

At this thought, large drops of perspiration coursed each other down his hollow cheeks, and the blood became stagnant and frozen in his veins. At the moment of accomplishing his crime, his strength and resolution fled from him.

The horseman still advanced. Beppo, bewildered and trembling, his eyes fixed, his hair standing on end, still hesitated, when a thrill of pain, caused by his foot coming in contact with something sharp, obliged him to stoop, in order to examine the wound. The blood was flowing profusely from his naked toe, and upon looking down he saw shining on the ground a large poignard with the handle curiously cut, the blade broad and sharp, the point fine and rounded.

"Ah! it is God that sent me this blade," said the unhappy man, overjoyed at the discovery.

And brandishing the poignard in his hand, he darted towards the traveller.

The man before whom Beppo ran so wildly, was endowed with one of those honest and patriarchal faces, that at once prepossessed the beholder in his favour. He appeared about fifty years of age, with a smile for every one that approached him. His eye was dark, lively and joyous, and his countenance open and parental. The traveller was of a herculean figure, and anybody that looked upon his broad shoulders and muscular wrists, would have thought twice before they attacked him.

Two pistols menacingly protruded from the holster of his saddle—a carbine of at least fifty years date hung by his side, and upon his now and well filled valise, reposed an enormous umbrella, carefully strapped and secured, which answered as a tent in case of emergency, for the rider as well as his horse.

Perfectly assured by all these precautions, offensive as well as defensive, and profoundly absorbed with his own ideas, our traveller gave himself up to a scientific and literary conversation of which he himself composed all the parts; he interrogated as well as answered in an audible voice, put questions, and raised doubts, giving right and wrong with a perfect impartiality, and irreproachable good faith.

Sometimes the words which he allowed to escape him in the heat of argument belonged to a strange tongue, now Greek then Latin, and sometimes even the Etrurian language; all were mixed and scattered along his journey like veritable pearls, and fell, alas! at the feet of the beast.

Beppo, therefore, pounced upon the traveller before he either saw or heard him approach. With one hand the peasant seized the bridle of the horse, whilst with the other he presented the poignard to the throat of the rider, and in a low, trembling and broken voice he stammered out, "Money! bread! Do you see this deadly instrument?"

"What—how?" cried the antiquarian, suddenly arousing from the deep thought, and with a gesture as rapid as lightning, he grasped in his strong hand the arm of the aggressor, and with the other drew the poignard from it.

Beppo, at this unlooked for event, uttered a cry of agony, drew away quickly his disarmed hand, let go the bridle, and without daring to fly, or renew the attack, he remained struck to the earth, and bewildered as a criminal before his judge. All this was accomplished in less than a minute. The peasant had no longer his ordinary strength. All his courage, all his resolution was gone, and suffocated by remorse, weakened by fasting, overcome by the fatigues and sufferings of that dreadful day, and subdued by the appearance and cabalistic words of the man, who in his ignorance and affliction, he took for a sorcerer, Beppo yielded like a child to the first demonstration of his antagonist, and in despair gave up the hope of providing even a meal for his famishing family. The traveller had now time to recover himself. He examined from head to foot the daring wretch who had so boldly thrown himself across his path; and his natural kindness regaining its ascendancy over him, he commenced sermonizing, in a tone of mixed anger and pity:—

"Ah! my man, what is the meaning of your stopping honest people on their journey, in so rude and graceless a manner? Do you know that I could make you mount behind me to your great dismay and bring you to the nearest commissary of police, and there deliver you into the hands of justice. Do you know that I am Don Lattanzio de Magistro, an expert lawyer, and first director of the Royal Museum, and that I travel at the expense of Government for the purpose of making scientific discoveries. But I am truly too indulgent to give you these explanations. Return home, and meditate profoundly on the folly and personal risk of your conduct, and above all, upon the total absence of common courtesy and politeness, of which you were guilty towards me."

"Pardon, Signor, pardon," repeated the poor peasant in a tone of the deepest humiliation: "I know I merit not your indulgence, but misery, hunger, my famishing children, have driven me mad."

"And could you not explain all that in a respectful and decent manner, without placing under my nose this —" Here the antiquary glanced at the poignard, and an exclamation of joy, astonishment, and triumph escaped from him.

He had, in speaking, cast his eyes on the poignard, and recognized the infallible signs in the blade, half eaten as it was by rust, a rare, precious, and historical instrument. He turned and re-turned the blade, he tarnished it with his breath, then wiped it, breathed on it again, hugged it with frantic transports to his breast, and Beppo thought that reason had fled, and the traveller had become suddenly mad.

"Ah! my friend," cried the antiquarian, jumping from his horse, "you know not the treasure, the precious relic that you have dazzled my delighted eyes with. And I dared to suspect you. Forgive the wrong I have done you. I now understand your object—you wanted to sell me this poignard, that I have been seeking after for the last ten years, and for the possession of which I would willingly give half my fortune. Come, my friend, for you are truly so—come to my arms."

