

TRUE TO HIS WORD.

A NOVEL.

CHAPTER XXXV.
THE CAVERN.

When Walter left the camp with his two companions the sun was high in the heavens and poured down its rays upon a magnificent landscape of wood and mountain, but one which was without a trace of cultivation; not a road was visible in any direction, nor did they come across any pathway, save such as the sure-footed brigands used. Lofty as was their position, their route still lay upwards, and the summit of the mountain was still hid from their view to the east and north, in which latter quarter, as Walter supposed, lay the sea. He cast his eyes about in hopes of a landmark, and presently rose Etna, its crown of snow shining in the morning light. Colletta, who was walking behind him, marked the quick direction of his glance and called out to his companion, who instantly produced from his pocket a long shawl. He had a dozen pockets, at least, in various parts of his clothing; some for his jewellery, some for his food, some for his ammunition. Santoro's manner was so stern upon exhibiting this unlooked-for commodity that Walter imagined he was about to be strangled with a shawl instead of a bowstring and he drew back a pace.

'It is useless to make resistance,' said Santoro. 'We have our orders and must obey them; it is necessary that the signor should be blindfolded.'

'Blindfolded!' echoed Walter, the thought of being shot with his eyes bandaged, suggested by what he had read of military executions, at once occurring to his mind. 'No; you may shoot as I am.'

'We mean you no harm, signor,' explained Santoro; 'but the captain does not choose that you should know the way to our cavern; and he pointed eastward with his finger.'

'But it isn't in Mount Etna, is it?' inquired Walter, 'or I shall have to walk a long way with my eyes shut.'

'That hill yonder is not Etna, signor,' returned the brigand; and then, with his companion's assistance, he proceeded to bind the shawl twice and thrice over the upper part of their prisoner's face. Walter knew that the brigand had lied to him concerning Etna, and made up his mind to detect the direction in which they were about to proceed. But this was rendered impossible by a simple precaution. They turned him round and round three times; then each taking an arm, they led him away, at first down hill, probably retracing their steps to confuse him, and then again up hill, till the fatigue and heat incident upon his constrained motion and bandaged head became almost insupportable. At last they came to what appeared to be high level ground with trees, to judge by the coolness and the breeze upon it, and here they halted. Then the brigand call was given and returned from close at hand; a few minutes of waiting, and then he was bidden to stoop his head and follow Santoro, who guided him by his hand. Half-a-dozen paces of cautious walking, during which his disengaged fingers were bruised against what seemed a rocky passage, and then a wave of cool salt air broke gratefully upon his mouth and cheek. Santoro had let go his hand, so that he dared not move, since, for aught he knew, he was at the summit of some dizzy precipice; but if his sense of hearing could be trusted, there was a woman's cry of welcome; then a smothered laugh broke tinkling out, and Santoro said: 'I had quite forgotten that you were still stooping; you can now hold up your head.'

'But can I take off the bandage?'

'In one moment, signor; but there was a whispered word or two before the shawl was loosened and he was permitted to look about him.'

The scene that saluted Walter's eyes was very surprising. He found himself in a vast cavern, the arch of which, so far from endangering his head, was fifty feet above it; huge stalactites, on which the sunbeams shone and gave to them the brightness of lit chandeliers, depended from the roof. The floor, a sparkling sand, was soft and noiseless to the feet. Of windows this noble chamber could not boast; but through a vast natural opening the blue sea could be seen far as eye could reach. The sight of it was almost like liberty itself to Walter, and for an instant his gaze rested on it with thankful joy; then it lit on a young girl, who stood near the opposite wall, with her eyes fixed on the sand, and apparently unconscious of a stranger's presence.

'Why, where is Santoro gone?' inquired Walter.

'Santoro will return in a moment, signor,' murmured the girl.

'Oh, I see!' said Walter; 'you are Lavocca.'

'Yes, signor.' It was evident that the mention of her name had revealed to her that he was acquainted with Santoro's love for her, and that the knowledge overwhelmed her with confusion. For a Sicilian, she was almost a blonde and a very pretty one.

'But what has become of Santoro?' repeated Walter. 'His fingers untied this shawl but one minute ago, and now he has disappeared!'

'He is here,' said Lavocca, interrupting, 'and the young signora with him.'

'The signora!' exclaimed Walter, turning eagerly round, and expecting to behold no other than Lillian herself.

'That is the name by which my people honor me,' said a sweet voice; 'but I am plain Joanna, sister of Rocco Corrali.'

Walter reflected that Lillian was in this woman's power, and that it behoved him to conciliate her by all the arts he knew.

'I am come, signora, from your brother with a message to the young lady under your protection, as Santoro here (for the brigand had returned) has doubtless informed you.'

