

THE AMERICAN BARON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DODGE CLUB," "THE CRYPTOGRAM," ETC.



"ETHEL OBTAINED A PAIR OF SCISSORS."

CHAPTER XXV.

SEEKING FOR HELP.

THE departure of the drivers with their horses had increased the difficulties of the party, and had added to their danger. Of that party Ethel was now the head, and her efforts were directed more zealously than ever to bring back Lady Dalrymple to her senses. At last these efforts were crowned with success, and, after being senseless for nearly an hour, she came to herself. The restoration of her senses, however, brought with it the discovery of all that had occurred, and thus caused a new rush of emotion, which threatened painful consequences. But the consequences were averted, and at length she was able to rise. She was then helped into her carriage, after which the question arose as to their next proceeding.

The loss of the horses and drivers was a very embarrassing thing to them, and for a time they were utterly at a loss what course to adopt. Lady Dalrymple was too weak to walk, and they had no means of conveying her. The maids had simply lost their wits from fright; and Ethel could not see her way clearly out of the difficulty. At this juncture they were roused by the approach of the Rev. Saul Tozer.

This reverend man had been bound as he descended from his carriage, and had remained

bound ever since. In that state he had been a spectator of the struggle and its consequences, and he now came forward to offer his services.

"I don't know whether you remember me, ma'am," said he to Lady Dalrymple, "but I looked in at your place at Rome; and in any case I am bound to offer you my assistance, since you are companions with me in my bonds, which I'd be much obliged if one of you ladies would untie or cut. Perhaps it would be best to untie it, as rope's valuable."

At this request Ethel obtained a pair of scissors from one of the maids, and after vigorous efforts succeeded in freeing the reverend gentleman.

"Really, Sir, I am very much obliged for this kind offer," said Lady Dalrymple, "and I avail myself of it gratefully. Can you advise us what is best to do?"

"Well, ma'am, I've been turning it over in my mind, and have made it a subject of prayer; and it seems to me that it wouldn't be bad to go out and see the country."

"There are no houses for miles," said Ethel.

"Have you ever been this road before?" said Tozer.

"No."

"Then how do you know?"

"Oh, I was thinking of the part we had passed over."

"True; but the country in front may be different. Didn't that brigand captain say something about getting help ahead?"

"Yes, so he did; I remember now," said Ethel.

"Well, I wouldn't take his advice generally, but in this matter I don't see any harm in following it; so I move that I be a committee of one to go ahead and investigate the country and bring help."

"Oh, thanks, thanks, very much. Really, Sir, this is very kind," said Lady Dalrymple.

"And I'll go too," said Ethel, as a sudden thought occurred to her. "Would you be afraid, aunty dear, to stay here alone?"

"Certainly not, dear. I have no more fear for myself, but I'm afraid to trust you out of my sight."

"Oh, you need not fear for me," said Ethel.

"I shall certainly be as safe farther on as I am here. Besides, if we can find help I will know best what is wanted."

"Well, dear, I suppose you may go."

Without further delay Ethel started off, and Tozer walked by her side. They went under the fallen tree, and then walked quickly along the road.

"Do you speak Italian, miss?" asked Tozer.

"No."

"I'm sorry for that. I don't either. I'm told it's a fine language."

"So I believe; but how very awkward it will be not to be able to speak to any person!"

"Well, the *Italian* is a kind of offshoot of the Latin, and I can scrape together a few Latin words—enough to make myself understood, I do believe."

"Can you, really? How very fortunate!"

"It is somewhat providential, miss, and I hope I may succeed."

They walked on in silence now for some time. Ethel was too sad to talk, and Tozer was busily engaged in recalling all the Latin at his command. After a while he began to grow sociable.

"Might I ask, miss, what persuasion you are?"

"Persuasion?" said Ethel, in surprise.

"Yes, 'm; de-nomination—religious body, you know."

"Oh!—why, I belong to the Church."

"Oh! and what church did you say, 'm?"

"The Church of England."

"H'm. The 'Piscopalian body. Well, it's a high-toned body."

Ethel gave a faint smile at this whimsical application of a name to her church, and then Tozer returned to the charge.

"Are you a professor?"

"A what?"

"A professor."

"A professor?" repeated Ethel. "I don't think I *quite* understand you."

"Well, do you belong to the church? Are you a member?"

"Oh yes."

"I'm glad to hear it. It's a high and a holy and a happy perrivelege to belong to the church and enjoy the means of grace. I trust you live up to your perriveleges?"

"Live what?" asked Ethel.

"Live up to your perriveleges," repeated Tozer—"attend on all the means of grace—be often at the assembling of yourself together."

"The assembling of myself together? I don't think I *quite* get your meaning," said Ethel.

"Meeting, you know—church-meeting."

"Oh yes; I didn't understand. Oh yes, I always go to church."

"That's right," said Tozer, with a sigh of relief; "and I suppose, now, you feel an interest in the cause of missions?"

"Missions? Oh, I don't know. The Roman Catholics practice that to some extent, and several of my friends say they feel benefit from a mission once a year; but for my part I have not yet any very decided leanings to Roman Catholicism."

"Oh, dear me, dear me!" cried Tozer, "that's not what I mean at all; I mean Protestant missions to the heathen, you know."

"I beg your pardon," said Ethel. "I thought you were referring to something else."

Tozer was silent now for a few minutes, and then asked her, abruptly,

"What's your opinion about the Jews?"

"The Jews?" exclaimed Ethel, looking at him in some surprise, and thinking that her companion must be a little insane to carry on such an extraordinary conversation with such very abrupt changes—"the Jews?"

"Yes, the Jews."

"Oh, I don't like them at all."

"But they're the chosen people."

"I can't help that. I don't like them. But then, you know, I never really saw much of them."

"I refer to their future prospects," said Tozer—"to prophecy. I should like to ask you how you regard them in that light. Do you believe in a spiritual or a temporal Zion?"

"Spiritual Zion? Temporal Zion?"

"Yes, 'm."

"Well, really, I don't know. I don't think I believe any thing at all about it."

"But you *must* believe in either one or the other—you've *got* to," said Tozer, positively.

"But I *don't*, you know; and how can I?"

Tozer threw at her a look of commiseration, and began to think that his companion was not much better than a heathen. In his own home circle he could have put his hand on little girls of ten who were quite at home on all these subjects. He was silent for a time, and then began again.

"I'd like to ask you one thing," said he, "very much."

"What is it?" asked Ethel.

"Do you believe," asked Tozer, solemnly, "that we're living in the Seventh Vial?"

"Vial? Seventh Vial?" said Ethel, in fresh amazement.

"Yes, the Seventh Vial," said Tozer, in a sepulchral voice.

"Living in the Seventh Vial? I really don't know how one can live in a vial."

"The Great Tribulation, you know."

"Great Tribulation?"

"Yes; for instance, now, don't you believe in the Apocalyptic Beast?"

"I don't know," said Ethel, faintly.

"Well, at any rate, you believe in his number—you must."

"His number?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the number six, six, six—six hundred and sixty-six."

