

Stephen read; the Letter contained the absolution of the Sovereign Pontiff. It was signed by Pius VII. himself. It informed the Penitent that his censures were now removed—that he might enter the Church and approach the holy sacraments.

The anathema is removed, said Stephen. Let us return thanks to the Lord who has been moved by your repentance. And he fell on his knees and took the penitents hand. It was icy cold; the unfortunate man had fainted away.

I ran to call for help. It was with great difficulty he was brought back to his senses. When he opened his eyes, Ah! why did you awake me, said he to us in a low voice; I had such a delightful dream! I thought some one had taken a great weight off my breast which had lain on it for many years!

It was no dream, said Stephen gently, showing him the Apostolic Brief; and he read it a second time.

When he had finished, the penitent was so pale that we imagined he was going to expire. Nevertheless he took the letter, and pressed it silently to his lips.

My dear friend, said Stephen. your strength is exhausted; any further excitement would be dangerous to you, and you must preserve yourself for the new life into which you are about to enter. I will go and return thanks to God in his holy temple, because he has been so merciful to you. Here is a physician who will pay you every attention which your case requires. To-morrow.——

The penitent made us a sign to stop, and after having collected himself a little, he said. I am dying. Don't attempt to deceive me for the few moments I have to live. Oh! it is a great favour of the Almighty to take me out of life, on the very day I received my pardon! Bro-

ther,—for at present I can call you so—brother, the wishes of a dying man are sacred, and you cannot refuse the request I am going to make. I wish to be brought to the Church, at the gate of which I have sighed and mourned for so long a time, and to the foot of that altar which I have so often looked at with eyes of envy. Oh! for pity's sake, get this done! there is not a moment to lose. I am a poor exile that wishes to breathe his last in his own country: I am anxious to die in the land of promise.

But you are so weak, replied Stephen, in a voice broken by his sobs. To-morrow—

To-morrow will be too late cried out the dying man in great pain. Oh my God! if I could only go myself to your temple, without any assistance!

He made a convulsive effort to collect his strength, and staggered a few paces. But his knees tottered under him, and he fell into our arms.

Stephen exchanged a rapid look with the Physician. The latter took the penitents hand, and after a moments silence he said shaking his head. 'You may do what he wishes.'

The sick man heard this decision and clasped the hand of him who pronounced it.

Stephen then gave the necessary directions. A litter was brought on which the penitent was placed, and we slowly proceeded in the direction of the Church.

When we arrived beneath the porch Stephen made a signal to stop for a moment. The Penitent prayed with fervour. He beheld the stone on which he had knelt weeping for so many long years, the pillar against which he had often rested his wearied frame, and the image of the Blessed Virgin before which he had so often prayed. At the sight of those objects his eyes filled with