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MASANIELLO IL PESCATORE E LA RIVOLUZIONE DI NAPOLI



THE STORY OF
MASANIELLO, THE FISHERMAN, AND THE REVOLUTION OF NAPLES.



THE LAZZARONI OF NAPLES.

PART THE FIRST.

THERE are few kingdoms in Europe which have undergone so many vicissitudes as that of Naples; and the chief source of its calamitous changes was the preposterous claims of the popes to dispose at their pleasure of the crown. After the overthrow of the Hohenstauffen, a dynasty remarkable for its uncompromising hostility to the papal usurpations, the sovereignty of Naples was bestowed upon the house of Anjou; but this French race of princes soon became unpopular, and after many changes and convulsions, the Neapolitan dominions were annexed to the kingdom of Spain, then rapidly rising into the foremost rank of European states. It remained quietly subject to Spain for nearly 150 years, until in the year 1647, a poor fisherman raised a revolt, which entailed upon it additional misery. The history of this extraordinary revolution is so very interesting, and so very instructive, that we shall relate it at full length, especially as some of the most important details have been hitherto hidden from English readers. To understand the causes of the revolution, it will be necessary to give a preliminary sketch of the Spanish tyranny over the Neapolitans.

When Spain first acquired dominion over Naples, the latter country, notwithstanding recent wars, was wealthy and populous; and its position afforded a reasonable prospect of increasing prosperity, for it possessed the finest ports in the Western Mediterranean, then the great high-road of commerce. Spain, on the other hand, was exhausted by long wars against the Moors, the recent discovery of America had seduced a large portion of the population to emigrate to the new countries, and the gold and silver imported from Mexico and Peru did not compensate for the abstraction of cultivation from the land, the emigration of the most industrious, and the consequent cessation of domestic improvement. Under these circumstances the Spanish government regarded its Neapolitan territory as a kind of reserved treasury by which all the pecuniary deficiencies of Spain might be supplied and the chief object of their administration was to drain as much money from their Italian subjects, as they could obtain by fair means or by foul. Naples, of course, was governed by viceroys; the only object contemplated in the selection of these officers was their skill in extortion, and if they sent home money in plenty, no objection was made to any

acts of tyranny or rapacity in which they might please to indulge on their own account. The fertility and opulence of the Neapolitan dominions would have enabled them to bear very heavy exactions, but the more the Spaniards obtained, the more they desired, and the very ease with which existing taxes were paid, became an excuse and encouragement for fresh impositions. Thus matters proceeded, until, as an Italian historian justly remarked. "The secret fires of Vesuvius were not so numerous, nor so dangerous, as the revengeful flames which burned in the bosoms of the Neapolitan populace."

During the reigns of Philip the Third and Philip the Fourth of Spain, the sufferings of the Neapolitans were aggravated by the custom which prevailed of farming the taxes. The Genoese brokers, who purchased them from the King of Spain, extorted profit in every shape and way, from the unfortunate peasant and artisan, and when profits no longer supplied their rapacity, compelled the unfortunate victims of their rapacity to yield up their little capital. Under such a system it is not wonderful that the wealth of Naples at length became exhausted; and when the Admiral of Castile, the ruling viceroy, demanded a subsidy from the assembled estates, he received a refusal which he was convinced arose from absolute poverty. He wrote to Philip the Fourth, that Naples in its present exhausted state, could not meet the new demand; he received in reply, peremptory orders to exact the subsidy, but the gallant admiral refused to become the agent of oppression, and immediately resigned the government.

