

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE POPE'S RECREATION HOUR.

THE pope followed his retreating form with a glance of sadness and a shake of the head.

"He is past help," murmured he; "he runs to his ruin, and the voice of warning is unheeded. But how, if he should happen to be right? How, if he with his worldly wisdom and his theory of earthly happiness, should be more conformable to the will of God than we with our virtue and our doctrine of renunciation? Ah, yes, the world is so beautiful, it seems made entirely for pleasure and enjoyment, and yet men wander through it with tearful eyes, disregarding its beauty, and refusing to share its pleasures. All, except man, is free on earth. He alone lies in constraining bands, and his heart bleeds while all creation rejoices. No, no, that cannot be; every individual does what he can to render mankind free and happy, and I also will do my part. God has laid great power in my hand, and I will use it so long as it is mine."

Thus speaking, the pope left the garden, and hastened up to his study.

"Signor Galiandro," said he, to his private secretary, "did you not speak to me to-day of several petitions received, in which people begged for dispensations from monk and cloister vows?"

Signor Galiandro smilingly rummaged among a mass of papers that covered the pope's writing-table.

"In the last four weeks some fifty such petitions have

been received. Since your holiness has released several monks and nuns from their vows, all these pious brides of Christ and these consecrated priests seem to have tired of their cloister life, and long to be out in the world again."

"Whoever does not freely and willingly remain in the house of the Lord, we will not retain them," said Ganganelli. "Compelled service of the Lord is no service, and the prayer of the lips without the concurrence of the heart is null! Give me all these petitions, that I may grant them! The love of the world is awakened in these monks and nuns, and we will give back to the world what belongs to the world. With their resisting and struggling hearts they will make but bad priests and nuns; perhaps it will be better for them to become founders of families. And they who honestly do their duty, equally serve God, whether they are in a cloister or in the bosoms of their families."*

The pope seated himself at his writing-table, and after having carefully examined all the petitions for dispensations, signed his consent, and smilingly handed them back to his secretary.

"I hope we have here made some people happy," said he, rising, "and therefore it may, perhaps, be allowed us also to be happy in our own way for a quarter of an hour."

He lightly touched the silver bell suspended over his writing-table, and at the immediately opened door appeared the pleasant and well-nourished face of brother Lorenzo,

* Ganganelli's own words.—See Gorani, vol. ii., p. 41.

the Franciscan monk, who performed the whole service of the pope.

"Lorenzo," said Ganganelli, with a smile, "let us go down into the poultry-yard. You must show me the young chickens of which you told me yesterday. And hear, would it be asking too much to beg of you to bring my dinner into the garden?"

"I would that you could ask too much," said brother Lorenzo, waddling after his master, who was descending the stairs leading to the court-yard. "I really wish, your holiness, that it were asking too much, for then your dinner would be at least a little more desirable and heavier to transport! Was such a thing ever heard of? the father of Christianity keeps a table like that of a poorest begging monk, and is satisfied with milk, fruit, bread, and vegetables, while the fattest of capons and ducks are crammed in vain for him, and his cellar is replete with the most generous wines."

"Well, well, scold not," said Ganganelli, smiling; "have we not for years felt ourselves well in the Franciscan cloister, it never once occurring to us to wish ourselves better off? Why should I now quit the habits of years and accustom myself to other usages? When I was yet a Franciscan monk, I always had, thanks to our simple manner of living, a very healthy stomach, and would you have me spoil it now, merely because I have become pope? It has always remained the same human body, Lorenzo, and all the rest is only falsehood and fraud! How few years is it since you and I were in the cloister, and you served the poor Franciscan monk as a lay brother! You then called me brother

Clement, and they all did the same, and now you no longer call me brother, but holy father! How can your brother of yesterday be your father of to-day? We are here alone, Lorenzo; nobody sees or hears us. We would for once cease to be holy father, and for a quarter of an hour become again brother Clement."

"Ahem! it was not so bad there," simpered Lorenzo. "It was yet very pleasant in our dear cloister, and I often think, brother, that you were far happier then than now, when every one falls upon his knees to kiss your slipper. It must be very dull to be always holy, always so great and sublime, and always revered and adored!"

