ADVENTURES OF AN AIDE-DE-CAMP, VOLUME III

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or, A Campaign in Calabria

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ADVENTURES
OF
AN AIDE-DE-CAMP:
OR,
A CAMPAIGN IN CALABRIA.

BY
JAMES GRANT, ESQ.
AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR."

Claud. I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am returned, and that war thoughts
Have left their places vacant; in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying how I liked her ere I went to war.
SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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ADVENTURES

OF AN

AIDE-DE-CAMP.

CHAPTER I.

THE THIRD PENITENT—THE MONK.

The escape of a second victim from the vaults caused a great surmising and anxiety at Canne; and although, no doubt, the cardinal suspected that I had a hand in the matter, he never spoke of it. The astonishment of the keeper was boundless, when he discovered his charge vanishing so unaccountably: he was accused of conspiracy, and imprisoned by order of the podesta. The poor man defended himself before the tribunal, by laying the blame upon—whom think you, gentle reader?—VIRGIL; who is regarded by the lower order of Italians less as a poet, than as a conjuror and magician, upon whose guilty head the blame of everything wicked and wonderful is laid.

Among the mountains, he has for ages been deemed the architect of every devilish contrivance, every fathomless cavern, splendid crag, fantastic rock, and ruined tower. A long dispute ensued between two learned lawyers, concerning the question whether it might or might not have been Virgil; and the decision was given for the prisoner, on the testimony of the chiavaro, or smith: who declared that a venerable man with a white beard, meagre aspect, and eyes like living coals, had ordered a set of keys like those produced in court, for which he paid in strange and antique coin; and when he (the chiavaro) looked for them next day, they had vanished from his pouch, showing plainly that they were coins of hell. All present crossed themselves; and the keeper was immediately set at liberty, and restored to his dignity and bunch of keys.

Of the Cavalier Paola, I had intelligence before leaving Canne. Gathering together a band of those bold spirits who infested the wilds of the Brettian forest, he fired the palace of his foe, the bishop; who narrowly escaped with a severe bullet wound, of which he soon after died. For this outrage, Casteluccio had to pay many a bright ducat to the altars of mother church, before he was permitted to resume his place in society; and it was not until the death of Murat that he obtained peaceable possession of his patrimony at Cosenza.

Several days elapsed without the appearance of the Roman courier, and I became very impatient to rejoin my regiment. Notwithstanding the risk of discovery, prompted equally by curiosity and humanity, I made a last visit to

those frightful vaults, to free the remaining captive.

The stillness of midnight was around me when I entered, but a noisy singing rang through the echoing cells; the measure was a boisterous sailor's carol, such as I had often heard the fishermen singing, as they sat mending their nets on the shore of Messina.

I beheld in the third captive, an Italian, about forty years of age, possessing a powerful and savage aspect, strongly chained to a large stone which served him for a chair and table, while a pile of straw between it and the wall formed his bed. He was flourishing his arms and snapping his fingers whilst he sang; but ceased on my entrance, and regarded me with a sullen stare of surprise. A large leathern flask, which stood on the stone near him, explained the cause of his merriment.

"Ha! thou cursed owl that pokest about in the night, what seek you here, when you should be snug in the dormitory? Up helm and away, black devil! there's no girl here to confess—no one but Lancelloti of Fruili, a born imp of Etna, who will break every bone in your hypocritical body, if it comes within reach of his grapnels!"

"The pirate—the companion of Petronio!" I exclaimed; "are you that Lancelloti of whom I have heard so much? Astonishing!"

"Ho! ho! what are you talking about?" asked the captive, rolling his great head about. "I tell you, Signor Canonico, that I am Osman Carora, a jovial monk of Friuli—(what am I saying?) yes, Friuli—would I was there again! Never have I seen a prospect equal to the fair Carinthian mountains, and the deep rocky dales through which the Isonza sweeps, on to the Gulf of Trieste. It was my hap to look for many a dreary day through the iron bars of my dormitory on that gulf, and afterwards to sail, with royals and sky-sails set, every rope a-taunto, and the red flag of Mahomet flying at the foremast head. Accursed bishop! I may revenge me yet, if the good friend who brings me this jolly flask every night proves true. Ah, Truffi, though crooked in form and cross in spirit, thou art an angel of light to me!"

"Truffi!" said I; "mean you Gaspare?"

The renegade, moved alternately by brutality, rage, and maudlin sentimentality, burst into a shout of drunken laughter.

"You know him—ha! ha! and are a jolly priest after all. Alla akbar! instead of a prying monkish spy, I find you a comrade. Thou who knowest Gaspare must doubtless have heard of me. He is now in Canne, planning my escape from this cursed cockpit; to which the double-dyed villany of Petronio has consigned me. Gaspare was my stanch gossip in the cloisters of Friuli, and my master-at-arms and fac-totum on board the *Crescent*: his ingenuity alone saved me when I had nearly fallen into the clutches of the grand bailiff, for slaying the Capitano Batello. Fi! the recollection of that adventure haunts me yet: the glazing eyes,

the clenched teeth, the pale visage, and the gleaming sword; the silver hairs, and the old man's blood streaming on the white dress and whiter bosom of his daughter! "O, cursed flask!" said the ruffian, pausing to squeeze the leathern bottle. "May every monk and mollah anathematize thee in the name of Christ and Mahomet; for thou art now empty, useless, and upon thy vacuity I cry anathema! Beautiful wert thou indeed, Paula Batello, and too pure a being for such a serpent as Lancelloti to behold!"

"Caro signor, I would gladly hear her story?"

"And so thou shalt: firstly, because thou art a comrade of our Apollo with the hump; secondly, because I would like to hear thy opinion upon it; and thirdly, because I love to have some one to talk to in this blasted vault, whose walls I would that Satan rent asunder and ruined for ever." And without further preface, he commenced the following story; which deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER II.

THE MONK'S STORY.

The Capitano Batello was an old soldier of the Venetian Republic, who, after an active life, retired to spend the winter of his days among the woody solitudes of Friuli. All the village loved the good old capitano, who made wooden swords and flags for the children, and retailed his campaigns and adventures a thousand times to the frequenters of the cantina, where he was the military and political oracle; and at mass, all made way for the white-haired old man, when he came slowly marching up the aisle, with the Signorina Paula leaning on his arm. The old soldier's doublet was perhaps a little threadbare, or his broad hat glazed at the edge; yet he never forgot his rank, even when struggling for existence with half a ducatoon a day.

But Paula, the gentle-voiced, the blue-eyed and fair-haired Paula, was the admiration of all—the glory of the village; and the old captain watched her as a miser would a precious jewel. Beard of Ali! she would have brought a princely sum at Algiers.

She was beautiful, and her soft blue eyes looked one fully and searchingly in the face with all the confidence of perfect innocence. Her mother was gone to heaven, as the captain said, when he engaged me as tutor to Paula and her brother: an office for which I received a trifle, that went into the treasury of San

Baldassare—a trap which swallowed everything. The boy, Rosario, was a chubby little rogue, and for a time I took pleasure in hearing their lisping accents, as they conned over their task in an arbour which Paula's hands had formed at the back of their little cottage.

Thunder! how often have I looked back with astonishment on those days, when on the gun-deck of the *Crescent* I stood at the head of five hundred of the boldest hearts of Tunis and Tripoli. Who then could have recognised in Osman the blood-thirsty, the hypocritical Fra Lancelloti? Yes! I was ever a hypocrite, and regarded with scorn and detestation the sombre garb which tied me to the monastery. But my fate was not in my own hands: my parents were a son and daughter of old mother church, and I came into the world very unfortunately for both parties. They threw me into the lantern of San Baldassare, where thirty years before my father had been found himself. As a reward for giving me life, my mother died in the dungeons of San Marco; and my father expiated his share in the matter at the first general *auto-da-fé*: so you see that I come of a martyred family.

A prisoner from my boyhood upwards, I looked upon the world as a realm of light and joy, from which I was for ever debarred by those mysterious vows which the monks had induced me to profess before their meaning was understood. When from my iron grate I looked on the vale of the winding Isonza, blooming with foliage and verdure and bounded by the blue Carinthian hills, and listened to the rushing sound of the free bold river, how intense were my longings to follow its course to where it plunged headlong into the Gulf of Trieste; where for hours I have watched the scudding sails till my eyes and heart ached. O, hours of longing and of agony! To see nature spread before me in all her glory, yet be unable to taste her sweets: to be a prisoner without a crime. And love, or what the world calls love, I knew not what it was; though a secret spirit whispered within me: I longed to look on some fair face, and to hear a gentle voice reply to mine; but love's magic, its mystery, and its madness, I was yet to learn. With a heart thus formed, and open to the assaults of that wicked little god—whom the ancients should have depicted as a giant—you may imagine my sensations on finding myself in the presence of Paula; whose face and form far outshone the famous Madonna of our chapel. A hot blush suffused my cheek: but the fair face of Paula revealed only the rosy tinge of health, and her brow the calm purity of perfect innocence. I was silent and awed in her presence: an Italian monk awed by a girl of seventeen!

With evening I returned to the cloisters; and a chill sank upon my heart as their cold shadows fell over me. I was in my old dormitory, where the truckle-bed, the polished skull, the cross, and rough vaulted roof seemed yet the same: but I was changed. The recollection of Paula's soft gazelle-like eyes and snowy

breast never left me for a moment, and I passed a sleepless night.

"O, that I were a soldier or a cavalier, for then Batello would respect, and his daughter might love me: but a priest—a priest—anathema! anathema! there is no hope for me: none! O, malediction! why did I ever behold thee, Paula?"

Thus passed the night. Noon found me again in the arbour of Batello's garden: the golden-haired and ruddy-cheeked Rosario was drawling over his task; but I neither heard nor beheld him. I saw only his sister, who, seated beneath the shadow of the luxuriant rose-trees, was immersed in the glowing pages of the warrior bard, Luigi Tansilla, the brave follower of Piero di Toledo.

The rays of the sun streamed between the foliage of the arbour, lighting up her fair ringlets, which glittered like living gold; her white neck sparkled in the same mysterious radiance: a glory seemed around her, and the soft calm aspect of her downcast face made her seem the very image of our lovely lady, the famed Madonna of Cantarini. Intoxicated with her appearance, I trembled when addressing her, while she entered frankly into conversation with me on the merits of the soldier's poems. Full and calmly her mild eyes gazed on mine, yet no suspicion struck her of the passion which glowed within me; and which I dared not reveal, for death was the doom: on the one hand, her firm father's poniard; on the other, the dungeons of the Piombi or the horrors of the holy office.

By night the ravings of my dreams were heard by the tenants of the adjoining dormitories, Petronio and Truffi the crookback; and they soon learned from my mutterings that I loved Paula, the daughter of the Signor Batello. Petronio—the same accursed Petronio, who from his archiepiscopal palace sent forth the mandate which entombed me here, when, after a tough battle with a Maltese cruiser, I was cast half drowned and bleeding on the beach of Canne—Petronio, whose matchless hypocrisy makes his villany even of a deeper dye than mine, then came to act the part of friend; to counsel me to destruction, and to become the evil genius of the good Batello and his innocent children.

A thorough Italian monk, dark, gloomy, and superstitious, he was my senior by fifteen years, and had secretly plunged into all the excesses of Venice. Like the fiendish hunchback, he was an adept in every dissimulation and debauchery, and boasted of his exploits; till, ashamed of my weakness, I took heart, and burned for distinction in the same worthy fields. I put myself under his guidance and tuition: to effect what? O, innocent Paula!

I had resolved, by every art of reasoning and sophistry, to break down the barriers of religion and modesty, and bend her mind to my purpose. But each successive day when I looked upon her snowy brow, her pure and happy face, blooming with beauty and radiant with youth, my diabolical purpose was left unfulfilled, unattempted; and my heart shrank from the contest.

Sometimes young and handsome cavaliers, from the castle of Gradiska or the citadel of Friuli, came to visit the old capitano; and the gallantry of their air, the glitter of their military garb and weapons, the ease with which they lounged about, strummed on the mandolin, or whispered soft nothings to the fair girl, made my envious heart burn with alternate rage and jealousy. Intensely I longed to be like one of them: and yet I could have slain them all, and Paula too when she smiled on them.

But I soon found a more powerful auxiliary to my love, than either Petronio's sophistry or Truffi's villany could furnish: and where think you? In Paula's own heart. Ho! ho! a young girl soon discovers that which is the sole object of her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night—a lover! There is a mysterious emotion so pleasing to her heart, so flattering to her fancy, and altogether so peculiarly grateful to her mind in being beloved, that she gives way to all the fervour of a first passion with joy and trembling. Ha! thou knowest the hearts of our Italian girls: warm, tender, and easily subdued; what more can lover wish?

The garrisons were marched to the Carinthian frontier, and the cavaliers came no more to the cottage of Batello: he spent the most of his time detailing his battles and reading the Diaries and Gazette at the wine-house; while his old housekeeper (whom my cowl kept in awe) was always occupied in household matters. I kept Rosario close to his task, and therefore had the dear girl all to myself.

What could she hope for in yielding to such a passion? Remorse, despair, and madness! But of these the young damsel thought not then. Ha! I was then graceful and well looking, and we both were young and ardently in love. My eyes at one time, my tremulous tones at another, had informed her of the mighty secret which preyed upon my heart; and which my lips dared not reveal until the rapturous moment when I perceived the mutual flame that struggled in her bosom. Then, but not till then, did I pour forth a rhapsody expressive of my love; when yielding to its burning impulses, all the long-concealed ardour of my heart burst at once upon her ear. Love lent a light to my eyes, a grace and gesture to my figure, and imparted new eloquence to my tongue: I was no longer myself; no more the cold, cautious friar, but the impetuous Italian lover. The monk was forgotten in the man; my vows in the delight of the moment; and the lovely Paula sank upon my shoulder overcome with love and terror. O, hour of joy! when I first pressed my trembling lip to that soft and beautiful cheek. Long years of penance and of prayer—of dreary repining, of soul-crushing humiliation and sorrow—were all repaid by the bliss of that embrace: which I have never forgotten. No! not all the years that have passed since then; not all the dark villanies I have planned and perpetrated: and they are many; not all the dangers I have dared: and they are countless as the hairs of your head; not all the toils

and miseries of a life can efface it from my memory. I was happy then: I who, perhaps, have never been so since. * * * * *

A footstep aroused us, and the blushing girl shrank from me as the little boy Rosario came gamboling towards the arbour with a chaplet for her hair. I cast a fierce glance of hatred upon him. Even Paula was piqued, and refused to receive the flowers; upon which the child wept, and pulling my cassock, prayed me to lecture his sister for being so coy.

"Scold her, Father Lancelloti!" said he, rubbing his glittering eyes with his plump little hands; "for she will neither kiss me nor receive my roses to put among her pretty hair, as she used to love to do."

"Give me the flowers, child," said I; "shall *I* kiss sister Paula for you, Rosario?"

"O, yes, yes," cried the little boy, "or sister Paula will kiss you, and then me."

Our lips met, and the agitated and infatuated Paula embraced the child, who laughed and clapped his hands with innocent glee; and yet he knew not at what. At that moment the long sword of the captain jarred on the gravel walk, and his heavy tread rang beneath the trellis of the garden. Aware that, as a priest, I had wronged him in the declaration made to his daughter, and that I had committed a deadly sin before God, I shrank from meeting him; and, leaping over the garden-wall, returned to the monastery, where, not without sensations of triumph, I recounted my conquest to Petronio and the hunchback.

Three days I visited her as usual, and rejoiced in the success of my amour; for I loved her tenderly and dearly. My air was so sanctified that the most jealous guardian would not have suspected me; then how much less the good Batello, who, by his profession, had been accustomed to intercourse with men of the strictest honour, and suspected no man of duplicity, because his own brave heart was guileless.

My rose-bud of love was just beginning to bloom, when matters were doomed to have a terrible crisis.

One bright forenoon, when Rosario had finished his task, I was about to return to Friuli, and merely bowed to Paula, because her father was present.

"Brother Lancelloti," said he, grasping my cope, "hast heard the news? The senate is about to declare war against the Turks, and the capeletti are to be doubled. Brave news for an old soldier, eh! I may be a colonello, with Rosario for captain! Come hither, thou chubby rogue—wouldst like to be a captain?"

"O, yes, if sister Paula would play with me as she used to do, and kiss me instead of Father Lancelloti."

"Rosario! what sayest thou?" cried the fierce old soldier with a stentorian voice, while Paula grew pale as death, and my spirit died away within me; but the terrified child made no reply. The captain's face was black with rage: his eyes

sparkled, and stern scorn curled his lip; yet he spoke calmly.

"Go—go, Father Lancelloti, and may God forgive you! I will not require the services of your faithful reverence from to-day. Away—march! or you may fare worse: dare not to come here again, I am Annibal Batello—thou knowest me!" And, touching the hilt of his sword, he turned on his heel and left me.

I rushed away, overwhelmed with bitterness, rage, and humiliation, and hating Rosario with the hate of a fiend.

To Truffi and Petronio, my story was the source of endless merriment: the hunchback snapped his fingers, whooped, and laughed till the cloisters rang with his elfish joy. Deprived of my mistress, whom I dared not visit for dread of the captain's sword, stung by the taunts of my friends, dejected and filled with gloomy forebodings, the cloisters soon became intolerable to me. I formed many a romantic and desperate scheme to rid myself of those cursed trammels which monkish duplicity had cast around me in boyhood: but thoughts of the holy office, the Piombi, and the fate of my father, filled me with dismay; and I dared not fly from Friuli.

One day, whilst wandering far up the banks of the Isonza, with a heart swollen by bitter thoughts, I plunged into the deepest recesses in search of solitude. Reaching the cascade which falls beneath the ancient castle of Fana, I paused to listen to the rushing water, whose tumult so much resembled my own mind. The voice of no living thing, save that of the lynx, broke the stillness around me: the lofty trees of the dense forest, clad in the richest foliage of summer, cast a deep shadow over the bed of the dark blue stream; which swept noiselessly on, between gloomy impending cliffs, until it reached the fall, where it poured over a broad ledge of rock, and thundered into a terrible abyss, whence the foam arose in a mighty cloud, white as Alpine snow. Rearing its grey and mossy towers high above the waving woods, the shattered rocks, and roaring river, the ancient castello looked down on the solitude beneath it. A mighty place in days gone by, it had been demolished by the bailiff of Friuli, for the crimes of Count Giulio (see vol. i. p. 186), and was now roofless and ruined; the green ivy clung to the carved battlement, and the rays of the bright sun poured aslant through its open loops and empty windows. But the scenery soothed not my heart: I burned for active excitement, to shake off the stupor that oppressed me.

A turn of the walk brought me suddenly upon the little boy, Rosario, who was weaving a chaplet of wild roses and trailing daphne; culled, doubtless, for the bright tresses of Paula. Remembering some stern injunction from his father, on beholding me he fled as from a spectre. Like a tiger, I sprang after him: fear added wings to his flight; but I was close behind. A fall on the rocks redoubled my anger and impatience, and I caught him by his long fair hair, while he was in the very act of laughing at my mishap.

"Cursed little babbler!" said I, shaking him roughly; "what deservest thou at my hands?"

"Spare me, good Father Lancelloti, and I will never offend again."

"Silence, or I will tear out thy tongue!"

My aspect terrified him, and he screamed on his father and Paula to save him.

"Paula!" said I, shaking him again, "thy devilish tongue hath destroyed Paula and me too!"

"Spare me," said he, whimpering and smiling; "and pretty sister Paula will kiss you for my sake."

"Anathema upon thee!" His words redoubled my fury, and I spat on him. The cascade roared beside me, the deepest solitude was around us, hell was in my heart, and the devil guided my hand; I launched the screaming child from the rocks: headlong he fell through the air, and vanished in the cloudy spray of the vast abyss. The bright sun became suddenly obscured by a cloud, and a deeper gloom stole over the dell of Fana: the ruined tower seemed a monstrous head, and its windows invidious eyes looking down on me—the landscape swam around, and I heard a cry of *murder* above the roar of the cascade. The yell of a lynx completed my terror, and I rushed in frenzy from the spot. * * *

I was in my dormitory; the darkness of night was in my soul and all around me: overwhelmed with an excess of horror for my wanton crime, I spent the night in the agonies of penance and prayer, and making mental vows to sin no more. Had the universe been mine, I would have given it that Rosario might be restored to life. O, that I could have lived the last day over again, or have blotted it for ever from my mind! But, alas! the strong and dark fiend had marked me for his own. Through the silence of the still calm night, came the rush of the distant river: there was madness in the sound; but I could not exclude it, and the cry of the poor child mingled ever with its roar. Humble in spirit, and contrite in heart, at morning matins I bowed down in prayer among the brotherhood. The sublime symphonies of the hymn Veni Creator, or of the litanies of our lady of Loretto, the song of the choir and the mellifluous strain of the organ, rang beneath the vaulted dome like the voice of God and the knell of death; and yet they spoke of hope—hope to the repentant—and I prostrated myself before the altar: tears burst from my eyes, and the fire of my heart was assuaged.

I left the monastery to seek some calm solitude, wherein to pour forth my soul in secret prayer; but my evil genius was beside me, and guided me to detection and disgrace. I wandered on, but knew not and cared not whither; wishing only to fly from the haunts of men and my own burning thoughts. Vain idea! Rosario, as he sank among the spray, his sister's tears, his father's sorrow, were ever before me, and I looked upon myself with horror.

"Good father!" cried a voice, disturbing my dreadful reverie; "O, reverend signor, help, in the name of the Blessed Trinity!"

I started with dismay—what did I behold? The white-haired veteran, Batello, bearing in his arms the dripping corpse of Rosario, while Paula clung to him overcome with sorrow and terror. Even the venerable goatherd, whose crook had fished up the dead child, was moved to tears; while I, the cause of the calamity, looked on with unmoved visage. Was it an index of my mind? O, no! a serpent was gnawing my heart: I could have screamed with agony; and my breath came close and thick. I trembled and panted while Batello spoke.

"Fra Lancelloti," said he, "thou comest upon me in an hour of deep woe, when I have much need of godly consolation; but not from thy lips. A week ago we quarrelled: I know the weakness of the human heart, and from the bottom of my soul forgive thee; for in this terrible moment I cannot look on any man with anger. Pass on, in the name of God! for thy presence is—I know not why—peculiarly hateful to me at this moment. Many a dead face have I looked upon by breach and battlefield, but thou—my Rosario—thy mother—" and the old soldier kissed his dead child, and wept bitterly.

The goatherd, who had been observing me narrowly, now whispered in Batello's ear. His eyes glared, and relinquishing the body, with one hand he grasped his sword, with the other my throat.

"Double-dyed villain!—hypocrite!—thou knowest of this, and canst say how Rosario died! Speak, or this sword, never yet stained with the blood of a coward, shall compel thee."

"Sacrilege!" I gasped, while Paula swooned: "Sacrilege!—I am a priest—"

"Rosario's hand grasps part of a rosary—lo! thy chaplet is broken, and the beads are the same. Speak, ere I slay thee!" and he drew his sword.

Trembling, I glanced at my girdle: but a half of my chaplet hung there; the other was grasped in the tenacious hand of Rosario. Overwhelmed with terror, I attempted to escape; and, in the blindness of his fury, the old man struck me repeatedly with his sword, while he cried aloud for help. Transported with fury at the sight of my own blood, and dreading discovery, I became mad, and plunged yet deeper into crime: closing with him, my strength and youth prevailed over his frame, now enfeebled by age, wounds, and long campaigns; I struck him to the earth, and with his own sword stabbed him to the heart. His blood streamed over Paula—I remember nothing more. I fled to the hills, and, throwing off my upper vestments, wandered in wild places, far from the reach of the Grand Bailiff; who offered five hundred ducats for my head, sent the carbineers of Gradiska and the vassals of the duchy to hunt me down, and established such a close chain of communication along the frontiers that escape was almost impossible. He solemnly vowed to avenge the murder of Batello (who had been the friend and

fellow-soldier of his father, the old Count of Lanthiri) and I should assuredly have become his victim, and been consigned to the gallows or the Holy Office, had I not been joined by Gaspare Truffi; who, after transferring to his own pouch every bajoccho in the convent treasury, had come to share my fortunes in the wilderness.

Changing our attire, we embarked for Greece; but were captured off Calabria by a corsair of Tunis. Whereupon I instantly turned Mussulman, and served his highness the Bey with such courage and devotion, that, as Osman Carora, I became the idol of the Tunisians, and terror of the Mediterranean. Enough!—thou knowest the rest. Shipwreck and the fortune of war placed me in the power of my old friend Petronio—and I am here."

"And Paula?"

"Became Contessa di Lanthiri, and soon forgot poor Fra Lancelloti."

Such was the story related to me by the third captive whom those vaults contained: I have jotted it down just as it was related to me; but without the many pauses of maudlin grief, or oaths of rage, with which his half-intoxicated state caused him to intersperse it.

I need hardly add that I left this deliberate ruffian to his fate, locking all the doors securely behind me; and, to make the keeper more alert in future—as I intended to return no more—I left my false keys in his niche in the little chapel. The terrified warder, on finding a set of keys the exact counterpart of his own, declared they must have belonged either to Virgil or to the devil: they were destroyed, the vaults sprinkled with holy water, and the wizard was seen no more.

CHAPTER III.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

It was a clear and beautiful morning when I issued forth on my return to the cardinal's villa. As I passed a cantina by the roadside, under a trellis in front of it, I encountered two personages whom I had no wish to meet on that side of Massena's lines: the surly Captain Pepe, who treated me so insultingly at Crotona, and Truffi the hunchback, whom I recognised notwithstanding his

disguise—a white Cistertian frock and shovel hat. Draughts, dominoes, and wine-horns were before them; and they had apparently passed the night at the table over which they leaned, sleeping away the fumes of their potations.

As I passed, an unlucky house dog leaped forth from his barrel, yelling and shaking his chain. The captain, yet half intoxicated, started up and felt for his sword, and I saw a bastia knife gleaming in the long lean fingers of the cripple.

"Corpo!" said he, "'tis only a priest."

"Hola! call you that fellow a priest?" replied Pepe, balancing himself with difficulty: but, drunk as he was, he had the eyes of a lynx, and knew me in a moment. "Mille baionettes! an English spy. Ah, Monsieur Aide-de-camp!—villain! Hola, the quarter guard! Hola, the provost, and the noose from the nearest tree: *à la lanterne*!"

He staggered towards me with his drawn sabre, and I supposing the cantina was full of soldiers, became alarmed, as the hideous Truffi yelled and whooped till the welkin rang. My death was certain if captured: not even York could have saved it, or those important despatches with which the general entrusted me. But I thought less of them than of Bianca, life, liberty, and honour. I easily wrenched Pepe's sabre from him, and knocked him down with my clenched hand: his head clattered on the hard dusty road, and he lay motionless. Truffi rushed on me with his poniard, but I dealt him a blow across the head with my sabre, and he fell prone over the body of his companion.

I fled to the villa, entered unseen, and threw myself panting upon my bed; where, notwithstanding my fears and agitation, I soon fell fast asleep.

In two hours after I was awakened by Catanio, whose countenance betokened something unusual. My first thought was of Captain Pepe.

"The courier has arrived from Rome, and his Majesty awaits you." I leaped up, joyful at being undeceived so agreeably.

"Has he brought the signora's dispensation?"

"His Majesty has not said."

My toilet was soon completed, and I was ushered into the presence of the cardinal, who was seated at breakfast. His Irish valet was in attendance. The plainness of his equipage contrasted strongly with the splendour of his pretensions. He was busy reading, and heard not our approach.

"You see him, perhaps, for the last time," whispered Catanio. "Behold! does there not reign around him a mystic dignity that makes him seem as much a king as if he stood in the halls of Windsor or Holy rood? Ah, who can look on such a man, declining into the vale of life, venerable with years, the majesty and memory of ages, without being moved? But this is a cold and calculating age, without veneration for the past; and the regrets of those who love it, provoke but a smile from the selfish and unreflecting."

Without partaking of his enthusiasm, I was not a little moved by his tone and words.

"Catanio, place a chair for Captain Dundas," said the cardinal, perceiving us. "Sir, you will breakfast with me, as I have intelligence for you. Our most Holy Father has been pleased to dispense with the vows of the Signora D'Alfieri at my intercession; and on presenting this document to the Abbess at Canne, she will be free to quit the convent and resume her place in society. This is the despatch from the spedizioniere of the papal court."

I returned thanks with suitable sincerity of manner.

"Zamori, a Calabrian fisherman of Gierazzo, is now in the harbour of Carine with his little vessel, which, as Catanio informs me, will sail in the evening; on receipt of my order, Zamori will convey you to any part in Calabria, or place you on board the British frigate now cruising in the Adriatic."

"A fisherman's bark will be but a comfortless place on these rough waters, for the delicate signora. But O, most sincerely have I to thank your Eminence for the interest you have taken in this matter, and the kindness you have shown me."

"Captain Dundas, here at least I am a king!" said the old man, whose broad brow became clouded for the first time. "Though exiled, forgotten by Britain, and standing on the verge of the tomb, I will yield my pretensions only with my last breath."

My reply was interrupted by the appearance of six French soldiers, with a sergeant, coming down the avenue at a quick pace, with their bayonets fixed. I remembered my encounter with Pepe, the keen glances of Compere in the church, and all the dangers of my situation flashed upon me: I stood irresolute whether to fight, fly, or surrender.

"Sir, they are no doubt in pursuit of you," said the cardinal, his aged cheek beginning to flush: "but will they dare to cross my threshhold? Alas! what will they not? The invasion of Rome, the expulsion of the sacred college, and the seizure of Pius himself, are yet fresh in my recollection. Catanio meet them at the porch, and in the name of God dare them to enter the house of one of his servants!"

"Alas!" replied Catanio, "let me implore your majesty to pause. We are but three aged and infirm men, against seven soldiers, armed, insolent, and rapacious; as the followers of a usurper ever are."

"This is no time for delay. Away, Captain Dundas!" exclaimed York; "you must fly. Catanio will lead you to the beach ere the house is surrounded. Farewell, sir! a long farewell to you: we may never meet again!"

Deeply moved by the old man's manner, I bowed, and, according to the custom, kissed the hand he extended towards me: a massive ruby ring—the great coronation ring of our ancient kings—sparkled on his finger.

Catanio hurried me away, and by the most unfrequented paths we reached the beach; while the soldiers surrounded and searched the villa.

The cardinal died a few months afterwards, at Rome, in the eighty-second year of his age, and was buried between his father and brother at Frescati. Henry IX. is inscribed on his tomb; which the genius of Canova has adorned with the most splendid sculpture. It is a curious fact, that till the last day of his life, the cardinal was in communication with many men of rank, wealth, and power, who seemed still to have entertained the chimerical hope of placing him on the British throne; and many documents discovered after his decease, and now preserved in our archives, prove that his family had, even then, numerous adherents in the three kingdoms: some of them men whom the Government could little have suspected of such sentiments. Buonaparte, too—that overturner of kings and kingdoms—is said to have expressed a wish to place him on the throne; and, as an earnest of his friendship, robbed him of his French estates: but the star of the Stuarts had set. George III. kindly and wisely passed over in silence the names of those whose romantic enthusiasm, or political bias, the papers of the cardinal-duke had so awkwardly revealed.

I got on board Zamori's little sloop in safety; and, in obedience to the cardinal's command, the warp was cast off, the sweeps run out, and he anchored about half a mile from the shore. Catanio left me, promising to return after dusk with the signora, whom I anxiously awaited; expecting every minute to see bayonets glittering on the sunny beach, or a boat filled with armed men push off towards the barque of Zamori.

The latter was a garrulous old fellow, whose tongue gave me very little time for reflection. Night began to close over Canne; and I beheld its approach with joy: the day had seemed interminably long. The evening gun was fired from the French fort, the tricolor descended from its ramparts, and I heard the evening hymn floating over the glassy sea from the various craft around us; where many of the sailors lay stretched upon bundles of sails, smoking cigars, tinkling the mandolin, and enjoying the rich sunset of their glorious clime. Sinking behind the mountains, the sun bade us adieu; darkness gradually crept along the winding shore, and white vapours curled in fantastic shapes from the low flats and ravines: slowly and brightly the moon soared into view, bathing land and ocean in a flood of silvery light.

I lay on a bundle of sails listening to the skipper's legends of the young Count of Caulonia, who fell in love with a mermaid that arose from her coral cave in the Gulf of Gierazzo, and sat beneath his castle walls singing as the syrens sung to Ulysses; and of the wondrous demon fish caught in Naples, in 1722, with a man in armour in its stomach; and Heaven knows what more. Hearing the dash of oars alongside the *Echino*, as Zamori's bark was named, and seeing a

boat shoot under her quarter, I leapt up. I went to the side and received Catanio, who handed up Francesca D'Alfieri. The poor girl was so happy to find herself free, and entrusted to my care, that she could only weep with joy; uttering sobs in the depths of an ample satin faldetta which the abbess had given her, with two rosemary sprigs sewn crosswise in front, to scare away evil spirits.

"Farewell to you, captain!" said Catanio, or Duncan Catanach; "do not forget us when you go home to the land we love so well."

"Good-bye: God bless you, old man!" I replied, as the boat was pushed off and moved shoreward.

The dark grave has long closed over the faithful Catanach and his illustrious master; but memory yet recalls the old man's visage: I can see it as I saw it then; clouded by honest sorrow, and its hard wrinkled features tinged by the light of the moon.

An hour afterwards we were ploughing the waters of the gulf, with the broad latteen sail of the *Echino* bellying taut before the breeze as she cleft the billows with her sharp-beaked prow. Zamori grasped the tiller with important confidence; the crew, his two athletic and black-browed sons, remained forward, and I seated myself beside the signora, who permitting her hood to fall back, the moon shone on her beautiful features and glossy hair. So dangerous an attraction near old Zamori disturbed his steering, and the *Echino* yawed till her sail flapped to the mast.

"A sweet face!" he muttered, as the boat careened over; "but it will work mischief, like the mermaids."

"O, signor, I am happy, so very happy!" said Francesca: the richness of her tone, and the artlessness of her manner moved me. "Shall we soon see Calabria?"

"That is Capo Trionto," said I, pointing ahead.

