A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

I.

As Don Ippolito passed down the long narrow calle or footway leading from the Campo San Stefano to the Grand Canal in Venice, he peered anxiously about him: now turning for a backward look up the calle, where there was no living thing in sight but a cat on a garden gate; now running a quick eye along the palace walls that rose vast on either hand and notched the slender strip of blue sky visible overhead with the lines of their jutting balconies, chimneys, and cornices; and now glancing toward the canal, where he could see the noiseless black boats meeting and passing. There was no sound in the calle save his own footsteps and the harsh scream of a parrot that hung in the sunshine in one of the
loftiest windows; but the note of a peasant crying pots of pinks and roses in the campo came softened to Don Ippolito’s sense, and he heard the gondoliers as they hoarsely jested together and gossiped, with the canal between them, at the next gondola station.

The first tenderness of spring was in the air, though down in that calle there was yet enough of the wintry rawness to chill the tip of Don Ippolito’s sensitive nose, which he rubbed for comfort with a handkerchief of dark blue calico, and polished for ornament with a handkerchief of white linen. He restored each to a different pocket in the sides of the ecclesiastical talar, or gown, reaching almost to his ankles, and then clutched the pocket in which he had replaced the linen handkerchief, as if to make sure that something he prized was safe within. He paused abruptly, and, looking at the doors he had passed, went back a few paces and stood before one over which hung, slightly tilted forward, an oval sign painted with the effigy of an eagle, a bundle of arrows, and certain thunderbolts, and bearing the legend, CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES, in neat characters. Don Ippolito gave a quick sigh, hesitated a moment, and
then seized the bell-pull and jerked it so
sharply that it seemed to thrust out, like a
part of the mechanism, the head of an old
serving-woman at the window above him.

"Who is there?" demanded this head.

"Friends," answered Don Ippolito in a
rich, sad voice.

"And what do you command?" further
asked the old woman.

Don Ippolito paused, apparently searching
for his voice, before he inquired, "Is it here
that the Consul of America lives?"

"Precisely."

"Is he perhaps at home?"

"I don't know. I will go ask him."

"Do me that pleasure, dear," said Don
Ippolito, and remained knotting his fingers
before the closed door. Presently the old
woman returned, and looking out long
enough to say, "The consul is at home,"
drew some inner bolt by a wire running to
the lock, that let the door start open; then
waiting to hear Don Ippolito close it again,
she called out from her height, "Favor me
above." He climbed the dim stairway to
the point where she stood, and followed her
to a door, which she flung open into an
apartment so brightly lit by a window look-
ing on the sunny canal, that he blinked as he entered. "Signor Console," said the old woman, "behold the gentleman who desired to see you;" and at the same time Don Ippolito, having removed his broad, stiff, three-cornered hat, came forward and made a beautiful bow. He had lost for the moment the trepidation which had marked his approach to the consulate, and bore himself with graceful dignity.

It was in the first year of the war, and from a motive of patriotism common at that time, Mr. Ferris (one of my many predecessors in office at Venice) had just been crossing his two silken gondola flags above the consular bookcase, where with their gilt lance-headed staves, and their vivid stars and stripes, they made a very pretty effect. He filled a little dust from his coat, and begged Don Ippolito to be seated, with the air of putting even a Venetian priest on a footing of equality with other men under the folds of the national banner. Mr. Ferris had the prejudice of all Italian sympathisers against the priests; but for the he could hardly have found anything in Don Ippolito to alarm dislike. His face was a little thin, and the chin was delicate; the
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nose had a fine, Dantesque curve, but its final droop gave a melancholy cast to a countenance expressive of a gentle and kindly spirit; the eyes were large and dark, and full of a dreamy warmth. Don Ippolito's prevailing tint was that transparent blueishness which comes from much shaving of a heavy black beard; his forehead and temples were marble white; he had a tonsure the size of a dollar. He sat silent for a little space, and softly questioned the consul's face with his dreamy eyes. Apparently he could not gather courage to speak of his business at once, for he turned his gaze upon the window and said, "A beautiful position, Signor Console."

"Yes, it's a pretty place," answered Mr. Ferris, warily.

"So much pleasanter here on the Canal-azzo than on the campos or the little canals."

"Oh, without doubt."

"Here there must be constant amusement in watching the boats: great stir, great variety, great life. And now the fine season commences, and the Signor Console's countrymen will be coming to Venice. Perhaps," added Don Ippolito with a polite
dismay, and an air of sudden anxiety to escape from his own purpose, "I may be disturbing or detaining the Signor Console?"

"No," said Mr. Ferris; "I am quite at leisure for the present. In what can I have the honour of serving you?"

Don Ippolito heaved a long, ineffectual sigh, and taking his linen handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his forehead with it, and rolled it upon his knee. He looked at the door, and all round the room, and then rose and drew near the consul, who had officially seated himself at his desk.

"I suppose that the Signor Console gives passports?" he asked.

"Sometimes," replied Mr. Ferris, with a clouding face.

Don Ippolito seemed to note the gathering distrust, and to be helpless against it. He continued hastily: "Could the Signor Console give a passport for America... to me?"

"Are you an American citizen?" demanded the consul in the voice of a man whose suspicions are fully roused.

"American citizen?"

"Yes; subject of the American republic."

"No, surely; I have not that happiness.
I am an Austrian subject," returned Don Ippolito a little bitterly, as if the last words were an unpleasant morsel in the mouth.

"Then I can't give you a passport," said Mr. Ferris, somewhat more gently. "You know," he explained, "that no government can give passports to foreign subjects. That would be an unheard-of thing."

"But I thought that to go to America an American passport would be needed."

"In America," returned the consul, with proud compassion, "they don't care a fig for passports. You go and you come, and nobody meddles. To be sure," he faltered, "just now, on account of the secessionists, they do require you to show a passport at New York; but," he continued more boldly, "American passports are usually for Europe; and besides, all the American passports in the world wouldn't get you over the frontier at Peschiera. You must have a passport from the Austrian Lieutenancy of Venice."

Don Ippolito nodded his head softly several times, and said, "Precisely," and then added with an indescribable weariness, "Patience! Signor Console, I ask your pardon for the trouble I have given," and he made the consul another low bow.
Whether Mr. Ferris's curiosity was piqued, and feeling himself on the safe side of his visitor he meant to know why he had come on such an errand, or whether he had some kindlier motive, he could hardly have told himself, but he said, "I'm very sorry. Perhaps there is something else in which I could be of use to you."

"Ah, I hardly know," cried Don Ippolito. "I really had a kind of hope in coming to your excellency."

"I am not an excellency," interrupted Mr. Ferris, conscientiously.

"Many excuses! But now it seems a mere bestiality. I was so ignorant about the other matter that doubtless I am also quite deluded in this."

"As to that, of course I can't say," answered Mr. Ferris, "but I hope not."

"Why, listen, signore!" said Don Ippolito, placing his hand over that pocket in which he kept his linen handkerchief. "I had something that it had come into my head to offer your honoured government for its advantage in this deplorable rebellion."

"Oh," responded Mr. Ferris with a falling countenance. He had received so many offers of help for his honoured government
from sympathising foreigners. Hardly a week passed but a sabre came clanking up his dim staircase with a Herr Graf or a Herr Baron attached, who appeared in the spotless panoply of his Austrian captaincy or lieutenancy, to accept from the consul a brigadier-generalship in the Federal armies, on condition that the consul would pay his expenses to Washington, or at least assure him of an exalted post and reimbursement of all outlays from President Lincoln as soon as he arrived. They were beautiful men, with the complexion of blonde girls; their uniforms fitted like kid gloves; the pale blue, or pure white, or hussar black of their coats was ravishingly set off by their red or gold trimmings; and they were hard to make understand that brigadiers of American birth swarmed at Washington, and that if they went thither, they must go as soldiers of fortune at their own risk. But they were very polite; they begged pardon when they knocked their scabbards against the consul's furniture, at the door they each made him a magnificent obeisance, said "Servus!" in their great voices, and were shown out by the old Marina, abhorrent of their uniforms and doubtful of the consul's political sympa-
thies. Only yesterday she had called him up at an unwonted hour to receive the visit of a courtly gentleman who addressed him as Monsieur le Ministre, and offered him at a bargain ten thousand stand of probably obsolescent muskets belonging to the late Duke of Parma. Shabby, hungry, incapable exiles of all nations, religions, and politics, beset him for places of honour and emolument in the service of the Union; revolutionists out of business, and the minions of banished despots, were alike willing to be fed, clothed, and despatched to Washington with swords consecrated to the perpetuity of the republic.

"I have here," said Don Ippolito, too intent upon showing whatever it was he had to note the change in the consul's mood, "the model of a weapon of my contrivance, which I thought the government of the North could employ successfully in cases where its batteries were in danger of capture by the Spaniards."

"Spaniards? Spaniards? We have no war with Spain!" cried the consul.

"Yes, yes, I know," Don Ippolito made haste to explain, "but those of South America being Spanish by descent"—
"But we are not fighting the South Americans. We are fighting our own Southern States, I am sorry to say."

"Oh! Many excuses. I am afraid I don't understand," said Don Ippolito meekly; whereupon Mr. Ferris enlightened him in a formula (of which he was beginning to be weary) against European misconception of the American situation. Don Ippolito nodded his head contritely, and when Mr. Ferris had ended, he was so much abashed that he made no motion to show his invention till the other added, "But no matter; I suppose the contrivance would work as well against the Southerners as the South Americans. Let me see it, please;" and then Don Ippolito, with a gratified smile, drew from his pocket the neatly finished model of a breech-loading cannon.

