

THE ROBBER'S CAVE

by A. L. O. E.



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The Robbers' Cave

A TALE OF ITALY

BY

**Charlotte Maria Tucker
(A. L. O. E.)**

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The Robbers' Cave.

A TALE OF ITALY.

CHAPTER I.

A CALABRIAN INN.

"Lazy dog! can't he drive faster—keeping us grilling here in the heat! I should like to have the use of his whip for a few minutes and try its effect upon his shoulders!" Such was the impatient exclamation of Horace Cleveland, as for the third time he thrust his head out of the carriage window.

"I wish that we had never come to Calabria at all!" sighed his mother. Horace was resuming his lounging position in the carriage, after hurling a few Italian words of abuse at the driver, as she added, "It was a nonsensical whim of yours, Horace, to bring us into this wild land, when we might have remained in comfort at Naples, with every convenience around us, such as my weak health so much requires."

"Convenience!" repeated Horace contemptuously, "would you compare the luxuries of Naples, its drives, its bouquets, its ices, its idle amusements, with the glorious scenery of a land like this? Look what a splendid mountain rises there, all clothed to the very summit with myrtle, aloes, and cactus, where here and there stands a tall palm, like the king of the forest, overlooking the rest. And see what an expanse—what an ocean of olives stretches yonder!"

"I do not admire the olive, with its rugged stem and dull dingy leaves," observed Mrs. Cleveland.

"Not when the breeze ruffles those leaves, and shows their silver linings? look there now,—how beautiful they appear

under the brightness of an Italian sky!"

"I am too weary to admire anything," said Mrs. Cleveland with a yawn, "and it seems as if we were never to reach the inn at Staiti. The heat is almost suffocating."

"I say," halloed Horace to the driver, "how long shall we be in arriving at Staiti?"

The Italian shrugged his shoulders, and without taking the trouble to turn round made reply, "We shall not be there till twenty-four o'clock, signore."

"Twenty-four o'clock!" exclaimed Horace; not surprised, however, by the expression, as the reader may possibly be, as he was familiar with the Italian mode of reckoning the twenty-four hours from sunset to sunset. "Is there no inn,—no locanda, where we could rest on the way?"

"Si, signore," answered the Calabrese, pointing onwards with his whip to a small, irregularly built house, which seemed wedged between two masses of rock overgrown with cactus, and which was so much of the color of the cliffs, that one might fancy that it had grown out of them.

"It looks much more picturesque than comfortable," observed Horace, drawing back his head, and showing the inn to his mother.

"Let's stop there—or anywhere," gasped Mrs. Cleveland, fanning herself with the air of one whose patience as well as strength is almost exhausted. "I can go no further to-day."

"We can stop and bait," said Horace; and again he leaned out of the window to give his orders to the driver in the haughty tone of command which he seemed to think befitting an English "milordo."

It was clear at a glance that Horace Cleveland regarded himself as one of the lords of creation, and, from national or family or personal pride, considered himself superior to all such of his fellow-creatures as he might meet in Calabria. His manner, even to his mother, was petulant and imperious. Horace Cleveland had had, indeed, much to foster his vanity and strengthen his pride. Horace occupied a proud position in his school, and he plumed himself not a little upon it. "The boy is father of the man," sang the poet; and on the strength of that aphorism Horace built up a high tower of airy hopes. He had been accustomed to be admired, imitated, followed, in the little world of a public school, and he expected to hold the same place in the great world, which he soon must enter. Horace felt himself born to command.

The youth's triumphs at school had hardly tended to make him more agreeable at home. He was an only child, and his widowed mother regarded him as her all in all. Very proud was Mrs. Cleveland of his talents, very proud of his success: with fond admiration she gazed on his open, handsome countenance,—the high forehead, the clear gray eye, and thought that amongst all his companions none could compare with her son. And yet Mrs. Cleveland was by no means altogether contented with Horace. She would have been better pleased had he exhibited less spirit and more submission. Horace was eager to claim a man's independence; Mrs. Cleveland clung to a parent's authority. It is probable that the

lady would have retained more influence over her boy, had she exercised it more judiciously. She had been as an unskillful rider, who, instead of keeping a light but firm hand on the bridle, alternately threw down the rein and caught it up to jerk the mouth of his restive steed, and irritate its temper. Delicate health and weak nerves had combined to make the widowed lady sometimes peevish, and even unreasonable; and her will often clashed with that of her son to a degree that caused a painful jar upon the feelings of both. Thus those who were dearer to each other than all the world besides, were each not unfrequently a source of annoyance and irritability even to the being best beloved.

"I am sure that it was great folly to come to Calabria at all!" exclaimed Mrs. Cleveland, as the chaise drew up at the door of the inn.

Now this was what Horace could not endure to hear, since it had been to gratify his wishes, and quite against her own judgment, that his mother had quitted Naples for the mountainous south of Italy. Moreover Horace had heard that same exclamation nearly ten times already on that day, and the effect of heat and weariness had drawn largely on his stock of patience. Ready to vent his ill-humor on the first thing that he touched, Horace flung open the door of the chaise as he might have hit at a foe, and rudely pushed aside a young Italian who had come forward to help the lady to alight. The hot blood rose to the stranger's sun-burnt cheek, and a look of anger, instantly repressed, passed like lightning over his face. Mrs. Cleveland caught the look, transient as it was, and as she walked into the inn, laid her hand on the arm of her son, and whispered to him in English:

"For mercy's sake, do not treat these people with rudeness. You know that all these Italians carry stilettos in their vests; we are alone—amongst strangers!"

Horace's only reply was a look to express contempt for all Italians in general, and this one in particular, and a disregard for all considerations founded upon personal fear. He snatched up a grip, and one or two shawls from the chaise, and carried them into the locanda, being too much out of humor to offer his mother the support of his arm.

Mrs. Cleveland was shown into the little inn by its master, who came forth to meet her. He was a stout, red-faced man with one eye, and a countenance by no means prepossessing.

"Giuseppina! Giuseppina!" he shouted.

A Calabrese girl, barefooted, attired in a bright blue dress with an orange border, and wearing large gold ear-rings and chain, came to answer the call. Guided by her the weary lady entered a small, close room which might be termed the parlor, but which was evidently put to many more uses. The entrance of the visitors disturbed a hen and a whole brood of sickly chickens, which cackling and fluttering made a hasty retreat across the threshold. On one part of the dirty earthen floor was piled a set of empty wine-skins, the odor from which blended with the more disagreeable scent from some thousands of silk-worm cocoons, heaped together in a corner.

"Have you no better quarters to give us than this hole?" cried Horace to Giuseppina in the Italian language, which he spoke with ease.

"No, signore," replied the girl, as she swept from the table a confused litter of old sacking, chaff and oakum, in order to make preparation for the coming meal, which Horace, with a look of disgust, forthwith proceeded to order. Mrs. Cleveland, being less familiar with the language, usually left such arrangements to her son.

"What can you give us?" asked Horace.

"Ebene, signore, maccaroni," replied the bare-footed maiden.

"Maccaroni, of course, and what besides?"

Giuseppina glanced to the right at the wine-skins, then to the left at the heap of cocoons, as if to gather from them some culinary idea, shrugged her shoulders and suggested "omelet," but in a tone expressive of doubt.

"Omelet then, and anything else that you may have, and be quick, for the lady is weary and wants refreshment!" cried Horace.

Giuseppina showed her white teeth in a smile and quitted the parlor.

"One is stifled in this horrible den!" exclaimed Horace, stalking up to the window, and throwing it open. Very little air was admitted on that sultry afternoon, but there came the sound of voices from without.

"What are the people doing outside, Horace?" faintly inquired Mrs. Cleveland.

"Like Italians—doing nothing," was the reply, "They are merely gathering round that young man whom we saw at the door, apparently to listen to his singing, for he has a guitar in his hand."

"That Italian whom you struck?" inquired Mrs. Cleveland.

"I did not strike him—I only pushed him back. These fellows must be taught to know their own place," Horace haughtily replied.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Cleveland, leaning forward on the chair on which she had wearily sunk, "you must acquire, indeed you must, a more gentle and conciliatory manner. In a wild, strange place like this, altogether out of the bounds of civilization, a thoughtless act might bring serious trouble—a wanton insult might cost a life!"

Horace did not answer, and as he remained looking out the window, his mother could not see on his face the effect of her gentle reproof, she saw, however, that he was impatiently moving his foot up and down, which was his trick when he had to listen to anything which it did not please him to hear.

A few chords on a guitar, touched by a skillful hand, were now heard, and immediately the hum of voices without was silenced.

"I hate to see a man play a guitar!" exclaimed Horace. As he spoke, the tones of a voice singularly melodious and rich mingled with those of the instrument, and Mrs. Cleveland, weary as she felt, was lured to the window to listen.

Surrounded by a group of Calabrese stood the musician. He was simply but picturesquely attired, after the fashion of his country; the red jacket, not worn, but carried across the shoulder ready to be put on in season of rain, left exposed to view the white shirt. A felt hat, of a somewhat oval shape, shaded a countenance which, with its classical outlines and thoughtful expression, could have formed a study for an artist. The song of the young Italian, translated into English, might run thus:—

If to pine in a dungeon were e'er my fate
When light struggled in through the iron grate,
What view would most soothe my unwearied eye,—
The boundless ocean—the earth—or sky?

Oh! not the ocean!—its ceaseless swell
With my restless grief would accord too well;
The voice of its wild waves would break my sleep,
And the captive bend o'er his chain and weep.

'Twere sweet to gaze on the laughing earth,
And view, though distant, its scenes of mirth.
Ah, no! ah, no! they would but recall
Life's flowers to one who had lost them all.

The sky, the sky, unbounded, bright,
With its silvery moon, and its stars of light,
The blush of morning, the evening glow,
Its passing clouds, and its radiant bow,—

There—there would I fix my unwearied eye,
Till fancy could paint a bright world on high,

And earth and its sorrows would fade in night,
With freedom before me—and heaven in sight!

CHAPTER II.

A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER.

"Who is that singer?" inquired Mrs. Cleveland in broken Italian of the girl Giuseppina, who had just reëntered the room with a large dish of macaroni which looked like a pile of tobacco-pipes.

"Improvvisatore," answered the girl.

"What is that?" inquired Horace.

"An improvisatore," replied Mrs. Cleveland, "is one who makes poetry on the spur of the moment. This class of minstrels is, I believe, peculiar to Italy, the beautiful language of the country giving facility to rapid composition. Do you suppose," she continued, addressing herself to Giuseppina, "that the young man really made that song about prisons himself?"

"Prisons," repeated the Calabrese, with a slight but expressive shrug of the shoulders, "I should say that Raphael might very well sing about prisons."

"You don't mean us to understand," said Horace, "that, young as he seems, he has been acquainted with the inside of them?"

"Chi sa? (who knows?)" replied the girl, with another expressive shrug, as she placed his dish upon the table.

"He was never imprisoned, I trust, for any crime?" inquired Mrs. Cleveland, more uneasy than ever at the recollection of Horace's rudeness to the stranger.

"Chi sa?" repeated the girl.

"I cannot believe," said the lady, "that there can lurk much harm in one with such a countenance, and such an exquisite voice."

"Oh, he's an Italian!" cried Horace, who rather prided himself on his prejudices.

Giuseppina lingered, fidgeting about the table, moving the dish now to the right, now to the left, as if she could never satisfy herself that she had placed it perfectly straight.

"Does this Raphael, as you call him," said Horace, "earn his living by his music?"

"Chi sa?" repeated Giuseppina, not looking up, but showing her teeth in a meaning smile.

"Does the idle fellow do nothing but sing and play?"

"He cures the sick also," replied Giuseppina; "he gathers

herbs, and has wonderful power to take away fever, and to heal wounds from sword or from shot. But," she added, crossing herself, and shaking her head, "the abbate (abbot) says that none can tell how he came by his knowledge."

"This Raphael is looked upon, then, as rather a suspicious character?"

Giuseppina dropped her voice, and looked as if the desire to impart information were struggling with a fear of danger from so doing as she made answer,

"He is certainly no stranger to Matteo."

The last word was pronounced in a whisper so low, that both Mrs. Cleveland and her son had to bend forward to catch the name.

"Who is Matteo?" asked Horace.

Giuseppina raised her hands and eyebrows with a gesture of surprise.

"Not know Matteo! all the world knows Matteo!" she said with low but rapid utterance, glancing around her as she did so, as if to make sure that no third listener was present; "we don't speak of him—no one speaks of him—but—"

"But?" said Horace with some curiosity as the speaker came to a pause.

"Oh!" continued Giuseppina, with the same stealthy look and quick utterance, "did not the signori hear how the

government courier was stopped and robbed of three hundred dollars on the high road, and the Cavaliero Donato waylaid and shot dead? It is said that they owed him a grudge. And the Contessa Albani was attacked in her detturino and all her jewels taken, and her servants knocked on the head!"

"By whom—by this Matteo?" asked Horace, while his mother, who only understood half of the girl's information, clasped her hands with a gesture of alarm.

"Zitto! (hush!)" whispered the talkative Calabrese, who appeared, however, greatly to relish the diversion of frightening an English lady. Horace looked as if he could not be frightened.

"And does your government do nothing to keep down such banditti?" said young Cleveland; "what are the soldiers about?"

"I soldati! ah!" replied Giuseppina with an expressive nod; "there was a party of them here to-day, horsemen, on their way to Reggio; they had a prisoner with them, arms bound behind his back;"—the girl put back her own elbows and scowled darkly, as if acting the part of a captured bandit.

"I hope that it was this Matteo!" cried Horace.

"Zitto! (hush!)" again whispered the girl; "it was not Matteo—they said it was his son."

"I suppose that the soldiers were taking him to Reggio for trial!"

Giuseppina again nodded her head.

"And what is likely to become of him?"

The girl twisted her finger in the chain which she wore, tightening it round her neck, but only answered with a shrug, "Chi sa?" and quitted the room to bring in the rest of the dinner.

"Horace! what a dreadful place we have come to!" gasped Mrs. Cleveland.

The youth laughed as he seated himself at the table. "It is clear that one has some chance of an adventure in Calabria," said he.

"Keep me from adventures!" exclaimed the lady, "Did not the girl tell us—I could hardly understand her, for she spoke so fast—of people being robbed and murdered on the high road by banditti?"

"Ah! but the soldiers are wide awake," suggested Horace, helping the maccaroni. "I hope that they" (he was not now speaking of the military) "will bring us something better worth eating than this!"

Giuseppina pushed the door open with her knee, and reëntered, a dish of omelet in one hand, a second full of snow in the other, and a bottle of wine under her arm.

"Where will the soldiers be to-night?" asked Mrs. Cleveland with some anxiety; "I wish that we had asked for an escort."

"They'll be at Staiti, no doubt," answered Giuseppina, setting down the viands which she had brought.

"We'll be at Staiti to-night also," said Horace; adding in English, "so, mother, you need fear nothing."

"Staiti to-night! no, it would be dark ere the signori could arrive there," observed Giuseppina; "the signori can have good beds here."

"Here!" exclaimed Horace, looking around him in disgust, "the place is not fit for a hound!"

"But, my dear child," said Mrs. Cleveland, "safety is to be thought of even before comfort."

Horace replied to his mother, like herself speaking in English, which Giuseppina, unnecessarily loitering by the table, tried to understand with her eyes, as it conveyed no meaning to her ears: "You talk of safety as if this place were safe. Have you not just heard that one of the gang of banditti is below—a fellow let loose from a prison?"

"The improvisatore?" said Mrs. Cleveland; "I did not understand that he was actually one of the band."

"But I did," pursued Horace, in his overbearing manner; "and I saw the master of this very house, who, by the way, looks a ruffian if ever there was one, in close conference with this very Raphael, who has doubtless come here for no good."

Mrs. Cleveland pushed away the plate of untasted food before her, nervous anxiety having taken from the weary lady all inclination to eat. Horace, to whom a little danger was rather a pleasant excitement, had already half demolished the omelet.

"The signora is not well, the signora must not travel further to-day," suggested Giuseppina.

Horace glanced up hastily at his mother; but seeing on her anxious countenance nothing to excite his fears for her health, he impatiently motioned to the girl to quit the room, as he felt more at his ease when her black eyes were not watching his lips. Giuseppina with lingering step withdrew.

"I wish that you would eat, mother; you know that you will be quite exhausted if you don't," cried Horace in a tone of vexation.

"I can't travel in the dark—I can't go to be waylaid—robbed—perhaps—"

"Don't you see," cried Horace, striking the handle of his spoon on the table to give more force to his argument, "that if we stay here we are just as likely to come to grief? Have you never heard or read of horrid little wayside inns kept by robbers in disguise; of beds contrived to fall down upon travelers and crush them; of stealthy footsteps at night—and all that sort of thing? Now this seems to be exactly the place for such an unpleasant adventure."

"Oh, why did we ever come to Calabria?" exclaimed Mrs. Cleveland, sinking back in her chair.

Horace felt some self-reproach for thus adding to the terrors of his mother. He hastily finished his omelet, and said in a more reassuring voice—

"You see, mother dear, if we once get to Staiti, we'll be

under the wing of the law: you can travel with a military escort like a queen."

"But it is the journey to Staiti—"

"Never fear that, it will soon be over; anything is better than stopping here."

Horace presently pushed back his chair, and, rising from the table, said to Mrs. Cleveland, "I'm going to order Giacomo to put to the horses; the sooner we're off the better;" and without waiting to hear his mother's objections, the youth hastily left the apartment.

"Willful, unmanageable boy!" murmured the lady to herself; "he thinks that he knows better than every one else, and I feel too much exhausted and worn out to oppose him. The charge of such an ungovernable child is too much for a poor widow like me. I should never have yielded to his entreaties, and come to this horrible, desolate place. If I once find myself again in a civilized land, once again know the comforts of a home, nothing on earth shall persuade me to go a second time upon a wild expedition such as this."

CHAPTER III.

BITTER WORDS.

Horace found Jacomo the driver seated outside the door of the inn, enjoying *al fresco* (in the open air) a large plateful of macaroni. As Horace came towards him, the man looked a thoroughly characteristic specimen of his nation—half-supporting himself on his elbow, while his head was thrown back to enable him with more convenience to drop into his mouth some six inches length of the white moist tube, to which he was helping himself with his fingers!

"Jacomo, put in the horses at once: we must make good speed to reach Staiti to-night," said Horace.

The Italian stared at the speaker with a look of surprise and dissatisfaction. "The signor forgets that the day is advanced, the way mountainous, the horses tired, the signora faint, and the roads not safe after dark." said the man; "it would be no wise act to start before morning."

"That is for me to decide, and not for you," said the young Englishman with *hauteur*.

"You can have excellent accommodation here—good beds, good fare—what more can the signori require?" said the one-eyed host, pointing towards the inn with a peculiar and stealthy expression in his disagreeable face, which confirmed Horace in his resolution to depart.

"Jacomo, harness the horses, and directly!" he exclaimed. "If there be any delay, not an extra carlino (a small coin) shall you have at the end of the journey."

The driver, with an exclamation directed to his patron saint and some mutterings which Horace did not understand, began

making preparations to obey, moving his lazy limbs more leisurely than suited the impatience of his employer. The host, shrugging his shoulders, went into the inn. As Horace was about to follow him thither, the improvisatore, who had been standing under the shadow of a neighboring tree unperceived by the youth, came forward and crossed over between him and the door, not looking at Horace, nor appearing to observe him, but as he passed close in front of him dropping the words "Do not go," in a low but earnest tone.

Horace glanced in surprise after the speaker, startled by so strange a warning from the last person whom he should have expected to give one. He would have liked to have questioned Raphael, but the improvisatore had already disappeared.

"I wonder if it be wise to start," thought Horace, whose resolution for the first time began to waver; "yet I have no reason to trust this stranger, who seems to bear an evil character, even amongst the people of this place."

"The signor has changed his mind?" inquired Jacomo with a grin—the man having probably detected a look of indecision upon the face of young Cleveland.

This way of putting the question fixed the determination of Horace, who secretly prided himself upon what he thought strength and decision of character. "I never change my mind," he said haughtily; "I shall be ready to start in ten minutes. Let me then find the carriage at the door, or you shall have reason to repent of the delay."

In about a quarter of an hour the vehicle stood ready in front

of the inn. The one-eyed man, who seemed to combine in himself the offices of landlord and ostler, was there to see his guests depart. Giuseppina was at the door, and about half-a-dozen bare-footed brown urchins, crowded together like bees to view the strangers enter the carriage, as they had stared a few hours before at the soldiers bearing the bandit away. Raphael stood with folded arms near the heads of the horses. He exchanged words with no one, nor seemed to take notice of the whispered remarks of the children who glanced at him ever and anon.

"The soldiers had *him* once," said one boy, pointing to the improvisatore; "did they tie his arms behind him? I wonder whether he has the marks on his wrists."

"How did he get away? did Matteo break his prison, and set him free?"

"Perhaps the soldiers let him off because he sings so fine!" suggested one black-eyed little damsel, with uncombed hair falling in dark masses on each side of her merry brown face.

"I like Raphael; he cured my bad leg, and he speaks so kind," said another.

"But he's a bad man, I know he's a bad man," whispered a thin, sallow child with a solemn look—"he does not bow to the Madonna, nor touch the holy water."

"He does!" exclaimed the former speaker, indignant at so dark an imputation being thrown on his benefactor.

"But he does not," persisted the sallow child; "I've watched

him again and again; he never bows to the holy image, nor crosses himself; and I don't believe that he tells his beads, or ever goes to confess. Mother says that he's a wicked man, and prays to none of the saints."

The faintest approach to a smile on the lips of the young Italian alone betrayed that he heard any part of the conversation of which he was the subject.

