

Literature, &c.

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From Hogg's Instructor.

THE RAINBOW.

THE evening was glorious, and light, through the trees,
Play'd the sunbeams, the raindrops, the birds, and the breeze,
The landscape, outstretching, in loveliness lay
On the lap of the year in the beauty of May.
For the queen of the spring, as she pass'd down the vale,
Left her robe on the trees, and her breath in the gale,
And the smile of her promise gave joy to the hours,
And fresh in her footsteps grew herbage and flowers.
The skies, like a banner in sunset unroll'd,
O'er the west threw their splendour of azure and gold,
But one cloud at a distance grew dense and increased,
Till its margin of black touched the zenith and east.
We gazed on the scenes while around us they glow'd,
When a vision of beauty appeared on the cloud,
'Twas not like the sun, as at mid-day we view,
Nor the moon that walks nightly in star-light and blue.
In the hour of its grandeur, sublimely it stood,
O'er the river, the village, the field, and the wood:
And river, field, village, and woodland grew bright,
As conscious they gave and afforded delight.
'Twas the bow of Omnipotence bent to His hand,
Whose grasp, at creation, the universe spann'd,
The presence of God in a symbol sublime,
His vow from the flood to the exit of time.
Awhile and it sweetly bent over the gloom,
Like love o'er a death-couch, or hope o'er a tomb;
Then left the dark shade, when it slowly retired,
As love had just vanished, or hope had expired.
Like a visit, the converse of friends, or a day
That bow from my sight pass'd for ever away;
Like that visit, that converse, that day, from my heart
That bow from remembrance can never depart.

A NIGHT'S ADVENTURE IN ROME.

BY WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

CHANCING to be in Rome in the August of 1830, I visited the gorgeous church of Santa Maria Maggiore, during the celebration of the anniversary of the Holy Assumption.

It was a glorious sight to one unaccustomed to the imposing religious ceremonials of the Romish church, to witness all the pomp and splendour displayed at this high solemnity—to gaze down that glittering pile, and mark the various ecclesiastical dignitaries, each in their peculiar and characteristic costume, employed in the ministrations of their sacred functions, and surrounded by a wide semicircle of the papal guards, so stationed to keep back the crowd, and who, with their showy scarlet attire and tall halberts, looked like the martial figures we see in the sketches by Callot. Nor was the brilliant effect of this picture diminished by the sumptuous framework in which it was encased. Overhead flamed a roof resplendent with burnished gold; before me rose a canopy supported by pillars of porphyry, and shining with many coloured stones; while on either hand were chapels devoted to some noble house and boasting each the marble memorial of a pope. Melodious masses proper to the service, were ever and anon chanted by the papal choir, and overpowering perfume was diffused around by a hundred censers.

Subdued by the odours, the music, and the spectacle, I sank into a state of dreamy enthusiasm, during the continuance of which I fancied myself a convert to the faith of Rome. As I gazed among the surrounding crowd, the sight of so many prostrate figures, all in attitudes of the deepest devotion, satisfied me of the profound religious impression of the ceremonial. As elsewhere, this feeling was not universal; and, as elsewhere likewise, more zeal was exhibited by the lower than the higher classes of society: and I occasionally noted amongst the latter the sparkle of an eye or the flutter of a bosom, not altogether agitated, I suspect, by holy aspirations. Yet methought, on the whole, I had never witnessed such abandonment of soul, such prostration of spirit, in my colder clime, as that which in several instances I now beheld; and I almost envied the poor maintain near me, who, abject upon the earth,

had washed away her sorrows, and perhaps her sins, in contrite tears.

As such thoughts swept through my mind, I felt a pleasure in singling out particular figures and groups which interested me, from their peculiarity of costume, or from their devotional fervour. Amongst others, a little to my left, I remarked a band of mountaineers from Calabria, for such I judged them to be from their wild and picturesque garb. Deeply was every individual of this little knot of peasantry impressed by the ceremonial. Every eye was humbly cast down, every knee bent, every hand was either occupied in grasping the little crucifix suspended from its owner's neck, in telling the beads of his rosary, or fervently crossed upon his bare and swarthy breast.