"Dear Calabria!" she exclaimed, kissing her hand to the distant coast; "there was a time when I thought never to behold thee more! Beautiful star!" continued the enthusiastic girl, pointing to a twinkling orb: "Signor, is it not lovely? alas! 't is gone: perhaps it is a world!" she added, clasping her hands, as it shot from its place and vanished. The increasing roughness of the sea, as we sailed along the high Calabrian coast, soon made Francesca uneasy: her prattle died away; she became very sick, and lay in the stern-sheets of the boat, covered up with Zamori's warm storm jacket, and a spare jib: both rather coarse coverings for a beautiful and delicate female. At length she slept; and I was left for a time to my own reflections.

About midnight, I was roused from a sound nap by Zamori.

"Look around you, excellency," said he, in a whisper; "saw you ever aught so splendid—so terrible?"

Like a vast globe of gold the shining moon was resting on the summit of

Cape Trionto; which, rising black as ebony from the ocean, heaved its strongly-marked outline against the illuminated sky: its ridge was marked by a streak of fiery yellow. The water was phosphorescent; the waves seemed to be burning around us, and we sped through an ocean of light! The spray flying past our bows seemed like sparks of living fire; the ropes trailing over the gunnel, and the myriads of animalcules which animate every drop of the mighty deep, were all shining with magic splendour. An exclamation of rapture escaped me: at that moment the moon sank down behind Trionto; in an instant the sea became dark, and not a trace of all that glorious and magnificent illumination remained behind.

"Have you seen these often, Zamori?"

"No!" said he, shuddering and crossing himself; "but such sights never bode good. We shall have the French in Lower Calabria soon. 'Tis Fata Morgana," he added, whispering; "she dwells in the straits of Messina: I have seen her palace of coral and crystal rise above the waves. She is a mermaid of potent power: God send that we have no breeze before morning!"

Cape St. James was in sight when the sun arose from the ocean, revealing all the glories of the beautiful coast and sparkling sea. After the stout Calabrians had knelt and prayed to a rudely-carved Madonna nailed above the horse-shoe on the mast, I partook of their humble breakfast; which consisted of olives, salt-fish, maccaroni, and sour wine: the signora was too much indisposed to join us.

I looked forward with pleasure to assuming my important command at Scylla; but other prospects made me happier still: I welcomed the freshening breeze, as the little bark rushed through the surging sea which boiled over her gunnels, and roared like a cascade under her counter; while the ruin-crowned or foliaged headlands, and the countless peaks which towered above them, changed their aspect every moment as we flew on. I thought of my smiling Bianca, and hailed with joy the hills of Maida. We beheld the evening sun gilding the Syla, and at night were off Crotona, and saw the lights glimmering in its narrow streets and gloomy citadel, where Macleod was stationed with his Highlanders. Anchored close under its ramparts, lay the *Amphion*, and brave Hanfield's sloop of war, the *Delight*. The sky was dark and lowering, the sea black as ink: everything portended a rough night, and I was well pleased that our voyage was over.

My despatch for Captain Hoste required him to bring round the Ross-shire Buffs without delay to Messina; and the order was forthwith given to heave short, to cast loose the sails, and lower away all the boats.

My old friend Castagno, with a party of the Free Corps, formed the guard at the citadel gate; I was immediately recognized, and consigning the happy Francesca to his care, beat up the quarters of Macleod: I found him comfortably carousing with Drumlugas and some of his officers, who were passing a portly jar of gioja round the table with great celerity. When the curiosity and laughter oc-

casioned by my attire had subsided, and when the general's order had been read, I related my adventures; passing over the visits to the vaults, and the discovery of Francesca D'Alfieri.

An hour before gun-fire the Buffs were all on board the frigate: her ample canvas was spread to the breezes of the Adriatic, and by sunrise we saw her vanish round the promontory of Lacinium. The Cavaliere Benedetto, with four hundred rank and file of the Free Corps, was left to hold Crotona; while, by Macleod's order, I took command of a company of those troops which the *Amphion* could not accommodate: that evening, bidding adieu to brave Castagno (whom I never saw again), we marched *en route* for St. Eufemio, where I was to see them safely embarked for Messina.

Thanks to Macleod and his officers, my attire had now become a little more professional: one gave me a regimental jacket, another a tartan forage-cap, a third a sash, and Drumlugas presented me with a very handsome sabre; of which he had deprived the Swiss colonel whom he vanquished at Maida. In this motley uniform, I rode at the head of the Free Company; which formed a very respectable escort for Francesca and her sister, who accompanied us: both were mounted on fiery-eyed Calabrian horses, a breed famous for their strength and endurance. While so many bayonets glittered around them, the ladies had no fear of banditti; Ortensia laughing merrily, made her horse curvet and prance, and lent her soft melodious voice to the jovial chorus with which the Italian soldiers lightened the toil of their morning march. But Francesca was reserved; and beneath her veil I often saw tears suffusing her mild and melancholy eyes.

"Dear Francesca, why are you so sad?" asked her sister; "O, now is the time for joy! See how brightly the sun shines on the distant sea, and how merrily the green woods are waving in the breeze. Most unkind, Francesca! for your sake, I have left my poor Benedetto in that gloomy castle of Crotona. Laugh and be joyous. Think on the happiness awaiting us at home, and the embrace of our dear little Bianca, when she throws her arms around you."

"And Luigi," added Francesca, unable to restrain her tears.

The path we pursued was different from that which I had travelled before, and the intense solitude around it was almost oppressive. We were marching through a dense forest, where not a sound broke its stillness, save the cry of a solitary lynx or the flap of an eagle's wing, as he soared to his eyrie in the sandstone cliffs which reared their rugged front above the woodlands. White wreaths of distant smoke shot up in vapoury columns through the green foliage, announcing that the wild contained other human beings than ourselves; but whether these were poor charcoal-burners, or robbers roasting a fat buck on the green sward, we knew not. We passed one or two lonely cottages, where the labouring hinds were separating grain from its husks, by the ancient modes—trampling the corn

under the hoofs of cattle, or rolling over it a large stone drawn by a team of stout buffaloes.

Calabria was then (and perhaps is yet) widely different from every other part of Italy: its peculiar situation, its lofty mountains, its dense forests spreading from sea to sea and intersected by few roads, and its hordes of banditti, made it dangerous and difficult of access to the artist and tourist; consequently, until the close of Manhes' campaign of blood, it was an unknown territory to the rest of Europe. These circumstances rendered the natives rude in character and revengeful in spirit; and thus a mighty barrier rose between the lower orders and the noblesse: who (in the words of a recent writer on Italy) "live wholly apart from the people—they compose two entirely distinct worlds."

After halting in forests during the sultry noon, cantoning in villages, and marching in the cool morning and evening for two days, we arrived near Amato, a little town within a few leagues of the Villa D'Alfieri. We were traversing a deep pass of the Apennines, when the evening, which had been serene and fine, became clouded: the lowering sky portended a coming tempest. We pushed on, at an increased pace, to reach a castellated villa, the residence of a Calabrian of rank, which we saw perched on an isolated mass of rock, about a league up the mountains. Striking and picturesque appeared the Vale of Amato, as the setting sun poured its last blaze of radiance down the deep gorge between the dark wooded hills, gilding the crenellated battlements, Saracenic galleries and Norman keep of the distant castle; and reflected in the river, which glowed like a stream of molten gold between thickets of sombre cypress and fragrant orange-trees. Gradually, the hue of the setting orb changed from bright saffron to deep red; and a flood of crimson lustre fell over everything, tinging the lofty hills, the thick woods, the glassy river with a blood-red tint, which rapidly became more sombre as the sun disappeared behind the pine-clad hills. Then thunder rumbled through the darkening sky; gloomy banks of cloud came scudding across it, and volumes of vapour rolled away from the bed of the Amato.

"On, on!" cried Francesca; "O, the storm will be a terrible one: feel you not the very blast of the sirrocco? Alas! we may die among the mountains. Yonder is the residence of Guelfo the Buonapartist—ah! the subtle knave! If we trust ourselves under his roof, say not a word of Luigi, and mention not our names. Ah! if he should recognise us: you remember that terrible night with the conciarotti and the mob of Palermo."

They pushed forward at a gallop, and I followed; after leaving orders with old Signor Gismondo, who—as I ought to have mentioned before—was captain of the Free Company, to continue his route double-quick to Amato, where we would rejoin him by daybreak next day. Gismondo was now grave, reserved, and melancholy in the extreme: but I was much pleased at renewing my acquaintance with

him. Poor man! it was fated to be of short duration. We had scarcely separated before the lightning gleamed between the splintered rocks of the pass; the air became sulphurous, close, and dense; in five minutes it was dark; we saw the luminous glow-worms sparkling amid the dewy grass beneath the shady foliage, while ever and anon the red lightning shot from peak to peak, illuminating the scenery with its lurid glare. After scrambling up a steep ascent, the face of which was scarped and defended by four pieces of *French* cannon, we reached the gate of this Neapolitan lord; whom I had no wish to meet again, as his bad political bias had gained him an unfavourable name in Calabria. Numerous towers and curtain walls of red stone surrounded the building; few windows were visible outwardly, and those were far from the ground and well barred with time-worn stancheons.

Passing through a gate surmounted by a wolf's head cabossed on a shield, and surrounded by the collar of shells, with the crescent and ship of the Knights' Argonauts of San Nicolo, we dismounted in the courtyard.

"Alas! for poor Gismondo and his soldiers!" exclaimed Francesca, as the gates were closed; and the descending storm burst forth in all its fury.

CHAPTER IV.

CASTELGUELFO—THE WOLF OF AMATO.

By the barone, a short and meagre little man of a most forbidding aspect, we were received with all due honour and courtesy, and without being recognised; but his residence was so full of armed men, that it could scarcely afford us accommodation, ample though its towers and corridors seemed to be.

"These are Lucchesi, the most hideous provincials of Italy; those wanderers who spread over all Europe with organs and monkeys," whispered Ortensia, as we passed through the court, which was crowded with the most savage-looking fellows imaginable. Many were half naked, or clad only in the skins of sheep and lynxes, beneath which might be seen the remains of a ragged shirt, a tattered vest, or breeches, once red or yellow; their legs and feet were bare; some had old battered hats, or red slouched caps: but the greater number had only their shock heads of hair, bleached by the weather till it was coarse as a charger's mane, and overhanging their gaunt ferocious visages, grim with starvation and misery: which ever accompanied French invasion. A few wore the gallant bandit

costume of the south, and all were carousing, and filling the hollow towers, the dark arcades, and echoing corridors with bursts of brutal laughter to lighten their work: for all were busy, polishing rifle and pistol locks, and grinding the blades of sabres, poniards, and pikes. My fair companions shrank with dismay from the hall windows when they viewed the assemblage below, and even I did not feel quite at ease; especially after seeing about two hundred stand of *French* arms and accoutrements ranged along the vestibule.

"Signor Barone, you keep a strong garrison here," said I, smiling, while we surveyed the motley crew of ruffians from a lofty oriel; "do you expect Massena to pass the Amato soon?"

"That would be superb!" replied he, with a grin, which revealed his ample and wolfish jaws. "No, no, 't is only my good friend Scarolla, the valiant captain of four hundred free companions, who is here with his band: we are bound on a little piece of service together. Ha! ha! if that fool Belcastro had not poisoned himself instead of the Maltese Knight, he would have been here too."

At that moment Scarolla approached: I attentively surveyed the celebrated bandit-chief, whose name, in the annals of Italian ferocity, stands second only to that of Mammone, "the blood-quaffer." He was above six feet high, and moulded like a Hercules; dark as that of a Negro, his mean visage announced him a Lucchese; long black hair hung down his back, and a thick beard fringed his chin. The band of his ample beaver, his velvet jacket and mantello were covered with the richest embroidery, and a silver hilted poniard glittered in his waist-belt. His brows were knit and lowering, his eyes keen and sinister: the ladies trembled beneath the bold scrutiny of his glance, and shrank close to my side for protection while the withered little barone introduced us.

"Signor Inglese, the valiant Capitano Scarolla; brave men ought to know each other: you are both captains, remember."

"Serving under different leaders," I replied, while bowing, and repressing a scornful smile.

"Superba!" cried the little barone, laughing and rubbing his hands; but Scarolla's brows knit closer, and his eyes kindled at my inuendo.

The hall was now lighted by several tall candelabra; their lustre was reflected from the gilded columns and pendants of the lofty roof, and the frames of dark, gloomy, and mysterious portraits of the ancient Guelfi; who seemed scowling from their pannels on their degenerate descendant and his unworthy confederate.

That ancient apartment, when viewed as I beheld it, one-half bathed in warm light, and the other sunk in cold shadow, seemed the very scene of a romance; to which the graceful figures of the Signora del Castagno and her sister, and the picturesque garb of the tall Scarolla gave additional effect. Now

were appropriate sounds wanting; for a storm raged in the valley below, thunder growled in the mountains above, and the rain rushed like hail on the casements; the painted traceries of which were often lit by fitful gleams of the moon or the blue forked lightning, as it shot from hill to hill.

Uneasy in the presence of Scarolla, the ladies, after a slight refreshment, withdrew to repose; promising to be up with the lark for our journey to-morrow.

When travelling, or on active service, one is compelled to accommodate oneself to every kind of society, place, and circumstance; and upon this philosophical principle, I made myself quite at home, and supped merrily with the barone and bandit: of whom the servants stood in the greatest awe. Supper over, wine was produced: however abstemious the Italians may be, I saw no sign of the national trait that night, at Castelguelfo; where we drank the richest continental wines, emptying the decanters in rapid succession, as if we had been three Germans drinking for a wager.

Rendered mellow by his potations, our host became talkative; and, in spite of the nods and contemptuous frowns of the impatient Scarolla, informed me that he was collecting men to make a political demonstration, of which I should soon hear at Palermo—an attack on a powerful feudatory, with whom he had a deadly quarrel, which the presence of our army only smothered for a time.

"It will be superb," grinned the barone. "I hate him with the stern bitterness of a thorough old Calabrese. Thrice has he crossed me at court: he caused Ferdinand to regard me with coldness and jealousy, and when all the nobles of the province received the order of San Constantino, I alone was left undecorated; and my name, the oldest in Naples, was forgotten. We have now the country to ourselves; and taking advantage of the lull, all Italy, from Scylla to the Alps, shall ring with my retribution. Yesterday, Crotona was abandoned to the Calabri; the soldiers who fought and won at Maida have all withdrawn, and there is no one to mar my revenge. O, it will be signal! In their king's service, the followers of my foe are all in garrison at Reggio; and his residence is unprotected. I have a hundred sbirri well mounted, armed and faithful; Scarolla has four hundred of the bravest rogues that ever levelled a rifle. Superba! Loyal visconte, beware the fangs of the Wolf! Per Baccho! there shall be a modern feud between the Guelfi and Alfieri, famous as that they had of old—ha! ha!"

"The Villa D'Alfieri is then the point of attack," said I.

"Superba!" screamed the little barone, who was becoming more inebriated: "yes; I will clothe its walls in flames; and if blood can quench them, then so shall they be quenched. Yea, in blood, shed where my ancestor's yet cries for vengeance. Viva Guesippe Buonaparte!"

"One alone shall be spared, excellency;" remarked Scarolla, who was also becoming excited.

"So I have promised you, prince of rogues, as the price of your services. The plunder of the villa belongs to your followers; and to you falls that glorious prize, the theme of our improvisatori, the pride of the Calabrias——"

"Bianca D'Alfieri!" added Scarolla, his eyes lighting with insolent triumph.

"Superb! is she not?" laughed the barone.

"God curse you both," I muttered; instinctively feeling for my sabre, and gulping down my wine, to hide the passion that boiled within me. I thanked Heaven that they knew not of Gismondo and his company; by whom I hoped the villa would be saved from this revengeful rebel.

"When does the attack take place, signor?"

"To-morrow, at midnight. We will burn a light at St. Eufemio that will astonish the good citizens of Messina, and scare Fata Morgana in her ocean palace. You are on your way to Palermo?"

I bowed.

"Say, when you get there, that Castelguelfo is in league with Regnier, has burned the grand bailiff, and hoisted the standard of Guiseppe of Naples: cospetto! the cross of the iron crown will outweigh the star of Constantine!"

"Success to the expedition, signori," said I, drinking to conceal my anger and confusion. "Faith! this is quite a revival of that ancient feud, of which the improvisatori sing so much."

"And long will they sing of the diabolical treachery of the Alfieri."

"Signor, I would gladly hear the relation."

"You shall, in a few words. You have heard of the famous fighting Dominican Campanella, who, in 1590, raised the banner of revolt in the Calabrias: my ancestor, Barone Amadeo, disgusted by Spanish misrule, joined him with three hundred men-at-arms; but these were all defeated and slaughtered by the followers of the then Visconte Santugo, on the same field of Maida where you so lately vanquished Regnier. Then commenced the quarrel between the Guelfi and the Alfieri; which, though we never came to blows, has survived for two centuries, and has settled down into coldness, mistrust, and jealousy, intriguing at court and petty squabbling at home. We are old-fashioned people here; but France holds out civilization and regeneration to us. Well, Messer Amadeo was defeated, and Santugo gave his castle to the flames, so that the Wolf of Amato might have nowhere to lay his head. An outcast, deserted by his followers and abandoned by all, he wandered long in the wild forest of St. Eufemio, until, reduced to the last extremities of hunger and despair, he resolved to throw himself upon the generosity of his triumphant enemy; and knocking at the gate of the castle of Santugo, craved the insolent porter to admit him to the visconte's presence. He was absent, fighting against Campanella; but Theodelinde of Bova, his young wife, resided at the castle during his campaign.

"Gaunt, from long continued misery, overgrown with a mass of beard and hair—clad in the skins of his namesake the wolf instead of the knightly Milan steel, and grasping a knotted staff in lieu of the bright-bladed falchion of Ferrara—Messer Amadeo had more the aspect of an ancient satyr than a Neapolitan cavalier.

"'Madonna mia!" cried Theodelinde, with dismay, 'Who art thou?'

"'Signora, thou beholdest Guelfo, the persecuted lord of Amato, who is come to cast himself at thy feet. My territories spread from the Tyrrhene to the Adriatic Sea; they have passed away, my people are destroyed, my castle is ruined, and I have nowhere to lay my head, save in the grave. Though thy husband's foe, take pity upon me, gentle signora! I am perishing with want; for the ban of God and the king are upon me, and no man dares to give me a morsel of bread or a cup of water.'

"Gentle in spirit, and milder in blood than our Italian dames, Theodelinde came of an old Albanian race; and, moved with pity, wept to behold a warrior of such high courage and birth reduced to such exceeding misery. Enjoining her maidens to secrecy, she provided him with food and raiment, and concerted means for his escape into Greece. The unfortunate Amadeo was grateful, and, touched with her generosity, swore on the cross that he would forgive the visconte for all the persecutions to which he had subjected him. That night he retired to rest in peace, beneath the roof of his deadliest enemy.

"Long exhaustion caused a deep slumber to sink upon his eyelids, and he heard not the clang of hoofs and the clash of steel ringing in the wide quadrangle, announcing that Santugo had returned, flushed with victory and triumph; his sword reeking with the blood of the revolters. Theodelinde rushed forth to meet her husband, and their meeting was one of joy: her tears of happiness fell on the steel corslet of the stern visconte, and he too rejoiced; for the Spanish king had promised to bestow upon him all the possessions of Amadeo, if before the festival of the Annunciation, which was but three days distant, he placed the Wolf's head on the high altar of St. Eufemio.

"The gentle viscontessa knew not of this bloody compact; but presuming on the joy and tenderness displayed by her husband, and shrinking from aught that resembled duplicity, she led him to the chamber of Amadeo. He was reposing on a stately couch, and fitfully the beams of the night-lamp fell on his pale forehead and noble features. He started, awoke, and saw—what? Theodelinde by his bedside, with her stern husband clad in complete armour. Santugo, his barred visor up, regarded him with a lowering visage; while he grasped a heavy zagaglia, such as our estradiots used of old, and which glittered deadly like the eyes of him who held it. Then Theodelinde knew, by the glare of that terrible eye, that Amadeo was lost, and she sank upon her knees.

"'Oh, pity him and spare him for my sake: spare him if you love me, my husband.'

"But the ruthless Alfieri heard her not—saw her not: he beheld only the aggrandisement of his power, and hearkened only to the whisperings of avarice and enmity. Amadeo leaped up; but his foe was too swift for him. Hurled with equal force and dexterity, the zagaglia flew hissing from Santugo's hand, and its broad barbed head cleft the skull, and lay quivering in the brain of Amadeo. Theodelinde sank down on the floor in horror; while the visconte cut off the head with his poniard, and knitting the locks to his baldrick, galloped to the church of St. Eufemio, where he flung the gory trophy on the altar. The ghastly skull remained there on a carved stone bracket, for half a century; until the cathedral of St. Eufemio was destroyed, on the anniversary of the deed, by the earthquake of 1638. Those who viewed its fall beheld a spectacle which was beyond description terrible! The earth yawned, and the stately church with its three tall taper spires; its pinnacles, rich with gothic carving; its windows, sparkling with light and gorgeous with tracery; its massive battlements and echoing aisles, sank slowly into the flaming abyss,—down, down, until the gilded cross on the tallest pinnacle vanished. Convents, stately palaces, and streets sank down with it, and where St. Eufemio stood, there lay a vast black fetid lake, rolling its dark sulphurous waves in the light of the summer moon. Ho! ho! what a tomb for the skull of the Wolf!

"The Guelfi were landless outcasts, until, by the treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, Naples passed away from Spanish domination; and under Charles of Parma, my father recovered the old possessions of our house: now, in imitation of Amadeo, I am ready for revolt; and, with every chance of success, to-morrow shall unroll the banner of Joseph of Naples, whom Madonna bless! To-morrow, let the Alfieri and loyalists beware! I will not spare even the linnet in the cage, or the dog that sleeps on the hearth. Drink, Scarolla, to the Signora Bianca; who by to-morrow eve will be hailed as thy gay capitanessa!"

But Scarolla heard him not: his head had fallen forward on his breast, and long ere the host's story was concluded, he was snoring with the force of a trombone.

CHAPTER V.

HAPPINESS.

By daybreak next morning we were clear of the castello; for we quitted its walls while its ruffian inmates were buried in slumber. I was happy when the ladies were mounted, and once more on the road; having been under considerable apprehension for their safety: dreading, perhaps, our detention as royalist prisoners in the barone's residence.

"A rough night the last for a march, signor," said I to Captain Gismondo, whom we found parading the Calabri in the street of Amato.

"A tempest, signor! the blue glare of the lightning alone revealed to us that foaming river which we forded, the water rising to our waist-belts; and the rain that rushed down from heaven was every drop large enough to beat in our drumheads."

Ordering the company to march by a solitary and long forgotten road, towards St. Eufemio, I informed Gismondo and my fair charge of the diabolical plan laid by the barone and his revolters to destroy the villa, and assign the innocent Bianca to the wretch Scarolla as the price of his co-operation. Her sisters shrieked with terror, and old Battista gave me a stern smile while laying his hand on his sword.

"I know a path across the mountains, signor; I travelled it once to Monteleone: my little daughter was with me then;" he sighed deeply. "By Ave Maria this evening our good friends the Alfieri will have a hundred and fifty bayonets at their disposal. Compagna! threes right, quick march!" and we moved off with rapidity.

Marching by the most retired roads, we made a circuit among the mountains to deceive the barone, if any of his scouts should have followed us. The evening sun was casting the long shadows of the lofty hills of Nicastro across the woods and valleys of St. Eufemio, the waters of the bay were rolling in their usual varied tints of sparkling blue, and the eve was so calm and still, that the dash of the lonely breakers, as they flowed on the sandy beach, was heard many miles from the shore; mingling with the solemn hymn of the Sicilian mariners, and the crews of those picturesque feluccas which spread their striped latteen sails to the breezes of the strait.

Leaving Gismondo with his company to follow, I pushed on with the ladies at full gallop towards the villa: they were both expert horsewomen, and quite outstripped me, as we flew along the sandy marino. Their merry laughter and taunting cries of "Fi! fi! Signor Capitano," were very galling to me; for I was considered the best horseman (except Lascelles) on the Sicilian staff, and had twice won the regimental and brigade cup at the Palermitan races.

"On my honour! ladies, if I held the reins of my brave English grey instead of those of a chubby Calabrian horse, you would not have distanced me thus," said I, when they halted to let me come up with them.

The battery erected by the soldiers of Sir Louis de Watteville was now abandoned and demolished; the cannon were away, and the platforms overgrown with luxuriant grass. How stirringly my time had passed since the morning when our army landed on the beach close by!

The moment we rode into the quadrangle of the villa, the clattering hoofs roused the whole household, as the blast of a trumpet would have done. To be brief: great was the joy diffused by our arrival. We disturbed the old viscontessa from cards, with which she was rapidly gaining from old Adriano all the ducats she had paid at confessional an hour before for peccadilloes. The young visconte, pale and worn with long illness of mind and body, received the trembling Francesca to his arms as if she had been restored to him from the tomb. The Italians are peculiarly exciteable, and his transports were wild in the extreme. He had expected to behold his bride no more; and now she was hanging on his bosom, free, happy, and more beautiful than ever. As I had long foreseen, he placed in my hand that of his blushing cousin, Bianca; while the venerable viscontessa wept and prayed with joy, scattered a handful of cards and counters over us, in her confusion, and embraced us by turns. The whole household, male and female, from Andronicus the chasseur to the little ragazzo who turned the spits, joined in a general chorus of joy; they commenced the furious tarantella in the quadrangle, and the whole mansion rang with shouts: which were soon to be changed for those of a less agreeable nature.

Around the white neck of Bianca, I threw the riband with the gold medal presented to me by Cardinal York, whose kindness had restored Francesca to light and life; and the sweet girl kissed it, promising to treasure it for his sake and mine. She appeared so beautiful, so blooming and happy, as she hung upon my shoulder in the recess of a lofty window, with the light of the western sky streaming on her bright curls and glittering dress; and Santugo seemed so much absorbed in the presence of her sister, who was seated between him and his mother, with a hand clasped fondly by each; that I was loath to disturb the happy group and blight their general joy, by speaking of Guelfo: but the appearance of Gismondo's company marching along the marino, and the advanced hour of the evening, made it imperative that arrangements should be made for fighting or flying. All changed colour when I mentioned Castelguelfo: Santugo's brow grew black, and his mother burst into tears.

"O, Luigi! to remain would be madness, when Giacomo and all our people are serving as soldiers at Reggio!" she exclaimed.

"It ill beseems you, signora, to counsel me to my dishonour;" replied the fierce young man, with singular hauteur, while his lip quivered and his dark eyes shone with fire. "Like all the family of Amato, Dionisio is a coward at heart, and a rebel Buonapartist; and shall I, who am esteemed among the bravest and most

patriotic of our noblesse, fly before a base leaguer with banditti? Never! With Gismondo's Calabri, and the armed men I can collect on an hour's notice, to the last will I defend my father-house; fighting from chamber to chamber and story to story, and die rather than yield, even should Guelfo involve the whole fabric in flames and destruction."

"Ammirando!" exclaimed Gismondo, entering, "you speak as I expected to hear the son of my old comrade; whose honours you will never tarnish. Courage, ladies! One hundred and fifty bayonets are here, under my orders; and with Madonna's blessing, and our own hands, the Wolf may fall into as great a snare as old Amadeo did in the days of poor Campanella."

The viscontessa shuddered: but her son took down his sword from the wall.

"Dundas," said he; "to you, who are a soldier of greater experience than any here (not even excepting our old guerilla, Gismondo), I look principally for advice during this night's uproar. Come, signor, leave Bianca, and loosen your sabre in its sheath. Ladies, away to your mandolins and embroidery, or to ave and credo; your presence alone unmans me. Ola, Zaccheo! where the devil is my old courier tarrying now? Bolt and barricade every door and window, and muster and arm the valets. Even the little ragazzo must handle a musket to-night."

"Had we not better send a horseman to the Royal Reggitore of Nicastro for aid?"

"An insolent Sicilian dog!" replied Santugo. "No, no; we must trust to Heaven and our own bravery."

Land and ocean had grown dark, or what is deemed so in fair Ausonia. The bright stars studding the whole firmament, and the pale silver moon rising over the dark green ridges of the wooded hills, shed their mystic light on cape and bay over Amato's frowning rocks and flowing river; illuminating the tall round tower, the broad façade, and many arcades of the Villa D'Alfieri, and bathing in silver the orange woods around it.

Before the hour of the projected attack, we had all prepared for defence; and our arrangements had been made for a vigorous one: every door, window, and aperture were strongly barred and barricaded; piles of furniture, statues, cushions, ottomans, massive tomes from the library, and everything suitable, were pressed into the service; forming barriers in the passages and on stair-landings, in case of an assault. Ere midnight tolled from the sonorous old clock in the quadrangle, all the ladies and their attendants were stowed away in the attic story, and one hundred and eighty men were stationed at the different posts assigned them below. Gismondo commanded one wing of the mansion; his lieutenant and Alfiero, two cavaliers of the House of Bisignano, the other; while Santugo and myself occupied the centre.

The soldiers were so well posted, that the different approaches to the villa

were completely enfiladed; while that by the quadrangle would be exposed to a deadly cross fire from fifty windows. In this order we awaited the revolters.

On making my rounds, to see that all were on the alert, I visited the ladies; who, in the attic story of the old round tower, were quite secure from musketry. The old viscontessa was on her knees praying: she had relinquished her cards for "The Litanies of our Blessed Lady;" and a crowd of female domestics knelt around her. Bianca and her sisters were clustered together, with arms entwined, like three beautiful graces; but looking pale and terrified: awaiting the strife with beating hearts and eyes suffused with tears.

"Dearest Claude!" said she whose gentle voice I loved best, "for God's sake! O, for my sake! do not expose yourself heedlessly to danger."

"Courage, dear one," said I, putting an arm playfully round her; "we must all fight like the Trojans of old. Think of what will be the fate of us all—of yourself in particular—if Guelfo and his ruffian compeers capture the villa to-night. If I can put a bullet into the head of this new suitor, Scarolla—Tush, Bianca! ridiculous, is it not?" She made a sickly attempt to smile, but bowed her head on my shoulder and wept. I heard Santugo and his chasseur uttering my name, and calling aloud through various parts of the mansion; but I was too agreeably occupied to attend to them just then.

"Allerta!" cried Gismondo; and knowing the military warning, I hurried away to the scene of action.

"See you the rascals, signor?" said he, pointing from a barricaded window, to a dark mass moving along the distant roadway, and rapidly debouching into the lawn. They marched in the full glare of the moonlight, and the gleam of steel flashed incessantly from the shapeless column. They carried two standards, and one was a tri-color.

"Some of those Jacobin dogs are the iron miners of Stilo: they have long been stubborn traitors," said Santugo, in accents of rage.

"And bold Scarolla, so long the scourge of Frenchmen, why leagues he with villains such as these?"

"You forgot, signor," replied the young lord, with a grim smile, "that he is either to gain a noble bride, or an ounce bullet to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

THE VILLA BESIEGED.

”Trombadore, sound the alert!” cried I to the little Calabrian trumpeter. The sharp blare of his brass instrument awoke every echo of the great villa; there was a clatter of accoutrements, a clashing of bayonets and buckles, a hum, and all became still as the grave. We now heard the tread of the advancing force, which divided into two bodies; one to assault the house in front, the other in flank. A red light shot up between the trees of the avenue, as an earnest of what was to ensue: the gate lodge had been given to the flames.

A steep sloping terrace, enclosed by a high balustrade, encircled the whole villa: six iron wickets, leading to the lawn and garden, had been well secured, and this outer defence formed our first barrier against the foe; who advanced within a few yards of it, before I ordered the trumpeter to sound again. At the first note, a volley, which the assailants little expected, was poured upon them, throwing them into the utmost confusion, and driving them back with slaughter. They replied with promptitude, and poor old Gismondo fell dead by my side. My blood now got heated in earnest!

”Bravissimo soldateria!” I cried to the Free Calabri, while brandishing my sabre and hurrying from post to post to animate their resistance: ”level low, and fire where they are thickest!” The roar of the musketry stirred all the echoes of the vast resounding building: its long corridors, lofty saloons, and domed ceilings, gave back the reports with redoubled force; every place was filled with smoke, without and within; every window and aperture was streaked with fire, bristling with bright steel bayonets, and swarming with dark fierce visages.

Our fire made frightful havoc among the revolters; who numbered above a thousand, all keen for plunder, infuriated by unexpected opposition, and maddened by wine drank in the various houses and cellars they had pillaged on their march: their yells were like those of wild beasts or savages.

The sbirri, or feudal gens-d’armes who wore the barone’s livery, were lost among the dense rabble of barefooted miners from Stilo, grim charcoal-burners, and Scarolla’s squalid banditti. A revolting array of hideous faces I beheld moving beneath me in the moonlight; distorted by every malignant and evil passion, and flushed with wine, fury, and inborn ferocity. In the blaze of their brandished torches, glittered weapons of every description, from the pike twelve feet long, to the short spadetto and knife of Bastia. Onward they rushed, a mighty mass of ferocity and filth; and again they were repulsed, leaving the quadrangle strewn with killed and wounded.

”Viva Giuseppe! superba!” cried a shrill quavering voice: it was that of the barone, whom we now saw heading a third attack in person; whilst a strong party, making a lodgment under the portico, assailed the grand entrance with crowbars and levers. The colonnade protected them from our fire, and the massive framework of the door was fast yielding to the blows of pickaxes and hammers with

which the strong-armed miners assailed it; whilst their courage increased, as the barrier gradually gave way before their strenuous efforts. At last a tremendous shout announced that an aperture was made; upon which I ordered the barricades of the vestibule to be strengthened, and lined by a double rank of soldiers, entrusting their command to the young Alfiero Caraffa.

The fire of the besiegers had now reduced our force to about eighty effective men; and my anxiety for the safety of the villa and its inmates increased with the wounds and deaths around me. The whole terrace on the land-side was lined with marksmen, who knelt behind the stone balusters, and fired between them with deadly precision at the large upper windows; through which the white uniforms and gay trappings of the Royal Calabrians were distinctly visible in the moonlight. I dreaded the continuation of this deadly fire more than a close assault; and to increase my anxiety, Andronicus, who acted as our commissary, came with a most lugubrious visage to inform me that the ammunition was becoming expended, and that the pouches of the Free Calabri were almost empty.