The attention of the children was now diverted to the travelers who were leaving the inn. "How pale the signora is! does she not look anxious and frightened?" were the whispers exchanged among the group.

Uneasy and irresolute Mrs. Cleveland certainly was. Horace, who, however faulty in other respects, never concealed anything from his mother, had told her of the warning of Raphael; and as he led her to the carriage, lingering and reluctant, he was warmly combating the idea that the Italian's words should have the slightest effect in influencing their movements.

"Doubtless he is playing into the hands of this Matteo, of whose atrocities we have been hearing, and who will be as savage as a bear at the capture of his son. Common sense tells us that we should put no faith in this stranger; a low musician, a jail-bird, a companion of thieves!"

These words were uttered aloud, of course in the English language, but as Mrs. Cleveland glanced at the improvisatore to judge by his face whether he merited the epithets given him, she again saw a sudden flush tinge the paleness of his cheek.

Raphael stepped forward, as if to help her into the carriage, for her foot was already on the step, and again in low tones breathed the words "*Do not go*," but this time in English, though with an accent quite Italian.

Mrs. Cleveland started, and would have drawn back; but Horace at that moment almost lifted her into the carriage, and sprang in after her with a quickness which gave his nervous mother hardly time to think or to breathe.

"Horace—I can't go—I won't go—stop the driver—we will get out!" gasped the lady.

"Mother, it is nonsense; you will make us the laughing-stock of the place!" exclaimed Horace, who had caught sight of a leer upon the face of the one-eyed man, which had strengthened his suspicions as to the character of the low little inn in the mountains.

The driver cracked his whip, and the jingle of the horses' bells was heard as they moved forward on the white, dusty road.

The conscience of Horace smote him a little for the rudeness of his manner and words. "You know, mother," he said, in a softer tone, "that I must care for your comfort and safety."

"Comfort!" exclaimed Mrs. Cleveland with indignation; "willful, ungrateful boy that you are, you never care for anything but your own selfish fancies!" and exhausted in strength, and wounded in feeling, the irritated mother burst into a flood of tears.

"Mother, I can't stand this!" exclaimed Horace, in extreme vexation at seeing her weep.

"You have planted many a thorn in my pillow," sobbed the lady; "you may find them one day on your own!"

Horace could not answer. His heart seemed to be rising into his throat. He pulled his cap low over his eyes, and leaned back in the corner of the carriage, wishing, with all his soul, that he had never come on the journey. He had been accustomed to chidings and reproaches, but not to tears, and each drop seemed to fall upon his heart like a drop of molten lead. Horace had never but once before seen his parent weep upon his account, and the occasion which drew forth those tears was one of the most tender recollections of his childhood. Horace remembered the time when he had lain in his little cot, parched by fever, and when awakening again and again in the long, wretched nights he had ever seen, by the dim light of the shaded candle, the form of his mother, ready to offer the cooling drink to relieve his burning thirst. He remembered how, as long as his danger continued, her calm courage had never failed her, faith and love supporting her through sleepless nights and miserable days; but that when the doctor had said at last, "The crisis is over, he will do well," her overstrained feelings had at length given way, and she had wept tears of thankful delight over the child who lay on her bosom! How different from those glad tears were the drops which the wounded, disappointed parent was shedding now! A painful sensation came over Horace as the doubt suggested itself to his mind whether his mother would have felt such transport at his recovery had she known all that his petulance would cost her; nay, Horace was not certain whether, on the whole, her only

and much-loved son had not given her more pain than pleasure. It was too true that he *had* thought more of his own selfish fancies than of the wishes of his tender parent; that he had often treated her with disrespect, and even with actual disobedience. Horace's conscience told him that he had not honored his mother, nor made her happy; and he was so painfully stung by its reproaches that he was half inclined to call out to the driver to go back to the inn, as a kind of practical way of showing his parent that he regretted having preferred his own opinion to hers. But the carriage was now plunging down a road so steep and narrow, that it would have been almost impossible to stop it, and quite impossible to turn. The utmost attention of the driver was required to keep his horses on their legs, and every now and then a tremendous jolt made Mrs. Cleveland grasp the side of the vehicle to prevent herself from being jerked out of her seat. She had ceased crying, but she was thoroughly displeased with her son, and was not disposed to address him again, even if the roughness of the road had not rendered it difficult to speak.

Horace knew that he ought to ask his mother's forgiveness at once, as he had often done when a child; but pride shrank from that simple course. As a compromise between conscience and pride, he said with a little hesitation:

"I am sorry that I spoke so unguardedly about that mysterious Italian; though who could have dreamed of any one here comprehending the English tongue?"

Mrs. Cleveland made no reply, but continued gazing out of the carriage window in an opposite direction.

"And I am sorry," continued Horace with an effort, "that I said or did anything to vex you."

Still silence—still the averted face. This had not been the first, no, nor the fiftieth time that Horace had offended his mother, and such offences, though apparently trivial,

"Make up in number what they lack in weight."

Constant friction produces on the mind the same effect that it does on the body—a rankling sore more painful than the result of one sharp blow. A few affectionate words, a filial embrace, had often seemed sufficient reparation for an ebullition of hasty temper; love readily forgets and forgives; but when the conduct repented of to-day is repeated to-morrow, when hastiness becomes habitual, when pride and self-will gain increasing strength, what wonder if a feeling of resentment mingle even with maternal affection? Mrs. Cleveland was in a state of nervous irritation, and not disposed to meet the constrained advances of her son. Deeply mortified by her silence, vexed with his mother, but far more vexed with himself, Horace again threw himself back in the carriage. No enjoyment could he find in surveying the exquisite landscape around him, over which the beams of the setting sun were now throwing a golden glory.

CHAPTER IV.

SEPARATION.

Scarcely had the upper rim of the golden sun dipped below the horizon, when the dark curtain of night was thrown over the landscape, spangled with tremulous stars. Horace was startled from his disagreeable reflections by what seemed almost like sudden darkness; and Mrs. Cleveland became yet more nervously alive to the dangers of the road, when she could no longer see their approach.

Having reached the bottom of a long, steep hill, Jacomo got down from his seat, and lit the carriage lamps. In reply to the lady's anxious question as to whether it would not yet be better to go back, he replied that it would now be as easy to proceed to Staiti as to return to the inn, for the road down which they had just descended was one fitted for goats rather than for horses. Jacomo muttered and grumbled a good deal, as he remounted his seat, about the folly of having started at all; and his words, though but half understood, did not tend to reassure Mrs. Cleveland.

The momentary glare which the lamps threw in passing on gray rock, or gloomy thicket, seemed to make the darkness beyond more deep and oppressive; and the jingle of the horse-bells, and rumble of the wheels, but drearily broke the stillness of that unfrequented road. Horace knew well that his mother was in an agony of nervous alarm, dreading to catch sight of a bandit behind every bush; and notwithstanding his natural courage he began in some measure to share her apprehensions. Raphael's warning rang in his ears—and the more vividly memory recalled the countenance of him who had given it, the more Horace wondered at himself for having allowed so little

weight to his words. Horace had often longed for an adventure; but night traveling through a wild and desolate country, known to be infested by robbers, has in it more of romance than of pleasure even to one of courageous spirit.

The road now lay through the deep recesses of a wood, where the boughs, meeting and intermingling above, formed an arch over the way, and blotted out from view the few stars that had gleamed in the sky.

Suddenly there was heard the sharp report of a pistol, which made Mrs. Cleveland start and shriek. The next moment the horses were thrown violently back upon their haunches, and the lamplight dimly showed indistinct forms glancing like phantoms through the darkness. Then came wild, fierce faces at the window; the door was forced open, and the travelers dragged out of the carriage almost before they had time to be certain that all was not some terrible dream!

Horace's first impulse was to defend his mother. All unarmed as he was, he struck at the man who had seized her, but received himself a sharp blow on the arm which made it drop stunned to his side. He glanced round, and that glance was sufficient to assure him that resistance would be utterly hopeless. There were at least five or six robbers around, most of them already busily engaged in rifling the carriage; and strange sounded their laughter and their jests as they drew forth now this thing—now that—dragging cloaks, bandboxes, dressing-case, umbrella, fan, to be piled in a heap on the road.

The bandit who had seized Mrs. Cleveland had already torn from her neck the gold chain, and with it the watch which she

wore; and plunging his coarse hand into her pocket had turned it inside out, to make sure that none of its contents should escape him. Trembling as in a fit of ague, the poor lady had been constrained to pull off her gloves, and draw hastily from her icy fingers the jeweled rings which adorned them. Horace was half-maddened at the sight, but he had no power to protect his mother; he could but pass his left arm around her to support her from sinking, and glare at the spoilers with the vain wrath of one whose strength does not equal his spirit. Giacomo was on his knees, invoking the Virgin and all the saints to defend him! The robbers took little notice of him, save that one spurned him with his foot in passing, and another sternly bade him cease his whining, or he would dash out his brains!

Amidst the confusion and terrors of the scene, Horace yet retained his self-possession sufficiently to notice that none of the bandits kept any of the plunder, but that they placed it together in the heap before mentioned, probably with a view to division. The word "Matteo" was also occasionally heard amid the tumult of voices, and presently every eye was turned in one direction, whence came a crashing sound as if some one were forcing his way through the brushwood. Mrs. Cleveland had sunk on the ground, Horace was kneeling beside her, half supporting her drooping form, when there strode into the dimly lighted space the tall figure of the chief of the banditti.

Matteo was a large and powerful man, with a countenance on which the character of ruffianism was so legibly stamped, that had he appeared in gentlemen's society under whatever auspices, with whatever name, or in whatever dress, a child would have instinctively shrunk from him, and a stranger's first thought have been:

"There is one whom I would rather not meet alone at night in a solitary place."

Grizzled was the shock of coarse hair thrown back from his dark face,—grizzled the untrimmed beard; but his thick beetling brows were intensely black, and almost joined together in one. The most repulsive feature was the mouth, of which the lower jaw projected, and which was furnished with teeth so irregular and large, that they suggested the idea of the fangs of some beast of prey. The alarm of Mrs. Cleveland increased when the light fell on the countenance of the man in whose power she knew herself to be. Claspings her hands she gasped forth in broken Italian:

"Oh, mercy—we will pay ransom—we will give anything—only spare me and my son!"

"Ransom!" repeated Matteo in a hoarse voice, "we want from you something more than money;" and turning sharply round to one of his companions he inquired, "Has not the Rossignol returned?"

"Not yet," replied the young man addressed, who, though seemingly several years older than Raphael, bore so strong a likeness to him, that the first impression of the bewildered travelers had been that the musician whose warning they had neglected, and whom they had left behind at the little inn, had by some strange means overtaken the carriage. The second glance at Enrico had however quite removed such impression. The cast of the features might be alike,—there might be the same classical outline, the same delicately penciled brow,—but the expression of the face was utterly dissimilar. Instead of the

calm thoughtfulness, tinged with melancholy, which had struck Mrs. Cleveland in the improvisatore, there was a restless wildness in this young man's eye, like that of a hunted animal, and a nervous twitch in his lip peculiarly apparent whenever he was addressed by Matteo.

"Why has he not returned?" growled Matteo; "and why did he go at all?"

"He went for tidings of your son, and he has not had time to return," was the answer.

"If he play me false," commenced the brigand,—grinding his white fangs instead of completing his sentence.

"He has not played you false, or these birds would not be in your net," cried Enrico, as he pointed to Horace and his mother.

Horace at once comprehended that "the Rossignol" (the Italian word for "nightingale") must be a cant name for Raphael; and that the musician, whatever might have been his motive in uttering his words of warning, must have incurred some risk by doing so.

Matteo now turned again towards his captives, and spoke as follows to the trembling lady, using violent gesticulation, and giving emphasis to his speech with the action of hand and foot:

"You know, or you do not know, that the dogs of soldiers have seized my son; that they have dragged him off to a dungeon; that the sentence of a tyrannical judge may condemn

him, as it has condemned other bold spirits before him. You are rich; a golden key opens all doors—ay, even the barred and bolted gate of a prison! You shall write to the government. You shall say that you are in Matteo's hands, at Matteo's mercy. You shall tell what conditions I offer. If Otto be set free you shall be set free; if they hurt a hair of his head"—Matteo half unsheathed his stiletto, and the gleam of the cold blue steel spoke more forcibly than words.

"There is little use in writing," suggested Enrico; "these people are strangers—foreigners—a mere letter is thrown aside—blood is spilt while officials take their drive or their siesta. [*] Let one of the prisoners go, knowing that the life of the other hangs on the issue, and the dullest employé will be made to hear, the slowest to act; gold will be lavished freely, and Otto be a free man again."

[*] The noonday sleep which Italians habitually take.

Mrs. Cleveland glanced anxiously from one speaker to the other, unable to catch the whole of their meaning, but understanding in a general way the nature of a discussion in which she was so deeply concerned.

"Right! right!" exclaimed the robber. "We'll keep the lady and send off the boy."

"No!" exclaimed Horace, starting to his feet; "if a prisoner must remain in your hands, keep me and release my mother."

"Oh, my child; my child!" cried the lady, "never shall they part us—never!" and she stretched out her clasped hands to Matteo in an attitude of agonizing entreaty.

"I'll send *her*," growled the brigand; "she is a mother, she will not spare cries or tears to wring mercy out of the merciless. Hear me, woman!" he continued in a louder tone, to the trembling supplicant before him,—*"you shall go to those high in power and plead for my son as you would plead for your son; and pour out your gold to those who never yet refused gold, yea, if it were the last ducat which you possessed to keep you from beggary. If Otto be standing here in three days—"*

"Three days are not enough," interrupted Enrico, "you require an impossibility; application may have to be made to Naples, to the king himself."

"Ay, ay," said the brigand impatiently; "Naples is more than a stone's throw, and time may be needed, even though love and fear alike give wings. If, woman, in seven days my son be standing here free and uninjured," Matteo stamped on the ground as he spake, "free and uninjured shall your son be restored; if there be an hour's delay"—Matteo uttered with an oath some threat which the lady could not understand, but of its horrible nature she could judge both by the gesture of him who made it, and by the livid paleness which overspread the face of her son.

"O Horace! what does he say?" she exclaimed.

"Never mind, mother; it was something that you had better

not understand. You know quite enough. You know that my life depends upon your procuring within seven days the release of this Otto, this son of Matteo."

Horace spake less distinctly than usual, and even his lips looked bloodless and white.

Matteo turned to the heap of plunder. "Is everything here?" he sternly inquired.

"Everything," promptly replied several voices.

The brigand pointed to Giacomo. "Make that fellow take the reins again," he said, "and drive as one who drives for his life. Thrust the woman back into the carriage; she must be at Staiti within the hour."

Two or three rude hands were instantly laid on Mrs. Cleveland, but she clung to her son as if it were to death instead of to liberty and safety that she was to be hurried. In that moment of terror and anguish all his faults and her own perils were forgotten. The mother thought only of her child. To tear her from him was to rend asunder the very strings of her heart!

"Mother, dear, don't give way like this. There's no use resisting, no use entreating. We may yet meet again. All may be well. Don't you give these wretches an excuse for treating you roughly!" and as he uttered these broken sentences, Horace tried gently himself to unclothe those clinging arms. It was only, however, by sheer force that the robbers tore Mrs. Cleveland away from her boy, and her cry as they were severed rang in the ears of Horace like a death-knell. He had a

terrible persuasion at that moment that he was parted from his mother never to see her again. A crowd of recollections rushed through the youth's brain: a consciousness that he had been a self-willed, undutiful son; that his conduct had caused all this misery; that he had forgiveness to implore for a thousand faults, and yet that his tongue had no power to ask it. Horace saw his mother dragged to the carriage, and rather thrown than lifted into it. From her silence after that one cry, he believed that her senses must have failed her, and was almost thankful for that belief. He saw a robber strike one of the horses with something that made it, weary as it was, bound forward with such frantic violence that Jacomo was almost unseated. His exclamation of terror raised hoarse laughter from the lawless band, and before that laughter had ceased the carriage with its gleaming lamps had disappeared in the darkness, and Horace stood, helpless and alone, a captive in the midst of banditti.

CHAPTER V.

ROUGH COMPANY.

If one feeling were more overpowering than another to Horace at that trying hour, it was the pang of remorse—despair of ever being able to make up by devotion in the future for ingratitude and disobedience in the past. Oh! that the selfish and self-willed would anticipate the hour of final separation from one whose tender love they are now throwing away as a

worthless thing, under whose reproofs they chafe, for whose infirmities they have no indulgence! A time may come when they will in vain wish that by the loss of every earthly possession they could purchase one smile from the eyes, one fond word from the lips of a now neglected parent.

Horace was roused from his gloomy thoughts by the hoarse voice of Matteo. "Has any one brought the irons?" he said.

With a heavy clanking sound a robber threw down on the ground an old pair of shackles, red with rust, which had, probably at some remote period, been worn by one of the band. Matteo pointed with his coarse finger to Horace—a significant action which required no explanation. As the fetters were being fastened over the slender ankles of the youth, the chief bade Enrico take charge of the prisoner, for whose safety he should answer with his own.

Then followed a division of the spoil. Mrs. Cleveland's dressing-case and desk were forced open with a dagger—the contents of her purse counted out, the various articles of her luggage placed in separate heaps. Reserving almost all the gold for himself, Matteo distributed his booty. Most of the robbers looked discontented, but not one dared to utter a murmur. Horace saw with bitter emotion his mother's most valued trinkets in these rude hands; the Maltese cross which he himself had given, the mourning brooch with his father's hair, nay, the very wedding-ring which had united his parents, were profaned by the touch of fingers which might be stained with murder. These papers, some of them priceless to her who had once owned them, were thrown away or trampled under foot.

Matteo beckoned Enrico to some little distance, apparently to give him some orders, and their departure seemed to be the signal for more unrestrained and lawless mirth. Then also the murmurs which had been checked by the presence of the dreaded chief broke out amongst such of the band as had been disappointed in their share of the plunder.

"What am I to make of trumpery like this?" exclaimed one robber, holding up to view with great contempt a silver gray cloak with a hood, a black gown, a lace-trimmed parasol, and a fan!

His appeal was answered by a roar of laughter.

"You may set up for a gentlewoman, Beppo!" shouted one.

"My share matches yours," laughed another, "you've the dress, and I've the dressing-case!"

"Ay, with silver tops to all the bottles," growled Beppo. "I'll make an exchange if you will."

The offer was only received with a louder burst of merriment, and the disappointed Beppo turned fiercely towards Horace.

"Here's a garment more to my mind!" he cried, and flinging down his bundle of woman's clothes, the robber seized hold of the indignant and struggling captive, and by force dispossessed him of his coat.

The gang gathered around, much amused at the scene, laughing uproariously at the vain passionate resistance of

Horace.

"There's more peel on the orange!" cried one, and the young captive might have had to submit to further indignities had not Enrico come to the rescue.

"Hold!" he cried, "the prisoner is in my charge; no one has a right to touch him but me."

"For seven days," said Beppo significantly—"he'll want no clothes after that;" and putting out his large, coarse foot he added with a laugh, "in seven days I'll have hosen and boots. I take it that his will just fit me!"

"It's a shame to dig a man's grave before his eyes!" exclaimed Enrico.

"Shame!" repeated Beppo angrily, "don't come it your brother over us, it's enough to have one lunatic in a family, say I."

Without taking any notice of the insult, Enrico touched Horace on the shoulder and bade him come with him; which the youth was ready enough to do—it being an unutterable relief to him to be removed, even for a short time, from the company of the rest of the lawless band. Enrico led his captive into the deep recesses of the wood, seeming to find his way by instinct through the darkness in which shining fireflies glanced and played. Horace envied them their liberty. He walked with difficulty and pain. His fetters not only impeded his movements but chafed his ankles. He stumbled over the inequalities of the ground, struck against branches which he could not see, and his chain caught and entangled in brambles,

and he often felt inclined to throw himself down on the ground in utter despair of getting on. Enrico neither pitied nor appeared to notice his sufferings, but hurried him on through the thicket.

Horace, who, notwithstanding his fetters, grasped strongly the hope of future escape, was eagerly on the watch for landmarks, and strained his eyes in the darkness to find some. The rippling sound of water, and the occasional glimpse which he caught through the trees of what appeared to be a stream, seemed to supply something like a guide. His hope strengthened as the noise increased so greatly that Horace felt certain that they were approaching a cataract plunging down the side of the mountain; the roar of waters could not be mistaken, though nothing was visible to the eye. Before Enrico reached what must be the head of the fall, he turned sharply round to the left, and grasping his captive by the wrist, made him follow in the same direction.

"Is there not a cataract yonder?" asked Horace; it was the first time that he had addressed his jailer.

"Sheer two hundred feet over the rocks," was the reply; "we call it 'Cascata della Morte (the death fall),' for a miserable wretch was once whirled over the edge."

"And perished?" inquired Horace.

"As surely," answered Enrico, "as if he had flung himself from the top of St. Peter's or down into the crater of Vesuvius. The remains, when recovered from the stream in the valley yonder, scarcely retained semblance of the human form."

Horace hardly paid attention to the concluding words, he was so carefully surveying the path before him. He had left the thick wood behind him, and had now to pass along a ledge of rock, which seemed like a shelf jutting out of the mountain, and which overhung a precipice of whose depth there was not sufficient light to enable him to judge. To Horace a vast chasm of darkness appeared to spread to the right. Here Enrico and his prisoner were challenged by a robber who had been left as a sentinel to guard this dangerous post.

"Chi va là?" (Who goes there?) cried the man. Enrico gave the word "Morte," and passed on with his captive.