'Is she a relative of yours?' inquired Joanna with a certain quickness of manner that did not escape Walter's notice.

'No, signora.'

'Then may I ask how it happens that you have been sent hither instead of her father?'

'Well, for one thing, Mr. Brown could only speak English; and it seems that it is contrary to your custom to allow a prisoner who is about to leave you—'

'How do you know she is about to leave us? I mean, how did my brother know?' interrupted Joanna. 'The lady is in my hands, not his.'

'I know nothing of that, signora,' answered Walter, 'being, alas! but a captive myself. I am only your brother's mouth-piece. A very large sum has been agreed upon as our ransom, and that cannot be procured unless the young lady applies to the banker in person. I understood too that she was far from well, and to an invalid these open-air lodgings must needs be hurtful.'

'The young lady is well lodged enough, as you shall presently see for yourself,' answered Joanna; 'the air that is here admitted so freely is shut out from our inner room. Come with me, sir, and she led the way across the cavern with quick determined tread.'

Close behind where Santoro and Lavocca were now standing in low-toned talk, and where Walter himself had stood, till, at a sign from Joanna, he had changed his place, was a sort of recess in the wall of the cave; it was apparently of small extent, but at the touch of the signora, what seemed to be rock, but was in fact a door, rudely painted in imitation of it, opened without noise and revealed a second apartment, smaller than the first, but furnished like an ordinary room. There were chairs and a table in it; a thick carpet covered the floor; it was lighted by an orifice that looked seaward but to west instead of north, and which could be closed by a wooden shutter. Close beside it, and yet sheltered from the draft, was a rude couch, upon which lay the form of a woman.

'The young lady is asleep,' said Joanna.

Walter bent down to gaze upon the unhappy Lillian. Her eyes were closed, but there were traces of tears upon her pale cheek, in the centre of which there burned a hectic spot of fever; he could hardly recognize for the invalid he had seen carried up and down the Marina. 'Great Heaven, how ill she looks!' was his ejaculation.

'She has suffered from alarm and fatigue,' observed Joanna; 'she has been distressed too about the safety of her friends. It will doubtless do her good to see you.'

'Would you be kind enough to break it to her that I am here?' said Walter, stepping back a pace. 'She is not aware that I have been taken captive, nor even of my presence in Sicily. The sudden shock might do her harm.'

'One is not killed by unexpected happiness,' returned Joanna, 'or at least so I have been told by those who have experienced it; but nevertheless I will do your bidding. Who shall I say has come? You are not a relative, it seems. Shall I say that it is her betrothed?'

'I am not her betrothed,' answered Walter.

'But you hope to be so,' returned the other. 'I read it in your face.'

'I have no hope of the sort, signora,' was Walter's reply. He did not think it necessary to explain to her why he had none. Not only was the difference of their fortunes as insurmountable as heretofore (for

he was well convinced that Mr. Brown could pay his ransom and yet remain a wealthy man), but there was that in Lillian's look which told him that she would live to be the bride of no man. 'I am her friend and her father's friend, and that is all. My name is Walter Litton.'

Joanna approached the couch and placed her hand softly upon Lillian's own. She awoke at once.

'Is papa here?' cried she.

'Your father is not here, but a friend has come to see you.'

'A friend? Alas! I have no friend except my father.'

'He calls himself so; he has brought some news for you, but you must not talk of it in English else you cannot see him.'

'In English! Is he then an Englishman?'

'Yes; his name is Walter Litton.'

'Walter!' A low cry of surprise and tenderness escaped her lips.

'I am here, Lillian,' said Walter, coming forward and holding out his hand. 'Do not excite yourself; I bring you good tidings.'

'But how came you here?' She closed her eyes after one glance of grateful recognition.

'It is a long story, which there is no time to tell you now. Let it suffice that I have been taken captive with your father.'

'Ah, you risked then your life for my father and me!' These words, like the rest, were spoken in her native tongue.

'You must not speak English,' said Joanna.

'Pardon her, signora; it will not occur again,' said Walter. 'She fears that her father's life is menaced. No, Lillian; he will regain his liberty, if only the ransom which he has agreed to give can be procured. The authorization for its payment, which you will present at Gordon's bank, is here. When once the money has been received he will be free.'

'And you?' Walter felt that she was aware of all that he had believed and endeavored from the moment of their last parting.

'I shall be free also in a day or two at furthest, when we shall be sent back in safety to Palermo. Our only anxiety is upon your account. Do not fret yourself as respects us. Do you feel that you have strength enough to return to the city, where your sister's loving tendance awaits you?—Signora, you said something a while ago of this poor lady being your prisoner; but I am well convinced that you will not refuse your brother's wish that she should be set free at once. You see how weak and ill she is. To keep her here would be to kill her.'

'And what then?' whispered Joanna.

