

communication existed between it and the sea, which had never indeed been explored, but the existence of which was evident from the fact, that the water in the Fishpond rose and fell with the tide. To a distance of several fathoms below the surface of the earth, the sides of the pit were straight and smooth as a wall; but it had been ascertained that, at a considerable depth, a projecting ledge of rock, a couple of feet in breadth, ran round its entire circumference, which at low water was left completely bare, and on which, at such times, one might sit or stand in safety for some hours—it being again submerged by the rising of the water to the depth of three or four fathoms, according to the state of the tide, whether spring or neap. When crossing the river from the Carlist side, the young man had observed the tide was rapidly falling, and knowing, from the interval that had elapsed, that it must be now about low water, he prepared at once for the descent. This was an achievement which, however frightful to look upon, was in reality not attended with any excessive danger to one of steady nerves, when properly assisted from above; his ultimate safety, of course, depending on his being withdrawn before the rising of the tide. In fact, young Silva had more than once performed the feat in his boyish days, and now felt no hesitation in resorting to it again as the only means of escape from a remorseless and unsparing enemy. In a much shorter time, therefore, from the first alarm, than we have taken to describe the spot, he stood with his agitated father at the mouth of the black and gaping chasm, from which distinctly ascended the hoarse bellowing of the vexed torrent far below, as it rushed through the concealed outlet to the sea. A stout rope secured round his middle, the young man let himself cautiously over the edge; the remainder of the cord being wound round the trunk of a fruit tree, whilst Don Ricardo firmly grasped the extremity, 'paying it out' by degrees. After the lapse of a few anxious minutes, the Don felt the strain relax, a proof that the young man had reached his resting-place; then the vibration of the cord announced that he had cast it off; and then a shout from below conveyed the signal to withdraw it. The only approach for horsemen through the grounds being very circuitous, Don Ricardo was enabled to reach the house and take his seat in the drawing-room before the dargoons pulled up at the door.

A dozen of their number instantly dismounted, and surrounded the house, whilst their officer knocked loudly for admittance. The door having been opened by Don Ricardo in person—the domestics having long before retired to rest, as it was not deemed prudent to inform them of the presence of the young man—the Christino leader recognised him at once as evidently the proprietor of the mansion.

'You keep late hours, Don Ricardo Silva,' he commenced. 'May I take the liberty of inquiring whether you have had any visitors this evening?'

'My family is a small one, captain,' replied Don Ricardo, endeavoring to disguise his anxiety under a feint smile; 'and in the present disturbed state of affairs, we never have any visitors beyond our own circle.'

'If I mistake not,' said the other, 'you have a son among the rebels in the pay of Don Carlos. May I ask, without giving offence, when you heard from him last?'

'The last letter I received from him,' replied the father, 'is dated several months back.'

'Strange,' observed the Christino, 'that I

should happen to be so much better informed about him than yourself! Now, were I to venture a guess as to his whereabouts, I should say he was at this moment beneath this very roof.'

Don Ricardo vehemently, and indeed truly, denied the fact of his presence beneath the roof; but, as may be supposed, his protestations met with little credit. A guard was placed over him and his lady in the apartment in which they had been sitting; the domestics were summoned, and put under similar restraint in another; and the remainder of the dragoons were ordered to dismount and search the house.

An hour subsequently, when every nook and cranny of the building, with the out-offices and garden, had been ramsacked—of course fruitlessly—the commander of the Christino party again entered the apartment in which the Don and his lady were detained, and informed them, that as it was evident the young man had made his escape before the Queen's troops had reached the house, it became his duty to convey them both to Bilboa, to render an account for having harbored and connived at the escape of a rebel: This was a blow which they had never anticipated, and for which they were wholly unprepared. None but themselves being privy to the fact of the young man's concealment in the Fiend's Fishpond, to convey them to Bilboa, and leave him to await the rising of the tide, would be to doom him to certain death. Even as it was, the latest period at which he could be withdrawn with life was approaching with fearful rapidity. Horrified at the prospect, the anguished mother shrieked and fainted; whilst the stout-hearted Don himself could not so control his emotions as to prevent the officer from discovering that some deeper influence was at work than the mere dread of the inconvenience to which they would themselves be exposed, trifling as it must prove in the absence of all positive evidence that young Silva had really been there at all. This of course but confirmed him in his previous intention of taking them to Bilboa; for which place, accordingly, the entire party, including the almost broken-hearted parents, started in a short time afterwards.

