

STRIFE.

# STRIFE.

A Romance of Germany and Italy.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A WOMAN'S EXPERIENCES IN EUROPE," "ENGLAND'S  
LAST QUEEN," ETC.

"War not with necessity."

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J. FAGAN & SON,  
STEREOTYPERS, PHILAD'A.

### Dedication.

*Whatever merit this volume may be found to contain, is ascribed to the Memory of my husband, Ernest C. Wallace; and in association, to the Original Press Club of Philadelphia, many of whose names have been recorded in the Book of Life.*

*The Authoress.*

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## STRIFE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### IMMERGRÜN.

MY father's castle, Immergrün, was situated on the highest elevation of table-land running along the right bank of the river in the valley of the Elbe, a short distance below Dresden.

My great-great-grandfathers might be forgiven for their pride in this grand estate, whose possession with them dated several hundred years back. In their day, vine-hills, minsters, old towers, and wind-mills allured quixotic travellers to the neighborhood of Immergrün; but their descendants beheld with great satisfaction the gradual improvements in the valley, till villas, groves, and cultivated gardens nestled at their very feet, and they surveyed with the stately pride of "the oldest family" these modern improvements from their ancient castle.

A leafy avenue led by a rather circuitous and steep drive to the "visitors' grove," as it was called. There every traveller was sure to find his way. It was pleasant to see parties of excursionists resting under

the old trees, whose abundant foliage sheltered them from the noon glare, and to hear them eulogize the taste and hospitality of the De Stalbergs, who afforded them the charming view of the valley, and a bird's-eye view of the Saxon capital, whose hum and bustle reached their ears with a softened, alluring sound. The grove was not far from the castle, and I fancy the enthusiastic praises that sometimes fell on listening ears were shaped for that purpose. It was a harmless flattery, intended to reciprocate some of the genial influence the proprietors of Immergrün had exercised, out of pure hospitality to chance pleasure-seekers.

But, alas! dear reader, I have no such entertainment for you.

Snow covers the ivy that grows over the old castle-walls, the trees are mantled with snow, and the whole plain in the valley of the Elbe is one great blank. The steep hillsides on the opposite banks of the river, cut into narrow terraces for the vine-growers, present a dreary aspect.

Rows of blackened sticks standing upright, and the gnarled vines shrinking from their stiff support, remind one of some humans, as we see them among the peasantry at the time of the vintage, when they have abused the gifts of Dame Nature, and converted the luscious fruit of these same vines into stupefying draughts.

While we are regarding this wintry prospect from a hall window, a friend, who was not expected this morning, has come cautiously behind me, to form

his own opinions of my sanitary condition, as my father is out in his sleigh, notwithstanding the heavy fall of snow continues unabated.

"Well, little one, you have surveyed the prospect thoroughly, I think. What is your conclusion?" our friend asks.

"Not very flattering to my ancestors, doctor," I reply, as quietly.

"Poor ghosts! of what offence are they guilty toward your little ladyship?"

"Why should they call this place Immergrün? At this moment, not a twig or blade of green is to be seen, either on the castle walls, the trees, or anywhere in the landscape. *Evergreen*, indeed: ough! I do not wonder my father dislikes the place; it is cold and dreary enough."

"Not wishing to cross your humor, mademoiselle, and entertaining due respect for the opinion of the Baron de Stalberg, I should be happy to learn more of this matter; so come into the library. I have a word to say to you."

Dr. Léon is not to be crossed, dear reader, any more than myself; so we will go with him to the most inviting corner of the castle, as he requests.

The family physician and the pastor of the De Stalbergs were always the two cherished friends, selected with a regard to the same qualifications in either—piety and intelligence: one to administer to our weakness; the other to restrain our self-sufficiency—both acknowledging their dependence on a greater Physician.

It was scarcely fair to lay on my father's shoulders all the weight of gloom that had oppressed my spirits and prompted my answer to Dr. Léon.

My eyes had rested a long time on that shroud of snow that covered the graves of my mother and our good bishop, in the family cemetery at Immergrün.

There was only one window in the castle that looked into the cemetery. A church, built by my grandfather, and endowed with a pastorate, screened it from all the others.

Our bishop had "fallen asleep" only three months previous to the opening of my story, and, though but a girl of fourteen then, my incomplete character was already tinged with sombre shades, and I had my own hours of unuttered grief and lonely musing over that little cemetery.

My sister and brother shared with me the instructions of my father, who endeavored to inspire a healthier tone of mind than I had yet attained; for though only a listener in the presence of the august faculty in the learned school of preceptors, my mind, very sensitive and *a little wilful*, took occasional rambles over the fields of retrospection, and, gathering the withered flowers of hopes unrealized and promises unfulfilled, laid them away in secret nooks, to be cherished for what they *had been*.

Dr. Léon suspected the existence of this "cranny," and whenever he could get the faintest clew to the occasion of my retirement there, he poured in such a flood of sunshine on my morbid fancies that they

appeared like "rubbish," as he called them, and I deserted them for the more cheerful views of *real* life he presented.

Come into the library with us, dear reader. It is very cheerful there. A large fireplace is all ablaze with ruddy flames. On the square blue tiles of the chimney-place, under the high old-fashioned mantelpiece, are pictures painted in the Meissen porcelain manufactory, representing Immergrün under the benign influences of spring, summer, and autumn. There is one tile devoted to a winter view, but it is too flattering, and there is only one month in the year when it can be tolerated—the month of July.

My father is represented on one tile, as he appeared in his fifth year. He wears pink-striped pantaloons, with a waist not wider than two inches, fitting close up under his arms, little straps across the top of his fat arms, and a wealth of golden hair, the only covering of his fair neck and shoulders. He is looking very intently at something not included in the picture, and his dog, a woolly dog, seems to be wondering what his master is looking at, judging by the upturned head. The artist displayed a consciousness that *attitude*, and not expression, was his forte.

My sister Léoni, and her twin-brother Léon, occupy the oval centres of two contiguous tiles; I, the youngest, the next tile to my mother's. My mother has no apparent motive for being in the group, and I appear to have been at that juvenile age when one stays where one is put. I was put on the

tile in a sitting posture, like the figures on a Chinese fan, sans floor or furniture. By far the best delineations on the tiles are a series of heraldic designs, including the armorial ensigns of all the branches of the De Stalbergs.

They seem to have been a hopeful race, for every device insinuates a claim in some form to that golden attribute whose progeny, according to Sophocles, is imperishable fame.

*Spes — Espérance — Speranza!* The despair with which I opened this chapter betokens no especial transmission of this tri-formed motto as a talisman to one inheritor of the hopeful inscription. But I must not berate my ancestors, whose intentions were, no doubt, better than those embodiments of good purposes that are said to form a mosaic pavement for the lower world. I may confess, however, that these intentions last referred to are more obscure to my mind than some of the philosophy of the old fatalists, whose yearnings for the Truth, with their imperfect light, had more of the spirit of true religion than many of the revelations of our day, when men are more covetous of advantage, and whose spiritual excellence attains to no greater elevation than the realization of their great expectations.

The library is a dreamy old place, and tempts one to forget one's company manners. Make yourself at home, dear reader. The De Stalbergs accord that privilege to their guests as the highest compliment to their intelligence and good sense.

The curiosities in that cabinet with glass doors were all placed there by visitors to the ancestral and present occupants of the castle—from the Egyptian infant mummified three thousand years ago, to that arrow-head from the American hunting-grounds. So each article, besides its local worth, has a value by its association with some dear friend or honored guest.

The bronzes are all Pompeian copies; the marbles, Roman; and the stone and silver, Egyptian models. The engravings on the walls are German reformers, writers, kings, and electors, considered excellent portraits, and valuable to students of physiognomy. I became a physiognomist at a very early age, and Dr. Léon declared "those old pictures had more to do with my education in that branch of learning than Addison"—though a handsome edition of his works occupies a conspicuous corner in the lower row of English authors; and that "More would have considered me a fair illustration of *prosopolepsia*, or the taking a prejudice against a person for his looks, which he reckoned among the smaller vices in morality."

Dr. Léon often amused himself at my expense, but I was always compensated for the diversion my "odd notions and ways" afforded him, by a line and a precept proportioned to my capacity, and so gently offered, as a remedy for erring opinions, or suggestion for additional knowledge, that his raillery was taken for just what he intended—good-humored pleasantry, with never a suspicion of malice

in it. For a young lady of my wilful tendencies to retain the good opinion of a man so opposed to unreason as Dr. Léon, the reader must suspect, and I admit, claims on his generous consideration, independent of any individual qualifications.

Dr. Léon was, as his name indicates, of Spanish origin — one of a large family of sons whose sole inheritance was the nobility of blood that had run in the veins of maternal and paternal ancestry, without the wherewithal to furnish nutriment, and without which the best blood becomes thin, and cries out from every member of the ignoble body, and punishes neglect of its cries with the afflictions of Job, even from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. Alimentiveness did not predominate over other propensities in Dr. Léon's organization; but the faculty of self-esteem was largely developed, and his spirit of independence, dignity, and self-government prevented his rusting in indigent idleness while there was a wide field for the occupation of his *energies*, which are the truest tests of real nobility. A relative on the maternal side, whose guardianship concluded with the distribution of the pittance left by their father to eight sons, gave them, as a *bonus*, an excellent maxim, modified by a man noted for practising what he preached, into this terse sentence: "Eagles fly alone, and they are but sheep which always herd together."

Shrewd enough to take a good hint without quarrelling with its author or caring for his motive, the

youngest of the eight brothers, at the age of sixteen, began the study of medicine, passed the ordeal of an examination before the faculty of the University at Berlin, "walked the hospitals," received the highest commendations of his professors, and so fastened upon their approbation by his display of perseverance, tenacity of purpose, and capacity of endurance, united with qualities peculiarly adapted to the profession he had chosen — tenderness, charity, and benevolence — that his fame reached the Prussian Court, and, at the age of twenty-six, Dr. Léon was appointed the court physician to Frederick William III. A prince who "placed a Bible in the hands of every family in his realm," could not fail to recognize the merits of a man who attributed his success in life to his unalterable faith in the maxims of that guide. For the precept of Sir Philip Sidney was but a dilution of a proverb, and yet stimulating enough to induce one young eagle to leave the aerie deserted by the parent birds, and, finding his own sustenance, prove his right to a noble name.

Such was my father's friend, Dr. Léon. His estate adjoined Immergrün, and his time was divided between his own and my father's castle. His family consisted of a wife and one daughter. Madame was a bright, *bonny* lady; and Ethel, a fair-haired, beautiful girl of fourteen — just my age — was the crowning joy of the good doctor's life. Castle Mähren was the gift of the king to Dr. Léon. My father, the Baron de Stalberg, was attached to the court when Dr. Léon became the king's physician.

Immediately discerning the noble qualities of the new favorite, my father laid aside his usual reserve, and made friendly advances that led to mutual confidence, and were highly advantageous to Dr. Léon. The social character and rather retiring disposition of the king, inclined him to consult my father privately on many occasions when a more general council might have been held. Dr. Léon's opinions were often deferred to on certain questions where his economy induced wise adjustment; and the king admitted him to these private conferences on my father's ascribing to the doctor the credit of whatever happy issues were due to his advice. After eight years of uninterrupted intercourse with each other and their king on this enviable footing, my father was obliged to retire from the court to devote the most tender care to my mother's health, which threatened rapid decline. Dr. Léon having chosen for a wife a lady who, having no title to court favors, would not even share the privileges of her husband at court, gained a reluctant consent to his retirement, from the king, at the same time; and "by way of gratifying and rewarding both the friends," the king gave the estate adjoining my father's to the doctor, and furnished the castle "as a bridal gift to the new wife."

Several years were passed in travel through the East, and my mother's health improved wonderfully; but suddenly she insisted on returning home, and declared her conviction "that she would only live long enough to see Immergrün once more."

The doctor and Madame joined their entreaties to my father's in vain to dissuade her, and he finally yielded to my mother's longing desire to return to her home.

One week after she arrived at Immergrün, my mother suffered great mental anguish, and then all was blank for several months. A day came when she again recognized her home, husband, and children; but it was only the flickering of a light that had seemed almost gone, to cheer the watchers for a moment — then expire.

Death is not the greatest sorrow. My mother's grave was not so sad a place as her prison-house, and my father's *grief* was not so terrible to me as the *despair* I remembered only too well.

But I invited you to hear what the doctor had to say in the old library. And there he is, dear reader, seated on the very fauteuil I notice he always takes when he anticipates some manœuvring on my part. He thinks I cannot detect the anxiety brooding in that dear, benevolent face. I shall just let him entertain his opinion, and take a seat on the old tiger-rug before the fire — a winter luxury "especially for Minnette, the little one."

I will confess the snow-air has made me a little nervous, and a certain dream — I believe in dreams — haunts me; so if Dr. Léon suspects any concealment of a certain little "brownie," who is my favorite guest in the *cranny*, but uneasy at the doctor's menacing approach, I must avoid his challenge, or be defeated.

You understand, then, why I make the firelight my excuse, and turn my eyes partly away from his inquisitive glances.

"Minnette,"—there is a touch of sadness in his voice, but I must not permit it to affect me—"you said your father disliked Immergrün?"

"Yes, doctor; only this morning, when the snow began to fall, he declared the castle was cheerless, the weather execrable, and he had but one tie at Immergrün."

"I suspected as much," he answered, as if talking to himself. The doctor looked a shade paler, or perhaps it was the sickly hue of the phantasm that threw its white mystery over everything I looked at. There are three occasions when this influence is very perceptible to me: the full moon, shedding its intense white light from an unclouded sky full on the disk of earth that I inhabit; when at sea, the restless waters are churned into a creamy foam, and an impenetrable shroud of mist gathers around the shivering vessel, shutting from my view the sky, the only familiar sight in the vast solitude of mid-ocean; and when all the landscape is covered—as I saw it from the window of the library—with its symbolic pall of pure snow, nature's mute acknowledgment that so God can blot out His inevitable curse with heaven's new whiteness.

These phenomenal occurrences repeat their unnatural effect on me as often as they repeat themselves; and I am thrilled with the same consciousness always, of a strange sympathy with that white

mystery, that impalpable something, that eludes criticism.

If you have no prepossession for these "flimsy fancies," dear reader, you may find a more palpable reason for Dr. Léon's pallor than the reflex of my "white ideal," in his apprehensions of evil, in a physical sense, that threatened his dearest friend, my father.

## CHAPTER II.

### UNEXPECTED GUESTS.

HAVE any visitors been here in my absence, or have you been away from the castle?"

"No visitors have been here; but we have been away from the castle," I responded as if I were repeating the translation of a sentence in an exercise-book.

The doctor smiled, as if even this faint attempt at gayety gave him some encouragement, and I improved my opportunity to seize the vantage-ground, and perhaps evade the cross-questioning regarding myself that I felt was coming.

"We went to Dresden on Monday," I continued, with my liveliest tones, "and attended the opera in the evening — Der Freischütz."

"Very good," responded the doctor cheerily, "the most wholesome hobgoblin dose I could prescribe. The very best satire on transcendentalism that could be conveyed to a rational mind."

"But the music, doctor?"

"Capital, when you shut your eyes."

"On Tuesday we returned home, and Madame and Ethel dined with us."

"And they are off the *company list* at Immergrün?"

"I beg Madame's pardon, and —"

"Granted by proxy; and more readily, as neither one was included in my inquiry regarding visitors to the castle. And as I do not propose to weary you with my catechism, I have a leading question that will bring us nearer the purpose. Has the baron, your father, had any symptoms of nervousness or illness of any sort?"

"No, doctor, I have not heard him complain of any — oh, yes! I forgot. At dinner on Wednesday, just after Antonio removed the soup, which my father declared was insipid — though we all disagreed with him — he suddenly dropped his hands on his knees, and exclaimed, 'Oh! that dreadful feeling — my hands and arms are like lead!' Then he grew very pale; but Léon gave him a glass of water, and he took it in his own hand, and seemed well again the moment after he had swallowed the water."

"It was a rather sudden attack —"

"I scarcely think you would have pronounced it an attack, doctor; but a mere — what you call a symptom —"

"An adjunct; yes: there was no faintness, difficulty of respiration, articulation, or complaint of palpitation in the throat?"

"Only that momentary paralysis of the arms," I replied, confidently. "And there was no exciting cause, apparently; for but two letters came with the

mail, and they were both friendly invitations from the Baron von Seibert at Prague and the Cardinal Darrée at Rome."

"Well, run over the six days remaining, and tell me if anything occurred to excite or even interest your father more than usual."

I was fairly caught now, on a point I had quite forgotten in my exclusive entertainment of "the brownie."

Madame had purposely failed to remind the doctor that Léon and Léoni's birthday fête was at hand, when he was invited by the conference and urged by my father to superintend the purchase of furniture and upholstery for the new parsonage; and we tried to intercept everything calculated to remind my father of the date. But we were ourselves deceived by his calm preparation for it.

Madame had sent the presents which she knew the doctor would approve, in his name, and wishing to avoid anything that might mar the pleasure of my brother and sister in receiving their gifts, she permitted them to suppose they were selected before the doctor's departure, and promised herself a little amusement at the doctor's expense, when he received the thanks that were due to her own providing for his forgetfulness. How should I avoid betraying Madame's secret? I was saved all trouble on this score by the opening of the library door, and the appearance of the twin brother and sister in the room.

Delighted with the doctor's presence, so unexpected to them, they each seized a hand, and kissed

him on both cheeks, Léon saying: "A thousand thanks for the beautiful presents you sent for our fête, dear doctor."

There was a dilemma!

Ringling for Nannine, Léoni ordered the presents to be brought in, and remarked, as the case of their more costly gifts was laid on the table: "Doctor, you will have an opportunity now to prove your skill in pointing out characteristics in gifts."

"Yes, doctor," added Léon, "and you, no doubt, can guess the giver's name as readily: so there they are, at your service."

It was too absurd. I could not help laughing at the doctor's dismay. In that grand, simple nature there lurked none of "the civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits" of society, and at that moment the uneasy little gentleman was a fit subject for a comic sculptor. His well-braced shoulders had borne without bending under life's burdens; his compact little head, well posed, had no nonsensical developments under the comfortable layer of iron-gray hair that was brushed away from his expansive forehead. His beard and eyebrows matched the hair perfectly; and it was inexpressibly amusing to me to see those eyebrows rise almost to a vertical line with the wrinkles in his forehead, as he drew down his beard with the hand that hesitated to touch the traps for his conscience that my brother had so innocently laid.

I was conscious of his giving an appealing glance at my face, that called for interference, and I could, by simply pointing out his own presents, have re-

lieved all embarrassment; but it was a rare treat to see a lion-hearted man, who had no fear of anything in nature, coping with that imp of temptation, a fib! I knew who would win, so my amusement was harmless.

In his desperation, the doctor gave one more look at me, and caught the expression of mirth I could no longer restrain.

"Minnette, you rogue," he exclaimed, "you are mischievously enjoying my perplexity! Come here this moment, and, by way of atonement, offer my defence for total ignorance of the source of every one of these baubles!"

As fate would have it, Madame Léon and Ethel burst in upon us just at the moment of confession; and my sister's demure account of "the doctor's inexplicable gravity when she ordered the presents to be brought," threw Madame into convulsions of laughter that even the doctor could not resist.

When the presents were duly admired, the doctor requested Léoni to summon Antonio, and I was surprised to see that Madame became sad and disquieted.

Nannine, answering the bell, was questioned regarding my father, and it was evident, by her manner, there was something she avoided mentioning; and she hastily offered to "send Antonio," adding, "the baron went out an hour ago, in his sleigh."

"My dear Kate," said the doctor to Madame, "I wish to know the extent of the fainting-spell the baron had in his chamber on Wednesday night; and it is better not to conceal the real state of affairs

from the children. There is no occasion for great alarm," he said, as we exclaimed at this acknowledgment that our father had suffered without our knowing more of it than the momentary faintness we had witnessed at table.

"Antonio did wrong to conceal my father's illness from me," said Léoni, with mingled pain and displeasure.

"My dear Léoni, I must acquit Antonio of blame," replied Madame, hastily, and with her irresistibly persuasive tones. "The baron was merely faint after the mental struggle he endured against the returns of that violent grief he has brought into subjection, and that this fête-day naturally stirred again. Antonio called Nannine immediately, and your father, on recovering his consciousness, expressed the wish that you should not have the pleasure of your fête marred by any information of his weakness."

"It should be a matter of congratulation also," said Doctor Léon, "that your father could so promptly rally from an attack that five years ago would have prostrated him for weeks; and that he could even elude your tender watchfulness by appearing so cheerful—as Nannine reports him—on your fête-day. Now, to come to the point, I wish very much you would all join me in persuading the baron to leave Immergrün. He is leading a more secluded life than his naturally cheerful nature can bear without injury. Content to devote his time to your instruction and happiness, he only occasionally sees the outside world—then, never social-

ly; and he admits no one to Immergrün but the few friends who, like Madame and myself, are in entire sympathy with him. This must not be. In Italy he has many old court friends, with whom his present associations would be of the most cheerful character. And two years of entire change of scene, habits, climate, and intercourse would be of incalculable advantage to him, and better for you all. I will begin with the youngest. Come, Minnette, which do you prefer, orange-blossoms, or snow-flakes?"

"I should like it to be always summer," I replied; "and on sunny days my father is always more genial."

"I was sure of that vote. Now, Master Léon, your voice, if you please?"

"I am so extravagantly fond of travel that I could not offer an objection, unless it were to doubt the possibility of your effecting an arrangement to separate my father from yourself, doctor."

"It will require our joint philosophy, my boy, to avoid, on this occasion, the imputation of folly. And I must beg you will none of you aid your father in an attempt at a compromise. If we should accompany you the result would not be the same."

Ethel's fair ringlets and my dark curls were in ominous proximity at that moment, and something very like a lamentation was threatening, when Léoni said:

"Ah, doctor, if you are willing to trust my father away without your care, I am comforted by your confidence. But I shall sadly miss these very assurances of yours, that have power to quiet my fears."

It was too much. Ethel and I broke into a loud wail; and the doctor and my brother fled from the room, while Madame and Léoni shared their pocket-handkerchiefs with us. Neither Ethel nor myself were ever known to be provided for these occasions, so it was a mercy they were rare.

Madame conquered herself first, and then put our woes to rout by the most tempting descriptions of the pleasures in store for us, and a confidential promise that "she would manage to make the doctor relent, and bring herself and Ethel to surprise us in some of the most delightful places we visited."

When the doctor and Léon returned to the library, they had consulted with Antonio, and were convinced my father was not threatening any serious attack, and only required the enlivening influence that our proposed tour would afford.

"What have we here?" exclaimed Madame, looking curiously through a window that commanded a view of the carriage-entrance to the castle.

"It is the baron!" answered Ethel; "and he has two persons with him in the sleigh. They look for all the world like Santa Claus, so covered with snow!"

A small avalanche shot off the robe that my father held up, while Antonio assisted an old gentleman—a Rip Van Winkle specimen—out of the sleigh; and a tall, straight figure in woman's garb stepped out beside them, her keen black eyes throwing one glance at our window from under the rim of a half-high beaver, as she turned to follow my father into the castle.

### CHAPTER III.

#### NECESSITY.

I HAVE lively recollections of my father's favorite occupation in the old library at Immergrün—the translation of Sophocles and his cheerful contemporaries. There was a certain hour allotted to me, when I was but eight years old, which, with the tyrannical propensities of that juvenile period, I insisted on having entire. But sometimes the hour sounded before my father laid down his work; so my pertinacious head was sure to come between his eyes and the pages of his primitive acquaintances who flourished four hundred years before Christ. Their one-sided lanterns threw out for my father more pleasing rays than some of the most completely luminous emanations from patent lights of modern days; and I strongly suspect he would rather have taken his chances in the Shades where these heathen philosophers commune, than be doomed to the companionship of some of their opponents in the prospective millennium!

Sometimes I was induced to compromise with my father, and hear him read aloud certain interesting passages, that I was expected to understand as children generally comprehend fables and fairy

tales. But the result turned out differently, and, like many an older listener, I turned the problems over in my mind till I formed my own theory, and was prepared to give independent evidence of some *remarkable inferences*—at least original.

My *bonne*, Nannine, had the principal benefit of my speculations on Greek philosophy; and sometimes she regarded me as a sort of human strait-jacket for the crazy wits of a superannuated grand-lama, who had mistaken his way to Immergrün on the occasion of the latest transmigration. Once I solemnly remonstrated with her for saying "there was no necessity" for a certain request of mine to be attended to. I insisted that the word necessity must not be used carelessly; and that my father said "it was taking a great liberty, and might offend an awful goddess." Supposing herself guilty of the sin of levity against some canonized female in the Roman Catholic Calendar, as I had never in my Protestant arguments so much as hinted at female deities, Nannine hastily made the sign of the cross, to avert the penalty of her *sin of unconsciousness*, and asked, "What *saint* do you mean? the *heathen* call them goddesses."

In Nannine's mind the human race was divided into three classes: Roman Catholics, heretics or intelligent Protestants, heathen or ignorant Protestants. Without the slightest idea that the origin of Nannine's faith in minor saints was by sleight of hand, a conversion of the apotheosis of the Greeks and ancient Romans into canonization by the modern

Romans, I went on lucidly exposing my own ignorance; just as many a one has done in my hearing, without the plea of childhood for an excuse.

If Nannine ever had any Protestant proclivities, they were restrained from that date.

"My father says," I began, by way of confirming the truth of my argument — of course I confirmed Nannine's prejudice — "that these wise Greeks declared, 'We are subject to kings, kings to the gods, and God to necessity.'" Nannine's eyes grew very large, and then a sort of film gathered over them, as if all the mist I had been trying to clear from her benighted vision had only concentrated itself and dimmed her orbs effectually.

Perhaps her expression at that moment suggested more of the Athenian faith.

"Necessity is a blind goddess," I said, "and has not much intelligence, and all iron nails, wedges, anchors, and melted lead are emblems of her inflexible severity."

But I must not continue to tell how I perverted unconsciously the truths conveyed in those sublime symbolical mysteries of the impious but grand old Greeks. I will add six years to the mental process by which my father brought me to more just and clearer views of the rich thought contained in his favorite tragedies, and tell you, indulgent reader, how I recalled passages of the *Ædipus Coloneus*, where the blind father is led by his daughter to the sacred groves, when I found my father's strange guests comfortably installed in apartments on the sunny

side of the castle, their wet garments exchanged for more comfortable and becoming robes furnished from the wardrobe of our hospitable homestead. The door of their sitting-room was partly open as I passed to my room on the same floor, and I could view their satisfaction and quiet delight with the pleasant shelter offered them from a tempest of snow and sleet, without being an obstacle to their enjoyment.

There was a cheerful regard for the comfort of the old man, that made the expression of the large pale-featured woman, younger by thirty years at least than her companion, almost beautiful, in their warm, generous glow of kindness. I had never imagined Antigone, the model of perfect womanhood, so largely moulded as this type of a rare physical growth; but something inexpressibly gentle in Mademoiselle Beaumont's manner of addressing and approaching her father, reminded me at once of the lines of the *Ædipus Coloneus* devoted to the exquisite description of the daughter's first view of Athens, and her fearless guidance of her blind father within the forbidden circle of the sacred oracles. When the chorus, apparently blind to the identity of *Ædipus*, as his goddess Necessity, querulously calls out, "A vagrant, some vagrant is the old man, and not a native, or he would never have trespassed on the untrodden plantation of these immitigable virgins, whom we tremble to mention, and pass by without a glance, without a sound, without a word,

uttering the silent language of reverential thought alone."

After this warning Ædipus speaks: "Do thou now, my child, lead me, that we may at once, adopting a pious course, *be partly speakers, partly listeners, and not war with necessity.*"

Antigone submissively replies, "My father, this is my duty: do thou quietly adjust thy step by my step."

So I imagined these strangers were communing when my father overtook them on the banks of the Elbe, struggling against the tempestuous winds, with the sleet driving in their faces, and causing them to stagger blindly on the very edge of the river-bank, where every step was perilous in the treacherous snow-drifts.

"They were avoiding Immergrün as forbidden ground," said my father, "and mistook our modest chapel for a Catholic church, and the old castle for a convent. When I urged them—seeing the old man becoming exhausted—to enter the sleigh and let me bring them to Immergrün till the storm was past, the daughter replied, in words as quaint as the fashion of her garments:

"If the hospitable offer holds good on confession that we are Protestants, we will gladly accept it."

"And what are they thinking to accomplish by travelling afoot in such inclement weather?" asked the doctor.

"That they will answer for themselves," replied my father, "when they are sufficiently rested. I promise myself a treat in hearing the history of this

old man, who has outlived his generation, and seems but a solitary relic of the past."

"I should greatly prefer a short discussion on the prospects of certain friends of mine, for a *future* result of certain *plans* of mine," said the doctor, dryly.

A quick glance of surprise and inquiry from my father was met by one of perfect indifference to the scrutiny on the doctor's part, and finding no assurance of any implied knowledge of his recent illness in the masked countenance, my father smiled, and continued:

"Well, you may have all the time between now and dinner to exhibit the plans for your air-castles, and I claim your attention for my guests after that. They are Moravians, and, being Cubans of more than ordinary cultivation, speak the purest Castilian dialect."

If there was anything that Dr. Léon cherished with peculiar care, it was his fondness for his Spanish tongue, and already my father, Madame, Ethel, my brother, sister, and myself had acquired considerable knowledge of Spanish through the doctor's energetic "professorship."

## CHAPTER IV.

### A DREAM.

WHEN my father and the doctor retired to the smoking-room, and Ethel was occupied with Léon and my sister in examining some coins, I seized the opportunity to communicate a *dream* to Madame. Madame was thoroughly French, and laughingly called me "a little beclouded German dreamer, who would never be able to frighten *her* with the feverish visions of a fanciful imagination."

But I think on this occasion I surprised her into a momentary forgetfulness of her boasted resolution. It is but fair that I tell the whole truth of the matter, and let the reader judge for himself.

I decoyed Madame into my boudoir with a promise that she should hear how my father discovered the secret preparations for the fête.

Threatening to withhold my story if Madame affected amazement at the confused mass of "girl-rubbish"—materials for articles being *made up* for a fair—scattered over floor and furniture of my sanctum, Madame chose to ignore the disorder, and seated herself in an easy-chair by the grate fire. I took one opposite, and we placed our feet on the

rounds of the fender—a feminine practice—and I began:

"Soon after you left with Ethie, on Wednesday evening, sister and Léon went to bed, my father retired to his room, and I came to this room, where Nannine was ordering and dusting the furniture, previous to my arranging the table for the presents.

"Nannine spread a crimson cover on the octagon table, festooned it with some hot-house vines, and then, with my permission, brought in Frederike, the pastry-cook, who placed the handsomely iced cake in the centre of the table."

"The lettering and those figures in the date would do credit to the most proficient *chef*," Madame asserted.

"Fritz, the gardener," I continued, "brought those pretty vases filled with the precious flowers I have scarcely ventured even to admire the last three weeks. Edrina, the housemaid, appeared in the doorway, smiling and courtesying, with a pair of brush-racks which her brother carved and polished as bright as he makes the glossy coat of Ebony, my black pony. Edrina's pride in the handiwork of her brother was equal to her pleasure in presenting the gifts.

" 'Please, mademoiselle,' she said, 'if the racks are pretty enough—Hans carved them.'"

"Frau Herrmann, the housekeeper, produced a pair of fire-screens painted by Karl, her son, who copies for the Meissen factory, and has a remarkable genius for his art."

Madame smiled as if she doubted whether my praise was deserved. Her incredulity was changed to surprise when I placed one of the screens in her hands.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "this was done by that poor boy with a spinal affection. Is he Frau Herrmann's son? I would know his work anywhere."

"He is indeed her son," I replied; "and I shall not fail to tell him you recognized his work so pleasantly. It will afford one solace for many thankless tasks." Poor boy! how painfully sensitive he is regarding his deformity. One day last week I entered the long room, where I love to go in without disturbing that absorbed interest each artist has in his work — some sketching little perspective views from their windows overlooking the valley, and others copying, with marvellous accuracy, some of the most difficult designs of the masters. Karl did not perceive my presence till I had stood almost beside him several minutes. I spoke to him, and he started and blushed, with a shrinking gesture, as if guilty of crime in permitting his deformed little figure to be seen.

"'Karl,' I said, 'you are making a beautiful copy of the San Sisto Madonna; it is more truthful in expression than any I find elsewhere.'

"'Ah! Mademoiselle de Stalberg,' he replied, 'I know your kind motive, but you overrate my modest work.'

"'No, Karl; indeed I find in no other copies that

trance of heavenly joy in the Madonna's expression, with the slightest shade of prophetic musing, that one must look for the second time to be sure his own vision is not clouded. How can you transfer that gleam of Raphael's genius without something of the same inspiration that originated it?'

"'Mademoiselle, do I really succeed in pleasing you so well? Then let me confess my secret. I never see the holy satisfaction in the eyes of Raphael's Madonna, but I think how happy the holy mother was in the assurance that the divine beauty of the Son could never become changed to a painful deformity like mine.'

"'Karl,' I said, reprovingly, 'the genius that consoles your hours of pain would be dearly exchanged for a graceful casket without the gift.'

"'Thanks, mademoiselle; I will cherish the recollection of that reproof,' and a tremor of repressed pleasure forced the white thin hands to suspend their work. Yesterday I sent a copy of my mother's miniature likeness for him to paint; and Frau Herrmann said when she gave it to him with the message he burst into tears. As he is to paint it at his leisure, the copy may not be finished before we leave Immergrün. Will you receive it, Madame? My father has already paid for the work."

"How the peasantry will miss your father, even as far as Meissen!" said Madame, with more emotion than she often betrayed. "My dear Minnette, each precept of your father is well worth recording; it is verified by his own noble conduct."

When I had responded to this praise of my almost idolized parent, I came back to my description of the arrangements for the fête, and it was Madame who ran away from it the next time.

"Nannine and Antonio," I continued, "gave me a surprise when they brought the very things we had been wishing for: those sleeping Cupids in bronze for Léoni, and the head of the young Augustus in marble, for Leon."

"Minnette," said Madame, with a serious air, her countenance clouding, "it is unfortunate that Antonio is so confirmed a Papist; Nannine is as faithful to her Catholic creed, but she is not a narrow tool of the Pope, as Antonio can be. I almost regret the doctor brought him from Rome; for if Nannine had been left to us without Antonio's influence, she might have been a good Protestant by this time."

"Antonio is scrupulously exact in the performance of every duty my father appoints," I remarked.

"No doubt," replied Madame; "and he would as scrupulously betray him to the Papal Government, should his confessor so order him. But your father is wise enough to protect himself; and of course he would not be induced to travel without Antonio."

Madame's suggestion was not a cheerful one, you will admit, dear reader.

Nannine had been my mother's maid five years, when Dr. Léon brought Antonio from Rome to assist him with his professional correspondence and numerous duties to the sick in the parish. After my mother's death, Antonio was the night-watcher

at my father's bedside through all the sleepless nights that followed his nervous prostration; and finally, with characteristic generosity, the doctor begged my father to retain Antonio altogether, as his services proved indispensable.

Nannine's bright eyes and rosy cheeks were not lost on Antonio, and she was no less pleased with the courteous attentions of one her superior in grade, though not in education. My mother had taken great pains to instruct Nannine in all knowledge suitable to her station, and she was equal in refinement to many who claim superior advantages.

The marriage contract was displeasing to myself only; for I was but five years old then, and fancied myself entitled to sole and entire possession of "my Nannine."

However, Antonio was careful not to irritate my jealousy, and finally won me over completely; so I dubbed him with the distinguished title of "Nannine's Antonio."

It was hard to believe that, after nine years' service, such a servant could be dangerous to his master's interests.

"It will do no harm to suggest a little precaution to the baron; and I will say to him," continued Madame, "that his very dignity of demeanor and reticence of manner will make him the object of jealous suspicion to the spies of the Papal Government. Always guard your expressions in Italy before either Nannine or Antonio, and you will spare them

the pain of repeating anything dangerous at the confessional."

"Then it is the system that is base!" I exclaimed. "And our danger rests more with the Government than our poor servants, who would never treacherously invent cause for complaint against us."

Madame assented, and the uncomfortable subject was dropped for the fête again.

"After duly examining the splendid brooch and studs you sent," I proceeded, "and the doctor's bracelet and guard-chain —"

"Poor, dear, abused man!" interrupted Madame, and then laughed again at the recollection of his perturbation.

"I placed them on the table; and after placing all the congratulatory notes in Ethel's beautiful portfolio, I concluded the list with my bracelet and guard-chain. I had dismissed Nannine, and sat down to indulge in a little sentiment on my own account, when the door opened, and in walked my father.

"I missed you from your room, my child, where I went to kiss Léoni, on the eve of her birthday, or I might not have enjoyed your preparations for the fête, which you have concealed from me!" he said, and looked so sadly reproachful I could not refrain from tears.

"You intended it for the best," he said, caressingly taking my hand. "But, my daughter, to be treated as one too weak to bear the trials for which, as I am not responsible, I can view with some degree of

fortitude and philosophy even, pains me more than I can express. It is mistaken kindness, my dear Minnette. After this, come to me with full confidence on every subject relating to our sweet Spirit. I feel she is always with us; and if these memorial days are fraught with sadness, I will at least enjoy the consciousness that I am not deprived of my children's confidence. That is the greatest happiness left me."

"Imagine my surprise when he gave me those three elegant medallions, containing his own and my mother's likenesses. And we never suspected that my father even remembered the day."

Madame took the medallion I detached from my necklace, and turned away from me to examine it by the window.

I had not observed the fire sinking to a few dull embers; and I rang for Antonio, as Madame retreated to the lounge, without a comment, after looking intently at my mother's picture.

The lights were brought by Nannine, who said "Antonio had been sent with a prescription to the apothecary, for Frau Hermann's son, Karl, who was suffering from a cold. The baron had directed Antonio to wait for the mixture, and take it to Karl, so he could not be at home in time to wait at dinner."

"That has been a preconcerted plan of your father and the doctor," said Madame, coming out of her corner, as Nannine left the room with a cheery fire

blazing from fresh pine-logs, and lights burning in the brackets over the mantel.

"Yes," I replied; "and now I shall barely have time before dinner to relate my dream."

That dream was stranger than fiction. A wiser head than mine suggests, "What reason cannot explain, it cannot have dictated"—placing such *visions* under the head of revelation. And so far as I am concerned, that dream remains there to this day.

"After a cheerful talk about the plans for the fête," I continued, "I accompanied my father as far as the door of my chamber, and had no idea he felt ill when he bade me 'good night!' After I was undressed, and Nannine had left me, I sat down to toast my feet at the fire, and, I suppose, fell asleep. I seemed to be wandering through long halls, and passing open doors of innumerable apartments, that offered no attraction to me, though I was worn out with fatigue. Finally, I entered one room, even more desolate than all the others. Sinking on the cold stone floor, I cried out in my exhaustion, 'Oh, my mother; I am alone in my grief, shut out from all human sympathy!'

"The echoes of my own despair were thrown back by the relentless walls, and I bowed my head with anguish at my loneliness.

"A strange rustling sound over my head startled me. I looked up, and saw a pale misty cloud pervading the room, and a luminous spot near the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to have come. An outline of a scroll first appeared, then a hand be-

came plainly visible, holding the scroll; and as the scroll fell open with a distinct rustling sound, my mother's face appeared, looking at me with a mournful tenderness, and she seemed to sigh rather than utter the sentence, 'My child, my child, why are you so impatient?' Then gradually fading, the bright spot was a blank again, and I found myself standing, the scroll at my feet. I picked it up hastily, and found outlined sketches of forms I recognized as my father's, sister's, brother's; and, Madame, if you can credit my word, two forms that corresponded with those of the old man and his daughter, now our guests."

"Was that all your dream?" she asked.

"No; the strangest part to me is to come," I answered, and continued with more earnestness, as I detected an interest Madame could not conceal.

"I had hardly asked myself what those outlines indicated, when on one side of the room the mist spread itself as one would stretch a canvas sheet for a magic lantern, and on it the forms were duplicated, and gradually became full, life-size figures: then their vestments appeared to float around them, and finally the figures became bright ethereal forms, invested with spirit-life, and yet images unmistakable of the earthly ones outlined on my scroll.

"Till this is accomplished, *necessity* forbids you to rest."

"The voice was my mother's again. I saw her face for an instant in the same place, over my head, and when my tearful eyes fell from the blank that

came between her gaze and mine, the forms and mist had all disappeared, and I started from my chair with a cry of alarm.

"Léoni was dreadfully startled by my cry, but less bewildered than I, though she had been disturbed from a sound sleep. She questioned me so closely, it was strange I did not tell her the dream. But somehow I felt I had no right to repeat it, any more than I ought to reveal the actual secrets of one party that had been confided to me, to another whom that secret concerned. Finding I could not or would not recall my dream, Léoni insisted on my taking a soothing draught, and would not go to bed again till I was safe in mine. But long after she thought I slept, my mind was busy with every detail of that vivid dream."

"Your conversation with your father, and the excitement of the preparation for the fête made you nervous," said Madame, trying to assume a deprecating tone.

"How do you account for the identity of this old man and his daughter?" I asked.

"Who can account for the freaks of any one's imagination?" Madame retorted, as dinner was announced.

## CHAPTER V.

FATHER BEAUMONT.

MADAME and I were the last to enter the library, where we usually assembled before dinner was announced.

Our guests were greatly amused at Léon's account of the blunders he had made in assorting some coins he had collected for chronological arrangement. After Madame's introduction to "Mademoiselle Beaumont" and "Father Beaumont," I was presented by my father as "My little one, Minnette."

My dream was so fearfully vivid as I approached Father Beaumont, that I trembled when his bony hand closed over mine, and his aged eyes fixed on my face an eager, inquiring look. My feeling was akin to that which causes me, to this day, a shrinking sensation when some people assume that vanishing expression that seems to promise a startling revelation when they have receded to a sufficiently impressive point.

But Father Beaumont no doubt detected my nervousness, and his grave expression instantly changed to a pleasant smile. His regard had been only that intense earnestness with which age, with its hand

already on the veil, looks back at youth, still entertaining the bright promises of life.

The blessing that I usually received with silent awe when it was pronounced by aged bishops who visited my father, affected me differently when Father Beaumont, still holding my hand, said, solemnly: "The Lord be with thee daughter!" I involuntarily responded, "And with thy spirit."

Mademoiselle Beaumont drew my hand in her arm, leaving my father to escort Father Beaumont, and Léon to lead Ethel to the dining-hall, and with as little ceremony we took our places at table.

The conversation was general on topics of local interest, till after the dessert; and I was recalled from a contemplation of Father Beaumont's gray head, that had sent my wits on a roving expedition to the haunts of the Parcae, where the three fatal ladies performed all the characters attributed to them, appearing principally as "three old women with large locks of white wool, and daffodils on their heads," according to my last lesson in mythology, when I was reminded of my mundane existence by Nannine saying, in an undertone:

"Mademoiselle, please take a goblet of cream in place of coffee, this evening."

I should have assented to poison rather than prolong the settlement of the question at that moment and attract attention to my self-conscious stupidity and ill manners. But when Father Beaumont began to sip at his coffee, and remarked: "This 'Saxon Switzerland' reminds me of a place called the 'Swit-

zerland of America,' that I visited on my way from the West Indies," I repented my decision.

Father Beaumont was ready to talk, and a cup of coffee adds so much to the pleasure of a chatty old gentleman's communications.

Little did I dream how near to us all were "The Three Sisters," weaving in with that old man's story the threads of our own destiny.

