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Title: The Parent's Assistant

Author: Maria Edgeworth

Release Date: January, 2003 [Etext #R3655
[Yes, we are about one year ahead of schedule]

[The actual date this file first posted = 07/03/01]

Edition: 10

Language: English

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THE PARENT'S ASSISTANT OR STORIES FOR CHILDREN

by Maria Edgeworth

Preface Addressed to Parents.

Our great lexicographer, in his celebrated eulogium on Dr. Watts, thus speaks in commendation of those productions which he so successfully penned for the pleasure and instruction of the juvenile portion of the community.

"For children," says Dr. Johnson, "he condescended to lay aside the philosopher, the scholar, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion, and systems of instruction adapted to their wants and capacities, from the dawn of reason to its gradation of advance in the morning of life. Every man acquainted with the common principles of human action, will look with veneration on the writer, who is at one time combating Locke, and at another time making a catechism for CHILDREN IN THEIR FOURTH YEAR.

A voluntary descent from the dignity of science is perhaps the hardest lesson which humility can teach."

It seems, however, no very easy task to write for children. Those only who have been interested in the education of a family, who have patiently followed children through the first processes of reasoning, who have daily watched over their thoughts and feelings--those only who know with what ease and rapidity the early association of ideas are formed, on which the future taste, character and happiness depend, can feel the dangers and difficulties of such an undertaking.

Indeed, in all sciences the grand difficulty has been to ascertain facts--a difficulty which, in the science of education, peculiar circumstances conspire to increase. Here the objects of every experiment are so interesting that we cannot hold our minds indifferent to the result.

Nor is it to be expected that many registers of experiments, successful and unsuccessful, should be kept, much less should be published, when we consider that the combined powers of affection and vanity, of partiality to his child and to his theory, will act upon the mind of a parent, in opposition to the abstract love of justice, and the general desire to increase the wisdom and happiness of mankind. Notwithstanding these difficulties, an attempt to keep such a register has actually been made.

The design has from time to time been pursued. Though much has not been collected, every circumstance and conversation that have been preserved are faithfully and accurately related, and these notes have been of great advantage to the writer of the following stories.

The question, whether society could exist without the distinction of ranks, is a question involving a variety of complicated discussions, which we leave to the politician and the legislator. At present it is necessary that the education of different ranks should, in some respects, be different. They have few ideas, few habits in common; their peculiar vices and virtues do not arise from the same causes, and their ambition is to be directed to different objects. But justice, truth, and humanity are confined to no particular rank, and should be enforced with equal care and energy upon the minds of young people of every station; and it is hoped that these principles have never been forgotten in the following pages.

As the ideas of children multiply, the language of their books should become less simple; else their taste will quickly be disgusted, or will remain stationary. Children that live with people who converse with elegance will not be contented with a style inferior to what they hear from everybody near them.

All poetical allusions, however, have been avoided in this book; such situations only are described as children can easily imagine, and which may consequently interest their feelings. Such examples of

virtue are painted as are not above their conception of excellence, or their powers of sympathy and emulation.

It is not easy to give REWARDS to children which shall not indirectly do them harm by fostering some hurtful taste or passion. In the story of "Lazy Lawrence," where the object was to excite a spirit of industry, care has been taken to proportion the reward to the exertion, and to demonstrate that people feel cheerful and happy whilst they are employed.

The reward of our industrious boy, though it be money, is only money considered as the means of gratifying a benevolent wish. In a commercial nation it is especially necessary to separate, as much as possible, the spirit of industry and avarice; and to beware lest we introduce Vice under the form of Virtue.

In the story of "Tarlton and Loveit" are represented the danger and the folly of that weakness of mind, and that easiness to be led, which too often pass for good nature; and in the tale of the "False Key" are pointed out some of the evils to which a well educated boy, on first going to service, is exposed from the profligacy of his fellow servants.

In the "Birthday Present," and in the character of Mrs. Theresa Tattle, the "Parent's Assistant" has pointed out the dangers which may arise in education from a bad servant, or a common acquaintance.

In the "Barring Out" the errors to which a high spirit and the love of party are apt to lead have been made the subject of correction, and it is hoped that the common fault of making the most mischievous characters appear the most ACTIVE and the most ingenious, has been as much as possible avoided. UNSUCCESSFUL cunning will not be admired, and cannot induce imitation.

It has been attempted, in these stories, to provide antidotes against ill-humour, the epidemic rage for dissipation, and the fatal propensity to

admire and imitate whatever the fashion of the moment may distinguish.

Were young people, either in public schools, or in private families, absolutely free from bad examples, it would not be advisable to introduce despicable and vicious characters in books intended for their improvement. But in real life they MUST see vice, and it is best that they should be early shocked with the representation of what they are to avoid. There is a great deal of difference between innocence and ignorance.

To prevent the precepts of morality from tiring the ear and the mind, it was necessary to make the stories in which they are introduced in some measure dramatic; to keep alive hope and fear and curiosity, by some degree of intricacy. At the same time, care has been taken to avoid inflaming the imagination, or exciting a restless spirit of adventure, by exhibiting false views of life, and creating hopes which, in the ordinary course of things, cannot be realized.

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

CHAPTER I.

*Chi di gallina nasce, convien che rozole.
As the old cock crows, so crows the young.*

Those who have visited Italy give us an agreeable picture of the cheerful industry of the children of all ages in the celebrated city of Naples.

Their manner of living and their numerous employments are exactly described in the following "Extract from a Traveller's Journal." *

* Varieties of Literature, vol. i. p. 299.

"The children are busied in various ways. A great number of them bring fish for sale to town from Santa Lucia; others are very often seen about the arsenals, or wherever carpenters are at work, employed in gathering up the chips and pieces of wood; or by the sea-side, picking up sticks, and whatever else has drifted ashore, which, when their basket is full, they carry away.

"Children of two or three years old, who can scarcely crawl along upon the ground, in company with boys of five or six, are employed in this pretty trade. Hence they proceed with their baskets into the heart of the city, where in several places they form a sort of little market, sitting round with their stock of wood before them. Labourers, and the lower order of citizens, buy it of them to burn in the tripods for warming themselves, or to use in their scanty kitchens.

"Other children carry about for sale the water of the sulphurous wells, which, particularly in the spring season, is drunk in great abundance.

Others again endeavour to turn a few pence by buying a small matter of fruit, of pressed honey, cakes, and comfits, and then, like little peddlers, offer and sell them to other children, always for no more profit than that they may have their share of them free of expense.

"It is really curious to see how an urchin, whose whole stock and property consist in a board and a knife, will carry about a water-melon, or a half roasted gourd, collect a troupe of children round him, set down his board, and proceed to divide the fruit into small pieces among them.

"The buyers keep a sharp look out to see that they have enough for their little piece of copper; and the Lilliputian tradesmen act with no less caution as the exigencies of the case may require, to prevent his being cheated out of a morsel."

The advantages of truth and honesty, and the value of a character for integrity, are very early felt amongst these little merchants in their daily intercourse with each other. The fair dealer is always sooner or later seen to prosper. The most cunning cheat is at last detected and disgraced.

Numerous instances of the truth of this common observation were remarked by many Neapolitan children, especially by those who were acquainted with the characters and history of Piedro and Francisco, two boys originally equal in birth, fortune and capacity, but different in their education, and consequently in their habits and conduct. Francisco was the son of an honest gardener, who, from the time he could speak, taught him to love to speak the truth, showed him that liars are never believed--that cheats and thieves cannot be trusted, and that the shortest way to obtain a good character is to deserve it.

Youth and white paper, as the proverb says, take all impressions. The boy profited much by his father's precepts, and more by his example; he always heard his father speak the truth, and saw that he dealt fairly with everybody. In all his childish traffic, Francisco, imitating his parents, was scrupulously honest, and therefore all his companions trusted him--"As honest as Francisco," became a sort of proverb amongst them.

"As honest as Francisco," repeated Pedro's father, when he one day heard this saying. "Let them say so; I say, 'As sharp as Pedro'; and let us see which will go through the world best." With the idea of making his son SHARP he made him cunning. He taught him, that to make a GOOD BARGAIN was to deceive as to the value and price of whatever he wanted to dispose of; to get as much money as possible from customers by taking advantage of their ignorance or of their confidence. He often repeated his favourite proverb--"The buyer has need of a hundred eyes; the seller has need but of one." * And he took frequent opportunities of explaining the meaning of this maxim to his son. He was a fisherman; and as his gains depended more upon fortune than upon prudence, he trusted habitually to his good luck. After being idle for a whole day, he would cast his line or his nets, and if he was lucky enough to catch a fine fish, he would go and show it in triumph to his neighbour the gardener.

* *Chi compra ha bisogna di cent' occhi; chi vende n'ha assai di uno.*

"You are obliged to work all day long for your daily bread," he would say. "Look here; I work but five minutes, and I have not only daily bread, but daily fish."

Upon these occasions, our fisherman always forgot, or neglected to count, the hours and days which were wasted in waiting for a fair wind to put to sea, or angling in vain on the shore.

Little Pedro, who used to bask in the sun upon the sea-shore beside his father, and to lounge or sleep away his time in a fishing-boat, acquired habits of idleness, which seemed to his father of little consequence whilst he was BUT A CHILD.

"What will you do with Pedro as he grows up, neighbour?" said the gardener. "He is smart and quick enough, but he is always in mischief. Scarcely a day has passed for this fortnight but I have caught him amongst my grapes. I track his footsteps all over my vineyard."

"HE IS BUT A CHILD yet, and knows no better," replied the fisherman.

"But if you don't teach him better now he is a child, how will he know when he is a man?" said the gardener.

"A mighty noise about a bunch of grapes, truly!" cried the fisherman: "a few grapes more or less in your vineyard, what does it signify?"

"I speak for your son's sake, and not for the sake of my grapes," said the gardener; "and I tell you again, the boy will not do well in the world, neighbour, if you don't look after him in time."

"He'll do well enough in the world, you will find," answered the fisherman, carelessly. "Whenever he casts my nets, they never come up empty. 'It is better to be lucky than wise.'" *

* *E meglio esser fortunato che savio.*

This was a proverb which Pedro had frequently heard from his father, and to which he most willingly trusted, because it gave him less trouble to fancy himself fortunate than to make himself wise.

"Come here, child," said his father to him, when he returned home after the preceding conversation with the gardener; "how old are you, my boy?-- twelve years old, is not it?"

"As old as Francisco, and older by six months," said Pedro.

"And smarter and more knowing by six years," said his father. "Here, take these fish to Naples, and let us see how you'll sell them for me. Venture a small fish, as the proverb says, to catch a great one. * I was too late with them at the market yesterday, but nobody will know but what they are just fresh out of the water, unless you go and tell them."

* *Butta una sardella per pigliar un luccio.*

"Not I; trust me for that; I'm not such a fool," replied Pedro, laughing; "I leave that to Francisco. Do you know, I saw him the other day miss selling a melon for his father by turning the bruised side to the customer, who was just laying down the money for it, and who was a raw servant-boy, moreover--one who would never have guessed there were two sides to a melon, if he had not, as you say, father, been told of it?"

"Off with you to market. You are a droll chap," said his father, "and will sell my fish cleverly, I'll be bound. As to the rest, let every man take care of his own grapes. You understand me, Pedro?"

"Perfectly," said the boy, who perceived that his father was indifferent as to his honesty, provided he sold fish at the highest price possible. He proceeded to the market, and he offered his fish with assiduity to every person whom he thought likely to buy it, especially to those upon whom he thought he could impose. He positively asserted to all who looked at his fish, that they were just fresh out of the water. Good judges of men and fish knew that he said what was false, and passed him by with neglect; but it was at last what he called GOOD

LUCK to meet with the very same young raw servant-boy who would have bought the bruised melon from Francisco. He made up to him directly, crying, "Fish! Fine fresh fish! fresh fish!"

"Was it caught to-day?" said the boy.

"Yes, this morning; not an hour ago," said Pedro, with the greatest effrontery.

The servant-boy was imposed upon; and being a foreigner, speaking the Italian language but imperfectly, and not being expert at reckoning the Italian money, he was no match for the cunning Pedro, who cheated him not only as to the freshness, but as to the price of the commodity.

Pedro received nearly half as much again for his fish as he ought to have done.

On his road homewards from Naples to the little village of Resina, where his father lived, he overtook Francisco, who was leading his father's ass. The ass was laden with large panniers, which were filled with the stalks and leaves of cauliflowers, cabbages, broccoli, lettuces, etc.-- all the refuse of the Neapolitan kitchens, which are usually collected by the gardeners' boys, and carried to the gardens round Naples, to be mixed with other manure.

