

## TRUE TO HIS WORD.

## A NOVEL.

## CHAPTER XLII.—Continued.

'What! the three hundred thousand ducats?'

The idea of Sir Reginald's personal guarantee being accepted for such a sum as fifty thousand pounds—one hundredth part of which in ready money he had rarely possessed in his life—had utterly overwhelmed him.

Walter began to think that his own difficulties were over and ventured to smooth away those which seemed to present themselves to Sir Reginald.

'Your guarantee,' said he, 'it is true, will be but a matter of form. When Mr. Brown regains his liberty he will be glad enough to pay the money; only in the absence of the authorization the bank needs to be assured of this by his daughter and yourself.'

'But if he does not regain his liberty and the money is taken by the brigands all the same?' observed the baronet. 'Supposing even they were to kill him and these three hundred thousand ducats go into Corrali's pockets all the same?'

'That is to the last degree improbable; such a breach of faith has never been known among these people.'

'Impossible! But is it impossible? that is the question. As to honor among thieves, there is a proverb to that effect, but it would scarcely justify me in putting such a temptation as fifty thousand pounds in the way of a brigand. No, Mr. Litton; I am sensible of the compliment Mr. Gordon pays me; but I must decline to accept such a responsibility as a man of honor.'

'I must again remind you that we are quite alone, Sir Reginald,' said Walter, 'and that I know you perfectly well. Your scruples upon this matter when I saw you last were confined to making overtures to the brigands at all, who, you said, must be treated with by the sword alone. Those scruples you have forgotten; but you have found others more adapted for the new conditions. I do not doubt that in any case you would find reasons enough to excuse you from following the course which duty points out to you. As for me, if you persist in this wickedness, I shall be a dead man to-morrow night; but do not imagine that I shall die unavenged. I will leave behind me a statement of your conduct towards your relative, which shall be published far and wide. You will be rich, for it is possible—I have no doubt you are speculating upon her illness turning out fatally—that you may obtain poor Lillian's inheritance as well as that of your wife; but you will never purchase the respect but the recognition of your fellow-men. You will be held as a man accursed.'

'Have you done?' inquired Sir Reginald. 'I have nothing more to say, Reginald Selwyn, except to put the question for the last time: Will you save your father-in-law's life or will you not?'

'If you mean, will I become a party to a negotiation with brigands?—no; I will not!'

'Mr. Gordon was right,' said Walter. 'There was a time when Reginald Selwyn was a gentleman and a soldier; but I know him now for what he knows himself to be, a scoundrel!'

Sir Reginald leaped to his feet, but the passion which prompted him to strike his adversary gave way immediately to calculations of prudence. Walter waited for his friend to speak; but perceiving him to remain silent, he turned and left the room.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## WALTER SETS HIS HOUSE IN ORDER.

It had lately appeared to Walter Litton that existence had no great boon to offer him; but now that he was in the street, with the sea before him and the voices of his fellow-men falling upon his ear, it seemed hard to die. He was not yet thirty and in perfect health and vigor. There was no reason—save the bail bond of his word he had given to the brigand chief and which was to be exacted on the morrow—why he should not live for the next forty years. If only that little promise of his could be blotted from his mind he felt that his life might be a happy one. Should Lillian recover, of which there now seemed to be good hope, she would undoubtedly accept him for her husband in spite of any representations of Sir Reginald. To have love, health and youth within his power, and yet to exchange all to-morrow for a cruel death was terrible indeed.

Walter made use of one of the few hours of life remaining to him to draw up a detailed statement of the facts of Mr. Christopher Brown's capture and imprisonment, with especial reference to the ransom which would have procured his release; the mysterious disappearance of the authorization and Sir Reginald's lukewarmness concerning it; the negotiations with the banker and the baronet's refusal to sign the guar-

antee; nor did he hesitate to point out how the latter's material interests had been advantaged at the expense of his unhappy relative. This paper he sealed up and addressed to the British consul, with a request that it might be made public so soon as the fatal news from Corrali's camp should reach the city. Of himself he said little, beyond describing the circumstances of his compelled return to the brigands, which would naturally afford to his statement the weight which attaches to the evidence of a dying man.

