

very intimately; and I never heard anything of him that was not good. I believe that, in those days at least, he was really a most remarkable man. But that was long ago, and he may have changed. Irresponsible power corrupts so many people."

The Gadfly raised his head from the flowers, and looked at her with a steady face.

"At any rate," he said, "if Monsignor Montanelli is not himself a scoundrel, he is a tool in scoundrelly hands. It is all one to me which he is—and to my friends across the frontier. A stone in the path may have the best intentions, but it must be kicked out of the path, for all that. Allow me, signora!" He rang the bell, and, limping to the door, opened it for her to pass out.

"It was very kind of you to call, signora. May I send for a vettura? No? Good-afternoon, then! Bianca, open the hall-door, please."

Gemma went out into the street, pondering anxiously. "My friends across the frontier"—who were they? And how was the stone to be kicked out of the path? If with satire only, why had he said it with such dangerous eyes?

CHAPTER IV.

MONSIGNOR MONTANELLI arrived in Florence in the first week of October. His visit caused a little flutter of excitement throughout the town. He was a famous preacher and a representative of the reformed Papacy; and people looked eagerly to him for an exposition of the "new doctrine," the gospel of love and reconciliation which was to cure the sorrows of Italy. The nomination of Cardinal Gizzi to the Roman State Secretaryship

in place of the universally detested Lambruschini had raised the public enthusiasm to its highest pitch; and Montanelli was just the man who could most easily sustain it. The irreproachable strictness of his life was a phenomenon sufficiently rare among the high dignitaries of the Roman Church to attract the attention of people accustomed to regard blackmailing, speculation, and disreputable intrigues as almost invariable adjuncts to the career of a prelate. Moreover, his talent as a preacher was really great; and with his beautiful voice and magnetic personality, he would in any time and place have made his mark.

Grassini, as usual, strained every nerve to get the newly arrived celebrity to his house; but Montanelli was no easy game to catch. To all invitations he replied with the same courteous but positive refusal, saying that his health was bad and his time fully occupied, and that he had neither strength nor leisure for going into society.

"What omnivorous creatures those Grassinis are!" Martini said contemptuously to Gemma as they crossed the Signoria square one bright, cold Sunday morning. "Did you notice the way Grassini bowed when the Cardinal's carriage drove up? It's all one to them who a man is, so long as he's talked about. I never saw such lion-hunters in my life. Only last August it was the Gadfly; now it's Montanelli. I hope His Eminence feels flattered at the attention; a precious lot of adventurers have shared it with him."

They had been hearing Montanelli preach in the Cathedral; and the great building had been so thronged with eager listeners that Martini, fearing a return of Gemma's troublesome headaches, had persuaded her to come away before the Mass

was over. The sunny morning, the first after a week of rain, offered him an excuse for suggesting a walk among the garden slopes by San Niccolò.

"No," she answered; "I should like a walk if you have time; but not to the hills. Let us keep along the Lung'Arno; Montanelli will pass on his way back from church and I am like Grassini—I want to see the notability."

"But you have just seen him."

"Not close. There was such a crush in the Cathedral, and his back was turned to us when the carriage passed. If we keep near to the bridge we shall be sure to see him well—he is staying on the Lung'Arno, you know."

"But what has given you such a sudden fancy to see Montanelli? You never used to care about famous preachers."

"It is not famous preachers; it is the man himself; I want to see how much he has changed since I saw him last."

"When was that?"

"Two days after Arthur's death."

Martini glanced at her anxiously. They had come out on to the Lung'Arno, and she was staring absently across the water, with a look on her face that he hated to see.

"Gemma, dear," he said after a moment; "are you going to let that miserable business haunt you all your life? We have all made mistakes when we were seventeen."

"We have not all killed our dearest friend when we were seventeen," she answered wearily; and, leaning her arm on the stone balustrade of the bridge, looked down into the river. Martini held his tongue; he was almost afraid to speak to her when this mood was on her.