"I really don't understand this," said Ethel.

"Don't you believe that the Sixth Vial is done?"

"Sixth Vial? What, another vial?"

"Yes; and the drying of the Euphrates."

"The Euphrates? drying?" repeated Ethel in a trembling voice. She began to be alarmed. She felt sure that this man was insane. She had never heard such incoherency in her life. And she was alone with him. She stole a timid look, and saw his long, sallow face, on which there was now a preoccupied expression, and the look did not re-assure her.



"TONITRUENDUM EST MALUM!"

But Tozer himself was a little puzzled, and felt sure that his companion must have her own opinions on the subject, so he began again:

"Now I suppose you've read Fleming on the Papacy?"

"No, I haven't. I never heard of it."

"Strange, too. You've heard of Elliot's 'Horæ Apocalypticae,' I suppose?"

"No," said Ethel, timidly.

"Well, it's all in Cumming—and you've read him, of course?"

"Cumming? I never heard of him. Who is he?"

"What, never heard of Cumming?"

"Never."

"And never read his 'Great Tribulation?'"

"No."

"Nor his 'Great Expectation?'"

"No."

"What! not even his 'Apocalyptic Sketches?'"

"I never heard of them."

Tozer looked at her in astonishment; but at this moment they came to a turn in the road,

when a sight appeared which drew from Ethel an expression of joy.

It was a little valley on the right, in which was a small hamlet with a church. The houses were but small, and could not give them much accommodation, but they hoped to find help there.

"I wouldn't trust the people," said Ethel.

"I dare say they're all brigands; but there ought to be a priest there, and we can appeal to him."

This proposal pleased Tozer, who resumed his work of collecting among the stores of his memory scraps of Latin which he had once stored away there.

The village was at no very great distance away from the road, and they reached it in a short time. They went at once to the church. The door was open, and a priest, who seemed the village priest, was standing there. He was stout, with a good-natured expression on his hearty, rosy face, and a fine twinkle in his eye, which lighted up pleasantly as he saw the strangers enter.

Tozer at once held out his hand and shook that of the priest.

"Buon giorno," said the priest.

Ethel shook her head.

"Parlate Italiano?" said he.

Ethel shook her head.

"Salve, domine," said Tozer, who at once plunged headlong into Latin.

"Salve bene," said the priest, in some surprise.

"Quomodo vales?" asked Tozer.

"Optime valeo, Dei gratia. Spero vos valere."

Tozer found the priest's pronunciation a little difficult, but managed to understand him.

"Domine," said he, "sumus viatores infelices et innocentes, in quos fures nuper impetum fecerunt. Omnia bona nostra arripuerunt—"

"Fieri non potest!" said the priest.

"Et omnes amicos nostros in captivitatem lachrymabilem tractaverunt—"

"Cor dolet," said the priest; "miseret me vestrum."

"Cujusmodi terra est hæc in qua sustentandum est tot labores?"

The priest sighed.

"Tonitruendum est malum!" exclaimed Tozer, excited by the recollection of his wrongs.

The priest stared.

"In hostium manibus fuinus, et, bonum tonitru! omnia impedimenta amissimus. Est nimis omnipotens malum!"

"Quid vis dicere?" said the priest, looking puzzled. "Quid tibi vis?"

"Est nimis sempiternum durum!"

"In nomine omnium sanctorum apostolorumque," cried the priest, "quid vis dicere?"

"Potes ne juvare nos," continued Tozer, "in hoc lachrymabile tempore? Volo unum verum vivum virum qui possit—"

"Diabolus arripiat me si possim unum solum verbum intelligere!" cried the priest. "Be jabbers if I ondherstan' yez at all at all; an' there ye have it."

And with this the priest raised his head, with its puzzled look, and scratched that organ with such a natural air, and with such a full Irish flavor in his brogue and in his face, that both of his visitors were perfectly astounded.

"Good gracious!" cried Tozer; and seizing the priest's hand in both of his, he nearly wrung it off. "Why, what a providence! Why, really, now! And you were an Irishman all the time! And why didn't you speak English?"

"Sure and what made you spake Latin?" cried the priest. "And what was it you were thryin' to say wid yer 'sempiternum durum,' and yer 'tonitruendum malum?' Sure an' ye made me fairly profeen wid yer talk, so ye did."

"Well, I dare say," said Tozer, candidly—"I dare say 'tain't onlikely that I *did* introduce one or two Americanisms in the Latin; but then, you know, I ain't been in practice."

The priest now brought chairs for his visitors, and, sitting thus in the church, they told

him about their adventures, and entreated him to do something for them. To all this the priest listened with thoughtful attention, and when they were done he at once promised to find horses for them which would draw the carriages to this hamlet or to the next town. Ethel did not think Lady Dalrymple could go further than this place, and the priest offered to find some accommodations.

He then left them, and in about half an hour he returned with two or three peasants, each of whom had a horse.

"They'll be able to bring the leedies," said the priest, "and haul the impty wagons afther thim."

"I think, miss," said Tozer, "that you'd better stay here. It's too far for you to walk."

"Sure an' there's no use in the wide wurruld for *you* to be goin' back," said the priest to Ethel. "You can't do any gud, an' you'd better rist till they come. Yer frind 'll be enough."

Ethel at first thought of walking back, but finally she saw that it would be quite useless, and so she resolved to remain and wait for her aunt. So Tozer went off with the men and the horses, and the priest asked Ethel all about the affair once more. Whatever his opinions were, he said nothing.

While he was talking there came a man to the door who beckoned him out. He went out, and was gone for some time. He came back at last, looking very serious.

"I've just got a message from thim," said he.

"A message," exclaimed Ethel, "from them? What, from Girasole?"

"Yis. They want a praste, and they've sint for me."

"A priest?"

"Yis; an' they want a maid-servant to wait on the young leedies; and they want thim imajitly; an' I'll have to start off soon. There's a man dead among thim that wants to be put undher-ground to-night, for the rist av thim are goin' off in the mornin'; an' accordin' to all I hear, I wouldn't wondher but what I'd be wanted for somethin' else afore mornin'."

"Oh, my God!" cried Ethel; "they're going to kill him, then!"

"Kill him! Kill who? Sure an' it's not killin' they want me for. It's the other—it's marryin'."

"Marrying?" cried Ethel. "Poor, darling Minnie! Oh, you can not—you will not marry them?"

"Sure an' I don't know but it's the best thing I can do—as things are," said the priest.

"Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do!" moaned Ethel.

"Well, ye've got to bear up, so ye have. There's troubles for all of us, an' lots av thim too; an' more'n some av us can bear."

Ethel sat in the darkest and bitterest grief for some time, a prey to thoughts and fears that were perfect agony to her.

At last a thought came to her which made her start, and look up, and cast at the priest a

look full of wonder and entreaty. The priest watched her with the deepest sympathy visible on his face.

"We must save them!" she cried.

"Sure an' it's me that made up me mind to that same," said the priest, "only I didn't want to rise yer hopes."

