

TRUE TO HIS WORD.

A NOVEL.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEW LODGINGS.

It is late October, but where Walter Litton has, for the present, taken up his abode all nature still wears her summer dress. It is early morning, but the air, though welcome and refreshing, breathes on him soft and warm as he stands on the balcony in front of his lodgings and looks out on sea and shore. As the morning advances, the growing glow and heat are such as soon to drive out here from the balcony into his chamber, a scantily furnished room—as furnished apartments go in England—but wonderfully clean for Palermo; the reason of which can best be explained by an introduction to the proprietor of the house, whose modest knock at the door has already been repeated without arousing the attention of his new tenant, absorbed by the duties of sea and land.

A small, spare Sicilian, who now enters with the breakfast equipage, Signor Baccari, like his house, has a half-baked look, which might lead the uncharitable to suppose him averse to the use of water; he was indeed averse, for he was a Sicilian, but for all that he used it, being, as we shall hear, a quiverer—a vow—though to no saint—to do so.

"Good morning, signor. You have slept well, I trust?" said he in tolerable English.

"If I have not, it was no fault of the arrangements made for my comfort," returned Walter warmly.

Baccari bowed, and showed his teeth, white as the mice of any organ-grinder of his race.

"To please the friend of one's friend is to please one's self," he answered. "So soon as his letter reached me, said I to my wife: 'Scrub everything—the tables, the chairs, the floors.' It was Signor Pelter's weakness to have everything scrubbed; and the weakness of those we love is to be respected." If Signor Pelter had been dead and his Sicilian friend had been referring to the fulfilment of his last request, his tone could not have been more grave and pathetic.

"Your good will is, I am sure, reciprocated," observed Walter smiling. "When Mr. Pelter found I was resolved to visit Sicily he said: 'I have one good friend there; if you visit Palermo, ask for Signor Baccari, in the Piazza Marina. I spent a winter at his house in my young days, when I thought I was going to be a Raphael, a Murillo, a Tintoretto—three single gentlemen artists all rolled into one.' You remember his style."

"Is it possible to forget it? Heavens, what a genius he had! I have in my little room above stairs his view of the harbor. It is the place itself! He was ever upon the sea, you know—the deep, smiling, treacherous sea!" And Signor Baccari crossed himself like lightning, and muttered something that sounded between a curse and a prayer.

"You do not like the salt water, then, you self?"

"I! How can you ask me who know what happened! I detest it! I abhor it! I fear it worse than the brigands. What! body of Bacchus, did he never tell you why—he who preserved my Francisco?"

"Never; he only mentioned that you and he were old friends."

"Is it possible? To be sure, he is not one to talk of his good deeds; if so, he would be always talking. And yet, look you, because he is a heretic there are some who would hold him worse than a brigand. Bah! what stuff.—Forgive me, signor, for spitting on the ground. That was one of his prejudices, and it should have been respected. 'If you must spit, my dear Baccari,' he would say, 'spit in the sea.' He was so droll?"

"But how was it he saved your Francisco?"

"O, sir! we were in a boat together—Francisco, then a little child, my wife and I, all fools for being there—with the signor and a fisherman, out in the next bay to the west, yonder, which is more beautiful than this, folks say, or than the Bay of Naples. But to my wife, with the child in her arms, nothing seemed so beautiful as to watch the reflection of his innocent face in the deep, deceitful sea. So, while she was leaning over the boat-side—it is terrible even to tell of it!—the boy leaped out of her arms; there was a little splash, and then all the light of our life was quenched forever!"

"But your son was not drowned, for I have seen him."