This excellent nobleman was succeeded by the Duke of Arcos, a man of a very opposite character. Like most Spaniards, he was haughty, vindictive, and obstinate, but unlike his countrymen, he was crafty and treacherous. He had not been long in office, when the French, then at war with Spain, sent out a fleet which threatened to invade Naples, and consequently forced the viceroy to prepare an armament for the protection of his province. The practice of that day in such an emergency, was to borrow the amount of the parliamentary grant from some capitalist, to whom a branch of the public revenue was mortgaged for the interest and repayment of the loan, and who generally derived an exorbitant profit from the transaction. Such was the general opinion of the Neapolitan resources, that a lender and money were easily found, but such, also, was the exhaustion of the country, that the viceroy's council were at their wits' end to devise an impost for its repayment. At length it was proposed by Andrea Nauclerio, the provost of the merchants, to levy a tax of one carlin per pound, on all the fruits and vegetables which were brought to market, and which then, as now, formed the principal articles of food to the lower classes at Naples. The proposition was adopted, and an edict for its enforcement issued on the 3rd of January, 1647.

This tax was by no means a new invention; several viceroys had already attempted to establish it, but had finally abandoned the scheme, from a conviction of its odious and oppressive nature. The Duke of Arcos, however, was deaf to all remonstrances, and he even accused those counsellors of treason, who ventured to remind him of the homely proverb, that "Hunger will break through stone walls." Scarcely was the edict published, when loud murmurs were heard throughout the entire city of Naples. It is a city in which a large vagrant body, called the Lazzaroni, accustomed to support life at a very trifling expense, support themselves by chance jobs, because a trifling remuneration, less than Englishmen frequently bestow in alms, enables them to live in the luxury of

indolence. On this numerous and dangerous class the tax pressed with enormous severity; to use their own expression, recorded by a contemporary writer, "it took the food out of their very mouths." Acts of violence succeeded to their disregarded murmurs; the viceroy could not appear abroad without being subjected to seditious clamours, and even personal insults; insurrectionary placards were posted in the market-place; and the booth erected for the collection of the tax was burned to the ground. Arcos at length, greatly alarmed, summoned his council, and went through the mockery of deliberation; but every other source of revenue was pledged and mortgaged to the outside of its value, money was to be raised at all hazards, and, of course, the consultations ended in ordering the continuance of the tax. Some efforts were made to punish those who publicly testified their dissatisfaction; but this only increased the number of secret conspirators, and the viceroy soon received an alarming warning of the perils by which he was environed. A Spanish flotilla lay in the Bay of Naples, the admiral's galley was remarkable for its strength and beauty, and 300,000 ducats were placed on board her for transmission to Spain. On the night of the 12th of May, she was discovered to be on fire, and ere means could be taken to save her, she blew up with all her treasure, and a portion of her crew. There was not one who saw the spectacle that did not feel convinced that it was the work of treachery, and the viceroy felt so much alarmed, that though he was pre-eminently superstitious, he forbade the annual procession on the 24th of June, in honour of John the Baptist, lest the collection of a multitude should lead to a sudden outbreak of insurrection.

Among those who exclaimed most bitterly against the fruit tax, was Tomasso Aniello, better known by the abbreviation Mas-aniello, whose destiny it was to experience more rapid changes of condition in the ensuing troubles, than any mortal ever underwent in the same space of time. He was a handsome, light-built, active, young man, not more than twenty-four years of age, but already recognised as a leader among his associates, from his readiness of wit, and great personal activity in the manly sports which delight the fishermen of Naples. His wife was detected by the tax collectors concealing a bag of flour, to evade the duty; she was grossly insulted and dragged to prison. The rest of the history must now assume the form of a journal, that our readers may the better appreciate the rapidity with which events followed each other.

July 7, 1647. This was the second Sunday before the feast of our lady of Carmel, one of the festivals celebrated by the superstitious Neapolitans with circumstances of peculiar solemnity. Among other amusements, it was customary to erect a wooden fortress, which the fishermen defended disguised as Turks, while the Lazzaroni attacked it in their ordinary habiliments. So popular was this spectacle, that it was always rehearsed on the three preceding Sundays; on the Sunday of which we speak, Masaniello, who had been chosen leader of one of the parties, assembled a crowd of boys and young persons, at a very early hour, to practise their parts in the performance. It so happened that this was also a great market-day, and crowds of peasants from the neighbouring districts had come in with fruit and vegetables for sale. Either on account of the superabundant supply, or the engagement of the multitude in their sports, the market was very heavy, and purchasers could not be found for the articles. The fiscal officers insisted that the tax should be paid on

