

four persons whom they accompanied. In a few minutes the whole party were on their way to the Termini, Faustina with her friends in Sant' Ilario's carriage, the prefect in his little brougham, the soldiers on their horses, trotting steadily along in a close squad.

Faustina sat leaning her head upon Corona's shoulder, while Giovanni looked out of the window into the dark streets, his rage boiling within him, and all the hotter because he was powerless to change the course of events. From time to time he uttered savage ejaculations which promised ill for the prefect's future peace, either in this world or in the next, but the sound of the wheels rolling upon the uneven paving-stones prevented his voice from reaching the two women.

"Dear child," said Corona, "do not be frightened. You shall be free to-night or in the morning — I will not leave you."

Faustina was silent, but pressed her friend's hand again and again, as though she understood. She herself was overcome by a strange wonderment which made her almost incapable of appreciating what happened to her. She felt very much as she had felt once before, on the night of the insurrection, when she had found herself lying upon the pavement before the half-ruined barracks, stunned by the explosion, unable for a time to collect her senses, supported only by her physical elasticity, which was yet too young to be destroyed by any moral shock.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

On the following morning all Rome rang with the news that the Saracinesca had lost their title, and that Faustina Montevarchi had murdered her father. No one connected the two events, but the shock to the public mind was so tremendous that almost any incredible tale would have been believed. The story, as it was generally told, set forth that Faustina had gone mad and had strangled her father in his sleep. Every one agreed in affirm-

ing that he had been found dead with her handkerchief tied round his neck. It was further stated that the young girl was no longer in the Palazzo Montevarchi, but had been transferred to the women's prison at the Termini, pending further examination into the details of the case. The Palazzo Montevarchi was draped in black, and before night funeral hatchments were placed upon the front of the parish church bearing the Montevarchi arms. No one was admitted to the palace upon any pretext whatever, though it was said that San Giacinto and Flavia had spent the night there. No member of the family had been seen by any one, and nobody seemed to know exactly whence the various items of information had been derived.

Strange to say, every word of what was repeated so freely was true, excepting that part of the tale which accused Faustina of having done the deed. What had taken place up to the time when Corona and Giovanni had come may be thus briefly told.

Prince Montevarchi had been found dead by the servant who came to bring a lamp to the study, towards evening, when it grew dark. As soon as the alarm was given a scene of indescribable confusion followed, which lasted until the prefect of police arrived, accompanied by a party of police officials. The handkerchief was examined and identified. Thereupon, in accordance with the Roman practice of that day, the prefect had announced his determination of taking Faustina into custody. The law took it for granted that the first piece of circumstantial evidence which presented itself must be acted upon with the utmost promptitude. A few questions had shown immediately that Faustina was the last person who had seen Montevarchi alive. The young girl exhibited a calmness which surprised every one. She admitted that her father had been angry with her and had struck her, but she denied all knowledge of his death. It is sufficient to say that she fearlessly told the truth, so fearlessly as to prejudice even her own family with regard to her. Even the blood on the handkerchief was against her, though she explained that it was her own, and although the bruise on her lip bore out the statement. The prefect was inexorable. He explained that

Faustina could be taken privately to the Termini, and that the family might use its influence on the next day to procure her immediate release, but that his duty compelled him for the present to secure her person, that he was responsible, that he was only doing his duty, and so forth and so on.

The consternation of the family may be imagined. The princess broke down completely under what seemed very like a stroke of paralysis. San Giacinto and Flavia were not to be found at their house, and as the carriage had not returned, nobody knew where they were. The wives of Faustina's brothers shut themselves up in their rooms and gave way to hysterical tears, while the brothers themselves seemed helpless to do anything for their sister.

Seeing herself abandoned by every one Faustina had sent for Corona Saracinesca. It was the wisest thing she could have done. In a quarter of an hour Corona and her husband entered the room together. The violent scene which followed has been already described, in which Giovanni promised the prefect of police that if he persisted in his intention of arresting Faustina he should himself be lodged in the Carceri Nuove in twelve hours. But the prefect had got the better of the situation, being accompanied by an armed force which Giovanni was powerless to oppose. All that could be obtained had been that Giovanni and Corona should take Faustina to the Termini in their carriage, and that Corona should stay with the unfortunate young girl all night if she wished to do so. Giovanni could not be admitted.