"I think that I might possibly find my way back from hence to the high road," thought Horace, "with the sound of the water to guide me, were I only freed from these shackles. But if a sentinel be always placed here on the watch, it would render escape well-nigh impossible. One blow would send one reeling over that rock into depths that it makes the brain dizzy to think of!"

Enrico now again struck into the forest, and here the path became so very intricate that Horace soon lost all idea even of the direction in which he was going, all clue by which he might find his way back. The path was so much tangled with thicket, that the progress of Enrico and his prisoner became necessarily very slow, and Horace soon became not only exhausted, but despairing. It was some time since a word had been exchanged, but as they toiled on through the brushwood, Enrico said abruptly to his companion:

"You need not fear insult from me, for I, like yourself, am a

gentleman born. My father was of good family, he was an officer in the royal army, and died in the service of the king."

"Then how can you—" Horace stopped short, being afraid of saying something that might offend.

"How can I consort with such ruffians? you would ask. No matter; that is no business of yours. Men may be bound by other kind of chain than that which you drag so wearily along."

There was extreme bitterness in the young man's tone, and though Horace could not see the face of the speaker in the gloom, he imagined how the thin lip was twitching and the restless eye wandering around. Horace was anxious to ascertain to a certainty whether Raphael were the brother to whom reference had been made, and who had been spoken of as "the Rossignol," but he was afraid of drawing the improvisatore into difficulty or danger by letting it be known that he had ever seen him. As a leading question, Horace asked Enrico whether he knew English, remembering that Raphael had uttered his second warning in that language.

"No; is it likely that I should?" answered the robber.

Foiled in his first attempt to gain information Horace made another. "Why did that fellow call your brother a lunatic?" said he.

"Because he is one!" replied Enrico impatiently; "none but a madman would be always putting his head into the lion's mouth, certain that it must be bitten off at last!"

"Does he belong to the band?" asked Horace.

"Yes—no—what is it to you?" cried Enrico.

This rebuff put an end to the conversation, though it increased the desire of Horace to know more of the mysterious Raphael; for he was now certain that the stranger at the door of the inn was the brother of the bandit Enrico.

At length the long tangled forest was passed, and the way opened on a rocky space, where, by the faint star-light, no longer hidden by foliage, Horace saw a bold, partially-wooded cliff rising before them, a gigantic mass of gloomy shade. Horace had little opportunity, however, of remarking anything but the difficulty of the ascent, as progression here took the character of climbing, which the fetters on his limbs made a terrible effort.

"It is impossible for me to get up, chained as I am!" exclaimed Horace, after having rubbed the skin from one of his ankles, in a vain attempt to raise himself to a platform of rock.

"Impossible!" echoed Enrico, with a short, mocking laugh; "it must be done, and the sooner the better, or Matteo will be here to quicken your movements with the point of his stiletto."

Once again Horace tried to get up, the moisture dewing his lip and brow, both from the pain and the exertion; but cumbered as he was with his shackles he could not succeed. Then Enrico, growing impatient, lent a strong hand to help him. Even with this assistance it was with the utmost difficulty that the suffering youth reached the platform. He stopped for some moments to recover his breath and to wipe his heated temples.

"Could you find your way back?" said Enrico.

"The woods seem to me to be a perfect labyrinth."

"Then there is no chance of your attempting an escape?"

"I fear that I have more will than power to escape," replied the young captive with a sigh.

"Do you know what would follow your making any such attempt?"

"Perhaps—" began Horace.

"Most assuredly," interrupted Enrico, "I should send a bullet through your head."

"This *gentleman*, as he calls himself, is not much better than the rest," was the silent reflection of Horace.

A few more steps, and the two had reached the mouth of a cave which yawned in the mountain, its mouth half hidden by a thick growth of cactus, which abounded as a weed in this place. Horace was glad to have arrived at his destination, whatever it might be, for he felt that he could not for many minutes more have endured the exhausting effort of dragging his fettered feet over the rocks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROBBERS' CAVE.

Enrico, followed by his prisoner, groped his way though the cave, and then along a passage in the rock too low to admit of their standing upright. The dampness of the air, the darkness of the place, made the unhappy Horace feel as though he were entering a tomb. They soon, however, emerged into a very spacious cavern of irregular shape, at one side of which was some light. This light, as Horace soon perceived, came from two wax tapers, burning in front of an image of the Virgin. The feeble gleam served only to make "darkness visible," not reaching at all to the roof of the cave, and showing but little even of its brown rugged wall. The place was tenanted by bats, which wheeled around in circling flights, seeming to Horace's fevered imagination like spirits of evil haunting the robbers' cave. The youth watched with curiosity to see whether Enrico would cross himself or bow on passing the image, and as he did neither, the prisoner ventured upon a remark.

"I should hardly have expected to see *that here*," he said, pointing to the shrine.

"Why so?" asked his companion.

"Because," answered Horace, trying to put his reply in the least offensive form, "I should not have thought Matteo a man to care for religion."

"That shows how little you know about him," said Enrico. "Some of your mother's good ducats will go to a fat friar for masses, that the rest may be enjoyed with an easy conscience;

and though Matteo has not scrupled to rob a traveler on this Friday, nothing would persuade him to touch a morsel of meat."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Horace, "that a man can so deceive his own soul?"

"None of that talk here," cried Enrico, with a gesture of irritation; "we have more of it than we like, and will never stand it from you!"

"From whom *can* they hear it?" thought the astonished Horace. "One would as little expect to hear truth as to find honesty in a den like this!"

Enrico now lighted a torch which was fastened in the rock a few feet above a long low table, which Horace now for the first time perceived, and which, with the rude benches on each side of it, seemed to form all the furniture of the place. On it were ranged sundry flagons, bottles of wine, and other preparations for a meal.

"I suppose that while you are our prisoner you will partake of our fare," said Enrico. "Will you join our jovial party at supper to-night, or shall I at once introduce you to the luxuries of our private apartment—the elegant chamber which you are to share with me and my brother?" Enrico's tone was satirical, and there was indescribable bitterness in his smile.

"If you could possibly keep me apart from the band to-night, I should be thankful," said Horace. "I am parched with thirst, but I have not the slightest inclination to eat food."

Enrico went up to the table, and filled a large tankard with water, which Horace eagerly drained. He then bade the prisoner to follow him, and a little more—to Horace—painful clambering up rude stony steps brought them to a recess in the side of the cave, about ten feet above the floor, and overlooking the table.

It was so utterly dark, that it was by feeling and not by sight that young Cleveland became aware that there was a heap of dry leaves upon the rocky floor.

"As the *Rossignol* has not returned," said Enrico, "you may take possession of his bed. I warrant it that you have been accustomed to a more soft and dainty couch! I must go below to prepare the banquet."

So saying, Enrico groped his way back to the floor of the cavern; while Horace, dizzy and bewildered by the strange events of the night, gave a deep sigh of relief at finding himself in comparative solitude. He threw himself down on the heap of leaves, resting his burning forehead on his arm, and tried to collect his scattered thoughts and realize his position.

"What a strange, wild place this is! shall I ever leave it alive?—shall I ever look upon the sunshine, or feel the pure breath of heaven? What horrors these walls may have witnessed! could they speak, what fearful tales of crime might they disclose! and it is more than probable that, ere a week shall have passed, another may be added to the list." Horace changed his position in feverish restlessness, and a sharp thrill of pain reminded him of the fetters on his limbs. "There would be none to lift a hand, or to speak a word in my defence, no,

nor to feel pity for my youth, whatever I might have to endure! Even this Enrico who seems somewhat less brutal than the rest, would shoot me dead on the spot rather than suffer his captive to escape. Oh, my mother, my poor mother, how little you ever expected your son to be in such a situation as this!"

Then Horace recalled how, ever since he could remember, his parent had been wont to come and sit at night by his bedside, stroke back his curly hair and talk to him of holy things, and tell him how much she loved him. These nightly visits, once a pleasure to both, had within the last year become a cause of painful feeling between Horace and his mother. The youth had grown jealous of being treated like a child, it had annoyed him to be disturbed from his desk or some interesting book by the entrance of his mother at her regular hour,—to be chidden for sitting up late, or warned of the danger of fire. Horace had become so impatient of the interruption, the reproof and the warning, that he had at last actually locked his door, answering his mother's "good-night" without turning the key to admit her. Mrs. Cleveland had been deeply wounded. Horace hardly guessed how deeply, but it was agony now upon this his first night of captivity to recall the sound of her step in the passage, the tone of her plaintive "good-night" and to think that that step—that voice—might be heard by his ear no more. Oh, why had he not loved her better?—why, why had he not always welcomed the presence of one so dear?

With this train of thought came linked another; it was not only in filial piety that Horace Cleveland had failed, his neglect had not been only towards his mother. Carefully brought up as he had been, the youth had, with tolerable regularity, observed the outward forms of religion, and conscience had been easily

satisfied that all was right with his soul. Horace had mistaken reverence for devotion, and belief in God's truth for faith. But such a shadow of religion could not support him under the pressure of real trials, or make tolerable the prospect of death: it had no strength or solidity in it. Horace could not realize the presence of a heavenly Father in the dark, gloomy cave, nor was the psalmist's assurance his,—*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* In courage and spirit he was by no means deficient—but human courage and spirit will bend under the pressure of protracted trial, that terrible walk in shackles had for the time exhausted the energies of Horace, and in that gloomy abode of evil he felt desolate and wretched indeed.

Even the comfort of silence was soon taken from the prisoner. Before many minutes had elapsed, a wild uproar of voices announced the approach of the band. One by one the robbers emerged from the low passage which united the outer and inner caves, some bearing spoil, and some bearing torches, which threw a wild, red glare on their dark faces and picturesque dress. Horace counted eight bandits, including Enrico. The men sat noisily down at the table. Matteo and some others had their seats near the wall, and were so immediately under Horace that he could not see them, without stretching his head so far forward that he would himself have been exposed to the observation of the robbers which he anxiously desired to avoid; but while remaining under cover of the darkness of his recess, Horace had full view of Enrico and three of his companions, who sat opposite to their chief.

I shall not enter into details of what—with disgust and

horror—Horace saw and heard on that night; the oaths, the tales, the songs of the coarsest description, the sounds of wild revel, the burst of laughter strangely echoing through the recesses of the vaulted cave, till it seemed as though fiends unseen shouted and laughed again. Enrico, laying aside his former manner, appeared to be the gayest of the gay, plunging into the torrent of unholy mirth as though he sought to drown all memory and all remorse.

Horace tried to shut out from his own ears the sounds of profane merriment, but he tried in vain. It seemed to his loathing mind that if one black spot were to be found on earth, where evil, unmixed evil, reigned triumphant, where faith was quite shut out, where heavenly hope could not come—that spot was the robbers' cave in the depth of the Calabrian mountain!

CHAPTER VII.

MUSIC AND MADNESS.

"Ha! the Rossignol come at last!" shouted Beppo as a low, clear whistle was heard in the dark passage.

Horace looked down eagerly, and saw the slight form of Raphael, as he came forth from the gloom, bearing his instrument of music.

The young Calabrian looked exceedingly weary. He made a

slight inclination of the head on entering towards the place where Horace knew that the chief was; he then laid his guitar against the rocky wall and sat down on a vacant seat beside his brother Enrico.

"What news of Otto?" cried Matteo, whose voice was easily recognized amongst the rest by its peculiar harshness.

"I could gain no tidings beyond those which have already reached you," replied Raphael, in low, rich tones, which formed as strong a contrast to the discordant sounds which had lately prevailed, as his appearance did to that of his companions. "He was, as you know, conveyed by a strong military escort towards Staiti; thence to be taken to Reggio. He had not been able to communicate with any one at the inn, access to him being strictly forbidden by the officer in charge."

Something that sounded like a curse burst from the lips of Matteo.

"And what are your news?" inquired Raphael, with what seemed to Horace a somewhat anxious air.

One of the robbers replied with a laugh,—"Some good business done to-day! English travelers are always worth the plucking! It will take you some time with your curing and your carolling to bring in the value of a plaything like this;" and he held up the glittering gold chain which had been torn from the neck of Mrs. Cleveland.

"Any blood shed?" inquired Raphael quickly, resting his clenched hand on the table, and sternly regarding the last speaker. When a short account of what had occurred was given

to him, the improvisatore looked relieved, and Horace instinctively felt that he had a friend in the man whom he had called to his face a low musician, a jail-bird, a companion of thieves.

Raphael bent towards his brother and whispered some question, to which Enrico replied by glancing up towards the recess occupied by the captive; then heaping food upon a trencher which was before the Rossignol, he bade him eat and drink and refresh himself after his long walk.

Raphael shook his head, and pushed the trencher away.

"If you will not eat, you shall sing," cried Matteo. "Beppo here has a voice which he might have borrowed from a raven, and Marco's is like a muffled drum—we've not had a singer worth listening to, since Carlo was shot in the wood!"

Raphael did not appear much more disposed to sing than to eat, but Matteo spoke like one whose will was a law which few would have dared to oppose; and the musician, albeit reluctantly, laid his hand on the guitar.

"Give us the jovial old Spanish drinking song with the bolero—give it out bold and free!" exclaimed Beppo.

"I shall choose my own song," replied Raphael coldly, "and sing it in what manner I list."

"A madman's theme must be madness," cried the ill-favored robber.

"Be it so," answered the Rossignol, "although I accept not

your name—I take the word as my subject. Madness shall be my theme."

He struck a few chords with a light, bold hand—and the silvery sound in that fearful place seemed like the tones of an angel's harp. In an instant all other noise was so completely hushed that Horace could hear distinctly the slow drip of water distilling from the roof of the cave. The attention of the robbers deepened as, after a short prelude, the *Rossignol* began to sing. His exquisite voice poured forth in a wild and original air, sometimes rapid and almost gay, but at the close of every verse ending in a minor key, and in tones of such deep pathos that they sounded like a dirge from the dead, or a wail for the lost. Horace had often listened to music, but he had never before heard such music as this. In others he had felt sweet song a charm, but in Raphael it was a power. It was a spell which kept chained in almost breathless silence the reckless beings whose fierce passions brooked no restraint either of law or conscience.

MADNESS

A wanderer stood by a rapid stream,
When a scroll unto him was brought;
'Twas a father's message of love, addrest
To one whose childhood his care had blest.
'Twas an offer of pardon peace and rest;—
But the prodigal whom he sought,
Only flung the scroll from the river's brink,
And watched it slowly and slowly sink.

Oh! madman, to break love's golden link!

On a hill stood a poor wayfaring man,
When a parchment to him was given
By which he was proved the rightful heir
To all the broad region before him there,
The wooded valleys, and meadows fair,
Bounded but by the arch of heaven.
But with reckless hand he the parchment tore,
And the breezes afar the fragments bore.
Oh! madman, that wealth can be thine no more!

A doomed man crouched o'er his prison fire,
His heart for his fate he steeled;
Already he heard the castle bell
Boom drearily forth his dying knell,
When his eye on a royal writing fell;
'Twas his pardon, signed and sealed!
But he flung the pardon into the flame,
And so went forth to a death of shame.
Oh! madman, well hast thou earned the name!

"Almost as well," exclaimed Beppo, "as the rhymer who could make such a song! Sing to us of men of flesh and blood, for the world holds no such fools as those in your ballad—they be more unnatural than the ghosts and goblins of nursery rhymes."

"For the matter of that," observed Marco, another of the robbers, "there's many a prodigal I wot of, has thrown his

father's letter away."

"But to tear a deed of inheritance—throw a pardon into the fire—nothing so wild, so improbable was ever yet said or sung. Such mad freaks as those are not played by men even in their dreams."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the Rossignol, while his fingers, as if unconsciously, wandered over the strings of his guitar.

"Is the song ended?" said Matteo.

"Not ended—but you have heard enough," was the answer of the improvisatore.

"Let's hear it out," cried the chief. "Let's hear it out," echoed the bandits.

Again rose the rich, full tones, but with deeper emphasis, more thrilling expression.

Such madmen amongst us live and dwell

Such madmen amongst us die;

A father's message is heard—forgot;

A treasure offered—accepted not;

Men wildly prefer the demon's lot,

To freedom and life on high!

A king's free pardon—a parent's stay,

Infinite wealth may be theirs to-day.

Oh! madmen, to cast them all away!

The song ceased. There was an instant of deep stillness, and then Beppo flung a tankard at the head of the speaker, as his comment on a moral so unwelcome. By a quick movement Raphael avoided the blow; Enrico glanced fiercely at Beppo; the Rossignol laid his hand on his brother's arm, as if to restrain him from expression of anger, and without taking any other notice of the insult, arose from his seat.

The countenances of the banditti, as Horace looked down upon them, would have been a study for a painter. The music had a very different effect upon its various hearers. Beppo's face was flushed with passion, while over that of Marco, a powerful man who sat next to him, gathered a gloomy scowl. A third wore a mocking sneer, a glance that seemed to say that while he admired the music, he cared nothing for the moral of the song. Enrico's expression, after the glance of indignation had passed away, was that of silent misery which he made a vain effort to conceal. The bow might have been drawn at a venture, but in one heart the barbed arrow was rankling. And there stood the Rossignol, calm and intrepid, as one not unconscious of danger, but raised above its fear. Horace looked with wondering curiosity at the man who could dare to sing such a lay in such a place, and marveled what mysterious link could bind his fate with that of ruffians with whom it appeared that he could have no feeling in common. Even as regarded Enrico, when Horace now looked upon the two brothers, and contrasted them with each other, he could hardly conceive how he had ever traced a resemblance between them.

The noise of the falling tankard clattering on the rocky floor, was succeeded by that of the fist of Matteo coming heavily down upon the table, as if in anger; when the chief spoke,

however, he made no allusion to the song; that it had offended him could only be gathered from the increased savageness of his tone.

"It is time to disperse. Mountain-wolves, away to your dens!"

The command was instantly obeyed. For a few moments noise and uproar prevailed, and as the wild band scattered in various directions, torches flashed hither and thither in the hot murky air. Horace watched the retreating form of Beppo, as the light which he carried showed a deeper recess of the cave than he had been able to see before, with glistening stalactites hanging from the roof; and when he turned to look for the Rossignol, found that he had disappeared from his view. Remembering that Raphael was to share his own rocky chamber, Horace awaited his coming with interest and impatience. There was a step on the rough stair (if such that might be called, that seemed framed by nature and not by man), which led to the upper recess, and some one entered, but in the darkness Horace knew not whether it were Raphael or Enrico. The comer threw himself down on a heap of leaves not far from Horace, and either imagining the captive to be asleep, or (as was more probable) forgetting his presence altogether, gave a heavy groan as if in pain. That sound assuredly did not come from the Rossignol's lips. Horace lay for some time perfectly still, listening to the drip drip of water, and the deep sighs of his unseen companion, and awaiting the coming of Raphael, till, weary as he was, sleep overcame the young captive.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DASH FOR FREEDOM.

The summer morning had dawned, and though no direct ray could ever enter the inner cave, Horace could see the reflection of pure rosy light tinging the rugged stone, hundreds of feet above him, through a cleft in the rocky roof, which appeared as if it had been rent asunder by the shock of an earthquake. More refreshing to the captive's eye was even that reflected gleam, which showed that the sun was shining upon earth, though not upon him; and he longed for wings to fly upwards through that lofty cleft to the glorious daylight beyond.

Horace half raised himself on his elbow and looked around him. Not two yards from the spot on which he rested he saw the kneeling form of Raphael, who was evidently engaged in prayer. The sight of him was to Horace like the sight of the sun-lit rocks;—something to witness to the existence of Heaven's light even in this abode of darkness. On the other side lay Enrico asleep, and the quiet which prevailed through the cave showed that the day was but little advanced.

After a brief space of time Raphael arose from his knees, and turning towards Horace perceived by the dim light that the captive was awake.

"How have you slept?" he asked in Italian, addressing Horace in the third person singular, which, in that language, is

a token of respect.

Even this trifling mark of courtesy was grateful to the unfortunate youth.

"I slept but ill," replied Horace; "how could I look for pleasant slumbers here?"

"The bed is but a hard one," said the Rossignol, "to one who has been accustomed to a softer pillow, though custom has made its roughness no hardship to us. Yonder, where the water drips, Nature has formed a simple basin, where you may find refreshment in bathing your weary limbs."

Horace attempted to rise, but the clambering of the previous night had made his fetters gall him so severely, that every movement was pain.

Raphael saw his distress. "I know too well what it is to wear such anklets," said he.

"Can you not free me from them?" exclaimed Horace.

The Rossignol shook his head. "I cannot free you from them," he said, "but I can render their effects less painful;" and he drew from a little hole in the side of the rock some lint and ointment, which, kneeling down, he at once began to apply to the captive's swollen ankles. The touch of his hand was gentle as a woman's, and Horace felt grateful for the relief imparted.

"I regret that I spoke of you as I did yesterday," said the youth, remembering his insulting manner and the words at the door of the inn.

"It is not at once that we know either our friends or our foes," replied Raphael.

"But you will be my friend—I know it—I can trust you!" exclaimed Horace, an eager hope arising in his heart; and, speaking in English, in a low, rapid tone, he offered the Italian a large reward—a thousand ducats—two—three—if he would aid him in effecting his escape, and so restore him to freedom and safety.

Raphael knitted his brows, and shook his head sadly in reply.

"It would be a noble deed—it would be to rescue a fellow-creature from danger—"

"And to deliver my only brother to death," interrupted Raphael, pointing to the sleeper at his side.

"Matteo would never—"

"Matteo has vowed that Enrico shall answer for your safe keeping with his life; Matteo never breaks such a vow," said Raphael, speaking in imperfect English.

"But he cannot be such a ruffian as to murder his own follower," pursued Horace, who was unwilling to let go his only hope of escape.

