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THE REVELS OF ORSERA

RONALD ROSS

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THE REVELS OF ORSERA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ROMANCES

THE CHILD OF OCEAN (1889)
THE SPIRIT OF STORM (1896)

POETRY

FABLES (1908)
PHILOSOPHIES (1910)
LYRA MODULATA (1911)
THE SETTING SUN (1912)
PSYCHOLOGIES (1919)

PREFACE

THE original object of this romance was to bring a set of type-characters of humanity into one book, so as to show the interplay of character with action. The work was commenced in 1889–90, while I was on active service in Burma. It was first printed privately in Bangalore, India, as a play in verse, and was then published again in verse by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, London; but the title was taken from Byron's unfinished fragment called the "Deformed Transformed," although this was only one of the legendary subjects of the work. Some of the secondary episodes which I developed during the five years I spent upon the task have been omitted in the romance. Most of the historical and geographical points given in the book are real, but, of course, all the personages and nearly all the quotations in the notes are purely fictitious; and, needless to say, the metaphysics are somewhat out of date.

RONALD ROSS
ROSS INSTITUTE
PUTNEY, S.W. 15

24th July, 1930

THE REVELS OF ORSERA

A Mediæval Romance

BY RONALD ROSS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1920

NOVELS and NOVELISTS,
medical : 20 cent.



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of the
Human Spirit

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CONTENTS

PAGE

PRELUDE.—The Great Repentance . . . 1

PART I.—THE INN

1. Morva Neroni and her Twin Children . . 7
2. Omination 10
3. The Philosopher and the Dwarf . . . 18
4. Company Enters 24
5. The Wonderful Cloak 31
6. Bran 39
7. Mother and Son 43
8. The Angel in the Butt 49
9. Gangogo and Zozimo 59
10. Disgraced 65
11. Hung on the Hook 69
12. Zozimo's Sister 74
13. The Noble Stranger 76
14. Disappearance 82

PART II.—THE SUITORS' TRIAL

15. The Dream 85
16. Preparations 89
17. At the Flower-Throne 98
18. The Suitors 105
19. Zozimo astonishes Them 110
20. The Wonderful Stranger 118
21. The Suitors' Trial 120
22. The Suitors feel Themselves Injured . . 132
23. Despair and Love 137
24. Zozimo takes his Revenge 142

PART III.—THE TOURNAMENT

25. Not so easily Won 151
26. Cajazzo arrives after All 158

PAGE

27. Otto takes Zozimo's Advice again . . . 164
28. The Suitors challenge Otto 171
29. The Cardinal's Return and the Tournament of Cards 181
30. The Lists 190
31. The Tournament opens 192
32. Otto opposes the Suitors 203
33. The End of the Tournament 216
34. The Colours of Love 230

PART IV.—THE SIFTINGS OF FATE

35. Astrella 241
36. The Court of Beauty 252
37. The Harassed Lovers 264
38. Gangogo decides to Repent 270
39. Lelita and Cajazzo 280
40. Gangogo's Repentance 285
41. The Cardinal obtains Evidence . . . 293
42. The Triumph of Justice 297
43. Morva comes 308
44. Otto, Zozimo, and Morva 314
45. Dreams 317
46. Lelita and Otto 319
47. The Face in the Flame 321

PART V.—CLOUDS, MOUNTAINS, AND STARS

48. The Battle of the Peaks and the Clouds . 327
49. Silence and Mist 329
50. On the Glacier 333
51. Brunde Bound 338
52. Astrella Descends 346
53. Sleep and Waking 346
54. The Partition 355
55. The Secret 359
56. Flight 363
57. The Temptation 367
58. Conclusion 375

Historical Notes 380

THE REVELS OF ORSERA

PRELUDE

THE GREAT REPENTANCE

If Switzerland be the nave of Europe, then the mountains of the group which contains the Galenstock, the Rhonestock, and the Dammastock are the axle-cap. From them the great ranges called the Pennine, Lepontine, Bernese, and Titlis Alps, and the Grisons, diverge like spokes of a gigantic wheel; and between these bastions, the Rhone, the Reuss, the Aar, the Ticino, the Tosa, and the Rhine roar forth to the north, south, east, and west. The snow melting on the flanks of the Galenstock runs partly into the Mediterranean and partly into the North Sea.

The Galenstock and Gerstenhorn, giant guardians of that sea of ice which gives birth to the Rhone, stand one on each side of the young river. Raging in the darkened straits of his deep-cloven ravines, he bounds forth between these portals, which glitter in the sun at an immense altitude above him. Looking at them from below, one would call them the summits of the world.

From all sides of the Galenstock, Father of Rivers, rivers run. From his height he surveys Italy, France, and Germany, which meet at his feet. His enormous brothers of the Alps bend towards him on all sides; but amid those turbulences of rock, river, and ice, he

himself is seated calmly, stoled in eternal snows, like a white-robed figure of ancient peace. His wisdom is of the stars, and his knowledge of high heaven.

From the height of his summit one seems able to observe the movement of the black and jagged world revolving beneath the stationary stars; to feel the quiver and vibration of the movement; to stem as on a chariot the winds of space. Borne on the earth, we rush onward, cleaving the infinite like spirits carried along with incredible speed; and the constellations flash past us as we move.

*

There, according to the Historian, on a night in early spring more than four centuries ago, a terrible voice was heard crying in the darkness.

On the summit there was no light, for the stars were lost in the stagnant, misty, and frozen air. And yet no darkness; for the light of the stars filled the formless mist. There was no sound, for the air was dead. And yet no silence; for everywhere could be heard the fine crepitation of the crystals of snow creeping together in the intense frost. In the night, light; in the light, silence; in the silence, sound. The very particles of snow cried out against the deadly cold. No light, no sound, no silence, and no darkness.

There was nothing there: and yet it seemed as if something must be there—not seen, not heard, but felt. A presence of what? A presence of Pain. As if some great Pain were there in the darkness. Not the agony of the frost, but some unendurable Torment.

At last the silence became aware of something monstrous murmuring there. It was the Pain acquiring utterance. The words became real and ran like a vibration through the congealed atmosphere. The Voice began in very low tones:

"I, spirit of eternal question," it said, "who end

by being spirit of eternal self, and therefore of eternal evil; everlasting I and therefore everlasting torment; must change, must come to a new issue, must clothe myself afresh; must die to live. For Hell is Thought in Heaven."

It ceased for a time, and then began again.

"The strands of nature run double in me. My pride that feeds me yet devours me. First-born and yet outcast of Heaven, I walk, like darkness, great with terrible deeds; I stand, like night, flapping my wings upon the mountains in exultation: but still a voice, crowning achievement, cries within me cursing me. I am impure, and mixed with good. Hell is not that we are in, but that that is within us. This spot of virtue in me is my hell. For not in kind, but in distraint of kind, the direst flames."

The mist thickened. The cold became still more intense. Somewhere, far away, a rock rent by the frost fell with a sound of distant thunder. The Voice continued:

"I am apart, like God, for ever; Hate, my content; and Scorn, the Heaven I have. I hide me in the enrocked bosom of the earth, or in the soundless and unsounded seas, or in the high-piled clouds of tempest; but in vain. Not thus do I avoid Thee; for Thou art in my heart."

The Voice ceased for a long time. All was silent. Nothing occurred. It seemed as if the silence had become expectant—were listening for something.

Suddenly the Voice struck down expectant silence with a blow of thunder. Everything was startled. "Torment," it cried; "have mercy! torment, torment, torment! I can endure no more the torment of Thy gaze! Have mercy! Cease, cease! I too am god! Batter me down not utterly, here in the base regard of these Thy creatures. Hath Thy divinity no mercy left for mine?"

It continued immediately in a torrent of words: "I, whom by Thee created, Thou, good, yet darest call evil, Thyself thus, not I, father of evil—or if omnipotent then evil, or if not evil not omnipotent, mistaker or miscreator—I, miscreated, shriek to Thee! Have mercy! I reel, I faint, I fall! Lo, I repent. Have mercy. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

A breath, an air! In a moment, it seemed, the mist was dispersed, and a million stars filled the heavens —some golden, some silver, some azure, and some with mingled beams. Steadfast, yet with an incessant alternation of flashing rays, host beyond host, they peopled space—some near, some far, some alone, some in clustering constellations. They were the angels of God leaning there upon their bright swords to gaze down upon that dreadful pinnacle of darkened earth.

In that ineffable fulguration the snowy summits of the Galenstock had become black; the earth appeared a black maze of jagged peaks and chasms hurtling among the million lights of heaven.

Presently, from beyond the uttermost stars, from an infinite distance, there came a sound, a faint harmony of heavenly music. Then it ceased suddenly, as if the great gates of Heaven had swung-to and shut upon it. The stars continued to flash whitely and silently.

*

But their light was only in heaven, and there was nothing but darkness on the earth. In another moment the vision of them became blurred, and a freezing haze again filled the air. The Voice seemed further away. "The moment passes; the torment ceases," it said. "I will descend; I will descend and be no more the Vulture of the barren hills, the Eagle storming at the sun."

The mist formed again, and the stars vanished, or remained but pale influences of light within the mist. The Voice continued, still further away: "I live, I breathe, I feel no more the dreadful gaze. I will descend and war no more on Heaven. I will descend and do great deeds of good, that I may win me love and rest; and pray to end for ever."

The Voice ceased. The cold was so intense that the whole rocky mass of the mountain seemed to shudder, and the formication of the particles of snow creeping together was heard again.

Suddenly, however, many small voices like the twittering of birds filled the mist, as if asking and answering questions. "What shall he do to be saved?" said one.

"Believe," was the reply.

"Wait on the Lord," said another deeply.

"What deed?" asked a loud voice impatiently. To this there were many replies, and a sweet voice in the distance sang, "But seek no guerdon for thy deeds."

"A deed of pity," answered a voice.

"Of love," said another.

"They are one," replied a flute-like voice, far away.

The voices were scattering in the distance; but the sweet voice continued singing, soaring away, "But seek no love returned, no guerdon for thy deeds."

There was utter darkness. Even the snow on the summit remained silent. The voices had gone.

*

On its eastern edge the snow-field which covers the summit of the Galenstock ends abruptly in a black precipice. At the foot of this precipice, where the litter of rocks fallen from it abuts upon the glacier below, there is a sheltered spot where chamois-hunters were wont to pass the night; and here three figures,

lain sleeping among the mingled rock and snow, could be distinguished in the suffused glimmer of starlight. Two of them lay close together rolled in furs, with the ends of their bows protruding from the wraps (in which they had been placed in order that the warmth of the owners' bodies should keep them supple and ready for use in the morning). The third figure lay somewhat higher up ; but, as if this person scorned the cold, the arms were flung abroad so that the hands rested palm upward on the snow. The attitude might have seemed that of death did not the breast rise and fall regularly. The face, singularly beautiful even as seen by that wan light, was turned upward. It was troubled. The head was being rolled slightly from side to side, and the lips moved as in the utterance of dreams. The figure was tall, but that of a young girl.

It seemed as if she strove to utter cries, but could not. Her features began to wear the expression of terror in sleep. She strove to awake, but an iron sleep had seized her. Her fingers twitched helplessly on the rock.

Suddenly she leapt to her feet with a cry, and, grasping her bow and a couple of arrows with one hand, looked from side to side, panting. The others sprang to her assistance. But it was nothing. It was only a dream.

PART I

THE INN

I.—Morva Neroni and her Twin Children

At the time of this History, the year 1495, Morva Neroni, known in the neighbourhood as the Venetian Woman, lived with her two children in a poor farm situated very high up on the side of the mountains beside the stream called Tiefentobel—which is one of the discharges of the Tiefen Glacier and runs into the Reuss above Realp, on the road between the Furka and the village of Orsera (Urseren or Andermatt).[1] The cottage stood on the top of the Ebnetenalp, the hill which divides the end of the Urserenthal from the Garschenthal (we use the modern names) and looked down into the latter. Between it and the Galenstock was the rocky summit of the Bielenstock, and directly behind and above it was the Ochsenalp. It is a wild and awful spot where the winds of the north, south, east, and west clash together, mingle in thunder, and dissolve in rain and snow; and the mists ascending from many valleys meet and slowly rise to heaven like smoke from the sides of a dulled fire-heap. When the mists are rent apart for a few moments, enormous peaks and the white faces of the glaciers of the St. Gotthard become visible around, like startling phantoms. We stare into revealed abysses, or gaze upward at impending cataclysms of

[1] These facts are taken from the narrative of Johann Müren, who knew her well. See also the Historical Notes.

rock, seen for an instant and then vanishing. When the fog closes again, the disappeared vision remains with us like a nightmare, and we are conscious of terrible presences, as one in a forest at night among wild beasts.

Morva Neroni was a Venetian woman. She had once undoubtedly been wealthy and was of very good family; but her husband had fallen into some serious quarrel and was obliged to fly with his young wife and twin children towards the Alps. He was, however, suddenly assassinated on the way and died in the arms of the poor woman. Continuing her flight, she ascended the St. Gotthard and hid herself in the lonely and desolate Guspisthal for many years, until, taking fright at something, she removed still further from Italy, to the cottage which we have mentioned.

Nothing can be discovered regarding the cause of this extraordinary flight, nor of the assassination, nor of her continued retirement. The affair seems to have been of a political nature, and, certainly, a most mysterious letter to her from Tassini, the servant of the Duchess of Milan, has been actually found, though nothing can be made of it. She lived in poverty in Switzerland, although, Müren says, he knew that every five years or so a friar brought her money from Italy.

A curious character, full of lofty sorrow and of no less lofty pride and determination, she was looked upon with dislike by the people of Andermatt, who however did not know her well; but Müren, who was better acquainted with her, respected her very much. At times she descended there to sell her cattle, her cheeses, and chamois skins, but would never let her children accompany her—which aroused the jealousy of the village mothers. Her superior austere manner, her brilliant dark eyes, her remains of great beauty, her grace of breeding, had now, in the accustoming of time, lost their effect of awe; so that she had begun

to be regarded somewhat as a witch. Nevertheless there were tales of her goodness to travellers and hunters on certain occasions, and she was much beloved by Müren's widowed mother at Urseren.

Sometimes she would return from the valley full of weariness and sorrow, but was always too proud to show either. In order to prove that nothing ever fatigued her, she would immediately start forth again to milk the goats. She was full of tales of her life in Italy, and seemed ever to be hoping for return.

When her children were asleep, she would suddenly rise and, going stealthily to a corner of the room, would remove a block of wood from a beam in the roof, whence she would pull forth a little bag containing a hoard of gold pieces, some valuable gems, and a dagger. She would add a gold piece, look at the gems, and draw the flat of the blade across her palm. It was the weapon which had slain her husband. Then she sat by the embers as they sank lower and lower and all became darkness ; and no one knew when it was that she lay herself down to sleep.

Her children saw and knew nothing of the world except from some strange old manuscripts which their mother kept in a box—legends of Italian feuds and histories of old cities—forgotten things. But there was one more treasure—a figured Dante, very costly and beautiful, which they were never tired of studying, and which filled them with those lofty thoughts which moulded their lives. In fact Morva had educated them severely and well. Living there aloft, they saw the world without entering it. Nevertheless, besides Müren, they had company on occasions—that of grave and stalwart men, young and old, the chamois-hunters.

The behaviour of these men when they approached the hut was singular. They brought presents, such as cheeses, portions of venison, skins ; but seldom dared come alone. On entering, they would doff

their caps and seat themselves on the very edge of the nearest plank settle. Waiting to be spoken to, they would reply seriously and with studied decorum. They were the only persons who had ever seen the children of Morva Neroni. When the people of the villages questioned them as to these children, the simple hunters would laugh, and then tell such stories as made the mothers angry.

Her children were now twenty years of age, and Zozimo demanded to begin his career, whatever it was to be. Both mother and daughter opposed his leaving them, as they were too poor to put him out in the world, and Morva did not dare to send him to Italy, where she had rich relations. Thus it was that he finally determined to enter the inn as a mere tapster—for he argued that, the nobler the blood, the more certain would be success even from the lowest start. But, though the proud mother assented at last, the daughter was never reconciled to the idea, and angrily disputed the wisdom of his project. He remained obstinate however, and commenced his career in the manner we shall see. Hazardous venture; for life like the ocean rolls its greatest waves near the shore.

But the hunters watched over him, and brought news of him to the lonely cottage on the Ebnetenalp.

II.—Ominations

At the time of this history, also, Count Maximilian Reichenfels was the Overlord of these parts.[1] After the battle of Nancy in 1476, he had established his foster-brother Capponi in an inn situated on the road between Orsera and the Furka, at the top of the Urserenthal (just where the Realper Reuss rushing

[1] See the Historical Notes.

down from the Garschenthal joins the stream which flows out of the Wyttenwasserthal below the Ebnetenalp, but on the other side of the stream), about two miles from Realp and six from the Count's castle at Hospenthal. On the slope behind the inn there was a fringe of stunted pines to protect from avalanches; and nothing but ugly and monotonous hills covered with poor grass, and a mournful stream running down sobbing amongst its stones, were in sight. Almost always, great white clouds thronged one after the other down the pass, sometimes almost touching the ground, and looking like weary pilgrims wandering eastward. The building itself was as melancholy as the place. Constructed of wood of various ages and colour, with walls supported against the violent weather of the region by strong plank buttresses, it was almost smothered by an immense roof weighted down with big stones, and looked like a huge turtle. It contained two large rooms, the kitchen and the great eating-room, and some newly constructed sleeping-chambers for the Count's guests—since the inn was often used also as a hunting lodge. The entrance to the inn led directly into the eating-room. The unceiled roof of this was black with age and smoke, and everywhere meat, hams, cheeses, and pails of milk hung on hooks from the roof, and barrels of beer and wine stood upon tressels on the ground. Some trophies of the chase were nailed upon the bressummers, and a table with wooden benches and six finely carved chairs for the Count and his guests filled the middle of the room. A great bronze brasier or rather salver which had belonged to the Counts of Romont, embossed with well-executed figures of fighting hogs, stood upon short feet on the ground; and within it three iron dogs supported the burning trunks of wood. The smoke was carried away, or rather not carried away, by a sooty wooden flue built down from the roof

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and held up by posts from below. The whole building was so well caulked with clay, tar, and rags, that there was said to be considerably less wind within than without; though Gangogo, the Count's jester, maintained the converse, and showed the honesty of his conviction by going to sleep outside.

In the summer there was a good flow of guests, mostly the Count's servants and messengers, travelling between his estates at Orsera and in the Rhone Valley, who brought thirst and some profits to the host. But the principal customer was the Count himself, who paid with a laugh his foster-brother's extortions, and at every advent from his Italian estates gave him a barrel of some southern vintage. It was his desire to have the inn always well stocked, because he occasionally brought important guests to it. Indeed, the Count kept here the most valuable of his possessions, which he had just acquired by means of an agent from the sacking of Pietro Medici's palace at Florence. This was a unicorn's horn set in silver and estimated at seven thousand ducats; and it was placed on the centre of the table because it had the power of destroying poison in food, as well as of keeping all demons and witches out of the house.

This history commences in the early spring of 1495, upon a rough, blustering evening. Two large and fat men were seated at the table and were having some small drink before supper. They were Capponi, the innkeeper, and Father Seraphin, the priest; and Pompilia, the wife of the former, sat between these two masses of male flesh, busy with her sewing. The priest, who possessed a receding chin and a prehensile upper lip which seemed always to be tremulous with fear of some sort, was narrating certain supernatural occurrences which had recently been brought to his knowledge; and Capponi, who was notorious in the

region as being a philosopher, if not an atheist, was disputing the accuracy of the priest's information. "I tell you," thundered Seraphin, "that this tale of the three black priests is true, and if for no other reason than because I, a priest, tell it. They have been seen walking arm in arm down the Furka Pass seven days in succession without ever going up. How do you explain that? I will now enumerate the other prodigies which I have already described to you. Secondly, the huge black goat, which was seen by Hans Petel browsing on the Bäzberg, and moving forward on his forelegs alone, leaving the hind legs standing where they had been before. Third, the shower of fishes which fell at Interlaken. Fourth, the round patches of sunlight, made by the sun shining through small holes or chinks, containing two or three black dots, very small and alike in all the patches.[1] Then the old woman at Mörel selling nuts who, when her cloak was torn off her, was discovered to be a great ape, which ran shrieking up the mountains. Then the River Reuss, which ran uphill fully two hours at midnight under the ice last January——"

"Do you believe such stuff?" said Capponi.

Seraphin took no notice and continued, "Here is another story which I was just about to narrate when you interrupted me. Only a few days ago a friar walked into the inn at Bristen and boasted that he could eat everything which the host could give him. The latter wagered his soul against the friar's thorn stick that he could not; but was horrified to find that he continued to devour every dish set before him, growing larger and larger with every mouthful. At last, when even the assistance of the terrified neighbours was exhausted, someone thought luckily of putting a holy wafer into the last dish. The result was that the friar (who was the Devil) lost his bet, jumped

[1] Such dots are now known to be caused by "sun-spots."

up, and went rolling head-over-heels down the slope into the Kärstelenbach."

"I gather that they were all drunk together," said Capponi (often nicknamed Cappone—Capon).

"Were they drunk, then, also in the following matter?" said the priest. "About a month ago three men I know were fishing in the black lake of Grimsel, and suddenly saw, arising from the very depths, huge bubbles as great as caldrons—out of which bubbles, when they burst on the top of the water, came a voice crying in the words of Scripture, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.' But most terrible of all is the thing told me by the boy Johann Müren. Only a week ago he, with Hans Petel and two other men, was lying out under a rock after chamois upon the Galenstock, and Petel was left aloft that night to watch. By midnight there came a deathly silence with a great cold, so that they could not sleep and the hair rose on their heads; and then there was heard a voice speaking most awfully and crying in a language as of gods, which they could not understand, and groaning in great agony and torment of spirit; and with it there was a rocking of the mountain and a creeping forth of living creatures. Presently the old man Petel ran in, drawing his breath from his inwards, his hair blanched and his eyes blasted, who straightway fell down in a seizure. You have not heard of this?"

"Do you think that every time a man has a fit some lie is proved?" Capon shouted, thumping the table.

The priest on the other side of Pompilia thumped the table too and said, "Yes, I do. Now I will tell you the most wonderful thing which followed. A few days later, a company of traders in skins coming up from the Wallis saw with their own living sight the Archangel Uriel standing upon a pinnacle of the Galengrat, robed in a streaming garment of pale

green such as the star Sirius doth wear, and shading his eyes against the sun and looking north, south, east and west over all God's land, until, taking his pinions, he swept over the great sea of ice" (Rhone Glacier) "towards the north-west. And also, some of my people have seen, at divers times, by the light of the moon, troops of angels with drawn swords pacing along the ridges of uttermost snow and gazing steadfastly down into the abysses and black chasms and cracks between the mountains. Every midnight can be seen belchings forth of flame and smoke and torrents running fire, and can be heard shrieks and groans. At other times, behind the snow-mist, where there is the eternal silence, contentions have been heard, the clang of shields and spears, as of armed men, so that the hunters ran frightened therefrom; and at another time a great voice, as of an angel crying change. And if you do not believe, I know the cause of this," continued the priest; "for in Italy, France, Germany, and even Britain, owing to the amazing endeavours of the Pope (Borgia!) and the holy Louis IX and other most virtuous princes and priests and saints, wickedness is being so stamped upon that the profession of devilry is becoming bankrupt, and the Evil One hath, from great agony of spirit, determined to leave the war against Heaven and to come and settle peacefully among us as a simple villager, devoting himself to good works."

"Fools, fools, fools!" said Capon beating the table with his pint pot.

"What do you know about these things?" said Pompilia.

The philospher did not reply to her, but drawing a manuscript towards him, said, "Now you have told me all this stuff, it is my turn to confound your arguments. You believe anything that is told you by

peasants, but nothing that is told you by the great men of antiquity. It is time to hear some of these." And he began to read passages from his work, ransacking it for his most brilliant apothegms, and enunciated each, when found, in a sudden loud voice, as if the world were listening.

"I am of the opinion of Lucretius," he cried, thumping the board, that 'Haud igitur faciunt animae sibi corpora et artus,' and to say that that which has no substance can yet maintain form of itself and *in vacuo* is folly."

Father Seraphin, who was falling asleep, gurgled out "I am not," while Pompilia, seizing the opportunity for talking, wondered how the sick goat was doing. After a few minutes silence Capon shouted, "I am again of opinion with Lucretius,

> '. . . res quoniam docui non posse creari
> De nilo neque item genitas ad nil revocari';

and that nothing can proceed from nothing, and nothing can return to nothing." "Rubbish!" gurgled out the worthy father again; and Pompilia added that the price of bread would probably rise owing to the war in Italy, and that she wondered whether Count Trullo, the Count's nephew, liked bacon. After another silence Capon once more thundered out like a captain in a battle, "I am not of the opinion of Heraclitus that all things are of fire; nor of the opinion of Empedocles that there are diverse elements; nor of Anaxagoras that each thing is an element of itself."

"I am," grunted the priest, going off finally into a series of double snores, inspiratory and expiratory; while the dame rose, saying that it was time to get supper; that it was of no use to argue about such things which nobody knew anything of and which no sensible people considered; that at any rate Capon

was much too ignorant to understand the matter; and that the good father, being a holy, sanctified, and religious man, was a thousand times wiser than he.

After this Capon fell into a reverie of disgust—in which doubtless some wonderful sparks of thought would ultimately have been clashed out from among the jarring of his emotions had he not dashed down his manuscript impatiently and cried after a long interval of silence, "A fig for the devil and all his works" —*apropos* of some idea of his.

For this impiety he was to be punished immediately. Father Seraphin suddenly rose with a cry and pointed at the window. "There he is," he yelled; "there he is!"

Sure enough a terrible face was seen peering in at the window. Next moment the door burst in with a violent gust of wind, and an extraordinary figure appeared on the threshold—a little, shrivelled, wizened form with a bundle on his back and holding a staff with one hand and a green bag with the other; and as he advanced into the room each step was accompanied by another gust of storm.

"*Retro!*" shouted the Father; "he has come for your soul!" And, as Müren points out in his history, so strong is the natural force of belief in us that even Capon, forgetting his wicked philosophy at sight of this apparition, thought the same thing, and snatched at the priest's rosary as a charm against the intruder. But the priest, himself overcome with fear, would not let go of it—with the result that it broke and the two fat men rolled on the floor.

There is no knowing but that the spectre might have carried them both off bodily; but fortunately Pompilia entered at the moment and, so great is the courage of women, actually went up to the devil and boxed his ears.

"Please, madam, please!" cried the fiend, wriggling with pain, "it is I, Zozimo, who have come to serve with you—and this is my guitar."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Pompilia, smiting him; "so you will frighten my husband and the holy father out of their wits!"

Thus it was that Zozimo entered life, and this tale. He was the son of Morva Neroni, the Venetian Woman who lived in the mountains; and had been hired by Pompilia to be drawer at the inn, in place of the goat-boy who had recently left to seek higher fortune in the wars.

III.—The Philosopher and the Dwarf

A philosopher, says the excellent Brother Johannes Murinus, is of Satan—from whom, indeed, first came to us the deplorable faculty of reason in the juice of that fruit which he gave unto our parents. For (he says) if a thing is it should be believed; and if a thing is believed it is, since otherwise it would never have been believed: hence all ratiocination is but logomachy, and the syllogism is devoured of itself. If, he argues, it be contended that mere belief is insufficient of itself since we believe so differently; the answer is that that is because we have tinctured our belief with reasoning, and if we had never reasoned at all we should all have believed the same thing. Being accused of reasoning in giving his reasons for his disbelief in reason, he closed the matter by stating simply that his disbelief was a belief and not a reason at all. Thus, in the present case, he believed that the Fiend had, after all, come for Capon's soul, but that he had been driven away and supplanted at the door by the pure spirit of Zozimo. It is surprising to find such a very modern line of thought in a poor peasant

who lived four centuries ago ; but Müren hated the innkeeper as much as he loved Zozimo.[1]

In truth they were much of a contrast. Capon was a large man. His head was bald, his eyes were of a pale pellucid blue, and his face was finely touched with red. A few light hairs sufficed for his beard and moustache, and his chest appeared to have suffered a landslip under his doublet. The great girth of his hips was most apparent when, struck by some important idea, he would suddenly stand stock-still among his barrels, forefinger to forehead. On seeing his huge body being rolled about on its short legs among the wine-casks, we might have imagined that one of these had come to life. His preoccupation was no less with liquor than with philosophy—and towards evening became more so. For in fact there was little for him to do in this remote valley, and he was rather a paid servant of the Count than a free innkeeper—especially as his wife did most of the work. Hence, as the Count's nephew, Trullo, said, poor Capon was host and customer in one.

On the other hand, seen next day by daylight, Zozimo's appearance was found to be far from terrible. Although he was now twenty years of age, he was no taller than a boy of ten, and his face was quite hairless. His pale hair and complexion, his thin hands, and his delicate features, were like those of a sickly girl ; and the unfortunate though slight curvature in the upper part of his spine thrust forward the chin in such a manner that the countenance seemed forced to look upward to heaven in a continual supplication, to which the mild blueness of the eyes and the sweetness of the expression gave a certain pathetic quality. But, notwithstanding the sickliness due to his deformity, there was in Zozimo a decided air of courage and even of manliness which clearly belonged to the spirit rather

[1] See the Historical Notes

than to the flesh. The eyebrows were straight and marked, and the eyes held flashes of humour or of resolution which showed the man in him. There was nothing of piteous deprecation or of feeble resignation about him; but his face always wore a happy look of goodness, innocence, and hope; and it was clear to all that, either from the sap of youth or from the seclusion in which he had been brought up, he was not yet fully conscious of his misfortune.

Thus when Pompilia had struck him on his infelicitous arrival, he had sat down smiling on a bench, fully recognising the humour of the occasion. And no sooner had she done so than she felt remorse; so that she patted his head and asked his forgiveness in such kind terms that he sprang up and kissed her hand as if she had been a great lady and he a paladin. Next day he spent very busily with her learning his work and doing it.

But it was otherwise with Capon—who stared at him all day, though occasionally bursting into laughter at his expense. Then he called him up and asked him his name.

"Zozimo, if it please you, sir."

"I see you are a rogue, Zozimo."

"If I am, sir," answered Zozimo briskly, rubbing one of the dishes, "I shall hope to be bettered, by God's grace."

"Come, I will have no canting here," roared the other, giving him a push which sent him rolling on the floor.

So he behaved all day, asking him many questions, pinching him, pulling his ear, shouting with laughter and making jests on him. Through all this the little fellow behaved with admirable spirit, affecting to be always busy and cheerful; though after a time his lip quivered as he turned away on having received in his heart the point of some wit of his master's. Towards

evening, however, Capon became quite unbearable in his clownish humour, for he followed his victim about all over the house, laughing in a drunken manner and rolling like a galleon in a ground sea. He had stuck two long peacock feathers in Zozimo's cap; which was indeed so mirth-provoking that even Pompilia, good as she was, could not help turning aside from her cooking to smile at him.

Zozimo, though secretly pained at this unaccustomed rudeness, pretended to carry it off with an air as if it were wit in him rather than deformity which was the cause of so much laughter. He was not going to be abashed by such trifles on the very threshold of his future. And in the evening too he had ample revenge; for a party of rough hunters happening to come in, Capon shouted to him to bring ale. When he entered with it, dressed as he was in his feathers, Capon roared again with boorish mirth; but two of the hunters, who knew Zozimo well, but were not aware that he was now a servant at the inn, sprang to their feet, took the salver from him, bowed low to him much to Capon's amazement, and dusted a place on the bench for him. This, however, Zozimo refused (though the tears came to his eyes), saying, "No, kind friends; I am now to wait on you, not you on me; I am here my master's servant, although if you continue to have care of my mother and sister as formerly, I shall thank you." "What," cried Capon, "shall my guests wait on my tapster?"—and he made as if about to thrash Zozimo. One of the hunters, however, a very strong man called Martinac, put out his hand and caught him by the seat of his breeches. "Beware," he said, "master Capon; when the fox worried the rabbit, the eagle worried the fox!" Capon took the hint.

After this the philosopher contented himself with observing the dwarf from a distance with a scientific interest. The whole of the next day he stared at

him ; and towards evening wrote in his note-book, "After all, deformity is the only curse ; it is not what we are, but what we fall short in, troubles us."

The day following, he continued his observation, and noted the happiness of Zozimo's face—his business, his eagerness for labour, the state of cleanliness to which he had already brought the old inn ; and he wrote in his notebook, "After all, deformity is the only blessing ; it is not that we are, but that we fall short of, which incites us !" "To such a being," he wrote, "admiration comes never, love comes never. The soul of Cæsar with such a hunch could not have commanded a band of children. A she-mouse would not fly before him, had he the spirit of Achilles. To be weak, to fail in all things, to suffer pain and to die young, were ordained to him at birth by a just Heaven."

Then he called Zozimo to him. "Little man," he cried, holding him at arm's length, "how are you ?"

"I am well, sir," answered Zozimo ; "and happy, sir, I thank you and my mistress, sir."

"You are happy ? humph. What have you to hope for ?"

"I have to hope, sir, for your favour and my lord the Count's, sir. I trust to do my labour well, so that when I am older and stronger, as I shall be, my lord by your leave may take me into his service."

"Oh, you wish to serve the Count, then ?"

"Yes, sir, I have hopes of it if I serve you well and my kind mistress will spare me."

"You wish to be his jester, what ? but Gangogo is his jester."

"His jester, sir ? no, sir."

"What then, you whippet ?"

Zozimo blushed. "I wish to be a soldier, sir."

"A soldier—ha !"

"Yes, sir, and a poet, sir."

"A poet; well, and anything more ?"

"I would learn philosophy, sir, if you would teach me, and would practise myself in policy and statesmanship in order to be of use to my lord. I have some sense of Latin, sir, and am well read in the wisdom of princes."

"Tell me, then, something of the virtue of Augustus."

"That he visited Gallus Terrinius, who had lost his sight and purposed self-destruction, and by his kind consolations diverted him."

"Well, I had forgot it. Tell me of other princes' folly."

"That Caligula was so mad as to make love to the moon and to pretend that Jupiter walked privately with him."

"From which you gather——?"

"That it is better to be kind to inferiors than be familiar with those who are above us."

"And which do you hold to be the first motto of antiquity?"

"Mens sana, etc., sir."

"Is that so?—then go about your business," said Capon, taking him by the nape of the neck, applying the sole of his foot to his back, and sending him whirling through the doorway.

"No," said Capon to himself, when he had done laughing; "I recant, great Heaven. The less a man's stature the greater his pride. Men fight with men, but dwarfs dare battle with gods."

His day's work done, Zozimo would open the wooden shutter of the garret where he slept and, wrapping himself in goat-skins, would gaze upon the stars. He would bare his soul before them, stroking meanwhile the strings of his guitar—so gently as not to awaken his master and mistress. Then he was like a child seated on the outer steps of Heaven, and listening with parted lips to the far angelic choirs.

What though next day the trials, the sordid labours

of the world, fell upon him and buffeted him : they were but the gusts of wind which made to sound and to thrill the more deeply that æolian harp which was his soul within. Aware of his bodily weakness yet not aware of it—for life and action had not yet held up their brutal mirror to him—he did not comprehend the full weight of his misfortune, or crushed the thought of it back into the depths. He thought himself still a child ; he felt the sap of the bud still in him ; he expected further development.

IV.—Company Enters

But scarcely had Zozimo been one week in the inn when jesting Fortune tried to enlighten him. A smoking courier arrived from the Rhone Valley with letters for the Count—who had but lately come to Hospenthal for the summer ; and next day, as suddenly, Bran, the Captain of his Guards, flings in, dashed with mire, exclaiming that the Count and his daughter will be there for dinner in three minutes, on their way from Hospenthal to Ulrichen ; that the Venetians had declared against the King of France ; that the Count with all his strength was going to the aid of the Duke of Milan against the Duke of Orleans at Novosa ; and that fine times were coming. When he saw Zozimo, however, he suddenly ceased talking and stared at him with round eyes, whistling and combing his beard with his fingers, while his tall plumes tickled the rafters. "Gad !" he whispered to himself, "here is sport" : and the next moment a shower of pebbles rattled on the casement-shutter as the Count, his daughter and retinue, curbed up at the door from a smart canter. Capon bowed them in. Zozimo, who, while cleaning plates, had been considering all that morning a sonnet purporting to be from Sir Launcelot

to Guinevere, felt a sudden throbbing of the veins as the august company entered. Hitherto he had seen no strangers but chamois-hunters ; and he felt that the tenor of his life had come to a cusp, as it were, and would hereafter run a different course. It was his object to ingratiate himself with the Count, and that important nobleman now stood before him with his daughter by his side.

One of the richest men in Switzerland, Reichenfels was now old ; but he was tall, and still keen and energetic, though a slight bend in the knees showed a touch of weakness in him. His figure was slight and his shoulders somewhat narrow ; but his ruddy face and quick blue eyes belied the grey in his hair ; while his gay apparel of yellow hose, yellow satin tunic, black scabbard, and dark green cloak, showed in him an affectation of youth which was well served by the graceful manner in which he led by the hand his beautiful daughter, and in which he doffed his plumed and jewelled cap of cloth of gold.

The Lady Lelita, so renowned for her beauty and her father's idol, was dressed in a dark brown habit and a surcoat bordered with gold-coloured ermine which nestled round her neck. Her cap too was of brown velvet with a beautiful yellow plume clasped with a great turquoise. She was small, but of such perfect symmetry that she appeared tall. Her complexion was of an almost uniform dark ruddiness, as if the blood tingled in the skin. Her lips, so red that the Marchioness of Montferrat, her cousin and enemy, said she laced herself too tightly, were moulded with an almost ineffable sweetness, full of health, happiness, and kindness ; but her eyes, of a deep blue-grey, were quick and vivacious. Her hair, heavy and abundant, was of that dark ruddy gold which reminds us of a heap of doubloons held in a black netting ; and when her look fell upon Zozimo he forgot even the stars.

He had been about to serve Bran with a mug of ale placed on a wooden plate, and stood in the very centre of the large room when Reichenfels and his daughter, followed by a crowd of men-at-arms and retainers, entered. Naturally all eyes were turned upon him, standing as he was against the nether gloom of the chamber, wearing a couple of peacock feathers as long as himself in his cap, and carrying a pewter pot, which by its size made his diminutiveness appear the more marked. Instantly remembering what Sir Amadis or Sir Oliver would have done in the circumstances, he took off his cap with his disengaged hand, pressed it to his heart and bowed thrice to the distinguished guests. His look of careful apprehension toward the critically placed beer-pot, as he did so, was so comical that when finally, after bowing thrice as if he were the owner of a palace, he tripped up and fell heavily backward, the beer pouring over him, a roar of laughter arose at his expense.

"Jupiter, what is *it?*" cried the Count.

"Good Heavens, what can *it* be?" exclaimed Lelita.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bran; "by my beard, 'tis another Gangogo!"

"By Agamemnon," said the Count; "he bows like a paladin!"

"What a strange creature!" said Lelita.

"Jupiter's eagle," shouted Bran; "'tis the king of the monkeys!"

"Ho, ho, the king of the monkeys!" roared the men-at-arms, the handy archers and the dapper pages behind. So ended the first advance of Zozimo toward fortune. Pompilia upbraided him for spilling the beer and hustled him out of the room.

"Well, well," said the Count after Zozimo's condition was explained to him; "let us have a slice of bread and cheese and a pot of wine each, Capon. To

the wars, to the wars, we are going to the wars, friend ; so be quick."

Zozimo, very much humiliated, was obliged to wait at table. He was much surprised too, and could not quite understand why everyone laughed so much. The burly soldiers held him out at arm's length, patted his back and even offered him morsels from the dinner. One gave him a penny and another said he would make a fine soldier. When he affirmed that that was his ambition, everybody laughed. One of the pages pricked his calf with a pin secretly ; and when Zozimo suggested that such conduct was not honourable, he put out his tongue at him. Another poured some liquor down his neck ; and finally they all even stopped eating in order to laugh when Bran suddenly clapped his helmet over him, covering his head and almost his shoulders, and held his hands to prevent him taking it off. "Hum," said the Count calling him to him ; "what is your name ?" "Zozimo, sir." "So ! you wish to be my jester, I hear ; then rap me out a jest." "A jest, sir—if you please, sir—I have not thought of one, sir." "By Priam's beard, then," shouted the nobleman, "you shall think of one or be trussed for dinner, like a fowl." "Please, sir," cried Zozimo piteously, "my mother says that jesting is not courteous." "What !" thundered Bran, seizing him by the leg ; "you will preach to the Count, will you ?" "Sir, sir," cried the poor little creature, almost weeping ; "I know a jest, sir, I know a jest. What is that which runs along in the sunshine and casts no shadow ?"

When nobody could answer, Zozimo began to pluck up heart again and to nod and smile all round. Suddenly, however, Lelita said, "'Tis a river, is it not ?" "Yes, that is it," the poor boy admitted, feeling that the point of the jest was somehow blunted. "Come, that is a scurvy small jest," bellowed Bran ; "give

us another." "No," exclaimed Lelita kindly, seeing a tear standing in his eyes, and looking around her with a little pout of defiance ; "your mother tells you true ; it is not courtly to jest too much, 'tis the sport of boors. Come, tell us what you can do ? "

In some singular manner these sweet feminine words immediately recovered him from the depression caused by the rough male voices ; and the beauty of the noble young lady thrilled to his heart. "Faith," said a soldier as Zozimo knelt on one knee and kissed her hand ; "that was done with a true knight's air."

"Madam," answered Zozimo, "it is not that my birth is not as gentle as that of many ; or that in my nurture and tuition I have not profited ; but rather in my poverty, and in my ignorance of those excellent manners it delights the great to look upon. For I have observed that in my speech, behaviour, and conduct there is something foreign, since these gentlemen are so much inclined to laugh at me ; and for this I humbly crave your forgiveness and theirs. You have asked me what there is that I can do to show that I am not all base. In truth it is but little, and that little I would hide from you out of modesty, but that you push me to confession. In arms, I admit it, I have neither practice nor proficiency—I would that I had ; neither in learning, languages, laws, or other knowledges am I well versed as I should wish, since my good parent is too poor to find me tutors. I have therefore no merits but such as come of solitude and meditation ; that is, I can in a very humble way write some poor verses, and even sing them to music ; and if you wish it I will essay something before you."

Lelita lifted her finger to still the roars of laughter which were often on the point of arising during this speech ; and without hesitation told him to fetch his guitar and begin. Seating himself on a stool at her feet, he tuned the instrument with the intervals then

in fashion and spoke again ; "I am so ignorant that I have no knowledge of what songs great ladies love, whether roundels, ballades, sonnets, or romances. If it be your wish I will sing to you a romance I have made of Sir Bortegal (a knight living only in my fancy) who was brave but ill favoured, and the lady Camilla who loved him not ; but the romance will take three hours in the saying."

"Thank you," said Lelita ; "but we must shortly go upon our journey and have not time to listen to such a great romance, but on our return, we shall compel you to it. Have you no small song to sing us ?"

After a few minutes' hesitation Zozimo began. He looked for one moment at Lelita and his cheek flushed. Seated in such a manner that his deformity was scarcely apparent, a transformation seemed to have come over him. A look of manliness, of audacity even, came into those pure and beautiful eyes. He looked like one who was throwing all on one die. He sang :

"There was a star in heaven
Made only to rejoice ;
She paled her light not even
When she heard God's voice :
And on the earth a flower
Gazed up at her with love.

"She looked amazèd on him
With beams of silver scorn,
And cast her wrath upon him—
'Oh, creature humbly born,
What makes thee worthy me ?'
He answered only, 'Love.'

"With icy anger sparkling,
She finely flashed her flame,
And left the heavens darkling.
'If thou hast yet a name,
What is thy name ?' she said.
He answered only, 'Love.'"

The voice was thin and poor, but perfectly true; while the playing, Lelita noticed, was very good and enriched with certain graces which could have been learnt only of excellent masters, and were indeed taught to him by his mother.

"By my beard, madam," said Bran brutally; "a dwarf has the devil's courage; this pretty flower here" (meaning himself) "would think twice before singing such a song before you." "To God, sir," answered Lelita, glancing angrily at him, "stars are no more than flowers are"; with which, she thanked Zozimo, and her father awoke from a short nap occasioned by the beer he had drunk. "To horse, to horse!" he shouted as if he had been all the while awake; "yes, 'twas an excellent jest, but we must be away." In a few minutes they were all in the saddle, and Lelita reached down her hand for Zozimo to kiss; which he did, standing on a large stone.

That night Zozimo could not sleep; a something wild had seized upon his heart and made it struggle as if it sought to be free of the feeble body. The blood sang in his veins; he lay down and then leapt up again. All night long the moon raced through a sea of light but rapid clouds, sending sudden splendours into his chamber like flashes from fairy lanterns. He fell into a doze, and then dark shapes appeared to be sitting around him in the corners, at the window, on the pallet, laughing and pointing at him, while one beautiful countenance regarded him with that look of wonder and pity which was now stamped on his soul for ever. Why was the expression of pity there? He awoke in an agony and heard the wind whistling in the crannies; he leant feverishly from the casement and saw the shadows flying over the hill. Cloud, splendours, laughters, love seemed to fill the air; exquisite beauty, hateful mockery, more hateful pity. He saw the icy moon—scornfully she gazed down upon

him. "Worm," she seemed to say, "art thou there, worm?" But around her were a hundred pitying eyes of stars which seemed to say, "Be comforted." Then there came a gust of wind with a shouting and rattling everywhere. "Ha, ha, ha! we have found him out," it cried; "he tries to hide himself, but we have found him out, ha, ha, ha!"

Then again the beautiful face—how beautiful! melting and dissolving the heart within him till he hid his face in the pillow and sobbed.

That mysterious chord in us which we call self-consciousness, personality, what not, remains at first inert and soundless within us. Suddenly the finger of some circumstance strikes it and it trembles, vibrates, and rings out that wonderful tone, harsh, beautiful, or terrible, to which all the future music of our being shall be attuned. Until then the child-soul may harmonise herself in any key, and may say, "I shall mingle with the symphonies of the spheres." But Fate, touching that silent string, cries, "Fool, attune thyself to this."

V.—The Wonderful Cloak

In the week that followed, the pain of all this had subsided, leaving only a new beautiful image in Zozimo's mind. Nature is so kind to us that every day she rubs out what she wrote the day before, especially the unpleasant things.

Every minute, in the midst of his work, a thrill of joy would shoot through his heart. It was a delicious omen: look, he was fated to win. "Gad," said Capon, watching him at work, "had I been born a dwarf I had become a god. He cleans more pots in a day than I write letters." "He is in love," whispered Pompilia to herself, shaking her head. Through cleaning pots lay the way to Lelita, Zozimo thought.

Capon in his ponderous manner was not unkind to the lad. A philosopher under such circumstances of repression will argue with a fly if he can. He showed him some of his notes, but only answered humph! humph! when Zozimo remarked upon them. The fly can be admitted to admiration, but never to criticism. One evening, however, when Pompilia was down in the village, Capon shortly told the boy to bring his guitar and sing him the romance of Sir Bortegal. Zozimo repeated it, singing in a sort of improvised chant he was skilled in; and Capon at first listened with patience, only enquiring now and then who cooked Sir Bortegal's dinner for him in the desert, and how he lived so richly in the Paynim city without funds. Soon, however, being seated in a comfortable chair of the Count's, he fell into a slumber; then waking with a start saw the rich light of sunset streaming in upon the singer as he sat on a low stool in front of him, transfigured in a poetic ecstasy, and singing the end of Sir Bortegal in the desert and the mourning of Mother Earth and of the stars. The flesh no longer clothed the spirit, but the spirit the flesh; and the poor little hunchback, bathed in a double irradiance, shone like one beatified. Capon sat up in his chair, grasping the arms of it, and stared thunderstruck.

In a week from the time when the Count had passed through the inn, a courier arrived with orders for dinner on the next day, since his lordship had decided after all not to move against the Duke of Orleans as he had intended, but to return to Reichenfels (Hospenthal). He had indeed promised to send aid to the League; but from one thing and another only five Italian men-at-arms ever went; while, it is said, as many as twenty of his Switzers joined the King of France, whom they loved because of his father. During the winter the Count had got possession cheaply of a number of valuable articles despoiled by Charles from the Medici

palace ; and his pacific decision was due perhaps as much to this fact as to the important intention of his with regard to his daughter, which will be mentioned presently, and which he had already made public.

Hitherto, since his separation from his mother and sister, Zozimo had seen nothing of them. Morva had dreaded to visit him in his new position ; but on the morning of the day on which the Count's arrival was expected she suddenly appeared at the door. Capon and Pompilia had been quarrelling violently, since he would do no work, while she was nearly distracted with the anxiety of cooking and laying out dinner for so large a company ; and it was at this juncture that Norva appeared.

It was dark and tempestuous weather in spring. The wind roared, and sudden lashings of rain or hail smote the old wooden house every half hour. Enormous mists came rushing down the valley and fled away seething and boiling like steam from a cauldron, to plunge frantically into the Urseren Valley ; and they seemed in their flight to turn over and grapple with one another like warring spirits. Down from the invisible hills there came a myriad cascades, laughing and chattering like a swarm of children, deluging the sullen boulders, whispering to the beautiful young mosses, and singing to themselves as they ran down the gullies. Along the eaves of the old inn a hundred drops of water ran, leaping off at the ends into the wind, like a string of bathers from a diving-board. The solitary valley was alive with motion, being sometimes covered with flashes of lurid sunlight and at other times hid in darkness. At these moments it was so dark in the chalet that one could scarcely see anything.

The Venetian Woman wore her usual expression of proud fatigue, but there was a look also of harassment on her features. She had walked a long way through the storm, and her cloak and rough homespun dress

For the weather was warm with the sea-wind, though stormy.

The girl looked up sharply. "It has sore eyes," she said, "and the light hurts it."

"How I love children!" cried Pompilia, giving her the milk; "for such a child as yours I have prayed Heaven morning, noon, and night. Will you let me look at it? Alas! I love to see their innocent eyes."

The girl now looked sharply at Pompilia and said, "Good madam, it is not well and this chill air will hurt it."

"It is *not* chill," Morva exclaimed suddenly. "Why will you not let us see it? Is it deformed?"

"Deformed?" reiterated the woman.

"Ha," said Morva, "I have guessed it."

"It is my child," she answered, hugging the bundle.

Morva strode forward and put her hand on the shawl covering the infant. "I will see it," she cried. The stranger flushed deep red; and, starting up, she shrieked loudly, glaring at the other in terror. While they all shrank back in amazement at this strange conduct she rushed to the door and, refusing the milk which Pompilia had offered her, disappeared in the storm. "I guessed it," said Morva, folding her hands under her cloak; "the brat must be deformed."

The girl's name was Brunde Wilstern.

She had scarcely gone when Zozimo, who had been watching the scene silently, turned round with a small sigh to resume his work. As he did so his eye fell on a bench which he had but lately brought in and placed out of the way behind a butt. To his surprise there were some things now heaped upon it; stepping up to them, he found a cloak and hat of the finest black stuff with clasps of the most magnificent emeralds set in Venetian silver-work; a green plume; and a long basilard in a chased silver scabbard and with a hilt of enormous diamonds and emeralds em-

bedded in silver. The cloak and hat were lined with green silk according in colour with the emeralds; and the former was thrown carelessly half upon the dusty floor. Zozimo gave a loud cry, and held up the cloak.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Pompilia; "who put them here?"

"I did but now bring the bench in, mistress," said Zozimo, much perplexed; for the room had not been empty two minutes since he had done so.

"Heavens!" Pompilia cried, examining the invaluable gems; "some great nobleman must have entered but now and left them here. He is gone to the stable, I warrant. Do not touch them, Zozimo, for your life. Run, run, fetch the Count's tankard and tell him, if perchance he enter, that dinner will be served when the Count comes. I will go and see if he is in the stable;" and she bustled out.

Zozimo turned to his mother, who was staring at the clothes and had become pale with agitation. "What is the matter?" he asked with surprise. "Is it these clothes that trouble you?"

"Yes," she answered. "Know this, for I have come to-day to tell you. Some evil thing follows your sister. Thrice has she dreamed terribly in the night and woke shrieking."

"Tush! A dream?—What was it, then?"

"She will not tell; but all day long she broods of it on the mountains and fears to sleep at night. But, more than this, I too have dreamed—last night—and of you; and that is why I come to you to-day."

Zozimo took her hand affectionately. She continued,

"I dreamed that you came to me, not as you are, but tall and noble, as your father was. Now mark you," she almost hissed, "you in my dream were clad in this same sword and cloak I see!"

Zozimo stepped back in utter astonishment; but before he could reply, Capon entered in a bad humour, and seeing the dwarf idling about, as he thought, took him by the ear and wrung it painfully. Morva, unable to bear the sight of this just correction, left the room, and was soon followed by Zozimo, rubbing his ear. Capon then, considerably relieved in his feelings, went to examine the mysterious articles of which his wife had just told him. Sipping occasionally from the pot of beer which he held in his left hand, he took them up one after the other with the right.

Now to be a philosopher is in this world to have great temptations. It appears never fit that the high mind should go in low circumstances. The awl to the horny hand and the plough to the heavy limbs; but why poverty to the clear intelligence? Fortune, the senseless goddess, loves the insensate—gives wealth to folly, dominion to the dull-pate, honour to the dishonourable. The fool lolls at the banquet, scoffing at the wise-man in the gutter. The one with fortune achieves nothing, the other without her moves the world. Give wisdom wealth, then, and what can stand before it? It is sad for the bright lamp to be hung in a small place. Capon felt himself to be the bright lamp. He looked at the jewels, and the jewels, like flashing eyes, seemed to look at him. Flight—Rome—Paris—his book splendidly copied and bound and presented to kings—himself the wealthy and learned patron of learning.

No: to be a philosopher is in this world to be able to overcome great temptations. After all, the only effective religion is of the intellect. Virtue is no question of creeds, but of knowledge or custom. He who has seen a thief hanged does not steal; but hell is a far place. Instruction is useful here, that it shows us without experience all possible issues to a conduct. If the hanged thief could return to life, he would prob-

ably espouse honesty; philosophy brings us to the same goal—without the hanging.

After all, Capon argued, it was wrong of the owner to leave the jewels here so carelessly, and he would be deserving of a sharp lesson. Zozimo, unknown to Capon, might be dishonest; or any loose character might come in for drink. What if a philosopher were to administer a sharp lesson by pretending to steal some of the jewels. The owner on discovering his loss would be enraged; and then he, Capon, could produce them with a few words of admonition. Accordingly, looking round cautiously, he unclasped some of the brilliants and hastily secreted them about his own person.[1]

Suddenly there came a thundering knock at the door, and almost before Capon could recover himself it was kicked in, and Bran, the Count's captain of men-at-arms (whom we have seen before), strode in. Without observing the host at first, he began to roar for the tapster; and Zozimo answered shrilly from the kitchen.

VI.—Bran

Bran was a very large man, dressed almost entirely in chamois leather, but with a bronze bascinet with lambrequin and a great scarlet cloak. His enormous beard was held in a net to keep it from being tangled by the wind, and his sword was hitched up behind him under the cloak. A brazen cross, hung on a necklace of brass beads, lay on his broad chest beneath the beard. His face, reddened still with the cold at the top of the pass, was broad and honest, with blue eyes; but instead of the left eyebrow there was a transverse scar in its place. His nose was his worst

[1] We have this merely on the authority of Müren, who hated Capon.

feature, for it was short and broadened at the nostrils. He was splashed with mud from head to heel; for he could not endure to ride slowly, and when travelling with the Count was accustomed to spur on before in order to give news of his arrival. Standing in the middle of the room, he shouted at the top of his voice for a pot of beer, and then, seeing Capon, slapped him heavily on the back, crying, "What, my old philosopher, have you proved white to be black yet? By my boots I love you."

He was one of those who clap everyone on the back and protest their friendship; and he protested but the truth, for he loved everyone. Roaring again for the tapster, he flung himself in the Count's chair. In a minute or two Zozimo entered, having donned clean clothes and a clean white apron. He gave Bran the beer—who took it at a gulp, called for a napkin, wiped his mouth with it, stared at the dwarf and then, remembering him, broke into a loud guffaw. "What, little mannikin," he cried, "has no magpie eaten you yet? By my beard I love you."

At that moment Morva re-entered and stood behind, frowning at the warrior. Zozimo, by his expression, did not at all seem to return the other's love, and stood dubiously out of his way. "Well, well; come, sit on my knee, cocky," said he, good-humouredly; and, drawing him to him, began stroking his back compassionately; "How is the poor little hunch?" he said. "I am well, sir, but busy, sir," answered the lad, who did not relish this pity. At the word "well" Bran roared with laughter again.

"Well? Ho, ho—well as a starved sparrow, my boy; as a drowned polecat. Poor little soul, then. By my boots, but I love you. How old are you?" and he looked as if he were going to kiss him. (Bran kissed all the children and girls he met.) Before Zozimo could well answer, however, the soldier began

to tell Capon of the storm he had just ridden through and how there was a snow flaw on the Furka Pass. He said that he hoped the Count would get through it; that some fine sport was toward; that the Duke of Milan and the King of France might knock their heads together for all he or the Count cared; that he was going to call his new horse Grosbauch, that these passes were devil's footing for aught but mules, but that he would rather ride the deuce's pepper nag than a mule; and finally, that he was sad and required cheering. On this suggestion he insisted that Zozimo should laugh.

"Laugh, roar me out a laugh, snippet," he cried.

"What shall I laugh at, sir?" inquired Zozimo.

"Laugh at me, boy, and I will laugh at you." It was amusing to see the great German blowing out his lungs and emitting shocks of sound which made the windows rattle, while the pallid little creature standing between his knees, and oppressed by the weight of his huge hand, twisted up his lips into a sickly, painful grin. A rabbit in the clutch of a bear could not have been less merry. Then he made him sing. When Zozimo had begun a sad song, "The devil catch it," cried the other, "give us a merry one"; and no sooner had he commenced the merry one when the visitor suddenly remembered something and began to shout, "News, news, Capon, my man."

Pompilia had not been able to find the owner of the mysterious cloak, hat, and sword anywhere. Certain, however, that he would appear sooner or later, she had wisely resumed her cooking. Now, bustling in to arrange the table, she inquired the nature of the news.

"Aha," cried the soldier when he had kissed her, "I shall make the women's ears twitch, in faith. They love to hear of marriage and the undoing of men. Listen, now: the Count has had it proclaimed by mouth

and trumpet that none but the handsomest man in the world, be he count, carl, coster, or thief, shall wed the beauteous Lady Lelita, his daughter and heir."

"Heavens!" cried Pompilia, lifting her hands.

"Aye, and there will be the finest youth of the world here, I assure you, from the plains, from Spain, Burgundy, the Sicilies, France, and Britain; not to mention Djem the Grand Turk's brother. In three months the suitors shall gather at Reichenfels; for the Count hath a mind to show our mountains to the world, and there shall be feasting and what not, and the lady herself will choose. Tush, 'tis foolery."

"What, the handsomest man and no respect given to riches?"

"Aye."

They then asked him if he too would be a suitor, for he was a fine man. He laughed, draining off another pot of beer, which he had held in his hand during his narrative. Then he went on to describe how, when coming up the Furka path, they had fallen in with the Cardinal Raffaello, who was travelling to Switzerland by special mission of the Holy Father to purge the land of witchcraft; to examine into certain wonders which had been seen in the country; and to drive the evil one from among them. He related how the Cardinal moved, and even slept, in complete consecrated armour; what a fine person he had, and how all who looked upon his eyes felt as when the pyx was before them. At the end of every sentence he added, "Tush, 'tis foolery"; and finished by saying, "And yet I believe in it."

Morva and Zozimo had been standing apart, silently listening to the news. To the hearts of both it was interesting; but when Bran stated that the cardinal's chief office was protector of honest women who were in danger of getting unawares a demon lover—a danger considered then very imminent from certain

veracious rumours of its having already happened—Morva stepped forward. "A protector of women, sir?" she inquired. "Ay," he answered. "How can he protect women against the devil?" "Faith, he hangs the woman first and exorcises the devil afterwards. If you are wrung in that wither, old woman, I warn you against hemp"; and in so saying he arose, laughing boisterously, and turned to go to the stables in order to look after his horse. Recollecting something, he stopped and smacked Capon on the back. "I will make a bargain with you, my friend," he said; "I have a butt of the best Sicilian wine from the cellar of Peter of Florence; but I hate these acid waters. 'Tis even now coming up the pass, and I will sell you the whole butt for leave to drink as much beer as I desire in this inn during one week. How goes your stomach to that toast, my lad?"

Capon, who knew more about the wine, most gladly consented; and Bran strode off to the stables, followed by the innkeeper and his wife.

VII.—Mother and Son

The room grew very dark. Morva and Zozimo remained alone in it. The shadow of a great cloud engrossed the valley and the inn. A furious gust of wind shook the roof, and was followed by a silence during which nothing but the dripping of water from the eaves could be heard. The mother and the deformed son stood on either side of those wonderful thrown-aside vestments, the jewels of which glittered like the green and white eyes of serpents between them. Each felt that here there might be a mystery important to both.

Persons who have long lived together in solitude experience a certain strange diffidence when first

brought into outer society. It is almost painful to mark the indifference which strangers show to one whose thoughts we are familiar with and whose individuality we reverence or love. On witnessing the novel appreciation we begin to entertain doubts concerning the long-formed one. Besides, our friend shows new phases, appears perhaps not so excellent or noble; for we generally magnify the good qualities of those who have been much alone with us, unless indeed we much underrate them. In fine, each reads the other's thought and feels some secret shyness.

Zozimo was astonished that anyone could have been so rough with his mother as the soldier had been; and Morva, though expecting it, was shocked at the slighting treatment shown toward her son. Hence both remained for some time in silence.

At last Zozimo turned with a sigh and began to arrange the platters on the table. "Mother," he said, "I hate that man."

"You must endure him," she answered.

"Yes. But where is my sister now?"

"I have bought this wine for her to bring her sleep to-night. Why do you sigh, my son?"

"I feel a thunder in the air," he answered.

She was standing erect in the middle of the room, looking down upon him. There was a kind of cruelty in her heart, even towards her own son. In his menial employment he looked very feeble, very unworthy, almost hideous. Why had Heaven been so hard with her; nay, what right had he to be so mean a creature? It was not in her blood nor in his father's. With one foot planted before her, with her proud, dark aquiline countenance, she appeared fit to be the mother of a nobler being. Her lip curled a trifle.

"You sigh for the thunder," she said; "poor boy, you have more to sigh at. If you were handsome, now, as your father was, see how fortune could have helped

you in this matter of the Count's daughter. She goes to the handsomest man, they say."

Zozimo glanced quickly at her and sighed.

"But no. Even I, your mother, look at you with pain sometimes. God has not dealt kindly with me. Ah, do I not remember how, when you were born, my soul exulted within me and I dreamed of you full grown, beautiful and strong, the redresser of our wrongs? 'Twas of you, not of your sister, I dreamed, for you were the male. Oh, malicious fate! Your father embraced me in his pride until—we saw—until the nurse placed in my arms——"

Zozimo gave a cry. "Oh, mother, mother," he said, "you hurt me!"

Never before had she spoken thus to him; never before reproached him with word or look. But now an icy hardness seemed to grasp her heart; an anger against him, which insisted on words, filled her.

"Did you not hurt us then?" she cried; "sometimes it is as much a sin to be as to do."

Zozimo moved about in the white light, looking very pale, feeble, and despicable.

"Sometimes also," he said, "the noblest hearts are in the poorest bodies, as all men say; and God sets them there as He hides diamonds in the clods of the earth. If I have no noble body, all the more reason for me to show that I have a noble soul. I will try, my mother."

"Ah, the poor fable," she answered scornfully. "No, as the body is so is the soul, or so soon it shall be. No, do not believe it; nature works not so brutally, but to the excellent soul puts an excellent body that all men may know it."

"I am not all deformed," said Zozimo piteously. "See, mother, this brow is high and there is flesh in this arm. My shoulders are not broad, 'tis true; but what of that? A man's strength is best seen in

the attitude he is wont to stand in, as when he folds his arms thus, or leans upon his hip. When I grow further, I shall be very strong."

Norva seemed lost in abstraction. "When he was unborn," she muttered, "he leapt, tormenting me."

"And then," continued Zozimo, "besides my forehead, my arm, and my confident attitude, I am learned in many things. Verses I can write; music I have studied and, by your tuition, can even paint a portrait. Though I cannot write Latin in the style of Virgil yet, I am by labour becoming proficient. For when other men sleep, their day's work done, I busy myself in further labour. To such a one the gates of the world will be open."

Morva remained in her absent mood. "If he were handsome now and clad in these jewels!—and oh, how miserably poor we are; how poor!" she muttered.

Zozimo continued to address her as if she listened: "But then, alas, I have vices, grievous faults, such as loving all day to dream vain dreams, being desirous of eating sweet things, hating labour, flying in an angry humour. And then, too, at times I am haughty—proud."

Morva heard but the last words, and they seemed to sting her into attention to what he was saying. She flashed her eyes upon him and her lip curled in contempt.

"Proud! you?" she cried.

"Yes, mother," he answered, "I am proud sometimes when I am feeling well."

"You worm, you rabbit!" she shrieked, "will you dare to pride, my living insult and my shame!"

Zozimo gasped and shivered all over, as if an arrow had been plunged into his heart. His pale face grew paler; his hair appeared to lift itself on his brow; his fingers twitched in the air. She glanced at him

and then covered her face with her hands. "Your pardon," she whispered from behind them.

He controlled himself; "I am still, mother," he answered.

"Zozimo, Zozimo," came Pompilia's voice from the kitchen, "what are you doing?"

"Here, mistress, here," he shouted, "I am laying the table."

Morva strode from the room.

It grew darker still. Only one pallid gleam came in at the window of the great, sombre chamber. The melancholy wind moaned about the roof, making a kind of sobbing sound everywhere, as if there were people weeping close by. Zozimo flung away the napkin which was under his arm and, tottering to a chair, knelt down before it and laid his head on it.

For the first time he began to see himself really as he was. The slights of strangers, the mockery of others, the brutality of his master, nay, even the bitter anger and scorn of his own mother, revealed to him his own image, as if with a background of fire. He had not realized it before.

In a minute he arose from the chair, brushing the long locks from his forehead. "If being be a sin," he said, "sin is innocence. But God worketh in His mood. The lion He hath made, and the worm."

Then he took from his breast a small mirror and scanned his features in it. "Yes, here is the face—not evil. The eyes are pure though sad; but then the brow. Look, 'tis no girl's forehead. Such brows had well become the mover of a world: but, oh, alas, the body!"

His eye suddenly caught sight of the cloak, hat, and sword which still lay on the bench. Glancing quickly around and being satisfied that he could not be observed (for the sound of laughter and conversation came from the kitchen), he placed the hat on his head,

the cloak round his shoulders, and drew the long glittering blade. Putting the mirror before him on a chair, at some distance so that he could see as much of his figure as possible, he threw himself first into an attitude of warlike attention, then into one of defiance, and lastly, flourishing the sword which was as long as himself, he delivered a severe attack upon the looking-glass. The cloak trailed upon the floor; the large hat with its magnificent plumes almost covered his shoulders; the hand was lost in the handle of the weapon, and the beam of livid light entering at the window cast a grotesque, capering shadow upon one of the great wine-butts, and made the dancing jewels gleam upon the diminutive figure performing such antics.

At the very moment when his incapacity was first made clear to him his personality thus asserted itself. Nature experiments by making mixtures: she flings down the worldfull of us and says, "Shift for yourselves." In the *vis viva* of our being the sum of the potential and kinetic energies, our personality and our capacity, remains a constant. "Thus," he cried, "thus diamonded and rapiered should I stand and lead hosts. For this state and habit nature meant these straight brows and this noble countenance. Ay, and by God's help I shall attain them yet. There is the blood of warriors and of poets in me!"

Here Pompilia began to shriek to him from the kitchen that the kid was over-roasting. With a sigh he replaced the gorgeous hat and cloak on the bench. "Alas, no," he said, "no warrior I. But I shall be better. I shall be just, busy, good, and a lover of all despite my calamity."

The room grew darker than ever; the wind ceased altogether.

He continued: "And yet why not? Things are achieved by intention, and not by nature. We may,

in the slackness of present possession, lose all; and in having nothing, gain everything. The baseborn soldier plunges to the front when often the noble leader of companies looks backward. Behold, there is a voice crying within me. I am thus; and though I am thus, I shall measure me with the highest!"

The whole house began to shake as if with inextinguishable laughter; the wooden walls trembled, the beams of the heavy roof rattled: a tornado of wind swept down from heaven and banged the doors, making the arras dance to be free. In every direction the doors slammed and then stood open and slammed again, as if invisible persons were entering. Zozimo started and looked round, so suddenly did the onslaught of tempest break in upon his thoughts.

An indescribable chill fell upon his blood; at the same moment all the doors slammed again simultaneously and then stood wide open.

A magnificent figure appeared at the entrance of the chamber. It was that of a young man of the most superb stature and beauty. His head was bare and he was without a cloak; and his dress was almost entirely black. Without noticing Zozimo, who had fallen cowering in a corner, he advanced into the room, and taking up the jewelled cloak, hat, and sword, placed them upon himself, and without a word, disappeared by the way he had come.

