

Signor Formica

By E. T. A. Hoffmann

I

Celebrated people often have many ill things said of them, whether well-founded or not. And no exception was made in the case of that admirable painter Salvator Rosa, whose vivid, living pictures cannot fail to impart a keen and characteristic delight to those who look upon them.

At the time that Salvator's fame was ringing through Naples, Rome, and Tuscany—indeed, through all Italy—and painters who were desirous of gaining applause were trying to imitate his highly individual style, his malicious and envious rivals were spreading all sorts of evil reports intended to cast ugly black stains upon the glorious splendour of his artistic fame. They claimed that he had at a former period of his life belonged to a gang of banditti, and that it was to his experiences during this lawless time that he owed all the wild, fierce, fantastically attired figures which he introduced into his pictures, just as the gloomy fearful wildernesses of his landscapes (the *selve selvagge*, savage woods, to use Dante's expression) were faithful representations of the haunts where the banditti lay hidden. What was worse still, they openly charged him with having been concerned in the atrocious and bloody revolt which had been set on foot by the notorious Masaniello in Naples. They even described the share he had taken in it, down to the minutest details.

The rumour ran that Aniello Falcone, the painter of battle pieces, one of the best of Salvator's masters, had been stung into fury and filled with bloodthirsty vengeance because the Spanish soldiers had slain one of his relatives in a street brawl. Without delay he gathered a band of wild and desperate young men, mostly painters, put arms into their hands, and gave them the name of the "Company of Death." And in truth this band inspired all the fear and consternation suggested by its terrible name. At all hours of the day they wandered the streets of Naples in gangs, and cut down without mercy every Spaniard whom they met. They did more—they forced their way into the holy sanctuaries, and relentlessly murdered their unfortunate enemies who had taken refuge there. At night they gathered around their chief the bloody-minded madman Masaniello, and painted him by torchlight, so that in a short time there were hundreds of these little pictures circulating in Naples and the surrounding area.

This is the ferocious band of which Salvator Rosa was alleged to have been a member, working hard at butchering his fellow men by day, and by night working just as hard at painting. The truth about him has however been stated, by a celebrated art critic, Taillasson, I believe. "Salvator Rosa's works are characterized by arrogant and defiant originality, and by fantastic energy both of conception and of execution. Nature revealed herself to him not in the lovely peacefulness of green meadows, flourishing fields, sweet-smelling groves, murmuring springs, but in the awful and the sublime as seen in towering masses of rock, in the wild seashore, in savage inhospitable forests; and the voices that he loved to hear were not the whisperings of the evening breeze or the musical rustle of leaves, but the roaring of the hurricane and the thunder of the cataract. To one viewing his desolate landscapes, with the strange savage figures stealthily moving about in them, here singly, there in troops, the uncomfortable thoughts arise unbidden, 'Here's where a fearful murder took place, there's where the bloody corpse was hurled into the ravine.' "

Admitting all this, and even that Taillason is also right when he maintains that Salvator's "Plato," in deed, that even his "Holy St. John Proclaiming the Advent of the Saviour in the Wilderness," look just a little like highway robbers—admitting this, I say, it is nevertheless unjust to argue from the character of the works to the character of the artist himself, and to assume that an artist who represents savage and terrible subjects with lifelike fidelity must himself have been a savage, terrible man. He who prates most about the sword is often he who wields it the worst; he who feels in the depths of his soul all the horrors of a bloody deed, so that, taking the palette or the pencil or the pen in his hand, he is able to give living form to his feelings, is often the one least capable of practicing similar deeds.

Enough! I don't believe a single word of all those evil reports, by which men sought to brand the excellent Salvator an abandoned murderer and robber, and I hope that you, kindly reader, will share my opinion. Otherwise, I see grounds for fearing that you might perhaps entertain some doubts respecting what I am about to tell you of this artist. The Salvator I wish to put before you in this tale—that is, according to my conception of him—is a man bubbling over with the exuberance of life and fiery energy, but at the same time a man endowed with the noblest and most loyal character—a character which, like that of all men who think and feel deeply, is able even to control the bitter irony which arises from a clear view of the significance of life. I need scarcely add that Salvator was no less renowned as a poet and musician than as a painter. His genius was revealed in rays thrown in many directions.

I repeat again, I do not believe that Salvator had any share in Masaniello's bloody deeds; on the contrary, I think it was the horrors of that fearful time which drove him from Naples to Rome, where he arrived a poverty-stricken fugitive, just at the time that Masaniello fell.

Not over well dressed, and with a scanty purse containing not more than a few bright sequins in his pocket, he crept through the gate just after nightfall. Somehow or other, he didn't exactly know how, he wandered as far as the Piazza Navona. In better times he had once lived there in a large house near the Pamfili Palace. With an ill-tempered growl, he gazed up at the large plate-glass windows glistening and glimmering in the moonlight. "Hm!" he exclaimed ironically. "It'll cost me dozens of yards of coloured canvas before I can open my studio up there again." But suddenly he felt paralyzed in every limb, and at the same moment more weak and feeble than he had ever felt in his life before. "But shall I," he murmured between his teeth as he sank down upon the stone steps leading up to the house door, "really be able to finish canvas enough in the way the fools want it done? I have a notion that that will be the end of it!"

A cold cutting night wind was blowing down the street. Salvator realized that he must find shelter. Rising with difficulty, he staggered on into the Corso, and then turned into the Via Bergognona. At last he stopped before a little house with only a couple of windows, inhabited by a poor widow and her two daughters. This woman had housed him for little money the first time he came to Rome, an unknown stranger ignored by everyone; and so he hoped to find a lodging with her again, such as would be best suited to his reduced circumstances.

He knocked at the door, and several times shouted out his name. At last he heard the old woman slowly and reluctantly waking out of her sleep. She shuffled to the window in her slippers, and began to rain down a shower of abuse upon the scoundrel who was disturbing her in this way in the middle of the night; her house was not an inn, and so on. Then there ensued a good deal of talk back and forth before she recognized her former lodger's voice. But when Salvator complained that he had fled from Naples and was unable to find a shelter in Rome, the old woman cried, "By all the blessed saints of Heaven! Is that you, Signor Salvator? Your little room above, that looks onto the court, is still empty, and the old fig-tree has pushed its branches

right through the window and into the room, so that you can sit and work like you was in a beautiful cool arbour. Yes, and how pleased my girls will be that you have come back, Signor Salvator. But, d'ye know, my Margarita's grown a big girl and fine-looking? You won't give her any more rides on your knee now. And—and your cat, you know, three months ago she choked on a fishbone. But you know, my fat neighbour that you used to laugh at and draw cartoons of—she *did* marry that young fellow, Signor Luigi, after all. Ah well! *nozze e magistrati sono da dio deslinati* [marriages and magistrates are made in heaven], they say.”

“Signora Caterina,” cried Salvator, interrupting the old woman, “I beg you by the blessed saints, let me in, and then tell me all about your fig-tree and your daughters, the cat and your fat neighbour—I am dying of weariness and cold.”

“Bless me, how impatient we are,” rejoined the old woman. “*Chi va piano va sano, chi va presto more lesto* [walk slowly and have a long life; make haste and a widow's your wife], I tell you. But you are tired, you are cold; where are the keys? Quick with the keys!”

But the old woman still had to wake her daughters and kindle a fire—and she was a long time about it, such a long, long time. At last she opened the door and let poor Salvator in. Scarcely had he crossed the threshold than, overcome by fatigue and illness, he dropped on the floor as if dead. Happily the widow's son, who lived at Tivoli, chanced to be at his mother's that night. He at once gave up his bed to make room for the sick man.

The old woman was very fond of Salvator, and she rated him above all other painters in the world. In everything that he did she took the greatest pleasure. She was therefore quite beside herself to see him in this sad condition, and wanted to run off to the neighbouring monastery to have her father confessor come and fight against the adverse power of the disease with consecrated candles or some powerful amulet or other. On the other hand, her son thought it would be almost better to see about getting an experienced physician at once, and off he ran there and then to the Piazza di Spagna, where he knew the distinguished Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni dwelt. No sooner did the doctor learn that the painter Salvator Rosa lay ill in the Via Bergognona than he declared himself ready to call and see the patient.

Salvator lay unconscious, struck down by a most severe attack of fever. The old woman had hung up two or three pictures of saints above his bed, and was praying fervently. The girls, though bathed in tears, tried from time to time to get the sick man to swallow a few drops of the cooling lemonade which they had made, while their brother, who had taken his place at the head of the bed, wiped the cold sweat from Salvator's brow. And so morning found them, when with a loud creak the door opened, and the celebrated Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni entered the room.

If Salvator had not been so seriously ill that the two girl's hearts were melted in grief, they would, I think (for they were in general frolicsome and saucy), have enjoyed a hearty laugh at the doctor's extraordinary appearance, instead of retiring shyly, as they did, into the corner. It will indeed be worth while to describe the outward appearance of this little man who presented himself at Dame Caterina's in the Via Bergognona in the gray of the morning. In spite of being rather tall as a boy, Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni had not been able to advance beyond the altitude of four feet. Moreover, in the days of his youth, he had been distinguished for his elegant figure. Before his head, always indeed somewhat ill-shaped, and his big cheeks, and his stately double chin had put on too much fat; before his nose had grown bulky and spread owing to overmuch indulgence in Spanish snuff; and before his little belly had assumed the shape of a wine-tub from too much fattening on macaroni—the garments of an Abbate, which he at that time affected, suited him down to the ground. He was then in truth a pretty little man, and accordingly the Roman ladies had styled him their *caro puppazetto* [sweet little doll].

But these days were gone. A German painter, seeing Dr. Splendiano walking across the Piazza di Spagna, said and he was perhaps not far wrong—that it looked as if some strapping fellow of six feet or so had walked away from his own head, which had fallen on the shoulders of a little marionette clown, who now had to carry it about as his own.

This curious little figure walked about in patchwork—an immense quantity of pieces of Venetian damask of a large flower pattern that had been cut up in making a dressing-gown; high up around his waist he had buckled a broad leather belt, from which an excessively long rapier hung; while his snow-white wig was surmounted by a high conical cap, not unlike the obelisk in the Piazza San Pietro. Since the said wig, all tumbled and tangled, spread out thick and wide all over his back, it might very well have been taken for the cocoon out of which a fine silkworm had crept.

The worthy Splendiano Accoramboni stared through his big, bright spectacles, with his eyes wide open, first at his patient, then at Dame Caterina. Calling her aside, he croaked with bated breath, “There lies the great painter Salvator Rosa, and he’s lost if my skill doesn’t save him, Signora Caterina. Tell me when he came to lodge with you? Did he bring many beautiful large pictures with him?”

“Ah! my dear doctor,” replied Signora Caterina, “the poor fellow only came last night. And as for pictures—why, I don’t know nothing about them; but there’s a big box below, and Salvator begged me to take very good care of it, before he became senseless like he now is. I suppose there’s a fine picture packed in it, as he painted in Naples.”

What Signora Caterina said, however, was a falsehood; but we shall soon see that she had good reasons for imposing upon the doctor in this way.

“Good! Very good!” said the doctor, simpering and stroking his beard; then, with as much solemnity as his long rapier, which kept catching in all the chairs and tables, would allow, he approached the sick man and felt his pulse, snorting and wheezing, so that it had a most curious effect in the midst of the reverential silence which had fallen upon all the rest. Then he ran over in Greek and Latin the names of a hundred and twenty diseases that Salvator had not, then almost as many which he might have had, and concluded by saying that on the spur of the moment he didn’t recollect the name of his disease, but that he would within a short time find a suitable one for it, and the proper remedies as well. Then he took his departure with the same solemnity with which he had entered, leaving them all full of trouble and anxiety.

At the bottom of the steps the doctor requested to see Salvator’s box; Signora Caterina showed him one—in which were two or three of her deceased husband’s cloaks now laid aside, and some old worn-out shoes. The doctor smilingly tapped the box, on this side and on that, and remarked in a tone of satisfaction “We shall see we shall see!” Some hours later he returned with a very beautiful name for his patient’s disease, and brought with him some big bottles of an evil-smelling potion, which he directed to be given to the patient constantly. This was a work of no little trouble, for Salvator resisted as well as he could, and obviously showed the greatest aversion for the stuff, which looked, and smelt, and tasted, as if it had been concocted from Acheron itself.

Whether the disease, since it had now received a name, and in consequence really signified something, had only just begun to put forth its virulence, or whether Splendiano’s potion made too much of a disturbance inside the patient—it is at any rate certain that the poor painter grew weaker and weaker from day to day, from hour to hour. And notwithstanding Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni’s assurance that after the vital process had reached a state of perfect equilibrium, he would give it a new start like the pendulum of a clock, they were all very doubtful as to

Salvator's recovery, and thought that the doctor had perhaps already given the pendulum such a rough jolt that the mechanism was damaged.

Now it happened one day that when Salvator seemed scarcely able to move a finger he was suddenly seized with the paroxysm of fever; in a momentary accession of strength he leapt out of bed, seized the full medicine bottles, and hurled them fiercely out of the window. Just at this moment Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni was entering the house, when two or three bottles came bang upon his head, smashing all to pieces, while the brown liquid ran in streams all down his face and wig and ruff. Hastily rushing into the house, he screamed like a madman, "Signor Salvator has gone out of his mind, he's delirious; no skill can save him now, he'll be dead in ten minutes. Give me the picture, Signora Caterina, give me the picture—it's mine, the scanty reward of all my trouble. Give me the picture, I say."

But when Signora Caterina opened the box, and Dr. Splendiano saw nothing but the old cloaks and torn shoes, his eyes spun round in his head like a pair of fire-wheels; he gnashed his teeth; he stamped; he consigned poor Salvator, the widow, and all the family to the devil; then he rushed out of the house like an arrow from a bow, or as if he had been shot from a cannon.

After the violence of the paroxysm had spent itself, Salvator again relapsed into a deathlike condition. Signora Caterina was fully persuaded that his end was really come, and away she sped as fast as she could to the monastery, to fetch Father Boniface to administer the sacrament to the dying man. Father Boniface came and looked at the sick man; he said he was well acquainted with the peculiar signs which approaching death stamps on the human face, but that for the present there were no indications of them on the face of the insensible Salvator. Something might still be done, and he would procure help at once, only Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni with his Greek names and infernal medicines was not to be allowed to cross the threshold again. The good Father set out at once, and we shall see later that he kept his word about sending the promised help.

Salvator recovered consciousness again; he fancied he was lying in a beautiful flower-scented arbour, for green boughs and leaves were interlacing above his head. He felt a salutary warmth glowing in his veins, but it seemed to him as if somehow his left arm was bound fast.

"Where am I?" he asked in a faint voice. Then a handsome young man, who had stood at his bedside, but whom he had not noticed until just now, threw himself upon his knees, and grasping Salvator's right hand, kissed it and bathed it with tears, as he cried again and again, "Oh! Signor! my noble master! now it's all right; you are saved, you'll get better."

"Tell me—" began Salvator, when the young man begged him not to exert himself, for he was too weak to talk; he would tell him all that had happened. "You see, my esteemed and excellent sir," began the young man, "you were very ill when you came from Naples, but your condition was not really dangerous; a few simple remedies would soon have set you, with your strong constitution, on your legs again, if you hadn't, through Carlos's well-intentioned blunder in running off for the nearest physician, fallen into the hands of the Pyramid Doctor, who did his best to put you in your grave."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Salvator, laughing heartily, notwithstanding the feeble state he was in. "What do you say?—the Pyramid Doctor? Yes, although I was very ill, I saw that the little fellow in damask patchwork, who condemned me to drink his vile devil's brew, wore on his head the obelisk from the Piazza San Pietro—and so that's why you call him the Pyramid Doctor?"

"Why," said the young man, likewise laughing, "Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni must have come to see you in his mysterious conical nightcap; and, do you know, you can see it flashing every

morning from his window like some bad omen in the sky. But it's not for this cap that he's called the Pyramid Doctor; for that there's a very different reason. Dr. Splendiano is a great lover of pictures and has quite a choice collection, which he has gained in a peculiar way. He keeps a close eye on painters and their illnesses. He's particularly eager to get at artists who are strangers in Rome. If they eat an ounce or two too much macaroni, or drink a glass more Syracuse than is altogether good for them, he will afflict them with first one and then the other disease, designating it by a formidable name, and proceeding at once to cure them of it. He generally bargains for a picture as the price of his attendance; and as only specially obstinate constitutions can withstand his remedies, it generally happens that he gets his picture out of the chattels left by the poor foreigner, who meanwhile has been carried to the Pyramid of Cestius, and buried there. It hardly need be said that Signor Splendiano always picks out the best of the pictures the painter has finished, and also does not forget to bid the men take several others along with it. The cemetery near the Pyramid of Cestius is Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni's cornfield, which he diligently cultivates, and for that reason he is called the Pyramid Doctor. Dame Caterina took great pains, of course with the best intentions, to make the doctor believe that you had brought a fine picture with you; you may imagine with what eagerness he concocted his medicines for you. It was fortunate that you threw the doctor's bottles at his head, it was also fortunate that he left you in anger, and no less fortunate that Signora Caterina, who believed you were in the agonies of death, fetched Father Boniface to administer to you the sacrament. Father Boniface understands something of the art of healing; he formed a correct diagnosis of your condition and sent for me."

"Then you also are a doctor?" asked Salvator in a faint voice.

"No," replied the young man, a deep blush mantling his cheeks, "no, my estimable and worthy sir, I am not in the least a doctor like Signor Splendiano Accoramboni; I am a barber-surgeon. I felt that I would sink into the earth with fear—with joy—when Father Boniface came and told me that Salvator Rosa was almost at the point of death in the Via Bergognona, and required my help. I came as fast as I could, opened a vein in your left arm, and you were saved. Then we brought you up into this cool airy room that you once occupied. Look, there's the easel which you left behind you; there are a few sketches which Signora Caterina has treasured as if they were relics. You've passed the crisis of your illness; simple remedies such as Father Boniface can prepare are all that you want, except good nursing, to bring back your strength again. And now permit me once more to kiss this hand—this creative hand that charms her deepest secrets from Nature and clothes them in living form. Permit poor Antonio Scacciati to pour out all the gratitude and immeasurable joy of his heart that Heaven has granted him to save the life of our great and noble painter, Salvator Rosa." Thereupon the young barber-surgeon threw himself on his knees again, and, seizing Salvator's hand, kissed it and bathed it in tears as before.

