

CHAPTER XI

Your's in the ranks of death.
Shakespeare

Near three weeks had elapsed since the Marchese's arrival at Rome, and not any decisive answer was returned by the Inquisition to his application, when he and Vivaldi received at the same time a summons to attend father Schedoni in his dungeon. To meet the man who had occasioned so much suffering to his family, was extremely painful to the Marchese, but he was not allowed to refuse the interview; and at the hour appointed he called at the chamber of Vivaldi; and, followed by two officials, they passed on together to that of Schedoni.

While they waited at the door of the prison-room, till the numerous bars and locks were unfastened, the agitation, which Vivaldi had suffered, on receiving the summons, returned with redoubled force, now that he was about to behold, once more, that wretched man, who had announced himself to be the parent of Ellena di Rosalba. The Marchese suffered emotions of a different nature, and with his reluctance to see Schedoni, was mingled a degree of curiosity as to the event, which had occasioned this summons.

The door being thrown open, the officials entered first, and the Marchese and Vivaldi, on following, discovered the Confessor lying on a mattress. He did not rise to receive them, but, as he lifted his head, and bowed it in obeisance, his countenance, upon which the little light admitted through the triple grate of his dungeon gleamed, seemed more than usually ghastly; his eyes were hollow, and his shrunk features appeared as if death had already touched them. Vivaldi, on perceiving him, groaned, and averted his face; but, soon recovering a command of himself, he approached the mattress.

The Marchese, suppressing every expression of resentment towards an enemy, who was reduced to this deplorable condition, inquired what he had to communicate.

'Where is father Nicola?' said Schedoni to an official, without attending to the question: 'I do not see him here. Is he gone so soon, and without having heard the purport of my summons? Let him be called.'

The official spoke to a centinel, who immediately left the chamber.

'Who are these that surround me?' said Schedoni. 'Who is he that stands at the foot of the bed?' While he spoke, he bent his eyes on Vivaldi, who rested in deep dejection there, and was lost in thought, till, aroused by Schedoni's voice, he replied,

'It is I, Vincentio di Vivaldi; I obey your requisition,¹ and inquire the purpose of it?'

The Marchese repeated the demand. Schedoni appeared to meditate; sometimes he fixed his eyes upon Vivaldi, for an instant, and when he withdrew them, he seemed to sink into deeper thoughtfulness. As he raised them once again, they assumed a singular expression of wildness, and then settling, as if on vacancy, a sudden glare shot from them, while he said—'Who is he, that glides there in the dusk?'

His eyes were directed beyond Vivaldi, who, on turning, perceived the monk, father Nicola, passing behind him.

'I am here,' said Nicola: 'what do you require of me?'

'That you will bear testimony to the truth of what I shall declare,' replied Schedoni.

Nicola, and an inquisitor who had accompanied him, immediately arranged themselves on one side of the bed, while the Marchese stationed himself on the other. Vivaldi remained at its foot.

¹ A formal demand.

Schedoni, after a pause, began: 'That which I have to make known relates to the cabal formerly carried on by him, the father Nicola, and myself, against the peace of an innocent young woman, whom, at my instigation, he has basely traduced.'

At these words, Nicola attempted to interrupt the Confessor, but Vivaldi restrained him.

'Ellena di Rosalba is known to you?' continued Schedoni, addressing the Marchese.

Vivaldi's countenance changed at this abrupt mention of Ellena, but he remained silent.

'I have heard of her,' replied the Marchese, coldly.

'And you have heard falsely of her,' rejoined Schedoni. 'Lift your eyes, my lord Marchese, and say, do you not recollect that face?' pointing to Nicola.

The Marchese regarded the monk attentively, 'It is a face not easily to be forgotten,' he replied; 'I remember to have seen it more than once.'

'Where have you seen him, my Lord?'

'In my own palace, at Naples; and you yourself introduced him to me there.'

'I did,' replied Schedoni.

'Why, then, do you now accuse him of falshood,' observed the Marchese, 'since you acknowledge yourself to have been the instigator of his conduct?'

'O heavens!' said Vivaldi, 'this monk, then, this father Nicola, is, as I suspected, the slanderer of Ellena di Rosalba!'

'Most true,' rejoined Schedoni; 'and it is for the purpose of vindicating—'

'And you acknowledge yourself to be the author of those infamous slanders!' passionately interrupted Vivaldi;—'you, who but lately declared yourself to be her father!'

In the instant, that Vivaldi had uttered this, he became sensible of his indiscretion, for till now he had avoided informing the Marchese, that Ellena had been declared the daughter of Schedoni. This abrupt disclosure, and at such a moment, he immediately perceived might be fatal to his hopes, and that the Marchese would not consider the promise he had given to his dying wife, however solemn, as binding, under circumstances so peculiar and unforeseen as the present. The astonishment of the Marchese, upon this discovery, cannot easily be imagined; he looked at his son for an explanation of what he had heard, and then with increased detestation at the Confessor; but Vivaldi was not in a state of mind to give any explanation at this moment, and he requested his father to suspend even his conjectures till he could converse with him alone.

The Marchese desisted for the present from further inquiry, but it was obvious that his opinion and his resolution, respecting the marriage of Vivaldi, was already formed.

'You, then, are the author of those slanders!' repeated Vivaldi.

'Hear me!' cried Schedoni, in a voice which the strength of his spirit contending with the feebleness of his condition, rendered hollow and terrible—'Hear me!'

He stopped, unable to recover immediately from the effect of the exertion he had made. At length, he resumed,

'I have declared, and I continue to declare, that Ellena di Rosalba, as she has been named for the purpose, I conjecture, of concealing her from an unworthy father, is my daughter!'

Vivaldi groaned in the excess of his despair, but made no further attempt to interrupt Schedoni. The Marchese was not equally passive. 'And was it to listen to a vindication of your daughter,' said he, 'that I have been summoned hither? But let this Signora Rosalba, be who she may, of what importance can it be to me whether she is innocent or otherwise!'

Vivaldi, with the utmost difficulty, forbore to express the feelings, which this sentence excited. It appeared to recall all the spirit of Schedoni. 'She is the daughter of a noble house,' said the

Confessor, haughtily, while he half raised himself from his mattress. 'In me you behold the last of the Counts di Bruno.'

The Marchese smiled contemptuously.

Schedoni proceeded. 'I call upon you, Nicola di Zampari, who have declared yourself, on a late occasion, so strenuous for justice, I call upon you now to do justice in this instance, and to acknowledge, before these witnesses, that Ellena Rosalba is innocent of every circumstance of misconduct, which you have formerly related to the Marchese di Vivaldi!'

