

Stories Toto Told Me

By Baron Corvo

V.—About the Heresy of Fra Serafico

ONE of Toto's brothers was called Nicola, and he was going to be a priest. He was nineteen years old, and very like Toto in appearance with this notable difference—there was no light in his eyes. He was a curious, gaunt, awkward, unworldly creature, absolutely the opposite of Toto, who had the charm and freedom of a young savage on the loose. I don't know why the clergy, for whom I entertain the highest respect, of course, should always slink along by the wall, expressing by the cringing obsequiousness of their carriage that they would take it as a favour for some one to kick them, but such is the case. I used to see this Nicola sneaking about during his summer vacation, but I don't think I ever spoke to him except when he came to say "How do you do?" and "Good-bye." One morning, soon after his arrival, I asked Toto what was the matter with his brother, for he looked even more caged, humpty-backed, and slouching, more utterly miserable and crushed than usual. "'Cola, sir,' he said, 'you must know, has a very feeling heart, and if he meets with any little misfortune it is a much more serious thing to him than it would be to me. I, of course, would say that it didn't matter, and

and look for something else to amuse me: but 'Cola will think over his grief so much that it will seem far greater than it really is, and he will not be able to eat his food or take any interest in anything, and wish he was dead or that he had never given himself the annoyance of being born. And I suppose now he has had some little trouble in his college—dropped his garter, perhaps, and let his stocking down when out with the camerata in the street, and he has thought about it so much that now he believes he has committed a sin against the sixth commandment, by an indecent exposure of his person. But, if I have your leave, I will ask him, for I can see him saying his beads behind the Emissario.”

Toto ran away, and I took a little nap.

When I woke, he was coming down the steps holding a rhubarb leaf over his head. “I am sure you will be much amused, sir, when I tell you what is the matter with 'Cola,” he said. “I have made him very angry with me because I could not help laughing at him, and he has said that I should certainly burn for making a mock of the clergy—clergy, indeed, and he only a sub-deacon, and I his brother who know all about him and everything he ever did! And Geltruda, too! For my part I am sure it is a gift straight from Heaven to be a priest, because I remember that 'Cola used to be quite as fond of enjoying himself as I am, but since he went to the Seminario he will not look at a petticoat—that is to say, the face that belongs to it, for it is only the petticoats he does look at. Have I not seen my little mother cry when he came home, because he only put his lips to her hand—and they didn't touch it—as if she were la Signora Duchessa instead of the mother who wished to take him in her arms? But his dolour now, sir, is this. You must know that in the Seminario you have to preach to the other chierichetti in the
refectory,

refectory, during supper. This is to give you practice in delivering sermons. And after you have preached, you go to your place, and, if it is necessary to make any remarks upon what you have said, the professors tell you then what they think. Well, it was 'Cola's turn to preach the night before he came home, and he says that it was a sermon which he had taken all his life to write. He had learnt it by heart, and on arriving in the pulpit he repeated it, moving his hands and his body in a manner which he had practised before his mirror, without making a single mistake. When he had finished, the Rector paid him compliments, and two or three of the other professors did the same. But when it came to the turn of the Decanus who is the senior student, he said that the college ought to be very proud of having produced an abbatino so clever as to be able, in his first sermon, to invent and proclaim sixteen new and hitherto unheard of heresies. And 'Cola, instead of feeling a fine rage against this nasty, jealous prig, with his mocking tongue, takes all the blame to himself and is making himself wretched. I told him that there was no difficulty about heresies, if that was what he wanted, because I think that to do wrong is as easy as eating, and that the real difficulty is to keep straight. But he says he is a miserable sinner, and that it is all his fault, for he cannot have perfectly corresponded with his vocation. Why, as for heresy, sir, I will tell you how a friar in Rome was accused of preaching heresy, and then you will know that it is not always the being accused of inventing heresies that makes you guilty of that same.