"You perceive, Signor Console," he said with new dignity, "that this is nothing very new as a breech-loader, though I ask you to observe this little improvement for restoring the breech to its place, which is original. The grand feature of my invention, however, is this secret chamber in the breech, which is intended to hold an explosive of high potency, with a fuse coming out
below. The gunner, finding his piece in danger, ignites this fuse, and takes refuge in flight. At the moment the enemy seizes the gun the contents of the secret chamber explode, demolishing the piece and destroying its captors."

The dreamy warmth in Don Ippolito's deep eyes kindled to a flame; a dark red glowed in his thin cheeks; he drew a box from the folds of his drapery and took snuff in a great whiff, as if inhaling the sulphurous fumes of battle, or titillating his nostrils with grains of gunpowder. He was at least in full enjoyment of the poetic power of his invention, and no doubt had before his eyes a vivid picture of a score of secessionists surprised and blown to atoms in the very moment of triumph. "Behold, Signor Console!" he said.

"It's certainly very curious," said Mr. Ferris, turning the fearful toy over in his hand, and admiring the neat workmanship of it. "Did you make this model yourself?"

"Surely," answered the priest, with a joyous pride; "I have no money to spend upon artisans; and besides, as you might infer, signore, I am not very well seen by
my superiors and associates on account of these little amusements of mine; so I keep them as much as I can to myself.” Don Ippolito laughed nervously, and then fell silent with his eyes intent upon the consul’s face. “What do you think, signore?” he presently resumed. “If this invention were brought to the notice of your generous government, would it not patronise my labours? I have read that America is the land of enterprises. Who knows but your government might invite me to take service under it in some capacity in which I could employ those little gifts that Heaven”—He paused again, apparently puzzled by the compassionate smile on the consul’s lips. “But tell me, signore, how this invention appears to you.”

“Have you had any practical experience in gunnery?” asked Mr. Ferris.

“Why, certainly not.”

“Neither have I,” continued Mr. Ferris, “but I was wondering whether the explosive in this secret chamber would not become so heated by the frequent discharges of the piece as to go off prematurely sometimes, and kill our own artillerymen instead of waiting for the secessionists?”
Don Ippolito's countenance fell, and a dull shame displaced the exultation that had glowed in it. His head sunk on his breast, and he made no attempt at reply, so that it was again Mr. Ferris who spoke. "You see, I don't really know anything more of the matter than you do, and I don't undertake to say whether your invention is disabled by the possibility I suggest or not. Haven't you any acquaintances among the military, to whom you could show your model?"

"No," answered Don Ippolito, coldly, "I don't consort with the military. Besides, what would be thought of a priest," he asked with a bitter stress on the word, "who exhibited such an invention as that to an officer of our paternal government?"

"I suppose it would certainly surprise the lieutenant-governor somewhat," said Mr. Ferris with a laugh. "May I ask," he pursued after an interval, "whether you have occupied yourself with other inventions?"

"I have attempted a great many," replied Don Ippolito in a tone of dejection. "Are they all of this warlike temper?" pursued the consul.
"No," said Don Ippolito, blushing a little, "they are nearly all of peaceful intention. It was the wish to produce something of utility which set me about this cannon. Those good friends of mine who have done me the honour of looking at my attempts had blamed me for the uselessness of my inventions; they allowed that they were ingenious, but they said that even if they could be put in operation, they would not be what the world cared for. Perhaps they were right. I know very little of the world," concluded the priest, sadly. He had risen to go, yet seemed not quite able to do so; there was no more to say, but if he had come to the consul with high hopes, it might well have unnerved him to have all end so blankly. He drew a long, sibilant breath between his shut teeth, nodded to himself thrice, and turning to Mr. Ferris with a melancholy bow, said, "Signor Console, I thank you infinitely for your kindness, I beg your pardon for the disturbance, and I take my leave."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Ferris. "Let us see each other again. In regard to the inventions,—well, you must have patience." He dropped into some proverbial phrases
which the obliging Latin tongues supply so abundantly for the races who must often talk when they do not feel like thinking, and he gave a start when Don Ippolito replied in English, "Yes, but hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

It was not that it was so uncommon to have Italians innocently come out with their whole slender stock of English to him, for the sake of practice, as they told him; but there were peculiarities in Don Ippolito's accent for which he could not account. "What," he exclaimed, "do you know English?"

"I have studied it a little, by myself," answered Don Ippolito, pleased to have his English recognised, and then lapsing into the safety of Italian, he added, "And I had also the help of an English ecclesiastic who sojourned some months in Venice, last year, for his health, and who used to read with me and teach me the pronunciation. He was from Dublin, this ecclesiastic."

"Oh!" said Mr. Ferris, with relief, "I see;" and he perceived that what had puzzled him in Don Ippolito's English was a fine brogue superimposed upon his Italian accent.
"For some time I have had this idea of going to America, and I thought that the first thing to do was to equip myself with the language."

"Um!" said Mr. Ferris, "that was practical, at any rate," and he mused a while. By and by he continued, more kindly than he had yet spoken, "I wish I could ask you to sit down again: but I have an engagement which I must make haste to keep. Are you going out through the campo? Pray wait a minute, and I will walk with you."

Mr. Ferris went into another room, through the open door of which Don Ippolito saw the paraphernalia of a painter's studio: an easel with a half-finished picture on it; a chair with a palette and brushes, and crushed and twisted tubes of colours; a lay figure in one corner; on the walls scraps of stamped leather, rags of tapestry, desultory sketches on paper.

Mr. Ferris came out again, brushing his hat.

"The Signor Console amuses himself with painting, I see," said Don Ippolito courteously.

"Not at all," replied Mr. Ferris, putting
on his gloves; "I am a painter by profession, and I amuse myself with consuling;" and as so open a matter needed no explanation, he said no more about it. Nor is it quite necessary to tell how, as he was one day painting in New York, it occurred to him to make use of a Congressional friend, and ask for some Italian consulate, he did not care which. That of Venice happened to be vacant: the income was a few hundred dollars; as no one else wanted it, no question was made of Mr. Ferris's fitness for the post, and he presently found himself possessed of a commission requesting the Emperor of Austria to permit him to enjoy and exercise the office of consul of the ports of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, to which the Pre-

1 Since these words of Mr. Ferris were first printed, I have been told that a more eminent painter, namely, Rubens, made very much the same reply to very much the same remark, when Spanish Ambassador in England. "The Ambassador of His Catholic Majesty, I see, amuses himself by painting sometimes," said a visitor who found him at his easel. "I amuse myself by playing the ambassador sometimes," answered Rubens. In spite of the similarity of the speech, I let that of Mr. Ferris stand, for I am satisfied that he did not know how unhandsomely Rubens had taken the words out of his mouth.
sident of the United States appointed him from a special trust in his abilities and integrity. He proceeded at once to his post of duty, called upon the ship's chandler, with whom they had been left, for the consular archives, and began to paint some Venetian subjects.

He and Don Ippolito quitted the Consulate together, leaving Marina to digest with her noonday porridge the wonder that he should be walking amicably forth with a priest. The same spectacle was presented to the gaze of the campo, where they paused in friendly converse, and were seen to part with many politenesses by the doctors of the neighbourhood, lounging away their leisure, as the Venetian fashion is, at the local pharmacy.

The apothecary craned forward over his counter, and peered through the open door. "What is that blessed Consul of America doing with a priest?"

"The Consul of America with a priest?" demanded a grave old man, a physician with a beautiful silvery beard, and a most reverend and senatorial presence, but one of the worst tongues in Venice. "Oh! he added, with a laugh, after scrutiny of the two
through his glasses, "it's that crack-brain Don Ippolito Rondinelli. He isn't priest enough to hurt the consul. Perhaps he's been selling him a perpetual motion for the use of his government, which needs something of the kind just now. Or maybe he's been posing to him for a picture. He would make a very pretty Joseph, give him Potiphar's wife in the background," said the doctor, who, if not maligned, would have needed much more to make a Joseph of him.
II.

MR. FERRIS took his way through the devious footways where the shadow was chill, and through the broad campos where the sun was tenderly warm, and the towers of the church rose against the speckless azure of the vernal heaven. As he went along, he frowned in a helpless perplexity with the case of Don Ippolito, whom he had begun by doubting for a spy with some incomprehensible motive, and had ended by pitying with a certain degree of amusement and a deep sense of the futility of his compassion. He presently began to think of him with a little disgust, as people commonly think of one whom they pity and yet cannot help, and he made haste to cast off the hopeless burden. He shrugged his shoulders, struck his stick on the smooth paving-stones, and let his eyes rove up and down the fronts of the houses.
for the sake of the pretty faces that glanced out of the casements. He was a young man, and it was spring, and this was Venice. He made himself joyfully part of the city and the season; he was glad of the narrowness of the streets, of the good-humoured jostling and pushing; he crouched into an arched doorway to let a water-carrier pass with her copper buckets dripping at the end of the yoke balanced on her shoulder, and he returned her smiles and excuses with others as broad and gay; he brushed by the swelling hoops of ladies, and stooped before the unwieldy burdens of porters, who, as they staggered through the crowd with a thrust here and a shove there, forgave themselves, laughing, “We are in Venice, signori;” and he stood aside for the files of soldiers clanking heavily over the pavement, their muskets kindling to a blaze in the sunlit campos, and quenched again in the damp shadows of the calles. His ear was taken by the vibrant jargoning of the boatmen as they pushed their craft under the bridges he crossed, and the kecn notes of the canaries and the songs of the golden-billed blackbirds whose cages hung at lattices far overhead. Heaps of oranges, topped by the fairest cut in halves,
gave their colour, at frequent intervals, to the dusky corners and recesses, and the long drawn cry of the venders, "Oranges of Palermo!" rose above the clatter of feet and the clamour of other voices. At a little shop where butter and eggs and milk abounded, together with early flowers of various sorts, he bought a bunch of hyacinths, blue and white and yellow, and he presently stood smelling these while he waited in the hotel parlour for the ladies to whom he had sent his card. He turned at the sound of drifting drapery, and could not forbear placing the hyacinths in the hand of Miss Florida Vervain, who had come into the room to receive him.

