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denouncing the Catholic Church as corrupt; it was absolutely the work of Satan; it was antichrist. An application of certain passages in the Apocalypse, first introduced by polemical divines in the mere heat of discussion, became a part of the national faith in Scotland. All this popular and unqualified animosity cannot be admired by us. But great changes of this description never yet were effected by moderate equitable gentlemen. We have to ask ourselves whether, upon the whole, our Reformers did not accomplish their great work as well and as wisely as the times permitted.

We will not follow Principal Tulloch any further in his account of Knox: we should be only repeating what he has more eloquently said. We would invite our readers to a perusal of the book itself: they will find it both eloquent and instructive.

FELICITA.

PART I.—CHAPTER I.

"I THINK, if you please," said Felicia, slowly, "that I will prefer to go to my aunt."

"You shall do what you like," said her interlocutor, rudely, "we're English — we are; we don't constrain nobody. Go to your aunt, to be sure, and make a French marriage with whoever suits her. I promise you *she* won't give in to a foolish girl's will as we've done here."

"My aunt is not French," said the girl, with a little pride.

"Oh no, only rather more so," said the irritated Cockney. "Good morning, Miss Antini—I'm busy, thank you—don't hurry about your arrangements, I beg—but for me and my son, our time is not our own, you understand. We're hard-working people, and obliged to look after our business; so I am compelled to say good-day; but don't by any means let us hurry *you*."

Thus dismissed, Felicia Antini went her way, with feelings considerably mortified, and flushed cheeks. Her way was an extremely prosaic one; up three pair of stairs, in a narrow London house stuck on to a showy London shop, to a little bed-chamber which overlooked the chimneys. Here she had lived for three months, trying to be as cheerful as a new-made orphan could be, and making herself useful in the "establishment" of the only relative she knew anything of—a cousin of her mother's; a life to which, in her dearth of friends, and the simplicity of her thoughts, she might very well have accustomed herself, had not the son and heir of the house fallen violently in love with his relative, and persecuted her with all the persevering attentions which were "the proper thing" in this young gentleman's sphere. It was so hard to persuade the complacent and well-to-do young Cockney that her "no" was serious —that Felicia's life for some time back had been much unlike her name. Now the amazed resentment of her wooer and of his father, who had made up his mind to a magnanimous stretch of generosity in consenting to receive his poor cousin's daughter as his son's wife, and whom her refusal astounded beyond measure, had at last fixed the thoughts of the solitary girl on the only alternative which she could see remaining to her. Her education and former customs made it hard for her to seek other employment of a similar kind—she had not courage. Here it was impossible to stay; and the only thing practicable seemed to accept the invitation of her Italian aunt. But Felicia was at heart an English girl, with some prejudices and many likings. It was but slowly and with reluctance that she made up her mind to this necessity. She knew nothing in the world of her father's sister, save what could be conveyed by the odd yet kind letter in which the invitation to his orphan came; and the long journey,

the strange country, the life among strangers, alarmed Felicia. She felt little inclination to claim the offered kindness so long as shelter and daily bread could be found at home. Now, though the daily bread was in little danger, the shelter was no longer tenable, and Felicia's thoughts turned like shadows before her to her father's land.

Felicia Antini was the only child of an Italian long resident in England and his English wife. Her father had been a tolerably successful teacher of his own language, and had not left his wife and child unprovided; but after his death Mrs Antini had fallen into bad health, which much impoverished their little provision. Felicia had still something when her mother, too, was gone; but she was lonely and homeless—a sorer evil than poverty—and was glad to accept the only protection of kindred which was near enough to be offered to her in her first solitude. Thus she only cried and smiled over the cranky characters and bad spelling of Madame Peruzzi's letter, which moved her by its Italian exuberance, even while her own English reserve shrank from a full response to its caressing expressions. Now she saw nothing else remaining to her, and took out once more her aunt's epistle to decipher its quaint lines word by word, and to fancy herself, as far as that was possible, an Italian girl beneath Madame Peruzzi's matronly wing. Felicia's father had been one of those attenuated, long-visaged Italians with a chuckle always lurking in his hollow cheek, and a gleam of fire and malice in his eye, who never run into raptures of patriotism, and caress their native land rather by stinging proverbs of affectionate depreciation, than by positive praise; and as for Felicia's mother, that excellent and homely woman was distinguished by nothing so much as a fervent jealousy of everything Italian, restrained in expression, but all the more earnest in thought. Had Mrs Antini known or suspected that the first-born baby daughter of whom she was so proud was to be the sole blossom of the family tree, nothing in the world would have induced her to yield the naming of the child to her husband, and forego the privilege of settling her nationality in her cradle. As it was, when the father added the caressing syllables of an Italian diminutive to the little girl's name, and called her Felicita, the English mother asserted her independence of all the laws of euphony by cutting short the pretty word into the Saxon abruptness of Fellie. Between these two the girl grew up more disposed to the mother's side than the father's, a steady little Englishwoman. If ever Felicia gave her mother a pang, it was when she sang with her father, exercising the voice which she derived from him, in music which was somewhat above Mrs Antini's comprehension, though she could not well condemn it, or showed herself fluent in the tongue which the Italian's homely wife had never succeeded in acquiring. The good woman showed her annoyance only by a little bustle about the house, and pretence of indifference—a very little additional irritability of temper—moods which both husband and daughter fully understood, but which were not serious enough to make dispeace or discontent in the little household which, on the whole, was affectionate and happy. Then the Italian died, and was laid in English ground, and grew holy with all the sacred recollections which sanctify the dead; and Mrs Antini subsided out of her housewifely bustle into the calm of widowhood, and then, as if her strength followed her active duties, into ill health and invalidism, and Felicia's care. That time was sad, but still happy; for the two women, who were alone in the world, were still together, and took comfort in their mutual affection as only mother and daughter can; and then came a sore blank, a heavier void, and henceforth no one reduced the sweet syllables of Felicia's name into that homely Fellie, which now would have been sweeter than any music to the orphan's ear.

All this passed through the girl's mind as she sat in her little London attic, among the smoke and the sparrows. She could not marry the young shopkeeper. It was no use trying to reconcile herself to the ne-

cessity — the thing was impossible; so there remained to Felicia only her father's distant relatives, her unknown aunt, her paternal country, and the Italian which she already began to forget. After a time she began instinctively to gather her little property together, and prepare for her departure. The house she was leaving was not one to be much regretted; but when she took her little wardrobe out of the drawers, and knelt on the floor at her lonely packing, the occupation was sorrowful enough. She thought to herself—as it was so hard to get out of the habit of thinking—what would her mother say? and felt a pang of distress cross her mind at the idea of new habits and associations, against which that mother's prejudices and antipathies would have been so much excited. The novelty at that moment did not strike Felicia pleasantly—she did not think of the delights of the journey, of the change, of all there was to see, and of the unknown events to be encountered, which, even because they are unknown, please the youthful fancy. She was going by herself and for herself, she who had been all her life one of a family—going from everything she knew and was familiar with; so she packed up the black dresses with some few tears falling among them, and many sighs.

A very few days after this, having warned her aunt of her coming by a letter, Felicia set out with a sad heart. She was attended to the railway by a little group of the young women connected with her relative's "establishment," who had taken up Felicia's cause with warm *esprit de corps*, and who for various reasons (partly because she was tacitly understood to have rejected the young master of the place—an assertion of the female privilege which all women more or less enjoy; partly because of her relationship to their employer; partly for her lonely condition, and even a little for her foreign name and blood, and the undefined superiority which the possession of another language carried over her unlearned companions) admired and protected and copied Felicia. It was something to look back upon their faces as they walked up and down by the side of the train before it started, and ran after it to the very end of the railway platform, kissing their hands, waving their handkerchiefs, and wiping their eyes. They had to walk back all the way from London Bridge to Oxford Street, and I daresay did it with a very good heart, and talked of nothing else all day but how she looked, poor dear, and what her perils on the journey might be. They were but silly créatures, most likely, with their little vanities and jealousies, but this forlorn young woman was glad of their sympathy; the bench of bishops could not have consoled her so well.

We will not dwell upon the details of Felicia's journey. A solitary girl in black, sitting back in the corner of a carriage, with a thick gauze veil over her face, is not a very unusual traveller anywhere, and is perhaps nowhere less interesting than on a tourist's route abroad, where one expects bright faces and lively interest. Making her way through France with a few words of French, and all the reserve yet self-dependence of an English girl, was hard enough work for Felicia. If she could have travelled night and day throughout, she might have done well enough; but the pause of a night was something from which the young traveller shrank with dread, and she would rather have slept on the steps of the railway or in any dark corner about, than have ventured to enter the terrible brightness of a hotel, and provide lodging and provision for herself, as she had to do at Paris and Marseilles. Then came the sea, and she breathed freely; but up to that time Felicia saw very little of the way, ventured to enter into conversation with no one, and found little comfort, if it were not in the occasional gleam upon her of a kind old French face in a snow-white cap, which smiled a silent encouragement to her loneliness. The young people—the happy people—the travelling ladies in their English perfection of travelling-dresses, or the fine Frenchwomen who dazzled all the eyes which could see with the graces of a Parisian toilette, rather made the orphan shrink within herself; but there was

still an old woman, here and there, to hearten her with that magic of kind looks, which, somehow, old women — much belied species of humanity — excel in when they will. When she had reached the panting steamboat which was to convey her to Italy, Felicia threw herself upon the hard sofa in the little cabin with a sigh of relief and comfort. No more peril of hotels and railway offices frightened her imagination — her troubles were almost over. She was ill, but she was safe; she had recovered the gift of speech, and could once more make herself understood. So, venturing to take pleasure in that blue transparent sea, and wistfully gazing as "the old miraculous mountains heaved in sight," and the silence broke into all the noises of a port, and opaque boats danced upon the water which beneath them seemed made of sunshine, our lonely young traveller approached to her father's country. Later when the evening fell, after great trials by means of the customhouse, Felicia reached Florence. She had been less than a week on the way, and when the city of Dante burst upon her in the evening sunshine, among its circle of hills, she could scarcely realise to herself the fact of being so far away from that familiar country which she fondly called "home;" then of having no home anywhere in the world; and then, that what claim to home she had was here. Home! there was not even such a word in the language which henceforth was to be her language; henceforward her dearest retirement could be only *in casa* (in the house). Felicia drew her veil closer over her face as she drove across the Arno, and with a certain indescribable prejudice declined to be attracted by the beauty of the scene. She would not see the quaint bridge that spanned the river, the tall houses reflecting themselves in the magical stream, the grey Apennine heaving up his mighty shoulders behind the city, and all the wonderful sunshine and atmosphere which glorified the Italian town. Then the vehicle slackened its pace, and Felicia's heart beat faster. They had plunged out of the sunshine into the deep and cold shadow of the Via Giugnio, where by that time in the day sunlight was impossible, save that which blazed on the unequal roofs, and dropped in downward lines aslant, from the deep Tuscan cornice at the corners of the lanes which fell into this street. Then Felicia's conveyance stopped before a great door, flanked by two large windows, strongly barred with iron. After a little interval the door swung open, and a maid-servant appeared; a dumpy, cheerful little Tuscan, bustling and good-tempered, who conducted Felicia up-stairs with a running flood of words, to which the stranger, in her nervous agitation, found it quite impossible to attend. Some one met them on the stairs, and Felicia's heart leaped to her mouth. This must surely be her aunt at last. She made an embarrassed trembling pause, but the passenger went on without noticing her. So they continued up and up those lengthy stairs, the heart of the young stranger sinking more and more the further she ascended. The staircase was indifferently lighted, and closed doors frowned on her upon the landing-places. Poor Felicia ran over all her life in her thoughts as she went up these steps—the little suburban house which was home, the fresh, fair, tiny English apartments, the kind mother, the familiar life. Now she was here among strangers, many hundred miles away from every one who knew her, and painfully doubtful of her new relations, and the reception she should meet with from them. Thus her whole peaceful past history, with its melancholy ending of farewells and deathbeds, went by her eyes like a picture as she ascended these stairs.

This house, from cellar to roof, was Madame Peruzzi's—her property, almost her sole property; a little estate in a town frequented by the wandering English and the other wealthy nations who are given to travel. Her own apartments were in the third story, not quite the highest, but next to the attics—the third story, counting by legitimate floors, but, including *entresols*, somewhat more like the fifth. When Felicia reached this elevation she found her aunt at last awaiting her, not much less nervous than herself, though Madame Peruzzi's age

and dignity kept her in her own apartments to await her visitor. The old lady stood with her hand upon the little marble table before her, in a somewhat agitated pose, as if she had been standing for her portrait. She wore a black gown with a tight-fitting jacket, and large mosaic brooch. Her scanty grey hair was put up in a little knot at the back of her head, its colour and distribution being abundantly evident from the want of anything in the shape of cap—a painful deficiency, which puzzled her niece extremely at the first glance, when it appeared to her that something, she could not tell what, was wanting in Madame Peruzzi's toilette. The old lady's ears were heavily weighted with round bosses of mosaic to correspond with her brooch. She wore lace frills about her wrinkled and yellow hands, and the hollow cheek and gleaming eye were less comely in Madame Peruzzi than they had been in the familiar face of Felicia's father. Still there was sufficient resemblance to wake a flood of affectionate recollections in the orphan's mind. She made a few hasty steps forward, half shy, half eager, and then, with a momentary start of dismay, found herself suddenly clasped in her aunt's arms. These arms were rather bony, and gave a somewhat grim embrace; and as the long brown face bent over her, and the old grey uncovered head, it may be forgiven to the stranger if she felt this first ebullition of affection somewhat overpowering. Felicia was glad to slide out of her aunt's arms, and drop into the first chair which offered itself. Madame Peruzzi had a perfumed handkerchief in her hand, and the least possible fragrance of garlic in her breath. She was overflowing with affection for her beloved Antonio's child, her dearest niece, her sweet Felicita. The flood of rapid words and caressing expressions took away the poor girl's breath; she dropped softly into a chair, holding her little travelling-bag clasped in her hand. Madame Peruzzi seated herself beside her, and poured out inquiry after inquiry: How long had she been on the way?—how wonderful that she should have come so soon! was not she happy to find herself in Florence?—were not the skies always cloudy in England?—how could Antonio, poor Antonio! have existed so long in that dismal country? And to die without seeing Italy again!—without leaving his child under his sister's care! Ah, heavens! what a fate! Such were the welcoming words with which Madame Peruzzi greeted her niece.

In the mean time, Felicia glanced round her, and silently took in a little picture of the scene. The room fronted to the street, and had two windows hung with fringed muslin curtains—not so white as might have been desired; between them was a marble table, supported on feet which had once been gilded, and supporting a long narrow mirror. This and the round table, also topped with marble, on which Madame Peruzzi had been leaning, were the grand articles in the room. The rest of the furniture consisted of an old-fashioned sofa with cushions, and chairs which were not to correspond. The floor was uncarpeted, and consisted of tiles, dark-red and diamond-shaped, on which every footstep resounded. In one corner, a stove made of terracotta projected a little from the wall; some pictures—very bad copies from the cheap Florentine manufactories of such articles—were hung round the room; books were not to be seen, neither were there any materials for woman's work, or the least trace of that litter of life and occupation which the tidiest of apartments unconsciously and appropriately attains; everything was cold, bare, and penurious. Felicia had seen many a poorer room which had no such meagre expression. The penury here was not poverty of means alone, but poverty of life. As she looked, only half conscious of observing, her aunt's monologue went on. Madame Peruzzi did not require much aid in maintaining the conversation. She plunged into a hasty description of what were to be the future pleasures of Felicia's life—the Cascine, the Pergola, the Casino balls, to which a dear friend of Madame Peruzzi could gain them admission, the approaching delights of the carnival. Felicia listened with silent dismay and be-

wilderment. She did not comprehend the out-of-doors life described to her. These things, it was to be supposed, were gaieties understood to be generally agreeable to people of her age, but they only chilled and frightened the stranger, who, sadly fatigued and worn out with her journey, startled by new circumstances and the change of every domestic detail around her, would have been much more pleased to hear of a room she could retire to, to rest a little, and cry a little, and make up her mind to the novel condition in which she found herself. This, at last, Felicia took courage to ask for timidly. Then Madame Peruzzi led her by an open door into a little narrow strip of a room which opened from the sitting-room, where a little dressing-table stood before the window, and a little bed occupied the end of the apartment. "This is thy apartment, Felicita mia; thou shalt be very happy here," said Madame Peruzzi, looking round with some complacence. "See thou the sweet Madonna over thy head, and the blessed water. These were my Regina's, when the dear girl lived. Thou art my daughter now, and I have no other: be happy, my soul, with thy brother Angelo and me."

