

"Thank God that I can speak to you—before I die," he said faintly.

Then in a voice of despair Joseph cried, "Gaspard! Gaspard! You are not going to die! You cannot, you will not die and leave me, and leave Riga, and our poor uncle! Oh, no! oh, no!"

And Gaspard replied quietly, gently, "Yes, little brother. I must die. It is the will of our good God and—He knows best."

"He is not good if He takes you from us!" cried the younger, in such a distraction of anguish, that he knew not what he was saying. "But you will not die! It is only that you are faint. Let me bind up your wounds—"

"No—but water," gasped the dying man; and Joseph, snatching off his hat, brought some in a moment from a trickling stream that flowed along the wall of rock beside them. From the palm of his hand he poured it almost drop by drop between the pale lips parted to receive it. And Gaspard was greatly revived. His eye brightened: he looked steadfastly at his brother with a gaze which controlled the latter.

"Listen," he said—his voice, though very weak, sounding clear and distinct. "Little brother. I am dying—and that I may die in peace you must make me a promise."

"Anything! You know I will do anything!—but let me—"

Human help would be vain," interrupted Gaspard. "I am glad that only you are with me. Thank God, the others—are spared—seeing me die. You must bear it. I do not suffer. The shock of the fall paralyzed sensation. Since I regained consciousness I have had time to pray and think. Life is going fast now. Listen."

He paused to gather strength, then resumed, "Joseph, my uncle is old—Riga is very young. You must take my place. When time has healed Riga's grief for me, try to love and marry her. I wish it—for both your sakes—and our uncle's."

"I promise," said Joseph eagerly.

"No—I bind you by no promise in this. Do but try—when the time comes. Ask God's will. But the promise—Joseph, I ask—what you—will think—a hard thing—to forgive one—whom—you will feel—to be an enemy. But you are strong—and you are true. I can trust you. Keep my rosary always about you—to remind you—of my dying—ontreaty—to forgive—the unhappy man—who is the cause—of my death."

"Murdered! You are murdered!" cried Joseph, in a horror so intense that his whole frame quivered convulsively, and his face grew livid.

"Struck—in sudden blind frenzy," said Gaspard. "He did not—mean—to kill me."

"But who?" demanded Joseph in a voice almost marticularly hoarse. "Ah, I know!" he exclaimed the next instant. "He who was your rival!"

Yes—poor Colenso," answered the failing voice, which came to his ear as from a long way off, across a surging sea—the sea of blood that was surging through his throat and head in an all but suffocating tide. "I tell you—that you may—know the truth. But—you must not tell it—except—to the padre. Let it—be thought—an accident."

Joseph could not speak, and after a brief silence, Gaspard went on:

"I was stooping—at—the edge—of the cliff—when he—spoke—beside me. I looked up—and—saw—he was—mad with—jealousy. He asked—if it was—true—that my marriage—day—was—set. When—I said yes—he struck—before—I could gain my—feet. I remember—his look—of horror—as—I reeled—backward. He—did—not mean—"

Many a time afterwards, Joseph marvelled how he lived through the agony of the moments that followed: how he could have remained quiet, silent, until Gaspard spoke once more and for the last time.

"Riga must never know," he said very faintly. "Be—resigned—all—to God's will. Tell Filipe—I forgive—him. I pray God—to—forgive—him. You—promise—?"

"I promise."

Gaspard smiled. His last words were spoken—but he lifted his gaze to heaven with an indescribable look of faith and love, as his moving lips syllabled the words, "Jesu! Maria!" His eyes closed slowly. He was dead.

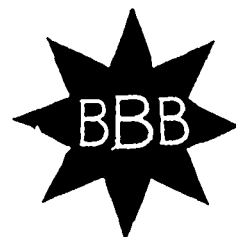
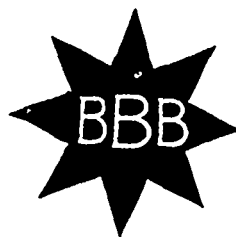
A month after the fatal day on which Gaspard Paoli crossed the threshold of his home for the last time, a lethargy like that of despair almost, had settled upon the stricken house. The old man was silent and uncomplaining—but stunned, apparently, by the greatness of the calamity that had befallen him. Riga looked like a storm-beaten lily, white, drooping, crushed. To both the interests of life seemed

(To be Continued.)

St. Benoit, County of Two Mountains, Feb. 1st, 1882.

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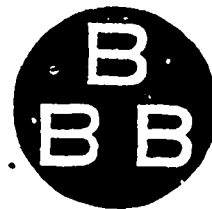
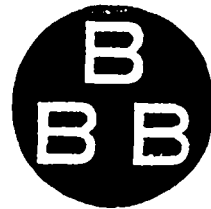
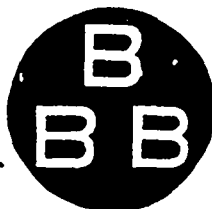
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