everything, whether it was sold or not; but it still remained to be decided whether the tax should be paid by the peasants or by the hucksters. The dispute was referred to Naucerio, the provost of the merchants, whom we have already mentioned as the proposer of the obnoxious impost, and he decided that the tax should be paid by those who brought the fruit to market. Masaniello's brother-in-law, a hard-working peasant from Pozzeroli, was one of the persons aggrieved by this decision; he exclaimed against the injustice of being compelled to pay for articles which had as yet produced him no profit, and his loud tones soon attracted the notice of Masaniello and his companions. They hurried into the market-place, and the peasant, now sure of support, ventured to give free scope to his indignation, by throwing about the figs, which had been the original cause of the dispute, crying out, "Take these who will, our tyrants shall have none of them!" In an instant, Masaniello, who stood by his side, seized a bunch of figs, and flinging it violently into Naucerio's face, exclaimed, "Let them take this at the least!" This was the signal for a general riot, missiles of every description were flung at the tax-gatherers and their attendants, one act of violence led to another, the toll-bars were torn down, the booths of the collectors burned, and in a very few minutes the market-place was at the mercy of an infuriate populace. Masaniello seized the opportunity of addressing his companions, indignation prompted his eloquence, and though he had no advantages of education, his harangue was one well calculated to ensure the support of the mob. He pointed out to his hearers the dangers they had already incurred by provoking the vengeance of the Spaniards, he declared that this was the crisis of their country's fate, he conjured them to stand by him, and promised in the strongest terms a redress of all the grievances of which they had to complain.

Such, indeed, are the topics always used by a demagogue to inflame a multitude; but Masaniello was not an orator who traded on excitement, it was a mere accident which elevated him to be the author and leader of a movement. But his career fully proved the perils that arise from stimulating the passions of the ignorant, and added one to the many proofs which history affords of the impossibility of correcting evils by an appeal to physical force, without producing calamities infinitely greater than the oppressions which led to the insurrection.

Goaded onwards by the fiery harangue of Masaniello, the mob rushed from the market-place; some armed themselves with their ordinary implements of industry, others broke open the shops of the gunsmiths and seized the weapons they contained; the houses of the farmers of taxes were broken open, shots were fired into the houses of persons supposed to be favourable to the Spaniards, and many took the opportunity of revenging private quarrels under pretence of zeal for the public cause. At first the insurgents abstained from plunder, but in this as in countless other instances, the vehemence of patriotism was soon unable to restrain the lust of pillage; the women who had joined the rioters, gave the example of pilfering, which soon extended into a regular system of robbery.

As yet the insurgents had no acknowledged leader; like all vulgar rioters they wished to have a member of the aristocracy, and accidentally meeting the Prince of Bisignano, they compelled him to act as their chief. But though the Neapolitan nobles were justly indignant at the tyranny of the Spanish viceroy, they were too wise to countenance the outbreak of the populace;

they knew full well that a mob, after having used the nobles, whom deluded ambition has led to participate in their efforts, must eventually yield to the natural jealousy with which the lower orders regard their superiors and fling them away as broken tools, too fine and too weak to execute the rough work required by an imperious democracy. Shocked at the excesses he was compelled to witness, the Prince took the earliest opportunity of escape, while the confused masses spread over the city, began to direct their forces on one common centre and move towards the viceroy's palace.

The viceregal guards made a faint effort to resist the popular current, but they were soon overcome, and a body of the rioters forcing their way into the viceroy's presence, imperiously demanded not only the abolition of the obnoxious impost on fruit, but of all other taxes and impositions whatever. Terrified by violence, destitute of any force on which he could rely, and perceiving that the popular excitement increased every hour, the Duke of Arcos readily assented to every demand; but his compliance did not allay the tumult, the mob began to destroy his most valuable furniture, and did not abstain from personal violence. He attempted to escape in a coach, but was detected, abused, threatened and struck; by flinging money among the mob, he diverted their attention for a moment, and while they were eagerly engaged in a scramble, he succeeded in making his escape.