"God! we are lost then!" I exclaimed: this information fell upon me like a thunderbolt. I hurried to Santugo, whom I found kneeling, rifle in hand, before a narrow loophole, endeavouring to discover the little barone, the main-spring of this revolt; whom it was no easy task to perceive, among such a rabble, although we heard his croaking voice and chuckling laugh every moment.

"Superba! viva Giuseppe Buonaparte! *viva la Capitanessa Scarolla*!" The banditti answered by a yell of delight. "On, on brave rogues;" he added, "we will have two pieces of cannon here in an hour."

"Cannon!" I reiterated, and exchanged glances with Santugo. We were both astounded by the intelligence.

"O, Claude!" said my friend, "I tremble only for my mother, for Francesca and her sisters. For myself, per Baccho! you know I would fight, without a tremor, till roof and rafters, column and cupola, fell in ruins above me. Is all lost, then?'

"No," said I, speaking through my hand; for the noise of the conflict was deafening; "we may save the villa yet, and all its inmates: but a bold dash must be made. Look yonder! what see you?"

"I understand—the task is mine."

"Mine, rather."

"No, no, Signor Claude, I have Francesca at stake."

"And I, Bianca—we are equal."

"I care not. Ola, Andronicus! saddle my cavallo Barbero, and look well to girth and holster—quick, away, Signor Greco!"

What we saw was the British fleet, consisting of a gigantic ship of the line and three or four frigates and corvettes, standing slowly down the Straits of the

Pharo, and keeping close in shore; attracted, probably, by the sound of the firing. I knew the flag-ship of Sir Sidney Smith, by its old-fashioned poop-lantern; and my project was to despatch a messenger on board, craving help. But how could one leave the villa? it was environed on one side by surf and steep rocks, shelving down to a whirlpool; on the other by fierce assailants who were merciless as the yawning sea.

Desperate was the venture: but that it must be attempted, we knew was imperative. A friendly contest ensued between us and the two Cavalieri Caraffa; each insisting on being the executor of the dangerous service. We contested the point so long, that it was at last referred to a throw of dice: the lot fell on Luigi; who prepared at once for the deadly mission, by divesting himself of his mantle, buttoning his short velvet surtout closely about him, and taking in three holes of his sword belt; while I hurriedly indited the following note to the admiral.

"VILLA D'ALFIERI. *Sept.* 20*th*, 1808.

"Sir,

"I have the honour to request that you will order as strong a detachment of seamen or marines as you may deem necessary, to be landed at the villa of the Alfieri, which is closely besieged by the Baron of Castelguelfo, a Buonapartist, who is now at the head of a numerous force of Italian rebels. To protect the loyal family of the bearer, the Visconte di Santugo, I placed in the villa a company of the Free Corps, and have already to regret the loss of Captain Battista Gismondo, and nearly sixty rank and file. Our case is desperate. The villa will not be tenable one hour longer, as the barone (whom Regnier has supplied with all munition of war) is bringing two pieces of cannon against it, and our cartridges are totally expended. I have the honour, &c. &c.
"CLAUDE DUNDAS,
Capt. 62d Regt."
Admiral Sir SIDNEY SMITH,
H.M. ship *Pompey*.

According to the fashion of many large Italian houses, the stables formed a part of the principal building; and so in the present emergency it was lucky that the horses were at hand. Santugo's black Barbary horse, with its red quivering nostrils, eyes sparkling fire, and its mane bristling at the noise of the musketry, was led by the Greek chasseur through a long corridor to a saloon which overlooked the grottoes by the sea-shore. The saddled steed was an unusual visitor in that

noble apartment; where statues, vases, pictures, and sofas, were piled up in confusion to form barricades before six tall windows which faced the straits. One was open, revealing the bright sky, the sparkling sea, Sicilia's coast and the sailing fleet; while ten Calabri, with their bayonets at the charge, stood by to guard the aperture.

The brave young noble mounted, and stooping as he passed out, guided his horse along a ledge of slippery rock, and the casement was immediately secured behind him. We watched him with equal anxiety and admiration, as he rode along the perilous path, where one false step of the Barbary would have plunged him in the whirlpool, which roared and sucked in the foaming eddies, beneath the villa walls. The instant he passed the angle of the building which was swept by the fire of the assailants, there burst from them a simultaneous yell; which was answered by a shout of reckless defiance from the daring Santugo, who driving spurs into his fleet horse, compelled it to clear the high balustraded terrace by a flying leap. Then his long sword flashed in the moonlight as he slashed right and left, crying—"Viva Carolina! Ferdinando nostra e la Santa Fede!" cutting his way through the yelling mass, escaping bullet and steel as if he had a charmed life, he passed through them and was free; and I had no doubt would gain the village (where the boats lay) safely and rapidly.

Enraged at his escape, the revolters pressed on with renewed fury, but changed their mode of attack. A cloud now passed over the moon involving the scenery in comparative darkness; but it was soon to be illuminated in a manner I little expected.

There flashed forth a sudden glare of light, revealing the sea of ferocious visages and glancing arms of the enemy, the bloody terrace heaped with dead, the dark arcades, carved cornices, and lofty portico of the villa: a lurid glare shone over everything, and a man advanced to the terrace holding aloft an Indian skyrocket; a terrible species of firework often used by the French. Its yellow blaze fell full upon the face of the bearer, in whom I recognised the villainous engineer, Navarre; I snatched a musket from the hand of a dead soldier, but ere it was aimed the traitor had shot the fiery missile from his hand and disappeared.

This terrible instrument of eastern warfare forced itself forward, roaring and blazing towards the villa, and breaking through a window, plunged about as if instinct with life, setting fire to everything inflammatory within its reach. From its size and weight, and the formation of its sides, which were bristling with spikes, it finally stuck fast to the flooring of a room; where its power of combustion increased every instant, and a succession of reports burst from it as its fire-balls flew off in every direction. All fled in dismay, to avoid being blown up by the sparks falling into their pouches, scorched to death by remaining in its vicinity, shot by its bullets, or stabbed by the spikes; which it shot forth

incessantly, like quills from a "fretful porcupine."

In vain I cried for water: no one heard me; the diabolical engine bounded, roared, and hissed like a very devil, involving us in noisome and suffocating smoke; and in three minutes the magnificent villa was in flames, and its defenders paralysed.

"Superba!" cried the barone. "Viva Guiseppe!" and the triumphant yells of his enraged followers redoubled. I turned to the Cavalieri Caraffa.

"Gentlemen, keep your soldiers at their posts to the last," said I, "while I provide for the retreat of the ladies."

"How, signor?" asked Andronicus; "on every hand they environ us, save the seaward; where a whirlpool—O, omnipotente!"

At that moment we heard the report of a cannon; a round shot passed through the great door, demolishing in its passage a beautiful fountain of marble and bronze, and the water flowed in a torrent over the tessellated pavement, while musketry was discharged in quick succession through the breach. To augment our distress, the barone's guns had come up; and the triumphant cries, the ferocity and daring of the assailants increased as the hot flames grew apace around us. Shrieks now burst from the summit of the round tower: overwhelmed with anxiety and rage, and faint with the heat and smoke of the fire-arms and conflagration, I hurried up the great staircase to bring away the females, who could not remain five minutes longer: but where or how I was to convey them, Heaven only knew!

The moon, which had been obscured for some time, now shone forth with renewed lustre; and I saw the sea brightening like a silver flood, as the last clouds passed away from the shining orb. O, sight of joy! Three large boats filled with marines and seamen were at that moment pulled close under the rocks; to which they had advanced unseen by the foe. The headmost had already disappeared in the sea grottoes; and I heard the measured clank of the rowlocks, and saw the oar-blades of the sternmost barge flash like blue fire as they were feathered in true man-o'-war style. The boats shot under the rocks, like arrows: one moment the glittering moon poured its cold light on the glazed caps and bristling bayonets of the closely packed marines—on the bright pike-heads, the gleaming cutlasses, and little tarpaulins of the seamen—and the next, it shone on the lonely seething ocean.

"Saved, thank Heaven!" I exclaimed, rushing down the stair. "Bravo, soldateria! fight on, brave Calabri, for aid is near. Hollo, Zaccheo! throw open the windows to the back, and bring down the ladies before the fire reaches the upper stories. Hollo, signor trombadore! sound the *rally*, my brave little man!"

The poor boy was so terrified that his trumpet-call was only a feeble squeak; but the survivors of the company, about fifty in number, rushed from all quarters

to the spot. A volley of musketry announced that our marines had opened on the assailants.

"Let us sally out—away with the barricades!" cried Lieutenant Caraffa; and we rushed forth with charged bayonets, eager to revenge the slaughter and devastation of the night. The regular fire of a hundred marines from the terrace—to which Santugo led them by a secret passage from the grottoes below—threw the revolters into a panic; and their discomfiture was completed by a strong detachment of seamen, headed by Hanfield the gallant captain of the *Delight*, whom Sir Sidney had sent in command of the expedition. Rushing over the lawn with a wild hurrah, they fell slashing and thrusting with cutlass and pike among the recoiling rabble of the barone; who, abandoning their two six-pounder guns, fled, *en masse*, with rapidity: but fighting every step of the way towards the mountains, and firing on us from behind every bush and rock which afforded momentary concealment. In the pursuit I encountered the formidable Scarolla, who fired both his pistols at me without effect, as I rushed upon him with my sabre: clubbing his rifle, he swung it round his head with a force sufficiently formidable; but watching an opportunity when he overstruck himself, I sabred him above the left eye, and beat him to the ground; when some of his followers made a rally and carried him off.

"Viva Guiseppe!" cried a well-known voice close by me; and looking round, I beheld the little author of all the mischief, struggling in the grasp of a seaman; whom, by his embroidered anchors, I recognised as boatswain of the *Delight*. He was not much taller than his antagonist, the barone, but strong and thickset, with the chest and shoulders of an ox; an ample sunburnt visage, surmounted by a little glazed hat, and fringed by a circular beard of black wiry hair below, his cheek distended by a quid, and an enormous pig-tail reaching below his waist-belt, made him seem a very formidable antagonist to Guelfo; whom, he had knocked down, and over whom he was flourishing his heavy cutlass, squirting a little tobacco-juice into his eyes from time to time.

"Maladetto!" growled the Italian lord, "O, povero voi, Signor Marinero!"

"Avast, old Gingerbread! I speak none of your foreign lingos," replied the boatswain.

Flushed with rage and disappointment, the barone struggled furiously with his strong antagonist, who held him at arms' length, in doubt whether to cleave him down or let him go; till Zaccheo, the Greek, approached, and, ere I could interfere, ended the matter, by driving his couteau-de-chasse through the heart of Guelfo, who expired without a groan.

By daybreak, the fighting was over. A poor little midshipman and several seamen were killed; a hundred of our mad assailants lay dead in the quadrangle, and as many more round the terrace. In the villa, half its garrison lay killed or

wounded around the windows, from which the flames and smoke rolled forth in mighty volumes; many were roasted or consumed before we could remove them: poor old Gismondo with the rest. Hanfield ordered his men to save the villa from further destruction; but the flames had gathered such force, that for a time every effort seemed fruitless. Assisted by three boats' crews from the flag-ship, they pulled down a part of the mansion, and turned the water of the *jets d'eau* on the rest, to prevent the fire (which was confined to one wing) from spreading to the main building. After an hour of toil and danger, during which I worked away in my shirt-sleeves until I was as black as a charcoal-burner, the flames were suppressed: but how changed was the aspect of the once splendid villa!

One portion of the building was roofless and ruined: its lofty casements shattered, its corbelled balconies, tall pillars, and rich Corinthian entablatures, scorched by fire, and blackened by smoke; the ravaged gardens and terraces were strewn with corpses, the halls, saloons, and corridors, encumbered with the same ghastly objects, splashed with blood, and filled with confusion and destruction; pier-glasses, vases, and statues, were dashed to pieces, hangings and pictures rent and torn. The quiet library and elegant boudoir rang with the cries of the wounded, or the reckless merriment of the sailors, who caroused on the richest wines. But Santugo looked around him with the most perfect *sang froid*.

Twenty prisoners we had captured were sent over to Palermo, where they expiated their revolt in the horrible dungeons of the Damusi,—the most frightful perhaps in the world, where their bones are probably lying at this hour.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NUPTIALS.

When the fight was over, the fire extinguished, and the dead all interred, I repaired to the grotto, where the ladies and their attendants were shivering with terror and the cold air of the sea, which every instant threw a shower of sparkling spray into the damp vaults. A statue to St. Hugh, before which three dim tapers were always burning, gave a picturesque aspect to the natural grotto; and a rill of limpid water, at which the saint had quenched his thirst, gurgled from the rocks into a rich font of white marble. Around this little shrine the females were clustered; and a cry burst from them when I approached in my unseemly garb, spotted with blood, blackened by powder, smoke, and toil, and plastered over

with clay, as if I had been dipped in the mud-baths of Abano.

The carriage was brought; the horses of the ladies were saddled, and they left the half ruined villa with a strong escort, to take up a temporary residence at the castle of Angistola, the property of the Duke of Bagnara, near Pizzo. After seeing the remains of the Calabrian company embarked for Messina in our gun-boats, I, accompanied by Santugo, followed the ladies at full gallop; leaving the old chasseur to act as commandant at the villa. I despatched a mounted servant to Scylla, for some of my baggage; a suit of uniform especially, as my harness was quite ridiculous in the gay *salons* of the duchess.

At Angistola, the ladies soon recovered from their terror and fatigue: the beauty of the scenery, where the steep Apennines sloped down to the Gulf of St. Eufemio, covered with dark pines or orange trees, and the deep-wooded dell through which the river wound, seemed gloomy, solemn, and picturesque. The Duke of Bagnara held a military command at a distance; but his fair duchessa, who was one of the reigning beauties of the Sicilian Court, received us with every honour and kindness.

A few days after our arrival we had the castello filled with milliners from Palermo, and the ladies were constantly clustered in deep consultation around the duchess in her boudoir; the visconte was joyous and gay—a fête was evidently approaching: he was about to espouse his cousin, with all the splendour that wealth could yield, and the imposing pomp of the Catholic Church impart; and (to be brief) I found myself on the same happy footing with my dear little Bianca, without the portentous question having been asked. It was all quite understood: we had made no secret of our mutual attachment, which was revealed by every gentle word and tender glance. Our marriage was the earnest wish of Santugo and the vicontessa; and as for her principal relative, the withered little Prince of St. Agata, as the girl was without a ducat, he cared not a straw who became her husband.

The day before the auspicious one, old Fra Adriano came jogging up to the castello on his ambling mule, in the execution of his office as family confessor, to confess us all, according to the Italian custom, before marriage. To this I objected, first with a joke, and then gravely; much to the horror of the reverend friar: he turned up his eyes, and muttering "ahi! eretico!" went in search of Bianca, who confessed to him—Heaven knows what! So innocent a being could have nothing to reveal, save her own happiness and joy.

Adriano had scarcely left me, when I saw a sergeant, in the welcome and well-known uniform of my own regiment, ascending the steep avenue to the castle porch.

"What can be the matter now?" thought I; and at such a time—the deuce! "Well, Gask, what news from the corps, and what has brought you here?" said I, as

he entered the room and stood straight as his half-pike, which he held advanced. "Take a chair, man," I added, with that kind familiarity with which an officer ought always to greet a soldier of his own regiment in a strange place.

"Sir, I have brought a letter from Sir John Stuart. Being on my way to join the garrison at Scylla castle, he sent me over in a gun-boat from Messina, that I might deliver this; which he was anxious you should receive without delay."

I tore open the note. It ran thus;—

"*Messina, Tuesday morning.*

"DEAR DUNDAS,—Join your garrison at Scylla without a moment's delay: General Sherbrooke threatens to supersede you, and order you to join the 'Wiltshire' at Syracuse; as he understands that you attend more to the ladies than H.M.'s service. Massena and Regnier are concentrating forces in Upper Calabria; the chiefs of the Masse are wavering; and you may expect more broken heads by Christmas. Adieu! I start for London to-morrow.

"**I am, &c. &c.,** "J. STUART, Major-General."

"So, Gask, you are bound for Scylla?" said I, glad the note contained only a friendly hint.

"Yes, sir."

"You will go with me, as it is unsafe for you to travel alone in such a country as this. I set out the day after to-morrow."

"I am much obliged to you, sir, for your forethought. Do we march by daybreak?"

"No, no," I answered, laughing; "that would scarcely suit; but retire with the chamberlain, who will order you a luncheon and tell you news."

Though pleased with Sir John's friendly attention, I could very well have dispensed with the presence of my countryman, the sergeant; who was a true blue Presbyterian from the Howe of Fife, an ardent worshipper of Eben Erskine, and one, consequently, who would look with pious horror on the popish ceremonies of the morrow: which there was no doubt he would witness, with the household of the castello.

Poor Gask! He was a worthy and good soldier, for whom the whole corps had a sincere respect. Educated for our stern Scottish kirk, some misfortunes in early life forced him into the ranks, where his superior attainments and classical

education made him a marvel among the Wiltshire men, and gained him three stripes, although it could do nothing more; the quiet tenor of his way being the reverse of the smart drill-corporal or bustling sergeant-major, who looks forward to the post of adjutant. He was the beau-ideal of a Scottish soldier, grave, intelligent, and steady; and was seldom seen, unless, book in hand, reading in some retired nook, when his comrades were roystering in the canteen or sutler's tent. Poor Gask! this page is the only tribute to your memory.

Next day the marriages were celebrated with great pomp, in the church of St. Eufemio, at Nicastro: that of the visconte and Francesca took place first, and was followed by that of Bianca and myself. A new uniform coat was quite spoiled by the holy water, which the bishop sprinkled over us very liberally; and my white "regimental breeches" were totally ruined by the rough Mosaic of the church, when I advanced on my knees, with a lighted candle in one hand, to present bread and wine to the bishop, while old Adriano waved the stole over us, according to the usage of the land.

"Ah! if any of our mess could see me just now, how the rogues would laugh!" thought I, while scrambling along the aisle, with the hot wax dropping on my fingers from the confounded taper, which I did not hold so gracefully as Bianca held hers. Grand as the ceremony was, I disliked so much of it, and dreaded to encounter the cold smile and smirking face of Sergeant Gask; who stood, upright as a pike, among the kneeling domestics.

We were glad when the bishop concluded the ritual, the fundamental part of which was simple enough; but I could very well have dispensed with all that Italian superstition had added to it: yet I behaved with such decorum, that the bishop believed me as stanch a Catholic as ever kissed cross, and fain would gentle Bianca have thought me so too. The moment we left the altar a bright circle of young ladies clustered round her, covering her with kisses, while the people shouted, "O giorno felice! Viva il capitano! Viva la capitanessa!"

All blessed her, and muttered, "Bell' Idolo!" as she passed forth: indeed, she appeared as enchanting as beauty of the most delicate caste, the richest attire, and most splendid diamonds could make her; and if always lovely, even in the plainest garb, imagine how she must have shone in her magnificent bridal dress, when her eyes beamed with delight and her soft cheek turned alternately deep red and deadly pale, as the blood came and went with the varying thoughts that agitated her—awe and modesty, love and exultation!

"Giorno felice, indeed!" thought I; and springing into the carriage beside her, we drove off for the castello, as fast as four galloping horses could take us. The sonorous organ, the chanting priests, the ringing bells, the shouts and discharge of fire-arms, died away behind us; and accompanied by a gay cavalcade of the fairest and noblest in the province, our marriage train swept through the

solitary vale of the Angistola at full speed, towards the castle: where a lordly fête awaited us, and from the tall windows of its hall a blaze of light was shed on the darkening scenery and winding river as we rode up the gloomy avenue.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEMPEST—THE LAST OF THE HUNCHBACK.

Leaving Santugo and his bride with the duchess, we set out next day for Scylla; our calesso having an escort, without which, it was impossible to travel in such a country. Gask occupied the rumble beside Annina, while a chasseur with ten sbirri sent by the duchess, rode five in front and five in the rear; their leader riding some hundred yards in advance. All these men wore the duke's livery; they were well mounted, and armed with carbines, sabres, and pistols. The calesso was furnished with a loop-hole, opening under the rumble, through which I could blaze away with my pistols, in case of having to retreat skirmishing.

The scenery was now beginning to assume the brown warm tints of autumn; but the savage mountain gorges, the deep woods, the winding shore and beetling cliffs, through which the road lay, were not less beautiful than when I passed them before, with poor Castelermo. The ramparts of Monteleone, the bosky forest of Burello, the silver windings of Metramo, the famous vineyards of Rossarno and Gioja were all passed rapidly; and plunging down into the wilderness, between the Apennines and the sea, we had accomplished half our journey, when a tremendous storm overtook us.

Our hearts were so full of happiness, and each was so much absorbed in the presence of the other, that we marked not the flight of time; and though our carriage rolled on through the most beautiful scenery of that wild province, we bestowed scarce a glance or a thought upon it. Yet we conversed very little; for an overwhelming sense of happiness had quite subdued Bianca's vivacity.

I deemed myself the luckiest member of our Calabrian army. Hundreds had come only to find a tomb on the plains of Maida, before the ramparts of Crotona, or in the trenches of Scylla. A few had gained a step of promotion and a little honour; the general a great deal—the title of count, and from the city of London a substantial dinner at the Mansion-house, with the present of a splendid sword: but I had gained Bianca d'Alfieri, who had last season turned half the heads in Palermo. "Bravo Claude!" thought I; "it is quite a regimental triumph,

and deserves to be borne on our colours. At Syracuse, the mess will drink deep when they hear of it!"

The darkening of the sky, across the azure surface of which dense columns of cloud were moving in rapid succession, and the exhalation of a chilly vapour and malaria from the stagnant pools of a dismal swamp in which we suddenly became entangled, all foreboded a coming storm. The sea, when seen at intervals between the opening hills, was black as ink, and fleckered with masses of foam. Vessels were making all snug aloft and getting close under the lee of the shore to avoid the threatened tempest, which was soon to sweep over the bosom of the trackless ocean. The rumbling of the carriage, and the hoofs of our galloping escort sounded deep and hollow between the echoing hills.

"Signor," said their decurione or chasseur, riding up to the window which I had let down for the admission of air, "in three minutes we shall have a tremendous storm: perhaps la capitanessa would wish to seek a place of safety."

"But where?"

"Madonna only knows, excellency. The earth shakes, the air is thick. I am an old man, and remember with dread when last I saw such signs. Fly to the shore—the sea may ingulph you; to the hills—they may fall down and overwhelm you; to the plains—and the solid earth may yawn beneath your feet."

"Pleasant!" I said, considerably startled; "what do you advise? to seek Seminara? The spire of the Greek cathedral rises yonder above the pine woods and vapour of the marshes."

"No, signor, we are safer on the mountains or in the marshes: here let us remain and trust to Madonna for protection."

"In God alone is all my trust!" said the Scottish sergeant, whose knowledge of Latin enabled him to understand the sbirro; "but as for your Madonna——" he snapped his fingers without concluding.

The blackness was increasing fast, and we sought the shelter offered by a thick pine wood to escape the pelting rain; which rushed down in a torrent, every drop larger than a pistol bullet. As it would have been unsoldier-like to remain in the calesso while our escort were exposed to the storm, I passed the time under the trees rolled up in my military cloak, after securing the carriage doors to protect Bianca and her attendant; who drew their veils close to shut out the flashes of vivid lightning which every instant illumined the darkest dingles of the forest. A terrible noise, such as I had never heard before, rumbled in the earth and air. I looked to the sbirro; he was crossing himself and muttering an ave, while a sour presbyterian smile curled the lips of Gask, who leaned on his pike beside him. The chasseur, or decurione, ordered the horses to be unharnessed from the carriage; and I had soon reason to thank him sincerely for his forethought.

We saw the flames of distant Etna casting a light across the western sky;

but in every other direction the heavens were involved in gloom or dark grey twilight. The whole atmosphere, however, soon began to assume an aspect so fiery, that over Seminara the dense clouds seemed as if rolling in flames; and we beheld the tall *façade* of the Greek abbey, the dark mountains and the arches of a ruined aqueduct between them, standing in bold outline and strong relief on the red and luminous background. The scene was wild and magnificent; but the drenching rain, and the roaring wind, which shook the strongest pines like ostrich feathers, and almost blew us away with the branches, leaves, and stones which it swept over the waste, the sulphureous state of the atmosphere, and the ground trembling beneath our feet, made us feel, altogether, too uncomfortable to enjoy the splendid aspect of the heavens and earth agitated by such a storm.

It was truly Calabrian! Our horses snorted and pranced, their manes bristled, their prominent eyes shot fire; and it required all our efforts to calm them, and keep them from breaking the bridle-reins which we had buckled to trees. Suddenly a most appalling clap of thunder burst over our heads, like the broadside of a fleet. A lofty and precipitous cliff of volcanic rock, which reared up its rugged front not far from us, heaved and reeled like some mighty animal convulsed with agony: shaken to the base by some tremendous subterranean throe, it rocked visibly, and the foliage on its summit was tossed like raven plumage on a hearse by the motion.

Anon a cry of dismay burst from the sbirri. An enormous mass became detached from the highest peak; rolling from its perpendicular front and rebounding from cliff to cliff it came thundering into the plain below, bringing with it a mighty ruin of shattered stones, dust, trees and soil, which fell like the fragments of a mountain, and with a force that shook the ground we stood on. The crash was deafening; a storm of leaves, small stones, and dust flew past us, and for a minute the air was fearfully dense, gloomy, and palpable. I reeled, and clung to the carriage-wheels for support; Bianca swooned; Gask was praying devoutly with his grenadier cap off, and the sbirri muttered their aves aloud: above us the thunder rolled on from peak to peak, and the lightning shot between them, while the air grew darker and more sulphureous.

Terrified by the shaken rock and the bursting thunderbolts, our fiery horses became mad: they foamed, snorted, plunged, and kicked fire from the stones; the four that were unharnessed from the calesso broke loose and fled, at full speed, towards Seminara, pursued by the decurione and his sbirri, who were eager to save them: they were noble bays, and favourites of the duchess. Thus the sergeant and I were left alone standing by the calesso.

"Ghieu, ho! ho!" cried a croaking voice in the thicket; I heard a chuckling laugh, and a figure rolled up like a ball, making a summerset over the rocks and stones, lighted close by my feet. "Buon giorno, signor capitano! he, he! ho, ho!

fine evening, eh?"

Like a gigantic toad, Gaspare Truffi stood before me, with his long matted hair waving over his frightful visage; his torn cassock revealing a leathern baldrick furnished with pistols, poniard, and horn. Like the very demon of the storm, he whooped and yelled. A broad-leaved hat of the largest size overshadowing his figure like an umbrella, gave a peculiarly droll effect to his aspect.

"A delightful evening!" he croaked; "how does our Calabrian weather agree with your stomach, Signor Inglese? Ill, I think, to judge from that lugubrious visage of thine. Ola, Lancelloti! come hither and behold the good padre confessor who came so devoutly to worm a story out of you in the bishop's vaults: he, he! ho, ho! Feel you how the ground shakes?" he added, stamping his shapeless feet on the quaking turf; "feel you how earth and air tremble? Ammirando! there is a rebellion in hell, for our good friend the devil is gone to the witch-tree at Benevento to-night: ha, ha!"

"Beard of Mahomet!" cried a distant voice, "where are you, cursed crookback?" and at that moment I saw my friend of the vaults advancing towards us, clad in the usual brigand costume, with malice in his eye and a cocked rifle in his hand. Other figures, like dim ghosts appeared through the dark misty vapour that floated round us, and I knew that we had fallen in with a party of banditti.

"Come on, comrades," cried Truffi; "here is a calesso containing, I doubt not, the Signora Bianca, whom we all know of. Viva! a prize worth a thousand scudi!" He advanced to the door of the carriage, but with the butt of his pike Gask dealt him a blow which levelled him on the turf. Uttering a yell he rushed like a lion upon his assailant; who, not expecting so vigorous an onset from a figure so decrepit, was taken completely by surprise and deprived of his weapon, which Truffi snapped like a reed; rending the tough ash pole to threads with his sharp teeth and long bony fingers.

He drew his stiletto; and I, narrowly escaping a rifle-shot from Lancelloti, closed with the hideous dwarf, whose insulting demeanor had roused both my hatred and anxiety. Though once before, in a personal struggle I had obtained convincing proof of his wondrous strength, I disdained to use my sabre against him; but striking the poniard from his hand, endeavoured to hurl him to the earth by grasping his leather girdle. In vain! his short bandy legs upheld his shapeless body, like pillars of steel, while his strong and ample hands grasped me like grappling irons.

Lancelloti advanced with his clubbed rifle; but Gask assailed him with his sword, and I was left to deal with Truffi alone. I heard the cries of Bianca during the lulls of the storm, and my anxiety was great: the sbirri had all disappeared, the misty figures were rapidly increasing in form and number, and shouts rang through the echoing wood. At this most critical moment, when engaged in a

desperate struggle, the earth shook under our feet and a sensation like an electric shock shot over every nerve. We paused and glared fiercely at each other.

Again, there was a rumbling in the lurid air above, and the quivering earth beneath: yet we relaxed not our vice-like grasp. What a moment it was! The shaking rocks, the waving trees and the whole country around us were torn by one of those mighty convulsions so common to the Calabrias.

Never shall I forget my sensations when, within a yard of where we struggled, the earth gaped and rent; showing an awful chasm about twenty feet wide: my heart forgot to beat; my blood curdled! From the gap there arose a thin sulphury light, illuminating the trees above and the distant dingles of the wood, shining on the wet trunks and glistening leaves; showers of sparks and columns of smoke arose from it, with balls of ignited matter, which hissed in succession as they rose and fell, or exploded among the wet foliage of the forest. Beautiful was its aspect when illuminated by the mysterious yellow glare of that smoky chasm; and I saw the distorted form of Truffi, in strong outline between it and me. I felt his grasp tightening: we were near the gulf, and I read his hellish purpose in the twinkling of his red hollow eyes. Gathering all my strength for one tremendous effort, great beyond my hopes, I flung him from me into the flaming chasm: but the shock threw me prostrate on the turf. I leaped up: Truffi had vanished in that appalling grave, which was now closing rapidly, and soon shut altogether; the sparks and ignited matter arose no more, and the wood became involved in double gloom.

Dismayed at the horrible living tomb which had so suddenly engulphed the hunchback, Lancelloti shrank back; and I leaned against the carriage overcome with my own emotions. The wind was dying away: the heavy pine branches hung down motionless. One voice alone broke the stillness; it was that of the Scottish serjeant who prayed devoutly. Though as brave a fellow as ever drew sword, he was terrified at that moment.

We soon heard the galloping of hoofs, and the decurione, with the ten sbirri, came back; upon which Lancelloti and his company disappeared and we saw them no more that night.

"The carriage horses?" I inquired.

"O, signor! they have all rushed over the cliffs of Palmi and perished in the sea!" replied the breathless sbirro.

"Bianca," I exclaimed, "O God, what a fate you have escaped! Signor decurione, never can I sufficiently reward you for desiring the horses to be unharnessed so soon!" I shook the hand of the sbirro, while my heart sank at the contemplation of what might have happened.

It was long ere Bianca recovered from the horrors of that night; which, indeed, were such as might have shaken a stouter heart than that of the gentle

Italian girl.

We reached Seminara with great difficulty, dragging the calesso by the saddle horses; but on obtaining mules at the Greek abbey, we again set out for Scylla, *viâ* Bagnara: where soon afterwards I had a sharp encounter with the voltigeurs of the 23d regiment (French).

CHAPTER IX.

A MILITARY HONEYMOON.

On the day after assuming my command at Scylla, I ordered out the little garrison in heavy marching order, and found it to consist of picked young fellows of my own regiment, 250 file, with five officers. This small party, with the garrisons at Reggio and Crotona, Amanthea and Monteleone, formed the whole force left in Calabria, with orders to defend their several posts to the last extremity. The last four places were held by Italians alone.

I found that every means had been taken to render the famous rock, and the stronghold of the race of Ruffo, yet more impregnable. In place of the princely cardinal's banner, our gaudy union spread its scarlet folds to the wind, the mighty breach—to me the scene of an adventure never, never to be forgotten—was now closed up, and a strong stone bastion, surmounted by six iron twenty-four-pounders, frowned grimly in its stead.

We were often visited by Santugo and his bride: he belonged to the Reggio garrison, which was commanded by the Prince of St. Agata. My brother officers were all agreeable men, and the time passed very pleasantly. Bianca's residence shed quite a halo over the formal barrack and rugged castello, which was enlivened by a continual round of fair visitors from Fiumara, Reggio, and the neighbouring villas. Those gay subs who had looked forward with repugnance to detachment duty in the gloomy castle of Cardinal Ruffo, became delighted with the station and the gaiety of the entertainments. The towers rang perpetually with the dulcet voices of Italian girls, the twangling of mandolins, or the notes of the piano. Every evening, the hall—where the ambitious cardinal had formed his deep laid schemes of political intrigue, where his mailed ancestors had drunk "the red wine through the helmet barred," and where the Norman knight and Saracen emir had met hand-to-hand in deadly strife—was the scene of a waltz or quadrille party; or rang to the mad and merry tarantella, the modern remnant of

the ancient bacchanalian dance. Never since the days of Faunus, Saturn's fabled son, Ausonia's oldest king, had the rock of Scylla witnessed such a continuance of festivity.

Amid this joyous career, we had all a narrow escape from malice and treason.

One evening Gask appeared with a very long face, and informed me that the castle well had been poisoned, for the purpose of destroying us all. Twenty men lay sick in hospital, and a cry of rage went through the whole castle.

"Poisoned—O, lord!" cried Gascoigne, who was with me at the time, and snatching up a decanter of brandy, he nearly drained it at one gulp. Gask had seen a man in the garb of the Campagnia di Morti prowling about the margin of the well, whom we had no doubt was the perpetrator of the villany. While I was making inquiries and despatching parties in pursuit of him, Oliver Lascelles entered my room with a drawing in his hand.