There was an unearthly attraction, I can recall now, in Father Beaumont. It was not the awe nor the solemnity that are inseparable from honorable old age. It was not only the calm confidence of ripened judgment, with its graceful charities clustered around it—not the silvery voice made more touching by its faint tremor: it was something added to all these—something more than all these. That light in the eye, that holy light that shines in the countenances of the dear ones we have seen pallid and haggard with pain, and suddenly there is no more pain—but the shadows have not yet closed around them; even death is awed for a time by their mysterious beauty. We have all witnessed this first unconscious greeting of the soul to the invisible messenger of rest; the unearthly light radiating from their spiritual countenances. And the memory of their peaceful entrance into the light whose reflection almost dazzled our mortal eyes, serves to soften our grief when they have faded from our sight. Yes, for have we not seen our loved ones glorified?

I caught that expression in Father Beaumont's face; but I had never seen death, or witnessed its

approach; and I thought merely as the others did, who listened to his story, that the associations of the past were lending their gentle harmonies as accompaniments to the simple story of his childhood, and the recollections of a father whom he had revered.

I regret, for the reader's sake, that in the translation, the poetic fervor, that the Spanish language supplied, must be lost.

#### FATHER BEAUMONT'S STORY.

I was born in the year 1762. I am eighty-four years of age.

My father, General Beaumont, was an officer in the household of the King of Poland, Stanislaus, when, after the vicissitudes of a brief reign as king, he retired to the Duchy of Lorraine, and consoled himself for past failures in what had seemed to him worthy attempts, by ruling the duchies of Lorraine and Bar as a righteous prince.

Nancy, the capital of Lorraine, was my native city. I have no recollection of its appearance when I was a boy, nor of the King Stanislaus, who died when I was but four years old.

Since my return to Europe in the past months, I have visited the chateau my father occupied, and was pleased to find in every part of it the tokens of his veneration for the prince he served. Portraits, busts, and even a life-size statue of the king, were in my father's chateau, its most conspicuous ornaments.

My father assisted with his excellent judgment in the architectural plans for many of the public buildings with which Stanislaus embellished Nancy; and it was of him that the attachment of the king became historical, though I believe his name has never been mentioned in the incident relating to my father only.

It came to the king's knowledge that General Beaumont, in distributing orders for certain moneys intrusted to him for charitable purposes, had exceeded his allowance, and, rather than disappoint the poor people who applied for their portions after the king's limit had been reached, he supplied the deficiency out of his own purse, though he suffered by it considerable inconvenience. It is not often the good deeds of subjects are reported to their rulers, but my father was fortunate in having several friends who repeated their admiration of his honorable and unselfish conduct in the presence of Stanislaus.

Not seeming to notice their remarks, his majesty continued sketching a draught for a new hospital at Lunéville. When it was completed, he said:

"Summon General Beaumont to our presence."

My father came, and the sketch was submitted to his approval. He suggested several changes.

"On what ground?" asked the king.

"By a slight additional expense your majesty can make an institution that would satisfy the most extravagant expectations, and avoid the imputation of sparingness, where your majesty is, in reality, extremely liberal, and should leave no room for cavillers."

"Bring me the treasurer," said the king, and hastily wrote three orders, which he gave to the treasurer, with these directions:

"That," said he, laying down the first, "is an appropriation for the hospital at Lunéville, subject to General Beaumont's orders or drafts.

"That," giving him the second, "is an order on the king's private treasury for the sum of the deficit in the last alms-deed of the king."

My father was overwhelmed with shame at this rebuke, as he thought it, when the king continued, laying the third order on the treasurer's table:

"That is the sum to be paid annually to General Beaumont from the king's treasury."

"In what quality shall I mark him, your majesty?" said the treasurer.

"*As my friend*," answered the monarch.

While Father Beaumont improved this period to refresh himself with sips of coffee, I filled up the pause in secret self-congratulation on a better appreciation of certain stubborn facts that appeared dubious no longer, as they were stated in my last lesson in chronology:

"How Adam might have conversed with Methuselah about two hundred and fifty years, and he, about six hundred years with Noah, and one hundred years with Shem; and how Shem lived long enough before the flood to converse one hundred and fifty years with Abraham!"

After a sufficient pause, Father Beaumont contin-

ued the story that, as I must again warn the reader, was the warp and woof of that complete fabrication in which the fatal ladies already alluded to were weaving the designs illustrated in the story of every listener to Father Beaumont, not excepting Nannine.

Stanislaus died in 1766, and my father, General Beaumont, had the affliction, immediately after this loss, to be bereft of his wife's companionship. At my mother's death I was but four, and my brother Emil eight years of age.

My father had only one friend to advise with when the means to assist the crowds who declared themselves friends were struck from his hands by the blow that deprived him of king and wife.

How far *this* friend was influenced by disinterested motives time will show, as it proves all other professions. The Abbé de l'Étoile offered my father an important position as financier for a company at Martinico, in the West India Islands, trading with France.

Emil and myself were placed in the Monastery of St. Jerome, under the guardianship of the abbé, whose brother, the Count de l'Étoile, bore the oldest hereditary title in the kingdom of Lorraine.

My father served the company by which he was employed as faithfully as he had served his king; but with more prudence, he invested privately his own profits in an estate at Havana, and had scarcely paid his last instalment that secured his clear ownership, when it was discovered that the company he

served was controlled by the Jesuits — the abbé holding a special partnership — and the society falling under the disgrace of the crown, the company was financially ruined! That was in 1766. I was fourteen, Emil eighteen. My father requested the abbé to send us to America to be with him in Havana; but Emil, completely influenced by the abbé, declared he had a vocation for the monastic life, and I was sent alone with the abbé's secretary to consult with the American ambassador, then at the Court of Versailles. He, Dr. Franklin, recommended me to the care of Count Pulawski, who was about to sail for America, to join in the struggle just beginning between the colonists and Great Britain.

Owing to severe storms and adverse winds, our voyage was tedious; and I realized none of the pleasures of a sea-voyage, so delightfully described by poets and musicians. When we arrived at New York, my father had come all the way from Havana to meet me, and it seemed, in the joy of that reunion, as if the world had no more happiness to offer me.

Pausing to recover his composure, Father Beaumont was prohibited, by Dr. Léon, from a continuation of his story, till he had rested a half-hour at least.

In the mean time we adjourned to the library.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SPERANZA.

MADemoiselle BEAUMONT was not handsome. Her features were not beautiful, her complexion not fair. And yet there was a peculiar sweetness of expression, a sincerity in her direct look, when your eye met hers, that instantly won your esteem and confidence. Her figure was tall, but well balanced, and her carriage in walking was by no means awkward.

Taking my hand in hers as we arose from the table the evening of her arrival, she completely concealed my thin hand in her solid palm, smiling as she closed her fingers one by one over mine. Then looking in my face, her countenance became almost sad, and she inquired with a womanly tenderness, "Have you been ill, recently?"

"Oh, no! Mademoiselle Beaumont," I replied; "I am never really ill!"

"You are very slight and pale," she replied; "and I am afraid these long curls are taking more than their share of your strength."

"My sister and Dr. Léon have been at variance on that question for some time," I replied; "and I am really indifferent as to their decision."

"Your sister is averse to the sacrifice of them, no doubt, but it might be rewarded by the acquisition of a few roses to these pale cheeks; and the nutriment they are stealing might repair some of the waste of this thin little body."

"Minnette never was strong in appearance as this great Saxon girl of mine," interrupted Dr. Léon, drawing Ethel's long golden hair through his fingers. "But the Baron de Stalberg has decided on a tour of a year or two in Italy, and I hope for wonderful results from that journey."

"I trust we shall meet there," Mademoiselle hastily replied; then pausing, her expression became anxious almost, as she continued: "But our way lies apart from the highways where travellers are drawn by the attractions of art. Our mission is to the wilds usually dreaded and avoided by pleasure-seekers. And only imperative duty would incline any one to go through the passes of the Abruzzi, infested by brigands and lawless gypsies."

Ethel's eyes had grown larger with every word Mademoiselle Beaumont uttered, and we were quite prepared for the exclamation that followed, as the doctor left the room:

"Oh, Minnette, imagine how delightful it must be to see those strange people in their own haunts! And pray, Mademoiselle Beaumont, what sort of a charm do you carry to prevent their injuring you?"

We laughed heartily at Ethel's eager interest in the gypsies, and at what we supposed her absurd question. But we became suddenly grave when

Mademoiselle Beaumont actually produced a talisman!

"This little medal is not invested with any spell of necromantic art, but it was left by my uncle at the Monastery of St. Jerome, for us to use as a passport through the wilds of the Abruzzi."

The medal was of gold, not worn with handling, but dull from age. On one side it bore the inscription of a lighted torch, the flame held up; on the other side was the simple word, *Speranza!*

"Why, Minnette," exclaimed Léon, "see, this medal is inscribed with one of the forms of our motto!"

My father had accompanied Father Beaumont to his sitting-room, the doctor was enjoying a meerschaum, and my sister was employed in directing some arrangements for the comfort of our guests in their sleeping apartments.

So there was no one to detect the overpowering emotion excited in my mind by this unexpected encouragement of my supernatural inclinations. An association that would have startled the coldest skeptic, rushed to my mind, as Mademoiselle Beaumont denied the existence of any peculiar power in the medal she possessed. Only three days previous to my dream, my father placed on my finger my mother's wedding-ring, bearing the same inscription, *Speranza!* I knew of but three inscriptions of that particular form of the motto. They were on my mother's monument, the ring I wore, and the medal in Mademoiselle Beaumont's possession; and in my

dream, Mademoiselle, my mother, and I were as plainly identified as Mademoiselle was to me at that moment.

Madame Léon had often boasted of her utter insensibility to "German mysticism," and disavowed all dread of any indirect supernatural agency in her destiny. But with only half my knowledge of this coincidence, she turned pale, and regarded me with an inquiring look, as if her thoughts were very like my own. Was there, after all, some invisible agency, by providential suggestion, warning me of unusual trial? Or was some impious spirit seeking, in my mother's form, to afflict me with apprehensions of evils to which I was not doomed? Suddenly I became jealous of my secret. I regretted that Madame knew even my dream; and I resolved that no one should ever again share my confidence on this subject. If I were possessed of an evil spirit, I would appeal in secret to heaven; if favored with the ministrings of the blessed, I would wait their instruction to reveal it, and guard my compact with them as sacred.

With this resolution, I forced myself to listen to the remarks the medal had occasioned, as Mademoiselle concluded with this natural inference:

"It would not be surprising if you should be able to trace an association of the origin of these mottos. Your ancestors were as likely to be leagued with the secret bands who opposed the power of the papacy — and who used these secret passwords — as hundreds of other German, French, and Italian noblemen."

The doctor, having finished his pipe, returned to the library just as Ethel, whose lively observation nothing escaped, exclaimed:

"Look at Minnette, now! I never saw such roses in her face. Mademoiselle, they are for your especial pleasure."

The glow of excitement that I was conscious of before, now painfully rushed to my head and tingled in my eyes, and Ethel was punished for her thoughtless remark, by her father's immediate order for me to retire, declaring at the same time that he would not permit Father Beaumont to make any further exertion for our entertainment that evening.

When the doctor, Madame, and Ethel were gone, and I had been enjoying an imaginary trip — not as wide of the reality as many of my aerial voyages — I became restless to know my father's opinion of the proposition to travel, and insisted on going to him, when Nannine told me he was in his sitting-room, having dismissed Antonio for the night.

Dressing-gown, slippers, and shawl were donned even while Nannine protested, and the discussion ended with an emphatic "*I must go*," that my good *bonne* never answered.

"May I come in, father?"

I was already in, and the smile that suggested the fact encouraged me to close the door of my father's sitting-room, and ensconce myself in a corner of a lounge drawn by the fire.

"I see by your unusual color, dear child, you are 'crossing bridges before you come to them,' and

taking the doctor's sudden conclusion too seriously. How you do fret the poor little imagination that is always multiplying problems!"

But I was very snug by this time, dear reader, for my father, while he talked, placed a large sofa-coverlet on a chair with the deepest arms and highest back I ever saw on a chair, and making me sit in it, he folded the coverlet all around me, and left only my eyes visible, peeping over the coverlet and under the shawl twisted around my head; so I must have resembled those pictures of Arab infants buried in a bundle of dry-goods posted between the high humps of a sleepy camel. I had the advantage over the little Arabs, in being able to throw off part of the wrappings when they became intolerable. It would not be proper for me to seem to boast of being a spoiled child; and yet, as I look back to those days of indulgence in every whim my capricious fancy could invent, I think my dear father had more patience than a human parent could be expected to have. But, to do myself justice, let me assert that I was free from selfishness, even in my whims. I was not cruel. I abhorred rudeness to the meanest peasant, and would have suffered in silence a long time, if my complaint was likely to inflict pain on others.

Until my eighth year I had been Nannine's exclusive charge, and by Dr. Léon's orders, and Madame's womanly ingenuity, I was kept out of my father's way as much as possible. I almost lived at Mähren castle, and Ethel seemed as near to me, in my childhood, as my own sister. The morbid in-

fluence of my father, during his prolonged season of melancholy despondency, from which I was protected, caused that premature gravity of disposition in my sister, that was almost painful to witness sometimes. And yet my father and Léoni had certain characteristics that threw them into irreconcilable antagonism occasionally; while every ingredient of my versatile — not fickle — nature seemed to find an affinity with some corresponding element in my father's character.

When I was at last permitted to share the privilege of his companionship with my brother and sister, I seemed to realize the privation I had suffered so long, and exacted every moment of his attention, as I have already acknowledged, to which I could make the least claim.

But I repaid with all the strength of a childish devotion my father's indulgence, and as I grew older and wiser, our attachment and mutual confidence increased; so when I felt the need of some restraining force, my father was my refuge from the impulses of my own overwrought imagination, or the goadings of my sometimes irrepressible *nerves*.

My brother Léon was enthusiastic in his attachment to his father, and was a brother such as one rarely finds out of a book.

Léoni would sacrifice herself for any of us, and in every crisis proved her infallible affection toward father, brother, or sister.

With such agreement of affections and inclinations, it was no matter for wonderment that under

my father's training we attained an aptitude for acquirements unusual for students so youthful as we. But while it is not an impossibility, there are few parents who exercise the same force of parental love, pride, and judgment, always considerate of peculiar tastes or deficiencies of organization, in accomplishing the education of their children. In this remark, only those parents are included, of course, who have all their time and a liberal fortune at their command, as my father had. It may not be desirable to ripen young minds so rapidly. Premature fruit is always somewhat enfeebled in fibre, and more or less susceptible to fervid heats or sudden frosts. But our father, in his Sybaritic seclusion, had no opportunity to compare our progress with others of our own age, and was unconscious of our unusual attainments, and attributed Dr. Léon's apprehensive warnings to undue anxiety likely to result from professional partiality to certain theories, united with a jealous devotion to each of us as well as to every interest of my father's.

I wish the reader to understand every allusion to my fancied "gift of sight" in spiritual matters, as distinct and entirely apart from any theory or faith inculcated by my father or his church. My father was eminently a Christian man, and in the Moravian doctrine, that he had adopted from convictions of the grand power in its very simplicity to elevate whoever could grasp it, he found complete satisfaction. And the rule of that doctrine he made the rule of his household, as nearly as possible — "Christ all, and in all."

If he had suspected that I was evolving out of the elements of my own will and morbid inclinations, as it may have been, a system of secret belief, that was to control my destiny to an incalculable extent, he would have been painfully alarmed, and I should never have had the materials, in all probability, of which I am making this autobiographic story for you, dear reader. And, certainly, he would never have told me what my greedy ears feasted on that very evening, when all in the house were sleeping, as we thought.

"My dear father, if it will not pain you," I said, "will you tell me if there is any peculiar significance in the adoption of the motto, *Speranza*, by your ancestors?"

"No; I think it was chosen as a mere distinction of Christian hope in immortality beyond the grave, as all who came out of the darkness of unbelief adopted some symbol of faith in God."

"You do not know who first used the motto in your family?"

"No; but I have often wished to discover some clew to its origin with the De Stalbergs; and have wasted considerable precious time in vain search among the family papers and relics."

"Is it on anything besides prayer-books, Bibles, and this ring?" I asked, half afraid to mention the last thing in my list, though it was just the one I was solely interested in at that moment.

"And your mother's monument."

This was said, not as if to remind me of some-

thing forgotten, but to encourage me to unburden my mind of any thought I might have conceived regarding the act of transcribing the motto on a monument, that might be considered too sacred for fanciful or commonplace inscriptions.

"I intended, Minnette, to tell you the peculiar circumstance of the inscribing of the motto on your mother's monument, but not yet. Now, however, I see you would not be satisfied to wait, and I will explain my reasons for an act scarcely within the simple customary limits of our attention to the mere remains of our blessed ones.

"The very day your mother arrived at Immergrün after our journey, she took that ring—her wedding-ring—and this engagement-ring that is attached to my guard-chain, from her finger, and, reading the inscription in each, remarked: 'I wish that whichever of us shall first be laid in the grave might wear this wedding-ring; and the one remaining might wear the engagement-ring. They bear the same motto, expressive of our immortal hope, and it would seem like a sort of tie between the living and the dead for each to retain one of these golden circlets, expressive of eternity, with the inscription, that adds to their symbolic interest and significance.'

"At the time of your mother's death, you know how painfully weak I became, and you can understand the grief it was to me, when, the first day of my recovery from entire prostration, I discovered that the only request your mother had made regarding her burial was unfulfilled! I confided my distress to Dr.

Léon. He found both the rings, that had been placed in your mother's casket by her own hands.

"My sorrow was so extreme, that, in my excitement, I would have ordered the grave to be opened, and the request complied with even then. But the doctor's resolution prevented that unreasonable expedient, and the inscription on the monument was suggested. Of course, I felt the wisdom of that alternative, and immediately the order was given and executed."

When my father concluded this account, of what, to my mind, was the climax of a mysterious association of some hidden interests connecting the spiritual ministries of my mother with some mission which I was to perform, or cause to be performed, we were perfectly silent for several minutes. I was too amazed to speak!

Was it really music that I heard, in the sound that seemed to fall on my ears—was it an earthly voice, or had the gift of hearing been vouchsafed?

My father heard it. He looked startled for a moment, and then said:

"Listen, my child: that must be Mademoiselle Beaumont's voice. She is singing an evening hymn; it is an old Moravian custom. I recognize it. It was your mother's favorite, and she requested the choir to sing it for her when the last sacrament was administered to her!"

He opened the door, and we went to my chamber door, directly opposite Father Beaumont's room.

I never felt such emotion as that night awakened — not in all the eventful course of my life that followed it. As we approached nearer, the voice, mellow, subdued, and with a thrilling pathos, touched our hearts with a stirring sympathy. The words we could distinctly hear were Addison's:

When nature fails, and day and night  
Divide Thy works no more;  
My ever-grateful heart, O Lord,  
Thy mercy shall adore.

Through all eternity to Thee  
A joyful song I'll raise:  
But oh! eternity's too short  
To utter all Thy praise.

When the hymn was ended, my father kissed my forehead, and left me without a word.  
I "sobbed myself to sleep."

## CHAPTER VII.

### "ASLEEP."

I HAD slept but one hour, I think, when I became conscious of a movement and cautious stepping in my sister's room, adjoining mine. Hastily rising, I opened a communicating door, noiselessly, and discovered Léoni dressing rapidly, and Nannine already dressed, standing beside some one at the fire, holding a vial and cup, from which, by the odor that pervaded the room, I judged she had been administering a dose of ether.

"Who is ill?" I asked, entering at once. Léoni came hurriedly toward my door, and I saw she was fearfully agitated, as she motioned me to re-enter my own room, and following me, closed the door.

"Sister, a strange providence has visited our house: Father Beaumont is dead!"

"DEAD!" Awful announcement, and at midnight!

I had never seen death. My last recollection of my mother was pleasant: a smile, such as lingers in a mother's eyes after the "good-night" kiss.

And now, for the first time, I realized that death and I were in the same house. How quietly he had entered! Had there been a struggle with his vic-

tim? Would I see a white face distorted with the agony that wrenches soul from body?

"He 'fell asleep,' Mademoiselle told our father, very calmly," said Léoni.

"He requested her to sing the evening hymn, that she had not sung since they left their home in America. When it was ended, he talked with her about his plans for the accomplishment of the mission they had undertaken; and when Mademoiselle finally turned to leave the room, he recalled her, and told her 'he had just received a message from the Lord!'

"Alarmed at his expression, and thinking his mind was wandering, Mademoiselle told him she would call assistance if he was ill. 'No, my daughter,' he replied, 'if you have no fear of the heavenly messenger, stay; do not bring any one. I am perfectly calm, and only falling asleep.'

"Mademoiselle, scarcely knowing what she did, knelt at the bedside, and burst into tears and sobs. Our father, who felt anxious to know they were sleeping before he retired, entering their sitting-room, heard Father Beaumont say:

"Thy blessing, O Lord, I pray Thee, rest upon this house, and with my child, when Thou receivest my spirit!"

"The next moment he was dead; and our father found Mademoiselle fainting beside the bed."

When Léoni left my room, Nannine came and assisted me to put on some warm clothing, and soon—I was too bewildered to note the length of time—

my father came for me and led me to the awful presence!

How calmly he slept! I felt no terror in that *peaceful* presence. Surely he had "only fallen asleep." The closed eyes, the mouth composed and almost smiling as with the parting benediction, the white hands clasped on the still breast, the marble brow whiter even than the white hair and beard, were all one picture of repose, rest—perfect rest!

"Oh, my father! oh, my father!" It was a human cry, from a heart torn with its first anguish!—such a cry as that which caused tears to spring unbidden to the eyes of the Redeemer, when Mary's woe found its plaintive utterance, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" But, alas! our human compassion could not, like the divine, restore what was lost. We left the stricken one alone with her grief, till only low moans escaped wearily at intervals; and then Dr. Léon, who had been summoned, led the poor, lonely mourner away from her dead.

Madame and Ethel both came over to the castle, and remained with us till the morning dawned; and the shadows, other than those that usually come with the night, departed with it.

The only paper found, containing the handwriting of Father Beaumont—in a wallet that he always carried about his person, and placed under his pillow at night—was one sheet of thin paper, much worn and blotted with tears. I do not think this prayer, contained in the fervent breathings of a Christian

poet, has ever been published. If it has, and the reader recognizes the initials subscribed, I trust also he has the remembrance of their author, whose every word was intended to bless!

I will give as I read them, the contents of the paper.

"From my dear brother in Christ, Wm. H—  
V— V—, I received this prayer, written for my comfortable communion with my God, in my hours of depression, at B—, December, 18—.

F. C. BEAUMONT."

#### A PRAYER.

O Thou who reign'st enthroned on high,  
My Friend most dear and ever nigh,  
My Father! deign to lend an ear—  
And smile away this starting tear!  
'Tis wrong, perhaps, in helpless me  
To ponder on futurity.  
Still pardon, Lord, the glist'ning eye,  
The throbbing heart, the bursting sigh,  
That mourns not over past distress,  
For yet Thy hand ne'er ceased to bless.  
Nor lurks there any present woe,  
That bids reluctant tears to flow;  
Nor latent ills I ought to weep,  
That in the future's bosom sleep.  
*But when I stretch my aching sight  
Across that path of dubious night  
Which yet my feeble steps must tread  
Before my race is perfected;  
I tremble, lest from Thee I stray,  
And all my hopes should die away;  
When of Thy firm support bereft,  
To my own strength and wisdom left,*

Uncomforted by faith or prayer,  
I'd fall a victim to despair.  
'Tis this, O Lord, provokes my fear,  
'Tis this calls forth the suppliant tear.  
My God, thy helpless child preserve;  
From Thee, oh, never let me swerve!  
Thus, thus I shall be truly blest,  
In grief and joy, in toil and rest.  
Ah! then am I but wholly Thine,  
Is heavenly resignation mine,  
Should storms arise at Thy command,  
The firmer I shall grasp Thy hand.  
As long as such Thy sacred will,  
My present duties I'll fulfil;  
And learn that *patience*, Lord, from Thee,  
Which Thou dost daily show to me.  
Or should'st Thou call me to proclaim  
To some poor flock thy saving name,  
Nor poverty, nor scorn, nor hate  
Shall render me disconsolate.  
Condemn'd and slighted by mankind,  
May I in Thee a Patron find!  
Or should'st thou send me o'er the wave  
To shores which other billows lave,  
Though whirl'd by storms, the angry tide  
In yawning gulfs should open wide,  
Or lash the skies to overwhelm—  
May I but know Thee at the helm!  
*Be Thou my stay in life and death,*  
And oh, receive my dying breath!  
Whate'er Thy wisdom shall ordain,  
May I but ever Thine remain.  
For this alone I weep and sigh,  
And how could'st Thou this boon deny?  
*With Thee, life's troubles I can brave,  
With Thee, I'll triumph o'er the grave!*

So, "the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man" had availed to bless in life and death the friend now "sleeping in Jesus."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MADemoisELLE BEAUMONT.

TO avoid the charge of inconsistency in my narration of the history of the noble woman who bravely resolved to take up the burden laid down by her father, and bear it till the same "message from the Lord" should release her from the self-imposed obligation, I must explain how, though a *wayfarer*, Mademoiselle Beaumont was not dependent on charity—how, with an inheritance equal in pecuniary importance to my own, she was yet poor—"poor in spirit," sacrificing every earthly advantage for one holy purpose. Her sacrifice was an *atonement*. Who had sinned? How could so much as an ample fortune be required, except in restitution for a great wrong? And who had been wronged? Who had committed the wrong?

At first, when the funeral rites were over, Mademoiselle Beaumont seemed bewildered—as we see great natures after terrible shocks. They look for another stroke to follow the blow that has sent their world whirling away from them, running from under their slipping feet—their great purpose, their strongest hold on life wrenched from their grasp!

To aid in restoring her from her unsettled condi-

tion of mind, Dr. Léon resorted to a method that might be regarded strange by some. He confined Mademoiselle to my sick-chamber. A low nervous fever followed the excitement through which I had passed, and, in my delirium, I mistook the gentle hands and soothing voice that calmed my frenzy for my mother's.

When I recognized who it was that administered to my restless demands, I grew uneasy at the absence of my "second mother," Madame Léon, and my good nurse, Nannine. But when I was assured that they were only yielding their office—as well as my sister—to a heart that needed this draught on its sympathy to prove that it was yet rich with the attributes of divine tenderness, I realized the first suggestion in my mother's sentence: "Till this is accomplished, necessity forbids you to rest." By being patient and sympathizing, I could assist this lonely mourner to prepare for the renewal of her holy purpose.

What a rich experience was my convalescence with the companionship of Mademoiselle Beaumont! What the world calls friendship is a mystery to me—there is so much comfort and apparent joy in it that will not bear the trial of *circumstance*. Instead of saying, "Circumstances alter cases," say, *Circumstance alters friendship*, and one will perceive my drift. But let me repeat a curious conversation into which Mademoiselle and I meandered one day. It was three weeks after Father Beaumont had been placed in our little cemetery. How distinctly I recall the solemn tones of the mournful trombones in

the church tower, when they announced to the people in the valley that a soul had taken its flight from our little congregation on earth to enter the great temple above, and called for a reverential "Praise God" for the light He had vouchsafed to His servant. It is a beautiful Moravian custom, and I fancy the "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," must sound more glorious when it is mingled with the praise borne on that sacred music to heavenly listeners, from the hearts that follow their redeemed brother with a grateful song. And for this joy in the happiness of a soul, the Moravians wear no mourning. With them, death is not, as with the heathen, "the privation of life." It is a promotion to a *higher life*, and the white pall that covers the coffin of their deceased is emblematic of the purity of that perfect Light!

Mademoiselle had told my father her history, and her father's object in his journeying on the arduous path marked out for himself. She had been careful to guard her confession with palliative considerations for the sinning one whose error demanded atonement; and the instructions she wrote for my father—a will legally prepared for the execution of her purpose by my father's direction, should death prevent her fulfilment of it—was sealed, and the names of the guilty ones not spoken.

But when Atropos, the fatal sister, severed the thread that united Mademoiselle Beaumont and her father in one sacred bond of duty, did Lachesis, her wary sister, twirl her spindle, and, seizing the feeblest

life that was near the broken thread, weave in my destiny with one so much more reliable?

We will see.

Dr. Léon had given free permission for as much conversation as I chose to enjoy; and had privately urged me "not to let my intuitive aversion to impertinent curiosity lead me to the extreme of reserve, that would, perhaps, prevent that free expression of whatever might oppress the bruised heart of our new friend; and be a diversion for my own thoughts—not invariably profitable."

For Mademoiselle, his system worked perfectly well. For me—possessed of a theory that Dr. Léon could not, with all his insight into my "cranks," conceive of—the experiment brought strange results, at least not desirable in the opinion of every one.

I was sitting on a lounge drawn before the grate-fire in Léon's room, while my own was opened for ventilation; and fearing Mademoiselle was weary, as she had supported me in her arms, my head resting on her shoulder, I moved to my pillow, saying: "I must not weary you, Mademoiselle: you beguile me into a selfish forgetfulness of the possibility of your becoming fatigued."

"My little friend," she replied, deprecating my self-accusation, with her heart in every tone and gesture, "you make me feel just sixty pounds lighter—I suppose that is your weight—when you impose the mighty burden on me. There is more magnetism in this little frame," she said, losing the half lively

expression of countenance for a reflective one again — "than I could have believed. You really possess an influence over me, that I have no inclination to resist. Your presence alone calms and rests me. You ask me no questions, and yet, in every word I speak to you, I seem to respond to some inquiry that I am conscious your kind interest in me expresses. You ask no confidence, and yet I involuntarily yield it."

I was puzzled to answer that mere expression of my own settled conviction. Mademoiselle had a powerful capacity for suffering; and yet she acknowledged my power to tranquillize her grief. The secret that had racked my brain into fever, I had the strength to hold in my own possession; and if I had chosen, I could, by revealing my fearful impressions left by the dream, have startled Mademoiselle Beaumont into — what? A belief, perhaps, in my own new faith. But I would not interfere, by a wanton betrayal of my mother's trust, with the purposes of Providence. So I felt then.

Assuring Mademoiselle that the pleasure of our intercourse was reciprocal, I added, "I shall, by way of deserving your insinuated charge of inquisitiveness, ask for the history of the medal you possess, with our family motto. But you need not tell me, and, indeed, I would rather you would not, unless you can find some pleasure yourself in the subject."

"I have been on the point of mentioning it several times," she replied, "and refrained, not from any

reluctance of my own; for when I am alone with you, I can reflect without excitement on the scenes of my life, that have been passed in perfect harmony with that dear father who has left me to finish my journey alone."

Pausing a moment as if to arrange her recollections into a smooth narrative, Mademoiselle suddenly glanced at me, and a look of perplexity overspread her countenance.

"I cannot talk with you," she said, "as I do to others. I forget my reserve, and it seems unreasonable that I should make your heart, so youthful in experience, the receptacle of my confidences."

"It does not seem at all strange to me," I replied. "Ethel is the only young friend I have, and Madame and Dr. Léon have no reserves in our presence, when they meet in consultation with my father, no matter what the subject may be. And I should not be content with half measures. Besides, you occupy a good share of my sympathies, and you need not fear my heart will be overburdened with all the confidence you choose to intrust to its keeping."

The light of a smile, nearer to mirth than anything I had seen since Father Beaumont's death, in Mademoiselle's eyes, hovered there a moment, and her voice was natural and almost cheery again as she exclaimed:

"Well, you are a most singular child! You amaze me sometimes with that weird expression and oracular manner. I am glad you are to have a change from this enticing old castle, that is converting your

naturally sunny nature into the morbid gravity of a nun. A little friction with the elements of society, rougher than anything Immergrün harbors, will do you no harm."

Ah, Mademoiselle Beaumont, you were no prophetess! In the sacred seclusion of that old home, my childish heart throbbed with emotions such as the great world can never inspire; and when I left its hallowed influence, dreaming my father's protection would make my pilgrimage a joyful one along the highways of life, and conduct me safely back to that rest again, where was my "gift of sight"? Mercifully wanting!

Reminding me that Father Beaumont had concluded his account of himself with his joyful meeting with General Beaumont, his father, in the New York harbor, after a stormy voyage, Mademoiselle continued:

"Minnette, guard as a sacred trust the *names* I shall mention to you, and never let any one through this confidence use them injuriously, consciously or unconsciously!

"You remember my father stated that my uncle, Emil Beaumont, remained at the Monastery of St. Jerome, resolved on a monastic seclusion, when my father, Frederick Beaumont, left Lorraine to join my grandfather, General Beaumont. My grandfather, being a Roman Catholic, submitted to this unexpected vocation of his eldest son without remonstrance, though it grieved him more than he chose to confess, as his private journal betrayed after his death.

"Grateful to the Polish nobleman who kindly cared for his younger son, during their voyage, my grandfather urged the count to accompany him to his home in Havana. But to the soldier the attractions of warfare proved more enticing than friendly invitations, and my grandfather parted with Count Pulawski to sail for Havana; while the latter proceeded to present his credentials to the commanders of the American forces.

"My father was not permitted to attend the schools in Havana, or to be separated in any way from my grandfather, who devoted his whole attention to the only being whose affection he could claim. He was not disappointed in the result. With a heart overflowing with kindly impulses, and a mind justifying his father's ambitious hopes, my father developed, in his rapid progress in education, the capacity for large schemes and benevolent designs, corresponding with the tastes his father had employed so beneficially in the service of Stanislaus.

"On an estate, whose slave-quarter alone covered an area of an equal extent with some European towns, there was scope for the employment of a genius for civil architecture, and my grandfather, gratified by the improvements that made his estate famous on the island, relinquished the whole care of it to my father when he was but seventeen years old. There were two persons who strongly opposed the latter proceeding. The confessor, who resided with my grandfather, and the steward who had hitherto been partially intrusted with the ex-

penses of the estate, which my father's comprehensive economy would not admit any longer. Acting on the principle that Stanislaus had maintained with my grandfather, he refused to revoke his full, free delivery of the entire responsibility to his son Frederick, and further offended the discontented priest by a formal testament, bequeathing the bulk of his large fortune to my father, providing a comfortable annuity for his confessor and steward, and leaving my uncle Emil a mere stipendiary allowance.

"It will be remembered that the Abbé de l'Étoile recommended my grandfather to enter the West India house—in the trade that met with a termination so disastrous to the Jesuits—artfully concealing his individual interest in the speculation. And there was ground for the suspicion General Beaumont entertained, that the abbé was the cause of Emil's bias toward a monastic life, knowing the benefits that had accrued to my grandfather through his own honesty and prudence in the transaction that might have ruined a careless or less honorable man. But if the abbé hoped to gain any benefit through the detention of my uncle at the monastery, he was greatly deceived in my grandfather's resolute character.

"In reply to a letter from Emil, announcing his appointment as chaplain and confessor to the family of the young Count de Meffray, nephew to the Abbé de l'Étoile, 'for which renunciation of individual preference for the privacy of the cloister, he was to succeed to the prelacy of the Abbé de l'Étoile!' my grandfather promptly replied:

"While I am better satisfied with this change in your plans to employ your spiritual calling in a broader measure than a cloister life can possibly admit, I could wish that before you decided on accepting clerical orders, you had been permitted to test the reliability of your intentions by a visit to me. You might, perhaps, have found noble use for your spiritual inclinations in administering to the comfort of the slaves belonging to my estate, and in promoting the interests of many Catholic institutions on our islands worthy of your assistance. But you have chosen a service that I regard the most responsible in the gift of the Church. On your influence may depend the eternal welfare of a noble family, as well as the honor of their individual members in the present life. In the performance of this great trust, remember first the honor of Him who calls you to your office of spiritual adviser, the honor of the noble count who intrusts you with the secrets of his house, your own honor as a servant of God and man, and the honorable name I have given you as a birth-right, that has never yet been stained with the taint of dishonesty, either in matters concerning the service of our family to our king, our Church, or in any of our transactions with men.

"The compensation allowed by the generous master you will serve makes the sum I have bequeathed you very trifling in comparison; but trusting that your motives for undertaking so sacred a mission were of the purest religious character, I am not disposed to change my will, intending, as when I made

it, only to place an almsgiving at your disposal, to be continued by your brother Frederick, should he survive you, as you may designate.'"

Mademoiselle sat painfully abstracted, with the open letter in her hand, till I ventured, after a reasonable pause, to ask:

"Mademoiselle, is your uncle living still?"

A sigh escaped her, as if some doubt of her right to throw off more of the weight that oppressed her had been removed by my voice, and she replied:

"My mission is to find him, and undo his entangled work: he forgot the law of his fathers, and the punishment of his own remorse is greater than he can bear."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MEDAL.

DR. LÉON interrupted the story, in which I had become intensely interested as it proceeded; and I was not sorry when Nannine entered to say my own room was sufficiently warmed, after the airing she had given it, for me to return to it; and my father came to invite the doctor to his sitting-room, at the same time.

"Mademoiselle Beaumont," said the doctor, as he was leaving us, "you cannot fail to decide on accepting the baron's invitation to travel with Léoni and Minnette, at least as far as Naples, when you see the evidences of your good influence over one of the party," looking askance at me.

"You are all kindly considerate," she replied; "but I have already delayed longer than I should under any other circumstances. Now that Minnette is mending so decidedly, I must in a few days be on my way again; and if Providence favors my undertaking, I will return when it is accomplished, and make my residence in this neighborhood, where, though I have suffered my deepest sorrow, I have tasted the sweetest consolations of Christian fellowship."

In this frank, unhesitating manner Mademoiselle Beaumont met every suggestion, and the feeling of confidence she inspired by it was irresistible.

When we were once more alone she finished her story :

"My grandfather and the Abbé de l'Étoile died within three months of the same year that my father married. A Protestant lady coming into a Catholic household makes sometimes trying difficulties. But the liberality of my father's religious views prevented embarrassments that otherwise could not have failed to disturb the tranquillity of their union.

"My mother found no difficulty in persuading my father to dispense with the services of his confessor in the family. Like most men, even in the Catholic Church, my father felt a natural repugnance to a rule that deprives the family institution of its most sacred privilege, the keeping of its own secrets, for which nothing under heaven can be so immaculate as to guard against its own advantage, when unlimited control, as in the case of a private chaplain, is confided with the secret.

"I was the only child born of this marriage, and, like yourself, I was left motherless at an age too early to realize the extent of my loss.

"My uncle Emil had never written to Havana in reply to my grandfather's letter regarding his appointment in Count de Meffray's family, and there had not been any communication between my father and my uncle up to the time of my mother's death.

"Shortly after that great affliction to my father —

who had adopted Protestant principles so far that his confessor, after useless remonstrances, refused him the rite of communion with the Church — my father was summoned to a meeting of landholders and stewards, who were indignantly resisting the interference of some few charitable proprietors on behalf of several Moravian missionaries, who had actually sold their rights as freemen to the overseers of several estates, and worked like common laborers, only to be enabled to preach salvation to the poor creatures whose souls had not been worth the effort to save them, in the estimation of many of their masters.

"My father's promptness and energy saved the unfortunate missionaries a painful imprisonment; and their zeal and intelligence manifested in the ignoble service they had performed in the name of the Great Master, and the effect on the minds of hundreds of slaves already taught to read for their own satisfaction the chapters from the Word and Moravian hymns distributed among them — these proofs of their sincerity induced my father to offer them the shelter that his own estate could afford them from the persecution of the enraged Papists. My father was amazed at the discoveries he continually made of the enlightenment of these simple-hearted men, in matters of which not only the laity, but many of the clergy of his own Church were profoundly ignorant. Their doctrine, so simple, so free from the dogmatism of 'the Fathers,' relying for its authority on one Father alone, took hold of the

strong nature of my father, and he became completely converted to the Moravian faith.

"I have already described our home, the town that sprang from the settlement founded by those missionaries on the lands my father gave them from his own estate; and you know of the educational institutions, the colleges, boarding schools, and town schools where hundreds of the youth of the States are educated.

"Knowing all this, you can appreciate the nobleness of my father's sacrifice in leaving the interests of a lifetime to atone, if possible, for the evil of a brother that clouded his last days, and filled his generous heart with unutterable anguish.

"I cannot speak with calmness of the breaking up of our home, our journey to B——, the Moravian town in the States, where Pulawski, my father's friend, had visited and written letters of enthusiastic praise of all he witnessed of the beauty of the valley, which he called the 'Switzerland of America.' And there my father met an old bishop who had known my mother in her girlhood. He assured my father of a circumstance that greatly astonished him. Several months after the date of my mother's marriage, the bishop had been requested to give information to a religious historical society in Lorraine, of a certain medal that had been stamped with the password of the Carbonari, and used by a succession of Waldensian missionaries in their journeyings through the haunts of the Carbonari in Italy.

"The letter containing the request was written by

the Countess de Meffray, wife to the nobleman in whose house my uncle Emil was acting as chaplain. She stated that, as a Protestant, a 'descendant of the Waldensians,' she was 'interested in the discovery of a *relic*, that her family could claim for the particular services they had given to the Protestant cause,' and that 'an irresponsible member of the society had given the medal to a family of Protestants in America'—giving their name—which the bishop had just traced to my mother's family. My father immediately despatched a letter of inquiry to my mother's brother at Havana, to which he replied that 'the medal had been found among my mother's papers, and had been given to him by my father after her death, among papers to be delivered to a friend who was to have taken the medal to Europe; and as there were explicit directions for its return to the Countess de Meffray, who appeared to have corresponded with my mother regarding it, it had been forwarded to Lorraine about one year before we had left Havana.'

"My mother's brother did not know that news of the death of the countess had prevented my mother's fulfilling her intentions regarding the medal, and my uncle Emil, through whom the correspondence was opened, had not informed my father of the count's death several years after the countess, until he confessed the wrong that we had left our home to repair.

"When we arrived at Lorraine, this medal was enclosed in a note for my father, instructing him

to carry it, if he followed his brother Emil to the Abruzzi, or give it to his messenger, so there could be no doubt of the authority of any one appearing for the assistance of my uncle Emil, in Italy; and the motto, he stated, would serve as a pass-word with any of the mountain gypsies or brigands, should my father encounter them."

Taking the medal from her pocket, Mademoiselle was in danger of another relapse into that abstraction that was contrary to my impatient desire to hear all the story; and I resorted to an expedient that nearly proved fatal to my further knowledge of the tantalizing little talisman, that with its one word — *Hope* — seemed by some inherent quality to have effected miraculous conversions wherever it had been retained.

"Mademoiselle," I said, closely watching the effect of my suggestion, "though your father was unconscious of the existence even of that medal, it was in his house when he acceded to the wishes of a Protestant wife, when he received the Moravian missionaries, and when he founded a Moravian settlement; it was also in your uncle's possession when he resolved to make reparation for a great wrong, as you tell me; and it was in your possession when you were led by a good Providence to enter our house, where the same motto belongs, and find friends of your own sect."

I did not add to my evidence, "And over your father's grave the shadow of my mother's monument falls, inscribed with the same motto!"

"Mademoiselle," I said, "you disclaim any pecu-

liar power in that medal, but suppose there should exist some talismanic —"

"I forbid any such Oriental fancies regarding this harmless piece of metal," Mademoiselle exclaimed. "I have no taste for the marvellous, and the realities of life are too serious to admit of my indulgence in that propensity to fable that you possess."

Seeing me smile at my success, in at least rousing her from the threatened abstraction, Mademoiselle continued to lecture me.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that your busy brains could invent fables as readily as a Chinese priest. What an insinuation! As if this medal was a sort of seal to some mysterious compact that had concluded with some awful incantation! Evidently it is merely a symbol used by some leader of the Masonic orders, that opposed all oppressive powers in the early days of Protestantism, and who are now only outlaws, who retain the signs, but none of the spirit of the original bands.