"No; thanks to Santa-Rosalía—and a heretic—he was saved. Our friend was with us, brave, agile, and who swims like a fish. Hardly had that little splash faded from our ears—as the knell of a death bell flies away—when there was a big splash—that was Signor Pelter; O, sir, I shall never forget it!—a header," he afterwards

called it; and he then comes up with the child in his mouth—I mean, in his arms—like a water dog. It was nothing short of a miracle. What could I say to that hero, who had thus rescued our darling from the jaws of death? Nothing—nothing that could make him understand my gratitude! 'Oh, what,' cried I, 'noble Englishman, can I ever do for you or yours?' 'Wash, my dear Baccari, wash a little occasionally, for my sake,' was his reply. Hence it is that our house alone, in all Palermo, is always water flooded. 'You will die of the damp,' say the neighbors; but we are not dead yet, neither I nor my wife nor our good Francisco. Is it wonderful that we have done Signor Pelter's bidding, and are always clean! Is it wonderful also that to me the sea is more terrible even than the brigands!"

"Are the brigands, then, so very alarming?" inquired Walter. "I understood that you good folks who dwell in towns at least were safe from them."

"Safe! Holy Rosalia, nobody is safe!" answered the other, sinking his voice. "It is not safe even for us two to be talking of them. They have spies everywhere, allies everywhere. Why, the Marina yonder is the only road in Palermo that a rich man dare take his pleasure upon. On all other ways—if he goes to Messina, for example—he must take a mounted escort. To think that a couple of miles out and in is all that a man dare travel here in Palermo because of brigands!"

"My dear Mr. Baccari," said Walter smiling, "it appears to me, since our friend Pelter never even so much as mentioned their existence, that you have got brigands on the brain."

"Pardon, signor; it seems so, doubtless.—Your breakfast is prepared."

It was evident that the feelings of the little lodging house keeper had been wounded. In vain, before sitting down to his meal, Walter endeavored to explain away his unfortunate observation.

"The Signor Litton is mistaken; I am not out of my mind, as he has been pleased to imagine," was all that his apologies could for some time extract from his host. But presently, when Walter had explained to him that in England there were no brigands, absolutely none, and that therefore all reference to such unpleasant folks had for him an air of fable, he grew mollified.

"The signor, then, is blest in his country," was his grave observation, after which he inquired whether it had always been so favored.

"Well, we had once robbers and outlaws," admitted Walter, "but certainly never in broad day and in the neighborhood of our towns. There was Robin Hood, for example, centuries ago, whose land, however, was said to plunder the rich only and not the poor."

"Ay, but these rogues, they plunder everybody!" put in the Sicilian, once more astride upon his hobby; "though it is only when some great man has suffered that the affair is made public. My neighbor here, Loffredo, for example, a man as poor as myself, was taken up the mountain last spring, and had to pay so much for his ransom that he and his family are beggared."

"I would have let them kill me first!" exclaimed Walter indignantly.

"Yes; but your wife could not—that is, if she loved you, as in this case. Loffredo refused to pay more than such and such a sum—which would not have utterly impoverished him—whereupon one comes down here into the very next street yonder and brings something with him. 'Madam,' says he to Loffredo's wife, 'do you recognize this ear?' They had begun to mutilate the poor fellow; and without doubt he would have died by inches had she not sold all and sent the required ransom."

The good man's manner was so earnest, so pathetic, that Walter was tempted to observe: "I trust, Signor Baccari, that you yourself have never suffered from these villains, either in purse or person?"

"Thanks be to Heaven, never! But my Francisco was once taken; he was acting as guide to a French gentleman, and, fortunately, being so small a fish, they made use of him in another way; they sent him into the town to state the price of their captives when, only think of it, Francisco himself was thrown into prison upon the charge of treating with brigands! The poor innocent lad! Our rulers, you see, cannot put down these thieves; but when a man is taken by them they throw obstacles in the way of obtaining his liberty."

Walter could not but acknowledge that this was indeed a pitiable state of affairs, though in his heart he thought his host was intentionally exaggerating matters. An element of humor also mixed with his compassion for Signor Baccari, whose fate it

was to live on an island, where on the one hand the sea was forbidden to him, and on the other the land. It seemed impossible for any man, not absolutely a prisoner, to possess a more limited horizon in the way of movement.

