

## TRUE TO HIS WORD.

A NOVEL.

## CHAPTER XL.

## A GLEAM OF HOPE.

It was too late that night to call upon the consul or the bankers, on whom his mind misgave him it would be of small use to call in any case; but a sudden impulse caused him to seek the gate of the English burial ground. Even if Santoro were there he could obviously afford him no assistance; and it was to the last degree improbable that he should be there on that first evening of their arrival, and when he might naturally conclude that the young Englishman would have no need to see him. Yet he went on the bare chance of his being there. His heart seemed to yearn for the one companion with whom, if he had no sympathy, he had at least something in common, who shared with him that knowledge of his own perilous position which it seemed impossible to induce any one else in Palermo to share.

Finding Santoro at the spot agreed upon—'Why, you could hardly have expected to see me so soon?' said he.

'I did not expect it, signor; but I had my orders not to lose a chance of communicating with you.'

'Indeed! It struck me that the captain did not trouble himself much about the matter.'

'It was not the captain; it was la signora,' answered the other.

Walter felt the color come into his cheeks as he replied: 'I understood that only those two who came up from the cavern were under her directions.'

'That is so, signor; but one that is dear to her is very dear to me.'

'Ah! Lavocca?'

'Yes, signor,' answered he. 'Have you any news?'

'Bad news. It is that I wished to see you about. The authorization which Mr. Brown sent for the payment of the ransom is not to be found. Are you sure that no one could have possessed himself of it while the English lady was being brought back?'

'That is impossible,' said Santoro. 'In the first place, it would have benefited no one; and in the second, no one would have dared.'

'That is also my opinion. But at all events it has disappeared, and without it I fear not a ducat can be raised. My idea is that you should return at once to the camp and bring back another order from Mr. Brown.'

'But that would be very dangerous, signor.'

'How so, when the troops have been withdrawn?'

'Oh, the troops are nothing! It is Corrali himself that I should fear to meet. It is contrary to his wishes that we came down here; his patience is already exhausted and he would not believe one word of such a tale as this. My return would be the signal for putting mildred to death. You don't know the captain's temper, signor. I will go if such is your wish, but that is my conviction.'

In vain Walter attempted to move Santoro from this opinion, delivered with all the gravity of a judge. It was certain that he was in the best position to speak positively upon such a matter, and he had no motive for misrepresenting it. Walter felt convinced against his will that upon himself alone depended the success of his mission. Yet without the authorization how could he hope to induce the bankers to advance such a sum or the tenth part of it? He shook hands with Santoro and returned alone to his own lodgings. Francisco met him at the door with extravagant signs of welcome and satisfaction.

'I never thought to see your face again, signor,' exclaimed he. 'I was right, you see, about these gentlemen of the mountains. Well, you have seen Corrali face to face, and yet escaped him with your life and a whole purse. That is what no other man in Sicily can say for himself, save you and me.'

'Then the young lady too,' continued Francisco; 'she has reason to thank her stars, for it is better to be ill in Palermo than to enjoy the best of health up yonder,' and he pointed towards Mount Pellegrino, 'without a roof to one's head and among bad company. They say that Joanna is a wicked person.'

'Then they do her a great injustice, Francisco,' answered Walter. 'But how did you know that the lady had been with Joanna?'

'Oh, well, there is a friend of mine at the hotel, and she is the signora's nurse for the present.'

'But did the signora tell her then?'

'I suppose so. Who else? Certainly she told her.'

'But Sir Reginald himself informed me

that she was delirious—not capable of understanding what was said to her.'

'I believe that is so. She chatters, poor thing—so Julia tells me.'

'When the lady first came back to Palermo,' inquired Walter, 'was she aware of all that had happened? Is it only lately that she has lost consciousness, Francisco?'

'I believe so. I will ask Julia, if you like, when I see her next.'

'By all means ask her. But when will you see her?'

'Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps not till the day after; it depends upon the signora's state whether she can get away or not. But the next time she shall give me all particulars; you may look upon the matter as settled.'

This information moved Walter greatly as corroborating his suspicions, for if it should turn out to be correct, it must needs follow that there was concealment on the baronet's part with respect to the authorization, or at all events of Lili n's mission. She would hardly have spoken of her imprisonment and of Joanna without mentioning the very purpose to effect which she had obtained her freedom.

The next morning, as soon as business hours commenced, Walter presented himself at the British consul's and told his story, to which that official listened with attentive courtesy. Nothing, however, he said, could be done, so far as he was concerned, more than had already been done. The authorities at Palermo had acted promptly and as duty plainly pointed out to them in sending forth the troops; and all that he could do, if it was the case that they had been withdrawn, would be to demand that they should make another attempt to compel the brigands to surrender their captive. As to the ransom, it was not to be expected that the Sicilian Government would assist in its collection or even countenance its payment. That was a matter for the consideration of Mr. Brown's bankers.