“ Ah well, formerly there lived in Rome a certain friar called Fra Serafico. When he had lived in the world he was of the Princes of Monte Corvino, but at about the age of 'Cola he astonished everybody by giving up his rank and his riches and his state, and becoming a son of Saint Francis. Now the Franciscans of his
convent

convent were not quite able to understand why a young man who had his advantages, should give them up as he did, and prefer a shaved head and naked feet and to be a beggar. And Fra Serafico though he had the best will in the world, didn't make a good impression on the other friars, because his manners were different to theirs. He felt miserable without a pocket-handkerchief for his nose. And it was some time before the superiors became certain that he had a true vocation, for he went about his duties with diligence and humility, feeling so shy, because the things around him were so strange, that he gained for himself amongst the other novices the nickname of 'Dumbtongue.'

"And this went on until he had finished his probation, and taken the habit and the vows.

"One day after this, the Father Guardian, in order to give him a good humiliation, told him to prepare a sermon to preach before the convent at the chapter that afternoon. Fra Serafico received this command in silence, and, having kissed the ground before his Superior, he went away to his cell, and when the afternoon came he stood up to preach.

"Then, sir, a very curious thing happened, for Fra Serafico preached, and while he preached the faces of the other friars became set in a glare of astonishment, and the eyes of the Father Guardian were almost starting out of his head by the time the sermon was finished. Then there was silence for a little while, and the friars looked at one another and nodded. It seems that they had been entertaining an angel unawares, for this Dumbtongue, as they called him, had turned out to be a perfect Goldenmouth. And the friars were more than glad, for, though they were all good men and very holy, they had no great preacher among them at that time; and they thought it was a shame that an Order whose business was to preach should have no man who could
preach

preach well, and at last they saw a way out of the difficulty: 'For surely,' they said, 'this Serafico speaks the words of San Paolo himself, with the tongue of an angel.'

"After this he gave fervorini daily in the convent church, till all the city was filled with his fame, and at last he was named by Papa Silvio to preach the Lent in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso.

"Of course you know very well, sir, that the devil is always disgusted to see the works of God going on as easily as water running out of a turned-on tap, and you know also that when a good work seems to be thriving at its best, then is the time the devil chooses to try to upset it. And so he went to a little Jesuit called Padre Tonto Pappagallo—and, of course, I need not tell you that the Jesuits are not what you might call friendly to the Franciscans—and he suggested to him the evil thought, that it was a bad thing for the Jesuits to be beaten in preaching by the Franciscans, and what a score it would be if a Jesuit were to have the honour of catching Fra Serafico in the act of preaching heresy. Padre Tonto, it happened, had made a bad meditation that morning, having allowed his eyes to fix themselves upon some of the stone angels who were dangling their beautiful white legs over the arches round the apsis, and his thoughts to wander from his meditation to those things which every good priest flies from with as much haste as he would fly from the foul fiend appearing in person. And so his mind was just like a fertile field, and when the devil popped in his suggestion, the seed immediately took root, and before the morning was over it had burst into blossom, for this Padre Tonto cut off to the church of San Carlo to hear the great preacher, and when he saw the vast multitude all so intent upon those golden words, that if an earthquake had happened then and there I believe no one would have blinked, and when he heard the sighs from the
breasts

breasts of wicked men and saw the tears rain down on women's cheeks, he envied Fra Serafico his power to move men so, and he began to listen to the sermon that he might catch the preacher preaching heresy. Now, of course, while he was staring about, he had not paid attention to the words of gold, and the first sentence that caught his ear when he did begin, indeed, to listen was this, 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.'

"Padre Tonto jumped up and ran out of the church. He was delighted, for he had heard a heresy straight away. 'No one shall be crowned,' he said—'that is, of course, with the crown of glory which the saints in heaven wear for ever—unless he has contended lawfully—that is, to say, as the martyrs did in the Colosseo. Pr-r-r-r-r, my dear Serafico! And what, then, becomes of all the holy bishops and confessors, and of the virgins and penitents and widows whom Holy Church has numbered with the saints? These were not martyrs, nor did they fight with beasts, like San Paolo' (and I cannot tell you the place, sir). 'An I were Pope, Seraficone mio, I should burn your body in the Campo di Fiore to-morrow morning, and your soul in hell for ever and the day after.' And saying these words and all sorts of other things like them, he ran away to the Sant' Uffizio and made a mischief with much diligence.