She was a girl of about seventeen years, who looked older; she was tall rather than short, and rather full,—though it could not be said that she erred in point of solidity. In the attitudes of shy hauteur into which she constantly fell, there was a touch of defiant awkwardness which had a certain fascination. She was blonde, with a throat and hands of milky whiteness; there was a suggestion of freckles on her regular face, where a quick colour came and went, though her cheeks were habitually somewhat pale;
her eyes were very blue under their level brows, and the lashes were even lighter in colour than the masses of her fair gold hair; the edges of the lids were touched with the faintest red. The late Colonel Vervain of the United States army, whose complexion his daughter had inherited, was an officer whom it would not have been peaceable to cross in any purpose or pleasure, and Miss Vervain seemed sometimes a little burdened by the passionate nature which he had left her, together with the tropical name he had bestowed in honour of the State where he had fought the Seminoles in his youth, and where he chanced still to be stationed when she was born; she had the air of being embarrassed in presence of herself, and of having an anxious watch upon her impulses. I do not know how otherwise to describe the effort of proud, helpless femininity, which would have struck the close observer in Miss Vervain.

"Delicious!" she said, in a deep voice, which conveyed something of this anxiety in its guarded tones, and yet was not wanting in a kind of frankness. "Did you mean them for me, Mr. Ferris?"

"I didn't, but I do," answered Mr. Ferris.
"I bought them in ignorance, but I understand now what they were meant for by nature;" and in fact the hyacinths, with their smooth textures and their pure colours, harmonised well with Miss Vervain, as she bent her face over them and inhaled their full, rich perfume.

"I will put them in water," she said, "if you'll excuse me a moment. Mother will be down directly."

Before she could return, her mother rustled into the parlour.

Mrs. Vervain was gracefully, fragiley unlike her daughter. She entered with a gentle and gliding step, peering near-sightedly about through her glasses, and laughing triumphantly when she had determined Mr. Ferris's exact position, where he stood with a smile shaping his full brown beard and glancing from his hazel eyes. She was dressed in perfect taste with reference to her matronly years and the lingering evidences of her widowhood, and she had an unaffected naturalness of manner, which, even at her age of forty-eight, could not be called less than charming. She spoke in a trusting caressing tone, to which no man at least could respond unkindly.
"So very good of you, to take all this trouble, Mr. Ferris," she said, giving him a friendly hand, "and I suppose you are letting us encroach upon very valuable time. I'm quite ashamed to take it. But isn't it a heavenly day? What I call a perfect day, just right every way; none of those disagreeable extremes. It's so unpleasant to have it too hot, for instance. I'm the greatest person for moderation, Mr. Ferris, and I carry the principle into everything; but I do think the breakfasts at these Italian hotels are too light altogether. I like our American breakfasts, don't you? I've been telling Florida I can't stand it; we really must make some arrangement. To be sure, you oughtn't to think of such a thing as eating, in a place like Venice, all poetry; but a sound mind in a sound body, I say. We're perfectly wild over it. Don't you think it's a place that grows upon you very much, Mr. Ferris? All those associations,—it does seem too much; and the gondolas everywhere. But I'm always afraid the gondoliers cheat us; and in the stores I never feel safe a moment—not a moment. I do think the Venetians are lacking in truthfulness, a little. I don't believe they under-
stand our American fair-dealing and sincerity. I shouldn't want to do them injustice, but I really think they take advantages in bargaining. Now such a thing even as corals. Florida is extremely fond of them, and we bought a set yesterday in the Piazza, and I know we paid too much for them. Florida,” said Mrs. Vervain, for her daughter had re-entered the room, and stood with some shawls and wraps upon her arm, patiently waiting for the conclusion of the elder lady's speech, “I wish you would bring down that set of corals. I'd like Mr. Ferris to give an unbiased opinion. I'm sure we were cheated.”

“I don't know anything about corals, Mrs. Vervain,” interposed Mr. Ferris.

“Well, but you ought to see this set for the beauty of the colour; they’re really exquisite. I’m sure it will gratify your artistic taste.”

Miss Vervain hesitated with a look of desire to obey, and of doubt whether to force the pleasure upon Mr. Ferris. “Won't it do another time, mother?” she asked faintly; “the gondola is waiting for us.”

Mrs. Vervain gave a frailish start from the chair, into which she had sunk. “Oh, do let us be off at once, then,” she said; and
when they stood on the landing-stairs of the hotel: "What gloomy things these gondolas are!" she added, while the gondolier with one foot on the gunwale of the boat received the ladies' shawls, and then crooked his arm for them to rest a hand on in stepping aboard; "I wonder they don't paint them some cheerful colour."

"Blue, or pink, Mrs. Vervain?" asked Mr. Ferris. "I knew you were coming to that question; they all do. But we needn't have the top on at all, if it depresses your spirits. We shall be just warm enough in the open sunlight."

"Well, have it off, then. It sends the cold chills over me to look at it. What did Byron call it?"

"Yes, it's time for Byron, now. It was very good of you not to mention him before, Mrs. Vervain. But I knew he had to come. He called it a coffin clapped in a canoe."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Vervain. "I always feel as if I were going to my own funeral when I get into it; and I've certainly had enough of funerals never to want to have anything to do with another, as long as I live."

She settled herself luxuriously upon the
feather-stuffed leathern cushions when the cabin was removed. Death had indeed been near her very often; father and mother had been early lost to her, and the brothers and sisters orphaned with her had faded and perished one after another, as they ripened to men and women; she had seen four of her own children die; her husband had been dead six years. All these bereavements had left her what they had found her. She had truly grieved, and, as she said, she had hardly ever been out of black since she could remember.

"I never was in colours when I was a girl," she went on, indulging many obituary memories as the gondola dipped and darted down the canal, "and I was married in my mourning for my last sister. It did seem a little too much when she went, Mr. Ferris. I was too young to feel it so much about the others, but we were nearly of the same age, and that makes a difference, don't you know. First a brother and then a sister: it was very strange how they kept going that way. I seemed to break the charm when I got married; though, to be sure, there was no brother left after Marian."

Miss Vervain heard her mother's mortu-
ary prattle with a face from which no impatience of it could be inferred, and Mr. Ferris made no comment on what was oddly various in character and manner, for Mrs. Vervain touched upon the gloomiest facts of her history with a certain impersonal statistical interest. They were rowing across the lagoon to the Island of San Lazzaro, where for reasons of her own she intended to venerate the convent in which Byron studied the Armenian language preparatory to writing his great poem in it; if her pilgrimage had no very earnest motive, it was worthy of the fact which it was designed to honour. The lagoon was of a perfect, shining smoothness, broken by the shallows over which the ebbing tide had left the sea-weed trailed like long, dishevelled hair. The fishermen, as they waded about staking their nets, or stooped to gather the small shell-fish of the shallows, showed legs as brown and tough as those of the apostles in Titian’s Assumption. Here and there was a boat, with a boy or an old man asleep in the bottom of it. The gulls sailed high, white flakes against the illimitable blue of the heavens; the air, though it was of early spring, and in the shade had a salty pungency, was here
almost languorously warm; in the motionless splendours and rich colours of the scene there was a melancholy before which Mrs. Vervain fell fitfully silent. Now and then Ferris briefly spoke, calling Miss Vervain's notice to this or that, and she briefly responded. As they passed the mad-house of San Servolo, a maniac standing at an open window took his black velvet skull-cap from his white hair, bowed low three times, and kissed his hand to the ladies. The Lido in front of them stretched a brown strip of sand with white villages shining out of it; on their left the Public Gardens showed a mass of hovering green; far beyond and above, the ghost-like snows of the Alpine heights haunted the misty horizon.

It was chill in the shadow of the convent when they landed at San Lazzaro, and it was cool in the parlour where they waited for the monk who was to show them through the place; but it was still and warm in the gardened court, where the bees murmured among the crocuses and hyacinths under the noonday sun. Miss Vervain stood looking out of the window upon the lagoon, while her mother drifted about the room, peering at the objects on the wall through her eye-
glasses. She was praising a Chinese painting of fish on rice-paper, when a young monk entered with a cordial greeting in English for Mr. Ferris. She turned and saw them shaking hands, but at the same moment her eye-glasses abandoned her nose with a vigorous leap; she gave an amiable laugh, and groping for them over her dress, bowed at random as Mr. Ferris presented Padre Girolamo.

"I've been admiring this painting so much, Padre Girolamo," she said, with instant good-will, and taking the monk into the easy familiarity of her friendship by the tone with which she spoke his name. "Some of the brothers did it, I suppose."

