

CONRAD BOLANDEN

BARBAROSSA; AN
HISTORICAL NOVEL OF
THE XII CENTURY.

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Conrad von Bolanden Barbarossa; An Historical Novel of the XII Century

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

The pleasant historical novel which is now offered to the American public, refers to a period of history very much misrepresented, though very frequently written about, or at least referred to by popular writers. In the contest between Pope Alexander III. and the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, we see a very important phase of the long struggle between the spiritual and civil power; a struggle, in which was fought the battle of real liberty, and real Christian civilization, against brute force and Pagan tyranny. Perhaps nothing has been so badly understood as the real *casus belli* in this struggle of centuries. Most non-Catholics firmly believe that the conflict arose from an effort of the Church to obtain universal dominion; to make princes and people bow to her behests on all matters; to reduce the civil ruler to the condition of a mere lieutenant of the Pontiff, to be removed at will by that spiritual autocrat, and, of course, to

improve the condition of her own officials; securing for them the choicest and fairest portions of all the good things of the earth. The Emperors and Kings who were hostile to the Church are painted, on the other hand, as the assertors of civil liberty, the William Tells that refused to salute the tyrant's cap, even though it were called a tiara; the heroes, that in a superstitious age braved the terrors of excommunication, rather than sink into a degraded servitude, to the heartless ambition of churchmen.

Nothing can be farther from the truth than this view of the subject. In reality, what the Church fought for during this long struggle was-not power, but-liberty. She refused to admit that she was a corporation existing by the permission, or the creation of the State. She claimed to be a spiritual society, existing by the fiat of the will of God, entirely independent in her own sphere, having a government of her own; executive, legislative, and judicial rights and duties of her own; an end of her own, far above and beyond the affairs of this world. It was for this liberty and independence that her martyrs had died, her confessors languished in prison, her saints prayed and suffered. When the rulers of the world became Christian, the difficulties in the way of her liberty did not cease; they only assumed a new form. Open opposition became oppression, under the specious name of protection; and the State made every effort to restrain and shackle a power, the indomitable energy and dauntless courage of which it imagined it had reason to fear.

This was, indeed, one of the "empty" things which the sons of

men, crafty in their own generation, allow themselves to say when they speak of spiritual things. The unrestrained power of the city of God on earth cannot hinder, or in any way interfere with the true development of the earthly commonwealth. Truth, morality, justice, are the surest foundations of civil peace, liberty, and prosperity. Under the pretence of defending their rights and those of their people, civil rulers have endeavored to subjugate the Church, enslave her ministers, make her, in a word, merely a piece of government machinery, to register their decrees, and enforce them with her anathemas. Had they succeeded, the only bulwark of freedom would have been swept away; for as man has no right higher or holier than freedom of conscience, that is, freedom to serve God rather than man, had this right been sacrificed to the imperious demands of the civil power, other rights less important, such as those which constitute civil liberty, would have been lost with it.

Thus the medieval Pontiffs—living in exile, wandering from one city to another, often in prison, rarely suffered to live in peace—were the martyrs of the highest and truest freedom. To their indomitable courage, untiring perseverance, and clear-sighted intelligence, we owe whatever idea of true freedom (that is of the existence of the rights of man independently of the permission, toleration, or concession of the civil power) still survives in modern society.

These fundamental truths are well illustrated in the following pages. The special period of history chosen, serves to show

clearly the real points of dispute. Even Voltaire acknowledged that it was the "wisdom" of Alexander III. that triumphed over the "violence" of Barbarossa. As the same writer observes: – "Alexander revived the rights of the people and suppressed the crimes of Kings." A Pontiff to whom such testimony is borne by Voltaire, cannot fairly be accused of ambitious designs. In his contest with Frederic, from the beginning to the end, he simply asserted the independence of the Church. Antipope after antipope was opposed to him, all of them were puppets of the Emperor; but in the end, even Frederic was obliged to yield, and to acknowledge the patient but determined Alexander as the Vicar of Christ.

The subserviency of these pretended Pontiffs is well described by our author. There is no exaggeration here. These men were merely Vicars of the Emperor, existing by his favor, the creatures of his breath. They cared little for the ratification of their decrees in Heaven; so that they knew that they pleased the rulers of this world! What the Emperor wished bound, they did bind, and what he wished loosed, they did loose, even the holy bonds of matrimony. Their degradation and that of the courtier bishops, so graphically depicted in these pages, is a practical proof of the great truth, that while there is no human greatness more exalted than the dignity of the ecclesiastical character, there is no fall lower than that of a churchman who, forgetful of his calling, makes himself the slave of the world's power, be it wielded by a crowned King or by an uncrowned mob.

The heartless repudiation of his wife by Henry the Lion, after the mock sentence of the miserable Victor, and the recourse of Constance to Alexander, himself a fugitive, and persecuted, is a touching instance of the manners of the times, and of the protection the Church and her real Pontiffs ever gave to the sanctity of marriage. Little do women in our day think how much they owe to the Popes, who so bravely and so constantly fought their battles in those rude and licentious ages, protecting their innocence, defending their rights, making them the companions, not the servants of those rough warriors. There was more than one Constance in those ages: but never did any of them appeal to the Head of Christendom, that her demand for justice was not heard, and her rights courageously vindicated.

The simple threads of the love-story of Erwin and Hermengarde serve pleasantly to connect together the other more important events of the tale, and serve to illustrate on the one hand the finest type of feminine affection and constancy, and on the other that of manly nobility and courage. We think the author can fairly lay claim to historical accuracy in the main events of his tale. Every matter of public interest, even the wonderful pestilence which checked Frederic in his victorious career at Rome, is related as given by contemporary writers.

We venture to bespeak for Barbarossa a kind and gracious reception from the American public. It is a well told tale, which will afford real instruction, as well as pleasant amusement. It will serve to give true ideas about medieval history, and to

make Catholics more interested in learning the truth about those real Pontiffs, who did battle for religion and the rights of man against the Kings and rulers of the day. We consider it a valuable contribution to our lighter literature, and we hope to see it followed by many others of the same purpose and object. The translator has done his work well, and we trust Barbarossa in its English dress will become a universal favorite.

J. K.

Philadelphia,
Ascension Day, 1867.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY

Towards the middle of the 12th century, Milan had conquered for herself a powerful supremacy throughout all of Upper Italy, and with the exception of the proud Genoa and the maritime Venetian republic, all the cities of Lombardy acknowledged her sovereignty. Lodi, Pavia, and some few of the neighboring towns, had made bold attempts to assert their rights, but all their efforts were unsuccessful; and had only resulted in riveting more tightly their fetters, while the pride of the Milanese, and a desire for more extended power, increased in proportion to the failing strength of their adversaries. The majority bore in silence the yoke which they could not shake off preferring the advantages secured to them by prompt submission to the danger of losing in the unequal struggle every vestige of their former independence.

Lombardy, it is true, was an appanage of the Germanic empire, but the sovereignty of the Emperor was almost nominal, and only acknowledged by the turbulent Lombards, when forced so to do by his victorious arms; and whenever a war broke out between the Monarch, his great feudatories, or the Church, the smouldering embers of rebellion at once burst forth into open insurrection.

Scarcely had Frederic the First, of Hohenstauffen, mounted

the throne, when his attention was attracted to Italy by an event of grave and unusual importance.

In 1158, whilst Barbarossa, as the Emperor was usually surnamed by the Italians, was presiding over a High Court of Justice at Kossnitz, and listening to the various cases submitted for his decision, two men, wearing upon their backs a wooden cross as a symbol of their misfortune, presented themselves before the throne with a long list of grievances against the Milanese, by whom, they alleged, the city of Lodi had been destroyed after the pillage and the exile of its citizens. They had come now to implore the intervention of the Emperor, whose power alone, they urged, could check the tyranny of the Milanese and save from utter ruin the other cities of Lombardy.

Frederic at once dispatched one of his nobles, Schwicker, of Aspremont, with a letter of reproof and menace to Milan. But on his arrival the consuls and the people refused to listen to the message. They tore the despatch to pieces, trampled it underfoot, and obliged the ambassador to seek safety in flight.

Such a crime could not go unpunished, and Frederic, at the head of a powerful army, crossed the Alps and appeared, when least expected, in the plains of Lombardy. Meanwhile the Milanese were putting into execution their perfidious designs against Como and Lodi, and offered to the Emperor the sum, enormous for that age, of four hundred gold *marks*, on condition that he would recognize their sovereignty over these cities.

But the proposition was indignantly rejected. "Wretches," said

he to the Milanese ambassadors, "do you presume to bribe me to palliate your treachery? Do you propose to the Emperor of Germany to become a partner in your baseness? Even were it in my power to sell the half of my domains, I would rather turn your city into a paltry village than countenance this exercise of arbitrary despotism over a country which has as much right to liberty as yourselves." The result of the interview was a solemn engagement, on the part of the Milanese, to indemnify Lodi and Como for all damages sustained, as the powerful alliances of Milan, her military strength, and the comparative weakness of the German army, did not, at the time, permit of the absolute subjection of Lombardy.

Thence Frederic marched towards Tortona, an ally of the Milanese, which had attacked and ravaged the territory of Pavia. Explanations were demanded, but, confiding in the strength of its fortifications, Tortona haughtily refused. The Emperor at once attacked the town, stormed the works, and reduced it to ashes.

This terrible example dismayed the Milanese, who were ignorant of the fate in store for them, but they had learned to appreciate the energy and courage of the Emperor, and they began to estimate the necessity of strengthening and renewing the alliances which had formerly existed between them and the neighboring States.

Scarcely had the Emperor recrossed the Alps, and received the crown from the hands of Pope Adrian IV., when the Milanese resumed their depredations upon Lodi. Far from making amends

for their former damages, and thus fulfilling the stipulations of the treaty, they marched a powerful army against the city, imprisoned or killed the inhabitants, and only retired after laying waste the vineyards, and destroying the crops throughout the entire province.

Again the inhabitants of Lodi sought the assistance of the Emperor.

Barbarossa was incensed beyond measure at this insolent disregard, not only of his threats, but even of his Imperial supremacy. Such audacity demanded prompt repression, and Imperial edicts were at once issued to all the spiritual and temporal princes of the Empire, summoning them to join the Army destined to operate in Italy.

In the month of June, 1158, the German army crossed the Alps, and Milan was besieged and taken after a heroic defence.

Again Frederic, either through pity or a desire to spare the noble city, or through the temptation of a costly bribe, delayed the execution of his threats, although urgently counselled to inflict upon Milan the fate of Tortona. But he humbled the pride of the haughty Lombards: all their rights and privileges were confiscated, and they were compelled to rebuild Lodi and Como, while all duties and customs were henceforth to revert to the Imperial treasury; a fine of nine thousand silver marks was imposed, and as a guarantee for the fulfilment of these and many other conditions, three hundred of the principal citizens were to be given up and held as hostages.

The Emperor then disbanded the greater portion of his German levies, and convoked a Diet of the princes, prelates, counts, and chief civil dignitaries, who in general assembly were to attend to the pacification of Italy, and the re-establishment of order, and to define precisely the respective rights of the sovereign and his subjects.

An immense camp was pitched in the midst of the vast plain which is watered by the Po; in the centre stood the Imperial tent, and around it, in order of rank, those of the princes. Streets at right angles divided the various quarters of this city of canvas, and to avoid all danger of collisions, the Germans and Italians were encamped on opposite sides of the river. Frederic had invited four of the most celebrated *juris consults* of Bologna, and had given them as coadjutors twenty-eight counsellors from the other Lombard towns, in order to investigate and define thoroughly the origin and spirit of their statute laws and their oral traditions.

From his throne, Frederic opened the assembly with a solemn discourse.

"Called to the supreme power, by the grace of God," said he, "our task is to elevate the courage of the good, to restrain and punish the evil-doer. At the close of the late campaign which we have terminated so fortunately; the pacification of the country demands our earnest attention, for it is only simple justice that we should protect, by our arms, the people who are governed by our laws. But before anything be written, or decided concerning

our respective rights, duties, and privileges; we must establish what is equitable and expedient, necessary and useful, according to the locality and the epoch; for once these laws adopted and promulgated, there will be no further discussion admitted in the matter, they will be rigidly and exactly enforced."

The Italians were astonished at the ability of the young monarch. His talents and his policy compelled their respect, for it became evident that under such a ruler, their only safe course of action would be implicit obedience.

Whilst the Bolognese legists insisted upon privileges being accorded to the Emperor, based upon the old Roman law, the Lombard counsellors complained of an autocratic despotism, in the decisions, subversive of their own peculiar rights, and inimical to the interests of their country. For example, all revenues from tolls on rivers and bridges, and tonnage dues in ports and harbors, were to revert hereafter to the Emperor; and all duties on grain, salt works, and fisheries, with the right of coinage, hitherto a prerogative of the dukes, counts, and free cities, were in future to belong exclusively to the Imperial treasury.

Barbarossa had destroyed the autonomy of the Lombard cities, and reduced them to be mere dependencies of the empire. Still, so long as he remained in Upper Italy, no open signs of discontent were manifested, but scarcely had he turned towards Rome, when the revolt broke out. In order to pacify, if possible, the malcontents, Otto de Wittelsbach; the Chancellor Rinaldo,

and the Knight of Goswin were at once sent to Milan. But the exasperated populace assembled before the dwelling of the ambassadors, who with much difficulty escaped being torn to pieces.

This unexpected outrage excited the rage of the German nobles who accompanied the Emperor, and the rebellious city was threatened with sack and pillage, while its inhabitants were doomed to slavery. This fierce menace, however, by no means disheartened the Milanese, who determined to employ every means of resistance in their power, and to die gloriously rather than wear the fetters of serfdom. The struggle began at once, and while Barbarossa was celebrating the festival of Easter at Bologna, the Lombards seized the Imperial treasury, in which were lodged the enormous sums which he had collected in Italy. Then they burned the castle and hung all the garrison, who were Italians, as traitors to their country.

The Emperor hastened back with his little army, but he arrived too late; the Milanese had retreated behind their works, and from the walls of the city could see Frederic, in his anger, lay waste all the surrounding country; for, weak in numbers and destitute of siege artillery, his army was powerless against the town. Scarcely had he left the neighborhood, when the Lombards took up again the offensive, and retaliated upon the Emperor's allies for the havoc which he had caused in their territory. Joining their forces to those of the Brescians, they took Lodi and Cremona, and made several attacks upon the Imperialist forces; and such was

the vindictiveness displayed; that several abortive attempts were made to assassinate the German Emperor, who was unable to check or punish these acts of hostility. His army was composed almost entirely of Italians, and although the rebellious city of Cremona was taken and burned, his reprisals were without result.

This continual strife and its attendant misfortunes, equally disastrous for both factions, reduced Lombardy almost to a desert. The devastated fields produced no more crops, and the ground being unable to sustain even the native population, the foreign troops suffered severely from famine. Barbarossa convoked again his knights and nobles, thanked and rewarded them publicly for their devotion to his cause, and disbanded the Germans, promising to open the campaign with a strong army, early in the following spring.

CHAPTER II.

THE AMBUSCADE

After a winter spent in harassing the enemy and in petty skirmishes with the Emperor's adherents, the Milanese inaugurated the year 1161, in a more serious manner, by the capture of several fortresses, some by assault, others through treachery. Frederic was still unable to make any serious resistance to his enemy's advance; for the German reinforcements had not yet arrived, and his own little army, in order to hasten the fall of Milan, was besieging the towns of Como and Neulodi, so that his operations were limited almost to a strictly defensive policy, whilst, in person, he rode at the head of a small escort, through the province, reassuring his declared allies and conciliating those whose sentiments were as yet doubtful.

It was a beautiful morning. A small troop of armed men, whose appearance was that of banditti, were keeping guard at the foot of a hill, about two days' journey from Milan. The soldiers, wearied by a long march, were stretched upon the ground, and about a dozen horses, with heaving flanks, stood close by, showing clearly that they had shared the fatigue of their riders.

The chief of the band stood a little to their rear, and with his arms crossed on his breast, appeared to be reflecting profoundly.

His costly armor and proud bearing was not that of a robber, for his shield was magnificently embossed in silver, the border of his surcoat richly embroidered, and his sword-belt inlaid with precious jewels. By his side stood a man of short stature, apparently quite at his ease. He wore a pointed hat, and on his bronzed face beamed an expression of knavery and deceit, which, with his sparkling eye and a continued sneer around the mouth, gave to his whole physiognomy a most malevolent character. He carried a cross-bow and a quiver full of bolts on his back, and by his side hung a long rapier.