"I shall warn the Baron de Stalberg to avoid China, Persia, and Egypt in his travels, and hereafter I will keep my stories to myself." Saying this, Mademoiselle pretended she was going out of my room. But I heard the remainder of the story before she left me.

"A young heiress born to the Count de Meffray had been abducted at her birth, in order to secure her inheritance for the benefit of the Abbey of St. Jerome; and after a Catholic education — which her Protestant mother would have prevented — she was

to be elected abess of a convent, as an equivalent for the wrong of depriving her of a birthright. As she had been reported dead by the physician to the countess, no one but Emil Beaumont and his accomplice knew of her existence—as the Countess de Meffray at least; and her brother, who inherited his father's Italian lands and title, was called the Count de Meffray, and under the guardianship of an uncle, his mother's brother, was now receiving his last year's collegiate education in Rome. Emil Beaumont, overwhelmed with remorse, had renounced the orders with which he had been invested, and shutting himself in a half-ruined hospice in the Abruzzi, was watching over the daughter of his benefactors, who had attained her sixteenth year in ignorance of her parentage. She was accomplished in every branch of learning taught in the Italian schools. Emil Beaumont had not written to his brother, Father Beaumont, till the money that had been invested from the young countess's revenues for the abbey was lost in a speculation, again attributed to the Jesuits, and Emil Beaumont's small allowance was insufficient to support his victim in the manner befitting her rank, and that he had not the cruelty to deny her, since he repented of his deed.

"My uncle is near his last days, and cannot live more than a few years," said Mademoiselle; "so when I place in his hands an order for a sum that will repay every dollar of the inheritance of the young countess, we have only to reconcile her

brother and uncle to an agreement to preserve my father's name from dishonor, and restore the heiress to her rights."

And, dear reader, Mademoiselle Beaumont—who was, after all, the greatest victim to this terrible wrong—uttered no word of regret or reproach, though her act of restitution, now in her power to withhold, left her with a bare support.

It was far in the night when I fell asleep after that recital, and I awoke late the next morning. My sister and Nannine were in the room.

"Where is Mademoiselle Beaumont?" I asked, when she did not come, even after my morning meal was ended.

The answer brought hot tears to my eyes. She was gone!

The snow had fallen again through the night. Mademoiselle's foot-prints were traced to our chapel; from there to her father's grave, and then they followed out into the highway, and were lost in the beaten paths.

We could all recall her unusual earnestness when she bade us good night, and Léoni and I remembered a whispered blessing.

## CHAPTER X.

### AN UNFORTUNATE REMARK.

SIX months had passed since we left Immergrün, when we entered Rome one evening before sunset, by the Porta del Popolo, after driving through the Villa Borghese.

We purposed visiting the Convent of La Trinita de' Monti, to hear vespers chanted by the sisters and their pupils. Taking the drive over the Pincio, we passed the Villa Medici just as the art students were coming down the steps of the French Academy.

Giving orders for the carriage to be drawn aside from the drive near the wall on the edge of the declivity of the Pincio, my father remarked:

"It will be a half-hour before the service begins; so we may as well enjoy the military band till then."

At that moment a group of students, throwing their mantles on the grass, seated themselves opposite us, under the oaks of the Druid Grove that crowns the Pincio, and overlooks, as Mizpah overlooked the dead of her past, the ruins of old Rome. With the music, mingled sounds of laughter from the gardens of the Pincio, silvery notes from cascades falling through artificial grottos, and murmurs of the breeze that gently stirred the leaves of the grave

old oaks. People from every known clime, dressed in endless variety of costume, stood in circles near the orchestral platform, or promenaded the flowery walks, or remained in their carriages, enjoying the scene as we did, without the energy to participate.

One of the group of students remained standing, his pale face flushed with pleasure, his dark eye kindling with emotion, as he looked away from the scene of joyous life around him to the wreck of art at our feet, in the great amphitheatre of earth bounded by her circle of seven hills.

In hut or hamlet, the elegance of the young stranger who captivated my attention would have betrayed his noble birth. His figure was slight and graceful, his movements were easy, and there was an expression of soul-light in his intellectual countenance that I could compare only to the transparency of a Greek vase, illuminated by a subdued light from within. Why did I persist in vain efforts to recall that face? I had never seen it; and yet it was familiar. When the young nobleman spoke, there was a pathos in his voice that touched my heart with a strange sympathy I could not define. At his feet sat a dark youth, whose pure olive complexion and foreign-Spanish dialect denoted the aboriginal Mexican. Lighting a cigarette, and leisurely lifting his eyes to his companion's face, he said:

"De Meffray, you seem to be preoccupied: are you still troubled because Amelia defied the inspectors in class to-day, or are your thoughts disquieted

because of something beyond the appreciation of your fellow-mortals — students, I mean?"

"I never was less troubled than at this moment," answered the youth who had been addressed by the name of the young countess whose fate had been in the hands of Emil Beaumont! "On the contrary," he continued, "I was endeavoring to draw from the scene before us somewhat of the inspiration that glows in your designs, Romierez."

"Your goddess is not Italy, De Meffray; you will find Mars rather than Venus in her vales."

"Viva Italia!" cried three or four young disciples of the new Mazzinian school.

"St! you are indiscreet," muttered another. "Patriotism is cheap as any other sentiment. Besides, why should we begrime ourselves with mud? If the pigs love their sty, let them wallow in it."

"There speaks no Roman!" said Romierez, stretching out his arm, and touching the peak of the philosopher's hat.

The little Frenchman, so rebuked, removed his hat, gave the peak a slight touch by way of readjustment, placed it on his head again, and, shrugging his shoulders, waited with a ludicrous expression for the burst of merriment to subside that his characteristic pantomime had called forth.

Every word uttered by the students was borne to my ears by the light breeze blowing from the grove toward our carriage. Besides, my anxiety to learn more of one bearing the name of the young girl whose history had interested me so intensely, roused

me to a keen perception of each character and expression of that group of students.

"Listen, gentlemen," the Frenchman began again. "I have done with the subject of war; but a matter of friendship demands my interference on behalf of my countryman, the Count de Meffray!"

My father, sister, and brother were occupied with the various objects around them, and seemed not to have caught the name repeated so often and increasing my interest with each repetition.

"If you have a homily prepared that would burden you to keep it, I will do my best to listen, Marigney," answered his friend; "but I am not aware of the necessity for any advice from you."

"I have too much regard for you to leave you to a morbid illness that you mistake, and may seriously magnify," retorted Marigney. "By exposing a wound one begins the cure. I am not deceived. Romierez was right; you have lost your inspiration with your favorite model!"

"Hold, Marigney! I like not your knife! You probe too deep, without finding your mark. I have no such sentiment toward Amelia as you ascribe to me; and let me beg, as a personal favor, that her name shall not be mentioned again in common with the models of the Academy. I shall remove my easel to the convent, and not expose her again to the accident of being mistaken for a member of the class. I was anxious to have Professor ——'s opinion of the *pose* for my Anunciatta, and forgot it was

inspection-day. I shall not soon forgive myself for the blunder."

"She was equal to the occasion," said Romierez; "her eyes were magnificent when she turned on the president, as he ordered her not to leave the platform; and Rachel could not have made such an exit!"

De Meffray chafed under the infliction of these remarks, that he had no authority to forbid, and yet regarding an affair he would have held as exclusively his own. There was a warning as well as an appeal in his tones, when he said, looking at all the group:

"I trust I will be able to prove your friendship in this matter, as I have shared your confidence hitherto. When the proper time comes, I will satisfy you regarding my interest in Amelia. Till then, oblige me by not mentioning her name."

It would not be easy to describe the look of astonishment that was equally expressed by all his hearers. While they exchanged glances of mutual mystification, De Meffray appeared to have forgotten his remarks the moment they were uttered, and, with no perceptible effort, threw his whole soul into the scene before him. The momentary pallor that betrayed his extreme annoyance at the subject so abruptly broached by his companions, and so readily dismissed by himself, was again succeeded by a flush of pleasure, as the young count looked eagerly on the wonderful effects of sunset in the varying hues of sky and atmosphere above and around him. The sun seemed to rest on Monte Mario, and through

the pink, blue, and golden canopies that veiled the orb from our sight, the earth was illumined with a tinted atmosphere through which the wilderness of Rome's marble edifices, pillars, and balconies appeared beautiful as the crystal battlements described in Revelations.

My soul went out in harmony with the powerful influences, that lifted the heart of De Meffray to a strain of enthusiasm evidently too great for expression.

The picture before us was so vast, so full of the history of the past, of present decay. The struggle of modern ambition over ancient ruin, distinguished by the fresh, snowy marble and modern gilding glistening beside the gray, crumbling temples, arches, towers, and monuments, whose difficult and profuse ornamentation revealed their mediæval origin.

That scene stirred the emotions of the Nero of literature, who could sit on the pinnacle of Fame, exulting over the flames he had fanned from the passions of men's hearts — to destroy their purity by a consuming power — and yet, in his better moments, weave the noblest fancies of this Mistress of the World — Rome — "The Niobe of nations, childless and crownless in her voiceless woe."

Léon broke the silence into which all of us — our own party and the students — had relapsed, awed by the grandeur of a sunset that called with vivid distinctness the recollection of Madame de Stael's word-pictures, painted with a truth that I never

realized till I saw them from the same spot. When, in the reflected light of evening, "the spires, columns, and monuments, scattered all over Rome, appeared like an aërial city floating above the terrestrial city."

"Sister!" exclaimed Léon; and De Meffray was attracted by his earnestness to listen to the conversation that followed, as innocent of any intentional rudeness as I had been in following the dialogue between his companions and himself.

"Sister, if the genii of Art should offer you a gift—a talent for the expression of your impressions of this glorious scene, what would you choose—painting, sculpture, or poetry?"

"There are three gifts in your proposition," I replied; "one for each of us. Let our father choose first, then Léoni, and I will take what is left."

My father, smiling at my air of mock modesty, replied, "I am content to regard this scene without any greater power than that of appreciating it in itself as a poem of Nature and Art, and this view of it as the most sublime page in my book of life!"

Léoni said, "Painting rarely satisfies me; the art is too limited in proportion to the labor of execution. Sculpture I like better, and then the gift must be rare; for, to achieve a satisfactory result, one must have attained a degree of culture, or be possessed of an ideality so exalted, that with one gigantic effort one conceives and at the same moment presents the emblem of its conception—a Miltonic or statuesque *thought*."

"So you leave to me poetry," I answered; "a capricious, tyrannical genius, enslaving often where she gives her loftiest inspirations, rewarding the efforts of her victim with a morbid sensibility of wrong, even while the world is applauding her work."

"There is no danger that such an ungracious party will be troubled by the genii," said Léon, with an air of exasperation; "so I shall ask for myself all three gifts, with the power of an historian to use them aright. Looking at this accumulation of monuments, we are reminded that fame is perishable. We know nothing of their architects, not even the names of many of them. I regard their work as the simple landmarks of great eras in the world's history. The Panthéon marks the confines of pagan dominion. St. Peter's is the climax of priestly pomp—at the expense of an impoverished laity—whose revolt marked the decline of papal power, and the beginning of a reformation. St. Angelo is a mausoleum of the glory of conquest. Territory can no more be purchased at the price of human blood. Henceforth the *cause* of battle must be *Liberty*, the *consequence* *Revenge*!"

"My son, you should not let your feelings lead you to forget our surroundings," said my father, in a low voice. And there was occasion for his warning, as several of the students, excited by Léon's remarks, had risen from the grass, and moved near the carriage to a seat on the wall, where they heard without losing a word he uttered. De Meffray,

without moving from his position by one of the trees, was again pale with the sympathetic emotion that my brother had evidently occasioned.

"As visitors," continued my father, "we have no part in the struggles of Italy; and extravagant speculations rashly uttered, cannot aid those who have her cause in trust. Do not again, by allusion to this subject, mar our enjoyment of what is offered for our admiration and instruction, and place us in a false light with the authorities whose protection we enjoy."

My father had raised his voice for the last remark, and the effect was what he wished.

The students moved on toward the Monte Pieté, and we resumed the cheerful tone in which our conversation had begun.

The bell sounded for the Ave, and we arrived at the convent, the moment when De Meffray and his companions entered the door of the chapel.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AMELIA.

AS in all churches connected with convents in Rome, where the sisters and their pupils take part in the public services, an iron grating separated the main altar and the tribunes encircling it from the body of the Church of La Trinita di Monti. The tribunes were built like heavy oaken chairs in the linings of the chancel, and occupied by the Sisters of Monte Pieté, while their pupils, many of them daughters of the nobility, were ranged in two lines across the chancel before the altar. As strangers we were ushered to chairs immediately in front of the grating, and had a fair opportunity to observe the effect of seclusion on the young girls belonging to the convent school. Their faces were as pale and inanimate as the lawn veils they wore. In the response to the chant their tones were as dreary and monotonous as the dull, unbecoming uniform of the sisters. I gladly turned from them to the organ gallery, where a voice intoned, then chanted, trilled its own free notes, and then burst, like a soul disenthralled, into a sacred melody, such as one might hear on approaching the heavenly city.

Around us pressed an uncomfortable crowd of Italian, French, and English residents in Rome, and a promiscuous sprinkling of soldiers, beggars, and gypsies, the silken robes of a kneeling princess falling in neglected folds over the sandals of a stupid peasant—the latter as lost in her amazement at the scene before her as the princess was rapt in her devotions.

Not far from us the students were standing, and I was thinking of their advantages in having for study contrasts that are offered nowhere but in Rome, when a low sob interrupted my thoughts.

Following the direction from which the sound seemed to have come, I saw a young girl richly dressed in the costume of the Roman Contadini, kneeling before the grating, beside another Roman girl who had occupied the chair next to mine. Their dresses were of the same fine material—bright coloring, harmoniously combined in the bordering of their cloth skirts and silken drapery, in elegant contrast with their snowy-white garibaldi waists and flowing sleeves, their broad black braids half concealed under the square folds of white lawn, gracefully pinned on the head with jewelled arrows.

There was not the least difference in any part of their dress, and yet a glance was sufficient to decide one in pronouncing the girl next to me a peasant, the other a princess—by nature.

I had seen many of the models who frequented the streets leading to the studios in Rome, with bright eyes, olive complexions, splendid teeth and hair, like

the girl next me, whom I should not have distinguished from a crowd of them, except for the freshness of her costume. But her companion! A delicate symmetrical form, complexion as pure as a lily, and a countenance quickly composed after the sob that escaped her had alarmed her into an assumed calm—expressing the suppressed feeling that I never saw in a human face before, and only once in a painting. It was the "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" of an *Ecce Homo*, by a Spanish master, whose name is lost.

"Amelia, the count is here, he is studying the Volterra!" whispered her companion.

Romierez, the Mexican, had not exaggerated, then. This was Amelia! and her eyes were indeed magnificent, as she turned to look at Count de Meffray. He stood, with his fellow-students, opposite the splendid painting by Volterra—"The Descent from the Cross"—and, oblivious of the crowd around him, or the ceremony of the service, his mind was absorbed in the mysteries of a genius that rivalled Michael Angelo's, his enjoyment intensified unconsciously by the sweet voice soaring in rich melody above the chanted accompaniment of the choir.

Rapidly running through her prayers, the last bead in a cornelian and silver rosary slipped through the fingers of the whisperer, and, dropping the rosary into her pocket, she said:

"Come, Amelia; I must see the count: he has not appointed the hour for to-morrow."

But her remark was unheeded. Her companion's head was again bowed in grief, that agitated her whole frame as she vainly strove to repress her feelings. Rising with an impatient ejaculation, begun even while she bowed and crossed herself, the provident model went after the students, who had begun to move toward the door, leaving her companion still weeping.

When the service concluded, all the students and the model had left the church, and I waited with more than ordinary interest the movements of Amelia, who I was convinced was the Amelia the student had referred to. An unnatural calm had succeeded her great agitation; her hands tightly clasped, her eyes, veiled by the long lashes still glistening with tears, fixed on the marble pavement on which she was kneeling, her drooping attitude completing a graceful picture of simple devotion and penitence.

My father had remained seated till the crowd passed out, and we were just rising to follow the last stragglers, as there was now an opportunity to get near the side chapels to view the altar paintings, when I saw the young Count de Meffray pushing his way back into the church. He was alone, and had evidently learned of Amelia's having been present at the service, for he went directly to her side and stood there. As she, unconscious of his presence, rose from her knees, inclined her head reverently toward the altar, and, with a dignity rarely seen in one so young as she, making the sign of the cross publicly, she turned and met the questioning look of De Meffray.

Oh, how beautiful she was! Her face was radiant with a glad surprise when she encountered her friend so unexpectedly. I almost exclaimed with admiration when she seized the hand De Meffray held out to her with the innocent joy of a child.

"You have forgiven me, and you have come to seek me?" she asked, eagerly.

"I was only pained for you, not angered on my own account," was the manly reply.

There was no excuse for me to linger, even if I could have permitted myself the enjoyment of their conversation that I had no right to hear. But before we had reached the church door, Amelia and De Meffray went out by a side door communicating with the convent; and for the first time in my life I felt a pang of that nameless feeling one has in seeing those who have inspired us with a deep, though indefinable interest, disappear from our presence, unconscious of our sympathy — of our existence, perhaps.

My father had dismissed our carriage when we arrived at the church, as we had only to descend the great stone stairway leading to the Piazza di Spagna, where our hotel was situated. As we passed down the steps, I observed on one of the platforms a figure I can recall as vividly now as it appeared then — its old wrinkled visage, the elfish locks escaping the bands of a crimson turban, and the crouching attitude beside a crumbling wall, returning to me like the vague beginning of a terrible dream, of which I am conscious, but powerless to define.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DISCOVERIES.

WE had not left the breakfast-table the morning after our visit to La Trinita di Monti, when the Count Darrée, an old classmate of my father's, now resident in Rome and in high favor at the Vatican, sent in his card, with a request to be admitted informally, as he was in haste. My father introduced him at once to the breakfast-room, and offering him his own place at table, gave Antonio a note to the banker's, and dismissed him from the room!

My sister, not understanding such a singular arrangement on the part of my father, and attributing it to some unaccountable embarrassment, was about to summon another attendant, when my father requested her to be seated and hear what Count Darrée had to communicate.

"My good Baron de Stalberg," he began, "I wish you well out of Rome. Notwithstanding my representations of your honorable conduct in all circumstances where your Protestant opinions have been called in question, a great deal of jealousy is manifested among the clergy, of the liberty you have been permitted in having access to the library of

the Vatican, and several other privileges they regard as unwarrantable, considering your religious sentiments."

"You astonish me," replied my father. "I had no idea that in gratifying my son's passion for historical research among the manuscripts, charts, and old volumes of the Vatican library, I was asking any greater favor than that accorded as freely in Vienna, Venice, Florence, and wherever we have considered it worth while to look."

"The truth of the matter is this, my friend: several of your enemies, who remember your embassy to Vienna, on a certain occasion when your moderation effected more for the Protestant cause than their violence could injure it, have been spying every action of yours since you entered Rome. And last evening, at a meeting of cardinals, a conversation was reported, in which you were accused of encouraging your son in openly haranguing the students on the Pincio."

"How dare they utter such falsehoods!" exclaimed Léon, greatly excited.

My father checked him, and repeated every word of the conversation as it actually passed.

"It was unfortunate," Count Darrée remarked, "that the students should have heard your remarks, my young friend. Be more guarded in future, and remember the very dignity of your father's position is a cause of offence to those who would traduce him. It is fortunate you are still a minor, for my intervention would avail nothing where

open expression of seditious sentiments could be proved of a responsible party. I am obliged to attend a secret council this morning, Baron, and will not be able to accompany you to St. Angelo. I have a nephew of my old friend, the Count de l'Étoile, under my care, and he is better acquainted with the points of interest in the history of the fortress than I am; so if you will accept him as an escort, he will make your visit to St. Angelo more enjoyable than I could, possibly. You will find him at the fortress on presentation of this note." Rising to take leave, Count Darrée continued talking in a lowered tone to my father, while my brother and sister, noticing my fearful agitation, whispered their reassurances that failed to dispel my fears for our safety. Madame Léon's warning was too well grounded.

My father accompanied his friend to the door. We waited his return to the breakfast-room with considerable impatience for the space of nearly a half hour. When he returned there was an expression of suppressed indignation in his countenance, of which I had seen the mere shadow on former occasions, but never such complete, unmitigable wrath.

Laying the note Count Darrée had given him on the table, my father threw himself into an easy-chair, and holding out his hand to Léon, said, with an effort to smile:

"My son, do not give yourself any needless uneasiness about your slight indiscretion of yesterday. The Count Darrée, unused to the milder forms of

family discipline, exaggerated the effect of your remarks to awe you into future submission to expediency, the cardinal virtue in Rome. Another matter, for more serious consideration, has come to light by a really curious combination of little circumstances, that, without a key, might have passed under my notice forever without the least suspicion of their significance.

"Did either of you notice an old woman on the steps of the Piazza di Spagna yesterday, who seemed to watch our movements with more than ordinary curiosity?"

"I did," I replied, and described her appearance.

"That woman is Antonio's mother!" said my father, and continued, with a voice trembling with indignation, "Antonio is a mere tool of the Jesuits, and Count Darrée informs me that no Catholic family in Rome would trust him near them, on account of his servile dread of the Papal Government, that induces him to obey the meanest commands of the Jesuit confessors."

"How could Dr. Léon have been so grossly imposed upon?" questioned my sister, as if she half suspected Count Darrée might have exaggerated this circumstance, as well as the matter of Léon's heedlessness.

"It would not be fair to say the doctor had been imposed upon," replied my father; "but I do not envy the spirit of his former master, who, discovering Antonio's entire subjection to the Papal influence, transferred him to a Protestant master and a

foreign country, rather than denounce the spy as well as the system that influenced him."

"Surely, my dear father, you will not venture on that plan at this time, after the warning we have just had!" said Léoni, with the greatest alarm in her voice and countenance.

"It is that consideration that annoys me so exceedingly," said my father. "If I had no one but myself to think of, I would assert openly my disgust for the men and the principle that can employ a servant to discover the secrets and unavoidable confidences of those whom he serves, as if his obligation to them ceased with the signing of his receipts. How are we ever to raise even the most intelligent servants to a just appreciation of their responsibility, while the very principles of their religious system are corrupted by artifice and treachery?"

"I can account for Antonio's strange conduct now," said Léon, sorrowfully. "Several times, in my room, he has hastily executed some important duty, and left with an excuse I considered insufficient to warrant his slighting my wishes. But I remember that on each occasion I was speaking my mind freely on the Unity question, and the last time he ventured to say, before going:

"Monsieur Léon, in Rome *words* are winged. They are no sooner hatched than they fly, and the air is filled with invisible snares!"

"And I am sure Nannine is unhappy here," I said, to support my brother's suggestion and excuse Antonio. "She never once mentioned Antonio's

mother, and I do not believe they have met since we came to Rome."

"I understand that, since the Count Darrée's explanation," said my father, less excited, but evidently ill at ease.

"Antonio is at variance with his mother, regarding a singular affair, certainly. Count Darrée tells me, that shortly after Antonio came to Immergrün, old Lavinia suddenly locked up her apartments, took her daughter Nita — only five years old then — and, without giving any idea of her purpose to her neighbors, went off to the Abruzzi. When she returned, she brought with her own child, another girl about the same age as Nita. To all her curious questioners, she declared that the child, Amelia, was the daughter of Ermitano, an old man who had once been a leader of the Carbonari, and who still had more influence with the half-civilized creatures inhabiting those regions than any one else, and for that reason was encouraged by the Government in his eccentric way of ruling them, in both temporal and as much of spiritual affairs as he could himself introduce among them."

If you ever endured the sensation one has when the heart seems to have taken a leap into the throat, you can form some idea of my feelings, dear reader, when the name of Amelia was again associated with a romantic story that could easily be attached to Mademoiselle Beaumont's lost heiress, the young Count de Meffray's friend — or sister — and the object of my secret interest, whose fate I might yet have to

decide, if nothing should be heard from the only one besides myself who could declare her origin.

The time had not yet elapsed for my father to open the sealed instructions, and I recalled *Maiselle's* injunction of secrecy too vividly to think of committing my convictions to any one regarding this *waif*, or her reputed father, whom I at once believed was Emil Beaumont!

"It has been ten years," my father continued, "since old Lavinia brought the child into Rome, and, taking rooms on the Gregorianna, considered the most healthful part of the city, furnished them handsomely, and provided tutors for Amelia, who always insisted on sharing the benefits of this instruction with her foster-sister Nita.

It was remarked that old Lavinia seldom appeared at the church, and always accompanied Amelia to the convent when she attended some of the classes after her tenth year, and called for her, when the lessons were ended, never permitting her to *pose* for altar paintings, as many of the daughters of the Roman nobility, even, did — within the Roman restrictions. But no one interfered with Lavinia's jurisdiction until about a year ago. Count Darrée received a communication from the Count de l'Étoile, the brother of the late Count de Meffray, saying a woman, evidently a gypsy tramp, had told him that when the child of the Countess de Meffray born in Naples was reported still-born, it was the trick of an enemy, who carried off the heiress to the Abruzzi, and as the count, the countess, and the physician,

who was an accomplice to the deed, were all deceased now, she alone could find the hermit who claimed the child as his daughter, or the woman in whose care he had placed her in Rome. Suspecting the woman of one of those gypsy outrages practised on the credulous to secure their reward, the Count de l'Étoile hastily dismissed the tramp, who made good her escape from the neighborhood before prudence suggested some attention to the matter.

"The Count Darrée immediately thought of Lavinia's foster-child on receiving the communication, and rashly threatened Lavinia with severe punishment if she did not reveal more than she declared she was able to tell of the young girl's father, the hermit; and finally tracing him to the Abruzzi, the count was informed that the hermit had been dead two months, and a superannuated Waldensian had taken his hermitage, and was called by the same name, *Ermitano*!"

"And what effect has this incident had on the two most interested in such a serious question?" asked Léon.

"The Count Darrée informs me they very sensibly treat the matter with equal indifference and incredulity."

Count Darrée might have been right in his conclusion; but what I had seen in the Church of La Trinità di Monti made me argue differently. A hundred questions rushed to my mind, but I dared not trust my voice to ask a single one; and I was glad when the subject of Antonio's treatment was again resumed.

"Antonio is vexed because his mother never told him of the responsibility she had undertaken, immediately on his leaving her, ten years ago, and now he wishes her to place Amelia in a convent and remove his sister from Rome, where she associates with the French models at the Academy; but Lavinia resents his interference, and Nannine is forbidden by Antonio to visit her. The count intimates that Antonio is prompted by a certain cardinal whose Jesuitical principles are well known, and he advises me to leave Rome as soon as possible, if I wish to retain him and Nannine. Until I am convinced of the justice of Count Darrée's accusation against Antonio, I do not incline to part with him; and as we have no particular attraction in Rome, we may as well remove both Antonio and Nannine from the influence against which I am warned. To-morrow we start, then, for Naples. In the future, also, we must be more circumspect, and utter no sentiments in their presence that can be repeated to our injury at the confessional."

With this conclusion our conference ended, and we hastened our preparations for the visit to San Angelo.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## SAN ANGELO.

IF the reader has forgotten that little circumstance of the motto, over which I had brooded in the shadows of Immergrün, let him recall it, and have patience with me if I declare that, in spite of the glorious sunshine of an Italian atmosphere, that word *hope*, in its three variations, *spes*, *espérance*, and *speranza*, insinuated itself into every cunning intricacy of suggestion that my feverish fancy devised, as we drove to the fortress of San Angelo; and I associated Emil Beaumont and the hermit of the Abruzzi in one personage, Amelia and the lost countess in another, and imagined all sorts of horrible fates for Mademoiselle Beaumont, who might have lost the medal, or met with some accident, perhaps even a sudden death, and the little talisman that was to have assisted her to reach the hermit, and accomplish the restoration of Amelia, was achieving wonderful successes for some accidental owner, while its rightful possessors were losing the blessing contained in its message of hope!

No old crone ever shook up, held to the light, examined and re-examined the settlings of her coffee-

cup more sedulously than I peered into the sediment of my morbid imagination. I recalled my dream. No count, no lost heiress. *But*, if Father Beaumont, in leaving his mission not fulfilled, had entailed on me a part of the work, was Antonio, a mere servant, the link of association between the De Meffrays and our own house? Or would Mademoiselle Beaumont find this waif whom I regarded as the object of her mission, and bring us together?

My mood was a fit prelude for the visit we were about to make. The angel on the summit of the fortress in the pacific act of sheathing his sword, called forth a suggestion from Léon, as we came to the Bridge of St. Angelo, that it "might be advisable to hold the sword suspended yet awhile." If the remark provoked a laugh, the shadowy grandeur and dignity of the great tower that rose majestically higher as we entered a grand portal, and drew up to the door of the commandant's office, effectually sobered us. We were within the walls where hundreds of state-prisoners were incarcerated on charges, many of which were not so well grounded as my brother's offence.

We had scarcely descended from the carriage, when the Count de Meffray appeared, and taking the note my father had given to the commandant for him, he merely glanced at the superscription, and with a frank smile and manly grace offered his "best services in conducting us over the snares and pitfalls of St. Angelo!"

My father's German frigidity melted before the

genial warmth of the young southerner, who received his guardian's friends with an irresistible grace, the sympathetic fervor of the Italian, and ready adaptation of the Frenchman, evincing his double nationality in those slight expressions and gestures distinctly characteristic, and yet combined without incongruousness in this young nobleman.

The reader is doubtless familiar with innumerable descriptions of St. Angelo, if not with the colossal square tower itself, whose travertine blocks, covered with the mould of sixteen centuries, have preached their sermons to as many generations of men. Léon, my brother, was in an ecstasy of delight as we ascended higher and nearer the centre of the mausoleum of Hadrian, till we stood on the broad terrace that overlooks Rome and the Campagna.

The Count de Meffray had exhibited a store of information of historical interest connected with St. Angelo, while he discussed with my father and Léon the traditions of Goths and Greeks, Latins, Spanish, and English scribes; and in that animated communication of mind to mind, a mutual understanding seemed to have sprung into existence between my father and Léon and their new acquaintance that months of ordinary intercourse might not have accomplished.

My sister, like myself, was disposed to be silent all the time we traversed the gloomy stairways, galleries, and chambers, where darkness brooded, never penetrated by the light of heaven's sunshine, and nursing in its dismal corners that spirit of revenge

that is born of oppression, and achieves its triumphs in the name of justice. To me, the deathlike stillness of the prison was worse than the terrors of the sepulchre; for *living* hearts were immured in these cold dungeons, and spirits that aspired to the liberty that seeks only the right of self-control in the limits of God's law alone, were broken and crushed into forced submission by the power that instituted the Inquisition, and *was the Inquisition in everything but the name*, in 1847! But my sister forced herself to speak when occasional pauses seemed to require it, her amiable and willing disposition giving a sweetness of expression and gentleness of manner that I saw the Count de Meffray admired, as every one did who met her under such circumstances. I was more selfish in my moody reserve, and was torturing myself with the indulgence of an old trick—following out a train of suggestion by association. The idea of revenge had suggested Léon's remark, on the Pincio, "Henceforth the cause of battle must be liberty—the consequence, revenge;" and pursuing a line of equally cheerful images, I arrived at a conclusion in the shape of an imaginary war, in which my father and brother perished, Léoni died of a broken heart, and I returned forlorn to Immergrün, when I was startled by the Count de Meffray's direct question:

"Mademoiselle Minnette, would you take pleasure in visiting the cell said to be that of Beatrice Cenci?"

My face crimsoned with a consciousness of positive rudeness in appearing so insensible to the kind-

ness of one-on whose patience in going over the same routine required by every chance pleasure-seeker we had no claim, and might have been left to the tedious volubility of a hired cicerone.

"I should, indeed, enjoy it," I replied, "if it will not tax your kindness too far, Count de Meffray."

"Why, sister, we have not had a word from you since we entered the castle," exclaimed Léon. "I began to think some grim enchanter had laid on you the spell of silence."

"If it were so," I replied, "I am doubly indebted to Count de Meffray for dispelling the evil spirit with the countercharm of Beatrice's name."

"The potency of that charm has been proved many times in this old castle, exciting interest when all other means have failed."

Did he mean to rebuke my seeming inattention to his efforts to make our visit entertaining? I deserved it, perhaps; but I could not permit him to rest under a false impression of my conduct. I looked an appeal, and my father, who had expected me to reply, responded the moment he saw my need of his aid.

"I must apologize for my daughter's abstraction, Count de Meffray. She is not usually capricious, and, under ordinary circumstances, I should be inclined to regard her silent attention as great a compliment to your impressive account of St. Angelo as our demonstrative expressions of pleasure."

"I beg you will not imagine for a moment that I thought otherwise," answered De Meffray, hastily.

"I was rather flattered by mademoiselle's intense interest in the scenes we have often pointed out to visitors without gaining even polite attention. I attributed her silence to the susceptibility I myself have to grave influences, and if I had been free from the office of cicerone, in all probability I should have relapsed into a sympathetic silence, and some one might have taken us for two ghosts of the past, wandering through this old fortress."

"And have been frightened out of their senses," chimed in Léon, ready to aid in carrying off the affair with a laugh that Count de Meffray's words had already provoked by their comic admixture of badinage and dignity.

Summoning a corporal by a slight gesture, the count gave an order for two torches to be brought, to light us to the cell; and as he conducted us to the judgment-hall where Beatrice was said to have been condemned to die, he requested my father to use the German language in the presence of any of the guards, and, adopting it himself, alluded to the unfortunate affair on the Pincio.

"There is scarcely an intelligent youth in Rome," he added, seeing my father puzzled to answer, "who does not heartily coincide with every word M. de Stalberg uttered. But we only whisper it," dropping his voice.

The torchbearers appearing at the entrance to a narrow passage-way leading to the cells, Count de Meffray made a movement toward them, and my father availed himself of the pretext for remaining

silent to the remarks of the young Italian, tempting as they were to a response as frank as the promptings of the ingenuous confession.

Arriving at the door of the cell, where the flambeau preceding us had been placed inside to illuminate the gloomy entrance, we were obliged to stoop very low and almost creep into the cell.

"Here is an indignity," said De Meffray—taking care to speak in German—"that I never could comprehend. The cruelty of incarceration in a living tomb was surely satisfaction enough, without the infliction of such degradation as to force noble victims to crawl like animals into their dens."

"Marie Antoinette complained of the same indignity, at the Conciergerie," replied Léon; "and I do not wonder she submitted to actual imprisonment with more patience than to such petty tyranny."

My father shuddered as he looked around at the bare walls, with their heavy lining, through which no sound could penetrate, at the narrow bed, a mere step, elevated enough to distinguish it from the floor of the cell, and a stone shelf, the only sign of a human habitation.

"Ah!" he sighed, sorrowfully; "it must have been a bruised and broken heart, indeed, that could find in this darkness and desolation repose and peace!"

"And how the tyrants failed to bury all remembrance of the bright spirit, even as they immured her fair body in this living tomb," answered Léon. The world is full of witnesses imbued with a sympathy

for Beatrice's sufferings, that will always reflect disgrace on her persecutors."

"Guido was the chosen medium for the revelation of that pure spirit, too subtle for the flames or the irons of the Inquisition," I replied. "He must have been gifted with 'the discerning of spirits,' for to the Beatrice in the Barberini, I turn from the pretty dreamy faces, that awaken pleasing thoughts, as they are represented in every lady's boudoir — realizing nothing more than a copyist's *ideal* of Beatrice — as I do from the thousands of paintings of the crucifixion, to my soul's vision of Calvary, and bend my head with reverential awe before that vision of suffering that Guido's streaming eyes beheld! Where else do we find those inflamed, languid eyes wearily following your gaze, while a pallor of fearful apprehension marks the countenance wasted by suffering, its pallor painfully contrasting with the fever-flush on the cheeks, and the crimsoned swollen lips; the emaciated throat too thin to support the weary head, drooping under the weight of its drapery. And as we look again and again, with an irresistible fascination, into those liquid orbs, where the soul seems still floating, the dark pupils emit electrical flashes that a death-wound only could elicit from a spirit escaping in triumph, which a Guido alone could arrest!"

"Mademoiselle Minnette, if you were an artist, I should pray to be your pupil," exclaimed De Meffray; "for you would impart the first, last, and great requisite of all art, its very *soul* — sympathy!"

"That is the secret of the success of women in arts, where the heart must be moved, before the eye can be pleased," said my father.

"I have heard," continued De Meffray, "many artists declare, that the impulse of inspiration failed them in the presence of the Beatrice Cenci, and a real depression seized them, that is the despair of all art."

One more object of interest to Léon was named — the spiral corridor running around the whole circumference of the circular tower, nine hundred and sixty-seven feet, at a very steep grade — I have forgotten the exact degree of inclination.

Passing from the cell of Beatrice to the corridor, we came again into sunlight, and our eyes, that had become accustomed to the torchlight, felt the relief when we again entered the darkness of the corridor. The torches behind us penetrated the blackness of its darkness with a yellow glow, like the sun through a London fog.

Léon and Count de Meffray each took a cannon-ball and rolled them down the corridor, their reverberations gaining force as their momentum increased, and producing shocks equal to the discharge of heavy guns. Thinking I would improve the opportunity to gather some memento of St. Angelo, I stooped to pick up some of the little white marble mosaics loosened from the pavement of the corridor, and was just in the act of putting my treasures in my pocket, when I received a heavy blow on my shoulder, heard a cry of alarm from Léoni and my

father, and felt a sharp pain in my arm, that caused me to faint.

A fearful sensation, like the darting of a hundred lances in my arm, was the first thing I realized on opening my eyes. I was lying on a soldier's couch in the guard-room, a surgeon dressing a wound in my arm.

I could not lift my eyes at first, to reassure the frightened group around me. The pain was sickening; but under my eyelids, only half opened for some time, I could view the operation of the surgeon. My sleeves were torn from my left arm, and the surgeon was cutting away from the flesh scraps of the material that was sticking to it.

"The burns are not as deep as I was afraid they were," he remarked. "They will be painful, but not serious. Ah! mademoiselle, you are better! You are unfortunate to suffer so much from the stupidity of that torch-bearer."

I tried to reply, and managed a faint smile, in answer to Léoni's anxious look; but my mind had already endured considerable tension, and the accident found me not too well prepared for so great a shock to my nervous system. I again became insensible with the pain, and did not recover consciousness till after I had been taken to my own apartment at our hotel. Léoni's sobs roused me to an effort to speak, and I succeeded in reassuring her by insisting on being informed of "the manner of the accident."

The surgeon explained "that the corporal, lower-

ing his torch to pour out the liquid tar boiling in the cup of the flambeau, was struck by my elbow as I drew back my hand with the mosaics, and in his awkward attempt to apologize for being so near me, dropped the torch, the metal striking my shoulder, and the liquid fire falling on the back of my loose sleeve."

"To Count de Meffray's great presence of mind we owe your escape from worse consequences," said my father.

"Was he burned in extinguishing the fire?" I asked.

"He has just a few blisters to attest to his bravery," said the surgeon, smiling; and, administering a composing draught, he left with a promise to call in the evening again.

The Count de Meffray called while the surgeon was dressing my wound in the evening. He remained only long enough to be assured of my recovery from the faintness of the morning, and left kind messages of "regret for the accident, and a hope that he would have the pleasure of seeing me much improved in a few days."

Our departure from Rome was frustrated for the present. One thought consoled me.

Could I possibly aid the young unfortunate girl in whose sad fate all my sympathies were enlisted?

By declaring what I knew, I might. But—Mademoiselle Beaumont! How could I have betrayed *her secret, not mine*, and so have forced a

sacrifice on her part, that she might have reconsidered!

In view of such struggles between the mere sentiments of our hearts that bespeak our *divine humanity*, and the unyielding sense of justice that *proves our human divinity*, do not the godlike powers of the soul assert themselves? If it beats in vain against its walls of flesh, if its vision is limited, its knowledge finitely circumscribed, it is still conscious of realms beyond the finite, where *eternity will satisfy* its boundless aspirations.

If I had been intrusted with the knowledge that would decide the happiness of a fellow-being, what cruelty it seemed to be bound to silence that condemned both to unwilling suffering!

*Unwilling suffering!* that was my mother's reproach—"impatience" with the inscrutable dispensations of Heaven!

I would wait.

So I declared to myself, when at last my staring eyes consented to close for rest that night. But with my feverish dreams came horrors of gloomy cells—then prisoners burning in flames that could not be reached. Once Beatrice's face appeared at the grating of her cell, calm and unmoved by the torturing fire, even smiling at my excitement. Then it was Amelia's face, full of mournful reproach!

## CHAPTER XIV.

### RETROSPECTION.

IT scarcely need be said that, like all accidents, mine seemed to have happened at the worst possible time for us. Besides, the Baron de Stalberg was no Abraham. His motherless Isaacs were exempt from the call for burnt offerings, on the principle of weakness in the parent, which, according to Luther's wife, decided the choice of the father rather than the mother, in the call for the sacrifice of Isaac. My father stood in the relation of both parents; and no mother could have been more distressed over the wound that was deeply burned in my arm.

We had almost resolved to discontinue the journey, when, as if he had anticipated some such intent, Dr. Léon wrote:

"If you are so ungrateful as not to remain absent another year, and confirm the benefits already derived, I will prescribe the Antipodes for the least sign of a relapse into the old Immergrün blues!"

Nannine and Antonio were never more helpful and sincerely kind in their efforts to alleviate my sufferings, and relieve my father of his great anxiety, part of which they little dreamed the cause! Antonio seemed to have seized upon this excuse to

confine himself to the house; and, whatever mischief might have been done through his instrumentality before, certainly during the two weeks we were delayed in Rome, after our unfortunate visit to San Angelo, there was not the slightest ground for suspicion of his unfaithfulness to my father.

In the mean time the young friend, of whom the reader is no doubt ready to hear something further, was gaining rapidly on my father's esteem, and my brother's positive affection.

Count de Meffray and Léon possessed like qualities, and my brother, who had never before affiliated with any one of his own age and sex, seemed to delight in that mental harmony that existed between himself and his new friend. I was not permitted to enjoy more than a few minutes in his society each time the count called, until the second week after my accident. And then the favor was extended no more than a half hour.

My sister — my grave, gentle Léoni — was interested, but not so enthusiastic about the count, whom my brother declared was possessed of

"Every charm that wins the heart,  
By Nature given, enhanced by art;"

and I was often tempted to laugh at Léoni's serious way of repeating little snatches of conversation that she intended for my simple amusement, when she was all the while supplying that little bit of romance in my nature with substantial food for its digestion, in place of the vague, shadowy questions that had only tantalized my imagination hith-

erto. The fatal sisters, the Parcae — my three ungracious pets — were no match for a live, noble hero, a mysterious hermit whose whereabouts I wondered over, and a lost heiress whose identity I assured myself I knew.

Where was Mademoiselle Beaumont? How should I inquire after Emil Beaumont, in whose death I had no faith? For else, what was to prevent the denouement so important to the poor girl whose fate was in Mademoiselle Beaumont's hands?

I remember how she *shivered* at the mere suggestion of her inability to accomplish her great purpose.

I was so absorbed in this romance, the like of which I never expected to find outside the leather covers of an ancient novel, that I obtained credit for great fortitude in bearing my pain, when the truth was, I was half unconscious of any present suffering. My own life, as a mere speculator in this strange affair, was idealized to me.