"He would do it—nor would it be for the first time," said Raphael, his face darkening with some recollection of horror; "it was not by the hand of soldier or executioner that Carlo perished in the wood!"

Horace felt the blood run cold in his veins, yet his intense desire for freedom made him once more return to the subject. "If Matteo be so merciless," he said, "how dared you provoke his anger last night?"

"I had my message to give, and I gave it," replied the improvisatore; "he who builds on the brink of a volcano does so with the knowledge that the lava may one day overflow. Yet do I stand on vantage ground, and Matteo would bear from me what he would bear from no one beside."

"Why so?" inquired young Cleveland.

"He has an old wound in his thigh, which, having been imperfectly healed, has broken out afresh. Having gained, when I was very young, some slight knowledge of surgery from my grandfather, I am able to afford him such aid as the chief would be loath to lose. Besides," continued Raphael, "Matteo has a passionate love for melody, the one softening quality yet left him; and words are endured when clothed in music which, without it, would be perilous in the utterance. I must now depart; the band usually pursue their work at dusk, but mine requires the daylight." Raphael now spoke in his native tongue, being so little conversant with English that he was obliged, when using that language, to interpolate many words from his own.

"Do not leave me!" exclaimed Horace, who already looked upon the Rossignol as his only earthly protector.

"There is a villager sick, perhaps dying, whom I must see, and others who must not vainly expect me. I will, please

Heaven, return before dark; and will, ere I go, bring you food to supply the wants of the day."

So saying, Raphael with a light step descended the rude steps which led to the body of the cave, and soon returned with a plentiful supply of better fare than Horace would have expected to find in such a place. His appetite was now keen, as he had eaten nothing since he had left the inn on the mountain.

"How shall I ever repay you for your kindness to a prisoner?" he said to Raphael.

"I shall ask a favor of you this evening," replied the Rossignol, "which, if granted, will richly repay any slight services which I can render. I must go now—the day advances—but I leave you with little anxiety; while Otto lives, your life is perfectly safe from any deed of violence. Annoyance or insult you may have to endure, but a brave youth, as I doubt not that you are, can endure hardness like a good soldier of the cross."

The last words, and the glance which accompanied them, acted on the spirit of Horace like the sound of a trumpet. Refreshed by his morning ablutions and the food of which he had partaken, not only the youth's bodily frame felt invigorated, but his mind rebounded from its late depression with all the elasticity of hope. There were a thousand chances, Horace thought, in his favor. His mother might—would succeed in her efforts to effect his exchange with the bandit's son, or the government would be roused to send an overwhelming force to crush the robbers. Even failing this, Matteo himself might be bribed to release his captive, or

Raphael, moved by generous compassion, aid him to effect his escape.

But why should he wait for Raphael?—the thought darted into the mind of Horace as he concluded his substantial meal. Could he not, without any assistance, recover the freedom which he had lost?

Young Cleveland glanced eagerly around—below—his heart throbbing high at the idea of such a feat as would establish his reputation as a hero for the rest of his days. The cavern was still perfectly quiet—the very bats had retired to rest—there was nothing but the sleeping figure of Enrico to betoken that the place was inhabited by any living creature but himself. The entrance was not bolted or barred; when Raphael had departed through the aperture, which was only distinguishable from the walls of the cave by its more intense blackness, no sentinel had challenged him for a password. Horace recollected, indeed, with uneasiness, that a robber had kept guard on the ledge of rock; but he hoped that at an hour so early as the present, no such precaution might be deemed needful. There must be danger, indeed, in an attempt to escape, but had not the peril in itself a certain indefinable charm? Horace had often longed for an adventure—here was one which had in it enough of romance to satisfy the most chivalrous spirit.

The only thing which presented any real difficulty to the boy's sanguine mind, was the bondage of his fetters; they not only cruelly impeded his movements, but made such a clanking as he walked, that it was certain to rouse the robbers. If Horace were once beyond the cave, the noise would signify

less, but in that vaulted, echoing chamber, every sound was trebled. As his only resource, the youth half reclined on the rock and holding up the chain with one hand, so that the iron should not touch the stone, with the other he helped to propel himself along in a slow and most uncomfortable manner. Tedious and awkward as was this method of progression, it had at least the merit of being noiseless, and every yard crept over seemed to Horace to be a gigantic stride towards freedom. But oh, how distant seemed that yawning chasm through which the fugitive must make his way! how often he stopped in breathless anxiety to listen for sounds of pursuit!

At length the nearer end of the rocky passage was gained, and still perfect quiet reigned around; after their midnight revel the bandits' slumbers were heavy and long. Horace had not crept far through the passage when the increasing light and the freshening air told of his approach to the outer world. He was so eager and impatient to reach it that the crouching position and slow progress to which he was confined became almost intolerably irksome. Horace had a vivid recollection of Enrico's threat; and the idea of being struck down like a rat in its hole, or shot in the back without the possibility of flight or resistance, increased the intensity of his desire to get beyond the perilous passage.

Horace reached the outer cave, which was light in comparison to that which he had quitted, though the entrance was much overgrown with plants. It opened upon the radiant east, and vivid though broken rays of sunshine were streaking with bright lines the rugged pavement and walls. "O blessed sunlight!" exclaimed the prisoner with transport, as, pushing the mantling foliage aside, he made his way into the open air,

and sprang to his feet, feeling in the action as though he already were almost free!

Bright was the morning, splendid the view which the rocky platform without the cave commanded! An ocean of waving forest spread downwards—almond, olive, and palm, with a thick growth of underwood between, a wilderness of foliage, a labyrinth of wood, clothing the mountain-side, more than half-way up which the robber's den was situated. Horace had, however, no time now to indulge in admiration, or even to enjoy the sensation caused by the delicious air, and the knowledge that one great difficulty had been surmounted; he began at once to search anxiously for a downward path. The platform in front of the cave could only be quitted by descending such a rough, precipitous wall of rock, that a false step must have been fraught with danger. Horace, twelve hours before, might have gone down rapidly enough, but what was practicable to unfettered limbs was utterly impracticable to him now.

"I should but break a limb by attempting to get down!" exclaimed the almost despairing youth, after surveying again and again the rugged steep. "I cannot conceive how I ever mounted these rocks. Enrico dragged me up by sheer strength, or even his benevolent hint as to the quickening power of Matteo's stiletto would never have enabled me to climb. And even were I unshackled, and able to spring from rock to rock, by what clue could I find my way through that dense woodland before me? It shuts me in as effectually as bars and bolts could do. Oh, misery, to be thus mocked with the hope of freedom, only to find that, after all my exertions, it is impossible to escape!"

Horace was startled by a rough grasp on his shoulder. Turning sharply round he beheld Enrico.

"So you thought to give us the slip!" exclaimed the bandit, significantly pointing to a pistol which he carried in his belt. "Think you that if there had been a chance of our bird's escaping, we should not have clipped his wings more closely?"

"O Enrico!" exclaimed Horace with passionate earnestness, "you can help me—you can set me free. A file would be worth its weight in gold! Strike off my fetters—guide me through the wood, and the richest reward—"

"Name it again and I'll strike you dead!" cried Enrico, his sallow countenance assuming almost a livid hue.

"You are miserable here—your life is—"

Enrico gnashed his teeth with passion. "Whatever my life here may be," he exclaimed, "I am not going to fling it away in a mad attempt to rescue a stranger. Miserable I may be, but not insane enough to draw down upon my head the vengeance of a man who never forgives, and who, when he singles out a foe, never fails to make him a victim. Have I not seen Carlo lying in his blood? There is not one man in the band who would aid you to baffle Matteo, though you should promise him to fill that cave to the roof with silver and gold."

And with these words on his lips, the robber turned, and retired into the darkness of the cavern, leaving Horace to meditate on the desperate character of his own situation.

CHAPTER IX.

ANXIOUS HOURS.

How unwilling is youth to part with hope—how it clings even to its shadow! Believing against the evidence of his senses that what was so desirable could not be impossible, Horace only desisted from attempts to descend the rocks, when, in making them, he had hurt his ankle so severely that he would have cried aloud with anguish had he not feared that the sound might be overheard by the robbers. With a very heavy heart the unhappy captive then dragged his chain to a little cleared space, a few yards higher than the entrance to the cave, where the roots of an oak offered a rude seat. Here Horace Cleveland rested his aching limbs, and leaning his head on his hands, gave himself up to anxious thought.

Still his mind was running upon chances of escape. Horace recalled the words of Raphael which had surprised him when they were uttered,—"I shall ask a favor of you which, if granted, will richly repay any services that I can render." What favor could a prisoner possibly have it in his power to grant? Raphael must be anticipating his release, and his restoration to a position in which he could largely reward any kindness which he now might receive. Perhaps the young Italian hoped that Horace might procure his pardon from the king of Naples for some crime, the commission of which had driven one born for better things to seek the shelter of a robber's den. Perhaps

the free pardon of Enrico might be the desired boon. Horace's thoughts rambled on through paths almost as mazy as the forest before him. He would place Raphael in the way of distinguishing himself. Raphael was the son of an officer, and bore the stamp of a gentleman; with his singular talents he would grace any society, and might raise himself to a high position. Horace had already begun to feel a strong interest in his mysterious friend, whose character and situation afforded to the youth's mind an enigma which he was curious to solve. Raphael certainly kept evil company, and a man may be known by his chosen associates; the girl at the inn had more than hinted doubts regarding his character; the Rossignol had himself confessed that he had once worn shackles, which confirmed Giuseppina's report that he had known the inside of a prison. But, on the other hand, Horace recalled the song of Raphael; he remembered how his presence, like that of some being of higher and purer nature, had checked the foul flood of vile conversation which had flowed amongst the banditti, and how in the dim twilight he on that morning had seen the young Italian kneeling in prayer.

That last recollection raised in the bosom of Horace a feeling of self-reproach. Except a few instinctive ejaculations, which could hardly be called prayers, since his capture he had neglected the duty of devotion. He had been so much taken up with his own hopes and fears, his difficulties and dangers, so great had been his eagerness to escape, and the excitement caused by the strange scenes passing around him, that Horace had not bent his knee in prayer, as he had been accustomed from childhood to do. And yet, never through the course of his life had Horace had greater need of Divine protection. He had tried all earthly means for his deliverance, and all having

failed, nothing remained for the prisoner but to turn unto Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death. Under the spreading branches of the oak, in the stillness of that wild and desolate spot, the young captive knelt down and prayed. Horace prayed for his mother—for himself—more for rescue from earthly trials than for grace and strength to endure them, for the youth was yet ignorant of human weakness, and of the objects for which affliction is sent to the sons of men.

"Ha, ha! see the heretic at his beads!" exclaimed the mocking voice of Beppo, who, with two or three of his companions, had sauntered lazily forth into the sunshine.

Horace was on his feet in a moment, ashamed—strange cause for shame!—at having been discovered by these men in the act of prayer. The scornful laugh of the robbers brought the blood to his cheek.

The banditti had merely come out of the cave to sun themselves in the morning beams, and enjoy in the open air the *dolce far niente* of which the Italians are so fond. They stretched themselves on the ground in front of their den, and the better to beguile the time, amused themselves by asking the young stranger a number of questions regarding his country, its customs, its people, its ruler, making their comments upon his replies in a half jocular, half insulting manner, which sorely tried his patience. Common sense, however, showed Horace that there was little to be gained by quarreling with men who held his life in their hands, and that it was better to bear an insulting jest than to try whether the robbers' stiletos had keener edge than their wit.

Partly to change the current of conversation, and partly to gain information on a subject that interested him, Horace suddenly asked Beppo where the Rossignol had learned the song which he had sung on the preceding night.

"Who ever asked where the nightingale learns its lay?" answered the robber, whose face looked even more repulsive when seen by the clear light of day, than it had done by torch-gleam. "And yet notes of his sort suit our wild haunts so ill, that I trow that he learned it in his cage!"

"He has been in prison then?" asked Horace.

"Oh, he, like most of us, has known what it is to lodge free, gratis, and for nothing at the expense of our gracious King Francis," laughed Beppo, "and has found the bedchamber none of the airiest, and the royal fare none of the daintiest!"

"And for what offense?" began Horace; but Enrico, who had joined the party, fiercely cut his questioning short.

"There be ways of shackling tongues as well as limbs!" he exclaimed, resting his right hand on the butt of his pistol, and glaring at young Cleveland as if he had touched a wound.

Horace made no attempt to pursue the conversation so rudely interrupted. The banditti began to amuse themselves with dirty cards, gambling away their ill-earned spoils; and Horace, as he sat watching them in silent disgust from under his tree, saw many things that had belonged to himself and his mother staked and lost in play. Then came the noonday meal of maccaroni and the peculiar fruit of the cactus, which was eaten in the open air, and of which the prisoner, with a rude

hospitality, was invited by the robbers to partake. The day had now become oppressively hot, and the banditti, after the fashion of their country, stretched themselves on the ground to enjoy their afternoon siesta. Horace did not sleep; even had he been in the habit of conforming to this Italian custom, he would now have felt too restless and anxious to do so. In a half-recumbent position he remained listening to the loud, monotonous noise of the cicada, a kind of beetle that all day long fills the air with its harsh grating sound, and watching the lizards as with quick motion, their lithe, slender forms glanced in and out of holes in the rock. Familiarity with the sight of the robbers had rather lessened his fears of danger from them, and though Horace had small hope of effecting his escape by any efforts of his own, he had strong expectations that the unwearied exertions of his mother would avail to procure his release.

When the sun, sloping towards the west, was throwing the broad shadow of the mountain across the valley which stretched in front of the cave, the banditti prepared to start upon some lawless expedition. The day of listless indolence and reckless gambling was probably to be succeeded by an evening of crime. Horace was well pleased to find that Matteo had no intention of dragging his captive with him into the woods. The youth had exchanged no word with the chief on that day, but before the robber quitted his mountain haunt, he strode up to Horace, and addressed him with an expression of savage determination upon his hard features, that was calculated to inspire more fear than the tenor of his words.

"I need hardly command you, boy, not to stir beyond this platform of rock, as—even were you unfettered—it would be

impossible for you to find your way through yon forest without a guide. It may be as well, however, to remind you, that these woods are our familiar haunts, that watch is kept there by night and by day, and that a network surrounds you there which you would feel before you saw it. Were you detected in any insane attempt to break through the toils, short and sharp would be the means taken to curb your restless humor. You are not the first prisoner whom I have kept for ransom, and I have found a little iron in the foot a more effectual restraint than a great weight of iron around it."

"Ay," joined in Beppo, who had overheard the threat, "the procuratore of Garda will go halting for the rest of his life, as a token that he passed one night in the den of the wolf, and tried to make his escape in the morning!"

CHAPTER X.

THE LONE SENTINEL.

Horace had not been left many minutes to ruminate over the bandit's parting warning, when the sound of a melody, warbled in rich tones which, once heard, could ever afterwards be recognized, announced to his glad ear that the Rossignol was coming through the forest. Little as the captive had seen of the improvisatore, he yet welcomed him as a friend.

"I have been impatient for your return," Horace exclaimed,

as soon as Raphael emerged from the trees. "Have you heard any tidings from Staiti? can you give me any news of my mother?"

Raphael made a sign in the negative, as he advanced to the foot of the rocky ascent.

Horace leaned over the rough parapet and said in English, "Could you not contrive to bear a note or a message from me to my mother?"

"Matteo made me give my word of honor that I would not do so," replied Raphael; "had he not bound me by that which he knows that I never break, he would have detained me in his fastness here, almost as close a prisoner as yourself."

With the agility of a chamois the young Italian now ascended the rocks to gain the platform in front of the cave, unimpeded by his instrument, which he carried slung behind him. His first glance, on reaching the spot where Horace awaited him, was directed towards the fettered ankles of the captive.

"You have been attempting to escape!" he said quickly.

"Is it a crime in your eyes to make an effort for freedom?" asked the prisoner.

"In your case it is useless—utterly useless—worse than useless," said Raphael with earnestness; "I know better than you can know, in how close a clutch you are held; I see, as you cannot see, the pitfalls surrounding you here."

"But what can I do?" exclaimed Horace impatiently, chafing under the sense of bondage like a caged lion.

"Trust in God," was the reply; and these three words, uttered with the manly simplicity of one who in himself had proved their power, dispelled in the mind of Horace every lingering doubt and suspicion as regarded the character of Raphael. Wonderingly he resolved the mystery of the connection of a man of no ordinary earnestness of devotion, with the lowest and worst of his race. As little would Horace have expected to find the rich blossoms of the passion-flower twining round a cluster of poisonous fungi, or a jewel glittering on some heap of corruption, as a firm, decided Christian man in a den of robbers and thieves. How could a rain-drop retain its purity when mixed with the stagnant waters of a pool? how could the spark of faith still live with so fierce a storm of temptation around it?

While Horace was reflecting on his strange companion, Raphael, laying aside his guitar, had entered the cave. He soon returned, bearing with him such liniment as he had used in the morning to relieve the pain caused to the captive by the chafing of his fetters. Raphael then knelt down upon the rock, and applied the simple remedy. Horace, unaccustomed to suffering or restraint, could scarcely endure the pressure of the iron upon his galled and swollen ankles. He implored Raphael, as he had urged Enrico, to release him from the torturing bonds. Sadly but firmly his suit was refused, and when pressed, it only wrung forth the unanswerable question:

"Would you have me sacrifice the life of my brother?"

When all that was possible had been done for the prisoner's relief, Horace asked Raphael, with some curiosity, what was the favor which he had expressed his intention of one day asking.

"I ask it now," replied the Rossignol; and to the surprise, and almost disappointment of young Cleveland, he drew forth from his bosom a small English Testament, which bore marks of having been much used.

"I would have left this with you this morning," said Raphael, "but I feared lest my treasure should be discovered, and taken from you by force. See, it is in English," he continued, "and the little which I know of that tongue has been chiefly learnt from its pages; but my knowledge is very imperfect; oft in vain I struggle to make out the meaning of a passage, like one groping in the darkness of a cave. You, who can speak my language as well as your own, will make all clear and plain to my understanding."

"How did you get this?" asked Horace with interest, turning over to the title-page, on which the name of Pietro Marino was written.

"Let us leave the tale to another day," replied Raphael; "time is now precious; I expect that the band will this evening return more early than usual. Could you know how long and how anxiously I have waited for such an opportunity as this, you would not marvel at my reluctance to hazard its loss by delay."

So saying, Raphael threw himself on the rock beside Horace, and eagerly turning over the pages of the Testament,

showed place after place where he had found difficulties from his imperfect knowledge of English. Horace had often read the Bible with his mother, often listened to chapters in church, and had with tolerable regularity, though with slight attention, perused the Scriptures by himself. But the cold, lifeless form which the performance of this duty had too often been to the youth, was something different indeed from the intense earnestness which he now saw in his strange companion. It was evident that to Raphael religion was a living reality, something that engaged all the powers of his mind as well as all the affections of his soul. The Bible was to him as the Father's letter, treasured in the bosom of the Son; as the charter by which he held all his dearest hopes; as the "pardon signed and sealed" granted to the prisoner by the grace of his King.

The Rossignol and Horace read together as long as the daylight lasted, and when that failed they returned to the cave, and pursued their occupation by the gleam of the tapers which were lighted in front of the Virgin's shrine.

Horace was well versed in Scripture history, but he had only a very superficial knowledge of the Epistles of St. Paul. The glowing, fervent spirit of devotion breathing through them had found no response in his heart. He read now, almost as though they were new to him, the soul-stirring words of the apostle and martyr, proclaiming the blessed truths which he so joyfully sealed with his blood. "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong!*" Horace felt that the Italian at his side was not merely reading this as a chronicled address to suffering saints of old, but receiving it as a rousing call to himself, a watchword to be used on the field of battle, a command from a leader to a soldier of the cross.

"Is it true," asked Raphael, when at last he paused in his reading—"is it true that in your blessed land these Scriptures are open to all?"

"The poorest can have a Bible," replied Horace.

"What a power must be wielded there for the truth!" said the Italian, laying his hand upon the open Testament. "In this country there is but a man here and there, like a picket in a hostile land, a sentinel on a post of danger, to grasp with a feeble hand the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, standing forth in a cause which, were it not the cause of the Almighty, he might well consider to be desperate; but with you, how strong, how united a phalanx must hold the ground against all opposers, and go forward conquering and triumphant in the great battle that is waged on earth!"

"Of what battle do you speak?" said Horace, rather to draw forth an answer from Raphael than from any difficulty as to his meaning.

"The great battle between truth and error, Light and Darkness, God and Satan," replied Raphael; "that battle in which every individual must be enlisted on one or the other side."

"Not necessarily to take any very active part," observed Horace, who felt as regarded himself there had been little interest, and certainly no great effort in the strife.

Raphael fixed his large, earnest eyes upon the speaker with an expression of grave surprise. "In the world's warfare," said he, "what do we esteem a soldier who shrinks from taking his

part in the struggle, who obeys not his leader, who deserts his banner at a period of danger?"

"We esteem him a coward," replied Horace.

"And if he take part with the enemy?"

"He has the name, and deserves the fate of a traitor."

"And what shall we call those who, enlisted from infancy to oppose sin and Satan, are content to remain mere spectators of the strife, or who actually join the ranks of the foe?"

"Nine-tenths of the Christian world do so," observed Horace, "and certainly look upon themselves neither as cowards nor traitors. Few consider that there is any battle to be fought at all. Men follow their own pleasure, do their own will, and doubt not but that all will be well in the end."

"You do not think so?" said Raphael.