"Now Padre Tonto had a very good reputation and was exceedingly well thought of in Rome. Moreover, the accusation he made, appeared to be well founded. So Fra Serafico was sent for and the question was put to him, 'Did you, or did you not, in your sermon preached in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso on the second Monday in Lent, say, "No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully?"' And Fra Serafico replied that his questioner, who was the Grand Inquisitor himself, spoke like

a book with large letters and clasps of silver, for without a doubt he had used those very words. The Grand Inquisitor laid down the key of the question room, and remarked that confession of wrong done was always good for the soul: and he pointed out to Fra Serafico the dreadful heresy of which he had been guilty in uttering words which, if they meant anything at all, meant this, according to Padre Tonto Pappagallo, who was a theologian, *That it was impossible to get to heaven unless you suffered martyrdom.* And he told Fra Serafico, that as he had made his heresy public by preaching it to all Rome, it would be necessary to make amends also in the place of his crime, or else to let himself be burnt with fire in the Campo di Fiore on the next public holiday, both to atone for the sin, and in order to encourage other people who might feel it their business to preach heresy as he had done. And Fra Serafico answered that he wished to live and die a good and obedient son of Holy Mother Church, and to submit his judgment in all things to Hers; therefore, it would give him much joy to make public amends for his heresy at any time or place which His Eminence in his wisdom might be pleased to appoint.

“The next day the people of Rome were called by proclamation to the Church of San Carlo Al Corso to see Fra Serafico’s humiliation, and because he was such a celebrated man there came together all the noblest and most distinguished persons in the city. Papa Silvio sat upon the throne with the Princes Colonna and Orsini on his right hand and on his left. All around there were fifty scarlet cardinals, bishops by the score in purple and green, friars grey, friars white, friars black, monks by the hundred, and princes and common people like rain drops. And when they had all taken their places, Fra Serafico entered between two officers of the Sant’ Uffizio with their faces covered in the usual manner, and first he prostrated himself before the Majesty in the tabernacle,
and

and then at the feet of Papa Silvio, then he bowed from the waist to the Sacred College and the prelates, and from the shoulders to the rest ; and then he was led into the pulpit from which he had proclaimed his heresy. There he began to speak, using these words : ‘ Most Holy Father, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords, my Reverend Brethren, Most Illustrious Princes, my dear Children in Jesus Christ. I am brought here to-day on account of the vile and deadly heresy which I am accused of preaching in this pulpit on the first Monday in Lent. That heresy is contained in the following words : “ No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.” I freely confess, acknowledge, and say that I did in real truth use those words. But before I proceed to abjure the heresy contained in them and to express with tears my penitence for the crime I have committed, I crave, my beloved children in Jesus Christ, most illustrious princes, my reverend brethren, most eminent and most reverend lords, and, prostrate at Your Feet, Most Holy Father, your indulgence for a few moments while I relate a dream and a vision which came to me during the night just past, which I spent for the good of my soul upon the tender bosom of the Sant’ Uffizio.’ Fra Serafico’s face as he spoke beamed with a beauty so unearthly, his manner was so gracious, and the music of his golden voice so entrancing that Papa Silvio, making the Sign of the Cross, granted him the favour he had asked.

“ The Friar went on : ‘ In my dream it appeared to me that I was standing before the bar of the Eternal Judge, and that there I was accused by a certain Jesuit named Padre Tonto Pappagallo of having preached heresy on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, using these words : “ No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.” And while I waited there, Blessed Father Francesco himself came and stood beside me. And the Judge of all men looked upon me with
wrath

wrath and anger, asking whether I confessed my crime, and I, wretched man that I am, in the presence of Him who knows all things, even the inmost secrets of the heart, could do nothing else but acknowledge that it was even so. Then the Padre Eterno, who, though terrible beyond all one can conceive to evil-doers, is of a justice so clear, so fine, and straight that the crystal of earth becomes as dark as mud, the keenness of a diamond as blunt granite, and the shortest distance between two points as crooked as the curves in a serpent's tail—this Just Judge, I say, asked me, who am but a worm of the earth, whether I had anything to say in excuse for my crime.