"I don't understand," said the artist, raising himself up a little, though with considerable difficulty, "I don't understand, my dear Antonio, what makes you show me all this respect. You are, you say, a barber-surgeon, and we don't in a general way find this trade going hand in hand with art—"

"As soon," replied the young man, casting down his eyes, "as you have picked up your strength again, my dear sir, I have a good deal to tell you that now lies heavy on my heart."

"Do so," said Salvator; "you may have every confidence in me—that you may, for I don't know that any man's face has made a more direct appeal to my heart than yours. The more I look at you the more plainly I seem to trace in your features a resemblance to that incomparable young painter—I mean Sanzio Raphael."

Antonio's eyes were lit up with a proud, radiant light—he vainly struggled for words with which to express his feelings.

At this moment Signora Caterina appeared, followed by Father Boniface, who brought Salvator a medicine which he had mixed and which the patient swallowed with more relish and felt to have a more beneficial effect upon him than the Acheronian waters of the Pyramid Doctor Splendiano Accoramboni.

II

And Antonio's words proved true. The simple remedies of Father Boniface, the careful nursing of good Signora Caterina and her daughters, the warmer weather which now came—all co-operated so well together with Salvator's naturally robust constitution that he soon felt sufficiently well to think about work again; first of all he made a few sketches which he thought of working out afterwards.

Antonio scarcely ever left Salvator's room; he was all eyes when the painter drew out his sketches; while his judgment on many points showed that he must have been initiated into the secrets of art.

"See here Antonio," said Salvator to him one day, "you understand art matters so well that I believe you have not merely cultivated your critical judgment, but must have wielded the brush as well."

"You may remember," rejoined Antonio, "when you were just about coming to yourself again after your long unconsciousness, that I had several things to tell you which lay heavy on my mind. Now is the time for me to unfold all my heart to you. You must know then, that though I am called Antonio Scacciati the barber-surgeon, who opened the vein in your arm for you, I really belong to art—to the art to which, after bidding farewell to my hateful trade, I intend to devote myself for once and for all."

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed Salvator, "Ho! ho! Antonio, weigh well what you are about to do. You *are* a clever surgeon, and perhaps will never be anything more than a bungling painter all your life long; for, with your permission, as young as you are, you are decidedly too old to begin to use the charcoal now. Believe me, a man's whole lifetime is scarce long enough to acquire a knowledge of the True—still less the practical ability to represent it."

"Ah! but, my dear sir," replied Antonio, smiling blandly, "don't imagine that I should now have come to entertain the foolish idea of taking up the difficult art of painting if I hadn't practiced it on every possible occasion from my childhood. In spite of the fact that my father obstinately kept me away from everything connected with art, Heaven was graciously pleased to throw me in the way of some celebrated artists. I must tell you that the great Annibal Caracci interested himself in the orphan boy, and also that I may with justice call myself Guido Reni's pupil."

"Well then," said Salvator somewhat sharply, a way of speaking he sometimes had, "my good Antonio, you have indeed had great masters, and so without detriment to your surgical practice, you must have been a great pupil. Only I don't understand how you, a faithful disciple of the gentle, elegant Guido, whom you perhaps outdo in elegance in your own pictures—for pupils do this in their enthusiasm—can find any pleasure in my productions, and can really regard me as a master in the Art."

At these words, which indeed sounded a good deal like derisive mockery, the hot blood rushed into the young man's face.

"Let me be frank and lay bare the thoughts I have in my mind. I tell you, Salvator, I have never honoured any master from the depths of my soul as I do you. What I am amazed at in your works is the sublime grandeur of conception which is often revealed. You grasp the deepest secrets of Nature: you understand the mysterious hieroglyphics of her rocks, trees, and waterfalls; you hear her sacred voice, you understand her language, and possess the power to write down what she has said to you. Yes, I can call your bold free style of painting nothing else than *writing down*. Man and his doings do not satisfy you; you see him only as a part of Nature, and as his essential character is conditioned by natural phenomena; and in these facts I see why you are truly great only in your landscapes with their wonderful figures. Historical painting confines you to limits which clog your genius for reproducing your higher intuitions of Nature."

"That's talk you've picked up from envious historical painters," said Salvator, interrupting his young companion; "like them, Antonio, you throw me the bone of landscape painting that I may gnaw away at it, and so spare their own good flesh. Don't I understand the human figure and all that is dependent upon it? But this silly criticism, repeated from others—"

"Don't be angry," interrupted Antonio, "don't be angry, my good sir; I am not blindly repeating anybody's words, and I should not for a moment think of trusting to the judgment of our painters here in Rome. Who can help admiring the bold draughtmanship, the powerful expression, but above all the living movement of your figures? It's plain to see that you don't work from a stiff, inflexible model, or even from a lifeless manikin; it is evident that you yourself are your own breathing, living model, and that when you sketch or paint, you have the figure you want to put on your canvas reflected in a great mirror opposite to you."

"The devil! Antonio," exclaimed Salvator, laughing, "I believe you must have been peeping into my studio when I was not aware of it, since you have such an accurate knowledge of what goes on in it."

"Perhaps I may," replied Antonio; "but let me go on. I am not so anxious to classify the pictures which your powerful mind suggests to you as are your pedantic critics. In fact, I think that the word 'landscape,' as generally employed, has an indifferent application to your productions; I should prefer to call them historical representations in the highest sense of the word. If we fancy that this or that rock or this or that tree is gazing at us like a gigantic being with thoughtful earnest eyes, so again, on the other hand, this or that group of fantastically attired men resembles some remarkable stone which has been endowed with life; all Nature, breathing and moving in harmonious unity, lends accents to the sublime thought which leapt into existence in your mind. This is the spirit in which I have studied your pictures, and so in this way it is, my grand and noble master, that I owe to you my truer perceptions in matters of art. But don't imagine that I have fallen into childish imitation. However much I would like to have your free bold pencil, I do not attempt to conceal the fact that Nature's colours appear to me different from what I see in your pictures. It is useful, I think, for the sake of acquiring technique, for the pupil to imitate the style of this or that master, but as soon as he comes to stand in any sense on his own feet, he ought to aim at representing Nature as he himself sees her. Nothing but this true method of perception, this unity with oneself can give rise to character and truth. Guido shared these sentiments; and that fiery man Preti, who, as you are aware, is called *Il Calabrese*—a painter who certainly, more than any other man, has reflected upon his art—also warned me against all imitation. Now you know, Salvator, why I admire you beyond all other painters, but do not imitate you."

While the young man had been speaking, Salvator had kept his eyes fixed unchangeably upon him; he now clasped him tumultuously to his heart.

“Antonio,” he then said, “what you have just now said are wise and thoughtful words. Young as you are, you are nevertheless, as far as the true perception of art is concerned, a long way ahead of many of our old and much vaunted masters, who have a good deal of stupid foolish twaddle about their painting, but never get at the true root of the matter. Body alive, man! When you were talking about my pictures, I began to understand myself for the first time, I believe; and because you do not imitate my style—do not, like a good many others, take a tube of black paint in your hand, or dab on a few glaring colours, or even make two or three crippled figures with repulsive faces look up from the midst of filth and dirt, and then say, ‘There’s a Salvator for you!’—just for these very reasons I think a good deal of you. I tell you, my lad, you’ll not find a more faithful friend than I am—that I can promise you with all my heart and soul.”

Antonio was beside himself with joy at the kind way in which the great painter thus testified to his interest in him. Salvator expressed an earnest desire to see his pictures. Antonio took him immediately to his studio.

Salvator had really expected to find something fairly good from the young man who spoke so intelligently about art, and who, it appeared, had a good deal in him; but nevertheless he was greatly surprised at the sight of Antonio’s fine pictures. Everywhere he found boldness in conception, and correctness in drawing; and the freshness of the colouring, the good taste in the arrangement of the drapery, the uncommon delicacy of the extremities, the exquisite grace of the heads, were all so many evidences that Antonio was no unworthy pupil of the great Reni. But Antonio had avoided this master’s besetting sin of trying, all too obviously, to sacrifice expression to beauty. It was plain that Antonio was aiming to reach Annibal’s strength, without having as yet succeeded.

Salvator spent some considerable time of thoughtful silence in the examination of each of the pictures. Then he said, “Listen, Antonio: it is indeed undeniable that you were born to follow the noble art of painting. For not only has Nature endowed you with the creative spirit from which the finest thoughts pour forth in an inexhaustible stream, but she has also granted you the rare ability to surmount in a short space of time the difficulties of technique. It would only be false flattery if I were to tell you that you had yet advanced to the level of your masters, that you are equal to Guido’s exquisite grace or Annibal’s strength; but I am certain that you far excel all the painters who hold up their heads so proudly in the Academy of San Luca here—Tiarini, Gessi, Sementa, and all the rest of them, even Lanfranco himself, for he only understands fresco painting. And yet, Antonio, if I were in your place, I should deliberate a while before throwing away the lancet altogether, and confining myself entirely to the pencil. That sounds rather strange, but listen to me. Art seems to be having a bad time of it just now, or rather the devil seems to be very busy amongst our painters nowadays, setting them against one another. If you cannot make up your mind to put up with all sorts of annoyances, to endure more and more scorn and abuse in proportion as you advance in art, and as your fame spreads to meet with malicious scoundrels everywhere, who with a friendly face will force themselves upon you in order to ruin you the most surely afterwards—if you cannot, I say, make up your mind to endure all this—let painting alone. Think of the fate of your teacher, the great Annibal, whom a rascally band of rivals persecuted in Naples, so that he did not receive one single commission for a great work, and was everywhere rejected with contempt. This is said to have been instrumental in his early death. Think of what happened to Domenichino when he was painting the dome of the chapel of St. Januarius. Didn’t the villains of painters—I won’t mention a single name, not even the rascals

Belisario and Ribera—didn't they bribe Domenichino's servant to strew ashes in the lime, so the plaster wouldn't stick fast on the walls, and the painting have no permanence? Think of all that, and examine yourself well whether your spirit is strong enough to endure things like that; if not, your artistic power will be broken, and along with the resolute courage for work you will also lose your ability."

"But, Salvator," replied Antonio, "it would hardly be possible for me to have more scorn and abuse to endure, supposing I took up painting entirely and exclusively, than I have already endured while merely a barber-surgeon. You have been pleased with my pictures, you have indeed! and at the same time declared from inner conviction that I am capable of doing better things than several of our painters of the Academy. But these are just the men who turn up their noses at all that I have produced, and say contemptuously, 'Look, here's our barber-surgeon who wants to be a painter!' And for this very reason my resolve is only more unshaken; I will sever myself from a trade that grows more hateful every day. Upon you, my honoured master, I now stake all my hopes. Your word is powerful; if you would speak a good word for me, you might overthrow my envious persecutors at a single blow, and put me in the place where I ought to be."

"You repose great confidence in me," rejoined Salvator. "And now that we thoroughly understand each other's views on painting, and I have seen your works, I don't really know that there is anybody for whom I would rather take up the cudgels than for you."

Salvator once more inspected Antonio's pictures, and stopped before one representing a "Magdalene at the Saviour's feet," which he especially praised.

"In this Magdalene," he said, "you have deviated from the usual mode of representation. Your Magdalene is not a thoughtful virgin, but a lovely artless child rather, and yet she is such a marvelous child that hardly anybody else but Guido could have painted her. There is a unique charm in her dainty figure; you must have painted with enthusiasm; and if I am not mistaken, the original of this Magdalene is alive and to be found in Rome. Come, confess, Antonio, you are in love!"

Antonio looked down, while he said in a low shy voice, "Nothing escapes your penetration, my dear sir; perhaps it is as you say, but do not blame me for it. That picture I set the highest store by, and hitherto I have guarded it as a holy secret from all men's eyes."

"What do you say?" interrupted Salvator. "None of the painters here has seen your picture?"

"No, not one," was Antonio's reply.

"All right then, Antonio," continued Salvator, his eyes sparkling with delight. "Very well then, you may rely upon it, I will overwhelm your enemies, and get you the honour you deserve. Entrust your picture to me; bring it to my studio secretly by night, and then leave all the rest to me. Will you do so?"

"Gladly, with all my heart," replied Antonio. "And now I should very much like to talk to you about my love-troubles as well; but I feel as if I ought not to do so today, after we have opened our minds to each other on the subject of art. I also entreat you to grant me your assistance both in word and deed later on in this matter of my love."

"I am at your service," said Salvator, "for both, both when and where you require me." Then as he was going away, he once more turned round and said, smiling, "See here, Antonio, when you disclosed to me the fact that you were a painter, I was very sorry that I had spoken about your resemblance to Sanzio. I took it for granted that you were as silly as most of our young folk, who, if they bear but the slightest resemblance in the face to any great master, at once trim their beard or hair as he does, and from this fancy it their business to imitate the style of the master in their art achievements, even though it is a manifest violation of their natural talents to do so."

Neither of us has mentioned Raphael's name, but I assure you that I have seen in your pictures clear indications that you have grasped the full significance of the inimitable thoughts which are reflected in the works of the greatest painter of this age. You understand Raphael, and would give me a different answer than Velasquez did when I asked him not long ago what he thought of Sanzio. 'Titian,' he replied, 'is the greatest painter; Raphael knows nothing about carnation.' This Spaniard, I think, understands flesh but not criticism; and yet these men in San Luca elevate him to the clouds because he once painted cherries which the sparrows picked at."

It happened not many days afterwards that the Academicians of San Luca met together in their church to judge the works of painters who had applied for admission to the Academy. There Salvator had sent Scacciati's fine picture. In spite of themselves the painters were greatly struck with its grace and power; and from all lips there was heard nothing but the most extravagant praise when Salvator informed them that he had brought the picture with him from Naples, as the legacy of a young painter who had died prematurely.

It was not long before all Rome was crowding to see and admire the picture by the young unknown master who had died so young; it was unanimously agreed that no such work had been done since Guido Reni's time; some even went so far in their enthusiasm as to place this exquisitely lovely Magdalene above Guido's creations of a similar kind.

Among the crowd of people who were gathered round Scacciati's picture, Salvator one day observed a man who, besides presenting a most extraordinary appearance, behaved as if he were crazy. Well advanced in years, he was tall, thin as a spindle, with a pale face, a long sharp nose, a chin equally long, a little, pointed beard, and gray, gleaming eyes. On the top of his light sand-coloured wig he had set a high hat with a magnificent feather; he wore a short dark red mantle or cape with many bright buttons, a sky-blue doublet slashed in the Spanish style, immense leather gauntlets with silver fringes, a long rapier at his side, light gray stockings drawn up above his bony knees and gartered with yellow ribbons, and bows of the same sort of yellow ribbon on his shoes.

This remarkable figure was standing before the picture as if enraptured: he raised himself on tiptoe; he stooped down till he became quite small; then he jumped up with both feet at once, heaved deep sighs, groaned, nipped his eyes so close together that the tears began to trickle down his cheeks, opened them wide again, fixed his gaze immovably upon the charming Magdalene, sighed again, lisped in a thin, querulous castrato-like voice, "*Ah! carissima— bebedettissima! Ah! Marianna—Mariannina—bellissima.*" ["Oh! dearest—most adored! Ah! Marianna—sweet Marianna! my most beautiful!"]

Salvator, who delighted in such eccentricities, drew near the old fellow, intending to engage him in conversation about Scacciati's work, which seemed to afford him so much exquisite delight. Without paying any particular heed to Salvator, the old gentleman stood cursing his poverty, because he could not give a million sequins for the picture, and place it under lock and key where nobody else could set his cursed eyes upon it. Then, hopping up and down again, he blessed the Virgin and all the holy saints that the scoundrel of an artist who had painted the heavenly picture which was driving him to despair and madness was dead.

Salvator concluded that the man either was out of his mind, or was an Academician of San Luca with whom he was unacquainted.

All Rome was full of Scacciati's wonderful picture; people could scarcely talk about anything else, and this of course was convincing proof of the excellence of the work. And when the painters were again assembled in the church of San Luca, to decide about the admission of

certain other pictures which had been announced for exhibition, Salvator Rosa suddenly asked, whether the painter of the "Magdalene at the Saviour's Feet" was not worthy of being admitted a member of the Academy. They all with one accord, including even that hairsplitter in criticism, Cavalierè Josepin, declared that such a great artist would have been an ornament to the Academy, and expressed their sorrow at his death in the choicest phrases, although, like the old madman, they were praising Heaven in their hearts that he was dead. Still more, they were so far carried away by their enthusiasm that they passed a resolution that the admirable young painter whom death had snatched away from art so early should be nominated a member of the Academy in his grave, and that masses should be read for the benefit of his soul in the church of San Luca. They therefore begged Salvator to inform them what was the full name of the deceased, the date of his birth, the place where he was born, and so forth.

Then Salvator rose and said in a loud voice, "Signors, the honour you are anxious to render to a dead man you can more easily bestow upon a living man who walks in your midst. The 'Magdalene at the Saviour's Feet'—the picture which you so justly exalt above all other artistic productions that the last few years have given us, is not the work of a dead Neapolitan painter as I pretended (this I did simply to get an unbiased judgment from you); that painting, that masterpiece, which all Rome is admiring, is from the hand of Signor Antonio Scacciati, the barber-surgeon."

The painters sat staring at Salvator as if suddenly thunderstruck, incapable of either moving or uttering a single sound. After quietly exulting over their embarrassment for some minutes, Salvator continued, "Well now, signors, you would not tolerate the worthy Antonio among you because he is a surgeon; but I think that the illustrious Academy of San Luca has great need of a surgeon to set the limbs of the many crippled figures which emerge from the studios of a good many among your number. But of course you will no longer scruple to do what you ought to have done long ago, namely, elect that excellent painter Antonio Scacciati a member of the Academy."