Oliver was an artist, and a complete enthusiast in Italian scenery, and still more so in Italian women; every moment stolen from duty was devoted to the pencil, and many of his warmly tinted sketches, done in a masterly manner, are at this moment in my portfolio. I have often admired his coolness, when, under a heavy fire, he has seated himself to sketch the enemy's position, a striking ruin, a fallen column, or piece of ancient sculpture, from which his sword had scraped the moss.

"Behold a portrait of our friend of the Campagna di Morti," said he, displaying his drawing. "I saw the rogue seated by the fountain, and admiring his picturesque costume, and his striking countenance, with well-knit brows, the eyes deep set in the head, and having that determined scowl which is esteemed so classic, I gave the fellow a ducat to sit; so here you have his features fairly done in crayon."

"The scoundrel! they are those of Navarro, the Italian engineer, who deserted to the French after assassinating the Maltese knight in mistake for me. He is no doubt employed by Massena as a spy upon us. By Heaven, Lascelles, if I had the rascal here I think I could pistol him this instant!"

"That would make a spirited sketch too: but he cannot be far off, and Gask with his party will probably capture him."

I resolved to hold a drumhead court-martial on him the moment he fell into our hands, and promised twenty guineas to his capturer. But we saw him no more: for a time at least; and, to prevent such attempts in future, I placed a sentinel at the fountain, which after a time became purified. Macnesia's skill saved the twenty soldiers, who were brought almost to the brink of the grave: they had all narrowly escaped death; as a quantity of acquetta was found in the water when Macnesia analyzed it.

To expatiate on the happiness I enjoyed at Scylla would be too commonplace; and I have a great press of other matter to relate. Rumours of Massena's advance from Cassano, and the retreat and dispersion of the chiefs of the Masse, spread dismay through all the Lower Province, and roused us from our short dream of pleasure. All families of rank again returned to Palermo; but a few spirited cavaliers retired to the savage fastnesses of the hills, where the brave Paesani and wild banditti made common cause against the invader. The arrival of a detachment of the Royal Artillery, brought from Messina by the *Delight*, and a despatch from Major-General Sherbrooke, directing me to "defend Scylla while one stone stood upon another," caused me to make the most strenuous preparations for a vigorous resistance; being anxious to render myself worthy of the important trust reposed in me—the defence of the key of the Italian Peninsula.

The presence of Bianca was the only damper to my ardour; for I anticipated with dread the dangers to which she would be exposed when the coming strife closed around us: but to my earnest entreaties that she would join her aunt and the young viscontessa, who had retired to Carolina's court at Palermo, she answered only by her tears and entreaties that I would not send her away, but permit her to share all the perils to which I might be exposed. Poor girl! little knew she of war and the manifold horrors of a protracted siege, or a fortress carried by assault: but to resist her charming entreaties was impossible; and my anxiety increased as the distance between us and the enemy lessened. How marriage spoils the *esprit du corps*! Every officer and private of the 62nd looked forward with ardour and hope; and I felt the old reckless spirit rising, notwithstanding the fears that oppressed me.

The daily arrival of couriers from the Masse, and from the armed cavalieri on the mountains, the telegraphing of despatches to and fro with Messina, the hourly training of soldiers at the batteries, the visiting of guards, which were doubled at night, and all the eternal hubbub created by the near approach of the foe, kept me fully occupied; and never, even when tenanted by the martial cardinal, had Scylla witnessed such military bustle and excitement.

Advices soon reached us that General Regnier had invested the castle of Crotona; which, after a bold defence by the Free Calabri, had been compelled to capitulate when the heavy battering train of the French opened on its decayed fortifications. All Naples was exasperated by the intelligence that the gallant Cavaliere del Castagno had been hanged as a traitor by orders of Regnier; whose forces, eager to revenge the triumph of Maida, marched rapidly by the shores of the Adriatic: they crossed the mountains at Francavilla, fighting every inch of the way with the Masse and the bold comrades of Francatripa, Fra Diavolo, Benincasa, and Mamone, and reached Monteleone, which the Italians abandoned; and once more the tricolor of the Buonapartists was triumphantly hoisted on its

ramparts.

CHAPTER X.
WRECK OF THE *DELIGHT*.

Towards the end of December, the French had pushed forward as far as Seminara; and, by the concentration of troops and a train of heavy ordnance at that place, I had no doubt that preparations were making to besiege the castle of Scylla. Every exertion was made by the loyalists to prevent the carriage of cannon into that corner of Calabria: working parties of soldiers and armed peasants were continually employed in trenching and barricading the roads, and rendering the passes of the Solano impracticable; thus making every approach down from the hills of Milia as difficult as possible.

Along these heights and passes, I stationed strong bodies of armed Calabrese, entrusting the defence of the Solano to the Cavaliere di Casteluccio; who, since his escape, had distinguished himself on a thousand occasions: so miraculous were his adventures, that the superstitious provincials believed he had been rendered bullet-proof by the witches of Amato. But so overwhelming was the force of Regnier, that all attempts to bar the passage of his train proved, ultimately, unavailing.

On the last day of that eventful year, the glitter of arms and the pale white smoke of musketry were seen spreading over the Milia Hills; between the peaks of which the morning sun poured down his strong and ruddy light on the scene of contest. The drums beat, and we got under arms. Our Calabrian out-picquets and fatigue-parties were driven down from the mountains by three battalions of French infantry, led by General Milette, and were pursued by four squadrons of hussars until close under cover of our twenty-four-pounders.

Regnier was now in complete possession of those important heights; and his working parties were daily and nightly employed in repairing or forming roads for the conveyance of their battering train from Seminara. Their operations were retarded and rendered perilous by the incessant attacks of the followers of Casteluccio and Francatripa; but a damper was given to our zeal by the surrender of a numerous garrison at Reggio, where an Italian force, under the Prince of St. Agata, capitulated after a brief resistance. The castle of St. Amanthea, a property of the Prince di Bisignano, was captured by assault, after a desperate

defence by the gay Captain Piozzi: he was slain by a cannon-ball, and thus the fair and fickle Despina was once more left a widow. On—on pressed the foe. The banner of Ferdinand IV. had sunk from every rampart in Calabria, save the solitary stronghold of Scylla. We found ourselves alone, and could hope for little from resistance; as all the forces of Massena were pouring southward, with orders to capture it at every risk of life and expense of blood.

Every night the sky was streaked with fire, showing where Favazina, Fiumara, San Batello, and many a hamlet were given to the flames, after being ravaged by the foragers of the enemy; and every breeze bore past us the cries of slaughtered men and the shrieks of miserable women.

The fall of Reggio was first announced to us by seeing Santugo's battalion of the Calabri retreating upon Scylla in solid square, pursued by cavalry, and galled by three curricle guns; which followed them at a gallop and were discharged from every eminence that afforded an opportunity of sending a shot into the retiring column: on its arrival, it occupied the half-ruined town below us.

Shortly afterwards, four Sicilian gun-boats, each carrying a twenty-four pounder in its bow, were captured by the enemy close by Scylla; and these cannon were landed and added to the train against the fortress. The moment it was known they had fallen into Regnier's hands, the *Delight* sloop-of-war, commanded by Captain Hanfield, stood close in shore to recapture them; and we watched her operations, from the ramparts, with the greatest interest.

Although the last day of December, it was a beautiful evening, and the golden Straits were gleaming in the light of the setting sun, then verging, through a sky of the purest azure, towards the green and lofty mountains which rise behind the spires and towers of Messina. The French beached the gun-boats in succession; and, covered by field-pieces and surrounded by squadrons of cavalry, we feared the sailors of the *Delight* would never cut them out or destroy them. Protected by the ship's broadside, three well-armed boats put off from her, and pulled shoreward, with the gallant intention of spiking the gun-boats' artillery at all risks.

Fire flashed incessantly from the red portholes of the *Delight*; and the white smoke of her cannon, rising through her taut rigging in fantastic curls, rolled away over the still bosom of the glassy Straits. The shot of the French field-pieces fell in a shower round her advancing boats; and wherever a ball plunged into the bright ocean, a pillar of liquid, like a water-spout, reared into the air with a hollow roar: a dozen of those crystal columns shot up their foamy heads at every moment, as the sailors pulled steadily towards the beach. In the headmost boat waved a large union-jack; and beside it, in the stern-sheets, sat Hanfield, waving his sword and cheering on his men. Close in his wake came the other boats, crowded with red and blue jackets, and glittering with boarding-pikes, bayonets,

and cutlasses; while the glistening blades of the feathered oars flashed like silver in the sunlight, as they rose and fell in measured time, shooting the swift boats onward.

Crowding on the ramparts, the 62nd cheered, and threw their caps into the air; a response arose from the deck of the distant sloop, when lo! a most unlooked-for misfortune took place. Scylla, that place of horror and mystery to the ancient mariner, and before whose "yawning dungeon" Æneas and Ulysses quailed with terror, was still fraught with danger. Under a press of canvass, the *Delight* sailed obliquely, to keep company with her boats: there was a stiff breeze blowing straight from Sicily, and she stood close along shore, with every inch of her snowy canvass filled, when we beheld her shaken by a tremendous shock: her stately masts shook like willow wands, her long pendant fluttered, her broad sails shivered in the breeze, and she careened suddenly over. An exclamation burst from every lip.

"Ashore!" cried the soldiers, with sorrow and dismay, as her tall foretopmast fell overboard; the main and the mizen followed it with a hideous crash: the beautiful vessel, which a moment before had been sailing so smoothly and swan-like, so trimly and saucily, lay a dismasted wreck, bulged on a sunken rock within a few furlongs of the beach, with her lee guns buried in the water, and all her seamen and marines who were not floundering in the wreck around her, clinging to her windward bulwarks.

A triumphant *vivat!* burst from the enemy, who plied their field-pieces with redoubled ardour; and a cry, loud, fierce and hoarse, answered from the English boats. The oarsmen paused, and the utmost confusion took place: there seemed a doubt whether to advance to the attack, or return to the assistance of their drowning messmates. Exasperated by the wreck of his dashing vessel, and filled with a desire for vengeance, the gallant Hanfield (an officer of great professional knowledge, and high individual worth) ordered the boats to advance: but his efforts were fruitless. His craft were soon crippled by the French cannon-shot and grape, which killed or wounded the majority of his force before it came near the Sicilian prizes. Hanfield, with many of his sailors, was killed, and Captain Seccombe, of the *Glatton* frigate, who happened to be on board the *Delight*, received a severe wound, of which he died a few days after. The boats' crews were all captured; and those men on the wreck went off in two remaining boats to save themselves from the same fate. To prevent Regnier from using the cannon remaining in the *Delight*, in prosecution of the siege, the moment it was dark enough I left the sea-staircase, in a boat, with ten soldiers, and setting fire to the vessel, burned her to the water's edge: so ended this catastrophe, which shed a

gloom over us all for some time.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOLTIGEURS.—THE MASSACRE OF BAGNARA.

Il Cavaliere di Casteluccio, some of whose followers still hovered about the Solano, having sent me accurate information of the position and arrangement of Regnier's outpost at Bagnara—the point nearest to us in his possession, and held by the voltigeurs of the 23rd (French) Light Infantry—I concerted a plan to form a junction with the Cavaliere's Free Company, and cut off that detachment; as the castle had been quite blocked up on every side since Regnier had pushed his advanced parties as far south as Bagnara and Favazina.

On a misty night in the month of February, an hour after tattoo-beat, I marched out one hundred rank and file (more indeed than could be spared from my small garrison), and was joined by three times that number of the Free Calabri, led by Santugo. Guided by the distant watchfires of General Milette's picquets, which formed a fiery chain along the Milia heights, we moved by the most unfrequented paths and gorges: the last were numerous enough, as the whole country bore traces of that terrible convulsion of nature, which twenty-four years before engulphed Bagnara and three thousand of its inhabitants. Hideous scaurs and chasms rent in the sandstone rocks and salt-hills, together with the banks of vapour exhaled from the marshes, completely screened our movements from the enemy; scattered parties of whom watched the operations of the banditti and the Masse (a force now rapidly melting away), who were apt at all times to beat up their quarters. The system of perpetual harassing was vigorously maintained, to prevent the formation of roads for the conveyance of their battering train towards the scene of the intended siege.

After a time, the night became so dark that the visconte was doubtful which was the way; as the dense vapour rolling down from the mountains cast a double gloom over everything. Opening the door of a wretched hut, I found an old crone, who dealt in spells and love potions, spreading her shrivelled hands over the expiring embers of a few dried sticks.

"Beware, excellency, the hag is a sorceress!" said Giacomo, as I entered.

"Signora," said I, unheeding his caution, "we are in want of a guide to the olive wood of Bagnara: can you procure us one for the service of Ferdinand and

la Santa Fede?"

I glanced at her son, or grandson, a boy about fifteen, a model of that bloom and symmetry so common in the youth of Spain and Italy; he was almost naked, or clad only in skins. "Go thou, Pablo," said the crone.

"Ahi! madre," said he, shrinking back, "like my father, I may be shot by the French."

"Via—away!" she replied, sternly. The strict filial obedience exacted by the ancients yet existed in these remote provinces; so taking his knife and pole, the youth at once prepared to accompany us.

Guided by him, we reached the neighbourhood of Bagnara about midnight, and halted in an olive wood, situated on an eminence above the town: it was then reduced to a few cottages, occupied by the voltigeurs; who had taken all the usual means to render their post as strong as possible, by loop-holing the walls to enfilade the approaches, and barricading the ends of the little street with trees, furniture, brushwood, and banks of earth.

"Chi è là?" cried a sonorous voice from the wood as we entered it.

"*Italia*," answered the first file of our advanced guard, and the Cavaliere di Casteluccio rode up at the head of his company of volunteers; all bold athletic fellows, armed with rifles and poniards, and carrying their ammunition in leather pouches or large buffalo horns.

Below us, in Bagnara, all was still; the poor doomed soldiers slept soundly: not a light twinkled, not a sound broke the silence, save the rustle of the leafless trees, or the dash of the lonely sea as it rolled on the shingly beach. At times a red light shot across the sky to the westward; it rose from the peak of Stromboli in the distant isles of Æolus. We held a council in the olive grove before advancing.

"Signor Casteluccio, be so good," said I, "as to describe the enemy's post."

"The voltigeurs are 600 strong, and commanded by a Colonel Pepe——"

"Any relation of Don Pepe?" asked the visconte, laughing.

"A tall lanthorn-jawed fellow, with a scar over the left eye," said the cavaliere.

"The same," said I: "we have met before."

"He occupies the house of the podesta, a stone building, well loop-holed and barricaded; the approach to it is defended by three twelve-pounders, which sweep the principal street, and are always loaded with round and tin-case shot. A hundred voltigeurs garrison the house; the others are quartered in those adjoining; and the defensive arrangements are such, that they can all act in concert, and, like a star-fort, the post gives a cross fire at every angle."

"The safest approach?"

"Is from the seaward. There a deep rut leads directly from the shore to the town; thick foliage overhangs it, under which we can advance unseen. A single

sentinel guards the point—the night is dark—you comprehend me?" added the cavaliere, smiling grimly, as he touched one of those villainous stilettos, which his countrymen were never without.

"Ay, Signor Paolo," I replied; "once in we will do very well; but as the voltigeurs sleep with their muskets loaded and their belts on, they will start to arms the moment the sentinel fires his piece."

"But he must be disposed of," said Santugo, coolly. "Giacomo!"

His fac-totum appeared immediately.

"A French sentinel occupies the ravine through which we must advance undiscovered. He must not fire: you will see to this as you value life."

Giacomo bowed intelligently, and was withdrawing, when the voice of Gascoigne arrested him.

"You murdering: villain, come here! what the devil—will you permit this piece of rascality, Dundas?"

"Assuredly not!" said I, dismounting from Cartouche.

"I am an English officer, and not an assassin!" said Lascelles, in great wrath.

"You have both only anticipated me," I replied. "Santugo, we cannot permit the poor soldier to be slain in a manner so dastardly. No! I would rather advance under the hottest fire of musketry, than consent to it: my own soldiers at least will follow me." A murmur of assent rose from the 62nd.

"Cospetto!" exclaimed Santugo, impatiently; "and to save the life of this paltry voltigeur, who will perhaps be shot afterwards, you may sacrifice all our lives and the success of the expedition?"

"I understand the scruples of our friends," replied Casteluccio; "and will undertake that in ten minutes Signor Dundas will have the voltigeur beside him, safe and sound: unless, indeed, he makes a great resistance; in which case I cannot assure you of my being very patient."

In three columns we moved to the attack. Santugo with his corps marched on one flank of the post; the cavaliere, with his Free Company, on the other; with my hundred men, I chose the central point of assault by the gorge; and the report of the first volley was to be the signal for the onset. Luckily for us, a thick white vapour, rolling from the sea, enveloped all Bagnara, veiling our movements completely: the enemy had not the remotest suspicion of our vicinity. My soldiers were in light marching order, with sixty rounds of ammunition; we went down the hill double quick, and entered the gorge softly in sections of threes. Casteluccio accompanied us to seize the sentinel; but I had little reliance to place on the successful fulfilment of his promise.

"The sentinel once captured, we will rush upon them like a herd of wolves; and the massacre of Bagnara shall live in Calabrian story, like the Sicilian vespers of old!" said the cavaliere, in a low, hoarse tone. His eyes sparkled; he drew his

poniard, and stole from my side towards the unsuspecting voltigeur, whom we discerned about fifty yards from where my party halted. Under the shade of a foliaged cliff he stood motionless, with his musket ordered, and his eyes bent on the ground. His voice alone broke the intense stillness of his post, and had he been less occupied with his own thoughts, he must undoubtedly have seen us; but the mind of the poor Swiss conscript was perhaps far away, where his mother's vine-clad chalet looked down on the vales and cataracts of his native canton: sadly and slowly he hummed the pastoral "*Ranz des vetches*," and saw not the foe who, crouching like a lynx, with one hand on his lip and the other on his weapon, stole softly towards him. I waited the issue with anxiety.

"Silenzio!" exclaimed the strong cavalier, in a fierce whisper, as he grasped the sentry by the throat. The poor Swiss boy (for he was but a boy after all) understood not the word; but the sudden stifling grasp, and the sight of the glittering bastia poniard, almost deprived him of his faculties: taken completely by surprise, he dropped his musket, and was dragged among us a prisoner.

"Signor, I have redeemed my promise," said the breathless Paolo. "May this be an omen of what is to follow!" He sprang up the rugged face of the gorge to rejoin his party, while mine moved forward double quick. Leading the way, sabre in hand, I scrambled over a bank of earth; a strong wicket in which led to the guard-house. We were provided with sledge-hammers; and the noise of breaking it down brought out the guard: they fired, and two soldiers fell dead beside me; we answered by a volley, and the whole cantonment was alarmed in a moment. With the charged bayonet and clubbed musket we rushed upon the guard, which we overwhelmed and captured in a moment.

"Lascelles, take twenty men, and beat down the Seminara gate: Santugo will enter that way. Off, double quick!"

The surprise was so complete, that the resistance we encountered on every hand was faint: the guards were overpowered, the avenues beaten open, and the fierce followers of the visconte and Cavaliere Paolo spread like a pack of famished hounds over the little town; slaying all they met, without mercy or remorse.

The party occupying the podesteria gave us more trouble than we had expected. I saw Colonel Pepe, in his shirt and trousers, rush from the door to the three field-pieces, which he discharged in rapid succession; and their canister shot did terrible execution among the dense column of Calabrians rushing up the street. Ere he regained the door, a shot from a rifle arrested him; he tossed his arms wildly above his head, and then fell backwards a corpse. The entrance was closed and barricaded; and a close and destructive fire was opened from every window, and those countless loop-holes with which the walls had been hastily perforated: flashes, smoke, and half naked men were seen at every aperture; and the gleams of the musketry illuminated the whole place.

Aware that not a moment was to be lost, as the cavalry at Seminara or the picquets of Milette would be all under arms at the sound of the first shot, I resolved that a vigorous attempt should be made to storm the podesta's house; which, from its size and strength, had become the principal keep or stronghold of the enemy. Desiring Gascoigne, with a suitable party, to collect as many prisoners as possible, I led forward my own immediate command. Our approach was completely enfiladed by the adjoining houses, from which the French poured forth a fire with such destructive precision and rapidity, that in a few minutes the street presented a horrible spectacle; being heaped with killed and wounded, whose blood crimsoned the gutters on both sides of the way. Directing Santugo to assail the house in rear, Casteluccio and I led on a mixed force of British and Calabri; but so terrible was the leaden hail the French showered on three sides of us, that we were repulsed with immense slaughter: the cavaliere received a severe wound in the sword-arm; yet he quitted not the ground, but brandishing his sabre with his left hand, continued to animate his followers by his presence and cries of "Viva Ferdinand IV!"

Again I led forward the remnant of my party, and again we were forced to recoil, but succeeded in bringing off one of the curricle guns; with a wild shout of triumph it was wheeled round, double shotted, and discharged against the house.

"Hurrah!" cried I, almost frantic with excitement, ramming home another ball with my own hand; "Bravo! Gask, keep your hand tight on the vent—ready the match—stand clear of the recoil—fire!" and again it belched forth destruction. Thrice it was fired, and thrice the shot struck the same place; an enormous rent yawned in the wall, and a mass of masonry fell to the earth: yet the French fought with undiminished courage. The side of a room had been completely breached.

"Forward the 62nd! Advance the Calabri! On them with the bayonet—charge—hurrah!" Animated by my example, and notwithstanding the deadly fire poured on them from every part, onward they went, with that heroic ardour which soon after swept the armies of Napoleon from the fields of Spain and Flanders. We burst in amongst the voltigeurs; whose diminutive stature placed them at the utmost disadvantage, when opposed to English soldiers and the tall athletic Calabri in the fierce hand-to-hand combat which ensued. A desperate struggle followed; for a time the podesteria seemed shaken to its base, and in the close melée I received a severe blow from a clubbed musket: but the voltigeurs yielded themselves prisoners of war in five minutes; and my soldiers immediately encircled them, to protect them from the knives and bayonets of the infuriated Italians.

In the despatch of General Sherbrooke it is mentioned, that "in the night attack on Bagnara, the voltigeurs of the 23rd Light Infantry were cut to pieces." This was literally the case: so merciless were the Calabrese, that a great number of the poor Frenchmen were slaughtered in their beds (a blanket, a greatcoat, or

a bundle of fern), and no wounded man escaped them. Of Colonel Pepe's 600 voltigeurs, 450 lay, like himself, weltering in blood, in the streets and houses of Bagnara. I did all that man could do, short of assaulting the Calabrians, to stop the horrid slaughter; but my efforts were unavailing, and the blood of these brave men was poured forth like water: the soldiers of the 62nd revolted at such cold-blooded cruelty, and expressed their indignation aloud. The poor remnant of the 23rd were moody and silent, cast down in spirit and pale in visage, ragged and half naked, when I paraded them outside the town; just as the grey day-light brightened the Milia peaks, and the sea began to change its hue from inky grey to sparkling blue, as it rolled on the rocky promontories of Scylla and Palmi. Our casualties were numerous: but one officer, a hundred and fifty rank and file, and three pieces of cannon were the prizes of the night. To gain these, four hundred and fifty of their comrades had been destroyed; and almost in cold blood too!

CHAPTER XII.

RETREAT IN SQUARE.—THE PRISONER OF WAR.

Borne on the morning breeze from Seminara, the distant sound of a cavalry trumpet warned us to retire with precipitation. We spiked the guns, blew up the tumbrils, and, setting the town on fire, soon destroyed all of Bagnara that the last earthquake had left unengulfed. Lighted by the red blaze which the burning houses cast on the green hills, the dark pine woods, and the impending masses of basaltic rock frowning over mountain-streams and deep defiles, we continued our retreat double-quick, without the aid of our little guide, Pablo; who, at sound of the first shot, had vanished, without waiting for his promised reward.

"Hark to the tantara of the trumpets! Milette's cavalry brigade is coming on," said Santugo, checking his black Barbary horse and listening to the distant sound.

As he spoke, French cavalry appeared on the Seminara road, galloping in file along the narrow way by which we were hurrying towards Scylla; whose ramparts we discerned above the morning mist, about three miles off. The rising sun gleamed gaily on the long lines of shining helmets and glancing sabres, as the horsemen swept through the deep dell in close pursuit. The fire of Casteluccio's volunteers, who formed our rear-guard, served to keep them in check for a time, and impede their advance by the fall of steeds and their riders; but on

our debouchement into more open ground, I formed the whole into a compact square, with the prisoners in the centre. The cavalry now pushed on at a furious gallop, and, as they cleared the gorge, the trumpeters sounded in succession "form squadron;" the right files trotted, while the left swept round at full speed; and, the moment each troop formed, it rushed upon us with a force and impetuosity which must have stricken terror into the Calabrese: but the proud troopers recoiled before the levelled bayonets and steady fire of a few brave men of my own corps, who formed the rearward face of the square.

Successively the six squadrons of a whole corps of light cavalry swept after us, and successively they were compelled to break into subdivisions, and retire to the right and left round the flanks of their column, while the next in order advanced to the charge. They suffered severely: both horses and riders lay rolling in heaps, while we lost not a man, as the troopers never fired their pistols: probably to spare their countrymen who were our prisoners. Just as a brigade of horse artillery came at a gallop from the dell, and were wheeled round on an eminence to open upon us, we gained the shelter of a pine thicket, and in perfect safety retired leisurely upon Scylla.

Casteluccio's band—whose retreat to their fastnesses in the Solano the advance of Milette's cavalry had completely cut off—I added to the garrison of the town. The wound of the brave cavaliere was severe, and a musket-ball had broken his left arm. Our surgeon, Macnesia, reduced the fracture; but the patient was quite unserviceable, and therefore retired for a time to Messina.

After the transmission of our prisoners and wounded to the same place, in the boats of the *Electra* frigate, I gladly retired to my quarters; where the joy and tenderness of Bianca soon made me forget the excitement and weariness of the past night. That evening the mist, which had all day hovered over land and sea, cleared away; when we plainly saw the French working parties on the mountains, forming the road from Seminara, under the protection of strong escorts of cavalry and infantry.

Occasionally a puff of white smoke, curling from the brow of a cliff or from a neighbouring thicket, and an immediate commotion among the enemy, announced a sudden shot from a concealed Calabrian rifle, which had struck one from the roll of the soldiers of the empire. Banditti, and broken parties of the Masse, stuck like burrs in the skirts of the French; and the loss of life occasioned by such desultory warfare was immense.

Bianca shuddered as she surveyed the distant foe and glanced at the castle batteries below us; where, in regular order, stood the long lines of iron twenty-fours and thirty-twos, with all the accompaniments of rammers, sponges, and handspikes; pyramids of balls occupying the spaces between. The glittering bayonets shone on every bastion and angle; while the numerous sentinels, and the

hourly rounds of the watchful commanders of guards, denoted an alertness and excitement: a vicinity of warfare equally appalling and novel to her. Whilst we were watching all these preparations, a little drummer beat the warning for the "evening retreat;" the sharp rattle of his drum agitated Bianca so much, that she burst into tears, and, sinking on my shoulder, exclaimed, "Oh, Claude! would to God, we were safe at Palermo! All this is indeed terrible."

"All *this*!" I reiterated. "Faith! Bianca, I see nothing terrible here. The guards on the alert, the cannon in order, the duty carried on strictly, all bespeak the orderly garrison. But if the mere sight of these things and the clatter of that little boy's drum affright you, think what will be your terrors when yonder hill bristles with brigades of cannon, vomiting death and fire; when every point around us glitters with steel, and even the roar of Dragara is lost in that of the conflict; when men are falling like ripe grapes in a storm, and the shot flying thick as hail, rending battlement and tower. Oh! think of all these dangers, dear one; and, once more, let me entreat you—implore you, to retire to Messina. Consent, Bianca; and I will this moment order a gun to fire for the *Electra's* boat."

"And you counsel me to leave you so soon?" said she, bending her soft eyes on mine.

"Your gentle mind cannot conceive the horrors of a siege. Scylla I must defend to the last, for such are my orders: but how long can such a little fortress withstand the mighty army of Massena? Our separation, Bianca, can only be for a time——"

"Caro Claude, for a time—but how long? You may be taken prisoner and carried to Don Pepe's dungeons in Dalmatia, and I may never see you again. When I think of poor Benedetto's fate—oh, horror! Say no more, Claude: death only shall separate us."

The entrance of Bob Brown or Annina (they now composed our entire household) put an end to this pathetic interview. Bianca smiled through her tears, and looked so beautiful and happy, and love made me so selfish, that I said no more of her retiring to Sicily.

The evening was sunny and still, the air serene, and the sea calm, except around the rock of Scylla. The green Sicilian shore rose up, clearly and distinctly, from the azure ocean; and the sails of the *Amphion*, the *Electra*, the *Glatton*, the *Pompey*, and all our numerous war-ships which studded the Straits, shone white as snow in the sunbeams; while Sicilian gun-boats, slave-galleys, and xebecques dotted the sea between: the cloudless sky and the range of hills which terminates at the Faro, formed the background. Our casements were open, and the setting sun poured his bright rays into the castle-hall; the roof of which was covered with the dilapidated frescoes of Matteo Prette, and the faded coats armorial of the princes of Ruffo Scylla. It was a noble relic of other days. Massive Ionic

columns of Sicilian marble, with bases of green Corsican jasper, rising from a tessellated floor, supported its arched roof; between these, in niches, were some rare pieces of ancient sculpture, dug from the ruins of the neighbouring Columna Rhegini: or, perhaps, relics of that edifice which Anaxilaus, its prince, first raised on the rock to defend him against the warriors of Tuscany. The early flowers of a warm Italian spring were blooming in the balconies, and their sweet perfume was wafted around us.

Bianca was seated at work, brocading a piece of scarlet Palmi silk, while I lounged on a sofa reading the last "Gazetta Britannica;" a silver caraffa of the cardinal's muscadel stood close at hand, and I thought, while knocking the ashes from my third cigar, that my situation on the staff would be a very pleasant one, if Monsieur le General Regnier contented himself by remaining entrenched at Cassano, instead of beating up my quarters at the extremity of lower Italy.

A smart single knock at the door announced Sergeant Gask.

"Mr. Lascelles has sent me to say, sir, that the officer taken prisoner at Bagnara, who wished to be sent to Dalmatia on parole, appears to be an Italian."

"The rascal!" I exclaimed; "but perhaps he is a Roman or Venetian."

"He says the last, sir; but I could swear that he is a Calabrian born and bred."

"Bring him here, with a file of the barrier guard, that I may examine him myself."

Gask retired, and in five minutes returned with the prisoner—a sullen and dogged-like fellow, wearing a plain French uniform, blue, with scarlet facings, an aiguilette and shoulder-scales. He was swarthy, and his lank moustaches gave him a melancholy aspect; while the rolling of his restless eyes announced that he was very ill at ease.

On his entrance with the escort, Bianca withdrew. Imagine my surprise on recognising Pietro Navarro, who grew deadly pale on beholding me.

"Good-evening! Signor Navarro," said I; "I did not expect to meet a descendant of the worthy inventor of mines under circumstances so degrading."

"I am Pepe Biada, a Venetian, bearing a commission in the artillery of the emperor. You are making some mistake, signor, and I warn you to beware of reprisals. A heavy brigade of guns are already *en route* for Scylla, which cannot hold out a day against the forces now marching on it—no, San Martino!—not a single day."

"San Marteeno? ha! the true Neapolitan twang that," I exclaimed. "How many men are moving on this point?"

"Six thousand, exclusive of artillery, horse, and sappers," he answered, gruffly. "I demand, signor, as a Venetian, in the service of the King of Italy, that I may be permitted to retire on my parole of honour." He spoke boldly, and seemed to imagine that his information had staggered me a little.

”You must first be examined by a military court-martial. I have not forgotten that night when you poniarded the brave cavaliere of Malta in mistake for me. On clearing yourself of that, and several other gross misdemeanours, you will be transmitted to Sicily, to be treated as the government shall deem fit. You will be good enough to hand me your sabretache? Take him away, Gask, and guard him well—he deserves no mercy. Give Captain Gascoigne my compliments—send him here, and desire the orderly drum to beat for orders.”

Navarro, finding that his assertions of innocence were made to one who was too well convinced of his guilt, in silence unbuckled his belt, threw it with the sabretache towards me, and retired with his escort. From its bulk and weight, I thought it contained something of importance; but found only an Italian work on engineering by Donato Rosetta the canon of Livournia, together with a few sketches of forts and roads. One of these was important enough: it showed the castle of Scylla, with the positions to be occupied by the French cannon; their proposed approaches and trenches were laid down, and our weakest points were marked. This document was a fresh cause for exasperation: from his knowledge of the fortress and its locality, Navarro must have been of the utmost use to General Regnier; and I was determined to bring him to trial without delay. My process was harsh: but let the peculiar nature of my position, the power with which I was vested, and Navarro’s crimes, excuse it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DRUM-HEAD COURT-MARTIAL.

I paraded the whole of the little garrison, and ordering a drum-head court to assemble immediately, wrote the charges on which the prisoner was to be arraigned before it: but I was interrupted by an outcry and combat in the guard-house. Snatching the sword from Gask’s belt, he had attempted to stab him, and break away by force; but the soldiers beat him down with the butts of their muskets, and he was secured with handcuffs, an iron bar, and a padlock.

Formed in close column, the whole garrison, including the free corps of Santugo (who, although their lieutenant-colonel, was, oddly enough, under my orders,) paraded to hear and behold the proceedings. So exasperated were the Calabri, that the presence of British soldiers alone prevented them from sacrificing the unhappy Navarro, and thus destroying all that judicial form which I

meant to give to our proceedings.

In centre of the castle court was placed a drum, with a Bible, pens, ink and paper upon it. The president stood on one side, and the members on his right and left hand; Navarro, with his escort, stood opposite: I had to act in the triple capacity of prosecutor, witness, and approver. The paper found attached to the poniard in Castelermo's bosom, the likeness of Navarro, disguised as one of the Campagnia di Morti, together with the contents of his sabretache, I laid before the court for examination.