"Oh no," said the monk, "it's a Chinese painting. We hung it up there because it was given to us, and was curious."

"Well, now, do you know," returned Mrs. Vervain, "I thought it was Chinese! Their things are so odd. But, really, in an Armenian convent it's very misleading. I don't think you ought to leave it there; it certainly does throw people off the track," she added, subduing the expression to something very lady-like, by the winning appeal with which she used it.
“Oh, but if they put up Armenian paintings in Chinese convents?” said Mr. Ferris.
“You’re joking!” cried Mrs. Vervain, looking at him with a graciously amused air.
“There are no Chinese convents. To be sure those rebels are a kind of Christians,”
she added thoughtfully, “but there can’t be many of them left, poor things, hundreds of
them executed at a time, that way. It’s perfectly sickening to read of it; and you
can’t help it, you know. But they say they haven’t really so much feeling as we have—not so nervous.”

She walked by the side of the young friar as he led the way to such parts of the convent as are open to visitors, and Mr. Ferris came after with her daughter, who, he fancied, met his attempts at talk with sudden and more than usual hauteur. “What a fool!” he said to himself. “Is she afraid I shall be wanting to make love to her?” and he followed in rather a sulky silence the course of Mrs. Vervain and her guide. The library, the chapel, and the museum called out her friendliest praises, and in the last she praised the mummy on show there at the expense of one she had seen in New York; but when Padre Girolamo pointed
out the desk in the refectory from which one of the brothers read while the rest were eating, she took him to task. "Oh, but I can't think that's at all good for the digestion, you know,—using the brain that way whilst you're at table. I really hope you don't listen too attentively; it would be better for you in the long-run, even in a religious point of view. But now—Byron! You must show me his cell!" The monk deprecated the non-existence of such a cell, and glanced in perplexity at Mr. Ferris, who came to his relief. "You couldn't have seen his cell, if he'd had one, Mrs. Vervain. They don't admit ladies to the cloister."

"What nonsense!" answered Mrs. Vervain, apparently regarding this as another of Mr. Ferris's pleasantry; but Padre Girolamo silently confirmed his statement, and she briskly assailed the rule as a disrespect to the sex, which reflected even upon the Virgin, the object, as he was forced to allow, of their high veneration. He smiled patiently, and confessed that Mrs. Vervain had all the reasons on her side. At the print-office, where she handsomely bought every kind of Armenian book and pamphlet, and thus repaid in the only way possible the
trouble their visit had given, he did not offer to take leave of them, but after speaking with Ferris, of whom he seemed an old friend, he led them through the garden environing the convent, to a little pavilion perched on the wall that defends the island from the tides of the lagoon. A lay-brother presently followed them, bearing a tray with coffee, toasted rusk, and a jar of that conserve of rose-leaves which is the convent’s delicate hospitality to favoured guests. Mrs. Vervain cried out over the poetic confection when Padre Girolamo told her what it was, and her daughter suffered herself to express a guarded pleasure. The amiable matron brushed the crumbs of the baicolo from her lap when the lunch was ended, and, fitting on her glasses, leaned forward for a better look at the monk’s black-bearded face. “I’m perfectly delighted,” she said. “You must be very happy here. I suppose you are.”

“Yes,” answered the monk rapturously; “so happy that I should be content never to leave San Lazzaro. I came here when I was very young, and the greater part of my life has been passed on this little island. It is my home—my country.”

“Do you never go away?”
"Oh, yes; sometimes to Constantinople, sometimes to London and Paris." 

"And you've never been to America yet? Well now, I'll tell you; you ought to go. You would like it, I know, and our people would give you a very cordial reception."

"Reception?" The monk appealed once more to Ferris with a look.

Ferris broke into a laugh. "I don't believe Padre' Girolamo would come in quality of distinguished foreigner, Mrs. Vervain, and I don't think he'd know what to do with one of our cordial receptions."

"Well, he ought to go to America, anyway. He can't really know anything about us till he's been there. Just think how ignorant the English are of our country! You will come, won't you? I should be delighted to welcome you at my house in Providence. Rhode Island is a small State, but there's a great deal of wealth there, and very good society in Providence. It's quite New-Yorky, you know," said Mrs. Vervain expressively. She rose as she spoke, and led the way back to the gondola. She told Padre Girolamo that they were to be some weeks in Venice, and made him promise to breakfast with them at their hotel. She
smiled and nodded to him after the boat had pushed off, and kept him bowing on the landing-stairs.

"What a lovely place, and what a perfectly heavenly morning you have given us, Mr. Ferris! We never can thank you enough for it. And now, do you know what I'm thinking of? Perhaps you can help me. It was Byron's studying there put me in mind of it. How soon do the mosquitoes come?"

"About the end of June," responded Ferris mechanically, staring with helpless mystification at Mrs. Vervain.

"Very well; then there's no reason why we shouldn't stay in Venice till that time. We are both very fond of the place, and we'd quite concluded, this morning, to stop here till the mosquitoes came. You know, Mr. Ferris, my daughter had to leave school much earlier than she ought, for my health has obliged me to travel a great deal since I lost my husband; and I must have her with me, for we're all that there is of us—we haven't a chick or a child that's related to us anywhere. But wherever we stop, even for a few weeks, I contrive to get her some kind of instruction. I feel the need of it so much
in my own case; for to tell you the truth, Mr. Ferris, I married too young. I suppose I should do the same thing over again if it was to be done over; but don't you see my mind wasn't properly formed; and then following my husband about from pillar to post, and my first baby born when I was nineteen—well, it wasn't education, at any rate, whatever else it was; and I've determined that Florida, though we are such a pair of wanderers, shall not have my regrets. I got teachers for her in England,—the English are not anything like so disagreeable at home as they are in travelling, and we stayed there two years—and I did in France, and I did in Germany. And now, Italian. Here we are in Italy, and I think we ought to improve the time. Florida knows a good deal of Italian already, for her music teacher in France was an Italian, and he taught her the language as well as music. What she wants now, I should say, is to perfect her accent and get facility. I think she ought to have some one come every day and read and converse an hour or two with her."

Mrs. Vervain leaned back in her seat and looked at Ferris, who said, feeling that the matter was referred to him, "I think—
without presuming to say what Miss Vervain's need of instruction is—that your idea is a very good one." He mused in silence his wonder that so much addlepatedness as was at once observable in Mrs. Vervain should exist along with so much common sense. "It's certainly very good in the abstract," he added, with a glance at the daughter, as if the sense must be hers. She did not meet his glance at once, but with an impatient recognition of the heat that was now great for the warmth with which she was dressed, she pushed her sleeve from her wrist, showing its delicious whiteness, and letting her fingers trail through the cool water; she dried them on her handkerchief, and then bent her eyes full upon him, as if challenging him to think this unlady-like.

"No; clearly the sense does not come from her," said Ferris to himself; it is impossible to think well of the mind of a girl who treats one with tacit contempt.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Vervain, "it's certainly very good in the abstract. But, oh dear me! you've no idea of the difficulties in the way. I may speak frankly with you, Mr. Ferris, for you are here as the representative of the country, and you naturally
sympathise with the difficulties of Americans abroad; the teachers will fall in love with their pupils."

"Mother!" began Miss Vervain; and then she checked herself.

Ferris gave a vengeful laugh. "Really, Mrs. Vervain, though I sympathise with you in my official capacity, I must own that, as a man and a brother, I can't help feeling a little sorry for those poor fellows, too."

"To be sure, they are to be pitied, of course—and I feel for them; I did when I was a girl; for the same thing used to happen then. I don't know why Florida should be subjected to such embarrassments, too. It does seem sometimes as if it were something in the blood. They all get the idea that you have money, you know."

"Then I should say that it might be something in the pocket," suggested Ferris, with a look at Miss Vervain, in whose silent suffering, as he imagined it, he found a malicious consolation for her scorn.

"Well, whatever it is," replied Mrs. Vervain, "it's too vexatious. Of course, going to new places, that way, as we're always doing, and only going to stay for a limited time, perhaps, you can't pick and choose.
And even when you do get an elderly teacher, they’re as bad as any. It really is too trying. Now, when I was talking with that nice monk of yours at the convent, there, I couldn’t help thinking how perfectly delightful it would be if Florida could have him for a teacher. Why couldn’t she? He told me that he would come to take breakfast or lunch with us, but not dinner, for he always had to be at the convent before nightfall. Well, he might come to give the lessons some time in the middle of the day."

"You couldn’t manage it, Mrs. Vervain, I know you couldn’t," answered Ferris earnestly. "I’m sure the Armenians never do anything of the kind. They’re all very busy men, engaged in ecclesiastical or literary work, and they couldn’t give the time."

"Why not? There was Byron."

"But Byron went to them, and he studied Armenian, not Italian, with them. Padre Girolamo speaks perfect Italian, for all that I can see; but I doubt if he’d undertake to impart the native accent, which is what you want. In fact, the scheme is altogether impracticable."
"Well," said Mrs. Vervain; "I'm exceedingly sorry. I had quite set my heart on it. I never took such a fancy to any one in such a short time before."

"It seemed to be a case of love at first sight on both sides," said Ferris. "Padre Girolamo doesn't shower those syruped rose-leaves indiscriminately upon visitors."