The Academicians, swallowing Salvator's bitter pill, feigned to be highly delighted that Antonio had in this way given such incontestable proofs of his talent, and with all due ceremony nominated him a member of the Academy.

As soon as it became known in Rome that Antonio was the author of the wonderful picture, he was overwhelmed with congratulations, and even with commissions for great works, which poured in upon him from all sides. Thus by Salvator's shrewd and cunning stratagem the young man emerged all at once out of obscurity, and with the first real step he took in his artistic career rose to great honour.

Antonio revelled in ecstasies of delight. So much the more therefore did Salvator wonder, some days later, to see him appear with his face pale and distorted, utterly miserable and woebegone. "Ah! Salvator!" said Antonio, "what advantage has it been to me that you have helped me to rise to a level far beyond my expectations, that I am now overwhelmed with praise and honour, that the prospect of a most successful artistic career is opening out before me? I am utterly miserable, for the picture to which, next to you, my dear sir, I owe my great triumph, has proved the cause of lasting misfortune to me."

"Stop!" replied Salvator, "don't sin against your art or your picture. I don't believe a word about the terrible misfortune which you say has befallen you. You are in love, and I presume you can't get all your wishes gratified at once, on the spur of the moment; that's all it is. Lovers are like children; they scream and cry if anyone touches their doll. Stop your moaning and groaning; that's something I cannot stand. Come, sit down there and tell all about your fair Magdalene,

quietly, and give me the history of your love affair, and let me know what the stumbling blocks are that we have to remove. I promise you my help beforehand. The more adventurous, the more I shall like them. In fact, my blood is coursing hot in my veins again, and I must work off some energy in a few wild pranks. But go on with your story, Antonio, and as I said, let's have it quietly without any sighs and lamentations, without any Ohs! and Ahs!"

Antonio took his seat on the stool which Salvator had pushed up to the easel at which he was working, and began as follows

"There is a high house in the Via Ripetta, with a balcony which projects far over the street so that it immediately strikes the eye of anyone entering through the Porta del Popolo. In it lives the biggest fool in all Rome—an old bachelor with every fault that a bachelor could have—he is avaricious, vain, anxious to appear young, amorous, foppish. He is tall, as thin as a switch, wears a gay Spanish costume, a sandy wig, a conical hat, leather gauntlets, a rapier at his side—"

"Stop, stop!" cried Salvator, interrupting him, "excuse me a minute or two, Antonio." Then, turning over the picture which he was painting, he seized his charcoal and in a few free, bold strokes sketched on the back of the canvas the old man whom he had seen behaving so strangely in front of Antonio's picture at San Luca.

"By all the saints!" cried Antonio, as he leaped to his feet, and forgetful of his unhappiness, he burst out into a loud laugh. "That's the man! That's Signor Pasquale Capuzzi, whom I was just describing, that's Capuzzi to the very T."

"So you see," said Salvator calmly, "that I am already acquainted with the worthy gentleman who most probably is your bitter enemy. But go on.

"Signor Pasquale Capuzzi," continued Antonio, "is as rich as Croesus, but at the same time, as I have just told you, a miser and an impossible ass. The best thing about him is that he loves art, particularly music and painting; but he mixes up so much folly with it all, that even here there's no standing him. He considers himself the greatest composer in the world, and thinks that there's not a singer in the Papal Choir who can approach him. Accordingly he looks down on our Frescobaldi with contempt; and when the Romans talk about the wonderful charm of Ceccarelli's voice, he informs them that Ceccarelli knows as much about singing as a pair of top-boots, and that he, Capuzzi, knows which is the right way to delight the world. And since the first singer of the Pope bears the proud name of Signor Odoardo Ceccarelli di Merania, our Capuzzi is delighted when anybody calls him Signor Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia; for it was in Senigaglia that he was born. Rumour goes that his mother, being startled at the sight of a seal suddenly rising to the surface, gave birth to him in a fisherman's boat, and this accounts, it is said, for a good deal of the curriishness in his nature.

"Several years ago he produced one of his operas on the stage. He was hissed off, but that hasn't cured him of his mania for writing execrable music. Indeed, when he heard Francesco Cavalli's opera *Le Nozze di Teti e Peleo*, he swore that Cavalli had stolen the most sublime parts from *his* immortal works, for which he barely escaped being thrashed or even stabbed. He still has a craze for singing arias, and accompanies his hideous squalling on a jarring, jangling guitar, all out of tune. His faithful Pylades is an ill-bred eunuch dwarf, whom the Romans call Pitichinaccio. There is a third member of the company—guess who it is? None other than the Pyramid Doctor, who makes a noise like a melancholy ass and yet fancies he's singing an excellent bass, as good as Martinelli of the Papal Choir. These three fine people are in the habit of meeting in the evening on the balcony of Capuzzi's house, where they sing Carissimi's motets until all the dogs and cats in the neighbourhood break out miaowing and howling, and all the neighbors heartily wish the devil would run away with all blessed three.

“With this old idiot, my father was very intimate, since he trimmed Capuzzi’s wig and beard. When my father died, I undertook this business, and Capuzzi was most satisfied with me, because, as he once stated, I knew better than anybody else how to give his mustaches a bold upward twirl. But the real reason was that I was satisfied with the few pence which he gave me for my trouble. He firmly believed that he overpaid me, since, while I was trimming his beard, he would always close his eyes and croak through an aria from his own compositions. My ears used to split, and yet the old fellow’s crazy antics afforded me a good deal of amusement, so that I continued to attend him.

“One day, I quietly ascended the stairs, knocked at the door, and opened it, when lo, a girl—an angel of light—came to meet me. You know my Magdalene; it was she. I stood stock still, rooted to the spot. No, Salvator, you shall have no Ohs! and Ahs! Well, the first sight of this, the most lovely girl I had ever seen, enkindled in me the most passionate love. The old man informed me with a smirk that the young lady was the daughter of his brother Pietro, who had died at Senigaglia, that her name was Marianna, and that she was an orphan. Since he was her uncle and guardian, he had taken her into his house. You can easily imagine that after this Capuzzi’s house was Paradise to me. But no matter what plans I made, I could never succeed in getting a tête-à-tête with Marianna, even for a single moment. Her glances, however, and many a stolen sigh, and many a soft pressure of the hand, let me know my good fortune.

The old man divined what I was after—which was not a very difficult thing for him to do. He informed me that my behaviour towards his niece was not such as to please him altogether, and he asked me what was the real purport of my attentions. Then I frankly confessed that I loved Marianna with all my heart, and that the greatest earthly happiness I could conceive was a union with her. At this Capuzzi, after measuring me from top to toe, burst out in a guffaw of contempt, and declared that he never had any idea that such lofty thoughts could haunt the brain of a paltry barber. I was almost boiling with rage; I said he knew very well that I was no paltry barber but rather a good surgeon, and, moreover, in painting, a faithful pupil of the great Annibal Caracci and of the unrivalled Guido Reni. But Capuzzi only replied by a still louder guffaw of laughter, and in his horrible falsetto squeaked, ‘See here, my sweet Signor barber, my excellent Signor surgeon, my honoured Annibal Caracci, my beloved Guido Reni, be off to the devil, and don’t ever show yourself here again, if you don’t want your legs broken.’ And then the knock-kneed old fool laid hold of me with no less an intention than to kick me out of the room, and hurl me down the stairs. But that, you know, was the limit. My anger got the better of me, I seized the old lunatic and threw him so that his legs stuck up in the air; and there I left him screaming, while I ran down the stairs and out of the house door which, I need hardly say, has been closed to me ever since.

“And that’s how matters stood when you came to Rome and when Heaven inspired Father Boniface with the happy idea of bringing me to you. Then as soon as your clever trick had brought me the success for which I had been vainly striving so long, that is, when I was accepted by the Academy of San Luca, and all Rome was heaping up praise and honour on me lavishly, I went straight to the old man and suddenly presented myself before him in his own room, like a threatening apparition. Such at least he must have thought me, for he grew as pale as a corpse, and retreated behind a great table, trembling in every limb. And in a firm and earnest way I represented to him that it was not now a paltry barber or a surgeon, but a celebrated painter and Academician of San Luca, Antonio Scacciati, to whom he would not, I hoped, refuse the hand of his niece Marianna.

“You should have seen into what a passion the old fool flew. He screamed; he flourished his arms about like one possessed of devils; he yelled that I, a ruffianly murderer, was seeking his life, that I had stolen his Marianna from him since I had portrayed her in my picture, and it was driving him mad, driving him to despair, for all the world, all the world, were fixing their covetous, lustful eyes upon his Marianna, his life, his hope, his all; but I had better take care, he would burn my house over my head, and me and my picture in it. And therewith he kicked up such a din, shouting, ‘Fire! Murder! Thieves! Help!’ that I was completely confused, and thought only of making my way out of the house.

“The crackbrained old fool is head over ears in love with his niece; he keeps her under lock and key; and as soon as he succeeds in getting a dispensation from the Pope, he will force her to a shameful marriage with himself. All hope for me is lost!”

“No, no, not quite,” said Salvator, laughing, “I am of the opinion that things could not be better for you. Marianna loves you, of that you are convinced; and all we have to do is to get her out of the power of that old lunatic, Signor Pasquale Capuzzi. I should like to know what there is to hinder a couple of enterprising fellows like you and me from accomplishing this. Pluck up your courage, Antonio. Instead of wailing, and sighing, and fainting like a lovesick swain, it would be better to set to work to think out some plan for rescuing your Marianna. You wait and see, Antonio, how finely we’ll circumvent the old dotard; the wildest extravagance hardly seems wild enough to me. I’ll set about it at once, and learn what I can about the old man, and about his habits of life. But you must not be seen in this affair, Antonio. Go home quietly, and come back to me early tomorrow morning, then we’ll consider our first plan of attack.”

Herewith Salvator shook the paint out of his brush, threw on his mantle, and hurried to the Corso, while Antonio betook himself home as Salvator had bidden him—his heart comforted and full of hope again.

III

Next morning Salvator, having in the meantime inquired into Capuzzi’s habits of life, very greatly surprised Antonio by a description of them, even down to the minutest details.

“Poor Marianna,” said Salvator, “leads a sad life of it with the crazy old fellow. There he sits sighing and ogling the whole day long, and what is worse still, in order to soften her heart towards him, he sings her all sorts of love ditties that he has composed or intends to compose. At the same time he is so damnably jealous that he will not even permit the poor young girl to have the usual female attendance, for fear of intrigues and amours, which a maid might be induced to engage in. Instead, a hideous little monster with hollow eyes and pale flabby cheeks appears every morning and evening to perform for sweet Marianna the services of a tiring-maid. And this little apparition is nobody else but that dwarf Pitichinaccio, who has to wear women’s clothing. Capuzzi, whenever he leaves, carefully locks and bolts every door; besides which there is always a confounded fellow keeping watch below, who was formerly a bravo, and then a gendarme, and now lives under Capuzzi’s rooms. It seems, therefore, almost impossible to enter his house; nevertheless I promise you, Antonio, that this very night you shall be in Capuzzi’s own room and shall see your Marianna, though this time it will only be in Capuzzi’s presence.”

“What do you say?” cried Antonio, quite excited; “what do you say? We shall manage it tonight? I thought it was impossible.”

“There, there,” continued Salvator, “keep still, Antonio, and let us quietly consider how we may safely carry out the plan I have conceived. But in the first place I must tell you that I have already scraped an acquaintance with Signor Pasquale Capuzzi without knowing it. That wretched spinet, which stands in the corner there, belongs to him, and he wants me to pay him the preposterous sum of ten ducats for it. When I was convalescent I longed for some music, which always comforts me and does me a deal of good, so I begged my landlady to get me some such instrument as that. Signora Caterina learned that there was an old man living in the Via Ripetta who had a fine spinet to sell. I got the instrument brought here. I did not trouble myself either about the price or about the owner. It was only yesterday evening that I learned quite by chance that the gentleman who intended to cheat me with this rickety old thing was Signor Pasquale Capuzzi. Signora Caterina had enlisted the services of an acquaintance living in the same house, and indeed on the same floor as Capuzzi—and now you can easily guess whence I have got all my news.”

“Yes,” replied Antonio, “then the way to get in is found; your landlady—”

“I know very well, Antonio,” said Salvator, cutting him short, “I know what you’re going to say. You think you can find a way to your Marianna through Signora Caterina. But you’ll find that we can’t do anything of that sort; she is far too talkative; she can’t keep the least secret, and so we can’t for a single moment think of employing her in this business. Now listen to me quietly. Every evening when it’s dark, Signor Pasquale, although it’s very hard work for him owing to his knock-knees, carries his little friend the eunuch home in his arms, as soon as he has finished his duties as maid. Nothing in the world could induce the timid Pitichinaccio to set foot on the pavement at that time of night. So that when—”

At this moment somebody knocked at Salvator’s door, and to the consternation of both, Signor Pasquale stepped in in all the splendour of his gala attire. On catching sight of Scacciati he stood stock still as if paralyzed, and then, opening his eyes wide, he gasped for air as though he had some difficulty in breathing. But Salvator hastily ran to meet him, and took him by both hands, saying, “My dear Signor Pasquale, your presence in my humble dwelling is, I feel, a very great honour. May I presume that it is your love for art which brings you to me? You wish to see the newest things I have done, perhaps to give me a commission for some work. In what, my dear Signor Pasquale, can I serve you?”

“I have a word or two to say to you, my dear Signor Salvator,” stammered Capuzzi painfully, “but—alone—when you are alone. With your leave I will withdraw and come again at a more seasonable time.”

“By no means,” said Salvator, holding the old gentleman fast, “by no means, my dear sir. You need not stir a step; you could not have come at a more seasonable time, for, since you are a great admirer of the noble art of painting, and the patron of all good painters, I am sure you will be greatly pleased for me to introduce to you Antonio Scacciati here, the first painter of our time, whose glorious work—the wonderful ‘Magdalene at the Saviour’s Feet’—has excited the most enthusiastic admiration throughout all Rome. *You* too, I need hardly say, have also formed a high opinion of the work, and must be very anxious to know the great artist himself.”

The old man was seized with a violent trembling; he shook as if he had a shivering fit of the ague, and shot fiery wrathful looks at poor Antonio. He however approached the old gentleman, and, bowing with polished courtesy, assured him that he esteemed himself happy at meeting in such an unexpected way with Signor Pasquale Capuzzi, whose great learning in music as well as in painting was a theme for wonder not only in Rome but throughout all Italy, and he concluded by requesting the honour of his patronage.

This behaviour of Antonio, in pretending to meet the old gentleman for the first time in his life, and in addressing him in such flattering phrases, soon brought him around again. He forced his features into a simpering smile, and, as Salvator now let his hands loose, gave his mustache an elegant upward curl, at the same time stammering out a few unintelligible words. Then, turning to Salvator, he requested payment of the ten ducats for the spinet he had sold him.

“Oh! that trifling little matter we can settle afterwards, my good sir,” was Salvator’s answer. “First have the goodness to look at this sketch of a picture which I have drawn, and drink a glass of Syracuse while you do so.” Salvator meanwhile placed his sketch on the easel and moved up a chair for the old gentleman, and then, when he had taken his seat, he presented him with a large and handsome wine-cup full of good Syracuse—the little pearl-like bubbles rising gaily to the top.

Signor Pasquale was very fond of a glass of good wine—when he did not have to pay for it; and now he ought to have been in an especially happy frame of mind, for, besides nourishing his heart with the hope of getting ten ducats for a rotten, worn-out spinet, he was sitting before a splendid, boldly designed picture, the rare beauty of which he was quite capable of estimating at its full worth. And that he was in this happy frame of mind he evidenced in divers ways; he simpered ingratiatingly; he half closed his little eyes; he assiduously stroked his chin and mustache; and lisped time after time, “Splendid! delicious!” but they did not know to which he was referring, the picture or the wine.

When he had thus worked himself into a quiet cheerful humour, Salvator suddenly began—“They tell me, my dear sir, that you have a most beautiful and amiable niece, named Marianna—is it so? All the young men of the city are so smitten with love that they do nothing but run up and down the Via Ripetta stupidly, almost dislocating their necks in their efforts to look up at your balcony for a sight of your sweet Marianna, to snatch a single glance from her heavenly eyes.”

Suddenly all the charming simpers, all the good humour which had been called up into the old gentleman’s face by the good wine, were gone. Looking gloomily before him, he said sharply, “Ah! that’s an instance of the corruption of our abandoned young men. They fix their infernal eyes, the shameful seducers, upon mere children. For I tell you, my good sir, that my niece Marianna is a child, still a child, only just outgrown her nurse’s care.”

Salvator turned the conversation upon something else; the old gentleman recovered himself. But just as he, his face again radiant with sunshine, was on the point of putting the full wine-cup to his lips, Salvator began anew. “But tell me, my dear sir, if it is indeed true that your niece, with her sixteen summers, really has beautiful auburn hair, and eyes full of heaven’s own loveliness and joy, like Antonio’s Magdalene?” It is generally maintained that she has.”

“I don’t know,” replied the old gentleman, still more sharply than before, “I don’t know. But let us leave my niece in peace; rather let us exchange a few instructive words on the noble subject of art, as your fine picture here invites me to do.”

Every time that Capuzzi raised the wine-cup to his lips to take a good draught, Salvator began to talk again about the beautiful Marianna, so that at last the old gentleman leaped from his chair in a perfect passion, banged the cup down upon the table and almost broke it, screaming in a high shrill voice, “By the infernal pit of Pluto! by all the furies! you will turn my wine into poison—into poison I tell you. But I see through you, you and your fine friend Signor Antonio, you think to make sport of me. But you’ll find yourselves deceived. Pay me the ten ducats you owe me immediately, and then I will leave you and your associate, that barber-fellow Antonio, to make your way to the devil.”