The prison of the Termini was under the administration of an order of nuns devoted especially to the care of prisoners. The prefect arrived in his own carriage simultaneously with the one which conveyed his prisoner and her friends. As the gate was opened and one of the sisters appeared, he whispered a few words into her ear. She looked grave at first, and then, when she saw Faustina's angel face, she shook her head incredulously. The prefect had accomplished his duty, however. The prison-gates closed after the two ladies, and the sentinel outside resumed his walk, while the carriages drove away, the

one containing the officer of the law and the other Giovanni, who had himself driven at once to the Vatican, in spite of the late hour. The great cardinal received him but, to his amazement, refused an order of release.

The sister who admitted Corona and Faustina took the latter's hand kindly and looked into her face by the light of the small lantern she carried.

"It is some dreadful mistake, my child," she said. "But I have no course but to obey. You are Donna Faustina Montevarchi?"

"Yes — this is the Princess Sant' Ilario."

"Will you come with me? I will give you the best room we have — it is not very like a prison."

"This is," said Faustina, shuddering at the sight of the massive stone walls, quite as much as from the dampness of the night air.

"Courage, dear!" whispered Corona, drawing the girl's slight figure close to her and arranging the mantle upon her shoulders. But Corona herself was uneasy as to the result of the ghastly adventure, and she looked anxiously forward into the darkness beyond the nun's lantern.

At last they found themselves in a small whitewashed chamber, so small that it was brightly lighted by the two wicks of a brass oil-lamp on the table. The nun left them alone, at Corona's request, promising to return in the course of an hour. Faustina sat down upon the edge of the little bed, and Corona upon a chair beside her. Until now, the unexpected excitement of what had passed during the last three or four hours had sustained the young girl. Everything that had happened had seemed to be a part of a dream until she found herself at last in the cell of the Termini prison, abandoned by every one save Corona. Her courage broke down. She threw herself back upon the pillow and burst into tears. Corona did not know what to do, but tried to comfort her as well as she could, wondering inwardly what would have happened had the poor child been brought to such a place alone.

"What have I done, that such things should happen to me?" cried Faustina at last, sitting up and staring wildly at her friend. Her small white hands lay help-

lessly in her lap and her rich brown hair was beginning to be loosened and to fall upon her shoulders.

The tears stood in Corona's eyes. It seemed to her infinitely pathetic that this innocent creature should have been chosen as the victim to expiate so monstrous a crime.

"It will be all cleared up in the morning," she answered, trying to speak cheerfully or at least hopefully. "It is an abominable mistake of the prefect's. I will not leave you, dear—take heart, we will talk—the nun will bring you something to eat—the night will soon pass."

"In prison!" exclaimed Faustina, in a tone of horror and despair, not heeding what Corona said.

"Try and fancy it is not——"

"And my father dead!" She seemed suddenly to realise that he was gone for ever. "Poor papa! poor papa!" she moaned. "Oh, I did not mean to be undutiful—indeed I did not—and I can never tell you so now——"

"You must not reproach yourself, darling," said Corona, trying to soothe her and to draw the pitiful pale face to her shoulder, while she wound her arm tenderly about the young girl's waist. "Pray for him, Faustina, but do not reproach yourself too much. After all, dear, he was unkind to you——"

"Oh, do not say that—he is dead!" She lowered her voice almost to a whisper as she spoke, and an expression of awe came over her features. "He is dead, Corona. I shall never see him again—oh, why did I not love him more? I am frightened when I think that he is dead—who did it?"

The question came suddenly, and Faustina started and shuddered. Corona pressed her to her side and smoothed her hair gently. She felt that she must say something, but she hardly expected that Faustina would understand reason. She gathered her energy, however, to make the best effort in her power.

"Listen to me, Faustina," she said, in a tone of quiet authority, "and try and see all this as I see it. It is not right that you should reproach yourself, for you have had no share in your father's death, and if you parted in

anger it was his fault, not yours. He is dead, and there is nothing for you to do but to pray that he may rest in peace. You have been accused unjustly of a deed which any one might see you were physically incapable of doing. You will be released from this place to-morrow morning, if not during the night. One thing is absolutely necessary—you must be calm and quiet, or you will have brain fever in a few hours. Do not think I am heartless, dear. A worse thing might have happened to you. You have been suspected by an ignorant man who will pay dearly for his mistake; you might have been suspected by those you love."

