

I told him of my love, and with such rapturous delight that he even offered to aid me in my object, by marrying me to Donna Maria, — a piece of generous zeal, I am certain, that originated less in friendship than in the prospect of a proselyte, — the niece of a bishop, too! Poor fellow, he might make many converts, if he were thus easily satisfied.

The next day I drove Donna Maria out for an airing, and, while occupying her mind with various matters, contrived to prolong our excursion to Horseleap. "What a dreary spot you have chosen for our drive!" said she, looking around her.

"Do you see yonder little hut," said I, "where the smoke is rising?"

"Yes, that poor cabin yonder! You have not come to show me *that*?" said she, laughing.

"Even so, Maria," said I; "to show you that poor and humble hut, and to tell you that it was there I was born, — a peasant's son; that from that same lowly roof I wandered out upon the world friendless and hungry; that partly by energy, partly by a resolution to succeed, partly by the daring determination that would not admit a failure, I have become what I am, — titled, honored, wealthy, but still the son of a poor man. I could not have gone on deceiving you, even though this confession should separate us forever." I could not speak more, nor needed I. Her hand had already clasped mine as she murmured: "Yours more than ever."

"Now is the moment, then, to become so," said I, as I lifted her from the carriage and led her within the cabin.

The company were already waiting dinner ere we returned to the Castle. "I have to make our excuses," said I to the hostess; "but we prolonged our drive to a considerable distance."

"Ah, we feared you might have taken the road by the lake, where there is no turning back," said she.

"Exactly, madam; that is what we did precisely, for we are married!"

Need I dwell upon the surprise and astonishment of this announcement? The Bishop — fortunately it was in Spanish — uttered something very like an oath. The bride blushed — some of the ladies looked shocked — the men