The doors slammed simultaneously behind him.

VIII.—The Angel in the Butt

Zozimo shrieked as if he had beheld an apparition: "The vision," he cried, "the vision! see, the spirit of my mother's dream. A demon! a demon!"

The wind howled in a veritable tornado, bringing the rain in a torrent through the window. Pompilia

ran in shrieking, "My arras, my arras will be spoiled. What, you miserable little wretch, have you not shut the shutters? Are you mad that you stare so?"—and she clapped-to the casement and then proceeded to shake Zozimo. Capon and Morva ran in. "Where are the sable clothes?" inquired the latter.

"Gone, gone," shrieked Zozimo; "a devil has entered here and taken them."

They were certainly gone. All stood thunderstruck.

Now it happened that that was the very moment chosen by the fates for convincing Capon that the devil did really exist. For no sooner did he hear that the clothes were disappeared than he began to examine his own in order to assure himself whether or not the jewels he had taken were also gone. Finding them safe, he proceeded to accuse Zozimo of having stolen the mysterious articles. "Devil," he said, "devil, devil—proof! 'tis yourself, you little thieving midge, that has taken them. What, what, do I not know that there is no devil but of human iniquity?"—and he was just going to assure everyone that he had seen Zozimo in the act with his own eyes when, it is said, a most unaccountable thing happened. He began to start about in a strange manner, scratching himself violently first in one place and then in another, next slapping himself here and there, and finally yelling madly and throwing out from his pockets a number of live embers which lay smoking on the ground.

The narrator of this tale assures us that these were the jewels which he had plucked from the mantle and hat and which had turned to fire in his pockets; and he proceeds to draw a moral concerning the iniquity of Capon's conduct and its punishment, which may be useful to anybody who may think himself likely to come across the devil's clothes. But good dame Pompilia was clearly of another opinion, since her husband had but just now spilt some money in the

kitchen fireplace and was in the act of drunkenly picking it up again when the turmoil commenced. Consequently she incontinently flung over him a pail of water which stood near, lest his clothes should catch fire.

What with the wind and rain outside; with the noise made by Bran, who had just entered, and was shouting and beating the table with a tankard in order to show his good humour; and with the yells of Capon, who thought that he was bewitched and that the last day was coming, and who insisted on hiding his head in his wife's apron; there was such a hubbub in the inn that people could not hear themselves speak. In the midst of it the Count's party rode up to the door and crowded in, wringing wet. With them was the Cardinal and his train of soldiers and servants, so that altogether the large room was filled.

"God's mercy!" exclaimed the Count, seeing Capon with his head wrapped up in his wife's dress while he shouted, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a philosopher!" "Good gracious, is the man mad?" And they all roared with laughter as the intoxicated man of wisdom recognised that he still lived. Then the Count turned to his daughter. "How do I look, daughter, after yonder near escape?" he said.

"Like a knight of twenty," she replied.

"Ha! I believe you," he cried, slapping his chest. "'Twill take more than a snowstorm to kill me yet. Come, dinner, come; have the saddles shifted and the beasts watered, and we will on to the castle in an hour." Then he kissed his daughter's hand. "My daughter rather than twenty sons," he said gallantly; "but—what, what, what—where is Gangogo?"

"The son of an old servant," croaked the Count's parrot held by a page.

"Coming after, uncle," answered Trullo, the Count's nephew, with a sly look at Bran.

"So, so, then. Lord Cardinal, you will stay with us, we hope, while this your great mission keeps you in our mountains. Ere you leave us we may require, in fee of our hospitality, that you perform an office upon my daughter, sir. Is not that well said?—ha, ha! She would be married, she would be married! 'Tis the way of the little wagtails!"

All eyes were turned upon the magnificent figure of the young Cardinal of Parma. At last, at the age of thirty-two, he had awakened from his lethargy and seemed ripe for some tremendous action. What would it be? What was this mission on which he had come? And why this complete suit of armour? In fact he was clad from head to heel in a suit of the newest-fashioned plate armour, inlaid with gold and having large curved pieces upon the *coudes* and *genouillères* in order to protect the elbows and knees. His tabard was of white velvet, sloping down stiffly from his shoulders and edged with six inches of miniver. His gilded spurs were very long—nearly nine inches. His sword, a two-handed one, hung behind his back by means of a baldric round the shoulders, which were not protected by pass-guards. His hands were not gauntleted, but his head was covered with a white steel armet—an apparition curious even in that day when full armour was worn only in battle or tournaments. As he stood there in the inn, perfectly motionless, his arms folded calmly on his breast, the cuirass gleaming under his tabard and the lofty silver cross shining on the bright casque, all eyes were furtively turned towards him. When everyone was laughing at the grotesque figure cut by the innkeeper, his countenance, fair, youthful, and vigorous as that of an angel, lost none of its gravity, though the touch of scorn upon the lips somewhat deepened. To the Count's invitation he replied with a slight bow of the head; and, as if conscious of the general gaze though despising it, he

remained in the centre of the room, willing to let all people look their fill. Superb in stature and symmetry as he was in face, and sublime in the high purity of his expression, he seemed to create an atmosphere of awe about him. The rough soldiers looked askance at him while pretending to seat themselves carelessly on the benches; and Lelita could not keep her eyes from him.[1]

The Count continued, laughing, "Well, well, we are a handsome race—from father to son—'tis in the blood. Will you believe it, my lord Cardinal, when the peasants would say *such-a-one is well featured* they call him a *Reichenfels*. When I was young—well, well. We have wonders too, to show you, my lord. We are strong, fiery, lusty, and diverse. Among the walls of these mountains nature breedeth in a uberty of strange forms. A Frenchman said of us that we were all mad—ha! ha! Look now at our host here, Capon, my foster-brother. He is but an innkeeper yet a philosopher withal."

Capon writhed and wriggled before the two noblemen. "Oh, my lord!" he exclaimed, perspiring with modesty.

"And truth, his philosophy is a pleasant one, for he holds the world to be an excellent one."

"Oh, sir!" he cried again, covered with confusion.

"As for his arguments," continued Reichenfels, "they crack the brains of us soldiers. For me, I do not know the tail of a syllogism from the head of it. Your propter-quod's and your ergo-hoc's give us the gripe-rot, and when we would argue we burst with our own vehemence, like an Italian piece of ordnance, and our enemy not the worse by a jot. But my brother here will lay it in with a spruce tongue. I wager you he will prove you sin is virtue, sorrow is

[1] For further details regarding him see the Historical Notes.

pleasure, wrong is right, and that the devil himself does not exist."

Poor Capon, between his liquor and his shamefacedness, was nearly annihilated. He stammered out his unworthiness of such praises; but, taking his tablets from his pocket, was just about to offer them to the learned cardinal when that prelate turned round haughtily to the Count.

"I wonder, my lord," he said, "that you will listen to such witless trash. The meanest thing on earth is this same philosophy. Words, words, aye, when a man shall build a house with words instead of with bricks they shall avail him; but never shall he so rear the palace of truth. Wisdom, that weathercock that is blown about with every wind, crows mightily on the steeple, but look how he faces first this way, then that. There is more truth in a cowkeeper's heart than in the brain of a score of Platos. What the need of this tongue-clapping when God has put in the soul of us each a conscience for the right? Heaven help me, but one word that is in our heart is worth a book of brain-stuff!"

The Count almost disappeared in the midst of his concessions. "Yes, yes, yes, I grant you," he said, "'tis so, 'tis so." As for Capon, his "spruce tongue" was not equal to the debate. The cardinal eyed him haughtily for a moment.

"If there is no evil," he thundered suddenly, "*who* are you, old man? Beware, or I will question further of you; for you mix your mind with mighty matters. Look; our enemy is not of words but of deeds; not of earth but of air. Combat him therefore with deeds and with prayers, not with arguments."

The philosopher was confounded: but whether or not he could have plucked up enough courage to reply is not certainly known, for at that moment there arose a great hubbub outside, and certain hardy mountain-

eers, who had been retained for carrying some of the Count's baggage, entered, struggling with a heavy butt of wine. Bran and Trullo nudged each other; and the former, going up to the humiliated man of wisdom, slapped him on the back.

"Come, uncle," he said, "never be down in the mouth. Here is the butt of Sicilian I promised you, and good wine is worth much philosophy, boy—ay" (he added under his breath), "and keeps down the worm, conscience, too."

"Oh, Captain, Captain," cried Capon, forgetting his sorrow, "you shall drink in this inn for ever! O the noble wine! O the noble Sicilian, the golden lava of Etna! the true Catanian!—it is the poetry of wines, the Venus of liquor, got out of the sea-foam by the panting fires of the subterrene! Come, gentlemen, we shall drink a bumper that shall make us as gods on the keep of Taormina. Ground it here, fine fellows; ground the butt here. Wife, bring the auger and the hammer and the Count's silver flagon. Ha, ha, where shall I tap it?"

"You shall not tap it at all," said Bran. "You are a fine host and would tap Sicilian! Fie, you must knock away a nail or two and take the top off the barrel."

"Worthy Captain," cried the other, "I will take the top off and dive in the liquor!—Oh, the smell of the southern vintage—but—but—'tis somewhat cattish. Tush, it smells somewhat cattish," he added in surprise.

"Cattish!" cried Bran, "'tis your own nose is deadened with beer."

"Oho!" continued Capon, standing by the side of the barrel with mallet in hand, "but I will say a grace at the cracking of this brave butt. My lords, madam, and gentlemen, the grace."

"The grace, the grace!" shouted the soldiers, clinking their cans; while the Count and his daughter

watched smiling and the cardinal stood silently as before.

Waving his hammer, Capon repeated :

" While Heaven gives us liquor Hell is shut,
And there's an angel lives within the butt.
Wine makes the floor uneven, fortune level,
And he who drinks need never fear the devil."

With that he knocked the head off the barrel.

As a matter of fact, however, there was no angel living in that butt ; but he who desired to drink most certainly feared the devil—for a minute or two, at all events. No sooner was the top off, than a round hairy head appeared, followed by a face the most hideous and villainous imaginable. For one instant this terrible countenance scowled over the edge of the barrel at the terrified sceptic ; then two huge hairy hands grasped the wood ; and in another second a creature like some gigantic and poisonous spider had vaulted out of the tun and was pursuing the poor man. Capon, shrieking at the top of his voice and going as fast as his quaking paunch would allow him, dodged round the barrel followed by the infuriated apparition, who, blind with rage, seemed to know and to see no one but him who had indeed liberated him.

After the first surprise a roar of laughter greeted this singular event ; for the monster was none other than the notorious Gangogo, the Count's jester. But the jest approached very nearly to a dangerous issue, for it was seen that the hunchback carried a dagger in his hand. Moreover, scarcely had he appeared, when the Cardinal drew his blade and began to shout in a voice of thunder, " Room for my long-sword, room for my long-sword ! " aiming two or three strokes at the demon. Gangogo, seeing himself attacked by this new enemy, leapt with incredible agility over

his weapon and, clinging to him like a tiger-cat, stabbed him thrice. Rushing again upon Capon he flung him down, and tossing his hair from his face, plunged his dagger into the poor philosopher's breast, yelling out, "Blood!—I will drink *you*. Bod! I will kill you. Gog! I will gut you all; you shall have tripe for dinner; you shall drink your bellyfuls of Gangogo!"

All this was tragic enough; and here would have been two dead men, but, fortunately for the world, the wicked man's weapon is frequently one of lead only. Gangogo soon discovered that the point of his dagger, instead of being as red as he hoped, was innocently looking up in his face, so to speak, being indeed made of lead. In fact, Bran and Trullo, who, by way of practical joke, had put him in the barrel, had also taken good care to substitute this for his own weapon.

And now Gangogo too began to see the jest. It is astonishing how quickly we fall into the general humour on these occasions. His face, which was white with anger, began to change; nay, he laughed; nay, he even laughed loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha," he shouted, "grin, roar, yell, you cockerels; I am Gangogo the Count's jester. It is a jest, a jest, and I am the jester. Roar, shout, shriek, I am the Count's jester, Gangogo, the merrymaker, the god of laughter born out of a wine-barrel; the jocund, the open-natured one." So saying he threw his dagger into the air and caught it again by the blade. "Look at me, laugh at me—that is my motto; and if I have a dagger 'tis one of lead. I am a good fellow, a good fellow." Then he went and sat on the corner of the table, scowling round.

"Your jest too is one of lead," said the Cardinal argrily, wrapping his wrist in a kerchief; "for your leaden dagger has scratched me in spite of my steel

armour. Would your wit were sharper and your dagger blunter."

"Faith," growled Gangogo, angry again; "neither jest nor dagger is mine. If the dagger had been mine it would have unmade those who made the jest."

"How came Gangogo in the barrel?" inquired the Count?

"He was found drunk this morning in the inn," answered Trullo.

"Gangogo must be whipped if my lord Cardinal be wounded," the Count said.

"I was deceived in him," the Cardinal replied haughtily. "I pray you forgive him."

This Gangogo was he who had behaved so heroically when a lad at Giornica; nor could anyone, when looking at the amazing energy of his face and the deformed strength of his limbs, doubt that he would make a bold and strong soldier. Yet the face, while it was energetic enough, was scarcely intellectual; and was made up of such a mixture of ferocity, courage, honesty, wickedness, passion, and yet something almost of goodness, and was withal so extraordinarily hideous, that at first sight of him a person would feel a shock of horror. The hunch on his back was enormous and compelled his face to look always downward, just as Zozimo's compelled his to look upward. His limbs, though crooked, were as thick and heavy as those of some large beast of prey; and altogether his appearance was so malign that it would be expected that no one could endure him. On the contrary, however, he was followed. His figure, his jests, and the peculiar idiom which he affected delighted the rough natures which surrounded him; and our historian maintains that he was the best-loved man in the valley!

IX.—Gangogo and Zozimo

The Count, the Cardinal, Lelita and Trullo now repaired to the side-apartments in order to perform their ablutions before eating. Many of the soldiers, too, followed their example and went out to the poultry yard, through which there dashed a little torrent. Capon, who was somewhat sobered by the events which had occurred to him, busied himself in arranging, with the help of the Count's servants, the long table; and Gangogo, perched upon a corner of it, scowled round, still panting from his recent efforts. Bran lolled upon a bench and impatiently urged on the preparations for dinner, shouting every minute or so, "Come, dinner, dinner; will you see me shrivel before your eyes? Why, my very beard begins to look starved!"

"Plagues pelt it," said Gangogo in his choice language, "why was not dinner ready when we arrived?"

"You are late, oaf, you are late," said Bran.

"Oaf!—I spit at you," replied Gangogo amiably.

"If you don't have a care, I shall spit you," Bran answered, touching his sword.

Gangogo scowled at him. You see, poor fellows, they were hungry, and, though the best of friends, were not very happily inclined at that moment. "Poof! do you think that you big men have a monopoly of abuse?" he said.

"We have a monopoly of cudgelling," laughed Bran loudly.

"Were your wit as long as your beard I would contend with you." Gangogo tried to pass the matter off with a jest.

"Come, if you snap at me I shall thrash you. I am curst when I am hungry."

Gangogo snarled savagely: "And I am curst when I am cursed."

"That is always," observed Bran carelessly.

Gangogo was in want of a repartee; not finding one he resorted to personalities; and as Bran was sprawling half on the floor with his shirt appearing under his doublet, he cried, winking to the menials, "Put your boots away, they fill the whole room. How can the lackeys lay table with your mountain hoofs in the way? If anyone were to fall over the precipice of your leg and die, you shall be hanged for it, Heaven smite me."

"Come," answered Bran, not laughing at all, "I am out of humour and you are a bitter, poor fool with no jocosity in you, but only tartness. A stick is your only cure."

Gangogo showed his teeth; "Aye, it is ever thus with you bullock-brained Hectors," he said; "stick is your only epigram."

Bran answered only by roaring out again for dinner. Suddenly, however, he sat upright. "By my body," he said, "where is Zozimo? I had forgotten him."

Truly he had forgotten all about little Zozimo and the amusement he intended to get by pitting the two dwarfs against each other. It would pass the minutes before dinner.

At that moment Trullo entered; "Zozimo," he said, "who is Zozimo?"

Trullo was an old man of twenty-six or so. He was rather tall, but of a weak and fatigued habit of body; and his head was already becoming bald. His features were regular, his eyes soft, large, and dark, and his complexion of an exquisite red and white. His teeth were beautifully regular, and when he smiled he smiled in a peculiarly winning manner. When he quizzed anyone he did so with great indulgency.

Bran stretched himself: "Now we shall have

sport. Zozimo, Zozimo!" he roared. "A delicate little creature that my soul loves, and no viperish, yellow, black-haired, hunchback monstrosity as yonder" (nodding over to Gangogo).

"Ya-a," snarled the Count's jester, showing his leaden dagger; "I will stab you."

Ever since the Count's arrival Morva and Zozimo had been in the kitchen. Out of kindness Pompilia had kept the latter there until dinner was ready, since she feared he would become the butt of so many idle persons. Now that the great pasty was baked she allowed him to enter with it; which he did with some pride in order to show his strength. He was dressed in a perfectly clean little apron and his new coat. His face shone with cold ablutions and his fair hair was neatly combed upon his head. Altogether he looked perfectly happy, busy, and amiable, and seemed to have forgotten all his recent trials. Besides, should he not have the happiness of waiting on a certain one?

As he entered, Capon shouted, "Dinner is served," thus drawing attention to the dwarf's presence. Morva followed behind, full of a painful curiosity to see how her son would be received; and indeed no sooner was he beheld than the lounging soldiers set up a great guffaw, while the busy lackeys turned and laughed. The pasty certainly was as big as himself.

Gangogo stared at him open-mouthed: he had never seen him before. Then he began to flap his arms as an owl flaps its wings. "Oh, pest plague us!" he shrieked in his happy idiom; "oh, the yellow-spot take us! By the jaundiced Vulcan, what is this? A mannikin tapster? Oh, oh, black-brew my gall-bladder! Come, let me measure myself upon him."

So saying he descended slowly from the corner of

the table as a large baboon descends from his perch. Keeping his eye fixed on the other dwarf, he approached him, still flapping his arms. Zozimo, seeing this incubus coming down upon him, between him and the table, remained as if petrified with the pasty in his hands and looking over the top of it. They stood staring at each other.

Gangogo laughed silently but happily. "Come, come, come, little brother," he said, "let me shake you by the hand. Are you well, child?"

"I am well, sir, but busy, sir," responded Zozimo.

"Excellent child!" continued Gangogo, taking the pasty away from him and putting it on the table; "be always thrifty, busy, clean, so that all men shall love you."

"Yes, sir," said Zozimo, staring at the figure before him—which seemed a hideous distorted image of his own.

"That is right. Never pick your teeth, for it wastes good provender; nor sigh after eating, for it denotes a gluttonous habit; nor breathe in your beer-pot, for it shows a vile haste in drinking. I would have you perfect and wise."

At this excellent advice of Gangogo's the company laughed loudly.

"I do, sir," answered Zozimo, much disconcerted.

The other dwarf suddenly seemed to become very angry. "You do, sir, do you?" he cried; "what! you puke on your front, fie, fie! You are a filthy little creature. You lick the butter from your bread? you hiccup in your mug and sneeze in the pie? Come, come, it is time you improved at your age. Have you no consideration left for others?"

"Whom, sir?" said Zozimo, amazed at the other's words.

"Whom, sir! why, I, sir. Are you mad, sir?

Hold yourself straight before your betters. Why do you arch your back at me? Are you a cat?"

"Alas, sir, it is my infirmity, sir," pleaded poor Zozimo.

Gangogo became infuriated. He lifted his hunch like a tiger-cat and the hair on the back of his head stood up like the juba of a wild boar. He shrieked with rage and laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho, a troll, a dwarf, a pigmy, a mannikin, a little, thin, puny, peevish deformity! What, you will rival me, the Count's jester, and be smaller than myself? If so, I will swell up against you like a great poodle against a little one."

Gangogo lifted himself on his toes, stuck out his elbows and glared down upon the terrified little tapster.

"Ho, ho, ho, crunch, munch," he cried; "I will eat you, devour you, bones and all! Do my eyes flash you to a cinder? why do you rival me, then? I am hairy, savage as the out-herded boar, strong as a drinker of warm blood; and you a shred, a moonbeam. Ya-a, I could mash you between my tuskers."

Zozimo too was beginning to get angry. He commenced to tremble all over and his hands shook. "You are a bad gentleman, sir," he answered with spirit, "and I do not wish to have to do with you."

"Bravo, bravo," shouted the audience at this strange dialogue. "Stick up to him, fly," shouted Bran.

Suddenly Gangogo changed his manner. "By this emerald in my cap," he said, "I love you and will have you with me always. You shall be my jester as I am the Count's, and on the same score; for 'tis sweeter to keep baser company than nobler. I sicken with joy! Sweet little peascod! Look at me, am I not beautiful as a green speckled spider with a black

fur ? Come, let us kiss and be friends. I will embrace you."

"No, sir," said Zozimo with dignity, trying to hold him off.

But Gangogo seized him in his long arms, pretending to kiss him, while the soldiers shouted with laughter. "Ho, ho, the loves of the angels!" cried Bran.

Zozimo, shivering with anger and humiliation, began almost to weep. Bran took him and seated him upon his knee.

"There, there, little soul," he said, "I will not have you tormented. From this vantage you can spit at the foul yellow fiend-scorpion yonder. Now by my beard, I love you and everyone hates him. You are no uglier than he. Come, let me stroke the poor little hump, then; ho, ho, ho!"

Seated on the soldier's knee, Zozimo suddenly held up his hand in the air and, thrusting out his chin at Gangogo, cried, "I hate you."

"Flea!" replied Gangogo shrugging his shoulders and half turning away.

"Scorpion!" said Zozimo.

"Frog!" answered Gangogo, leaping round again.

"Vampire!"

"Fly!"

"Dragon!"

"What!" shrieked Gangogo, "you twisted mouse, you skip-rat, you snip, you snail, you starved caddis-fly!"

"That is right," said Trullo, smiling kindly; "give him the whole zoology. Begin with the reptiles and so on to the birds and beasts."

Gangogo foamed at the mouth. He seized by the teeth the clew of his black and yellow cloak and then tugged at it. He stuck up the point of the dagger-sheath in his belt and walked round and round in front of Bran and Zozimo. Leaning forward, he

scratched the ground with his nails as if he was going to spring upon them. Suddenly, panting hard to regain self-mastery, he broke into a wild laugh.

"I am calm," he said, "I am very calm. It is ill of you, Master Bran, to rob me of my best friends. Give him back to me and I will be kind to him. Sweet little ugliness, here is a sixpence for you, and we will be reconciled."

Zozimo looked scornfully at him. He had won. "I will not have it," he said; "let me down, I am busy."

Then, the jest being over, everyone remembered that he was hungry. "Dinner!" they shouted, "dinner, dinner!"

"Ready, gentlemen, ready," answered Capon; "my wife has gone to warn the Count." Then, catching sight of Zozimo—"What, you little lead-footed toad, do I see you idling?" and he gave him a shaking.

During this refined scene, Morva had remained leaning against the wall: at its conclusion she took out her handkerchief, wiped her hands, replaced it in her bosom, and resumed her position.

X.—Disgraced

The Count, the Cardinal, and Lelita now entered the room and seated themselves at the head of the table with Bran and Trullo. Below them there was a crowd of noisy soldiers, German, Swiss, Lombards, and Piedmontese, who abated little of their clamour for the presence of their masters; for in fact the Count considered noise manly, and the Cardinal despised it. Capon, Pompilia, and the Count's servants waited at the meal, the last regaling themselves with morsels from the broken meats snatched during their service.

Lelita looked round smiling. "Who has put these

violets before me?" she said. "Dame Pompilia, where is the poor dwarf who pleased me so much when last we stayed here?"

"He is within, but idle, madam," responded the hostess.

"Idle!—he was the pick of assiduous servants."

"I am here, madam, I am here," cried a voice; and Zozimo ran in and, kneeling on one knee, kissed the hand she offered him. When he got up he waited behind her.

The Count turned round in his chair, wiping his mouth, and stared at him. "Yes, yes," he said, "I remember, the dwarf jackanapes. But I will not have him to wait near me."

"He sets you off, father," Lelita remarked, slily.

"Well, well," laughed her father, much pleased; "once I was handsome enough, but now I am old, old. Well, I have endured Gangogo many years because he is the son of an old servant—an old servant."

The person alluded to was sitting on the ground close to his master and was engaged upon a pretty plateful. He felt much more charitable, but was too busy to say so.

The conversation then ran upon the near escape the Count and his daughter had just experienced, after Bran had ridden in advance. The matter was now related to him with animation. It appeared that when approaching the summit of the Furka, in a very bad piece of the bridle-path, a fierce paroxysm of the storm had burst upon them. At that height the clouds deposited snow instead of rain as below; and as a dangerous precipice existed to the left of the path, the party experienced some difficulty; which reached to the extreme of danger when the high-mettled horses of Riechenfels and Lelita, terrified at the blinding tempest, began to prance in the narrow way. Behind them rode three grooms, each with

two led horses, and incapable of giving aid, as their beasts too became restless. The soldiers, with Trullo and the Cardinal in the rear, were unable to pass the block of capering animals, and it was feared for a moment that there would be a general stampede along the mountain path. The Count's horse had indeed begun to go backward over the precipice and he himself was shouting at the top of his voice, when a figure leapt down from the steep rock ahead and seized the reins of the maddened brute, being just in time to save the rider's life. It was a woman. Seen but for a moment by a glimpse of sunlight, her figure appeared very extraordinary and her hair gleamed like a halo around her head. The next instant she disappeared down the slope and was gone.

While they were all talking together about this event, while some were discussing the girl's appearance and others were drinking her health, Zozimo listened open-mouthed. He was serving the Count with a dish of stewed larks. Without thinking what he was doing he began to sing out, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, I know her, I know her!" and incontinently poured the contents of the dish over the nobleman's arm and leg.

"Furies! fire!" yelled the Count, leaping to his feet, "he scalds me!"

"You know her, do you?—here, then, here and here," shouted Capon, boxing his ears; while poor Zozimo, holding the dish with one hand, endeavoured to protect his ears with the other, calling out all the time, as if it were an excuse, "I know her, I know her." At last he had to drop the dish and run for it.

"A thunder on you!" shouted Capon, pursuing him; "there, there, you will soil the Count, will you? Take that and that." Zozimo ran round the barrels followed by his weighty master; and was finally

seized and fitly castigated before the whole company. Bursting into tears he left the room, disgraced.

"Poor boy," exclaimed Lelita.

"This comes of these deformities," cried the Count, shaking his soiled sleeve; "their actions are as crooked as their backs."

It now became very dark indeed, though it was still early in the afternoon. A dense mass of cloud seemed to wrap itself like a napkin around the lofty valley and the solitary inn. Morva had seated herself on a bench out of the way, whence she could see all that was passing. When everyone laughed at Zozimo she laughed too, shortly and sharply, keeping her chin on her hand and her mouth closed firmly. When Zozimo left the room she did not follow him, but simply leant backward, as if that scene was over and she would wait for the next. She knew he would return soon.

As for him, he first went into the kitchen; but there the servants were running in and out. Then by a side-door he crept into the room which was reserved for the Count. It was almost entirely dark. Here was shelter at last. The conversation and the shouts of laughter from the eating-room were somewhat deadened.

On a bench lay Lelita's outer wrapper damp with rain, and her little gloves (gloves had been lately invented). There came a delicate odour from them. Zozimo, with a cry, flung himself upon them and wept passionately, his ears ringing from the slaps of his master.

His tears added to the effect of the rain. His heart seemed to him to have become fire. He writhed in anguish, for now he knew himself thoroughly. We shall not die without learning this knowledge.

The scoffs, the jeers, the slaps, the insults seemed to cling to him still when alone, like bats. Above all was the pity written upon that beautiful face he loved.

This drove him to frenzy. This it was that convinced him. In his anguish he cried out half aloud, "I am deformed, I am deformed, for ever and ever."

And yet he could scarcely believe it. It seemed quite impossible to him, after the brave dreams he had indulged in, that he should be so much below his fellows. Did he really belong to the same kind as that horrible creature Gangogo, that human dwarf-fiend who had tormented him?

Once more he took out the little mirror. Opening the door to the kitchen in order to admit a little light, and putting on the Count's cloak and hat which lay at hand, he surveyed himself, unable to credit his misfortune. He took Lelita's glove and kissed it passionately, shedding tears of anguish and murmuring, "I love you, I love you!"

Suddenly he felt himself seized by a strong hand and swung into the air. The last humiliation was yet to come.

XI.—Hung on the Hook

In another minute Zozimo found himself held aloft before the feasters. A blaze of light from lamps and torches (which had now been lit) fell upon him and confused his vision.

It was Bran who was holding him in the air with one arm. He had gone out to get the horses ready for the next stage, and on returning had discovered the dwarf in the Count's chamber. The visitors were rising from table preparatory to departure.

Zozimo, still absurdly dressed in the Count's long cloak and hat, and still grasping Lelita's glove, dangled miserably in the strong hand which held him. "Here's a rogue," shouted Bran.

"On my word, my cloak!" exclaimed the Count.

"I caught him thus," said the soldier, "staring in

a mirror and kissing the Lady Lelita's glove, as if he were a paladin at least."

"My glove!" cried Lelita.

"The Count's hat, the Count's cloak!" shrieked Capon and Pompilia, together.

"The Count's hat, the Count's cloak!" echoed Gangogo mockingly.

"I never can use them again," vociferated the Count.

"He never can," said Gangogo, imitating him.

"Look, sirs, what shall we do with him?" asked Bran.

"Hang him on a hook and make bacon of him," Gangogo suggested.

No sooner said than done. Poor Zozimo was hung by the breeches upon one of the large hooks which depended from the ceiling for flitches of bacon. Slowly he swung round and round, still stupidly clutching Lelita's glove. A paper dropped from him. Trullo stepped forward and picked it up—though Lelita protested.

Then for the first time Zozimo's features became distorted. "Give it to me, give it to me," he shrieked. "Kill me, but give me back the paper, kind gentlemen, dear gentlemen!"

"Ay, give it him back," said Bran, relenting.

Trullo was unmoved. He opened it and glanced at it with a sweet but fatigued smile. "'To the Most Beautiful Lady'—ahem!" he read.

"Take him down!" cried Lelita, angrily.

"What folly!" continued Trullo; "'tis to the most beautiful Lady Lelita." Then he read in a clear voice:

"No flowers about me strewn, no tender flowers,
To make me posies and beguile the hours,
My thoughts of thee I will make bouquets of,
And hang them in my heart's chancel of love.

In darkness now I move, disdained and poor,
And misery haunts me at my humble door;
But I will to the wars, a warrior chief,
And move in conquest as I moved in grief!
Noted above all others and alone
Return with fame and win thee for my own.
"Your sincere, tender, but secret knight,
"ZOZIMO."

The soldiers could scarcely contain themselves with laughter. That this miserable little being should so delude himself! They shouted round him, "Warrior, warrior-chief!" and their white teeth seemed to him to gleam like those of wolves. They went up to him in turn and spun him round as he hung from the roof, crying, "Hail, warrior-chief!" Lelita and Pompilia shrieked at them, but could not make themselves heard.

Then, when the rope was twisted as much as it could be, they stood and watched it untwisting. Faster and faster Zozimo span round until he felt sick with giddiness. Suddenly, however, there was a silence; and just as Bran, in obedience to Lelita, was about to take him down, a dark figure appeared in the middle of the room before him. It was his mother. She spoke quietly at first.

"I am his mother," she said, almost as if she were alone. "These things that I have seen done, that I have heard, are but little to me. Oh yes, the wound is too deep: to me fate has been so unkind that man's unkindness touches me not. Laugh on, gentlemen, laugh on: I would not cross your humour; and he is but my son."

She paused, looking sadly on the ground, meaning no irony in her words. But almost all present were abashed, and expected from her a torrent of denunciation. The Count, who had been laughing gaily at the pleasantry of his men, began to put on another cloak rather shamefacedly; Trullo whistled and looked

at his feet, and the Cardinal even remitted his grave stare and rose as if to prepare for the journey.

"What we mothers bear," she continued, "we bear for ever. Our children are other limbs upon us. But in them, I think, the strands of our ravelled natures do grow each to its own issue. Oh yes; for some are perfect, issued from our perfections; and others faulty, issued from our faults: so dreadfully doth the great God show us the essences of our souls unmixed.

"Oh, I am still, I am not troubled. The cure of shame is shame; its use its remedy. There I am well tried."

There was now a dead silence, and Zozimo had ceased to spin round. She stepped up to him suddenly with clenched hands. "Answer," she cried, "if indeed you are my son and no demon-changeling—answer! What cast in me has moulded you? What crime in me are you the image of? Those pendulous lips, those tear-blistered eyes, that form, that pitiable form—O Heaven! Who pieced you up of all my feeblenesses, leaving my virtues out, to be my abasement and dishonour for ever?"

She dashed her hands into the air and shrieked, "Worm! child of mine and worm! Hang there and rot for ever and ever and leave me sonless!"

So saying she rent her mantle from top to bottom before his eyes and rushed out into the darkness.

During this terrible scene the miserable creature who by misfortune had been so bitterly cursed remained hanging without a word. His face wore an utterly vacuous expression which was not lightened even by his mother's anger. When she was gone no one spoke; but at last Lelita broke the silence. "Alas, poor little dwarf," she said, shuddering. Then he gave a great cry. "Take him down," she cried angrily, stamping her foot.

There was only one person there who did not relent. That was Gangogo. He saw that Zozimo had been the slave of self-delusion, and he now determined, out of pure kindness, to undeceive him thoroughly, so that he might not again find himself in such a false situation. By experience too he knew his feelings. Sometimes fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind indeed.

"Ho, ho, ho," he said, strutting up to him and standing below him with arms akimbo and legs straddled widely apart; "ho, ho, a mother's curse bites deep. A warrior? a warrior chief? Why, what but a she-rabbit could you kill, and what sword wield but a little maid's knitting-needle? Are you mad, with your puny, crooked limbs, your shrunk thighs, confined paunch, pigeon breast, your monstrous hump, into which the rest of your body has retracted itself like a snail into its shell—are you mad to aspire to my lady, the most advanced record of beauty noted over the world and loved by princes and lords?" (Here he snapped his finger and thumb over his shoulder at Lelita.) "Do not lean on the greatness of your mind either. Had you the spirit of Agamemnon and the genius of Alexander, you would have no more command among men than a capacitous coney or a meditative mouse; and were your soul to be taken out of its shell and put into a better one, you would still be the shadow of a blade of grass you are, you wisp, you wart, you poor little pitiful dwarf—ho, ho, ho!"

Gangogo felt himself to be both just and witty at the same time. But the next moment he was suddenly hurled forward to the ground before Zozimo, and found himself held in that position. Turning his face with difficulty, he saw a wonderful being standing over him, clothed in white and pinning him down by means of a long sharp staff, the point of which seemed to be piercing his back. He thought it was an angel; and

his hideous face was distorted by terror. "Mercy," he croaked; "mercy—angel—mercy!"

It was Zozimo's sister, Astrella.

They all rose stupefied, as if indeed it had been an angel come to punish them all for their cruelty.

Behind her stood two very tall old men, the hunters Daniel and Danioth—her companions in the chase and now her stalwart guardians.

XII.—Zozimo's Sister

"Such, indeed," says the historian, "was their amazement at that vision of her (concerning which some who were there have told me) that all remained standing and crossed themselves to escape her wrath; and even the holy Cardinal himself stepped forward astonished. For her beauty was above earth and that of God's angel descended; and her stature above woman; her great eyes were as blue as heaven but full of anger, and her face flushed with ire; her hair, between silver and gold, shining round her head as that lambent halo about some stormy star at eve. And even her vestment seemed not of earth but wholly of white, and her cap and bodice also (such as Switzer maidens use) not of black but of white, so as to be unseen of the deer in the snow; and her bow and her twin arrows were bound on her back. But her face, though fierce with her virginity, was sweet withal as of an angel that shall be; and they were amazed indeed that she should be the very twin-sister of that miserable one that hung there in his torment; but such was the deed of God."

Leaving Gangogo, she stepped to where the Count stood with his daughter and the Cardinal, and spoke in the tone of a silver clarion: "Even now upon the mountains did I save you, and you requite me thus! Had I known you then I should have let you

die, and laughed to see your bodies shoot from that awful verge, chased by the mountain eagles ! "

They were all abashed.

" Hout, tout ! " exclaimed the Count, much vexed. " I am trembling ; I am angry ; what do you mean ? "

Astrella left him with a gesture of scorn, and went to her brother, who was lying moaning on the ground, the hunters having released him from the hook. She supported his head on her knee and kissed his brow, taking no further notice of the Count and his party.

Presently the Count, much annoyed, left the room, followed by Lelita, the Cardinal, Bran, Trullo, and the retainers—all of them wearing the lofty expression of innocence reviled. The only one who was not abashed was Gangogo. Trying to rub that part of his back where Astrella's iron-shod staff had nearly penetrated the flesh, he shambled out, croaking, " Ho ! girl—no angel ! Woman—poof—fod for you—poof ! " She marked none of them, but remained kneeling down before her deformed brother, and the old hunters stood silently beside them.

After the room was empty, however, Astrella did not remain long with him ; but laying his head gently on the floor, she and her companions went to the kitchen and upbraided Capon and Pompilia fiercely, declaring that she would not allow her brother to stay with them a moment longer, in spite of his indenture. Hearing from the woman that Morva had left the inn a few minutes before, she ran out with the hunters to find her in order that they together might take Zozimo away. Pompilia, very angry with the maiden, occupied herself in clearing the dishes in the kitchen, and Capon rolled off to his pallet full of wine and unphilosophical reflections ; so that Zozimo was left alone in the eating-room for some time.

XIII.—The Noble Stranger

The dwarf's mind had become numbed. While hanging on the hook he had sunk into a kind of lethargy in which realities appeared to be dreams. The insults of Gangogo and even the voice and appearance of his sister roused him not; and when he felt himself released from the support of her arms, he sank helplessly on the floor. He observed vaguely that the room had become empty and that his sister had left him; and then a fit of epilepsy, such as he was subject to, overtook him. He gave a little cry and fell forward; and his limbs began to twitch with the convulsions.

When he came to himself he found that he was still on the floor alone. Two torches, placed in sockets on the walls, were flaring wildly and uttering streams of smoke in the gusts of wind which swept through the old house. On these occasions, on recovery from these attacks, his mind was generally seized by horrible phantasies. Now, raising himself on his elbow, he shuddered all over and his hair crept on his head; for the torches flaring this way and that alternately, the capering of the arras in the wind, and the shaking of the whole building, filled him with terror. Outside too a rainless tornado boomed and thundered in the air and an unwonted darkness turned the evening into night. Then he remembered where he was.

"Not dead!" he shrieked; "not dead! I thought I should have died and become a ghost, a blessed undeformed ghost. Oh!—the suffering of a god makes him diviner; but of a worm more miserable than he was."

He was filled with a sudden resolution to end himself. He drew the little dagger which his mother had given him and tried to use it. Thrice he stabbed at himself, and thrice, when the point of the dagger

pricked the skin, he desisted. He was not man enough for a Roman's death.

Then he again lost all control over his imagination. A horrible chill pervaded his blood. It seemed that presences were about him. Suddenly, he thought, a ravaging wind fled shrieking through the inn, blowing out the torches in an instant. Then there was as sudden a silence, as sudden a darkness.

Though it was very dark, Zozimo could see, or thought he could see, the doors round the room open stealthily. Spiritual torches giving no light seemed to be carried about round him. It seemed to him as if these torches were held over him in order that invisible beings could look at him. Curious stars floated in the air. He remained on the floor chattering with the fear of these fancies, and with the illness left by the attack of convulsions.

Presently, however, he became aware that the mysterious stranger who had put his cloak and sword in the inn had entered the room and was sitting calmly at the table. He seemed to speak to him in the darkness.

"Ho! tapster," he said—"tapster—tapster——" The voice died away in the darkness, went off to a distance, became infinitely far.

It must have been illusion; for in an instant the torches had relighted themselves and he saw the figure sitting at the table, calmly looking at him. The stranger called to him again, and again the voice seemed to go out into the darkness, while the torches dwindled and died out as before.

Suddenly a sharp, shrill voice seemed to shriek in Zozimo's ear—"Zozimo, Zozimo, where are you?"

It was very dark; but he knew the stranger was still sitting there.

Then came a deep gruff voice which called, "Tapster, tapster; a pot of ale and a great one."

Zozimo was in a trance. He rose and took off the Count's cloak which had still remained on him, that nobleman having disdained to take it with him. "I come, I come, sir," he answered, as if the voice which had called him had been real. Instantly a hundred voices seemed to ring out in all parts of the room crying his name in every variety of tone—"Zozimo, Zozimo, Zozimo."

He tried to do his best, and followed each of the voices as quickly as he could in the darkness; but they called him different ways. "Here, sir," he said, "I come, sir; I come quickly, sir. Anon, anon, sir. Yes, sir, coming, sir."

Then all the voices burst into shouts and peals of laughter, up in the ceiling, under the floor, even out in the storm. "He comes, he comes!" they cried; "all hail! the warrior chief! all hail!"

The torches relighted themselves simultaneously. Zozimo found himself standing in the middle of the room. The stranger was sitting beside the table with his fist upon it and was gazing at him much surprised. "What, tapster," he said, "what is the matter with you? Are you deaf or mad? Bring me a pot of ale and a great one."

"I come, I come, sir," answered the dwarf. Half dazed, he fetched a pewter pot and tried to fill it at a barrel; but his hand shook so much that the ale was spilt upon the ground. There it seemed to blaze like burning oil.

"You play the ass, friend," said the stranger. "You are mad or drunk, I think. Bring me yonder stool."

"Now, sir; I will, sir," Zozimo replied, walking towards the stool. Much to his surprise, however, it seemed to move away from him as he approached it.

"Come hither," cried the stranger angrily. "You sleep, you dream! What is the matter with you?" and he tweaked his ear.

At this Zozimo awoke as out of a trance. It must all have been the effect of his fit; for now he saw that the torches were burning brightly, that there was only a very ordinary wind, and that the stranger sitting there was certainly merely a young man, though a very handsome one, and that he was desirous of doing such an earthly act as to drink beer. Indeed, though he had tweaked his ear, he was looking kindly at him.

Nevertheless Zozimo had no sooner felt the pain than he was mastered by a devouring passion. He would have no more of this. "Off! hands off!" he cried. "I will endure no more from devil or man!"

"Right!" exclaimed the stranger, smiling very kindly upon him. "Those who never resist are alway down-trodden. You do right to resist. What is your name?"

"Zozimo," said the dwarf crossly.

"Well, Zozimo, do you know I like you."

"You do not know me."

"But I have been watching through the window the way you have been treated here. I dislike it much."

"Who are you?" asked Zozimo angrily.

The stranger was astonished. "Surely I may sit in an inn without being asked that question," said he.

"I think you are the evil one," exclaimed Zozimo.

The stranger laughed. "You flatter me. I am the Count Otto Azrimar—a Spaniard and at your service."

It seemed to Zozimo that he could not yet see quite clearly, for though he looked hard at the other he could make but little of his face, save that it was very handsome. He observed, however, that the Count Otto had before him a great pictured volume open on the table.

"What is that book?" he asked, still almost in a trance and still angry.

"It is a volume which I have lately bought and am reading with great pleasure and respect."

"What is it?"

"The Holy Book."

"Can you read it?"

"Of course. Here is the passage which I was reading when I observed you lying on the floor. It seems applicable to you," and he read:

"'*Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι· ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες——*'"

"I do not understand it," said Zozimo.

"What!" exclaimed Count Otto, "and yet you have dared to affect poetry! You do not know Greek!"

"Is it Greek indeed?" exclaimed the dwarf. "I would that I could understand it. What does it say?"

"I will translate," said the nobleman.

"'Bienaventurados los pobres de espíritu; porque de ellos es el reyno de los cielos. Bienaventurados los mansos; porque ellos posseerán la tierra. Bienaventurados los que lloran; porque ellos serán consolados.'"

"Still I understand not," said Zozimo.

The stranger seemed to become angry. "Do you know no language but your feeble Italian and your boorish German then, and yet profess to have a mind? Let me try you again. I will transpose the two last clauses as I have done already and as they are found in the Latin.

"'Beati pauperes spiritu: quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum. Beati mites; quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram. Beati qui lugent: quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.'"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Zozimo. "Those are divine words. Who said them, pray?"

"Yes, they are good enough. They are God's words and the kernel of religion. I wish, however—Well here is more: 'Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis, et persecuti vos fuerint, et dixerint omne malum adversum vos.' That is much applicable to you—and this: 'Bienaventurados los de limpis corazon; porque ellos verán á Dios.'"

He looked down smiling at Zozimo, who approached him, with tears in his eyes.

"Shall I be blessed, then?" he said.

"God will doubtless reward you."

"How?"

The stranger laughed. "Of that I do not know. The ways of Heaven are dark. But now that I think of it I myself can do something for you. Do you care to leave this inn and become my servant?"

"Since you read the Holy Book," said Zozimo, "I believe you to be virtuous. Are you a man or some spirit?"

He began to tremble again; so great was the other's beauty that he appeared scarcely human, and Zozimo now remembered the affair of his cloak—though his mind was still greatly confused.

"A man certainly," laughed the Count.

"Stand!" exclaimed Zozimo fiercely, "I doubt you. What of my mother? You know something of her. I had forgot it."

The stranger, however, did not hear him, but, kissing the great Book, closed it reverently. Then, smiling at the dwarf, he drew him towards himself, patting the weak trembling hand. "Do you know, Zozimo," he said, "I have taken much liking for you, and will do for you what these fools will never do. Do you trust me?"

It seemed, however, to Zozimo that he could see nothing clearly; he was still dazed. "I trust not any," he exclaimed; "and fear none."

"Good," said the stranger, "that is the proper spirit. Listen then to what I will tell you."

Suddenly it seemed to Zozimo as if the torches extinguished themselves again, and all became dark. But the stranger still sat there, holding his hand, and talking to him as if he were a child. "Know," he said, "that having but lately come to my inheritance I am passing rich; and that I am here to seek me pleasant adventures and for the sake of a certain lady. But I obey this Book, and desire to comfort the pitiful and to ensue the love of all men. Now my steward Cipo being dead, I will make you, if you desire it, my steward in his place and, if I find you as I think you, my friend. Come, then, my servants and horses wait without; and, if you agree to it, we will incontinently leave this dreadful inn and see the world together. Hold this Book, then, while I find my purse." And he rose, placing a coin upon the table and gathering his cloak about him.

XIV.—Disappearance

We have seen that Astrella had left the inn in order to seek her mother. Morva Neroni, after having used the terrible words against her son, had rushed up the Furka road; but began to relax her speed the further she advanced. Presently she halted and returned slowly, full of remorse; but in descending she took a short cut, so that her daughter and the hunters who followed her missed her upon the road.

With her curses ringing themselves back on her heart, she approached the inn and looked through the window. Her amazement when she saw an unknown but noble person holding her son's hand in his was great. Suddenly, with a cry, she turned to make for the door and enter; but before she reached it she

fell heavily, as if shot, and lay clutching the stones convulsively and opening and shutting her mouth. She had fainted.

A few minutes later Capon was so unfortunate as to incur that calamity which his friends attributed to liquor and his enemies to his philosophy. Refreshed by a short slumber, he had risen and, while his wife was cleaning the platters in the kitchen, had entered the eating-room. There, to his surprise, he found a very noble-looking stranger leaning against one of the wine-barrels as if he were feeling ill ; while Zozimo, far from waiting on him as he should have been doing, was struggling in a kind of convulsion on the floor.

" What ! " exclaimed the host angrily, going up to his tapster and kicking him. " Is this the way you lose me my customers ? Will you lie here so long because some gentlemen have made a jest of you ? Take that to have something to cry at " ; and he kicked him again.

Zozimo rose with an oath and, Capon said, flashed out a fire at him the same moment and blinded him.

" Oh, Heaven ! " he shrieked, " I am blinded. Zozimo is the devil " ; and he staggered into the kitchen.

Astrella returned alone a few moments later and entered by the kitchen door. She and Pompilia ran to the eating-room. It was empty. Zozimo was not to be seen.

Capon was quite blind, and Zozimo had disappeared utterly. Suddenly however, in a pause of the wind, the galloping of horses could be heard. Gradually the sound became fainter and fainter, and then ceased altogether. They could not understand what had happened. On the floor, however, they found the rich cloak of Count Reichenfels which Zozimo had worn, and the small dagger which Morva had given to him and with which he had attempted to end his feeble

existence. Strangely enough it was smeared with fresh blood.

Oustide the inn, they found Morva lying on the ground near the window, in a faint. Each of her hands grasped a stone—as if, since she had cursed her son, that was all which was to be left to her ; and her long grey hair had fallen from her cap and lay spread upon the wet earth round her.

PART II

THE SUITORS' TRIAL

XV.—The Dream

Day followed day, week followed week, and there was still no news of the missing one. After the tempestuous rains of the newborn spring, the joyful sun brought light and warmth to every valley and even to those grey peaks of the aged mountains; and the world in her supreme beauty quivered at noonday with reviving heat, like one snatched from the grave. Suddenly the dull grey slopes of the rounded hills were swept by a new actinic green, and a myriad flames which we call flowers burned between the blades of the living grass. All day long, like children, the flowers danced in the breeze and sang their open-mouthed anthems to the sun—which our ears are too dull to hear; and all night, like children, they slept folded and turned together. Now the cattle were called from the pens and led lowing to the lofty pastures; and the white banners of winter fled from the vales and retreated, torn and soiled with defeat, to the uttermost alps. Midsummer came and passed, and every morning the cloudless sun rolled up in the east, and every evening reeled down, cloudless, to the west. But no news came.

After one such day, the summer night was windless and warm, even at those great heights under the decaying roots of the loftiest snows; and the full midnight moon made the stars invisible, as with some

silent but almost evil enchantment. Under the very snow-cap of the Galenstock there is a wide but shallow cave, facing south—composed of gigantic boulders piled upon each other, and roofed by grasses and the melting ice of the mountain. There lay a white figure propped half sitting against stones, but asleep; and the mystic moon gazed silently at her, and a jewel at her throat sparkled like the fire of ice as it rose and fell with her breath.

All around her too were the sparklings of innumerable small fires of ice quickened by those magic rays; for long stalactites of ice hung dripping from the roof, and others rose beneath them from the saturated mosses; and every wet pebble had an eye of white fire; and a small runnel under the rocks showed teeth of icicles sparkling in the moonlight. Points of light everywhere, but without colour. Fires everywhere, but without warmth. No colour, no warmth; for the moonlight was less light than enchantment—a something outside nature.

Was that bright face there in heaven—which gazed upon that bright face there on earth—a Being malign? Was there malignity in those innumerable small eyes which everywhere stared at the sleeper—in the eyes of the wet pebbles and in the teeth of the half-frozen streamlet? Suddenly it seemed as if the cave was alive with spirits seated on every vantage, watching her. From the pendant point of each icicle hanging from the roof leapt water-drops like tiny sprites, one after the other, exultingly to earth; as if thronging to see her. Some mischief here; and a pale flower at the mouth of the cave seemed to be also watching her with a tear in its eye, as if with pity and fear for her.

The moon gazed and gazed—with silent anger; for that which she gazed at was more beautiful than herself. The night was windless, but not silent; for everywhere

could be heard numberless tinklings, babblings, and prattlings, small but musical—which some might think were the voices of streams under the stones ; and there were secret and stealthy footfalls—which some might think were drippings from above ; and even, from outside there came a continuous far diapason of mysterious harmonies—which some might think were the night-cries of the torrents of melting snow pouring down the mighty mountain's flanks. Dimly through the misty moonlight showed the great figures of the mountains across the valley, as if they too sat watching, leaning chin on hands. A scene of ineffable beauty—but evil ; and the stars were not in it.

The sleeper, bathed in white moonlight, stirred slightly. Her fingers opened and closed ; her face grew troubled. Beside her lay a bow, and a quiver containing two arrows. A rough fur was drawn over her feet, and others were thrown beside her—for the cave was often used by hunters at night ; and the dead embers of a fire were close to her. She moved again, and her lips opened as if to speak. The moonlight made marble of her beauty.

Presently the murmurs of the rivulets and torrents gathered themselves into diverse tones and pealed louder and louder as if all the notes of a great organ were being sounded together in one unvarying harmony; and then a predominant voice, at first mingled with these, began to acquire separate utterance. "Hear, hear, hear, hear," it seemed to repeat. It grew louder and louder—"Hear, hear, hear, hear."

Suddenly the sleeper answered in her sleep like an echo—"I hear."

There was nothing there. It was a vision of sleep ; but the voice of the vision grew out of the voices of the streams into articulate words. "Maiden, dost thou sleep ?" it said.

"Sleep," she answered, like an echo, again.

"Sleepest thou deeply?"

"Deeply."

"Do these barren mountains suffice thee?"

"Suffice me."

"Whose voice hearest thou amid the solitude of the mountains?"

"Of the mountains."

"Desirest thou not love?"

"Not love."

The air became magical; the weird face of the moon grew scornful; the icicles sparkled; the falling drops of water took to themselves iridescent wings of light; and the streams pealed their harmony louder and louder. The voice continued, half mingling with them.

"Eagle and sister of Eagles, hear! O wingless and winged maiden of these lone mountains, hear: I visit thee again. Why watchest thou thus for ever the barren stars that walk these wastes of weary snow? Come, link thyself with me, and wait no more the wanderings of the moon and the chill paces of the planets as they move. For I will bring thee love, even as of old the sons of God communed with the daughters of men."

The voice grew fainter, as if descending.

"And give me pity with thy love; for I am that I am, and all my spirit is blackened with my fate, and my heart aches for peace. Hear, spirit of these pure snows, and melt for me. Hear, watcher of these cold heights, and warm for me. Lo, I have done a deed to win thee, that thou mayest know me as I am, and good. For thee I suffer; suffer also thou for me, and give me love."

The voice died away.

Suddenly a black ray shot from the moon as she sank behind the mountain, and a chill air sighed over the lonely mountain side.

With a cry Astrella sprang from her sleep, and seizing her bow ran to the cavern's mouth.

The moon had gone, and a great blackness filled the air.

But the darkness brought the stars; and far on the horizon one pure planet loomed like the eye of dawn; and the zodiacal Light lay like the sword of God across the spiritual east.

XVI.—Preparations

Three months after the disappearance of Zozimo from the inn—that is to say, some weeks after midsummer, 1495—Count Reichenfels prepared to receive the competitors in that curious affair known in history as the "suitors' trial." The village of Urseren was gaily decked for the occasion. The peasantry wore their best clothes, and, the weather being cloudless, streamed out along the four great bridle-paths which entered the village, with the desire of watching the arrival of the expected guests. The sun shone round and fair; the two glaciers of Gurschen and St. Anna which hang upon the St. Gotthard over the village, shrunk though they were by the summer, sparkled their best; and the weird Spitzliberg, divested of his clouds, looked not near so terrible—as we might imagine a magician to look without his robe. Upon the level meadows which stretch from the castle right up to Andermatt, scores of gay tents were pitched ready to receive the guests. Unlike the monotony of white exhibited by our encampments of to-day that of the Count showed every variety of colour—crimson, scarlet, blue, orange, gold, and even green; while many of the tents were varied with strips of alternating hues such as black and white, black and orange, white and blue; and, for others, the gilded

poles and ropes, the magnificent curtains and the heavy gonfalons drooping upon the wind, made up a sufficient splendour of colour. Many of the tents, moreover, especially those which had been taken at Grandson, were rather to be styled palaces, for besides containing sleeping chambers they had courts, forecourts, galleries, kitchens, sculleries, and even chapels. Day after day the valley was filled with the hammering of tent-pegs, as the Count, riding to and fro with his daughter, arranged and rearranged the order of the encampment, while the children of the village watched the magnificent spectacle, finger in mouth. Over all, streaming upon a gigantic fir-pole and rattling in the wind, rose the great banner of Uri, the famous Black Bull; which certainly had the effect of calming those honest burghers who were inclined to bite their thumbs at the splendour of a spectacle that—it might have been thought by some—was contrary to true republican simplicity.

As the day of the trial approached (says Müren) cavalcades of mules and horses bearing baskets of fruit, sacks of corn, articles of furniture of the camp, and a hundred other things, began to stream up the St. Gotthard and Luzern routes; and the stumbling of mules upon the cobbles of the roads or rather bridle-paths, the shouts of the drivers, the songs of the wayfarers and guides, and the harmonious jödling of the cattle boys filled the valley with sounds which suggested the importance of the event. The whole place began to fill rapidly with people. Besides the mule-drivers and food-vendors, numbers of servants of the approaching competitors had already arrived with the advance baggage of their masters—pages in the gaudy striped hose of the period, squires, men-at-arms, body-servants, cooks, and what-not—who, speaking every language of Europe, thronged that secluded valley, mingling with the Count's servants,

wandering among the tents, quarrelling with the mule-drivers, chaffering at the village shops, playing leap-frog in the meadows, or staring open-mouthed at the glaciers and barren summits, which in their turn stared back at them with an appearance as if of scorn and anger at their intrusion. Visitors also from all the surrounding parts were arriving daily. Peasants streamed in from every valley in the neighbourhood, from the Rhone Valley, the Rhine Valley, the Göschenenthal, the Grimsel, and above all from Italy ; while soldiers from Milan, burghers from Zürich, students from St. Gall, and idle persons from everywhere gathered together to see the sight or to encourage friends whose names were down for competition. These already the Count had conciliated by means of a large banquet which was outside the plan of proceedings and which indeed was given on the spur of the moment as a sort of preliminary ; and so great was the popularity it had gained for him that whenever he appeared the people lined the road and cheered him, and even the severe Zürichers would stand aside and doff to him like any others. If by chance his daughter was with him the salutations rent the air.

Difficult as it is for us to imagine a nobleman like this giving his daughter away in such a fashion, it was not so much a subject for wonder at the time. Ladies frequently were made the prize of a tournament in which the best man-at-arms was the victor ; and Reichenfels with his usual vanity saw that he could go a step further and award the lady on this occasion to him whom, at the mere view of him, he adjudged to be the best man. If, he argued, we judge a horse by the points, why not a man ? Mere achievement, the mere power of doing, depending often so much on chance as it does, is seldom so good a criterion of a man's merits as his appearance, which we are led by every instinct of eye and of mind to appraise at its

true value. It was shrewdly suspected, however, that the wily baron was not going to depend as much on external advantages as he gave out; and indeed the pages of Astra, Zamba, Sax-Misox (Misocco), Montefine and other nobles declared openly that in their opinion the award would be given according to policy alone, and that beauty would be made a cover for some very subtle stroke of business which would perhaps even lead to the expulsion of the French from Italy. Certainly many gentlemen appeared to be of this opinion; for they put themselves forward as competitors without showing such personal advantages as were to be expected in those who did so. At any rate, all promised themselves an amusing time of banquet and spectacle, especially during the "carrousels" after the trial, and few cared how the choice of the lady would ultimately fall.

Next, the competitors themselves began to arrive. The roads were lined with crimson flags; and troops of the Count's soldiers went forth to meet the guests and to conduct them to their several tents. The Count Trullo, Reichenfels' nephew, was master of the ceremonies in this way, and spent the day riding up and down between the castle and the summit of the St. Gotthard Pass. There, upon a small grassy promontory which juts into the beautiful little lake of Lucendro, a magnificent tent with wine and sweetmeats was laid out for the refreshment of the travellers; and as each person of quality arrived from Italy, he was ushered into the tent by the smiling young nobleman and fortified for the remaining six miles of the journey by a draught of ice-cold Asti or Chambave and a box full of comfits. Similarly Bran ruled the ceremonies on the German side and presided over the refreshments which the Count's care had provided here also in a wayside inn at Göschenen. His German tongue and hearty manner went well with the honest

and often distinguished Switzers of the Eidgenossenschaft, such as Reding of Switz and Theiling of Luzern. The latter was a close friend of the Count and of his captain, since they had fought under him at the memorable campaign of Giornica sixteen years ago—where, in consequence of the Count taking the *right side*, he had won practical independence from Milan. These two arrived together, and with many a broad German oath and many a kiss embraced the heavy soldier of fortune—perhaps the most honoured guests of all but, of course, not competitors. Conducting them to the village, Bran had barely time to reach the Oberalp (even then nearly breaking his horse's wind up the steep old path) to welcome the host of worthies from the Graubünden, the feudatory lords of the Rhine Valley and neighbouring parts, now rendered so happily innocuous, the Belmonts, Aspermonts, Montforts, Misocci, Haldensteins, and Werdenbergs, and some members of the united bund from Vazerol. It is stated that he tired out five horses on that day.

The labours of the Count himself may be imagined from those of his lieutenants, for his it was to welcome each guest on his arrival and to conduct him to his tent. Accompanied by his jester and a troop of magnificently dressed soldiers, he dashed every few minutes from the castle and the débouchures of the St. Gotthard and Furka roads to those of the Oberalp and Luzern roads, and back again. The Lady Lelita of course remained invisible, as was only proper for one who was the real occasion of such a brilliant scene, but we do not need to be told that she and her maids regarded the doings out of window with not a little interest. Already a number of ladies, the wives of guests and sisters of competitors, were around her; all talking, pointing and laughing with the pleasure which the occasion inspired.

Next day the same thing continued; and as each party rode in, the Count's eye flashed more proudly and his welcome was more cordial. Last of all came the Prince of Astra, that magnificent nobleman, one of the greatest in the empire, who owned vast estates in almost every country—Egremont, Vin, Capoli, Castra, and so on. It was well known that he had been in love with Lelita for some years; but though he was exceedingly handsome and not over forty years of age, she had always rejected him—much to the Count's indignation. No sooner was the reception of this grandee over, than shouts of applause amongst the people, mingled with laughter, announced the arrival of some competitors of a different caste. These were honest boys of the mountains, young chamois-hunters in their brown leather dress, strapping young herdsmen, with feather in hat and looks as free as the men of Uri should have. Nor were they to be despised. The sympathies of the crowd were with them and, though they came on in a body as if bashfully seeking a mutual support, his lordship's bow was no less deep to them than to the others and, much to their own surprise and to the delight of the onlookers, each found himself installed in a separate tent.

The same evening there was a banquet for the ladies in the castle and another for the men in the camp. Over one presided Lelita and over the other her father; and at the latter all the suitors had now an opportunity of viewing each other closely, while the Count and the guests could comment on the appearance of each. The Count's eye ran proudly over the eminent and noble men who had assembled to woo his daughter. Any one of them would make an excellent son-in-law, he thought; though he had certainly been disappointed in some whom he had counted upon. It was unfortunate, for instance, that the Prince Zizim or Djem, brother of the Grand Seignior Bajazet II, was

unavoidably prevented from coming; though, it was true, he had obstinately refused to become a Christian. As everyone knows, he was a captive in Borgia's hands, and was so terrible to his brother that his possessor received 45,000 ducats a year from the Turk for his safe-keeping, and offered to put him to death for not less than 300,000 ducats in one sum. Lately, however, he had fallen into the hands of the French King, and the Count hoped not a little for his presence in consequence; a hope that was not fulfilled because the prince was engaged in being poisoned at that date (it is said that he would have preferred to be married). Other important personages failed to arrive. These were the many descendants of Scanderbeg, Prince of Albania, all handsome men and heirs to thrones (in Turkey): there was the brother of Constantine Dragases, Emperor of the Eastern Empire, and Constantine Aramito, King of Macedonia and Thessaly. These were all so busy plotting that they had no time to think of love; and after all, the Count said, they were a beggarly lot. But he was more moved when the Count di Cajazzo, son of Sanseverino and an old lover of Lelita's, sent his excuses; as also did Carlo Balbiano, Count of Belgioioso, Galeazzo Visconti, and many other young nobles, friends of Reichenfels. They were not handsome enough, they said. Cæsar Borgia himself, however, had written that he wished to resign his hat in order to win so rich and beautiful a bride, but, being held a hostage by the King, he could not do so for political reasons. Nevertheless those who had arrived and had subscribed their names as her suitors made such a magnificent show that the old nobleman felt, what we seldom feel, quite satisfied.

The next day was given over to tournaments and feats of arms according to the usage of the time, in order to afford some delay during which belated suitors could arrive without danger of finding themselves too late

for the principal contest; and also to allow of rest for those who had been fatigued by their travels. The Countess did not show herself to her ardent lovers as they hoped, no doubt: her moment of appearance was reserved for the crowning point of the trial itself on the next day. But the men had such a good opportunity of comparing and vying with each other that many lost heart, erased their names from the list, and contented themselves with remaining to see the spectacle among the other guests of the Count: a result which, seeing the large number of doubtful candidates, was highly desirable. In the tourney the Prince of Astra, a powerful, heavy man, and the lord Zamba, a Venetian soldier, were declared the victors; while in the feats of strength three hunters named Hans Oge, Mumm, and Hedwig Schlaus (the Hedwig being a feminine name, oddly enough) were so prominent that all the other peasants who had been so bold as to advance themselves as suitors resigned their candidature in despair. Another banquet closed the day.

The next day, the sixth of August, was appointed for the trial, which was to be held in the evening; and the suitors spent the morning in making their toilet. It is said that there were no less than twenty-five barbers in the camp at the time, by which it may be judged what importance was attached to their office: and, according to Tschudi, the tailors were still more numerous—for the rich did not disdain to press the advantage of dress against those who were too poor to claim it, but who nevertheless made as much out of homespun and chamois skin as they could.

At noon all the suitors and guests assembled in the camp, and advancing amongst the huzzas of the onlookers, presented themselves at the door of the castle. They were greeted with the highest honours

by the Count and led into the banqueting-hall, where they were regaled until five o'clock in the evening.

Müren, who had scarcely been out of his native valley, probably gives a very exaggerated description of the splendours of the Count's palace. It was situated in the angle made by the confluence of the Realper and the St. Gotthard sources of the Reuss and lay just under the old Lombard tower. It possessed a large central hall and no less than forty sleeping chambers; but what scandalised Murinus most was the presence of seven glass windows.

"What with curious carved corbels," he says, "fantastic eaves, crooked windows, arches of the Turks, pilasters begotten of Italy, turrets and towers without end, up which a plumed man-at-arms did have no difficulty in riding" (surely exaggeration), "hanging embrasures, pointed roofs, casements for a Leonora to hang out of, halls for eating, forty sleeping chambers, and a room to wash in, kitchens, sculleries, dungeons, treasure vaults and stables, God bless us but we did not know but we had gotten among the Moors or the Africans. And then of pictures without end, not of blessed but of vain things; such as I saw of Dame Cassandra and of Sir Apollo of Greece, most wilful, and of Dame Helen and Sir Hector and what not, and of seven demons that strangled a he-goat, not bad to behold, and of a gib-cat, excellent and like the life. Then of images in brass and stone of men and women, naked and shameful, and of a great ape turning about the world upon his hands, that was in the middle of the great hall and so pretty that I looked at it long, laughing heartily. And then pictures of stone upon the very floor, so that one started, thinking to have trodden on a grinning face; and lamps and moons of silver, and chairs made of serpents, and rich curtains, and worked tapestries and carpets, things shocking to see; and a great buffet with whole casks of wine

goodly to see, and spits and dogs of silver. . . ." "The Lady Lelita's chamber, in which she sat, was the most beautiful ever seen, which I beheld by grace of her waiting maid, the roof being of stars and angels and the walls painted like trees and curtains of gossamer like clouds, in which were a hundred finches and sparrows in gilt cages, singing all day; which I was told she tended with her own hand; and strange music instruments with written music were on the floor, and in the middle a silver salver with a great Froissart upon it whose leaves were I thought not holily pictured, and a Boccaccio chained by the wall on a corbel, but never an honest chapbook therein. . . ." "The pleasure-ground was laid out with trees which did not naturally grow in that air, being brought, torn up by the roots, on mules' backs from Italy; and they were cut like turkeycocks and other fooleries. Every spring would Madam have roses brought from Italy and planted there; and there were fountains and images and cannons and a marble banqueting house. . . . Moreover many pavilions were pitched in the summertime for my lord's guests, who frequented him much at that season; so that there was continual riot and drinking and taking of spices and wine and brave talk, though but little deeds, much more as in the house of some Gascon than as in an honest Switzer's house."

XVII.—At the Flower-Throne

During the progress of the banquet, the flower-throne from which Lelita was to behold the concourse of her lovers was being prepared by the servants—on the flat piece of ground at the end of the garden, where the St. Gotthard and the Furka Rheuss met together. Here there was a large open space covered with fine grass and studded with a few small fir-trees;

and amongst these a number of white statues were placed about. Nearer to the house and facing this level spot, a pavilion had been erected, covering a platform upon which was placed a single throne, the whole being strewed with a multitude of roses cut off close to the head so as to avoid the thorns. Festoons of flowers hung from every angle of the tent and hid the ropes in an agreeable fashion. Before the throne stood a salver of gold a yard and a half in diameter and worth thousands of ducats; and upon it was laid a small circlet of gold which the lady was to place upon the head of the successful suitor, and another circlet much smaller, which the successful suitor was to place on the lady's finger. Beautiful carpets were disposed here and there for the guests to recline upon, and the whole was intended to represent a sort of paradise of Boccaccio. Dinner was half through when the servants, having finished their task, left the place deserted; for the sightseers of the village had gone away on the same errand as the quality and were busy provisioning themselves against the evening.