"Nothing!" said the knight, angrily. "Ah! Griffi, if you have deceived me, you shall be flogged."

"Flogged! my lord Pietro! I, Cocco Griffi, the son of the high and mighty Consul Nigri of Milan! I flogged!" said the little man, with marked astonishment.

"Yes, without fail!"

"How, my lord Pietro! your native city boasts of giving liberty to the Italians. Would it not be barbarous to flog a loyal citizen?"

"You have most richly deserved it! At this very moment, the Milanese are destroying one of the strongholds of German tyranny; and I, who would so gladly have shared in the glorious work, have been decoyed here by your specious tale, to await, uselessly, the coming of that accursed Barbarossa, while my countrymen are celebrating their triumph."

"I crave your pardon, my lord! The destruction of a castle, already half in ruins is scarcely a deed worthy of your heroism,"

replied Griffi, in a half serious, half jocular tone. "Ah! it would be another thing had it been necessary to storm the Castle of Cinola. But as Barbarossa's worthy governor, Bonello, has in a fit of patriotism opened the gates, I could see but little opportunity there for a display of your valor. For the prowess of the brave Milanese will not go further than the draining of some wine-casks and the destruction of some old furniture; they may perhaps burn the castle, but, this done, they will return within their city walls."

Pietro made no reply, but with a glance of contempt upon the speaker, again turned to gaze into the distance.

"On the other hand," continued Griffi, proudly, "you will have, thanks to me, a chance of doing here something truly heroic. I learned that the Emperor, with a feeble escort, was about to proceed towards the North; I managed to insinuate myself among the soldiers, and discovered the road by which he was to travel; and then galloping night and day, came here, to show you how to rid the country of its oppressor, by his death or capture! And yet, as a reward for all this, you threaten to flog me!"

"But if we succeed!" said Pietro, his face flushing with enthusiasm, "if we succeed, I will fill your hat with gold pieces. I will have your name engraved upon tablets of bronze, and your statue erected in every public square in Lombardy."

Cocco scarcely heeded the last words, so intently did he gaze towards the distant horizon. Suddenly he seized the arm of the knight:

"Look there!" he cried, "there, near the forest; see that armor shining in the sun. It is Barbarossa himself, followed by eighteen knights and seventy varlets!"

"Oh! the wretch!" exclaimed the Milanese, with an expression of mingled hatred and anger.

"I beg you, my lord," said Pietro hurriedly, "take off your helmet, and turn your shield, or their reflection will betray our presence," and, as his advice was followed, he at once resumed, -

"Now let us make every arrangement in order that the tyrant may not escape. Remain here with your men, in observation, whilst I ride over to Cinola to get reinforcements."

"Aye! and meanwhile, Barbarossa will get away. Oh! fool that I am! why am I here, without my own brave troopers? One bold stroke, and the yoke of my beloved country would be broken!"

"Fear nothing," said Cocco, "those iron-clad soldiers would need wings, to escape now. Mark yonder little valley with its sloping meadows and its narrow stream! The Germans are making toward it, for the road passes close by, and good pastures are too rare now in Lombardy for them to neglect so favorable a chance for resting their horses. So, while his Imperial Majesty is taking his ease, our troops will come up, and it will be an easy task to seize this red-headed tyrant by the beard."

Griffi whistled and clapped his hands, and, at the sound, an active little horse ran toward him.

"Cocco," said the knight to his companion, "my good friend, Cocco, lose no time-but, stay, let two of my troopers go with you;

an accident might happen, and remember that you hold in your hands the liberty of Italy."

"Bah! my lord Pietro," replied the other, "I will give you leave to flog me, if my horse, Molo, does not easily distance your stiff troopers!" and as he spoke he sprang upon the back of the nimble animal, and soon left far behind him the soldiers whom the knight had detailed as his escort.

Pietro concealed himself behind a bush, whence he could observe the enemy's movements. The Germans continued to advance. In front, rode the knights in complete armor, – he could even distinguish Barbarossa's banner with its richly embroidered lion, and it seemed as though he could recognize the lofty stature of the Emperor himself.

As Cocco had foreseen, they entered the valley, in which, midway, stood the ruins of an ancient cloister.

The emotion of the Milanese increased as he watched the little troop. He forbade his men to rise from the ground, lest their bright helmets might reveal their presence, and, gazing earnestly towards the city, his whole person betrayed the feverish restlessness of one who felt as much anxiety for the deliverance of his country as hatred for the tyrant whose iron arm weighed so heavily upon Italy.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHANCELLOR RINALDO

The Imperial escort had halted in the valley, the horses were unsaddled and grazing in the meadows, while the soldiers in groups were resting beneath the shade of the pines and oak-trees.

Three of the knights had chosen the most picturesque spot among the ruins, and from the slight elevation, on which they stood, could discern all the surrounding country, and even the lofty summits of the Alps, which bounded the horizon toward the North. It was to this direction that was turned the anxious gaze of one of the knights, who, with his hands resting on his sword-hilt, stood before the gateway of the ruined church. But little above the middle height, he was powerfully built, and his long mantle, thrown behind him, showed that his arms, legs, and feet were cased in mail, and that above his ordinary armor he wore a coat of silver links which came down to the knee. On his head was a steel helmet of proof, which shone brilliantly in the sun, and a heavy two-handled sword with a double hilt, and in a plain leathern scabbard, completed his accoutrement.

At first sight, the form of the young soldier scarcely seemed to warrant his ponderous armor. Strikingly handsome, with hands of remarkable delicacy, with a bright fair complexion, and a mouth around which played a smile of frankness and amiability,

it needed a second glance to discover that, under this engaging exterior, was concealed a violent energy, an iron will, and a pride without limit. His full blue eyes inspired confidence, but at times his glance could threaten as fiercely as it now seemed kind and gentle. His brow was high and broad, his nose aquiline, and his beard and hair of a bright red.

Such was the appearance of the Emperor Frederic I., the mightiest sovereign of his age, and one of the most illustrious men of whom history has made mention.

His two companions were striking contrasts. The first was tall, with a grave dark face, and long black hair; and his stern features indicated the soldier whose life had been passed in action. Thoroughly devoted to his sovereign, the Count Palatine Otho de Wittelsbach was the faithful and constant attendant of the Emperor.

The other was a small fair man, with a gentle and smiling face. Unlike Otho, he was not in armor, but wore a long embroidered gown, green trunk-hose, and a black hat. Yet in spite of his amiable expression, there was an air of dissimulation about him, and his eyes were as false and deceitful as his language was elegant and persuasive. He was the celebrated Chancellor Rinaldo, Count of Dussel, and Archbishop of Cologne, in whom the Emperor reposed the most implicit confidence, a confidence fully justified by the political talents of the wily statesman. It was said that his ideas were even more progressive than those of the prince himself, and that he pushed him forward in his policy,

despite the many serious obstacles in the path of his Imperial sovereign.

The Emperor was still gazing toward the north, when a young man of handsome bearing and with an almost childlike expression of amiability on his features, approached, holding a cup of wine. Frederic's whole expression changed to one of almost paternal fondness, as he glanced at the young soldier.

"Always mindful of your godfather, my good Erwin," said he, draining the goblet. "By my faith, if the repast be but proportionate to your attentions, we shall feast most regally to-day."

"The table awaits you, Sire," said the young man, pointing to a shield which was placed on a stone near by. "Pray, pardon the frugality of the entertainment." Barbarossa turned towards the shield emblazoned in blue and white *lozenges*, on which was placed the Emperor's meal, consisting of bread and a little smoked meat.

"Sit down, gentlemen," said he. "Ah! not so bad; I see that Bavaria has sent us her food as far as Lombardy."

"Aye!" replied Count Otho, "and her contingent will be here soon to aid us with their good lances. According to the last despatches, the advanced guard should arrive to-morrow."

"It is full time to chastise these disloyal Guelphs," said Frederic. "The rebellion has become general; Milan openly defies us; Genoa grows each day more factious, and even Venice, despite our Chancellor's eloquence, has assumed an air of

insolence."

"Right and reason," replied Rinaldo, "have but little chance of success against fraud and dissimulation."

"Well answered," cried Otho; "I am glad to hear such sentiments proclaimed. We must draw the sword, and prove to these insurgents that they owe obedience and respect to their sovereign."

"You are right, my lord Count," said Rinaldo, glancing at the Emperor. "After vainly trying mildness and conciliation, it would be rank cowardice not to use the sword."

At the close of their frugal repast, the Emperor directed his chancellor to read to him, until it was time to mount again; and Rinaldo, taking a book which was brought to him by the young knight Erwin, opened it at a marked page, while Otho, too thorough a soldier to care much for literature, withdrew on one side.

"We have learned the ideas of His Holiness as to the origin of all power," said the Chancellor to the Emperor, who was seated on the pedestal of a fallen column. "The following letter from Pope Gregory VII. will fully explain what these ideas mean, and to what they tend.

"The Church is our common Mother, the source and origin of all light and vitality. It is on this account that all emperors and kings, princes and archbishops, bishops and prelates, are her vassals. Thanks to the power of the Apostolic keys, she can make and unmake them, for the power which she delegates is not for a

passing fame, but for a holy eternity. To her, then, they all owe a respectful and modest obedience."

Until then, the Emperor had listened in silence, although his features betrayed the violent emotions of his inner self. Suddenly interrupting the Chancellor, he exclaimed, -

"By my faith, the reasoning is highly logical! The Church rules all! She can make and depose both emperors and princes! – All must passively obey her mandates! – What arrogance! – Princes are naught but simple vassals of the Pope!"

"Absolutely nothing else," replied Rinaldo; "the Pope is the sun, the Emperor the moon, who receives from His Holiness light and brilliancy and power."

"Enough! enough!" cried Frederic, angrily; "mark the place and close the book-the reading of such enormities is an insult to the Imperial dignity." A crafty smile played around the Chancellor's lips as he replied, -

"Great men, unluckily, make great blunders; but for your unfortunate oversight, no Pope would have ventured to make such an extravagant claim to universal sovereignty."

"Was it not the duty of Charles to defer to the request of Rome?"

"Most certainly! but his liberality to the Church might have been more measured, and the honors conceded more judiciously denuded. Hold the Pope's stirrup! – yes, the Emperor must even stoop to that-although it is, in reality, a mere idle form," added the Chancellor, hurriedly, as Frederic's face colored up. "Surely

none can blame the Popes if they construe what was a mere form into an obligation of importance."

"When I held the stirrup of His Holiness, my lord Chancellor," said Barbarossa with great dignity, "it was the homage paid by a Christian to the chief of Christendom."

"A most excellent reason, Sire," replied the Chancellor, in an insinuating tone. "The fulfilment of a Christian's religious duties can but honor an Emperor. But I have yet to learn in what way those duties interfere with the prerogatives of a Sovereign."

"Well! – you would elevate then the monarch's rights above the Christian's responsibilities?"

The smiling glance of the statesman dwelt for an instant upon his sovereign, who had given his minister to understand that he regarded his opinions as somewhat heretical and very difficult of realization. Barbarossa was willing to admit, to a certain extent, the superiority of the temporal over the spiritual power, but he still hesitated before the impiety of claiming the supremacy.

"Although you may place the Emperor above the Christian," resumed the Chancellor, "you will not on that account cease to be one. I will say even more: to reign, truly, the separation of the Empire from the Papacy is a necessity. Look towards the monarchs of France and Saxony; for them the Pope has never been anything more than the Bishop of Rome, chosen from among the most worthy prelates. They were the temporal masters of the Roman Pontiff, although ever the first to honor him as the Head of the Church. And what, to-day, is the Papal supremacy

over the Emperor, what is his influence? You selected Victor as Sovereign Pontiff, while the College of Cardinals elected Roland, who, under the title of Alexander III., reigns in spite of you! Victor, the feeble creation of your own hands, will fall as soon as your support be withdrawn, while Alexander, your triumphant adversary, is seated more firmly than ever upon the throne of St. Peter. His legates, only, are received in Spain, in France, in England; they only are acknowledged throughout the civilized world!"

"Enough of this!" said Frederic. "To what end serves your discourse? It is but a waste of time to prove to me, now, that during the past two years we have plotted, and toiled, and fought in vain."

"In vain! Sire! – but why? Because you neglected the golden opportunity! Milan, the bulwark of Alexander's power, was in your hands; you should have levelled her to the ground!"

"Always ready, my lord, to tell me what should have been done! Why was not this advice offered sooner?"

"It is not yet too late," replied Rinaldo. "The German bands have passed the Alps; let their first exploit be the capture of Milan."

"Naturally; and their second?"

"The overthrow of the present *status* of Italy, and the installation of Victor at Rome."

"And then the heretic Barbarossa, the persecutor of the Holy Church, will be put under the ban of the Universe!" replied

Frederic, with a bitter laugh.

"Heretic? No! But the astonished world will hail in you the worthy rival of the great Emperor. What did Charlemagne, and Otho, and Henry III. do? Did they not give Rome to the Popes? And if you, their successor, should place in Rome a bishop of your own selection, who could dispute your authority? Act, break down all opposition, and the Papacy, henceforward, will be no more the enemy, but the obedient vassal of the Germanic Empire." Whilst Rinaldo spoke, Barbarossa seemed lost in thought; every word of the crafty statesman produced its effect, for it answered the ambitious cravings of his own nature, which had long aimed at the subjection of the spiritual to the temporal power. Could his dreams be realized, the Emperor would reign supreme, and the Church, shorn of all her prerogatives, would remain, as she had existed during the dark ages, the source of all faith, but a mere fief of the Empire.

The difficulties of the undertaking did not escape him, but far from causing discouragement, they pleased him the more, by their bold and hazardous originality. Rinaldo, in silence, with folded arms and down-cast eyes, watched narrowly the effect produced on the Emperor by his discourse.

Suddenly Otho of Wittelsbach advanced hurriedly.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLE

"Bad news! Sire," cried the Count Palatine. "Cinola, your strong fortress on the Adda, is in the hands of the enemy."

Barbarossa sprang to his feet, and gazed with surprise upon the Count.

"Cinola taken!" cried he angrily, – "when-by whom?"

"To-day, by the Milanese; but here is a man who will give full details to your Majesty."

And he pointed to a soldier who, until then, had stood at a short distance from the group.

"Ah! is that you, Gero?" said Frederic, whose extraordinary memory never forgot a name or a face. "Tell me at once, everything!"

"The tidings which I bring to your Majesty are most unfortunate. Cinola was, this morning, surrendered to the Milanese."

"Surrendered?" said the Emperor, angrily.

"Yes, Sire, – surrendered by the base Guelph, the traitor Bonello, to whom your Majesty had intrusted the command of the fortress."

The face of the Emperor grew black with rage.

"What is the strength of the Milanese?" he asked.

"About three hundred men."

"Have they burned the Castle?"

"I am ignorant of that fact, Sire! As soon as the banner of the Guelphs was hoisted over the citadel, I hastened hither. But some time must elapse before they can sack and burn the place, as their first visit will doubtless be to the wine-cellars."

"How many Germans were with you in the Castle?"

"Three and a half, your Majesty, – for one of them had lost a leg. Poor fellows! they are in a pitiable condition, for their lives are in danger!"

"Gentlemen," said the Emperor to his knights, who were grouped around him, "we must not lose an instant; this new outrage must be punished at once!"

The knights looked at each other with astonishment; and even the daring Otho shook his head.

"Sire!" said he, "the Guelphs are too much our superiors in numbers."

"Since when has the Count Otho learned to count his foes?" inquired the Emperor.

"But," observed the Chancellor, whom the sudden resolution of the Emperor had alarmed, "would it not be more prudent to await the arrival of the German troops?"

"No! the punishment should always follow closely upon the crime. What! these traitors have dared to lay their plans under my very eyes, and yet you speak of waiting! – It would be a public admission of our weakness."

"To accommodate ourselves to circumstances," replied the Chancellor, "is not weakness, but rather wisdom. The Emperor should not expose his person needlessly. Pardon my frankness, Sire; it is your duty not to court unnecessary danger."

"Know, my lord," said Frederic, "that on the battlefield, he most easily escapes death who braves it most! But, rather death itself, than tame submission to such an outrage as this!"