'Why then I should say that what some folks have said of you was only too true: that you were a woman without a heart.'

'You would be wrong,' answered she. 'Even if I acted as you suggest I should have a justification. Still, for your sake, all shall be as you wish; she shall be carried to Palermo this very day.'

'Lillian,' cried Walter joyfully, 'the signora has promised to set you free; before to-night you will be clasped in your sister's arms! Let that thought give you strength and courage.'

'I will do my best, Walter,' answered Lillian.

'Signora,' said Walter, 'do not let a minute be lost in sending her where aid can be given to her.'

Joanna bowed her head and left the room.

'I shall never see you more, Walter,' said Lillian.

'Yes, you will,' answered he; 'we shall meet again and you will once more be well and happy.'

At that moment Joanna entered, accompanied by Santoro and Lavocca. These two took up the couch and carried Lillian forth into the outer room. Walter would have followed, but Joanna made a sign to him to remain.

'You must stay here, signor,' said she, 'or you would learn the secret of finding your way out of prison.'

To this Walter answered nothing, for to him it had seemed as though Lillian's motionless and almost inanimate form had been carried out but to be placed in a still narrower prison house. He drew a chair to the table and sat down.

'You would be left alone with your grief, Signor Litton?' said Joanna interrogatively and laying her hand upon the door.

'Thank you, yes,' answered he.

'Those are his first thanks,' observed she bitterly as she left the room; 'thanks for my absence.' But if Walter heard her words he did not heed them; he was picturing to himself the English burial ground at Palermo, as he had seen it a few days ago, and wondering in what part of it they would lay Lillian.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JOANNA.

'Come, signor, you must eat and drink,' were the first words spoken that roused Walter from the sorrow into which Lillian's departure under such sad conditions had cast him. Joanna was standing by him with a loaf of bread in one hand and a

bottle of wine in the other; she placed these upon the table, and then produced from a cupboard some meat and a pot of cream. This solicitude for his comfort did not fail to move the young fellow. He was not so imprudent as not to perceive the immense importance of making friends with the sister of the brigand chief. Walter was exceedingly hungry, so he fell to the viands with vigor.

'Have they starved you up in the mountains yonder?' inquired she watching him with surprise.

'They have not treated me so well as you do, signora. Allow me to congratulate you upon the contents of your store. Why, this is more like a liqueur than a wine!'

'It is lacryme Christie. The mayor of the village hereabouts is good enough to send us some at Eastertide.'

'To send us some,' thought Walter.

'Do not imagine it is stolen,' laughed Joanna; 'we are not the outlaws that you are inclined to imagine us. We have friends in higher places than you imagine; and as for the poor—when did you ever hear us spoken ill of by a poor man?'

Walter thought of his host on the Marina, confined to a few square miles of ground for life, because of Captain Corrali and Company, but he remained silent.

'I see you are determined to think ill of us,' said Joanna.

'I think ill of the occupation, signora. See what it has done in my case.'

'Your friend, the young lady, was sailing before she fell into our hands,' put in Joanna quickly.

'I was not referring to her, signora, but to myself. Here am I taken prisoner, and put in danger of my life!'

'I hope not; indeed I could not smile if I thought it probable,' interrupted Joanna.

'You will pay some money, the loss of which you will not feel, and will then be sent back again to your friends. Your few days of captivity will be an experience with which to entertain them.'

'Indeed, Joanna (he had dropped the 'signora'), it is no flattery to you to say that the only pleasant thing that has happened to me during my captivity has been my reception here; your abode and surroundings are a romance in themselves; your unlooked-for kindness and hospitality I shall never forget; the only thing which distresses me about it is that you should be what you are.'

'I don't understand you, signor,' said Joanna.

'Nay, I meant no offence; but to me it appears deplorable that one so fitted to adorn a home, sound-hearted, generous—'

'That is because I let the signora go,' observed Joanna.

'No, indeed; that only showed you to be womanly. To have retained her would have been cruel. I say that in leading the life you do you waste your time away, and in a little while you will bitterly repent your choice of it.'

'I had no choice,' said Joanna.

'You have it now, signora. When this unhappy business is over you have only to come into Palermo, and I will answer for it that you have made a friend there who will provide for you a better future.'

'And who is that friend?' inquired Joanna.

'The young lady whom you have just set free; she has a grateful heart and her father is a man of wealth.'

'I do not wish to be indebted to that young lady,' answered Joanna. 'Let us cease to talk of my affairs, signor; they may appear to interest you now, but they will not do so a week hence. The memory of all your sex is very short; but that of a rich man like you for a poor girl like me—ah! he only thinks of her while he sees her.'

'You are making several mistakes at once, Joanna,' said Walter. 'In the first place, I am as poor as you are, probably poorer. I should be totally unable to pay even the small sum your brother fixed upon as the price of my freedom but that he has permitted Mr. Brown's ransom to cover mine.'