Horace knew not what to reply. He was too conscious that he had been describing his own state of mind, and felt that if a brave, earnest, self-sacrificing spirit of devotion be necessary to the Christian soldier, he was unworthy of the name. Willing to change the conversation, he said abruptly:

"You must be indeed as a sentinel in a hostile land; I wonder how you can keep your ground at all in this the very stronghold of the enemy."

"I can but grasp my sword, and look to my Leader," said Raphael. "I am sometimes well-nigh ready to give up all in

despair, but He can keep me from falling."

"I marvel why you remain here," began Horace, when he was prevented from concluding his sentence by the sound of a shrill whistle from the wood, and Raphael, hastily rising, thrust his Testament into his bosom.

"I knew that they would return soon," he said; "see where yonder they come."

The banditti returned in a very discontented mood. They had found no prey, and brought back no booty. The only consolation which they found under their disappointment, was that of exercising the power of tormenting, and their unfortunate prisoner had to run the gauntlet of every kind of annoyance. Horace, little accustomed to insult, chafed with impotent rage. He glanced at Raphael, as though to claim his protection, and the Rossignol, without appearing to notice the appeal, came to his relief in the only effectual way. The liquid tones of his guitar were heard through the noisy uproar, and the tumult suddenly lulled. The notes exercised such a spell as fable ascribes to that of Orpheus, and almost as savage an auditory as that which listened to the ancient bard, gathered around the Rossignol as he poured forth his thrilling lay:—

There is a sword of glittering sheen—

All unite to defend the right!

Its blade is bright, and its edge is keen,

But the wound it gives is a wound unseen,

And who would flinch in the glorious fight!

There is a foe—a ruthless foe—

Such unite to oppose the right!
In secret ambush he croucheth low,
And the blow he strikes is a deadly blow,
But who would flinch in the glorious fight!

There is a banner floating wide—
All unite to defend the right!
The blood of martyrs its folds has dyed
When the best and the bravest fought side by side,
For who would flinch in the glorious fight!

There is a Leader exalted high!
All unite to defend the right!
Through Him His followers hosts defy,
Through Him they learn to do and to die,
And scorn to flinch in the glorious fight!

There is a palm—a victor's palm—
All unite to defend the right!
'Twill be given in realms of peace and calm
To the steadfast spirit, the stalwart arm
That never flinched in the glorious fight!

Then shall lips touched with living flame
In song unite—in the world of light,
"In our Leader's strength, in our Leader's name,
We fought—we struggled—we overcame—
And victors stood in the glorious fight!"

So spirited was the air, so flowing the measure, that Matteo himself beat time with his heavy hand on the table, and several

of the banditti actually joined in the burden. Horace saw, however, by the glances directed towards the improvisatore, that the words were only tolerated on account of the music, and Enrico, as if the strain were hateful to him, quitted the table before the song was ended.

On the mind of the young prisoner himself the effect of the lay was powerful. He felt his spirit roused by the music, which seemed to burst forth from the singer's soul rather than from his lips. Horace realized, as he had never done before, his own responsibilities as a sworn soldier of Christ. Had he not been enlisted to serve under the banner of the cross, to fight manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil? And how had he kept his vow—how had he fought under that banner? What interest had he taken in the holy cause—what had he ever sacrificed in order to spread its conquests? it was not needful for Horace to compare himself with missionaries spending their strength and hazarding their lives to win heathen lands for their Leader; nor with the devoted men and *women* who in densely crowded cities lead the assault against the enemy's mightiest strongholds; such may be termed the *forlorn hope* of the Christian host, the Gideons or Davids of the army; but had he shown himself worthy to be counted even amongst the common rank and file? Had he ever struck one good blow for the sake of religion against a besetting sin? Had he cared even to keep his sword bright? Had he not felt ashamed on that morning at being discovered in the act of prayer? Could he regard himself as other than a coward, even if he deserved not the name of traitor?

How the lay rang that night in the ears of Horace! The music haunted him when he retired with Raphael to the rocky recess,

whither they had been preceded by Enrico. Horace there found a fresh bed of fragrant herbs, which had been gathered for him, over which was thrown a mantle which he had seen on the shoulders of Raphael.

In silence the Rossignol knelt down to pray, and the young Englishman knelt beside him. Horace expected some taunt from Enrico, who lay stretched on his heap of leaves; but the bandit watched them in sullen silence, by the light of a torch which he had stuck on the wall.

As Raphael was making his simple preparations for the night, in removing a portion of his dress he bared his shoulder, and accidentally displayed to the view of Horace a hurt which he had received on it, a purple contusion, as from some blunt but heavy instrument. The injury had evidently been both recent and severe.

"No light hand left such a mark as that?" exclaimed Horace.

"It was Matteo's work, it is no prison-scar upon me," replied Raphael, covering the evidence of the chief's brutality.

"And do you know how he won that scar?" exclaimed Enrico with vehemence. "In coming between the wolf and his prey, in trying to save that poor wretch Carlo from destruction. His attempt was in vain, all that he does is in vain; the hand that left that mark will fall more heavily upon him one day."

It was long ere Horace could sleep. The sight of that bruised, lacerated shoulder had brought more vividly before him the savage nature of the man in whose absolute power he lay than aught he had seen or heard. "Raphael must indeed," thought

the captive, "be as a sentinel on a post of danger, as a soldier isolated from his comrades in an enemy's land." Horace looked at the young Italian, stretched in peaceful slumber on his rocky bed, and wondered how his repose could be so serene and untroubled. It was the consciousness of the presence of a watchful Guardian that gave to the soldier of the cross calm sleep in the robbers' den. His last waking thought had been, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"*

CHAPTER XI.

THE ORPHAN'S TALE.

A strange Sabbath was that to Horace which commenced with the dawning day. He closed his eyes on the rude and gloomy cave around him, and tried to make memory and fancy replace the hateful scene; he sought to shut his ears to the noise of oaths, profane talking, and wrangling. Sadly he recalled privileges unprized and too often neglected when he had had the power to enjoy them. He had frequently been weary of the quiet monotony of the holy day, desiring more active amusements, more exciting pursuits, and now remembered the peaceful Sabbaths in his home almost as though they had been spent in paradise, and sighed when the doubt presented itself whether he would ever be permitted to know such Sundays again.

It need scarcely be said that the Sabbath was no holy season to the robbers. It was passed with rather more of noisy riot than the preceding day had been. There was more of the wild mirth so forcibly described as *the crackling of thorns under the pot*, the laughter which makes the thoughtful listener more sad than sounds of woe. The robbers gambled, danced, reveled, swore.

Raphael was the especial target for their coarse jests, which he bore as one who was accustomed to endurance, a veteran in suffering, though young in years. Horace marveled how long the improvisatore had been subjected to the daily martyrdom of such an existence, a constant chafing and fretting like that of the waves against some solitary headland.

Raphael, during the first part of the day, appeared to avoid the society of the prisoner; he neither addressed, nor even looked towards him. It seemed to Horace that the young Italian did not wish his comrades to see that there was any community of thought or sympathy between them; and Horace felt that to have been recognized as the friend of the Rossignol would have increased the difficulties of his own position. It would have been like leaning on a lightning conductor while thunder was growling above.

When gambling had succeeded to more noisy revels, the improvisatore approached Enrico, who was seated amid a group of his rude companions outside the cave. Horace, from his favorite seat under the oak, where he enjoyed comparative seclusion, watched with interest the movements of the brothers, though he could not overhear their conversation. Raphael laid his hand on Enrico's shoulder, stooped down, and whispered something in his ear. Enrico, who had a dice-box in

his hand, frowned and shook his head with a gesture of impatience. Again there was a low whisper, and the robbers around burst into mocking laughter. Distress, indecision were stamped upon the face of Enrico, and as Horace viewed on the one side the anxious, pleading look of the brother, on the other the dark glances of his reckless companions, he seemed to behold, in human embodiment, spirits of good and of evil contending for the possession of a soul. This time the good appeared to gain the mastery, for Enrico, suddenly flinging dice and dice-box on the ground, sprang to his feet, and followed his brother down the rocks into the forest, in whose recesses they were soon lost to view.

They were absent for more than an hour, and on their return Enrico looked sadder and more subdued, as, with folded arms and downcast eyes, he emerged from the shadow of the trees. Horace suspected that the interview had had some relation to himself, for Enrico, after mounting to the rocky platform, stood for some moments before his prisoner, surveying him with a fixed and inquiring gaze, then, as if answering some question to himself, he shook his head and turned sadly away.

When, in the hottest and most oppressive part of the day, the banditti retired for their accustomed siesta, the improvisatore joined Horace under the oak. Again was the Testament produced, and again the prisoner and his companion drank deeply of its life-giving truths. He who has never known severer thirst than that which makes a draught of cold water refreshing on a summer's day, can scarcely conceive the feverish eagerness of the traveler in the desert, when, exhausted and parched with thirst, he bends over the lonely well. Raphael was treading the wilderness of life, the scorching

sun of temptation above him, the burning sands of tribulation beneath his feet, and the Scriptures were to him as the cooling waters to the pilgrim ready to perish.

"I wish," said Horace, when at length there was a pause in the reading, "that you would tell me how you ever came to lead this strange life amongst robbers, and what induces you, unfettered as you are, to remain in this horrible place. Enrico has told me that your father was an officer of gentle birth. How came the sons of such a man to dwell in the haunts of banditti?"

Raphael sighed as he made answer. "My father was of an honorable family; but his own heroic virtues would have ennobled any descent. He was 'without fear and without reproach'; his name had never been coupled with disgrace. I was but a child when I last saw my father, but well do I remember—never can I forget—how I used to clamber on his knee and play with his sword-knot; and how he would lay his hand on my head and tell me that I should one day serve the king, and that the duty of a brave soldier is simply prompt, unswerving obedience—obedience even unto death. And the lesson which my father gave to his child he sealed with his blood. He received orders to defend a mountain pass from the enemy with a small body of troops that were placed under his command. I know not—it was never clearly ascertained—whether in the confusion of a general retreat that small band was actually forgotten, or whether the commander had found it impossible to send reinforcements to its aid; but it was isolated, unsupported, and attacked by a greatly superior force.

"Some of those under my father's command urged the

necessity of retreat; resistance, they said, was hopeless; to attempt to defend the pass was but to throw away the lives of his men.

"'I was placed here to hold this post,' was the gallant reply; 'and till I receive orders from my leader to quit it, here I am bound to remain. It is his office to command, and mine to obey.'

"The men," continued Raphael with emotion, "were not inspired by their captain's heroism. False to their trust, one by one they deserted their banners. A single brave man remained firm as a rock at the post of duty; where my father had planted his colors, there he fought, and there—he fell!"

"And did not your king reward such generous devotion by caring for the fatherless children of such a man?" exclaimed Horace, as Raphael with a deep sigh closed his brief account.

"Earthly princes do not resemble Him who keeps a record of every act of obedience," replied Raphael. "There were a few words of praise, a ribbon, and a cross, and then all appeared to be forgotten. My brother and I might have starved in the streets of Naples but for the kindness of our mother's father, a physician, who supported and educated us for the sake of a daughter whose loss he yet mourned.

"Enrico became weary of the monotony and restraint of the life which he led in the good old man's home. He spent much of his time away from it, and became acquainted with some who made no good use of the influence which they acquired over his generous and confiding nature.

"When I had reached the age of fifteen, my grandfather died; I was with him at the last, received his parting blessing, and closed his eyes. All my earthly comfort was buried in his grave. I will not dwell on the events of the following year."

Raphael chose not to unveil to the eye of a stranger scenes of riot and selfish profusion in the house which the memory of a venerable relative had to him rendered sacred. He would not relate how Enrico had recklessly squandered his young brother's inheritance as well as his own, exposing the orphan left to his guidance to the contamination of such society as might have ruined his soul as well as his fortunes. Raphael was tender of the reputation of a brother whom he yet loved with the strength of that affection which can bear all, hope all, endure all. But though the Rossignol purposely left out all the darker shades of the picture, Horace had already seen enough of Enrico to fill up the outlines for himself. After a brief pause, Raphael continued his narration:—

"I was sleeping one night in my chamber, when I was startled from slumber by the sudden entrance of my brother. It was the hour before dawn, when darkness is deepest; I could not see his face, but I was alarmed by the grasp of his icy hand, and the strange, altered tone of his voice. 'Raphael,' he exclaimed, 'we must fly! I am a ruined man! the bloodhounds are already on my track!' I found afterwards that my unfortunate brother had been mixed up in a night-brawl, in which a man of high rank had been killed, and that Enrico was suspected—*falsely* suspected"—Raphael laid strong emphasis on the word—"of having dealt the fatal blow. Enrico had no means of proving his innocence; he had little money left, and no friends. He had been the victim of men more unscrupulous

and reckless than himself, who were willing to screen their own guilt by sacrificing their dupe. Why should I dwell on a painful theme? Before morning we fled from Naples. Pursued by the ministers of the law, Enrico took refuge in these mountains of Calabria, and, driven to desperation, in an evil hour joined himself to a band of outlaws. I accompanied his steps and shared his fortunes."

"Then it was through no error of your own that you became associated with these men of blood?"

"I say not so," replied Raphael, quickly, "nor can attempt to justify my weak compliance. I was young and inexperienced, indeed, but not so young nor so ignorant as not to see the snares into which I was running. I was carried on by an impetus which I had not sufficient strength of principle to resist. My own views of religion and duty were dark. My conscience, indeed, was not dead; but while I could stifle its reproaches by supposed good deeds, while Latin prayers and long fastings could, as I thought, atone for sharing the booty of the robber (in his worst crimes, thank God, I never shared!), I pursued my course with but little remorse. I will not weary you with accounts of pilgrimages to holy shrines made with bare and bleeding feet, nor tell you how many hours at night were often spent in reciting prayers that I understood not. Vain superstition! miserable opiates to put to sleep the restless monitor within! I was a favorite with Matteo and his followers. My youth, and perhaps my love of music, and my slight knowledge of the healing art, won for me more kindness and indulgence than it might have been supposed that such men could have shown. I ministered to their pleasure and to their comfort; they loved my jests and my songs. I might say

whatever I liked—almost do whatever I liked; I was as the spoiled child of the band."

Horace felt no surprise that the gifted boy, attractive in person and winning in manner, should have exercised powers of fascination over the rough spirits around him. The prisoner had himself begun to feel in the society of Raphael a kind of magnetic influence, which made him watch every look, and listen for each word, with a strange interest for which he could scarcely have accounted. Circumstances, however, had evidently altered as regarded the connection of Raphael with the banditti, and Horace remarked to the Rossignol that he seemed to be now rather tolerated than liked.

"How is it," asked young Cleveland, "that the once 'spoiled child of the band' is now treated with such harshness, and even brutality, that it seemed to me to-day as though your very life were scarcely worth a day's purchase? How is it also that you have learned to put away superstition, to see the folly of dead forms, and have become so earnest in the service of God, that you are ready to hazard all for his sake?"

"It is a long story," replied Raphael, "and I hear by the sound of voices in the cave that the bandits' siesta is over. We must not be seen together," he continued, rising hastily from his seat; "you have perils enough to encounter as an Englishman, a Protestant, and a prisoner, without its being added to your list of offenses that you can call Raphael a friend."

Horace was disappointed at the interruption to the tale of the improvisatore, and awaited with curiosity and interest a fitting opportunity to hear its conclusion.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE LIGHT WAS LIT.

Raphael spent several hours in visiting the sick, and the opportunity which Horace desired came not until the morrow. Tidings having been brought from Marco, who had gone out as a spy, that a traveling party was expected on the way to Staiti, the bandits departed at dawn in the hope of intercepting it. They went off in high spirits, except Matteo, whose fierce and gloomy visage was never lighted with a smile.

"Enrico lost his last carlino at play yesterday!" shouted Beppo; "but he will return with a heavy bag of ducats with which to line my purse. He puts one hand into a cavalier's pocket, and with the other makes the contents of it over to me. I call him the lion's provider."

"A lion more given to roaring than to fighting," laughed Enrico; but the laugh was suddenly cut short as he caught the eye of his brother.

Raphael approached Enrico, and though Horace could not distinguish what he said to him in his low, earnest tone, the robber's reply was more audible:—

"I must go—I have no choice—I may prevent bloodshed."

Enrico had the same uneasy, vacillating manner which Horace had before remarked, and the nerve of his lip twitched violently.

"Enrico, keep at my side!" called out Matteo, turning upon the Rossignol a scowl of dark suspicion and dislike.

Horace and Raphael watched the departure of the banditti. The latter stood for some time with folded arms, his eyes fixed upon the spot where Enrico had disappeared from view, and with an expression of such anxious care on his face, that Horace did not venture to disturb him. Presently, however, the pale features resumed their usual calmness, and Raphael, turning towards the captive, proposed that they should renew their study of the Scriptures.

Some time was spent in this occupation. Horace was beginning to regard his seat under the oak much as he regarded his place in the old village church. The presence of earnest piety had seemed to isolate that one little spot from all the rocks around, and the green boughs above were as the roof of a temple consecrated to God. There were portions of Scripture which Horace felt that he should always connect with that oak and with him who now sat by his side beneath it—verses that he could never hear again without recalling the musical tones of the Rossignol's voice.

When the reading was concluded, Horace asked Raphael to tell him something of the circumstances attending his capture and imprisonment. "For I have understood, both from yourself and from others," said the youth, "that you, like myself, know something of captivity. How did you fall into your enemy's

hand?"

"Simply thus," replied Raphael; "I was wandering slowly through the woods one evening, when I heard a rapid step behind me, and on turning, beheld Matteo wounded, bleeding, gasping, like a stag whom the hunters have pursued till his strength is exhausted, and he can but turn, face them, and die. I saw by his staggering, uncertain step that he could not fly much further.

"'Boy!' he exclaimed, 'they are upon me! Plunge yonder through the thicket, and let them hear you; you may draw off pursuit from your captain.'

"I obeyed, was followed, and taken."

"Then your generous act saved the chief?"

"It was a mere act of impulse," replied Raphael; "it deserved no praise, and won no gratitude. I was now a prisoner, bound and guarded. I was taken from one place to another, and brought before a tribunal of justice. There was little against me but bare suspicion, for no actual crime could be laid to my charge. I had, indeed, been seen in the company of banditti. I was known to be acquainted with Matteo. I had baffled the soldiers when they had believed that the blood-money for his capture was within their grasp. The last offense might be atoned for; I was offered freedom and reward if I would betray the secret haunts of Matteo. Of course such treachery was not to be thought of.

"After tedious imprisonment and examinations before various authorities, I was condemned to six months' labor in

the galleys, rather for obstinate silence than for any offense which could be proved."

"What!" exclaimed Horace, "was not the remembrance of the faithful services of your heroic father sufficient to save his son from so harsh a sentence?"

"No one knew my parentage," replied Raphael quickly; "no, no! Sunk as I was, disgraced, condemned, I jealously guarded the honor of my father's name as the one precious possession left me, which would never be tarnished by shame. It should never be said that the son of Raphael Goldoni had appeared as a criminal at the bar of justice!"

"Were you not in a state of misery on hearing your doom?" asked Horace.

"I was in a state of sullen despair. It seemed to me as if there were no help for me on earth or in heaven. I was an outcast, a wretch abandoned by my fellow-creatures. I accused them of cruelty and injustice; and, what was far worse, my soul rose in guilty rebellion against the decrees of Providence. I looked upon myself as a sufferer rather for the crimes of others than my own, forgetful that no circumstances could justify my compliance with what I had known to be evil. Sometimes, indeed, conscience, oft stifled, would make itself heard, and then the icy calm of despair was exchanged for a tempest of anguish, such as almost shook reason from its seat. I could no longer have recourse to the miserable refuge offered by pilgrimage or penance. Even the relief of confession was denied me, for I had never learned to go in simplicity of faith for pardon and absolution to Him who heareth in secret. This

mortal life was to me as a prison, and yet I clung to its dark walls, for I saw nothing beyond but purgatory fires, which made the thought of death a terror. I knew myself to be guilty in the sight of God, and I could not recognize a compassionate Father in the awful Judge before whom I trembled. My service had been that of a slave, my sufferings were those of a slave; far more galling than the iron which fettered my limbs was that which entered into my soul."

"And how long did this misery last?"

"Not long," replied the Italian. "I and my companions in punishment were chained by two and two in the galleys, and on the third day of my labors I was coupled with a man whose demeanor at once struck me as different from that of the other prisoners. He was not old in years, but his form was bowed by suffering and sorrow, and white as silver were his locks and the beard which descended almost to his girdle. He looked so calm and resigned in the dignity of conscious innocence, that even the first glance convinced me that no criminal was at my side. Had I been in a less gloomy and despondent mood, I should have questioned my new companion; but I had lost all interest in life, all care for what was passing around me. Even when Marino (such was his name) spoke a few words of kindly greeting to his partner in misfortune, I only bowed my head in reply, and preserved a moody silence. I thought that the galley-slave pitied me, and my proud heart shrank from pity, even when I needed it most.

"Our toil on that day was severe. We had to row at our utmost speed, hour after hour, under the burning rays of the sun, which were reflected with dazzling glare from the waters.

I felt as if the unwonted and protracted labor were drawing my very life away, and I saw that my comrade, who was weaker, suffered yet more than myself. The beaded drops were upon his brow and his lip, and he bent over his oar as if every stroke might be his last. While we were painfully toiling on, a gay cavalier, stretched at ease in the stern of our galley, was humming a light lay of love, or quaffing cool draughts of sparkling wine. He took no notice of the exhausted rowers, except to express impatience at the slow progress which they made. At length the keel grated on the shore, we lifted our oars, and the cavalier stepped on the beach. There were gay friends to welcome him there, and take him with them to cool orange-groves and glittering fountains, towards which we wearily turned our longing eyes. There with fair and high-born ladies would he enjoy the feast, the dance, and the song, while we sat thirsty, weary, neglected—the very outcasts of mankind.