All this Walter felt to be perfectly reasonable; but beneath all this polite logic he could plainly perceive a profound incredulity, not in his story, but in the reality of Corrali's threat. At the English banker's, to which the consul was civil enough to accompany him, he was admitted to an interview with one of the members of the firm and at once presented Mr. Brown's memorandum—'Spare no expense; trust implicitly the bearer.'

'Bearer!' repeated the man of money; 'why, this is almost as bad as a blank cheque.'

Here the consul interposed with a few hurried words in Sicilian, which, though he caught their meaning but indistinctly, made Walter flush with indignation. He perceived he was indebted to that gentleman's good offices for convincing Mr. Gordon that he was really the person indicated in the document.

'You see, sir, this is a matter of business,' explained the banker; 'and when we are asked to put implicit confidence in a man we like to be sure it is the right man. It seems unlike a man of business such as Mr. Brown that he should have written such a memorandum at all.'

'If you were half starved and surrounded by brigands, sir, you would not be so scrupulous about technicalities,' observed Walter.

'We are well aware of Mr. Brown's misfortune and regret it deeply,' answered the banker; 'but still the form is unusual.'

'It is, however, but the corollary of a document that should have been long ago in your hands, Mr. Gordon—an authorization for the payment of three hundred thousand ducats as ransom.'

'Three hundred thousand ducats!' exclaimed the banker. 'Why, that is preposterous!'

'No doubt it appears so; yet, if one possessed the money, one would give it to save one's life.' And with that Walter once more told his story.

It was plain the banker was much moved, for he had lived much longer in Sicily than the consul and therefore knew more of brigands.

'Well, it is a huge sum,' he said; 'and to raise it within so short a time we shall require help from the other banks, which will no doubt assist us in such an emergency. Mr. Christopher Brown has no account with us to speak of, but his name is a good one. It will be a great risk, and yet one which it may be our duty to run.'

Walter felt as though this man were giving him new life; he had heard that money could not save men from death, but here was an instance to the contrary.

'However, no step can be taken in the

matter without the production of the authorization,' continued the banker.

'Alas! sir, I have told you that it cannot be found.'

'But if it is not found, Mr. Litton, it must surely be plain to you that you are taking up my time to no purpose. Not that I grudge it to you, under the circumstances; but you cannot be serious in expecting us to raise a fortune upon such a security as this for an almost total stranger.'

'Then, God help us!' said Walter.

'In what relation do you stand towards Mr. Brown, young gentleman?' asked the banker.

'I am only his friend, sir, and his fellow-sufferer.'

'But I understood that he had relatives with him.'

'He has two daughters—one of them, as I have told you, seriously ill—and a son-in-law, Sir Reginald Selwyn.'

'But surely it was his duty to have accompanied you here to-day; and once more there came into the banker's face that look of distrust with which he had first greeted the presentation of his credentials.'

'Sir Reginald is not aware of my visit to you, Mr. Gordon, nor even of my possession of this paper. I came straight from Mr. Brown himself, who had no reason to doubt that the authorization was in your hands.'

'Let it be searched for thoroughly, Mr. Litton. If it is not found, you must perceive for yourself how utterly futile is any application to our firm.'

'Forgive me, sir, for having taken up so much of your time,' said Walter rising; 'that I was pleading the cause of a dying man—one whose life is as good as lost if this money be not paid—must be my excuse.'

He said not a word concerning his own peril. The hardness if not the villainy of Sir Reginald; the misery of Lotty; the pitiable condition of poor Lilian, unable to speak a word upon a subject so vital to her father; the old merchant's impending fate—all these things oppressed Walter's mind. The trouble in the young man's face touched the banker's heart.

'Search, I repeat, Mr. Litton, for this authorization,' said he more kindly as he held out his hand; 'but if it cannot be found, still come to me again, to-morrow at latest. We will do for you what we can.'

With which gleam of hope Walter took his leave.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## A LAST APPEAL.

