

THE COUNTERFEIT DUCATS.

IN the end of the fifteenth century when the cities of Italy were rendered rich by their trade to the West Indies, Padua was one of the most flourishing of its towns, and possessed a body of merchants, and particularly goldsmiths, jewelers and dealers in silk, with whom Venice itself could scarcely bear a comparison. Amongst these goldsmiths and jewelers there was one more eminent than his brethren. His dwelling was upon the bridge, and Padua was scarcely more universally known in Italy than Jeronimo Vincente was known for one of its citizens. "It never rains but it pours," says a northern proverb; "riches begets riches," says an Italian one. Jeronimo found the truth of both these sayings. He was already rich enough to satisfy a dozen merchants and to make a score of German princes. Fortune, however, did not yet think she had done enough for him. Every day some traveler was arriving at Padua, in the exchange of whose foreign money for the coin of Padua he obtained some good bargains, and added to his over-flowing coffers. Few died without relatives but that he was appointed their executor. Many paid tribute to his wealth and reputation by leaving him their heir. The city of Padua gave him all the public contracts; and he almost sank under the weight of trusts, offices, etc., not merely offered, but obtruded and imposed on him.

Who could be more happy than Jeronimo Vincente? So he thought himself as he walked on the bridge of Padua one beautiful Summer's evening. A coach of one of the nobles passed at the same moment. No one noticed it. On the other hand, every one who passed him saluted him. "Such have been the effects of my industry, my dexterity in business, and my assiduous application. Yes, Jeronimo, others have to thank their ancestors; you have only to thank yourself. It is all your own merit."

And with these reflections his stature, as it were, increased some inches higher, and, assuming a peculiar port and a self-satisfied step, he walked in vanity, and almost in defiance of every one and everything, to his own house. He fell asleep in the same mood, and dreamed that the ancient fable of Jupiter was repeated in his house, and that the heavens opened and descended upon him in a shower of ducats and pistoles. In all this soliloquy of Jeronimo, you will observe, there was not a word or thought of any one but himself; he did not attribute his plenty to the blessing of God; he felt no gratitude to Him who had showered down upon him in abundance; his mind, his spirit, and his vanity were that of Nebuchadnezzar; and the fate of Nebuchadnezzar was nearer to him than he imagined. It is a part of the wise economy of Providence to vindicate the honor and duty which belong to Him; it is a part of His mercy to humble those who in forgetting Him are about to lose themselves. He sends them prosperity as a blessing; they abuse it and convert it to a curse. He recalls the abused gift, and sends them adversity to bring them to their duty.—Such was the course of Divine government in the early ages of the world, such it is to this day, and such did Jeronimo find it much sooner than he expected.

On a sudden, without any apparent cause, he saw to his astonishment, the universal respect to his wealth and reputation on a manifest decrease. Some who had before nearly kissed the ground in his presence, now looked erectly in his face, and kept their straightforward course, without giving him the honorable side of the path; others kept their bonnets as if nailed to their heads; two or three recalled their trusts; others happened to call for accounts of such trusts, when he was not at home, or busy, spoke in a peremptory tone, dropped hints of the laws of the country, and the duty of guardians. In plain words he gradually discovered himself to be as much avoided as he had heretofore been sought. No one was punctual in his attendance but those to whom he paid their weekly or monthly pensions. If there could be any doubt that something extraordinary had happened, Jeronimo had at length sufficient proof; for having put himself in nomination for one of the offices of parochial intendant, and of the great church and treasury of Padua, a competitor was preferred, less wealthy than himself by some thousands.

Jeronimo returned home much confounded at this unexpected defeat. In vain he examined himself and his situation for the cause.

"Am I not as rich as ever?" said he. "Have I defrauded any one? No.—Have I suffered any one to demand their payment of me twice? No. What can be the cause of all this?"

This was a question he could not answer, but the fact became daily and hourly so much more evident, that he shortly found himself as much avoided, and apparently condemned in every respectable company as he had formerly been courted and honored.

It is time, however, to give the reader some information as to the actual cause. A whisper was suddenly circulated that Jeronimo had not acquired his wealth by honest means. It was reported, and gradually universally believed, that he was an utterer, if not a coiner, of base money. He had the reputation, as has before been said, of being the most able workman in Padua, in gold, silver and lace; "and surely," said the gossips of Padua, "he does not wear his talent in a napkin. He employs his dexterity to some purpose."

"Are you not speaking too fast?" said another neighbor; "I have always held Jeronimo to be an honest man."

"And so have I hitherto," said the other, "till I assayed it; this ducat I received from Jeronimo; let us prove it at your assay, and you will allow that I did not speak without some good foundation." The proposal was accepted, the trial was made, and the ducat found to be base in the proportion of one-third copper, to two thirds silver.