While gazing upon this group, I chanced upon an individual whom I had not hitherto noticed, and who now irresistibly attracted my attention. Though a little removed from the Calabrian mountaineers, and reclining against the marble walls of the church, he evidently belonged to the same company; at least so his attire seemed to indicate, though the noble cast of his countenance was far superior to that of his companions. He was an old man, with a face of the fine antique Roman stamp—a bold outline of a prominent nose, rugged and imperious brow, and proudly cut chin. His head and chin, as well as his naked breast, were frosted over with the snowy honours of many winters, and their hoar appearance contrasted strikingly with the tawny hue of a skin almost as dark and as lustrous as polished oak. Peasant as he was, something of grandeur and majesty was in this old man's demeanour and physiognomy. His head declined backwards, so as completely to expose his long and muscular throat. His arms hung listlessly by his side; one hand dropped on the pavement, the other was placed within his breast: his eyes were closed. The old man's garb was of the coarsest fabric; he wore little beyond a shirt, a loose vest, a sort of sheep skin cloak, and canvas leggings bound around with leathern thongs. His appearance, however was above his condition; he became his rags as proudly as a prince would have become his ermine robe.

The more I scrutinised the rigid lines of this old man's countenance, the more I became satisfied that many singular, and perhaps not wholly guiltless, events were connected with his history. The rosary was in his hand—the cross upon his breast—the beads were untold—the crucifix unclasped—no breath of prayer passed his lips. His face was turned heavenward, but his eyes were closed,—he dared not open them. Why did he come thither, if he did not venture to pray? Why did he assume a penitential attitude, if he felt no penitence?

So absorbed was I in the perusal of the working of this old man's countenance, as to be scarcely conscious that the service of high mass was concluded, and the crowd within the holy pile fast dispersing. The music was hushed, the robed prelates and their train had disappeared, joyous dames were hastening along the marble aisles to their equipages; all, save a few kneeling figures near the chapels, were departing; and the old man, aware, from the stir and hum prevailing around, that the ceremonial was at an end, arose, stretched out his arm to one of his comrades, a youth who had joined him, and prepared to follow the concourse.

Was he really blind? Assuredly not. Besides, he did not walk like one habituated to the direct calamity that can befall our nature. He staggered in his gait, and reeled to and fro. Yet wherefore did he not venture to unclothe his eyes within the temple of the Most High? What would I not have given to be made acquainted with his history! For I felt that it must be a singular one.

I might satisfy my curiosity at once. He was moving slowly forward, guided by his comrade. In a few seconds it would be too late—he would have vanished from my sight. With hasty footsteps I followed him down the church, and laid my hand, with some violence, upon his shoulder.

The old man started at the touch, and turned. Now, indeed, his eyes were opened wide, and flashing full upon me,—and such eyes! Heretofore I had only dreamt of such. Age had not quenched their lightning, and I quailed beneath the fierce glances that he threw upon me. But if I was, at first, surprised at the display of anger which I had called forth in him, how much more was I astonished to behold the whole expression of his face suddenly change. His eyes continued fixed upon mine as if I had been a basilisk. Apparently he could not avert them; while his whole frame shivered with emotion. I advanced towards him; he shrank backwards, and, but for the timely aid of his companion, would have fallen upon the pavement.

At a loss to conceive in what way I could have occasioned him so much alarm, I rushed forward to the assistance of the old man; when his son, for such it subsequently appeared that he was, rudely repelled me, and thrust his hand into his girdle as if to seek for means to prevent further interference.

Meanwhile the group had been increased by the arrival of a third party, attracted by the cry the old man had uttered in falling. The new comer was an Italian gentleman, somewhat stricken in years; of stern and stately deportment, and with something sinister and forbidding in his aspect. He was hastening towards the old man, but he suddenly stopped, and was about to retire, when he encountered my gaze. As our eyes met he started; and a terror, as sudden and lively as that exhibited by the old man, was at once depicted in his features.

My surprise was now beyond all bounds,

and I continued for some moments speechless with astonishment. Not a little of the inexplicable awe which affected the old man and the stranger was communicated to myself. Altogether, we formed a mysterious and terrible triangle, of which each side bore some strange and unintelligible relation to the other.

The new comer first recovered his composure, though not without an effort. Coldly turning his heel upon me, he walked towards the old man and snook him forcibly. The latter shrank from his grasp, and endeavoured to avoid him; but it was impossible. The stranger whispered a few words in his ear, and of which, from his gestures being directed towards myself, I could guess the import. The old man replied. His action was that of supplication and despair. The stranger retorted in a wild and vehement manner, and even stamped upon the ground, but the old man still continued to cling to the knees of his superior.

