



LITERATURE.

THE SEASON IN PASSING.

BY ROBERT STORY.

The seasons, in passing, one sweet moral bring,
And well—if he marked it—would man do;
‘Spread pleasure like me,’ is the language of spring,
Make all hearts as glad as you can do!
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed every mourner a brother;
And if each while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit, too, for another!

The summer but varies the lesson—‘Make glad!’
Treat all men with love and affection!
My sun shines alike on the good and the bad,
And shall you dare to think of selection?
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed e’en a bad man a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit, too, for another!

The Autumn proclaims—‘Lo my steps are for all;
But should one in the scramble, get favour,
Let him share with those to whom little may fall,
And what’s left will have all the more savour!
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed the unlucky a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit, too, for another!’

The winter affirms it, while shaking the door,
And binding the stream with his fetter—
‘Keep the cold that I bring, from the hearths of the poor,
And your own will burn brighter and better!’
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed every poor man a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit, too, for another!

MARRIAGE ON THE SCAFFOLD.
A THRILLING STORY.

FROM THE FRENCH OF ALEXANDER DUMAS.

ONE morning, in 1501, the inhabitants of Naples found the following official announcement placarded on their walls:

‘I promise four thousand ducats to whoever delivers into the hands of justice the Calabrian bandit, Rocco del Pizzo, dead or alive.’

‘ISABELLA OF ARRAGON, Regent.’

Three days afterwards a man presented himself to the minister of police, and declared that he had an unfailing means of finding the culprit, but that, instead of the offered gold he required a boon which the regent alone could grant, and that, therefore, he would treat with her only. The minister, in answer, said that he would not disturb her highness for such a trifle; that they had promised four thousand ducats, and nothing else; that if he wished to earn them, he had but to deliver Rocco del Pizzo, and that sum should be immediately counted out to him. The stranger disdainfully withdrew. That same evening, so bold a robbery took place between Resina and Torre del Greco, that all agreed that none but Rocco del Pizzo could have committed it. The next day, when Isabella gave audience to her minister, she asked what he had discovered with regard to this outrage. He had discovered nothing; now as ever, the perpetrator had disappeared, and was, in all probability, already busy at the other extremity of the kingdom; he, however, recollected the man who had the day before offered to deliver up Rocco del Pizzo, and repeated all the details of their interview to the regent, adding, that as this person insisted on personally addressing her highness, he thought it unsafe to grant such a request to a stranger.

‘You were wrong,’ said the regent; ‘seek this man and bring him to me.’

The minister retired, promising to set all his agents at work; and on reaching his office he sent forth his spies with full powers to search for the stranger and detain him, but without otherwise inconveniencing him. Nevertheless the day passed away in useless inquiries; that night a second and more audacious robbery took place at Aversa, leaving no doubt that Rocco del Pizzo was drawing near to the capital. The poor minister of police began to regret most sincerely having so positively refused the stranger’s offers, and his regret augmented when the regent sent notice, in the course of the following day, to know if he had yet discovered the stranger. Unfortunately his regrets were useless; this day, like the preceding one, elapsed without his gaining any clue to his mysterious auxiliary; but night brought a fresh catastrophe. At day-break a man was found, stark naked and dead, with a poignard still quivering in his heart, on the road between Amalfi and Cava—and, right or wrong, public opinion attributed this new crime to Rocco del Pizzo. The body was recognized to be that of a young nobleman known as Raymond the Bastard, and who, despite the bar sinister was acknowledged as a relation by the powerful house of

Carracciolo, those eternal favourites of the Neapolitan queens; and one of the members of that family was then said to hold, in the regent’s court, the hereditary office of lover!

This time the minister was in utter despair; the more so, that but half an hour after receiving his reports, he was summoned before the regent; and, on arriving at the palace, he found her in great anger, with Antonello Carracciolo, the brother of the murdered man, by her side.—Isabella harshly asked the poor man if he had scoured the squares, streets and lanes of Naples, and was no further advanced. The regent granted him that day to continue his search, declaring that if the next day he had not seen the stranger, or taken Rocco del Pizzo, he need only appear before her to yield up his place, Count Antonello Carracciolo having declared that Rocco del Pizzo alone could have committed this crime. As the minister was returning from his audience in great tribulation, he thought he saw a resemblance to his mysterious incognito in a man who was basking in the autumn sun on the other side of the square, closely muffled in a large cloak. He felt as if nailed to the ground; he trembled lest his eyes had deceived him; but the longer he looked, the more certain he was; he advanced towards him, and he now distinctly recognized his man. The other allowed him to approach him without stirring—you might have taken him for a statue; the minister caught him by the shoulder, as if fearful that he would yet escape him. ‘Ah!’ cried he, ‘at last it is you.’

‘Yes, it is me,’ replied the stranger, ‘what do you want with me?’ ‘I wish to take you to the regent; she desires to speak with you.’ ‘Indeed! it is rather late.’