As our object is not to describe feelings, but to record facts, we shall not dwell upon the sufferings of Don Ricardo and his lady throughout that dreadful night. The reader can readily imagine how at one moment they would almost resolve to risk all, and reveal the fact, and, rescuing their child from the horrors of the frightful grave into which he had been lowered by his father's hand, procure for him, at all events, the respite of an hour, and the privilege to look once more, before he died, on the light of the sun; and how, at the next, they would determine to confide him to the bounty of that Providence who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand, and bow in submission to His will, rather than become themselves the instruments in revealing the place of his concealment, and betraying him into the hands of men whose 'tender mercies were cruel.' Let it suffice to say, that when, towards the close of the following day, they were led forth from the prison in Bilboa, in which they had been immured, and informed they were at liberty to return to their mansion, the locks of the gentleman, which, though he had passed the middle age, on the previous evening had been black and glossy as the raven's wing, were white as if the snows of seventy years had descended on his head—the lady was an idiot.

Neither need we expatiate on the feelings of young Silva, as he beheld—if indeed such an expression be correct as applied to

his sensations amid the thick darkness which reigned eternally within the frightful recesses of that horrid cavern—the gradual approaches of apparently inevitable death; the rising waters gradually ascending to the level of the ledge on which he stood—to his knees; his hips; his middle; his armpits. Conscious by this time that something extraordinary had occurred to prevent his parents from effecting his release, all hope of life had faded, and what he deemed a last prayer to Heaven was quivering on his lips, when a loud shout from the mouth of the pit drove the blood, which had begun to stagnate round his heart, again like lightning through his veins. Prompt as the echo was his reply; and the next moment the cord from above struck the water within reach of his arm. With all the despatch which his numbed fingers would permit, he fastened it around him, and announcing his readiness by another shrill cry, was drawn in safety to the top.

He learned, on enquiry, that a neighboring peasant, tempted by the luscious fruits with which the trees in Don Ricardo's garden were loaded, had, on the very night in question, ventured on a predatory excursion against them: and was actually employed in filling a bag with his spoils, when he was alarmed by the entrance of the young man and his father, as related, on the appearance of the Christino cavalry. Taking refuge in a clump of flowering shrubs, he had been an unseen observer of the young man's descent into the Fishpond, and of all the subsequent occurrences. Readily comprehending the entire affair, the honest fellow watched the dragoons clear of the grounds, and knowing that not a moment more was to be lost, procured a rope, and hastened again to the spot, when the result was as we have already described. He now related to young Silva the substance of a singular conversation which, as he lay concealed, he had overheard between the Christino commander and his subordinate officer. In reply to some enquiry of the latter concerning the authority of his information with reference to the visit of the Carlist officer, 'Oh,' said the superior in a significant tone, 'my intelligence must be authentic, since I have had it from on high.'

'What!' exclaimed the subaltern laughingly; 'have you got a correspondent in heaven?'

'Why, not exactly,' was the reply; 'my correspondent is yet a resident on earth, and yet I receive his communications literally from the clouds. At another time, however, I may give you further information concerning my celestial informant. At present, I am not at liberty.'

The peasant who related this strange conversation discovered nothing in it beyond an unmeaning jocularity bordering on profanity; but Silva, who, during his seclusion, had naturally been speculating on the probable channel through which the Christinos had obtained information of his presence, conceived it to convey much more than met the ear, and to want but a certain key to explain the import of its mysterious allusions. A few minutes afterwards, he found lying on the floor of the hall what a little reflection led with to regard as furnishing the key which he required. This was nothing more than a scrap of paper, less than the palm of a man's hand, greatly crumpled, as if it had been rolled up and thrust into a small space, much soiled, and slightly burned, on which was written, in characters almost illegible, from the treatment it had undergone—'Silva, lieutenant, — battalion Carlist infantry, will spend to-night at his father's house on the river side, close to the shore.