Presently, however, two ladies, cloaked from head to heel, emerged from the back of the house, and, running so as to keep out of sight of the banqueting-hall, approached the pavilion and inspected it.

"Madam, how beautiful!" cried one.

"Am I to sit up there and blow kisses to those boors?" exclaimed the other, who was Lelita herself.

"What, madam, the prince of Astra a——?"

"Pish!" exclaimed Lelita, "he is fat at forty; what will he be at fifty?" and she plumped her beautiful little body down upon a seat, lifting her heels at the same time in a manner which countesses and milkmaids use alike when they wish to express some disgust at life. "But for my father's wishes I should refuse to look at any of them. What a crew, Zitella! There is not one fine man among them, and

already I hate them all. If I had some of that Italian poison I have heard of I would wed them all to one mate this very night."

"To one mate, madam?"

"To Death, fool."

"Oh, oh!"

"Yes, that is what they would cry indeed—oh, oh! I wish I had the poison.

"Never!" continued Lelita, "will I marry one of them; and it is fortunate indeed for them that that vile Cajazzo has not been of this number, for in that case I would certainly have done for the crew of them."

"Madam!" exclaimed Zitella.

"Brute!" exclaimed the lady.

"Madam!"

"Pig!" she insisted.

Zitella was speechless.

"Yet no less than five times he told me that he adored me; and now when I promise myself indeed he remains aloof! He is right though: he is ugly. Yet I would have preferred him to the others and perhaps married him—to one of the kitchen-maids."

"You also refused him five times, madam."

"And would fifty."

"He despairs of you."

"Then there is Balbiano, disagreeable little wretch. Why, rather than marry these two I would wed the Prince of Astra and all of them together *immediately*, Zitella!"

"That would be scarcely right, madam," said the matter-of-fact Zitella.

"Do *I* care for right? But no; one man is like another. 'Tis sincerity they are all in need of; which indeed is the first virtue we commonly part with and the last that we should cleave to. I can excuse anything in a man but insincerity; while in my eyes

sincerity will make a villain half honest. He who does not speak the truth openly, Zitella, is the worst villain of all. No, I am glad Cajazzo and Balbiano did not come here to torment me."

"If that is truth, Gangogo is a good man."

"Certainly, and I would rather wed Gangogo than one of these dummies. He is honest, and if he is ugly beyond belief he is still stronger. But, on my soul, if I could but see him here, there is one that I would marry in a trice; and that is the little hunchback, Zozimo, whom we saw in the inn."

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried Zitella with horror.

"I would indeed. The sweet little fellow. His face had an expression that I never forget and—do you know—whenever I think of him—well, I declare that I am inclined to fall in love with him more than with all these great stuffed bolsters. If he were here I should take him at once. Zitella, I am wretched."

"You ought to be a very happy woman, madam."

"Ought to be!" cried Lelita, leaping to her feet and administering a very hearty box on the ear to her maid. "But now you *feel* that I am not, don't you?"

The girl's lip began to tremble and pout, but in an instant the beautiful little lady had put her arm round her, kissed the insulted cheek and begun to weep herself.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, "I am very miserable. I do not wish to be married. I wish to die a maid. I do not care for any of these men. I am ashamed of the whole affair . . ."; and there is no knowing how long she would have gone on in this strain—for her maid suddenly shook her arm and pointed breathlessly through the trees. A young man was pacing there. He did not observe the girls, nor, owing to the music, overhear the conversation, but walked up and down, evidently in some great agitation of

spirit; for he often raised his face and hands to heaven. The sun, now sinking lower over the Furka, put a confused light upon him through the trees, so that it was difficult to see him distinctly; but it was evident in a moment that he was possessed of the most exceptional beauty. Tall and extremely well formed, he was dressed in the Italian fashion of the period—which set off his figure to perfection. The jewels on the hilt of his sword, in the clasp of his cap and in his brooch flashed every time he turned, and the high plume on his head touched the branches of the trees.

"Heavens!" cried Zitella, "what a beautiful man!"

Lelita did not answer.

"What jewels, what clothes, what legs!" cried Zitella again.

"Who is he?" asked Lelita; "I have not observed him before."

"Pray Heaven that he is one of the suitors, madam," whispered the maid.

"I shall hate him with the rest if he is," answered her mistress; "but fly, fly; he is coming towards us!" and in a moment the two maidens fled like doves before a hawk—terrified at this apparition of so much beauty.

Seen nearer the young man will be recognised at once. He was the very person who had left his black and green cloak and hat on the bench in the inn and had then appeared so mysteriously to Zozimo. He was now pacing to and fro in such an agitated manner that it might have been thought that he was ill; for he continually pressed his hand to his heart or to his forehead with a gesture of great feeling; and might doubtless have burst into audible speech which would have enlightened us as to his real thoughts if he had not been interrupted at the moment by a second

person. The figure which now advanced hurriedly was extremely small and feeble, though from the energy of the step it did not seem that the soul was as weak as the body. This little person was richly dressed in black doublet and cap and white hose ; but the whole effect, which might have been fairly passable, was spoilt by the great crimson feather which was stuck in the cap. It was Zozimo himself. Striding up to the other he exclaimed gutturally,

"The hour is come, my lord."

"My friend," exclaimed the young man, "do you not know how my heart has been telling me that the hour is come ? I can endure myself no longer ; I cannot sit, I cannot think, I cannot speak. Bring me to her, for the love of Heaven ! "

The music from the banqueting-hall sounded out loudly—the same music which had prevented him from hearing the conversation of Lelita and Zitella—and seemed to fling him into an ecstasy, but one which, it was now evident, was not of sorrow or despair. "Speak, speak, heavenly thunder," he cried, lifting his arms ; "speak of my love, speak of her, only of her."

Zozimo looked curiously at him and smiled. "Is it the heavenly thunder or myself who is to speak of her, my lord ? " he asked.

"Both, both, both," said the young man.

"Listen to me rather than to the music, then, if you would win her."

"Bring me to her—only bring me to her," he cried ; "I cannot endure to be parted from her any more, good Zozimo."

"You have yet a part to play," answered Zozimo ; "you must be discreet and wary, my lord, or else all will go ill. Hush ! " he cried in a croaking voice, "the banquet is breaking up ; they will all be out presently, and you know nothing yet of your share in the performance ! "

Something in the excited strut of the dwarf engaged the other's attention and he looked down at him.

"What is it, friend Zozimo?" he asked.

"You must listen to me and do exactly as I venture to suggest to you. You must keep your wits about you, my lord, and not fall into these transports. In the first place you must not dream of joining that crowd of lunatics, the suitors."

"Not join them!—how else am I to win her?"

"Precisely in that manner—by *not* joining them. I know something of women's minds, and this lady, mark you, is already sick of the whole business. She is ashamed of the part she is about to play, and you will only cheapen yourself if you join the ruck now. You must hold aloof; for even if you gain her hand by the terms of the trial, you will not gain her love. Women must be piqued to be won," he croaked, peering excitedly into the other's face. "It is I who will win her by joining the suitors."

"You, you, you win her!" cried the young man. "Impossible, good Zozimo—you forget——"

"I forget nothing—I know everything—only do as I say. Stand by carelessly as if you had nothing at all to do with the affair, and if you are asked any questions, say that you came as my master to see how I fared in the trials. I shall presently make one of the suitors."

"But, Zozimo," exclaimed the young man surprised, "by what we hear, the prize is to go to the handsomest man, not to the——"

"Ugliest, you would say."

The young man was confused by his tactless speech, but continued, "Besides, if you so win her, I do not see how it will help me."

"That you shall discover later, my lord," cried the dwarf. "In the meantime leave the whole affair to me and remain leaning against the statue of Apollo

yonder as if you have as little to do with the lady as with the devil." So saying he drew his belt tighter, cocked his hat higher, and strutted off with a jolt which showed all his deformity to its greatest advantage. The youth remained, looking after him with a pained expression, and then took the position mentioned. The music of the banquet died away, and the sound of voices was heard approaching.

XVIII.—The Suitors

It could not be denied that, seen now by broad daylight, Count Azrimar was even more prepossessing than he appeared to be by the dim light in the inn, chiefly on account of the sweetness and benignity of his expression; and his reason for visiting the valley was now manifest. Evidently his kindness had already produced a considerable effect upon Zozimo, who, partly as a result of his travels and partly perhaps because of the favour shown to him by his master, had acquired a much more confident manner, and indeed somewhat that of a man of the world. At the same time, whether owing to this larger experience of the world, or to the cruelty with which he had been treated in the inn, he seems to have lost from that moment all his affection for the lady on whom he had formerly set his heart, and to be now prepared to labour body and soul for his benefactor; and the capacity and determination of his face suggested that his help was likely to be of not a little value, even to such a promising suitor as his master.

The banquet had now ceased, and the well-fed guests were beginning to issue from the house in readiness for the long-anticipated trial. The first voices heard approaching belonged to the three hunters Oge, Mumm, and Schlaus, who, excited with wine,

came sauntering down the rivage, arm in arm, laughing boisterously.

"Hang him, hang him," cried Schlaus, a gigantic fellow with a handsome, sinister face, "the beloved Count, the wonderful old fellow! what a prince is there, what a true Switzer noble! a hand and a heart for all—no finger-tips. Let's make him emperor, lads, now that Waldemann is dead. Give me his daughter and 'tis I will do the trick for him."

"Ha, ha, ha," roared the red-faced young Oge. "Did ye see the pots and the pans and the broths and the fries and the toasts, lads? I am as full of all sorts as a pedlar's pack."

"Curse them all," said Mumm, swallowing his saliva peevishly, for he was the only one who was sober; "I hate these lordings that sneer a body into a blue ague."

"Give me the lady," roared Schlaus; "I will make him King of the Switzers, Duke of Burgundy, Emperor of Germany, Grand Seignior of Mahomed, and King of the devils, with myself as son-in-law and heir."

"No doubt of the last," sneered Mumm.

"No indeed. I will get him an army of fifty thousand Switzers with which we will conquer the whole world, lads. There's an arm for you. Here's a leg. Look at this fist."

"And look at this fist," said Mumm.

"And at this," exclaimed Oge, roaring with laughter.

Schlaus darted a swift look at his companions and then began to laugh too. "Right you are!" he cried; "three bonny lads as ever were. Let us swear an oath together. For my part, 'tis only the money I have a heart for; I love Nan of our village better than any lady of them all."

"And what would you have us swear?" said Mumm suspiciously.

"Why, to be sure," continued Schlaus, "one of

us brave lads is bound to win. Mark you now how devilish cunning I am ; what a head for policy I've got ; fit for councillor and general together. Suppose then that we have each an equal chance—let us swear to the effect that he who wins the lady will go shares with the money, lads. What say you ? A bright idea ! Trust me for a good head."

Mumm answered contemptuously as was his wont, and a long dispute began as to which was better, the certainty of a third share or the third share of a certainty; which ceased only when Schlaus, evidently prepared for the occasion, produced pen and ink and parchment and read aloud an agreement which he had already written thereon to the effect that the happy possessor of the Lady Lelita should divide her wealth between the three. This they all signed after much wrangling, Mumm and Oge being scarcely able to read ; and hardly had they done so when the other suitors began to appear.

The first who approached was a tall, dignified looking man, extremely handsome of course, and dressed entirely in a long black gown of the Bologna University lined with minniver. A square black cap (baretta) covered his head ; and but for the small silver scabbard and sword by his side he would have exactly resembled in costume any other scholar of the day. He was in fact no less a person than Oïlus, physician to the Emperor, who had sent him on his quest with his best wishes but not without a little laughter at the expense of his vanity. " A handsome physician," said the imperial jester, " is so dangerous that he ought to be either married or hanged " ; but when Oïlus chose the greater evil of the two it was, as it will appear, not without the hope of doing a good stroke of scientific work and of completing a certain experiment which he had long meditated. As he now advanced from the house his eyes searched furtively in every direction ;

and it was not until he had reached a secluded spot that he drew forth from his robe a small crystal phial and hid it rapidly in the moss at the root of a fir-tree. "Ha!" he exclaimed to himself, "may science now help me to a rich wife and to the fame which I have so long deserved."

Presently two other persons advanced through the trees, engaged in a loud dispute. One was dressed in a manner not unlike the physician; but he had no beard, and his fine thin face and large sparkling dark eyes betokened a more restless energy. Anyone could have told us that it was the great philosopher Severus of Paris, who, in spite of his wonderfully fine presence, had lashed so fiercely the erotic tendencies of the age. The other was a youth of singular beauty with ruddy cheeks, beautiful blue eyes, and a profusion of light hair—of a beauty which indeed emulated that of the young Count Otto Azrimar (who still stood leaning against the statue of Apollo). He was dressed almost entirely in azure silk, with a mantle of a deeper blue hanging upon his shoulders and a blue cap with a light pink plume, all however somewhat the worse for wear. A mandolin richly inlaid with silver and jewels hung by a scarf round his neck; and, as he talked, his fingers idly twanged the plectrum against the strings. This was the poet Cynthian, the famous page and pupil when a boy of Pius II, Eneas Sylvius; and must have been somewhat older than he appeared.

"You mock yourself," cried Severus heatedly with the polemical frankness of the age; "you may have some little puddle-stir of fame, which in a serious world is mere notoriety if not disgrace; but for talents, Heaven defend us! you are nothing but one of those syllable-sillabub makers, pastry-cooks of letters, comfit-confectioners, who pass off a musical wind for poetry, and come in at the tail of the great somewhere between the buffoon and the monkey! You would

sacrifice sense, wisdom, and philosophy, if you had them, to the music of your verse ; and think, because a true poet may rave, that all raving is poetry. I tell you, the very care that you take of the choice and ordering of your words proves the barrenness of your wit ; for no man who has a good thought in him cares a straw for the clothes it may pass in. The very splendour of your art shows its real poverty, just as a beggar is wont to put all his riches on his back" ; and he looked with manifest contempt at the other's costume.

" What do you, chop-logic, know of art ? " cried the poet, equally frankly, flushing. " Do you not understand that the worth of art, unlike that of such base articles as you are born to use, lies in its worthlessness. Of what worth are these flowers, say ? and yet God made them. The only things that are worthy, fool, are the things that are worthless ; for when you get down to your pounds and pence you get down to your pots and pans and scullery tools. Worth and value, there ! And of what worth is your precious philosophy ; since one philosopher avers to be true what another proves in a trice to be false, and the only outcome of it all is a mutual pulling of noses ? Men at best are but ants, and the more they meddle with high matters the more contemptible they seem ! " With that he turned his back on the other and lolled off, twanging his instrument.

Fortunately this degree of rudeness was not shown by the other suitors, however jealous they were of each other, or else there would have been quarrelling at once ; for now they all began to pour out upon the lawn. The lords Zamba and Montefine came first, offering spices to each other and contending in complimentary speeches. The first, a famous condottieri leader, was a Venetian ; and the second was the eminent politician who later more than anyone else saved Naples from the French—they are so well known

in history that it is unnecessary to describe them further. The last to come forth was the Prince himself; and all who saw him felt that he was to be the winner of the trial on account of his beauty as well as of his wealth. Very tall, with a large head and full features, somewhat rounded by indolence however, he evinced by his magnificent manner a sense of superiority which perhaps he thought it unnecessary or impossible to disguise. Following these came a crowd of guests, some of whom had at first intended to advance themselves among the candidates, but had thought better of it; and all of them, clustering together among the trees and talking with the greatest vivacity and good humour, while their splendid clothes were lit up by the rich beams of the setting sun, made a scene that was pleasant to watch. Upon the opposite banks of the two streams a large crowd of the commoner folk stood or sat on the grass; and now when they saw the suitors together began to cheer lustily, calling out by name those whom they were most inclined to favour. Still however, though the music began to play loudly, Lelita and the ladies did not show themselves; and the Count remained away in attendance on his daughter.

XIX.—Zozimo Astonishes Them

In the meantime, in a remote part of the garden, with his arms crossed and his cap over his eyes, walked the redoubtable Bran, who according to his usual humour should have been in the very midst of the revelry; and Trullo, flushed with gaiety, found him pacing here all alone. Of course both Bran and Trullo had determined without hesitation to join the ranks of the suitors; the former because he had long expressed his admiration for the lady, and the latter because, though he did not exactly love her, yet, as

it was well understood, had a cousinly eye to the property. For a long time, however, as often happened, Bran had been out of spirits, lolling about on benches, sleeping during the day, and even going to prayers; and when he suddenly announced at the last moment his intention to forgo his former purpose, Trullo thought that he must be ill indeed.

"Come, come," he cried on seeing him, "this cannot hold further. You will be turning monk next. What has come over you? You will not be one of the suitors? On my life I believe you have indeed fallen in love with my cousin."

Bran was about to reply angrily when Gangogo rushed up to them, breathless and in high spirits. This worthy did indeed find himself in good fettle during the revelry. Dressed in a fine jester's suit of yellow slashed with black and a fool's cap which scarcely suited the ferocity of the countenance beneath it, he was everywhere present and always astonishing, The amazing energy and even health, which in spite of his deformity showed themselves in the grip of his brows and the colour in his cheeks, carried him everywhere; and his impudence and audacity, like those of some terrific ape, made him always feared. Ever since he had wounded the great cardinal, he had become more and more unbearable; and there was no jest so outrageous that he would not undertake it for the sake of the applause which always followed. He delighted in the astonishment which his appearance caused among the visitors. Every night he roamed about the valley executing detestable practical jokes. Three times running he gagged and beat the camp watchman, and then rushed yelling among the tents with such speed that no one could catch him. He seized an old woman, tied her mantle over her head, fixed a lighted torch on top, and sent her screaming through the village to the terror of the peasants. He cut down

the tent given to the Prince's servants and belaboured them with a pole while they were struggling under the canvas. The night before the trial a number of gentlemen, chief among whom were Theiling and Reding, catching the spirit of his humour, rode down to Göschenen, delivered a feigned attack upon it, tied together a number of the guards in their shirts, and rode off yelling like fiends after having cracked not a few pates. Fortunately the broad Germans who were the victims of his folly laughed at it as much as did those who only witnessed it; and indeed he became the idol of the crowd to such an extent that they would look at nothing else while he was present.

"Zod, bod, and doddikins," he cried, coming up to Trullo and Bran, "if you would see a string of scare-crows, fall to and look at these suitors all together. As piebald, scurvy a crew as ever I saw. A hedge-full of corrupted corpses hung in chains could not be ghastlier. By death and the yellow spot-plague, I have a mind to go in and over-triumph the lot of them."

"Aye, do," said Trullo, sarcastically.

"Zod, I never thought of it before. It would be a good jest to win little Maid Mincing straight off, would it not? How the old goat would go aninnying after his daughter—ho! ho!"

"The others are too handsome, Gangogo."

"Handsome, say you! Bod, a row of dredged suicides by drowning would look livelier. Fifty starved tailors in a mortuary are nothing to it. There is not a straight nose, leg, or back among them. They have the melancholy of a mare dying of the botts; which though starved to the skin cannot digest the mere thought of a mouthful of hay. To look at the place where they stand you would think you were on a month-old battle-field full of lank cadavres. A blue, worm-eaten collection of gallows' droppings."

The others laughed.

"In holy truth," continued Gangogo, "it would be a sin against heaven not to fall in and win."

"What, you—*you* will be a suitor?" cried Trullo.

"I—I—yes, I. By the bottomless pit, though I am hunched and hairy yet I have a beauty of my own. There is never a man but will turn pale if I look into his eyes in anger. See this hand now—bristled with black hairs like the maw of Satan's pet tabby gib-cat. Were I not light tempered and a jester I should be feared. I have a mouth full of white tusks, and eyes black and luminous as the Fiend's lantern wherewith he looks for lost souls. Zod!" he exclaimed with enthusiastic confidence; "I am beautiful!"

"You are most charming, Gangogo," cried Trullo, stuffing his sash into his mouth to keep himself from laughing; "but ladies love a gentler sort."

Gangogo was about to recommence his own eulogy when his attention was suddenly attracted to something beyond the trees. Crouching down he peered forth in a state of the wildest excitement. "By the fat of corpses!" he cried in his usual vocabulary, "here comes that little villain Zozimo, the tapster of Capon's inn! Now I swear upon it he too is come to woo! What else brings him here?"

Surely enough it was Zozimo. Dressed as before he was pacing slowly toward them holding in his hands a very large book from which it was evident that he was both reading and deriving amusement; for the movements of his lips in forming the words to himself did not disguise the smile that flickered about them. An expression of intense benignity covered his face—which rendered all the more ridiculous the effect produced by the small body and the long crimson feather.

Bran and Trullo burst out laughing, and Gangogo strutting forward cried, "Ho! ho! now for sport. I will bring you up a jest from hell now?" So saying

he went up to the unconscious dwarf and struck up the book in his face, calling out, "A pot of ale!"

"Yes, sir, coming, sir," answered Zozimo instantly, without showing the smallest surprise, but suddenly fixing his cold grey eyes on the other.

"Gad," cried Gangogo, jumping back; "what a devil's face the little scrape-farthing has got on him!" and he began to walk round and round him with feigned alarm, amid roars of laughter from Bran, who had suddenly recovered his spirits—as in Gangogo's presence he always did.

It was seriously to be hoped that the excellent scenes of the inn were to be repeated; and the spectacle of the two dwarfs was so diverting that Trullo was just about to run and fetch the others to the sport. He became suddenly aware, however, that there was a change somewhere. Zozimo, without ceasing to hold the book before him and without relaxing his benevolent and even condescending smile, gazed upon Gangogo in such a remarkable way that that worthy actually appeared to be abashed. He ceased his gyrations abruptly and standing opposite began to scratch his head in perplexity; while Zozimo continued to smile, and even glanced up at Trullo as if Gangogo and not himself were the amusing party. But from that smile all the child-like simplicity and goodness had vanished, and it was evident that in these three months Zozimo had indeed learned something of the world and of himself.

"Well?" he exclaimed after a pause, smiling.

Gangogo was at a loss for a moment; then, thinking upon a happy subject, leered at the others and said with a grin, "You have a sister, rabbit?"

"Indeed I have, sir," answered Zozimo in his blandest tones; "and I am very sorry that she knocked you down the other day. It was a great presumption in her!"

Gangogo grunted. "If I were in the humour for it," he said, "I would love her. She is very beautiful."

"Yes, sir," answered Zozimo, "the very toads, beetles, snails, and worms follow her, sir."

Gangogo was doubtful as to how this should be taken. "You nutshell!" he cried, affecting more contempt than he felt. "Why does she live on the mountains!"

"To talk with the stars, sir."

"What, are not men good enough for her?"

"No, sir."

"True, she has not known me long," Gangogo exclaimed with a grandiose air.

Zozimo allowed himself a little joke. "No, faith!" he said, "she has found you short, sir."

The pun had an astonishing effect; Gangogo recoiled before him and Bran laughed. Never would Zozimo have made such a reply of old.

"Squirt!" exclaimed Gangogo, recovering spirit. "Do your mother and sister live on the mountains alone?"

"Aye, with God," answered Zozimo.

"Come, I will buy her of you for a ducat."

"She is too high-souled to be so low-sold, sir," answered Zozimo instantly, smiling at the other as a sage might smile at a puppy.

"Fust!" cried Gangogo getting angry; "what does she think of me?"

"Excellently, sir."

"I believe you. This icy virtue is soon melted. Tell her I smoke for her. What did she say?"

"She spoke excellently of you, sir," said Zozimo in his kindest manner; "excellently and with truth and sincerity that you are a very nasty piece of venom and malignity. Indeed in your heart she has read rage, hatred, lust, jealousy, and all things evil"; and he looked calmly into the other's eyes.

Bran burst out laughing, and Gangogo was so astonished at the daring of this little creature that he could say nothing.

"It is of no use, Gangogo," exclaimed Trullo. "You are not witty enough and are defeated. Now, my little man."

"Well, sir," said Zozimo, putting the edge of the book to his chin and half smiling and half bowing over it at Trullo.

"Do you remember the meat hook, Zozimo?"

"Yes, sir, alas, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha! the sight of it!" cried Trullo. "How we have laughed over it since!"

"And the verses, sir."

"Do not mention them. O Heaven! How did they go. 'I will to the wars, a warrior chief.' Oh, god of laughter, stay me."

"And the conclusion, sir," said Zozimo, now a little excited.

"'Noted above all others, and alone
Return with fame and win thee for my own.'

"*My* own!"

"What, you are not fool enough to try for my cousin!"

"Aye and to win her," cried Zozimo waving the book; "I stand upon certainty."

"You stand on an ass's legs."

Zozimo waved his hand.

"Come, you are not far from a rogue," said Gangogo savagely.

"Only a yard and a half, sir," responded the dwarf.

"You are an ass," he thundered.

"No, for I cannot bear you."

"True, you are more like an ape," said Trullo.

"No, for I cannot imitate you."

"If you do not take care I will thrash you with my stick," exclaimed Trullo, losing temper.

"You are a thief and murderer," cried Gangogo, grinding his teeth.

"Were I to steel or to steal you," answered Zozimo instantly, "I should yet be neither, for you are worthless and no man. Well, is your ass and ape wit done yet?"

"You dwarf, you tapster," cried Gangogo.

"God made me one and fortune the other; but since I have met you I shall give up beer-drawing for bear-drawing. I shall lead you about with a string in the nose to fairs and country places where we shall be known as Bruno and the Dwarf."

Even Trullo, the calm one, was getting angry at this defeat of his ally. "Upon my word I despise you, little rascal," he said.

Zozimo flashed a side-look as cold as steel at him. "That is only sufficient to make you look ridiculous, my lord," he said; "for your face, on which nature has written fribbler, will no more express scorn, the privilege of gods, than a suet pudding will express rage. You are not based firm enough in wit for scorn."

"I believe you are Satan," cried Trullo, much astonished.

"Aye, Satan," said Gangogo, pulling him behind.

"Satan," said Trullo in his turn when Zozimo faced round to Gangogo; and so they continued alternately jerking his coat behind and using an epithet which no one can consider complimentary, while Bran roared aloud at the scene. Suddenly, however, Zozimo, thinking that he had had enough of this, leaped in the air between them and putting out his hands at the same moment dexterously sent them down on their backs, where they sat amazed.

In the meanwhile they had unconsciously approached a little nearer to the spot where the trial was to take place, so that they had come in full view of the suitors and guests who had begun to stroll

about with some impatience. The fall of Trullo and Gangogo and the absurd figure cut by Zozimo gave rise to a shout of laughter at their expense; while the Count Azrimar, who had been watching the scene for some time with an amused expression on his face, advanced somewhat from the column at its conclusion. Zozimo, as if for the very purpose of courting ridicule, or perhaps in order to take the utmost advantage of his victory, began to strut about in the most absurd manner, folding his arms and staring defiantly at the handsome and magnificent figures around him.

"Fortune places us in strange company, Prince," exclaimed Zamba with a short laugh.

"The touch does not degrade us, my lord—my lord——"

"Zamba."

"My lord Zamba," said the Prince. "Do you think all of us are assembled or must we fear more suitors?"—with a little accent on the *fear*.

"Nay, I think we are all here," replied the soldier.

"Who then, think you, is the gentleman leaning yonder? I had not observed him before."

This exclamation had the effect of drawing a multitude of eyes upon the Count Azrimar, who, having come to the other side of the statue in order to keep Zozimo in sight, remained leaning his hand upon the foot of Apollo, his face clouded with some vexation at his servant's behaviour. The light now fell full upon him and a buzz of involuntary admiration broke from the crowd as they beheld a vision which suggested that the god Apollo in person was standing at the foot of his own statue.

XX.—The Wonderful Stranger

The consternation of the suitors at sight of this powerful rival was so evident that many of the guests

who were not interested in the result burst into laughter. "What!" cried Theiling, clapping one or more of them on the back in his robust manner; "keep up your hearts, boys; never give way; if this goes further your cheeks will need the paint-pot again!" "Ho there," cried Reding, "call the five and twenty barbers!"—at which witticism the laughter was renewed, and might have advertised the young man of the effect he was producing, if he had not already turned away with indifference. Gangogo, who was made aware of this wonderful presence at a moment when he was sore from defeat, was struck dumb with amazement and disgust. Even he was compelled to admit now that a man of real beauty, not to say beauty greater than his own, was present; and biting his nails with envy and thrusting aside Bran and Trullo, who stood in front of him, he strutted up behind the youth. "By the laugh of lepers!" he shouted returning, "nature has no charter to make men thus. Fire! I am inflamed!" and he strutted up again and returned, slamming his fist into the palm of his other hand. "His jewels are worth kingdoms," he cried: "his cap against the Prince of Astra and his cloak against the rest of us! Zod, I hate him!" Bran grunted and laughed. "He will oust the rest of us as easily as a cuckoo sparrows," he said; while Trullo smiled with an admiration which was entirely free from jealousy.

In the meanwhile Zozimo, who had slipped away for a minute, now suddenly returned; and, seeing the attention which his master excited, determined not to lose the opportunity for advertising the company of the purpose he was vainglorious enough to pursue. Suddenly running up to him, so as to draw all eyes upon him, he fell on one knee, and, doffing his cap to the ground, publicly asked for his master's blessing. The young man smiled indulgently, patted his head and,

taking a priceless ring from his finger, gave it to him, wishing him every prosperity. "Ha!" said everyone to himself; "so the young man is the dwarf's master; but why does he wish him prosperity and what is the issue?" At this moment, however, the loud shout that broke from the crowd announced that the lady herself was advancing from the castle.

XXI.—The Suitors' Trial

The hour was come. Trumpets and a discharge of fire-arms filled the valley with echoes; the suitors and guests, lifting their caps to the skies, shouted aloud—a shout which was repeated by the spectators beyond the stream. The very wind seemed to join in the general pleasure, for it made the great gonfalons of the pavilion rattle with the sound of pistol shots; while a flight of pigeons leapt from the eaves of the castle and circled round and round in the rosy sunlight, as if to welcome the bride.

Lelita, conducted by her proud father and accompanied by a number of ladies (with their fingers in their ears to keep out the sound of the fire-arms), advanced toward the pavilion. She was dressed entirely in a green-coloured silk gown with long sleeves. On her head sparkled a coronet, and round her waist a zone of gold studded with emeralds, which the Count compared to the zone of Venus, was clasped; while the same jewels formed the buckles of her shoes and flashed in the diadem, matching wonderfully with the brilliant and dazzling colour, between that of gold and the tenderest tint of the opening bud, of her dress. A dagger in a golden sheath was set at her waist, and struck a chord of sympathy, as it were, with her beautiful hair; and no one could deny that she presented the most beautiful vision of beauty that they had ever seen—so perfect were her proportions,

so exquisite her dress, and so wonderful the almost grape-like brilliance of her colour. Cynthian the poet praised her incessantly for some weeks afterwards.

She took her seat without delay. The ladies, many of them (such as the Countesses of Haldenstein and Werdenberg) her dearest friends, clustered behind her and poured those jests in her ear which made her look back at them with an adorable gesture. No wonder that the men cheered with such a gusto. Even the Prince was not a little moved. The Count Reichenfels now held up his hand for silence.

"Noble and perfect gentlemen," he said; "my daughter begs me thank you for your courtesy; her love she keeps for one, but her respect, she bids me to tell you, is for all. Before her stand the noblest men in the world; may Heaven bless the choice!"

A deafening shout greeted this little speech, which, it must be confessed, was delivered not without grace though in something of a cracked voice. An alarum of trumpets silenced the clamour. The suitors were to come forward one by one and kiss the lady's hand.

The guests divided themselves from the suitors and ranged themselves on either side of the pavilion; and each of the latter was surrounded by the members of his retinue. The Prince had at least a dozen gentlemen with him beside the pages who carried his ancestral jewels, his box of sweetmeats, and his helmet and sword. Zamba and Montefine had half as many each (as was arranged beforehand). Severus was accompanied by six scholars and students, Cynthian by as many poets and musicians; but Oïlus, strong in the sense of some secret assistance, was alone, and Schlaus, Mumm, and Oge had none to support them but a posse of manly brown hunters like themselves. Trullo stood surrounded by a group of gentlemen and farmers who were his uncle's dependents; while Bran, who had determined at the last moment to take his chance,

found himself at the head of the Count's men-at-arms, who encouraged him with hearty but heavy blows on the back. One by one the suitors now advanced and kissed the lady's hand amidst the scrutiny and the cheers of the onlookers; which latter were not diminished when Gangogo, waving his hat to the crowd, thrust in behind Bran and declared himself to be a candidate. Last of all came the gallant Count himself—perhaps the sincerest lover of all.

Another fanfare announced the herald, who, dressed in crimson, cried in a thundering voice,

"Silence!—Lords, Ladies, and Signiors, the Count of Reichenfels hereby promiseth his daughter and his fortune to what man soever she, upon view and choice of him, pronounceth the handsomest, be he count, carl, prince, or herdsman; with this one proviso—that he do sue her in all love and honour, nothing withholding, nothing hiding; being free to wed her both with hand and heart, and with no trick, compulsion or scheme endeavouring to compound her favour or foresway her judgment. Say, are all agreed?"

"Agreed!" shouted the suitors.

"I give the trial open, then."

The music burst forth loudly, and the suitors, each followed by his friends and headed by the Prince, walked past Lelita twice, blazing in their magnificent costumes and treading the earth with the pride and confidence begotten of their own beauty. The Count, flinging himself on a cushion at his daughter's feet, criticised each narrowly; though, it was whispered, he had already made his choice. The fine soldiers, Reding and Theiling, sat next to him and roared out jests not always of the most delicate nature; and the crowd everywhere laughed, joked, and cheered their favourites. One man's legs were too long, another's too short, their noses were too straight or not straight enough, and so on. Seen in the neigh-

bourhood of his rivals the Prince did not show to the advantage that was expected; he was just a little too heavy and seemed somewhat put out at the criticisms which were flung at him. The favourites were Zamba, a fine military figure, Bran, the hunter Schlaus, and Cynthian; and if the more noisy men preferred the first three, the ladies seemed to concentrate their attention so much on the last that, with his rapid perception, his heart began to beat very high. But he who gave rise to the greatest amusement was undoubtedly the modest Gangogo. With his ferocious bear-like gait he closed the procession each time that it filed past the lady; but everyone saw with huge delight that he was no longer in jest but in sober earnest; for the leer on his face had given way to an imbecile smile of gratification, and he plodded seriously onward without any of his usual pranks. The crowd, much amused, shouted with one voice, "Gangogo, a Gangogo, a Gangogo!"—a salute which the hunchback returned by gravely taking off his hat.

In the meantime, in spite of the fine persons and magnificent dress of the suitors, it might have been observed that the eyes of a number of the ladies and indeed of many of the men were fixed in another direction. Lelita, with lips apart and flushed with excitement, was listening to the comments of those around her when she suddenly became aware of this fact, and, following the direction of the general gaze, she was startled at seeing the young man whom she had observed before in the garden. At the same time Zitella whispered, "Look, look, madam!" But Lelita had scarcely done so when a fire seemed to run through her veins. The young man was not one of the suitors! On the contrary he was leaning on the column, calmly watching the crowd and showing not the slightest intention of joining the amorous competitors.

He stood to the left of her within a score of paces. Everyone wondered alike at his marvellous beauty and at his abstention from the trial. But just as many may watch the flight of an arrow while but one can feel the wound it gives, so, while the others wondered, Lelita was instantly conscious of an intolerable sting. This beauty and this abstention were an insult fired expressly at her. At the very moment of her triumph she was beaten down to the dust, and that without a word or even a look directed at her.

Forced to reply to the questions and compliments addressed to her on all sides, she had yet time to steal a glance every now and then at her silent tormentor. He stood idly staring before him. Did he, then, show no interest in her at all? Was this insult accidental or intentional? Perhaps he was already married, this youth? Such were the queries she put to herself; and it must not be supposed that a lady of such an experience of the world as she had could not find an answer in a feminine way of her own to such a simple problem, when as we know every woman can find an answer to everything. Turning round with sufficient quickness to surprise him, she found his eyes fixed on her with an expression which told her at once that she was indeed the cause of his coming hither, though whether it was an expression of love or hatred she could not determine. The young man looked away instantly.

The march of the suitors had now ceased and they drew up in a large semicircle before her, the Prince at one end and Gangogo at the other. The attendants of each withdrew a little to the rear and the music ceased. The Count rose and stood behind his daughter and, one by one, the lovers advanced and propounded their passion for her in a short speech to which she gave a suitable and graceful reply, which was always cheered to the echo. Never had the Count been more

happy nor his daughter appeared so. The Prince laid his hereditary jewels at her feet; the lord Zamba offered her his sword; the lord Montefine his numerous orders; Severus all his knowledge; Cynthian his genius; Oïlus his professional skill; Schlaus, Mumm, and Oge their honest hearts; Trullo his affection, and Bran himself and his services. Gradually however, as if tired of cheering, the crowd became more and more slient. The same thought seemed to strike everyone; why did not the handsome stranger advance? The Count too by this time had observed him and gazed at him thunderstruck. There was an awkward pause; but the youth neither moved nor spoke. With a slight frown the Count lifted his hand and the music recommenced loudly—signal that another stage of the trial was over.

Scarcely had it begun, however, when a hoarse voice was heard shouting at the top of its bent. It was Gangogo. "Sir—madam! I too would speak!" he vociferated. "Leave off that spot-plague din there!" The music ceased abruptly. "I too would woo you, madam," he cried.

"What, what, what? Gangogo too?" said the Count.

"Yes, I!" growled Gangogo. "Why not Gangogo? I have no gifts to give, it is true—neither of jewels, cash, or even love. I claim the prize merely upon the conditions of the trial, because I am the handsomest man here."

At this unexpected declaration the crowd broke into a shout of laughter, which, so far from encouraging him as by some it seemed intended to do, plunged him suddenly into a fit of ungovernable fury. He began to walk round and round in a circle, his eyes blazing and his stiff short hair rising on his head, while every now and then he scratched the earth with his long arms as he walked (as he was wont to do when

angry), presenting the most hideous spectacle that can be imagined.

"I—I—why not I too?" he shouted. "Yah! who will fight me? Come on, come on! Come all! I will tear you to shreds! I will dig down to your skeleton in a trice! I will do in a moment the graveyard work of a century! Look at me—look!"

And he ran round and round again like a tiger-cat in a cage, "I am beautiful, beautiful!" he yelled. "What is more beautiful than a tiger and I am one? Who will fight me? Cowards all—all cowards! Ha! look at me, just look at me!"

Lelita held up her hand. "Cease, Gangogo, cease!" she cried. "Enough, I admire you; you are beautiful indeed, but you must allow me to judge for myself, and I shall not forget you."

At this moment there was another interruption. It was caused by Zozimo, who was seen pushing in among the crowd. He held in his arms a large tray covered by a napkin; and, if Gangogo had looked terrible, this one appeared so ridiculous that the crowd, which had ceased to laugh at the other's rage, burst again into shouts of merriment. The whole thing was becoming a farce. Lelita remembered him at once.

"Sir, sir, sir!" he cried, "it is Zozimo, it is poor little Zozimo. I too have come to woo you, madam. You know that I have loved you long in secret. Poor, poor, poor little Zozimo."

"Alas, Zozimo, what can I do for you?" cried Lelita, pitiful and vexed.

"Listen, listen!" said Zozimo. "I have strange matters here. This tray, madam, contains revelations under a napkin; but first I give you this jewel."

"It is a magnificent diamond!" cried Lelita astonished. "How did you come by it?"

"This paper which I will read you," continued

Zozimo, "is more worth your consideration. It is an agreement signed by your worthy suitors, Schlaus, Oge, and Mumm. Let me read it.

"'We, Mumm and Oge, hunters, do hereby agree that the one of us which wins the lady Lelita to wife shall without demur or contention straightway hand over her and her fortune to his honest friend Hedwig Schlaus, farmer; provided that, in case he shall not desire her, she shall be returned to which of them may wish for her, for the sum of a hundred ducats a year for her maintenance. Signed: Oge and Mumm. Hedwig Schlaus, witness.'"

The consternation of the three hunters may be imagined when they found this secret document of theirs made so public; and two of them immediately fell upon Schlaus for imposing on them in such a manner, while none could conceive how Zozimo had possessed himself of the document.

"Monstrous, monstrous!" cried the Count. "Sirs, I am surprised at you. These persons have infringed the conditions of the trial. Write them out!"

"Listen, listen!" continued Zozimo. "Here is a phial belonging to the physician Oïlus, the contents of which he caused to be given by a servant to the lady Lelita, believing it to be a love philtre."

"O Heaven!" cried Oïlus, detected.

"He is guilty; his face betrays him; write him out!" shouted the Count.

"Do you love him after the philtre, lady?" asked Zozimo, grinning.

"No, I hate him!" answered Lelita.

"Then," said Zozimo, "his philtre is as worthless as his candidature. But listen, listen! Here are two rings, being the marriage rings given by the philosopher Severus to his two wives, living one in Padua and the other at Geneva."

"You lie, you lie!" cried Severus.

"Write him out; his face betrays him!" thundered the Count.

"Wait!" cried Zozimo. "Here is the notebook of the poet Cynthian——"

Cynthian tried to snatch it.

"——in which is written," continued Zozimo, "'A list of notable and beautiful ladies to whom it is expedient that I pay court. The lady Amaryllis—item, sonnet. The lady Maria—item, sonnet. The lady Jacoba—item, idyll!' and so on to 'the lady Lelita—item, cunning; of no poetical apprehension!'"

"Not to *your* verse, sir!" said Lelita spitefully.

"Write him out, write him out!" roared the Count in a fury. How had the dwarf become acquainted with these things? Everyone was amazed.

"Wait, wait, wait!" cried Zozimo. "Here is the whistle with which the lord Montefine, politician, purposed to call his confederates together for the object of carrying off the lady from her chamber to-night."

This was going too far. Why, none of the suitors would be left at this rate. "Do you deny it, sir?" asked the Count rather anxiously.

Montefine, for all his diplomacy, could do nothing but stare at the dwarf in amazement.

"He cannot deny it, sir," said Zozimo; "for I know his accomplices and will bring them before you if you please."

"Write him out!" shouted the Count. "Enough ——"

"Here is a letter," continued Zozimo, "written to you, my lord Count, by the upright soldier, the lord Zamba, slandering all the other suitors."

"Alas, I know it," said the Count sorrowfully. "Enough, enough, no more."

The consternation was general. Everyone stared aghast at his neighbour. What was the trial come to? The Count was becoming very uneasy.

"Wait!" shouted Zozimo, flourishing a beautiful coronet and screaming at the top of his voice. "Here is the ducal coronet offered to the Count by the Prince of Astra, in order to obtain his daughter—and *accepted!*"

The Prince burst into a fit of laughter. "Ha, ha!" he cried; "I too am discovered. Upon my word it is the devil!"

"Wait, gentlemen, wait," screamed the dwarf. "Only two suitors remain, my friends Trullo and Bran; and here are two love letters written by them to a peasant girl, my sister. Shall I read them, madam?"

"No, no!" cried Lelita; "I believe you. I see it in their faces."

There was a silence of extreme surprise not to say disgust. Here was an end indeed to a scene which promised so much pleasure. The Count sat stupefied. Lelita arose with an indignant gesture. "Enough," she cried, "most honourable suitors. Is this the way in which you think to win me? I thank you. I am for none of you!" Zozimo folded his arms.

Suddenly Gangogo pushed to the front. "What of me?" he cried in a voice of thunder. "Come, what of me, peewit; what of me? Am I dishonest? Am I a plotter? Come!"

Zozimo looked at him calmly. "Gangogo is honest," he said.

"A judgment, a judgment," roared the hunchback. "Gangogo is honest!"

"Most noble lady," exclaimed Zozimo, dropping on his knee before Lelita; "think of my patient love and of this service that I have done, and reward me. Let Zozimo entreat you—poor, poor Zozimo!"

At this moment the Count committed a great indiscretion for which, seeing the distracted state of the poor man's mind, we must forgive him. Finding

himself robbed of all the desirable suitors and none left but two wretched dwarfs, he turned, in a broken-spirited way and without due consideration, to the young man who was still leaning on the pedestal of the statue. "Sir," he exclaimed, "I commend your patience. You have been very patient indeed; but it is now your turn to speak if—I mean my daughter—that is to say——"

The young man glanced at Zozimo and came forward with his eyes on the ground.

"Your pardon, sir," he said, "I am——"

"Did you not come to join the rest, sir?" asked the Count, gripping his daughter's chair.

The young man was very embarrassed. He shifted uneasily from foot to foot. "I came only, sir," he gasped, "to attend the suit of my excellent servant, Zozimo." Then he blushed crimson.

There was a howl of anger from the crowd. Lelita leapt to her feet.

"Enough!" she cried; "let the trumpets sound. Farewell for ever, my noble paladins. You see, I have to choose between this dwarf and this. Fie! hunchbacks are more straight than you. Father," she continued, swallowing a sob; "I will now choose between these two dwarfs."

"What, what!" whispered the Count, "go hang the trial! take the Prince."

"Take me," said Gangogo in a hoarse whisper, "and you will find me beautiful enough."

It was observed here that the Count Azrimar, who still kept his gaze on the ground, began to shiver all over. Suddenly, however, he lifted his eyes and they met those of Lelita with a flash that showed at once his true feeling for her. She paused a moment and then advanced proudly to the front of the platform. "Signiors!" she cried; "let me at least be honest. I promised my hand to the handsomest man among

you and I must redeem my promise. Know, then, that your own actions have disfigured you more than the parts that nature gave you can atone for. I choose this dwarf, Zozimo, as the handsomest among you; for he is at least deserving, kind, and good."

Zozimo sprang upon the platform and kissed her hand.

But it is not to be thought that such an arrangement could have been endured. The crowd broke into a fierce yell. "He is Satan!" they cried; "Zozimo is Satan!" The Prince drew his sword and was followed in the action by the others. "Down!" they cried, "down, you rat; down, you vampire!" and several of the ladies even tried to push him away.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he shrieked, "you do not play me fair. I am the winner here without question! You must give her up to me!"

It is more likely that he would be run through the body; a dozen swords were pointed at him. Suddenly, recognising his situation and with a terror which some say was affectation, he leapt off the platform and resigned his rights with a gesture which perhaps contained in it a scintillation of humour or even of contempt. Lelita burst into tears; but the crowd soon found that they had fallen from the frying pan into the fire; for no sooner had Zozimo given her up than the only remaining suitor, Gangogo, was by her side in a moment. And he was certainly a more terrible claimant; for he drew his dagger, threatened her life with it, and shouted in his graceful idiom, "By the shrieks of Tartarus she is mine! Off all, or I am a widower in a moment!" Mad with a fury that appeared to be entirely groundless, he flourished the weapon and forced everyone to hold back for fear, if they should approach, that he would stab her.

What happened exactly is not known; but in a moment the dagger was seen flying in the air, while

the Count Azrimar was holding down the ferocious dwarf with both hands. Lelita fainted.

There was tumult everywhere. The gentlemen leaped on the platform and the crowd in the meadow dashed across the two torrents regardless of wetted feet.

The Count went up and down roaring out, "Hang him from the battlement!—little Lola! what! what! there, the red comes back! sweet daughter!—be hanged to you! Shovel him off the keep with a string on him!" and so on.

Nothing, however, was eventually injured save the lady Lelita's laces.

XXII.—The Suitors Feel Themselves Injured

Such was the miserable ending of the brilliant Suitors' Trial, so famous in history. What a situation for the poor lady who had expected to obtain the handsomest husband in Christendom! "But then," exclaims Murinus in triumph at the discovery, "count up the suitors and you will find that they number exactly *thirteen*, the number delighted in by devil and witches as being the most unfortunate for men. Besides, was it not presumptuous on the part of the Count to lay so much on the single virtue, beauty, when God hath endowed us with a hundred others such as valour, God-fearing, cleanliness, and the rest? the reproof of which folly lay indeed in the very result of the trial."

The close of the trial was indeed a dull affair. The sun had set and a cold, dank mist began to rise from the ground, while the gloomy tower of Reichenfels, black against the golden west, seemed to grin down malignly on the scene. The guests commenced to hurry away to their tents, oppressed with a sort of

supernatural horror ; though the Count, after declaring the trial to be without result, rushed among them, invited them to the banquet as if nothing had happened, and even hinted at another trial the next day. Ruefully he stood, while his daughter was recovering from her swoon, endeavouring vainly to stem the tide of departure and inwardly cursing the officiousness of the wretched Zozimo, which, however, he could not openly resent. The same person, too, had dragged away the Count Azrimar, just as Reichenfels was beginning to base some hopes in his sudden devotion to Lelita. What the poor man was to do now for a son-in-law he did not know. His daughter he felt was disgraced ; for the story would get abroad all over Europe in a few weeks and both of them would be covered with ridicule. Even now the gross peasantry were breaking up and going home in a condition of much hilarity, while Reding and Thieling were laughing explosively under a tree. Why, the girl was rejected, after some show of hesitation, even by the miserable dwarf whom she had been compelled to accept. Here was a crash indeed !

At this moment, however, his spirits were raised somewhat by the arrival of some soldiers and pages dressed magnificently in the Venetian fashion, who declared that they were the servants of the Count Azrimar. Their master, they said, had ridden in advance to be present at the trial ; and so splendid were their accoutrements that Reichenfels was at once convinced of his great wealth and determined to seize the new chance that offered. The young man's behaviour in refusing to join the suitors and in allowing his servant to behave in the way he did was the most singular in the world ; but when the Count remembered the manner in which he had seized Gangogo, the thought struck him that there was some plan from the very first to defeat the ends of the trial, and that perhaps this

Azrimar was in reality the most sincere suitor of all. Consequently he ushered the new-comers into the castle itself with the greatest condescension, and sent abroad a dozen messengers to look for the Count and to entreat him to accept the same hospitality.

When he had dismissed poor Lelita to her chamber and had collected as many of his guests as he could, he led the way into the banquet-room. After some wine and sweetmeats they sat down to a second feast at which all the ladies were present. Most of the guests, too, had returned by this time; and all of the suitors, excepting Severus and the hunters, who felt that they could never be forgiven, had determined to put a brave face on the matter in the hopes of a second chance on the morrow. The Count soon recovered his temper. "Courage, Signiors, courage!" he cried. "Such things do not happen twice. Another time you will not employ these artifices, so natural in your circumstances, and the trial will proceed more smoothly. Come, hang melancholy and be mirthful!"

"And what pray was the artifice employed by me?" exclaimed the Prince angrily. "I offered you a coronet which you accepted."

"Prince, Prince!" cried the Count, "I beg you reflect——"

"It is unnecessary, sir," said the Prince. "I never reflect. A man in my position has no need to. Why did you accept the title in private and then round upon me in public for having offered it?"

"Dear Prince!" exclaimed the lady of Werdenberg archly; "you were so sure of winning that the bribe was unnecessary."

"Bribe, madam!" cried the Prince, "I bribe!—I!——"

"Believe it, Count," said Montefine, "you have been imposed upon in the strangest manner for a

man of your years. I assure you that I had no intention whatever of carrying off the lady by force."

"Why did you not say so at the time?" asked the beautiful daughter of Raron, who was present.

"Because I was so thunderstruck at the imputation, madam."

"If indeed," exclaimed the Count, "it can be proved——"

"And what, sir," shouted Cynthian across the table, "have I done to merit censure? Am I not free to cultivate the divine Muse as I please?"

A shout of laughter arose. "Write me too an ode," cried a lady. "And me—and me," cried others.

"Believe it, sir——" began the poor Count.

"It appears," said Cynthian very sarcastically, "that you were willing enough to find an excuse for getting rid of some of us."

"For that matter, sir," said Oïlus, "am I not to exercise my own profession in my own interests?"

Another shout of laughter broke forth and all the ladies asked the physician for some of the love philtre which had proved so useful.

"I had made a mistake in the flask," he answered indignantly; "but for all that I think that it was not courteous in your lordship to write me out for using such a natural precaution."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen——" began the Count.

"Why, sir," asked Trullo smiling sweetly, "should our friend Bran and myself be excluded for having had love affairs when, as is well known, my beautiful cousin herself has——"

"And why, sir," thundered Zamba suddenly, "do you presume to censure me for having made known to you the very truths about these gentlemen, which, when made public by another, you found sufficient to condemn them? If a simple soldier like myself is to be dishonoured for speaking the truth and is

to be called a slanderer when he writes to you in the cause of simple honesty, I shall not trouble you or your daughter again, sir, believe me."

"To whom do you refer as dishonest, sir?" cried the Prince, looking blackly at him.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" cried the Count, "let bygones be bygones. To-morrow——"

"I think, my lord Count," said the Prince, slowly removing his eyes from Zamba and his host; "that you have condemned us all on very trivial grounds indeed."

"But the terms of the trial, Prince, the terms of the trial," cried the Count piteously.

"Well have we—*have I*—infringed them?"

"No, no, certainly not, certainly not," exclaimed the Count in extreme perplexity.

"Then," they all shouted triumphantly, "why did you exclude us from the trial?"

At this point all the ladies and the guests who had not joined in the trial could not refrain from bursting into laughter, partly at the chagrin of the suitors and partly at their attempts to shift the blame upon the poor Count; a ridicule which did not improve the temper of the former nor the situation of the latter.

"In fact, sir," said Cynthian sourly when it ceased, "it does not require a poet's imagination to conceive that the whole fiasco was arranged by you for some purpose of your own."

The Count was aghast.

"At all events, sir," said the Prince, "it must have been you who informed the dwarf about the coronet."

"And about the letter I wrote you," cried Zamba.

"I—gentlemen—I!" protested the Count.

"Then who was it?" asked Cynthian. "The dwarf obtained his knowledge from someone and doubtless for some purpose not connected with himself;

for he resigned the lady as soon as he had won her."

"It seems as if you had designed your jester Gangogo to be the victor, my lord," suggested Montefine.

At this fresh laughter broke out.

"Aye, Gangogo, Gangogo!" shouted Reding, "he is the true winner of the trial. Gangogo is honest. A thousand cheers for him. Bring forth Gangogo."

"Gangogo, Gangogo!" they all shouted. "Bring forth Gangogo!"

"Let Gangogo be brought!" said the Count, glad to find someone to relieve him of his guests' indignation.

XXIII.—Despair and Love

During this second banquet, night had descended over the valley. The last pale wash of twilight had faded from the west and the stars, ineffectual rivals of the sun, shone upon the deserted garden, the empty pavilion of roses, and the much-trodden grass around it. Black and gigantic rose the huge slopes of the St. Gotthard and the Bäzburg, and the lights of Urseren glimmered across the meadows. Floods of red light and the sounds of mirth poured from the distant windows of the banqueting-room; but all here was silent. A secret chill rose from the damp ground.

Two dark figures appeared and spoke in subdued tones.

"Good!" exclaimed one. "You have advised me wisely indeed! If I mistake not, I have lost the lady that I love and my own honour together. To what end, to what end, O foolish councillor, have you led me to this? I have seen her slighted and wronged—and have achieved nothing if not her well-deserved hate. I might have stepped in and won with ease. I abstained, have lost, and am a fool."

"But you have done two things commending to

women—you have piqued her and saved her in danger. You shall earn her love now. Is that nothing—ha ? "

" Nothing to my honour," cried the other, " for I do not think it honourable to trick the love of women. It is a thing that most dishonours her whom most we love. I have offended my own virtue and her sanctity."

" I am your servant, my lord," said Zozimo.

" Good in action but bad in advice, Zozimo. You have ruined me now. Not all that I can say, do, or appear can remove the odour of that insult. Detestable ! detestable ! fool that I was. Your eye and my unreadiness flung me into it. To stand there and not to woo her, to look at her and not to approach her, to hear her speak and not to fling myself at her feet—O Heaven—but to turn coldly and say, ' It is my servant, my servant Zozimo, who woos you ! ' "

" Hush ! " cried the other ; " not so loud. Would you spoil it all ? Hist, I hear her coming. This is the hour for which I have toiled. Do you think that a woman cannot read closer ? What chance has a word against a look with a woman ?—Lie close now."

There was a rustling of silk and a small sigh in the darkness A light step was heard ascending the platform, someone fell into the throne of flowers, and suddenly a succession of loud sobs broke the silence. The moon, silver discoverer, rose over the edge of the mountain and shot her pale rays into the pavilion. Yes, there were the flowers, there the much-trodden grass, there the tent-ropes casting their shadows upon the canvas—and there Lelita, crying upon the throne that was to have been her throne of triumph. But the two figures were gone.

The heaving of her shoulder could be seen in the dim splendour. The pale green hue of the dress looked ghastly in that light ; but the emeralds, as if proud of their vitality, flashed back a decided ray. They all

shook and shivered in sympathy with every sob. The head with its circlet of humbler pearls was pressed down upon the hands, which rested on one arm of the chair. The emerald upon one foot shone like a green fire—like a fairy glow-worm amongst the flowers that heaped the platform.

For many minutes this sobbing continued. Then the girl sat up as if awaking from sleep. She had flung herself there when all was dark around. She sat up and removed her hands from her face. A splendour of silver, full of delicate tints as of jewels, water or crystal at twilight, exquisite subterfuges of colour, subtle evanescences of nameless and unnameable hues changing momently, filled her eyes. The moon, surrounded with a broad halo of lofty, fretted, icy cloud, looked like a fairy rising in her shell. Lelita felt as if she had slept in the chair for some hours, so great was the surprise of this sweet change.

Her lips moved. With both hands she drew the little dagger at her side from its scabbard. "Enough," she said, "enough, enough! This ends me. After this I cannot live. I am disgraced. Jesting Heaven, that this should be myself—this slighted thing Lelita, who this morning was the lady of all hearts! Oh, oh, let me die."

It may be imagined indeed that she was quite willing to die, but unfortunately the process is a painful one. The sticking in of the steel is the chief difficulty. It is easy, of course, to die when you have driven it far enough. Lelita looked at the point of her toy dagger, and the point, as it were, questioned her. It asked her if she had courage. We may imagine a dagger like that waiting for a long time in the hope, often disappointed, of killing someone. It would be a pity to disappoint it again. She smiled at the thought. Yes, she was a brave little person and a proud one. She set her pretty teeth and stood up and held the

dagger out at arm's length in a feminine fashion, so as to give sufficient impetus to the stab. We do not know that she remembered anything about her stays at the time. At all events, at this very moment, the dagger was taken out of her hand, and the hand itself seized and covered with kisses. "Help!" she cried, forgetting that that was the last thing which she wanted. "I bring it," answered a voice.

Was this some fairy prince who had stepped out of the moon? Had she stabbed herself and was she dead? Was this the welcome of some spirit to her enfranchised soul? Were those passionate eyes, that perfect face human at all? What words were those pouring forth as from some fountain at her side? She was in a trance.

Gradually she felt a pain growing at the spot where she had intended to stab herself. Had she really stabbed herself, then?

She awoke with a start. This was the young man who had insulted her. She tried to draw away her hand. She could not; nay a warmth seemed to enter it from the lips that pressed it, and to rise up to her soul. She understood it all. This man had loved her secretly, in some manner unknown to her. For his very love to her he would not join the suitors; he contented himself with rendering the whole affair abortive, and then he threw himself at her feet.

The voice was pouring itself forth; a bubbling of melodious words. "Sweet soul, sweet maid, bright planet of my life." A poetry, nay a rhythm, born naturally of love. "Sweet soul, sweet maid, bright planet of my love; my soul, my maid, dear passion of my life. When you did not know me nigh I have adored you. Take, take these kisses and my soul with them. Now on these delicate fingers let my lips bring fiery roses, emblems of my love. Your hand, your arm, I will devour you all. Come, enter me and be my heart. Sit in my spirit like a star and see my

love. Bury me with roses and so let me die. Hide me in flowers and so let me die. Tell me you love me not and so let me die; or touch my hand with yours and bid me live"; and so on, nonsense full of sense.

To be taken by storm in this way by a man she had never seen before! Who was he? Whence came he? How daring, how passionate! He seized her hand, he imprisoned her arm, his face was at her knees. The thick, rich, curling hair, circling his head like an aureole or the locks of a cherub, amazed her. The straight, determined brows fascinated her. She would have liked to have placed one of her hands, did he not detain them both, on his head. She saw that a little cloud had come over the moon; the man at her feet seemed very dark, very handsome.

Was it an angel, a spirit?

The next moment she heard someone calling her; it was the Count. He approached rapidly, and she could see the flashing of torches on the trees. They were looking for her; and, it appeared, in some distress; for the Count was telling some of them to run and search the torrent. She laughed; they thought that she had committed suicide. She tried to drag away her hand, but the wretch would not let it go. The Count was upon them; the torches glared upon them; they were caught.

"What, what, what," exclaimed the Count, "how is this?"

"I have found your daughter for you, sir," said the young man, rising with a smile.

"So it seems. On my word, sir! But you play off and on strangely, sir."

"I love your daughter, sir," said the stranger.

"Indeed! What is that you have in your hand?"

"Your daughter's, sir."

"Well, when you leave it," said the Count frowning portentously, "we will—we will go in to supper."

"I shall never leave it till I have stamped it mine—thus," said the Count Azrimar, putting a ring upon the finger (with some difficulty, we admit).

"And my daughter," said the Count, "she has no word?"

"I have not seen him yet," cried Lelita piteously.

"You must come with me, sir," said the Count, "and answer some strict questions I must put to you. You play fast and loose in a very strange manner—very. Come."

The Count led the way frowning to the banqueting-hall, whence now uproarious shouts of laughter were issuing. The guilty couple walked behind him, and the hand of one took the hand of the other and pressed it. The second hand did not find the first troublesome.

They entered the banqueting-room together.

XXIV.—Zozimo takes his Revenge

After the Count ordered Gangogo to be brought in he had risen somewhat stiffly (for the absurd accusations of his guests had nettled him) and had left the room on the plea of seeing his daughter. He had ascended to her chamber, where he found the crimson gold-embroidered coverlet of the bed disordered and the different-coloured pillows with impressions left by her head and wet with tears. She had been weeping there: but she was gone. The maid was frightened. No one knew where she was. Full of a horrible suspicion, the Count hurried forth, called for torches and rushed into the garden seeking everywhere; and, perhaps, the apprehension of that moment, more than all the other events of the day, impressed upon him a sense of the disgrace which she had suffered. When he found her as we have described, it was with a double

relief; for she was alive and reinstated in the good graces of fortune. The same thought came to him as had struck his daughter; namely that this young man was the real suitor after all, and by some means had brought about the failure of the trial in order to clear the ground for himself. His jewels and the rich dresses of his servants suggested that he was very wealthy—a point which the Count promised himself to study more carefully on the morrow. He was certainly the handsomest man there; Lelita seemed to like him, and no one could complain if he were to be proclaimed the successful suitor next day.

In the meantime Gangogo had been brought into the banqueting-hall. He was eating large sugar-plums, which he took out of a silk bag and stuffed into his mouth so fast that his cheeks bulged on both sides. A strong bronze chain was knotted round his waist and held at the ends by a couple of powerful soldiers; for when he was in disgrace he became often so violent as to necessitate his being bound in this manner to pillars of the castle hall. While he was being led up toward the Prince he took the opportunity of snatching some more confections off the table.

"On my word!" exclaimed the Prince when he and the company had gazed for some minutes at the outrageous dwarf.

"On my word!" answered Gangogo, in the best of humours, with his mouth full. The whipping that he had been promised did not trouble him a jot.

"Pray, sir," said the Prince, spreading his napkin over the knee which was nearest to the dwarf, "may I ask what relation there is between you and your friend, Bozimo?"

"Hey?" said Gangogo, squinting at the Prince and opening his mouth in surprise; so much that its contents could be seen.

"What are you and Bozimo to each other?"

"Zozimo," corrected Gangogo with a laugh like the sound of a watchman's rattle—which made everyone else laugh.

"Exactly."

"Just so," said Gangogo, looking for an almond at the bottom of the bag.

"I mean," continued the Prince after a pause during which he had gazed at the hunchback as we gaze at a monkey, "with reference to the events of to-day; what arrangements did you and your charming companion make in order to enable you to bring about a consummation so flattering to yourselves, which, but for the objection that we all naturally took to it, may have resulted in your possession of the prize of the competition?"

Gangogo replied only by inserting a whole sugared peach into his mouth and staring at him.

The Prince smiled contemptuously, "Your tricks, sir," he said, "are not even laughable. I must press you for a reply. If you do not answer candidly; if you remain unwilling to inform us by what means your friend became possessed of certain items of intelligence which he used with admirable skill against us, apparently solely for your advantage (since he resigned for himself his share in the spoils); and whether indeed you were not privy to the whole business, those stripes which I fear to think you will be compelled to bear on the morrow will, at my solicitation of the Count, be no doubt doubled in number, and your confession, now peacefully requested, obtained at the stroke of the whip."

Gangogo assumed a hideous look of utter vacancy.

"You shall be whipped twice over, sir," suddenly thundered the Prince, more briefly.

The dwarf sprang backward as if terrified and then, carefully taking the half-consumed peach out of his mouth and doffing his cap to the Prince, said, "The

information requested, agreeable to myself as to the lords and ladies assembled, whether to-day, to-morrow, or the next day, or concerning the events of yesterday or the day before, since the breaking out of war between the French and the Milanese."

"In what manner ?" asked the Prince.

"I mean, sir," answered Gangogo, obviously imitating the Prince's style, "that the relation between myself and the infamous dwarf Gozimo, whom indeed to see is to behold, to behold to look at, and so on, not only for *himself* but for the sake of every person in that company ; nor for *myself* but for that of every-one out of it ; though it was easier to win the lady by that means than by any other."

"Ha, you say so," said the Prince ; "you confess it !" He sat with fist on table, very angry and not a little flushed with wine.

"Bod !" exclaimed Gangogo, "whatever the result, honesty and your highness compel me to out with it at the expense of telling the truth, exasperating my enemies, conciliating his, reproving yours, and finishing the matter at once."

"You had better," shouted Zamba, thumping the table—also with some slight vinous vigour.

"That is the whole affair then," said Gangogo, returning the peach to his mouth.

"I do not catch you entirely," said the Prince. "You have not told us yet how you found out the affair of the coronet."

"Nor that of my note-book," cried Cynthian.

"Nor mine—nor mine," shouted the others.

"Draw round me then, signiors," said Gangogo, "and wait till I have finished my mouthful." This he did with great deliberation, casting a calm look at Reding and the others which made them tremble with suppressed laughter. "Now, gentlemen," he continued, "I am the man for you ; do me the honour

of keeping your wits about you if you can. There is magic in the affair, signiors."

"Magic!" they cried.

"That same Zozimo, not I, my lords, is the devil. I will now explain by what necromancy, spodomancy, cheiromancy, and onomancy he proved you all to be such rank rogues as you doubtless are, and, as he phrased it, should be ducked in neroli twice daily. Zod, bod, and doddikins, said he, a row of starved tailors hung on a chain would not be a beastlier sight than your worships, save when the same circumstance doth occur more than once in a different manner."

"Be more explicit," said the Prince, frowning.

"With respect to the coronet then," continued Gangogo, "that the Prince offered as a bribe to the Count and the old he-goat accepted, and with respect to the lies written by the lord Zamba, and the infamous scheme of the lord Montefine and the tricks of the meaner caste of apes, I have the word of the excellent dwarf Zozimo, bosom friend to the fiend, that they were discovered in this manner. Setting aside the commutation of metals, the first, last, and eternal necessity of the thing, my lord Prince, you have arrived at a solution of the affair that is as much a credit to the weakness of your understanding as to the strength of your wine."

The Prince looked amazed.

"You shall be fooled twice over, sir," thundered Gangogo in the way the Prince had done just now.

"He is laughing at us," exclaimed Zamba rising angrily, amid the roars of the guests. At the same moment Gangogo with great dexterity and infinite impudence flicked a plum-stone at his face; "so much do we lose the respect of the meanest after we have been detected in a fault," says Murinus.

The scene which now followed lives in history. Gangogo, suddenly twitching the chain away from the

laughing soldiers, escaped, and, followed by the infuriated suitors, ran down alongside the tables, whirling the ends of the chain round and round so as to defend himself. At first he was aided by all the rest of the guests, especially Reding, who allowed himself to be used as a dodging-post by the agile hunchback; though some of the suitors had gone so far as to draw their daggers and the position was therefore a serious one. Suddenly however (as it frequently happened with him) Gangogo lost his temper; in a moment he fell into a furious passion and lost all control over himself. Whirling the formidable chains he attacked everyone. Two ladies were injured and the lord Montefine struck violently. The creature had become a very demon; and all the women were beginning to shriek aloud when fortunately Bran seized one end of the chain and a soldier the other. Kicking and biting, the dwarf was ground down upon the floor and made prisoner.

"Now!" cried Bran breathlessly, "we will give Gangogo a lesson. He needs it. What shall we do with him?"

Bran's knee was on Gangogo's back and his hand held him by the back of the neck; but the dwarf, panting beneath the large soldier, could just see before him by pushing his chin forward. In front of him stood a little figure dressed gaily in a very fine suit of dark green satin.

It was Zozimo. His left hand grasped the hilt of a dainty little sword and the right hand held a pair of gloves high in the air. He was laughing heartily. Everyone drew back from him.