Corona sighed, and her voice trembled with the last words. To her, Faustina was suffering far more from the shock to her sensibilities than from any real grief. She knew that she had not loved her father, but the horror of his murder and the fright at being held accountable for it were almost enough to drive her mad. And yet she could not be suffering what Corona had suffered in being suspected by Giovanni, she had not that to lose which Corona had lost, the dominating passion of her life had not been suddenly burnt out in the agony of an hour, she was only the victim of a mistake which could have no consequences, which would leave no trace behind. But Faustina shivered and turned paler still at Corona's words.

"By those I love? Ah no! Not by him—by them!" The blood rushed to her white face, and her hand fell on her friend's shoulder.

Corona heard and knew that the girl was thinking of Anastase. She wondered vaguely whether the hot-headed soldier artist had learned the news and what he would do when he found that Faustina was lodged in a prison.

"And yet—perhaps—oh no! It is impossible!" Her sweet, low voice broke again, and was lost in passionate sobbing.

For a long time Corona could do nothing to calm her. The tears might be a relief to the girl's overwrought faculties, but they were most distressing to hear and see.

"Do you love him very much, dear?" asked Corona, when the paroxysm began to subside.

"I would die for him, and he would die for me," answered Faustina simply, but a happy smile shone through her grief that told plainly how much dearer to her was he who was left than he who was dead.

"Tell me about him," said Corona softly. "He is a friend of mine —"

"Indeed he is! You do not know how he worships you. I think that next to me in the world — but then, of course, he could not love you — besides, you are married."

Corona could not help smiling, and yet there was a sting in the words, of which Faustina could not dream. Why could not Giovanni have taken this child's straightforward, simple view, which declared such a thing impossible — because Corona was married. What a wealth of innocent belief in goodness was contained in that idea! The princess began to discover a strange fascination in finding out what Faustina felt for this man, whom she, Corona, had been suspected of loving. What could it be like to love such a man? He was good-looking, clever, brave, even interesting, perhaps; but to love him — Corona suddenly felt that interest in the analysis of his character which is roused in us when we are all at once brought into the confidence of some one who can tell by experience what we should have felt with regard to a third person, who has come very near to our lives, if he or she had really become a part of our existence. Faustina's present pain and sense of danger momentarily disappeared as she was drawn into talking of what absorbed her whole nature, and Corona saw that by leading the conversation in that direction she might hope to occupy the girl's thoughts.

Faustina seemed to forget her misfortunes in speaking of Gouache, and Corona listened, and encouraged her to go on. The strong woman who had suffered so much saw gradually unfolded before her a series of pictures, constituting a whole that was new to her. She comprehended for the first time in her life the nature of an innocent girl's love, and there was something in what she learned that softened her and brought the moisture into her dark eyes. She looked at the delicate young creature beside her, seated upon the rough bed, her

angelic loveliness standing out against the cold background of the whitewashed wall. The outline seemed almost vaporous, as though melting into the transparency of the quiet air; the gentle brown eyes were at once full of suffering and full of love; the soft, thick hair fell in disorder upon her shoulders, in that exquisite disorder that belongs to beautiful things in nature when they are set free and fall into the position which is essentially their own; her white fingers, refined and expressive, held Corona's slender olive hand, pressing it and moving as they touched it, with every word she spoke. Corona almost felt that some spiritual, half divine being had glided down from another world to tell her of an angel's love.

The elder woman thought of her own life and compared it with what she saw. Sold to a decrepit old husband who had worshipped her in strange, pathetic fashion of his own, she had spent five years in submitting to an affection she loathed, enduring it to the very end, and sacrificing every instinct of her nature in the performance of her duty. Liberated at last, she had given herself up to her love for Giovanni, in a passion of the strong kind that never comes in early youth. She asked herself what had become of that passion, and whether it could ever be revived. In any case it was something wholly different from the love of which Faustina was speaking. She had fought against it when it came, with all her might; being gone, it had left her cold and indifferent to all she could still command, incapable of even pretending to love. It had passed through her life as a whirlwind through a deep forest, and its track was like a scar. What Faustina knew, she could never have known, the sudden growth within her of something beautiful against which there was no need to struggle, the whole-hearted devotion from the first, the joy of a love that had risen suddenly like the dawn of a fair day, the unspeakable happiness of loving intensely in perfect innocence of the world, of giving her whole soul at once and for ever, unconscious that there could be anything else to give.

"I would die for him, and he would die for me," Faustina had said, knowing that her words were true.

