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THE DETECTED BRIGAND.

BY ———

Continued from our last Number.—Conclusion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE same moonbeams that lighted the skiff of the stranger over the placid waters of the bay, shed their soft rays upon the fresco designs and mosaic decorations that embellished a spacious apartment in the Palazzo d'Altino. The furniture was simple, and little suited to the gorgeous taste of a northern visitor, but the treasures of art accumulated there, rendered other display of wealth superfluous. A Cupid and Psyche of Canova; a bust of the muse Erato, and some figures in bas relief, by the same sculptor, with specimens of the antique from Pompeii, were in keeping with the paintings of Raphael and Titian, and the productions of the modern David. A window of Gothic shape and dimensions sufficed to light the apartment; the centre compartment was thrown open, and through it the moon-light streamed upon the figure of Isabella Herbert; her dark clustering curls fell over her snowy hand, on which her cheek, which was as purely colourless, rested; the glittering tears were falling fast through her slender fingers upon the mosaic incrustations beneath her arm. Since the sun's decline she had kept solitary watch, her looks unwaveringly directed to the Ponte de la Sanita. Many a foot had crossed its broad arch in that time, but none of the passers by, gave the well known signal. Once her heart beat audibly, respiration almost ceased, and the eloquent blood, obedient to the mind's impulse, rushed to the seat of thought, as a gentleman stopped opposite the window on the same spot where Captain Beaufort stood some hours before. He removed his hat, the night wind played through his light crisp hair, in the deceptive light the features even seemed familiar. He stood musingly in the same attitude for some minutes, replaced his hat and moved on—was it possible her fancy had deceived her? It was—it must be so—and now, as his figure receded, she saw that he was taller than her expected friend. The violent revulsion of her feelings produced tears. She wept freely, and her surcharged heart was relieved.

"My dear Isabella," said the Countess, who

had approached her unperceived, "you keep late vigils; I had hoped you were long since retired to repose. This wakeful and unceasing anxiety will affect your health, and I fear impair your constitution; and it is a duty, dearest, we owe to the giver of life and health, to preserve the gifts."

Whilst she was speaking, footsteps were heard ascending the terrace—Isabella trembled with nervous apprehension.

"Do not be alarmed, my sweet child," said the Countess, "it is the friar whom I have appointed to meet here. He has requested an interview with me tonight, intimating that he has something of deep interest and importance to impart."

This intelligence, though it allayed her fears, did not lessen her emotion. On seeing the friar, she could not articulate the enquiry that hovered on her lips. The sound of the old man's voice, in bestowing his benediction, re-assured her.

"Have you seen the stranger, the English stranger, holy father?" she enquired with a faltering voice.

"Be tranquil, my daughter," said the old man, "I have seen and conversed with your friend; be composed and collected, and yield with trustful resignation your destiny into the hands of your Divine protector. He never yet abandoned the pure of heart. Pray, my child—pray with fervour and with hope, and you will gain strength and consolation? Be seated," he continued, "I have much to impart, and the night is waning. It may be the last time, lady," and he turned to the Countess, "that we shall ever meet, and I would not willingly leave you in ignorance of all the poor friar owes to your benevolence."

"Alas! kind father," she answered, "it is I who am the debtor, having the will but not the power to repay the invaluable benefits you have conferred on me. Your sympathy has consoled me in trying afflictions, whilst your holy exhortations and pious example have instructed me to bear a weary life without repining, nor can I forget the affectionate care you have bestowed upon the wayward and