'Villain! do you hesitate,' said Vivaldi to Nicola, 'to retract the cruel slanders which you have thrown upon her name, and which have been the means of destroying her peace, perhaps for ever? Do you persist—'

The Marchese interrupted his son:—'Let me put an end to the difficulty, by concluding the interview; I perceive that my presence has been required for a purpose that does not concern me.'

Before the Confessor could reply, the Marchese had turned from him to quit the chamber; but the vehemence of Vivaldi's distress prevailed with him to pause, and thus allowed him to understand from Schedoni, that the justification of the innocent Ellena, though it had been mentioned first, as being the object nearest to his heart, was not the only one that had urged him to require this meeting.

'If you consent,' added Schedoni, 'to listen to the vindication of my child, you shall afterwards perceive, Signor, that I, fallen though I am, have still been desirous of counteracting, as far as remains for me, the evil I have occasioned. You shall acknowledge, that what I then make known is of the utmost consequence to the repose of the Marchese di Vivaldi, high in influence, and haughty in prosperity as he now appears.'

The latter part of this assurance threatened to overcome the effect of the first; the pride of the Marchese swelled high; he took some steps towards the door, but then stopped, and, conjecturing that the subject, to which Schedoni alluded, concerned the liberation of his son, he consented to attend to what Nicola should disclose.

This monk, meanwhile, had been balancing the necessity for acknowledging himself a slanderer, against the possibility of avoiding it; and it was the resolute manner of Vivaldi, who appeared to have no doubt as to his guilt in this instance, that made him apprehend the consequence of persisting in falshood, not either remorse of conscience, or the appeal of Schedoni. He acknowledged then, after considerable circumlocution, in which he contrived to defend himself, by throwing all the odium of the original design upon the Confessor, that he had been prevailed upon by his arts to impose on the credulity of the Marchese, respecting the conduct of Ellena di Rosalba. This avowal was made upon oath, and Schedoni, by the questions he put to him, was careful it should be so full and circumstantial that even the most prejudiced hearer must have been convinced of its truth; while the most unfeeling must have yielded for once to indignation against the asperser,² and pity of the aspersed. Its effect upon the present auditors was various. The Marchese had listened to the whole explanation with an unmoved countenance, but with profound attention. Vivaldi had remained in a fixed attitude, with eyes bent on father Nicola, in such eager and stern regard, as seemed to search into his very soul; and, when the monk concluded, a smile of triumphant joy lighted up his features, as he looked upon the Marchese, and claimed an acknowledgment of his conviction, that Ellena had been calumniated. The cold glance, which the Marchese returned, struck the impassioned and generous Vivaldi to the heart, who perceived that he was not only totally indifferent as to the

² Slanderer.

injustice, which an innocent and helpless young woman had suffered, but fancied that he was unwilling to admit the truth, which his judgment would no longer allow him to reject.

Schedoni, meanwhile, appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflicted upon him, and it was only by strong effort, that he sustained his spirit so far as to go through with the interrogations he had judged it necessary to put to Nicola. When the subject was finished, he sunk back on his pillow, and, closing his eyes, a hue so pallid, succeeded by one so livid, over-spread his features, that Vivaldi for an instant believed he was dying; and in this supposition he was not singular, for even an official was touched with the Confessor's condition, and had advanced to assist him, when he unclosed his eyes, and seemed to revive.

The Marchese, without making any comment upon the avowal of father Nicola, demanded, on its conclusion, the disclosure, which Schedoni had asserted to be intimately connected with his peace; and the latter now inquired of a person near him, whether a secretary of the Inquisition was in the chamber, who he had requested might attend, to take a formal deposition of what he should declare. He was answered, that such an one was already in waiting. He then asked, what other persons were in the room, adding, that he should require inquisitorial witnesses to his deposition; and was answered, that an inquisitor and two officials were present, and that their evidence was more than sufficient for his purpose.

A lamp was then called for by the secretary; but, as that could not immediately be procured, the torch of one of the centinels, who watched in the dark avenue without, was brought in its stead, and this discovered to Schedoni the various figures assembled in his dusky chamber, and to them the emaciated form and ghastly visage of the Confessor. As Vivaldi now beheld him by the stronger light of the torch, he again fancied that death was in his aspect.

Every person was now ready for the declaration of Schedoni; but he himself seemed not fully prepared. He remained for some moments reclining on his pillow in silence, with his eyes shut, while the changes in his features indicated the strong emotion of his mind. Then, as if by a violent effort, he half raised himself, and made an ample confession of the arts he had practised against Vivaldi. He declared himself to be the anonymous accuser, who had caused him to be arrested by the Holy Office, and that the charge of heresy, which he had brought against him, was false and malicious.

At the moment when Vivaldi received this confirmation of his suspicions, as to the identity of his accuser, he discovered more fully that the charge was not what had been stated to him at the chapel of San Sebastian, in which Ellena was implicated; and he demanded an explanation of this circumstance. Schedoni acknowledged, that the persons, who had there arrested him, were not officers of the Inquisition, and that the instrument of arrest, containing the charge of elopement with a nun, was forged by himself, for the purpose of empowering the ruffians to carry off Ellena, without opposition from the inhabitants of the convent, in which she was then lodged.

To Vivaldi's inquiry, why it had been thought necessary to employ stratagem in the removal of Ellena, since, if Schedoni had only claimed her for his daughter, he might have removed her without any, the Confessor replied, that he was then ignorant of the relationship which existed between them. But to the further inquiries, with what design, and whither Ellena had been removed, and the means by which he had discovered her to be his daughter, Schedoni was silent; and he sunk back, overwhelmed by the recollections they awakened.

The depositions of Schedoni having been taken down by the secretary, were formally signed by the inquisitor and the officials present; and Vivaldi thus saw his innocence vindicated by the very man who had thrown him among the perils of the Inquisition. But the near prospect of release now before him failed to affect him with joy, while he understood that Ellena was the

daughter of Schedoni, the child of a murderer, whom he himself had been in some degree instrumental in bringing to a dreadful and ignominious death. Still, however, willing to hope, that Schedoni had not spoken the truth concerning his relationship to Ellena, he claimed, in consideration of the affection he had so long cherished for her, a full explanation of the circumstances connected with the discovery of her family.

At this public avowal of his attachment, a haughty impatience appeared on the countenance of the Marchese, who forbade him to make further inquiry on the subject, and was immediately retiring from the chamber.

