

The envelope contained a note from the cardinal, in his own hand, to the effect that suspicion had fallen upon another person and that Giovanni was at liberty to return to his home if he would sign the accompanying document. The latter was very short, and set forth that Giovanni Saracinesca bound himself upon his word to appear in the trial of the murderer of Prince Montevarchi, if called upon to do so, and not to leave Rome until the matter was finally concluded and set at rest.

He took the pen that lay on the table and signed his name in a broad firm hand, a fact the more notable because Corona was leaning over his shoulder, watching the characters as he traced them. He folded the paper and placed it in the open envelope which accompanied it. The cardinal was a man of details. He thought it possible that the document might be returned open for lack of the means to seal it. He did not choose that his secrets should become the property of the people about the Holy Office. It was a specimen of his forethought in small things which might have an influence upon great ones.

When Giovanni had finished, he rose and stood beside Corona. Each looked into the other's eyes and for a moment neither saw very clearly. They said little more, however, until the attendant entered again.

"You are at liberty," he said briefly, and without a word began to put together the few small things that belonged to his late prisoner.

Half an hour later Giovanni was seated at dinner at his father's table. The old gentleman greeted him with a half-savage growl of satisfaction.

"The prodigal has returned to get a meal while there is one to be had," he remarked. "I thought you had gone to Paris to leave the agreeable settlement of our affairs to Corona and me. Where the devil have you been?"

"I have been indulging in the luxury of a retreat in a religious house," answered Giovanni with perfect truth.

Corona glanced at him and both laughed happily, as they had not laughed for many days and weeks. Saracinesca looked incredulously across the table at his son.

"You chose a singular moment for your devotional

exercises," he said. "Where will piety hide herself next, I wonder? As long as Corona is satisfied, I am. It is her business."

"I am perfectly satisfied, I assure you," said Corona, whose black eyes were full of light.

Giovanni raised his glass, looked at her and smiled lovingly. Then he emptied it to the last drop and set it down without a word.

"Some secret, I suppose," said the old gentleman gruffly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Arnoldo Meschini was not, perhaps, insane in the ordinary sense of the word; that is to say, he would probably have recovered the normal balance of his faculties if he could have been kept from narcotics and stimulants, and if he could have been relieved from the distracting fear of discovery which tormented him when he was not under the influence of one or the other. But the latter condition was impossible, and it was the extremity of his terror which almost forced him to keep his brain in a clouded state. People have been driven mad by sudden fright, and have gradually lost their intellect through the constant presence of a fear from which there is no escape. A man who is perpetually producing an unnatural state of his mind by swallowing doses of brandy and opium may not be insane in theory; in actual fact, he may be a dangerous madman. As one day followed another Meschini found it more and more impossible to exist without his two comforters. The least approach to lucidity made him almost frantic. He fancied every man a spy, every indifferent glance a look full of meaning. Before long the belief took possession of him that he was to be made the victim of some horrible private vengeance. San Giacinto was not the man, he thought, to be contented with sending him to the galleys for life. Few murderers were executed in those days, and it would be a small satisfaction to the Monte-

varchi to know that Arnaldo had merely been transferred from his study of the library catalogue to the breaking of stones with a chain gang at Civitavecchia. It was more likely that they would revenge themselves more effectually. His disordered imagination saw horrible visions. San Giacinto might lay a trap for him, might simply come at dead of night and take him from his room to some deep vault beneath the palace. What could he do against such a giant? He fancied himself before a secret tribunal in the midst of which towered San Giacinto's colossal figure. He could hear the deep voice he dreaded pronouncing his doom. He was to be torn to shreds piecemeal, burnt by a slow fire, flayed alive by those enormous hands. There was no conceivable horror of torture that did not suggest itself to him at such times. It is true that when he went to bed at night he was generally either so stupefied by opium or so intoxicated with strong drink that he forgot even to lock his door. But during the day he was seldom so far under the power of either as not to suffer from his own hideous imaginings. One day, as he dragged his slow pace along a narrow street near the fountain of Trevi, his eyes were arrested by an armourer's window. It suddenly struck him that he had no weapon of defence in case San Giacinto or his agents came upon him unawares. And yet a bullet well placed would make an end even of such a Hercules as the man he feared. He paused and looked anxiously up and down the street. It was a dark day and a fine rain was falling. There was nobody about who could recognise him, and he might not have another such opportunity of providing himself unobserved with what he wanted. He entered the shop and bought himself a revolver. The man showed him how to load it and sold him a box of cartridges. He dropped the firearm into one of the pockets of his coat, and smiled as he felt how comfortably it balanced the bottle he carried in the other. Then he slunk out of the shop and pursued his walk.