Salvator shouted, as if mastered by the most violent rage, "What! you have the audacity to treat me in this way in my own house! Do you think I'm going to pay you ten ducats for that rotten box? The worms have long ago eaten all the goodness and all the music out of it. Not ten—not five—not three—not one ducat shall you have for it, it's not worth a farthing. Away with the tumble-down thing!" and he kicked over the little instrument again and again, till the strings were all jarring and jangling together.

"Ha!" screeched Capuzzi, "justice is still to be had in Rome; I will have you arrested, sir—arrested and cast into the deepest dungeon," and he was about to rush out of the room, blustering like a hailstorm. But Salvator took fast hold of him with both hands, and drew him down into the chair again, softly murmuring in his ear, "My dear Signor Pasquale, don't you perceive that I was only jesting with you? You shall have for your spinet, not ten, but *thirty* ducats cash down." And he went on repeating, "thirty bright ducats in ready money," until Capuzzi said in a faint and feeble voice, "What do you say, my dear sir? Thirty ducats for the spinet without its being repaired?" Then Salvator released his hold of the old gentleman, and asserted on his honour that within an hour the instrument should be worth thirty—nay, forty ducats, and that Signor Pasquale should receive as much for it.

Taking in a fresh supply of breath, and sighing deeply, the old gentleman murmured, "Thirty—forty ducats!" Then he began, "But you have greatly offended me, Signor Salvator—" "Thirty ducats," repeated Salvator. Capuzzi simpered, but then began again, "But you have grossly wounded my feelings, Signor Salvator—" "Thirty ducats," exclaimed Salvator, cutting him short; and he continued to repeat, "Thirty ducats! thirty ducats!" as long as the old gentleman continued to sulk—till at length Capuzzi said, radiant with delight, "If you will give me thirty—I mean forty ducats for the spinet, all shall be forgiven and forgotten, my dear sir."

"But," began Salvator, "before I can fulfill my promise, I still have one little condition to make, which you, my honoured Signor Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia, can easily grant. You are the first composer in all Italy, besides being the foremost singer of the day. When I heard in the opera *Le Nozze di Teti e Peleo* the great scene which that shameless Francesco Cavalli has stolen from your works, I was enraptured. If you would only sing me that aria while I put the spinet to rights you would confer upon me the greatest pleasure I can conceive."

Puckering up his mouth into the most winning of smiles, and blinking his little gray eyes, the old gentleman replied, "I perceive, my good sir, that you are yourself a clever musician, for you possess taste and know how to value the deserving better than these ungrateful Romans. Listen—listen—to the aria of all arias."

Thereupon he rose to his feet, and stretching himself up to his full height, spread out his arms and closed both eyes, so that he looked like a cock preparing to crow; and he at once began to screech in such a way that the walls rang again, and Signora Caterina and her two daughters soon came running in, fully under the impression that such screaming must betoken some accident or other. At the sight of the crowing old gentleman they stopped on the threshold utterly astonished; and thus they formed the audience of the incomparable musician Capuzzi.

Meanwhile Salvator, having picked up the spinet and thrown back the lid, took his palette in hand, and in bold firm strokes began on the lid of the instrument the most remarkable piece of painting that ever was seen. The central idea was a scene from Cavalli's opera *Le Nozze di Teti*, but there was a multitude of other personages mixed up with it in the most fantastic way. Among them were the recognizable features of Capuzzi, Antonio, Marianna (faithfully reproduced from Antonio's picture), Salvator himself, Signora Caterina and her two daughters—and even the Pyramid Doctor was not wanting—and all grouped so intelligently, judiciously, and ingeniously,

that Antonio could not conceal his astonishment, both at the artist's intellectual power as well as at his technique.

Meanwhile old Capuzzi had not been content with the aria which Salvator had requested him to give, but carried away by his musical madness, he went on singing or rather screeching without cease, working his way through the most awful recitatives from one execrable scene to another. He must have been going on for nearly two hours when he sank back in his chair, breathless, and with his face as red as a cherry. And just at this same time also Salvator had so far worked out his sketch that the figures began to wear a look of vitality, and the whole, viewed at a little distance, had the appearance of a finished work.

"I have kept my word with respect to the spinet, my dear Signor Pasquale," breathed Salvator in the old man's ear. Pasquale started up as if awakening out of a deep sleep. Immediately his glance fell upon the painted instrument, which stood directly opposite him. Then, opening his eyes wide as if he saw a miracle, and throwing his conical hat on the top of his wig, he took his crutch-stick under his arm, made one bound to the spinet, tore the lid off the hinges, and holding it above his head, ran like a madman out of the house altogether, followed by the hearty laughter of Signora Caterina and both her daughters.

"The old miser," said Salvator, "knows very well that he has only to take that painted lid to Count Colonna or to my friend Rossi and he will at once get forty ducats for it, or even more."

Salvator and Antonio then both deliberated how they should carry out the plan of attack which was to be made when night came. We shall soon see what the two adventurers resolved upon, and what success they had in their adventure.

As soon as it was dark, Signor Pasquale, after locking and bolting the door of his house, carried the little monster of an eunuch home as usual. The whole way the little wretch was whining and growling, complaining that not only did he sing Capuzzi's arias till he got hoarse and burnt his fingers cooking the macaroni, but he had now to lend himself to duties which brought him nothing but sharp boxes of the ear and rough kicks, which Marianna lavishly distributed to him whenever he came near her. Old Capuzzi consoled him as well as he could, promising to provide him an ampler supply of sweets than he had hitherto done; indeed, as the little man would not cease his growling and querulous complaining, Pasquale even laid himself under the obligation to get a natty abbot's coat made for the little torment out of an old black plush wasitcoat which he (the dwarf) had often set covetous eyes upon. He demanded a wig and a sword as well. Parleying upon these points, they arrived at the Via Bergognona, for that was where Pitichinaccio dwelt, only four doors from Salvator.

The old man set the dwarf down cautiously and opened the street door; and then, the dwarf in front, they both began to climb up the narrow stairs, which were more like a rickety ladder for hens and chickens than steps for respectable people. But they had hardly mounted half way up when a terrible racket began up above, and the coarse voice of some wild drunken fellow was heard cursing and swearing, and demanding to be shown the way out of the damned house. Pitichinaccio squeezed himself close to the wall, and entreated Capuzzi, in the name of all the saints, to go on first. But before Capuzzi had ascended two steps, the fellow who was up above came tumbling headlong downstairs, caught hold of the old man, and whisked him away like a whirlwind out through the open door below into the middle of the street. There they both lay—Capuzzi at bottom and the drunken brute like a heavy sack on top of him. The old gentleman screamed piteously for help; two men came up at once and with considerable difficulty freed him from the heavy weight lying upon him; the other fellow, as soon as he was lifted up, reeled away cursing.

“Good God! what’s happened to you, Signor Pasquale? What are you doing here at this time of night? What quarrel have you been getting mixed up in in that house there?” asked Salvator and Antonio, for these were the two men.

“Oh, I shall die!” groaned Capuzzi; “that son of the devil has crushed all my limbs; I can’t move.”

“Let me look,” said Antonio, feeling all over the old gentleman’s body, and suddenly he pinched Capuzzi’s right leg so sharply that the old man screamed loudly.

“By all the saints!” cried Antonio in consternation, “My dear Signor Pasquale, you’ve broken your right leg in the most dangerous place. If you don’t get speedy help you will be a dead man within a short time, or at any rate be lame all your life long.”

A terrible scream escaped the old man’s breast. “Calm yourself, my dear sir,” continued Antonio, “although I’m now a painter, I haven’t altogether forgotten my surgical practice. We will carry you to Salvator’s house and I will at once bind up—”

“My dear Signor Antonio,” whined Capuzzi, “you nourish hostile feelings towards me, I know.” “But,” broke in Salvator, “this is now no longer the time to talk about enmity; you are in danger, and that is enough for honest Antonio to exert all his skill on your behalf. Lay hold, friend Antonio.”

Gently and cautiously they lifted up the old man between them, and carried him to Salvator’s dwelling. All the way Capuzzi screamed with the unspeakable pain caused by his broken leg.

Signora Caterina said that she had had a foreboding that something was going to happen, and so she had not gone to bed. As soon as she caught sight of old Pasquale and heard what had befallen him, she began to heap reproaches upon him for his bad conduct. “I know,” she said, “I know very well, Signor Pasquale, whom you’ve been taking home again. Now that you’ve got your beautiful niece Marianna in the house with you, you think you’ve no further call to have womenfolk about you, and you treat that poor Pitichinaccio most shameful and infamous, putting him in petticoats. But look to it. *Ogni came ha il suo osso* [Every house has its skeleton]. Why if you have a girl about you, don’t you need womenfolk? *Fate il passo secondo la gamba* [Cut your clothes according to your cloth], and don’t you require anything either more or less from your Marianna than what is right. Don’t lock her up as if she were a prisoner, nor make your house a dungeon. *Asino punto convien che trotti* [If you are in the stream, you had better swim with it]; you have a beautiful niece and you must alter your ways to suit her, that is, you must only do what she wants you to do. But you are an ungallant and hard-hearted man, yes, and even in love, and jealous as well, they say, which I hope at your years is not true. Your pardon for telling you it all straight, but *chi ha nel petto fiele non puo sputar miele* [when there’s bile in the heart there can’t be honey in the mouth]. So now, if you don’t die of your broken leg, which at your age is not at all unlikely, let this be a warning to you; and leave your niece free to do what she likes, and let her marry the fine young gentleman as I know very well.”

And so the stream went on uninterruptedly, while Salvator and Antonio cautiously undressed the old gentleman and put him to bed. Signora Caterina’s words were like knives cutting deeply into his breast; but whenever he attempted to interrupt, Antonio warned him that all speaking was dangerous, and so he had to swallow his bitter gall. At length Salvator sent Signora Caterina away, to fetch some ice-cold water that Antonio wanted.

Salvator and Antonio satisfied themselves that the fellow who had been sent to Pitichinaccio’s house had done his duty well. Notwithstanding the apparently terrible fall, Capuzzi had not received the slightest damage beyond a slight bruise or two. Antonio put the old gentleman’s right foot in splints and bandaged it up so tight that he could not move. Then they wrapped him

up in cloths that had been soaked in ice-cold water, as a precaution, they alleged, against inflammation, so that Capuzzi shook as if with the ague.

“My good Signor Antonio,” he groaned feebly, “tell me if it is all over with me. Must I die?”

“Compose yourself,” replied Antonio. “If you will only compose yourself, Signor Pasquale! As you have come through the first dressing with so much nerve and without fainting, I think we may say that the danger is past; but you will require the most attentive nursing. At present we mustn’t let you out of the doctor’s sight.”

“Oh! Antonio,” whined the old gentleman, “you know how I like you, how highly I esteem your talents. Don’t leave me. Give me your dear hand—so! You won’t leave me, will you, my dear good Antonio?”

“Although I am now no longer a surgeon,” said Antonio, “although I’ve given up that trade which I hated, in your case, Signor Pasquale, I will make an exception, and will undertake to attend you, for which I shall ask nothing except that you give me your friendship, your confidence again. You were a little hard upon me—”

“Say no more,” lisped the old gentleman, “not another word, my dear Antonio—”

“Your niece will be half dead with anxiety,” said Antonio again, “at your not returning home. You are, considering your condition, brisk and strong enough, and so as soon as day dawns we’ll carry you home to your own house. There I will again look at your bandage, and arrange your bed as it ought to be, and give your niece her instructions, so that you may soon get well again.”

The old gentleman heaved a deep sigh and closed his eyes, remaining some minutes without speaking. Then, stretching out his hand towards Antonio, he drew him down close beside him, and whispered, “It was only a joke that you had with Marianna, was it not, my dear sir?”

“Think no more about that, Signor Pasquale,” replied Antonio. “Your niece did, it is true, strike my fancy; but I have now quite different things in my head, and—to confess it honestly—I am very pleased that you did return a sharp answer to my foolish suit. I thought I was in love with your Marianna, but what I really saw in her was only a fine model for my ‘Magdalene.’ And this probably explains how it is that, now that my picture is finished, I feel quite indifferent toward her.”

“Antonio,” cried the old man, in a strong voice, “Antonio, you glorious fellow! What comfort you give me—what help—what consolation! Now that you don’t love Marianna I feel as if all my pain had gone.”

“Why, I declare, Signor Pasquale,” said Salvator, “if we didn’t know you to be a grave and sensible man, with a true perception of what is becoming to your years, we might easily believe that you were yourself by some infatuation in love with your sixteen-year-old niece.”

Again the old gentleman closed his eyes, and groaned and moaned at the horrible pain, which now returned with redoubled violence.

The first red streaks of morning came shining in through the window. Antonio announced to the old man that it was now time to take him to his own house in the Via Ripetta. Signor Pasquale’s reply was a deep and pitiful sigh. Salvator and Antonio lifted him out of bed and wrapped him in a wide mantle which had belonged to Signora Caterina’s husband, and which she lent them for this purpose. The old man implored them by all the saints to take off the villainous cold bandages in which his bald head was swathed, and to give him his wig and plumed hat. And also, if it were possible, Antonio was to put his mustache a little in order, that Marianna might not be too much frightened at sight of him.

Two porters with a litter were standing ready before the door. Signora Caterina, still storming at the old man, and mixing a great many proverbs in her abuse, carried down the bed, in which

they then carefully packed him; and so, accompanied by Salvator and Antonio, he was taken home to his own house.

No sooner did Marianna see her uncle in this wretched plight than she began to scream, while a torrent of tears gushed from her eyes; without noticing her lover, who had come along with him, she grasped the old man's hands and pressed them to her lips, bewailing the terrible accident that had befallen him—so much pity had the good child for the old man who plagued and tormented her with his amorous folly. Yet at this same moment the inherent nature of woman asserted itself in her; for it only required a few significant glances from Salvator to put her in full possession of all the facts of the case. Now, for the first time, she stole a glance at the happy Antonio, blushing hotly as she did so; and a pretty sight it was to see how a roguish smile gradually routed and broke through her tears. Salvator, despite the "Magdalene," had not expected to find the little maiden half so charming, or so sweetly pretty as he now really discovered her to be; and while, almost feeling inclined to envy Antonio his good fortune, he felt that it was all the more necessary to get poor Marianna away from her hateful uncle, let the cost be what it might.

Signor Pasquale forgot his trouble in being received so affectionately by his lovely niece, which was indeed more than he deserved. He simpered and pursed up his lips so that his mustache was all of a totter, and groaned and whined, not with pain, but simply and solely with amorous longing.

Antonio arranged his bed professionally, and, after Capuzzi had been laid on it, tightened the bandage still more, at the same time so muffling up his left leg as well that he had to lay there motionless like a log of wood. Salvator withdrew and left the lovers alone with their happiness.

The old gentleman lay buried in cushions; moreover, as an extra precaution, Antonio had bound a thick piece of cloth well steeped in water round his head, so that he might not hear the lovers whispering together. This was the first time they unburdened all their hearts to each other, swearing eternal fidelity in the midst of tears and rapturous kisses. The old gentleman could have no idea of what was going on, for Marianna from time to time asked him how he felt, and even permitted him to press her little white hand to his lips.

When the morning began to be well advanced, Antonio hastened away to procure, as he said, all the things that the old gentleman required, but in reality to invent some means for putting him, for some hours at least, in a still more helpless condition, as well as to consult with Salvator what further steps were then to be taken.

IV

Next morning Antonio came to Salvator, melancholy and dejected.

"Well, what's the matter?" cried Salvator when he saw him coming, "What are you hanging your head about? What's happened to you now, you happy dog? Can you not see your mistress every day, and kiss her and press her to your heart?"

"Oh! Salvator, it's all over with my happiness, it's gone for ever," cried Antonio. "The devil is making sport of me. Our stratagem has failed, and we now are open enemies with that cursed Capuzzi."

"So much the better," said Salvator; "so much the better. But come, Antonio, tell me what's happened."

"Just imagine, Salvator," began Antonio, "yesterday when I went back to the Via Ripetta after an absence of at the most two hours, with all sorts of medicines, whom should I see but old

Pasquale standing in his own doorway, fully dressed. The Pyramid Doctor and that damned bravo were standing behind him, while a confused something was bobbing around their legs. I believe it was that little monster Pitichinaccio. As soon as the old man saw me, he shook his fist at me, and began to heap curses on me, swearing that if I approached his door, he would have all my bones broken. 'Be off to the devil, you dirty barber-fellow,' he shrieked; 'you think you can outwit me with your lying and tricks! Like the devil himself you lie in wait for my poor innocent Marianna, and think you are going to get her into your toils—but stop a moment! I will spend my last ducat to have the life stamped out of you, before you know it. And your fine patron, Signor Salvator, the murderer—bandit—who's escaped the halter—he shall be sent to join his captain Masaniello in hell—I'll have him run out of Rome; that won't cost me much trouble.'

"The old fellow raged on, and since that damned bravo, set on by the Pyramid Doctor, looked as if he was getting ready to attack me, and a crowd of curious onlookers began to assemble, what could I do but leave as fast as I could? I didn't like to come to you in my trouble, for I know you would only laugh at me and my complaints. Why, you can hardly keep back your laughter now."

As Antonio ceased speaking, Salvator did indeed burst out laughing heartily.

"Now," he cried, "now the situation is beginning to be interesting. And now, my worthy Antonio, I will tell you in detail what took place at Capuzzi's after you left. You hardly left the house when Signor Splendiano Accoramboni, who learned—God knows in what way—that his bosom friend Capuzzi had broken his right leg during the night, drew near in all solemnity with a surgeon. Your bandages and the whole way of treatment you adopted with Signor Pasquale was bound to excite suspicion. The surgeon removed the splints and bandages, and they discovered, what we both knew very well, that there was nothing wrong, not even an ossicle dislocated, let alone broken. It didn't require any uncommon intelligence to figure out the rest."

"But," said Antonio, utterly astonished, "my dear, good sir, tell me how you learned all that? Tell me how you get into Capuzzi's house and know everything that takes place there?"