Under the care of the surgeon of San Angelo, I improved so far by the tenth day of the wound in my arm, that my father was encouraged to appoint the Thursday following, three days later, for our positive farewell to Rome.

Just a few minutes after this arrangement was decided upon, a messenger came from the Count Darée, with invitations to meet a party of my father's former college friends, on that evening, at the count's villa, nine miles outside the walls of Rome. I joined my entreaties to Léon's to induce my father to accept the invitation, urging the benefit it would

be to my sister to have a change from our apartments, where she had remained a close watcher through the hours of my suffering, to the cheerful villa of the Count Darrée, and the society they could not fail to find agreeable. There was one great obstacle to my father's consent, no less formidable than the walls of Rome! The political agitation in certain quarters caused the enactment of the strictest martial laws for the safety of the Papal Government. One rule required the closing of the gates of the city at nine o'clock, and the Count Darrée warned my father, in his note, that he must not think of returning to Rome before the following afternoon.

After numerous objections, overthrown as soon as offered by my father and sister, the invitation was accepted. Léon remained with me. Antonio was to accompany my father, but he hinted that, "should my father grow uneasy to have him away from our apartments through the night, he knew the guards at the gates of the city personally, and could pass during the 'change,' if necessary."

My father improved this opportunity to push Antonio with several sharp suggestions, that might have embarrassed any one guilty of the duplicity Antonio had been charged with. His replies and manner were so ingenuous that we were all convinced there was no treachery in his heart toward us, and that his apparent pleasure on being informed of our arrangement to leave Rome for Sicily, was unfeigned.

Before the hour for our noonday meal, Nannine,

taking an opportunity when no one else was with me in my room, said, with considerable hesitation:

"Mademoiselle, I have a great favor to ask!"

"That is a rare thing for you, Nannine: tell me quickly, so I can rid myself of one at least of the thousand obligations I owe to my faithful foster-mother." Down rolled two big tears over the rosy cheeks I so often kissed in my childhood, and I brushed them away with something of the old jealousy, and kissed my good Nannine heartily.

"What is it, Nannine, that makes you so tender-hearted to-day? If you weep when I grant the favor—without knowing what it is—what would you have done if I had refused?"

It was only an April shower, and my raillery brought two merry glances from Nannine's bright eyes, that dried up the drops threatening to follow my two captives.

"Mademoiselle, I have received a message from Antonio's mother. She is in great trouble, and says, if I chose, I could assist her. I was to have asked your permission to leave you this evening, so Antonio would not know where I was, but think I was sitting here. Now he is going away this evening, may I send for mother Lavinia to come here?"

I would have given a hundred scudi one minute before for the *opportunity* that Nannine not only gave me, but begged me to accept as a favor.

What *mites* we must always be in the eyes of Providence, boring through crusts and rinds, when cups brimful of cream are in our way, ready to

overflow and drown us—blind insects that we are!

Fifty questions crowded my brain, so I could not shape any, but replied:

"Certainly, Nannine, you can do as you please about your own affairs; and if Antonio's conduct to his mother makes it necessary for her to appeal to you, I cannot think you do wrong to aid her in any way you can without hurting Antonio."

"Antonio is weak, mademoiselle, and his sister Nita has easily made him believe stories of her mother, and the Signora Amelia, who is under her care, that make him angry with them, and cruelly deaf to his mother's appeals for a better understanding. Since you are so kind, mademoiselle, I will send for mother Lavinia to come here, if it should part Antonio and myself forever."

Make allowances, dear reader, for Nannine's native enthusiasm and natural propensity to declamation! If Italy had *done* as much as it has *said*, united Italy to-day would include the universal empire!

Though I will admit, the remark so emphatically independent, led me to consider that I might have been doing a little special pleading on my own account when I encouraged Nannine to circumvent her husband's determination.

The reader knows, however, that I never overestimated the strength of that mutual attraction that ought to unite husband and wife, converting *obedience* into *compliance*, and *duty* to *regard*, in the case of my *bonne* and Antonio. This unpremeditated ac-

knowledgment on the part of Nannine rather confirmed my suspicion that the alliance was continued on the same ground where it began, a basis of convenience rather than any unusual congeniality. One might have thought, too, there was some of the force of an old grudge against Antonio in the *pat* I gave my sofa-pillow, with an unaccountable degree of satisfaction with the absolute confidence Nannine reposed in me. That *pat* was very like an emphatic "Good!" that in my infancy I had maliciously *said* on occasions of triumph over my rival in my *bonne's* attentions.

Was I childish? Well, I will bear the imputation for the sake of the recollections of the days, the golden days of my past!

Had you no golden days, dear reader?—nor hours?—*moments*, then—to which you revert as to a glimpse of heaven? When, perhaps in the time of your deepest anguish, some pitying angel floated too near the circle of your humanity, and unwarily revealed to mortal eyes the *image* of the Comforter! Bear with me, then, while I recall the last day of a happy childhood, the full splendor of whose setting sun enriched with purple and gold the clouds hovering in the horizon on that eve of my entrance into womanhood, concealing their ominous shadows with its dazzling scintillations.

And who was the alchemist who wrought the transition in my heart?

*Paul de Meffray!* And the Italian Revolution fused my whole being in the crucibles of war!

A romance only, I promised the reader — no history, no tragedy.

But every battle-ground has its border groups, some more, some less picturesque in the red light of war. Fiery shells sometimes rear their heads in mid-air, and, arching their comet-like trails, seek those border groups from the very centre of the conflict. These fiery arcs are triumphant illuminations to the laughing gods, but to the victims fresh cause "to weep for the world's wrong."

As my father and Léoni drove from the door of the hotel to attend Count Darrée's party, Léon and Count de Meffray crossed from the opposite side of the piazza, saluted the carriage, and entered our hotel to pass a quiet evening.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SURPRISES.

A BASKET of camellias, hyacinths, and violets had been placed on my table in the morning, and a little card, whose coronet I recognized without disturbing the flowers, modestly concealed itself from other eyes.

My heart beat a little faster than usual when I obeyed Léon's summons to meet the count in the reception-room.

Old Lavinia would not come, I thought, till later in the evening, and, with my catechism all prepared for her, I was free to enjoy the hour of lively discourse I expected to hear between the count and my brother.

Nannine, not suspecting any cause for Lavinia's distress but the anxiety to reconcile Antonio before his departure from Rome, patiently waited the moment of her mother-in-law's arrival, secure of having no unpleasant interruption from Antonio, who could not possibly return before ten o'clock.

After the usual words of greeting had been interchanged between the count and myself, I took the chair he placed for me, where, by simply turning my

head, I could view with ease the gay throng of people on the piazza, vividly picturesque in the flaring light of the girandoles outside the windows of our hotel.

The count took a seat beside Léon opposite me, and I noticed he was not in the mood with which he generally responded to Léon's lively conversation. His expression varied from gravity to assumed gayety as fitfully as the firelight playing over his features. One moment that indescribable shade of sadness, that would be called pensive in a woman's countenance, would slowly overcast the eyes and brow, as I had detected it on the Pincio and at San Angelo. But there was no womanly appeal in the fierce grappling with the emotion that compressed his lips, dilated the thin nostril, and betrayed that rebellious spirit of man that defies fate to crush him with the stern necessity to endure what he cannot reconcile with his heart's tender yearnings.

Suddenly, as our imaginations will turn on us sometimes, and mock our indulgence of it, a thought entered my mind that disturbed my peace more than I could understand as a reasonable result even of a positive knowledge.

Suppose the count was really certain of his sister's death, and anxious to clear up the mystery of Amelia's birth in order to make her his wife! To me it was a flat, homely thought!

I was quite satisfied with my opportunity for my investigations, for *one* evening at least, and hastily banished my own disagreeable thoughts to listen to

the dialogue that was passing between the two friends, who again seemed to be mutually attracted by some invisible magnetism.

"Now, that my father cannot be pained by the allusion, and Antonio is at a safe distance, what hopes do the Liberalists entertain of Italy's being united?" asked Léon.

"Mazzini seems to stand alone sometimes, in even hoping for the people to throw off the fetters that have bound them so long in abject servitude to a triple crown. Religious differences interfere with political unions, and it seems as if the corrupt agents of the papal power have injured, past remedy, the members that are of vital importance to the movement toward manly independence. Oh, it is pitiful to see the elements of manhood in a noble nation so debased as they have become through this twofold arbitration of Church and State."

"Yet, I think," replied my brother, "that when the truth becomes so apparent to men as powerful in their influence as Count Darrée and the sympathizers he numbers on his lists, the night of superstition must break into a dawning, from the very light they reflect."

"And yet those men prejudice the world against the cause of Italian liberty by their extremes of enthusiasm," answered De Meffray, gloomily. "Their political differences make them opposed to the Papists, their affected adoption of materialism, a *fashion* among the youth of France, Germany, and Italy, destroys their allegiance to the truths of the

Church, and their bigotry makes them deaf to the rationality of Protestantism. And without some religious faith, men can no longer inspire the confidence of the masses, who have no other consolation than the promises of their religion for the hardships of this life."

"Tell me," I ventured to ask, "how you reconcile your faith with the philosophy with which you argue against the Papist and for *the Church*, as you express it?"

"*The Church* to which I allude," said De Meffray, with more animation than he had yet thrown into his manner, "is not the Church of Rome, as it exists, with its thousands of plethoric clergy, feeding on the substance of the laity. On the apostolic mother Church have been engrafted the degenerate plants of a strange vine, and, in their banyan-like growth, they have concealed the ancient trunk."

"But when the pioneers in so sacred a work have hewn their way into the venerable tree," I replied, "when they have lopped off every parasitical twig, and admitted the light of truth, *all the faithful* — Roman Catholic and Protestant Catholic — must eventually meet on a common basis, to interpret her ineffaceable motto, engraved on the ancient trunk, 'Catholic to every truth of God; Protestant to every error of man!'"

"And then," said Léon, completing the figure, "her leaves, for the healing of the nations, will no more be blown about by adverse winds of doctrine, or be parched in the desert suns of infidelity!"

Count de Meffray was more affected than he wished to betray by this unexpected turn in our conversation, and he rose from his chair and poured out a goblet of water at a table, while my brother suddenly bethought him that it was time to remand me to my own apartment.

"The count has promised me some of his own history, when I have told him of Immergrün, and now I shall have a good chance," said Léon, in a tantalizing way.

"How? a good chance!" I asked. "Are you afraid my presence would interfere with your inventions? Your genius in that line has never yet been daunted by so slight an obstacle."

"Sister," he replied, with mock gravity, "prevarication originated with man, I will admit; but woman was the instigator; and with a descendant of my venerable grandmother Eve staring me in the face, I could not presume to attempt romance, and Immergrün suggests no other style of rhetoric — *voilà tout!*"

It was with difficulty I resisted the contagion of Count de Meffray's hearty laugh at Léon's droll expression, as he concluded his absurd remark, and I could scarcely reply with due dignity.

"I shall report your incivility both to our old home and my sex, to my father and sister."

"Leave him to the household gods at Immergrün, Mademoiselle Minnette," said De Meffray, laughingly; "I find the *penates* no mean vindicators of their wrongs!"

That random shaft went straight home. I started so violently at the suggestion of the old, vague superstition, that both the count and Léon noticed it, and supposed I had suffered one of those twinges of pain in which my arm occasionally indulged.

"We have thoughtlessly permitted you to remain too long," said De Meffray, opening the door for me to pass out, while Léon followed me to be sure Nannine was waiting in my room.

"Nannine, you need not wait up for Antonio. He will scarcely come to-night. But if he should, I have a letter to write to Mähren Castle, and I will not be asleep till it is too late to expect him."

"Thank you, Monsieur Léon."

The door had barely closed when we heard the bell ring at the *porte cochère*, as if a cautious, steady hand had made it sound.

"Nannine," I said, "I will stay in sister's room till you have talked with Lavinia. You will be secure from interruption only in this room. And before she leaves, I wish to see Lavinia alone."

"Mademoiselle, leave the door open, and you can hear what she tells me. I would rather you should understand the trouble, and you can help me to advise mother Lavinia."

"No, unless Lavinia consents to your having a third party to her conference, you have no right to ask it, or I to listen."

As I had judged, the ring was old Lavinia's, and Nannine was informed "a woman wished to see her below."

I had taken a book and was trying to fix my mind on its pages, when Nannine opened my door, came in, and locked the door opening into the passageway leading from Léoni's room, and, without saying a word, went back to my room, leaving the door partly open.

I had heard some one enter my room with her, and her singular conduct puzzled me. Why should she lock the door of the room where I was stationed to prevent any one passing through to her visitor?

I rose hastily, threw down my book, and, turning to follow Nannine and ask her meaning, I stood face to face with Amelia!

"Pardon my boldness, Mademoiselle de Stalberg, but my heart is breaking, and yours is filled with human tenderness!"

What a sentence from such a source!

Young, beautiful, talented, furnished with all that sustains the wants of the body, and even of taste, luxuriously, and yet declaring as a world-sick gray-beard might, with the mute expression of her large, sad eyes, that the world's "common joys were but common cheats," and her lonely heart had proved it.

"I have wished very much to see you," I said; "and though the surprise has somewhat bewildered me, you are more than welcome to all the comfort I can afford you."

Seeing me motion to close the door, she prevented me, saying:

"Mother Lavinia is with Nannine, and I can tell

her to wait for me, if you are not still too weak to bear an interview with me. I have so much I wish to say to you."

"Tell her, by all means," I answered; "and stay as long as you please. I feel perfectly strong to-night."

What could she say to me? I forgot even to place a chair for her before she returned, and sat in my own as if I was not sure but this was all a dream, when Amelia herself re-entered, closed the door, drew a chair beside me, and, with unmistakable human accents, half whispered:

"Pauvrette! you have suffered from your accident, and Mademoiselle Beaumont was right; your spirit is too keen for its slight frame, and your heart absorbs more than its share of the world's sorrows."

"Mademoiselle Beaumont!—you have seen her?"

"Yes; and the inexpressible happiness of communing with one of my own sex, my equal in station, left me with a longing to enjoy the privilege again, and so I came to you. When Nannine's message came to-day, saying you would be alone with her this evening, my heart bounded with one mad impulse—to risk anything to meet you as we are now!"

"I must let you speak, and only listen," I replied, "till I know what I ought to say. But let me assure you at once, that if you are in the position I have supposed—the child of noble parents, yet a lonely waif; rich by inheritance, yet actually possessing nothing—nothing that you can tell me will add anything to the sympathy with which my heart has

yearned toward you, and I had determined to express to you personally before I left Rome."

How her Italian blood glowed like crimson flames in the cheeks that but a moment before were ashy pale! Her eyes emitted those electric flashes I fancied were expressed in the Beatrice's eyes; and as she caught me in her arms and pressed me so close to her heart that I could hear its beating, there was a wild burst of the passionate longing for the utterance of the noblest feelings, and yearnings for kindred communion, in her cry:

"O my God! I have entreated for only one assurance like this, of human affection like the love of a sister!"

Her strong, brave heart had held its measure of bitterness but too long in silence, and now it overflowed of itself; and when the arms that had been locked around me relaxed their hold, and the poor girl sank, weak as a child, into a chair, her choking sobs terrified me. I called Nannine, and, without resistance, Amelia let her take the white scarf from her hair, take out the heavy pins that held her braids, and bathe the hot head from a toilette-cup that I held for her.

"She must not go to-night," I said, in an undertone, to Nannine, when I followed her to the door.

"I am afraid mother Lavinia will not leave her, mademoiselle, even here."

"Tell her I wish it; and if she refuses you, I will see her myself. Prepare Léoni's bed for her, and be sure Antonio does not find Lavinia here before you know it."

The caution was scarcely needed — Nannine was too much afraid of Antonio's temper. He rarely exhibited it to her, and my father never interfered: always simply commenting on the proneness of the Italian nature to anger, he declared a wholesome letting alone was the speediest remedy.

Closing the door on Nannine, I returned to Amelia's side, and seeing her composure was completely restored, I kissed her hot cheek, and said, quietly:

"I am glad you came to me, and only regret I did not obey the impulse that prompted me twenty times to ask you to come."

"I have watched you often," she replied, "when you were driving or walking with your brother, and I knew you would feel how sad it was for me to know I had a brother, as noble, generous, and tender-hearted, and yet did not dare to let him know my claim on his affection."

"You should not grieve so much at a mere delay in your being identified to him. But you saw Mademoiselle Beaumont; why, then, does the matter rest?"

"She cannot prove anything without her uncle, and he cannot be found!"

A cold chill crept around my heart at this declaration, for I knew that Emil Beaumont was not the man to sacrifice even his good name, as his niece would, rather than have this innocent girl so cruelly deprived of her whole happiness. And if the threat of Count Darree to search out every possible trace of the suspected fraud had reached him, it might be

he *had* been cowardly enough to terminate his own life with the sin unatoned!

"We will take our own time to talk about it, and you must remain here to-night with me, will you?"

"Oh, I wish I could; but I dare not — or, perhaps *now* I can. Ask mother Lavinia, please?"

"If you will lie down on the lounge, I would like to speak with her a few minutes."

Leaving her comfortably resting, I went to Léoni's room. How strangely out of place old Lavinia appeared in a room furnished with examples of modern art and civilization! And how little she heeded them! Her dress, a gray cloth skirt, a yellow cotton shawl crossed over her breast and tied in a knot at her back, a red handkerchief, worn like a negro's bandanna, on her head, and heavy sandals secured to her feet over thick, yellow stockings, like the Blue-coat boys in London, composed the entire costume. Both elbows rested on her right knee, crossed over the left, and her face was covered with both hands, in which her head rested. Conforming to the custom of the country, where all young people address the aged peasants as mother or father, where the position is so undefined as old Lavinia's, I said quietly, fearing she was asleep, and I should unnecessarily startle her:

"Mother Lavinia, I have a favor to ask."

Dropping her arms and raising her head quietly, as if she had known all the time that I was regarding her, and had not, as I supposed, imagined I was

Nannine, she fixed on me a pair of eyes that seemed to *absorb*, not scan, my soul in my face.

"Child," she said, "slowly rising, without moving her eyes from my face, "do not let the world impose on you. If they see what I do, they will lay all their burdens on you!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You have a power to draw the very spirits to your aid; but you let others come between them and your own ease."

"Do not speak so," I said, really distressed; "you injure me more than you do good. I am too ready to listen to superstitious suggestions."

"It will always be so. You are wilful, and refuse what I would give my right hand to have." The only way with her, I could see, was to ignore the allusion, and say what I had come to say.

"Can Amelia stay with me, to-night?"

"Yes; why not?"

"She was afraid she ought not."

"She *could* not with any one else."

"Then, why with me?" The question was asked before I could stop myself, and old Lavinia smiled at my disconcerted look, when I realized what I had done—given her an opportunity to continue the subject I had wished to avoid. She read my look, and refrained from further mention of it. The reader may think I went too far in my purpose to serve a stranger, who had no claim on me for the compromise of my dignity, in a conspiracy with a servant against her husband; in permitting a woman

whose course was not without some suspicions in the minds of nearly every one of her neighbors, to approach me with her insinuations, characteristic of the gypsy crones she had imitated in many ways beside her dress, and in opening my arms to one whose equality was not established.

Ah! the philosophy of expediency, policy, and necessity I can appreciate, but not practise.

That thermometrical process of dividing the affections of the heart, and subjecting them under certain laws, may be admirable philosophy; but after all, I do believe unchecked sympathy within the bounds of delicacy, has compensations that the Expedients never realize, with all their philosophy.

"Mademoiselle de Stalberg, you are willing to do all in your power to serve the signora?" said Lavinia.

"Certainly I am; and determined I *will* aid her."

"Then let me say to you what I scarcely dare to acknowledge to myself. I am afraid the proof of her birthright will never be found."

"What *is* the proof, and *where* is it?" I asked.

"Emil Beaumont's confession, and the certificate of a certain brigand's wife, who gave up the care of the child to me when she was only five years old."

"Well, and where are they? Why not —"

"I have never seen the woman since I took the child; and Emil Beaumont has disappeared! If I should tell my convictions to the government officers, they would send me to a mad-house, and put Amelia in a convent. Some one, I suspect the

brigand woman, or her people, sent a message to Count Darrée, telling him that when the Countess de Meffray gave birth to a daughter in Naples, she was not still-born, as Emil Beaumont and her physician had declared, but had been given to a woman who sold her, when she was five years old, to Lavinia, the mother of Antonio.

"I had only to show this paper, from Ermitano, to the Count Darrée, to clear myself, and prevent his taking the signora from me; but, I am certain, since Emil Beaumont has disappeared, and his niece cannot find him, that Amelia is the sister of the young Count de Meffray."

I glanced at the paper, containing a brief statement in a bold handwriting, that Lavinia had been charged with the care of Amelia, the daughter of one who had chosen to live in the solitude of the mountains, after losing all that could make the world attractive; and should any sudden illness cause his death, Lavinia would be instructed where to apply for the inheritance he had to leave her. The signature was simply, ERMITANO.

"The signora can tell you all we know about Mademoiselle Beaumont, and about her uncle; but, mademoiselle, I am in great trouble about something I cannot tell the signora; it would do no good, and distress her still more.

"When I took the child from the brigand woman, she gave me a little medal with a motto inscribed on it, and told me I must go once in every six months to the Abruzzi, where Ermitano's hermitage was;

and as I could not see him without that medal, I must always have it with me. After I was forced to tell the Count Darrée where Ermitano's hermitage was, I went myself to inform him what had been said. He gave me notes dated one year ahead for the allowance I have paid to me for the signora at the banker's, and said I would hear from him when it was necessary to come again.

"When I came home, I found I had left the medal; and when I called to mind the last I had seen of it, I remembered it was in Ermitano's own hands; and he had walked with me to the last pass where I had to show it usually, so that I did not need it, and forgot about it. He must have kept it purposely, so I could not come back, and that is why I am afraid nothing more will ever be known of the affair."

I considered a moment, and then took off my ring and handed it to Lavinia, with the inscription turned so she could read it.

"Whose ring was this?" she exclaimed.

"My mother's," I answered.

"Then your family must have been connected with the leaders of the Carbonari, and you could pass anywhere among the outlaws who keep their name, but are no more like them than Pius IX. is like the Apostle Peter!"

Giving me back the ring, she continued: "If at any time I think I can find Ermitano, as he chose to call himself, that ring might do more to aid the signora than anything except Mademoiselle Beaumont's medal, like the one I had, and which, of course, I cannot have."

"Very well, mother Lavinia; if you believe it will serve in that way, you may have the ring whenever you come or send for it."

Expressing her thanks for this unexpected relief, she turned to the door, saying:

"I must go; all you have done this evening of your own accord, I was coming to beg you to do, through Nannine, for the signora has been quietly grieving her heart out; and when I received Nannine's message, I told the signora you would be glad to hear of Mademoiselle Beaumont, and so tempted her to come to you. As you love truth, be true to her!"

Before I could reply, Lavinia was already on the stairs; and when Nannine ran in, alarmed, thinking Antonio had returned, the street door had closed on the faithful old friend of my guest.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM."

SEEING it was only mother Lavinia who had descended the stairs, Nannine lost the look of alarm with which she had hurried to the hall, and, turning to me with an expression of sorrowful perplexity, she remarked:

"Poor mother Lavinia is very unfortunate; her life has been so full of disappointments. Nita was always a deceitful girl, but mother Lavinia says her father bequeathed nothing but his wickedness to her, and that is why she bears with her so patiently. The signora should not fret: they will find Nita with the models *en route* to Paris, of course."

"Find Nita!" I was on the point of exclaiming, for it was the first intimation I had that she was missing; but I refrained from any comment. It suited my purpose to let Nannine suppose Amelia's "*fretting*" was on Nita's account.

"Mother Lavinia tells me the signora has eaten nothing all day, and I am preparing some *bouillon coupé* and wine-toast for both of you, mademoiselle. I am afraid the baron will think I have been remiss if he finds you ill after this excitement."

"No fear, Nannine. My father will entirely ap-

prove my course; and how I shall enjoy brother's surprise when he meets our guest at breakfast!"

I had followed Nannine to the *cuisine de navire*, as Léon called the little cook-room, no larger than a ship's cuddy, and requested her to arrange part of the outside wrapping over the bandaged arm that had become loosened. After this little delay, I returned to my room, and what was my fright when I discovered the door leading to Léoni's room open! Antonio was my first thought. He had probably found the lower door unbolted, and I had forgotten to lock the reception-room after Lavinia went out. Of course, he was searching every corner but the kitchen, usually deserted at that hour; and what must be Amelia's consternation! Hurrying into the room, what did I see?

A picture time will never efface from my recollection.

An artist would have seized it for an original version of the old but ever new subject, "LOVE'S FIRST DREAM!"

I have not told you, I believe, dear reader, that my brother was a very handsome youth. He had the same cast of countenance as my father—that Greek type of the classic German face, not common, but found in some of the old German families. Suffering had made this rather cold outline almost severe in my father's case; but Léon's brown eyes and hair, and a peculiar wreathing of the lip that softened his whole expression, when my mother's own smile seemed to play over his features, could

not be compared with the usually stern look that my father's gray eyes and iron-gray hair increased.

If the intruder—that he was—had been astonished, he was philosopher enough to quickly rid himself of all uneasy emotions, for the full realization of the pleasure so unexpectedly found. Amelia was quietly sleeping. Nature, so sadly exhausted, had yielded to the gentle ministrant who soothes the wounded spirit into her own calm repose.

A warm flush suffused her cheeks, and the lashes of her closed eyelids swept them like a silken fringe. Her long black braids hung down, one resting on the floor, the other thrown around her head, over the pillow. Her left hand seemed to have fallen on the pillow while it was raised to thrust the braid back from her forehead; and the lining of that hand was too delicate for any one to mistake. The fingers were as fair and waxy as an infant's; and that peculiar pink that all the art of a skilful dealer in cosmetics could not imitate, tinted the sides of the fingers, the tips, and the fleshy part of the palms. She wore the same dress I described at the chapel, and her skirt falling off her feet, displayed slippers, in place of the heavy sandal, with narrow ribbons crossed around the ankle, and coquettish little bows on the toes.

Léon was so wrapt with admiration of the picture, whose charm no mortal could have resisted, that of course he was oblivious of Minnette de Stalberg's very existence. And I verily believe, if I had accosted him in that trance of delight with the ques-

tion, "Where is the fortress for the protection of this fair suppliant?" he would, like Stefano Colonna, have placed his hand on his heart, and smilingly answered, "*Eccola!*"

Ah! Monsieur Léon, for your teasing, what a sweet revenge to banish you from my pretty captive's presence, without one word of satisfaction for the hundred questions with which you would assail me!"

A treacherous sigh escaped me, and I was betrayed at the very moment of this exulting thought. To Léon's eager inquiring look I made no reply; but, assuming a solemn gravity, I warned him with a gesture to be silent and leave the room! Placing his hand over his mouth, he glided out, motioning me to follow.

He never stopped till he reached the reception-room, and then he exclaimed, "Where in all the earth did that splendid girl come from — or is she one of your invocations embodied?"

"You would not believe me if I should tell you who she is; and, as to my invocations, if they are all as real flesh-and-blood people as this one, I shall be guilty of no sacrilege in calling for them. Brother," I continued, provokingly cool, and looking at a mantel clock, "it is too late for Antonio now, and Nannine is coming with some refreshment for the signora; so let me beg you to be a dutiful son of your correct father, and retire immediately!"

"The signora! — that's *very* satisfactory. Minnette de Stalberg, I am here in place of the Baron de Stalberg, invested with all due authority to con-

trol his household, in his absence. If you resist my authority, I must seize your *bonne*, Nannine, as hostage, and intercept the refreshments."

Nannine came in with a tray temptingly arranged, and stood smiling, as if wonderfully amused at Léon's evident perplexity.

"Nannine," I said, "lay the cover on the refreshment table, in this room; and add to your dishes some cake, grapes, and mandarins, for my brother: he is hungry!"

"Oh, sister! that is too bad!" The pleading voice did more to bring me to a compromise than the words of deprecation; so I took him to my room, and, without naming Mademoiselle, or even Emil Beaumont, (I intended no one but my father should receive that confidence, and even he would not have learned anything from me, if the packet had not been intrusted to him by Mademoiselle, showing, as a last resort, he should be informed of the secret,) I told Léon my impressions in such a way that he at once felt convinced I was right.

"And the count knows nothing of it!" he exclaimed, "more than as the report of some cheating gypsy, who hoped to get a reward for the fabrication, and get away with it before anything could be proved."

"Brother, are you sure of that?" I asked. "I have fancied that something has taken hold of his thoughts, with regard to this suggestion, more deeply than he chooses to acknowledge."

"What made you think so?" asked Léon.

"That occasional indescribable sadness that without any apparent cause flits over his countenance."

"How minutely you study each other's expression!" Léon replied, with that arch look that was always so provoking!

The blood rushed to my face, and my eyes filled with tears the next instant; but, seeing my real discomfort, the good-hearted boy said, coaxingly:

"Never mind. I only meant that I could match any one's sisters with mine; and perhaps he was envying me one of them."

"If he should fancy Léoni, you can be even with him and exchange —"

Blush for blush! I was so surprised at the genuine suffusion of blushes, betraying a boyish coyness at this mere allusion to his apparent admiration of Amelia, that I left the sentence unfinished, and, hearing Amelia stirring, I hastily joined her, promising Léon, as I went, to meet him in the reception-room with Amelia as soon as she was ready to come.

I took care not to confess how Léon had stolen a march on me during my desertion of the post I had promised to guard so vigilantly.

The look of anxiety and pain had given place to one of quiet assurance and calm hope in Amelia's countenance. I passed my hand over her brow, to find it temperately cool; and it seemed to me my ring, with its motto of hope, sparkled with a brighter lustre as it flashed across my sight, in the act of smoothing from that young brow all trace of "wrinkled care;" and when Amelia's smile of grateful

acknowledgment met mine, I saw *hope* dawning in her eyes, and plainly stamped on her forehead!

The moment I mentioned Léon, her instinctive delicacy appeared.

"Your father might not understand my consent to be introduced to your brother under these circumstances; and while Nannine's presence insures the propriety of it, I fear the misconstruction that might be placed on my meeting your brother in your father's absence and without his sanction."

"You do my father an injustice by your doubt," I said. "I never knew him to hesitate where the least claim on his generosity was apparent. Besides," I continued, "you can gratify him more than you imagine with your account of his favorite, Mademoiselle Beaumont!"

O Lavinia! Lavinia! how readily I adopted your artfulness!

The suggestion had a happy effect, and all doubt and reluctance were overcome.

"Mademoiselle Beaumont described all of you so exactly," Amelia said, "that when the count called my attention to you on the Corso one day, I immediately named you. A week after that, I saw you as you took seats near me in La Trinita di Monti. I was so sad at my own loneliness, when I saw your happiness with your father, sister, and brother, that I could hardly remain at the service. Once you looked in my face, and yet seemed not to know you were gazing directly in my eyes. You looked from my face to the row of pale faces in the stalls, and

seemed to be saddened by them. I fell on my knees to avoid looking at you, and my feelings overcame my self-control."

Then Paul de Meffray knew who we were at that time, and had arranged deliberately with his uncle, the Count Darrée, to take his place as cicerone at St. Angelo! He had never confessed it. Rome is surely the nursery of secrecy, I thought, and should I remain here I might acquire a taste for conspiracy. Conspiracy! with a breathing witness of my actual part in it standing innocently before me! Antonio might have indulged in his most sardonic smile at my expense, and I could not have disputed his right.

"When Mademoiselle Beaumont spoke of you to me," I said, "I promised not to mention the names of any of the parties concerned in your secret, and as yet my father knows nothing of her connection with the matter. If you do not object, I think it will be best to make him our confidant, and my brother and sister can remain ignorant of the share of Mademoiselle's uncle in your misfortune, as her noble self-forgetfulness entitles her to our consideration in not exposing her relative further than she finds necessary."

"Those are my feelings entirely; and I do not propose to accept of Mademoiselle Beaumont's sacrifice of fortune, to restore what has been lost of my inheritance in speculations for the increase of Church benefits. The cause was good, though the means were dishonestly employed, and all I demand is the

perfect restoration of my proper title to my name, and the acknowledgment of my right of inheritance. If for a moment I could forget the noble woman who is so bravely and unweariedly carrying out her sainted father's purposes, I am not worthy of my own father's stainless name!"

There was a declaration that no Jesuit could have uttered! If for a moment I had felt a fit of uneasiness, when I discovered we had been known so well, and that all the *coincidents* I had counted were the most natural results of deliberate plans on the parts of Count Darrée, De Meffray, old Lavinia, and unconsciously of Amelia herself—all suspicions of any base motive vanished on that assurance of Amelia's perfect innocence of heart and simplicity of character. Under ordinary circumstances her frankness might have been the seal of a life-long friendship.

"You do not wear your scarf in the house," I said, half questioning the matter, as I held toward Amelia the *pane* that she had worn after the fashion of the *ciociare* on her head.

"No, I never do, for it has always been an irksome addition to the weight of my own hair, which is quite heavy enough. Nita, my foster-sister, who is obliged to wear the *pane* always, according to an old law for the regulation of dress among the *Contadini*, has made this prejudice of mine a matter of frequent annoyance; but mother Lavinia, always sensible and just, rebukes her interference, and comforts me by saying I have been very patient in submitting

to the degradation of this uniform for her sake, when I might have insisted on my right to adopt a costume more in accordance with my natural taste."

"It is certainly very becoming," I could not help saying; and a flush of pleasurable consciousness heightened the color that already warmed Amelia's bright face. Looping her braids in Grecian links, she bound an end of one braid across the top of the head, and secured it again to the top of the loops at the back of the head with a golden arrow. I stood looking at this hasty and apparently unstudied toilette with undisguised admiration, when Amelia caught the reflection of my face in the mirror she was using. Turning suddenly, she said:

"How different you are from what I supposed I should find in all ladies of your position! You conceal no emotion of pleasure or admiration with that cold indifferent manner that some noble women think essential to the distinctions of refinement."

Your candor of speech is a match for my ingenuous manners, I thought, very much amused at the sagacious criticism of the high-born dames, who but too justly merited the opinion of one whose isolation had at least the advantage of preserving her good blood in its native purity and *freshness*. How the dames would have smiled at her "*charming naïveté!*"

As we passed through Léoni's room to the reception-room, Amelia stopped a moment, and said:

"Call me Amelia; Mademoiselle Beaumont persisted in addressing me as signora, and it almost interfered with my happiness in her society."

"Very well; and I am Minnette to you, and not mademoiselle," I agreed.

The introduction of Amelia to Léon was happily carried off with my brother's usual tact in situations that were embarrassing to many older heads. We all did justice to Nannine's extempore meal, and with Léon's hearty assistance the *bouillon coupé* and wine toast were entirely disposed of, when Nannine removed the dishes for our attack on the fruit bowl. There was a cornucopia of fresh preserved grapes, done up in grape leaves for each of us — Nannine prohibited fruit cake for Amelia and myself, so Léon refused to take any out of "sheer resentment," he declared — and by way of doing in Rome as the Romans do, we concluded our feast with those spicy little mandarins, a species of orange enjoyed nowhere so well as in Italy. It seems as if nature had, in the matter of diet as well as in every other consideration, been especially mindful of the productions of Italy. Where olive oil is so abundantly used in the preparation of food, those little oranges, broken open at the end of a meal, remove all traces of the oils, with their aromatic odor and pungent taste.

During a pause in some lively chatting about the singularities Léon and I had observed in Roman people and customs, and Amelia's questions about German institutions, Nannine laid a little bunch of pressed Alpine flowers before my brother, saying:

"Did you forget these, Monsieur Léon? I found them after you took your herbarium away."

"Yes, I did quite forget them," he replied; then handing them to Amelia to admire their little snow-dresses of white velvet, and their orange-tipped stamens, he said:

"Signora, I found these Alpine blossoms in the Brenner Pass. Are they not beautiful?"

"They are, indeed. I never saw them before, and it seems incredible that anything so delicate could live on those snow peaks above the clouds."

"But see," replied Léon, "how they are clothed in their warm winter dress! This beautiful provision of Providence for this sole mountain-flower, is to me a pleasing evidence of God's peculiarly tender regard for the solitary! The mountaineers watch these blossoms with almost jealous care; while in our valleys, where bright flowers grow in our very paths, we crush millions of wee violets under our feet, or leave them unnoticed in the marshes and thickets!"

As Léon continued his pretty allusion, that reminded Amelia of her own solitary existence, although she was as far from accusing him of any personal application of a mere accidental thought as he was of intending any, I could not but reflect on the vast difference between men and women in this respect.

Man may be possessed of the finest sensibility or intellectual feeling, and yet lack that quality of apprehension that distinguishes a true woman's sentiment, and by which, like a sensitive plant, she intu-

itively avoids whatever can wound the most delicate feelings.

It is something of which woman should not complain, as it proves, in one point at least, her superiority. The Saviour recognized this *difference*, when at the feast his mother reminded him of a need that she perceived. He replied with a rebuke for her asking a miracle, but immediately afterward *performed the miracle!* So the same voice that asked, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" was mute before still another's lamentation; answering her reproaches with tears, and making reparation of her loss, he performed another miracle — no less than the raising of the dead to life!

Surely man need not boast of a superiority that the Saviour contradicted by such deference to woman's requests.

Coming down to less divine authority, how many a queen mother and wife has stood between a surly ruler and the demands of his people. Ah! woman has no need to ask for her rights; she has only to assert her God-given power, never slighting that very quality of apprehension that man lacks, and she stands beside him, his equal — a *helpmate* indeed — so constituted by God, and acknowledged by man!

How poor Léon would have exclaimed at my use of his poetic thought, never dreaming he had unwittingly indulged his own fancy at Amelia's expense. And yet in my heart I was sure I only responded to the ineffable sadness betrayed by the sudden pallor overspreading Amelia's telltale face!

Before we separated for the night, the wound was forgotten, and Amelia was highly amused at my brother's exacting a promise that she would "appear at breakfast in the identical image of the Signora Amelia, or he would conclude that he had been really imposed upon by some of Minnette's witchery!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A RENDEZVOUS.

MINNETTE!" "Sister!" "Mademoiselle!" "My daughter!"

Yes, the voices were actually those of my father, brother, sister, and Nannine, and I was sitting up in my bed, and they were standing beside it—Léoni and my father still in the wrappings they wore when they set out for Count Darrée's villa, and Nannine and my brother in dressing-gowns, thrown on hastily, as people do in the middle of the night, when unexpectedly called up.

"What is the matter?" was my natural question.

"Oh, sister, how it frightened me to have you so long waking up!" said Léoni.

"Is that all?" I said, sleepily. "If I had thought you were coming home to-night, I should have waited up." Then a thought flashed across my drowsy senses, and I became as wide awake as any one could wish.

"Sister," I said, in a whisper, you must sleep here in my bed; I have a friend in yours. Guess who?"

"I knew it!" exclaimed Léon.

"Of course you did," I replied.

"That is n't what I mean, Minnette. The Signora

Amelia is gone, and my father thought you knew where!"

"Impossible!" I said, hurrying Nannine with my gown and slippers, which were no sooner donned than I was in my sister's room; but there had been no doubt a hasty flight, and not a trace of Amelia but the tumbled bedclothes that had covered her.

My father was the picture of despair when I re-entered my room; and what was my amazement to hear a mingling of voices in the reception-room, among which I clearly distinguished those of Count Darrée and the Count de Meffray!

I became so agitated on fully realizing what was transpiring around me, without the least knowledge of the reason of it all, that I felt myself growing wild.

"Do, some one, tell me what this all means, or I shall lose my senses!" I exclaimed, trying to seem only impatient, but, in fact, too hysterical to carry out the impression.

"I have been waiting for you to become fairly awake, my daughter," replied my father, in his most quiet and reassuring tones; "and now that you realize that the young lady who accepted your hospitality has so strangely disappeared, I will explain that the Count Darrée, and her brother, the Count de Meffray, came here with the hope of claiming her, and placing her under the protection of the Countess Darrée, this very night."

There are some combative temperaments that will stop to quarrel with an absurdity at the block, where

all earthly questions are to be ended with their lives; and if ever I figure in a new series of illustrated Fox's Martyrs, it will be in the attitude of an expostulator!

"Why should they come to-night to alarm her, as they have most likely, when they knew she was safe here, after all the years she has been with strangers, where she was not properly protected!" I said, and never to my last moment will I forget the *effect* of those words.

My brother and sister looked at each other with dumb amazement, Nannine betrayed actual fright, and my father exclaimed:

"Minnette! can it be possible that you have been so unfortunate as to assist the countess in this terribly mistaken proceeding, and now attempt to cover her flight with insincere argument!"

What was the sudden passion that flamed like fire into my very temples! It was the first feeling of indignation at my own father!

"Father," I exclaimed, without a tremor now in my voice, "did I ever *tell* or *act* an untruth to your knowledge?"

"No, my daughter — never intentionally; but you have never been tried by such a combination of influences as have been brought to bear on you in this affair!" was the astoundingly calm reply.

"Then it is necessary for me to declare, that when Amelia was in her bed, we agreed to drive outside the walls to-morrow in a close carriage, if the surgeon would give me permission to go; and that I

have no more idea how or why she left that room than you have!" I said, positively.

"Oh, my daughter, you have removed a mountain of anxiety from my mind," exclaimed my father. "And now let Nannine assist you to dress, so you can meet Count Darrée and Count de Meffray with the same assurance."

Léon returned to his room to arrange his dress in a more presentable style, my sister removed her wrappings, and my father rejoined his inopportune guest, as I persisted in thinking, and in attributing Amelia's surreptitious leave-taking to their undue haste in securing possession of her. But my conjectures were of the most vague description. And not once did the idea occur to me that my father and sister's return at that hour was a matter of surprise, considering the difficulty, to say nothing of the dangers of the road they were obliged to take. It was intended that I should receive that explanation after the most urgent question was settled; but, as usual with such "ill-balanced, mercurial contrivances—in fact, a mere bundle of nerves," as Dr. Léon declared I was—before the midnight conference ended, I received in one instant the complete shock, and charged the whole party with my electrical consternation.

One point in common with the sisterhood I confess: I had a decided satisfaction in any unusual comeliness in my appearance, which, thanks to Dame Nature, was never revolting to the most fastidious observer; and on the occasion of that midnight toi-

lette—my long curls left in half-ringleted disorder down my back, only brushed smoothly off my temples, my brow very fair and white from my recent illness, and a warm tint that my interrupted slumbers had imparted to my cheeks, heightening the glow in my surprised eyes, that threw out a little gleam of girlish pride at the inquiring maiden in my mirror—justified the Count de Meffray's momentary forgetfulness of his business, when he came forward to receive me in the reception-room.

It might have been that my color suggested the count's sudden flush; but what wonder if I not only turned but *felt pale*, when Count de Meffray and Count Darrée, who had screened from my observation any other persons in the room, stepped aside, and I confronted the Director-General of Police—the subordinate to Count Darrée, who was Minister of the Interior—Nita, Antonia's sister, and a common, coarse-looking woman, whose physiognomy was the most forbidding I had ever met!

My father had purposely refrained from telling me whom I was to encounter, in order that the high functionary who had come to investigate the affair might read in my emotion on meeting him my innocence of any design in Amelia's escape.