‘How—rather late?’ asked the minister, fearing the stranger would reveal nothing; ‘what do you mean?’

‘I mean that if you had done three days ago what you are now doing, the police records of Naples would show two thefts and one assassination the less.’

‘What!’ continued the minister, ‘you have not changed your mind, I hope.’

‘I never change it.’ ‘You will bring Rocco del Pizzo to me, if we agree to your demands?’

‘Without doubt.’ ‘You can still do so?’

‘As easily as I now yield myself.’ ‘Follow me then.’

‘One instant. I shall see the regent herself, and alone.’

‘Herself, and alone.’ ‘I am ready.’ ‘One word more—before entering, you must give up your arms to the officer on guard; it is the etiquette of the court.’

‘I know it is—it is a thing of course.’

‘You consent?’ ‘Why not?’ ‘Follow me.’

They walked towards the palace, the minister seeming to fear that his mysterious companion might yet disappear, and soon reached the regent’s waiting-room. While the minister proceeded to inform Isabella of his prize, the stranger himself drew his pistols from his belt, and gave them to the officer on guard. In five minutes the minister returned, and summoned the incognito to the regent’s presence. They traversed two or three apartments, then a long corridor—there was a half-opened door at its end—they entered, and found themselves in the regent’s oratory, and the duchess Isabella awaiting them. Although this was, most probably, the first time that the stranger had found himself in the presence of so powerful a princess, he was in no way embarrassed; but after saluting her with a kind of rudeness, which, however, did not want for grace, he remained motionless and mute, awaiting her questions. ‘It is you, then,’ said the duchess, ‘who have engaged to deliver up Rocco del Pizzo to us?’

‘It is, madam,’ he replied.

‘And you are certain you can fulfil your promise?’

‘I offer myself as hostage.’ ‘Thus, your head—’

‘Will pay for his, should I fail.’ ‘It is not quite the same thing,’ observed the duchess.

‘I can offer no more,’ he answered.

‘And what do you require in return?’ ‘I have said that I must speak to your highness alone.’

‘This gentleman is as myself,’ said the regent.

‘I have asked to see your highness alone,’ he replied; ‘it is my first condition.’

‘Leave us, Don Luys,’ said the duchess. The minister bowed and retired; the stranger remained *tele-a-tele* with the regent; they were only separated by her prie Dieu, on which was placed a missal surmounted by a crucifix. She threw a rapid glance on him. He was a man of from thirty to thirty-five years old, above the middle size, and much sun-burnt; his long, curling black hair fell over his neck, and his eager gaze expressed both resolution and boldness; he was like most mountaineers, admirably well made, and his whole bearing bespoke both elasticity and strength. ‘Who are you, and from whence do you come?’ she asked. ‘What is my name to you, madam?’ he answered, ‘or what matter which village saw my birth? I am a Calabrian—that is to say, a slave to my word; that is all you need know, is it not?’

‘And you promise to deliver up Rocco del Pizzo to me?’ ‘I promise it.’ ‘And what do you require in return?’ ‘Justice!’ ‘Justice? Duty bids me give you that. It is no reward.’ ‘Yes, I know that is an idea among sovereigns; you think that you are as upright judges as Solomon; unfortunately, your justice has two weights and two measures.’ ‘How?’ ‘Yes, yes; heavy for little folks, light for the great,’ continued the stranger.

‘Such is your justice.’ ‘You are wrong,’ replied the regent; ‘my justice is alike for all; I will prove it to you. Speak; for whom do you invoke it?’

‘For my sister, who has been basely deceived.’

‘By whom?’ ‘By one of your courtiers.’ ‘Which?’

‘Oh! by one of the youngest, the handsomest, the noblest. Ah! your highness hesitates already.’

‘No. I only desire to know what he has done.’

‘And if he has deserved death, shall I have his head for Rocco del Pizzo’s?’ ‘But,’ asked the duchess, who shall judge his crime?’

The stranger hesitated a moment; and then, fixing his ardent gaze on the regent, ‘Your highness’s conscience,’ he replied. ‘Then you will rely on it?’

‘Entirely; and, if your highness considers his a capital crime, you will give me his head for that of Rocco del Pizzo?’ ‘I swear it on this gospel and this Christ!’

‘Then listen to me, madam. My story is long. Our family inhabited a little isolated cottage about half a league from the village Rosarno, situated between Cosenza and St. Euphemia; it consisted of my father and my mother, myself and my sister Constanza. All around us extend the domains of a powerful nobleman, on whose estates we were born, and whose vassals we consequently are.’

‘What is his name?’ interrupted the regent.

‘I will tell you his crime first, his name afterwards.’

‘It is well; go on.’