"Hang him on a hook and make bacon of him," he suggested, pointing to a large hook which hung from the roof for the purpose of supporting there the famous unicorn's horn—which had been brought from Capon's inn for the nonce.

"Hang him on the hook," they all shouted. "Yes, yes, hang him on the hook."

Bran looked swiftly at Zozimo and smiled. Lifting Gangogo with all his strength he passed the hook under the chain round his waist. The dwarf hung motionless looking stupidly at the company and gradually swinging round and round until his red eyes fixed themselves without speculation on Zozimo. The smaller dwarf stood below looking up with a smile at his former tormentor.

Zozimo had the dress and air of the steward of a great nobleman. His sober-coloured clothes were of the richest material, and a black hat with a small feather was under his arm. From his waist hung a bunch of keys, a heavy purse, and a writing tablet. He bowed in the most admirable manner to the company and, advancing toward Gangogo, addressed him with the greatest politeness.

"My poor friend," he exclaimed, "in what a pitiful plight do I find you? Is it possible that men can ever thus afflict one whom I was obliged to confess honest and his own conscience proclaims the handsomest man in the world? Alas! I fear that you have fallen below your own philosophy. Do you not remember in what terms you enjoined me to be busy, thrifty, clean, perfect, and wise? Look at me to what I have come by your advice. I have obtained the kindest, richest, and handsomest of all masters. I am trusted, loved, and honoured. I have servants, castles, estates, jewels, affairs, and money confided to me. Proud gentlemen find it no dishonour to court me and the ministers of princes communicate with me. And yet, behold me, I am of such poor circumstances by nature that men call me Zozimo the dwarf—poor, poor Zozimo, the dwarf! I began with nothing; I was a tapster in a humble inn; while you, the wonderful Gangogo, the strong, the impetuous,

the princely Gangogo, the honest Gangogo, the handsome Gangogo, were the admired of all beholders. Do you remember how (it is not three months since) I hung in the very plight that is yours now and you condemned me with every term of contempt ? Alas, friend, to such a pass have evil ways, such as drunkenness, evil-speaking, rioting, violence, and passion brought you, in spite of your honesty and beauty. I must condemn you in my turn ; but I pity you. I must reproach you ; but I would take you down from the hook—if I were tall enough."

So saying he flourished his hat to his rival and looked round for applause. His sentiments had been excellent, his reproof well merited and his language moderate ; but yet his speech was followed by silence.

While he had been speaking, Reichenfels, Lelita, and Count Azrimar had entered and had attracted the general attention. The last, going up to his servant, touched him smilingly on the shoulder. " Enough, good Zozimo," he said ; " since I am somewhat taller than you are, I will perform the action which you have so charitably suggested." So saying he took down Gangogo from the hook ; and that worthy, who had said not a word the whole time, remained standing stupefied, blinking at Zozimo. Gradually (a thing most unexpected in one so base) a large tear formed in each of his eyes, rolled down his cheeks and fell on the floor. Bran was thunderstruck. " What, cheer up, old comrade ! " he cried ; " after all we love you the better of the two ! "

It may be imagined that the unexpected reappearance of the young Count caused much interest among the guests and some consternation among the suitors. Reichenfels, who had overheard the mention made by Zozimo of the castles, estates, and jewels of his master, determined upon a bold move. Leading his daughter to her seat near to himself and placing the young man

between them with every mark of respect, he lifted his drinking horn with a look of veiled triumph at the suitors, and cried, " Signiors, I drink to the health of my daughter and of the noble Count Azrimar. There will be no further trial to-morrow."

The Prince left the room without a word. Gangogo was led off by the two soldiers. Zozimo disappeared, and the Count chuckled to himself for ten minutes.

PART III

THE TOURNAMENT

XXV.—Not so Easily Won

It had been intended that Lelita should be married a week after the trial and that the interim should be devoted to pleasure. The fiasco, however, led to a change in the plan. On the morning after the trial, Reichenfels had gone to his daughter's chamber in order to discuss the situation with her.

"You do not understand, my father," she said; "it is impossible for me to marry this young signior so soon because I do not know who he is at all. You do not comprehend these matters."

"But it had been agreed," he exclaimed aghast, "that you were to marry the favoured suitor within a week. What am I to do with such a crowd of persons without offering them some amusement of the kind?"

"Of course," she replied scornfully, "that arrangement was intended to apply only if I had chosen Cajazzo or Balbiano or the Prince or someone with whom I am already acquainted. I hope you did not think that I should ever have been so hasty with any of these disgraceful people you have collected from every part of the world?"

"You were to marry the handsomest man of all, as I understood."

"Pish!" she exclaimed; "that was your idea,

you foolish old father. What do I care for handsome men or for any man at all ? Of course I should have chosen the very ugliest if I pleased and married him within a week or a year or not at all, just as I had a mind to do."

"Tut, tut, tut!" he exclaimed rubbing his head, "you women are all alike. Tell me, do you intend to take the Count then ?"

"He is certainly handsome," answered Lelita, looking at the point of her shoe ; "but I know nothing really about him, while I cannot understand however he comes to know me so well and to love me so much. I have never seen him or even heard of him before. Have you, father ?"

"No, no," he answered ; "but he is rich, Lola, very rich."

But nothing he could say persuaded her to yield, and so the poor man was obliged to state that the marriage was put off for a month. The Prince went off to Italy early the same morning and the other suitors were making preparations to depart, being in a state of high dudgeon about the bad treatment they conceived themselves to have received. A tourney which was attempted in the evening was a very dull affair ; and the peasantry and poorer people who had come to witness the trial were already beginning to throng the passes on their way home. The Count was distracted. He implored his daughter to alter her determination. The business might come off still with some show of success if ended by a brilliant marriage feast. As it was everyone would be gone in two days.

Lelita kept her chamber all the morning with a few select friends such as the lady of Werdenberg and Count Raron's daughter ; and said that she was sorry, but she would marry no one yet. As for Count Otto, he would have to take her as he found her or not at all.

"Why should she?" exclaimed all the friends together. "Now that the Prince is gone there is no need of any hurry; and it is a wonder if she will look at any man at all after the disgraceful treatment she has received." The Count, they continued, should never have brought his daughter into such a quandary, and he ought at once to demand some explanation from young Otto as to why he had allowed his servant to interfere in such a manner. Reichenfels felt as if he had put his head into a wasp's nest, and flew away banging the door. Outside he met the passionate lover, and taking his arm cried,

"These women! Never, signior, has a poor father been so tormented! She loves you to distraction, but nothing will induce her to leave her room this morning. It is a pity, it seems to me, that you did not enter the lists with the others and win her openly, for then we should have had none of these tantrums. That Zozimo of yours was too clever altogether."

"Indeed, sir!" cried the young man spiritedly; "I have too much respect for her to compete for her as if for a prize at tennis. My love for her is above that of the poor tricksters who did so. As for my servant's action, he told me that he could bring the trial to nothing and I left it to him on that assurance; but I do not cease to regret that I went so far as not to join in when you appealed to me. It was only in a moment of confusion, believe me, sir, that I did so; and I shall never forgive myself for it."

"I will tell her so, I will tell her so," exclaimed the Count; "but for the present I can do nothing but commend you patience. Farewell in the meantime; I must attend my guests"; and he hurried away.

Just before dinner, however, Zozimo demanded admission to the lady. He brought a splendid mirror set with rubies as a gift from his master. Lelita looked at it and then at Zozimo and yawned.

"Thank your master," she said; "it will do for the maids to dress their hair at after they wash themselves; and I have no patience with the slovenly hussies. As for you, master Zozimo, you seem in fine fettle since I met you last and have had your revenge over poor Gangogo, I find."

"Thank you, my lady; thank you, thank you," he answered, bowing so comically that all the ladies began to laugh.

"But," she continued scornfully, "your manners have not improved at all. You used to love me a little, I believe; at least you wrote me verses. Do you know, Zozimo, I was half inclined to fall in love with you myself, though you are so very very ugly?"

"Oh, madam!" he answered, "how could so poor a creature ever aspire to you?"

"Well, we ladies are said to love such aspirations whether they are successful or not. But when, yesterday, I chose you out of all the suitors you gave me up on a very small compulsion indeed. I shall never choose you again, Zozimo."

"You impudent little wretch!" cried the ladies.

"My master, madam——" he began.

"—— shall be nothing to me, sir," she cried, "until you explain how you came by your knowledge of those tricks which you exposed. Speak at once, you little vampire!"

"Madam," he answered with dignity, "I should only fatigue you by the telling. I used my eyes and my ears, madam, that is all."

"And your fingers too. You must be a natural thief as well as a spy. I wonder that your master keeps such a creature about him. You shall be discharged at once if—if I ever marry him."

Zozimo sighed. The ladies pointed their needles at him and hissed; and he was glad to leave as precipitately as the Count had done. Such was the in-

gratitude which he suffered for all his pains and labours.

Outside in the garden Count Otto was pacing to and fro. Wherever he went the eyes of all followed him, but those who had attempted to go further and converse with him had felt themselves foiled by a benign obstruction in him.

"My lord Count," said Bran, coming up to him, "I have put your fellows in the tents that were given to the Prince's servants."

The Count bowed.

"You have a dozen strong fellows," continued Bran.

Otto glanced up at Lelita's windows.

"I was vastly pleased at the fashion of their morions," said the soldier; "plain, serviceable, and with none of your brass rivets and such rubbish, that are not suitable to a simple man-at-arms. The shoulder-pieces are better of chain-mail as you have them. 'Twas an old soldier chose them for you, sir; as I can see. Doubtless your captain Othman—— ?"

"You are mistaken," answered Otto smiling; "my steward, Zozimo, chose the armour."

"Zozimo!" cried Bran whistling, "what does he know about armour? And then for your horses; the best Roman breed. You will not say that Zozimo bought those also?"

"Well," said the Count, "I certainly had his advice in the matter."

Bran whistled again. Trullo joined them. "What do you think?" exclaimed Bran; "Zozimo chose my lord's horses and armour!"

"They have been admired by everyone," said Trullo, "As for your pages, they are perfection. The sober dark green and white is a change for the better. Your Venetian fashion is admirable. What could have been more ridiculous than the old brilliant

colours ? When I was page to Milan my cloak was of green and gold without and scarlet within ; my tunic was of orange ; my left leg was crimson and my right leg white, clocked with gold from ham to heel, as if I had been born to be model to Pietro Vannucci. You have seen his pictures ? "

" Oh yes," responded the Count carelessly, looking up again at the window.

" Bellini might have painted the Grand Turk blue, so wild were our colours. How are the dresses at the French court ? "

" I assure you, sir, that I know nothing of them," said the Count, looking with rather a vexed air along the Italian gallery.

Bran laughed. " If you are a Venetian, sir," he said, " they will not love you among the French ; and as for us Switzers we are all for King Charles too."

" You can scarcely call me a Venetian, my dear signior—signior——"

" Bran."

" Bran. If I have a house or two among them I am not of them myself. A bird is not a squirrel because she nests in a tree. For that reason I should belong to every nation in Europe " ; and he began to form his lips for whistling.

Reding rolled up. " That wine of Domo d'Ossola is delicious," he puffed. " If I were not getting as fat as a tun I would be drinking it all day. I envy you slim youngsters."

" Youngsters, indeed," shouted Bran, " I am forty."

" And I thirty-two," said Trullo.

" Infants," shouted Reding. " 'Tis not the years make the age, boys ; 'tis the fat. I am becoming old as Lucifer all through this accumulation of lard. I can scarcely get on a horse now."

" Your honour did well at the tourney though," said Bran.

"Middling, middling," shouted the hero. "But, like a deer's horns, I put on a layer an inch deep every year."

He was speaking in German, whereas before the conversation was carried on in Italian. Count Otto smiled. Reding looked at him sharply. "You understand German then?" said he.

"Very well indeed," answered the young man, "but I may be pardoned for loving the Venetian better. He stopped and blushed suddenly. Bran and Trullo looked at each other astonished. "Indeed!" said the latter, "you speak it too, but with a broad Switzer accent! that is very strange."

The young man laughed. "My German," said he, "I had from a Switzer nurse and is perhaps none of the best."

"Bravo!" cried Reding; "my little niece, as I call her, will then wed a brave Switzer in part. We shall admit you to the Eidgenossenschaft, signior!"

"I am a subject of the Emperor," said the Count.

"And what are we, sir, what are we?" exclaimed the other testily. "Though we have had words with the Habsburgs we are still the subjects of the Emperor."

"As the bear is of the lion," laughed Bran.

At this moment the ladies appeared in a body, with Lelita among them, walking through the gallery toward the banqueting-room. Count Otto sprang forward with his eyes lit up; and was about to kiss her hand when she drew it away and then, as if remembering, gave it to him again. "Heavens, signior!" she exclaimed, "I have seen you so little as yet that I scarcely remembered you."

"Dear lady," he answered rather ruefully, "I should never have forgotten you had I seen you but a moment."

"It is astonishing, sir," she replied, "that you have forgotten so soon the suit of your *servant*, Zozimo. I

thought that you came hither to support it; but my father tells me that you are his rival rather than his friend."

He stood up abashed. Her father!—had she forgotten his own pleading? She looked at him swiftly from head to heel. He was dressed magnificently. His wide sleeves and his tightly-fitting hose were of the richest cloth of gold. A tunic of thick black stuff covered his body, and a cloak of the same material hung from his shoulders clasped by a great topaz. His featherless cap was of black velvet slashed with gold. His complexion, deepened in colour by the rebuff, had the dark rich blood tint of perfect health, and his face was certainly the handsomest and perhaps the most winning that she had ever seen. She was pleased in spite of herself, but made a little mouth of ridicule and swept by on the arm of old Reding. As they passed him all the ladies shot a quick glance at him without a word.

Trullo took his arm smiling. "You are astonished, my dear Count," he said; "but the ladies are going to make you pay for your little plot of yesterday."

They went in to dinner.

Lelita had managed to place the Lady of Werdenberg between herself and Count Otto. As she seated herself she placed her hand on the table. The ring which he had put on her finger was no longer there.

XXVI.—Cajazzo Arrives after All

The meal was not a joyous one. The suitors who remained were moody, and were obliged to endure the rallies of the ladies, who took the greater pleasure in tormenting them on that account. The host looked angrily at his daughter because she had changed her place, and the guests felt the discomfort of this want of harmony. In spite of the questions of the Baroness

Werdenberg, who under a show of kindness was endeavouring to scrutinise his affairs, Count Otto remained distraught and silent; the more so since he saw that everyone had observed the slighting manner of Lelita towards him. The suitors, who before had been depressed by his silence, were beginning to stare boldly at him, to whisper and to gaze officiously; and at the close of the meal, the poet Cynthian went so far as to ask Reichenfels loudly, with a meaning glance towards Otto, when the second trial was to be. Lelita only laughed, threw back her head coquettishly, and said that she was about to send for a fresh batch of suitors first.

After dinner the Count took the young man aside and told him that his daughter was very shy of him and would not marry him under a fortnight (he said, reducing the time she had mentioned by half). Lelita had escaped again to her chamber, and Otto felt with extreme pain that he was in danger of losing her after all. If nothing is so pleasant as success and the open admiration of people, nothing is so disagreeable as their change of manner which follows a sudden and unexpected failure; and if this weighed but little with him in comparison with the loss of Lelita's regard for him, it was yet enough to bring his trouble to an extreme point. He saw at once that it was all due to the unfortunate words he had used when he declared he had come only to attend the suit of his servant; he cursed Zozimo's interference, wished that he had joined the suitors openly, and felt himself unable to blame reasonably the revenge which his beloved one was taking against him. Going to his chamber, which though a poor one was the only room available for him under the same roof as hers, he took her portrait from his bosom and flung himself on his bed. "Never, never, never!" he cried; "never shall you be mine!"

Suddenly he fell into a deep sleep. He was very fatigued with excitement and the alternate joy and sorrow of the last twenty-four hours. When he awoke it was at the sound of someone entering the room. Zozimo stood there gazing at him.

"Soh! my lord," he cried, "this is the way in which you lose your opportunity. I thought that you were at the tournament."

Otto sprang to a sitting posture. "What has happened?" he asked. "I have been asleep."

"You have indeed!" answered the dwarf, striding up and down; "you will win no lady in this manner. Good looks and the passion of Polyphemus alone will not conquer the heart of that little coquette. You should have been up and doing for the last three hours. She has been at the tourney smiling upon everyone. The suitors have plucked up courage again and are clamouring for a fresh trial, each declaring his innocence on the former occasion. Everyone has been wondering at your absence and the Count even looks blackly at me. Your cause will fail utterly. The lady no longer wears your ring and worst of all—worst of all—that fiend Cajazzo has arrived."

"Cajazzo?"

"Yes, Cajazzo. He declared that he will win her in spite of his want of beauty; and I think he will, for at least he is a man of energy."

"He is——"

"—one of her former lovers." Zozimo walked up and down squinting with concentration of thought. "One of her twenty lovers and the most favoured. I wonder, my lord, that you affect this lady when you have all the world to choose from."

Otto smiled. "The old theme," he cried.

"I speak in your lordship's interests."

"Doubtless, good friend; but I affect her because I love her; and I shall do so in spite of all those old

toys of hers. Do you think that love has no better eyes than mere curiosity has? Coquette you called her—why not? The woman, mark you, Zozimo, has but a few days of liberty; like a pretty butterfly she flits from blossom to blossom, never staying long with any. What, the sun shines and the flowers woo her and shall she not flaunt prettily in the air? Let her dally with us all, then; she will, when caught, make not the worse wife."

"I doubt if it be virtuous," sniffed Zozimo, stopping with folded arms.

"That is always the corner-stone of your argument, Zozimo," Otto exclaimed, stretching his arms as he sat on the edge of the bed. "But, I am convinced, Heaven itself is not as fastidious as you are. God gave us laughter to set broadly between vice and virtue, so that what is neither good nor bad should be but laughed at."

Zozimo held up his hand and squinting over the middle finger of it croaked, "What is not good is bad, what is not good is bad!"

"And what is neither is often best," laughed Otto; "like my Lelita. I will love her in spite of a hundred adorers. I will follow her if she kill me for it. She is like a candle flame, shedding light upon all, looked at by all, but burning when touched."

"And you are the moth," said Zozimo, "that will consume yourself there."

Otto sprang to his feet. "Zozimo," he exclaimed, "hold me the mirror here. Now for a thousand Cajazzos. I am refreshed with sleep and a voice whispers me that I shall win her. Courage!"

Zozimo held the large mirror under his chin for the use of his master; and the young man, after looking with satisfaction at the image of his own beauty, could not help being struck suddenly by the contrast presented by the face of his servant, lean, peevish,

and unhealthy, which peered at him over the edge of the glass. Having started involuntarily with a gesture of disgust and annoyance, he endeavoured to hide it by examining his sleeve of cloth of gold. "Mercy," he cried, "I have rumpled my fine sleeve during my sleep, Zozimo."

"Dress is everything at this moment, my lord," answered the dwarf, "you must throw away no chance of winning. Cajazzo has arrived in advance of his baggage, dressed vilely in black hose, a rusty morion, a common corselet with the edge of his leather jerkin showing under, and a black enamelled sword not fit for a Low Country captain."

"Why in armour, Zozimo?"

"Because, says he, he would at all events be in time for the tourney if not for the lady. He treats her with laughter, love, and slighting, as we do a child. He says that he will win her if he has not to die for it, will fight for her with anyone weaker than himself, and will love her until he marries her. One of those low, jesting fellows, my lord."

"What did he do at the passage?"

"Why, first he arrives without a word and visor down; rides in to the help of Bran and Theiling who were playing at blunt sticks with several others, and upsets two warriors in a moment. Your lady Lelita rises, waves her handkerchief and screams, "Cajazzo! Cajazzo! I know him by the enamelled nenuphar on his helmet." He was on a small horse up to his waist, not big enough for a page, and gave Bran and Theiling nothing to do but look on and laugh. He brought down Werdenberg so heavily that he bled at the nose."

"A proper man!" cried Otto.

"After the passage was over he lifted his visor and looked quizzically at Lelita. "So we will be a-marrying," he says, "without waiting for old friends."

He had heard about the trial. "Why were you not present?" she cries. "Because," he said laughing, "old nuts are hard to crack."

"He meant that he was not so foolish?"

"He meant more than that, but said little else; for he next joined in at the new sword-play with the poet fellow, who worsted him, then he went to single-stick with a Scotch captain of Reding's, who drubbed him; then he had a ride with Reding himself, who took his old corselet clear off his back and left him in his jerkin looking like a plucked chicken. He was everyone's hero. Your lady Lelita welcomed him almost with tears of delight, while the Count shook his hand for an hour. A real man; one of those who can do things. When he heard about you and the issue of the trial his face became very grave. You will have to deal with him."

Otto sat smiling, looking before him; "What shall we do then, Zozimo?" he asked.

"In the first place put on your crimson suit with the cloth of gold tissue and pearl collar."

"Well?"

"That will let them all know your superiority. Next I shall run up to her chamber and put some trifle there from you to astonish her."

"Oh, yes."

"Lastly you will not appear until supper, and then go in to the banquet-room a quarter of an hour late, followed by myself, your captain, and all your pages."

Zozimo strode about greatly excited while Otto only smiled.

"There is one thing, my lord," the dwarf exclaimed, "which must be changed: your manner. You do not know men. You think that to own their love and respect you must seek always to please them. Kick them rather. They are like dogs that troop barking against a humble cur but stand back from your lordly,

snarling hound. You smile in your speech, even at men, and they do but despise you for it. There is no reason why you should trouble yourself to please these mountebanks. Hold them off and they will swarm about you. You must now be abrupt, fierce, and scornful in your manner; jest on the weak; reply tardily to questions, and stare down a man or two. I beg you mark the change that will ensue."

Otto laughed and stretched himself again. "You are very cunning, Zozimo," he said, "for all your virtue. I think that you are right perhaps, since pride is the soul's backbone, after all. I will try the manner you describe; but do not blame me if, like the conduct that you advised me to at the trial, it fails."

"Never fear," said Zozimo, rubbing his hands; "but, my lord, I beg you to observe that my advice is nowhere contrary to the strictest principles of virtue. You have every right to adjust your manner so that, without injuring others, you may be suitably respected yourself."

XXVII.—Otto takes Zozimo's Advice Again

Accordingly Otto did not appear until supper was well advanced. As soon as the sun had set, Reichenfels, Lelita, and all their guests came clattering in with appetites quickened by the crisp air of the valley, by exercise and pleasant society. Wine and spices were handed round, and the hilarity was general. The remaining suitors had recovered their spirits at the absence of their formidable rival and at the prospect of a second trial in which each thought that he might be the victor; for Lelita had behaved graciously to them all in spite of her former anger. The competitors at the tourney had run to make a change of clothing, with the exception of the Count Cajazzo;

who seemed to delight in his old cuirass with a kind of bravado which was evidently pointed at the splendid costume of the suitors. He behaved very noisily, taking wine with old friends and laughing heartily at the accounts of yesterday's trial; accusing Lelita of vanity and declaring that she had been rightly served by fortune.

"Handsome men!" he cried gaily; "oh, there! Men have no right to be handsome; they should leave that to the ladies. You should take an old lover, madam, in spite of his old clothes. I assure you that I love you very passably for such a veteran in the passion. Not enough to make myself ridiculous at a show of beauty or to trouble myself by writing stanzas to you, or even to change my clothes thrice a day for you. I will fight for you, sigh for you and lie for you in reason," with a glance at the suitors, "but not lose my supper for you. I vow you are very beautiful, but I have waited so long for you that I can easily wait another day; and since I came hither mainly to taste your mountain venison, why, in Heaven's name, is it not served up?"

"It is late like yourself," cried Lelita, in high spirits; "but, let us hope, more tender."

He bowed. "A lady's jest," he said, "like a king's, must be laughed at."

"And like yours," she retorted; "for we laugh at them whether they are good or not."

"Sweet lady!" he cried, "like myself they are not enough for you. I am as bad a jester as a rider. You strip off my armour of wit as easily as my foe yonder stripped off my armour of steel. In conclusion, I love you."

"But not enough, sir," she answered; "would you die for me?"

"No, indeed. Then could I never enjoy you."

"Would you live for me, then?"

"That were worse, for you would despise me."

"Hear how he talks!" she cried, "he says he loves me and yet will do nothing to win me!"

"We shall see, madam," he answered gaily.

"In conclusion, you will eat for me," she said mocking him, "and drink for me."

"I see no chance of that even," he cried.

The trumpets had sounded for supper and all were waiting the arrival of Count Azrimar, whose seat beside Lelita was empty. She had glanced several times toward the door. At last Reichenfels, with a slight frown in the same direction, gave the signal to the servants and they all fell to with fingers and knives; but otherwise in a manner that is kept up to the present day, with astonishing persistence.

"Where then," cried Cajazzo, "is the Count Azrimar of whom I have heard so much?"

"I have not seen him since dinner," said the Count crossly.

"Ah, then he is a lover after my own heart," said Cajazzo. Everyone laughed meaningly. "He is either a very great signior or a boor for keeping us waiting"; and he shot a glance at Lelita.

"Judge when you have seen him," she snapped.

Cajazzo bowed and smiled. "I have already seen him through your eyes," he said.

"That name is a curious one," he continued after a pause; "is he too one of the descendants of Scanderbeg?"

"What, what!" exclaimed the Count, "I hope not!"

"An impostor of that name has lately been at Rome—or of some similar name. He was found to be a servant of Cardinal Cibo."

Lelita began to blush deeply.

"He speaks German with a Switzer accent," put in the Baron Werdenberg.

"But the purest Venetian," she added.

"Venetian!" exclaimed Cajazzo; "I have heard that a great signior has apppeared there lately and, upon falling into a quarrel with a gentleman, disappeared as suddenly."

"Perhaps," cried Trullo, "that is why he was absent from to-day's feats of arms."

The innuendo was cheered by some of the suitors.

"Tush!" cried Reding. "We saw him seize your dwarf, Gangogo, yesterday unarmed."

At this moment the signior himself appeared. He was dressed as suggested by Zozimo and preceded by two beautiful pages carrying each a tray of grapes, nearly as large as plums, and sweetmeats from Florence. He was followed by Zozimo and Othman, the captain of his guard, and by a crowd of richly dressed pages. His face was fixed as stern as the fine features admitted; and the Count, rising to receive him, took his hand and ushered him to his seat. He cast a haughty yet benign glance at the guests and, turning to Lelita with a faint smile, presented the fruit to her with an admirable gesture.

Sitting down without a word, his glance met that of Cajazzo as two swords clash together. Cajazzo, in spite of his own words, was of an agreeable presence. With light hair and moustache, he possessed clear grey eyes of surprising energy and fire. His nose was delicate and very high at the bridge, and his lips were healthy, joyous, and unreserved, while his body was that of a man inured to arms. An expression of admiration mingled with suspicion crossed his features in an instant as he saw the other.

"You have no appetite, signior," said Lelita with open sarcasm to Otto.

"I am a lover, madam," he answered without a smile.

She glanced in his face. It was clear that he was

offended. In reality he could hardly endure his joy at finding himself next to her, and his whole soul was lighted up at the circumstance. It was hard to mask himself in that stolidity at the moment. He felt inclined to seize her hand and kiss it.

"You were not at the tourney," she continued.

"I feared to trouble you," he said simply.

A difficult reply to deal with. She only pouted and made her left hand visible, from which the ring was again absent.

"The Count di Cajazzo," said Reichenfels, "is an old friend of mine—and of my daughter."

"Therefore of mine," said Otto gravely but with a kindly look at his rival. Cajazzo started and the blood came swiftly into his face.

"I thank you, sir Count," he said merrily. "We are rivals nevertheless, I must assure you. I have offered my hand to this lady at least ten times and have been refused as often. Nevertheless I would as soon wed her as another."

"That argues no very ardent passion," said Otto smiling in spite of himself. Zozimo touched his shoulder.

"No indeed. We love each other like cat and dog."

"When did I say that I loved you at all?" exclaimed Lelita.

Otto turned away indifferently and spoke to Reichenfels. Both Lelita and Cajazzo stared at him for abandoning them in such a sudden manner, and the conversation proceeded gaily without him. Gradually he ceased to speak even to the Count, who was evidently somewhat distraught, and fell into a long scornful silence; which indeed was observed by Lelita, who straightway nearly turned her back to him. At this the suitors began to stare at him more fiercely than ever. Suddenly the lord Zamba addressed him across the table.

"Have you lately been in Venice?" he asked.

Cajazzo sat back on his stool and bit his lip. He had taken a liking to Otto in spite of his manner—for which he saw there was some reason.

Azrimar did not reply.

"Did you happen to quarrel with my friend Domenico Malipieri?" Zamba continued with open insolence.

"Is it true that you left Venice immediately afterwards?" asked Cynthian in a manner equally insolent.

"What, what, what!" exclaimed the Count; "such questions, signiors——"

Otto flushed deeply. He saw the innuendo and wished to resent it openly. Zozimo touched his shoulder again, and he understood that he was to answer in another manner. He rose with a contemptuous smile. "My captain-at-arms, gentlemen," he said, "will doubtless take the trouble to reply to you"; and with the shortest farewell to Lelita and her father he left the room amidst dead silence.

When he reached his chamber Zozimo was in an ecstasy. "Admirable, my lord, admirable!" he cried; "that was a cut across the face to them. Men are such creatures that to strike them is the only way to their good respect. The wages of virtue is scorn. Be humble, charitable, kind, and you will be patted on the back and secretly despised everywhere. Scorn is the only badigeon to cover your face with against scorn. Always give a counter in the same thrust at once. There is no faculty in man to admire the meek. You will see, now that they have felt your weight, a change come over them all; and I beg you, my dear master, preserve the same complexion toward them until the end, giving them silence against their prattle, smiles against their diplomacy, and scorn against their anger."

"Those principles run against religion, Zozimo," said Otto, smiling.

"No, no, no!" croaked Zozimo; "you mistake. Secretly be as charitable as you please; you may dare even to be humble in your own chamber; but God, in ordering your actions, has not troubled to concern Himself with your manners."

At this moment there came a knock at the door. It was Zitella, who by her mistress's command brought back the ring which Otto had given to her. This was equivalent to a dismissal, and Otto stood thunderstruck. All his hopes were dashed now.

"I vow," he exclaimed, "that your mistress is very unkind!"

"I begged her not to do it, signior," said Zitella.

"Why is she so incensed against me?"

"Oh," said Zitella, holding the door latch and looking down, "she bid me to say that your lordship is too magnificent for her."

Zozimo stood in the room in a great passion. "My lord," he exclaimed, "is not well treated. He is accepted at one moment and flung away the next. He is too great a signior to be dallied with thus, girl. Tell your mistress so; tell her so."

"I will," said Zitella looking at him with a shudder.

"No," exclaimed Otto, standing mournfully gazing at the ring, "tell her that I am not too magnificent to follow her on foot if I cannot ride in her company."

Zitella glanced at him and went out.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Zozimo, "we must go another way to work. We must attack the old Count. I have it—the sword of silver and topazes and your lordship's rent roll. I will do it at once."

Otto smiled faintly. "Your advice, Zozimo," he said, "has not proved good on two occasions."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Zozimo, hurrying away, "the devil himself may sometimes make mistakes."

Otto's clothes, damp with perspiration, had not dried yet. The moonlight too was cold and seemed to be freezing him. He ventured to glance at the little lamp. The tiny flame, sharp against the dark arras as an electric spark, seemed to bicker with anger against him. Alternately increasing and decreasing in volume, it seemed to be wishing to draw his attention. It seemed to be trying to spit at him with fury, spluttering every few minutes with a little hiss. He thought that the bear's head was drawing nearer to him to devour him. He began to feel full of secret terror. These things were conspiring against him. Perhaps they would awaken her before——

He shut his eyes and sighed deeply. She would find to-morrow how much he had loved her. He pictured her awakening. There where the chaste, impassive moonbeams poured now, the early rose of the morning sun would be spread. Her lips too would be rosy. Her cheeks rosy with sleep. She would stretch her arms, awake and smile. She would rise and would see—oh, horror!

Perturbation of fancy! What would she say? He loved me, then; there must have been some mistake, this was no adventurer, this—this dead thing! Would she shriek? Would she kiss his cold head? He pictured her standing there in horror, her hands clasped, her little naked feet white against the black bearskin. He saw the dark red stream trailing along the floor.

A hissing voice came from somewhere. He almost fell, so much was he startled.

"Why do you wait?" it said.

The voice came from the other side of the door. He did not answer.

That strange square of different coloured moonlight on the floor before him! It was like love itself, he thought; composed of so many delicate hues, all so

different and yet all so beautiful. The joyous yellow, the warm rose, the luscious purple, the chill blue. These colours were in his heart too, but they were growing dimmer there—for soon it would be full only of darkness. On the floor, however, they were becoming astonishingly bright. The lamp was going out. The flame vanished suddenly with an angry little splutter, leaving only a tiny red heart of fury against him. It seemed to him as if his presence had caused the death of the chaste flame. The room was full only of love now.

A terrible thought came to him. Now that the lamp was out might he not lift his eyes just ever so little? For one moment? He would die the next.

He drew a long thin stiletto from his side and cautiously, timidly lifted his eyes. He could see nothing; the foot of the bed was toward him and was too high for him to look over.

Slowly with parted lips and dagger in hand he moved forward from the door on his knees. With infinite caution he approached the patch of moonlight. Presently the beams in all their colours poured over him and bathed him. The purple fell on his head, the rose on his breast, and the cold blue on the dagger in his hand. His knees were patched with various hues. He turned toward the bed and looked up, panting with fear. There was only darkness there.

Soon his eyes became accustomed to it. The bed was in an arched alcove. Above it upon a shelf several large books could be dimly discerned and a crystal of water sparkled faintly. The corner of the rich coverlet poured over into the moonlight, and a crimson pillow lay on the floor. He could see nothing of her he sought. She was lying at full length, her face turned from him, and one hand lay on the coverlet. He should never see her face again. An almost un-

controllable anguish seized him at the thought. He dare not rise to look at her for fear that his breath might wake her.

Again the hissing whisper came through the door: "Why do you wait?"

Smiling he opened his dress at the throat and felt for the little hollow above the breastbone where the two sinews of the throat converge together. Placing the point of the stiletto there with the forefinger of the left hand he raised the hilt with the right for a strong downward thrust. In a moment he knew the cold steel would traverse the organs of the chest and would transfix the throbbing heart. The heart would grip the steel, would close convulsively upon it and would then relax for ever. He would do it now. There was no hope for him. Against his will he sobbed once, twice.

Shutting his eyes, remaining with the hilt of the dagger held aloft, he composed his thoughts for a minute toward heaven. He prayed silently.

Then he drew a long breath. The moment was come. He would die looking at Lelita. He swore that in his death agony, even, he would make no noise to alarm her. The perspiration broke out upon his face. He opened his eyes.

She was sitting up in bed gazing at him. He could see the terror on her face. Her lips were open but she said nothing.

He was bathed in moonlight and the blue light was on his face now. A mortal terror was upon him too.

She did not shriek: she said nothing.

Why did he not strike downward?

Her teeth began to chatter. She moved one hand slowly toward him. He remained as if frozen in that attitude. At last came a faint voice from her lips:

" Are you also dead ? " it said.

He did not answer.

" Why did you kill yourself ? " she said again.

He remained silent, unable to do anything. He dared not slay himself in her presence, neither did he dare to move.

She began to tremble all over.

" Did you love me so well as to slay yourself for me ? Have you appeared like this to tell me so ? Did you not know that I loved you ? Why did you do it ? "

She gave a long-drawn, shivering sigh.

" You were very beautiful and I loved you from the first," she said in a scarcely audible whisper, thinking she was talking with the dead. " Why did you kill yourself ? "

She uttered another long plaintive sigh, and Otto's uplifted hand gradually dropped down and his head began to sink on his breast.

" Will you appear to me always like this to torment me ? " she continued, trembling violently. " If so I shall follow you soon. Did you not know women better ? Ah, me ! Must we not be cautious ? Must we have no modesty ? Can we give ourselves to a stranger without thought ? You did wrong to slay yourself like that. Oh, horror ! "

Ghastly in the moonlight Otto knelt speechless before her. The wound on his head was very visible and so great was his agitation that it began to bleed afresh. He heard her beginning to pant with uncontrollable terror. It was a wonder that she had not shrieked out aloud before. He was almost mad with shame and perplexity. Coming there to slay himself at her bedside, he had remained to extort a confession from her, for she believed that he was his own disembodied spirit. How could he awaken her to the truth ? A thought struck him at last. He let the

dagger drop from his hand. It fell to the ground with a loud clang.

She started back. It seemed the truth was dawning upon her. He lifted his head, looked at her for a moment, dropped his head again and advanced one knee. He could tell by her altered breathing that she understood now. He crossed his hands submissively upon his breast. Then he spoke hoarsely.

"Madam," he said; "you mistake. I have not killed myself, but if you had not awoke I would have been dead by this time. I came here to kill myself, for your words when last we met were insupportable to me. You commanded me to show myself to you only as a corpse, and I had hoped that would assure you better of my love than my tongue could."

She did not answer.

"What you said now has brought me much comfort," he continued; "but if you will not say the same again to me, knowing me to be living, I shall proceed as I had intended. Heaven knows that I cannot live without your love."

Lelita was still trembling, and now began to weep.

"Hush!" she exclaimed; "there is someone at the door. You will be overheard!"

It was Zozimo who had pushed the door open a little in order to hear.

"Madam," continued Otto passionately, "tell me, I beseech you."

"If you will stretch out your arm and place your hand on the edge of the bed I will tell you," she said.

He did so, and presently her two little hands were fumbling with his. She had slipped a ring on his finger.

"Now go, sir, go!" she cried. "I am so gratified that you are still living that I will not blame you for what you have done. I shall love you always"; and

she turned her face to the pillow and began to sob violently.

Otto rose without looking at her or saying anything, and left the room. He went to his chamber and prayed for an hour and then fell into a deep slumber. Zozimo had disappeared.

PART IV

THE SIFTINGS OF FATE

XXXV.—Astrella

Now that the great tournament is over and Otto has progressed so far in the affections of his mistress as to be allowed to live, we must move for a moment away from Orsera to the mountains behind it—to the cottage of Morva Neroni and the surrounding peaks.

The reader will remember that when Zozimo disappeared from the inn in the company of the Count Azrimar, Astrella had found her mother lying on the ground close to the window. On recovering consciousness and hearing that Zozimo was not to be found, Morva went at once in search of him in the direction of Orsera and told her daughter to seek in the opposite direction. She found no traces of her son; but Astrella met the two hunters on the Furka road and continued her quest with them.

When they reached the snow, they suddenly found a body lying by the side of the path. It was not Zozimo, but the poor woman, Brunde Wilstern. They revived her with food and wine from their wallets, and then took her to Morva's cottage.

For three months afterwards, nothing was heard of Zozimo; and the wrath of his sister, and also that beautiful maid herself, have been well described by Müren, who was one of the very few people of Urseren who had ever seen her. It is best to give the descrip-

tion in his own words. "For," he says, "even as her twin-brother Zozimo was feeble and hunched in body (but not in mind) below the weakest of grown men, so was she of a surprising wonderful beauty above any maiden or dame of past or present, even of Dame Helen or the virgin Cassandra, and in her stature and movement rather like unto the ancient fabled sister of Apollo that hunted in the glades of the mountains of the ancient gods. For her head was tall above most men, and her strength so great that I have seen her wrench aside a young bull by the horns, and I myself could not even come at the bending of her bow. Yet her body was maidenly withal and perfect; and her face heavenly and perfect as are the faces of the fierce angels that smite the thing abhorred in the church at Orsera.[1] For the beauty of the face, and the brightness thereof, and the bound locks thereof, are not to be imagined; and they made to start as at the sight of a miracle those few (men and women) who saw it; for it (the face) was at the same time of man and of woman in that it was both sweet and fiery-cold like to an ice-pinnacle pierced by a sun-ray; and, like a cloud, could at any moment flash to anger born out of Heaven. . . . She loved not the homely tasks, but, obedient to her good mother, endured them oft in humility, though for ever her soul yearned to be upon the mountains. There, clad in white, but not in the fashion of our Switzer maidens, she roamed all day, aye, whole days and nights, with the hunters, chiefly with Daniel and Danioth of Göschenen, old hunters and expert; yet was she more skilful than they. Nor did she use new toys of handbows or arbalests, but a straight bow, and drew not the string thereof to the ear but to the breast; for which her right breast was constrained by her well-laced bodice like that of an Amazon. And she bore but two arrows, which were

[1] In the Count's chapel, not the village church (?).

named Saefa and Saevestris, either in her band or in a painted quiver ; and she never lost them, for they never failed to strike, and, however fell the deer after it was struck, she failed not to recover its body and her weapon. She knew every *sattel* from alp to alp and was perfect at following the fots about the hills, and climbed any rock or ice without labouring the breath, and endured without pain any cold or tempest or snow. And that vision "—he wrote in his old age—" I have not seen again, nor ever shall again till the Holy Virgin perchance call me if found worthy ; but it is one which being once seen upon the earth tells men for ever that God is with them."

" The love that she bore to her poor deformed twin-brother," he continues, " was so wonderful that oft I shed tears at seeing it ; since she conceived it holy to sit at his feet and hear him when he prattled of the great things which were for him when (as he dreamed) he should become full-grown, which never was to be. But she knew it well and often wept secretly. She would draw him panting to the upper ice and there find him crystals and blue and white flowers, the while he told her tales of paladins and poets, which I marvelled to hear. But as for her, she conceived him to be wiser than any man, young or old, and believed that at some time his wisdom would make him what he dreamed. . . . Now therefore, when he was snatched away from her, her anger was great, and she reproached her mother for letting him go ; and even the mountains became unendurable to her, and she sat all day upon the pinnacles, looking over the seas of ice " (? the Tiefen and Rhone glaciers) " and refusing the comfort of the hunters who tried to rouse her. For their love for her passed that of man to woman, and they took contagion of her sorrow and sought everywhere through the mountains for her brother, but in vain."

Her grief was not only fierce—like that of Achilles

at the death of Patroclus; but at times, when her feminine nature asserted itself, melted into passionate weeping alternating with fits of angry silence. Forbidden by her mother to descend into the villages, she left the search in them to the hunters; but herself roamed every ravine and gully of the mountains, probing the snow with her staff and examining each pool of the torrents for that which she thought to find; and when she came home at night full of failure flung herself face-downwards on the little chair which was her brother's, and would listen to nothing. The efforts of her mother to distract her with feminine occupations failed entirely—she threw down her sewing and refused even to tend the cows and goats. She could endure neither pity nor contemperation; and when Müren (who at that time visited them frequently) tried to commiserate with her, she blazed out at him so wrathfully that he was glad to escape.

Something vague had also fallen between Astrella and her mother. In truth, Astrella knew little of what had happened at the inn. She had blamed her mother from the first for allowing Zozimo to go there; and had been witness of how he had been treated in it. But what filled her with the greatest fear was the fact that his dagger had been found smeared with blood—from which she argued that he had been murdered by someone during her absence from the tavern. That was all. Morva, however, not only knew more but did not dare to tell her daughter all she knew. She had seen the pleasantries perpetrated on Zozimo and, out of the pride of her own nature, had even herself cursed him before everyone. Then came the thing which she saw when she returned to the inn and looked through the window—or was it merely fancy—because she had fainted unaccountably ere the perception had quite come to her? Whatever it was it did not lead her to think that it was Zozimo's blood which

lay on the dagger ; she believed that he still lived, and it was she who urged the hunters to seek him. Again, who was that wonderful stranger who wore the rich cloak and hat which she had seen in her dream, and which had been left so carelessly in the public room, and who was with her son when she last saw him ? She remembered also the dreams which her daughter had told her of, and at which she had half laughed. Was this person connected with them ? Was there some evil magic here ? Lastly she had heard of the object of the Cardinal's visit to these valleys and knew that some even thought her to be a witch ! She smiled with disdain at the thought ; but it was necessary to keep silence. The dreams must not be mentioned ; nor the stranger. If any of it were to leak out she and her daughter would fall under suspicion. She therefore determined to say nothing—not even to Astrella ; but her daughter felt the reticence by instinct.

During that sad period, however, the sorrows of Morva and her daughter were somewhat lightened by sympathy for the poor woman Brunde whom they had brought to live with them. Morva's cottage was but a wooden structure built over a cattle byre and, except for a few articles brought from Italy, provided only with the humble Swiss furniture of the day. Nevertheless they found room for her and tended her very kindly. She still remained taciturn, and never lost her dread for Morva ; but she became passionately attached to Astrella, whom she allowed even to see her infant. The poor creature was indeed very dull and hung for ever round her sickly babe, weeping much ; but she helped with the cattle and won the love of her hostesses. She said that she came from Göschenen and explained why she could not return there. She had had a lover, she said, who was the richest and handsomest prince living ; but Morva, looking at her, wondered who he could have been. Brunde, however,

revived under their kindness, and one day they heard a wonderful voice singing among the cattle. It was that of none other but the poor girl—so true it is that every beggar has his jewel. But she would sing seldom, and knew only some simple songs.

As the days flew by, Astrella's grief grew even deeper, for she argued that if Zozimo had been alive he would certainly have found means to let them know it. At the same time, Morva became more and more impatient of her daughter's sorrow and frequently chid her. Midsummer passed without news; and they heard nothing even after the suitors' trial—for most of the hunters had gone to the valley to see the sport, and Müren had not visited them for some time. On the warm night before the tournament, Astrella vowed that she could not endure the cottage and must sleep in the hunters' cave on the mountain. She went out alone.

We have already seen what happened.

Next morning early, she returned pale with anger, and almost tottered as she flung herself down on the grass in front of the cottage.

Morva was alarmed. "What is it?" she asked.

Astrella rose again, placed her hands before her brow and then flung them outward, as if driving something away. "The terrible vision!" she cried.

"Tell me, then; tell me," said Morva.

"I cannot tell thee, mother," cried Astrella.

Morva looked scornful. "I believe not that which cannot bear the telling," she said. "Your foolish grief has maddened you."

"You also have not told me all," answered Astrella, entering the cottage.

Presently the old hunter Danioth (who had not descended to Orsera to see the trial) came up with news of chamois; and, after salutations, Morva took him into the cottage. They found Astrella seated at the

table, with her face and arms flung forward on it, sobbing violently, while Brunde was trying to console her.

Morva became very angry. "Fie!" she said; "I think you have changed from a man into the weakest of green-sick girls. You weep day and night!"

"And you, never," answered Astrella, angrily.

"I have had my years of weeping," said Morva; "but I keep my tears for solitude. But you—you wrong us all by this unseemly manner; for sorrow, like the plague, leaps from one to another of us. You have had three months of weeping—enough!"

"I am his sister."

"And I his mother."

"Then you should weep more than I."

"Or you less. You are ever in extremes! At one moment more of a man than of a woman, at another less of a woman than of a child!"

"Grief, madam," interposed old Danioth, respectfully, "is ever strongest in the strongest natures."

"And so is self-restraint," cried Morva. "I say nothing of her grief, but of her tears."

"You never loved him as I did," sobbed Astrella. "Mother, mother, you were not always kind to him. You were angry at him because of his deformity. You loved me better—me, poor wretch, who was but a clod to him! Do I care who hears? Is my heart so base that all the world may not look into it? I will weep for him till I die. He was my spirit, and I only his poor body!"

Brunde crept up to her and kissed her hand like a dog. Morva stood before her saying nothing; but two tears ran down her cheeks, and she made no effort to wipe them away.

Suddenly, however, she stepped forward and seized her daughter's wrist. "Enough," she cried, hoarsely and angrily. "I will have no more of it. You are my

child and shall obey me even in your grief. I have loved you both equally, and you wrong me, daughter, by your words. You shall seek my forgiveness at once ! "

The young maid, accustomed to obey her mother in all things, without rising flung her arms round her waist and hid her weeping face in her skirts, while Morva placed her old hand upon her daughter's hair.

There came a sudden loud knocking at the door, and Müren ran in, waving a small bag in the air. " He is alive," he cried. " I have seen him. He has sent you this money. He is alive and well ! "

In one moment they were raised from the depth of sorrow to the height of joy. They clustered round him with questions. Without replying and still breathless with climbing, he poured the contents of the bag on the table before them. It contained some scores of Venetian sequins and pistoles, the former of sixteen carats of gold and the latter of thirty-two.

" There ! " he cried ; " these are from him. It was but yesterday that I heard of his return to the valley. He is steward to a great signior who has come as one of the suitors. But more than that—I have seen him. At midnight, while I was at my studies, he himself entered my room in the village and gave me this money for you ! "

They clapped their hands. " Is he well ? " asked Morva.

" Aye indeed ! " cried Müren, delighted at bringing so much pleasure ; " and another man ; for he is finely dressed in black, with a jewel in his cap, and his air is that of a great steward full of affairs. He stayed scarce a minute ; but plumped me down this bag for you, said that he would come soon to see you, that you, madam, were not to seek to speak with him, that his master was the noblest in the world, and that he would

tell you all when he meets you. So saying he hurried away, without even taking my hand. My mother bade me start at once to tell you, and I have walked here since daybreak."

"Have you seen this lord also?" asked Morva.

"Aye, yesterday—the noblest and handsomest signior in the world, who, as all say, will certainly win the lady Lelita, whom he loveth fiercely."

"Ah!" said Morva. "Describe him more——"

"I will descend at once to see my brother," cried Astrella.

Morva thought for a moment.

"No," she said; "you shall follow the deer on the mountains to-day, and it is I who will return with our friend to see him. But I will not speak to him since he so desires it," she added somewhat bitterly.

"Let me eat a little then," said Müren, "and I will take you down, and tell you further as we go. To-day is to be a great tournament at which the suitors will decide their rivalry by arms, and we shall yet be there in time."

Astrella obeyed. Her heart bounded with joy, and she felt that she must tell it to the mountains. Taking her bow and calling Danioth, she ran forth—where they presently found the other hunter, Daniel; and ascended the alp behind the cottage. Her sorrow and her dreams were forgotten.

The sun shone brightly; the air was sweet; and the cattle-bells tinkled on the hills. Opposite rose the swelling sides of the St. Gotthard with the glaciers between its summits sparkling in the morning light; the peaks of the Muttenhorn and Seckihorn stood blackly against the sky; and films of white vapour, growing, dissolving, descending, and vanishing, stood in the windless air.

Astrella could not walk—she bounded up the steep slopes, leaving the hunters far behind her, gazing up at

her. Her face shone to heaven, her parted lips were red, her white teeth glistened, her breast panted, her arrows clanked on her back, and her feet only touched the knolls of grass. The grim mountains opened out and showed their hoards of glittering ice. She laughed ; she called out aloud to the dreadful peaks ; she called them by name, and they seemed to hear. Her heart leapt with intense joy, and her breath floated from her like the spirit of exultation. Close above her, as she climbed, there came a flight of eagles, circling round and round her on motionless wings, following her (as often they did), and calling to each other.

Suddenly the beautiful Tiefen glacier, embedded between the Gletschhorn and the Galenstock, burst upon the view. On the one side was the Furkahorn, on the other the Spitzliberg. Still higher she climbed, running along the ridge of rocks. Peak upon peak beyond the Muttenhorn became visible, and the great Griess glacier, with its face turned toward the morning sun, shone like a field of light. Far away among the filmy mists and blue air of the darker west was the Rhone valley, and, still further, the pink phantoms of Monte Rosa and the Weisshorn. Far to the east extended the blue hazy plain of Orsera. There she knew her brother was.

She turned. The hunters were left far below. Now that the wind of her own movement had ceased, she felt an unutterable silence. Nothing but the cry of the eagles, now far above her in the middle blue.

Yet there was something there. As she moved round a rough crag, treading on deep moss, she suddenly saw a figure close to her, kneeling on a platform of rock and facing the sun.

A vizored helmet gleamed on his head, and a steel corselet on his breast. A purple mantle fell from his shoulders as he knelt, and his large and bare hands held the cross of the hilt of his naked sword before his sunlit

and steadily, until it was discovered that some cards of the pack used before had got into his hand. He declared with much perplexity that he knew nothing of it ; and after some noise they recommenced amidst the laughter of all the guests. This time the poet fell into a difficulty. He turned up Charlemagne, the king of parroquets, on two critical occasions during the same deal ; and the words which began to be used were so vigorous that the ladies held their ears. After he had protested his innocence with much apparent sincerity he was allowed to resume his seat.

" By the foot of Pharaoh ! " cried the Prince ; " we are all of us the most unfortunate or else the most dishonest of men. Nothing that we attempt seems to succeed. This lady, like the wife of Tobias, must be protected by a demon."

They called for fresh cards and began again. Everything, however, proceeded quietly for some time until one of the three residual cards which were lying close to the Count di Cajazzo was seen to be missing just as he had taken a trick. The young man arose flushing angrily and flung his cards on the table.

" No man," he cried, " has ever dared to call a son of Sanseverino dishonest. There is some magic in this, gentlemen. I refuse to play any more ! "

The Prince grunted and said that for his part he would play till midnight, if only to give the Evil One some trouble. They called for yet another pack and sprinkled it with holy water from the Count's chapel. The Prince dealt with great deliberation amidst the silence of all the onlookers, who were curious as to what would happen next. His hand contained the seven highest cards.

In a moment everyone sprang to his feet and stood pointing at Otto. " It is strange," they cried, " that for the second time all the suitors except yourself should have been dishonoured in this way." Otto

was as much amazed as the others. He protested that he knew nothing of it all, that it was quite impossible for him to bring about such results even if he had wished to, and that after all the whole affair might have been due only to chance. The party broke up with much heat. Otto was perplexed, the Count vexed, Gangogo delighted, and the guests amused. When Otto went to his chamber Zozimo was there cleaning arms. He described to his servant what had happened. Zozimo burst into laughter.

"Dishonest! yes!" he cried; "I will wager not one of them is honest. Suitors indeed! There is not one of them would not stoop to pick up a dropped shilling or cheat his blind grandmother. I am glad that they were all found out, and if I were the lady I should pack them all off this evening, rain or no rain."

"I cannot believe it of Cajazzo or of the Prince," said Otto.

Zozimo nodded his head seven times; "Every man is made chiefly of rogue," he said, "just as every mountain is made chiefly of rock. The stone is under the alp. Your princes and gentry do not cheat only because they have no occasion to."

Otto laughed. "The cards too fell very strangely," he said; "I have seen nothing like it. Montefine and the Prince held some of the most curious hands imaginable; and altogether it was no wonder that we thought the cards bewitched; though it was an unfortunate magic for me."

"Unfortunate!" cried Zozimo, "how so, my lord?"

At that moment Zitella knocked again at the door. She brought back the coronet of rubies which Zozimo had given to Lelita in the morning.

"Why is this?" cried Otto, much disturbed.

"My mistress begs that you will not trouble so much about her. She says——"

"What?"

"That you are too honest for her, my lord."

"Should he be dishonest, then?" shouted Zozimo angrily.

"I am but the messenger," said Zitella looking down.

Otto buried his face in his hands. "I am too virtuous for her, too magnificent, and now too honest," he said; "tell her that perhaps I am only too unfortunate."

Zitella went away with the message.

"You see?" continued Otto, turning to Zozimo.

The dwarf only ground his teeth for a reply.

When the young Count emerged from his chamber, he found himself so coldly treated that he was in doubts as to whether it was right for him to stay in the castle. The Count even hinted that the Barbary horse and gelding were too valuable a present for him, and he saw clearly that they all began to think him some sort of magician; though what had befallen at cards was clearly only the effect of simple chance and some little dexterity on the part of one or two of the players. His soul began to fill up to the brim with anger, and he vowed that the next day should see the end of this state of things. Apart, in a proud silence, he contemplated the merriment around him, apparently the only sad one there; foiled at every turn by some imperceptible gossamer of opposition and yet seemingly the best beloved of fortune.

That evening the Cardinal held vespers in the Count's chapel. It was observed—to the surprise of some perhaps—that Otto and Zozimo were the most devout persons there, the latter repeating his prayers with such urgency that the beads of perspiration stood on his brow, and the former remaining immersed in silent solicitation of Heaven. As he ceased Otto observed the gaze of Lelita fixed upon him with a sort of apprehension. She instantly glanced downward to her folded hands.

A peal of music seemed to tell him that his prayer would be successful. He arose comforted and resolute. The thanks that he had given to Heaven for past favours, Heaven seemed already to reward by expectations of future ones. The angels, he felt, smiled at him, and he should succeed.

XXX.—The Lists

The next morning the valley was alive with sounds of preparations for the tournament. The rain had cleared away, and the sun rose with great brilliance. Streams of people and horses poured along the road from Urseren and even along the Luzern road. The peasantry, who before had been returning home, disappointed in the result of the suitors' trial, now flocked back to see the question settled in the only manner in which it seems questions ever are settled.

It must be confessed that the valley of Andermatt is in fine weather an ideal place for out-of-door sports. From the castle to the village there extends, as we have described, an absolutely level green meadow or rather plain of soft thick grass, surrounded by steep declivities from which a vast number of persons may find a good outlook upon the scene. The Reuss, after leaving Hospenthal, curves away toward the Bäzberg, leaving plenty of room for the evolutions of horsemen; and the air is so invigorating, the sun so brilliant, the sky so blue in good weather, and the surrounding scenery so beautiful, that no better place could have been found for a tournament such as we are about to describe. We cannot wonder at the enthusiasm with which Reichenfels had regarded his long-cherished scheme; nor, when we remember that gentlemen of the period often ruined themselves in giving "carrousels" of this nature, are we surprised at hearing of

the immense sum spent by him upon it. Tourneys, though common enough in France, Italy, and Germany, had not been held frequently, as may be imagined, among the mountains. Murinus declares that the great tournaments at Mayence in 1480, Stuttgard in 1484, Anspach in 1485, Bamberg in 1486, Ratisbon in 1487, and even that given by Phillip Prince Palatine at Heidelberg in 1481, were not to be compared in splendour to this one ; while even those given by the King of France lately at Lyons and Asti were not superior to it. Unfortunately no remains of the great mole or embankment which the Count constructed for the use of his court are now to be seen ; but our historian states that it was situated close to where the discharge from the St. Anna glacier falls from the St. Gotthard hills into the plain. It extended along the base of the mountain, and was two hundred yards long and over six feet high, being constructed of earth beaten down flat and covered with mats and carpets. Over it was stretched a great pavilion or marquee, supported by four huge poles bearing outward and fixed to the earth by red and white ropes. It was taken at Grandson and had constituted the Duke's tent of audience, having no flies to it. Along the front of the embankment and running to some length beyond it on either side was a palisade of wood ; and a similar palisade ran parallel to it at a distance of two hundred yards, and shut off the encampment of the guests from the course. The lists were closed at either end, and the whole had an oval shape in accordance with the custom of the day. Lists must be round (says the old writer Menestrier) because the sun goes round, or oval because Castor and Pollux were born out of an egg ; though in reality, of course, the shape was chosen for the convenience of the sports. Down the whole length of the course, and therefore parallel to the edge of the great embankment, ran a stout paling called the barri-

cade or barrier, being a late invention for the prevention of those dreadful accidents which used to occur when the horses of two tilters ran foul of each other. The tilters now rode on different sides of the barrier, keeping it each on his right hand as they galloped down the length of it, so that when they met near its centre they could strike each other with the lance without danger of the horses coming into collision. At either end of the lists there were openings for the entry of the combatants and tents for them to arm themselves in ; and here too forges were erected for the use of the Milanese armourers whose duty it was to repair such damages as were caused by the strife. The Count and his guests were to be stationed on the embankment, while the peasantry and those who were present without his invitation were obliged to content themselves with standing outside the palisade or upon the slopes of the hill behind. Numbers of rough benches were, however, provided for them, and the Count was so careful of his popularity that he was going to give wine and beer in unlimited quantities for their refreshment—a generosity which the sober mountaineers were not likely to abuse to any great extent.

XXXI.—The Tournament Opens

The proceedings opened at about eight in the morning with High Mass in the Count's chapel. The Cardinal presided and took the occasion, after receiving the eucharist, to preach a short sermon. He stated that he had been much offended at seeing some priests playing at cards contrary to the Synod of Langres. He denounced the increasing vice and frivolity of the age, and hinted in an unmistakable manner at the late conduct of the suitors. In conclusion he reminded them of the sanctity of tournaments, and recalled with a torrent of eloquence the glories of true chivalry.

The Count and his guests now walked to the lists and entered the pavilion prepared for them.

As the tourney was not to begin until the afternoon and the morning was to be devoted to other courses, those who were not going to participate in the latter came in ordinary or rather extraordinary dress. Costume at that time was just about to reach its highest point of splendour and extravagance, though at the same period a fashion more sober in colour if not in material was creeping in, probably from Italy. The dagging of the edges of clothes, that is, a peculiar escalloping mostly in the form of rose leaves, was beginning to go out in favour of much slashing of the sleeves and upper hose—a fashion which prevailed among the Swiss and is said to have been introduced by them after Grandson. The absurd long toes or poulaines had given way to toes just as absurdly broad, the new shoes sometimes measuring one foot across. Hose still remained "departed of two colours," as Chaucer expresses it, that is, the two legs of different colours; and, though it was a dying fashion, the division of the whole dress into two sober hues, such as brown and dark green, remained for some time. Upper and lower hose began to be distinguishable—the upper being much slashed and becoming eventually trunk-hose, while the latter merged by degrees into silk stockings. Tunics, gowns, and cloaks of every variety were worn, generally having sleeves of the most fantastic cut; some reaching to the ground with a hole in the middle from which the hand emerged, others wonderfully slashed, and a third variety slit into two parts which were loosely fastened together by means of a number of points, so as to allow of the fine under-linen being seen. The caps were of infinite variety. Cloth of gold and of purple-gold, cloth of silver, velvet, satin, damask, and taffeta were the commonest materials.

The Count wore a curious dress of blue silk with a multitude of small holes embroidered in it, and the needle with which each hole was worked hanging from it by its thread—a rather uncomfortable dress, we imagine. The Prince wore stockings of Milanese milled serge of migraine, that is, the colour of pomegranate seeds; upper stocks of the same coloured velvet slashed with white; pourpoint of cloth of purple-gold with black girdle; points of gold cord, and a sheath to his sword of the same colour as his hose. He carried his cap on his head. Montefine was remarkable for a pair of hose of purple stamine and Venice gold, lined with blue silver sarsenet and edged with passement of purple silk and gold of Milanese work. His coat was of dark blue crewel and reached nearly to his knees. Oïlus wore a dark coloured gown and the academical barret. The poet had no other clothes than those in which he had appeared at the trial, so poorly were literary persons remunerated even in those days. His cap hung on his back by a string round the throat. The Swiss barons wore their hats generally in the same way (which was a fashion of the time), and their feathers nearly swept the ground. Otto had buskins with greyhounds and birds worked upon them, and hose of different colours embroidered with pearls in a peculiar manner which showed that he belonged to the Venetian fraternity of young men called La Compagna della Calza. His tunic and cloak were of dark but very rich stuff, the points being of gold and silk with aglets which were minute figures of saints exquisitely wrought in silver. Trullo had the sleeves of his "houppelande" embroidered with the words and music of a song commencing "Madame, je suis tout joyeulx." The lines of the music consisted of gold thread and the head of each note was made by four pearls in a group. The ladies were dressed with equal magnificence and, the hennin, or high horned headdress, being now given

up, with much taste. The Italians, of course, had never used the hennin, but some of the older German women continued to do so. Lelita was distinguished from all the rest by wearing nothing but a dark green coat-hardy, that is an old-fashioned dress which fitted the body very tightly, and swept away at the skirt with graceful folds. On her head was a chaplet of pearls peaked like a crown, and she never appeared more beautiful than in this simple costume.

The ground, covered until now by peasants, dogs, and horses, was cleared by a rank of heralds and trumpeters, who proclaimed with much noise that the first course would be a battle of men-at-arms. The crowd cheered lustily, for this was what would now be called a popular event ; and the Count as he took his seat waved his cap, and flung the contents of his purse to the heralds. At that time everyone, man and woman, carried his purse hanging on his hip by means of a baldric and containing generally a miséricorde as well as money, keys, and so on. There was now not a little fumbling in them, for the suitors wished to vie with each other in generosity and at the same time to spend as little as possible. Ducats, crowns, unicorns, ridaus, and other coins of all nationalities rained down upon the ground. The Prince, who was talking to Lelita, turned carelessly and threw the heralds a handful of pearls ; and his generosity was rewarded by a shout from the spectators. Everyone now suddenly looked at Otto as if to see whether he would or could exceed the munificence of his rival. He plunged his hand into his placquet ; but catching Lelita's glance at the moment suddenly drew it out again and gave only a few crowns. For some unknown cause the imperious little lady began to blush rather violently, and the Prince, looking at Otto, whispered her something.

The scene was brilliant in the extreme. In front of the pavilion and on the other side of the lists an open

stretch or rather avenue of grass between the tents extended to the foot of the Bäzberg, which, with its great bastions of green earth surmounted by jagged peaks of granite, made a background against which the brilliant dresses of the heralds shone out with redoubled splendour. The sky was blue, the air was windless, and the sun filled the valley. Everyone, except perhaps Otto, was in high spirits. The Count, consoled for the failure of the trial by the fine promise of the day, was boisterous. His parrot, fastened to his wrist by a long gold chain, walked up and down the balustrade in front of them, and cried, "I am a fine fellow, a fine fellow." Lelita turned rapidly from side to side and jested with everyone, and the action combined with her close-fitting dress to show off her pretty figure to advantage. Cajazzo, dressed without a tabard in an old-fashioned suit of splints, which though serviceable enough was perhaps too shabby for the occasion, pushed about everywhere full of high spirits, and told them all what great things he was going to do at the quintain.

Presently the gates at either end of the lists were flung open and two bodies of men-at-arms on foot, numbering some twenty on each side, emerged, marched forward in line and saluted the Count and the lady of the tournament. Each man-at-arms was dressed in hauberk, salade, and leather hose, and carried a large wooden halberd; and each had behind him two arbalisters, two matchlock men, and a coustillier or varlet. Mostly grim old soldiers they were, evidently determined to make sport for themselves as well as for the spectators, although they carried only weapons of wood. The mimic battle commenced when the Count gave the signal to the trumpeters who stood at his side; and immediately the matchlocks were fired (without bullets of course), and the arbalisters shot off their blunt arrows at the adversary. Then

the two bodies charged and met in the centre with a crash. Many a warrior was knocked flat in a moment, and many a wooden halberd flew into splinters, and the clatter of blows became general. The crossbow men and the matchlock men, having reloaded, advanced to the aid of their masters, and such was the force with which the arrows of the former hit a man at close quarters that though they could not penetrate they could hurl him down as if with a blow. At the sound of a second trumpet both parties made a rush for the barrier and endeavoured to clamber over it with all expedition, because the prize was to be given to that party which should first seize a spear stuck in the ground on the other side. The thing was not so easy, however, because the combatants were allowed to pull down their opponents ; and many were the shouts of laughter which greeted the fall of a heavy man-at-arms from the barrier. Bushton at last seized the prize and obtained the victory for his party.

While this was going on several little events had happened in the pavilion. Otto, too unhappy to enjoy the spectacle and standing a little behind and to one side of Lelita, kept his gaze fixed upon her more than upon the fighters. He observed to his astonishment that she was as little absorbed in the struggle as he was, and kept looking about her. Affecting to gaze before him he felt that her gaze became fixed for some moments upon him. This occurred twice, till Cajazzo touched his sleeve and called him forward so that the large body of Reding was interposed between him and her. Again he saw her look round at the place where he had been standing, and now observed that her face was full of a curious expression of apprehension. That she seemed to take some sort of interest in him now was plain, but whether it was one of liking or disliking he could not determine.

In a minute, however, he discovered which it was.

An arrow glanced off the breastplate of one of the combatants just as the struggle ceased and, hitting Lelita's shoulder harmlessly, fell upon the ground at her feet. In a moment Otto and Cajazzo, actuated by the same thought, leapt down and seized it laughing.

"Cupid has shot at you, madam," cried the latter.

"But not wounded me," she answered gaily.

"A favour, a favour!" cried Otto, and the young men tried to draw it away from each other.

"To which do you award it, madam?" asked Cajazzo.

"It is mine!" said Otto, holding it up triumphantly.

Lelita looked at him for a moment and her eyes seemed to grow narrower and narrower.

"It is yours, Signior," she said to Cajazzo; "it is yours, *of course*." Otto gave it to him without a word, and Cajazzo ran it under the hinge of his visor.

"That which has threatened you harmlessly, madam, shall destroy my rivals," he cried laughing.

"It is more likely that that which cannot injure me cannot injure them," she answered merrily. Otto hung his head and left the field to his more fortunate rival. She hated him now.