Felicia sat down upon her trunk, which had been carried here, though she had not observed it, feeling a little faint. Even then she was not left alone; and when the maid called Madame Peruzzi from the *sala*, the door of communication was still left open. Felicia did not move in her first moments of loneliness, but sat still upon her trunk, with her eyes fixed upon that open door. She scarcely felt courage to rise and close it; she sat gazing at it with a forlorn and dumb dismay. Looking at that, she seemed to be looking at the entire circumstances of her new life. There was no other entrance to the room, and all her English privacy and individuality seemed to faint away from her at this sight. She had not even taken off her bonnet, or loosed from her weary shoulders the cloak which was heavier than usual with the weight of dust produced by an autumn day's journey. She could not cry, she could scarcely breathe; she sat apathetic and miserable, looking at her exposed apartment. Here was not the shelter which even her London attic gave her. In this place no one understood what was implied in the idea of home. Then came an interval of silence and quiet, which could not be called repose; she heard Madame Peruzzi's voice, at some little distance, giving orders to her maid; she could hear, even without wishing it, what Madame Peruzzi said; and only roused herself to the desperate possibility of closing her door when the colloquy seemed almost over. Pure Tuscan, with all its resounding syllables and soft terminations, but certainly not the liquid Italian, the melting accents which sentimental travellers delight to record; on the contrary, a couple of English scolds at high words could not have made more commotion than was created by the perfectly peaceable conference of Madame Peruzzi and her maid. However, the old lady, by an extraordinary discretion, respected the closed door of Felicia's room; and the stranger, after some breathless listening, roused herself to change her dress and shake off the weary travelling-garments full of dust which weighed her down. She had been kindly received; she had nothing to complain of, and yet her heart sank. Her aunt's words buzzed in her ears, like painful indications of a life unknown to her. What were the Cascine and the Pergola, the winter's balls and carnival, to a sober English girl in mourning, brought up in the humblest section of the English middle-class, and accustomed to reckon upon things totally different as the most important matters of life? Felicia was not wise enough to be quite above the fascination of such promises, but to have these hopes held out to her in the first hour of her arrival, in a house so very moderate in its pretensions, as matters of essential importance, seemed to her something so gravely and sadly ridiculous, that, once out of Madame Peruzzi's presence, she could scarcely believe her in earnest. She made her simple toilette slowly, to gain a little time to think; she persuaded herself that it was impossible to form any proper idea of the life and house

to which she had come, till time should inform her fully on the subject; she thought of her father, and the stories he used to tell her of his own country. But her father had been long absent from his country, had acquired other habits and tastes, and remembered only the delights of his youth, quaint rural customs, and primitive pleasures, which in the telling had seemed as delightful to Felicia as to himself, but which she had connected with the luxuriant vineyards and shadowy olive gardens, the Italian farms with their primitive wealth and labours, and which she was sadly at a loss to adapt to these meagre apartments, where everything was poor and unlovely, and where no beauty made up for the English comfort, which was out of the question here. The result of Felicia's deliberations was, that she became too much puzzled to deliberate further; and experiencing a slight revulsion of personal comfort when she had bathed her face, brushed out her hair, and changed her dress, at last opened, with more courage than she had felt in closing it, the door of her chamber, and found herself once more in presence of her aunt.

"If Angelo had but known thou wert here," cried Madame Peruzzi, "nothing would have detained him, Felicita mia—not his most dear friends—he is so anxious thou shouldst be happy with us. Ah! he is good, very good, my son. If Angelo had stood in his father's place, we should have been people of fortune, my soul; but the Signor Peruzzi was one of seven sons, and that which is in seven parts is less to each than if all were one, like Angelo, thou knowest. But he has good friends, very good friends—he is not neglected: they remember that he is a Peruzzi, and thou shalt have thy share of thy cousin's advantages, though thou and I, my Felicita, are not noble like Angelo. But what then? we shall enjoy our life the same, and he is a good son. But tell me, Carina; thy father Antonio, did he never speak to thee of me?"

"Many times, aunt," said Felicia, faltering a little, for her father did not always speak with enthusiasm of his sister.

"And desired thee to come to us when he died, the good Antonio! did he not so?" continued the aunt.

"You forget my mother was then alive," said Felicita, with sorrowful pride: "while she lived, he could wish me no other guardian."

"Thy mother, ah! who was thy mother, *carina?*" said the old lady, raising a little her capless head; "not a rich milor's daughter, Antonio told us. I know not the customs of thy country: if she was poor, and he was poor, why then did they marry? My poor Antonio! was it not a sad life?"

"They married because they were fond of each other," said Felicia, with a rising colour, "and my father did not think his life sad: we were very happy—more happy than I can tell you; everything went well with us then."

"He was always good," said Madame Peruzzi, "but thou wilt pardon me, Felicita, if to live in that cloudy island, and to labour all one's days, seems to me a sad life. And Antonio left thee a little fortune, did he not? Thou art rich, Felicita mia? We labour but for our children, my soul. if they are well, all is well. Ah! if I could but see my Angelo rich, I should die with joy."

"If Angelo thinks like me, aunt," said Felicia, quietly, "he would rather have his mother than be rich. One can work and live, but one cannot have a second father and mother."

"*Carina mia!* thou shalt have a second mother—thou art my own child!" cried the old lady, with a sudden embrace. Felicia unconsciously slid out of it with embarrassment as soon as she was able, and did not feel so happy as might have been expected. Strangely enough, at this pathetic climax of their interview, two ludicrous ingredients in the novelty of her position tempted Felicia at the same moment to laugh and to be slightly ill-tempered. One was a puzzling question, which ran through all her musings, and kept her in an annoying but ludicrous uncertainty—whether her aunt Peruzzi had forgotten to put on her cap, and was unaware of it? and the other was a secret and hopeless longing for that great feminine English luxury, a cup of tea. She drew back, uncon-

sciously putting up her hand to the crimped frill of her mourning collar, which her aunt's embrace had disturbed, and feeling herself more and more obstinately and perversely English in proportion as she perceived how different everything else was around her. In the midst of such questioning and such involuntary resistance, the afternoon wore to an end. The impossible tea appeared not for the refreshment of the young Englishwoman, and Madame Peruzzi, if she had forgotten it, certainly did not discover the absence of her cap.

A little before six o'clock Angelo came home. Angelo was the only son of his mother, a young Florentine of two-and-twenty, but looking more youthful than he was, fresh, adolescent, and beardless, with a face which attracted his cousin's shy regard in spite of herself. Good looks are more common among the men than among the women of Tuscany, and Angelo Peruzzi's looks were sunny and frank and candid, with a degree of simplicity in the good-humour beaming from them, which an English youth of the same years could hardly have exhibited. He was not dark, but simply brown, with hazel eyes, a laughing, curved upper-lip, and so entire an absence of anything like care or thought in his face that the grave young girl beside him, although younger than he, looked with a certain wistful envying and anxiety at his unclouded countenance, feeling herself ages older than he was, and wondering over his inexperience. Felicia herself was not quite twenty, and, English though she was in feeling, had one of those remarkable Italian faces, not always beautiful, which it is not easy to forget. Her eyes were blue, with a gleam of latent fire in their depths; her hair of a colourless darkness, like twilight, not black, but without light; her face long and oval. When she grew old, she would be like her father—a suggestion which at the present moment was not very complimentary, but at present she was something more than pretty, though less than beautiful. The two young people looked at each other with mutual curiosity as young people use; each was rather more a mystery to the other than it is common for young men and young women to be, for the serious English girl in her mourning was about as great a puzzle to Angelo as the thoughtless young Florentine was to Felicia; but they began their mutual examination with mutual good-will. Shortly after Angelo's arrival they were called to dinner, which was served in another apartment rather more bare than the first, at the other end of a long passage. Here Felicia began her experiences of Italian household economy. The meal was long and various, but the stranger's plate went away again and again untouched, and she was fain to plead extreme fatigue as the cause of her want of appetite. Poor Felicia! The dinner was a grand dinner, made in her honour. Soup, a compound of hot water, grease, and maccaroni, made a rather unpromising beginning. Then came very thin slices of uncooked ham and sausage, to be eaten with bread and butter; then a grand *fritto*—pieces of disguised fish and vegetable fried; then a dish of meat boiled out of its senses, surrounded with extraordinary vegetables. About this time Felicia ceased to be able to observe what was brought to the table—a whiff of garlic, a fragrance of cheese, enveloped the apartment. Madame Peruzzi kept up (without any slang) a *stunning* conversation with the dumpy cheerful little maid, who came and went perpetually with the various dishes, and Angelo partook of all with a cheerful gusto which threw poor Felicia into dismay. She sat looking at them all without being able to say a word. Oh for that impossible cup of tea! oh to be able to forget the flavour of that maccaroni! but it was as impossible to obtain the one as to escape the other, and Felicia sat silent, sick, and disgusted, scarcely able to keep her chair till the ceremonial was over, longing to be alone, and find in rest the only comfort which seemed to remain for her. Fortunately, however, nobody was surprised that she should wish to go to rest immediately. She had more than a traveller's license; it was evident that, traveller or no traveller, there being no amusement in the way,

that was supposed to be the most sensible thing she could do. Madame Peruzzi herself retired to her own room immediately. Angelo went out, the house fell into profound silence, and into a darkness as profound. Felicia looked out from her high window: there lay the street, deep down, with its faint glimmer of scanty lamps under the shadow of these lofty houses, each defending itself, with its deep overhanging cornice, from any invasion of light from the sky. The sounds which from that depth reached Felicia at her high window were drowsy and faint, as though the town was dropping to sleep; but the lights were brilliant in one great house opposite, where carriages began to arrive, and through the open door of which Felicia saw a vision of passing ladies in all the glories of evening dress; while in an apartment almost opposite her own, thinly veiled by a muslin curtain, the lady of the house was having her own toilette completed to receive her guests. This was the true Italian evening division of the community; amusement for those who had amusement—for those who had not, sleep. Angelo was at his *café* and the theatre. His mother, whom nobody cared to seek, and who had consented to relinquish her hopes of pleasure—his mother was in bed. Such was the proper and natural arrangement of things, as it seemed, at Florence. Felicia lay down to her rest an incipient rebel. Might it not be possible to change all that?

CHAPTER II.

"This is kind of thee, *carina*," said Madame Peruzzi next morning, as Felicia and she sat together over their coffee. "Angelo is late in bed, as he needs to be, for due rest, poor boy, after a pleasant night. He will tell us of his pleasures when he wakes—and now I shall no longer drink my coffee alone. Thou wilt make a new life, Felicita mia, for me."

"I am glad you will like me with you, aunt," said Felicia, who was, however, puzzled by the entire absence of disapproval with which the old lady mentioned her son's late hours. "Is it Angelo's occupation which keeps him out so late?"

"His occupation? What is that, my soul?" asked Madame Peruzzi. "Didst thou not hear him say he was going to the Pergola to hear Norma? He shall take thee one of these days."

"Does he go there often?" asked Felicia, with still a troublesome terror lest she should hear her cousin designated as a conductor or member of the orchestra, an intimation which would not have been very delightful to her. Madame Peruzzi put her hand, with a playful momentary pressure, upon Felicia's hand.

"For what dost thou take my Angelo, my child? Is he old? is he past his pleasure? When there is no better gratification, where should he go but to the theatre? And as for me, I am old—my day is over—I go to bed."

"But Angelo, my aunt, has he then command of his time?" said Felicia, with timidity, glancing round the apartment, which bore so many visible signs of bare and meagre poverty. "Has he not—employment—does he not do anything? I mean—in England the young men have always something to do."

"My soul, we have enough," said Madame Peruzzi, with a beaming smile. "Why should Angelo weary himself with labour? In England I have heard they are compelled to work to keep off melancholy and miserable thoughts, but thou knowest not yet our Italy, where it is pleasure to live. No, Felicita carina. My Angelo has good blood and a brave spirit. He takes his pleasure in his youth, for youth is the season of pleasure. At my age one heeds no longer what comes or goes. A new *prima donna*, or a grand *spectacle*, is but little to me. I should lose the whole if I but lost my spectacles, but it is different with Angelo and thee."

Felicia prudently kept silence and made no rejoinder. She contented herself with remembering that, after all, the country and its customs were new to her, and that she was not quite qualified, on twenty-four hours' ex-

perience, to revolutionise this household, and protest against its habits of life—which was an unusual amount of modesty and sense for a girl of nineteen to exhibit, as everybody must allow. Accordingly, for this day at least, she was content to see what should happen, and find out the natural course of events in her aunt's house. About twelve o'clock, Angelo made his appearance, and ate his breakfast good-humouredly, entertaining his mother and cousin with his last night's adventures; for Angelo was as good a son as Madame Peruzzi called him, and would not have done an intentional slight to his only relatives for anything in the world. Then the young gentleman disappeared for the day; he had various engagements with various acquaintances, which, he honestly regretted, prevented him this day from showing her ancestral town to his cousin. When he was gone the old lady followed Felicia to her room. Madame Peruzzi proposed to order a carriage and drive her niece to the Cascine, where all the world spent its afternoon; and the careful aunt was solicitous to see what were the stranger's equipments, and if her dress was satisfactory. She looked a little grave over the poor girl's unvaried black. It was no longer necessary, she said, to wear so much mourning—no one knew in Florence who these sable garments were worn for, and she disliked the dress for her own part, though she wore it herself in the house, for economy's sake. These remarks revived in Felicia a little temper, which she had always possessed. She had no desire to go to the Cascine; she would much prefer seeing the town, the Duomo, the Campanile, the pictures of which her father had told her. Madame Peruzzi shook her head, and went away with smiling pertinacity. Then at four o'clock the carriage came. The old lady had done herself injustice when she said she was too old for pleasure. She made her appearance now in a toilette which astonished Felicia, with a very small ultra-Parisian bonnet gay with artificial flowers, and a little parasol, like a bright-coloured butterfly, and cream-coloured gloves, fresh and fragrant. They made an odd contrast as they took their seats together in the little hackney carriage—the old lady so gay, and the young one so perfectly plain and unadorned. As they drove down the Lung' Arno in the afternoon sunshine, Felicia no longer shut her eyes to the beauty of the scene. As the houses disappeared, and they passed out of the gate in full sight of the blue Apennines, contracting their noble link of enclosure towards the west, and all the tender meadows basking in the sunshine in the low Vale of Arno, her heart for the first time was touched towards her father's country. These farmhouses softly seated among the verdant grass, with the deep shady arch sometimes passing under the entire building, and the square tower raising its little upper-story above the red-tiled roof, bore a pleasant look of home which comforted the longing in her mind. It was good to take refuge somewhere. Italian homes might be in these rural houses: though an upper floor in the Via Giugnio recalled few recollections of the domestic sanctuary. As Felicia amused herself with these imaginations, and Madame Peruzzi occupied her active old senses in recognising and identifying most of the persons they met on the road, their carriage drove along through level lines of trees, flat and formal, with stretches of green meadow-land on either side, to an open space in front of the great Dairy—a square brick building, from which the place takes its name. Here the Florentine world was at its height of occupation. Here Madame Peruzzi's carriage drew modestly in to the ranks, and stood with the others in close square, contributing a little rivulet to the stream of talk spreading around. Everybody was talking, laughing, flirting, making and confirming engagements. Through the narrow lanes left between the carriages, youths like Angelo, and indeed Angelo himself—a sight tolerably welcome to the eyes of his cousin—mingled with elder and less prepossessing men; while ladies leant out of their carriages, making free use of gesture, voice, hand, and fan—ladies with miniature bonnets, disclosing each a mass of glossy black

hair and a pair of jewelled ears—ladies so fine that a suspicion of provincialism clouded the magnificence of their toilettes; but not lovely, not pretty—the least comely of Italian women. When Angelo discovered his mother's modest vehicle among the crowd, he made haste towards her with a face glowing with pleasure—the Countess Picasola had just invited him to dinner. His satisfaction reflected itself with a double glow in the countenance of his mother, who bent over him with delighted looks. "We shall not see thee to-night, then, my Angelo?" she said, pressing her son's hand. Other loungers followed Angelo, till Felicia, shy and strange, became quite bewildered by the names and voices, and by the universal Italian, which had been for some years unfamiliar to her, and of which she had not yet recovered the habitual use, in the midst of so much conversation, without taking part in it, with a dozen people talking across her, and Madame Peruzzi half-standing in the carriage, and excited with an indulgence evidently very unusual, ready to respond to all, and answering three at a time. Felicia, who might have been amused at a great distance, leant back in her corner quite overpowered, and longing to escape from the confusion and crowd. Then came the flower-women, with their great flapping hats and pearl necklaces, who thrust little bouquets into her hand, to the extreme confusion and dismay of the stranger, who did not know the custom of the place, and was equally reluctant to take and afraid to offer money for them. When they moved homeward at last, Felicia sighed with relief, and Madame Peruzzi subsided in the highest state of gratification into the corner of the carriage, and began to explain to her niece what great people were some of those who had addressed her. It was all for Felicia's sake that her good aunt had undertaken this expedition; but the kindness in the mean time was its own reward.

