

kissed the feet and pedestal of the crucifix, whispering softly: "Lord, keep me faithful unto death."

When he rose, the officer was standing by the table, examining Montanelli's portrait. "Is this a relative of yours?" he asked.

"No; it is my confessor, the new Bishop of Brisighella."

On the staircase the Italian servants were waiting, anxious and sorrowful. They all loved Arthur for his own sake and his mother's, and crowded round him, kissing his hands and dress with passionate grief. Gian Battista stood by, the tears dripping down his gray moustache. None of the Burtons came out to take leave of him. Their coldness accentuated the tenderness and sympathy of the servants, and Arthur was near to breaking down as he pressed the hands held out to him.

"Good-bye, Gian Battista. Kiss the little ones for me. Good-bye, Teresa. Pray for me, all of you; and God keep you! Good-bye, good-bye!"

He ran hastily downstairs to the front door. A moment later only a little group of silent men and sobbing women stood on the doorstep watching the carriage as it drove away.

CHAPTER VI.

ARTHUR was taken to the huge mediæval fortress at the harbour's mouth. He found prison life fairly endurable. His cell was unpleasantly damp and dark; but he had been brought up in a palace in the Via Borra, and neither close air, rats, nor foul smells were novelties to him. The food, also,

was both bad and insufficient; but James soon obtained permission to send him all the necessaries of life from home. He was kept in solitary confinement, and, though the vigilance of the warders was less strict than he had expected, he failed to obtain any explanation of the cause of his arrest. Nevertheless, the tranquil frame of mind in which he had entered the fortress did not change. Not being allowed books, he spent his time in prayer and devout meditation, and waited without impatience or anxiety for the further course of events.

One day a soldier unlocked the door of his cell and called to him: "This way, please!" After two or three questions, to which he got no answer but, "Talking is forbidden," Arthur resigned himself to the inevitable and followed the soldier through a labyrinth of courtyards, corridors, and stairs, all more or less musty-smelling, into a large, light room in which three persons in military uniform sat at a long table covered with green baize and littered with papers, chatting in a languid, desultory way. They put on a stiff, business air as he came in, and the oldest of them, a foppish-looking man with gray whiskers and a colonel's uniform, pointed to a chair on the other side of the table and began the preliminary interrogation.

Arthur had expected to be threatened, abused, and sworn at, and had prepared himself to answer with dignity and patience; but he was pleasantly disappointed. The colonel was stiff, cold and formal, but perfectly courteous. The usual questions as to his name, age, nationality, and social position were put and answered, and the replies written down in monotonous succession. He was beginning to feel bored and impatient, when the colonel asked:

"And now, Mr. Burton, what do you know about Young Italy?"

"I know that it is a society which publishes a newspaper in Marseilles and circulates it in Italy, with the object of inducing people to revolt and drive the Austrian army out of the country."

"You have read this paper, I think?"

"Yes; I am interested in the subject."

"When you read it you realized that you were committing an illegal action?"

"Certainly."

"Where did you get the copies which were found in your room?"

"That I cannot tell you."

"Mr. Burton, you must not say 'I cannot tell' here; you are bound to answer my questions."

"I will not, then, if you object to 'cannot.'"

"You will regret it if you permit yourself to use such expressions," remarked the colonel. As Arthur made no reply, he went on:

"I may as well tell you that evidence has come into our hands proving your connection with this society to be much more intimate than is implied by the mere reading of forbidden literature. It will be to your advantage to confess frankly. In any case the truth will be sure to come out, and you will find it useless to screen yourself behind evasion and denials."

"I have no desire to screen myself. What is it you want to know?"

"Firstly, how did you, a foreigner, come to be implicated in matters of this kind?"

"I thought about the subject and read everything I could get hold of, and formed my own conclusions."

"Who persuaded you to join this society?"

"No one; I wished to join it."

"You are shilly-shallying with me," said the colonel, sharply; his patience was evidently beginning to give out. "No one can join a society by himself. To whom did you communicate your wish to join it?"

Silence.

"Will you have the kindness to answer me?"

"Not when you ask questions of that kind."

Arthur spoke sullenly; a curious, nervous irritability was taking possession of him. He knew by this time that many arrests had been made in both Leghorn and Pisa; and, though still ignorant of the extent of the calamity, he had already heard enough to put him into a fever of anxiety for the safety of Gemma and his other friends. The studied politeness of the officers, the dull game of fencing and parrying, of insidious questions and evasive answers, worried and annoyed him, and the clumsy tramping backward and forward of the sentinel outside the door jarred detestably upon his ear.

