

forth, and Marco, disappointed and discouraged, resumed his interrupted search.

After some time a squire descended to announce that the Count and Countess del Balzo had arrived, and were enquiring anxiously for him. These tidings sent the blood rushing to his heart, and he went hastily towards the entrance to wait upon them; but after a few steps, he hesitated, paused, and finally turning back, leaned against a pillar, with contracted brow and folded arms.

He had not long remained thus, when, from the opposite quarter of the vaults, several voices were heard shouting together—"Here! here! She is found! she is found!"

The implements were thrown down, and the workmen, with an answering shout, rushed towards the spot from all directions, the light of their torches flashing fitfully on the long dark vaults of the intricate labyrinth.

"Is she living?" demanded Marco, from the midst of the approaching crowd.

"Alas! no!" mournfully replied the Judge, from within the chamber.

The party immediately came forth with the daughter of the Count del Balzo, borne by two men-at-arms, in the midst; her face was pale as alabaster, her eyes were closed, her head drooped inertly on her shoulder. Lauretta, with dress disordered and dishevelled hair, walked by their side, holding her mistress' hand in her own, and continuing, almost unconsciously, to kiss and bathe it with her tears.

Marco, in whose bosom emotions of hope and despair still conflicted, as he saw the mournful procession move slowly along, and by the flickering light of the torches distinguished the pallid countenance of the beloved of his heart, could scarce persuade himself that all was not the illusion of a dream. Slowly advancing, he placed his hand on the forehead of Beatrice; the cold and clammy touch roused him from his stupefaction, the torpid blood rushed furiously through his veins, thick drops of sweat hung on his agitated countenance. Thus he walked by the side of Beatrice, till, ascending the inner steps, the group entered the small courtyard, where the fresh air and brilliant sunlight seemed to restore him completely to his senses. Remembering that Ermalinda awaited him in the castle, and how fatal the sudden appearance of her daughter in this state might be to her, he commanded the vassals, in a firm voice, to extinguish their torches, lay aside their implements, and avoiding all noise, disperse quietly to their residences. Then, preceeding Lauretta and the men-at-arms who carried Beatrice, he led them to the chamber of Margarita, where the good dame was anxiously awaiting his return.

When the daughter of the count was laid on a couch, the chief turned to Lauretta, and in a low and unsteady voice asked when her mistress had expired.

"She was alive a short time ago," sobbed the damsel, "but died of terror in my arms, when she heard the doors burst open, believing that they were coming to assassinate us."

The surgeon of the castle, who had been sent for, now entered. He examined the pulse of the unfortunate girl—no beating was perceptible; he placed a feather near her lips, and a slight breath of air seemed gently to ruffle it. Lauretta and Margarita used every exertion to revive her; little by little they came to distinguish the flowing of her pulse, the beating of her heart, the gentle heaving of her bosom, till at last the warmth of life spread through all her limbs.

"Her strength hath been almost worn out by fear and anguish," added the surgeon, when he had communicated this result to Marco in an outer chamber; "a burning fever begins to course through her veins, and though all the resources of mine art shall be applied, I will not answer for her surviving the morrow."

The hopes of Marco, raised by his first announcement were again rudely dashed to the ground.

"She is fitter for heaven than for earth," he murmured to himself after a pause; then, with the air of one who has little more to hope or fear in this world, he turned to the wife of Melagrua, who had also issued from the inner apartment, and asked if she knew where Ottorino was confined. From certain words dropped by Lodrisio in her presence, the dame conjectured him to be shut up in the castle of Binaseo, and imparting her suspicions to the Visconte, he resolved to depart at once to his residence.

"Let Lauretta remain alone with her mistress," he said, "so that, when she awakes from her trance, none but a beloved and trusty countenance may meet her eye. And do thou go to the countess, Margarita; tell her all that has happened, and tell her too, in her orisons to remember the name of Marco."

He hastily descended to the courtyard, left some orders with the judge who was there in waiting, and in a few minutes the drawbridge resounded beneath his horse's tread, as he rode forth on the way to Binaseo.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

It is only when the storm of passion and prejudice has had time to subside that we are enabled to discover the precious gem that lies beneath the transparent liquid.