



THE VICARIA OF NAPLES.

THE VICARIA OF NAPLES.

THE Vicaria, or Castel Capuano, of Naples, now used as a prison, is an ancient and extensive edifice. It was formerly outside the city walls, and is even now in one of the extreme streets of that capital, and outside the Capua Gate. William I. built it as a palace and fortress, strengthening it with fosses, bastions, and other defences. The kings of Naples lived there until the time of Ferdinand of Aragon, who, enlarging the walls, rendered it useless as a fortress. The viceroy, Peter of Toledo, with immense labour, and at great expense, reduced it from a palace to a court-house and prison in 1540, and gave to it the form in which it is now seen; since when it has been called the Vicaria. The royal chambers—formerly the scene of so many crimes, such lasciviousness, and such great splendour—then became tribunals, and the lower apartments were closed, narrowed, and converted into prison cells, in accordance with the Spanish ferocity and natural cruelty of disposition. Since that time, for three hundred and ten years, the building has discharged the double office of “palazzo di giustizia” and “carcere pubblico.” Here, under the name and pretext of law, a few have tyrannised over many, not only of the guilty, but of the unfortunate as well, so that it has ever been the abode of misery. This edifice—large, isolated, quadrilateral in form, and of a sombre colour—stands in a large space situated at the end of the street of tribunals. The entrance is by a single gate, protected by an iron paling, over which may be seen a double-headed eagle in sculpture; opposite the entrance is a marble column. Swiss soldiers used ordinarily to guard the entrance and prison part of the building. Passing the entrance, a vast quadrilateral courtyard is seen, ornamented with porticoes, which formerly girt it round, and still in a great part remain; around the courtyard are the houses of the keepers of the tribunals: that of the executioner and his assistant is a closed chamber, in which are the tools and apparatus, &c., for setting up the gallows and the guillotine; opposite this, and near the last pillar of the portico, there is an antique marble lion, below which, and underground, is a cave, now closed up

and disused, wherein the “lion torture,” as it was called, frequently took place. Beneath the porticoes are three wide, commodious stairs: that on the right leads to the civil and criminal courts, that in front to the superior civil court, whilst the third leads to the prison and to the criminal court as well. This third stair, like the others, is of three flights; after passing the second, a low doorway, black with iron and filth, is reached: here stands a turnkey, with a large iron key in his hand; on the left there is another door, before which a second keeper stands. By the front door is the entrance to the people’s prison, and on the left that of the nobles. On each of these entrances there is a rude drawing of the Virgin, and on the great wall to the right, a representation of Christ (colossal) carrying his cross, and surrounded by soldiers and executioners, who are conducting him to Calvary. Near this picture might be seen in former days a posse of keepers, sbirri, gendarmes, and people of different grades in society, the friends of prisoners, awaiting the hour for admission, driven off, meanwhile, from time to time, by the turnkey on duty—unless, indeed, they were fortunate enough to be able to bribe him.

The prison, as it now exists, does not present the full development of the idea upon which it was first constructed; it formerly consisted of three stories, of which two only remain—the third, the lowermost, formed in the old ditch that surrounded the whole edifice. These remains—shut up beneath the level of the street—consist of large dark caverns, encumbered with rubbish and filth, and infested with enormous rats. This was called old Vicaria, and had numerous secret cells—dark, damp, sepulchral dungeons. The windows of the Vicaria were formerly narrow loopholes, and a great height above the ground; but they are now more ample, and lower in position. Celano has left on record that in his time there were no less than 4,000 human creatures incarcerated within these walls; at the present day, 1,500 is the greatest number they could contain, inasmuch as a considerable part of the prison has been walled up—the effect not of pity or shame on the part of the Government, but of necessity, owing to the strides of civilisation and the march of intellect—forces which will before long, it is to be hoped,

sweep away from the beautiful city of Naples so hateful a monument of a now crushed and powerless despotism. How many noble-hearted patriots, how many glorious spirits, have been confined within these dismal walls during the past three hundred and ten years! Here Thomas Campanella dragged on a weary existence; here Antonio Serra wrote his first treatise on political economy; here Mattia Preti was incarcerated for the crime of having killed the sentry who opposed his entrance into Naples, as a breach of the sanitary laws, when he had fled from Rome. With his story is connected the one redeeming trait associated with the Vicaria—that the Viceroy of that day liberated him, excusing this clemency with the memorable words, “Vir excellens in arte non debet mori.”

These and many such have from time to time inhabited the wretched dungeons of the prison, besides whom were many unknown to fame, silent sufferers of a tyranny from which they despaired of escaping. The upper prison, or, as it is called, the prison of the nobles, is but little better than the Vicaria Vecchia, and differs solely in the social position—its inhabitants formerly filled from that of the lower one—and in the fact that the prisoners are not here crowded together in nakedness and filth, worse than that of beasts. In front of the entrance of the largest chamber is the office of the inspector of police, who observes and hears all that passes. Busts of the king and queen ornament this structure, and above the inspector’s chair is a crucifix fixed to the wall. One would suppose no order inconsistent with rights divine and human could possibly emanate thence. In the first chamber there are two cupboards containing the registers of the prisons, and a third furnished with lint, ointment, &c., for the wounded. In a corner are heaped up the keepers’ beds, whilst bunches of keys are hung upon the walls, and above all is suspended a picture of the Virgin with a lamp before it. Hither the gentlemen prisoners may come to meet their families at given times, or to confer with their legal advisers. The crowd was often so great as to make the heat almost unbearable, and happy was he who could enter the office of the inspector. In the corner of this chamber, and near the office,