After his departure, the mob proclaimed Masaniello "Captain General of the faithful people of Naples," he who had been a humble fisherman in the morning, was an absolute sovereign ere the night closed in. He nominated a council composed of the lowest and most infamous of the rioters, but, in the true spirit of a low democrat, flushed by temporary power, he did not permit his fellow rebels to deliberate on his orders; indeed he would scarcely deign to listen to their advice.

Even at this early stage of the revolution, symptoms were perceptible of the insanity to which Masaniello ultimately fell a victim, and which was necessarily ripened by the excitement of the strange circumstances in which he found himself placed. He made the tower of the Carmelites his head-quarters, and there, while his council talked rather than deliberated, he stood in moody silence, warming his hands over a chafing-dish of coals. The only answer he made to repeated inquiries was, "I feel a burning and a heaviness as if my brain were overflowed by molten lead; but the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Saints appear to me every night, and promise me their assistance and protection. I have promised freedom to the people and they shall be free, yes I promise it, I swear it, they shall be free." This and similar broken speeches were uttered with maniac vehemence, which made them pass with his deluded votaries for words of inspiration. They unhesitatingly obeyed his orders to break open all the prisons, and liberate the captives; they massacred the few inhabitants who ventured to resist, and they set fire to the mansions of several obnoxious individuals. One of the houses which became the prey of the incendiaries, contained a large quantity of gun-powder, it was blown up, and eighty seven persons lost their lives. Sunday night was spent sleeplessly by the population of Naples; the flames of burning houses lighted every quarter of the city; the shrieks of the wounded and the lamentations of the relatives of the slain were heard in every street, save where the imperious insurgents forcibly compelled silence.



THE STORY OF
MASANIELLO, THE FISHERMAN, AND THE REVOLUTION OF NAPLES.



CHILDREN OF THE NEAPOLITAN LAZZARONI.

PART THE SECOND.

JULY 8th.—The morning of Monday had scarcely dawned, when licentious bodies of rioters appeared parading the streets, renewing the scenes of the former day with tenfold violence. In this, as in every other instance of a popular outbreak, it was found that the disposition to riot, like every other evil principle, is greatly strengthened by indulgence, and that the calamities of licentiousness accumulate with frightful rapidity. The Duke of Arcos resolved to negotiate, and he employed a Neapolitan nobleman, the Duke of Matalone, whom he held at the time as a prisoner in the castle, to act as his mediator with the insurgents.

No more puzzling question could be put to the Neapolitans, than to ask what was the substance of their demands. The expectations of a mob are always vague, and hence they insist upon impossibilities. The leaders of the insurrection demanded not only the abolition of all imposts, but the production of a charter, written, as they said, in letters of gold, and granted by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, to the citizens of Naples. No such document had ever existed, but nothing short of a miracle could convince the multitude of their delusion. Masaniello averred that it had been supernaturally described to

him, and this declaration rendered further evidence superfluous.

The viceroy under these circumstances endeavoured to palm on the populace a forged document similar to that which they required. There had not been sufficient time to give such a fraud even a chance of success; it was at once detected, and popular indignation was directed against the Duke of Matalone. The fiercer insurgents seized on his person, loaded him with chains, and dragged him to prison.

Masaniello's malady had been aggravated by a sleepless night; he incited his followers to fresh acts of violence, and begun to display a fierce hatred of the nobility and gentry. With his sanction, the houses of all who were regarded as enemies to the people, were gutted and destroyed; his followers, the lowest and most licentious of the Lazzaroni, paraded the streets with boat-hooks to drag the gentlemen from their horses, and inspired such terror, that the appearance of one of them was sufficient to clear a crowded street. The very women joined in these excesses, with muskets on their shoulders, swords by their sides, and daggers in the folds of their dress; and even the children were made to bear their part in the national frenzy. A second night of revolution closed in, and the results of the

tyranny of a mob were traced in characters of blood and flame on the once lovely city of Naples.