The Via Giugnio, however, did not look less meagre and gloomy than before, as once more they ascended the long stairs and reached their own apartments. Everything picturesque and bright out of doors—within, poverty and plainness devoid of every pretension to beauty; once more the penurious chilly life, which found no pleasure in itself, and, when left alone, had no resource but sleep. The dinner of that day was by no means so grand as the previous one; Angelo was doubtless a great deal better off at the Countess Picasola's, not to speak of the honour. The greasy soup, the oily vegetables, the black dish of fried rice, the incomprehensible sweets and sours of the meal, were once more too much for Felicia. She retired hastily, as soon as withdrawal was permissible. Retired, but to what? There was not a book visible, so that resource was impossible; and glad though she would have been to take her work and spend her evening, as she had spent many an evening with her mother, Felicia found that equally out of the question. Madame Peruzzi, indeed, accompanied her niece to the *sala*, and seated herself in a corner of the sofa, yawning horribly; but no lamp was brought into the room, nor did she ask for any, and the twilight gathered quick and grey over the apartment, in which at last it was only possible to perceive the coloured fabric of Madame Peruzzi's dress, and the white glimmer of Felicia's work on the little marble table. Vainly the stranger tried to be amusing, to interest her relative by either remarks or questions, or to draw out her curiosity concerning England and the customs of that country. Madame Peruzzi sat swallowing vast yawns, nodding in her corner of the sofa, answering in monosyllables. Poor Felicia was in despair. When she became convinced that it was mere cruelty to detain her aunt, she in her turn became silent, and favoured the escape of the unfortunate old lady; but when Madame Peruzzi had made her escape, it was still scarcely nine o'clock, and what was the solitary girl to do? She had been shy to ask for light, expecting every moment the advent of the maid Marietta, and that tall Roman lamp with two lights, which had reminded her on the previous evening of the lamp of a carriage, as swung in Marietta's hand, and leaving her person invis-

ible. It came along the long passage from the other end of the house, but no light came through the darkness; and when at last Marietta herself appeared, it was but to ask if the Signorina wanted anything before she went away for the night. With hesitation and faltering, Felicia put forward her humble desire for a light. A light!—there was only oil enough in the lamp to light the Signor Angelo to his own room, when he should come in. What could Marietta do? Yet the kind-hearted Tuscan could not leave the stranger without exhausting herself with expedients to supply what she wanted. At length a sudden idea struck Marietta. She darted back to her odd little kitchen, and reappeared in a few minutes with an old blue tea-cup in her hand, which she placed on the table, to Felicia's great amazement. Then Marietta produced a match-box, struck a match, and lighted a little floating wick which sailed on the surface of a little pool of oil. "Ecco, Signorina!" she cried triumphantly. Yes, behold it!—the domestic lamp—the evening illumination. The good-natured girl could not be sufficiently pleased with herself for the idea, and went off in a little flush of exultation, making the door ring behind her as she closed it to celebrate her clever expedient, and the extraordinary inclination of the Signorina to sit alone through the solitary night.

When Marietta was gone, and Felicia sat by herself in that dreary apartment, with her little light twinkling feebly out of the tea-cup, and herself and it gloomily reflected out of the dark depths of the mirror between the windows, Felicia's first and momentary impulse was a laugh of self-ridicule; but the laugh soon subsided into very different feelings, and before she was aware, her eyes were surprised with heavy tears. The gloom and solitude of the house, where no one moved but herself, the total isolation in which she stood, the apparent impossibility of making any one understand her, oppressed her heart. There was no sleep in her young eyes or her restless mind, and the only occupation which occurred to her for the moment was a desperate fit of home-sickness and longing, in which any refuge in her mother's country, however miserable, seemed better than the condition in which she stood. That was, however, as foolish as it was vain. After a little interval she dried her eyes, and took up her unsteady taper to carry it tenderly to her own room. There she tried a little arrangement to keep herself amused; and when her small possessions were in perfect order—order scarcely more perfect than that which she disturbed, but still something which amused and occupied her—she took out a humble little piece of embroidery, and tried to work. But working by that little floating light in solitude, amidst the gloomy shadows of the Via Giugnio, was not so easy as some people might suppose, especially when one is haunted with recollections of a bright family-table, on which the lamp burned clear, and love was warm, and father and mother smiled upon their only child. Now all that remained to her was Madame Peruzzi, asleep in her room, and the young Florentine, who did not know what home or industry was, and who managed to forget poverty and a useless life by the perpetual amusement of one kind or another, which, in his mother's eyes, was only natural to his youth. Felicia's heart sank as she sat in her dark bed-chamber, trying to do her embroidery, and trying still more to keep her thoughts from interference in other people's concerns. Her aunt and cousin were poor, very poor, yet no thought of occupation or employment seemed to enter the mind of Angelo. What benefit to him was the Countess Picasola and her invitation? said Felicia to herself. What was to become of him if he did nothing, and could do nothing?—and yet what had she to do with it? She perplexed herself to such an extent that she threw down her work, and went to the window to refresh herself with the fresh air. Just then a carriage drew up at the great house opposite, waiting for the great lady, whom Felicia once more saw through the thin blinds, finishing her evening's toilette. Other ladies, young slender figures in floating lace and

muslin, had joined her, ere she appeared below at the door, to enter her carriage. Felicia looked on with a certain wistfulness, not envy, but something more like wonder at the differences of providence. When the echoes raised by their departure had died away, she still stood leaning out, looking up and down the deep gulf of street. There was little to see, save the irregular line of lofty houses, and far below an occasional passenger, but the air at least soothed her. Then Felicia, with a low laugh and a deep sigh, resigned herself to the necessities of her position, and, unable longer to resist the gloom, the silence, and the solitude, lay down at last and went to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

In this monotonous and uncomfortable life the weeks ran on rapidly enough—slow as they passed, yet so devoid of interest, when they were gone, that they seemed no longer than a common day. Felicia tried hard to convey her own ideas to the minds of her friends, but without much visible success, and she came to modify her own opinions concerning them, as she gained greater experience. Madame Peruzzi, though she retired to rest at eight o'clock, and suffered no litter of feminine occupation to be visible in her *sala*, was not the less a careful mother, nor scorned to use her needle and her shears for the comfort of her household, though Felicia found it almost impossible to persuade her aunt to bring her mending and darning into the sitting-room, or to share with her those cheerful and sociable domestic labours. It was against Madame Peruzzi's conscience to have her private labours suspected. She would not for the world have had one of her visitors discover her or her young companion at work; and as the old lady had greatly fallen out of acquaintance—if she ever had any acquaintance with the little Florentine world of fashion — and was visited only by old ladies of her own standing, it was not so easy to find a willing and suitable chaperone for Felicia as might have been supposed, and accordingly the projects for taking her out and supplying amusement for her evenings, which the old lady had been eloquent upon at first, soon dropped out of remembrance, and were mentioned no more. And Felicia found that her cousin, though living, after his kind, the life of a young man of fashion, was nevertheless a good son, innocent and without guile, who did not hesitate to bestow his full confidence on his mother, and was entirely trusted by her in return. How it was that under these circumstances Angelo, without the slightest idea of wrong-doing, was absent from home every night, and how, in spite of the extreme poverty of the *ménage*—a poverty which became more visible to Felicia every day—no idea of doing anything for himself or his family to improve his position, or to provide for the future exigencies and expansions of life, seemed ever to occur to his mind, became less a mystery to her as she became more acquainted with her new sphere. Felicia was, however, English enough and woman enough to have a strong inclination towards reform, and a great impatience of those evils which everybody else seemed so contented with. The cousins were, moreover, much attracted towards each other; and ere they had been long together, the usual result to be hoped or apprehended from the familiar intercourse of a young man and young woman, both good-looking and well-dispositioned, seemed in a fair way of coming to pass. Now and then Angelo stayed at home, the lamp was lit, Felicia produced her embroidery, Madame Peruzzi dozed in a corner of the sofa, and the meagre little *sala* brightened into a kind of magical version of home, an impossibility brought to pass by a dawning of something different from the mild domestic affections which are supposed to have their centre there. And then conversations ensued—conversations unlike everything which the young man had ever taken part in before, and which they carried on

alone, the mother being pleasantly absent and lost in dreams. On one of these nights, pleasant to both, and much longed for by Felicia, Angelo directed his inquiries in a somewhat marked and significant manner to England and English customs, a little to the surprise, but much to the satisfaction, of his cousin.

"I wish you could but go to England, Angelo," cried the young reformer, determined not to lose her opportunity; "I cannot describe to you how different everything is. I do not suppose you can understand me when I tell you—if any one had told *me*, before I came here, what I should find in Florence—"

"Does Florence disappoint you, then, my cousin?" asked the young man.

"Yes, in some things," said Felicia; "in others, no; but you do, Angelo."

"I? and how?" said Angelo, with a smile.

"Because I do not know what is the good of you," said the young revolutionary demurely.

"Nor I either," cried her cousin, who thought her frankness a sally of humour. "Why should there be any good in me? is that necessary in your England?"

"I did not say there was no good in you; that is not true," said Felicia. "But you are of *no use*, cousin; you ought to be so different. Had you been born an Englishman, you would have been busy all day long—labouring, exercising your faculties, helping on the work of the world. Every man in England is trained to do that, and knows it is his duty. You would have gone out to work, and come home to rest, if you had been born an Englishman, Angelo."

"Should I have been happier, my cousin?" said the young man.

"Happier!—what has being happy to do with it?" cried Felicia with a little burst of vehemence. "Does it make you happy to go to your *café*? are you happy when you are at the Cascine or in the theatre? You know quite well you are only amused; and that is so different. Ah, Angelo! that makes all the difference. People in England do not think it necessary to be always amused; but we all try, when we have the chance, to be happy."

"But you do not all succeed, my cousin?" said Angelo; "and your Englishman, Felicita mia—your Englishman who goes out to work, and comes in to rest—what shall he do to be happy?"

The young Italian asked the question with a certain bitterness and personality; for Angelo was by no means acquainted with the instincts of English womankind, and had not sufficient experience to know that the existence of the special Englishman, whom he suspected, would have much moderated, in all probability, his cousin's earnestness on his own behalf. Felicia, for her part, faltered in her answer, blushed crimson, and, by her hesitation, convinced the young Florentine that his suspicions had some foundation.

"I do not know—I—I cannot tell," she said with confusion, unable to shut out from her mind, at that embarrassing moment, that English youthful imagination which supposes happiness to mean love and the young home and household, which is the first instinctive suggestion of insular comfort and virtue. In spite of herself, Felicia could not help thinking if Angelo, instead of a Florentine man-about-town, had been that same imaginary Englishman of whom they spoke, what visions of some little suburban house might have been floating in his imagination, and what a fanciful little paradise—perhaps the only refined and beatified conception of his life—might have risen to him out of a little waste of imaginary tables and chairs. That, at least, was her womanish conception of the subject; but something sealed her lips, and she could have done any other impossible thing sooner than betray to Angelo the momentary suggestion of her own heart.

"Then if you do not know, and cannot tell, my cousin, I must tell you of a happiness, or an amusement—I know not how you will call it—which is falling to me," said Angelo, with gaiety which looked somewhat forced. "There is a countrywoman of thine, Felicita, on the other side of the way, young, and

rich, and pretty—a wilful little woman; and she does me the honour to smile upon me."

It was now Felicia's turn to feel a little involuntary bitterness. Though she could have done any spite to herself the moment after, by way of punishment for her weakness, she *felt* a momentary blank in her face, and pang in her heart. But she very speedily regained the mastery, and made an answer of congratulation which seemed forced only to herself. Angelo went on fluently with his brag and his description. The young lady of his story was one of the slender white figures whom Felicia had watched so often issuing from the door of the house opposite into the carriage which carried them away to nightly amusement or daily airings. She was very young—only sixteen—an orphan, and a great heiress,—so much Angelo knew; and, led on by the evident interest, and perhaps the slight pique perceptible in the tone of his cousin, the young man poured into her eager ears everything he had heard concerning the young Englishwoman, and perhaps a little more.

"Very rich—a great heiress;—and how have *you* met her, Angelo?" asked Felicia, with an unconscious emphasis upon the *you*, which proved that she considered great heiresses rather out of the young Peruzzi's way.

"I have met her in society, my cousin," said the laughing Angelo, who immediately quoted a list of great names which still further confused and troubled Felicia. "We are poor, it is true—very poor," said the light-hearted Florentine; "but that is not in Florence what it is in thy country: the saints defend us, we are all poor! Yet they will ask thy idle unfortunate cousin to their assemblies, Felicita, while they see him still in possession of a tolerable coat and a pair of gloves. Gloves, heaven be praised, are cheap in Florence, so, though I am poor, I can still see my heiress. And what sayest thou, Felicita? if all progresses, as, to say the truth, all bears promise of progressing, thy poor cousin may not long be poor."

"Do you mean, if you marry the heiress, Angelo?" asked Felicia.

"I mean, if the heiress marries me, my cousin," said the young man.

Felicita was silent; her own uncomfortable sensations, and the inexplainable mortification she felt in her heart, prevented her from any word or hint of opposition. She went on with her embroidery very swiftly and quietly, while Angelo, very well pleased with the impression he had produced, and with a great deal of boyish mischief and self-complacency seconding some feelings more serious, was silent also, letting his laughing glance travel round the apartment, and finding, with a rapid perception of the picturesque, something rather attractive in the scene. The room not half lighted, with its two unshuttered windows gleaming through the muslin curtains, and all the darkness of the night beyond them; the tall Roman lamp, with its two unshaded lights shining steadily from the little marble table; Madame Peruzzi, a dark shadow in the corner of the sofa, leaning back upon her hard cushions, with her grey head veiled by the darkness; the whole darkly gleaming in the narrow mirror, which gave such strange depth to the shadows and prominence to the light. Then Angelo returned to the light, and the face it shone on, the point of highest illumination in the picture. Felicia was making wonderful progress with her work; her hands moved as hands only can move when the heart is agitated and the thoughts in full career. The young man looked at her white clear forehead, on which the lamp shone, at the graceful stoop of her head, her eyes cast down, and her lips firmly closed. The whole face was very grave, deeply silent, with that indescribable disapproval and mute resistance on its every feature which people abroad are fond of characterising as the insular look of stone. The expression struck Angelo: he could not flatter himself that there was pique or personal offence in it; somehow it seemed a dumb reproach upon his levity, and touched, with a singular pain unknown to him before, the light heart in his Italian breast: higher things than belonged to *his* life; virtues, and honours, and

heroisms unknown seemed somehow to beam upon the wistful gaze of Angelo out of that silent uncommunicating face.

"Felicita! *sorella mia*," he said softly, using the tenderest title of kindred, which by no means meant the exclusive *sister* of our preciser tongue—"you disapprove of me—you think me wrong: shut not up thy thoughts in thy lips—speak! I will listen like a child."

"Why should I speak?" and Felicia, availing herself, however, of the permission with all the eagerness of hitherto restrained eloquence—"why should I speak? you do not understand me. To me, because I know you, and know that there are better things in you, it is terrible to see you throw away your life and dishonour it. Yes, dishonour it, Angelo! Would her friends permit you to marry this heiress? would she, do you think, if she lived with us a week, continue to think you her equal? and besides, women everywhere are obliged to marry for fortune, and you pity and scorn them for it; but men, Angelo! men who can work, is it possible that *you* can calmly think of doing the same thing?"

"Why should not I?" said the young man with an amused and amazed smile. "My little English cousin, does no one do as much in your country? I am poor, you know it only too well; and as for your work, Felicita, I know not what I could work at, nor how I should learn, for here is nothing to do in Florence. Why then must I refuse to be enriched, should that good fortune come to me, by a good little wife?"

