

she saw herself surrounded by a body of armed men, who seemed to rise from the very earth, and all looking fiercely at her.

There was something so terrifying in the countenance of these men, that, for a time, Antonia lost her presence of mind. She was in possession of her reasoning powers, however, for a sufficient time to see Bianca, the gypsy girl, dart away from the dark man who was attempting to fasten a thong about her hands, and leaping into the thicket with a shrill cry of defiance, she was gone.

A dozen men plunged into the copse after her, but they soon returned fatigued and angry at missing one who might perhaps have given them some hint as to the whereabouts of the hidden wealth of the Calores.

Antonia heard them utter bitter curses and heap multitudes of imprecations upon the head of the dark man from whom the child had escaped; saw them prepare a rude litter of boughs; was conscious that she was placed upon it and lifted upon the shoulders of four men, but knew no more, sinking into insensibility so deeply as to not hear the jeers or the loud angry words, and even blows, which excited the company as they walked rapidly through the wood. Antonia heard not the sighing of the wind as it sadly rustled the leaves of the tall trees which swayed mournfully to and fro, nor the low notes of the birds, which nearly ceased their merry song as the strange procession passed by. She knew not as hour upon hour glided away that the glorious sunset had died away in the misty atmosphere which succeeded, and which now was evaporating. She heard not its pattering upon the upturned leaves of the wood, nor yet, when the boughs were saturated and the great drops fell thick and fast over her, did she waken. She heard not the loud hooting of an owl as they, at last, reached their lodge, a hooting which seemed so near and so unnatural that the abductors could not shake off the ghostly sound until after Antonia had been given over to the charge of some old women, and then it was washed down with a suspicious liquid that was freely used at every lodge.

A whole day passed away and another night succeeded, still was Antonia under the strict guard of the same old women, who, however, seemed unusually kind for brigands. "We can only keep two, you know!" said one meaningly to the other, "the man is about the same as gone, so we must attend well to the Señora, for she can earn more money you know than he can, if she is only trained up well!" Antonia heard this speech, but could not determine its meaning. She had, it is true, heard a deep groaning through the day, which had perplexed her much, could it be that it came from another captive, perhaps the man who was "about the same as gone?"

"He may be a Christian," she thought, "and may die alone and uncared for; or he may be one who has never heard the blessed truths and mercies of Him who was slain, a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world." After much persuading, Antonia was at last allowed to visit her fellow captive. She looked at the blood-stained face, with no feeling of weakness about her; she bathed his forehead and washed away the blood. He was a gentleman, it was