"Well filled panniers, truly," said Pedro, as he overtook Francisco and the ass. The panniers were indeed not only filled to the top, but piled up with much skill and care, so that the load met over the animal's back.

"It is not a very heavy load for the ass, though it looks so large," said Francisco. "The poor fellow, however, shall have a little of this water," added he, leading the ass to a pool by the roadside.

"I was not thinking of the ass, boy; I was not thinking of any ass, but of you, when I said, 'Well filled panniers, truly!' This is your morning's work, I presume, and you'll make another journey to Naples to-day, on the same errand, I warrant, before your father thinks you have done enough?"

"Not before MY FATHER thinks I have done enough, but before I think so myself," replied Francisco.

"I do enough to satisfy myself and my father, too," said Pedro, "without slaving myself after your fashion. Look here," producing the money he had received for the fish; "all this was had for asking. It is no bad thing, you'll allow, to know how to ask for money properly."

"I should be ashamed to beg, or borrow either," said Francisco.

"Neither did I get what you see by begging, or borrowing either," said Pedro, "but by using my wits; not as you did yesterday, when, like a novice, you showed the bruised side of your melon, and so spoiled your market by your wisdom."

"Wisdom I think it still," said Francisco.

"And your father?" asked Pedro.

"And my father," said Francisco.

"Mine is of a different way of thinking," said Pedro. "He always tells me that the buyer has need of a hundred eyes, and if one can blind the whole hundred, so much the better. You must know, I got off the fish today that my father could not sell yesterday in the market--got it off for fresh just out of the river--got twice as much as the market price for it; and from whom, think you? Why, from the very booby that would have bought the bruised melon for a sound one if you would

have let him. You'll allow I'm no fool, Francisco, and that I'm in a fair way to grow rich, if I go on as I have begun."

"Stay," said Francisco; "you forgot that the booby you took in today will not be so easily taken in to-morrow. He will buy no more fish from you, because he will be afraid of your cheating him; but he will be ready enough to buy fruit from me, because he will know I shall not cheat him-- so you'll have lost a customer, and I gained one."

"With all my heart," said Pedro. "One customer does not make a market; if he buys no more from me, what care I? there are people enough to buy fish in Naples."

"And do you mean to serve them all in the same manner?" asked Francisco.

"If they will be only so good as to give me leave," said Pedro, laughing, and repeating his father's proverb, "'Venture a small fish to catch a large one.'" * He had learned to think that to cheat in making bargains was witty and clever.

* *see anted.*

"And you have never considered, then," said Francisco, "that all these people will, one after another, find you out in time?"

"Ay, in time; but it will be some time first. There are a great many of them, enough to last me all the summer, if I lose a customer a day," said Pedro.

"And next summer," observed Francisco, "what will you do?"

"Next summer is not come yet; there is time enough to think what I shall do before next summer comes. Why, now, suppose the

blockheads, after they had been taken in and found it out, all joined against me, and would buy none of our fish--what then? Are there no trades but that of a fisherman? In Naples, are there not a hundred ways of making money for a smart lad like me? as my father says. What do you think of turning merchant, and selling sugar-plums and cakes to the children in their market? Would they be hard to deal with, think you?"

"I think not," said Francisco; "but I think the children would find out in time if they were cheated, and would like it as little as the men."

"I don't doubt them. Then IN TIME I could, you know, change my trade-- sell chips and sticks in the wood-market--hand about the lemonade to the fine folks, or twenty other things. There are trades enough, boy."

"Yes, for the honest dealer," said Francisco, "but for no other; for in all of them you'll find, as MY father says, that a good character is the best fortune to set up with. Change your trade ever so often, you'll be found out for what you are at last."

"And what am I, pray?" said Pedro, angrily. "The whole truth of the matter is, Francisco, that you envy my good luck, and can't bear to hear this money jingle in my hand. Ay, stroke the long ears of your ass, and look as wise as you please. It's better to be lucky than wise, as MY father says. Good morning to you. When I am found out for what I am, or when the worst comes to the worst, I can drive a stupid ass, with his panniers filled with rubbish, as well as you do now, HONEST FRANCISCO."

"Not quite so well. Unless you were HONEST FRANCISCO, you would not fill his panniers quite so readily."

This was certain, that Francisco was so well known for his honesty amongst all the people at Naples with whom his father was acquainted, that everyone was glad to deal with him; and as he never wronged anyone, all were willing to serve him--at least, as much as they could without loss to themselves: so that after the market was over, his panniers were regularly filled by the gardeners and others with whatever he wanted.

His industry was constant, his gains small but certain, and he every day had more and more reason to trust to his father's maxim--That honesty is the best policy.

The foreign servant lad, to whom Francisco had so honestly, or, as Pedro said, so sillily, shown the bruised side of the melon, was an Englishman.

He left his native country, of which he was extremely fond, to attend upon his master, to whom he was still more attached. His master was in a declining state of health, and this young lad waited on him a little more to his mind than his other servants. We must, in consideration of his zeal, fidelity and inexperience, pardon him for not being a good judge of fish. Though he had simplicity enough to be easily cheated once, he had too much sense to be twice made a dupe. The next time he met Pedro in the market, he happened to be in company with several English gentlemen's servants, and he pointed Pedro out to them all as an arrant knave. They heard his cry of "Fresh fish! fresh fish! fine fresh fish!" with incredulous smiles, and let him pass, but not without some expressions of contempt, though uttered in English, he tolerably well understood; for the tone of contempt is sufficiently expressive in all languages. He lost more by not selling his fish to these people than he had gained the day before by cheating the ENGLISH BOOBY. The market was well supplied, and he could not get rid of his cargo.

"Is not this truly provoking?" said Pedro, as he passed by Francisco, who was selling fruit for his father. "Look, my basket is as heavy as

when I left home and look at 'em yourself, they really are fine fresh fish today and yet, because that revengeful booby told how I took him in yesterday, not one of yonder crowd would buy them; and all the time they really are fresh today!"

"So they are," said Francisco, "but you said so yesterday, when they were not; and he that was duped then, is not ready to believe you today. How does he know that you deserve it better?"

"He might have looked at the fish," repeated Pedro; "they are fresh today. I am sure he need not have been afraid."

"Ay," said Francisco; "but as my father said to you once--the scalded dog fears cold water." *

** Il cane scottato dell' acqua calda ha paura poi della fredda.*

Here their conversation was interrupted by the same English lad, who smiled as he came up to Francisco, and taking up a fine pine-apple, he said, in a mixture of bad Italian and English--"I need not look at the other side of this; you will tell me if it is not as good as it looks.

Name your price; I know you have but one, and that an honest one; and as to the rest, I am able and willing to pay for what I buy; that is to say, my master is, which comes to the same thing. I wish your fruit could make him well, and it would be worth its weight in gold to me, at least. We must have some of your grapes for him."

"Is he not well?" inquired Francisco. "We must, then, pick out the best for him," at the same time singling out a tempting bunch. "I hope he will like these; but if you could some day come as far as Resina (it is a village but a few miles out of town, where we have our vineyard), you could there choose for yourself, and pluck them fresh from the vines for your poor master."

"Bless you, my good boy; I should take you for an Englishman, by your way of dealing. I'll come to your village. Only write me down the name; for your Italian names slip through my head. I'll come to the vineyard if it was ten miles off; and all the time we stay in Naples (may it not be so long as I fear it will!), with my master's leave, which he never refuses me to anything that's proper, I'll deal with you for all our fruit, as sure as my name's Arthur, and with none else, with my good will. I wish all your countrymen would take after you in honesty, indeed I do," concluded the Englishman, looking full at Pedro, who took up his unsold basket of fish, looking somewhat silly, and gloomily walked off.

Arthur, the English servant, was as good as his word. He dealt constantly with Francisco, and proved an excellent customer, buying from him during the whole season as much fruit as his master wanted. His master, who was an Englishman of distinction, was invited to take up his residence, during his stay in Italy, at the Count de F.'s villa, which was in the environs of Naples--an easy walk from Resina. Francisco had the pleasure of seeing his father's vineyard often full of generous visitors, and Arthur, who had circulated the anecdote of the bruised melon, was, he said, "proud to think that some of this was his doing, and that an Englishman never forgot a good turn, be it from a countryman or foreigner."

"My dear boy," said Francisco's father to him, whilst Arthur was in the vineyard helping to tend the vines, "I am to thank you and your honesty, it seems, for our having our hands so full of business this season. It is fair you should have a share of our profits."

"So I have, father, enough and enough, when I see you and mother going on so well. What can I want more?"

"Oh, my brave boy, we know you are a grateful, good son; but I have been your age myself; you have companions, you have little expenses

of your own. Here; this vine, this fig-tree, and a melon a week next summer shall be yours. With these make a fine figure amongst the little Neapolitan merchants; and all I wish is that you may prosper as well, and by the same honest means, in managing for yourself, as you have done managing for me."

"Thank you, father; and if I prosper at all, it shall be by those means, and no other, or I should not be worthy to be called your son."

Piedro the cunning did not make quite so successful a summer's work as did Francisco the honest. No extraordinary events happened, no singular instance of bad or good luck occurred; but he felt, as persons usually do, the natural consequences of his own actions. He pursued his scheme of imposing, as far as he could, upon every person he dealt with; and the consequence was, that at last nobody would deal with him.

"It is easy to outwit one person, but impossible to outwit all the world," said a man * who knew the world at least as well as either Piedro or his father.

** The Duke de Rochefoucault.--"On peut etre plus fin qu'un autre, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres."*

Piedro's father, amongst others, had reason to complain. He saw his own customers fall off from him, and was told, whenever he went into the market, that his son was such a cheat there was no dealing with him. One day, when he was returning from the market in a very bad humour, in consequence of these reproaches, and of his not having found customers for his goods, he espied his SMART son Piedro at a little merchant's fruit-board devouring a fine gourd with prodigious greediness. "Where, glutton, do you find money to pay for these dainties?" exclaimed his father, coming close up to him, with angry gestures. Piedro's mouth was much too full to make an immediate

reply, nor did his father wait for any, but darting his hand into the youth's pocket, pulled forth a handful of silver.

"The money, father," said Piedro, "that I got for the fish yesterday, and that I meant to give you to-day, before you went out."

"Then I'll make you remember it against another time, sirrah!" said his father. "I'll teach you to fill your stomach with my money. Am I to lose my customers by your tricks, and then find you here eating my all? You are a rogue, and everybody has found you out to be a rogue; and the worst of rogues I find you, who scruples not to cheat his own father."

Saying these words, with great vehemence he seized hold of Piedro, and in the very midst of the little fruit-market gave him a severe beating. This beating did the boy no good; it was vengeance not punishment. Piedro saw that his father was in a passion, and knew that he was beaten because he was found out to be a rogue, rather than for being one. He recollected perfectly that his father once said to him: "Let everyone take care of his own grapes."

Indeed it was scarcely reasonable to expect that a boy who had been educated to think that he might cheat every customer he could in the way of trade, should be afterwards scrupulously honest in his conduct towards the father whose proverbs encouraged his childhood in cunning.

Piedro writhed with bodily pain as he left the market after his drubbing, but his mind was not in the least amended. On the contrary, he was hardened to the sense of shame by the loss of reputation. All the little merchants were spectators of this scene, and heard his father's words: "You ARE a rogue, and the worst of rogues, who scruples not to cheat his own father."

These words were long remembered, and long did Pedro feel their effects.

He once flattered himself that, when his trade of selling fish failed him, he could readily engage in some other; but he now found, to his mortification, that what Francisco's father said proved true: "In all trades the best fortune to set up with is a good character."

Not one of the little Neapolitan merchants would either enter into partnership with him, give him credit, or even trade with him for ready money. "If you would cheat your own father, to be sure you will cheat us," was continually said to him by these prudent little people.

Pedro was taunted and treated with contempt at home and abroad. His father, when he found that his son's smartness was no longer useful in making bargains, shoved him out of his way whenever he met him. All the food or clothes that he had at home seemed to be given to him grudgingly, and with such expressions as these: "Take that; but it is too good for you. You must eat this, now, instead of gourds and figs--and be thankful you have even this."

Pedro spent a whole winter very unhappily. He expected that all his old tricks, and especially what his father had said of him in the market- place, would be soon forgotten; but month passed after month, and still these things were fresh in the memory of all who had known them.

It is not easy to get rid of a bad character. A very great rogue * was once heard to say, that he would, with all his heart, give ten thousand pounds for a good character, because he knew that he could make twenty thousand by it.

