

and brooding over wild and sometimes fearful thoughts, till his very brain reeled, and his heart grew sick with its own imaginings. Then he would rise, and pace with hasty step, the narrow bounds of his prison, pausing often to gaze upon the unveiled features of Viola, which ever seemed to return his loving look with eyes of answering love, and to smile upon him, with such life-like quietness, as almost to cheat him into the fond illusion of her actual breathing presence. Or he would stand before his window, till ready to drop with weariness, peering forth through its iron gratings, upon the rocks and trees, and sending his streaming eye far over the boundless sea of forest, to the distant verge of the horizon, along which, in dark and distinct outline, were traced the higher summits of the Apennines.

Food was brought him, of the richest quality, and wine and fruits in abundance, and of the most delicious flavor; they remained almost untouched. Books, too, were piled upon his table, and crayons, pencils, paints, every appliance for the art he loved, were furnished him; but he was far too wretched, too full of anxious thought, to find pleasure or employment in his customary resources. Manfredi occasionally made him a hurried visit, but the last time he had come he seemed heated by wine, and remained, through the whole of a stormy evening, challenging Annibal to drink, and himself quaffing cup after cup of the intoxicating liquid.

As he grew more and more excited, Viola became his theme, and Annibal could scarcely restrain his angry emotion, as he listened to the gross and familiar language which the robber coupled with her pure and cherished name. But with a stern self-control that surprised himself, he repressed the gushing feelings of his soul, and preserved a cold and silent demeanor, that baffled the malice of his tormentor. But when, as if to try him still further, Manfredi threw out dark hints of the fate in reserve for the haughty beauty, Annibal, forgetting every suggestion of prudence, darted on him a glance of angry scorn, and rising, retreated to the farthest corner of the room, anxious to escape from the sound of words, which pierced like barbed arrows through his heart.

"Thou art in haste to flee from the wine-cup, young sir," said the bandit, rising also, and advancing towards his captive. "It is a hint, doubtless, that I should depart; but ere I do thee so much pleasure, let me tell thee that we have won from thy kind patron the four hundred crowns demanded for thy ransom. Yet, as I have told thee, thou goest not so till my work is achieved—nor even then, Count de Castro, since I know thee, till from thy deep and well-filled coffers the same sum has been paid into my hand for thy redemption."

And with this threat, accompanied by a mocking laugh of triumph, the reckless robber turned and

quitted the apartment. Never had Annibal's heart sunk down in such utter despair as when he heard the key grate harshly in the lock, the heavy bar placed immoveably across his door, and the slow and heavy tread of the ruffian, as he descended the stair, leaving him immured within those frowning walls, with the maddening thought preying upon his heart, that the purity, the happiness, the life perchance, of her he loved, must be immolated upon the altar of licentious passion and revenge, while he lay hopelessly enthralled, at the mercy of the fiend who was plotting to destroy her.

From that night Manfredi came no more to his apartment, and Annibal was left undisturbed, to listen to the melancholy winds, as they sighed through the dark forest, and exhaust his thoughts and his invention, in some fruitless plan for escape. Again and again he examined every panel in the polished wainscot, every plank in the oaken floor, hoping that some one would be made to slide back, and reveal to him a way of egress from his gloomy prison; but in vain, though still he returned to the search; when, oftentimes frenzied by disappointment and despair, he would rush to the narrow window, and, could he have removed the iron stanchions that secured it, would have cast himself headlong to the earth, in the agony of his earnest wish for freedom.

He had vainly sought to enlist the sympathy of the man who served him with food, who, though a surly and brutal wretch, he hoped to find not wholly steeled to pity. But, after accepting the bribe of a costly ring, and listening, with well feigned complacency, to the promise of a richer reward, the hardened robber scoffed at his credulity, and tauntingly told him he would "wear the ring in remembrance, but as for the gold, he won his share among the band, and he valued his head too much to lose it for a few crowns more or less, which he should be sure to do, were he fool enough to let him out of his cage."

Thus baffled in this his last hope, Annibal sunk down into a state of apathy, which is often the sad result of disappointment and despair. He sat for hours, gazing with a vacant eye from his window, or mechanically opening the books which lay upon his table; but his mind received no impression from the page on which his eye glanced, and if he turned from that to his pencil, it traced only one image, a hundred and a hundred times repeated. One evening, when he had remained looking forth with unconscious gaze upon the landscape, long after every object was shrouded in darkness, he was recalled from a train of thought, which, more placid than usual, had borne him backward to the happy past, recalling events which cast a gleam of brightness even over his stricken soul, when he heard the door of his chamber open; a step entered, and a lamp shed its feeble rays athwart the gloom.

Annibal did not look around, but he marvelled that