"Well, then, may Heaven help you!" said Rinaldo, despairingly, – "three hundred against eighty; – the odds are too great; – it is an unpardonable piece of rashness!"

"Be it so, my lord! But what can three hundred traitors do against eighty German nobles, fighting for the honor of their name, in the cause of their sovereign? If I had with me only ten loyal knights, I would prove to the world, that, in Germany, courage and chivalry are not mere empty names! Come, gentlemen, to horse!"

"To arms! to arms! Long live the Emperor!" cried the knights, inspired by the courage of their sovereign.

"Your peaceful calling will render your presence useless in this bloody work of justice," said the Emperor, turning to his Chancellor. "It will be better that you should await our return. Stay, ride off immediately towards the German troops, who are on their march, and bid the princes hasten their arrival!"

"May God preserve us!" said Rinaldo, perceiving that the Emperor wished to keep him out of danger. "I am ready to die with my sovereign."

"Your fidelity needs no such act of heroism to prove its value," said Barbarossa. "Besides, I have by no means decided, as yet, to leave this world for another! But a truce to this discussion. Seek the princes, salute them in my name, and bid them march at once upon Milan!"

Rinaldo anxiously watched the tall form of the Emperor through the crevices of the walls, as his heavy step resounded beneath the arches of the ruined church. The shrill blast of the trumpet assembled the knights who were already in the saddle. Without touching the stirrup, the prince vaulted upon his mail-clad steed, and in a few minutes the little band disappeared in the direction of the south-west.

"There goes a man who probably rides to meet his death," said Rinaldo to himself. "His pride despises danger, and yet, though I know the strength of his arm, some trifling accident may ruin everything. Whilst I seek the princes, the Milanese may exult over his corpse, and Rome, raising again her humbled head, topple down the edifice built up so laboriously!"

The Chancellor started, as a voice addressed him.

"If you are ready, my lord Count, we will set forward," said the soldier whom Barbarossa had left behind as escort to the minister.

"You should not have weakened the little troop by your absence, for your lance would be more than ever useful to-day to His Majesty."

"Pshaw!" replied the man, "I have no fears about the result.

The Guelphs never can stand before Count Otho and his brave lances. Besides, Barbarossa leads them, and I never saw his eye flash so fiercely as when he bade me stay with you."

Rinaldo mounted his horse and, accompanied by the soldier, rode swiftly towards the north.

Meanwhile the Emperor pushed forward. His knights rode behind him in stern silence, but with a look of grim determination upon their bronzed faces, and naught was heard, save the clatter of their horses' hoofs, and the rattle and clank of their armor. Barbarossa was carefully examining the distant limits of the plain, where could be seen what at first seemed only dark moving shadows; soon, however, the gleam of helmets and lances was distinctly visible, and even the heavy step of troops on the march could be distinctly heard. Barbarossa hesitated for a moment, as if in doubt what course to pursue, when Count Otho approached.

"I think I know those troops," said he. "As we were leaving the ruins, I saw several horsemen, on yonder hills, riding towards Milan. They are doubtless the enemy's videttes, who are carrying to the conquerors of Cinola the tidings of our advance."

"Gero," said the Emperor, "you are the least heavily armed. Ride forward and see what is the strength of that detachment; I want to know if they have any infantry in the rear, and whether there are any lancers posted in the wood, to take us in flank."

The trooper galloped off. The other soldiers at once dismounted to draw their saddle-girths and prepare for the fight,

and the drinking-cup, which passed freely from hand to hand, contributed greatly to increase their courage.

Barbarossa took no refreshment, but he carefully reconnoitred the ground. Not an inequality of its surface, not a stream or marsh escaped his eye. On the right was a little wood, which might serve the enemy to mask his movements, and as the ground on which he stood was slightly elevated, he determined to await the enemy there, in order to give greater impetus to the charge of his own troopers.

Gero soon returned, followed at a distance by several of the enemy's horsemen, thrown out as scouts.

"The Guelphs are moving in three columns-in the centre is about two hundred Infantry. The wings are much weaker. I could see nothing in the woods."

"The Milanese seem very confident," said the rough soldier Goswin; "they think that five Lombards are at least equal to one German, and so neglect their tactics. Ah! well! I killed twenty of them at Lodi without dinting my sabre, and am rather curious to see how many I can exterminate to-day, and not turn its edge."

"Yes," added Frederic, with a laugh; "and these good people have surnamed you, in consequence, 'The Lombard-eater.' You are in luck to-day, Master Goswin, for you will have enough to satisfy even your appetite. – But to work, gentlemen! The enemy will not leave us much longer the choice of the attack, so we must give him something to do."

He divided the escort into three columns, giving the right wing

to Count Otho, the left to the knight of Goswin, and reserving to himself the command of the centre. The Lombard tactics were usually to kill the horses of the knights, who, dismounted and in heavy armor, would then become comparatively less dangerous; but the monarch understood the danger.

The Milanese advanced about a hundred yards, and then halted. Unlike the stern silence of their adversaries, they shouted, and sang, and clashed their weapons as if to prove that they felt assured of victory.

Barbarossa rode along the front of his little band, which calmly awaited the attack: -

"Valiant friends," said he, "have faith in your good cause! You draw the sword against treachery and rebellion! Trust in God; it is he who chastises the perjurer! Confide in the strength of your good right arms, and show to the world, that you are worthy to bear the name of Germans! Let St. Michael, the patron of our country, be your rallying-cry! Couch your lances! Forward, Charge!"

"Saint Michael, Saint Michael for the Emperor!" rang through their ranks, as they dashed upon the foe.

The Milanese cavalry, with a savage yell, advanced to meet their enemies, while their infantry, in close column, awaited the shock of the German horse. Soon the clash of arms and the wild cries of the combatants proclaimed that they were fighting hand to hand. Barbarossa was everywhere in the thickest of the *mélée*; the Milanese leader fell before his lance, and then the Emperor,

sword in hand, broke through the enemy's centre. Soon each knight had stretched an adversary on the ground. The ranks of the infantry first faltered, and then gave way, and many a foot-soldier found death beneath the hoofs of the trampling chargers, as he vainly endeavored to pierce the serried line of German steel. Still the Lombards fought stubbornly, and the hope of terminating at one blow the slavery of their country, animated them to desperate efforts. Their bravest champions had fallen beneath the Emperor's sword, and still, to the cry of "Death to the tyrant!" they fought on. Suddenly Frederic's horse was pierced by a pike-thrust, and fell heavily upon him. Crushed under his steed, the Emperor was well-nigh powerless, and the blows of his enemies rained upon his armor.

A cry of triumph revealed to the Germans the danger of their sovereign. Erwin broke through the Lombard ranks, and for an instant diverted their attention to himself. Other knights came up. Erwin, unhorsed, was holding his buckler above the Emperor's head. Suddenly the cry of "St. Michael to the rescue" rang above the din of the battle, and Otho, at the head of his brave lancers, charged the foe. The fight was over, and soon the Milanese infantry were fleeing, broken and in disorder, across the plain.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE VICTORY

In the midst of the battle-field stood Barbarossa, surrounded by the dead and the dying. His mantle, pierced and torn, and stained with blood, hung over his armor, whose strength had protected him so well against the weapons of the Lombards; for, save a slight contusion, he was unwounded. Far away in the plain could still be seen the German cavalry, chasing the scattered fugitives, but near him were only a few of his own wounded men. Before him lay a dying Guelph, the blood welling in torrents from his breast, who gazed upon the Emperor with an expression which, even in his last moments, bespoke his bitter hatred for the oppressor of his country; powerless and crushed, his impotent rage broke forth in fierce invective.

"Tyrant," said he, in a broken voice, "when will thy bloody work be at an end! Immolate the last of the Lombards to thy pride; drink their heart's blood, if thou wilt! – we will gladly yield it to thee in exchange for our freedom! – But-be accursed! – thou and all thy race!"

He fell back and expired. The Emperor gazed sadly upon the corpse, for the words of the dying man and his malediction had strangely moved him; but just then, Otho of Wittelsbach rode up with his men, in charge of some prisoners.

"I have spared these rascals, Sire," said the Count Palatine, "that some of them, at least, may expiate their treachery on the gibbet."

Frederic turned towards the prisoners, but even before he spoke, his angry glance showed what fate was in store for them. Still he was silent for an instant, in the hope that some of them might sue for mercy. But there was no appeal, and pointing to a tree, he said, -

"Let them die!"

Undismayed by the approach of death, the Lombards met their fate in silence. None asked for pardon. They died martyrs to the holy cause of freedom, and in the defence of the most sacred rights of their native land. But their last glance was one of implacable hatred for the tyrant.

"Count Palatine, take possession of the fortress of Cinola at once, before the Milanese can strengthen themselves in the works," said Barbarossa. "We will wait here for Goswin, and then follow with the wounded."

Wittelsbach mounted, and rode away.

Erwin had remained near the prince, and Barbarossa turned with a kind smile towards the boy, who had so bravely fulfilled his knightly duties in the fight, and who had so efficiently protected the life of his sovereign.

"You have well merited your godfather's thanks, my young friend," said he, "and we will not prove ungrateful. Ask me what favor you will, I promise that it shall be granted."

Erwin bowed in silence, but before he could speak, Goswin rode up, bringing with him as prisoner the knight Bonello, the late treacherous governor of Cinola.

"Ah! by Saint Guy, Sire, this has been a brave day's work," said he, pointing to the dead bodies. "I would have finished mine long since, but for this noble chevalier. I must admit that he is a gallant soldier, although, alas! a most foul traitor!"

Frederic gazed contemptuously upon his former partisan. Bonello was a man still in the prime of life, and, though short in stature, well and powerfully built. His visage, though dejected, was calm. Like the majority of the inferior nobility, he had been long one of the warmest adherents of the Emperor, although he had acted as such rather through necessity than from choice. His glance fell before that of his sovereign.

"Are you ready to die the death of a traitor?" asked Frederic.

"I am ready to die," answered Guido; "but I implore you to withdraw the epithet of traitor!"

"And why, pray?"

"Sire, Guido Bonello was a traitor only on the day when he swore allegiance to his country's tyrant, forgetting, for a moment, that he was a Lombard."

"Are you not ashamed to seek thus to disguise your felony?" asked Frederic.

"Sire, we may bow in obedience to the monarch, who by his victorious arms has conquered Lombardy. But when tyranny reigns in the place of justice, when our rights are trampled

underfoot, when our country is laid waste and her inhabitants held to ransom, when the Emperor's iron heel is placed upon the necks of a kneeling people, then, Sire, obedience becomes a crime! It is better to die free, than live as slaves! If it needs be that Italy obey you against her will, exile her population and replace it with serfs."

The monarch, as grand justiciary of the Empire, had allowed the prisoner full freedom of speech in his defence; but when he had concluded:

"The usual Lombard argument," he exclaimed; "the invention of some facts, the misrepresentation of others! You call tyranny the energetic punishment of traitors whom I had loaded with favors; legitimate taxation you term extortion! But who, then, have given greater evidences of tyranny over the weak than the Lombards themselves? Remember Como and Lodi-think of the excesses committed there before our army restored order! Were not those cities, the so-called allies of Milan, only her slaves? But it is not for a sovereign to seek excuses before a traitor! Go, the gallows awaits you!"

Calmly, without bravado as without faltering, the prisoner heard his sentence; but as the men-at-arms advanced to seize him, he raised his head:

"There exists an ancient custom," said he, "honored even among the heathens. All those who are condemned to death, are permitted to make one last request, which is granted to them."

"'Tis well-what is yours?"

"Delay the execution for three days."

"Why ask for this delay?"

The tone of the prisoner changed. His confidence left him, his lips trembled convulsively; and a tear stood in his eye.

"Pshaw!" he said, "I can scarcely believe myself guilty of such weakness! But there are times when the feelings of a father are stronger than the duties of the patriot. Let me see my child once more; she is the sole fruit of my once happy marriage. When one is so near his last hour, there is much to be done."

"You need feel no shame for such sentiments," replied Frederic, "they only do you honor. I will grant your request. Goswin, take charge of the prisoner."

The Emperor turned away to give orders for the care of the wounded and the burial of the dead. Litters were hastily constructed of lances and the branches of trees, and then, escorted by a few knights, Barbarossa rode over to Cinola, whither he was soon followed by the other troops and the wounded Germans.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COURT FOOL

Scarcely was the Emperor installed in the fortress, when the German levies began to come in, and Frederic was extremely gratified by the arrival of several bishops, whose presence, he hoped, would lend great moral strength to his cause, although they came, not as messengers of peace, but in complete armor, and attended by well-appointed troops. Foremost among the temporal chiefs were Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, next to Barbarossa himself, the most powerful prince of the Empire; Leopold, Duke of Bohemia; and the mighty counts of Dachau, d'Andech's and d'Abenberg. Duke Henry of Austria had not yet arrived, although his army stood close at hand in the defiles of the Alps.

In the immense plain before the castle a vast camp rose, as if by magic. Over the white tents fluttered the pennons of the knights, and before the pavilions of the princes were hoisted their several standards, rich in gold and silver embroidery. Through the canvas streets pressed a gay crowd in rich dresses and shining armor, while knights surrounded by their brilliant retinues, rode in every direction.

In the middle of the camp stood the Imperial pavilion, and toward it, as to a common centre, seemed to tend all the varied

parts of the strange tumult.

Meanwhile a sad spectacle might have been witnessed before the gates of the fortress, distant a thousand paces from the camp. From the open postern of the huge round tower, which formed the principal salient of the fortification, Bonello was being led out to execution. The three days' respite had expired, and the certainty of his speedy death, joined to the sorrow that he had not yet seen his child, had left upon the prisoner's face traces of deep anguish. His trembling knees could scarcely support him as he followed the jailers who were conducting him to the scaffold from which hung the fatal knot.

The condemned man made every effort to meet his fate with courage, but when, a few steps from the gallows, the executioner seized the rope, all his fortitude deserted him, and he halted.

"What is the matter now," cried the brutal soldier who commanded the escort. "Until now you have given proofs of bravery; do you tremble at the sight of a piece of hemp?"

Bonello raised his head, and with tears in his eyes, in a voice choking with emotion, replied, -

"I do not fear to die, but-oh! my child, my darling child!"

And he covered his face with his hands.

"What serves this everlasting whimper about your child; yesterday was your day, but you got a reprieve by your lamentations; but we can't wait any longer; so come and be hanged at once!"

"You are a fool, cousin," cried a shrill voice; "do you think

any one will let himself be hung, if he can help it?"

The executioner turned and glanced angrily at the speaker; a small man, almost a dwarf in stature, with intelligent features and eyes beaming with malice, he was dressed in the garb of a jester, and wore on his head a bright scarlet cap with asses' ears. Both cap and jacket were covered with a great number of little bells, which rang merrily with every movement. He was seated on a stone, his chin resting on his hands, and laughing ironically in the face of the enraged soldier.

"Hold your tongue," said the latter, "or I'll hang you too by the ears."

"Do you want to get me out of the way for my fool's bauble?" said the jester, in the same careless tone. "I warn you if you aspire to be my successor, you will have to prove that there are more brains in your head than there are in a pumpkin. You are making a poor beginning, cousin Hesso, or you would not hang this miserable wretch so early in the morning."

"The man must be hung now, because his time has come!" said Hesso, furiously. But the arms of Henry the Lion, which were embroidered on the jester's coat, prevented any violence on his part.

"You would be right, if you were not such a liar," replied the fool. "Your long ears heard the Emperor say yesterday, 'Let him be hung to-morrow!' What was true then, will be equally so fourteen hours hence. Till then the poor devil's time is his own."

Hesso hesitated for an instant, but the idea that he should

suffer the interference of a court fool to delay an execution, was enough to put him beside himself with rage. Turning towards the prisoner, he cried, -

"Enough of this; fasten up the traitor to the gibbet!"

The assistants obeyed, and already the noose was around the prisoner's neck, when, with a sudden spring, and before the executioner could interfere, the jester drew a knife from his belt, and cut the rope.

"What means this!" exclaimed Hesso.

"Thwarted! thwarted," cried the fool; "don't you see! cousin mine, that this man has not yet been to confession? The head and the body of the poor devil belong to you and the crows, but neither you, nor your friend Beelzebub, have any right over his soul! Let this man first comply with his duties as a Christian!"