The papal officer bowed obsequiously at the Count Darrée's introduction, and his countenance and posture were as rigid and immovable as the rows of marble figures lining the halls of the Capitol; while Count Darrée, after leading me to my own

easy chair, placed by De Meffray, proceeded as follows:

"Mademoiselle de Stalberg, the baron, your father, has already informed us of your share in our surprise at the unaccountable departure of your guest, the young Countess de Meffray! We came here with the expectation of confirming your generous faith in the story and character of a truly noble girl, whose sad misfortune we hastened to terminate by restoring her to the affectionate care of her brother, now her only near relative, and of removing her from the uncertain guardianship that is unsuitable for her — though I believe it has been invariably kind and devoted — to the protection of the Countess Darrée, *until there was time to make different arrangements*. In order that you may be assured of our genuine knowledge of the facts I have only intimated, and that you may appreciate my motive in this unseasonable and urgent examination — as it may seem to you — I will confess that I am more influenced by my sense of justice in bringing the treacherous parties who have conspired to ruin the prospects of a helpless girl, and the peace of her family, to the punishment due to such a base scheme, than from any alarm for the safety of the countess. Moreover, I am informed that certain parties in the plot have attempted to throw the onus of this fraud on our Church. This malicious slander shall be refuted, if out of my own private fund I use dollar for dollar in proving the defamation on the perpetrators!"

Ah, Count Darrée, like all pompous, self-important personages, you overstrained the effect of your harangue!

A wise inquisitor, not seeking some private advantage by making grandiloquent speeches in the ears of the director-general, to be carried straight to an applauding council, would have been solemnly quiet in questioning a sick girl at midnight, letting the hour, circumstances, and the anxiety of those around her, impress her with the awfulness of the occasion.

I had refused to let Amelia talk of her trouble until the morning, and was fortunately able to declare that I knew nothing of her convictions or intentions regarding Count de Meffray's right to claim her and punish her enemy. So, though I was pained by the evident discomfort of the Count de Meffray, whose pride and generous nature suffered in regarding me as an unwilling witness at the bar of the Inquisition, and by my father's looking distressingly annoyed, I could have laughed at the ludicrous aspect my perverse sense of the ridiculous took in, at one glance, at the swelling importance of Count Darrée, the stiff pose of the director-general, and the half-sullen, half-awed attention of Nita and the tramp, to a harangue that would result in nothing, even when Count Darrée would give me a chance to speak!

I congratulated myself that my father was ignorant of Mademoiselle Beaumont's connection with the affair, and I imagined how Count Darrée would

treat a Protestant of her high order and lowly mien, if it was in his power. To save her, I thought, Amelia has fled for the present, and the secret of Mademoiselle Beaumont will never pass my lips till she unseals them herself!

After another five minutes' speech—in which I was assured of the "ability of the director-general to bring the whole affair to open judgment, the appreciation of my probable wish to be silent on the matter confided to me, and the injury I would be doing to Amelia in withholding any information of her plans, and the disgrace that would attach to myself, as a foreigner, a Protestant, and a woman, in the prejudiced opinions of all interested in an affair that could no longer be concealed from public observation"—the Count Darrée finally remarked: "And now, Mademoiselle de Stalberg, will you hear the answers of these two witnesses—meaning Nita and the gypsy; or do you desire to speak, and not be troubled with evidence you may already possess?"

"Pardon me, Count Darrée," I said, "if it will occasion you any discomfort. I have not wished to appear rude in preventing your kind explanation, but permit me to assure you that I am utterly unable to assist in this matter of the Countess de Meffray. She was so unhappy when she came to me, that I only thought of comforting her; and I heard nothing from her of her story that I did not know already through my father's account, and the reports you have heard. If her identity has been proved, I am as yet ignorant of the good fortune."

Even the director-general collapsed at this audaciously cool reply of a girl supposed to be half-petrified with awe.

I think my father, with all his dignity of character and gravity of judgment, was the only one who caught an inkling of my view of the effect of that answer. At all events, he cleared his throat, and applied his handkerchief to his lips before he found voice to prevent Count Darrée's urging me further, when the latter recovered from his absolute "amazement at my hardihood," as every line in his visage betrayed.

"Count Darrée," he said, with a manner that commanded attention, "my daughter is, as I supposed, interested in the unfortunate young Countess de Meffray for her own sake alone, and her motives in encouraging her to enjoy the hospitality of her brother's friends are such as we would attribute to any girlish sympathy for another. If you are satisfied that my conclusion is correct, I will beg to have my daughter excused from any further excitement to-night, as her invalid state requires some consideration."

While my father spoke, I was conscious that the tramp looked at me with an increasing curiosity, that reached its culmination when I raised my hand to push my hair off my face, as it had fallen forward. Turning to the director-general, she whispered a hurried sentence, and again fixed her eyes on me with a wandering look, not at any particular point, I thought, when the director-general asked Count

Darrée's permission to speak. The count changed color, and seemed embarrassed by the boldness of the request, and yet could not exactly refuse it.

"I wish to remind the lady, your daughter, signor," he said, "that in taking evidence in a case so important as the one before us, we are not permitted to receive mere assertions, contrary to facts discernible to our own actual perceptions."

"What do you mean?" was exclaimed in chorus by each male present, not excepting the Count de Meffray. Each one's indignation at the charge of my untruthfulness was different in kind, but equal in degree.

But hastily approaching me, the gypsy forgetting herself and eagerly coming close beside me, the director-general asked, with a sardonic smile, "May I ask how mademoiselle came in possession of the opal ring on her finger!"

"Opal ring!" I exclaimed, and to my horror, in place of my mother's diamond ring, an opal flamed on my finger!

I was speechless and faint, and my turn had come. How could I utter the words that would condemn me, and yet were perfectly true?

"Where did you get the ring, my daughter?" my father asked.

"Father, I never saw it before!" was my answer, and a blessed unconsciousness shut out from my sight the faces of my friends.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PARTING.

WHEN I recovered from my faint, I found only the Count de Meffray remaining, as my father had insisted upon it, to hear whatever I might be able to state.

He expressed his sorrow and regret at the painfulness of my position, and seemed so affected by my emotion, expressed in unrestrained sobbing on my father's breast, that I resolved at once to use my judgment in the settlement of my own accountability with the brother of my fugitive friend, who was now the greatest sufferer, I considered.

Requesting Léoni and my brother to leave me with the count and my father alone, I said:

"Count de Meffray, though I have spoken the truth in all my assertions to-night, it is in my power to serve you on one condition."

"If it will not distress or tax you in any way, I am ready to accede to any condition you may suggest, Mademoiselle Minnette; and from such generosity and noble self-forgetfulness as you have displayed, I need fear no imposition."

I could not resist the impulse to hold out my hand; and the manly way with which he took it, in

acknowledgment of my thanks for his trust in me, shook my composure again, for a moment, before I could proceed.

"First," I said, "is it in your power to forbid any further search for the parties who have knowingly or ignorantly occasioned or assisted in this abduction of your sister?"

"Certainly," he replied; "and if, as we begin to surmise, my sister has absented herself voluntarily from Rome, to shield any one whom she fears will be punished with the severity such guilt certainly merits, I will aid her in her purposes, if she will only permit me to share the confidence and affection I have already been so sadly deprived of."

My father's amazement cannot be described when I declared that the secret was in my possession, but it belonged to one whom all the terrors of the Inquisition could not force me to betray; but if Count de Meffray could *keep faith with a heretic*, I would freely impart all I knew of the circumstances, on his solemn oath to abide by my condition of secrecy, taken in the presence of my father. "And," I said, "I may afford a clew to some plan for Amelia's recovery."

I will never lose the vivid impression of that vow! Standing before me and my father, with a face white as death, Count de Meffray raised his right hand and affirmed:

"By my *mother's spirit*, and as I hope to enjoy the communion of all whom I love, hereafter, I promise never to use one word of your confession, against any one living or dead!"

Then I told all I knew,—every word of the story as Mademoiselle Beaumont related it at Immergrün, and all that Amelia or old Lavinia had said; and if, in the course of my recital, tears glistened on my father and Count de Meffray's cheeks, they were worthy expressions of such grand emotions as their strong manly hearts were capable of entertaining for the noble sacrifice of a woman, like Mademoiselle Beaumont's.

"Evidently," said my father, "old Lavinia, who has disappeared as well as Amelia, must have been admitted by her to Léoni's room, and, availing herself of your promise to lend her your mother's ring with the motto that has served her before, she took it from your finger, replacing it with the opal that the gypsy woman recognized as one Lavinia received from her—with several other valuables belonging to the countess—and from which she declared old Lavinia would not part, except for some great service. To the director-general your denial of all knowledge as to how the ring came on your finger, was of course proof positive that you had felt yourself betrayed into a tissue of falsehoods; and so far as he is concerned, and probably the Count Darrée also, you will rest under the imputation until Amelia or Mademoiselle Beaumont can clear you, by declaring your innocence."

"I care for nothing so much as my truthful reputation," I replied; "but with your and the Count de Meffray's support, I can bear the temporary disturbance of unjust suspicion, for the sake of two noble

women, who have heavier burdens, without any of the consolation I am afforded."

A knock at the door was answered by my father's summoning both my sister and brother, the former holding in her hand a little strip of paper that Nannine had found tied in the corner of a handkerchief that was under my pillow.

It read, "Lavinia says you will understand the exchange. I am compelled to absent myself for the sake of my noble friend, whose relative is dying, and sends for me to receive proofs. Certain spies are trying to find them, for a reward. Tell my brother all you know. He is too noble to permit injustice to the one deserving our everlasting gratitude, as you do that of yours, hopeful — and joyous almost." Signed, "ONE OF MINNETTE'S WITCHES."

My father and the count read the paper in silence, and I immediately destroyed it when the latter returned it, almost smiling as he glanced at Léon; and I gave an assenting nod to the mute inquiry "if the characteristic quotation was not from Léon's remarks."

A sudden light flashed in the window, and what was my astonishment when Léon drew open the inside latticed shutters, and a sunbeam darted across the room!

It was morning. The daylight revealed the inroads of the night's exciting scenes on all our pale, wan countenances, and Count de Meffray, declining my father's invitation to remain to breakfast with us, left us, promising to call in the evening.

Two hours later, we were warned to leave Rome that very day, by Count Darrée; and the Count de Meffray was ordered to return to Lorraine, under the command of the Count de l'Étoile, his uncle!

Antonio placed Nita under the care of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in the Convent of Monte Pieté. The brigand woman was held by the director-general till her charges could be proved true or false; and, with an indescribable weariness of spirit, I said 'good-by' to Rome, as it faded from our sight through the gloom that settled over the Campagna, where we parted that evening with the Count de Meffray.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A HAPPY INTERVAL.

THE incidents of my last chapter occurred in November of 1847 — an eventful year to Italy, whose actual history furnished more marvels than the most arbitrary fiction could exhibit. Nevertheless, as one of a group drawn into the outer circle of the great maelstrom of a revolution, I can fulfil my promise of a romance to the reader, without encroaching on the prerogatives of the historian, for whose wearisome dates and details my reader would not thank me, were I to risk the charge of presumption, on the authority of the hosts of scribes who have furnished volumes of Italian history, which, all collected, might rival in proportion the library of the British Museum. It was once said, "Minnette de Stalberg presents all her acquaintances under the graceful veil of ideality, and through that medium even those whom she dislikes become interesting, in spite of her prejudices!"

Let any novelist deny, if he can, the power of such an incentive to respond to the requests of friends, who urge with peculiar pertinacity the oft-repeated remark, "Your life has been so eventful that you ought to write a book!"

Well, my autobiography has pretty nearly assumed that formidable proportion, and a certain sprite who assists my memory — a novelist would say, the muse who ministers to my imagination — penetrates the most threatening clouds with her starry eyes, and whispers, "Come on, this is sport to me: you paint the storms, and I will furnish a rainbow, and the good people will smile and declare it was all Minnette's witchery!"

So, dear reader, this is my last apology, my last pause, in a fiction running parallel with *facts*. So fly with me from the "*author's den*," and

"We soon shall dwell by the azure sea  
Of serene and golden Italy!"

From November, 1847, to February, 1849, we skip an interval of fifteen months. In that period, Paul de Meffray's uncle, the Count de l'Étoile, died. The Count Darrée was assassinated one month after our departure from Rome — a fate to be deplored, although, like a piratical politician steering through revolutionary struggles, he met his reward for concealing his true colors, at the hands of one of his own secret party, who confused Count Darrée's name with that of the enemies to the Liberal cause.

"Amelia's identity," we heard, "was clearly proved by Emil Beaumont, who, in his last hours, at the hermitage in the Abruzzi, displayed the deepest contrition for his guilty means of furthering the cause of the Jesuits in France."

In January of 1848 — two months after the flight

of Pius IX. from Rome — Mademoiselle Beaumont, Amelia, and old Lavinia arrived in Sicily, joining us at the Hotel Trinacria. A few days later, Count de Meffray arrived from Lorraine, with the intelligence of his uncle's decease, and his having bequeathed to Amelia, the Countess de Meffray, his entire fortune, on condition that she would refrain from prosecuting her claims on the Society of Jesuits for the revenues involved in their losses through the misrepresentation of Emil Beaumont, as her father, the Count de Meffray, had granted the use of the income to the Church, supposing Paul de Meffray to be his only heir, for whom his Italian estates gave sufficient to support his title of Count de l'Étoile, to which he would succeed on the death of his uncle.

Through the influence of the Count de l'Étoile — Amelia's uncle — the Count Darrée was induced to dismiss the brigand woman who assisted in Emil Beaumont's plot, and, by means best known to himself and Paul de Meffray, the director-general, my agreeable inquisitor, was prevented from instituting further proceedings; consequently Amelia and Paul de Meffray, my father and old Lavinia were the only ones besides myself who knew the real name of Ermitano, as the gypsies had called Emil Beaumont.

Mademoiselle Beaumont and the Countess de Meffray found, as all friends do, that a financial dispute was a great bar to their mutual happiness, and the Baron de Stalberg was appealed to for a settlement of the question.

He humorously balanced the consideration of a newly found title on one side, and the superiority of age by several years on the other, and then, declaring that neither party had a right to assume the decision of a question already provided for by the will of the late Count de l'Étoile, he commended Mademoiselle Beaumont's principle in offering indemnification, and the Countess de Meffray's discernment in refusing from Mademoiselle Beaumont what her own uncle had placed out of her power to accept. For Mademoiselle's further consolation, my father remarked to her privately that the influence of the Abbé de l'Étoile had perverted her uncle's principles, and alienated him from his father and brother; and while it was cruel to victimize a helpless girl, the sin of the first offender had only returned where it originated, when the family of the abbé suffered. "They have redeemed their own disgrace in pardoning your uncle's," my father added; "and even your father's sense of justice would have been completely satisfied, had his life been spared to accomplish all that you have done in restoring Amelia to her friends and making her your debtor. To press any further obligation on her would defeat your own generous intention, my dear Mademoiselle; so consider the question fairly and justly disposed of!"

During the time passed at the hermitage of Emil Beaumont — part of a ruined abbey — by Amelia and Mademoiselle, old Lavinia went to Rome to see her daughter Nita, and was informed that she had

already entered her novitiate, determining to remain in the convent as one of the sisterhood. I forbear further comment than this, that "in every evil we may find some benefit," and it would be a blessing if all the envious—those baleful *shades* of society, who poison our truest happiness with their hidden sting—could be induced to bury themselves in a like seclusion. Nita was not jealous of Count de Meffray's regard for Amelia; she had no such excuse for her feeling of dislike for Amelia, and indifference toward her mother: it was envy—the attribute of the arch-fiend from whose agency society is never safe, and imparted most freely to natures of which Nita was a coarse but true type.

In Antonio, old Lavinia found as little consolation; but Amelia's faithful and affectionate gratitude for all her care, seemed to supply all the sunshine of the old woman's existence.

"Mother Lavinia must never part from me," Amelia declared; and the look that accompanied old Lavinia's reply conveyed as much assurance as her words, that she was in no danger of making such a trial of Amelia's gratitude.

To crown our happiness in those golden days in Sicily, Dr. Léon, Madame, and Ethel joined us, and for several weeks it seemed as if our skies were to be all smiles for the future, and our walks all flowers. But until we enter the land where there are no partings and no graves, perfect and uninterrupted happiness cannot be the portion of the most favored mortal.

The doctor was recalled to Mähren Castle by his brother, acting for the king, who required Dr. Léon's attendance at a consultation regarding the health of the queen, Madame and Ethel going with him.

The Countess de Meffray, the Count de l'Étoile, her brother, and Mademoiselle Beaumont accompanied them as far as Immergrün, where the latter promised to meet us on our arrival, after her visit to Lorraine, with Amelia and Paul.

The correspondence agreed upon between Amelia and myself was continued as regularly as that of Paul and Léon while we remained in Sicily; but suddenly it ceased, and we could only conjecture the reason till one never-to-be-forgotten day, that found us at the most beautiful of all the garden-spots in the world—Sorrento.

## CHAPTER XX.

### INCOGNITO.

WE had chosen the Hotel Tasso for our residence at Sorrento, and, held by the enchantments of the place, we had been only loiterers there for several months, although my father's perfect restoration to health, and my invigorated tone, left no excuse for our continued absence from Immergrün.

With the same fancy that all travellers are supposed to have for identifying with places of interest their productions or suggestions through poets, painters, or sculptors, I was poring over the pages of Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered" one morning, on the balcony that overlooks the cliffs on which stands the house where Tasso was born.

Léon had gone into the town to select some ornaments I had wished for in Sorrento-wood, inlaid in mosaic, of a bright coloring, and graceful designs peculiar to the workmanship of Sorrento artisans.

My sister listened to a canto of the "Jerusalemme" that I read to her, and then went to attend to some preparations for the packing of baggage that was to be forwarded in advance of our return home.

My father, joining me a few minutes after Léoni had left me, remarked:

"I am rather surprised at your remaining here, my daughter, when a patient little donkey is waiting in the garden for some one to occupy that empty saddle, so inviting with its fresh linen covering. Why did you not go with Léoni to the *fabrique*?"

"I have no better excuse for my bad taste than the old one, my dear father—a disposition to neglect all rational enjoyment for the easy indulgence of my imagination with the unwholesome food of poets!"

"Well, I am going to drive in a vettura to Vico. Would you like to accompany me?"

"I think not, this morning," I replied. "Brother expects to find me here on his return; and Nannine is under a cloud, that I cannot account for; so I must devote an hour or so to her."

"You are never wanting for reasons, for anything you do," replied my father, half laughing, as Léoni joined us, prepared for the drive, and Nannine followed to know if I intended to accompany them. When I had given my answer in the negative, Léoni said, as if in reply to my father's remark:

"Sister, have you forgotten the excuse you made, when you were about eight years old, for playing a song, one Sunday, when Léon interrupted you?"

"Yes," I said, "I have no recollection of it at all."

"When Léon looked very gravely at you, and said, 'Minnette, you are playing a song on Sunday, and it is wicked, even if it is your favorite tune,' you looked as grave as he, and whispered, 'How can it

be wicked to practise what I mean to sing when I go to heaven?"

My father burst into a hearty laugh at this absurd recollection; and Nannine's cloud was considerably diminished to all appearance, when the vettura drove out the gate, with Antonio, and left me with her alone.

"Nannine, sit with me on the balcony," I said, as soon as the carriage had disappeared. "I wish you to tell me some of the old legends of Sorrento."

"May I bring some fruit for you, *mia cara*?"

"Indeed you may," I replied; "the very suggestion gives me an appetite."

I improved the interval of her absence in the enjoyment of a reverie. Leaning over the railing of the balcony, with the book carelessly held in one hand, I glanced at a fly-leaf, where I had scribbled the motto, *Spes, Speranza, and Espérance*, my name in German text, and the date of my beginning of the poem. Then the opal ring that Amelia had refused to take when she restored my mother's ring, attracted my notice. It was an oriental opal of great value, and as I watched its changing colors, as if sparks of fire were escaping from it, I thought how appropriately it was called in the East the *flaming opal*, when Nannine caught me by my dress, exclaiming:

"Mademoiselle, your book is gone, and you almost followed it into the sea!"

"Oh dear, how provoking!" I said, when I saw my book sailing over the waves, its gilt edges flashing back saucy glances, as if mocking at my vexa-

tion. "It was Léon's book, and I have not finished it!"

The next moment I could have laughed at Nannine's wo-begone countenance; but I was astonished into a fit of sobriety by the superstitious terror with which she shuddered, and said:

"I do believe the spirits, that look through the water with eyes like fire at night, were trying to dazzle you even in the daylight, and draw you into the waves through their dreadful charm!"

"You certainly cannot be serious in saying anything so absurd!" I exclaimed.

"It is true, mademoiselle; and in the cave of St. Anthony there is a votive light always burning before the blessed St. Anthony, who keeps those baleful fires from harming the faithful."

Here was a fearful dash of cold water over my private speculations on the same uncertain ground, and there was no small degree of chagrin in my remark:

"I can well believe in the existence of the shrine, and I would venture on the certainty of a money-box in the vicinity."

I repented my ungracious speech to my faithful *bonne*, and restored her composure with caresses that never failed to comfort her, before I explained the phosphorescent lights that had been imposed on her credulity as evil spirits by a crafty, money-loving priesthood. Extremes of monkish fanaticism are, after all, parallel with that morbid indulgence of the imagination in ultra-spiritualism, I thought;

and, hereafter, whatever favors may be granted me through indications of ministering angels, in dreams or signs, I will regard it an unlawful and unhallowed means to invoke or endeavor to force revelations.

This digestion of Nannine's unfortunate remark was accompanied with the most cheerful talk on her part, and the satisfactory disposal of a basket of fruit placed on the floor between our chairs, as Nannine's lap was occupied by a bunch of sewing, and my white dress was the last one of my allowance for the week.

"Sister, I have some news for you!"

Jumping up, I ran through the dining-hall into the garden, to answer the cheery greeting of Léon, who saw me through the open doors, as he entered the main walk on a little white donkey no larger than a Newfoundland dog.

But the news were destined to wait.

As the donkey walked up to the door, the very picture of gravity, a great bundle of purchases, pendant on either side from a strap thrown across his back, and Léon seated behind them, utterly unconscious of his ludicrous appearance, as he sat as straight as possible, his feet nearly touching the ground, I burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, that was resented from an unexpected quarter.

The donkey-boy, who had waited Léon's return, stepped up to take the bridle as Léon attempted to scramble off, when the little animal, incensed at my want of respect for his gravity, turned short around with a fearful bray, and, throwing Léon head fore-

most into the nearest grass-plot, and growing more exasperated at Léon's shouts of laughter, he gave the donkey-boy a kick with his flying heels, and, sending him a complete somersault over Léon, rushed out of the gate, broke the bundles, and scattered our ornaments among the astonished peasants collected in the road.

My father came just in time to witness the capture of the donkey and the gathering up of the wrecked ornaments.

"Is any one hurt?" he asked.

"Nothing but the donkey's feelings," replied Léon, pouring half a hatful of extra baioches in the donkey-boy's hands, who walked off with a grin of satisfaction.

I assisted my brother in wiping the dust from the unfortunate ornaments—the only harm they sustained, with the exception of a few trifling breaks that could be easily repaired; and when Antonio, whose brow was more lowering than I had seen it since we left Rome, left the sitting-room, I asked for Léon's promised news. Producing a letter from Ethel, he read the statement that Amelia and Paul de Meffray had returned with Mademoiselle Beaumont to Immergrün, and, leaving her there, had proceeded to Rome!

"But," said Léon, "that was three months since; and is n't it strange that this letter should be so long on its way, and that we have heard nothing from the Count or Amelia?"

A strange interruption prevented my reply—a

prolonged dull, heavy sound of a signal-gun across the bay, followed the next moment by a returning salute from the fortress at Castelamare

We hurried to my father, and found him with several papers and letters open on the table beside him, while his face was ghastly pale.

To Léon's inquiries, he seemed unable to reply, and Antonio answered:

"The Count de l'Étoile has been arrested for sympathy with the Liberal movement in Italy."

"Paul arrested!" exclaimed Léon; "and where is Amelia?"

"She was last seen with my mother between Rome and Naples, and if she is discovered by the guards from Gaeta, she will be confined in the fortress till His Holiness is restored to the temporal power!"

"What in all the world can Amelia have to do with the restoration of—"

"My son," said my father, hastily, recovering from the first shock of the exciting news, "the facts are too evident from these papers to be disputed, and the precedents too numerous of unjust imprisonment during civil conflicts, to leave any cause for surprise." Dismissing Antonio, he continued: "I have news of the landing of French troops at Civita Vecchia, of Austrian invasions in the north, and Spanish invasions in the southern provinces, and the prospect for a general war is imminent. We must trust to the caution and shrewdness of Lavinia for

Amelia's escape from Italy in safety, and hasten our own departure for Immergrün."

"What can be the matter with Antonio? Nannine's strange conduct implies some apprehension. Can she suspect Antonio of treachery?"

It was I who proposed that question, as a whole "sea of troubles" rolled over my heart with the consciousness that this day was the end of my childish gayety of heart, and a future of grave anxieties must be my portion — who could tell me for how long?

Too depressed to listen to my father's instructions to Antonio and Nannine for immediate preparations for our departure from Sorrento on the following day, I went to the balcony again, to find a melancholy consolation in the sad moaning of the waves, that seemed to intone their dirge of "grief too sad for song" with more than wonted solemnity.

And what a mockery was the splendor of the heavens, smiling above the tossing waves and the agony of my suspense!

The day was — Italian; the air ethereal balm; the sky a golden arch, vaulting grandly over the deep, mysterious blue of the Mediterranean. Sorrento was blooming with the luxuriance of Eden. Terrace on terrace rose receding from the sea; parterres of flowers, screened from the sun by bowers of orange-blossoms, even while the golden fruit of an earlier season hung from interlacing boughs.

Sorrento is peopled with invisible ministers to every sense of enjoyment, and even my troubled

breast was beguiled into a sense of repose by its sweet enchantment!

Inhaling, with the freshness of the sea, mingled odors of violet, hayacinth, magnolia, and orange-blossom, I heard an evening hymn chanted by a procession of monks, going from a shrine in the valley to their monastery on the mountain, night-ingales trilling an accompaniment, and the ocean breezes murmuring a responsive Amen!

Looking into the waves, I thought of my book they had carried away, and then the scenes in the "Jerusalemme" were pictured to my mind. This rock-bound city, exposed to the broad sweep of the waves, illustrates the Siege, I thought. And in the restless surging of the sea I traced the origin of Tasso's boldest soarings, as well as the most delicate imagery of the "Jerusalemme." The blue waves, in their long lines of diamond-netted armor, with gleaming white crests, came, like the hosts of the Crusaders against the Paynim city, only to dash against a mighty barrier, to be broken, driven back, and overwhelmed by the multitude of illimitable waves, rising ever, and rolling in from the great sea beyond! "Thus far shalt thou go!" ay, and at the Great Captain's mandate, "Peace! be still!" even these waves must rest in calm silence. Oh, that the strife so threatening in this land were ended!

From the blue mist that envelops Capri I saw a sail emerge, and as it rose and fell on the billows, a stream of phosphorescent light, so alarming to Nannine, glanced in the shadow of the canvas. I had

intended to go that very night to the cave of St. Anthony, and dispel all her doubts by my experiments on an amber necklace, in the presence of the saint's effigy. But I must lose that sight. Then I thought with regret that none of the minstrels who came daily to the albergo had sung any of the songs of Tasso. Three hundred years before, a beautiful Neapolitan lady, Portia Rossi, had come to this very house as the bride of Bernado Tasso. And on this balcony the gentle sister of the poet Tasso watched in vain for her brother's return to her, when her mother had died, and her home was desolate, till one evening he came in disguise —

A grating of the boat's keel on the beach below the cliff interrupted my thought, and looking down, I saw the boat I had noticed before, with the sails dropped, and a party of minstrels, with zittah, mandolin, and harp, leaving the beach and coming toward the rocky stairway that led to our garden!

The harper was evidently the eldest of the party, and I was regarding his white beard and gray locks with a feeling of awe akin to that inspired by Father Beaumont, when, to my astonishment, the old man raised his eyes to my face and flashed at me a glance of joyful recognition!

But the next moment I ridiculed my own folly in being startled at a mistake, evidently, of the dim vision of age. And I was half ashamed when, as if my surprise had been observed, the harper removed his hat with an indescribable grace, and said:

"Pardon, signorina, if my glance was bold: my

imagination was so influenced by the power of this scene, and of the associations of Sorrento with all that is spiritual in my nature, that for a moment I mistook you, in your white robe, for one of those spirits, fairies, or nymphs, who have their haunts at Sorrento."

"You are a poet," I said, responding to the good will of the minstrel's remark, and if an improvisatore also, you have come opportunely; for my father, like Saul, is in great heaviness of spirit this evening, and the songs of Tasso, in the poet's own home, may have power to soothe him. If you will remain at the albergo till our dinner-hour, my father will hear your music at least."

"The signorina is gracious, and her encouragement is a good omen of the success of a tour just begun." And with a *gracia* in chorus, the minstrels went around by a path leading to the garden. I directed Antonio to give them refreshment, and joined my father in the sitting-room.

I had not time to tell them of the arrival of the new minstrels from Capri, when Léon came flying into the room, his face radiant with delight, and in his hand he held the lost book.

"Is n't it a remarkable coincident!" he exclaimed, "that a boat carrying some friends of De Meffray's to the fortress at Capri, should pick up this book and carry it straight to him? And by Minnette's scribbling these mottos, and her name, and the date of our arrival here, on the fly-leaf, he knew just where to send a message. See what he

writes on this cover. I can barely make it out: the water has soaked through the lot of soft paper I took off from under this. "*Amelia safe — her brother joins her soon.*"

"This is indeed a great relief," said my father. "But, what did the harper say further?"

"He talked broken German, and seemed anxious that his comrades should not understand him. The Cardinal H—— sent a demand for Paul's release, on condition that he would return with the guard to Gäeta, and induce his sister to remain there with him, till the war is ended. He will send his answer to-night, the harper said, after he has consulted with Amelia. And the old man assures me Paul's detention will be only to prevent his taking active part in the war, or aiding foreigners to escape who are found guilty of conspiracy against the Papal Government."

"My son, there is more meaning in this visit of the musicians, that at first seemed merely accidental, than I thought possible. What foreigners, but ourselves, can be suspected of intrigue with the count, except the students, who are already in Rome, and for the present safe from papal interference?"

"This story of the count's having seen that book may be a mere trick of the musician, who, after all, I begin to think is a spy!" exclaimed Léon; "for he let me recognize the book, before he delivered it, and may even have written that sentence to delude us into some confession."

"Antonio is at the bottom of it, if your conjec-

ture is right," said my father. "And the letters that have miscarried, as we supposed, may be the proofs he has furnished of our correspondence with the count, for the sake of some benefit promised, or to avert personal punishment."

My sister, coming in hurriedly at that moment, looked anxiously at each face, as if to read some confirmation of her own fears, and then asked:

"Do you think there is any danger of your being arrested, my dear father? I am almost distracted with Nannine's strange behavior. She laughs hysterically one minute, and the next sobs pitifully, and she has not spoken with Antonio to-day. I am certain we are threatened with some trouble that Nannine knows of, and dares not reveal!"

"In any event, my daughter, no dishonorable conduct can be proved of my actions, or Léon's, and our best security, until we are safe beyond Naples, will be a calm, deliberate proceeding in the plan we have already made for our journey. To fret over mere suppositions can avail nothing; and we must use all the fortitude we are capable of showing in these trying moments, relying on the kind Providence that directs our trials, and who alone can order the end!"

The doors opening into the dining-hall were thrown open before Léon could utter the sentence his impatience could hardly withhold, and Antonio announced dinner.

The minstrels, according to the Italian custom, were ranged on one side the room, and they rose as

we entered the hall. I had put my hand in my father's arm, and stood facing the old harper, while my father paused to say a few pleasant words to all the musicians. To my full inquiring gaze into the harper's eyes, he again flashed a glance whose meaning and identity I felt at the same instant. Paul de Meffray himself was the harper, and his presence in disguise betokened some danger to me and mine, that he had come to avert!

To my surprised recognition, he replied with a smile, and then said respectfully, but with the privileged air of an old musician, a leader of a minstrel band:

"At the signorina's request, I have improvised a song of Tasso, for which she has herself afforded the inspiration; and for the young signore a German song!"

"We will gladly hear them," my father replied, "and your music may have power to dispel the regrets that cloud our last evening at Sorrento."

In imminent emergencies one is apt to experience that unearthly calm frame of mind, that with a strange inconsistency admits of sympathy with extremely opposite effects in surrounding scenes, sounds, or discourse, rather relieved by the wild artificial harmony, than sensible of any discord.

It is the rude appeal of nature for exemption from the bitterness that the heart imbibes with every moment's reflection. Uncultivated and uncivilized peoples carry the extreme of this resistance to the lessons of purification and advancement of the soul

— in the chastisements of grief — to the horrible orgies and wakes that insult the very remains of those for whom they profess to mourn.

I look back at that evening at Sorrento as the crisis of each one's fate who shared the scene with me. And my father's gloomy conviction of impending trial, my sister's agonizing apprehension, Léon's desperation, and De Meffray's unflinching grasp of his opportunity to serve a friend or destroy an enemy, seem but parts of a thrilling overture for which my heart-cords, strained to their utmost tension, furnished the keynote.

Antonio was the only one who seemed unable to fall in with the wild rapture, low wailing, solemn grandeur, and plaintive melody of the music that formed a prelude to the song. He was grave and restless.

The doors opening into the garden and on the bay had been left wide open, to admit the evening air — so grateful after the warm hour of sunset; and the plashing of the fountain in an orange grove at the base of a vine-clad terrace on the one side, and the wild-wave music of the Mediterranean on the other, were distinct yet accordant harmonies with the sounds that De Meffray and his companions called from the instruments that seemed to respond with the soul of sadness, that the poet's actual embodiment could not have made more impressive.

For his subject, De Meffray chose the return of Tasso to Sorrento, after his imprisonment, in a shepherd's guise, unconscious of his mother's death,

while he related to his sister his own trials, until, seeing her fainting with sorrow, he discovered himself as Tasso, her brother.

Striking a chord of the harp, to give his companions the note, De Meffray paused but a moment, and then, to a sweet running accompaniment, sang with a voice rich in subdued melody:

Is it well with thyself and thy mother,  
In this bower, though earthly, so fair?  
Where even the spirits immortal  
That wander from Eden repair.

These groves, filled with fragrance and music,  
Give back their delight to my soul,  
But *thou*, lady, mute as thy lyre,  
Dost struggle some grief to control.

Thy gaze is as mournful as evening;  
My heart in thy smiles would fain bask;  
Thy brow so like death, it appals me,  
And frights back the question I'd ask.

Noble Portia, thy mother and Tasso's,  
*She liveth* — thy brother to greet?  
This packet from him I would give her,  
How blessed the moment they meet!

He bade me, a shepherd lad, bring it,  
"His sister Cornelia," he said,  
"Its contents would read to her mother,  
So tender and gentle the maid!"

Thy hand trembles, lady, nor opens  
The packet so prayerfully given!  
Oh, say not this hearth is deserted,  
That sorrow *her* heart-strings hath riven!

Thy sigh fills my soul with its anguish;  
 Would Tasso, thy brother, were here!  
 But he in dejection must languish  
 The world at his heart-cries to sneer!

In slavery worse than the galleys  
 He labors proud nobles to please,  
 Their jealousy goading to madness,  
 His efforts their hate to appease.

And while day and night he is toiling  
 Their courts to illumine with his light,  
 They envy the talent he gives them,  
 And banish the giver from sight.

Cornelia! — she faints — oh, my sister!  
 Look up, 't is thy brother who calls;  
 This shepherd-*guise* only discarding,  
 I'LL GUARD THEE — WHATEVER BEFALLS!

With that last line, De Meffray's eyes were fixed full on my face, and if there is an ecstasy in danger that assures us of the love we covet, my heart was thrilled with it. I could not tell the moment the song ended, for the echoes that reverberated in my heart, even after the voice had trembled to silence. The tumult of fear and apprehension in my own breast was silenced with this pæan of my soul — I love, and I am beloved!

## CHAPTER XXI.

## ARRESTED.

LÉONI was deeply moved by the pathos that the count had unconsciously thrown into his voice, and, unable to control her emotions, she left the hall immediately at the conclusion of the song.

My father made some trivial inquiries of the musicians regarding Capri, and Léon sat moodily attentive. Presently my sister returned, and said: "My dear father, if it will not be too troublesome, will you tell Nannine how to arrange those articles in your room — Nannine will show you what I mean — and Léon can tell her where to find some of his treasures that are to go in the same box. May I keep the fruit? We will be waiting for you here."

"Very well: we must have one more song when we return, and then we must be satisfied for this evening," my father answered, and followed Léon from the room.

"Sister, this will be our last evening; so come to the balcony and make the most of it."

What possesses her — I thought; one would think the occasion anything but one of anxiety, to hear that tone of voice.

I glanced at De Meffray, and he was actually repressing a smile at my perplexed expression.

The moment we entered the balcony, Antonio engaged in an inaudible conversation with the musicians, and Léoni had a good opportunity to say:

"Minnette, do not be alarmed; our father and Léon have already escaped, and Antonio will be arrested in their place."

De Meffray approached the doorway as I grasped the railing of the balcony in my trembling agitation, and, screening me from Antonio's observation, he quietly remarked:

"Does the signorina find Italy as beautiful as her native valley?"

"We have no Mediterranean there, and no setting like these skies for our evening star," Léoni answered.

"Ay, signorina," and De Meffray raised his voice, "the morning and evening stars reveal the full splendor of their smiling salutation to earth, when their jewelled coronets glitter in the skies of Sorrento."

Through the garden I heard a tramping of measured steps, and the next moment a company of Swiss guards entered the dining-hall.

I began to doubt my own sanity when the officer of the company, stepping up before De Meffray, politely offered him a paper, which De Meffray read carefully, placed in a pocket inside his mantle, and gave another to the officer, bidding Antonio "request his master, the Baron de Stalberg, and the signore, his son, to attend the presence of the guard a moment."

Léoni made a movement as if to pass through the room — when Antonio obeyed De Meffray's order, and went to seek my father and brother — but De Meffray said, restraining her:

"Pardon, signorina; I am compelled to detain you till the business of the guard is concluded."

"What is their business with my father?" I exclaimed, unable to contain my fears.

Antonio passed the door opening into the garden at that instant, going in the direction of the outer gate, his face pale and his countenance terribly agitated.

"Seize that man; he has betrayed his trust, and is trying to escape."

Every soldier rushed from the room, the musicians following, and De Meffray, blocking the doorway, looked back at us with a reassuring smile, as Léoni said, "Be calm, Minnette; it is just as they planned it, and the guard will soon be gone."

Antonio was brought into the hall by the guard, in a state of fright and bewilderment pitiable to behold.

"Where are your master, the Baron de Stalberg, and his son?" asked the officer, sternly.

"I cannot find them," replied Antonio.

"Since I have been here," said De Meffray, "this man's actions have caused me to suspect treachery, and I am convinced his wife has assisted in getting the baron and the young signore away."

"Indeed, signore, I am innocent of your charge."

"Prove it then," the officer answered gruffly, "and

take these men to your wife. She can answer for herself, or she is no woman."

This suggestion was immediately acted upon, and poor Antonio was marched straight through the rooms, where all trace of Nannine had disappeared, and the corded trunks and boxes were manifest proofs of hasty preparations for our departure!

The rage of the officer was equal to Antonio's despair at his helpless position; and when the order was given to place him on the horse intended for my father, the muttered threats of the officer, his injunction to the musicians, whose real profession we had truly guessed, to report Antonio's treachery, at Capri, where he ordered their immediate return, and his advice respectfully offered for De Meffray to remain at Sorrento till the return of the guard, to assist in searching the fugitives when an order was obtained—all this failed to divert my attention from the distress of Antonio; and as he was whirled out of sight in the midst of the mounted guard, I broke down completely, and cried aloud.

They had not been gone three minutes, when old Lavinia walked quietly into the hall.

"No time to lose; order the baggage away, and follow us to the cave," she said to De Meffray, who, keeping up the assumed office of a spy in disguise, had already despatched *his aids* to Capri by the boat in which they crossed to Sorrento.

While De Meffray arranged for the removal of our baggage to Castelamare with the proprietor of the albergo, where it was to be expressed for Dresden,

old Lavinia took off my dress, and robed me in a complete Contadina costume, even to the *pane*, and directed Léoni in the arrangement of a Neapolitan robe for herself.

Taking only some warm wrappings, the moment our dresses were changed old Lavinia walked out of the albergo, and Léoni and I followed. We had not spoken one word about anything but our costumes to Lavinia, and in perfect silence we hurried after her, as she took great strides along the path leading to the cave of St. Anthony.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE CAVE OF ST. ANTHONY.

THE cave of St. Anthony was an inland cave in structure, though found on the coast of the Mediterranean.

From Naples to Sorrento the coast is one grand irregular chain of promontories, intersected by inlets from the sea, and distorted into endless convolutions by volcanic action and tidal winds and waves. These points of coast-land are joined by bridges where the recesses are narrow, and in the broader gorges the road is continued around the concave sides of the mountains, running like a serpentine marble walk at the base of the whole chain, walled in by solid rocky ledges from the inundations of the Mediterranean.

Crossing a bridge in the first recess below Sorrento, and turning up the lower bank of the inlet, we came suddenly upon the cave. Entering by a narrow passage-way, that had been widened from a mere crevice, through which the cave was first discovered, we found ourselves in an octagon room, about twenty feet in diameter, walled and roofed with solid rock. Opposite the doorway, a shrine, like

those so commonly seen in Catholic countries, was placed, about four feet from the ground — an image of St. Anthony, in a glass case, a little oil lamp sending a feeble ray from its crusted wick. A money-box, secured to the wall under the shrine, informed the chance pilgrim that a coin would be accepted by the saint in lieu of a taper, when circumstances of a local nature made it expedient.

St. Anthony's office was to extinguish evil fires, not to preserve sacred ones from draughts and other innovators. A faithful monk from the nearest monastery was able to feed the little lamp sufficiently to reveal the requirements of the saint intimated by the money-box, which was but one of a million of those appurtenances of the horse-leech whose cry is always, "Give! give!"

Old Lavinia had provided lights for us. Two earthen crescets, or Roman lamps, with wicks saturated in a preparation of refined lard-oil perfumed with myrrh, threw out a pleasant light and odor at the same time.

It is certainly a wise provision of a great proselyting institution, whose strength consists in its magnitude, to leave these *vestibules* to the Mother Church open to every wayside farer. There is the retreat for the travel-worn pilgrim, who hails its refreshing coolness "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." To the fugitive, a sanctuary from the penalty of transgression, where, in the cleft of the rock, God's own hand will screen his guilt from the burning gaze of Justice. To the innocent

worshipper of heaven's loving kindness, it is a place where he may pause while the world rushes by; and when his tribute of thanksgiving is paid, he finds he has lost neither time nor opportunity, for a better path opens before him as he leaves the shrine, with fewer tangles and more sunlight in it!

Alas, that such precious helps must share the alternative of many customs that we wandering Israelites abused! But when our very manna is contaminated by our greedy and evil appropriation of it, it must be withheld, and when we can quiet our consciences for neglect of the Temple services, with a hasty Pater Noster, or "Hail Mary," in the vestibule, we must bring out the High Altar stripped of all its sensual charms, and command a sincere worship of the Invisible God!

There were two suppliants kneeling at the foot of a rude stone altar, as my sister and I entered the cave of St. Anthony—both in the Contadina costume of the Campagna; and in a corner of the cavern stood two piffiarri, or mountain minstrels, who come always before the fête-day of a favorite saint, to visit each shrine in the degenerative streets of Rome and Naples, to invest them with the sanctity of their pure inspirations, as spirit-voices have breathed to them the heavenly notes, in the sacred silence of the mountain heights.