"Therefore let us go to our ducks and hens," said the pope. "The people have made a bugbear of me, before which they fall upon the earth. But the good animals, who understand nothing of these things, they cackle and grunt, and gabble at me, as if I were nothing but a common goose-herd and by no means the sainted father of Christendom! Come, come to my dear brutes, who are so frank and sincere that they cackle and gabble directly in my face as soon as their beaks and snouts are grown. They are not so humble and devoted, so adoring and cringing, as these men who prostrate themselves before me with humble and hypocritical devotion, but who secretly curse me and wish my death, that there may be a change in the papacy! Come, come, to our honest geese!"

Brother Lorenzo handed to the pope the willow basket filled with corn and green leaves, and both, with hasty steps and laughing faces, betook themselves to the poultry-yard; the ducks and geese fluttered to them with a noisy gabbling

as soon as they caught sight of the provender-basket, and Ganganelli laughingly said: "It seems as if I were here in the conclave, and listening to the contention of the cardinals as they quarrel about the choice of a new pope. Lorenzo, I should well like to know who will succeed me in the sacred chair and hold the keys of St. Peter! That will be a stormy conclave!—Be quiet, my dear ducks and geese! Indeed, you are in the right, I forgot my duty! Well, well, I will give you your food now—here it is!"

And the pope with full hands strewed the corn among the impatiently gabbling geese, and heartily laughed at the eagerness with which they threw themselves upon it.

"And is it not with men as with these dear animals?" said he, laughing; "When one satisfies them with food, they become silent, mild, and gentle. Princes should always remember that, and before all things satiate their subjects with food, if they would have a tranquil and unopposed government! Ah, that reminds me of our own poor, Lorenzo! Many petitions have been received, much misery has been described, and many heart-rending complaints have been made to me!"

"That is because they know you are always giving and would rather suffer want yourself than refuse gifts to others," growled Lorenzo. "Hardly half the month is past, and we are already near the end of our means!"

"Already?" exclaimed the pope, with alarm. "And I believe I yet need much money. There is a father of fourteen children who has fallen from a scaffolding and broken both legs. We must care for him, Lorenzo; the children must not want for bread!"

"That is understood, that is Christian duty," said Lorenzo, eagerly. "Give me the address, I will go to him yet to-day! And how much money shall I take with me?"

"Well, I thought," timidly responded Ganganelli, "that five scudi would not be too much!"

Lorenzo compassionately shrugged his shoulders. "You can never learn the value of money," said he; "I am now to take *five* scudi to these *fourteen* children."

"Is it not enough?" joyfully asked Ganganelli. "Well, I thank God that you are so disposed! I only feared you would refuse me so much, because my treasury, as you say, is already empty. But if we yet have something left, give more, much more! At least a hundred scudi, Lorenzo!"

"That is always the way with you; from extreme to extreme!" grumbled Lorenzo. "First too little, then too much! I shall take to them twenty scudi, and that will be sufficient!"

"Give them thirty," begged Ganganelli, "do you hear, thirty, brother Lorenzo. Thirty scudi is yet a very small sum!"

"Ah, what do you know about money?" answered Lorenzo, laughing; "these geese here understand the matter better than you, brother Clement."

"Well, it is for that reason I have made you my cashier," laughed Ganganelli. "A prince will always be well advised when he chooses a sensible and well-instructed servant for that which he does not understand himself. To acknowledge his ignorance on the proper occasion does honor to a prince, and procures him more respect than if he sought to give himself the appearance of knowing and understanding

everything. Come, Lorenzo, let us go into the garden; you see that these fowls care nothing for us now; as they are satiated, they despise our provender. Come, let us go farther!"

"Yes, into the garden!" exclaimed Lorenzo, with a mysterious smile. "Come, brother Clement, I have prepared a little surprise for you there! Come and see it!"

And the two old men turned their steps toward the garden.

"Follow me," said Lorenzo, preceding the pope, and leading him to a more solitary and better screened part of the garden. "Now stoop a little and creep through here, and then we are at the place."

The pope carefully followed the directions of his leader, and worked his way through the obstruction of the myrtle-bushes until he arrived at a small circular place, in the centre of which, shaded by tall olive-trees, was a turf-seat surrounded by tendrils of ivy, and before which was a small table of wood yet retaining its natural covering of bark.