July 9th.—The excesses of the former days were renewed with fresh violence. Masaniello led a body of his followers against the steeple and church of St. Lorenzo, which had been garrisoned by a company of Spanish soldiers, who were too few to offer any effective resistance. Henceforth, the church of St. Lorenzo became the chief focus of the insurrection, and its great bell was used to sound the tocsin, whenever Masaniello and his successors deemed it necessary to summon an assembly of the people. In the evening of the day, the viceroy made a new effort to open a negotiation with the insurgents, employing as his ambassador Cardinal Felomario, Archbishop of Naples, who was rather a favourite with the populace. He persuaded the people and their leaders that he had full power to arrange all the points of difference, and he produced copies of the charters granted by Ferdinand the Catholic, and Charles the Fifth. Though these documents contained nothing like the stipulations ignorantly expected by the multitude, they were received with satisfaction, and the night was passed more peacefully than either of the preceding.

July 10th.—The expectations of peace to which the cardinal's embassy had given rise, were disappointed by a new series of events. Large parties of banditti, which had long infested the kingdom of Naples, flocked to the capital, and were gladly received by Masaniello. To one of these criminals, by name Perrone, he intrusted the charge of the prisoners. But the Duke of Matalone found little difficulty in persuading the bandit to become a traitor to the popular cause, and to join with another bandit, named Palombe, in a plot for the assassination of Masaniello. As a preliminary, the duke was permitted to make his escape, and he took good care to remove himself to a safe distance.

Masaniello summoned a general assembly, to deliberate on the proposals made by the cardinal; an immense multitude thronged into the square appointed for the meeting; but the appearance of five hundred banditti, armed to the teeth, well mounted, and acting in concert, excited some alarm. They rode forward to the place where Masaniello stood; some exclamations from the crowd excited his alarm, and he commanded the bandits to dismount. Instead of obeying the order, seven of them discharged their carbines at him, but though his shirt was burned by the gunpowder, not a ball struck him. The enraged mob immediately assailed the bandits; thirty of them fell at the very first discharge, and the rest sought shelter in a church, trusting that the Neapolitans, who are proverbial for superstition, would respect the sanctuary.

But in the terrible excitement of popular fury, religion ceases to curb violence, and superstition is of course still more inefficacious. The enraged multitudes forced the gates, the work of butchery went on in the sacred precincts, the floor was flooded with blood, wretches were slaughtered while they grasped the altar, and the images of the Virgin and the Saints were stained with the gore of the victims. A few were reserved for a worse fate; they were tortured to force a confession; cords were drawn round their thumbs, and tightened until blood spouted from the nails; the heads of others were subjected to similar compression until their eyes were starting from the sockets: they confessed the plot that had been laid for the murder of Masaniello, and the intention of their masters to fall upon the mob during the confusion that must necessarily result from the loss

of the popular leader. All agreed that the Duke of Matalone and his brother, Don Joseph Caraffa, were the contrivers of the conspiracy; but some, probably in the vain hope of preserving their lives, added many other horrors, declaring that a plot had been laid for undermining the place of assembly, and blowing all the insurgents together into the air. These revelations scarcely delayed their fate, as each told all he was supposed to know, he was hewn down, beheaded, and mutilated in barbarous triumph.

The assembly still continued its meeting; Masaniello, guarded by the most ferocious of the Lazzaroni, bearing on pikes the gory heads of the slain banditti, harangued the multitude, exaggerating the dangers from which he and they had escaped, and calling for vengeance on the whole body of the nobles.

