thing at all? The horrible absurdity, the inexorable delicacy of his position made him laugh.

On the other hand, besides, he was bound to Don Ippolito, who had come to him as the nearest friend of both, and confided in him. He remembered with a tardy, poignant intelligence how in their first talk of the Vervains Don Ippolito had taken pains to inform himself that Ferris was not in love with Florida. Could he be less manly and generous than this poor priest, and violate the sanctity of his confidence? Ferris groaned aloud. No, contrive it as he would, call it by what fair name he chose, he could not commit this treachery. It was the more impossible to him because, in this agony of doubt as to what he should do, he now at last read his own heart clearly, and had no longer a doubt what was in it. He pitied her for the pain she must suffer. He saw how her simple goodness, her blind sympathy with Don Ippolito, and only this, must have led the priest to the mistaken pass at which he stood. But Ferris felt that the whole affair had been fatally carried beyond his reach; he could do nothing now but wait and endure. There are cases in which a man must not protect the woman he loves. This was one.
The afternoon wore away. In the evening he went to the Piazza, and drank a cup of coffee at Florian's. Then he walked to the Public Gardens, where he watched the crowd till it thinned in the twilight and left him alone. He hung upon the parapet, looking off over the lagoon that at last he perceived to be flooded with moonlight. He desperately called a gondola, and bade the man row him to the public landing nearest the Vervains', and so walked up the calle, and entered the palace from the campo, through the court that on one side opened into the garden.

Mrs. Vervain was alone in the room where he had always been accustomed to find her daughter with her, and a chill as of the impending change fell upon him. He felt how pleasant it had been to find them together; with a vain, piercing regret he felt how much like home the place had been to him. Mrs. Vervain, indeed, was not changed; she was even more than ever herself, though all that she said imported change. She seemed to observe nothing unwonted in him, and she began to talk in her way of things that she could not know were so near his heart.

"Now, Mr. Ferris, I have a little surprise for you. Guess what it is!"
"I'm not good at guessing. I'd rather not know what it is than have to guess it," said Ferris, trying to be light, under his heavy trouble.

"You won't try once, even? Well, you're going to be rid of us soon! We are going away."

"Yes, I knew that," said Ferris quietly.

"Don Ippolito told me so to-day."

"And is that all you have to say? Isn't it rather sad? Isn't it sudden? Come, Mr. Ferris, do be a little complimentary, for once!"

"It's sudden, and I can assure you it's sad enough for me," replied the painter, in a tone which could not leave any doubt of his sincerity.

"Well, so it is for us," quavered Mrs. Vervain. "You have been very, very good to us," she went on more collectedly, "and we shall never forget it. Florida has been speaking of it, too, and she's extremely grateful, and thinks we've quite imposed upon you."

"Thanks."

"I suppose we have, but as I always say, you're the representative of the country here. However, that's neither here nor there. We have no relatives on the face of
the earth, you know; but I have a good many old friends in Providence, and we're going back there. We both think I shall be better at home; for I'm sorry to say, Mr. Ferris, that though I don't complain of Venice,—it's really a beautiful place, and all that; not the least exaggerated,—still I don't think it's done my health much good; or at least I don't seem to gain, don't you know, I don't seem to gain."

"I'm very sorry to hear it, Mrs. Vervain."

"Yes, I'm sure you are; but you see, don't you, that we must go? We are going next week. When we've once made up our minds, there's no object in prolonging the agony."

Mrs. Vervain adjusted her glasses with the thumb and finger of her right hand, and peered into Ferris's face with a gay smile. "But the greatest part of the surprise is," she resumed, lowering her voice a little, "that Don Ippolito is going with us."

"Ah!" cried Ferris sharply.

"I knew I should surprise you," laughed Mrs. Vervain. "We've been having a regular confab—clave, I mean—about it here, and he's all on fire to go to America; though it must be kept a great secret on his
account, poor fellow. He's to join us in France, and then he can easily get into England, with us. You know he's to give up being a priest, and is going to devote himself to invention when he gets to America. Now, what do you think of it, Mr. Ferris? Quite strikes you dumb, doesn't it?" triumphed Mrs. Vervain. "I suppose it's what you would call a wild goose chase,—I used to pick up all those phrases,—but we shall carry it through."

Ferris gasped, as though about to speak, but said nothing.

"Don Ippolito's been here the whole afternoon," continued Mrs. Vervain, "or rather ever since about five o'clock. He took dinner with us, and we've been talking it over and over. He's so enthusiastic about it, and yet he breaks down every little while, and seems quite to despair of the undertaking. But Florida won't let him do that; and really it's funny, the way he defers to her judgment—you know I always regard Florida as such a mere child—and seems to take every word she says for gospel. But, shedding tears, now: it's dreadful in a man, isn't it? I wish Don Ippolito wouldn't do that. It makes one creep. I can't feel that it's manly; can you?"
Ferris said something about those things being different with the Latin races.

"Well, at any rate," said Mrs. Vervain, "I'm glad that Americans don't shed tears, as a general rule. Now, Florida: you'd think she was the man all through this business, she's so perfectly heroic about it; that is, outwardly: for I can see—women can, in each other, Mr. Ferris—just where she's on the point of breaking down, all the while. Has she ever spoken to you about Don Ippolito? She does think so highly of your opinion, Mr. Ferris."

"She does me too much honour," said Ferris, with ghastly irony.

"Oh, I don't think so," returned Mrs. Vervain. "She told me this morning that she'd made Don Ippolito promise to speak to you about it; but he didn't mention having done so, and—I hated, don't you know, to ask him—In fact, Florida had told me beforehand that I mustn't. She said he must be left entirely to himself in that matter, and"—Mrs. Vervain looked suggestively at Ferris.

"He spoke to me about it," said Ferris.