"I never look down at water without remembering," she said, slowly raising her eyes to his; then with a nervous little shiver: "Let us walk on a bit, Cesare; it is chilly for standing."

They crossed the bridge in silence and walked on along the river-side. After a few minutes she spoke again.

"What a beautiful voice that man has! There is something about it that I have never heard in any other human voice. I believe it is the secret of half his influence."

"It is a wonderful voice," Martini assented, catching at a subject of conversation which might lead her away from the dreadful memory called up by the river, "and he is, apart from his voice, about the finest preacher I have ever heard. But I believe the secret of his influence lies deeper than that. It is the way his life stands out from that of almost all the other prelates. I don't know whether you could lay your hand on one other high dignitary in all the Italian Church—except the Pope himself—whose reputation is so utterly spotless. I remember, when I was in the Romagna last year, passing through his diocese and seeing those fierce mountaineers waiting in the rain to get a glimpse of him or touch his dress. He is venerated there almost as a saint; and that means a good deal among the Romagnols, who generally hate everything that wears a cassock. I remarked to one of the old peasants,—as typical a smuggler as ever I saw in my life,—that the people seemed very much devoted to their bishop, and he said: 'We don't love bishops, they are liars; we love Monsignor Montanelli. Nobody has ever known him to tell a lie or do an unjust thing.'"

"I wonder," Gemma said, half to herself, "if he knows the people think that about him."

"Why shouldn't he know it? Do you think it is not true?"

"I know it is not true."

"How do you know it?"

"Because he told me so."

"*He* told you? Montanelli? Gemma, what do you mean?"

She pushed the hair back from her forehead and turned towards him. They were standing still again, he leaning on the balustrade and she slowly drawing lines on the pavement with the point of her umbrella.

"Cesare, you and I have been friends for all these years, and I have never told you what really happened about Arthur."

"There is no need to tell me, dear," he broke in hastily; "I know all about it already."

"Giovanni told you?"

"Yes, when he was dying. He told me about it one night when I was sitting up with him. He said—Gemma, dear, I had better tell you the truth, now we have begun talking about it—he said that you were always brooding over that wretched story, and he begged me to be as good a friend to you as I could and try to keep you from thinking of it. And I have tried to, dear, though I may not have succeeded—I have, indeed."

"I know you have," she answered softly, raising her eyes for a moment; "I should have been badly off without your friendship. But—Giovanni did not tell you about Monsignor Montanelli, then?"

"No, I didn't know that he had anything to

do with it. What he told me was about—all that affair with the spy, and about——"

"About my striking Arthur and his drowning himself. Well, I will tell you about Montanelli."

They turned back towards the bridge over which the Cardinal's carriage would have to pass. Gemma looked out steadily across the water as she spoke.

"In those days Montanelli was a canon; he was Director of the Theological Seminary at Pisa, and used to give Arthur lessons in philosophy and read with him after he went up to the Sapienza. They were perfectly devoted to each other; more like two lovers than teacher and pupil. Arthur almost worshipped the ground that Montanelli walked on, and I remember his once telling me that if he lost his 'Padre'—he always used to call Montanelli so—he should go and drown himself. Well, then you know what happened about the spy. The next day, my father and the Burtons—Arthur's step-brothers, most detestable people—spent the whole day dragging the Darsena basin for the body; and I sat in my room alone and thought of what I had done——"

She paused a moment, and went on again:

"Late in the evening my father came into my room and said: 'Gemma, child, come downstairs; there's a man I want you to see.' And when we went down there was one of the students belonging to the group sitting in the consulting room, all white and shaking; and he told us about Giovanni's second letter coming from the prison to say that they had heard from the jailer about Cardi, and that Arthur had been tricked in the confessional. I remember the student saying to me: 'It is at least some consolation that we know

he was innocent.' My father held my hands and tried to comfort me; he did not know then about the blow. Then I went back to my room and sat there all night alone. In the morning my father went out again with the Burtons to see the harbour dragged. They had some hope of finding the body there."