Horrid outcries rent the air as he concluded; a party instantly departed in search of the duke and his brother, while others, in anticipation of their capture, hastily prepared a wooden scaffold; the bleeding bodies of those who had been slain were tied to the tails of horses and dragged through the streets; the fishermen, the Lazzaroni, and hordes of degraded women, incensed by fury, mutilated the senseless carcasses, while children wallowed in the blood, and seemed to take a premature delight in slaughter. Matalone escaped his pursuers, but Caraffa was taken and dragged towards the square. His captors could not delay their eagerness for his blood, and, before he reached the scaffold, a butcher struck off his head with a blow of a cleaver. When intelligence of this event reached Masaniello, he ascended the scaffold, still in his sailor's dress, with a drawn sword in his hand, and exclaimed, "Bring here the head of the traitor." His orders were obeyed, and the furious demagogue insulted and spurned the corpse of the unfortunate nobleman, until his own followers could not conceal their feelings of disgust.

During this dreadful day the Neapolitan clergy kept the churches open, covered the altars with the ornaments used in the services for the dead, offered up prayers for peace, and repeated the service of their church called "supplications for the passing soul," usually recited for persons at the point of death. Even this spectacle failed to produce the intended effect; murderers with their weapons of slaughter, incendiaries waving their blazing torches, stopped at the gates of the churches as they passed, uncovered their heads, knelt for a few moments to go through the mummery of devotion, and then went on their way to continue the work of destruction.

July 11th.—The Duke of Arcos was far from breaking off the negotiations in consequence of the preceding horrors. Cardinal Felomario again presented himself as a mediator; Masaniello, who was unable to write, dictated to his secretaries certain conditions for peace, principally insisting on the total abolition of taxes, and full indemnity for all who had engaged in the insurrection. When the articles were prepared, they were read to the people in the church of the Carmelites, and received with loud acclamation. Cardinal Felomario then proposed that Masaniello should accompany him to the Spanish governor; the proposition was adopted, and the demagogue exchanged his sailor's dress for a superb robe of silver tissue. He then mounted a splendid charger, richly caparisoned, and, accompanied by a vast multitude, proceeded to the viceroy.

The Duke of Arcos, though imbued with a double portion of Spanish pride, received the imperious fisherman with the utmost respect, and treated him as if he had been the first of the grandees. The courtly ceremonies were tedious; they were pro-

tracted to such a length, that the crowd which waited outside for Masaniello's return, began to get alarmed, and to show symptoms of suspicion and uneasiness. On hearing this Masaniello stepped to the window, and by a single word hushed the miscreants to silence. He took the opportunity of showing to the viceroy the wonderful and perilous influence which he had established over the populace by manifesting their immediate and implicit obedience to his commands. He gave a signal with his hand, and instantly all the bells in the city began to toll; he waved his hand once more, and their knell instantly ceased. He lifted his arm, and the multitude raised deafening shouts; he placed his finger on his lips, and the assembled thousands became mute and motionless as statues. Such an exhibition produced the designed effect; the viceroy felt it necessary to recognise the title of so potent a demagogue; he not only saluted him as captain-general of the populace, but placed a gold chain round his neck with his own hands, and proclaimed him Duke of St. George.

July 12th.—The hopes of peace were baffled by the increasing malady of Masaniello; he was haunted by a morbid terror of death, dreading particularly the banditti, and the nobles by whom he believed them to be instigated. He could only sleep for a few minutes at a time, keeping his attendants in constant excitement, by springing from his troubled slumbers and exclaiming, "Up, up, there can be no rest for us until we are masters of Naples!" He received food only from the hands of one of his relations, and he frequently expressed a belief that he would eventually be deserted by the fickle populace, ignominiously slain, and that his body would be exposed to insults as gross as those which had been offered to the remains of Caraffa. Agitated by these apprehensions, he no longer received applications and petitions in the market-place, but posted himself at the window of his own cottage, in his fisherman's dress, with a loaded blunderbuss at hand. A body of the Lazzaroni surrounded the house as guards and executioners of his will; two secretaries prepared his answers, sentences, &c., and in all of these Masaniello continued to manifest an implacable hatred of the aristocracy.