"I have already told you," replied Salvator, "that an acquaintance of Signora Caterina lives in the same house, and on the same floor as Capuzzi. This acquaintance, the widow of a wine-dealer, has a daughter whom my little Margaret often goes to see. Girls have a special instinct for finding other girls of the same sort and so it came about that Rose—that's the name of the wine-dealer's daughter—and Margaret soon discovered a small vent in the living room, leading into a dark closet that adjoins Marianna's apartment. Marianna had heard the whispering and murmuring of the two girls, and she noticed the vent-hole, and so the way to a mutual exchange of communications was soon open and used. Whenever old Capuzzi takes his afternoon nap, the girls gossip away to their heart's content. You may have noticed that little Margaret, Signora Caterina's and my favourite, is not so serious and reserved as her elder sister, Anna, but is pert and mischievous. Without expressly mentioning your love affair I have told her to get Marianna to tell her everything that takes place in Capuzzi's house. She is a very apt pupil in the matter; and if I laughed at your pain and despondency just now it was because I knew what would comfort you, knew I could prove to you that the affair has now taken a most favourable turn. I have plenty of excellent news for you."

"Salvator!" cried Antonio, his eyes sparkling with joy, "how you cause my hopes to rise! Thank God for the vent-hole! I will write to Marianna; Margaret can take the letter with her—"

"No, no, we can have none of that, Antonio," replied Salvator. "Margaret can be useful to us without being your love messenger exactly. Besides, accident, which often plays fine tricks, might carry your love notes into old Capuzzi's hands, and bring an endless amount of fresh

trouble upon Marianna, just when she is on the point of getting the lovesick old fool under her thumb. Listen to what happened. The way in which Marianna received the old fellow when we took him home has reformed him. He is fully convinced that she no longer loves you, but that she has given him at least one half of her heart, and that all he has to do is to win the other half. And Marianna, since she imbibed the poison of your kisses, has advanced three years in shrewdness, artfulness, and experience. She has convinced the old man, not only that she had no share in our trick, but that she hates our goings-on, and will meet with scorn every device on your part to approach her. In his excessive delight the old man was too hasty, and swore that if he could do anything to please his adored Marianna he would do it immediately, she only has to mention it. At this Marianna modestly asked for nothing except that her *zio carissimo* [dearest uncle] would take her to see Signor Formica in the theatre outside the Porta del Popolo. This rather stumped Capuzzi; he consulted with the Pyramid Doctor and with Pitichinaccio; at last Signor Pasquale and Signor Splendiano came to the resolution that they really would take Marianna to this theatre tomorrow. Pitichinaccio will accompany them in the disguise of a handmaid. He gave his consent only on condition that Signor Pasquale would make him a present, not only of the plush wasitcoat, but also of a wig, and at night would, alternately with the Pyramid Doctor, carry him home. That bargain they finally made; and so this remarkable trinity will certainly go along with pretty Marianna to see Signor Formica tomorrow, in the theatre outside the Porta del Popolo.”

It is now necessary to say who Signor Formica was, and what he had to do with the theatre outside the Porta del Popolo.

At the time of the Carnival in Rome, nothing is more sad than when the theatre managers have been unlucky in their choice of a musical composer, or when the primo tenore at the Argentina theatre has lost his voice on the way, or when the male prima donna of the Valle theatre is laid up with a cold—in brief, when the chief source of recreation which the Romans were hoping to find does not work out. Then comes Holy Thursday and cuts off all the hopes that otherwise might have been realized. It was just after one of these unlucky carnivals—almost before the strict fastdays were past, when a certain Nicolo Musso opened a theatre outside the Porta del Popolo, where he stated his intention of putting nothing but light impromptu comic sketches in the manner of the *Commedia dell' arte* on the boards. His advertisement was ingenious and witty, and consequently the Romans formed a favourable preconception of Musso's enterprise. But even without this they were so desperate for entertainment that they would have snatched eagerly at the poorest show.

The interior arrangements of the theatre, or rather of the small shed, did not say much for the financial resources of the enterprising manager. There was no orchestra, nor were there boxes. Instead, a gallery was put up at the back, where the arms of the house of Colonna were conspicuous—a sign that Count Colonna had taken Musso and his theatre under his special protection. A low platform covered with carpets and hung around with painted sheets of paper (which, according to the requirements of the piece, had to represent a wood or a room or a street)—this was the stage. Add to this that the spectators had to content themselves with hard uncomfortable wooden benches, and it was no wonder that Signor Musso's patrons on first entering were pretty loud in their grumblings against him for calling a miserable shed a theatre. But no sooner had the first two actors who appeared exchanged a few words than the attention of the audience was arrested; as the piece proceeded their interest took the form of applause, their applause grew to admiration, their admiration to the wildest pitch of enthusiastic excitement,

which found vent in loud and continuous laughter, clapping of hands, and screams of “Bravo! Bravo!”

And indeed it would not have been very easy to find anything finer than these extemporized representations of Nicolo Musso; they overflowed with wit, humour, and imagination, and they lashed the follies of the day with an unsparing scourge. The audience was carried away by the incomparable powers of characterization that all the actors showed, but particularly by the inimitable mimicry of Pasquarello, by his marvellously natural imitations of the voice, gait and postures of well-known personages. By his inexhaustible humour, and the point and appositeness of his impromptu sallies, he quite carried his audience away. The man who played the role of Pasquarello and who called himself Signor Formica was animated by a spirit of great originality; often there was something so strange in his tone and gestures that the audience, even in the midst of the most unrestrained burst of laughter, felt a cold shiver run through them. He was excellently supported by Dr. Gratiano, who in pantomime, in voice, and in his talent for saying the most delightful things mixed up with apparently the most extravagant nonsense, seemed to have no equal in the world. This role was played by an old Bolognese named Maria Agli.

Thus in a short time all cultured Rome was seen hastening in a continuous stream to Nicolo Musso’s little theatre outside the Porta del Popolo, while Formica’s name was on everybody’s lips, and people shouted with wild enthusiasm, “*Oh! Formica! Formica benedetto! Oh! Formicissimo!*”—not only in the theatre but also in the streets. They regarded him as a supernatural visitant, and many an old lady who had split her sides with laughing in the theatre, would suddenly look grave and say solemnly, “*Scherza coi fanti e lascia star santi*” [Jest with children but let the saints alone], if anybody ventured to say the least thing in disparagement of Formica’s acting. This arose from the fact that outside the theatre Signor Formica was an inscrutable mystery. Never was he seen anywhere and all efforts to discover traces of him were vain, while Nicolo Musso on his part refused to say a word about Formica’s life off the stage. And this was the theatre that Marianna was anxious to go to.

“Let us make a decisive onslaught on our foes,” said Salvator; “we couldn’t have a finer chance than when they’re returning home from the theatre.” Then he imparted to Antonio the details of a plan, which, though it appeared venturesome and dangerous, Antonio embraced with joy, since it held out to him a prospect of carrying off his Marianna from the hated old Capuzzi. He was also delighted to hear that Salvator was especially concerned to chastise the Pyramid Doctor.

When night came, Salvator and Antonio each took a guitar and went to the Via Ripetta, where, with the express view of causing old Capuzzi annoyance, they complimented lovely Marianna with the finest serenade that ever was heard. For Salvator played and sang in masterly style, while Antonio, as far as the capabilities of his fine tenor would allow him, almost rivalled Odoardo Ceccarelli. Although Signor Pasquale appeared on the balcony and tried to silence the singers with abuse, his neighbours, attracted to their windows by the good singing, shouted to him that he and his companions howled and screamed like so many cats and dogs, and yet he wouldn’t listen to good music when it did come into the street; let him go in and stop up his ears if he didn’t want to listen to good singing. And so Signor Pasquale had to bear the torture nearly all night long of hearing Salvator and Antonio sing songs which either were the sweetest of love songs or else mocked at the folly of amorous old fools. They plainly saw Marianna standing at the window, even though Signor Pasquale begged her in the sweetest of phrases and protestations not to expose herself to the noxious night air.

Next evening the most remarkable company that ever was seen proceeded down the Via Ripetta towards the Porta del Popolo. All eyes were turned upon them, and people asked each other if these were maskers left from the Carnival. Signor Pasquale Capuzzi, spruce and smug, all elegance and politeness, wearing his gay Spanish suit well brushed, parading a new yellow feather in his conical hat, and stepping along in shoes too small for him, as if he were walking among eggs, was leading pretty Marianna on his arm; her slender figure could not be seen, still less her face, since she was smothered up in her veil and wraps. On the other side marched Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni in his great wig, which covered the whole of his back, so that from behind he appeared to be a huge head walking along on two little legs. Close behind Marianna, and almost clinging to her, waddled the eunuch dwarf Pitichinaccio, dressed in fiery red petticoats, his head hideously covered with bright-coloured flowers.

This evening Signor Formica outdid even himself. As a new number, which he had not done before, he introduced short songs into his performance, burlesquing the style of certain well-known singers. Old Capuzzi's passion for the operatic stage, which in his youth had almost amounted to a mania, was now stirred up in him anew. In a rapture of delight he kissed Marianna's hand time after time, and protested that he would not miss an evening at Nicolo Musso's theatre with her. Signor Formica he extolled to the very skies, and joined hand and foot in the boisterous applause of the rest of the spectators. Signor Splendiano was less satisfied, and kept continually admonishing Signor Capuzzi and lovely Marianna not to laugh so immoderately. In a single breath he ran over the names of twenty or more diseases which might arise from splitting the sides with laughing. But neither Marianna nor Capuzzi heeded him in the least. As for Pitichinaccio, he felt very uncomfortable. He had been obliged to sit behind the Pyramid Doctor, whose great wig completely overshadowed him. He could not see a single thing on the stage, nor any of the actors, and he was also repeatedly bothered and annoyed by two forward women who had placed themselves near him. They called him a dear, comely little lady, and asked him if he was married, though to be sure, he was very young, and whether he had any children, who they swore must be sweet little creatures, and so forth. The cold sweat stood in beads on poor Pitichinaccio's brow; he whined and whimpered, and cursed the day he was born.

After the conclusion of the performance, Signor Pasquale waited until the spectators had left the theatre. The last light was extinguished just as Signor Splendiano lit a small piece of wax torch at it; and then Capuzzi, with his worthy friends and Marianna, slowly and circumspectly set out on their return journey.

Pitichinaccio wept and screamed; Capuzzi, greatly to his vexation, had to take him on his left arm, while with the right he led Marianna. Dr. Splendiano showed the way with his miserable little bit of torch, which only burned with difficulty, and even then in a feeble sort of a way, so that the wretched light it cast merely served to reveal to them the thick darkness of the night.

While they were still a good distance from the Porta del Popolo they suddenly found themselves surrounded by several tall figures closely enveloped in mantles. The torch was knocked out of the doctor's hand, and went out on the ground. Capuzzi, as well as the doctor, stood still without uttering a sound. Then, from some invisible source, a pale reddish light fell upon the muffled figures, and four grisly skulls fixed their hollow ghastly eyes upon the Pyramid Doctor. "Woe—woe—woe betide thee, Splendiano Accoramboni!" the terrible spectres shrieked in deep, sepulchral tones. Then one of them wailed, "Do you know me? do you know me, Splendiano? I am Cordier, the French painter, who was buried last week; your medicines brought me to my grave. Then the second, "Do you know me, Splendiano? I am Kűfner, the German painter, whom you poisoned with your infernal electuary." Then the third, "Do you know me,

Splendiano? I am Liers, the Fleming, whom you killed with your pills, and whose brother you defrauded of a picture.” Then the fourth, “Do you know me, Splendiano? I am Ghigi, the Neapolitan painter, whom you despatched with your powders.” And lastly all four together, “Woe—woe—woe upon thee, Splendiano Accoramboni, cursed Pyramid Doctor! We bid you come—come down with us beneath the earth. Away—away—away with you!” and so saying they threw themselves upon the unfortunate doctor, and raising him in their arms, whisked him away like a whirlwind.

Now, although Signor Pasquale was a good deal overcome by terror, yet it is surprising how promptly he recovered courage as soon as he saw that it was only his friend Accoramboni with whom the spectres were concerned. Pitichinaccio had stuck his head, with the flower-bed that was on it, under Capuzzi’s mantle, and clung so fast around his neck that all efforts to shake him off proved futile.

“Pluck up your spirits,” Capuzzi exhorted Marianna, when nothing more was to be seen of the spectres or of the Pyramid Doctor; “pluck up your spirits, and come to me, my sweet little dove! As for my worthy friend Splendiano, it’s all over with him. May St. Bernard, who also was an able physician and gave many a man a lift on the road to happiness, may he help him, if the revengeful painters whom he hastened to get to his Pyramid break his neck! But who’ll sing the bass of my canzonas now? And this booby, Pitichinaccio, is squeezing my throat so, that, besides the fright caused by Splendiano’s abduction, I fear I shall not be able to produce a pure note for six weeks to come. Don’t be alarmed, my Marianna, my darling! It’s all over now.”

She assured him that she had quite recovered from her alarm, and begged him to let her walk alone without support, so that he could free himself from his troublesome pet Pitichinaccio. But Signor Pasquale only took faster hold of her, saying that he wouldn’t let her leave his side a yard in that pitch darkness for anything in the world.

Just as Signor Pasquale, now at his ease again, was about to proceed on his road, four frightful fiend-like figures rose up in front of him, as if out of the earth; they wore short flaring red mantles and fixed their keen glittering eyes upon him, at the same time making horrible noises—yelling and whistling. “Ugh! ugh! Pasquale Capuzzi! You cursed fool! You amorous old devil! We belong to your fraternity; we are the evil spirits of love, and have come to carry you off to hell—to hell-fire—you and your crony Pitichinaccio.” Thus screaming, the Satanic figures fell upon the old man. Capuzzi fell heavily to the ground and Pitichinaccio along with him, both raising a shrill piercing cry of distress and fear, like that of a whole troop of cudgelled asses.

Marianna had meanwhile torn herself away from the old man and leaped aside. Then one of the devils clasped her softly in his arms, whispering the sweet glad words, “O Marianna! my Man-anna! At last we’ve managed it! My friends will carry the old man a long, long way from here, while we get to safety.”

“O my Antonio!” whispered Marianna softly.

But suddenly the scene was illuminated by the light of several torches, and Antonio felt a stab in his shoulder. Quick as lightning he turned around, drew his sword, and attacked a bravo, who with his stiletto upraised was just preparing to deliver a second blow. He saw that his three companions were defending themselves against a superior number of gendarmes. He managed to beat off the fellow who had attacked him, and joined his friends. Although they were maintaining their ground bravely, the contest was too unequal; the gendarmes would certainly have proved victorious if two newcomers had not suddenly ranged themselves with a shout on the side of the young men, one of them immediately cutting down the fellow who was pressing Antonio the hardest.

In a few minutes the contest was decided against the police. Several lay stretched on the ground seriously wounded; the rest fled with loud yells towards the Porta del Popolo.

Salvator Rosa (for he it was who had hastened to Antonio's assistance and cut down his opponent) wanted to take Antonio and the young painters who were disguised in the devil's masks and then and there chase the police into the city.

Maria Agli, however, who had come along with him, and, notwithstanding his advanced age, had tackled the police as stoutly as any of the rest, urged that this would be imprudent, for the guard at the Porta del Popolo would be certain to know of the affair and would arrest them. So they all betook themselves to Nicolo Musso, who gladly received them into his narrow little house not far from the theatre. The artists took off their devils' masks and laid aside their mantles, which had been rubbed over with phosphorus, while Antonio, who, beyond an insignificant scratch on his shoulder, was not wounded, exercised his surgical skill in binding up the wounds of the rest—Salvator, Agli, and his young comrades—for all the others had been wounded, though none of them at all dangerously.

The adventure, despite its foolhardiness, would undoubtedly have been successful, if Salvator and Antonio had not to a certain extent overlooked one person, who upset everything. The *ci-devant* bravo and gendarme Michele, who lived below in Capuzzi's house, and was his general servant, had, in accordance with Capuzzi's directions, followed Capuzzi's party to the theatre, but at some distance off, for the old gentleman was ashamed of the tattered reprobate. In the same way Michele was following them homewards. And when the spectres appeared, Michele who, be it remarked, feared neither death nor devil, suspecting that something was wrong, hurried back as fast as he could run in the darkness to the Porta del Popolo, raised an alarm, and returned with all the gendarmes he could find, just at the moment when, as we know, the devils fell upon Signor Pasquale, and were about to carry him off as the dead men had the Pyramid Doctor.

In the very hottest moment of the fight, one of the young painters observed that one of the gendarmes, taking Marianna in his arms (for she had fainted), made off for the gate, while Signor Pasquale ran after him with incredible swiftness, as if he had quicksilver in his legs. At the same time, by the light of the torches, the artist caught a glimpse of something gleaming, clinging to Capuzzi's mantle and whimpering; no doubt it was Pitichinaccio.

Next morning Dr. Splendiano was found near the Pyramid of Cestius, fast asleep, doubled up like a ball and squeezed into his wig, as if into a warm soft nest. When he awakened, he rambled in his talk, and there was some difficulty in convincing him that he was still on the surface of the earth, and in Rome to boot. And when at length he reached his own house, he returned thanks to the Virgin and all the saints for his rescue, threw all his tinctures, essences, electuaries, and powders out of the window, burned his prescriptions, and vowed to heal his patients in the future by no other means than by anointing and laying on of hands, as some celebrated physician of former ages, who was at the same time a saint (his name I cannot recall just at this moment), had done with great success before him.

"I can't tell you," said Antonio next day to Salvator, "how my heart boils with rage since my blood has been spilled. Death and destruction overtake that villain Capuzzi! I tell you, Salvator, that I am determined to *force* my way into his house. I will cut him down if he opposes me, and carry off Marianna."