"Oh, by the bye, when did you last meet Giovanni Bolla?" asked the colonel, after a little more bandying of words. "Just before you left Pisa, was it?"

"I know no one of that name."

"What! Giovanni Bolla? Surely you know him—a tall young fellow, closely shaven. Why, he is one of your fellow-students."

"There are many students in the university whom I don't know."

"Oh, but you must know Bolla, surely! Look, this is his handwriting. You see, he knows you well enough."

The colonel carelessly handed him a paper

headed: "Protocol," and signed: "Giovanni Bolla." Glancing down it Arthur came upon his own name. He looked up in surprise. "Am I to read it?"

"Yes, you may as well; it concerns you."

He began to read, while the officers sat silently watching his face. The document appeared to consist of depositions in answer to a long string of questions. Evidently Bolla, too, must have been arrested. The first depositions were of the usual stereotyped character; then followed a short account of Bolla's connection with the society, of the dissemination of prohibited literature in Leghorn, and of the students' meetings. Next came "Among those who joined us was a young Englishman, Arthur Burton, who belongs to one of the rich shipowning families."

The blood rushed into Arthur's face. Bolla had betrayed him! Bolla, who had taken upon himself the solemn duties of an initiator—Bolla, who had converted Gemma—who was in love with her! He laid down the paper and stared at the floor.

"I hope that little document has refreshed your memory?" hinted the colonel politely.

Arthur shook his head. "I know no one of that name," he repeated in a dull, hard voice. "There must be some mistake."

"Mistake? Oh, nonsense! Come, Mr. Burton, chivalry and quixotism are very fine things in their way; but there's no use in overdoing them. It's an error all you young people fall into at first. Come, think! What good is it for you to compromise yourself and spoil your prospects in life over a simple formality about a man that has betrayed you? You see yourself, he wasn't so particular as to what he said about you."

A faint shade of something like mockery had crept into the colonel's voice. Arthur looked up with a start; a sudden light flashed upon his mind.

"It's a lie!" he cried out. "It's a forgery! I can see it in your face, you cowardly—— You've got some prisoner there you want to compromise, or a trap you want to drag me into. You are a forger, and a liar, and a scoundrel——"

"Silence!" shouted the colonel, starting up in a rage; his two colleagues were already on their feet. "Captain Tommasi," he went on, turning to one of them, "ring for the guard, if you please, and have this young gentleman put in the punishment cell for a few days. He wants a lesson, I see, to bring him to reason."

The punishment cell was a dark, damp, filthy hole under ground. Instead of bringing Arthur "to reason," it thoroughly exasperated him. His luxurious home had rendered him daintily fastidious about personal cleanliness, and the first effect of the slimy, vermin-covered walls, the floor heaped with accumulations of filth and garbage, the fearful stench of fungi and sewage and rotting wood, was strong enough to have satisfied the offended officer. When he was pushed in and the door locked behind him he took three cautious steps forward with outstretched hands, shuddering with disgust as his fingers came into contact with the slippery wall, and groped in the dense blackness for some spot less filthy than the rest in which to sit down.

The long day passed in unbroken blackness and silence, and the night brought no change. In the utter void and absence of all external impressions, he gradually lost the consciousness of time; and

when, on the following morning, a key was turned in the door lock, and the frightened rats scurried past him squeaking, he started up in a sudden panic, his heart throbbing furiously and a roaring noise in his ears, as though he had been shut away from light and sound for months instead of hours.

The door opened, letting in a feeble lantern gleam—a flood of blinding light, it seemed to him—and the head warder entered, carrying a piece of bread and a mug of water. Arthur made a step forward; he was quite convinced that the man had come to let him out. Before he had time to speak, the warder put the bread and mug into his hands, turned round and went away without a word, locking the door again.

Arthur stamped his foot upon the ground. For the first time in his life he was savagely angry. But as the hours went by, the consciousness of time and place gradually slipped further and further away. The blackness seemed an illimitable thing, with no beginning and no end, and life had, as it were, stopped for him. On the evening of the third day, when the door was opened and the head warder appeared on the threshold with a soldier, he looked up, dazed and bewildered, shading his eyes from the unaccustomed light, and vaguely wondering how many hours or weeks he had been in this grave.

“This way, please,” said the cool business voice of the warder. Arthur rose and moved forward mechanically, with a strange unsteadiness, swaying and stumbling like a drunkard. He resented the warder’s attempt to help him up the steep, narrow steps leading to the courtyard; but as he reached the highest step a sudden giddiness came over him,

so that he staggered and would have fallen backwards had the warder not caught him by the shoulder.

“There, he’ll be all right now,” said a cheerful voice; “they most of them go off this way coming out into the air.”

