

not always pleasant. In summer-time the heat of the Piazza was insupportable. The glare of the sun on the marble palaces almost blinded us. True we used always to seek out a shady place for our siesta, but still many of us had sore eyes; and then so few people came in summer—it was our dead season.

For some time back Pietrina used to talk a good deal with my father of an evening, and I often noticed her cry. Mother Teresa and Tonino would laugh and say, "The widower is teasing Pietrina. It is four years now since La Lucia died: no wonder he begins to forget her."

"But Pietrina is married," I ventured to put in.

"And where is her husband?" sneered they.

"You are very knowing if you find him."

"Perhaps he is dead."

"Oh, to be sure, it looks like it! Perhaps," maliciously added Mother Teresa, "he has never been alive!"

Years passed rapidly away. Pietrina's little one was about three, and I eleven. One morning I had indeed a surprise, for my father not only did not put on his plaister, but washed himself, combed his hair, brought out of a chest a white shirt, a jacket, and brown velvet trousers, dressed himself very neatly, went out, and returned with his beard shaved off. Then he gathered all his money together, filled a bag with his clothes, and said, "I shall be away for a few days, Giacomo. I am going to Lucca to seek for work; if I succeed in finding any, you will come there to me." I did not answer him; he kissed me, a thing he never did, and went off. The idea of having to leave Pallidina made me cry frantically.

"What is it, Momo? what ails thee?" was

her inquiry, as soon as we met. At first I thought I would keep my fears to myself, but she pressed me so that I ended by confiding to her my misery at the prospect of having soon to go away.

"Oh, that will never be," said she; then, taking me by the hand, "Come along, we will go and perform a novena to our guardian angels, in order that they may never separate us;" and, hurrying into the church, we at once began our novena. Never before had I prayed with such fervour.

Our novena was over, and my father had not returned. We begged a penny of Teresa to get a taper to light before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. Teresa was not generous, and this request put her out of temper, but she did not dare to refuse us.

"Do you know, Pallidina, that my father staying away so long makes me think he is settling down at Lucca, and will soon be back to fetch me?"

"I have prayed too much to the good God, to Our Lord and his Blessed Mother, and to all saints and angels, for that to happen," said Pallidina, with a confident air. "And do you suppose Our Lady did not see the taper we burnt before her this morning, and that she will not entreat her Son for us? For my part, I feel quite at ease."

The child's faith revived mine. So long as I was with her, I too believed that nothing could separate us; but when Mother Teresa, after making my soup (of which she ate half herself), went away and left me alone in my wretched room, I would burst into tears. I used constantly to fancy that I heard my father turning the key in the door, and to wake with a start, thinking that I heard him say, "Get up, Momo, and let us be off to Lucca."

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