"We must save them," said Ethel, with strong emphasis.

"We? What can you do?"

Ethel got up, walked to the church door, looked out, came back, looked anxiously all around, and then, resuming her seat, she drew close to the priest, and began to whisper, long and anxiously.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE AVENGER ON THE TRACK.

WHEN Dacres had sprung aside into the woods in the moment of his fierce rush upon Girasole, he had been animated by a sudden thought that escape for himself was possible, and that it would be more serviceable to his friends. Thus, then, he had bounded into the woods, and with swift steps he forced his way among the trees deeper and deeper into the forest. Some of the brigands had given chase, but without effect. Dacres's superior strength and agility gave him the advantage, and his love of life was a greater stimulus than their thirst for vengeance. In addition to this the trees gave every assistance toward the escape of a fugitive, while they threw every impediment in the way of a pursuer. The consequence was, therefore, that Dacres soon put a great distance between himself and his pursuers, and, what is more, he ran in such a circuitous route that they soon lost all idea of their own locality, and had not the faintest idea where he had gone. In this respect, however, Dacres himself was not one whit wiser than they, for he soon found himself completely bewildered in the mazes of the forest; and when at length the deep silence around gave no further sound of pursuers, he sank down to take breath, with no idea whatever in what direction the road lay.

After a brief rest he arose and plunged deeper still into the forest, so as to put an additional distance between himself and any possible pursuit. He at length found himself at the foot of a precipice about fifty feet in height, which was deep in the recesses of the forest. Up this he climbed, and found a mossy place among the trees at its top, where he could find rest, and at the same time be in a more favorable position either for hearing or seeing any signs of approaching pursuers.

Here, then, he flung himself down to rest, and soon buried himself among thoughts of the most exciting kind. The scene which he had just left was fresh in his mind, and amidst all the fury of that strife there rose most prominent in his memory the form of the two ladies, Minnie standing calm and unmoved, while Mrs.

Willoughby was convulsed with agitated feeling. What was the cause of that? Could it be possible that his wife had indeed contrived such a plot with the Italian? Was it possible that she had chosen this way of striking two blows, by one of which she could win her Italian, and by the other of which she could get rid of himself, her husband? Such had been his conjecture during the fury of the fight, and the thought had roused him up to his Berserker madness; but now, as it recurred again, he saw other things to shake his full belief. Her agitation seemed too natural.

Yet, on the other hand, he asked himself, why should she not show agitation? She was a consummate actress. She could show on her beautiful face the softness and the tenderness of an angel of light while a demon reigned in her malignant heart. Why should she not choose this way of keeping up appearances? She had betrayed her friends, and sought her husband's death; but would she wish to have her crime made manifest? Not she. It was for this, then, that she wept and clung to the child-angel.

Such thoughts as these were not at all adapted to give comfort to his mind, or make his rest refreshing. Soon, by such fancies, he kindled anew his old rage, and his blood rose to fever heat, so that inaction became no longer tolerable. He had rest enough. He started up, and looked all around, and listened attentively. No sound arose and no sight appeared which at all excited suspicion. He determined to set forth once more, he scarcely knew where. He had a vague idea of finding his way back to the road, so as to be able to assist the ladies, together with another idea, equally ill defined, of coming upon the brigands, finding the Italian, and watching for an opportunity to wreak vengeance upon this assassin and his guilty partner.

He drew his knife once more from a leathern sheath on the inside of the breast of his coat, into which he had thrust it some time before, and holding this he set forth, watchfully and warily. On the left side of the precipice the ground sloped down, and at the bottom of this there was a narrow valley. It seemed to him that this might be the course of some spring torrent, and that by following its descent he might come out upon some stream. With this intention he descended to the valley, and then walked along, following the descent of the ground, and keeping himself as much as possible among the thickest growths of the trees.

The ground descended very gradually, and the narrow valley wound along among rolling hills that were covered with trees and brush. As he confined himself to the thicker parts of this, his progress was necessarily slow; but at the end of that turn he saw before him unmistakable signs of the neighborhood of some open place. Before him he saw the sky in such a way that it showed the absence of forest trees. He now moved on more cautiously, and, quit-

ting the valley, he crept up the hill-slope among the brush as carefully as possible, until he was at a sufficient height, and then, turning toward the open, he crept forward from cover to cover. At length he stopped. A slight eminence was before him, beyond which all was open, yet concealed from his view. Descending the slope a little, he once more advanced, and finally emerged at the edge of the forest.

He found himself upon a gentle declivity. Immediately in front of him lay a lake, circular in shape, and about a mile in diameter, embosomed among wooded hills. At first he saw no signs of any habitation; but as his eyes wandered round he saw upon his right, about a quarter of a mile away, an old stone house, and beyond this smoke curling up from among the forest trees on the borders of the lake.

The scene startled him. It was so quiet, so lonely, and so deserted that it seemed a fit place for a robber's haunt. Could this be indeed the home of his enemies, and had he thus so wonderfully come upon them in the very midst of their retreat? He believed that it was so. A little further observation showed figures among the trees moving to and fro, and soon he distinguished faint traces of smoke in other places, which he had not seen at first, as though there were more fires than one.

Dacres exulted with a fierce and vengeful joy over this discovery. He felt now not like the fugitive, but rather the pursuer. He looked down upon this as the tiger looks from his jungle upon some Indian village. His foes were numerous, but he was concealed, and his presence unsuspected. He grasped his dagger with a firmer clutch, and then pondered for a few minutes on what he had better do next.

One thing was necessary first of all, and that was to get as near as he possibly could without discovery. A slight survey of the situation showed him that he might venture much nearer; and his eye ran along the border of the lake which lay between him and the old house, and he saw that it was all covered over with a thick fringe of trees and brush-wood. The narrow valley along which he had come ended at the shore of the lake just below him on his right, and beyond this the shore arose again to a height equal to where he now was. To gain that opposite height was now his first task.

Before starting he looked all around, so as to be sure that he was not observed. Then he went back for some distance, after which he descended into the valley, crouching low, and crawling stealthily among the brush-wood. Moving thus, he at length succeeded in reaching the opposite slope without appearing to have attracted any attention from any pursuers. Up this slope he now moved as carefully as ever, not relaxing his vigilance one jot, but, if possible, calling into play even a larger caution as he found himself drawing nearer to those whom he began to regard as his prey.

Moving up this slope, then, in this way, he at length attained the top, and found himself

here among the forest trees and underbrush. They were here even denser than they were on the place which he had just left. As he moved along he saw no indications that they had been traversed by human footsteps. Every thing gave indication of an unbroken and undisturbed solitude. After feeling his way along here with all the caution which he could exercise, he finally ventured toward the shore of the lake, and found himself able to go to the very edge without coming to any open space or crossing any path.

On looking forth from the top of the bank he found that he had not only drawn much nearer to the old house, but that he could see the whole line of shore. He now saw that there were some men by the door of the house, and began to suspect that this was nothing else than the headquarters and citadel of the brigands. The sight of the shore now showed him that he could approach very much nearer, and unless the brigands, or whoever they were, kept scouts out, he would be able to reach a point immediately overlooking the house, from which he could survey it at his leisure. To reach this point became now his next aim.