* *Chartres*.

Something like this was the sentiment of our cunning hero when he experienced the evils of a bad reputation, and when he saw the numerous advantages which Francisco's good character procured. Such had been Pedro's wretched education, that even the hard lessons of experience could not alter its pernicious effects. He was sorry his knavery had been detected, but he still thought it clever to cheat, and was secretly persuaded that, if he had cheated successfully, he should have been happy. "But I know I am not happy now," said he to himself one morning, as he sat alone disconsolate by the sea-shore, dressed in tattered garments, weak and hungry, with an empty basket beside him. His fishing-rod, which he held between his knees, bent over the dry sands instead of into the water, for he was not thinking of what he was about; his arms were folded, his head hung down, and his ragged hat was slouched over his ace. He was a melancholy spectacle.

Francisco, as he was coming from his father's vineyard with a large dish of purple and white grapes upon his head, and a basket of melons and figs hanging upon his arm, chanced to see Pedro seated in this melancholy posture. Touched with compassion, Francisco approached him softly; his footsteps were not heard upon the sands, and Pedro did not perceive that anyone was near him till he felt something cold touch his hand; he then started, and, looking up, saw a bunch of grapes, which Francisco was holding over his head.

"Eat them: you'll find them very good, I hope," said Francisco, with a benevolent smile.

"They are excellent--most excellent, and I am much obliged to you, Francisco," said Pedro. "I was very hungry, and that's what I am now, without anybody's caring anything about it. I am not the favourite I was with my father, but I know it is all my own fault."

"Well, but cheer up," said Francisco; "my father always says, 'One who knows he has been in fault, and acknowledges it, will scarcely be in fault again.' Yes, take as many figs as you will," continued he; and held his basket closer to Pedro, who, as he saw, cast a hungry eye upon one of the ripe figs.

"But," said Pedro, after he had taken several, "shall not I get you into a scrape by taking so many? Won't your father be apt to miss them?"

"Do you think I would give them to you if they were not my own?" said Francisco, with a sudden glance of indignation.

"Well, don't be angry that I asked the question; it was only from fear of getting you into disgrace that I asked it."

"It would not be easy for anybody to do that, I hope," said Francisco, rather proudly.

"And to me less than anybody," replied Pedro, in an insinuating tone, "_I_ that am so much obliged to you!"

"A bunch of grapes, and a few figs, are no mighty obligation," said Francisco, smiling; "I wish I could do more for you. You seem, indeed, to have been very unhappy of late. We never see you in the markets as we used to do."

"No; ever since my father beat me, and called me rogue before all the children there, I have never been able to show my face without being giped at by one or t'other. If you would but take me along with you amongst them, and only just SEEM my friend, for a day or two, or so, it would quite set me up again; for they all like you."

"I would rather BE than seem your friend, if I could," said Francisco.

"Ay, to be sure; that would be still better," said Pedro, observing that Francisco, as he uttered his last sentence, was separating the grapes and other fruits into two equal divisions. "To be sure I would rather you would BE than SEEM a friend to me; but I thought that was too much to ask at first, though I have a notion, notwithstanding I have been so UNLUCKY lately--I have a notion you would have no reason to repent of it. You would find me no bad hand, if you were to try, and take me into partnership."

"Partnership!" interrupted Francisco, drawing back alarmed; "I had no thoughts of that."

"But won't you? can't you?" said Pedro, in a supplicating tone; "CAN'T you have thoughts of it? You'd find me a very active partner."

Francisco still drew back, and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground. He was embarrassed; for he pitied Pedro, and he scarcely knew how to point out to him that something more is necessary in a partner in trade besides activity, and that is honesty.

"Can't you?" repeated Pedro, thinking that he hesitated from merely mercenary motives. "You shall have what share of the profits you please."

"I was not thinking of the profits," said Francisco; "but without meaning to be ill-natured to you, Pedro, I must say that I cannot enter into any partnership with you at present; but I will do what, perhaps, you will like as well," said he, taking half the fruit out of his basket; "you are heartily welcome to this; try and sell it in the children's fruit market. I'll go on before you, and speak to those I am acquainted with, and tell them you are going to set up a new character, and that you hope to make it a good one."

"Hey, shall I! Thank you for ever, dear Francisco," cried Pedro, seizing his plentiful gift of fruit. "Say what you please for me."

"But don't make me say anything that is not true," said Francisco, pausing.

"No, to be sure not," said Pedro; "I DO mean to give no room for scandal. If I could get them to trust me as they do you, I should be happy indeed."

"That is what you may do, if you please," said Francisco. "Adieu, I wish you well with all my heart; but I must leave you now, or I shall be too late for the market."

CHAPTER II.

*Chi va piano va sano, e anche lontano.
Fair and softly goes far in a day.*

Pedro had now an opportunity of establishing a good character. When he went into the market with his grapes and figs, he found that he was not shunned or taunted as usual. All seemed disposed to believe in his intended reformation, and to give him a fair trial.

These favourable dispositions towards him were the consequence of Francisco's benevolent representations. He told them that he thought Pedro had suffered enough to cure him of his tricks, and that it would be cruelty in them, because he might once have been in fault, to banish him by their reproaches from amongst them, and thus to prevent him from the means of gaining his livelihood honestly.

Pedro made a good beginning, and gave what several of the younger customers thought excellent bargains. His grapes and figs were quickly sold, and with the money that he got for them he the next day purchased from a fruit dealer a fresh supply; and thus he went on for some time, conducting himself with scrupulous honesty, so that he acquired some credit among his companions. They no longer watched him with suspicious eyes. They trusted to his measures and weights, and they counted less carefully the change which they received from him.

The satisfaction he felt from this alteration in their manners was at first delightful to Pedro; but in proportion to his credit, his opportunities of defrauding increased; and these became temptations which he had not the firmness to resist. His old manner of thinking recurred.

"I make but a few shillings a day, and this is but slow work," said he to himself. "What signifies my good character, if I make so little by it?"

Light gains, and frequent, make a heavy purse, * was one of Francisco's proverbs. But Pedro was in too great haste to get rich to take time into his account. He set his invention to work, and he did not want for ingenuity, to devise means of cheating without running the risk of detection. He observed that the younger part of the community were extremely fond of certain coloured sugar plums, and of burnt almonds.

** Poco e spesso empie il borsetto.*

With the money he had earned by two months' trading in fruit he laid in a large stock of what appeared to these little merchants a stock of almonds and sugar-plums, and he painted in capital gold coloured letters upon his board, "Sweetest, largest, most admirable sugar-plums

of all colours ever sold in Naples, to be had here; and in gratitude to his numerous customers, Pedro adds to these, 'Burnt almonds gratis.'".

This advertisement attracted the attention of all who could read; and many who could not read heard it repeated with delight. Crowds of children surrounded Pedro's board of promise, and they all went away the first day amply satisfied. Each had a full measure of coloured sugar-plums at the usual price, and along with these a burnt almond gratis.

The burnt almond had such an effect upon the public judgment, that it was universally allowed that the sugar-plums were, as the advertisement set forth, the largest, sweetest, most admirable ever sold in Naples; though all the time they were, in no respect, better than any other sugar-plums.

It was generally reported that Pedro gave full measure--fuller than any other board in the city. He measured the sugar-plums in a little cubical tin box; and this, it was affirmed, he heaped up to the top, and pressed down before he poured out the contents into the open hands of his approving customers. This belief, and Pedro's popularity, continued longer even than he had expected; and, as he thought his sugar-plums had secured their reputation with the GENEROUS PUBLIC, he gradually neglected to add burnt almonds gratis.

One day a boy of about ten years old passed carelessly by, whistling as he went along, and swinging a carpenter's rule in his hand. "Ha! What have we here?" cried he, stopping to read what was written on Pedro's board. "This promises rarely. Old as I am, and tall of my age, which makes the matter worse, I am still as fond of sugar-plums as my little sister, who is five years younger than I. Come, Signor, fill me quick, for I'm in haste to taste them, two measures of the sweetest, largest, most admirable sugar-plums in Naples--one measure for myself and one for my little Rosetta."

"You'll pay for yourself and your sister, then," said Pedro, "for no credit is given here."

"No credit do I ask," replied the lively boy; "when I told you I loved sugar-plums, did I tell you I loved them, or even my sister, so well as to run in debt for them? Here's for myself, and here's for my sister's share," said he, laying down his money; "and now for the burnt almonds gratis, my good fellow."

"They are all out; I have been out of burnt almonds this great while," said Pedro.

"Then why are they in your advertisement here?" said Carlo.

"I have not had time to scratch them out of the board."

"What! not when you have, by your own account, been out of them a great while? I did not know it required so much time to blot out a few words-- let us try."; and as he spoke, Carlo, for that was the name of Pedro's new customer, pulled a bit of white chalk out of his pocket, and drew a broad score across the line on the board which promised burnt almonds gratis.

"You are most impatient," said Pedro; "I shall have a fresh stock of almonds to-morrow."

"Why must the board tell a lie to-day?"

"It would ruin me to alter it," said Pedro.

"A lie may ruin you, but I could scarcely think the truth could."

"You have no right to meddle with me or my board," said Pedro, put off his guard, and out of his usual soft voice of civility, by this last

observation. "My character, and that of my board, are too firmly established now for any chance customer like you to injure."

"I never dreamed of injuring you or anyone else," said Carlo--"I wish, moreover, you may not injure yourself. Do as you please with your board, but give me my sugar-plums, for I have some right to meddle with those, having paid for them."

"Hold out your hand, then."

"No, put them in here, if you please; put my sister's, at least, in here; she likes to have them in this box: I bought some for her in it yesterday, and she'll think they'll taste the better out of the same box. But how is this? your measure does not fill my box nearly; you give us very few sugar-plums for our money."

"I give you full measure, as I give to everybody."

"The measure should be an inch cube, I know," said Carlo; "that's what all the little merchants have agreed to, you know."

"True," said Pietro, "so it is."

"And so it is, I must allow," said Carlo, measuring the outside of it with the carpenter's rule which he held in his hand. "An inch every way; and yet by my eye--and I have no bad one, being used to measuring carpenter's work for my father--by my eye I should think this would have held more sugar-plums."

"The eye often deceives us;" said Pietro. "There's nothing like measuring, you find."

"There's nothing like measuring, I find, indeed," replied Carlo, as he looked closely at the end of his rule, which, since he spoke last, he

had put into the cube to take its depth in the inside. "This is not as deep by a quarter of an inch, Signor Pietro, measured within as it is measured without."

Pietro changed colour terribly, and seizing hold of the tin box, endeavoured to wrest it from the youth who measured so accurately. Carlo held his prize fast, and lifting it above his head, he ran into the midst of the square where the little market was held, exclaiming, "A discovery! a discovery! that concerns all who love sugar-plums. A discovery! A discovery that concerns all who have ever bought the sweetest, and most admirable sugar-plums ever sold in Naples."

The crowd gathered from all parts of the square as he spoke.

"We have bought," and "We have bought of those sugar-plums," cried several little voices at once, "if you mean Pietro's."

"The same," continued Carlo--"he who, out of gratitude to his numerous customers, gives, or promises to give, burnt almonds gratis."

"Excellent they were!" cried several voices. "We all know Pietro well; but what's your discovery?"

"My discovery is," said Carlo, "that you, none of you, know Pietro. Look you here; look at this box--this is his measure; it has a false bottom-- it holds only three-quarters as much as it ought to do; and his numerous customers have all been cheated of one-quarter of every measure of the admirable sugar-plums they have bought from him. 'Think twice of a good bargain,' says the proverb."

"So we have been finely duped, indeed," cried some of the bystanders, looking at one another with a mortified air. "Full of courtesy, full of craft!" * "So this is the meaning of his burnt almonds gratis," cried

others; all joined in an uproar of indignation, except one, who, as he stood behind the rest, expressed in his countenance silent surprise and sorrow.

** Chi et FA pi caress che non vole,
O ingannato t'ha, o inganuar et vole.*

"Is this Piedro a relation of yours?" said Carlo, going up to this silent person. "I am sorry, if he be, that I have published his disgrace, for I would not hurt YOU. You don't sell sugar-plums as he does, I'm sure; for my little sister Rosetta has often bought from you. Can this Piedro be a friend of yours?"

"I wished to have been his friend; but I see I can't," said Francisco. "He is a neighbour of ours, and I pitied him; but since he is at his old tricks again, there's an end of the matter. I have reason to be obliged to you, for I was nearly taken in. He has behaved so well for some time past, that I intended this very evening to have gone to him, and to have told him that I was willing to do for him what he has long begged of me to do--to enter into partnership with him."