Yet Signor Baccari was by no means dispirited by these peculiar circumstances of his existence; his talk, when it was not upon the brigand topic, was as gay and lively as the twitter of a bird; no stranger would have had a better guide than he to show him the lions of Palermo, and if Walter had cared for gossip, the private history of every household in the place would have been at his service, for Baccari knew it all. Francisco, his son, a lad of talent, seventeen or eighteen years old, was generally, however, Walter's cicerone. This youth was a study for a painter; tall, slight and sunburnt, with poetic grace in his every movement and a certain cold indifference in manner that would have been contemptuous but for its sweetness; just as, when a king's air is cold and apathetic, we call it royal. He had no conversation, but since he could speak no word of English that was of no consequence to Walter, who on his part possessed but a smattering of Italian, and no Sicilian save what he found in his pocket dictionary. Still, the two got on very well together, Francisco's eloquence of gesture doubtless making up for a good deal. But what made him especially valuable to Walter was that, unlike his father, he was passionately attached to the sea, and well skilled in the management of a sailing boat. In vain had Baccari forbidden him, even when little more than a child, to tempt the treacherous smile of the Mediterranean; he had ever taken his greatest pleasure upon it; and now that he was a man—according at least to Sicilian reckoning—he was, in all except the name and the attire (which his father would not permit him to adopt), a sailor.

Litton, too, notwithstanding the attractions which Palermo offered to his artist's eyes, was seldom content to be on shore, nor even in the waters immediately about the harbor. It was daily his practice to take boat and put to sea; to escape from the landlocked bay, with its sheer steep, until they seemed to dwindle before the presence of snow-capped Etna—a hundred miles away. Ever and anon, Walter would intermit his watch upon the sailless sea to take from the pocket of his sketch book a printed extract from a new-paper, which he would read and read again, as though to assure himself that in the end his patience must necessarily be rewarded: "On Wednesday last, from Plymouth, the yacht Sylphide (Christopher Brown, Esquire) for Palermo." The weather had been charming; even the Bay of Biscay must have been tolerably tranquil during the passage of the voyagers, but still the Sylphide came not. It was unreasonable in Walter to be so impatient, for he himself had started from England on the Thursday by Paris and Marseille for the same destination, and the iron horse was, of course, an overmatch even for the swift-winged Sylphide. Moreover, she might have touched at Gibraltar, or even at Marseille itself. But there was still another alternative, the thought of which haunted Walter, blurred all beauties of land and sea to his curious eyes, and made him sick at heart. The voyage, in place of benefiting Lillian's health, might have injured it; the Sylphide, perchance, might have put back, or, making for some port, its passengers might have disembarked and gone home by land. Thus, day after day went by in fruitless expectation; his sketch book, notwithstanding the temptations that on every side appealed to him, remained almost blank; his hand refused its wonted office; it was only by forcing his mind into the shafts, and making that draw, in the shape of acquiring the Sicilian language, that the time could be made to pass for Walter at all. Making every reasonable allowance for probable delays, the yacht was now a fortnight behind her time, when on a certain evening, just as their own little sailing boat, far out at sea, had as usual put about for home, and Walter, sunk in dependency, was thinking whether it was worth while to remain in Sicily at all, Francisco touched his elbow, and, in his cold indifferent tones, observed: "Inglese sheep." Walter started to his feet and gazed to westward; there was many a white sail studding the blue deep, as stars the sky, but he noticed no addition to their number.

"There," said Francisco, nodding lazily towards the extreme horizon, where something like a puff of smoke was barely visible; "Inglese yat."

His sharp and practised eye had detected something in the shape of the sail which announced at once her class and nationality. "Let us put back and meet her," exclaimed Walter eagerly, thinking not of the yacht but Lillian.

Francisco opened his almond eyes a little, the only expression of wonder he ever allowed himself. "Why so, signor? when with the breeze she must needs be in Palermo before us."

