

Chapter 5 - The Blind Scholar and his Daughter

The Via de' Bardi, a street noted in the history of Florence. lies in Oltrarno, or that portion of the city which clothes the southern bank of the river. It extends from the Ponte Vecchio to the Piazza de' Mozzi at the head of the Ponte alle Grazie; its right-hand line of houses and walls being backed by the rather steep ascent which in the fifteenth century was known as the hill of Bogoli, the famous stonequarry whence the city got its pavement - of dangerously unstable consistence when penetrated by rains; its left-hand buildings flanking the river and making on their northern side a length of quaint, irregularly-pierced facade, of which the waters give a softened loving reflection as the sun begins to decline towards the western heights. But quaint as these buildings are, some of them seem to the historical memory a too modern substitute for the famous houses of the Bardi family, destroyed by popular rage in the middle of the fourteenth century.

They were a proud and energetic stock, these Bardi; conspicuous among those who clutched the sword in the earliest world-famous quarrels of Florentines with Florentines when the narrow streets were darkened with the high towers of the nobles, and when the old tutelary god Mars, as he saw; the gutters reddened with neighbours' blood, might well have smiled at the centuries of lip-service paid to his rival the Baptist. But the Bardi hands were of the sort that not only clutch the sword-hilt with vigour, but love the more delicate pleasure of fingering minted metal: they were matched, too, with true Florentine eyes, capable of discerning that power was to be won by other means than by rending and riving, and by the middle of the fourteenth century we find them risen from their original condition of popolania to be possessors, by purchase, of lands and strongholds, and the feudal dignity of Counts of Vernio, disturbing to the jealousy of their republican fellow-citizens. These lordly purchases are explained by our seeing the Bardi disastrously signalled only a few years later as standing in the very front of European commerce - the Christian Rothschilds of that time - undertaking to furnish specie for the wars of our Edward the Third, and having revenues 'in kind' made over to them, especially in wool, most precious of freights for Florentine galleys. Their august debtor left them with an august deficit, and alarmed Sicilian creditors made a too sudden demand for the payment of deposits, causing a ruinous shock to the credit of the Bardi and of associated houses, which was felt as a commercial calamity along all the coasts of the Mediterranean. But, like more modern bankrupts, they did not, for all that, hide their heads in humiliation; on the contrary, they seemed to have held them higher than ever, and to have been among the most arrogant of those grandees, who under certain noteworthy circumstances, open to all who will read the honest pages of Giovanni Villani, drew upon themselves the

exasperation of the armed people in 1343. The Bardi, who had made themselves fast in their street between the two bridges, kept these narrow inlets, like panthers at bay, against the oncoming gonfalons of the people, and were only made to give way by an assault from the hill behind them. Their houses by the river, to the number of twenty-two (palagi e case grandi), were sacked and burnt, and many among the chief of those who bore the Bardi name were driven from the city. But an old Florentine family was many-rooted, and we find the Bardi maintaining importance and rising again and again to the surface of Florentine affairs in a more or less creditable manner, implying an untold family history that would have included even more vicissitudes and contrasts of dignity and disgrace, of wealth and poverty, than are usually seen on the background of wide kinship. But the Bardi never resumed their proprietorship in the old street on the banks of the river, which in 1492 had long been associated with other names of mark, and especially with the Neri, who possessed a considerable range of houses on the side towards the hill.

In one of these Neri houses there lived, however, a descendant of the Bardi, and of that very branch which a century and a half before had become Counts of Vernio: a descendant who had inherited the old family pride and energy, the old love of pre-eminence, the old desire to leave a lasting track of his footsteps on the fast-whirling earth. But the family passions lived on in him under altered conditions: this descendant of the Bardi was not a man swift in street warfare, or one who loved to play the signor, fortifying strongholds and asserting the right to hang vassals, or a merchant and usurer of keen daring, who delighted in the generalship of wide commercial schemes: he was a man with a deep-veined hand cramped by much copying of manuscripts, who ate sparing dinners, and wore threadbare clothes, at first from choice and at last from necessity; who sat among his books and his marble fragments of the past, and saw them only by the light of those far-off younger days which still shone in his memory: he was a moneyless, blind old scholar - the Bardo de' Bardi to whom Nello, the barber, had promised to introduce the young Greek, Tito Melema.