"Excuse me, my lord," said Beppo, making sundry efforts to withdraw himself from the proffered kindness,

"I do not wish to appear better than I am. I know not the value of this blade, but was led by a guilty thought—"

"Guilty or not," interrupted the antiquarian, "I care not. This poignard is worth at least one hundred ducats, and I am ready to give it to you, if you think you cannot get more for it elsewhere."

"Oh! sir," said Beppo, throwing himself at the feet of the stranger, "how can I show my gratitude for your kindness?"

"Let it might be said that I gained this treasure surreptitiously," said Don Lattanzio, "I shall tell you the history of this wonderful blade, that chance or Providence has thrown into your hands. You must know then my friend, that —"

"I have still one favour to ask of your excellency," said Beppo, in a fever of anxiety, "as you are so good and so charitable, will you give me the means of promptly succouring my wife and children, who are at a short distance from this in the last extremity. You can tell me the history afterwards."

"Certainly," replied the good antiquarian. "I have in my valise all sorts of provisions, together with a moderate supply of wine. I am obliged to take these precautions travelling through the country. But thank God I have now succeeded in my search. I shall forthwith be elected academical member and professor; in fact, everything I desire, thanks to thee my friend—thanks to thee and to thy poignard."

"My wife—my children," said Beppo a prey to the most dreadful emotion.

"Your wife—I shall thank her with all my heart, and as to your children, why if they are pretty, I shall adopt them."

Five minutes brought Beppo and his patron to the door of the cabin. The mother and her two little children had not changed their position since the departure of Beppo, but remained on their knees praying silently but fervently. Upon seeing a stranger they arose quickly.

"My wife—my children, we are saved," cried the husband, wild with joy; "Look on your benefactor, and thank him."

"My God! how I thank you for saving me from crime," cried the peasant throwing himself on his knees, and giving vent to an impassioned flood of tears. "Oh! Mariette, my beloved if you but knew—"

"Your wife has nothing to learn," quickly replied the antiquarian. "You must recollect, my friend, that whatever occurred at our meeting must remain between ourselves. Come, my pretty innocents," he said, addressing the children, "you must first have your supper, of which I fear you stand much in need, and then you must mount upon my horse along with your mother, and we shall all five go to Barletta. When there, your father shall be my gardener, and your mother shall be my house keeper."

"And now, my children," emphatically continued Don Lattanzio, no longer able to retain the history of the poignard, "listen attentively to what I am about relating. Your father came to sell a blade which formerly belonged to the celebrated Ettore Fiermo, one of the most illustrious captains of the 15th century. In 1513, when the French and the Spaniards were disputing about our unhappy country, thirteen Italian warriors challenged in single combat thirteen French knights, and the meeting took place in the environs of Barletta, in the precise spot on which your cabin now stands, and where the famous poignard was found by your father."

But we do not mean to follow the excellent Don Lattanzio in his historical details. Enough, he kept his promise of providing for father and mother, and adopted and educated the children, who grew up in beauty and accomplishments, and never ceased to remember the day on which they raised up their feeble hands and voices to Heaven, for that protection which was afterwards vouchsafed to their frenzied parent.

#### AN ESCAPE FROM VERDUN.

I was among the English who were detained in France at the breaking out of the war in 1803. My rank as an army physician enabled me to be of much service to many of my countrymen at Verdun; whilst the fees I obtained from the wealthier individuals supplied all my necessities. My medical character, likewise, introduced me extensively into French society, and I must confess that I was always treated with kindness and delicacy. Though many of the military, the *employes*, and even the rich householders and landholders had risen, as the English phrase is, from 'the dregs of the people' by the conflicts of the revolution, I always found them polite, liberal, and sincere. Good manners are really of very easy acquirement by people of intellect; witness the stage and revolutions, which always give the ascendancy to talents. It was long before our splendid victory of Trafalgar, and the supplementary victory of Sir Richard Strachan, were known by the English prisoners at Verdun. At length a 'Morning Chronicle' got amongst us, heaven knows how, and the joy of our countrymen was extreme, nor was it expressed in terms very flattering to the French. This I rather regretted, for the better classes of that nation were, I thought, particularly delicate in communicating the victories of Napoleon. They always seemed them to our feelings, by considering the Emperor at war with the English government, and not with the English nation.

While our exultation was at its zenith, I went to dine with the Count de ——. I had determined to avoid the mention of Trafalgar, and all bellicose or national topics. This was my invariable habit. However, on entering the room, which was excessively crowded, particularly with ladies and military men of rank, I found a strong reaction against us. The Countess, forgetting, I thought, her usual urbanity, said to me, 'Ah, Doctor —, so Providence has given you English a great victory at sea.' I knew the whole value of her emphasis upon Providence. If the English gained a battle it was the work of Providence, distinct from their merits; if the French obtained a splendid triumph, it was attributed to the genius of the Emperor, and to the native bravery of the French soldiers. Resolve I that the lady should not make me the dope of

such egregious national vanity, and in the presence of so many who were enjoying the triumph, I coolly replied—that I was far a sceptic as to the interference of Providence, but I could never mix up a Providence in the destruction, carnage, cruelties, and ferocious passions of a battle. 'Madam,' I added, mildly, 'I must confess I could never form any idea of a fighting Providence, and least of all can I appreciate a Providence so inconsistent, not to say treacherous, as to fight on both sides, for whilst she gives us a victory at sea, she as invariably gives the triumph to Napoleon on shore. Trafalgar comes between Ulm and Austerlitz.' My triumph over my hostess was evident in the faces of the company and the conversation changed with the grace and facility peculiar to the French.