He gradually withdrew himself from the company and retired to a part of the great pavilion which was curtained off from the rest for a dining-hall. Here a number of lackeys were engaged in laying out the table, and they gazed curiously at Otto as, like one in a dream, he flung himself down on a seat and mused despairingly. It was all over. This creature whom he loved so passionately hated him. For him heaven had closed for ever. Nothing that he should ever do could gain her love. Heartless—coquette—these were the words that Zozimo had applied to her. Let her be so, he cried passionately—he would love her the same. No—it was something evil or base that she had observed in him. But what could it be? Why

did the others too stand so aloof from him? Was he indeed evil or base? His conscience absolved him. He was not one of those puritans who insult God by calling themselves evil at all hours. He saw himself to be good like the other works of God. He was free from the self-accusing religion which is no religion. He had done no one an injury, and yet he was surrounded by a scarcely secret hatred. If he had appeared too clever, too magnificent, or too honest, as Lelita had averred, he had endeavoured by the humility of his manner and dress to remove the suspicion. For himself he thought only of one thing, his love for her. He was conscious of possessing neither pride nor vanity. He knew indeed that he was richer and better looking than most men; but he knew also that these are only two gifts among a hundred; and there was not a man among the suitors for whom he did not feel as much respect as for himself. Even Gangogo, who to most men appeared almost loathsome, he saw was but one among the many seeds which Heaven scatters upon earth to fructify after their kind. He was conscious of a boundless good-nature toward others, and yet he received none in return.

He rose sighing. He had still to face the suitors. And then——

In the meantime the *course de faquin* had commenced. Cajazzo, Bran, Reding, Theiling, Sax-Misox, Zamba, and several others were taking their turns. Even the Count had donned leather hose and seized a lance. The first of these rode a fine little mare contrary to the rules of chivalry; but the fact now only excited merriment, and as he sat the mare amongst the others with the arrow in his helmet he was cheered by the spectators. The quintain or dibble was a figure generally made rudely like a Turk and set up in front of the pavilion for tilters to ride against. The left arm stuck out forward holding a wooden

sabre ; and the whole thing turned upon a pivot in such a peculiar way that if the rider who tilted against it struck it in the middle or on the left it would remain still, but if he struck it on the right it would spin round and hit him from behind with the wooden sabre as he passed. The game was scored by points like target shooting.

"Le coup dans l'œil en vaut trois," shouted the heralds ; "de l'œil au bout du nez, deux ; du nez au menton, un." A player who ran disgracefully was compelled to go on at the risk of receiving many blows from the sabre, until he should score a certain number of points. Cajazzo as he walked past Lelita touched her favour and shook his spear, but in order to tease him she called out that he was to wear it only so long as he remained the best at the quintain, and that if he failed in this the more successful competitor was to receive it. This was received by a shout from some of the suitors, the Prince, Trullo, Cynthian calling at once for leather stockings ; and Otto, who by no means wished to do so, was compelled to join.

The attention of the crowd was now diverted by the appearance of Gangogo armed cap-à-pie, and sitting a fine horse ; and so great was his popularity that a loud shout arose to welcome him. He was a very expert tilter and, as we have described, by no means a despicable soldier ; but though only a squire he was now armed like a knight in a splendid suit of gold-inlaid Maximilian armour which had belonged to one of the boy knights of the Duke of Burgundy. Though his figure looked very squat and low, the armour hid much of his deformity ; and as he went by with visor up and seven yellow plumes each a yard long on his helmet he looked a very fierce warrior. What was the delight of the crowd, however, to see him followed presently by the other dwarf. Zozimo was armed in a brigandine, or brass-studded leather tunic, and

hose of the same material, with a light coat of mail and a small salade. He rode a beautiful little Arab and was followed by Othman. The suitors, however, were not so well pleased to see him as were the people, and declared that they would not tilt with him [1]—until at last the Count persuaded them because of the amusement to be extracted from the sight. In the first turn Cajazzo, Gangogo, Zamba, and Zozimo all scored three each and the others with the exception of Otto did fairly well. Otto's turn came last and for some reason he became nervous. Everyone seemed to look at him and to wonder how he would do. He missed the figure entirely amid dead silence.

He had no sooner done so and was riding back from the extremity of the lists where his horse had carried him than he saw two gleaming eyes fixed upon him from amongst the crowd. They belonged to Morva Neroni, Zozimo's mother. She stared at him without a word ; but he evidently did not know her.

In the second turn he was so successful as to score two, but in the third and fourth he missed entirely again. He was greeted with derisive cheers, and Lelita looked away when he passed her. In the meantime Cajazzo, Zozimo, and Gangogo had scored three every time ; and the success of Otto's servant was looked upon with as much surprise as his own want of skill. The two dwarfs were quarrelling as usual.

"Bod!" cried Gangogo, "you are a little Satan."

"Then you are Gubabub the devil who sits on the fat miller's chest o' nights," answered Zozimo.

"Tell me that you learned to tilt in that way in three months."

"Why not?" asked Zozimo hotly. "And since I can tilt better than you can I shall not take the trouble to answer you."

"We shall see," said Gangogo fiercely.

[1] Neither Gangogo nor Zozimo had any right by rule to play.

Otto felt rather humiliated. He had done so badly that he had asked to be released, but the herald had said with a laugh that he must score three at least. The Prince, too, for some reason, had not done well, though no one as yet had been struck by the sabred Turk. This was reserved for Otto. Full of determination he spurred forward and dibbled his lance excellently as he thought, but was at the same moment knocked out of his saddle by a violent blow on the back. He had struck the figure on the right side. Angered by the shouts of laughter which arose, his fine hose messed by mud, he returned to the pavilion frowning, without glancing at Lelita. In the meantime the last three competitors were running their courses. The crowd were shaking their fists at Zozimo, evidently thinking him some sort of magician, and commanding him to use no tricks. Cajazzo ran and scored three amongst frantic cheers. Zozimo, plainly intimidated by the crowd, scored only one and lost.

"Ha!" yelled Gangogo, "you pitiful little ewt, you are afraid. He could have done it better if he had tried," he shouted to the crowd.

"Then do better yourself," snarled Zozimo.

Gangogo rode and hit the quintain on the left side of the head. Unfortunately the catch broke and the arm swung round the wrong way, and striking him full on the chest flung him to the ground. He was up again upon his horse in a minute, and drawing his holy-water-sprinkler struck at Zozimo with all his might. The spiked ball fell full on his chest; but the little creature, not at all daunted, struck Gangogo such an amazing blow with the stump of his lance that he measured his length upon the ground again and found it not so easy to rise this time. Cajazzo was declared the winner because Gangogo, though he hit the Turk fairly, did not withstand his return blow. The hunchback danced with rage for five

minutes in the middle of the course, his long plumes whirling about him like the legs of a tarantula.

The next course was one with which we will not detain the readers long. The suitors having challenged Otto, Othman, the captain of his twenty lances, challenged as many of the suitors' men to joust in the open. Otto's guard consisted entirely of estradiots (Greek mercenaries, then very popular among the Venetians). They wore a cuirass with sleeves and gloves of mail and a jacket without sleeves over it ; an open salade on the head, and sabre, mace, and the double-pointed lance called the arsegaye—wild but strong and soldier-like fellows, evidently rather disconcerted by their master's failure at the *course de faquin*. They were opposed to Bushton and twenty men-at-arms, and scarcely had the tucket sounded when the Scotchman found himself on the ground among most of his companions. Othman was declared the victor, and it being now noon the company broke up to dinner.

XXXII.—Otto opposes the Suitors

To Otto's great surprise Reichenfels approached him, carrying his parrot on his finger, and said that his daughter requested his hand to dinner. By this time all pride and even resistance seemed to have been driven out of the young man, and he rose with no attempt to conceal his pleasure. Blushing to the eyes with astonishment and delight, he took her hand and led her into the banqueting chamber amid the no less surprise and disgust of the other suitors ; who were obliged by etiquette to follow them in a body, the other ladies being allotted to those guests who were not supposed to be in servitude to the lady of the tournament. Amazed at the unexpected dis-

tinction, Otto could say nothing, and Lelita watched him with a smile.

"Your kindness overpowers me," he said at last. "To what do I owe it?"

"To your misfortunes, I think," she answered gaily.

"I shall bless them in future."

"A man and a book without faults are the most faulty of all," she said. "You are not experienced at the quintain?"

"I have not studied the use of arms much," he replied humbly.

"And yet you will have to face these gentlemen presently," she whispered. "And they do not love you."

He sighed. "And yet I have done nothing to deserve their dislike."

She looked at him brightly. "Say the word," she exclaimed, "and the Count di Cajazzo will take your place. He has begged me to tell you again that he is willing to do so. He has wronged you, he says."

"Nay, madam," he answered joyfully, "he wrongs himself because he is too chivalrous. I hope I shall do better in the afternoon."

"It is strange," she said, "that you have not studied arms. Were I a man I should do nothing else. Were you not somewhat sickly in your childhood, Signior? I have thought so at times."

Otto blushed and stammered. "Yes, I was very sickly once," he said. "But I am now very well and strong." And he looked almost admiringly at his powerful hand, placed on the table before him.

Lelita blushed also, and then began to talk very kindly with him, discussing the events of the day with much pleasantry. Presently the others joined in, and the hilarity became general. Otto, hardly able to believe in his sudden fortune and feeling the full vigour

of his spirits revive under it, talked with a brilliance and gaiety that had not been expected of him; and, if the suitors looked at him more jealously on that account, the general opinion of him began to turn quickly in his favour. However, in a few minutes, as it appeared, the Count rose and said that it was time for those gentlemen who were not already armed to put on their harness, and Otto was obliged to rise with the others and go to his arming tent at the end of the lists.

Zozimo was awaiting him with a suit of Maximilian armour with lamboys or long steel skirts nearly down to the knees. The armour was plain, without any ornament; and there was no feather in the helmet. A large shoulder shield was buckled on to his left shoulder, and Zozimo maintained an ominous silence during the process.

"Your lordship," he said at last, "did not do well at the quintain."

"You could hardly expect me to," answered Otto, smiling, "as you know I have had no experience of it."

"Ah, you should have taken my help. The next affair is more serious."

"I shall do my best."

"That is always a small excuse for failure!"

"But it is often the only one."

"No, no, my lord. Our failures like our sins can never be forgiven."

"I hope not."

"If we neglect precautions that we are able to take, our failures become faults."

"Well, and what if faults even may be of service to us? I have learned to think so during the last hour."

"Your lordship is in a better humour."

"I have cause to be," he answered, telling Zozimo the good fortune which had just befallen him. The dwarf was not a little pleased, but still remained

suspicious. "Good," he exclaimed; "but what if one of these Hectors knocks you on the head now? Where will your good humour be then?"

"I feel the strength of ten, Zozimo," replied the young man, "and shall do my best for the love of my mistress."

"Remember, sir," the dwarf grumbled, "that I am always behind you. You may not be so hopeful presently."

Otto looked at him keenly as he lifted the curtain to go out. "No, Zozimo, no," he said; "I will fight by myself."

Zozimo shrugged his shoulders angrily.

Otto mounted a magnificent white horse held by one of his grooms, and Zozimo followed him on the small black Arab.

In the meantime, while the suitors were arming, the *course des testes* had been run by Cajazzo, Zamba, Sax-Misox, and Gangogo. Five large Turks' heads had been placed at equal distances from each other down the length of the course, and one stood on the other side of the barrier. They were placed upon tall busts of gilded wood so lightly that they would fall off at a blow, and between them hurdles were planted transversely in the ground. The game was one mostly of horsemanship and consisted in knocking them down one after the other with *different* weapons; but the whole had to be done at full gallop, and trotting or ambling was not allowed. In order to take the last Turk's head the rider was obliged to leap his horse over the barrier, a feat which, considering the weight of his arms, was not very easy. Zamba ran first. Starting from the end of the lists at full gallop he overturned the first head with his spear in rest. Dropping the spear as he galloped round the end of the hurdle he darted a light *lande*, or *cane* as they called it, at the next. To the third he took his battle-axe, to the

fourth his morning-star, and to the fifth, which he missed, his sword, dropping each weapon when he had used it. Without waiting a moment after missing the fifth head, he sprang over the barrier in splendid style and upset the sixth with a blow of his gauntleted hand, amid great applause. The arms were picked up by his squire, the heads reinstated and the next player took his turn. Everyone except Sax-Misox missed one or more heads, and Cajazzo fell in leaping the barrier. Gangogo struck every head except the last, which his horse shied at after taking the leap ; and he was so furious that he leapt down and belaboured the poor animal with his empty scabbard. Sax-Misox was declared the victor.

After a short interval, during which the expectation of the spectators grew to a high point, for the chief affairs of the day were now to take place, a loud fanfare of trumpets announced the arrival of the combatants. The Prince, Zamba, Montefine, Cynthian, and Oïlus emerged at one end of the lists and Otto at the other. The heralds, drawing themselves up in line before the former, read out the challenge again, and all the spectators standing up waved their hands and shouted the names of those warriors whom they favoured especially. Lots were then drawn to determine in what order the suitors should engage their opponent. There was a pause of silence and expectation.

Otto sat motionless on his horse. His spirit seemed to be under the influence of some delicious narcotic ; he felt that drowsiness which succeeds a relief from intense bodily pain. Lelita's kindness had renewed his life and plunged him into a sort of sleep in which his soul seemed floating somewhere like a star within a gigantic dark visored casque. Seen through the chinks of the visor, as if far away, was the outside world, the brilliant crowd, the heralds of his opponents ; and above them he noticed the long Urseren valley

bathed in sunlight and sloping up on either side to the summits of the mountains. Higher hung the westering sun, but, he observed, not as bright as before. Above the jags of the Spitzliburg a circular disk of thin cloud was expanding itself, and its translucent border, coloured like the most exquisite mother-of-pearl, had touched and engrossed the planet's orb. From the Spitzliburg itself rose a pillar of cloud like a great smoke going up to heaven and joining with the disk of vapour overhead. Already the sunshine had become sickly. He watched the clouds with a far-off interest. The great snows of the Galenstock, he knew, were beginning their daily warfare against the intolerable sun, were pouring upward their legions of mist to hide themselves from him.

His horse began to champ the bit and he shifted slightly in the saddle.

She had been kind to him, kind to him at last. He could see her without moving his head. She was gazing in his direction. Her distant face was ruddy in the light. She might even love him after all. Yes, he might win this peerless lady of all the earth. The thought flung him into a deeper stupor. He felt that he was smiling to himself within that dark helmet. Others, outside, would be wondering no doubt at his fierce appearance. His soul seemed to be floating away in inexpressible emotions, as if to join those formless nebulosities in the sky.

A tucket sounded. The preliminaries were over. Otto smiled again. What was success to him since she had praised his want of success ? Slowly he placed the butt of his spear in the socket on the right side of his body-piece and drew a little nearer to the barrier. His horse began pawing the ground.

At the other end of the barrier far away and at the other side of it another horseman was waiting. Suddenly a tumult of shouts arose. They cried his name.

The ladies in the pavilion were waving their handkerchiefs at him, not at his opponent. He had no time to be astonished, for a second trumpet announced the moment of starting and the well-trained steed bounded off as if struck with a whip.

His blood surged within him; his heart leapt; in a moment he had come from heaven to earth. His adversary seemed to be growing larger and the plumes on his helmet, depressed by the wind of his speed, streamed behind and disappeared from Otto's view. He felt as if seated on a chair, so furious was the pace of his horse. Suddenly the man grew enormous and black against the sunlight. He felt a heavy blow on his left shoulder and heard the splintering of wood and the sound of a heavy body hurtling past him. Instinctively he drew rein and felt the rough jolts of the horse trying to check his speed under the influence of the severe bit. A thunder of voices broke upon his ear. "Missed!" they cried. "The Lord Montefine wins!" Thus it was indeed. Montefine had broken his lance fairly and Otto had not hit him at all. So much for dreaming at the point of action. He rode back silently. The people in the pavilion were silent as he passed them.

Once more he was in his place and the fuming Spitzliberg before him. The sky had grown still darker. He heard the croaking voice of Zozimo behind him.

"That was a bad stroke, my lord," he said; "you must do better now."

Otto laughed cheerily, and the tucket sounded once more.

Once more he flew onward, once more he felt the blow on the shoulder, once more heard the thunder of voices as his speed relaxed.

"Missed again!" they cried. "Oïlus wins!"

He felt his face flushing under the visor. Lelita

did not look at him as he passed. Zozimo was getting angry.

"This will never do, my lord!" he cried. "You seem to be asleep. Aim lower, for Heaven's sake, or they will take you for a simpleton."

Otto laughed again and again sped onward.

This time he aimed very carefully at the left side of his opponent below the breast and received the blow, not on the shoulder, but on the face—and a heavy blow it was. Again, however, his spear remained unbroken.

"Bravely hit, poet!" shouted the crowd. "His spear is as good as his pen! Bravo!"

"You crossed your spear that time, my lord," said one of the heralds reproachfully. This was a very poor thing to do at tilting, and Otto as he rode back began to feel disgrace. Someone, as he passed the pavilion, gave a short laugh. Zozimo upbraided him roundly and told him to grip tightly this time or he would be unhorsed, for the Prince was coming against him.

He did grip as tightly as he could. He felt his lance shiver in his hand, and the next moment he found himself rolling over and over on the ground. A herald came up to him and helped him to rise.

"My lord is not well?" he asked.

Lelita called out from her place and asked if he were ill. In answer he only bowed low and seated himself again upon his horse. On return to his station Zozimo said nothing at all.

A long delay occurred. Presently a herald rode up from the Count and said that the lord Zamba did not care to take his turn against a gentleman who did not appear to be well. Otto was stung by the way in which he spoke and said that he would see it out. He observed that a number of people in the pavilion had turned their backs to the course and were talking and laughing as if no more business was to be done. After a further delay the tucket sounded once more.

This time Otto's horse, as if conscious of the want of skill of his rider, suddenly swerved to one side just at the moment when the lances should have been broken. Otto, almost weeping with shame, brought him round to return to his place, when he observed that Zamba, who had done the same, leapt boldly over the barrier and approached him furiously.

"Is that the way," he cried, "in which you tilt with gentlemen?"

At this moment almost everyone in the pavilion, seeing Otto miss his stroke again, had turned round indifferently to watch a young man of the name of Ulrich Huggler whose conduct they found interesting. This young gallant was standing close to the Count with a trumpet, his office being to blow it at his master's signal. Being however a fine lad, at that moment when he should have been watching the Count he was really watching a pretty young lady in the company and was indeed crossing eyes with her in the manner that boys and girls use. He had just succeeded in ogling her into some confusion when he found that the Count was trying to tickle his ear from behind while a hundred faces were grinning at him. A minute afterwards the expression of the faces changed suddenly and the bewildered youth received a thousand cuffs and orders to blow his tucket at once. Realising the situation at last, he did so with energy.

In the same way Zozimo was engaged in an unexpected manner just when he should have had eyes for his master alone. Gangogo had come up to him from behind.

"Female weazel——" he said.

Zozimo looked at him with disdain.

"Your master is a pretty coney. Is it a girl in armour? Come, you breath of air, what mean you by bringing such a lippus as that to this tournament of men? I never saw such vile jousting in my life.

A baby would run a better tilt with the stalk of a dandelion. If you do not fly off with him presently to the place whence you came I shall make it a point to kill both of you. Do you hear ? "

Zozimo looked at him and burst with laughter.

" My good friend," he said, " you spend yourself so much on threats that you have little strength left for action. Your language is so violent that we may easily guess your deeds to be weak."

Gangogo suddenly leapt upon him and getting his head under his arm felt for his miséricorde. Zozimo would doubtless have evaded him had not his attention been attracted at that moment by a shout which arose from the crowd. As it was Gangogo had him at his mercy and drawing the long thin weapon began to insert it just above the breastplate of the other dwarf with great deliberation. He passed it carefully into his vitals, as he thought, with satisfaction, and drew it out again. Zozimo suddenly flung him away with an oath and then began to run toward his master, and Gangogo, seeing an action so unexpected in a man who he hoped would have fallen dead, fled in the opposite direction with a loud howl.

In the meantime, just when everyone in the pavilion was laughing at Ulrich Huggler and Zozimo was engaged with his friend, Zamba, who, as we have said, had leapt the barrier and approached Otto, cried:

" Is this the way you tilt with gentlemen ? Have you so little shame as to practise an art so publicly when you are so ignorant in it, or are you merely a poltroon ? "

Without waiting for an answer he came close to him and whispered:

" You vile coward, I have a mind to kill you. Draw your weapon or I will." At the same moment he dealt him a blow with his sword on the left side of the forehead, and Otto's horse, apparently readier

for combat than his master, seized the flank of Zamba's horse with his teeth, and the two stallions began to kick and squeal together. Otto, recovering himself quickly from his astonishment at this quite unlawful attack, drew his sword and struck Zamba such a blow on the crest as staggered him. The sword, however, flew into splinters at the blow and he felt himself left defenceless, quite forgetting his morning-star under his saddle. Zamba did not lose his advantage. The horses being locked together he rained blow after blow at the left side of Otto's head. The young man could see his eyes glittering villainously through the eye-holes of the visor which, according to a custom, was made in the shape of a man's face, namely, with a low retreating forehead, a high thin nose, a prominent spiral moustache, and an open mouth, exceedingly mean and hideous, not unlike that of Zamba's own countenance.

"Ha! ha! ha!" Zamba exclaimed with every blow. "You will dishonour me, will you? You woman's man, you man-woman! I will spoil your beauty for you."

Otto could see his teeth under the moustache of the mask. He felt a dull pain growing on his left forehead where the blows fell. In vain he tried to ward off the blows with his left arm, or strike his adversary with the hilt of his broken sword. Zamba with a grunt of satisfaction dropped his sword, took Otto's reins with his left hand, and drew his morning-star, or great spiked mace (blunted), with his right. Otto saw the spikes flash in the sun, felt the blow descend, and fell off his horse.

The hubbub was loud enough. The action had been quite unlawful. The people who had witnessed it had in vain attempted to get the trumpeter's attention, and when at last they did so and the trumpet rang out, the sudden fight was over and Otto lay stretched

on the ground in the middle of the course. The whole thing had happened within a minute, a few yards in front of Lelita and the Count. Zamba, hooking up his morning-star with a laugh of satisfaction, turned round and began to ride off at a walking pace.

A crowd of persons ran out and lifted Otto's head and unlaced his helmet. Lelita sat as pale as death. This was probably the first time that she had ever seen real war and hate so close to her, and she never forgot the figure of the condottiere smiting his helpless adversary.

Otto was, however, barely unconscious. The blood streamed from a large bruise on his head where the helmet had been dinted by the repeated blows of the blunt sword ; but he was not hurt, and in a moment he opened his eyes and, such was his vigour, attempted to get up from the ground. A second affair, he saw, was on foot. Cajazzo had leapt on his horse and riding after Zamba had defied him for his dishonesty.

" I claim an interlude," he cried to the Count. " I wish to deal with this gentleman in a course of swords."

" No, no," said the Count.

" He has infringed the rules," cried Cajazzo.

" It is false," answered Zamba. " He accepted my challenge by drawing his sword too."

" That is true, Cajazzo " ; said the Count.

" It may be," shouted Cajazzo ; " but I will have a round with him nevertheless. You have behaved in an unknightly manner, Signior, by striking as you did a defenceless man."

" He is an impostor who ought to be punished," replied Zamba.

" You lie," exclaimed Cajazzo, losing self-control in a moment ; " and it is you who shall be punished."

The Count reluctantly gave consent to an inter-

lude, knowing that the swords (which were now examined by the heralds) were blunt.

The combatants took positions some distance apart in front of the pavilion and waited for the signal. Otto was removed to the seat next to Lelita, and the guests vied with one another in paying him attentions. Lelita kept repeating to all around that he had been ill lately and was not yet strong enough for these violent games. She seemed to pay but little attention to what now began to engross Otto, namely the quarrel between Zamba and Cajazzo. Presently, however, the fight began.

The adversaries dashed forward at full gallop according to the ordinary usage of this course, and as they passed each other delivered a ringing blow on the left side of the head. Making now a quick demivolte and returning at the gallop, they delivered a second blow of the same kind. Making another demivolte they returned again ; but instead of passing each other remained within striking distance and commenced to rain down a tempest of blows. Cajazzo being a skilled soldier was a match for Zamba, and it was seen clearly was minded to give him a lesson. By a quick stroke, however, Zamba dashed his reins out of his hand and then, as his horse lost control, followed him and knocked him too out of his saddle.

Zamba sat his horse in front of the pavilion in rather an insulting manner, as if daring anyone else. Lifting his visor, he glanced contemptuously at Otto, and seeing that he himself had now no chance whatever with Lelita, cried out some words to the effect that Otto was a woman. He rose instantly, determined to try his chance again, when he was forestalled by no less a person than the Cardinal, who had just arrived at the lists from the castle.

" Be assured," he said to Zamba, " if there are women in the world, there are also men who are

able to punish the perfidy which you have twice shown."

The soldier attempted to put aside the challenge, since the day of militant churchmen was passing (though Matthæus Schinner, the herd boy of Wallis, who rose to be a cardinal a few years later, was perhaps an exception). The Cardinal was, however, determined to show his parts; and Zamba found the weight of his blows so terrible that, affecting to be unable to hold in his horse, he fairly fled, chased by the mighty churchman as by a destroying angel, and saved only by the sound of the trumpet. He returned sullenly to the arming tent, where the suitors were awaiting him.

The challenge having resulted in favour of these gentlemen, the Count had nothing else to do but tell the heralds to declare another suitors' trial on the morrow to be conducted on the same terms as the original one.

XXXIII.—The End of the Tournament

Cajazzo, who had not been hurt by his fall, returned nimbly to the pavilion.

"So, madam!" he exclaimed in affected anger; "you care little for my mishaps. You cannot expect me to fight your battles again; so that you must clearly understand that, though I am about to take part against the suitors on account of the general challenge which they issued, it is not on your behalf. I shall do so only for the sake of glory."

"I have a sterner compellor," said Otto, rising from his seat beside Lelita. "But I must first thank you, Signior, for taking my part against the lord Zamba. I hope still to do better in the course that remains to be run."

"I will not advise you to try again," said Cajazzo,

" for you are not in good health, clearly. But who is your sterner compellor ? "

" Love," answered Otto.

" Oh, there ! " said Cajazzo disdainfully.

" If you do not take the trouble to fight for me, Signior Cajazzo," said Lelita mockingly, " you cannot expect me to take the trouble of loving you."

" Love," he answered, glancing slightly at Otto, " comes naturally without trouble, effort, or stratagem. Nature wins at a blow where the devil or a politician would fail."

The suitors had now ridden up to pay their respects to the lady of the tournament, and were loudly cheered by those who had cheered Otto before. Montefine had heard the last remark.

" What is that that a politician cannot do ? " he asked.

" Win love," answered Cajazzo.

" Well," said Montefine, " here is one who is about to try."

" Madam," said the Prince bowing, " we have come to ask that he who does best in the next course shall obtain your hand. Now that we have silenced our calumniators," with a contemptuous glance at Otto, " let the watchword of the joust be Love."

An appreciative shout arose.

" Love ! what is love ? " said Cajazzo scornfully.

" Tell us then, Signior, if you know," answered the Prince laughing.

" Ah, yes, I will, you poor victims of folly," he replied in high spirits, " if you can understand me. Love is that in the first place which makes a wise man foolish and a foolish man wise."

" You admit that, then."

" Of course. It makes a wise man a fool and a fool wise ; a strong man weak and a weak man strong ; a rich man poor and a poor most rich ; an honest man

dishonest and a pickpocket honest ; a clever man dull and a politician," with a look at Montefine, " still duller. It comes to a wise man in spite of wisdom ; to a fool in spite of folly ; to a strong man not because he is strong ; to a weak man because he is weak," with a swift glance at Otto ; " to a rich man though riches dazzle him ; to a poor man though poverty benumb him ; to an honest man though honesty forbid ; to a thief though dishonesty dissuade ; to a clever man though he be armoured with wit, and to a politician though he be armoured with dullness. To the wise man it gives heart, to the foolish brains ; to the strong pity, to the weak confidence, to the rich humility, to the poor pride, to the honest hardihood, to the dishonest scruples, to the clever man despair, and to the politician stupefaction. It makes the old man leer, the young man grave, the matron laugh, the maiden sigh. It compels your bearded doctors," with a look at Oïlus, " to dance the hornpipe of folly, and your sheep-brained Lotharios," with one at Trullo, " to browse on books. Like a polished shield it makes a man by turns all forehead and no mouth or all mouth and no forehead, and like the enchantment of Circe it sticks into one the villainous attributes of many. Like a magnetic mountain, by drawing the nails and bolts out of passing ships, it causes them to founder hopelessly. Away ! no love for me ! I am a child of glory ! " and he sprang on his horse amidst the cheers of the audience.

This little speech was evidently made partly to restore good humour after the fierce behaviour of Zamba, and partly to relieve Lelita of the embarrassing request of the suitors. In a trice all were on horseback and galloping off to their respective stations.

The last to do so was Otto. Suddenly falling on his knee before Lelita, he cried,

" Madam, I thank Heaven and you for your kindness

to me. If I have ever offended you I ask your pardon ; and will now endeavour to relieve you of the shame of having such a weak lover. If you will grant me your handkerchief as a favour, I shall die unless I do so."

"Tut, tut," said the Count, "you are not recovered enough for the caracol."

Lelita without a word took the chaplet of pearls from her head and placed it upon his helmet. Otto started as if with shame, gasped, rose, bowed deeply, and sprang on his horse.

"Why did you do that ?" said Reichenfels angrily. "The young man will have everyone against him now."

Lelita flung herself back in her chair and said nothing.

The sun had disappeared entirely. A gloomy, impassive layer of cloud covered the sky, except that part of it which was over the Furka Pass. The reek rising from the Spitzliberg had become black in colour and, impinging against the layer of cloud above, spread itself out and began to run down the gorges of the mountains. Amongst the waifs of rolling vapour the hard naked spires and points of rock stood out grimly, as if glaring around upon the scene. The heat was excessive, but a sudden damp chill seemed to be making its way through the atmosphere. The spectators stood silent, and the white gleam coming from that part of the mountains which was still in sunlight made their faces seem pale. The people in the pavilion had ceased to talk and chatter, and the Count played silently with his parrot. Everyone felt that, though the next course was supposed to be the last, something else was going to occur, something perhaps more serious than the mimic warfare which had been seen hitherto. The bird was the only creature which did not seem to have lost its spirits. He walked up and down the balustrade with ruffled feathers screaming out short sentences.

"Zod, bod, and doddikins," he cried, "I'll gut you

all. Tut, tut, tut, a piebald, scurvy crew. Where's dinner? Gangogo—o—o—o!" he screamed in an intolerable voice; then, suddenly lowering his voice and nodding his head with eyes half shut, added, "the son of an old servant—an old servant."

No one laughed.

Meantime the barriers had been torn up to give sufficient room for the combatants to ride abreast. At the Count's request Bran and Trullo, who had long retired from the suitors of their own will, joined them again because seven signiors wished to oppose them. These were Otto, Cajazzo, the Cardinal, Sax-Misox, Reding, Theiling, and Gangogo. Both sides were marshalled according to lot so that no one knew whom he should be opposed to. Otto riding up last, as we have said, found himself placed next to Cajazzo, who was laughing loudly. On seeing the chaplet of pearls on Otto's head, however, the young man suddenly ceased his mirth and looked at him long through his visor.

"Signior di Cajazzo," said Otto, "you have observed the gift that my lady has given me. I shall hope to do honour to it and to your friendship."

"My friendship!" said Cajazzo in a hollow voice.

"We shall see," continued Otto gaily. "But I wish that it was an affair of swords rather than of these sticks which I have no use at."

"You wish so?" said Cajazzo grimly. "You may soon have your wish."

The tucket sounded for spears in rest. At the same time a distant growl of thunder was heard. Every word spoken was heard distinctly in the silence here at the end of the lists.

"You lovers should try the Sardinian Caracol," said Theiling laughing, "and let the lady take the survivor."

"Ah!" exclaimed Cajazzo. "The Sardinian Caracol—I have heard of it."

" It would be the shortest way out of the difficulty," Theiling added ; and the trumpet for the charge rang out in the silence.

The wind whistled through the chinks of Otto's helmet and moaned in his ears as it does in some old house in winter. He heard the dull thud of his horse's hoofs, but the rushing of the horsemen beside him was lost in the whirl of wind. They seemed in the pale light like spectres beside him. One ear of his horse was turned forward and one backward. His sword beat his side regularly as if clamouring for something.

" Thou shalt have it, friend," he said to his sword, and laughed.

Then came their opponents like a bank of steel flying up against them. He had just time to see that, by a stroke of chance, he was pitted against Zamba again ; he had just time to set his teeth, aim the point of his spear very steadily and grip his horse more tightly with his knees, when he felt the beast torn away from between them and then several blows on various parts of his body. Rising instantly he gripped his sword handle and looked round half dazed. The yells of the spectators burst on his ears.

There was little dust because of yesterday's rain. All the horses had vanished. Instead, several men in armour were struggling on the ground and attempting to rise. Gangogo was jeering at Bran close to Otto—they had unhorsed each other. Cajazzo was sitting up drawing a bloody splinter from between the bars of his visor and Otto feared that his eye may have been injured. Further lay Cynthian and—he was glad to see—his opponent, Zamba, unhorsed by a fortunate stroke.

The heralds had been very express on the point that the combat was to cease as soon as the spears broke and that no sword-play was to be allowed. Nevertheless, Zamba had no sooner leapt to his feet and seen

Otto than, utterly disordered by fury, he rushed forward, crying,

"Ha, coward! you have made a lucky stroke this time, but you shall pay for it now," and drew his sword.

"It is against the rule," cried Cajazzo.

"You too?" shouted Zamba. "I will drub you both again, then," and he struck him with his sword. Cajazzo retorted instantly, and the trumpets began to sound in order to put a stop to the fight—which all beheld from the palisade. At the same moment, however, Cynthian and Bran, who had only seen Cajazzo's return blow, thinking that it was he who had broken the rule, rushed furiously at him, and Zamba instantly flung himself again at Otto.

"Ha, sir!" exclaimed the young man, "this is no game of skill now"; and letting out his full strength he knocked the soldier down heels over head at a single blow. The combatants who had not been unhorsed, seeing the fray, charged back again pellmell; and the fight would have become general if the heralds had not rushed in, the Count himself among them.

"How is this, sirs?" he shouted angrily. "Do you not know that a knight who breaks the rules of the tourney may be disgraced? Who began this business?"

Cajazzo flung his sword angrily to the ground and raised his visor. The blood was streaming from a splinter wound in his cheek.

"Sir," he cried, "this is the second time that fellow has broken the rules, and these gentlemen, too, thought it good to set upon me without provocation."

A loud clamour arose, some saying one thing and some another. At last Cajazzo, who was much excited, cried,

"It is of no use, sir. The fact is that there are ten men to one lady, and since we cannot all possess her we must even have it out here and now."

He began to stamp up and down in a surprising fury and took the arrow which Lelita had given him from his helmet.

"She gave me this favour and now she has given a richer one to another. Here goes mine," snapping it; "and I intend to win the other and the lady with it. So help me, Heaven! Do you think I have waited all these years and will now give her up tamely to any of you? Be hanged with your beauty trials—let the best soldier have her. I challenge you one and all for her!"

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the Count, "it is becoming dark and there is no time for it. The tournament is over."

"It is not begun yet for me," cried Cajazzo. "I shall hold the field all night. Give me that token, sir," he shouted to Otto.

"Ho, ho!" cried Gangogo. "No, by your leave, it is the same for all of us. Let us have the Sardinian Caracol."

"Content!" cried Cajazzo in a strange excitement; "and let the last man left standing win her."

"Pish!" said Theiling, who had suggested it first; "it is too dangerous."

"Then it suits me well," shouted Cajazzo.

Immediately everyone called out in its favour and the Count much disturbed, consulted with the Prince, the Cardinal, and Theiling. There seemed nothing else to be done, for the fierce spirits of all had been roused; and reluctantly he gave his assent.

The Sardinian Caracol was a kind of circular tournament in which the combatants formed a large circle and, galloping inward, met all together in the centre. The fight was then to be continued on horse or foot with swords. Those who chose to yield were to lie on the ground, and the last man left standing received the prize. The Count insisted on blunt swords being used;

but, as it was, the game would be very dangerous owing to the terrible crash of horses in the centre. Not a few of the suitors did not like the thought of it, but were bound in honour to join. Ten competitors agreed to play ; and Theiling wished to do so because he had proposed the course, but was overruled. The ladies and the spectators showed great excitement when they heard about it, and Lelita became very pale. While the lots were being drawn as to the order in which the combatants should be placed in the circle, the sky was still more overcast and the thunder began to roll closer and closer. Long arms of cloud reached down from the mountains and sudden gusts of chill wind tossed about the numerous flags and gonfalons. A huge body of vapour sank even lower upon the valley as if to crush those who were within it ; and suddenly the setting sun shot forth an angry gleam of red fire from over the Furka, turning everything to the colour of blood. Then the gleam vanished, and a small, fine rain filled the air, and a heavy shock of thunder rolled echoing among the hills. All looked anxiously upon the sky, for a lightning stroke was much to be apprehended in that high altitude by men clad in armour. The combatants took their places silently in a circle round the lists. Otto found himself just opposite to Lelita, and between Gangogo and the Prince. She had called to him, " You have my favour, sir. See that you do not too ill or too well." She was very excited and breathed quickly. The other suitors formed a large ring a hundred yards in diameter.

What happened at the first shock Otto scarcely remembered : he saw only the horses rushing together tossing their heads and finally screaming with rage or terror. The scene was dreadful to behold. Many of the horses and one of the combatants, Oïlus, were killed on the spot. Thanks to their armour the knights were not injured by the kicks of the maddened animals,

though many were knocked down by them. Montefine and Trullo were stunned and remained senseless during the rest of the fight. The Prince, Zamba, and Bran kept their seats and instantly fell upon each other with their swords. Those who were in the midst of the confusion of dead and dying horses extricated themselves only with difficulty, and immediately began the combat against the nearest opponent. The squires ran up as close as they dared in order to be within reach of their masters. The thunder crashed loudly overhead, the rain became heavier, and a chill mist began to rise from the soil.

Otto at first stood alone unopposed and put up his hand to feel whether the chaplet was still on his helm. He drew himself up to his full height and held his sword with its point upon the earth. His figure clad in the perfect well-fitting armour was superb. He did not move. He waited to be attacked. A tremendous strength seem to run down his nerves ; and a sudden remembrance of something far distant struck him and he smiled to himself. It would be seen presently what he could do.

He saw Cajazzo and Cynthian belabouring each other at a little distance. The next moment Gangogo flew at him with a shout and Otto struck him down as if he had been a twig. He flew at him again and again and was struck down by the young man, seemingly with the greatest ease. Being nearest to the pavilion they were seen the best and the spectators cheered every blow. Suddenly Gangogo, dropping his sword, evaded his blow and leapt in upon him. Otto flung him away. The dwarf was on him again like a cat and drew his miséricorde, against the rules. Otto hurled him away with all his force. He circled through the air and dropped with a clang. The next moment, the horses of the Prince and Zamba coming together violently, both riders fell to the ground ; and Bran,

having no longer anyone to oppose, dismounted. Otto saw in a moment that Zamba and the Prince as soon as they observed him made for him. They came on together, but Zamba rather warily.

"Well, sir," said Otto, "I am waiting for you." Zamba leapt aside and struck him and the Prince did the same. Otto laughed and then fell on the soldier, literally hewing him to earth with blow after blow. The Prince, more fortunate, was stunned by a single blow. Bran on seeing this cried wrathfully,

"So, you can fight after all. Well, here's for you." Instead of taking Otto's blows he parried them and returned such vigorous ones that the young count staggered. Not for long, however, for infuriated with pain at a blow which tore away his shoulder-piece, he hacked so vigorously that he overcame Bran's guard and hurled him like the others to the ground.

"Enough, enough," cried Bran, lying on his back, "I will fight no more for a woman I do not want with a man who seems to be the devil." Gangogo, however, had recovered, and springing on Otto's back tried to insert his dagger between his armet and his back-piece. It was impossible to shake off the terrible dwarf, and he was actually feeling the point of the steel when someone from behind saved him by striking Gangogo senseless. It was Cajazzo. Having overcome Cynthian he had rushed towards Otto.

These two only remained.

The trumpets began suddenly to bray for the combat to cease.

"Enough!" cried Otto hoarsely.

Cajazzo slowly advanced toward him.

"Enough!" he cried again. "I will not fight with you."

"Give me the chaplet then," said a husky voice coming from Cajazzo's helmet.

"No. But I will not fight with you."

"You are not so weak as I thought."

"Weak! I am too strong for you; but I will not fight with you."

"Come; we shall see."

"Cease! You have been my friend. You only of all these. I love you. I will not fight with you."

Cajazzo remained a moment irresolute.

"Sir," he said, "you mistake. This is not a battle but a tournament. There is no occasion for fine speeches. The prize goes to the winner. I do not suppose that either of us intends to kill the other. You must yield either yourself or the favour."

Otto lifted his sword to the sky. It seemed to him that he could not see distinctly. A frenzy that he was quite unacquainted with had overcome him. It was the spirit of the body which had mastered the spirit of the soul—for, once too rashly released, the spirit of the body has this power.

"I do not intend to kill you—now—not now," he said very hoarsely, "but presently——"

For answer Cajazzo struck him.

Like Bran he guarded Otto's blows and did not venture to receive them on his armour. As it was he shook at every stroke from his opponent. He had no time to strike in return. Otto ranged round him looming in front of him like a tower. Blow on blow fell with tremendous force. Cajazzo had hoped that the Count would become tired; but no, he seemed to become more vigorous. His own arm began to ache; then he was knocked down in a moment. He rose again.

Otto heard a whisper behind him. It was his squire Zozimo.

"Good, my lord," he said. "Now complete it."

He commanded himself with a shudder and saw all at once that it was raining.

A white mist almost hid the two remaining combatants. Overhead the thunder shrieked as if the veil of the heavens was being rent in twain. The crowd of spectators leapt over the palisade and rushed toward them.

Cajazzo spoke in a voice very weak, very hoarse.

"Who are you? Whence have you come? Why have you come to take her from me? I could have defeated the others. Why did you affect to have no skill in arms! You are a trickster. You play trick after trick in order to win her wealth. You have been playing darkly all day. I do not know who you are, but I judge you now to be a villain. You called me your friend. I am your friend no longer."

Otto gave a cry.

"How can I give her to you when I too have loved her so long?" he said. "Why do you take your friendship from me? You wrong me."

Cajazzo sprang at him and struck him blow after blow. He stood taking them all without an effort to retaliate.

"Strike him," hissed Zozimo behind him.

He did not move.

Cajazzo suddenly ceased his blows, dropped his sword and grasped the region of his heart with both his gauntleted hands. He began to stagger about and groan, and then uttered a succession of the most dreadful shrieks ever heard. The blood of the bystanders seemed to curdle with terror, and Lelita and the other ladies who had rushed forward shrieked in sympathy. There was something so terrible in the cry of this armed man generally so brave, says the historian, that scarcely anyone could contain their fear. In a moment, however, the fit passed as it came and, seizing his sword again, he made another blow at Otto, and then fell senseless.

This scene with the thunder and the rain closed the

tournament in an appalling way. The Count Otto, rushing to the fainting man and supporting his head on his knee, began to unlace his helmet. When it was taken off they all thought he was dead, for his lips were white and still, and the blood flowed from many wounds on the head and cheek. Lelita fell screaming beside him and pushing Otto away took Cajazzo's head herself.

"Now," she cried to the victor, "you have done for him and yourself as well. Never think that I shall marry you. What, you, a detected murderer? Why did you pretend to have no skill in arms and lead him on to fight with you? You are terrible, you are awful! They fell before you like children. How do you dare to be so strong and so beautiful? Begone. I hate you. Let me not see you again unless I see you a corpse. Do you think that I gave you those pearls for love of you? Fool! It was because I hoped that they would kill you with it on. I shudder at the very thought of you. Give me the pearls. Do not dare to touch this dead body. Oh! oh! It is he whom I love, and he is dead!"

While she spoke Otto's head had been sinking ever lower and lower as he stood. When at the close of her speech she kissed Cajazzo's lips, he slowly took the chaplet of pearls off his helmet and laid them on the ground beside her. Then without a word he disappeared in the crowd around, followed by Zozimo.

The thunder had ceased, the rain came down in a pitiless torrent. Such of the knights as remained senseless were carried away to their tents. Of these Oïlus was dead, Zamba badly wounded, and all of the rest except Bran more or less hurt. Strangely enough no wound whatever was found on Cajazzo's body, such at least as would account for the terrible cries he had uttered. But he remained quite senseless, breathing heavily.

The crowd broke up and rushed home in the darkness.

Even the Count's parrot said nothing. A nameless terror filled every mind.

XXXIV.—The Colours of Love

About an hour after midnight the heavy clouds which had lingered round the mountains, stooping over them and searching every spot like spoilers after a battle, began to dissolve, and the moon looked out clearly from heaven. At the same time two subdued voices were talking in Count Azrimar's room. Unable to sleep himself he had awakened his servant and was discussing some plan with him. His lamp had died out, and they were in darkness.

They had returned from the tournament without a word passing between them. As soon as his armour was taken off, the young nobleman had flung himself groaning on his bed without removing his hacqueton of chamois-skin or the mail gussets on his shoulders. He was sore with bruises, sorer in the heart, exhausted with fatigue and grief. His face was smeared with blood from the wound on his forehead.

"I cannot understand it," he groaned. "Everything that I do seems to turn out ill. Heaven knows that I would not have harmed Cajazzo. He forced himself upon me."

"Do you mean to say, my lord," said Zozimo fiercely, laying his two hands upon his chest, "that my presence brings you ill fortune? If so——"

"Oh! oh!" groaned Otto; "she is lost to me for ever, for ever. She loves him. I see it all now. She gave me the chaplet to make his triumph the greater. What am I beside him but a poor dull creature; and he noble, experienced in arms and the world, a true man."

"Tush!" said Zozimo rudely. "You have every advantage, my lord, but lose everything by your

weaknesses. Why did you not kill him when I told you to ? "

" Do you think me so base ? " said Otto angrily.

" Base ! " cried the dwarf. " Was it not within the terms of the course ? Oïlus was killed and no one was accused of baseness. The fellow would have killed you if he could."

Otto looked at him.

" I fear I have killed him," he said.

" You ! " exclaimed Zozimo contemptuously. " No, but you would have allowed yourself to be killed if ——"

Otto looked at him with a kind of horror, and then flung his face on the pillow again and groaned.

" If," said the dwarf, his hair rising on his head with anger, " if, my lord, you think——"

" Leave me, leave me ! " cried Otto.

Zozimo laughed roughly.

" In faith I will," he said. " I will find some merrier company among the good fellows below. A cup of wine will do me no harm."

Otto took no supper. He lay on the pallet all the evening revolving the affair and growing more and more miserable. Lelita, he felt, was lost to him. Whether Cajazzo was going to die or not it was the same. He saw how his failure in the tournament at first, and then his wonderful feats of strength, must appear to her. Doubtless everyone thought that the whole of it was a trick. The next day he should be obliged to leave the castle.

Zozimo had returned and was sleeping in the alcove.

The more he tossed the more miserable Otto became. Much fatigued but sleepless, he fell into a sort of excited dream. He thought continually of Lelita, of her beautiful vivid face, of her quick hands, of her beautiful body, of her kindness to him. She was one of those little queens of women who draw some

men toward them with a much greater force than do their statelier, colder, or purer sisters. Unacquainted with love, love mastered him with ease. He knew nothing of the thought—

> "Love is like understanding, that grows bright
> Gazing on many truths."

One of love's truths sufficed him. He thought of her cruel words, "Let me not see you again unless I see you a corpse."

Later the moonlight flashed into his chamber. He awoke from what was no sleep and his pillow he found was wet. He thought for a moment that it was with blood and he saw clearly what he must do. There was only one thing left to him. Lelita should indeed see him again.

He arose trembling and crept to the door. Stealthily as he did so, Zozimo started up.

"Whither are you going, my lord?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Otto, "nothing, Zozimo."

"You meditate something."

"I am going out."

"I will come with you."

"No. I wish to be alone."

"You meditate some rash action."

"No, no."

"I know it, my lord."

Otto thought a moment.

"I am going to Madam's chamber," he whispered.

Zozimo remained silent as if thunderstruck.

"Ha!" he said. "That may not be amiss. Yes, you could do worse. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Bravo! that is a good thought. I will come with you."

"No," said Otto sternly, "I must be alone."

"Pish! That of course. But the door may be locked and you may need my help."

"Zozimo!" exclaimed Otto suddenly, "can you not win her love for me?"

Zozimo considered.

"No, my lord. You mistake me. No man has power over another's soul in the way you mean. You must win that for yourself."

Otto sighed and smiled in the darkness.

"I have tried and failed."

"Try again," said Zozimo, "and you may succeed. Play a bold game. I thought this morning that the little vixen had an eye for you in spite of her sharp words. Let us see, let us see. 'Tis a good thought of yours. Gracious! life is joyous! But in case she shrieks, my lord——" he added, rubbing his hands with delight.

"Shriek?" asked Otto, "why should she?"

"Give me a moment, my lord. I have observed her window. You can easily pass her through it. Wait, and I will go warn Othman to be in readiness. Ha! we shall take a thought from my lord Montefine." He was gone in an instant.

Otto staggered against the wall. Yes, it could certainly be done. But what would be the use of it if he had not her love? This warfare against a woman's heart was beyond the pressure of force or the tricks of cunning.

Zozimo returned breathing hoarsely.

"The house is lapped in sleep," he cried, "the moonlight sleeps on the floor, the cricket chirps in the chink. All is ready, my lord. Come."

Otto smiled; he would let Zozimo deceive himself. They stole out and along a silent corridor. Everything was quiet except his own heart, which too would be quiet soon. They turned up another corridor to the left and came to Lelita's door.

"Go in, my lord," said Zozimo; "I will wait you here."

Otto pressed his hand for a moment and entered, shutting the door behind him.

A tiny silver lamp burned on a small enamelled table. The chamber was very small and hung round with blue silken curtains embroidered with the story of Sir Amadis of Gaul. The floor was covered deep with furs of the chamois and the bear. Otto sobbed aloud suddenly and fell on his knees at the door.

The flame of the lamp was not much bigger than a pea, and gave forth a faint sweet odour, but so little light that the moonbeams entering by the window contended successfully with it. The window was furnished with glass, not embroidery; and the panes being of different colours the room seemed to be filled with as many delicate hues as is a precious stone. Just beyond the area of moonlight a great illuminated volume lay upon a book-stand. In the darkness against the arras some clothing was flung on a couple of stools, but in the moonlight itself, in the centre of the chamber, a bear's head snarled at Otto from the floor. Upon the bear's fur beyond it stood two little shoes together, and the emeralds upon their buckles sparkled angrily in the weird light. Otto determined to look no further. Kneeling, he kept his eyes fixed on the bear's head and the little shoes. He had sworn to look no further.

He remained at the door, breathless. A faint sound filled the room, a regular sufflation, the breathing of the young girl—the inspiration soft and slow, the expiration short and sharp as of one fatigued. By and by it began to form itself into a musical cadence, to make a faint chime in the stillness, as of sweet-toned fairy bells. He felt as if a sympathetic sleep was coming upon him, as if he were being lulled by some harmonious waters breaking on a shore. Something magnetic held him kneeling there.

It was very chill after the rain even in the chamber.

Otto's clothes, damp with perspiration, had not dried yet. The moonlight too was cold and seemed to be freezing him. He ventured to glance at the little lamp. The tiny flame, sharp against the dark arras as an electric spark, seemed to bicker with anger against him. Alternately increasing and decreasing in volume, it seemed to be wishing to draw his attention. It seemed to be trying to spit at him with fury, spluttering every few minutes with a little hiss. He thought that the bear's head was drawing nearer to him to devour him. He began to feel full of secret terror. These things were conspiring against him. Perhaps they would awaken her before——

He shut his eyes and sighed deeply. She would find to-morrow how much he had loved her. He pictured her awakening. There where the chaste, impassive moonbeams poured now, the early rose of the morning sun would be spread. Her lips too would be rosy. Her cheeks rosy with sleep. She would stretch her arms, awake and smile. She would rise and would see—oh, horror!

Perturbation of fancy! What would she say? He loved me, then; there must have been some mistake, this was no adventurer, this—this dead thing! Would she shriek? Would she kiss his cold head? He pictured her standing there in horror, her hands clasped, her little naked feet white against the black bearskin. He saw the dark red stream trailing along the floor.

A hissing voice came from somewhere. He almost fell, so much was he startled.

"Why do you wait?" it said.

The voice came from the other side of the door. He did not answer.

That strange square of different coloured moonlight on the floor before him! It was like love itself, he thought; composed of so many delicate hues, all so

different and yet all so beautiful. The joyous yellow, the warm rose, the luscious purple, the chill blue. These colours were in his heart too, but they were growing dimmer there—for soon it would be full only of darkness. On the floor, however, they were becoming astonishingly bright. The lamp was going out. The flame vanished suddenly with an angry little splutter, leaving only a tiny red heart of fury against him. It seemed to him as if his presence had caused the death of the chaste flame. The room was full only of love now.

A terrible thought came to him. Now that the lamp was out might he not lift his eyes just ever so little? For one moment? He would die the next.

He drew a long thin stiletto from his side and cautiously, timidly lifted his eyes. He could see nothing; the foot of the bed was toward him and was too high for him to look over.

Slowly with parted lips and dagger in hand he moved forward from the door on his knees. With infinite caution he approached the patch of moonlight. Presently the beams in all their colours poured over him and bathed him. The purple fell on his head, the rose on his breast, and the cold blue on the dagger in his hand. His knees were patched with various hues. He turned toward the bed and looked up, panting with fear. There was only darkness there.

Soon his eyes became accustomed to it. The bed was in an arched alcove. Above it upon a shelf several large books could be dimly discerned and a crystal of water sparkled faintly. The corner of the rich coverlet poured over into the moonlight, and a crimson pillow lay on the floor. He could see nothing of her he sought. She was lying at full length, her face turned from him, and one hand lay on the coverlet. He should never see her face again. An almost un-

controllable anguish seized him at the thought. He dare not rise to look at her for fear that his breath might wake her.

Again the hissing whisper came through the door: "Why do you wait?"

Smiling he opened his dress at the throat and felt for the little hollow above the breastbone where the two sinews of the throat converge together. Placing the point of the stiletto there with the forefinger of the left hand he raised the hilt with the right for a strong downward thrust. In a moment he knew the cold steel would traverse the organs of the chest and would transfix the throbbing heart. The heart would grip the steel, would close convulsively upon it and would then relax for ever. He would do it now. There was no hope for him. Against his will he sobbed once, twice.

Shutting his eyes, remaining with the hilt of the dagger held aloft, he composed his thoughts for a minute toward heaven. He prayed silently.

Then he drew a long breath. The moment was come. He would die looking at Lelita. He swore that in his death agony, even, he would make no noise to alarm her. The perspiration broke out upon his face. He opened his eyes.

She was sitting up in bed gazing at him. He could see the terror on her face. Her lips were open but she said nothing.

He was bathed in moonlight and the blue light was on his face now. A mortal terror was upon him too.

She did not shriek: she said nothing.

Why did he not strike downward?

Her teeth began to chatter. She moved one hand slowly toward him. He remained as if frozen in that attitude. At last came a faint voice from her lips:

" Are you also dead ? " it said.

He did not answer.

" Why did you kill yourself ? " she said again.

He remained silent, unable to do anything. He dared not slay himself in her presence, neither did he dare to move.

She began to tremble all over.

" Did you love me so well as to slay yourself for me ? Have you appeared like this to tell me so ? Did you not know that I loved you ? Why did you do it ? "

She gave a long-drawn, shivering sigh.

" You were very beautiful and I loved you from the first," she said in a scarcely audible whisper, thinking she was talking with the dead. " Why did you kill yourself ? "

She uttered another long plaintive sigh, and Otto's uplifted hand gradually dropped down and his head began to sink on his breast.

" Will you appear to me always like this to torment me ? " she continued, trembling violently. " If so I shall follow you soon. Did you not know women better ? Ah, me ! Must we not be cautious ? Must we have no modesty ? Can we give ourselves to a stranger without thought ? You did wrong to slay yourself like that. Oh, horror ! "

Ghastly in the moonlight Otto knelt speechless before her. The wound on his head was very visible and so great was his agitation that it began to bleed afresh. He heard her beginning to pant with uncontrollable terror. It was a wonder that she had not shrieked out aloud before. He was almost mad with shame and perplexity. Coming there to slay himself at her bedside, he had remained to extort a confession from her, for she believed that he was his own disembodied spirit. How could he awaken her to the truth ? A thought struck him at last. He let the

dagger drop from his hand. It fell to the ground with a loud clang.

She started back. It seemed the truth was dawning upon her. He lifted his head, looked at her for a moment, dropped his head again and advanced one knee. He could tell by her altered breathing that she understood now. He crossed his hands submissively upon his breast. Then he spoke hoarsely.

"Madam," he said; "you mistake. I have not killed myself, but if you had not awoke I would have been dead by this time. I came here to kill myself, for your words when last we met were insupportable to me. You commanded me to show myself to you only as a corpse, and I had hoped that would assure you better of my love than my tongue could."

She did not answer.

"What you said now has brought me much comfort," he continued; "but if you will not say the same again to me, knowing me to be living, I shall proceed as I had intended. Heaven knows that I cannot live without your love."

Lelita was still trembling, and now began to weep.

"Hush!" she exclaimed; "there is someone at the door. You will be overheard!"

It was Zozimo who had pushed the door open a little in order to hear.

"Madam," continued Otto passionately, "tell me, I beseech you."

"If you will stretch out your arm and place your hand on the edge of the bed I will tell you," she said.

He did so, and presently her two little hands were fumbling with his. She had slipped a ring on his finger.

"Now go, sir, go!" she cried. "I am so gratified that you are still living that I will not blame you for what you have done. I shall love you always"; and

she turned her face to the pillow and began to sob violently.

Otto rose without looking at her or saying anything, and left the room. He went to his chamber and prayed for an hour and then fell into a deep slumber. Zozimo had disappeared.

PART IV

THE SIFTINGS OF FATE

XXXV.—Astrella

Now that the great tournament is over and Otto has progressed so far in the affections of his mistress as to be allowed to live, we must move for a moment away from Orsera to the mountains behind it—to the cottage of Morva Neroni and the surrounding peaks.

The reader will remember that when Zozimo disappeared from the inn in the company of the Count Azrimar, Astrella had found her mother lying on the ground close to the window. On recovering consciousness and hearing that Zozimo was not to be found, Morva went at once in search of him in the direction of Orsera and told her daughter to seek in the opposite direction. She found no traces of her son; but Astrella met the two hunters on the Furka road and continued her quest with them.

When they reached the snow, they suddenly found a body lying by the side of the path. It was not Zozimo, but the poor woman, Brunde Wilstern. They revived her with food and wine from their wallets, and then took her to Morva's cottage.

For three months afterwards, nothing was heard of Zozimo; and the wrath of his sister, and also that beautiful maid herself, have been well described by Müren, who was one of the very few people of Urseren who had ever seen her. It is best to give the descrip-

tion in his own words. "For," he says, "even as her twin-brother Zozimo was feeble and hunched in body (but not in mind) below the weakest of grown men, so was she of a surprising wonderful beauty above any maiden or dame of past or present, even of Dame Helen or the virgin Cassandra, and in her stature and movement rather like unto the ancient fabled sister of Apollo that hunted in the glades of the mountains of the ancient gods. For her head was tall above most men, and her strength so great that I have seen her wrench aside a young bull by the horns, and I myself could not even come at the bending of her bow. Yet her body was maidenly withal and perfect; and her face heavenly and perfect as are the faces of the fierce angels that smite the thing abhorred in the church at Orsera.[1] For the beauty of the face, and the brightness thereof, and the bound locks thereof, are not to be imagined; and they made to start as at the sight of a miracle those few (men and women) who saw it; for it (the face) was at the same time of man and of woman in that it was both sweet and fiery-cold like to an ice-pinnacle pierced by a sun-ray; and, like a cloud, could at any moment flash to anger born out of Heaven. . . . She loved not the homely tasks, but, obedient to her good mother, endured them oft in humility, though for ever her soul yearned to be upon the mountains. There, clad in white, but not in the fashion of our Switzer maidens, she roamed all day, aye, whole days and nights, with the hunters, chiefly with Daniel and Danioth of Göschenen, old hunters and expert; yet was she more skilful than they. Nor did she use new toys of handbows or arbalests, but a straight bow, and drew not the string thereof to the ear but to the breast; for which her right breast was constrained by her well-laced bodice like that of an Amazon. And she bore but two arrows, which were

[1] In the Count's chapel, not the village church (?).

named Saefa and Saevestris, either in her band or in a painted quiver ; and she never lost them, for they never failed to strike, and, however fell the deer after it was struck, she failed not to recover its body and her weapon. She knew every *sattel* from alp to alp and was perfect at following the fots about the hills, and climbed any rock or ice without labouring the breath, and endured without pain any cold or tempest or snow. And that vision "—he wrote in his old age—" I have not seen again, nor ever shall again till the Holy Virgin perchance call me if found worthy ; but it is one which being once seen upon the earth tells men for ever that God is with them."

" The love that she bore to her poor deformed twin-brother," he continues, " was so wonderful that oft I shed tears at seeing it ; since she conceived it holy to sit at his feet and hear him when he prattled of the great things which were for him when (as he dreamed) he should become full-grown, which never was to be. But she knew it well and often wept secretly. She would draw him panting to the upper ice and there find him crystals and blue and white flowers, the while he told her tales of paladins and poets, which I marvelled to hear. But as for her, she conceived him to be wiser than any man, young or old, and believed that at some time his wisdom would make him what he dreamed. . . . Now therefore, when he was snatched away from her, her anger was great, and she reproached her mother for letting him go ; and even the mountains became unendurable to her, and she sat all day upon the pinnacles, looking over the seas of ice " (? the Tiefen and Rhone glaciers) " and refusing the comfort of the hunters who tried to rouse her. For their love for her passed that of man to woman, and they took contagion of her sorrow and sought everywhere through the mountains for her brother, but in vain."

Her grief was not only fierce—like that of Achilles

at the death of Patroclus; but at times, when her feminine nature asserted itself, melted into passionate weeping alternating with fits of angry silence. Forbidden by her mother to descend into the villages, she left the search in them to the hunters; but herself roamed every ravine and gully of the mountains, probing the snow with her staff and examining each pool of the torrents for that which she thought to find; and when she came home at night full of failure flung herself face-downwards on the little chair which was her brother's, and would listen to nothing. The efforts of her mother to distract her with feminine occupations failed entirely—she threw down her sewing and refused even to tend the cows and goats. She could endure neither pity nor contemperation; and when Müren (who at that time visited them frequently) tried to commiserate with her, she blazed out at him so wrathfully that he was glad to escape.

Something vague had also fallen between Astrella and her mother. In truth, Astrella knew little of what had happened at the inn. She had blamed her mother from the first for allowing Zozimo to go there; and had been witness of how he had been treated in it. But what filled her with the greatest fear was the fact that his dagger had been found smeared with blood—from which she argued that he had been murdered by someone during her absence from the tavern. That was all. Morva, however, not only knew more but did not dare to tell her daughter all she knew. She had seen the pleasantries perpetrated on Zozimo and, out of the pride of her own nature, had even herself cursed him before everyone. Then came the thing which she saw when she returned to the inn and looked through the window—or was it merely fancy—because she had fainted unaccountably ere the perception had quite come to her? Whatever it was it did not lead her to think that it was Zozimo's blood which

lay on the dagger ; she believed that he still lived, and it was she who urged the hunters to seek him. Again, who was that wonderful stranger who wore the rich cloak and hat which she had seen in her dream, and which had been left so carelessly in the public room, and who was with her son when she last saw him ? She remembered also the dreams which her daughter had told her of, and at which she had half laughed. Was this person connected with them ? Was there some evil magic here ? Lastly she had heard of the object of the Cardinal's visit to these valleys and knew that some even thought her to be a witch ! She smiled with disdain at the thought ; but it was necessary to keep silence. The dreams must not be mentioned ; nor the stranger. If any of it were to leak out she and her daughter would fall under suspicion. She therefore determined to say nothing—not even to Astrella ; but her daughter felt the reticence by instinct.

During that sad period, however, the sorrows of Morva and her daughter were somewhat lightened by sympathy for the poor woman Brunde whom they had brought to live with them. Morva's cottage was but a wooden structure built over a cattle byre and, except for a few articles brought from Italy, provided only with the humble Swiss furniture of the day. Nevertheless they found room for her and tended her very kindly. She still remained taciturn, and never lost her dread for Morva ; but she became passionately attached to Astrella, whom she allowed even to see her infant. The poor creature was indeed very dull and hung for ever round her sickly babe, weeping much ; but she helped with the cattle and won the love of her hostesses. She said that she came from Göschenen and explained why she could not return there. She had had a lover, she said, who was the richest and handsomest prince living ; but Morva, looking at her, wondered who he could have been. Brunde, however,

revived under their kindness, and one day they heard a wonderful voice singing among the cattle. It was that of none other but the poor girl—so true it is that every beggar has his jewel. But she would sing seldom, and knew only some simple songs.

As the days flew by, Astrella's grief grew even deeper, for she argued that if Zozimo had been alive he would certainly have found means to let them know it. At the same time, Morva became more and more impatient of her daughter's sorrow and frequently chid her. Midsummer passed without news; and they heard nothing even after the suitors' trial—for most of the hunters had gone to the valley to see the sport, and Müren had not visited them for some time. On the warm night before the tournament, Astrella vowed that she could not endure the cottage and must sleep in the hunters' cave on the mountain. She went out alone.

We have already seen what happened.

Next morning early, she returned pale with anger, and almost tottered as she flung herself down on the grass in front of the cottage.

Morva was alarmed. "What is it?" she asked.

Astrella rose again, placed her hands before her brow and then flung them outward, as if driving something away. "The terrible vision!" she cried.

"Tell me, then; tell me," said Morva.

"I cannot tell thee, mother," cried Astrella.

Morva looked scornful. "I believe not that which cannot bear the telling," she said. "Your foolish grief has maddened you."

"You also have not told me all," answered Astrella, entering the cottage.

Presently the old hunter Danioth (who had not descended to Orsera to see the trial) came up with news of chamois; and, after salutations, Morva took him into the cottage. They found Astrella seated at the

table, with her face and arms flung forward on it, sobbing violently, while Brunde was trying to console her.

Morva became very angry. "Fie!" she said; "I think you have changed from a man into the weakest of green-sick girls. You weep day and night!"

"And you, never," answered Astrella, angrily.

"I have had my years of weeping," said Morva; "but I keep my tears for solitude. But you—you wrong us all by this unseemly manner; for sorrow, like the plague, leaps from one to another of us. You have had three months of weeping—enough!"

"I am his sister."

"And I his mother."

"Then you should weep more than I."

"Or you less. You are ever in extremes! At one moment more of a man than of a woman, at another less of a woman than of a child!"

"Grief, madam," interposed old Danioth, respectfully, "is ever strongest in the strongest natures."

"And so is self-restraint," cried Morva. "I say nothing of her grief, but of her tears."

"You never loved him as I did," sobbed Astrella. "Mother, mother, you were not always kind to him. You were angry at him because of his deformity. You loved me better—me, poor wretch, who was but a clod to him! Do I care who hears? Is my heart so base that all the world may not look into it? I will weep for him till I die. He was my spirit, and I only his poor body!"

Brunde crept up to her and kissed her hand like a dog. Morva stood before her saying nothing; but two tears ran down her cheeks, and she made no effort to wipe them away.

Suddenly, however, she stepped forward and seized her daughter's wrist. "Enough," she cried, hoarsely and angrily. "I will have no more of it. You are my

child and shall obey me even in your grief. I have loved you both equally, and you wrong me, daughter, by your words. You shall seek my forgiveness at once ! "

The young maid, accustomed to obey her mother in all things, without rising flung her arms round her waist and hid her weeping face in her skirts, while Morva placed her old hand upon her daughter's hair.

There came a sudden loud knocking at the door, and Müren ran in, waving a small bag in the air. " He is alive," he cried. " I have seen him. He has sent you this money. He is alive and well ! "

In one moment they were raised from the depth of sorrow to the height of joy. They clustered round him with questions. Without replying and still breathless with climbing, he poured the contents of the bag on the table before them. It contained some scores of Venetian sequins and pistoles, the former of sixteen carats of gold and the latter of thirty-two.

" There ! " he cried ; " these are from him. It was but yesterday that I heard of his return to the valley. He is steward to a great signior who has come as one of the suitors. But more than that—I have seen him. At midnight, while I was at my studies, he himself entered my room in the village and gave me this money for you ! "

They clapped their hands. " Is he well ? " asked Morva.

" Aye indeed ! " cried Müren, delighted at bringing so much pleasure ; " and another man ; for he is finely dressed in black, with a jewel in his cap, and his air is that of a great steward full of affairs. He stayed scarce a minute ; but plumped me down this bag for you, said that he would come soon to see you, that you, madam, were not to seek to speak with him, that his master was the noblest in the world, and that he would

tell you all when he meets you. So saying he hurried away, without even taking my hand. My mother bade me start at once to tell you, and I have walked here since daybreak."

"Have you seen this lord also?" asked Morva.

"Aye, yesterday—the noblest and handsomest signior in the world, who, as all say, will certainly win the lady Lelita, whom he loveth fiercely."

"Ah!" said Morva. "Describe him more——"

"I will descend at once to see my brother," cried Astrella.

Morva thought for a moment.

"No," she said; "you shall follow the deer on the mountains to-day, and it is I who will return with our friend to see him. But I will not speak to him since he so desires it," she added somewhat bitterly.