A much more sorrowful, if less important, task then claimed his attention in bidding farewell to Lillian. It was necessary to do this in writing, since, even if he should have the chance of seeing her, it would have been impossible, in her fragile condition, to communicate to her the true state of the case. He did not waste many words upon Sir Reginald, of whose conduct in the present matter she would hear the particulars from other sources; but he solemnly laid the fate of her father and himself at the baronet's door. He asked Lillian's pardon for the involuntary share he had himself taken in the marriage of her sister with the man who had thus brought ruin on them all. The rest of his letter described the growth of his affection for herself, which had induced him to come abroad under circumstances which had given her just cause for apprehension. Then he spoke of their common youth, and entreated her not to grieve unreasonably over his decease. He gave her his full leave to marry whom she would. 'Such a permission,' wrote he, 'will seem preposterous to any other than yourself, but you will feel that I have the right to give it.' And he wished her happiness in her wedded life. He was not afraid of falling into the hands of God, nor did he repine in an unmanly manner. His mind wandered back to Beech street and faithful Jack Pelter. He did not feel equal to writing to him, but he would learn all that had taken place and he could trust him to construe all aright. By his will he had left him—the only friend who had at that time shewn himself friendly—what property he was possessed of. He had put aside some portion of his ready money to pay for his own interment in the English cemetery should his body be recovered from the brigands; and the rest he had allotted to Francisco. These with the letters he intended to leave out upon the morrow in order that they might be found after he had left the city. And now all matters having been thus provided for in this world, he was sitting at his open window thinking.

'Signor!'—he started, so deep he was in meditation that he had not heard any one enter his apartment—'signor, I have news for you.'

It was Francisco's voice, the tones of which were always musical. 'You have scarcely touched your dinner, my father says; but you will eat supper when you have heard my tidings. The English young lady is better, though still weak and worn, poor soul.'

'What! can she see me then?'

'Yes; she will see you, not to-night, but to-morrow.'

'To-morrow! It will be early then, I hope, Francisco.'

'Yes; it will be early. She wishes to see you, signor.'

'A thousand thanks, Francisco. You will find that I have not forgotten this good service.'

'Oh, do not speak of that. But you must really eat something, none would think that it was but yesterday that you came back half starved from the mountains.'

Walter had been reminded of a thing forgotten—namely, his appointment with Santoro for that evening.

'Come, signor, let me bring you supper.'

'Presently, Francisco—in half an hour; I have something to do first in the town.' He turned back to the window, unwilling to prolong this talk; and Francisco, with an anxious glance at his English friend, withdrew from the apartment. Immediately afterwards Walter took up his hat and repaired to the usual rendezvous, where he found Santoro awaiting him. He at once informed the brigand that all hope of obtaining the ransom was at an end and inquired at what hour it would be necessary to start upon the morrow.

'We should be off before noon,' was his quiet reply, 'since it takes much longer to climb a mountain than to descend from it.'

'Then I will be here before that hour.'

'Hush! Not here, signor, but at the end of the Marina,' answered the brigand. 'This place is growing too hot for me, and it is necessary that I should leave the town to-night.'

'You do not suppose, I hope, that it is through anything I have said,'

'No, no; the signor is a man of honor; but he has been watched and followed. A brigand's eyes never deceive him.'

Walter could not but think that his companion was mistaken, for not only had he been unconscious of any such espionage, but he knew of none who could have any interest in his coming and going. Still it was obvious that Santoro was uneasy, and since it was unnecessary to prolong the interview, they parted at once. As Walter went back to his hotel he cast a glance up to the rooms which the Selwyns occupied and saw Sir Reginald smoking on the balcony; and as he was the only man who was likely to take any note of his proceedings, the brigand's suspicion seemed to him more absurd even than before.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## THE TEMPTER.

Sleep, Walter had feared, would have been impossible for him under the circumstances in which he was placed; but, however, he had several hours of refreshing slumber. He welcomed them not only for the forgetfulness they afforded, but because they would give him strength to bear whatever brigand cruelty might have in store for him, and above all to support the old merchant. When Francisco came, therefore, at an early hour to conduct him to the hotel he found the young Englishman calm and collected. At the door of the hotel he was left by Francisco in the hands of the porter, who conducted him upstairs.

It was a relief to Walter to find Lady Selwyn at the door waiting to receive him, and he felt that her presence would afford full authority for his visit. He knew that she was daring much in admitting him to her sister's presence.

'You will not talk with her long,' pleaded she, 'Mr. Litton, will you? Lillian is very weak and feeble; and above all things refrain from speaking about that matter we were talking of yesterday.'

'About your father's peril?'

'Well, about your apprehensions upon his account; Sir Reginald assures me that there is no real danger. There is nothing to be gained by dwelling on it; and if my sister should share your fears it would have a very bad effect upon her.'

'You may rely on my prudence, Lady Selwyn,' answered Walter; and thereupon she led the way into the sick room. The first appearance of Lillian gave Walter an uncomfortable notion that he had been deceived as to her true condition; she looked more like a convalescent than one who had so recently been reported as dangerously ill. The hand which she stretched out to him was almost transparent; and the voice with which she welcomed him was as weak as that which had murmured his name when they parted in the cavern; but instead of the spot of scarlet upon her pallid cheeks there was now a blush, which was certainly not the flush of fever, though it might have been summoned there by his coming.

'This is better than when we met each other last, Walter,' said she with a smile.

