

passions, than he had ever done in the haunts of men.

Ernest was roused from his meditation ; his charger galloped past him ; he called to it, and the animal stopped ; but suddenly it started again : he looked for the cause, and beheld a party of men within a few yards of the place where he stood. The moon-beams glittered upon the weapons which they wore. Alberti had advanced into the full moonlight, and they perceived him ; he did not appear to notice them, but again called to his horse. The animal came up to him, but at that instant one of the men approached to seize it. Ernest lifted up his arm and struck the man down ; he wreathed the mane round his hand, and demanded loudly, but calmly, the reason of their interference. An insulting shout was the only reply he received, and they rushed towards him. In an instant, Ernest had leaped upon his horse ; the men threw themselves before him ; they commanded him to dismount, they attempted to drag him down. He swept them away with his arm, he urged on his charger, and bounded from the midst of them ; but another party sprang up before him. He had burst from them, his way seemed unimpeded, when he felt the whirr of a bullet, as it flew past his head. He heard again the report of a loud volley, and he was yet unwounded. At once his charger reared and snorted ; then his legs staggered, its head plunged forward into the earth ; it struggled in vain to rise, and rolled heavily over. Ernest heard not, cared not, for the crowd that gathered round him. He lifted up the head of his dying horse from the earth, and wiped away the foam and dust from his mouth and nostrils. The poor animal was dying ; the sweat streamed out from his reeking sides, and mingled with its spouting blood. Ernest saw an expression, almost human, turned for a moment on him from its staring eye. Once again, the faithful creature turned to throw out its quivering limbs, and to strike its head into the earth : it gasped, and gasped, and its head slipped away from the arms of its master. Alberti raised it again, but his loved charger lay motionless and dead beside him. The tears gushed from his eyes ; but he saw the men who surrounded him, who had for some minutes gazed on him in silence. In a frenzy of rage he started up, and strove to draw his sword ; it seemed glued to the scabbard, and at first resisted his efforts. Wild with fury, he wrenched it forth. The blade had already stuck against another sword, when it rivetted his look, for it was smeared with what he knew to be the dark blood of his general. The sight calmed him at once ; the sword dropped from

his grasp ; and he called out in a voice of horror : "Enough, enough ! I have had blood enough !"

His antagonist started with wonder ; but suddenly a blow struck him from behind. He turned his head, and beheld a man drawing from his shoulder a streaming dagger ; he saw the face of the man ; he knew him. The man was a deserter from his own regiment.

"It is right that I should fall thus," he cried out ; and sank lifeless on the body of his horse.

Ernest unclosed his eyes, and found that he was lying upon a mat, in a spacious cavern, partly roofed in from the open sky, by a shelving rock at a great height above him. By the dim light, his eye could not measure the vast extent of the cavern. He endeavoured to rise, but the pain and weakness which he felt in his shoulder, reminded him of his wound, and he sunk back again. He listened ; but faint and indistinct sounds alone met his ear. At length, amid the black shadows which hung about the vault-like roof, at the farther end of the cavern, a light appeared : it shone out one red sparkle from the gloom : it moved downwards ; and he thought he heard the clanking tread of a person descending a flight of steps. Nearer and nearer the light came ; and he beheld a figure approaching. The moon, whose light had been gradually fading, had now set ; the first dun light of morning scarcely dispelled the darkness which succeeded. The man placed the lamp on a ledge of the rock, and drawing his cloak round him, stood leaning against the wall. The chill morning air rushed through the cavern, and almost extinguished the flame : the man bent down over the lamp to trim it, and the light flared over the face of the deserter, who had stabbed Alberti. Ernest spoke to the man : he addressed him by his name. The man answered churlishly :

"Do you not know me ?" said Alberti.

"I know you ? not I : I only know, that I wish I had killed you ; or that the fellows who took the trouble of bringing you here, would have staid with you, and not sent me down to this dismal den, while they are drinking above."

"Bring your lamp, and look me in the face," said Ernest, in a tone of command.

The man brought the lamp, and held it carelessly before his face. He turned pale as he gazed ; and although Alberti was a helpless and imprisoned man, for a while he thought of him only as the officer whom he had served under and obeyed. He faltered out a few words of excuse, dictated by the feeling of the moment.

"There is no occasion for excuse, Michael," said Alberti ; "I do not think you would have stabbed me intentionally ; but I want no excuses."