‘My presence is no longer necessary,’ he added: ‘the prisoner has concluded the only detail which I could be interested to hear from him; and, in consideration of the confession he has made as to the innocence of my son, I pardon him the suffering, which his false charge has occasioned to me and my family. The paper containing his depositions is given to your responsibility, holy father,’ addressing the inquisitor; ‘and you are required to lay it upon the table of the Holy Office, that the innocence of Vincentio di Vivaldi may appear, and that he may be released from these prisons without further delay. But first, I demand a copy of those declarations, and that the copy also shall be signed by the present witnesses.’

The secretary was now bidden to copy them, and, while the Marchese waited to receive the paper, (for he would not leave the chamber till he had secured it) Vivaldi was urging his claim for an explanation respecting the family of Ellena, with unconquerable perseverance. Schedoni, no longer permitted to evade the inquiry, could not, however, give a circumstantial explanation, without partly disclosing, also, the fatal designs which had been meditated by him and the late Marchesa di Vivaldi, of whose death he was ignorant; he related, therefore, little more respecting Ellena than that a portrait, which she wore as being her father’s, had first led to the discovery of her family.

While the Confessor had been giving this brief explanation, Nicola, who was somewhat withdrawn from the circle, stood gazing at him with the malignity of a demon. His glowing eyes just appeared under the edge of his cowl, while, rolled up in his dark drapery, the lower features of his face were muffled; but the intermediate part of his countenance, receiving the full glare of the torch, displayed all its speaking and terrific lines. Vivaldi, as his eye glanced upon him, saw again the very monk of Paluzzi, and he thought he beheld also a man capable of the very crimes of which he had accused Schedoni. At this instant, he remembered the dreadful garment that had been discovered in a dungeon of the fortress; and, yet more, he remembered the extraordinary circumstances attending the death of Bianchi, together with the immediate knowledge which the monk had displayed of that event. Vivaldi’s suspicions respecting the cause of her death being thus revived, he determined to obtain, if possible, either a relief from, or a confirmation of them; and he solemnly called upon Schedoni, who, already condemned to die, had no longer any thing to fear from a disclosure of the truth, whatever it might be, to declare all that he knew on the subject. As he did so, he looked at Nicola, to observe the effect of this demand, whose countenance was, however, so much shrouded, that little of its expression could be seen; but Vivaldi remarked, that, while he had spoken, the monk drew his garment closer over the lower part of his face, and that he had immediately turned his eyes from him upon the Confessor.

With most solemn protestations, Schedoni declared himself to be both innocent and ignorant of the cause of Bianchi’s death.

Vivaldi then demanded by what means his agent, Nicola, had obtained such immediate information, as the warning he had delivered at Paluzzi proved him to have, of an event, in which it appeared that he could be so little interested; and why that warning had been given.

Nicola did not attempt to anticipate the reply of Schedoni, who, after a momentary silence, said, 'That warning, young man, was given to deter you from visiting Altieri, as was every circumstance of advice or intelligence, which you received beneath the arch of Paluzzi.'

'Father,' replied Vivaldi, 'you have never loved, or you would have spared yourself the practice of artifices so ineffectual to mislead or to conquer a lover. Did you believe that an anonymous adviser could have more influence with me than my affection, or that I could be terrified by such stratagems into a renunciation of its object?'

'I believed,' rejoined the Confessor, 'that the disinterested advice of a stranger might have some weight with you; but I trusted more to the impression of awe, which the conduct and seeming foreknowledge of that stranger were adapted to inspire in a mind like your's; and I thus endeavoured to avail myself of your prevailing weakness.'

'And what do you term my prevailing weakness,' said Vivaldi, blushing.

'A susceptibility which renders you especially liable to superstition,' replied Schedoni.

'What! does a monk call superstition a weakness!' rejoined Vivaldi 'But grant he does, on what occasion have I betrayed such weakness?'

'Have you forgotten a conversation which I once held with you on invisible spirits?' said Schedoni.

As he asked this, Vivaldi was struck with the tone of his voice; he thought it was different from what he had remembered ever to have heard from him; and he looked at Schedoni more intently, that he might be certain it was he who had spoken. The Confessor's eyes were fixed upon him, and he repeated slowly in the same tone, 'Have you forgotten?'

'I have not forgotten the conversation to which you allude,' replied Vivaldi, 'and I do not recollect that I then disclosed any opinion that may justify your assertion.'

'The opinions you avowed were rational,' said Schedoni, 'but the ardour of your imagination was apparent, and what ardent imagination ever was contented to trust to plain reasoning, or to the evidence of the senses? It may not willingly confine itself to the dull truths of this earth, but, eager to expand its faculties, to fill its capacity, and to experience its own peculiar delights, soars after new wonders into a world of its own!'

Vivaldi blushed at this reproof, now conscious of its justness; and was surprised that Schedoni should so well have understood the nature of his mind, while he himself, with whom conjecture had never assumed the stability of opinion, on the subject to which the Confessor alluded, had been ignorant even of its propensities.

'I acknowledge the truth of your remark,' said Vivaldi, 'as far as it concerns myself. I have, however, inquiries to make on a point less abstracted, and towards explaining which the evidence of my senses themselves have done little. To whom belonged the bloody garments I found in the dungeon of Paluzzi, and what became of the person to whom they had pertained?'

Consternation appeared for an instant on the features of Schedoni. 'What garments?' said he.

'They appeared to be those of a person who had died by violence,' replied Vivaldi, 'and they were discovered in a place frequented by your avowed agent, Nicola, the monk.'

As he concluded the sentence, Vivaldi looked at Nicola, upon whom the attention of every person present was now directed.

'They were my own,' said this monk.

'Your own! and in that condition!' exclaimed Vivaldi. 'They were covered with gore!'

'They were my own,' repeated Nicola. 'For their condition, I have to thank you,—the wound your pistol gave me occasioned it.'

Vivaldi was astonished by this apparent subterfuge. 'I had no pistol,' he rejoined, 'my sword was my only weapon!'

'Pause a moment,' said the monk.

'I repeat that I had no fire-arms,' replied Vivaldi.

'I appeal to father Schedoni,' rejoined Nicola, 'whether I was not wounded by a pistol shot.'

'To me you have no longer any right of appeal,' said Schedoni. 'Why should I save you from suspicions, that may bring you to a state like this, to which you have reduced me!'

'Your crimes have reduced you to it,' replied Nicola, 'I have only done my duty, and that which another person could have effected without my aid—the priest to whom Spalatro made his last confession.'

'It is, however, a duty of such a kind,' observed Vivaldi, 'as I would not willingly have upon my conscience. You have betrayed the life of your former friend, and have compelled me to assist in the destruction of a fellow being.'