"It was never found, was it?"

"No; it must have got washed out to sea; but they thought there was a chance. I was alone in my room and the servant came up to say that a 'reverendissimo padre' had called and she had told him my father was at the docks and he had gone away. I knew it must be Montanelli; so I ran out at the back door and caught him up at the garden gate. When I said: 'Canon Montanelli, I want to speak to you,' he just stopped and waited silently for me to speak. Oh, Cesare, if you had seen his face—it haunted me for months afterwards! I said: 'I am Dr. Warren's daughter, and I have come to tell you that it is I who have killed Arthur.' I told him everything, and he stood and listened, like a figure cut in stone, till I had finished; then he said: 'Set your heart at rest, my child; it is I that am a murderer, not you. I deceived him and he found it out.' And with that he turned and went out at the gate without another word."

"And then?"

"I don't know what happened to him after that; I heard the same evening that he had fallen down in the street in a kind of fit and had been carried into a house near the docks; but that is all I know. My father did everything he could for me; when I told him about it he threw up his practice and took me away to England at

once, so that I should never hear anything that could remind me. He was afraid I should end in the water, too; and indeed I believe I was near it at one time. But then, you know, when we found out that my father had cancer I was obliged to come to myself—there was no one else to nurse him. And after he died I was left with the little ones on my hands until my elder brother was able to give them a home. Then there was Giovanni. Do you know, when he came to England we were almost afraid to meet each other with that frightful memory between us. He was so bitterly remorseful for his share in it all—that unhappy letter he wrote from prison. But I believe, really, it was our common trouble that drew us together."

Martini smiled and shook his head.

"It may have been so on your side," he said; "but Giovanni had made up his mind from the first time he ever saw you. I remember his coming back to Milan after that first visit to Leghorn and raving about you to me till I was perfectly sick of hearing of the English Gemma. I thought I should hate you. Ah! there it comes!"

The carriage crossed the bridge and drove up to a large house on the Lung'Arno. Montanelli was leaning back on the cushions as if too tired to care any longer for the enthusiastic crowd which had collected round the door to catch a glimpse of him. The inspired look that his face had worn in the Cathedral had faded quite away and the sunlight showed the lines of care and fatigue. When he had alighted and passed, with the heavy, spiritless tread of weary and heart-sick old age, into the house, Gemma turned away and walked slowly to the bridge. Her face seemed for a mo-

ment to reflect the withered, hopeless look of his. Martini walked beside her in silence.

"I have so often wondered," she began again after a little pause; "what he meant about the deception. It has sometimes occurred to me——"

"Yes?"

"Well, it is very strange; there was the most extraordinary personal resemblance between them."

"Between whom?"

"Arthur and Montanelli. It was not only I who noticed it. And there was something mysterious in the relationship between the members of that household. Mrs. Burton, Arthur's mother, was one of the sweetest women I ever knew. Her face had the same spiritual look as Arthur's, and I believe they were alike in character, too. But she always seemed half frightened, like a detected criminal; and her step-son's wife used to treat her as no decent person treats a dog. And then Arthur himself was such a startling contrast to all those vulgar Burtons. Of course, when one is a child one takes everything for granted; but looking back on it afterwards I have often wondered whether Arthur was really a Burton."

"Possibly he found out something about his mother—that may easily have been the cause of his death, not the Cardi affair at all," Martini interposed, offering the only consolation he could think of at the omment. Gemma shook her head.

"If you could have seen his face after I struck him, Cesare, you would not think that. It may be all true about Montanelli—very likely it is—but what I have done I have done."

They walked on a little way without speaking.