"Then why in the world did you let me run on? I suppose you advised him against it:"

"I certainly did."
"Well, there's where I think woman's intuition is better than man's reason."

The painter silently bowed his head.

"Yes, I'm quite woman's rights in that respect," said Mrs. Vervain.

"Oh, without doubt," answered Ferris, aimlessly.

"I'm perfectly delighted," she went on, "at the idea of Don Ippolito's giving up the priesthood, and I've told him he must get married to some good American girl. You ought to have seen how the poor fellow blushed! But really, you know, there are lots of nice girls that would jump at him—so handsome and sad-looking, and a genius."

Ferris could only stare helplessly at Mrs. Vervain, who continued:—

"Yes, I think he's a genius, and I'm determined that he shall have a chance. I suppose we've got a job on our hands; but I'm not sorry. I'll introduce him into society, and if he needs money he shall have it. What does God give us money for, Mr. Ferris, but to help our fellow-creatures?"

So miserable, as he was, from head to foot, that it seemed impossible he could endure more, Ferris could not forbear laughing at this burst of piety.

"What are you laughing at?" asked
Mrs. Vervain, who had cheerfully joined him. "Something I've been saying? Well, you won't have me to laugh at much longer. I do wonder whom you'll have next."

Ferris's merriment died away in something like a groan, and when Mrs. Vervain again spoke, it was in a tone of sudden quorulousness. "I wish Florida would come! She went to bolt the land-gate after Don Ippolito,—I wanted her to,—but she ought to have been back long ago. It's odd you didn't meet them, coming in. She must be in the garden somewhere; I suppose she's sorry to be leaving it. But I need her. Would you be so very kind, Mr. Ferris, as to go and ask her to come to me?"

Ferris rose heavily from the chair in which he seemed to have grown ten years older. He had hardly heard anything that he did not know already, but the clear vision of the affair with which he had come to the Vervains was hopelessly confused and darkened. He could make nothing of any phase of it. He did not know whether he cared now to see Florida or not. He mechanically obeyed Mrs. Vervain, and stepping out upon the terrace, slowly descended the stairway. The moon was shining brightly into the garden.
XV.

FLORIDA and Don Ippolito had paused in the pathway which parted at the fountain and led in one direction to the water-gate, and in the other out through the palace-court into the campo.

"Now you must not give way to despair again," she said to him. "You will succeed, I am sure, for you will deserve success."

"It is all your goodness, madamigella," sighed the priest, "and at the bottom of my heart I am afraid that all the hope and courage I have are also yours."

"You shall never want for hope and courage then. We believe in you, and we honour your purpose, and we will be your steadfast friends. But now you must think only of the present—of how you are to get away from Venice. Oh, I can understand how you must hate to leave it! What a beautiful night! You mustn't expect such moonlight as this in America, Don Ippolito."
"It is beautiful, is it not?" said the priest, kindling from her. "But I think we Venetians are never so conscious of the beauty of Venice as you strangers are."

"I don't know. I only know that now, since we have made up our minds to go, and fixed the day and hour, it is more like leaving my own country than anything else I've ever felt. This garden, I seem to have spent my whole life in it; and when we are settled in Providence, I'm going to have mother send back for some of these statues. I suppose Signor Cavaletti wouldn't mind our robbing his place of them if he were paid enough. At any rate we must have this one that belongs to the fountain. You shall be the first to set the fountain playing over there, Don Ippolito, and then we'll sit down on this stone bench before it, and imagine ourselves in the garden of Casa Vervain at Venice."

"No, no; let me be the last to set it playing here," said the priest, quickly stooping to the pipe at the foot of the figure, "and then we will sit down there, and imagine ourselves in the garden of Casa Vervain at Providence."

Florida put her hand on his shoulder. "You mustn't do it," she said simply.
"The padrone doesn’t like to waste the water."

"Oh, we’ll pray the saints to rain it back on him some day," cried Don Ippolito, with wilful levity, and the stream leaped into the moonlight, and seemed to hang there like a tangled skein of silver.

"But how shall I shut it off when you are gone?" asked the young girl, looking ruefully at the floating threads of splendour.

"Oh, I will shut it off before I go," answered Don Ippolito. "Let it play a moment," he continued, gazing rapturously upon it, while the moon painted his lifted face with a pallor that his black robes heighten'd. He fetched a long, sighing breath, as if he inhaled with that respiration all the rich odours of the flowers, blanched like his own visage in the white lustre; as if he absorbed into his heart at once the wide glory of the summer night, and the beauty of the young girl at his side. It seemed a supreme moment with him; he looked as a man might look who has climbed out of life-long defeat into a single instant of release and triumph.

Florida sank upon the bench before the fountain indulging his caprice with that sacred, motherly tolerance, some touch of
which is in all womanly yielding to men's will, and which was perhaps present in greater degree in her feeling "towards a man more than ordinarily orphaned and unfriended.

"Is Providence your native city?" asked Don Ippolito abruptly, after a little silence.

"Oh no; I was born at St. Augustine in Florida."

"Ah yes, I forgot; madama has told me about it; Providence is her city. But the two are near together?"

"No," said Florida compassionately, "they are a thousand miles apart."

"A thousand miles? What a vast country!"

"Yes, it's a whole world."

"Ah, a world, indeed!" cried the priest softly, "I shall never comprehend it."

"You never will, answered the young girl gravely, "if you do not think about it more practically."

"Practically, practically!" lightly retorted the priest. "What a word with you Americans! That is the consul's word: practical."

"Then you have been to see him to-day?" asked Florida with eagerness. "I wanted to ask you."—
"Yes, I went to consult the oracle, as you bade me."

"Don Ippolito—"

"And he was averse to my going to America. He said it was not practical."

"Oh!" murmured the girl.