Brief as the proceedings of such a tribunal always are, ours were necessarily unusually so: a forward movement was at that moment being made by the French cavalry, and we were pressed for time. The following is a literal transcript of the short and singular document indicted by Lascelles on that occasion: it is still in my possession:—

"Proceedings of a drum-head court-martial, held on PIETRO NAVARRO, late of the Sicilian Engineers, by order of Captain DUNDAS, 62d Regiment, Commandant of the Castle of Scylla.

"The court being duly sworn, and having weighed and considered the evidence against the prisoner and his defence, are of opinion that he, Pietro Navarro, is guilty of the following charges:—

"*First*, Of assassinating Marco di Castelermo, a Knight Commander of Malta, and Captain of the Free Corps.

"*Second*, Desertion to the enemy.

"*Third*, Conspiring with rebels to destroy the Villa D'Alfieri.

"*Fourth*, Poisoning the well of H. M. Castle of Scylla, and thereby endangering the lives of the garrison.

"*Sentence*, To be shot or hanged, as the Commandant shall direct.

"MEMBERS.
"PAT. GASCOIGNE, Capt. 62d Regt. Pres.
"O. LASCELLES, Lieut. 62d Regt.
"PELHAM VILLIERS, Lieut. 62d Regt.
"CONTE D'ARENA, Lieut. Free Corps.
"CONTE DI PALMA, Lieut. Free Corps.
"Scylla, Feb. 1808."

To this I affixed my signature, with the fatal words "*confirmed—to be shot.*" Navarro grew pale as death when I laid down the pen; and as I gave the command, forming the close column into a hollow square by marching it to the front and wheeling the subdivisions of the central companies outward, he seemed to

receive an electric shock. He moved mechanically to the front; when I desired Lascelles, who acted as our adjutant, to read the brief proceedings. So flagrant were his crimes that to have yielded him one privilege as an officer, was not even to be thought of, and he was treated in every respect as a private soldier.

Oliver read the proceedings and sentence first in English, and then in Italian; Navarro listened with dogged silence, knowing well that entreaties were useless if made to the stern military tribunal before which he found himself so suddenly arraigned. His lip quivered, and his brow blanched, when the last words "to be shot," fell upon his ear, and he gave me a dull inquiring stare, as I folded the paper and thrust it into my sabretache.

Though my glance was firm and my voice never quavered, I felt for the poor wretch, undeserving as he was. He hovered on the brink of eternity, and my lips were to utter the command which would at once send him into the presence of his Creator.

Mine—there was something terrible in the idea: I paused for a moment; a beam of hope lightened his gloomy eyes and brow. The place was so still that one might have heard a pin fall: but delay was cruel.

"Unhappy man!" said I, "you have heard the opinion and sentence of the court. The latter must be carried into execution in twenty minutes, and it would be well to employ that little time in pure repentance, and in solemn prayer."

"O, omnipotente!" he exclaimed, raising up his eyes and fettered hands; "in twenty minutes, can so many years of sin and enormity be repented of? O, San Giovanni, thou whose most holy order I have outraged! O, San Marco the glorious! Eufemio the martyred! and thou, sweetest Madonna! intercede for me with One whom I am unworthy to address?" Deeply touched with his tone, I turned to Santugo: but he was too much used to hear such pious ejaculations on every frivolous occasion to care a straw about them; and leaning on his sabre he surveyed the culprit with a stern glance of distrust and contempt.

"Down on your knees, villain!" he exclaimed, "and pray with a will; for I fear you are standing on the brink of eternal damnation!"

"O, horror!" cried Navarro; and losing all self-possession, he sank on his knees, and began to repeat his paternoster with great devotion.

"I regret that we have here no priest of the Catholic church to attend you in this terrible hour;" said I, "but yonder is a good and worthy soldier who has once been in holy orders, and if his prayers——"

"Away!" cried Navarro, as Gask took a Bible from his havresack, and laying his grenadier cap aside, advanced towards him. "Better a Turk than a Jew; but in such an hour as this, better the devil than a heretic! Away, accursed! I spit upon you! I will trust rather to my own prayers than thy intercessions——"

"I presume not to intercede," said poor Gask, meekly, as he closed the Bible;

"I am but a humble soldier, though I have seen better days; and I am a sinner, doubtless, though never committing sin wilfully. I entreat your permission to accompany you in prayer, to soothe your last moments, in such wise that through the blessed mercy of the Lord of Hosts——"

"Ghieu, setanasso!" screamed the assassin, quite beside himself; "away, heretic! Better the most ribald monk of Pistoja than such as thee!"

"Fall back, Gask; the man is frantic," said I. "Tell off a section with their arms loaded; desire the pioneers to dig a grave in the cardinal's bastion, and their corporal to bind up the prisoner's eyes."

Gask saluted and retired to obey; while the prisoner, covering his face with his fettered hands, appeared to be engaged in the deepest prayer. The men of the 62nd evinced considerable repugnance to become his executioners: such a duty being always reserved as a punishment for bad or disorderly soldiers; and there was not one among them who could be deemed to come under either of these denominations. A whisper circulated through the ranks, and I knew that I was imposing an unpleasant duty upon good men. The visconte divined my dilemma.

"Dundas," said he, "as Italians, let ours be the task to punish this wretch: whom I blush to acknowledge a countryman! Giacomo, take twenty of our corps, and shoot him through the back: but unbind his hands, that he may tell over his beads once more before he dies."

Giacomo selected his marksmen, and drew them up opposite a high wall, before which Navarro knelt about thirty paces from them. As the Calabrians loaded, two pioneers with a shovel and pickaxe approached; and on seeing them the prisoner seemed seized with a frenzy. Suddenly he sprang up and fled towards a parapet wall with the fleetness of a hare, and a scene of the utmost confusion ensued: shot after shot was fired at him, but missed. It was madness to hope to escape from Scylla, filled as it was with armed men, enclosed on three sides by the surging sea, on the fourth by steep cliffs, and girdled by lofty towers and bastions. Frantic with desperation and terror, the miserable Navarro rushed up the platform of one of the gun-batteries, and swung himself over the parapet; escaping a shower of balls aimed at him by the half-disciplined Calabri, who had all rushed in disorder to the walls: destruction dogged him close. Beneath, the cliff descended sheer to the sea three hundred feet below; above, the parapet bristled with weapons, and was lined with hostile faces. Chilled with a sudden horror, when the dash of the foaming sea and the hollow boom of those tremendous caverns by which the rock is pierced, rang in his ears, he became stunned; and closing his eyes, clung to a straggling vine or some creeping plants, with all the stern tenacity that love of life and fear of death inspire: never shall I forget the expression of his face when I looked over the parapet upon him. It was ghastly as that of a corpse: his short black hair bristled and quivered on his scalp; his

deep dark eyes glared with terror, hatred, and ferocity, till they resembled those of a snake; and every muscle of his face was contracted and distorted. He swung in agony over the beetling cliff, on which he endeavoured in vain to obtain a footing; but its face receded from him, and he hung like a mason's plummet.

"Giacomo," said the visconte, "end his misery."

The Calabrian levelled his musket over the breast-work, and his aiming eye, as it glanced along the smooth barrel, met the fixed and agonized glance of Navarro. He fired; the ramparts round us, and the rocks and caves beneath gave back the reverberated report like thunder: the ball had passed through the brain of Navarro, who vanished from the cliff, and was seen no more.

So perished this unhappy traitor.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIANORA—THE FORFEITED HAND.

The exciting affair with Navarro was scarcely over, before we became involved in another; which, though of a different description, caused me no little anxiety: of this, my gay friend, Oliver Lascelles, was the hero.

Oliver was a handsome, good-humoured, light-hearted, curly-headed, thoughtless, young fellow; heir to one of the finest estates in Essex, with a venerable Elizabethan manor-house and deer park, a stud of horses and a kennel of hounds. He was a good shot, and a sure stroke at billiards; could push his horse wherever the hounds went, and, when hunting, was never known to crane in his life: he would spur, slapdash over everything; and he always led the field. However, these were but the least of his good qualities: he possessed others that were of a better order. Oliver was, every inch, an English gentleman and soldier; possessing a refined taste, and more solid acquirements than such as are necessary merely to enable a man to acquit himself in fashionable or military life: for, in truth, a very "shallow fellow" may pass muster, at times, in the ball room, on parade, or in the hunting-field.

About this time, when Regnier's advance kept us all on the alert, Oliver, as if he had not wherewithal to occupy his thoughts, contrived to fall in love; and, to all appearance, so earnestly, that I was not long in discovering and rallying him about it. People are very prone to fall in love in that land of bright eyes: the little god Cupid is still "king of gods and men," in sunny Ausonia; where love seems

to be the principal occupation of the inhabitants.

Though the advanced posts of the enemy were now pretty close to us on all sides, our fiery spark, Lascelles, went forth every evening, to visit his inamorata; who dwelt in the neighbourhood of Fiumara, which had now become a French cantonment. I have elsewhere alluded to his artistic talent: he had now conceived a violent fancy for delineating Italian girls in all the glory of ruddy and dimpled cheeks, dark eyes, braided hair, and very scanty petticoats. His apartments were strewed with such sketches; and Bianca rallied him smartly on finding that the same pretty face was traceable in every drawing: Oliver had evidently one vivid and particular idea ever uppermost in his mind. He had a rival, too,—a devil of a fellow,—who contrived to infuse an unusual quantum of mystery into this love affair: all the perils of which I will relate to the reader, while our friends, the French, are labouring at the Seminara road, in order to bring up their train of cannon.

"Where away so fast, Oliver?" asked I, as he was hurrying past me, one evening, about dusk, muffled in his cloak.

"Only a little way from the castle," he responded, somewhat impatiently.

"Southward, eh?"

"Ah—yes."

"To Fiumara?"

"Why—yes."

"Take care, Oliver, my boy! The French 101st, a thousand strong, are cantoned there; and the end of this nightly visiting may be a few years unpleasant captivity in Verdun or Bitche."

"Tush!" said he, impatiently; "I have my sword and pistols."

"So much the worse; they may only provoke the wrath of your captors. 'T is a pity your fair one, Signora Montecino (that's her name, I believe) lives in so dangerous a vicinity."

"I am only going to visit the bishop of Nicastro."

"A shallow excuse, Oliver: you are not a man to relish the old bishop's society. By-the-bye, his niece is very pretty; is she not?"

"Rather," said he, drily.

"So much so, that you think her face cannot be delineated too often?"

"Stay, Claude; no quizzing: I won't stand it."

"She has a brother, or cousin, a sad fellow—an outlawed guerilla, or something of that sort; who has served under Francatripa, and is stained with a thousand nameless atrocities. And do you know what people say about the pretty signorina herself?"

"What say they?" he asked, sternly.

"That she is a nearer relation of the good padre bishop than he cares to

have generally known: priests' nieces——"

"D——n their impudence! only yourself, Claude—Capt. Dundas, I must request——"

"O, yes; I understand all that: ha! ha!"

"No man in the service——"

"What! do you really love this girl, Oliver?"

"Yes; on my honour, I do."

"Very possibly: but—I speak as an old friend—you do not mean seriously?"

He started, and coloured deeply.

"I know not," he muttered, hurriedly: "and yet, Claude, I cannot be so base as to think of her otherwise than as a man of honour ought to do. Her relationship to the old padre is, to say the best of it, somewhat dubious: but then, she is so good-tempered and ladylike—so gentle, so beautiful, and winning—that I cannot, for the soul of me, help loving her; and I pledged——"

"Pledged! Maladetto! as they say here, are you engaged to her?"

"Why, I did not make a particular—that is to say, not quite an engagement—pshaw! what am I talking here about?"

"I see! Ah, Oliver, you are evidently very deeply dipped with her: you cannot steal a march upon me. Let me advise you, Lascelles, to be cautious in your affair with this young lady. Your family, your fortune, all entitle you——"

"Thanks, Dundas! I don't require this tutor-like advice," said he, putting his foot in the stirrup of his roan-horse, with a dash of hauteur in his manner.

"At Fiumara, the French keep a sharp look out," I urged.

"Be it so," said he: "thither I go at all risks."

"You are not acting wisely."

"Granted—one never does so in love."

"Be cautious, Oliver! I would be loth to lose you; and I find it will be necessary to 'come the senior over you,' as the mess say, and order that no officer or soldier shall go beyond one mile from camp or quarters."

"Do so to-morrow," he added, laughing; "but, meanwhile, ere the order is issued, I shall ride so far as Fiumara to-night. What is the parole?"

"*Maida*—countersign *Italy*."

"Thank you: I do not wish to be fired on by the blundering Calabri," he replied; little imagining he would never require the watch-word. "Adieu! by midnight I will return."

Breaking away, he leaped on his horse, and dashing through the arched portal of the castle, rode down the hill through Scylla at a furious gallop.

I was under considerable apprehension for my rash friend's safety. Midnight passed: slowly the hours of morning rolled on. Day was breaking, and the peaks of Milia were burnished by the yet unrisen sun, when I visited the posts to

inquire for Lascelles. He had not returned; and as he had never before been absent so long in such a dangerous neighbourhood, I became very uneasy: deeply I regretted that, even at the risk of unpleasant words, I had not exerted my authority as commanding officer, and compelled him to stay within the castle. The bugle sounded for morning parade at the usual hour; but Oliver Lascelles was not forthcoming: his place in the ranks was vacant.

On the advance of the French, the old bishop, before mentioned, had retired from the city of Nicastro; abandoning to them his residence—the ancient castle, famous as the place where Henry, of Naples, expiated his rebellion. Retiring to his little paternal villa, near Fiumara, he lived in retirement, unmolested by the French; who almost depopulated the surrounding country by their tyranny, extortions, and wanton outrage. On the side of a hill, at the base of which ran a deep and rapid stream, its banks covered with orange and citron trees, stood the bishop's villa. It faced the straits of Messina: high rocks and a thick wood of pines hid it from the view of the foe at Fiumara; otherwise their forage parties would assuredly have paid it a visit.

On the evening I last saw Oliver, a young lady was visible at an open window of this mansion. She was alone, and seated in a reclining posture on an ottoman, upon which lay her guitar: her hair, half-braided, half-disordered, rolled in natural ringlets of the deepest black over a neck of the purest white—so pure, so transparent, that the blue veins beneath were distinctly visible. She was not tall, but of a full and beautifully rounded form; and though her features were not regular, yet their expression was very captivating and piquant. Her eyes were dark and brilliant, her lips full and pouting, her cheeks flushed and dimpled.

Notwithstanding the season of the year, the air was close and still; the sun had set, and the sky wore a warm and fiery tinge; but the hills and wood were of a dark bronze hue.

Dianora Montecino listened impatiently. She awaited the coming of Oliver: but he came not. She often surveyed her figure in a mirror which hung opposite, and a calm smile lighted up her pretty face: it was one of complacent but innocent admiration of her own attractions. Her hair being in partial disorder, languidly, with her delicate fingers, she endeavoured to adjust it; then pausing, she sighed, and after again consulting the friendly mirror, with a pardonable coquetry, she allowed the flowing tresses to remain free.

"He always prefers me in dishabille. That seems strange: and yet I think I really look better so. But truly, Signor Oliver, you tarry long to-night."

The last flush of sunlight vanished from the hills of Milia (or Mylæ), and now rose the bright moon, shedding its softer light over land and sea; tinging the straits with silver lustre, and revealing the Sicilian feluccas, with their striped latteen sails, and other picturesque vessels, which the sombre shadows of evening

had for a time obscured. At the base of the hills the river wound between rocks and thickets, its surface reflecting the innumerable stars that studded the serene blue sky. A beautiful fountain beneath the terrace threw up its jet of water like a ceaseless shower of diamonds; the air was laden with the perfume of the earliest flowers of an Italian spring, and not a breath of wind was abroad to stir their closed petals, then filled with fragrant dew. Intently the young girl hearkened for the tramp of her lover's horse; but he came not: she heard only the tumultuous beating of her own heart, and the monotonous plash of the water falling from the bronze Triton's mouth into the marble basin below.

A step was heard softly on the gravel walk:

"At last he comes!" she said, pouting; while joy and hope sparkled in her dark and liquid eyes: a man leaped over the balustrade of the terrace. "Dear Oliver, you have come at last: but stay! I owe you a scolding, signor mio!"

"'T is not Oliver," replied the stranger, with a husky, but somewhat sad tone of voice; and he stood before her. Dianora's first impulse was to call for assistance; but the voice of the stranger again arrested her.

"For God's sake, signora, do not summon any one! You have nothing to fear from me—indeed you have not."

"Giosué, is it only you?" said the young lady, with a tone of undisguised reproach and vexation. There was a pause.

The unwelcome visitor was a young man about six-and-twenty, whose dress announced his occupation and rank in life to be somewhat dubious; but his air, though constrained in the presence of Dianora, had a dash of gallant and graceful recklessness in it. He wore the brigand garb, which had then become a kind of uniform adopted by all desperadoes; he had a carbine in his hand, and a knife and four long iron pistols were stuck in a yellow silk sash. A loose velvet jacket, knee breeches, and gaiters crossed with red leather straps, displayed to advantage his fine athletic figure; and round his open neck hung a little bag containing a charm, which he supposed rendered him bullet-proof. A large, shapeless, and battered Calabrian hat, with a royalist red riband flaunting from it, shaded his face; which was fringed with a black and untrimmed beard, and presented a kind of savage beauty: though squalid through want, and fierce in its expression; being marked with the lines of the worst passions. The young girl regarded him with a glance expressive equally of timidity and pity.

"Dianora—Dianora!" said he, reproachfully, but mildly; "there was a time when you were not wont to pronounce my name in such a tone. Alas! sweet cousin—like myself, its very sound seems changed."

"Poor Giosué!" she began.

"Was not expected here to-night," said he, bitterly. "No; you await another. Cattivo! I know it."

He regarded her gloomily; his fierce dark eyes sparkling in the twilight like those of a basilisk; and she, who but a moment before had been all eagerness for the arrival of Oliver Lascelles, now mentally implored Heaven that he might not come that night, for something dreadful would certainly ensue.

"Dianora," said the young man, "is it true what they tell me—that you love this stranger?"

"As I never can love thee, Giosué," replied the girl, with timid energy.

"Malediction! Have you forgotten how you once swore your hand should be mine?"

"True, Giosué; but you were not then what you have since become."

"Hear me, false one! I swear by God and his blessed saints, that the hand you promised me shall never be the prize of another. No! Maladetto! I will slay you rather!" He laughed bitterly, and spoke in a hoarse tone. "You despise me, Dianora. I am now a penniless outlaw. May our uncle, the hard-hearted bishop, whose miserly cruelty has driven me to despair——"

"O most ungrateful and unkind, Giosué! say rather your own wild and intractable spirit has occasioned your destruction——"

"And the loss of your love, Dianora?"

"Indeed, Giosué, I never could have loved you as—you would wish to be loved: but I have pitied you, wept for you, prayed for you——"

"Bless you, dear girl," replied the young man, with intense sadness; "you are very good and amiable; but I feel that love for you is making me mad!"

"Now, leave me, Giosué. Should the bishop find you here——"

"Say rather he whom you expect!" he exclaimed, bitterly and jealously. "Ha! false and fickle one! within sound of my whistle are those who in a moment would bear you off to yonder mountains in spite of all opposition, and leave in flames this villa of our dog of an uncle. But no, signora; I must have your love freely, or not at all."

"A moment ago you threatened——"

"Peace! Attempt not to stir until you have heard me. This cursed English lieutenant (ha! malediction! you see I know him), if he comes hither to-night may get a reception such as he little expects." He uttered a ferocious laugh, and struck with his hand the weapons which garnished his girdle. They clattered, and the heart of Dianora trembled between fear and indignation; for nothing rouses a young girl's spirit so much as hearing her lover spoken of lightly.

"Cospetto! let this baby-faced teniente beware," continued Giosué; "or, by the blessed Trinity! I will put a brace of bullets through his brain."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the trembling Dianora, "begone, lest I spit upon you! O Giosué! are you indeed become so ruffianly? Have brigandism and outrage hardened you thus?"

He laughed sternly, and said, "You do expect him to-night, then?"

"What is that to you?" she replied, pettishly. "Cousin, I will love whom I please."

"You shall not love him."

Dianora, who was now angry in downright earnest, began to sing, and thrum the strings of her mandolin.

"Me non segni il biondo Dio,
Me con Fille unisca amore—"

"Dianora!" exclaimed the young man, in a voice half mournful and half ferocious. "By the memory of other days, I conjure you to hear me! Think how, as children—as orphans—we lived, and played, and grew together—hear me!" His voice grew thick; but the irritated girl continued her song.

"E poi sfoghi il suo rigore
Fato rio, nemico ciel."

"Cruel that thou art: thy wish will never be realized!" he exclaimed, fiercely. Still she continued:—

"Che il desio non mi tormenta,
O——"

"Maledictions on you! Is it thus you treat me?"

Dianora laughed: he gazed intently upon her with fierce glistening eyes; his white lips were compressed with stern resolution, though agitation made them quiver—and that quivering was visible even in the moonlight.

"Dianora," said he, "for this time I will leave you; but when again we meet—*tremble*! Fury! I am not to be treated like a child!"

"Do not be so passionate, signor cousin. Madonna mia! You are quite the Horazio of Matteo Aliman's novel!"

"Beware," he responded, with a dark and inexplicable scowl, "that your hand—the hand pledged as mine—is not bestowed upon your lover as Clarinia's was. Farewell, fickle and cruel Dianora! Misfortune and love are turning my brain."

"Say rather wine, dice, and debauchery."

"Diavolessa!" he exclaimed, in accents of rage; and springing over the terrace, disappeared.

Dianora resumed her guitar; but she could sing no more: her assumed nonchalance quite deserted her. The instrument fell on the floor, and covering her face with her white hands she wept bitterly: for Giosué's threats and Oliver's absence terrified her.

The calm moon looked down on the dark forests and the snaky windings of the river, on whose glassy bosom here and there a red glow marked the watchfires of the distant French picquets. No one was ascending the mountain side. In the villa, in the valley below, and on the hills around it, the most intense silence prevailed. Eagerly Dianora listened. Anon there rang through the welkin a shrill whistle—the whistle of Giosué; a faint cry succeeded: it rose from the river side, and floated tremulously upward through the still air. Another, and another followed: they were cries for succour! Her brain reeled—she sank upon her knees, and raised her hands to Heaven—her heart beat wildly—she panted rather than breathed. "O, God!" thought she; "if Oliver encounter the wild comrades of Giosué, what have I not to dread?"

Appalled by her own vivid and fearful thoughts, she sat as if spell-bound, listening for other sounds, in an agony of suspense; but none other arose from the dark wooded dell than the murmur of the river, as its waters rolled on their way to the ocean.

"Joy—joy—he comes at last!" she exclaimed, as the hoofs of a galloping horse rang on the narrow and rocky pathway, which wound between thickets of orange and citron trees up the mountain side. "Dear and blessed Lady of Burello, how I thank thee that he came not sooner! Three paters and three aves will I say.—I see him now: 'tis he! How bravely he reins up his roan English horse, with its high head and flowing mane! There is the dark cloak, and the little cap, beneath which his brown hair curls so crisply. Oh, well should I know him among a thousand!"

With all the frankness and ardour of an Italian girl she rushed upon the terrace, and, waving her hand over the balustrade, said playfully, "You have come at last, Signor mio. Fi! I owe you a severe lecture: approach, and receive it penitently."

At that moment, the horseman rode close to the wall of the terrace, and threw an arm around her. Overcome by her recent agitation, Dianora sank upon his breast, murmuring, in tender accents, "Oliver—dear Oliver."

"The curses of the whole calendar upon thee and Oliver too! Ha! you greet not him contemptuously with an old scrap of Metastasio. Burning hell! traitress, I recall your biting taunts, and will revenge me even as Horazio did. Lo! the hand you pledged unto me shall yet be mine."

A smothered cry burst from Dianora.—Instead of the handsome and flushed face of Oliver Lascelles, a livid and unearthly visage, distorted by the most vindictive passions, was close to her cheek; two ferocious eyes glared upon her, and the strong arm of Giosué was around her.

"Never again wilt thou scorn a lover, Dianora Montecino; and dear will *that* taunt cost thee which dictates my revenge."

His long keen acciaro gleamed in the moonlight, as he grasped her beautiful hand with the grasp of a tiger—instantly the sharp knife descended upon the slender wrist!

* * * * *

Let me throw a veil over the horrors that ensued.

The French sentinels on the windings of the lonely river, the wolf in the distant woods and the eagle on the rocks of Battaglia, must have been alike startled by the agonizing shrieks of Dianora. Fearful they were; but of short duration. A moan succeeded—a moan of terrible import. Then rang the hoofs of a horse as if spurred madly down the steep roadway. A turn of the dell hid the wild horseman, and then all became still.

Her right hand severed at the wrist, her nose cut off, and her face seamed with the most frightful gashes, Dianora was found by the alarmed household of the bishop, stretched on the marble terrace, bleeding and senseless—mutilated—dying. She was borne away: convulsions succeeded, and that night the unhappy Dianora died.

She expired in the arms of the venerable bishop, whose grief and horror rendered him almost distracted.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MONASTERY.

To return to Scylla.—The hour of parade passed: Lascelles had not yet returned, and I could no longer withstand my anxiety for his safety. Accompanied by my intelligent countryman, Gask, a bugler, and twenty soldiers in light marching order, each with sixty rounds of ammunition, I departed in the direction of Fiumara, on the almost hopeless errand of endeavouring to discover him. I now

reproached myself bitterly, and really thought I had been much to blame in not restricting my rash friend, even at the chance of a quarrel: it could not have been of long duration.

Leaving Scylla as quietly as possible, we marched towards Fiumara by the most lonely and unfrequented route, through gorges and thickets, expecting every instant to hear the musket of our advanced file discharged, as a signal that a patrol of French cavalry, or some such interruption, was in sight.

It was a beautiful morning: the rays of the bright sun streamed aslant between the peaks of Mylæ, and the white dewy vapour curled from the dells like a gauze screen, mellowing the dark green of the pine thickets and the blue of the gleaming ocean, which shone at times between the openings of the high and broken shore. The morning hymn to the Virgin, and the tolling of the matin bell, floated through the still air from the dark old walls of St. Battaglia; a monastery perched on a rock, by the base of which the pathway wound. On we hurried; and soon Fiumara, its houses shining in the sun, the red smoky fires of the French camp, and their chain of out-picquets near the river, appeared before us.

At the bottom of the hill on which the Villa of Montecino was situated, just as we were striking into the narrow path that wound up its wooded side, our advanced file, (who was about fifty paces in front), halted, and waved his hand.

"Keep together, men! fix bayonets!—look to your priming—forward!" I exclaimed, and we rushed towards him. There was no immediate cause for alarm; but on a level spot of green sward we discovered sufficient evidence that some deed of violence and atrocity had been perpetrated, and I trembled for my poor friend Oliver! On the grass lay his gilded gorget, with its white silk ribbon rent in two; near it lay a buff military glove, covered with blood; a little further on we found his riding switch, with his crest graven on its gold embossed head. All around, the trampled state of the grass, the marks of feet (some of which had evidently been shoeless), the deep indents of horse-hoofs, and, worst of all, a pool of coagulated blood on the pathway, led us to anticipate some terrible catastrophe. Loud and deep were the threats and execrations of the soldiers.

At an accelerated pace we pushed up the hill towards the house of Montecino, passing on our left the mouldering ruins of a castelletto, or little fortalice; the broken ramparts of which were almost hidden under heavy masses of dark green ivy and luxuriant weeds.

Entering the bishop's disordered mansion without ceremony, I halted the soldiers in the vestibule, and desired a servant, who appeared, to conduct me to her master. The woman vouchsafed me no other reply than a motion to follow her: she was very pale, and her eyes were red from recent weeping. Opening a door, she ushered me into a little darkened oratory; where, on a bier before the altar surrounded by tapers, shedding "a dim, religious light," lay the sad re-

mains of the hapless Dianora. They were covered with a white shroud; and so completely, that I beheld not the frightful ravages committed by the knife of the assassin. Beside the body—his white vestments soiled with blood, his thin grey hairs dishevelled, his aspect wild and haggard—knelt Piero Montecino, the aged Bishop of Nicastro; his attenuated hands clasped and holding a crucifix, on which, at times, he bowed down his reverend head. His wonted spiritual resignation, priestly dignity, and stateliness of aspect were gone: his spirit was crushed and broken. How changed was his whole appearance since the day when, with Bianca, I stood before the altar in the church of his bishoprick!

"O, Dianora! my daughter—my child!" he exclaimed, in accents of the deepest grief: "O, madonna, have mercy upon me! Holy Trinity, have mercy upon me! Dianora, my blessed one! Saint Euphemio, pray for her! Saint Magdalene, pray for her! Sweet lady of Burello!—beatified Rosalia!—thrice blessed lady of Loretto, mother of mercy! hear me, and pray for her!" Heavy sobs succeeded.

The touching tones of his voice, and the passionate fervour of his devout appeals, deeply moved me. So intense was his sorrow, that it almost warranted the suspicion of a nearer relationship to Dianora than his vows and character as a Catholic churchman permitted; but no such ungenerous thought occurred to me then: my heart felt only the deepest and most sincere compassion for the bereaved old man. He was so besotted with woe, that I saw it was next to impossible to obtain from him the least intelligence or advice; and, withdrawing softly, I left the villa immediately.

When descending the hill towards the spot where we had found the relics of our missing comrade, we met a peasant, who, with a long ox-goad, was urging a pair of lazy buffaloes towards Scylla. I desired my soldiers to bring him before me, in the desperate hope of obtaining some information concerning poor Lascelles; and, strange to say, we could not have had a luckier rencontre, or better intelligencer.

"Hollo, Signor Campagnuolo!" said I to the cattle driver; "from whence have you come this morning—Fiumara, eh?"

"No, Signor."

"Where, then?"

"From the monastery of Battaglia, down the mountains yonder," he answered somewhat reservedly; and, endeavouring to pass, he added, "a holy day to you, Signor."

"Any movement taking place among the French lately?—are any of their patrols out?"

"I have not heard, excellency; but a fugitive, chased by a party of them, took refuge at the monastery this morning, and is said to have confessed to the Padre Abate a horrible crime."

"Ha! and is he now in the sanctuary?" I demanded, eagerly.

"Prostrate on the steps of the altar: his penitence is great. Madonna intercede for him!"

"Thanks," said I, permitting the uneasy rustic to pass on his way. "Advance, soldiers—trail arms—forward, double quick! We have got on the right scent at last, perhaps; and there is not a moment to be lost."

With right good will the soldiers moved forward towards the monastery; their arms glancing and pouches clanking as they rushed down the steep hill side. The place of our destination, a confused mass of irregular buildings, stood near the river before-mentioned, about a mile distant. It was a monastery of great antiquity; a high wall of grey stone girdled it round, and above that rose its campanile, a square tower, surmounted by a flat tiled roof. From the outer wall, the rocks on which the edifice was perched sloped precipitously down on all sides; especially towards the south, where they descended in one unbroken line to the deep dark waters of the still but rapid stream, which wound through a chasm below.

As we began to ascend the steep and devious path cut in the hard volcanic rock, and leading directly to the monastery, we saw the monks appearing and disappearing like black crows on their high outer wall; and the arched gateway was hurriedly closed: the fathers were evidently in a state of consternation, and making all fast; fearing that we might disregard the immunities of the holy sanctuary. All the friars had vanished by the time we reached the iron-studded door in the outer wall; over which the evergreen, ivy, and long rank grass were waving in profusion.

We knocked loudly. No answer was given.

"Sound!" said I, to the bugle-boy; and a loud blast from his instrument made the old walls, the echoing chapel, the bosky woods and splintered rocks ring far and near. Still the summons was unheeded, and the impatient soldiers thundered at the gateway with the butts of their muskets. The reverend fathers no doubt suspected our purpose.

"What want ye?" said an old vinegar-visaged friar, appearing on the top of the wall, which he had surmounted by the assistance of a ladder.

"Are you all asleep within there?" I answered, angrily. "We want a fugitive, to whom you have given refuge. Call you this civility, padre? and to us whose swords are drawn in the cause of your country."

"Beware, Signori Inglesi! dare you violate the rights of the blessed sanctuary?"

"You will soon learn whether we will not, you old scarecrow!" I replied, with increased impatience. "Aprite la porta, Signor Canonico, or by Heaven! we will beat it down in a twinkling!"

"Patience, capitano—patience, until I confer with the reverend Superior."

"Be quick, then! We must see instantly this rascal who has obtained sanctuary. The enemy are so near, that we have not a moment to lose."

The monk disappeared. I directed Gask, with six soldiers, to watch the walls, and capture or wound any man attempting to escape; but not to kill—if possible. I was most anxious to learn with certainty the fate of Lascelles: whether he had been assassinated; or was lying perishing and mutilated in some solitary place; or had been delivered up to the French. Indeed, I should have been relieved from a load of anxiety, and felt overjoyed to learn that his fate was only the last. Gask was as well aware as I how jealous the continental monks were of the ancient right of sanctuary, and he knew that they would rather favour the escape of the vilest criminal than deliver him up to offended justice. Of their obstinacy in this respect, I know of several instances: one I will mention in particular. It occurred at Malta.

A soldier of ours, when passing one day through a street of Valetta, was run against and thrown down by a provoking brute of a pig. Exasperated at having his gay uniform soiled by the dusty street, he gave the grunting porker a hearty kick; upon which the villainous macellajo, to whom it belonged, drew his poniard and stabbed him to the heart. The poor soldier fell dead on the pavement; the murderer fled to the great church of St. John, and obtained sanctuary. Respecting the popular prejudices of the Maltese (who regard with the greatest veneration that sacred edifice, which contains the sepulchres of innumerable brave knights of the Isle,) the general commanding permitted the hot-blooded ruffian to remain some time in sanctuary, before he applied to the bishop for the exertion of his authority to have him delivered up to the civil magistrates. The prelate delayed, equivocated; and the reverend fathers, foreseeing the violation of their famous place of refuge, facilitated the escape of the assassin, and so defeated the ends of justice.

I was determined that the priests of St. Battaglia should not cheat me so in this affair; and, after desiring Gask with his party to keep on the alert, I was about to have the door blown to pieces by a volley of musketry, when the bars were withdrawn, and it slowly revolved on its creaking hinges. The soldiers were about to rush in; but the sight they beheld arrested them: all paused, mute, and turned inquiringly to me for instructions.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SANCTUARY VIOLATED.