"Let me eat a little then," said Müren, "and I will take you down, and tell you further as we go. To-day is to be a great tournament at which the suitors will decide their rivalry by arms, and we shall yet be there in time."

Astrella obeyed. Her heart bounded with joy, and she felt that she must tell it to the mountains. Taking her bow and calling Danioth, she ran forth—where they presently found the other hunter, Daniel; and ascended the alp behind the cottage. Her sorrow and her dreams were forgotten.

The sun shone brightly; the air was sweet; and the cattle-bells tinkled on the hills. Opposite rose the swelling sides of the St. Gotthard with the glaciers between its summits sparkling in the morning light; the peaks of the Muttenhorn and Seckihorn stood blackly against the sky; and films of white vapour, growing, dissolving, descending, and vanishing, stood in the windless air.

Astrella could not walk—she bounded up the steep slopes, leaving the hunters far behind her, gazing up at

her. Her face shone to heaven, her parted lips were red, her white teeth glistened, her breast panted, her arrows clanked on her back, and her feet only touched the knolls of grass. The grim mountains opened out and showed their hoards of glittering ice. She laughed ; she called out aloud to the dreadful peaks ; she called them by name, and they seemed to hear. Her heart leapt with intense joy, and her breath floated from her like the spirit of exultation. Close above her, as she climbed, there came a flight of eagles, circling round and round her on motionless wings, following her (as often they did), and calling to each other.

Suddenly the beautiful Tiefen glacier, embedded between the Gletschhorn and the Galenstock, burst upon the view. On the one side was the Furkahorn, on the other the Spitzliberg. Still higher she climbed, running along the ridge of rocks. Peak upon peak beyond the Muttenhorn became visible, and the great Griess glacier, with its face turned toward the morning sun, shone like a field of light. Far away among the filmy mists and blue air of the darker west was the Rhone valley, and, still further, the pink phantoms of Monte Rosa and the Weisshorn. Far to the east extended the blue hazy plain of Orsera. There she knew her brother was.

She turned. The hunters were left far below. Now that the wind of her own movement had ceased, she felt an unutterable silence. Nothing but the cry of the eagles, now far above her in the middle blue.

Yet there was something there. As she moved round a rough crag, treading on deep moss, she suddenly saw a figure close to her, kneeling on a platform of rock and facing the sun.

A vizored helmet gleamed on his head, and a steel corselet on his breast. A purple mantle fell from his shoulders as he knelt, and his large and bare hands held the cross of the hilt of his naked sword before his sunlit

face. His eyes were closed, and his lips moved in prayer. He did not see her.

Astrella stood speechless, watching him. Suddenly he heard her, opened his eyes, and leapt to his feet.

The two remained, motionless, gazing at each other. The sunlight fell on both equally, and their shadows lay blue on the white snow at their feet. Both supreme in beauty, they seemed like two elemental spirits of humanity, diverse yet perfect, seeing each other for the first time. His lips began to move, as if he were vainly seeking for words; but she remained silent. Her grief had made her woman; her joy made her goddess again—and she excelled him. His face grew somewhat troubled. "Art thou human—or what?" he said.

The spell was broken, for the hunters had now come up and stood looking at him, astonished. Then he remembered—he had seen them before; and his face closed as with a visor. He sighed; and then smiled slightly as he flung his great sword into its scabbard. "After all, this is the earth," he said.

"It is the Cardinal!" cried the hunters, doffing their caps. They all stood with bowed heads before him.

"I see that you are hunters, friends," he continued. "That is good, since God doth dwell with you upon these mountains. And I have sought Him here; for He hath given me work to do."

He took no further notice of them, but looked round upon the glorious scene as he adjusted the baldric of his sword. But it was evident that he did not mark the scene. To him, the outer world was but an undertone of stage-music to the drama which was for ever being played in his own thoughts.

He had some small difficulty with the baldric. Then he threw back his cloak, letting it hang from his neck, and gathered the folds of it with large strong hands under the baldric, as if preparing for a journey.

He was like an archangel about to descend. He had forgotten the existence of the others ; but there was not even a suspicion of pretence in that forgetfulness.

Presently he moved down the goat-track which led past them. The hunters fell on their knees, and Astrella stood bowed before him. Then he started as he saw them again, and raised two fingers in blessing. Suddenly he stopped as he passed Astrella and searched her with his eyes. He was again astonished by her beauty, though not affected by it ; and his face remained seraphic. " Are you not sister of one Zozimo —a dwarf ? " he asked, after a pause, in Italian.

" He is my dear twin-brother," she answered, frowning at the Cardinal's last word.

" That is strange," he said slowly ; " for in you I see only the finger of God." And, without another word, he descended the steep path to the valley.

She remained gazing angrily after him ; and then followed her companions to the summit.

The mountains were deserted. In the windless silence, a distant murmur was heard. It was the shouting of the crowd at the opening of the tournament at Orsera. The air was absolutely still and a a faint mist began to obscure the sun.

XXXVI.—The Court of Beauty

The morning after the tournament, Count Otto sprang from his bed full of joy. The sun was shining brightly ; and his thoughts rushed to the events of the night as his eyes rested on the ring upon his finger. He told Zozimo the gist of what had happened, and the dwarf ran about much excited at the news.

" You must confess," said the Count, " that all your deep-laid scheming came to nothing, while on the other hand nature succeeded with a touch."

The dwarf suddenly became grave.

"Oh yes, yes, my lord," he exclaimed; "true, true; I am but a poor politician, my lord; a poor, sad creature; but in that your lordship verily sought to lay hands on your lordship's own life—oh, my lord, that was very, very wrong. What say the Scriptures, my lord——"

"Tut!" exclaimed the Count, impatiently.

"Well, my lord, I did my best," continued Zozimo gaily; "but the fiend himself would fail against the wits of that little lady. And not even yet, my lord, unless I am mistaken, must you be secure, for she will still turn again on you. Heaven assist the husband of such a little politician!" and he laughed loudly, until he began to cough.

"Well, Heaven has assisted her lover," answered the Count.

It seemed as if Zozimo were indeed to be proved right; for after he had gone away to bring the morning collation for his master (since those who had fought in a tournament were obliged by custom to rest in their chambers the next morning), he returned with the news that Lelita had risen early and had gone with Zitella to visit the Count Cajazzo, who was lying still senseless in his tent, and had placed white roses on his breast.

"Besides that, I must warn you, my beloved lord," Zozimo added, "that the carved images yonder think no better of your lordship even yet, though they have now gained some dread for you. More than ever, after your deeds of yesterday, they think us to be enchanters, my lord!" and he screwed down his lips, put his chin on his breast, and expanded the fingers of his left hand, looking at his master with horror at the imputation.

Count Otto could not help smiling at his ridiculous attitude.

"Tush!" he exclaimed, "enough of that! To-day

I shall show them that I am nothing but mere man. I shall catch the love of all of them to-day as I have caught the love of one—of one!" he repeated, kissing the ring and gazing in rapture at Lelita's portrait.

"I warn you, my lord, I warn you," croaked Zozimo. "Be not too kind with them. Why, that Gangogo even calls me cacodæmon, my lord. Oh, he is a bad, bad man, Gangogo. He is now lying bruised in his chamber and slandering me to all the gentlemen that go to laugh at him." Zozimo walked about furiously at the thought. "And the lady Lelita gave no return to the compliments I paid her from you, my lord," he added.

Otto only held out the ring and smiled.

In the meantime, the whole castle as well as the camp of the suitors remained hushed on account of the serious condition of the Prince, Cajazzo, and Zamba. The guests, scattered through the garden and the banqueting-hall, spoke in whispers as if fearing that their voices might reach the wounded knights; and the lackeys stole about their business on tip-toe. The Prince's physician, clothed in black, and followed by several surgeons, barbers, and apothecaries, moved with great gravity from tent to tent, or came finger on lip to speak to the Count, who in his turn whispered the physician's prognoses to the other guests, shaking his head gloomily. And there was cause for this general silence, for neither the Prince nor Cajazzo had spoken a word as yet, and the Count Zamba was in a high fever from his wounds; the lord Montefine, Cynthian, and Trullo, though not so sick as the others, kept on their beds; while, worst of all, the candles were lighted round the poor physician who wished to be knight, lover, and discoverer in one, and who failed in all.

As Zozimo reported, Lelita had gone with Zitella early in the morning to the Count Cajazzo's tent.

The squire was surprised at their visit, but Zitella called him out. The soldier's arms were hanging on the tent-pole and he himself lay motionless on his back on the pallet; covered with a fur, pale, his eyes closed and his face bound up. Lelita, as soon as she saw that she was alone, began to sob, and kneeling down kissed one of the cold hands. Then taking a white rose from her breast she placed it upon his. He was breathing very heavily, but quietly. She sobbed again, stooped and kissed his forehead. Calling the squire she directed that she should be sent for if the Count became worse, no matter at what time of day or night, and departed to her room; where she remained all day.

In one part of the castle, however, some merriment was still to be found, and that was in the attic where Gangogo lived. Bran, Reding, Theiling and other soldiers among the Count's guests, fatigued with the air of sadness about the place occasioned by so simple a matter as a few broken heads, had gone to drink beer with that worthy and to listen to his pleasant complaints as he lay on his pallet groaning in consequence of the many bruises received by him in his encounters with Otto.

"May I wear no breeches like the four kings of Ireland," he exclaimed; "may I live on burbots all-days and die of the puff-plague, if I touch him again. I am consumed as by the enchantments of Canidia. Ya-ah, there's a bruise! I have as many sores as Lazarus and lie as painfully as Prometheus on the rock. I am as raw as a cudgelled calf, and an invisible werewolf is crunching my bones. I have done with battle this time forward. The fame of fifty Alexanders shall not screw me to be a hero longer. There now, there now, there's a raw bone-end sticking through my skin!"

They roared with laughter.

"What! cheer up, old friend," cried Bran, "and have at him another time."

"Have at him yourself, you maggotty pumpkin," shouted the dwarf. "May I rot like a rat in a gutter ere I touch him again."

"Why, he is no boy for a soldier, that's flat," said the Count Reding to provoke him.

"Fod for him!" grunted the sick man; "though for that matter he is Achilles to a toad compared with you blubber-witted beer-barrels." And he turned his face to the wall in contempt of them.

"Then, what think you of Zozimo?" asked Bran.

Gangogo jumped round in his bed as if pricked with a dagger.

"Ha!" he exclaimed.

"A good servant that, mark you," Bran continued. "A clever rascal. He carries matters well for his master. Sober, thrifty, clean, honest, and but moderately hunched. I love him well, by my beard."

Gangogo groaned with the pain of his bruises, moistened his lips, nodded seven times and placed his fingers beside his nose.

"What I think of the noble Signior Otto," he said, "all men shall hear. A fine, upright, noble signior. He is stronger than I am and, in a delicate style, more handsome too. Though nothing of a soldier yet, I shall, perdy, give him instructions in the matter, if he beg me for it with sufficient humility, for a thousand ducats a lesson, not less. In time he shall be a pupil that shall better his master, it becomes my humility to say. But as for his familiar, Zozimo, I will say nothing. Why should I mix myself with hell? Shall I speak my mind of him? No. He hath his ears everywhere like an elephant his trunk. Mind you, the little pied colic can sit on the Spitzliberg and yet at the same time push his ear in at yonder keyhole. Let me vomit flames like a dragon before

I utter another word against him. I say he is an honest little pie-cock; no warlock, no wizard, no necromancer, no devil, I say, an honest little charlatan. Do I wish to be turned into a smoke in an instant like a drachm of powder by a wizard's glass? Or into a toad? Or into a sparrow? Or a dead leaf, or a pot of beer, or an old aunt's lap-cat? Or be metamorphosed from what I am now into some hideous, foul-mouthed, stupid deformity? Bod, no!"

"You think he can do all these things, then?" they asked.

"Think!" he exclaimed, scratching himself. "Fetch me my dagger yonder."

Theiling rose to bring him his dagger. Everyone obeyed Gangogo.

"Look on this," the dwarf continued; "is there a spot of blood on this dagger? No. Yet I have not wiped it nor burnished it. What of that? Fod, you bullock-brained Germans have no apprehension!" Then he whispered to them hoarsely behind his hand, his eyeballs rounding with awe:

"I stuck him with this yesterday; pheezed it down softly between his backbone and collar-bone, and stirred up his vitals with it."

"And what did he do?" they asked, laughing.

"Ran away," answered Gangogo, almost weeping and again turning his face to the wall.

It was Bran who told these matters to Zozimo; who laughed heartily when he heard of Gangogo's disappointment with the miséricorde.

"My lord Bran," he said, "it did but pass between my breastplate and the hacqueton; but my lord Gangogo is a very evil lord and would have slain me."

"Beware!" said the great German, dismissing him with a gentle push; "my lord Gangogo may even do for you yet if you play any more of your pranks on him."

Zozimo, knowing that his master was, after the events of the tournament, held in greater suspicion than before, and feeling that the Count Otto's kindness of heart prevented him from maintaining his own dignity with sufficient pride, determined to do it for him. When therefore his master told him to carry some rare Greek wine as a present to the Count Cajazzo, he took the opportunity afforded by his having to go through the garden to the Count's tent of behaving with the reserve becoming to the servant of an ill-used nobleman. It was necessary for him to pass among a number of ladies seated in the sunshine on carpets spread on the grass ; and this he did, carrying a crystal goblet of wine on a silver salver with so much superciliousness as to cause them all to laugh heartily. When he returned (the wine having been refused by order of the Prince's physician) his attitude was so offensive that the ladies determined to punish him for it.

" Come hither, little hypocrite," cried the Lady of Werdenberg.

" Fod ! What a naughty little man," cried another, trying to imitate Gangogo.

" Come hither, cockatrice ! " repeated the Lady of Werdenberg imperiously.

" Cockatrice, cockatrice ! " they all cried clapping their hands.

Zozimo stood still with his salver and lifted his chin scornfully.

" I'm not a cockatrice," he said.

" Come ! " said the Lady of Werdenberg, " if you are not a cockatrice, then, you are at least a familiar. Tell us, what made so noble a gentleman as the Count Azrimar entertain so evil a servant as you are ? It is impossible for the lady Lelita to take a husband who is followed by such a *memento mori*. You would ruin the cause—well, of a Count Otto even. You

would ever be a skeleton at the feast of love. By what wizardry have you won the respect of such a master ? "

" Ah, madam ! " cried poor Zozimo, writhing at such cruelty, " you wrong me indeed ! I am no wizard ; I am but poor Zozimo, a dwarf. My master, the virtuous and noble Count, took pity upon me when all persecuted me and reviled me and beat me ; and he made me his steward, madam. I am the Count Azrimar's steward, madam," he added, puffing out his breast.

They laughed at his air of dignity.

" Rather," continued the Lady of Werdenberg, " you must be some imp of his ; and but an indifferent familiar, for your master has now irrevocably lost the favour of his mistress—is it not so ? "

At this Zozimo was seized with such a fit of laughter that he could hardly hold the salver and staggered about with the violence of his mirth. Suddenly recovering his dignity he exclaimed,

" But these are matters of state, madam. It is impossible to discuss matters of state with fair ladies. I have my secrets, madam. Pray let me pass, ladies."

But the ladies were so incensed at his absurd airs that from insults they passed to violence and began to prick him with their needles ; from which assault Zozimo, in agonies for the safety of his crystal goblet, escaped only with difficulty, and without maintaining his master's dignity with the success he had hoped for. So truly has a philosopher said, a cocked hat seldom mends matters.

Meanwhile Count Reichenfels had been distracted by the result of his tournament ; though secretly not a little pleased to have his daughter's hand sought by all these suitors with so much ardour. While in great anxiety lest so noble a guest as the Prince should meet his death while with him, he still saw with pleasure

that most probably he would be his son-in-law if he recovered; or that the Count Cajazzo would be. For since Lelita had publicly rejected the undisputed winner of the tournament, the Count Azrimar, the whole trial had become null and void and it was left to the anxious father to settle matters according to the dictates of policy or of his daughter's heart. He was not sorry that the Count Otto was foiled after all; for, though rich, he was known to no one and appeared to be unpopular. On the other hand, the Prince was a grand signior and the Count Cajazzo a very estimable person.

He had gone to his daughter's chamber to discuss the matter with her, but had found the door closed against him. This made him very angry; and, as he could not refrain from talking about the matter, he discussed it walking in the garden with his friends the Counts Reding, Theiling, Werdenberg, and the parrot. He was for the Prince, but all the others were for Cajazzo, and Otto was mentioned only to be condemned with shrugs of the shoulder. Presently, however, that young signior approached them from the door of the castle.

He was no longer dressed in the sober habiliments which he had affected of late, but in a gorgeous costume consisting of tunic and hose of rose-coloured silk, a flame-coloured mantle edged with ermine, broad crimson shoes, a crimson scabbard, and a hat plumed almost to the ground, after the German fashion, with red and white feathers. As he approached them, his face, showing not a wrinkle of age, care, or even thought, glowed with health and happiness; and so astonishing were his beauty and the innocence and sweetness, and yet manliness, of his expression that they all stood still in their walk to look at him, while the Lady of Werdenberg, who had been discussing him at the moment, sat with fingers raised in air, in very surprise

at this handsome apparition. When he doffed his plumed hat as he passed the ladies, a single ring gleamed on his finger. The Count Reichenfels came up to him with both hands extended.

"Ah, my dear guest!" he cried, "what happiness that the puissant victor is himself uninjured! Tut, tut! not a scratch, not a bruise! Oh, my lord Count, what blows, what force, what an arm! Here are my friends—and yours, sir—who vow such deeds in these degenerate days——"

"When I was young!" screamed the parrot. "Bash me flat!"

"As I was saying——" continued the Count; "alas! so many poor gentlemen lying wounded! What then? It is the fortune of arms. There, my noble guest, I pray you not to be down in the heart. You have the honour; relinquish then the prize without sorrow. What! what! Only a girl, remember! One of these contrary little wagtails, my dear Count. Only that. What a glum face? Never! —why, when I was young, my lord——"

"Cook me a pie, Geronimo!" screamed the parrot.

"As I was saying——" the Count continued; "a fig for all philosophy, say I (who indeed am but a poor down-slamming soldier, a hitter, no thinker, sir)—as I was saying—a fig for philosophy save that which preaches resignation, Count. Ha! I touch it there. All said, what are these little turncoats, my dear guest? A woman is a turncoat, or turn-petticoat, or what you will. So never have a glum face at the silly hussy rejecting your lordship——"

"What!" exclaimed Otto, suddenly affecting to be grave. "I thought the Sardinian Caracol decided, my lord."

"Undoubtedly," cried Reichenfels in much perplexity. "There is no doubt of that. You are indeed victor. But," continued he, taking hold of a button

of the young man's cloak, "with provisions, my lord. The lady's consent——"

"Indeed, sir," said Otto, "I knew nothing——"

"Besides," broke in the Lord of Werdenberg, speaking through almost closed lips according to his habit, as if to open his mouth were beneath his nobility, "this signior, methinks, with his little skill in arms at first and his great good fortune at the end——"

Otto flushed.

"To my shame, sir," he said, "I have hitherto neglected arms somewhat."

"How then your prowess at the end?" laughed Werdenberg, folding his arms.

"I do not take you, sir," answered Count Otto, proudly.

"I doubt not," said Werdenberg hotly. "Nor do we take you, sir. I have seen men that play badly at first and afterward win. Shall I tell you, sir, what I say of them?"

"Count! Count!" cried Reichenfels distressed.

Otto turned gravely to the Count Reding.

"Sir," he said, "I pray you to judge between this signior and me. When I failed I failed from want of skill; but when I succeeded, that was but in a natural combat which strength not skill decided. I think the signior wrongs me."

Werdenberg laughed in a hissing manner and was evidently going to give an insulting reply, when his wife, who with the other ladies had been watching the scene, interfered.

"Fie, my lord," she said, coming up to them, "are you not ashamed to impute such things to this gentleman who, as his very face tells us, is above them? Besides," she added, laying one hand on her husband's arm and pointing with the other to the ring on Otto's finger, "we ladies have noted what you

gross men have not seen, and what, if we do not mistake, puts him above your evil thoughts."

They all looked at the ring. Otto stood, smiling, hat in hand, to let the ladies scrutinise it one after the other.

"It is Lelita's ring!" they burst out, clapping their hands. "The Count Azrimar has won the trial!"

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Reichenfels, "so it is. Who would have thought it after her words. Tut, tut! What a little turncoat!"

"Wait!" cried the Lady of Werdenberg. "Answer, Signior, I command you. Did the lady Lelita herself give you this or did your servant Zozimo find it for you?" with a bitter emphasis on the "servant Zozimo."

Otto flushed very red and stood turning the ring on his finger. Then suddenly taking it off he flung himself on one knee before her and put the ring in her hand.

"Madam," he cried hoarsely, "I have long repented of those foolish words; and, as a sign that she forgives me, the lady whom I love has given me this ring—herself, I assure you, placing it upon my finger. Now take it from me and listen to me, I pray you. For her I have long contended with these gentlemen and others in arms; but still they doubt me. Let me now contend with you ladies, whose gentler looks better assure me of success, in words. I ask your protection, madam, and the protection of these other fair ladies. Be kind to me and doubt me no longer. See, I have given you the ring, which for my heart's blood I would not yield to any man. If you still doubt me, keep it; for what shall her love avail me if I be not worthy of it? Shall I hold her love, even after I have fairly won it, if I be no honourable man and a base fellow, as these signiors have me to be?

If I am base I am unworthy her—even if she love me I am unworthy her, and must yield her up. Judge then, madam, and you fair ladies. I shall abide your judgment, for your eyes can read straight to the heart; more searching than men's eyes. If I am so—so base a being as to plot crookedly for her love—a trickster and dishonourable in arms, tell me so; yield me not back the ring; and Heaven knows it shall be my duty then to leave her, aye, even if it kill me. But if you conceive me honourable, madam, place back the ring here where she put it, and I shall live."

So saying, he bowed his head before the ladies. The Lady of Werdenberg blushed slightly, laughed a joyous laugh and held up the ring, looking round. Then she placed it again on his finger.

"Live, sir," she cried; "you are worthy of her love. This Court of Beauty has ordained it. Let him who doubts again, beware!"

XXXVII.—The Harassed Lovers

News that the lady Lelita had at last put an end to the great Trial of the Suitors by giving her ring to the Count Azrimar, thereby accepting him as the successful candidate, was speedily noised abroad in the castle, the camp, and the village; not without admiring reference to the gallant manner in which he had also won the suffrage of the Court of Beauty. The matter quickly appealed to the imagination of the numerous minstrels who were in the place; and they now set themselves to compose elegant recitations of the whole affair and to sing them to whomsoever cared to listen. Thus a crowd of soldiers, pages and country people soon collected round the castle in hopes of getting glimpses of the successful lover; whose popularity was heightened when it was learned

that, because the lady Lelita had not deigned as yet to show herself to him or to the public after giving him the ring, he had vowed that he would eat nothing and drink nothing until she appeared. This behaviour of his was quickly reported to her, together with an account of his appeal to the Court of Beauty (which indeed she had witnessed from her window); and she expressed her approval of both, but still refused to issue from her bower.

And the young nobleman's intentions had been rightly rumoured; for, when the guests went into dinner at noon, he remained in the garden pacing beneath Lelita's windows and writing a sonnet to her in his tablets. At dinner the guests, especially the ladies, vied with each other in commending him, called him the handsomest, the noblest, and the richest gentleman in the world, and congratulated the Count Reichenfels on his son-in-law—to such an extent that he was compelled to drink as much wine as was good for him. After dinner the ladies gathered round the young lover where he stood in the garden, and insisted on his reading to them the poetry which he had composed; which he did in the most admirable style and not without his sincerity being manifest by some unexpected tears in his eyes. The ladies were enchanted with him both as lover and poet; and the sonnet pleased Count Reichenfels so much that he also recited it with full and appropriate gestures no less than three times; until the lords Reding, Theiling, Werdenberg, and others went away to converse with Gangogo, and the ladies disappeared for the afternoon siesta—thus fortunately leaving the lover at last alone with his thoughts.

So he paced there until the westering sun approached the mountains. And not without some care on his brow; for his love still hid herself from him and the world; and so variable always had been her behaviour

towards him, that even he felt some anxiety as to what she would do when at last she deigned to come forth. Nor could he help remembering that she had visited Cajazzo that very morning and had given him white roses. At last, however, when the sun touched the Furka, and a score of silver clarions announced the evening feast, and all the guests trooped away from the garden, he found a red rose under her chamber window. Running with joy to pick it up he saw another fall beside it. He kissed the flowers delightedly, assured at last of his lady's favour.

The evening now darkened apace; the mountains grew great in the twilight; the golden flush of the western sky faded; the stars, bright eyes of heaven, appeared in heaven; the earth became black against the stars; and presently another star shone forth from his lady's chamber. But still she came not.

He paced the darkened garden unseen amongst the trees. Voices, laughter, and the choral music of boys' voices came from the chamber where all save him were feasting. He feasted on thoughts of her.

Suddenly she stood before him covered with a long dark mantle and panting fast. He stepped forward with a cry.

"Is that you, my lord?" she said. "It is very dark and I cannot see you."

He flung himself on his knee before her.

"It appears," she continued, "that you have vowed to eat nothing until you see me. I have come out to free you from that vow, since now that I know you are no mere spirit I would not have you become one through hunger. You may go in to supper, then."

"If you will go with me, madam," he said, "I will go."

She remained silent for a minute.

"You have been very merry with our friends, sir,"

she said. "I was watching you from the window, and saw that if I fail you again you will easily find a lady here to take my place."

He said nothing but remained on his knee, his heart beating fast.

"Do you know, Signior," she continued, "you were very bold last night. You do not seem to be as bold now. I fear that you must give me back the ring. Oh!" she cried suddenly, speaking very low and laughing; "he is one of those men who are patient and will be tormented for ever. I shall love to torment you, sir, if——"

"You may kill me, madam," he said.

Something in this answer made her breathe very quickly. He could not see her at all. From the banqueting-hall came a sound of laughter and conversation. Suddenly the voices of two or three ladies were heard calling out to him to ask how his vigil went. He did not answer.

"Tush!" whispered Lelita quickly and angrily; "how foolish those creatures are! I declare that if I were to allow them they would take you from me. Quick, we must run hence!"

She took his hand in an instant and ran with him to the bottom of the garden. Breathing very quickly, she drew him suddenly into the midst of a small grove of fir-trees and without a word flung her arms round his neck and kissed his face.

"My love," she whispered, "my hero, my wonderful one, would you slay yourself for me? See, then, what I will do for you! I will be the first to kiss you. I will give up that right of maids to be wooed. I will woo you. Are you so calm? See, then, how passionate I am. Did you think me such a cold creature? Such a coquette? See, then, that I am not. If there is a star watching us let him hear me swear how I love you. This is not I, Lelita, but a new spirit from

heaven who loves you and has entered into me. I would that I could take away these mountains and let the whole world see these kisses. If the flowers have tongues they will tell the winds of my love to-morrow and it shall be blown about the great earth. The pure dew shall become rosy with it before dawn and the morning will be astonished at it. The great sun, that walks across the world to pick up the jewels left by the night in the mouths of the flowers, shall find them rosy with my love for you. I will sing of you to the stars to-night and they shall cluster together in heaven to hear. The dawn shall come, and they not see it."

"The dawn shall come," said Otto, "and not know me again. The stars shall whisper together about me. I will not be content to call myself a man. I have become a spirit and am in heaven. The thunder shall speak softly when I appear. The mountains shall turn their heads toward me. Your love has made me more than man. I shall commune with none but the stars and you. Listen! listen! the flowers are singing together of us. The trees are talking of us. If this be earth, earth is heaven and heaven no higher than earth can be."

Voices were again heard calling for Count Otto. Lelita took his hand again and drew him hurriedly away, running as fast as she could on the soft grass. Then she stopped and put her arms round him.

"Listen!" she said, "I went this evening to see the Count Cajazzo. I gave him a white rose and kissed his forehead. To you I gave two red roses and kissed your lips. By that you know how much I love you; for I love him very much. You see these things turn out very strangely."

The merciless voices approached again, and again the lovers fled amongst the trees.

"Promise," exclaimed Lelita panting, "promise

one thing. You will never tell anyone what I have said to you. I should be laughed at."

"Except the stars, the flowers, and the trees," answered Otto gravely, "I will tell no one."

"Then," exclaimed Lelita with a fine feminine accent, "I will. Do you think that I fear them? The whole world shall know how I love you, and that at once."

Without another word she ran with him to the door of the banqueting-hall. Waiting for a moment to adjust her hair and then taking his hand, she led him in. Amidst surprised silence she walked with him to the other end of the room; but they had not reached it before all the guests rose up and cheered them. When she came to her father, she bowed deeply to him and suddenly, blushing a little, stood on tip-toe and kissed Otto before them all.

"There!" she exclaimed taking a seat at the table. "That is the way Lelita has fallen in love; and I would have you all know it is not the first time I have kissed him to-night. Now we will have supper, for I am so hungry that I shall eat a great deal; and my lord here has eaten nothing all day for love of me. That is much in a man."

But it was a long time before the guests allowed the famished lovers to quell their hunger. They all rose again and drank to their health; and then the ladies crowded round Lelita to kiss her and the men round Otto to take his hand; and finally Count Reichenfels embraced him before them all.

Thus happily did Count Otto Azrimar win his love and triumph over all his enemies.

At that moment, however, the loud clanging of armed men was heard in the entrance to the banqueting-hall, and the captain of the Cardinal's guards appeared and saluted Reichenfels. They had found, he said, the woman who had been sought so long by the

Cardinal, and he now requested the Count's permission to seize her.

The woman was Brunde Wilstern. The Cardinal himself was absent, having desired to spend some days alone upon the mountains in commune with Heaven.

XXXVIII.—Gangogo decides to Repent

On the morrow, when it was reported that both the Prince and the Count Cajazzo had recovered consciousness during the night and that the lord Zamba was rid of his fever, while the lady Lelita had finally accepted the Count Azrimar, the whole valley returned to its festivities, a hundred gonfalons again waved in the sunny air, and the lists were reopened for a score of trials at arms arranged for that day. Early in the morning the Switzer nobles galloped forth in full armour for friendly jousting, and numbers of Switzer lads, hunters, esquires, and soldiers engaged in feats of archery and wrestling and other exercises, which were perhaps of greater interest to the populace than the affairs of the great Tournament of the Suitors itself.

Early in the morning, too, the Count Reichenfels repaired to his daughter's chamber and, having embraced her, demanded to know the date on which she wished to be married.

"Married!" she cried. "Am I a cherry, my father, that I should be eaten at only one bite?"

"No, no, no!" he answered. "Certainly not. But you said you would be wed the day after the trial."

"I say many things," she replied, stalking her fingers down the arm of her chair.

All the ladies chattered at him for suggesting such a thing.

She refused to fix the day.

"Besides," she added, "I insist upon waiting until my lords the Prince and Cajazzo have recovered enough to permit them paying homage, according to the rule, to my lord Otto, who has triumphed over them all. They all slandered him before; now they shall bow to him. I will have it so!" she finished, stamping her foot.

The ladies clapped approval, and Reichenfels was compelled to fly before them.

Presently Lelita issued from her chamber and was conducted by the Count Azrimar, in company with all the ladies, to the lists; where they were met with rounds of applause and where they remained some hours of the morning witnessing the sports.

The Prince of Astra was already well enough to swear lustily when he heard of the success of the Count Otto; but the Count Cajazzo remained so ill that it was forbidden to tell him of it. A wound which the latter had received at Fornovo a month ago broke out afresh and a fever followed the first unconsciousness. Lelita was unhappy about him, be being a cousin and almost brother to her; and she said she was in dread of the moment when he should discover what her final choice was.

Toward Zozimo, steward of the great lord who had won the hand of the heiress of that region and who would be its possessor some day, the manner of all men now changed; the servants bowed before him; the soldiers no longer ventured to hustle him; the maids looked demure as he passed; and even the Count Reichenfels' major-domo drank wine with him. He retaliated with superb looks and gestures and appeared scarcely to notice anyone not of the nobility. He wore numerous rings on his fingers and a great emerald on his bonnet; and was followed everywhere by that gloomy captain of his master's guard,

Othman, who very significantly touched his sword when any attempt was made to return to the old familiarities with the dwarf. In fact Zozimo now assumed the airs of a secretary rather than of a servant or even of a steward; and was never seen anywhere without an expression of hurry and some open parchments regarding the marriage settlement in his hands.

He informed his master of this change in behaviour toward him, and then, bowing low, added:

"Accept, my lord, my humble felicitations. Matters are now as they should be. If your lordship had deigned to take my advice from the first and had treated these insolent suitors with the contempt they deserve, the late tournament had been avoided."

"Quite so," said the Count Otto, laughing. "But why all this pride now, Zozimo?"

"Pride," answered the dwarf, "is half a virtue, half a vice. That pride that becomes us, but no more, is virtue. Being therefore proud but in your lordship's service, my conscience (which is tender, my lord) does not prick me. But enough of this matter. I would crave your lordship's patience now in respect to your marriage settlements and these title-deeds, sir, which must be dealt with very presently. Presurmising the reception your lordship would have among these boors, I had the caution to bring these deeds with me from Fiescoli, and think your lordship will now find them useful. I hope I have done well, sir."

"Thanks, Zozimo. Yes, yes, very well," answered Otto. "You say that not a soul is now opposed to me? I am glad."

"Well, sir," replied the dwarf, stroking his chin and bursting out into a short laugh, "there are carpers still, of course; but creatures of no account, sir. For example that hunchback of the landamman's, Bambobo——"

"Gangogo."

"Gangogo, yes—affairs have made me forget the ape's name, my lord!—Gangogo continues to slander me, though, as I have said, others have now come to a proper respect for me. He is teaching the landamman's parrot to call me a devil, sir!"

"Fie!" exclaimed the Count Otto; "what a trifle! The poor man is so warped by nature that his words surely must not be too seriously considered."

But the thought evidently made Zozimo angry, because he commenced to stride about the room, and exclaimed:

"Devil himself! A bad man, a bad man! One who spreads false reports, my lord! Have I injured him? Have I vilified him? I must warn you, sir; I know that he is already meditating an injury upon you, not to mention on my humble self. But I will forestall him," he added, shaking his fist in the air, "I will forestall him. I will see about it as soon as your lordship has dismissed these papers."

"Tut!" cried Otto, smiling; "I too will forestall him, and, I wager, in a more effectual manner than yours; though I see no injury he can work upon me, and will take care he attempts none on you. But why do you concern yourself with him?"

"My lord," said Zozimo sighing, "I have a pain here in my head and my breast. The brain and the heart are too great for this puny frame and would burst it. This makes me impatient to bear with villains and fools, sir. But, there, my lord, I shall take care and deal with the hunchback. Do not trouble over him."

Whether it was the belabouring he had received in the tournament, or the terror he had conceived of Zozimo, or the medicine which the Prince's physician had given him, consisting of zodoary, satyrion, and dittany, and causing a certain inward depletion of

body and spirit, Gangogo had lost much of his sprightly humour. He lay all day abed, his face turned to the wall and his blanket drawn over his head; and on one occasion went so far as even to say his prayers. This gave him so much comfort that he sent for the Count's parrot and taught him to say what Zozimo had complained of; but, tiring of this, presently fell into the doldrums again. When his friends came to cheer him, he uttered nothing for a long time but grunts and groans, and then springing up suddenly roared,

"I will have no more to do with you empty-egg-pated villains. You lead me into whippings, cursings, revilings, bone-breakings, and madness. Away, you Bœotian beeves, you stuffed hogmanay hogs!"

They were forced to leave him alone with his humour.

Presently, however, much to the hunchback's amazement, the Count Otto entered his attic and, having saluted him kindly, sat down on the edge of his pallet.

"Gangogo," said the Count smiling, "I hear that you will not fight me again!"

"No, spot me," answered Gangogo sulkily.

"Yet you tried to give me the miséricorde after having vowed friendship to me. You nearly slew me in a foul manner."

"Fod!" exclaimed the jester, "if you talk to me I will try again."

"What!" cried Otto; "you wrong yourself mightily by wearing these humours. I know you better. You are not so bad as you paint yourself. I find you a man of great energy, of dauntless courage, of soldier-like qualities, of open honesty and other virtues; but you dress yourself in a savagery not your own."

Gangogo opened his eyes. Praise was new to him.

"If you could but conquer yourself," continued the Count, "there is nothing not open to you. You could become either statesman or condottiere. You could compel men by your energy if your energy were turned to admirable uses; as your wit would be more acceptable if it were not so coarse. You have a fund of virtue in you for which, if you would but draw upon it, you would be the richer; as the widow's cruze empties not after using."

"Ha!" exclaimed the hunchback, "I thank you. You are the first that reads me well. I believe I have virtues, the puff-plague take them. You think, then, that I would make a good condottiere?"

"Who better? You are a born leader if you would but throw away the jester, or rather the madman, in you."

"Then I shall mend indeed. I am weary of evil company. These companions, Bran and Trullo, are leading me fast to the devil. I have to drink all day to keep them in countenance, such is my desire to please. I have to roar drunken songs, to affect anger, to break vile jests, to mimic the godly in order to please others. My native spirit is not allowed to look out, nor can I ever please myself. I should be bold, upright and virtuous, following a good course in spite of the desires of evil persons. As you say, I have some few humble virtues. I have some energy, no little courage, many soldier-like qualities, and open honesty that must delight the angels; but there! —what loses me is too great tenderness of heart. I must be for ever showing kindness to my friends, by making them merry; I must be for ever drinking and laughing with them. I have no time left for study, godliness, and sobriety. A plague take my good heart."

Otto smiled.

"I have some few other virtues," continued Gangogo,

"I am pious by nature; I hate evil-speaking, lying, and slandering; I say no ill of anyone; I feel neither envy, jealousy, nor any such passions; if I have a hot temper 'tis over in a minute, as a good fellow's should be; my heart smiles sweetly on the world; I love the memory of my mother, and I love flowers, sheep, and such things; in war I have a strong hand, an impetuous onset, and a generous forbearance; with women I do not press my advantages; in affairs of state I am secret, resourceful, and far-reaching. But for a weakness, a sort of general kindness toward others, I should be a lump of virtue unalloyed. As you say, I could easily become an admirable statesman, condottiere, nobleman, prince, priest, lawyer, anything but for my plaguey small vices of complaisancy."

"Well," said the Count smiling, "I trust you will mend as you said you hoped to; and here is a hunter's horn set with silver, which I pray you accept from me."

He rose to depart, when Gangogo called him back.

"Sir," he said in a hoarse whisper; "for you I have conceived much love; but since you have advised me, permit me to advise you. Your steward Zozimo (you may not know it) is no less than a warlock, if not a vampire. I am convinced by many observations that he has fixed himself on you like a leech with intent to suck your juices. From when I first met him I knew him to be a secret creature; one that shall in time bloat himself with your wealth until you float empty in the air like the husk of a spider-eaten caddis-fly. Unless you take warning, that will be the end of you: and you will find him, like a spider that has eaten his brother, grown monstrous in your web, if he do not one of these days suddenly change you to a Barbary baboon and marry Lelita himself."

The Count laughed loudly.

"Well," he cried, "Heaven send you better thoughts of him who, despite your suspicion of him, I know to be a worthy man and my good servant." And nodding kindly to the hunchback he went away.

Gangogo remained staring after him a long while. Then he scratched his head, grunted, pulled his ears and rubbed his nose for a good quarter of an hour. At last he sprang from his bed and in spite of his bruises began to caper about the chamber and to snap his fingers in the air.

"Fod!" he cried, "I have it, I have it. As the Count commends me to, I will repent, pray seven times daily, fast on Fridays, and give pennies to children. In this manner I shall win the favour of Heaven and become a valiant and virtuous knight, bearded with gravity and righteousness, a councillor and a leader, at last a great prince. Ha! I have it! I shall also get me assoilzied and sprinkled with holy water so that the fiend—Zozimo or the fiend—cannot touch me. Fod! More, more, more! I shall thus be able to seize Zozimo in spite of his incantations, and to overcome him and compel him to become my servant, and by his magic make me what I wish to be (if by chance Heaven reward me not suitably at once). A plot! a plot! I am master of these matters now. O witty Gangogo! O wise and great soldier! Thus I shall make my enemy my servant and Heaven itself my champion."

He ran to his chest, took forth his rosary and was about to fling himself on his knees when someone tapped at his door.

"My lord, my lord," said a small voice outside.

Gangogo's hair stood on end. It was Zozimo there; who might yet work his magic on him since he had not had the time to repent as he intended. Worse, the fact that Zozimo interrupted him precisely at that moment showed a knowledge of his intention

and a wish to prevent it. Gangogo sprang into his bed, clutching his rosary.

Zozimo opened the door a little and put his head round it. Gangogo's hair bristled with horror.

"It is only I, my lord; poor Zozimo," said the former. He entered the room timidly, carrying something in his hand.

Here the Count's parrot, which was walking on the window-sill, cried, "Zozimo is a devil."

Gangogo fixed his blinking eyes on the thing that Zozimo carried. He expected to be turned into a rat on the spot.

"O my lord," continued Zozimo, "I have but come to ask after your lordship's health. Indeed I am rejoiced to see your lordship again. And so well, so strong; as handsome as ever!"

"What do you want?" growled Gangogo.

"Want, my lord?—Oh, nothing, nothing. What should poor Zozimo want? He has a rich and generous master. Save your lordship's good health I want nothing." He smiled happily, but kept a wary eye on the other.

Gangogo moistened his lips with his tongue.

"Bod!" he said, "I have a rosary with me and if you try your wizardry on me now, it shall rebound on you."

"Wizardry!" cried Zozimo; "nay, my dear lord, I have but come to pay respect to you and beg you accept this little thing from me. A present from me, sir. Alas, I am but a poor man. A paltry present, my lord, but given from my heart to show I love you. I have none better indeed to give. It is my most cherished toy, my lord. A portrait of a beautiful lady set with seed pearls." And he approached Gangogo with a cringing wriggle of his whole body, such as a little dog shows in the presence of a great one.

Gangogo felt somewhat reassured at this behaviour of his enemy.

"Put it down yonder then, and go," he growled. He was curious to see what the thing was.

"Your lordship accepts!" cried Zozimo delightedly. "I thank you indeed! What condescension! There it is. A poor present, but from the heart, my lord. After this your lordship will never think of me as of——"

"Go!" roared Gangogo, suddenly reaching out his arm from under the bed-clothes and seizing his dagger which hung on the wall.

Zozimo disappeared in a flash.

"Ha!" grunted Gangogo after examining the portrait, getting out of bed again, and closing the door carefully. "A poor, thin, watery magician. Fod, if I could not overmaster him, magic and all. By the chair of St. Columban he shall become my familiar and fetch me diamonds, pearls and such like out of the subterrene. Well, to repentance quick. I must become holy on the spot, that's flat, or he will catch me unawares again."

Later, when Bran and his other friends visited him he drove them away at once.

"Begone, you tankard-knaves," he shouted. "Know that I have repented and become holy and will have no more to do with you, either in this world or in heaven. You are not of God, as I am. I am vowed to live wisely and soberly henceforth. Fod! Do you laugh at a man that repents? Come then, wait till I am well and I will crack your skulls for you."

The same evening, having sent for Father Seraphin to the Count's chapel, he descended there with some pain and confessed to the holy man all the evils that others had worked on him. This done, he was shrived, caused holy water to be sprinkled on himself, his clothes, his armour and his weapons, and finally

remained awake the whole night pacing the chapel saying his prayers, and having his armour consecrated in knightly fashion. Father Seraphin, unused to such vigils, fell asleep on the steps of the altar ; Bran and the Switzer nobles, who often peered in at the door to laugh at the hunchback's repentance, went yawning off to bed at last ; and even Zozimo became tired of peeping in at the window. Thus determinedly did Gangogo fortify himself for his struggle with the magician.

XXXIX.—Lelita and Cajazzo

Cajazzo had been recovering slowly. He was very weak still and did not move from his tent ; though he was permitted to receive short visits from his friends. Reichenfels came frequently, and so did Bran and Trullo ; and the first questions which he asked were of Lelita. The Prince's physician forbade, as we said, all reference in his presence to her choice of the Count Otto ; and consequently he could obtain little information from his visitors. She was well, she favoured no one, they thought ; yes, she certainly was friendly with Otto but——. At first when he saw the white rose which Lelita brought him his heart bounded with hope, ill as he was ; but gradually he became alarmed by that very ambiguity in the replies which was intended to keep him at rest. Gangogo, who condescended to give Cajazzo some of the conversation which he now denied his other friends, first set fire to this train by the stupidity of his replies to the anxious enquirer, though he had been warned against doing so.

" Gangogo," said the large-eyed patient, laying a white hand on the jester's shoulder, " you are my friend."

"Fod, I am. Who would not love you better than that Spanish Venetian fellow?" for Gangogo, in spite of Otto's kindness, now again extended to him the suspicions he formerly held only of his servant.

"Hum. That sounds curiously. You ask, why should you not love me better than you love him; but why should you compare us two so particularly?"

"I mean," said Gangogo scratching his chin, "that no one would prefer him—no one in his senses."

"Gad!" exclaimed Cajazzo laughing, "then you mean that a person out of his—or her—senses might prefer him."

"Well, a madman or madwoman might."

"Say a madwoman," exclaimed Cajazzo bitterly.

Gangogo transferred his hand to his head. He was getting into a quandary.

"Bod, I see what you mean," he said, affecting to laugh heartily, "you mean that madam is madly in love with him. Poof! she is as sane as I am—that is the curious part of it," he added infelicitously.

Cajazzo was on fire in a moment.

"'The curious part of it,' you say! The curious part of what? Why do you people talk in this manner? If she is to take the Venetian, why do you not tell me and let me—congratulate him at once? One had better try to get a straight answer from a lawyer or an oracle than from one of you. You come and sit round me like crows round a dying cow, as much as to say, 'Here is a discarded lover, let us watch him out.' Pish! do I care whom the woman marries? Call me no discarded lover, 'fore Heaven. If there is a condition of man that I hate it is your discarded lover. I know when one is coming round the corner, by a qualm in my inwards. 'Good-day.' 'Good-day, sir, to you,' he answers with a queasy, pitiful melancholy, hang-dog jocularity, a misfortune-spoilt air, a kind of take-all, impatient patient sweetness that

makes me sick. Faugh! he has a patch on the eyebrow, a notch on the nose, and lives on salad and oil."

Reichenfels, Bran and Trullo who had entered laughed at him. Gangogo who did not care for this kind of talk rubbed his leg gloomily and said,

"It is very well, Signior, but you loved her enough to fight for her."

"Ho!" cried Cajazzo, "I loved her enough, did I? And so—so—I am the discarded—ah, I see."

"Tush!" cried Bran. "Your fancies run away with you."

"You do not look so well this morning," exclaimed Trullo.

"Can you not tell me, sir," he cried to the Count. "what your daughter is about? Not that I wish to know for my own sake, but for hers. I have a most itching curiosity about her."

"Do you ask me, a father, and think you know women?" the Count said.

Cajazzo looked at him, sank back in his chair and sighed wearily.

"Caw, caw!" he said; "the cow is dying. You find the discarded lover an amusing sight, do you not?"

Presently when he was alone again he sent for his squire and questioned him closely. The fellow evaded him; but he was not to be cajoled. Calling for his tablets he wrote to Lelita imploring her to visit him, and gave them to his squire for her. After consultation with his physician she determined to tell him all.

It was evening when she went to him. The Count Otto remained close to the tent and kissed her hand as she left him. She entered suddenly and found Cajazzo slumbering in his chair. He was paler than before, his hair was thinner and his hands seemed longer. She approached him quietly and put a

bunch of white roses from the Val Levantina into his hand, awaking him.

"Ah!" he cried, "so you have come, dear lady. That is good, but—these roses are of the wrong colour."

"You are better?"

He kissed her hand.

"A trifle! Only a few bruises. I shall be well to-morrow," he cried. "I must thank you for coming to see me before, and you are very good to come again. You are looking more beautiful than ever. If I have ever been inclined to love you, madam," he added gaily, "it would be now, dear lady. But on my word I am becoming too old and am so villainously ugly that my new glass mirror cracked when I looked into it. Pardieu! I shall give over love and use arms only. But even in that I am a failure. When I attacked Trivulzio at Fornovo the other day my rascally Estradiots fled as soon as they saw the Frenchman's eye and left me looking like a fool; and now I have done so badly on the course that you are ashamed of me doubtless." He looked wistfully at her.

"You did wonderfully," said Lelita.

"Wonderfully!" he cried bitterly. "I shrieked like a woman for some cause—I do not know what. It was wonderful, as you say. You thought me a coward; and so I am."

"Nonsense!" cried she. "You were wounded and ill."

"Well, I am disgraced as a soldier," he said gloomily. "But as a lover, madam, you shall still find me admirable," he added, becoming gay again. "I am irresistible, the ladies say. One of those ugly, fortunate fellows. I shall at least never be a discarded lover. I have a friend who rails all day at such creatures, who follows them into alleys and broken-down wine-shops to observe their humours, who hires splenetic

poets to write against them, who pats them on the back and treats them to turned wine and staled lettuces, and never sees one without spitting. Why, if I were to become one he would set his dogs at me, though I am his oldest friend. Imagine me in a featherless cap, a rusty sword, a stained leather coat, and a pocket full of abused and abuseful sonnets ; a down-tailed dog at my heels, a sigh for the innkeeper's daughter to get her pity, and three leeks for dinner."

"At least, Signior," said Lelita laughing, "you would not become a discarded lover for me, for you have never professed yourself my lover at all."

"No, indeed!" he exclaimed spiritedly, "not since we were boy and girl in my father Sanseverino's great garden; when I slew the stump of a broken tree in your defence, vowing it was a dragon, and you fled to my arms in order to escape a wrathful caterpillar. You must understand that I referred to several ladies whom I have in my mind."

"Have they all discarded you, then?" she asked cruelly.

"Pish!" he cried; "I shall easily find more. I am such a fine fellow. When you are married I shall go to Paris where the dames do not torment a poor creature."

The time was come. Lelita spoke very low, turning a ring upon her finger.

"But you must not go before," she said. "You must wait until I am m—married."

He turned his face slightly to the pillow and remained silent.

"When will you be married?" he said at length in a hollow voice.

"Soon," she answered, full of remorse.

He said nothing and did not look at her.

She ran forward suddenly and kissed his forehead as he lay with his head back on the pillow. Then

she bounded away and ran to the Count Otto, out of breath.

"It is done," she cried excitedly.

Otto did not reply. He took her hand and led her away.

XL.—Gangogo's Repentance

On the morrow it was publicly proclaimed that the lady Lelita would be wed in one week or so from that day; that the Cardinal of Parma, then present in the country by delegation of His Holiness, would perform the ceremony; and that there would be unheard-of rejoicings and carousals, and another tournament to commemorate the marriage. At this news many of the nobles who lived near at hand went to their homes for a few days in order to prepare themselves the better for so magnificent a festival, and those guests who remained sent posts to Italy for still more splendid attire. All day long the Counts Reichenfels and Azrimar, or their secretaries and a number of notaries with plans, drawings, and deeds, were engaged upon the question of the marriage settlements; a business in which Zozimo showed himself so cunning a partisan on his master's behalf, argued all points with such knowledge and acumen, and produced so many astounding deeds, laws, findings and decisions in support of his contentions, that even the Count Reichenfels was nonplussed and defeated in his attempt to cajole his son-in-law into yielding him several fiefs in Southern Italy which he wished for.

This affair continued for several days, owing to the long debates between Zozimo and the lawyers. The Count Otto left everything to his steward, indulged himself in the society of his mistress and the other ladies, and joined with pleasure and spirit in the

general festivities ; not disdaining the daily jousts—at which with practice he now became more proficient. Now that he no longer feared to be thought ostentatious he gave rein to his feelings of generosity, and every day convoys of mules came up the St. Gotthard with the presents which he destined for his friends.

Gangogo at this time was believed to have gone mad. Whether it was at the kindness of Otto and the advances of Zozimo (made, it is thought, at Otto's command), or for some other reason, but his whole manner was now changed. He would frown and strut away if anyone had the hardihood to speak to him, and he rejected with scorn the company of his former friends. He was always absent both from tourney and from banquet ; and it was observed with astonishment that he now had eyes for no one but the Cardinal of Parma. Not only, in imitation of him, did he continually wear armour (being even found so defended in bed), but he had ransacked the Count's armoury for pieces as similar to those of the Cardinal as he could obtain. When the great prelate was in the castle, Gangogo would remain for hours so clad outside his chamber, waiting for him ; and when he issued would salute him profoundly and then follow him at a distance. When the Cardinal halted in meditation Gangogo halted also, and when he stepped forward again, so did Gangogo ; and he imitated him in every gesture and even in expression of face. At first everyone thought that the jester was daring to mock the Cardinal ; but presently he was seen to be quite serious. He did not speak to the Cardinal, nor did the Cardinal (who seldom observed things round him) take any notice of him whatever. He seemed to have become a distorted parody of the Churchman.

The weather was very sunny and hot during those days. One afternoon, the Prince of Astra, the lords

Reding, Werdenberg, and Theiling, and Bran and Trullo were seated in the garden under a tree. The Prince, compelled to await the marriage, was in an ill-humour; the Switzer nobles and Bran were nodding their heads, almost asleep; and Trullo was recounting to them, in a manner to show his wit and his white teeth, his reasons for supposing Gangogo to be in love. "How do you know it?" asked Bran surlily.

"By dissection," replied Trullo; "I know each bristling hair of his. He is in love. He pants, he swells, he glares with it. But whom it is he loves, I know not."

"He is merely mad with the blow on the head he got in the tournament," replied Bran.

At that moment Gangogo himself appeared among the trees, reading a paper. He looked more ridiculous than ever because, not only was he wearing a helmet and armour in imitation of the Cardinal, but he had also donned a large faded red cloak, somewhat like that of the Cardinal, and a two-handed sword, slung over his shoulder—both too large for him. Trullo crowed like a cock. "Ha!" exclaimed Gangogo, looking up from his reading and observing them.

"What do you read, Paladin?" asked Trullo. "Love verses?"

"Soh!" grunted Gangogo, scowling at them.

"Come, Gangogo, you have been writing love verses; you have become a poet!"

"And you a fool," replied the dwarf.

"Come, old friend, you are in love," said Trullo, "and in danger of making an ass of yourself."

"It is better to make an ass of oneself than to be an ass by nature," grunted Gangogo.

They all sat up and laughed at him. "Away!" he roared; "you miry muck-worms, you muddy moil of maggots, I will have no more to do with you. I

am retired from you. There is no virtue in you. You are fulsome, gluttonous, and irreligious as hogs. When is it since you have prayed ? When is it since you have sung anthems ? Bod, hang you ! Think of me as of one who has become virtuous. I spue you all out of my heart—the twisting gripe-rot seize you ! " And he stalked away.

" Mercy ! " cried the Prince, shaking with laughter ; " love, that makes the angels sing, causes spiders to spit venom ; and, it seems, virtue in power over various creatures has effect in their several natures. Thus Gangogo in love and virtuous is more beastly than before ! "

Suddenly Gangogo returned. " I will explain this much to you," he said.

" Bravo, old friend," said Werdenberg.

" Friend ! frypan !—I will explain to you since in virtue there is charity. But stand apart—distantly ; for an angel hath put these matters in my chamber. What is this then ?—a great diamond ! And this ?—a paper of holy wisdom ! Listen therefore and amend, ye mountains of infamy." And he read from the paper in a croaking sing-song voice :

" The virtues I have seen in you
Should win you love, and honour too,
If you gave love and honour more
To those you should have feeling for.
For worth is but a lumpish stone
Ere virtue put it to the hone,
And without form, refraction, fit,
Till Love, the cutter, faces it.
Why should not yours through charity
At last, then, like this diamond be ?

" Why not, indeed, you eyes of evil, heirs of hell, you workers of iniquity ? That I have great virtues is unquestionable, but I have marred them in your company. Think upon your death-beds and amend. What, then, shall avail you but virtue ? There are

tears of angels shed upon virtuous death-beds. Go, haunt churches and listen to anthems, ye bandogs of Satan. Till then, I will get me charity, and avoid you as I would avoid the vomit of surfeited vultures."

"He is lost!" said the Prince, while Gangogo strutted away; "for the last proof of Evil is that he teaches Virtue."

"Faith," said Bran, "his angel is none other than the Count Otto, whom I saw putting that paper in his chamber out of kindness for him!"

A little later, the Cardinal was walking under the trees in the orchard, where Bushton and Zozimo had been reporting to him that the woman Brunde was to be apprehended next day. It is not known why Zozimo had given away her place of hiding (which he had probably learnt from Müren), but it might have been merely to annoy his enemy, Gangogo—for reasons which will appear later. In any case, however, he seemed now to have repented his action, and remained after Bushton's departure, in a rueful condition. "I hope," he said, "that your Eminence does not think me officed in a job in this matter. I know nothing of the woman, my lord, save that my mother has taken pity on her. Alas, sir, I must weep for her. So young, my lord, and so poor." He wiped away a tear. "I have done this thing from pure, pure holiness—to help your lordship to find and to conquer the Evil Spirit. But *mei piget*. Have pity on her, great lord."

"A witch!" exclaimed the Cardinal angrily. "Preach me not pity; for it is a file that cuts the chains of punishment, to let all villains laugh at judgment. You have done well. I think you honest. Go. Stay—are you not brother to a maiden who dwells on these mountains? That is strange; for you are small, mean, and contemptible, as she is noble.

For her sake I question not your virtue, though evil is rumoured of you. Your master also is noble. Go. *Dominus vobiscum.*"

Zozimo knelt before him; but his face could not be seen as he kissed the Cardinal's hand. Then he went.

The Cardinal continued pacing to and fro in the shade of the trees. Owing to the heat, he had removed his morion and carried it half-rolled in his mantle. Suddenly another footfall crushed the dead leaves near him. It was Gangogo; who, after taking three portentious steps towards him, folded his arms and said simply:

"My lord Cardinal, I have now become of the faction of God."

Raffaello looked at him without moving or replying.

Keeping his arms folded, Gangogo lifted his right forefinger and continued: "In the day I am strong, swift, and confident; but at night, mark you, I become a mouse of pusillanimity, for a voice crieth unto me, 'Gangogo, Gangogo, why dost thou persecute Me?' Therefore as a man I am satisfied; but as a spirit I have repented me. To this end I have prayed in churches and joined with a sweet voice in the singing of anthems; I have howled peccavis at midnight; I have given such bad pennies as I possessed and some good ones to beggars; I have kissed children that ran shrieking from me; I have read a chapbook in Latin, which I have forgot; I have fasted on raw milk, lentils, and chitterlings till the belly groaned in anger; and I have bought (with the price of my second-best jewelled dagger taken at Giornica) from the pavid priest Seraphin a red-sealed indulgence of His Holiness. In this wise I have won me faith—in myself; hope—in my adventures; and charity—to the confusion of my enemies: and when I come to

die—which will be a long time yet—the angels shall weep at my death-bed."

"It would be a charity to think you mad," said the Cardinal sternly.

Gangogo did not seem to hear, but taking another step forward, continued, "Not that I have ought to repent me of; for by nature I am virtuous, noble, proud, exultant, fierce, all-overcoming, strong, healthy as ocean, strenuous as the sun, and busy as the flame that dances in the heart o' the furnace. But I repent for these three reasons: *videlicet*, first, because I purpose to become a priest and a great cardinal, as yourself; secondly, because I purpose to overcome with contrition that pietistical flea-magician Zozimo and the familiar he hath changed into the magnificent Azrimar; and thirdly, because I have conceived a mighty devotion for your holy Eminence, whom I have secretly vowed to assist, so that, having found Satan together, I shall seize him by his goat-hoof the while you cut off his head with your bilbo. To this end, I opine you shall make me your captain in place of the snivelling Scotsman Bushton, who indeed hath rejected my discovery of Zozimo and calls me Shedim and Incubus—with a suitable stipend. But I am not content for my contrition with the indulgence of Seraphin, and therefore seek for no less than an absolution from yourself, holy Eminence—for which hereby I petition thee, singing *peccavi*, *mea culpa*, and *nunc dimittis*." And, taking off his casque, he flung himself on both knees before the Cardinal.

Where others would have seen mockery or mere stupidity, Raffaello saw only wickedness. "Think you," he said angrily, "that contrition is self-praise, and repentance a road to advancement? And shall I, who seek the help of Heaven, solicit thine, thou evil dwarf?"

Gangogo was so astonished at this sudden rejection

of his offer that his jaw fell and he sank back upon his heels. "Is dwarf not man," he croaked, "has dwarf no soul then? Did I not, too, have a mother?"

"I know not," replied the Cardinal. "For me, I had no mother, being a foundling. But beware. I have already sounded thee and found thee base, body and soul. When first I saw thee I judged thee devil; but on nearer view see thee to be no devil, but only beast human. Whether indeed thou hast a soul, I wonder. I will not shrive thee. Go."

The poor hunchback began to tremble all over. "What I, no soul?" he cried. "I, Gangogo, no soul! O! O! What, shall all my repentance avail me naught then? And when I die, shall I not see again my mother in Heaven—my mother," he shrieked, "who, by the murk and miserable taper light which like the guttering candle of her life flickered to death on her last words, kissed me, a child, ere she died and told me that she would meet me in Heaven! No soul! And shall I, then, see her no more?" He clenched his hands in the air. Two tears formed in his eyes and fell upon his breastplate. A cloud passed over the sun, and he looked very hideous in the side-light of its shadow.

The face of Raffaello Bonto remained impassive. He stood in that half-light like an archangel condemning a soul, not to hell but to nothingness. "Go!" he thundered. "I will not shrive thee; I deal not with the baseness of beasts but of spirits. Get thee a soul first ere thou come to me again."

Gangogo rose stiffly, shaking all over, and departed slowly without a word—utterly overcome for the first and last time in his life!

The Cardinal watched him going and remained pacing to and fro. "Dwarf and dwarf," he muttered, "worm and worm. What of these worms that wither in the sun? So let them wither—nor can we help

them ; for of such is the Kingdom of Earth. But Evil is not of Earth but of Heaven. There have I seen him in visions fall like a flaming star to rack the wretched race of innocent men. Now, through this woman, shall I draw him unto me and slay him utterly, till Heaven be purified. For I am pure ; and God hath given me this thing to do. But in his death I too shall die."

He bowed his face, and then raised it to heaven. But the shadow of the cloud was upon it.

XLI.—The Cardinal obtains Evidence

Mingled in the crowd of peasants at the tournament, Morva and Müren had been able to see Zozimo and his master only from a distance ; and she made no attempt to speak to her son. But she had not failed to recognise in the young Count Azrimar the person whom she had seen through the window of the inn with her son. Now also she observed (as did everyone) that Otto's eyes were only for the Lady Lelita ; and was not a little astonished to observe it because, such are mother's hearts, she had connected him in some mysterious way with another. She also saw with some surprise how much Zozimo had learned from his travels ; and with some pain how much the crowd seemed to resent the singular cleverness which he had acquired. At the end of the tournament, however, she, like all of them, was oppressed with a mysterious feeling almost of terror, and this remained with her as she returned the same evening to her home. Two such long journeys in one day were little to her.

She had little to tell her daughter ; but, now that events seemed to be propitious, she admitted that she had seen Azrimar in the inn with her son, and said it was for this reason that she had believed the latter

still lived. But Astrella became suspicious, and pressed to be allowed to visit her brother. And during the next few days, as Zozimo still failed to visit them, she became more and more insistent.

Suddenly, early one morning a few days later, loud voices were heard approaching the cottage on the Abnetenalp ; and presently a number of armed men appeared and walked up to the door. Fortunately Astrella was absent on the mountains, and Morva and Brunde alone were at home. All the men were clad in the peculiar morions and cloaks of the Cardinal ; and their leader, Bushton (for it was he), thundered with his sword-hilt on the door. He had come, he said, by command of his lord, the Cardinal of Parma, acting through the authority of the Landamman, Count Reichenfels, to arrest, seize, and punish for witchcraft the evil woman who had taken refuge in Morva's house. The soldiers had been led to the spot by a hunter who, however, was much ashamed of his task and angrily assured Bushton (what he did not quite believe) that Morva herself was beyond suspicion. Bushton had evidently already judged the prisoner before she had been taken ; for he stated that she would presently stand in *loco penitentiae* by being bound upon the top of a high mountain and frozen to death. But brave as they were, the soldiers thought twice about entering the cottage, as they did not know what the witch might do to them. Thus, they all came forward suddenly with the cross-hilts of their swords before them, and threw a prayer-book through the window, followed by a discharge of holy water—with which they had come provided. When the cottage did not fly away bodily, the soldiers finally rushed in together. Nothing happened ; and they found Brunde cowering behind the table. There she was drenched with holy water, bound in triple bonds, and led forth. She fought them with hands and teeth ;

and was persuaded to give in only when Morva promised to accompany her.

When Astrella returned from the mountains, she was told by another hunter what had occurred, and that her mother would not come back until night. She was on no account to follow. Her anger was extreme.

The same morning Count Azrimar and Lelita were walking in the shady wood near the old tower of Reichenfels and near the Furka road. Zitella was seated under a tree close by; and the weather was very sultry, and gathering thunder-clouds filled the air with gloom.

"Tell me, love," Lelita said when they were alone.

"Well?"

"When we are married you will not keep that evil Zozimo about you."

"Why not?"

"I hate him, I abhor him, the little evil weakling."

"That is wrong of you," said he, taking her face between his large hands and smiling at her. "He is not evil."

"Then I do not know what is evil. I have long wished to speak of him to you, my lord. Will you tell me what it is that makes you so fond of him?"

Otto did not answer, but placed his hand upon his chin in thought. "I will tell you—later," he answered at length. "I love him a great deal—he is not evil, I assure you."

"Not evil!" she cried. "Trust a woman for finding out an evil being. I see it in his eyes. At first he was well enough; he was amusing and clever and seemed good-humoured and kind. But now he is becoming worse daily."

"Worse?" echoed Otto uneasily; "how so?"

"Not evil!" repeated Lelita; "why, when he is seen the maids huddle together, screaming like a flock

of geese. The milkmaids declare that the very cows grow tetchy at sight of him and kick the pails. When the village children follow him he catches one or two and beats them. He drinks with the Scotchman who follows the Cardinal."

Otto had grown pale. "I will speak to him," he said. "But, indeed, I know him to be a most virtuous creature and love him."

"Then pray do not love me," cried Lelita angrily, throwing his hand from her.

"What, may I not love both my goddess and my dwarf?" he exclaimed.

"No, you must choose one of us."

"Lelita," he said, "you wrong him—though I do not wonder at it. You forget his deformity. Sweet, the bitter spirit which feeds on bitterness has no honey to draw the souls of other men. Remember, child, the torment in which he lives—ill-health, weakness, the observation, ridicule, rudeness, and unopposable violence of others. The butt of all men in spite of his virtue, he finds virtue unprofitable. I know him better and will see to him."

These words, which are of the kind that women like, brought Lelita back to him in a moment. She flung her arms round him in a manner which showed her infatuation for him.

"Oh, you are as good as beautiful," she cried; "my love, my husband. You are above us all. To other men nature gives the qualities of heaven—wisdom, virtue, pity, beauty, riches; but to all, as if envious of her charity, she has added vices to darken the mixture. In you alone she has blended only those essences which are her best."

At that moment a trumpet was heard and a large company was seen coming past the old tower from the Furka. At the head of it rode the great Cardinal in full armour, upon a large white horse; and it was

observed that he looked neither to left nor right, and that he carried his naked sword before him across the pommel of his saddle. Behind him his soldiers dragged bound a poor woman with a bundle in her arms ; and last of all came a tall old woman with her face half-hidden by the mantle over her head.

Otto and Lelita remained hand in hand watching the procession, which wended its way towards the castle of Orsera. Azrimar seemed to be somewhat disturbed, but said nothing. The captive was, of course, Brunde Wilstern, and the woman who followed was Morva Neroni.

XLII.—The Triumph of Justice

Ever since the tournament, the young Cardinal Raffaello had been mostly absent from Orsera. According to Murinus, he had spent the time in lonely vigils upon the mountains—accompanied only by some of his guards, or, indeed, quite alone and ascending to the very summits of the peaks. There, doubtless, he had matured the great enterprise which he was so soon to attempt—to rid the whole world of evil at a blow. Imagination is of two kinds : one which springs like a river from a thousand imperceptible sources of experience, to end by fertilising a continent ; the other which starts from a single impulse, like a rock loosened from a mountain-top, hurtling and bounding downward, to destroy all in its career and to lie at last a useless portent in the astonished valley beneath. His was of the second type—and it gathered impetus among those magnificent scenes. Day after day he stood gazing at the tumults of granite and ice, and his soul burned within him to reach the summit of his design. He ate and drank little, as one fasting in the wilderness ; but day and night he wore armour, and his spirit communed with Heaven.

As we have said, the strange ominations which brought him to these valleys proved on enquiry to yield little encouragement; but the case of Brunde Wilstern of Göschenen seemed more genuine. She was apparently the daughter of a hangman (? of the canton), who had died and left her in great poverty; and she lived by herself on the outskirts of the village and kept swine and goats. All day long she tended these animals on the hillside, and had few friends; so that later, when it was rumoured that she had found a lover, all the village wished to see him. What was their horror when they discovered him to be, if not a devil, yet a quite diabolical creature—who, in fact, struck or stabbed one of them. Next day she too disappeared; but so many witnesses had seen the lover that Bushton, the captain of the Cardinal's guards, felt no doubt of the facts.