The house in which Bardo lived was situated on the side of the street nearest the hill, and was one of those large sombre masses of stone building pierced by comparatively small windows, and surmounted by what may be called a roofed terrace or loggia, of which there are many examples still to be seen in the venerable city. Grim doors, with conspicuous scrolled hinges, having high up on each side of them a small window defended by iron bars, opened on a groined entrance-court, empty of everything but a massive lamp-iron suspended from the centre of the groin. A smaller grim door on the left hand admitted to the stone staircase, and the rooms on the ground-floor. These last were used as a warehouse by the proprietor; so was the first floor; and

both were filled with precious stores, destined to be carried, some perhaps to the banks of the Scheldt, some to the shores of Africa, some to the isles of the Egean, or to the banks of the Euxine. Maso, the old serving-man, when he returned from the Mercato with the stock of cheap vegetables, had to make his slow way up to the second storey before he reached the door of his master, Bardo, through which we are about to enter only a few mornings after Nello's conversation with the Greek.

We follow Maso across the antechamber to the door on the left hand, through which we pass as he opens it. He merely looks in and nods, while a clear young voice says, 'Ah, you are come back, Maso. It is well. We have wanted nothing.'

The voice came from the farther end of a long, spacious room, surrounded with shelves, on which books and antiquities were arranged in scrupulous order. Here and there, on separate stands in front of the shelves, were placed a beautiful feminine torso; a headless statue, with an uplifted muscular arm wielding a bladeless sword; rounded, dimpled, infantine limbs severed from the trunk, inviting the lips to kiss the cold marble; some well-preserved Roman busts; and two or three vases from Magna Grecia. A large table in the centre was covered with antique bronze lamps and small vessels in dark pottery. The colour of these objects was chiefly pale or sombre: the vellum bindings, with their deep-ridged backs, gave little relief to the marble, livid with long burial; the once splendid patch of carpet at the farther end of the room had long been worn to dimness; the dark bronzes wanted sunlight upon them to bring out their tinge of green, and the sun was not yet high enough to send gleams of brightness through the narrow windows that looked on the Via de' Bardi.

The only spot of bright colour in the room was made by the hair of a tall maiden of seventeen or eighteen, who was standing before a carved leggio, or reading-desk, such as is often seen in the choirs of Italian churches. The hair was of a reddish gold colour, enriched by an unbroken small ripple, such as may be seen in the sunset clouds on grandest autumnal evenings. It was confined by a black fillet above her small ears, from which it rippled forward again, and made a natural veil for her neck above her square-cut gown of black rascia, or serge. Her eyes were bent on a large volume placed before her: one long white hand rested on the reading-desk, and the other clasped the back of her father's chair.

The blind father sat with head uplifted and turned a little aside towards his daughter, as if he were looking at her. His delicate paleness, set off by the black velvet cap which surmounted his drooping white hair, made all the more perceptible the likeness between his aged features and those of the young maiden, whose

cheeks were also without any tinge of the rose. There was the same refinement of brow and nostril in both, counterbalanced by a full though firm mouth and powerful chin, which gave an expression of proud tenacity and latent impetuosity: an expression carried out in the backward poise of the girl's head, and the grand line of her neck and shoulders. It was a type of face of which one could not venture to say whether it would inspire love or only that unwilling admiration which is mixed with dread: the question must be decided by the eyes, which often seem charged with a more direct message from the soul. But the eyes of the father had long been silent, and the eyes of the daughter were bent on the Latin pages of Politian's 'Miscellanea,' from which she was reading aloud at the eightieth chapter, to the following effect:

'There was a certain nymph of Thebes named Chariclo, 'especially dear to Pallas; and this nymph was the mother of 'Teiresias. But once when in the heat of the summer, Pallas, in 'company with Chariclo, was bathing her disrobed limbs in the 'Heliconian Hippocrene, it happened that Teiresias coming as a 'hunter to quench his thirst at the same fountain, inadvertently 'beheld Minerva unveiled, and immediately became blind. For it 'is declared in the Saturnian laws, that he who beholds the gods 'against their will, shall atone for it by a heavy penalty... When 'Teiresias had fallen into this calamity, Pallas, moved by the 'tears of Chariclo, endowed him with prophecy and length of 'days, and even caused his prudence and wisdom to continue 'after he had entered among the shades, so that an oracle spake 'from his tomb: and she gave him a staff, wherewith, as by a 'guide, he might walk without stumbling... And hence, Nonnus, 'in the fifth book of the 'Dionysiaca,' introduces Actaeon 'exclaiming that he calls Teiresias happy, since, without dying, 'and with the loss of his eyesight merely, he had beheld Minerva 'unveiled and thus, though blind, could for evermore carry 'her image in his soul.'