"Francisco! Francisco!--your measure, lend us your measure!" exclaimed a number of little merchants crowding round him. "You have a measure for sugar-plums; and we have all agreed to refer to that, and to see how much we have been cheated before we go to break Piedro's bench and declare him bankrupt, *--the punishment for all knaves."

** This word comes from two Italian words, banco rotto--broken bench. Bankers and merchants used formerly to count their money, and write their bills of exchange upon benches in the streets; and when a merchant or banker lost his credit, and was unable to pay his debts, his bench was broken.*

They pressed on to Francisco's board, obtained his measure, found that it held something more than a quarter above the quantity that could be contained in Piedro's. The cries of the enraged populace were now most clamorous. They hung the just and the unjust measures upon high poles; and, forming themselves into a formidable phalanx, they proceeded towards Piedro's well known yellow lettered board, exclaiming, as they went along, "Common cause! common cause! The little Neapolitan merchants will have no knaves amongst them! Break his bench! break his bench! He is a bankrupt in honesty."

Piedro saw the mob, heard the indignant clamour, and, terrified at the approach of numbers, he fled with the utmost precipitation, having scarcely time to pack up half his sugar-plums. There was a prodigious number, more than would have filled many honest measures, scattered upon the ground and trampled under foot by the crowd. Piedro's bench was broken, and the public vengeance wreaked itself also upon his treacherous painted board. It was, after being much disfigured by various inscriptions expressive of the universal contempt for Piedro, hung up in a conspicuous part of the market-place; and the false measure was fastened like a cap upon one of its corners. Piedro could never more show his face in this market, and all hopes of friendship--all hopes of partnership with Francisco--were for ever at an end.

If rogues would calculate, they would cease to be rogues; for they would certainly discover that it is most for their interest to be honest--setting aside the pleasure of being esteemed and beloved, of having a safe conscience, with perfect freedom from all the various embarrassments and terror to which knaves are subject. Is it not clear that our crafty hero would have gained rather more by a partnership with Francisco, and by a fair character, than he could possibly obtain by fraudulent dealing in comfits?

When the mob had dispersed, after satisfying themselves with executing summary justice upon Piedro's bench and board, Francisco found a carpenter's rule lying upon the ground near Piedro's broken bench, which he recollected to have seen in the hands of Carlo. He examined it carefully, and he found Carlo's name written upon it, and the name of the street where he lived; and though it was considerably out of his way, he set out immediately to restore the rule, which was a very handsome one, to its rightful owner. After a hot walk through several streets, he overtook Carlo, who had just reached the door of his own house. Carlo was particularly obliged to him, he said, for restoring this rule to him, as it was a present from the master of a vessel, who employed his father to do carpenter's work for him. "One should not praise one's self, they say," continued Carlo, "but I long so much to gain your good opinion, that I must tell you the whole history of the rule you have restored. It was given to me for having measured the work and made up the bill of a whole pleasure-boat myself. You may guess I should have been sorry enough to have lost it. Thank you for its being once more in my careless hands, and tell me, I beg, whenever I can do you any service. By-the-by, I can make up for you a fruit stall. I'll do it to-morrow, and it shall be the admiration of the market. Is there anything else you could think of for me?"

"Why, yes," said Francisco; "since you are so good-natured, perhaps you'd be kind enough to tell me the meaning of some of those lines and figures that I see upon your rule. I have a great curiosity to know their use."

"That I'll explain to you with pleasure, as far as I know them myself; but when I'm at fault, my father, who is cleverer than I am, and understands trigonometry, can help us out."

"Trigonometry!" repeated Francisco, not a little alarmed at the high sounding word; "that's what I certainly shall never understand."

"Oh, never fear," replied Carlo, laughing. "I looked just as you do now- -I felt just as you do now--all in a fright and a puzzle, when I first heard of angles and sines, and cosines, and arcs and centres, and complements and tangents."

"Oh mercy! mercy!" interrupted Francisco, whilst Carlo laughed, with a benevolent sense of superiority.

"Why," said Carlo, "you'll find all these things are nothing when you are used to them. But I cannot explain my rule to you here broiling in the sun. Besides, it will not be the work of a day, I promise you; but come and see us at your leisure hours, and we'll study it together. I have a great notion we shall become friends; and, to begin, step in with me now," said Carlo, "and eat a little macaroni with us. I know it is ready by this time. Besides, you'll see my father, and he'll show you plenty of rules and compasses, as you like such things; and then I'll go home with you in the cool of the evening, and you shall show me your melons and vines, and teach me, in time, something of gardening. Oh, I see we must be good friends, just made for each other; so come in--no ceremony."

Carlo was not mistaken in his predictions; he and Francisco became very good friends, spent all their leisure hours together, either in Carlo's workshop or in Francisco's vineyard, and they mutually improved each other. Francisco, before he saw his friend's rule, knew but just enough of arithmetic to calculate in his head the price of the fruit which he sold in the market; but with Carlo's assistance, and the ambition to understand the tables and figures upon the wonderful rule, he set to work in earnest, and in due time, satisfied both himself and his master.

"Who knows but these things that I am learning now may be of some use to me before I die?" said Francisco, as he was sitting one morning with his tutor, the carpenter.

"To be sure it will," said the carpenter, putting down his compasses, with which he was drawing a circle--"Arithmetic is a most useful, and I was going to say necessary thing to be known by men in all stations; and a little trigonometry does no harm. In short, my maxim is, that no knowledge comes amiss; for a man's head is of as much use to him as his hands; and even more so.

"A word to the wise will always suffice."

"Besides, to say nothing of making a fortune, is not there a great pleasure in being something of a scholar, and being able to pass one's time with one's book, and one's compasses and pencil? Safe companions these for young and old. No one gets into mischief that has pleasant things to think of and to do when alone; and I know, for my part, that trigonometry is--"

Here the carpenter, just as he was going to pronounce a fresh panegyric upon his favourite trigonometry, was interrupted by the sudden entrance of his little daughter Rosetta, all in tears: a very unusual spectacle, for, taking the year round, she shed fewer tears than any child of her age in Naples.

"Why, my dear good humoured little Rosetta, what has happened? Why these large tears?" said her brother Carlo, and he went up to her, and wiped them from her cheeks. "And these that are going over the bridge of the nose so fast? I must stop these tears, too," said Carlo.

Rosetta, at this speech, burst out laughing, and said that she did not know till then that she had any bridge on her nose.

"And were these shells the cause of the tears?" said her brother, looking at a heap of shells, which she held before her in her frock.

"Yes, partly," said Rosetta. "It was partly my own fault, but not all. You know I went out to the carpenter's yard, near the arsenal, where all the children are picking up chips and sticks so busily; and I was as busy as any of them, because I wanted to fill my basket soon; and then I thought I should sell my basketful directly in the little wood-market. As soon as I had filled my basket, and made up my faggot (which was not done, brother, till I was almost baked by the sun, for I was forced to wait by the carpenters for the bits of wood to make up my faggot)--I say, when it was all ready, and my basket full, I left it altogether in the yard."

"That was not wise to leave it," said Carlo.

"But I only left it for a few minutes, brother, and I could not think anybody would be so dishonest as to take it whilst I was away. I only just ran to tell a boy, who had picked up all these beautiful shells upon the sea-shore, and who wanted to sell them, that I should be glad to buy them from him, if he would only be so good as to keep them for me, for an hour or so, till I had carried my wood to market, and till I had sold it, and so had money to pay him for the shells."

"Your heart was set mightily on these shells, Rosetta."

"Yes; for I thought you and Francisco, brother, would like to have them for your nice grotto that you are making at Resina. That was the reason I was in such a hurry to get them. The boy who had them to sell was very good-natured; he poured them into my lap, and said I had such an honest face he would trust me, and that as he was in a great hurry, he could not wait an hour whilst I sold my wood; but that he was sure I would pay him in the evening, and he told me that he would call here this evening for the money. But now what shall I do, Carlo? I shall have no money to give him: I must give back his shells, and that's a great pity."

"But how happened it that you did not sell your wood?"

"Oh, I forgot; did not I tell you that? When I went for my basket, do you know it was empty, quite empty, not a chip left? Some dishonest person had carried it all off. Had not I reason to cry now, Carlo?"

"I'll go this minute into the wood-market, and see if I can find your faggot. Won't that be better than crying?" said her brother. "Should you know any one of your pieces of wood again if you were to see them?"

"Yes, one of them, I am sure, I should know again," said Rosetta. "It had a notch at one end of it, where one of the carpenters cut it off from another piece of wood for me."

"And is this piece of wood from which the carpenter cut it still to be seen?" said Francisco.

"Yes, it is in the yard; but I cannot bring it to you, for it is very heavy."

"We can go to it," said Francisco, "and I hope we shall recover your basketful."

Carlo and his friend went with Rosetta immediately to the yard, near the arsenal, saw the notched piece of wood, and then proceeded to the little wood-market, and searched every heap that lay before the little factors; but no notched bit was to be found, and Rosetta declared that she did not see one stick that looked at all like any of hers.

On their part, her companions eagerly untied their faggots to show them to her, and exclaimed, "That they were incapable of taking what did not belong to them; that of all persons they should never have thought of taking anything from the good natured little Rosetta, who

was always ready to give to others, and to help them in making up their loads."

Despairing of discovering the thief, Francisco and Carlo left the market. As they were returning home, they were met by the English servant Arthur, who asked Francisco where he had been, and where he was going.

As soon as he heard of Rosetta's lost faggot, and of the bit of wood, notched at one end, of which Rosetta drew the shape with a piece of chalk, which her brother had lent her, Arthur exclaimed, "I have seen such a bit of wood as this within this quarter of an hour; but I cannot recollect where. Stay! this was at the baker's, I think, where I went for some rolls for my master. It was lying beside his oven."

To the baker's they all went as fast as possible, and they got there but just in time. The baker had in his hand the bit of wood with which he was that instant going to feed his oven.

"Stop, good Mr. Baker!" cried Rosetta, who ran into the baker's shop first; and as he heard "Stop! stop!" re-echoed by many voices, the baker stopped; and turning to Francisco, Carlo and Arthur, begged, with a countenance of some surprise, to know why they had desired him to stop.

The case was easily explained, and the baker told them that he did not buy any wood in the little market that morning; that this faggot he had purchased between the hours of twelve and one from a lad about Francisco's height, whom he met near the yard of the arsenal.

"This is my bit of wood, I am sure; I know it by this notch," said Rosetta.

"Well," said the baker, "if you will stay here a few minutes, you will probably see the lad who sold it to me. He desired to be paid in bread, and my bread was not quite baked when he was here. I bid him call again in an hour, and I fancy he will be pretty punctual, for he looked desperately hungry."

The baker had scarcely finished speaking when Francisco, who was standing watching at the door, exclaimed, "Here comes Pietro! I hope he is not the boy who sold you the wood, Mr. Baker?"

"He is the boy, though," replied the baker, and Pietro, who now entered the shop, started at the sight of Carlo and Francisco, whom he had never seen since the day of disgrace in the fruit-market.

"Your servant, Signor Pietro," said Carlo; "I have the honour to tell you that this piece of wood, and all that you took out of the basket, which you found in the yard of the arsenal, belongs to my sister."

"Yes, indeed," cried Rosetta.

Pietro being very certain that nobody saw him when he emptied Rosetta's basket, and imagining that he was suspected only upon the bare assertion of a child like Rosetta, who might be baffled and frightened out of her story, boldly denied the charge, and defied any one to prove him guilty.

"He has a right to be heard in his own defence," said Arthur, with the cool justice of an Englishman; and he stopped the angry Carlo's arm, who was going up to the culprit with all the Italian vehemence of oratory and gesture. Arthur went on to say something in bad Italian about the excellence of an English trial by jury, which Carlo was too much enraged to hear, but to which Francisco paid attention, and turning to Pietro, he asked him if he was willing to be judged by twelve of his equals?

"With all my heart," said Pietro, still maintaining an unmoved countenance, and they returned immediately to the little wood-market. On their way, they had passed through the fruit-market, and crowds of those who were well acquainted with Pietro's former transactions followed, to hear the event of the present trial.

Arthur could not, especially as he spoke wretched Italian, make the eager little merchants understand the nature and advantages of an English trial by jury. They preferred their own summary mode of proceeding.