The idea of making capital out of the original deeds concerning the Saracinesca, which had presented itself to him soon after the murder, recurred frequently to his mind; but he felt that he was in no condition to elaborate

it, and promised himself to attend to the matter when he was better. For he fancied that he was ill and that his state would soon begin to improve. To go to San Giacinto now was out of the question. It would have been easier for him to climb the cross on the summit of St. Peter's, with his shaken nerves and trembling limbs, than to face the man who inspired in him such untold dread. He could, of course, take the alternative which was open to him, and go to old Saracinesca. Indeed, there were moments when he could almost have screwed his courage to the point of making such an attempt, but his natural prudence made him draw back from an interview in which he must incur a desperate risk unless he had a perfect command of his faculties. To write what he had to say would be merely to give a weapon against himself, since he could not treat the matter by letter without acknowledging his share in the forgeries. The only way to accomplish his purpose would be to extract a solemn promise of secrecy from Saracinesca, together with a guarantee for his own safety, and to obtain these conditions would need all the diplomacy he possessed. Bad as he was, he had no experience of practical blackmailing, and he would be obliged to compose his speeches beforehand with scrupulous care, and with the wisest forethought. For the present, such work was beyond his power, but when he was half drunk he loved to look at the ancient parchments and build golden palaces in the future. When he was strong again, and calm, he would realise all his dreams, and that time, he felt sure, could not be far removed.

Nevertheless the days succeeded each other with appalling swiftness, and nothing was done. By imperceptible degrees his horror of San Giacinto began to invade his mind even when it was most deadened by drink. So long as an idea is new and has not really become a habit of the brain, brandy will drive it away, but the moment must inevitably come when the stimulant loses its power to obscure the memory of the thing dreaded. Opium will do it more effectually, but even that does not continue to act for ever. The time comes when the predominant thought of the waking hours reproduces itself during the artificial sleep with fearful force, so that the mind at

last obtains no rest at all. That is the dangerous period, preceding the decay and total collapse of the intellect under what is commonly called the fixed idea. In certain conditions of mind, and notably with criminals who fear discovery, the effects of opium change very quickly; the downward steps through which it would take months for an ordinary individual to pass are descended with alarming rapidity, and the end is a thousand times more horrible. Meschini could not have taken the doses which a confirmed opium-eater swallows with indifference, but the result produced was far greater in proportion to the amount of the narcotic he consumed. Before the week which followed the deed was ended, he began to see visions when he was apparently awake. Shapeless, slimy things crawled about the floor of his room, upon his table, even upon the sheets of his bed. Dark shadows confronted him, and changed their outlines unexpectedly. Forms rose out of the earth at his feet and towered all at once to the top of the room, taking the appearance of San Giacinto and vanishing suddenly into the air. The things he saw came like instantaneous flashes from another and even more terrible world, disappearing at first so quickly as to make him believe them only the effects of the light and darkness, like the ghost he had seen in his coat. In the beginning there was scarcely anything alarming in them, but as he started whenever they came, he generally took them as a warning that he needed more brandy to keep him up. In the course of a day or two, however, these visions assumed more awful proportions, and he found it impossible to escape from them except in absolute stupor. It would have been clear to any one that this state of things could not last long. There was scarcely an hour in which he knew exactly what he was doing, and if his strange behaviour escaped observation this was due to his solitary way of living. He did not keep away from the palace during the whole day, from a vague idea that his absence might be thought suspicious. He spent a certain number of hours in the library, doing nothing, although he carefully spread out a number of books before him and dipped his pen into the ink from time to time, stupidly, mechanically, as though his fingers could not forget the habit so

long familiar to them. His eyes, which had formerly been unusually bright, had grown dull and almost bleared, though they glanced at times very quickly from one part of the room to another. That was when he saw strange things moving in the vast hall, between him and the bookcases. When they had disappeared, his glassy look returned, so that his eyeballs seemed merely to reflect the light, as inanimate objects do, without absorbing it, and conveying it to the seat of vision. His face grew daily more thin and ghastly. It was by force of custom that he stayed so long in the place where he had spent so much of his life. The intervals of semi-lucidity seemed terribly long, though they were in reality short enough, and the effort to engage his attention in work helped him to live through them. He had never gone down to the apartments where the family lived, since he had knelt before the catafalque on the day after the murder. Indeed, there was no reason why he should go there, and no one noticed his absence. He was a very insignificant person in the palace. As for any one coming to find him among the books, nothing seemed more improbable. The library was swept out in the early morning and no one entered it again during the twenty-four hours. He never went out into the corridor now, but left his coat upon a chair near him, when he remembered to bring it. As a sort of precautionary measure against fear, he locked the door which opened upon the passage when he came in the morning, unlocking it again when he went away in order that the servant who did the sweeping might be able to get in.