Corona would die for Giovanni now, no doubt, but not because she loved him any longer. She would sacrifice herself for what had been, for the memory of it, for the bitterness of having lost it and of feeling that it could not return. That was a state very different from Faustina's; it was pain, not happiness, despair, not joy, emptiness, not fulness. Her eyes grew sad, and she sighed bitterly as though oppressed by a burden from which she could not escape. Faustina's future seemed to her to be like a beautiful vision among the clouds of sunrise; her own like the reflection of a mournful scene in a dark pool of stagnant water. The sorrow of her life rose in her eyes, until the young girl saw it and suddenly ceased speaking. It was like a reproach to her, for her young nature had already begun to forget its trouble in the sweetness of its own dream. Corona understood the sudden silence, and her expression changed, for she felt that if she dwelt upon what was nearest to her heart she could give but poor consolation.

"You are sad," said Faustina. "It is not for me — what is it?"

"No. It is not for you, dear child."

Corona looked at the young girl for a moment and tried to smile. Then she rose from the chair and turned away, pretending to trim the brass oil-lamp with the little metal snuffers that hung from it by a chain. The tears blinded her. She rested her hands upon the table and bent her head. Faustina watched her in surprise, then slipped from her place on the bed and stood beside her, looking up tenderly into the sad dark eyes from which the crystal drops welled up and trickled down, falling upon the rough deal boards.

"What is it, dear?" asked the young girl. "Will you not tell me!"

Corona turned and threw her arms round her, pressing her to her breast, almost passionately. Faustina did not understand what was happening.

"I never saw you cry before!" she exclaimed in innocent astonishment, as she tried to brush away the tears from her friend's face.

"Ah Faustina! There are worse things in the world than you are suffering, child!"

Then she made a great effort and overcame the emotion that had taken possession of her. She was ashamed to have played such a part when she had come to the place to give comfort to another.

"It is nothing," she said, after a moment's pause. "I think I am nervous — at least, I am very foolish to let myself cry when I ought to be taking care of you."

A long silence followed, which was broken at last by the nun, who entered the room, bringing such poor food as the place afforded. She repeated her assurance that Faustina's arrest was the result of a mistake, and that she would be certainly liberated in the morning. Then, seeing that the two friends appeared to be preoccupied, she bade them good-night and went away.

It was the longest night Corona remembered to have ever passed. For a long time they talked a little, and at length Faustina fell asleep, exhausted by all she had suffered, while Corona sat beside her, watching her regular breathing and envying her ability to rest. She herself could not close her eyes, though she could not explain her wakefulness. At last she lay down upon the other bed and tried to forget herself. After many hours she lost consciousness for a time, and then awoke suddenly, half stifled by the sickening smell of the lamp which had gone out, filling the narrow room with the odour of burning oil. It was quite dark, and the profound silence was broken only by the sound of Faustina's evenly-drawn breath. The poor child was too weary to be roused by the fumes that had disturbed Corona's rest. But Corona rose and groped her way to the window, which she opened as noiselessly as she could. Heavy iron bars were built into the wall upon the outside, and she grasped the cold iron with a sense of relief as she looked out at the quiet stars, and tried to distinguish the trees which, as she knew, were planted on the other side of the desolate grass-grown square, along the old wall that stood there, at that time, like a fortification between the Termini and the distant city. Below the window the sentry tramped slowly up and down in his beat, his steps alone breaking the intense stillness of the winter night. Corona realised that she was in a prison. There was something in the discomfort which was not

repugnant to her, as she held the grating in her fingers and let the cold air blow upon her face.

After all, she thought, her life would seem much the same in such a place, in a convent, perhaps, where she could be alone all day, all night, for ever. She could not be more unhappy behind those bars than she had often been in the magnificent palaces in which her existence had been chiefly passed. Nothing gave her pleasure, nothing interested her, nothing had the power to distract her mind from the aching misery that beset it. She said to herself a hundred times a day that such apathy was unworthy of her, and she blamed herself when she found that even the loss of the great Saracinesca suit left her indifferent. She did no good to herself and none to any one else, so far as she could see, unless it were good to allow Giovanni to love her, now that she no longer felt a thrill of pleasure at his coming nor at the sound of his voice. At least she had been honest. She could say that, for she had not deceived him. She had forgiven him, but was it her fault if he had destroyed that which he now most desired? Was it her fault that forgiveness did not mean love? Her suffering was not the selfish pain of wounded vanity, for Giovanni's despair would have healed such a wound by showing her the strength of his passion. There was no resentment in her heart, either, for she longed to love him. But even the habit of loving was gone, broken away and forgotten in the sharp agony of an hour. She had done her best to bring it back, she had tried to repeat phrases that had once come from her heart with the conviction of great joy, each time they had been spoken. But the words were dead and meant nothing, or if they had a meaning they told her of the change in herself. She was willing to argue against it, to say again and again that she had no right to be so changed, that there had been enough to make any man suspicious, that she would have despised him had he overlooked such convincing evidence. Could a man love truly and not have some jealousy in his nature? Could a man have such overwhelming proof given him of guilt in the woman he adored and yet show nothing, any more than if she had been a stranger? But the argument was not satisfactory, nor conclusive. If human ills could