"Perhaps not, if she made love to you, and you had only to accept her," said Felicia, with a little scorn; "but it is you who must woo and say you love *her*. Do you love her, Angelo?"

As she looked him in the face in her frank indignation, Angelo responded by a bright intimidating look, which took Felicia much by surprise. She did not repeat her question, but drooped her head with a confused involuntary agitation, of which she was mightily ashamed. There was a pause, and then Angelo answered with great composure and laughing self-possession:

"You take this matter much too gravely, my cousin. If she will marry me, can I help it? In thy country, is it not everybody's duty to be rich? And so long as one does not steal nor cheat, does it matter how?"

"You do not know my country, nor anything about it," said Felicia. "There are men who hold such sentiments in England, but not such men as you."

"My cousin," said Angelo affectionately, "what kind of man, then, am I?"

"The men who say such things, and think such things," repeated Felicia, "are men without innocence, without honour, without heart—men who have tried the world and failed—whom no one loves nor trusts—who are shunned when they are successful, and scorned when they are not. No, Angelo—not such as you."

"Ah, Felicita! you speak easily," said Angelo, growing grave; "you think of your own country. Your Englishman, who goes out to work and comes home to rest, do you think I do not sometimes envy him?—I and many more than me. But what can I do?—what is there in Florence, in Italy, for any man?—mosaics and copies from the galleries—porcelain. Shall I go to La Doccia, my cousin, and learn that craft?—or would you have me work in alabaster? I will be faithful and obedient, Felicita: which will you bid me do?"

Half affronted, half impressed, no longer desirous to continue the conversation, and perhaps as anxious by this time to escape to her own apartment as her aunt herself could be, Felicia made no answer. Angelo had said very little; but somehow he had unsettled the confident and certain standing-ground upon which his cousin stood. She began to feel confused and dizzy, and to understand dimly, as theory always does when it comes in contact with reality, that arbitrary injunctions are not much to the purpose, and

that more things than abstract right and wrong make up the sum of most human matters. She was not great in argument or reason, as girls of nineteen rarely are; she was young and arbitrary and imperative, as belonged to her youth, and impatient of those vulgar external obstacles which stood in the way of what ought to be. If there was nothing for Angelo to do in Florence or in Italy, that very fact was wrong. Why was there not anything to do? She was inclined to ask the question angrily—to demand that somebody should be pointed out to her to bear the blame. Whose fault was it? If not Angelo's, at least that of the people or the government. But something closed Felicia's lips; she was vexed, confused, embarrassed—everything was wrong.

In the silence which ensued, Madame Peruzzi gave signs of reviving animation. This old lady, who had no knowledge nor conception of Angelo's heiress, had designs of her own of a less ambitious kind—designs very probably not much different from those which may be entertained by English mothers, but so much honester and more innocent, that this matchmaker had not the slightest conception of any harm in them, or that it was at all necessary to disguise or conceal her schemes. Madame Peruzzi was simply and ingenuously of opinion that Felicia's tiny fortune should not be suffered to go out of the family, and that her fifty pounds a-year would make a very comfortable addition to the income of her cousin. This idea reconciled her to sit up till ten, nay, even till eleven o'clock—if her doze upon the sofa could be called sitting up—to encourage the *tête-à-tête* of the young people. Their silence roused her now, as their conversation had not succeeded in doing. She raised herself, a queer old figure, from her corner of the sofa. Long before this time Felicia had ceased to hope that her aunt, unawares, had forgotten to put on her cap. She got up with her scanty grey hair falling into disorder, rubbing her eyes, which were dazzled by the light. "My children," said Madame Peruzzi, "I love to see you talking together. Ah, it is such happiness when minds are sympathetic! but it is late."

"Yes," cried Felicia, with unusual promptness, putting away her work; "and we have kept you up and disturbed your rest, aunt. It is selfish. I fear it is my fault; for Angelo," she added, with a little girlish pique and mischief, "Angelo is very happy at the *café*, when there is no better entertainment to be had."

"True, my soul," said the matter-of-fact mother, gravely, "and well it is thus. Yet he does not grieve to lose his pleasure now and then for thy sake. He is slow to commend himself, my good Angelo; but I know he loves well to be with thee."

This speech produced some awkwardness to both the persons concerned. Felicia shot a rapid, mischievous, half-malicious glance at her cousin. He, the honest fellow, meaning no harm, only laughed and blushed; for that he should be more than half in love with his young relation, as was very evident, and yet confide to her his heiress hopes, did not strike Angelo as anything extraordinary. He did not quite understand her scruples on the subject. The reluctance with which the heroes of novels in England accept the wealthy hands of heiresses, would have been simply and totally incomprehensible to Angelo; and Felicia's indignation was entirely lost upon a mind innocent of any intention which he would be ashamed to own. He could understand somewhat better, and felt flattered by the slight spark of pique and malice which she exhibited—that was jealousy, the other was something mysterious and unexplainable. As for Madame Peruzzi, who had not heard a word of the conversation, and who could not suppose them to be on other than the most satisfactory terms, she looked on with great complacency upon their good-night, and enfolded her niece in a sleepy embrace, with as much fervour as was compatible with that comatose condition. She thought *her* scheme was progressing famously, and she was exceedingly well content.

While Felicia sought her own apartment with feelings much less

satisfactory. What, if Angelo were ever so industriously inclined, what was the young man to do? True, it was very easy to say that carving alabaster or fitting together the tiny morsels of mosaic was better than idleness—better than the poverty closely approaching want which existed, without any effort to remedy it, in this household; but, after all, Felicia had learned to yield some weight to the name of Peruzzi, and even her own humble antecedents did not lend much countenance to the idea of a handicraft. Angelo had no genius; he was not a painter or a sculptor or a musician born, as a young Italian having any connection with romance had a right to be. He had no connection with romance, the honest fellow! He could read his own language, and that was about the sum of his education: if he spoke pure Tuscan, that was by virtue of his birthplace, and no credit to himself; and his few epistolary efforts were not likely to impress any one with high ideas of his attainments in literature. Ambition in its humblest shape—even that power of "bettering himself," under the flattering influence of which the very maid-servants rejoice in England — was closed to Angelo. He might condescend, if Felicia succeeded in impressing her own ideas upon him, to daily labour; but no hope of enterprise or possibility of ambition was there to stimulate Angelo. It was the young man's fortune to belong to a nation caressed and admired and flattered out of everyday existence. If Angelo was idle, he was no more idle than his country; if Angelo contented himself with those barren amusements which stood in the place of life and happiness, he did but what all Italy was doing. Italy, like Angelo, vegetated on the enough which supplied her merest unavoidable wants. Italy, like Angelo, did her best to content the higher part of her with the past; and to make her sunshine of climate, as he made his sunshine of youth, stand in the place of all the real foundations of national joy and prosperity. Generations of such as Angelo had blossomed and degenerated on the same soil. How then was Angelo to blame?

Perhaps Felicia's cogitations were neither so distinct nor so abstract, for Angelo Peruzzi was much more present to her thoughts, and more immediately interesting, than any vision of Italy; still they ran in this channel, and perhaps she was not sorry to find such excuses for her cousin. However, heated and agitated as she was by the conversation which had just ended, she was glad to find her usual refuge from herself at her window, where the wind refreshed her pleasantly, though it was now nearly the end of October, and not so warm as it had been. It was a moonlight night, and moonlight had a picturesque effect on the Via Giugnio. Her eyes were caught irresistibly by the irregular line of house-tops, the broad white lights and impenetrable depths of shadow, where here and there a cluster of windows shone like molten silver, and on either side of them the high opposite houses blotted out the line, and left but a tall dark blank of wall, mysterious and gloomy in the shade. Presently Felicia's observation was attracted by something more immediately interesting; her eyes turned involuntarily to the house opposite which she had watched so often, but from which her cousin's tale, if she had been perfectly mistress of herself, would have turned her eyes now. At the opposite window, almost on a level with her own, was a little white figure unrecognisable in the darkness, for the high roof of the opposite house kept Madame Peruzzi's habitation in complete shadow. This little figure, whoever it might be, found out Felicia shortly after Felicia discovered *it*, and straightway began to make signals and telegraphic gestures across the street, waving a tiny hand out of a wide white sleeve, nodding a little head, and making every demonstration of friendship possible at the distance. Dismayed, astonished, and perhaps not without a more particular pang, Felicia retired from the window. Her first idea was that she had been taken for Angelo, and a flush of indignation and pain, too strong for her control, overpowered her at the thought; but when she sat down with her brow and her heart alike

throbbing to think it over, Felicia grew calmer. It must, after all, have been herself, and she alone, for whom these salutations were intended. Angelo's room was at the other side of the house; Angelo must have spoken to his heiress of his cousin. Felicia's vexation and pain subsided gradually. She saw herself, however, in a strangely embarrassing confidential position between two people whose incipient relations to each other affronted her own self-regard as much as they offended her judgment; she felt herself involved in a clandestine correspondence, which most likely, because her heart and her own affections were engaged in preventing it, her girlish pride and honour would move her to encourage. What could she do? Felicia pressed her hands against her hot forehead, which throbbed and beat to their touch, and with growing pain and perplexity confused her brain and heart with thinking. A young woman, a very young girl, an Englishwoman, who ought not to be permitted to fall into this snare, was the little stranger who had just made these eager salutations to her at the window. But if she undeceived this almost child, if she did what real honour and duty demanded of her, the forlorn young creature trembled at the interpretation which might be put upon her conduct. They would say she did it because she herself loved Angelo; they would say it was jealousy, self-interest — things that her face and her heart burned to think of. What could she do?— suffer the whole to go on, and "sacrifice herself," and, to save her own pride, connive at the future misery of all parties? Felicia lifted her face from between her hands, and put out her light, and crept softly to rest in the dark, as if thus she could escape from her own sight and thoughts. She had seen by a sudden prophetic intuition what was coming upon her; but as yet, thank heaven, there was a little breathing-time. The moment when she was called to do anything in the matter was not yet come.

THE MASTER OF SINCLAIR'S NARRATIVE OF THE '15.

It will be in the recollection of many people that Sir Walter Scott has more than once referred, in a manner calculated to excite a lively interest, to a manuscript volume written by the Master of Sinclair. Being an account of the affair of "the fifteen" by one who took an active share in it, expectations of instruction and interest might naturally be embarked in such a production, even though it were not thus recommended, and came from the pen of a stupid instead of a very clever man. Scott, indeed, entertained the idea of publishing the book, and was restrained, not by any fear that it would lack interest in the eyes of the world, but by certain misgivings about the propriety of letting loose so acerb and spiteful an attack on many men whose grandchildren were alive. He wrote an introductory notice to the work, which begins as if it were intended for the press, but ends with the following paragraph, which shows that intention to have been abandoned: "The following memoirs are written with great talent and peculiar satirical energy. They are intended as a justification of the author's own conduct, but are more successful in fixing a charge of folly and villany upon that of others than in exculpating his own. They will be a precious treat to the lovers of historical scandal, should they ever be made public. The original memoirs, written by the hand of the author, are in the library at Dysart. But there are other transcripts in private collections, though some, I understand, have been destroyed to gratify those whose ancestors fall under the lash of the Master. It is remarkable that the style, which is at first not even grammatical, becomes disengaged, correct, and spirited in the course of composition."

These mysterious Memoirs, with Sir Walter's Introduction, are now before us in a handsomely-printed volume, for which the reader will in vain search the advertisements of the

be in hard condition then. He certainly was not when I saw him.

The Bedouins fortunately gave very little evidence of skill in concealing blemishes. The deception most commonly attempted upon us lay in disguising a rejected animal in the hope that he might be taken on fresh inspection. A horse makes his appearance in the morning in a plain halter and Bedouin saddle. If he is not accepted, towards evening he appears in the character of a fresh arrival, with long heavy tassels hung all over the saddle, and with a breastband whose fringe covers all the forearm. If this again fails, next morning he is brought in a gorgeous red braided saddle with a padded saddle-cloth that conceals nearly all but the head and tail. I recollect only one instance in which another mode of deception had been adopted. A horse was brought to us with his legs all plastered with mud as if he had passed through a quagmire up to his belly. The owner was, of course, required, as a preliminary to business, to wash his horse's legs; and when, finding that otherwise there was no hope of sale, he complied, there appeared a beautifully fired fetlock, seamed all over in a manner which indicated some severe disease.

(To be continued.)

FELICITA.—CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER IV.

In the next morning's cheerful daylight Felicia smiled at herself over her night's trouble. *She* was not called upon, surely, to arrange or to prevent her cousin's marriage. There was no need for her arbitration one way or other; how foolish she had been! But perhaps the smile had a little bitterness in it; and it is certain Felicia felt very lonely (more lonely than she had felt since her first arrival) as she glanced out at the window—and it was astonishing how often that impulse moved her—at the opposite house.

As for Angelo, he continued to be rather triumphant and in high spirits, pleased with the thoughts of becoming suddenly a rich man, and also, with extraordinary inconsistency, not perceiving how one thing contradicted the other, pleased with the idea of having made Felicia a little jealous, and piqued her into betraying something of her own feelings. Perhaps this was the real occasion of his glee; but the sight of her cousin's satisfaction made Felicia withdraw more and more into herself: his kindness affronted and offended her; his levity struck her with sharp pain and impatience; she took refuge in her own room, and shut her door, and betook herself to some homely matters of dressmaking. Felicia had to be very economical with her little income. It was not in her nature to retain anything in her own hands which any one beside her seemed to want. She had already silently expended her own little funds to increase, as much as such a trifle could, the comforts of the household, and of her poor old aunt. She would gladly have worked, if she could, for the same purpose, with the best heart and intention in the world, but not without some idea of shaming Angelo into the way he should go.

However, Felicia did not find even in dressmaking sufficient attraction to counterbalance her excitement of thought. She had by no means completed the proper round of sight-seeing which ought to be accomplished by a stranger in Florence; and after wandering about the house restlessly for some time, interfering with the orders for dinner, intruding into Madame Peruzzi's room, carrying off the greater proportion of the work there to relieve the old lady's eyes and fingers, and generally expressing her restless and dissatisfied condition by all the means in her power, Felicia at length prevailed upon her aunt to conduct her to the Pitti Palace, and leave her there to

wander among the pictures at her leisure. This grand indulgence was one which Madame Peruzzi was very doubtful about. She greatly feared that it was not quite proper; but with a wilful English girl, who feels quite competent in broad daylight and a public place to protect herself, what can a tremulous old lady do?

Felicia accordingly strayed about at her own sweet will among the pictures, finding them very generally unsatisfactory, and in a perverse mood forsook the realities for the shadows, and lingered behind the copiers who had possession of the finest pictures in the room, wondering over that branch of industry. If Angelo, for instance, worked at *that*, would his critical cousin be satisfied? She answered herself, No, no! her heart making indignant thumps by way of echo against her breast; and so indignantly vowing to let Angelo alone—surely she could find something better to do than a constant speculation about Angelo?—went lingering round the room making unamiable criticisms in her discontented mind. She was standing opposite that pale Judith—pale with passion and exhaustion, and yet bearing a hectic touch of shame, abusing it to herself, when something happened to Felicia. Here eyes were by no means fixed upon the picture, but had sidelong glimpses of passing figures round her. Thus she saw something dart from behind the great overshadowing easel of an industrious artist—something which moved in a flutter and a bound, noiseless foot, and clouds of noiseless muslin. This something fell upon her suddenly, and grasped both her hands. Agitated, but not alarmed, knowing instinctively who it was, yet instinctively assuming a look of surprise and ignorance, Felicia (who, herself, was not very tall) looked down upon a pretty little wilful face, half child, half woman, radiant with smiles, and eager to speak. Following this figure was an old French maid looking kind and curious, who investigated Felicia's face and dress with a most attentive inspection, and drew as close to her mistress as decorum would allow. The little girl held Felicia's hands clasped in hers, and looked very much as if she meant to kiss her. "Oh, you are Felicita!" she cried, out of breath—"Angelo's Felicita! I know you are; do not deny me. I am so very very glad to see you here."

"And you?" said Felicia, looking down upon her, perhaps without the cordiality which such a bright little creature was accustomed to meet, and permitting without returning the pressure of her hands.

"Has he not told you of me?" said the stranger, with a momentary look of disappointment.

"My cousin Angelo has told me of ——." Felicia was about to say something rather cruel. She checked herself suddenly, perceiving the atrocity of her impulse; she was going to say "of an heiress," and paused to think of another word.