Francisco, in whose integrity they all had perfect confidence, was chosen with unanimous shouts for the judge; but he declined the office, and another was appointed. He was raised upon a bench, and the guilty but insolent looking Pietro, and the ingenuous, modest Rosetta stood before him. She made her complaint in a very artless manner; and Pietro, with ingenuity, which in a better cause would have deserved admiration, spoke volubly and craftily in his own defence. But all that he could say could not alter facts. The judge compared the notched bit of wood found at the baker's with a piece from which it was cut, which he went to see in the yard of the arsenal. It was found to fit exactly. The judge then found it impossible to restrain the loud indignation of all the spectators. The prisoner was sentenced never more to sell wood in the market; and the moment sentence was pronounced, Pietro was hissed and hooted out of the market-place. Thus a third time he deprived himself of the means of earning his bread.

We shall not dwell upon all his petty methods of cheating in the trades he next attempted. He handed lemonade about in a part of Naples where he was not known, but he lost his customers by putting too much water and too little lemon into this beverage. He then took to the waters from the sulphurous springs, and served them about to foreigners; but one day, as he was trying to jostle a competitor from the coach door, he slipped his foot, and broke his glasses. They had

been borrowed from an old woman, who hired out glasses to the boys who sold lemonade. Piedro knew that it was the custom to pay, of course, for all that was broken; but this he was not inclined to do. He had a few shillings in his pocket, and thought that it would be very clever to defraud this poor woman of her right, and to spend his shillings upon what he valued much more than he did his good name--macaroni. The shillings were soon gone.

We shall now for the present leave Piedro to his follies and his fate; or, to speak more properly, to his follies and their inevitable consequences.

Francisco was all this time acquiring knowledge from his new friends, without neglecting his own or his father's business. He contrived, during the course of autumn and winter, to make himself a tolerable arithmetician. Carlo's father could draw plans in architecture neatly; and pleased with the eagerness Francisco showed to receive instruction, he willingly put a pencil and compasses into his hand, and taught him all he knew himself. Francisco had great perseverance, and, by repeated trials, he at length succeeded in copying exactly all the plans which his master lent him. His copies, in time, surpassed the originals, and Carlo exclaimed, with astonishment: "Why, Francisco, what an astonishing GENIUS you have for drawing!--Absolutely you draw plans better than my father!"

"As to genius," said Francisco, honestly, "I have none. All that I have done has been done by hard labour. I don't know how other people do things; but I am sure that I never have been able to get anything done well but by patience. Don't you remember, Carlo, how you and even Rosetta laughed at me the first time your father put a pencil into my awkward, clumsy hands?"

"Because," said Carlo, laughing again at the recollection, "you held your pencil so drolly; and when you were to cut it, you cut it just as if

you were using a pruning-knife to your vines; but now it is your turn to laugh, for you surpass us all. And the times are changed since I set about to explain this rule of mine to you."

"Ay, that rule," said Francisco--"how much I owe to it! Some great people, when they lose any of their fine things, cause the crier to promise a reward of so much money to anyone who shall find and restore their trinket. How richly have you and your father rewarded me for returning this rule!"

Francisco's modesty and gratitude, as they were perfectly sincere, attached his friends to him most powerfully; but there was one person who regretted our hero's frequent absences from his vineyard at Resina. Not Francisco's father, for he was well satisfied his son never neglected his business; and as to the hours spent in Naples, he had so much confidence in Francisco that he felt no apprehensions of his getting into bad company. When his son had once said to him, "I spend my time at such a place, and in such and such a manner," he was as well convinced of its being so as if he had watched and seen him every moment of the day. But it was Arthur who complained of Francisco's absence.

"I see, because I am an Englishman," said he, "you don't value my friendship, and yet that is the very reason you ought to value it; no friends so good as the English, be it spoken without offence to your Italian friend, for whom you now continually leave me to dodge up and down here in Resina, without a soul that I like to speak to, for you are the only Italian I ever liked."

"You shall like another, I promise you," said Francisco. "You must come with me to Carlo's, and see how I spend my evenings; then complain of me, if you can."

It was the utmost stretch of Arthur's complaisance to pay this visit; but, in spite of his national prejudices and habitual reserve of temper, he was pleased with the reception he met with from the generous Carlo and the playful Rosetta. They showed him Francisco's drawings with enthusiastic eagerness; and Arthur, though no great judge of drawing, was in astonishment, and frequently repeated, "I know a gentleman who visits my master who would like these things. I wish I might have them to show him."

"Take them, then," said Carlo; "I wish all Naples could see them, provided they might be liked half as well as I like them."

Arthur carried off the drawings, and one day, when his master was better than usual, and when he was at leisure, eating a dessert of Francisco's grapes, he entered respectfully, with his little portfolio under his arm, and begged permission to show his master a few drawings done by the gardener's son, whose grapes he was eating.

Though not quite so partial a judge as the enthusiastic Carlo, this gentleman was both pleased and surprised at the sight of these drawings, considering how short a time Francisco had applied himself to this art, and what slight instructions he had received. Arthur was desired to summon the young artist. Francisco's honest, open manner, joined to the proofs he had given of his abilities, and the character Arthur gave him for strict honesty, and constant kindness to his parents, interested Mr. Lee, the name of this English gentleman, much in his favour. Mr. Lee was at this time in treaty with an Italian painter, whom he wished to engage to copy for him exactly some of the cornices, mouldings, tablets, and antique ornaments which are to be seen amongst the ruins of the ancient city of Herculaneum. *

* We must give those of our young English readers who may not be acquainted with the ancient city of Herculaneum, some idea of it. None can be ignorant that near Naples is the celebrated volcanic

mountain of Vesuvius;--that, from time to time, there happen violent eruptions from this mountain; that is to say, flames and immense clouds of smoke issue from different openings, mouths, or CRATERS, as they are called, but more especially from the summit of the mountain, which is distinguished by the name of THE crater. A rumbling, and afterwards a roaring noise is heard within, and prodigious quantities of stones and minerals burnt into masses (scoriae), are thrown out of the crater, sometimes to a great distance. The hot ashes from Mount Vesuvius have often been seen upon the roofs of the houses of Naples, from which it is six miles distant. Streams of lava run down the sides of the mountains during the time of an eruption, destroying everything in their way, and overwhelm the houses and vineyards which are in the neighbourhood.

*About 1700 years ago, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Titus, there happened a terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius; and a large city called Herculaneum, which was situated at about four miles' distance from the volcano, was overwhelmed by the streams of lava which poured into it, filled up the streets, and quickly covered over the tops of the houses, so that the whole was no more visible. It remained for many years buried. The lava which covered it became in time fit for vegetation, plants grew there, a new soil was formed, and a new town called Portici was built over this place where Herculaneum formerly stood. The little village of Resina is also situated near the spot. About fifty years ago, in a poor man's garden at Resina, a hole in a well about thirty feet below the surface of the earth was observed. Some persons had the curiosity to enter into this hole, and, after creeping underground for some time, they came to the foundations of houses. The peasants, inhabitants of the village, who had probably never heard of Herculaneum, were somewhat surprised at their discovery.** About the same time, in a pit in the town of Portici, a similar passage underground was discovered, and, by orders of the King of Naples, workmen were employed to dig away the earth, and clear the passage. They found, at length, the entrance into the town,*

which, during the reign of Titus, was buried under lava. It was about eighty-eight Neapolitan palms (a palm contains near nine inches) below the top of the pit. The workmen, as they cleared the passages, marked their way with chalk when they came to any turning, lest they should lose themselves. The streets branched out in many directions, and, lying across them, the workmen often found large pieces of timber, beams, and rafters; some broken in the fall, others entire. These beams and rafters are burned quite black like charcoal, except those that were found in moist places, which have more the colour of rotten wood, and which are like a soft paste, into which you might run your hand. The walls of the houses slant, some one way, some another, and some are upright. Several magnificent buildings of brick, faced with marble of different colours, are partly seen, where the workmen have cleared away the earth and lava with which they were encrusted. Columns of red and white marble, and flights of steps, are seen in different places; and out of the ruins of the palaces some very fine statues and pictures have been dug. Foreigners who visit Naples are very curious to see this subterraneous city, and are desirous to carry with them into their own country some proofs of their having examined this wonderful place.

*** Philosophical Transactions, vol. ix. p. 440.*

CHAPTER III.

*Tutte le gran faciende si fanno di poca cosa.
What great events from trivial causes spring.*

Signor Camillo, the artist employed by Mr. Lee to copy some of the antique ornaments in Herculaneum, was a liberal minded man, perfectly free from that mean jealousy which would repress the efforts of rising genius.

"Here is a lad scarcely fifteen, a poor gardener's son, who, with merely the instructions he could obtain from a common carpenter, has learned to draw these plans and elevations, which you see are tolerably neat. What an advantage your instruction would be to him," said Mr. Lee, as he introduced Francisco to Signor Camillo. "I am interested in this lad from what I have learned of his good conduct. I hear he is strictly honest, and one of the best of sons. Let us do something for him. If you will give him some knowledge of your art, I will, as far as money can recompense you for your loss of time, pay whatever you may think reasonable for his instruction."

Signor Camillo made no difficulties; he was pleased with his pupil's appearance, and every day he liked him better and better. In the room where they worked together there were some large books of drawings and plates, which Francisco saw now and then opened by his master, and which he had a great desire to look over; but when he was left in the room by himself he never touched them, because he had not permission. Signor Camillo, the first day he came into this room with his pupil, said to him, "Here are many valuable books and drawings, young man. I trust, from the character I have heard of you, that they will be perfectly safe here."

Some weeks after Francisco had been with the painter, they had occasion to look for the front of a temple in one of these large books. "What! don't you know in which book to look for it, Francisco?" cried his master, with some impatience. "Is it possible that you have been here so long with these books, and that you cannot find the print I mean? Had you half the taste I gave you credit for, you would have singled it out from all the rest, and have it fixed in your memory."

"But, signor, I never saw it," said Francisco, respectfully, "or, perhaps, I should have preferred it."

"That you never saw it, young man, is the very thing of which I complain. Is a taste for the arts to be learned, think you, by looking at the cover of a book like this? Is it possible that you never thought of opening it?"

"Often and often," cried Francisco, "have I longed to open it; but I thought it was forbidden me, and however great my curiosity in your absence, I have never touched them. I hoped indeed, that the time would come when you would have the goodness to show them to me."

"And so the time is come, excellent young man," cried Camillo; "much as I love taste, I love integrity more. I am now sure of your having the one, and let me see whether you have, as I believe you have, the other. Sit you down here beside me; and we will look over these books together."

The attention with which his young pupil examined everything, and the pleasure he unaffectedly expressed in seeing these excellent prints, sufficiently convinced his judicious master that it was not from the want of curiosity or taste that he had never opened these tempting volumes. His confidence in Francisco was much increased by this circumstance, slight as it may appear.

One day, Signor Camillo came behind Francisco, as he was drawing with much intentness, and tapping him upon the shoulder, he said to him: "Put up your pencils and follow me, I can depend upon your integrity; I have pledged myself for it. Bring your note-book with you, and follow me; I will this day show you something that will entertain you at least as much as my large book of prints. Follow me."

Francisco followed, till they came to the pit near the entrance of Herculaneum. "I have obtained leave for you to accompany me," said his master, "and you know, I suppose, that this is not a permission

granted to everyone?" Paintings of great value, besides ornaments of gold and silver, antique bracelets, rings, etc., are from time to time found amongst these ruins, and therefore it is necessary that no person should be admitted whose honesty cannot be depended upon. Thus, even Francisco's talents could not have advanced him in the world, unless they had been united to integrity. He was much delighted and astonished by the new scene that was now opened to his view; and as, day after day, he accompanied his master to this subterraneous city, he had leisure for observation. He was employed, as soon as he had gratified his curiosity, in drawing. There are niches in the walls in several places, from which pictures have been dug, and these niches are often adorned with elegant masques, figures and animals, which have been left by the ignorant or careless workmen, and which are going fast to destruction. Signor Camillo, who was copying these for his English employer, had a mind to try his pupil's skill, and, pointing to a niche bordered with grotesque figures, he desired him to try if he could make any hand of it.

Francisco made several trials, and at last finished such an excellent copy, that his enthusiastic and generous master, with warm encomiums, carried it immediately to his patron, and he had the pleasure to receive from Mr. Lee a purse containing five guineas, as a reward and encouragement for his pupil.

Francisco had no sooner received this money, than he hurried to his father and mother's cottage. His mother, some months before this time, had taken a small dairy farm; and her son had once heard her express a wish that she was but rich enough to purchase a remarkably fine brindled cow, which belonged to a farmer in the neighbourhood.