"Thanks," returned Mrs. Vervain; "it's very good of you to say so, Mr. Ferris, and it's very gratifying, all round; but don't you see, it doesn't serve the present purpose. What teachers do you know of?"

She had been by marriage so long in the service of the United States that she still regarded its agents as part of her own domestic economy. Consuls she everywhere employed as functionaries specially appointed to look after the interests of American ladies travelling without protection. In the week which had passed since her arrival in Venice, there had been no day on which she did not appeal to Ferris for help or sympathy or advice. She took amiable possession of him at once, and he had established an amusing sort of intimacy with him, to which the haughty trepidations of her daughter set certain bounds, but in
which the demand that he should find her a suitable Italian teacher seemed trivially matter of course.

"Yes, I know several teachers," he said, after thinking a while; "but they're all open to the objection of being human; and besides, they all do things in a set kind of way, and I'm afraid they wouldn't enter into the spirit of any scheme of instruction that departed very widely from Ollendorff." He paused, and Mrs. Vervain gave a sketch of the different professional masters whom she had employed in the various countries of her sojourn, and a disquisition upon their several lives and characters, fortifying her statements by reference of doubtful points to her daughter. This occupied some time, and Ferris listened to it all with an abstracted air. At last he said, with a smile, "There was an Italian priest came to see me this morning, who astonished me by knowing English—with a brogue that he'd learned from an English priest straight from Dublin; perhaps he might do, Mrs. Vervain? He's professionally pledged, you know, not to give the kind of annoyance you've suffered from in teachers. He would do as well as Padre Girolamo, I suppose."
“Do you really? Are you in earnest?”

“Well, no, I believe I’m not. I haven’t the least idea he would do. He belongs to the church militant. He came to me with the model of a breech-loading cannon he’s invented, and he wanted a passport to go to America, so that he might offer his cannon to our government.”

“How curious!” said Mrs. Vervain, and her daughter looked frankly into Ferris’s face. “But I know; it’s one of your jokes.”

“You overpraise me, Mrs. Vervain. If I could make such jokes as that priest was, I should set up for a humorist at once. He had the touch of pathos that they say all true pieces of humour ought to have,” he went on instinctively, addressing himself to Miss Vervain, who did not repulse him. “He made me melancholy; and his face haunts me. I should like to paint him. Priests are generally such a snuffy, common lot. And I dare say,” he concluded, “he’s sufficiently commonplace, too, though he didn’t look it. Spare your romance, Miss Vervain.”

The young lady blushed resentfully. “I see as little romance as joke in it,” she said.
"It was a cannon," returned Ferris, without taking any notice of her, and with a sort of absent laugh, "that would make it very lively for the Southerners—if they had it. Poor fellow! I suppose he came with high hopes of me, and expected me to receive his invention with eloquent praises. I've no doubt he figured himself furnished not only with a passport, but with a letter from me to President Lincoln, and foresaw his own triumphal entry into Washington, and his honourable interviews with the admiring generals of the Union forces, to whom he should display his wonderful cannon. Too bad; isn't it?"

"And why didn't you give him the passport and the letter?" asked Mrs. Vervain.

"Oh, that's a state secret," returned Ferris.

"And you think he won't do for our purpose?"

"I don't, indeed."

"Well, I'm not so sure of it. Tell me something more about him."

"I don't know anything more about him. Besides, there isn't time."

The gondola had already entered the canal, and was swiftly approaching the hotel.
“Oh yes, there is,” pleaded Mrs. Vervain, laying her hand on his arm. “I want you to come in and dine with us. We dine early.”

“Thank you, I can’t. Affairs of the nation, you know. Rebel privateer on the canal of the Brenta.”

“Really?” Mrs. Vervain leaned towards Ferris for sharper scrutiny of his face. Her glasses sprang from her nose, and precipitated themselves into his bosom.

“Allow me,” he said, with burlesque politeness, withdrawing them from the recesses of his waistcoat, and gravely presenting them. Miss Vervain burst into a helpless laugh; then she turned toward her mother with a kind of indignant tenderness, and gently arranged her shawl so that it should not drop off when she rose to leave the gondola. She did not look again at Ferris, who resisted Mrs. Vervain’s entreaties to remain, and took leave as soon as the gondola landed.

The ladies went to their room, where Florida lifted from the table a vase of divers coloured hyacinths, and stepping out upon the balcony, flung the flowers into the canal. As she put down the empty vase, the linger-
ing perfume of the banished flowers haunted the air of the room.

"Why, Florida," said her mother, "those were the flowers that Mr. Ferris gave you. Did you fancy they had begun to decay? The smell of hyacinths when they're a little old is dreadful. But I can't imagine a gentleman's giving you flowers that were at all old."

"Oh, mother, don't speak to me!" cried Miss Vervain, passionately, clapping her hands to her face.

"Now I see that I've been saying something to vex you, my darling," and seating herself beside the young girl on the sofa, she fondly took down her hands. "Do tell me what it was. Was it about your teachers falling in love with you? You know they did, Florida: Pestachiavi and Schulze, both; and that horrid old Fleuron."

"Did you think I liked any better on that account to have you talk it over with a stranger?" asked Florida, still angrily.

"That's true, my dear," said Mrs. Vervain, penitently. "But if it worried you, why didn't you do something to stop me? Give me a hint, or just a little knock, somewhere?"
"No, mother; I'd rather not. Then you'd have come out with the whole thing, to prove that you were right. It's better to let it go," said Florida with a fierce laugh, half sob. "But it's strange that you can't remember how such things torment me."

"I suppose it's my weak health, dear," answered the mother. "I didn't use to be so. But now I don't really seem to have the strength to be sensible. I know it's silly as well as you. The talk just seems to keep going on of itself,—slipping out, slipping out. But you needn't mind. Mr. Ferris won't think you could ever have done anything out of the way. I'm sure you don't act with him as if you'd ever encouraged anybody. I think you're too haughty with him, Florida. And now, his flowers."

"He's detestable. He's conceited and presuming beyond all endurance. I don't care what he thinks of me. But it's his manner towards you that I can't tolerate."

"I suppose it's rather free," said Mrs. Vervain. "But then you know, my dear, I shall be soon getting to be an old lady; and besides, I always feel as if consuls are a kind of one of the family. He's been very obliging since we came; I don't know what
we should have done without him. And I don’t object to a little ease of manner in the gentlemen; I never did.”

“He makes fun of you,” cried Florida; “and there at the convent,” she said, bursting into angry tears, “he kept exchanging glances with that monk, as if he—He’s insulting, and I hate him!”

“Do you mean that he thought your mother ridiculous, Florida?” asked Mrs. Vervain gravely. “You must have misunderstood his looks; indeed you must. I can’t imagine why he should. I remember that I talked particularly well during our whole visit; my mind was active, for I felt unusually strong, and I was interested in everything. It’s nothing but a fancy of yours; or your prejudice, Florida. But it’s odd, now I’ve sat down for a moment, how worn out I feel. And thirsty.”

Mrs. Vervain fitted on her glasses, but even then felt uncertainly about for the empty vase on the table before her.

“It isn’t a goblet, mother,” said Florida; “I’ll get you some water.”

“Do; and then throw a shawl over me. I’m sleepy, and a nap before dinner will do me good. I don’t see why I’m so drowsy of
late. I suppose it's getting into the sea air here at Venice; though it's mountain air that makes you drowsy. But you're quite mistaken about Mr. Ferris. He isn't capable of anything really rude. Besides, there wouldn't have been any sense in it."

The young girl brought the water and then knelt beside the sofa, on which she arranged the pillows under her mother, and covered her with soft wraps. She laid her cheek against the thinner face. "Don't mind anything I've said, mother; let's talk of something else."

The mother drew some loose threads of the daughter's hair through her slender fingers, but said little more, and presently fell into a deep slumber. Florida gently lifted her head away, and remained kneeling before the sofa, looking into the sleeping face with an expression of strenuous, compassionate devotion, mixed with a vague alarm and self-pity, and a certain wondering anxiety.
DON IPPOLITO had slept upon his interview with Ferris, and now sat in his laboratory, amidst the many witnesses of his inventive industry, with the model of the breech-loading cannon on the work-bench before him. He had neatly mounted it on wheels, that its completeness might do him the greater credit with the consul when he should show it to him, but the carriage had been broken in his pocket, on the way home, by an unlucky thrust from the burden of a porter, and the poor toy lay there disabled, as if to dramatise that premature explosion in the secret chamber. His heart was in these inventions of his, which had as yet so grudgingly repaid his affection. For their sake he had stinted himself of many needful things. The meagre stipend which he received from the patrimony of his church, eked out with the money paid him for bap-
tisms, funerals, and marriages, and for masses by people who had friends to be prayed out of purgatory, would at best have barely sufficed to support him; but he denied himself everything save the necessary decors of dress and lodging. He fasted like a saint, and slept hard as a hermit, that he might spend upon these ungrateful creatures of his brain. They were the work of his own hands, and so he saved the expense of their construction; but there were many little outlays for materials and for tools which he could not avoid, and with him a little was all. They not only famished him—they isolated him. His superiors in the church, and his brother priests, looked with doubt or ridicule upon the labours for which he shunned their company, while he gave up the other social joys, few and small, which a priest might know in the Venice of that day, when all generous spirits regarded him with suspicion for his cloth's sake, and church and state were alert to detect disaffection or indifference in him. But bearing these things willingly, and living as frugally as he might, he had still not enough, and had been fain to assume the instruction of a young girl of old and noble family in certain
branches of polite learning which a young lady of that sort might fitly know. The family was not so rich as it was old and noble, and Don Ippolito was paid from its purse rather than its pride. But the slender salary was a help; these patricians were very good to him; many a time he dined with them, and so spared the cost of his own pottage at home—they always gave him coffee when he came, and that was a saving; at the proper seasons little presents from them were not wanting. In a word, his condition was not privation. He did his duty as a teacher faithfully, and the only trouble with it was that the young girl was growing into a young woman, and that he could not go on teaching her for ever. In an evil hour, as it seemed to Don Ippolito, that made the years she had been his pupil shrivel to a mere pinch of time, there came from a young count of the Friuli, visiting Venice, an offer of marriage; and Don Ippolito lost his place. It was hard, but he bade himself have patience; and he composed an ode for the nuptials of his late pupil, which, together with a brief sketch of her ancestral history, he had elegantly printed, according to the Italian usage, and
distributed among the family friends; he also made a sonnet to the bridegroom, and these literary tributes were handsomely acknowledged.

