

out knowing why, that the news had wounded him deeply.

They were sitting on the terrace of her lodging, looking out over the red roofs to Fiesole. After a long silence, Martini rose and began tramping up and down with his hands in his pockets, whistling to himself—a sure sign with him of mental agitation. She sat looking at him for a little while.

“Cesare, you are worried about this affair,” she said at last. “I am very sorry you feel so despondent over it; but I could decide only as seemed right to me.”

“It is not the affair,” he answered, sullenly; “I know nothing about it, and it probably is all right, once you have consented to go into it. It’s the *man* I distrust.”

“I think you misunderstand him; I did till I got to know him better. He is far from perfect, but there is much more good in him than you think.”

“Very likely.” For a moment he tramped to and fro in silence, then suddenly stopped beside her.

“Gemma, give it up! Give it up before it is too late! Don’t let that man drag you into things you will repent afterwards.”

“Cesare,” she said gently, “you are not thinking what you are saying. No one is dragging me into anything. I have made this decision of my own will, after thinking the matter well over alone. You have a personal dislike to Rivarez, I know; but we are talking of politics now, not of persons.”

“Madonna! Give it up! That man is dangerous; he is secret, and cruel, and unscrupulous—and he is in love with you!”

She drew back.

“Cesare, how can you get such fancies into your head?”

“He is in love with you,” Martini repeated. “Keep clear of him, Madonna!”

“Dear Cesare, I can’t keep clear of him; and I can’t explain to you why. We are tied together—not by any wish or doing of our own.”

“If you are tied, there is nothing more to say,” Martini answered wearily.

He went away, saying that he was busy, and tramped for hours up and down the muddy streets. The world looked very black to him that evening. One poor ewe-lamb—and this slippery creature had stepped in and stolen it away.

CHAPTER X.

TOWARDS the middle of February the Gadfly went to Leghorn. Gemma had introduced him to a young Englishman there, a shipping-agent of liberal views, whom she and her husband had known in England. He had on several occasions performed little services for the Florentine radicals: had lent money to meet an unforeseen emergency, had allowed his business address to be used for the party’s letters, etc.; but always through Gemma’s mediumship, and as a private friend of hers. She was, therefore, according to party etiquette, free to make use of the connexion in any way that might seem good to her. Whether any use could be got out of it was quite another question. To ask a friendly sympathizer to lend his address for letters from Sicily or to keep a few documents in a corner of his counting-house

safe was one thing; to ask him to smuggle over a transport of firearms for an insurrection was another; and she had very little hope of his consenting.

"You can but try," she had said to the Gadfly; "but I don't think anything will come of it. If you were to go to him with that recommendation and ask for five hundred scudi, I dare say he'd give them to you at once—he's exceedingly generous,—and perhaps at a pinch he would lend you his passport or hide a fugitive in his cellar; but if you mention such a thing as rifles he will stare at you and think we're both demented."

"Perhaps he may give me a few hints, though, or introduce me to a friendly sailor or two," the Gadfly had answered. "Anyway, it's worth while to try."

One day at the end of the month he came into her study less carefully dressed than usual, and she saw at once from his face that he had good news to tell.

"Ah, at last! I was beginning to think something must have happened to you!"

"I thought it safer not to write, and I couldn't get back sooner."

"You have just arrived?"

"Yes; I am straight from the diligence; I looked in to tell you that the affair is all settled."

"Do you mean that Bailey has really consented to help?"

"More than to help; he has undertaken the whole thing,—packing, transports,—everything. The rifles will be hidden in bales of merchandise and will come straight through from England. His partner, Williams, who is a great friend of his, has consented to see the transport off from South-

ampton, and Bailey will slip it through the custom house at Leghorn. That is why I have been such a long time; Williams was just starting for Southampton, and I went with him as far as Genoa."

"To talk over details on the way?"

"Yes, as long as I wasn't too sea-sick to talk about anything."

"Are you a bad sailor?" she asked quickly, remembering how Arthur had suffered from sea-sickness one day when her father had taken them both for a pleasure-trip.

"About as bad as is possible, in spite of having been at sea so much. But we had a talk while they were loading at Genoa. You know Williams, I think? He's a thoroughly good fellow, trustworthy and sensible; so is Bailey, for that matter; and they both know how to hold their tongues."