'It is indeed, Lillian.' He could say no more, since the truth was not to be said.

'I long to hear how you got away from that dreadful place, but they say you must not tell me now.' The tears stood in her eyes, which also brimmed with love and tenderness. 'But one thing you must tell me—about dear papa. When shall I see him, when will he be here?'

Walter hesitated.

'You have forgotten, my dear Lily, that the ransom has not been paid,' interposed Lotty.

'But why is this long delay? How cruel it is to keep poor papa in captivity! He must have been days and days, though I know not how long. Do, dear Walter, hasten it.'

'I have done what I can, Lillian.'

'And you are still doing your best, I am sure. But what is the obstacle?'

'The sum is so very large,' said Walter.

'Nay, but surely the bank can raise it. What papa wrote was surely sufficient.'

Walter turned his eyes involuntarily towards Lotty. If she did not know that her husband had possessed himself of the authorization he felt sure that she suspected it.

'Is it possible that they refuse to pay it?'

inquired Lillian.

'The bankers do not refuse to pay it, Lillian, but we must have patience.'

'Poor dear papa!' sighed Lillian so softly that none but a lover's ear could have caught the sound. 'How wretched he must be among those terrible men! O Walter! when shall we see him?'

'I shall see him to-day, Lillian,' answered Walter.

'To-day!'—with a slight flush of joy—'that is well indeed. You need not have been afraid to tell me such good tidings. It is bad news, not good, that kills one. Tell him, with my dearest love,' she went on, 'how I long to see him. And tell him that if anything could aid to the happiness of such a moment it will be the thought that you have brought him to me. He will not wish to keep us asunder now, Walter!'

Then she closed her eyes, and Lotty made a sign to him that he should withdraw.

Lotty left the room with him, and as

those who watch the sick are wont to do when their invalid has a visitor, inquired of him what he thought of Lillian. 'Is she better than you expected, Mr. Litton?'

'She is better than I was led to expect,' answered Walter.

Lotty's cheek turned a shade whiter as she observed: 'Yet she is still so weak that a breath of bad news would kill her.'

'Yes; you heard what she said just now. That news will come to-morrow, and then Sir Reginald will have the blood of three innocent persons instead of two to answer for.'

'O, sir, be pitiful!' exclaimed Lotty.

'What! pitiful to the man who stole that authorization from yonder sick girl! Pitiful to the man who has led me about Lillian's health—painting her as out of her mind lest I should question her and prove him thief or use her services to save the doomed!'

'No, Mr. Litton—not to the man; but to the woman! Pity me, who am his wife.'

'I do, I do.' If she had had any hand in deceiving him it was an unwilling hand, nor had she been thoroughly persuaded of the peril in which her father stood.

'I pity you, Lady Selwyn, from my heart.'

'Oh, Mr. Litton!' she said, 'you cannot forgive me?'

'Yes; I forgive you. A time will come when it will be a comfort to you to know as much. Keep all news that comes to-morrow from Lillian's ears.'

'And shall you really see dear papa to-day?' she went on.

'Yes; to-day.'

'Then you will give him my love too with Lillian's and tell him nothing.'

'Nothing that will make one daughter less dear to him than the other, you may be sure.'

'God bless you, Walter.'

'And God bless you, Lotty. Farewell!'

He turned and went down stairs with the slow step that bears a heavy heart. He had seen the last English face, save one, that he should ever see—that one which would meet his own with hopelessness depicted on it. He was with it in that camp among the mountains before he had left the city walls behind him and was a captive once again.

Francisco brought him his breakfast, but asked no question concerning his recent visit to the hotel, an omission which was not owing to any want of personal interest.

'Has Signor Litton any plans for the day?' he inquired presently.

'Plans for the day?' repeated Walter, whose mind was so occupied with the thought of what the day had in store for him that he did not really understand the question.

'I mean,' explained Francisco, 'will you not have a sail in the bay, signor, such as used to please you? There is a pleasant breeze afloat, though none on shore; and we can have the old boat, or for that matter the signora would let you have the yacht itself; it has lain idle these many days and will do so, I suppose, till Milord Brown's ransom is paid.'

'I suppose so,' answered Walter. There was something which seemed to convince Francisco that questioning would be of no avail, for immediately afterwards he withdrew.

Walter left the house, walking along the Marina. Every step he took was away from the habitations of his fellow-men, and was, as it were, an act of farewell to them.

Now he was alone; only one man in all Palermo was cognizant of the sacrifice he was about to make; and death was certain. He had already got within a hundred yards of the end of the Marina when he heard quick footsteps coming behind him and then his own name called out in English: 'Walter Litton!' He turned round, for he knew the voice, and beheld Reginald Selwyn.

'What is it that you want with me, sir?' said Walter.