When the stations have all been visited, the minstrels improve their opportunity to visit the studios, and, by posing for the artists, they reap a profitable harvest, carrying home ample sustenance

for their few wants during the bleak winter months. Supposing the two females were sisters and daughters to the old minstrel and his son, I was not surprised at their quietly waiting for the conclusion of the former's devotions. Men have a peculiarly willing acquiescence to that one undeniable saying in woman's praise, "Last at the cross, and earliest at the grave."

Old Lavinia threw a glance around the cavern, that rested on the kneeling figures, and grew into an expression of impatient discontent.

My sister and myself were evidently taken for what we personated in our borrowed costumes, and the piffiarri, with the kindly thoughtfulness of age on the father's part, and the shy respect of youth on the son's, turned their faces from us, as if to avoid interfering with our religious intentions in entering the cave.

It was a strange scene—a beautiful contrast between the sombre shadowy seclusion of a cold damp cavern, and the bright life without, which was colored in our gay costumes, as well as the jaunty dresses, decked with ribands and flowers, of the piffiarri.

Old Lavinia might have represented the witch of Vesuvius, only she stood so erect. And there was a sinewy strength in the knitting of her bony frame and the play of her wrinkled visage, that added to her firm carriage and unhesitating step a boldness and intrepidity, at once assuring one of her ability to accomplish her most daring purpose.

Her plain, dark woolen dress and gray cloak were only relieved by the red kerchief she wore on her head, as we see them worn by the venditti on the Corso, or an old apple-woman on Broadway. On the road she always threw over her gaudy head-dress a black silken shawl, that served as a protection against night-damps, or a screen from intrusive observation in the daylight when it suited her to remain unrecognized. Lavinia stood in the doorway; the piffiarri seemed not to regard her evident annoyance at the devotional attitude of the Contadini; but, with a feeling of undefined dread, lest this continued and apparently purposeless silence would induce them to accost us with questions. I drew nearer old Lavinia, and involuntarily put my hand in hers.

The action affected her strangely. The hard visage softened to a smile, like that which unconsciously answers an infant's mute inquiry, when, seeing trouble in its mother's face, it can only try with its baby-efforts to draw her attention to itself. Withdrawing her stern look at the two Contadini, and slowly kneeling, the tears rolled down her cheeks, and she whispered with choking articulation, "Kneel, child, and from your earnest heart offer a petition for the forgiveness of my misguided son!"

Ah, she had witnessed my pity for Antonio, when the rude hands of the guards hurried him to the dungeon, from which he had not the honor nor the courage to protect my father and brother.

Obeying her request, I knelt on the ground be-

side old Lavinia; but, between my sight and the throne to which my soul aspired, a smiling face, so full of loving sympathy, filled my vision, that I yielded to the trance-like spell of its smile, and forgot all earthly needs in that momentary communion with my mother's spirit!

I was recalled to a sense of my real position when old Lavinia lifted me from the ground, and, as I opened my eyes reluctantly on the actual scene around me, my astonishment can be imagined when I recognized in the piffiarri my father and Léon, anxiously regarding me, and Amelia and Nannine trying to soothe Léoni's unrestrained grief.

"This excitement will kill her!" she said, with an intensity of fear and wild hopelessness, as I opened my eyes; and then Amelia whispering to her, as she saw me moving, Léoni smothered her sobs. My outstretched hand was released from Nannine's grasp to meet Amelia's, and in her embrace all my vitality returned! Heart to heart, we were united by a sympathy that no accident had created. It was a communion of pure love foreordained for holy purposes, and guarded by angel ministers.

After our hurried exchange of congratulations — only half satisfactory because only half understood — old Lavinia took from her pocket a flask, and, without asking my consent, presented it to my lips, and I swallowed a fearful dose! I shuddered with disgust at the rank, disagreeable flavor that filled my throat with its acrimonious taste.

"What is it like?" asked old Lavinia, as if I had uttered my detestation of the draught.

"The poison of asps!" I replied.

A strange laugh was her only answer to my comparison, and then a piercing look, as if she were trying to fathom the depths of that power she had ascribed to me of natural divination.

"Nannine, I am so glad you are going with us!" I exclaimed. But her gloomy countenance did not brighten. She only shook her head sadly and said:

"No, *mia cara*, I cannot go. Antonio has destroyed all my happiness as well as his own."

"Do not despond so much, Nannine," my father replied. "In rendering obedience to his directors, Antonio was placed in a very unenviable position; but I am certain he will see the wrong of such a system to its servants; and when I am convinced that he has entirely repented his part in the base scheme to deprive me of my power to protect my children, and to punish an impulsive boy for a heedless expression of his convictions, I will receive him again, for your sake!"

Mother Lavinia seized Nannine's hand before she had time to reply, and hurried her from the cave. A loud cracking of a whip, that was accompanied by a gay song of some moonlight stroller, was more and more distinctly heard approaching the cave, and, a moment after old Lavinia left us, a jolly-looking *portatore d'acqua*, or water-carrier, entered the cave, and stood smilingly regarding us in the doorway! A flaming red waistcoat buttoned close over a blue

striped shirt with the sleeves rolled up nearly to the elbows, brown striped pantaloons, rolled just enough to make his blue stockings and dusty shoes conspicuous, a beaver with one side of the rim fastened up on the side of the hat with a bunch of ribands, was the fantastic garb characteristic of the grotesque taste of the Sicilian water-carriers.

Amelia laughed, as I looked at her to know if we should vacate the cave for a new worshipper, and Léon exclaimed:

"De Meffray! what a complete disguise! I never should have known you!"

And yet but a few touches of a pencil, deepening and widening the shade of eyebrows and moustache, and lowering the line where his pure brow and dark hair met, had been the whole work of transmutation from the Greek face to an absurdly rounded, Italian peasant countenance, brimful of merriment and dare-deviltry!

The effect was irresistible, and we all joined Amelia in a hearty laugh, that wonderfully eased our care-burdened hearts.

"What an absurd masquerade!" said Léon, holding his sides with laughter.

"And yet," said my father to De Meffray, recovering his gravity, "I scarcely see how we can afford to be so merry yet. My greatest anxiety now is on your account, my young friend!"

"I shall not be missed before to-morrow," replied De Meffray. "My good friend, the Caprian minstrel, who allowed me to rifle him of his papers, and then

taught me a spy's use of them, will enjoy his slumbers in my prison-cell to-night; and when he rends the morning skies with vows of vengeance on my head, in the presence of the commandant, I shall be beyond the reach of its accomplishment!"

"But that is not all. I learned from Amelia your refusal of an honorable position in the Pope's gift, that would not compromise your honor in accepting it, as it requires no action on your part against the cause you sympathize with!"

"Baron de Stalberg, here is my answer," and De Meffray, taking Amelia's hand, seemed to appeal to my father to recognize the appreciation of both sister and brother for the part we had taken in restoring their relationship. "What selfish consideration can ever outweigh the obligation of either of us to you and yours?"

"And yet," said my father, with the tenderness that I had never heard in his voice before, except when he addressed his own children, "it has cost your brave heart no slight pain, to be forced to lay aside your pride of patriotism for a humiliating disguise, your ambitious dreams of prominence in a noble cause for tedious and hazardous flight."

"Ah! Baron de Stalberg, you have touched the right cord for my response, in that one word *hazard*. To Léon and myself, the daring and excitement of this escapade will be compensation for any disappointment in our desires to play the soldier. And that is all it could amount to. Before the French cannon, Mazzini's most sanguine crusaders must

relinquish their hopes of liberating Rome from the thralldom of Popery!"

"There will be a day of reckoning for the hydra-headed Napoleons," exclaimed Léon. "All that is valuable they rob from whatever country they can steal into; and on what they cannot move, they leave the impress of their spite in the shape of cannon-balls!"

"I suppose I am more French than Italian by my birthright," said De Meffray, with a shrug that certainly evinced a claim of French extraction, indisputable as it was comical, "but I prefer one drop of pure Italian blood to all the inflammable liquid called French blood, that may run in my veins! Are you ready to start?"

The last words were addressed to old Lavinia, who stood silent and gloomy in the doorway.

"Yes," she replied; "and if you are not cautious, you will defeat my plan to outwit the whole council of cardinals. If we fall into their hands, we will find that Mother Church's affection for her *wayward children* (I wish I could give the *tone* with the words) is a very different one from Mother Nature's even, and the hardships of the Abruzzi not to be named with the holy tasks of penance prescribed by the Scarlet Lady!"

The count looked at mother Lavinia with an expression that was utterly unintelligible to me: only I could see that, however he might disapprove of her sentiment, he was not offended by the poor heart's natural expression of the hatred she felt to-

ward the system that had caused her wretchedness. Amelia sighed gently, and forbore a reproof.

My father, wishing to divert Lavinia from reflections that could not heal her individual grievance any more than they could remedy the cause of the evil, said: "I think your plan of remaining at Lancianno, if we can once get into Abruzzi Citra, is the most practicable one; and we shall be so proficient as models, under your training, that we can venture to take a fishing-smack, or some of the market-boats on the Adriatic, for Venice."

"Our home at dear old Immergrün seems very far away," Léoni said, in a half-weary, half-murmuring tone. Its dreary echo comes back to me *now*, with a sad, sad moan, and I realize as truly that chill of despondency that induced the prophetic murmur, and was communicated to my heart.

"The vettura is coming—Nannine is safe at the house of the vetturino," Lavinia said, before the rest of us could distinguish from the roar of the sea on the coast, the sound of wheels on the hard road.

Beckoning me to follow, she went out to meet the carriage. Not noticing the count, who followed us, she said, in a conciliatory tone, "I sent Nannine without warning, for I could not trust her to say good-by."

"Then shall I not see my poor Nannine again?" I asked.

Old Lavinia paid no attention to my question, but, dismissing the boy who drove the vettura, she took her seat on the vetturino's box, and signalled to De Meffray to summon the rest from the cave.

"Keep up a brave heart, Mademoiselle Minnette. I am afraid your sister, who has seemed strong till now, is suffering more than she is willing to acknowledge in her anxiety. Whatever happens, I have friends who will assist your father; and if I am recaptured, it will annoy me, but I can suffer no serious punishment."

"And Léon?" I asked, feeling more dread of the silence I knew the count purposely kept on that point than an expression of his worst apprehension.

"He must be concealed at all hazards," was the slowly uttered reply. "They had better capture both your father and myself than him, while these spiteful advisers of His Holiness send out their decrees from Gäeta. That unfortunate remark on the Pinician has been magnified to a matter worthy of a special edict from Gäeta, and there would be no silken thread to the seal."

Old Lavinia had quietly listened to De Meffray, and when he finished, she looked at me seriously, and said:

"Now, you have drawn enough torture out of one question to satisfy any reasonable creature of your size; so let the count assist you in the vettura, and call the rest! We must manage to keep between the guard from Capri, if they venture across to-night, and Antonio's escort."

"She is peevish to-night," said the count, in an undertone, as he turned to obey Lavinia's directions; "but it is the only vent for her trouble on Antonio's account. She would sacrifice herself for any of us."

I meant to place my right foot on the step of the carriage, but before I could accomplish it, both feet were on the floor of the vettura. I had been lifted as if I were a doll, and with one spring of De Meffray's firm, sinewy arms, I was off the ground and in the vettura.

"Well done," said old Lavinia. "He could n't have lifted me so."

De Meffray had disappeared in the cave when the sentence was half spoken, and I took a seat in silence, awed by the wild grandeur of the scene around me, as my glance took in the whole sweep of the Bay of Naples, from Naples to Sorrento.

Overhead, myriads of golden lights reflected their scintillations on the deep blue waves surging at our feet. Night had clothed with a deeper majesty the sloping hills and lofty mountains hemming us in between their silent walls and the moaning Mediterranean. In soft spring light there was an irresistible soothing spell in the purple haze that lent its rich hue to the verdure on these hillsides, where orange, citron, pine, and olive trees, grape and flowering vines, and bright-leaved plants formed a gorgeous mosaic for the blue-and-emerald setting of the Mediterranean. But now, great pillars of cloud, rising in heavy volumes from Vesuvius, stretched along the skies like dark beacons of coming despair. While I was regarding these inauspicious signs, the moon suddenly lifted her head above the distant Alps, and a rosy light flushed over the snowy peaks as delicate as the bloom on a maiden's cheek.

"Look!" exclaimed old Lavinia, and a rattling sound, like the bursting of a cannon loaded with grape-shot, directed my eyes to Vesuvius.

A shower of fire was thrown off from the column of fire and smoke that covered from our sight the rosy Alps and their fickle Mistress Moon, and in his wrath at the favor of her glance at the pure snowy peaks, the black sides of Vesuvius trembled, shivered, and groaned with unrelieved, jealous rage.

"If you were to watch them all night, you'd see this flirtation and quarrelling kept up," said old Lavinia; "so you need not mind it. I take my omens from smaller things."

The night seemed darker than before, till the moon appeared after this fiery display of Vesuvius, and the rocks beside us, rising in perpendicular columns, towered in the darkness like great temples for unhallowed worship, their walls reverberating the incessant anthems of the Mediterranean, and by their rude weird majesty imposing on all that was credulous in my nature of the mystic and awful.

I scarcely heeded the entrance of the rest into the vettura, and as the horses—three abreast, as they are driven on the Italian roads—dashed off from De Meffray's impatient whip, the reckless speed suited the beat of my pulse, quickened by the draught old Lavinia had administered; and the midnight hour, the occasion of our flight, and the increasing tempest of sounds accompanying the panorama before us, were the grandest, wildest natural harmony I ever experienced.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A MIDNIGHT EXCURSION.

HOW long we had been flying around sharp curves that followed the winding of projecting rocks, across bridged chasms, and along white stretches of road, while the sea and mountains raced swiftly past us on either side, in mere lines of water and landscape, I could not tell; but it seemed an age since we had started—when the horses were reined in at the entrance to a town on the coast.

Léoni had seemed only half conscious while she rested against Amelia, who tried in vain to rouse her from her apathy.

"She must not sleep in this night air; it is madness to let her," grumbled old Lavinia. I had chafed her hands, but they fell listlessly in her lap the moment I stopped. Amelia and I both whispered to her that my father was getting uneasy about her, in vain. She would not even try to rouse her energies from the sluggish state I had never known her to be in before.

I wondered, but dared not ask old Lavinia, why she did not try Léoni with the stimulant that was running in electrical currents through my veins,

coursing to my brain, it seemed to me, and inflaming my very eyes with intense fever.

"Where are we?" I asked, standing up in the carriage as it stopped.

"At the town of Vico," answered De Meffray. "The streets are so narrow here we cannot drive three horses abreast, and must take off one."

I drew the pins from the *pane* on my head, and my curls fell heavily on my shoulders, damp with the night moisture, and hot with the fever of my brain. Pushing my hair from my temples, the night air bathed them with its dewy coolness. It was perfumed with magnolia, and balmy with the spray from the waves at our feet.

The right horse had been detached from the right shaft, and placed in advance of the other two; and, De Meffray, mounting the leader to ride postilion, was just starting, when old Lavinia said to Léoni:

"Mademoiselle, you had better walk through the town, or, at least, part of the way, for I cannot let you sleep."

Permitting my brother to assist her out of the vettura, Léoni passively consented to the proposition; and was too indifferent to her comfort or discomfort to resist, though I could see she shivered as if the exertion was instinctively dreaded.

"I will go, too," I said, jumping from the carriage, glad to have the freedom, and anxious to see my sister rally from her apathy.

"Signore, will you walk with us?" asked old Lavinia, of my father. "If we are overtaken by

the guard, do whatever the Signorina Amelia directs," she said, to Léon; "and leave the count with the horses: he will be in no danger of detection."

"The signorina knows every path from here to Naples, as well as I do," she said, in reply to the look of inquiry my father gave her.

"Do you think it would be better to let her accompany us and remain yourself with my son, if there is reason to think we may meet a guard?"

Shaking her head and looking significantly at Léoni, telling as plainly by her gesture as words could have expressed, the necessity for her watching my sister, she replied:

"I must look ahead a little, when we reach the other gate, and see if the road is clear."

Revived somewhat by the forced exercise, Léoni walked slowly, but with more strength, I thought, than she seemed to have before she left the vettura.

Seeing her better, old Lavinia said: "Mademoiselle Minnette, your sister can follow us with the Baron de Stalberg, and you will be better for a little run to the point outside the gate; so let us go on faster."

The stimulus of the draught seemed to have lent wings to my feet, and old Lavinia's long strides hardly kept pace with my rapid steps through the narrow streets, that seemed crowding in on me as I hurried to gain the fresh breeze from the sea again.

"Why do not you give Léoni some stimulant?" I ventured to ask.

"It is no use, and would do more harm than

good. She had the fever in her blood before to-day, or she would not so soon show the effect of this excitement," answered old Lavinia.

"The fever?" I exclaimed.

"Yes; and if she does not sleep when we stop at Castelamare to-night, you will have to leave her with me, and go on with the count and your father."

It did not enter my mind that she had omitted to name Amelia and Léon in this arrangement; but I soon discovered how completely old Lavinia could manage an intrigue!

When we reached the north entrance to Vico, through which we were to make our exit, the vettura was just in sight behind us, and Léoni and my father had entered it again.

About a hundred yards from the gate a point in the road commanded several miles of the coast beyond. Hurrying to the point, we had but to take one look, and a sight met our eyes that made old Lavinia's countenance swarthy with terror. The very guard that had arrested Antonio was returning, with his white horse plainly distinguishable, at a fast gallop!

"That is something I was not prepared for!" Lavinia exclaimed; and, rushing back to the carriage that just passed out of the gate, she lifted Léoni from the vettura. While obeying her directions, that I could not hear, Amelia and my brother sprang out of the other side of the carriage, and disappeared in a ravine that opened in the mountain south of the gate.

"Get in, and seem to be asleep, signore," said De Meffray to my father; and, snatching my *pane* from the seat of the carriage, he pinned it like a three-cornered shawl under my chin.

"These flying curls must be imprisoned, at all events," he said, amused at my eagerness, and half-daring courage, that the stimulant had no doubt helped to give me.

Directing me to stand in the road, and move carelessly out of their way when the guard came, De Meffray began to turn the vettura, and pulling and screaming at the horses like a veritable Sicilian, he blocked up the gate with the vettura, just as the guard rode up to it.

"What are you stopping there for, right in the entrance?" called out the officer, whose voice had the same harsh grating sound as when he upbraided Antonio so severely at Sorrento.

"My leader is balky," replied De Meffray, in a careless manner, true to the character he had assumed.

"The devil's own luck I have to-night," said the captain, savagely. "Can't you take him out, and pull the vettura in with the other horses? Don't stand howling like an idiot!"

De Meffray did cut the most ludicrous figure in his portatore costume, and his laughing eyes could scarcely help betraying his own consciousness of their absurd expressions, as he blinked them, and screamed with every blink at the poor horse he was holding back, while he made frantic gestures, as if to hurry him on.

In the mean time, Lavinia had made good her retreat with Léoni; and, taking the leader from the traces, De Meffray backed the vettura into the road again.

As the troops filed past, De Meffray, placing himself in the captain's way as he held the leader by the bridle, whined out like an errand-boy, "A carlino, signore captain, for my trouble!"

"Get out, you rascal; you'll not get a *grano* from me, but *that*," brandishing his sword, that he had been flourishing for my admiration, while the carriage was backing, "if I find you in my way again."

"Where are you going with that crazy old carriage?" asked the captain, taking a second thought as he was on the point of starting after the guards, already out of sight, their horses' hoofs clattering noisily over the flags of lava in the narrow, high-walled streets.

"I was just thinking there was no use going on to-night to Sorrento; for if I turn back to Castelmare, I can bring down more passengers, and Beppo will get the vettura in good time," said De Meffray, coolly.

Beppo was the owner of the line of post-carriages, and often employed the peasants to drive them down from Castelmare to Sorrento; so the answer was a safe one.

"I don't think you will go to Castelmare to-night; so help the girl into the vettura, and give us the pleasure of your company at Sorrento, as soon as you can catch up to us."

I was cold with fright, and De Meffray started so violently that his horse was frightened and jerked the bridle out of his hand, and ran up the road toward Castelamare.

The captain laughed, and said, "Now, if I could be spared from to-night's business, I'd offer to keep the girl's company while you go after the horse, and the old piper sleeps so sensibly. But I must 'go where honor,' etc., you know the rest. Don't be worried about the horse; he can't go far."

"When *folly* loosens a man's tongue, what woman can exceed his empty gabble!" I was thinking, when De Meffray, recovering his voice at the last suggestion, asked:

"What's to stop the horse?"

"A big boulder that has tumbled from the cliff, and is jammed in the road between the palisades and the ledge, so we can't pass even with our horses. We will send the men up with drills and powder in the morning and blast the rock. So follow on to Sorrento; you'll find us at the Albergo Tasso."

And the vain babblers put spurs to his horse and followed the guard.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE BOWLDER.

TAKING out a pocket-handkerchief the moment the captain disappeared, the count wiped his forehead, and said to my father, who received me in his arms as I sprang into the carriage shivering with a nervous chill:

"The warmest work I ever did was to rein in my temper long enough to let that fellow get out of my way."

"You did well to restrain it," my father replied; "for he could be ugly enough if fairly provoked. Minnette's a brave little maiden, and doing very well now," he continued, in answer to De Meffray's anxious look, as my father enveloped me in a warm covering and placed me against the back of the carriage. But my feelings did not accord with the account of me. I was doing very ill instead of very well; and the effects of the draught were not likely to trouble me with an excess of courage any longer.

Looking in the direction of the fugitives, De Meffray shouted all manner of Sicilian lines agreed upon as signals for a recall in such scattering emergencies, but no creature in that dreary midnight scene was visible but the three nervous watchers.

"I had better go on and see what prospect there is of our managing the bowlder," said De Meffray, after ten minutes, and no one appeared; "and should the guard or any other party to be avoided come this far before I return, you can drive slowly on after me, and we must trust my sister and mother Lavinia with Léon and his sister. They are both accustomed to such adventures, and will run no risks."

He had not gone out of our sight when we saw the runaway leader trotting back again; and, catching him, the count mounted his back, waved his hat to us, and galloped around a promontory that shut him too away from us.

"I am very anxious about Léoni. She is not like herself in this trouble, and seems scarcely aware of the danger of our position," said my father.

I did not deceive my father. It was better he should think Léoni was merely bewildered and apathetic, than know what was evidently the case. As old Lavinia had judged, a slow fever had been coming on a week before; and daily headaches as the sun set, sleepless nights, and heaviness on waking in the mornings were all, to my mind, clear symptoms of the fever I had not suspected before.

After another ten minutes of painful suspense, old Lavinia appeared with Léoni, and, to my comfort, my sister seemed to have recovered more life, and walked better than when she first left the carriage.

But when they reached the carriage, I was shocked at the expression of Léoni's countenance. In that short time of our journey, her face seemed to have

become haggard, her eyes sunken, cheeks drawn, and mouth painfully set.

She answered my look with a faint smile, and there was a glassy brilliancy of the eye that I knew was no indication to afford any comfort. Old Lavinia sighed as she assisted her in the vettura; and seeing my eyes filling with tears that I could not restrain at this sad condition of my sister, she said, quietly, and with less fretfulness in her voice than since we left the cave:

"If we reach Castelmare, the signorina must not go further to-night. She needs the rest; and it might be better not to expose her to the sea air, even to-morrow, for she has a little fever, and cannot take the remedies she ought to have, while she is out and unprotected from the dampness."

"My daughter, do you feel ill?" asked my father, now realizing for the first moment Léoni's actual danger. Old Lavinia's manner had betrayed more than her words.

"I am more tired than anything; and a dull aching in my limbs, with alternations of heat and cold all through my blood, seem like fever symptoms," she quietly replied. "But one good night's rest, and Lavinia's prescription that she has been telling me about, will restore me very quickly, I know."

We were at the foot of a mountain, on which a monastery was standing conspicuously. Its windows reflected the red flames of Vesuvius.

"Heaven avert the omen!" old Lavinia said, under her breath, shaking with suppressed agitation,

as she looked suddenly, with an expression of horror, at the monastery, the door of which had opened, and a procession of monks in black robes came forth, bearing lighted torches, whose flare made their hideous masks, and the black pall covering a coffin carried in their midst, horribly glaring — the death's-head and cross-bones embroidered in white on the pall that swept the ground, looking ghastly in the moonlight — while the monks, slowly disappearing behind the brow of the mountain, chanted a wailing dirge, full of hopeless woe, rather than the promise of resurrection.

"What a heathenish horror!" exclaimed old Lavinia, the moment her vision was freed from the spectacle. We were all too deeply affected to reply; so, turning suddenly away from the carriage, the old woman went with those same impatient strides down the hill, into the ravine, where Amelia and my brother had disappeared.

Lavinia had scarcely gone, when we heard a sharp report of a small firearm, seemingly north of us, and to the right considerably of the coast road.

"What can that be?" my father exclaimed, grasping the reins, that had been lying idly on the front of the vettura.

Old Lavinia came back at a pace that I cannot describe. She neither ran nor walked; but, impelled by a strong motive, she moved as people rush through blinding smoke, or from a falling ruin, when no one can tell "how they escaped." Perhaps, in such a crisis, the invisible wings expand involuntarily, to

avoid permanent adoption prematurely. Or, it may be, some witness of the peril, who desires that the threatened victim shall not quit the world before himself, lends a double power of escape through his saving impulse.

In the latter case, Lavinia had three forces added to her own power of locomotion; for even my sister threw off her wrappings and stood up in the vettura, looking wildly toward the ravine, as the old woman emerged from it, alone.

Seizing the reins as she mounted the vetturino's box, Lavinia waited, with her head bent forward as if to lessen the space between herself and some point where she hoped to hear another signal — and sure enough it came. The second time, followed by an explosion that my father at once interpreted — the blasting of the boulder.

Off dashed the horses, and to my question, half shrieked in my nervous excitement:

"Amelia and Léon, we are leaving them — where are they?" Lavinia answered:

"Wherever the signals were fired, and they are warning us of our own danger!"

Around those curves, and over the bridges of the coast road, the wheels were literally *spinning*, and fire flashed from the horses' feet with every stroke of their hoofs on the rocky road. We were going around the base of one of the largest promontories, so we could not see more than a few yards ahead of us at any time. I remembered that afterward, but had not the sense to think then how pedestrians, by a short ascent on one side, and an equal descent on

the other, could reach the point we were striving after by a long circuit around the mountain.

The last sharp turn brought us in full view of the palisades:

An immense rock was balancing on the ledge of the embankment, the horse's traces fastened around a sort of knob of the rock, and De Meffray stood holding the horse on the side of the boulder opposite the way we were coming. A place just wide enough for us to pass through was cleared without touching on either side, though Lavinia scarcely slackened the speed of the horses; and the instant we passed the boulder, it rolled with a tremendous shock from the ledge against the palisades—and we were barred from the pursuit of a guard from Capri!

Amelia, Léon, and De Meffray took their places without speaking—their faces telling all they had suffered in the time we were answering their signal—and, without urging, the horses dashed on with us. In one hour from the time we left Vico, we were landed on the platform at the railroad station at Castelamare.

Thrusting his papers in my father's hand, De Meffray hailed the guard of a railway carriage attached to an engine already "fired up" for use.

"Is this the train for the Cardinal M.'s passenger?" asked De Meffray.

"It is."

"He has escaped, and I have brought the bearer of a despatch to his eminence. Monseignor, the guard of your carriage!" said De Meffray, taking off

his hat to my father, while old Lavinia, marshalling all the rest of us out on the platform, grumbled and wrangled with some imaginary extortioner as she counted from her purse the price of our fare into De Meffray's hand.

Showing the guard his papers with a seal that no good Catholic would dispute in the hands of His Satanic Majesty, my father coolly remarked:

"I will wait a half-hour or so. A messenger may arrive from Capri,"—and off he walked to the waiting-room.

De Meffray was mounting his box in true vetturino fashion, when old Lavinia called out:

"Go tell the signore what I wish!"

Laughing derisively, De Meffray only waited to catch the eye of the curious guard, and said, "That old woman has offered me more than the price of her trip to get the signore to take her to Naples with her models. I like scudi, but not for such undertakings!" and off he drove!

Muttering and drawing her cloak around her, old Lavinia stepped off the platform, we all motioning to follow her, when the guard asked:

"Good mother, why are you anxious to reach Naples so early in the morning?"

"To be ahead of Olivia's models, to be sure!" she crossly answered.

"And what is it worth to manage the business for you?"

"That!" said Lavinia, holding in the light a coin that dazzled the eyes of the guard.

He took it. The golden hook never scratched as

it went down, and ten minutes afterward he informed old Lavinia that "the signore had consented!"

Just as the half-hour expired, a horseman dashed up to the platform. Throwing the reins on his horse's neck, he hastened to my father, who was already at the door of the railway carriage, and presented a paper. My father glanced at it, and asked:

"Have you ordered your horse to be tended?"

"Here comes the vetturino, Monseignor; I passed him in the street."

"Jump in!" my father said, getting in first himself, the messenger following, models last, and, taking his box, the guard signalled the engineer, and we were off for Naples!

"Sister," said the messenger under his breath, "what do you think of my diplomatic skill?"

"It is equalled only by Léon's engineering," answered Amelia, smiling.

"And Amelia's quickness in discovering the boat from Capri to be our pursuers!" said Léon.

"And mother Lavinia's driving!" I chimed in.

"And our father's gravity as a government spy!" said Léoni, who was thoroughly roused to her usual interest in any threatened disaster to her father, sister, or brother, her fever subdued by fear.

When the especial train arrived at Naples, on the morning of the 5th of April, 1849, a guard from Gaeta was in attendance to receive the Baron de Stalberg.

The first person who left the carriage was a messenger who reported the escape of the baron to the captain of the guard.

A certain seal was glanced at, in the hands of a government spy, and he and the messenger took a vettura for the Gaeta station.

An old woman with her models were shut in, till the carriage was deserted by the guard as empty, to prevent a reprimand to the conductor, who hugged his bribe as compensation for his anxiety.

When the models joined the usual crowd at the station when a prisoner is expected, the old woman inquired curiously about the "train just in."

"Be off, mother, to your studios," said a good-natured railway officer; "if you loiter here, you will lose a good part of your commissions, and gain no more information than you have now!"

Mumbling and frowning, the old woman marshalled her models to the nearest wine-shop, and from there —

Naples was scoured that same day for the old woman and her models, the spy and the messenger, but they had "made themselves air, into which they vanished!"

A telegram from Castelmare informed the commandant at Naples that "the Baron de Stalberg, son, and two daughters, the Count de l'Étoile, and the Countess de Meffray, and Lavinia, duenna to the latter, must be arrested, if possible!"

"For conspiracy and abduction of Government papers!"

The telegram was authorized by the captain of a guard from Capri, who arrived at Castelmare ten minutes later than the fugitives arrived at Naples!

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE ANGEL OF DEATH!

I DARE not dwell on the three days following our arrival at Naples. It was such bitter, bitter woe, to see the writhings with pain, the wild, frightened countenance distorted with dread of imaginary pursuers, to hear the anxious questions as to our comfort, and then the cries of anguish at Léon's supposed absence from us, and the appeals for her father's release, with which Léoni, in her fevered ravings, almost maddened us! Our efforts to soothe her were useless. Risking everything from which we had fled, we employed a physician, reputed a most skilful practitioner in cases of Naples fever. But his most powerful remedies would not reach Léoni's need—if she was within human aid—and when she was suddenly still, her eyes fixed smilingly on some fancied object, that had no more terror for her, the breathings growing more gentle—less frequent, till at last, even the breath went out with a faint sigh—we stood motionless, breathless almost—till we could no longer bear the agony of that awful silence—lest the life hovering at the parted smiling lips should flutter back to the weary breast, and rack the worn body with its throes again.

Over the casket containing our dearest treasure my father's figure became bowed, his voice tremulous; and after persuasion, reasoning, and pleading failed to draw him away, he was forced to see the casket closed, shutting his heart in; and from the mournful, beseeching face he turned to us then, we saw that the light had faded into the past, and his hopes of future happiness had fled with the departed spirit! His tottering steps accompanied us in our dreary journey, but his heart was with the sacred charge that an honest, kindly peasant was taking *home*.

It was touching to witness the tearful sympathy of the people about us, who did all that simple kindness can do to comfort us; and even their mute wonder at the fearful change in my father was affecting. He looked, indeed, as if half a century had been added to his years in that short season of trial. To their whispered encouragement and fervent blessings, when we left them, he only repeated to the peasants, as he had done continually, Léoni's sad complaint: "Our home at dear old Immergrün is very far away!"

One morning at sunrise we arrived at the hermitage of Ermitano, on the mountains. Friends had surrounded us, protecting and aiding us, from the time we entered the region where pure mountain air seems to impart to the hardy mountaineer its own buoyancy and generous freedom.

My father was carried on a litter up the last steep ascent, and there was something in the manner of

the venerable hermit who came out, like a good pastor, to meet the strangers that his people had brought to his sheltering roof, that met my father's mood.

He received and ate the bread the hermit broke for him, and tasted the fruits; and then, looking kindly, though very sorrowfully, at the aged recluse, he said:

"My friend, we may break bread together in a solemn feast, as our Master did, when the last earthly comfort was denied Him; the world has no more solace for either of us."

"Nay, friend," the hermit answered, "such despondency I do not indulge in. I have, even here, a sacred trust. These forest-people are all my children. Morning and evening they come for my guidance of their honest petitions for heavenly grace, and many hours of cheerful communion I hold with them as they flock around me.

"My sorrows are known only to my own breast—and Heaven knows they are bitter; but while consolation is afforded me in this sacred retreat, I thankfully accept the boon, and trust for the desired end."

My father sighed, stroked my curls, that fell over my eyes on his breast, and wearily murmured, "Our home at dear old Immergrün is very far away!"

Why prolong the sad recital? One night, when my father slept, exhausted with watching, I had been entreated to lie down beside Amelia to rest, in a room adjoining my father's. Presently the door seemed to be opened, and Léoni beckoned me to

come to my father. I seemed to rise and follow her, leaving Amelia sleeping. My mother was bending over my father's sleeping form, and, with a smile, she kissed his lips; and then both she and Léoni were gone!

"*She has left ashes on his lips!*" I cried out, and sprang from Amelia's arms, meeting in my father's room white faces, that looked with helpless grief at the silent one, whose broken heart had ceased to beat!

"Sister, I cannot bear this! let me go with the men who are to fight in to-morrow's battle before Rome, or I shall go mad!" Léon cried, and something within me answered:

"If you must go, Léon, you may; I can bear any sorrow now!"

But when I fell senseless in his arms, he said to those around him:

"Poor little heart! I am all she has left her now."

And even Amelia's gentleness was not more tender than the care of my noble brother for the feeble, flickering life, that threatened many times to escape during the three dreamy weeks that followed.

I suffered no pain, had no wishes, no fears, no hopes, no cares.

At last, old Lavinia insisted that I must be carried into the open air, and one bright morning I was placed on a mattress under a tree near the hermitage.

Amelia had gone with Paul and Léon to ascend a peak of the mountain, from which a fine view could

be had. If I had not persuaded Amelia to go, Léon would have remained. Their interest in each other had been very apparent during those happy days in Sicily, and my father approved heartily, we could not fail to see, though he never even acknowledged that he detected the attachment. I remarked to him once, "Father, Amelia and Léon seem to have been born for each other; and they acknowledge it in every look and action when they are together; and yet apart, they are never restless, and make no exertion to attract any especial attention or increase their opportunities to hold the communion of mind and heart that is evidently the chief pleasure of either."

Laughing heartily, my father replied:

"If I could trust that little head that has all sorts of agreeable fancies about others, and believe these children were so far decided in their affections, I would certainly give them credit for being the most sensible lovers it was ever my province to commend."

"But leaving the *if* out of the question, you could not object?" I asked.

"I always hoped that Ethel would be Léon's choice, for the sake of the friendship that is my dearest relation—except with my three children; but where the heart of a child is concerned in the gift, no parent would be justified in bestowing so much if it involved a sacrifice."

There the matter rested. But I often recalled that quiet expression of his views of it, and knew that in

giving my encouragement to a union likely to prove an unusual blessing, I would not offend against my father's wishes. Léon asked Paul, in my hearing one day, his opinion of Ethel.

"She is worthy of all the admiration she draws to herself, by the very charm of her unconscious power," he replied.

Sometimes I had thought he was different in his manner toward her; there was more deference, I thought, and less of that freedom of intercourse that *we* all shared alike. But then, accident had thrown him with Léoni and myself so intimately that there could be no natural reserve with us.

At Sorrento all doubts were dispelled—one glance had told me all I wished to know of Paul's heart; and the very reserve that had grown between us from the time my father became a care instead of a protector, increased my appreciation of the *quality* of Paul's regard for me.

On one question there had been unbroken silence since our reunion: the religious belief of Amelia and Paul. All my anxieties and regrets centred on that one point.

The misery resulting from a misalliance of Protestant and Romanist in Amelia's family, and Mademoiselle Beaumont's unhappy fate—an exile from the scenes where she might, even when her father's presence could no longer cheer her, have continued the happiness every strong heart *must* needs share, when with those for whom it works out the best ends of life: this reflection checked the hopes that

my natural heart had felt when I first discovered the certainty of Paul's love for me. And the great need I felt of assistance, counsel, support in a matter so grave, added to the weight of my sorrow for my loss, and forced me to wish death to release me from a doubt I could not banish.

Would my influence be great enough to convert him? I dreaded my recovery of health and strength, that must bring me nearer the decision I felt must be made then.

I was cowardly, perhaps, in my weakness; but love and principle wage mighty contests in such exigencies, that the stoutest hearts might shrink from.

Ermitano never presented himself, except when a pilgrim demanded his attention on his way to other mission stations, or at the morning and evening services. Only when others' necessities required his ministering, he left the solitude of his own apartment in the hermitage. Hermitage was not the proper name for Ermitano's retreat, as he had not entirely secluded himself; but in effect, his life approached nearer a hermit's than any other, and the old half-ruined abbey had been occupied by six hermits in succession, which certainly seemed to invest it with the right to be called the hermitage. The grounds were not enclosed around it, as the outside lines of the whole region, twenty miles in circumference, were guarded by alternate watches, who prevented the encroachments of strangers who had not sufficient business with the mountaineers to warrant

their entrance within the barrier. The huts of the peasants were some distance from the hermitage.

So Lavinia was my only companion in this forest scene; the first day I could be induced to face the broad daylight, that seems so intensely bright when the heart is crushed that seeks its cheer, and yet dreads its glare.

For some time I avoided the sky, after I began to look about me, from my bed already strewn with fallen leaves.

I could not bear to look at the serene, unruffled sky, that shut out my beloved ones from my sight.

A slanting ray of sunshine fell on the edge of my mattress, and, putting my hand out to feel its genial warmth, I was surprised to see how thin my hand was, by the pink light that was reflected through it.

"What would Nannine say to that?"

My question was answered with sobs. Old Lavinia threw herself on her face at the foot of my mattress, and between her sobs exclaimed:

"Nannine will never forgive Antonio. She has left him, now that he is released, and the rest of her life will be devoted to you. She will start for Immergrün in a few days to prepare for your return."

I could not reply. My heart ached for this stricken mother, who had better have been childless! Suddenly a crackling of dried branches near us gave notice of some one approaching.

Old Lavinia hastily dried the tears that had seemed a luxury after her pent-up sorrow — and I had welcomed them for her sake — but neither of us thought of looking who might be the intruder.

"Minnette, my child, my darling, oh, my poor little sunbeam!"

I knew the voice, and who alone had the right to call me by his own name for me. I threw my arms around his neck, and all the woe unuttered till now, was poured out in wild lamentations on that true heart.

Dr. Léon — the reader must recognize him — had been searching for us since we left Sorrento. He arrived there the day after we left; and even Nannine supposed, until two days before, that we were secreted in the neighborhood, so carefully was the manner of our escape concealed by the mortified guards.

Léon was frantic with alternate joy and grief on seeing our dearest friend; and Amelia and Paul expressed their sympathy and delight, by kindly providing every comfort and all the refreshment our hospice could afford for the doctor.

"I have sent so many letters recalling you home, and I looked every day for your arrival," said the doctor, "thinking my dear friend was intending to surprise us; till at last, Madame's forebodings of some treachery on Antonio's part, induced me to believe he had intercepted my letters, and prevented yours from reaching us. So I came to bring you all home, furnished with passports from the Pope for our entire party, on the request of our king, and his representation to the Italian government of your peaceable motive in passing the lines.

"To-morrow we will think about the best ar-

rangement for our journey, and we must each encourage a spirit of *hopefulness*, not morbidly nursing our selfish grief for those who have gained so much by our loss, but thanking that tender Providence that has left us true hearts to be blessed by our happiness or saddened by our despair. There are motherly arms at Immergrün waiting for a stray daughter, and a sister looking very impatiently for her absent companion. Can you think of this, Minnette?"

"Could I reject the comforting thought that the dear spirits who are gone have directed this sacred adoption of an earthly father, mother, and sister?"

It was a paternal kiss that was impressed on my forehead, and my sleep that night was dreamless.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### DAWNING OF CHEERFULNESS.

YOUTH can but choose to drink the promising elixir that Hope presents in her fragrant chalice to his very lips. The doctrines of despair are for those who, in the autumn of life, have only a barren retrospection, unfruitful of a single sheaf in the garner of earth or heaven; whose eyes, accustomed to avoid the prospective views of their own inevitable future, are dimmed by their hopeless contemplations of fallow fields and blackened stubble — the remains of their wasted earthly possessions.

“O world! O life! O time!  
On whose rude steps I climb,”

came from a heart that, striving to make its own laws, placed itself beyond the pale of human or divine sympathy, and, appalled by its isolated experience of the woes of earth, “wept sweet tears *too tumultuously for peace*,” or, with Babylonish temerity, building the loftiest temples that man’s imagination ever conceived, faced divine law with divine poetry, undaunted by visions from his airy battlements, that caused the cherubim to veil their faces and cry,

“Unworthy! unworthy!” To him, “laughter, light, and music were a sweet *madness*, and ecstasy but a *thrilling sadness*!”

Such rare exceptions cannot alter the universal law of youth. It is more natural to adopt Collier than Shelley, and declare, “I would not despair unless I knew the irrevocable decree was past; *saw* my misfortune recorded in the book of fate, and signed and sealed by necessity.”

Such was the thought with which I closed a copy of Shelley’s poems, that Dr. Léon had left in his room, and I had purloined in his absence from the hermitage.

A decided reaction had begun in my physical condition, in consequence of cheerful intercourse with the doctor, Ermitano, Amelia, Paul, and even Léon, whose elastic nature sprang back from the tension of excessive grief to the ease of moderate cheerfulness, when the burden of his anxiety on my account was lifted by Dr. Léon, and his heart was interested, in spite of its inclination to indulge in useless regret, by the magic power that Amelia insensibly exercised over him. She was as innocent of any art in drawing and centring Léon’s feelings and sentiments on herself, as when she was the object of his admiration and wonder, as she lay sleeping before him, unconscious of his presence, that night in Rome, a picture of rare beauty and childlike confidence in the security of my protection.

Amelia’s character was as complete, sound, and well balanced as her *physique*. In the sum of

characteristics that constituted her individuality, there was scarcely an undue proportion of any. Her imagination, subject to her will, and her will schooled by an uncommon necessity, she seemed almost incapable of the extravagant impulses induced by morbid sensitiveness in its reactions, or the leaden despondency sure to weigh on spirits that assume austere sobriety and sepulchral gravity for true philosophy or religion.

