The House by the Medlar-Tree

by Giovanni Verga

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HOUSE BY THE MEDLAR-TREE ***

HOUSE BY THE-MEDLAR-TREE

By Giovanni Verga

Translation By Mary A. Craig

An Introduction By W. D. Howells

New York: Harper & Brothers

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INTRODUCTION.

Any one who loves simplicity or respects sincerity, any one who feels the tie binding us all together in the helplessness of our common human life, and running from the lowliest as well as the highest to the Mystery immeasurably above the whole earth, must find a rare and tender pleasure in this simple story of an Italian fishing village. I cannot promise that it will interest any other sort of readers, but I do not believe that any other sort are worth interesting; and so I can praise Signor Verga's book without reserve as one of the most perfect pieces of literature that I know.

When we talk of the great modern movement towards reality we speak without the documents if we leave this book out of the count, for I can think of no other novel in which the facts have been more faithfully reproduced, or with a profounder regard for the poetry that resides in facts and resides nowhere else. Signor Verdi began long ago, in his Vita dei Campi ("Life of the Fields") to give proof of his fitness to live in our time; and after some excursions in the region of French naturalism, he here returns to the original sources of his inspiration, and offers us a masterpiece of the finest realism.

He is, I believe, a Sicilian, of that meridional race among whom the Italian language first took form, and who in these latest days have done some of the best things in Italian literature. It is of the far South that he writes, and of people whose passions

are elemental and whose natures are simple. The characters, therefore, are types of good and of evil, of good and of generosity, of truth and of falsehood. They are not the less personal for this reason, and the life which they embody is none the less veritable. It will be well for the reader who comes to this book with the usual prejudices against the Southern Italians to know that such souls as Padron ’Ntoni and Maruzza la Longa, with their impassioned conceptions of honor and duty, exist among them; and that such love idyls as that of Mena and Alfio, so sweet, so pure, and the happier but not less charming every-day romance of Alessio and Nunziata, are passages of a life supposed wholly benighted and degraded. This poet, as I must call the author, does again the highest office of poetry, in making us intimate with the hearts of men of another faith, race, and condition, and teaching us how like ourselves they are in all that is truest in them. Padron ’Ntoni and La Longa, Luca, Mena, Alfio, Nunziata, Alessio, if harshlier named, might pass for New England types, which we boast the product of Puritanism, but which are really the product of conscience and order. The children of disorder who move through the story—the selfish, the vicious, the greedy, like Don Sylvestro, and La Vespa, and Goosefoot, and Dumb-bell, or the merely weak, like poor ’Ntoni Malavoglia—are not so different from our own images either, when seen in this clear glass, which falsifies and distorts nothing.

Few tales, I think, are more moving, more full of heartbreak than this, for few are so honest. By this I mean that the effect in it is precisely that which the author aimed at. He meant to let us see just what manner of men and women went to make up the life of a little Italian town of the present day, and he meant to let the people show themselves with the least possible explanation or comment from him. The transaction of the story is in the highest degree dramatic; but events follow one another with the even sequence of hours on the clock. You are not prepared to value them beforehand; they are not advertised to tempt your curiosity like feats promised at the circus, in the fashion of the feebler novels; often it is in the retrospect that you

recognize their importance and perceive their full significance. In this most subtly artistic management of his material the author is most a master, and almost more than any other he has the rare gift of trusting the intelligence of his reader. He seems to have no more sense of authority or supremacy concerning the personages than any one of them would have in telling the story, and he has as completely freed himself from literosity as the most unlettered among them. Under his faithful touch life seems mainly sad in Trezza, because life is mainly sad everywhere, and because men there have not yet adjusted themselves to the only terms which can render life tolerable anywhere. They are still rivals, traitors, enemies, and have not learned that in the vast orphanage of nature they have no resource but love and union among themselves and submission to the unfathomable wisdom which was before they were. Yet seen aright this picture of a little bit of the world, very common and low down and far off, has a consolation which no one need miss. There, as in every part of the world, and in the whole world, goodness brings not pleasure, not happiness, but it brings peace and rest to the soul and, lightens all burdens; the trial and the sorrow go on for good and evil alike; only, those who choose the evil have no peace.

W. D. Howells.

THE HOUSE BY THE MEDLAR-TREE.

I.

Once the Malavoglia were as numerous as the stones on the old road to Trezza; there were some even at Ognino and at Aci Castello, and good and brave seafaring folk, quite the opposite of what they might appear to be from their nickname of the Ill-wills, as is but right. In fact, in the parish books they were called Toscani; but that meant nothing, because, since the world was a world, at Ognino, at Trezza, and at Aci Castello they had been known as Malavoglia, from father to son, who had

always had boats on the water and tiles in the sun. Now at Trezza there remained only Padron ’Ntoni and his family, who owned the Provvidenza, which was anchored in the sand below the washing-tank by the side of Uncle Cola’s Concetta and Padron Fortunato Cipolla’s bark. The tempests, which had scattered all the other Malavoglia to the four winds, had passed over the house by the medlar-tree and the boat anchored under the tank without doing any great damage; and Padron ’Ntoni, to explain the miracle, used to say, showing his closed fist, a fist which looked as if it were made of walnut wood, “To pull a good oar the five fingers must help one another.” He also said, “Men are like the fingers of the hand—the thumb must be the thumb, and the little finger the little finger.”

And Padron ’Ntoni’s little family was really disposed like the fingers of a hand. First, he came—the thumb—who ordered the fasts and the feasts in the house; then Bastian, his son, called Bastianazzo because he was as big and as grand as the Saint Christopher which was painted over the arch of the fish-market in town; and big and grand as he was, he went right about at the word of command, and wouldn’t have blown his nose unless his father had told him to do it. So he took to wife La Longa when his father said to him “Take her!” Then came La Longa, a little woman who attended to her weaving, her salting of anchovies, and her babies, as a good house-keeper should do; last, the grandchildren in the order of their age—’Ntoni, the eldest, a big fellow of twenty, who was always getting cuffs from his grandfather, and then kicks a little farther down if the cuffs had been heavy enough to disturb his equilibrium; Luca, “who had more sense than the big one,” the grandfather said; Mena (Filomena), surnamed Sant’Agata, because she was always at the loom, and the proverb goes, “Woman at the loom, hen in the coop, and mullet in January;” Alessio, our urchin, that was his grandfather all over; and Lia (Rosalia), as yet neither fish nor flesh. On Sunday, when they went into church one after another, they looked like a procession.

Padron ’Ntoni was in the habit of using certain proverbs and sayings of old times,

for, said he, the sayings of the ancients never lie: “Without a pilot the boat won’t go;” “To be pope one must begin by being sacristan,” or, “Stick to the trade you know, somehow you’ll manage to go;” “Be content to be what your father was, then you’ll be neither a knave nor an ass,” and other wise saws. Therefore the house by the medlar was prosperous, and Padron ’Ntoni passed for one of the weighty men of the village, to that extent that they would have made him a communal councillor. Only Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, who was very knowing, insisted that he was a rotten codino, a reactionary who went in for the Bourbons, and conspired for the return of Franceschello, that he might tyrannize over the village as he tyrannized over his own house. Padron ’Ntoni, instead, did not even know Franceschello by sight, and used to say, “He who has the management of a house cannot sleep when he likes, for he who commands must give account.” In December, 1863, ’Ntoni, the eldest grandson, was called up for the naval conscription. Padron ’Ntoni had recourse to the big-wigs of the village, who are those who can help us if they like. But Don Giammaria, the vicar, replied that he deserved it, and that it was the fruit of that satanic revolution which they had made, hanging that tricolored handkerchief to the campanile. Don Franco, the druggist, on the other hand, laughed under his beard, and said it was quite time there should be a revolution, and that then they would send all those fellows of the draft and the taxes flying, and there would be no more soldiers, but everybody would go out and fight for their country if there was need of it. Then Padron ’Ntoni begged and prayed him, for the love of God, to make the revolution quickly, before his grandson ’Ntoni went for a soldier, as if Don Franco had it in his pocket, so that at last the druggist flew into a rage. Then Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, dislocated his jaws with laughter at the talk, and finally he said that by means of certain little packets, slipped into certain pockets that he knew of, they might manage to get his nephew found defective in some way, and sent back for a year. Unfortunately, the doctor, when he saw the tall youth, told him that his only defect was to be planted like a column on those big ugly feet, that looked like the

leaves of a prickly-pear, but such feet as that would be of more use on the deck of ah iron-clad in certain rough times that were coming than pretty small ones in tight boots; and so he took ’Ntoni, without saying “by your leave.” La Longa, when the conscripts went up to their quarters, trotted breathless by the side of her long-legged son, reminding him that he must always remember to keep round his neck the piece of the Madonna’s dress that she had given him, and to send home news whenever any one came that way that he knew, and she would give him money to buy paper.

The grandfather, being a man, said nothing; but felt a lump in his throat, too, and would not look his daughter-in-law in the face, so that it seemed as if he were angry with her. So they returned to Aci Trezza, silent, with bowed heads. Bastianazzo, who had unloaded the Provvidenza in a great hurry, went to meet them at the top of the street, and when he saw them coming, sadly, with their shoes in their hands, had no heart to speak, but turned round and went back with them to the house. La Longa rushed away to the kitchen, longing to find herself alone with the familiar saucepans; and Padron ’Ntoni said to his son, “Go and say something to that poor child; she can bear it no longer.” The day after they all went back to the station of Aci Castello to see the train pass with the conscripts who were going to Messina, and waited behind the bars hustled by the crowd for more than an hour. Finally the train arrived, and they saw their boys, all swarming with their heads out of the little windows like oxen going to a fair. The singing, the laughter, and the noise made it seem like the Festa of Trecastagni, and in the flurry and the fuss they forgot their aching hearts for a while.

“Adieu, ’Ntoni! Adieu, mamma! Addio. Remember! remember!” Near by, on the margin of the ditch, pretending to be cutting grass for the calf, was Cousin Tudda’s Sara; but Cousin Venera, the Zuppidda (hobbler), went on whispering that she had come there to see Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni, with whom she used to talk over the wall of the garden. She had seen them herself, with those very eyes, which the worms would one day devour. Certain it is that ’Ntoni waved his hand to Sara, and that she

stood still, with the sickle in her hand, gazing at the train as long as it was there. To La Longa it seemed that that wave of the hand had been stolen from her, and when she met Cousin Tudda's Sara on the piazza (public square), or at the tank where they washed, she turned her back on her for a long time after. Then the train moved off, hissing and screaming so as to drown the adieus and the songs. And then the curious crowd dispersed, leaving only a few poor women and some poor devils that still stood clinging to the bars without knowing why. Then, one by one, they also moved away, and Padron 'Ntoni, guessing that his daughter-in-law must have a bitter taste in her mouth, spent two centimes for a glass of water, with lemon-juice in it, for her. Cousin Venera, the Zuppidda, to comfort her gossip La Longa, said to her, "Now, you may set your heart at rest, for, for five years you may look upon your son as dead, and think no more about him."

But they did think of him all the time at the house by the medlar—now it would be a plate too many which La Longa found in her hand when she was getting supper ready; now some knot or other that nobody could tie like 'Ntoni in the rigging—and when some rope had to be pulled taut, or turn some screw, the grandfather groaning, "O-hi! O-o-o-o-hi!" ejaculated: "Here we want 'Ntoni!" or "Do you think I have a wrist like that boy's?" The mother, passing the shuttle through the loom that went one, two, three! thought of the boum, boum of the engine that had dragged away her son, which had sounded ever since in her heart, one!—two!—three!

The grandpapa, too, had certain singular methods of consolation. "What will you have? A little soldiering will do that boy good; he always liked better to carry his two arms out a-walking of a Sunday than to work with them for his bread." Or, "When he has learned how salt the bread is that one eats elsewhere he won't growl any longer about the minestra * at home."

* Macaroni of inferior quality.

Finally, there arrived the first letter from 'Ntoni, which convulsed the village. He

said that the women oft there swept the streets with their silk petticoats, and that on the mole there was Punch's theatre, and that they sold those little round cheeses, that rich people eat, for two centimes, and that one could not get along without soldi; that did well enough at Trezza, where, unless one went to Santuzza's, at the tavern, one didn't know how to spend one's money.

"Set him up with his cheeses, the glutton," said his grandfather. "He can't help it, though; he always was like that. If I hadn't held him at the font in these arms, I should have said Don Giammaria had put sugar in his mouth instead of salt."

The Mangiacarubbe when she was at the tank, and Cousin Tudda's Sara was by, went on saying:

"Certainly. Those ladies with the silk dresses waited on purpose for Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni to steal him away. They haven't got any pumpkin-heads down there!"

The others held their sides with laughing, and henceforth the envious girls called 'Ntoni "pumpkin-head."

'Ntoni had sent his portrait, too; all the girls at the tank had seen it, as Sara showed it to one after another, passing it under her apron, and the Mangiacarubbe shivered with jealousy. He looked like Saint Michael the Archangel with those feet planted on a fine carpet, and a curtain behind his head, like that of the Madonna at Ognino; and he was so handsome, so clean, and smooth and neat, that the mother that bore him wouldn't have known him; and poor La Longa was never tired of gazing at the curtain and the carpet and that pillar, against which her son stood up stiff as a post, scratching with his hand the back of a beautiful arm-chair; and she thanked God and the saints who had placed her boy in the midst of such splendors. She kept the portrait on the bureau, under the glass globe which covered the figure of the Good Shepherd; so that she said her prayers to it, the Zuppidda said, and thought she had a great treasure on the bureau; and, after all, Sister Mariangela, the Santuzza, had just such another (anybody that cared to might see it) that Cousin Mariano Cinghialenta

had given her, and she kept it nailed upon the tavern counter, among the bottles.

But after a while ’Ntoni got hold of a comrade who could write, and then he let himself go in abuse of the hard life on board ship, the discipline, the superiors, the thin rice soup, and the tight shoes. “A letter that wasn’t worth the twenty centimes for the postage,” said Padron ’Ntoni. La Longa scolded about the writing, that looked like a lot of fishhooks, and said nothing worth hearing.

Bastianazzo shook his head, saying no; it wasn’t good at all, and that if it had been he, he would have always put nice things to please people down there on the paper—pointing at it with a finger as big as the pin of a rowlock—if it were only out of compassion for La Longa, who, since her boy was gone, went about like a cat that had lost her kitten. Padron ’Ntoni went in secret, first, to Don Giammaria, and then to Don Franco, the druggist, and got the letter read to him by both of them; and as they were of opposite ways of thinking, he was persuaded that it was really written there as they said; and then he went on saying to Bastianazzo and to his wife:

“Didn’t I tell you that boy ought to have been born rich, like Padron Cipolla’s son, that he might have nothing to do but lie in the sun and scratch himself?”

Meanwhile the year was a bad one, and the fish had to be given for the souls of the dead, now that Christians had taken to eating meat on Friday like so many Turks. Besides, the men who remained at home were not enough to manage the boat, and sometimes they had to take La Locca’s Menico, by the day, to help. The King did this way, you see—he took the boys just as they got big enough to earn their living; while they were little, and had to be fed, he left them at home. And there was Mena, too; the girl was seventeen, and the youths began to stop and stare at her as she went into church. So it was necessary to work with hands and feet too to drive that boat, at the house by the medlar-tree.

Padron ’Ntoni, therefore, to drive the bark, had arranged with Uncle Crucifix Dumb-bell an affair concerning certain lupins * to be bought on credit and sold

again at Riposto, where Cousin Cinghialenta, the carrier, said there was a boat loading for Trieste. In fact, the lupins were beginning to rot; but they were all that were to be had at Trezza, and that old rascal Dumb-bell knew that the Provvidenza was eating her head off and doing nothing, so he pretended to be very stupid, indeed. “Eh! too much is it? Let it alone, then! But I can’t take a centime less! I can’t, on my conscience! I must answer for my soul to God! I can’t”—and shook his head till it looked in real earnest like a bell without a clapper. This conversation took place at the door of the church at Ognino, on the first Sunday in September, which was the feast of Our Lady. There was a great concourse of people from all the neighborhood, and there was present also Cousin Agostino Goosefoot, who, by talking and joking, managed to get them to agree upon two scudi and ten the bag, to be paid by the month. It was always so with Uncle Crucifix, he said, because he had that cursed weakness of not being able to say no. “As if you couldn’t say no when you like,” sneered Goosefoot. “You’re like the—” And he told him what he was like.

* Coarse flat beans.

When La Longa heard of the business of the lupins, she opened her eyes very wide indeed, as they sat with their elbows on the table-cloth after supper, and it seemed as if she felt, the weight of that sum of forty scudi on her stomach. But she said nothing, because women have nothing to do with such things; and Padron ’Ntoni explained to her how, if the affair was successful, there would be bread for the winter and ear-rings for Mena, and Bastiano could go and come in a week from Riposto with La Locca’s Menico. Bastiano, meantime, snuffed the candle and said nothing. So the affair of the lupins was arranged, and the voyage of the Provvidenza, which was the oldest boat in the village, but was supposed to be very lucky. Maruzza had a heavy heart, but did not speak; he went about indefatigably, preparing everything, putting the boat in order, and filling the cupboard with provisions for the journey—fresh bread, the jar with oil, the onions—and putting the fur-lined coat under the deck.

The men had been very busy all day with that usurer Uncle Crucifix, who had sold a pig in a poke, and the lupins were spoiling. Dumb-bell swore that he knew nothing about it, in God's truth! "Bargaining is no cheating," was he likely to throw his soul to the pigs? And Goosefoot scolded and blasphemed like one possessed—to bring them to agreement, swearing that such a thing had never happened to him before; and he thrust his hands among the lupins, and held them up before God and the Madonna, calling them to witness. At last—red, panting, desperate—he made a wild proposition, and flung it in the face of Uncle Crucifix (who pretended to be quite stupefied), and of the Malavoglia, with the sacks in their hands. "There! pay it at Christmas, instead of paying so much a month, and you will gain two soldi the sack! Now make an end of it. Holy Devil!" and he began to measure them. "In God's name, one!"

The Provvidenza went off on Saturday, towards evening, when the Ave Maria should have been ringing; only the bell was silent because Master Cirino, the sacristan, had gone to carry a pair of new boots to Don Silvestro, the town-clerk; at that hour the girls crowded like a flight of sparrows about the fountain, and the evening-star was shining brightly already just over the mast of the Provvidenza, like a lamp. Maruzza, with her baby in her arms, stood on the shore, without speaking, while her husband loosed the sail, and the Provvidenza danced on the broken waves by the Fariglione * like a duck. "Clear south wind and dark north, go fearlessly forth," said Padron 'Ntoni, from the landing, looking towards the mountains, dark with clouds.

La Locca's Menico, who was in the Provvidenza with Bastianazzo, called out something which was lost in the sound of the sea. "He said you may give the money to his mother, for his brother is out of work;" called Bastianazzo, and that was the last word that was heard.

* Rocks rising straight out of the sea, separate from the shore.

II.

In the whole place nothing was talked of but the affair of the lupins, and as La Longa returned with Lia from the beach the gossips came to their doors to see her pass.

“Oh, a regular golden business”! shouted Goose-foot, as he hitched along with his crooked leg behind Padron ’Ntoni, who went and sat down on the church-steps with Padron Fortunato Cipolla and Locca Menico’s brother, who were taking the air there in the cool of the evening. “Uncle Crucifix screamed as if you had been pulling out his quill-feathers; but you needn’t mind that—he has plenty of quills, the old boy. Oh, we had a time of it!—you can say as much for your part, too, can’t you, Padron ’Ntoni? But for Padron ’Ntoni, you know, I’d throw myself off the cliffs any day. So I would, before God! And Uncle Crucifix listens to me because he knows what a big ladle means—a big ladle, you know, that stirs a big pot, where there’s more than two hundred scudi a year a-boiling! Why, old Dumb-bell wouldn’t know how to blow his nose if I wasn’t by to show him!”

La Locca’s son, hearing them talk of Uncle Crucifix, who was really his uncle, because he was La Locca’s brother, felt his heart swelling with family affection.

“We are relations,” he repeated. “When I go there to work by the day he gives me only halfwages and no wine, because we are relations.”

Old Goosefoot sneered:

“He does it for your good, so that you shouldn’t take to drinking, and that he may have more money to leave you when he dies.”

Then old Goosefoot went on amusing himself by speaking ill now of one now of another, as it happened; but so good-humoredly, without malice, that no one could catch him in anything actionable.

He said to La Locca’s son:

“Your uncle wants to nobble your Cousin Vespa [wasp] out of her garden—trying to get her to let him have it for half what it’s worth—making her believe he’ll marry her. But if La Vespa succeeds in drawing him on, you may go whistle for your inheritance, and you’ll lose the wages he hasn’t given you and the wine you didn’t drink.”

Then they began to dispute—for Padron ’Ntoni insisted upon it that, “after all, Uncle Dumb-bell was a Christian, and hadn’t quite thrown his brains into the gutter, to go and marry his brother’s daughter.”

“What has Christian to do with it, or Turk either?” growled Goosefoot. “He’s mad, you mean! He’s as rich as a pig; what does he want of that little garden of Vespa’s, as big as a nose-rag? And she has nothing but that.”

“I ought to know how big it is; it lies along my vineyard,” said Padron Cipolla, puffing himself like a turkey.

“You call that a vineyard? Four prickly-pears!” sneered Goosefoot.

“Between the prickly-pears the vines grow; and if Saint Francis will send us a good shower of rain, you’ll see if I don’t have some good wine! To-day the sun went to bed loaded with rain, or with wind.” “When the sun goes to bed heavy one must look for a west wind,” said Padron ’Ntoni.

Goosefoot couldn’t bear Cipolla’s sententious way of talking, “thinking, because he was rich, he must know everything, and could make the poor people swallow whatever nonsense he chose to talk. One wants rain, and one wants wind,” he wound up. “Padron Cipolla wants rain for his vines, and Padron ’Ntoni wants a wind to push the poop of the Provvidenza. You know the proverb, ‘Curly is the sea, a fresh wind there’ll be!’ To-night the stars are shining, at midnight the wind will change. Don’t you hear the ground-swell?”

On the road there was heard the sound of heavy carts, slowly passing.

“Night or day, somebody’s always going about the world,” said Cipolla a little later

on.

Now that they could no longer see the sea or the fields, it seemed as if there were only Trezza in the world, and everybody wondered where the carts could be going at that hour.

“Before midnight the Provvidenza will have rounded the Cape of the Mills, and the wind won’t trouble her any longer.”

Padron ’Ntoni thought of nothing but the Provvidenza, and when they were not talking of her he said nothing, and sat like a post among the talkers.

“You ought to go across the street to the druggist’s, where they are talking politics. You’d make a fine figure among them. Listen how they shout!”

“That’s Don Giammaria,” said La Locca’s son, “disputing with Don Franco.”

The druggist was holding a conversation at the door of his shop with the vicar and two or three others. As he was a cultured person he got the newspaper, and read it, too, and let others read it; and he had the History of the French Revolution, which he kept under the glass mortar, because he quarrelled about it every day with Don Giammaria, the vicar, to pass the time, and they got positively bilious over it, but they couldn’t have lived a day without seeing each other. On Saturdays, when the paper came, Don Franco went so far as to burn a candle for half an hour, or even for a whole hour, at the risk of a scolding from his wife, so as to explain his ideas properly, and not go to bed like a brute, as Uncle Cipolla and old Malavoglia did. In the summer, besides, there was no need of a candle, for they could stand under the lamp at the door, when Mastro Cirino lighted it, and sometimes Don Michele, the brigadier of the customs guard, joined them; and Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, too, coming back from his vineyard? stopped for a moment. Then Don Franco would say, rubbing his hands, that they were quite a parliament, and go off behind his counter, passing his fingers through his long beard like a comb, with a shrewd little grin, as if he were going to eat somebody for his breakfast; and would let slip broken

phrases under his breath full of hidden meaning; so that it was plain enough that he knew more than all the world put together. And Don Giammaria couldn't bear the sight of him, and grew yellow with fury and spit Latin at him. Don Silvestro, for his part, was greatly amused to see how he poisoned his blood "trying to straighten out a dog's legs," he said, "without a chance of making a centime by it; he, at least, didn't lose his temper, as they did." And for that reason they said in the place that he had the best farms in Trezza—"that he had come to a barefooted ragamuffin," added old Goosefoot. He would set the disputants at each other as if they had been dogs, and laughed fit to split his sides with shrill cries of ah! ah! ah! like a cackling hen.

Goosefoot went off again with the old story that if Don Silvestro had been willing to stay where he belonged, it would be a spade he'd be wielding now and not a pen.

"Would you give him your granddaughter Mena?" said Cipolla at last, turning to Padron 'Ntoni.

"Each to his own business—leave the wolf to look after the sheep."

Padron Cipolla kept on nodding his head—all the more that there had been some talk between him and Padron 'Ntoni of marrying Mena to his son Brasi; if the lupin business went on well the dowry would be paid down in cash, and the affair settled immediately.

"The girl as she has been trained, and the tow as it has been spun," said Padron Malavoglia at last; and Padron Cipolla agreed "that everybody in the place knew that La Longa had brought up her girl beautifully, that anybody who passed through the alley behind the house by the medlar at the hour at which they were talking could hear the sound of Sant'Agata's loom. Cousin Maruzza didn't waste her oil after dark, that she didn't," he said.

La Longa, just as she came back from the beach, sat down at the window to prepare the thread for the loom.

"Cousin Mena is not seen but heard, and she stays at the loom day and night, like

Sant'Agata," said the neighbors.

"That's the way to bring up girls," replied Maruzza, "instead of letting them stay gaping out the window. 'Don't go after the girl at the window,' says the proverb."

"Some of them, though, staring out of window, manage to catch the foolish fish that pass," said her cousin Anna from the opposite door.

Cousin Anna (really her cousin this time, not only called so by way of good-fellowship) had reason and to spare for this speech; for that great hulking fellow, her son Rocco, had tacked himself on to the Mangiacarubbe's petticoat-tail, and she was always leaning out of the window, toasting her face in the sun.

Gossip Grazia Goosefoot, hearing that there was a conversation going on, came to her door with her apron full of the beans she was shelling, and railed about the mice, who had made her "sack like a sieve," eating holes all over it, as if they had had wits like Christians so the talk became general because those accursed little brutes had done Maruzza all sorts of harm, too. Cousin Anna had her house full of them, too, since she had lost her cat, a beast worth its weight in gold, who had died of a kick from Uncle Tino.

"The gray cats are the best to catch mice; they'd go after them into a needle's eye."
"One shouldn't open the door to the cat by night, for an old woman at Aci Sant'Antonio got killed that way by thieves who stole her cat three days before, and then brought her back half starved to mew at the door, and the poor woman couldn't bear to hear the creature out in the street at that hour, and opened the door, and so the wretches got in. Nowadays the rascals invent all sorts of tricks to gain their ends; and at Trezza one saw faces now that nobody had ever seen on the coast; coming, pretending to be fishing, and catching up the clothes that were out to dry if they could manage it. They had stolen a new sheet from poor Nunziata that way. Poor girl! robbing her, who worked so hard to feed those little brothers that her father left on her hands when he went off seeking his fortune in Alexandria, in Egypt. Nunziata

was like what Cousin Anna herself had been when her husband died and left her with that houseful of little children, and Rocco, the biggest of them, no higher than her knee. Then, after all the trouble of rearing him, great lazy fellow, she must stand by and see the Mangiacarubbe carry him off."

Into the midst of this gossiping came Venera la Zuppidda, wife to Bastiano, the calker; she lived at the foot of the lane, and always appeared unexpectedly, like the devil at the litany, who came from nobody knew where, to say his say like the rest.

"For that matter," she muttered, "your son Rocco never helped you a bit; if he got hold of a soldo he spent it at the tavern."

La Zuppidda knew everything that went on in the place, and for this reason they said she went about all day barefoot, with that distaff that she was always holding over her head to keep the thread off the gravel. Playing the spy, she was; the spinning was only a pretext. "She always told gospel truth—that was a habit of hers—and people who didn't like to have the truth told about them accused her of being a wicked slanderer—one of those whose tongues dropped gall. 'Bitter mouth spits gall,' says the proverb, and a bitter mouth she had for that Barbara of hers, that she had never been able to marry, so naughty and rude she was, and with all that, she would like to give her Victor Emmanuel's son for a husband.

"A nice one she is, the Mangiacarubbe," she went on; "a brazen-faced hussy, that has called the whole village, one after another, under her window ('Choose no woman at the window,' says the proverb); and Vanni Pizzuti gave her the figs he stole from Mastro Philip, the ortolano, and they ate them together in the vineyard under the almond-tree. I saw them myself. And Peppi (Joe) Naso, the butcher, after he began to be jealous of Mariano Cinghialenta, the carter, used to throw all the horns of the beasts he killed behind her door, so that they said he combed his head under the Mangiacarubbe's window."

That good-natured Cousin Anna, instead, took it easily. "Don't you know Don

Giammaria says it is a mortal sin to speak evil of one's neighbors?"

"Don Giammaria had better preach to his own sister Donna Rosolina," replied La Zuppidda, "and not let her go playing off the airs of a young girl at Don Silvestro when he goes past the house, and with Don Michele, the brigadier; she's dying to get married, with all that fat, too, and at her age! She ought to be ashamed of herself."

"The Lord's will be done!" said Cousin Anna, in conclusion. "When my husband died, Rocco wasn't taller than this spindle, and his sisters were all younger than he. Perhaps I've lost my soul for them. Grief hardens the heart, they say, and hard work the hands, but the harder they are the better one can work with them. My daughters will do as I have done, and while there are stones in the washing-tank we shall have enough to live on. Look at Nunziata—she's as wise as an old grand-dame; and she works for those babies as if she had borne them herself."

"And where is Nunziata that she doesn't come back?" asked La Longa of a group of ragged little fellows who sat whining on the steps of the tumbledown little house on the opposite side of the way. When they heard their sister's name they began to howl in chorus.

"I saw her go down to the beach after broom to burn," said Cousin Anna, "and your son Alessio was with her too."

The children stopped howling to listen, then began to cry again, all at once; and the biggest one, perched like a little chicken on the top step, said, gravely, after a while, "I don't know where she is."

The neighbors all came out, like snails in a shower, and all along the little street was heard a perpetual chatter from one door to another. Even Alfio Mosca, who had the donkey-cart, had opened his window, and a great smell of broom-smoke came out of it. Mena had left the loom and come out on the door-step.

"Oh, Sant'Agata!" they all cried, and made a great fuss over her.

“Aren’t you thinking of marrying your Mena?” asked La Zuppidda, in a low tone, of Maruzza. “She’s already eighteen, come Easter-tide. I know her age; she was born in the year of the earthquake, like my Barbara. Whoever wants my Barbara must first please me.”

At this moment was heard a sound of boughs scraping on the road, and up came Luca and Nun-ziata, who couldn’t be seen under the big bundle of broom-bushes, they were so little.

“Oh, Nunziata,” called out the neighbors, “were not you afraid at this hour, so far from home?”

“I was with them,” said Alessio. “I was late washing with Cousin Anna, and then I had nothing to light the fire with.”

The little girl lighted the lamp, and began to get ready for supper, the children trotting up and down the little kitchen after her, so that she looked like a hen with her chickens; Alessio had thrown down his fagot, and stood gazing out of the door, gravely, with his hands in his pockets.

“Oh, Nunziata,” called out Mena, from the doorstep, “when you’ve lighted the fire come over here for a little.”

Nunziata left Alessio to look after her fire, and ran across to perch herself on the landing beside Sant’Agata, to enjoy a little rest, hand in hand with her friend.

“Friend Alfio Mosca is cooking his broad beans now,” observed Nunziata, after a little. “He is like you, poor fellow! You have neither of you any one to get the minestra ready by the time you come home tired in the evening.”

“Yes, it is true that; and he knows how to sew, and to wash and mend his clothes.” (Nunziata knew everything that Alfio did, and knew every inch of her neighbor’s house as if it had been the palm of her hand.) “Now,” she said, “he has gone to get wood, now he is cleaning his donkey,” and she watched his light as it moved about the house.

Sant'Agata laughed, and Nunziata said that to be precisely like a woman Alfio only wanted a petticoat.

"So," concluded Mena, "when he marries, his wife will go round with the donkey-cart, and he'll stay at home and look after the children."

The mothers, grouped about the street, talked about Alfio Mosca too, and how La Vespa swore that she wouldn't have him for a husband—so said La Zuppidda—"because the Wasp had her own nice little property, and wanted to marry somebody who owned something better than a donkey-cart. She has been casting sheep's eyes at her uncle Dumb-bell, the little rogue!"

The girls for their parts defended Alfio against that ugly Wasp; and Nunziata felt her heart swell with contempt at the way they scorned Alfio, only because he was poor and alone in the world, and all of a sudden she said to Mena:

"If I was grown up I'd marry him, so I would, if they'd let me."

Mena was going to say something herself, but she changed the subject suddenly.

"Are you going to town for the All Souls' festa?"

"No. I can't leave the house all alone."

"We are to go if the business of the lupins goes well; grandpapa says so."

Then she thought a minute and added:

"Cousin Alfio, he's going too, to sell his nuts at the fair."

And the girls sat silent, thinking of the Feast of All Souls, and how Alfio was going there to sell his nuts.

"Old Uncle Crucifix, how quietly he puts Vespa in his pocket," began Cousin Anna, all over again.

"That's what she wants," cried La Zuppidda, in her abrupt way, "to be pocketed. La Vespa wants just that, and nothing else. She's always in his house on one pretext or another, slipping in like a cat, with something good for him to eat or drink, and the

old man never refuses what costs him nothing. She fattens him up like a pig for Christmas. I tell you she asks nothing better than to get into his pocket."

Every one had something to say about Uncle Crucifix, who was always whining, when, instead, he had money by the shovelful—for La Zuppidda, one day when the old man was ill, had seen a chest under his bed as big as that!

La Longa felt the weight of the forty scudi of debt for the lupins, and changed the subject; because "one hears also in the dark," and they could hear the voice of Uncle Crucifix talking with Don Giammaria, who was crossing the piazza close by, while La Zuppidda broke off her abuse of him to wish him good-evening.

Don Silvestro laughed his hen's cackle, and this fashion of laughing enraged the apothecary, who had never had any patience for that matter; he left that to such asses as wouldn't get up another revolution.

"No, you never had any," shouted Don Giammaria to him; "you have no place to put it." And Don Franco, who was a little man, went into a fury, and called ugly names after the priest which could be heard all across the piazza in the dark. Old Dumb-bell, hard as a stone, shrugged his shoulders, and took care to repeat "that all that was nothing to him; he attended to his own affairs."

"As if the affairs of the Company of the Happy Death were not your affairs," said Don Giammaria, "and nobody paying a soldo any more. When it is a question of putting their hands in their pockets these people are a lot of Protestants, worse than that heathen apothecary, and let the box of the confraternity become a nest for mice. It was positively beastly!"

Don Franco, from his shop, sneered at them all at the top of his voice, trying to imitate Don Silvestro's cackling laugh, which was enough to madden anybody. But everybody knew that the druggist was a freemason, and Don Giammaria called out to him from the piazza:

"You'd find the money fast enough if it was for schools or for illuminations!"

The apothecary didn't answer, for his wife just then appeared at the window; and Uncle Crucifix, when he was far enough off not to be heard by Don Silvestro, the clerk, who gobbled up the salary for the master of the elementary school:

"It is nothing to me," he repeated, "but in my time there weren't so many lamps nor so many schools, and we were a deal better off."

"You never were at school, and you can manage your affairs well enough."

"And I know my catechism, too," said Uncle Crucifix, not to be behindhand in politeness.

In the heat of dispute Don Giammaria lost the pavement, which he could cross with his eyes shut, and was on the point of breaking his neck, and of letting slip, God forgive us! a very naughty word.

"At least if they'd light their lamps!"

"In these days one must look after one's steps," concluded Uncle Crucifix.

Don Giammaria pulled him by the sleeve of his coat to tell him about this one and that one—in the middle of the piazza, in the dark—of the lamplighter who stole the oil, and Don Silvestro, who winked at it, and of the Sindic Giufà, who let himself be led by the nose. Dumb-bell nodded his head in assent, mechanically, though they couldn't see each other; and Don Giammaria, as he passed the whole village in review, said: "This one is a thief; that one is a rascal; the other is a Jacobin—so you hear Goosefoot, there, talking with Padron Malavoglia and Padron Cipolla—another heretic, that one! A demagogue he is, with that crooked leg of his"; and when he went limping across the piazza he moved out of his way and watched him distrustfully, trying to find out what he was after, hitching about that way. "He has the cloven foot like the devil," he muttered.

Uncle Crucifix shrugged his shoulders again, and repeated "that he was an honest man, that he didn't mix himself up with it."

“Padron Cipolla was another old fool, a regular balloon, that fellow, to let himself be blindfolded by old Goosefoot; and Padron ’Ntoni, too—he’ll get a fall before long; one may expect anything in these days.”

“Honest men keep to their own business,” repeated Uncle Crucifix.

Instead, Uncle Tino, sitting up like a president on the church steps, went on uttering wise sentences:

“Listen to me. Before the Revolution everything was different; Now the fish are all adulterated; I tell you I know it.”

“No, the anchovies feel the north-east wind twenty-four hours before it comes,” resumed Padron ’Ntoni, “it has always been so; the anchovy is a cleverer fish than the tunny. Now, beyond the Capo dei Mulini, they sweep the sea with nets, fine ones, all at once.”

“I’ll tell you what it is,” began old Fortunato. “It is those beastly steamers beating the water with their confounded wheels. What will you have? Of course the fish are frightened and don’t come any more; that’s what it is.”

The son of La Locca sat listening, with his mouth open, scratching his head.

“Bravo!” he said. “That way they wouldn’t find any fish at Messina nor at Syracuse, and instead they came from there by the railway by quintals at a time.”

“For that matter, get out of it the best way you can,” cried Cipolla, angrily. “I wash my hands of it. I don’t care a fig about it. I have my farm and my vineyards to live upon, without your fish.”

Padron ’Ntoni, with his nose in the air, observed, “If the north-east wind doesn’t get up before midnight, the Provvidenza will have time to get round the Cape.”

From the campanile overhead came the slow strokes of the deep bell. “One hour after sunset!” observed Padron Cipolla.

Padron ’Ntoni made the holy sign, and replied, “Peace to the living and rest to the

dead."

"Don Giammaria has fried vermicelli for supper," observed Goosefoot, sniffing towards the parsonage windows.

Don Giammaria, passing by on his way home, saluted Goosefoot as well as the others, for in such times as these one must be friends with those rascals, and Uncle Tino, whose mouth was always watering, called after him:

"Eh, fried vermicelli to-night, Don Giammaria!"

"Do you hear him? Even sniffing at what I have to eat!" muttered Don Giammaria between his teeth; "they spy after the servants of God to count even their mouthfuls—everybody hates the church!" And coming face to face with Don Michele, the brigadier of the coast-guard, who was going his rounds, with his pistols in his belt and his trousers thrust into his boots, in search of smugglers, "They don't grudge their suppers to those fellows."

"Those fellows, I like them," cried Uncle Crucifix. "I like those fellows who look after honest men's property!"

"If they'd only make it worth his while he'd be a heretic too," growled Don Giammaria, knocking at the door of his house. "All a lot of thieves," he went on muttering, with the knocker in his hand, following with suspicious eye the form of the brigadier, who disappeared in the darkness towards the tavern, and wondering "what he was doing at the tavern, protecting honest men's goods?"

All the same, Daddy Tino knew why Don Michele went in the direction of the tavern to protect the interests of honest people, for he had spent whole nights watching for him behind the big elm to find out; and he used to say:

"He goes to talk on the sly with Uncle Santoro, Santuzza's father. Those fellows that the King feeds must all be spies, and know all about everybody's business in Trezza and everywhere else; and old Uncle Santoro, blind as he is, blinking like a bat in the sunshine, at the tavern door, knows everything that goes on in the place, and could

call us by name one after another only by the footsteps." Maruzza, hearing the bell strike, went into the house quickly to spread the cloth on the table; the gossips, little by little, had disappeared, and as the village went to sleep the sea became audible once more at the foot of the little street, and every now and then it gave a great sigh like a sleepless man turning on his bed. Only down by the tavern, where the red light shone, the noise continued; and Rocco Spatu, who made festa every day in the week, was heard shouting.

"Cousin Rocco is in good spirits to-night," said Alfio Mosca from his window, which looked quite dark and deserted.

"Oh, there you are, Cousin Alfio!" replied Mena, who had remained on the landing waiting for her grandfather.

"Yes, here I am, Coz Mena; I'm here eating my minestra, because when I see you all at table, with your light, I don't lose my appetite for loneliness."

"Are you not in good spirits?"

"Ah, one wants so many things to put one in good spirits!"

Mena did not answer, and after a little Cousin Alfio added:

"To-morrow I'm going to town for a load of salt."

"Are you going for All Souls?" asked Mena.

"Heaven knows! this year my poor little nuts are all bad."

"Cousin Alfio goes to the city to look for a wife," said Nunziata, from the door opposite.

"Is that true?" asked Mena.

"Eh, Cousin Mena, if I had to look for one I could find girls to my mind without leaving home."

"Look at those stars," said Mena, after a silence. "They say they are the souls loosed from Purgatory going into Paradise."

“Listen,” said Alfio, after having also taken a look at the stars, “you, who are Sant’Agata, if you dream of a good number in the lottery, tell it to me, and I’ll pawn my shirt to put in for it, and then, you know, I can begin to think about taking a wife.”

“Good-night!” said Mena.

The stars twinkled faster than ever, the “three kings” shone out over the Fariglione, with their arms out obliquely like Saint Andrew.

The sea moved at the foot of the street, softly, softly, and at long intervals was heard the rumbling of some cart passing in the dark, grinding on the stones, and going out into the wide world—so wide, so wide, that if one could walk forever one couldn’t get to the end of it; and there were people going up and down in this wide world that knew nothing of Cousin Alfio, nor of the Provvidenza out at sea, nor of the Festa of All Souls.

So thought Mena, waiting on the landing for grandpapa.

Grandpapa himself came out once or twice on the landing, before closing the door, looking at the stars, which twinkled more than they need have done, and then muttered, “Ugly Sea!” Rocco Spatu howled a tipsy song under the red light at the tavern. “A careless heart can always sing,” concluded Padron ’Ntoni.

III.

After midnight the wind began to howl as if all the cats in the place had been on the roof, and to shake the shutters. The sea roared round the Fariglione as if all the bulls of the Fair of Saint Alfio had been there, and the day opened as black as the soul of Judas. In short, an ugly September Sunday dawned—a Sunday in false September which lets loose a tempest on one between the cup and the lip, like a shot from behind a prickly-pear. The village boats were all drawn up on the beach, and well fastened to the great stones under the washing-tank; so the boys amused themselves

by hissing and howling whenever there passed by some lonely sail far out at sea, tossed amid mist and foam, dancing up and down as if chased by the devil; the women, instead, made the sign of the cross, as if they could see with their eyes the poor fellows who were on board.