The name of this neighbor of Jeronimo, who had defended him, was Guiseppe Cognigero, a very worthy and honest man; not one of those who found a triumph in the downfall of another, though above him in wealth and honor. Guiseppe, as he said, had always held Jeronimo to be a respectable and worthy citizen. He had many dealings with him, and had always found him just and punctual to the lowest coin: "Is it possible," said he to himself, "that after such a course of honesty and reputation, he has so far forgotten himself as to become a common cheat? I will not believe it. But this fact of the base ducat? Well; but my friend might not have received the ducat from Jeronimo. I am resolved I will make a trial of him myself, before I will give in to the belief of these reports in the teeth of so fair a character for so many years." Guiseppe was a shrewd man, and never fixed on a purpose but when he had the ingenuity to find the means of executing it. He went immediately to his home, and taking a hundred ducats from his private store, went with them to the house of Jeronimo.

"Signor Jeronimo," said he, "here are a hundred ducats which I wish to keep for a certain purpose. I have just embarked in a speculation of great extent the result of which no one can foresee. I wish to keep this sum as a deposit, in the event of the failure of my hopes, if you will do me the favor to take the custody of it."

Jeronimo, pleased at a confidence to which he was now not much accustomed, very willingly accepted the charge, and Guiseppe took his leave in the full persuasion that the trial would correspond with his expectations and that the report would be proved false and malicious.

In the course of a few days Guiseppe, according to the plan concerted in his own mind, called suddenly on Jeronimo.

"My dear friend," said he, "I sincerely rejoice that I have found you at home; a sudden demand has fallen upon me, and I have an unexpected occasion for the hundred ducats which I deposited with you."

"My good friend," said Jeronimo, "do not preface such a trifle with such a serious apology. The money is yours." At the same time opening a private drawer—"You see here it is, just as I deposited it. Take your money my friend, and you may always have the same or any other service from me."—Saying this he gave Guiseppe the bag in which he brought the ducats to him.

Guiseppe hastened home, counted and examined the ducats. The number was right, their appearance seemed good; he sounded them singly. One sounded suspiciously; he assayed it—it was base. "Well," said he, "this may be an accident; I could almost swear, indeed, that every ducat I gave him was good; but this, perhaps, I might have overlooked." He sounded another, his suspicions increased; another—he now determined to assay them all. He did so; and to his confusion (for the honest man was truly grieved and confounded at the detection of his neighbor's dishonesty) he found thirty bad ducats out of the hundred.

He now hastened back to Jeronimo. "These are not the ducats, sir, I deposited with you; here are thirty bad ducats out of the hundred." "Bad or good," replied Jeronimo indignantly, "they are the same which you deposited; I took them from your hands, put them in the drawer, and they were not moved from thence till you demanded them." Guiseppe insisted, and at length severely reproached Jeronimo. Jeronimo commanded him to leave his house. "Can you suspect me of such a pitiful fraud?" said he.

"Indeed, I never should," replied Guiseppe, "unless upon this absolute evidence. But there must be a fraud somewhere. Either I am attempting to defraud you, or you to cheat me. It is incumbent upon both our reputations that this matter should be cleared up. I shall go to the magistrates." "Go where

you please," said Jeronimo; "but go without delay."

Guiseppe immediately hastened to the president of justice. He demanded a summons for Jeronimo. It was granted. He complained without reciting the particulars, that Jeronimo had paid him back a deposit, and, in a hundred ducats, had given him thirty bad. Jeronimo denied it. "I gave him back the same which he deposited with me." There was a law at Padua termed the "law of wager." The substance of this was, that the party accused had it in his option to clear himself by an oath of his innocence.

"Will you take your wager?" said Guiseppe.

"Yes, sir," replied Jeronimo.

The holy evangelists were accordingly presented to him, and Jeronimo swore upon them that he had not touched, still less changed the ducats, since they were deposited with him. The president accordingly gave judgment in his favor, being compelled thereto by the laws of Padua. And Guiseppe, with horror at the united fraud and perjury of the man whom he had hitherto deemed honest and respectable, left the court and withdrew to his home.

This trial excited a universal interest and rumor in Padua. The president of the law had acquitted Jeronimo; not so, however, public reputation. Guiseppe was a man of established character, Jeronimo's fame had been long blighted. The previous reports, therefore, were now considered as fully confirmed into certainty. The magistrates, accordingly deemed it necessary to point the attention of the police to him and to his future dealings; and Jeronimo hereafter became a marked character. The police of Padua were administered with that discrete cunning for which the Italians are celebrated. Some of its officers very shortly contrived, in the disguise of foreign merchants, to make a deposit of good and marked money with Jeronimo, and shortly after redeemed it back. The money was restored as required. It was immediately carried, as before, in the case of Guiseppe, to the public assay, and the result was that the greatest part of the number of the coins were found to be base.