"I think," continued the priest with vehemence, "that Signor Ferris is no longer my friend."

"Did he treat you coldly—harshly?" she asked, with a note of indignation in her voice. "Did he know that I—that you came—"

"Perhaps he was right. Perhaps I shall indeed go to ruin there. Ruin, ruin! Do I not live ruin here?"

"What did he say—what did he tell you?"

"No, no; not now, madamigella! I do not want to think of that man now. I want you to help me once more to realise myself in America, where I shall never have been a priest, where I shall at least battle even-handed with the world. Come, let us forget him; the thought of him palsies all my hope. He could not see me save in this robe—in this figure that I abhor."

"Oh, it was strange, it was not like him, it was cruel! What did he say?"
"In everything but words, he bade me despair; he bade me look upon all that makes life dear and noble as impossible to me!"

"Oh, how? Perhaps he did not understand you. No, he did not understand you. What did you say to him, Don Ippolito? Tell me!" She leaned towards him, in anxious emotion, as she spoke.

The priest rose, and stretched out his arms, as if he would gather something of courage from the infinite space. In his visage were the sublimity and the terror of a man who puts everything to the risk.

"How will it really be with me yonder?" he demanded. "As it is with other men, whom their past life, if it has been guiltless, does not follow to that new world of freedom and justice?"

"Why should it not be so?" demanded Florida: "Did he say it would not?"

"Need it be known there that I have been a priest? Or if I tell it, will it make me appear a kind of monster, different from other men?"

"No, no!" she answered fervently. "Your story would gain friends and honour for you everywhere in America. Did he"—
“A moment, a moment!” cried Don Ippolito, catching his breath. “Will it ever be possible for me to win something more than honour and friendship there?”

She looked up at him askingly, confusedly.

“If I am a man, and the time should ever come that a face, a look, a voice, shall be to me what they are to other men, will she remember it against me that I have been a priest, when I tell her—say to her, madamigella—how dear she is to me, offer her my life’s devotion, ask her to be my wife?” —

Florida rose from the seat, and stood confronting him, in a helpless silence, which he seemed not to notice.

Suddenly he clasped his hands together, and desperately stretched them towards her.

“Oh, my hope, my trust, my life, if it were you that I loved?” —

“What!” shuddered the girl, recoiling, with almost a shriek. “You? A priest!”

Don Ippolito gave a low cry, half sob: —

“His words, his words! It is true, I cannot escape, I am doomed, I must die as I have lived!”

He dropped his face into his hands, and stood with his head bowed before her; neither spoke for a long time, or moved.
Then Florida said absently, in the husky murmur to which her voice fell, when she was strongly moved, "Yes, I see it all, how it has been," and was silent again, staring, as if a procession of the events and scenes of the past months were passing before her; and presently she moaned to herself, "Oh, oh, oh!" and wrung her hands.

The foolish fountain kept capering and babbling on. All at once, now, as a flame flashes up and then expires, it leaped and dropped extinct at the foot of the statue.

Its going out seemed somehow to leave them in darkness, and under cover of that gloom she drew nearer the priest, and by such approaches as one makes toward a fancied apparition, when his fear will not let him fly, but it seems better to suffer the worst from it at once than to live in terror of it ever after, she lifted her hands to his, and gently taking them away from his face, looked into his hopeless eyes.

"Oh, Don Ippolito," she grieved. "What shall I say to you, what can I do for you, now?"

But there was nothing to do. The whole edifice of his dreams, his wild imaginations, had fallen into dust at a word; no magic
could rebuild it; the end that never seems the end had come. He let her keep his cold hands, and presently he returned the entreaty of her tears with his wan, patient smile.

"You cannot help me; there is no help for an error like mine. Sometime, if ever the thought of me is a greater pain than it is at this moment, you can forgive me. Yes, you can do that for me."

"But who, who will ever forgive me," she cried, "for my blindness! Oh, you must believe that I never thought, I never dreamt"—

"I know it well. It was your fatal truth that did it; truth too high and fine for me to have discerned save through such agony as—You too loved my soul, like the rest, and you would have had me no priest for the reason that they would have had me a priest—I see it. But you had no right to love my soul and not me—you, a woman. A woman must not love only the soul of a man."

"Yes, yes!" piteously explained the girl, "but you were a priest to me!"

"That is true, madamigella. I was always a priest to you; and now I see that I never could be otherwise. Ah, the wrong began
many years before we met. I was trying to blame you a little”—

"Blame me, blame me; do!"

"but there is no blame. Think that it was another way of asking your forgiveness.
—O my God, my God, my God!"

He released his hands from her, and uttered this cry under his breath, with his face lifted towards the heavens. When he looked at her again, he said: "Madamigella, if my share of this misery gives me the right to ask of you”—

"Oh, ask anything of me! I will give everything, do everything!"

He faltered, and then, "You do not love me," he said abruptly; "is there some one else that you love?"

She did not answer.

"Is it—he?"

She hid her face.

"I knew it," groaned the priest, "I knew that too!" and he turned away.

"Don Ippolito, Don Ippolito—oh, poor, poor Don Ippolito!" cried the girl, springing towards him. "Is this the way you leave me? Where are you going? What will you do now?"

"Did I not say? I am going to die a priest."
"Is there nothing that you will let me be to you, hope for you?"

"Nothing," said Don Ippolito, after a moment. "What could you?" He seized the hands imploringly extended towards him, and clasped them together and kissed them both. "Adieu!" he whispered; then he opened them, and passionately kissed either palm; "adieu, adieu!"

A great wave of sorrow and compassion and despair for him swept through her. She flung her arms about his neck, and pulled his head down upon her heart, and held it tight there, weeping and moaning over him as over some hapless, harmless thing that she had un purposely bruised or killed. Then she suddenly put her hands against his breast, and thrust him away, and turned and ran.