The portal of the edifice slowly unfolded, disclosing the whole array of priests, who, clad in their floating vestments, advanced chaunting from the oratory, with tapers burning, censers smoking, and two emblazoned banners waving: one of white silk, bearing a large crimson cross, surmounted by the sacred charge of St. Peter—the keys of heaven; the other, the symbolical banner of St. Battaglia, surrounded by all the imaginary odour and glory of sanctity. The spectacle was very imposing: the tapers of scented wax, and the silver censers filled with lavender flowers, diffused through the air a fragrant perfume; while the pale curling smoke that encircled the gilded crosses and elevated images rendered—

"——Indistinct the pageant proud,
As fancy forms of midnight cloud,
When flings the moon upon her shroud
A wavering tinge of flame."

The misty vapour, the flickering lights, and the flowing garments of the fathers;

the dark walls of the old cloisters which rang to the solemn and sonorous chaunt of twenty male voices; the distant organ swelling aloud, and then dying away in the hollow recesses of the arched oratory, together produced a striking effect. The abbot, an aged priest of venerable aspect, with a beard white as the new fallen snow (then an unusual appendage to a canon's chin), appeared at their head. They halted beneath the ivy-crowned archway; the chaunt ceased, the soldiers drew back, and all were silent: save the magnificent strains of the organ reverberating in the vaulted chapel and the rustle of the consecrated standards, all was still. The abbot, who no doubt expected that this religious display would impress us with a feeling of awe, then addressed me.

"Your purpose, signor?" he asked, mildly, but firmly.

"Reverend abate," I responded, lowering my sword respectfully, "I demand the person, of a vile assassin, whom I have learned, from unquestionable authority, you have concealed within these walls!"

"He whom you seek is under the protection of God. Know, signor, that he who puts forth a hand in anger against one who seeketh and findeth sanctuary in the church, is guilty of the most atrocious sacrilege!"

"On my own head be the guilt of the sacrilege, Padre Abate. Excuse us: the French are in your immediate vicinity, and we run the imminent risk of being all taken prisoners. One of our comrades, a young officer of distinction, is missing;

and a frightful assassination has been committed at the villa Montecino: we have every reason to believe that your favoured fugitive is implicated in both these mysterious occurrences. I cannot parley with you, reverend signor: I demand an interview with the criminal; and if he is not instantly brought forth, I have to acquaint you that I will search the monastery by force; and, if need be, drag him from the very altar at the point of the bayonet!"

Ere the indignant abbot could reply—

"Darest thou! abominable heretic as thou art, violate the house of God?" cried a tall, fierce-looking and fanatical monk, rushing forward, with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, and holding aloft a ponderous ebony crucifix. "Pause! lest the thunders of offended Heaven be hurled upon ye: pause! lest the vials of wrath——"

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed, impatiently; "we may parley here till sunset. Soldiers, forward to the chapel: there you will doubtless discover the rogue." My followers rushed past; a volley of execrations burst from the padri, and I was assailed with cries of—

"Paganico infame! malandrino! infidel! damnable heretic!" and a thousand other injurious and ridiculous epithets. I heeded them not; but, at the head of my party, burst into the chapel of the monastery. I had augured rightly: there the fugitive was discovered.

Pale as death, ghastly and bloody from a sword wound on the head, a savage-looking fellow was dragged by force from the foot of the great gilt crucifix on the altar; to the rail of which he clung for a moment with convulsive energy. The soldiers brought him before me, and, by their fixed bayonets, kept back the exasperated priests; who continued to pour forth upon us a ceaseless torrent of invectives and maledictions, which we regarded no more than the wind.

"Are you the unhappy man who is guilty of murder?" said I. He replied only by a wild and unmeaning stare.

"Unhappy wretch! your name?"

"Giosué of Montecino," said he, suddenly and fiercely. I trembled for poor Oliver, on remembering the name of his rival.

"Villain! what fiend tempted you to slay your unhappy cousin?"

He started, as if stung by a serpent.

"She is dead, then!" he said in a hoarse and almost inarticulate voice, while his head drooped upon his heaving breast. Suddenly uttering a howl like a wild beast, he broke away from the soldiers, escaping their levelled bayonets; and, finding the gate secured, scrambled up the rugged outer wall like a polecat; there balancing himself, he turned, and regarding me with a scornful scowl, he burst into a bitter and hysterical laugh. The soldiers rushed towards him, and one fired; but I threw up his firelock, and the ball passed close to the head of the

assassin, who never winced. Escape was now impossible. On one side of him bristled twenty bayonets; en the other was a tremendous precipice, with a deep river flowing at its base several hundred feet below. The slightest dizziness might have been fatal to him. But folding his arms he uttered a laugh of defiance, and called upon us to fire. I was strongly tempted to put his talisman to the proof; but restrained my exasperated soldiers.

"Wretch," said I; "know you aught of a British officer, who has been missing since last night?"

"Yes," he replied, with a sardonic grin, shaking his clenched right hand aloft with savage exultation. "These are the fingers that fastened on his throat with a tiger's clutch."

"You slew him!" I cried, and drew a pistol from my sash.

"I did not—ha! and yet I did."

"How, villain?" He laughed scornfully again.

"Hear me, Giosué Montecino," said I: "you see this pistol? I might in one moment deprive you of existence——"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the assassin.

"Yet I will spare your life, if you will tell me the fate of my comrade."

"My life? Bagatella! ho—ho! I want it not. Fools—dolts that ye are! think ye that I am afraid to die? Here is my breast—a thousand bullets were welcome—straight to the heart—fire!" and he smote his bosom as he spoke. There was something almost noble in his aspect at that moment, notwithstanding its wildness and repulsiveness.

"Hear me, fellow:—the Lieutenant Lascelles"——

"Ha!" he ground his teeth madly. "Curses hurl him to that perdition into which he has hurried me! At this moment he feels in the body some of those agonies I endure in the spirit. O, Dianora!—thou whose very shadow I worshipped,—I who loved the very ground you trod upon!" The inexplicable ruffian sobbed heavily; yet his blood-shot eyes were never moistened by a tear. "O, Dianora!" he continued, in a voice which, though husky, yet expressed the most intense pathos. "Who was the fiend that nerved me to destroy thee—and so barbarously? Who, but this accursed Englishman! Believe me, Signor, I had not the least intention of slaying her last night: O no! none—none!" He wrung his hands wildly. "What could be further from my thoughts? Disguised as her lover—as this Oliver—I intended to have carried her off; but her endearing accents, addressed as to him, fell like scorching fire upon my heart. I could restrain my demoniac feelings no longer. O, horror! Yet I have done nothing that I would not commit again, rather than behold her in the arms of—of—Maladetto!—his name is poison to my lips!"

"Madman, come down from the wall."

"Would you learn the fate of your friend?" he asked, exultingly.

"Had I a mountain of gold to give you—"

"Gold?—fool!—what is gold to me? Listen. Waylaid by my companions last night, the dog you call your comrade was dashed from his horse by their clubs. He fought bravely, and with his sabre laid open my head: my own blood blinded me. Ha! a moment, and my hand was on his throat—my acciaro at his breast—yet I spared him."

"Heaven will reward you"——

"Ha—ha! A sudden death suited not my purpose or my hate. Slow, consuming, diabolical mental tortures were what I wanted: and what think you we did?" I was breathless; I could not ask, but Giosué continued:

"Bound with cords, he was borne to a ruined vault among the lonely mountains yonder; there amid stinging adders, hissing vipers, bloated toads, and voracious polecats, we flung him down, tied hand and foot, stunned and bleeding. Then closing the aperture, we piled up earth and stones and rocks against it. There let him perish! unseen, unknown, unheard. May never an ave be said over his bones, and may a curse blight, haunt, and blast, to all futurity, the spot where they lie." He paused for a moment, and then continued more slowly and energetically.

"To laugh to scorn the terror of death was the glory of the Greek and the Roman; and I will show thee, Signor Inglese, that Giosué of Montecino can despise it, as nobly as his classic fathers may have done in the days of old." He raised aloft a long bright poniard, which he suddenly drew forth from his sleeve.

"Madman!—desperado!" I exclaimed; "hold, for the sake of mercy! A word—a word—I will give you a thousand ducats! life! all! anything! but say where you have imprisoned my friend?—for Heaven's sake say!"

"Never!" said he, with a triumphant scowl—-"never: let him perish with myself. Love for Dianora led me to destroy her; and love for her still, teaches me that to survive would be the foulest and basest cowardice!"

He struck the stiletto to his heart, and fell dead at my feet.

I was horror-stricken: not by the suicide of the assassin, but by the revelation he had had just made. Of its truth I could not entertain a doubt, The situation of the unfortunate Lascelles, pinioned, wounded, and entombed alive, to endure all the protracted agonies of death by starvation, rushed vividly upon my mind, and overwhelmed me with rage and mortification. I explained to my soldiers the terrible confession of the fierce Giosué, and their emotions were not much short of my own. We endured tantalization in its bitterest sense. What would I not have given that the convulsed corpse of the vindictive Montecino were yet endued with life. But, alas! the ruffian had perished in his villainy with the important secret undisclosed, and the horrible fate of my friend could not be averted.

And Giosué, wretch as he was, I pitied him. His had been the burning love, and his the deadly hatred of his country:

"The cold in clime, or cold in blood,
Their love it scarce deserves a name;
But *his* was like the lava's flood,
That boils in Etna's breast of flame."

Slowly and dejectedly we quitted the monastery, as the sun was setting behind the hills of Sicily; and marching in silence towards Scylla, we reached a third time the place where Oliver's glove and gorget had been found. There we made an involuntary halt, and gazed around us with the keenest scrutiny, in the hope of discovering some clue to the place of his immurement. My brave party seemed very unwilling to return to Scylla without making another effort to rescue the victim of Montecino. Innumerable were the ideas suggested and plans proposed; but none of them seemed worthy of attention, save one of Sergeant Gask's.

"The rascal mentioned a ruined vault among the hills," said he: "now what think you, Captain Dundas, of searching the ruins on the mountain yonder? And, by my faith, sir! the foot-marks and traces of blood lead off in that direction. See! the lower branches of the shrubs are broken, the withered leaves of the last year are trodden down, and bloody tracks are on the grass."

"The sergeant is right, sir," muttered the soldiers, pleased with his acuteness.

"Move on, then—forward to the old castle; any active occupation is preferable to this horrid state of idle suspense."

A quarter of an hour's rapid marching brought us to the castelletto, a little tower in a state of great dilapidation, covered with masses of bronze-like ivy, and the beautiful wild flowers of fruitful Italy. A large owl flew from one of the shattered openings, and with a shrill scream soared on its heavy wings through the evening sky. The woods and hills around us were growing dark; the place was still as the grave: the ivy leaves rustling tremulously on the rugged masonry of the ruin, and a rivulet tinkling through a fissure of a neighbouring rock, were the only sounds we heard. Solemn pines towered around it on every hand, and the aspect of the landscape was peculiarly desolate and gloomy. A musket was fired as a signal, and with a thousand reverberations the wooded hills gave back the echo. With heads bent to the ground, we listened intently; but there was no response, and we looked blankly in each other's faces.

"This cannot be the place," said I in a tone of sadness, about to move unwillingly away.

"Stay, sir—look here, Captain Dundas," cried Gask; "here is blood on the grass, and, sure as I live, stones freshly heaped up there!"

"Right—by Jove! Gask, you are an acute fellow. Pile your firelocks, lads, and clear away this heap of rubbish."

Flushed with hope, the soldiers attacked the pile of stones indicated by the sergeant: there were bushes, earth, and fragments of ruined masonry, all evidently but recently piled up against the base of the tower. Rapidly they rolled down the heavy blocks, and toiled so strenuously that in three minutes the whole heap was cleared away, and a little arched aperture disclosed. An exclamation of joy and hope burst from the whole party: we had found the place. Gask and the little bugler descended into the vault—a dark, damp, and hideous hole under the ruins. A faint moan drew them cautiously to a corner, and there they found the object of all our search and anxiety—Oliver Lascelles, benumbed by cold, and his limbs swollen almost to bursting by the tight cordage which confined them. He was speechless and half-stifled by the noxious vapours of the dungeon: had we been half an hour later he must have expired. When we drew him forth, he was so pale, haggard, and death-like, that his aspect shocked me; but the pure fresh breeze of the balmy evening revived him, and he recovered rapidly. He could not address us at first; but his looks of thankfulness, joy, and recognition were most expressive. The soldiers were merry and happy, every face beamed with gladness; even Gask's usually grave and melancholy visage was brightened by a smile.

We had little time for explanation; we were in a dangerous vicinity, from which it was necessary to retire without a moment's delay. Oliver was quite enfeebled; but, supported on the sergeant's arm and mine, he contrived to walk, though slowly, and we set out immediately for the castle of Scylla.

Gask afterwards told me, that in the vault "he had touched something that made his flesh creep." It was a small and delicate female hand. I never mentioned the circumstance to Oliver; who was long in recovering from the effects of his perilous love adventure. But I had no doubt the dead hand was poor Dianora's: the *forfeited hand*, which in cruel mockery that incarnate demon Giosué had thrown beside her lover.

In the bustle of succeeding and more important events the interest we took in Lascelles' affair gradually subsided. But it was long ere he forgot the fate of Dianora, and the horrible death which, by a lucky combination of incidents, he had so narrowly escaped; and longer still ere he recovered his wonted buoyancy

of spirit and lightness of heart.

CHAPTER XVII.
UNEXPECTED PERILS.

The near approach of the enemy made it apparent that the town of Scylla would soon be destroyed by the shot and shell their artillery would pour upon it; and that the Free Corps, who occupied its half-ruined streets, would be sacrificed without being of service to the garrison in the castle; I, therefore, telegraphed to the *Electra*, to send off a boat, as I wished to consult with her commander about the transmission of those troops to Messina.

A strong breeze had been blowing from the south-west all day, and the sea ran with such fury through the Straits that no boat could come off until after sunset, when there was a lull. Immediately, on being informed that a boat had arrived at the sea staircase, I buckled on my sabre, threw my cloak round me, and hurried off, intending to return before the ever-anxious Bianca had discovered my absence. How vain were my anticipations!

The long *fetch* of the sea running from Syracuse rolled the breakers with great fury on the castle rock, and the boat was tossed about like a cork among the foaming surf that seethed and hissed around us. As the oars dipped in the water and she shot away, I seated myself in the stern-sheets, beside the little middy who held the tiller-ropes. The frigate lay nearly a mile to the southward, and there was such a tremendous current against us that the six oarsmen, though straining every nerve and sinew, found it impossible to make head against it.

"I wish we may make the frigate to-night, sir," said the midshipman, looking anxiously at the clouds: "there's a squall coming from the south-south-east, and these Straits are an awkward place to be caught by one. What do you think, Tom Taut?"

"Think, sir? why that we'll have a dirty night," replied the sailor whom he addressed: a grim, brown, and brawny tar. "When I sailed in the *Polly Femus*, 74, we had just such a night as this off Scylla, and I won't be in a hurry forgetting it!"

It was now past sunset, in the month of February, and the darkness of the louring sky increased rapidly. Through the thin mist floating over the surface of the water, the frigate loomed large; but when the rising wind cleared it away, we

found the distance increasing between us: the strong current was carrying us, at the rate of five knots an hour, towards the terrible rock we had just left; which rose from the water like a black gigantic tower, and seemed ever to be close by, frowning its terrors upon us. Dense banks of vapour soon shrouded the land and hid the frigate: it grew so dark that we knew not which way to steer. The seamen still continued to pull fruitlessly; for we made so much sternway that I expected to find the frail craft momently stranded on the rocky beach.

"We shall never reach the frigate to-night, unless she fills and makes a stretch towards us," said the middy. "This current will not change till daylight, and the Lord knows when the wind will chop about. It has been blowing from Syracuse ever since the poor little *Delight* was driven on the rocks yonder."

"You cannot fetch Scylla, I suppose."

"Lord, no, sir! we must give it a wide berth: the breakers will be running against it in mountains just now. We must put up the helm and run with the wind and tide, to avoid swamping; and if we escape being sucked into Charybdis on the westward, or beached under the cliffs of Palmi to the northward, we may consider ourselves lucky dogs."

"But we may be thrown upon a part of the coast occupied by the enemy."

"Better that than go to old Davy, sir," said the grey-haired bow-oarsman, "as I nearly did when the *Polly Femus*, 74, came through these same Straits of Messina."

"When?" said I. "Lately?"

"Lord love you, no, sir—why 't was in the year one."

"One?"

"That is 1801. We were standing for Malta with a stiff breeze from the nor'-east. The *Polly Femus* was close hauled on the starboard tack——"

"D—n the *Polyphemus*," cried the midshipman, testily, as he put the helm up; "take in your loose gaff, Tom: if we are not picked up by the *Amphion*, your tune will be changed before morning. Hoste keeps a good look out!"

"He was made a sailor of in the *Polly*—whew! beg pardon, sir," said the old fellow, who could not resist making another allusion to his old ship.

"Faith! Captain Dundas," said the middy, "it is so dark that I have not the slightest notion of our whereabouts."

"Yonder's a spark away to windward, sir," said old Tom. "The *Electra*, cannot be less than somewhere about two miles off—a few fathoms more or less."

At that moment the frigate fired a gun; the red flash gleamed through the gloom, and after a lapse the report was borne past us on the night wind. A blue light was next burned; it shone like a distant star above the black and tumbling sea, then expired: and so did all our hopes of reaching the ship—the sound of her gun having informed us that we had been swept by the current far to the north of

the Lanterna of Messina, which was rapidly being lost amid the murky vapour.

"Keep a good look out there forward," cried the middy: "if we miss the *Amphion*, we may all go to the bottom, or be under weigh for a French prison by this time to-morrow."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the sailor through his hand, while, bending forward, he strove to pierce the gloom a-head.

"Give way, men—cheerily now."

The rowers stretched back over the thwarts till their oars bent like willow wands, and as the strong current was with us now, we flew through the foaming water with the speed of a race-horse.

"The *Amphion* should be somewhere hereabouts," said the midshipman, as the oarsmen suspended their labours after a quarter of an hour's pulling: we anxiously scanned the gloomy watery waste, but could discern no trace of her. Vapour and obscurity involved us on every side, and our minds became a prey to apprehensions, while our blood chilled with the cold atmosphere, and a three hours' seat in an open boat at such a season. The tower of the Lantern had vanished; a single star only was visible, and the inky waves often hid it, as the boat plunged down into the dark trough of the midnight sea.

Suddenly the broad moon showed her silvery disc above the level horizon; her size seemed immense, and as the thin gauzy clouds rolled away from her shining face, we saw the black waves rising and falling in strong outline between. Her aspect was gloomy and louring.

"When the moon sets, the current will begin to run northward," said the experienced little mid; "and we shall have a capital chance of being sucked into the Calofaro, or stranded on Punta Secca. Would to God, we saw the frigate!"

As he spoke, a large vessel passed across the bright face of that magnificent moon, which shed a long line of silver light across the troubled water, brightening the summits of the waves as they rose successively from the dark bosom of the sea. The effect was beautiful, as the vessel passed on the rolling surge, and heaving gracefully, slid away into obscurity.

"A large frigate on the starboard tack," said the midshipman, as she disappeared: "she is five miles off."

"That's the *Amphion*, your honour," said Tom Taut; "I know her as well as the old *Polly Femus*."

"Are you sure?" I asked with anxiety.

"Sure?" replied Tom, energetically spitting his quid to leeward; "I know her in a moment, by the rake of her spars. Her mizen top-sail aback—her courses shivering: I know her better than any ship on the station, except the darling old *Polly*. Bill Hoste is creeping along shore, after some of these gun-boats the *Delight* let slip so easily."

"If I judge rightly, we must be somewhere off Palmi."

"Hark!" said the midshipman, and the roar of billows rolling on the shore confirmed my supposition.

"Breakers ahead!" cried the man at the bow, and we beheld a long white frothy line, glimmering through the gloom; and above it towered the dark outline of a lofty coast. The current shot us among the surf; which boiled around us as white as if we were amid the terrors of Charybdis. A little cove, where the waves rolled gently up the sandy slope, invited us to enter; the boat ran in, and we were immediately in the smooth water of a little harbour, where the dark wild woods overhung the rocks at its entrance, and all around it on every side. Here we hoped to remain unseen, till daylight revealed our "whereabouts," as the middy had it.

For a time we kept the oars in the rowlocks, ready to retire on a moment's notice; but finding that not a sound, save the dashing sea, woke the echoes of that lonely place, I volunteered to land and make a reconnoissance; desiring the midshipman to pull southward, along the shore, in case of any alarm, that I might be picked up at some other point. Belting my sabre tighter, I threw aside my cloak, and sprang ashore. On walking a little way forward, through the wood, I found the country open, and saw lights at a distance; which I conjectured to be those of Palmi or Seminara, where Regnier had concentrated a strong body of troops.

Struggling forward among a wilderness of prostrate columns and shattered walls overgrown with creeping plants and foliage (probably the ruins of ancient *Taurianum*), I often stopped and bent to the ground to listen; but heard only the creaking trees, the gurgle of a lonely rill seeking its devious path to the sea, or the rustle of withered leaves, swept over the waste by the rising wind. But the roll of a distant drum and the flash of a cannon about two miles off, arrested my steps and made me think of returning: I conjectured it to be the morning gun from the French fort at Palmi. Daylight soon began to brighten the summits of the Apennines, and the waves, as they rolled on each far off promontory and cape. Having nearly a mile to walk, I began hurriedly to retrace my steps; for the dawn stole rapidly on. As I walked on, the deep boom of a cannonade and the sharp patter of small arms made my heart leap with excitement and anxiety, and spurred me in my flight. Breaking through the wood, I rushed breathlessly to the shore; but alas! the boat was gone: I saw it pulled seaward, with a speed which the strong flow of the morning current accelerated. In close chase, giving stroke for stroke, while the crew plied their muskets and twenty-four pounder, followed one of those unlucky gun-boats captured by the French: it had been anchored in the same cove, and had discovered our little shallop the moment day broke.

The pursued and the pursuers soon disappeared behind a promontory, and I found myself alone, far behind the enemy's lines, and almost without a chance of escape. Cursing the zeal which had led me on such a fruitless reconnoissance,

I retired into a beech wood, as the safest place; and lay down in a thicket to reflect on my position, and form a plan for extrication from it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY—THE TWO GENERALS.

I was only twelve miles distant from Scylla; but as every approach to it was closely blocked up by Regnier, whose troops covered the whole province from sea to sea, every attempt to reach it would be attended by innumerable dangers and difficulties: yet, confiding in the loyalty of the Calabrese, and the influence my name had among them, I did not despair of regaining the fortress, by seeking its vicinity through the most retired paths.

Except my sword, spurs, and Hessian boots, I had nothing military about me; as I wore a Calabrian doublet of grey cloth, and a nondescript forage-cap. As I walked forward, the trees became more scattered, and the openness of the ground made the utmost circumspection necessary. A sudden cry of "Halte! arrêtez!" made me pause; and, within a few paces, I beheld a French vidette—a lancer in his long; scarlet cloak, which flowed from his shoulders over the crupper of his horse, and, like his heavy plume and tricoloured banderole, was dank with dew.

"Ah, sacre coquin!" he cried, lowering his lance, and charging me at full speed. "I see you are an Englishman." I sprang behind a tree, and as he passed me in full career, by a blow of my sabre I hewed the steel head from his lance. At that moment an officer rode up, and, placing a pistol at my head, commanded me to yield. Resistance was vain, and I surrendered my sabre in the most indescribable sorrow and chagrin; for thoughts of Bianca, of a long separation and imprisonment, of all my blighted hopes of happiness, honour, and promotion, and of the important trust reposed in me, rushed in a flood upon my mind: almost stupified, I was led away by my captor.

A few minutes' walk brought us to the bivouac of a cavalry brigade, which was in all the bustle of preparation for the march; while six trumpeters, blowing "boot and saddle," made the furthest dingles of the forest ring. The horses were all picqueted under trees, or within breast-ropes; and the officer informed me that the brigade was that of General Compere, before whom he led me.

Rolled up in a cloak, the general was seated at the foot of a tree; behind him stood his mounted orderly, holding his charger by the bridle. His aide-de-camp

and a number of officers lounged round him, smoking cigars, drinking wine from a little barrel, and joking with great hilarity ere they marched. The ashes of the watch-fires smouldered near; the mist was curling between the branches of the leafless trees, and the rising sun glittered on the bright lance-heads, the gay caps, and accoutrements of the dashing lancers; who were rapidly unpicqueting their chargers, and forming close column of squadrons on the skirts of the wood.

"Monsieur le vicomte is welcome as flowers in spring," said the general; "but who is this?—Ah!" he exclaimed, suddenly recognising me, and raising politely his cocked-hat. "I did not expect to have this pleasure. You are the brave officer I met at Maida?"

I bowed.

"And again behind our lines at Cassano—disguised as a monk?" he added, with a keen glance.

"Thrown upon that coast by shipwreck, I gladly adopted any disguise until I could escape."

"Our whole army heard of you, and understood you had been employed as a spy by the Count of Maida; consequently Massena was enraged at your escape. Ah! the old Tambour—he is a rough dog! However, monsieur, *I* do not believe that one who could fight so gallantly at Maida, would stoop to act a dishonourable part."

"Yet, will monsieur be so good as explain," said another officer, "how we find him here; without the lines drawn round Scylla, to the garrison of which he says he belongs—and why in the garb of a Calabrian?"

Indignant at the suspicious nature of these queries, and unused to the humiliating situation of a prisoner, I replied briefly and haughtily; relating how I had missed the boat—a story which none of them seemed to believe. A whisper ran round, and the offensive term "*espion*" brought the blood rushing to my cheek.

"Monsieur le general," said I, with a sternness of manner which secured their respect, "will, I trust—in memory of that day at Maida—be so generous as to send me, on parole, to Messina, where I may treat about an exchange; by doing so, he will confer a lasting obligation, which the fortune of war may soon put it in my power to repay."

"I deeply regret that to General Regnier I must refer you—he alone can grant your request. As we move instantly on Scylla, you must be transmitted to head-quarters without delay, and under escort. Appearances are much against you; but I trust matters will be cleared up. Chataillion," said he to his aide, "help the gentleman to wine and a cigar, while I write a rough outline of this affair to monsieur le general."

Commanding my feelings and features, I drank a glass or two of wine, while

the general, taking pen and ink from his sabretache, wrote a hasty note to Regnier.

"Chataillion," said he, while folding it, "order a corporal and a file of lances."

The vicomte went up to the first regiment of the brigade, and returned with the escort.

"In the charge of these soldiers, you must be sent to Seminara, where I trust your parole will be accepted in consequence of this note: though monsieur le general and monseigneur le marechal are far from being well disposed towards you; especially for the last affair with the voltigeurs of the 23rd. Ah! Regnier's son Philip was shot at Bagnara—poor boy! Adieu! May we meet under more agreeable circumstances;" and giving the letter to the corporal, Compere sprang into his saddle, and left me. His aide-de-camp, the Vicomte de Chataillion, seeing how deeply I was cast down, expressed regret at having been my capturer. "But monsieur will perceive," said he, with a most insinuating smile, "that I was only doing my duty. You cannot travel on foot with a mounted escort—it would be dishonourable; and as I have a spare horse, you are welcome to it: on reaching Seminara, or even the frontiers, you can return it with the corporal.—Adieu!" And we parted.

The frontier! distraction! I could scarcely thank the young Frenchman: but memory yet recalls his gallant presence and commanding features—one of the true old noblesse. How different he was from Pepe, Regnier, Massena, and many others; whom the madness and crimes of the Revolution had raised to place and power, from the dregs of the French people.

With a little ostentation, the lancers loaded their pistols before me, and in five minutes I was *en route* for Seminara, with a file on each side and the corporal riding behind. I often looked back: Compere's brigade were riding in sections towards the hills, with all their lance heads and bright accoutrements glittering in the sun; while the fanfare of the trumpets, the clash of the cymbals, and the roll of the kettle-drums, rang in the woods of Palmi. They were moving towards Scylla, and my heart swelled when I thought of my helplessness and of poor Bianca; the hope of Regnier accepting my parole alone sustained me: but that hope was doomed to be cruelly disappointed.

By the way we passed many ghastly objects, which announced the commencement of that savage war of extermination which General Manhes afterwards prosecuted in the Calabrias. Many armed peasantry had been shot like beasts of prey, wherever the French fell in with them; and their bodies hung on the trees we passed under, while their grisly heads were stuck on poles by the roadside. Some were in iron cages, and, reduced to bare skulls, grinned through the rusty ribs like spectres through barred helmets; while the birds of prey, screaming and flapping their wings over them, increased the gloomy effect such objects must necessarily have upon one's spirits.

The morning was balmy and beautiful, the sun hot and bright, the sky cloudless and of the palest azure; light fleecy vapour floated along the distant horizon, where the sea lay gleaming in green and azure: but never had I a more unpleasant ride than that from Compere's bivouac. I often looked round me, in the desperate hope that a sudden attack of robbers or loyal paesani would set me free; though warned by the corporal that on the least appearance of an attempt at rescue he would shoot me dead. But Regnier had effectually cleared and scoured the country, and we passed no living being, save an old Basilian pilgrim, travelling barefooted, perhaps on his way to the Eternal City; and once, in the distance, a solitary bandit on the look-out, perched on the summit of a rock like a lonely heron. The bells of the mountain goats, the hum of the bee or the flap of the wild bird's wing, and the dull tramp of our horses on the grassy way, alone broke the silence. My escort were solemn and taciturn Poles, who never addressed a word either to me or to each other; so my gloomy cogitations were uninterrupted till we entered Seminara, when the scene changed.

The town was crowded with soldiers, and all the populace had fled: cavalry, infantry, artillery, sappeurs, voltigeurs, and military artizans, thronged on every hand; shirts and belts were drying at every window, and the air was thickened by pipe clay and tobacco-smoke, while the sound of drums, bugles, and trumpets mingled with shouts and laughter, rang through the whole place—noise and uproar reigning on all sides. The great Greek abbey and cathedral were littered with straw for cavalry horses; the principal street was blocked up by waggons, caissons, tumbrils, pontoons, mortars, and the whole of that immense battering train concentrated for the especial behoof of my brave little band at Scylla: whither it would be conveyed the moment the roads were completed.

A strong guard of grenadiers stationed before the best house in the town, announced it to be the quarters of the general. They belonged to the 62nd of the French line. In front of the mansion stood thirty pieces of beautiful brass cannon: the same which the French threw into the sea on abandoning Scylla, when, in the year following, the British beleaguered it under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, 27th regiment. I was ushered by the corporal into the general's presence, and found him just finishing breakfast: he had pushed away his last cup of chocolate, placed his foot on the braciere, and was composing himself to resume reading the *Moniteur*, while his servant, a grenadier in blue uniform, with rough iron-grey moustaches cleared the table. On the wall hung a bombastic bulletin of Napoleon, dated 27th December, 1806:—

"The Neapolitan dynasty has ceased to reign! its existence is incompatible with the repose of Europe and the honour of our crown. Soldiers, march! and *if* they will await your attack, drive into the sea those feeble battalions *of the tyrants of the ocean*—lose no time in making all Italy subject to my arms!"

Probably the *Moniteur* contained some unpleasant account of our brilliant success in other parts of the world; for the temper of the general was soured, and he regarded me with a most vinegar-like aspect, when the corporal ushered me in. I bowed coldly; he answered only by a stern glance, spread his hands behind his coat tails, and leaned against the mantel-piece.

"Ouf! a prisoner of war," said he, and scanning me at intervals, while reading the letter of Compere.

"Your name and rank?"

"Dundas, captain of the 62nd regiment of the line, and commandant of the castle of Scylla, for his Majesty Ferdinand IV."

"Ouf! the very man we wanted! You were caught on the shore near Palmi?"

"Yes, when left there by the boat of the *Electra* frigate, and merely meaning to make a reconnoissance, (until daybreak enabled us to put to sea) I penetrated"—

"A deuced lame story! Bah! you were merely making a reconnoissance at Canne too, I suppose? Ha! ha! well, we will cure you of that propensity for the future."

"I request to be liberated on my parole."

"A spy on parole! Ouf!"

"Scoundrel!" I exclaimed, losing all temper, "I am a gentleman—a British officer."

"Sacre coquin! men of honour do not prowl in the rear of an enemy's chain de quartiers in disguise: where is your uniform?"

I gave him a scornful glance in reply.

"Ouf!" said he, "you came to see our arrangements for capturing your crow's nest at Scylla. Behold, then, our pontoons, our battering train, our brigades of infantry and sappers: I trust you will report to monseigneur the Prince of Essling, that they are all ready for instant service."

"Monsieur, I demand my parole."

"If Massena grants a parole he may, but not so Regnier: you must be sent to the marshal; and I believe he is most likely to give you a yard or two of stout cord, and a leap from the nearest tree."

"Such conduct would not surprise me in the least!" I answered, bitterly; "the savage military government, which dragged the Duc d'Enghien from a neutral territory, and after a mockery of judicial form shot him by torchlight at midnight; and which so barbarously tortured to death a British officer, in the Temple, at Paris, must be capable of any inhumanity. After the ten thousand nameless atrocities by which France, since the days of the Revolution, has disgraced herself among the nations of Europe; no new violation of military honour, of humanity, or the laws of civilized nations, can be a subject of wonder."

"Ah, faquin! I could order you to be hanged in ten minutes."

"A day may yet come when this ruffianly treatment shall be repaid."

"Ouf! monsieur mouchard, Massena will look to that. At Castello di Bivona, you will be embarked on board La Vigilante courier gunboat, commanded by Antonio Balotte. He is a rough Lucchese, that same Antonio, who will string you to the yard-arm if you prove troublesome. Ouf! if the emperor was of my opinion, his soldiers would not take any prisoners." He grinned savagely, and summoned his orderly.

"Order a corporal and file of soldiers. To them," he continued, addressing the Lancer, "you will hand over the prisoner with this brief despatch for Marshal Massena at Cosenza; it states who he is, and the suspicions against him."