Jeronimo was next day arrested and thrown into prison. His house was searched in the same instant. The search most fully confirmed what indeed now required but little confirmation. In the secret drawers were found all the instruments of coining, as well as all the materials of adulteration. An immense quantity of base coin was likewise found in different parts of the house. All Padua was now in arms. They clamorously demanded justice on a man who had not the temptation of poverty to commit crimes; here is a man said they, who has raised his head above all of us, and lived in luxury and splendor, year after year, upon the fruit of his crimes. He has even sat upon the public bench of magistrates, and administered the laws of Padua; if justice be not made for the rich, if its objects be the defence of all, let him now be brought to trial, and meet with the punishment which he so well merits. The magistrates, in obedience to the popular clamor, and at the same time acknowledging its justice somewhat hastened the trial of Jeronimo. He was brought forward, accused and witnesses examined, he had nothing to allege which could weigh a single grain against the mass of evidence produced against him. He was accordingly unanimously condemned. The trial was holden on Monday; he was found guilty the same day, and ordered for execution in the public square on Friday following, the interval being granted for religious preparations.

Who was now so unhappy as Jeronimo de Vincente, and what a vicissitude in his fortune and reputation had a very short time produced! Within those few months he had been the wealthiest and most respected in Padua. The noblest families sought the hand of his only daughter in marriage; his wife was the pattern and exemplar of all the ladies of the city and neighborhood; his house was full of the richest furniture and paintings in Italy. Now the officers of justice were in possession of it, and performed the vilest office in the most magnificent chambers; whilst, with the ordinary insolence of such ruffians, they scarcely allowed a corner of the house to his unhappy wife and daughter.—And where was Jeronimo himself. In the public prison of the city; in a cell not four feet square, and under orders for execution the next following day.—Was not this enough to reduce Jeronimo to his sense? It was; he humbled himself before God and implored his pity; and it pleased the Infinite Goodness to hear his prayer and to send relief where he least expected it.

Jeronimo had a confidential clerk or managing man of the name of Jacobo. On the day preceeding that ordered for his master's execution, he was going up stairs to attend some message for his unhappy mistress, when his foot slipped and he fell from the top to the bottom. His neck was dislocated by the fall and

he died without uttering a word. This miserable man had a wife; and the intelligence of this disaster being carried to her occasioned illness that placed her in the most imminent danger. She repeatedly requested, during the night, that Jeronimo's wife might be sent to her, as she had something very heavy at her heart to communicate to her.—Jeronimo's wife accordingly came very early on the following morning. The unhappy woman having summoned up the small remnant of her strength, and requested Jeronimo's wife to hear what she had to say, but not to interrupt her till she had concluded, thus addressed her:

"Your husband is innocent, mine was guilty. Fly to the magistrates, inform them of this and save my husband's soul from adding to his other crimes the guilt of innocent blood. Thy husband—" She was about to proceed, but death arrested her words.

Jeronimo's wife thinking that her husband was now effectually saved, flew to the president of the magistracy, and demanded immediate admission, and related the confession she had just received. The president shook his head.—"Where is the woman that made the confession?"

"She is dead."

"Then where is the party accused instead of Jeronimo?"

"He is dead likewise."

"Have you any witnesses of the conversation of the dying woman?"

"None; she requested every one to leave the chamber, that she might communicate to me alone."

"Then the confession, good woman, can avail you nothing; the law must have its course." Jeronimo's wife could make no reply; she was carried senseless out of court, and the president, from a due sense of humanity, ordered her to be taken to the house of one of his officers and kept there till after the execution of her husband.

The finishing of this catastrophe was now at hand. Already the great bell of the city was tolling. The hour at length arrived, and Jeronimo was led forth.—He was desired to add anything which he had to say, without loss of time. He satisfied himself with the declaration of his innocence, and with recommending his soul to his Maker, then knelt down to receive the destined blow; but scarcely was he on his knees before the whole crowd was thrown into motion by some of the marshals of justice rushing forward and exclaiming to stop the execution. The marshal at length made his way to the scaffold, and delivered a paper with which he was charged to the presiding officer. The officer, upon reading it, immediately stayed the further proceeding of the execution; Jeronimo was led back to his prison.

"What is all this?" exclaimed the crowd. "Have the friends of Jeronimo at length the sum of money which our just judges have required of them, and is his punishment thus bought off?—Happy inhabitants of Padua, where to be rich is to be able to commit any crime with impunity."