The Princess Montevarchi was still dangerously ill, and Faustina had not been willing to leave her. San Giacinto and Flavia were not living in the house, but they spent a good deal of time there, because San Giacinto had ideas of his own about duty, to which his wife was obliged to submit even if she did not like them. Faustina was neither nervous nor afraid of solitude, and was by no means in need of her sister's company, so that when the two were together their conversation was not always of the most affectionate kind. The consequence was that the young girl tried to be alone as much as possible when she was not at her mother's bedside. One

day, having absolutely nothing to do, she grew desperate. It was very hard not to think of Anastase, when she was in the solitude of her own room, with no occupation to direct her mind. A week earlier she had been only too glad to have the opportunity of dreaming away the short afternoon undisturbed, letting her girlish thoughts wander among the rose gardens of the future with the image of the man she loved so dearly, and who was yet so far removed from her. Now she could not think of him without reflecting that her father's death had removed one very great obstacle to her marriage. She was by no means of a very devout or saintly character, but, on the other hand, she had a great deal of what is called heart, and to be heartless seemed to her almost worse than to be bad. In excuse of such very untheological doctrines it must be allowed that her ideas concerning wickedness in general were very limited indeed, if not altogether childish in their extreme simplicity. It is certain, however, that she would have thought it far less wrong to run away with Gouache in spite of her family than to entertain any thought which could place her father's tragic death in the light of a personal advantage. If she had nothing to do she could not help thinking of Anastase, and if she thought of him, she could not escape the conclusion that it would be far easier for her to marry him, now that the old prince was out of the way. It was therefore absolutely necessary to find some occupation.

At first she wandered aimlessly about the house until she was struck, almost for the first time, by the antiquated stiffness of the arrangement, and began to ask herself whether it would be respectful to the memory of her father, and to her mother, to try and make a few changes. Corona's home was very different. She would like to take that for a model. But one or two attempts showed her the magnitude of the task she had undertaken. She was ashamed to call the servants to help her—it would look as though there were to be a reception in the house. Her ideas of what could take place in the Palazzo Montevarchi did not go beyond that staid form of diversion. She was ashamed, however, and reflected, besides, that she was only the youngest of the family and had no right to take the initiative in the mat-

ter of improvements. The time hung very heavily upon her hands. She tried to teach herself something about painting by looking at the pictures on the walls, spending a quarter of an hour before each with conscientious assiduity. But this did not succeed either. The men in the pictures all took the shape of Monsieur Gouache in his smartest uniform and the women all looked disagreeably like Flavia. Then she thought of the library, which was the only place of importance in the house which she had not lately visited. She hesitated a moment only, considering how she could best reach it without passing through the study, and without going up the grand staircase to the outer door. A very little reflection showed her that she could get into the corridor from a passage near her own room. In a few minutes she was at the entrance to the great hall, trying to turn the heavy carved brass handle of the latch. To her surprise she could not open the door, which was evidently fastened from within. Then as she shook it in the hope that some one would hear her, a strange cry reached her ears, like that of a startled animal, accompanied by the shuffling of feet. She remembered Meschini's walk, and understood that it was he.

"Please let me in!" she called out in her clear young voice, that echoed back to her from the vaulted chamber.

Again she heard the shuffling footsteps, which this time came towards her, and a moment afterwards the door opened and the librarian's ghastly face was close before her. She drew back a little. She had forgotten that he was so ugly, she thought, or perhaps she would not have cared to see him. It would have been foolish, moreover, to go away after coming thus far.

"I want to see the library," she said quietly, after she had made up her mind. "Will you show it to me?"