"Of somebody!" said the little stranger; "and I am somebody. Yes, look at me! he has told me of *you*, and I love you already, Felicita. I think of you quite as his sister. We shall be such friends. Come, Annette speaks only French; she will not understand a word we say; and I have a hundred things to tell you —come."

Somewhat amazed and taken by surprise, Felicia, who had only her own vague reluctance to oppose to this imperious friendship, was hurried on ere she knew what she was doing; and, bewildered by the flood of words which immediately overpowered her, as her new acquaintance clung to her arm, and, keeping half a step before her, looked up into her face, was for the moment entirely subjugated and taken captive. The two strayed along the grand galleries of the Pitti, no longer looking at the pictures, making a stray dash at one here and there, most frequently a worthless little miniature—if anything is worthless in that collection —which the little butterfly could not see perfectly without rushing to it, and exclaiming, "Oh look—do you know what this is?—isn't it pretty?" while she pulled Felicia briskly along with her by the arm. To all these girlish vagaries Felicia quietly submitted, feeling, after a while, in her elder womanly gravity, a touch of that charm of remembrance which makes one

girl just out of her girlhood indulgent to the freaks of another who is still in that rejoicing time. This girl was so much gayer, finer, more self-confident than Felicia had ever been; so much of the conscious power of wealth, and the freedom of one to whom nothing she wished for had ever been denied, was in her air and manner, that the sight of her was a kind of apotheosis of girlhood and its privileges to Felicia. She, a woman nearly twenty, tried by the early calamities of a life which had been hard upon her, could no longer venture to walk with that free step, to talk with that unrestrained voice, to say, "What does it matter if the people look at us?—let them look!" as defiant sixteen did, who was afraid of nobody. Felicia was even shy of being visible to passing eyes in that close *tête-à-tête* of confidential friendship. She smiled at herself and blushed and dropped her veil, and hurried her companion past the little groups of picture-gazers. All this the lively blue eyes perceived and understood, and made their own interpretation of.

"What are you afraid of?—people looking at us?" said the young lady. "Never mind the people, Felicita; I want to tell you something. Call me Alice, will you, please? I am so disappointed and mortified and disgusted that you did not know my name. To think that Angelo should have told me so much about you, and never mentioned my name! I shall scold him so to-night. But do call me Alice, please; and then I will tell you my darling little scheme."

"I must call you Miss Clayton. You and I are not equals," said Felicia gravely; "you are younger than I am, and I ought not to yield to you what I know is wrong. I scarcely see how we can be friends, so different is your place and mine; but at least we are not, and never can be, equals, so I must not call you by your Christian name."

The little girl looked up with her face overcast and wondering. "But—but you are as good as I am," she said, pressing Felicia's arm.

"Perhaps," said Felicia, smiling; "I did not speak about being as good; it would be sad work if the highest were to be the best as well: but we are not *equals;* you understand what that means?"

"Yes—but you are—what the servants call gentlefolks," cried Alice. "Angelo told me he was poor; I know that very well; but I know that people of good family despise those who are only rich. Is that what you mean?—do you mean because my father was only a moneyed man that I am not good enough for you?—or what do you mean?—for I know very well that Angelo is a gentleman, and you are his cousin; and unless you have taken a dislike to me, or don't think me good enough for him, I don't know what you wish me to understand, Felicita!"

"I am not speaking of Angelo. I believe he is of a good family by his father's side; but I am not a Peruzzi," said Felicia. "If I were at home in England, I could not by any chance associate with such as you. I will not deceive any one here. I am not your equal. I cannot be comfortable to meet you and call you Alice, and hear you talk of all your friends and your cousins, so very, very different from mine. Do you know," said Felicia, raising her head with quite an unusual effusion of pride, "I am much more on a level with your maid than with you?"

"Nonsense; I don't believe it!" cried Alice energetically; then the little girl made a pause, and changed her tone, evidently following out this new question in her own mind, and arranging it to suit her other ideas in respect to Angelo's family. "I suppose your father was the naughty son, was he? and ran away and married somebody he fell in love with—oh, no; I mean your mamma, Felicita. Oh, I do so love these stories; and they have sent for you here to take care of you, and make you like their own child? Now tell me; I want to know one thing: is she a very sweet person, Angelo's mother?"

A very sweet person! Felicia's lip trembled with almost irrepressible laughter. Little Alice thought it was restrained feeling; she fancied that the poor niece's gratitude and admiration were too much for speech,

and ran on in her own convenient rattle, without leaving her new acquaintance time to answer.

"She does not care for society now—she never goes out anywhere, the dear old lady!" said Alice; "and I suppose it is because you are not quite so noble as they are that I have never met you in society. Angelo says you are so good and so attentive to his mother, Felicita. Oh! don't you think you could smuggle me in sometimes, and let me help to amuse her?"

"I don't think it is possible," said Felicia laconically.

"How dreadfully English you are—how uncivil! You are not a bit like an Italian. You never say a word more than you can help, and look as if you meant it all. I really do think I shall begin not to like you," cried Alice; "but I do like you, mind," she added, once more pressing Felicia's arm; "and I never will be content till you love *me*—do you hear?"—and there was a renewed pressure of the arm she held—"because if it comes true, and—and happens, you know—we shall be quite near relations, Felicita; and I never had a sister in my life."

Unconsciously to herself, Felicia shrank a little at once from the idea and from her companion. "Don't you like to think of it?" cried the quick little girl instantly. "Felicita, would you rather that Angelo did not love me?"

"I have nothing to do with it," said Felicia, trembling a little. "Angelo is almost a stranger to me, though he is my cousin. Do not ask me, pray. I shall be glad to see him happy, and you also; but now you must let me go. Some one will come for me presently to take me home."

"Oh! but I want to speak to you first," said Alice, clinging only the more closely to her companion's arm. "Will you be quite sure not to be offended? Will you forgive me if I am going to say something wrong? Oh, Felicita! I want to know you, and see you often. And you tell me you are poor. Will you be my *parlatrice*, dear? Now it is out, and I have said it: will you, Felicita? I shall love you like my own sister, and we can have such delightful long talks, and I'll get on so quick with my Italian. Dear Felicita, will you? It would make me so happy."

With this bright little creature standing before her, pleading with her blue Saxon eyes, her rosebud face, her affectionate words, looks, and smiles and syllables, each more winning than the other—the first person who had spoken to her in her own language since she came to Florence—Felicia found resistance very difficult. The little girl was clothed in that irresistible confidence of being unrefusable which so seldom lasts beyond childhood, and was so radiant in her ignorance of disappointment that it was far harder to say nay to her than it would have been to deny a boon really needful to a careworn suppliant. Little Alice was not presumptuous either in the strength of her inexperience. She did not believe she could be denied, but asked with her whole heart notwithstanding, and with the most sincere importunity. Felicia could not look at her unmoved; somehow the little face, in its bright ignorance, touched her more than a sad one could have done. She said something, she scarcely knew what, about being quite unprepared for such a proposal, and thinking it over when she got home, and added once more that she must go, as somebody waited for her. Already she felt conscious of a momentary duplicity. Why did she not say, "My aunt is coming for me," as under any other circumstances she would have done? Poor Felicia! who had so little heart or inclination to further this delusion. Yet she watched with instinctive terror lest Madame Peruzzi's gaunt shadow should appear at one of the doors.

"And we can have such delightful talks—all about Angelo," said Alice, with a laugh and a blush—"only don't tell *him*. I would *never* let him know we mentioned his name. Oh, look, Felicita! is that dreadful old woman beckoning to *you*?—is that Madame Peruzzi's maid? Never mind her. Annette will go and tell her you are coming. Annette—Oh, Felicita! what is wrong?"

And Alice stood amazed and in dismay as her new friend burst from

her abruptly, and made all the haste possible across the room to where Madame Peruzzi stood by the door, looking for her niece. The light came full from a side-window upon that tall bony old figure, and upon the face grey with age and seamed with deep wrinkles, where the dust of time lay heavy. Madame Peruzzi wore a bonnet of very fashionable shape, though dingy material, and had some artificial flowers encircling that oval of grey hair and leathern cheek. Old age was not lovely in Angelo's mother. She had no complexion, and rather too much feature even in her youth, and the features now bore too great a resemblance to the eagle physiognomy to be at all fair to behold. She wore her usual thrifty household dress of black, with, however, a coarse gay-coloured shawl; and even a spectator more observant and of calmer judgment than Alice Clayton would have found it hard to discover anything like gentility in the old woman's figure. She carried a little travelling-bag in her hand—a bag of Felicia's, to which her aunt had taken a fancy—which was stuffed with homely purchases, and, contracting her grey eyebrows over her eyes, stood waiting for her niece, and contemplating Alice with curiosity scarcely less keen than her own. Alice Clayton made a very different vision to the eyes of Madame Peruzzi. Her pretty face, which was characteristic of little beyond English good health and good temper, and the bloom and beauty of extreme youth, the old lady bestowed but little attention upon; but the pretty perfection of her morning dress, the many-flounced muslin, gay and light, the delicate falls of embroidery about her neck and wrists, the dainty hat, were not lost upon Madame Peruzzi. She saw a sight not unfamiliar to Florentine eyes—the English girl perfectly equipped in everything appropriate to her youth and condition, whose appearance testified, beyond a doubt, to the wealth and luxury of her family. There she stood, with her French maid close behind her, gazing with all her eyes at Madame Peruzzi, full of curiosity, murmuring to herself, "What an old witch!" resolute to ask Angelo who that extraordinary figure belonged to, and if it was his mother's faithful hundred-year-old traditionary maid. "If she were not such a hideous old creature, what fun it would be to have her tell us stories!" said the unconscious Alice to herself, as she gazed at her lover's mother, and at Felicia in her black dress hastening to join her; while Madame Peruzzi, in return, gazed at Alice, speculating on who *she* was, and whether Felicia's acquaintance with her might be an opening into "society" for her niece, and an enlargement of connection for her son. Between the two, Felicia, with a flutter and pang, ran across the spacious room, and caught at her aunt's arm, and drew her hastily away. She felt so hurried and anxious to escape that she could scarcely hear or understand the questions with which Madame Peruzzi assailed her, and certainly had neither breath nor inclination to answer them. She hurried the old lady down the stairs at a most unusual pace, and could not help looking back again and again to see if they were followed or observed, and yet she could not have explained to any one why she did it. Certainly it was nothing to her, and it is quite doubtful whether Angelo, under the same circumstances, would have taken any pains to conceal his mother. But Felicia could not resist her impulse. She only felt safe at last in the Via Giugnio, within the shady portals of their own lofty house.

Then Madame Peruzzi was much dissatisfied with the very brief reply which her niece gave to her questions — "a young Englishwoman, whom she knew." The old lady had ocular demonstration that her niece knew the little stranger, and that she was English; but who was she?—and how had Felicia became acquainted with her?—and how long had she been in Florence?—and of what degree were her friends?—and where did she live?—and altogether who was she? The result was so much the less satisfactory, that Felicia could not have answered if she would, and would not if she could. On the contrary, she restrained herself carefully, and did not even confess that she did not know. Angelo himself,

she said to herself, somewhat bitterly, must tell his mother. She had been sufficiently vexed already without *that*. The consequence was that the day passed somewhat uncomfortably in the Via Giugnio, where Madame Peruzzi's curiosity lasted long, and was mixed with some jealousy and annoyance in the thought that her English niece meant to keep this fine acquaintance to herself, and was not disposed to share with Angelo the further advantages it might bring. The old lady laid up in her mind every particular of what she had seen, to tell her son. Perhaps he could succeed better with Felicia than she had done, and at least it was right that he should know.

While Felicia, for her part, a little sulky and solitary, in her own room, pondered the interview, and watched at her window behind the curtains, to see Alice in undisguised solicitude watching for her from the opposite house. Amidst all the disagreeable feelings which this little girl had excited in her mind, she still felt a certain indescribable melting towards the sweet English face and English tongue, the confidential and frank accost of the stranger. She was so young, after all—only sixteen—that Felicia's womanly dissatisfaction at her unconcealed liking for Angelo would have very speedily given way, had Angelo been nothing more than a mere relative to Felicia. As it was, her conscience and her imagination tormented her the whole day long. What was Angelo to her?—why should she object to anybody preferring him, or saying so? Why should not the wealthy orphan bestow her fortune on Angelo if she pleased? Then Felicia's mocking fancy taunted her with believing Alice her *rival;* and with a stinging blush and bitter humiliation, she flew from her window. Her rival! All Felicia's work, and all the haste she made about it, and all her other resources of thought and speech, could not drive that humiliating suggestion out of her head. Her blush and her discomfort lasted the whole day. She had not a word to say, nor a look to bestow on Angelo, though she forced herself to sit rigidly opposite to him while his mother recounted every detail of the appearance of Alice, and complained that Felicia would not tell her who the stranger was. Angelo had no such delicacy. *He* disclosed all that he knew with the frankest equanimity. She was very rich, the little Englishwoman, and pretty, yes—and was extremely gracious to himself, he added with a laugh and look which sent Madame Peruzzi's ambitious hopes bounding upwards. This occurred in the afternoon, when it was still daylight, the young man having appeared this day much earlier than his wont. He stood at the window as he spoke, with something of the pleased hesitation and fun of a young girl describing a conquest, looking down upon the windows where Alice certainly was not visible, though Felicia suspected otherwise. Madame Peruzzi sat on the sofa, asking questions and admiring him, as, indeed, was not wonderful, for he looked all the handsomer for looking pleased, while Felicia sat by looking on with the most intolerable impatience in her mind. She could not bear to see him smiling with that womanish complacency. She was too much interested for his credit to tolerate it. The look disturbed her beyond measure in her imperative youthful thoughts. She was ashamed for him—he who was happily and totally unconscious in his own person of having anything to be ashamed of, and at last joined in the conversation when too much provoked to bear any longer her spectator position.

"Miss Clayton wishes me to be her *parlatrice*," said Felicia. "I would not decide, aunt, before consulting you. Should you object?"

She glanced at Angelo as she spoke, and saw that he started slightly, but not that he was discomposed or mortified at the thought of his little lady-love knowing a relation of his to be in circumstances which could justify such an offer. Angelo was not a schemer—he was content to marry the heiress as a very proper and legitimate means of promoting his own interest, but not to deceive her into a marriage with him. Felicia, in the ignorance of her insular notions, having done him more than justice at one time, and

given him credit for exalted sentiments impossible to the atmosphere in which he lived, did him less than justice now. He would have brought in the astounded Alice into this very *sala* if he could have done it with propriety, as smiling and good-humoured as now.

"My soul," said Madame Peruzzi, faltering a little—for she could not forget that, until ten minutes before, her hopes had been fixed on Felicita as her son's wife, and the prudent old lady still remembered that a bird in the hand was more satisfactory than a dozen in the bush—"My soul, you have no need to give yourself trouble. You have enough, Felicia mia—and—it might harm our Angelo, thou perceivest, my life!"

"Nay; but Felicita has no friends—this signorina longs to know her, and loves her already," said Angelo: "be not hindered, my cousin, by any thought of me."

"You do not know the English," said Felicia, turning to him quickly with a significance of meaning which Angelo could not even guess at. "Should I have presented Miss Clayton to your mother, Angelo?"

"And why not?" said Angelo, turning his eyes from Felicia to his mother—then, perhaps, he coloured slightly. "They saw each other," he said; "I will tell Mees Aleece who it was."

"Nay, my son," said Madame Peruzzi, "they are proud, these English, as Felicita says. I had but my household dress, and was not like thy mother. Say it was thy old nurse, or thy mother's maid. Thy rich heiress shall never scorn thee, my life, for thy mother's sake."

Angelo crossed over quickly to her sofa, and kissed Madame Peruzzi's hollow grey unlovely cheek. "Who scorns my mother scorns me," he said, with a glance towards his cousin, who looked on with amazed and uncomprehending eyes.

Felicia was totally discomfited. She "gave it up" in complete bewilderment; she could no more understand how fortune-hunting was a perfectly honourable and laudable occupation, and could be pursued honestly without guile or concealment, than Angelo could understand the self-delusions of Alice concerning himself, nor how utterly dismayed that young lady would be could she see the reality of his domestic arrangements, and know his mother as she was.

CHAPTER V.

