

"We are all a poor soft set," sighed Mother Teresa: pointing to my father, "Bastiano is the only one of us who knows how to gain money without any trouble. He is so disgusting that he has but to get up and pretend to follow people, and they'll throw him any amount; with his plaister over his eye, and that hideous mouth he twists, he's sure of his game—except, indeed, that two English lords one day had the courage to go by and give him nothing."

"Ah, did not I laugh?" said Tonino.

"Hush, hush, here is a carriage;" and at once old Teresa, Tonino, and two or three more, rushed up to the occupants and obtained a few coppers.

"Now for our turn, Momo," whispered Pallidina.

"No, mine," growled my father; and, dragging himself with great rapidity on his hands and knees, he lifted his distorted face towards the strangers, and held out his dirty cap without a word, and three of the strangers looking away dropped something into it.

Next came Pallidina.

"I have no mother, and I have had nothing to eat for two days, my good gentlemen, *'datemi un soldo se vi piace.'*"

"The others have had it all," was the reply.

Pallidina hid her face and sobbed. "Here, poor child," said a passer-by, slipping a silver coin into her hand. Pallidina duly blessed her benefactor; then, drawing back, "Now, Momo," said she, "you go up to the Signorina."

Accordingly, I ran and leaped and contrived to reach the church porch as soon as the young lady. I only looked at her, smiled, and held out my hand without a word.

"Oh, what an exquisite child!" she exclaimed. "Do look, mamma; how handsome these Italians are. Have you any pence?"

"I have none left."

"Have you some small silver?"

The mother turned back, and I was delighted to be as rich as Pallidina; between us we actually had a whole franc. Old Giacomo, under the porch, coughed himself black in the face, but he got nothing.

Pietrina, standing at the entrance of the church, bent her head over her sleeping child as the strangers went in, and so hid her face from them.

"Poor creature, she is ashamed to beg," said the lady; "I really must get the cicerone to change me a five-franc piece, and I'll give her a trifle as we go out."

While the party were admiring the interior of the church, we were all gathered round

Mother Teresa, and made over to her our money, which she divided most equitably between us.

"It's only Pietrina and old Giacomo who have not chosen to enter into partnership with us, and I don't think they have acted wisely," observed she.

"There's no telling," returned Tonino; "I have heard say that neither of them want for anything."

"Nor do we want for anything either," said my father; "except," he added, "that when I take off my plaister at night I feel uncomfortable, I'm so used to it, and every now and then I am inclined to go on all fours."

"What a thing, to be sure, habit is!" observed Teresa; "if I were not to beg, I should think myself the idlest of creatures. I should find time hang very heavy."

"And to think," said my father, "that there should be fools who would have us go into the poor-house! I hope we shall never be reduced to that."

As for me, who had never before paid much attention to the general conversation, I was much struck with it on this occasion, and in the evening, when seated with Pallidina in the Duomo waiting for Benediction, I felt quite sad. She inquired what ailed me.

"I am afraid we are great sinners," I replied, "because we tell nothing but lies."

"I don't know what you may do," returned she, gravely, "but for my part I tell none."

"Yes, you do; when you are asked if I am your brother, you say that I am."

"That is not a lie—for, besides that I love you like one, the old priest told me once that we were all brothers in Christ."

"But is that true?"

"It must be true, Giacomo, when the Curato said so."

"Well, I am glad to be really your brother, I can tell you." I was indeed, and could hardly sleep for joy.

It requires a good deal of talent to make a successful beggar. No one understood the art better than Pallidina. She seemed to read people's faces. "That poor lady will give me something," she would say; "that ugly lady will not—she has a dog; people who have dogs do not like the poor. There's that fat gentleman, you may try him—he is not charitable, but he'll give to get rid of you. That young lady has new gloves on, it's no use asking her—it would spoil her gloves to open her purse. Look at that young man speaking to a lady, he'll like her to see him give alms—make haste, you will get something." I followed her injunctions, and always succeeded.