quite as inimical a glance; for occasion never offered to put a slight on Piero but it was seized on greedily; so that, aside from his gnawing fear lest Giuliano should succeed, Piero had come to hate the older man on his own more personal account. It was certainly a relief that Giuliano took the character of the villain in the plays, for Piero could infuse an almost unearthly passion into his glance of hatred at the end of the fifth act, where, of course, the villain was always found out, and subjected to indiscriminate objurgation.

Piero's acting had thus, what with his love and what with his hate, become little more than a free out burst of all the pent-up emotions of his life; and his success was already causing his heart to throb with a new hope, and an access of determination. Many syllables had dropped, as if involuntarily, from Leona's lips which he knew could be only the forerunners, unless, perhaps, even the accompaniment of some warmth of feeling for him. A movement of the hand, a posture of her divine form, a word unsaid, or a glance not yet permitted, had come to be to him but letters in an alphabet which he was fast deciphering. No longer, even in his rashest moments, did he fear his rival's power,—rival no longer, but hated more unreasoningly, more deeply than ever. Giuliano had recognized, but with a dizziness too uncontrollable for drawing back, the precipice on which he stood, and madly plunged to the bottom of what seemed must be hopeless love. The leap once taken, the fall not fatal, his ready mind, practiced in the portrayal of villainy, contrived a thousand petty annoyances for the favored Piero, whose hatred, therefore, burned more angry day by day.

One night when Piero was putting the last touches to his costume for the play, his mind was occupied with the brightest hopes; and as he once again softened the carnation of his cheek with the hare's-foot, he smiled into the glass and whispered, "To-night shall I be praised by her?" and the answer, "Yes!" must have been in his heart, for with a light step he went out into the corridor and down the stairs. It was a bare, sordid place here behind the stage, filled with a stifling smell that came from paint, and gas, and dirt; but Piero breathed deep of the thick air as he went down past Leona's dressing-room. The night was hot, and a cloth of some heavy green material, which was hung in front of the open door way, was swinging in the wind that passed through the room from out of doors. Just as Piero reached the door the cloth blew outward, leaving a narrow crack, through which the lover's glance shot involuntarily.

"My God!" he cried beneath his breath, and while his heart stopped beating for an instant, and then rushed on with a tumultuous bound. "My God!" was all he could think; for he had seen, not what he had thought to see—a lovely girl, with golden hair, and a fair brow and cheek, and neck and arm; but in her place a horrid hag, so nearly bald that the scanty hair stood separated like stiff, white bristles on the shining pate, and a wrinkled, stained, and mould-patched shoulder.

A moment he stood there; his sluggish blood did not run fast enough to make it possible to move.

The curtain blew aside again, while he still remained rooted to the spot; but his heart beat no faster now to see Leona as he always saw her,—her hand upraised among her golden tresses, a soft, embroidered shawl disposed about her shoulders.

His wild laugh as he continued his way along the passage rung jarringly through the wings and out upon the stage; even the audience were chilled by the reverberations of a sound more like a shriek than laughter. The cry wound itself into their souls, and made them indisposed to mercy when Piero, later, while the play was in progress, slipped a little in his part; and when he once failed to respond as usual to some movement of Leona's, a failure which made him seem brutal, a hiss from the pit curdled his blood.

The deadly sound rose and gathered strength, till the embittered actor would have been glad to sneak away from the sight of all who had