'Weak, superstitious fool!' at length exclaimed the stranger, 'I will waste no more words with thee! Do, or else say what thou wilt; but beware!' And then spurning him haughtily back with his foot, he strode rapidly away.

The old man's revered head struck against the marble floor. His temple was cut open by the fall, and blood rushed in torrents from the wound. Recovering himself, he started to his feet—a knife was instantly in his hand, and he would have pursued and doubtless slain his aggressor, if he had not been forcibly withheld by his son, and by a priest who had joined them.

'Maledizione!' exclaimed the old man—'a blow from him—from that hand! I will stab him, though he were at the altar's foot; though he had a thousand lives, each should pay for it. Release me, Paolo! release me! for, by Heaven! he dies!'

'Peace, father!' cried the son, still struggling with him.

'Thou art not my son, to hinder my revenge!' shouted the enraged father. 'Dost not see this blood—my blood—thy father's blood?—and thou holdest me back! Thou that shouldst have struck him to the earth for the deed—but he was a noble, and thou dar'st not lift thy hand against him!'

'Wouldst thou have me slay him in this holy place?' exclaimed Paolo, reddening with anger and suppressed emotion.

'No, no,' returned the old man, in an altered voice; 'not here, not here, though 'twere but just retribution. But I will find other means of vengeance. I will denounce him—I will betray all, though it cost me my own life! He shall die by the hands of the common executioner;—there is one shall testify for me!' and he pointed towards me.

Again I advanced towards him.

'If thou hast ought to disclose pertaining to the Holy Church, I am ready to listen to thee, my son,' said the priest; 'but reflect well ere thou bringest any charge thou mayest not be able to substantiate against one who stands so high in her esteem as him thou wouldst accuse.'

The son gave his father a meaning look, and whispered something in his ear. The old man was suddenly still.

'Right, right,' said he; 'I have bethought me. 'Twas but a blow. He is wealthy, I am poor; and there is no justice for the poor in Rome.'

'My purse is at your service,' said I, interfering; 'you shall have my aid.'

'Your aid!' echoed the old man, staring at me, 'will you assist me, signor?'

'I will.'

'Enough. I may claim the fulfilment of your promise.'

'Stop, old man,' said I; 'answer me one question ere you depart. Whence arose your recent terrors?'

'You shall know hereafter, signor,' he said, 'I must now begone. We shall meet again. Follow me not,' he continued, seeing I was bent upon obtaining further explanation of the mystery. 'You will learn nothing now, and only endanger my safety. Addio signor,' and with hasty steps he quitted the church, accompanied by his son.

'Who is that old man?' I demanded of the priest.

'I am as ignorant as yourself,' he replied, but he must be looked to; he talks threateningly. And he beckoned an attendant.

'Who was he who struck him?' was my next enquiry.

'One of our wealthiest nobles,' he replied, 'and an assured friend of the church. We could ill spare him. Do not lose sight of them! he added to the attendant, and let the *shirri* track them to their haunts. They must not be suffered to go forth to-night. A few hours' restraint will cool their hot Calabrian blood.'

'But the name of the noble, father?' I said, renewing my inquiries.

'I must decline further questioning,' returned the priest coldly. 'I have other occupation; and meanwhile it will be well to have these stains effaced, which may else bring scandal on those holy walls. You will excuse me, my son.' So saying, he bowed and retired.

I made fruitless enquiries for the old man at of the door of the church; he was gone; none of the bystanders who had seen him go forth knew whither.

Stung by curiosity, I wandered amid the most unfrequented quarters of Rome throughout the city, in hope of meeting with the old Calabrian, but in vain. As, however, I entered the court-yard of my hotel, I fancied I discovered, amongst the lounging assemblage gathered round the door, the dark eyes of the young mountaineer. In this I might have been mistaken; no one answering to his description had been seen near the house.

THE MARCHESA.

On the same night I bent my step towards the Colosseum; and, full of my adventure of the morning, found myself, not without apprehension, within its labyrinthine passages. Accompanied by a monk, who, with a small horn lantern in his hand, acted as my guide, I fancied that, by its uncertain light, I could discover stealthy figures lurking within the shades of the ruin.

