

were clearly visible. Frink recognized him at once. He recognized him as one of his worst enemies—the very brigand Berengar, by whom he had been first seized, and from whom he had but recently escaped. This was the man to whom he had been betrayed by Thain and Drury. This was the man who no doubt had been paid to keep him, and who never would let him go.

He now saw the last hope of escape die away utterly. If Berengar were here, his whole band must be near. Berengar had been following him and searching for him ever since. He had found him at last. He was here. There he stood, face to face.

Hope died out in Frink's heart; but in its place there arose the hottest fury and the fiercest desire for vengeance. His rifle went up in an instant, and Berengar was covered by it. The noise, which Frink made in cocking it, alarmed the brigand. He looked up. He caught sight of Frink's face, as his eyes glared upon him from a crevice in the rocks. He saw also the muzzle of the rifle which was leveled against him. He saw the whole thing.

By an involuntary start he sprang backward, as though to escape.

Too late!

As he did so, the report of the rifle rung through the air; a wild yell sounded out, and Berengar gave a leap upward, and fell down dead!

The next instant all was confusion. Figures flitted to and fro in the woods. Two men rushed forward to Berengar's help. Frink raised his other rifle and took aim, but did not fire; he thought it best to reserve it until a time of actual attack. The two men seized the body of Berengar, and drew it back into the woods.

Frink proceeded to load his rifle.

All this had been the work of a few moments. Lucy had been a horror-stricken spectator. So awful was the sight of death, that she sat almost senseless. It seemed to her as though Berengar was one of her deliverers, and Frink was her captor and jailer; and as though her deliverer had been shot down while coming to save her. This fierce, furious, gloomy Frink had her a hopeless captive on this lonely rock, to do as he might choose. The thought was anguish.

In a sudden panic she started to her feet. She had a wild idea of flight.

Frink started up also, and, seizing her by the arm, drew her closer in under the shelter of the rocks, regarding her with a face of appalling meaning.

"Do you remember what I told you?" he cried.

Lucy said not a word. Terror had deprived her of utterance. Frink had now no more pity for her than a madman.

"Do you remember?" he repeated.

Lucy gasped out some incoherent words.

"The brigands are there, but they shall never capture me. I cannot escape, but I can die! Do you hear?"

"Yes; oh, yes!"

"And if I die, you shall not escape. You shall not go to triumph over me. I have lost my soul for your sake. For you I have become a traitor and a murderer. If I die, I will not die alone. You must die, too, and go with me into the other world!"

"Oh, spare me! Oh, have mercy—have mercy!" moaned Lucy, shrinking back in an anguish of terror.

"Mercy! There's no question about mercy!" said Frink. "I love you; and, since you haven't been mine in life, you shall be mine in death."

"Oh, have mercy!"

"No; we must die. Soon they will be upon us. I must kill you now, and then I will kill myself. The death of the chief will only make them more merciless. Come, prepare!"

"Oh, give me time. Oh, don't be too hasty," cried Lucy. "Perhaps they will go away. We may yet escape."

Frink shook his head.

"There's no hope," said he. "They know we're here. They'll watch till we are starved out, or else they'll make an attack to-night—come over in the dark and get us alive."

At this, Lucy fell on her knees and buried her face in her hands. There was no hope. Despair was in her heart.

"Rise," cried Frink.

She did not move.

"Very well," he murmured. "Better so. Say your prayers."

With these words, he raised his rifle and pointed it at her. Suddenly the sharp report of

a rifle sounded behind him, with loud shouts and the rush of footsteps. He started involuntarily and turned.

For a minute he stood as if turned to stone.

Two men were bounding toward him with loud cries and menacing shouts. Two men! Who were these two men?

The forms of those whom he knew to be lying dead far away, lying drowned at the bottom of that deep pit in Leonforte, done to death by his own hands; men who had been his friends, whom he had betrayed, whose memory was anguish, the thought of whom was torment. What, then, must the sight of them have been, coming thus suddenly, coming without warning, coming thus with loud shouts and menacing gestures? It was as though they had risen out of the ground, or darted into visible form out of space.

Horror indescribable came upon him and overwhelmed him. For a moment he stood as if turned to stone. Then, with a yell of mortal fear, he darted back and bounded wildly away. His rifle fell from his hands. He leaped from rock to rock, not looking where he went, urged by a maddening impulse to fly. On he went, and on, in a straight course, for some twenty or thirty paces.

Then he sprang forward. A wild cry rose in the air, and the next instant Frink disappeared down into the awful chasm.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A GENERAL BREAK-UP.

As the report of the rifle rang through the air, followed by the shriek from Frink, the woods on the opposite side of the cabin seemed suddenly to become alive with human beings. They poured forth, all armed, looking eagerly about, and peering down into the abyss into which Frink had fallen. The defender of the rock had been taken in the rear, so that now there was no longer any need for caution or silence. Until now none of them had known, though some had suspected, that there was any secret path to the top of the rock, but the presence of Garth and Tancred now made known most plainly the fact of its existence. Garth now flung a ladder across, and soon the whole band had crossed over.