But when Angelo next encountered Alice Clayton, and was accosted by her with eager questions about his cousin, and inquiries concerning the "frightful old witch" who hurried Felicia away, the young man began to understand what his cousin meant when she said he did not understand the English; and the blue eyes fixed upon him took away his courage. He did not answer boldly that it was his mother, as he meant to do, but faltered, and found himself assenting at last when Alice suggested his mother's maid. When he had done this a great revolution of feeling befell Angelo. He was half disgusted, half stimulated by the deception. It was no longer a jesting matter to him. Now, in mere vindication of himself to himself, it became necessary to press his suit and become serious in it; while the more he did so, the less he liked his little heiress; and a certain sense of guilt in his conscience, and the dishonour of denying his mother, gave a bitterness to every thought of her, which by no means promoted his happiness as a lover. Meanwhile Felicia, who disapproved of him and watched him, and seemed to perceive by intuition his sentiments and his actions alike, became more and more interesting to Angelo. He was flattered by that constant noiseless watchful regard which he knew she bestowed upon him. He felt that she found him out, and saw the change in his mind; and feeling, for the first time in his life, pain and dissatisfaction with himself, Angelo, instead of being offended by her unexpressed perceptions, felt a relief in grumbling vaguely to her

over all those vague miseries upon which youthful people revenge the youthful pangs of their own beginning life.

While things were in this condition, Alice Clayton lost no opportunity to improve her acquaintance with Felicia. She watched from the windows when she went out, and followed her; she continued to encounter her in all sorts of unlikely places; she took that girlish violent fancy for the elder young woman, which is generally every girl's first love;—indeed, but for the greater force and excitement of what Alice supposed to be *real* love—the love which would blossom into bridal cake and orange blossoms—it is extremely doubtful whether the little girl liked Angelo better than his cousin; and at last, by persistence and entreaties, she gained her end. Felicia, tormented by constant petitions, and full of an indescribable curiosity about the progress of affairs between Angelo and the little stranger, consented at length to become her *parlatrice*. This peculiar office was one excellently well adapted for making her acquainted with everything which passed in or flashed through the volatile and girlish mind of Alice. A *parlatrice* is a talking teacher—a shoot from the great governess tree—from whom no accomplishment is required, but a good accent and tolerable command of her own language, and whose duty is simply to talk with the individual under instruction. An easy task to all appearance, but not so easy as it seems when it is the pupil who is bent upon talking, and whose thoughts flood into abundant rivers of English instead of strait streams of Italian. It was now winter, and winter is not much more gracious in Florence than in England; but while the weather grew colder and colder, Madame Peruzzi's stony rooms remained innocent of fire, and perhaps Felicia found an additional inducement in the warm comfort of the carpeted apartment which was Alice's dressing-room, and where she could warm her chilly English fingers at the sparkling wood-fire and recall insular comforts without rebuke. Here she heard all about the antecedents, prospects, and limitations of her young companion's life. Alice Clayton was the only child of a rich man, who had left her nothing much to boast of in the way of family connections on his side, and no relative on her mother's save a proud aunt, who could scarcely forgive her sister's low marriage, and yet was not indisposed to accept the guardianship of a young lady with a hundred thousand pounds. This, however, Mr Clayton had strictly guarded against. The guardian of Alice was a London solicitor—an excellent man, who lived in Bedford Row, and was the most innocent and inexperienced of old bachelors. Mr Elcombe, totally ignorant what to do with her, had confided her to the care of his sister-in-law, a semi-fashionable widow of these regions, and under the maternal care of Mrs George Elcombe the young heiress had come to Italy, and at sixteen had made her appearance in the society of Florence. "With her fortune," her accommodating chaperon saw no advantage in retaining Miss Clayton in girlish bondage. It did not matter to *her* how early she came out. Here, accordingly, the child well-pleased had come into all the privileges of the woman, had met Angelo Peruzzi, and pleased with his good looks, and flattered with the novelty and frolic of the whole matter, had fallen in love, according to her own showing, at first sight. Falling in love had no sentimental influence upon Alice. She thought it the best fun possible, and enjoyed, above all her other pleasure, that delightful secret which she could only discuss with Felicia, and which, "for all the world," must never be mentioned to anybody else. One drawback, however, remained to her happiness. Till she was twenty-one she was under her guardian's authority. She could neither marry nor do anything else of importance without his consent.

"But about Angelo?" cried Felicia one day, astounded to hear of this hindrance—"does he expect to satisfy your guardian? or what is to be done?"

"That is just what he asked me the other day," said the laughing Alice; "and I told him, to be sure,

he must wait. Oh, *I* am not in a hurry at all, I assure you—*I* can wait very well till I come of age."

"But if you wait till you come of age," said Felicia quickly, "you will not marry Angelo."

"Felicita!" cried her little companion indignantly. "Do you mean to suppose that I will be inconstant? or do you think he will forget me?"

"I do not know," said Felicia—"perhaps one, perhaps the other; but you cannot expect Angelo to wait for four—five years."

"The knights long ago used to wait for scores of years," said Alice, indignantly.

"I hope they were very happy at the end," said her grave senior, with a smile; "but there are no such knights nowadays. And Angelo is very different, and you are so young: you two will never wait for each other through five long years."

"We will, though!" cried Alice. "Felicita, I do believe you don't like us to be fond of each other. I always thought so from the first. Something is wrong: either you don't approve of it, or you don't like me, or something. You are always English and downright on other things, but you are a regular Italian here—you never say right out what you mean."

"I am sorry you think so," said Felicia, with a sudden painful blush and paleness immediately succeeding each other, which would have betrayed her to a more skilled observer of human emotions; "but I have nothing to do with it, and no right either to approve or disapprove. Besides, we are speaking English," she added immediately in Italian, "and that is quite contrary to our purpose. If you are going to speak English, Miss Elcombe will be a better *parlatrice* than me."

"Oh, never mind the *parlatrice*. Imagine me speaking to Maria Elcombe of Angelo!" cried Alice, with a little burst of laughter. Felicia, who sat with her back to the door, could not understand how it was that the little girl's cheeks suddenly flushed crimson, and an injured sullen look of anger came upon her face. Half afraid to look round, and guessing the domestic accident which had happened, Felicia did not turn her head, but watched the course of events in her companion's face. She knew, by the look of Alice, that some one was approaching; and though she heard no footstep, was scarcely surprised by Mrs Elcombe's distinct slow voice close at her ear. "Who was it, Miss Clayton, may I ask, whom you could not speak of to Maria?"

Alice was greatly discomfited, and first of all she was angry, as was natural to a spoiled child. "I am not obliged to speak to Maria of everybody I know," she said, with a pout and a frown. Mrs Elcombe was still invisible to Felicia, who sat motionless, sunk in a low easy-chair, with the colour fluctuating rather uneasily on her own cheek, and her eyes fixed upon the blushing, pouting, discomposed face before her. Then an authoritative rustle of silk made itself heard in the apartment, and Mrs Elcombe, gliding round behind Felicia's chair, seated herself beside Alice, and took the affronted little girl's hand affectionately into her own.

"By no means, my dear child! Speak to Maria of whom you please," said this sensible woman, remembering that young ladies of Alice Clayton's endowments demand other treatment from ordinary girls of sixteen. "You know how glad I always am when you make *nice* friends—friends whom I can approve of;" and here the slightest side-glance in the world made a parenthesis of Felicia, and excepted *her;* "but you are my little ward at present, my love. I am responsible to my brother for so precious a charge, and you must forgive me for inquiring, my sweet Alice. I heard what seemed to me a gentleman's name—a gentleman's *Christian* name. Most probably I know him also, and think him charming; but, my love, you can surely speak of him to *me*."

This appeal threw Alice into the greatest confusion and dismay, and had a still more painful effect upon Felicia, whose presence Mrs Elcombe studiously ignored after that one glance, but for whom it was much less easy to suppose herself a piece

of furniture than it was for that respectable woman of the world to conclude her to be. Felicia was all the more humiliated and abashed that she felt herself to have no real standing-ground here. She was no *parlatrice*, though she filled that office. She had no claim whatever to consider herself an equal or companion — not even the imaginary claim of nobility; the few drops of long-descended blood which made Angelo a Peruzzi. Felicia's blood was of a very mediocre Italian quality, diluted by intensely commonplace English. Any one with a prejudiced eye, like Mrs Elcombe, finding her here so familiarly installed, and investigating her claims, must infallibly conclude her an accomplice of her cousin's, the agent of a clandestine correspondence; and Felicia, who had so little sympathy with this correspondence, felt her breast swell and her cheek burn, while smooth Mrs Elcombe, the pleasantest of maternal women, went on, wooing the confidence of her heiress with every appearance of believing herself to be alone with Alice, and having lost sight entirely of the presence of a third person in the room.

In the mean time Alice, faltering and ashamed, half disposed to cry, and half to be angry, did not know what to answer. She was not crafty or wise by any means, though she was an heiress, and the English fashion of answering honestly a fair question was strong upon the little girl. She could not tell what to do; she looked at Felicia, but it awed even Alice for the moment to see how her dignified chaperone ignored Felicia's presence. Then a little indignation came to her aid; she began to pluck at the corners of her handkerchief, and pout once more. Then her answer came reluctantly, being a subterfuge. "I know nobody, Mrs Elcombe, that you do not know as well. I don't know any gentleman in Florence" (here the breath and the voice quickened with rising anger) "whom I have not seen with you."

"Precisely, my love; I am quite aware of that," said Mrs Elcombe, cheerfully; "therefore, Alice, I am sure, when you think of it, you cannot have the slightest objection to tell me whom you were speaking of. I have the most perfect confidence in *you*, my dear child; you don't suppose that I don't *trust* you; but I confess I am curious and interested to know who it was."

Here followed another pause, then Felicia rose. "Perhaps I may go now," she said hurriedly. "You will not want me again this afternoon, Miss Clayton; and you can let me know afterwards when I am to come again."

"Oh, by all means, my love, let the young person go," said Mrs Elcombe, looking up as if she had discovered Felicia for the first time. "We are going out to make some calls presently. Surely, Miss Clayton does not require you any longer to-day; it is a pity to detain her, wasting her time. I hope you have a good many pupils. Good-day. I never like to detain such people, my dear, after I have done with them," said the excellent matron, in audible consideration, "for their time, you know, is their fortune."

"But, Felicita, Felicita, stop! Oh, Mrs Elcombe, you mistake—she has no pupils!—she is quite as good as we are," cried Alice, rising in great distress; "she only comes because it is a favour to me. Felicita, stay! I cannot let you leave me so."

"I beg the young lady's pardon," said Mrs Elcombe; "but I think it is always a pity to have things done as a favour which you can pay money for, and get the proper persons to do —I don't mean anything in respect to the present instance, but as a general rule, my dear Alice, I think you will find it useful to remember what I say. The young lady is Mademoiselle Antini, I think; but, perhaps, as we were beginning quite a private conversation, my love, we need not detain her now."

Alice ran to Felicia, put her arms round her, and kissed her eagerly. "Don't be angry, please—I shall not tell her anything—oh, Felicita, dear, don't be vexed!—and promise you will come again to-morrow!" cried Alice, in a whisper, close to Felicia's ear.

"Tell Mrs Elcombe anything you please; you surely cannot suppose I

want anything concealed from her," said Felicia, quietly; "I should not have come at all, but, as I supposed, with her perfect concurrence; and I will ask to see her if I come to-morrow."

So saying, despite the frightened and deprecating look with which Alice replied, and the gesture she made to detain her, Felicia went away—her heart beating quicker, and her pride, such as it was, sore and injured. After all, everything Mrs Elcombe had said was quite true: she was in an undeniably false position — her cousin's agent! and the conversation that might ensue touching Angelo was sure to bear fruit of one kind or other. She went away, accordingly, with some commotion in her heart.

Angelo lingered at home that evening. Angelo himself was dissatisfied and out of sorts. The saucy composure with which his little heiress had announced to him that she was not at all in haste, and that he must wait five years, confounded the young man. Hopes of sudden wealth are not good for any one; and Angelo felt a certain share of the gambler's feverishness and contempt for ordinary means and revenues. There are circumstances under which the pretty sauciness and assurance of pretty little girls like Alice Clayton are exceedingly captivating and delightful; but there are other circumstances which give quite a different aspect to such coquettish girlish impertinences. Angelo had never made very desperate love to the little English-woman—she did not require it. Fun and good-humour, and a general inclination to abet all her frolics and do what she wanted him, were quite enough for the sixteen-year-old beauty. But to wait five years! What would become of that youthful flirtation in five years? The young Florentine was very sulky, sufficiently inclined to talk over his troubles, but ashamed to enter upon the subject with Felicia, who alone could understand him. The *sala* that evening was less comfortable than it had used to be in summer. January in Florence is January without any equivoque; and though Madame Peruzzi had a stove in the room, she was an old-fashioned Italian, and was not in the least inclined to use it, not to speak of the high price of the wood. The old lady, accordingly, less pleased than ever to sit up through the long cold evening, sat in her usual sofa corner wrapped up in a large ancient faded shawl, beneath which she wore so many old jackets and invisible comforters that her leanness was rounded into very respectable proportions. Close beside her, under her skirts, only visible when she made some movement, was a little round earthenware jar with a handle, within which a little heap of charcoal smouldered in white ashes. Madame Peruzzi would have scorned the brightest coal-fire in all England, in compensation or exchange for that unwholesome little furnace under her skirts; but with all her shawls huddled round and her pan of charcoal, she did not look quite an impersonation of that sunny, glowing, fervid Italy of which we read in books. Everything looked cold to-night—poor Felicia, working at her needlework with blue fingers, and beginning to repent of her stubborn English resistance to the pan of charcoal—Angelo leaning his arms on the chilly marble table with discontent and disappointment on his face. Even Angelo felt the cold pinch his feet upon those disconsolate tiles, which no carpet ever had covered, and buttoned his great-coat over his breast with a physical sensation which seconded his mental discomforts and increased them. Felicia wore the warmest winter dress she had and a shawl, which rather shocked her English sentiments of home-propriety, but was quite indispensable. They were a very dreary party under the two bright steady lights of their tall lamp. It was a kind of Italian interior unknown to strangers, and novel in its way.

"I wish," cried Angelo, at last, in a sudden burst as if his thoughts had been going on in this strain, and only broke from him when he could restrain himself no longer—"I wish that this Firenze had never been 'la bella.' I wish we had no Dante, no Giotti, no fame, Felicita! The past murders us. Is there so much power

in a mass of stone and marble, in a line of pictures, that they should trample the life out of generations of men? I wish these strangers, these travellers, these wandering English, would find some other place to visit and admire and degrade. I wish they would but leave us our own country, to make the best of it for ourselves. They would degrade us all into cooks, and couriers, and hotel-keepers. It should not be—it is shame!"

"What have the English done, that you should speak so?" cried Felicia, somewhat indignantly; for her national prejudices were very easily roused, and this unexpected attack astounded her beyond measure.

"Done!—oh nothing very bad; they have taken my mother's house, floor after floor, and made up our income," said Angelo, with an angry laugh. "They have done nothing wrong, my English cousin. Why should they do *every* thing, I say? Why are they doing a thousand things everywhere, every one, all over the face of the earth, except Italy? Why must we never live out of hearing of those frogs who croak to us of their present and our past? Ah, shall we never have anything but a past! You stare at me, Felicita; you think me mad, I who am useless and idle as you say, but I too am an Italian. I think of my country as well as another. I could be a revolutionary, a politician as well as another; and if I say nothing, it is for my mother's sake."

"But your mother would not hinder you from making a revolution in yourself, Angelo," said Felicia, philosophically, improving the opportunity.

Angelo laughed. "Insatiable moralist!" he said, shrugging his shoulders, "I have already had the honour of telling you what are the only things I could do, copying pictures, carving alabaster, making porcelain. Then there are the Government bureaus, it is true; but I have no interest, Felicita mia; what shall I do?"

"You only mock me, Angelo," said Felicia. "You never think seriously, much less speak seriously. You want to be rich and have everything that pleases you, but you don't want to work for it. A great many people are like that—it is not singular to you."

Her tone stung her cousin deeply. "And you—you despise me!" he said. "Because I care more for what you think than for what all the world thinks, therefore you scorn me."

"Do not say so," said Felicia, quickly; "Alice Clayton's opinion ought to be, and is, a great deal more important to you than mine. She thinks you always right; I do not; but that is no fault of mine."

"Alice Clayton is a child," said Angelo; "her opinion is what pleases her for the moment. How should she judge of a man? she knows less of me than Marietta does. I am a stranger to her disposition, to her little experience, and to her heart."

"Then why, for heaven's sake," said Felicia, before she was aware of what she said—then she paused: "I do not understand what you mean."