Maruzza la Longa was silent, as behooved her; but she could not stand still a minute, and went up and down and in and out without stopping, like a hen that is going to lay an egg. The men were at the tavern, or in Pizzuti's shop, or under the butcher's shed, watching the rain, sniffing the air with their heads up. On the shore there was only Padron 'Ntoni, looking out for that load of lupins and his son Bastianazzo and the Provvidenza, all out at sea there; and there was La Locca's son too, who had nothing to lose, only his brother Menico was out at sea with Bastianazzo in the Provvidenza, with the lupins. Padron Fortunato Cipolla, getting shaved in Pizzuti's shop, said that he wouldn't give two baiocchi for Bastianazzo and La Locca's Menico with the Provvidenza and the load of lupins.

"Now everybody wants to be a merchant and to get rich," said he, shrugging his shoulders; "and then when the steed is stolen they shut the stable door."

In Santuzza's bar-room there was a crowd—that big drunken Rocco Spatu shouting and spitting enough for a dozen; Daddy Tino Goosefoot, Mastro Cola Zuppiddu, Uncle Mangiacarubbe; Don Michele, the brigadier of the coast-guard, with his big boots and his pistols, as if he were going to look for smugglers in this sort of weather; and Mastro Mariano Cinghialenta. That great big elephant of a man, Mastro Cola Zuppiddu, went about giving people thumps in fun, heavy enough to knock down an ox, as if he had his calker's mallet in his hand all the time, and then Uncle Cinghialenta, to show that he was a carrier, and a courageous man who knew the world, turned round upon him, swearing and blaspheming.

Uncle Santoro, curled all up in the corner of the little porch, waited with out-stretched hand until some one should pass that he might ask for alms.

“Between the two, father and daughter, they must make a good sum on such a day as this,” said Zuppiddu, “when everybody comes to the tavern.”

“Bastianazzo Malavoglia is worse off than he is at this moment,” said Goosefoot. “Mastro Cirino may ring the bell as much as he likes, to-day the Malavoglia won’t go to church—they are angry with our Lord—because of that load of lupins they’ve got out at sea.”

The wind swept about the petticoats and the dry leaves, so that Vanni Pizzuti, with the razor in his hand, held on to the nose of the man he was shaving, and looked out over his shoulder to see what was going on; and when he had finished, stood with hand on hip in the door-way, with his curly hair shining like silk; and the druggist stood at his shop door, under that big ugly hat of his that looked as if he had an umbrella on his head, pretending to have high words with Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, because his wife didn’t force him to go to church in spite of himself, and laughed under his beard at the joke, winking at the boys who were tumbling in the gutters.

“To-day” Daddy Goosefoot went about saying, “Padroni ’Ntoni is a Protestant, like Don Franco the apothecary.”

“If I see you looking after that old wretch Don Silvestro, I’ll box your ears right here where we are,” shouted La Zuppidda, crossing the piazza, to her girl. “That one I don’t like.”

La Santuzza, at the last stroke of the bell, left her father to take care of the tavern, and went into church, with her customers behind her. Uncle Santoro, poor old fellow, was blind, and didn’t go to the mass, but he didn’t lose his time at the tavern, for though he couldn’t see who went to the bar, he knew them all by the step as one or another went to take a drink.

“The devils are out on the air,” said Santuzza, as she crossed herself with the holy water. “A day to commit a mortal sin!”

Close by, La Zuppidda muttered Ave Marias mechanically, sitting on her heels, shooting sharp glances hither and thither, as if she were on evil terms with the whole village, whispering to whoever would listen to her: “There’s Maruzza la Longa doesn’t come to church, and yet her husband is out at sea in this horrid weather! There’s no need to wonder why the Lord sends judgments on us. There’s even Menico’s mother comes to church, though she doesn’t do anything there but watch the flies.”

“One must pray also for sinners,” said Santuzza; “that is what good people are for.”

Uncle Crucifix was kneeling at the foot of the altar of the Sorrowing Mother of God, with a very big rosary in his hand, and intoned his prayers with a nasal twang which would have touched the heart of Satan himself. Between one Ave Maria and another he talked of the affair of the lupins, and of the Provvidenza, which was out at sea, and of La Longa, who would be left with five children.

“In these days,” said Padron Cipolla, shrugging his shoulders, “no one is content with his own estate; everybody wants the moon and stars for himself.”

“The fact is,” concluded Daddy Zuppiddu, “that this will be a black day for the Malavoglia.”

“For my part,” added Goosefoot, “I shouldn’t care to be in Cousin Bastianazzo’s shirt.”

The evening came on chill and sad; now and then there came a blast of north wind, bringing a shower of fine cold rain; it was one of those evenings when, if the bark lies high and safe, with her belly in the sand, one enjoys watching the simmering pot, with the baby between one’s knees, and listening to the housewife trotting to and fro behind one’s back. The lazy ones preferred going to the tavern to enjoy the Sunday, which seemed likely to last over Monday as well; and the cupboards shone in the firelight until even Uncle Santoro, sitting out there with his extended hand, moved his chair to warm his back a little.

“He’s better off than poor old Bastianazzo just now,” said Rocco Spatu, lighting his pipe at the door.

And without further reflection he put his hand in his pocket, and permitted himself to give two centimes in alms.

“You are throwing your alms away, thanking God for being in safety from the storm; there’s no danger of your dying like Bastianazzo.”

Everybody laughed at the joke, and then they all stood looking out at the sea, that was as black as the wet rocks.

Padron ’Ntoni had been going about all day, as if he had been bitten by the tarantula, and the apothecary asked him if he wanted a tonic, and then he said:

“Fine providence this, eh, Padron ’Ntoni?” But he was a Protestant and a Jew; all the world knew that.

La Locca’s son, who was out there with his hands in his empty pockets, began:

“Uncle Crucifix is gone with old Goosefoot to get Padron ’Ntoni to swear before witnesses that he took the cargo of lupins on credit.”

At dusk Maruzza, with her little ones, went out on the cliffs to watch the sea, which from that point could be seen quite well, and hearing the moaning waves, she felt faint and sick, but said nothing. The little girl cried, and these poor things, forgotten up there on the rocks, seemed like souls in Purgatory. The little one’s cries made the mother quite sick—it seemed like an evil omen; she couldn’t think what to do to keep the child quiet, and she sang to her song after song, with a trembling voice loaded with tears..

The men, on their way back from the tavern, with pot of oil or flask of wine, stopped to exchange a few words with La Longa, as if nothing had happened; and some of Bastianazzo’s special friends—Cipolla, for example, or Mangiacarubbe—walking out to the edge of the cliff, and giving a look out to see in what sort of a temper the

old growler was going to sleep in, went up to Cousin Maruzza, asking about her husband, and staying a few minutes to keep her company, pipe in mouth, or talking softly among themselves. The poor little woman, frightened by these unusual attentions, looked at them with sad, scared eyes, and held her baby tight in her arms, as if they had tried to steal it from her. At last the hardest, or the most compassionate of them, took her by the arm and led her home. She let herself be led, only saying over and over again: “O Blessed Virgin! O Blessed Virgin Mary!” The children clung to her skirts, as if they had been afraid somebody was going to steal something from them too. When they passed before the tavern all the customers stopped talking, and came to the door in a cloud of smoke, gazing at her as if she were already a curiosity.

“Requiem aeternam,” mumbled old Santoro, under his breath: “that poor Bastianazzo always gave me something when his father let him have a soldo to spend for himself.”

The poor little thing, who did not even know she was a widow, went on crying: “O Blessed Virgin! O Blessed Virgin! O Virgin Mary!”

Before the steps of her house the neighbors were waiting for her, talking among themselves in a low voice. When they saw her coming, Mammy Goose-foot and her cousin Anna came towards her silently, with folded hands. Then she wound her hands wildly in her hair, and with a distracted screech rushed to hide herself in the house.

“What a misfortune!” they said among themselves in the street. “And the boat was loaded—forty scudi worth of lupins!”

IV.

The worst part of it was that the lupins had been bought on credit, and Uncle Crucifix was not content with “fair words and rotten apples.” He was called

Dumb-bell because he was deaf on one side, and turned that side when people wanted to pay him with talk, saying, “the payment can be arranged.” He lived by lending to his friends, having no other trade, and for this reason he stood about all day in the piazza, or with his back to the wall of the church, with his hands in the pockets of that ragged old jacket that nobody would have given him a soldo for; but he had as much money as you wanted, and if any one wanted ten francs he was ready to lend them right off, on pledge, of course—“He who lends money without security loses his friends, his goods, and his wits”—with the bargain that they should be paid back on Sunday, in silver, with the account signed, and a carlino more for interest, as was but right, for, in affairs, there’s no friendship that counts. He also bought a whole cargo of fish in the lump, with discount, if the poor fellow who had taken the fish wanted his money down, but they must be weighed with his scales, that were as false as Judas’s, so they said. To be sure, such fellows were never contented, and had one arm long and the other short, like Saint Francesco: and he would advance the money for the port taxes if they wanted it, and only took the money beforehand, and half a pound of bread per head and a little quarter flask of wine, and wanted no more, for he was a Christian, and one of those who knew that for what one does in this world one must answer to God. In short, he was a real Providence for all who were in tight places, and had invented a hundred ways of being useful to his neighbors; and without being a seaman, he had boats and tackle and everything for such as hadn’t them, and lent them, contenting himself with a third of the fish, and something for the boat—that counted as much as the wages of a man—and something more for the tackle, for he lent the tackle too; and the end was that the boat ate up all the profits, so that they called it the devil’s boat. And when they asked him why he didn’t go to sea, too, and risk his own skin instead of swallowing everything at other people’s expense, he would say, “Bravo! and if an accident happened, Lord avert it! and if I lost my life who would attend to my business?” He did attend to his business, and would have hired out his very shirt; but

he wanted to be paid without so much talk, and there was no use arguing with him because he was deaf, and, more than that, wasn't quite right in his head, and couldn't say anything but "Bargaining's no cheating;" or, "The honest man is known when pay-day comes."

Now his enemies were laughing in their sleeves at him, on account of those blessed lupins that the devil had swallowed; and he must say a De profundis for Bastianazzo too, when the funeral ceremony took place, along with the other Brothers of the Happy Death, with the bag over his head.

The windows of the little church flashed in the sunshine, and the sea was smooth and still, so that it no longer seemed the same that had robbed La Longa of her husband; wherefore the brothers were rather in a hurry, wanting to get away each to his own work, now that the weather had cleared up. This time the Malavoglia were all there on their knees before the bier, washing the pavement with their tears, as if the dead man had been really there, inside those four boards, with the lupins round his neck, that Uncle Crucifix had given him on credit, because he had always known Padron 'Ntoni for an honest man; but if they meant to cheat him out of his goods on the pretext that Bastianazzo was drowned, they might as well cheat our Lord Christ. By the holy devil himself, he would put Padron 'Ntoni in the hulks for it!—there was law, even at Trezza.

Meanwhile Don Giammaria flung two or three asperges of holy-water on the bier, and Mastro Cirino went round with an extinguisher putting out the candles. The brothers strode over the benches with arms over their heads, pulling off their habits; and Uncle Crucifix went and gave a pinch of snuff to Padron 'Ntoni by the way of consolation; for, after all, when one is an honest man one leaves a good name behind one and wins Paradise, and this is what he had said to those who asked him about his lupins:

"With the Malavoglia I'm safe, for they are honest people, and don't mean to leave

poor Bastianazzo in the claws of the devil."

Padron 'Ntoni might see for himself that everything had been done without skimping in honor of the dead—so much for the mass, so much for the tapers, so much for the requiem—he counted it all off on his big fingers in their white cotton gloves; and the children looked with open mouths at all these things which cost so much and were for papa—the catafalque, the tapers, the paper-flowers; and the baby, seeing the lights, and hearing the organ, began to laugh and to dance.

The house by the medlar was full of people. "Sad is the house where there is the 'visit' for the husband." Everybody passing and seeing the poor little orphaned Malavoglia at the door, with dirty faces, and hands in their pockets, shook their heads, saying:

"Poor Cousin Maruzza, now her hard times are beginning."

The neighbors brought things, as the custom is—macaroni, eggs, wine, all the gifts of God that one could only finish if one was really happy—and Cousin Alfio Mosca came with a chicken in his hands, "Take this, Cousin Mena," he said, "I only wish I'd been in your father's place—I swear it—at least I should not have been missed, and there would have been none to mourn for me."

Mena, leaning against the kitchen door, with her apron over her face, felt her heart beat as if it would fly out of her breast, like that of the poor frightened bird she held in her hand. The dowry of Sant'Agata had gone down, down in the Provvidenza, and the people who came to make the visit of condolence in the house by the medlar looked round at the things, as if they saw Uncle Crucifix's claws already grasping at them; some sat perched on chairs, and went off, without having spoken a word, like regular stockfish as they were; but whoever had a tongue in their heads tried to keep up some sort of conversation to drive away melancholy, and to rouse those poor Malavoglia, who went on crying all day long, like four fountains. Uncle Cipolla related how there was a rise of a franc to a barrel in the price of anchovies, which

might interest Padron ’Ntoni if he still had any anchovies on hand; he himself had reserved a hundred barrels, which now came in very well; and he talked of poor Cousin Bastianazzo, too, rest his soul; how no one could have expected it—a man like that, in the prime of life, and positively bursting with health and strength, poor fellow!

There was the sindaco, too, Master Croce Calta “Silk-worm”—called also Giufà—with Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, and he stood sniffing with nose in the air, so that people said he was waiting for the wind to see what way to turn—looking now at one who was speaking, now at another, as if he were watching the leaves in the wind, in real earnest, and if he spoke he mumbled so no one could hear him, and if Don Silvestro laughed he laughed too.

“No funeral without laughter, no marriage without tears.” The druggist’s wife twisted about on her chair with disgust at the trifling conversation, sitting with her hands in her lap and a long face, as is the custom in town under such circumstances, so that people became dumb at the sight of her, as if the corpse itself had been sitting there, and for this reason she was called the Lady. Don Silvestro strutted about among the women, and started forward every minute to offer a chair to some new-comer, that he might hear his new boots creak. “They ought to be burned alive, those tax-gatherers!” muttered La Zuppidda, yellow as a lemon; and she said it aloud, too, right in the face of Don Silvestro, just as if he had been one of the tax-gatherers. She knew very well what they were after, these bookworms, with their shiny boots without stockings; they were always trying to slip into people’s houses, to carry off the dowry and the daughters. ’Tis not you I want, my dear, ’tis your money. For that she had left her daughter Barbara at home. “Those faces I don’t like.”

“It’s a beastly shame!” cried Donna Rosolina, the priest’s sister, red as a turke, fanning herself with her handkerchief; and she railed at Garibaldi, who had brought

in the taxes; and nowadays nobody could live and nobody got married any more.

“As if that mattered to Donna Rosolina now,” murmured Goosefoot.

Donna Rosolina meanwhile went on talking to Don Silvestro of the lot of work she had on her hands: thirty yards of warp on the loom, the beans to dry for winter, all the tomato-preserve to be made. She had a secret for making it, so that it kept fresh all winter; she always got the spices from town on purpose, and used the best quality of salt. A house without a woman never goes on well, but the woman must have brains, and know how to use her hands as she did, not one of those little geese that think of nothing but brushing their hair before the glass. “Long hair little wit,” says the proverb, specially when the husband goes under the water like poor Bastianazzo, rest his soul!

“Blessed that he is!” sighed Santuzza, “he died on a fortunate day, a day blessed by the Church—the eve of Our Lady of Sorrows—and now he’s praying for us sinners, like the angels and the saints. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.’ He was a good man, one of those who mind their own business, and don’t go about speaking ill of their neighbors, as so many do, falling into mortal sin.”

Maruzza, sitting at the foot of the bed, pale and limp as a wet rag, looking like Our Lady of Sorrows herself, began to cry louder than ever at this; and Padron ’Ntoni, bowed and stooping, looking a hundred years older than he did three days before, went on looking and looking at her, shaking his head, not knowing what to say, with that big thorn Bastianazzo sticking in his breast as if a shark had been gnawing at him.

“Santuzza’s lips drop nothing but honey,” observed Cousin Grace Goosefoot.

“To be a good tavern-keeper,” said La Zuppidda, “one must be like that; who doesn’t know his trade must shut his shop, and who can’t swim must be drowned.”

“They’re going to put a tax on salt,” said Uncle Mangiacarubbe. “Don Franco saw it in the paper in print. Then they can’t salt the anchovies any more, and we may just

use our boats for firewood."

Master Turi, the calker, was lifting up his fist and his voice, "Blessed Lord—" he began, but caught sight of his wife and stopped short.

"With the dear times that are coming," added Padron Cipolla, "this year, when it hasn't rained since Saint Clare, and if it wasn't for this last storm when the Provvidenza was lost, that was a real blessing, the famine this year would be solid enough to cut with a knife."

Each one talked of his own trouble to comfort the Malavoglia and show them that they were not the only ones that had trouble. "Troubles old and new, some have many and some have few," and such as stood outside in the garden looked up at the sky to see if there was any chance of more rain—that was needed more than bread was. Padron Cipolla knew why it didn't rain any longer as it used to do, "It rained no longer on account of that cursed telegraph-wire that drew all the rain to itself and carried it off." Daddy Tino and Uncle Mangiacarubbe at this stood staring with open mouths, for there was precisely on the road to Trezza one of those very telegraph-wires; but Don Silvestro began to laugh with his hen's cackle, ah! ah! ah! and Padron Cipolla jumped up from the wall in a fury, and railed at "ill-mannered brutes with ears as long as an ass's." Didn't everybody know that the telegraph carried the news from one place to another; this was because inside the wires there was a certain fluid like the sap in the vines, and in the same way it sucked the rain out of the sky and carried it off where there was more need of it; they might go and ask the apothecary, who said it himself; and it was for this reason that they had made a law that whoever broke the telegraph-wire should go to prison. Then Don Silvestro had no more to say, and put his tongue between his teeth.

"Saints of Paradise! some one ought to cut down those telegraph-posts and burn them!" began Uncle Zuppiddu, but no one listened to him, and to change the subject looked round the garden.

“A nice piece of ground,” said Uncle Mangia-carubbe; “when it is well worked it gives food enough for a whole year.”

The house of the Malavoglia had always been one of the first in Trezza, but now—with Bastianazzo drowned, and ’Ntoni gone for a soldier, and Mena to be married, and all those hungry little ones—it was a house that leaked at every seam.

“In fact what could it be worth, the house?” Every one stretched out his neck from the garden, measuring the house with his eye, to guess at the value of it, cursorily as it were. Don Silvestro knew more about it than any one, for he had the papers safe in the clerk’s room at Aci Castello.

“Will you bet five francs that all is not gold that glitters,” he said, showing the shining new silver piece of money. He knew that there was a mortgage of two francs the year, so he began to count on his fingers what would be the worth of the house with the well and the garden and all.

“Neither the house nor the boat can be sold, for they are security for Maruzza’s dowry,” said some one else; and they began to wrangle about it until their voices might have been heard even inside, where the family were mourning for the dead. “Of course,” cried Don Silvestro, like a pistol-shot, “there’s the dowry mortgage.”

Padron Cipolla, who had spoken with Padron ’Ntoni about the marriage of his son Brasi and Mena, shook his head and said nothing.

“Then,” said Uncle Cola, “nobody’ll suffer but Uncle Crucifix, who loses his lupins that he sold on credit.”

They all turned to look at old Crucifix, who had come, too, for appearance’ sake, and stood straight up in a corner, listening to all that was said, with his mouth open and his nose up in the air, as if he was counting the beams and the tiles of the roof to make a valuation of the house. The most curious stretched their necks to look at him from the door, and winked at each other, as if to point him out.

“He looks like a bailiff making an inventory,” they sneered.

The gossips, who had got wind of the talk between Cipolla and Padron ’Ntoni about the marriage, said to each other that Maruzza must get through her mourning, and then she could settle about that marriage of Mena’s. But now La Longa had other things to think of, poor dear!

Padron Cipolla turned coolly away without a word; and, when everybody was gone, the Malavoglia were left alone in the court.

“Now,” said Padron ’Ntoni, “we are ruined, and the best off of us all is Bastianazzo, who doesn’t know it.”

At these words Maruzza began to cry afresh, and the boys seeing the grown-up people cry began to roar again, too, though it was three days now since papa was dead. The old man wandered about from place to place, without knowing what he was going to do. But Maruzza never moved from the foot of the bed, as if she had nothing left that she could do. When she spoke she only repeated, with fixed eyes, as if she had no other idea in her head, “Now I’ve nothing more to do.”

“No!” replied Padron ’Ntoni. “No! we must pay the debt to old Dumb-bell; it won’t do to have people saying: Honest men when they grow poor become knaves.” And the thought of the lupins drove the thorn of Bastianazzo deeper into his heart.

The medlar-tree let fall dry leaves, and the wind blew them here and there about the court.

“He went because I sent him,” repeated Padron ’Ntoni, as the wind bears the leaves here and there, “and if I had told him to fling himself head foremost from the Fariglione, he would have done it without a word. At least he died while the house and the medlar-tree, even to the last leaf, were his own; and I, who am old, am still here. ‘Long are the days of the poor man.’”

Maruzza said nothing, but in her head there was one fixed idea that beat upon her brains, and gnawed at her heart—to know, if she might, what had happened on that night; that was always before her eyes, and if she shut them she seemed to see the

Provvidenza out by the Cape of the Mills, where the sea was blue and smooth and sprinkled with boats, which looked like gulls in the sunshine, and could be counted one by one—that of Uncle Crucifix, the other of Cousin Barrabbas, Uncle Cola's Concetta, Padron Fortunato's bark—that it swung her head to see; and she heard Cola Zup-piddu singing fit to split his throat out of his great bull's lungs, while he hammered away with his mallet, and the scent of the tar came on the air; and Cousin Anna thumped her linen on the stone at the washing-tank, and she heard Mena, too, crying quietly in the kitchen.

"Poor little thing!" said the grandfather to himself, "the house has come down about your cars too." And he went about touching one by one all the things that were heaped up in the corner, with trembling hands, as old men do, and seeing Luca at the door, on whom they had put his father's big jacket, that reached to his heels, he said to him, "That'll keep you warm at your work—we must all work now—and you must help, for we have to pay the debt for the lupins."

Maruzza put her hands to her ears that she might not hear La Locca, who, perched on the landing behind the door, screamed all day long with her cracked maniac's voice, saying that they must give her back her son, and wouldn't listen to reason from anybody.

"She goes on like that because she's hungry," said Cousin Anna, at last. "Now old Crucifix is furious at them all about the lupins, and won't do anything for them. I'll go and give her something to eat, and then she'll go away."

Cousin Anna, poor dear, had left her linen and her girls to go and help Cousin Maruzza, who acted as if she were sick, and if they had left her alone she wouldn't have, lighted the fire or anything, but would have left them all to starve. "Neighbors should be like the tiles on the roof that carry water for each other." Meanwhile the poor children's lips were pale for hunger. Nunziata came to help too, and Alessio—with his face black from crying at seeing his mother cry—looked after the

little boys, crowding round him like a brood of chickens, that Nunziata might have her hands free.

“You know how to manage,” said Cousin Anna to her, “and you’ll have your dowry ready in your two hands when you grow up.”

V.

Mena did not know that there was an idea of marrying her to Padron Cipolla’s Brasi “to make the mother forget her grief,” and the first person to tell it her was Alfio Mosca, who, a few days later, came to the garden gate, on his way back from Aci Castello, with his donkey-cart. Mena replied, “It isn’t true, it isn’t true!” but she was confused, and as he went on telling her all about how he had heard it from La Vespa in the house of Uncle Crucifix, all of a sudden she turned red all over. Cousin Alfio, too, lost countenance seeing the girl like that, with her black kerchief over her head. He began to play with the buttons of his coat, stood first on one leg, then on the other, and would have given anything to get away. “Listen; it isn’t my fault; I heard it in old Dumb-bell’s court while I was chopping up the locust-tree that was blown down in the storm at the Santa Clara, you remember. Now, Uncle Crucifix gets me to do chores for him, because he won’t hear of La Locca’s son ever since his brother played him that trick with the cargo of lupins.” Mena had the string of the gate in her hand, but couldn’t make up her mind to open it. “And then if it isn’t true, why do you blush?” She didn’t know, that was the truth, and she turned the latch-string round and round. That person she knew only by sight, and hardly that. Alfio went on telling her the whole litany of Brasi Cipolla’s riches; after Uncle Naso, the butcher, he was the best match in the place, and all the girls were ready to eat him up with their eyes. Mena listened with all hers, and all of a sudden she made him a low courtesy, and went off up the garden path to the house.

Alfio, in a fury, went off and scolded La Vespa for telling him such a lot of stupid

lies, getting him into hot water with everybody.

“Uncle Crucifix told me,” replied La Vespa; “I don’t tell lies!”

“Lies! lies!” growled old Crucifix. “I ain’t going to damn my soul for that lot! I heard it with these ears. I heard also that the Provvidenza is in Maruzza’s dowry, and that there’s a mortgage of two francs a year on the house.”

“You wait and you’ll see if I tell lies or not,” continued La Vespa, leaning back against the bureau, with her hands on her hips, and looking at him all the time with the wickedest eyes. “You men are all alike; one can’t trust any of you.” Meanwhile Uncle Crucifix didn’t hear, and instead of eating, went on talking about the Malavoglia, who were talking of marriages in the family; but of the two hundred francs for the lupins nobody heard a word.

“Eh!” cried La Vespa, losing patience, “if one listened to you nobody would get married at all.”

“I don’t care who gets married or who doesn’t, I want my own; I don’t care for anything else.”

“If you don’t care about it, who should? I say—everybody isn’t like you, always putting things off.”

“And are you in a hurry, pray?”

“Of course I am. You have plenty of time to wait, you’re so young; but everybody can’t wait till the cows come home, to get married.”

“It’s a bad year,” said Uncle Dumb-bell. “No one has time to think of such things as those.”

La Vespa at this planted her hands on her hips, and went off like a railway-whistle, as if her own wasp’s sting had been on her tongue.

“Now, listen to what I’m going to say. After all, my living is mine, and I don’t need to go about begging for a husband. What do you mean by it? If you hadn’t come

filling my head with your flattery and nonsense, I might have had half a thousand husbands—Vanni Pizzuti, and Alfio Mos-ca, and my Cousin Cola, that was always hanging on to my skirts before he went for a soldier, and wouldn't even let me tie up my stockings—all of them burning with impatience, too. They wouldn't have gone on leading me by the nose this way, and keeping me slinging round from Easter until Christmas, as you've done."

This time Uncle Crucifix put his hand behind his ear to hear the better, and began to smooth her down with good words: "Yes, I know you are a sensible girl; for that I am fond of you, and am not like those fellows that were after you to nobble your land, and then to eat it up at Santuzza's tavern."

"It isn't true! you don't love me. If you did you wouldn't act this way; you would see what I am really thinking of all the time—yes, you would."

She turned her back on him, and still went on poking at him, as if unconsciously, with her elbow. "I know you don't care for me," she said. The uncle was offended by this unkind suspicion. "You say these things to draw me into sin." He began to complain. He not care for his own flesh and blood!—for she was his own flesh and blood after all, as the vineyard was, and it would have been his if his brother hadn't taken it into his head to marry, and bring the Wasp into the world; and for that he had always kept her as the apple of his eye, and thought only of her good. "Listen!" he said. "I thought of making over to you the debt of the Malavoglia, in exchange for the vineyard, which is worth forty scudi, and with the expenses and the interest may even reach fifty scudi, and you may get hold even of the house by the medlar, which is worth more than the vineyard."

"Keep the house by the medlar for yourself," said she. "I'll keep my vineyard. I know very well what to do with it." Then Uncle Crucifix also flew into a rage, and said that she meant to let it be gobbled up by that beggar Alfio Mosca, who made fish's-eyes at her for love of the vineyard, and that he wouldn't have him about the

house any more, and would have her to know that he had blood in his veins, too. “I declare if he isn’t jealous!” cried the Wasp.

“Of course I’m jealous,” said the old man, “jealous as a wild beast;” and he swore he’d pay five francs to whoever would break Alfio Mosca’s head for him, but would not do it himself, for he was a God-fearing Christian; and in these days honest men were cheated, for good faith dwells in the house of the fool, where one may buy a rope to hang one’s self; the proof of it was that one might pass and repass the house of the Malavoglia till all was blue, until people had begun to make fun of him, and to say that he made pilgrimages to the house by the medlar, as they did who made vows to the Madonna at Ognino. The Malavoglia paid him with bows, and nothing else; and the boys, if they saw him enter the street, ran off as if they had seen a bugbear; but until now he hadn’t heard a word of that money for the lupins—and All Souls was hard at hand—and here was Padron ’Ntoni talking of his granddaughter’s marriage!

He went off and growled at Goosefoot, who had got him into this scrape, he said to others; but the others said he went to cast sheep’s-eyes at the house by the medlar-tree; and La Locca—who was always wandering about there, because she had been told that her son had gone away in the Malavoglia’s boat, and she thought he would come back that way, and she should find him there—never saw her brother Crucifix without beginning to screech like a bird of ill omen, making him more furious than ever. “This one will drive me into a mortal sin,” cried Dumb-bell.

“All Souls is not yet come,” answered Goosefoot, gesticulating, as usual; “have a little patience! Do you want to suck Padron ’Ntoni’s blood? You know very well that you’ve really lost nothing, for the lupins were good for nothing—you know that.”

He knew nothing; he only knew that his blood was in God’s hands, and that the Malavoglia boys dared not play on the landing when he passed before Goosefoot’s

door. And if he met Alfio Mosca, with his donkey-cart, who took off his cap, with his sunburnt face, he felt his blood boiling with jealousy about the vineyard. “He wants to entrap my niece for the sake of the vineyard,” he grumbled to Goosefoot. “A lazy hound, who does nothing but strut round with that donkey-cart, and has nothing else in the world. A starving beggar! A rascal who makes that ugly witch of a niece of mine believe that he’s in love with her pig’s face, for love of her property.”

Meantime Alfio Mosca was not thinking of Vespa at all, and if he had any one in his eye it was rather Padron ’Ntoni’s Mena, whom he saw every day in the garden or on the landing, or when she went to look after the hens in the chicken-coop; and if he heard the pair of fowls he had given her cackling in the court-yard, he felt something stir inside of him, and felt as if he himself were there in the court of the house by the medlar; and if he had been something better than a poor carter he would have asked for Sant’Agata’s hand in marriage, and carried her off in the donkey-cart. When he thought of all these things he felt as if he had a thousand things to say to her; and yet when she was by his tongue was tied, and he could only talk of the weather, or the last load of wine he had carried for the Santuzza, and of the donkey, who could draw four quintals’ weight better than a mule, poor beast!

Mena stroked the poor beast with her hand, and Alfio smiled as if it had been himself whom she had caressed. “Ah, if my donkey were yours, Cousin Mena!” And Mena shook her head sadly, and wished that the Malavoglia had been carriers, for then her poor father would not have died.

“The sea is salt,” she said, “and the sailor dies in the sea.”

Alfio, who was in a hurry to carry the wine to Santuzza, couldn’t make up his mind to go, but stayed, chatting about the fine thing it was to keep tavern, and how that trade never fell off, and if the wine was dear one had only to pour more water into the barrels. Uncle Santoro had grown rich in that way, and now he only begged for

amusement.

“And you do very well carrying the wine, do you not?” asked Mena.

“Yes, in summer, when I can travel by night and by day both; that way I manage pretty well. This poor beast earns his living. When I shall have saved a little money I’ll buy a mule, and then I can become a real carrier like Master Mariano Cinghialenta.”

The girl was listening intently to all that Alfio was saying, and meanwhile the gray olive shook, with a sound like rain, and strewed the path with little dry curly leaves.

“Here is the winter coming, and all this we talk of is for the summer,” said Goodman Alfio. Mena followed with her eyes the shadows of the clouds that floated over the fields, as if the gray olive had melted and blown away; so the thoughts flew through her head, and she said:

“Do you know, Cousin Alfio, there is nothing in that story about Padron Fortunato Cipolla, because first we must pay the debt for the lupins.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Mosca; “so you won’t go away from the neighborhood.”

“When ’Ntoni comes back from being a soldier, grandfather and all of us will help each other to pay the debt. Mamma has taken some linen to weave for her ladyship.”

“The druggist’s is a good trade, too!” said Alfio Mosca.

At this moment appeared Cousin Venera Zup-pidda, with her distaff in her hand. “O Heaven! somebody’s coming,” cried Mena, and ran off into the house.

Alfio whipped the donkey, and wanted to get away as well, but—

“Oh, Goodman Alfio, what a hurry you’re in!” cried La Zuppidda, “I wanted to ask you if the wine you’re taking to Santuzza is the same she had last time.”

“I don’t know; they give me the wine in barrel.”

“That last was vinegar—only fit for salad—regular poison it was; that’s the way Santuzza gets rich; and to cheat the better, she wears the big medal of the Daughters

of Mary on the front of her dress. Nowadays whoever wants to get on must take to that trade; else they go backward, like crabs, as the Malavoglia have. Now they have fished up the Provvidenza, you know?"

"No; I was away, but Cousin Mena knew nothing of it."

"They have just brought the news, and Padron 'Ntoni has gone off to the Rotolo to see her towed in; he went as if he had got a new pair of legs, the old fellow. Now, with the Provvidenza, the Malayoglia can get back where they were before, and Mena will again be a good match."

Alfio did not answer, for the Zuppidda was looking at him fixedly, with her little yellow eyes, and he said he was in a hurry to take the wine to Santuzza.

"He won't tell me anything," muttered the Zuppidda, "as if I hadn't seen them with my eyes. They want to hide the sun with a net."

The Provvidenza had been towed to shore, all smashed, just as she had been found beyond the Cape of the Mills, with her nose among the rocks and her keel in the air. In one moment the whole village was at the shore, men and women together, and Padron 'Ntoni, mixed up with the crowd, looked on like the rest. Some gave kicks to the poor Provvidenza to hear how she was cracked, as if she no longer belonged to anybody, and the poor old man felt those kicks in his own stomach. "A fine Providence you have!" said Don Franco to him, for he, too, had come—in his shirt-sleeves and his great ugly hat, with his pipe in his mouth—to look on.

"She's only fit to burn," concluded Padron For-tunato Cipolla; and Goodman Mangiacarubbe, who understood those matters, said that the boat must have gone down all of a sudden, without leaving time for those on board to cry "Lord Jesus, help us!" for the sea had swept away sails, masts, oars, everything, and hadn't left a single bolt in its place.

"This was papa's place, where there's the new rowlock," said Luca, who had climbed over the side, "and here were the lupins, underneath."

But of the lupins there was not one left; the sea had swept everything clean away. For this reason Maruzza would not leave the house, and never wanted to see the Provvidenza again in her life.

“The hull will hold; something can be made of it yet,” pronounced Master Zuppiddu, the calker, kicking the Provvidenza too, with his great ugly feet; “with three or four patches she can go to sea again; never be fit for bad weather—a big wave would send her all to pieces—but for ‘long-shore fishing, and for fine weather, she’ll do very well.” Padron Cipolla, Goodman Marigiacarubbe, and Cousin Cola stood by, listening in silence.

“Yes,” said Padron Fortunato, at last. “It’s better than setting fire to her.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Uncle Crucifix, who also stood looking on, with his hands behind his back. “We are Christians, and should rejoice in each other’s good-fortune. What says the proverb? ‘Wish well to thy neighbor and thou wilt gain something for thyself.’”

The boys had installed themselves inside the Provvidenza, as well as the other lads who insisted on climbing up into her, too. “When we have mended the Provvidenza properly,” said Alessio, “she will be like Uncle Cola’s Concetta;” and they gave themselves no end of trouble pushing and hauling at her, to get her down to the beach, before the door of Master Zuppiddu, the calker, where there were the big stones to keep the boats in place, and the great kettles for the tar, and heaps of beams, and ribs and knees leaning against the wall. Alessio was always at loggerheads with the other boys, who wanted to climb up into the boat, and to help to fan the fire under the kettle of pitch, and when they pushed him he would say, in a threatening whine:

“Wait till my brother ’Ntoni comes back!”

In fact ’Ntoni had sent in his papers and obtained his leave—although Don Silvestro, the town-clerk, had assured him that if he would stay on six months longer as a

soldier he would liberate his brother Luca from the conscription. But ’Ntoni wouldn’t stay even six days longer, now that his father was dead; Luca would have done just as he did if that misfortune had come upon him while he was away from home, and wouldn’t have done another stroke of work if it hadn’t been for those dogs of superiors.

“For my part,” said Luca, “I am quite willing to go for a soldier, instead of ’Ntoni. Now, when he comes back, the Provvidenza can put to sea again, and there’ll be no need of anybody.”

“That fellow,” cried Padron ’Ntoni, with great pride, “is just like his father Bastianazzo, who had a heart as big as the sea, and as kind as the mercy of God.”

One evening Padron ’Ntoni came home panting with excitement, exclaiming, “Here’s the letter; Goodman Cirino, the sacristan, gave it to me as I came from taking the nets to Pappafave.”

La Longa turned quite pale for joy; and they all ran into the kitchen to see the letter.

’Ntoni arrived, with his cap over one ear, and a shirt covered with stars; and his mother couldn’t get enough of him, as the whole family and all his friends followed him home from the station; in a moment the house was full of people, just as it had been at the funeral of poor Bastianazzo, whom nobody thought of now.

Some things nobody remembers but old people, so much so that La Locca was always sitting before the Malavoglia house, against the wall, waiting for her Menico, and turning her head this way and that at every step that she heard passing up or down the alley.

VI.

Ntoni got back on a Sunday, and went from door to door saluting his friends and acquaintances, the centre of an admiring crowd of boys, while the girls came to the

windows to look at him; the only one that was not there was Mammy Tudda's Sara.

"She has gone to Ognino with her husband," Santuzza told him. "She has married Menico Trinca, a widower with six children, but as rich as a hog. She married him before his first wife had been dead a month. God forgive us all!"

"A widower is like a soldier," added La Zuppidda; "a soldier's love is soon cold; at tap of drum, adieu, my lady!"

Cousin Venera, who went to the station to see if Mammy Tudda's Sara would come to say good-bye to Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni, because she had seen them talking to each other over the vineyard wall, hoped to put 'Ntoni out of countenance by this piece of news. But time had changed him too—"Out of sight, out of mind"—'Ntoni now wore his cap over his ear.

"I don't like those flirts who make love to two or three people at a time," said the Mangiacairubbe, pulling the ends of her kerchief tighter under her chin, and looking as innocent as a Madonna. "If I were to love anybody, I'd stick to that one, and would change, no, not for Victor Emmanuel himself, or Garibaldi, even."

"I know whom you love!" said 'Ntoni, with his hand on his hip.

"No, Cousin 'Ntoni, you don't know; they have told you a lot of gossip without a word of truth in it. If ever you are passing my door, just you come in, and I'll tell you the whole story."

"Now that the Mangiacarubbe has set her heart on Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni, it will be a real mercy for his cousin Anna if anything comes of it," said Cousin Venera.

'Ntoni went off in high feather, swaggering with his hand on his hip, followed by a train of friends, wishing that every day might be Sunday, that he might carry his pretty shirts out a-walking. That afternoon he amused himself by wrestling with Cousin Pizzuti, who hadn't the fear of God before his eyes (though he had never been for a soldier), and sent him rolling on the ground before the tavern, with a bloody nose; but Rocco Spatu was stronger than 'Ntoni, and threw him down.

In short, ’Ntoni amused himself the whole day long; and while they were sitting chatting round the table in the evening, and his mother asked him all sorts of questions about one thing and another, and Mena looked at his cap, and his shirt with the stars, to see how they were made, and the boys, half asleep, gazed at him with all their eyes, his grandfather told him that he had found a place for him, by the day, on board Padron Fortunato Cipolla’s bark, at very good wages.

“I took him for charity,” said Padron Fortunato to whoever would listen to him, sitting on the bench in front of the barber’s shop. “I took him because I couldn’t bear to say no when Padron ’Ntoni came to ask me, under the elm, if I wanted men for the bark. I never have any need of men, but ‘in prison, in sickness, and in need one knows one’s friends’; with Padron ’Ntoni, too, who is so old that his wages are money thrown away.”.

“He’s old, but he knows his business,” replied, old Goosefoot. “His wages are by no means thrown away, and his grandson is a fellow that any one might be glad to get away from him—or from you, for that matter.”

“When Master Bastian has finished mending the Provvidenza we’ll get her to sea again, and then we sha’n’t need to go out by the day,” said Padron ’Ntoni.

In the morning, when he went to wake his grandson, it wanted two hours to dawn, and ’Ntoni would have preferred to remain under the blankets; when he came yawning out into the court, the Three Sticks were still high over Ognino, and the Puddara * shone on the other side, and all the stars glittered like the sparks under a frying-pan. “It’s the same thing over again as when I was a soldier and they beat the reveille on deck,” growled ’Ntoni. “It wasn’t worth while coming home, at this rate!”

“Hush,” said Alessio. “Grandpapa is out there getting ready the tackle; he’s been up an hour already,” but Alessio was a boy just like his father Bastiànazzo, rest his soul! Grandfather went about here and there in the court with his lantern; outside

could be heard the people passing towards the sea, knocking at the doors as they passed to rouse their companions. All the same, when they came to the shore, where the stars were mirrored in the black smooth sea, which murmured softly on the stones, and saw here and there the lights of the other boats, ’Ntoni, too, felt his heart swell within him. “Ah,” he exclaimed, with a mighty stretch of his arms, “it is a fine thing to come back to one’s own home. This sea knows me.” And Pa-dron ’Ntoni said, “No fish can live out of water,” and “For the man who is born a fish the sea waits.”

* The Great Bear.

On board, the bark they chaffed ’Ntoni because Sara had jilted him. While they were furling the sails, and the Carmela was rowed slowly round and round, dragging the big net after her like a serpent’s tail, “‘Swine’s flesh and soldier’s faith last but a little while,’ for that Sara threw you over,” they said to him.

“When the Turk turns Christian the woman keeps her word,” said Uncle Cola.

“I have plenty of sweethearts, if I want them,” replied ’Ntoni; “at Naples they ran after me.”

“At Naples you had a cloth coat and a cap with a name on it, and shoes on your feet,” said Barabbas.. .

“Are the girls at Naples as pretty as the ones here?”

“The girls here are not fit to hold a candle to those in Naples. I had one with a silk dress, and red ribbons in her hair, an embroidered corset, and gold epaulets like the captain’s. A fine, handsome girl who brought her master’s children out to walk, and did nothing else.”

“It must be a fine thing to live in those ports,” observed Barabbas.

“You on the left there, stop rowing!” called out Padron ’Ntoni..

“Blood of Judas! You’ll send the bark onto the net,” shouted Uncle Cola from the

helm. “Will you stop chattering! Are we here to scratch ourselves or to work?”

