

"That's it, Miss, honey," cried Brian, his sanguine spirits rising, as the dog seized the reticule and wagged his tail in acknowledgment of the caresses of Helen. "I hope yer handkercher's in it—and are you sure yer name's on it!—Then I'll be bail we'll not be long here till some one comes to look for us. That's it my good ould fellow!" shouted the excited boy, as Jason dashed bravely into the half frozen water. "That's a good dog, that's a haro! Sarra a bit but he's aqual to Bran, the greatest dog I ever hard tell of! Look how he floundher's through it all, like a big whale! Hurrah! more power to you! He's safe on the firm ice, Miss, alanna. Look how the crathur gallops off! Wid the help ov God he'll bring us comfort this night yet! Keep up yer heart, Miss Helen, my darlint lady. Sure you've the good dog and the mercy of Almighty God to trust to."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Is there no way to save thee? minutes fly,

And thou art lost! Thou!

I love thee,

Thou knowest it—that I stand here is the proof!

MARINO FALIERO.

WHILE Helen Blachford and her true-hearted companion remained on the bleak and shelterless strip of ice, which yet was to them an ark of safety, bearing them above the troubled waters which seemed to call for their destruction with restless voice, Max Von Werfenstein was wandering by the lake shore, little dreaming of the perils which environed her he loved so well. He was roused from his reverie by a voice not easily mistaken, and turning beheld Colonel Orrin Fisk, who, from the rifle he carried, seemed to have been deer-hunting.

"There's a pretty considerable change in the weather, I reckon," said Orrin. "I was all the mornin' after them cussed critters, but they didn't give me a chance, and I'd have went to hum long ago only I'm sothin' confus about that gal. I hope she warn't on the ice in that eternal squall."

"Ice—who? what do you mean, Mr. Fisk?"

"Well, sir, I had been up as far as Red Pint, and was comin' back and steerin' right to hum, when I seen that tall handsome gal from the humstead oulder (pointing with his finger in the direction of Hemlock Knoll) comin' down that blaze like wink. Well, sir, I steps out to meet her, for I dont deny, but I likes to look at a handsome gal when I've any idle time on my hands, but by goah, the minute she set eyes on me, she turns

right about and out upon the ice like a skeared doe."

"For God's sake, of whom are you speaking?" asked Max, already apprehending that Orrin in his periphrastical manner alluded to Helen.

"Well, I air goin' to let you know," answered the Colonel composedly; "so says I to myself, when I sees her poppin' off like a bottle of ginger beer, I know what you're arter, my gal. You think I'll follow your lead, but I guess I knows a trick worth two on that. And I just turned quite simple-like, and goes into Phut Loomiss's shanty, and sets down quite unconcerned."

"Colonel Fisk, I beg you to answer me at once. Are you speaking of Miss Blachford?"

"Well, I guess I am."

"And do you mean to say she was on the ice?"

"Sartin I do."

"But you saw her come back—you saw her in safety?"

"Well, sir, you see whin I wint into Phut's shanty, the old man himself was there, laid up with a fit of the dumb ager, and so we fell to trade between my mare and his pony, and while I was keepin' a tight hand, lest I should get sucked in, for Phut's a keen old coon, I tell you, I forgot all about the gal till the squall kem on, and then says Phut, 'This'll break up the young ice, I guess,' and then she jumped right into my mind."

"But she must have returned," exclaimed Max, in a voice half choked with terror.

"Well, sir, I seed no glimpse of her, and I reckon she must have gone a pretty considerable way before the squall kem on. What on airth could have taken her so far from the shore on sich a day passes guessin'; though to be sure, thim gals has never any reason for anything they do. Howsoever she mought have got off ondiskivered by me. But I wish I may be shot if here isn't her big dog and she had him with her. Great heaven and airth, she's gone down and that critter's escaped!"

Even the apathetic Orrin was struck with horror at this apparent confirmation of his fears; what then must Max have felt. His first impulse was to rush to the lake, but staggering forward a few paces, he would have fallen if he hadn't caught at a tree for support. At the same moment the dog sprang towards him, leaped upon him, and sought to attract his notice.

"What's this he's got in his mouth?" cried Orrin, attempting to seize the tassel of Helen's reticule, but Jason refused to deliver up the pledge, with which he had been entrusted, to him, and kept his teeth firmly closed upon the bag.