

but less assuredly this time. "'Twas you, then, sir, whom the woman was shrieking to the immortal gods to aid her in escaping from. It was you who fired that shot. By the by, was anyone else hurt?"

"I wish that I could answer that question," said the voice, gloomily. "Your fall created a diversion which my—which Delicia took advantage of. I thought—you see I have no secrets from you, sir, I confess frankly that it was I who fired that shot—that I was a murderer, and what was more to the purpose, I believed that I had killed the wrong man. When I had satisfied myself that you were not seriously hurt, I tried to find Delicia, and the scoundrel with whom she had fled, but was unable to do so. They were both gone."

"You have made yourself clear, sir—save as regards one point," said Berkeley calmly. "And that is why you persist in keeping me here a prisoner against my will."

"I thought you clever, sirrah—you are a dullard after all," said the voice, this time a trifle disappointedly. "I do not care to have my—to have Delicia's flight become a matter of common gossip—a nine days' wonder."

"I would cheerfully promise to hold my tongue—and I am accounted a man of my word, sir," said young Berkeley indignantly.

"I do not want any pledges from you, sir. I promise you that I would rather trust bolts and bars than the force-extorted word of any man on earth. In forty-eight hours—or less—the fugitives should be in our hands. Until that time we are forced to do violence to your rights—unwillingly, sir, believe me."

Berkeley had no answer for this, so he sulkily held his tongue. The voices died away after that, and, strain his ears as he would, he could not catch the faintest sound. He gathered from this that they were tired of his sullenness and that the room was empty.

The hours dragged. He had no way of determining time. He could hear the ticking of a clock from somewhere near him, but it did not strike the hours. He did not even know whether it was day or night, and thoughts of Marjory, her anxiety when possibly a day and night should pass with-

out hearing from him, made his heart like lead. He chafed frantically against his bonds, but without effect.

A long, long time had passed when, still straining his sense of hearing as he had strained it for hours, he heard a faint sound like the nibbling of a tiny mouse in the room near him. "What is that?" he called out, and the nibbling stopped instantly and the silence stagnated as before. His voice had had the odd sound of dead wood spattering in the waters of a sullen, currentless pool.

More minutes passed, and the nibbling began again—more gently this time. "Who is there?" he said in a whisper. "Is there someone near me in the room? If there is, I warn you that I intend to cry out—if you do not answer."

A lower whisper responded to his own. "It is a friend," said a soft little voice—that he had not heard before in that evil place. "I am trying to cut through the wall, *monsieur*, and it is hard work. For your own sake, I implore you to be quiet!"

He made no answer, holding his breath that he might not miss the nibbling when it came again. It did not last so long this time—there was a little clang that told him that a key had fallen to the floor. And after that there was silence for a long moment, as if his unseen visitor feared that less friendly ears than his own had caught the sound; and then he heard a step—the faint rustle of a skirt—a draught of fresh air fanned his cheek, and through the bandage he was able, tightly secured and drawn as it was, to catch a faint wandering gleam of light.

"Stay, I will rid you of the bandage first," said the pleasant little voice. "Quiet, *monsieur*, or you will betray me into worse dangers than you dream of."

He heard the snap of a cord, another, and his own freed hands helped to rid his eyes of the thick bandage. When this was done, however, he blinked like an owl in an ivy-thatch, and it was many minutes before he could see anything save a tall silver taper, crowned with flame and circled with myriads of floating violet stars.

A moment passed, and the up-standing taper resolved itself into a cheap tallow candle, held by a trembling woman-child