'You are, however, the betrothed of this rich man's daughter.'

'I again declare that such is not the fact; my poverty would forbid such an alliance. This sketch book is my cheque book, and nature the only bank from which I draw my income.'

'Is this really true, sir?' asked Joanna.

'Do I look so false that it is impossible to believe my words?' returned Walter, smiling.

'O, no! you look true enough,' answered Joanna; 'but still I cannot believe you. An Englishman and poor! That is incredible.'

'And yet there are a good many of them in that condition,' said Walter smiling.

Suddenly the shrill moist note with which Walter's ear had become familiar was heard without.

'Hush!' said Joanna. 'It is Rocco. Away, into the other room!'

Hardly had he time to gain the inner apartment, when Corrali sprang into the room Walter had just quitted.

'Where are the Englishman and the girl?' were his first impatient words.

'The Englishman is in yonder. The girl has been sent to Palermo at your request, as Santoro informed me.'

'Let her be followed and brought back at once.'

'There is no one to do it; all the men are away. She is ill and dying.'

'No matter; she shall die with us, not with her friends. The troops have fired upon us, as if that were the way to treat with me and mine. I will have her back alive. How long is it since she left you?'

'More than an hour,' answered Joanna.

'Il diavolo!' muttered the brigand. 'It will be the worse for those that are left.'

'Where is this fellow?' Then he went into the inner room and confronted Walter.

'Look you,' cried he passionately, 'you think all is well with you because this old man's daughter has escaped. But you will find unless she sends the money before the week is out that all is not so well. These soldiers of yours have done us a mischief; and somebody shall pay for it. Do you understand me?'

'Captain Corrali, it is easy to understand that something has put you out of temper,' answered Walter. 'But if the soldiers have attacked you, it is plain that neither Mr. Brown nor I could have sent them.'

'They came on your account; and what has happened goes down to your account.—Joanna.'

'What is it you are about to do, Rocco?' inquired the girl.

'To take him away with me at once lest another bird should slip out of the cage.'

'But he is surely safer here than anywhere,' urged Joanna.

'Do as I bid you,' exclaimed the brigand.

'Now fasten his arms behind him with me.'

'An impediment to your movements, brother.'

'He will go fast enough, I'll warrant.'

'What! are you going alone with him? Hark! there is the signal. Santoro and the rest will have returned.'

'So much the better for this gentleman here,' said the brigand, 'since he will have his arms loose. Otherwise I should have waited for one of them. I am not in a mood to be trifled with, Mr. Englishman.'

'Don't answer him,' whispered Joanna to Walter. 'He is dangerous.'

No sooner had those who had formed Lillian's escort entered the cavern than they were ordered on the march, though two of them at least had done a good day's work in that way already. No other voice was heard save that of the angry chief; but as Walter with blinded eyes was quitting the cavern he felt a parcel placed in the pocket of his coat and the pressure of a hand that seemed to bid him be of good courage.

(To be Continued.)

MORE DESIRABLE THAN A FINE FACE.

Contentment, good humor and complacency of temper outlive all the charms of a fine face, and make the decays of it invisible. These God-given qualities always follow the use of Paine's Celery Compound. We know of instances in our experience where the ill-tempered, irritable and ugly in disposition, made so from ailments such as overworked and tired brain, nervous debility, a feeling of goneness, sleeplessness, dyspepsia and indigestion, have been completely changed in character and disposition by the use of Paine's Celery Compound. Good humor and complacency of temper afterwards reigned supreme in their lives and actions.

It is these qualities, dear reader, and not the charms and attractions of a fine face, which will make you loveable and popular with your friends during life. The glow of health in the ordinary looking face, which Paine's Celery Compound gives, will outlive the handsome face and features of the subject who never uses this great tonic. If you are ailing in any way, or feel out-of-sorts, keep this valuable Compound near you; and by its use you will soon find health, joyousness, appetite and strength your portion in life.

Newspapers of the World.

The printing industry is not only important in itself, but also because of its immense general influence. The department in which this influence is greatest is that of newspapers. London Industries says that the number of newspapers published in all countries is estimated at 41,000. Of these 24,000 appear in Europe. Germany heads the list with 5,500, then comes France with 4,100, Britain with 4,000, Austria-Hungary with 3,500, Italy with 1,400, Spain with 850, Russia with 800, Switzerland with 450, Belgium and Holland with 300 each, and the remainder in the smaller countries. The United States have 12,500 newspapers, Canada has 700 and Australia also 700. Out of the 300 journals published in Asia, Japan alone has 200. If this is any measure of progress, the latter country has progressed immensely, for twenty years ago it had no newspapers.