

come with me into the woods, and I will shed no more blood: I will lie down on the grass and listen to thy words."

"Osseo, in the name of the Great Spirit of the Christian's prayer, go away before my people kill thee. If I call out they will come."

"Maiden, the tribe that kills and steals is at hand, and if I whistle they will scale the wall and put thy people to death. But come with me, little bird of the west: I will hide thee from them before I give the signal."

"They cannot come, Osseo; they cannot come. There are armed men upon the walls. At the least noise they will rush upon thee."

"My fetish is stronger than they are," whispered the Indian, and Mina saw him feeling in his bosom for the serpent. She shuddered, and stood transfixed to the spot, as if fascinated herself, and unable to raise her voice. There was a minute's silence. Then a flash and the report of a gun. The Indian had seized hold of the serpent more roughly than usual. The creature hissed, and sprang to his throat. He gave a violent start and his gun, which he held with one arm against his shoulder, slipped, went off, and wounded him in the breast. The noise roused at once all the sentinels, and the baron and Raoul were in an instant on the spot. Torches threw light on the scene, and Mina was found kneeling by the Indian's side, who lay apparently dead. The serpent on his bosom was lifeless also. But when they took up Osseo, to carry him into the hall, it was perceived that he still breathed, and Mina implored the baron to send for a priest. Raoul went to fetch the cure, and her mother tried to take her away; but she turned round with an imploring countenance, and said:

"Let me stay, mother, in case he revives."

And the priest, who arrived at that moment, seconded her entreaties. Raoul had told him who the dying man was, and how anxious Mina was about his soul. Nobody quite understood what had happened. She looked for the baron, and said:

"He told me before the gun went off that the robbers were close at hand."

"Aye," said he, "we must be on our guard, then; but the sound of the gun will have frightened them away, I think. But how, in heaven's name, my child, were you speaking with this wretch?"

"I was standing at the door of our room, to get air, for I was faint, and I saw him gliding up the stairs. I called to him, and told him who I was, and begged him to go away—"

"The deuce you did!" ejaculated the baron.

"But he would not go; and as he was feeling for his fetish—that serpent you see there—his gun went off."

"Hush!" said the cure; "I think he is moaning."

The Indian had opened his eyes and looked at the bystanders with a half-fierce, half-bewildered gaze, but when he saw Mina a more human expression stole over his features. He raised his hand to his mouth. This was a token he recognized her. The village doctor, who had been summoned, felt his pulse, and said he had not long to live. The young girl bent over him, and in accents low and sweet, spoke to him in his own tongue. The hall was

by this time crowded, and every one was watching the dying man and the child, and the priest standing close to her. A pin might have been heard to drop. No one uttered a word but herself, and no one understood what she was saying except the dying man, whose eyes fastened themselves on her face. She looked inspired. On the ashy paleness of her cheek a red spot deepened into crimson as her emotion increased. Sometimes she raised her hand and pointed to the sky. Once he felt in his breast, as if searching for something there. She took up the dead serpent and showed it to him, then throwing it down she set her foot upon it, and held the crucifix before his eyes. Raoul de la Croix felt at that moment a thrilling sensation in his heart which he never forgot. He would fain have fallen at her feet; and her own mother gazed with awe on her child. At last the Indian spoke. His strength seemed for a moment to rally. He raised himself on his elbow, took the crucifix in his hand, and touched his forehead with it. Then in her ear he murmured a few words.

"Monsieur le Cure," Mina cried, "he asks to be baptized. He believes now in the Great Spirit who died for him. He is very sorry to have robbed and killed His children. Oh, M. le Cure, will you baptize him?"

Whilst she was speaking, a spasm passed over Osseo's face, and the death-rattle sounded in his throat. There was no time to lose. The priest baptized him, and whilst the water was still flowing on his brow, the poor ignorant savage, on whom a ray of light had shone in the last hour of his life, died with his eyes fixed on the crucifix which Mina was holding in her clasped and upraised hands.

Those who had witnessed this scene had been deeply impressed. Mina herself did not seem at all conscious that she had been admired, or even much noticed, on account of the part she had taken in it. An immense weight was off her mind, and during the days which followed, she was often in high spirits. The friendship between her and the young de la Croix grew more and more close. The baron, delighted at the result of Mandrin's projected attack, and at the disappearance of his gang from the Forez, which followed upon his lieutenant's death, could afford to forgive Mina, and to laugh at her for her connivance, as he called it, with the robbers. Madame d'Auban, mean time, was counting the hours till her husband's arrival. He had written to say he would leave Paris in two days. No positive promise had been given him about an appointment in Bourbon, and recent circumstances had made him adverse to press the matter. He had accordingly contented himself with obtaining letters of introduction to the governor and one or two other French residents in the island. He added, that he had sent Antoine to their former lodgings in the Rue de l'Écu, and that he had ascertained that the Comte de Saxe had called there, and expressed great surprise at their departure. The landlord had told him they had left France as well as Paris, and were on their way to the Isle de Bourbon.

When Raoul heard that M. d'Auban was expected in a day or two, he looked more thoughtful than he had ever done in his life before.