

a massive statue, whilst, speechless with terror, she could only utter the most piteous cries.

"Strike, I say—loose her hold; or if she will not, sever her hands from the joints."

He was in the act of drawing a weapon to do the deed himself, when a person hastily entered, muffled and masked like the Count's companion in his English excursion.

"Fly,—fly for your lives!" exclaimed the stranger; "we are all betrayed! Terrible rumours are abroad of a foul murder committed this day at your instigation. The lazzaroni are gathering—crowds are already coming this way,—we must lose no time if we wish to escape a dreadful death."

With looks aghast, they regarded each other—not a word was spoken, but the Count, sheathing his weapon, led the way to the terrace,—fleet horses were in attendance, brought there for another purpose; they now served their owners well.

The morning succeeding these events, the bells of the various churches, monasteries and convents, were chiming the hour for early matins, when a procession of Franciscan Monks issued from the Palazzo, attending a bier, on which the lovely form of Isabella was extended; the transparent complexion was scarcely dimmed by death; a rose tinge lingered on each cheek and lip; her dark and glossy hair fell in soft waves from off her brow; it was ornamented with fresh gathered flowers, which were also strewn profusely over the bier. The rich habiliments in which the inanimate form was arrayed, gave more the idea of a bride in repose, than a corpse born to its sepulchre. The funeral procession slowly conveyed their burthen to the church of *Santa Maria della Vita*, and deposited the bier at the foot of the altar, to remain till the prescribed hour for lowering the uncoffined body to its last receptacle in the catacombs.

The clock of St. Elmo's tolled ten, as four sturdy men, carrying a covered litter, started from the entrance of the catacombs in the court of the *Hopital de la France*, and bent their rapid steps to the beach. Three persons closely followed on their track. The moon was just raising its disk above the ocean, as the party reached the bay. Hailing a boat in attendance, they cautiously placed the litter in it—one only of the number remained on shore; he wore the cowl and habit of a Franciscan Friar. The following day no English pennon was visible in the Bay of Naples,—before the morning sun arose the stately vessel, commanded by Captain Beaufort, was ploughing her way through the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

The scene now changes to the village of Ururi in the Albanian territory. As the morning dawned three horsemen rode furiously towards the quiet hamlet; their horses were covered with foam, and dust and blood trickled from their reeking flanks.

A single horseman who emerged from the shade of an olive grove arrested their speed. On attracting their notice, he merely turned his horse's head and proceeded to the other side of the grove. They followed, and Don Gaetano Vardarelli\* found himself welcomed by thirty of his troop, who as a body bore his name, and were distinguished as the Vardarelli Banditti, the terror and the scourge of southern Italy. Beside him rode his brother the second in command; the third person of the party was hailed with acclamation by the assemblage. He was named by them the unknown chief, and under his guidance they had often achieved the most daring exploits; they knew it was through his mysterious and powerful influence they were for a series of years enabled to elude and oftentimes defy the efforts of Government for their suppression.

"We have awaited you in this sheltered place," said Gaetano's youngest brother, who held command in absence of his seniors.

"I ordered them to do so, having failed to meet you at the place appointed." Glancing at their persons he demanded: "Is there a pursuit or any threatened danger? Your horses are jaded, yourselves exhausted."

"A hot pursuit," quickly replied Gaetano; "the soldiery are even now upon us. Hark! do you not hear the tramping of their horses—look to your firelocks! not a moment is to be lost—we can fearlessly dare them, were they double our number. Come on my brave fellows, I feel myself invincible at your head." The shout that would have responded to this brief address, was arrested on their lips by a gesture from the chief.

"Silence, I entreat—our pursuers must reach us time enough without calling them to the spot. Listen to me, Don Gaetano; let not our temerity lead these gallant fellows to destruction. You talk of facing our foes if double our number. I tell you they count ten times as many. Resistance will be unavailing; be advised whilst yet there is a moment for decision, to surrender. Not a man amongst you will be injured. I promise it—and I have the power to see it fulfilled. You know each one of you that it is not a coward's fear of death that prompts this counsel, for I have braved its terror with you a hundred times."

"It is not the fear of death," hastily interrupted Gaetano; "it is the fear of exposure. You would sacrifice the lives of ten thousand followers, rather than the mask of hypocrisy you have successfully worn through your life, should be now removed. But do not deceive yourself, you cannot force my men to swerve from their allegiance; they will be true to their leader to the death. We have triumphed,

\*The honorable R. C. Craven, in his *Tour in Southern Italy*, gives a detailed account of the Vardarelli Banditti, and their suppression in 1822.