"It seems to me, though, that Bailey is running a serious risk in doing a thing like this."

"So I told him, and he only looked sulky and said: 'What business is that of yours?' Just the sort of thing one would expect him to say. If I met Bailey in Timbuctoo, I should go up to him and say: 'Good-morning, Englishman.'"

"But I can't conceive how you managed to get their consent; Williams, too; the last man I should have thought of."

"Yes, he objected strongly at first; not on the ground of danger, though, but because the thing is 'so unbusiness-like.' But I managed to win him over after a bit. And now we will go into details."

When the Gadfly reached his lodgings the sun

had set, and the blossoming pyrus japonica that hung over the garden wall looked dark in the fading light. He gathered a few sprays and carried them into the house. As he opened the study door, Zita started up from a chair in the corner and ran towards him.

"Oh, Felice; I thought you were never coming!"

His first impulse was to ask her sharply what business she had in his study; but, remembering that he had not seen her for three weeks, he held out his hand and said, rather frigidly:

"Good-evening, Zita; how are you?"

She put up her face to be kissed, but he moved past as though he had not seen the gesture, and took up a vase to put the pyrus in. The next instant the door was flung wide open, and the collie, rushing into the room, performed an ecstatic dance round him, barking and whining with delight. He put down the flowers and stooped to pat the dog.

"Well, Shaitan, how are you, old man? Yes, it's really I. Shake hands, like a good dog!"

The hard, sullen look came into Zita's face.

"Shall we go to dinner?" she asked coldly. "I ordered it for you at my place, as you wrote that you were coming this evening."

He turned round quickly.

"I am v-v-very sorry; you sh-should not have waited for me! I will just get a bit tidy and come round at once. P-perhaps you would not mind putting these into water."

When he came into Zita's dining room she was standing before a mirror, fastening one of the sprays into her dress. She had apparently made up her mind to be good-humoured, and came up to

him with a little cluster of crimson buds tied together.

"Here is a buttonhole for you; let me put it in your coat."

All through dinner-time he did his best to be amiable, and kept up a flow of small-talk, to which she responded with radiant smiles. Her evident joy at his return somewhat embarrassed him; he had grown so accustomed to the idea that she led her own life apart from his, among such friends and companions as were congenial to her, that it had never occurred to him to imagine her as missing him. And yet she must have felt dull to be so much excited now.

"Let us have coffee up on the terrace," she said; "it is quite warm this evening."

"Very well. Shall I take your guitar? Perhaps you will sing."

She flushed with delight; he was critical about music and did not often ask her to sing.

On the terrace was a broad wooden bench running round the walls. The Gadfly chose a corner with a good view of the hills, and Zita, seating herself on the low wall with her feet on the bench, leaned back against a pillar of the roof. She did not care much for scenery; she preferred to look at the Gadfly.

"Give me a cigarette," she said. "I don't believe I have smoked once since you went away."

"Happy thought! It's just s-s-smoke I want to complete my bliss."

She leaned forward and looked at him earnestly.

"Are you really happy?"

The Gadfly's mobile brows went up.

"Yes; why not? I have had a good dinner; I am looking at one of the m-most beautiful views

in Europe; and now I'm going to have coffee and hear a Hungarian folk-song. There is nothing the matter with either my conscience or my digestion; what more can man desire?"

"I know another thing you desire."

"What?"

"That!" She tossed a little cardboard box into his hand.

"B-burnt almonds! Why d-didn't you tell me before I began to s-smoke?" he cried reproachfully.

"Why, you baby! you can eat them when you have done smoking. There comes the coffee."

The Gadfly sipped his coffee and ate his burnt almonds with the grave and concentrated enjoyment of a cat drinking cream.

"How nice it is to come back to d-decent coffee, after the s-s-stuff one gets at Leghorn!" he said in his purring drawl.

"A very good reason for stopping at home now you are here."

"Not much stopping for me; I'm off again to-morrow."

The smile died on her face.

"To-morrow! What for? Where are you going to?"

"Oh! two or three p-p-places, on business."

It had been decided between him and Gemma that he must go in person into the Apennines to make arrangements with the smugglers of the frontier region about the transporting of the fire-arms. To cross the Papal frontier was for him a matter of serious danger; but it had to be done if the work was to succeed.

"Always business!" Zita sighed under her breath; and then asked aloud:

"Shall you be gone long?"