At this point in the reading, the daughter's hand slipped from the back of the chair and met her father's, which he had that moment uplifted; but she had not looked round, and was going on, though with a voice a little altered by some suppressed feeling, to read the Greek quotation from Nonnus, when the old man said -

'Stay, Romola; reach me my own copy of Nonnus. It is a more correct copy than any in Poliziano's hands, for I made emendations in it which have not yet been communicated to any man. I finished it in 1477, when my sight was fast failing me.'

Romola walked to the farther end of the room, with the queenly step which was the simple action of her tall, finely-wrought frame, without the slightest conscious adjustment of herself.

'Is it in the right place, Romola?' asked Bardo, who was perpetually seeking the assurance that the outward fact continued to correspond with the image which lived to the minutest detail in his mind.

'Yes, father; at the west end of the room, on the third shelf from the bottom, behind the bust of Hadrian, above Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus, and below Lucan and Silius Italicus.'

As Romola said this, a fine ear would have detected in her clear voice and distinct utterance, a faint suggestion of weariness struggling with habitual patience. But as she approached her father and saw his arms stretched out a little with nervous excitement to seize the volume, her hazel eyes filled with pity; she hastened to lay the book on his lap, and kneeled down by him, looking up at him as if she believed that the love in her face must surely make its way through the dark obstruction that shut out everything else. At that moment the doubtful attractiveness of Romola's face, in which pride and passion seemed to be quivering in the balance with native refinement and intelligence, was transfigured to the most lovable womanliness by mingled pity and affection: it was evident that the deepest fount of feeling within her had not yet wrought its way to the less changeable features, and only found its outlet through her eyes.

But the father, unconscious of that soft radiance, looked flushed and agitated as his hand explored the edges and back of the large book.

'The vellum is yellowed in these thirteen years, Romola.'

'Yes, father,' said Romola, gently; 'but your letters at the back are dark and plain still - fine Roman letters; and the Greek character,' she continued, laying the book open on her father's knee, 'is more beautiful than that of any of your bought manuscripts.'

'Assuredly, child,' said Bardo, passing his finger across the page, as if he hoped to discriminate line and margin. 'What hired amanuensis can be equal to the scribe who loves the words that grow under his hand, and to whom an error or indistinctness in the text is more painful than a sudden darkness or obstacle across his path? And even these mechanical printers who threaten to make learning a base and vulgar thing - even they must depend on the manuscript over which we scholars have bent with that insight into the poet's meaning which is closely akin to the mens divini of the poet himself; unless they would flood the world with grammatical falsities and inexplicable anomalies that would turn the very fountain of Parnassus into a deluge of poisonous mud. But find the passage in the fifth book, to which Poliziano refers - I know it very well.'

Seating herself on a low stool, close to her father's knee, Romola took the book on her lap and read the four verses containing the exclamation of Actaeon.

'It is true, Romola,' said Bardo, when she had finished; 'it is a true conception of the poet; for what is that grosser, narrower light by which men behold merely the petty scene around them, compared with that far-stretching, lasting light which spreads over centuries of thought, and over the life of nations, and makes clear to us the minds of the immortals who have reaped the great harvest and left us to glean in their furrows? For me, Romola, even when I could see, it was with the great dead that I lived; while the living often seemed to me mere spectres - shadows dispossessed of true feeling and intelligence; and unlike those Lamiae, to whom Poliziano, with that superficial ingenuity which I do not deny to him, compares our inquisitive Florentines, because they put on their eyes when they went abroad, and took them off when they got home again, I have returned from the converse of the streets as from a forgotten dream, and have sat down among my books, saying with Petrarca, the modern who is least unworthy to be named after the ancients, *'Libri medullitus delectant, colloquuntur, consulunt, et viva quadam nobis atque arguta familiaritate junguntur.'*

'And in one thing you are happier than your favourite Petrarca, father,' said Romola, affectionately humouring the old man's disposition to dilate in this way; 'for he used to look at his copy of Homer and think sadly that the Greek was a dead letter to him: so far, he had the inward blindness that you feel is worse than your outward blindness.'