“It’s the tide drives us up,” said ’Ntoni.

“Draw in there, you son of a pig; your head is so full of those queens of yours that you’ll make us lose the whole day,” shouted Barabbas.

“Sacrament!” replied ’Ntoni, with his oar in the air. “If you say that again I’ll bring it down on your head.”

“What’s all this?” cried Uncle Cola from the helm. “Did you learn when you were a soldier not to hear a word from anybody?”

“I’ll go,” said ’Ntoni.

“Go along, then! With Padron Fortunato’s money he’ll soon find another.”

“Prudence is for the master, patience for the man,” said Padron ’Ntoni.

’Ntoni continued to row, growling all the while, as he could not get up and walk away; and Cousin Mangiacarubbe, to put an end to the quarrelling, said it was time for breakfast.

At that moment the sun was just rising, and a draught of wine was pleasant in the cold air which began to blow. So the boys began to set their jaws at work, with flask between their knees, while the bark moved slowly about inside the ring of corks.

“A kick to whoever speaks first,” said Uncle Cola.

Not to be kicked, they all began to chew like so many oxen, watching the waves that came rolling in from the open sea and spreading out without foam, those green billows that on a fair sunny day remind one of a black sky and a slate-colored sea.

“Padron Cipolla will be swearing roundly at us to-night,” said Uncle Cola; “but it isn’t our fault. In this fresh breeze there’s no chance of fish.”

First Goodman Mangiacarubbe let fly a kick at Uncle Cola, who had broken silence himself after declaring the forfeit, and then answered:

“Since we are here, we may as well leave the net out a while longer.”

“The tide is coming from the open; that will help us,” said Padron ’Ntoni.

“Ay, ay!” muttered Uncle Cola meanwhile.

Now that the silence was broken, Barabbas asked ’Ntoni Malavoglia for a stump of a cigar.

“I haven’t but one,” said ’Ntoni, without thinking of the recent quarrel, “but I’ll give you half of mine.”

The crew of the bark, leaning their backs against the bench, with hands behind their heads, hummed snatches of songs under their breath, each on his own account, to keep himself awake, for it was very difficult not to doze in the blazing sun; and Ba-rabbas snapped his fingers at the fish which leaped flashing out of the water.

“They have nothing to do,” said ’Ntoni, “and they amuse themselves by jumping about.”

“How good this cigar is!” said Barabbas. “Did you smoke these at Naples?”

“Yes, plenty of them.”

“All the same, the corks are beginning to sink,” said Goodman Mangiacarubbe.

“Do you see where the Provvidenza went down with your father?” said Barabbas to ’Ntoni; “there at the Cape, where the sun glints on those white houses, and the sea seems as if it were made of gold.”

“The sea is salt, and the sailor sinks in the sea,” replied ’Ntoni.

Barabbas passed him his flask, and they began to mutter to each other under their breath against Uncle Cola, who was a regular dog for the crew of the bark, watching everything they said and did; they might as well have Padron Cipolla himself on board.

“And all to make him believe that the boat couldn’t get on without him,” added Barabbas; “an old spy. Now he’ll go saying that it is he that has caught the fish by his cleverness, in spite of the rough sea. Look how the nets are sinking; the corks are

quite under water; you can't see them."

"Holloa, boys!" shouted Uncle Cola; "we must draw in the net, or the tide will sweep it away."

"O-hi! O-o-o-hi!" the crew began to vociferate, as they passed the rope from hand to hand.

"Saint Francis!" cried Uncle Cola, "who would have thought that we should have taken all this precious load in spite of the tide?"

The nets shivered and glittered in the sun, and all the bottom of the boat seemed full of quicksilver.

"Padron Fortunato will be contented now," said Barabbas, red and sweaty, "and won't throw in our faces those few centimes he pays us for the day."

"This is what we get," said 'Ntoni, "to break our backs for other people; and then when we have put a few soldi together comes the devil and carries them off."

"What are you grumbling about?" asked his grandfather. "Doesn't Padron Fortunato pay your day's wages?"

The Malavoglia were mad after money: La Longa took in weaving and washing; Padron 'Ntoni and his grandsons went out by the day, and helped each other as best they could; and when the old man was bent double with sciatica, he stayed in the court and mended nets and tackle of all kinds, of which trade he was a master. Luca went to work at the bridge on the railroad for fifty centimes a day, though 'Ntoni said that wasn't enough to pay for the shirts he spoiled by carrying loads on his back—but Luca didn't mind spoiling his shirts, or his shoulders either; and Alessio went gathering crabs and mussels on the shore, and sold them for ten sous the pound, and sometimes he went as far as Ognino or the Cape of the Mills, and came back with his feet all bloody. But Goodman Zuppiddu wanted a good sum every Saturday for mending the Provvidenza; and one wanted a good many nets to mend, and rolls of linen to weave, and crabs at ten sous the pound, and linen to bleach, too,

with one's feet in the water, and the sun on one's head, to make up two hundred francs. All Souls was come, and Uncle Crucifix did nothing but promenade up and down the little street, with his hands behind his back, like an old basilisk.

"This story will end with a bailiff," old Dumbbell went on saying to Don Silvestro and to Don Giammaria, the vicar.

"There will be no need of a bailiff, Uncle Crucifix," said Padron 'Ntoni, when he was told what old Dumb-bell had been saying. "The Malavoglia have always been honest people, and have paid their debts without the aid of a bailiff."

"That does not matter to me," said Uncle Crucifix, as he stood against the wall of his court measuring the cuttings of his vines; "I only know I want to be paid."

Finally, through the interposition of the vicar, Dumb-bell consented to wait until Christmas, taking for interest that sixty-five francs which Maruzza had managed to scrape together sou by sou, which she kept in an old stocking hid under the mattress of her bed.

"This is the way it goes," growled Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni; "we work night and day for old Crucifix. When we have managed to rake and scrape a franc we have to give it to old Dumbbell."

Grandfather, with Maruzza, consoled each other by building castles in the air for the summer, when there would be anchovies to be salted, and Indian figs at ten for eight centimes; and they made fine projects of going to the tunny-fishing, and the fishing for the sword-fish—when one gains a good sum by the day—and in the mean time Cousin Bastian would have put the Provvidenza in order. The boys listened attentively, with elbows on their knees, to this discourse, as they sat on the landing, or after supper; but 'Ntoni, who had been in foreign ports, and knew the world better than the others, was not amused by such talk, and preferred going to lounge about the tavern, where there was a lot of people who did nothing, and old Uncle Santoro the worst of them, who had only that easy trade of begging to follow, and sat

muttering Ave Marias; or he went down to Master Zuppiddu's to see how the Provvidenza was getting on, to have a little talk with Barbara, who came out with fagots for the fire under the kettle of pitch, when Cousin 'Ntoni was there.

"You're always busy, Cousin Barbara," said 'Ntoni; "you're the right hand of the house; it's for that your father doesn't want to get you married."

"I don't want to marry anybody who isn't my equal," answered Barbara. "Marry with your equals and stay with your own."

"I would willingly stay with your people, by Our Lady! if you were willing, Cousin Barbara." *

"Why do you talk to me in this way, Cousin 'Ntoni? Mamma is spinning in the court; she will hear you."

"I meant that those fagots are wet and won't kindle. Let me do it."

"Is it true you come down here to see the Mangiacarubbe when she comes to the window?"

"I come for quite another reason, Cousin Barbara. I come to see how the Provvidenza is getting on."

"She is getting on very well, and papa says that by Christmas she will be ready for sea."

As the Christmas season drew on the Malavoglia were always in and out of Master Bastiano Zuppiddu's court. Meanwhile the whole place was assuming a festive appearance; in every house the images of the saints were adorned with boughs and with oranges, and the children ran about in crowds after the pipers who came playing before the shrines, with the lamps before the doors; only in the Malavoglia's house the statue of the Good Shepherd stood dark and unadorned, while Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni ran here and there like a rooster in the spring. And Barbara Zuppidda said to him:

“At least you’ll remember how I melted the pitch for the Provvidenza when you’re out at sea.”

Goosefoot prophesied that all the girls would want to rob her of him.

“It’s I who am robbed,” whined Uncle Crucifix. “Where am I to get the money for the lupins if ’Ntoni marries, and they take off the dowry for Mena, and the mortgage that’s on the house, and all the burdens besides that came out at the very last minute? Christmas is here, but no Malavoglia.”

Padron ’Ntoni went to him in the piazza, or in his own court, and said to him: “What can I do if I have no money? Wait till June, if you will do me that favor; or take the boat, or the house; I have nothing else.”

“I want my money,” repeated Uncle Crucifix, with his back against the wall. “You said you were honest people; you can’t pay me with talk about the Provvidenza, or the house by the medlar-tree.”

He was ruining both body and soul, had lost sleep and appetite, and wasn’t even allowed to relieve his feelings by saying that the end of this story would be the bailiff, because if he did Padron ’Ntoni sent straightway Don Giammaria or Don Silvestro to beg for pity on him; and they didn’t even leave him in peace in the piazza, where he couldn’t go on his own business without some one was at his heels, so that the whole place cried out on the devil’s money. With Goosefoot he couldn’t talk, because he always threw in his face that the lupins were rotten, and that he had done the broker for him. “But that service he could do me!” said he, suddenly, to himself; and that night he did not sleep another wink, so charmed was he with the discovery. And he went off to Goosefoot as soon as it was day, and found him yawning and stretching at his house door. “You must pretend to buy my debt,” he said to him, “and then we can send the officers to Malavoglia, and nobody will call you a usurer, or say that yours is the devil’s money.”

“Did this fine idea come to you in the night,” sneered Goosefoot, “that you come

waking me at dawn to tell it me?"

"I came to tell you about those cuttings, too; if you want them you may come and take them."

"Then you may send for the bailiff," said Goose-foot; "but you must pay the expenses."

Before every house the shrines were adorned with leaves and oranges, and at evening the candles were lighted, when the pipers played and sang litanies, so that it was a festa everywhere. The boys played at games with hazel-nuts in the street; and if Alessio stopped, with legs apart, to look on, they said to him:

"Go away, you; you haven't any nuts to play with. Now they're going to take away your house."

In fact, on Christmas eve the officer came in a carriage to the Malavoglia's, so that the whole village was upset by it; and he went and left a paper with a stamp on it on the bureau, beside the image of the Good Shepherd.

The Malavoglia seemed as if they all had been struck by apoplexy at once, and stayed in the court, sitting in a ring, doing nothing; and that day that the bailiff came there was no table set in the house of the Malavoglia.

"What shall we do?" said La Longa. Padron 'Ntoni did not know what to say, but at last he took the paper, and went off with his two eldest grandsons to Uncle Crucifix, to tell him to take the Prov-videnza, which Master Bastiano had just finished mending; and the poor old man's voice trembled as it did when he lost his son Bastianazzo. "I know nothing about it," replied Dumb-bell. "I have no more to do with? the business. I've sold my debt to Goosefoot, and you must manage it the best way you can with him."

Goosefoot began to scratch his head as soon as he saw them coming in procession to speak to him.

“What’ do you want me to do?” answered he; “I’m a poor devil, I need the money, and I can’t do anything with the boat. That isn’t my trade; but if Uncle Crucifix will buy it, I’ll help you to sell it. I’ll be back directly.”

So the poor fellows sat on the wall, waiting and casting longing glances down the road where old Goosefoot had disappeared, not daring to look each other in the face. At last he came limping slowly along (he got on fast enough when he liked, in spite of his crooked leg). “He says it’s all broken, like an old shoe; he wouldn’t hear of taking it,” he called out from a distance. “I’m sorry, but I could do nothing.” So the Malavoglia went off home again with their stamped paper.

But something had to be done, for that piece of stamped paper lying on the bureau had power, they had been told, to devour the bureau and the house, and the whole family into the bargain.

“Here we need advice from Don Silvestro,” suggested Maruzza. “Take these two hens to him, and he’ll be sure to know of something you can do.”

Don Silvestro said there was no time to be lost, and he sent them to a clever lawyer, Dr. Scipione, who lived in the street of the Sick-men, opposite Uncle Crispino’s stable, * and was young, but, from what he had been told, had brains enough to put in his pocket all the old fellows, who asked five scudi for opening their mouths, while he was contented with twenty-five lire.

The lawyer was rolling cigarettes, and he made them come and go two or three times before he would let them come in. The finest thing about it was that they all went in procession, one behind the other. At first they were accompanied by La Longa, with her baby in her arms, as she wished to give her opinion, too, on the subject; and so they lost a whole day’s work. When, however, the lawyer had read the papers, and could manage to understand something of the confused answers which he had to tear as if with pincers from Padron ’Ntoni, while the others sat perched up on their chairs, without daring even to breathe, he began to laugh heartily, and the

Malavoglia laughed too, with him, without knowing why, just to get their breath. “Nothing,” replied the lawyer; “you need do nothing.” And when Padron ’Ntoni told him again that the bailiff had come to the house: “Let the bailiff come every day if he likes, so the creditors will the sooner tire of the expense of sending him. They can take nothing from you, because the house is settled on your son’s wife; and for the boat, we’ll make a claim on the part of Master Bastiano Zuppiddu. Your daughter-in-law did not take part in the purchase of the lupins.” The lawyer went on talking without drawing breath, without scratching his head even, for more than twenty-five lire, so that Padron ’Ntoni and his grandson felt a great longing to talk too, to bring out that fine defence of theirs of which their heads were full; and they went away stunned, overpowered by all these wonderful things, ruminating and gesticulating over the lawyer’s speech all the way home. Maruzza, who hadn’t been with them that time, seeing them come with bright eyes and rosy faces, felt herself relieved of a great weight, and with a serene aspect waited to hear what the advocate had said. But no one said a word, and they all stood looking at each other.

“Well?” asked Maruzza, who was dying of impatience.

“Nothing! we need fear nothing!” replied Padron ’Ntoni, tranquilly.

“And the advocate?”

“Yes, the advocate says we need fear nothing.”

“But what did he say?” persisted Maruzza.

“Ah, he knows how to talk! A man with whiskers! Blessed be those twenty-five lire!”

“But what did he tell you to do?”

The grandfather looked at the grandson, and ’Ntoni looked back at his grandfather. “Nothing,” answered Padron ’Ntoni; “he told us to do nothing.”

“We won’t pay anything,” cried ’Ntoni, boldly, “because they can’t take either the

house or the Provvidenza. We don't owe them anything."

"And the lupins?"

"The lupins! We didn't eat them, his lupins; we haven't got them in our pockets. And Uncle Crucifix can take nothing from us; the advocate said so, said he was spending money for nothing." There was a moment's silence, but Maruzza was still unconvinced.

"So he told you not to pay?"

'Ntoni scratched his head, and his grandfather added:

"It's true, the lupins—we had them—we must pay for them."

There was nothing to be said, now that the lawyer was no longer there; they must pay. Padron 'Ntoni shook his head, muttering:

"Not that, not that! the Malavoglia have never done that. Uncle Crucifix may take the house and the boat and everything, but we can't do that."

The poor old man was confused; but his daughter-in-law cried silently behind her apron.

"Then we must go to Don Silvestro," concluded Padron 'Ntoni.

And with one accord, grandfather, grandchildren, and daughter-in-law, with the little girl, proceeded once more in procession to the house of the communal secretary, to ask him how they were to manage about paying the debt, and preventing Uncle Crucifix from sending any more stamped paper to eat up the house and the boat and the family.

Don Silvestro, who understood law, was amusing himself by constructing a trap-cage, intended as a present for the children of "her ladyship."

He did not do as the lawyer did, he let them talk and talk, continuing silently to sharpen his reeds and fasten them into their places. At last he told them what was necessary. "Well, now, if Madam Maruzza is willing to put her hand to it,

everything may be arranged." The poor woman could not guess where she was to put her hand. "You must put it into the sale," said Don Silvestro to her, "and give up your dotal mortgage, although you did not buy the lupins."

"We all bought the lupins together," murmured the poor Longa. "And the Lord has punished us all together by taking away my husband."

The poor ignorant creatures, motionless on their chairs, looked at each other, and Don Silvestro laughed to himself. Then he sent for Uncle Crucifix, who came gnawing a dried chestnut, having just finished his dinner, and his eyes were even more glassy than usual. From the very first he would listen to nothing, declaring that he had nothing to do with it, that it was no longer his affair. "I am like the low wall that everybody sits and leans on as much as he pleases; because I can't talk like an advocate, and give all my reasons properly, my property is treated as if I had stolen it." And so he went on grumbling and muttering, with his back against the wall, and his hands thrust into his pockets; and nobody could understand a word he said, on account of the chestnut which he had in his mouth. Don Silvestro spoiled a shirt by sweating over the attempt to make him understand how the Malavoglia were not to be called cheats if they were willing to pay the debt, and if the widow gave up her dotal rights. The Malavoglia would be willing to give up everything but their shirts sooner than go to law; but if they were driven to the wall they might begin to send stamped paper as well as other people; such things have happened before now. "In short, a little charity one must have, by the holy devil! What will you bet that if you go on planting your feet like a mule in this you don't lose the whole thing?"

And Uncle Crucifix replied, "If you take me on that side I haven't any more to say." And he promised to speak to old Goosefoot. "For friendship's sake I would make any sacrifice." Padron 'Ntoni could speak for him, how for friendship's sake he had done as much as that and more; and he offered him his open snuffbox, and stroked the baby's cheek, and gave her a chestnut. "Don Silvestro knows my weakness; I

don’t know how to say no. This evening I’ll speak to Goosefoot, and tell him to wait until Easter, if Cousin Maruzza will put her hand to it.” Cousin Maruzza did not know where her hand was to be put, but said that she was ready to put it immediately.

“Then you can send for those beans that you said you wanted to sow,” said Uncle Crucifix to Don Silvestro before he went away.

“All right! all right!” replied Don Silvestro. “We all know that for your friends you have a heart as big as the sea.”

Goosefoot, while any one was by, wouldn’t hear of any delay, and screamed and tore his hair and swore they wanted to reduce him to his last shirt, and to leave him without bread for the winter, him and his wife Grace, since they had persuaded him to buy the debt of the Malavoglia, and that those were five hundred lire, one better than another, that they had coaxed him out of, to give them to Uncle Crucifix. His wife Grace, poor thing, opened her eyes very wide, because she couldn’t tell where all that money had come from, and put in a good word for the Malavoglia, who were all good people, and everybody in the vicinity had always known they Were honest. And Uncle Crucifix himself now began to take the part of the Malavoglia. “They have said they will pay; and if they don’t they will let you have the house; Madam Maruzza will put her hand to it. Don’t you know that in these days if you want your own you must do the best you can?” Then Goosefoot put on his jacket in a great hurry, and went off swearing and blaspheming, saying that his wife and old Crucifix might do as they pleased, since he was no longer master in his own house.

VII.

That was a black Christmas for the Malavoglia. Just then Luca had to draw his number for the Conscription—a low number, too, like a poor devil as he was—and he went off without many tears; they were used to it by this time. This time, also,

‘’Ntoni accompanied his brother, with his cap over his ear, so that it seemed as if it were he who was going away, and he kept on saying that it was nothing, that he had been for a soldier himself. That day it rained, and the street was all one puddle.

“I don’t want you to come with me,” repeated Luca to his mother; “the station is a long way off.” And he stood at the door watching the rain come down on the medlar-tree, with his little bundle under his arm. Then he kissed the hands of his mother and his grandfather, and embraced Mena and the children.

So La Longa saw him go away, under the umbrella, accompanied by all his relations, jumping from stone to stone, in the little alley that was all one puddle; and the boy, who was as wise as his grandfather himself, turned up his trousers on the landing, although he wouldn’t have to wear them any more when he got his soldier-clothes. “This one won’t write home for money when he is down there,” thought the old man; “and if God grants him life he will bring up once more the house by the medlar-tree.” But God did not grant him life, just because he was that sort of a fellow; and when there came, later on, the news of his death, a thorn remained in his mother’s heart because she had let him go away in the rain, and had not accompanied him to the station.

“Mamma,” said Luca, turning back, because his heart bled to leave her so silent, on the landing, looking like Our Lady of Sorrows, “when I come back I’ll let you know first, and then you can come and meet me at the station.”

And these words Maruzza never forgot while she lived; and till her death she bore also that other thorn in her heart, that her boy had not been present at the festa that was made when the Provvidenza was launched anew, while all the place was there, and Barbara Zuppidda came out with the broom to sweep away the shavings. “I do it for your sake,” she said to Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni; “because it is your Providence.”

“With the broom in your hand, you look like a queen,” replied ’Ntoni. “In all Trezza there is not so good a housewife as you.”

“Now you have taken away the Provvidenza, we shall not see you here any more, Cousin ’Ntoni.”

“Yes, you will. Besides, this is the shortest way to the beach.”

“You come to see the Mangiacarubbe, who always goes to the window when you pass.”

“I leave the Mangiacarubbe for Rocco Spatu. I have other things in my mind.”

“Who knows what you have in your mind—those pretty girls in foreign parts, perhaps?”

“There are pretty girls here, too, Cousin Barbara, and I know one very well.”

“Really?”

“By my soul!”

“What do you care?”

“I care! Yes, that I do; but she doesn’t care for me, because there are certain dandies who walk under her window with varnished boots.”

“I don’t even look at those varnished boots, by the Madonna of Ognino! Mamma says that varnished boots are only fit to devour the dowry and everything else; and some fine day I shall go out with my distaff, and make him a scene, that Don Silvestro, who won’t leave me in peace.”

“Do you mean that seriously, Cousin Barbara?”

“Yes, indeed I do!”

“That pleases me right well,” said ’Ntoni.

“Listen; let’s go down to the beach on Monday, when mamma goes to the fair.”

“On Mondays I never shall have a chance to breathe, now that the Provvidenza has been launched.”

Scarcely had Master Turi said that the boat was in order, than Padron ’Ntoni went

off to start her with his boys and all the neighbors; and the Provvidenza, when she was going down to the sea, rocked about on the stones as if she were sea-sick among the crowd.

“This way, here!” called out Cousin Zuppiddu, louder than anybody; but the others shouted and struggled to push her back on the ways as she rocked over on the stones. “Let me do it, or else I’ll just take the boat up in my arms like a baby, and put her in the water myself.”

“Master Turi is capable of doing it, with those arms of his,” said some one; or else, “Now the Malavoglia will be all right again.”

“That devil of a Cousin Zuppiddu has lucky fingers,” they exclaimed. “Look how he has put her straight again, when she was like an old shoe.” And in truth the Provvidenza did seem quite another boat-shining with new pitch, and with a bright red line along her side, and on the prow San Francesco, with his beard that seemed to have been made of tow, so much so that even La Longa had made peace with the Provvidenza, whom she had never forgiven, for coming back to her without her husband; but she made peace for fright, now that the bailiff had been in the house.

“Viva San Francesco!” called out every one as the Provvidenza passed; and La Locca’s son called out louder than anybody, in the hope that now Padron ’Ntoni would hire him by the day, instead of his brother Menico. Mena stood on the landing, and once more she cried for joy; and, at last, even La Locca got up like the rest, and followed the Malavoglia.

“O Cousin Mena, this is a fine day for all of you,” said Alfio Mosca to her from his window opposite. “It will be like this when I can buy my mule.”

“And will you sell your donkey?”

“How can I? I’m not rich, like Vanni Pizzuti; if I were, I swear I wouldn’t sell him, poor beast! If I had enough to keep another person, I’d take a wife, and not live here alone like a dog.”

Mena didn't know what to say, and Alfio added: "Now that the Provvidenza has put to sea again, you'll be married to Brasi Cipolla."

"Grandpapa has said nothing about it."

"He will. There's still time. Between now and your marriage who knows how many things may happen, or by what different roads I shall drive my cart? I have been told that in the plain, at the other side of the town, there is work for everybody on the railroad. Now that Santuzza has arranged with Master Philip for the new wine, there is nothing to be done here."

Meanwhile the Provvidenza had slipped into the sea like a duck, with her beak in the air, and danced on the green water, enjoying its coolness, while the sun glanced on her shining side. Padron 'Ntoni enjoyed it, too, with his hands behind his back, and his legs apart, drawing his brows together, as sailors do when they want to see clearly in the sunshine; for it was a fine winter's day, and the fields were green and the sea shining and the deep blue sky had no end. So return the sunshine and the sweet winter mornings for the eyes that have wept, to whom the sky has seemed black as pitch; and so all things renew themselves like the Provvidenza, for which a few pounds of tar and a handful of boards sufficed to make her new once more; and the eyes that see not these things are those that are done with weeping and are closed in death.

"Bastianazzo is not here to see this holiday!" thought Maruzza, as she went to and fro, arranging things in the house and about the loom—where almost everything had been her husband's work on Sundays or rainy days—and those hooks and shelves he had fixed in the wall with his own hands. Everything in the house was full of him, from his water-proof cape in the corner to his boots under the bed, that were almost new. Mena, setting up the warp, had a sad heart, too, for she was thinking of Alfio, who was going away, and would have sold his donkey, poor beast! for the young have short memories, and have only eyes for the rising sun; and no one looks

westward save the old, who have seen the sun rise and set so many times.

“Now that the Provvidenza has put to sea again,” said Maruzza at last, noticing that her daughter was still pensive, “your grandfather has begun to go with Master Cipolla again; I saw them this morning, from the landing, before Peppi Naso’s shed.”

“Padron Fortunato is rich, and has nothing to do, and stays all day in the piazza,” answered Mena.

“Yes, and his son Brasi has plenty of the gifts of God. Now that we have our boat, and our men no longer need to go out by the day to work for others, we shall get out of this tangle; and if the souls in Purgatory will help us to get rid of the debt for the lupins, we shall be able to think of other things. Your grandfather is wide-awake, don’t you fear, and he won’t let you feel that you have lost your father. He will be another father to you.”

Shortly after arrived Padron ’Ntoni, loaded with nets, so that he looked like a mountain, and you couldn’t see his face. “I’ve been to get them out of the bark,” he said, “and I must look over the meshes, for to-morrow we must rig the Provvidenza.”

“Why did you not get ’Ntoni to help you?” answered Maruzza, pulling at one end of the net, while the old man turned round in the middle of the court, like a winder, to unwind the nets, which seemed to have no end, and looked like a great serpent trailing along.

“I left him there at the barber’s shop; poor boy, he has to work all the week, and it is hot even in January with all this stuff on one’s shoulders.” Alessio laughed to see his grandfather so red, and bent round like a fish-hook, and the grandsire said to him, “Look outside there; there is that poor Locca; her son is in the piazza, with nothing to do, and they have nothing to eat.” Maruzza sent Alessio to La Locca with some beans, and the old man, drying his forehead with the sleeve of his shirt, added:

“Now that we have our boat, if we live till summer, with the help of God, we’ll pay the debt.”

He had no more to say, but sat under the medlar-tree looking at his nets, as if he saw them filled with fish.

“Now we must lay in the salt,” he said after a while, “before they raise the tax, if it is true it is to be raised. Cousin Zuppiddu must be paid with the first money we get, and he has promised that he will then furnish the barrels on credit.”

“In the chest of drawers there is Mena’s linen, which is worth five scudi,” added Maruzza.

“Bravo! With old Crucifix I won’t make any more debts, because I have had a warning in the affair of the lupins; but he will give us thirty francs for the first time we go out with the Provvidenza.”

“Let him alone!” cried La Longa. “Uncle Crucifix’s money brings ill luck. Just this last night I heard the black hen crowing.”

“Poor thing!” cried the old man, smiling as he watched the black hen crossing the court, with her tail in the air and her crest on one side, as if the whole affair were no business of hers. “She lays an egg every day, all the same.”

Then Mena spoke up, and coming to the door, said, “There is a basketful of eggs, and on Monday, if Cousin Alfio goes to Catania, you can send them to market.”

“Yes, they will help to pay the debt,” said Padron ’Ntoni; “but you can eat an egg yourselves now and then if you feel to want it.”

“No, we don’t need them,” said Maruzza, and Mena added, “If we eat them they won’t be sold in the market by Cousin Alfio; and now we will put duck’s eggs under the setting hen. The ducklings can be sold for forty centimes each.” Her grandfather looked her in the face, and said:

“You’re a real Malavoglia, my girl!”.

The hens scratched in the sand of the court, in the sun, and the setting hen, looking perfectly silly, with the feather over her beak, shook herself in a corner under the green boughs in the garden, along the wall, there was more linen bleaching, with a stone lying on it to keep it from blowing away. “All this is good to make money,” said Pa-dron ’Ntoni, “and, with the help of God, we shall stay in our house. ‘My house is my mother.’”

“Now the Malavoglia must pray to God and Saint Francis for a plentiful fishing,” said Goose-foot meanwhile.

“Yes, with the times we’re having,” exclaimed Padron Cipolla, “they must have sown the cholera for the fish in the sea, I should think.”

Mangiacarubbe nodded, and Uncle Cola began to talk of the tax that they wanted to put on salt, and how, if they did that, the anchovies might be quiet, and fear no longer the wheels of the steamers, for no one would find it worth his while to fish for them any more.

“And they have invented something else,” added Master Turi, the calker: “to put a duty on pitch.” Those to whom pitch was of no importance had nothing to say, but Zuppiddu went on shouting that he should shut up shop, and whoever wanted a boat mended might stuff the hole with his wife’s dress. Then they began to scold and to swear.

At this moment was heard the scream of the engine, and the big wagons of the railway came rushing out all of a sudden from the hole they had made in the hill, smoking and fuming as if the devil was in them. “There!” cried Padron Fortu-nato, “the railroad one side and the steamers the other, upon my word it’s impossible to live in peace at Trezza nowadays.”

In the village there was the devil to pay when they wanted to put the tax upon pitch. * La Zup-pidda, foaming at the mouth, mounted upon her balcony, and went on preaching that this was some new villany of Don Silvestro, who wanted to bring the

whole place to ruin, because they (the Zup-piddus) wouldn't have him for a husband for their daughter; they wouldn't have him even for a companion in the procession, neither she nor her girl! When Madam Venera spoke of her daughter's husband it always seemed as if she herself were the bride.

Master Turi Zuppiddu tramped about the landing, mallet in hand, brandishing his chisel as if he wanted to shed somebody's blood, and wasn't to be held even by chains. The bile ran high from door to door, like the waves of the sea in a storm. Don Franco rubbed his hands, with his great ugly hat on his head, saying that the people was raising its head; and seeing Don Michele pass with pistols hanging at his belt, laughed in his face. The men, too, one by one, allowed themselves to be worked up by their womankind, and began hunting each other up, to try and rouse each other to fury, losing the whole day standing about in the piazza, with arms akimbo and open mouths, listening to the apothecary, who went on speechifying, but under his breath, for fear of his wife up-stairs, how they ought to make a revolution if they weren't fools, and not to mind the tax on salt or the tax on pitch, but to clear off the whole thing, for the king ought to be the people. Instead, some turned their backs, muttering, "He wants to be king himself; the druggist belongs to those of the revolution who want to starve the poor people." And they went off to the inn to Santuzza, where there was good wine to heat one's head, and Master Cinghialenta and Rocco Spatu made noise enough for ten.

* Dazio (French, octroi), tax on substances entering a town, levied by the town-council.

The good wine made them shout, and shouting made them thirsty (for the tax had not yet been raised on the wine), and such as had much shook their fists in the air, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, raging even at the flies.

Vanni Pizzuti had closed his shop door because no one came to be shaved, and went about with his razor in his pocket, calling out bad names from a distance, and

spitting at those who went about their own business with oars on their backs, shrugging their shoulders at the noise.

Uncle Crucifix (who was one of those who attended to their own affairs, and when they drew his blood with taxes, held his tongue for fear of worse, and kept his bile inside of him) was never seen in the piazza now, leaning against the wall of the bell-tower, but kept inside his house, reciting Paternosters and Ave Marias to keep down his rage against those who were making all the row—a lot of fellows who wanted to put the place to sack, and to rob everybody who had twenty centimes in his pocket.

Whoever, like Padron Cipolla, or Master Filippo, the ortolano, had anything to lose stayed shut up at home with doors bolted, and didn't put out even their noses; so that Brasi Cipolla got a rousing cuff from his father, who found him at the door of the court, staring into the piazza like a great stupid codfish. The big fish stayed under water while the waves ran high, and did not make their appearance, not even those who were, as Venera said, fish-heads, but left the syndic with his nose in the air, counting his papers.

"Don't you see that they treat you like a pup-pet?" screamed his daughter Betta, with her hands on her hips. "Now that they have got you into a scrape, they turn their backs on you, and leave you alone wallowing in the mud; that's what it means to let one's self be led by the hose by that meddling Don Silvéstro."

"I'm not led by the nose by anybody," shouted the Silk-worm. "It is I who am syndic, not Don Silvestro."

Don Silvestro, on the contrary, said the real syndic was his daughter Betta, and that Master Croce Calta wore the breeches by mistake. He still went about and about, with that red face of his, and Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta, when they saw him, went into the tavern for fear of a mess, and Vanni Pizzuti swore loudly, tapping his razor in his breeches-pocket all the time. Don Silvestro, without noticing them, went

to say a word or two to Uncle Santoro, and put two centimes into his hand.

“The Lord be praised!” cried the blind man. “This is Don Silvestro, the secretary; none of these others that come here roaring and thumping their stomachs ever give a centime in alms for the souls in Purgatory, and they go saying they mean to kill your syndic and the secretary; Vanni Pizzuti said it, and Rocco Spatu and Master Cinghialenta. Vanni Pizzuti has taken to going without shoes, not to be known; but I know his step all the same, for he drags his feet along the ground, and raises the dust like a flock of sheep passing by.”

“What is it to you?” cried his daughter, when Don Silvestro was gone. “These affairs are no business of ours. The inn is like a seaport—men come and go, and one must be friendly with all and faithful to none, for that each one has his own soul for himself, and each must look out for his own interests, and not make rash speeches about other people. Cousin Cinghialenta and Rocco Spatu spend money in our house. I don’t speak of Pizzuti, who sells absinthe, and tries to get away our customers.”

Cousin Mosca was among those who minded their own business, and passed tranquilly through the piazza with his cart, amid the crowd, who were shaking their fists in the air.

“Don’t you care whether they put on the hide tax?” asked Mena when she saw him come back with his poor donkey panting and with drooped ears.

“Yes, of course I care; but to pay the tax the cart must go, or they’ll take away the ass, and the cart as well.”

“They say they’re going to kill them all. Grandpapa told us to keep the door shut, and not to open it unless they come back. Will you go out tomorrow too?”

“I must go and take a load of lime for Master Croce Calta.”

“Oh, what are you going to do? Don’t you know he’s the syndic, and they’ll kill you too?”

“He doesn’t care for them, he says. He’s a mason, and he has to strengthen the wall of Don Filippo’s vineyard; and if they won’t have the tax on pitch Don Silvestro must think of something else.”

“Didn’t I tell you it was all Don Silvestro’s fault?” cried Mammy Venera, who was always about blowing up the fires of discord, with her distaff in her hand. “It’s all the affair of that lot, who have nothing to lose, and who don’t pay a tax on pitch because they never had so much as an old broken board at sea. It is all the fault of Don Silvestro,” she went on screeching to everybody all over the place, “and of that meddling scamp Goose-foot, who have no boat, either of them, and live on their neighbors, and hold out the hat to first one and then another. Would you like to know one of his tricks? It isn’t a bit true that he has bought the debt of Uncle Crucifix. It’s all a lie, got up between him and old Dumb-bell to rob those poor creatures. Goosefoot never even saw five hundred francs.”

Don Silvestro, to hear what they said of him, went often to the tavern to buy a cigar, and then Rocco Spatu and Vanni Pizzuti would come out of it blaspheming; or he would stop on the way home from his vineyard to talk with Uncle Santoro, and heard in this way all the tale of the fictitious purchase by Goosefoot; but he was a “Christian” with a stomach as deep as a well, and all things he left to sink into it. He knew his own business, and when Betta met him with his mouth open worse than a mad dog, and Master Croce Calta let slip his usual expression, that it didn’t matter to him, he replied, “What’ll you bet I don’t just go off and leave you?” And went no more to the syndic’s house; but on the Sunday appointed for the meeting of the council Don Silvestro, after the mass, went and planted himself in the town-hall, where there had formerly been the post of the National Guard, and began tranquilly mending his pens in front of the rough pine table to pass away the time, while La Zuppidda and the other gossips vociferated in the street, while spinning in the sun, swearing that they would tear out the eyes of the whole lot of them.

Silk-worm, as they had come all the way to Master Filippo's vineyard to call him, couldn't do less than move. So he put on his new overcoat, washed his hands, and brushed the lime off his clothes, but wouldn't go to the meeting without first calling for Don Stefano to come to him. It was in vain that his daughter Betta took him by the shoulders, and pushed him out of the door, saying to him that they who had cooked the broth ought to eat it, and that he ought to let the others do as they liked, that he might remain syndic. This time Master Calta had seen the crowd before the town-hall, distaffs in hand, and he planted his feet on the ground worse than a mule. "I won't go unless Don Silvestro comes," he repeated, with eyes starting out of his head. "Don Silvestro will find some way out of it all."

At last Don Silvestro came, with a face like a wall, humming an air, with his hands behind his back. "Eh, Master Croce, don't lose your head; the world isn't going to come to an end this time!" Master Croce let himself be led away by Don Silvestro, and placed before the pine council-table, with the glass inkstand in front of him; but there was no council, except Peppi Naso, the butcher, all greasy and red-faced, who feared nobody in the world, and Messer Tino Piedipassera (Goosefoot).

"They have nothing to lose," screamed La Zuppidda from the door, "and they come here to suck the blood of the poor, worse than so many leeches, because they live upon their neighbors, and hold the sack for this one and that one to commit all sorts of villanies. A lot of thieves and assassins."

"See if I don't slit your tongue for you!" shouted Goosefoot, beginning to rise from behind the pine-wood table.

"Now we shall come to grief!" muttered Master Croce Giufà.

"I say! I say! what sort of manners are these? You're not in the piazza," called out Don Silvestro. "What will you bet I don't kick out the whole of you? Now I shall put this to rights."

La Zuppidda screamed that she wouldn't have it put to rights, and struggled with

Don Silvestro, who pulled her by the hair, and at last ended by thrusting her inside her own gate. When they were at last alone he began:

“What is it you want? What is it to you if we put a tax on pitch? It isn’t you or your husband that will have to pay it, but those who come to have their boats mended. Listen to me: your husband is an ass to make all this row and to quarrel with the town-council, now when there is another councillor to be chosen in the room of Padron Cipolla or Master Mariano, who are of no use, and your husband might come in.”

“I know nothing about it,” answered La Zuppidda, becoming quite calm in an instant. “I never mix myself up in my husband’s affairs. I know he’s biting his hands with rage. I can do nothing but go and tell him, if the thing is certain.”

“Certain? of course it is—certain as the heavens above, I tell you! Are we honest men or not? By the holy big devil!”

La Zuppidda went straight off to her husband, who was crouching in the corner of the court carding tow, pale as a corpse, swearing that they’d end by driving him to do something mad. To open the sanhedrim and try if the fish would bite, there were still wanting Padron Fortunato Cipolla and Master Filippo, the market-gardener, who stayed away so long that the crowd began to get bored—so much so that the gossips began to spin, sitting on the low wall of the town-hall yard. At last they sent word that they couldn’t come; they had too much to do; the tax might be levied just as well without them.

“Word for word what my daughter Betta said,” growled Master Croce Giufà.

“Then get your daughter Betta to help you,” exclaimed Don Silvestro. Silk-worm said not another word audibly, but continued to mutter between his teeth.

“Now,” said Don Silvestro, “you’ll see that the Zuppiddi will come and ask me to take their daughter Barbara, but they’ll have to go on asking.”

The meeting was closed without deciding upon anything. The clerk wanted time to

get up his subject. In the mean while the clock struck twelve, and the gossips quickly disappeared. The few that stayed long enough to see Master Cirino shut the door and put the key in his pocket went away to their own work, some this way, some that, talking as they went of the dreadful things that Goosefoot and La Zuppidda had been saying. In the evening Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni heard of this bad language, and, “Sacrament!” if he wouldn’t show Goosefoot that he had been for a soldier! He met him, just as he was coming from the beach, near the house of the Zuppiddi, with that devil’s club-foot of his, and began to speak his mind to him—that he was a foul-mouthed old carrion, and that he had better take care what he said of the Zuppiddi; that their doings was no affair of his. Goosefoot didn’t keep his tongue to himself either.

“Holloa! do you think you’ve come from foreign parts to play the master here?”

“I’ve come to slit your weasand for you if you don’t hold your tongue!”

Hearing the noise, a crowd of people came to the doors, and a great crowd gathered; so that at last they took hold of each other, and Goosefoot, who was sharp as the devil he resembled, flung himself on the ground all in a heap with ’Ntoni Malavoglia, who thus lost all the advantage which his good legs might have given him, and they rolled over and over in the mud, beating and biting each other as if they had been Peppi Naso’s dogs, so that ’Ntoni had to be pulled into the Zuppiddi’s court with his shirt torn off his back, and Goose-foot was led home bleeding like Lazarus.

“You’ll see!” screamed out again Gossip Venera, after she had slammed the door in the faces of her neighbors—“you’ll see whether I mean to be mistress in my own house. I’ll give my girl to whomsoever I please!”

The girl ran off into the house, red as a turkey, with her heart beating as fast as a spring chicken’s.

“He’s almost pulled off your ear!” said Master Bastiano, as he poured water slowly

over ’Ntoni’s head; “bites worse than a dog, does Uncle Tino.” ’Ntoni’s eyes were still full of blood, and he was set upon vengeance.

“Listen, Madam Venera!” he said, in the hearing of all the world. “If your daughter doesn’t take me, I’ll never marry anybody.” And the girl heard him in her chamber.

“This is no time to speak of such things, Cousin ’Ntoni; but if your grandfather has no objection, I wouldn’t change you, for my part, for Victor Emmanuel himself.”

Master Zuppiddu, meanwhile, said not a word, but handed ’Ntoni a towel to dry himself with; so that ’Ntoni went home that night in a high state of contentment.

But the poor Malavoglia, when they heard of the fight with Goosefoot, trembled to think how they might at any moment expect the officer to turn them out-of-doors; for Goosefoot lived close by, and of the money for the debt they had only, after endless trouble, succeeded in putting together about half.

“Look what it means to be always hanging about where there’s a marriageable girl!” said La Longa to ’Ntoni. “I’m sorry for Barbara!”

“And I mean to marry her,” said ’Ntoni.

“To marry her!” cried the grandfather. “And who am I? And does your mother count for nothing? When your father married her that sits there, he made them come and tell me first. Your grandmother was then alive, and they came and spoke to us in the garden under the fig-tree. Now these things are no longer the custom, and the old people are of no use. At one time it was said, ‘Listen to the old, and you’ll make no blunders.’ First your sister Mena must be married—do you know that?”