Arthur struggled desperately for breath as another handful of water was dashed into his face. The blackness seemed to fall away from him in pieces with a rushing noise; then he woke suddenly into full consciousness, and, pushing aside the warder’s arm, walked along the corridor and up the stairs almost steadily. They stopped for a moment in front of a door; then it opened, and before he realized where they were taking him he was in the brightly lighted interrogation room, staring in confused wonder at the table and the papers and the officers sitting in their accustomed places.

“Ah, it’s Mr. Burton!” said the colonel. “I hope we shall be able to talk more comfortably now. Well, and how do you like the dark cell? Not quite so luxurious as your brother’s drawing room, is it? eh?”

Arthur raised his eyes to the colonel’s smiling face. He was seized by a frantic desire to spring at the throat of this gray-whiskered fop and tear it with his teeth. Probably something of this kind was visible in his face, for the colonel added immediately, in a quite different tone:

“Sit down, Mr. Burton, and drink some water; you are excited.”

Arthur pushed aside the glass of water held out to him; and, leaning his arms on the table, rested his forehead on one hand and tried to collect his

thoughts. The colonel sat watching him keenly, noting with experienced eyes the unsteady hands and lips, the hair dripping with water, the dim gaze that told of physical prostration and disordered nerves.

"Now, Mr. Burton," he said after a few minutes; "we will start at the point where we left off; and as there has been a certain amount of unpleasantness between us, I may as well begin by saying that I, for my part, have no desire to be anything but indulgent with you. If you will behave properly and reasonably, I assure you that we shall not treat you with any unnecessary harshness."

"What do you want me to do?"

Arthur spoke in a hard, sullen voice, quite different from his natural tone.

"I only want you to tell us frankly, in a straightforward and honourable manner, what you know of this society and its adherents. First of all, how long have you known Bolla?"

"I never met him in my life. I know nothing whatever about him."

"Really? Well, we will return to that subject presently. I think you know a young man named Carlo Bini?"

"I never heard of such a person."

"That is very extraordinary. What about Francesco Neri?"

"I never heard the name."

"But here is a letter in your handwriting, addressed to him. Look!"

Arthur glanced carelessly at the letter and laid it aside.

"Do you recognize that letter?"

"No."

"You deny that it is in your writing?"

"I deny nothing. I have no recollection of it."

"Perhaps you remember this one?"

A second letter was handed to him, and he saw that it was one which he had written in the autumn to a fellow-student.

"No."

"Nor the person to whom it is addressed?"

"Nor the person."

"Your memory is singularly short."

"It is a defect from which I have always suffered."

"Indeed! And I heard the other day from a university professor that you are considered by no means deficient; rather clever in fact."

"You probably judge of cleverness by the police-spy standard; university professors use words in a different sense."

The note of rising irritation was plainly audible in Arthur's voice. He was physically exhausted with hunger, foul air, and want of sleep; every bone in his body seemed to ache separately; and the colonel's voice grated on his exasperated nerves, setting his teeth on edge like the squeak of a slate pencil.

"Mr. Burton," said the colonel, leaning back in his chair and speaking gravely, "you are again forgetting yourself; and I warn you once more that this kind of talk will do you no good. Surely you have had enough of the dark cell not to want any more just for the present. I tell you plainly that I shall use strong measures with you if you persist in repulsing gentle ones. Mind, I have proof—positive proof—that some of these young men have been engaged in smuggling prohibited literature into this port; and that you have been in communication with them. Now, are you going

to tell me, without compulsion, what you know about this affair?"

Arthur bent his head lower. A blind, senseless, wild-beast fury was beginning to stir within him like a live thing. The possibility of losing command over himself was more appalling to him than any threats. For the first time he began to realize what latent potentialities may lie hidden beneath the culture of any gentleman and the piety of any Christian; and the terror of himself was strong upon him.

"I am waiting for your answer," said the colonel.

"I have no answer to give."

"You positively refuse to answer?"

"I will tell you nothing at all."

"Then I must simply order you back into the punishment cell, and keep you there till you change your mind. If there is much more trouble with you, I shall put you in irons."

Arthur looked up, trembling from head to foot. "You will do as you please," he said slowly; "and whether the English Ambassador will stand your playing tricks of that kind with a British subject who has not been convicted of any crime is for him to decide."