"See, this is my surprise!" said Lorenzo.

Ganganelli stood silent and motionless, with folded hands. A deep emotion was visible in his gentle mien, and tears rolled slowly down over his cheeks.

"Well, is it not well copied, and true to nature?" asked Lorenzo, whose eyes beamed with satisfaction.

"My favorite spot in the garden of the Franciscan convent!" said Ganganelli in a tone trembling with emotion. "Yes, yes, Lorenzo, you have represented it exactly, you know well enough what gives me pleasure! Accept my thanks, my dear good brother."

And, while giving his hand to the monk, his eye wandered with gentle delight over the place, with its beautiful trees and green reposing bank, and thoughtfully rested upon each individual object.

"So was it," he murmured low, "precisely so; yes, yes, in this place have I passed my fairest and most precious hours; what have I not thought and dreamed as a youth and as a man, how many wishes, how many hopes have there thrilled my bosom, and how few of them have been realized!"

"But one thing has been realized," said Lorenzo, "greater than all you could have dreamed or hoped! Who would ever have thought it possible that the poor, unknown Franciscan monk would become the greatest and most sublime prince in the whole world, the father of all Christendom? That is, indeed, a happiness that brother Clement, upon his grass-bank in the Franciscan convent, could never have expected!"

"You, then, consider it a happiness," said Ganganelli, slowly letting himself down upon the grass-bank. "Yes, yes, such are you good human beings! wherever there is a little bit of show, a little bit of outward splendor, you immediately conclude that there is great happiness. This proves that you see only the outward form, paying no regard to what is concealed under that form, and which is often very bitter. Believe me, Lorenzo, in these times there is no very great happiness in being pope and the so-called father of Christendom. The princes have become very troublesome and disobedient children; they are no longer willing to recognize our paternal authority, and if the holy

father does not manifest a complaisant friendliness toward these refractory princely children, and wink at their independence, they will renounce the whole connection and quit the paternal mansion. We should then, indeed, be the holy father of Christendom, but no longer have any children under the paternal authority! For having so expressed myself, I shall never be pardoned by the cardinals and princes of the Church; it has made them my deadly enemies, and yet it is with these principles alone that I have succeeded in bringing the refractory Portuguese court again under my parental control!

“But here in this pleasant place let us dismiss such unpleasant thoughts,” the pope more cheerfully continued, after a pause. “Here I will forget that I am pope; here I will never be anything more than brother Clement of the Franciscan convent, nor shall the cares and troubles of the pope, nor his holiness or infallibility, accompany him to this dear quiet place. Here I will be only a man, and forgetting my cramping highness and my forced splendor, will here right humanly enjoy the sun and this soft green grass, and in deep draughts inhale this sweet balsamic air. Ah, how happy one may yet be if he can for a moment escape from the envelope of dignity by which he is kept a chrysalis, and freely exercise the butterfly wings of manhood! And hear me for once, brother Lorenzo, so very human has your pope here become, that he feels a right fresh human appetite. If all here is as it used to be at the convent, then must you have something to appease my hunger.”

Brother Lorenzo nodded with a sly smile. Stepping to the side of the grassy bank, and slipping aside a small door

concealed by the grass, he disclosed a walled excavation, filled with fruits and pastry.

“I see you have forgotten nothing!” joyfully exclaimed Ganganelli, taking some of the fragrant fruit which Lorenzo tendered him. “Ah, you make me very happy, Lorenzo.”

Saying this, he threw his arm around Lorenzo’s neck, and silently pressed him to his bosom.

Brother Lorenzo was equally silent, but he no longer laughed; his usually cheerful face assumed a wonderfully clear and pleased expression, and two large tears rolled down over his cheek—but they were tears of joy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DEATH-SENTENCE.

AN approaching bustling, a vehement calling and screaming, disturbed the two old men. It was Lorenzo who was called, and he quickly glided through the bushes to look after the cause of this disturbance. But soon he returned with a melancholy face and depressed mien.

“Brother Clement,” said he, “it is already all over with our enjoyment, which has been so great for me that I forgot to remind you that the pope cannot neglect the hour in which he gives audience. That hour has now come, and your anteroom is already filled with princes and prelates.”

“And yet you speak of the great happiness of being