

"Anka was following Paul; she stopped, and touched his sleeve.

"Let her go in my place, *do* please, and let me stay, good Paul."

"Nonsense; I should most likely be in irons, myself, to-morrow; the commissioners are very choice over this criminal—she took so much trouble to capture. And a pretty rage Connt Avallo would be in, when I took him a wrinkled grandmother instead of a handsome young woman; but I won't flatter you. Spaniards know how to do that much better than we plain spoken Belgians. Here we are—you must come the moment I bid you."

The occupant of the cell (which was an exact counterpart of the one Anka had left) was reading from a well-worn manuscript, when the maiden was unceremoniously ushered in, and the door locked upon her. Paul, with his roughness, had been very considerate to the old lady. He knew about the manuscript, but winked at her retention of it against all prison rules. She looked up with her peaceful smile, welcomed her guest as courteously as if she stood under her own roof, and offered her single chair. The chair Anka declined, and seated herself on a foot-stool, an article of luxury that Paul had contrived to introduce without regard to order.

"I have not long to stay, good mother; my release has come, but I had a great desire to see you once more."

"I am glad to hear that you are liberated, my dear; it matters not much to one like me, whose term of life is nearly ended, where its last few days are spent; but for the young, it is an unnatural state of quietude, and often deforms the strongest mind. But, my dear, I hope you are not accepting freedom for your limbs, and still refusing the redemption purchased long ago for your soul?"

Anka looked up quickly. "I would part with every limb for one hour's real peace. If pardon *were* offered to me, indeed I would not refuse it; but I cannot find room for hope."

"And why should there not be hope? you believe in this sacred word." She pointed to the open pages before her.

"Yes; but it is long since I have read a line."

"*Then* listen now and remember, my dear, that it is God who speaks, and to disbelieve his promises, is to make Him a liar. Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord;' and again, 'When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness he hath committed, doeth that which is lawful and right he shall save his soul alive.' And here, as if the Lord would stretch out His hand to those in the very lowest estate, He says, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but *in* me is thine help.' 'I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away.' Will you say there is no hope?"

To Anka it still appeared too great a mercy to be true, and she replied, doubtfully, "But those things were addressed to the Jews; I have sinned even worse than they did; for no Christ had as yet died for them—their light was dim. It seems presumptuous, after all my sin, to think God can still love and care for me."

"Do you think you were *ever* more worthy of His notice, my dear? Had you ever a claim upon his mercy? Did it cost the Saviour less to