'You, like me, have assisted to destroy a destroyer,' replied the monk. 'He has taken life, and deserves, therefore, to lose it. If, however, it will afford you consolation to know that you have not materially assisted in his destruction, I will hereafter give you proof for this assurance. There were other means of shewing that Schedoni was the Count di Bruno, than the testimony of Ansaldo, though I was ignorant of them when I bade you summon the penitentiary.'

'If you had sooner avowed this,' said Vivaldi, 'the assertion would have been more plausible. Now, I can only understand that it is designed to win my silence, and prevent my retorting upon you your own maxim—that he who has taken the life of another, deserves to lose his own—To whom did those bloody garments belong?'

'To myself, I repeat,' replied Nicola, 'Schedoni can bear testimony that I received at Paluzzi a pistol wound.'

'Impossible,' said Vivaldi, 'I was armed only with my sword!'

'You had a companion,' observed the monk, 'had not he firearms?'

Vivaldi, after a momentary consideration, recollected that Paulo had pistols, and that he had fired one beneath the arch of Paluzzi, on the first alarm occasioned by the stranger's voice. He immediately acknowledged the recollection. 'But I heard no groan, no symptom of distress!' he added. 'Besides, the garments were at a considerable distance from the spot where the pistol was fired! How could a person, so severely wounded as those garments indicated, have silently withdrawn to a remote dungeon, or, having done so, is it probable he would have thrown aside his dress!'

'All that is nevertheless true,' replied Nicola. 'My resolution enabled me to stifle the expression of my anguish; I withdrew to the interior of the ruin, to escape from you, but you pursued me even to the dungeon, where I threw off my discoloured vestments, in which I dared not return to my convent, and departed by a way which all your ingenuity failed to discover. The people who were already in the fort, for the purpose of assisting to confine you and your servant during the night on which Signora Rosalba was taken from Altieri, procured me another habit, and relief for my wound. But, though I was unseen by you during the night, I was not entirely unheard, for my groans reached you more than once from an adjoining chamber, and my companions were entertained with the alarm which your servant testified.—Are you now convinced?'

The groans were clearly remembered by Vivaldi, and many other circumstances of Nicola's narration accorded so well with others, which he recollected to have occurred on the night alluded to, that he had no longer a doubt of its veracity. The suddenness of Bianchi's death,

however, still occasioned him suspicions as to its cause; yet Schedoni had declared not only that he was innocent, but ignorant of this cause, which it appeared from his unwillingness to give testimony in favour of his agent, he would not have affirmed, had he been conscious that the monk was in any degree guilty in this instance. That Nicola could have no inducement for attempting the life of Bianchi other than a reward offered him by Schedoni, was clear; and Vivaldi, after more fully considering these circumstances, became convinced that her death was in consequence of some incident of natural decay.

While this conversation was passing, the Marchese, impatient to put a conclusion to it, and to leave the chamber, repeatedly urged the secretary to dispatch; and, while he now earnestly renewed his request, another voice answered for the secretary, that he had nearly concluded. Vivaldi thought that he had heard the voice on some former occasion, and on turning his eyes upon the person who had spoken, discovered the stranger to be the same who had first visited him in prison. Perceiving by his dress, that he was an officer of the Inquisition, Vivaldi now understood too well the purport of his former visit, and that he had come with a design to betray him by affected sympathy into a confession of some heretical opinions. Similar instances of treachery Vivaldi had heard were frequently practised upon accused persons, but he had never fully believed such cruelty possible till now, that it had been attempted towards himself.

The visit of this person bringing to his recollection the subsequent one he had received from Nicola, Vivaldi inquired whether the centinels had really admitted him to his cell, or he had entered it by other means; a question to which the monk was silent, but the smile on his features, if so strange an expression deserved to be called a smile, seemed to reply, 'Do you believe that I, a servant of the Inquisition, will betray its secrets?'

Vivaldi, however, urged the inquiry, for he wished to know whether the guard, who appeared to be faithful to their office, had escaped the punishment that was threatened.

'They were honest,' replied Nicola, 'seek no further.'

'Are the tribunal convinced of their integrity?'

Nicola smiled again in derision, and replied, 'They never doubted it.'

'How!' said Vivaldi. 'Why were these men put under arrest, if their faithfulness was not even suspected?'

'Be satisfied with the knowledge, which experience has given you of the secrets of the Inquisition,' replied Nicola solemnly, 'seek to know no more!'

'It has terrible secrets!' said Schedoni, who had been long silent. 'Know, young man, that almost every cell of every prisoner has a concealed entrance, by which the ministers of death may pass unnoticed to their victims. This Nicola is now one of those dreadful summoners, and is acquainted with all the secret avenues, that lead to murder.'

Vivaldi shrunk from Nicola in horror, and Schedoni paused; but while he had spoken, Vivaldi had again noticed the extraordinary change in his voice, and shuddered at its sound no less than at the information it had given. Nicola was silent; but his terrible eyes were fixed in vengeance on Schedoni.

'His office has been short,' resumed the Confessor, turning his heavy eyes upon Nicola, 'and his task is almost done!' As he pronounced the last words his voice faltered, but they were heard by the monk, who drawing nearer to the bed, demanded an explanation of them. A ghastly smile triumphed in the features of Schedoni; 'Fear not but that an explanation will come full soon,' said he.

Nicola fixed himself before the Confessor, and bent his brows upon him as if he would have searched into his very soul. When Vivaldi again looked at Schedoni, he was shocked on

observing the sudden alteration in his countenance, yet still a faint smile of triumph lingered there. But, while Vivaldi gazed, the features suddenly became agitated; in the next instant his whole frame was convulsed, and heavy groans laboured from his breast. Schedoni was now evidently dying.

The horror of Vivaldi, and of the Marchese, who endeavoured to leave the chamber, was equalled only by the general confusion that reigned there; every person present seemed to feel at least a momentary compassion, except Nicola, who stood unmoved beside Schedoni, and looked stedfastly upon his pangs, while a smile of derision marked his countenance. As Vivaldi observed, with detestation, this expression, a slight spasm darted over Nicola's face, and his muscles also seemed to labour with sudden contraction; but the affection was transient, and vanished as abruptly as it had appeared. The monk, however, turned from the miserable spectacle before him, and as he turned he caught involuntarily at the arm of a person near him, and leaned on his shoulder for support. His manner appeared to betray that he had not been permitted to triumph in the sufferings of his enemy, without participating at least in their horror.