It was two years after this that I had a singular opportunity of escaping from Verdun. I had ceased to be on parole, and a combination of circumstances advantageous to my escape was offered to me by friends. My plan was to go to Paris, and from thence to travel to Bordeaux as an American merchant returning to Baltimore.

In the diligence to Bordeaux, was a vivacious and loquacious little French-woman—very pretty, and of most insinuating manners. Another *compagnon de voyage* was a captain of the *Cuirassiers* of the Imperial Guard. He was the beau ideal of a military hero—young, tall of a powerful frame, with an open noble countenance, and a profusion of jet black whiskers and mustachios.

We became confidential, even at the out-set of the journey, and what did not a little surprise me was, that he spoke to me by my assumed name as if we had been old friends, though I felt convinced I never sat eyes on him before. So superb a Murat-like figure of a military officer was not easily to be fargo ten.

Arrived at the little town of —, about twenty English miles from Bordeaux, he took me into the recess of a window of the house where we changed horses, and informed me that he was on a visit to his uncle, who had a small estate and chateau just off the high road, and he first invited then pressed, and at last insisted that I should accompany him and stay two or three days with 'the good old man.' In vain I urged the necessity of my mercantile affairs, and my anxiety to get back to my counting-house at Baltimore. The officer repeated mysteriously, 'I am a gentleman and a soldier, accept my invitation, or assuredly you'll repent it.'

I was at last reluctantly overcome, and the officer sent a boy off to his uncle with the news, loudly delivered, that he and his old friend had at length arrived at the inn and would be with him in an hour.

I was very hospitably received by a venerable old lady and gentleman, in a house of some grandeur. One fortnight elapsed, nor could I get away from my kind hosts, in spite of my palpable and uncontrollable desire to depart, and my incessant fear of being detected. At last, at night, after the old lady and gentleman had retired to rest, my friend, pouring out the last glass of a bottle of fine old claret, said without any preface or apology—'you must go to Bordeaux to-morrow—I have ordered my uncle's carriage and horse for you precisely at six—'

Shall I take leave of the family? 'Decidedly not. My uncle and aunt are invalids, and cannot be disturbed so early, and they will dispense with the ceremony, so good night.' I was bowed out of the room, and lighted to my chamber in a very summary way, and I was much perplexed, and not a little annoyed at so much kindness, mixed with a singularity which became almost insulting.

The next morning at six, I found an open carriage at the door, with my friend's horses and liveries, and my friend himself awaited me in the hall.

Taking me into a little boudoir, he briefly and abruptly said in the style of his master, Napoleon—"You have been perplexed at the singularity of my manners—at my taciturnity—and vexed at your detention from your counting-house at Baltimore. My friend you are not an American returning to your country; in plain terms, you are an English prisoner escaping from Verdun. Do not start nor turn colour—I presume you are Dr. ——. You were not on your parole when you escaped, but two of your countrymen, who had their parole, have shamefully violated it, and they escaped from Verdun eight-and-forty hours after you left it."

The Emperor was vexed at this dishonour, and the police on the coast were using their utmost vigilance. That pretty woman in the diligence, with whom you seemed so much inclined to become intimate, is the wife of a police agent at Bordeaux. The only way to save you was, to treat you as my old familiar friend, travelling with me to my uncle's chateau. Now all is explained. Entering Bordeaux in this equipage, and with a passport from this house you will excite no suspicion. I need not say the injury I shall suffer if you betray the service I have rendered you. But no—you cannot—you are a man of honour—and now, my friend, do not imbibe the vulgar prejudice instilled into your countrymen by your press, that the French officers are ferocious *canaille*. We fight for military glory whilst the personal malignity of your officers against us strips war of all its pride and magnanimity. Farewell, and let us exchange these snuff-boxes as a memorial of this scene; but I have one favour to ask of you. Do you not know an English town called Reading?"

"Intimately; it lies on the high road between the metropolis and my little paternal property.—I pass through it five or six times every year."

"Then do me this sacred office of friendship. I have a young brother, a lieutenant de Vaisseau, who was badly wounded and captured by one of your ships of war.—He is prisoner at Reading; I have never relieved his necessities partly from the want of means, and partly from my absence with the Emperor at Austerlitz, Wagram, and Jena. Take these seventy Napoleons, deliver them to my brother, and console him by what you know of me and this kind old uncle and aunt."

We parted: I was eight and forty hours at Bourdeaux when I obtained a passage on board a ship bound for Charlestown, South Carolina. In the night, when out of sight of land, the Captain put the helm up and steered due north. On my expressing my astonishment, he frankly