"My companion addressed me again, in a voice so faint that I could at first scarcely catch his meaning. 'Is it not well, my son,' he murmured, 'that there is One who hath said, "*Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?*"'

"The words sounded strange to me, and I replied with sullen despair, 'There is no rest for me—no, not even in the grave!'

"Then you have never yet come to Him, never yet found the Savior,' said Marino; 'you have not yet accepted His invitation; perhaps till this day you never heard it.'

"This was so unlike any address to which I had hitherto

listened on the subject of religion, that it instantly arrested my attention. Fresh from the pure fount of Truth came the words which Marino now uttered. Parched as I was with feverish thirst, with a force which I cannot describe came especially one blessed verse, which I have ever since regarded as the very breathing of infinite love. *'And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'*

"That day,—that sultry, exhausting day," continued Raphael, clasping his hands as he spoke, "I regard as the birth-day of my soul. It was then first that I learned that there was pardon, full, free pardon, even for the chief of sinners; that there was love, infinite love, towards those for whom the Lord had died. I learned that I had been *'bought with a price,'* and that I was no longer mine own. In the morning my soul had been even as your person now is. I had been shackled with my sins, galled, imprisoned, without power to shake off either the burden of my guilt or the dread of its punishment. I had seen before me a forest labyrinth of difficulties and temptations, and had no clue to guide me through it. The grand, glorious truth that the blood of the Savior *'cleanseth from all sin,'* broke at once my chain and set me free; and henceforth God's Word was to be my guide to safety, to peace, and, I trust, hereafter—to glory."

There were some moments of silence, only broken by the ceaseless noise of the cicada and the sigh of the wind through the wood.

"Who was Marino," inquired Horace; "and how came so good a man to be working as a slave at the oar?"

"He had been sentenced to the galleys for a very different crime from any of which I had been suspected," replied Raphael. "Marino, as I learned afterwards from himself, had been a student of medicine, brought up in the Romish faith. Circumstances, or rather the leading of God's Providence, had taken him to England, where he had resided for years, and where he had acquired not only a knowledge of the languages, but of the truth which in your land is guarded and prized. Marino might have remained honored and happy amongst those whose communion he had joined; but he thought of the darkness of ignorance shrouding his own beautiful country; he thought of the bondage of superstition in which his fellow-citizens groaned; Marino returned to be a missionary to his own people. Following the steps of his Master in the path of self-denying labor, he soon tracked the holy footprints through sufferings also. You know, doubtless, that with Italians it is held a crime to search the Scriptures; doubly a crime to teach others to do so. Marino for both offenses was sentenced for three years to the galleys. Alas! broken down as he was by hardship and trial, his life did not last out the term."

"Was it not much to be regretted," observed Horace, "that, instead of laboring where he could have labored in safety, this good man threw away freedom, and, as it proved, life itself, upon such a desperate venture?"

"I have no reason to say so," replied the Rossignol with deep feeling. "Marino was silenced from preaching the gospel to freemen, that he might carry the glad tidings to slaves! Who can say that he lived or that he died in vain? I was not the only wretched outcast over whose darkness he shed light, though to none was he such a friend, such a father as he was to me."

When his spirit passed away, I felt that for the third time my earthly stay had been wrenched from my hold, but now I was not left desolate. Marino had led me to the Rock—the changeless—the everlasting!" Raphael's voice faltered as he continued, covering his eyes with his hand: "When they dropped his lifeless remains into the sea, without funeral rite, without toll of bell, without even a coffin to shroud them; when the waves of the Mediterranean rolled over the spot where slept the friend I loved best upon earth, even then God sent thoughts of comfort—of triumph—into my soul. I knew that Marino would rise again, incorruptible, immortal, glorious; that the sea should give up her dead and the Savior reclaim His own. And I knew that there was something left also for me—an object in life, as well as a hope in death."

"What was that object?" asked Horace.

Raphael seemed unable to give an audible reply. He turned over silently the leaves of his Testament, and laid his finger upon this verse: "*The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them!*"

Horace remained for a space with his eyes riveted upon the passage, marveling how he had never before seen how it contains not only the ground of a Christian's *hope*, but of a Christian's willing obedience. What is true religion but "a personal love for a personal Savior?" "*The love of Christ constraineth!*" that is the very watchword of the soldier of the cross upon the battle-field of life. Not to live to self, but unto God; not to do our own will, but God's will; to make His love

our inspiring motive, His glory our end and aim;—this is the object, the only object, worthy of an immortal soul.

After a lengthened pause, Horace resumed the conversation. "I am surprised," said he, "that one whose whole character had been changed like yours, should ever have come back to a den of wickedness like this."

"When Marino departed," replied Raphael, "my six months of durance had almost come to a close. Often and anxiously I revolved in my mind what course it would be right to pursue after I should have regained my freedom. Sometimes I almost decided upon working my way to England; at other times I proposed returning to Naples, seeking out some old acquaintances of my grandfather, and trying through their assistance to make my entrance into his profession. Amidst my various projects one truth was ever recurring to my mind. A soldier chooses not his own post: it was my one simple duty to find out where my Leader would have me to be, and what He would have me to do. More and more strongly the conviction came that nowhere was light more needed, and into no place was it less likely to penetrate, than into this robbers' cave. Here seemed to be my allotted post, and hither I accordingly came."

"You were throwing yourself into the midst of great temptations," observed Horace.

"I felt that—I feel it," replied Raphael; "and often have I feared presumption, and closely have I searched my own motives for running so great a risk. But," he continued, as if conscious that there was a need of explaining his position in order to justify his conduct, "I knew that there were

circumstances in my favor, which made it possible for me to plant my foot where by another man no standing-ground could have been found. I was known amongst the banditti, liked, favored; perhaps I counted too much upon that favor, as I certainly did upon the circumstance of having saved the life of their captain."

"But the danger!" exclaimed Horace Cleveland.

"There was nothing but bare life to be hazarded; I had nothing else that I could lose—not even a fair reputation. I had neither father nor mother to mourn me! I had but a brother, and he was one of the band. Perhaps my strongest earthly incentive was the hope of being the means of winning his soul."

"And how were you received by the banditti?" inquired Horace, who regarded this project of planting a "home mission" in the midst of a gang of ruffians as the wildest, most impracticable scheme which enthusiasm had ever devised.

"I was received with a welcome so cordial and warm, that it almost shook my resolution to strip away all deception, and at once avow the reason for my return. I was enabled, however, to speak out the truth—to own that I came not to rejoin the band, to eat bread that was won by robbery, or to touch gold that was stained with blood—to say that if the outlaws desired it I would tend their sick, and do what other kindly offices I might without wounding my conscience—but that I was now the soldier and servant of One who suffers no compromise with sin."

"I should have liked to have heard such an avowal made to

such men," exclaimed Horace, "and to have seen the countenance of Matteo as you spoke! That was indeed walking into the lion's den, and laying your hand on his mane. How was your strange offer received?"

"With bursts of laughter and mocking jests. I believe that some of the banditti deemed that imprisonment had affected my brain."

"I marvel not at that," returned Horace. "Did you not find it hard to stand against the storm of ridicule?"

"So hard that I almost cowered beneath it. I had then, however, nothing beyond such ridicule to bear. The robbers were amused—not infuriated. My conditions were mirthfully accepted. I was elected with shouts as friar and father confessor to the band, and was given full leave to pray and to fast as long as it might suit my pleasure to do so."

"The outlaws doubtless thought," observed Horace, "that your resolution was but some strange passing fancy."

"I doubt not that they thought so," replied Raphael, "and that they promised themselves much diversion from what was to them so novel. But when the robbers found that though they might be in jest, the object of their mockery was in earnest, opposition assumed a different form."

"You were persecuted, threatened, tormented," said Horace, recollecting the lacerated shoulder, and the cruel insults of which he had himself been a witness.

"I had a little rough discipline," answered Raphael lightly,

"such as every soldier must look for. I have often cheered myself under it by remembering the words of my father—if applicable to earthly warfare, how much more so to the heavenly!—"The duty of a brave soldier is simple, prompt, unswerving obedience, even unto death!"

"But does it not damp your spirit," asked Horace, "to find that you labor and suffer in vain?"

A thoughtful, pensive expression sat on the brow of the young Italian as he replied, "Is there not a promise that such labor shall not be in vain? I have not much to cheer me, I own, as regards any little efforts of my own; yet the village youth whom I am now going to visit has begun to pray in earnest, and in the Savior's name alone. Sometimes I think that in my brother's bosom a better spirit is stirring, though he is hedged round with difficulties whose greatness a stranger cannot fully understand. God will give Enrico to me; while life remains, I will never cease to pray for my brother, and He in whom I trust will grant me my heart's desire."

The sigh which followed came from a burdened, but yet a confiding heart.

"Oh, yes," cried Horace, anxious to efface the painful impression caused by a thoughtless question, "you will not suffer without reward. I know not whether you will care to hear it, but I must tell you one thing. Though, from my cradle, I have heard a great deal about religion, I have never thought so seriously upon the subject as you have made me do during these last few days. If I ever become a *real* Christian—a faithful soldier, as you would say—I shall trace the beginning

of an earnest life to these hours which I have spent with you under this oak."

The pale face of Raphael lighted up with an expression of joy, as when a sunbeam, bursting from behind a cloud, throws over a still stream a pathway of glory. The smile was so bright, so sudden, so angel-like in its gladness, that it often in future days recurred to the memory of Horace. Raphael grasped his hand with the warmth of a brother, but without commenting upon what he had said; and the improvisatore soon afterwards descended to the forest to go on his errand of mercy to the sick.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAILURE.

Not the example and influence of Raphael alone tended to ripen good resolutions in the mind of the captive; much resulted from the effect of the long hours of solitude in which reflection was forced upon him. To one of Horace's lively temper and active disposition, meditation had appeared to be of all occupations the most tedious and unprofitable, as long as study or amusement could fill up each waking hour. It was thus that little wisdom had been gained while a good deal of knowledge had been acquired, and that even the lessons of experience had made but small impression upon Horace Cleveland. He had had his day-dreams, it is true, and his schemes of ambition, but neither had been calmly reviewed in

the sober light of truth. Now, having nothing else to do, Horace perforce must think; and the result of reflection was that the proud lad, who, exalted by conscious superiority over his companions, had feared comparison with no one, now felt mortified and even disgusted with himself. He recalled circumstances that had once elated him; he remembered the trophies won by intellectual or physical efforts; all their glitter and glory seemed gone. When the youth recollected how utterly he had ignored "the only object in life worthy of an immortal soul," he felt little cause to exult at having won the prize at the examination, or the honors at foot-ball or the boat-race. These things were indeed good in themselves, but what were they compared to the crown of life towards which the soldiers of the cross were pressing? Horace thought of the heroes of old, to emulate whom had been his ambition: he compared Cæsar and Alexander with Marino the galley-slave—they, sweeping like a pestilence over the earth; he, employing his dying breath in leading his fellow-sufferer to God. What were the different results of their labors? The warriors had, as it were, sent up a blazing rocket to startle the world, falling in a shower of dazzling sparks that glittered awhile, and then expired. The galley-slave had been the instrument in God's hand of lighting a star that should shine in the firmament of bliss when sun and moon should be seen no more. What are all human trophies compared to the trophy of a rescued soul, what all earthly glory compared to the glory which cometh from God?

"Raphael has been given a difficult, a perilous post of duty," thought Horace; "was none allotted to me? He tries to influence for good the lowest and worst of his kind; have I had no power to influence, and if I had, what use did I ever make

of it? Was not I also a soldier of the cross?"

The youth resolved that, if ever permitted to see his mother and his country, he would pursue a less selfish course than that which he had hitherto followed. His heart grew heavy as he thought of the possibility—at that moment it almost presented itself as a *probability*—that he would never be granted an opportunity of redeeming the past. Very bitter was it to him now to recall how his petulance and pride had distressed his mother, to know that he had added weight to the widow's cross, instead of helping her to support it. "You have planted many a thorn in my pillow!" Were not these almost the last words that he had heard from her loving lips? had he not seen her weep for the undutifulness of her only son? If a brother's blood was once said to cry from the earth, would not a mother's tears do so also?

Horace arose from his seat, restless and miserable; he must find something, do something to drive from him distracting thoughts. Raphael left his guitar leaning against the rock. Horace took it up, and swept his hand over the strings; he could produce sound but not music. No melody came from the strong but objectless touch. He put down the instrument again; it only brought back again the theme of his painful reflections. Had he not struck life's chords with the same careless hand, and had they not given forth jarring discord?

Unable to play, the prisoner attempted to sing in order to while away the wearisome hours. He tried to wake the mountain echoes with some of the bold, spirited lays which he had sung with his comrades at school. Then a plaintive strain came to his remembrance; Horace had often heard his mother

sing it, and he associated her voice with each word. It seemed so well suited to his own sad estate, his fallen hopes, once so bright and gladsome, that giving utterance to his feelings in the poet's appropriate lines, he sang Moore's well-known lay:—

"All that's bright must fade,
The brightest still the fleetest.
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest!
Stars that shine and fall,
The flower that drops in springing.
These, alas, are types of all
To which our hearts are clinging!

"Who would seek or prize
Delights that end in aching?
Who would trust to ties
That every hour are breaking?
Better far to be
In utter darkness lying,
Than be blest with light, and see
That light for ever flying!"

"Beautiful, but not true!" exclaimed a voice beside him.

Horace started and turned round; he had been so much absorbed in the train of ideas awakened by the words, that he had not heard Raphael ascending the rocks, nor been aware that the mournful song had reached any ear but his own.

"Sing it again," said the improvisatore.

Horace felt some reluctance to comply with the request from one who was himself a master of the musical art; he would rather have listened than sung. At Raphael's desire, however, he repeated the strain, the improvisatore listening intently, and keeping time to the music with his hand.

"And now let me hear you," said Horace; "and let us have something more cheerful."

Raphael took up his guitar, and struck a few chords full of harmony and tone in a different and far richer key than that in which Horace had been singing. He afterwards remained for several minutes silent, gathering and arranging his thoughts. "I will be your echo," he then said with a smile; "but I will give back your notes in more joyous strain, less meet for the poet, but more for the Christian;" and catching up the air, Raphael sang in Italian as follows:—

"Earth's bright hopes must fade,
Not those which grace hath given;
Joys were fleeting made,
But not the joys of heaven!
Stars that shine above,
And flowers that cannot wither,
These are types of peace and love
That shall abide for ever!

"Who that seeks the skies
Would mourn earth's pleasures blighted.
Weep o'er broken ties
Soon to be re-united!
Blest e'en awhile to be

In darkness and in sorrow,
Assured we soon the dawn shall see
Of an eternal morrow!"

Raphael did not lay down his guitar. The last thought seemed to link itself on to another, and changing the mournful air to a burst of triumphant melody which appeared to well up fresh from a deep spring of joy within him, the Rossignol poured forth in his richest tones the following:

SONG OF HOPE.

Now in the east Hope's trembling light
Proclaims a brighter dawning;
Though woe endureth for a night,
Joy cometh in the morning!

For many weary ages past
Hath sin's dark night prevailing
A gloom o'er all the nations cast,
Whence rose the sounds of wailing!
The idol-gods have many a shrine
Where, bound in chains of error,
Myriads, shut out from light divine,
Crouch down in shame and terror!
But in the east Hope's rosy light
Proclaims a brighter dawning;
Though woe endureth for a night,
Joy cometh in the morning!

Like Cynthia from her silvery car,

The Church could darkness lighten;
Each high example, like a star,
Shone forth to cheer and lighten.
But I shall need not star nor moon
In that clear day before me,
The sun of righteousness shall soon
Burst forth in cloudless glory!
Yes, in the east, Hope's kindling light
Proclaims a brighter dawning;
Though woe endureth for a night,
Joy cometh in the morning.

"Hark!" exclaimed Horace suddenly, "the robbers are in the wood!"

The music had scarcely died on the lips of Raphael. His eyes were fixed upon the sky as if already beholding in its blue depths the signs of the coming triumph. He turned them now towards the forest, and something of the brightness of hope lingered in them as he said, leaning over the rocky parapet to gaze:

"They bring no prisoners, I see no spoil. They have been disappointed again of their prey."

The gang of robbers wore a very different air from what they had done in the morning, as slowly and sullenly, one by one, they swung themselves up to the platform in front of the cave. On Enrico's face alone Horace fancied that he could detect an expression of relief, as his eye met that of his brother.

"They never came, though we watched for them from sunrise till sunset!" cried one of the band. "I take it they've put off their journey till the morrow. Some woman's whim, I'll be bound, for we heard there's a signora in the party."

"We'll make them pay dear for our lost time," growled Matteo with an oath, as with the back of his rough hand he wiped his heated brow.

"I say," exclaimed Beppo, with a malignant scowl at Raphael, "we'll never have luck with such a preaching, praying heretic amongst us. What's the use of our burning candles to the Madonna, or vowing what best we can spare to the saints, if we've him praying hard against us?"

"The saints and the blessed Virgin Mary wouldn't listen to him," cried Marco, crossing himself as he mentioned the Madonna's name.

"I take it that his prayers go higher and straighter than ours go, Marco," said Beppo; "and they can do something down here below, or Enrico would not have hung back as he did to-day."

"I did not hang back," fiercely retorted Enrico.

"You'll prove but a hollow reed at the pinch," said Beppo, who looked quite ready to defend his opinions with something harder than words. "Did not that psalm-singing brother of yours do all that he could to prevent you from going about your business this very day?"

"He did not," stammered forth Enrico, avoiding meeting the

gaze of Raphael.

"Did you not?" cried Beppo, turning to the improvisatore, upon whom every eye was now bent.

Horace was almost startled at the short affirmative "si." which was the only reply of Raphael.

"You did—did you?" exclaimed Matteo, striding up to the speaker, while his hand fumbled in his leathern belt.

"And you prayed that our quarry might escape us!" cried Beppo.

"You did—did you?" repeated Matteo, more savagely than before.

Raphael met his fierce gaze with unblenching eye, and again briefly answered "si."

Horace held his breath, as one who sees a wild beast crouching for his deadly spring on a defenseless victim; he expected every moment to see Raphael laid dead at his feet. When Matteo contented himself with growling out a curse and a threat, and with the other robbers sauntered into the cave, the youth could hardly believe that the improvisatore bore not indeed a charmed life, and that some invisible circle of protection had been drawn around him by a hand unseen.

"How could you dare to brave so his fury?" exclaimed Horace to Rossignol; "I thought that he would have struck you to the earth."

"He that speaks for the truth must hold to the truth," replied Raphael, as, taking up his instrument, he followed the banditti into their dark retreat.

CHAPTER XIV.

TIDINGS.

Horace was awakened very early on the following morning by the sound of voices speaking in earnest whispers near him. His rocky recess, as the reader is aware, was shared by the brothers Goldoni. The struggling light of dawn was too dim to enable Horace to discern their figures, but the tones of Raphael's voice in their peculiar sweetness were distinguishable from all others even in the lowest whisper.

"So young—his poor mother," these were the only words that reached the captive's ear, but he felt assured that they related to himself. Enrico seemed to be resisting some urgent entreaty, the nature of which, however, could not be gathered from his hurried, murmured reply.

"You are to me as a chain—a fetter," said Raphael, still speaking below his breath.

"It is well that you have one, or you would be using freedom to throw away your life upon some insane venture," exclaimed Enrico, his impatience causing him slightly to raise his voice.

Again there was the sound of pleading, low, fervent, as from one who was wrestling for something dearer than life. It was an entreaty to a brother, a brother beloved, to have mercy upon his own soul, to break from the bondage which held him, to grapple with the foe who was dragging him downwards towards the abyss of destruction. "To-day may be the turning-point of your existence. As you decide for good or for evil now, so may the long, endless hereafter be to you an eternity of bliss or of anguish. There will be some dark deed done to-day. Those who are watched for will not yield without resistance. You may have the stain of murder on your soul. Oh, while there is yet time flee—save yourself—the door of mercy is open to you yet!"

More followed, which Horace could not hear. The tone of Enrico's replies was agitated; but it seemed as if he lacked resolution to take some decided step that his brother was urging upon him. The result of the conversation, and it was a long one, Horace could only guess by Raphael's closing words:

"Then no resource is left to me but prayer."

The tone in which they were uttered was not desponding, but solemn, as if, when all earthly hope had failed, he was enabled yet more firmly to grasp the promise of his God.

Soon afterwards there was a stir in the cave. From their various lurking-places the robbers came forth, to partake of their morning meal, and prepare for their expedition. Enrico carefully avoided his brother; and Raphael, who never joined the banditti at their feasts, left the cave to follow the daily avocations by which he earned his scanty subsistence.

The robbers seemed to be aware that the expected travelers were not likely to be early on the route, for they lingered in their haunt till past noonday. Horace was, as before, exposed to their coarse jests and rude banter. Beppo, in particular, took pleasure in trying his mettle, and raising apprehensions in his mind. The robber described with a minuteness which almost sickened his hearer, barbarities exercised upon former prisoners; his memory was well stored with horrors, and he took care that Horace should have the full benefit of their recital. Beppo dwelt especially on the miserable fate of Carlo, one of the band who had attempted to break from the rest, and who had perished by the hand of the captain. Horace noticed that Beppo, while telling the tale, often glanced meaningly at Enrico. Raphael's unhappy brother assumed a defiant, half-scornful air, boldly commended the murderous deed, and seemed eager to cast from himself the slightest suspicion of an intention to follow the example of Carlo.