"Favorisca, Excellency," replied Meschini in a broken voice. He had been frightened by the noise at the door, and the contortion of his face as he tried to smile was hideous to see. He bowed low, however, and closed the door after she had entered. Scarcely knowing what he did, he shuffled along by her side while she looked about the library, gazing at the long rows of books, bound all alike, that stretched from end to end of many of the

shelves. The place was new to her, for she had not been in it more than two or three times in her life, and she felt a sort of unexplained awe in the presence of so many thousands of volumes, of so much written and printed wisdom which she could never hope to understand. She had come with a vague idea that she should find something to read that should be different from the novels she was not allowed to touch. She realised all at once that she knew nothing of what had been written in all the centuries whose literature was represented in the vast collection. She hardly knew the names of twenty books out of the hundreds of millions that the world contained. But she could ask Meschini. She looked at him again, and his face repelled her. Nevertheless, she was too kindhearted not to enter into conversation with the lonely man whom she had so rarely seen, but who was one of the oldest members of her father's household.

"You have spent your life here, have you not?" she asked, for the sake of saying something.

"Nearly thirty years of it," answered Meschini in a muffled voice. Her presence tortured him beyond expression. "That is a long time, and I am not an old man."

"And are you always alone here? Do you never go out? What do you do all day?"

"I work among the books, Excellency. There are twenty thousand volumes here, enough to occupy a man's time."

"Yes—but how? Do you have to read them all?" asked Faustina innocently. "Is that your work?"

"I have read many more than would be believed, for my own pleasure. But my work is to keep them in order, to see that there is no variation from the catalogue, so that when learned men come to make inquiries they may find what they want. I have also to take care of all the books, to see that they do not suffer in any way. They are very valuable. There is a fortune here."

Somehow he felt less nervous when he began to speak of the library and its contents and the words came more easily to him. With a little encouragement he might even become loquacious. In spite of his face, Faustina began to feel an interest in him.

"It must be very hard work," she remarked. "Do you like it? Did you never want to do anything else? I should think you would grow tired of being always alone."

"I am very patient," answered Meschini humbly. "And I am used to it. I grew accustomed to the life when I was young."

"You say the collection is valuable. Are there any very beautiful books? I would like to see some of them."

The fair young creature sat down upon one of the high carved chairs at the end of a table. Meschini went to the other side of the hall and unlocked one of the drawers which lined the lower part of the bookcases to the height of three or four feet. Each was heavily carved with the Montevarchi arms in high relief. It was in these receptacles that the precious manuscripts were kept in their cases. He returned bringing a small square volume of bound manuscript, and laid it before Faustina.

"This is worth an enormous sum," he said. "It is the only complete one in the world. There is an imperfect copy in the library of the Vatican."

"What is it?"

"It is the Montevarchi Dante, the oldest in existence."

Faustina turned over the leaves curiously, and admired the even writing though she could not read many of the words, for the ancient characters were strange to her. It was a wonderful picture that the couple made in the great hall. On every side the huge carved bookcases of walnut, black with age, rose from the floor to the spring of the vault, their dark faces reflected in the highly-polished floor of coloured marble. Across the ancient tables a ray of sunlight fell from the high elere-story window. In the centre, the two figures with the old manuscript between them; Faustina's angel head in a high light against the dusky background, as she bent forward a little, turning the yellow pages with her slender, transparent fingers, the black folds of her full gown making heavy lines of drapery, graceful by her grace, and rendered less severe by a sort of youthfulness that seemed to pervade them, and that emanated from herself. Beside her, the bent frame of the broken down librarian, in a humble and respectful attitude, his long arms hang-

ing down by his sides, his shabby black coat almost dragging to his heels, his head bent forward as he looked at the pages. All his features seemed to have grown more sharp and yellow and pointed, and there was now a deep red flush in the upper part of his cheeks. A momentary light shone in his gray eyes, from beneath the bushy brows, a light of intelligence such as had formerly characterised them especially, brought back now perhaps by the effort to fix his attention upon the precious book. His large, coarse ears appeared to point themselves forward like those of an animal, following the direction of his sight. In outward appearance he presented a strange mixture of dilapidation, keenness, and brutality. A week had changed him very much. A few days ago most people would have looked at him with a sort of careless compassion. Now, there was about him something distinctly repulsive. Beside Faustina's youth and delicacy, and freshness, he hardly seemed like a human being.

"I suppose it is a very wonderful thing," said the young girl at last, "but I do not know enough to understand its value. Do my brothers ever come to the library?" She leaned back from the volume and glanced at Meschini's face, wondering how heaven could have made anything so ugly.

"No. They never come," replied the librarian, drawing the book towards him instinctively, as he would have done if his visitor had been a stranger, who might try to steal a page or two unless he were watched.