Ferris stepped back again into the shadow of the tree from which he had just emerged, and clung to its trunk lest he should fall. Another seemed to creep out of the court in his person, and totter across the white glare of the campo and down the blackness of the calle. In the intersected spaces where the moonlight fell, this alien, miserable man saw the figure of a priest gliding on before him.
FLORIDA swiftly mounted the terrace steps, but she stopped with her hand on the door, panting, and turned and walked slowly away to the end of the terrace, drying her eyes with dashes of her handkerchief, and ordering her hair, some coils of which had been loosened by her flight. Then she went back to the door, waited, and softly opened it. Her mother was not in the parlour where she had left her, and she passed noiselessly into her own room, where some trunks stood open and half-packed against the wall. She began to gather up the pieces of dress that lay upon the bed and chairs, and to fold them with mechanical carefulness and put them in the boxes. Her mother’s voice called from the other chamber, “Is that you, Florida?”

“Yes, mother,” answered the girl, but remained kneeling before one of the boxes, with that pale green robe in her hand which
A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

she had worn on the morning when Ferris had first brought Don Ippolito to see them. She smoothed its folds and looked down at it without making any motion to pack it away, and so she lingered while her mother advanced with one question after another; "What are you doing, Florida? Where are you? Why didn't you come to me?" and finally stood in the doorway. "Oh, you're packing. Do you know, Florida, I'm getting very impatient about going. I wish we could be off at once."

A tremor passed over the young girl, and she started from her languid posture, and laid the dress in the trunk. "So do I, mother. I would give the world if we could go to-morrow!"

"Yes, but we can't, you see. I'm afraid we've undertaken a great deal, my dear. It's quite a weight upon my mind, already; and I don't know what it will be. If we were free, now, I should say, go to-morrow by all means. But we couldn't arrange it with Don Ippolito on our hands."

Florida waited a moment before she replied. Then she said coldly, "Don Ippolito is not going with us, mother."

"Not going with us? Why?"——

"He is not going to America. He will
not leave Venice; he is to remain a priest,' said Florida doggedly.

Mrs. Vervain sat down in the chair that stood beside the door. "Not going to America; not leave Venice; remain a priest? Florida, you astonish me! But I am not the least surprised, not the least in the world. I thought Don Ippolito would give out, all along. He is not what I should call fickle, exactly, but he is weak, or timid, rather. He is a good man, but he lacks courage, resolution. I always doubted if he would succeed in America; he is too much of a dreamer. But this, really, goes a little beyond anything. I never expected this. What did he say, Florida? How did he excuse himself?"

"I hardly know; very little. What was there to say?"

"To be sure, to be sure. Did you try to reason with him, Florida?"

"No," answered the girl, drearily.

"I am glad of that. I think you had said quite enough already. You owed it to yourself not to do so, and he might have misinterpreted it. These foreigners are very different from Americans. No doubt we should have had a time of it, if he had gone with us. It must be for the best. I'm
sure it was ordered so. But all that doesn't relieve Don Ippolito from the charge of black ingratitude, and want of consideration for us. He's quite made fools of us."

"He was not to blame. It was a very great step for him. And if"

"I know that. But he ought not to have talked of it. He ought to have known his own mind fully before speaking; that's the only safe way. Well, then, there is nothing to prevent our going to-morrow."

Florida drew a long breath, and rose to go on with the work of packing.

"Have you been crying, Florida? Well, of course, you can't help feeling sorry for such a man. There's a great deal of good in Don Ippolito, a great deal. But when you come to my age you won't cry so easily, my dear. It's very trying," said Mrs. Vervain. She sat a while in silence before she asked, "Will he come here to-morrow morning?"

Her daughter looked at her with a glance of terrified inquiry.

"Do have your wits about you, my dear! We can't go away without saying good-bye to him, and we can't go away without paying him."

"Paying him?"

"Yes, paying him—paying him for your
lessons. It’s always been very awkward. He hasn’t been like other teachers, you know: more like a guest, or friend of the family. He never seemed to want to take the money, and of late, I’ve been letting it run along, because I hated so to offer it, till now it’s quite a sum. I suppose he needs it, poor fellow. And how to get it to him is the question. He may not come to-morrow, as usual, and I couldn’t trust it to the padrone. We might send it to him in a draft from Paris, but I’d rather pay him before we go. Besides, it would be rather rude, going away without seeing him again.” Mrs. Vervain thought a moment; then, “I’ll tell you,” she resumed. “If he doesn’t happen to come here to-morrow morning, we can stop on our way to the station and give him the money.”

Florida did not answer.

“Don’t you think that would be a good plan?”

“I don’t know,” replied the girl in a dull way.

“Why, Florida, if you think from anything Don Ippolito said that he would rather not see us again—that it would be painful to him—why, we could ask Mr. Ferris to hand him the money.”
"Oh no, no, no, mother!" cried Florida, hiding her face, "that would be too horribly indelicate."

"Well, perhaps it wouldn't be quite good taste," said Mrs. Vervain perturbedly, "but you needn't express yourself so violently, my dear. It's not a matter of life and death. I'm sure I don't know what to do. We must stop at Don Ippolito's house, I suppose. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," faintly assented the daughter.

Mrs. Vervain yawned. "Well, I can't think anything more about it to-night; I'm too stupid. But that's the way we shall do. Will you help me to bed, my dear? I shall be good for nothing to-morrow."

She went on talking of Don Ippolito's change of purpose till her head touched the pillow, from which she suddenly lifted it again, and called out to her daughter, who had passed into the next room: "But Mr. Ferris—why didn't he come back with you?"

"Come back with me?"

"Why yes, child. I sent him out to call you, just before you came in. This Don Ippolito business put him quite out of my head. Didn't you see him?—Oh! What's that?"