Schedoni's struggles now began to abate, and in a short time he lay motionless. When he unclosed his eyes, death was in them. He was yet nearly insensible; but presently a faint gleam of recollection shot from them, and gradually lighting them up, the character of his soul appeared there; the expression was indeed feeble, but it was true. He moved his lips as if he would have spoken, and looked languidly round the chamber, seemingly in search of some person. At length, he uttered a sound, but he had not yet sufficient command of his muscles, to modulate that sound into a word, till by repeated efforts the name of Nicola became intelligible. At the call, the monk raised his head from the shoulder of the person on whom he had reclined, and turning round, Schedoni, as was evident from the sudden change of expression in his countenance, discovered him; his eyes, as they settled on Nicola seemed to recollect all their wonted fire, and the malignant triumph, lately so prevalent in his physiognomy, again appeared as in the next moment, he pointed to him. His glance seemed suddenly impowered with the destructive fascination attributed to that of the basilisk, for while it now met Nicola's, that monk seemed as if transfixed to the spot, and unable to withdraw his eyes from the glare of Schedoni's; in their expression he read the dreadful sentence of his fate, the triumph of revenge and cunning. Struck with this terrible conviction a pallid hue overspread his face; at the same time an involuntary motion convulsed his features, cold trembling seized upon his frame, and, uttering a deep groan, he fell back, and was caught in the arms of the people near him. At the instant of his fall, Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavoured to make their way out of it. This, however, was impracticable, for the door was fastened, until a physician, who had been sent for, should arrive, and some investigation could be made into this mysterious affair. The consternation of the Marchese and of Vivaldi, compelled to witness this scene of horror, cannot easily be imagined.

Schedoni, having uttered that demoniacal sound of exultation, was not permitted to repeat it, for the pangs he had lately suffered returned upon him, and he was again in strong convulsions, when the physician entered the chamber. The moment he beheld Schedoni, he declared him to be poisoned; and he pronounced a similar opinion on father Nicola; affirming, also, that the drug, as appeared from the violence of the effect, was of too subtle and inveterate a nature to allow of antidote. He was, however, willing to administer the medicine usual in such cases.

While he was giving orders to an attendant, with respect to this, the violence of Schedoni's convulsions once more relaxed; but Nicola appeared in the last extremity. His sufferings were

incessant, his senses never for a moment returned, and he expired, before the medicine, which had been sent for, could be brought. When it came, however, it was administered with some success to Schedoni, who recovered not only his recollection, but his voice; and the first word he uttered was, as formerly, the name of Nicola.

‘Does he live?’ added the Confessor with the utmost difficulty, and after a long pause. The persons around him were silent, but the truth, which this silence indicated, seemed to revive him.

The inquisitor, who had attended, perceiving that Schedoni had recovered the use of his intellects, now judged it prudent to ask some questions relative to his present condition, and to the cause of Nicola’s death.

‘Poison,’ replied Schedoni readily.

‘By whom administered?’ said the inquisitor, ‘consider that, while you answer, you are on your death-bed.’

‘I have no wish to conceal the truth,’ rejoined Schedoni, ‘nor the satisfaction’—he was obliged to pause, but presently added, ‘I have destroyed him, who would have destroyed me, and—and I have escaped an ignominious death.’

He paused again; it was with difficulty that he had said thus much, and he was now overcome by the exertion he had made. The secretary, who had not been permitted to leave the chamber, was ordered to note Schedoni’s words.

‘You avow then,’ continued the inquisitor, ‘that the poison was administered, both in the case of father Nicola and in your own, by yourself?’

Schedoni could not immediately reply; but when he did, he said, ‘I avow it.’

He was asked by what means he had contrived to procure the poison, and was bidden to name his accomplice.

‘I had no accomplice,’ replied Schedoni.

‘How did you procure the poison, then?’

Schedoni, slowly and with difficulty, replied, ‘It was concealed in my vest.’

‘Consider that you are dying,’ said the inquisitor, ‘and confess the truth. We cannot believe what you have last asserted. It is improbable that you should have had an opportunity of providing yourself with poison after your arrest, and equally improbable that you should have thought such provision necessary before that period. Confess who is your accomplice.’

This accusation of falshood recalled the spirit of Schedoni, which, contending with, and conquering, for a moment, corporeal suffering, he said in a firmer tone, ‘It was the poison, in which I dip my poniard, the better to defend me.’

The inquisitor smiled in contempt of this explanation, and Schedoni, observing him, desired a particular part of his vest might be examined, where would be found some remains of the drug concealed as he had affirmed. He was indulged in his request, and the poison was discovered within a broad hem of his garment.

Still it was inconceivable how he had contrived to administer it to Nicola, who, though he had been for some time alone with him on this day, would scarcely have so far confided in an enemy, as to have accepted any seeming sustenance that might have been offered by him. The inquisitor, still anxious to discover an accomplice, asked Schedoni who had assisted to administer the drug to Nicola, but the Confessor was no longer in a condition to reply. Life was now sinking apace; the gleam of spirit and of character that had returned to his eyes, was departed, and left them haggard and fixed; and presently a livid corpse was all that remained of the once terrible Schedoni!

While this awful event had been accomplishing, the Marchese, suffering under the utmost perturbation, had withdrawn to the distant grate of the dungeon, where he conversed with an official as to what might be the probable consequence of his present situation to himself; but Vivaldi, in an agony of horror, had been calling incessantly for the medicine, which might possibly afford some relief to the anguish he witnessed; and when it was brought, he had assisted to support the sufferers.

At length, now that the worst was over, and when the several witnesses had signed to the last avowal of Schedoni, every person in the chamber was suffered to depart; and Vivaldi was reconducted to his prison, accompanied by the Marchese, where he was to remain till the decision of the holy office respecting his innocence, as asserted by the deposition of Schedoni, should be known. He was too much affected by the late scene to give the Marchese any explanation at present, respecting the family of Ellena di Rosalba, and the Marchese, having remained for some time with his son, withdrew to the residence of his friend.

CHAPTER XII

Master, go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty.
Shakespeare

In consequence of the dying confession of Schedoni, an order was sent from the holy office for the release of Vivaldi, within a few days after the death of the Confessor; and the Marchese conducted his son from the prisons of the Inquisition to the mansion of his friend the Count di Maro, with whom he had resided since his arrival at Rome.

While they were receiving the ceremonious congratulations of the Count, and of some nobles assembled to welcome the emancipated prisoner, a loud voice was heard from the anti-chamber exclaiming, 'Let me pass! It is my master, let me pass! May all those who attempt to stop me, be sent to the Inquisition themselves!'