Massena! O, how little I had to hope for, if once in the clutches of that savage and apostate Italian: particularly when blackened by all that Regnier's malicious nature might dictate. In half an hour I was on the march for Castello di Bivona, escorted by a corporal and file of the 101st, with fixed bayonets. As a deeper degradation, Regnier had ordered me to be hand-cuffed. Heavens! my blood boils yet at the recollection of that! I would have resisted; but a musket levelled at my head silenced all remonstrance, and I bottled up my wrath while Corporal Crapaud locked the fetters on me. We marched off, my exasperation increasing as we proceeded; for the escort seemed determined to consider me in the character of a spy, and consequently treated me with insult and neglect: in vain I told them I was a British officer, and deserved other treatment.

"True, monsieur," replied the corporal, who was a dapper little Gaul, four feet six inches high, "but I am obeying only the orders of the general; and a British officer, or any other officer, who is caught among an enemy's cantonments in disguise, must be considered as a spy, and expect degradation as such. Monsieur will excuse us—we have orders not to converse with prisoners; and the general—ah! ventre bleu!—he is a man of iron!"

This coolness, or affectation of contempt or superiority, only increased my annoyance. Although the soldiers conversed with all the loquacity and sung with all the gaiety of Frenchmen, they addressed me no more during the march of more than twenty-five miles. This lasted seven hours, exclusive of halts at Gioja, Rossarno, and several half-deserted villages and shepherds' huts; where they extorted whatever they wanted, at point of the bayonet, and made good their quarters whenever they chose; browbeating the men and caressing the women (if pretty). I often expected a brawl, and perhaps a release; but all hope died away, when, about sunset, we entered Castello di Bivona: my spirit fell in proportion as the plains and snow-capped Apennines grew dark, when the red sun dipped into the Tyrhene sea.

There were no French troops in the town; but anchored close to the shore lay the French gun-boat *La Vigilante*, mounting a six and a fourteen pounder, and

having thirty-six men—quite sufficient to hold in terror the inhabitants of the little town, who had not forgotten the visit paid them by Regnier's rear-guard. My heart sickened when, from an eminence, I beheld *La Vigilante*, which was to bear me further from liberty and hope; and the most acute anguish took possession of me, when confined for the night and left to my own sad meditations. I understood that I was to be transmitted to the Upper Province with some other prisoners, who were to arrive from Monteleone in the morning, and be conveyed across the gulf of St. Eufemio by the gun-boat.

I found myself confined for the night in the upper apartment of a gloomy tower, formed of immense blocks of stone, squared and built by the hands of the Locrians. The chamber was vaulted, damp, and destitute of furniture; but a bundle of straw was thrown in for my couch by Corporal Crapaud: he, with the escort, occupied a chamber below, where they caroused and played with dominoes. A turf battery of four 24-pounders, facing the seaward, showed that the French had converted this remnant of the ancient Hipponium into a temporary fort: a trench and palisade surrounded it.

A single aperture a foot square, four feet from the floor, and crossed by an iron bar, admitted the night breeze and the rays of the moon; showing the dark mountains, the blue sky, and the sparkling stars.

Left to solitude, my own thoughts soon became insupportable. "At this time yesternight I was with Bianca!" To be separated from her for an uncertain time—perhaps for ever, if Regnier's threats were fulfilled by the relentless Massena; to be taken from my important command at a time so critical—when the last stronghold of the British in Calabria was threatened by a desperate siege, on the issue of which the eyes of all Italy and Sicily were turned; the imminent danger and degrading suspicions under which I lay, manacled and imprisoned like a common felon; threatened on the one hand with captivity, on the other with death; and, worst of all, the image of Bianca, overwhelmed with sorrow and horror by the obscurity which enveloped my fate: all combined, tortured me to madness. I was in a state bordering on distraction. Stone walls, iron bars, and steel bayonets: alas! these are formidable barriers to liberty.

Midnight tolled from a distant bell, then all became still: so still that I heard my heart beating. Deeming me secure, my escort were probably sleeping over their cups and dominoes. I was encouraged to attempt escaping, and endeavoured to rally my thoughts. Though half worn out by our long march over detestable roads—a journey rendered more toilsome by the constrained position of my fettered hands—I became fresh and strong, and gathered courage from the idea. Yonder lay the *Vigilante*, with her latteen sail hanging; loose: and the sight of her was an additional spur to exertion: once on board of her, every hope was cut off for ever.

The detested fetters, two oval iron rings secured by a padlock and bar, were first to be disposed of: but how? The manner in which they secured the wrists crippled my strength: the iron bar was a foot long, and though defying my utmost strength to break or bend it, yet ultimately it proved the means of setting me free. The padlock was strong and new: but a happy thought struck me; I forced it between the wide and time-worn joints of the wall until it was wedged fast as in a vice, then, clasping my hands together, I wrenched round the bar, using it as a lever on the lock which passed through it; and in an instant the bolt, the wards, the plates which confined them, and all the iron-work of the once formidable little engine, fell at my feet.

"God be thanked! oh, triumph!" burst in a whisper from my lips: my heart expanded, and I could have laughed aloud, while stretching my stiffened hands. But there was no time to be lost: the fall of the broken padlock might have alarmed the escort, and I prepared for instant flight. Thrusting some of the iron pieces under the door bolts, to prevent it being readily opened, I turned to the window, and found, with joy, that there was space enough between the cross-bar and the wall for egress: but the ground was fifteen feet below. With great pain and exertion I pressed through, and, half suffocated, nearly stuck midway between the rusty bar and stone rybate. At that moment of misery and hope, the corporal thundered at the door; I burst through, fell heavily to the ground, and for a moment was stunned by the fall: but the danger of delay, and the risk of being instantly shot if retaken, compelled me to be off double-quick. I rushed up the banquette of the gun-battery, cleared the parapet at a bound, and scrambled over the stockade like a squirrel.

"Villan, hola! halte!" cried Crapaud, firing his musket: the ball whistled through my hair, and next moment I was flying like a deer with the hounds in full chase. I was closely pursued: but, after three narrow escapes from the bullets of my escort, I baffled them, and gained in safety the cork wood of Bivona.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ALBERGO.—THE BANDIT'S REVENGE.

Seeking a thick and gloomy dingle, I flung myself under its shadow to rest; breathless with my recent exertion, the long day's march, and the excitement of the last hour. My plan was soon decided: to approach Scylla, from which I

was then nearly thirty miles distant, was my principal object; but many dangerous obstacles were to be encountered and overcome, before I stood in the hall of Ruffo Sciglio. The snow melting among the Apennines had swollen the Metramo and other rivers which I had to pass; the towns, villages, and all the level country swarmed with French troops and Buonapartist sbirri or gendarmes, all closing up towards the point of attack; while the woods and mountains were infested by banditti, the most ferocious and lawless in Europe. To lie concealed in thickets by day and to travel by night, was the plan I proposed adopting; and anxious to find myself as far as possible from the place of my imprisonment, after a brief rest I set forward on my dubious and difficult journey; thinking more of the joy of embracing Bianca, than the triumph of meeting Regnier in the breach.

Many of the mountains being yet capped with snow rendered the air cold and chilly; my head was without covering, and I was destitute of every means of defence against either robbers or wolves: the last were numerous in these wilds, and I often heard their cries rising up from the depths of the moonlit forest, through which I toiled southward. So wearying, difficult and uncertain was the path, that I had only proceeded seven or eight miles when day broke, and found me in an open and desert place near Nicotera. The appearance of a body of the enemy marching down the hills was sufficient to scare me, and seeking shelter in an orange wood, I lay concealed in it for hours; not daring to venture forth, although I felt the effects of an appetite sharpened by the keen mountain air. I had heard much of the manna said to be found in the morning on the leaves of the mulberry and other trees in Calabria; but not a drop was to be seen, although I searched anxiously enough. The day seemed interminably long, and joyfully I hailed eve closing as the sun sank once more behind Sicily, and the long shadows of Nicotera fell across the plain.

Armed with a stout club, torn from a tree, I once more set forward, favoured by the dusk and refreshed by my long halt, though hungry as a hawk.

At the hut of a poor charcoal-burner I received some refreshments and ascertained the right (or rather safest) path; the honest peasant, on partly learning the circumstances of my escape, shouldered his rifle, stuck a poniard in his girdle, and accompanied me as far as Gioja; where, after shewing me from the heights the French watch-fires at Seminara, he left me. I was pleased when he did so, for then only I became convinced that his intentions were honest. While travelling with him unarmed I was somewhat suspicious of his kindness: but I did him wrong; he was a hardy and loyal Calabrian, and my fears were groundless. Regretting having brought him so far from his hut, I gave him three crowns, nearly all the money in my possession: at first he refused it; but the temptation was too great for the poor peasant, whose only attire was a jacket of rough skin, a pair of tattered breeches, the net which confined his ample masses of hair, and the buff

belt sustaining his dagger and powder-horn. Muttering something about his little ones at home, he took the reward, with many bows and protestations, and we parted.

Rejoicing in my progress, I struck into a path up the hills towards Oppido. The utmost circumspection was now necessary: every avenue to Scylla being closely guarded by Regnier's picquets and chain of advanced sentries. About midnight I lost my way among the woods and defiles. I was drenched by falling into a swampy rice plantation, and severely cut and bruised by the rocks and roots of trees: the night being so dark that I could scarcely see my hand outstretched before me. A sudden storm of rain and wind, which swept down from the hills, completed my discomfiture; and I hailed with joy a light which twinkled at the bottom of a deep and savage dell: seeming, from the eminence on which I stood, like a lantern at the bottom of a pit.

It proved to be an albergo, or lonely mountain inn; but of the most wretched description. Exhausted and weather-beaten as I was, the many unpleasant stories I had heard of those suspicious places, and the close connection of their owners with the banditti occurred to me; but this did not discourage me from knocking at the door. Close to it stood a lumbering old-fashioned Sicilian carriage; which announced a visitor of some importance; and the moment I knocked, a violent altercation ensued as to whether or not the door should be opened.

"Signor Albergatore," cried a squeaking voice, "open the door at your peril! Open it—and I shall lay the whole affair before his excellency, the president of the Grand Civil Court."

The innkeeper uttered a tremendous oath and opened the door. A blazing fire of billets and sticks roared up the opening which served for a chimney, and filled the whole albergo with a ruddy light. The host, a most forbidding-looking dog, with only one eye, a lip and nose slashed by what appeared to have been a sword-cut, and which revealed all his upper teeth, growled a sullen welcome: evidently nowise pleased with my splashed and miserable appearance. But I was resolved to make good my billet, and drawing close to the fire took a survey of the company: it consisted of an important little personage, whose face seemed the production of a cross between the rat and weasel; a jovial young fellow, whose jaunty hat and feather, green velvet jacket and breeches of striped cotton, rosy and impudent face, together with his little mandolin, declared him to be a wandering improvisatore; and an old monk of St. Christiana (the neighbouring town) who lay fast asleep in a corner, with his hands crossed on his ample paunch: his shaven scalp shining like a polished ball in the light of the fire, which made his white hair and beard glisten like silver as they flowed over his coarse brown cassock.

The little personage before mentioned was Ser Villani, the great notary of

St. Eufemio; a more apt plunderer of King Ferdinand's subjects than any robber in Calabria: he was a thorough-paced lawyer, and consequently a knave. Armed with a pass, which for a certain consideration he had obtained from General Regnier, he was on his way from Gierazzo, where he had been collecting information relative to an interminable process. The Grand Civil Court of Palermo was putting every judicial instrument in operation to plunder the rich Prince of St. Agata, at the suit of a neighbouring abbey of monks, whose relicario he was bound to keep in repair: he having neglected to enclose the parings of the nails of San Gennaro in a gilt box, these inestimable reliques were lost, and his altezza was deprived of his cross of the saint's order, and became liable to swinging damages. All his notes on this most interesting case, Ser Villani carried in a legal green bag, which he grasped with legal tenacity; and he looked at me from time to time with glances of such distrust and dislike, that I concluded it contained more than mere paper.

Three well-armed and wild-looking peasants were sleeping in a corner, and the host wore a long knife in his girdle. Forbidding as he was in aspect, his wife and daughter were still more so: their clothes exhibited a strange mixture of finery and misery—massive silver pendants and gold rings, chains, rags, and faded brocades; while their feet were shoeless. My suspicions increased, and I found I had got into a lion's den.

"Signor Albergatore," said I, "do you fear banditti, that you were so long in undoing the door?"

"'T was the Signor Scrivano who raised so many objections," he replied, sulkily.

"Had Master Villani known I was a cavalier of Malta escaping from the French, he might have been a little more hospitable," I replied; to deceive them as to my real character: for I dreaded being given up to Regnier, perhaps for the sake of a reward. "Who occupy the mountains hereabout?"

"Scarolla and Baptistello Varro," replied the host. "But they never visit so poor an albergo as this."

"I hope not," faltered the notary, who turned ghastly pale at the name of Varro; and muttering to himself, he glanced uneasily at us all, with eyes that glittered like those of a monkey. "Ah, when will that loitering scoundrel of a postilion return with a smith to repair the calesso? Hound! he contrived very opportunely that the wheel should come off close by the albergo: but let him beware; his neck shall pay the forfeit, if worse comes of this."

A quiet laugh spread over the host's face, like sunshine over a field.

"Ser," said the improvisatore, "your postilion is probably only away to the next hill; and when he returns, a score of riflemen will be at his back."

The little notary quaked; and although the cunning minstrel merely spoke

in jest, his suppositions were indeed too correct. The secret understanding which existed between the brigands, postilions, and innkeepers of south Italy, was notorious: it has formed the machinery of innumerable tales of fiction. But since the campaign of Manhes and the close of the war, Italy has been quite regenerated.

The improvisatore received a furious glance from the host, that confirmed my suspicions: but to retire now was almost impossible.

After a miserable supper had been washed down by a caraffa of tart country wine, we drew closer to the smoky fire, and composed ourselves round it for the night. The wife and daughter of the host retired to a kind of loft above; resigning the only bed in the house,—viz., a bag of leaves and a blanket or two, to the priest. The notary nodded over his green bag, and, though he started at every sound, pretended to be fast asleep.

Notwithstanding my fatigue, thoughts stole over me and kept me awake; and more than once I saw the dark glassy eye of the host observing me intently, from the gloomy corner where he lay on the tiled floor. In short, not to keep the reader any longer behind the curtain, we were in one of those infamous dens which were the resort of the brigands: to whom the keepers conveyed information of all travellers who passed the night with them; stating whether they were armed or escorted by soldiers or sbirri. The suspicious improvisatore again whispered to me that he had no doubt the notary's postilion was only away to summon his comrades, the banditti. Reflecting that I was unarmed, I felt the utmost anxiety; but retiring might only anticipate matters: the fellows asleep in the corner were well armed, and I saw the hilts of their knives and pistol butts shining in the light of the fire.

"I am glad we have a cavalier of Malta here to-night," whispered the lad with the guitar. "You may save us all from Baptistello if he pays us a visit—all, one excepted: but, signor, you have very much the air of an Englishman."

"I served with the English fleet when it assisted the knights at the siege of Valetta. But I hope the rogues will not carry me off in expectation of a ransom."

"Madonna forbid! But Heaven help poor Villani, if he fall into the clutches of Baptistello!"

"Why so?"

"Signor, it is quite a story!" said he, drawing closer and lowering his voice. "Baptistello was a soldier of the Cardinal Ruffo, and served in his army when it defeated the French in the battle of Naples, on the happy 5th of June. His father, Baptiste, was a famous bravo and capo-bandito, who infested the mountains above St. Agata, and was the terror of the province from Scylla to La Bianca. He boasted that he had slain a hundred men; and it is said that in order to rival the frightful Mammone, he once quaffed human blood. He was deemed bullet-proof: a charm worn round his left wrist made him invulnerable; and he escaped so

often and so narrowly that he soon thought so himself. His presence inspired terror, and no man dared to travel within twenty miles of his district without a numerous escort. The Prince of St. Agata, lord of that territory, alone treated his name with contempt, and daily drove his carriage through the wildest haunt of Baptiste, without attendants.

"One day they met: it was in a lonely valley near the Alece.

"'Stand!' cried the gigantic robber, kneeling behind a rock, over which he levelled his rifle. The reins fell from the hands of the driver.

"'Villain! fire, if you dare!' cried the prince.

"The robber fired, and his bullet passed through the hat of the prince; who, levelling a double-barrelled pistol, shot four balls through the heart of his assailant. Before the arrival of the banditti, who with shouts were rushing down from the mountains, the Prince was driving at full gallop through the valley, with the body of Varro lashed to the hind axle-bar and trailing along the dusty road. Thus he entered Reggio in triumph, like Achilles dragging Hector round the walls of Troy. The body was gibbeted, and the head placed in an iron cage and sent over to Messina; when it was stuck on the summit of the Zizi palace, where it yet remains, bleached by the dew by night and the sun by day: I saw it three days ago.

"One night soon after this, a ragged little urchin presented himself in an apartment of the palace, just before the prince retired to rest.

"'Who are you, Messerino?' he asked.

"'Baptistello, the son of old Baptiste Varro.'

"'Ah! and what do you want?' said the prince, looking round him for a whip or cane.

"'My father's head.'

"'Away, you little villain, ere you are tossed over the window! I would not give it for a thousand scudi.'

"'For two thousand, serenissimo?'

"'Yes, rogue, for so many I might.'

"'On your word of honour?'

"'An impudent little dog! Yes. Away!—when *you* fetch me such a sum, per Baccho! you shall have your father's head: but not till then.'

"'Enough, excellency: I will redeem it, and keep my word. San Gennaro judge between us, and curse the wretch who fails!'

"'A bold little rogue, and deserves the old villain's head for nothing,' muttered the prince. 'Two thousand scudi! Ah, poor boy! where will he ever get such a sum?'

"The prince soon forgot all about it; but Baptistello, inspired by that intense filial veneration for which our Calabrian youth are so famous, worked incessantly

to raise the two thousand scudi—a mighty sum for him: but he did not despair. He dug in the vineyards and rice-fields by day, in the iron mines of Stilo by night, and begged in cities when he had nothing else to do; and slowly the required sum began to accumulate. When old enough to level the rifle, by his mother's advice he took to his father's haunts, and turned bandit. Then the gold increased rapidly; and, regularly as he acquired it, he transmitted the ill-gotten ransom to Ser Villani, of St. Eufemio: leaving the gold in the hollow of a certain tree, where the notary found it and left a full receipt for each amount.

"When the two thousand pieces were numbered, Baptistello presented himself before Villani in the disguise of a Basilian, requesting him to pay Prince St. Agata the money and redeem the bare-bleached skull, which grins so horribly from the battlements of the Palazzo Zizi. They met at the porch of the great church, where the notary had just been hearing mass. He denied ever having received a quattrino of the money: not a single piece had he ever seen—'No, by the miraculous blood of Gennaro!'

"'Behold your signed receipts, Master Scrivano.'

"'Via! they are forgeries. Away, or I will summon the officers of justice.'

"'My two thousand scudi!—my hard-won money, earned at peril of my soul! Return it, thou most infamous of robbers!' cried the infuriated Varro, grasping the notary's throat and unsheathing his poniard.

"'Help, in the name of the Grand Court!' shrieked Villani. Baptistello was arrested, imprisoned in the fearful *Damusi*, and kept there for months; he was then scourged with rods, and thrust forth, naked and bleeding, to perish in the streets; while the money, earned with so much toil and danger, went to enrich the dishonest notary. Baptistello is on the mountains above us; and if Villani falls into his hands this night, Signor Cavaliere, thou mayest imagine the sequel."

The improvisatore ceased, and I saw the keen twinkling eyes of the notary watching me: he must have heard the whole story, while affecting to sleep; and, trembling violently, he clutched his legal green bag. Suddenly some one tapped at the casement; and I saw a large, fierce and grim face peering in.

"Ha!" cried the notary, springing up; "'t is the calessiero returned at last. Thou loitering villain! I will teach you how to respect a member of the Grand Civil court of Sicily."

He opened the door, and—horror!—instead of the humble and apologizing postilion, there stood the tall athletic form of Baptistello Varro, clad in his glittering bandit costume. Had the notary encountered thus the great head of his profession, face to face, he could not have been more overwhelmed with dismay: he seemed absolutely to shrink in size before the stern gaze of the formidable robber; whose entrance scarcely less alarmed the old priest, the poor improvisatore, and myself. But, remembering my former adventures with Varro, I was not with-

out hope of escape. The albergo was crowded with his savage followers, and we were all dragged roughly forth as prisoners. The notary's hired calesso was undergoing a thorough search: the lining was all torn out, and every pannel and cushion were pierced and slashed; while the contents of his trunks and mails were scattered in every direction, and flying on the breeze. In his green bag were found a thousand ducats.

"Villain!" exclaimed Baptistello, as he threw the gold pieces on the sward, "there is more than we would deem sufficient to ransom ten such earth-worms as thee: yet this is but a half of the sum I deposited in the hollow tree at St. Eufemio. I am a robber—true: but I gain my desperate living bravely in the wilderness, by perilling my life hourly; while *thou*, too, art a thief, but of the most despicable and cowardly description—a legalized plunderer of widows and orphans—a vampire who preys on the very vitals of the community—a smooth-faced masterpiece of villany: in short, wretch, thou art a notary. Remember the ransom of my father's head—the dungeons—the chains and the scourge. Ha! remember, too, that thou art alone with me on the wild mountains of Calabria: so, kneel to the God above us; for the last sands of thy life are ebbing fast." And he dashed him to the earth.

"O, signor—O, excellency—mercy!" craved the notary, grovelling in the dust; but the fierce robber only grinned, showing his pearl-white teeth; as leaning on his rifle he surveyed him with an air of triumphant malice and supreme contempt. "Mercy! I implore you, by the blood of Gennaro the blessed! Mercy, as you hope for it at your dying day! I will repay the money. I will no longer be a notary, but an honest man."

"Wretch! such mercy will be given as tigers give," cried the ferocious Baptistello, spurning the poor man with his foot, and holding aloft his crucifix. "By this holy symbol of our salvation, I have sworn that thy head shall pay the forfeit for my father's!" The brigand kissed it. Though all hope died away in the heart of the notary, he still poured forth a jargon of alternate prayers, threats, and entreaties: his agony was terrible; for at that moment forty of the "sharpest practice" were about to be accounted for.

"God! I dare not address myself to thee. O, holy father pray for me in this great peril!" he cried to the old monk of St. Christiana. "Supplicate him for a sinner that has forgotten how to pray for himself."

"Buono!" said Baptistello; "let the priest pray while the notary swings."

Lancelotti approached and surveyed me with an insolent leer: he held a rope—the reins of the lawyer's mules; in a moment it was looped round the notary's neck, and the other end thrown over the arm of a beech-tree. The monk, kneeling on the sod, prayed with fervour: increased probably by anxiety for himself. The struggles of the poor wretch were horrible to behold: overcome with the terror of death, he fought like a wild beast; scratching, biting, and howling:

but in the strong grasp of his powerful destroyers his efforts were like those of an infant. In a minute he swung from the branch of the beech, while, with a stern smile of grim satisfaction, the robber watched the plunges of his victim writhing in the death agony: the sharp withered features growing ghastly, as the pale light of the dawning day fell on their distorted lines. But enough.

"Signor Canonico," said Varro, "you may go; the mountains are before you—we meddle not with monks." The priest retired instantly, without bestowing a thought on his companions in trouble. "And who are you, signor, with the mandolin?" continued Baptistello.

"An improvisatore, from Sicily last, excellency," replied the lad, doffing his hat with all humility; "I have come to rouse my countrymen, by the song and guitar, to battle against the legions of Massena, as they did of old against the Saracen and Goth. I am but a poor lad, and have no ransom to offer save a song of the glorious Marco Sciarra; not a paola can I give your excellencies: my sole inheritance is this guitar, which my father gave me with his dying hand (for he, too, was an improvisatore), when he fell in battle under the banner of Cardinal Ruffo."

"Where, boy?"

"On the plains of Apulia—I was a little child then," said the lad, shedding tears. "See, the mandolin is stained with his blood."

"Benissimo!" exclaimed the band, who crowded round us.

"Thou, too, art free; for we war not with the poor. Away! follow the monk, and the virgin speed thee." But the minstrel bestowed an anxious glance on me, and drew near; scorning to imitate the selfish priest, who had now disappeared from the path which wound over the brightening mountains.

"Your name, signor?" asked Varro, surveying me with a glance of surprise, and seeming puzzled what to think of me.

"Dundas, captain in the British service, and commandant of Scylla," I replied, with haughty brevity.

"The friend of Castelermo, and who so bravely avenged his death on the renegade Navarro—is it not so?"

"The same, Signor Capo: for two days past I have undergone great misery, and last night made a most miraculous escape from the troops of General Regnier."

"Who has offered a hundred gold Napoleons for you dead or alive: a sum quite sufficient to excite the avarice and cupidity of a Calabrian outlaw."

My spirit sank—I made no reply, but cursed the French general in my heart.

"Courage, signor," said Baptistello, laying his hand familiarly on my shoulder; "think not so hardly of us: we all love the British soldiers, and would not yield you to Regnier for all the gold in France. We have not forgotten Maida—eh,

comrades?"

"Viva il Re d'Inghilterra!" answered the band with one voice. (It was the cry of the loyalists as often as "Viva Ferdinando IV.")

"You hear the sentiments of my followers," said Varro; "truly, signor, as the Husband of the Signora d'Alfieri, your name is dear to the whole Calabrians; and I believe the wildest rogue in these provinces would not touch a hair of your head. Corpo di Baccho! you must breakfast with us among the mountains: we trust to your honour for not revealing our fastness to our disadvantage—to our own hands for avenging it, if you do. Enough, signor: we know each other."

I was in the hands of men with whom it would have been rash to trifle; and, accepting the rough invitation, I accompanied them across the hills. The sun rose above the highest peak of Bova, and poured its fiery lustre into the dark green valleys; gilding the convent vanes and little spires of St. Christiana and Oppido, and exhaling the mist from the black glittering rocks, the sable pines, and verdant slopes of the Apennines.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BANDIT'S CAVERN.—RECAPTURE AND DELIVERANCE.

Through a long deep gorge, winding between basaltic cliffs, the production of volcanic fire, or formed by some great convulsion which had rent the massive hills, we scrambled along for nearly half a mile; at the end rose a wall of rock, on ascending which, by means of a ladder, I found myself in the den of the banditti. The ladder being drawn up when the last man ascended, all communication with the chasm below was thus cut off.

A fire burned brightly in a recess of the cavern, revealing its ghastly rocks and hollow depths, the long stalactites, the crystals, and various sparkling stones which glimmered in the flames as they shot upward through the cranny that served for a chimney. Several females, grouped round it, were engaged in chatting, quarrelling, and cooking; and their picturesque costumes, olive complexions, and graceful figures, were brought forward in strong warm light by the flickering flames: some had still the sad remains of beauty, and their Greco-Italian features still wore the soft Madonna-like expression of the southern provinces: though, alas! their innocence had fled; others were sullen, forbidding, or melancholy, and all were laden with tawdry finery and massive jewels.

The aspect of the cavern; one part glaring with lurid light, the other half involved in gloom, where its mysterious recesses pierced into the bowels of the mountain; the women, with their full bosoms, large black eyes, and sandalled feet, their glossy hair braided into tails, or flowing in dishevelled ringlets; the bearded banditti, some in their well-known costume, others in a garb of rough skins, showing their bare legs and arms—their rifles, knives, pistols, and horns, sparkling when they moved; formed a striking scene. Looking outward, also, a view of the distant sea, the smoke of Stromboli piercing the infinity of space above it, the spire of Fiumara, the vine-clad ruins of a Grecian temple, and the long bright river that wound between the hills towards it, formed a subject for the pencil, such as would have raised the enthusiasm of Salvator Rosa; who, in pursuit of the savagely romantic, sojourned for a time among the wilds, the beauties, the terrors, and the banditti of Calabria.

Chocolate, kid's flesh stewed, eggs, milk, dried grapes, and wine, composed the repast: when it was finished, the poor improvisatore, though not quite at ease, found himself compelled to sing; and chose for his theme MARCO SCIARRA, the glory of the Abruzzesi, whose fame and memory the honest man and the bandit alike extol. He sang in ottiva rima and tinkled an accompaniment with his guitar, while every ear listened intently.

The scene opened in the wilds of Abruzzi; Marco was at the head of his thousand followers, and in all the plenitude of his power and terror—that chivalric brigandism which gained him the title of Re della Campagna; then we were told how, kneeling by the wayside, he kissed the hand of Tasso, and did homage to the muse; how successfully he warred with Clement VII. and the Count of Conversano, and then fought the battles of the Venetians against their Tuscan enemies: of his bravery, his loves, his compassion, and countless escapes, we all heard in succession, down to that hour when, in the marches of Ancona, he met Battimello, his former friend; who while embracing him, in the true spirit of Italian treachery, struck a dagger in his heart, and sold his head to a papal commissary.

Every eye flashed as the minstrel concluded; a groan of rage, mingled with a burst of applause, shook the vaulted cavern: for the theme was one well calculated to interest his hearers deeply; and one very pretty young woman threw her arms around the improvisatore, and kissed him on both cheeks. While all were thus well pleased, we took our departure; and were very glad when the cavern and its inmates were some miles behind us. On bidding adieu to Baptistello, I promised to have his father's head sent from Messina, if I lived to reach that city in safety. He kissed my hand, and a dark smile lit up the features of Lancelloti: I was too soon to learn the ideas passing in the mind of that abominable traitor.

There is, generally, a romance about the Italian outlaw, which raises his

character far above that of the mere pickpocket or house-breaker. The danger encountered in the course of his desperate profession, and the wild scenery around him, were all calculated to inspire him with a tinge of heroism: were, I say; for the real Italian brigand may now, happily, be classed with the things which are past. Without being guilty of any premeditated crime, many were forced upon that terrible career by the French invasion, or by too freely using their knives in those outbursts of anger and revenge to which the hot blood of the southern climes is so prone: but to some good feelings lingering in those hearts which danger and despair had not completely hardened, I owed my safety in these various encounters with the wild bravos of Calabria.

But the most dangerous was yet to come. The reward offered by Regnier for my recapture had excited the avarice of Lancelloti; who was then tracking me over the hills, intent on my destruction. On parting with the improvisatore, close by where the poor notary yet hung with the wild birds screaming round him, I continued my way, as warily as possible, to avoid the enemy; for a continual pop—pop—popping in the distance, and the appearance of white smoke curling on the mountain sides and from the leafless though budding forests, announced that the French advanced parties were skirmishing with the brigands and armed paesani, and kept me continually on the alert. Dread of the effect of Regnier's reward, compelled me to avoid every man I met; so my route soon became equally toilsome and devious. Yet though exhausted by travelling and loss of sleep, I was animated by a view of Scylla's distant towers and terraces, which rose above the woodlands gleaming in the rays of the joyous sun, and continued to press forward; until completely overcome with fatigue, I threw myself on the green sward, under the cool shade of a pine thicket, and fell into a deep sleep.

This happy slumber, (which after a long march under the scorching heat of noon, the cool shade rendered so refreshing) had lasted, perhaps, an hour, when I was roughly roused by the smart application of a rifle butt to the side of my head. Starting up, I found myself in the grasp of Lancelloti, and two others of Varro's band: alas! weary and unarmed, what resistance could I offer? They were strong, fresh, and armed to the teeth: solitude was around us, and no aid near; every hope of escape vanished.

"Via, Signor Inglese!" said one; "did you mean to sleep there all day?"

"Beard of Mahomet!" said Lancelloti, with a scowl; "you had better make use of your legs."

"Your purpose, scoundrels?"

"To deliver you to the French commandant at Fiumara," replied the ci-devant priest and pirate. "Madonna! a hundred pieces of gold are not to be despised. Look you, signor, I swear by the light of Heaven, to blow your brains out on the first attempt to escape!—so fill the foreyard—maladetto! Remember I

am Osman Carora—ha, ha!"

"Wretch! would you murder me in cold blood, and thus add to the guilt accumulated on your unhappy head?"

"Cospetto! it is indeed mighty," said he, gloomily; "yea, enough to darken the stone of Caaba, which was once white as milk, but now, blackened by the sins of men, is like a piece of charcoal in those walls where Abraham built it. When a devout Turk, I—via! on—or a brace of balls will whistle through the head you may wish should reach Fiumara on your shoulders—ha, ha!"

To resist was to die; so, relying on the humanity of the French officer commanding the outposts, I accompanied them, in indescribable agony of mind. The fading rays of the setting sun, as it sank behind the hills, were reddening the massive towers and crenelated battlements, the terraced streets and shining casements of Scylla. It vanished behind the green ridges; the standard descended from the keep, and my heart sank as we neared Fiumara. My escort kept close by me, with their rifles loaded. A river, the name of which I do not remember, winds from these hills towards Fiumara; and we moved along its northern bank. Its deep, smooth current lay on the left side of the narrow path, and precipitous rocks, like a wall, rose up on the right; so that I was without the slightest hope of effecting an escape. I spoke of the greater reward they would receive on conducting me to Scylla: but they laughed my words to scorn. The French out-picquets were now in sight; and far down the valley we saw their chain of advanced sentinels, motionless on their posts, standing with ordered arms, watching the still current of the glassy river, as it swept onwards to the sea: its bright surface reflected the steep rocks, the green woods, and a ruined bridge, so vividly, that the eye could not distinguish where land and water met. The last flush of day, as it died away over the Apennines, cast a yellow blaze on its windings; which at intervals were dotted by the fitful watch-fires of the out-lying piquets.

A party of armed men had been seen by Lancelloti pursuing the turnings of the path we trod: they came towards us: their conical hats and long rifles announced them Calabrians, and a consultation was held by my capturers whether to advance or retire; as it was quite impossible to leave the path on either hand.

"Go to the front, Gaetano, and reconnoitre," said Lancelloti; "they may be some of the Free Corps." My heart leaped at the idea.

"Cospetto! and if they are?"

"We shoot him through the head, plunge into the river, and swim for it!" said the other ruffian.