He managed a whole year upon the proceeds, and kept a cheerful spirit till the last soldo was spent, inventing one thing after another, and giving much time and money to a new principle of steam propulsion, which, as applied without steam to a small boat on the canal before his door, failed to work, though it had no logical excuse for its delinquency. He tried to get other pupils, but he got none, and he began to dream of going to America. He pinned his faith in all sorts of magnificent possibilities to the names of Franklin, Fulton, and Morse; he was so ignorant of our politics and geography as to suppose us at war with the South American Spaniards, but he knew that English was the language of the North, and he applied himself to the study of it. Heaven only knows what kind of inventor's Utopia our poor, patent-ridden country appeared to him in these dreams of his, and I can but dimly figure it to myself. But he might very naturally desire to come to a land where the spirit of invention is
recognised and fostered, and where he could hope to find that comfort of incentive and companionship which our artists find in Italy.

The idea of the breech-loading cannon had occurred to him suddenly one day, in one of his New-World-ward reveries, and he had made haste to realise it, carefully studying the form and general effect of the Austrian cannon under the gallery of the Ducal Palace, to the high embarrassment of the Croat sentry who paced up and down there, and who did not feel free to order off a priest as he would a civilian. Don Ippolito’s model was of admirable finish; he even painted the carriage yellow and black, because that of the original was so, and coloured the piece to look like brass; and he lost a day while the paint was drying, after he was otherwise ready to show it to the consul.

He had parted from Ferris with some gleams of comfort, caught chiefly from his kindly manner, but they had died away before nightfall, and this morning he could not rekindle them.

He had had his coffee served to him on the bench, as his frequent custom was, but
it stood untasted in the little copper pot beside the dismounted cannon, though it was now ten o’clock, and it was full time he had breakfasted, for he had risen early to perform the matin service for three peasant women, two beggars, a cat, and a paralytic nobleman, in the ancient and beautiful church to which he was attached. He had tried to go about his wonted occupations, but he was still sitting idle before his bench, while his servant gossiped from her balcony to the mistress of the next house, across a calle so deep and narrow that it opened like a mountain chasm beneath them. “It were well if the master read his breviary a little more, instead of always maddening himself with those blessed inventions, that eat more soldi than a Christian, and never come to anything. There he sits before his table, as if he were nailed to his chair, and lets his coffee cool—and God knows I was ready to drink it warm two hours ago—and never looks at me if I open the door twenty times to see whether he has finished. Holy patience! You have not even the advantage of fasting to the glory of God in this house, though you keep Lent the year round. It’s the Devil’s Lent, I say. Eh, Diana!
There goes the bell. Who now? Adieu, Lusetta. To meet again, dear. Farewell!"

She ran to another window, and admitted the visitor. It was Ferris, and she went to announce him to her master by the title he had given, while he amused his leisure in the darkness below by falling over a cistern-top, with a loud clattering of his cane on the copper lid, after which he heard the voice of the priest begging him to remain at his convenience a moment till he could descend and show him the way up-stairs. His eyes were not yet used to the obscurity of the narrow entry in which he stood, when he felt a cold hand laid on his, and passively yielded himself to its guidance. He tried to excuse himself for intruding upon Don Ippolito so soon, but the priest in far suppler Italian overwhelmed him with lamentations that he should be so unworthy the honour done him, and ushered his guest into his apartment. He plainly took it for granted that Ferris had come to see his inventions, in compliance with the invitation he had given him the day before, and he made no affectation of delay, though, after the excitement of the greetings was past, it was with a quiet
dejection that he rose and offered to lead his visitor to his laboratory.

The whole place was an outgrowth of himself; it was his history as well as his character. It recorded his quaint and childish tastes, his restless endeavours, his partial and halting successes. The ante-room in which he had paused with Ferris was painted to look like a grape-arbour, where the vines sprang from the floor, and flourishing up the trellised walls, with many a wanton tendril and flaunting leaf, displayed their lavish clusters of white and purple all over the ceiling. It touched Ferris, when Don Ippolito confessed that this decoration had been the distraction of his own vacant moments, to find that it was like certain grape-arbours he had seen in remote corners of Venice before the doors of degenerate palaces, or forming the entrances of open-air restaurants, and did not seem at all to have been studied from grape-arbours in the country. He perceived the archaic striving for exact truth, and he successfully praised the mechanical skill and love of reality with which it was done; but he was silenced by a collection of paintings in Don Ippolito's parlour, where he had been made to sit
down a moment. Hard they were in line, fixed in expression, and opaque in colour, these copies of famous masterpieces,—saints of either sex, ascensions, assumptions, martyrdoms, and what not,—and they were not quite comprehensible till Don Ippolito explained that he had made them from such prints of the subjects as he could get, and had coloured them after his own fancy. All this, in a city whose art had been the glory of the world for nigh half a thousand years, struck Ferris as yet more comically pathetic than the frescoed grape-arbour; he stared about him for some sort of escape from the pictures, and his eye fell upon a piano and a melodeon placed end to end in a right angle. Don Ippolito, seeing his look of inquiry, sat down and briefly played the same air with a hand upon each instrument.

Ferris smiled. "Don Ippolito, you are another Da Vinci, a universal genius."

"Bagatelles, bagatelles," said the priest pensively; but he rose with greater spirit than he had yet shown, and preceded the consul into the little room that served him for a smithy. It seemed, from some peculiarities of shape, to have once been an oratory, but it was now begrimed with smoke
and dust from the forge which Don Ippolito had set up in it; the embers of a recent fire, the bellows, the pincers, the hammers, and the other implements of the trade, gave it a sinister effect, as if the place of prayer had been invaded by mocking imps, or as if some hapless mortal in contract with the evil powers were here searching, by the help of the adversary, for the forbidden secrets of the metals and of fire. In those days, Ferris was an uncompromising enemy of the theatricalisation of Italy, or indeed of anything; but the fancy of the black-robed young priest at work in this place appealed to him all the more potently because of the sort of tragic innocence which seemed to characterise Don Ippolito's expression. He longed intensely to sketch the picture then and there, but he had strength to rebuke the fancy as something that could not make itself intelligible without the help of such accessories as he despised, and he victoriously followed the priest into his larger workshop, where his inventions, complete and incomplete, were stored, and where he had been seated when his visitor arrived. The high windows and the frescoed ceiling were festooned with dusty cob-webs; litter of shavings and
whittlings strewed the floor; mechanical implements and contrivances were everywhere, and Don Ippolito's listlessness seemed to return upon him again at the sight of the familiar disorder.

Conspicuous among other objects lay the illogically unsuccessful model of the new principle of steam propulsion, untouched since the day when he had lifted it out of the canal and carried it in-doors through the ranks of grinning spectators. From a shelf above it he took down models of a flying machine and a perpetual motion. "Fantastic researches in the impossible. I never expected results from these experiments, with which I nevertheless once pleased myself," he said, and turned impatiently to various pieces of portable furniture, chairs, tables, bedsteads, which, by folding up their legs and tops, condensed themselves into flat boxes, developing handles at the side for convenience in carrying. They were painted and varnished, and were in all respects complete; they had indeed won favourable mention at an exposition of the Provincial Society of Arts and Industries, and Ferris could applaud their ingenuity sincerely, though he had his tacit doubts of their
usefulness. He fell silent again when Don Ippolito called his notice to a photographic camera, so contrived with straps and springs that you could snatch by its help whatever joy there might be in taking your own photograph; and he did not know what to say of a submarine boat, a four-wheeled water-velocipede, a moveable bridge, or the very many other principles and ideas to which Don Ippolito's cunning hand had given shape, more or less imperfect. It seemed to him that they all, however perfect or imperfect, had some fatal defect; they were aspirations toward the impossible, or realisations of the trivial and superfluous. Yet, for all this, they strongly appealed to the painter as the stunted fruit of a talent denied opportunity, instruction, and sympathy. As he looked from them at last to the questioning face of the priest, and considered out of what disheartened and solitary patience they must have come in this city,—dead hundreds of years to all such endeavour,—he could not utter some glib phrases of compliment that he had in his tongue. If Don Ippolito had been taken young, he might perhaps have amounted to something, though this was questionable;
A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

but at thirty, as he looked now, with his undisciplined purposes, and his head full of vagaries of which these things were the tangible witness. — Ferris let his eyes drop again. They fell upon the ruin of the breech-loading cannon, and he said, "Don Ippolito, it's very good of you to take the trouble of showing me these matters, and I hope you'll pardon the ungrateful return, if I cannot offer any definite opinion of them now. They are rather out of my way, I confess. I wish with all my heart I could order an experimental, life-size copy of your breech-loading cannon here, for trial by my government, but I can't; and to tell you the truth, it was not altogether the wish to see these inventions of yours that brought me here to-day."