Right glad was the prisoner when at length the robbers arose, looked to their guns, examined the priming, and after quaffing large bumpers to the success of their man-hunt, left him to his quiet solitude.

There is natural elasticity in the mind of the young. As soon as the form of the last of the band had disappeared behind the trees, Horace breathed more freely, and the relief which he felt made his spirit rebound into hope. "I shall have but three days more of this to endure," thought he; "the worst half of the trial is ended, and oh, how glorious it will be to fling these fetters aside, and tread the earth once more as a free man! To leave behind, once and for ever, this den of misery and horror! I shall not care to stay longer in Italy; I shall hate the very sound of

the language in which I have heard such things as I have been compelled to listen to here. But I cannot part with Raphael; no! he has quite long enough held his hopeless post, teaching those who will not learn, pleading with those who will not hear; he has quite long enough risked his life for the sake of a worthless brother. With his talents and his earnestness of purpose, what a glorious career is before him! If his light has shone even in this dark den, what a luster will it shed in some high position, where the world can see its brightness! Raphael is so unlike all other men whom I have met with; wherever he be he will exercise power, and that power will be exerted for good. I am sure that my mother would pay for his expenses at one of our universities. The Christian soldier will then have a wider battle-field before him; he has been trained in these wild mountains by hardship and danger for deeds which, if I mistake not, will one day make his name renowned."

From forming projects for his friend, it was an easy transition to make some for himself.

But Horace's castles in the air were different now from what they had been in the days of his careless boyhood. Adversity is a powerful teacher, and when its lessons are enforced by their visible influence upon another, when example shows how in the fiery furnace the pure gold shines more brightly, to a generous spirit like that of Horace its lessons are seldom in vain. Young Cleveland now thought less of commanding his fellow-creatures than of serving them; of being a victor in earthly warfare than of approving himself as a good soldier of the cross. He saw that his first post of duty must be home—the second, the circle of his school-companions; he felt that his pride and self-will, the sins which most easily beset him, must

be resisted and overcome there. Obedience to his parent would be the test of his obedience to God. His wild, undisciplined spirit must be brought into cheerful subjection.

"Henceforth, I will be a different son to my mother." thought Horace; "she shall never again shed a tear for word or for action of mine."

Thus in pleasing and not unprofitable musings passed the hours of the summer afternoon. Ever and anon Horace turned his watchful eye towards the wood, and listened for the sound of signal-whistle or pistol-shot in the distance. There was nothing, however, to tell that anything of human guilt was marring the peace of that beautiful scene. All was tranquil in the rich glow of sunshine; and but for the chains on his ankles, Horace could have enjoyed the sense of calm repose in that bright, luxurious clime. There was something of romance in his own situation which was not without its charms; and the youth smiled to himself as he thought what a theme for a tale of stirring interest his adventures would be when the social circle of friends should be gathered round the blazing logs of a Christmas fire. None of his companions would be able to tell of such hair-breadth escapes, or a life so wild and so strange. It was very amusing to Horace to see in imagination the wondering, curious, half-incredulous looks on familiar faces, and to fancy that he could hear his mother's ejaculations, now of thankfulness, now of terror.

As he was busy drawing these pictures of imagination, Horace saw the figure of the improvisatore coming toward him from the wood. At first glance he was struck by a change in the mien of Raphael, perceptible even at a distance. The firm,

elastic tread habitual to him was exchanged for a slow, lingering step, like that of an invalid, and twice he raised his hand to his forehead as if oppressed by dizziness or pain. Horace left his seat beneath the oak, and advanced to meet Raphael as far as the rocky parapet, beyond which he could not proceed. He called out the Rossignol's name, but Raphael neither replied nor raised his face to greet him with his usual kindly smile. Instead of mounting the rough mass of rocks almost with the lightness and ease that wings might have given, Raphael seemed for the first time to experience some difficulty in climbing, and Horace observed, as he gained the top, that the face of the young Italian was even more pale than usual.

"Raphael, you are ill!" exclaimed Horace.

The Rossignol shook his head.

"Something painful, I am certain, has happened. Come, sit down on this rock; or shall we go yonder to our favorite oak?"

Raphael seated himself on the rock, and turned his face from his friend.

"You have had something to grieve or to alarm you? The lad whom you visited is dead?"

"He is better," the Rossignol replied.

"But you feel dull and gloomy, as I felt yesterday; such a cloud came over me then, it seemed as if everything were dark around. You cheered me then, Raphael, it is my turn to cheer you now. I have been forming such golden plans for the future,

plans for you as well as for myself;" and in a few rapid sentences Horace described some of the hopes which had been brightening his solitary hours.

Raphael only responded with a sigh so deep-drawn that Horace saw at once that no light trouble, no passing cloud could cast such a shadow on his soul.

"You have heard bad news," cried young Cleveland; "do they regard yourself or—or me?"

Raphael's silence was sufficient reply.

"Tell me the whole truth!" exclaimed Horace.

"Could you bear it?" answered Raphael, slowly turning round, and fixing his large dark eyes upon Horace with a gaze of unutterable sadness.

"Yes; I can bear all, must know all!" exclaimed Horace. His heart was beginning to throb fast, while a sensation of cold crept over him, assuredly not caused by the weather.

"All is said in few words—Otto was hanged this morning."

Prepared as he was for a painful communication, the tidings came upon Horace like a blow. He had been so full of hopeful anticipation, he had had such confidence in the power of his mother's tears, and her gold, that he had little reckoned upon having to suffer anything beyond a seven days' captivity. Now Matteo's horrible threat, that threat which he had not dared to translate to his mother, rose up in his mind like a spectre.

"Are you quite certain—quite certain that the tidings are true?"

"Quite certain," was the mournful reply.

"Does Matteo know all?"

"He can hardly know it, or—or I should not have found you here alone. But he will be sure to know it before the morning; evil tidings fly on swift wings."

Horace grasped the hand of his friend with a convulsive pressure. "Oh, Raphael, you will not—cannot see me murdered in cold blood by that merciless man. For my mother's sake—for God's sake—for the sake of Him whom you serve—release me—save me from this horrible fate!"

The earnest, imploring gaze was met by one of anguish.

"We can fly together," continued Horace, speaking with eager rapidity. "Once out of the forest we are both safe, both happy—"

Raphael interrupted him with a single word, "Enrico!"

In that name were expressed all the difficulties of his position, at least all such as might be regarded as insuperable. The fearful choice to Raphael lay but between his brother and his friend. To save the one was to sacrifice the other.

It was a moment of exquisite pain to the captive and his companion. So great was the tension of their nerves, that the sound of a whistle from below made them both start, as if it

had been a death-signal.

"They come—all is lost!" exclaimed Horace.

"No—not so—there is but one man—it is only Marco," said Raphael, as the powerful form of the bandit appeared advancing to the rock.

"But he knows all—I see it in his face; he comes a death-messenger!" cried Horace.

And certainly the dark, saturnine countenance of the robber wore a deeper shade of gloom than usual, such as could not escape the notice of the anxious eyes that sought to read in it their fate.

"He may know nothing, do not betray your own secret," whispered Raphael, who, however, could not but draw the same conclusion as young Cleveland had done from the bandit's appearance.

CHAPTER XV.

ONWARDS.

When Marco had reached the top of the parapet Horace drew a little hope from the trivial circumstance that the bandit did not look at him, nor appear to notice his presence. He

addressed himself at once to the improvisatore.

"Your preaching to the living is over, you may now pray for the dead," he said in a hollow, sepulchral voice, crossing himself as he spoke.

"Explain yourself!" exclaimed Raphael.

"Your brother is"—Marco pointed downwards—"with the souls in purgatory."

Raphael uttered an exclamation which was almost like a cry. "Not by violence, not by violence?" he gasped forth.

Marco gloomily shook his head, and muttered between his teeth, "The Cascata della Morte!"

"How did it happen?" exclaimed Horace, giving voice to the question painted on Raphael's agonized face.

"We were all on our way to the high road," said Marco, "when some one proposed that instead of following the bend of the river, it would be well for one or two of our party to cross it, so that by making a round to the left, we might come on the travelers from behind, while the rest attacked them in front. Enrico and I had orders to cross. You know," continued the robber, addressing himself to Raphael, "that the only bridge there is the trunk of the tree, thrown across from bank to bank, some twenty yards above the Cascata. Enrico went first, I lingered to tighten my belt, which was loose. I know not whether he was taken with giddiness at seeing the waters rushing on so madly beneath him, or whether he stumbled on the rough bark, but I saw Enrico suddenly go down splash into

the current. He gave a cry and struggled desperately, but the rush there is so strong and rapid that no swimmer could stem it; the water bore him on as if he had been a reed on the surface, on—over—you know the depth of the fall, and may judge whether he could reach the bottom alive."

Raphael closed his eyes, as if to shut out a vision of the awful scene—the precipice and the victim dashed over it.

"Not time for a single Ave or Paternoster," said the bandit, "even had he had the grace to repeat one; but I trow that you had made half a heretic of him. There was not a saint who would help him in his need, or he would not have come to so awful an end."

Raphael turned and rushed into the cave, to hide himself from the sunshine, and give vent in solitude and darkness to the first burst of uncontrollable grief.

"Ay, ay," said Marco, following him with his eyes; "if ever one brother loved another, that brother was Raphael. He is always teaching and preaching about submission, but I take it that when it comes to a sharp, sudden trial like this, the heretic's faith and trust will be whirled away, like that poor struggling wretch who has just been dashed to pieces over the fall. It was an awful sight, even to one used like myself to rough work," added the bandit, wiping his brow; "and often when I stand sentry within sound of that deathly cataract, I shall fancy that I hear again the last cry of the miserable Enrico."

"Is Matteo returning soon?" asked Horace, who could not

forget his own perilous position even in his interest in the fate of the sufferer.

"He will come when he has done his business," was the surly reply. "The sun has nearly sunk behind the hills, but the expected party have not yet appeared. The band will keep on the watch, and perhaps pass the night in the woods. I am appointed sentinel at the rock-pass till they return, and I have come to fill my wallet and my flask, as it is uncertain how many hours I may have to remain and keep guard."

So saying, the robber went to the entrance to the cave, pushed aside the plants which almost concealed it, and stooping his tall, gaunt figure, entered in. Horace felt an almost irresistible impulse to try once more the descent of the rocks, impossible as he had found it to be to climb down while the shackles confined his ankles. He was almost bewildered by what he heard, evil tidings succeeding evil tidings with a rapidity which had overpowered for a time the stronger nature of Raphael, disciplined as it had been by conflict and suffering. Horace attempted to pray, but could not collect his thoughts; the only words of Scripture that came into his mind were, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!" and that aspiration the poor doomed captive uttered from the depth of his soul.

In about a quarter of an hour Marco emerged from the cave, and proceeded towards his allotted post. He stopped as he was about to pass Horace, and looked at him with a scrutinizing eye.

"One might deem that *you* had been the one to lose a brother," he observed, "or that you had just seen the ghost of

Enrico. You look white as a corpse on the bier."

Horace made no answer, and the robber went on his way.

Scarcely had Marco reached the wood, when Raphael came forth from the cave. He was now perfectly calm, but almost stern in his sadness, and Horace saw more distinctly than he had ever seen it before, the Rossignol's likeness to his brother. Raphael made a gesture to the prisoner to place his foot upon a large stone which was near, and then, to the surprise of Horace, threw himself on his knees beside him.

"When I besought God to make the path plain before me, I thought not of this answer," said Raphael in a low tone; "but just and true are his ways;" and the moment after, with a file which he had brought in his hand, he was working at the chain of the captive.

The mingled feelings of hope, fear, delight, impatience, which struggled together in the bosom of Horace pass description. Though Raphael filed with the full power of his right arm, it seemed to Horace as though the stubborn iron would never give way, and the noise caused by the instrument sounded to him so loud, that he was in terror lest it should reach Marco, and awake his suspicions. At the first pause made by Raphael, though it was but to shake back the dark locks that had fallen over his brow as he stooped, Horace caught the file from his hand and used it himself with the desperate energy of one who felt that his life might be the sacrifice of even a few minutes' delay; but he found that better progress was made when he resigned it again to Raphael. Not a single word was uttered by either until the work was completed, and Horace

stood unfettered beneath the deep blue sky, which was already darkening into night. He would have leaped and bounded in the rapture of recovered freedom, but for an instinctive delicacy which forbade demonstration of joy in the presence of the bereaved brother of Enrico.

"Now, put on my mantle and hat," said Raphael.

"Why so?" asked Horace; "surely we shall escape together; I shall have your guidance through the forest?"

"Through the most intricate part you shall have it; but when we reach the post guarded by Marco, we must separate; it is only wrapt in disguise that you will be able to pass him."

"He is but one man—there are two of us," began Horace, all his natural courage rising at the prospect of a struggle.

"One man—but with two pistols at his belt, and with a hand that, when it draws a trigger, never fails to hit its mark. Remember also that the sound of a shot would be sufficient to draw the whole band upon us. Do not delay putting on this disguise; time is precious to you now."

Horace promptly obeyed. Though he had not yet attained the stature of Raphael, the difference between their heights was not great enough to be striking, and the almost sudden darkness of southern latitudes was now falling upon earth.

"There is the moon," observed Horace; "her light will serve to guide us on our way."

"I need it not," the Rossignol replied, "every step of that way

is familiar to me;" and he began descending the rocks.

Horace followed, rejoicing in his newly-restored powers of activity, though their exercise was cramped not a little by the necessity of moving with caution in the darkness. Before he clambered over the rocky parapet, he turned one last glance towards the old oak, the dim outline of whose branches he faintly could trace.

"Farewell," thought the released captive, "farewell for ever to the place where I suffered so much of evil, and learned so much of good; where I have seen more of the wickedness of man, and more of the grace of God, in a few days, than in all my former lifetime!"

In profound silence, save when a pebble fell, dislodged beneath a climbing foot or hand, the twain descended those rocks down which the prisoner had so often gazed, measuring their depth with an anxious and at length a hopeless eye. A few more steps, and the fugitives had entered the depths of the forest. Here the light was almost entirely shut out, for rarely was a glimpse of the silver moon seen behind the thick branches. Over moss-grown roots, between the knotted, gnarled trunks of old trees, now bending low to avoid being struck by their boughs, now thrusting aside plants whose long trailing tresses concealed all trace of a path even during the day, Raphael guided his companion. Occasionally there was a rustle as they started some wild creature from its lair, or a frightened bird rose on the wing. A single nightingale was pouring forth its soft, melancholy lay; other sounds there were none, till a faint noise, as of a distant waterfall, reached the listening ear. A sudden turn at length brought the fugitives to a

break in the forest, and Horace saw before him the same ledge of rock overhanging a precipice which he so well recollected traversing under the guidance of Enrico. The moon, almost at the full, in unveiling brightness shone on the cold gray stone, veined with green moss and lichen, and the wooded heights which rose on one side above it, and even revealed the awful beauty of the deep gorge on the left, glimmering on a stream which, hundreds of feet below, wound like a thread of silver through the dark valley. Distinct in the moonshine, which threw his black shadow on the rock wall behind him, rose the gaunt form of Marco the bandit. He stood at so narrow a part of the ledge, that though he was almost close to the rock, the precipice in front of him yawned scarcely more than a yard from his feet. He could hardly be passed without being touched, and Horace perceived at once that, without the protection of a disguise, the attempt to cross in front of the watchful sentinel must bring inevitable destruction.

"Draw your hat lower over your brow," whispered Raphael; "the pass-word is 'Speranza.' If Marco speak to you, do not reply. Silence on my part would cause no surprise after all that has passed. The sound of water will be sufficient to guide you, till you reach the bank of the stream. Do not attempt to cross it," Raphael's voice faltered as he spoke, "turn to the right and follow its course till you reach the high road, which crosses it by a bridge. And now—God's blessing go with you!" and extending his hand to Horace, Raphael added, "here we must part."

"O Raphael!" exclaimed the young Englishman, grasping it with emotion, "I cannot desert you thus, cannot leave you to the vengeance of Matteo—I feel that your blood would be on

my head—I would rather go back to the cave!"

The two hands were yet clasped in each other, and Horace felt the warm pressure of his friend's as he replied, "You would have no chance of mercy; your young life would be the certain sacrifice; I have a thousand advantages which you do not possess. I know every man in the band—I have put most of them under obligation; every path in the forest is familiar to me as well by night as by day. If you knew the mountain's weight which will be removed from my heart by your flight, you would not dally thus with your fate."

"But do I not leave you to danger, the most terrible danger?"

"You leave me to the care of my heavenly Father. He is with me, I have nothing to fear."

"But," began Horace, still retaining his hold of the hand of Raphael, "if you should suffer for this generous act, I never should know peace any more."

"Say not so," murmured the Rossignol, with more than his usual sweetness of tone; "if anything should happen to me, think that the lone, desolate wanderer has found at last rest and a home; that the dreary warfare is ended—the long life-struggle over. I am not, as you are, a mother's hope, and pride, and comfort; I now stand alone in the world." "I will be your brother!" exclaimed Horace; "oh, I cannot, will not desert you!"

"You could not serve me, even were you to return to the cave," said Raphael; "I could not replace the chains; the Rubicon was passed when I filed them asunder. My chance of

escape would be greatly lessened by my having to care for your safety as well as my own. Therefore go, my friend—my brother!"

Raphael drew Horace to his heart, and pressed him to it for a moment in a close embrace; then suddenly unloosing it, he turned around and buried himself in the wood.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PERILOUS PASS.

The parting from Raphael gave a keen pang to Horace. He could scarcely have believed that in so short a space of time any human being could have obtained so strong a hold upon his affections. Pity, gratitude, admiration had combined in a three-fold cord to knit to his heart the man whose fate had been so singularly linked with his own, and who was now freely risking life to save him. But Horace had no time to dwell on tender recollections at a moment like this. The absorbing instinct of self-preservation claimed now the first place in his mind. Every minute of delay increased the danger of the dreaded Matteo's return. Horace must pass along that perilous ledge, close in front of the ruffian whose strong arm could, were his slightest suspicion aroused, hurl the stripling over the beetling precipice to lie a mangled corpse in the valley below.

"Speranza! Speranza! hope!" Horace repeated to himself,

less from the fear that in the excitement of the moment the pass-word might escape his memory, than from an effort to draw encouragement from the sound. "God be my helper! God be my hope!" and drawing Raphael's mantle yet more closely round his form, and pulling the hat lower over his eyes, with a palpitating heart, yet a firm, brave step, Horace Cleveland strode forth into the moonlight, which had never before appeared to him so painfully brilliant.

"Ha, Raphael, you are not going *thither*! it is of no avail! you will only turn your brain altogether!" exclaimed Marco, as Horace approached him, and to the no small alarm of the fugitive, the bandit actually laid a strong, heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Speranza!" muttered Horace, shaking himself loose from a grasp which seemed to him like that of death. The fugitive could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses when he found himself actually striding onwards beyond the perilous spot. He expected every moment to be overtaken by a bullet, or to hear a sudden shout of recognition. He dared not look behind him, nor much quicken his steps, but instinctively he held his breath till he had gained the wood at the further end of the ledge. Then, indeed a low, fervent thanksgiving burst from the lips of Horace, and he felt himself really free.

The sound of falling water had every minute become more and more distinct. Horace, with eager hope, hurried forward in the direction from whence it came. Yet a little struggling through bramble and bush, trying the most direct way rather than the clearest, while still listening with painful anxiety for sound of pursuit, and the youth reached the bank of a stream

which was rushing on as if eager to plunge madly down into the valley. The trunk of a tree lay over it, cutting with its dark, rough outline the path of quivering silver which the moonbeams had thrown across the waters. Here must have been the scene of the fearful catastrophe which Marco had related.

Horace shuddered at the sight of those dark, rapid waters in which a fellow-creature so lately had perished. He had now, however, no time for reflecting on the untimely fate of the wretched Enrico. Remembering the directions of Raphael, Horace was about to track the upward course of the stream, when he was startled by a faint cry, as of a human voice, which mingled with the rushing noise of the cataract. Horace was not of a superstitious nature; but it is no marvel that, when his nerves were quivering from the tension required for a great effort—at that hour of night—in that desolate place—on the very spot where he believed that, but a few hours before, a miserable man had been swept into eternity—that cry should seem to curdle the blood in his veins.

Again it rose, more distinct than before; and now superstition—if such a feeling had for a moment arisen—gave place to one more worthy. Horace was many yards from the head of the cataract, though he could see its spray white in the moonlight; the way to it was very thickly overgrown with brushwood, through which mortal foot had never yet made its way. He held a short debate in his mind as to the course which he ought to pursue; whether he should seek his own safety by going to the right, or whether he should force a difficult passage to the top of the fall, in hopes of giving aid to some fellow-creature in distress. Was it not possible that Enrico,

saved by some incomprehensible miracle, might be there in a position of peril from which he had no power to extricate himself? Might not Horace give aid to the brother of Raphael? That last thought destroyed every doubt, every selfish calculation of personal risk. Horace only considered how he might reach the place, and though not yet daring to answer the cry, he began with all the activity and energy on which he once had prided himself, to make his way to the edge of the cascata.

When the English youth had accomplished his object, how wondrous was the scene which presented itself to his view as he bent forward to gaze down the cascade. The body of water was not large, but the depth of the fall was very great, and one sheet of white foam overspread the stream which plunged seething, hissing, roaring—down—down—down—till it was lost in the cloud of spray which, hundreds of feet below, veiled the bottom of the cataract. Exquisite was the beauty of the fall, especially as now seen by the misty, silvery light of the moon, which gave a ghastly grandeur to the wild, bold, wooded rocks, which the cataract seemed to be cleaving asunder like an archangel's glittering sword. But the eye of Horace was riveted on one dark object in the midst of the foam, not many feet below the summit. At the first glance he deemed that it might be a fragment of rock that had endured for ages the dash and fret of the restless waters; but no; it moved—it clung—a human being, suspended as it seemed by miracle, was living—breathing in the very heart of the dizzying roar and rush!