In the next instant Paulo burst into the saloon, followed by a group of lacqueys, who, however, paused at the door, fearful of the displeasure of their lord, yet scarcely able to stifle a laugh; while Paulo, springing forward, had nearly overset some of the company, who happened at that moment to be bowing with profound joy to Vivaldi.

'It is my master! it is my dear master!' cried Paulo, and, sending off a nobleman with each elbow, as he made his way between them, he hugged Vivaldi in his arms, repeating, 'O, my master! my master!' till a passion of joy and affection overcame his voice, and he fell at his master's feet and wept.

This was a moment of finer joy to Vivaldi, than he had known since his meeting with his father, and he was too much interested by his faithful servant, to have leisure to apologize to the astonished company for his rudeness. While the lacqueys were repairing the mischief Paulo had occasioned, were picking up the rolling snuff-boxes he had jerked away in his passage, and wiping the snuff from the soiled clothes, Vivaldi was participating in all the delight, and returning all the affection of his servant, and was so wholly occupied by these pleasurable feelings as scarcely to be sensible that any persons besides themselves were in the room. The Marchese, meanwhile was making a thousand apologies for the disasters Paulo had occasioned; was alternately calling upon him to recollect in whose presence he was, and to quit the apartment

immediately; explaining to the company that he had not seen Vivaldi since they were together in the Inquisition, and remarking profoundly, that he was much attached to his master. But Paulo, insensible to the repeated commands of the Marchese, and to the endeavours of Vivaldi to raise him, was still pouring forth his whole heart at his master's feet. 'Ah! my Signor,' said he, 'if you could but know how miserable I was when I got out of the Inquisition!'

'He raves!' observed the Count to the Marchese, 'you perceive that joy has rendered him delirious!'

'How I wandered about the walls half the night, and what it cost me to leave them! But when I lost sight of them, Signor, O! San Dominico! I thought my heart would have broke. I had a great mind to have gone back again and given myself up; and, perhaps, I should too, if it had not been for my friend, the centinel, who escaped with me, and I would not do him an injury, poor fellow! for he meant nothing but kindness when he let me out. And sure enough, as it has proved, it was all for the best, for now I am here, too, Signor, as well as you; and can tell you all I felt when I believed I should never see you again.'

The contrast of his present joy to his remembered grief again brought tears into Paulo's eyes; he smiled and wept, and sobbed and laughed with such rapid transition, that Vivaldi began to be alarmed for him; when, suddenly becoming calm, he looked up in his master's face and said gravely, but with eagerness, 'Pray Signor, was not the roof of your little prison peaked, and was there not a little turret stuck up at one corner of it? and was there not a battlement round the turret? and was there not' Vivaldi, after regarding him for a moment, replied smilingly. 'Why truly, my good Paulo, my dungeon was so far from the roof, that I never had an opportunity of observing it.'

'That is very true, Signor,' replied Paulo, 'very true indeed; but I did not happen to think of that. I am certain, though, it was as I say, and I was sure of it at the time. O Signor! I thought that roof would have broke my heart, O how I did look at it! and now to think that I am here, with my dear master once again!'

As Paulo concluded, his tears and sobs returned with more violence than before; and Vivaldi, who could not perceive any necessary connection between this mention of the roof of his late prison, and the joy his servant expressed on seeing him again, began to fear that his senses were bewildered, and desired an explanation of his words. Paulo's account, rude and simple as it was, soon discovered to him the relation of these apparently heterogeneous circumstances to each other; when Vivaldi, overcome by this new instance of the power of Paulo's affection, embraced him with his whole heart, and, compelling him to rise, presented him to the assembly as his faithful friend, and chief deliverer.

The Marchese, affected by the scene he had witnessed, and with the truth of Vivaldi's words, condescended to give Paulo a hearty shake by the hand, and to thank him warmly for the bravery and fidelity he had displayed in his master's interest. 'I never can fully reward your attachment,' added the Marchese, 'but what remains for me to do, shall be done. From this moment I make you independent, and promise, in the presence of this noble company, to give you a thousand sequins, as some acknowledgement of your services.'

Paulo did not express all the gratitude for this gift which the Marchese expected. He stammered, and bowed and blushed, and at length burst into tears; and when Vivaldi inquired what distressed him, he replied, 'Why, Signor, of what use are the thousand sequins to me, if I am to be independent! what use if I am not to stay with you?'

Vivaldi cordially assured Paulo, that he should always remain with him, and that he should consider it as his duty to render his future life happy. 'You shall henceforth,' added Vivaldi, 'be

placed at the head of my household; the management of my servants, and the whole conduct of my domestic concerns shall be committed to you, as a proof of my entire confidence in your integrity and attachment; and because this is a situation which will allow you to be always near me.'

'Thank you, my Signor,' replied Paulo, in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by his gratitude, 'Thank you with my whole heart! if I stay with you, that is enough for me, I ask no more. But I hope my Lord Marchese will not think me ungrateful for refusing to accept of the thousand sequins he was so kind as to offer me, if I would but be independent, for I thank him as much as if I had received them, and a great deal more too.'

The Marchese, smiling at Paulo's mistake, rejoined, 'As I do not perceive, my good friend, how your remaining with your master can be a circumstance to disqualify you from accepting a thousand sequins, I command you, on pain of my displeasure, to receive them; and whenever you marry, I shall expect that you will shew your obedience to me again, by accepting another thousand from me with your wife, as her dower.'

'This is too much, Signor,' said Paulo sobbing—'too much to be borne!' and ran out of the saloon. But amidst the murmur of applause which his conduct drew from the noble spectators, for Paulo's warm heart had subdued even the coldness of their pride, a convulsive sound from the anti-chamber betrayed the excess of emotion, which he had thus abruptly withdrawn himself to conceal.

In a few hours, the Marchese and Vivaldi took leave of their friends, and set out for Naples, where they arrived, without any interruption, on the fourth day. But it was a melancholy journey to Vivaldi, notwithstanding the joy of his late escape; for the Marchese, having introduced the mention of his attachment to Ellena di Rosalba, informed him, that, under the present unforeseen circumstances, he could not consider, his late engagement to the Marchesa on that subject as binding, and that Vivaldi must relinquish Ellena, if it should appear that she really was the daughter of the late Schedoni.

Immediately on his arrival at Naples, however, Vivaldi, with a degree of impatience, to which his utmost speed was inadequate, and with a revived joy so powerful as to overcome every fear, and every melancholy consideration, which the late conversation with his father had occasioned, hastened to the *Santa della Piéta*.