be healed by the use of logic, there would long since have been no unhappiness left in the world. Is there anything easier than to deceive one's self when one wishes to be deceived? Nothing, surely, provided that the inner reality of ourselves which we call our hearts consents to the deception. But if it will not consent, then there is no help in all the logic that has been lavished upon the philosophy of a dozen ages.

Her slender fingers tightened upon the freezing bars, and once more, in the silent night, her tears flowed down as she looked up at the stars through the prison window. The new condition of her life sought an expression she had hitherto considered as weak and despicable, and against which she struggled even now. There was no relief in weeping, it brought her no sense of rest, no respite from the dull consciousness of her situation; and yet she could not restrain the drops that fell so fast upon her hands. She suffered always, without any intermitence, as people do who have little imagination, with few but strong passions and a constant nature. There are men and women whose active fancy is able to lend a romantic beauty to misfortune, which gives some pleasure even to themselves, or who can obtain some satisfaction, if they are poets, by expressing their pain in grand or tender language. There are others to whom sorrow is but a reality, for which all expression seems inadequate.

Corona was such a woman, too strong to suffer little, too unimaginative to suffer poetically. There are those who might say that she exaggerated the gravity of the position, that, since Giovanni had always been faithful to her, had acknowledged his error and repented of it so sincerely, there was no reason why she should not love him as before. The answer is very simple. The highest kind of love not only implies the highest trust in the person loved, but demands it in return; the two conditions are as necessary to each other as body and soul, so that if one is removed from the other, the whole love dies. Our relations with our fellow-creatures are reciprocal in effect, whatever morality may require in theory, from the commonest intercourse between mere acquaintances to the bond between man and wife. An honest man will always hesitate to believe another unless he

himself is believed. Humanity gives little, on the whole, unless it expects a return; still less will men continue to give when their gifts have been denounced to them as false, no matter what apology is offered after the mistake has been discovered. Corona was very human, and being outwardly cold, she was inwardly more sensitive to suspicion than very expansive women can ever be. With women who express very readily what they feel, the expression often assumes such importance as to deceive them into believing their passions to be stronger than they are. Corona had given all, love, devotion, faithfulness, and yet, because appearances had been against her, Giovanni had doubted her. He had cut the plant down at the very root, and she had nothing more to give.

Faustina moved in her sleep. Corona softly closed the window and once more lay down to rest. The hours seemed endless as she listened for the bells. At last the little room grew gray and she could distinguish the furniture in the gloom. Then all at once the door opened, and the nun entered, bearing her little lantern and peering over it to try and see whether the occupants of the chamber were awake. In the shadow behind her Corona could distinguish the figure of a man.

"The prince is here," said the sister in a low voice, as she saw that Corona's eyes were open. The latter glanced at Faustina, whose childlike sleep was not interrupted. She slipped from the bed and went out into the corridor.

The nun would have led the two down to the parlour, but Corona would not go so far from Faustina. At their request she opened an empty cell a few steps farther on, and left Giovanni and his wife alone in the gray dawn. Corona looked eagerly into his eyes for some news concerning the young girl. He took her hand and kissed it.

"My darling — that you should have spent the night in such a place as this!" he exclaimed.

"Never mind me. Is Faustina at liberty? Did you see the cardinal?"

"I saw him." Giovanni shook his head.

"And do you mean to say that he would not give the order at once?"

"Nothing would induce him to give it. The prefect got

there before me, and I was kept waiting half an hour while they talked the matter over. The cardinal declared to me that he knew there had been an emity between Faustina and her father concerning her love for Gouache —"

"Her love for Gouache!" repeated Corona slowly, looking into his eyes. She could not help it. Giovanni turned pale and looked away as he continued.