The wood being dense, Dacres found no more difficulty in passing through this than in traversing what lay behind him. The caution which he exercised here was as great as ever, and his progress was as slow, but as sure. At length he found himself upon the desired point, and, crawling cautiously forward to the shore, he looked down upon the very old house which he had desired to reach.

The house stood close by the lake, upon a sloping bank which lay below. It did not seem to be more than fifty yards away. The doors and windows were gone. Five or six ill-looking fellows were near the door-way, some sprawling on the ground, others lolling and lounging about. One glance at the men was sufficient to assure him that they were the brigands, and also to show him that they kept no guard or scout or outpost of any kind, at least in this direction.

Here, then, Dacres lay and watched. He could not wish for a better situation. With his knife in his hand, ready to defend himself in case of need, and his whole form concealed perfectly by the thick underbrush into the midst of which he had crawled, he peered forth through the overhanging leaves, and watched in breathless interest. From the point where he now was he could see the shore beyond the house, where the smoke was rising. He could now see that there were no less than four different columns of smoke ascending from as many fires. He saw as many as twenty or thirty figures moving among the trees, made conspicuous by the bright colors of their costumes. They seemed to be busy about something which he could not make out.

Suddenly, while his eye roved over the scene, it was struck by some fluttering color at the open window of the old house. He had not

noticed this before. He now looked at it attentively. Before long he saw a figure cross the window and return. It was a female figure.

The sight of this revived all that agitation which he had felt before, but which had been calmed during the severe efforts which he had been putting forth. There was but one thought in his mind, and but one desire in his heart.

His wife.

He crouched low, with a more feverish dread of discovery at this supreme moment, and a fiercer thirst for some further revelation which might disclose what he suspected. His breathing came thick and hard, and his brow lowered gloomily over his gleaming eyes.

He waited thus for some minutes, and the figure passed again.

He still watched.

Suddenly a figure appeared at the window. It was a young girl, a blonde, with short golden curls. The face was familiar indeed to him. Could he ever forget it? There it was full before him, turned toward him, as though that one, by some strange spiritual sympathy, was aware of his presence, and was thus turning toward him this mute appeal. Her face was near enough for its expression to be visible. He could distinguish the childish face, with its soft, sweet innocence, and he knew that upon it there was now that piteous, pleading, beseeching look which formerly had so thrilled his heart. And it was thus that Dacres saw his child-angel.

A prisoner, turning toward him this appeal! What was the cause, and what did the Italian want of this innocent child? Such was his thought. What could his fiend of a wife gain by the betrayal of that angelic being? Was it possible that even her demon soul could compass iniquity like this? He had thought that he had fathomed her capacity for malignant wickedness; but the presence here of the child-angel in the power of these miscreants showed him that this capacity was indeed unfathomable. At this sudden revelation of sin so enormous his very soul turned sick with horror.

He watched, and still looked with an anxiety that was increasing to positive pain.

And now, after one brief glance, Minnie drew back into the room. There was nothing more to be seen for some time, but at last another figure appeared.

He expected this; he was waiting for it; he was sure of it; yet deep down in the bottom of his heart there was a hope that it might not be so, that his suspicions, in this case at least, might be unfounded. But now the proof came; it was made manifest here before his eyes, and in the light of day.

In spite of himself a low groan escaped him. He buried his face in his hands and shut out the sight. Then suddenly he raised his head again and stared, as though in this face there was an irresistible fascination by which a spell was thrown over him.

It was the face of Mrs. Willoughby—youth-

ful, beautiful, and touching in its tender grace. Tears were now in those dark, luminous eyes, but they were unseen by him. Yet he could mark the despondency of her attitude; he could see a certain wild way of looking up and down and in all directions; he noted how her hands grasped the window-ledge as if for support.

And oh, beautiful demon angel, he thought, if you could but know how near you are to the avenger! Why are you so anxious, my demon wife? Are you impatient because your Italian is delaying? Can you not live for five seconds longer without him? Are you looking in all directions to see where he is? Don't fret; he'll soon be here.

And now there came a confirmation of his thoughts. He was not surprised; he knew it; he suspected it. It was all as it should be. Was it not in the confident expectation of this that he had come here with his dagger—on their trail?

It was Girasole.

He came from the place, further along the shore, where the brigands were around their fires. He was walking quickly. He had a purpose. It was with a renewed agony that Dacres watched his enemy—coming to visit his wife. The intensity of that thirst for vengeance, which had now to be checked until a better opportunity, made his whole frame tremble. A wild desire came to him then and there to bound down upon his enemy, and kill and be killed in the presence of his wife. But the other brigands deterred him. These men might interpose and save the Italian, and make him a prisoner. No; he must wait till he could meet his enemy on something like equal terms—when he could strike a blow that would not be in vain. Thus he overmastered himself.

He saw Girasole enter the house. He watched breathlessly. The time seemed long indeed. He could not hear any thing; the conversation, if there was any, was carried on in a low tone. He could not see any thing; those who conversed kept quiet; no one passed in front of the window. It was all a mystery, and this made the time seem longer. At length Dacres began to think that Girasole would not go at all. A long time passed. Hours went away, and still Girasole did not quit the house.

It was now sundown. Dacres had eaten nothing since morning, but the conflict of passion drove away all hunger or thirst. The approach of darkness was in accordance with his own gloomy wishes. Twilight in Italy is short. Night would soon be over all.

The house was on the slope of the bank. At the corner nearest him the house was sunk into the ground in such a way that it looked as though one might climb into the upper story window. As Dacres looked he made up his mind to attempt it. By standing here on tip-toe he could catch the upper window-ledge with his hands. He was strong. He was tall. His enemy was in the house. The hour was at hand. He was the man.

Another hour passed.

All was still.

There was a flickering lamp in the hall, but the men seemed to be asleep.

Another hour passed.

There was no noise.

Then Dacres ventured down. He moved slowly and cautiously, crouching low, and thus traversing the intervening space.

He neared the house and touched it. Before him was the window of the lower story. Above him was the window of the upper story. He lifted up his hands. They could reach the window-ledge.

He put his long, keen knife between his teeth, and caught at the upper window-ledge. Exerting all his strength, he raised himself up so high that he could fling one elbow over. For a moment he hung thus, and waited to take breath and listen.

There was a rush below. A half dozen shadowy forms surrounded him. He had been seen. He had been trapped.

He dropped down and, seizing his knife, struck right and left.

In vain. He was hurled to the ground and bound tight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FACE TO FACE.

HAWBURY, on his capture, had been at once taken into the woods, and led and pushed on by no gentle hands. He had thus gone on until he had found himself by that same lake which others of the party had come upon in the various ways which have been described. Toward this lake he was taken, until finally his party reached the old house, which they entered. It has already been said that it was a two-story house. It was also of stone, and strongly built. The door was in the middle of it, and rooms were on each side of the hall. The interior plan of the house was peculiar, for the hall did not run through, but consisted of a square room, and the stone steps wound spirally from the lower hall to the upper one. There were three rooms up stairs, one taking up one end of the house, which was occupied by Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie; another in the rear of the house, into which a door opened from the upper hall, close by the head of the stairs; and a third, which was opposite the room first mentioned.