"My dear," Martini said at last; "if there were any way on earth to undo a thing that is once done, it would be worth while to brood over our old mistakes; but as it is, let the dead bury their dead. It is a terrible story, but at least the poor lad is out of it now, and luckier than some of those that are left—the ones that are in exile and in prison. You and I have them to think of; we have no right to eat out our hearts for the dead. Remember what your own Shelley says: 'The past is Death's, the future is thine own.' Take it, while it is still yours, and fix your mind, not on what you may have done long ago to hurt, but on what you can do now to help."

In his earnestness he had taken her hand. He dropped it suddenly and drew back at the sound of a soft, cold, drawling voice behind him.

"Monsignor Montan-n-elli," murmured this languid voice, "is undoubtedly all you say, my dear doctor. In fact, he appears to be so much too good for this world that he ought to be politely escorted into the next. I am sure he would cause as great a sensation there as he has done here; there are p-p-probably many old-established ghosts who have never seen such a thing as an honest cardinal. And there is nothing that ghosts love as they do novelties——"

"How do you know that?" asked Dr. Riccardo's voice in a tone of ill-suppressed irritation.

"From Holy Writ, my dear sir. If the Gospel is to be trusted, even the most respectable of all Ghosts had a f-f-fancy for capricious alliances. Now, honesty and c-c-cardinals—that seems to me a somewhat capricious alliance, and rather an uncomfortable one, like shrimps and liquorice. Ah, Signor Martini, and Signora Bolla! Lovely

weather after the rain, is it not? Have you been to hear the n-new Savonarola, too?"

Martini turned round sharply. The Gadfly, with a cigar in his mouth and a hot-house flower in his buttonhole, was holding out to him a slender, carefully-gloved hand. With the sunlight reflected in his immaculate boots and glancing back from the water on to his smiling face, he looked to Martini less lame and more conceited than usual. They were shaking hands, affably on the one side and rather sulkily on the other, when Riccardo hastily exclaimed:

"I am afraid Signora Bolla is not well!"

She was so pale that her face looked almost livid under the shadow of her bonnet, and the ribbon at her throat fluttered perceptibly from the violent beating of the heart.

"I will go home," she said faintly.

A cab was called and Martini got in with her to see her safely home. As the Gadfly bent down to arrange her cloak, which was hanging over the wheel, he raised his eyes suddenly to her face, and Martini saw that she shrank away with a look of something like terror.

"Gemma, what is the matter with you?" he asked, in English, when they had started. "What did that scoundrel say to you?"

"Nothing, Cesare; it was no fault of his. I—I—had a fright——"

"A fright?"

"Yes; I fancied——" She put one hand over her eyes, and he waited silently till she should recover her self-command. Her face was already regaining its natural colour.

"You are quite right," she said at last, turning to him and speaking in her usual voice; "it is

worse than useless to look back at a horrible past. It plays tricks with one's nerves and makes one imagine all sorts of impossible things. We will *never* talk about that subject again, Cesare, or I shall see fantastic likenesses to Arthur in every face I meet. It is a kind of hallucination, like a nightmare in broad daylight. Just now, when that odious little fop came up, I fancied it was Arthur."

CHAPTER V.

THE Gadfly certainly knew how to make personal enemies. He had arrived in Florence in August, and by the end of October three-fourths of the committee which had invited him shared Martini's opinion. His savage attacks upon Montanelli had annoyed even his admirers; and Galli himself, who at first had been inclined to uphold everything the witty satirist said or did, began to acknowledge with an aggrieved air that Montanelli had better have been left in peace. "Decent cardinals are none so plenty. One might treat them politely when they do turn up."

The only person who, apparently, remained quite indifferent to the storm of caricatures and pasquinades was Montanelli himself. It seemed, as Martini said, hardly worth while to expend one's energy in ridiculing a man who took it so good-humouredly. It was said in the town that Montanelli, one day when the Archbishop of Florence was dining with him, had found in the room one of the Gadfly's bitter personal lampoons against himself, had read it through and handed the paper to the Archbishop, remarking: "That is rather cleverly put, is it not?"