When death is drawing nigh us we do not wink at the truth of matters; and Walter, who was yet—if he kept his word—upon life's brink, felt his own mind convinced that even if the authorization still existed it would not be permitted to leave the hands that held it, since those hands were Reginald Selwyn's. Yet not the less on that account did it behoove him to do his best to obtain it. It was a humiliation to have to make application to this man once more, and the more so because to him he had confided that his own life was imperilled as well as that of Mr. Brown; but for the latter's sake he was resolved to do so. He accordingly called at the baronet's hotel to request another interview. The reply brought to him by the servant was that Sir Reginald had gone out. He therefore sat down and wrote a letter, in which he urged the immense importance of the document with which Lilian had been intrusted; stated his firm belief that it had not been lost upon the way into the town; and adjured him, if he wished to save his father-in-law from a cruel death, that he should use every effort to discover it. 'If it indeed be lost,' wrote he, 'you can certify to that effect, and your personal presence at the banker's may be of some avail.' To this letter and not until late in the evening a verbal answer was delivered at Walter's lodgings, to the effect that Sir Reginald had nothing to add to what he had already communicated to Mr. Litton. The method and terms of this reply struck Walter as being suspicious; it seemed to him that the baronet was not only resolved not to commit himself to paper, but that he had purposely avoided any direct reference to the authorization itself.

The first thing on the morrow, agreeably to the invitation he had received, Walter presented himself at the English bank. Mr. Gordon received him with much kindness, and he fancied that there was a smile of something like assurance on his face.

'Well, sir, and have you found this authorization?' were his first words.

'No, Mr. Gordon; and I frankly tell you that I think it will not be found.'

'But who could have taken it? Of what use would it be to any human being, save to Brown himself and this rascal Corrali, whose people would be the last to have stolen it?'

'I cannot say, sir,' replied Walter; 'a reply that expressed the state of the case more literally than his interlocutor imagined. He could indeed make a guess of

what use it might be to a certain person, but he could not say so. 'I can only repeat that it is not to be found.'

'Well, that is very unfortunate, because it would have made matters comparatively easy,' answered Mr. Gordon. 'I have, however, been in communication with my partners on the matter, and they are willing to make an exceptional effort. We cannot treat of course with you as a principal; but if Mr. Brown's son-in-law and daughter will come to us in person, prepared to make an affidavit respecting this document and to execute a deed guaranteeing us against the loss of the money, it shall be raised by to-morrow morning. It is unfortunate that Mr. Brown's other daughter should be ill; but we must take her acquiescence for granted.'

Mr. Gordon evidently imagined that he was not only making a very generous offer, which in truth he was, but also one which would be readily accepted by the parties concerned.

'If such an arrangement does not come up to your ideas of what is liberal, Mr. Litton,' said he, 'they will differ very much from those of the commercial world, I promise you.'

'Your offer, Mr. Gordon, is most liberal, most generous; but I am doubtful if it will be of any service. Sir Reginald Selwyn told me that even should the authorization be found it would be a question with him whether he should make use of it. As a matter of principle, he said he objected to treat with brigands at all except with the sword; and as for a guarantee, it is my impression that he will never give it.'

'Indeed,' said the banker. 'This is then a very serious business, for if Sir Reginald positively refuses to execute the deed I spoke of we can do nothing. I cannot think that he will venture to refuse. People will not hesitate to say that he let his father-in-law be put to death in order that he might inherit his money.'

'My belief is, Mr. Gordon,' answered Walter, 'that he will let people say what they please.'

'You have had no quarrel with Sir Reginald, I presume, sir?' inquired he.

'There has been no absolute quarrel, but we are certainly not on good terms.'

'I am glad to hear that, because I hope you are judging him harshly. Go to him at once and state the case exactly as it stands. Here are his father-in-law's bankers prepared to advance this ransom upon the guarantee of himself and Lady Selwyn, and on the understanding that Miss Lilian Brown on her recovery will join with her sister in seeing us righted.'

'Of that I will be answerable with my life,' added Walter hastily.

'Well, certainly, your life is a valuable one. I hope to see more of you before you leave Palermo and under more pleasant circumstances. Above all, I hope to see you again to-day and accompanied by Sir Reginald and Lady Selwyn.'

'I will do my very best, sir,' answered Walter; 'and whatever happens I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Good-bye, Mr. Gordon.'

'Nay!—don't let us say good-bye, but good day,' said the banker, shaking hands with him and accompanying him to the door. 'On Tuesday we have a little dinner party, and if you will allow me I will send you a card of invitation to your hotel.'

A card of invitation for Tuesday! Never perhaps did such a simple act of courtesy awaken such feelings in him as he took his way home through the crowded streets. His firm conviction was that his fate was sealed and that no Tuesday would ever dawn upon him in this world.

At the hotel door he was met by the statement that Sir Reginald was not within.

'It is no matter; I will go in and wait for him,' was Walter's quiet rejoinder. He entered the sitting room and waited.

It was a relief to Walter to hear Sir Reginald's stern voice in the hall (doubtless rebuking the porter for having given his visitor admittance) and to feel that he would at least definitely know his fate.

'It seems to me, Mr. Litton, that you are very importunate,' were his first words.