"Here, my dear mother," cried Francisco, pouring the guineas into her lap; "and here," continued he, emptying a bag which contained about as much more, in small Italian coins, the profits of trade-money he had fairly earned during the two years he sold fruit amongst the little Neapolitan merchants; "this is all yours, dearest mother, and I hope it

will be enough to pay for the brindled cow. Nay, you must not refuse me- -I have set my heart upon the cow being milked by you this very evening; and I'll produce my best bunches of grapes, and my father, perhaps, will give us a melon; for I've had no time for melons this season; and I'll step to Naples and invite--may I, mother?--my good friends, dear Carlo and your favourite little Rosetta, and my old drawing master, and my friend Arthur, and we'll sup with you at your dairy."

The happy mother thanked her son, and the father assured him that neither melon nor pine-apple should be spared, to make a supper worthy of his friends.

The brindled cow was bought, and Arthur and Carlo and Rosetta most joyfully accepted their invitation.

The carpenter had unluckily appointed to settle a long account that day with one of his employers, and he could not accompany his children. It was a delicious evening; they left Naples just as the sea-breeze, after the heats of the day, was most refreshingly felt. The walk to Resina, the vineyard, the dairy, and most of all, the brindled cow, were praised by Carlo and Rosetta, with all the Italian superlatives which signify, "Most beautiful! most delightful! most charming!" Whilst the English Arthur, with as warm a heart, was more temperate in his praise, declaring that this was "the most like an English summer's evening of any he had ever felt since he came to Italy: and that, moreover, the cream was almost as good as what he had been used to drink in Cheshire." The company, who were all pleased with each other, and with the gardener's good fruit, which he produced in great abundance, did not think of separating till late.

It was a bright moonlight night, and Carlo asked his friend if he would walk with them part of the way to Naples. "Yes, all the way most willingly," cried Francisco, "that I may have the pleasure of giving to

your father, with my own hands, this fine bunch of grapes, that I have reserved for him out of my own share."

"Add this fine pine-apple for my share, then," said his father, "and a pleasant walk to you, my young friends."

They proceeded gaily along, and when they reached Naples, as they passed through the square where the little merchants held their market, Francisco pointed to the spot where he found Carlo's rule. He never missed an opportunity of showing his friends that he did not forget their former kindness to him. "That rule," said he, "has been the cause of all my present happiness, and I thank you for--"

"Oh, never mind thanking him now," interrupted Rosetta, "but look yonder, and tell me what all those people are about." She pointed to a group of men, women and children, who were assembled under a piazza, listening in various attitudes of attention to a man, who was standing upon a flight of steps speaking in a loud voice, and with much action, to the people who surrounded him. Francisco, Carlo and Rosetta joined his audience.

The moon shone full upon his countenance, which was very expressive and which varied frequently according to the characters of the persons whose history he was telling, according to all the changes of their fortune.

This man was one of those who are called Improvisatori--persons who, in Italian towns, go about reciting verses or telling stories, which they are supposed to invent as they go on speaking. Some of these people speak with great fluency, and collect crowds round them in the public streets.

When an Improvisatore sees the attention of his audience fixed, and when he comes to some very interesting part of his narrative, he dexterously drops his hat upon the ground, and pauses till his auditors have paid tribute to his eloquence. When he thinks the hat sufficiently full, he takes it up again, and proceeds with his story. The hat was

dropped just as Francisco and his two friends came under the piazza. The orator had finished one story, and was going to commence another. He fixed his eyes upon Francisco, then glanced at Carlo and Rosetta, and after a moment's consideration he began a story which bore some resemblance to one that our young English readers may, perhaps, know by the name of "Cornaro, or the Grateful Turk."

Francisco was deeply interested in this narrative, and when the hat was dropped, he eagerly threw in his contribution. At the end of the story, when the speaker's voice stopped, there was a momentary silence, which was broken by the orator himself, who exclaimed, as he took up the hat which lay at his feet, "My friends, here is some mistake! this is not my hat; it has been changed whilst I was taken up with my story. Pray, gentlemen, find my hat amongst you; it was a remarkably good one, a present from a nobleman for an epigram I made. I would not lose my hat for twice its value. It has my name written withinside of it, Dominicho, Improvisatore. Pray, gentlemen, examine your hats."

Everybody present examined their hats, and showed them to Dominicho, but his was not amongst them. No one had left the company; the piazza was cleared, and searched in vain. "The hat has vanished by magic," said Dominicho.

"Yes, and by the same magic a statue moves," cried Carlo, pointing to a figure standing in a niche, which had hitherto escaped observation. The face was so much in the shade, that Carlo did not at first perceive that the statue was Pietro. Pietro, when he saw himself discovered, burst into a loud laugh, and throwing down Dominicho's hat, which he held in his hand behind him, cried, "A pretty set of novices! Most excellent players at hide-and-seek you would make."

Whether Pietro really meant to have carried off the poor man's hat, or whether he was, as he said, merely in jest, we leave it to those who now his general character to decide.

Carlo shook his head. "Still at your old tricks, Pietro," said he. "Remember the old proverb: No fox so cunning but he comes to the furrier's at last." *

** Tutte le volpi si trovano in pellicera.*

"I defy the furrier and you, too," replied Pietro, taking up his own ragged hat. "I have no need to steal hats; I can afford to buy better than you'll have upon your head. Francisco, a word with you, if you have done crying at the pitiful story you have been listening to so attentively."

"And what would you say to me?" said Francisco, following him a few steps. "Do not detain me long, because my friends will wait for me."

"If they are friends, they can wait," said Pietro. "You need not be ashamed of being seen in my company now, I can tell you; for I am, as I always told you I should be, the richest man of the two."

"Rich! you rich?" cried Francisco. "Well, then, it was impossible you could mean to trick that poor man out of his good hat."

"Impossible!" said Pietro. Francisco did not consider that those who have habits of pilfering continue to practise them often, when the poverty which first tempted them to dishonesty ceases. "Impossible! You stare when I tell you I am rich; but the thing is so. Moreover, I am well with my father at home. I have friends in Naples, and I call myself Pietro the Lucky. Look you here," said he, producing an old gold coin.

"This does not smell of fish, does it? My father is no longer a fisherman, nor I either. Neither do I sell sugar-plums to children: nor do I slave myself in a vineyard, like some folks; but fortune, when I least expected it, has stood my friend. I have many pieces of gold like this. Digging in my father's garden, it was my luck to come to an old Roman vessel full of gold. I have this day agreed for a house in Naples for my father. We shall live, whilst we can afford it, like great folks, you will see; and I shall enjoy the envy that will be felt by some of my old friends, the little Neapolitan merchants, who will change their note when they see my change of fortune. What say you to all this, Francisco the Honest?"

"That I wish you joy of your prosperity, and hope you may enjoy it long and well."

"Well, no doubt of that. Everyone who has it enjoys it WELL. He always dances well to whom fortune pipes." *

** Assai ben balla a chi fortuna suona.*

"Yes, no longer pipe, no longer dance," replied Francisco; and here they parted; for Pedro walked away abruptly, much mortified to perceive that his prosperity did not excite much envy, or command any additional respect from Francisco.

"I would rather," said Francisco, when he returned to Carlo and Rosetta, who waited for him under the portico, where he left them--"I would rather have such good friends as you, Carlo and Arthur, and some more I could name, and, besides that, have a clear conscience, and work honestly for my bread, than be as lucky as Pedro. Do you know he has found a treasure, he says, in his father's garden--a vase full of gold? He showed me one of the gold pieces."

"Much good may they do him. I hope he came honestly by them," said Carlo; "but ever since the affair of the double measure, I suspect double-dealing always from him. It is not our affair, however. Let him make himself happy his way, and we ours."

"He that would live in peace and rest,
Must hear, and see, and say the best." *

** Odi, vedi, taci, se vuoi viver in pace.*

All Pedro's neighbours did not follow this peaceable maxim; for when he and his father began to circulate the story of the treasure found in the garden, the village of Resina did not give them implicit faith. People nodded and whispered, and shrugged their shoulders; then crossed themselves, and declared that they would not, for all the riches of Naples, change places with either Pedro or his father. Regardless, or pretending to be regardless, of these suspicions, Pedro and his father persisted in their assertions. The fishing-nets were sold, and everything in their cottage was disposed of; they left Resina, went to live at Naples, and, after a few weeks, the matter began to be almost forgotten in the village.

The old gardener, Francisco's father, was one of those who endeavoured to THINK THE BEST; and all that he said upon the subject was, that he would not exchange Francisco the Honest for Pedro the Lucky; that one can't judge of the day till one sees the evening as well as the morning. *

** La vita il fine,--e di loda la sera.*

"Compute the morn and evening of their day."--Pope.

Not to leave our readers longer in suspense, we must inform them that the peasants of Resina were right in their suspicions. Pedro had

never found any treasure in his father's garden, but he came by his gold in the following manner:--

After he was banished from the little wood-market for stealing Rosetta's basketful of wood, after he had cheated the poor woman, who let glasses out to hire, out of the value of the glasses which he broke, and, in short, after he had entirely lost his credit with all who knew him, he roamed about the streets of Naples, reckless of what became of him.

He found the truth of the proverb, "that credit lost is like a Venice glass broken--it can't be mended again." The few shillings which he had in his pocket supplied him with food for a few days. At last he was glad to be employed by one of the peasants who came to Naples to load their asses with manure out of the streets. They often follow very early in the morning, or during the night-time, the trace of carriages that are gone, or that are returning from the opera; and Pedro was one night at this work, when the horses of a nobleman's carriage took fright at the sudden blaze of some fireworks. The carriage was overturned near him; a lady was taken out of it, and was hurried by her attendants into a shop, where she stayed till her carriage was set to rights. She was too much alarmed for the first ten minutes after her accident to think of anything; but after some time, she perceived that she had lost a valuable diamond cross, which she had worn that night at the opera. She was uncertain where she had dropped it; the shop, the carriage, the street, were searched for it in vain.

Pedro saw it fall as the lady was lifted out of the carriage, seized upon it, and carried it off. Ignorant as he was of the full value of what he had stolen, he knew not how to satisfy himself as to this point, without trusting someone with the secret.

After some hesitation, he determined to apply to a Jew, who, as it was

whispered, was ready to buy everything that was offered to him for sale, without making any TROUBLESOME inquiries. It was late; he waited till the streets were cleared, and then knocked softly at the back door of the Jew's house. The person who opened the door for Pedro was his own father. Pedro started back; but his father had fast hold of him.

"What brings you here?" said the father, in a low voice, a voice which expressed fear and rage mixed.

"Only to ask my way--my shortest way," stammered Pedro.

"No equivocations! Tell me what brings you here at this time of the night? I WILL know."

Pedro, who felt himself in his father's grasp, and who knew that his father would certainly search him, to find out what he had brought to sell, thought it most prudent to produce the diamond cross. His father could but just see its lustre by the light of a dim lamp, which hung over their heads in the gloomy passage in which they stood.

"You would have been duped, if you had gone to sell this to the Jew. It is well it has fallen into my hands. How came you by it?" Pedro answered that he had found it in the street. "Go your ways home, then," said his father; "it is safe with me. Concern yourself no more about it."

Pedro was not inclined thus to relinquish his booty, and he now thought proper to vary in his account of the manner in which he found the cross.

He now confessed that it had dropped from the dress of a lady, whose carriage was overturned as she was coming home from the opera, and he concluded by saying that, if his father took his prize from him without giving him his share of the profits, he would go directly to the

shop where the lady stopped whilst her servants were raising the carriage, and that he would give notice of his having found the cross.

Piedro's father saw that his SMART son, though scarcely sixteen years of age, was a match for him in villainy. He promised him that he should have half of whatever the Jew would give for the diamonds, and Piedro insisted upon being present at the transaction.

We do not wish to lay open to our young readers scenes of iniquity. It is sufficient to say that the Jew, who was a man old in all the arts of villainy, contrived to cheat both his associates, and obtained the diamond cross for less than half its value. The matter was managed so that the transaction remained undiscovered. The lady who lost the cross, after making fruitless inquiries, gave up the search, and Piedro and his father rejoiced in the success of their manoeuvres.

It is said, that "Ill gotten wealth is quickly spent"; * and so it proved in this instance. Both father and son lived a riotous life as long as their money lasted, and it did not last many months. What his bad education began, bad company finished, and Piedro's mind was completely ruined by the associates with whom he became connected during what he called his PROSPERITY. When his money was at an end, these unprincipled friends began to look cold upon him, and at last plainly told him--"If you mean to LIVE WITH US, you must LIVE AS WE DO." They lived by robbery.