"By Satan! what's that to me? Here, you men, tie a new knot, and hang up the traitor at once!"

"Then you will be hung too, cousin," said the jester. "Would you really dare to execute a man without confession? I came here to witness the death of a bandit, but not to see the devil steal his soul! If you have any respect for your own life, cousin, you will put off the business until I bring here a monk, or a bishop, or if needs, the Pope himself!" This said, he rushed toward the encampment.

Hesso bit his lips sullenly, but he knew the positive order which existed, that no one was to be put to death, without first receiving the succors of religion.

"Lead the prisoner back to his dungeon," said he, "until the fool and the priest have finished their task."

The jester stopped before a tent whose splendid appearance denoted the princely rank of its occupant. In front of the entrance floated a banner on which were blazoned the arms and bearings of episcopal dignity. Upon the threshold stood a man, evidently of high rank, gazing idly at the busy movement of the camp. He wore a long tunic, magnificently embroidered on the cuffs and collar; his hands sparkled with rings of gold and precious stones; his expression was engaging, and he smiled cordially as the fool approached.

"I'm in luck!" cried the jester; "I was only looking for a monk, and I've stumbled on a prelate in all his glory."

"What do you want, rascal?"

"To save a soul from Satan, cousin Adelbert! There is a poor fellow near here who is going to be hanged; he is still in the bonds of sin, and I want you to come out and cut them, so that he can spring from the gallows straight into Abraham's bosom!"

"But, Lanzo," replied Adelbert, "don't you perceive that I have neither sword nor dagger in my belt."

"Oh! cousin, your tongue is sharp enough of itself. Come with me!"

"What! a prelate follow a fool! Rogue, you ought to be flogged."

"Well then! let the prelate lead the way. I warrant he will not lose the trail."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Why, the prelate, of course."

"And of whose trail do you speak?"

"Zounds! Why, the fool's, to be sure! you look very much like me, cousin, although your cap has no ears, for your surcoat is nearly as motley as mine."

"Leave me instantly!" said Adelbert.

"You are willing, then, to leave this poor wretch to Satan."

"Yes, beyond doubt; and you with him! Find a monk, if you can."

"Hey? – Well, I am learning something new every day," said Lanzo, ironically. "I never thought before, that a monk was worth more than a prelate; but I'll remember in future. – Ah, I am in luck, here comes a monk! – two of them. – I may say three, instead of one!" he cried, as several monks dismounted and approached the tent.

They were dusty and travel-stained, and apparently fatigued with a long journey; the eldest addressed the prelate, while his companions stood on one side in an attitude of deep humility.

"Deign to pardon my boldness," said he, after the usual greetings; "we have just arrived in your camp, and seek a friendly shelter. Our rules prescribe the greatest discretion; but, in these troublous times, it is no longer an easy task to hold our pastoral office. Perhaps, your Excellency will deign to offer us an humble place beneath your tent?"

But the modest request seemed to irritate the prelate. He drew

himself up, proudly, and glanced disdainfully upon the speaker, as he replied, sharply, -

"The tent of a bishop is not an inn for mendicant friars."

"If you want to keep company with bishops, or priors, or even canons, holy father," said Lanzo, "you must wear a *pelisse* of *sables*, and let the hair grow on your shaven poll."

"Would you be kind enough," said the embarrassed monk, turning to the jester, "would you be kind enough to use your influence with this noble gentleman. We are messengers from the Archbishop Everard of Salzburg."

"What!" sneered Adelbert. "Monks acting as the envoys of an archbishop? Has your master no abbot or canon at the head of his chapter? Your cowls are out of place amid the splendors of a court! I warn you that His Majesty has little love for your cloth, and he is right."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lanzo, "if my cousin Barbarossa could only use the monks as train-bearers and courtiers for his pet Pope, we would soon have little need for bishops and canons!"

With an angry look at the jester, Adelbert re-entered the tent. The monks seemed greatly embarrassed. Their scornful reception was the more mortifying, because it was the first visit which they had ever paid to the high dignitaries of the Church.

"Be of good cheer, sons of Saint Benedict," said Lanzo; "on the word of a fool, I promise you comfortable lodgings and a hearty meal! But you must do me a service in return!"

"Most gladly, my son," replied the monk.

"Come with me then, I'll show you the way," said Lanzo, and they left the spot, followed by the others, leading their horses.

"You merely ask me to perform a pious duty," said the priest, when Lanzo had explained the affair; "had we not better go at once to the poor wretch?"

"There is no need of haste," replied Lanzo. "They dare not hang him, until he has confessed and received absolution. You need fear no rivalry in the matter, either; for my cousin Barbarossa hates your fraternity, and will not allow a monk within the limits of the camp. So that we have no one here, save prelates in velvet and ermine, who will have nothing to do with a confession. – Holloa, there, you idlers, make way for honest people!" cried the jester, striking with his cap a crowd of servants who were blocking up the entrance to a narrow street.

Close at hand, in the middle of an open square, stood the tent of Henry the Lion, and behind were the lodgings of his suite and the stables for their horses.

"Here, Balderich!" said the jester to one of the servants, "take these animals to the stables, and feed them well."

And, as the varlet led away the horses, Lanzo conducted the monks to his own tent, where he offered them some food and wine.

"I am aware," said he, "that you abstain from meat; but, with the best will in the world, I cannot give you any fish, although there is plenty of it in camp."

The monks said their *benedicite* and ate what was set before

them.

"Will you not change your dress, Father Conrad?" asked one of them, of him who seemed the superior.

"Not yet, my son," replied Conrad; "for the present it will suffice to shake off the dust."

"Whilst the monks were attending to the needs of their chief, the fool examined intently the imposing figure of his guest, as though seeking to guess at his identity.

"My son!" said he to the monk, "if those are your children, you must be their father?"

"Certainly! friend Lanzo."

"Then, may Heaven forgive me, for I have led a worthy abbot to the tent of a fool."

"You see how deceitful appearances sometimes are," replied the abbot, with a smile.

"Yes! – yes. Henceforth I'll go blindfold, and open my ears wider than ever, to see better what lies before me. But now, my lord Abbot, whenever it may please you, we can set out on our mission. As to you, my holy friends and worthy guests, during our absence comfort yourselves with what is before you; the ham comes from the Duke's own table, and the wine from his cellars."

And Lanzo and the Abbot left the tent.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

On a rough stone, in the deep and gloomy dungeon of the fortress of Cinola, sat Guido de Bonello, his body bent forward until his head almost rested upon his knees, his manacled hands hanging helpless under the weight of his fetters, and his tearful gaze fixed despondingly upon the ground. He was a brave man, and had often looked death boldly in the face; and if he was now so unmanned, it was from no thought of his own sad fate; his fears were for his daughter, so soon to be left without a protector. Suddenly the sound of steps met his ear, and he raised his head quickly, in the fond hope of distinguishing the light footfall of a woman. The key grated in the lock, the door swung back upon its hinges, and the chief turnkey, followed by Lanzo and the Abbot, entered the cell.

"Here is the priest," said the jailer, sullenly; "get through your business as soon as possible, for you must be hung at once. If I am to have as much trouble with all my other prisoners, in future, I would rather resign my office now, and have done with it."

"I am entirely at your service, my son," said the Abbot, kindly, as he approached the prisoner.

"Thanks, holy father," replied Guido; "but you are mistaken if you expect to find a criminal here!"

"Of course!" exclaimed the jester. "Nowadays they never hang any but honest men; the scoundrels go scot-free. Come, come, cousin, if for nothing else, you merit the gallows for being such a tender father, and touching a fool's heart. God knows it was nothing but pity which prompted me to get you a confessor."

Without noticing the idle babble of the fool, the prisoner gazed earnestly upon the Abbot, who seemed deeply grieved at the sight of his sad condition.

"You have no hardened criminal to deal with," said he, divining the priest's thoughts. "My sole fault has been that I drew my sword to resist the bloody despotism of the Emperor. I feel confident that you have not visited the camp of Barbarossa to encourage the crimes and errors of the heretic, for your calm and pious eyes show clearly that you are no sycophant sold to the tyrant! As an unworthy sinner, I will gladly avail myself of your kind arm in this my last journey. But first let me beg you to administer aid to my spiritual necessities." The clatter of horses' feet in the court-yard interrupted the prisoner; the sound of light footsteps was heard along the passage; the door swung open, and a slight veiled form entered the dungeon; – the daughter of Bonello was in her father's arms. In the doorway stood Pietro Nigri, gazing, with deep emotion, upon the scene.

The prisoner, passionately embracing his daughter, wept and sobbed bitterly; for the thought that he held now to his heart, perhaps for the last time, all that he loved on earth, was agonizing in the extreme.

The young girl's face was calmer. She uttered neither complaint nor lamentation. For a moment her head reposed upon her father's breast, and then, raising it, she put back the gray hairs which covered his brow, and gazed fondly into his eyes.

"My father!" She could say no more; but the tone was enough to show the world of deep emotions which filled her heart at this awful moment.

Disengaging herself from his embrace, she looked around her.

Women, in trying circumstances, often give proof of marvellous energy and force of character. Mastering for the moment her grief, – dismissing every painful thought, – the young girl sought only to cheer the last hours of the condemned.

"Take off these heavy fetters which crush him," said she to the jailer; "put him in some other less frightful cell, I implore you!"

"I have no desire to be hung in his place," growled the man.

"Oh!" said she, pleadingly, "it can be no crime to soothe the last moments of a dying man!" and she emptied the contents of her purse into the jailer's hand.

The effect of the gold was magical; he smiled, bowed, and muttered some excuse for his churlishness.

"Noble lady-you are too kind-yes, you are right, it would be inhuman to torture the poor wretch unnecessarily. I will conduct him to the upper tower, and, as he cannot wear his chains on his last journey, I may as well rid him of them now."

And, taking a key from the bunch at his girdle, Guido's manacles fell upon the ground.

"Captain Hesso would be incensed, were he to see this, but it matters little; he won't come back again today, and to-morrow all will be over."

These last cruel words wellnigh broke the young girl's heart. The jester observed her changing face, and his own ready sympathies were awakened.

"Yes," said he, "to-morrow all will, probably, be over; but, one word from me to the noble Duke, would falsify your prediction. I cut the rope once, and I would do it again if the fancy took me."

"I owe you many thanks, my kind friend," said Bonello, pressing the hand of the jester. "I would not be here now, if your kind heart and good knife had not acted so promptly."

"Pshaw! It Was a silly thing to do, my good sir; but if you would do something really of use, you should send this reverend gentleman to the Emperor, to get His Majesty to open your cage."

"If you have access to the court, holy father," said Bonello, "use your influence in my behalf! I have never opposed the Imperial supremacy, and only took up arms to resist oppression; but if the Emperor will spare my life, I will consecrate it, hereafter, entirely to my child."

"Sir knight, be assured that I will do all in my power. A mission of grave importance summons me to the Emperor's presence without delay. May God grant that I may find him mercifully disposed! I will return as speedily as possible, to announce to you the result of my efforts."

And the prelate, followed by Lanzo, took his departure for

the Camp, while Guido, his daughter, and Pietro Nigri, were conducted by the jailer to a lofty and well-lighted chamber of the upper tower.

"If you wish anything," said he, "open this window and call; I shall be close at hand."

He lingered for an instant, and then left the room, carefully locking the door behind him.

The travellers evidently stood in need of refreshments; but the sad fate awaiting Bonello, had prevented his child from all consciousness of physical wants. Every movement of the girl betrayed her inward suffering; but, with the desire of soothing his last moments, she strove bravely to conceal every trace of her own emotion.

Pietro was pale and suffering; although severely wounded in the late unlucky battle, the proud Milanese felt still more deeply the dangers menacing his beloved country. Wrapped in contemplation of the German camp, he stood at the open window, entirely forgetful of the unfortunate Guido and his daughter.

"I have been awaiting you impatiently, for two days past, my child! Were you delayed by the insecurity of the road?"

"Not at all, father; it was Pietro's wound which prevented me travelling more rapidly."

"Were you not annoyed?"

"On the contrary," she replied; "the German knights paid us every attention in their power."

"What strange people those Germans are!" said Guido. "I have often admired their courteous treatment of women. But your appearance in their camp would, of itself, bring you a host of valiant champions."

"Heaven preserve us from such chivalrous support," said Pietro, whose violent hatred for the Germans would not suffer him to listen to a word in their praise.

"To be just towards the virtues of our enemies, is no proof of either weakness or treason."

"No; but to admit the virtue of an enemy, is not becoming in a sincere patriot," replied Nigri.

Bonello knew Pietro's blind hatred for everything that was German, and had calculated upon a similar answer, the injustice of which it was most easy to show by simple facts. During their discussion, Hermengarde had approached the window, and now gave way to the emotions which she had so long controlled. The tears coursed down her cheeks, for she could see distinctly the gallows and the executioners. Raising her eyes appealingly towards Heaven, which shone clear and pure above the smiling landscape, she thought of the promised intercession of the holy abbot, and she prayed to God and the Holy Virgin, for the safety of her beloved and unfortunate father.

Her tears ceased, and in a calmer tone, she turned towards him: -

"Without doubt, the Emperor will pardon you. The Almighty knows your innocence, and will not suffer you to die the death

of the guilty."

"Let us hope so, my child!"

"For my part, I expect nothing," said Nigri. "The heart of the tyrant Barbarossa knows neither pity nor justice. — Hermengarde, resign yourself to the worst, and do not cherish a vain hope."

"Oh! Pietro," said she, turning away.

"Rather be proud of your father's death; he is a martyr to the cause of his country's freedom!"

"Enough! enough!" interrupted Bonello. "A girl of fourteen cannot understand such heroic sentiments, dear Pietro! But if my hours are numbered, as you seem to think; if I am soon to leave you forever," (and Guido mustered up all his courage to preserve the appearance of calm resignation,) "it is you, Pietro, who must endeavor to replace me. You know my wishes; receive Hermengarde's hand now, until the priest can unite you forever."

Tears streamed from the prisoner's eyes and fell upon his gray beard, as he took his daughter's hand to place it in that of Pietro. But the words of the young man had made too painful an impression upon her heart, and turning from him, with a burst of bitter weeping, Hermengarde threw herself upon her father's bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABBOT CONRAD

The condemned man could not easily have found a more powerful advocate than the Abbot Conrad, the friend of the great Archbishop of Salzburg, whose opposition had hitherto prevented the recognition in Germany of the Anti-Pope Victor. Frederic had neglected nothing to obtain the active co-operation of the Princes of the Church, but all in vain; neither threats nor entreaties could induce Eberhard to countenance the schism. He had not even replied to the Emperor's summons to accompany him to Italy, in order that it might not be imagined that he would make any compromise with heresy and error.

Many of the bishops regulated their conduct by that of the eminent Archbishop of Salzburg, and as long as the feeble and irresolute Victor was not universally acknowledged as Pope, the Emperor could not hope for a complete realization of his ambitious projects. In fact, Victor was as humbly submissive to Frederic's slightest wishes as Alexander III. was inflexibly opposed to them. As powerful and bold as Barbarossa himself, he disdained to play the part of lackey to the Emperor, and refused to enthrall the liberty of the Church and make religion the mere stepping-stone to a despotic prince. Such a man was dangerous to the Emperor's projects, and every effort was made to drive

Alexander from the throne of St. Peter. Eberhard was the head of the Papal faction in Germany, and as Conrad was said to possess great influence with the Archbishop, it was most natural to suppose that Frederic would gladly oblige the monk whenever it was in his power to do so.

The long expected arrival of the Abbot was promptly noised through the Imperial camp, and scarcely had he returned to the jester's hospitable tent, when he found himself surrounded by the courtiers. Adelbert was one of the foremost, and the prelate strove, by most humble excuses, to atone for his former incivility. Conrad retained his native modesty, and smiled as he witnessed the assiduity of the German nobles.

"His Eminence the Bishop regrets that he is not to have the honor of offering you his hospitality," said Adelbert. "But His Majesty has ordered the most sumptuous apartment of his own tent to be prepared for your reception, my lord Abbot. His Eminence has overwhelmed me with well-merited reproaches for my unlucky mistake of this morning. But I could scarcely imagine that so illustrious an Abbot would have been thus disguised beneath a monk's cowl!"

"Lord Adelbert, I beg that you will cease these apologies; the mistake is of too little importance to be referred to a second time."