“Cursed is my fate!” cried ’Ntoni, stamping and tearing his hair. “Working all day! Never going to the tavern! Never a soldo in one’s pocket! Now that I’ve found a girl to suit me, I can’t have her! Why did I come back from the army?”

“Listen!” cried old ’Ntoni, rising slowly and painfully in consequence of the racking pain in his back. “Go to bed and to sleep—that’s the best thing for you to do. You

should never speak in that way in your mother's presence."

"My brother Luca, that's gone for a soldier, is better off than I am," growled 'Ntoni as he went off to bed.

VIII.

L uca, poor fellow, was neither better off nor worse. He did his duty abroad, as he had done it at home, and was content. He did not often write, certainly—the stamps cost twenty centimes each—nor had he sent his portrait, because from his boyhood he had been teased about his great ass's ears; instead, he every now and then sent a five-franc note, which he made out to earn by doing odd jobs for the officers. The grandfather had said, "Mena must be married first." It was not yet spoken of, but thought of always, and now that the money was accumulating in the drawer, he considered that the anchovies would cover the debt to Goosefoot, and the house remain free for the dowry of the girl. Wherefore he was seen sometimes talking quietly with Padron Fortunato on the beach while waiting for the bark, or sitting in the sun on the church steps when no one else was there.

Padron Fortunato had no wish to go back from his word if the girl had her dowry, the more that his son always was causing him anxiety by running after a lot of penniless girls, like a stupid as he was. "The man has his word, and the bull has his horns," he took to repeating again. Mena had often a heavy heart as she sat at the loom, for girls have quick senses. And now that her grandfather was always with Padron Fortunato, and she so often heard the name Cipolla mentioned in the house, it seemed as if she had the same sight forever before her, as if that blessed Christian Cousin Alfio were nailed to the beams of the loom like the pictures of the saints. One evening she waited until it was quite late to see Cousin Alfio come back with his donkey-cart, holding her hands under her apron, for it was cold and all the doors were shut, and not a soul was to be seen in the little street; so she said good-evening

to him from the door.

“Will you go down to Biccocca at the first of the month?” she asked him, finally.

“Not yet; there are still a hundred loads of wine for Santuzza. Afterwards, God will provide.”

She knew not what to say while Cousin Alfio came and went in the little court, unharnessing the donkey and hanging the harness on the knobs, carrying the lantern to and fro.

“If you go to Biccocca we shall not see each other any more,” said Mena, whose voice was quite faint.

“But why? Are you going away too?”

The poor child could not speak at all at first, though it was dark and no one could see her face.

From time to time the neighbors could be heard speaking behind the closed doors, or children crying, or the noise of the platters in some house where supper was late; so that no one could hear them talking.

“Now we have half the money we want for old Goosefoot, and at the salting of the anchovies we can pay the other half.”

Alfio, at this, left the donkey in the court and came out into the street. “Then you will be married after Easter?”

Mena did not reply.

“I told you so,” continued Alfio. “I saw Padron ’Ntoni talking with Padron Cipolla.”

“It will be as God wills,” said Mena. “I don’t care to be married if I might only stay on here.”

“What a fine thing it is for Cipolla,” went on Mosca, “to be rich enough to marry whenever he pleases, and take the wife he prefers, and live where he likes!”

“Good-night, Cousin Alfio,” said Mena, after stopping a while to gaze at the lantern

hanging on the wicket, and the donkey cropping the nettles on the wall. Cousin Alfio also said good-night, and went back to put the donkey in his stall.

Among those who were looking after Barbara was Vanni Pizzuti, when he used to go to the house to shave Master Bastiano, who had the sciatica; and also Don Michele, who found it a bore to do nothing but march around with the pistols in his belt when he wasn't behind Santuzza's counter, and went ogling the pretty girls to pass away the time. Barbara at first returned his glances, but afterwards, when her mother told her that those fellows were only loafing around to no purpose—a lot of spies—all foreigners were only fit to be flogged—she slammed the window in his face—mustache, gold-bordered cap and all; and Don Michele was furious, and for spite took to walking up and down the street, twisting his mustache, with his cap over his ear. On Sunday, however, he put on his plumed hat, and went into Vanni Pizzuti's shop to make eyes at her as she went by to mass with her mother. Don Silvestro also took to going to be shaved among those who waited for the mass, and to warming himself at the brazier for the hot water, exchanging saucy speeches with the rest. "That Barbara begins to hang on 'Ntoni Malavoglia's hands," he said. "What will you bet he doesn't marry her after all? There he stands, waiting, with his hands in his pockets, waiting for her to come to him."

At last, one day, Don Michele said:

"If it were not for the cap with the border, I'd make that ugly scamp 'Ntoni Malavoglia hold the candle for me—that I would."

Don Silvestro lost no time in telling 'Ntoni everything, and how Don Michele, the brigadier, who was not the man to let the flies perch on his nose, had a grudge against him.

Goosefoot, when he went to be shaved and heard that Don Michele would have given him something to get rid of 'Ntoni Malavoglia, ruffled himself up like a turkey-cock because he was so much thought of in the place. Vanni Pizzuti went on,

saying: “Don Michele would give anything to have the Malavoglia in his hands as you have. Oh, why did you let that row with ’Ntoni pass off so easily?”

Goosefoot shrugged his shoulders, and went on warming his hands over the brazier. Don Silvestro began to laugh, and answered for him:

“Master Vanni would like to pull the chestnuts out of the fire with Goosefoot’s paws. We know already that Gossip Venera will have nothing to say to foreigners or to gold-bordered caps, so if ’Ntoni Malavoglia were out of the way he would be the only one left for the girl.”

Vanni Pizzuti said nothing, but he lay awake the whole night thinking of it. “It wouldn’t be such a bad thing,” he thought to himself; “everything depends upon getting hold of Goosefoot some day when he is in the right sort of humor.”

It came that day, once when Rocco Spatu was nowhere to be seen. Goosefoot had come in two or three times rather late, to look for him, with a pale face and starting eyes, too; and the customs guard had been seen rushing here and there, full of business, smelling about like hunting-dogs with noses to the ground, and Don Michele along with them, with pistols in belt and trousers thrust into his boots.

“You might do a good service to Don Michele if you would take ’Ntoni Malavoglia out of his way,” said Vanni to Papa Tino, as he stood in the darkest corner of the shop buying a cigar. “You’d do him a famous service, and make a friend of him for life.”

“I dare say,” sighed Goosefoot. He had no breath that evening, and said nothing more.

In the night were heard shots over towards the cliffs called the Rotolo and along all the beach, as if some one were hunting quail. “Quail, indeed!” murmured the fisher-folk as they started up in bed to listen. “Two-legged quail, those are; quail that bring sugar and coffee and silk handkerchiefs that pay no duty. That’s why Don Michele had his boots in his trousers and his pistols in his belt.”

Goosefoot went as usual to the barber's shop for his morning glass before the lantern over the door had been put out, but that next morning he had the face of a dog that has upset the kettle. He made none of his usual jokes, and asked this one and that one why there had been such a devil of a row in the night, and what had become of Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta, and doffed his cap to Don Michele, and insisted on paying for his morning draught. Goosefoot said to him: "Take a glass of spirits, Don Michele; it will do your stomach good after your wakeful night. Blood of Judas!" exclaimed Goosefoot, striking his fist on the counter and feigning to fly into a real rage, "it isn't to Rome that I'll send that young ruffian 'Ntoni to do penance."

"Bravo!" assented Vanni. "I wouldn't have passed it over, I assure you; nor you, Don Michele, I'll swear."

Don Michele approved with a growl.

"I'll take care that 'Ntoni and all his relations are put in their places," Goosefoot went on threatening. "I'm not going to have the whole place laughing at me. You may rest assured of that much, Don Michele." And off he went, limping and blaspheming, as if he were in a fearful rage, while all the time he was saying to himself, "One must keep friends with all these spies," and ruminating on how he was to make a friend of Santuzza as well, going to the inn, where he heard from Uncle Santoro that neither Rocco Spatu nor Cin-ghialenta had been there; then went on to Cousin Anna's, who, poor thing, hadn't slept a wink, and stood at her door looking out, pale as a ghost. There he met the Wasp, who had come to see if Cousin Anna had by chance a little leaven.

"Today I must speak with your uncle Dumbbell about the affair you know of," said Goosefoot. Dumb-bell was willing enough to speak of that affair which never came to an end, and "When things grow too long they turn into snakes." Padron 'Ntoni was always preaching that the Malavoglia were honest people, and that he would pay him, but he (Dumb-bell) would like to know where the money was to come

from. In the place, everybody knew to a centime what everybody owned, and those honest people, the Malavoglia, even if they sold their souls to the Turks, couldn't manage to pay even so much as the half by Easter; and to get possession of the house one must have stamped paper and all sorts of expenses; that he knew very well.

And all this time Padron 'Ntoni was talking of marrying his granddaughter. He'd seen him with Padron Cipolla, and Uncle Santoro had seen him, and Goosefoot had seen him too; and he, too, went on doing the go-between for Vespa and that lazy hound Alfio Mosca, that wanted to get hold of her field.

"But I tell you that I do nothing of the sort!" shouted Goosefoot in his ear. "Your niece is over head and ears in love with him, and is always at his heels. I can't shut the door in her face, out of respect for you, when she comes to have a chat with my wife; for, after all, she is your niece and your own blood."

"Respect! Pretty sort of respect! You'll chouse me out of the field with your respect."

"Among them they'll chouse you out of it. If the Malavoglia girl marries Brasi Cipolla, Mosca will be left out in the cold, and will take to Vespa and her field for consolation."

"The devil may have her for what I care," called put old Crucifix, deafened by Uncle Tino's clatter. "I don't care what becomes of her, a godless cat that she is. I want my property. I made it of my blood; and one would think I had stolen it, that every one takes it from me—Alfio Mosca, Vespa, the Malavoglia. I'll go to law and take the house."

"You are the master. You can go to law if you like."

"No, I'll wait until Easter—'the man has his word, and the bull has his horns;' but I mean to be paid up to the last centime, and I won't listen to anybody for the least delay."

In fact, Easter was drawing near. The hills began once more to clothe themselves with green, and the Indian figs were in flower. The girls had sowed basil outside the windows, and the white butterflies came to flutter about it; even the pale plants on the sea-shore were starred with white flowers. In the morning the red and yellow tiles smoked in the rising sun, and the sparrows twittered there until the sun had set.

And the house by the medlar-tree, too, had a sort of festive air: the court was swept, the nets and cords were hung neatly against the wall, or spread on drying-poles; the garden was full of cabbages and lettuce, and the rooms were open and full of sunshine, that looked as if it too were content. All things proclaimed that Easter was at hand. The elders sat on the steps in the evening, and the girls sang at the washing-tank. The wagons began again to pass the high-road by night, and at dusk there began once more the sound of voices in conversation in the little street.

“Cousin Mena is going to be married,” they said; “her mother is busy with her outfit already.”

Time had passed—and all things pass away with time, sad things as well as sweet. Now Cousin Maruzza was always busy cutting and sewing all sorts of household furnishing, and Mena never asked for whom they were intended; and one evening Brasi Cipolla was brought into the house, with Master Fortunato, his father, and all his relations.

“Here is Cousin Cipolla, who is come to make you a visit,” said Padron ’Ntoni, introducing him into the house, as if no one knew anything about it beforehand, while all the time wine and roasted pease were made ready in the kitchen, and the women and the girls had on their best clothes.

That evening Mena looked exactly like Sant’-Agata, with her new dress and her black kerchief on her head, so that Brasi never took his eyes off her, but sat staring at her all the evening like a basilisk, sitting on the edge of his chair, with his hands between his knees, rubbing them now and then on the sly for very pleasure.

“He is come with his son Brasi, who is quite a big fellow now,” continued Padron ’Ntoni.

“Yes, the children grow and shoulder us into the ground,” answered Padron Fortunato.

“Now you’ll take a glass of our wine—of the best we have, and a few dried pease which my daughter has toasted. If we had only known you were coming we might have had something ready better worth your acceptance.”

“We happened to be passing by,” said Padron Cipolla, “and we said, ‘Let’s go and make a visit to Cousin Maruzza.’”

Brasi filled his pockets with dried pease, always looking at the girl, and then the boys cleared the dish in spite of all Nunziata, with the baby in her arms, could do to hinder them, talking all the while among themselves softly as if they had been in church. The elders by this time were in conversation together under the medlar, all the gossips clustering around full of praises of the girl—how she was such a good manager, and kept the house neat as a new pin. “The girl as she is trained, and the flax as it is spun,” they quoted.

“Your granddaughter is also, grown up,” said Padron Fortunato; “it is time she was married.”

“If the Lord sends her a good husband I ask nothing better,” replied Padron ’Ntoni.

“The husband and the bishop are chosen by Heaven,” added Cousin La Longa.

Mena sat by the young man, as is the custom, but she never lifted her eyes from her apron, and Brasi complained to his father, when they came away, that she had not offered him the plate with the dried pease.

“Did you want more?” interrupted Padron Fortunate when they were out of hearing. “Nobody could hear anything for your munching like a mule at a sack of barley. Look if you haven’t upset the wine on your new trousers, lout! You’ve spoiled a

new suit for me."

Padron 'Ntoni, in high spirits, rubbing his hands, said to his daughter-in-law: "I can hardly believe that everything is so happily settled. Mena will want for nothing, and now we can put in order all our other little matters, and you may say the old daddy was right when he said, 'Tears and smiles come close together.'"

That Saturday, towards evening, Nunziata came in to get a handful of beans for the children, and said: "Cousin Alfio goes away to-morrow. He's packing up all his things."

Mena turned white, and stopped weaving.

In Alfio's house there was a light. Everything was topsy-turvy. He came a few minutes after, knocking at the door, also with a very white face, and tying and untying the knot of the lash of his whip, which he held in his hand.

"I've come to say good-bye to you all, Cousin Maruzza, Padron 'Ntoni, the boys, and you too, Cousin Mena. The wine from Aci Catena is finished. Now Santuzza will get it from Master Filippo. I'm going to Biccocca, where there is work to be got for my donkey."

Mena said nothing; only the mother spoke in reply to him: "Won't you wait for Padron 'Ntoni? He will be glad to see you before you go."

So Cousin Alfio sat down on the edge of a chair, whip in hand, and looked about the room, in the opposite direction to that where Mena was.

"Now, when are you coming back?" said La Longa.

"Who knows when I shall come back? I shall go where my donkey carries me. As long as there is work I shall stay; but I should rather come back here if I could manage to live anyhow."

"Take care of your health, Cousin Alfio; I've been told that people die like flies of the malaria down there at the Biccocca."

Alfio shrugged his shoulders, saying there was nothing to be done. “I would much rather not have gone away from here.” He went on looking at the candle. “And you say nothing to me, Cousin Mena?”

The girl opened her mouth two or three times as if to speak, but no words came; her heart beat too fast.

“And you, too, will leave the neighborhood when you are married,” added Alfio. “The world is like an inn, with people coming and going. By-and-by everybody will have changed places, and nothing will be the same as it was.” So saying, he rubbed his hands and smiled, but with lips only—not in his heart.

“Girls,” said La Longa, “go where Heaven appoints them to go. When they are young they are gay and have no care; when they go into the world they meet with grief and trouble.”

Alfio, after Padron ’Ntoni and the boys had come back, and he had wished them also good-bye, could not make up his mind to go, but stood on the threshold, with his whip under his arm, shaking hands now with one, now with another—with Cousin Maruzza as well as the rest—and went on repeating, as people do when they are going for a long journey, and are not sure of ever coming back, “Pardon me if I have been wanting in any way towards any of you.” The only one who did not take his hand was Sant’Agata, who stayed in the dark corner by the loom. But, of course, that is the proper way for girls to behave on such occasions.

It was a fine spring evening, and the moon shone over the court and the street, over the people sitting before the doors and the girls walking up and down singing, with their arms around each other’s waists. Mena came out, too, with Nunziata; she felt as if she should suffocate in the house.

“Now we sha’n’t see Cousin Alfio’s lamp any more in the evenings,” said Nunziata, “and the house will be shut up.”

Cousin Alfio had loaded his cart with all the wares he was taking away with him,

and now he was tying up the straw which remained in the manger into a bundle, while the pot bubbled on the fire with the beans for his supper.

“Shall you be gone before morning, Cousin Alfio?” asked Nunziata from the door of the little court.

“Yes. I have a long way to go, and this poor beast has a heavy load. I must let him have a rest in the daytime.”

Mena said nothing, but leaned on the gate-post, looking at the loaded cart, the empty house, the bed half taken down, and the pot boiling for the last time on the hearth.

“Are you there too, Cousin Mena?” cried Alfio as soon as he saw her, and left off what he was engaged upon.

She nodded her head, and Nunziata ran, like a good house-keeper as she was, to skim off the pot, which was boiling over.

“I am glad you are here; now I can say goodbye to you, too.”

“I came here to see you once more,” she said, with tears in her voice. “Why do you go down there where there is the malaria?”

Alfio began to laugh from the lips outward, as he did when he went to say good-bye to them all.

“A pretty question! Why do I go there? and why do you marry Brasi Cipolla? One does what one can, Cousin Mena. If I could have done as I wished to do, you know what I would have done.”

She gazed and gazed at him, with eyes shining with tears.

“I should have stayed here where the very walls are my friends, and where I can go about in the night to stable my donkey, even in the dark; and I should have married you, Cousin Mena—I have held you in my heart this long while—and I shall carry you with me to the Biccocca, and wherever I may go. But this is all useless talk, and one must do what one can. My donkey, too, must go where I drive him.”

“Now farewell,” said Mena at last. “I, too, have something like a thorn here within me.... And now when I see this window always shut, it will seem as if my heart were shut too, as if it were shut inside the window—heavy as an oaken door. But so God wills. Now I wish you well, and I must go.”

The poor child wept silently, hiding her eyes with her hand, and went away with Nunziata to sit and cry under the medlar-tree in the moonlight.

IX.

Neither the Malavoglia nor any one else in the town had any idea what Goosefoot and Uncle Crucifix were hatching together. On Easter Day Pa-dron ’Ntoni took out the hundred lire which were amassed in the bureau drawer, and put on his Sunday jacket to carry them to Uncle Crucifix.

“What, is it all here?” said he.

“It can’t yet be all, Uncle Crucifix; you know how much it costs us to get together a hundred lire. But ‘better half a loaf than no bread,’ and ‘paying on account is no bad pay.’ Now the summer is coming, and with God’s help we’ll pay off the whole.”

“Why do you bring it to me? You know I have nothing more to do with it; it is Cousin Goosefoot’s affair.”

“It is all the same; it seems always to me as if I owed it to you, whenever I see you. Cousin Tino won’t say no, if you ask him to wait until the Madonna del’Ognino.”

“This won’t even pay the expenses,” said old Dumb-bell, passing the money through his fingers. “Go to him yourself and ask him if he’ll wait for you; I have nothing more to do with it.”

Goosefoot began to swear, and to fling his cap on the ground after his usual fashion, vowing that he had not bread to eat, and that he could not wait even until Ascension-tide.

“Listen, Cousin Tino!” said Padron ’Ntoni, with clasped hands, as if he were praying to our Lord God, “if you don’t give me at least until Saint Giovanni, now that I have to marry my granddaughter, it would be better that you should stab me with a knife and be done with it.”

“By the holy devil!” cried Uncle Tino, “you make me do more than I can manage. Cursed be the day and the hour in which I mixed myself up in this confounded business.” And he went off, tearing at his old cap.

Padron ’Ntoni went home, still pale from the encounter, and said to his daughter-in-law, “I’ve got off this time, but I had to beg him as if I had been praying to God,” and the poor old fellow still trembled. But he was glad that nothing had come to Padron Cipolla’s ears, and that the marriage was not likely to be broken off.

On the evening of the Ascension, while the boys were still dancing around the post with the bonfire, the gossips were collected around the Malavoglia’s balcony, and Cousin Venera Zuppidda was with them to listen to what was said, and to give her opinion like the rest. Now, as Padron ’Ntoni was marrying his granddaughter, and the Provvidenza was on her legs once more, everybody was ready to put a good face on it with the Malavoglia—for nobody knew anything of what Goosefoot had in his head to do, not even Cousin Grace, his wife, who went on talking with Cousin Maruzza just as if her husband had nothing on his mind. ’Ntoni went every evening to have a chat with Barbara, and had confided to her that his grandfather had said, “First we must marry Mena.”

“And I come next,” concluded ’Ntoni. After this Barbara had given to Mena the pot of basil, all adorned with carnations, and tied up with a fine red ribbon, which was the sign of particular friendship between girls; and everybody made a great deal of Sant’Agata—even her mother had taken off her black kerchief, because it is unlucky to wear mourning in the house where there is a bride, and had written to Luca to give him notice that Mena was going to be married. She alone, poor girl, seemed

anything but gay, and everything looked black to her, though the fields were covered with stars of silver and of gold, and the girls wove garlands for Ascension, and she herself went up and down the stairs helping her mother to hang the garlands over the door and the windows.

While all the doors were hung with flowers, only that of Cousin Alfio, black and twisted awry, was always shut, and no one came to hang the flowers there for the Ascension.

"That coquette Sant'Agata," Vespa went about saying in her furious way, "she's managed at last to send that poor Alfio Mosca out of the place." Meanwhile they had made a new gown for Sant'-Agata, and were only waiting until Saint John's Day to take the silver dagger out of her braids of hair, and part it over her forehead, before she went to church, so that every one who saw her pass said, "Lucky girl!"

Padron Cipolla at this time sat for whole evenings together with Padron 'Ntoni, on the church steps, talking of the wondrous doings of the Provvidenza.

Brasi was always hanging about the street near the Malavoglia, with his new clothes on; and soon after it was known all over the place that on that Sunday coming Cousin Grace Goosefoot was going herself to part the girl's hair, and to take out the silver dagger from her braids—because Brasi Cipolla had lost his mother—and the Malavoglia had asked Cousin Grace on purpose to please her husband, and they had asked also Uncle Crucifix and all the neighborhood, and all their relations and friends without exception.

Cousin Venera la Zuppidda made no end of a row because she hadn't been asked to dress the bride's hair—she, who was going to be a connection of the Malavoglia—and her girl had a sweet-basil friendship with Mena, so much so that she had made up a new jacket for Barbara in a hurry, not expecting such an affront. 'Ntoni prayed and begged in vain that they would not take it up like that, but pass it over. Cousin Venera, with her hair ready dressed, but with her hands covered with

flour, for she had begun to make the bread, so that she didn't mean to go to the party at the Malavoglia, replied:

"You wanted Goosefoot's wife, keep her! Or her or me; we can't stay together. The Malavoglia know very well that they have chosen Madam Grace only because of the money they owe her husband. Now they are hand and glove with old Tino since Padron Cipolla made him make it up with Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni after that affair of the fight. They would lick his boots because they owe him that money on the house," she went on scolding. "They owe my husband fifty lire too, for the Provvidenza. To-morrow I mean to make them pay it."

"Do let them alone, mother," supplicated Barbara. But she was in the pouts too, because she couldn't wear her new jacket, and she was almost sorry she had spent the money for the basil-plant for Mena; and 'Ntoni, who had come to take her home with him, had to go off alone, quite chapfallen, looking as if his new coat were too big for him. Mother and daughter stood looking out of the court, where they were putting the bread in the oven, listening to the noise going on at the house by the medlar, for the talking and laughing could be heard quite plainly where they were, putting them in a greater rage than ever.

The house was full of people, just as it had been at the time of Bastianazzo's death, and Mena, without her dagger, and with her hair parted in the middle, looked quite differently; so that the gossips all crowded around her and made such a chattering that you couldn't have heard a cannonade. Goosefoot went on talking nonsense to the women, and made them laugh as if he had been tickling them; while all the time the lawyer was getting ready the papers, although Uncle Crucifix had said that there was time enough yet to send the summons. Even Padron Cipolla permitted himself a joke or two, at which no one laughed but his son Brasi; and everybody spoke at once; while the boys struggled on the floor for beans and chestnuts. Even La Longa, poor woman, had forgotten her troubles for the moment, so pleased was she; and

Padron ’Ntoni sat on the low wall, nodding his head in assent to everybody and smiling to himself.

“Take care that this time you don’t give your drink to your trousers, which are not thirsty,” said Padron Cipolla to his son.

“The party is given for Cousin Mena,” said Nunziata, “but she doesn’t seem to enjoy it as the others do.”

At which Cousin Anna made as if she had dropped the flask which she had in her hand, in which there was still nearly a half-pint of wine, and called out: “Here’s luck, here’s luck! ‘Where there are shards there is feasting,’ and ‘Spilled wine is of good omen.’”

“A little more and I should have had it on my new trousers this time too,” growled Brasi, who, since his misfortune to his new clothes, had become very cautious.

Goosefoot sat astride of the wall, with the glass between his legs (it seemed to him as if he were already the master, because of that, summons he meant to send), and called out, “To-day there’s nobody at the tavern, not even Rocco Spatu; today all the fun’s here, the same as if we were at Santuzza’s.”

From the wall where he sat Goosefoot could see a group of people who stood talking together by the fountain, with faces as serious as if the world were coming to an end. At the druggist’s shop there were the usual idlers with the journal, talking and shaking their fists in each other’s faces, as if they were coming to blows the next minute; while Don Giammaria laughed, and took snuff with a satisfaction visible even at that distance.

“Why didn’t Don Silvestro and the vicar come?” asked Goosefoot.

“I told them to, but they appear to have something particular to do,” answered Padron ’Ntoni.

“They’re over there at the shop, and there’s a fuss as if the man with the numbers of

the lottery had come. What the deuce can have happened?"

An old woman rushed across the piazza, screaming and tearing her hair as if at some dreadful news; and before Pizzuti's shop there was a crowd as thick as if an ass had tumbled under his load there; and even the children stood outside listening, open-mouthed, not daring to go nearer.

"For my part I shall go and see what it is," said Goosefoot, coming slowly down off the wall.

In the group, instead of a fallen ass, there were two soldiers of the marine corps, with sacks on their shoulders and their heads bound up, going home on leave, who had stopped on their way at the barber's to get a glass of bitters. They were telling how there had been a great battle at sea, and how ships as big as all Aci Trezza, full as they could hold of soldiers, had gone down just as they were; so that their tales sounded like those of the men who go about recounting the adventures of Orlando and the Paladins of France on the marina at Catania, and the people stood as thick as flies in the sun to listen to them.

"Maruzza la Longa's son was also on board the Red d'Italia" observed Don Silvestro, who had also drawn near to listen with the rest.

"Now I'll go and tell that to my wife," cried Master Cola Zuppiddu, "then she'll be sure to go to Cousin Maruzza. I don't like coolnesses between friends and neighbors."

But meanwhile the poor Longa knew nothing about it, and was laughing and amusing herself among her relations and friends.

The soldier seemed never tired of talking, and gesticulated with his arms like a preacher.

"Yes, there were Sicilians—there were men from every place you can think of. But, mind you, when the calls pipe to the batteries, one minds neither north nor south, and the guns all talk the same language. Brave fellows all, and with strong hearts

under their shirts. I can tell you, when one has seen what I have seen with these eyes, how those boys stood up to their duty, by Our Lady! one feels that one has a right to cock one's hat."

The youth's eyes were wet, but he said it was only because the bitters were so strong.

"It seems to me those fellows are all mad," said Padron Cipolla, blowing his nose with great deliberation. "Would you go and get yourself killed just because the King said to you, 'Go and be killed for my sake?'"

All the evening there was talking and laughing and drinking in the Malavoglia's court in the bright moonlight, and when nearly everybody was tired, and they sat chewing roasted beans, with their backs against the wall, some of them singing softly among themselves, they began talking about the story that the two soldiers on leave had been telling. Padron Fortunato had gone away early, taking with him his son in his new clothes. "Those poor Malavoglia," said he, meeting Dumb-bell in the piazza; "God have mercy on them! It seems as if they were bewitched. They have nothing but ill luck."

Uncle Crucifix scratched his head in silence. It was no affair of his any more. Goosefoot had taken charge of it, but he was sorry for them—really he was, in earnest.

The day after the rumor began to spread that there had been a great battle at sea, over towards Trieste, between our ships and those of the enemy. Nobody knew how many there were, and many people had been killed. Some told the story in one way, some in another—in pieces, as it were, and broken phrases. The neighbors came with hands under their aprons to ask Cousin Maruzza whether that were not where Luca was, and looked sadly at her as they did so. The poor woman began to stand at the door as they do when a misfortune happens, turning her head this way and that, or looking down the road towards the turn, as if she expected her father-in-law and

the boys back from the sea before the usual time. Then the neighbors would ask her if she had had a letter from Luca lately, or how long it had been since he had written. In truth she had not thought about the letter, but now she could not sleep nor close her eyes the whole night, thinking always of the sea over towards Trieste, where that dreadful thing had happened; and she saw her son always before her, pale, immovable, with sad, shining eyes, and it seemed as if he nodded his head at her as he had done when he left her to go for a soldier. And thinking of him, she felt as if she had a burning thirst herself, and a burning heat inside that was past description. Among all the stories that were always going in the village she remembered one of some sailors that had been picked up after many hours, just in time to save them from being devoured by the sharks, and how in the midst of all that water they were dying of thirst. And as she thought of how they were dying of thirst in the midst of all that water, she could not help getting up to drink out of the pitcher, and lay in the dark with wide-open eyes, seeing always that mournful vision.

As days went on, however, there was no more talk of what had happened, but as La Longa had no letter, she began to be unable either to work or to stay still; and she was always wandering from house to house as if so she hoped to hear of something to ease her mind. “Did you ever see anything so like a cat who has lost her kitten?” asked the neighbors of each other. And Padron ’Ntoni did not go to sea, and followed his daughter-in-law about as if he had been a dog. Some one said to him, “Go to Catania, that is a big place; they’ll be able to tell you something there.”

In that big place the poor old man felt more lost than he ever did out at sea by night when he didn’t know which way to point his rudder. At last some one was charitable enough to tell him to go to the captain of the port, who would be certain to know all about it. There, after sending them from Pilate to Herod and back again, he began to turn over certain big books and run down the lists of the dead with his finger. When he came to one name, La Longa, who had scarcely heard what went on, so loudly did her ears ring, and was listening as white as the sheet of paper, slipped silently

down on the floor as if she had been dead.

“It was more than forty days ago,” said the clerk, shutting up the list “It was at Lissa. Had not you heard of it yet?”

They brought La Longa home in a cart, and she was ill for several days. Henceforward she was given to a great devotion to the Mother of Sorrows, who is on the altar of the little chapel; and it seemed to her as if the long corpse stretched on the mother’s knees, with blue ribs and bleeding side, was her Luca’s own portrait, and in her own heart she felt the points of the Madonna’s seven sharp swords. Every evening the devotees, when they came to church for the benediction, and Don Cirino, when he went about shaking his keys before shutting up for the night, found her there in the same place, with her face bent down upon her knees, and they called her, too, the Mother of Sorrows.

“She is right,” they said in the village. “Luca would have been back before long, and there would have been the thirty sous a day more to the good for the family. ‘To the sinking ship all winds blow contrary.’”

“Have you seen Padron ’Ntoni’?” added Goosefoot. “Since his grandson’s death he looks just like an old owl. The house by the medlar is full of cracks and leaks, and every one who wants to save his money had better look out for himself.”

La Zuppidda was always as cross as a fury, and went on muttering that now the whole family would be left on ’Ntoni’s hands. This time any girl might think twice about marrying him.

“When Mena is married,” replied ’Ntoni, “grandpapa will let us have the room up-stairs.”

“I’m not accustomed to live in a room up-stairs, like the pigeons,” snapped out Barbara, so savagely that her own father said to ’Ntoni, looking about as he walked with him up the lane, “Barbara is growing just like her mother; if you don’t get the better of her now, you’ll lead just such a life as I do.”

The end was that Goosefoot swore his usual oath by the big holy devil that this time he would be paid. Midsummer was come, and the Malavoglia were once more talking of paying on account because they had not got together the whole sum, and hoped to pick it up at the olive harvest. He had taken those pence out of his own mouth, and hadn't bread to eat—before God he hadn't. He couldn't live upon air until the olive harvest.

"I'm sorry, Padron 'Ntoni," he said, "but what will you have? I must think of my own interest first. Even Saint Joseph shaved himself first, and then the rest."

"It will soon be a year that it has been going on," added Uncle Crucifix, when he was growling with Uncle Tino alone, "and not one centime of interest have I touched. Those two hundred lire will hardly cover the expenses. You'll see that at the time of olives they'll put you off till Christmas, and then till Easter again. That's the way people are ruined. But I have made my money by the sweat of my brow. Now one of them is in Paradise, the other wants to marry La Zuppidda; they'll never be able to get on with that patched-up old boat, and they are trying to marry the girl. They never think of anything but marrying, those people; they have a madness for it, like my niece Vespa. Now, when Mena is married you'll see that Mosca'll come back and carry her off, with her field."

He wound up by scolding about the lawyer, who took such a time about the papers before he sent in the summons.

"Padron 'Ntoni will have been there to tell him to wait," suggested Goosefoot. "With an ounce of pitch one can buy ten such lawyers as that."

This time he had quarrelled seriously with the Malavoglia, because La Zuppidda had taken his wife's clothes out of the bottom of the tank and had put hers in their place. Such a mean thing as that he could not bear; La Zuppidda wouldn't have thought of it if she hadn't got that pumpkin-head of a 'Ntoni Malavoglia behind her, a bully that he was. A good-for-nothing lot they were, the Malavoglia, and he didn't want to

see any more of them, swearing and blaspheming as his wont was.

The stamped paper began to rain in on them, and Goosefoot declared that the lawyer couldn't have been content with the bribe Padron 'Ntoni had given him to let them alone, and that proved what a miser he was; and how much he was to be trusted when he promised to pay what he owed people. Padron 'Ntoni went back to the town-clerk and to the lawyer Scipione, but he laughed in his face and told him that he was a fool for his pains; that he should never have let his daughter-in-law give in to it, and as he had made his bed so he must lie down.

"Woe to the fallen man who asks for help!"

"Listen to me," suggested Don Silvestro. "You'd better let them have the house; if not, they'll take the Provvidenza and everything else, even to the hair off your head; and you lose all your time, besides, running backward and forward to the lawyer."

"If you give up the house quietly," said Goose-foot to the old man, "we'll leave you the Provvidenza, and you'll be able to earn your bread and will remain master of your ship, and not be troubled with any more stamped paper."

After all, Cousin Tino wasn't such a bad fellow. He went on talking to Padron 'Ntoni as if it hadn't been his affair at all, passing his arm over his shoulder and saying to him, "Pardon me, brother, I am more sorry than you are; it goes to my heart to turn you out of your house, but what can I do? I'm only a poor devil; I'm not rich, like Uncle Crucifix. If those five hundred lire hadn't come actually out of my very mouth, I would never have troubled you about them—upon my word I wouldn't."

The poor old man hadn't the courage to tell his daughter-in-law that she must go "quietly" out of the house by the medlar-tree. After so many years that they had been there, it was like going into banishment, or like those who had gone away meaning to come back, and had come back no more. And there was Luca's bed there, and the nail where Bastianazzo's pea-jacket used to hang. But at last the time

came that they had to move, with all those poor sticks of furniture, and take them out of their old places, where each left a mark on the wall where it had stood, and the house without them looked strange and unlike itself. They carried their things out by night into the sexton's cottage, which they had hired, as if everybody in the place didn't know that now the house belonged no more to them but to Goosefoot, and that they had to move away from it. But at all events no one saw them carrying their things from one house to the other. Every time the old man pulled out a nail, or moved a cupboard from the corner where it was used to stand, he shook his poor old head. Then the others, when all was done, sat down upon a heap of straw in the middle of the room to rest, and looked about here and there to see if anything had been forgotten. But the grandfather could not stay inside, and went out into the court in the open air. But there, too, was the scattered straw and broken crockery and coils of old rope, and in a corner the medlar-tree and the vine hanging in clusters over the door. "Come, boys, let's go. Sooner or later we must," and never moved.

Maruzza looked at the door of the court out of which Luca and Bastianazzo had gone for the last time, and the lane where she had watched her boy go off through the rain, with his trousers turned up, and then thought how the oil-skin cape had hidden him from her view. Cousin Alfio Mosca's window, too, was shut close, and the vine hung over the way, so that every one who passed by plucked off its grapes.

Each one had something in the house which it was specially hard to leave, and the old man, in passing out, laid his head softly, in the dark, on the old door, which Uncle Crucifix had said was in need of a good piece of wood and a handful of nails.

Uncle Crucifix had come to look over the house, and Goosefoot with him, and they talked loud in the empty rooms, where the voices rang as if they had been in a church.

Cousin Tino hadn't been able to live all that time upon air, and had sold everything to old Dumb-bell to get back his money.

“What can I do Cousin Malavoglia?” he said, passing his arm over his shoulder. “You know I’m only a poor devil, and can’t spare five hundred lire. If you had been rich I’d have sold the house to you.”

But Padron ’Ntoni couldn’t bear to go about the house like that, with Goosefoot’s arm on his shoulder. Now Uncle Crucifix was come with the carpenter and the mason and a lot of people, who ran about the place as if they had been in the public square, and said, “Here must go bricks, here a new beam, here the floor must all be done over,” as if they had been the masters. And they talked, too, of whitewashing it all over, and making it look quite a different thing.

Uncle Crucifix went about kicking the straw and the broken rubbish out of the way, and picking up off the floor a bit of an old hat that had belonged to Bastianazzo, he flung it out of the window into the garden, saying it was good for manure. The medlar-tree rustled softly meanwhile, and the garlands of daisies, now withered, that had been put up at Whitsuntide, still hung over the windows and the door.

From this time the Malavoglia never showed themselves in the street or at church, and went all the way to Aci Castello to the mass, and no one spoke to them any more, not even Padron Cipolla, who went about saying: “Padron ’Ntoni had no right to play me such a trick as that. That was real cheating to let his daughter-in-law give up her rights for the sake of the debt for the lupins.”

“Just what my wife says,” added Master Zuppiddu. “She says even the dogs in the street wouldn’t have any of the Malavoglia now.”

All the same, that young heathen Brasi howled and swore that he wanted Mena; she had been promised him, and he would have her, and he stamped and stormed like a baby before a toyshop at a fair.

“Do you think I stole my property, you lazy hound, that you want to fling it away with a lot of beggars?” shouted his father.

They even took back Brasi’s new clothes, and he worked out his ill-temper by

chasing lizards on the down, or sitting astride of the wall by the washing-tank, swearing that he wouldn't do a hand's turn—no, that he wouldn't, not if they killed him for it, now that they wouldn't give him his wife, and they had taken back even his wedding-clothes. Fortunately, Mena couldn't see him looking as he did now, for the Malavoglia always kept the door shut down there at the sexton's cottage, which they had hired, in the black street near the Zuppiddi; and if Brasi chanced to see any of them, if it were ever so far off, he ran to hide himself behind a wall or among the prickly-pears.

Mena was quite tranquil, however—there was so much to do in the new house, where they had to find places for all the old things, and where there was no longer the medlar-tree; nor could one see Cousin Anna's door, or Nunziata's. Her mother watched over her like a brooding bird while they sat working together, and her voice was like a caress when she said to her, "Give me the scissors," or, "Hold this skein for me"; so that the child felt it in her inmost heart, now that every one turned away from them; but the girl sang like a lark, for she was but eighteen, and at that age, if the sun do but shine, everything seems bright and the singing of the birds is in one's heart. Besides, she had never really cared for "that person," she said to her mother in a whisper as they bent together over the loom. Her mother had been the only one who had really understood her, and had had a kind word for her in that hard time. At least if Cousin Alfio had been there he would not have turned his back upon them.

So goes the world. Every one must look out for himself, and so said Cousin Venera to Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni—"Every one must see to his own beard first, and then to the others. Your grandfather gives you nothing; what claim has he on you? If you marry, that means that you must set up house for yourself, and what you earn must be for your own house and your own family. 'Many hands are a blessing, but not all in one dish.'"

"That would be a fine thing to do, to be sure," answered 'Ntoni. "Now that my

relations are on the street, am I to throw them over? How is my grandfather to manage the Provvidenza and to feed them all without me?"

"Then get out of it the best way you can!" exclaimed La Zuppidda, turning away from him to hunt over the drawers, or in the kitchen, upsetting everything here and there, making believe to be ever so busy, not to have to look him in the face. "I didn't steal my daughter. You can go on by yourselves, because you are young and strong and can work, and have your trade at your finger-ends—all the more now that there are so few young men, with this devil of a conscription sweeping off all the village every year; but if I'm to give you the dowry to spend it on your own people, that's another affair. I mean to give my daughter to one husband, not to five or six, and I don't mean she shall have two families on her shoulders."

Barbara, in the other room, feigned not to hear, and went on plying her shuttle briskly all the time. But if 'Ntoni appeared at the door, she cast down her eyes and wouldn't look at him. The poor fellow turned yellow and green and all sorts of colors, for she had caught him, like a limed sparrow, with those great black eyes of hers, and then she said to him after her mother was gone, "I'm sure you don't love me as much as you do your own people!" and began to cry, with her apron over her head.

"I swear," exclaimed 'Ntoni, "I wish I could go back to soldiering again!" and tore his hair and thumped himself in the head, but couldn't come to any decision one way or the other, like the pumpkin-head that he was.

"Then," cried the Zuppidda, "come, come! each to his own home!" And her husband went on repeating:

"Didn't I tell you I didn't choose to have a fuss?"

"You be off to your work!" replied she. "You know nothing about it."

'Ntoni, every time he went to the Zuppiddi, found them in an ill-humor, and Cousin Venera went on throwing in his face that time that his people had asked Goosefoot's

wife to dress Mena's hair—and a fine hair-dressing they'd made of it!—licking Cousin Tino's boots because of that twopenny business of the house, and he'd taken the house all the same.

"Then, Cousin Venera, if you speak in this way, I suppose you mean, 'I don't want you in my house any longer.'"

'Ntoni meant to play the man, and did not show himself again for two or three days. But little Lia, who knew nothing of all this chatter, still continued to go to play in the court at Cousin Venera's, as they had taught her to do in the days when Barbara used to give her chestnuts and Indian figs for love of her brother 'Ntoni, only now they gave her nothing. And La Zuppidda said to her: "Have you come here to look for your brother? Does your mother think we want to steal your precious brother?"

Things came to such a pass that La Longa and La Venera did not speak, and turned their backs upon each other if they met at church.

'Ntoni, bewitched by Barbara's eyes, went back to stand before the windows, trying to make peace, so that Cousin Venera threatened to fling water over him one time or another; and even her daughter shrugged her shoulders at him, now that the Malavoglia had neither king nor kingdom.

And she said it to his face, too, to be rid of him, for he stood like a dog always in front of the window, and might stand in the way of a better match, too, if any one were to come that way for her.

"Now then, Cousin 'Ntoni, 'the fish of the sea are destined for those who shall eat them'; let's make up our minds to say good-bye, and have it over."