At last Arthur was conducted back to his own cell, where he flung himself down upon the bed and slept till the next morning. He was not put in irons, and saw no more of the dreaded dark cell; but the feud between him and the colonel grew more inveterate with every interrogation. It was quite useless for Arthur to pray in his cell for grace to conquer his evil passions, or to meditate half the night long upon the patience and meekness of Christ. No sooner was he brought again into the long, bare room with its baize-covered table, and

confronted with the colonel's waxed moustache, than the unchristian spirit would take possession of him once more, suggesting bitter repartees and contemptuous answers. Before he had been a month in the prison the mutual irritation had reached such a height that he and the colonel could not see each other's faces without losing their temper.

The continual strain of this petty warfare was beginning to tell heavily upon his nerves. Knowing how closely he was watched, and remembering certain dreadful rumours which he had heard of prisoners secretly drugged with belladonna that notes might be taken of their ravings, he gradually became afraid to sleep or eat; and if a mouse ran past him in the night, would start up drenched with cold sweat and quivering with terror, fancying that someone was hiding in the room to listen if he talked in his sleep. The gendarmes were evidently trying to entrap him into making some admission which might compromise Bolla; and so great was his fear of slipping, by any inadvertency, into a pitfall, that he was really in danger of doing so through sheer nervousness. Bolla's name rang in his ears night and day, interfering even with his devotions, and forcing its way in among the beads of the rosary instead of the name of Mary. But the worst thing of all was that his religion, like the outer world, seemed to be slipping away from him as the days went by. To this last foothold he clung with feverish tenacity, spending several hours of each day in prayer and meditation; but his thoughts wandered more and more often to Bolla, and the prayers were growing terribly mechanical.

His greatest comfort was the head warder of the prison. This was a little old man, fat and bald,

who at first had tried his hardest to wear a severe expression. Gradually the good nature which peeped out of every dimple in his chubby face conquered his official scruples, and he began carrying messages for the prisoners from cell to cell.

One afternoon in the middle of May this warder came into the cell with a face so scowling and gloomy that Arthur looked at him in astonishment.

"Why, Enrico!" he exclaimed; "what on earth is wrong with you to-day?"

"Nothing," said Enrico snappishly; and, going up to the pallet, he began pulling off the rug, which was Arthur's property.

"What do you want with my things? Am I to be moved into another cell?"

"No; you're to be let out."

"Let out? What—to-day? For altogether? Enrico!"

In his excitement Arthur had caught hold of the old man's arm. It was angrily wrenched away.

"Enrico! What has come to you? Why don't you answer? Are we all going to be let out?"

A contemptuous grunt was the only reply.

"Look here!" Arthur again took hold of the warder's arm, laughing. "It is no use for you to be cross to me, because I'm not going to get offended. I want to know about the others."

"Which others?" growled Enrico, suddenly laying down the shirt he was folding. "Not Bolla, I suppose?"

"Bolla and all the rest, of course. Enrico, what is the matter with you?"

"Well, he's not likely to be let out in a hurry, poor lad, when a comrade has betrayed him. Ugh!" Enrico took up the shirt again in disgust.

"Betrayed him? A comrade? Oh, how dreadful!" Arthur's eyes dilated with horror. Enrico turned quickly round.

"Why, wasn't it you?"

"I? Are you off your head, man? I?"

"Well, they told him so yesterday at interrogation, anyhow. I'm very glad if it wasn't you, for I always thought you were rather a decent young fellow. This way!" Enrico stepped out into the corridor and Arthur followed him, a light breaking in upon the confusion of his mind.

"They told Bolla I'd betrayed him? Of course they did! Why, man, they told me he had betrayed me. Surely Bolla isn't fool enough to believe that sort of stuff?"

"Then it really isn't true?" Enrico stopped at the foot of the stairs and looked searchingly at Arthur, who merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course it's a lie."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, my lad, and I'll tell him you said so. But you see what they told him was that you had denounced him out of—well, out of jealousy, because of your both being sweet on the same girl."

"It's a lie!" Arthur repeated the words in a quick, breathless whisper. A sudden, paralyzing fear had come over him. "The same girl—jealousy!" How could they know—how could they know?

"Wait a minute, my lad." Enrico stopped in the corridor leading to the interrogation room, and spoke softly. "I believe you; but just tell me one thing. I know you're a Catholic; did you ever say anything in the confessional——"

"It's a lie!" This time Arthur's voice had risen to a stifled cry.

Enrico shrugged his shoulders and moved on again. "You know best, of course; but you wouldn't be the only young fool that's been taken in that way. There's a tremendous ado just now about a priest in Pisa that some of your friends have found out. They've printed a leaflet saying he's a spy."

He opened the door of the interrogation room, and, seeing that Arthur stood motionless, staring blankly before him, pushed him gently across the threshold.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Burton," said the colonel, smiling and showing his teeth amiably. "I have great pleasure in congratulating you. An order for your release has arrived from Florence. Will you kindly sign this paper?"

