Arzolina cannot read any more. I wish I had Signora Elena's little book, for I have nothing short and simple to read. She told me the Capucino said she need not bother about saying many "Ave Marias" and "Paternosters," but should just offer her sufferings in expiation of her sins. I asked if she had been very wicked, and she answered, "*Chi lo sa!*" (Who knows!) She often says she will pray for me in Paradise, so she evidently thinks she is dying. I wonder has she any dread? Probably the pain is so great, thought is bewildered and indistinct. However, she is quite sensible, and told me a charming little story apropos of the virtue of suffering. I wish I could remember how she put it, but the gist was this, "*Il nostro Signore girava il mondo con S. Pietro,*" (Our Lord was wandering round the world with S. Peter), and met a woman with a sad face. "*Dove vai?*" (Where are you going?) He asked her. "*A farmi monaca*" (To become a nun), she answered. And Jesus looked distressed and did not bless her. "*Tiglia mia*" (My daughter,) He said, "*tu sfuggi la tua croce*" (You are fleeing your cross). And then they continued to *girare il mondo*, until they met another woman with a cheerful face and gay attire. "*E tu dove vai?*" (And where art thou going?) "*A prendere marito*" (To take a husband.) And He smiled on her and blessed her, saying, "*Tiglio mia, tu fai bene, perciocchè tu abbracci la croce, e non la sfuggi; perchè a chi prende marito e fa figli non mancheranno dolori*" (My daughter, thou doest well, because thou embracest the cross; for who marries and has children will never be wanting in troubles).

The poor soul spoke with evident conviction! But I think she has a good enough husband, and is fond of her children—sons of 17, 15 and 12, nice-looking boys. But poverty has made her life a burden, always in service to earn for her children. Up to Christmas she was working and working till the first appalling hæmorrhage came on, since which things have gone on rapidly from bad to worse. Now she is a living corpse, with an almost parchment colour, and that smell, poor soul, which must be a torment in itself alone, and which must be *almost* the hardest part to bear because of knowing it causes suffering to others. That good Cecchina told me she often could not eat if before meals she had done some service for the poor woman, and one does not wonder. The flies, too, give her now so much discomfort—they are all over *her* and leave the others in peace. It is all very sad, but as long as the morphine deadens the pain it is not *such* an unbearable "calling" as I expected. Having one's full reason is a great thing. She is very calm and can think; one would like that. But when the morphia ceases to help her, when the full agony is felt, I know instinctively the cry must then be for her, as for all, "Oh Father, *won't* you take her," and I have been wondering if one could not go on strengthening the doses of morphia and so gain continuous relief. The limit is I suppose when it would cause death by blood-poisoning, and I fully see there must be hard-and-fast rules for doctors on these matters, else, witnessing such agony, they would often fail in courage to prolong it, and administer palliatives knowing they would hasten the end. I suppose doctors have only one article of religion on this matter—they are morally bound to make life continue to the utmost limit possible. And just as in the houses of the rich and loved everything is done to keep the dying as long as possible with us, so with the poor and lonely in the hospitals, whilst every attempt is made to ease their sufferings, everything too is done to prolong their existence. Happily people are generally too puzzled, bewildered when dying, to understand how things are, and so they do not beg for an end to be put to it, as otherwise they might. I cannot imagine anything more terrible than having to refuse poison to any agonising fellow being who *implored* to have it, but mercifully it is *very* rare that they do.

It seemed curious to come away from this little Hospital corner, with these two poor creatures moaning and writhing, in between their talk, curious to come out and see the whole of Lucca alive with *contadini*—dressed gaily and talking vehemently about the "*Volto Santo*" (Sacred Head). But to-day was a fête, and the beloved sacred image of the Lucchese was exposed to the view of the faithful at the Duomo. The Piazza outside was most animated, "*scapelti, medaglie, corone, storie del Volto Santo,*" &c., &c., (scapulæ, medals, rosaries, histories of the holy image) were being sold for a few centimes; there were also stalls of biscuits, pastry, &c., and on one even handkerchiefs, ribbons and tapes were displayed. Inside, High Mass was still going on, the Archbishop, Canons, &c., making even a brighter group of colour than the peasants. I felt I must not go inside the little chapel, as I could not kiss the feet of the image, and still less could I just walk past it as a staring tourist heretic, but I wanted to see what this object of real devotion was like, and happily the crowd was not too dense to allow me to get a place outside, but right in front. The ceremony was not impressive. A priest at the foot of the image took the objects which were to be blessed, from each person as they passed, touching the silver shod foot with them and handing them back. The owner knelt a minute or so, and then passed on. I saw no one kiss the foot after all, and heard afterwards that it was a very especial privilege, as far too many people came to allow each one to do it.

But as my eyes got accustomed to the candle light and I saw above the gorgeous dress and diamond pendant that curious dark face, overwhelmed, as it were, by the rich crown, as I saw the weary patient lift of brow, the intense sadness of the whole expression, it took complete possession of one, and the heart cried out, "Master, here too you are made to suffer, even this image of you with its infinite pathos and simplicity, is weighed down, drowned, eclipsed in all these riches."

The contadini, wrapt in admiration of the gorgeous ornaments, "*sono di valore di chi sa quanti milioni*" I heard said (they are worth who knows how many millions) had little thought for the true meaning of that crucified figure. It struck me as painfully symbolic of the whole of Christianity, the love of riches and possessions having swamped so grievously the patient serving of one's brethren, and suffering for them, which is the first half of religion. "He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how *can* he love God whom he hath not seen?" And surely we do *not* love our brother, or things would be so different, so very different *here*. . . . Then the music broke out, violins and organ, and the pathos of that face, as well as the memory of my poor Arzolina, of that unfortunate Beatrice (who had again told me she must do away with herself if sent from the Hospital) and others, made the tears come as I knelt to pray for all the sorrowing.

(*To be continued.*)

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