Whatever suspicions I might entertain, I pursued my course in silence. Emerging from the vomitorio, we stood upon the steps of the colossal amphitheatre. The high pile was bathed in rosy moonlight, and reared itself in serene majesty before my view.

While indulging in a thousand speculations, occasioned by the hour and the spot, I suddenly perceived a figure on a point of the ruin immediately above me. Nothing but the head was visible; but that was placed in a bold relief against the beaming sky of night, and I recognised it at once. No nobler Roman head had ever graced the circus when Rome was in her zenith. I shouted to the old Calabrian, for he it was I beheld. Almost ere the sound had left my lips he had disappeared. I made known what I had seen to the monk. He was alarmed—urged our instant departure, and advised me to seek the assistance of the sentinel stationed at the entrance to the pile. To this proposal I assented; and having descended the vasty steps, and crossed the open arena, we arrived, without molestation, at the door-way.

The sentinel had allowed no one to pass him. He returned with me to the circus; and after an ineffectual search among the ruins, volunteered his services to accompany me homewards, through the Forum. I declined his offer, and shaped my course towards a lone some *vicolo* on the right. This was courting danger; but I cared not, and walked through the deserted place.

Scarcely had I proceeded many paces, when I heard footsteps swiftly approaching; and ere I could turn round, my arms were seized from behind, and a bandage was placed across my eyes. All my efforts at liberation were unavailing; and after a brief struggle, I remained passive.

'Make no noise,' said a voice which I knew to be that of the old man, 'and no harm shall befall you. You must come with us. Ask no questions, but follow.'

I suffered myself to be led, without further opposition, whithersoever they listed. We walked for it might be, half an hour, much beyond the walls of Rome. I had to scramble through many runs and frequently stumbled over inequalities of ground. I now felt the fresh breeze of night blowing over the wide campagna, and my companions moved swiftly onwards as we trod on the elastic turf.

At length they came to a halt. My bandage was removed, and I beheld myself beneath the arch of an aqueduct, which spanned the moonlight plain. A fire was kindled beneath the arch, and the ruddy flame licked its walls. Around the blaze was grouped the little band of peasantry I had beheld in the church, in various and picturesque attitudes. They greeted my conductors on their arrival, and glanced inquisitively at me, but did not speak to me. The elder Calabrian, whom they called Christofano, asked for a glass of *acquavita*, which he handed respectfully to me. I declined the offer, but he pressed it upon me.

'You will need it, signor,' he said, 'you have much to do to-night. You fear, perhaps, it is drugged. Behold!' And he drank it off.

I could not, after this, refuse his pledge. 'And now, signor,' said the old man, removing a short distance from the group, 'may I crave a word with you—your name?'

As I had no reason for withholding it, I told him how I was called.

'Hum! Had you no relation of the name of —?'

'None whatever.' And I sighed, for I thought of my desolate condition.

'Strange!' he muttered; adding with a grim smile,—'but, however, likenesses are easily accounted for.'

'What likenesses?' I asked. Whom do I resemble? and what is the motive of your inexplicable conduct?'

'You shall hear,' he replied, frowning gloomily. 'Step aside, and let us get within the shade of these arches out of the reach of yonder listeners. The tale I have to tell is for your ears alone.'

I obeyed him; and we stood beneath the shadow of the aqueduct.

'Yeas ago,' began the old man, 'an Englishman, in all respects resembling yourself, equally well favoured in person, and equally young, came to Rome, and took up his abode within the eternal city. He was of high rank in his own country and was treated with the distinction due to his exalted station here. At that time I dwelt with the Marchese di—. I was his confidential servant—his adviser—his friend. I had lived with his father—carried him as an infant—sporting with him as a boy—loved and served him as a man. Loved him I say; for, despite his treatment of me, I loved him then as much as I abhor him now. Well! signor, to my story. If his youth had been profligate, his manhood was not less depraved; it was devoted to cold, calculating libertinism. Soon after he succeeded to the estates and title of his father, he married. That he loved his bride, I can scarcely believe; for though he was wildly jealous of her, he was himself unfaithful, and she knew it. In Italy, revenge, in such cases, is easily within a woman's power; and, for aught I know, the marchesa might have meditated retaliation. My lord, however, took the alarm, and thought fit to retire to his