“ ‘And I, covered with confusion as with a garment, because of my many sins, replied, “May it please Your Majesty, I have confessed my crime, and in excuse I can only say that when I was preparing my sermon I took those words from the writings of San Gregorio.”

“ ‘The Judge of all men ordered my angel to write this down, and deigned to ask whether I could say in what part of the writings of San Gregorio this heresy could be found. “ May it please Your Majesty,” I replied, “ the heresy will be found in the 37th Homily of San Gregorio on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca.” Then I covered my face with my hands and waited for my dreadful sentence ; but Blessed Father Francesco comforted me, and patted my shoulder with his hand, all shining with the Sacred Stigmata, and the Padre Eterno, speaking in a mild voice to the Court of Heaven, said, “ My children, this little brother has been accused of preaching a heresy, and this heresy is said to have been taken from the writings of San Gregorio. In this case, you will perceive that it is not our little brother who is a heretic, but San Gregorio, who will therefore have the goodness to place himself at the bar, for We are determined to search this matter to its remotest end.” Then San Gregorio was led by his guardian angel
from

from his throne among the Doctors of the Church, and came down to the bar and stood beside me and Blessed Father Francesco, who whispered in my ear, "Cheer up, little brother, and hope for the best!"

"And the Padre Eterno said, "San Gregorio, this little brother has been accused before Us, that on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, he preached heresy in the following words: 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.' We have examined him, and he alleges that he has taken these words from the 37th Homily, which you have written upon the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca. We demand, therefore, that you should say, first, whether you acknowledge that you have written these words; and secondly, if you have done so, what excuse you have to offer?" And San Gregorio opened the book of his writings which, of course, he always carries with him, and turned the pages with an anxious finger. Presently he looked up with a smile into the Face of God and said, "May it please Your Majesty, our little brother has spoken the truth, for I have found the passage, and when I have read it, You will find the answer to both questions which Your Condescension has put me." So San Gregorio read from his writings these words, "But we cannot arrive at the great reward unless through great labours: wherefore, that most excellent preacher, San Paolo, says, 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.' The greatness of rewards, therefore, may delight the mind, but does not take away the obligation of first fighting for it." "Hm-m-m-m," said the Padre Eterno, "this begins to grow interesting; for it seems, My children, that Our little brother here has quoted his heresy from San Gregorio, and that San Gregorio in his turn quoted it from San Paolo, upon whom, therefore, the responsibility seems to rest. Call San Paolo."

"So

“So the seven archangels blew their trumpets and summoned San Paolo, who was attending a meeting of the Apostolic College, and when he came into Court his guardian angel led him to the bar, where he took his place by the side of San Gregorio’ (the one who made them Catholics in England, sir, and the chant, sir, and saw San Michelé Arcangiolo on top of the Mola, sir), ‘and of my wretched self. “Now, San Paolo,” said the Padre Eterno, “We have here a little grey friar who has been accused of preaching heresy on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, in these words, ‘No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.’ And he has informed Us that he quoted these words from the 37th Homily of San Gregorio on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca. We have examined San Gregorio, and he has pointed out to Us that he did indeed use these words, as our little brother has said ; but San Gregorio also alleges that they are not his own words, but yours. The Court, therefore, would like to know whether San Gregorio’s statement is true.” Then San Paolo’s guardian angel handed to him the book which contained all the letters he had written, and after he had refreshed his memory with this, the great apostle replied, “May it please Your Majesty, there is no doubt that both our little brother and San Gregorio are right, for I find in my second letter to San Timoteo, chapter ii. verse 5, the following words : ‘And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he contend lawfully.’ “Well !” said the Padre Eterno, “this is a very shocking state of things that you, of all men, should publish heresies in this manner and lead men of all ages into error ! San Gregorio, taking the statement on your authority, preaches heresy in his time, and a thousand years after, our little brother, innocently thinking that men of such eminence as the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Apostle of England are of good authority,

authority, preaches the same heresy. You see now that it is impossible to know what the end of a lie will be when once it has been started on its course."