"You may say good-bye to it all, Cousin Barbara, but I can't. Love isn't over so easily as that with me."

"Try. I guess you can manage it. There's nothing like trying. I wish you all the good in the world, but leave me to look after my own affairs, for I am already twenty-two."

“I knew it would come to this when they took our house, and everybody turned their backs on us.”

“Listen, Cousin ’Ntoni. My mother may come at any minute, and it won’t do for her to find you here.”

“Yes, yes, I know; now that they’ve taken our house, it isn’t fair.” Poor ’Ntoni’s heart was full; he couldn’t bear to part from her like that. But she had to go to the fountain to fill her pitcher, and she said adieu to him, walking off quickly, swaying lightly as she went; for though they were called hobblers because her great-grandfather had broken his leg in a collision of wagons at the fair of Trecastagni, Barbara had both her legs, and very good ones too.

“Adieu, Cousin Barbara,” said the poor fellow; and so he put a stone over all that had been, and went back to his oar like a galley-slave—and galley-slave’s work it was from Monday morning till Saturday night—and he was tired of wearing out his soul for nothing, for when one has nothing, what good can come of driving away from morning till night, with never a dog to be friends with one either, and for that he had had enough of such a life. He preferred rather to do nothing at all, and stay in bed, as if he were sick, as they did on board ship when the service was too hard, for the grandpapa wouldn’t come to pull him and thump him like the ship’s doctor.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing. Only I’m a poor miserable devil.”

“And what can be done for you, if you are a poor miserable devil? We must go on as we come into the world.”

He let himself be loaded down with tackle, like a beast of burden, and the whole day long never opened his mouth except to growl and to swear.

On Sunday ’Ntoni went hanging about the tavern, where people did nothing but laugh and amuse themselves; or else he sat for whole hours on the church steps, with his chin in his hands, watching the people passing by, and pondering over this hard

life, where there was nothing to be got by doing anything.

At least on Sunday there was something that cost nothing—the sun, the standing idle with hands in one's pockets; and then he grew tired even of thinking of his hard fate, and longing to bask again in the strange places he had seen when he was a soldier, and with the memory of which he amused himself on working-days. He only cared to lie like a lizard basking in the sun. And when the carters passed, sitting on their shafts, he muttered, "They have an easy time of it, driving about like that all day long and when some poor little old woman came from the town, bent down under her heavy burden like a tired donkey, lamenting as she went, as is the manner of the old, he said to her, by way of consolation:

"I would be willing to take your work, my sister; after all, it is like going out for a walk."

Padron 'Ntoni would go off to old Crucifix, saying to him over and over again, at least a hundred times: "You know, Uncle Crucifix, if we can manage to put the money together for the house you must sell it to us and to nobody else, for it has always belonged to the Malavoglia, and 'his own nest every bird likes best,' and I long to die in my own bed. 'Blest is he who dies in the bed where he was born.'"

Uncle Crucifix muttered something which sounded like "Yes," not to compromise himself, and then would go off and put a new tile or a patch of lime on the wall of the court, to make an excuse for raising the price of the house.

Uncle Crucifix would reassure him in this way: "Never fear, never fear; the house won't run away, you know. Only keep an eye upon it. Every one should keep an eye upon whatever he sets store by." And once he went on, "Isn't your Mena going to be married?"

"She shall be married when it shall please God," replied Padron 'Ntoni. "For my part, I should be glad if it were to be to-morrow."

"If I were you I would give her to Alfio Mosca; he's a nice young fellow, honest and

hard-working, always looking out for a wife everywhere he goes; it is the only fault he has. Now they say he's coming back to the place. He's cut out for your granddaughter."

"But they said he wanted to marry your niece Vespa."

"You too! You too!" Dumb-bell began to scream, in his cracked voice. "Who says so? That's all idle chatter. He wants to get hold of her ground, that's what he wants! A pretty thing that would be! How would you like me to sell your house to somebody else?"

And Goosefoot, who was always hanging about the piazza, ready to put in his oar whenever he saw two people talking together, broke in with, "Vespa has Brasi Cipolla in her head just now, since his marriage with Sant'Agata is broken off. I saw them with my own eyes walking down the path by the stream together."

"A nice lot, eh?" screamed Uncle Crucifix, quite forgetting his deafness. "That witch is the devil himself. We must tell Padron Fortunato about it, that we must. Are we honest men, or are we not? If Padron Fortunato doesn't look out, that witch of a niece of mine will carry off his son before his eyes, poor old fellow."

And off he ran up the street like a madman. In less than ten minutes Uncle Crucifix had turned the place topsy-turvy, wanting to call Don Michele and his guest to look up his niece; for, after all, she was his niece, and belonged to him, and wasn't Don Michele paid to look after what belonged to honest men? Everybody laughed to see Padron Cipolla running hither and thither, panting like a dog with his tongue out, after his great lout of a son, and said it was no more than he deserved that his son should be snapped up by the Wasp when he thought Victor Emmanuel's daughter hardly good enough for him, and had broken off with the Malavoglia without even saying "by your leave."

Mena had not put on mourning, however, when her marriage went off; on the contrary, she began once more to sing at her loom, and while she was helping to salt

down the anchovies in the fine summer evenings, for Saint Francis had sent that year such a provision as never was—a passage of anchovies such as no one could remember in any past year, enough to enrich the whole place; the barks came in loaded, with the men on board singing and shouting and waving their caps above their heads in sign of success to the women and children who waited for them on the shore.

The buyers came from the city in crowds, on foot, on horseback, and in carts and wagons, and Goosefoot hadn't even time to scratch his head. Towards sunset there was a crowd like a fair, and cries and jostling and pushing so as no one ever saw the like. In the Malavoglia's court the lights were burning until midnight, as if there were a festa there. The girls sang, and the neighbors came to help their cousin Anna's daughters and Nunziata, because every one could earn something, and along the wall were four ranges of barrels all ready prepared, with stones on the top of them.

"I wish the Zuppidda were here now!" exclaimed 'Ntoni, sitting on the stones to make weight, and folding his arms; "then she would see that we can manage for ourselves as good as anybody, and snap our fingers at Don Michele and Don Silvestro."

The buyers ran after Padron 'Ntoni with money down in their hands. Goosefoot pulled him by the sleeve, saying, "Now's your time; make your profit while you can."

But Padron 'Ntoni would only answer: "Wait till All Saints, that's the time to sell anchovies. No, I won't take earnest-money. I don't mean to be tied; I know how things will go." And he thumped on the barrels with his fist, saying to his grandchildren: "Here is your house and Mena's dowry; and the old house is ready to take you to its arms. Saint Francis has been merciful. I shall close my eyes in peace."

At the same time they had made all their provision for the winter—grain, beans, oil—and had given earnest to Don Filippo for a little wine for Sundays. Now they were tranquil once more. Father and daughter-in-law began once more to count the money in the stocking, and the barrels ranged against the wall of the court, and made their calculations as to what more was needed for the house. Maruzza knew the money, coin from coin, and said, “This from the oranges and eggs; this from Ales-sio for work at the railroad; this Mena earned at the loom;” and she said, too, “Each has something here from his own work.”

“Did I not tell you,” said Padron ’Ntoni, “that to pull a good oar all the five fingers must help each other? Now there is but little more needed.” And then he would go off into a corner with La Longa, and they would have a great confabulation, looking from time to time at Sant’Agata, who deserved, poor child, that they should talk of her, because she had neither word nor will of her own, and attended to her work, singing softly under her breath like a bird on its nest before the break of morning; and only when she heard the carts pass on the highroad in the evening she thought of Cousin Alfio Mosca’s cart, that was wandering about the wide world, she knew not where; and then she stopped singing.

In the whole place nothing was seen but men carrying nets and women sitting in their doors pounding salt and broken bricks together; and before every door was a row of tiny barrels, so that it was a real pleasure to a Christian to snuff the precious odor as he passed, and for a mile away the breath of the gifts of the blessed Saint Francis floated on the breeze; there was nothing talked of but anchovies and brine, even in the drug-store, where all the affairs of all the world were discussed. Don Franco wanted to teach them a new way of salting down, a receipt which he had found in a book. They turned their backs on him, and left him storming like a madman. Since the world was a world, anchovies had always been cured with salt and pounded bricks.

“The usual cry! My grandfather used to do it,” the druggist went on shouting at them. “You want nothing but tails to be complete asses! What is to be done with such a lot as this? And they are quite contented, too, with Master Croce Giufà (which means oaf), because he has always been syndic; they would be capable of saying that they didn’t want a republic because they had never seen one.” This speech he repeated to Don Silvestro on a certain occasion when they had a conversation without witnesses. That is to say, Don Franco talked, and Don Silvestro listened in silence. He afterwards learned that Don Silvestro had broken with Betta, the syndic’s daughter, because she insisted on being syndic herself; and her father let her wear the breeches, so that he said white to-day and black to-morrow.

X.

Ntoni went out to sea every blessed day, and had to row, tiring his back dreadfully. But when the sea was high, and fit to swallow them all at one gulp—them, the Pravvidenza, and everything else—that boy had a heart as brave as the sea itself—“Malavoglia blood!”—said his grandfather; and it was fine to see him at work in a storm, with the wind whistling through his hair, while the bark sprang over the big waves like a porpoise in the spring.

The Provvidenza often ventured out into blue water, old and patched though she was, after that little handful of fish which was hard to find, now that the sea was swept from side to side as if with brooms. Even on those dark days when the clouds hung low over Agnone, and the horizon to the east was full of black shadows, the sail of the Provvidenza might be seen like a white handkerchief against the leaden-colored sea, and everybody said that Padron ’Ntoni’s people went out to look for trouble, like the old woman with a lamp.

Padron ’Ntoni replied that he went out to look for bread; and when the corks

disappeared one by one in the wide sea, gleaming green as grass, and the houses of Trezza looked like a little white spot, so far off were they, and there was nothing all around them but water, he began to talk to his grandsons in sheer pleasure. La Longa and the others would come down to the beach to meet them on the shore as soon as they saw the sail rounding the Fariglione; and when they too had been to look at the fish flashing through the nets, and looking as if the bottom of the boat were full of molten silver; and Padron ’Ntoni replied before any one had asked, “Yes, a quintal or a quintal twenty-five” (generally right, even to an ounce); and then they’d sit talking about it all the evening, while the women pounded salt in the wooden mortars; and when they counted the little barrels one by one, and Uncle Crucifix came in to see how they had got on, to make his offer, so, with his eyes shut; and Goosefoot came too, screaming and scolding about the right price, and the just price, and so on; then they didn’t mind his screaming, because, after all, it was a pity to quarrel with old friends; and then La Longa would go on counting out sou by sou the money which Goosefoot had brought in his handkerchief, saying, “These are for the house; these are for the every-day expenses,” and so on. Mena would help, too, to pound the salt and to count the barrels, and she should get back her blue jacket and her coral necklace, that had been pawned to Uncle Crucifix; and the women could go back to their own church again, for if any young man happened to look after Mena, her dowry was getting ready.

“For my part,” said ’Ntoni, rowing slowly, slowly round and round, so that the current should not drive him out of the circle of the net, while the old man pondered silently over all these things—“for my part, all I wish is that hussy Barbara may be left to gnaw her elbows when we have got back our own again, and may live to repent shutting the door in my face.”

“In the storm one knows the good pilot,” said the old man. “When we are once more what we have always been, every one will bear a smooth face for us, and will open their doors to us once more.”

“There were two who did not shut their doors,” said Alessio, “Nunziata and our cousin Anna.”

“‘In prison, in poverty, and in sickness one finds one’s friends’; for that may the Lord help them, too, and all the mouths they have to feed!”

“When Nunziata goes out on the downs to gather wood, or when the rolls of linen are too heavy for her, I go and help her too, poor little thing,” said Alessio.

“Come and help now to pull in this side, for this time Saint Francis has really sent us the gift of God!” and the boy pulled and puffed, with his feet braced against the side of the boat, so that one would have thought he was doing it all himself. Meanwhile ’Ntoni lay stretched on the deck singing to himself, with his hands under his head, watching the white gulls flying against the blue sky, which had no end, it rose so pure and so high, and the Provvidenza rushed on the green waves rolling in from farther than the eye could see.

“What is the reason,” said Alessio, “that the sea is sometimes blue and sometimes green and then white, then again black as the sand of the beach, and is never all one color, as water should be?”

“It is the will of God,” replied the grandfather, “so the mariner can tell when he may safely put out to sea, and when it is best to stay on shore.”

“Those gulls have a fine time of it, flying in the air; they need not fear the waves when the wind is high.”

“But they have nothing to eat, either, poor beasts.”

“So every one has need of good weather, like Nunziata, who can’t go to the fountain when it rains,” concluded Alessio.

“Neither good nor bad weather lasts forever,” observed the old man.

But when bad weather came, and the mistral blew, and the corks went dancing on the water all day long as if the devil were playing the violin for them, or if the sea

was white as milk, or bubbling up as if it were boiling, and the rain came pouring down upon them until evening, so that no wraps were proof against it, and the sea went frying all about them like oil in the pan, then it was another pair of shoes—and ’Ntoni was in no humor for singing, with his hood down to his nose, bailing out the Provvidenza, that filled faster than he could clear out the water, and the grandpapa went on repeating, “White sea, sirocco there’ll be!” or “Curly sea, fresh wind!” as if he had come there only to learn proverbs; and with these blessed proverbs, too, he’d stand in the evening at the window looking out for the weather, with his nose in the air, and say, “When the moon is red it means wind; when it is clear, fine weather; when it is pale it means rain.”

“If you know it is going to rain,” said ’Ntoni, one day, “why do we go out, while we might stay in bed an hour or two longer?”

“‘Water from the sky, sardines in the net,’” answered the old man.

Later on ’Ntoni began to curse and swear, with the water half up to his knees.

“This evening,” said his grandfather, “Maruzza will have a good fire ready for us, and we shall soon be quite dry.”

And at dusk when the Provvidenza, with her hull full of the gifts of God, turned towards home, with her sail puffing out like Donna Rosolina’s best petticoat, and the lights of the village came twinkling one by one from behind the dark rocks as if they were beckoning to each other, Padron ’Ntoni showed his boys the bright fire which burned in La Longa’s kitchen at the bottom of the tiny court in the narrow black street; for the wall was low, and from the sea the whole house was visible, with the tiles built into a shed for the hens, and the oven on the other side of the door.

“Don’t you see what a blaze La Longa has got up for us?” said he, in high spirits; and La Longa was waiting for them, with the baskets ready. When they were brought back empty there wasn’t much talking; but instead, if there were not enough, and Alessio had to run up to the house for more, the grandfather would put

his hands to his mouth and shout, “Mena! Oh, Mena!” And Mena knew well what it meant, and they all came down in procession—she, Lia, and Nunziata, too, with all her chicks behind her; then there was great joy, and nobody minded cold or rain, and before the blazing fire they sat talking of the gifts of God which Saint Francis had sent them, and of what they would do with the money.

But in this desperate game men’s lives are risked for a few pounds of fish; and once the Malavoglia were within a hair’s-breadth of losing theirs all at once, as Bastianazzo had, for the sake of gain, when they were off Agnone as the day drew to a close, and the sky was so dark that they could not even see Etna, and the winds blew and swept up the waves so close about the boat that it seemed as if they had voices and could speak.

“Ugly weather,” said Padron ’Ntoni. “The wind turns like a silly wench’s head, and the face of the sea looks like Goosefoot’s when he is hatching some hateful trick.”

The sea was as black as the beach, though the sun had not yet gone down, and every now and then it hissed and seethed like a pot.

“Now the gulls have all gone to sleep,” said Alessio.

“By this time they ought to have lighted the beacon at Catania,” said ’Ntoni; “but I can’t see it.”

“Keep the rudder always north-east,” ordered the grandfather; “in half an hour it will be darker than an oven.”

“On such evenings as this it is better to be at Santuzza’s tavern.”

“Or asleep in your bed, eh?” said the old man; “then, you should be a clerk, like Don Silvestro.”

The poor old fellow had been groaning all day with pain. “The weather is going to change,” he said; “I feel it in my bones.”.

All of a sudden it grew so black that one couldn’t even see to swear. Only the

waves, as they rolled past the Provvidenza, shone like grinning teeth ready to devour her; and no one dared speak a word in presence of the sea, that moaned over all its waste of waters.

“I’ve an idea,” said ’Ntoni, suddenly, “that we had better give the fish we’ve caught to-day to the devil.”

“Silence!” said his grandfather; and the stern voice out of that darkness made him shrink together like a leaf on the bench where he sat.

They heard the wind whistle in the sails of the Provvidenza, and the ropes ring like the strings of a guitar. Suddenly the wind began to scream like the steam-engine when the train comes out from the tunnel in the mountain above Trezza, and there came a great wave from nobody knew where, and the Provvidenza rattled like a sack of nuts, and sprang up into the air and then rolled over.

“Down with the sail—down!” cried Padron ’Ntoni. “Cut away, cut away!”

’Ntoni, with the knife in his mouth, scrambled like a cat out on the yard, and standing on the very end to balance himself, hung over the howling waves that leaped up to swallow him.

“Hold on, hold on!” cried the old man to him, through all the thunder of the waves that strove to tear him down, and tossed about the Provvidenza and all that was inside her, and flung the boat on her side, so that the water was up to their knees. “Cut away, cut away!” called out the grandfather again.

“Sacrament!” exclaimed ’Ntoni; “and what shall we do without the sail, then?”

“Stop swearing; we are in the hands of God now.”

Alessio, who was grasping the rudder with all his force, heard what his grandfather said, and began to scream, “Mamma, mamma, mamma!”

“Hush!” cried his brother, as well as he could for the knife in his teeth. “Hush, or I’ll give you a kick.”

“Make the holy sign, and be quiet,” echoed the grandfather, so that the boy dared not make another sound.

Suddenly the sail fell all at once in a heap, and ’Ntoni drew it in, furling it light, quick as a flash.

“You know your trade well, as your father did before you,” said his grandfather. “You, too, are a Malavoglia.”

The boat righted and gave one leap, then began to leap about again among the waves.

“This way the rudder, this way; now it wants a strong arm,” said Padron ’Ntoni; and though the boy, too, clung to it like a cat, the boat still sprang about, and there came great waves sweeping over it that drove them against the helm, with force enough nearly to knock the breath out of them both.

“The oars!” cried ’Ntoni; “pull hard, Alessio; you’re strong enough when it comes to eating; just now the oars are worth more than the helm.”

The boat creaked and groaned with the strain of the oars pulled by those strong young arms; the boy, standing with his feet braced against the deck, put all his soul into his oar as well as his brother.

“Hold hard!” cried the old man, who could hardly be heard at the other side of the boat, over the roaring of the wind and the waves. “Hold on, Alessio!”

“Yes, grandfather, I do,” replied the boy.

“Are you afraid?” asked ’Ntoni.

“No, he’s not,” answered his grandfather for him; “but we must commend ourselves to God.”

“Holy devil!” exclaimed ’Ntoni. “Here one ought to have arms of iron, like the steam-engine. The sea is getting the best of it.”

The grandfather was silent, listening to the blast.

“Mamma must by this time have come to the shore to watch for us.”

“Don’t talk about mamma now,” said the old man; “it is better not to think about her.”

“Where are we now?” asked ’Ntoni after some time, hardly able to speak for fatigue.

“In God’s hands,” answered the grandfather.

“Then let me cry!” exclaimed Alessio, who could bear it no longer; and he began to scream aloud and to call for his mother at the top of his voice, in the midst of the noise of the wind and of the sea, and neither of them had the heart to scold him.

“It’s all very well your howling, but nobody can hear you, and you had best be still,” said his brother at last, in a voice so changed and strange that he hardly knew it himself. “Now hush!” he went on; “it is best for you and best for us.”

“The sail!” ordered Padron ’Ntoni. “Put her head to the wind, and then leave it in the hands of God.”

The wind hindered them terribly, but at last they got the sail set, and the Provvidenza began to dance over the crests of the waves, leaning to one side like a wounded bird.

The Malavoglia kept close together on one side, clinging to the rail. At that moment no one spoke, for, when the sea speaks in that tone no one else dares to utter a word.

“Only Padron,” ’Ntoni said, “Over there they are saying the rosary for us.”

And no one spoke again, and they flew along through the wild tempest and the night, that had come on as black as pitch.

“The light on the mole!” cried ’Ntoni; “do you see it?”

“To the right!” shouted Padron ’Ntoni; “to the right! It is not the light on the mole. We are driving on shore! Furl, furl!”

“I can’t,” cried ’Ntoni; “the rope’s too wet.” His voice was hardly to be heard through the storm, so tired he was. “The knife, the knife! quick, Alessio!”

“Cut away, cut away!”

At that moment a crash was heard; the Pravvidenza righted suddenly, like a still spring let loose, and they were within one of being flung into the sea; the spar with the sail fell across the deck, snapped like a straw. They heard a voice which cried out as if some one were hurt to death.

“Who is it? Who called out?” demanded ’Ntoni, aiding himself with his teeth and the knife to clear away the rigging of the sail, which had fallen with the mast across the deck, and covered everything. Suddenly a blast of wind took up the sail and swept it whistling away into the night. Then the brothers were able to disengage the wreck of the mast, and to fling it into the sea. The boat rose up, but Padron ’Ntoni did not rise, nor did he answer when ’Ntoni called to him. Now, when the wind and the sea are screaming their worst together, there is nothing more terrible than the silence which comes instead of the voice which should answer to our call.

“Grandfather! grandfather!” called out Alessio, too; and in the silence which followed the brothers felt the hair rise up on their heads as if it had been alive. The night was so black that they could not see from one end of the boat to the other, and Alessio was silent from sheer terror. The grandfather was stretched in the bottom of the boat with his head broken. ’Ntoni found him at last by groping about for him, and thought he was dead, for he did not move, nor even breathe. The helm swung from side to side, while the boat leaped up and then plunged headlong into the hollows of the waves.

“Ah, Saint Francis de Paul! Ah, blessed Saint Francis!” cried the boys, now that they knew nothing else to do. And Saint Francis mercifully heard while he passed through the whirlwind helping his flock, and spread his mantle under the Provvidenza just as she was ready to crash like a rotten nut on the “Cliffs of the Domes,” under the lookout of the coast-guard. The boat sprang over the rocks like a colt, and ran on shore, burying her nose in the sand. “Courage, courage!” cried the

guards from the shore; “here we are, here we are!” and they ran here and there with lanterns, ready to fling out ropes.

At last one of the ropes fell across the Provvidenza, which trembled like a leaf, and struck ’Ntoni across the face like a blow from a whip, but not the gentlest of caresses could have seemed sweeter to him at that moment.

“Help, help!” he cried, catching at the rope, which ran so fast that he could hardly hold it in his hands. Alessio came to his assistance with all his force, and together they gave it two turns around the rudder-post, and those on shore drew them in.

Padron ’Ntoni, however, gave no sign of life, and when the light was brought they found his face covered with blood, and the grandsons thought him dead, and tore their hair. But after an hour or two arrived Don Michele, Rocco Spatu, Vanni Pizzuti, and all the idlers that had been at the tavern when the news had come, and by force of rubbing and of cold water they brought him to himself, and he opened his eyes. The poor old man, when he heard where he was, and that there wanted less than an hour to reach Trezza, asked them to carry him home on a ladder. Maruzza, Mena, and the neighbors, screaming and beating their breasts in the piazza, saw him arrive like that, stretched out on the ladder, pale and still, as if he had been dead.

“’Tis nothing, ’Tis nothing!” called out Don Michele, at the head of the crowd. “’Tis only a slight thing.” And he went off to the druggist’s for the Thieves’ vinegar. Don Franco came himself with it, holding the bottle with both hands; and Goose-foot, too, came running, and his wife and Dumbbell and the Zuppiddi and Padron Cipolla and all the neighborhood, for at such a time all differences are forgotten; there came even poor La Locca, who always went wherever there was a crowd or a bustle, by night or by day, as if she never slept, but was always seeking her lost Menico. So that the people were crowded in the little street before the Malavoglia’s house as if a corpse had been there, and their cousin Anna had to shut the door in their faces.

“Let me in, let me in!” cried Nunziata, pounding with her fist on the door, having

run over only half dressed. “Let me in to see what has happened to Cousin Maruzza!”

“What good was it sending us for the ladder if we can’t come in and see what’s going on?” shouted the son of La Locca.

The Zuppidda and the Mangiacarubbe had forgotten all the hard words that had passed between them, and stood chatting before the door, with hands under their aprons. Yes, it was always so with this trade, and it was bound to finish this way one day or another. Whoever marries their daughter to a seafaring man is sure to see her come back to the house a widow, and with children into the bargain; and if it had not been for Don Michele there would have remained not one of the Malavoglia to carry on the family. The best thing to do was to do nothing, like those people who got paid for just that—like Don Michele, for example; why, he was as big and as fat as a canon, and he ate as much as ten men, and everybody smoothed him down the right way; even the druggist, that was always railing at the King, took off his great ugly black hat to him.

“It will be nothing,” said Don Franco, coming out of the house; “we have bandaged his head properly; but if fever doesn’t come on, I won’t answer for him.”

Goosefoot insisted on going in “because he was one of the family, almost,” and Padron Fortunato, and as many more as could manage to pass.

“I don’t like the looks of him a bit!” pronounced Padron Cipolla, shaking his head. “How do you feel, Cousin ’Ntoni?”

For two or three days Padron ’Ntoni was more dead than alive. The fever came on, as the apothecary had said it would, but it was so strong that it went nigh to carry the wounded man off altogether. The poor old fellow never complained, but lay quiet in his corner, with his white face and his long beard, and his head bound up. He was only dreadfully thirsty; and when Mena or La Longa gave him to drink, he caught hold of the cup with both trembling hands, and clung to it as if he feared it would be

taken from him.

The doctor came every morning, dressed the wound, felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, and went away again shaking his head.

At last there came one evening when the doctor shook his head more sadly than ever; La Longa placed the image of the Madonna beside the bed, and they said their rosary around, it, for the sick man lay still, and never spoke, even to ask for water, and it seemed as if he had even ceased to breathe.

Nobody went to bed that night, and Lia nearly broke her jaws yawning, so sleepy was she. The house was so silent that they could hear the glasses by the bedside rattle when the carts passed by on the road, making the watchers by the sick man start; so passed the day, too, while the neighbors stood outside talking in low tones, and watching what went on through the half-door. Towards evening Padron ’Ntoni asked to see each member of his family one by one, and looking at them with dim, sunken eyes, asked them what the doctor had said. ’Ntoni was at the head of the bed, crying like a child, for the fellow had a kind heart.

“Don’t cry so!” said his grandfather, “don’t cry. Now you are the head of the house: Think how they are all on your hands, and do as I have done for them.”

The women began to cry bitterly, and to tear their hair, hearing him speak in that way. Even little Lia did the same, for women have no reason at such times, and did not notice how the poor man’s face worked, for he could not endure to see them grieve for him in that way. But the weak voice continued:

“Don’t spend money for me when I am gone. The Lord will know that you have no money, and will be content with the rosary that Mena and Maruzza will say for me. And you, Mena, go on doing as your mother has done, for she is a saint of a woman, and has known well how to bear her sorrows; and keep your little sister under your wing as a hen does her chickens. As long as you cling together your sorrows will seem less bitter. Now ’Ntoni is a man, and before long Alessio will be old enough to

help you too."

"Don't talk like that, don't! for pity's sake, don't talk so!" cried the women, as if it were of his own free-will that he was leaving them. He shook his head sadly, and replied:

"Now I have said all I wished to say, I don't mind. Please turn me on the other side. I am tired. I am old, you know; when the oil is burned out the lamp goes out too."

Later on he called 'Ntoni, and said to him:

"Don't sell the Provvidenza, though she is so old; if you do you will have to go out by the day, and you don't know how hard it is when Padron Cipolla or Uncle Cola says to you, 'There's nobody wanted on Monday.' And another thing I want to say to you, 'Ntoni. When you have put by enough money you must marry off Mena, and give her to a seaman like her father, and a good fellow like him. And I want to say, also, when you shall have portioned off Lia, too, try and put by money to buy back the house by the medlar-tree. Uncle Crucifix will sell it if you make it worth his while, for it has always belonged to the Malavoglia—and thence your father and Luca went away, never to return."

"Yes, grandfather, yes, I will," promised 'Ntoni, with many tears. And Alessio also listened gravely, as if he too had been a man.

The women thought the sick man must be wandering, hearing him go on talking and talking, and they went to put wet cloths on his forehead.

"No," said Padron 'Ntoni, "I am in right senses. I only want to finish what I have to say before I go away from you."

By this time they had begun to hear the fishermen calling from one door to another, and the carts began to pass along the road. "In two hours it will be day," said Padron 'Ntoni, "and you can go call Don Giammaria."

Poor things! they looked for day as for the Messiah, and went to the window every

few minutes to look for the dawn. At last the room grew lighter, and Padron ’Ntoni said, “Now go call the priest, for I want to confess.”

Don Giammaria came when the sun had already risen; and all the neighbors, when they heard the bell tinkle in the black street, went after it, to see the viaticum going to the Malavoglia. And all went in, too; for when the Lord is within the door can be shut upon nobody; so that the mourning family, seeing the house full of people, dared not weep nor cry; while Don Giammaria muttered the prayers between his teeth, and Master Cirino put a candle to the lips of the sick man, who lay pale and stiff as a candle himself.

“He looks just like the patriarch Saint Joseph, in that bed, with that long beard,” said Santuzza, who arranged all the bottles and straightened everything, for she was always about when Our Lord went anywhere—“Like a raven,” said the druggist.

The doctor came while the vicar was still there, and at first he wanted to turn his donkey round and go home again. “Who told you to call the priest?” he said; “that is the doctor’s affair, and I am astonished that Don Giammaria should have come without a certificate. Do you know what? There is no need of the priest—he’s better—that’s what he is.”

“It is a miracle, worked by Our Lady of Sorrows,” cried La Longa; “Our Lady has done this for us, for Our Lord has come too often to this house.”

“Ah, Blessed Virgin! Ah, Holy Virgin!” exclaimed Mena, clasping her hands; “how gracious art thou to us!” And they all wept for joy, as if the sick man were quite ready to get up and be off to his boat again.

The doctor went off growling. “That’s always the way. If they get well it is Our Lady has saved them; if they die, it is we who have killed them.”

“Don Michele is to have the medal for throwing the rope to the Provvidenza, and there’s a pension attached to it,” said the druggist. “That’s the way they spend the people’s money!”

Goosefoot spoke up in defence of Don Michele, saying that he had deserved the medal, and the pension, too, for he had gone into the water up to his knees, big boots and all, to save the Malavoglia—three persons. “Do you think that a small thing—three lives?—and was within a hair’s-breath of losing his own life, too, so that everybody was talking of him: and on a Sunday, when he put on his new uniform, the girls couldn’t take their eyes off him, so anxious were they to see if he really had the medal or not.”

“Barbara Zuppidda, now that she’s got rid of that lout of a Malavoglia, won’t turn her back on Don Michele any more,” said Goosefoot. “I’ve seen her with her nose between the shutters when he’s passed along the street.”

’Ntoni, poor fellow, as long as they couldn’t do without him, had run hither and thither indefatigably, and had been in despair while his grandfather was so ill. Now that he was better, he took to lounging about, with his arms akimbo, waiting till it was time to take the Provvidenza to Master Zup-piddu to be mended, and went to the tavern to chat with the others, though he hadn’t a sou to spend there, and told to this one and that one how near he had been to drowning, and so passed the time away, lounging and spitting about, doing nothing. When any one would pay for wine for him he would get angry about Don Michele, and say he had taken away his sweetheart; that he went every evening to talk to Barbara at the window; that Uncle Santoro had seen him; that he had asked Nunziata if she hadn’t seen Don Michele pass by the black street.

“But, blood of Judas! my name isn’t ’Ntoni Malavoglia if I don’t put a stop to that. Blood of Judas!”

It amused the others to see him storm and fume, so they paid for him to drink on purpose. San-tuzza, when she was washing the glasses, turned her back upon them so as not to hear the oaths and the ugly words that were always passing among them, but hearing Don Michele’s name, she forgot her manners, and listened with all her

ears. She also became curious, and listened to them with open mouth, and gave Nunziata's little brother and Ales-sio apples or green almonds to get out of them what had passed in the black street. Don Michele swore there was no truth in the story, and often in the evening, after the tavern was shut, they might be still heard disputing, and her voice would be audible, screaming, "Liar! Assassin! Miscreant! Thief!" and other pretty names; so much so that Don Michele left off going to the tavern at all, and used to send for his wine instead, and drink it by himself at Vanni Pizzuti's shop.

XI.

One day 'Ntoni Malavoglia, lounging about as usual, had seen two young men who had embarked some years before at Riposto in search of fortune, and had returned from Trieste, or from Alexandria, in short, from afar off, and were spending and swaggering at the tavern—grander than Cousin Naso the butcher, or than Padron Cipolla. They sat astride of the benches joking with the girls and pulling innumerable silk handkerchiefs out of their pockets, turning the place upsidedown.

'Ntoni, when he came home at night, found nobody there but the women, who were changing the brine on the anchovies and chatting with the neighbors, sitting in a circle on the stones, and passing away the time by telling stories and guessing riddles, which amused greatly the children, who stood around rubbing their sleepy eyes. Padron 'Ntoni listened too, and watched the strainer with the fresh brine, nodding his head in approval when the stories pleased him, or when the boys were clever at guessing the riddles.

"The best story of all," said 'Ntoni, "is that of those two fellows who arrived here to-day with silk kerchiefs that one can hardly believe one's eyes to look at, and such a lot of money that they hardly look at it when they take it out of their pockets. They've seen half the world, they say. Trezza and Aci Castello put together are not

to be compared to what they've seen. I've seen the world too, and how people in those parts don't sit still salting anchovies, but go round amusing themselves all day long, and the women, with silk dresses and more rings and necklaces than the Madonna of Ognino, go about the streets vying with each other for the love of the handsome sailors."

"The worst of all things," said Mena, "is to leave one's own home, where even the stones are one's friends, and when one's heart must break to leave them behind one on the road. 'Blest is the bird that builds his nest at home!'"

"Brava, Sant'Agata!" said her grandfather; "that is what I call talking sense."

"Yes," growled 'Ntoni, "and when we have sweated and steamed to build our nest we haven't anything left to eat; and when we have managed to get back the house by the medlar we shall just have to go on wearing out our lives from Monday to Saturday, and never do anything else."

"And don't you mean to work any more? What do you mean to do—turn lawyer?"

"I don't mean to turn lawyer," said 'Ntoni, and went off to bed in high dudgeon.

But from that time forth he thought of nothing but the easy, wandering life other fellows led; and in the evening, not to hear all that idle chatter, he stood by the door with his shoulders against the wall, watching the people pass, and meditating on his hard fate; at least one was resting against the fatigues of to-morrow, when must begin again over and over the same thing, like Cousin Mosca's ass, that when they brought the collar reached out his neck to have it put on. "We're all asses!" he muttered; "that's what we are—asses! beasts of burden." And it was plainly enough to be seen that he was tired of that hard life, and longed to leave it, and go out into the world to make his fortune, like those others; so that his mother, poor woman, was always stroking him on the shoulder, and speaking to him in tones that were each like a caress, looking at him with eyes full of tears, as if she would read his very soul. But he told her there was no cause to grieve, that it was better he should

go, for himself and for the rest of them, and when he came back they would all be happy together.

The poor mother never closed her eyes that night, and steeped her pillow with tears. At last the grandfather himself perceived it, and called his grandson outside the door, under the shrine, to ask him what ailed him.

“What is it, my boy?” he said. “Tell your grandpapa; do, that’s a good boy.”

’Ntoni shrugged his shoulders; but the old man went on nodding his head, and seeking for words to make himself understood properly.

“Yes, yes! you’ve got some notion in your head, boy! some new notion or other. ‘Who goes with lame men limps himself before long.’”

“I’m a poor miserable devil, that’s what it is.”

“Well, is that all? You knew that before. And what am I, and what was your father? ‘He is the richest who has the fewest wants. Better content than complaint.’”

“Fine consolation, that is!”

This time the old man found words, for they were in his heart, and so came straight to his lips.

“At least, don’t say it to your mother.”

“My mother! She would have done better not to have brought me into the world, my mother!”

“Yes,” assented Padron ’Ntoni, “it would have been better she had not borne you, if you are to begin to talk in this way.”

For a minute ’Ntoni didn’t know what to say, then he began: “Well, I mean it for your good, too—for you, for my mother, for us all. I want to make her rich, my mother! that’s what I want. Now we’re tormenting ourselves for the house, and for Mena’s dowry; then Lia will grow up, and she’ll want a dowry too, and then a bad year will throw us all back into misery. I don’t want to lead this life any longer. I

want to change my condition and to change yours. I want that we should be rich—mamma, Mena, you, Alessio, all of us."

Padron 'Ntoni opened his eyes very wide and listened, pondering, to this discourse, which he found very hard to understand. "Rich!" he said, "rich! And what shall we do when we are rich?" 'Ntoni scratched his head, and began to wonder himself what he should do in such a case. "We should do what other people do," he said—"go and live in town, and do nothing, and eat meat."

"In town! go and live in town by yourself. I choose to die where I was born;" and thinking of the house where he was born, which was no longer his, he let his head drop on his breast. "You are but a boy; you don't know what it is," he said; "you don't know, you don't know! When you can no longer sleep in your own bed, or see the light come in through your own window, you'll see what it is. I am old, and I know!" The poor old man coughed as if he would suffocate, with bent shoulders, shaking his head sadly. "'His own nest every bird likes best.' Look at those swallows; do you see them? They have always made their nest there, and they still return to make it there, and never go away."

"But I am not a swallow," said 'Ntoni. "I am neither a bird nor a beast. I don't want to live like a dog on a chain, or like Cousin Alfio's ass, or like a mule in a mill, that goes round and round, turning the same wheel forever. I don't want to die of hunger in a corner, or to be eaten up by sharks."

"Thank God, rather, that you were born here, and pray that you may not come to die far from the stones that you know. 'Who changes the old for the new changes for the worse all through.' You are afraid of work, are afraid of poverty; I, who have neither your youth nor your strength, fear them not. 'The good pilot is known in the storm.' You are afraid of having to work for your bread, that is what ails you! When my father, rest his soul, left me the Provvidenza and five mouths to feed, I was younger than you are now, and I was not afraid; and I have done my duty without grumbling;

and I do it still, and I pray God to help me to do it as long as I live, as your father did, and your brother Luca, blessed be their souls! who feared not to go and die where duty led them. Your mother, too, has done hers, poor little woman, hidden inside four walls; and you know not the tears she has shed, nor how many she sheds now, because you want to go and leave her; nor how in the morning your sister finds her sheets wet with tears. And nevertheless she is silent, and does not talk of you nor of the hard things you say to her; and she works, and puts together her provision, poor busy little ant that she is; and she has never done anything else all her life long—before she had so many tears to shed, and when she suckled you at her breast, and before you could go alone, or the temptation had come over you to go wandering like a gypsy about the world."

The end of it was that 'Ntoni began to cry like a child, for at bottom the boy had a good heart; but the next day it began all over again. In the morning he took the tackle unwillingly on his shoulder, and went off to sea growling, "Just like Cousin Alfio's ass: at daybreak I have to stretch out my neck to see if they are coming to load me." After they had thrown the net he left Alessio to move the oars slowly, so as to keep the boat in its place; and folding his arms, looked out into the distance to where the sea ended, towards those great cities where people did nothing but walk about and amuse themselves; or thought of the two sailors who had come back thence, and had now for some time been gone away from the place; but it seemed to him that they had nothing to do but to wander about the world from one town to another, spending the money they had in their pockets. In the evening, when all the tackle was put away, they let him wander about as he liked, like a houseless dog, without a soldo to bless himself with, sooner than see him sit there as sulky as a bear.

"What ails you, 'Ntoni?" said La Longa, looking timidly into his face, with her eyes shining with tears, for she knew well enough, poor woman, what it was that ailed him. "Tell me, tell your mother." He did not answer, or answered that nothing ailed

him. But at last he did tell her that his grandfather and the rest of them wanted to work him to death, and he could bear it no longer. He wanted to go away and seek his fortune like other people.

His mother listened, with her eyes full of tears, and could not speak in reply to him, as he went on weeping and stamping and tearing his hair.

The poor creature longed to answer him, and to throw her arms round his neck, and beg him not to go away from her, but her lips trembled so that she could not utter a word.

“Listen,” she said at last; “you may go, if you will do it, but you won’t find me here when you come back, for I am old now and weak, and I cannot bear this new sorrow.”

’Ntoni tried to comfort her, saying he would soon come back with plenty of money, and that they would all be happy together. Maruzza shook her head sadly, saying that no, no, he would not find her when he came back.

“I feel that I am growing old,” she said. “I am growing old. Look at me. I have no strength now to weep as I did when your father died, and your brother. If I go to the washing I come back so tired that I can hardly move; it was never so before. No, my son, I am not what I was. Once, when I had your father and your brother, I was young and strong. The heart gets tired too, you see; it wears away little by little, like old linen that has been too often washed. I have no courage now; everything frightens me. I feel as one does when the waves come over his head when he is out at sea. Go away if you will, but wait until I am at rest.”

She was weeping, but she did not know it; she seemed to have before her eyes once more her husband and her son Luca as she had seen them when they left her to return no more.

“So you will go, and I shall see you no more,” she said to him. “The house grows more empty every day; and when that poor old man, your grandfather, is gone, too,

in whose hands shall I leave those orphan children? Ah, Mother of Sorrows!”

She clung to him, with her head against his breast, as if her boy were going to leave her then and there, and stroked his shoulder and his cheeks with her trembling hands. Then ’Ntoni could resist her no longer, and began to kiss her and to whisper gently in her ear:

“No, no! I won’t go if you say I must not. Look at me! Don’t talk so, don’t. Well, I’ll go on working like Cousin Mosca’s ass, that will be thrown into a ditch to die when he’s too old to work any more. Are you contented now? Don’t cry, don’t cry any more. Look at my grandfather how he has struggled all his life, and is struggling still to get out of the mud, and he will go on so. It is our fate.”

“And do you think that everybody hasn’t troubles of their own? ‘Every hole has its nail; new or old, they never fail.’ Look at Padron Cipolla how he has to run here and to watch there, not to have his son Brasi throwing all the money he has saved and scraped into Vespa’s lap! And Master Filippo, rich as he is, trembling for his vineyard every time it rains. And Uncle Crucifix, starving himself to put soldo upon soldo, and always at law with this one or with that. And do you think those two foreign sailors that you saw here, and that put all this in your head with their talk of strange countries, do you think they haven’t their own troubles too? Who knows if they found their mothers alive when they got home to their own houses? And as for us, when we have bought back the house by the medlar, and have our grain in the hutch and our beans for the winter, and when Mena is married, what more shall we want? When I am under the sod, and that poor old man is dead too, and Alessio is old enough to earn his bread, go wherever you like. But then you won’t want to go, I can tell you; for then you will begin to know what we feel when we see you so obstinate and so determined to leave us all, even when we do not speak, but go on in our usual way. Then you will not find it in your heart to leave the place where you were born, where the very stones know you well, where your own dead will lie

together under the marble in the church, which is worn smooth by the knees of those who have prayed so long before Our Mother of Sorrows."