'Where two men's lives are in such imminent peril, Sir Reginald, I do not think that any endeavor to save them should be termed importunity. The authorization intrusted to your sister-in-law's hands has been lost.'

'You have already had your answer upon that point,' replied the other. 'As to its being lost I cannot say, because that supposes such a document to have been in existence; but at all events it has not been found.'

'I conclude, Sir Reginald, I may take it for granted that it will not be found?'

'I do not understand you, Mr. Litton.'

'We are quite alone, Sir Reginald,' said Walter, 'and there is no reason why I should not speak plainly. The loss of this document, which includes the sacrifice of your father-in-law's life, would be to you a great gain. It behoves you therefore, for your reputation's sake, to search for the authorization.'

'My reputation, sir,' said Sir Reginald,

'can stand any slur which Mr. Walter Litton may choose to cast upon it.'

'I do not speak of myself; I am merely quoting the opinion of Mr. Gordon, the banker here, which will be shared by every one of our countrymen in this place, that if you refuse to assist in rescuing Mr. Brown from the danger which threatens him your conduct will be open to the gravest suspicions. The money which it is well known you would inherit by such a course of proceeding would doubtless be a consideration, but it would be blood money.'

Sir Reginald restrained himself, as Walter knew he could not have done had he been imputing to him less than the truth. 'It is certainly very agreeable, Mr. Litton,' said he, 'to find that others beside yourself are interesting themselves so much in my private affairs; but it is just as well that the facts should be thoroughly understood. You accuse me of concealing or destroying a certain document, the very existence of which I do not hesitate to deny. It is true my sister-in-law has mentioned the very sum you speak of, but as to seeing it stated in black and white, that nobody has done. Yet because I don't produce it you accuse me of refusing to assist my father-in-law in obtaining his freedom. I have done my best by getting the troops sent out, and I am prepared to do aught else to further the same end.'

'In that case, Sir Reginald,' said Walter, 'my object in coming here to-day is accomplished. I am commissioned by Mr. Gordon to inform you that if you and Lady Selwyn will present yourselves in person at the bank to-day your guarantees for the money will be accepted in place of the authorization, and that in that case Mr. Brown's ransom will be forthcoming at once.'

(To be Continued.)

## LENGTH OF A WORKING DAY.

A Turkish working day lasts from sunrise to sunset, with certain intervals for refreshment and repose, writes some one in the Carriage Monthly. In Montenegro the day laborer begins work between five and six in the morning, knocks off at eight for an hour, works on till noon, rests until two and then labors on until sunset. This is in summer. In winter he commences work at half-past seven or eight, rests from twelve to one and works uninterruptedly from that time to sunset. The rules respecting skilled labor are theoretically the same, but considerable laxity prevails in practice. In Servia the principle of individual convenience rules in every case.

In Portugal, from sunrise to sunset is the usual length of the working day. With field laborers and workmen in the building trade the summer working day begins at half-past four or five in the morning and ends at seven in the evening, two or three hours rest being taken in the middle of the day. In winter the hours are from half-past seven to five, with a shorter interval of repose. In manufactories the rule is twelve hours in summer and ten in winter, with an hour and a half allowed for meals.

Eleven hours is the average day's labor in Belgium, but brewers' men work from ten to seventeen hours; brickmakers, sixteen; the cabinetmakers of Brussels and Ghent are often at work seventeen hours a day; tramway drivers are on duty from fifteen to seventeen hours, with an hour and a half off at noon; railway guards sometimes know what it is to work nineteen and a half hours at a stretch, and in the mining districts women are often kept at truck loading and similar heavy labor for thirteen or fourteen hours.

The normal work day throughout Saxony is thirteen hours, with two hours allowance for meal-taking. In Baden the medium duration of labor is from ten to twelve hours; but in some cases it far exceeds this, often rising to fifteen hours in stone-ware and china works and cotton mills; in saw mills to seventeen hours, while the workers in the sugar refineries, where the shift system is in vogue, work for twenty-four hours and then have twenty-four hours free, and in too many Baden factories Sunday work is the rule.

In Russian industrial establishments the difference in the working hours is something extraordinary, varying from six to twenty. It is remarkable that these great divergencies occur in the same branches of industry within the same inspector's district and among establishments whose produce realizes the same market price.

A comparison of their hours of toil places Canadian workmen far in advance of their foreign brethren. Let us hope that the refining influences of civilization and Christianity may speedily lead, as they eventually must, to the uplifting of labor and to such an understanding between it and capital that the clamorous demands of the toiling masses for an equal division of the day into eight hours for toil, eight for sleep and eight for recreation may be satisfied.

Goslin—If Miss Scadd's face is her fortune she doesn't rate very high. Dolley—Her pa value is much above her face value.