'I want you not to be a fool, Litton,' answered the other. 'I have been thinking over what you told me you had made up your mind to do in case the extravagant demands of these villains were not complied with. It seems to me that you are mad.'

'I am not mad, sir.'

'It cannot surely be your purpose to give yourself up to these rascals, that they may take your life?'

'I intend to keep my word, Sir Reginald Selwyn.'

'In other words, you intend to surrender yourself.'

'Yes, sir. Some touch of tenderness, born of friendship, may have moved you to urge me thus; if so, let it move you further. There is time even yet to repent and to procure your father-in-law's ransom. By that means you will save both our lives; but otherwise the blood of both will be on your head.'

'I cannot consent to be a party to any arrangement with thieves and robbers, such as you propose.'

'You mean, you will not.'

'Well, if you choose to take it that way, I will not.'

'Then your refusal is our death doom and you know it.'

'And your departing thus will be Lillian's death doom,' returned Sir Reginald, 'when she comes to know what has happened. If I was the scoundrel that you believe me, I would say go; for Lillian will die if you do so, and my wife will of course inherit her money. But I intreat you not to go. It is true that hitherto I have done my best to oppose your marriage with my sister-in-law; but I will oppose it no longer.'

'And your father-in-law having been put to death there will be no other obstacle to it.'

'Well, if anything happens to Mr. Brown—I don't believe it will.'

'You lie!' interrupted Walter. 'You know that death will happen to him, even better than you know it will happen to me. But you wish not to be alone in your villainy; you would bribe me into being your confederate and to share your guilty gains. To-morrow you will be known for what you are; but if you dare to tempt me any more you shall be known to-day. There is some one coming this way; if you do not leave me I swear I will tell him what you have done, be he who he may.'

Sir Reginald still hesitated. 'I have striven to save you, Walter Litton,' he said.

'Yes, to shame and infamy; I refuse to be saved upon such terms. I prefer the death that is awaiting me to the life that awaits you, Reginald Selwyn.'

As Walter pronounced the name in a loud voice, Sir Reginald turned to go, only just in time to avoid Francisco, who came up. He had been running, which Walter had never known him to do before.

'Oh, Signor Litton! what is it that you are doing?'

'I am taking a walk on the Marina, Francisco,' returned Walter.

'But afterwards?'

'Well, afterwards, when I get to the wall yonder, I shall make across into the country. Did you suppose I was going to throw myself into the sea?'

'No, signor; but you are about to do something as bad. Why have you left that money behind you for me, as though I would never see you more—and worse, for your own burial in the cemetery?'

'It is always best to provide against the worst, Francisco; then whatever happens the mind is calm. I did not know you would visit my room so quickly; but since you have done so you may take the letters you have found there to their destinations—one to the English consul and the other to Lady Selwyn.'

'But none for her sister? Ah! that alone gave me hope, for you would surely have written to the signora,' said he, 'had you intended never to return.'

'Most certainly I should.' Walter had inclosed his letter to Lillian in a note to Lotty, telling her not to deliver it until the former had regained her strength.

'Hush!' whispered Francisco. 'Listen! From the trees which fringed the road there had come a sound which Walter understood only too well; Santoro was becoming impatient.'

'That is the brigand call, signor.'

'I know it, Francisco; and I must obey it. Farewell!'

The next moment Walter had sprung over the wall and disappeared. Francisco uttered a loud cry and fled back towards the city.

(To be Continued.)

## Minnesota's Wonderful Climate.

Curious winter phenomena we have here, remarked the St. Paulite to the visitor from St. Louis. You notice that icicle up there on the cornice of that eight story building? Should say it was ten feet long. Well, this very morning one just like that dropped as Sam Bones was passing and the point struck him square on the top of the head. It went through him like a shot and pinned him to the sidewalk bolt upright and still as a statue.

Kill him?

Hardly. As soon as the icicle melted he walked off all right enough. See?

An extraordinary escape, truly—perhaps an isolated case. But I should think he would be liable to take cold from the draft through the hole in his body.

Not at all. You see, the winter climate here is so dry that—

Bosh!—Nature's Realm.

## An Advertised Method of Suicide.

Cumso—It seems queer to advertise methods of suicide.

Mrs. Cumso—What in the world do you mean?

Cumso—Here's an advertisement which says: Try a pair of our shoes and you will never wear another shoe.—Harper's Bazar.

Not at all. You see, the winter climate here is so dry that—

Bosh!—Nature's Realm.

## An Affair of the Heart.

Sam Johnson—What's de reason, Mr. Snowball, dat you am so repulsive when presses my suit? Has you got no affections for me?

Matilda Snowball—On de contrary, Mr. Johnson, I lubs you wid my whole heart, but it am a fact dat I lub Jeeter Webster wid more den my whole heart.

Texas Siftings.