Ellena heard his voice from the grate, inquiring for her of a nun, who was in the parlour, and in the next instant they beheld each other yet once again.

In such a meeting, after the long uncertainty and terror, which each had suffered for the fate of the other, and the dangers and hardships they had really incurred, joy was exalted almost to agony. Ellena wept, and some minutes passed before she could answer to Vivaldi's few words of tender exclamation: it was long ere she was tranquil enough to observe the alteration, which severe confinement had given to his appearance. The animated expression of his countenance was unchanged; yet, when the first glow of joy had faded from it, and Ellena had leisure to observe its wanness, she understood, too certainly, that he had been a prisoner in the Inquisition.

During this interview, he related, at Ellena's request, the particulars of his adventures, since he had been separated from her in the chapel of San Sebastian; but, when he came to that part of the narration where it was necessary to mention Schedoni, he paused in unconquerable embarrassment and a distress not unmingled with horror. Vivaldi could scarcely endure even to hint to Ellena any part of the unjust conduct, which the Confessor had practised towards him, yet it was impossible to conclude his account, without expressing much more than hints; nor could he bear to afflict her with a knowledge of the death of him who he believed to be her parent,

however the dreadful circumstances of that event might be concealed. His embarrassment became obvious, and was still increased by Ellena's inquiries.

At length, as an introduction to the information it was necessary to give, and to the fuller explanation he wished to receive upon a subject, which, though it was the one that pressed most anxiously upon his mind, he had not yet dared to mention, Vivaldi ventured to declare his knowledge of her having discovered her parent to be living. The satisfaction immediately apparent upon Ellena's countenance heightened his distress, and his reluctance to proceed; believing, as he did, that the event he had to communicate must change her gladness to grief.

Ellena, however, upon this mention of a topic so interesting to them both, proceeded to express the happiness she had received from the discovery of a parent, whose virtues had even won her affection long before she understood her own interest in them. It was with some difficulty, that Vivaldi could conceal his surprize at such an avowal of prepossession; the manners of Schedoni, of whom he believed her to speak, having certainly never been adapted to inspire tenderness. But his surprize soon changed its object, when Olivia, who had heard that a stranger was at the grate, entered the parlour, and was announced as the mother of Ellena di Rosalba.

Before Vivaldi left the convent, a full explanation, as to family, was given on both sides, when he had the infinite joy of learning, that Ellena was not the daughter of Schedoni; and Olivia had the satisfaction to know that she had no future evil to apprehend from him who had hitherto been her worst enemy. The manner of his death, however, with all the circumstances of his character, as unfolded by his late trial, Vivaldi was careful to conceal.

When Ellena had withdrawn from the room, Vivaldi made a full acknowledgment to Olivia of his long attachment to her daughter, and supplicated for her consent to their marriage. To this application, however, Olivia replied, that, though she had long been no stranger to their mutual affection, or to the several circumstances which had both proved its durability, and tried their fortitude, she never could consent that her daughter should become a member of any family, whose principal was either insensible of her value, or unwilling to acknowledge it; and that in this instance it would be necessary to Vivaldi's success, not only that he, but that his father should be a suitor; on which condition only, she allowed him to hope for her acquiescence.

Such a stipulation scarcely chilled the hopes of Vivaldi, now that Ellena was proved to be the daughter not of the murderer Schedoni, but of a Count di Bruno, who had been no less respectable in character than in rank; and he had little doubt that his father would consent to fulfil the promise he had given to the dying Marchesa.

In this belief he was not mistaken. The Marchese, having attended to Vivaldi's account of Ellena's family, promised, that if it should appear there was no second mistake on the subject, he would not longer oppose the wishes of his son.

The Marchese immediately caused a private inquiry to be made as to the identity of Olivia, the present Countess di Bruno; and, though this was not pursued without difficulty, the physician, who had assisted in the plan of her escape from the cruelty of Ferando di Bruno, and who was living, as well as Beatrice, who clearly remembered the sister of her late mistress, at length rendered Olivia's identity unquestionable. Now, therefore, that the Marchese's every doubt was removed, he paid a visit to the *Santa della Piéta*, and solicited, in due form, Olivia's consent to the nuptials of Vivaldi with Ellena; which she granted him with an entire satisfaction. In this interview, the Marchese was so much fascinated by the manners of the Countess, and pleased with the delicacy and sweetness, which appeared in those of Ellena, that his consent was no longer a constrained one, and he willingly relinquished the views of superior rank and fortune,

which he had formerly looked to for his son, for those of virtue and permanent happiness that were now unfolded to him.

On the twentieth of May, the day on which Ellena completed her eighteenth year, her nuptials with Vivaldi were solemnized in the church of the *Santa Maria della Piéta*, in the presence of the Marchese and of the Countess di Bruno. As Ellena advanced through the church, she recollected, when on a former occasion she had met Vivaldi at the altar, and, the scenes of San Sebastian rising to her memory, the happy character of those, which her present situation opposed to them, drew tears of tender joy and gratitude to her eyes. Then, irresolute, desolate, surrounded by strangers, and ensnared by enemies, she had believed she saw Vivaldi for the last time; now, supported by the presence of a beloved parent, and by the willing approbation of the person, who had hitherto so strenuously opposed her, they were met to part no more; and, as a recollection of the moment when she had been carried from the chapel glanced upon her mind, that moment when she had called upon him for succour, supplicated even to hear his voice once more, and when a blank silence, which, as she believed, was that of death, had succeeded; as the anguish of that moment was now remembered, Ellena became more than ever sensible of the happiness of the present.

Olivia, in thus relinquishing her daughter so soon after she had found her, suffered some pain, but she was consoled by the fair prospect of happiness, that opened to Ellena, and cheered, by considering, that, though she relinquished, she should not lose her, since the vicinity of Vivaldi's residence to *La Piéta*, would permit a frequent intercourse with the convent.

As a testimony of singular esteem, Paulo was permitted to be present at the marriage of his master, when, as perched in a high gallery of the church, he looked down upon the ceremony, and witnessed the delight in Vivaldi's countenance, the satisfaction in that of my 'old Lord Marchese,' the pensive happiness in the Countess di Bruno's, and the tender complacency of Ellena's, which her veil, partly undrawn, allowed him to observe, he could scarcely refrain from expressing the joy he felt, and shouting aloud, '*O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*'³

CHAPTER XIII

Ah! where shall I so sweet a dwelling find!
For all around, without, and all within,
Nothing save what delightful was and kind,
Of goodness favouring and a tender mind,
E'er rose to view.

