a narrow staircase. Drawing the door after him, he descended. He soon was on the quay that jutted into the Canal Della Rizio. Hailing a passing market gondola, he bargained for a place, which, after some good-natured chaffing as to his good looks and inquiries as to his capabilities of taking care of a husband, he succeeded in obtaining, and was shortly transported to the Grande Mercado, or market-place, which even at that early hour was filled with peasants who had come in from the country with their produce.

He had escaped thus far, but he knew that the next moment might be the end of his tether; whither should he turn? In the small town of Poncevat, that stretches along the shores of the Adriatic, an old friend with whom he had rollicked and reveled in his academy days, lived in a sort of feudal state, surrounded by his vassals, and lording it over a wide extent of country. Here would he flee, and throw himself upon the generosity of a heart that he had never known to fail.

After a long and tiresome journey, during which he more than once found himself on the verge of discovery, and was brought face to face with persons whom he had reason to suppose were engaged in hunting up his whereabouts, he arrived, foot-sore, travel-stained, and ragged before the chateau of his friend. Here his heart failed him. How could he present himself, before this sovereign lord, a destitute vagabond?

Connected with the castle was a ruinous-looking pile that, in the last Austrian war, had suffered at the hands of the invader, but although shattered, and seemingly about to fall, was yet used as a place of worship for the villagers and peasantry. Andrea entered.

The noble columns that supported the domed roof guarded the main aisle to the altar; and although many of them were broken, and some prostrate, yet, even in this mutilated condition, they claimed the eye of the visitor, so beautiful was the workmanship and classic the design. The dim religious light that filled the ancient edifice; the sacred lamp that ceaselessly burned before the altar — emblem of eternity; the sculptured saints and martyrs, who, robed in white, looked forth from the niches in which they rested, some as if to bless the wanderer’s approach with promises of protection and peace, and others with frowns and menaces — were all calculated to fill the soul of the fugitive with awe, as well as deep and painful contemplation.

Withdrawing himself behind some of the shattered columns in the darkest recesses of the church, he easily escaped the sacristan’s notice and passed the night. Early morning brought the faithful to the door, and soon the peal of the Trinidades rung out over the land and sea. The worshipers entered, and the old priest intoned the service of the Mass, and offered the oblation that mercy dictated. As the people began to disperse, Andrea saw the well-known figure of his friend Victor enter the church, and walk slowly past him. Instinctively he made a gesture as if to detain him, and in so doing moved forward. The sound of footsteps behind him attracted the young man’s attention, and he turned. Seeing only a rather dirty peasant girl of unusual stature, he tossed her a coin and resumed his promenade.

“Victor!” It was but a whisper, but the effect was electric.

“Who calls me?” said the young lord, wheeling on his heel. “You?” and he advanced toward the cloaked peasant. “Do you know, my girl, it is not seemly that persons in your station should thus address their betters. There is such a thing as being too friendly. If others had chanced to overhear you, in sooth your acquaintance with Joseph and his wooden horse would have been assured.

“Has Victor della Fraçescolla forgotten his old schoolmate Andrea Belloti Bianca?”

“Never! Have you a message from him!”

“Yes, a message, and more.”

“More?”

“Yes, I have him with me.”