Hawbury was taken to this house, and led up stairs into this room in the rear of the house. At the end farthest from the door he saw a heap of straw with a few dirty rugs upon it. In the wall a beam was set, to which an iron ring was fastened. He was taken toward this bed, and here his legs were bound together, and the rope that secured them was run around the iron ring so as to allow of no more motion than a few feet. Having thus secured the prisoner, the men left him to his own meditations.

The room was perfectly bare of furniture, nothing being in it but the straw and the dirty rugs. Hawbury could not approach to the windows, for he was bound in a way which prevented that. In fact, he could not move in any direction, for his arms and legs were fastened in such a way that he could scarcely raise himself from where he was sitting. He therefore was compelled to remain in one position, and threw himself down upon the straw on his side, with his face to the wall, for he found that position easier than any other. In this way he lay for some time, until at length he was roused by the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs. Several people were passing his room. He heard the voice of Girasole. He listened with deep attention. For some time there was no reply. At length there was the sound of a woman's voice—clear, plain, and unmistakable. It was a fretful voice of complaint. Girasole was trying to answer it. After a time Girasole left. Then all was still. Then Girasole returned. Then there was a clattering noise on the stairs, and the bumping of some heavy weight, and the heavy breathing of men. Then he heard Girasole say something, after which arose Minnie's voice, close by, as though she was in the hall, and her words were, "Oh, take it away, take it away!" followed by long reproaches, which Hawbury did not fully understand.

This showed him that Minnie, at least, was a prisoner, and in this house, and in the adjoining room, along with some one whom he rightly supposed was Mrs. Willoughby.

After this there was a further silence for some time, which at last was broken by fresh sounds of trampling and shuffling, together with the confused directions of several voices all speaking at once. Hawbury listened, and turned on his couch of straw so as to see any thing which presented itself. The clatter and the noise approached nearer, ascending the stairs, until at last he saw that they were entering his room. Two of the brigands came first, carrying something carefully. In a few moments the burden which they bore was revealed.

It was a rude litter, hastily made from bushes fastened together. Upon this lay the dead body of a man, his white face upturned, and his limbs stiffened in the rigidity of death. Hawbury did not remember very distinctly any of the particular events of his confused struggle with the brigands; but he was not at all surprised to see that there had been one of the ruffians sent to his account. The brigands who carried in their dead companion looked at the captive with a sullen ferocity and a scowling vengefulness, which showed plainly that they would demand of him a reckoning for their comrade's blood if it were only in their power. But they did not delay, nor did they make any actual demonstrations to Hawbury. They placed the corpse of their comrade upon the floor in the middle of the room, and then went out.

The presence of the corpse only added to the gloom of Hawbury's situation, and he once more turned his face to the wall, so as to shut out the sight. Once more he gave himself up to his own thoughts, and so the time passed slowly on. He heard no sounds now from the room where Miss Fay was confined. He heard no noise from the men below, and could not tell whether they were still guarding the door, or had gone away. Various projects came to him, foremost among which was the idea of escaping. Bribery seemed the only possible way. There was about this, however, the same difficulty which Mrs. Willoughby had found—his ignorance of the language. He thought that this would be an effectual bar to any communication, and saw no other alternative than to wait Girasole's pleasure. It seemed to him that a ransom would be asked, and he felt sure, from Girasole's offensive manner, that the ransom would be large. But there was no help for it. He felt more troubled about Miss Fay, for Girasole's remarks about her seemed to point to views of his own which were incompatible with her liberation.

In the midst of these reflections another noise arose below. It was a steady tramp of two or three men walking. The noise ascended the stairway, and drew nearer and nearer. Hawbury turned once more, and saw two men entering the room, carrying between them a box about six feet long and eighteen inches or two feet wide. It was coarsely but strongly made, and was undoubtedly intended as a coffin for the corpse of the brigand. The men put the coffin down against the wall and retired. After a few minutes they returned again with the coffin lid. They then lifted the dead body into the coffin, and one of them put the lid in its place and secured it with half a dozen screws. After this Hawbury was once more left alone. He found this far more tolerable, for now he had no longer before his very eyes the abhorrent sight of the dead body. Hidden in its coffin, it no longer gave offense to his sensibilities. Once more, therefore, Hawbury turned his thoughts toward projects of escape, and discussed in his mind the probabilities for and against.

The day had been long, and longer still did it seem to the captive as hour after hour passed slowly by. He could not look at his watch, which his captors had spared; but from the shadows as they fell through the windows, and from the general appearance of the sky, he knew that the close of the day was not far off. He began to wonder that he was left so long alone and in suspense, and to feel impatient to know the worst as to his fate. Why did not some of them come to tell him? Where was Girasole? Was he the chief? Were the brigands debating about his fate, or were they thus leaving him in suspense so as to make him despondent and submissive to their terms? From all that he had ever heard of brigands and their ways, the latter seemed not unlikely; and this

thought made him see the necessity of guarding himself against being too impatient for freedom, and too compliant with any demands of theirs.

From these thoughts he was at last roused by footsteps which ascended the stairs. He turned and looked toward the door. A man entered.

It was Girasole.

He entered slowly, with folded arms, and coming about half-way, he stood and surveyed the prisoner in silence. Hawbury, with a sudden effort, brought himself up to a sitting posture, and calmly surveyed the Italian.

"Well," asked Hawbury, "I should like to know how long you intend to keep up this sort of thing? What are you going to do about it? Name your price, man, and we'll discuss it, and settle upon something reasonable."

"My price?" repeated Girasole, with peculiar emphasis.

"Yes. Of course I understand you fellows. It's your trade, you know. You've caught me, and, of course, you'll try to make the best of me, and all that sort of thing. So don't keep me waiting."

"Inglis milor," said Girasole, with a sharp, quick accent, his face flushing up as he spoke—"Inglis milor, dere is no price as you mean, an' no ransom. De price is one dat you will not wis to pay."

"Oh, come now, my good fellow, really you must remember that I'm tied up, and not in a position to be chaffed. Bother your Italian humbug! Don't speak in these confounded figures of speech, you know, but say up and down—how much?"

"De brigands haf talk you ovair, an' dey will haf no price."

"What the devil is all that rot about?"

"Dey will haf youair blood."

"My blood?"

"Yes."

"And pray, my good fellow, what good is that going to do them?"

"It is vengeance," said Girasole.

"Vengeance? Pooh! Nonsense! What rot! What have I ever done?"