‘Our young master is a brilliant lord, bold, handsome, noble, rich, generous—and yet with all that, hated and feared; for when he approached, there was not a husband, father or brother, but trembled for his wife, daughter and sister. I must own, though, that the ill he did was prompted by his evil genius, who whispered deeds of hell to him. This evil genius was his natural brother, Raymond the Bastard.’ ‘Raymond the Bastard!’ cried the duchess—‘he who was murdered last night?’ ‘The same.’

‘Do you know his assassin?’ ‘It is I!’ ‘It was not Rocco del Pizzo?’ she asked. ‘It was I!’ he calmly answered. ‘But you have helped yourself to justice.’

‘I asked for it three days ago, and it was refused me.’

‘And what do you require now?’

‘The best half of my vengeance, madam. Raymond the Bastard has instigated the crime, his brother is the criminal.’ ‘His brother?’ cried the duchess—‘his brother?’ ‘But his brother is Antonello Carracciolo!’

‘He is, madam,’ cried the stranger, fixing a piercing look on her.

Isabella turned pale, and leaned against the prie Dieu as if her limbs were failing her; but her courage soon returned. ‘Go on,’ she said, ‘go on.’ ‘The name of the criminal will not alter the judge’s decision?’ he asked.

‘In nothing,’ she answered; ‘I have sworn; go on; I will listen to you.’ She had again the firm look and attitude as before this terrible disclosure, and the stranger continued his recital in the same tone of voice:

‘I was saying, madam, that the Count Antonello Carracciolo was handsome, rich and generous, but he had a brother who was to him what the serpent was to our first parents, his prompter, his evil genius. Well, madam, it is hardly six months since that the count was hunting in our neighbourhood. He had lost himself in pursuit of a stag; he was hot and thirsty; he met a young girl coming from the fountain with a pitcher of water on her head; he leaped from his horse and asked her for a drink; that young girl was Constanza—my sister.’

The regent shivered with emotion; but the stranger appeared not to notice her agitation, and proceeded with his tale. ‘I have told you, madam, what Count Antonello is; allow me to tell you what my sister was. She was but sixteen years of age, beautiful as an angel, chaste as the Madonna. You might see her thoughts in her eyes, as one can see the bottom of a lake through its limpid waters; her father and mother often examined this mirror of her soul, and had never read the shadow of an evil thought in it. Constanza had never yet loved; she was above those grosser souls around her; that human mud might not soil her virgin robes. But as I have already said, madam, and you perhaps know also, Count Antonello is young, handsome and graceful. Constanza had never before met a man of his rank; he, too, had never before seen a woman like her! They were mutually attracted to each other, and when they separated, Constanza only dreamt of the handsome young gallant, and the Count Antonello’s sole thought was of the lovely peasant girl.’ The regent bit her lip, but she said not a word.

‘I must also say, madam, that Constanza was not aware that he was the Count Carracciolo; she took him for some page or squire, whom she might love in all security—for we are rich for our rank; she loved in chastity.—They met again and again, and always on the same spot; but once they forgot to mark the flight of time, and my father becoming uneasy at her absence, took his gun and went in search of her; he soon found her sitting with a young man. Constanza started like a frightened roe, while the young man ran to the forest; my father’s first movement was to raise his gun and take aim at him. But Constanza rushed before him. My father lowered his arm—he had recognized the young count.’

‘Was it indeed Antonello Carracciolo?’ murmured the regent.

‘Himself!’ answered the stranger. My father ordered his wife and daughter to prepare for a journey, and that very night they went to my aunt’s at Monteleone. Before they left, my father took Constanza aside, and said, ‘If you see him again, I will kill him.’ Constanza fell on her knees, and with clasped hands and streaming eyes implored his pardon. He pressed her to his heart and before break of day, she and her mother were no longer on the count’s territory.’

The regent drew a sigh of relief.

‘The next day my father went to the count; I do not know what passed between them, but I know this, that the count pledged his word that he would for the future respect Constanza’s virtue. On the morrow the count set off for Naples.’

‘Yes, yes, I remember his return,’ said the regent; ‘well, what next?—what next?’

‘What next, madam, what next? Why, he continued to think of her whom he should have forgotten. The pleasures of a court, the favors of high born dames, the visions of ambition even, were insufficient to draw the memory of the poor Calabrian; her image was unconsciously before him, by day and by night; she destroyed his sleep. His letters to his brother were sad and desponding, the latter became uneasy, and joined him here; he fancied him enamored of some queen, to whose hand he dared not aspire; he laughed when he found that all this distress of mind was for a Calabrian woman.’

‘You are a fool, Antonello,’ said he; ‘this girl is your vassal, your serf, your subject—she is your property.’

‘But I have promised her father never again to seek her.’ ‘A gentleman’s word is sacred; you must keep it.’

‘You see, then, that all is lost.’ ‘But suppose she should come to you?’ ‘She!—how?’

‘Wherever you like; here, if you will.’ ‘Oh, no! not