"I feel deeply mortified, my lord!" continued Adelbert. "Your celebrated order is welcomed by all, and surely its virtuous superior should have been received with open arms."

The abbot began to feel an intense disgust for this obsequious servility, and was well satisfied when he reached the monarch's tent. At the farther side of the square, on which it stood, was planted a tall flagstaff where floated the proud banner of the Emperor. On either side, midway between it and the tent, were two knights in complete armor, who, with drawn swords, mounted guard over the Imperial shield. This was in conformity with a traditional custom, and the duty was shared, in turn, by every noble, spiritual and temporal, of the court. Unlike the rest of the camp, a profound silence replaced the noisy bustle. Warriors in shining mail, and courtiers in rich dresses, stood around the pavilion; but their grave and respectful deportment showed that they were near the presence of their sovereign.

The Emperor and his chancellor were seated at a table, in deep consultation. Frederic had much reason to be gratified with the alacrity shown by the majority of the German princes in obeying his summons; but the absence of many of the bishops was a bad omen for the success of his cause. Some, it is true, had sent both men and money, others merely excuses; but the Emperor could not but feel that there was a very evident disinclination to hold converse with a schismatic.

His numerous and well-organized army could easily have overrun and conquered all Italy, but his long cherished project, the submission of the spiritual power of the Church to the temporal sovereignty of the Empire, could not, in that age, be attained by force of arms.

He was particularly indignant against the Bavarian Episcopacy, whose primate, Eberhard of Salzburg, was the chief and most zealous adherent of Alexander III. A threatening message had been dispatched to the Archbishop, demanding his immediate presence; but, instead of appearing in person at the head of his men-at-arms, the primate had delegated an humble monk as his representative to the Court.

"In truth!" exclaimed Frederic, "I am beginning to weary of this; – the Archbishop appears to despise both threats and entreaties! – By Heavens! he shall feel my anger!"

"Violence would be out of place here," remarked the Chancellor, dryly. "Your Imperial Majesty is scarcely in a condition, at present, to break the cross and mitre."

"Must we then sue humbly for the aid of this egotistical old priest?" said Frederic, bitterly. "I would have you know, my lord, that we are not yet reduced so low as that! If the Archbishop does not offer us a valid excuse, he shall be punished by banishment."

"Banishment!" replied the minister, with a laugh. "The sentences, which Victor fulminates, will all turn to smoke, for the world has little scruple in ridiculing the Anti-Pope. You may use force, but it will be at the expense of your own reputation. You know well that Eberhard is profoundly respected by all, and his example has been the chief cause of the non-recognition of Victor's claims. The people revere him as a saint, and if you would ruin your own cause irretrievably in the estimation of the world, you have only to punish the Archbishop."

"What then does your wisdom suggest?"

"As neither prayers, nor threats have availed," replied the crafty statesman, "try diplomacy. Assume the mask of Organizer of the Church. Receive the Abbot Conrad with cordiality, and trust to me for the rest."

"What is your plan?"

"To persuade Eberhard to visit your court, – the game will be in your own hands then."

"In my own hands! Bah! Eberhard will never break faith with Alexander!"

"Probably not! but if he should come here, I will spread the report that he has acknowledged Victor. And, what is still more important, the holy man will have paid a visit to the heretic Barbarossa, – a visit which would never be made, were you to continue to be the avowed enemy of the Church."

"Your reasoning is specious," said the prince; "that game may be successful!"

"May be? – only may be!" replied Dassel, somewhat offended by Frederic's incredulity. "My policy is not a *game*; it is no mere fancy of the brain."

"I perceive," answered Barbarossa, "that science is irritable, and her adepts petulant. We will therefore bow before your invention, which you insist is not a mere game, but a deadly war-engine levelled against Alexander III."

"Eberhard's apparent defection will be your rival's death-blow, for Victor's recognition will be its natural and immediate

consequence," said the Chancellor. "And now, Sire, if you will permit me, I will summon the Archbishop's envoy. The monarch assented, and the Count drawing aside the silken curtains of the tent, beckoned to a chamberlain. A few moments after Conrad entered."

"Welcome, my lord Abbot," said Frederic, rising. "We are pleased with the judicious choice thus made by our Metropolitan of Salzburg. We are always glad to receive a counsellor whose wisdom can enlighten us in matters of difficulty."

Conrad bowed and handed a sealed packet to the Emperor. Frederic hurriedly tore open the envelope; it only contained the Abbot's letters of credence.

"Be seated," said Barbarossa, pointing to a chair. "The Archbishop, I perceive, alleges his advanced age as an excuse for his refusal to our invitation. We regret these obstacles-but what says he to our request?"

"He cannot send the contingent demanded by your Majesty. All his troops are needed to defend his own territory against his ambitious neighbors. But he is prepared to offer a tribute of money!"

"Money! – I want none of it!" said Frederic, proudly. "Loyalty and attachment are alone of value in our eyes. Our sovereign power would be weak indeed if obedience could be replaced by gold! But enough of this; we can do without the Archbishop's assistance; our forces are strong enough already to take the field! Tell me, though, what does he think of the true head of the

Church? We trust that he is not one of those who compound with heresy?"

"Submission to the legitimate Pope is one of the first duties of a prelate," replied Conrad. "But in the opinion of him who sent me hither, it is not Victor but Alexander who has a right to the title. The Archbishop has commissioned me to make this observation to your Majesty."

"There it is again!" cried Frederic, "always observations!"

"Allow me, Sire, to lay before you the reasons which have influenced the convictions of the Archbishop," said Conrad. – "Immediately upon the death of Adrian IV., the Sacred College unanimously elected Roland, now Alexander III."

"Unanimously?" interrupted Barbarossa. "If I recollect aright, all the Cardinals were not present!"

"True, three were absent, – but two of them were held as prisoners by your Majesty," replied Conrad.

"The answer is devoid of reason, my lord Abbot. Those two Cardinals had incurred my displeasure. We merely invited them not to leave our court, – but they could scarcely be called prisoners; – however, proceed!"

"Alexander's energetic, inflexible character was known, and it was decided to depose him. A powerful faction elected Cardinal Octavian, and Alexander was forcibly expelled. In consequence of this, the Archbishop Eberhard, and every other prelate who is learned in the sacred canons, regard Victor's election as illegal, and look upon Alexander as the legitimate Pope."

"This is strange!" said the Emperor, forced to blush before the Abbot's arguments. "We certainly had never considered the question in this light. – We will have to be influenced by the Archbishop's opinion. – Hitherto we had thought differently. Your Metropolitan should have explained before the Council of Pavia, to which he was convened, the reasons which you have just advanced! – If we are in error, if we have indorsed so far the Anti-Pope, it is your master's fault. We much desire an interview with the worthy prelate, and regret exceedingly, that we cannot at once profit by his experience. The more so that, had he so willed it, this schism might have been long since ended."

The Abbot was dumb with surprise, but he still hesitated to give faith to the entire sincerity of the Emperor.

"The schism grieves us much," continued Barbarossa. "The Defender of the Faith, more than any one else, must deplore its continuance. Hitherto we have done all in our power in order that Victor, whom we supported, should be acknowledged by the whole Church. But what you have just told us, as coming from the Archbishop, creates grave doubts in our mind."

"In any case," said Rinaldo, timidly, "it would be well if His Eminence of Salzburg should join the Court. – His presence alone would remove many obstacles."

"Although in feeble health, the venerable Bishop will not hesitate before the fatigues of the journey, if he were once assured that his influence would effect the unanimous recognition of the true Pope!" added Conrad.

"Let us hope so, at least!" replied the Emperor, and turning towards Rinaldo, he added, "You will write to this effect to the Archbishop; and, in the meantime, my dear Abbot, you are our guest."

He rose, and bowed graciously to the prelate, as a signal that the audience was at an end; but the Abbot, preoccupied with Bonello's case, after a moment's hesitation, began to plead in his behalf.

"Deign to excuse me, Sire, if I venture to implore your clemency for a most unfortunate man. A Guelph knight, named Bonello, is to be hung to-day. Spare his life, Sire, and in future he will no longer mix in political strife, but devote himself entirely to the education of his only daughter. She is almost a child, and needs a father's care; the more so that her extraordinary beauty is in itself a grave danger to one so young. If your Majesty desires to show me any favor, you will listen to my earnest prayer."

The Emperor reflected for a moment.

"What you ask is impossible," said he; "the sentence must be executed!"

"Although your Majesty cannot pardon the traitor," said Rinaldo, "you can easily offer him to the Archbishop of Salzburg's friend. Bonello is only a Lombard noble; it would be an original present to a German bishop."

Barbarossa divined the Chancellor's meaning, but he was inflexible.

"Not another word; the traitor must die!"

Conrad read in the Emperor's expression the uselessness of further appeal, and he could only rejoice that he had been able to prolong, although but for a few short hours, the life of the condemned. He might at least prepare him for the great journey into eternity.

"Hasten to discharge your holy mission," said Barbarossa, "for to-morrow at daybreak Bonello shall be hanged."

The prelate bowed, and left the tent.

"You should let the poor devil live," said the Chancellor, in a discontented tone.

"The poor devil might live," replied Barbarossa, "but the rebel must die;" and he took his place again at the table.

"If I aspired to the empire of the world, the blind goddess of justice would be obliged to make more than one sacrifice on the altar of expediency," remarked the Count of Dassel. "The Abbot Conrad solicited the Guelph's pardon; Conrad is the friend of the Archbishop Eberhard, and Eberhard is the soul of the Episcopacy."

"Must we purchase the loyalty which is ours by right, by making concessions and granting impunity to crime?"

"Your Majesty's notions of justice utterly confound my poor wisdom," said Rinaldo respectfully. "At this moment I am in an awkward dilemma. I see dangerous breakers ahead; a species of conspiracy against the realization of your gigantic enterprise, and I neither dare to show the peril nor attempt to avoid it. It is truly painful for a sincerely devoted heart."

"Explain your meaning," said the Emperor.

The Chancellor rose and approached the table, his knit brows and eager eyes wearing an expression of stern determination.

"Henry the Lion is Duke of Saxony and Bavaria," he continued. "He is the most powerful lord of Germany. As a Guelph, his attachment to Alexander is patent; we hold the proofs at hand. To conciliate Henry by gifts of power or territory would be dangerous. Proud, haughty, and ambitious, he can hope for nothing from you, and will naturally turn to that faction which can offer him the most solid advantages. Even now, perhaps, he may be only awaiting a plausible excuse for leaving the Emperor and joining the party of Alexander III."

The Chancellor paused for a moment, as if expecting a reply; but he received none.

"Henry the Lion is allied to the wealthy and powerful Berthold of Zœhringen," continued Dassel. "In the event of a rupture, Zœhringen also would be arrayed against us. Is the Emperor in a fit condition to resist this coalition?"

"The assertion is a bold one, my lord, and yet I must confess that your fears are not entirely groundless," answered Barbarossa.

"I have shown the danger to your Majesty; let me now explain how it may be averted. The Lion espoused Clemence, a sister of the Zœhringen; by her he has no male issue. Now, to a prince who seeks to perpetuate the glories of his race, there can be no condition more painful than this, and it is even said to have caused more than one curious family discussion. Should the

Duke repudiate Clemence, your cause would be gained; for by the very fact of the divorce he would be obliged to break with Zoehringen and Alexander, and become your partisan."

Frederic shook his head, as he replied, —

"This master-stroke of policy is not without its merit, but is the proceeding honest or honorable?"

"Ah!" cried Dassel, "I felt sure that the Emperor's love of justice would prove the only real obstacle to the success of the house of Hohenstauffen. Ah, well!" he continued ironically, "we shall at least be martyrs to the cause of justice."

The Emperor was silent; Rinaldo had wounded his conscientious scruples, but the Chancellor spread out before him a parchment, and looked steadily upon his sovereign, as he prepared to employ this last terrible weapon.

"Henry the Lion is ambitious," said Barbarossa; "his strength and his alliances make him really dangerous. But, your plan is a good one, if it were feasible!"

"And why not, Sire? If the Emperor could divorce himself, what can prevent the Duke? If I mistake not, you did not ask permission of the Pontiff when, upon the pretext of consanguinity, you repudiated Adelaide and married Beatrice. Think you that the Pope Victor will hesitate to annul the Duke's marriage, if the Emperor so orders it?"

"Measure your words, my lord Chancellor! If I still hesitate, it is because of the crying injustice of which poor Clemence would be the victim. She is a noble woman!"

"Doubtless, and I pity her sincerely; but are the tears of a woman to baffle your projects for glory and dominion?"

This remark terminated the discussion. The proud aspirations of Barbarossa for universal Empire smothered every other feeling. He loved power and fame, and to them he sacrificed every other sentiment.

"But the Duke's assent to our projects is by no means certain," said he, less to discuss the subject than as a mark of his discontent.

"I will take care of that," said the Chancellor; "the Lion must be speedily influenced to an open rupture!"

CHAPTER IX.

FILIAL DEVOTION

The oftener Bonello saw his daughter, the more unwilling he became to die. Alas! what will become of her, poor orphan, he thought. Then again, at times, he turned to his project of her marriage with Nigri, and felt reassured. But Pietro had so deeply wounded her feelings by his violent and inconsiderate outburst, that he no longer desired that union for his child. She might perhaps seek shelter in a convent! Yet, in those times of civil strife, the walls of a cloister were but an insecure protection! Whilst he lamented in the bitterness of his thought, Pietro Nigri recommenced his wild harangue on the subject of the expected pardon.

"I should be sorry, sir knight, to allow Frederic to suppose for an instant that I feared death."

"Our positions are very different, young man," replied Bonello. "The cares and sentiments of a father are often more potent than the chivalrous heroism of a youth!"

"You should be able to master your emotions," said Nigri. "The ties of mere human affection should be as nothing compared with the duties which we owe to our country. If we fear the rope and the scaffold, – if the approach of death is to excite our tears, – we will deserve, by our weakness, to bear the

German yoke."

"You really do yourself injustice, Pietro!" said the prisoner, glancing towards the window where his daughter stood, anxiously awaiting the return of the Abbot. At last she perceived some horsemen approaching the eminence on which the fortress was built. It even seemed to her that she could distinguish the monk's robe; but what meant those armed men? Were they the Abbot's escort? Her heart beat violently. They drew up at the foot of the hill, and the prelate, leaving his attendants, ascended with hasty steps the path which led to the Castle.

"It is he! – he is coming-he is coming," cried Hermengarde, excitedly. "See how the holy man hastens. No! his is not the air of a messenger of evil; it is mercy and pardon that he will announce! My father! – oh, my father!" said she, embracing Bonello, and smiling through her tears.

"You are right, perhaps, my child; but wait a moment."

"Oh! do not doubt it, it is certain! You are pardoned; a voice from within tells me that I am right!"

The key grated in the lock, and the Abbot entered with a solemn and dejected mien.

"I have come in person," he said, "to communicate the result of my mission. I have only partially succeeded. Sir Knight. But the Emperor has respited you for to-day."

The prisoner was not for an instant deceived by the mild form under which the Abbot veiled his failure. But the childish sentiments of Hermengarde did not take in at once the dread

truth.

"Holy Father," said she, "your vague words alarm me. I implore you, tell me clearly if the Emperor has pardoned my father?"

The prelate looked sadly at the young girl.

"At first the Emperor positively refused to listen to my prayers for mercy; however, by my persistent supplications I have attained a satisfactory result."

"Ah! only for to-day!"

"We may feel perfectly easy, dear child. To-day not a hair of your father's head will be harmed!"

"But to-morrow! – Great God! what may happen tomorrow?" she cried, with anguish.

"Trust in God, my child," said the monk; "he alone is master of the future."

"Oh! unhappy creature that I am. – You hesitate to tell me the fearful truth! – You dread my tears! – Do you not see, dearest Father, that my eyes are dry? – that I am calm and resigned? – For God's sake, speak to me!" cried Hermengarde. "This uncertainty is worse than death! I am strong enough to bear anything but that, – we have no time to lose in idle tears now. The few short hours that are left us must be spent in trying to avert to-morrow's fearful doom!"

Hermengarde spoke earnestly, and her touching distress suggested a last hope to the good Abbot.

"Your pleadings may soften the Emperor, my child," he said.

"I will gladly use my influence to get you to his presence. – You may be more successful than I."