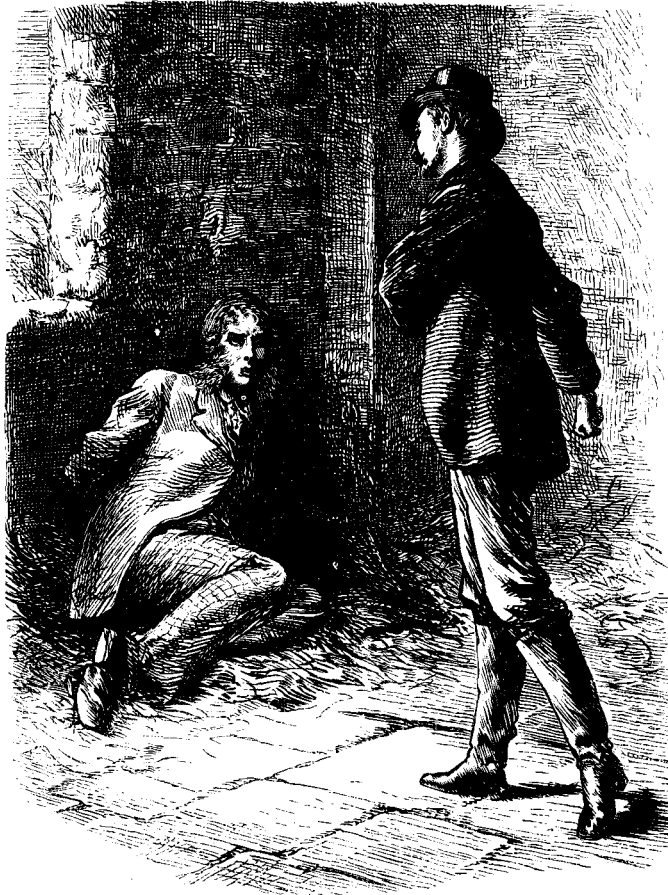
"Dat—dere—his blood," said Girasole, pointing to the coffin.

"What! that scoundrel? Why, man alive, are you crazy? That was a fair stand-up fight. That is, it was two English against twenty Italians, if you call that fair; but perhaps it is. His blood! By Jove! Cool, that! Come, I like it."

"An' more," said Girasole, who now grew more excited. "It is not de brigand who condemn you; it is also me. I condemn you."

"You?" said Hawbury, elevating his eyebrows in some surprise, and fixing a cool stare upon Girasole. "And what the devil's *this* row about, I should like to know? I don't know *you*. What have you against *me*?"

"Inglis milor," cried Girasole, who was stung to the quick by a certain indescribable



"INGLIS MILOR, I SALL HAF YOUAIR LIFE."

yet most irritating superciliousness in Hawbury's tone—"Inglis milor, you sall see what you sall soffair. You sall die! Dere is no hope. You are condemn by de brigand. You also are condemn by me, for you insult me."

"Well, of all the beastly rot I ever heard, this is about the worst! What do you mean by all this infernal nonsense? Insult you! What would I insult you for? Why, man alive, you're as mad as a March hare! If I thought you were a gentleman, I'd—by Jove, I will, too! See here, you fellow: I'll fight you for it—pistols, or any thing. Come, now. I'll drop all considerations of rank. I'll treat you as if you were a real count, and not a sham one. Come, now. What do you say? Shall we have it out? Pistols—in the woods there. You've got all your infernal crew around you, you know. Well? What? You won't? By Jove!"

Girasole's gesture showed that he declined the proposition.

"Inglis milor," said he, with a venomous glitter in his eyes, "I sall haf youair life—wis

de pistol, but not in de duello. I sall blow your brain out myself."

"Blow and be hanged, then!" said Hawbury.

And with these words he fell back on his straw, and took no further notice of the Italian.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TORN ASUNDER.

WHEN Dacres made his attempt upon the house he was not so unobserved as he supposed himself to be. Minnie and Mrs. Willoughby happened at that time to be sitting on the floor by the window, one on each side, and they were looking out. They had chosen the seat as affording some prospect of the outer world. There was in Mrs. Willoughby a certain instinctive feeling that if any rescue came, it would come from the land side; and, therefore, though the hope was faint indeed, it nevertheless was sufficiently well defined to inspire her with an uneasy and incessant vigilance. Thus,

then, she had seated herself by the window, and Minnie had taken her place on the opposite side, and the two sisters, with clasped hands, sat listening to the voices of the night.

At length they became aware of a movement upon the bank just above them and lying opposite. The sisters clasped one another's hands more closely, and peered earnestly through the gloom. It was pretty dark, and the forest threw down a heavy shadow, but still their eyes were by this time accustomed to the dark, and they could distinguish most of the objects there. Among these they soon distinguished a moving figure; but what it was, whether man or beast, they could not make out.

This moving figure was crawling down the bank. There was no cover to afford concealment, and it was evident that he was trusting altogether to the concealment of the darkness. It was a hazardous experiment, and Mrs. Willoughby trembled in suspense.

Minnie, however, did not tremble at all, nor was the suspense at all painful. When Mrs. Willoughby first cautiously directed her attention to it in a whisper, Minnie thought it was some animal.

"Why, Kitty dear," she said, speaking back in a whisper, "why, it's an animal; I wonder if the creature is a wild beast. I'm sure I think it's very dangerous, and no doors or windows. But it's *always* the way. He wouldn't give me a chair; and so I dare say I shall be eaten up by a bear before morning."

Minnie gave utterance to this expectation without the slightest excitement, just as though the prospect of becoming food for a bear was one of the very commonest incidents of her life.

"Oh, I don't think it's a bear."

"Well, then, it's a tiger or a lion, or perhaps a wolf. I'm sure *I* don't see what difference it makes what one is eaten by, when one *has* to be eaten."

"It's a man!" said Mrs. Willoughby, tremulously.

"A man!—nonsense, Kitty darling. A man walks; he doesn't go on all-fours, except when he is very, very small."

"Hush! it's some one coming to help us. Watch him, Minnie dear. Oh, how dangerous!"

"Do you really think so?" said Minnie, with evident pleasure. "Now that is really kind. But I wonder who it *can* be?"

Mrs. Willoughby squeezed her hand, and made no reply. She was watching the slow and cautious movement of the shadowy figure.

"He's coming nearer!" said she, tremulously.

Minnie felt her sister's hand throb at the quick movement of her heart, and heard her short, quick breathing.

"Who *can* it be, I wonder?" said Minnie, full of curiosity, but without any excitement at all.

"Oh, Minnie!"

"What's the matter, darling?"

"It's so terrible."

"What?"

"This suspense. Oh, I'm so afraid!"

"Afraid! Why, I'm not afraid at all."

"Oh! he'll be caught."

"No, he won't," said Minnie, confidently.

"I *knew* he'd come. They *always* do. Don't be afraid that he'll be caught, or that he'll fail. They *never* fail. They *always will* save me. Wait till your life has been saved as often as mine has, Kitty darling. Oh, I expected it all! I was thinking a little while ago he ought to be here soon."

"He! Who?"