M. LACORDAIRE PROPOSING TO MRS. THOMPSON.

is a low, narrow door, which opens upon a short, dark passage leading into a large apartment called the "udienza" or audience room; the latter is lighted by three grated windows looking out in the court-yard; across the middle of this apartment two large wooded gratings extended, on the one side of which those desirous of visiting the prisoners presented themselves, and the wretched captives were mastered on the other. At one time this was the only mode in which any one could visit or converse with his friends in prison; the crush, heat, and noise rendering it but little satisfaction to either party. The gentlemen prisoners, in order to leave this, were forced to push and elbow their way by main force. The press and suffocating smell of the place were rendered still more intolerable by the confusion and noise arising from the mode in which the prisoners were summoned. A visitor presents himself, and having given a fee to the first, second, and third jailors, is admitted to the last mentioned. He makes known the name of the prisoner he is in search of; the jailor at once knocks loudly upon the lock of the grating, and *chiamatori*—as the better conducted prisoners employed to call the others are named—answers to the summons, shouts the name on to another, he in his turn sending it still further, until it reach the end of the prison; and as a constant shouting and re-shouting of names is thus caused, it was almost impossible for the unfortunate visitor, or his wretched friend, to communicate in a manner at all satisfactory. Should the visitor be poor, the wife of a prisoner, or his child, and unable to pay the fees extorted by the jailors, they would seize upon the bread, fruit, or other present they might have brought to their relative. Such is a faithful picture of the scene presented, until very lately, by the audience chamber of the Vicaria prison.

The dormitories are reached by a sort of grotto or tunnel passage, very poorly lighted: the *camarone* (large prison rooms) are dark and dismal looking; a row of filthy beds on either side, with a passage between, constitutes a description: darkness, misery, and the most abominable smell, pervade the whole region of this; on the left side, six patches of light, from so many chambers below,

direct attention thitherward, and the more tolerable part of the prison is entered; this is the least insupportable of all, owing to the grated windows admitting air—a boon for which the naked prisoners often paid dearly when the cold of winter entered it. One of these dormitories, called the Porta Capnana, is large and long, and lighted by four windows in front, and two looking out on the Capnana Gate; to the bars of these the prisoners may even yet be seen clinging to get a breath of fresh air; the external wall in which the windows are is ten feet in thickness. Take away the superior light from the second *camarone*, and it differs in nothing from the other—the same nakedness, squalor, and filth has always prevailed in both. In front of the corridor is the infirmary; here only does the sun enter freely by an eastern window, and four that overlook the court-yard; nor are there the usual iron gratings on these; a network of wire is, however, spread across, to prevent anything being thrown into them. This brief sketch may give some idea of the superior part, or nobles' prison, of the Vicaria, where the suspected, accused, and condemned were all indiscriminately mixed, and an *à fortiori* argument may be drawn as to the state of the people's prison under the same roof. In the latter, the crowding, the noise, the filth, are all in an excess above the former; and here, in addition, are the secret chambers—small, narrow, dark cells—localities that have acquired so dark a notoriety as to be designated by the names *Asprinio* (on account of its coldness), *Sperone* (spur), *Lampa* (lamp), and *Marco Perrone*, the last in memory of a man of that name who was imprisoned in one of these for twenty-seven years, and the *Camerelle*.

Besides these, there are three others which have been walled up; these latter were known by sobriquets of *Gallinaccio* (turkey cock), *Monacella* (the little nun), and *Farfarella* (the little imp).

The prison fare is, as may be suspected, in harmony with its locality—twenty ounces of black bread, with a ladleful of beans or dough mixed with oil or rancid fat. These rations are not sufficient to satisfy hunger, and barely support life for further torture, whilst, notwithstanding their insufficiency, they are still further diminished by

peculation. On four days in the year, the king and queen's saint's days, rations of flesh and white bread are issued; and these are days of rejoicing. There are so many fearful traditions connected with the suffering, amounting (besides the well-known torture) to the still greater one of slow starvation, that the only wonder is that these gloomy walls are allowed to cumber the ground any longer. They have played a worse part than the Bastille, and deserve to share the Bastille's fate.

THE CHATEAU OF PRINCE POLIGNAC.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

(Concluded from page 331.)

In the costume we described in our last, with his hat in his hand, he stood under the great gateway of the hotel, ready to hand Mrs. Thompson into the carriage. This would have been nothing if the landlord and landlady had not been there also, as well as the man cook, and the four waiters, and the *file de chambre*. Two or three other pair of eyes Mrs. Thompson also saw, as she glanced round, and then Mimmy walked across the yard in her best clothes with a *fière* day air about her for which her mother would have liked to have whipped her.

But what did it matter? If it was written in the book that she should become Madame Lacordaire, of course the world would know that there must have been some preparatory love-making. Let them have their laugh; a good husband would not be dearly purchased at so trifling an expense. And so they sallied forth with already half the ceremony of a wedding.

Mimmy seated herself opposite to her mother, and M. Lacordaire also sat with his back to the horses, leaving the second place of honour for Lilian. "Pray make yourself comfortable, M. Lacordaire, and don't mind her," said Mrs. Thompson. But he was firm in his purpose of civility, perhaps making up his mind that when he should in truth stand in the place of papa to the young lady, then would be his time for having the front seat in the carriage.

Lilian, also in her best frock, came down the school