"You have failed! Then, indeed, all hope is lost," she cried, despairingly.

"Calm yourself, my child," said Guido, "all is not lost yet."

"Oh! I am calm, my Father; my mind is entirely composed. – Reverend Sir, take me at once, I beseech you, to the Emperor!"

And with wonderful stoicism she began her preparations; for though her heart was wellnigh breaking within her, she had summoned all her courage for this one last effort.

"Pietro," said she, after a moment's hesitation, "will you not come with me?"

"Pardon me, noble lady, if I cannot accede to your request; the sight of the tyrant has always been insupportable to me. – What will it be now, when I behold you a suppliant at his feet?"

"Ah! Pietro, do not refuse me the support of your arm!"

"Fear not, my daughter," said the Abbot; "I will not leave you for an instant. This young man appears too much excited, and we must act with the greatest calmness!"

Hermengarde seized the prelate's hand, and they immediately left the tower.

Conrad's retinue was composed of gentlemen of the Imperial household, for Barbarossa always treated with great distinction all those whose favor he wished to gain. As they descended the hill, Hermengarde's beauty attracted the admiration of the knights, one of whom dismounted as she approached, and

respectfully held the stirrup for her to mount. For her remarkable loveliness could not fail to conciliate the kind feelings of all those who in that chivalric age treated woman with such distinguished courtesy. The little band moved slowly along the main road to the Imperial tent, for such was the bustle and movement that their progress was more than once arrested by the crowd. Although for the first time within the precincts of a camp, Hermengarde scarcely remarked the tumult, nor noticed the looks of open admiration which her beauty called forth from all, so entirely was she a prey to her own sad thoughts. As they passed the tent of Henry the Lion, they met, the Chancellor Rinaldo, who, richly dressed and surrounded by a brilliant retinue, was about to pay a visit to the Duke.

"Whither go you thus, my lord Abbot?" he asked; "ah, well! I see you are not easily discouraged; and in truth," he added, bowing to the young girl, "your *protégée* is worthy of your best efforts, to which I sincerely wish you every success."

"The result would most certainly be successful, my lord," said Conrad, "if my slight influence was but backed by you."

Rinaldo said nothing, but as he gazed on Hermengarde, his bold imagination at once conceived a plan of which it alone was capable.

"My support is cheerfully offered, my lord Abbot," said he, after a moment's silence. "As much through respect for you, as from interest in this amiable young lady; but we must take every precaution, and not act rashly. I have a trifling affair to arrange

with the Saxon Duke, and will then at once join you. Pray, in the meanwhile go into my tent."

The Count directed one of his attendants to show every respect to the prelate and his suite during his absence, and then, after a few words of cheer to the young girl, continued on his way.

"What a lucky meeting!" said the Chancellor, who never neglected even the most unimportant circumstance. "The Lion can never look at this girl calmly. She is rather young, it is true, and a few years more would be in her favor; still, compared with Clemence, the Duke will not hesitate an instant."

He had by this time arrived at the Saxon tent, and dismounting, he left his escort in the ante-chamber, passing himself into an inner apartment. Beckoning to a servant who was in waiting, -

"Can I speak with your master?" he asked.

"In a few moments, my lord! The Duke is at present with his family, and desires not to be interrupted."

In the adjoining room he could hear the deep voice of a man mingling with the gay laugh and joyous prattle of children.

"There is no hurry about it," replied Dassel.

And he paced the ante-chamber, seemingly immersed in grave thought, but in reality listening to what was said in the Duke's chamber.

Henry the Lion was a bold and courageous monarch, ever occupied in the extension of his territories. His dream was to unite under his sway all the provinces of Northern Germany, as

Frederic had done with those of the South. Under the pretext of converting the heathen, he had been engaged for many years in a war with the Slaves, but the aggrandizement of his kingdom was a motive far more potent than could be the triumph of the true faith.

The innovations attempted by Frederic in the affairs of the Church met with little favor in his eyes, for he made no secret of his leanings towards orthodoxy, and although, as a vassal of the Empire, he fought against the Lombards, still in his heart he sympathized with their resistance to the encroachments of the Emperor. He refused to recognize Victor, the anti-Pope, whose slavish nature he despised, and whom he openly treated with contempt as occupying a position to which he was not legally entitled. It needed all Frederic's diplomacy to secure the co-operation of the Duke in the struggle which he was about to inaugurate, for Barbarossa had long felt the necessity of detaching him from the support of Alexander III., and it seemed as though the crafty Chancellor had discovered a sure means of success.

Whilst the minister was plotting his dishonorable combinations, the Duke, all unconscious of the visit awaiting him, was seated in the bosom of his family, Henry was a tall, powerfully built man, with dark hair and eyes, a heavy beard, and a frank open expression upon his sun-burned features. His remarkable strength had gained him the surname of the Lion. He was impatient of all repose, and chafed bitterly at the inaction to

which the Emperor had condemned him.

Near him sat the Duchess, busied with her embroidery. Not without personal and intellectual attractions, she was sincerely attached to her husband, but the affection which he had once felt for the lovely Clemence had long since made way for other sentiments. Honoring her virtues, he could not but feel deeply mortified that he was without an heir, and to his intimate associates he had more than once hinted at the possibility of a divorce.

"Look, Clemence! what a fine boy our little Hildegarde would make," said the Duke, playing with the silken curls of the child who had glided between his knees. "He would be old enough now to play with arms, or sharpen arrows, and in a few years could fight by my side!"

"And perhaps die there, husband!"

"Our five daughters run no risk of dying a hero's death!" he replied bitterly. "Ah! I would give the half of my left hand if one of those girls were a boy!"

"Henry, do not cherish such gloomy thoughts. You make me tremble for our future!"

"Never mind! a hand for a son!" continued Henry, with growing rage. "If my death-bed could be surrounded by five sons, I should feel that my toils had not been altogether unavailing. Ah! those five young lions could complete the work which their father had begun, and their combined efforts might defy the Emperor. But it is a painful, a bitterly painful thought, that I shall die and

leave to helpless girls the great work which I have so painfully achieved."

Clemence let fall her work and gazed upon her husband; despite her gentle nature and her sentiments of Christian resignation, she was much depressed by his violent outburst.

"Pardon, dear Henry!" she said; "your views are selfish ones. He who toils only for earthly fame, gives little thought to Eternity. In this world, we should be contented with the consciousness that we have always acted honestly and from noble motives!"

"A sad fate!"

"But the best, the most really meritorious! The true crown of glory is eternal and unfading! What we accomplish on earth is often valueless hereafter, for what then avails a lifetime spent in strife, and storms, and troubles! I implore you, dear husband, do not question the decrees of Providence; think less of earthly greatness, for pride leads to forgetfulness of God, and to eternal perdition!"

"You are right," said the Prince, who had listened calmly while Clemence was speaking, "if we are to measure honor's reward by what comes after death; but I maintain that I would gladly exchange some leaves of my heavenly crown, for the prospect of an earthly heir."

A slight noise was heard, the curtains were lifted, and Lanzo with a serious face entered the room.

"Whence come you, knave?"

"From the gallows, godfather!"

"What! am I the sponsor of a gallows-bird?"

"You have no reason to be ashamed of it, cousin, since it appears to be the fashion, nowadays, to hang honest people!"

"Who has been hanged?"

"Oh! just now, no one; but those who have the halter around their necks are not always the worst off. It may be that your Grace or the Emperor would send an honest citizen to execution; but, when the devil in person leads a man to the scaffold, it is another thing!"

"You are not bright to-day, Lanzo!"

"And why not, master?"

"This stupid speech about the devil leading a man to the scaffold."

"My luminous idea was a true one, though," said the jester. "Would you like me to show you one of Satan's tricks?"

"I am somewhat curious; let us see."

"Be good enough then to open wide the eyes of your understanding, for he who is blind in spirit, although carnally lucid, cannot discover the wiles of the demon. The works of his diabolical Majesty are, like Beelzebub himself, of a spiritual essence. The first and chief agent of the devil is-guess what, cousin!"

"What do you mean?"

"Pride! Whenever Satan can entangle a man in the meshes of pride, it is all over with him! Pride rises, and aspires to rise. Let us suppose that our individual is a duke, he covets the Empire;

and to accomplish his purpose, would destroy every barrier to his ambition, even were it necessary to be guilty of a crime. Should he be an Emperor, he desires the power of God, and even the Pope must be his humble vassal. If you look around, cousin, you can see for yourself, that is, if your eyes are worth anything. Should the proud man have an excellent wife, whose only fault is that she has not borne him a son, the poor creature becomes a martyr, for pride has no respect for the feelings or rights of others, and only dreams of seeing his own power and glory reflected in the persons of his descendants, long after his own flesh has become the food of worms!"

The Duke started, and turned towards his wife; but Clemence seemed absorbed in her work and heedless of the fool's discourse.

"Shall I show you some more of the devil's tricks, cousin?"

"No! I have had enough for to-day!"

"His diabolical Majesty has not only snares and pitfalls to catch fools, but also executioners to hunt them up! If I mistake not, one of these gentry is about to pay you a visit, cousin! Come, I will show him to you, but take good care of yourself, noble Lion!"

The prince looked anxiously to where Lanzo pointed, for he knew that his jester often veiled really serious truths beneath the semblance of frivolity.

"Here is His Majesty's servant!" said the fool, as Rinaldo entered, with a smile.

"Forgive me, my lord, for thus disturbing your family party for a moment; I could not resist the temptation of being the messenger of good news!"

"You are welcome, my lord; and these news are?"

"That to-morrow we break camp, and march upon Milan."

"At last!" cried the soldier; "it is, indeed, good news that you bring me. Camp-life is demoralizing, and we should have finished long since with our enemies!"

"So I have urged," replied Rinaldo. "His Majesty wished at first to await the arrival of the Austrian duke, but your counsels have modified the plan. I must really admire your influence over one who is so little patient of advice or control. Your Highness is as great in the council as in the field."

[Transcriber's note: Initial text of paragraph missing-possibly "The Duke was ..."] secretly flattered by this homage to his pride. "My observations have only served to develop the great military talent of the Emperor."

"With an ironical smile, scarcely perceptible around the corners of his mouth, Rinaldo answered, -

"A monarch is none the less great, because he listens to reason and follows good advice! But I have come to summon your Highness to a council of war, in which the plan of campaign against Milan is to be discussed. It will be very select, and only a few princes and prelates, who are experienced in the art of war, will be present."

"At what hour?"

"So soon as you shall have arrived?"

"Halloa, without there! my cloak!" cried the Duke.

"Oh! there is no need of such haste!" said Dassel. "Before starting, I must solicit a favor of your Highness."

"On what subject, pray?"

"Oh, a mere peccadillo! But, by your leave, I would make my confession in secret."

As they entered an adjoining room, Lanzo hurriedly concealed himself behind the hangings, as though this presumption was one of his privileges.

"What is the matter?" asked the Duke of Rinaldo, who stood before him with down-cast eyes, and an appearance of irresolution and discouragement.

"I am really a guilty man," said the Chancellor, after a moment's silence. I meant to await a more favorable occasion; but-I was an unwilling listener to your conversation with the Duchess, and much as I dislike to interfere with your domestic happiness, I have been unable to restrain myself. – That you, the most powerful prince of the Empire, should be without an heir to your glory-so mighty a tree, full of sap and vigor to remain barren-truly, it is a sad reflection!" – The Lion raised his eyes upon the Chancellor, whose face wore an expression of deep chagrin.

"A sad reflection, say you! – A man must learn to carry the burden which he cannot shake off!"

"Which he cannot? – Very true, *if* he cannot; but, for my part,

I have imagined that this accident, so fatal to your race, might be remedied. Mayhap, it will need great strength of mind on your part, or even some violence?" said the tempter, in an insinuating tone.

"Nothing more?"

"I cannot now say! The Emperor's first wife was childless; he divorced her and married Beatrice. This union has been blessed with a numerous progeny."

An expression of mingled regret and anger passed over the features of the Duke, who sat twisting his beard, in silence.

"Frederic could do it; – Adelaide was his relative!"

"Oh, that was the pretext, I know," said the Chancellor; "but we can easily find another equally good; and it is certain that the Pope Victor will gladly yield to a demand made by the Emperor, or even, indeed, to your own request. If consanguinity were a substantial ground for a divorce, it seems to me that the extinction of a noble house would be quite as valid a plea. Do not let this matter drop. I feel sure that your Grace will pardon my indiscretion and importunity."

"There is no indiscretion, my lord! It is not the first time that I have pondered over this matter; but it is strange, how different an almost familiar thought appears when couched in words!"

"It is merely the realization of our long cherished desires," said the statesman but he thought within himself, – "It is a remorse for an evil deed!"

For a moment the Duke was silent, and then, with his eyes

turned towards the ground, he resumed, -

"I agree with you, that my marriage has become insupportable to me; but to commence the affair, and to carry it to a satisfactory result, - hum! - I think that rather comes within the scope of your talents and intelligence, my dear Chancellor!"

"With pleasure! - You can count upon me in every way," replied Rinaldo, and, for once, he spoke the truth. "But, in the first place, it will be necessary to secure the Emperor's consent, and, through him, that of the Pope. Perhaps, to-day you may have the opportunity of discussing the matter before four competent persons, - will that suit your Grace?"

They left the room. Henry called for his cloak, and sword and helmet. Lanzo was seated on the ground, playing with his bells.

"Cousin!" said he, looking up, as they approached, "have you forgotten all about the snares of the devil?"

As if to increase the Duke's remorse, Clemence and her children entered the room. The Duchess had heard her husband and hastened, according to the old German custom, to bring him his sword and helmet. The Chancellor bowed low before the princess, and his calm and smiling face gave no presage to the noble lady of the misfortune which menaced her happiness; but Henry, less skilled in dissimulation, averted his gaze, as he said, -

"You should not take this trouble, Clemence!"

"It is ever my pleasure to serve my noble husband," she replied, presenting him his helmet.

The Chancellor's visit alarmed her, for she knew the violent

and impetuous temper of her lord, and she feared lest some misunderstanding might arise between him and the Emperor.

"Where are you going, Henry?" she asked. "Are you summoned to His Majesty?"

"Summoned, – no; that is to say, yes. I am summoned to a Council of War about to take place;" and, in company with the Chancellor, he left the tent.

"Great God! what is the matter?" said Clemence. "I have never seen him thus!"

"Nor I neither," replied Lanzo, who was still seated upon the ground. "He looks marvellously like a man whom the devil is leading to the gallows!"

"What a fearful speech, Lanzo!"

"What a wicked man, Clemence!"

"Do you dare to speak thus of your master, Sirrah?"

"Oh! I have given him up, noble lady, and have entered your service; for, methinks you will soon have grievous need of a faithful servant!"

"Why so?"

"Why so? – hum! – the why would only worry you. Never question a fool too closely, noble dame, for fools tell the truth!"

"But I would know the truth, Lanzo!"

"Good! Then pray for your husband."

"I have already done so, to-day."

"Then do it again."

"But why?"

"Because he is in bad company, and needs your prayers!"

CHAPTER X.

THE TEMPTER

Frederic awaited Dassel's return, in a state of feverish anxiety for the success of his mission. He had carefully pondered over his Chancellor's proposition, and he now dreaded lest the refusal of Henry to the contemplated divorce might interfere with the realization of his cherished projects. The very possibility of failure was painful to him, but when the Chamberlain announced the Duke's arrival, he dissembled his agitation and advanced cordially to meet him.

"Are you at last satisfied, my dear Duke," said he, motioning to a seat.

"Certainly, I must be satisfied," replied the Duke, who seemed uneasy and dispirited.

"The princes will be here shortly, and we will open the Council without delay, for the measures against Milan must be decided upon at once. This proud and rebellious city shall feel all the weight of our displeasure, — our own opinion is in favor of utterly destroying this hot-bed of treason, and we trust that your Grace thinks with us."

The Duke remained silent, his eyes still fixed upon the ground. "My plan is the result of mature deliberation," pursued Barbarossa; "but we would listen to your counsel."

"As your Majesty pleases," replied Henry.

The Emperor glanced towards Rinaldo, who answered by a look of astonishment.

"Your Grace seems out of spirits; – you will, I know, pardon my remark," said Frederic, cordially. "I trust that you have received no bad news from the Duchy, or that you have no domestic annoyances!"

"Domestic annoyances, only, Sire!" said Rinaldo.