Thomson

The Fête which, some time after the nuptials, was given by the Marchese, in celebration of them, was held at a delightful villa, belonging to Vivaldi, a few miles distant from Naples, upon the border of the gulf, and on the opposite shore to that which had been the frequent abode of the Marchesa. The beauty of its situation and its interior elegance induced Vivaldi and Ellena to select it as their chief residence. It was, in truth, a scene of fairy-land. The pleasure-grounds extended over a valley, which opened to the bay, and the house stood at the entrance of this valley, upon a gentle slope that margined the water, and commanded the whole extent of its luxuriant shores, from the lofty cape of Miseno to the bold mountains of the south, which,

³ O happy day! O happy day!

stretching across the distance, appeared to rise out of the sea, and divided the gulf of Naples from that of Salerno.

The marble porticoes and arcades of the villa were shadowed by groves of the beautiful magnolia, flowering ash, cedrati, camellias, and majestic palms; and the cool and airy halls, opening on two opposite sides to a colonade, admitted beyond the rich foliage all the seas and shores of Naples, from the west; and to the east, views of the valley of the domain, withdrawing among winding hills wooded to their summits, except where cliffs of various-coloured granites, yellow, green, and purple, lifted their tall heads, and threw gay gleams of light amidst the umbrageous landscape.

The style of the gardens, where lawns and groves, and woods varied the undulating surface, was that of England, and of the present day, rather than of Italy; except 'Where a long alley peeping on the main,' exhibited such gigantic loftiness of shade, and grandeur of perspective, as characterize the Italian taste.

On this jubilee, every avenue and grove, and pavilion was richly illuminated. The villa itself, where each airy hall and arcade was resplendent with lights, and lavishly decorated with flowers and the most beautiful shrubs, whose buds seemed to pour all Arabia's perfumes upon the air, this villa resembled a fabric called up by enchantment, rather than a structure of human art.

The dresses of the higher rank of visitors were as splendid as the scenery, of which Ellena was, in every respect, the queen. But this entertainment was not given to persons of distinction only, for both Vivaldi and Ellena had wished that all the tenants of the domain should partake of it, and share the abundant happiness which themselves possessed; so that the grounds, which were extensive enough to accommodate each rank, were relinquished to a general gaiety. Paulo was, on this occasion, a sort of master of the revels; and, surrounded by a party of his own particular associates, danced once more, as he had so often wished, upon the moon-light shore of Naples.

As Vivaldi and Ellena were passing the spot, which Paulo had chosen for the scene of his festivity, they paused to observe his strange capers and extravagant gesticulation, as he mingled in the dance, while every now-and-then he shouted forth, though half breathless with the heartiness of the exercise, '*O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*'

On perceiving Vivaldi, and the smiles with which he and Ellena regarded him, he quitted his sports, and advancing, 'Ah! my dear master,' said he, 'do you remember the night, when we were travelling on the banks of the Celano, before that diabolical accident happened in the chapel of San Sebastian; don't you remember how those people, who were tripping it away so joyously, by moonlight, reminded me of Naples and the many merry dances I had footed on the beach here?'

'I remember it well,' replied Vivaldi.

'Ah! Signor *mio*, you said at the time, that you hoped we should soon be here, and that then I should frisk it away with as glad a heart as the best of them. The first part of your hope, my dear master, you was out in, for, as it happened, we had to go through purgatory before we could reach paradise; but the second part is come at last;—for here I am, sure enough! dancing by moonlight, in my own dear bay of Naples, with my own dear master and mistress, in safety, and as happy *almost* as myself; and with that old mountain yonder, Vesuvius, which I, forsooth! thought I was never to see again, spouting up fire, just as it used to do before we got ourselves put into the Inquisition! O! who could have foreseen all this! *O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*'

'I rejoice in your happiness, my good Paulo,' said Vivaldi, 'almost as much as in my own; though I do not entirely agree with you as to the comparative proportion of each.'

‘Paulo!’ said Ellena, ‘I am indebted to you beyond any ability to repay; for to your intrepid affection your master owes his present safety. I will not attempt to thank you for your attachment to him; my care of your welfare shall prove how well I know it; but I wish to give to all your friends this acknowledgment of your worth, and of my sense of it.’

Paulo bowed, and stammered, and writhed and blushed, and was unable to reply; till, at length, giving a sudden and lofty spring from the ground, the emotion which had nearly stifled him burst forth in words, and ‘*O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*’ flew from his lips with the force of an electric shock. They communicated his enthusiasm to the whole company, the words passed like lightning from one individual to another, till Vivaldi and Ellena withdrew amidst a choral shout, and all the woods and strands of Naples re-echoed with—‘*O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*’

‘You see,’ said Paulo, when they had departed, and he came to himself again, ‘you see how people get through their misfortunes, if they have but a heart to bear up against them, and do nothing that can lie on their conscience afterwards; and how suddenly one comes to be happy, just when one is beginning to think one never is to be happy again! Who would have guessed that my dear master and I, when we were clapped up in that diabolical place, the Inquisition, should ever come out again into this world! Who would have guessed when we were taken before those old devils of Inquisitors, sitting there all of a row in a place under ground, hung with black, and nothing but torches all around, and faces grinning at us, that looked as black as the gentry aforesaid; and when I was not so much as suffered to open my mouth, no! they would not let me open my mouth to my master!—who, I say, would have guessed we should ever be let loose again! who would have thought we should ever know what it is to be happy! Yet here we are all abroad once more! All at liberty! And may run, if we will, straight forward, from one end of the earth to the other, and back again without being stopped! May fly in the sea, or swim in the sky, or tumble over head and heels into the moon! For remember, my good friends, we have no lead in our consciences to keep us down!’

‘You mean swim in the sea, and fly in the sky, I suppose,’ observed a grave personage near him, ‘but as for tumbling over head and heels into the moon! I don’t know what you mean by that!’

‘Pshaw!’ replied Paulo, ‘who can stop, at such a time as this, to think about what he means! I wish that all those, who on this night are not merry enough to speak before they think, may ever after be grave enough to think before they speak! But you, none of you, no! not one of you! I warrant, ever saw the roof of a prison, when your master happened to be below in the dungeon, nor know what it is to be forced to run away, and leave him behind to die by himself. Poor souls! But no matter for that, you can be tolerably happy, perhaps, notwithstanding; but as for guessing how happy I am, or knowing any thing about the matter.—O! it’s quite beyond what you can understand. *O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!*’ repeated Paulo, as he bounded forward to mingle in the dance, and ‘*O! giorno felice!*’ was again shouted in chorus by his joyful companions.

THE END