"Nothing: I dropped my candle."
"You're sure you didn't set anything on fire?"
"No! It went dead out."
"Light it again, and do look. Now is everything right?"
"Yes."
"It's queer he didn't come back to say he couldn't find you. What do you suppose became of him?"
"I don't know, mother."
"It's very perplexing. I wish Mr. Ferris were not so odd. It quite borders on affectation. I don't know what to make of it. We must send word to him the very first thing to-morrow morning, that we're going, and ask him to come to see us."

Florida made no reply. She sat staring at the black space of the door-way into her mother's room. Mrs. Vervain did not speak again. After a while her daughter softly entered her chamber, shading the candle with her hand; and seeing that she slept, softly withdrew, closed the door, and went about the work of packing again. When it was all done, she flung herself upon her bed and hid her face in the pillow.

The next morning was spent in bestowing those interminable last touches which the
packing of ladies' baggage demands, and in taking leave with largess (in which Mrs. Vervain shone) of all the people in the house and out of it, who had so much as touched a hat to the Vervains during their sojourn. The whole was not a vast sum; nor did the sundry extortions of the padrone come to much, though the honest man racked his brain to invent injuries to his apartments and furniture. Being unmurmuringly paid, he gave way to his real goodwill for his tenants in many little useful offices. At the end he persisted in sending them to the station in his own gondola, and could with difficulty be kept from going with them.

Mrs. Vervain had early sent a message to Ferris, but word came back a first and a second time that he was not at home, and the forenoon wore away and he had not appeared. A certain indignation sustained her till the gondola pushed out into the canal, and then it yielded to an intolerable regret that she should not see him.

"I can't go without saying good-bye to Mr. Ferris, Florida," she said at last, "and it's no use asking me. He may have been wanting a little in politeness, but he's been so good all along; and we owe him too much not to make an effort to thank him before
we go. We really must stop a moment at his house."

Florida, who had regarded her mother’s efforts to summon Ferris to them with passive coldness, turned a look of agony upon her. But in a moment she bade the gondolier stop at the consulate, and dropping her veil over her face, fell back in the shadow of the tenda-curtains.

Mrs. Vervain sentimentalised their departure a little, but her daughter made no comment on the scene they were leaving.

The gondolier rang at Ferris’s door and returned with the answer that he was not at home.

Mrs. Vervain gave way to despair. "Oh dear, oh dear! This is too bad! What shall we do?"

"We’ll lose the train, mother, if we loiter in this way," said Florida.

"Well, wait. I must leave a message at least." "How could you be away," she wrote on her card, "when we called to say good-bye? We’ve changed our plans and we’re going to-day. I shall write you a nice scolding letter from Verona—we’re going over the Brenner—for your behaviour last night. Who will keep you straight when I’m gone? You’ve been very, very kind. Florida joins me
in a thousand thanks, regrets, and good-byes." .

"There, I haven't said anything, after all," she fretted, with tears in her eyes.

The gondolier carried the card again to the door, where Ferris's servant let down a basket by a string and fished it up.

"If Don Ippolito shouldn't be in," said Mrs. Vervain, as the boat moved on again, "I don't know what I shall do with this money. It will be awkward beyond anything."

The gondola slipped from the Canalazzo into the network of the smaller canals, where the dense shadows were as old as the palaces that cast them, and stopped at the landing of a narrow quay. The gondolier dismounted and rang at Don Ippolito's door. There was no response; he rang again and again. At last from a window of the uppermost story the head of the priest himself peered out. The gondolier touched his hat and said, "It is the ladies who ask for you, Don Ippolito."

It was a minute before the door opened, and the priest, bare-headed and blinking in the strong light, came with a stupefied air across the quay to the landing-steps.

"Well, Don Ippolito!" cried Mrs. Vervain, rising and giving him her hand, which she first waved at the trunks and bags piled
up in the vacant space in front of the boat, "what do you think of this? We are really going, immediately; we can change our minds too; and I don't think it would have been too much," she added with a friendly smile, "if we had gone without saying good-bye to you. What in the world does it all mean, your giving up that grand project of yours so suddenly?"

She sat down again, that she might talk more at her ease, and seemed thoroughly happy to have Don Ippolito before her again.

"It finally appeared best, madama," he said quietly, after a quick, keen glance at Florida, who did not lift her veil.

"Well, perhaps you're partly right. But I can't help thinking that you with your talent would have succeeded in America. Inventors do get on there, in the most surprising way. There's the Screw Company of Providence. It's such a simple thing; and now the shares are worth eight hundred. Are you well to-day, Don Ippolito?"

"Quite well, madama."

"I thought you looked rather pale. But I believe you're always a little pale. You mustn't work too hard. We shall miss you a great deal, Don Ippolito."

"Thanks, madama."
"Yes, we shall be quite lost without you. And I wanted to say this to you, Don Ippolito, that if ever you change your mind again, and conclude to come to America, you must write to me, and let me help you just as I had intended to do."

The priest shivered, as if cold, and gave another look at Florida’s veiled face.

"You are too good," he said.

"Yes, I really think I am," replied Mrs. Vervain, playfully. "Considering that you were going to let me leave Venice without even trying to say good-bye to me, I think I’m very good indeed."

Mrs. Vervain’s mood became overcast, and her eyes filled with tears: "I hope you’re sorry to have us going, Don Ippolito, for you know how very highly I prize your acquaintance. It was rather cruel of you, I think."

She seemed not to remember that he could not have known of their change of plan. Don Ippolito looked imploringly into her face, and made a touching gesture of depreciation, but did not speak.

