

At first he nearly resolved not to address him ; but the stranger had not proceeded many steps, when Ernest stood before him, and exclaimed :
 "Signor Everard, have you forgotten me ?"

The Italian, who had come there to examine the mines, did not, indeed, recognize at once, in the emaciated being who addressed him, the young and gallant Count Alberti, whom he had known at Vienna, one of the bravest and most accomplished men of the court. Who would not have been struck at such a contrast ? Who could have refused to grant the request that Ernest made ? He entreated Everard to remove his infant from the mines, and to deliver him to the care of the old countess.

The generous Italian did not hesitate to comply with his wishes : but his heart and soul were interested in the cause, when Alberti conducted him to the hut, and he beheld the pale and slender Bianca bending over her sick infant, like a drooping lily—preserving, in the midst of toil and misery, all the sweet and delicate graces of a virtuous and high-born female—and when her beseeching and melancholy smiles, and her voice like mournful music, pleaded for her infant's life.

The Italian left the mines immediately, to seek the means of the child's removal, but had no sooner reached the post-house nearest to the mines, than a person arrived there express from Vienna, anxiously inquiring if Alberti or his wife were still alive. A few hours after, another person arrived with the same haste, and on the same errand : they were, the one a near relation of Bianca, the other Alberti's fellow-soldier and most intimate friend. Pardon had at length been granted to the young exile, on the petition of the general officer whom he had wounded ; and Alberti was recalled by the empress herself to the court of Vienna.

The bearers of these happy tidings immediately descended into the mines. As they approached Alberti's hut, the light which glimmered through some apertures in the shattered door, induced them to look at its inmates before they entered. Though dressed in a dark coarse garment, and wasted away to an almost incredible slowness, still enough of her former loveliness remained, to tell them that the pallid female they beheld was the young countess ; and the heart admired her more—as she sat leaning over her husband, and holding up to his kisses her small infant, her dark hair carelessly parted, and bound round her pale brow, seeming to live but in her husband's love—than when elegance had vie'd with splendour in her attire, when her hair had sparkled with diamonds, and, in full health and beauty, she had been the one gazed at and

admired in the midst of the noblest and fairest company of Vienna. The door was still unopened, for Bianca was singing to her husband ; she had chosen a song, which her hearers had listened to in her own splendid saloon, on the last night she had sung there : the soft complaining notes of her voice had seemed out of place there, where all was careless mirth and festivity ; but its tone was suited to that dark solitude—it was like the song of Hope in the cave of Despair.

The feelings of Bianca, as she ascended slowly in the miner's bucket from the dark mine, cannot be described. She had unwillingly yielded to her husband's entreaties, that she would be first drawn up ; and with her infant on her bosom, her eyes shaded with a thick veil, and supported by the surveyor of the mines, she gradually rose from the horrible depth. The dripping damps that hung round the cavern, fell upon her, but she heeded them not. Once she looked up at the pale pure star of light, far, far above her, but immediately after, she bent down over her infant, and continued without moving or speaking. Several times the bucket swayed against the sides of the shaft, and Bianca shuddered, but her companion calmly steadied it ; and at last she was lifted out upon the ground. She did not look up ; she knelt in fervent but distracted prayer, till she heard the bucket which contained her husband approaching. The chain creaked, and the bucket swung, as it stopped above the black abyss. Even then there was danger, the chance of great danger ; it was necessary for Ernest to remain immovable ; at the highest certainty of hope, he might yet be plunged at once into the yawning depths below. Bianca felt this, and stirred not ; she held in her breath convulsively—she saw through her veil the planks drawn over the cavern's mouth—she saw Ernest spring from the bucket—some one caught her child, as, stretching forth her arms to her husband, she fell senseless on the ground.

There were many hearts that sorrowed over the departure of the young Alberti and his wife from the mines of Idria. The miners, with whom they had lived so long, had learned to love them, at a time, too, when many a heart had forgotten to love and to hope ; had learned from their kind words, but more, oh ! much more from their beautiful example, to shake off the dreadful bonds of despair, and, daily to seek, and to find, a peace which passeth all understanding. Ernest and Bianca had taught them to feel how happy, how cheering a thing religion is ! Was it then surprising, that, at their departure, their poor companions should crowd around them, and weep with mournful gratitude, as Ernest distributed