"Yes, and he said that the evidence was very strong, since no one had been known to enter the house, and the servants were clearly innocent — not one of them betrayed the slightest embarrassment."

"In other words, he believes that Faustina actually did it?"

"It looks like it," said Giovanni in a low voice.

"Giovanni!" she seized his arm. "Do you believe it, too?"

"I will believe whatever you tell me."

"She is as innocent as I!" cried Corona, her eyes blazing with indignation. Giovanni understood more from the words than she meant to convey.

"Will you never forgive?" he asked sadly.

"I did not mean that — I meant Faustina. Giovanni — you must get her away from here. You can, if you will."

"I will do much for you," he answered quietly.

"It is not for me. It is for an unfortunate child who is the victim of a horrible mistake. I have comforted her by promising that she should be free this morning. She will go mad if she is kept here."

"Whatever I do, I do for you, and I will do nothing for any one else. For you or for no one, but I must know that it is really for you."

Corona understood and turned away. It was broad daylight now, as she looked through the grating of the window, watching the people who passed, without seeing them.

"What is Faustina Montevarchi to me, compared with your love?" Giovanni asked.

Something in the tone of his voice made her look at him. She saw the intensity of his feeling in his eyes, and she wondered that he should try to tempt her to love

him with such an insignificant bribe — with the hope of liberating the young girl. She did not understand that he was growing desperate. Had she known what was in his mind she might have made a supreme effort to deceive herself into the belief that he was still to her what he had been so long. But she did not know.

"For the sake of her innocence, Giovanni!" she exclaimed. "Can you let a child like that suffer so? I am sure, if you really would you could manage it, with your influence. Do you not see that I am suffering too, for the girl's sake?"

"Will you say that it is for your sake?"

"For my sake — if you will," she cried almost impatiently.

"For your sake, then," he answered. "Remember that it is for you, Corona."

Before she could answer, he had left the room, without another word, without so much as touching her hand. Corona gazed sadly at the open door, and then returned to Faustina.

An hour later the nun entered the cell, with a bright smile on her face.

"Your carriage is waiting for you — for you both," she said, addressing the princess. "Donna Faustina is free to return to her mother."

### CHAPTER XXIII.

When Giovanni Saracinesca had visited Cardinal Antonelli on the previous evening, he had been as firmly persuaded that Faustina was innocent, as Corona herself, and was at first very much astonished by the view the great man took of the matter. But as the latter developed the case, the girl's guilt no longer seemed impossible, or even improbable. The total absence of any ostensible incentive to the murder gave Faustina's quarrel with her father a very great importance, which was further heightened by the nature of the evidence. There

had been high words, in the course of which the Princess Montevarchi had left the room, leaving her daughter alone with the old man. No one had seen him alive after that moment, and he had been found dead, evidently strangled with her handkerchief. The fact that Faustina had a bruise on her arm and a cut on her lip pointed to the conclusion that a desperate struggle had taken place. The cardinal argued that, although she might not have had the strength to do the deed if the contest had begun when both were on their feet, it was by no means impossible that so old a man might have been overcome by a young and vigorous girl, if she had attacked him when he was in his chair, and was prevented from rising by the table before him. As for the monstrosity of the act, the cardinal merely smiled when Giovanni alluded to it. Had not fathers been murdered by their children before, and in Rome? The argument had additional weight, when Giovanni remembered Faustina's wild behaviour on the night of the insurrection. A girl who was capable of following a soldier into action, and who had spent hours in searching for him after such an appalling disaster as the explosion of the Serristori barracks, might well be subject to fits of desperate anger, and it was by no means far from likely, if her father had struck her in the face from his place at the table, that she should have laid violent hands upon him, seizing him by the throat and strangling him with her handkerchief. Her coolness afterwards might be only a part of her odd nature, for she was undoubtedly eccentric. She might be mad, said the cardinal, shaking his head, but there was every probability that she was guilty. In those days there was no appeal from the statesman's decisions in such matters. Faustina would remain a prisoner until she could be tried for the crime.

His Eminence was an early riser, and was not altogether surprised that Giovanni should come to him at such an hour, especially as he knew that the Princess Sant' Ilario had spent the night with Faustina in the Termini prison. He was altogether taken aback, however, by Giovanni's manner, and by the communication he made.

"I had the honour of telling your Eminence last night,