

not let him die," and Alessandro also prayed. But the oppression of the scene was too much for him. Lying his hand on the low window-sill he vaulted over it, saying to Ramona, who turned her head at the sound, "I will not go away, Senorita. I will be close under the window, if he awakes."

Once in the open air he drew a long breath and gazed bewilderedly about him, like one just recovering consciousness after a faint. Then he threw himself on the ground under the window, and lay looking up into the sky. Capitan came up, and with a low whine stretched himself out at full length by his side. The dog knew as well as any other one of the house that danger and anguish were there.

One hour passed, two, three; still no sound from Felipe's room. Alessandro rose, and looked in at the window. The Father and the Senora had not changed their attitudes; their lips were yet moving in prayer. But Ramona had yielded to her fatigue; slipped from her knees in a sitting posture, with her head leaning against the post of the bedstead, and fallen asleep. Her face was swollen and discolored by weeping, and heavy circles under her eyes told how tired she was. For three days and nights she had scarcely rested, so constant were the demands on her. Between Felipe's illness and Juan Can's, there was not a moment without something to be done, or some perplexing question to be settled; and above all, and through all, the terrible sorrow. Ramona was broken down with grief at the thought of Felipe's death. She had never known till she saw him lying there delirious, and as she in her inexperience thought, dying, how her whole life was entwined with his. But now, at the very thought of what it would be to live without him, her heart sickened. "When he is buried, I will ask Father Salvierderra to take me away. I never can live here alone," she said to herself, never for a moment perceiving that the word "alone" was a strange one to come into her mind in the connection. The thought of the Senora did not enter into her imaginations of the future which so smote her with terror. In the Senora's presence Ramona always felt herself alone.

Alessandro stood at the window, his arms folded, leaning on the sill, his eyes fixed on Ramona's face and form. To any other than a lover's eyes she had not looked beautiful now; but to Alessandro she looked more beautiful than the picture of Santa Barbara on the wall beyond. With a lover's instinct he knew the thought which had written such lines on her face in the last three days. "It will kill her if he dies," he thought, "if these three days have made her look like that." And Alessandro threw himself on the ground again, his face down. He did not know whether it were an hour or a day that he had lain there, when he heard Father Salvierderra's voice speaking his name. He sprang up, to see the old monk standing in the window, tears running down his cheeks. "God be praised," he said, "the Senor Felipe will get well. A sweat has broken out on his skin; he still sleeps, but when he wakes he will be in his right mind. The strength of the fever is broken. But, Alessandro, we know not how to spare you. Can you not let the men go without you, and remain here? The Senora would like you remain in Juan Can's place till he is about. She will give you the same wages he had. Would it not be a good thing for you, Alessandro? You cannot be sure of earning so much as that for the next three months, can you?"

While the Father was speaking, a tumult had been going on in Alessandro's breast. He did not know by name any of the impulses which were warring there, tearing him in twain, as it were, by their pulling in opposite directions; one saying "Stay!" and

the other saying "Go!" He would not have known what any one meant who had said to him, "It is danger to stay; it is safety to fly." All the same he felt as if he could do neither.

There is another shearing yet, Father," he began, "at the Ortega's ranch. I had promised to go to them as soon as I had finished here, and they have been wroth enough with us for the delay already. It will not do to break the promise, Father."

Father Salvierderra's face fell. "No, my son, certainly not," he said; "but could no one else take your place with the band?"

Hearing these words, Ramona came to the window, and leaning out, whispered, "Are you talking about Alessandro's staying? Let me come and talk to him. He must not go." And running swiftly through the hall, across the veranda, and down the steps, she stood by Alessandro's side in a moment. Looking up in his face pleadingly, she said: "We can't let you go, Alessandro. The Senora will pay wages to some other to go in your place with the shearers. We want you to stay here in Juan Can's place till he is well. Don't say you can't stay! Felipe may need you to sing again, and what would we do then? Can't you stay?"

"Yes, I can stay, Senorita," answered Alessandro gravely. "I will stay so long as you need me."

"Oh, thank you, Alessandro!" Ramona cried. "You are good to stay. The Senora will see that it is no loss to you;" and she flew back to the house.

"It is not for the wages, Senorita," Alessandro began; but Ramona was gone. She did not hear him, and he turned away with a sense of humiliation. "I don't want the Senorita to think that it was the money kept me," he said, turning to Father Salvierderra. "I would not leave the band for money; it is to help, because they are in trouble, Father."

"Yes, yes, son. I understand that," replied the monk, who had known Alessandro since he was a little fellow playing in the corridors of San Luis Rey, the pet of all the Brothers there. "That is quite right of you, and the Senora will not be insensible of it. It is not for such things that money can pay. They are indeed in great trouble now, and only the two women in the house; and I must soon be going on my way North again."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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