"But my poor father was very fond of the books, was he not? Did he not often come to see you here?"

She was thinking so little of Meschini that she did not see that he turned suddenly white and shook like a man in an ague. It was what he had feared all along, ever since she had entered the room. She suspected him and had come, or had perhaps been sent by San Giacinto to draw him into conversation and to catch him in something which could be interpreted to be a confession of his crime. Had that been her intention, his behaviour would have left little doubt in her mind as to the truth of the accusation. His face betrayed him, his uncontrollable fear, his frightened eyes and trembling limbs.

But she had only glanced at him, and her sight wandered to the bookcases for a moment. When she looked again he was moving away from her, along the table. She was surprised to see that his step was uncertain, and that he reeled against the heavy piece of furniture and grasped it for support. She started a little but did not rise.

"Are you ill?" she asked. "Shall I call some one?"

He made no answer, but seemed to recover himself at the sound of her voice, for he shuffled away and disappeared behind the high carved desk on which lay the open catalogue. She thought she saw a flash of light reflected from some smooth surface, and immediately afterwards she heard a gurgling sound, which she did not understand. Meschini was fortifying himself with a draught. Then he reappeared, walking more steadily. He had received a severe shock, but, as usual, he had not the courage to run away, conceiving that flight would inevitably be regarded as a proof of guilt.

"I am not well," he said in explanation as he returned. "I am obliged to take medicine continually. I beg your Excellency to forgive me."

"I am sorry to hear that," answered Faustina kindly. "Can we do nothing for you? Have you all you need?"

"Everything, thank you. I shall soon be well."

"I hope so, I am sure. What was I saying? Oh—I was asking whether my poor father came often to the library. Was he fond of the books?"

"His Excellency—Heaven give him glory!—he was a learned man. Yes, he came now and then." Meschini took possession of the manuscript and carried it off rather suddenly to its place in the drawer. He was a long time in locking it up. Faustina watched him with some curiosity.

"You were here that day, were you not?" she asked, as he turned towards her once more. The question was a natural one, considering the circumstances.

"I think your Excellency was present when I was examined by the prefect," answered Meschini in a curiously disagreeable tone.

"True," said Faustina. "You said you had been here all day as usual. I had forgotten. How horrible it was. And you saw nobody, you heard nothing? But I suppose it is too far from the study."

The librarian did not answer, but it was evident from his manner that he was very much disturbed. Indeed, he fancied that his worst fears were realised, and that Faustina was really trying to extract information from him for his own conviction. Her thoughts were actually very far from any such idea. She would have considered it quite as absurd to accuse the poor wretch before her as she had thought it outrageous that she herself should be suspected. Her father had always seemed to her a very imposing personage, and she could not conceive that he should have met his death at the hands of such a miserable creature as Arnaldo Meschini, who certainly had not the outward signs of physical strength or boldness. He, however, understood her words very differently and stood still, half way between her and the bookcases, asking himself whether it would not be better to take immediate steps for his safety. His hand was behind him, feeling for the revolver in the pocket of his long coat. Faustina was singularly fearless, by nature, but if she had guessed the danger of her position she would probably have effected her escape very quickly, instead of continuing the conversation.

"It is a very dreadful mystery," she said, rising from her chair and walking slowly across the polished marble floor until she stood before a row of great volumes of which the colour had attracted her eye. "It is the duty of us all to try and explain it. Of course we shall know all about it some day, but it is very hard to be patient. Do you know?" she turned suddenly and faced Meschini, speaking with a vehemence not usual for her. "They suspected me, as if I could have done it, I, a weak girl! And yet—if I had the man before me—the man who murdered him—I believe I would kill him with my hands!"

She moved forward a little, as she spoke, and tapped her small foot upon the pavement, as though to emphasise her words. Her soft brown eyes flashed with righteous anger, and her cheek grew pale at the thought of avenging her father. There must have been something very fierce in her young face, for Meschini's heart failed him, and his nerves seemed to collapse all at once. He tried to draw back from her, slipped and fell upon his

knees with a sharp cry of fear. Even then, Faustina did not suspect the cause of his weakness, but attributed it to the illness of which he had spoken. She sprang forward and attempted to help the poor creature to his feet, but instead of making an effort to rise, he seemed to be grovelling before her, uttering incoherent exclamations of terror.

"Lean on me!" said Faustina, putting out her hand. "What is the matter? Oh! Are you going to die!"

"Oh! oh! Do not hurt me—pray—in God's name!" cried Meschini, raising his eyes timidly.