"No; only a fortnight or three weeks, p-p-probably."

"I suppose it's some of *that* business?" she asked abruptly.

"That ' business?"

"The business you're always trying to get your neck broken over—the everlasting politics."

"It has something to do with p-p-politics."

Zita threw away her cigarette.

"You are fooling me," she said. "You are going into some danger or other."

"I'm going s-s-straight into the inf-fernal regions," he answered languidly. "D-do you happen to have any friends there you want to send that ivy to? You n-needn't pull it all down, though."

She had fiercely torn off a handful of the climber from the pillar, and now flung it down with vehement anger.

"You are going into danger," she repeated; "and you won't even say so honestly! Do you think I am fit for nothing but to be fooled and joked with? You will get yourself hanged one of these days, and never so much as say good-bye. It's always politics and politics—I'm sick of politics!"

"S-so am I," said the Gadfly, yawning lazily; "and therefore we'll talk about something else—unless you will sing."

"Well, give me the guitar, then. What shall I sing?"

"The ballad of the lost horse; it suits your voice so well."

She began to sing the old Hungarian ballad of the man who loses first his horse, then his home,

and then his sweetheart, and consoles himself with the reflection that "more was lost at Mohacz field." The song was one of the Gadfly's especial favourites; its fierce and tragic melody and the bitter stoicism of the refrain appealed to him as no softer music ever did.

Zita was in excellent voice; the notes came from her lips strong and clear, full of the vehement desire of life. She would have sung Italian or Slavonic music badly, and German still worse; but she sang the Magyar folk-songs splendidly.

The Gadfly listened with wide-open eyes and parted lips; he had never heard her sing like this before. As she came to the last line, her voice began suddenly to shake.

"Ah, no matter! More was lost——"

She broke down with a sob and hid her face among the ivy leaves.

"Zita!" The Gadfly rose and took the guitar from her hand. "What is it?"

She only sobbed convulsively, hiding her face in both hands. He touched her on the arm.

"Tell me what is the matter," he said caressingly.

"Let me alone!" she sobbed, shrinking away. "Let me alone!"

He went quietly back to his seat and waited till the sobs died away. Suddenly he felt her arms about his neck; she was kneeling on the floor beside him.

"Felice—don't go! Don't go away!"

"We will talk about that afterwards," he said, gently extricating himself from the clinging arms. "Tell me first what has upset you so. Has anything been frightening you?"

She silently shook her head.

"Have I done anything to hurt you?"

"No." She put a hand up against his throat.

"What, then?"

"You will get killed," she whispered at last. "I heard one of those men that come here say the other day that you will get into trouble—and when I ask you about it you laugh at me!"

"My dear child," the Gadfly said, after a little pause of astonishment, "you have got some exaggerated notion into your head. Very likely I shall get killed some day—that is the natural consequence of being a revolutionist. But there is no reason to suppose I am g-g-going to get killed just now. I am running no more risk than other people."

"Other people—what are other people to me? If you loved me you wouldn't go off this way and leave me to lie awake at night, wondering whether you're arrested, or dream you are dead whenever I go to sleep. You don't care as much for me as for that dog there!"

The Gadfly rose and walked slowly to the other end of the terrace. He was quite unprepared for such a scene as this and at a loss how to answer her. Yes, Gemma was right; he had got his life into a tangle that he would have hard work to undo.

"Sit down and let us talk about it quietly," he said, coming back after a moment. "I think we have misunderstood each other; of course I should not have laughed if I had thought you were serious. Try to tell me plainly what is troubling you; and then, if there is any misunderstanding, we may be able to clear it up."

"There's nothing to clear up. I can see you don't care a brass farthing for me."

"My dear child, we had better be quite frank with each other. I have always tried to be honest about our relationship, and I think I have never deceived you as to——"

"Oh, no! you have been honest enough; you have never even pretended to think of me as anything else but a prostitute,—a trumpery bit of second-hand finery that plenty of other men have had before you——"

"Hush, Zita! I have never thought that way about any living thing."

"You have never loved me," she insisted sullenly.

"No, I have never loved you. Listen to me, and try to think as little harm of me as you can."

"Who said I thought any harm of you? I——"

"Wait a minute. This is what I want to say: I have no belief whatever in conventional moral codes, and no respect for them. To me the relations between men and women are simply questions of personal likes and dislikes——"

"And of money," she interrupted with a harsh little laugh. He winced and hesitated a moment.