"How can I help you?" shouted out Horace, forgetful of everything but the frightful situation of Enrico.

"A rope—quick—my strength is giving way!" Hollow and

strange came the scarcely articulate sounds.

Horace struck his brow with his hand. "What can I do? oh, what can I do? a rope were worth the ransom of a king!"

"I can't hold out long; the rush will bear me down." The voice was fainter than before.

Horace drew Raphael's mantle from his shoulders; he tore from it strip after strip; he could think of no other means of saving the perishing man. With fingers which trembled with nervous haste, he proceeded to tie together these unmanagable substitutes for a rope. Tightly he knotted them, and tried each knot; for the awful consequences, were a single one to give way, were too terrible to think of. His movements were quickened by the horrible dread that he would see Enrico, exhausted and despairing, whirled down to certain death at the very moment when deliverance appeared at hand.

"Haste, or I'm lost!" cried the voice from the fall.

Horace was engaged in fastening one end of his improvised rope round a tree which bent over the cataract. The stem was so slender that he almost feared lest its roots should give way with the strain which would be upon it, but there was no other tree sufficiently close to the edge to serve his purpose.

"Now!" exclaimed Horace, as he flung the thick knotted rope towards the spot where the indistinctly seen form of Enrico broke the long line of foam.

At that moment a cloud passed over the moon, which had till then been shining in untroubled brightness.

"Where is it? I can't find it!" cried Enrico, in a tone of anguish. Horace's interest rose to agony. He had done all that he could do—he had strained every nerve—he had now nothing left but the means of prayer. Fervently he prayed for light—light on the fearful, the fatal darkness. Like a film the cloud rolled away; he looked down—almost fearing to look—Enrico was still clinging below.

"I see it, but I can't reach it!" shrieked the miserable man; the dark line of the rope lay on the foam just beyond his outstretched hand.

Horace was almost in despair; he had no power to throw it nearer; the current of the waters was gradually drawing the life-rope further away from their victim.

"Make a spring at it!" exclaimed Horace, and shuddered at his own words, lest Enrico should obey, miss the rope, and be dashed to pieces down the fall.

"He has done it! oh, merciful Heaven!" gasped the youth, almost faint with extreme excitement; "hold on, hold on for your life!" and with a strength beyond his years—a strength which seemed to be superhuman—Horace, throwing his whole weight on the upper end of the rope, drew it hand over hand towards him. He was in momentary dread of feeling it suddenly become light from the yielding of a knot, or from the numbed hands below giving up their desperate grasp; he was not without an undefined sense of terror lest he should be overbalanced himself, and instead of saving Enrico, be dashed with him over the abyss. Not even when Horace had passed Marco in safety had he experienced a feeling of relief so

intense as when Enrico's dripping head appeared above the fall, and, a moment after, with a tremendous effort, he swung himself on the bank.

"Thank God! oh, thank God!" exclaimed Horace. Enrico lay motionless, senseless. His failing powers had been concentrated on that one effort, and he swooned as soon as it had been made.

Horace did all that he could to fan the flickering spark of life. He first dragged Enrico a few paces from the edge; for in that moment of dizzy horror he could not disconnect nearness to the Cascata della Morte from the idea of danger; he longed to get beyond hearing of its roar. He then removed part of the clothes of the half-drowned man, which were torn, saturated, and dripping with water. He chafed Enrico's limbs, breathed on his lips, tried to impart warmth to the bruised and benumbed frame. He wrung the water from the long black hair which hung in tangled strands over the ghastly face, which even in its senselessness retained a look of distress which told of the agony of the late struggle for life.

While Horace is thus engaged I will relate how Enrico had come into the strange and fearful position from which he had been thus wonderfully rescued.

Slipping on the rough tree-bridge and losing his balance, Enrico had fallen into the stream, struggling in vain with the current, and had been (as Marco had described), borne onward to the edge of the cataract. In vain had he attempted to catch at the reeds of grasses near, in vain he had shrieked for help. He had been whirled on, and then over in that awful plunge which

involved almost inevitable destruction!

From the centre of the rock-wall that backed the cataract, and not very far from the summit, jutted out a small fragment of crag, round and over which the furious waters had for centuries dashed, bearing away particles of the solid stone by ceaseless wear, yet leaving a tooth-like projection, only visible when the flood was not full, though its opposition always whirled the spray in wider circles from that spot. On this projection the unfortunate Enrico was dashed, stunned and bruised. Caught by his clothes, he had been suspended for some minutes in an almost unconscious state, unable even to utter a cry. He revived, indeed, but only to become aware of the full horrors of his situation. His eyes being, from his position, turned below, he beheld the awful depth down which he expected every moment to be hurled, as the fierce hissing waters, with unceasing flow, seemed like merciless enemies determined to tear him down, to wrench him away from the one little point of refuge afforded by the projecting crag to which he now wildly clung. Enrico's soul sickened, his brain reeled; the din of the torrent rushing, rolling, roaring—above, below—almost maddened the wretched man! A strange idea possessed his mind, that it was Raphael's prayer which suspended him now, as it were, by a hair above the gulf, of not only temporal but eternal destruction. If Raphael should cease, even for a moment, to pray, the half-frenzied Enrico believed that the waters would have their wild will, and bear him crashing down to perdition, swathed in the white shroud of their foam!

Thus passed the fearful time till brief twilight deepened into night. Still Enrico clung to his crag, its shape enabling him so

to support his person that its weight did not rest on his hands, though all their strength was needed to enable him to resist the constant pressure of the furious waters. He was contending with a foe that could never grow weary. Often Enrico cried aloud for help, with a bitter consciousness of the improbability that such cry would reach a human ear, since he had never yet known any one come to the top of the cliff, less from the difficulty of reaching it, than from a superstition which clothed the Cascata della Morte with supernatural terrors. The forest path, indeed, was not far distant, but it was lonely and wild, and never trodden save by members of the band. It seemed to Enrico as if the din which perpetually roared in his ears completely drowned the sound of his voice. He could hardly hear it himself; how could it reach a distant ear?

The robber had become calmer, though not less wretched. His mind now reverted to the past. Each event of his life—every error—every sin—seemed to rise up before him distinct as the white spray in the moonlight, hissed in his ears with the roar of the fall. Had not his position for years been imaged by his position now? Carried away by his passions as by the flood, hurled over the brink of crime in full rapid career towards endless ruin, yet caught—suspended—restrained—as it were, by the prayers, entreaties, example, of one who remained amid the whirl, the rack, and the rush, yet unshaken and firm as the crag.

In that hour of extremest peril the sinner's cry arose to his God. Raphael had spoken of mercy; might not that mercy be extended even unto him, not perhaps to save him from impending death, but from the more fearful death of the soul? Words that his brother had read from the Scriptures flashed

back on the mind of Enrico, "*He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.*" The drowning soul clung to that truth, even as the numbed hands clung to the rock. Enrico knew the utter impossibility now of saving himself; he felt that he deserved no mercy from an offended God; but there was One who could save *to the uttermost*, One who had died to save, One who could draw him yet out of the horrible pit, and set his feet on a rock, and order his goings.

While thus hanging, as it were, between earth and heaven, Enrico heard the call of Horace. He doubted not for a moment that the Almighty had sent his brother to his aid. When the rope of knotted strips was thrown down the cascade, it seemed to the poor penitent as an emblem of heavenly hope. Then sudden darkness hid it from his view, and in vain his hand groped in the chill waters to find it. The gloom of despair seemed to settle on his soul. The cloud rolled away, and the straining eyes of Enrico beheld the rope once again. He sought to grasp it, and failed. Was it that mercy, even the mercy held out to all contrite sinners, was not to be reached by him—that he who for so long had tried the patience of a long-suffering God, was to perish at last even in sight of the means of salvation?

"Raphael is praying, and I will hope," thought the struggling sufferer; and when Horace shouted down the direction to spring, "Raphael bids me, I obey," was the reflection which nerved him for the one desperate leap upon which he staked his existence.

Even when the rope was grasped, so great was the sufferer's exhaustion, so benumbed and stiffened were his fingers by the

drenching of the flood, that he could scarcely retain his hold. Yet it was as though an angel whispered as he was dragged upwards through the dash and the foam, "Hold fast—hold fast the hope set before you!" It was not merely the action of a drowning man grasping a cord, but of a perishing soul clinging to its last hope of grace.

As soon as the fearful effort was crowned with success, exhausted nature gave way. In a stupor which must have had fatal consequences had it overwhelmed him two minutes earlier, Enrico lay with his dripping head supported on the knee of Horace Cleveland. The stupor continued for some time. At length the pale lips parted and sounds came forth. Horace bent down to listen, and caught the words,—

"Oh, Raphael, I knew it was your prayer!"

Then the large black eyes suddenly opened. They rested not on Horace, but looked wildly around, as if seeking some other face; and half raising himself on his arm, Enrico exclaimed:

"Where is he—where is my brother?"

Horace did not answer, for at that instant his attention was arrested by the sound of a distant report. He sprang to his feet—there came another—another—then the rattling sound of a volley, all in the direction of the high road.

"Ha!" exclaimed Horace Cleveland, "the hunters lay in wait for a deer, but they seem to have fallen in with a lion."

Then, for the first time, Enrico recognized his deliverer. "The prisoner, and free!" he exclaimed in accents of alarm.

"Ay, free—free as the air, and not likely to be soon in bondage again, if that sound of musketry, as I believe, tells that soldiers are at hand."

Enrico struggled to his feet, passed his hand across his brow, and listened with a look of bewilderment and fear.

"Enrico, you also are free—free from worse bondage than mine. Remember that the robbers will deem your life forfeited. Surrender yourself up to justice, and I pledge my honor that every effort shall be made to secure your safety and your pardon."

"Pardon!" Enrico repeated the word, clasped his hands and looked upwards;—he was not thinking of the pardon of man.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONE EFFORT MORE.

We will now return to Raphael, who with keen and breathless interest had watched from the shade of the forest Horace's passage along the perilous ledge. When Marco's hand had been laid on the shoulder of the youth, the Rossignol could hardly refrain from springing forward to the rescue, and scarcely had Horace himself experienced greater satisfaction than did his friend when that startling danger was past. When the fugitive had disappeared from his view, Raphael, for the

first time, appeared to have leisure to think of himself. To aid in the escape of a prisoner was, as he well knew, a crime to be atoned for only with life. Raphael was young, and notwithstanding the recent bereavement, which had been like the wrenching away of a heart-string, life was to Raphael a precious thing, not to be parted with lightly.

As he stood with folded arms under the shadow of the waving boughs, a sense of the loveliness of nature came on his poet-soul with a soothing, softening power. He felt loath to leave God's beautiful world. How divinely fair looked the scene before him, beneath the silvery rays of the moon! How woefully breathed the night-breeze upon his feverish brow! How sweet sounded the nightingale's song, warbled soft through the stilly air! Hope, even earthly hope, was not dead in that young bosom; there was still a desire for human love and for human happiness there. Raphael thought of Horace, blessed with friends, a mother, a home; not, indeed, with envy, but with the instinctive yearning of a tender and loving nature for the sympathy of human hearts, of which he had known so little.

Thus the improvisatore had no intention of awaiting a violent death with folded hands; he revolved all possible means of escape. From Matteo's mercy he expected as little as he would have done from that of a lioness whose cubs had been slaughtered before her eyes. He must not await the burst of frantic fury of a father bereaved of his son and balked of his vengeance. Nor could Raphael count upon the protection of any of the band, though he knew that on some he had the claim of gratitude. No, he must rely upon the aid of God and his own efforts alone.

Raphael resolved to wait just long enough to give Horace a fair start, which might be essential to his safety, and then to follow himself in the same track as that which his friend had pursued. It was true that Marco must be passed on the perilous rock—that the bandit had pistols in his belt, and that his bullet always levelled his victim. But Raphael deemed it possible that the man would be reluctant to slay a comrade, alone and unarmed. Marco was savage, ignorant, blinded by superstition, a fanatic who regarded murder itself as a venial offence compared with heresy; but he was not so utterly hardened and depraved as were Matteo and Beppo. The fate of Enrico had seemed somewhat to move even his rugged nature. At all events, Raphael felt that of two dangers the lesser one was to be chosen;—better to try the chance of passing Marco, than to await the return of Matteo and his gang.

After recommending himself to the protection of his heavenly Father, in submission to the divine will, whatever that will might appoint, the young Italian quitted the shrouding shade, and with a firm step advanced towards the sentinel, whose eyes were at that moment, turned in an opposite direction. Raphael had, as we have seen, divested himself both of hat and mantle. His face was calm, but very pale;—the expression that of a man who knows that he is facing death, but who has nerved himself to face it without flinching. The mass of rich dark hair thrown back from his high, pale forehead, fell almost to his shoulders, damp with the dews of night.

Marco was repeating an Ave for the soul of the miserable Enrico, when, chancing to turn round, he suddenly beheld the tall figure approaching him in the moonlight, bareheaded, in its

spirit-like stillness and calmness, with the gaze of its large, thoughtful eyes riveted on his own. It came along the path by which, not an hour before, he believed that Raphael had passed. The Rossignol marveled to see the fear which he was wrestling down in his own heart suddenly transferred to the man before him. Marco's eyes dilated, his lips parted, his very hair seemed to rise from his head; he crossed himself with a trembling hand, moved backwards step by step as Raphael Goldoni drew nearer, but staring at him still, like the hare fascinated by the gaze of the serpent. At last with a cry, "*E il suo spirito!*" ("It is his ghost!") the strong man actually turned and fled, overpowered by superstitious terrors.

Then Raphael knew the cause of that before inexplicable alarm which his presence had inspired, and with thankfulness for the path thus cleared for him by means upon which he could never have reckoned, came a bitter pang of remembrance, as he thought on his brother, loved and lost! There appeared to be as little cause to doubt the death of Enrico as there would have been had he been dashed over the Falls of Niagara; no human foresight could have calculated upon the singular accident to which he owed his almost miraculous preservation.

Scarcely had the Rossignol entered the wood on the further side of the pass, with a feeling of deep melancholy as he approached the scene of his brother's fall, when he was startled, as Horace had been, by the sound of distant firing. It was evident that Matteo and his ruffian band had lighted on no despicable foe—that they were engaged in a desperate struggle with those who would claim blood for blood, and life for life.

Raphael and Horace little guessed that a timid delicate woman, foiled in her efforts to save her son in one way, had attempted another, with the energy given by desperation to maternal love. There had been a carriage and a lady within it; there had been postilions and outriders; the appearance of the equipage had been such as to awake cupidity, but not arouse alarm. But the banditti were soon to find out that the hands which held bridles were such as had been accustomed to grasp the sword. The luggage on the carriage consisted of sabres and carbines; and the travelers within it, save one, were soldiers chosen for courage and strength. Gold had, indeed, been lavished with unsparing hand by the almost despairing mother; and now, notwithstanding constitutional nervousness and delicacy of frame, Mrs. Cleveland risked her own life amidst clashing steel and flying bullets in order to lure from their secret fastness, and draw within reach of the arm of justice, those who in perilous captivity held her only son!

What was the result of the conflict we shall hear in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VICTORY.

"Onward, onward! now or never must we make a struggle for freedom!" exclaimed Horace. "If your strength fail you, Enrico, lean upon me. This is no time for giving way to

weariness; and as for hesitation and doubt—"

"The firing has ceased!" gasped Enrico; "we know not who are the victors."

"The right has conquered, be sure of that!" cried Horace, whose countenance, beaming with hope and flushed with excitement, presented a strong contrast to that of Enrico, livid even to ghastliness! The young bandit in his dripping garments looked more like the corpse of a drowned man than one through whose veins the warm blood of life was coursing.

"Come on!" again exclaimed the impatient youth; and almost dragging his companion forward, Horace hurried on for a few paces, and suddenly confronted—Matteo!

Defeat, disaster, despair, were stamped on the dark lineaments of the chieftain, distinct as the blood-marks on face and hand. It was the wounded lion driven back into the shelter of his native jungle, who hears behind him the bay of the bloodhounds, the shout of the hunters on his track! Matteo had seen all his followers, save Marco, slain or taken, and then, not till then, had he dashed aside opposing weapons and plunged into the depths of the thicket. He had paused but once, and that was to reload a pistol, less to provide for defence than to assure himself that he should never fall alive into the hands of his foes.

Before this desperate man stood his prisoner, his Italian companion at his side. No thought of apparitions roused in Matteo superstitious dread; he doubted not that in mortal flesh and blood he beheld a traitor and an escaping hostage, a

hostage for the son of whose ignominious death he on that very night had heard!

A fierce joy flashed in the blood-shot eyes of the bandit; he had lost all beside, but a dying man's vengeance yet might be his. Matteo leveled his pistol and fired; the report rang sharp through the wood, a victim lay stretched on the ground, but that victim was not Horace Cleveland. Raphael had reached the spot at that crisis only in time to throw himself in front of his friend, and receive in his own bosom the bullet destined for another!

With a wild cry Enrico rushed forward and threw himself on the ground by his brother. Absorbed by one overpowering dread, the wretched young man was unconscious of all that was passing around him; he heard not, cared not for the desperate struggle of Matteo with the soldiers, his wrestling for liberty and life as a wild beast caught in the toils, nor knew that the struggle ended at last in the capture of the chief. Enrico heard not, cared not for the sobs of delight with which a mother embraced a rescued son, nor knew the deep sympathy with which both Mrs. Cleveland and Horace now bent over Raphael. Had an earthquake shaken the forest, Enrico would scarcely have felt it. His brother's head was supported on his breast; the expression of the features was serene and painless, the heavy eyelids closed, and the long dark lashes resting on the colorless cheek.

"Raphael! my brother, look at me, speak to me! This is not, it cannot be death! One word, if it be of reproach—one look, were it even in anger! Tell me that I have not this night been rescued from the jaws of death, that I have not been saved from

the whelming waters to be plunged in darker depths of wretchedness!"

The young man sobbed aloud in the anguish of his soul. His nerves had been completely unstrung by the events of the last few hours; his mind was crushed by the consciousness that it had been his guilt that had led to the ruin of his brother.

"He bleeds but little; he may, he will revive!" exclaimed Horace. "I will bring water!" and he hurried away towards the stream. Briny drops were fast falling on the face of Raphael, but they seemed to have no power to arouse him.

"O God, have mercy upon me! O God, spare my brother; let him not perish through my sin! I will submit to Thy will in all things—I will not murmur—I will not rebel—only spare this one precious life!" It was the wrestling, agonizing prayer bursting from a broken and contrite heart.

"See, his lips move!" exclaimed Horace, who had just sprinkled water over the face of the dying man.

Faint sounds came forth, soft and melodious still, from those tuneful lips so soon to be silenced in death; even Enrico hushed his wild grief to listen. Low but distinct were the words:

"Joy cometh—in the morning!—see—it is brightening in the east—darkness is passing away—and for ever!"

"Raphael, do you know me?" faltered Horace, as he knelt beside the Rossignol, and pressed his icy hand in his own.

Raphael did not answer the question; the spirit fluttering on the confines of a world of light seemed already to feel the eternal sunshine on its wings! The large dark eyes slowly unclosed, but their gaze was fixed upwards, as if they beheld the vision of glories hidden from mortal eyes.

"It is over," he murmured—"all is over—the struggle—the battle is past! More than conqueror—through Him—only through Him who loved me! Ah, Marino—thou art there to welcome me, the palm in thy hand—the glory round thy brow. I knew our parting would not be for long! See the angel faces bending from the clouds—they are waiting there to receive me—light is streaming from the golden gate. Oh, stay me not—I must go!"

"He must not die and leave me!" gasped Enrico; "Raphael, live, if it be but to guide me, to teach me how to wrestle with my sins, to lead me, even me, to the Savior!"

Raphael turned his eyes upon his brother with a sudden look of joyful recognition.

"Enrico, saved!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, saved from destruction of body and soul, saved to be —"

"*My joy and crown of rejoicing!*" cried the dying man, the radiance of unearthly rapture lighting up his fading features. "Oh, my God, I thank thee—I bless Thee—Thou hast given me my heart's desire—Thou hast heard my prayer for my brother! Hark!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "do you not hear the shouts—the music—loud—louder! It is the song of triumph. The angels

are beckoning me upwards—why cannot I rise and join them! He is there—my Leader—my King! I have waited for Him—sought Him—I have found Him! All the mists are dissolving—the clouds are melting into light—the chain that bound me to the earth is loosening—He holds out a crown—a crown of life—and I take it—to cast at His feet."

Horace covered his eyes. The martyr-spirit had spread its pinions and soared upwards, leaving a track of light behind!

* * * * *

A full pardon for Enrico was ere long procured from the king of Naples. It was granted partly on account of the services of his father, partly because of the earnest pleadings of the Clevelands, who thus sought to repay some portion of the deep debt which they owed his brother.

The death of Raphael Goldoni had effected more than his life. His light, which for a brief space had shone on earth to the glory of his heavenly Father, had not been extinguished in darkness. Horace and Enrico had seen his example casting a pure though feeble radiance in the deep gloom of the robbers' cave; but it had a stronger, more abiding influence upon them when they thought of him as one of the starry host, raised to glitter for ever in the cloudless heaven above! Raphael had longed to win souls to Christ, and had sought them at the greatest personal risk, in the darkest haunt of evil. For such is the crown reserved, for such is the promise given.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the

stars for ever and ever!"

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