"Oh," said Don Ippolito, with a mortified air, "I am afraid that I have wearied the Signor Console."

"Not at all, not at all," Ferris made haste to answer, with a frown at his own awkwardness. "But your speaking English yesterday;—perhaps what I was thinking of is quite foreign to your tastes and possibilities."—He hesitated with a look of perplexity, while Don Ippolito
stood before him in an attitude of expectation, pressing the points of his fingers together, and looking curiously into his face. "The case is this," resumed Ferris, desperately. "There are two American ladies, friends of mine, sojourning in Venice, who expect to be here till midsummer. They are mother and daughter, and the young lady wants to read and speak Italian, with somebody a few hours each day. The question is whether it is quite out of your way or not to give her lessons of this kind. I ask it quite at a venture. I suppose no harm is done, at any rate," and he looked at Don Ippolito with apologetic perturbation.

"No," said the priest, "there is no harm. On the contrary, I am at this moment in a position to consider it a great favour that you do me in offering me this employment. I accept it with the greatest pleasure. Oh!" he cried, breaking by a sudden impulse from the composure with which he had begun to speak, "you don't know what you do for me; you lift me out of despair. Before you came, I had reached one of those passes that seem the last bound of endeavour. But you give me new life. Now I can go on with
my experiment. I can attest my gratitude by possessing your native country of the weapon I had designed for it,—I am sure of the principle: some slight improvement, perhaps the use of some different explosive, would get over that difficulty you suggested,” he said eagerly. “Yes, something can be done. God bless you, my dear little son—I mean—perdoni!—my dear sir”—

“Wait—not so fast,” said Ferris with a laugh, yet a little annoyed that a question so purely tentative as his should have met at once such a definite response. “Are you quite sure you can do what they want?” He unfolded to him, as fully as he understood it, Mrs. Vervain’s scheme.

Don Ippolito entered into it with perfect intelligence. He said that he had already had charge of the education of a young girl of noble family, and he could therefore the more confidently hope to be useful to this American lady. A light of joyful hope shone in his dreamy eyes, the whole man changed, he assumed the hospitable and caressing host. He conducted Ferris back to his parlour, and making him sit upon the hard sofa that was his hard bed by night, he summoned his servant, and bade her serve
them coffee. She closed her lips firmly, and waved her finger before her face, to signify that there was no more coffee. Then he bade her fetch it from the caffè; and he listened with a sort of rapt inattention while Ferris again returned to the subject and explained that he had approached him without first informing the ladies, and that he must regard nothing as final. It was at this point that Don Ippolito, who had understood so clearly what Mrs. Vervain wanted, appeared a little slow to understand; and Ferris had a doubt whether it was from subtlety or from simplicity that the priest seemed not to comprehend the impulse on which he had acted. He finished his coffee in this perplexity, and when he rose to go, Don Ippolito followed him down to the street-door, and preserved him from a second encounter with the cistern-top.

"But, Don Ippolito—remember! I make no engagement for the ladies, whom you must see before anything is settled," said Ferris.

"Surely,—surely!" answered the priest, and he remained smiling at the door till the American turned the next corner. Then he went back to his work-room, and took up the broken model from the bench. But he
could not work at it now, he could not work at anything; he began to walk up and down the floor.

"Could he really have been so stupid because his mind was on his ridiculous cannon?" wondered Ferris as he sauntered frowning away; and he tried to prepare his own mind for his meeting with the Vervains, to whom he must now go at once. He felt abused and victimised. Yet it was an amusing experience, and he found himself able to interest both of the ladies in it. The younger had received him as coldly as the forms of greeting would allow; but as he talked she drew nearer him with a reluctant haughtiness which he noted. He turned the more conspicuously towards Mrs. Vervain.

"Well, to make a long story short," he said, "I couldn't discourage Don Ippolito. He refused to be dismayed—as I should have been at the notion of teaching Miss Vervain. I didn't arrange with him not to fall in love with her as his secular predecessors have done—it seemed superfluous. But you can mention it to him if you like. In fact," said Ferris, suddenly addressing the daughter, "you might make the stipulation yourself, Miss Vervain."
She looked at him a moment with a sort of defenceless pain that made him ashamed; and then walked away from him towards the window, with a frank resentment that made him smile, as he continued, "But I suppose you would like to have some explanation of my motive in precipitating Don Ippolito upon you in this way, when I told you only yesterday that he wouldn't do at all; in fact I think myself that I've behaved rather fickle-mindedly—for a representative of the country. But I'll tell you; and you won't be surprised to learn that I acted from mixed motives. I'm not at all sure that he'll do; I've had awful misgivings about it since I left him, and I'm glad of the chance to make a clean breast of it. When I came to think the matter over last night, the fact that he had taught himself English—with the help of an Irishman for the pronunciation—seemed to promise that he'd have the right sort of sympathy with your scheme, and it showed that he must have something practical about him, too. And here's where the selfish admixture comes in. I didn't have your interests solely in mind when I went to see Don Ippolito. I hadn't been able to get rid of him; he stuck in my
thought. I fancied he might be glad of the pay of a teacher, and—I had half a notion to ask him to let me paint him. It was an even chance whether I should try to secure him for Miss Vervain, or for Art—as they call it. Miss Vervain won because she could pay him, and I didn’t see how Art could. I can bring him round any time; and that’s the whole inconsequent business. My consolation is that I’ve left you perfectly free. There’s nothing decided.”

“Thanks,” said Mrs. Vervain; “tho it’s all settled. You can bring him as soon as you like, to our new place. We’ve taken that apartment we looked at the other day, and we’re going into it this afternoon. Here’s the landlord’s letter,” she added, drawing a paper out of her pocket. “If he’s cheated us, I suppose you can see justice done. I didn’t want to trouble you before.”

“You’re a woman of business, Mrs. Vervain,” said Ferris. “The man’s a perfect Jew—or a perfect Christian, one ought to say in Venice; we true believers do gouge\(^\dagger\) so much more infamously here—and you let him get you in black and white before you come to me. Well,” he continued, as he

\(^\dagger\) Gouge, to cheat, to impose upon.
glanced at the paper, "you've done it! He makes you pay one-half too much. However, it's cheap enough; twice as cheap as your hotel."

"But I don't care for cheapness. I hate to be imposed upon. What's to be done about it?"

"Nothing; if he has your letter as you have his. It's a bargain, and you must stand to it."

"A bargain? Oh nonsense, now, Mr. Ferris. This is merely a note of mutual understanding."

"Yes, that's one way of looking at it. The Civil Tribunal would call it a binding agreement of the closest tenure,—if you want to go to law about it."

"I will go to law about it."

"Oh no, you won't—unless you mean to spend your remaining days and all your substance in Venice. Come, you haven't done so badly, Mrs. Vervain. I don't call four rooms, completely furnished for housekeeping, with that lovely garden, at all dear at eleven francs a day. Besides, the landlord is a man of excellent feeling, sympathetic and obliging, and a perfect gentleman, though he is such an outrageous scoundrel."
He'll cheat you, of course, in whatever he can; you must look out for that; but he'll do you any sort of little neighbourly kindness. Good-bye," said Ferris, getting to the door before Mrs. Vervain could intercept him. "I'll come to your new place this evening to see how you are pleased."

"Florida," said Mrs. Vervain, "this is outrageous."

"I wouldn't mind it, mother. We pay very little, after all."

"Yes, but we pay too much. That's what I can't bear. And as you said yesterday, I don't think Mr. Ferris's manners are quite respectful to me."

"He only told you the truth; I think he advised you for the best. The matter couldn't be helped now."

"But I call it a want of feeling to speak the truth so bluntly."

"We won't have to complain of that in our landlord, it seems," said Florida. "Perhaps not in our priest, either," she added.

"Yes, that was kind of Mr. Ferris," said Mrs. Vervain. "It was thoroughly thoughtful and considerate—what I call an instance of true delicacy. I'm really quite curious to see him. Don Ippolito! How very odd
to call a priest Don! I should have said Padre. Don always makes you think of a Spanish cavalier. Don Rodrigo: something like that."

They went on to talk, desultorily, of Don Ippolito, and what he might be like. In speaking of him the day before, Ferris had hinted at some mysterious sadness in him; and to hint of sadness in a man always interests women in him, whether they are old or young: the old have suffered, the young forebode suffering. Their interest in Don Ippolito had not been diminished by what Ferris had told them of his visit to the priest's house, and of the things he had seen there; for there had always been the same strain of pity in his laughing account, and he had imparted none of his doubts to them. They did not talk as if it were strange that Ferris should do to-day what he had yesterday said he would not do; perhaps as women they could not find such a thing strange; but it vexed him more and more as he went about all afternoon thinking of his inconsistency, and wondering whether he had not acted rashly.
IV.