'True, child; for I carry within me the fruits of that fervid study which I gave to the Greek tongue under the teaching of the younger Crisolora, and Filelfo, and Argiropulo; though that great work in which I had desired to gather, as into a firm web, all the threads that my research had laboriously disentangled, and which would have been the vintage of my life, was cut off by the failure of my sight and my want of a fitting coadjutor. For the sustained zeal and unconquerable patience demanded from those who would tread the unbeaten paths of knowledge are still less reconcilable with the wandering, vagrant propensity of the feminine mind than with the feeble powers of the feminine body.'

'Father,' said Romola, with a sudden flush and in an injured tone, 'I read anything you wish me to read; and I will look out any passages for you, and make whatever notes you want.'

Bardo shook his head, and smiled with a bitter sort of pity. 'As well try to be a pentathlos and perform all the five feats of the palaestra with

the limbs of a nymph. Have I forgotten thy fainting in the mere search for the references I needed to explain a single passage of Callimachus?'

'But, father, it was the weight of the books, and Maso can help me; it was not want of attention and patience.'

Bardo shook his head again. 'It is not mere bodily organs that I want: it is the sharp edge of a young mind to pierce the way for my somewhat blunted faculties. For blindness acts like a dam, sending the streams of thought backward along the already-travelled channels and hindering the course onward. If my son had not forsaken me, deluded by debasing fanatical dreams, worthy only of an energumen whose dwelling is among tombs, I might have gone on and seen my path broadening to the end of my life; for he was a youth of great promise ... But it has closed in now,' the old man continued, after a short pause; 'it has closed in now; - all but the narrow track he has left me to tread - alone in my blindness.'

Romola started from her seat, and carried away the large volume to its place again, stung too acutely by her father's last words to remain motionless as well as silent; and when she turned away from the shelf again, she remained standing at some distance from him, stretching her arms downwards and clasping her fingers tightly as she looked with a sad dreariness in her young face at the lifeless objects around her - the parchment backs, the unchanging mutilated marble, the bits of obsolete bronze and clay.

Bardo, though usually susceptible to Romola's movements and eager to trace them, was now too entirely preoccupied by the pain of rankling memories to notice her departure from his side.

'Yes,' he went on, 'with my son to aid me, I might have had my due share in the triumphs of this century: the names of the Bardi, father and son, might have been held reverently on the lips of scholars in the ages to come; not on account of frivolous verses or philosophical treatises, which are superfluous and presumptuous attempts to imitate the inimitable, such as allure vain men like Panhormita, and from which even the admirable Poggio did not keep himself sufficiently free; but because we should have given a lamp whereby men might have studied the supreme productions of the past. For why is a young man like Poliziano (who was not yet born when I was already held worthy to maintain a discussion with Thomas of Sarzana) to have a glorious memory as a commentator on the Pandects - why is Ficino, whose Latin is an offence to me, and who wanders purblind among the superstitious fancies that marked the decline at once of art, literature, and philosophy, to descend to posterity as the very high priest of Platonism, while I, who am more than their equal, have not

effected anything but scattered work, which will be appropriated by other men? Why? but because my son, whom I had brought up to replenish my ripe learning with young enterprise, left me and all liberal pursuits that he might lash himself and howl at midnight with besotted friars - that he might go wandering on pilgrimages befitting men who know of no past older than the missal and the crucifix? - left me when the night was already beginning to fall on me.'

In these last words the old man's voice, which had risen high in indignant protest, fell into a tone of reproach so tremulous and plaintive that Romola, turning her eyes again towards the blind aged face, felt her heart swell with forgiving pity. She seated herself by her father again, and placed her hand on his knee - too proud to obtrude consolation in words that might seem like a vindication of her own value, yet wishing to comfort him by some sign of her presence.

'Yes, Romola,' said Bardo, automatically letting his left hand, with its massive prophylactic rings, fall a little too heavily on the delicate blue-veined back of the girl's right, so that she bit her lip to prevent herself from starting. 'If even Florence only is to remember me, it can but be on the same ground that it will remember Niccolo Niccoli - because I forsook the vulgar pursuit of wealth in commerce that I might devote myself to collecting the precious remains of ancient art and wisdom, and leave them, after the example of the munificent Romans, for an everlasting possession to my fellow-citizens. But why do I say Florence only? If Florence remembers me, will not the world remember me? . . . Yet,' added Bardo, after a short pause, his voice falling again into a saddened key, 'Lorenzo's untimely death has raised a new difficulty. I had his promise - I should have had his bond - that my collection should always bear my name and should never be sold, though the harpies might clutch everything else; but there is enough for them - there is more than enough - and for thee, too, Romola, there will be enough. Besides, thou wilt marry; Bernardo reproaches me that I do not seek a fitting parentado for thee, and we will delay no longer, we will think about it.'

