

sounded to him as the voice of an angry multitude in chace of him, every waving branch and quivering bough looked to him as a sword or staff shaken over his head. Yet, still he durst not look behind him, still he halted not; but on, on he ran in breathless haste.

He came to the place we have before described, where a gentle slope led up from the wider road to the narrow path skirting the precipice. He ran up it in breathless haste; the grey twilight was just beginning to appear, when by it he saw standing on the narrow path before him a wild looking figure, whose hair and garments streamed to the wind, immovable as the rock that overhung it. He paused and staggered. The words of Scripture which had once terrified him in an eloquent preacher's mouth came to his thoughts. '*Fiat via illorum, tenebræ et lubricum, et Angelus Domini coarctans eos.*'* He thought of Balaam stopped by an avenging angel in the narrow path. It seemed to him, as if the same judgment had overtaken him in this most perilous pass. And yet the terror of what he had left behind him urged him on, and he determined, at all risks, to face any danger before him, so that he might reach his home. He rushed forward at once to the object of his terror, but still it moved not; he stood close to it, and it stirred not. He gazed upon it with mingled terror and anxiety—it was his wife!

There she stood, as if bereft of sense and speech, on the very brink of the precipice, looking intently down into its depth. She saw him not, she heeded him not; and even when he had grasped her arm and addressed her by her name, and told her who he was, she started not, and turned not towards him, but still kept her eyes in the same direction.

'Annette!' he exclaimed, almost distracted with this new sorrow, 'what is there below there, that so rivets your sight and mind?'

She replied not, but only pointed at a white object below.

'What is that?' he again asked: a white stone? some sheep in the valley?'

'Yes,' she replied, and they were her first words: 'our own lamb—Marie.'

'How?' cried out the wretched man, 'what is she doing there?'

At these words, her sense seemed to return to the unhappy mother, and turning round, and calmly confronting her husband, she said to him:

'Pierrot, you have no doubt forgotten that this night is the seventh anniversary of our dear child's miraculous recovery. This morning we were going to our Sanctuary a while in silence, by the dear light of its lamp, before she put off her white robes. She was tripping lightly and securely before me, when suddenly we lost sight of the light from the lamp; and she naturally thinking (as I should have done had I been first) that it was time to turn, did

so, and fell over the precipice. I gave but one shriek, and fell down senseless.'

Pierrot felt as if a sword was driven through his heart. In a tone of agony he exclaimed: 'I have, then, this night murdered my child! it was I who put out the lamp!' and before his wife could stop him, he had flung himself over the edge of the precipice; and seizing hold of the weak shrubs which grew from its clefts, he let himself down from crag to crag, by a path which the most daring hunter would not have ventured to try. Fragments of rock crumbled from under his feet and rolled down with terrible roar, the bushes crashed and crackled as he tore through them, regardless of bruise or tear; and in a few moments he stood, or rather kneeled, by the object at which his wife had pointed.

It was the body of his daughter, lying placid as if asleep, in a soft brake. Not a limb was broken, not a feature discomposed, not a scratch or rent inflicted on her hair or garments; the very garland which she bore as an offering was still in her hand, and her white cloak was gathered gracefully around her. The body of St Catharine, carried by angels to Mount Sinai, could not have been more gently laid down by their hands. For so light and brisk had been her step, that she did not stumble or slip over the perilous edge, but flew over, clear of its surface; and life must have been extinct without pain, long before she reached the ground below.

Pierrot knelt by her side, for some time, in deep anguish, but in earnest prayer; then taking her in his arms, as reverently as he would have handled a sacred relic, proceeded along the valley till he came to the same slope which he had ascended, with very different feelings, a few moments before, and returned along the path to the place where he had left his wife. He found her still rivetted, as if entranced to the spot. When he brought his precious burthen near her, she shed not a tear, she gave not way to a single expression of her womanly grief—her mind seemed absorbed in the consideration of what had occurred, which seemed to her something more mysterious than a mere accident or a human event.

She pressed her lips with deep devotion, on the pale, but yet warm, brow of her child, and addressed her husband in these words:

'Pierrot, the words which you just now spoke, are buried for ever in the faithful bosom of your wife. But they have recalled to my mind the words of your prayer just seven years ago, when you begged for your child's life, until some sacrilegious hand extinguished the lamp before the altar. Do you remember?' Pierrot's frame quivered, as he made a sign of assent. She continued: 'Then, your prayer was heard to the letter; and you have no right to complain.'

'But she, too, hath prayed long and earnestly for two favours, and one at least has been granted. She had entreated, not to be permitted to put off the white garments which consecrated her to God and his Blessed Mother, but to be laid in them on her bier. I thought but a few hours ago, that there was

* "May their way be dark and slippery, and an Angel of God straightening them." Ps. xxiiv.