Meanwhile Tancred had busied himself with Lucy. On seeing the flight of Frink he had flung his arms around the prostrate girl, with a thousand exclamations of endearment, but found that she was deaf for the present to all words of love. She was senseless. Much alarmed, and full of dire apprehensions, Tancred tried to rouse her. Rubbing and chafing her hands at length were efficacious toward restoring her, and she began to come back to herself. At length she drew a long breath, and looked up. The first human face that she saw was that of Tancred. The last human face had been that of Frink. She had closed her eyes on Hate, and now opened them on Love. Horror had withdrawn and given way to happiness. But so utterly unexpected was this appearance of Tancred that for some time Lucy was unable to understand it. She thought it was a portion of the senselessness into which she had fallen. She fancied that she had not yet altogether emerged from it, but would yet have a rude awakening to actual fact. She lay, therefore, gazing up into Tancred's face, with a faint smile on her lips, not daring, however, to utter a word, for fear of breaking the spell.

It was Tancred who first spoke.

"Lucy, darling!"

"Tancred!" she murmured.

"Have you recovered, dearest?"

"I don't know," said Lucy, who hardly felt certain that she was quite awake.

"Do you know me, dearest?"

"Tancred," was the reply in a tender voice.

"Do you feel stronger?"

Lucy drew a long breath and sat up.

"Am I really alive and awake, or is it all a dream?" she murmured.

She looked all around, trying to recollect what had happened. She saw the breastwork of rocks under which Frink had pulled her but a short time before. She saw the area on the top of the rocks. She saw the distant horizon with its border of rugged hills. She saw the overhanging sky. She saw the old tower. All these things had their own suggestions to make, and one by one Lucy's recollections came back again to her mind. She thought of Frink's last threat. Again, she saw him seize his gun and take aim. She heard his awful

words. She felt the gun pointing at her head. Then the report rang out.

In fact, when that report had sounded, she thought it was Frink's rifle fired at her. She had instantly become senseless. This result was partly due to her fatigue and weakness, consequent upon such intense excitement and emotion, and partly also to the power of imagination. She believed that the rifle was fired at her and she fell.

There is a well-authenticated story of a student in a German university upon whom a trick was played by his fellow students. This trick involved a trial for some offense for which the accused was condemned to death. His head was placed on the block, the judge gave the word, the executioner raised his ax, and a cold wet cloth was dropped on his neck. Nevertheless, the student fell dead just as if the ax had fallen.

So here Lucy had fallen senseless, and the only wonder was that she had not fallen dead.

For a long time she could not understand her position or believe in her good fortune; but Tancred found means to convince her that she was not dreaming, but was really and truly awake, and to explain how it was that he had come here.

Meanwhile, Garth had pushed the ladder across, and the men had come over. Now, among those who thus came over was a man who wished particularly to see him. This man had been sent by Mrs. Henslowe with the letter to Garth, which has already been mentioned, and also a letter for Tancred. This man had come up with some of the followers of Berengar, who informed him that Garth and Tancred would both be here in this place, and here he had accordingly come. Garth took the letter and read it through.

The perusal produced upon him the most extraordinary effect. He read, frowned, stared, read again, and finally sat thinking for a long time, with his eyes fixed on vacancy. At last he arose, and walked toward Tancred. By this time Lucy had come to the full use of her senses, and she and Tancred were sitting gazing into each other's eyes with a rapturous expression. Garth bowed low to the lady, and congratulated her on her safety, but made no pretense to receive her in any other way, although, if Mrs. Henslowe's charge had been true, he was bound then and there to receive her as nothing else than his own daughter. Garth, however, did not dream for one moment of receiving her in any such capacity.

"By the way," said he to Tancred, "a man has just brought this for you."

He handed the letter over to Tancred.

"I've just received a letter myself," continued Garth, "by the same hand. It's very important; I must go at once to England."

"England!"

"Yes; and at once."

"Pooh, man! Wait, and come along with us."

"I can't. There's nothing to keep me here. I mean to give up the Sicilian Republic for good. Berengar's fate has settled that question in my mind. But my business is so important that I must be gone without a moment's delay."

"Oh, well, then, my dear fellow, if you take that line, I've got nothing to say."

"Will you have the kindness to make my adieux to your mother, and will you also say to your sister that I had to depart very hurriedly without saying good-by, but hope to see her as soon as she arrives in England?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow; but why not stop in and see them on your way?"

"Can't do it, man," said Garth; "must go like a shot; not a moment to spare; and now good-by."

He shook hands with Tancred and was off.

The letter which Tancred received was written by his mother, and informed him that she and Pauline had decided to go to Palermo, and that they would put up at the Hotel Trinacria. She urged him if he found Lucy to bring her there as soon as possible.

This news was, on the whole, rather agreeable to Tancred than otherwise. To go to Palermo was just what he wanted; whereas, if his mother and sister had remained at Castronovo, he would have had to make a long detour. There was, not far from here, however, a path which led from Filaga to Vicari, at which latter place they would find a carriage-road and obtain a post-chaise to carry them the remainder of the way.

Fortunately, the mule had been taken care of and now proved to be in excellent condition.