** Vien presto consumato l'ingiustamente acquistato.*

Piedro, though familiarized to the idea of fraud, was shocked at the thought of becoming a robber by profession. How difficult it is to stop in the career of vice! Whether Piedro had power to stop, or whether he was hurried on by his associates, we shall, for the present, leave in doubt.

CHAPTER IV

We turn with pleasure from Piedro the Cunning to Francisco the Honest.

Francisco continued the happy and useful course of his life. By his unremitting perseverance, he improved himself rapidly under the instructions of his master and friend, Signor Camillo; his friend, we say, for the fair and open character of Francisco won, or rather earned, the friendship of this benevolent artist. The English gentleman seemed to take a pride in our hero's success and good conduct. He was not one of those patrons who think that they have done enough when they have given five guineas. His servant Arthur always considered every generous action of his master's as his own, and was particularly pleased whenever this generosity was directed towards Francisco.

As for Carlo and the little Rosetta, they were the companions of all the pleasant walks which Francisco used to take in the cool of the evening, after he had been shut up all day at his work. And the old carpenter, delighted with the gratitude of his pupil, frequently repeated--"that he was proud to have given the first instructions to such a GENIUS; and that he had always prophesied Francisco would be a GREAT man."

"And a good man, papa," said Rosetta; "for though he has grown so great, and though he goes into palaces now, to say nothing of that place underground, where he has leave to go, yet, notwithstanding all this, he never forgets my brother Carlo and you."

"That's the way to have good friends," said the carpenter. "And I like his way; he does more than he says. Facts are masculine, and words are feminine." *

** I fatti sono maschii, le parole femmine.*

These goods friends seemed to make Francisco happier than Pedro could be made by his stolen diamonds.

One morning, Francisco was sent to finish a sketch of the front of an ancient temple, amongst the ruins of Herculaneum. He had just reached the pit, and the men were about to let him down with cords, in the usual manner, when his attention was caught by the shrill sound of a scolding woman's voice. He looked, and saw at some paces distant this female fury, who stood guarding the windlass of a well, to which, with threatening gestures and most voluble menaces, she forbade all access.

The peasants--men, women and children, who had come with their pitchers to draw water at this well--were held at bay by the enraged female. Not one dared to be the first to advance; whilst she grasped with one hand the handle of the windlass, and, with the other tanned muscular arm extended, governed the populace, bidding them remember that she was padrona, or mistress of the well. They retired, in hopes of finding a more gentle padrona at some other well in the neighbourhood; and the fury, when they were out of sight, divided the long black hair which hung over her face, and, turning to one of the spectators, appealed to them in a sober voice, and asked if she was not right in what she had done? "I, that am padrona of the well," said she, addressing herself to Francisco, who, with great attention, was contemplating her with the eye of a painter--"I, that am padrona of the well, must in times of scarcity do strict justice, and preserve for ourselves alone the water of our well. There is scarcely enough even for ourselves. I have been obliged to make my husband lengthen the ropes every day for this week past. If things go on at this rate, there will soon be not one drop of water left in my well."

"Nor in any of the wells of the neighbourhood," added one of the workmen, who was standing by; and he mentioned several in which

the water had lately suddenly decreased; and a miller affirmed that his mill had stopped for want of water.

Francisco was struck by these remarks. They brought to his recollection similar facts, which he had often heard his father mention in his childhood, as having been observed previous to the last eruption of Mount Vesuvius. * He had also heard from his father, in his childhood, that it is better to trust to prudence than to fortune; and therefore, though the peasants and workmen, to whom he mentioned his fears, laughed, and said, "That as the burning mountain had been favourable to them for so many years, they would trust to it and St. Januarius one day longer," yet Francisco immediately gave up all thoughts of spending this day amidst the ruins of Herculaneum. After having inquired sufficiently, after having seen several wells, in which the water had evidently decreased, and after having seen the mill-wheels that were standing still for want of their usual supply, he hastened home to his father and mother, reported what he had heard and seen, and begged of them to remove, and to take what things of value they could to some distance from the dangerous spot where they now resided.

* *Phil. Trans. vol. ix.*

Some of the inhabitants of Resina, whom he questioned, declared that they had heard strange rumbling noises underground; and a peasant and his son, who had been at work the preceding day in a vineyard, a little above the village, related that they had seen a sudden puff of smoke come out of the earth, close to them; and that they had, at the same time, heard a noise like the going off of a pistol. *

* *These facts are mentioned in Sir William Hamilton's account of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius.--See Phil. Trans. 1795, first part.*

The villagers listened with large eyes and open ears to these relations;

yet such was their habitual attachment to the spot they lived upon, or such the security in their own good fortune, that few of them would believe that there could be any necessity for removing.--"We'll see what will happen to-morrow; we shall be safe here one day longer," said they.

Francisco's father and mother, more prudent than the generality of their neighbours, went to the house of a relation, at some miles' distance from Vesuvius, and carried with them all their effects.

In the meantime, Francisco went to the villa where his English friends resided. The villa was in a most dangerous situation, near Terre del Greco--a town that stands at the foot of Mount Vesuvius. He related all the facts that he had heard to Arthur, who, not having been, like the inhabitants of Resina, familiarized to the idea of living in the vicinity of a burning mountain, and habituated to trust in St. Januarius, was sufficiently alarmed by Francisco's representations. He ran to his master's apartment, and communicated all that he had just heard. The Count de Flora and his lady, who were at this time in the house, ridiculed the fears of Arthur, and could not be prevailed upon to remove even as far as Naples. The lady was intent upon preparations for her birthday, which was to be celebrated in a few days with great magnificence at their villa; and she observed that it would be a pity to return to town before that day, and they had everything arranged for the festival. The prudent Englishman had not the gallantry to appear to be convinced by these arguments, and he left the place of danger. He left it not too soon, for the next morning exhibited a scene--a scene which we shall not attempt to describe.

We refer our young readers to the account of this dreadful eruption of Mount Vesuvius, published by Sir W. Hamilton in the "Philosophical Transactions." It is sufficient here to say that, in the space of about five hours, the wretched inhabitants of Torre del Greco saw their town

utterly destroyed by the streams of burning lava which poured from the mountain. The villa of Count de Flora, with some others, which were at a little distance from the town, escaped; but they were absolutely surrounded by the lava. The count and countess were obliged to fly from their house with the utmost precipitation in the night-time; and they had not time to remove any of their furniture, their plate, clothes, or jewels.

A few days after the eruption, the surface of the lava became so cool that people could walk upon it, though several feet beneath the surface it was still exceedingly hot. Numbers of those who had been forced from their houses now returned to the ruins to try to save whatever they could. But these unfortunate persons frequently found their houses had been pillaged by robbers, who, in these moments of general confusion, enrich themselves with the spoils of their fellow-creatures.

"Has the count abandoned his villa? and is there no one to take care of his plate and furniture? The house will certainly be ransacked before morning," said the old carpenter to Francisco, who was at his house giving him an account of their flight. Francisco immediately went to the count's house in warn him of his danger. The first person he saw was Arthur, who, with a face of terror, said to him, "Do you know what has happened? It is all over with Resina!"

"All over with Resina! What, has there been a fresh eruption? Has the lava reached Resina?"

"No; but it will inevitably be blown up. There," said Arthur, pointing to a thin figure of an Italian, who stood pale and trembling, and looking up to heaven as he crossed himself repeatedly. "There," said Arthur, "is a man who has left a parcel of his cursed rockets and fireworks, with I don't know how much gunpowder, in the count's

house, from which we have just fled. The wind blows that way. One spark of fire, and the whole is blown up."

Francisco waited not to hear more; but instantly, without explaining his intentions to anyone, set out for the count's villa, and, with a bucket of water in his hand, crossed the beds of lava with which the house was encompassed; when, reaching the hall where the rockets and gunpowder were left, he plunged them into the water, and returned with them in safety over the lava, yet warm under his feet.

What was the surprise and joy of the poor firework-maker when he saw Francisco return from this dangerous expedition! He could scarcely believe his eyes, when he saw the rockets and the gunpowder all safe.

The count, who had given up the hopes of saving his palace, was in admiration when he heard of this instance of intrepidity, which properly saved not only his villa, but the whole village of Resina, from destruction. These fireworks had been prepared for the celebration of the countess' birthday, and were forgotten in the hurry of the night on which the inhabitants fled from Torre del Greco.

"Brave young man!" said the count to Francisco, "I thank you, and shall not limit my gratitude to thanks. You tell me that there is danger of my villa being pillaged by robbers. It is from this moment your interest, as well as mine, to prevent their depredations; for (trust to my liberality) a portion of all that is saved of mine shall be yours."

"Bravo! bravissimo!" exclaimed one, who started from a recessed window in the hall where all this passed. "Bravo! bravissimo!"-- Francisco thought he knew the voice and the countenance of this man, who exclaimed with so much enthusiasm. He remembered to have seen him before, but when, or where, he could not recollect. As soon as the count left the hall, the stranger came up to Francisco. "Is it

possible," said he, "that you don't know me? It is scarcely a twelvemonth since I drew tears from your eyes."

"Tears from my eyes?" repeated Francisco, smiling; "I have shed but few tears. I have had but few misfortunes in my life." The stranger answered him by two extempore Italian lines, which conveyed nearly the same idea that has been so well expressed by an English poet:--

"To each their sufferings--all are men
Condemn'd alike to groan;
The feeling for another's woes,
Th' unfeeling for his own."

"I know you now perfectly well," cried Francisco; "you are the Improvisatore who, one fine moonlight night last summer, told us the story of Cornaro the Turk."

"The same," said the Improvisatore; "the same, though in a better dress, which I should not have thought would have made so much difference in your eyes, though it makes all the difference between man and man in the eyes of the stupid vulgar. My genius has broken through the clouds of misfortune of late. A few happy impromptu verses I made on the Count de Flora's fall from his horse attracted attention. The count patronizes me. I am here now to learn the fate of an ode I have just composed for his lady's birthday. My ode was to have been set to music, and to have been performed at his villa near Torre del Greco, if these troubles had not intervened. Now that the mountain is quiet again, people will return to their senses. I expect to be munificently rewarded. But, perhaps, I detain you. Go; I shall not forget to celebrate the heroic action you have performed this day. I still amuse myself amongst the populace in my tattered garb late in the evenings, and I shall sound your praises through Naples in a poem I mean to recite on the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Adieu."

The Improvisatore was as good as his word. That evening, with more than his usual enthusiasm, he recited his verses to a great crowd of people in one of the public squares. Amongst the crowd were several to whom the name of Francisco was well known, and by whom he was well beloved. These were his young companions, who remembered him as a fruit-seller amongst the little merchants. They rejoiced to hear his praises, and repeated the lines with shouts of applause.

"Let us pass. What is all this disturbance in the streets?" said a man, pushing his way through the crowd. A lad who held by his arm stopped suddenly on hearing the name of Francisco, which the people were repeating with so much enthusiasm.

"Ha! I have found at last a story that interests you more than that of Cornaro the Turk," cried the Improvisatore, looking in the face of the youth, who had stopped so suddenly. "You are the young man who, last summer, had liked to have tricked me out of my new hat. Promise me you won't touch it now," said he, throwing down the hat at his feet, "or you hear not one word I have to say. Not one word of the heroic action performed at the villa of the Count de Flora, near Torre del Greco, this morning, by Signor Francisco."

"SIGNOR Francisco!" repeated the lad with disdain. "Well, let us hear what you have to tell of him," added he. "Your hat is very safe, I promise you; I shall not touch it. What of SIGNOR Francisco?"

"SIGNOR Francisco I may, without impropriety, call him," said the Improvisatore, "for he is likely to become rich enough to command the title from those who might not otherwise respect his merit."

"Likely to become rich! how?" said the lad, whom our readers have probably before this time discovered to be Pedro. "How, pray, is he likely to become rich enough to be a signor?"

"The Count de Flora has promised him a liberal portion of all the fine furniture, plate and jewels that can be saved from his villa at Torre del Greco. Francisco is gone down hither now with some of the count's domestics to protect the valuable goods against those villainous plunderers, who robbed their fellow-creatures of what even the flames of Vesuvius would spare."

"Come, we have had enough of this stuff," cried the man whose arm Pedro held. "Come away," and he hurried forwards.

