

"Because he ill-used her, and beat her and kicked her. I still remember the nights when he came home in a rage; she never said a word, and did everything that he wished; but he, he beat her till my heart was ready to break; I used to pull the bed-clothes over my head, and pretend to sleep, but in reality I cried the whole night. And when he saw her lying on the floor, then suddenly he would change, and drag her up, and kiss her till she screamed out that he would stifle her. Mother forbade me ever to say a word about it, but it wore her out, so that now all these long years since he died she has never got well, and if she should die soon, which God forbid, I know well who killed her."

The little priest shook his head, and seemed unwillingly to acknowledge his penitent in the right. At last he said, "Forgive him, as thy mother has; do not fix thy thoughts upon such sad pictures, Laurella; better times will come, and make thee forget it all."

"Never shall I forget that," said she shuddering, "and therefore I shall remain single, in order to be subject to no one who will first ill-treat me, and then fondle me; if any one wanted to beat me or kiss me now, I should know how to defend myself, but my mother could not defend herself from either blows or kisses because she loved him; and I will not be made ill or wretched by any one because I love him."

"Thou art a child, and talkest like one that knows nothing of what goes on in the world; are all men like thy poor father, that they give way to every temper and passion, and ill-treat their wives? Hast thou not seen plenty of good people in the neighbourhood, and wives who live in peace and unity with their husbands?"

"Nobody knew how my father treated my mother, for she would a thousand times rather have died than have complained of it to any one, and all because she loved him; if love seals one's lips when one ought to cry for help, and makes one defenceless against wrong such as one would not endure from one's worst enemies, then I will never give my heart to a man."

"I tell thee thou art a child, and knowest not what thou sayest; when the time is come, the question whether thou lovest or not will often arise in thy heart, and then all these resolutions will be forgotten."

Again a pause, after which the padre began again:

"And that artist, didst thou make up thy mind that he would use thee ill?"

"He used to look as I have seen my father look when he asked pardon of my mother, and wanted to take her in his arms to make peace with her again; I know those eyes, it made me shudder to see them again."

After this she kept a persevering silence. The padre was silent also; perhaps he was thinking of many beautiful maxims which he might have held up before the girl, but the young boatman had grown uneasy towards the end of the confession, and this checked him. After rowing for two hours, they arrived in the little harbour of Capri. Antonino carried the padre out of the boat over the little rippling waves, and carefully set him down. Laurella, however, would not wait till he waded back for her; she gathered her little skirt together, and with her wooden slippers in her right hand, and the bundle in her left, she nimbly splashed through the water.

"I dare say I shall be at Capri a long time to-day," said the padre, "and thou needest not wait for me; perhaps I shall not return till tomorrow; and, Laurella, when thou reachest home, remember me to thy mother. I shall come and see you this week. Thou wilt go home before night?"

"If I have an opportunity," said the girl, and pretended to be busy with her dress.

"I must go back, too," said Antonino, trying to speak in an indifferent tone; "I shall wait for you till the Ave Maria; if you don't come then, I will go my own way."

"Thou must go, Laurella," broke in the little padre; "thou canst not leave thy mother alone at night; art thou going far?"

"To Anacapri—to a vineyard."

"And I must go towards Capri; God protect thee, child, and thou, too, my son."

Laurella kissed her hand, and a farewell escaped her, which the padre and Antonino might both appropriate. Antonino, however, did not claim any of it; he pulled off his cap to the padre, without even looking at Laurella. When both, however, had turned their backs upon him, he let his eyes wander after the holy father for an instant as he wearily plodded through the deep shingle, and then fixed them upon the girl, who had turned to the right to go up the hill, holding her hand over her eyes to shield them from the burning sun. Before the path disappeared, she paused a moment as if for breath, and looked back. The shore lay at her feet, with the sea lovely in its intense blue; above her towered the lofty cliffs—it was indeed a view worth looking at. It so happened that in glancing towards Tonino's boat she met his eyes; each made a gesture of impatience, and the girl continued her way with a sullen expression on her face.

It was not long past noon, and already Antonino had been sitting for two hours on a bench before the osteria. He must have had something on his mind, for he was constantly getting up and walking into the sun, and looking hard at the paths which led right and left to the two little island towns.

He then said to the hostess that he was afraid of the weather; it might remain fine, but he well knew that colour of the sea and of the water; it had looked just like that before the great storm when he had had so much trouble to get the English family safe to shore.

"How have you fared at Sorrento," said the hostess; "better than we did here in Capri?"

"I could not have afforded macaroni if I had had only the boat to depend upon; now and then taking a letter to Naples, or taking out a signor to fish; that was all; but you know that my uncle has great orange-gardens, and is a rich man; 'Tonino,' said he, 'so long as I live you shall not want, and when I die, you'll find yourself provided for; so with God's help, I have got through the winter.'"

"Has he children, your uncle?"

