

fashionable dress, Mr. Fein—in a common cart. He was seated on a bundle of straw, and an armed soldier sat beside him. As he passed by the house, with pale face and downcast eyes, I could not help feeling pity for him after all; but Mr. von Walther said:

"You see now, Mr. Fein, the truth of the old saying: 'The fox may run long, but he is caught at last!'"

Farewell, dearest mother, and join in thanksgiving to God with your grateful son.

#### LETTER IV.

I am sure, dearest mother, my last letter must have given you great pleasure. My present one, too, will gratify, but it will also affect you deeply.

Yesterday evening, as my master, his wife, his daughter, and myself, were about to sit down to tea, a beautiful and fashionably dressed lady, with two charming little boys, walked into the room. She was on a visit with her relatives in the town, and had come to see her old friend, Madam von Walther. It was the Signora Bellini; but I did not recognize her; for when I had seen her before, she was deadly pale, and like a dying person. Nor did she know that I was in the house, for, from the time of the fire she had never heard of me.

But the younger of the two boys cried out the moment he saw me.

"See, mamma! this is the gentleman who climbed up the long ladder to us, and came in through the window to our room, when it was all on fire!"

"Oh, yes, it was you!" said the elder boy. "It was you that carried me and my little brother down, and bid us not be frightened, when the ladder was shaking, and the people crying out to us, and the alarm-bell ringing, and the flames roaring all around us!"

Their mother, the moment she came into the room, had run to embrace her friend, and it was only when the boy spoke, that she observed me. She looked at me for an instant, and cried out—

"Good God! yes, it is really you! O never, while I live, shall I forget your features, though I saw them but for a moment. In my hour of mortal anguish, you were an angel from heaven, who brought me not alone comfort, but also help. Oh, God knows, how anxiously I have always wished to see you, were it but once in my life, in order to offer you the best thanks of a tender mother's heart. I could not speak then, nor indeed am I able to do so even now." She burst into tears.

"O my children," cried she, "kiss this gentleman's—I do not even know your name—kiss this gentleman's hands, with which he saved your lives.

Had it not been for him, you would both have been burnt to ashes."

The little boys began to cry also, and bedewed my hands with their tears; my master's eyes filled up with tears, and his wife and daughter wept outright.

"But we do not know a word of all this story," said Mr. von Walther. "Come, Madam Bellini, sit down on that sofa, and tell us what it is. You, Mr. May, must sit beside her."

I wished to give this place to the lady of the house, but they all forced me to take the seat of honour. I sat down, and the boys clung to me, and held me by the hands. The younger I took on my lap, and the elder stood at my knee, while my master and the ladies drew their chairs around us.

Madam Bellini told the story with great spirit and tenderness. She described—and the very memory drove the blood once more from her cheek—their horror and anguish, when they missed the two children, when it was announced that they were above in the room, and when, amid the piteous cries of the multitude, the long ladder was brought to the spot. "Ah," cried she, "I rushed to the place—I looked up—I saw the window of the room fearfully illumined by the flames within—my mother's heart was like to break within me, and I sank powerless to the ground!"

We were all deeply affected in listening to the recital; she drew such a peril of the picture which I encountered in rescuing her children, that I myself shuddered at the thought. I said she painted the danger as far greater than it was. "O, no, no," cried she, "the risk was not so slight as your modesty makes it now. When I saw you burdened with both my children, upon the top of the tottering ladder, the flames and smoke bursting from the window, the sparks showering down upon your head, the gable blazing, bending, and cracking, my senses fled, and I fainted away."

"Oh, stop!" cried Madam von Walther, "my brain is dizzy."

"Ah," cried her daughter Amelia, "the very thought almost makes me faint." Madam Bellini became more composed, and turning to me, continued in a calmer voice:

"It was clear that both you and the children were in imminent danger of death; and since then many a brave man has said to me, 'we were not wanting in the disposition to save your children, but we looked on it as utterly impossible. It was God sent the strange gentleman, and the rescue of your children is an evident miracle. But a few moments more, and the burning gable, (which in a moment after actually did fall with a fearful crash, and a thick volume of smoke,) would have buried your children and their deliverer together. God