'Ntoni, from that day forth, said no more of going away, or of growing rich; and his mother watched him tenderly, as a bird watches her young, when she saw him looking sad or sitting silently on the door-step, with his elbows on his knees. And the poor woman was truly a sad sight to see, so pale was she, so thin and worn; and when her work was over she too sat down, with folded hands, and her back bent as badly as her father-in-law's. But she knew not that she herself was going for a journey—that journey which leads to the long rest below the smooth marble in the church—and that she must leave behind her all those she loved so well, who had so grown into her heart that they had worn it all away, piece by piece, now one and now another.

At Catania there was the cholera, and everybody that could manage it ran away into the country here and there among the villages and towns in the neighborhood. And at Ognino, and at Trezza, too, these strangers, who spent so much money, were a real providence. But the merchants pulled a long face, and said that it was almost impossible to sell even a dozen barrels of anchovies, and that all the money had disappeared on account of the cholera. "And don't people eat anchovies any more?" asked Goosefoot. But to Padron 'Ntoni, who had them to sell, they said that now there was the cholera, people were afraid to eat anchovies, and all that kind of stuff, but must eat macaroni and meat; and so it was best to let things go at the best price one could get. That hadn't been counted in the Malavoglia's reckoning. Hence, not to go backward, crab fashion, needs must that La Longa should go about from house to house among the foreigners, selling eggs and fresh bread, and so on, while the men were out at sea, and so put together a little money. But it was needful to be very careful, and not take even so much as a pinch of snuff from a person one did not know. Walking on the road, one must go exactly in the middle—as far away as possible from the walls, where one ran the risk of coming across all sorts of horrors;

and one must never sit down on the stones or on the wall. La Longa, once, coming back from Aci Gastello, with her basket on her arm, felt so tired that her legs were like lead under her, and she could hardly move, so she yielded to temptation, and rested a few minutes on the smooth stones under the shade of the fig-tree, just by the shrine at the entrance of the town; and she remembered afterwards, though she did not notice it at the time, that a person unknown to her—a poor man, who seemed also very weary and ill—had been sitting there a moment before she came up. In short, she fell ill, took the cholera, and returned home pale and tottering, as yellow as a gilded heart among the votive offerings, and with deep black lines under her eyes; so that when Mena, who was alone at home, saw her, she began to cry, and Lia ran off to gather rosemary and marshmallow leaves. Mena trembled like a leaf while she was making up the bed, and the sick woman, sitting on a chair, with pallid face and sunken eyes, kept on saying, “It is nothing, don’t be frightened; as soon as I have got into bed it will pass off,” and tried to help them herself; but every minute she grew faint, and had to sit down again. “Holy Virgin!” stammered Mena. “Holy Virgin, and the men out at sea! Holy Virgin, help us!” and Lia cried with all her might.

When Padron ’Ntoni came back with his grandsons, and they saw the door half shut, and the light inside the shutters, they tore their hair. Maruzza was already in bed, and her eyes, seen in that way in the dusk, looked hollow and dim, as if death had already dimmed their light; and her lips were black as charcoal. At that time neither doctor nor apothecary went out after sunset, and even the neighbors barred their doors, and stuck pictures of saints over all the cracks, for fear of the cholera. So Cousin Maruzza had no help except from her own poor people, who rushed about the house as if they had been crazy, watching her fading away before their eyes, in her bed, and beat their heads against the wall in their despair. Then La Longa, seeing that all hope was gone, begged them to lay upon her breast the lock of cotton dipped in holy oil which she had bought at Easter, and said that they must keep the light

burning, as they had done when Padron ’Ntoni had been so ill that they thought him dying, and wanted them all to stay beside her bed, that she might look at them until the last moment with those wide eyes that no longer seemed to see. Lia cried in a heart-breaking way, and the others, white as the wall, looked in each other’s faces, as if asking for help, where no help was; and held their hands tight over their breasts, that they might not break out into loud wailing before the dying woman, who, none the less, knew all that they felt, though by this time she saw them no longer, and even at the last felt the pain of leaving them behind. She called them one by one by name, in a weak and broken voice, and tried to lift her hand to bless them, knowing that she was leaving them a treasure beyond price.

“’Ntoni,” she repeated, “’Ntoni, to you, who are the eldest, I leave these orphans!” And hearing her speak thus while she was still alive, they could not help bursting out into cries and sobs.

So they passed the night beside the bed, where Maruzza now lay without moving, until the candle burned down in the socket and went out. And the dawn came in through the window, pale like the corpse, which lay with features sharpened like a knife, and black, parched lips. But Mena never wearied of kissing those cold lips, and speaking as if the dead could hear. ’Ntoni beat his breast and cried, “O mother! O mother! and you have gone before me, and I wanted to leave you!” And Alessio never will forget that last look of his mother, with her white hair and pinched features; no, not even when his hair has grown as white as hers.

At dusk they came to take La Longa in a hurry, and no one thought of making any visits; for every one feared for their life. And even Don Giammaria came no farther than the threshold, whence he dispensed the holy water, holding his tunic about his knees tight, lest it should touch anything in the house—“Like a selfish monk as he was,” said the apothecary. He, on the contrary, had they brought him a prescription from the doctor, would have given it them, would even have opened the shop at

night for the purpose, for he was not afraid of the cholera; and said, besides, that it was all stuff and nonsense to say that the cholera could be thrown about the streets or behind the doors.

“A sign that he spreads the cholera himself,” whispered the priest. For that reason the people of the place wanted to kill the apothecary; but he laughed at them, with the cackling laugh he had learned of Don Silvestro, saying, “Kill me! I’m a republican! If it were one of those fellows in the Government, now, I might find some use in doing it, but what good would it do me to spread the cholera?” But the Malavoglia were left alone with the bed whence the mother had been carried away.

For some time they did not open the door after La Longa had been taken away. It was a blessing that they had plenty to eat in the house—beans and oil—and charcoal too, for Padron ’Ntoni, like the ants, had made his provision in time of plenty; else they might have died of hunger, for no one came to see whether they were alive or dead. Then, little by little, they began to put their black neckerchiefs on and to go out into the street, like snails after a storm, still pale and dazed-looking. The gossips, remaining aloof, called out to them to ask how it had happened; for Cousin Maruzza had been one of the first to go. And when Don Michele, or some other personage who took the King’s pay, and wore a gold-bordered cap, came their way, they looked at him with scared eyes, and ran into the house. There was great misery, and no one was seen in the street, not even a hen; and Don Cirino was never seen anywhere, and had left off ringing at noon and at the Ave Maria, for he too ate the bread of the commune, and had five francs a month as parish beadle, and feared for his life, for was not he a Government official? And now Don Michele was lord of the whole place, for Pizzuti and Don Silvestro and the rest hid in their burrows like rabbits, and only he walked up and down before the Zuppidda’s closed door. It was a pity that nobody saw him except the Malavoglia, who had no longer anything to lose, and so sat watching whoever passed by, sitting on the door-step, with their elbows on their knees. Don Michele, not to take his walk for nothing, looked at

Sant'Agata, now that all the other doors were shut; and did it all the more to show that great hulking 'Ntoni that he wasn't afraid of anybody, not he. And besides, Mena, pale as she was, looked a real Sant'Agata; and the little sister, with her black neckerchief, was growing up a very pretty girl.

It seemed to poor Mena that twenty years had fallen suddenly on her shoulders. She watched Lia now, as La Longa had watched her, and kept her always close at her side, and had all the cares of the house on her mind. She had grown into a habit of remaining alone in the house with her sister while the men were at sea, looking from time to time at that empty bed. When she had nothing to do she sat, with her hands in her lap, looking at the empty bed, and then she felt, indeed, that her mother had left her; and when she heard them say in the street such an one is dead, or such another, she thought so they heard "La Longa is dead"—La Longa, who had left her alone with that poor little orphan, with her black neckerchief.

Nunziata or their Cousin Anna came now and then, stepping softly, and with sad looks, and saying nothing, would sit down with her on the door-step, with hands under their aprons. The men coming back from the fishing stepped quickly along, looking carefully from side to side, with the nets on their shoulders. And no one stopped anywhere, not even the carts at the tavern.

Who could tell where Cousin Alfio's cart was now? or if at this moment he might not lie dying of cholera behind a hedge, that poor fellow, who had no one belonging to him. Sometimes Goosefoot passed, looking half starved, glanced about him, as if he were afraid of his shadow; or Uncle Crucifix, whose riches were scattered here and there, and who went to see if his debtors were likely to die and to cheat him out of his money. The sacrament went by, too, quickly, in the hands of Don Giammaria, with his tunic fastened up, and a barefooted boy ringing the bell before him, for Don Cirino was nowhere to be seen. That bell, in the deserted streets, where no one passed, not a dog, and even Don Franco kept his door half shut, was heart-rending.

The only person to be seen, day or night, was La Locca, with her tangled white hair, who went to sit before the house by the medlar-tree, or watched for the boats on the shore. Even the cholera would have none of her, poor old thing.

The strangers had flown as birds do at the approach of winter, and no one came to buy the fish. So that every one said, “After the cholera comes the famine.” Padron ’Ntoni had once more to dip into the money put away for the house, and day by day it melted before his eyes. But he thought of nothing, save that Maruzza had died away from her own house; he could not get that out of his head. ’Ntoni, too, shook his head every time it was necessary to use up the money. Finally, when the cholera was at an end, and there only remained about half of the money put together with such pains and trouble, he began to complain that such a life as that he could not bear—eternally saving and sparing, and then having to spend for bare life; that it was better to risk something, once for all, to get out of this eternal worry, and that there, at least, where his mother had died in the midst of that hideous misery, he would stay no longer.

“Don’t you remember that your mother recommended Mena to you?” said Padron ’Ntoni.

“What good can I do to Mena by staying here?—tell me that.”

Mena looked at him timidly, but with eyes like her mother’s, where one could read her heart, but she dared not speak. Only once, clinging to the jamb of the door, she found courage to say: “I don’t ask for help, if only you’ll stay with us. Now that I haven’t my mother, I feel like a fish out of water; I don’t care about anything. But I can’t bear the idea of that orphan, Lia, who will be left without anybody if you go away; like Nunziata when her father left her.”

“No,” said ’Ntoni, “no, I can do nothing for you if I stay here; the proverb says ‘Help yourself and you’ll be helped.’ When I have made something worth while I’ll come back, and we’ll all be happy together.”

Lia and Alessio opened their large round eyes, and seemed quite dazzled by this prospect, but the old man let his head fall on his breast. “Now you have neither father nor mother, and can do as it seems best to you,” he said at last. “While I live I will care for these children, and when I die the Lord must do the rest.”

Mena, seeing that ’Ntoni would go, whether or not, put his clothes in order, as his mother would have done, and thought how “over there,” in strange lands, her brother would be like Alfio Mosca, with no one to look after him. And while she sewed at his shirts, and pieced his coats, her head ran upon days gone by, and she thought of all that had passed away with them with a swelling heart.

“I cannot pass the house by the medlar now,” she said, as she sat by her grandfather; “I feel such a lump in my throat that I am almost choking, thinking of all that has happened since we left it.”

And while she was preparing for her brother’s departure she wept as if she were to see him no more. At last, when everything was ready, the grandpapa called his boy to give him a last solemn sermon, and much good advice as to what he was to do when he was alone and dependent only on his own discretion, without his family about him to consult or to condole with him if things, went wrong; and gave him some money too, in case of need, and his own pouch lined with leather, since now he was old he should not need it any more.

The children, seeing their brother preparing for departure, followed him silently about the house, hardly daring to speak to him, feeling as if he had already become a stranger.

“Just so my father went away,” said Nunziata, who had come to say good-bye to ’Ntoni, and stood with the others at the door. After that no one spoke.

The neighbors came one by one to take leave of Cousin ’Ntoni, and then stood waiting in the street to see him start. He lingered, with his bundle on his shoulder and his shoes in his hand, as if at the last moment his heart had failed him. He

looked about him as if to fix everything in his memory, and his face was as deeply moved as any there. His grandfather took his stick to accompany him to the city, and Mena went off into a corner, where she cried silently.

“Come, come, now,” said ’Ntoni. “I’m not going away forever. We’ll say I’m going for a soldier again.” Then, after kissing Mena and Lia, and taking leave of the gossips, he started to go, and Mena ran after him. with open arms, weeping aloud, and crying out, “What will mamma say? What will mamma say?” as if her mother were alive and could know what was taking place. But she only said the thing which dwelt most strongly in her memory when ’Ntoni had spoken of going away before; and she had seen her mother weep, and used to find her pillow in the morning wet with tears.

“Adieu, ’Ntoni!” Alessio called after him, taking courage now he was gone, and Lia began to scream.

“Just so my father went,” said Nunziata, who had stayed behind the others at the door.

’Ntoni turned at the corner of the black street, with his eyes full of tears, and waved his hand to them in token of farewell. Mena then closed the door and went to sit down in a corner with Lia, who continued to sob and cry aloud. “Now another one is gone away from the house,” she repeated. “If we had been in the house by the medlar it would seem as empty as a church.”

Mena, seeing her dear ones go away, one after the other, felt, indeed, like a fish out of water. And Nunziata, lingering there beside her, with the little one in her arms, still went on saying, “Just so my father went away, just so!”

XII.

Padron ’Ntoni, now that he had no one but Alessio to help him with the boat, had to hire some one by the day—Cousin Nunzio, perhaps, who had a sick wife and a large

family of children; or the son of La Locca, who came whining to him behind the door that his mother was starving, and that his uncle Crucifix would give them nothing, because, he said, the cholera had ruined him, so many of his debtors had died and had cheated him out of his money, and he had taken the cholera himself. “But he hadn’t died,” added the son of La Locca, and shook his head ruefully. “Now we might have plenty to live on, I and my mother and all the family, if he had died. We stayed two days with Vespa, nursing him, and it seemed as if he were dying every minute, but he didn’t die after all.” However, the money that the Malavoglia gained day by day was often not enough to pay Cousin Nunzio or the son of La Locca, and they were obliged to take up those precious coins so painfully put together to buy back the house by the medlar-tree. Every time Mena went to take the stocking from under the mattress she and her grandfather sighed. La Locca’s son was not to blame, poor fellow—he would have done four men’s work sooner than not give the full worth of his wages—it was the fish, that would not let themselves be caught. And when they came ruefully home empty, rowing, with loosened sails, he said to Padron ’Ntoni: “Give me wood to split, or fagots to bind; I will work until midnight, if you say so, as I did with my uncle. I don’t want to steal the wages from you.”

So Padron ’Ntoni, after having thought the matter over carefully, consulted Mena as to what was to be done. She was clear-headed, like her mother, and she was the only one left for him to consult—the only one left of so many! The best thing was to sell the Provvidenza, which brought in nothing, and only ate up the wages of Cousin Nunzio or the son of La Locca to no purpose; and the money put aside for the house was melting away, little by little. The Provvidenza was old, and always needed to be mended every now and then to keep her afloat. Later, if ’Ntoni came back and brought better fortune once more among them, they might buy a new boat and call that also the Provvidenza.

On Sunday he went to the piazza, after the mass, to speak to Goosefoot about it.

Cousin Tino shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, said that the Provvidenza was good for nothing but to put under the pot, and talking in this way he drew him down to the shore. The patches, he said, could be seen under the paint, like some women he knew of with wrinkles under their stays; and went on kicking her in the hull with his lame foot. Besides, the trade was going badly; rather than buy, everybody was trying to sell their boats, much better than the Provvidenza. And who was going to buy her? Padron Cipolla didn't want old stuff like that. This was an affair for Uncle Crucifix. But at this moment Uncle Crucifix had something else on his hands—with that demon-ridden Vespa, who was tormenting his soul out running after all the marriageable men in the place. At last, for old friendship's sake, he agreed to go and speak to Uncle Crucifix about it, if he found him in a good humor—-if Padron 'Ntoni were really anxious to sell the Provvidenza for an old song; for, after all, he, Goosefoot, could make Uncle Crucifix do anything he liked. In fact, when he did speak of it—drawing him aside towards the horse-trough—Uncle Crucifix replied with shrugs and frantic shakings of his head, till he looked like one possessed, and tried to slip out of Goosefoot's hands. Cousin Tino, poor man, did his best—caught him by the coat and held him by force; shook him, to make him give his attention; put his arm round his neck, and whispered in his ear: "Yes, you are an ass if you let slip such a chance! Going for an old song, I tell you! Padron 'Ntoni sells her because he can't manage her any longer, now his grandson is gone. But you could put her into the hands of Cousin Nunzio, or of your own nephew, who are dying of hunger, and will work for next to nothing. Every soldo she gains will come into your pocket. I tell you, you are a fool. The boat is in perfectly good condition—good as new. Old Padron 'Ntoni knew very well what he was about when he had her built. This is a real ready money business—as good as that of the lupins, take my word for it!"

But Uncle Crucifix wouldn't listen to him—almost crying, with his yellow hatchet-face uglier than ever since he had nearly died of the cholera—and tried to get away, even to the point of leaving his jacket in Uncle Tino's hands.

“I don’t care about it,” said he; “I don’t care about anything. You don’t know all the trouble I have, Cousin Tino! Everybody wants to suck my blood like so many leeches. Here’s Vanni Pizzuti running after Vespa, too; they’re like a pack of hunting-dogs.”

“Why don’t you marry her yourself? After all, is she not your own blood, she and her field? It will not be another mouth to feed, not at all! She has a clever pair of hands of her own, she is well worth the bread she eats, that woman. You’ll have a servant without wages, and the land will be yours. Listen, Uncle Crucifix: you’ll have another affair here as good as that of the lupins.”

Padron ’Ntoni meanwhile waited for the answer before Pizzuti’s shop, and watched the two who were discussing his affairs, like a soul in purgatory. Now it seemed as if everything were at an end, now they began again, and he tried to guess whether or no Uncle Crucifix would consent to the bargain. Goosefoot came and told him how much he had been able to obtain for him, then went back to Uncle Crucifix—going backward and forward in the piazza like the shuttle in the loom, dragging his club-foot behind him, until he had succeeded in bringing them to an agreement.

“Capital!” he said to Padron ’Ntoni; then to Uncle Crucifix, “For an old song, I tell you!” And in this way he managed the sale of all the tackle, which, of course, was no longer of any use to the Malavoglia, now that they had no boat; but it seemed to Padron ’Ntoni that they took away his very heart from within him, as he saw them carry away the nets, the baskets, the oars, the rope—everything.

“I’ll manage to get you a position by the day, and your grandson Alessio too, never fear,” said Goosefoot to Padron ’Ntoni; “but you mustn’t expect high wages, you know! ‘Strength of youth and wisdom of age.’ For my assistance in the bargaining I trust to your good-will.”

“In time of famine one eats barley bread,” answered Padron ’Ntoni. “Necessity has no nobility.”

“That’s right, that’s right! I understand,” replied Goosefoot, and away he went, in good earnest, to speak to Padron Cipolla at the drug-store, where Don Silvestro had at last succeeded in enticing him, as well as Master Filippo and a few other bigwigs, to talk over the affairs of the Commune—for after all, the money was theirs, and it is silly not to take one’s proper place in the government when one is rich and pays more taxes than all the rest put together.

“You, who are rich, can afford a bit of bread to that poor old Padron ’Ntoni,” suggested Goosefoot. “It will cost you nothing to take him on by the day, him and his grandson Alessio. You know that he understands his business better than any one else in the place, and he will be content with little, for they are absolutely without bread. It is an affair worth gold to you, Padron Fortunato; it is indeed.”

Padron Fortunato, caught as he was just at that propitious moment, could not refuse; but after higgling and screwing over the price—for, now that the times were so bad, he really hadn’t work for any more men—he at last made a great favor of taking on Padron ’Ntoni.

“Yes, I’ll take him if he’ll come and speak to me himself. Will you believe that they are out of temper because I broke off my son’s marriage with Mena? A fine thing I should have made of it! And to be angry about it! What could I do?”

Don Silvestro, Master Filippo, Goosefoot himself—all of them, in fact—hastened to say that Padron Fortunato was quite right.

Mena, meanwhile, did not even put her nose at the window, for it was not seemly to do so now that her mother was dead and she had a black kerchief on her head; and, besides, she had to look after the little one and to be a mother to her, and she had no one to help her in the housework, so that she had to go to the tank to wash and to the fountain, and to take the men their luncheon when they were at work on land; so that she was not Sant’Agata any longer, as in the days when no one ever saw her and she was all day long at the loom. In these days she had but little time for the loom. Don

Michele, since the day when the Zuppidda had given him such a talking to from her terrace, and had threatened to put out his eyes with her distaff, never failed to pass by the black street; and sometimes he passed two or three times a day, looking after Barbara, because he wasn't going to have people say that he was afraid of the Zuppidda or of her distaff; and when he passed the house where the Malavoglia lived he slackened his pace, and looked in to see the pretty girls who were growing up at the Malavoglia's.

In the evening, when the men came back from sea, they found everything ready for them: the pot boiling on the fire, the cloth ready on the table—that table that was so large for them, now that they were so few, that they felt lost at it. They shut the door and ate their supper in peace; then they sat down on the door-step to rest after the fatigues of the day. At all events, they had enough for the day's needs, and were not obliged to touch the money that was accumulating for the house. Pa-dron 'Ntoni had always that house in his mind, with its closed windows and the medlar-tree rising above the wall. Maruzza had not been able to die in that house, nor perhaps should he die there; but the money was beginning to grow again, and his boys at least would go back there some day or other, now that Alessio was growing into a man, and was a good boy, and one of the true Malavoglia stamp. When they had bought back the house, and married the girls, if they might get a boat again they would have nothing more to wish for, and Padron 'Ntoni might close his eyes in peace.

Nunziata and Anna, their cousin, came to sit on the stones with them in the evenings to talk over old times, for they, too, were left lonely and desolate, so that they seemed like one family. Nun-ziata felt as if she were at home in the house, and came with her brood running after her, like a hen with her chickens. Alessio, sitting down by her, would say, "Did you finish your linen?" or "Are you going on Monday to Master Filippo to help with the vintage? Now that the olive harvest is coming you'll always find a day's work somewhere, even when you haven't any washing to do; and you can take your brother, too; they'll give him two soldi a day." Nunziata

talked to him gravely, and asked his advice with regard to her plans, and they talked apart together, as if they had already been a gray-haired old couple.

“They have grown wise in their youth because they have had so much trouble,” said Padron ’Ntoni. “Wisdom comes of suffering.”

Alessio, with his arms round his knees like his grandfather, asked Nunziata, “Will you have me for a husband when I grow up?”

“Plenty of time yet to think about that,” replied she.

“Yes, there’s time, but one must begin to think about it now, so that one may settle what is to be done. First, of course, we must marry Mena, and Lia when she is grown up. Lia wants to be dressed like a woman now, and you have your boys to find places for. We must buy a boat first; the boat will help us to buy the house. Grandfather wants to buy back the house by the medlar, and I should like that best, too, for I know my way all about it, even in the dark, without running against anything; and the court is large, so that there’s plenty of room for the tackle; and in two minutes one is at the sea. Then, when my sisters are married, grandfather can stay with us, and we’ll put him in the big room that opens on the court, where the sun comes in; so, when he isn’t able to go to sea any longer, poor old man! he can sit by the door in the court, and in the summer the medlar-tree will make a shade for him. We’ll take the room on the garden. You’ll like that? The kitchen is close by, so you’ll have everything under your hand, won’t you? When my brother ’Ntoni comes back we’ll give him that room, and we’ll take the one up-stairs; there are only the steps to climb to reach the kitchen and the garden.”

“In the kitchen there must be a new hearth,” said Nunziata. “The last time we cooked anything there, when poor Cousin Maruzza was too unhappy to do it herself, we had to prop up the pot with stones.”

“Yes, I remember,” said Alessio, sitting with his chin in his hands, and nodding gravely, with wide dreamy eyes as if he saw Nunziata at the fire and his poor mother

weeping beside the bed.

“And you, too,” said he, “can find your way in the dark about the house by the medlar, you have been there so often. Mamma always said you were a good girl.”

“Now they have sown onions in the garden, and they’re grown as big as oranges.”

“Do you like onions?”

“I must; I have no choice. They help the bread down, and they are cheap. When we haven’t money enough to buy macaroni we always eat them—I and my little ones.”

“For that they sell so well. Uncle Crucifix doesn’t care about planting cabbages or lettuce at the house by the medlar, because he has them at his own house, and so he puts nothing there but onions. But we’ll plant broccoli and cauliflower. Won’t they be good, eh?”

The girl, with her arms across her knees, curled upon the threshold, looked out with dreaming eyes, as well as the boy; then after a while she began to sing, and Alessio listened with all his ears. At last she said, “There’s plenty of time yet.”

“Yes,” assented Alessio; “first we must marry Mena and Lia, and we must find places for the boys, but we must begin to talk it over now.”

“When Nunziata sings,” said Mena, coming to the door, “it is a sign that it will be fair weather, and we can go to-morrow to wash.”

Cousin Anna was in the same mind, for her field and vineyard was the washing-tank, and her feast-days were those on which she had her hands full of clothes to be washed; all the more now that her son Rocco was feasting himself every day, after his fashion, at the tavern, trying to drown his regret for the Mangiacarubbe, who had thrown him over for Brasi Cipolla, like a coquette as she was.

“‘It’s a long lane that has no turning,’” said Padron ’Ntoni. “Perhaps this may bring your son Rocco to his senses. And it will be good for my ’Ntoni, too, to be away

from home for a while; for when he comes back, and is tired of wandering about the world, everything will seem as it should be, and he will not complain any more. And if we succeed in once more putting our own boat at sea—and it's putting our own beds in the old places that we know so well—you will see what pleasant times we shall have resting on the door-steps there, when we are tired after our day's work, when the day has been a good one. And how bright the light will look in that room where you have seen it so often, and have known all the faces that were dearest to you on earth! But now so many are gone, and never have come back, that it seems as if the room would be always dark, and the door shut, as if those who are gone had taken the key with them forever. 'Ntoni should not have gone away," added the old man, after a long silence. "He knew that I was old, and that when I am gone the children will have no one left."

"If we buy the house by the medlar while he is gone," said Mena, "he won't know it, and will come here to find us."

Padron 'Ntoni shook his head sadly. "But there's time enough yet," he said at last, like Nun-ziata; and Cousin Anna added, "If 'Ntoni comes back rich he can buy the house."

Padron 'Ntoni answered nothing, but the whole place knew that 'Ntoni would come back rich, now he had been gone so long in search of fortune; and many envied him already, and wanted to go in search of fortune too, like him. In fact they were not far wrong. They would only leave a few women to fret after them, and the only ones who hadn't the heart to leave their women were that stupid son of La Locca, whose mother was what everybody knew she was, and Rocco Spatu, whose soul was at the tavern. Fortunately for the women, Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni was suddenly discovered to have come back, by night, in a bark from Catania, ashamed to show himself, as he had no shoes. If it were true that he had come back rich he had nowhere to put his money, for his clothes were all rags and tatters. But his family received him as

affectionately as if he had come back loaded with gold. His sisters hung round his neck, crying and laughing for joy, and ’Ntoni did not know Lia again, so tall she was, and they all said to him, “Now you won’t leave us again, will you?”

The grandfather blew his nose and growled, “Now I can die in peace—now that these children will not be left alone in the world.”

But for a whole week ’Ntoni never showed himself in the street. Every one laughed when they saw him, and Goosefoot went about saying, “Have you seen the grand fortune that Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni has brought home?” And those who had not been in such a terrible hurry to make up their bundles of shirts and stockings, to leave their homes like a lot of fools, could not contain themselves for laughing.

Whoever goes in search of fortune and does not find it is a fool. Everybody knows that. Don Silvestro, Uncle Crucifix, Padron Cipolla, Master Filippo, were not fools, and everybody did their best to please them, because poor people always stand with their mouths open staring at the rich and fortunate, and work for them like Cousin Mosca’s ass, instead of kicking the cart to pieces and running off to roll on the grass with heels in the air.

The druggist was quite right when he said that it was high time to kick the world to pieces and make it over again. And he himself, with his big beard and his fine talk about making the world over again, was one of those who had known how to make a fortune, and to hold on to it too, and he had nothing to do but to stand at his door and chat with this one and that one; for when he had done pounding that little bit of dirty water in his mortar his work was finished for the day. That fine trade he had learned of his father—to make money out of the water in the cistern. But ’Ntoni’s grandfather had taught him a trade which was nothing but breaking one’s arms and one’s back all day long, and risking one’s life, and dying of hunger, and never having, a day to one’s self when one could lie on the grass in the sun, as even Mosca’s ass could sometimes do; a real thieves’ trade, that wore one’s soul out, by

Our Lady! And he for one was tired of it, and would rather be like Rocco Spatu, who at least didn't work. And for that matter he cared nothing for Barbara, nor Sara, nor any other girl in the world. They care for nothing but fishing for husbands to work worse than dogs to give them their living, and buy silk handkerchiefs for them to wear when they stand at their doors of a Sunday with their hands on their full stomachs. He'd rather stand there himself, Sunday and Monday too, and all the other days in the week, since there was no good in working all the time for nothing. So 'Ntoni had learned to spout as well as the druggist—that much at least he had brought back from abroad—for now his eyes were open like a kitten's when it is nine days old. "The hen that goes in the street comes home with a full crop." If he hadn't filled his crop with anything else, he had filled it with wisdom, and he went about telling all he had learned in the piazza in Pizzuti's shop, and also at Santuzza's tavern. Now he went openly to the tavern, for after all he was grown up, and his grandfather wasn't likely to come there after him and pull his ears, and he should know very well what to say to anybody who tried to hinder him from going there after the little pleasure that there was to be had.

His grandfather, poor man, instead of pulling his ears, tried to touch his feelings. "See," he said, "now you have come, we shall soon be able to manage to get back the house." Always that same old song about the house. "Uncle Crucifix has promised not to sell it to any one else. Your mother, poor dear, was not able to die there. We can get the dowry for Mena on the house. Then, with God's help, we can set up another boat; because, I must tell you, that at my age it is hard to go out by the day, and obey other people, when one has been used to command. You were also born of masters. Would you rather that we should buy the boat first with the money, instead of the house? Now you are grown up, and can have your choice, because you have seen more of the world, and should be wiser than I am now I am old. What would you rather do?"

He would rather do nothing, that's what he would rather do. What did he care about

the boat or the house? Then there would come another bad year, another cholera, some other misfortune, and eat up the boat and the house, and they would have to begin all over again, like the ants. A fine thing! And when they had got the boat and the house, could they leave off working, or could they eat meat and macaroni every day? While instead, down there where he had been, there were people that went about in carriages everyday; that's what they did. People beside whom Don Franco and the town-clerk were themselves no better than beasts of burden, working, as they did, all day long, spoiling paper and beating dirty water in a mortar. At least he wanted to know why there should be people in the world who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves, and were born with silver spoons in their mouths, and others who had nothing, and must drag a cart with their teeth all their lives. Besides which, that idea of going out by the day was not at all to his taste; he was born a master—his grandfather had said so himself. He to be ordered about by a lot of people who had risen from nothing, who, as everybody in the place knew, had put their money together soldo after soldo, sweating and struggling! He had gone out by the day only because his grandfather took him, and he hadn't strength of mind to refuse. But when the overseer stood over him like a dog, and called out from the stern, "Now, then, boy, what are you at?" he felt tempted to hit him over the head with the oar, and he preferred to weave baskets or to mend nets, sitting on the beach, with his back against a stone, for then if he folded his arms for a minute nobody called out at him.

Thither came also Rocco Spatu to yawn and stretch his arms, and Vanni Pizzuti, between one customer and another, in his idle moments; and Goosefoot came there too, for his business was to mix himself up with every conversation that he could find in search of bargaining; * and they talked of all that happened in the place.

* Senserie—a sort of very small brokerage, upon which a tiny percentage is paid.

From one thing to another they got talking of Uncle Crucifix, who had, they said,

lost more than thirty scudi, through people that had died of the cholera and had left pledges in his hands. Now, Dumb-bell, not knowing what to do with all these ear-rings and finger-rings that had remained on his hands, had made up his mind to marry Vespa; the thing was certain, they had been seen to go together to write themselves up at the Municipality, in Don Silvestro's presence.

"It is not true that he is marrying on account of the jewellery," said Goosefoot, who was in a position to know; "the things are of gold or of silver, and he could go and sell them by weight in the city; he would have got back a good percentage on the money he had lent on them. He marries Vespa because she took him to the Municipality to show him the paper that she had had drawn up, ready to be signed before the notary, with Cousin Spatu here, now that the Mangiacarubbe has dropped him for Brasi Cipolla. Excuse me. Eh, Cousin Rocco?"

"Oh, I don't mind, Cousin Tino," answered Rocco Spatu. "It is nothing to me; for whoever trusts to one of those false cats of womankind is worse than a pig. I don't want any sweetheart except Santuzza, who lets me have my wine on credit when I like, and she is worth two of the Mangiacarubbe any day of the week. A good handful, eh, Cousin Tino?"

"Pretty hostess, heavy bill," said Pizzuti, spitting in the sand.

"They all look out for husbands to work for them," added 'Ntoni. "They're all alike."

"And," continued Goosefoot, "Uncle Crucifix ran off panting to the notary, with his heart in his mouth. So he had to take the Wasp after all."

Here the apothecary, who had come down to the beach to smoke his pipe, joined in the conversation, and went on pounding in his usual way upon his usual theme that the world ought to be put in a mortar and pounded to pieces, and made all over again. But this time he really might as well have pounded dirty water in his mortar, for not one of them understood a word he said, unless, perhaps, it were 'Ntoni. He at

least had seen the world, and opened his eyes, like the kittens; when he was a soldier they had taught him to read, and for that reason he, too, went to the drug-shop door and listened when the newspaper was read, and stayed to talk with the druggist, who was a good-natured fellow, and did not give himself airs like his wife, who kept calling out to him, “Why will you mix yourself up with what doesn’t concern you?”

“One must let the women talk, and manage things quietly,” said Don Franco, as soon as his wife was safe up-stairs. He didn’t mind taking counsel even with those who went barefoot, provided they didn’t put their feet on the chairs, and explained to them word for word all that there was printed in the newspaper, following it with his finger, telling them that the world ought to go, as it was written down there.

XIII.

Padron ’Ntoni, when his grandson came home to him drunk in the evening, did his best to get him off to bed without letting him be seen by the others, because such a thing had never been known among the Malavoglia, and old as he was, it brought the tears to his eyes. When he got up by night to call Alessio to go out to sea, he let the other one sleep; for that matter, he wouldn’t have been of any use if he had gone. At first ’Ntoni was ashamed of himself, and went down to the landing to meet them with bent head. But little by little he grew hardened, and said to himself, “So I shall have another Sunday to-morrow, too!”

The poor old man did everything he could think of to touch his heart, and even went so far as to take a shirt of his to Don Giammaria to be exorcised, which cost him thirty centimes.

“See,” he said to ’Ntoni, “such things were never known among the Malavoglia! If you take the downward road, like Rocco Spatu, your brother and your sister will go after you. ‘One black sheep spoils the flock.’ And those few pence which we have put together with such pains will all go again—‘for one fisherman the boat was lost

‘—and what shall we do then?”

’Ntoni stood with his head down, or growled something between his teeth; but the next day it was the same thing over again; and once he said:

“At least if I lose my head, I forget my misery.”

“What do you mean by misery? You are young, you are healthy, you understand your business; what do you want more? I am old, your brother is but a boy, but we have pulled ourselves out of the ditch. Now, if you would help us we might become once more what we were in other days; not happy as we were then, for the dead cannot return to us, but without other troubles; and we should be together, ‘like the fingers of a hand,’ and should have bread to eat. If I close my eyes once for all, what is to become of you? See, now I tremble every time we put out to sea, lest I should never come back. And I am old!”

When his grandfather succeeded in touching his heart ’Ntoni would begin to cry. His brother and sisters, who knew all, would run away and shut themselves up, almost as if he were a stranger, or as if they were afraid of him; and his grandfather, with his rosary in his hand, muttered, “O blessed soul of Bastianazzo! O soul of my daughter-in-law Maruzza! pray that a miracle may be worked for us.” When Mena saw him coming, with pale face and shining eyes, she met him, saying, “Come this way; grandfather is in there!” and brought him in through the little door of the kitchen; then sat down and cried quietly by the hearth; so that at last one evening ’Ntoni said, “I won’t go to the tavern again, no, not if they kill me!” and went back to his work with all his former good-will; nay, he even got up earlier than the rest, and went down to the beach to wait for them while it wanted still two hours to day; the Three Kings were shining over the church-tower, and the crickets could be heard trilling in the vineyards as if they had been close by. The grandpapa could not contain himself for joy; he went on all the time talking to him, to show how pleased he was, and said to himself, “It is the blessed souls of his father and his mother that

have worked this miracle."

The miracle lasted all the week, and when Sunday came 'Ntoni wouldn't even go into the piazza, lest he should see the tavern even from a distance, or meet his friends, who might call him. But he dislocated his jaws yawning all that long day, when there was nothing to be done. He wasn't a child, to go about among the bushes on the down, singing, like Nunziata and his brother Alessio; or a girl, to sweep the house, like Mena; nor was he an old man, to spend the day mending broken barrels or baskets, like his grandfather. He sat by the door in the little street, where not even a hen passed by the door, and listened to the voices and the laughter at the tavern. He went to bed early to pass the time, and got up on Monday morning sulky as ever. His grandfather said to him, "It would be better for you if Sunday never came, for the day after you are just as if you were sick." That was what would be best for him—that there should not even be Sunday to rest in; and his heart sank to think that every day should be like Monday. So that when he came back from the fishing in the evening, he would not even go to bed, but went about here and there bemoaning his hard fate, and ended by going back to the tavern. At first when he used to come home uncertain of his footing, he slipped in quietly, and stammered excuses, or went silently to bed; but now he was noisy, and disputed with his sister, who met him at the door with a pale face and red eyes, and told him to come in by the back way, for that grandfather was there.

"I don't care," he replied. The next day he got up looking wretchedly ill, and in a very bad humor, and took to scolding and swearing all day long.

Once there was a very sad scene. His grandfather, not knowing what to do to touch his heart, drew him into the corner of the little room, with the doors shut that the neighbors might not hear, and said to him, crying like a child, the poor old man! "Oh, 'Ntoni, don't you remember that here your mother died? Why should you disgrace your mother, turning out as badly as Rocco Spatu? Don't you see how poor

Cousin Anna works all the time for that big drunkard of a son of hers, and how she weeps at times because she has not bread to give to her other children, and has no longer the heart to laugh? ‘Who goes with wolves turns wolf,’ and ‘who goes with cripples one year goes lame the next.’ Don’t you remember that night of the cholera that we were all gathered around that bed, and she confided the children to your care?”

’Ntoni cried like a weaned calf, and said he wished he could die, too; but afterwards he went back—slowly, indeed, and as if unwillingly, but still he did go back—to the tavern, and at night, instead of coming home, he wandered about the streets, and leaned against the walls, half dead with fatigue, with Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta; or he sang and shouted with them, to drive away his melancholy.

At last poor old Padron ’Ntoni got so that he was ashamed to show himself in the street. His grandson, instead, to get rid of his sermons, came home looking so black that nobody felt inclined to speak to him. As if he didn’t preach plenty of sermons to himself; but it was all the fault of his fate that he had been born in such a state of life. And he went off to the druggist, or to whoever else would listen to him, to exhaust himself in speeches about the injustice of everything that there was in this world; that if a poor fellow went to Santuzza’s to drink and forget his troubles, he was called a drunkard; while those who drank their own wine at home had no troubles, nor any one to reprove them or hunt them off to work, but were rich enough for two, and did not need to work, while we were all the sons of God, and everybody ought to share and share alike.

“That fellow has talent,” said the druggist to Don Silvestro or Padron Cipolla or to anybody else whom he could find. “He sees things in the lump, but an idea he has. It isn’t his fault if he doesn’t express himself properly, but that of the Government, that leaves him in ignorance.” For his instruction he lent him the Secolo (the Age) and the Gazette of Catania.

But ’Ntoni very soon got tired of reading; first, because it was troublesome, and because while he was a soldier they had made him learn to read by force; but now he was at liberty to do as he liked, and, besides, he had forgotten a good deal of it, and how the words came one after another in printing. And all that talk in print didn’t put a penny in his pocket. What did it matter to him? Don Franco explained to him how it mattered to him; and when Don Michele passed across the piazza he shook his head at him, winking, and pointed out to him how he came after Donna Rosolina as well as others, for Donna Rosolina had money, and gave it to people to get herself married.

“First we must clear away all these fellows in uniform. We must make a revolution, that’s what we must do.”

“And what will you give me to make the revolution?”

Don Franco shrugged his shoulders, and went back to his mortar, for talking to such people as that was just beating water with a pestle, neither more nor less, he said.

But Goosefoot said, as soon as ’Ntoni’s back was turned, “He ought to get rid of Don Michele, for another reason—he’s after his sister; but ’Ntoni is worse than a pig now that Santuzza has taken to keeping him.” Goosefoot felt Don Michele to be a weight on his mind since that active official had taken to looking askance at Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta and himself whenever he saw them together; for that he wanted to get rid of him.

Those poor Malavoglia had come to such a pass that they were the talk of the place, on account of their brother. Now, everybody knew that Don Michele often walked up and down the black street to spite the Zuppidda, who was always mounting guard over her girl, with her distaff in her hand. And Don Michele, not to lose time, had taken to looking at Lia, who had now become a very pretty girl and had no one to look after her except her sister, who would say to her, “Come, Lia, let us go in; it is not nice for us to stand at the door now we are orphans.”

But Lia was vain, worse than her brother ’Ntoni, and she liked to stand at the door, that people might see her pretty flowered kerchief, and have people say to her, “How pretty you look in that kerchief, Cousin Lia!” while Don Michele devoured her with his eyes Poor Mena, while she stood at the door waiting for her drunken brother to come home, felt so humbled and abased that she wanted the energy to order her sister to come in because Don Michele passed by, and Lia said:

“Are you afraid he will eat me? Nobody wants any of us now that we have got nothing left. Look at my brother, even the dogs will have nothing to say to him!”