"But I understand it perfectly," said Angelo, with pique. "Little Mees Aleece can play with me, she supposes, but she shall see otherwise. If she had me in her power, this little girl, it shall be but once and no more."

"Angelo," said Felicia, "I am not a proper adviser on such a matter—I am not a proper confidante. Pray be so good as to say no more to me. I can understand the other subject of your complaints, but not this."

"Yet it is the same subject, Felicita," cried the young man: "can I, who do nothing, and have no hope—can I have a wife like your Englishman? Can I ask any woman to live as my mother lives—she who is old and contented with her life, and an Italian? What must I do? You tell me work; but unless I make me an exile, there is nothing to work at; and, my cousin, if I marry little Alice, I will be good to her. I will not love her, but she shall have nothing to complain of me. Why should not I marry her?—but I will not wait five years."

"Cousin Angelo," said Felicia, rising abruptly from the table, "I wish you good-night; you oppress me, and I will not bear it. I have

nothing to do with your marrying or your love. I am only a plain English girl, and I do not understand them—I bid you good-night."

And with a hurried step and voice that faltered slightly, she went away, not in a very comfortable condition of mind, poor girl; tried on both sides beyond what was bearable, yet already blaming herself for her ebullition of impatience, and fancying she had betrayed feelings which she would have given the world to hide. Yet, inconsistent as human nature is, this sudden and angry departure of his cousin somehow cheered and exhilarated Angelo. His cheek took a warmer glow—he looked after her with a gleam in his eyes which had not been there a moment before. He was not affronted, but encouraged, and made Felicia's excuses to his mother, and sat by himself when the old lady was gone, with fancies which warmed his heart, but in which no thought of Alice Clayton interposed. He was not sorry nor concerned—he took no new resolution on the moment—he considered nothing—but in the pleasure of the moment basked like a child and took no further thought.

While, as for Felicia, she laid down her head upon her bed, till even that homely couch trembled with her restrained trouble. She was humiliated, grieved, oppressed; between these two her judgment was perpetually shocked and her heart wounded. To-morrow even opened to her a new variety of trial. To-morrow the chances were that accusations against her as a secret agent of Angelo's courtship would be brought with unanswerable logic; and Alice, when they were alone, would once more toss her little head in saucy triumph, and talk of leading Angelo, like a second Jacob, a willing wooer for five long years. Yet while this had to be looked for, *she* was the person whom Angelo himself offended with looks and suggestions of love, and to whom he did not scruple to confess his carelessness for Alice. She scorned him, she despised him, she turned with proud disgust from his unworthiness; yet, poor girl! leaned her head upon her bed, devouring sobs whose bitterness lay all in the fact that he was unworthy, and defending him against herself with a breaking heart. It was not Angelo, it was his education, his race, the atmosphere which surrounded him. The one sat smiling and dreaming in one room, pleasing himself in the moment, and taking no thought for the morrow; the other, on the other side of the wall, kept her sobs in her heart, thinking with terror of that inevitable to-morrow, and believing that she would be content to give her own life, ere the day broke, only to wake the soul of Angelo to better things, and open his eyes to honour and truth. Poor Felicia! and poor Angelo!—but it was very true her greater enlightenment did not make her happier. The young Florentine went smiling to his rest, and slept the sleep of youth half an hour thereafter; while his English cousin, chafing and grieving herself with that most intolerable of troubles, the moral obtuseness of the person most dear to her in the world, wept through half the night.

CHAPTER VI.

Brightly this day of Felicia's trial broke upon Florence—bright with all the dazzling sheen of winter—a cloudless sky, an unshaded sun, everything gay to look at, but the shrill *Tramontana* whistling from the hills, and winter seated supreme in the stony apartments of Italian poverty. In this morning's light Madame Peruzzi's shawled figure, encumbered with all its wrappings, was even more remarkable than it had been at night. A woollen knitted cap tied over her ears—a dark-brown dingy article, by no means improving to her complexion—worsted mits on the lean hands, in which, throughout the house, wherever she went in her morning perambulations, the old lady carried her little jar of charcoal, and her shawl enveloping the entire remainder of her person, left much to the imagination, but did not stimulate that faculty with very sweet sugges-

tions. While in the dazzle of the sunshine, everything in that bare little *sala* shone so bitterly and remorselessly cold, that it is not wonderful if Felicia, who was only in her first Italian winter, and not quite inured to the domestic delights of that season, felt chilled to her heart. Possibly this chill was no disadvantage at that crisis, for the extreme physical discomfort she felt not only blunted her feelings a little to future mental suffering, but held up before her, with an aspect of the most irresistible temptation, the cosy fire and warm interior of Alice Clayton's room.

Thither accordingly, a little after mid-day, Felicia betook herself, with no small flutter in her heart. She did not enter as usual, and make her way to the apartment of Alice. She asked for Mrs Elcombe, and was ushered up with solemnity into the drawing-room, to have that audience. Mrs Elcombe, though she was not a great lady at home, could manage to personate one very tolerably at Florence; and, to tell the truth, Felicia had so little experience of great ladies that she had entire faith in the pretensions of her little friend's guardian and chaperon. With Mrs Elcombe in the drawing-room was seated an elderly gentleman, looking much fatigued, heated, and *flustered*, if such a feminine adjective is applicable to elderly gentlemen. He looked precisely as if, vexed and worried out of his wits, he had escaped from some unsuccessful conflict, and thrown himself, in sheer exhaustion, into that chair. Seeing him, as she began to speak, Felicia hesitated, and made a pause. Mrs Elcombe hastened to explain—"This is Mr Elcombe, Miss Clayton's guardian, my brother. He is newly arrived, and naturally very anxious about his previous young charge. Pray tell me with confidence anything you may have to say."

"I have nothing to say, except to know whether—as I supposed from what you said yesterday—you have any objection to my visits to Miss Clayton," said Felicia. "I would have given them up at once; but—indeed I have not many friends in Florence, and it is a pleasure to see her sometimes; besides, that she wants me; but I thought it right in the first place, before seeing her again, to see you."

"I am much obliged—it is very judicious—pray be seated, mademoiselle," said Mrs Elcombe. "I am puzzled, however, to know in what capacity you visit my young ward. I had supposed as her *parlatrice?* She engaged you, as I imagined—indeed, I remember, finding you to be perfectly respectable so far as I could ascertain, that I gave my consent to make an arrangement; but according to what you say, I should suppose your visits to be those of friendship, which makes a difference. May I ask which is the case?"

"Certainly I have come to speak Italian with Miss Clayton," said Felicia, blushing painfully; "but I have not taken money from her, and never meant to do so. I came because she entreated me."

"And how did she know you, may I ask?" continued the great lady, fixing upon Felicia her cold and steady eyes.

"I believe through my cousin, whom she has frequently met," said Felicia as steadily, though her heart beat loud, and the colour, in spite of herself, fluctuated on her cheek.

"So! I believe we are coming to the bottom of it now," cried Mrs Elcombe, turning to her brother-in-law with a look of triumph. "Your cousin is Angelo Peruzzi; he knows our poor child's fortune, and in case his own suit should not prosper sufficiently of itself, he has managed to place you about her person, to convey his messages and love-letters, and so forth; and to make her suppose a beggarly Florentine idler to be a young Italian nobleman! Oh, I see the whole! Can you dare to look in my face and deny what I say?"

Felicia had become very pale; she was still standing, and grasped the back of a chair unconsciously as Mrs Elcombe spoke, half to support herself, half to express somehow by an irrepressible gesture the indignation that was in her. "I will deny nothing that is true," she said, commanding herself with nervous self-control. "Angelo Peruzzi is my cousin. Because he had spoken of me to her, Miss Clayton claimed my

acquaintance one morning in the gallery of the Palace. That is all my cousin has to do, so far as I am aware, with our acquaintance. If Angelo ever wrote to her, I am ignorant of it. I have never borne any message whatever between them. I have nothing to do with what he wishes, or what she wishes. They are both able to answer for themselves. Now will you be good enough to answer my question—I have answered yours. Do you object to my visits to Miss Clayton? May I beg that you will tell me yes or no?"

Mrs Elcombe stared at her questioner with speechless consternation. She expected the presumptuous young woman to be totally confounded, and lo! she was still able to answer. "I see you will not lose anything for want of confidence, mademoiselle," she said with a gasp. "To dare me to my very face! Do you suppose I believe your fine story? No! This poor child shall not be sacrificed to a foreign fortune-hunter if I can help it. I prohibit your visits to Miss Clayton—do you hear? I will give orders that you are not to be admitted again."

"Stay a moment," said the distressed elderly gentleman, who all this time had been recovering breath and looking on. "The young woman seems to me to have answered very sensibly and clearly—very different from that little fury in the other room—not to say that you have exposed your case unpardonably, sister, as indeed was to be expected. May I ask how it is that you, being an Italian, speak English so well?"

"I *am* English," said Felicia; she had no breath for more than these three laconic words.

"Ah, indeed; and what service, then, were you likely to be to Alice Clayton, when you went to her as her parla — parla — what-do-you-call-it? Eh, can you answer me that?"

"My father was an Italian—the one language is to me as familiar as the other," said Felicia, quietly.

"Hum—ah. What do you know, then, about this courtship business?" said the stranger. "Girls are always intrusted about such matters. Tell us in confidence, and be sure *I* shan't blame you. What hand have *you* had in it? Eh?"

"None whatever," said Felicia.

"Well, well; that is not precisely what I mean. What do you know about it? That will satisfy me!"

"I know nothing at all about it," said Felicia with some obstinacy—then she paused. "I am English, and I am not a waiting-woman. I neither will nor can repeat to you all that Alice Clayton—a little girl of sixteen—may have said to me. I am not aware of any duty which could make me do that; but so far from wishing to help on what you call a courtship between them, the idea is grievous to me. I have every reason in the world to oppose it," said Felicia hurriedly, giving way in spite of herself to her natural feelings. "My cousin's honour—his whole life—— But it is useless to tell you what I think on such a subject. May I see Miss Clayton? I have no further concern with the matter."

"Sister," said the lawyer, whose eyes had been fixed on Felicia while she spoke, "I see no reason to doubt what this young lady says. Let her go to Alice, and as often as she will. I believe she speaks the truth."

"As you will! The unfortunate child is your ward; let her be sacrificed," cried Mrs Elcombe. But Felicia did not wait to hear the end of her oration; she made a little curtsy of gratitude to her defender, and hurried away.

The half of it was over; now for Alice, whose saucy girlish brag of the impatience of her lover, and determination to make him wait, was perhaps rather more aggravating than even the doubts and interrogatories of her friends. But Alice to-day was neither saucy nor triumphant; she lay sunk in a great chair with her hands over her face, sobbing sobs of petulant anger, shame, and vexation—a childish passion. Felicia was entirely vanquished by this strange and unexpected trouble. She did not believe the little girl could have felt anything so much, nor did she understand what was the occasion of her sudden grief. Something in which Angelo on the one side and her newly-arrived guardian

on the other, had to do, was evident; but all Felicia's personal indignation was quenched at once by the sight of her tears. What had she to do weeping, that bright little happy creature? There are certainly some people in the world who are not born to weep, and whose chance sufferings strike with a sense of something intolerable the saddest spectators who see them. Little Alice Clayton, with her sixteen-year-old beauty, was one of these.

"What has happened? what is the matter?" cried Felicia, sitting down beside her, and drawing away the little hands from her face. "Let me make your mind easy by telling you that Mr Elcombe himself has just given me permission to come. I am not here under disapproval. Your guardian has sent me; and now tell me what is wrong?"

"Oh, Felicita," cried Alice suddenly, throwing herself upon Felicita's shoulder, "I will depend upon you, I will trust to you; though all the world should deceive me, I know you will tell me the truth; and if he really loves me, Felicita, I will wait for him ten, twenty—I do not mind if it was a hundred years!"

Felicia involuntarily drew herself away. "A hundred years is a long promise," she said, with a trembling smile.

"But that is no answer," cried Alice, recovering her animation. "I said I would depend on you, and believe whatever you said; and I will, Felicita! They tell me Angelo wants my fortune, and does not care for me. They try to make me believe nobody could love me at my age: that is a falsehood, I know!" cried Alice, with sparkling eyes, which flashed through her tears: "they might as well say at once that nobody could ever love a girl that had a fortune, for that is what they mean; but never mind, Felicita! It is of Angelo they were speaking—Angelo, your cousin, who is very fond of you, and tells you what he thinks, I know he does. If you will say you are sure he loves me, Felicita, I will wait for him, I tell you, a dozen years!"

This serious appeal took Felicia by surprise. She grew red and grew pale and drew back as her young companion bent forward, with a pang which she could not express. For the moment she felt guilty and a culprit, with the blue eyes of Alice gazing so earnestly and unsuspiciously in her face. How could she answer?—she who remembered, no further gone than last night, those looks and words of Angelo's which sent her thrilling with mortified pride, yet tenderness inextinguishable, to the solitude of her own chamber. When that first natural shock was past, and when she supposed she could detect a sharper and less earnest scrutiny in Alice's eyes, the poor girl once more grew indignant. Bad enough that she should be accused of abetting a wooing so little to her mind. Now must she be called upon to answer for him, and pledge her own sincerity for his? If Felicia had been a young lady in a novel, she would doubtless have recognised in this the moment for self-sacrifice—the moment in which to make a holocaust of her own feelings, and transfer, with the insulting generosity of a modern heroine, the heart which she knew to be her own, to the other less fortunate woman, who only wished for it. But as she was only a plain girl, accustomed to tell the truth, this climax of feminine virtue was not to be expected from her. And happily for herself she grew angry, resentful of all the perplexities forced upon her. She drew quite back from her little friend, or little tormentor. She rose up, and gathered her cloak about her with haste and agitation. She would go away—she was safe only in flight.

"It is not a question which can be asked of me," she said, with so much more than her usual gravity that Alice thought her stern, and grew quiet unawares. "Only one person can or ought to answer you. You must not repeat to me such words. No, you do me wrong; it is cruel to put such a question to me—"

"Why? you ought to know best. You are not going away, Felicita? Oh, don't go away! oh, I do so want you," cried Alice, rising and throwing herself upon her friend's arm. "I have everything to tell you, and I want to know what I should do, and

I want to ask about Angelo, and I want—oh, Felicita, don't *you* care at all about me? Won't you stay?"

"I care a great deal about you, but I will not stay," said Felicia firmly. "I can neither advise you what to do, nor tell you about Angelo. Ask Angelo himself, he is the proper person to speak to; and do what you think best. I will come back when you please; but I will not answer any questions: and now I cannot stay."

Saying which she led the little girl back to her seat, and with a swiftness and silentness which half-frightened Alice, left the room and the house. The little heiress sat still in her chair, startled into positive stillness. She could not hear Felicia's retreating footstep, but knew she was gone; and this new incident and new idea gave a new turn to the thoughts of Alice. Her tears dried of themselves, and her passion subsided. She no longer thought of her guardians, or Mrs Elcombe, or even of Angelo; but puzzled with all her amazed but shrewd little faculties over the new, abstruse, and mysterious question, What could Felicia mean?

While Felicia, sick at heart and utterly discouraged, went away by the quietest streets she could find to the other end of Florence. She had nothing to do there, and it would have greatly shocked her aunt's prejudices to see her alone so far from their own house; but Felicia's secret vexations were too much at the moment for any consideration of her aunt, or indeed for considerations of anything. She was not thinking; her utmost mental effort was to remember and sting herself over again with those words and looks, questions and implications, from which she had already suffered so cruelly; and when, returning home, having tired herself completely, she saw at a little distance, unseen herself, the laughing careless face of Angelo amidst a group of other such at the *café* door, her patience entirely forsook the English girl. What had she done to have her quiet footsteps so hopelessly entangled in a volatile, hopeless, inconsequent, Italian life like this?

That night she and her aunt spent alone in their usual fashion—which is to say that Madame Peruzzi went to bed, and that Felicia, with one feeble wick of the lamp lighted, bewildered herself with a book which she had not sufficient power of self-possession to understand, and watched from the window when Mrs Elcombe's carriage drove up to the door opposite, to see Alice glide into it with the others in a mist of floating white. That morning's passion did not hinder the little heiress. She was there as usual, and doubtless quite as smiling and bright as usual. Felicia said to herself with a momentary bitterness —"But what was it all to her?" She went back to the table, and bewildered herself for the rest of the evening with her book of Italian proverbs, scarcely seeing what she read, and certainly not comprehending it. That was how *she* spent the night.