This man was one of the villains against whom the honest orator expressed such indignation. He was one of those with whom Pedro got acquainted during the time that he was living extravagantly upon the money he gained by the sale of the stolen diamond cross. That robbery was not discovered; and his success, as he called it, hardened him in guilt. He was both unwilling and unable to withdraw himself from the bad company with whom his ill gotten wealth connected him. He did not consider that bad company leads to the gallows. *

** La mala compagnia e quella che mena uomini a la forca.*

The universal confusion which followed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius was to these villains a time of rejoicing. No sooner did Pedro's companion hear of the rich furniture, plate, etc., which the imprudent orator had described as belonging to the Count de Flora's villa, than he longed to make himself master of the whole.

"It is a pity," said Pedro, "that the count has sent Francisco, with his servants down to guard it."

"And who is this Francisco of whom you seem to stand in so much awe?"

"A boy, a young lad only, of about my own age; but I know him to be

sturdily honest. The servants we might corrupt; but even the old proverb of 'Angle with a silver hook,' * won't hold good with him."

** Pescar col hamo d'argento.*

"And if he cannot be won by fair means, he must be conquered by foul," said the desperate villain; "but if we offer him rather more than the count has already promised for his share of the booty, of course he will consult at once his safety and his interest."

"No," said Pedro; "that is not his nature. I know him from a child, and we had better think of some other house for to-night's business."

"None other; none but this," cried his companion, with an oath. "My mind is determined upon this, and you must obey your leader: recollect the fate of him who failed me yesterday."

The person to whom he alluded was one of the gang of robbers who had been assassinated by his companions for hesitating to commit some crime suggested by their leader. No tyranny is so dreadful as that which is exercised by villains over their young accomplices, who become their slaves. Pedro, who was of a cowardly nature, trembled at the threatening countenance of his captain, and promised submission.

In the course of the morning, inquiries were made secretly amongst the count's servants; and the two men who were engaged to sit up at the villa that night along with Francisco, were bribed to second the views of this gang of thieves. It was agreed that about midnight the robbers should be let into the house; that Francisco should be tied hand and foot, whilst they carried off their booty. "He is a stubborn chap, though so young, I understand," said the captain of the robbers to his men; "but we carry poniards, and know how to use them.

Pedro, you look pale. You don't require to be reminded of what I said to you when we were alone just now?"

Pedro's voice failed, and some of his comrades observed that he was young and new to the business. The captain, who, from being his pretended friend during his wealthy days, had of late become his tyrant, cast a stern look at Pedro, and bid him be sure to be at the old Jew's, which was the place of meeting, in the dusk of the evening. After saying this he departed.

Pedro, when he was alone, tried to collect his thoughts--all his thoughts were full of horror. "Where am I?" said he to himself; "what am I about? Did I understand rightly what he said about poniards? Francisco; oh, Francisco! Excellent, kind, generous Francisco! Yes, I recollect your look when you held the bunch of grapes to my lips, as I sat by the sea-shore deserted by all the world; and now, what friends have I. Robbers and--" The word MURDERERS he could not utter. He again recollected what had been said about poniards, and the longer his mind fixed upon the words, and the look that accompanied them, the more he was shocked. He could not doubt but that it was the serious intention of his accomplices to murder Francisco, if he should make any resistance.

Pedro had at this moment no friend in the world to whom he could apply for advice or assistance. His wretched father died some weeks before this time, in a fit of intoxication. Pedro walked up and down the street, scarcely capable of thinking, much less of coming to any rational resolution.

The hours passed away, the shadows of the houses lengthened under his footsteps, the evening came on, and when it grew dusk, after hesitating in great agony of mind for some time, his fear of the robbers' vengeance prevailed over every other feeling, and he went at the appointed hour to the place of meeting.

The place of meeting was at the house of that Jew to whom he, several months before, sold the diamond cross. That cross which he thought himself so lucky to have stolen, and to have disposed of undetected, was, in fact, the cause of his being in his present dreadful situation. It was at the Jew's that he connected himself with this gang of robbers, to whom he was now become an absolute slave.

"Oh, that I dared to disobey!" said he to himself, with a deep sigh, as he knocked softly at the back door of the Jew's house. The back door opened into a narrow, unfrequented street, and some small rooms at this side of the house were set apart for the reception of guests who desired to have their business kept secret. These rooms were separated by a dark passage from the rest of the house, and numbers of people came to the shop in the front of the house, which looked into a creditable street, without knowing anything more, from the ostensible appearance of the shop, than that it was a kind of pawnbroker's, where old clothes, old iron, and all sorts of refuse goods, might be disposed of conveniently.

At the moment Pedro knocked at the back door, the front shop was full of customers; and the Jew's boy, whose office it was to attend to these signals, let Pedro in, told him that none of his comrades were yet come, and left him in a room by himself.

He was pale and trembling, and felt a cold dew spread over him. He had a leaden image of Saint Januarius tied round his neck, which, in the midst of his wickedness, he superstitiously preserved as a sort of charm, and on this he kept his eyes stupidly fixed, as he sat alone in this gloomy place.

He listened from time to time, but he heard no noise at the side of the house where he was. His accomplices did not arrive, and, in a sort of impatient terror, the attendant upon an evil conscience, he flung open the door of his cell, and groped his way through the passage which he

knew led to the public shop. He longed to hear some noise, and to mix with the living. The Jew, when Pedro entered the shop, was bargaining with a poor, thin-looking man about some gunpowder.

"I don't deny that it has been wet," said the man, "but since it was in the bucket of water, it has been carefully dried. I tell you the simple truth, that so soon after the grand eruption of Mount Vesuvius, the people of Naples will not relish fireworks. My poor little rockets, and even my Catherine-wheels, will have no effect. I am glad to part with all I have in this line of business. A few days ago I had fine things in readiness for the Countess de Flora's birthday, which was to have been celebrated at the count's villa."

"Why do you fix your eyes on me, friend? What is your discourse to me?" said Pedro, who imagined that the man fixed his eyes upon him as he mentioned the name of the count's villa.

"I did not know that I fixed my eyes upon you; I was thinking of my fireworks," said the poor man, simply. "But now that I do look at you and hear your voice, I recollect having had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"When? where?" said Pedro.

"A great while ago; no wonder you have forgotten me," said the man; "but I can recall the night to your recollection. You were in the street with me the night I let off that unlucky rocket, which frightened the horses, and was the cause of overturning a lady's coach. Don't you remember the circumstance?"

"I have a confused recollection of some such thing," said Pedro, in great embarrassment; and he looked suspiciously at this man, in doubt whether he was cunning, and wanted to sound him, or whether he was so simple as he appeared.

"You did not, perhaps, hear, then," continued the man, "that there was a great search made, after the overturn, for a fine diamond cross, belonging to the lady in the carriage? That lady, though I did not know it till lately, was the Countess de Flora."

"I know nothing of the matter," interrupted Pedro, in great agitation. His confusion was so marked, that the firework-maker could not avoid taking notice of it; and a silence of some moments ensued. The Jew, more practised in dissimulation than Pedro, endeavoured to turn the man's attention back to his rockets and his gunpowder--agreed to take the gunpowder--paid for it in haste, and was, though apparently unconcerned, eager to get rid of him. But this was not so easily done. The man's curiosity was excited, and his suspicions of Pedro were increased every moment by all the dark changes of his countenance. Pedro, overpowered with the sense of guilt, surprised at the unexpected mention of the diamond cross, and of the Count de Flora's villa, stood like one convicted, and seemed fixed to the spot, without power of motion.

"I want to look at the old cambric that you said you had--that would do for making--that you could let me have cheap for artificial flowers," said the firework-maker to the Jew; and as he spoke, his eye from time to time looked towards Pedro.

Pedro felt for the leaden image of the saint, which he wore round his neck. The string which held it cracked, and broke with the pull he gave it. This slight circumstance affected his terrified and superstitious mind more than all the rest. He imagined that at this moment his fate was decided; that Saint Januarius deserted him, and that he was undone. He precipitately followed the firework-man the instant he left the shop, and seizing hold of his arm, whispered, "I must speak to you."

"Speak, then," said the man, astonished.

"Not here; this way," said he, drawing him towards the dark passage: "what I have to say must not be overheard. You are going to the Count de Flora's, are not you?"

"I am," said the man. He was going there to speak to the countess about some artificial flowers; but Pedro thought he was going to speak to her about the diamond cross.

"You are going to give information against me? Nay, hear me, I confess that I purloined that diamond cross; but I can do the count a great service, upon condition that he pardons me. His villa is to be attacked this night by four well armed men. They will set out five hours hence. I am compelled, under the threat of assassination, to accompany them; but I shall do no more. I throw myself upon the count's mercy. Hasten to him--we have no time to lose."

The poor man, who heard this confession, escaped from Pedro the moment he loosed his arm. With all possible expedition he ran to the count's palace in Naples, and related to him all that had been said by Pedro. Some of the count's servants, on whom he could most depend, were at a distant part of the city attending their mistress, but the English gentleman offered the services of his man Arthur. Arthur no sooner heard the business, and understood that Francisco was in danger, than he armed himself without saying one word, saddled his English horse, and was ready to depart before anyone else had finished their exclamations and conjectures.

"But we are not to set out yet," said the servant; "it is but four miles to Torre del Greco; the sbirri (officers of justice) are summoned—they are to go with us--we must wait for them."

They waited, much against Arthur's inclination, a considerable time for these sbirri. At length they set out, and just as they reached the villa, the flash of the pistol was seen from one of the apartments in the

house. The robbers were there. This pistol was snapped by their captain at poor Francisco, who had bravely asserted that he would, as long as he had life, defend the property committed to his care. The pistol missed fire, for it was charged with some of the damaged powder which the Jew had bought that evening from the firework maker, and which he had sold as excellent immediately afterwards to his favourite customers--the robbers who met at his house.

Arthur, as soon as he perceived the flash of the piece, pressed forward through all the apartments, followed by the count's servants and the officers of justice. At the sudden appearance of so many armed men, the robbers stood dismayed. Arthur eagerly shook Francisco's hand, congratulating him upon his safety, and did not perceive, till he had given him several rough friendly shakes, that his arm was wounded, and that he was pale with the loss of blood.

"It is not much--only a slight wound," said Francisco; "one that I should have escaped, if I had been upon my guard; but the sight of a face that I little expected to see in such company took from me all presence of mind; and one of the ruffians stabbed me here in the arm, whilst I stood in stupid astonishment."

"Oh! take me to prison! take me to prison--I am weary of life--I am a wretch not fit to live!" cried Pedro, holding his hands to be tied by the sbirri.

The next morning Pedro was conveyed to prison; and as he passed through the streets of Naples he was met by several of those who had known him when he was a child. "Ay," said they, as he went by, "his father encouraged him in cheating when he was BUT A CHILD; and see what he is come to, now he is a man!" He was ordered to remain twelve months in solitary confinement. His captain and his accomplices were sent to the galleys, and the Jew was banished from Naples.

And now, having got these villains out of the way, let us return to honest Francisco. His wound was soon healed. Arthur was no bad surgeon, for he let his patient get well as fast as he pleased; and Carlo and Rosetta nursed him with so much kindness, that he was almost sorry to find himself perfectly recovered.

"Now that you are able to go out," said Francisco's father to him, "you must come and look at my new house, my dear son."

"Your new house, father?"

"Yes, son, and a charming one it is, and a handsome piece of land near it--all at a safe distance, too, from Mount Vesuvius; and can you guess how I came by it?--it was given to me for having a good son."

"Yes," cried Carlo; "the inhabitants of Resina, and several who had property near Terre del Greco, and whose houses and lives were saved by your intrepidity in carrying the materials for the fireworks and the gunpowder out of this dangerous place, went in a body to the duke, and requested that he would mention your name and these facts to the king, who, amongst the grants he has made to the sufferers by the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius, has been pleased to say that he gives this house and garden to your father, because you have saved the property and lives of many of his subjects."

The value of a handsome portion of furniture, plate, etc., in the Count de Flora's villa, was, according to the count's promise, given to him; and this money he divided between his own family and that of the good carpenter who first put a pencil into his hands. Arthur would not accept of any present from him. To Mr. Lee, the English gentleman, he offered one of his own drawings--a fruit-piece.

"I like this very well," said Arthur, as he examined the drawing, "but I

should like this melon better if it was a little bruised. It is now three years ago since I was going to buy that bruised melon from you; you showed me your honest nature then, though you were but a boy; and I have found you the same ever since. A good beginning makes a good ending—an honest boy will make an honest man; and honesty is the best policy, as you have proved to all who wanted the proof, I hope."

"Yes," added Francisco's father, "I think it is pretty plain that Pedro the Cunning has not managed quite so well as Francisco the Honest."