So they held on their course, while the

"Inglese yat" fulfilled Francisco's prophecy by gaining on them hand over hand. For the rest of the voyage, Walter had no eyes except for her. What was the flaming glow of sky and sea compared with that first gleam which glittered on the sail that brought his Lillian from the under world! What was the purple tint of evening upon the mountain sides to the rose-colored dreams of love! On she came, the yacht ever nearer and larger, till it overtook their little craft. Walter had no need to read the name that was writ in golden characters upon the bows to know it was the Sylphide. An instinct seemed to assure him of the presence of the treasure that was being carried past him—of the neighborhood of her he loved. From under his broad hat he scanned the deck with furtive glance, though indeed there was but small chance of his being recognized. No newspaper had recorded, under the head of "Fashionable Intelligence," Mr. Walter Litton's departure from Beech street, Soho, for Sicily. By all on board who knew him, he was thought to be hundreds of leagues away, and by all save one—perhaps even by her—to have given up the object of his life as unattainable. But he was there close at hand, if not to win, at least to watch over and defend his Lillian. She was not on deck, nor did he expect her to be, for the evening air was chill. Sir Reginald alone, besides the members of the crew, was visible. He was standing in the bows, with a cigar in his mouth, looking intently towards the town, which they were now rapidly approaching. To judge by his frowning brow, his thoughts were far from pleasant ones, but they would have been darker yet had he known that the light bark with in but a few feet of him, and on which he did not even waste a glance, carried his whilom friend to the same port.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DANGER.

Among other things—but all connected with one tender topic—that troubled Walter's mind as his boat followed the English yacht that evening into Palermo harbor, and then lay at a prudent distance from her moorings, to mark who should leave her for the shore, was the question of conscience: "Have I a right thus to play the spy?" Here were an English gentleman and his family come abroad for health or pleasure, and was it fitting that they should be dogged and watched by one who, if not a stranger, had (though certainly through no fault of his own) forfeited the right to be considered as a friend of the family? Did not this very necessity for concealment on his part itself imply a certain meanness? What would be the judgment of any disinterested person upon such underhand proceedings? What must Francisco, for example, think? to whom he had given his orders to keep the boat in the shadow of an Italian steamer that happened to be anchored near the station which the Sylphide had taken up, and consequently afforded a convenient place of espial. Probably Francisco, engaged at that moment upon what was very literally a supper of herbs which, with some blackish bread, he had just taken out of his pocket, did not think much about it; yet, even in the presence of Francisco, Walter felt ashamed. He remembered a certain argument he had once held with Jack Pelter upon the subject of anonymous letters, in which he (Walter) had contended that under no possible circumstances could a right-minded, honest man—far less a gentleman—be justified in writing one. "What! though no other means of redressing wrong or warning an innocent person of some peril should suggest itself?" Jack had inquired; and he had answered: "No; not even in that case."

The surprise he had experienced at hearing his friend express a contrary opinion—for Pelter's nature was, he knew, ingenious to a fault—had impressed the circumstance upon him, and it now recurred to him with particularity. "Your argument, if pushed to extremity," Jack had replied, "would imply that nothing but straightforward conduct should be used, no matter against whom we may be contending; that in savage warfare, for example, we should employ no subtleties, nor even take advantage of the cover of a tree, and that against criminals we should scorn to call to our assistance the arts of the detective."

"The profession of the detective is one authorized by law; but what is called an amateur detective," he had replied, "is one in love with deception for its own sake, and therefore hateful to every honorable mind."

"But if one is persuaded that a crime is about to be committed, it is surely the duty of every man to avert it by such means as lie at his disposal. It is easy indeed to imagine a case—no personal advantage of course of our own being involved in the matter—where almost any means would be justifiable."