The palace in which Mrs. Vervain had taken an apartment fronted on a broad campo, and hung its empty marble balconies from gothic windows above a silence scarcely to be matched elsewhere in Venice. The local pharmacy, the caffè, the grocery, the fruiterer’s, the other shops with which every Venetian campo is furnished, had each a certain life about it, but it was a silent life, and at midday a frowsy-headed woman clacking across the flags in her wooden-heeled shoes made echoes whose garrulity was interrupted by no other sound. In the early morning, when the lid of the public cistern in the centre of the campo was unlocked, there was a clamour of voices and a clangour of copper vessels, as the housewives of the neighbourhood and the local force of strong-backed Friulan water-girls drew their day’s supply of water; and on that sort of special
parochial holiday, called a sagra, the campo hummed and clattered and shrieked with a multitude celebrating the day around the stands where pumpkin seeds and roast pumpkin and anisette-water were sold, and before the moveable kitchen where cakes were fried in caldrons of oil, and uproariously offered to the crowd by the cook, who did not suffer himself to be embarrassed by the rival drama of adjoining puppet-shows, but continued to bellow forth his bargains all day long and far into the night, when the flames under his kettles painted his visage a fine crimson. The sagra once over, however, the campo relapsed into its habitual silence, and no one looking at the front of the palace would have thought of it as a place for distraction-seeking foreign sojourners. But it was not on this side that the landlord tempted his tenants; his principal notice of lodgings to let was affixed to the water-gate of the palace, which opened on a smaller channel, so near the Grand Canal, that no wandering eye could fail to see it. The portal was a tall arch of Venetian gothic tipped with a carved flame, steps of white Istrian stone descended to the level of the lowest ebb, irregularly
embossed with barnacles, and dabbling long
fringe of soft green sea-mosses in the rising
and falling tide. Swarms of water-bugs and
beetles played over the edges of the steps,
and crabs scuttled sideways into deeper
water at the approach of a gondola. A
length of stone-capped brick wall, to which
patches of stucco still clung, stretched from
the gate on either hand under cover of an
ivy that flung its mesh of shining green from
within, where there lurked a lovely garden,
stately, spacious for Venice, and full of a
delicious half-sad surprise for whoso opened
upon it. In the midst it had a broken
fountain, with a marble naiad standing on a
shell, and looking saucier than the sculptor
meant, from having lost the point of her
nose; nymphs and fauns, and shepherds and
shepherdesses, her kinsfolk, coquetted in
and out among the greenery in flirtation,
not to be embarrassed by the fracture of an
arm, or the casting of a leg or so; one lady
had no head, but she was the boldest of all.
In this garden there were some mulberry
and pomegranate trees, several of which
hung about the fountain with seats in their
shade, and for the rest there seemed to be
mostly roses and oleanders, with other
shrubs of a kind that made the greatest show of blossom and cost the least for attendance. A wide terrace stretched across the rear of the palace, dropping to the garden path by a flight of balustraded steps, and upon this terrace opened the long windows of Mrs. Vervain’s parlour and dining-room. Her landlord owned only the first story and the basement of the palace, in some corner of which he cowered with his servants, his taste for pictures and bric-a-brac, and his little branch of inquiry into Venetian history, whatever it was, ready to let himself or anything he had for hire at a moment’s notice, but very pleasant, gentle, and unobtrusive; a cheat and a liar, but of a kind heart and sympathetic manners. Under his protection Mrs. Vervain set up her impermanent household gods. The apartment was taken only from week to week, and as she freely explained to the padrone hovering about with offers of service, she knew herself too well ever to unpack anything that would not spoil by remaining packed. She made her trunks yield all the appliances necessary for an invalid’s comfort, and then left them in a state to be strapped and transported to the
station within half a day after the desire of change or the exigencies of her feeble health caused her going. Everything for housekeeping was furnished with the rooms. There was a gondolier and a sort of house servant in the employ of the landlord, of whom Mrs. Vervain hired them, and she caressingly dismissed the padrone at an early moment after her arrival, with the charge to find a maid for herself and daughter. As if she had been waiting at the next door this maid appeared promptly, and being Venetian, and in domestic service, her name was of course Nina. Mrs. Vervain now said to Florida that everything was perfect, and contentedly began her life in Venice by telling Mr. Ferris, when he came in the evening, that he could bring Don Ippolito the day after the morrow, if he liked.

She and Florida sat on the terrace waiting for them on the morning named, when Ferris, with the priest in his clerical best, came up the garden path in the sunny light. Don Ippolito's best was a little poverty-stricken; he had faltered a while, before leaving home, over the sad choice between a shabby cylinder hat of obsolete fashion and
his well-worn three-cornered priestly hat, and had at last put on the latter with a sigh. He had made his servant polish the buckles of his shoes, and instead of a band of linen round his throat, he wore a strip of cloth covered with small white beads, edged above and below with a single row of pale blue ones.

As he mounted the steps with Ferris, Mrs. Vervain came forward a little to meet them, while Florida rose and stood beside her chair in a sort of proud suspense and timidity. The elder lady was in that black from which she had so seldom been able to escape; but the daughter wore a dress of delicate green, in which she seemed a part of the young season that everywhere clothed itself in the same tint. The sunlight fell upon her blonde hair, melting into its light gold; her level brows frowned somewhat with the glance of scrutiny which she gave the dark young priest, who was making his stately bow to her mother, and trying to answer her English greetings in the same tongue.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Vervain, and Don Ippolito made another low bow, and then looked at the girl with a sort of frank and melancholy wonder, as she turned and
exchanged a few words with Ferris, who was assailing her seriousness and hauteur with unabashed levity of compliment. A quick light flashed and fled in her cheek as she talked, and the fringes of her serious, asking eyes swept slowly up and down as she bent them upon him a moment before she broke abruptly, not coquettishly, away from him, and moved towards her mother, while Ferris walked off to the other end of the terrace, with a laugh. Mrs. Vervain and the priest were trying each other in French, and not making great advance; he explained to Florida in Italian, and she answered him hesitatingly; whereupon he praised her Italian in set phrase.

"Thank you," said the girl sincerely, "I have tried to learn. I hope," she added as before, "you can make me see how little I know." The deprecating wave of the hand with which Don Ippolito appealed to her from herself, seemed arrested midway by his perception of some novel quality in her. He said gravely that he should try to be of use, and then the two stood silent.

"Come, Mr. Ferris," called out Mrs. Vervain, "breakfast is ready, and I want you to take me in."
"Too much honour," said the painter, coming forward and offering his arm, and Mrs. Vervain led the way in-doors.

"I suppose I ought to have taken Don Ippolito's arm," she confided in undertone, "but the fact is, our French is so unlike that we don't understand each other very well."

"Oh," returned Ferris, "I've known Italians and Americans whom Frenchmen themselves couldn't understand."

"You see it's an American breakfast," said Mrs. Vervain with a critical glance at the table before she sat down. "All but hot bread; that you can't have," and Don Ippolito was for the first time in his life confronted by a breakfast of hot beef-steak, eggs and toast, fried potatoes, and coffee with milk, with a choice of tea. He subdued all signs of the wonder he must have felt, and beyond cutting his meat into little bits before eating it, did nothing to betray his strangeness to the feast.

The breakfast had passed off very pleasantly, with occasional lapses. "We break down under the burden of so many languages," said Ferris. "It is an embarras des richesses. Let us fix upon a common
maccheronic. May I trouble you for a poco più di sugar dans mon café, Mrs. Vervain? What do you think of the bellezza de ce weather magnifique, Don Ippolito?"

"How ridiculous!" said Mrs. Vervain, in a tone of fond admiration, aside to Don Ippolito, who smiled, but shrank from contributing to the new tongue.

"Very well, then," said the painter. "I shall stick to my native Bergamask for the future; and Don Ippolito may translate for the foreign ladies."

He ended by speaking English with everybody. Don Ippolito eked out his speeches to Mrs. Vervain in that tongue with a little French; Florida, conscious of Ferris's ironical observance, used an embarrassed but defiant Italian with the priest.

"I'm so pleased!" said Mrs. Vervain, rising when Ferris said that he must go, and Florida shook hands with both guests.

"Thank you, Mrs. Vervain; I could have gone before, if I'd thought you would have liked it," answered the painter.

"Oh nonsense, now," returned the lady. "You know what I mean. I'm perfectly delighted with him," she continued, getting Ferris to one side, "and I know he must have
a good accent. So very kind of you! Will you arrange with him about the pay?—such a shame! Thanks. Then I needn't say anything to him about that. I'm so glad I had him to breakfast the first day; though Florida thought not. Of course, one needn't keep it up. But seriously, it isn't an ordinary case, you know."

Ferris laughed at her with a sort of affectionate disrespect, and said good-bye. Don Ippolito lingered for a while to talk over the proposed lessons, and then went, after more elaborate adieus. Mrs. Vervain remained thoughtful a moment before she said—

"That was rather droll, Florida."

"What, mother?"

"His cutting his meat into small bites, before he began to eat. But perhaps it's the Venetian custom. At any rate, my dear, he's a gentleman in virtue of his profession, and I couldn't do less than ask him to breakfast. He has beautiful manners; and if he must take snuff, I suppose it's neater to carry two handkerchiefs, though it does look odd. I wish he wouldn't take snuff."

"I don't see why we need care, mother. At any rate, we cannot help it."
"That's true, my dear. And his nails. Now, when they're spread out on a book, you know, to keep it open, won't it be unpleasant?"

"They seem to have just such finger-nails all over Europe—except in England."

"Oh, yes; I know it. I dare say we shouldn't care for it in him, if he didn't seem so very nice otherwise. How handsome he is!"