After passing the old tower, Raffaello rode on in advance and entered Reichenfels' castle alone (and still with drawn sword). It was deserted because all were away at the tourney. Stalking into the great empty hall (now gloomy with the thunder clouds in the air), he paused for a moment in the centre of it, and, placing his huge sword before him point downwards, rested his elbows on the cross hilt of it and prayed fervently to Heaven.

He had scarcely finished his prayer when a great noise outside betokened the approach of the crowd which by this time had collected behind the accused and her guards. The first to enter was the Count, and he was followed by Bran, Trullo, Reding, Theiling, and some others. Gangogo was not to be found; though Trullo had sought him—not wishing him to miss a scene so congenial to his nature. The Count approached the churchman respectfully, but evidently disliking the affair. He had, indeed, been informed that his mission was against witchcraft, but he had

little suspected that one of his own peasants would be accused of so tremendous and extraordinary an offence as Brunde was charged with. The Cardinal, however, told him that if he was not satisfied of her guilt she should go free; and, sitting down with him at the table used by the Count in his office as Landamman of the district, he took from his secretary the Pope's commission with the Canton's ratification and settled all the preliminaries, the Count sitting by his side as joint judge. Meantime, the greatest interest prevailed among those who stood behind them as to whether such a crime as the woman was to be accused of was or was not possible. Bran maintained heatedly that it was, Trullo scornfully that it was not, while most of the others determined to await the evidence. Presently the great doors of the hall were flung open and the crowd, with Morva and Murinus amongst them, rushed in struggling, quarrelling, arguing, and hooting.

"Poof!" cried the Count, "fling the windows open. Is it possible, is it possible? Tut, tut, tut! why, any of us may be the son of the fiend at this rate—where's Gangogo?"

Brunde was now brought in, looking absolutely stolid and indifferent and carrying her infant swaddled closely in rags. She had evidently been struggling, however, for her gown was much torn, and one of her guards had his hand bitten, and the others seemed mortally afraid of her. Stains of mud on her face and dress showed that she had fallen to the ground, and the manner in which she moistened her dried lips showed that she was exhausted by the heat, by the long walk and by her efforts to escape.

"Fie, fie!" exclaimed the Count, examining Brunde attentively, "she is not at all beautiful."

"I thought the devil a gentleman," said Bran.

"Bah! a very coarse carrot!" cried the particular Trullo.

"Poof! stand back, my woman," the Count said peevishly. "Why do you grip her so?"

"She is dangerous, sir," said the six or seven guards who held the terrible creature.

The people began to edge away from her. Being a witch she might do something terrible in a moment. The women pitied the poor guards, some of whom were fine young fellows and perhaps had mothers. There was a distinct pressure outward among the crowd at the door. The Count moved his chair so that he could leave it in a moment. Honest Bushton loosened his dagger so as to defend his master in case she or her unknown lover attacked him. The only thing which did not fear her seemed to be the sun—which, pouring for a moment through the window, covered her with rosy light.

"Give me some water," she cried suddenly in a voice like that of a grating wheel. Two of the guards nearly fell down. The crowd rushed backwards; the women began to scream; Father Seraphin, whose toes were trodden on, was obliged to put his hand before his mouth. The Count rose quickly from his chair, prepared to seize the inlaid brass Turkish pen and ink box which were before him.

"Christo! what a love-voice," said Trullo, who was very sceptical as to the whole proceeding.

"Give me some food and some water," cried Brunde again. "My milk is scanted and my babe will die. It is sick. There is dust in my mouth."

A shout of horror went up from the crowd. A witch to ask for food!

The Cardinal now looked hard at her and tapped the table. "Answer," he cried in a terrible voice. "What is your name?"

Brunde was engaged in arranging the wrapper round her infant's face.

"What, is she deaf?" said the Count. "Your name, your name, good woman."

Brunde moistened her dry lips and looked straight before her.

"She is not deaf but obstinate," Trullo said.

"Speak now, will you?" whispered one of the guards, shaking her arm.

"What is your name?" thundered the Cardinal again.

"Shall I, too, be unanswered, uncivil Rahab?" cried the Count rising.

Brunde's eyes remained fixed on vacancy. Terrible insult! Only retort of the wretched against the world arrayed in judgment before them—silence! "What is your condition?"—rags. "What is your crime?"—misery. "What is your name?"—no answer. The world rises, puts both his fists on the table and shouts at her. Or he flings himself backward, smiles deprecatingly and loosens his waistcoat buttons, or his doublet, or his tunic, as the case may be. The law, in shape of policeman, halberdier, or beadle, looks ferociously at her, squints down his red nose, or shakes her arm. No answer. The whole court is insulted. The judges turn round their heads like parroquets and look at each other, while their tongues click in their mouths with amazement. Are we, God's vicegerents of justice, to be insulted by you, God-forgotten? They leap up and roar at her, they smile at the ceiling, scratching their chins with their pens; they grow apoplectically crimson; they nod their heads gravely seven times; they lift their hands and call Heaven to witness. What is your name?—no answer.

The Cardinal sat down again. "She is mute," he said despairingly; and then eyeing her sternly read

the accusation. He charged her with the monstrous sin of witchcraft. He thundered denunciation of her. He likened her in an evil sense to Sara the daughter of Raguel. He hurled the sixth chapter of Genesis at her. He described to the astonished hearers how a flood had overtaken those who had commerced with the sons of God: and what, he fulminated, should come to those who commerced with the sons of Evil? He ordered his secretary to recite the manner of the several evil spirits one or more of whom he maintained, comminuting the tried before the trial as was then the custom, had been evoked by her. The secretary, who wore the baretta of the university of Bologna, mentioned the fiends by name and called upon them one after another, to appear in defence of their cause and that of the witch, pausing after each invocation until the expectancy of the crowd was raised to the highest and it was thought that the illustrious defendant would appear in person. Failing, however, in this, to the relief of the fears if not of the curiosity of the crowd, the secretary next ordered forth more human witnesses of Brunde's love. Some dozen persons appeared, who described the scene when Brunde was detected in the company of a terrible creature —who had wounded one of them. One said that a blue fire breathed from his mouth, another that he had red horns, another that his tail was pea-green, another that he had a sting to his tail. He was described minutely as being short, humpy, hairy, and black; having ears like split ass's ears, a forked tongue, a fire in his mouth and teeth ravenous and jagged; and his tail, it was said, he carried over his shoulder like a pike, while his nose was like the snout of a rutty hog.

While these witnesses were being examined, all in their excitement beginning to clamour together, while the Cardinal became more and more triumphant and

the crowd more and more terrified, it was suddenly noticed that Brunde was struggling to free herself and was looking fixedly at one point of the hall. "Let me go, let me go!" she cried, "*he is here!*"

All eyes were turned at those terrible words in the direction she indicated. At one of the doors a figure, short, humpy, hairy, and black, just as the witnesses said, was standing ominously dark against a ray of sunlight beyond. The woman herself recognised him. The crowd with a shriek flung itself in the opposite direction. The Count rose hastily, Bran clutched his sword, and the secretary nearly swooned. "Heaven help us!" cried the witnesses, huddling together in terror.

"Why, it is Gangogo!" said the Count.

It was indeed no other; and at first sight it seemed as if the witnesses had been mistaken as to his real nature, and that he was in reality Brunde's lover. Straining forward toward him so far as her guards allowed, she cried, "My love, my love! do you not know me then? It is I, your Brunde, your poor Brunde!"

The crowd parted on all sides for him.

Gangogo remained uncertain in the doorway. Then he advanced slowly with a hideous, shamefaced, and yet impudent leer. Hitching up his small-clothes and grasping the hilt of his dagger, he scowled round at the crowd and shot a fiery glance at the prisoner.

"Well!" he exclaimed with a hoarse rattle in the throat.

"Do you not know me?" cried Brunde again. "It is I, your Brunde. It is I, my rich one, my brave one, my beautiful, my strong one! See I am Brunde."

It is impossible to describe the countenances of the crowd at this moment. It even seemed that they actually believed Gangogo himself to be the demon-lover! It did not strike them at all at the moment

that this was a trick of the witch to escape her punishment by making out that it was the Count's jester, and no demon at all, who was her lover. Even the judges, so dense are even judges at times, began to believe it. But it was impossible.

"If you are Brunde," said Gangogo slowly, eyeing her face to face, "if you are Brunde, then I know you not."

The poor creature fell back gasping for a moment. "See!" she cried piteously. "Oh, look, look, look again. See, this is our child and you have not beheld it yet. Look, how beautiful she is! She slumbers. She is my child and yours, and I am Brunde, poor Brunde."

Gangogo looked round slowly and furtively, without his wonted energy. "Who has played this jest upon me?" he said. "Away!" he cried suddenly to the woman.

Brunde gazed at him confounded.

"Do you not know me then?" she said, "poor Brunde, whom when they tormented you loved; for you were beautiful and brave and terrible?"

Every one burst into laughter at this description of the dwarf, and Gangogo gnashed his teeth with rage. "Woman, I know you not," he cried.

"Ah me!" she said sighing; "he knows me not for I am changed. Alas! I am ill and weary and poor, and so he knows me not. I have not now upon me my flowered kirtle. I am changed and sick and weary and he knows me not. Please, sirs," she continued weeping, "I will now return into my place."

She came back to the guards—who had inadvertently released her for a moment.

There was complete silence.

"Alas, poor creature!" said the Count.

"Woman," cried Gangogo, suddenly standing on

the tips of his toes and gesticulating in the air, "woman, you wrong me. You put this on me to defend yourself, that having a human lover you may be accounted innocent of the crime you are accused of. Am I a devil then?" and he turned fiercely upon the poor witnesses. "Am I a devil? You dogs, am I your fiend?"

Gangogo was so well known, so famous for many exploits and vices, that no one liked to have mistaken him for the devil; and it would certainly never do to accuse the Count's jester of being a fiend. Hence the witnesses found themselves in something of a quandary. They had sworn on oath to Brunde's lover being a demon. Her demeanour to Gangogo, however, and the inherent probability of the thing suggested (to their benighted intelligences) that it was really only the dwarf whom in the darkness they had mistaken for a still more terrible being; for the devil they had seen was exactly of the same height and breadth as Gangogo. In fact, so great was the power of the witch, that for a whole minute they were all convinced Gangogo himself was the lover. But it now occurred to them that they had just sworn to the lover being a demon! They were honest men and what they had sworn must therefore be true. Hence the lover was a demon. But Gangogo was not a demon. Gangogo therefore was not the lover. Even ordinary men can be logical when they choose.

Both the Count and the Cardinal were glaring angrily at them, while Gangogo, after asking his last question, was fingering his dagger. The crowd too was beginning to jeer at them and they felt very uncomfortable—until the real solution of the whole mystery flashed upon them simultaneously. Gangogo was not the lover, but the witch said so in order to cover herself. They had in fact been enchanted by her, and, so far as they knew, the demon may have

taken Gangogo's form. They therefore answered Gangogo at once.

"No, no, your lordship; you are not he."

"Ha!" cried Gangogo. "Am I horned, long-eared and tailed as you have given? If I be the thing that you have met this woman with, then are you liars and perjurers all and I will have the law of you. 'Od rot you!" He was in a fury. "Where is my tail, where is my tail, 'od rot you?" he cried, spinning round and round and demonstrating amid shouts of laughter that he wanted an appendage so useful to apes and so ornamental to demons.

"He has no tail surely," said one of the peasants, satisfying himself thoroughly, with all the scrupulous honesty of a manly Swiss, that he spoke the truth.

"Nor neither ears," said another.

"Nor a long snout," asserted a third.

"We are convinced, my lord," said all the witnesses together, "that you are not he. We swear it."

"A rotten rag for your oath," said Gangogo, scowling at them and leaving the hall.

The Count and the Cardinal were consulting. "Tut, tut!" said the former; "this is most likely that it is Gangogo." "My lord," exclaimed the other, "those men have just sworn that it is not. Speak!" he thundered at the witnesses; "upon your souls' salvation tell the truth; for if the lover be this Gangogo you are liars and perjurers."

"We swear he is not, sir," they answered.

"Then by your oath the woman is found guilty. Speak accused, guilty or not?"

Brunde stared before her. She had not even watched Gangogo leaving the hall.

Again attempts were made to force her to speak. "Guilty or not guilty?"—no answer. As if the punishment of men was entirely immaterial to those who have been punished by God.

"Why the question?" cried Trullo, suddenly thinking of something, "when she carries in her arms the evidence of her guilt or innocence?"

"Well said," cried the Count; "woman, let us see your child."

This seemed to stir the poor creature. Her speech began to creak on its rusty hinges. "No," she said, "my child is sick."

"What of that? Let us see it."

"It has tender eyes," she croaked, "that wince against the light."

"Come, take away the cloth."

They all arose and gathered round. Then she changed immediately. She became furious. She struck at them. "You shall not see it," she cried. "It is sick and weak. I am its mother and you shall not see it. Oh, oh, oh, I will curse you. You shall not see it."

They tore off the infant's face-covering. There lay the most hideous and deformed little creature imaginable, puling and clenching its fists at them. Horrible sight! The guards could hardly hold the witch for fear of her. Bran nearly overturned the Count and the Count nearly overturned the secretary. The people of the crowd nearest to Brunde began to struggle with those behind them.

The Cardinal rose and drew his great sword. The accused, he said, was found guilty of all the charges. The punishment which he awarded her was that she should be bound with her infant upon the peak of a frozen mountain until she died. Sheathing his sword, he ordered her into prison for the meantime and broke up the court. Everyone began talking loudly.

Scarcely had the judgment been delivered when a loud crash of thunder made the whole building shake —thus confirming the pious in their agreement with

the Cardinal. In fear of the approaching storm, however, even the pious began to stream out of the hall and to go home. At the same moment the tucket sounded for dinner; the prisoner was dragged away by the guards; and presently the chamber was left deserted.

XLIII.—Morva Comes

The hall remained empty for some minutes, during which it became darker and darker in consequence of the storm, although the time was only a little past midday.

A hum of voices from the banqueting-room and the pattering of rain were heard. Then there was a sudden sound of merry laughter in the vestibule, and Azrimar, Lelita, and Zitella (who had not been at the trial) ran in from the rain. He was holding his great silken cloak above Lelita, and she was holding the corner of it above Zitella. When they had entered, Zitella brushed the rain-drops from the cloak as it hung upon Azrimar's shoulders, and then she and Lelita moved across the hall to the stairs to go to their chambers, and Azrimar moved towards the banqueting-room. As they parted, a flash of lightning engraved them upon the darkness—Otto and Lelita were kissing their hands to each other. At the same moment, but unseen by Lelita (who had turned), a dark figure rose between them. It was Morva Neroni.

"Most noble," she said to Otto in broken Spanish, "I beg for a word with you."

"You wish to speak to me?" he said in German, stopping and turning. Seeing her now more distinctly, he started, and then stepped towards her, but halted again, turned from her, and began to draw off one of his leather mittens or fingerless gloves. "I have forgotten my Spanish, mistress," he added.

"Sir Baron," she said; "I would crave speech of you regarding my son, Zozimo, who is now your servant."

He contemplated her with a side-glance. The lightning flickered, and the rain roared on the roof. She stood proudly before him—evidently no mere peasant woman. "I have heard of you from your son," he said. "Your name is—is——"

"Morva Neroni, Excellency. I give you, lord, a widow's thanks for your kindness to my poor child."

The Count found a difficulty with the mitten, and began to pace backward and forward without looking at her. Roars of laughter came from the banqueting-room. "He is a good steward to me," he said, "and I am very well satisfied with him."

"I have seen him only from a distance," she answered. "He has not visited his mother since he entered your Excellency's service."

He looked at her. "Did you not say something——" he began.

She raised her hands to her head. "Ah, Signior," she cried, "he has told you then? I do not deserve to have a son at all. But I am a stranger here—a Venetian—and dare not face the lackeys to find him. Yet I hear dreadful things of him in the village."

Azrimar halted. "He is a dwarf," he said, "but a man of scrupulous virtue. I pity him and—love him. I owe him much."

She clenched her hands over her shoulders. "Ah, Signior," she exclaimed again, "I thank you. But they tell me that he has changed; that he is no longer as he was, poor boy. That he has become cunning, peevish, quarrelsome; that he lies and cheats, and even that he drinks with low persons—the son of my noble husband—the brother of my daughter!" Two tears, seen by the lightning, rolled down her cheeks. She looked very proud, very noble.

Azrimar was agitated. He drew on his mitten again. "Lies!" he exclaimed. "They love to persecute the miserable."

She bowed her head. "Will your Excellency command that I may see him?" she said.

"Whom?" he asked.

"My son."

He was strangely agitated. Suddenly he stepped towards her and uttered a word in the Venetian dialect.[1]

"Ah!" she almost shrieked, recoiling. "That name, known only to my husband and——"

There was a third person there—Zozimo himself. Seen by those weird flashes of light, he looked terribly excited, terribly mean and deformed. His hair almost stood upright on his head, and he clenched his claw-like hands. "No, no, no," he cried; "no, my lord, no, no——"

Something fell from her dress with a clang to the floor, and lay gleaming there in the fitful light. It was the small dagger. They stood at the three points of a triangle, with the dagger between them, and she looked from the one to the other. A low rumble of thunder shook the whole house, and the suits of armour nailed to the walls jingled and clanged with the vibration as if they were about to leap down and join them. Loud talk came from the banqueting-room. Her face changed. She flung her hand to her forehead, and would have fallen if Azrimar had not leapt forward and supported her. "No, no, no!" shrieked Zozimo, "it must not be done, my lord!"

She recovered herself and picked up the dagger. "It is done already," she said.

Then she looked quickly round the great room. An expression of triumph filled her eyes. "Come,"

[1] The word is no longer legible in the manuscript.

she said passionately; "storm for storm, thunder for thunder! Not between walls can we speak together!"

They rushed out into the rain.

The hall was empty again. There was no thunder and no lightning. The rain poured incessantly, and the suits of armour remained still. Suddenly loud voices approached from the banqueting-hall, and Bran and Trullo, with Gangogo between them, entered dancing arm in arm with goblets of drink in their hands. "What, boys!" roared Gangogo. "What, lads, what, jolly boys! Did I revile you, did I spit upon you, did I reprove you, was I virtuous, was I holy? I am recovered. I am sane. I am a thousand times worse than before! Drink, boys, drink!"

"Why, this is Gangogo again!" cried Bran. "Ho, lad, I love you, by my boots. There, there, never fret about the hump, lad. We all have as great ones somewhere about us!" And they danced round the hall and back again to the banquet—where they were greeted with rounds of applause.

Again the hall remained empty, and for some considerable time. Then Azrimar and Zozimo re-entered with quick steps. "What madness!" exclaimed the dwarf.

"Why did you not come with us?" asked Otto, angrily.

"It is madness, my lord."

"But it was to be done."

"No, no!"

"And to her too."

"Then you will end it all, and for ever."

"If it be so, so be it," said Azrimar proudly. "Secret—I hate the word. Let me not whisper to my own soul that which I dare not shout in the market-place. Such to me is the first rule of honour!"

"Oh, there!" cried Zozimo, derisively.

"I have always intended it."

"Tut, tut, tut."

Azrimar looked at him. "Zozimo," he said kindly, "you are not looking well."

"This body of mine, my lord," said the dwarf sighing, "incommodes me to such a degree, I have such evil health and feel so sad at times, that I scarce know what to do. The body affects the mind, sir. Fate fits our souls to its case, and what the body is the spirit grows to. It requires a strong will to control the peevish humours of such a body as this. *Homunculi quanti sunt*, I at least should say. The confined liver cannot benignly perform its functions, and the bile poisons the blood, sir."

He seemed to be a little overflushed with wine. Otto looked at him and suddenly determined to say what he had long meditated. "Zozimo," he exclaimed, "you have served me well indeed, and I know you to be as virtuous as others conceive you not to be. But your body is too frail for the life you lead here. There are too many base companions"—and he smiled. "Now that I am to be wed within a few days, your presence with me is no longer necessary, and——"

Zozimo began to tremble all over. "If, my lord, you wish to be rid of me——"

"No, no; but——"

The dwarf became angry. "After all I have done, my lord," he cried; "after all my labours——"

Azrimar was about to reply when the guests began to pour in from the banqueting-room, the midday dinner being over. To avoid them, he suddenly flung his cloak over his head and went out again into the rain. Zozimo disappeared also.

The rest of the day was spent by the guests in playing cards, dice, and chess, with sword-play, jests, and some small quarrelling; but the ladies occupied themselves with Lelita in discussing her bridal dresses —which it was agreed should be in the Swiss fashion.

The Count Azrimar, who had eaten nothing all day, remained somewhere by himself in the open; but towards evening he returned wet through, by the postern. To go to his chamber, he was obliged to pass through a gallery where the officers and Count's guard spent the day. Two Swiss soldiers (he observed) were seated at a table playing a favourite game of theirs, which consisted in laying the fists on the table and pushing them against each other until one is pushed back. Their knuckles were bleeding as Otto noticed them, and both the men were angry. At another table, Bushton, Bran, Zozimo and some others had been playing cards; but Zozimo had just risen in a fury and flung his cards to the ground. All of them had been drinking. "Let us hope," Bushton was saying sarcastically, "that you still have the *mens sibi conscia recti*, master Zozimo. You are virtuous, I admit; you say your prayers, correct Gangogo, discover witches, and do monstrous good actions—but you cheat at cards, friend!" Seeing Otto, they all rose respectfully.

A little later, the Count Azrimar was again walking in the garden at the foot of the old tower, meditating by himself. The storm was breaking, and the torn clouds allowed the last lurid glimmer of twilight to break through, and a patter of rain-drops fell from the trees. Suddenly a babel of loud cries arose not far from him, and he heard someone running over dead leaves past him. It seemed to be Gangogo, clothed in his black and yellow dagged jester's dress (which he seldom wore); but as the fugitive passed Otto, who was behind a tree, the latter saw in a flash that it was not he. Then Trullo and several others dashed across in pursuit of the fugitive, crying out, "Gangogo, Gangogo."

Otto ran with horror to the spot whence the noise had proceeded, and saw Bushton lying on the ground

wounded, with several people round him. Bushton thought he was dying; but even in that moment did not forget his soldierly scholarship. "Fret not, friends," he said. "*Pallida mors æquo*——"; and loss of consciousness completed the quotation. They carried him away, and he presently recovered. He had received only a flesh wound in the shoulder—but it had been given from behind. All averred that Gangogo was the criminal; but Bushton himself declared that it was the mysterious lover of Brunde. Otto alone knew the truth.

XLIV.—Otto, Zozimo, and Morva

It must have been some hours later than this, that is near midnight, when Count Azrimar was in his chamber pacing backwards and forwards alone and in darkness. He had been doing this for over an hour, and the footsteps of the others along the corridors had ceased as one by one the guests went to bed, when his door suddenly opened and a ray of light entered. It was Zozimo bringing in a candle and his master's night-draught of wine and water. He started on seeing Otto. "My lord," he exclaimed, "I thought that you had not yet come to your chamber." He placed the drink on the table but continued to hold the candle.

The young Count was evidently much agitated. "Stand!" he said. "Stand there and answer. Know that I have discovered the infamous thing which you attempted! Do not dare to deny it. I saw you in Gangogo's dress. What an infamy! You, who called yourself virtuous, who had imposed upon me by your religion, your pretended goodness! How dared you do such a thing? You are not good at all. You are cloaking an evil nature under the veil of hypocrisy."

Zozimo, having the candle in his right hand, unconsciously held it up so that it lit him from head to foot. What a hideous vision—the uneven gait, the lurch of the left leg, the upward thrust of the chin against the protuberant breast-bone, as if some invisible finger were for ever lifting the face to heaven in order to let men see its wickedness—the bilious eyes, the complexion already impure from excess, and yet the shaking, deprecatory raised hand, the didactic voice, the abrupt, clattering tread with its affectation of consequence, belying the feeble body! The candle shook in the hand, and the wax guttered over upon it. The corners of the mouth were drawn upwards, and the shadows of the cheek-bone danced about the eyes, which seemed to burn with fire and malignity. "So, my lord," he hissed, "you were clever enough to see it! That is good for a lover!"

"Clever!" said Otto furiously. "Do you peddle in such terms? What is that in the face of heaven and hell? Understand, I will have no more to do with you. You must leave me. I was mistaken in you."

Zozimo's under-jaw protruded with anger. "Yes, indeed, my lord, you are mistaken in me! You always wrong me!"

"Do you mean to extenuate your crime? Hypocrite that you are! I loathe you! Go!"

"Crime—do you call it a crime? The evil that we do for others, is that to be called a crime by those for whom we do it? It was done for you—for what you said to-day to my mother. My lord, my master, you do not understand!"

"What has that to do with Bushton?" cried Otto, standing still.

Zozimo put down the candle and began to weep. "I dare not say," he sobbed. "I know more than your lordship—and that Bushton knows also. But I will not insist. Say that I did it for revenge then!

Did he not insult me before others, and can I, a dwarf, fight a soldier in the open ?" Here his eyes gleamed with anger, but he continued, "No, no, no. Accuse me, sir, accuse me. Let me suffer for your lordship. I will go from you, sir, to-morrow ; but you will think better of me some day."

So saying he left the room, weeping bitterly. The Count Otto stood watching him, but evidently not believing a word that he said. When he was gone, he knelt before his crucifix and prayed.

As Zozimo went to the closet where he slept near his master's chamber, he ceased to weep ; but he sighed deeply as he flung himself down in darkness upon his pallet. "I have failed, I have failed !" he murmured. "It is useless. For self-service, success ; for self-sacrifice, ingratitude ! That is the error of the world." And he fell asleep instantly.

It appears, however, that the Count Azrimar was not fully comforted by his prayers ; for a little later he passed the guards and went out again and met, somewhere in the open, Zozimo's mother. The meeting seemed to have been arranged, for neither attempted any salutation.

"Well ?" she said.

He paced to and fro. "What do you wish with me ?"

"It must not be," she answered.

"It must be," he replied ; "and to-night."

"Then you are lost !"

"But I shall be in the right."

"Right !" she echoed scornfully. "Heaven that wrongs us cares not for right !"

Otto looked at her silently. It was she who became agitated. "You will lose all by this."

"God will fight for me."

"Do you imagine that He works for you alone ? Heaven has a large household to arrange for !"

"I hope He thinks for me. This your son has deceived me. He is not virtuous, but iniquitous." Then he described the events which had recently occurred.

She became much agitated and paced to and fro quickly. Suddenly she produced her small dagger and offered it to him.

He smiled and folded his arms.

"Do you not hear my words?" she cried excitedly.

"No," he answered, "the wind devours them."

"So shall your fate devour you too."

"Oh, that is nothing," he replied. "Our fate is what we do, not what is done us. Better all the unguardable bolts of heaven than the fever within us, the inner cavil, and the continual crying curse 'Shame, shame for ever!'"

She replaced the dagger in her dress and smiled. "Good!" she exclaimed; "you have plenty of virtue but no courage. I am beginning in my old age to prefer courage. Virtue, it appears to me, is the fool's recipe for hiding his folly. To me God seems to say to the whole world, 'Struggle your best and let the victorious be called virtuous.' I am losing faith in these old saws. There is but one virtue—that which wins. . . . Good!—you may go in peace," she added, suddenly changing her manner. "You may go in peace, wed in peace, live in peace. I will secure you!"

She left him without another word.

XLV.—Dreams

While Otto was engaged outside the castle in this conversation, Trullo, who had gone to bed, finding himself unable to sleep, rose and went into the adjacent corridor to breathe at the embrasure of a large window

there—because, in spite of the thunder and rain, the night was very hot and close. "Poof!" he said to himself, "the air is as stagnant as a marish pool where efts battle for breath. It is a night for ghosts."

There was dead silence except for the distant muttering of thunder. Suddenly he heard a groan in the darkness. "It is Gangogo," he said.

"Oh, oh, oh!" groaned the dwarf. "Torment, torment!"

Trullo smiled to himself. "On such a night as this," he thought, "even the spirit of Gangogo sees itself."

"My mother!" groaned the jester, "my mother, my love—oh, oh, oh! O poor dwarf, O miserable villain!"

"There he knows himself—Gangogo!"

"Halt, or I'll stab in the dark," replied Gangogo instantly.

"I, Trullo. What do you do here, Gangogo?"

"Wake."

"What fly has stung you that you grunt so much and groan!"

Gangogo was weeping. "I dreamed I saw a face with tears that looked upon me in my sleep," he moaned.

"Oh, pretty, oh, most pathetic! Come then, do not say it was your mother's," laughed Trullo.

"Am I, then, not man enough to have a mother even?" growled the dwarf; "it was."

"Why then it must have been she laughed," replied Trullo, cruelly.

Gangogo continued groaning, "Oh, oh!" he cried; "she changed into a star and vanished."

Suddenly again, a loud voice was heard talking rapidly, or rather chattering and crying, in one of the adjoining chambers. Trullo, taking Gangogo's arm, ran along the corridor and looked into the open door of the room whence the noise was coming. It

was dark, but the voice continued with a rush of words.

"I have repented, but Thou hast not forgiven me. I have suffered, but Thou hast not pitied me. I have done good deeds, but Thou has not requited me. I have borne all things, but Thou too hast buffeted me. I have sought love, but Thou has opposed me. What then shall I do to be saved?"

The voice rose in a crescendo, ending almost in a shriek. Bran, who slept, or rather did not sleep, in the next room, ran in with a candle. It was Zozimo crying in his sleep.

They shook him to wake him. He blinked at them with hideous eyes, and then with a grunt of contempt turned over and fell asleep again.

"Gangogo," laughed Bran, "you are stupid, but you are generally in the right. Zozimo is certainly the devil himself."

The Count Otto heard nothing of this because he was not in his chamber at the time.

XLVI.—Lelita and Otto

That night at about two or three o'clock in the morning, when the rain was again pouring down and the lightning still flashed from time to time, Lelita was awakened by a tapping at her window. She opened it in some alarm and found Otto standing there, his head reaching just to the window-sill. He had crept along the narrow ledge beneath and was holding to the window frame with both hands. "Lelita!" he whispered.

"Otto!" she cried drawing her hand across her sleepy eyes; "what is it? what has happened?"

"Nothing," he replied gasping.

"Why do you come to me?"

"Come to you?"

"Yes. You should not have come.'

"Lelita!" he whispered again. He was quite breathless, and the lightning flashed on his face while a fine drizzle, falling under the shelter of the eaves, sprinkled him incessantly.

She was amazed and terrified.

"I have come to you," he said breathlessly.

She put her hands on either side of his head and kissed his face with much love.

"I have come—I have come—to see you," he said.

"Oh!" she cried, "there is something terrible!"

"I could not sleep."

"Tell me then, tell me!" she cried passionately. "You have some secret, something dreadful to tell me."

"You are well to-night?" he asked still breathlessly. "The thunder is very loud and it is raining a little."

"Speak, speak! what is it?"

"Nothing," he answered. "I come to see whether you are well; that is all. I am very well myself. It seems God is looking for someone, the lightning flashes so."

"My dear lord," she cried, "tell me what it is."

"What?"

"The thing you have come to tell me."

"That thing? Oh, that is nothing. I can tell you to-morrow. The lightning flashes on your face. You are very beautiful. What would not a man do for you? In this light you appear like a statue, white with black hair. The lightning glitters on your teeth. You could be cruel if you wished."

His presence intoxicated her. Leaning over him she saw the narrowness of the ledge upon which he was standing.

"You will fall," she cried, clasping him tightly.

"Oh no—I came to tell you. We shall be married

soon, shall we not ? " Reaching up his hands to her he put them round her waist as far as he could.

" Dear love ! " she cried weeping, " why do you not tell me ? You are much troubled, yet you will not tell me."

" Thus," he said, " the angels lean from heaven to draw us in, but they cannot. I am falling from you ; falling, falling, falling. You are floating away from me like a star. I shall never reach you again. God is cruel who gives us love. There is no heaven but love ; and He hurls us down from it into the darkness. He flings us out of love into the night. Did you hear that thunder ? It was a soul that fell."

His eyes were wild and she clung to him and implored him to pass in through her chamber.

" No," he said, " I am falling, falling, falling. You will think of me one day without weeping."

" I came to tell you," he added suddenly.

" Yes, tell me."

" If I were to fall after I had told you ? "

" I will clutch you tight."

He laughed. " It is nothing. I can tell you to-morrow. You are well ? not frightened at the thunder ? not sleepless ? That is good. I must begone. We shall be married soon. I have become sleepy and it is raining."

He slipped from her in a moment and crept back along the ledge. Shutting the window she flung herself down and was asleep again in a few minutes.

XLVII.—The Face in the Flame

On the same night and at the same hour, a light could have been seen burning high on the Ebnetenalp. The storm had ceased—or rather, as it were, broken itself into a number of small storms which fretted, thundered, and lightened in the innumerable valleys

of the region. The darkness was absolute but for the flickering of the lightnings, and the wind had almost ceased; but a few raindrops continued to fall everywhere. The air was warm and still.

The light burned steadily. It came from a candle in one of the two upper rooms in Morva's cottage. In the room itself, the candle was the only point of light, and was surrounded by gloom save where its glow was reflected by a beautiful figure robed in white placed before it.

The candle stood in a small brass candlestick of exquisite workmanship standing upon a small but beautiful Venetian table. The candlestick had a hollow double circular base and a long stem with four rings round it, and had been made by the Moorish colony then in Venice. The flame burned silently and motionless and poured upward a thin, almost invisible, column of vapour.

The figure placed before it was that of Astrella. She sat nearly upright in an old chair carved with the heads of cherubim. The light gleamed on the points of her knees, on her beautiful hands lying clasped on her lap, and on her perfect face and silver-gold hair; but her eyelids covered the almost unimaginable beauty of her eyes. She remained as motionless as the flame of the candle.

On the chair was slung her quiver with the two arrows which never failed—Saefa and Saevestris. The chamber itself was black and almost invisible by that light; but from below there came the odour of cattle and the incessant tinkling of their bells.

She did not move. She awaited the return of her mother with news of her brother. With eyes closed, she thought only and passionately of him. Her breast rose and fell slowly. She was an Artemis in a woodman's hut.

Presently, it seemed, her thoughts changed—her

face grew troubled, and then stern, and then filled with a ferocity of maidenhood like that of an immortal. The type was not of earth. Nature makes thus only once or twice.

Suddenly she smiled as with sweet memories. Then in an instant she caught her breath and opened divine eyes.

The light of the flame of the candle seemed to dart into their depths. The next moment, as if she had been shot by some invisible bolt, her countenance was crossed by a look of pain; her eyes closed; her head fell back, and she was fast asleep as she sat.

The candle before Astrella's face burned very brightly, lighting it clearly. A poet might have imagined in the white flame, surrounded by its delicate blue halo of consuming vapours, a tiny face, a countenance as of some minute spirit, perhaps of some spirit of terror, gazing steadfastly, burningly, at the face of the sleeping maiden before it. In the countenance of the flame of the lamp he might have imagined eyes full of fiery love, an expression the opposite of that before it. In an instant he would have seen the spirits of fire and of ice opposed to each other, he would have imagined the tingling spark communing with the maiden's soul. The very silence of the chamber, the motionlessness of everything there, would have filled the mind with such fancies.

At first the sleeper's face remained passive and yet full of a curious pain. The heavy eyelids closed the eyes completely and the eyeballs beneath did not move, while the breathing was gentle and regular. Gradually the expression of pain vanished, the sleep became deeper, the breathing heavier. The lips fell apart.

It would have seemed that the flame of the lamp was magnetising her. It seemed to be very lurid, very blue. The lips of the little countenance of

flame, we should have fancied, were also blue and cold, not warm. In the eyes the heat would be concentrated.

Gradually the girl's lips began to shiver and closed again. There was an intermittency in her breathing. Her soul seemed to have come to attention within her. She was probably dreaming.

Then, if we had watched her face as closely as the flame was watching it, we might have seen her brows become slightly clenched and her lips firmer. The lips too of the flame would have seemed to be opening and shutting, speaking to her soul. We could not have heard anything of course, the whole thing being a fancy of ours, but the flame seemed, though remaining absolutely motionless, to be pouring forth a passionate energy toward her. It appeared, though so small, to be something diabolical and sinister, some frightful influence on the sleeping girl.

She began to roll her head against the high back of the chair, as if in pain. Then beneath her beautiful closed lids the eyes could be seen working. She was evidently dreaming. Of what? Nay, she seemed to be speaking in her sleep. Her lips, unlike those of the flame, were motionless; but nevertheless words of silence came from them.

Then she appeared to be listening again. It appeared as if her whole soul were listening. If we had looked at the flame we should have fancied that it was now speaking with an intense vehemence, that words were pouring from its lips. If we had listened intently enough, we might have fancied that a spiritual music, infinitely distant, as far off as the planetary harmony, so distant as to be scarce heard, was pouring from the flame, mingling with its words, forming an incantation of some terrible love—the maiden's face showing resistance, anger, fierce repulsion, ever present and yet for ever giving way—to what? What was the

expression coming there? Was the face flushing? Look, the flame was becoming animate—its eyes scintillated like meteors within the polar aurora. The blue, delicate, evanescent glimmering around it, which was its hair, seemed to rise. In its eyes a look of love, terrible and hopeless, and of despair, terrible and hopeless, seemed to mingle.

Only a fancy of ours, remember. There was no music in the air. We have merely imagined it. Astrella was only dreaming. She awoke in an instant, opened her eyes, fell kneeling before her crucifix, shrieking loudly, amazed and horrified by something terrible in her dream. There was no face, we have said, in the candle. The flame was white and pure. It was nothing.

As she prayed, the candle suddenly extinguished itself with a splutter.

After some minutes, Astrella rose from her knees. Her face had again become calm and resolute—even with that touch of scorn which so often lies in the strongest souls. The dawn had broken.

There came a knocking at the door. She opened it, and Morva entered hurriedly. Evidently very weary, since she had walked all the way home from Hospenthal since midnight, Morva yet showed an air of great triumph mingled with fierce resolve. She bent down her daughter's head (for Astrella was still taller than she) and kissed her. "Has anything happened?" she cried hurriedly.

"The evil thing again," Astrella answered gravely. "But tell me, tell me, have you seen my brother?"

"Ah, I divined it!" cried Morva. "But no matter, for I will end it." She paced up and down. "Ask me nothing. I have spoken with your brother and he is well. I will now sleep here a little, and then descend to the castle and sleep at Orsera. Soon we shall be free!"

She kissed her daughter again, passionately, and then flung herself on her bed.

Astrella bent over her, kissed her brow, and descended without a word to release the cattle for the morning.

Towards noon, Morva rose again, ate a little, and then went out along the road to Hospenthal. Astrella did not return till after she had gone.

PART V

CLOUDS, MOUNTAINS, AND STARS

XLVIII.—The Battle of the Peaks and the Clouds

It was now some weeks after the Suitors' Trial, and on the day of Brunde's trial the fine weather had broken amid much thunder and rain. The valley was filled with cloud, wind, turmoil, and wet, and the weather became colder daily. The peaks clothed themselves in vapour, and the upper flanks of the swelling rotundities of alp were seen, when occasionally exposed by the mist, to be covered with fine snow. It was the first step of winter in this lofty region.

Those winds which came from the sea laden with warm moisture, now brought to a standstill shuddering in the vicinity of the frozen barriers of the hills, halted there, wandered crying through the valleys, became visible as moving mists, and poured down torrents of rain. The hesitating clouds, checked in their career and in vain seeking outlets anywhere, rolled helplessly among the mailed pinnacles, the array of disciplined mountains, and fled weeping up the issueless gorges; or, if by chance able to pour at last over the opposing ridges of the first line, found a second line and a loftier behind. Torn by those spears and swords of granite, rent in pieces against the sharp edges of pyramidal spires of rock, or flung headlong down the ragged

gulleys where the torrents roared tempestuously below, they were everywhere defeated, heaped together, scattered by the scornful pinnacles. Some still full of life, it seemed, like despairing warriors wounded but not dead, would suddenly rise, shoot up the slopes and fling themselves on the peaks ; only to be hurled back to fall again in disorder, to sink miserably in futile wanderings, backward and forward, in the lower valleys.

The sun, outer spectator, was not visible down there. He still gleamed, it is true, on the glittering harness of the mountains as on the crests of men in battle amid the dust ; but in the valleys there was nothing but darkness all day ; and in the night bickering of lightning only. There fell the lees of battle, rain like blood, writhing and dying forms, lopped limbs of clouds, monstrous agonised figures dropping out of heaven clutching at each other and at the rocks, like those spirits hurled by the archangel out of God's presence. Up the passes, however, came cloudy succours, troops of mists running to battle, chariots of thunder griding the rocky ways, convoys of vapours. Shouts and clamour through the night, cries of thunder, lightning like the lashing of whips, a rushing to battle on the heights. Of those steadfast mountains only the mailed feet were visible, enormous and motionless, gripping the earth.

What battle of the Titans. In the evening, however, the contest, far from declining, increased in fury. It seemed that all the winds of heaven had gathered there to war upon the peaks. The clouds no longer resigned themselves so easily ; but urged by the fury of the wind flung themselves in battalions upon the rocks, which now streamed with water as if some great wave of the sea had deluged them bodily. The thunder and lightning ceased as if there was no longer time for noise, for those menaces and vocifer-

ations of the heavens. In the breathless assiduity of the attack these were forgotten. Every peak, vanishing and reappearing alternately, was the centre of a swarm of assailants; each like some armoured knight fighting for himself against a crowd of ever-yielding but ever-recurring enemies. Then, it seemed, the clouds were defeated again. They poured back through the passes, querulous, breathless, rushing over each other. Loud cries of thunder broke out afresh. The victorious pinnacles, shining in snow as in mail, gleamed under flashes of sunlight and ran with rain, the blood of their airy foes. They could be imagined crying victory to each other from valley to valley. The clouds were like the efforts of men; and the peaks like the deeds of God.

XLIX.—Silence and Mist

On the day on which Brunde was to be bound to the rock (two days after her trial), no rain fell.

It appeared that the heavens and the earth were weary; the heavens of pouring down his floods, of hurling his squadrons of cloud against the unalarmed pinnacles, of rolling forth his chariots and horsemen of thunder; the earth of withstanding, of repelling, of receiving in her lap the incessant rain. The conflict was spent. Both combatants seemed to have become breathless, pale, willing to cease for a time and rest.

The air was windless. It seemed the heavens were so exhausted that they could not make one effort more. It was impossible to conceive the blowing of a breath of air; and in the aspect of the sky, of the motionless hazes which hung transparent and almost invisible among the many pointed pinnacles, of the still and silent snow which lay thinly scattered

over the embossed granite or heaped deeply at the foot of the precipices, there was no movement, no suggestion of movement. Earth and heaven had become cataleptic, reduced to absolute rest at the climax of their strife. It was not that the air was free from cloud, but that the cloud was frozen into vaporous rigidities, mists, no longer opaque, definite, blurring the mountains, but diaphanous, limitless, all-pervading, suggesting a congelation of the air itself, giving the appearance to the jagged summits of standing in a slowly freezing fluid. Here the obscuration would be deficient, a black rock standing out clearly ; there, however, the haze was thicker, the lofty peak soared like a phantom in heaven, its outline just visible. Looking at the sun too, we could have imagined that this was a world at the bottom of the ocean, so warmthlessly he shone, so wanly he gazed upon the scene. It seemed as if these mountains were some of those mighty ranges of the submarine, where the sun shines a green star. There was a certain spirit of virescence here also, in spite of the newly fallen white. The air had a green tinge, a turbidity of frost which gave this colour to it, and suggested a depth of ocean. Here was a similar silence, an entire immobility.

The peaks received an access of terror. Scarcely visible they appeared loftier, more abrupt. Sometimes the base of a pinnacle would be cut off while the summit was clear ; giving the appearance of immense altitude, or suggesting that its top rose above the fluid that seemed to surround its feet. It looked less like rock than like a jag of ice. We could have imagined ourselves in the arctic regions, in a sea of icebergs. Not that they were white with snow ; the snow lay only in the hollows : they were black. The mist gave them this appearance. They seemed to be so cold, so utterly lifeless, so bound with black frost

that we might have fancied them peaks of some sunless planet—ever-clouded Jupiter or hyperborean Uranus. They were immense, cold, silent, aloof, beyond the terrestrial ; rather like dreadful visions of mountains than mountains themselves.

The haze was no thicker over the glaciers than over the rocks. A similar coldness, in this first approach of winter, filled everything. In fact the glacier was not always to be distinguished from the rock ; the snow covered both. Blown from the lofty ledges, it found a resting-place at the top of the glaciers, where it was very thick ; further down it lay more thinly on the ragged wrecks and lees of the ice, the fantastic ice-falls and desolate moraines. Here blades of grass and flowers were peering out above the surprising whiteness which would have covered them ; and still lower the snow lay only on the flat knolls of turf and the upturned faces of the stones. Below, the streams began to gather volume, to mingle together and roar in redoubled tones, and in the valleys the frozen air was filled by their incessant thunder. They gave a sense as of the whole weight of snow above melting at once, as if winter having advanced a foot too early were withdrawing it. Above, however, there was utter silence.

From the Furka a long ridge of naked rock breaking into a line of fantastic spires runs due north, contains a series of summits, the Furkahorn, the Galengrat, the Galenstock, the Tiefenstock, the Dammastock and so on, and practically divides the Rhone glacier and the valley of the Rhone from the Tiefen glacier, the Dammafirn and the valleys of the Reuss. As we have said, the snow upon one side of the ridge runs into the Mediterranean, and on the other side into the North Sea. The Galenstock and the Dammastock, nearly of equal heights, are its commanding summits. Between them rises the Tiefenstock, not so high as

either, but giving off another ridge which forms the northern limit of the Urserenthal and contains the Gletschhorn, the Spitzliberg, and the Bäzberg. The Tiefen glacier lies in the acute angle made by these two ridges, extends upwards from the Ochsenalp to the foot of the Tiefenstock, and has the Galenstock on one side and the Gletschhorn on the other. Looking south from the Galenstock we have the Rhone glacier and the Rhone valley on the right and the Tiefen glacier and the valley of Urseren on the left. We may ascend it by either glacier. Towards the Rhone its declivity is comparatively slight, but towards the Tiefen glacier it shows a frowning precipice of rock surmounted by a deep snow-field.

The Tiefen glacier was one field of snow on that day. It consists practically of two terraces of ice, one lower, declining to the Ochsenalp ; the other higher, extending to the feet of the last summits of the three great mountains. After ascending the moraine from the Ochsenalp we cross the first terrace, approaching the Galenstock. Here a mass of rocks divides the glacier into two parts. Taking the left portion, we ascend the slope between the two terraces and reach the upper one, by which we can approach the great snow-capped precipice which is the Galenstock. Leaving the glacier and ascending the steep rocks, we climb at last to the snow-field of the summit ; or, what is much easier, we may climb one of the summits of the Galengrat ridge below it and look out upon the Rhone glacier. It was one of these peaks which the Cardinal had chosen for the punishment of Brunde. Towards evening the haze began to thicken again. The wide expanse of the upper terrace seemed to increase in size as its limits were rendered more indefinable and the surrounding peaks less visible by the mist. The sun was no longer to be seen behind the veil of frozen, motionless vapour. There was absolutely

no wind, and the fine, dry particles of snow lay quite still. Deep down in the glacier-ice, the faint voice of running water was heard as if in expostulation. Mysterious sounds, the phantoms of sound, pervaded the air. The haze, though increasing on the whole, did so very imperceptibly ; the peaks became alternately visible and invisible as the vapour dissolved, condensed, appeared and disappeared in the frozen air. The cold was intense. Here at the summit of the world, the world was already becoming supernatural, aerial, a portion of the interstellar space.

L.—On the Glacier

A little before sunset, on the upper terrace of the glacier, could be seen a line of black moving bodies, ten in number. Nine of them were men and the tenth was a woman. The men were the Cardinal of Parma, Trullo, Bran, Gangogo, three soldiers and two hunters. The woman was Brunde, carrying her infant. The hunters guided the party, and Brunde, helped by two of the soldiers, came last. They trod in each other's steps and said little ; and appeared all to be giants, so much did the mist magnify them. The phantoms of the peaks seemed to be watching them, to be moving in their places as they moved, to be turning to see them.

But also watching them from the ridge above them, there were two figures seated quietly but scarcely visible by them. These were Astrella and a hunter named Pedel. She carried her bow in her hand and her arrows slung on her back, and he was seated close to her.

On the day when Brunde was taken in Morva's cottage, Astrella was absent in the mountains ; but on returning, she was told by a hunter what had occurred, and that her mother had descended to the

valley with the captive and would not come back till late at night. As we have seen, however, Morva did not return till the early morning after Brunde's trial, and the same night Astrella was visited by another of the terrible visions which haunted her. After sleeping many hours, Morva descended again, as described, to the castle. Astrella returned to the cottage later; and, soon afterwards, the hunter Pedel (whom she knew) came to her with news. He described the trial of Brunde yesterday, and its issues (which Morva had decided not to mention), as plainly as he dared to say; and then told her that he had been secretly paid that morning by the Counts Azrimar and Cajazzo to follow the Cardinal on the morrow and to release Brunde from the rock where she was to be bound, and then to hide her somewhere. The good fellow laughed at this, but with some apprehension. He added that the Count Reichenfels with several of his guests was going to spend the night after next in Capon's inn in order to receive the Cardinal after he had punished Brunde; and that Morva (whom he had met) was going there also and would probably not return for several days.

Astrella had said nothing, but had insisted on accompanying Pedel next day on his mission. He bowed before her as he would have bowed before a queen; called for her on the morrow, and followed her humbly. She never smiled and scarcely spoke a word as they watched the Cardinal's party ascending the glacier.

Across the waste of snow and in the utter silence, the voices of the party could sometimes be heard. Occasionally there was a cry followed by loud laughter; then measured words and then another cry.

A white darkness was falling over the scene. It was very cold.

Astrella and the hunter approached nearer to the

party as, leaving the edge of the glacier, they began to ascend the frozen rocks. At the same time a new light, a faint golden colour, was suffused in the air. It was the moon in her first quarter. Cold and indistinct, she was yet mastering the layers of frozen mist.

Behind the shelter of the boulders, Astrella and the hunter approached still nearer to the party. They climbed the rocks with supreme ease, yet so as not to be perceived. They could now hear the words of those in front of them, the cries of the woman, the shouts of laughter from Gangogo, and even the whining and puling of the infant. Their faces were very stern.

Meanwhile the Cardinal climbed ever nearer to the rock which he had fixed upon for his human sacrifice. The singular nature of the man became more and more apparent. He seemed quite insensible to the cries of his victim, to the hideous jests with which Gangogo was tormenting her, and to the wonders of the scene which opened before them as they scaled the lofty ridge. In his mind was only the terrible resolve which he had formed, a thing so wild that it might well have passed for madness. Armed from head to heel in plate, he had, nevertheless, scaled the rocks without fatigue to this height of many thousand feet. He wore a simple bascinet with visor raised, and a tabard lined with some inches of miniver. His long sword was carried by one of the hunters; and he took it now and slung it over his shoulders. Bran and Trullo, panting with their exertions, gazed at him curiously. What was he going to do? Why was he in such complete armour? Trullo, who made a shrewd guess at the identity of Brunde's lover, could scarcely help laughing.

Suddenly Astrella and Pedel stood before them, a few feet from them.

The party stopped short, and the guides doffed their caps at seeing Astrella. She stood with bowed head before the Cardinal. She was clad in white, and her bow and quiver hung on her shoulders; but her left hand held one of her arrows. The next moment she knelt humbly before the great Churchman, as one seeking a blessing.

He paused to recollect where he had seen her before. Then he remembered how she had saved them all on the Furka Pass, and how she had defended her brother at the inn; and he had seen her again on the mountains. His face remained grave. He stood still, saying nothing.

"My lord Cardinal," she murmured in Venetian; "I, your daughter, seek your blessing."

He removed his mitten and touched her hair with his bare hand, as she knelt before him. His face changed a little as if something had stirred within him. "My blessing is naught," he said; "seek God's."

She rose and stood bowed before him, but still barring his way. He was astonished and glanced at the arrow in her hand; and then passed his hand across his eyes. "Are you maiden," he exclaimed; "or what?"

All stood stock-still, staring at the two figures. They were both of the greatest beauty which the human form can attain to. But the Cardinal was inferior; for there was a wildness in his eyes, which did not dare to meet her gaze fully, but glanced from her to left and right. The two hunter-guides, as if expecting something, placed themselves with Pedel behind Astrella—not behind the Cardinal. The others remained motionless; but Gangogo moistened his lips with a broad tongue, and, as if remembering what had occurred in the inn, unconsciously rubbed with his hand the spot on his back where Astrella's staff

had nearly pierced him. Brunde, some distance behind, seemed not even to note what was happening.

"My father," said Astrella in a low voice, full of respect, "proceed not in this matter, I beseech."

He drew himself up. "The judgment is given," he answered.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "She is but a poor woman of the valleys and the judgment was madness."

"The law is written," he said.

"In water!" she cried. "My father, I know her well, and she has dwelt with us. The charge was false!"

"The charge was true," he said; "and the law, the law of God."

"Beware," she cried, "lest thou put thy own words into the mouth of God!" She flung herself again before him and continued passionately, "Take me then for thy human sacrifice!"

He started back. "What hast thou done?" he said.

"If we must perish for that that is done us, not that we do, then let me die, not her!" she cried. "Father, absolve me!—not for my deeds but for my suffering! And slay me then that I may suffer no more!"

He looked at her kindly and again touched her hair. "Thy face absolves thee," he said, "and I absolve thee too; though I have heard thee not."

He lifted to heaven the hilt of his sword before him, and passed her as she knelt. The others followed him, glancing at her one by one. But Brunde did not seem even to see her. When they were out of sight among the rocks, Astrella rose from her knees and looked round from side to side. "Go," she cried to Pedel. "Follow them and mark the spot where they bind her. I will be with you soon, and then we will unloose her. They have not thought

of that ; for evil and folly ever walk together. After to-day you shall see me no more. Go. Be true."

When he had gone, she remained sitting absolutely still but looking round and listening, as if expecting someone.

Nothing occurred, however. She then leant her head on her hands and considered deeply. Next, she took a small hone from her pouch and ground the heads of her arrows a little ; and, having eaten a few mouthfuls of food, looked round again, listening intently. The icy crescent of the moon sparkled a moment above the peak in the west and then sank behind a cloud.

Nothing occurred. She rose and, wrapping her bow close to her body within her cloak, followed Pedel, still looking from side to side as if expecting something.

LI.—Brunde Bound

The party which dragged Brunde to her doom had at last reached the fateful rock on the Galenstock.

"Soh!" said the Cardinal, "bind her fast on this rock, fellows. She shall not escape to tell the measure of her punishment."

"Good!" cried Gangogo ; "yet I have often escaped to tell the measure of mine." He was in wild excitement.

"It was full measure," laughed Bran.

"Ay, the fool's who lay it on me," answered Gangogo, "when you beat me."

"My beard, I had rather be a fool and beat than wise and be beaten," cried Bran.

"Nature suits us all to that which we crave for," answered the dwarf.

"Rather," laughed Trullo, "she bids us crave for that that suits us."

"Faith, I crave for beer," grunted the soldier.

Suddenly there was a cry from Brunde, who was being drawn up the rocks by the hunters and soldiers. "I will no more ascend this peak," she shrieked, "for I have done nothing to die for."

"Ho, ho," cried Gangogo, shouting down at her. "What nothing? Not loved a devil?"

"Will you move?" said a soldier roughly to her.

"No, no, I will sit down and rest."

"You shall rest standing for ever," shouted Gangogo, alluding to her coming punishment. "Fod, bod and doddikins!" he cried; "I am as jocund as the elf that dances in the eye of the moon o' nights."

"My beard is an icicle," cried Bran.

"And your breath a fog," said Trullo. "Each word and you exhale a mountain mist." They were standing on the pinnacle. Behind rose the heavy brow of the Galenstock, on the right extended the Rhone glacier shining in the pale moon, with the Oberland and Lepontine Alps beyond, looking with their snows like spectres of the night. To the left was the Tiefen glacier and the Urserenthal. It was as if they were suspended in air.

"No!" shrieked Brunde, "I will not go up there; I will not die."

"Why will you not?" shouted Gangogo.

"Because I have done nothing."'

"You have," he cried, "you have loved the devil."

"Do you think," exclaimed Trullo, pointing down to the Rhone glacier and speaking to Bran; "do you think that a stone falling hence would meet the earth in a thousand feet?"

"Much more than that, I gather."

"I wonder, would one be dashed utterly to pieces?"

"Utterly," grunted Bran, gazing down.

"Here one might fall and fall for ever as in a nightmare."

"Let me go!" shrieked Brunde, who had now been dragged upon the platform of the pinnacle and saw for the first time the surrounding abysses. "Let me go! I will not be bound here."

Gangogo was much interested in the struggles of this creature. He peered into her face and asked almost anxiously:

"Will you not? Why not?"

"Because I shake to see the horrible plunge," she replied, as if there was nothing curious in his questions. She was stupid with terror.

"You shook not when you plunged in hell," he shouted angrily.

"Oh, oh! I am innocent!" she cried.

"Why did you not say that before?" he sneered; "now it is too late!"

"I said so often before."

"You said so? When?" he asked, affecting just astonishment and looking into the whites of her eyes.

"What have I done to die? Are there not others who are as bad but do not die for it?"

"Bind her quickly," cried the Cardinal.

"Why do you think other people are as bad?" asked Gangogo, as if much interested in her sayings.

"I have been told so. Oh, I cannot die, I cannot die!" Her tongue was not tied now as it was at the trial.

"Why not?" said Gangogo soothingly; "you should be patient."

"I will be patient, yes," she answered, as if his utterances were not at all sarcastic. "If I must die, I will die patiently; but you men are cruel and wrong me."

"Why, you wronged me once; you said I was your lover."

The poor creature was so numbed with despair, wonder at the evil that had come upon her, and

fear of death, that she appeared to think the person talking to her was someone else.

"Yes, I thought so," she answered.

"And dare you think so now?" cried Gangogo in the utmost fury.

"I do not know; I cannot think."

"Am I, then, like your lover?"

"Do not look at me," she shrieked. "O God!"

"Dare you maintain this lie before the dooming lips of Death?" he shouted, beside himself. "Bod! I will stab you."

"Peace!" cried the Cardinal, putting out his hand to him.

We can scarcely recognise this Gangogo in the Gangogo who was about to reform. But then, after all, it is doubtful whether character exists to the degree we often imagine it does. We swing between so many opposites.

The soldiers were busy knotting the ropes round the victim. She was to be fastened to a point of rock on the summit of the pinnacle.

"You are slow, fellows," said the Cardinal. "What ails you?"

"Our hands are numb to knot the ropes," one of the soldiers replied.

Brunde began to regain her composure. She looked round at the vast spaces beneath her with horror and loathing, but a thought of a different kind struck her. She held her infant in her arms and it began to cry and struggle.

"I think, sir, you are kind," she said, addressing the Cardinal. "When I am dead, sir, and my child grows older, you will not teach her to forget my name?"

"I do not grasp you," said the Cardinal surprised.

"It is about my child. Now you have tied me to the waist, pray take my child. You may see I have

wrapped it well against the air. You must be tender with it for it is weak and coughs."

He stared at her.

"This let me tell you, sir," she continued—"and if you think it immodest in me, I pray you let a mother's fear excuse me—the child is weaned, does not need me longer. One moment more."

She kissed the child hungrily.

"My innocent!" she cried, "who never more shall take my kisses! Lie ignorant of this and never know the torture of your mother's death. Perhaps some day in visions you shall see me. My child, sir," she added, offering the infant to the Cardinal.

"Shall we take it, my lord?" asked a soldier much affected. Bran stood with folded arms, Trullo was biting his nails, and Gangogo swaying his body and glaring at the Cardinal.

"Take it?" cried Raffaello. "Wherefore?"

"My child, my child, great lord," she said, offering it to him.

"I do not need your child."

"But you must take my child or it will die."

"Woman, so let it."

"You will not kill my child too?" she shrieked. "Oh, oh!"

She uttered cry after cry, and then bowing her head over the infant appeared to faint. The soldiers passed ropes round her arms in order to support them.

The Cardinal now stepped before his victim and turning his back to her looked down into the black abyss of night below him and drew his sword. He appeared to be perfectly calm. Everyone gazed at him, expecting some extraordinary scene. The torches carried by the soldiers had been lit for the descent; and the men holding them stood together behind Brunde, the smoke from the flaming brands pouring

upward in straight columns, and the light flashing out in the misty air and making the night appear more dark and terrible.

There was utter silence.

Suddenly the Cardinal stepped forward to the edge of the precipice and, lifting his sword straight above his head, turned the blade quickly so that it flashed in the torchlight. Then with a sweep he brought the point down to the rock, and cried down into the abyss in a voice so deep and loud that all were astonished.

"Arise!" he shouted, "Spirit of Evil, spirit of Night!"

Trullo pressed Bran's arm. This madman was going to invoke the Evil One! This was the core of his actions! What insanity! He wished to fight a duel with the demon himself. He was mad yet extraordinarily terrible!

"Arise!" he shouted; "clap thy wings against me! Rise and thunder at me! Spirit of Darkness, from thy abysms of night come against me! Arise! arise!"

There was silence. No one said a word, and the soldiers holding the torches stood motionless. It seemed incredible that anyone could be so foolish; and yet—the silence, the darkness—Bran crossed himself. What if the demon were to take him at his word and hurl them all into the abyss? Gangogo was the only one not abashed. "The devil's at dinner," he said, like Elijah, "and will not come."

"Rise up in tempest!" thundered the Cardinal again. "I defy thee! Abide my question: answer for all the misery of the world! rage up against me! Here in the face of thy destroyed victim, avenge her! Hear!"

There was utter silence.

"He is at wine with friends," croaked Gangogo.

"Rise! Where are thy legions, Hell! Behold, I,

alone; mortal; in darkness; from this lofty rock pouring down my execrations on thee, made mad by all thy bitter work with men, defy thee. Darest thou not reply? Not come? Not batter down my arm, Immortal? Come clap thy wings against me. Rush and thunder at me! Taste the lightning of my sword!"

The abyss was silent. No answer came from that depth of night. No voice replied. It seemed nature was not at fault. The spirit that should have risen came not. There was no answer. No voice replied. The silence was unbroken.

"Why, my lord," cried Gangogo impudently, going up to him and touching his arm, "this hill is cold; the climate that he loves is warmer!"

"Peace!" exclaimed Raffaello turning towards him with a frown. "The spirit is dumb. Not to your vulgar eyes he deigns to show his countenance. I pray you all begone. Here will I watch all night."

Everyone exclaimed at this. "You shall not bear the frost, sir; it is madness," exclaimed Bran.

"I fear no frost," answered the enthusiast, "who fear not devil's fire. If I perish none will weep. I have no friend on earth; although in Heaven, many and mighty."

He stood, turned toward them, leaning on his great sword. His eyes, as he looked to heaven, shone in the torchlight, and his voice was very deep.

"For," he continued, "my soul was nursed in awful communes; I being no man's son; a foundling; and no mother's milk within me. I pray you all descend."

A mighty spirit this. They stood round him and looked at him as children look at some great person. At his command they turned without a word and began to descend one after the other.

Presently, however, Gangogo returned. Now that

the torches were being carried down the rocks it was very dark here. On all sides there was an abyss of blackness. Only the Cardinal's armour, reflecting the torchlight, shone with bright points like a constellation of stars before Gangogo. The woman tied to the rock was silent, and the Cardinal gazed silently down into the abyss. Gangogo walked up to him.

"Alas, sir," he said, "what devil is this that you look for? Is it he who fathered the child yonder?"

Raffaello Bonto turned angrily upon him.

"It is he," he said. "But get you gone."

"Why, then," exclaimed Gangogo scornfully, "let us give him one call more. Perhaps he dines, he sleeps, plays cards, talks with some fool or other."

"You do not grasp him," said the Cardinal impatiently and quite unconscious of the other's sarcasm. "Go! This very night he shall oppose me on this pinnacle. Farewell."

"Farewell," said Gangogo, retreating a little.

It was quite dark here now. The torches gleamed murkily some distance down. Before him stood the tall figure of the Cardinal like a shadow. He had turned from Gangogo to look again into the night.

Suddenly Gangogo stopped, lifted his open hands to a level with his shoulders and put his elbows outwards, his ears twitching like those of a tiger.

The Cardinal remained motionless, standing at the very edge of the precipice, with his back to Gangogo.

Gangogo hurled him over.

He stood listening, breathing fast. It had been done so instantaneously and soundlessly that even Brunde did not hear. Gangogo listened. Presently from far below came the faint sound of a heavy body clanging upon the rocks.

Gangogo turned round. Bran was calling him. Should he release the woman? No; she had infuriated him; she was ugly and miserable; besides,

they would come here again to-morrow, and if they found her not they would suspect him. He had had his revenge. Let her remain.

He descended.

LII.—Astrella Descends

Brunde remained alone, bound to the rock. Her infant lay still, slung in a mantle round her neck; and her head began to droop lower and lower over it—but she was so bound that she could not fall. She remained silent—not even weeping.

It seemed that a long time had passed, when someone touched her. She opened her eyes. Seen by the faint light of the setting moon, a beautiful figure stood before her. "Are you an angel?" said Brunde.

"Not on this earth are angels," answered Astrella, cutting her bonds rapidly.

When they had unbound her, Astrella took her child from her and carried it—and Brunde resigned it without a murmur. The hunter helped or carried the poor woman down to the glacier and then on to Morva's cottage; but this occupied some time, as the night was dark. On arriving, Astrella commanded him to remain there to guard Brunde for the night, and said that she was proceeding at once to the inn. He was astonished; but she departed without another word.

Owing to the darkness neither she nor Pedel had witnessed the death of the Cardinal.

LIII.—Sleep and Waking

Things had happened at the castle just as Pedel described.

Gangogo easily refuted the charge of having wounded Bushton, because, as a matter of fact, he had been with Bran all that evening in the village.

The morning after Otto had visited Lelita's window, he was awakened by a message from her enquiring about his health. He said that he would meet her below very soon; and when they met he looked a little grave and pale, perhaps, but as serene as ever. She was delighted and chid him soundly; and then told him angrily the story of Brunde—not one word of which she believed. As she was doing so, Cajazzo entered—pale but recovered; and he was equally incredulous. Azrimar looked very astonished, and grave; but presently discussed with them Lelita's plan for Brunde's release. Cajazzo was delighted. "Madam, my cousin," he said, "the Count Azrimar wins not only the most beautiful but the wisest and kindest lady in the world"—and he sighed a little. In a moment a tear stood in her eyes, and she gave Cajazzo her left hand and Otto her right, to kiss. Cajazzo's lip quivered, but he shook hands with Otto and cried gaily, "And, Signior, my cousin has been won by a man whose face tells all the world that he is as good as he is handsome and rich!" It was then arranged that all three should ride next day with Count Reichenfels to Capon's inn, in order to watch that nothing untoward happened to frustrate their cunning plot for the poor woman's release. The remainder of that stormy day was spent with all the guests in the happiest rejoicings, and the marriage was fixed for a few days later.

Zozimo remained at the castle in spite of what Azrimar had said to him, but was little seen during the day.

The next day in the afternoon, Reichenfels, Azrimar, Lelita, and Cajazzo rode, as arranged, to Capon's inn, where it was expected the Cardinal and his companions would join them after Brunde was bound to the rock. The Count, who sat one of the horses which Otto had given him, was in high spirits, his rheumatism being

much better ; and Cajazzo was as gay as ever. The lovers rode behind, and talked chiefly of what they were going to do after their marriage, for it was projected that they would descend to the Count's estates near Bellinzona. Otto was in doubts whether he should join the League against the French or the French against the League, and entered into many arguments for and against either alternative. Lelita vowed that he should do neither, and her arguments appeared to be the most powerful of all.

When they arrived at the inn it was evening, and, though the Count and Cajazzo were very merry together, everyone else seemed to be depressed, so utter was the stillness of the air, so gloomy the view outside. In spite of the fire in the great brazier, a chill in the atmosphere made people wrap their cloaks closer round them, while for no accountable reason conversation was carried on mostly in low voices.

"Gad!" cried Cajazzo after supper, "you are all as melancholy as moles. I would liefer fling a jest at a spectre than at one of you. You, cousin Lelita, and you, Signior Otto, seem to take your coming marriage very hardly ; nor do I wonder at it. Marriage is the first step of death, they say!"

"I am angry at the Cardinal," answered Lelita. "He is going to murder a poor woman to-night for nothing. I wish that a rock would fall upon him and crush him."

"Indeed," cried Cajazzo, "I was speaking with the village priest, Father Seraphin, to-day, a most apprehensive fellow. He says something hellish is about to happen, such mighty thunders we have had here of late, so enormous are the clouds that trail rumbling round about the hills ; as for me, however, I never have a presentiment but the things happen just the reverse. I had a presentiment that I should have broken Tri-

vulzio at Fornovo, but the truth was 'twas I who ran away!"