"I’m really afraid you’re not well, and I think it’s too bad of us to be going," resumed Mrs. Vervain; "but it can’t be helped now: we are all packed, don’t you
see? But I want to ask one favour of you, Don Ippolito; and that is,” said Mrs. Vervain, covertly taking a little rouleau from her pocket, “that you’ll leave these inventions of yours for a while, and give yourself a vacation. You need rest of mind. Go into the country, somewhere, do. That’s what’s preying upon you. But we must really be off, now. Shake hands with Florida—I’m going to be the last to part with you,” she said, with a tearful smile.

Don Ippolito and Florida extended their hands. Neither spoke, and as she sank back upon the seat from which she had half risen, she drew more closely the folds of the veil which she had not lifted from her face.

Mrs. Vervain gave a little sob as Don Ippolito took her hand and kissed it; and she had some difficulty in leaving with him the rouleau, which she tried artfully to press into his palm. “Good-bye, good-bye,” she said, “don’t drop it,” and attempted to close his fingers over it.

But he let it lie carelessly in his open hand, as the gondola moved off, and there it still lay as he stood watching the boat slip under a bridge at the next corner, and disappear. While he stood there gazing at the
empty arch, a man of a wild and savage aspect approached. It was said that this man's brain had been turned by the death of his brother, who was betrayed to the Austrians after the revolution of '48, by his wife's confessor. He advanced with swift strides, and at the moment he reached Don Ippolito's side he suddenly turned his face upon him and cursed him through his clenched teeth: "Dog of a priest!"

Don Ippolito, as if his whole race had renounced him in the maniac's words, uttered a desolate cry, and hiding his face in his hands, tottered into his house.

The rouleau had dropped from his palm; it rolled down the shelving marble of the quay, and slipped into the water.

The young beggar who had held Mrs. Vervain's gondola to the shore while she talked, looked up and down the deserted quay, and at the doors and windows. Then he began to take off his clothes for a bath.
FERRIS returned at nightfall to his house, where he had not been since daybreak, and flung himself exhausted upon the bed. His face was burnt red with the sun, and his eyes were bloodshot. He fell into a dose and dreamed that he was still at Malamocco, whither he had gone that morning in a sort of craze, with some fishermen, who were to cast their nets there; then he was rowing back to Venice across the lagoon, that seemed a molten fire under the keel. He woke with a heavy groan, and bade Marina fetch him a light.

She set it on the table, and handed him the card Mrs. Vervain had left. He read it and read it again, and then he laid it down, and putting on his hat, he took his cane and went out. "Do not wait for me, Marina," he said, "I may be late. Go to bed."

He returned at midnight, and lighting his candle took up the card and read it once
more. He could not tell whether to be glad or sorry that he had failed to see the Vervains again. He took it for granted that Don Ippolito was to follow; he would not ask himself what motive had hastened their going. The reasons were all that he should never more look upon the woman so hatefully lost to him, but a strong instinct of his heart struggled against them.

He lay down in his clothes, and began to dream almost before he began to sleep. He woke early, and went out to walk. He did not rest all day. Once he came home, and found a letter from Mrs. Vervain, postmarked Verona, reiterating her lamentations and adieus, and explaining that the priest had relinquished his purpose, and would not go to America at all. The deeper mystery in which this news left him was not less sinister than before.

In the weeks that followed, Ferris had no other purpose than to reduce the days to hours, the hours to minutes. The burden that fell upon him when he woke lay heavy on his heart till night, and oppressed him far into his sleep. He could not give his trouble certain shape; what was mostly with him was a formless loss, which he could not resolve into any definite shame or
wrong. At times, what he had seen seemed to him some baleful trick of the imagination, some lurid and foolish illusion.

But he could do nothing, he could not ask himself what the end was to be. He kept in-doors by day, trying to work, trying to read, marvelling somewhat that he did not fall sick and die. At night he set out on long walks, which took him he cared not where, and often detained him till the grey lights of morning began to tremble through the nocturnal blue. But even by night he shunned the neighbourhood in which the Vervains had lived. Their landlord sent him a package of trifles they had left behind, but he refused to receive them, sending back word that he did not know where the ladies were. He had half expected that Mrs. Vervain, though he had not answered her last letter, might write to him again from England, but she did not. The Vervains had passed out of his world; he knew that they had been in it only by the torment they had left him.

He wondered in a listless way that he should see nothing of Don Ippolito. Once at midnight he fancied that the priest was coming towards him across a campo he had just entered; he stopped and turned back
into the calle: when the priest came up to him, it was not Don Ippolito.

In these days Ferris received a despatch from the Department of State, informing him that his successor had been appointed, and directing him to deliver up the consular flags, seals, archives, and other property of the United States. No reason for his removal was given; but as there had never been any reason for his appointment, he had no right to complain; the balance was exactly dressed by this simple device of our civil service. He determined not to wait for the coming of his successor before giving up the consular effects, and he placed them at once in the keeping of the worthy ship-chandler who had so often transferred them from departing to arriving consuls. Then being quite ready at any moment to leave Venice, he found himself in nowise eager to go; but he began in a desultory way to pack up his sketches and studies.

One morning as he sat idle in his dismantled studio, Marina came to tell him that an old woman, waiting at the door below, wished to speak with him.

"Well, let her come up," said Ferris wearily, and presently Marina returned with a very ill-favoured beldam, who stared
hard at him while he frowningly puzzled himself as to where he had seen that malign visage before.

"Well?" he said harshly.

"I come," answered the old woman, "on the part of Don Ippolito Rondinelli, who desires so much to see your Excellency."

Ferris made no response, while the old woman knotted the fringe of her shawl with quaking hands, and presently added with a tenderness in her voice which oddly discorded with the hardness of her face: "He has been very sick, poor thing, with a fever; but now he is in his senses again, and the doctors say he will get well. I hope so. But he is still very weak. He tried to write two lines to you, but he had not the strength; so he bade me bring you this word: That he had something to say which it greatly concerned you to hear, and that he prayed you to forgive his not coming to revere you, for it was impossible, and that you should have the goodness to do him this favour, to come to find him the quickest you could."