If ’Ntoni had a spark of courage, said Goosefoot, he would get rid of that Don Michele. But ’Ntoni had another reason for wishing to get rid of Don Michele. Santuzza, after having quarrelled with Don Michele, had taken a fancy to ’Ntoni Malavoglia for that fashion he had of wearing his cap, and of swaggering a little when he walked, that he had learned when he was a soldier, and used to hide for him behind the counter the remains of the customers’ dinners, and to fill his glass as well now and then on the sly. In this way she kept him about the tavern, as fat and as sleek as the butcher’s dog. ’Ntoni meantime discharged himself, to a certain extent, of his obligation to her by taking her part, sometimes even to the extent of thumps, with those unpleasant people who chose to find fault with their bills, and to scold and swear about the place for ever so long before they would consent to pay them. With those who were friends with the hostess, on the contrary, he was chatty and pleasant, and kept an eye on the counter, too, while Santuzza went to confession; so that every one there liked him and treated him as if he were at home. All but Uncle Santoro, who looked askance at him, and muttered, between one Ave Maria and another, against him, and how he lived upon his girl like a canon, without lifting a finger; Santuzza replying that she was the mistress, and if it were her pleasure to keep ’Ntoni Malavoglia for herself as fat as a canon, she should do it; she had no need of anybody.

“Yes, yes,” growled Uncle Santoro, when he could get her for a minute by herself. “You always need Don Michele! Master Filippo has told me time and again that he means to have done with it, that he won’t keep the wine in the cellar any longer, and we must get it into the place contraband.”

“Don Filippo must attend to his own affairs. But I tell you once for all, that if I have to pay the duty twice over, I won’t have Don Michele here again. I won’t, I won’t!”

She could not forgive Don Michele the ugly trick he had played her with the Zuppidda, after all that time that he had lived like a fighting-cock at the tavern for love of his uniform; and ’Ntoni Malavoglia, with no uniform at all, was worth ten of Don Michele; whatever she gave to him she gave with all her heart. In this way ’Ntoni earned his living, and when his grandfather reproved him for doing nothing, or his sister looked gravely at him with her large melancholy eyes, he would reply:

“And do I ask you for anything? I don’t spend any money out of the house, and I earn my own bread.”

“It would be better that you should die of hunger,” said his grandfather, “and that we all fell dead on the spot.”

At last they spoke no more to each other, turning their backs as they sat. Padron ’Ntoni was driven to silence sooner than quarrel with his grandson, and ’Ntoni, tired of being preached to, left them there whining, and went off to Rocco Spatu and Cousin Vanni, who at least were jolly? and could find every day some new trick to play off on somebody. They found one, one day, which was to serenade Uncle Crucifix the night of his marriage with his niece Vespa, and they brought under his windows all the crew, to whom Uncle Crucifix would no longer lend a penny, with broken pots and bottles, sheep’s bells, and whistles of cane, making the devil’s own row until midnight; so that Vespa got up the next morning rather greener than usual, and railed at that hussy of a Santuzza, in whose tavern all that noisy raff had got up that nasty trick; and it was all out of jealousy she had done it, because she couldn’t

get married herself as Vespa had.

Everybody laughed at Uncle Crucifix when he appeared in the piazza in his new clothes, yellow as a corpse, and half frightened out of his wits at Vespa and the money she had made him spend for his new clothes. Vespa was always spending and spilling, and if he had left her alone would have emptied his money-bags in a fortnight; and she said that now she was mistress, so that there was the devil to pay between them every day. His wife planted her nails in his face, and screamed that she was going to keep the keys herself; that she didn't see why she should want a bit of bread or a new kerchief worse than she did before; and if she had known what was to come of her marriage, with such a husband, too! she would have kept her fields and her medal of the Daughters of Mary. And he screamed, too, that he was ruined; that he was no longer master in his own house; that now he had the cholera in his house in good earnest; that they wanted to kill him before his time, to waste the money that he had spent his life in putting together! He, too, if he had known how it would be, would have seen them both at the devil, his wife and her fields, first; that he didn't need a wife, and they had frightened him into taking Vespa, telling him that Brasi Cipolla was going to run off with her and her fields. Cursed be her fields!

Just at this point it came out that Brasi Cipolla had allowed himself to be taken possession of by the Mangiacarubbe, like a great stupid lout as he was; and Padron Fortunato was always hunting for them up and down on the heath, in the ravine, under the bridge, everywhere, foaming at the mouth, and swearing that if he caught them he would kick them as long as he could stand, and would wring his son's ears off for him. Uncle Crucifix, at this, became quite desperate, and said that the Mangiacarubbe had ruined him by not running off with Brasi a week sooner. "This is the will of God!" he said, beating his breast. "The will of God is that I should have taken this Wasp to expiate my sins." And his sins must have been heavy, for the Wasp poisoned the bread in his mouth, and made him suffer the pains of purgatory

both by day and by night.

The neighbors never came near the Malavoglia now, any more than if the cholera were still in the house; but left her alone, with her sister in her flowered kerchief, or with Nunziata and her cousin Anna, when they had the charity to come and chat with her a bit. As for Anna, she was as badly off as they were with her drunkard of a son, and now everybody knew all about it; and Nunziata, too, who had been so little when that scamp of a father of hers had deserted her and gone elsewhere to seek his fortune. The poor things felt for each other, for that very reason, when they talked together, in low tones, with bent heads and hands folded under their aprons, and also when they were silent, each absorbed in her own pain.

“When people are as badly off as we are,” said Lia, speaking like a grown-up woman, “every one must take care of one’s self, and look after one’s own interests.”

Don Michele, every now and then, would stop and joke with them a little, so that the girls got used to his gold-bound cap, and were no longer afraid of him; and, little by little, Lia began to joke with him herself, and to laugh at him; nor did Mena dare to scold her, or to leave her and go into the kitchen, now they had no mother, but stayed with them crouching on the door-step, looking up and down the street with her tired eyes. Now that they were deserted by the neighbors, they felt their hearts swell with gratitude towards Don Michele, who, with all his uniform, did not disdain to stop at the Malavoglia’s door for a chat now and then. And if Don Michele found Lia alone he would look into her eyes, pulling his mustaches, with his gold-bound cap on one side, and say to her, “What a pretty girl you are, Cousin Malavoglia!”

Nobody else had ever told her that, so she turned as red as a tomato.

“How does it happen that you are not yet married?” Don Michele asked her one day.

She shrugged her shoulders, and answered that she did not know.

“You ought to have a dress of silk and wool, and long ear-rings; and then, upon my word, there’d be many a fine city lady not fit to hold a candle to you.”

“A dress of silk and wool would not be a proper thing for me, Don Michele,” replied Lia.

“But why? Hasn’t the Zuppidda one? And the Mangiacarubbe, now that she has caught Brasi Cipolla, won’t she have one too? And Vespa, too, can have one if she likes.”

“They are rich, they are.”

“Cruel fate!” cried Don Michele, striking the hilt of his sword with his fist. “I wish I could win a tern in the lottery, Cousin Lia. Then I’d show you what I’d do.”

Sometimes Don Michele would add, “Permit me,” with his hand to his cap, and sit down near them on the stones. Mena thought he came for Barbara, and said nothing. But to Lia Don Michele swore that he did not come there on account of Barbara, that he never had, that he never should, that he was thinking of quite a different person—did not Cousin Lia know that? And he rubbed his chin and twisted his mustaches and stared at her like a basilisk. The girl turned all sorts of colors, and got up to run into the house; but Don Michele caught her by the hand, and said:

“Do you wish to offend me, Cousin Malavoglia? Why do you treat me in this way? Stay where you are; nobody means to eat you.”

So, while they were waiting for the men to come back from sea, they passed the time, she in the door, and Don Michele on the stones, breaking little twigs to pieces because he did not know what to do with his hands. Once he asked her, “Would you like to go and live in town?”

“What should I do in town?”

“That’s the place for you! You were not meant to live here with these peasants, upon my honor! You are of a better sort than they are; you ought to live in a pretty little cottage, or in a villa, and to go to the marina, or to the promenade when there is music, dressed prettily, as I should like to see you—with a pretty silk kerchief on your head, and an amber necklace. Here I feel as if I were living in the midst of pigs.

Upon my honor I can hardly wait for the time when I shall be promoted, and recalled to town, as they have promised me, next year."

Lia began to laugh as if it were all a joke, shaking her shoulders at the idea. She, who didn't know even what silk kerchiefs or amber necklaces were like.

Then one day Don Michele drew out of his pocket, with great mystery, a fine red and yellow silk kerchief wrapped up in a pretty paper, and wanted to make a present of it to Cousin Lia.

"No, no!" said she, turning fiery red. "I wouldn't take it, no, not if you killed me."

Don Michele insisted. "I did not expect this, Cousin Lia; I do not deserve this." But after all, he had to wrap the kerchief once more in the paper and put it back into his pocket.

After this, whenever she caught a glimpse of Don Michele, Lia ran off to hide herself in the house, fearing that he would try to give her the kerchief. It was in vain that Don Michele passed up and down the street, the Zuppidda screaming at him all the time; in vain that he stretched his neck peering into the Malavoglia's door; no one was ever to be seen, so that at last he made up his mind to go in. The girls, when they saw him standing before them, stared, open-mouthed, trembling as if they had the ague, not knowing what to do.

"You would not take the silk kerchief, Cousin Lia," he said to the girl, who turned red as a poppy, "but I have come all the same, because I like you all so much. What is your brother 'Ntoni doing now?"

Now Mena turned red too, when he asked what her brother 'Ntoni was doing, for he was doing nothing. And Don Michele went on: "I am afraid he will do something that you will not like, your brother 'Ntoni. I am your friend, and I take no notice; but when another brigadier comes in my place he will be wanting to know what your brother is always about with Cinghialenta and that other pretty specimen, Rocco Spatu, down by the Rotolo in the evening, or walking about the downs, as if they

had nothing to do but to wear out their shoes. Look after him well, Cousin Mena, and listen to what I tell you tell him not to go so much with that meddling old wretch Goosefoot, in Vanni Pizzuti's shop, for we know everything; and he will come to harm among them. The others are old foxes. And you had better tell your grandfather to stop him from walking so much up and down the beach, for the beach is not meant to walk about on; and the cliffs of the Rotolo have ears, tell him; and one can see very well, even without glasses, the boats that put out from there at dusk, as if they were going to fish for bats. Tell him this, Cousin Mena; and tell him, too, that this warning comes from one who is your friend. As for Master Cinghialenta, and Rocco Spatu, and Vanni Pizzuti as well, we have our eye on them. Your brother trusts old Goosefoot, but he does not know that the coastguards have a percentage on smuggled goods, and that they always manage to get hold of some one of a gang, and give him a share to spy on them that they may be surprised."

Mena opened her eyes still wider, and turned pale, without quite understanding all this long speech; but she had been trembling already for fear that her brother would get into trouble with the men in uniform. Don Michele, to give her courage, took her hand, and went on:

"If it came to be known that I had warned you, it would be all over with me. I am risking my uniform in telling you this, because I am so fond of all you Malavoglia. But I should be very sorry if your brother got into trouble. No, I don't want to meet him some night in some ugly place where he has no business; no, I wouldn't have it happen to catch a booty worth a thousand francs, upon my honor I wouldn't."

The poor girls hadn't a moment's peace after Don Michele had warned them of this new cause of anxiety. They didn't shut their eyes of a night, waiting behind the door for their brother, sometimes until very late, trembling with cold and terror, while he went singing up and down the streets with Rocco Spatu and the rest of the gang, and the poor girls seemed to hear the cries and the shots as they had heard them that

night when there was the talk of hunting two-legged quail.

“You go to bed, and to sleep,” said Mena to her sister; “you are too young for such things as this.”

To her grandfather she said nothing, for she wished to spare him this fresh trouble, but to ’Ntoni, when she saw him a little more quiet than usual, sitting at the door with his chin upon his hands, she took courage to say: “What are you doing, going about with Rocco Spatu and Cinghialen-ta? You have been seen with them at the Rotolo and on the downs. And beware of Goosefoot. Remember how Jesus said to John, ‘Beware of them whom God has marked.’”

“Who told you that?” said ’Ntoni, leaping up as if he were possessed. “Tell me who told you.”

“Don Michele told me,” she answered, with tearful eyes. “He told me that you should beware of Goosefoot, and that to catch the smugglers they had to get information from some one of the gang.”

“He told you nothing else?”

“No, he told me nothing else.”

Then ’Ntoni swore that there wasn’t a word of truth in the whole of it, and told her she mustn’t tell his grandfather. Then he got up and went off in a hurry to the tavern to drown his worries in wine, and if he met any of the fellows in uniform he gave them a wide berth. After all, Don Michele really knew nothing about it, and only talked at random to frighten him because he was jealous about San-tuzza, who had turned him (Don Michele) out of the house like a mangy dog. And, in short, he wasn’t afraid either of Don Michele or of any of his crew, that were paid to suck the blood of the people. A fine thing, to be sure! Don Michele had no need to help himself in that fashion, fat and sleek as he was, and he must needs try to lay hands on some poor helpless devil or other if he tried to get hold of a stray five-franc piece. And that other idea, too, that to get anything in from outside the country one must

pay the duty, as if the things had been stolen! And Don Michele and his spies must come poking their noses into it. They were free to take whatever they liked, and were paid for doing it; but others, if they tried at the risk of their lives to get their goods on shore, were treated worse than thieves, and shot down like wolves with pistols and carbines. But it never was a sin to rob thieves. Don Giammaria said so himself in the druggist's shop. And Don Franco nodded, beard and all, and sneered that when they got a republic there would be no more such dirty work as that.

"Nor of those devil's officials," added the vicar.

"A lot of idle fellows who are paid for carrying guns about!" snarled the druggist, "like the priests, who take forty centimes for saying a mass. Tell us, Don Giammaria, how much capital do you put into the masses that you get paid for?"

"About as much as you put into that dirty water that you make us pay the eyes out of our heads for," said the priest, foaming at the mouth.

Don Franco had learned to laugh like Don Silvestro, just on purpose to put Don Giammaria into a passion; and he went on, without listening to him:

"Yes, in half an hour their work is done, and they can amuse themselves for the rest of the day, just the same as Don Michele, who goes flitting about like a great ugly bird all day long, now that he doesn't keep the benches warm at Santuzza's any more."

"For that, he has taken it up with me," interposed 'Ntoni; "and he is as cross as a bear, and goes swaggering about, because he has a sabre tied to him. But, by Our Lady's blood! one time or another, I'll beat it about his head, that sabre of his, to show him how much I care for it and for him.'

"Bravo!" exclaimed the druggist. "That's the way to talk! The people ought to show their teeth. But not here; I don't want a fuss in my shop. The Government would give anything to get me into a scrape, but I don't care to have anything to do with their judges and tribunals and the rest of their machinery."

’Ntoni Malavoglia raised his fist in the air, and swore that he was going to have done with it, once for all, if he went to the galleys for it—for the matter of that, he had nothing to lose. Santuzza no longer looked upon him as she formerly did, so much had her father obtained of her, always whining and wheedling at her between one Ave Maria and another, since Master Filippo had left off keeping his wine in their cellar. He said that the customers were thinning off like flies at Saint Andrew’s Day, now they no longer found Master Filippo’s wine, which they had drunk ever since they were babies. Uncle Santoro kept on saying to his daughter: “What do you want with that great useless ’Ntoni Malavoglia always about the place? Don’t you see that he is eating you out of house and home, to no purpose? You fatten him like a pig, and then he goes off and makes eyes at Vespa or the Mangiacarubbe, now that they are rich;” or he said, “Your customers are leaving you because you always have ’Ntoni after you, so that nobody has a chance to laugh or talk with you or, He’s so dirty and ragged that he is a shame to be seen; the place looks like a stable, and people don’t want to drink out of the glasses after him. Don Michele looked well at the door, with his cap with the gold braid. People like to drink their wine in peace when they have paid for it, and they like to see a man with a sabre at the door, and everybody took off their caps to him, and nobody was likely to deny a debt to you while he was about. Now that he doesn’t come, Master Filippo doesn’t come either. The other day he was passing, and I wanted him to come in, but he said it was of no use now, for he couldn’t get anything in contraband any longer, now you had quarrelled with Don Michele—which is neither good for the soul nor for the body. People are beginning to murmur already, and to say that the charity you give to ’Ntoni is not blameless, and if it goes on the vicar may hear of it, and you may lose your medal.”

At first Santuzza held out, for, as she said, she was determined to be mistress in her own house; but afterwards she began to see things in another light, and no longer treated ’Ntoni as she used to do. If there was anything left at meals she did not give

it to him, and she left the glasses dirty, and gave him no wine; so that at last he began to look cross, and then she told him that she didn't want any idle fellows about the place, and that she and her father earned their bread, and that he ought to do the same. Couldn't he help a bit about the house, chopping wood or blowing up the fire, instead of always shouting and screaming about, or sleeping with his head on his arms, or else spitting about everywhere so that one didn't know where to set one's foot? 'Ntoni for a while did chop the wood, or blew the fire, which he preferred, as it was easier work. But he found it hard to work like a dog, worse than he did at home, and be treated like a dog into the bargain, with hard words and cross looks—and all for the sake of the dirty plates they gave him to lick.

At last, one day when Santuzza had just come back from confession, he made a scene, complaining that Don Michele had begun to hover about the house again, and that he had waited for her in the piazza when she came home from church, and that Uncle Santoro had called to him when he heard his voice as he was passing, and had followed him as far as Vanni Pizzuti's shop, feeling the walls with his stick. Santuzza flew into a passion, and said that he had come on purpose to bring her into sin again, and make her lose her communion.

"If you are not pleased you can go," she said. "Did I say anything when I saw you running after Vespa and the Mangiacarubbe, now that they have got themselves married?"

But 'Ntoni swore there wasn't a word of truth in it, that he didn't go running after any women, and that she might spit in his face if she saw him speaking to either of them.

"No, you won't get rid of him that way," said Uncle Santoro. "Don't you see that he won't leave you because he lives at your expense? You won't get him out unless you kick him out. Master Filippo has told me that he can't keep his new wine any longer in the barrels, and that he won't let you have it unless you make it up with

Don Michele, and help him to smuggle it in as he used to do." And he went off after Master Filippo to Vanni Pizzuti's shop, feeling his way along the walls with his stick.

His daughter put on haughty airs, protesting that she never would forgive Don Michele after the ugly trick he had played her.

"Let me manage it," said Uncle Santoro. "I assure you I can be discreet enough about it. Don't believe I will ever let you go back and lick Don Michele's boots. Am I your father, or not?"

'Ntoni, since Santuzza had begun to be rude to him, was obliged to look somewhere else for his dinner, for he was ashamed to go home—where all the time his people were thinking of him with every mouthful they ate, feeling almost as if he were dead too; and they did not even spread the cloth any more, but sat scattered about the room with the plates on their knees.

"This is the last blow for me, in my old age," said his grandfather, and those who saw him pass, bent down with the nets on his shoulders, on his way to his day's work, said to each other:

"This is Padron 'Ntoni's last winter. It will not be long before those orphans are left quite alone in the world."

And Lia, when Mena told her to stay in the house when Don Michele passed by, answered, with a pout: "Yes, it is worth while staying in the house, for such precious persons as we are! You needn't be afraid anybody 'll want to steal us."

"Oh, if your mother were here you wouldn't talk in that way," murmured Mena.

"If my mother were here I shouldn't be an orphan, and shouldn't have to take care of myself. Nor would 'Ntoni go wandering about the streets, until it is a shame to hear one's self called his sister. And not a soul would think of taking 'Ntoni Malavoglia's sister for a wife."

’Ntoni, now that he was in bad luck, was not ashamed to show himself everywhere with Rocco Spatu, and with Cinghialenta, on the downs and by the Rotolo, and was seen whispering to them mysteriously, like a lot of wolves. Don Michele came back to Mena, saying, “Your brother will play you an ugly trick some day, Cousin Mena.” Mena was driven to going out to look for her brother on the downs, or towards the Rotolo, or at the door of the tavern, sobbing and crying, and pulling him by the sleeve. But he replied:

“No, it is all Don Michele; he is determined to ruin me, I tell you. He is always plotting against me with Uncle Santoro. I have heard them myself in Pizzuti’s shop; and that spy said to him, ‘And if I come back to your daughter, what kind of a figure shall I cut?’ And Uncle Santoro answered, ‘But when I tell you that the whole place will by that time be dying of envy of you?’”

“But what do you mean to do?” asked Mena, with her pale face. “Think of our mother, ’Ntoni, and of us who have no one left in the world!”

“Nothing! I mean to put Santuzza to shame, and him too, as they go to the mass, before all the world. I mean to tell them what I think of them, and make them a laughing-stock for everybody. I fear nobody in the world. And the druggist himself shall hear me.”

In short, it was useless for Mena to weep or to beg. He went on saying that he had nothing to lose, and the others should look after themselves and not blame him; that he was tired of that life, and meant to end it, as Don Franco said. And since he was not kindly received at the tavern, he took to lounging about the piazza, especially on Sundays, and sat on the church-steps to see what sort of a face those shameless wretches would wear, trying to deceive not only the world, but Our Lord and the Madonna under their very eyes.

Santuzza, not wishing to meet ’Ntoni, went to Aci Castello to mass early in the morning, not to be led into temptation. ’Ntoni watched the Mangia-carubbe, with her

face wrapped in her mantle, not looking to the right or to the left, now she had caught a husband. Vespa, all over flounces, and with a very big rosary, went to besiege Heaven that she might be delivered from her scourge of a husband, and ’Ntoni snarled after them: “Now that they have caught husbands, they want nothing more. They’ve somebody to see that they have plenty to eat.” Uncle Crucifix had lost even his devotional habits since he had got Vespa on his shoulders; he kept away from church, to be free from her presence at least for so long a time, to the great peril of his soul.

“This is my last year!” he whined. And now he was always running after Padron ’Ntoni and the others who were badly off. “This year I shall have hail in my vineyard, you’ll see; I shall not have a drop of wine!”

“You know, Uncle Crucifix,” replied Padron ’Ntoni, “as soon as you like, I am ready to go to the notary for that affair of the house, and I have the money here.”

That one cared for nothing but his house, and other people’s affairs were nothing to him.

“Don’t talk to me of the notary, Padron ’Ntoni. If I hear any one speak of a notary I am reminded of the day when I let Vespa drag me before one. Cursed be that day!”

But Cousin Goosefoot, who smelled a bargain, said to him, “That witch of a Wasp, after your death, may be capable of selling the house by the medlar for next to nothing; isn’t it better that you should finish up your own affairs while you can?” And Uncle Crucifix would reply: “Yes, yes, I’ll go to the notary; but you must let me make some profit on the affair. Look how many losses I have had!” And Goosefoot, feigning to agree with him, would add, “That witch of a wife of yours must not know that you have the money, or she might twist your neck for the sake of spending it in necklaces and new gowns.” And he went on: “At least the Mangiacarubbe does not throw her money away, now she has caught a husband. Look how she comes to church in a cotton gown!”

“I don’t care for the Mangiacarubbe; but I know she and all the other women ought to be burned alive. They are only put in the world for our damnation. Do you believe that she doesn’t spend the money? That’s all put on to take in Padron Fortunato, who goes about declaring that he’d rather marry a girl himself out of the street than let his money go to that beggar, who has stolen his son from him. I’d give him Vespa, for my part, if he wanted her! They’re all alike! And woe to whoever gets one for his misfortune! The Lord help him! Look at Don Michele, who goes up and down the black street after Donna Rosolina! What does he need more, that one? Respected, well paid, fat, and comfortable! Well, he goes running after a woman, looking for trouble with a lantern, for the sake of the vicar’s few soldi after his death!”

“No, he doesn’t go for Donna Rosolina, no,” said Goosefoot, winking mysteriously. “Donna Rosolina may take root on her terrace among her tomatoes, with her eyes like a dead fish’s. Don Michele doesn’t care for the vicar’s money. I know what he goes to the black street for.”

“Then, what will you take for the house?” asked Padron ’Ntoni, returning to the subject.

“We’ll see, we’ll see when we go to the notary,” replied old Crucifix. “Now let me listen to the blessed mass;” and so he sent him off for that time.

“Don Michele has something else in his head,” repeated Goosefoot, running his tongue out behind Padron ’Ntoni’s back, and making a sign towards his grandson, who was leaning against the wall, with a ragged jacket over one shoulder, and casting furious looks at Uncle Santoro, who had taken to coming to mass to hold out his hand to the faithful in the intervals of muttered Glorias and Ave Marias, knowing them all very well as they passed him on their way out, saying to one, “The Lord bless you;” to another, “God give you health;” and as Don Michele passed, he said to him, “Go to her, she is waiting for you in the garden. Holy Mary, pray for us! Lord be merciful to me a sinner!” When Don Michele began to go back to the tavern

people said: “Look if the cat and dog haven’t made friends! There must have been some reason for their quarrelling. And Master Filippo has gone back too. He seems to have been fonder of Don Michele than of Santuzza! Some people wouldn’t care to be alone, even in Paradise.”

Then ’Ntoni Malavoglia was furious, finding himself hustled out of the tavern worse than a mangy dog, without even a penny in his pocket to pay to go and drink in spite of Don Michele and his mustaches, and sit there all day long for the sake of plaguing them, with his elbows on the table. Instead of which he was obliged to spend the day in the street, like a dog with his tail between his legs and his nose to the ground, muttering, “Blood of Judas! one day there’ll be an upsetting there, that there will.”

Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta, who always had more or less money, laughed in his face from the door of the tavern, pointing their fingers at him, or came out to talk to him in low tones, pulling him by the arm in the direction of the downs, or whispering in his ear. He hesitated always about giving them an answer, like a fool as he was. Then they would come down upon him both at once. “You deserve to die of hunger, there in sight of the door, and to have us sneering at you worse than Don Michele does, you faint-hearted wretch, you!”

“Blood of Judas! don’t talk like that,” cried ’Ntoni, shaking his fist in the air; “or else some day something new will happen, that there will!”

But the others went sneering off and left him, until at last they succeeded in putting him into such a fury that he came straight into the middle of the tavern among them all, pale as a corpse, with his hand on his hip, and on his shoulder his old worn jacket, which he wore as proudly as if it had been a velvet coat, turning his blazing eyes about the room, looking out for somebody. Don Michele, out of respect for his own uniform, pretended not to see him, and made as if he would go away; but ’Ntoni, seeing that Don Michele was not in the humor for fighting, became outrageously insolent, sneering at him and at Santuzza, and spitting out the wine

which he drank, swearing that it was poison, and baptized besides, for Santuzza had mixed it with water, and they were simply fools to go into such a place as that to throw away their money; and that was the reason why he had left off coming there. Santuzza, touched in her weakest point, could no longer command her temper, and flew out at him, saying that he didn't come because they wouldn't have him, that they were tired of keeping him for charity, and they had had to use the broom-handle to him before he'd go, a great hungry dog! And 'Ntoni began to rage and storm, roaring and flinging the glasses about, which, he said, they had put out to catch that other great codfish in uniform, but he would bring his wine out at his nose for him; he wasn't afraid of anybody.

Don Michele, white with rage, with his cap on one side, stammered, "This will end badly, will end badly!" while Santuzza rained flasks and glasses upon both of them. At last they flew at each other with their fists, until they both rolled on the floor like two dogs, and the others went at them with kicks and thumps trying to part them, which at last Peppi Naso, the butcher, succeeded in doing by dint of lashing them with the leather strap which he took off his trousers, which took the skin off wherever it touched.

Don Michele brushed off his uniform, picked up his sabre, which he had lost in the scuffle, and went out, only muttering something between his teeth, for his uniform's sake. But 'Ntoni Malavoglia, with the blood streaming from his nose, called out a lot of bad names after him—rubbing his nose with his sleeve meanwhile, and swearing that he would soon give him the rest of it.

XIV.

Ntoni Malavoglia did meet Don Michele, and "gave him his change," and a very ugly business it was. It was by night, when it rained in torrents, and so dark that even a cat could have seen nothing at the turn on the down which leads to the

Rotolo, whence those boats put out so quietly, making believe to be fishing for cod at midnight, and where ’Ntoni and Rocco Spatu, and Cinghialenta and other good-for-nothing fellows well known to the coast-guard, used to hang about with pipes in their mouths—the guards knew those pipes well, and could distinguish them perfectly one from another as they moved about among the rocks where they lay hidden with their guns in their hands.

“Cousin Mena,” said Don Michele, passing once more down the black street—“Cousin Mena, tell your brother not to go to the Rotolo of nights with Cinghialenta and Rocco Spatu.”

But ’Ntoni would not listen, for “the empty stomach has no ears”; and he no longer feared Don Michele since he had rolled over with him hand to hand on the floor of the tavern, and he had sworn, too, to “give him the rest of it,” and he would give him the rest of it whenever he met him; and he wasn’t going to pass for a coward in the eyes of Santuzza and the rest who had been present when he threatened him. “I said I’d give him the rest when I met him next, and so I will; and if he chooses to meet me at the Rotolo, I’ll meet him at the Rotolo!” he repeated to his companions, who had also brought with them the son of La Locca. They had passed the evening at the tavern drinking and roaring, for a tavern is like a free port, and no one can be sent out of it as long as they have money to pay their score and to rattle in their pockets. Don Michele had gone by on his rounds, but Rocco Spatu, who knew the law, said, spitting and leaning against the wall the better to balance himself, that as long as the lamp at the door was lighted they could not turn them out. “We have a right to stay so long!” he repeated. ’Ntoni Malavoglia also enjoyed keeping Santuzza from going to bed, as she sat behind her glasses yawning and dozing. In the mean time Uncle Santoro, feeling his way about with his hands, had put the lamp out and shut the door.

“Now be off!” said Santuzza, “I don’t choose to be fined, for your sake, for keeping

my door open at this hour."

"Who'll fine you? That spy Don Michele? Let him come here, and I'll pay him his fine! Tell him he'll find 'Ntoni Malavoglia here, by Our Lady's blood."

Meanwhile the Santuzza had taken him by the shoulders and put him out of the door: "Go and tell him yourself, and get into scrapes somewhere else. I don't mean to get into trouble with the police for love of your bright eyes."

'Ntoni, finding himself in the street in this unceremonious fashion, pulled out a long knife, and swore that he would stab both Santuzza and Don Michele. Cinghialenta was the only one who had his senses, and he pulled him by the coat, saying: "Leave them alone now! Have you forgotten what we have to do to-night?"

La Locca's son felt greatly inclined to cry.

"He's drunk," observed Spatu, standing under the rain-pipe. "Bring him here under the pipe; it will do him good."

'Ntoni, quieted a little by the drenching he got from the rain-pipe, let himself be drawn along by Cinghialenta, scolding all the while, swearing that as sure as he met Don Michele he'd give him what he had promised him. All of a sudden he found himself face to face with Don Michele who was also prowling in the vicinity, with his pistols at his belt and his trousers thrust into his boots. 'Ntoni became quite calm all of a sudden, and they all stole off silently in the direction of Vanni Pizzuti's shop. When they reached the door, now that Don Michele was no longer near them, 'Ntoni insisted that they should stop and listen to what he had to say.

"Did you see where Don Michele was going? and Santuzza said she was sleepy!"

"Leave Don Michele alone, can't you?" said Cin-ghialenta; "that way he won't interfere with us."

"You're all a lot of cowards," said 'Ntoni.

"You're afraid of Don Michele."

“To-night you’re drunk,” said Cinghialenta, “but I’ll show you whether I’m afraid of Don Michele. Now that I’ve told my uncle, I don’t mean to have anybody coming bothering after me, finding out how I earn my bread.”

Then they began to talk under their breath, drawn up against the wall, while the noise of the rain drowned their voices. Suddenly the clock struck, and they all stood silent, counting the strokes.

“Let’s go into Cousin Pizzuti’s,” said Cinghialenta. “He can keep his door open as late as he likes, and doesn’t need to have a light.”

“It’s dark, I can’t see,” said La Locca’s son.

“We ought to take something to drink,” said Rocco Spatu, “or we shall break our noses on the rocks.”

Cinghialenta growled: “As if we were just out for our pleasure! Now you’ll be wanting Master Vanni to give you a lemonade.”

“I have no need of lemonade,” said ’Ntoni. “You’ll see when I get to work if I can’t manage as well as any of you.”

Cousin Pizzuti didn’t want to open the door at that hour, and replied that he had gone to bed; but as they wouldn’t leave off knocking, and threatened to wake up the whole place and bring the guards into the affair, he consented to get up, and opened the door, in his drawers.

“Are you mad, to knock in that way?” he exclaimed. “I saw Don Michele pass just now.”

“Yes; we saw him too.”

“Do you know where he came from?” asked Pizzuti, looking sharply at him.

’Ntoni shrugged his shoulders; and Vanni, as he stood out of the way to let them pass, winked to Rocco and Cinghialenta. “He’s been at the Malavoglia’s,” he whispered. “I saw him come out.”

“Much good may it do him!” answered Cinghialenta; “but ’Ntoni ought to tell his sister to keep him when we have anything to do.”

“What do you want of me?” said ’Ntoni, thickly.

“Nothing to-night. Never mind. To-night we can do nothing.”

“If we can do nothing to-night, why did you bring me away from the tavern?” said Rocco Spatu. “I’m wet through.”

“It was something else that we were speaking of;” and Vanni continued: “Yes, the man has come from town, and he says the goods are there, but it will be no joke trying to land them in such weather as this.”

“So much the better; no one will be looking out for us.”

“Yes, but the guards have sharp ears, and mind you, it seems to me that I heard some one prowling about just now, and trying to look into the shop.”

A moment’s silence ensued, and Vanni, to put an end to it, brought out three glasses and filled them with bitters.

“I don’t care about the guard!” cried Rocco Spatu, after he had drunk. “So much the worse for them if they meddle in my business. I’ve got a little knife here that is better than all their pistols, and makes no noise, either.”

“We earn our bread the best way we can,” said Cinghialenta, “and don’t want to do anybody harm. Isn’t one to get one’s goods on shore where one likes?”

“They go swaggering about, a lot of thieves, making us pay double for every handkerchief that we want to land, and nobody shoots them,” added ’Ntoni Malavoglia. “Do you know what Don Giammaria said? That to rob thieves was not stealing. And the worst of thieves are those fellows in uniform, who eat us up alive.”

“I’ll mash them into pulp!” concluded Rocco Spatu, with his eyes shining like a cat’s.

But this conversation did not please La Locca’s son at all, and he set his glass down

again without drinking, white as a corpse.

“Are you drunk already?” asked Cinghialenta.

“No,” he replied, “I did not drink.”

“Come into the open air; it will do us all good. Good-night.”

“One moment,” cried Pizzuti, with the door in his hand. “I don’t mean for the money for the bitters; that I have given you freely, because you are my friends; but listen, between ourselves, eh? If you are successful, mind, I am here, and my house. You know I’ve a room at the back, big enough to hold a ship-load of goods, and nobody likely to think of it, for Don Michele and his guards are hand-and-glove with me. I don’t trust Cousin Goosefoot; the last time he threw me over, and put everything into Don Silvestro’s house. Don Silvestro is never contented with a reasonable profit, but asks an awful price, on the ground that he risks his place; but I have no such motive, and I ask no more than is reasonable. And I never refused Goosefoot his percentage, either, and give him his drinks free, and shave him for nothing. But, the devil take him! if he plays me such a trick again I’ll show him that I am not to be fooled in that way. I’ll go to Don Michele and blow the whole business.”

“How it rains!” said Spatu. “Isn’t it going to leave off to-night?”

“With this weather there’ll be no one at the Rotolo,” said La Locca’s son. “Wouldn’t it be better to go home?”

’Ntoni, Rocco, and Cinghialenta, who stood on the door-step listening in silence to the rain, which hissed like fish in the frying-pan, stopped a moment, looking into the darkness.

“Be still, you fool!” cried Cinghialenta, and Vanni Pizzuti closed the door softly, after adding, in an undertone:

“Listen. If anything happens, you did not see me this evening. The bitters I gave you out of good-will, but you haven’t been in my house. Don’t betray me; I am alone in

the world."

The others went off surlily, close to the wall, in the rain. "And that one, too!" muttered Cinghialenta. "And he's to get off because he has nobody in the world, and abuses Goosefoot. At least Goosefoot has a wife. And I have a wife, too. But the balls are good enough for me."

Just then they passed, very softly, before Cousin Anna's closed door, and Rocco Spatu murmured that he had his mother, too, who was at that moment fast asleep, luckily for her. "Whoever can stay between the sheets in this weather isn't likely to be about, certainly," concluded Cousin Cinghialenta.

'Ntoni signed to them to be quiet, and to turn down by the alley, so as not to pass before his own door, where Mena or his grandfather might be watching for him, and might hear them.

Mena was, in truth, watching for her brother behind the door, with her rosary in her hand; and Lia, too, without saying why she was there, but pale as the dead. And better would it have been for them all if 'Ntoni had passed by the black street, instead of going round by the alley. Don Michele had really been there a little after sunset, and had knocked at the door.

"Who comes at this hour?" said Lia, who was hemming on the sly a certain silk kerchief which Don Michele had at last succeeded in inducing her to accept.

"It is I, Don Michele. Open the door; I must speak to you; it is most important."

"I can't open the door. They are all in bed but my sister, who is watching for my brother 'Ntoni."

"If your sister does hear you open the door it is no matter. It is precisely of 'Ntoni I wish to speak, and it is most important. I don't want your brother to go to the galleys. But open the door; if they see me here I shall lose my place."

"O blessed Virgin!" cried the girl. "O blessed Virgin Mary!"

“Lock him into the house to-night when he comes back. But don’t tell him I told you to. Tell him he must not go out. He must not!”

“O Virgin Mary! O blessed Mary!” repeated Lia, with folded hands.

“He is at the tavern now, but he must pass this way. Wait for him at the door, or it will be the worse for him.”

Lia wept silently, lest her sister should hear her, with her face hidden in her hands, and Don Michele watched her, with his pistols in his belt, and his trousers thrust into his boots.

“There is no one who weeps for me or watches for me this night, Cousin Lia, but I, too, am in danger, like your brother; and if any misfortune should happen to me, think how I came to-night to warn you, and how I have risked my bread for you more than once.”

Then Lia lifted up her face, and looked at Don Michele with her large tearful eyes. “God reward you for your charity, Don Michele!”

“I haven’t done it for reward, Cousin Lia; I have done it for you, and for the love I bear to you.”

“Now go, for they are all asleep. Go, for the love of God, Don Michele!”

And Don Michele went, and she stayed by the door, weeping and praying that God would send her brother that way. But the Lord did not send him that way. All four of them—’Ntoni, Cinghialenta, Rocco Spatu, and the son of La Locca—went softly along the wall of the alley; and when they came out upon the down they took off their shoes and carried them in their hands, and stood still to listen.

“I hear nothing,” said Cinghialenta.

The rain continued to fall, and from the top of the cliff nothing could be heard save the moaning of the sea below.

“One can’t even see to swear,” said Rocco Spatu. “How will they manage to climb

the cliff in this darkness?"

"They all know the coast, foot by foot, with their eyes shut. They are old hands," replied Cinghialenta.

"But I hear nothing," observed 'Ntoni.

"It's a fact, we can hear nothing," said Cinghialenta, "but they must have been there below for some time."

"Then we had better go home," said the son of La Locca.

"Since you've eaten and drunk, you think of nothing but getting home again, but if you don't be quiet I'll kick you into the sea," said Cinghialenta to him.

"The fact is," said Rocco, "that I find it a bore to spend the night here doing nothing. Now we will try if they are here or not." And he began to hoot like an owl.

"If Don Michele's guard hears that they will be down on us directly, for on these wet nights the owls don't fly."

"Then we had better go," whined La Locca's son, but nobody answered him.

All four looked in each other's faces though they could see nothing, and thought of what Padron 'Ntoni's 'Ntoni had just said.

"What shall we do?" asked La Locca's son.

"Let's go down to the road; if they are not there we may be sure they have not come," suggested Cinghialenta.

'Ntoni, while they were climbing down, said, "Goosefoot is capable of selling the lot of us for a glass of wine."

"Now you haven't the glass before you, you're afraid," said Cinghialenta.

"Come on! the devil take you! I'll show whether I'm afraid."

While they were feeling their way cautiously down, very slowly, for fear of breaking their necks in the dark, Spatu observed:

“At this moment Vanni Pizzuti is safe in bed, and he complained of Goosefoot for getting his percentage for nothing.”

“Well,” said Cinghialenta, “if you don’t want to risk your lives, stay at home and go to bed.”

’Ntoni, reaching down with his hands to feel where he should set his foot, could not help thinking that Master Cinghialenta would have done better not to say that, because it brought to each the image of his house, and his bed, and Mena dozing behind the door. That big tipsy brute, Rocco Spatu, said at last, “Our lives are not worth a copper.”

“Who goes there?” they heard some one call out, all at once, behind the wall of the high-road. “Stop! stop! all of you!”

“Treachery! treachery!” they began to cry out, rushing off over the cliffs without heeding where they went.

But ’Ntoni, who had already climbed over the wall, found himself face to face with Don Michele, who had his pistol in his hand.

“Blood of Our Lady!” cried Malavoglia, pulling out his knife. “I’ll show you whether I’m afraid of your pistol!”

Don Michele’s pistol went off in the air, but he himself fell like a bull, stabbed in the chest. ’Ntoni tried to escape, leaping from rock to rock like a goat, but the guards caught up with him, while the balls rattled about like hail, and threw him on the ground.

“Now what will become of my mother?” whined La Locca’s son, while they tied him up like a trussed chicken.

“Don’t pull so tight!” shouted ’Ntoni. “Don’t you see I can’t move?”

“Go on, go on, Malavoglia; your hash is settled once for all,” they answered, driving him before them with the butts of their muskets.

While they led him up to the barracks tied up like Our Lord himself, and worse, and carried Don Michele too, on their shoulders, he looked here and there for Rocco Spatu and Cinghialenta. “They have got off!” he said to himself. “They have nothing more to dread, but are as safe as Vanni Pizzuti and Goosefoot are, between their sheets. Only at my house no one will sleep, now they have heard the shots.”

In fact, those poor things did not sleep, but stood at the door and watched in the rain, as if their hearts had told them what had happened; while the neighbors, hearing the shots, turned sleepily over in their beds and muttered, yawning, “We shall know to-morrow what has happened.” Very late when the day was breaking, a crowd gathered in front of Vanni Pizzuti’s shop, where the light was burning and there was a great chattering.

“They have caught the smuggled goods and the smugglers too,” recounted Pizzuti, “and Don Michele has been stabbed.”

People looked at the Malavoglia’s door, and pointed with their fingers. At last came their cousin Anna, with her hair loose, white as a sheet, and knew not what to say. Padron ’Ntoni, as if he knew what was coming, asked, “’Ntoni, where’s ’Ntoni?”

“He’s been caught smuggling; he was arrested last night with La Locca’s son,” replied poor Cousin Anna, who had fairly lost her head. “And they have killed Don Michele.”

“Holy Mother!” cried the old man, with his hands to his head; and Lia, too, was tearing her hair. Padron ’Ntoni, holding his head with both hands, went on repeating, “Ah, Mother! Ah, Mother, Mother!”

Later on Goosefoot came, with a face full of trouble, smiting his forehead. “Oh, Padron ’Ntoni, have you heard? What a misfortune! I felt like a wet rag when I heard it.”