" "But hear me," said San Paolo, who was a very bold man, "for I venture to submit to Your Majesty that the second letter which I wrote to San Timoteo has been placed by Your Church on earth on the list of the Canonical Books, and this means that when I wrote that letter I was inspired by the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, and that therefore I was divinely protected from teaching error in any shape or form ! "

" "Of course it does," replied the Padre Eterno. "The words that you have written, San Paolo, in your second letter to San Timoteo, are not the words of a man, but the words of God Himself, and the matter amounts to this, that our little brother here, who took the words from San Gregorio, who took them from you who were divinely inspired to write them, has not been guilty of heresy at all, unless God Himself can err. And who," continued the Padre Eterno, with indignation, "We should like to know, is the ruffian who has taken up Our time with this ridiculous and baseless charge against Our little brother ? "

" "Somebody said that it was a Jesuit named Padre Tonto Pappagallo, at which the Padre Eterno sniffed saying, "A Jesuit ! and what in the name of goodness is that ? "

" "So the Madonna whispered that it was a son of Sant' Ignazio. "Where is Sant' Ignazio ? " said the Padre Eterno. Now Sant' Ignazio, who had seen the way things were going, and what a contemptible spectacle his son was presenting, had hidden himself behind a bush and was pretending to say his office. But he was soon found and brought into Court, and the Padre Eterno asked him what he meant by allowing his spiritual children to act in this way. And Sant' Ignazio only groaned and said, "May it please
Your

Your Majesty, all my life long I tried to teach them to mind their own business, but in fact I have altogether failed to make them listen to me."

"That was my dream, Most Holy Father, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords, my Reverend Brethren, Most Illustrious Princes, my Beloved Children in Jesus Christ ; and since you have been so gracious as to listen, I will now no longer delay my recantation of the heresy of which I am accused of preaching on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso."

"But Papa Silvio arose from His throne, and the cardinals, and the bishops, and the princes, and the people, and they all cried in a loud voice, 'Eviva, eviva, Bocca d'Oro, eviva, eviva.'"

VI.—About One Way in which Christians Love One Another

"YES," I said, "that's a very good story, Toto. And now I want to know where you learnt it."

"Well, sir," he replied, "it was told to me by Fra Leone of the Capuccini. Not that I wish you to think the Capuccini and Franciscans to be the same. Not at all. But, of course, you know better than that, and it is like their impertinence of bronze to pretend that they are, as they do, for the Capuccini were not even heard of for hundreds of years after San Francesco founded his Order of Little Brothers. And the reason why they came to be made was only because of the vain man Simon Something or other, who gave more thought to his clothes than was good for his soul, and found that the sleeves which were good enough for San Francesco, and the round tippet which that heavenly saint wore,

did not suit his style of beauty, and so he made himself a brown habit instead of a grey one, with plain sleeves to show the shape of his arms, and no pockets in them, and a tippet not round but pointed like the piece of flesh there is between my shoulders. And then, because there are always plenty of men ready to run after something new, he got together so many followers who wished to dress themselves like him, that the Holy Father preferred to give them permission to have their own way rather than cause them to become rebels against our Holy Mother the Church, by making it difficult for them to be obedient, because the matter had really no importance to speak of."

I said that I knew all about that, but that I didn't believe that religious men, whether they were Franciscans or sham ones like the Capuccini, or even Jesuits, would show such jealousy and envy of each other as appeared in the story of Fra Serafico.

"And there," said Toto, "I can assure you that you are altogether wrong. I may tell you that in every religious order there are two kinds of men—the saints and the sinners; and of course, the saints always love each other as Francesco and Domenico did; and, by contrary, having submitted themselves to the infernal dragon who always drives all love out of the hearts of his slaves and inflames them with the undying fire of envy, the sinners hate each other with a hatred like the poison of vipers, and occupy themselves with all kinds of schemes by which they may bring discredit upon their enemies, the sinners of other orders. Why, I will tell you a tale which is quite true, because I have seen it, of how some Capuccini—and you will not ask me to say where their convent is—have done a deed by which much shame will some day be brought upon a house of Jesuits who live in their neighbourhood.

"Well, then, there was a convent of Capuccini, and outside the grounds

grounds or the convent there was a small house in which I lived with my father and my mother and my brothers and sisters, and it was a very lonely place. And about as far off as it would take you to say five Paters, and five Aves, and five Glorias, there was another house, and there were perhaps three or four cottages in sight, and that is all, so it was a very lonely place. But six miles away there was a large college of Jesuits, up in the hills, and when a Jesuit died it was the custom to bury him in the churchyard of the Capuccini.