It was curious enough that an aimless talk carried on in Beech street, over pipes and beer, should thus recur to him with such force and vividness; but perhaps it may be that no idle word, even spoken in jest, but bears some fruit in this world, as

we are told it will do in the other. At all events, Jack's opinions, which, when they were uttered, had failed to convince his opponent, now gave Walter comfort in affording him arguments of self justification. True, in this case he had no cause to suspect that any wrong, far less any crime, was about to be committed; yet Lillian's expressed apprehensions, combined with his own estimate of Sir Reginald's character, did give him considerable though vague anxiety on her account, and did afford him at least a colorable pretence for playing this clandestine part of guardian angel. And, at all events, he could honestly affirm that self-interest in no wise moved him in the matter. It was not to win her for himself that he was acting thus; she seemed as far out of his reach—and as adorable—as any saint seems to her worshipper; and if sacrilege was threatening her, it was his duty to avert it. It was perhaps fatal in him to imagine that any such was being meditated; but if so, here was no harm done in his keeping watch over her, thus unknown and afar.

As soon as the yacht had come to anchor he saw Sir Reginald go below and presently reappear in company with a lady, veiled and cloaked, whom he concluded to be Lady Selwyn. They got into a boat with some luggage and were rowed ashore, not to the Dogana, as he expected—Sir Reginald was not a man to submit to the inconvenience of a custom house, if money could ransom him—but at Porta Felice, whence they drove in the direction of the Marina. After their departure Mr. Christopher Brown came upon deck, and walked slowly up and down with his cigar, enjoying doubtless that first opportunity of a level promenade; but Lillian did not make her appearance. Walter did not wonder that she had not gone ashore with her sister, shrewdly guessing that, after so long a companionship with Sir Reginald, she found his absence more enjoyable than the land; but it did surprise him that on a night so mild and tranquil she did not come on deck to enjoy the glorious panorama that for the first time offered itself to her Saxon eyes. A light in the windows of the stern cabin served to mark her shrine. It was still so early that it was unlikely she was weary; so therefore she must needs be ill. Yet, in that case Sir Reginald would surely have procured medical advice; and he did not return.

There seemed nothing to be gained by watching longer, yet Walter remained for hours, long after the owner of the Sylphide had retired below, till the sky grew black and the stars came out above the mountain peaks. Then the patient Francisco, duly guarded for his long vigil, put him on shore. As he walked towards the Marina he saw a tall figure standing under the porch of the Hotel de France, which he once more recognized for the ex captain of dragons. Sir Reginald and his wife had established themselves, it seemed, within a few doors of his own lodging.

(To be Continued.)

A WELL-KNOWN HOTEL PROPRIETOR.

Winnipeg, the great Canadian prairie city of the West, is destined to become a place of vast importance. From a commercial point of view it will always be the great distributing point for Manitoba and the Territories, owing to its magnificent railway facilities. Winnipeg may justly be termed the commercial Mecca of the Northwest. In the matter of hotel accommodation, the city is away ahead of many places of the same size in the East. Among the many popular hotels may be mentioned the Leland House, of which Capt. W. D. Douglas is the genial and obliging proprietor. The Leland House has a reputation second to none in the West, and, as at present conducted, is a credit to Winnipeg, and without doubt deserves the large measure of patronage which the traveling public accord to it. The popular proprietor, Capt. Douglas, owing to pressure of business and confinement, was some time ago troubled with dyspepsia and indigestion, and a general feeling of lassitude, which made existence miserable and almost intolerable. The Captain, with great good sense, commenced the use of Paine's Celery Compound, and in a short time all these troubles were banished, and good health restored. The Captain says:—"I can recommend it with confidence to all who need such a valuable tonic."

Paine's Celery Compound is a sure and certain remedy for the worst cases of dyspepsia and indigestion; its work is sure, safe and permanent. For nervous debility, insomnia, headache and a used up feeling, it is acknowledged to be the greatest boon ever offered to mankind.

Why is it dangerous to go out in the spring time? Because every flower carries a pistol—the grass has blades, the trees shoot, and the bull-dog is out.

Mother—Bobby, you shouldn't speak as crossly to your father. You never hear him speak crossly to me. Bobby—He doesn't, ma; he's just like me, he doesn't