Cousin Grace, his wife, really cried, poor woman, for her heart ached to see how misfortunes rained upon those poor Malavoglia.

“What are you doing here?” asked her husband, under his breath, drawing her away from the window. “It is no business of yours. Now it isn’t safe to come to this house; one might get mixed up in some scrape with the police.”

For which reason nobody came near the Malavoglia’s door. Only Nunziata, as soon as she heard of their trouble, had confided the little ones to their eldest brother, and her house door to her next neighbor, and went off to her friend Mena to weep with her; but then she was still such a child! The others stood afar off in the street staring, or went to the barracks, crowding like flies, to see how Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni looked behind the grating, after having stabbed Don Michele; or else they filled Pizzuti’s shop, where he sold bitters, and was always shaving somebody, while he told the whole story of the night before, word for word.

“The fools!” cried the druggist, “the fools, to let themselves be taken.”

“It will be an ugly business for them,” added Don Silvestro; “the razor itself couldn’t save them from the galleys.”

And Don Giammaria went up close to him and said under his nose:

“Everybody that ought to be at the galleys doesn’t go there!”

“By no means everybody,” answered Don Silvestro, turning red with fury.

“Nowadays,” said Padron Cipolla, yellow with bile, “the real thieves rob one of one’s goods at noonday and in the middle of the piazza. They thrust themselves into one’s house by force, but they break open neither doors nor windows.”

“Just as ’Ntoni Malavoglia wanted to do in my house,” added La Zuppidda, sitting down on the wall with her distaff to spin hemp.

“What I always said to you, peace of the angels!” said her husband.

“You hold your tongue, you know nothing about it! Just think what a day this would have been for my daughter Barbara if I hadn’t looked out for her!”

Her daughter Barbara stood at the window to see how Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni

looked in the middle of the police when they carried him to town.

“He’ll never get out,” they all said. “Do you know what there is written on the prison at Palermo? ‘Do what you will, here you’ll come at last,’ and ‘As you make your bed, you must lie down.’ Poor devils!”

“Good people don’t get into such scrapes,” screamed Vespa. “Evil comes to those who go to seek it. Look at the people who take to that trade—always some scamp like La Locca’s son or Malavoglia, who won’t do any honest work.” And they all said yes, that if any one had such a son as that it was better that the house should fall on him. Only La Locca went in search of her son, and stood screaming in front of the barracks of the guards, saying that she would have him, and not listening to reason; and when she went off to plague her brother Dumb-bell, and planted herself on the steps of his house, for hours at a time, with her white hair streaming in the wind, Uncle Crucifix only answered her: “I have the galleys at home here! I wish I were in your son’s place! What do you come to me for? And he didn’t give you bread to eat either.”

“La Locca will gain by it,” said Don Silvestro; “now that she has no one to work for her, they will take her in at the poor-house, and she will be well fed every day in the week. If not, she will be left to the chanty of the commune.”

And as they wound up by saying, “Who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind,” Padron Fortunato added: “And it is a good thing for Padron ’Ntoni too. Do you think that good-for-nothing grandson of his did not cost him a lot of money? I know what it is to have a son like that. Now the King must maintain him.”

But Padron ’Ntoni, instead of thinking of saving those soldi, now that his grandson was no longer likely to spend them for him, kept on flinging them after him, with lawyers and notaries and the rest of it—those soldi which had cost so much labor, and had been destined for the house by the medlar-tree.

“Now we do not need the house nor anything else,” said he, with a face as pale as

’Ntoni’s own when they had taken him away to town, with his hands tied, and under his arm the little bundle of shirts which Mena had brought to him with so many tears at night when no one saw her. The whole town went to see him go in the middle of the police. His grandfather had gone off to the advocate—the one who talked so much—for since he had seen Don Michele, also, pass by in the carriage on his way to the hospital, as yellow as a guinea, and with his uniform unbuttoned, he was frightened, poor old man, and did not stop to find fault with the lawyer’s chatter as long as he would promise to untie his grandson’s hands and let him come home again; for it seemed to him that after this earthquake ’Ntoni would come home again, and stay with them always, as he had done when he was a child.

Don Silvestro had done him the kindness to go with him to the lawyer, because, he said, that when such a misfortune as had happened to the Malavoglia happened to any Christian, one should aid one’s neighbor with hands, and feet too, even if it were a wretch fit only for the galleys, and do one’s best to take him out of the hands of justice, for that was why we were Christians, that we should help our neighbors when they need it. The advocate, when he had heard the story, and it had been explained to him by Don Silvestro, said that it was a very good case, “a case for the galleys certainly”—and he rubbed his hands—“if they hadn’t come to him.”

Padron ’Ntoni turned as white as a sheet when he heard of the galleys, but the advocate clapped him on the shoulder and told him not to be frightened, that he was no lawyer if he couldn’t get him off with four or five years’ imprisonment.

“What did the advocate say?” asked Mena, as she saw her grandfather return with that pale face, and began to cry before she could hear the answer.

The old man walked up and down the house like a madman, saying, “Ah, why did we not all die first?” Lia, white as her smock, looked from one to the other with wide dry eyes, unable to speak a word.

A little while after came the summonses as witnesses to Barbara Zuppidda and

Grazia Goosefoot and Don Franco, the druggist, and all those who were wont to stand chattering in his shop and in that of Vanni Pizzuti, the barber; so that the whole place was upset by them, and the people crowded the piazza with the stamped papers in their hands, and swore that they knew nothing about it, as true as God was in heaven, because they did not want to get mixed up with the tribunals. Cursed be ’Ntoni and all the Malavoglia, who pulled them by the hair into their scrapes. The Zuppidda screamed as if she had been possessed. “I know nothing about it; at the Ave Maria I shut myself into my house, and I am not like those who go wandering about after such work as we know of, or who stand at the doors to talk with spies.”

“Beware of the Government,” added Don Franco. “They know that I am a republican, and they would be very glad to get a chance to sweep me off the face of the earth.”

Everybody beat their brains to find out what the Zuppidda and Cousin Grace and the rest of them could have to say as witnesses on the trial, for they had seen nothing, and had only heard the shots when they were in bed, between sleeping and waking. But Don Silvestro rubbed his hands like the lawyer, and said that he knew because he had pointed them out to the lawyer, and that it was much better for the lawyer that he had. Every time that the lawyer went to talk with ’Ntoni Malavoglia Don Silvestro went with him to the prison if he had nothing else to do; and nobody went at that time to the Council, and the olives were gathered. Padron ’Ntoni had also tried to go two or three times, but whenever he got in front of those barred windows and the soldiers who were on guard before them, he turned sick and faint, and stayed waiting for them outside, sitting on the pavement among the people who sold chestnuts and Indian figs; it did not seem possible to him that his ’Ntoni could really be there behind those grated windows, with the soldiers guarding him. The lawyer came back from talking with ’Ntoni, fresh as a rose, rubbing his hands, and saying that his grandson was quite well, indeed that he was growing fat. Then it seemed to the poor old man that his grandson was with the soldiers.

“Why don’t they let him go?” he asked over and over again, like a parrot or like a child, and kept on asking, too, if his hands were always tied.

“Leave him where he is,” said Doctor Scipione. “In these cases it is better to let some time pass first. Meanwhile he wants for nothing, as I told you, and is growing quite fat. Things are going very well. Don Michele has nearly recovered from his wound, and that also is a very good thing for us. Go back to your boat, I tell you; this is my affair.”

“But I can’t go back to the boat, now ’Ntoni is in prison—I can’t go back! Everybody looks at me when I pass, and besides, my head isn’t right, with ’Ntoni in prison.”

And he went on repeating the same thing, while the money ran away like water, and all his people stayed in the house as if they were hiding, and never opened the door.

At last the day of trial arrived, and those who had been summoned as witnesses had to go—on their own feet if they did not wish to be carried by force by the carbineers. Even Don Franco went, and changed his ugly hat, to appear before the majesty of justice to better advantage, but he was as pale as ’Ntoni Malavoglia himself, who stood inside the bars like a wild beast, with the carbineers on each side of him. Don Franco had never before had anything to do with the law, and he trembled all over at the idea of going into the midst of all those judges and spies and policemen, who would catch a man and put him in there behind the bars like ’Ntoni Malavoglia before he could wink.

The whole village had gone out to see what kind of a figure Padron ’Ntoni’s ’Ntoni would make behind the bars in the middle of the carbineers, yellow as a tallow-candle, not daring to look up for fear of seeing all those eyes of friends and acquaintances fixed upon him, turning his cap over and over in his hands while the president, in his long black robe and with napkin under his chin, went on reading a long list of the iniquities which he had committed from the paper where they were

written down in black and white. Don Michele was there too, also looking yellow and ill, sitting in a chair opposite to the “Jews” (as they would call the jury), who kept on yawning and fanning themselves with their handkerchiefs. Meanwhile the advocate kept on chatting with his next neighbor as if the affair were no concern of his.

“This time,” murmured the Zuppidda in the ear of the person next her, listening to all those awful things that ’Ntoni had done, “he certainly won’t get off the galleys.”

Santuzza was there too, to say where ’Ntoni had been, and how he had passed that evening.

“Now I wonder what they’ll ask Santuzza,” murmured the Zuppidda. “I can’t think how she’ll answer so as not to bring out all her own villanies.”

“But what is it they want of us?” asked Cousin Grazia.

“They want to know if it is true that Don Michele had an understanding with Lia, and if ’Ntoni did not stab him because of that; the advocate told me.”

“Confound you!” whispered the druggist, furiously, “do you all want to go to the galleys? Don’t you know that before the law you must always say no, and that we know nothing at all?”

Cousin Venera wrapped herself in her mantle, but went on muttering: “It is the truth. I saw them with my own eyes, and all the town knows it.”

That morning at the Malavoglia’s house there had been a terrible scene when the grandfather, seeing the whole place go off to see ’Ntoni tried, started to go after them.

Lia, with tumbled hair, wild eyes, and her chin trembling like a baby’s, wanted to go too, and went about the house looking for her mantle without speaking, but with pale face and trembling hands.

Mena caught her by those hands, saying, pale as death herself, “No! you must not

go—you must not go!" and nothing else. The grandfather added that they must stay at home and pray to the Madonna; and they wept so that they were heard all the length of the black street. The poor old man had hardly reached the town when, hidden at a corner, he saw his grandson pass among the carbineers, and with trembling limbs went to sit on the steps of the court-house, where every one passed him going up and down on his business. Then it came over him that all those people were going to hear his grandson condemned, and it seemed to him as if he were leaving him alone in the piazza surrounded by enemies, or out at sea in a hurricane, and so he, too, amid the crowd, went up the stairs, and strove, by rising on his tiptoes, to see through the grating and past the shining bayonets of the carbineers. 'Ntoni, however, he could not see, surrounded as he was by such a crowd of people; and more than ever it seemed to the poor old man that his grandson was one of the soldiers.

Meanwhile the advocate talked and talked and talked, until it seemed that his flood of words ran like the pulley of a well, up and down, up and down, without ceasing. No, he said; no, it was not true that 'Ntoni Malavoglia had been guilty of all those crimes. The president had gone about raking up all sorts of stories—that was his business, and he had nothing to do but to get poor helpless fellows into scrapes. But, after all, what did the president know about it? Had he been there, that rainy night, in the pitch darkness, to see what 'Ntoni Malavoglia was about? "In the poor man's house he alone is in the wrong, and the gallows is for the unlucky." The president went on looking at him calmly with his eye-glasses, leaning his elbows on his papers. Doctor Scipione went on asking where were the goods, who had seen the goods that was what he wanted to know; and since how long had honest men been forbidden to walk about at whatever hour they liked, especially when they had a little too much wine in their heads to get rid of.

Padron 'Ntoni nodded his head at this, or said, "Yes, yes," with tears in his eyes, and would have liked to hug the advocate, who had called 'Ntoni a blockhead. Suddenly

he lifted his head. That was good; what the lawyer had just said was worth of itself fifty francs. He said that since they wanted to drive them to the wall, and to prove plain as two and two make four that they had caught ’Ntoni Malavoglia in the act, with the knife in his hand, and had brought Don Michele there before them with his stupid face, well, then, “How are you to prove that it was ’Ntoni Malavoglia who stabbed him? Who knows that it was he? Who can tell that Don Michele didn’t stab himself on purpose to send ’Ntoni Malavoglia to the galleys? Do you really want to know the truth? Smuggled goods had nothing to do with it. Between ’Ntoni Malavoglia and Don Michele there was an old quarrel—a quarrel about a woman.” And Padron ’Ntoni nodded again in assent, for didn’t everybody know, and wasn’t he ready to swear before the crucifix, too, that Don Michele was furious with jealousy of ’Ntoni since Santuzza had taken a fancy to him, and then meeting Don Michele by night, and after the boy had been drinking, too? One knows how it is when one’s eyes are clouded with drink. The advocate continued:

“You may ask the Zuppidda, and Dame Grazia, and a dozen more witnesses, if it is not true that Don Michele had an understanding with Lia, ’Ntoni Malavoglia’s sister, and he was always prowling about the black street in the evening after the girl. They saw him there the very night on which he was stabbed.”

Padron ’Ntoni heard no more, for his ears began to ring, and at that moment he caught sight of ’Ntoni, who had sprung up behind the bars, tearing his cap like a madman, and shaking his head violently, with flashing eyes, and trying to make himself heard. The by-standers took the old man out, supposing that he had had a stroke, and the guards laid him on a bench in the witnesses’ room and threw water in his face. Later, while they were taking him down-stairs tottering and clinging to their arms, the crowd came pouring out like a torrent, and they were heard to say, “They have condemned him to five years in irons.” At that moment ’Ntoni came out himself, deadly pale, handcuffed, in the midst of the carbineers.

Cousin Grazia went off home, running, and reached there sooner than the others, panting with speed, for ill news always comes on wings. Hardly had she caught sight of Lia, who stood waiting at the door like a soul in purgatory, than she caught her by both hands, exclaiming: “Wretched girl! what have you done? They have told the judge that you had an understanding with Don Michele, and your grandfather had a stroke when he heard it.” Lia answered not a word any more than if she had not heard or did not care. She only stared with wide eyes and open mouth. At last she sank slowly down upon a chair, as if she had lost the use of her limbs. So she remained for many minutes without motion or speech, while Cousin Grazia threw water in her face until she began to stammer, “I can’t stay here! I must go—I must go away!” Her sister followed her about the room, weeping and trying to catch her by the hands, while she went on saying to the cupboard and to the chairs, like a mad creature, “I must go!”

In the evening, when her grandfather was brought home on a cart, and Mena, careless now whether she were seen or not, went out to meet him, Lia went first into the court and then into the street, and then went away altogether, and nobody ever saw her any more.

XV.

People said that Lia was gone to live with Don Michele; that the Malavoglia, after all, had nothing left to lose, and Don Michele would give her bread to eat. Padron ’Ntoni was of no use to anybody any more. He did nothing but wander about, bent almost double, and uttering at intervals proverbs without sense or meaning, like, “A hatchet for the fallen tree”; “Who falls in the water gets wet”; “The thinnest horse has the most flies”; and when they asked him why he was always wandering about, he said, “Hunger drives the wolf out of the wood,” or, “The hungry dog fears not the stick,” but no one asked how he was, or seemed to care about him, now he was

reduced to such a condition. They teased him, and asked him why he stood waiting with his back against the church-tower, like Uncle Crucifix when he had money to lend; or sitting under the boats which were drawn up on the sand, as if he had Padron Fortunato's bark out at sea. And Padron 'Ntoni replied that he was waiting for Death, who would not come to take him, for "Long are the days of the unhappy." No one in the house ever spoke of Lia, not even Sant'Agata, who, if she wished to relieve her feelings, went and wept beside her mother's bed when she was alone in the house. Now this house, too, had become as wide as the sea, and they were lost in it. The money was gone with 'Ntoni, Alessio was always away here or there at work, and Nunziata used to be charitable enough to come and kindle the fire when Mena used to have to go out towards evening and lead her grandfather home in the dusk, because he was half blind. Don Silvestro and others in the place said that Alessio would do better to send his grandfather to the poor-house, now that he was of no more use to anybody; but that was the only thing that frightened the poor old fellow. Every time that Mena led him out by the hand in the morning to take him where the sun shone, "to wait for Death," he thought that they were leading him to the poor-house, so silly was he grown, and he went on stammering, "But will Death never come?" so that some people used to ask him, laughing, where he thought Death had gone.

Alessio came back every Saturday night and brought all his money and counted it out to his grandfather, as if he had still been reasonable. He always replied, "Yes, yes," and nodded his head, and they always had to hide the little sum under the mattress, in the old place, and told him, to please him, that they were putting it away to buy back the house by the medlar-tree, and that in a year or two they should have enough. But then the old man shook his head obstinately, and replied that now they did not need the house, and that it would have been better if there had never been the house of the Malavoglia, now that the Malavoglia were all scattered here and there. Once he called Nunziata aside under the almond-tree, when no one was by, and

seemed to be anxious to say something very important; but he moved his lips without speaking, and seemed to be seeking for words, looking from side to side. “Is it true what they say about Lia?” he said at last.

“No,” replied Nunziata, crossing her hands on her breast, “no; by the Madonna of Ognino, it is not true!”

He began to shake his head, with his chin sunk on his breast. “Then why has she run away, too? Why has she run away?”

And he went about the house looking for her, pretending to have lost his cap, touching the bed and the cupboard, and sitting down at the loom without speaking. “Do you know,” he asked after a while—“do you know where she is gone?” But to Mena he said nothing. Nunziata really did not know where she was, nor did any one else in the place.

One evening there came and stopped in the black street Alfio Mosca, with the cart, to which was now harnessed a mule; and he had had the fever at Bicocca and had nearly died, so that his face was yellow as saffron, and he had lost his fine, straight figure, but the mule was fat and shining.

“Do you remember when I went away to Bicocca?—when you were still in the house by the medlar?” he asked. “Now everything is changed, for ‘the world is round, some swim and some are drowned.’” This time they had not even a glass of wine to offer him in welcome.

Cousin Alfio knew where Lia was—he had seen her with his own eyes, looking just as Cousin Mena used to when she used to come to her window and he talked to her from his. For which reason he sat still, looking from one thing to another, looking at the furniture and at the walls, and feeling as if the loaded cart were lying on his breast, while he sat without speaking beside the empty table, to which they no longer sat down to eat the evening meal.

“Now I must go,” he repeated, finding that no one spoke to him. “When one has left

one’s home it is better never to come back, for everything changes while one is away, and even the faces that meet one are changed, so that one feels like a stranger.”

Mena continued silent. Meanwhile Alessio began to tell him how he had made up his mind to marry Nunziata as soon as he had put together a little money, and Alfio replied that he was quite right, if Nunziata had also saved a little money, for that she was a good girl, and everybody knew her in the place. So even do our nearest and dearest forget us when we are no longer here, and each thinks of his own affairs and of bearing the burden which God has given him, like Alfio Mosca’s ass, poor beast, who was sold, and gone no one knew where.

Nunziata had her own dowry by this time, for her brothers were growing big enough to earn their own bread, and even to put by now and then a soldo; and she had never bought jewellery or good clothes for herself, for, she said, gold was for rich people, and white clothes it was nonsense to buy while she was still growing.

By this time she was grown up, a tall, slight girl with black hair and deep sweet eyes, that had never lost the look they wore when she found herself deserted by her father, with all her little brothers on her hands, whom she had reared through all those years of care and trouble. Seeing how she had pulled through all these troubles—she and her little brothers, and she a slip of a thing “no bigger than the broom-handle”—every one was glad to speak to her and to notice her if they met her in the street. “The money we have,” she said to Cousin Alfio, who was almost like a relation, they had known him so long. “At All Saints my eldest brother is going to Master Filippo as hired man, and the second to Padron Cipolla, in his place. When we have found a place for Turi I shall marry, but I must wait until I am older and my father gives his consent.”

“But your father doesn’t even think whether you are alive or dead,” said Alfio.

“If he were to come back now,” said Nunziata, calmly, in her sweet voice, sitting

quietly with her hands on her knees, “he would stay, because now we have some money.”

Then Cousin Alfio repeated to Alessio that he would do well to marry Nunziata, now that she had money.

“We shall buy back the house by the medlar,” added Alessio; “and grandfather will live with us. When the others come back they will live there too, and if Nunziata’s father comes, there will also be room for him.”

No one spoke of Lia, but they all thought of her as they sat with arms on their knees, looking into the moonlight.

Finally Cousin Mosca got up to go, because his mule shook his bells impatiently, almost as if he had known who it was whom Cousin Alfio had met, and whom they did not expect, at the house by the medlar-tree.

Uncle Crucifix expected that the Malavoglia would come to him about that house by the medlar, which had been lying all this time on his hands as if nobody cared to have it; so that he had no sooner heard that Alfio Mosca was come back to the place than he went after him to ask him to speak to the Malavoglia and induce them to settle the affair, forgetting, apparently, that he had been so jealous of Alfio Mosca, when he went away, that he had wished to break his ribs with a big stick.

“Listen, Cousin Alfio,” said Dumb-bell. “If you’ll arrange that affair of the house with the Malavoglia, when they have the money, I’ll give you enough to pay for the shoes you’ll wear out going between us.”

Cousin Alfio went to speak to the Malavoglia, but Padron ’Ntoni shook his head and said, “No; now we should not know what to do with the house, for Mena is not likely to marry, and there are no Malavoglia left. I am still here, because the afflicted have long lives. But when I am gone Alessio will marry Nunziata, and they will go away from the place.”

He, too was going away. The greater part of the time he passed in bed, like a crab

under the pebbles, crying out with pain. “What have I to do here?” he stammered, and he felt as if he was robbing them of the food they gave him. In vain did Mena and Alessio seek to persuade him otherwise. He repeated that he was robbing them of their food and of their time, and made them count the money hidden under the mattress, and if it grew less, he muttered: “At least if I were not here you would not need to spend so much. There is nothing left for me to do here, and it is time I was gone.”

The doctor, who came to feel his pulse, said that it was better they should take him to the hospital, for where he was he wore out his own life, and theirs too, to no purpose. Meanwhile the poor old man looked from one to the other trying to guess what was said, with sad faded eyes, trembling lest they should send him to the poor-house. Alessio would not hear of sending him to the poor-house, and said that while there was bread for any of them, there was for all; and Mena, for her part, also said no, and took him out into the sun on fine days, and sat down by him with her distaff, telling him stories as she would have done to a child, and spinning, when she was not obliged to go to wash. She talked to him also of what they would do if any little providential fortune were to happen to them, to comfort him, telling him how they would buy a calf at Saint Sebastian, and how she would be able to cut grass enough to feed it through the winter. In May they would sell it again at a profit; and she showed him the brood of chickens she had, and how they came picking about their feet as they sat in the sun and rolling in the dust of the street. With the money they would get for the chickens they would buy a pig, so as not to lose the fig-peelings or the water in which the macaroni had been boiled, and at the end of the year it would be as if they had been putting money in a money-box. The old man, with his hands on his stick, gave approving nods, looking at the chickens. He listened so attentively that at last he got so far as to say that if they had got back the house by the medlar they could have kept the pig in the court, and that it would bring a certain profit with Cousin Naso. At the house by the medlar-tree there was

also the stable for the calf, and the shed for the hay, and everything. He went on, recalling one thing after another, looking about him with sunken eyes and his chin upon his stick. Then he would ask his granddaughter under his breath, “What was it the doctor said about the hospital?”

And Mena would scold him as if he were a child, saying to him, “Why do you think about such things?”

He was silent, and listened quietly to all she said. But then he repeated, “Don’t send me to the hospital, I’m not used to it.”

At last he ceased to get out of bed, and the doctor said that it was all over with him, and that he could do no more, but that he might live like that for years, and that Alessio and Mena, and Nunzi-ata, too, would have to give up their day’s work to take care of him; for that if there were not some one near him the pigs might eat him up if the door were left open.

Padron ’Ntoni understood quite well what was said, for he looked at their faces one after another with eyes that it would break one’s heart to see; and the doctor was still standing on the door-step with Mena, who was weeping, and Alessio, who said no, and stamped and stormed when he signed to Nunziata to come near him, and whispered to her:

“It will be better to send me to the hospital; here, I am eating them out of house and home. Send me away some day when Mena and Alessio are gone out. They say no, because they have the good heart of the Malavoglia, but I am eating up the money which should be put away for the house; and then the doctor said that I might live like this for years, and there is nothing here for me to do. But I don’t want to live for years down there at the hospital.”

Nunziata began to cry, and she also said no, until all the neighborhood cried out upon them for being proud, when they hadn’t bread to eat. They ashamed to send their grandfather to the hospital, when the rest were scattered about here and there,

and in such places, too!

So it went on, over and over, and the doctor kept on saying that it was of no use, his coming and going for nothing; and when the gossips came to stand round the old man's bed, Cousin Grazia, or Anna, or Nunziata, he went on saying that the fleas were eating him up. Padron 'Ntoni did not dare to open his mouth, but lay there still, worn and pale. And as the gossips went on talking among themselves, and even Nunziata could not answer them, one day when Alessio was not there he said, at last:

"Go and call Cousin Alfio Mosca, that he may do me the charity to carry me to the hospital in his cart."

So Padron 'Ntoni went away to the hospital in Alfio Mosca's cart—they had put the mattress and pillows in it—but the poor sick man, although he said nothing, looked long at everything while they carried him to the cart one day when Alessio was gone to Riposto, and they had sent Mena away on some pretext, or they would not have let him go. In the black street, when they passed before the house by the medlar-tree, and while they were crossing the piazza, Padron 'Ntoni continued to look about him as if to fix everything in his memory. Alfio led the mule on one side, and Nunziata—who had left Turi in charge of the calf, the turkeys, and the fowls—walked on the other side, with the bundle of shirts under her arm. Seeing the cart pass, every one came out to look at it, and watched it until it was out of sight; and Don Silvestro said that they had done quite right, and that it was for that the commune paid the rate for the hospital; and Don Franco would also have made his little speech if Don Silvestro had not been there. "At least that poor devil will be left in peace," said Uncle Crucifix.

"Necessity abases nobility," said Padron Cipolla, and Santuzza repeated an Ave Maria for the poor old man. Only the cousin Anna and Cousin Grace Goosefoot wiped their eyes with their aprons as the cart moved slowly away, jolting on the

stones. But Uncle Tino chid his wife: “What are you whining about? Am I dead? What is it to you?”

Alfio Mosca, as he guided the cart, related to Nunziata how and where he had seen Lia, who was the image of Sant’Agata; and he even yet could hardly believe that he had really seen her, and his voice was almost lost as he spoke of it, to while the time, as they walked along the dusty road. “Ah, Nunziata! who would have thought it when we used to talk to each other from the doors, and the moon shone, and we heard the neighbors talking in front, and Sant’Agata’s loom was going all day long, and those hens that knew her as soon as she opened the door, and La Longa, who called her from the court, and everything could be heard in my house as plainly as in theirs. Poor Longa! See, now, that I have my mule and everything just as I wished, and I wouldn’t have believed it would have happened if an angel had told me; now I am always thinking of those old times and the evenings when I heard all your voices when I was stabling my donkey, and saw the light in the house by the medlar, which is now shut up, and how when I came back I found nothing as I left it, and Cousin Mena so changed! When one leaves one’s own place it is better never to come back. See, I keep thinking, too, about that poor donkey that worked for me so long, and went on always, rain or shine, with his bent head and his long ears. Now who knows where they drive him, by what rough ways, or with what heavy loads, and how his ears hang down lower than ever, and he snuffs at the earth which will soon cover him, for he is old, poor beast?” Padron ’Ntoni, stretched on the mattress, heard nothing, and they had put a covering drawn over canes on the cart, so that it seemed as if they were carrying a corpse.

“For him it is best that he should not hear,” continued Cousin Alfio. “He felt for ’Ntoni’s trouble, and it would be so much worse if he ever came to hear how Lia has gone.”

“He asked me about her often when we were alone,” said Nunziata. “He wanted to

know where she was."

"She is worse off than her brother is. We, poor things, are like sheep; we go where we see others go. You must never tell any one, especially any one in our place, where I saw Lia, for it would kill Sant'Agata. She recognized me, certainly, when I passed where she stood at the door, for she turned white and then red, and I whipped my mule to get past as quick as I could, and I am sure that poor thing would rather have had the cart go over her, or that I might have been driving her the corpse that her grandfather seems. Now the family of the Malavoglia is destroyed, and you and Alessio must bring it up again."

"We have the money for the plenishing. At Saint John's Day we shall sell the calf."

"Bravo! So, when the money is put away there won't be the chance of losing it in a day, as you might if the calf happened to die—the Lord forbid! Here we are at the first houses of the town, and you can wait for me here if you don't want to come to the hospital."

"No. I want to go too, so at least I shall see where they put him, and he will have me with him to the last moment."

Padron 'Ntoni saw them even to the last moment, and while Nunziata went away with Alfio Mosca, slowly, slowly, down the long, long room, that seemed like a church, he accompanied them with his eyes, and then turned on his side and moved no more. Cousin Alfio and Nunziata rolled up the mattress and the cover, and got into the cart and drove home over the long dusty road in silence.

Alessio beat his head with his fists and tore his hair when he found his grandfather no longer in his bed, and when they brought home his mattress rolled up, and raved at Mena as if it had been she who had sent him away. But Cousin Alfio said to him: "What will you have? The house of the Malavoglia is destroyed, and you and Nunziata must set it going again."

He wanted to go on talking about the money and about the calf, of which he and the

girl had been talking as they went to town; but Mena and Alessio would not listen to him, but sat, with their heads in their hands and eyes full of tears, at the door of the house, where they were now alone, indeed. Cousin Alfio tried to comfort them by talking of the old days of the house by the medlar-tree, when they used to talk to each other from the doors in the moonlight, and how all day long Sant'Agata's loom was beating, and the hens were clucking, and they heard the voice of La Longa, who was always busy. Now everything was changed, and when one left one's own place it was best, he said, never to come back; for even the street was not the same, now there was no one coming there for the Mangiacarubbe; and even Don Silvestro never was seen waiting for the Zuppidda to fall at his feet; and Uncle Crucifix was always shut up in the house looking after his things or quarrelling with Vespa; and even in the drug shop there wasn't so much talking since Don Franco had looked the law in the face and shut himself in to read the paper, and pounded all his ideas up into his mortar to pass away the time. Even Padron Cipolla no longer wore out the steps of the church by sitting there so much since he had had no peace at home.

One fine day came the news that Padron Fortu-nato was going to be married, in order that the Mangiacarubbe might not devour his substance in spite of him, for that he now no longer wore out the church-steps, but was going to marry Barbara Zuppidda. "And he said matrimony was like a rat-trap," growled Uncle Crucifix. "After that I'll trust nobody."

The curious girls said that Barbara was going to marry her grandfather, but sensible people like Peppi Naso and Goosefoot, and Don Franco, too, murmured: "Now Venera has got the better of Don Silvestro, and it is a great blow for Don Sil-vestro, and it would be better if he left the place. Hang all foreigners! Here no foreigners ever really take root. Don Silvestro will never dare to measure himself with Padron Cipolla."

"What did he think?" screamed Venera, with her hands on her hips—"that he could

starve me into giving him my girl? This time I will have my way, and I have made my husband understand as much. ‘The faithful dog sticks to his own trough.’ We want no foreigners in our house. Once we were much better off in the place—before the strangers came to write down on paper every mouthful that one ate, or to pound marsh-mallows in a mortar, and fatten on other people’s blood. Then everybody knew everybody and what everybody did, and what their fathers and grandfathers had done, even to what they had to eat; if one saw a person pass one knew where they were going, and the fields and the vineyards belonged to the people who were born among them, and the fish didn’t let themselves be caught by just anybody. In those days people didn’t go wandering here and there and didn’t die in the hospital.”

Since everybody was getting married, Alfio Mosca would have been glad to marry Cousin Mena, who had no longer any prospect of marrying, since the Malavoglia family was broken up, and Cousin Alfio could not now be called a bad match for her, with the mule which he had bought; so he ruminated, one Sunday, over all the reasons which could give him courage to speak to her as he sat by her side in front of the door with his back against the wall, breaking twigs off the bushes to give himself a countenance and pass away the time. She watched the people passing by, which was her way of keeping holiday.

“If you are willing to take me now, Cousin Mena,” he said at last, “I am ready, for my part.”

Poor Mena did not even turn red, feeling that Cousin Alfio had guessed that she had been willing to have him at the time when they were going to give her to Brasi Cipolla—so long ago that time appeared, and she herself so changed!

“I am old now, Cousin Alfio,” she said; “I shall never marry.”

“If you are old, then I am old too, for I was older than you were when we used to talk to each other from’ the windows, and it seems as if it was but yesterday, I remember it all so well. But it must be eight years ago. And now, when your brother

Alessio is married, you will be left alone."

Mena drew her shoulders together with Cousin Anna's favorite gesture, for she too had learned to do God's will and not complain; and Cousin Alfio, seeing this, went on: "Then you do not care for me, Cousin Mena, and I beg you to forgive my asking you to marry me. I know that you are above me, for you are the daughter of a ship-master; but now you have nothing, and when your brother marries you will be left alone. I have my mule and my cart, and I would let you want for nothing, Cousin Mena—but pardon the liberty I have taken."

"You have not taken a liberty, Cousin Alfio, nor am I offended; I would have said yes to you when we had the Provvidenza and the house by the medlar-tree if my relations had been willing, and God knows what I had in my heart when you went away to Bicocca with the donkey-cart; and it seems as if I could see still the light in the stable, and you piling all your things in the little cart in the court before your house. Do you remember?"

"Indeed, I do remember. Then, why do you not take me now, when I have the mule instead of the donkey, and your family will not say no?"

"I am too old to marry," said Mena, with her head bent down. "I am twenty-six years old, and it is too late for me to marry now."

"No, that is not the reason you will not marry me," said Alfio, with bent head as well as she. "You won't tell me the real reason;" and they went on breaking the twigs, without speaking or looking at each other. When he got up to go away, with drooping shoulders and bent head, Mena followed him with her eyes as long as she could see him, and then looked at the wall opposite and sighed.

As Alfio Mosca said, Alessio had taken Nunziata to wife, and had bought back the house by the medlar-tree.

"I am too old to marry," said Mena; "get married you, who are still young," and so she went up into the upper room of the house by the medlar, like an old saucepan,

and had set her heart at rest, waiting until Nunziata should give her children to be a mother to. They had the hens in the chicken-coop, and the calf in the stable, and the fodder and the wood in the shed, and the nets and all sorts of tackle hanging up, just as Padron ’Ntoni had described them; and Nunziata had planted cabbages and cauliflowers in the garden, with those slender arms of hers, that no one would have dreamed could have bleached such yards and yards of linen, or that such a slip of a creature could have brought into the world those rosy fat babies that Mena was always carrying about the place, as if she had borne them, and was their mother in very truth.

Cousin Mosca shook his head when he saw her pass, and turned away with drooping shoulders.

“You did not think me worthy of the honor of marrying you,” he said once when they were alone, and he could bear it no longer.

“No, Cousin Alfio,” answered Mena, with starting tears. “I swear it by the soul of this innocent creature in my arms; that is not my motive. But I cannot marry.”

“And why should you not marry, Cousin Mena?”

“No, no,” repeated Cousin Mena, now nearly-weeping outright. “Don’t make me say it, Cousin Alfio! Don’t make me speak. If I were to marry now people would begin to talk again of my sister Lia, so that no one can marry a girl of the Malavoglia after what has happened. You yourself would be the first to repent of doing it. Leave me; I shall never marry, and you must set your heart at rest.”

So Cousin Alfio set his heart at rest, and Mena continued to carry her little nephews in her arms, almost as if her heart, too, were at rest; and she swept out the room up-stairs, to be ready for the others when they came back—for they also had been born in the house. “As if they were gone on journeys from which any one ever came back!” said Goosefoot.

Meanwhile Padron ’Ntoni was gone—gone on a long journey, farther than Trieste,

farther than Alexandria in Egypt, the journey whence no man ever yet came back and when his name fell into the talk, as they sat resting, counting up the expenses of the week, or making plans for the future, in the shade of the medlar-tree, with the plates upon their laps, a silence fell suddenly upon them, for they all seemed to have the poor old man before their eyes, as they had seen him the last time they went to visit him, in that great wide chamber, full of beds in long rows, where they had to look about before they could find him, and the grandfather waited for them as the souls wait in purgatory, with his eyes fixed on the door, although he now could hardly see, and went on touching them to be sure that they were really there and still said nothing, though they could see by his face that there was much he wished to say; and their hearts ached to see the suffering in his face, which he could not tell them. When they told him, however, how they had got back the house by the medlar, and were going to take him back to Trezza again, he said yes, yes with his eyes, to which the light came back once more, and he tried to smile, with that smile of those who smile no more or who smile for the last time, which stays, planted in the heart like a knife.

And so it was with the Malavoglia when they went on Monday with Alfio Mosca's cart to bring back their grandfather, and found that he was gone. Remembering all these things, they left the spoons on their plates, and went on thinking and thinking of all that had happened, and it all seemed dark, as it was, under the shade of the medlar-tree. Now when their cousin Anna came to spin a little while with her gossips, she had white hair and had lost her cheerful laugh, because she had no time to be gay, now that she had all that family on her shoulders, and Rocco, too; and every day she had to go hunting him up, about the streets or in front of the tavern, and drive him home like a vagabond calf. And the Malavoglia had also two vagabonds; and Alessio went on beating his brains to think where they could be, by what burning hot roads, white with dust, that they had never yet come back after all that long, long time. .

Late one evening the dog began to bark behind the door of the court, and Alessio himself, who went to open the door, did not know ’Ntoni—who had come back with a bag under his arm—so changed was he, covered with dust, and with a long beard. When he had come in, and sat down in a corner, they hardly dared to welcome him. He did not seem like himself at all, and looked about the walls as if he saw them for the first time; and the dog, who had never known him, barked at him without stopping. They gave him food, and he bent his head over the plate, and ate and drank as if he had not seen the gifts of God for days and days, in silence; but the others could not eat for sadness. Then ’Ntoni, when he had eaten and rested a while, took up his bag to go.

Alessio had hardly dared to speak, his brother was so changed. But seeing him take his bag again, in act to go, his heart leaped up into his breast, and Mena said, in a wild sort of way:

“You’re going?”’

“Yes,” replied ’Ntoni.

“And where will you go?” asked Alessio.

“I don’t know. I came to see you all. But since I have been here the food seems to poison me. Besides, I can’t stay here, where everybody knows me, and for that I came at night. I’ll go along way off, where nobody knows me, and earn my bread.”

The others hardly dared to breathe, for their hearts felt as if they were held in a vice, and they felt that he was right in speaking as he did. ’Ntoni stood at the door looking about him, not being able to make up his mind to go.

“I will let you know where I am,” he said at last; and when he was in the court under the medlar-tree, where it was dark, he said, “And grandfather?”

Alessio did not answer. ’Ntoni was silent, too, for a while, and then said:

“I did not see Lia.”

And as he waited in vain for the answer, he added, with a quiver in his voice, as if he were cold, “Is she dead, too?”

Still Alessio did not answer. Then ’Ntoni, who was under the medlar-tree, with his bag in his hand, sat down, for his legs trembled under him, but rose up suddenly, stammering, “Adieu; I must go.”

Before going away he wanted to go over the house to see if everything were in its old place; but now he who had had the heart to leave them all, and to stab Don Michele, and to pass five years in prison, had not the heart to pass from one room into another unless they bade him do it. Alessio, who saw in his eyes that he wanted to see all the place, took him into the stable to show him the calf Nunziata had bought, which was fat and sleek; and in a corner there was the hen with her chickens; then he took him in the kitchen, where they had made a new oven, and into the room beside it, where Mena slept with Nunziata’s children, who seemed to her like her own. ’Ntoni looked at everything, and nodded his head, saying, “There grandfather would have put the calf, and here the hens used to be, and here the girls slept when there was the other one—” But there he stopped short, and looked about him, with tears in his eyes. At that moment the Mangiacarubbe passed by, scolding Brasi Cipolla, her husband, at the top of her voice, and ’Ntoni said, “That one has found a husband, and now when they have done quarrelling they will go back to their own house to sleep.”

The others were silent, and all the village was still, only now and then was heard the closing of some door; and Alessio at last found courage to say:

“If you will, you, too, have a house to sleep in. The bed is here, kept on purpose for you.”

“No,” replied ’Ntoni, “I must go away. There is my mother’s bed here, too, that she wetted with her tears when I wanted to go and leave her. Do you remember the pleasant talks we used to have in the evenings while we were salting the anchovies?

and Nunziata would give out riddles for us to guess, and mamma was there, and Lia, and all of us, and we could hear the whole village talking, as if we had been all one family. And I was ignorant, and knew no better then than to want to get away; but now I know how it all was, and I must go, I must go."

He spoke at that moment with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his head bent down between his shoulders. The Alessio threw his arms round his neck.

"Adieu," repeated 'Ntoni. "You see that I am right in saying that I must go. Adieu. Forgive me, all of you."

And he went, with his bag under his arm; then, when he was in the middle of the piazza, now dark and deserted, for all the doors were shut, he stopped to hear if they would shut the door of the house by the medlar-tree, while the dog barked behind and told him in that sound that he was alone in the midst of the place. Only the sea went on murmuring to him the usual story, down there between the Fariglione—for the sea has no country, either, and belongs to whoever will pause to listen to it, here or there, wherever the sun dies or is born; and at Aci Trezza it has even a way of its own of murmuring, which one can recognize immediately, as it gurgles in and out among the rocks, where it breaks, and seems like the voice of a friend.

Then 'Ntoni stopped in the road to look back at the dark village, and it seemed as if he could not bear to leave it, now that he "knew all," and he sat down on the low wall of Master Filippo's vineyard.

He sat there for a long time, thinking of many things, looking at the dark village, and listening to the murmur of the sea below. He sat there until certain sounds that he knew well began to be heard, and voices called to each other from the doors, and shutters banged, and steps sounded in the dark streets. On the beach at the bottom of the piazza lights began to twinkle. He lifted his head and looked at the Three Kings, which glowed in the sky, and the Puddara, announcing the dawn, as he had seen it do so many times. Then he bent down his head once more, thinking of all the story

of his life. Little by little the sea grew light, and the Three Kings paled in the sky, and the houses became visible, one after another, in the streets, with their closed doors, that all knew each other; only before Vanni Pizzuti's shop there was the lamp, and Rocco Spatu, with his hands in his pockets, coughing and spitting. "Before long Uncle Santoro will open the door," thought 'Ntoni, "and curl himself up beside it and begin his day's work." He looked at the sea again, that now had grown purple, and was all covered with boats that had begun the day's work, too, then took his bag, and said: "Now it is time I should go, for people will be beginning to pass by. But the first man of them all to begin his day's work has been Rocco Spatu."

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HOUSE BY THE MEDLAR-TREE ***

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