

send its grim message for thee. I'll raise up something—oh, I know not what—shall startle the air of Florence with proclamations of thy innocence! I'll raise the dead; I'll conjure up the ghost of old Bartolo—make it cry out in the public streets, that thou did'st not slay him! Farewell! If in the walls of Florence there be anything in the shape of comfort, Fazio, I'll clasp it in my strong arms, drag it to this dungeon, and make thee happy once more! Farewell!" And with a wild embrace, the wife tore herself from her husband's arms, left the ducal chamber, and reached the street, along which she sped with frantic footsteps, not knowing whither she was going.

The Marchesa Aldabella sat in her dainty boudoir, looking moody and vexed. She had just learned the tale of Fazio's disgrace—of Fazio's guilt—and her soul was filled with mortification and bitter gall.

Presently a woman's agonized voice smote the lady's ears, and Bianca, her hair loose about her shoulders, her garments all disordered, presented herself before the astonished Aldabella.

The Marchesa started up. "And who art thou, who thus unshowered and unbidden breaks in upon my privacy?"

Bianca tried to speak, but nothing but curses rose to her lips, and such she came not there to utter.

"Nay, stand not thus quakingly. Speak out, and freely," added Aldabella.

"There is one," faltered the wretched Bianca,— "one thou did'st love—Giraldi Fazio; one who loved thee—Giraldi Fazio; he's doomed to die—to die to-morrow morning; and lo! 'tis 'e already."

"He's doomed?" repeated the lady, with indifference. "Why, then, the man must die!"

"Nay, high-born lady, thou hast influence with the Grand Duke. His ear will not disdain thy prayer, if thou wilt plead for one condemned, but, oh! most innocent!"

"Plead for Giraldi Fazio?" cried she, with scorn. "I could not, if I would!"

Bianca fell upon her knees here, and seized one corner of Aldabella's robe. "Nay, listen to me, thou, so fair and lovely—hear, hear me, and thou art won! If thou wilt save him, I, Bianca, his wife, will give him to thee, and pardon all that has been and all that may be! And, oh! I will be thy handmaiden—thine in patience and in submission both! Thou shalt enjoy all, all that I enjoyed! His love, his life, his soul be thine; and I will bless thee—even in my misery, bless thee!"

"Knowest thou to whom and where thou playest the raver?" exclaimed the cruel Marchesa, in disdainful syllables. "Dost think that I, Aldabella, whose voice might make thrones render up their stateliest to my service, would stoop to the sorry sweepings of a prison?"

Stung by her taunting speech, Bianca now sprang to her feet.

"Proud-lipped woman!" she exclaimed; "had'st thou loved my Fazio, I would have pitied and pardoned thee for thy weakness, but now I despise thee!"

"Begone, or I will summon hither my servants to drive thee hence!"

"Oh, pardon me: I came not here to upbraid thee!" returned the miserable Bianca: "I came to solicit thine aid for one who cannot aid himself!"

"Begone, I say! What is thine husband to me? I slew him not—nay, nor denounced him to the judgment-seat!"

Burying her face in her hands, Bianca fled from the presence of the proud and wicked Aldabella, and found her way into the streets, in which she passed the whole of that long night. In the early morning she sought her husband's prison, and was admitted to his presence.

"Fazio, Fazio, Fazio!" she shrieked, rushing to him, and flinging herself upon his breast; "it is that

morning! Nay, set me loose; thou clasps't thy murdereress!"

By-and-by Captain Antonio entered the prison cell, to announce to the condemned one that his hour was come.

"I will obey thee, officer," rejoined Fazio. Then, turning to his wife, "Bianca, yet but a word; 'tis a strange one. Aldabella—"

"Curse her!"

"Peace, peace! Forgive her, for thy Fazio's sake!" "Anything, anything that thou mayest ask I'll readily grant; but they shall not kill thee!" she added, twining her arms about his neck; "or, if they do, let us both die together!"

At this moment a deep-toned passing-bell sent forth its warning voice, penetrating through the thick dungeon walls to smite the condemned one's ear.

Bianca's arms now loosened their hold, and she stood awhile transfixed, then fell prone upon the cold earth.

When next she opened her eyes to the light, Giraldi Fazio was dead, and her own reason had for ever fled.

"My liege," spoke Aldabella, "thou wilt not hearken to the story of a mad woman?"

"Nay, my brain hath now a short interval of rest, and I can relate my story clearly," Bianca replied. "My Fazio, my poor Fazio! he murdered not, Duke! He found Bartolo dead. The wealth did shine in his eyes, and he was dazzled. And when he was gaily gilded up, she—she, this proud and wicked Marchesa, lured him from me. Then, then I maddened! Hark! Do you hear the horrible bell—the bell that I set knolling? Hark! How cold it striketh here—here, on my brain!" she continued, tearing her hair, and uttering wild, discordant cries.

"I do believe thy tale," returned the Duke. "Let me lead thee hence."

"I am dying, Duke!" answered Bianca, sinking to the ground. "Stay with me to the last, and command that hateful, bad woman from my sight!" she continued, pointing to Aldabella.

"Away, Marchesa!" exclaimed the Duke; "thy cheeks are coloured with a guilty confusion. Away; and in sackcloth and ashes go weep for and repent thou of thy manifold sins."