"Hurt you? No! Why should I hurt you? You are ill—we will have the doctor. Try and get up—try and get to a chair."

Her tone reassured him a little, and her touch also, as she did her best to raise him to his feet. He struggled a little and at last stood up, leaning upon the bookcase, and panting with fright.

"It is nothing," he tried to say, catching his breath at every syllable. "I am better—my nerves—your Excellency—ugh! what a coward I am!"

The last exclamation, uttered in profound disgust of his own weakness, struck Faustina as very strange.

"Did I frighten you?" she asked in surprise. "I am very sorry. Now sit down and I will call some one to come to you."

"No, no! Please—I would rather be alone! I can walk quite well now. If—if your Excellency will excuse me, I will go to my room. I have more medicine—I will take it and I shall be better."

"Can you go alone? Are you sure?" asked Faustina anxiously. But even while she spoke he was moving towards the door, slowly and painfully at first, as it seemed, though possibly a lingering thought of propriety kept him from appearing to run away. The young girl walked a few steps after him, half fearing that he might fall again. But he kept his feet and reached the threshold. Then he made a queer attempt at a bow, and mumbled some words that Faustina could not hear. In another moment he had disappeared, and she was alone.

For some minutes she looked at the closed door through which he had gone out. Then she shook her head a

little sadly, and slowly went back to her room by the way she had come. It was all very strange, she thought, but his illness might account for it. She would have liked to consult San Giacinto, but though she was outwardly on good terms with him, and could not help feeling a sort of respect for his manly character, the part he had played in attempting to separate her from Gouache had prevented the two from becoming intimate. She said nothing to any one about her interview with Meschini in the library, and no one even guessed that she had been there.

CHAPTER XXIX.

In spite of his haste to settle all that remained to be settled with regard to the restitution of the property to San Giacinto, Saracinesca found it impossible to wind up the affair in a week as he had intended. It was a very complicated matter to separate from his present fortune that part of it which his cousin would have inherited from his great-grandfather. A great deal of wealth had come into the family since that time by successive marriages, and the management of the original estate had not been kept separate from the administration of the dowries which had from time to time been absorbed into it. The Saracinesca, however, were orderly people, and the books had been kept for generations with that astonishing precision of detail which is found in the great Roman houses, and which surpasses, perhaps, anything analogous which is to be found in modern business. By dint of perseverance and by employing a great number of persons in making the calculations, the notaries had succeeded in preparing a tolerably satisfactory schedule in the course of a fortnight, which both the principal parties agreed to accept as final. The day fixed for the meeting and liquidation of the accounts was a Saturday, a fortnight and two days after the murder of Prince Montevarchi. A question arose concerning the place of meeting.

Saracinesca proposed that San Giacinto and the notaries should come to the Palazzo Saracinesca. He was ready to brave out the situation to the end, to face his fate until it held nothing more in store for him, even to handing over the inventory of all that was no longer his in the house where he had been born. His boundless courage and almost brutal frankness would doubtless have supported him to the last, even through such a trial to his feelings, but San Giacinto refused to agree to the proposal. He repeatedly stated that he wished the old prince to inhabit the palace through his lifetime, and that he should even make every effort to induce him to retain the title. Both of these offers were rejected courteously, but firmly. In the matter of holding the decisive meeting in the palace, however, San Giacinto made a determined stand. He would not on any account appear in the light of the conqueror coming to take possession of the spoil. His wife had no share in this generous sentiment. She would have liked to enjoy her triumph to the full, for she was exceedingly ambitious, and was, moreover, not very fond of the Saracinesca. As she expressed it, she felt when she was with any of them, from the old prince to Corona, that they must be thinking all the time that she was a very foolish young person. San Giacinto's action was therefore spontaneous, and if it needs explanation it may be ascribed to an inherited magnanimity, to a certain dignity which had distinguished him even as a young man from the low class in which he had grown up. He was, indeed, by no means a type of the perfect nobleman; his conduct in the affair between Faustina and Gouache had shown that. He acted according to his lights, and was not ashamed to do things which his cousin Giovanni would have called mean. But he was manly, for all that, and if he owed some of his dignity to great stature and to his indomitable will, it was also in a measure the outward sign of a good heart and of an innate sense of justice. There had as yet been nothing dishonest in his dealings since he had come to Rome. He had acquired a fortune which enabled him to take the position that was lawfully his. He liked Flavia, and had bargained for her with her father, afterwards scrupulously fulfilling the terms of