

## THE DETECTED BRIGAND.

BY ———

*Continued from our last Number.*

## CHAPTER VII.

Who has not heard of the Bay of Naples? That gem of scenic loveliness—the theme of the poet—the dream of the painter—its beauties are familiar to all readers. Fancy, then, the full, broad harvest moon, shining in her own mild splendor upon the expanse of water, dotted near the shore with ships from various climes. Not a ripple disturbs the placid surface, save where the moon-beams are dancing, and the gentle undulation becomes visible, or now and again the splash of oars is heard and the waves close in the wake of some tiny craft, as fishermen go forth, or idlers from the ships in port return to their marine abode. A stately vessel anchored some distance from the coast, had England's pennant floating from her top-mast. It is the youthful commander of this vessel that now claims our attention. His boat has already cut its way through the waters, the steps are lowered from the ship, and in an instant the loiterer of the *Ponte de la Sanita* is on deck. Those who had observed the flushed brow, the look of eager expectation, and gratified happiness, he wore but a few hours before, could scarcely recognise in him the haggard and dispirited person, whose appearance, so altered was it since morning, elicited an exclamation of surprise from a friend, who extended his hand to him, as he enquired the cause of his protracted absence.

"I am glad, Wilmer, you are the first to meet me," said he, as he returned the cordial pressure that told him how much his countenance betrayed. "I am greatly agitated,—and you will not wonder at my disordered looks when you hear all I have to impart."

"A quarrel on shore, I presume,—some hostile ———."

"If it were only that, Wilmer," said Captain Beaufort, "you would not see me thus unmanned. What I have to relate is of far deeper import than aught that could possibly concern myself singly. The safety and happiness of one very dear to me is in peril: you have probably heard, for the affair has been talked about, of an attachment—a strong attachment on my part,—existing between me and Isabella Herbert. It was not, believe me, from any doubt I entertained of your friendship, that I forbore to touch upon this subject in some of our confidential hours; but because I hate to prate of love, as girls do, and to be quite candid, there was a lurking apprehension in my mind that I was forgotten, as Miss Herbert evinced in her correspondence an entire indifference to her English friends. To account at this moment

for my perturbed and agitated manner, I must enter a little in detail,—and to be the better understood, I will frankly acknowledge, she is the first and only girl I ever loved. I cannot refer to any precise time when my affection commenced. A boy at school, she held as powerful a sway over my feelings as at any subsequent period. She has been in truth the ruling star of my existence; and I think vanity does not deceive me in the hope I indulge of having an interest in her heart. The intimacy of our families, and the strict friendship that united the older members, induced her mother to regard my attentions with a favourable eye. The uncertainty, however, in which I was involved with regard to fortune, through the persecution of my litigious relative, was a serious obstacle to my suit. At least I would not presume to press it, till my claims were fully acknowledged, and I was in possession of adequate means to entitle me on that point to such an alliance. When my long cherished hopes were on the point of fulfilment, her mother's death unfortunately interposed, and delicacy forbade me to importune her till the first burst of filial sorrow was past. By a most unlucky concurrence of events, this Count d'Altino arrived in England during my absence in Paris, and Sir Eustace most unwisely suffered her to leave England, unattended by a suitable companion, and entrusted her solely to his care. He now holds her almost a prisoner in a suburban residence of his."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Mr. Wilmer.

"So I must understand from her letter," said Captain Beaufort, "and from all the circumstances attending our interviews. She is evidently under such strict surveillance, that she cannot hold intercourse with any one beyond the precincts of the palazzo."

"And for what purpose, and by what authority does he exercise such power?" enquired his friend.

"By the authority, it appears, of his own dastardly will!" warmly answered the lover, "and with the design, I fear, of marrying her to some of his creatures, that he may share her fortune; but he may have yet worse motives, for his character is black enough to be capable of any villainy. It was by the most singular chance I discovered the dear girl's retreat. Having made my *devoir* to the Ambassador, and delivered my papers, I proceeded in the direction pointed out by one of the lacquies in waiting, to the Palazzo d'Altino. In crossing the *Ponte de la Sanita*, my attention was arrested by a figure, resembling Miss Herbert's, training flowers