Arthur went up to him. "I want to know," he said in a dull voice, "who it was that betrayed me."

The colonel raised his eyebrows with a smile.

"Can't you guess? Think a minute."

Arthur shook his head. The colonel put out both hands with a gesture of polite surprise.

"Can't guess? Really? Why, you yourself, Mr. Burton. Who else could know your private love affairs?"

Arthur turned away in silence. On the wall hung a large wooden crucifix; and his eyes wandered slowly to its face; but with no appeal in them, only a dim wonder at this supine and patient God that had no thunderbolt for a priest who betrayed the confessional.

"Will you kindly sign this receipt for your papers?" said the colonel blandly; "and then I need not keep you any longer. I am sure you must be in a hurry to get home; and my time is

very much taken up just now with the affairs of that foolish young man, Bolla, who tried your Christian forbearance so hard. I am afraid he will get a rather heavy sentence. Good-afternoon!"

Arthur signed the receipt, took his papers, and went out in dead silence. He followed Enrico to the massive gate; and, without a word of farewell, descended to the water's edge, where a ferryman was waiting to take him across the moat. As he mounted the stone steps leading to the street, a girl in a cotton dress and straw hat ran up to him with outstretched hands.

"Arthur! Oh, I'm so glad—I'm so glad!"

He drew his hands away, shivering.

"Jim!" he said at last, in a voice that did not seem to belong to him. "Jim!"

"I've been waiting here for half an hour. They said you would come out at four. Arthur, why do you look at me like that? Something has happened! Arthur, what has come to you? Stop!"

He had turned away, and was walking slowly down the street, as if he had forgotten her presence. Thoroughly frightened at his manner, she ran after him and caught him by the arm.

"Arthur!"

He stopped and looked up with bewildered eyes. She slipped her arm through his, and they walked on again for a moment in silence.

"Listen, dear," she began softly; "you mustn't get so upset over this wretched business. I know it's dreadfully hard on you, but everybody understands."

"What business?" he asked in the same dull voice.

"I mean, about Bolla's letter."

Arthur's face contracted painfully at the name. "I thought you wouldn't have heard of it," Gemma went on; "but I suppose they've told you. Bolla must be perfectly mad to have imagined such a thing."

"Such a thing——?"

"You don't know about it, then? He has written a horrible letter, saying that you have told about the steamers, and got him arrested. It's perfectly absurd, of course; everyone that knows you sees that; it's only the people who don't know you that have been upset by it. Really, that's what I came here for—to tell you that no one in our group believes a word of it."

"Gemma! But it's—it's true!"

She shrank slowly away from him, and stood quite still, her eyes wide and dark with horror, her face as white as the kerchief at her neck. A great icy wave of silence seemed to have swept round them both, shutting them out, in a world apart, from the life and movement of the street.

"Yes," he whispered at last; "the steamers—I spoke of that; and I said his name—oh, my God! my God! What shall I do?"

He came to himself suddenly, realizing her presence and the mortal terror in her face. Yes, of course, she must think——

"Gemma, you don't understand!" he burst out, moving nearer; but she recoiled with a sharp cry:

"Don't touch me!"

Arthur seized her right hand with sudden violence.

"Listen, for God's sake! It was not my fault; I——"

"Let go; let my hand go! Let go!"

The next instant she wrenched her fingers away

from his, and struck him across the cheek with her open hand.

A kind of mist came over his eyes. For a little while he was conscious of nothing but Gemma's white and desperate face, and the right hand which she had fiercely rubbed on the skirt of her cotton dress. Then the daylight crept back again, and he looked round and saw that he was alone.

CHAPTER VII.

IT had long been dark when Arthur rang at the front door of the great house in the Via Borra. He remembered that he had been wandering about the streets; but where, or why, or for how long, he had no idea. Julia's page opened the door, yawning, and grinned significantly at the haggard, stony face. It seemed to him a prodigious joke to have the young master come home from jail like a "drunk and disorderly" beggar. Arthur went upstairs. On the first floor he met Gibbons coming down with an air of lofty and solemn disapproval. He tried to pass with a muttered "Good evening"; but Gibbons was no easy person to get past against his will.

"The gentlemen are out, sir," he said, looking critically at Arthur's rather neglected dress and hair. "They have gone with the mistress to an evening party, and will not be back till nearly twelve."

Arthur looked at his watch; it was nine o'clock. Oh, yes! he would have time—plenty of time——

"My mistress desired me to ask whether you would like any supper, sir; and to say that she