The old woman wiped her eyes with the corner of her shawl, and her chin wobbled pathetically while she shot a glance of baleful dislike at Ferris, who answered after
a long dull stare at her, "Tell him I'll come."

He did not believe that Don Ippolito could tell him anything that greatly concerned him; but he was worn out with going round in the same circle of conjecture, and so far as he could be glad, he was glad of this chance to face his calamity. He would go, but not at once; he would think it over; he would go to-morrow, when he had got some grasp of the matter.

The old woman lingered.

"Tell him I'll come," repeated Ferris impatiently.

"A thousand excuses; but my poor master has been very sick. The doctors say he will get well. I hope so. But he is very weak indeed; a little shock, a little disappointment?—Is the signore very, very much occupied this morning? He greatly desired,—he prayed that if such a thing were possible in the goodness of your Excellency,—But I am offending the signore!"

"What do you want?" demanded Ferris.

The old wretch set up a pitiful whimper, and tried to possess herself of his hand; she kissed his coat-sleeve instead. "That you will return with me," she besought him.
"Oh, I'll go!" groaned the painter. "I might as well go first as last," he added in English. "There, stop that! Enough, enough, I tell you! Didn't I say I was going with you?" he cried to the old woman.

"God bless you!" she mumbled, and set off before him down the stairs and out of the door. She looked so miserably old and weary, that he called a gondola to his landing and made her get into it with him.

It tormented Don Ippolito's idle neighbourhood to see Veneranda arrive in such state, and a passionate excitement arose at the caffè, where the person of the consul was known, when Ferris entered the priest's house with her.

He had not often visited Don Ippolito, but the quaintness of the place had been so vividly impressed upon him, that he had a certain familiarity with the grape-arch of the anteroom, the paintings of the parlour, and the puerile arrangement of the piano and melodeon. Veneranda led him through these rooms to the chamber where Don Ippolito had first shown him his inventions.

They were all removed now, and on a bed, set against the wall opposite the door, lay
the priest, with his hands on his breast, and a faint smile on his lips, so peaceful, so serene, that the painter stopped with a sudden awe, as if he had unawares come into the presence of death.

"Advance, advance," whispered the old woman.

Near the head of the bed sat a white-haired priest, wearing the red stockings of a canonico; his face was fanatically stern; but he rose and bowed courteously to Ferris.

The stir of his robes roused Don Ippolito. He slowly and weakly turned his head, and his eyes fell upon the painter. He made a helpless gesture of salutation with his thin hand, and began to excuse himself, for the trouble he had given, with a gentle politeness that touched the painter's heart through all the complex resentments that divided them. It was indeed a strange ground on which the two men met. Ferris could not have described Don Ippolito as his enemy, for the priest had wittingly done him no wrong; he could not have logically hated him as a rival, for till it was too late he had not confessed to his own heart the love that was in it; he knew no evil of Don Ippolito, he could not accuse him of any
betrayal of trust, or violation of confidence. He felt merely that this hapless creature, lying so deathlike before him, had profaned, however involuntarily, what was sacredest in the world to him; beyond this all was chaos. He had heard of the priest's sickness with a fierce hardening of the heart; yet, as he beheld him now, he began to remember things that moved him to a sort of remorse. He recalled again the simple loyalty with which Don Ippolito had first spoken to him of Miss Vervain, and tried to learn his own feeling towards her; he thought how trustfully at their last meeting the priest had declared his love and hope, and how, when he had coldly received his confession, Don Ippolito had solemnly adjured him to be frank with him; and Ferris could not. That pity for himself as the prey of fantastically cruel chances, which he had already vaguely felt, began now also to include the priest; ignoring all but that compassion, he went up to the bed and took the weak, chill, nerveless hand in his own.

The canonico rose and placed his chair for Ferris beside the pillow, on which lay a brass crucifix, and then softly left the room, exchanging a glance of affectionate intelligence with the sick man.
"I might have waited a little while," said Don Ippolito weakly, speaking in a hollow voice that was the shadow of his old deep tones, "but you will know how to forgive the impatience of a man not yet quite master of himself. I thank you for coming. I have been very sick, as you see; I did not think to live; I did not care—I am very weak now; let me say to you quickly what I want to say. Dear friend," continued Don Ippolito, fixing his eyes upon the painter's face, "I spoke to her that night after I had parted from you."

The priest's voice was now firm; the painter turned his face away.

"I spoke without hope," proceeded Don Ippolito, "and because I must. I spoke in vain; all was lost, all was past in a moment."

The coil of suspicions and misgivings and fears in which Ferris had lived was suddenly without a clew; he could not look upon the pallid visage of the priest lest he should now at last find there that subtle expression of deceit; the whirl of his thoughts kept him silent; Don Ippolito went on.

"Even if I had never been a priest, I would still have been impossible to her. She"—
He stopped as if for want of strength to go on. All at once he cried, "Listen!" and he rapidly recounted the story of his life, ending with the fatal tragedy of his love. When it was told he said calmly, "But now everything is over with me on earth. I thank the Infinite Compassion for the sorrows through which I have passed. I, also, have proved the miraculous power of the Church, potent to save in all ages." He gathered the crucifix in his spectral grasp, and pressed it to his lips. "Many merciful things have befallen me on this bed of sickness. My uncle, whom the long years of my darkness divided from me, is once more at peace with me. Even that poor old woman whom I sent to call you, and who had served me as I believed with hate for me as a false priest in her heart, has devoted herself day and night to my helplessness; she has grown decrepit with her cares and vigils. Yes, I have had many and signal marks of the Divine pity to be grateful for." He paused, breathing quickly, and then added, "They tell me that the danger of this sickness is past. But none the less I have died in it. When I rise from this bed it shall be to take the vows of a Carmelite friar."
Foregone Conclusion.