"An excellent plan!" replied Salvator, laughing. "An excellent plan! Splendidly contrived! Of course I am sure you have also found the same means for transporting Marianna through the air to the Piazza di Spagna, so that they don't seize you and hang you before you can reach

sanctuary. No, my dear Antonio, violence can do nothing for you this time. You may lay your life on it too that Signor Pasquale will now take steps to guard against any open attack. Moreover, our adventure has made a good deal of noise, and the public laughter at the absurd way in which we have read a lesson to Splendiano and Capuzzi has roused the police out of their light slumber, and they, you may be sure, will now exert all their feeble efforts to trap us. No, Antonio, let us have recourse to craft. *Con arte e con inganno si vive mezzo l'anno, con inganno e con arte si vive l'altra parte* [If cunning and scheming will help us six months through, scheming and cunning will help us the other six too], says Signora Caterina, and she isn't far wrong. Besides, I can't help laughing to see how we've behaved and acted for all the world like brainless boys, and I shall have to bear most of the blame, for I am a good bit older than you. Tell me, Antonio, supposing our scheme had been successful, and you had actually carried off Marianna from the old man, where would you have fled to, where would you have hidden her, and how would you have managed to get united to her by the priest before the old man could interfere to prevent it? You shall, however, in a few days, really and truly run away with your Marianna. I have let Nicolo Musso as well as Signor Formica into all the secret, and in common with them devised a plan which can scarcely fail. So cheer up, Antonio; Signor Formica will help you.

"Signor Formica?" replied Antonio in a tone of indifference which almost amounted to contempt. "Signor Formica! In what way can a buffoon help me?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed Salvator. "Please bear in mind, that Signor Formica is worthy of your respect. Don't you know he is a sort of magician who in secret is master of the most mysterious arts? I tell you, Signor Formica will help you. Old Maria Agli, the clever Bolognese Dr. Gratiano, is also a sharer in the plot, and will have an important part to play in it. You shall abduct your Marianna from Musso's theatre."

"You are deluding me with false hopes, Salvator," said Antonio. "You have just said that Signor Pasquale will take care to avoid all open attacks. How can you suppose after his recent unpleasant experience that he can possibly be willing to visit Musso's theatre again?"

"It will not be as difficult as you imagine to entice him there," replied Salvator. "What will be more difficult will be to get him to the theatre without his followers. But, be that as it may, what you have now got to do, Antonio, is to have everything prepared and arranged with Marianna, to flee from Rome the moment a favourable opportunity comes. You must go to Florence; your skill as a painter will recommend you there; and you shall have no lack of acquaintances, nor of honourable patronage and assistance—that you may leave to me to provide for. After we have had a few days' rest, we will then see what is to be done further. Once more, Antonio—live in hope; Formica will help you."

V

Signor Pasquale was only too well aware who had been at the bottom of the mischief that had happened to him and the poor Pyramid Doctor near the Porta del Popolo, and so it may be imagined how enraged he was against Antonio, and against Salvator Rosa, whom he rightly judged to be the ringleader. He was untiring in his efforts to comfort poor Marianna, who was quite ill from fear—so she said; but in reality she was furious that the scoundrel Michele with his gendarmes had come up, and torn her from her Antonio's arms. Meanwhile Margaret was very active in bringing her tidings of her lover; and Marianna based all her hopes upon the enterprising mind of Salvator. With impatience she waited from day to day for something fresh

to happen, and by a thousand petty tormenting ways let the old gentleman feel the effects of this impatience; but though she thus tamed his amorous folly and made him humble enough, she failed to reach the evil spirit of love that haunted his heart. After she made him experience to the full all the tricky humours of the most wayward girl, she then suffered him to press his withered lips upon her tiny hand just once. He then swore in his excessive delight that he would never cease kissing the Pope's toe until he had obtained dispensation to wed his niece, the paragon of beauty and amiability. Marianna was particularly careful not to interrupt him in these outbreaks of passion, for by encouraging these gleams of hope in the old man's breast she fanned the flame of hope in her own, for the more he could be lulled into the belief that he held her fast in the indissoluble chains of love, the more easy it would be for her to escape him.

Some time passed, when one day at noon Michele came stamping upstairs. After he had knocked a good many times to induce Signor Pasquale to open the door, he announced with considerable prolixity that there was a gentleman below who urgently requested to see Signor Pasquale Capuzzi, who he knew lived there.

"By all the blessed saints of Heaven!" cried the old gentleman, exasperated; "doesn't the rascal know that on no account do I receive strangers in my own house?"

But the gentleman was of very respectable appearance, reported Michele, rather oldish, talked well, and called himself Nicolo Musso.

"Nicolo Musso," murmured Capuzzi reflectively; "Nicolo Musso, who owns the theatre beyond the Porta del Popolo; what can he want with me?" Whereupon, carefully locking and bolting the door, he went downstairs with Michele, in order to converse with Nicolo in the street before the house.

"My dear Signor Pasquale," began Nicolo, approaching to meet him, and bowing with polished ease, "that you deign to honour me with your acquaintance affords me great pleasure. You lay me under a very great obligation. Since the Romans saw you in my theatre—you, a man of the most approved taste, of the soundest knowledge, and a master in art—not only has my fame increased, but my receipts have doubled. I am therefore all the more deeply pained to learn that certain young criminals made a murderous attack on you and your friends as you were returning from my theatre at night. But I pray you, Signor Pasquale, by all the saints, don't cherish any grudge against me or my theatre on account of this outrage, which shall be severely punished. Don't deprive me of the honour of your presence at my performances!"

"My dear Signor Nicolo," replied the old man, simpering, "be assured that I never enjoyed myself more than I did when I visited your theatre. Your Formica and your Algi—why, they are actors who cannot be matched anywhere. But the fright almost killed my friend Dr. Splendiano Accoramboni, indeed it almost proved the death of me—no, it was too great; and though it has not turned me against your theatre, it certainly has from the road there. If you will put up your theatre in the Piazza del Popolo, or in the Via Babuina, or in the Via Ripetta, I certainly will not fail to visit you every evening; but there's no power on earth shall ever get me outside the Porta del Popolo at nighttime again."

Nicolo sighed deeply, as if greatly troubled. "That is very hard upon me," said he then, "harder perhaps than you will believe, Signor Pasquale. For unfortunately—I had based all my hopes upon you. I came to solicit your assistance."

"My assistance?" asked the old gentleman in astonishment. "My assistance, Signor Nicolo? In what way could it profit you?"

"My dear Signor Pasquale," replied Nicolo, drawing his handkerchief across his eyes, as if brushing away the trickling tears, "my most excellent Signor Pasquale, you will remember that

my actors are in the habit of including songs in their performances. This practice I was thinking of extending imperceptibly more and more, then to get together an orchestra, and, frankly, get around the prohibitions against it, and establish what would amount to an opera house. You, Signor Capuzzi, are the first composer in all Italy; and we can attribute it to nothing but the inconceivable frivolity of the Romans and the malicious envy of your rivals that we hear anything else but your pieces exclusively at all the theatres. Signor Pasquale, I came to request you on my bended knees to allow me to put your immortal works, as far as circumstances will admit, on my humble stage."

"My dear Signor Nicolo," said the old gentleman, his face all sunshine, "why are we talking here in the public street? Pray have the goodness to climb up one or two rather steep flights of stairs. Come along with me up to my poor dwelling."

Almost before Nicolo got into the room, the old gentleman brought forward a great pile of dusty music manuscript, opened it, and, taking his guitar in his hands, began to deliver himself of a series of the frightful high-pitched screams which he considered singing.

Nicolo behaved like one in raptures. He sighed; he uttered extravagant expressions of approval; he exclaimed at intervals, "*Bravo! Bravissimo! Benedettissimo Capuzzi!*" until at last he threw himself at the old man's feet as if utterly beside himself with ecstatic delight, and grasped his knees. But he nipped them so hard that the old gentleman jumped off his seat, calling out with pain, and saying to Nicolo, "By the saints! Let me go, Signor Nicolo; you'll kill me."

"No," replied Nicolo, "no, Signor Pasquale, I will not rise until you have promised that Formica may sing in my theatre the day after tomorrow the divine arias which you have just executed."

"You are a man of taste," groaned Pasquale—"a man of deep insight. To whom could I better entrust my compositions than to you? You shall take all my arias with you. Only let go of me. But, good God! I shall not hear them—my divine masterpieces! Oh! let go of me, Signor Nicolo."

"No," replied Nicolo, still on his knees, and tightly pressing the old gentleman's thin spindle-shanks together, "no, Signor Pasquale, I will not let go until you give me your word that you will be present in my theatre the night after tomorrow. You need not fear any new attack! Why, don't you see that the Romans, once they have heard your work, will bring you home in triumph by the light of hundreds of torches? But in case that does not happen, I myself and my faithful comrades will take our arms and accompany you home ourselves."

"You yourself will accompany me home, with your comrades?" asked Pasquale. "And how many may that be?"

"Eight or ten persons will be at your command, Signor Pasquale. Yield to my intercession and resolve to come, I beg of you."

"Formica has a fine voice," lisped Pasquale. "How finely he will execute my arias."

"Come, oh! come!" exhorted Nicolo again, giving the old gentleman's knees an extra squeeze.

"You will pledge yourself that I shall reach my own house without being molested?" asked the old gentleman.

"I pledge my honour and my life," was Nicolo's reply, as he gave the knees a still sharper squeeze.

"Agreed!" cried the old gentleman; "I will be in your theatre the day after tomorrow."

Then Nicolo leapt to his feet and pressed Pasquale in so close an embrace that he gasped and panted for lack of breath.

At this moment Marianna entered the room. Signor Pasquale tried to frighten her away again by the look of resentment which he hurled at her; she took not the slightest notice of it, but going straight up to Musso, addressed him as if in anger—"It is in vain for you, Signor Nicolo, to attempt to entice my dear uncle to go to your theatre. You are forgetting that the infamous trick lately played by some dissolute seducers, who were lying in wait for me, almost cost the life of my dearly beloved uncle, and of his worthy friend Splendiano; yes, that it almost cost my life too. I will never give my consent to my uncle's again exposing himself to such danger. Desist from your entreaties, Nicolo. And you, my dearest uncle, you will stay quietly at home, will you not, and not venture out beyond the Porta del Popolo again at nighttime, which is a friend to nobody?"

Signor Pasquale was thunderstruck. He opened his eyes wide and stared at his niece. Then he rewarded her with the sweetest endearments, and set forth at considerable length how Signor Nicolo had pledged himself to arrange matters so that there would be no danger on the return home.

"Nonetheless," said Marianna, "I stick to my word, and beg you most earnestly, my dearest uncle, not to go to the theatre outside the Porta del Popolo. I ask your pardon, Signor Nicolo, for speaking my suspicions frankly in your presence. You are, I know, acquainted with Salvator Rosa and also with Antonio Scacciati. What if you are acting with our enemies? What if you are only trying to entice my dear uncle into your theatre so that they can carry out some fresh villainous scheme, for I know that my uncle will not go without me?"

"What a suspicion!" cried Nicolo, quite alarmed. "What a terrible suspicion, Signora! Have you such a bad opinion of me? Have I such a bad reputation that you think I could be guilty of treachery like that? But if you think so unfavourably of me, if you mistrust the assistance I have promised you, let Michele, who I know rescued you out of the hands of the robbers, accompany you, and let him take a large body of gendarmes with him, who can wait for you outside the theatre, for you cannot of course expect me to fill my auditorium with police."

Marianna fixed her eyes steadily upon Nicolo's, and then said, earnestly and gravely, "What do you say? Michele and gendarmes should accompany us? Now I see plainly, Signor Nicolo, that you mean honestly by us, and that my suspicions were unfounded. Pray forgive me my thoughtless words. And yet I cannot banish my nervousness and anxiety about my dear uncle; I must still beg him not to take this dangerous step."

Signor Pasquale had listened to all this conversation with expressions on his face that clearly showed the nature of the struggle that was going on within him. But now he could no longer contain himself; he threw himself on his knees before his beautiful niece, seized her hands, kissed them, bathed them with the tears which ran down his cheeks, exclaiming as if beside himself, "My adored, my angelic Marianna! Fierce and devouring are the flames of the passion which burns at my heart. Oh! this nervousness, this anxiety—it is indeed the sweetest confession that you love me." And he besought her not to give way to fear, but to go and listen in the theatre to the finest arias which the most divine of composers had ever written.

Nicolo too did not stop his entreaties, plainly showing his disappointment, until Marianna permitted her scruples to be overcome; and she promised to lay all fear aside and accompany the best and dearest of uncles to the theatre outside the Porta del Popolo. Signor Pasquale was in ecstasies, was in the seventh heaven of delight. He was convinced that Marianna loved him; and he now might hope to hear his music on the stage, and win the laurel wreath which had so long been the object of his desires; he was on the point of seeing his dearest dreams fulfilled. Now he

would let his light shine in perfect glory before his true and faithful friends, for he fully expected that Signor Splendiano and little Pitichinaccio would go with him as on the first occasion.

The night that Signor Splendiano had slept in his wig near the Pyramid of Cestius he had had, besides the spectres who ran away with him, all sorts of sinister apparitions visit him. The whole cemetery seemed alive, and hundreds of corpses had stretched out their skeleton arms towards him, moaning and wailing that even in their graves they could not get over the torture caused by his essence and electuaries. Accordingly the Pyramid Doctor, although he could not contradict Signor Pasquale's opinion that it was only a wild trick played on him by a gang of dissolute young men, grew melancholy; and, although not ordinarily inclined to superstition, he now saw spectres everywhere, and was tormented by forebodings and bad dreams.

As for Pitichinaccio, he could not be convinced that it was not real devils come straight from the flames of hell that had fallen on Signor Pasquale and himself, and the bare mention of that dreadful night was enough to make him scream. All the claims of Signor Pasquale that there had been nobody behind the masks but Antonio Scacciati and Salvator Rosa were of no effect, for Pitichinaccio wept and swore that in spite of his terror and apprehension he had clearly recognized both the voice and the behaviour of the devil Fanfarelli in the one who had pinched his belly black and blue.

It may therefore be imagined what an almost endless amount of trouble it cost Signor Pasquale to persuade the two to go with him once more to Nicolo Musso's theatre. Splendiano was the first to decide to go—after he had procured from a monk of St. Bernard's order a small consecrated bag of musk, the perfume of which neither dead man nor devil could endure; with this he intended to arm himself against all assaults. Pitichinaccio could not resist the temptation of a promised box of candied grapes, but Signor Pasquale had to consent that the dwarf might wear his new abbot's coat, instead of petticoats, which he affirmed had proved an immediate source of attraction to the devil.

What Salvator feared seemed therefore as if it would really take place; and yet his plan depended entirely, he continued to repeat, upon Signor Pasquale's being in Nicolo's theatre alone with Marianna, without his companions. Both Antonio and Salvator racked their brains to prevent Splendiano and Pitichinaccio from going along with Signor Pasquale. Every scheme that occurred to them had to be given up for lack of time, for the principal plan in Nicolo's theatre had to be carried out on the evening of the following day.

But Providence, which often employs the most unlikely instruments for the chastisement of fools, interposed on behalf of the distressed lovers, and put it into Michele's head to practice some of his blundering, thus accomplishing what Salvator and Antonio's craft was unable to accomplish.

That same night there was heard in the Via Ripetta before Signor Pasquale's house such a chorus of fearful screams and of cursing and raving and abuse that all the neighbours were startled up out of their sleep, and a body of gendarmes, who had been pursuing a murderer as far as the Piazza di Spagna, hastened up with torches, supposing that some fresh deed of violence was being committed. But when they, and a crowd of other people whom the noise had attracted, came upon the anticipated scene of murder, they found poor little Pitichinaccio lying as if dead on the ground, whilst Michele was thrashing the Pyramid Doctor with a formidable bludgeon. And they saw the doctor reel to the ground just at the moment when Signor Pasquale painfully scrambled to his feet, drew his rapier, and furiously attacked Michele. Round about were pieces of broken guitars. If several people had not grasped the old man's arm he would assuredly have run Michele right through the heart. The ex-bravo, now becoming aware by the light of the

torches whom he had attacked, stood as if petrified, his eyes almost starting out of his head, “a painted desperado, on the balance between will and power,” as it is said somewhere. Then, uttering a fearful scream, he tore his hair and begged for pardon and mercy. Neither the Pyramid Doctor nor Pitichinaccio was seriously injured, but they had been so soundly cudgelled that they could neither move nor stir, and had to be carried home.

Signor Pasquale had himself brought this mishap upon his own shoulders. We know that Salvator and Antonio had complimented Marianna with the finest serenade that could be heard; but I have forgotten to say that to the old gentleman’s great indignation they repeated it for several successive nights. At length Signor Pasquale, whose rage was kept in check by his neighbours, was foolish enough to have recourse to the authorities of the city, urging them to forbid the two painters to sing in the Via Ripetta. The authorities, however, replied that it would be a thing unheard of in Rome to prevent anybody from singing and playing the guitar where he pleased, and it was irrational to ask such a thing. So Signor Pasquale, determined to put an end to the nuisance himself, had promised Michele a large reward if he seized the first opportunity to fall upon the singers and give them a good sound drubbing. Michele at once procured a stout bludgeon, and lay in wait every night behind the door. But it happened that Salvator and Antonio judged it prudent to omit their serenading in the Via Ripetta for some nights before they carried out their plan, so as not to remind the old gentleman of his adversaries. Marianna remarked quite innocently that though she hated Antonio and Salvator, yet she liked their singing, for nothing was so nice as to hear music floating upwards in the night air.

This Signor Pasquale made a mental note of, and as the essence of gallantry intended to surprise his love with a serenade on his part, which he had himself composed and carefully practiced with his faithful friends. On the very night before the one in which he was hoping to celebrate his greatest triumph in Nicolo Musso’s theatre, he stealthily slipped out of the house and went and fetched his associates, with whom he had previously arranged matters. But no sooner had they sounded the first few notes on their guitars than Michele, whom Signor Pasquale had thoughtlessly forgotten to inform of his design, burst forth from behind the door, highly delighted that the opportunity which was to bring him the promised reward had at last come, and began to cudgel the musicians most unmercifully. We are already acquainted with the result. Of course there was no further possibility of either Splendiano or Pitichinaccio’s accompanying Signor Pasquale to Nicolo’s theatre, for they were both confined to their beds beplastered all over. Signor Pasquale, however, was unable to stay away, although his back and shoulders smarted considerably from the drubbing he had himself received; every note in his arias was a cord which drew him there with irresistible power.