"Why, any person; the person who is going to save me this time. I don't know, of course, who he is; some horrid man, of course. And then—oh dear!—I'll have it all over again. He'll carry me away on his back, and through those wretched woods, and bump me against the trees and things. Then he'll get me to the road, and put me on a horrid old horse, and gallop away. And by that time it will be morning. And then he'll propose. And so there'll be another. And I don't know what I *shall* do about it. Oh dear!"

Mrs. Willoughby had not heard half of this. All her soul was intent upon the figure outside. She only pressed her sister's hand, and gave a warning "Hus-s-s-h!"

"I know one thing I *do* wish," said Minnie.

Her sister made no reply.

"I do wish it would turn out to be that nice, dear, good, kind Rufus K. Gunn. I don't want any more of them. And I'm sure he's nicer than this horrid Count, who wouldn't take the trouble to get me even a chair. And yet he pretends to be fond of me."

"Hus-s-s-h!" said her sister.

But Minnie was irrepressible.

"I don't want any horrid stranger. But, oh, Kitty darling, it would be so *awfully* funny if he were to be caught! and then he *couldn't* propose, you know."

By this time the figure had reached the house. Minnie peeped over and looked down. Then she drew back her head and sighed.

"Oh dear!" she said, in a plaintive tone.

"What, darling?"

"Why, Kitty darling, do you know he really looks a little like that great, big, horrid man that ran with me down the volcano, and then pretended he was my dear papa. And here he comes to save me again. Oh, what *shall* I do? Won't you pretend you're me, Kitty darling, and please go yourself? Oh, ple-e-case do!"

But now Minnie was interrupted by two strong hands grasping the window-sill. A moment after a shadowy head arose above it. Mrs. Willoughby started back, but through the gloom she was able to recognize the strongly marked face of Scone Dacres.

For a moment he stared through the darkness. Then he flung his elbow over.

There arose a noise below. There was a rush. The figure disappeared from the win-

dow. A furious struggle followed, in the midst of which arose fierce oaths and deep breathings, and the sound of blows. Then the struggle subsided, and they heard footsteps tramping heavily. They followed the sound into the house. They heard men coming up the stairs and into the hall outside. Then they all moved into the front-room opposite theirs. After a few minutes they heard the steps descending the stairs. By this they judged that the prisoner had been taken to that room which was on the other side of the hall and in the front of the house.

"There dies our last hope!" said Mrs. Willoughby, and burst into tears.

"I'm sure I don't see what you're crying about," said Minnie. "You certainly oughtn't to want me to be carried off again by that person. If he had me, he'd *never* give me up—especially after saving me twice."

Mrs. Willoughby made no reply, and the sisters sat in silence for nearly an hour. They were then aroused by the approach of footsteps which entered the house; after which voices were heard below.

Then some one ascended the stairs, and they saw the flicker of a light.

It was Girasole.

He came into the room with a small lamp, holding his hand in front of the flame. This lamp he set down in a corner out of the draught, and then turned to the ladies.

"Miladi," said Girasole, in a gentle voice, "I am ver pained to haf to tella you dat it is necessaire for you to separat dis night—till to-morra."

"To separate?" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby.

"Only till to-morra, miladi. Den you sall be togeder foravva. But it is now necessaire. Dere haf ben an attempt to a rescue. I mus guard again dis—an' it mus be done by a separazion. If you are togeder you might run. Dis man was almos up here. It was only chance dat I saw him in time."

"Oh, Sir," cried Mrs. Willoughby, "you can not—you will not separate us. You can not have the heart to. I promise most solemnly that we will not escape if you only leave us togeder."

Girasole shook his head.

"I can not," said he, firmly; "de mees is too precious. I dare not. If you are prisonaire se will not try to fly, an' so I secure her de more; but if you are togeder you will find some help. You will bribe de men. I can not trust dem."

"Oh, do not separate us. Tie us. Bind us. Fasten us with chains. Fasten me with chains, but leave me with her."

"Chains? nonsense; dat is impossibile. Chains? no, miladi. You sall be treat beautiful. No chain, no; notin but affection—till to-morra, an' den de mees sall be my wife. De priest haf come, an' it sall be allaright to-morra, an' you sall be wit her again. An' now you haf to come away; for if you do not be

pleasant, I sall not be able to 'low you to stay to-morra wit de mees when se become my Con-tessa."

Mrs. Willoughby flung her arms about her sister, and clasped her in a convulsive embrace.

"Well, Kitty darling," said Minnie, "don't cry, or you'll make me cry too. It's just what we might have expected, you know. He's been as unkind as he could be about the chair, and of course he'll do all he can to tease me. Don't cry, dear. You must go, I suppose, since that horrid man talks and scolds so about it; only be sure to be back early; but how I am *ever* to pass the night here all alone and standing up, I'm sure I don't know."

"Alone? Oh no," said Girasole. "Charming mees, you sall not be alone; I haf guard for dat. I haf sent for a maid."

"But I don't want any of your horrid old maids. I want my own maid, or none at all."

"Se sall be your own maid. I haf sent for her."

"What, my own maid?—Dowlas?"

"I am ver sorry, but it is not dat one. It is anoder—an Italian."

"Well, I think that is *very* unkind, when you *know* I can't speak a word of the language. But you *always* do all you can to tease me. I *wish* I had never seen you."

Girasole looked hurt.

"Charming mees," said he, "I will lay down my life for you."

"But I don't want you to lay down your life. I want Dowlas."

"And you sall haf Dowlas to-morra. An' to-night you sall haf de Italian maid."

"Well, I suppose I must," said Minnie, resignedly.

"Miladi," said Girasole, turning to Mrs. Willoughby, "I am ver sorry for dis leetle accommodation. De room where you mus go is de one where I haf put de man dat try to safe you. He is tied fast. You mus promis you will not loose him. Haf you a knife?"

"No," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a scarce audible tone.

"Do not mourn. You sall be able to talk to de prisonaire and get consolazion. But come."

With these words Girasole led the way out into the hall, and into the front-room on the opposite side. He carried the lamp in his hand. Mrs. Willoughby saw a figure lying at the other end of the room on the floor. His face was turned toward them, but in the darkness she could not see it plainly. Some straw was heaped up in the corner next her.

"Dere," said Girasole, "is your bed. I am sorra. Do not be trouble."

With this he went away.

Mrs. Willoughby flung herself on her knees, and bowed her head and wept convulsively. She heard the heavy step of Girasole as he went down stairs. Her first impulse was to rush back to her sister. But she dreaded discovery, and felt that disobedience would only make her fate harder.



"ONE ARM WENT AROUND HER."

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOUND AT LAST.

IN a few moments Girasole came back and entered Minnie's room. He was followed by a woman who was dressed in the garb of an Italian peasant girl. Over her head she wore a hood to protect her from the night air, the limp folds of which hung over her face. Minnie looked carelessly at this woman and then at Girasole.

"Charming mees," said Girasole, "I haf brought you a maid for dis night. When we leaf dis you sall haf what maid you wis."

"That horrid old fright!" said Minnie. "I don't want her."

"You sall only haf her for dis night," said Girasole. "You will be taken care for."