Ferris made no answer, and Don Ippolito resumed:

"I have told you how, when I first owned to her the falsehood in which I lived, she besought me to try if I might not find consolation in the holy life to which I had been devoted. When you see her, dear friend, will you not tell her that I came to understand that this comfort, this refuge, awaited me in the cell of the Carmelite? I have brought so much trouble into her life that I would fain have her know I have found peace where she bade me seek it, that I have mastered my affliction by reconciling myself to it. Tell her that but for her pity and fear for me, I believe that I must have died in my sins."

It was perhaps inevitable from Ferris's Protestant association of monks and convents and penances chiefly with the machinery of fiction, that all this affected him as unreal as talk in a stage-play. His heart was cold, as he answered: "I am glad that your mind is at rest concerning the doubts which so long troubled you. Not all men are so easily pacified; but, as you say, it is the privilege of your Church to work miracles. As to Miss Vervain, I am sorry that I cannot promise to give her your message. I shall
never see her again. Excuse me," he con-
tinued, "but your servant said there was
something you wished to say that concerned
me?"

"You will never see her again!" cried the
priest, struggling to lift himself upon his
elbow, and falling back upon the pillow.
"Oh, bereft! Oh deaf and blind! It was
you that she loved! She confessed it to me
that night."

"Wait!" said Ferris, trying to steady
his voice, and failing; "I was with Mrs.
Vervain that night; she sent me into the
garden to call her daughter, and I saw how
Miss Vervain parted from the man she did
not love! I saw"—

It was a horrible thing to have said it, he
felt now that he had spoken; a sense of
the indelicacy, the shamefulness, seemed to
alienate him from all high concern in the
matter, and to leave him a mere self-con-
victed eavesdropper. His face flamed; the
wavering hopes, the wavering doubts, alike
died in his heart. He had fallen below the
dignity of his own trouble.

"You saw, you saw," softly repeated the
priest, without looking at him, and without
any show of emotion; apparently the con-
valescence that had brought him perfect
clearness of reason, had left his sensibilities still somewhat dulled. He closed his lips and lay silent. At last, he asked very gently, "And how shall I make you believe that what you saw was not a woman's love, but an angel's heavenly pity for me? Does it seem hard to believe this of her?"

"Yes," answered the painter doggedly, "it is hard."

"And yet it is the very truth. Oh, you do not know her, you never knew her! In the same moment that she denied me her love she divined the anguish of my soul, and with that embrace she sought to console me for the friendlessness of a whole life, past and to come. But I know that I waste my words on you," he cried bitterly. "You never would see me as I was; you would find no singleness in me, and yet I had a heart as full of loyalty to you as love for her. In what have I been false to you?"

"You never were false to me," answered Ferris, "and God knows I have been true to you, and at what cost. We might well curse the day we met, Don Ippolito, for we have only done each other harm. But I never meant you harm. And now I ask you to forgive me if I cannot believe you. I cannot—yet. I am of another race from
you, slow to suspect, slow to trust. Give me a little time; let me see you again. I want to go away and think. I don't question your truth. I'm afraid you don't know. I'm afraid that the same deceit has tricked us both. I must come to you to-morrow. Can I?"

He rose and stood beside the couch.

"Surely, surely," answered the priest, looking into Ferris's troubled eyes with calm meekness. "You will do me the greatest pleasure. Yes, come again to-morrow. You know," he said with a sad smile, referring to his purpose of taking vows, "that my time in the world is short. Adieu, to meet again!"

He took Ferris's hand, hanging weak and hot by his side, and drew him gently down by it, and kissed him on either bearded cheek. "It is our custom, you know, among friends. Farewell."

The canonico in the anteroom bowed austerely to him as he passed through; the old woman refused with a harsh "Nothing!" the money he offered her at the door.

He bitterly upbraided himself for the doubts he could not banish, and he still flushed with shame that he should have declared his knowledge of a scene which ought, at its worst, to have been inviolable
by his speech. He scarcely cared now for the woman about whom these miseries grouped themselves; he realised that a fantastic remorse may be stronger than a jealous love.

He longed for the morrow to come, that he might confess his shame and regret; but a reaction to this violent repentance came before the night fell. As the sound of the priest’s voice and the sight of his wasted face faded from the painter’s sense, he began to see everything in the old light again. Then what Don Ippolito had said took a character of ludicrous, of insolent improbability.

After dark, Ferris set out upon one of his long, rambling walks. He walked hard and fast, to try if he might not still, by mere fatigue of body, the anguish that filled his soul. But whichever way he went he came again and again to the house of Don Ippolito, and at last he stopped there, leaning against the parapet of the quay, and staring at the house, as though he would spell from the senseless stones the truth of the secret they sheltered. Far up in the chamber, where he knew that the priest lay, the windows were dimly lit.

As he stood thus, with his upturned face
haggard in the moonlight, the soldier commanding the Austrian patrol which passed that way halted his squad, and seemed about to ask him what he wanted there.

Ferris turned and walked swiftly home ward; but he did not even lie down. His misery took the shape of an intent that would not suffer him to rest. He meant to go to Don Ippolito and tell him that his story had failed of its effect, that he was not to be fooled so easily, and, without demanding anything further, to leave him in his lie.

At the earliest hour when he might hope to be admitted, he went, and rang the bell furiously. The door opened, and he confronted the priest's servant. "I want to see Don Ippolito," said Ferris abruptly.

"It cannot be," she began.

"I tell you I must," cried Ferris, raising his voice. "I tell you"—

"Madman!" fiercely whispered the old woman, shaking both her open hands in his face, "he's dead! He died last night!"