"That, of course, is the ugly part of the matter. But believe me, if I had thought that you disliked me, or felt any repulsion to the thing, I would never have suggested it, or taken advantage of your position to persuade you to it. I have never done that to any woman in my life, and I have never told a woman a lie about my feeling for her. You may trust me that I am speaking the truth——"

He paused a moment, but she did not answer.

"I thought," he went on; "that if a man is alone in the world and feels the need of—a woman's presence about him, and if he can find

a woman who is attractive to him and to whom he is not repulsive, he has a right to accept, in a grateful and friendly spirit, such pleasure as that woman is willing to give him, without entering into any closer bond. I saw no harm in the thing, provided only there is no unfairness or insult or deceit on either side. As for your having been in that relation with other men before I met you, I did not think about that. I merely thought that the connexion would be a pleasant and harmless one for both of us, and that either was free to break it as soon as it became irksome. If I was mistaken—if you have grown to look upon it differently—then——"

He paused again.

"Then?" she whispered, without looking up.

"Then I have done you a wrong, and I am very sorry. But I did not mean to do it."

"You 'did not mean' and you 'thought'—— Felice, are you made of cast iron? Have you never been in love with a woman in your life that you can't see I love you?"

A sudden thrill went through him; it was so long since anyone had said to him: "I love you." Instantly she started up and flung her arms round him.

"Felice, come away with me! Come away from this dreadful country and all these people and their politics! What have we got to do with them? Come away, and we will be happy together. Let us go to South America, where you used to live."

The physical horror of association startled him back into self-control; he unclasped her hands from his neck and held them in a steady grasp.

"Zita! Try to understand what I am saying to you. I do not love you; and if I did I would

not come away with you. I have my work in Italy, and my comrades——”

“And someone else that you love better than me!” she cried out fiercely. “Oh, I could kill you! It is not your comrades you care about; it’s—— I know who it is!”

“Hush!” he said quietly. “You are excited and imagining things that are not true.”

“You suppose I am thinking of Signora Bolla? I’m not so easily duped! You only talk politics with her; you care no more for her than you do for me. It’s that Cardinal!”

The Gadfly started as if he had been shot.

“Cardinal?” he repeated mechanically.

“Cardinal Montanelli, that came here preaching in the autumn. Do you think I didn’t see your face when his carriage passed? You were as white as my pocket-handkerchief! Why, you’re shaking like a leaf now because I mentioned his name!”

He stood up.

“You don’t know what you are talking about,” he said very slowly and softly. “I—hate the Cardinal. He is the worst enemy I have.”

“Enemy or no, you love him better than you love anyone else in the world. Look me in the face and say that is not true, if you can!”

He turned away, and looked out into the garden. She watched him furtively, half-scared at what she had done; there was something terrifying in his silence. At last she stole up to him, like a frightened child, and timidly pulled his sleeve. He turned round.

“It is true,” he said.

CHAPTER XI.

“BUT c-c-can’t I meet him somewhere in the hills? Brisighella is a risky place for me.”

“Every inch of ground in the Romagna is risky for you; but just at this moment Brisighella is safer for you than any other place.”

“Why?”

“I’ll tell you in a minute. Don’t let that man with the blue jacket see your face; he’s dangerous. Yes; it was a terrible storm; I don’t remember to have seen the vines so bad for a long time.”

The Gadfly spread his arms on the table, and laid his face upon them, like a man overcome with fatigue or wine; and the dangerous new-comer in the blue jacket, glancing swiftly round, saw only two farmers discussing their crops over a flask of wine and a sleepy mountaineer with his head on the table. It was the usual sort of thing to see in little places like Marradi; and the owner of the blue jacket apparently made up his mind that nothing could be gained by listening; for he drank his wine at a gulp and sauntered into the outer room. There he stood leaning on the counter and gossiping lazily with the landlord, glancing every now and then out of the corner of one eye through the open door, beyond which sat the three figures at the table. The two farmers went on sipping their wine and discussing the weather in the local dialect, and the Gadfly snored like a man whose conscience is sound.

At last the spy seemed to make up his mind that there was nothing in the wine-shop worth further waste of his time. He paid his reckoning, and,