They all laughed in a feeble manner. "The Cardinal is late," said the Count.

At this moment Zozimo and Pompilia entered the room quarrelling. Pompilia wished to put the dwarf in a cupboard in order to keep him from mischief. "He is a devil," she cried, shaking her fist at him. "Enough of that, woman!" said the Count angrily; and ordered that he should sleep in the kitchen.

It was now becoming very late, yet the Cardinal had not returned. Some peasants were standing at the other end of the large room, and among them was Morva Neroni. She was, however, seated unobserved behind a butt, on a stool in the corner, and did not attempt to speak to her son. She contented herself with eyeing him furtively, and then fixed her gaze on Otto and Lelita.

Presently there was a noise outside, the door was flung open, and Bran, Trullo, Gangogo, and the hunters entered.

"Fire, fire, and kilderkins of beer," shouted the soldier, shaking the frost from his beard and cloak.

"Where is the Cardinal?" asked everyone.

"Left on the peak," they cried.

"Not dead?" asked the Count anxiously.

"Who knows?" laughed Gangogo; "at any rate in the arms of Death. Death clutches him. We shall see, to-morrow."

They described what the Cardinal had done and how he had behaved, amid the astonishment of all.

"He will be frozen to death!" cried Lelita, admiring, in spite of herself, the man's curious heroism.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Gangogo. "There he will stand a rock upon a rock; the world's great sentinel against—nothing. Man may forgive, but nature never!"

Otto, Lelita, and Cajazzo looked at each other with some consternation; for since the Cardinal remained with Brunde, the hunter Pedel could not release her. Otto and Cajazzo whispered to her that they would ascend early in the morning and remonstrate with the Cardinal or succour him, as the case should require.

The Count, Cajazzo, Otto, and Lelita now retired to their chambers; and the others, having supped very heartily, rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down on the floor to sleep. Several peasants who still remained in the inn did the same.

Morva quietly shifted her seat, came near the brazier, and held out her hands to the flaming wood. No one had observed her.

Suddenly, just as everyone seemed to be falling asleep, Gangogo noticed her.

"Away, cursed hag!" he cried; "what do you here?"

"Wake," she answered laconically.

"Budge, graymalkin, budge," he roared; "how can we sleep if you sit and watch us like Death in a cemetery?"

"Furies," cried Bran rolling over, "let her be, man. Will you wake us all with your noise?"

"I hate her—ho—witch, witch," said Gangogo, falling asleep in a moment.

Morva was the only one who remained awake. She drew her stool nearer to the great brazier and warmed her hands. She looked at her hands. Long, delicate, but hardened now by labour. The ring which her husband had given to her in the days of their fortune sparkled on her finger but took from the glow of the fire a hue of blood. It seemed a spot of blood was on her finger.

It was very still here in the great eating-room of the inn. The sleepers muffled in their blankets were breathing heavily. The burning logs crackled and

fell to pieces in the brazier, while the scanty smoke flying upwards to the flue took the forms of writhing spirits, rolling over and over each other, struggling with each other, yearning as if with anguish, and finally escaping. Thus would writhe the spirits of the infernal; but never thus escape.

Glassed in each of her eyes as she gazed into the flames was a similar fire. It seemed her soul was full of flames that shone out of her eyes. The lids were drawn back to the utmost, the orbs fixed in reverie. Each pupil was a circle of crimson light. What fiery thoughts were within? What pride consuming like those embers in the incalescencies of evil fortune? What ashes of happiness? What terrible heat of resolve?

One by one the torches fixed in the sockets on the wall went out, emitting a pallid flame and an odour of resin. A faint haze of smoke filled the room, and shapes of smoke wandered helplessly under the dark and lofty roof. The fire became more and more ruddy as the logs ceased to flame and turned into trunks of glowing heat. The rafters, the barrels, the furniture were suffused with the same colour, and the woman's face looked as if washed with blood.

Her eyes turned slowly and she gazed from one to another of the sleepers.

What was her purpose there? There was some purpose in those flame-enlightened eyes; but she did not stir.

The sleepers lay in the first deep trance of slumber, fatigued with exertions. Their heads were pillowed on whatever they had been able to find—logs, stools, folded blankets. It was too soon yet for them to dream, to toss about. It seemed, but for the movement of their breasts, that they were dead. Here lay the great form of Bran, covered from head to heel; there Trullo affecting hardihood even in slumber;

there Gangogo, his big head pillowed on a tressel and one hand clutching his weapon. Beyond were the soldiers and the hunters heaped upon one another. All slept.

Sometimes one of them would twitch a limb in his sleep, would hold his breath for a moment. The woman gazed from one to the other of them. "Ay," she muttered, "like Death in a cemetery counting his spoils." She smiled.

Then her face saddened again and her eyes reverted to the fire. She thought of the husband whom she had loved so much, of his death, of her flight with her two babes. Why does God give us so much trouble, she thought? Why not have made earth a heaven at once?

She thought of her children, now born to be peasants. How poor they were, yet how noble! No! they should live in a higher world, she vowed. She, she could compass it—this very night.

But her soul? She would have to give her soul for it. Look, how the smoke rolled up from the intolerable embers! Look, how the shapes of smoke writhed in torment! See, in the embers themselves horrible figures, faces of anguish, burning yet undying forms!

She turned as she sat. "For you, my son, my soul; my soul for you, my son," she said to herself.

Suddenly there was a loud shriek, a shrill cry. She started. It was only a cricket beginning to sing under the brazier.

Morva sat upright. It was almost time.

The voice of the cricket rang out in a continuous stream of expostulation. It would rouse the sleepers.

"Hush, cricket, hush!" she said involuntarily. "Sleep, sleep. Wake not, sleepers; it is but the cricket cries."

The voice of the cricket ceased.

She thought of her son, the pitiful boy, so good, so miserable, so full of hope, so ardent for the world ; she thought of her curses. " Worm and child of mine ! " said a voice within her—" hang there and rot and leave me sonless." She looked round as if someone had spoken to her. It was only her own memory. Now she was going to revoke these words. She was going to give her soul to revoke them. She would enter hell-fire for her son. She would not ask God's mercy. Why had He given her a son, then, if she was not to do as she pleased in order to keep him happy ?

Again the cricket cried, shrilly, tremulously as if to awake the very dead. " You shall not do it ! " it seemed to say. " Help ! help ! Awake ! she will do murder ! "

" Hush ! " she answered. " Hush ! sleep, sleep ! Hear it not, sleepers ; it is but the cricket cries. Sleep and dream. The soul that watches you is sleepless—I am sleepless. Death shall call, nor you awake. The cricket cries in vain, then."

The cricket ceased.

" What I do," she said to herself, " I do not madly. The deed must be that shall be. See, my arm trembles not. Who can save him ? Who but I that made him and his woes, cursing him often for that which I cursed him with at first, his life ? If I am damned for this, what then !—what but that for her son a mother will enter hell, and hell shall be heaven for his sake ? Oh, for you, my son, my soul ; for you, my son."

" No ! " shrieked the cricket. " Never ! it must not be ! You must not destroy your soul. Awake, sleepers."

It seemed that the cricket had succeeded at last. Gangogo sat up suddenly in the wildest terror.

" Awake, awake, arise, you midnight sleepers ! " he cried.

They all began to stir. "Awake!" cried Gangogo.

"What is it?" they said, throwing off their blankets.

He rubbed his eyes. "I have dreamed," he said.

"You fool!" growled Bran; "go asleep again."

He rubbed his eyes hard. "I have dreamed I saw a spirit shooting through the night," he exclaimed, "that cried, 'Awake, you midnight sleepers!'"

"Well, you have woke us," cried Bran, cursing him and rolling over again.

"Awake!" said Gangogo, falling off to sleep. "Awake—awake—awake——"

He was asleep again. They all slept. The cricket was silent.

Morva stood up. "It was the voice that cried to me, too, 'Awake!' The voiceless voice of Death that calls to all, now calls to one, 'The hour is come.'"

The cricket was defeated and did not cry any more. Morva, stepping between the sleepers, went straight to the door of the room where Otto was sleeping and stood listening.

Someone whined in his sleep. "Ha!" she said, "I thought it was my son, a child, crying when I struck him."

The chamber which was occupied by Otto was next to that occupied by Lelita. Both the doors were shut. The fire was now dying down so much that the room was nearly in darkness. Morva knelt down before the two doors and prayed.

"God!" she said, "impute this not to me a crime. See, all you large-eyed angels that weep for me, thronging God's throne with intercessions for me, how a mother for her son will enter hell and bring you tears. Sleep on, my son, sleep on. One stroke and you are that you are for ever; and my soul only to be damned with punishment."

She moved stealthily to the kitchen.

LIV.—The Partition

Within the two doors outside of which Morva had knelt before attempting the terrible crime which she had conceived were Otto and Lelita, not asleep as Morva imagined.

As we have said, the two doors opened into separate chambers. Lelita was in one and Otto in the other. The rooms were very small, the walls made of rough planks, and the pallets simple boards covered with folded blankets—no unrestful bedding for those days. In Lelita's chamber a small candle was burning, giving a little light ; but Otto's room was quite dark. Zitella was asleep on the floor of her mistress's room.

Lelita had retired first. First seeing that her cushions and pillows had been disposed properly upon the pallet—for she had sent her maid, who was tired, to rest before—she unclasped her brooch and took off her outer dress, waiting to think between each action. In a few days she was to be married. What a thing to think of ! What a trouble it all was ! Well, she had promised, so she supposed it must be done.

She stood there amidst the fallen heap of her dress smiling. She folded her white, rounded arms across her bosom and looked at them. They were very pretty arms, certainly, but then she was very pretty altogether. How exquisitely the arms tapered to the wrists, how beautifully and softly they pressed upon each other. She held out one arm and tried to see the dimples that formed at the elbows when it was extended Very pretty dimples.

In fact it is wonderful what pains nature takes in these cases. And in a few days she would be married. All her pleasant girlhood was over. But then, how she loved Otto ! It was singular that she, who had had so many opportunities of falling in love, should not have done so until now. It was certainly very fortunate,

for Otto was the very prince of men. Well, and she was beautiful enough for him.

Otto entered his room later. It was not quite in darkness. He was surprised to see a light entering from some chinks in the wall. Suddenly, he almost cried out with surprise and pleasure, and then turned away quickly.

The fact was that the inn was so roughly built (as described at the beginning of this book), and the partition between the two chambers was so badly put together and so old, that there were many long and rather broad apertures between the rotten planks, through which he could see a certain beautiful vision. His own room being in darkness, Lelita had not become aware of these apertures.

Ah, sudden and beautiful vision!

He had turned from it in a moment; he could not breathe. She was only a few feet from him; and there were only a few planks between.

"Well," she exclaimed aloud to herself, continuing to examine those pretty arms, "he has found a beautiful wife!"

"Lelita!" he whispered.

She started. Instantly she saw the chinks in the wall. "Ah!" she cried, "go away! you are a monster."

Then followed many pretty passages. The light was to be blown out. It was not to be blown out. They were to try to kiss each other through the chink. She would not hear of such a thing. Alas! the planks were too broad to allow of their lips meeting. Then, wonderful thing! The two pallets were found to be both attached to the partition, one on either side of it; so that if a hand were passed through a chink they could fall asleep hand in hand. First, Otto's hand was put through and received kisses, and then Lelita's hand.

Thus they lay for a few minutes whispering many things. In reality, some hours. The voices without ceased and they still whispered and whispered. Somnus fled, quite disgusted.

Zitella slept, unconscious of it all.

After a time Lelita noticed that Otto became more silent. He was going to sleep, she thought, rather piqued; and yet he was holding her hand so that she felt his breath upon it. In reality, a disagreeable necessity had occurred to his mind. He had determined for some time to tell her a secret before their marriage, and no better opportunity than the present one was likely to present itself. He must tell her now; yet it was a hard task.

She was prattling of many things and gave him an opening all at once. "My lord," she said, "I have long wished to ask you of one thing. So far as I remember, I had not seen you before the Suitors' Trial; but you must have seen me before, or you would not have loved me. Indeed, you said once that you had been by me when I did not know. How was that?"

She felt his hand tighten on hers. He did not reply at once. "Yes, Lelita," he said at length; "I had seen you before and loved you."

"Where was it then, where was it? I am dying of curiosity."

"It was here."

"Here? In this inn?"

He kissed her hand.

"You cannot mean it! Yet stay a moment. You were here on a day in the spring when we were returning from Ulrichen, on the day when you took that creature Zozimo hence. Of course, how foolish of me! You must have seen me then."

"Yes," he answered, in a very low voice.

"Where were you? You were here all the time

when we were having dinner. Of course! you must have seen me from one of the side-chambers. How fortunate! if you had never seen me then we might never have loved each other, my lord."

"I once saw you before—here, too."

"Once before?"

"Yes—when you and your father stayed here a little time on your way to Ulrichen."

"That was wonderful. You must have remained at the inn for a week and more, and yet we never heard of you." She was becoming very curious.

It was some time before he replied. "I was here with Zozimo. What did you think of him in those days?"

"I hate him—I always hated him."

"Yet you were kind to him once."

"Yes—perhaps. He seemed so weak, so meek, so piteous, I remember. I loved him then, poor child. He appeared good and willing; not the hideous, evil creature he has become. Tell me, my lord——?"

She stopped, her heart full of a strange curiosity. Perhaps she was now to discover the link which bound Otto and Zozimo together.

"It seemed he dared even to love you then—wrote you some foolish verses—picked flowers for you—sang to you."

"You know all that? He must have told you. It is very strange."

"Poor little, secret, panting soul, he dared adore you, filled the sky with you, mixed you with the stars. You were kind to him. You were the only one of all who pitied him when the others tormented him and when even his mother cursed him."

"Yes, it was terrible to hear her."

"Yet it was your pity which caused him the greatest anguish of all. Do you remember you said, 'Alas! poor little dwarf'?"

"Did that cause him anguish?"

"He was not so much aware of his misfortune till then."

"How do you know my very words? Were you listening?"

"I heard them."

They remained silent. Lelita's heart was beating strangely.

LV.—The Secret

Outside, Morva Neroni had risen from her knees, and was stealing along the wall toward the kitchen, full of her dreadful resolve. Love within, murder without.

Otto's voice sounded very strangely when he spoke again. It was hard to tell this thing; yet it must be told. He knew that he might even lose Lelita in consequence. She would be kind to him to-night, he was aware—but to-morrow?

"Lelita," he said, "have you never been able to guess?"

"To guess what, my lord?"

He laughed strangely.

"Tell me Lelita, what would you do if the thing which Gangogo told you all——"

"You mean——"

"Yes, the thing which Gangogo thought that he had discovered, that I am——"

Her hand was suddenly withdrawn.

Outside Morva Neroni had reached the kitchen. A single rushlight was burning there gloomily, and several grooms and servants were sleeping on the floor. In the darkness lay Zozimo, his face, hideous in sleep, faintly lit by the feeble light. Morva stepped toward him very cautiously and stood gazing at

him. He was breathing very heavily and his lips twitched a little occasionally.

Lelita began to laugh. "My lord," she said, "what is Gangogo to what you were telling me—how you saw me first?"

Since her hand was withdrawn Otto felt a double darkness. He knew that he was trembling all over.

"You do not love me," he said piteously.

He heard her catch her breath. "It is your turn to give me your hand," she said. He passed his hand through the chink and felt her warm lips pressed upon it repeatedly. "That is how I love you," she whispered. Having kissed the hand she looked at it by the candlelight. How full, masculine, and strong! How the ring which she had given to him glittered upon it in the dim light!

"Suppose now," he continued, "suppose that what Gangogo said is partly true, would you cease to love me."

"My lord!" exclaimed Lelita, much surprised.

"I ask you to suppose it." His voice (and he spoke rapidly) was harsh. "Would you continue to love me if after all I were none but the Zozimo whom you saw here in the inn, some months gone?"

"How can I suppose such a thing? It is impossible. You say this to try me."

"Listen!" he cried, whispering eagerly through the partition and clutching her hand until she felt inclined to cry out. "Lelita, bright passion of my soul, my Lelita whom I have won, love of my heart, listen, listen!—I am not mad. Listen!—do you remember that night when Zozimo was tormented—oh, the terrible night!—listen!—when you had gone, there was someone seated at the table in the great chamber—a signior the most handsome imaginable—he was reading a book—the Holy Book—he read me verses

out of it—he was virtuous and pitiful—he pitied me—he spoke kindly to me whom my own mother had cursed—listen!—he took my hands and breathed upon me—fire was in his eyes—he drew his own weapon and slew himself—hold my hand—give me not up, Lelita! My love, my love! It was for you I did it. Do you not understand? We were transformed—our souls mingled and divided—I, Zozimo, my spirit passed—Lelita, my love! give me not away to the darkness. Hold my hand—cast me not out again!"

Suddenly he stopped. Then he quivered all over and cried, "Oh I am slain! Horror! I am falling from you!"

Outside Morva Neroni, looking round cautiously, had knelt by the side of her son Zozimo and had plunged her dagger into his side.

Lelita, already bewildered by the story which Otto had been telling her, noticed a sudden change in his voice; while at the same moment the hand which was passed through the partition clutched hers convulsively, and then, letting go of it, began to open and close the fingers rapidly. She could see nothing of her lover but his hand. As she looked at it, shrieking with terror, she saw that it was Otto's hand no longer, but a small shrivelled hand with claw-like fingers. It struggled still to free itself from the chink in the partition, where, by a side-movement, it was caught and held between the planks. Slowly the movement ceased and the hand hung drooping. She noticed even at that moment that it wore the ring which she had given to Otto. Now, as the fingers hung down listlessly, the ring, much too large for this shrivelled hand, ran down the finger and fell off.

This, then, was the dreadful secret between Otto and Zozimo; this the appalling result of the crime which Morva Neroni committed in the hope of assuring

to her son the undeformed body which he had obtained. The punishment was a part of the crime. Thinking to have slain the evil spirit who threatened them all, she had but brought about a second change. Zozimo, who had become the Count Otto, was retransformed into Zozimo.

The shrieks of Lelita and Zitella awoke the whole house. Both the women ran into the eating-chamber of the inn and fell fainting into the arms of the nearest. Lelita, however, recovered in a few moments, and pointing to the chamber next to hers cried :

" There, there ! The Count Otto is changed into Zozimo ! "

Gangogo taking a torch ran into Otto's chamber. He was followed by several men. Zozimo was lying against the partition, in which his hand was still fixed. He was bleeding, for it seemed the wound which Morva had given to the dwarf's body was still there, and indeed, Murinus says, had occasioned the second change by permitting the two spirits to mingle together. As Gangogo held his torch above them Zozimo looked up at him with a face of such pallid horror that he and the soldiers fled precipitately.

It seems, however, that the wound was not at once mortal, for Zozimo (the Count Otto that was) succeeded in freeing his hand and presently ran out amongst them all, holding his wounded side.

" Oh ! " he shrieked. " Let me go, let me dash my head against the wall ! Perfidious demon ! the lying villain ! Give me a sword, some friend ! "

Several of the soldiers hacked at him in their terror, but for some reason their blows failed. He ran hither and thither shrieking.

Morva, who had now learnt the effect of her deed, was leaning panting against the wall.

Presently a tall figure rose from the spot where Zozimo had lain. He gave Morva an awful look,

and stalked out silently between them all. The door of the inn opened before him, and he passed out.

Overcome by terror, no one moved. Zozimo, seeing this figure, followed him.

Outside, his hand was seized by someone. He thought it was Azrimar. It was not. It was his sister, and they were alone.

She took his arm firmly, and fled with him into the darkness.

LVI.—Flight

Not darkness, light.

At first sight coming from the inn, Zozimo thought that it was dark. It seemed to him when he ran out that he was about to fall off the earth, that the world would have shaken him off into space, so appalling he felt himself to have become. He was scarcely conscious. The wound in his side was a little painful, but owing to his very deformity the short dagger of Morva had been able to reach no vital organ. The wound did not pain him so much as the soul at finding herself cramped again into that little body. The sudden exility tortured him. The body too, he became aware, was baser, full of aches and pains, unutterable feebleness. In one instant it seemed all his late life, his love, his full joyous living, were removed from him, had become infinitely distant, like some landscape viewed at the further end of a long dark gallery. His soul was complaining within him, trying to ease her bulk within the new tenement, recognising with infinite sorrow the old pinching places of the body.

He ran lightly, however, and did not feel the earth. The increase of energy which accompanies compression carried him forward with ease. His form seemed to have become so light that he thought he might have

flown. The hand, too, which held his lifted him, helped him forward, carried him along so that his small feet scarcely touched the earth. Yet he could not speak, and it seemed to him that he was moving in utter darkness.

Gradually his eyes recovered some of their use. He saw that it was not darkness, but light. A universal silveriness, a white light of pearly mist, exquisitely beautiful. It seemed that he was moving at the bottom of a valley the sides of which ascended on either hand to heights lost in haze. He now became aware that in reality he was dead, that this hand which held his was an angel's hand, that the valley was the one which leads to paradise or the infernal, he knew not which. The light that beamed before him, diffused, formless yet radiant, must be the light of God's face, he thought. The angel was carrying him forward to judgment.

There was no fear in his soul then. He believed in God, not in punishments. What sins he had committed were already rewarded after their kind. He had indeed been punished before he had committed any sin at all. He saw at once the nakedness of the old lie of men's wickedness. Even in this moment of his utter misery his gospel was that brighter one, "Do thy best!" One great sorrow, however, there was upon his soul, Lelita; and in her horror and despair he suffered more than in his own. How far had he acted wrongly? Was it evil in him to have clutched at the one chance of happiness which fortune offered? Perhaps—he did not know—the balance seemed equal. After all, her love had brought much joy to her during its course. It was over—that is nature's inevitable end. Our relations with our fellows are so involved with conditions of give-and-take that it is only very rarely that they can be pronounced either good or evil.

Still they flew along. Then he became conscious of a greater pain in his wound, of an increased difficulty of going. They were ascending the steep side of the valley. He lost half his consciousness though he continued to feel the sense of progression. On, on—it seemed for ever. Higher, higher—his body becoming heavier and heavier. Everywhere the same beautiful silvery light, the spaces of white mist, the diffused ineffable splendour. Was he climbing up to heaven? At times it seemed to him that another and invisible hand was supporting him on the other side.

No, he was not dead. He felt passionate kisses upon his cheek. He became aware of a voice speaking to him and recognised it as his beloved sister's. At times when they rested in the ascent, his mind became clearer, his sight grew less filmy, and he was able to trace the features of her beautiful face. But he could not speak.

At first they were not pursued, but suddenly Astrella heard cries behind her. Understanding that her only course was to take to the mountains, she ascended the Ebnetenalp by the side of the Tiefentobel, the brook which, descending from the Tiefen glacier, rushed past Morva's cottage and joined the Reuss at the bottom of the Garschenthal. Unfortunately it had snowed slightly here, and consequently they left tracks which could easily be followed.

Having to help her almost-dying brother, she ascended very slowly and knew that the pursuers were gradually gaining on them. From the bottom of the valley came a peculiar bell-toned bellowing, like that of a bloodhound, which was Gangogo's voice. Gradually, as they ascended, the mist became clearer and the position of the stars in the heavens more determinable; while through the greater darkness below could be distinguished the faint, far red glow of

torches. Astrella, fatigued by the labours which she had already undergone, felt even her superb strength beginning to fail her as she drew her brother up the steep grassy slopes. Her breast panted like that of the pursued deer, her blood hammered in her veins. Nevertheless, strangely enough, her brother seemed to drag but little upon her hand.

Struggling over the terrible moraine with its huge blocks of stone heaped upon each other, they were nearly caught, the pursuers with their torches being seen distinctly a little below. Still nearer and nearer rang the voice of Gangogo and the shouts of his companions; who, now less often at fault in the thicker snow of the heights than they had been in the valley, gained rapidly on them. Further flight seemed hopeless. The fugitives, though they were not seen as yet, were being followed with ease by means of their footsteps.

As a last resource, Astrella drew her arrow Saefa upon Gangogo. The shaft struck him but pierced only the muscle behind the collar-bone. They could hear the hideous yells of the wounded hunchback. The pursuers, not expecting such a stroke (for they knew not who was with Zozimo) halted in alarm, and gave the two time to reach the glacier. Here, Astrella's knowledge of the windings between the crevasses enabled her to gain upon them.

She hardly knew whither she was going, but her instinct led her to the summits. She did not speak to her wounded brother, nor he to her. Without being told, she seemed to know already everything that had occurred. She seemed to know also that death would presently be upon them both. Panting and sobbing, he struggled on. Yet his form was so light that it almost seemed as if someone else were assisting them. She knew that their time was come, but also something would happen ere it came. She

knew all, it was not necessary to speak. But that thing must happen on the summits.

The pursuers gained upon them once more on the upper ice. At last the higher terrace of the glacier was reached, and they approached the final ascent of rock. Here the mist was very thick; but a white glimmer of starlight struggled through it. Each step higher and higher—and the labour became dreadful, even to her. The torches were scarcely visible, but closer and closer came the bellowing of the human bloodhound behind them in the darkness.

Suddenly he appeared in the starlight—close below them. He almost barked and whined as he leapt, and it might have been imagined that his tongue lolled from his mouth. His energy was dreadful. He sprang from point to point. But the others were left far behind, and he was alone.

Then he saw them and bellowed with rage and leapt forward. But she was a goddess still. Her second arrow, Saevestris, remained. He roared again and sprang again. But the feather came to her breast, the bowstring clanged, and the bolt thudded as it hit him full in the breast. He roared once more —and Gangogo was dead.

On, on—still upward. Presently it could be seen that the torches came to the place where he lay, and halted. There were shouts. The pursuers were terrified, not knowing who it was that fled with Zozimo before them and defended him so dreadfully. They halted. Their voices calling in the mist could be heard, far below. Then the torches began to descend. The pursuit had ceased.

LVII.—The Temptation

It seemed only a short time after this that Astrella and Zozimo ceased to move. They had arrived,

seemingly, upon some lofty pinnacle of rock, covered with scattered snow; but Zozimo fell into a half faint when action became no longer necessary.

The air was not so cold here as in the icy hollows of the mountains. A breath of warm wind had come; the mist vanished; a million stars were visible.

Astrella flung herself at full length beside her dying and nearly insensible brother. She threw aside her bow and empty quiver, and wrapt some of her dress round him. The blood had soaked one side of his clothing and now stained her own. Raising his head on her arm, she gazed long at his beloved features, distinctly seen by the heavenly effulgence of the stars. After a time, he opened his eyes and looked at her. He even smiled.

The mist had cleared as if by magic. It was no longer cold, even at this great height; but she cherished his small numbed hands in her own living ones. She made no attempt to stanch his wound; for she knew that very soon their doom would fall on both; and she only looked from him to the heavens, which, she prayed, would give her strength to withstand.

The air had become so pure that the heavens, covered with stars, appeared against the black summits of the earth as a dome of light; not sprinkled with points of brightness; not set with mere effulgent particles seemingly fixed upon a sphere; but looking as they are, an infinity full of living worlds, each beyond each to the uttermost distance. No half-veiled vision, but a perspective of God's work. Not dark, but splendid. No night, but rather a more wonderful day. No curtain of obscuring sunlight, but a revelation of more magnificent gloom. Miraculous, transplendent, a fulguration of divine rays. Space inhabited, teeming, thronged with those angels of God moving in their progressions, which we call the stars.

Beneath—the earth. A dark agglomeration of tumultuous pinnacles; a shadowy chaos; a lump of matter, great only because near—not even great though near; black, dead, inert, silent. There, it seemed, we might distinguish the singing of the several stars; but here, from the thick earth, no sound came. Above music—but only death below. The earth was but a wreck rolling through space; no inspired sister of the children of light, but a deformed cast of black substance; some sterile fragment broken from a more fortunate world. The mountains were felt rather than seen. Peak beyond peak, pinnacle beyond pinnacle, straining their blind eyes to find the heavenly glory and those divine habitants of the vast. Dumb, blind, and deformed giants of the darkness trying to hear the voices of space; enormous listeners to God; audience of the supernal utterance.

In the aspect of her dying brother there was now something childlike. His face seemed to be many years younger, and she thought of him as he was in his boyhood. Seen by the starlight, his face was beautiful. It was the soul coming forth.

He whispered her name.

"Speak not," she said; "the bubbling blood flows from your wound."

"I cannot die before I speak."

"We shall speak in heaven."

"Why should you die?"

"The hour is coming upon me."

"Will he appear?"

"Speak not. Fold your numbed hands about me; the life you lose draw from me; hold me fast, my brother."

"I was too rash with fortune," he said; "not content with what she gave me—hoped for much—lost all. The end is my just punishment, and hers, O Heaven! who sinned not."

"Torture me not with your pale innocence."

"Dare not to say it. I am not innocent. I was too weak with my infirmity, to take the jests of idle hours as bitter wrongs. My lot was not so very pitiful; but weakness in me led me to my sin."

"You have not sinned."

"She loved me. I came falsely to her."

"I could have made you live," cried Astrella; "I let you die. I should have yielded up myself for you. O pitiful full lips! O weakling hands I love! O more than lover—brother; and I your slayer!"

"Weep not," answered Zozimo. "After my hour of agony death will come. But first the terrible thing prevenes. Then look on me and yield not, for he is evil and his the cruellest jest of all upon me. He sought repentance, but found it not, and slew me in the seeking. But he will tempt you sorely. Then hold my hand, and if I die my spirit shall guard you."

They lay upon the hard rock embracing each other. She clasped the feeble, deformed body, and kissed those blue lips, and warmed those childish hands in her breast.

Suddenly they both started and stirred. "It is come!" she cried. "The terrible hour is come!"

The air was no longer mistless; but, unlike the earlier diffused vapour, clouds of definite shapes began to boil up round the crags, to crawl along the ridges—looking like spectres against the dark rock, and like shadowy spirits against the brilliance of the stars. They moved, grew greater or dwindled.

"Look, sister, look!" cried Zozimo. "Look! the terrible, beautiful form."

"Pray Heaven for me."

"I shudder; my dying soul despairs."

"Hover about me still when you are dead."

They clutched each other and gazed upwards.

The mists rose round them like weird forms of men; approached and receded. Before them on the ground at their feet came a little cloud, like a smoke rising from the rock, and grew in volume. It seemed that a voice was speaking to them out of the cloud. Astrella, drawing her brother's head to her, sat up and listened. It seemed as if they were listening to some wonderful music.

The cloud began to take human shape—quite indescribable—beautiful yet hideous—perfect yet deformed. The outline was indefinite like a mist; but the face, full of despair and yet nobleness, was clear. So also the utterance. Was it that of words—of speech, or of the last music of the soul that is too impassioned for words? Zozimo clung to the arm of his sister; and she rose upon her knees and flung back her hair, at once terrified and excited.

As the cloud had formed itself into a shape, so the music began to form itself into words—beautiful yet terrible; near, and yet so far that they seemed to mingle with the distant tones which may have been imagined to pulse from the vibrating stars. "No longer the feeble thing I was, which thou in pretext of my spirit scornedst, I come," said the Voice; "that thou who didst not hear me good shalt hear me evil; for I am that I am."

They could distinguish little but the moving lips that spoke. It was the spirit of question that is unrest, and the unrest that is evil. As at the beginning the stars were golden, silver, and azure, and throbbed in unison with the music of heaven. It seemed they were angels leaning from heaven to hear.

Astrella was breathing heavily, almost sobbing; but Zozimo felt himself reviving, and able to raise himself and to hold her arm with feverish strength. The dreadful form continued to address her, but he

could not hear all that it said. Her arm trembled, and she cried in reply, "Spirit and peer of spirits, why dost thou persecute me?"

"I am alone," said the Voice.

"Art thou so proud?"

"In thunder and with the voice of choiring stars, I, spirit and more than spirit, invoke thee now, human and more than human, whose starry essence, nursed in solitude, dwelleth on these unuttering dumb hills; as I, sole hate of Heaven, live alone."

Zozimo shrieked, "I shudder and my spirit thickens with death."

"I shudder and my spirit aches," she moaned.

"Behold and tremble not; look on me; behold and pity me—for ever and ever the enemy of God and man and all, upon whose head the very stars tingle sharp shining curses in their beams—outcast a wanderer, whom no thing loves."

She trembled. "Why is he so beautiful and yet so sad?" she cried.

The Voice grew distant, the moving lips more indistinct. "For me, for me, Heaven has no pity; as I alone of living things no hope."

"Yield not, yield not," cried Zozimo. "He pitied not me."

"Why is thy brow so thunder-scarred with pain?" she cried again.

"Not I my own creator, or the world's," answered the Voice; "or pain had not been here. If I am evil, Heaven that made the evil must too be evil and should bear the curse. Whose the fault?—not mine. But whose the punishment?—that is mine indeed."

Zozimo saw with terror that his sister was yielding. She began to move forward on her knees, though he held her with all his strength. "Yield not, yield not," he cried. "Hold fast my hand in yours!"

"Your blood is on my garments; hold me fast," she replied.

The voice came nearer and nearer. "No rest, no hope of rest, for ever and ever. But pity me, thou. Bless me one moment in the space of time. Have I not suffered for him thou lovest, and borne his cross for him with contumely of men—even I, immortal son of Heaven, become a worm of earth for thy sake? Know thou, therefore, my nobility and give me pity; for it is written the love of one pure spirit can quell the curse of God."

"Yield not, yield not, my sister," shrieked Zozimo. "Do not look, do not see!"

"O God," she cried, "why dost Thou persecute him?"

The Voice came nearer, ringing out with a triumphant music. The terrible eyes shone brightly, the lips moved fast. A dreadful hand was held forth from the cloud as if to lift her from earth.

She flung back her hair and shrieked in agony of spirit. She tried to fling her brother's hands from her arm and struggled forward on her knees, dragging him with her. Zozimo clung to her with frantic strength. "Yield not, yield not," he kept crying.

"Art thou so sad?" she repeated. "O God, why dost Thou persecute him?"

She struggled to free herself from her dying brother. She began to put her foot to the ground, as if to rise. The Voice rang louder and louder, full of wonderful harmony.

"Yield not, yield not," cried Zozimo. "By this my blood upon you; by my unhappy fate. His was the cruellest deed of all upon me! He cries for pity; but he gives it not!"

The eyes came near and gleamed upon them. The terrible Voice answered in anger, "Not I, but folly

slew him. How can earth's misery compare with hell's; or mortal's measure mine?"

Astrella cried loudly and put her hands before her face. Then she flung them forward and turned for a moment towards her brother. That glance gave her strength. "Even as thou hast not pitied him," she cried, "so Heaven shall pity not thee!" She fell towards her brother and kissed him convulsively.

A white fire flashed from out of the shape of clouds. Astrella gave a cry and Zozimo felt her limbs quivering against him. Her head fell heavily on his arm. She had not yielded; but she was dead.

The human shape in the cloud remained looking at her. It faded slowly and resolved itself into the substance of the cloud; and presently, a breeze coming, the vapour lifted off the rock and slowly moved away into space.

Zozimo turned towards his sister, whose face was pillowed on his arm, close to his. He kissed her passionately; and with his other hand loosened the dress at her throat and kissed her there, too. All the vapour had vanished again. The stars were quite clear. He fell back with the relaxation of relief and of death.

He died very slowly. It seemed to him that he was able to watch the stars for a long time. They were very large and brilliant and appeared to be floating close above him. Once he lifted his head with a great effort and saw the black peaks around him, the virginal snow on the great mountain behind, the frozen field of the Rhone glacier beneath him. The mountains had their faces turned upward to the stars and the stars looked downward at the mountains. The earth was very dark, but the heavens one blaze of splendour. It seemed to him lying there that he could feel the movement of the world revolving round its axis. As at the beginning of this history, there

was a tremor as of great speed, a trembling velocity of rotation, as if the world were some great chariot rushing through space. He was dying, but the world sped on.

Then he lost consciousness and died.

The air began to thicken again. Presently a figure rose as if from the rock. It was Morva; and she seated herself silently above her dead children. The daybreak did not become visible for many hours, because the snow began to fall steadily in utter darkness.

LVIII.—Conclusion

The party of pursuit was at first led by Bushton and Bran, but the latter, becoming exhausted with climbing, soon returned to the inn. As already stated, the remainder of the party halted on finding the body of Gangogo; and the soldiers, not knowing who accompanied Zozimo, were so terrified by superstitious fears that they refused to go further. They were also so fatigued that, when it commenced to snow before daybreak, they were obliged to leave the body on the lower glacier.

All next day the snow fell, and a dreadful darkness and unseasonable cold possessed the valley. Nevertheless, some soldiers and hunters ascended to the pinnacle where Brunde had been bound, and discovered the ropes cut and no signs of the Cardinal. It was not until two days after his death that his body was found at the foot of the precipice; and it was then brought to Orsera and laid by the side of the body of Gangogo in the chapel.

In the midst of the horror caused by these events, the death of Gangogo was received with a degree of grief which would have amazed him. Bran became nearly frantic with sorrow. He tore his beard and

slashed his arms with his knife, so as to allow his blood to fall upon the corpse. For a week he ate almost nothing, and sat weeping and praying by its side in the chapel. Trullo, too, felt his death keenly; and all the suitors and guests who had not already gone away, including the Prince of Astra, Reding, Theiling, Werdenberg, and Cajazzo, joined them in the mourning. The villagers trooped in to see the body, and many women placed flowers upon it. On the other hand, almost no notice was taken of the remains of the Cardinal, except by Bushton, Müren, Seraphin, and a few devout people; and some even declared that it was he who had caused all the tragedy by rousing the enmity of the evil being, who, not content with destroying him, had revenged itself by destroying also the Count Azrimar and Gangogo.

Lelita was so overcome with terror and grief that she was removed only with difficulty in a litter to the castle; and the Count Reichenfels took to his bed with sorrow for his jester and chagrin at the manner in which events had conspired against him and his daughter. Cajazzo and Trullo easily explained the circumstances on the supposition that Zozimo had murdered his master and had then taken his place in the chamber next to that of their cousin. They had not seen the figure of Azrimar stalking out of the inn, and declared that those who thought they had seen it were still half asleep. Their contention was strengthened by the fact that Othman and the Estradiots disappeared at the same time, having been probably suborned by Zozimo. Zozimo's wound they thought was either self-inflicted for deception or had been caused by Azrimar in a struggle. Others, however, thought that the Count Otto was spirited away by Zozimo and Othman; but some still argued that there had been magic in the whole affair. Zamba always thought that Otto was an imposter, and now

believed that he fled with his accomplices when he found that he could no longer maintain the deception; and the Prince agreed with him. Cajazzo, however, denied that Otto was capable of such a thing.

The suitors and the guests began to leave the valley at once, though some of them stayed for a few days to comfort Reichenfels.

As soon, however, as Lelita was able to travel, he left the valley for ever and went to reside in his Italian estates.

Brunde Wilstern was never heard of again, and no one but Cajazzo ever knew what became of her.

When Müren heard of the tragedy at the inn, he journeyed at once to Morva's cottage. It was found empty; but in the great Dante, which was placed open on the table, there were written the words, 'We all die'—evidently for his information. With the help of Daniel and Danioth and several other hunters, he searched every part of the neighbourhood —but without success. Several times every year, he and his friends repeated the attempt, equally without success.

Within a few weeks Cajazzo and Trullo were able to convince their cousin of the correctness of their theory regarding the tragedy at the inn. Although at first she refused to believe that the hand of Azrimar had not changed under her eyes into that of Zozimo, the time came when she began to doubt even herself. On her behalf the Count Cajazzo caused careful enquiries to be made in all parts of Italy for the Count Azrimar, but without any success. After this, Lelita obeyed her father and married her cousin Cajazzo. They had three very beautiful boys, all of whom came to fame and honour.

Bran never went out of mourning for Gangogo. The Count Reichenfels lived very long, far into a cheerful and happy old age, and left his Swiss pro-

perties to Trullo and his Italian ones to Cajazzo. The Count's parrot died on the day following the catastrophe—it is said, out of pique at being unable to express, except in the words of others, his ideas of the world in general.

Capon never lost his blindness, but in extreme age became sober and godly. He was then visited by Müren, who found him so convinced of the ubiquity of evil that he would not get into bed without first thwacking it with a stick lest the fiend should be there. Moreover, he would clutch his porringer with his left hand while he was eating with his right, for, he said, the victuals went so fast that he was sure some invisible cacodæmon was filching under his very nose. The spectacle edified Müren, who told him that the blindness had indeed given him sight. The poor creature, he said, lived a lonely life with his wife's relations (for his wife was dead), and knitted stockings all day.

As for Müren himself, he was strangely silent regarding these events until he became old, small, and grizzled. True, he would tell the children wild and awful tales of the mountains, and would set forth, staff in hand, to the unknown upper regions, saying that he was about to visit certain wonderful and beautiful persons who lived there, which the large-eyed youngsters would hear of when he returned. The spot he visited was that lofty rock standing between certain two glaciers. But all this time, never a word of the history which he wrote. Only later when, over fifty years of age, he was appointed to the curacy of Urseren did he mention it; nay, became garrulous of it, raved in abrupt manner of it, put strange questions to the peasantry, and grew quarrelsome with those who doubted him. So much so that he was actually thought by some to be demented, and a new curate was applied for. Before he arrived, the poor old man was found dead at his writing-desk. But before he died

he had found time to write his last experience. "Being seated at my confessional," he says, "and having listened to one and more bitter affairs that night, I saw of a sudden that the taper beside me was puffed out without any visible cause, and I started up trembling with fear at first, until, consoled by some holy thoughts, I sat me down again in the darkness and listened. For presently a dreadful voice came to me, confessing many things, rebellion against God, and the truth of the history which I have here set down. And I soon became aware that it was no less than some evil spirit that was crying to me; and I clutched close the Holy Symbols and had no fear, aye, and did in the end give absolution so much as in me lay; when the candle was relighted of itself."

HISTORICAL NOTES

1. THE ancient manuscript in which these matters are recorded remains in the library of the University at Bâle (Johannes Murinus: *The History of Raffaello Bonto, Cardinal of Parma*; dated Glarus, A.D. 1539). Written at first in Latin, then partly in Italian, and lastly almost entirely in German, it has been thumbed and marked by rare readers, and even figured occasionally with incubi and succubæ; and, according to a legend, the word *commenticii*, written in a bold hand in what appears to be red ink after the *finis*, was due to a mysterious friar who was discovered by the librarian reading it at midnight. But in addition to this indisputable record, Ægidius Tschudi, the historian, states that the story was familiar in his day to the peasantry of those valleys; whence, indeed, it has leaked out over Europe, having been treated (in part) by poets and novelists of England, Scotland, France, Germany, and Russia.

Tschudi knew Johann Müren very well, being but thirty years the younger; and describes him as possessor of a high head bulging crookedly on the left side like an ill-pressed cheese, nose curving down to the right, eyes deep-set and pathetic as those of an ape, mouth ever closed in a firm meditation inclining to melancholy, and enormous hands, red, raw, and as large as his face—always sitting, sitting with his hands crossed, his chin forward, and his curved countenance rising into a peak of cranium. "What thoughts within that skull; what Cyclopean hammerings, what bellows-puffings, what idea-smithing in that Etna of noddle!" exclaims Tschudi, the practical landamman. "Yet," he adds, "though his visions were not seldom as crooked as his head, I for one loved him; and if ever virtue entered the little jackanapes which was myself (when a boy), it was when I felt his half-ton of paw upon my head" (Swiss Antiquities).

This was at Glarus, Müren's first curacy, twenty years after the events which had thrilled his youth. It spite of his

priesthood and his ungainliness, he had in him a touch of pride which appeared about his lips and suggested that he had seen or done something beyond the scope of most men—though Heaven knows, says his biographer, he had achieved nothing but preach, pray, dream, and play with the children all his life; and had never been out of Glarus, St. Gall, and Urseren—save once when, minded to go to Italy, he got as far as Airolo, whence he hurried back because he met an atheist in the inn there! "A dreamer perhaps—such a one as we, occupied in our small tangible affairs, are apt to scorn. With our arithmetical sums of life, tables in hand, we wonder at a still, preoccupied mind of this sort, which without paper or logarithms moulds some mighty formula comprising the universe—we, scrambling hither and thither, breeching and booting ourselves, spurring at all hours, ransacking every cranny of life: he sitting alone in silence!"

In reality a Dante of the Alps—fierce, passionate, conscious of damnific sins, ever lost in transports of thought, one to whom an angel has spoken, lover of Astrella as Dante of Beatrice, possessor of a star. His was one of those pure souls in which all the facts of the earth dissolve themselves (as he himself says), and then slowly crystallise out again in perfect forms. So indeed are made those gems which differ only in molecular arrangement from the clods at our feet—the first fit for a crown, and the others fit only for the plough. For him it was the world dissolved; and what produced?

He died at Urseren (a Catholic) in 1549.

2. Tschudi says that Müren wrote his history with great care, knew all the actors, and was confidant of the Cardinal during his visit to Switzerland (surely an exaggeration); and, more recently, the late Dr. I. Cullender, who rediscovered the manuscript, made a very careful inquiry into the accuracy of his collateral statements (*The Epic of Johannes Murinus*, London, 189[illegible] without being able to detect any material error. At the same time he was able to add many facts of importance—of which the present writer has availed himself with gratitude. But, of course, if we ask how Müren could have obtained evidence of many of the scenes in the story, such, for instance, as the first and last ones, we cannot reply; unless we believe in that ultimate Confession in which he shrived the Evil One himself—surely being the first and last priest to have done so. "But at the worst," writes Dr. Cullender, "or perhaps at the best, the awful apologue becomes a symbol not to be despised, and in the repentance of evil we have a theme like that of

the wrath of Achilles. Painful arithmetic gives place to a more powerful calculus; we fling possibility behind us, and, like the mathematician by means of his imaginary, obtain the result, comprehensive and comprehensible, dragged out of the very chaos of the incomprehensible."

To Dr. Cullender the design is merely one of Good and Evil, mental, moral, and physical. That is, of course, the proximate design; but the writer sees a still broader one behind it in which the main type-characters of humanity are disparted and figured in heroic apposition. The story of Murinus operates, as it were, like a prism on human nature, splitting it into its component colours, the vivid yellow, the warm crimson, the sublime azure; of which some of us possess more of one than others have, but of which each contains something of each, so soberly has nature mixed us. Murinus himself perceived all these matters, for he said, "God, seeing the void, opened His hand, and straightway there fell from it suns, stars, angels, demons, men, deformities, eagles, and worms; things noble, base, holy, vile, beautiful, hideous, strong, and weak; things good and things evil: but of His wisdom He hath mingled them together so that indeed we cannot discern strength for his weakness, weakness for her strength, love for her hate, beauty for her imperfection, virtue for her sin, evil for his virtue, deformity for his merit. . . . If," he continues, "we could take all the parts of the spirit and pour them into a still of thought, and let them dissolve there as natron in water, and crystallise out again in perfect forms, then only shall we discern them clearly; but this cannot be done without much learning and labour. Most fortunate is it, therefore, when Fate herself doeth the alchemy, as mine own eyes have seen in this history, each element of the spirit living of itself or linked with fit elements of the body, which also hath his opposites, good or bad." Surely decisive words: and good and evil are but strands in the complex.

3. Giovanni Capponi, nicknamed Cappone (Capon), was born at Ulrichen, his mother being German and foster-mother of Count Reichenfels. His brother Pietro settled and throve in Florence; and he it was who made the famous reply to Charles VIII when he threatened to attack the city: "You may sound your trumpets if you please; we shall ring our bells." Capon, however, did not succeed as his brother did. In his early youth he had undoubtedly travelled much in France, Germany, and Italy, where he appears to have ac-

quired some knowledge of the classic languages; but an attempt of his to enter into connection with the Church failed on account of his being expelled for some scandalous conduct from the monastery of St. Gall, near Lake Constance—an episode which affords our indignant historian some position for his apothegm, "Dishonoured priest, honoured philosopher." In revenge he wrote his *Three Tails of Satan*, a blasphemous pamphlet directed against the Orders, some pages of which are still to be seen in Constance. After this, little is known of him until he was with the Count at Nancy; where the friendship sprang up between the foster-brothers which led to the evil-good fortune of one of them; for the nobleman established him afterwards in the inn near Realp—a sinecure which gave him leisure not only for the studies he affected but for drinking as well. I have forgotten the name of the Frenchman who said that a man of genius must have dilated nostrils. Capon was an exception to this rule; though, as Murinus avers, the rule that there is no rule without exceptions would be untrue if it were true, since if it were true there would be exceptions to itself, so that there *would* be rules without exceptions. Capon himself would have disdained such a feature, for he says, "It is not in state but in rags that wisdom delighteth to live. I never see a reverend square beard but that I desire to pull thereat, as at a door-knocker, and enquire who's within. They who look wise do but grow learning in the face to deceive others."

His metaphysic was very opposite to that of Müren. "Above virtue, above pity, above love itself, is wisdom," he cries. "We are not sinful; why should we be so; sin is not sweet, and we know it; but if ignorance be sin, then we sin indeed. Most men are good," he adds consolingly, but concludes, "most men are fools. Let the world be: we shall be very happy without fiends and angels, if only we keep wisdom." His definition of sin is rather good, "Sin is that that doeth hurt to ourself"—reminding us of the Angel's saying in Tobit, "They that sin are enemies to their own life." He also defines the fool as one who minds only his own business.

His wife was Pompilia Hüttel of Ulrichen, and they had no children.

4. Maximilian Count Reichenfels, Landamman of these parts, was born in 1437. His father, John, died when he came of age; as did his mother, who was of the Visconti. The family was much impoverished by the wars between the people and the barons; not directly, because John never had the *mazze*

sent against him, but through the losses of the Rarons of the Rhone Valley and the barons of the Rhine who were intimately connected with him. In spite of their many possessions round Bellinzona (the town itself having been bought by the Swiss from Sax-Misox in 1418), the family would have lost all footing in the high alps but for the address of young Maximilian. Instead of opposing every measure of the Eidgenossenschaft as the other noblemen seemed to do, he plunged heartily into the affairs of the confederates and declared himself a Switzer to the backbone. He joined the people during the affair of Toggenberg's will, or rather during the affairs which followed it; for Toggenberg died before he was born. In 1471 he adhered to the union formed at Vazerol between the Gotteshausbund, the Grauebund, and the Gerichtebund. Thus, like the barons of the Rhine, he saved himself from expulsion, and was not driven from his possessions as Raron on the other side had been.

The same year Maximilian married Isabel, of the houses of Sanseverino and Savoy, with whom he obtained more property on the Italian side. He was now well off though scarcely rich, owning estates in the Rhone and Rhine valleys, as well as his ancestral fief of the plain of Orsera and the Reichenfels castle, or rather house (of which the keep of Hospenthal is a relic), and his possessions in Italy. He was very popular, of a prudent yet flighty disposition, and full of political projects which always seemed to succeed in his hands. His daughter Lelita was born the next year, and shortly afterwards he became the richest man in the country owing to a stroke of good fortune.

He was much too cunning a man to join the confederates at first when war broke out between them and the Duke of Burgundy. In fact he had served with the Duke in the war of the Public Weal against Louis in 1454, going as page to the Duke of Calabria with the five hundred Swiss in his command. No sooner, however, was the Duke defeated at Grandson in 1476 than he rushed down with every man, old man and boy, whom he could press or persuade into his service; and so fortunate for him was it he did so that a large quantity of the booty fell into his hands from the misprision of the ignorant mountaineers. Thus for three florins he bought the Duke's great diamond from a poor priest who obtained it from a soldier for one florin. It went afterwards to the Duke of Milan and then to the Pope. One of his servants won the famous Three Brothers at cards, and was afterwards, singularly enough, hanged for some offence; but he had to

pay eighteen florins to a cautious old woman for the Duke's rosary with gold apostles. He obtained the Duke's gilt chair and his brother Anthony's ring from a man-at-arms by means of a wager at the cross-bow. He made himself so popular among the honest but stupid Swiss, chiefly, it is said, by giving them Aosta muscatel and peacocks' feathers, and by swearing in a humorous fashion by the Duke's great beard, that he acquired whatever he wanted almost for nothing. Many of the soldiers had cut up for clothing the superb tents of the Burgundians, fitted with silk and velvet and embroidered with gold, silver, and pearls. These clothes he exchanged easily for suits of warmer materials. Many of the tents he obtained still whole; and they figured afterward at the tournament of the suitors. The culverins with which he made such a show at Reichenfels were a part of the hundred and twenty pieces of ordnance of the Duke. Besides all this, large quantities of silver plate, coined money, cloth of gold, bed-linen, tapestry, and arms fell into his hands, so that he returned home worth very much more than when he had set forth. Indeed, he had become very wealthy at a single stroke. He was not half an Italian for nothing. Among the rest, it must be mentioned, he bought for a few francs body, soul, clothes and all, an enormous young German called Bran, who wore the whole of the Duke's arms worked in emeralds on his back; for this man had killed a Switzer and was in terror of the magistrates.

The Count no sooner reached home than he began to turn his fort into a palace. Half his wealth he sent to his seat near Bellinzona, where he built another superb house. Nevertheless, after having set a hundred works in train he joined the Duke of Lorraine at St. Nicholas against the Duke of Burgundy, who was, as everyone knows, at Nancy. It was here that Bran was sent by the Germans to warn the would-be deserter, Campobasso, not to dare to come into their camp. Campobasso seized him, flogged him, and would have executed him, but that he broke from the five men who held him in a manner wonderful even for a man of his strength. Reichenfels made him commandant of his men-at-arms in consequence. In the battle which followed, Capon, his foster-brother, rendered him some great but mysterious service which was the means of his obtaining his future post at the inn. Most certainly this did not occur at Morat—as some say.

When he returned home he found his wife dead, much to his sorrow. He was now forty years old. Shortly afterwards the Pope began to sell indulgencies to the Swiss, who

he found, were eager purchasers; and, by means of his legate the Bishop of Anagni, brought about a war between them and the Regent-Duchess of Milan. The ostensible cause was a wood of chestnuts in the Levantine which was claimed by Reichenfels for Uri. The fact was that the Count wished to secure his Italian properties against Milan and also to obtain fame as a soldier. Unfortunately for him Theiling was given the command by the men of Uri, and Reichenfels was obliged to content himself with the second post. He passed the St. Gotthard in November 1478 and participated in the well-known events which followed. In this campaign the notorious Gangogo, his jester (and, it is whispered, a nearer relative), distinguished himself by his amazing intrepidity, although he was only fifteen years of age. At the fortress of Giornica, where six hundred Swiss were attacked by no less than fifteen thousand Milanese, he advised that stratagem of flooding the fields with the freezing waters of the Ticino (so as to cause the cavalry of the Italians to slip on the ground), which gave the former such a great victory. Here Reichenfels obtained still more booty, though he himself was not present.

This campaign made him practically independent of Milan, where, however, he was frequently to be seen. Not much is known of him from this period until the year 1495, when, his daughter being grown up, he became so notorious through the famous matter of the Suitors' Trial and the singular events which followed. He seems to have spent his time in moving between his several estates, in hunting among the mountains, and in beautifying his house at Orsera. His predilection for that lofty valley amazed the people at a time when a mountain was looked upon with horror. The fact is, as Murinus tells us, that it was he who had discovered the centrality of the spot; so that he was naturally vain of possessing it. Though at this period he was quite rich enough to give up these barren alpine regions altogether, he was so proud of his Swiss origin that he preferred his seat here even to his Italian properties. A gift of shrewdness or else of very good fortune made him happy in most of his ventures, notwithstanding his giddiness. Thus he luckily espoused the interest of Ludovico Sforza and Sanseverino; and it was by his advice that the luckless Cico was carried about the streets of Milan in a tub. Jesting of this kind was a commendable point of his, for he was fertile in such inventions—which, says Murinus, do delight the rich and the great. Certainly Ludovico seems to have been very fond of him, and even urged him not to break off the betrothal of his daughter with the young lord Galeazzo di

Sanseverino in consequence of the quarrel between himself and the elder Sanseverino. Indeed, it seems that long before the Suitors' Trial negotiations for the hand of Lelita had been entered into fruitlessly by several noblemen. Whether Reichenfels looked too high (as his wealth prompted him to do), or whether the suitors were not sufficiently handsome for him, the negotiations all fell through. Certain it is that in his age he began to entertain the most extraordinary notions about personal beauty, imagining not only his daughter, but himself, to be possessed of wonderful attractions; though in reality, Müren says, he was somewhat the reverse, being of a bald and goat-like aspect!

5. The age was a great one. It was the close of the Middle Ages and the morning of modern Europe. As so often happens in history, everything was changed, seemingly at a single bound. Immense alterations were effected in politics, manners, arts, and thought. Constantinople had fallen in 1453; Burgundy was devoured by France after 1476; America was discovered and the Moors were expelled from Spain in 1492; the Wars of the Roses were over in England in 1485. Europe, instead of being divided into a multitude of petty duchies, found itself portioned into great States. France, England, Spain, the Empire sprang into more integral existence. Chivalry was almost dead, and feudalism in Northern Europe gave place to absolute monarchies and municipalities. In Italy in the north, republicanism was generally defeated by tyranny, and in the south the State of Rome and Naples was perhaps at its highest point of corruption; while the condition of the country was made manifest to the rest of Europe by the invasion of Charles in 1494—a discovery which helped the Reformation so much. As for art, Michael Angelo, Raffael, Titian, and Dürer were born; for religion, Huss and the remains of Wicliffe had been burned, Savanarola was speaking, Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli were born; for science, Copernicus was born. Many of those inventions, which more than the conquests of monarchs or even the progress of philosophy change the order of life, were made. Glass windows, printing, engraving, brushes, hand-guns, the rapier, coaches began to be used. America, the Cape of Good Hope, the Bible, and Greek were discovered. In another century the tobacco-pipe would begin to replace the sword and the stiletto.

At the time when our history begins Charles VIII of France had entered Italy and taken Naples. He had bowed thrice

to Borgia, had seen the death of Galeazzo Sforza and of Djem, and had learnt the use of a certain little white powder which is tasteless and causes dysentery. He entered Rome on the last day of 1494; and a new order began from that date. Having taken Naples he retreated, from a desire to see home again, as everyone knows; though meanwhile the Italian States had formed their League against him—including the Milanese (who had invited him to his adventure), the Venetians, and the Pope. On his way home he was obliged to fight the battle of Fornovo, on July 6, 1495, when he defeated the League and incommoded our Count di Cajazzo —as he has described. Reichenfels did not know what to do when he heard of the League; for, while all the Swiss were madly in favour of Charles, his own interest led him to help Ludovico Sforza before Novara. Hence, he wisely anticipated the advice of Napoleon and did nothing. As usual he had returned to the valley in the spring of 1495, and had proceeded thence with his daughter to his estates at Ulrichen, as already seen, at the moment when this history commences.

6. At the close of the fifteenth century the Swiss had reached to a very high degree of military glory. Though their independence was not yet fully recognised by the Emperor, they had made themselves felt in such a terrible way by the surrounding nations that the hopelessness of attacking them had become clear. They had successively defeated Hapsburg and Milan and had literally destroyed the power of Burgundy, enabling Louis to consolidate France. The Eidgenossenschaft was firmly established, and Berne, Zürich, Unterwalden, and Uri had taken under their protection the secondary cantons of Glarus, the Grisons, Ticino, and Valais. The feudal power of the barons was entirely broken, and Zürich and Berne had become great cities. The Swiss were accounted the best soldiers in Europe; but this fact, leading to the Reislaufen, or mercenary service abroad, began to weaken the power of the country in no small degree by draining it of its best youth and introducing luxury and vice instead. It is impossible to guess to what power the Confederates might not have reached if they had willed it, since they were irresistible in war and occupied the most central position in Europe; but, in spite of the efforts of the magistrates, the men poured away from the country by hundreds to seek wealth and easier life abroad, as witness the thousands who flocked to the rendezvous at Genoa in order to aid Charles

against Naples. The victories over Charles the Bold, moreover, filled the country with excesses, such as those of the Mad Society, for instance. No less than fifteen hundred robbers were executed shortly afterwards, and it seemed that the ancient Spartan morality was destroyed, with the result that, at the dreadful battle of Marignano in 1515, the Swiss power was, if not broken, yet rendered subservient to the French influence.

7. Müren draws a laboured connection between the entry of Charles into Rome, the humiliation of the Pope, and the strange things which occurred among the mountains at the same time, and which, as we have seen, were described by Father Seraphin to Capon in the inn. He claims that it was these events which led to the memorable visit of the Cardinal of Parma to the valley. This magnificent figure was in some respects typical of the remarkable age in which he lived—a man, indeed, who, according to Müren, loved to serve Heaven as much as most men love to serve themselves. It does not seem to be generally known that the young man mentioned in the Roman Diary as being created a Cardinal at twenty in 1483 was the same as he who was sent by Roderigo Borgia upon such an extraordinary mission to the Alps twelve years afterwards. Probably many readers have been struck by the account of how Sixtus IV offended the whole Sacred College by making such a boy a Cardinal and Bishop of Parma; especially as he was born of poor parents and seemed to have been imperfectly educated.[1] He had even been page to Count Riario and chamberlain to the Cardinal St. Vital, but was extraordinarily beautiful and of good disposition. Sixtus heaped benefits on him, advanced him as much as possible, and gave him the castlery of St. Angelo. The history of Murinus, however, affords us ampler details, some of which will interest the reader.

[1] "—Et confestim creati fuerunt Cardinales infrascripti, videlicet. . . . Dominus Raffaellius de Parma dictus *lo Cardinale di Parma*, puer nondum viginti annorum, et quidem formosus. Hic, ut fertur, non multum ante fuit Ragaccius Comitis Hieronymi, deinde Camerarius Cardinalis Sancti Vitalis, deinde Cubicularius Castellani Sancti Angeli, quem quum Xistus vidisset, mox ad se advocavit, illumque multis equidem opulentissimis Beneficiis insignitum, tandem ad Cardinalatus apicem contra aliorum, ut fertur, voluntatem assumsit. Juvenis est quidem bonae indolis, et morigeratus, et formosus, ut videri potest; literas autem non habet." Roman Diary (Stefano Infessura, p. 1158). The creation took place on November 15, 1483.

He was born, or rather found, at Lugano in 1464. It appears that he was indeed a foundling and that his parents were never discovered, but that he was brought up by the poor folk at whose door he had been left. All along, however, these persons noticed that they were under the protection of unknown but powerful people, for they were helped in many unexpected ways. Their name was Bonto, and they brought up the boy as their own, fearing that they might get into trouble if they disclosed that he was not so. Later he developed a most beautiful voice and sang in the new Church of San Lorenzo, where he was observed by Riario, who took him and his so-called parents to Rome. Here he advanced in the rapid manner already indicated.

Two reasons have been assigned for this advance. In the first place it was clear that he was the child of someone. Of whom, it is not known. It was even suggested that he was a nephew of Sixtus; but some say that he was the son of Rosa Vanozza and Manuele Melchiori, who brought her to Venice from Spain. This seems like one of those scandals that are so often heaped on the scandalous without sufficient scrutiny into the facts. Indeed, Melchiori seems to have been honest enough, and Roderigo Borgia would not have advanced the young man as he did if he had had such a parentage. A third rumour makes him the son of Roderigo himself but not of Rosa. It is suggested that Sixtus advanced him at the instance of the Spaniard, and it is certain that Borgia, when he came to the Holy Seat, gave him the town of Nepi and favoured him in many ways.

But he did not resemble in character some of those who, according to such a story, should have been his half brothers and sister. The boy's wonderful genius alone was enough to account for his rise—a genius not for letters, art, or war, but for holiness; yet not so much for holiness as for an extraordinary kind of seraphic aloofness from the world's contagion. The very beauty of his body seemed to be dedicated to Heaven's service, and when he sang in choir the eyes of the other lads would be fixed upon him. Still it was a holiness neither apostolic nor ascetic, but a sort of natural theopathy. He did not strive to be charitable, pious, learned, or ascetic —what he was he was by nature. Nor did he change as so many boys do at the age of puberty. On the contrary, his face remained as wonderfully angelic as it had been, but took upon it in addition the chaste ferocity of a soldier of Heaven. Yet withal he did nothing, he made no effort, he seemed to remain quite unconscious of the corruption and

vice around him; he did not exercise or castigate himself, he was not particularly assiduous in prayer; he did not appear averse from the wicked, he did not study much. He possessed without trouble the content of a perfect being, and was one of those whom men gaze at and admire though the promise of their countenance leads to no known result. He was as unaffected by his wealth as he had been by his poverty; and, though when he was promoted he lived in no great simplicity, it was easy to see that his circumstances of luxury did not move him at all. Brought at a word into the highest rank of the Church, he seemed to remain unconscious of the fact. He remained unapproached by intrigue, untouched by scandal, and aloof from the common human motives. He did only one thing—nothing; he was satisfied to be—and in that he was perfect.

His face was wonderful, the outline oval, the lips exquisitely red, large, sweet, and yet stern, the eyes rather drowsy than intellectual or visionary. Indeed, upon the whole of it sat a quiescence, almost an indolence—which suggested that Heaven was slowly maturing the soul within for some enterprise. The figure was tall and slight at first, gradually increasing in strength.

It is not to be wondered at that such a person was a revelation in the most corrupt of ages and of cities. Appearing by his very air to be of such superior virtue, it was to be expected that he would be hated; on the contrary he was much loved and honoured—though he put both love and honour beside him. He was held in esteem even by the people—it is said that the Roman mothers would hold up their babes to see him as he passed. The greatest things were expected of him, even by the most dissolute men; such as that reform of the Church which they had sufficient conscience to desire but not sufficient virtue to attempt. It is said that when Fra Girolamo had seen him and conversed with him he had exclaimed: "I am but the tongue; he shall be the sword."

A memorable figure; one of the few bright ones in that age of dark shadows. When Sixtus lay dying of the gout on the night of Thursday, the 13th of August, 1484, after having had his stormy meeting with the ambassadors about the peace of Bagnolo; when he was in the last throes of that life which had caused so much sorrow to so many, he was seen to be holding the hand of the young man whom he had just created a Cardinal. The attendants fled, and when after some hours they returned, they found that warm, young living hand

locked in the frozen grip of the dead man, who had thought, by linking himself with such superb innocence in that dreadful hour, to have escaped some of the dangers of death. Though unable to free himself from the terrible grasp, Raffaello showed neither fear nor emotion.

During those breathless days, too, when Innocent VIII lay in a lethargy and two hundred and twenty Roman citizens were assassinated in the streets, the Cardinal of Parma became again conspicuous. A Jewish doctor had endeavoured to revive the dying Pope by a transfusion of human blood. Three beautiful boys were chosen for the experiment. Led trembling to the side of the unconscious old man, one by one, after having their veins opened, they had grown pale and died suddenly; as if Heaven, in horror of the deed, had doomed its failure. Raffaello, seeing this, held out his arm nevertheless, and demanded the right of giving his blood for the head of the Church; but the physician, already terrified at his want of success, had fled secretly.

This was in 1492. Raffaello's character had been changing somewhat. It appeared he was ripening for some effort. Much of his quiescence was thrown off and his face began to show a great sternness. He was no longer blind to the evils and the corruption around him, and he even upbraided Alexander himself for the crimes of Cæsar, his son; for which indeed, though Cæsar was incensed against him, Alexander only promoted him to higher honour. At the same time he began to show some signs of mysticism—studied astrology, plunged into obscure details of forbidden arts, shut himself up closely for months at a time. Still later he seemed to become infected with the idea that his life was in danger; for he took to wearing armour under his robes, and once even appeared in the Pope's presence clad in complete steel, much to the astonishment of all. At last, at the beginning of 1495, having heard some curious rumours from Switzerland, he begged and obtained leave to go thither on an extraordinary mission, the nature of which we have seen. He had buried himself for weeks previously in solitude; had sought the wilderness and the summits of hills. When pressed to go on the important embassy to the Venetians respecting the King of France, who had invaded Italy, he had refused and set off on this affair, after exacting certain powers from Alexander.

This was the man whose visit to Switzerland has been so closely described in the quaint narrative of Murinus, and which has been dealt with in the preceding pages.

8. When, some years ago (1894), we visited the old mortuary at Urseren (Andermatt), we were allowed by the Capuchin father in charge to examine that sad relic of Müren which still remains there. It was very old, the cancellated bones of the mastoid processes showing rough and exposed, while delicate fistulæ, like those found in old books, perforated the frontal and parietal bones; but the irregular shape of it left no doubt as to whom it must have belonged. Next to it, in the second row from the top and the left middle column of pigeon-holes, there was another skull. It was more massive than his, or than those of the Mullers, Oges, and Wilsterns, humble villagers, which, with features rendered more marked by the dust accumulated on the horizontal surfaces, gaze into the chill chapel, upon the worn Mater Dolorosa, and the melancholy candles burning on the common wooden shelf. Very broad at the orbits, this skull sloped too suddenly, however, towards the vertex. Every tooth was perfect, but the bones were if anything too solid. We turned it over in our hands with curiosity. Upon the left side of the forehead remained the moiety of the label gummed to the bone and containing portions of the inscription *Est Profecto Deus*, which, together with the grotesque figure of an evil spirit, enabled us to recognise it at once. It was four hundred years old. Here lived the brain which had conceived a sublime war against evil himself. We did not tell the good father the once famous name of the owner, because we had been warned not to do so. Since then someone has been less discreet, and the skull has vanished.

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