"Blockhead!" exclaimed Lancelloti; "they are but four, and the first lucky fire may make us more than equal. To *you*," addressing me with cruel ferocity, "I swear, by all the devils, you shall be shot the instant we are attacked—shot, I say, and flung into the river, that no one else may win those bright Napoleons which

I hoped should clink in my own pouch."

At that moment, Gaetano came running back to say, that, although armed like the Free Calabri with white cross-belts and heavy muskets, they wore no uniform or scarlet cockade.

"They must be free cavalieri of our own order, then," exclaimed Lancelloti. "Some of Scarolla's band, perhaps."

"They have been plundering of late, as far as Capo Pillari."

"Forward, then!"

Life and liberty were hanging by a hair: my heart beat tumultuously, and mechanically I moved forward, cursing the unsoldier-like malice of the French leader, who had placed me in such a position, by exciting the avarice of such wretches. After losing sight of the advancing party for a time, we suddenly met them, front to front, at an abrupt angle where the road turned round a point of rock.

"Advance first, Signor Inglese," said Lancelloti; "and, should you attempt to escape, remember!" and, tapping the butt of his rifle, he grinned savagely as I stepped forward, expecting every instant to be shot through the head. My brain was whirling—I was giddy with rage and despair. The path diminished to a narrow shelf of rock, about a foot broad: on one side it descended sheer to the dark waters of the deep and placid river; on the other frowned the wall of basalt; and I was compelled to grasp the tufts of weeds and grass on its surface, as I passed the perilous turn.

Scarcely had I cleared the angle, when I was confronted by—whom!—Giacomo, Luca *labbruta*, and two other soldiers of Santugo, in disguise. Their shout of joy was answered by a volley from three rifles behind me; and the report rang like thunder among the cliffs.

I heard the balls whistle past; a shriek and a plunge followed, as one of the Free Corps fell, wounded, into the stream: his comrades rushed on, to avenge him, and I drew aside behind an angle of the rocks, to avoid the cross fire of both parties. Enraged to behold the husband of their famous "Signora Capitanessa" in such a plight, Giacomo and his comrades pressed furiously forward with fixed bayonets. To this formidable weapon, the foe could only oppose the clubbed rifle, and a desperate conflict ensued: but on such ground it could not be of long duration. Blubber-lipped Luca shot Lancelloti through the breast: he rolled down the steep rocks into the sluggish stream, above which his ferocious face rose once or twice amid the crimson eddies of his blood; then sank to rise no more. Immediately after, his companions were bayoneted, and flung over the precipice after him.

Full of triumph at his victory and discovery, honest Giacomo skipped about on the very edge of the cliff, dancing the tarantella like a madman.

"Thrice blessed be our holy Lady of Oppido, who led us this way to-night. O, happiness! O, joy to the capitanessa!" he exclaimed. "Ah, signor! you know not what she has endured. The whole garrison has been turned upside down: the Signora Bianca is distracted; the visconte, the Conte di Palmi, and Signor Olivero Lascelles have been incessantly beating the woods in search of you, so far as they dared venture. And Giacomo—O, triumph!—is the finder! It is an era in my life: Annina herself dare not be coy after this!"

Giacomo's Italian enthusiasm displayed itself in a thousand antics; and it was not until we saw a party of the French tirailleurs (whom the firing had alarmed) advancing up the opposite bank to reconnoitre, that we prepared to retire. It was now night: favoured by the moon, we forded the river at a convenient place, and taking our way through the woods between Fiumara and Scylla, we eluded the vigilance of the French picquets. In an hour I found myself safe within the walls, gates, and gun-batteries of my garrison; where my sudden return caused a burst of universal joy.

Breaking away from Luigi, my brother-officers and soldiers, who crowded clamorously round me, I hurried to the apartments of Bianca. All was silent when I entered, and the flickering rays of a night-lamp revealed to me the confusion my absence had created. Bianca's music, her guitar, her daily work, the embroidery, her books and drawings, lay all forgotten, and huddled in a corner, poor papagallo croaked desolately in his cage: for he, too, had been deserted, and his seed-box was empty. A row of vases, which Bianca used to tend everyday, had been forgotten; and the flowers had drooped and withered. The whole sleeping-chamber wore an air of disorder and neglect; her bed appeared not to have been slept in since I had left; for my scarlet sash lay on it, just where I had thrown it the night I left Scylla.

Above all, I was shocked with the appearance of the poor girl: reclining on a sofa, she lay sleeping on the bosom of Annina; who also was buried in a heavy slumber: both were evidently wearied with watching and sorrow. Bianca was pale as death: her beautiful hair streamed in disorder over her white neck and polished shoulder; and shining tears were oozing from her long dark lashes. She was weeping in her sleep, and the palor of her angelic beauty was rendered yet stronger by comparison with the olive brow and rosy cheeks of the waiting-maid.

I was deeply moved on beholding her thus: but I never felt so supremely happy as at the moment, when, gently putting my arm round her, I awoke her to

joy, and dispelled those visions of sorrow which floated through her dreams.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOYS OF A MILITARY HONEYMOON.

Early next morning I was roused by the sharp blast of a French trumpet, stirring all the echoes of Scylla. I was dressing hastily, when Lascelles, who commanded the barrier-guard, entered, saying that a flag of truce and a trumpet, sent by General Regnier, required a conference with the commandant.

"Curse Regnier," said I, testily, while dragging on my boots; "I will not hold any communication with him, after the scandalous manner in which he has treated me."

"But you may receive the officer, and hear that which he is ordered to communicate: at least answer this letter, of which he is the bearer."

By the grey twilight of a February morning I opened the Frenchman's despatch and read:

"SUMMONS

Of unconditional capitulation, and the articles thereof, agreed to between the commandant of Scylla, and Monsieur le General de Division, Regnier, Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, Knight-Commander of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, Grand Cross of the Lion of Bavaria, Knight of St. Louis of France, Chef de Bataillon of the Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard," &c. &c. &c.

"Bah!" cried Oliver, with a laugh; "throw it over the window."

"Give Monsieur le General, Knight of St. Louis, and all that, my compliments, and say, I will return these articles with the first cannon ball fired on his trenches."

"The enemy are close at hand this morning, and appear to have made great progress during the night."

"Desire the officer commanding the artillery to have all the heavy guns loaded with tin-case-shot, in addition to iron balls; and to have the primings well looked to."

"But the Frenchman—he is still waiting at the barriers—shall I show him up?"

"You may—I have a particular message to his general."

"He is a punchy, ungentlemanly kind of man, and appears to keep a sharp

eye about him, evidently observing all our defences."

"Lodge the trumpeter in the main-guard, and bind up the eyes of the officer: they served me so once; I will meet him in the old hall."

That I might not be deficient in courtesy, I directed wine, decanters, &c., to be conveyed to the vaulted hall, where princely banners and Italian trophies had given place to racks of arms, iron-bound chests, and military stores. Oliver led in the officer, with his eyes covered by a handkerchief, which gave him rather a droll aspect. He was a short thick-set man, with wiry, grey moustachios, and wore the uniform of the ill-fated voltigeurs of the 23rd regiment.

"Monsieur, you will no doubt pardon this necessary muffling," said I, advancing; "but as you wished to see me—ha!"—at that moment Oliver withdrew the bandage, when lo! imagine my astonishment on seeing the features of General Regnier! I knew him in an instant; although, instead of the blue coat and gold oak-leaves, the stars and medals of the general of the empire, he wore the plain light green and silver braid of the 23rd. His wonder was not less on recognising me.

"Ouf! you have outflanked me—quite!" said he, bowing with a ludicrous air of confusion and assurance.

"Shame! shame, general!" I replied, with an air of scorn: "who is now the spy and deserves to be hanged or shot?"

"Not I," said he, with *sang froid*; "I am the bearer of a flag of truce."

"In your *own* name? Good!"

"No; in that of Joseph I., King of Naples, and the Marshal Prince of Essling."

"A paltry pretence, under which you came hither to reconnoitre our works, our cannon, and means of resistance. Away, sir! Back to your position, and remember that one consideration alone prevents me from horse-whipping you as you deserve, for the manner in which you treated me at Seminara."

"Horsewhip—mille baionettes!" replied he, with eyes flashing fire; "I must have reparation for that: monsieur, be so good as to recall those words?"

"Sir, remember your threats and the fetters."

"Ouf!" he muttered, shrugging his shoulders. "I am in the lion's den. You must meet me, monsieur."

"Yes, in the breach—sword in hand—be gone, sir!"

"I go: but hear me. Remember the fate of the Italian commandant of Crotona. I swear, by God and the glory of France, that like him you shall die, and hang from these ramparts when the place surrenders. Our heavy gun-batteries will open at noon; you have but two hundred rank and file: for every one of these I can bring one piece of cannon and a hundred soldiers—ouf! we shall eat you up. Before the sun sets to-night my triumph shall be complete, and Calabria once more the emperor's."

And thus we parted with the bitterest personal animosity. He retired with the bewildered Lascelles; who led him, blindfold, to the outer barrier, and, with his trumpeter, there dismissed him.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, when he hurried back to me, "what a triumph it would have been to have sent the old fox over to Messina! Only think of Sherbrooke's flaming general order and address of thanks on the occasion. What on earth tempted you to let him go?"

"Flags of truce must be respected: but I had a hard struggle between etiquette and inclination. Desire the gunners of the guard to telegraph to the *Electra* and gun-boats to keep close in shore; and send my orderly to the Visconte di Santugo, saying I will visit him shortly."

The continual skirmishing of the peasantry and banditti with the French had greatly retarded the operations of the latter: but on the 10th of February—the infantry brigade of Milette's corps having descended from the Milia heights and come within range of our cannon—it became imperative to order off to Sicily the whole of the armed paesani who occupied the town of Scylla; as the bombarding operations of the besieging army would only subject them to destruction. While our batteries kept in check the soldiers of Milette, I superintended the embarkation of these brave fellows and the remnant of Santugo's Free Corps; who were all received on board the Sicilian gun-boats at the sea staircase. The visconte remained with me; but his volunteers, who afterwards distinguished themselves so much in our service, were quartered in Messina. Poor Giacomo was afterwards slain in the brilliant attack made by General Macfarlane on the coast of Naples, in the July following. The Cavaliere Paolo for his bravery on the same day, at the capture of the Castello d'Ischia, received the thanks of Ferdinand IV. and Sir J. Stuart, at the head of the army. He was afterwards created Conte Casteluccio, and shared his coronet with the fair widow of Castagno. He is now senior commandant of the Yager Guards in the Neapolitan army.

I transmitted with the gun-boats the whole of the sick and wounded, and everything of value. I sent away my groom with my gallant grey; which was indeed far too good a nag to be captured and ridden by Frenchmen.

It was in vain that I intreated Bianca to go in safety with the boats, and described to her all the horrors of a siege: the noise of our guns playing on Milette's advancing column only confirmed the fond girl's determination to remain with us; and she seemed happy when the last gun-boat, laden to the water's edge with her countrymen, moved slowly away from the shore, and the only chance by which she could leave me was cut off for ever.

A safe place was fitted up for her by the soldiers in a bomb-proof chamber, where the thick walls and arches of solid masonry shut out the storm of war, which was soon to shake the towers of Scylla to their deepest foundations. The

barriers of palisade were secured, the bridges drawn up, the standard hoisted, the guns double shotted with balls, canister, and grape, the breastworks and ramparts lined, the locks and flints examined; and thus we awaited the enemy on the forenoon of the 10th: the roll of their brass drums rang among the hills, as the successive columns descended from the heights of Milia, taking the most circuitous routes to avoid the fire of our cannon, which played upon their line of march at every opportunity afforded by the inequality of the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.
THE SIEGE OF SCYLLA.

My mind was a prey to the utmost anxiety, when I beheld the overwhelming masses which Regnier was pouring forward on the last solitary hold of Ferdinand, cut off by the stormy Strait of Messina from all Sicilian succour. A strong brigade of cavalry, the 23rd Light Infantry, the 1st, 62nd, and 101st Regiments of the French line, together with a powerful battering train, formed his force; but as each corps consisted of three battalions, he mustered more than 6,000 foot alone. The "handful" of the British 62nd, amounting now to only 200 file, were to encounter them: but proud of my corps, and feeling all the glorious ardour of my profession glowing within me—relying on the indomitable English spirit of my soldiers, and the great natural strength of the position we occupied—I did not despair of at least protracting a siege; which, when the great disparity of numbers is remembered, must be deemed as glorious a deed of arms as our military annals exhibit.

On the morning of the 11th February, five 24-pounders, five 18-pounders, four mortars, and innumerable field-pieces, opened a tremendous cannonade on the keep and upper works of Scylla, to demolish our cover and bury us with our guns under the ruins. This battering continued daily, without a moment's cessation, until the 14th; when, covered by it, the French sappeurs and artillerists formed two other breaching batteries, at two hundred yards distance from our bastions: notwithstanding the appalling slaughter made among them by our shells bursting, and grape-shot and musketry showering around, with deadly effect. Though the whole of Regnier's infantry remained under cover during these operations, the execution done on those who worked at the breaching batteries must have been fearful: they were so close and so numerous. My own brave little band was becoming thin from the fire from the heights: every cannon-shot

which struck the stone walls was rendered, in effect, as dangerous as a shell, by the heavy splinters it cast on every side; and I foresaw that the castle of Ruffo—mouldering with the lapse of years, and shaken by the storms and earthquakes of centuries—would soon sink before the overwhelming tempest of iron balls which Regnier hurled against it from every point: his gunners stopping only until their cannon became cool enough to renew the attack. We had expected great assistance from our flotilla of gun-boats; which, by keeping close in shore, might have cannonaded the enemy's position, and shelled their approaches; but a storm of wind and rain, which continued without cessation or lull from the time the attack began until it was ended, rendered an approach to Scylla impossible: the sea was dashing against it in mountains of misty foam, and on its walls of rock would have cast a line-of-battle ship like a cork.

The roar of the musketry and the perpetual booming of the adverse battery guns, produced a tremendous effect; awakening all the echoes of the fathomless caves of Scylla in the splintered cliffs and Mont Jaci; and after being tossed from peak to peak of the Milia Hills, with ten thousand reverberations all varying, the reports died away in the distant sky—only to be succeeded by others. The dense volumes of smoke that rose from the French batteries, were forced upwards and downwards by the stormy wind, and rolled away over land and sea, twisted into a thousand fantastic shapes; mingling on one side with the mist of the valleys, on the other with the foam of the ocean. The continual rolling of the French brass drums, the clamour of their artillerymen, and the wild hallooing of their infantry, added to the roar of the conflict above and that of the surge below, increased the effect of a scene which had as many beauties as terrors.

The night of the 14th was unusually dark and stormy; and on visiting Bianca in her dreary vault (which, by being below the basement of the keep, was the only safe place in the castle) she told me, with a pale cheek and faltering tongue, that often, of late, she had been disturbed by sounds rising from the earth below her. I endeavoured to laugh away her fears: but, on listening, I heard distinctly the peculiar noise of hammers and shovels; which convinced me that the French sappers were at work somewhere, and that the hollows of the rock had enabled them to penetrate far under the foundations of the castle. On examination, we found that for three nights they had been lodging a mine, during the noise and gloom of the storm, and had excavated two chambers; one under our principal bastion, the other under the keep, connecting them by a saucisson led through a gallery cut in the solid rock: the effect of such an explosion would have ended the siege at once, and blown to atoms the vault appropriated to Bianca and her servant. My mind shrank, with horror, from contemplating the frightful death she had so narrowly escaped. Next night the train would, undoubtedly, have been fired; and the inner chamber was pierced within three feet

of her bed! * * * * * *

Desiring Lascelles to prepare a counter-mine in case of our failure, I slipped out by the barriers, accompanied by Santugo and twelve volunteers. Favoured by the darkness of the night, the howling of the stormy wind, and dashing of the "angry surge," we stole safely to the scene of operations, and with charged bayonets fell upon a brigade of sappeurs—as the French style a party of eight private-artificers, under the command of a non-commissioned officer. They were all as merry as crickets, talking and laughing whilst working in their shirt sleeves.

They defended themselves bravely with their swords; but, as we possessed the mouth of the excavation, all retreat was cut off. The corporal, a strong athletic fellow, beat down Santugo's guard with a shovel, and striking him to the earth with the same homely weapon, broke through us, plunged down the rocks and escaped; but the whole of his party were bayoneted, and after utterly ruining and destroying the mine, we retreated within our gates without losing a man, or firing a shot. The exasperation of the proud Santugo at the rough knock down he received from the corporal is quite indescribable.

Next day the enemy pushed forward still closer to the walls: led by my old acquaintance De Bourmont, the 101st regiment had the temerity to advance round an angle of the rocks to the water's edge, for the purpose of destroying the sea staircase—our last, our only means of retreat. A cry burst from my soldiers: we brought every musket to bear upon that point, and depressed our cannon by wedges and hand-spikes: section after section of the enemy were swept into the sea, and they were therefore compelled to abandon the attempt; leaving half their number piled up on the rocky shore, killed or wounded, or drowned by falling from the narrow path, where many of the dead and dying were drenched and swept away every instant by the sea.

As the mist rolled up from the mountains, we saw the shattered remains of the regiment—a dark mass in grey great-coats, with the tops of their glazed caps and bayonet-blades glancing in the sun—retiring, double quick, beyond the eminence, which, to a certain extent, sheltered Regnier's infantry from our missiles: but their retreat was galled by them, and a line of prostrate bodies marked their route.

"Dundas, you shall see how I will unhorse that fellow," said the officer commanding our artillery, as he coolly adjusted the quoin under the breach of a long nine. He meant old Bourmont, who, like a brave fellow as he was, retreated in rear of his column, and was jogging along on his charger, whose drooping head, mulish ears, curved face, and shambling action, shewed the thorough French horse. Before I could speak, the match fell on the vent, the gun was fired, and the aim was true—fatally so.

"A splendid shot, and a jewel of a gun," exclaimed my friend, exulting in

his gunnery, as both horse and rider tumbled prone to the earth. "Will you try a shot, Dundas?"

"Thank you, no: you have killed the only man, amid all those ranks, I would have spared."

"By Jove! he is not settled yet," said Lascelles, with an air of disappointment, as the colonel disengaged himself from his fallen horse, and, heavily encumbered by his jack-boots, scrambled over the hill with as much expedition as his short legs and rotund form would permit. Both Oliver and the artillerist were chagrined at his escape; and yet, in their quiet moods, both were men who would not have killed a fly.

At that moment, so critical to Bourmont, I heard a splitting roar—the rock shook beneath us, and we knew not which way to look. Shaken and rent by the salvos of heavy shot which for four successive days had showered from the French batteries, an immense mass of wall, the curtain of our strongest bastion, rolled thundering to the earth; burying the poor artillery officer, Gascoigne, Sergeant Gask, a number of soldiers, and all our best cannon, under a mighty mountain of crumbled masonry. I was dismayed and grieved by this terrible catastrophe, which the French hailed with shouts of rapture and triumph: they redoubled their battering, with such effect on the shattered walls, that every time a ball struck, other masses gave way, burying soldiers and cannon beneath them. By sunset every gun was entombed under the prostrate walls, and we had only musketry to trust to, in case of an assault; which I had no doubt would be attempted that very night, as the breach was quite practicable, and the continual cannonade prevented us from repairing it by fascines or any other contrivance.

Some were now despairing, and all more or less dispirited: many an anxious glance was cast to Sicily, and to the sea which raged between us, as the lowering yellow sun sank behind the Neptunian hills, and the waves grew black and frothy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF SCYLLA—CONCLUSION.

Night descended upon Scylla, upon the dark Apennines and the tempestuous sea; and my mind became filled with anxiety: our means of defence were greatly diminished, our shelter ruined. The stormy state of the weather cut off, equally, all hope of succour or escape, and I anticipated with dread a surrender to General

Regnier, my personal enemy: by his orders Santugo had little mercy to expect from Napoleon: and I knew not to what indignities Bianca, as an Italian lady, might be subjected, if taken prisoner. Though crippled in means of resistance and reduced in number, my few brave fellows would have defended the ruined breach till the last of them perished; but I saw that, ultimately, Scylla must become the prize of the enemy, and only trusted that, during a lull of the storm, we might effect a retreat to Messina by the flotilla of Sicilian gun-boats.

How changed now was the aspect of the venerable Scylla, since that morning when the French batteries first opened on it! The massive Norman battlements and its beautiful hall had crumbled into rubbish, or sunk in ponderous masses beneath the heavy salvos: every window and loophole were beaten into hideous gaps, and yawning rents split the strong towers from rampart to foundation. The well was choked up by the falling stones; and want of water increased the miseries of sixty wounded men: whom, ultimately, we had to abandon to the care of the enemy. Every cannon was buried under the mighty piles of ruin beyond recovery—all, save one thirteen-inch mortar, which I ordered to be dragged to the summit of the breach; where it afterwards did good service.

Many of the miserable wounded were destroyed under the falling walls, or buried, more or less, at a time when we could not spare a hand to extricate them: their cries were piteous, and their agonies frightful. The dead lay heaped up behind breastwork and banquette, and from the castle gutters the red blood was dropping on the sea-beaten rocks below; where the sea mews and cormorants flapped their wings and screamed over the sweltering corpses of the 101st. The artillerymen were almost annihilated, and their platforms were drenched in gore.

Though exhausted by the toil they had endured, the brave little band of survivors manned the breach, and remained under arms during the whole of a most tempestuous night, with that quiet cheerfulness, mingled with stern determination, which are the principal characteristics of our unmatched soldiery in times of peril. Towards midnight, Santugo (whom, with Lascelles, I had left in charge of the breach) aroused me from a nap I was snatching, rolled up in my cloak and ensconced under the lee side of a parapet.

"Signor, we have had an alert," said he; "a movement is taking place amongst the enemy: they will be in the breach in five minutes."

I hurried to the mighty rent in our fortifications, and saw the long and perilous route which an escalade had to ascend—a steep and uncertain pathway, jagged with rocks and covered with a thousand cart-loads of loose stones, mortar, and rubbish: it looked like a waterfall as it vanished down the rocks into the gloom and obscurity below. The sky was intensely dark, and though the wind howled and the sea hissed and roared on the bluff headlands, the night seemed calm and still after the battle-din of the past day.

A white mass, like a rolling cloud, was moving softly towards the breach, and Santugo was puzzled to account for the strange uniform; but I knew in a moment that it was an attack *en chemise*, and that the stormers were clad each in a white shirt: a garb sometimes adopted by the French when engaged in a night assault. Here our vigilance got the better of them.

The chemise is a short shirt, either with or without sleeves, worn over the accoutrements, reaching only to the flap of the cartridge-box; and is a very useful and necessary precaution, to prevent the stormers from mistaking each other in the darkness, horror, and confusion of a night assault.

Our drum (we had only one now) beat, and a volley of musketry was poured upon the breach from every point that commanded it. The flashes glared forth over the ruined parapets above and the loopholes of the case-mates below, while our artillerymen, now that they had no longer cannon to work, stood by the howitzer to sweep the breach, and showered rockets, hand-grenades, and red and blue lights on the advancing column. The bursting of the former retarded and confused them, while the lurid or ghastly glare of the latter shewed us how to direct our fire: many fireballs alighted on the rocks, and blazed furiously, shedding over everything floods of alternate crimson and blue light, which had a magnificent yet horrible effect.

"Vive la gloire! Avancez! avancez, mes enfants!" cried the officer who led a wing of the French 62nd, and a wild cheer burst from his soldiers. It was the brave young Vicomte de Chataillion who headed "the Lost Children," and I saw with regret that he must fail.

"Forward the howitzer, to sweep the breach!" cried I to the artillerymen, who were every second falling down, killed or wounded, into the gap, before the fire of the French. "Forward—depress the muzzle, and stand clear of the recoil!"

Loaded with a bag containing a thousand musket-balls, the howitzer was run forward to the breach, over which its yawning muzzle was depressed and pointed.

"Fire!" cried the corporal. A little flame shot upward from the vent, a broad and vivid blaze flashed from the muzzle, and the report shook the ground beneath our feet. The effect of such an unusual and concentrated discharge of musket-shot on the advancing mass was awful and tremendous. By the light of the blazing fire-balls, we saw the sudden carnage in all its sanguinary horror: the dashing Chataillion, and more than two hundred rank and file, were swept away—literally *blown to pieces*—by the storm of leaden balls; and the remainder of his party retired on the main body in undisguised confusion and dismay.

"Well done, soldiers!" I exclaimed, with stern triumph, and feeling a wild glow of excitement only to be felt in such a place and at such a time. "Ready the handspikes—back with the mortar—load again, and cram her to the muzzle with

grape and tin-case shot, to sweep their column again!"

Again the brave French came headlong on, led now by jovial old De Bourmont; who, with the tricolor in one hand and his cocked hat in the other, scrambled up the loose stony breach in his clumsy jack-boots with an agility astonishing in one of his years and size. The gold cross of the Legion, the silver badges of Lodi, Arcola, of Marengo, and other scenes of honourable service—his bald head and silver hair—shone amid the glaring fire-balls and flashing musketry, as the desperate stormers swept on.

"Vive l'empereur! Avancez! Avancez!" cried he.

"Tué! tué!" yelled the forlorn band; and the whole of Regnier's division sent up the *cri des armes* from the hills to heaven. On came the infuriated assailants—on—on—rushing up the frightful path; but the deadly fire we rained upon them, and the fast falling corpses (every bullet killing double) soon kept them thoroughly in check.

Regardless of danger, I stood on the summit of the breach, that my soldiers might not want example: I felt the wind of the flying balls as they whistled past me; one carried away my right epaulette, a second broke the hilt of my sabre, and I lost a spur by a third.

"Soldiers, courage!" cried Santugo, who kept close by my side, and brandished his sabre with hot impatience; "courage, and they must again fly before you! Viva Ferdi—O, Madonna mia!" he suddenly ejaculated, in a gasping voice, as a ball struck him, and he sank at my feet. The soldiers at the howitzer dragged him back from the enemy's fire; and as they did so, a musket bullet dropped from his left shoulder: he caught it, all dripping as it was with his blood, and giving it to the corporal, exclaimed, like the soldier of Julian Estrado: "With *this* will I avenge myself! Signor Bombardiere, be so good as to load me a musket, and ram this bullet well home."

It was done in a twinkling; and while from sheer agony his frame quivered and his teeth were clenched like a vice, he levelled the piece over the wheel of the howitzer and shot poor De Bourmont; who fell dead and rolled to the bottom of the rocks. The concussion threw Santugo backwards: but he was again dragged out of the press by the gunners, and taken to a sheltered place, where Macnesia attended to his wound.

The instant Colonel Bourmont fell, another officer snatched the tricolor from the hand of the corpse as it rolled past, and supplied his place; and once more the storming party rushed up the steep ascent: regardless as before of falling men and rolling stones, of the shot showered on them from every point, and the hedge of keen bayonets bristling at the summit of the breach above them.

"Long live Joseph, King of Naples! Tué! Tué! Vive la France!" They were again within a few yards of us, when the stern order, "Forward with the how-

itzer!" rang above the din. The artillery put their hands and shoulders to the wheels, and urged it to the breach; which was again swept by an irresistible storm of bullets. Once more the carnage was beyond conception horrible; and with a yell of rage and dismay, the stormers retreated precipitately beyond the eminence which sheltered their infantry.

On their flying, the incessant discharge of fire-arms, which had rung for so many hours, died away for a time; and the rising sun revealed to us the carnage of the last night's conflict. The breach, the rocks, and approaches without the court, parapets and defences within, were covered with blood, and strewed with mangled bodies: but the ascent of the forlorn hope was terrible—no pencil could depict—no pen can describe it! The Frenchmen lay in piles of twenty and thirty; while scattered in every direction were seen the fragments of those who had perished by the discharges of the howitzer.

Taking advantage of the temporary cessation of hostilities, I ordered the breach to be repaired by piles of stones and rubbish, to form a breastwork; while another fatigue party cleared away some of the ruins which buried our cannon and platforms. The soldiers raised a faint cheer—one gun was extricated. Alas! a trunnion was knocked off by the falling stones, and our labour had been in vain—it was useless. On seeing how we were employed, the French drums once more beat the *pas de charge*, and the attack was renewed with greater fury, and on two distant points at once. The 1st, 62nd, and 101st again advanced to the breach, while a brigade of their second battalions, under General Milette, with ten or twelve field-pieces, assailed us on a point almost opposite; and the breaching battery, the field-brigade and mortars on the height, poured shot and shell upon us with remorseless determination. During the whole night and morning, the elemental war had continued with such unabated fury, that our gun-boats had been unable to leave the Sicilian coast; and I became convinced—but with sorrow and chagrin—that a capitulation was *inevitable*. I was about to order the gallant union to be hauled down, and the white flag of mercy hoisted: but before doing so, I conveyed a notice by telegraph to General Sherbrooke, in Sicily, acquainting him with my situation and intention.

"*Fight on—you will be rescued!*" was the answer we received. Almost immediately after the storm lulled a little, and we saw the stately *Electra* standing, with her sails crowded, towards Scylla; while the flotilla, from the Faro, spread their broad latteens to the stormy wind. Animated by the prospect, and filled with desperate courage, once more we manned the deadly breach. Before, we fought for honour and in the fulfilment of our duty; now, it was for life and liberty: and most effectually we kept the foe in check, until the gun-boats reached the sea staircase; where Captain Trollope, of the *Electra*, with the men-of-war launches, arrived to superintend the embarkation.

Aware of our intended escape, the enraged enemy did all in their power to frustrate it: the batteries, the brigades of field-pieces, and the battalions of infantry, poured their utmost fire upon the steep and narrow staircase (which was hewn out of the solid rock), on the ruined breach, the blood-stained ramparts, the corpse-heaped ditches, and the heaving boats: their drums rolled and their shouts rent the air, while their frantic gunners worked their cannon like madmen.

Now, indeed, came the moment of my greatest dread and anxiety; to which all the rest had been child's play. Bianca—the poor drooping girl, now half dead with terror and exhaustion—had to be brought forth, with her attendant, and conveyed to the boats: to the boats, good God! And at that terrible time, when the concentrated fire of such a number of cannon, mortars, and musketry was poured upon Scylla; and especially on that steep and slippery stair which she had to descend. The 1st Legere, nearly a thousand strong, swept it with their fire. My heart became quite unmanned—I trembled: but it was for her alone.

"Oliver!" I cried to Lascelles; "see Bianca—see Mrs. Dundas to the boats: it is a duty with which I can hardly trust myself—I have the breach to defend. Look sharp, man! yet in God's name, I implore you to be wary!"

He wrung my hand, sheathed his sword and withdrew. A minute afterwards, he emerged from the ruined arch of a bomb-proof; Bianca leaned on his arm, and a party of soldiers threw themselves in a dense circle around her for her protection.

"Claude, Claude!" she cried, in a despairing voice: but the faithful band hurried her down to the boats.

"Sound—close to the centre!" cried I to the bugle-boy; "call off the men from every point!"

As he obeyed me, tears fell fast from his eyes: his father, a soldier, lay dead in the breach close by. The bugle-blast was caught, in various cadence, by the wind; and could be barely heard above the noise of the conflict: the assembly, and the retreat, poured in rapid succession on the ear; and the last shrill note of the warning to retire *double-quick* had scarcely been given, ere the bugle flew from his grasp, and struck by a shot, the poor boy rolled at my feet, bleeding and beating the earth. Sixty men, the last remnant of my comrades, assembled from every point. Lloyd spiked the mortar, and the whole rushed helter-skelter down the steep staircase and sprang into the boats; which were pushed off as soon as they were filled.

I was the last to leave the fort, and as I turned to go,

"O, Captain Dundas, don't leave me, sir!" cried an imploring voice: it was the little bugler of the 62nd. A score of wounded men were crying the same thing: it was impossible to attend to them all: but snatching up the boy, I bore him off, and leaped into the launch of the *Electra*; in the stern sheets of which sat Bianca,

rolled up in my regimental cloak, to protect her from the chill morning air and damp sea atmosphere. She sobbed convulsively with terror and joy. Santugo was in one of the gun-boats; Macnesia sat beside him—Lloyd, Lascelles, and the soldiers, were crowded into other craft, and the whole gave a reckless cheer of defiance.

"Shove off!" cried the captain of the *Electra*, through his speaking trumpet; "give way lads—cheerily now!" and the oars dipped in the water, as the sails were trimmed, and the sterns were turned to Scylla.

The whole embarkation had been effected with matchless rapidity and order; notwithstanding that the cannon-shot, the bursting shells, the grenades, and musketry, lashed and tore the water into foam around us: the sea all the while, roaring and rolling in mighty mountains of froth against the cliffs; where it boiled as if in impotent wrath—recoiling from the slippery and frowning bluff, to run its waves in quick succession into the vast and gloomy Dragara: which has often been compared to the mouth of some wondrous monster essaying to engulf all ocean. One seaman was killed, and ten dangerously wounded: but these casualties were deemed trifling, under so heavy a fire; and when the sea was heaving and breaking beneath us, threatening every instant to swamp the boats, to dash them against each other, or on these inhospitable rocks, which nearly proved so fatal to the "sacred argo" of old.

With three hearty cheers we moved off. Scarcely had we done so, when the tricolor waved over Scylla, and the tall red plumes and glancing bayonets of the 101st appeared among the ruined walls; while a party of the 23rd rushed shouting down the staircase, with such impetuosity that many fell headlong into the seething sea.

We had done our duty. Though by force of numbers they had beaten us out of the last stronghold of Ferdinand IV. and the British in Calabria, they had gained only a pile of shapeless ruin; and at the dear price of many a gallant fellow. We were now on the open ocean—three minutes before, we were manning the frightful breach!

The storm died away, and the bright Ausonian sun arose in his glory: the shores of Sicily, studded with towns and castles, the green woods, the sparkling sandy beach, the bright Neptunian hills, and the red tower of the Lantern, were all radiant with light. The shore we had left, and the blood-stained Scylla, diminished in the distance, as our sailors bent to their flashing oars, and the bellying canvass swelled on the morning wind, which blew from the pine-clad Apennines.

"Courage, Bianca!" I exclaimed, and threw my arm around her; "we are beyond range even of cannon, now."

"Anima mia," she whispered, as she laid her head on my shoulder, "you are safe and I am happy!"

And thus ended MY CAMPAIGN IN THE CALABRIAS.

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