Amelia's education was not limited to the courses admissible in a convent school. Old Lavinia had sedulously watched the influence exerted by the Sisters in charge of Amelia's classes, and, determined to give her inclinations the bent of Protestantism, she inquired of the artists she met in the studios of German and English students, and was furnished by them with lists of books, historical and purely literary, that formed a process of self-education, more thorough, if not as methodical as that dull routine of her less fortunate classmates.

Although two weeks had passed since Dr. Léon's arrival at the hermitage, nothing had been said by him, or any one in my hearing, of our journey, that I had supposed would be at least attempted a few days after he came.

I had not trusted myself to even think of Immergrün. There are curious contradictions in sorrowful breasts. A tendency to indulge in almost sullen gloom may be accompanied by an irritability that will not bear a shade of melancholy in any one else; sympathy provoking rather than soothing the un-

settled feelings. I have known one or two who obeyed the impulse to fly all condolence, and run away from the very expression of sorrow in the faces of friends whose grief for their affliction could not be concealed; and when Léon cried out in his anguish, "Let me go into the battle, or I shall go mad!" I knew the force of his impulse, and could not but consent.

My poor father would have "outlived the sickness of his health and living, and *would have begun* to mend," could he have faced a foe less subtle than the undermining melancholy that surrounded him and chained him to Léon and myself, and the submissive sadness of all who served him.

The *fashion* that shuts out the sunshine from houses of mourning, clothes little children in the garb of woe, and denies the stricken heart all that is genial in the society of friends, or healthful in exercise and diversion, deserves to be parodied as I once heard an innocent child confound a roomful of fashionable mourners with a view of their own absurdity.

When the child had been arrayed in black, her gloves were scarcely on, as the *finishing touch* for her appearance in the church "the first Sunday,"—when, surveying herself in a mirror with a look of anything but approval, and then looking dolefully at the little "black hands," she asked:

"Will I take these off and wear my bright clothes soon?"

"Yes; but Katie would rather wear them now to

show how sorry she is that poor papa is dead, wouldn't she?"

"Yes," said Katie, appreciating the situation, while her aunt's eye was fixed on her; but the moment it was withdrawn, out came the child's truth, that is like God's truth, without anything to break the force: "But then, you know, auntie, it is better for papa to be in heaven, where he can't hear me walk when *I forget to go on my tippy toes!*"

The effect was horrible. I had more pity for the self-conscious shame that tinged the pale faces of that assembly of fashionable aunts, than sorrow that a soul whose release had been prayed for was at last resting, and the little one, so painfully restricted, could at least walk without reproof. Katie's tears, when she looked at papa's dead face and forgot herself, were more sincere than the pharisaical dressing of an unreflecting child in mourning garments. Moral — self-evident!

I had scarcely finished my surreptitious enjoyment of the grand passages in the "Revolt of Islam" — the result of "the agony and bloody sweat of intellectual travail," as the poet himself declared, feeling that in wrestling with a spirit at once so lofty and so demoniac I had gained strength in the encounter — when the owner of the book appeared at the door of the hermitage and smiled approval at my remaining in the open air longer than usual.

Amelia was assisting old Lavinia in the preparation of herbs, plants of various kinds, roots, and dried flowers, for the wonderful compound mixture

that I had already tasted in the cave of St. Anthony. We were seated in a bower of forest leaves, under a grand old cedar that the mountaineers venerated as much for its healthful fragrance as for its noble size.

"Many a *bambino* had recovered strength under that tree, whose life had been despaired of in the fatal air of Rome," old Lavinia asserted.

Léon and Paul had accompanied some of the peasants to their huts, to examine some small arms that they wished to purchase; and their heads appeared above the edge of a hill that ran down from the rear of the hermitage, just as the doctor crossed the grounds to our bower. A bunch of anemones decorated each of the hats of the tired travelers, who, throwing themselves on the ground and placing their hats carelessly under a bench, forgot to acquit themselves gallantly, as usual, in presenting the bouquets.

Amelia and I exchanged glances while the doctor was diverting the attention of the youths with questions about the arrangement of the houses and the habits of the peasants in their homes; and Amelia adroitly fished up the hats on the end of a long stick that Lavinia used for a stirrer when her mixture was boiling. We helped ourselves to the offerings intended, though not in the *order* we chose to appropriate them. Amelia took Paul's, and I Léon's. Concealing the bouquets, I held one flower in my hand, and, as soon as a pause occurred in the dialogue, I repeated a line from that prodigy, the vic-

tim of Goethe's cruel forcing-system—a mere experiment of an egotistic man on the heart of a maiden, who wept at the wreck she beheld in her mirror, when deserted by the cold engineer of her heart's fiercest passions.

No doubt Amelia's fishing up the hats called Bettine to my mind, through the association of the Turk's slipper that the latter mischievously purloined with her foot; and Shelley's complaint of the requisition of Providence on the heart of man for its entire surrender, suggested the sentiment: "I have heard learned men growling, and I always thought one single flower must shame the whole."

The immediate effect of the quotation was what I anticipated.

Léon exclaimed, "There is a breath of our own Germany. Minnette, you are growing strong again!"

But Paul recognized the *flower*, and gave the alarm to Léon of the theft. When the hats were found, minus the bouquets, there were two rueful faces; and then, the flowers produced, Amelia confessed the deed, and Paul claimed mine—Léon, Amelia's; and the somewhat damaged bouquets were consigned to the herbarium press, "for mementos of the perfidy of two ruthless maidens," Paul declared.

"Minnette has been reading two hours this morning," said Amelia, with a significant glance at Léon, that I also caught.

"Swiss Family Robinson?" said Léon, indifferently.

It was the doctor's turn to be amused. Some of

my first English translations were from that book; and some of the errors were so absurd, when I conjectured, rather than hunt for the correct interpretation, that they were repeated at dinner, to my father's great amusement, by way of promoting the good digestion that should wait on appetite.

Again Paul was the detective, and taking up the book that my sleeve only partially covered, he asked, "Where in all the world did this Shelley come from?"

"At her old tricks, truly," said Dr. Léon; "and see if you find any waving lead-marks, count: she will have completed her work then."

"Yes, here is one—;" but instantly his eyes fell from the page, and he said, "I spoke too quickly," closed the book, and returned it to me with a world of meaning in his gentle look.

I had obeyed my usual impulse to mark what touched my own peculiar feeling—hope, or apprehension—in the lines:

*"When to thy home thou dost return,  
Sleep not its hearth in tears."*

Dr. Léon, wishing to know the train of reflections I had followed, opened the book again, and, turning to the mark, read the lines aloud.

"Now, the question that you have yourself suggested, my dear child, must be considered," the doctor said, quietly; but Léon, touched by the words he had read, so directly applicable to our sorrowful return to Immergrün, buried his face in his crossed

arms, as he lay on the ground; and by his trembling we knew that he was weeping.

"I have been expecting some proposition the last two days," I answered, calmly, "and would have mentioned it, only I was afraid it would be mistaken for restlessness on my part, when perhaps your plans were arranged for remaining here some time longer."

"We have been waiting quietly for this manifestation of genuine improvement in our little patient," said the doctor; "and she has anticipated my limit for the probation by a whole week."

Mother Lavinia disappeared, then Amelia "was obliged to inquire about some mangling that was to be finished for Paul," and Paul suddenly bethought him of "a matter to be talked about with Ermitano," and the doctor was left to consult with two sad, sad hearts that longed for their home, and yet dreaded the desolation that would be more than ever realized in the familiar scenes of Immergrün.

But Léon could not subdue his outburst of grief, and the doctor urged him to rise from his prostrate position, and persuaded him to retire to his own room and rest awhile. "You are fatigued after your long walk, Léon; go rest awhile; and as Minnette is a host in herself, this morning we will no doubt arrange everything satisfactorily," he said.

But when Léon had entered the house, and I turned to the doctor for his communication, he too had "grown incapable of reasonable affairs," and I stole away. Glancing back from the door of the hermitage, I saw the doctor in the position that

Léon had been induced to abandon, and I knew that between that strong heart and grief, no earthly mediation could avail.

He bewailed his *only friend*, in the sense that such men call friendship, and I questioned whether it were wise to so concentrate friendly affections on one mortal, however worthy. Then two lines of Shelley again crossed my mind, though not strictly applying to the doctor:

"Alas, that love should be a blight and snare  
To those who seek all sympathies in one!"

This frame of mind was very suitable for the purposes of some one then watching me with the hope that some caprice would arrest my steps as I slowly walked toward Amelia's room.

At the end of a long passage-way in the hermitage, a heavy oaken door had attracted my notice in passing, several times. With the revival of my interest in other matters, a spirit of inquiry regarding my locality had struggled into the possession of its proper faculty.

Without any other object than the reward of the first prompting of that "capacity for investigation" since my residence at the hermitage, I opened the door—and lo! I was in Ermitano's *sanctum*. A long, low ceiling, frescoed rudely like the walls, with designs suggestive of Miltonic warfare, and the high-on-a-throne triumphs of a certain ruler in Pandemonium, first received attention.

Had I only been left to my own conclusions, I

should have decided that if the fire wasn't hot enough to melt, tan, or crack the thin skin of some of the victims of papal wrath represented in royal purple within dissolving proximity to even earthly caloric of half the quantity of that so appallingly represented in the frescoings, it was n't such a terrible thing, after all, to receive the "Depart ye" — from Rome! But Paul had witnessed my halting at the door, my entrance to the "temple," followed me, and remarked, "These absurd pictures, the 'Last Judgment,' in the Sistine Chapel, and all such horrible exhibitions are hideous; and" — shutting his eyes with a negative shake of the head at the same time — "I dislike to look at them, or anything that reminds me of future punishment."

"Paul," I answered, "these pictures are like the *facts* they foreshadow, *very* disagreeable!"

"You call it a *fact* that the awful denunciations of the pulpit are to be accomplished!"

"Do you call it a *fact*," I retorted, "that the magnificent *promises* are to be realized? If so, produce your authority for the one more than the other."

"But eternal love is God's law!"

"And eternal hate the devil's," I responded.

"But God is Omnipotent, and what can the devil's hate do against that unlimited attribute!"

"In our Litany," I replied, "we are strictly enjoined to avoid all 'doubtful disputations,' but I may give a reason for the hope that is in me, without violating the injunction. If the word is not true, all its blessed promises are mere opiates for present

pain, and its threats-inventions of ingenious agents of the father of our miseries. But believing, as no sane creature can help believing, that the word *is* true, we have much cause to fear the power of sin that could involve the Son of God in the sufferings of the *first death*, and tempt us to doubt the *possibility even* of 'the *second death*, which shall be worse than the first!'"

Shuddering, and letting his eyes fall to the pavement, Paul said, "Minnette, you have a way of saying hard things, that precludes all contradiction, and only makes me miserable!"

"And your own creed — has *it* no consolation for such emergencies?" I asked, with a touch of bitterness, feeling painfully the unwelcome accusation.

"Minnette, I forgot; this subject can rest till you are stronger. I have another to discuss, that cannot wait! On religious questions, I am for the present adrift, without compass or rudder, and have not the ensigns of Christian, Pagan, or Jew, wherewith to attract sympathy, much less the aid I may require."

The confession gratified me. I felt convinced, while we were in Sicily, of a gradual lifting of the weight of Romish laws from Paul's mind, that in spite of his free expressions and seeming orthodoxy on that memorable evening in Rome, was, after all, tintured with the glow that reflects from the dyed garments of the lady mother on the most distant child of her household. Amelia had so carefully avoided all allusion to her religion, since her arrival

at the hermitage — and there was no time for her to mention it before — that I could not tell how she thought, but trusted there was a weeding out of whatever germs might have been implanted in her breast, that were contrary to the principles of her Protestant mother. I knew that Mademoiselle Beaumont would not neglect her opportunity to begin the good work. Strangely enough, my interest, even in Mademoiselle Beaumont, had not been revived before that very morning, when all my natural affections seemed to flow back to my heart, through the medium of the strength acquired in the conflict with Shelley's fiery spirit. Lifted above, or sunk beneath the earth, with such an indomitable spirit, one must needs lose all consciousness of *self*, and, hand to hand with powers of darkness, or blinding light, must fight royally for the truth. I had contended with Shelley, and conquered — myself — in losing myself!

What had Paul to propose?

Proposals of marriage are, like death-bolts, always unexpected! Anticipation fails to lessen the shock of either, and I have perfect faith in the genuine unconsciousness of the victims of such shocks, when, having more of that "wholesome dread" of the "superior sex" than Minnette de Stalberg could entertain for anything not invested with wings, they quicken the palpitations of the proffered hearts, by falling gracefully into the arms that at once and forever *clasp* them to the aforesaid hearts.

Let a woman, if she would be true to herself,

meet the question, the most important of her life, with due dignity, consideration, and acknowledgment of her sense of its importance. Where passion sweeps aside all reason, there can no just law regulate the answer, or conduct of the settlement. But when "all the world" has known "of at least an understanding," or, "a decided preference," the party most concerned in the mysterious business of love-making, must be prepared for an eventual proposition. The way a woman *meets* that event, will be all her life afterward a proud satisfaction or a humiliating reflection.

God help the woman who cannot look her husband in the eyes, and smile at the recollection of her acceptance of his manly proposition.

There is magic power in the remembrance, if it be satisfactory to her, to heal wounds to self-love, banish doubts, and revive the fond fancies that then elevated the object of her love, and justified her idolatry. And when God shall separate what man may not put asunder, through all time that one moment of perfect communion of hearts will serve to redeem the hours lost in the chaos of separation!

"Minnette, after all the doctor's brave beginning, he has told you nothing of our failures in planning anything that seems to him practicable regarding our going out of Italy as soon as we thought we might?"

"No —" I replied, in a maze of wonderment. "And I do not understand what you mean by 'plans' and 'failures.' Are not the passports still

good? and isn't it absolutely impossible for the doctor to remain absent from Mähren Castle?"

Oh, that exasperating smile! And I was always doomed to meet it in the eyes I loved best to meet!

"Shall we talk here?" Paul asked. "It is a quiet old chapel, and no one will be likely to interrupt us. So sit in this chair, and let me be Sir Oracle, since our good friend has dropped the wand!"

"I have taxed his kindness, and would regret it if I did not feel assured that in serving my father's children, he finds the best consolation for his own grief," I said.

"Minnette, your faith in friendship is marvellous!" Paul exclaimed.

"No, Paul; you mistake. I do not even acknowledge the possibility of friendships. The three covenants that are mentioned in the Scriptures and that we interpret friendships, were inspired recognitions of mutual needs, in a spiritual sense. Jonathan and David sealed each new promise of friendly support with the *reminder*, '*forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord*,' etc. And John, the beloved disciple, was only chosen for the consolation of Mary when the Son should 'go away from her!' And Ruth confirmed her vow of fidelity to Naomi with 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!'"

"So, Minnette, you have fairly given the principles of *your* faith in male friendships — as of David and Jonathan; in female friendships — as in Naomi and Ruth; and friendships between the two sexes —

as in the case of Mary and the disciple. And short of these inspired and ordained covenants, you deny all existence of friendship?"

"Yes; and Heaven preserve me from the 'habits of friendship,' 'customs of friendship,' and whatever name the blandishments of society may furnish for the associations of the cold, unprincipled, deceitful, treacherous, cunning, and self-loving impostors, with the impulsive, unsuspecting, courageous, heedless, and short-sighted creatures who accept the flattery of the first for the genuine wine of inspiration that *unseen messengers* are only *waiting* to give them, while they are checked in their genuine aspirations by *human clogs*!"

"I forswear friendship from this moment, and declare myself a candidate for a covenant between thee and me, which is 'commanded of the Apostle to be *honorable* among all men.'"

That shock was a little too sudden for me even to *comprehend* it at once, and I saw Paul's startled eyes through the haze that floated before my own. I stood on my feet, when I did realize the position into which I had been cunningly ensnared, and in an instant I weighed and answered the proposition to my own conscience.

"Minnette, I almost hoped to surprise your heart into a confession, when your judgment was preoccupied. I am not worthy of the confidence that you must repose in whatever you love, but it is a delightful *hope* that your love for me may bear my soul up to the throne of God, side by side with your own.

I can but gaze up at you on that stupendous level; but when you come down to my heart—you will come, Minnette—*you alone are there*—and now—you are my divinest love!”

What we said then, none may ever know but the cloud of witnesses who, with their beatified vision, saw our hearts thrilling with the measure of our mutual joy, and believed *that was truth!*

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DECEPTION!

BEFORE we left the chapel, Paul pointed out to me a large crimson curtain that hung in an archway into which we ascended by several marble steps, the top one forming a broad platform, as if at some time an altar had stood there.

“This curtain divided the altar outside from the one that was formerly inside the chapel,” said Paul; and pulling aside the folds till I passed through, he brought me to the platform on which Ermitano stood morning and evening to conduct the services for the mountaineers.

I had not yet witnessed the services, and supposed they were the usual Romish prayers and chants.

“Would you like to be present this evening at the chanting of the Litany? The effect is grand in this old forest; and if you are as much comforted as Léon has been with the repetition of his own Moravian Litany, it will be my greatest happiness to enjoy the service with you!”

“Moravian—Litany—here?” I exclaimed.

“Minnette, you have been so ill, that nothing has come under your notice of the affairs of these people,

and even the good news Amelia has to tell you, the doctor thought best to withhold till you gained your present strength!"

"Ah, I know," I answered confidently. "Amelia has been a blessing to Léon, and she would greatly have disappointed me if she had refused to marry him."

"That is not all the news — I will tell — but let Amelia give you her own version of Mademoiselle Beaumont's mission of love to my sweet sister. At Lorraine, they hunted out every trace of our dear mother's Protestant faith, in her journals, letters, and among the families she had enriched with her lessons of simple faith, and by her own practice of self-denial for their sakes, being often subject to persecutions in a petty way, that she could not prevent, or even confess to my father, lest he should suffer on her account from the prejudices of the court against the Protestants. In her journal, she mentioned the loss of her infant daughter, repeatedly bemoaning her disappointment, and yet expressing a conviction that had the child lived, greater sorrow than the infant's death might have been her portion, in the living sorrow of her burial in a convent, when she was grown. And without mentioning his name, she clearly alluded to Emil Beaumont as the unscrupulous confessor, who would have accomplished her child's fate, if only to secure her inheritance for the Church. Of his actual treachery, she evidently had not the least suspicion. It was my mother's own patience under oppression, and her gentle behavior

toward the priest, that first caused him to regret his wickedness. And then he even insisted on Lavinia's preventing the very object he had sought to gain by his wickedness. Amelia's devotions were limited, as you know, to the mere attendance at prayers, in Rome, while she was withheld from the confessional and mass. Now, she is a confirmed Moravian; and, when she returns to Immergrün with you, will unite with the Church."

Some warm drops splashed on my hands, and then I knew I was crying; but I was happy, and I said:

"Paul, 'my cup runneth over' with the happiness we have now, and for the hope that we will *all* at last be gathered in the same fold of the Good Shepherd, who has so graciously cared for us in our tribulation."

I re-entered the chapel, and finding Ermitano there, I left Paul with him, while I went to see if Léon had slept, and where the doctor had gone. He had left the arbor, I noticed, as I glanced toward it from the outside altar.

He was in Léon's room, and not hearing my quiet entrance — I did not wish to waken Léon if he was sleeping — he uttered a sentence that petrified my heart, crushed every hope, blotted out all the bright visions pictured in my imagination for future bliss, in one instant of time!

"Paul is a noble fellow," he said. "I felt it would be wrong to conceal the truth, and told him all she was threatened with, related every circumstance of her

mother's malady, and yet he answered, 'My life and hers are bound in one fate, and I will yield to nothing but death!'"

I lived in spite of fate, I think, when I turned, or rather moved backward from that door, and walked to my own room. Amelia found me standing like a statue, perfectly cold and immovable.

"Minnette! what is the matter?" The voice reached the doctor. He hurried to me, and I simply answered, when he spoke to me:

"I heard what you told Léon. My heart must be made of iron if it does not break now!"

"What did you hear—every word—repeat to me!"

It was easy to do. Each word was graven on my brain in letters of fire. When I concluded, the doctor said:

"Now hear the rest, child, as you might have heard, if you had only waited a moment longer. Everything depends on yourself. If you yield to every whim of your morbid fancies, if you dream while you are awake, and awake when you should be dreaming, if you do not at once live for some special purpose, your mind will become hopelessly diseased, and, young as you are, you may live to be a wretched and miserable burden to all who love you. But it is in your own power to be—what you always have been to me—a bright little sunbeam; and you know whose path you can gild with your light!"

"Sister, those are the very words that the doctor

said to me, and you know he means what he tells us," said Léon!

Amelia moved toward the door, and met some one coming; I did not see who it was. I only heard the steps, and cried out: "Tell Paul not to come to me; I cannot see him. *I will not!*"

"Amelia, you have something to tell Minnette," Dr. Léon quietly answered, ignoring my impatient speech. Tell her all immediately. When she is ready to talk with me, I will come and say good-by!"

"Good-by! doctor, what do you mean!—you are angry—oh, what shall I do!" Léon hastily left the room.

"I am not a whit angry; only I have made such a hash of to-day's business that I shall trust Amelia's feminine wit to relate to you all I would have communicated."

The voice was so free from any expression of annoyance even, and there was such encouragement in it for me to take hold of, that I was reassured against my obstinate will.

"Bear with me only a little longer; I will be more reasonable when I am stronger," I said, imploringly.

"My dear child, no one but yourself is impatient; only have confidence in my judgment and my promises, and I ask nothing more of you. If I did not know your actual strength of purpose where you make a resolve, I would not have permitted your betrothal; but with another's happiness in your hands, I knew you would forget all else; and that

is the chief remedy for the malady with which you were threatened, but which you have bravely conquered. So great a shock as that which caused your illness seldom comes to any one person to bear, and you have before you the promise of great happiness in your future;—but Amelia must tell you; and then Lavinia can bring your broth, and I wish you to rest after that.”

Kissing my forehead, the doctor left us alone—Amelia and myself; and I caught each word that fell like a pearl from her lips, when she folded me in her arms and said, “My friend, my sister, we are orphaned alike; but each has a precious gift for the other. I would be unhappy if you refused *my* gift, Paul’s noble, generous heart; and let me show you how, in accepting Léon’s from you, I have as much reason for hesitation as yourself. Our mother was affected, before her death, almost the same as your mother, and yet, as is the case in your own family, no further trace of the malady can be found. If it could be, let me tell you candidly I think we have no right to refuse alliance with those who have chosen us for their companions through life, on the ground of any temporary disease of our parents. There would be few marriages, and more distress in the world than exists now, if it were the rule to consider the health of the parents before the happiness of the children. No right law could be made for such cruel prohibition.”

How her words, her voice, her touch soothed and comforted me! We sat on the side of my low

narrow bed, and I rested my head on Amelia’s breast while she continually passed her hand over my forehead and smoothed down my disordered hair, that the wind had entangled into hopeless twists of frowzy locks, and sleep fell like a shower of ether-spray over my senses. I made no resistance when Amelia said, “You shall not be wearied with my talking;” and loosening the cord of my robe, she placed me on my pillow, and continuing the movements with her magnetic hand a moment or two over my forehead and down over my eyelids, she steeped my brain, heart, and body in a profound slumber!

When I awoke, Lavinia was in the room, with the basin of broth and a glass of wine ready for my refreshment; and I really felt hungry for it, to the old woman’s great satisfaction.

“Now,” she said, when I had finished the broth and tasted the wine, “there is to be a marriage ceremony at the evening service, and the doctor will take you to the inside altar, where you can look on without being seen through the whole service. But it is customary for every one present to wear white; so I have a robe here for you that was made at a neighboring convent for an Italian lady when she was in her novitiate. You can wear that; Amelia has one too.”

Amelia answered Lavinia’s knock on the partition between our rooms, and came immediately to my room.

When the door opened I could scarcely credit my senses. Anything more lovely I never saw than

Amelia in her bride-like robes. She wore a train of white muslin, so fine and white, it fell like snow-wreaths around her feet. The waist, gathered into a belt, and fitting plain on the neck, was finished at the throat with a lace edge, fine but of a simple pattern. Wide flowing sleeves, edged with lace, partly displayed her beautiful white arms, a narrow gold band on each wrist being the only ornaments she wore. Her hair was braided and looped; a spray of white flowers—"a peasant had brought for her," she said—was twined with the braid that crossed the forepart of her head, and even that trying contrast of dead-white flowers in her jet-black hair did not affect in the least her clear, beautiful complexion.

"You are a little more pale than usual," I remarked; "but your eyes have so much brilliancy this evening, that they seem to give warmth to the rest of your countenance in spite of its pallor."

"I shall smile, Minnette, if you try to flatter me; and smiles are objectionable to *some people*, you know."

I was soon arrayed in a robe similar to Amelia's, my hair freshly curled, and simply smoothed off of my temples.

"You must not be fatigued by the fuss of preparation that these mountaineers expect of one," said old Lavinia; and then seeing there was no further ornament to be added to my dress, she said to Amelia, "Signora, you had better go with the count and the—Signore Léon. Dr. Léon will take Mademoiselle de Stalberg to the chapel."

Amelia turned and embraced me, kissing me on each cheek, and said:

"If Paul joins you, remember he is sad on account of your trouble, to-day; be very tender, for his heart is easily moved."

She saw my answer in my face, and, kissing me again, turned quickly away.

The doctor came for me a moment after Amelia left the room, and I went leisurely to the chapel, wondering how the peasants would look in their holiday finery; curious to see them, and yet dreading the effect of the scene on my feelings, that were liable to betray me to tears, or even sobs, if the music of the peasants touched my heart.

The service had begun when the doctor and I came to the platform inside the curtain; and peeping out, as the doctor held the folds so I could look without being seen, a pretty sight it was! The men and boys, about one hundred in number, were in their gayest costumes; hats and vests were decorated with flowers and ribbons. The hats were not removed from their heads, in the open air, unless they were kneeling in prayer. The women and girls were decked with all the flowers, ribbons, and ornaments they could command; and I was surprised to see that, after all Lavinia's saying they were so particular about white dresses, only the front row of young girls, in the centre of which the bride and groom sat, wore the white robes. Amelia, Léon, and Paul were nowhere to be seen.

After the usual evening service, a band of moun-

tain minstrels—harpers, violin-players, and piffiarri—immediately played and sang some of their most beautiful airs, and the bridal party arranged themselves for the marriage ceremony. I did not notice when the change was made, but I discovered, after the ceremony began, that Paul was beside me, and the doctor had gone away.

I was moved to tears at the service, reminding me of Immergrün, and the enjoyment Léoni and I had shared at the ceremonies in our own chapel.

When the blessing had been pronounced for the bridal pair, and all was ended but the congratulations for the bride and groom, Paul let the curtain close quickly, and, taking my hand, said, audibly—we were alone:

“Minnette, kneel with me, and say, if I walk worthy of you, shall we two nevermore be parted in this life?”

“Nor in the life to come!” I answered, kneeling with him.

“Then, ‘what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!’”

The curtain glided away, and Léon and Amelia were kneeling at the side of the altar, Ermitano stood facing Paul and myself; and, holding his hand over mine, as it rested in Paul’s, he continued, with the same voice that had struck silence into my very soul: “In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, ye are now joined together, to live in holy wedlock as husband and wife!”

Then to Amelia and Paul the same words were

repeated, as they had declared their betrothal at the same time with Paul and myself. Then all the peasants knelt as Ermitano said: “Receive ye the blessing of the Lord!”

A deep, musical *Amen* was responded to the blessing, and then the air, the forest, the chapel seemed to be throbbing, pulsating with waves of music, and the whole scene disappeared from my sight!

I opened my eyes on Dr. Léon, who was alone with me in the chapel. A bench near the platform was my lounge, and my head rested on the doctor’s arm as he knelt beside me.

“Well, my little lady, now you have a husband to take care of you, the adopted father can go the way of all adopted fathers on such occasions, I suppose!”

“I am almost afraid to trust you, or believe even what you say,” I answered.

“Then let me resign you at once—”

“No,” I replied, quickly, “I appreciate the arrangement. I remembered your telling me ‘you must say good-by,’ the moment Ermitano spoke. And it would have been impossible for me to have gone through this ceremony, or to have consented to any formal service, however private, if I had been warned of it, while my heart swells in my throat, or brims over at my eyes, when I am the least moved. I am not sorry; if you think it best to leave us here. It was the only way you could manage for us.”

“There you are, safe and sound! and Minnette de Stalberg never said anything more sensible than

what the Countess de l'Étoile has this moment oracularly uttered!"

Saying this, the doctor conducted me to my room, talking in the same strain all the way, and claiming at the door a bride's kiss. I gave it heartily, and received a fervent blessing in return. Old Lavinia was waiting for me, and, changing my dress for the morning robe, left me to rest alone, till Amelia joined me, bringing the intelligence I was not surprised to receive. The doctor had informally taken his departure for Immergrün, and Léon and Paul were escorting him part the way through the forest.

Amelia had put on her morning robe again, and sat beside me, practising some airs on a guitar, whose soothing tone sent me on an empyreal expedition out of the body!

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### OUT OF THE BODY.

I WAS soaring above the form that I recognized as mine, slumbering on the bed at the hermitage. The features of my ethereal form were not different, but the property of *weight* was gone, the earth losing its force of attraction, and the atmosphere offering no impediment to my free movement.

I made no exertion to move: even my will could rest, and I be attracted in pleasant currents of electrical light—not air, for breath seemed suspended: I was attracted wherever my sympathies could harmonize.

I found myself in the old library at Immergrün. Madame Léon and Ethel were there with Mademoiselle Beaumont. Each one had a sorrow or an anxiety brooding in her heart. Ethel's was merely sympathetic, and not individually defined.

Madame's mind was crowded with images of Léon, my brother.

Now she would see him struggling in a hand-to-hand encounter with brigands; again, he would rush in advance of a troop to inevitable death; then, trampled under the feet of a restless crowd, striving

to catch words of encouragement from a desperate enthusiast.

At my approach these fancies diminished in vividness in Madame's mind, and a vague anxiety on my account seemed to take their place. Ethel was influenced only by the genial light that accompanied me, as I was drawn toward her, and our sympathies were in such perfect accord, that I had only to wish joyousness for her, and the light was instantly reflected from her beautiful countenance.

Mademoiselle Beaumont sighed when I drew near to her, as if oppressed by some inexpressible sadness. When I threw on her the light that cheered Ethel, she covered her face in her hands, and shivered as a body cold of itself, will shudder in the sun's rays! Spirits were all about her, and their whisperings were not alike. Some filled her heart with apprehension. Some subdued her fears, but none sought to conceal the cause for her anxiety of mind, that gradually took the form of a distinct and perfect phantom picture, as delicate in outline and ethereal in its unsubstantial coloring, as the dream my mother had painted for me, when Mademoiselle Beaumont came toward Immergrün, two years before.

I saw the vision as Mademoiselle was seeing it; and interpreted it for myself; but I took heed to avoid lending her my power to confirm the convictions she dared not acknowledge even to her own heart.

She saw a broad blue sea, like the Mediterra-

nean. A ship stood solitary on the sea, with all its white sails spread, and glistening in the sunlight. Léon stood alone on the ship, inspired with an irresistible longing to risk a perilous voyage, and withheld from the attempt by the force of the affection for Amelia, that filled his heart. The white sails symbolized the purity and unselfishness of the motives impelling him to go—the intense blue of the sea, the strong hope of success. But overhead the blue canopy changed to a golden yellow, signifying the end of human hope; and then its hues were purple, meaning by this mingling of blue—hope—and black—the privation of light, that his hope was without reason!

A breeze seemed to stir the sails; and instantly a crew of sailors surrounded Léon. He glanced over the sea to where a long line of white beach gleamed at the foot of frowning palisades, half veiled with purple mist. A fortress on the palisades was screened, and its battlements festooned with purple cloud-wreaths.

The order to raise the anchor was expected, and already the sailors' hands were on the ropes, when Léon heard, in spite of the moaning waves, the roar of cannon from the impatient sentinels on the distant battlements, and the jests of the merry crew, those still, small voices, too fine for unattuned ears, warning, dissuading, and exhorting him, but vainly! The order was already on his lips to be uttered, when the library, just as it was, Madame, Ethel, and Mademoiselle sitting in brooding silence there,

appeared pictured on the sails, and Amelia and my sleeping figure at the hermitage formed a separate group, while in a circle around the three who sat by the deserted hearth in the old castle, the forms of my mother, father, Léoni, Father Beaumont, and two others, who resembled Amelia and Paul, and seemed in sympathy with the rest in trying to draw Léon with all the power of spirit force, to his home, whispered in murmurs that floated in harmonious notes to Léon's hearing:

*"Bide with us, lest ill befall thee,  
Heed them not who bid thee roam;  
Loving hearts would fain recall thee  
To the dear old hearth and home!"*

The sea, the skies, the ship, and its spirit-forms and living groups all faded. I felt a strong attraction drawing me from Mademoiselle Beaumont's side, and, whispering, "*My peace I leave with thee,*" I awoke!

Amelia was practising an air on a guitar at my window, and the full moon had flooded my floor with its intense white light. Paul stood gazing in my face; I held out both hands to him as I rose from my pillow, and we went out of the room so quietly that Amelia was not conscious of our movement.

My heart was full; I felt I must tell my dream to Paul, and all the secret of my inner life!

We walked straight to the chapel; I fancied it would be easier to say what I wished, on the spot

where I had resigned my separate existence for the mysterious union that time itself might not break, and that with the dissolution of the body would become even more perfect; no discordant earthly variance interfering with the final complete unison.

When I opened that chapel door in the morning, how little suspicion I had of the new *life* opening before me! How completely with it I shut out the past!

Drawing aside the curtain on the platform, we sat under the archway, partly sheltered from the chill night air, and yet commanding a glorious moonlight view of forest, mountain, and a broad stream of water that glanced with its myriad golden eyes at the moon as it seemed to rise in the swift race with her, over its stony bed, purling and gurgling with gleeful content.

"Paul, I have some questions to ask," — instantly his face betrayed anxiety; "but not till I have told you all I have experienced, apart from anything I have ever confessed to any one!"

The response was not audible, but decidedly demonstrative, and entirely satisfactory!

"Until you are ready to explain our delay," I began, "I shall patiently wait your pleasure. Besides, this uncertainty of each day's plans for my resting or moving, agrees with the habit that I have acquired of an illusory existence — associating with the material world about me the ethereal people of my dream-world. Only, I must introduce you, Paul, for I am not willing to be alone even in my fancies now!"

I related everything — my dream at Immergrün, the arrival of Father Beaumont and Mademoiselle, my mother's request, its strange suggestion, and the fact that only myself had been the interpreter of coincidences of events with the predictions of the signs and visions.

"So, when my sail was bringing me to Sorrento, and you saw the phosphorescent gleams in the shadow of the canvas, you took them for a response to the fire in that opal Amelia gave you?" Paul said, drawing the ring from my finger. "What a will-o'-the-wisp it is," he continued, laughing at the suggestion; "but it has no business with your lively imagination. It shall no longer be a circle of perpetual apparition; and the stars it has pretended to point out, that never set, shall leave our orbit this very evening! And this —" I closed my hand when my mother's ring began to follow the other from my finger; but by some sleight-of-hand Paul managed to get that too. "We will call that one the circle of perpetual occultation, that has answered your unwarranted ambition to have revelations of other spheres than your own natural one. You have, like the young Abdallah, used a mysterious treasure that fulfilled its mission in symbolizing the eternity of your mother's love; and every time you have attempted to pry into its mysteries, your poor little nerves have had a thwack!"

I could not contradict this extemporized theory, and could still less adopt it; but I watched with a singular satisfaction Paul's serious business-like way

of disposing of the rings. Tearing off the blank leaf of a note, he wrapped them both together and placed them in a vest-pocket. Then taking both my hands in his, and looking straight in my eyes, he said:

"I will exchange promises with you. I will do all that is consistent with my manhood in trying to comprehend as you do, the simple religious points on which we may differ now. Your faith in the Son of God is to my *mind* the most beautiful, and I believe the most elevating, of all creeds. I trust your prayers and my own will bring the same faith to my heart as well as to my understanding. In return I ask you to relinquish at once all belief in any special ministration, through your frail life, of powers of light or darkness, earth or heaven, to any one but myself. And as my exactions will be limited to common necessities, I shall call for no unearthly tribute that will require supernatural gifts for you. Will you grant me this request?"

"Paul," I answered, though I trembled at the thought of his disappointment, "what you ask is impossible! I have no longer the power to say *I will* or *I will not* in reference to these matters so difficult for me to express even. They affect me without my will. They are distinct intuitions, having nothing to do with my faith."

"I doubt not your faith has more latitude than most people's. Now, Minnette, if you are not weary of the subject, tell me exactly your idea of an orthodox faith."

"Wearied with talking to you, Paul?" I replied. "I am strong in the very confidence that I can walk through life with you and never grow weary."

"And we will count time only by heart-throbs," said Paul, his voice betraying how deeply he was touched by my confession.

"But, Paul," I interrupted, "when either heart has ceased to beat—"

He drew me closer to his heart, as if to repel some threatening fear, and when I persisted in my questioning, "What *then*, Paul?"

He replied, quickly, "*Then* the one who is left will have ample leisure to investigate your *separate theory!*"

He laughed as he emphasized the last two words; but, seeing I could not return his amused look with anything but a quiet assent to his humor, he again asked:

"Will you tell me your view of the safest doctrine for us finite beings?"

"Paul, how artful you are!" I exclaimed, "forcing me to reason when I would rather indulge in reverie—if any one besides yourself interfered with my mood; but I *can* tell you in very few words. I believe that God reveals His will to mankind *generally*, through the teachings of His life, and that of His apostles, as they are written in the Holy Scriptures alone. They comprehend a law sufficient for the guidance of men's actions; and, as there is a gradual, but very perceptible development of the faculty of understanding and reasoning in men,

these scriptural teachings are assuming higher significance. Men look for more than the mere security by faith and obedience of God's '*Enter thou.*' Some attain to Pentecostal inspiration, and speak *as they are moved* beyond their limited understanding, teaching the beginning on this side the vale of the enjoyment of the hallowed pursuits of the blessed."

"And do you ask for yourself," said Paul, "more latitude than this?"

"I *ask* only my daily bread, as I lisped the prayer at my mother's knee," I replied; "but some power within me makes what you call unreal, more palpable to me than the very material world about me. Paul," I said, "help me, if you can, to drown the voice of this monitor. When I am awake my nature instinctively obeys its mysterious voice, and in dreams I yield to its enchantment; but, when I am with you, my heart and conscience cry for release from the unnatural subjection!"

"O God! what a treasure am I answerable for! Minnette, my wife, you have filled my soul with an ineffable delight in this outpouring of your heart and mind unreservedly to my keeping. You are my hope, my faith, and the sweet charity that would bless all worlds. But I cannot afford to yield to any—but the Heavenly One who restores you richer to me—one thought that I may not share."

"You possess every secret of my mind," I answered, "and shall always!"

"Oh, I forgot to ask you why the name of Ruth

was given to you when you were baptized, as the doctor said it was, in writing it for Ermitano this morning."

"Why, the Moravians retain the custom of giving a name from the Scriptures, not for us to ask the intercession of the saints, but to have a special regard for the grace that originated the name."

"Ruth means mercy, tenderness, and sorrow for another's suffering. These graces are expressed in every act of your life, my love; and see how I have had this little plain gold band, the emblem of our pure, eternal love, inscribed."

I held the ring so I could read plainly, "*Paul, Ruth, fidé.*"

Placing it on my finger, Paul said, "Now our dual life has but one aim, one eternal purpose, and must continue, as it has begun, with perfect mutual confidence, '*ferasmuch as we have both sworn in the name of the Lord!*'"

"Amen!" a voice responded.

It was Léon, who came to look after us; and he declared "he could not leave without disturbing us, and had no power to speak till the Amen surged up from his heart, from perfect fulness of sympathy."

"And where is Amelia?" asked Paul; "not far off, I suspect."

"She is coming to lecture you for keeping Minnette in this night air."

"She is well protected," said Paul, drawing around me the mantle he had caught from a hook on my door as we passed out. But, hearing Amelia ap-

proach, he threw over my head the cape of the mantle, like a capuchin hood.

Amelia glanced at me, and seemed quite satisfied with my apparent tranquillity, and then remarked, looking at my wrapping:

"Really, Paul, you deserve credit for being a thoughtful husband already. I know well enough Minnette did not guard herself so carefully."

"Amelia, you are my own amiable sister," said Paul, with a malicious smile at Léon.

"But not to be imposed upon, for all that," said Léon, affecting indignation.

And he straightway told the truth.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CHARACTER.

DAYS glided into weeks; the dewy green foliage of summer faded and withered, and autumn came grandly into our forest-home, clothing the old trees in gorgeous array, spreading a bright carpet under our feet, and deepening the rich coloring of our sky with the orange and purple of autumn sunsets.

If such happiness, so unalloyed, as we two sisters, two brothers, two husbands, two wives experienced, could be continued uninterrupted, the pearly gates might stand ajar, and the shining ones might beckon us to come in vain, I thought, singing to myself:

"We would not leave our earth so fair  
For all their hallowed joys;  
Their golden harps to our love-notes  
Would be but angels' toys!"

"What is that you are singing, Minnette?" asked Amelia.

"Some invention of her own, I know by the tune," said Léon. "That tune never accompanies anything but her own words, and, profane or sacred, it mat-

ters not to her, the occasion sanctifies the sentiment."

Amelia laughed merrily at this provoking speech, and to sustain my assumed indignation I was obliged to pull the rim of my broad hat over my eyes.

"Come, sir, that is a libel, and if you cannot make sufficient excuse for your mistake, you must answer for the offence to an outraged husband," said Paul.

"Well," answered Léon, "if you would be patient, I could prove it by actual fact. I have heard sister sing regular May-songs on Sunday, and when Nanine checked her, she declared 'it was right to let her heart sing jubilees, and she always felt happy on Sundays.' Then, ten chances to one, we would have the most mournful chants all day Monday, and she insisted 'it was the solemn impression the Sabbath had made!'"

Léon's serious face and comic gestures, while he related this absurdity, were irresistible, and we all made the old woods resound with our shouts of laughter.

"What shall I say to him, Minnette?"

"Bring him to me, and I will punish him!" I replied, threateningly.

Léon tried to escape, but Paul was too quick for him, and brought him struggling to my feet. I kissed him heartily, and said, "Paul, he is a dear good brother, and only means to divest me of the wings that your imagination has furnished. You need not fear, any of you, that I shall take any new flights. My mission is so clearly to keep all three

of you in order, that I could n't think of leaving you to your own mischievous devices!"

"There, Mr. Enraged Husband, that is all the gratitude you get for interfering between brother and sister," said Amelia.

"Amelia, Minnette set you a better example for sisterly conduct at least," said Paul.

"Don't let him hoodwink you, Amelia; he does n't deserve a kiss of gratitude, as I did!" said Léon.

"Then he shall have one of reconciliation," said Amelia; and the beautiful face that bent over Paul's upturned eyes as he lay on the leafy carpet, expressed more than forgiveness—it was grateful remembrance!

"Sister!" said Paul, suddenly—as if something in Amelia's expression before she kissed him had suggested an idea he was afraid would escape him before it was well defined—"what gave you the impression you received, and that you have transmitted to Minnette, of the Countess Darrée. Minnette's idea of friendships, as they are commonly called, has a tinge of infidelity, and on occasion, as I once heard it"—he paused to catch my eye, but I pretended utter unconsciousness of his mischievous glance—"the Countess de l'Étoile can deliver a homily on false profession equal to old Lavinia's Romish expositions! She has not gained her knowledge from actual contact with deceit and envy, and her tones betrayed more feeling on the subject than a mere notion could convey; so, as you possessed her sympa-

thies entire on that question, let me know how you both came to your conclusion."