July 13th.—The business of this day was the installation of Masaniello in the cathedral, and the solemn ratification of the articles of peace arranged between him and the viceroy. During the ceremony the marks of Masaniello's madness first became obvious to the spectators; he frequently interrupted the reading of the articles by captious and even absurd objections; at the conclusion of the ceremony he was with difficulty restrained from throwing off his robes, and assuming his old dress in the presence of the whole assembly. The multitude, however, still adhered to him, and their acclamations succeeded for a time in restoring his equanimity.

July 14th.—The insurrection had now lasted a week; a second Sunday had dawned, and the distractions of Naples seemed to have become worse than ever. Masaniello's insanity now began to be manifest to the multitude; he galloped through the streets half-naked, invited the cardinal and the Duke of Arcos to sup with him, jumped into the sea with his clothes on, continued to swim about for an hour, and drank at supper twelve flasks of strong wine. The intoxication which ensued, produced the only sound sleep he had enjoyed since his elevation.

July 15th.—Insurrectionary violence was now beginning to grow weary of its own excesses. The populace had nothing to do; for all who could be regarded as enemies of the public cause were removed. Masaniello's insane freaks, sometimes ludicrous and

always mischievous, tended greatly to abate the popular enthusiasm in his favour; a new conspiracy was formed for his destruction, in which many who had been his most ardent supporters were included. His despotic power, which he frequently manifested by various acts of tyranny during the day, seemed still too formidable to be resisted. But towards evening he drew his sword, cut furiously at all around him, and became so outrageous that his friends were obliged to bind and secure him during the night.

July 16th.—Early in the day Masaniello escaped from the friends who detained him in custody, and rushed into the church of Del Carmine, during service before a crowded congregation. When the solemnity was concluded, Masaniello ascended the pulpit with a crucifix in his hand, harangued them in a desponding mood, complaining that he was betrayed and deserted. As he grew warm with the fervour of discourse, his insanity began to break out; at length his language and his gestures became so outrageous that the priests removed him by force from the pulpit. He then applied to the cardinal for protection, offering to resign all his authority to the viceroy, and the prelate persuaded him to retire into an adjoining cloister. The conspirators soon burst into his place of refuge, exclaiming, "Health to the king of Spain and death to Masaniello!" For a moment his former energies were rallied; he turned round to the assassins, and in a tone of firmness exclaimed, "Do my faithful subjects seek me? Here I am." The words had scarcely passed his lips when he received the fire of four muskets in his bosom; he had only time to exclaim, "Ungrateful traitors!" as he fell. He was a dead man ere his head touched the earth.

The crowded congregation, in the church of Del Carmine, learned the fate of the popular favourite without emotion. Those who had followed shouting in his train on the preceding day, patiently stood by while his head was cut off to be borne as a trophy to the viceroy. His body was dragged through the streets by a rabble of boys, among whom the nobility freely flung pieces of money, and was then cast into one of the city ditches.

July 17th.—The death of Masaniello does not conclude his "strange eventful history." On the morning after his murder a vast crowd of the Lazzaroni assembled, sought out his dishonoured remains, and carried them in melancholy procession to the cathedral; there his body was arrayed in royal robes, decorated with a crown and sceptre, and treated with all the respect due to a deceased sovereign. His funeral was celebrated with the utmost pomp; thousands of armed men followed the hearse, testifying their respect and sorrow; as the body sunk into the grave the assembled multitude burst into a passion of tears, prayers, and lamentation, and the memory of the unfortunate fisherman was long held in the highest veneration by the mob of Naples.

Thus, in the short space of ten days, Masaniello was raised from indigence and obscurity to the height of power; then suddenly slain as a wild beast and dragged through the city with ignominy, yet finally buried as a prince and almost worshipped as a saint.

The civil war soon broke out afresh, but the Neapolitans, after their first enthusiasm had cooled, proved unable to resist the might of the Spanish monarchy. Torn in sunder by internal tumults, insulted by their leaders, betrayed by their favourites, and plundered by banditti, they were glad to purchase peace upon any terms, and to submit to a government still more oppressive than that against which they had taken up arms.