It is time, however, to inform the reader of the true cause. Jeronimo was scarcely led to execution when the confessor of the prison demanded access to the president, immediately laid before him the confession of a prisoner who had died under a fever the preceding night. The wretched malefactor hereupon acknowledged that he was one of the party of coiners who had carried on the trade of making false money to a very great extent; that Jeronimo's clerk was at the head of the gang; that all the false money was delivered to his clerk, who immediately exchanged it for good money from his master's coffers, to all of which he had private keys, and in which coffers, on the apprehension of Jeronimo, he had deposited the instruments of coining, lest they should be found in his own possession. The confession terminated with enumerating such of the gang as were yet living, and pointing out their places of asylum and concealment.

The execution of Jeronimo, as has been related, was in its actual operation. The first step of the president, therefore, was to hurry one of the officers to stop its progress, and in the same moment to send off two or three detachments of the city guard to seize the accused parties before they should learn from public report the death of their comrade. The guards executed their purpose successfully; the malefactors were all taken and brought to the tribunal the same evening. The result was, that one of them became evidence against his comrades, and thus confirmed the truth of the confession and the innocence of Jeronimo.

The president, in order to make all possible atonement, ordered a public meeting of all the citizens of Padua to be summoned on the following day.—Jeronimo was then produced, upon which the president, descending from his tribunal, took him by the hand and led him up to a seat by the side of him on the bench of justice; the crier then proclaimed silence. Upon which the president rose and read the confession of the malefactor who died in the prison, and the transactions of the others; concluding the whole by declaring the innocence of Jeronimo, and restoring him to his credit, his fortune, and the good opinion of his fellow-citizens.

JACOBS OIL



THE GREAT GERMAN REMEDY.

FOR RHEUMATISM,

Neuralgia, Sciatica, Lumbago, Backache, Soreness of the Chest, Gout, Quinsy, Sore Throat, Swellings and Sprains, Burns and Scalds, General Bodily Pains, Tooth, Ear and Headache, Frosted Feet and Ears, and all other Pains and Aches.

No Preparation on earth equals St. Jacobs Oil as a remedy for simple and cheap External Remedy. A trial entails but the comparatively trifling outlay of 50 Cents, and every one suffering with pain can have cheap and positive proof of its claims. Directions in Eleven Languages.

SOLD BY ALL DRUGGISTS AND DEALERS IN MEDICINE.

A. VOGELER & CO., Baltimore, Md., U. S. A.

May 3, 1881—ly

MUSSEY & ALLEN

CENTRAL STORE

NEWPORT, PENN'A.

Now offer the public

A RARE AND ELEGANT ASSORTMENT OF

DRESS GOODS

Consisting of all shades suitable for the season

BLACK ALPACCAS

AND

Mourning Goods

A SPECIALITY.

BLEACHED AND UNBLEACHED

MUSLINS,

AT VARIOUS PRICES.

AN ENDLESS SELECTION OF PRINTS.

We sell and do keep a good quality of

SUGARS, COFFEES & SYRUPS

And everything under the head of

GROCERIES!

Machine needles and oil for all makes of

Machines.

To be convinced that our goods are

CHEAP AS THE CHEAPEST.

IS TO CALL AND EXAMINE STOCK.

No trouble to show goods.

Don't forget the

CENTRAL STORE,

Newport, Perry County, Pa.

USE

PURE

TINTED GLOSS

PAINT!

—

DON'T

make experiments on your buildings with untried

and unreliable articles at your expense.

DON'T PAY

for water and benzine \$1.50 to \$2.00 per gallon.

DO BUY

the Lucas reliable and guaranteed Tinted Gloss

PAINTS.

Circulars and Sample Cards of Paint mailed on

application.

JOHN LUCAS & CO.,

141 North Third Street,

Philadelphia, Pa.

13 6m

HELP

Yourselves by making money when a golden chance is offered, thereby always keeping poverty from your door. Those who always take advantage of the good chances for making money are offered, generally become wealthy, while those who do not improve such chances remain in poverty. We want many men, women, boys and girls to work for us right in their own localities. The business will pay more than ten times as much as any other. We furnish an expensive outfit and all that you need, free. No one who engages fails to make money very rapidly. You can devote your whole time to the work, or only your spare moments. Full information and all that is needed sent free. Address STINSON & CO., Portland, Maine 12.

ESTATE NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given, that letters of administration on the estate of Rev. S. S. Richmond late of Torontow township, Perry County, Pa., deceased, have been granted to the undersigned. P. O. Address—Landisburg, Perry County, Pa.

All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make immediate payment and those having claims will present them duly authenticated for settlement to

ALBERT E. RICHMOND, Administrator

CHAS. H. SMILEY, Atty.

May 10, 1881.