“Well,” said Salvator to Antonio, “since the obstacle which we took to be insurmountable has been removed from our way of itself, it all depends now upon you not to let the favourable moment slip for carrying off your Marianna from Nicolo’s theatre. But I needn’t talk, you won’t fail; I will greet you now as the fiancé of Capuzzi’s lovely niece, who in a few days will be your wife. I wish you happiness, Antonio, and yet I feel a shiver run through me when I think about your marriage.”

“What do you mean, Salvator?” asked Antonio, utterly astounded.

“Call it a crotchet, call it a foolish fancy, or what you will, Antonio,” rejoined Salvator—“I love the fair sex, but there is not a woman (not even one that I was madly in love with, and would die for) who doesn’t make me tremble with fear when I think of marriage to her. Their inscrutability perplexes all men. A woman that we believe has surrendered herself to us entirely,

heart and soul, and that we think has unfolded all her character to us, is the first to deceive us, and along with the sweetest of her kisses we drink the most pernicious of poisons.”

“And my Marianna?” asked Antonio, amazed.

“Pardon me, Antonio,” continued Salvator, “even your Marianna, who is loveliness and grace personified, has given me a fresh proof of how dangerous the mysterious nature of woman is to us. Just call to mind what the behaviour of that innocent, inexperienced child was when we carried her uncle home, how at a single glance from me she understood everything—everything, I tell you, and as you yourself admitted, proceeded to play her part with the greatest cleverness. But that is not to be compared at all with what took place when Musso visited the old man. The most practiced address, the most impenetrable cunning—in short, all the arts of the most experienced woman of the world could not have done more than little Marianna did to deceive old Capuzzi with perfect success. She could not have acted in any better way to prepare the road for us for any kind of enterprise. Our feud with the cranky old fool— any sort of cunning scheme seems justified— “But—come, my dear Antonio, never mind my fanciful crotchets, be happy with your Marianna; as happy as you can.”

If a monk had taken his place beside Signor Pasquale when he set out along with his niece to go to Nicolo Musso’s theatre, everybody would have thought that the strange pair were being led to execution. First went valiant Michele, repulsive in appearance, and armed to the teeth; then came Signor Pasquale and Marianna, followed by fully twenty gendarmes.

Nicolo received the old gentleman and his lady with every mark of respect at the entrance to the theatre, and conducted them to the seats which had been reserved for them, immediately in front of the stage. Signor Pasquale felt highly flattered by this mark of honour, and gazed about him with proud and sparkling eyes, whilst his pleasure, his joy, was greatly enhanced to find that all the seats near and behind Marianna were occupied by women alone. A couple of violins and a bass-fiddle were being tuned behind the curtains of the stage; the old gentleman’s heart beat with expectation; and when all at once the orchestra struck up the *ritornello* of his work, he felt an electric thrill tingling in every nerve.

Formica came forward in the character of Pasquarello, and sang—sang in Capuzzi’s own voice, and with all his characteristic gestures, the most hopeless aria that ever was heard. The theatre shook with the loud and boisterous laughter of the audience. They shouted, they screamed wildly, “O Pasquale Capuzzi! Our most illustrious composer and artist! Bravo! Bravissimo!” The old gentleman, not perceiving the ridicule and irony of the laughter, was in raptures of delight. The aria came to an end, and the people cried “Sh! sh!” for Dr. Gratiano, played on this occasion by Nicolo Musso himself, appeared on the stage, holding his hands over his ears and shouting to Pasquarello for God’s sake to stop this ridiculous screeching.

Then the doctor asked Pasquarello how long he had taken to the confounded habit of singing, and where he had got that execrable piece of music.

Whereupon Pasquarello replied that he didn’t know what the doctor wanted; the doctor was like the Romans, and had no taste for real music, since he failed to recognize the most talented of musicians. The aria had been written by the greatest of living composers, in whose service he had the good fortune to be, receiving instruction in both music and singing from the master himself.

Gratiano then began guessing, and mentioned the names of a great number of well-known composers and musicians, but at every distinguished name Pasquarello only shook his head contemptuously.

At length Pasquarello said that the doctor was only exposing gross ignorance, since he did not know the name of the greatest composer of the time. It was no other than Signor Pasquale Capuzzi, who had done him the honour of taking him into his service. Could he not see that he was the friend and servant of Signor Pasquale?

Then the doctor broke out into a loud long roar of laughter, and cried, What! Had he (Pasquarello) after leaving him (the doctor), in whose service he had gotten plenty of tips besides wages and food—had he gone and taken service with the worst old idiot who ever stuffed himself with macaroni, to a patched carnival fool who strutted about like a satisfied old hen after a shower of rain, to the snarling skinflint, the lovesick old poltroon, who infected the air of the Via Ripetta with the disgusting bleating which he called singing? and so forth.

To which Pasquarello, quite incensed, replied that it was nothing but envy which showed in the doctor's words; he (Pasquarello) was of course speaking with his heart in his mouth [*parla col cuore in mano*]; the doctor was not at all the man to pass an opinion upon Signor Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia; he was speaking with his heart in his mouth. The doctor himself had a strong tang of all that he blamed in the excellent Signor Pasquale; but he was speaking with his heart in his mouth; he (Pasquarello) had himself often heard fully six hundred people at once laugh most heartily at Dr. Gratiano, and so forth. Then Pasquarello spoke a long panegyric upon his new master, Signor Pasquale, attributing to him all the virtues under the sun; and he concluded with a description of his character, which he portrayed as being the very essence of amiability and grace.

"Heaven bless you, Formica!" lisped Signor Capuzzi to himself. "Heaven bless you, Formica! I see you have arranged this to make my triumph perfect, since you are upbraiding the Romans for all their envious and ungrateful persecution of me, and are letting them know *who* I really am."

"Ha! here comes my master himself," cried Pasquarello at this moment, and there entered on the stage—Signor Pasquale Capuzzi himself, just as he breathed and walked, his very clothes, face, gestures, gait, postures; in fact so perfectly like Signor Capuzzi in the auditorium, that the latter, quite aghast, let go Marianna's hand, which hitherto he had held fast in his own, and tapped himself, his nose, his wig, in order to discover whether he was not dreaming, or seeing double, whether he was really sitting in Nicolo Musso's theatre and dare credit the miracle.

Capuzzi on the stage embraced Dr. Gratiano with great kindness, and asked how he was. The doctor replied that he had a good appetite, and slept soundly, at his service [*per servirlo*]; and as for his purse—well, it was suffering from a galloping consumption. Only yesterday he had spent his last ducat for a pair of rosemary-coloured stockings for his sweetheart, and was just going to walk around to one or two moneylenders to see if he could borrow thirty ducats—"How can you pass over your best friends?" said Capuzzi.

"Here, my dear sir, here are fifty ducats, come take them."

"Pasquale, what are you about?" said the real Capuzzi under his breath.

Dr. Gratiano began to talk about a bond and about interest; but Signor Capuzzi declared that he could not think of asking for either from such a friend as the doctor.

"Pasquale, have you gone out of your senses?" exclaimed the real Capuzzi a little louder.

After many grateful embraces Dr. Gratiano took his leave. Now Pasquarello drew near with a good many bows, and extolled Signor Capuzzi to the skies, adding, however, that his purse was suffering from the same complaint as Gratiano's, and he begged for some of the same excellent medicine that had cured his. Capuzzi on the stage laughed, and said he was pleased to find that Pasquarello knew how to turn his good humour to advantage, and threw him several glittering ducats.

“Pasquale, you must be mad, possessed of the devil,” cried the real Capuzzi aloud. The listeners told him to be quiet.

Pasquarello went still further in his eulogy of Capuzzi, and came at last to speak of the aria which he (Capuzzi) had composed, and with which he (Pasquarello) hoped to enchant everybody. The fictitious Capuzzi clapped Pasquarello heartily on the back, and went on to say that he might venture to tell him (Pasquarello), his faithful servant, in confidence, that in reality he knew nothing whatever of the science of music, and in respect to the aria of which he (Pasquarello) had just spoken, as well as all pieces that he (Capuzzi) had ever composed, why, he had stolen them out of Frescobaldi’s canzonas and Carissimi’s motets.

“I tell you you’re lying in your throat, you dog,” shouted the Capuzzi off the stage, rising from his seat. Again he was told to keep still, and the woman who sat next to him drew him down on the bench.

It’s now time to think about other and more important matters,” continued Capuzzi on the stage. He was going to give a grand banquet the next day, and Pasquarello must look alive and have everything ready that was necessary. Then he produced and read over a list of all the rarest and most expensive dishes, making Pasquarello tell him how much each would cost, at the same time giving him the money for them.

“Pasquale! You’re insane! You’ve gone mad! You good-for-nothing scamp! You spendthrift!” shouted the real Capuzzi at intervals, growing more and more enraged the higher the cost of this the most nonsensical of dinners arose.

At length, when the list was finished, Pasquarello asked what had induced him to give such a splendid banquet.

“Tomorrow will be the happiest and most joyous day of my life,” replied the fictitious Capuzzi. “For let me tell you, my good Pasquarello, that I am going to celebrate the auspicious marriage of my dear niece Marianna tomorrow. I am going to give her hand to that fine young man, the best of all artists, Scacciati.”

Hardly had the words fallen from his lips when the real Capuzzi leapt to his feet, utterly beside himself, quite out of his mind, his face aflame with the most fiendish rage, and doubling his fists and shaking them at his counterpart on the stage, he yelled at the top of his voice, “No, you won’t, no, you won’t, you rascal! You scoundrel, you—Pasquale! Do you mean to cheat yourself out of your Marianna, you hound? Are you going to throw her into the arms of that scoundrel sweet Marianna, your life, your hope, your all? Ah! watch out! watch out! you infatuated fool. Remember what sort of a reception you will meet with from yourself. You shall beat yourself black and blue with your own hands, so that you have no relish for banquets and weddings!”

But the Capuzzi on the stage doubled his fists like the Capuzzi below, and shouted in exactly the same furious way, and in the same high-pitched voice, “May all the spirits of hell sit at your heart, you abominable simpleton of a Pasquale, you atrocious skinflint—you lovesick old fool—you gaudy-tricked-out ass with the cap and bells dangling about your ears. Take care lest I snuff out the candle of your life, and put an end to the dirty tricks which you try to work upon the good, honest, modest Pasquale Capuzzi.”

Amid the most fearful cursing and swearing of the real Capuzzi, the one on the stage dished up one fine anecdote after the other about him.

“Don’t you dare,” shouted the fictitious Capuzzi at last, “you amorous old ape, interfere with the happiness of these two young people, whom Heaven has destined for each other.”

At this moment there appeared at the back of the stage Antonio Scacciati and Marianna locked in each other’s arms. Although the old man was at other times somewhat feeble on his legs, now

fury gave him strength and agility. With a single bound he was on the stage, had drawn his sword, and was about to charge upon the pretended Antonio. He found, however, that he was held fast from behind. An officer of the Papal guard had stopped him, and said in a serious voice, "Recollect where you are, Signor Pasquale; you are in Nicolo Musso's theatre. Without intending it, you have played a most ridiculous role today. You will not find either Antonio or Marianna here."

The two persons whom Capuzzi had taken for his niece and her lover now drew near, along with the rest of the actors. The faces were all completely strange to him. His rapier fell from his trembling hand; he took a deep breath as if a~vakening out of a bad dream; he grasped his brow with both hands; he opened his eyes wide. The presentiment of what had happened suddenly struck him, and he shouted, "Marianna!" in such a stentorian voice that the walls rang.

But she was beyond reach of his shouts. Antonio had taken advantage of the opportunity while Pasquale, oblivious of everything around him and even of himself, was quarrelling with his double, to make his way to Marianna, and escape with her through the audience, and out a side door, where a carriage stood ready waiting; and away they went as fast as their horses could gallop towards Florence.

"Marianna!" screamed the old man again, "Marianna! she is gone. She has fled. That knave Antonio has stolen her from me. Away! after them! Have pity on me, good people, and take torches and help me look for my little darling. Oh! you serpent!"

He tried to make for the door. But the officer held him fast, saying, "Do you mean that pretty young lady who sat beside you? I believe I saw her slip out with a young man—I think Antonio Scacciati a long time ago, when you began your silly quarrel with one of the actors who wore a mask like your face. You needn't make trouble about it; every inquiry shall at once be set on foot, and Marianna shall be brought back to you as soon as she is found. But as for yourself, Signor Pasquale, your behaviour here and your murderous attempt on the life of that actor compel me to arrest you."

Signor Pasquale, his face as pale as death, incapable of uttering a single word or even a sound, was led away by the very same gendarmes who were to have protected him against masked devils and spectres. Thus it came to pass that on the selfsame night on which he had hoped to celebrate his triumph, he was plunged into the midst of trouble and all the frantic despondency which amorous old fools feel when they are deceived.

VI

Everything here below beneath the sun is subject to continual change; and perhaps there is nothing which can be called more inconstant than opinion, which turns round in an everlasting circle like the wheel of fortune. He who reaps great praise today is overwhelmed with biting censure tomorrow; today we trample under foot the man who tomorrow will be raised far above us.

Of all those who in Rome had ridiculed and mocked at old Pasquale Capuzzi, with his sordid avarice, his foolish amorousness, his insane jealousy, was there one who did not wish poor tormented Marianna her liberty? But now that Antonio had successfully carried off his mistress, all their ridicule and mockery was suddenly changed into pity for the old fool, whom they saw wandering about the streets of Rome with his head hanging on his breast, utterly disconsolate. Misfortunes seldom come singly; and so it happened that Signor Pasquale, soon after Marianna

had been taken from him, lost his best bosom friends also. Little Pitichinaccio choked himself in foolishly trying to swallow an almond in the middle of a cadenza; and a sudden stop was put to the life of the illustrious Pyramid Doctor Signor Splendiano Accoramboni by a slip of the pen, for which he had only himself to blame. Michele's drubbing made such work with him that he fell into a fever. He determined to make use of a remedy which he claimed to have discovered, so, calling for pen and ink, he wrote down a prescription in which, by employing a wrong sign, he increased the quantity of a powerful substance to a dangerous extent. Scarcely had he swallowed the medicine than he sank back on the pillows and died, establishing, however, by his own death in the most splendid and satisfactory manner the efficacy of the last tincture which he ever prescribed.

As already remarked, those who had laughed loudest and who had repeatedly wished Antonio success in his schemes, had now nothing but pity for the old gentleman; and the bitterest blame was heaped, not so much upon Antonio, as upon Salvator Rosa, whom, to be sure, they regarded as the instigator of the whole plan.

Salvator's enemies, who were many, exerted all their efforts to fan the flame. "You see," they said, "he was one of Masaniello's cutthroats, and he is ready to turn his hand to any deed of mischief, to any disreputable enterprise; we shall be the next to suffer from his presence in the city; he is a dangerous man."

And the jealous faction who had leagued together against Salvator actually did succeed in stemming the tide of his prosperous career. He produced one remarkable picture after another, all bold in conception, and splendidly executed; but the so-called critics shrugged their shoulders, now pointing out that the hills were too blue, the trees too green, the figures now too long, now too broad, finding fault everywhere where there was no fault to be found, and seeking to detract from his hard-earned reputation in all the ways they could think of. Especially bitter in their persecution of him were the Academicians of San Luca, who could not forget how he had taken them in with the surgeon; they even went beyond the limits of their own profession, and decried the clever stanzas which Salvator at that time wrote, hinting very plainly that he did not cultivate his own fruit but plundered that of his neighbours. For these reasons, therefore, Salvator could not regain the splendor, which he had formerly enjoyed in Rome. Instead of being visited by the most eminent Romans in a large studio, he had to remain with Signora Caterina and his green fig-tree; but amid these poor surroundings he sometimes found both consolation and tranquility of mind.

Salvator took the malicious machinations of his enemies to heart more than he should have; he even began to feel that an insidious disease, resulting from chagrin and dejection, was gnawing at his vitals. In this unhappy frame of mind he designed and executed two large pictures which caused quite an uproar in Rome. Of these one represented the transitoriness of all earthly things, and in the principal figure, that of a wanton female bearing all the indications of her degrading calling, was recognizable the mistress of one of the cardinals; the other portrayed the Goddess of Fortune dispensing her rich gifts. But cardinals' hats, bishops' mitres, gold medals, decorations of orders, were falling upon bleating sheep, braying asses, and other such contemptible animals, while well-made men in ragged clothes were vainly straining their eyes upwards to get even the smallest gift. Salvator had given free rein to his embittered mood, and the animals' heads bore the closest resemblance to the features of various eminent persons. It is easy to imagine, therefore, that the tide of hatred against him rose; and he was more bitterly persecuted than ever.

Signora Caterina warned him, with tears in her eyes, that as soon as it began to be dark suspicious characters were beginning to lurk about the house, apparently dogging his every

footstep. Salvator saw that it was time to leave Rome; and Signora Caterina and her beloved daughters were the only people whom it caused him pain to part from.

In response to the repeated invitations of the Duke of Tuscany, he went to Florence; and here at length he was richly paid for all the mortification and worry which he had had to struggle against in Rome, and here all the honour and all the fame which he so truly deserved were freely conferred upon him. The Duke's presents and the high prices which he received for his pictures soon enabled him to remove into a large house and to furnish it in the most magnificent style. There he gathered around him the most illustrious authors and scholars of the day, among whom it will be sufficient to mention Evangelista Toricelli, Valerio Chimentelli, Battista Ricciardi, Andrea Cavalcanti, Pietro Salvati, Filippo Apolloni, Volumnio Bandelli, Francesco Rovai. They formed an association for the prosecution of artistic and scientific pursuits, while Salvator was able to contribute an element of whimsicality to the meetings, which had a singular effect in animating and enlivening the mind. The banqueting hall was like a beautiful grove with fragrant bushes and flowers and splashing fountains; and the dishes even, which were served up by pages in eccentric costumes, were very wonderful to look at, as if they came from some distant land of magic. These meetings of writers and savants in Salvator Rosa's house were called at that time the *Accademia de' Percossi*.