'No, no, father; what could you do? besides, it is useless: wait till some one seeks me,' said Romola hastily.

'Nay, my child, that is not the paternal duty. It was not so held by the ancients, and in this respect Florentines have not degenerated from their ancestral customs.'

'But I will study diligently,' said Romola, her eyes dilating with anxiety. 'I will become as learned as Cassandra Fedele: I will try and be as useful to you as if I had been a boy, and then perhaps some great scholar will want to marry me, and will not mind about a dowry; and he will like to come and live with you, and he will be to you in

place of my brother . . . and you will not be sorry that I was a daughter.'

There was a rising sob in Romola's voice as she said the last words, which touched the fatherly fibre in Bardo. He stretched his hand upward a little in search of her golden hair, and as she placed her head under his hand, he gently stroked it, leaning towards her as if his eyes discerned some glimmer there.

'Nay, Romola mia, I said not so; if I have pronounced an anathema on a degenerate and ungrateful son, I said not that I could wish thee other than the sweet daughter thou hast been to me. For what son could have tended me so gently in the frequent sickness I have had of late? And even in learning thou art not, according to thy measure, contemptible. Something perhaps were to be wished in thy capacity of attention and memory, not incompatible even with the feminine mind. But as Calcondila bore testimony when he aided me to teach thee, thou hast a ready apprehension, and even a wide-glancing intelligence. And thou hast a man's nobility of soul: thou hast never fretted me with thy petty desires as thy mother did. It is true, I have been careful to keep thee aloof from the debasing influence of thy own sex, with their sparrow-like frivolity and their enslaving superstition, except, indeed, from that of our cousin Brigida, who may well serve as a scarecrow and a warning. And though - since I agree with the divine Petrarca, when he declares, quoting the 'Aulularia' of Plautus, who again was indebted for the truth to the supreme Greek intellect, 'Optimam foeminam nullam esse, alia licet alia pejor sit' - I cannot boast that thou art entirely lifted out of that lower category to which Nature assigned thee, nor even that in erudition thou art on a par with the more learned women of this age; thou art, nevertheless - yes, Romola mia,' said the old man, his pedantry again melting into tenderness, 'thou art my sweet daughter, and thy voice is as the lower notes of the flute, 'dulcis, durabilis, clara, pura, secans aera et auribus sedens,' according to the choice words of Quintilian; and Bernardo tells me thou art fair, and thy hair is like the brightness of the morning, and indeed it seems to me that I discern some radiance from thee. Ah! I know how all else looks in this room, but thy form I only guess at. Thou art no longer the little woman six years old, that faded for me into darkness; thou art tall, and thy arm is but little below mine. Let us walk together.'

The old man rose, and Romola, soothed by these beams of tenderness, looked happy again as she drew his arm within hers, and placed in his right hand the stick which rested at the side of his chair. While Bardo had been sitting, he had seemed hardly more than sixty: his face, though pale, had that refined texture in which wrinkles and lines are never deep; but now that he began to walk he looked as old as he really was - rather more than seventy; for his tall spare frame had the

student's stoop of the shoulders, and he stepped with the undecided gait of the blind.

'No, Romola,' he said, pausing against the bust of Hadrian, and passing his stick from the right to the left that he might explore the familiar outline with a 'seeing hand.' 'There will be nothing else to preserve my memory and carry down my name as a member of the great republic of letters - nothing but my library and my collection of antiquities. And they are choice,' continued Bardo, pressing the bust and speaking in a tone of insistence. 'The collections of Niccolo I know were larger; but take any collection which is the work of a single man - that of the great Boccaccio even - mine will surpass it. That of Poggio was contemptible compared with mine. It will be a great gift to unborn scholars. And there is nothing else. For even if I were to yield to the wish of Aldo Manuzio when he sets up his press at Venice, and give him the aid of my annotated manuscripts, I know well what would be the result: some other scholar's name would stand on the title-page of the edition - some scholar who would have fed on my honey, and then declared in his preface that he had gathered it all himself fresh from Hymettus. Else, why have I refused the loan of many an annotated codex? why have I refused to make public any of my translations? why? but because scholarship is a system of licensed robbery, and your man in scarlet and turred robe who sits in judgment on thieves, is himself a thief of the thoughts and the fame that belong to his fellows. But against that robbery Bardo de' Bardi shall struggle - though blind and forsaken, he shall struggle. I too have a right to be remembered - as great a right as Pontanus or Merula, whose names will be foremost on the lips of posterity, because they sought patronage and found it; because they had tongues that could flatter, and blood that was used to be nourished from the client's basket. I have a right to be remembered.'