"How so?"

Dassel read in Henry's silence, an invitation to take upon himself the explanation of the affair, and he began to paint in gloomy colors and with crafty skill the misfortune of the Duke, who, with all his power and renown, was doomed to leave no posterity to reflect his greatness and his fame.

"These sad facts have been the subject of our interview," he said. "Your Majesty will readily appreciate the natural despondency of a prince who looks beyond the present and who labors for ages yet unborn!"

"Really, I am deeply grieved," said Barbarossa, "but I can perceive no remedy. It does not seem as though Clemence were destined to realize your Grace's desires."

"Pardon my boldness," said Rinaldo, "if I venture to allude to your Majesty's course of conduct in a similar conjuncture."

"Very true! but every husband cannot, in the same case, do as I have done," said Frederic.

This remark was calculated to excite the pride of the Duke,

who had always regarded Barbarossa as the main obstacle to his own desires of personal aggrandizement.

"The Emperor must fully understand and examine my position," said Henry, raising his head proudly. "I must observe that, were our cases reversed, your Majesty would meet that courtesy from the Duke."

"Particularly from the Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, who does not idly bear the title of 'the Lion,'" added Frederic. "But, in truth, the business is serious and difficult; and although the reason assigned for the divorce appears a valid one, it is not in our power to pass judgment. Pope Victor alone enjoys this prerogative."

The last observation was judiciously calculated. It was necessary that Henry should understand, positively and clearly, that it was only Frederic's Pope, who, upon the Emperor's order, would pronounce the dissolution of the marriage. He wished to be assured of Henry's defection from the party of Alexander III., from whom the Saxon prince had nothing to hope in the matter of the divorce. Frederic gazed at him attentively, for the Lion's silence appeared an encouraging omen, as he hitherto had been a zealous supporter of the claims of Alexander III. to the throne of St. Peter.

"We doubt not," resumed Barbarossa, after a moment's silence, "that his Holiness, upon our representations, will be persuaded."

"I would solicit your Majesty's intervention in this business,

that it may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion as speedily as possible," said the Duke.

"As we have been ourselves in a similar position, we shall be able to advance most excellent reasons for its immediate solution. But I would advise that the Duchess be not informed of our project; it would cause her unnecessary pain, and a woman's tears must not influence in anyway the course of events."

The Chancellor seeing that his plot was progressing favorably, withdrew to seek for Conrad and his fair charge. He was anxious for Hermengarde's success, but less through pity for her misfortune than in the hope that it might further his own vile schemes. He found them in his own tent, which stood close by the Imperial pavilion. Hermengarde was seated in a corner of the apartment, gazing first at the sky and then towards the entrance, where she eagerly watched for the Chancellor's return. She trusted that her tears and entreaties would soften the heart of the Emperor. The monk had opened his breviary, and was praying, as Rinaldo entered smiling at the success of his plot against the Saxon Duke. He approached the young girl, and said kindly, -

"Pardon me, noble lady, if I have made you wait. In cases like yours, all depends upon choosing a seasonable moment. I think that moment has arrived."

These words awakened her hopes; but the thought that in a few moments her father's fate for weal or woe would be decided, took away her courage.

"Do not be alarmed; all will be well. Have no fear, and when you are before the Emperor, speak as your heart dictates. In such a case, that language is always more eloquent than studied words."

"Have you any hope?" asked Conrad, who sought to read the statesman's thoughts.

"Most excellent, my dear Abbot. The Emperor, I am positive, will grant Bonello's pardon. But hasten! and when you are summoned, lose no time."

He said a few more kind words to the young girl, and then left the tent. Meanwhile Frederic passed into the council-chamber, where the nobles sat discussing the siege of Milan and the future fate of the city. Obizzo, chief of the Italian auxiliaries, inveighed bitterly against the tyranny of the Milanese, and insisted upon making them submit to the same severe measures which they had inflicted upon Lodi. Obizzo's neighbor, dressed in full episcopal robes, and with a sword by his side, scarcely listened to the Italian's arguments, but watched eagerly the door of the Imperial chamber as though awaiting the presence of the monarch. It was Bishop Gero, of Halberstadt, elevated to that dignity by the powerful will of Barbarossa, in spite of all laws and justice, after the banishment of Bishop Ulrich.

That worthy prelate had sought refuge with the primate of Salzburg, and as Gero had heard of the arrival of the Archbishop's envoy, he began to fear the loss of his benefice. The bishops of Osnabruck and Minden, creatures of the Emperor,

also spoke in favor of extreme measures. The Count Palatine, Otho of Wittelsbach, always impatient of long speeches, found Obizzo's harangue tedious, and began to grow angry. At this moment was heard the deep voice of Henry the Lion, the curtain was drawn aside, and Barbarossa, accompanied by the Dukes of Saxony, Bohemia, and Rottemburg, entered the room. Behind them came the Chancellor Rinaldo. The nobles bowed respectfully to the Emperor, who seated himself upon the throne prepared for him, whilst they placed themselves in a half circle before him. On his entrance, the Chancellor had arranged the curtains so as to leave a small opening, behind which stood an attendant awaiting his orders.

"Reasons of grave moment have decided us," said Barbarossa, "not to await the arrival of the Duke of Austria, but to march, to-morrow, upon Milan. With God's help, it will be for your gallantry to punish the crimes which this city has committed against justice, against the supremacy of the German nation, and against the Majesty of our own person. Conscious of their guilt, as they must be, these rebels cannot expect a war according to the dictates of generosity, but one of extermination. We desire to know whether our trusty allies agree with the expectations of our adversaries. The question then is this: shall the campaign be carried on with inexorable severity, or does the enemy deserve that we should exhibit a certain leniency, and a respect for persons and property?"

Henry the Lion, to whom belonged the right of speaking

first, reflected for an instant. His chivalrous disposition did not sympathize with this war of extermination proposed by the Emperor, and a similar thought could be read in the countenance of the Duke of Rottemburg and the Count Palatine Otho.

The schismatical bishops, who understood at once that Barbarossa had determined upon the total destruction of the city, bent their heads in token of adhesion. They could scarcely wait for the moment of the ballot, so eager were they to give signs of their obedience. Obizzo moved impatiently upon his chair, unable to understand the hesitation of the Duke of Saxony.

"I came here with my Saxons and Bavarians to fight against the enemy," said the Lion; "to punish the rebels, and to make them acknowledge your sovereignty. But all this can be accomplished without laying waste this beautiful country. Why destroy their vines, uproot their trees, ruin their crops, burn their villages and hamlets? I am no partisan of useless cruelty."

"In other circumstances we would agree with you, noble Duke," replied Frederic; "but we think that Milan should receive the same treatment which she has inflicted upon other cities."

The Margrave Obizzo could no longer keep silence.

"Why show mercy to the scourge of all Lombardy? Milan has shed torrents of innocent blood, and has left to her victims only the choice between death or slavery! Yes," he cried, "Milan has a thousand times merited her destruction. And what I advance here, my lords, is not merely my individual opinion, but the sentiment of all Lombardy."

Obizzo's arguments coincided with the desires of the Emperor, but as he was about to continue, the latter stopped him by a look.

"You have not exaggerated, Margrave," said he, "but your emotions have carried you, perhaps, too far. What is your opinion, my Lord of Rottemburg?"

Although at heart opposed to the destruction of Milan, a punishment, in his opinion, much too severe, this prince was too anxious to conciliate the Emperor's favor to venture upon a remonstrance, and he yielded an immediate assent to the monarch's views.

The Duke of Bohemia likewise voted in favor of sack and pillage.

"And you, Count Palatine?" again inquired Barbarossa.

"I share the opinions of Duke Henry!" replied Wittelsbach; "the enemy should not have cause to think us savages!"

"If you wish to gain the enemy's good graces, my dear Count, you must treat him more gently in battle!" said the Emperor, recording the votes, which, as might have been expected, were in accordance with the Imperial wishes.

The Duke of Saxony dropped his heavy sword, with a loud crash upon the floor, and twisting his long beard, glared angrily upon the vile courtiers.

"You are not obliged to conform to the decisions of the Council," said Frederic, endeavoring to calm the Duke's anger; "we will trust to your own discretion in your relations with the

enemy. — But," continued he, "some one must inform the Abbot of St. Augustine, whose monastery is near Milan, that he must solicit us to spare his convent and its dependencies. Those monks are determined opponents of His Holiness Pope Victor, and warm partisans of the Cardinal Roland."

Henry was about to say a word in defence of the Abbot, and urge that religious discussions were scarcely a valid reason for burning a monastery; but he reflected at the impossibility of obtaining from Alexander III. the dissolution of his marriage, and he was silent.

"Those monks are your Majesty's most dangerous enemies," said Obizzo; "they continually excite the people and kindle the spirit of rebellion, on the pretext that your Majesty robs the Church of her liberty, and seeks to submit everything to your power."

Rinaldo here made a sign to the attendant, who immediately disappeared.

"As far as I know," said Werner, Bishop of Minden, who never let pass an opportunity for the display of his learning, "those monks follow the rule of St. Augustine, which Rule, Book II., chap. 12, forbids them expressly, taking part in worldly affairs, and recommends study and a life of contemplation."

"Pardon," interrupted Barbarossa, who feared a learned dissertation, "St. Augustine's rule has no connection with the question now before us."

"Certainly," said the prelate, humbly; "the rule has no

connection with the rebellion. I merely cited it to show that I heartily approved of the punishment of the Augustinians."

"It seems to me," said Gero, Bishop of Halberstadt, "that these monks richly deserve punishment, since they have refused to acknowledge the Pope appointed by the Emperor, to whom belongs, by immemorial custom, the right of nominating the Roman Pontiff. For this reason alone, if none other existed, the followers of St. Augustine deserve to be treated as rebels."

Not a voice was raised in defence of the poor monks, and it was decided that their monastery should be destroyed.

The Emperor was returning his thanks to the princes for their able counsels, when the silken curtain which closed the entrance to the tent was thrown wide open. On the threshold stood the stately form of the Abbot Conrad holding by the hand the trembling Hermengarde—a shrinking girl by the side of a gray-haired man. Near them stood Erwin, the Emperor's godson; for the youth, touched by the girl's misfortunes, had hastened to offer his services in her cause. His relationship to Barbarossa permitted him to follow the Abbot to the council-chamber, where he intended to use every effort to advance the cause of the unhappy Hermengarde.

The Emperor appeared surprised and annoyed, the presence of the Abbot and his charge explained the purport of their visit, and a sombre frown augured ill for their success; but the nobles who were present could not but sympathize with her grief.

"Pardon, Sire," said the Abbot, bowing respectfully to the

Emperor and the nobles; "my faith in your generosity emboldens me to plead, once more, in favor of the unfortunate. Before you stands a wretched daughter, whom the father's death will leave a helpless orphan, at a time when a fierce war is raging throughout the land. Will not your Majesty deign to lend an ear to pity? – it is a virtue which becomes a monarch, as much as justice."

While Conrad spoke, Hermengarde had fallen upon her knees; but spite all her efforts, she could only falter out-

"Pity-mercy! – for the love of God! Be merciful!"

Barbarossa remained seated; his scowling gaze turned upon the Abbot.

"You might have spared yourself this effort, my lord Abbot," said he violently; "do you imagine that a woman's tears could succeed, where your arguments have failed?"

"I had hoped it, Sire. It is natural to the human heart to be touched by the tears and prayers of the innocent. I hoped for nothing less from your Majesty's!"

They were alarmed at the bold demeanor of the Abbot, but the Lion bowed his head approvingly, and Barbarossa's scowl deepened. During the scene, Rinaldo had narrowly scanned the Duke's countenance, as if to mark the effect produced upon him by the remarkable beauty of the fair suppliant. But the crafty statesman was wrong if he imagined that a man of the Lion's character could be ensnared so easily. Had the Duke given any indication that the plot so skilfully imagined would be successful, the Chancellor would have urged Bonello's cause, but Henry's

countenance remained impassive. Hermengarde was still upon her knees weeping bitterly, and her face hidden in her hands. At times she looked upon the Emperor, striving to collect her thoughts, but the stern face of the monarch appalled her.

"Pity!" she cried. "Spare my father's life; he regrets his crime! Oh! pardon him!"

"Enough of these lamentations!" said Barbarossa; "let some one lead this woman hence!"

The Bishop Gero hastened to comply with the Emperor's wishes, whilst the latter explained to those present the crime of which Bonello had been guilty.

"If you consider our sentence unjust, speak, and the criminal shall be released," said he.

"Bonello is a valiant soldier, although he has drawn his sword in a bad cause," replied Otho. "Still, I implore you to pardon him for his daughter's sake."

"Pardon him, Sire. I fear your sentence may cause the death of two persons," said Henry, pointing to the pale and trembling Hermengarde.

"This time justice must take its course," answered Barbarossa.

"The sentence is perfectly just," added Werner, of Minden. "Who would deserve death, if traitors were allowed to go unpunished?"

The two other bishops nodded in token of approval; they never dissented from any apparent desire of Barbarossa.

"You perceive, my lord Abbot, that it is impossible for us to

pardon-"

He interrupted himself abruptly at the sight of Hermengarde, who fell fainting upon a chair.

"Enough of this, my lord Conrad, you may withdraw," and he motioned that they should take away the girl.

At this moment Erwin advanced, already deeply interested in Hermengarde's suffering; his godfather's stern refusal to her appeals affected him painfully. Bowing to the Emperor, with a bright flush upon his face, he said, -

"Pardon, Sire, if I venture to recall to Your Majesty's memory the recent battle, and the promise then made to grant me a favor."

"Ah! I trust that you will not make an improper use of my promise, Erwin?"

"An improper use-no, upon my honor. The favor which I now solicit, Sire, is the life and liberty of Bonello, this young girl's father."

"Is this petition serious, Count?" said Barbarossa, turning to him, angrily.

"It cannot be more so, Sire," answered the young man, promptly.

"Reflect well, boy, on what you ask," said the Emperor, fiercely. "Do not play with our promise-it is sacred; but-"

And he raised his right hand menacingly.

"If my petition were dictated by egotism, it might be considered an abuse of your Imperial promise; but I merely solicit the life and liberty of a man whose protection is necessary

to his daughter's happiness. In this I merely perform an act of humanity, and perhaps of chivalry."

"Well," said Barbarossa, after a moment of angry silence, "since you persist in a demand which we cannot refuse, be it so! Bonello is free! But you, Count Erwin of Rechberg, for the improper use to which you put our word, we withdraw from you our favor. You are banished from the Court--"

He did not conclude, for Erwin, almost stupefied with astonishment, threw himself at his feet, and taking the monarch's hand, -

"Sire," said he, "in pity, withhold this sentence-do not banish me from your presence-at least not now! Let me remain near you-you who are so menaced with perils on every side. Ah! let me still continue to watch over your precious life, and prove to you my gratitude for the almost paternal love and care which, until to-day, you have ever shown me! As a boy, I played upon your knees; it was from you I learned to use the sword and the lance; you have been to me a second father! Ah! my beloved godfather, do not send me into exile! Without you I care not to live!"

The touching prayer of this devoted heart produced its effect upon the monarch, from whose face all sternness gradually passed, to give place to an expression of a more kindly nature.

"Rise," said he; "you are a great flatterer, Erwin! It may be, too, a crafty knave! What think you, gentlemen?"

The nobles were somewhat surprised at this exhibition of feeling on the part of their sovereign, but their satisfaction was

evident. The Emperor continued, -

"We must not give any evidence of weakness, and as a punishment for the great interest which you have shown in favor of this culprit, you shall be banished, for a week's time, from our camp. This punishment will enable you to conduct to her home, the damsel whose cause you have so chivalrously advocated."

Emotion and fear at first did not allow Hermengarde to take in all the details of the scene. But when the youth came to tell her of her father's pardon, her joy and gratitude knew no bounds. Rising hurriedly, she would have thrown herself at the Emperor's feet, but he waved her away impatiently.