“Now there was a man who came to live in the other house, and he was not an old man nor a young man, but just between the two ; and because he felt lonely he used to pay attention to all the ladies who came in his way when visiting this celebrated convent of Capuccini ; and our difficulty was to know which one he was going to marry. And there was one in particular who appeared to these Capuccini to be the one that he ought to marry, but her home was far away in a large town, and so one of the friars wrote to her parish priest to ask what ought to be done, and the parish priest replied : ‘ Yes, you must get her married as soon as possible ; ’ and soon after that the respectable man married her and brought her to the house in the lonely place that I am telling you about. And they lived there very quietly for a little while, and then his business called the respectable man away from his house for a few weeks. So he went and his wife remained at home, and there was no one in the house besides her but a woman, her servant.

“And presently, in the middle or one night, there was a knocking at the door of the small house where I lived with my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, and I heard this knocking because that night I was going to enjoy myself in the orchard of the Capuccini. So I came downstairs in my shirt only ;

only ; and because I wished to keep what I was going to do a secret, I left my shirt rolled up in a bundle under the seat in the porch, and I will tell you why : I thought of two things ; the first thing was that it was a very rainy night, and if my mother found in the morning that my shirt was wet, she would guess I had been up to mischief, and having told my father, I should have nothing but stick for breakfast ; and the second thing was that if some Capuccino should be persuaded by an uneasy devil to look out of his window to see a naked boy running about in the orchard or in the churchyard, he would say to himself that it was just a poor soul escaping from purgatory, and then having repeated a *De Profundis*, he would go back to his bed. So just as I was creeping across the yard with the warm rain pouring in torrents over my body, there came this banging on the door of my house, and I skipped behind a tree and waited. Then my father opened the window of his room upstairs, demanding what was the matter, and the voice of the servant of the respectable man, replied that la Signora Pucci had suddenly been taken very ill, and that if my mother was a Christian woman she would come to her assistance. This servant spoke with a very thick voice, and as I did not think I was going to be amused if I stayed behind my tree, I ran away and enjoyed myself enough with the peaches belonging to these Capuccini. When I came home I dried myself with a cloth, took my shirt from under the seat in the porch, and went to bed again. And in the morning when I awoke there was no one to give us our breakfast, for my father was gone to his work and my mother to the assistance of the wife of the respectable man, so I was thankful enough that I had made so many good meals during the night. All that day and all the next night and the day after was my mother away from her home, and I need not tell you that I began to think that something very strange was happening

of

of which I ought to know ; so I waited here and I waited there, and I put a question of one kind to this and a question of another kind to that, and during the night, after my father had seen me go to bed, I got up again, left my shirt in the porch as before, not because it was raining now, but because I liked it, as well as for the other reason, and I wandered about quite naked and happy and free," (here he tossed his arms and wriggled all over in an indescribable manner) "dodging behind trees and bushes, from my father's house to the house of the respectable man and to the churchyard of the convent of the Capuccini, and during that night I saw many curious things, and these, with the answers which were given to the questions I had been asking, and other odds and ends which I either knew or had seen with my eyes, made me able to know exactly what this mystery was.

"Now I ought to have told you this, that a week before, a very old priest from the Jesuit college of which I have already spoken had been buried in the convent churchyard, also he was the confessor of the wife of the respectable man, and a priest whom she held in the very greatest honour, and he was called Padre Tommaso. He was a saint indeed whom everybody venerated, for the Signor Iddio had made him live one hundred and two years in order that he might add to the many good deeds which in his long life he had done. I should like you to remember this, because now I must go to another part of the story.

"After the servant of the respectable man had told my father that her mistress was ill, my mother arose from her bed and went at once to the house of the sick person. Arrived there, she found la Signora Pucci fallen upon the floor in great pain, and being a woman herself, she knew with one stroke of her eye what was the matter.