Though Salvator's mind was in this way devoted to science and art, yet his real true nature came to life again when he met with his friend Antonio Scacciati, who, along with his lovely Marianna, led the pleasant carefree life of an artist. They often recalled poor old Signor Pasquale whom they had deceived, and all that had taken place in Nicolo Musso's theatre.

Antonio once asked Salvator how he had contrived to enlist in his cause the active interest not only of Musso but of the excellent Formica, and of Agli too. Salvator replied that it had been very easy, for Formica was his most intimate friend in Rome, so that it had been a work of both pleasure and love to arrange everything on the stage in accordance with the instructions Salvator gave him. Antonio protested that, though still he could not help laughing over the scene which had paved the way to his happiness, he yet wished with all his heart to be reconciled to the old man, even if he never touched a penny of Marianna's fortune, which the old gentleman had confiscated; the practice of his art brought him in a sufficient income. Marianna too was often unable to restrain her tears when she thought that her father's brother might go to his grave without having forgiven her the trick which she had played upon him; and so Pasquale's hatred overshadowed like a dark cloud the brightness of their happiness. Salvator comforted them both—Antonio and Marianna—by saying that time had adjusted still worse difficulties, and that chance would perhaps bring the old gentleman near them in some less dangerous way than if they had remained in Rome, or were to return there now.

We shall see that a prophetic spirit spoke in Salvator.

A considerable time had elapsed, when one day Antonio burst into Salvator's studio breathless and pale as death. "Salvator!" he cried, "Salvator, my friend, my protector! I am lost if you do not help me. Pasquale Capuzzi is here; he has procured a warrant for my arrest for seducing his niece."

"What can Signor Pasquale do against you now?" asked Salvator. "Haven't you been married to Marianna by the Church?"

"Oh!" replied Antonio, giving way completely to despair, "the blessing of the Church herself cannot save me from ruin. Heaven knows by what means the old man has been able to approach the Pope's nephew. At any rate the Pope's nephew has taken the old man under his protection,

and has given him hope that the Holy Father will declare my marriage with Marianna to be null and void; and more, that he will grant him (the old man) dispensation to marry his niece.”

“Stop!” cried Salvator, “now I see it all; now I see it all. What threatens to be your ruin, Antonio, is this man’s hatred against me. For I must tell you that this nephew of the Pope’s, a proud, coarse, boorish clown, was among the animals in my picture to whom the Goddess of Fortune is dispensing her gifts. That it was I who helped you to win Marianna, though indirectly, is well known, not only to this man, but to all Rome—which is quite reason enough to persecute you since they cannot do anything to me. And so, Antonio, having brought this misfortune on you, I must make every effort to assist you, all the more since you are my dearest and most intimate friend. But, by the saints! I don’t see in what way I can frustrate your enemies’ little game—”

Therewith Salvator, who had continued to paint at a picture all the time, laid aside brush, palette, and maul-stick, and, rising from his easel, began to pace the room backwards and forwards, his arms crossed over his breast, Antonio meanwhile being quite wrapt up in his own thoughts, with his eyes fixed upon the floor.

At length Salvator paused before him and said with a smile, “See here, Antonio, I cannot do anything myself against your powerful enemies, but I know a man who can help you, and who will help you, and that is—Signor Formica.”

“Oh!” said Antonio, “don’t joke with an unhappy man, whom nothing can save.”

“What! you are despairing again?” exclaimed Salvator, who was now suddenly in the merriest humour, and he laughed aloud. “I tell you, Antonio, my friend Formica shall help you in Florence just as he helped you in Rome. Go quietly home and comfort your Marianna, and calmly wait and see how things turn out. I trust you will be ready at the shortest notice to do what Signor Formica, who is really here in Florence at the present time, shall require of you.” This Antonio promised most faithfully, and hope revived in him again, and confidence.

Signor Pasquale Capuzzi was not a little astonished at receiving a formal invitation from the Accademia de’ Percossi. “Ah!” he exclaimed, “Florence is the place then where a man’s merits are recognized, where Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia, a man gifted with the most excellent talents, is known and valued.” Thus the thought of his knowledge and his art, and the honour that was shown him on their account, overcame the hatred which he would otherwise have felt against a society at the head of which stood Salvator Rosa. His Spanish gala-dress was more carefully brushed than ever; his conical hat was equipped with a new feather; his shoes were provided with new ribbons; and so Signor Pasquale appeared at Salvator’s as brilliant as an iridescent beetle, his face all sunshine. The magnificence which he saw on all sides of him, even Salvator himself, who had received him dressed in the richest apparel, inspired him with deep respect, and, after the manner of little souls, who, though at first proud and puffed up, immediately grovel in the dust whenever they come into contact with what they feel to be superior to themselves, Pasquale’s behaviour towards Salvator, whom he would gladly have done a mischief to in Rome, was nothing but humility and submissive deference.

So much attention was paid to Signor Pasquale from all sides, his judgment was appealed to so unconditionally, and so much was said about his services to art, that he felt new life infused into his veins; and an unusual spirit was awakened within him, so that his utterances on many points were more sensible than might have been expected. If it be added that never in his life before had he been so splendidly entertained, and never had he drunk such inspiring wine, it will readily be conceived that his pleasure was intensified from moment to moment, and that he forgot all the wrong which had been done him at Rome as well as the unpleasant business which had brought

him to Florence. Often after their banquets the Academicians used to amuse themselves with short impromptu dramatic representations, and this evening the distinguished playwright and poet Filippo Apolloni called upon those who generally took part in them to bring the festivities to a fitting conclusion with one of their usual performances. Salvator at once withdrew to make all the necessary preparations.

Not long afterwards the bushes at the farther end of the banquet hall began to move, the branches with their foliage were parted, and a little theatre provided with seats for the spectators became visible.

“By the saints!” exclaimed Pasquale Capuzzi, terrified, “where am I? Surely that’s Nicolo Musso’s theatre.”

Without heeding his exclamation, Evangelista Toricelli and Andrea Cavalcanti—both of them grave, respectable, venerable men—took him by the arm and led him to a seat immediately in front of the stage, taking their places on each side of him.

This was no sooner done that there appeared on the boards—Formica in the character of Pasquarello.

“You dirty scoundrel, Formica!” shouted Pasquale, leaping to his feet and shaking his doubled fist at the stage. Toricelli and Cavalcanti’s stern, reproving glances bade him sit still and keep quiet.

Pasquarello wept and sobbed, and cursed his destiny, which brought him nothing but grief and heartbreak, declaring he didn’t know how he should ever set about it if he wanted to laugh again. He concluded by saying that if he could look upon blood without fainting, he should certainly cut his throat, or should throw himself in the Tiber if he could only stop that cursed swimming when he got into the water.

Doctor Gratiano now joined him and inquired what was the cause of his trouble. Whereupon Pasquarello asked him whether he did not know anything about what had taken place in the house of his master, Signor Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia, whether he did not know that an infamous scoundrel had carried off pretty Marianna, his master’s niece? “Ah!” murmured Capuzzi, “I see you want to make your excuses to me, Formica; you wish for my pardon—well, we shall see.” Dr. Gratiano expressed his sympathy, and observed that the scoundrel must have gone to work very cunningly to have eluded all the inquiries which had been instituted by Capuzzi.

“Ho! ho!” rejoined Pasquarello. “The doctor need not imagine that the scoundrel, Antonio Scacciati, had succeeded in escaping the sharpness of Signor Pasquale Capuzzi who was supported by powerful friends. Antonio had been arrested, his marriage with Marianna annulled, and Marianna herself had again come into Capuzzi’s power.”

“Has he got her again?” shouted Capuzzi, beside himself; “has he got her again, good Pasquale? Has he got his little darling, his Marianna? Is the scoundrel Antonio arrested? Heaven bless you, Formica!”

“You take a too keen interest in the play, Signor Pasquale,” said Cavalcanti gravely. “Pray permit the actors to proceed with their parts without interrupting them in this disturbing fashion.”

Ashamed of himself, Signor Pasquale resumed his seat, for he had again risen to his feet.

Dr. Gratiano asked what had taken place then.

A wedding, continued Pasquarello, a wedding had taken place. Marianna had repented of what she had done; Signor Pasquale had obtained the desired dispensation from the Holy Father, and had married his niece.

“Yes, yes,” murmured Pasquale Capuzzi to himself, whilst his eyes sparkled with delight, “yes, yes, my dear, good Formica; he will marry his sweet Marianna, the happy Pasquale. He knew that the dear little darling had always loved him, and that it was only Satan who had led her astray.”

“Why then, everything is all right,” said Dr. Gratiano, “and there’s no cause for lamentation.”

Pasquarello began, however, to weep and sob more violently than before, till at length, as if overcome by the terrible nature of his pain, he fainted away. Dr. Gratiano ran backwards and forwards in great distress, was so sorry he had no smelling salts with him, felt in all his pockets, and at last produced a roasted chestnut, and put it under the insensible Pasquarello’s nose. Pasquarello immediately recovered, sneezing violently, and attributing his faintness to his weak nerves, he related that immediately after the marriage Marianna had been afflicted with the saddest melancholy, continually calling upon Antonio, and treating the old gentleman with contempt and aversion. But the old fellow, quite infatuated by his passion and jealousy, had not ceased to torment the poor girl with his folly in the most abominable way. And here Pasquarello mentioned a host of mad tricks which Pasquale had done, and which were really widely known in Rome. Signor Capuzzi sat on thorns; he murmured at intervals, “Curse you, Formica! You are lying! What evil spirit is in you?” He was only prevented from bursting out into a violent passion by Toricelli and Cavalcanti, who sat watching him with earnest gaze.

Pasquarello concluded his narration by saying that Marianna had at last succumbed to her unsatisfied longing for her lover, her great distress of mind, and the innumerable tortures which were inflicted upon her by the execrable old fellow, and had died in the flower of her youth.

At this moment was heard a mournful *De profundis* sung by hollow, husky voices, and men clad in long black robes appeared on the stage, bearing an open coffin, within which was seen the corpse of lovely Marianna wrapped in white shrouds. Behind it came Signor Pasquale Capuzzi in the deepest mourning, feebly staggering along and wailing aloud, beating his breast, and crying in a voice of despair, “O Marianna! Marianna!”

So soon as the real Capuzzi caught sight of his niece’s corpse he broke out into loud lamentations, and both Capuzzis, the one of the stage and the one off, gave vent to their grief in the most heartrending wails and groans, “O Marianna! O Marianna! O unhappy me! Alas! Alas for me!”

Let the reader picture to himself the open coffin with the corpse of the lovely girl, surrounded by the hired mourners singing their dismal *De profundis* in hoarse voices, and then the comical masks of Pasquarello and Dr. Gratiano, who were expressing their grief in the most ridiculous gestures, and lastly the two Capuzzis, wailing and screeching in despair. Indeed, everyone who witnessed the extraordinary spectacle could not help feeling, even in the midst of the unrestrained laughter they had burst out into at sight of the marvellous actor who portrayed Capuzzi, that their hearts were chilled by a most uncomfortable feeling of awe.

Now the stage grew dark, and there was thunder and lightning. A pale ghostly figure, which bore most unmistakably the features of Capuzzi’s dead brother, Pietro of Senigaglia, Marianna’s father, rose seemingly from the ground.

“O you infamous brother, Pasquale! what have you done with my daughter? what have you done with my daughter?” wailed the figure, in a dreadful and hollow voice. “Despair, you atrocious murderer of my child. You shall find your reward in hell.”

Capuzzi on the stage dropped on the floor as if struck by lightning, and at the same moment the real Capuzzi reeled from his seat unconscious. The bushes rustled together again, and the stage

was gone, and also Marianna and Capuzzi and the ghastly spectre Pietro. Signor Pasquale Capuzzi lay in such a dead faint that it cost a good deal of trouble to revive him.

At length he came to himself with a deep sigh, and stretching out both hands before him as if to ward off the horror that had seized him, he cried in a husky voice, "Leave me alone, Pietro." Then a torrent of tears ran down his cheeks, and he sobbed and cried, "Oh! Marianna, my darling child—my—my Marianna." "But recollect yourself," said Cavalcanti, "recollect yourself, Signor Pasquale, it was only on the stage that you saw your niece dead. She is alive; she is here to crave pardon for the thoughtless step which love and also your own inconsiderate conduct drove her to take."

And Marianna, and behind her Antonio Scacciati, now ran forward from the back part of the hall and threw themselves at the old gentleman's feet—for he had meanwhile been placed in an easy chair. Marianna, looking most charming and beautiful, kissed his hands and bathed them with tears, beseeching him to pardon both her and Antonio, to whom she had been united by the blessing of the Church.

Suddenly the hot blood surged into the old man's pallid face, fury flashed from his eyes, and he cried in half-choked voice, "Oh! you abominable scoundrel! You poisonous serpent whom I nourished in my bosom!" Then old Toricelli, with grave and thoughtful dignity, put himself in front of Capuzzi, and told him that he (Capuzzi) had seen a representation of the fate that would inevitably and irremediably overtake him if he had the hardihood to carry out his wicked purpose against Antonio and Marianna's peace and happiness. He depicted in startling colours the folly and madness of amorous old men, who call down upon their own heads the most ruinous mischief which Heaven can inflict upon a man, since all the love which might have fallen to their share is lost, and instead hatred and contempt shoot their fatal darts at them from every side.

At intervals lovely Marianna cried in a tone that went to everybody's heart, "O my uncle, I will love and honour you as my own father; you will kill me by a cruel death if you rob me of my Antonio." And all the eminent men by whom the old gentleman was surrounded cried with one accord that it would not be possible for a man like Signor Pasquale Capuzzi di Senigaglia, a patron of art and himself an artist, not to forgive the young people, and assume the part of father to the most lovely of ladies, not possible that he could refuse to accept with joy as his son-in-law such an artist as Antonio Scacciati, who was highly esteemed throughout all Italy and richly crowned with fame and honour.

Then it was patent to see that a violent struggle went on within the old gentleman. He sighed, moaned, clasped his hands before his face, and, while Toricelli was continuing to speak in a most impressive manner, and Marianna was appealing to him in the most touching accents, and the rest were extolling Antonio all they knew how, he kept looking down—now upon his niece, now upon Antonio, whose splendid clothes and rich chains of honour bore testimony to the truth of what was said about the artistic fame he had earned.

All rage left Capuzzi's countenance; he sprang up with radiant eyes, and pressed Marianna to his heart, saying, "Yes, I forgive you, my dear child; I forgive you, Antonio. Far be it from me to disturb your happiness. You are right, my worthy Signor Toricelli; Formica has shown me in the tableau on the stage all the mischief and ruin that would have befallen me had I carried out my insane design. I am cured, quite cured of my folly. But where is Signor Formica, where is my good physician? let me thank him a thousand times for my cure; it is he alone who has accomplished it. The terror that he has caused me to feel has brought about a complete revolution within me."

Pasquarello stepped forward. Antonio threw himself upon his neck, crying, "O Signor Formica, you to whom I owe my life, my all—oh! take off your mask, so that I may see your face, so that Formica will not be any longer a mystery to me."

Pasquarello took off his cap and his mask, which looked like a natural face, since it offered not the slightest hindrance to the play of countenance, and Formica, Pasquarello, was transformed into— Salvator Rosa.

"Salvator!" exclaimed Marianna, Antonio, and Capuzzi, utterly astounded.

"Yes," said that wonderful man, "it is Salvator Rosa, whom the Romans would not recognize as painter and poet, but who in the character of Formica drew from them almost every evening for more than a year, in Nicolo Musso's wretched little theatre, the most noisy and most demonstrative storms of applause, from whose mouth they willingly took all the scorn, and all the satiric mockery of what is bad, which they would on no account listen to and see in Salvator's poems and pictures. It is Salvator Formica who has helped you, Antonio."

"Salvator," began old Capuzzi, "Salvator Rosa, I have always regarded you as my worst enemy; yet I have always prized your artistic skill very highly; and now I love you as the worthiest friend I have, and beg you to accept my friendship in return."

"Tell me," replied Salvator, "tell me, my worthy Signor Pasquale, what service I can render you, and accept my assurances beforehand, that I will leave no stone unturned to accomplish whatever you may ask of me."

And now the genial smile which had not been seen upon Capuzzi's face since Marianna had been carried off, began to steal back again. Taking Salvator's hand he lisped in a low voice, "My dear Signor Salvator, you possess an unlimited influence over good Antonio; beseech him in my name to permit me to spend my few remaining days with him, and my dear daughter Marianna, and to accept at my hands the inheritance left her by her mother, as well as the good dowry which I was thinking of adding to it. And he must not look jealous if I occasionally kiss her white hand; and ask him—every Sunday at least when I go to Mass, to trim my rough mustache, for there's nobody in all the world understands it as well as he does."

It cost Salvator an effort to repress his laughter at the strange old man; but before he could make any reply, Antonio and Marianna, embracing the old gentleman, assured him that they should not believe he was fully reconciled to them, and should not be really happy, until he came to live with them as their dear father, never to leave them again. Antonio added that not only on Sunday, but every other day, he would trim Capuzzi's mustache as elegantly as he knew how, and accordingly the old gentleman was perfectly radiant with delight. Meanwhile a splendid supper had been prepared, to which the entire company now turned in the best of spirits.

In taking my leave of you, beloved reader, I wish with all my heart that, while you have been reading the story of the wonderful Signor Formica, you have derived as much pure pleasure from it as Salvator and all his friends felt on sitting down to their supper.