"No, he was never married, and was a long while away from home; during that time he made a great deal of money, and now he's going to set up a great fishery, and will put me at the head of it."

"Then you are a made man, Antonino!"

The young sailor shrugged his shoulders.

"Every one must bear his own burden," said he, and then he jumped up and looked again right and left after the weather, though he must have known that there is but one weather side.

"Let me bring you another bottle, your uncle can pay for it," said the hostess.

"Only one more glass," said he, "for you have a fiery kind of wine here—my head is quite hot already."

"It does not go into the blood," said the woman; "you can drink as much as you like; there, my husband is just coming, you must stay and talk with him a little."

And the stately padrone of the tavern appeared, coming down from the mountain, his not upon his shoulder, and his red cap on his bushy head. He had been taking some fish to the town, which the grand lady had ordered for the good priest from Sorrento. When he caught sight of the young man, he waved him a cordial welcome, sat down on the bench beside him, and began to talk. His wife had just brought a second bottle of pure unadulterated Capri wine, when footsteps were heard crunching on the hard sand to the left, and Laurella made her appearance on the road from Anacapri. She gave a slight nod, and then stood still. Antonino jumped up.

"I must go," said he, "it is a girl from Sorrento, who came across early to-day with the priest, and wants to get back to her sick mother before night."

"Well, well, there is plenty of time before night," said the fisherman; "she will have time to drink a glass of wine. Here, wife bring another glass."

"Thank you, I won't drink," said Laurella, without moving.

"Pour out, wife," said the man; "pour out, she must drink."

To be continued.

## STRANGE FISHES.—No. II

A CERTAIN sporting fish has been seen to shoot with the precision of a prize rifleman. "We have," says Sir Charles Bell, "a curious instance of the precision of the eye and of the adaptation of muscular action in the beaked chætodon, a fish which inhabits the Indian rivers, and lives on the smaller aquatic flies. When it observes one alighted on a twig, or flying over (for it can shoot them on the wing), it darts a drop of water with so steady an aim as to bring the fly down into the water, when it falls an easy prey. It will hit a fly at the distance of from three to six feet. Another fish of the same order, the *zeus*, has the power of forming its mouth into a tube, and squirting at flies, so as to encumber their wings, and bring them to the surface of the water. In these instances, a difficulty will readily occur to the reader. How does the fish judge of position, since the rays of light are refracted at the surface of the water? Does instinct enable it to do this, or is it by experience?" Now, Sir Charles Bell was one of the closest observers and the most trustworthy writers of his time, so that his authority is unquestionable.

There is another operation by fishes, which seems to require almost equal experience. Professor Agassiz, while collecting insects along the shores of Lake Sebago, in Maine, observed a couple of cat-fish, which, at his approach, left the shore suddenly, and returned to the deeper water. Examining the place which the fishes had left, he discovered a nest among the water-plants, with a number of little tadpoles. In a few moments the two fishes returned, looking anxiously towards the nest, and approached within six or eight feet of where Professor Agassiz stood. They were evidently not in search of food, and he became convinced that they were seeking the protection of their young. Large stones, thrown repeatedly into the middle of the nest after the fishes had returned to it, only frightened them away for a brief period, and they returned to the spot within ten or fifteen minutes. This was repeated four or five times with the same result. This negatives the assertion made by some naturalists—that no fishes are known to take any care of their offspring. Here are other instances of their natural affection.

Dr. Hancock relates that both species of *hassar* mentioned below make a regular nest, in which they lay their eggs in a flattened cluster, and cover them over most carefully. Their care does not end here; they remain by the side of the nest till the spawn is hatched with as much solicitude as a hen guards her eggs, both male and female *hassar* steadily watching the spawn, and courageously attacking the assailant. Hence the negroes frequently take them by putting their hands into the water close to the nest, on agitating which the male *hassar* springs furiously at them, and is thus captured. The *round-head* forms its nest of grass, the *flat-head* of leaves. Both, at certain seasons, burrow in the bank. They lay their eggs only in wet weather. Numerous nests suddenly appear in a morning after rain occurs, the spot being indicated by a bunch of froth which appears on the surface of the water over the nest. Below this are the eggs, placed on a bunch of fallen leaves or grass, which the fishes cut, and collect together. By what means this is effected is rather mysterious, as the species are destitute of cutting-teeth. It may possibly be by use of their arms, which form the first ray of the pectoral fins.

Pennant, indeed, gives an additional instance of parental affection in this much-wronged class, for he says that the blue shark will permit its young brood, when in danger, to swim down its mouth and take shelter in its belly! The fact, he tells us, has been confirmed by the observation of several ichthyologists; and for his part he can see nothing more incredible in it than that the young of the opossum should seek an asylum in the ventral pouch of its parent. He does not tell us, however, that any of these observers who may have seen the young sharks swimming down the throat of their affectionate parent, ever saw one of them returning; and until that is seen, we must think the evidence rather incomplete, more particularly as the division and direction of