"You have no cause to thank me," he said. "Farewell, madam; this business has wearied us!" He signed to her to withdraw, and Conrad, Rechberg, and Hermengarde left the tent.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JOURNEY

Erwin thought it advisable to accompany Bonello and his daughter until they had reached a place of safety. Well aware of the dangers of the road, and the bitter party feeling throughout Lombardy, he feared lest the old man might lose his life, were he to meet any of the soldiers from Lodi, Pavia, Cremona, or the other cities which were leagued against Milan. He therefore procured a strong armed escort to protect his friends in case of attack. Whilst the Count of Rechberg was making his preparations, Hermengarde and the Abbot hastened to the castle to communicate the glad tidings of their success to the prisoner, who, in a transport of joyful emotion, threw himself upon his daughter's breast, with tears of pious gratitude. The Abbot looked on calmly. Pietro Nigri, as though he regretted that the tyrant had granted his old friend's pardon, gazed on in gloomy indifference. After the first moments of their joyful greeting, Guido requested to be informed of the details, and the Abbot Conrad related the scene which had taken place between the Emperor and the young Count.

"Where is the noble youth?" asked Bonello; "why did you not bring him here?"

At that moment was heard the clatter of horses' hoofs,

and the clank of armor, in the castle-yard, and Erwin, hastily dismounting, made his way towards the tower. Bonello watched him anxiously; and when the Count, in brilliant armor, entered the room, he rushed towards him, seized his hand, and fell upon his knees.

"Most excellent young man!" he cried; "you are my preserver! may God reward you for your kindness to my child! Heaven grant me the power to prove to you my gratitude! Anything which you may ask of me shall be yours. May God bless and keep you."

The old man spoke in a voice choked with emotion. Erwin interrupted him, for he was pained to see Bonello at his feet.

"Rise, my lord, I beg of you. Your thanks overwhelm me. I have only acted as any other gentleman would have done, in my place. I merely crave the favor of accompanying you to your home."

At this new mark of kind consideration, Bonello was about to utter further words of gratitude; but the Count interrupted him by the announcement that all was ready for their departure. They left the tower, and entered the court-yard of the castle, where stood Hermengarde's palfrey, and a splendid courser for her father. The parting between Bonello and the Abbot was touching; they embraced one another, and the prelate returned to the camp. Pietro Nigri mounted sullenly, glancing haughtily upon the young girl, and contemptuously at her father.

"Farewell, lady," he said; "I wish you every happiness. As to you, Sir," he added, "I sincerely trust that you may never have

cause to regret the life which you owe to a tyrant's mercy, – a life destined to be passed unprofitably, for all that concerns the honor and well-being of your country."

He dashed off before Guido could reply, and the others hastened to leave the castle, where some of them, at least, had suffered so acutely.

At the foot of the hill, they struck towards the south, and then diverged from the main road. Erwin was anxious to please his guests, and readily yielded to Bonello's guidance. The latter was perfectly familiar with the country, and desired to avoid any meeting with the Italian soldiery. For, though firmly resolved never to draw his sword again, he was pained at the sight of so many Lombards hurrying to join Barbarossa's legions and attack Milan, the most important bulwark of Italian independence, so they took a cross road which speedily led them to the summit of the plain. Every precaution had been taken against the marauders who then infested the country. In front, rode two men-at-arms; then came Rechberg, followed by Hermengarde and her father, and four other troopers closed the rear of the escort.

"We must hasten," said Guido, "in order to arrive before nightfall at the monastery of San Pietro; it will be sufficient for the first day's journey, and by starting at dawn to-morrow, we shall reach my castle before the evening."

Erwin had wished to learn some of the particulars about Bonello's family, and he at once profited by the present opening.

"Only by to-morrow evening?" said he; "then your castle must

be near the Lower Alps?"

"In their very midst, Count; in the very heart of the Alps," replied Guido. "If, as I suppose, you like mountain-castles, mine will please you. Years ago, when I visited Germany, I used to admire your fortresses perched upon the craggy peaks, like immense eagles' nests. The evident disposition of the Teutonic nobility to shun the cities and low grounds, and occupy the heights, is a mark of sound judgment. Our ancestors, also, knew how and where to build their strongholds. Did you ever see Castellamare?"

"Is that your dwelling?"

"Yes," answered Bonello. "The Romans from whom I am descended, erected the fortress, and it has been in my family from time immemorial."

"Doubtless, during your absence, your son commands in the castle?"

"I have no son," answered the old man, somewhat sadly.

"That pale-faced young man, who was with you at Cinola, is perhaps one of your relations?"

"Pietro Nigri? Oh, not precisely, but almost!" Here the young girl's horse plunged violently.

"Take care, my child; your horse seems inclined to be troublesome," said Guido. "Pietro," he resumed, "is the son of the Milanese Consul Nigri. He is a most worthy young man; he was my daughter's escort to Cinola."

They approached the monastery, around whose walls the

twilight mist was slowly rising. Still, from afar, could be seen the dark red windows of stained glass; and the gilded cross upon the tower, illuminated with the rays of the setting sun, shone bright through the evening haze. Bonello gazed eagerly upon this glad haven of rest, as they hastened forward.

At the sound of the bell, a grating was drawn aside.

"Open, open, brother Ignatius!" cried the lord of Castellamare to the monk, who examined the appearance of the visitors. "We wish a lodging for the night, and a flask of your best wine."

Soon a key grated in the lock, the gates opened, and the little cavalcade rode into the court-yard.

"You are most welcome, my lord," said Ignatius, cordially; "pardon me if I have made you wait. We are obliged to be most prudent, for the country is filled with marauders, who have little respect for the sanctity of our poor cloisters. Your arrival here is truly gratifying to us all; but we regret our superior's absence."

"Where is he?"

"In Genoa."

"I am extremely sorry," said Guido; "for we might have talked together until matins."

The horses were led to the stables, and a lay brother conducted the travellers to the refectory. Several long benches and tables, two comfortable arm-chairs, a handsome crucifix upon the wall, and a bronze *aspersorium*, composed all the furniture of the room. Seating himself in one of the arm-chairs, Guido at once entered into conversation with the lay brother, whose mission it

was not only to receive, but also to entertain all visitors to the convent.

"The holy Abbot is at Genoa, you say?" inquired Bonello. "He absents himself so rarely that there must have been grave reasons for his journey."

The monk glanced distrustfully at Erwin, and was silent. Rechberg concluded that the Order belonged to Alexander's party and had incurred the displeasure of the Emperor. The repast was soon brought in, and the tired travellers partook eagerly of the three copious dishes. The servants were entertained in another room. The rest of the evening was passed in conversation; but Bonello made no allusion to political affairs, and the monk imitated his example, although it was evident that he would gladly have spoken of the German army and the perils now menacing the Church. But the presence of the young nobleman imposed silence upon his curiosity.

Erwin felt this reserve the more so that he feared lest Guido might suspect him of repeating to the Emperor what he had already overheard. He would gladly have talked with Hermengarde, but it seemed as if she meant to model her conduct by her father's, and all his attempts to engage her in conversation were ineffectual.

"She considers me the enemy of her country," he thought; "perhaps avoids me as a heretic. At least she might remember what I have done for her sake."

The idea was painful to him, and he was heartily glad when

they separated for the night. Next morning they resumed their journey. The summits of the Alps grew more distinct, and Hermengarde's spirits appeared to brighten as they approached her home. She conversed gayly with Rechberg and asked many artless questions about Germany and its inhabitants, and he was charmed with the interest she evinced in his native land.

"Have you any mountains like those in Germany?" said she, pointing to the Alps.

"Yes, lady; and our mountains are covered with forests in which roam the stag, the roebuck, and the wild boar; but the bear, much to the delight of the traveller and the chagrin of true hunters, becomes every day more rare.

"Bears! but is it possible that any one can regret the disappearance of those fierce animals!"

"Oh! a bear-hunt has its charms!"

"Very dangerous ones, I should think."

"But it is precisely on account of their danger that this sport is attractive, fair lady. To slay a timid stag requires little courage, but a struggle with the bear needs both bravery and skill. The bear-hunt is the school in which we take our first lessons in the art of war."

The Count's earnestness proved that he spoke of one of his favorite pastimes.

"In what part of Germany is your domain, Count?" said Hermengarde, after a short pause.

"In Suabia."

"If I mistake not, Suabia is the birthplace of the Hohenstauffen?"

"Precisely, noble lady! The castles of Hohenstauffen and Rechberg are neighboring ones. Our families have always been intimate and are even connected by ties of blood."

Erwin almost regretted his last remark when he reflected that his relationship with Barbarossa would be a poor recommendation in the eyes of the young Lombard.

"I fear that our journey will be unpleasantly interrupted," said Bonello, who, for some time, had been watching a gray speck on the summit of the mountain.

"In what way, sir knight?"

"Do you see that castle? It is the dwelling of the Emperor's prefect, Herman, who is in charge of yonder bridge. He is a cruel, bad man, and levies tolls to suit his own pleasure, particularly when the travellers are wealthy or of high rank. He has on several occasions seized upon persons and held them prisoners until a high ransom has been paid for their release."

"But this is a crying injustice," said the Count, "and should be reported to His Majesty, who would punish Herman severely for his abuse of power." Bonello shook his head, with a smile.

"Herman merely executes the Emperor's orders," said he. Rechberg looked at the speaker with astonishment. He was loth to believe that such an insult to his sovereign were possible. Bonello resumed, -

"Barbarossa knows perfectly well all about his deputy here,

but there are other exactions of which I believe him still ignorant. He has reduced several families to utter beggary, and when he can squeeze nothing more out of them himself, he sells them to the Jews. This is what he calls 'balancing his accounts.' I have known instances where he has stretched the poor wretches on the rack to extort from them their last pennies. In short, this Herman, the terror of the country, is a disgrace to humanity. But there are other deputies of the Emperor in some of the cities, who are equally merciless in their exactions."

"I can scarcely credit your statements," replied the young Count; "but I feel sure that upon the first complaint of such enormities Frederic would interfere."

"You make a grave mistake," said Bonello. "I have personally represented the facts to the Emperor, but in vain; his invariable answer has been, that it was the duty of his agents to collect the taxes and imposts, and if they were obliged to resort to extreme measures, that it was doubtless the fault of the inhabitants who refused to pay their dues."

They rode on in silence. The young Count was dejected, for he began to perceive that it was natural for men like Bonello to resist such an arbitrary exercise of tyranny.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TOLL

They reached the bridge. On either side were two massive towers, over which floated the Imperial standard. Heavy barriers closed the pathway, and a strong body of men-at-arms defended the approach. Halfway from the bridge, on the summit of a lofty hill, stood the castle of Herman, built to command the road, which, as the main avenue to Genoa, was extensively travelled, and yielded an important revenue to the Imperial treasury. The castle had been destroyed by the Italians, during the reign of Henry V., but had been rebuilt by Frederic, at the time of his second invasion of Upper Italy, at which time Herman had been installed as Governor.

The soldiers were clustered beneath the porch; but a sentinel was watching from one of the loop-holes of the tower, and as he caught sight of the travellers, called out gayly to the others, "Halloa! comrades, here comes a rich prize: a Lombard knight, some Genoese merchants, and a lady! Levy a heavy toll, *Dietho*, they can afford to pay it; and if you will follow my advice, you will get something for us; the Emperor cannot find fault if honest folks think now and then of their own pockets!"

The challenge of the sentinel interrupted him, and the soldiers left the porch and drew up in front of the tower.

"What is that you say about merchants?" said Dietho, glancing sharply at the strangers. "These are no merchants, but a troop of armed men."

"Pshaw!" continued the first speaker, as he looked again. "There are only six, – two before and four behind; for I don't count those in the middle. It is only some of those lazy Genoese. And we are twelve here, and pretty determined fellows too! Now, Dietho, don't forget to lay it on heavily!"

"We will lay it on heavily," said another; "for since yesterday we have had no luck at all."

Dietho, who wore the purse at his girdle as a sign that it was he who received the tolls, carefully examined the travellers, but he seemed discontented, and shook his head.

"There is nothing to be made here; these people advance too boldly. I believe they are Germans."

"Well, and what of that," said the warder, who had descended from the tower. "No one passes here gratis."

"What do you say, Dietho? Do you think a piece of gold each for the gentlefolks, and two silver pennies for the servants, would be enough?"

Dietho shrugged his shoulders.

"It would be enough," he said; "but I fear they will refuse to pay it."

"Then we will force them!" cried several of the soldiers, brandishing their pikes. "A piece of gold for each gentleman, and two pence a piece for the servants, is little enough!"

Rechberg had left Hermengarde's side, and at the head of his little troop rode forward to ascertain if Bonello's complaints were really well founded. As he approached, his noble bearing and costly armor, with the splendid horse which he rode, gave a high idea of his importance to the men-at-arms.

"Look how his gilded helmet shines," said they, "and mark the gold on his spurs and his baldric; he is certainly a count, at least; or, mayhap, the son of some duke! – Oh! that fellow can pay, Dietho; ask at least three gold pieces!"

Rechberg continued to advance towards the closed town, whose guardians made no movement towards opening the passage.

"Take down the barrier, and allow me to pass," he said, politely.

"One moment, noble sir! – Don't you perceive that the Imperial banner floats above the tower? There is a toll to pay. Frederic would find it a hard matter to keep up his army if his taxes were not paid up! Besides, his Hungarian Archers need their wages. In short, the times are hard and the toll dear!"

The Count was provoked at the observations thus made, for they were of a nature to incense the Italians, and render the Emperor still more unpopular among them. However, he mastered his anger, and asked what there was to pay.

"Four gold pieces!" cried a voice, for Dietho hesitated.

"All right, you hear, four gold pieces, on account of the hard times," added Dietho. "The lady and her companion will also pay

eight more, and each servant two pence, in all twelve gold pieces and twelve pennies! Little enough, too, if you but think what an army Frederic is organizing at present."

"As well as I remember," said Erwin, "the legal toll is a penny for each person. By what right do you raise it a hundredfold?"

"I told you once already," replied Dietho; – "it is because the times are hard."

"Besides, we are not here to give explanations to milk-sops," said a voice from within. "Pay, or leave the bridge!"

"Miserable hound! do you dare to speak thus to a knight?" cried Erwin, passionately. "Here are your twelve pennies; now clear the way!"

"The varlets may pass," said Dietho, coolly pocketing the money; "but for the others to cross this beautiful bridge, which has cost so much money to build, there are just twelve pieces too few!"

"If you do not do your duty at once," said the knight, laying his hand on his sword, "I will compel you."

At this, the guard burst into a loud laugh of derision.

"Come on then," they cried; "if that is your game, we will give you a lesson in arithmetic."

Rechberg was disposed to force the passage, but Bonello hastened to interfere.

"Have no difficulty with those people," he cried; "I will pay what they ask!"

"No! you shall not," said the Count. "This robbery of

travellers, in the name of the Emperor, is a crime which must not go unpunished. Leave me; it is a meritorious action to chastise such scoundrels!"

All at once Herman appeared; he had overheard the quarrel, and now came to give assistance to his men.

Erwin lowered his visor, for the prefect knew him, and the young man wished to be positive of his complicity.

"What is the matter?" asked Herman.

"It is fortunate that you are here, my lord," replied Dietho. "This young man has been threatening to use his sword against us because we would not allow his whole party to cross for twelve paltry pennies."

"For twelve pennies! – You and your retinue! – You could not have seriously thought it," said Herman to the Count.

"Twelve pennies are just the legal tax, for we are but nine persons in all."

"Ah!" said the prefect; "perhaps you mean to teach me my duty, and what I have the right to ask?"

"The law has fixed the tariff sufficiently."

"Has it, indeed! Dietho, what did you charge this gentleman?"

"Twelve pieces of gold for the three nobles, and twelve pennies for the servants. – Pardon me if my demand was too moderate."

"It was, indeed, too moderate," cried Herman, glancing towards Bonello. – "You traitors have compelled the Emperor to cross the Alps, and now, if I am to judge by your lowered visor,

you wish to force the bridge! – Very well, come on. We are ready for you!"

The Count, at last fully convinced that the Governor was as guilty as his soldiers, raised his visor, and showed his face flushed with anger.

Herman was thunderstruck, and could scarcely falter out, -

"Oh, my dear Count, pardon! I crave you a thousand pardons! It is all a mistake, – but who could have supposed for a moment-?"

But the more he endeavored to apologize for his villainy, the more embarrassed he became. The soldiers, meanwhile, perceiving the sudden change in their master's demeanor, hastened to remove the barrier.

"It is not my place to pardon," said Rechberg; "you must explain your gross abuse of authority to His Majesty, who shall be acquainted with everything."

He turned abruptly, and crossed the bridge with his companions.

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