"I suppose nobody cares for what *I* want," said Minnie, "and I may as well speak to the wall, for all the good it does."

Girasole smiled and bowed, and put his hand on his heart, and then called down the stairs:

"Padre Patricio!"

A solid, firm step now sounded on the stairs, and in a few moments the priest came up. Girasole led the way into Hawbury's room. The prisoner lay on his side. He was in a deep sleep. Girasole looked in wonder at the sleeper who was spending in this way the last hours of his life, and then pointed to the coffin.

"Here," said he, in Italian, "is the body. When the grave is dug they will tell you. You must stay here. You will not be afraid to be with the dead."

The priest smiled.

Girasole now retreated and went down stairs.

Soon all was still.

The Italian woman had been standing where she had stopped ever since she first came into the room. Minnie had not paid any attention to her, but at last she noticed this.

"I *wish* you wouldn't stand there in that way. You really make me feel quite nervous. And what with the dark, and not having any light, and losing poor dear Kitty, and not having any chair to sit upon, really one's life is scarce worth having. But all this is thrown away, as you can't speak English—and how horrid it is to have no one to talk to."

The woman made no reply, but with a quiet, stealthy step she drew near to Minnie.

"What do you want? You horrid creature, keep away," said Minnie, drawing back in some alarm.

"Minnie dear!" said the woman. "H-s-s-s-h!" she added, in a low whisper.

Minnie started.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

One arm went around her neck, and another hand went over her mouth, and the woman drew nearer to her.

"Not a word. H-s-s-s-h! I've risked my life. The priest brought me."

"Why, my darling, darling love of an Ethel!" said Minnie, who was overwhelmed with surprise.

"H-s-s-s-h!"

"But how can I h-s-s-s-h when I'm so perfectly frantic with delight? Oh, you darling pet!"

"H-s-s-s-h! Not another word. I'll be discovered and lost."

"Well, dear, I'll speak very, very low. But how did you come here?"

"The priest brought me."

"The priest?"

"Yes. He was sent for, you know; and I thought I could help you, and he is going to save you."

"He! Who?"

"The priest, you know."

"The priest! Is he a Roman Catholic priest, Ethel darling?"

"Yes, dear."

"And *he* is going to save me this time, is he?"

"I hope so, dear."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely that is! and it was so kind and thoughtful in you! Now this is really quite nice, for you know I've *longed* so to be saved by a priest. These horrid men, you know, all go and propose the moment they save one's life; but a priest *can't*, you know—no, not if he saved one a thousand times over. Can he now, Ethel darling?"

"Oh no!" said Ethel, in a little surprise. "But stop, darling. You really must *not* say another word—no, not so much as a whisper—for we certainly *will* be heard; and don't notice what I do, or the priest either, for it's very, very important, dear. But you keep as still as a little mouse, and wait till we are all ready."

"Well, Ethel dear, I will; but it's awfully funny to see you here—and oh, *such* a funny figure as you are!"

"H-s-s-s-h!"

Minnie relapsed into silence now, and Ethel withdrew near to the door, where she stood and listened. All was still. Down stairs there was no light and no sound. In the hall above she could see nothing, and could not tell whether any guards were there or not.

Hawbury's room was at the back of the house, as has been said, and the door was just at the top of the stairs. The door where Ethel was standing was there too, and was close by the other, so that she could listen and hear the deep breathing of the sleeper. One or two indistinct sounds escaped him from time to time, and this was all that broke the deep stillness.

She waited thus for nearly an hour, during which all was still, and Minnie said not a word. Then a shadowy figure appeared near her at Hawbury's door, and a hand touched her shoulder.

Not a word was said.

Ethel stole softly and noiselessly into Hawbury's room, where the priest was. She could see the two windows, and the priest indicated to her the position of the sleeper.

Slowly and cautiously she stole over toward him.

She reached the place.

She knelt by his side, and bent low over him. Her lips touched his forehead.

The sleeper moved slightly, and murmured some words.

"All fire," he murmured; "fire—and flame. It is a furnace before us. She must not die."

Then he sighed.

Ethel's heart beat wildly. The words that he spoke told her where his thoughts were wandering. She bent lower; tears fell from her eyes and upon his face.

"My darling," murmured the sleeper, "we will land here. I will cook the fish. How pale! Don't cry, dearest."

The house was all still. Not a sound arose. Ethel still bent down and listened for more of these words which were so sweet to her.

"Ethel!" murmured the sleeper, "where are you? Lost! lost!"

A heavy sigh escaped him, which found an echo in the heart of the listener. She touched his forehead gently with one hand, and whispered,

"My lord!"

Hawbury started.

"What's this?" he murmured.

"A friend," said Ethel.

At this Hawbury became wide awake.

"Who are you?" he whispered, in a trembling voice. "For God's sake—oh, for God's sake, speak again! tell me!"

"Harry," said Ethel.

Hawbury recognized the voice at once.

A slight cry escaped him, which was instant-

ly suppressed, and then a torrent of whispered words followed.

"Oh, my darling! my darling! my darling! What is this? How is this? Is it a dream? Oh, am I awake? Is it you? Oh, my darling! my darling! Oh, if my arms were but free!"

Ethel bent over him, and passed her arm around him till she felt the cords that bound him. She had a sharp knife ready, and with this she cut the cords. Hawbury raised himself, without waiting for his feet to be freed, and caught Ethel in his freed arms in a silent embrace, and pressed her over and over again to his heart.

Ethel with difficulty extricated herself.

"There's no time to lose," said she. "I came to save you. Don't waste another moment; it will be too late. Oh, do not! Oh, wait!" she added, as Hawbury made another effort to clasp her in his arms. "Oh, do what I say, for my sake!"

She felt for his feet, and cut the rest of his bonds.

"What am I to do?" asked Hawbury, clasping her close, as though he was afraid that he would lose her again.

"Escape."

"Well, come! I'll leap with you from the window."

"You can't. The house and all around swarms with brigands. They watch us all closely."

"I'll fight my way through them."

"Then you'll be killed, and I'll die."

"Well, I'll do whatever you say."

"Listen, then. You must escape alone."

"What! and leave you? Never!"

"I'm safe. I'm disguised, and a priest is with me as my protector."

"How can you be safe in such a place as this?"

"I am safe. Do not argue. There is no time to lose. The priest brought me here, and will take me away."

"But there are others here. I can't leave them. Isn't Miss Fay a prisoner? and another lady?"

"Yes; but the priest and I will be able, I hope, to liberate them. We have a plan."

"But can't I go with you and help you?"

"Oh no! it's impossible. You could not. We are going to take them away in disguise. We have a dress. You couldn't be disguised."

"And *must* I go alone?"

"You must."

"I'll do it, then. Tell me what it is. But oh, my darling! how can I leave you, and in such a place as this?"

"I assure you I am not in the slightest danger."

"I shall feel terribly anxious."

"H-s-s-s-h! no more of this. Listen now."

"Well?"

Ethel bent lower, and whispered in his ear, in even lower tones than ever, the plan which she had contrived.