The old man's voice had become at once loud and tremulous, and a pink flush overspread his proud, delicately-cut features, while the habitually raised attitude of his head gave the idea that behind the curtain of his blindness he saw some imaginary high tribunal to which he was appealing against the injustice of Fame.

Romola was moved with sympathetic indignation, for in her nature too there lay the same large claims, and the same spirit of struggle against their denial. She tried to calm her father by a still prouder word than his.

'Nevertheless, father, it is a great gift to the gods to be born with a hatred and contempt of all injustice and meanness. Yours is a higher lot, never to have lied and truckled, than to have shared honours won by dishonour. There is strength in scorn, as there was in the martial fury by which men became insensible to wounds.'

'It is well said, Romola. It is a Promethean word thou hast uttered,' answered Bardo, after a little interval in which he had begun to lean on his stick again, and to walk on. 'And I indeed am not to be pierced by the shafts of Fortune. My armour is the aes triplex of a clear conscience, and a mind nourished by the precepts of philosophy. 'For men,' says Epictetus, 'are disturbed not by things themselves, but by their opinions or thoughts concerning those things.' And again, 'whosoever will be free, let him not desire or dread that which it is in the power of others either to deny or inflict: otherwis, he is a slave.' And of all such gifts as are dependent on the caprice of fortune or of men, I have long ago learned to say, with Horace - who, however, is too wavering in his philosophy, vacillating between the precepts of Zeno and the less worthy maxims of Epicurus, and attempting, as we say, 'duabus sellis sedere' - concerning such accidents, I say, with the pregnant brevity of the poet -

'Sunt qui non habeant, est qui non curat habere.'

He is referring to gems, and purple, and other insignia of wealth; but I may apply his words not less justly to the tributes men pay us with their lips and their pens, which are also matters of purchase, and often with base coin. Yes, 'inanis' - hollow, empty - is the epithet justly bestowed on Fame.'

They made the tour of the room in silence after this; but Bardo's lip-born maxims were as powerless over the passion which had been moving him, as if they had been written on parchment and hung round his neck in a sealed bag; and he presently broke forth again in a new tone of insistance.

'Inanis?' yes, if it is a lying fame; but not if it is the just meed of labour and a great purpose. I claim my right: it is not fair that the work of my brain and my hands should not be a monument to me - it is not just that my labour should bear the name of another man. It is but little to ask,' the old man went on, bitterly, 'that my name should be over the door - that men should own themselves debtors to the Bardi Library in Florence. They will speak coldly of me, perhaps: 'a diligent collector and transcriber,' they will say, 'and also of some critical ingenuity, but one who could hardly be conspicuous in an age so fruitful in illustrious scholars. Yet he merits our pity, for in the latter years of his life he was blind, and his only son, to whose education he had devoted his best years -' Nevertheless, my name will be remembered, and men will honour me: not with the breath of flattery, purchased by mean bribes, but because I have laboured, and because my labours will remain. Debts! I know there are debts; and there is thy dowry, Romola, to be paid. But there must be enough - or, at least, there can lack but a small sum, such as the Signoria might well provide. And if

Lorenzo had not died, all would have been secured and settled. But now ...'

At this moment Maso opened the door, and advancing to his master, announced that Nello, the barber, had desired him to say, that he was come with the Greek scholar whom he had asked leave to introduce.

'It is well,' said the old man. 'Bring them in.'

Bardo, conscious that he looked more dependent when he was walking, liked always to be seated in the presence of strangers, and Romola, without needing to be told, conducted him to his chair. She was standing by him at her full height, in quiet majestic self-possession, when the visitors entered; and the most penetrating observer would hardly have divined that this proud pale face, at the slightest touch on the fibres of affection or pity, could become passionate with tenderness, or that this woman, who imposed a certain awe on those who approached her, was in a state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father's books.