"Now the servant of the respectable man, who had accompanied my

my mother, was drunk and so useless. Therefore my mother, who is the best of all women living, made la Signora Pucci as comfortable as she could at that time, went into the stable, put the horse into the cart and, having driven for three miles to the nearest town, brought a doctor back with her as the day was breaking.

“The sick woman was put to bed, and the doctor gave my mother directions as to what was to be done during his absence; for he said he must go home now to finish his night’s rest, and in the morning he had his patients to see, but in the afternoon he would come again, and that then, perhaps, something would happen. But my mother told him that she would on no account consent to be left alone in the house with la Signora Pucci, because she perceived that something most dreadful was to happen. The doctor replied that he would not stay, because he could not; and that if my mother was not there to assist the sick woman in her trouble, she might die. But my mother would by no means be persuaded, and in the end she conquered, and the doctor stayed, and they waited all through the night, and the next morning at noon there came a new baby into that house, and la Signora Pucci was so astonished that she really nearly died, and as for the baby, he did die after a half-hour of this world.

“Then the sick woman became mad, and cried in delirium that she would not have it known to the respectable man, her husband, that a new baby had come into that house, so my mother went to the Father Guardian of these Capuccini, telling him all that she knew, how she had baptized the baby Angelo herself seeing that he was at the point of death, and that therefore he must be buried in the churchyard, and how his mother, la Signora Pucci, demanded that this should be done secretly, and that the grave should be made with Padre Tommaso, of whom I have told you before, who

was

was a saint that any person might be glad to be buried with. Upon which the Father Guardian replied that this was as easy as eating; and he directed my mother, having put the dead baby Angelo into a box, to take him under her cloak at midnight to the grave of Padre Tommaso. So she did as she was told, putting the dead baby Angelo into a wooden box in which rice had been, and cutting a cross upon the lid so that San Michelé Arcangiolo should know there was a Christian there; and at midnight she was there at the grave of Padre Tommaso. And, of course, I need not tell you that there was a naked boy hidden in a cedar tree, over their heads, lying flat upon his face upon a thick branch which he held between his thighs and with his arms, and looking right down upon the grave. Then there came out of the convent Fra Giovannino, Fra Lorenzo, Fra Sebastiano, and Fra Guilhelmo. And if I had not remembered that a naked boy in a cedar-tree was not one of the things which you are unable to do without at a midnight funeral, I should have laughed, because these friars, coming out of their convent without candles, fell over the crosses on the graves and said things which friars do not say in their offices. They brought two spades and a bucket of holy water, and when they came to the grave of Padre Tommaso, Fra Sebastiano and Fra Guilhelmo dug about three feet of a hole over the Jesuit's head, then my mother gave them the box from under her cloak and they put it in the earth, and having sprinkled it with holy water, they covered it up, made the grave look as it had looked before as best they could in that dim light, and then returned to their convent, all the time saying no word aloud.

“Then my mother went back to the house of la Signora Pucci, and a boy without clothes followed her there. For one hour afterwards I ran backwards and forwards secretly from the convent

vent to the house of the respectable man, but finding that nothing else happened I went to my bed.

“About the end of the day after this my mother returned to her house, and said that the doctor had brought a nurse to la Signora Pucci, and that the respectable man her husband also was coming back, so there was nothing more for her to do. Then she swooned with weariness, for she was tired to death, but having rested some days while I and my sisters and my brothers kept the house clean and tidy, she recovered herself.

“And that is all the tale, sir.

“And I think you will see that these Capuccini, unless indeed they are entirely fools of the most stupid, and that they may be have been urged on by envy of the Jesuit fathers to lay the beginnings of a plot which some day will cause a great scandal. You must see that they could not help the coming of the new baby to the house of the respectable man, and it is not for that that I blame them. You must see that when the new baby had come and died a Christian, there was nothing else for them to do but to bury it in their churchyard, and that secretly, to defend la Signora Pucci from shame. And, after all, you must see that there are yards and yards and yards of ground in that churchyard where this dead Christian baby Angelo could be buried by himself secretly, and that it is simply abominable to have to put him into the grave of a Jesuit, which, being opened as it may at any time—God knows when or why, but it is quite likely—will bring a great dishonour and a foul blot upon the sons of San Ignazio.”

I said that I saw.