Next morning Felicia rose with a craving anxiety in her heart, dimly feeling that something must have happened overnight, dimly dreading something which might happen today. She felt little doubt that Angelo had encountered Alice and seen her guardian; but Angelo was late, and did not make his appearance. It was with the greatest difficulty that she could manage to preserve enough of her usual calmness to save her from embarrassing inquiries, and sitting by while Madame Peruzzi sipped her coffee, Felicia was too much occupied in keeping down a convulsive shiver, half physical, half mental, combined of cold and anxiety, to be able for anything else. When the ungenial meal was over, and she had to occupy herself with her usual female work, the mending and darning of which she had insisted upon relieving her aunt, with the whole bright cold hours of the day before her, and that thrill of expectation in her whole mind and frame, the strain upon her became still harder. It was while she sat thus vainly endeavouring to restrain her thoughts, and assuring herself that, however the matter ended, she had nothing to do with it; and while Madame Peruzzi, in her great shawl, and with her pan of charcoal under her skirts, sat carefully surveying

some very old much-worn linen, to ascertain where it was practicable to apply a patch, that a sudden noise at the door startled Felicia. Angelo was not yet up, and the house a moment before had been perfectly still. Now Marietta's voice, in active discussion with intruders, made itself audible. Marietta was endeavouring to impress upon some obstinate visitors, first, that the Signora did not receive, and, second, that it was quite inconvenient, and out of the question, to attempt to make good their entrance at such an hour. Madame Peruzzi listened with an anxious flutter, sweeping up in her arms the heap of linen; while Felicia, perfectly still, heard the noise of English voices, and yet could scarcely hear them for the throbbing of her breast. But then, an indisputable reality, rang the girlish tones of Alice, speaking to some one who answered her in a voice which could belong to nobody but an elderly Englishman, doubtless Mr Elcombe. Another colloquy, and the two had swept triumphantly in, Alice dragging after her her reluctant and troubled guardian. Felicia started to her feet as this astounding vision appeared at the door. Madame Peruzzi, who had half risen, dropped back into her chair, scattering the linen at her feet in her nervous bewilderment. There stood the little heiress in her flutter of pretty flounces, not muslin this time, but more costly silk; and there sat at the household table "the frightful old witch," whom she had ridiculed to Angelo, and who could be no other than Angelo's mother. Alice, who had come in very briskly, and on first sight of Felicia had been about to rush into her arms, checked herself at this sight. She made a little frightened curtsy, grew very red, and stood gazing at Madame Peruzzi as though she had eyes for nothing else. The old lady rose immediately, unquestionably a very odd figure, and "received" her visitors with as much equanimity as she could muster, and the utmost exuberance of Italian politeness. But Alice's fright had startled all her Italian out of her little girl's head, and Mr Elcombe, stumbling forward, upset the charcoal pan and its white ashes, covering himself with confusion, and adding, if possible, to the awkwardness of the scene. Nobody spoke a word at first but Madame Peruzzi, and only Felicia understood what Madame Peruzzi said; but when Mr Elcombe began to stammer and apologize in English, and in the utmost embarrassment, the old lady, discovered so terribly out of toilette, and in employment so commonplace, addressed herself in incomprehensible explanations to him. But that the younger persons of the group were moved by much more serious feelings, the combination would have been simply ludicrous; but Alice, who had come in with all the energy and earnestness of a purpose, was so utterly confounded and dismayed by the sight of Madame Peruzzi, and Felicia was so anxious and so painfully excited, that they added quite a tragical element to the other by-play, and presently swept its lighter current into the course of their own stronger emotion. Singularly enough, the first idea which struck Alice was horror and disgust, not at the appearance of her lover's mother, but at her own unintentional levity and cruelty in speaking of her to Angelo; and all the youthful kindness towards Angelo which she dignified by the name of love, sprang up in double force in the warm rebound of her generous feelings. She had done him wrong—she returned with vehemence and earnestness to the idea which had brought her here.

"Felicita," she cried, "beg Madame Peruzzi to forgive us for intruding on her. Tell her we speak no Italian; do tell her, pray! I can't think of the words, and there is no time.—Have you told her?—does she understand you, Felicita? Oh, thank you! If she only knew how wicked and cruel I once was about her, she would hate me; but how could I tell it was his mother? She is not like him—not the least in the world. Felicita, we watched at the window and saw Angelo go out, and then we came to you. Mr Elcombe says he will trust what you say; and so should I, if it were for my life. Oh, Felicita, this time you must answer me! Mr Elcombe says

it shall be as you say. If you say Angelo loves me, he will give his consent; if you say it, I will wait for him, if it should be a dozen years!"

Felicia uttered a little cry of impatience and anger. "I said yesterday this question was not to be asked of me. I said I could not answer it—I will not answer it! It is cruel! Why do you come again to me?"

"Felicita! have I any one else whom I can ask?" cried Alice, taking her reluctant hand and caressing it, as she looked up with her girlish, coaxing, entreating looks in Felicia's face. "You said you liked me—you said you were fond of me; and when it may make me happy or unhappy all my life, you will never have the heart to refuse me now."

"There is but one person who can answer such a question; let him speak for himself. Can I tell what is in Angelo's heart?" said his cousin with a kind of despair. "I told you so before; you must ask himself, and not me. Am I a spy to know what is in his heart?"

"But I have asked Angelo, and I cannot tell whether he is in jest or earnest," said Alice, with a plaintive mingling of pique and humility. "Felicita, Felicita! I do not know what to do, or what to trust to, if you do not tell me; and it is for all my life!"

"For all your life! You are only sixteen; you do not know what life is," cried Felicia.

"And that is all the more reason you should tell me," said Alice, stealing once more to her side. "Mr Elcombe says I might pledge my whole life, and then find out—— Felicita! I trust only in you!"

"She says truly; the young man of course must preserve his consistency," said Mr Elcombe. "Speak to her; you are reasonable, and know—for his sake as well as hers. She will be content with nothing else."

"Felicita! tell me!" cried Alice, clasping her hands.

Felicia had risen up, and stood drawing back into the corner of the room—her face burning, her eyes glowing, an indignant despair possessing her. All this time Angelo's mother had been looking on amazed and uncomprehending; even her presence was some support to the poor girl. Now Madame Peruzzi, struck by a new idea, and stimulated by the frequent sound of Angelo's name, the only word she understood, left the room hurriedly. Felicia stood drawing back, holding up her hands to defend herself from the advance of Alice, saying she could not tell what—eager disclaimers of being reasonable and able to tell, indignant appeals against being asked. Her voice grew shrill in her trouble. What had she to do with it? She had always said so!—she had never stood between them!—why should she answer now?

"Because you are my friend," cried Alice, suddenly throwing herself into Felicia's arms, breaking down her defences, and clasping her appealing hands—"because I have no one to trust but you—because I take you for my sister. Felicita! does Angelo love me?"

"No! Alice, go away from me—you will kill me. No!—he loves *me!*" cried poor Felicia, with a sob and cry. Then she sank down without further word or thought upon the floor—her head throbbing, her heart beating, insensible to everything but that forced utterance, which came with no triumph, but with a pang indescribable from the bottom of her heart. She felt that some one endeavoured to draw her clasped hands from her face, and raise her from the ground; but she resisted, and kept there crouching down into her corner, thrilling with a passion of indignant shame, bitterness, and undeserved suffering. Why was this extorted, wrung from *her?*—why was *she* driven to confess it, as though she was the culprit? She desired no more to raise her eyes to the light; she was sick of scrutiny, sick of questions, conscious of no wish but to disappear from everybody's sight, and hide herself where neither Alice nor Angelo should see her more. She had said it, but she had no pleasure in it. She heard a murmur of voices, without caring to hear what was said or who was speaking. She had no longer either friend or cousin. Alice and Angelo were alike lost to her now. Nothing

in the world seemed to remain visible to her through those eyes blind with tears, and covered with her hands, save a flight somewhere into some unknown solitary country, and no comfort but the dreary consciousness of having separated herself from everybody she cared for, by that burst of plain-speaking, the inevitable truth.

CHAPTER VII.

Five years afterwards, a little English village had brightened to a public holiday. The place was a tiny hamlet of some twenty cottages, bearing conspicuous tokens of being close to somebody's lodge-gates who was pleased with pretty cottages, and wealthy enough to encourage the culture of the same. It was as easy to predicate, from the state of the gardens, that a flower-show and prizes were somewhere in the neighbourhood, as to conclude that the holder of the curacy under whose care that tiny Gothic chapel and schoolhouse had sprung into existence, wore a long priestly coat, and waistcoat buttoned up to the chin, and was slightly "high." The little village street was gay with a triumphal arch of boughs and flowers, for the five years were slightly exceeded, and the season was May. The sky was doubtful, uncertain, sunny and showery—an airy, breezy, variable English morning, with no such steady glory in its light as the skies of Italy; and anything more unlike the lofty houses of the Via Giugnio than those low rural cottages could not have been supposed. Along the road, where the sunshine and the shadows pursued each other, a bright little procession came irregularly along, with the flutter and variable movement which belongs to a feminine march. It was a christening party, headed by an important group of womankind guarding and encircling the one atom of weak humanity disguised in flowing muslin skirts, who was the hero of the day. Behind, at a little distance, were the ladies and gentlemen, godfathers and godmothers, papa and mama. The little mother in thanksgiving robes of white, with delicate roses on her soft cheek, and sweet lights of womanly triumph and gratitude in her eyes, called herself still Alice, but not Alice Clayton, and had blossomed out into a cordial and sweet young womanhood, prettier in her mother-pride than at saucy sixteen, when all her life, as the child supposed, hung upon the question, whether Angelo Peruzzi loved *her*, or sought only her fortune. Small thought of Angelo Peruzzi was in that sunshiny existence now. Behind Alice and her husband—yet not behind from any wish of theirs, or any distinction made by them—came a young woman alone. More marked in her characteristic Italian features than she used to be, five years older—perhaps, if no longer moved by active agitation, graver than formerly—it was still Felicia; "a young person" whom Alice's country neighbours could not comprehend—who did not choose to accept the entire equality which her friend would fain have forced upon her, and whose position in the young and gay household which called Alice mistress was a grave, doubtful, half-housekeeper position, in which *she* found no inconvenience, and which suited Alice perfectly, but did not satisfy the excellent neighbours, who had difficulty in making out whether or not Miss Antini was "a person to know." Felicia in Holmsleigh was twice as Italian as Felicia in Florence had been, and looked back strangely enough to that uncomfortable and agitating period of her existence with sighs and smiles, and recollections which touched her heart. Madame Peruzzi's cold rooms no longer chilled her, and she was no longer repelled by that unlovely unhomelike life of which memory preserved only the brighter parts. Yet nearly five years had passed since Felicia had either heard or seen anything of her Italian friends. The day on which she had made that confession which Alice extorted from her—a confession which she found afterwards, to her greatly increased horror,

to have been made in the very presence of Angelo, and immediately confirmed by him—had been her last day in the Via Giugnio. Alice, who bore her disappointment magnanimously, if disappointment it was, and who felt greatly shocked at the evident and extreme suffering of Felicia, had half entreated, half compelled, the poor girl to accompany her home. Felicia could scarcely be persuaded to see her cousin again; when she consented at last, she too had her caprice. He whom Alice would no longer wait for, must either relinquish Felicia too, or wait the full five years for his humbler and less wealthy love: perhaps other conditions were added which neither of them mentioned—but it was thus the cousins had parted. In the mean time, Madame Peruzzi died, and when Felicia mentioned Angelo at all, she spoke of him as a relation whom she should never see again. But the five years were past, and sometimes, unawares to herself, she started at an unusual sound in the house, and trembled and grew pale at an unexpected arrival. A possibility, however stoutly one may deny it, is still so powerful over that unruly imagination which is aided and abetted by the heart.

Thus she went lingering along the road, after Mrs Alice and her handsome husband, to the heir of Holmsleigh's christening, thinking, she would have said, of nothing in particular—of the passage of time, and the slow yet rapid progress of life—wonderfully grave and philosophic reflections, quite becoming to the inauguration of the new generation, as any one aware of them would have naturally said. But when the christening was over, and there was nothing but rejoicing in the house and park, where all the villagers, and a little crowd of other tenants, were feasted outside, and the great people had a grand dinner in the evening, Felicia continued wistful and contemplative still. The continual arrival of the carriages startled her, and kept her uneasy. She could not help a lingering idea that some one or other of them some day—this evening or another—might bring that stranger to Holmsleigh, whom she professed never to expect. There was no reason in the world to think of him to-night; but the noise and commotion and perpetual arrivals startled her; she was uneasy and anxious, and could not tell how it was.

At last the arrivals were over—the dinner was over. That moment of repose, which the ladies spend alone in the drawing-room—blissful moment after the troubles of a grand dinner—fell calm and grateful upon Felicia. She was past being snubbed by her friend's fine neighbours; she was quite sure of her position, if nobody else was; and people began to know as much. She sat in her usual quiet place, with her usual cheerfulness recovered. Another arrival! she was surprised and vexed to find how the sounds of these wheels ringing through the evening quiet disturbed her composure again. Of course, it was somebody invited for the evening; could nobody come or go without a fever on her part? She sat doubly still, and busied herself all the more with the prose of her next neighbour by way of self-punishment, and would not look up when the door opened to see who entered the room.

Would not look up for the first moment,—then she did look up. The person who entered was a gentleman alone—a soldier—the only man in the room, and he certainly had not been at dinner. Felicia was much too ignorant to know what his uniform was. It was not an English red coat; but she caught at the distance the gleam of a medal, the familiar Crimean medal, well enough known to her, on his breast. He had not been announced, but had sent his name to Alice, who was quite at the other end of the room. It was a very long apartment, stretching across the entire side of the house; the door was quite at one end, and Alice, as it happened, quite at the other. Felicia could not hear a word her neighbour was saying to her, but she could hear her own heart beat, and she could hear the slightest stir of motion the stranger made; the stranger, brown, bearded, and medalled, whom certainly she had never seen before, and did not know. Just then a little cry of joy and amaze-

ment from Alice struck her ear. Looking up, she saw the little mistress of the house running past her, with her girlish curls dancing about her ears, and her foot as light and unrestrained as though no responsibilities of wifehood or motherhood lay on her bright little head. Alice's face was flushed with surprise and pleasure, and her eyes fixed upon the stranger. Involuntarily, and by an impulse she could not restrain, Felicia rose. She did not know him! she had never seen him before; and yet, when Alice ran to meet him, she could not keep her seat. Alice ran with both her hands held out. When she met the stranger, Felicia bent forward with a face like marble. "Angelo!" It was not Angelo; and yet that was *his* name.

When Felicia came to herself she was in another room, with only Alice bending over her, and somebody behind in the twilight, who was not distinguishable save by some gleams of reflection, especially one which shone over Alice's head strangely like the medal upon that soldier's breast. Felicia did not answer the tender inquiries of her little friend; she turned towards this undiscernible figure and pointed almost imperiously—"Who is it?" she cried, and the foolish little kind creature by her side kept hold of her hands, and kissed her, and wasted a world of caressing words "to break it to her." "Who is it?" cried Felicia: and then the stranger took matters into his own hands,—for to be sure it was Angelo—Angelo himself, five years older, a Sardinian soldier, though a Tuscan poor gentleman, with a beard and a captain's commission, and her Britannic Majesty's Crimean medal upon his breast. As the three stood together in the twilight, or at least a minute later, when only two stood together, and the little mistress of the house had returned to her guests, Felicia was able to forgive Alice for her anxiety not to startle her, and her care in "breaking" the news.

But what had he to do with arms, that pacific Florentine? and with the Sardinian uniform and foreign wars? "You remember how I told you there was nothing to do, Felicita," explained the returned soldier days after, when Alice and her husband listened too; "but men who can do nothing else can fight,—it is an idler's natural profession. Every Italian like me has not an English cousin; but time is doing your work, Felicita, and some time or other the rulers in our country will learn at last to know that men who are good for little else are very good for soldiers; and that people who may not work *will* fight."

Plain politics—not hard to understand; and Felicia, perhaps, was less hard to please than before, and found great comfort in that Crimean medal. What natural consequences followed this visit to England of Captain Angelo Peruzzi it may not be necessary to particularise, nor where they went to live, nor what kind of *ménage* was their Anglo-Italian one; but it was a better ending to Angelo's innocent fortune-hunting than if Alice had made him master of Holmsleigh, and waited for him five years.