"The Countess Darrée is afflicted more now than I was when she incurred my dislike, so let her name be mentioned only with pity, Paul," answered Amelia.

"No," said Paul, emphatically; "I have determined to understand that false-hearted beauty's system of deceit. Her sorrow is but the common lot of all, and does not exempt her from trial for her faults."

"That interests me also, Amelia," said Léon, "for I am thinking about accepting two or three flattering invitations to her ladyship's villa, and unless you give satisfactory reason for not accepting them, good-by!"

Léon actually jumped to his feet, picked up his hat, and made a movement as if to start.

"What *are* we to do with these tyrants?" said Amelia, despairingly, to me.

"Why, if we can't be permitted to *love* our enemies, and *bless* them that curse us, we will fall to, like the rest of the world, and *berate* them soundly!" I answered.

Paul and Léon seemed determined to enjoy themselves at any one's expense that day, and both of them indulged in a good, long laugh at my reply, and Amelia's effort to resist their malicious triumph.

"If you insist on hearing the recital of that episode in my life that I would rather forget, you must be very grave while I recall the incidents," said Amelia.

"Paul is right, Amelia," said Léon. "You should

share with us all uncomfortable as well as pleasant remembrances; and it will lessen the pain of the one and increase your pleasure in the other!"

With this encouragement, Amelia began:

"Paul, you remember how often you came to our private school entertainments in the convent, with the Count and Countess Darrée, and a number of their fashionable friends; and how, when you and the count joined me, and sometimes introduced me to your friends, the countess laughed, displayed her pretty teeth, and exhibited her most fascinating manners in her amiable recognition of your condescension!"

"Yes," Paul answered, dryly; "I remember it well. And her smile was not as contagious as her ladyship imagined on those occasions."

"When I met her alone, she never recognized me; and once, when the count bowed from the carriage, on the Corso, she was so annoyed that a friend who was with them should witness the recognition of a 'person without a title,' that she impertinently asked, 'Who's your *friend*?' loud enough for me to overhear it. When the Count de l'Étoile sent his message about the gypsy's report of my origin, the Countess Darrée, to be on the safe side in the event of its proving true, came every day *alone* to my rooms and played the agreeable, but never had the courage or generosity to invite me to her villa, where my mind might have been relieved of its burden of inexpressible anxiety and apprehension. One day (I am addressing Léon now; you and Minnette know

the circumstance, Paul,) I was informed by the mother superior that several artists from Vienna were to visit the Academy of Art on the Pincian, and it would be a great advantage to have their opinion of my pose and Nita's for the *Annunciata* — Paul's painting for the altar. I had never visited the school; but, to oblige Paul, I went, with the understanding that we were to meet only the three artists and the Count Darrée. This was after the gypsy's report had been declared false. Entering the academy by a private hall leading to the platform where the classes of models pose for the students, we found the curtain closed, as I had been promised. The artists, Count Darrée, and Paul were there, and Nita and I placed ourselves for criticism, when suddenly the screen was cleared away, and the president of the college, all the students, a group of visitors, Countess Darrée with them, stared at our dismayed party. Of course I immediately left my stand, and turned to leave by the door I came in.

"'Resume your pose,' the president called out, 'if you wish to remain in our classes.'

"The Count Darrée and Paul instantly turned to him and explained the mistake, and I left the hall, meeting the president's unconcerned stare and ungentlemanly silence, after an unintentional insult, with one of disdain; and as I reached the door a low laugh of her ladyship was silenced by my look of unfeigned *surprise*!

"She actually reddened in the face, and I firmly

believe it was the only time she ever blushed for herself.

"When there were rumors again of my relationship to Paul, that the countess feared were true, she urged and entreated me to come to her villa, promising *I need not meet any one there!* I simply refused the invitation, saying I would prefer not to risk inconveniencing her ladyship by being accidentally discovered at her house. She took that charge of cowardice in silent humiliation. She could not disprove it, or redeem it by any noble repentance. She had not the moral courage. Nita, my foster-sister, never had a good disposition, but she was honest, and sensitive of her reputation for integrity. The countess enticed her to come to her villa on different pretences, and gained from her, by bribes artfully given as mere tokens of gratitude for little favors, all the information she wished about Lavinia and myself. And when Mademoiselle Beaumont came to Rome, it was with great difficulty we avoided Nita's close espionage on behalf of the countess. The poor girl was badly rewarded for her pains. And what I relate now, Paul, will show you the deepest shade in the countess's character, that, if you had permitted, I think I would rather have passed over; but it is the insight that Minnette has of the unwomanly soulless selfishness, that imbibed her expression when you pressed the question of friendship, that we had discussed on that very morning! The countess had a set of pearl jewelry that the count gave her, and some loose pearls to match.

One day she remarked to Nita, 'I am going to exchange these loose pearls for a set of earrings, and if I lose any pearls out of my necklace or bracelets, I will have imitation instead. It is impossible to match them with real.' Shortly after making that remark, which the countess evidently forgot, a young lady who visited the count, a relative of his family, was staying with them at the villa. Her mind was more than a match for the countess's manners in attracting and holding the attention of their guests, and the countess became violently jealous of the unsuspecting girl. One evening the countess came home and described some fancy ornament for the hair that she wished to purchase. It was expensive, and her economical husband refused to purchase it.

"'Why not exchange your pearls for it?' asked her friend, seeing the disappointment of the countess, and suggesting a way to accomplish the object. The answer was an indifferent one, and nothing further was said about the ornament.

"One day, a week afterward, the countess said to the count, 'I am afraid I have lost my loose pearls, and if I have, you must replace them. They are not where I usually keep them.' Nita was in the countess's room at the time, and when she followed the count out into the hall, Nita told the young lady friend of the count that possibly the countess had misplaced the pearls in taking them out to learn their value, as she had remarked she intended to do. When the countess re-entered the room the friend made Nita's suggestion to her. She looked per-

fectly confounded for an instant, and then began confusedly to search for the pearls, and make remarks that caused the friend considerable discomfort. Finally, she related the affair over so often and in such ambiguous style, that each repetition threw more suspicion on the relative of the count. At last, feeling painfully conscious of her embarrassing position, the young girl insisted on visiting a clairvoyante.

"She declared the pearls were not lost at all! The countess then interrupted the *séance*, and the question remained doubtful to every one who knew of it. The countess had no delicacy in her treatment of the friend, and even pretended to guard her keys where the friend was likely to be alone in her absence from home. Nita, pitying the distress of the friend of the count, went to a *fabrique* where she knew the countess dealt, and ascertained that she had sold the pearls to the dealer, purchased the head-ornament, and several things that she presented to some of the very people who believed her insinuations of theft!

"So even Nita disdained the continuance of the countess's favor; and when she learned that I was to be taken to the villa that night, she suspected the countess's intention to aid in bringing her mother, Lavinia, to trial, and gave her notice in time for us both to escape from Rome."

"Is that *all*?" asked Léon, as Amelia concluded her recital, and quietly resumed some fancy paper-work that she had prudently suspended, as it re-

quired very accurate cutting, and her scissors were not under as good control in her tremulous hands as her tongue was, from severe practice, under strong excitement.

"I wish it were less, or forgotten," Amelia answered, with a sigh half suppressed.

"Well, my love," said Léon, "pardon me if I indulge in one *mental ejaculation*, that, expressed, would not be mistaken for 'a soft rebuke in blessings ended,' by the Countess Darrée. And let me commend you for your careful avoidance of adjectives in your evidence of the meanest act of which I ever knew a human being to be guilty."

"If ever I commit a deed that I wish to have judged favorably," said Paul, "I hope sister will not be called to the witness stand. Her naked truth is more to be feared than Lord Chesterfield's vocabulary of '*attributives*.' I understand, now, how Minnette so completely realized the position of Count Darrée's friend."

Then Paul related my trouble about the opal ring when the gypsy discovered it on my finger, before I knew that Lavinia had placed it there in exchange for my own.

Amelia had never been told of this painful embarrassment that I had endured, and she was so excited when Paul related it with all the coloring of his charmed imagination, as he remembered the romantic midnight adventure, that it required all the art we could employ to chase away the painful impression

it gave Amelia of my suffering for my mediation, then pure friendly.

After ridiculing Paul's glowing account of the affair, and insisting that it was dreadfully exaggerated, I remarked, "You see, Paul, the uncomfortable effect of remembering the sins of our persecutors. Hereafter I shall cherish the love of the beatitudes, and avoid those maledictions proverbial for their *home predilections!*"

My raillery forced a smile into Amelia's tearful face, and, seeing something that attracted my notice elsewhere, I deserted the bower.

All the time of the conversation just related, old Lavinia sat under a tree near enough to hear our voices; and I judged, by her attitude of thoughtful attention, that our words were distinctly understood. I had occupied many hours, that might otherwise have proved tedious, in teaching Lavinia German, and her patience and intelligence made the task a pleasant one.

The roots, herbs, earth, and animals she had been preparing ever since our arrival at the hermitage, for her miraculous mixture, were now seething in one vessel, a porcelain pot shaped like a crucible, and resting on a tripod, under which a steady fire was kept up of charred coals, the flames smothered with ashes of leaves.

After I had given my ultimatum on the subject of backbiting to my three ungrateful auditors—who declared I had "infused the most venom into the dis-

course at the very beginning!" I left them, and went to old Lavinia.

One end of her head-kerchief was loose and fluttering in the breeze, and I tucked it in for her, saying, "Mother Lavinia, that sister and brother and husband are tiresome; have you room on your log for me?"

Spreading her dress over the leaves on the ground, she replied, "That will be more comfortable, child: sit down and tell me how you like the prospect of our journey to Venice."

"I am afraid you are not inclined to leave the hermitage at all," I replied, half laughing at the tone of regret with which she mentioned our proposed departure.

"Ah, this home has always been a peaceful retreat for me, from cares and anxieties that press on one where people live in crowds," she replied. "When Mademoiselle Beaumont and the signora Amelia were here alone, they were both more happy, they said, than they ever were in the great cities. I was almost foolish enough to think the signora had better stay with that deceitful woman you have been talking about; just as if *she* could be happy in a palace with a treacherous hostess. But I gave her her choice that night, and she answered with a sentence she had translated in the morning: '*I would rather come to shame before the world than let myself be assisted by a Judas at a judgment-bar!*'"

"Amelia is grand in that kind of simple power," I replied; "her heart is so noble and true that she has

only to obey its instinctive warning, and feel secure of her just conclusion!"

"She was good to Nita, and always gentle to me, and I would go with her anywhere in the wide world, without fear of her neglecting me."

I was accustomed to hear Lavinia crone over her favorite, and felt a greater satisfaction in listening to it than I could well explain. It gave me an assurance that all humanity was not base, and that the *divine spark* was not extinct while the spirit-light of pure love could shine out of those aged eyes as it returned Amelia's kindly smiles, in spite of the bereaved heart, that had not even the consolation of mourning, like Rachel or Mizpah, for the two not dead, but wrapped in the black veil of superstition, that stifles all the better yearnings of human affection.

"How shall you like to live in two homes always, mother Lavinia?" I asked; "six months at Lorraine, and six months at Immergrün."

"I have no hope of any such good fortune after you young folks get away from the good influence of the Abruzzi," she replied. "Some might think two homes sufficient, but I expect my old bones will be found bleaching on an Eastern desert, or drifted on the beach of a West India island."

"Oh, oh!" I exclaimed laughing, and drew the attention of the three tormentors from whom I thought I had escaped, to our tree, and they came in spite of the "slight" they accused me of in leaving them.

"Mother Lavinia, I verily believe her ladyship

has some design on you, and I mean to put a restraint on my own generosity. Till now I have shared your attention with her equally, but she is such an absorbent that I shall be entirely excluded after a while, and Nannine broken-hearted!" said Amelia, throwing herself on the leaves and laying her head in Lavinia's lap. Before her speech was ended she had been caressed by the brown bony hand, and her brow smoothed with touches too fond to be doubted.

"Mother Lavinia, look! there is a bird right over your crucible. See, he is actually intoxicated, just from the steam!" Léon cried, excitedly.

Our eyes had scarcely found the poor little thing clinging to a branch that was suspended over the vessel, when he fell dead on the ground, almost in the fire!

"Why, what a poisonous decoction that must be!" Paul exclaimed, "when the fumes will kill an animal at that distance."

"I am not surprised," I answered, shuddering at my recollection of the taste I had had of it at Sorrento. "What are the *poisonous* ingredients in it?" I asked.

"Just what you yourself recognized," said old Lavinia. "The poison of vipers!"

She took up the bird, gloomily regarded it, and then, taking a sharp stick, she made a hole in the ground, buried the bird, and pressed the mould over it with her feet.

"It was a dreadful dose," I said, half to myself.

"I felt at first as if I had taken some metallic fluid into my veins, that was gradually expanding and threatening to burst them; then fire and electricity seemed to course through my whole system; and when my feet touched the ground, they were numb, as when they have been heated suddenly, after being very cold."

"If I had dared to give it to your sister, it might have saved her; but I was not sure of her strength to resist the poison, as I was of you," said Lavinia. "And to yield to it would be death in less than an hour."

"What a combination of fire and snow you are, sister!" said Léon. "The doctor has often said," he continued, addressing old Lavinia, "that she resists doses strong enough to prostrate a strong man; but she is so sympathetic in her nature, that by contagion she will take the slightest fever from another person."

"I saw that when I gave her the theriaca, or she would have taken the fever from her sister. Before the fever has poisoned the blood, this mixture is an antidote; afterward, only fuel to the flame," said old Lavinia.

"This is the same formation of mithridate that was made by Andromachus, physician to Nero," said Amelia; "and there are about twenty-five times as many ingredients as there need be to make it just as efficacious. But I suppose if one grain of strained opium or a speck of the dried vipers should be omitted, mother Lavinia would scorn to use it."

"There you are mistaken, signora, for I have kept an ounce of opium out this time."

"Where is it?" asked Amelia. "Ermitano is suffering with that tooth again, this afternoon; and it is only from the cold settling there, that he had in his face yesterday. Ginger and opium, made into a plaster, will drive the pain, cold, and soreness all away."

"You will find the bottle in my room, signora, and a roll of linen," said old Lavinia, as Amelia turned toward the hermitage, but paused as Paul remarked:

"Léon, suppose we ride over to the colliery, and give directions for those men who are to guard us to the coast. These people are so forgetful and indifferent, that we cannot be too particular in making them understand we must start positively to-morrow evening."

"Very well," answered Léon. "I will go; it is just the day for an excursion."

"Minnette, would you like to go?" asked Paul.

"No, signore," said old Lavinia, shaking her head. "The signora and the Signora Amelia will do better to stay at the hermitage; and I think yourself and the signore would do as well to avoid the fatigue, as we have a tedious journey enough before us."

A look of astonishment passed quickly over Paul's countenance, that was succeeded by one of perplexity, as he looked inquiringly at old Lavinia's face. But he might as well have tried to read the riddle

in the face of the Sphynx, as in the impassive countenance of that wary old woman, when she chose to evade scrutiny. There was something wrong; that was evident. Paul, Léon, and myself felt it, and not one of us could have told *how* old Lavinia had given the impression! It was very natural to object to having Amelia or myself undertake a tedious ride on rough ponies through the forest, when we were to begin a journey of several days on horseback the next evening. But the advice to Paul and Léon, though seemingly reasonable also, were a little gratuitous for old Lavinia's usual circumspect care to avoid even the appearance of disregarding the self-importance of these young husbands.

"Have any news been received from Rome since last Thursday?" asked Paul, assuming an air of sudden curiosity.

"None that I have heard of, signore; but you will learn at the colliery if there have!" answered old Lavinia, as coolly.

"So we will. Well, Léon, if fatigue is the only plea for our remaining, we can risk that!"

This remark succeeded no better than the direct question to draw any admission from Lavinia; and, after a few moments' preparation, the two indefatigable voyagers started on their really useless errand.

"You will return before evening?" Amelia asked.

"Oh, yes; and you might meet us, if you choose. About sunset will be the time to start from here for a mile's ride," answered Paul.

The adieus were exchanged, and away they went.

Watching my opportunity when Amelia came from Ermitano's apartments, "Now, Amelia," I said, "see if you can get any news out of mother Lavinia. She has some, I am certain."

"Very well; let me try her alone, and I promise you shall know, if you are right," answered Amelia.

"Certainly," I replied; "and as I am rather fatigued, I will rest awhile. You can join me when you are ready."

"Will you take this bottle to Lavinia's room on the way?" Amelia asked, turning back again when she had gone but a few steps.

Looking at the vial as she gave it to me, I saw, instead of the black fluid opium I supposed was in it, a curious colored mixture that I had never seen before.

"What is this?" I asked.

"Opium, I suppose," Amelia replied. "But, as Ermitano's face was better, or else, like all men, his pain disappeared at the mere *sight* of the remedy, I did not open the vial."

"Look what a strange color it is; and I never saw opium so *pasty* as the consistency of this."

"You had not better take out the stopper. Perhaps I have made a mistake; and if we cross mother Lavinia by meddling with her mysterious pharmacy, farewell to all hope of any news we may get!"

I was more anxious for news than curious as to the contents of the vial, so I took Amelia's advice.

Falling into a revery on the way up to my room, I forgot to leave the vial in Lavinia's room, and not wishing to go back again, I placed it on my own table; and taking my Shelley, that Dr. Léon had been induced to leave with me, I threw myself on a lounge, and was soon lost to all sense of impatience in the absorbing interest of "the Cenci."

## CHAPTER XXX.

## SUSPENSE.

MINNETTE!"

The voice was so strange to my ear that I thought my eyes must be deceiving me when I saw Amelia standing beside me. But her countenance was even more strange than her voice. It expressed the hopeless terror of a craven heart, that, facing an enemy, is palsied by its own lack of courage, and, vanquished by its weak fears, dares not strike for life.

"Minnette, I am almost beside myself with distracting doubts!" she said, and her wild look confirmed her words.

"*Doubts!* of whom, or what?" I asked.

"Minnette, I *do* believe you are stronger than I, after all, in a great crisis. Be as brave and calm as you possibly can now, for I am helpless, and must depend on you!"

"Amelia, I can be reasonable; but if you continue to increase my fears without telling me what I have to encounter, you cannot expect superhuman courage."

"Well, be patient with me; the trouble may exist

in my imagination only, but it has taken a fierce hold on me."

This acknowledgment, that no accident, invasion, or *anything positively known*, had happened to Léon, Paul, or any one belonging to us, reassured me, and rising from the lounge, I insisted on Amelia's sitting quietly till she had told me what distressed her so unaccountably.

"I was so fearful that mother Lavinia would see my agitation, and I would not have Paul know my feelings for the world!" she said, despairingly.

"Amelia, you must be ill; perhaps you have some fever from the headache you complained of to-day," I said, really believing that nothing else could cause her to talk so incoherently.

"Oh, I am heart-sick!" she said, "and do not know how to tell you what I fear. Promise me that it shall never pass your lips, whether or not it is true, unless I give you leave to speak!"

"A promise of silence might make me as helpless as yourself in the matter; you can depend on me for maintaining secrecy, if it is better. You have that promise; only tell me at once, Amelia, for I am getting very nervous at this hesitation on your part. It is something concerning Léon; he is the only one you have not mentioned in your allusions yet."

"You remember he said the Countess Darrée had invited him to her villa?"

"Yes, certainly; but you could not —"

"Oh, let me tell you! you cannot conjecture my meaning. I have just learned from Ermitano, that

the young officer who stopped here on the way to Naples was a friend of the Countess Darrée. He told Ermitano that the countess had become a secret member of the Liberalists; and since their cause was lost in Rome, she has joined a party who are enlisting the young noblemen of every nation, wherever they meet them, and can work on their sympathies, to join Garibaldi, who is gathering forces near Tivoli, and is determined to fight in open country. Ermitano evaded the officer's questions about Paul and Léon, and gave him so little encouragement to remain at the hermitage, telling him he would find better accommodation to spare at the border, that the officer went off before we breakfasted this morning.

"When I told Ermitano, a few minutes ago, that Paul and Léon had gone over there, he looked alarmed at once, and said, 'How unfortunate! There will be a meeting and illumination in the forest to-night, for the express purpose of inducing the young men to adopt the Italian cause, and the officer hinted that Garibaldi himself might be there!'"

"My dream! my dream!" I exclaimed.

"What do you mean?"

"Where is the countess now?" I asked, dreading the answer that I saw in my dream all pictured clearly before me again — the Mediterranean, the vessel, the fortress with its cloud canopy, and Léon's bright eyes looking with the fire of enthusiasm toward the strife, while Amelia passively waited his return to her!

"They have a vessel off Naples, and the countess and her party are waiting to carry the officers enlisted around the Cape to join a force on the eastern coast."

"Amelia, we must go immediately, and join Léon and Paul."

"We cannot; it will be night by the time we arrive at the border, if they really go all the way, and we may miss them if they should start before we reach the colliery."

"If you will not go, I will persuade Lavinia to accompany me without you. I must reach Léon; for I have a presentiment that if I do not, some harm will come to him through the deceit of the Countess Darrée. The officer was sent here, or—" The thought that came into my head was too extravagant to utter; I banished it as preposterous; and finding my appeal had effected its purpose with Amelia, I hastily prepared for our ride, while Amelia summoned old Lavinia to prepare to accompany us.

I could understand the hesitation Amelia felt in admitting her fears of the Countess Darrée's power to influence Léon against his own will or the strength even of his affection for her, in a cause that had interested every feeling of his patriotic heart. The countess was discerning enough to comprehend Léon's noble love of independence, and had several times induced him to express his opinion on the Italian question, although she knew that in doing so my father was distressed by it and her husband seriously annoyed.

One time she remarked in my hearing: "Monsieur de Stalberg, you have not yet been presented to His Holiness; surely all Protestants must acknowledge that the blessing of the Holy Father can be efficacious when the very fact of their opposition to his temporal advancement proves the sincerity and unselfish motive of His Holiness in bestowing the papal benediction!"

"My dear countess," Léon answered, "the only blessing I should value especially from a Roman Pontiff, is the one he cannot consistently give—a *patriot's* blessing. And a country struggling for its freedom has a universal claim on youth and courage for opposition to the arch-enemy to all liberty, even that of conscience."

The countess saw by my smile that I had overheard the remarks, and, quickly charging on me the whole battery of malicious intentions, she said, "And Mademoiselle Minnette, your bright smile might induce the Holy Father to forget you were a little heretic, and betray him into a blessing with special indulgence!"

The shaft was well selected and beautifully aimed, but its poison met an unexpected antidote in my own acrid drop of hatred for the machinations of a deceitful woman, as my *instinct* taught me the Countess Darrée was.

"Madame," I replied, "I would spare Pius Ninth, or any other papist, the pain of penance for a falsehood of which he must be guilty every time he blesses with his lips a '*heretic*,' while in his heart he

reserves the malediction '*on all heretics*' that he must utter at the very next mass!"

I have not the ability to describe the look that answered this hasty speech; but after that skirmish, in which I did not feel worsted, the Countess Darrée and myself had exchanged as few words as common civility would permit.

Her motive in joining the Liberalists now, I could easily comprehend. Count Darrée's death at the hands of his own party threw a shade over the popularity of his name that could not be removed, for the lack of sufficient proof of his entire devotion to the papal cause; and the countess, being essentially an *intriguante*, had, as soon as possible, formed a clique of Roman noblemen and women who, like herself, had some personal wrong to avenge; and every energy, I well knew, would be exerted to engage the services of men like Léon and Paul. I was convinced that in some way the Countess Darrée had learned our habitation, and sent the officer Lavinia had mentioned to bring her information of us.

While I was getting ready to start on our uncertain expedition, swallowing with difficulty the broth Lavinia had ordered Amelia and myself to take, "or remain at home, as it would be nonsense for two women, faint with hunger, to attend a soldier's meeting," I turned over in my mind all these agreeable recollections and suggestions, and came to the conclusion that to make old Lavinia of any use in the matter, there was but one way—to make a clean breast of the whole affair, and trust her shrewd

head and faithful heart to comprehend and sacredly guard my confidence.

"Amelia," I said, urging her consent to my plan, "Lavinia is a good general; but is it fair to ask her assistance, and not give her the advantage we have of viewing the enemy's ground, as well as our own? Besides," I continued, "I more than half suspect she is already possessed of information that equals our own in importance."

"If she has," Amelia replied, "I could not detect it, nor would she give me the slightest encouragement to talk about the present aspect of the Italian cause."

"She saw your own reserve, and felt hurt by it," I answered; "and while I am as averse as you can be to anything like an indelicate disclosure of Léon's affairs to a third person, I think we should consider it perfectly right and justifiable to commit our anxiety to the keeping of one who has been faithful to both of us through a trial that few mothers could have borne so bravely."

"You are right, Minnette; do as you please, and I will abide by your action. Thank God, I am not left to my own weak fears in this exigency. I never felt so keenly the pain of threatening sorrow, and yet so helpless to avert it."

"That is not like your courage, sister," I said, kissing her cheek, wet with tears that she could not repress. "Finish this broth," and I held the bowl to her lips, forcing her to take it; "and now I will

return this vial to Lavinia's room, and see if she is ready to start."

Lavinia was not in her room, and, thinking she had gone down to meet us at the door, I hastily placed the vial on her table without seeing what I did, and, striking against another one, upset it. The stopper fell out, and I noticed the odor of ammonia and ether, though it had the same coloring as the contents of the vial I returned. As I replaced the stopper and stood the vial against the wall, Amelia came into the room, and I told her what I had done. She could not help smiling at my consternation, and said, "Lavinia would construe that accident into some omen that would only make her more uneasy; so we may as well go down and meet her without mentioning it."

And on that careless conclusion hung a decree of fate!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### RETRIBUTION.

**B**EFORE we reached the colliery, a messenger from Paul met us with a note hastily pencilled to myself, requesting me to come with Amelia and mother Lavinia to the border meeting. "The officer who was at the hermitage," it read, "seems to be making a strong impression on Léon. He is wildly enthusiastic about the forming of the new Garibaldian legion, and I fear the influence of this new acquaintance, who has a remarkably pleasing address. Indeed, he almost persuades me to believe in the success of the undertaking. Come with Amelia; I feel powerless to combat in any other way the plausible arguments of the officer, who has induced Léon to attend the meeting to-night in spite of my protest."

"That is just what I expected," Lavinia quietly remarked; "and I wish now that I had told you, so you could have persuaded them not to go. But I dislike to be always borrowing trouble."

After a half-hour's rest and refreshment at the colliery, we started for the assemblage of mountaineers, besides refugees, recruits, and bandits, who were certain to be there, escorted by a company of thirty

trained men from the colliery. The sunset, with its parting glory, the moonlight silvering every streamlet, and throwing its mysterious spirit-light over the shadowy forest as we silently rode through it, and as we came upon the settlement the sudden blaze of a hundred fires, the flames leaping in triumph to the very skies, illuminating every secret nook of the settlement, magnifying the forest-trees that bordered the clearing like four gigantic hedges of oak, and bringing out the expression of every fiendish passion that the Tempter can paint on the human countenance in that great crowd—that restless, shouting, defiant mass of humanity—I remember it all!

On one group alone my eyes were riveted. In the very centre of a piazza, around which the huts of the settlement were built in the form of a hollow square, a platform had been erected, and on it stood two officers in the crimson cloaks and plumes of the Garibaldian uniform.

Standing, almost leaning against the platform, was another officer, younger and with a fair face, though the features were strongly marked. The latter listened critically to every word uttered by the two on the stand, who addressed the crowd alternately, and at every pause turned on Léon and Paul, who were both intensely interested, a look as of melancholy reproach for withholding the aid that might convert this whole concourse with one electrical stroke of conviction, if they would but stand together, and with their youthful, animated countenances proclaim

their determination to lead whoever might follow! Paul did not expect us till an hour later. Lavinia tried in vain to penetrate that living wall of humanity, and reach the side of the stand, and the flaring lights, shifting shadows, surging waves of heads, hands, and banners, the deafening shouts of applause when daring acts of heroes in exile were recounted, made our efforts to attract the notice of Paul and Léon utterly useless.

Appeal followed appeal, till hundreds of eager listeners were enrolled; and yet the demand continued for the sacrifice. No deceitful promises were held out as inducements to these hard-headed, bold-hearted men—brigands and mountaineers. They would have been hurled back into the teeth of the already vanquished officers. But with the awful power of those death-dealing harpies near the rocks of the Syrens, those two persistent, determined enthusiasts repeated the warning of cold and hunger, thirst and weariness, imprisonment and death in the cause of liberty, promising as the only reward, “a lonely grave with a patriot’s deathless fame!”

I found my senses enthralled into a passive submission to the continually increasing power of this magnetic influence. My thoughts wandered back to Sicily: my father was smiling at Léon’s impulsive declaration of attachment to Paul; and then, pleased with Paul’s ready response, he laid his hand on their clasped hands and said: “Count, my boy has a wealth of affection to bestow, and an earnestness of purpose in his friendships; may this bond, so pleas-

antly formed, be the incitement to deeds and utterances in the cause of truth and right, whenever and wherever Providence may join your paths!"

"Lavinia, stop him, or I shall die!" Amelia moaned in my ears. I had been rapt in my own fancies, and as treacherously had unconsciousness of what was passing stolen over me, as the sleep that blinded the disciples to the Master's agony even while the hour was at hand!

One glance at the group: it had changed! Antonio was there, assisting the officer—the fair one—to separate Paul and Léon. Paul persuaded, Léon tried to disengage his hold; he was wild with excitement.

Lavinia's renewed efforts to force her way through the crowd, again seemed unavailing, when suddenly the officer who had exercised such control over my brother caught sight of Lavinia, and from her face glanced at Amelia's, and then at my own.

"My God! look at that smile!"

Lavinia said it: then strength came with her passion of anger that enabled her literally to hew a path through that mass of men, pressing and crowding in toward the scene of the struggle. Amelia fell senseless. I permitted them to carry her away to a hut, and stood chained to the spot, where I could see every gesture, every movement of the wrestlers for a point on which would turn or rest the question of partial defeat or complete triumph in this hard-fought battle for recruits.

Lavinia reached the stand, caught Antonio by the

wrist fiercely, and received a blow that he hurled at her without seeing who had grasped him. Paul, not knowing Antonio in his blinding rage at seeing mother Lavinia so brutally struck, caught his throat, when suddenly a shot was fired, then another, and Léon and the officer whose smile had so offended Lavinia fell at the feet of the horrified men, who drew back appalled at the termination of the conflict.

"Let me go through—it is my brother!" I repeated, each time they closed around me, and I soon stood beside Lavinia. Léon was dead. The ball entered his brain, and he could not have suffered a moment's pain. Paul was moaning and weeping in an agony of grief that could not find any other expression. Lavinia was speechless. Antonio told some one to take me away. I answered: "Be silent: who is this sufferer? Why don't you do something for him? Lavinia, look, the officer breathes and moves: can't you help him?"

They took Léon away; Paul went with them, Lavinia took a vial from her pocket, and poured some of the mixture from it into the officer's mouth; then she and Antonio assisted some one to carry the sufferer to a hut.

"Leave Antonio with him, and come with me to Amelia," I said, when he was comfortably placed on a bed.

We were at the door, just leaving the hut, when Antonio called Lavinia to come back. The officer

was writhing in awful convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and screaming horribly.

Lavinia put her hand to her head, as she looked in dismay at the awful spectacle of suffering before her; then hastily taking the vial from her pocket, she read and re-read the fearful truth it told.

"I have poisoned HER!" she exclaimed.

Antonio stood motionless, unable even to speak, till suddenly the writhing form stiffened in death, and then the traitor found utterance for his wrath and disappointment.

"You knew, then, it was the Countess Darrée," he hissed in old Lavinia's ear, "and you have *poisoned* her!"

"Antonio," old Lavinia replied, "I would that your soul was clear as mine is from the charge of murder. Retribution comes to all: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord."

The first shock, Léon's fall, had partially paralyzed my brain, but now came a revulsion, and I rushed to the door, calling for Paul.

That is all I remember of that day.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### IMMERGRÜN.

IT mattered not to Minnette de Stalberg that the old home had received her under its hospitable roof once more. Mähren Castle had not changed in the six years of her absence from Immergrün. But both were alike strange to her. Even the changes at Immergrün were unnoticed. A large stone building stood beside the little chapel, once the only Moravian house of worship in the Valley; but now the great school that Mademoiselle Beaumont had erected, as Minnette's father, the Baron de Stalberg, had directed when they were in Sicily together, monopolized the chapel, for three hundred maidens, of all ages and ranks, were receiving their education under Mademoiselle Beaumont's inspectorship. A new church stood between Mähren-Castle and Immergrün, taking half of its ground from each estate.

Robert Lentz and his pretty wife lived in the seminary, and were taking active part in the tuition and household duties of the establishment, as well as an ever-increasing interest in the growing congregation of Moravians in the Valley. Some of the older sisters in the congregation were often called

upon to tell "the last new scholar" about the day when Robert's wife was received by the children in the chapel as the pastor's bride.

Her spring costume of white embroidered muslin from India, her white chip hat with a wreath of white violets, were described minutely. "And the first Sunday was communion Sunday; and in place of Robert's mother, his bride carried the salver of wafers for her husband to distribute to the communicants, and ever after she was called 'the bride of the church;' and no one could meet her pleasant smile and not be comforted!" The new scholar could well believe all the kind dame told her of Mrs. Lentz, "for, she would never, never forget the first night she lay down in one of the row of beds with its snowy curtains, and, feeling 'just a little strange,' began to cry. And how Mrs. Lentz came and said: 'Oh, dear me; Mademoiselle Beaumont has gone to Mähren Castle, and here is a freshet threatening the seminary!' And then she laughed, too, when the new scholar said: 'It was only her way of making herself at home! And Mrs. Lentz staid beside her till she fell asleep.'"

Minnette met the little girls and the older ones, and received their little tokens of respect, their smiles and bouquets, with like indifference. Mademoiselle Beaumont, trying every way to rouse the dormant faculties, one day showed her three medals, told her how "three Waldensians once stood on a mountain that would soon shut out their valley in Bohemia from their sight forever; and how they knelt and

prayed that their persecutors might have their hardness of heart taken away, and permit the 'good seed' sown in the Valley to spring up and flourish when their children should ask what manner of faith their fathers professed. And then these three exiles made a covenant with the Lord, and vowed that the pure, simple truths of the Apostolic Church alone should dwell in their hearts."

These three medals were the symbols of that covenant.

"And now," said Mademoiselle, "in every land are smiling valleys where the children of those early fathers worship in their own way, and instruct thousands of children from the outside world in the teachings of the Word, as well as every useful and scientific art. The Moravian schools, colleges, and seminaries have no rivals in excellence, and here, at Immergrün, our lists are filled out a whole year in advance."

Minnette listened sometimes, and sometimes interrupted this attempt to interest her. Once she said, "Mademoiselle Beaumont is at Immergrün."

"I am Mademoiselle Beaumont," was the vain answer.

"Mademoiselle Beaumont is not ill — she does n't cough; and the medal she showed me was something that some one gave her, and no one but myself knew anything about it, and that was only a dream," was the reply.

Dr. Léon heard this useless conversation, and took Minnette away from Mademoiselle, who could no

longer repress her grief, and was seized with a long, exhausting spell of coughing.

"Doctor, I should like to go to Immergrün; but our home at dear old Immergrün is very far away."

A little girl, only four years old, with long golden hair, was brought to Minnette by her nurse. This little one had appeared to Minnette in a lovely garden in an Eastern city, and she thought it was the Christ-child.

"Where are her wings?" she asked, looking curiously at the child.

Amelia answered, "God sent her to us, and she must not have wings, or she would fly away to heaven, and leave us."

"Where is the Madonna?" was the next question.

The little one answered for herself. She clung to Amelia's neck, and cried out with fear at the intense gaze of the invalid. Then Paul came, and every one else was forgotten.

On this day at Immergrün the child was very happy. She had been listening to the singing of the scholars at a rehearsal for an entertainment in the school-chapel.

She sat down with Minnette under a tree in "the visitors' grove," and talked in her baby way of what she had seen, and then said, "To-night we will all hear them again; and mamma says you will go, too."

"Nannine, I am tired;" Minnette complained. "Where is Paul?"

Never far away, the faithful watcher came, and sent the child and her nurse away.

Old Lavinia brought a pillow, placed it in a hammock, and the wearied brain soon found rest in its own dream-world.

The evening came at last to the impatient scholars. Their bright, happy faces were all beautiful with joyousness, as they walked two and two into the chapel. Every one wore white, and as many natural flowers as they chose to wear in the hair, or as ornaments to any part of their dress, in garlands and bouquets. Fritz had been lavish with his choicest flowers in the green-house, and from Mähren came an abundant supply to decorate the chapel. One little, dark-eyed Spanish beauty wore a wreath of fuchsias on her head, the crimson pendent flowers contrasting richly with her black, glossy ringlets. Beside her sat a fairy, with a pink-and-white baby-face, and large blue eyes, whose light was softened by the modest loveliness of the tiny lilies of the valley resting on her innocent brow. Another waxen face looked more fair under the wreath of pink rosebuds and white hyacinths. The most conspicuous one, and, I think, the most beautiful, a mistaken guardian had clothed with a black robe, but, as she entered the chapel, Amelia placed on her head a wreath of white violets and *anemone*.

All these little children were in front of the older classes on the platform, and looked like the simple bordering to a rich flower-bed, where queenly roses, lilies, and rare flowers lifted their heads with conscious but innocent beauty.

Music formed an important branch of education

at the seminary, as in all Moravian schools, in whatever land; and these young girls were better trained in oratorio and the masses than many professional singers.

Every place in the chapel was occupied by a crowd of visitors invited from Dresden, many of them parents and friends of the scholars.

Mademoiselle Beaumont was present at the opening chorus, but the crowd and the heavy perfume of the flowers oppressed her, and she was taken out of the chapel.

The scene, the music, the prattling child sitting beside her, clapping her little hands with delight when she recognized a favorite among the scholars engaged with some part of the entertainment—a recitation, song, or performance on harp, guitar, or pianoforte—pleased Minnette for a time, and then awakened perplexing memories, till at last it became irksome, and she, too, left the chapel with Paul.

The entertainment was over. All had left the chapel, and the scholars were returning to the seminary, when the pastor stopped the older girls and requested them to follow him to the castle.

Mademoiselle Beaumont was dying, he told them, and desired to hear their voices again. Silently, with pale faces, more angelic with their awe of death, these thirty young girls stood around the bed of the dying woman. Taking the hand of each in turn, she addressed a special farewell blessing to every one of her class. Then turning to Ethel, she said:

“Before they sing, bring Minnette to me; I feel

that my departure in some way will effect her perfect restoration.”

The Litany for the Dying had been read, the last sacrament administered, and the young voices were chanting a subdued but sweet melody of praise, before the request could be granted.

The chant ended, and all knelt to join in the final prayer, “*Our Father*,” when Minnette entered with Ethel, whose pale features had suddenly brought to her recollection the night of Father Beaumont’s death, and induced her to go with her, after refusing all others’ persuasions.

Mademoiselle Beaumont held out her hand; her breath was faint and short, but she said, “Minnette, I am going home to my father; I shall soon ‘*fall asleep!*’”

“Father Beaumont sleeps in the shadow of my mother’s monument.”

“And I will sleep there too, Minnette, and—” The stifled sobs of some of the young girls, unable to control their grief, interrupted her. But Minnette gazed around at the saddened faces, kneeling forms, and the group of anxious friends at the bedside, and she suddenly understood the voice of sadness in those *sobs*, and the meaning of those tears!

Looking eagerly into Mademoiselle Beaumont’s face, she exclaimed, “You are *ill*, Mademoiselle: what can I do for you?”

“Ask—my Heavenly Father—to—receive—my spirit—quickly!”

. . . . .

I fell on my knees; a cloud of loved forms floated before me. I saw each one smiling — mother, father, Léon and Léoni, and then I heard the well-known chant beside me :

*"She is at rest in lasting bliss,  
Beholding Christ her Saviour."*

And I raised my bowed head, looked upon that dead face, the last of those who appeared in my vision, and the recollection and power to realize *all* came back with overwhelming force. In an agony of wretchedness I cried, "*Oh, I am weary — so weary, and indeed alone in my grief!*"

Madame Léon, recognized for the first time, held me close to her heart when Paul took me to her in the old library, till my own heart was eased with my sobs and tears.

Again the morning dawned, and the mournful announcement of a soul's departure from our midst was heard from the church tower; and in the Valley many of the old and young lifted up their voices and wept for the loss of their benefactress, before the inmates of either castle had thought of their rest.

## ADIEU.

DEAR reader, a sad history has been recited, with as much cheerfulness as possible, where clouds and sunshine so mingled, oftentimes, that it was difficult to distinguish which was really prevailing. My strife is ended. In warring against the limited knowledge that a wise Providence ordains for finite beings, I was opposing even the wisdom of those heathen philosophers — the familiars of the old library, in which I am now writing to you — I WAS WARRING WITH NECESSITY. The joy and peace *in believing*, are better than the unhallowed gratification of our speculative propensities, where the imagination is permitted to revel in soarings beyond the bounds of *right* and *reason*. If the reader has been *en rapport* with me through this history, he will admit there was more yielding to strange voices, than trusting to the infallible monitor, who is never silent, though it may be overruled by impious influences.

Were I to retrace my steps with you, dear reader, I could show you that my own wilful imagination made links of mysterious association, where none had existed in reality; and, by continual apprehension of evil, *insensibly aided in working out the fulfilment of its own forebodings!*

But the past must return to me no more. Repentance has shut it out, and keeps the door. The present is full of peace. Paul is a marvel of cheerfulness and content in any of our numerous homes: in Italy, at Lorraine, at Mähren or Immergrün.

Amelia loves the old shadowy home of Léon's childhood, and thinks her little one, *almost her idol*, is happier here. Sometimes we travel off and leave her with Doctor and Madame and Ethel, and old Lavinia stands by her favorite, while Nannine follows the fortunes of hers. A certain Prussian officer is a frequent guest at Mähren—Ethel can tell all about it.

A little hand tugged at my arm, a moment ago—fortunately for you, perhaps, dear reader. I laid down my pen, and took the little beauty up in my lap.

"I thought so!" exclaimed a green-eyed monster.

"What is baby's name?" I asked.

"Léoni Minnette Amelia de Stalberg!" was the long answer from the short person.

Paul laughed at the grave manner of the answer, and said, "If your ladyship will be so condescending, tell your devoted uncle which name you like best."

"Léoni; it was my papa's name," was the unexpected and prompt reply.

"Amelia, you will smother that child," said Paul. "I wish also that you should understand you are welcome to her, and I wouldn't for the world that she belonged to Minnette."

"Paul, how *can* you?" and the infant was in

greater danger than before of being smothered by its overwhelmed parent.

"Where would I be, I should like to know, if Minnette bestowed that much of her heart—and she would be sure to—on a third party?"

"How much do I love Léoni—and what is uncle jealous of?" Amelia laughingly asked the child.

"The concentrated affection of two lionesses for their cub," Paul replied, and rushed away from the menacing sister, niece, and wife.

Sunshine is all about us. Clouds have their days; but we take them for what they *are*, and DREAM of nothing worse. Do likewise, dear reader, and oblige yours truly,

MINNETTE —

THE END.