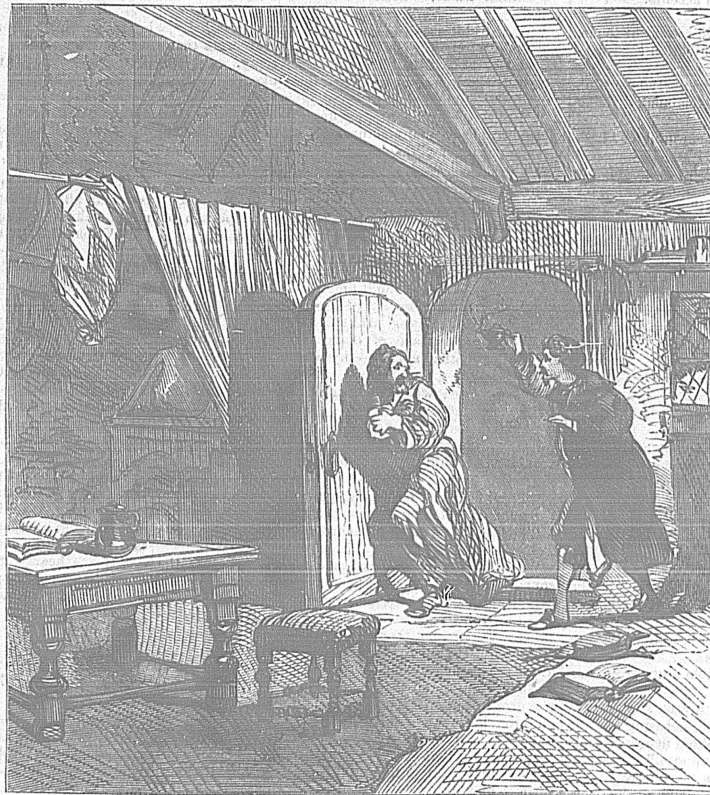
Shuddering with shame, and unable to utter a word in her own defence, the Marchesa slunk out of the *salon*, thence out of her own palace, and fled straightway to a convent, in which she ended her miserable days. For Bianca, the once-loving but jealous Bianca, she died in the Duke's arms, softly and peacefully as an infant sinking into a sweet slumber.

THE END.

SHOWS OF GRIEF.

Nor very many years ago it was considered an essential part of the etiquette of fashionable funerals to appear to weep. Each "mourner" was expected to carry in the hand a white pocket handkerchief, and to apply it to the eyes less or more frequently—the interval between the sobs being regulated by the degree of relationship, or friendship, which had existed between the unconsolable and the deceased. This bit of hypocrisy has happily been dispensed with, for some time past, by the mourning fashionists. It is no longer deemed indispensable to indicate to the world that what Hamlet calls "the fruitful river of the eye" is in a state of freshet, by hoisting the white flag of affliction at a burial. This change in the fashion is judicious, for tears are not necessarily the sign of sorrow. In fact, weeping regret is usually superficial; so that to counterfeit tears is simply to simulate a shallow grief. Besides, there are hundreds of persons who, like Job Trotter in the "Pickwick Papers," can "lay on the water" at will. Actors shed tears on the stage mechanically. Nothing can be more fallacious than the outward symbols of sorrow. Neither "inky suits," nor clouds of crape, nor an overflow of salt water, nor "the dejected 'haviour of the visage," are to be trusted as signs of inconsolability, especially if our departed brother or sister has been thoughtful enough to leave a handsome legacy to the sable-clad and lachrymose mourner. In such a case, a Niobe might, without injustice, be suspected of dissimulation. It is common to weep without much suffering, and equally common to suffer keenly without shedding tears. There are human crocodiles who could pour forth eye-water enough to swim in, without experiencing a single pang.

ONE of the officers of the Bank of England said, the other day, that, "in all its dealings with the United States, the bank had never lost a dollar by an American." The largest "piece of paper" ever discounted by this bank was a bill for £800,000, and the largest amount of business done in one day was £2,500,000. This was during the panic of May, 1866, when the whole City of London was rushing to the bank for relief.



THE MISER SEEKS REFUGE AT FAZIO'S HOUSE.

She dashed out of the prison into the street, and finding Aldabella's palace, succeeded in gaining an entrance to it.

The Marchesa, who had been holding late revels, had not yet dismissed her guests, amongst whom was the Grand Duke, the judge who had condemned Bianca's husband.

The poor maniac burst into the very midst of the gay company, and flying to Aldabella, clutched her by the arm.

"'Tis thou, thou!" cried mad Bianca. "I come to tell thee something!"

Aldabella shrank away, and sought to free herself from the woman's strong grip. But in vain; Bianca's fingers held her fast, as if in a vice.

"Dost know he's dead? Did'st hear the dismal bell—that bell which has palsied both my heart and brain?" Bianca shrieked into the Marchesa's ear.

"Why, 'tis Fazio's wife!" said the Duke, recognizing her.

"It is not Fazio's wife!" returned she, thrusting away Aldabella. "Have the dead wives? I know you, Duke; and to you I will tell my whole tale, simply and clearly!"