

nothing of my imprisonment or my escape. I was in another world, then all was blank; I knew nothing.

How long I lay thus I do not know. It could not have been long, for the alarm must have been given and pursuers would be after me.

I became conscious of a burning sensation in my throat, then an excruciating pain in my head, then another in my back; my arms and legs throbbed as if filled with needles. I felt something pressed to my lips, and again the burning in my throat. My mind grew calmer. I opened my eyes. Vision had returned to me.

Bending over me was a monk. He was clad in a long black gown or cassock, and strings of beads hung around his neck and from his waist. His broad brimmed black hat had fallen, and his closely shaven head glistened in the sunlight. He wore large, coloured glasses, through which he peered in a peculiar fashion, as if he was near-sighted. A book, which he had perhaps been reading, hung suspended by his side. Near by stood a patient mule, which he had no doubt been riding.

'You are wounded, son,' he said, in a voice that was soft and almost womanly.

'Yes, father,' I replied, my own voice coming only in a whisper. 'I have been shot.'

The monk's face was very pale—unnaturally white, I thought. He looked at me through his goggles a moment before answering.

'You are wounded in the back, son,' he said. 'Is it the work of an assassin?'

'I will tell you the truth, father,' I said, weakly. 'I am a prisoner of the State. The brother of the *prefetto* was murdered. I was accused of the murder, and though I knew nothing about it, I was convicted. I was at work on the public road to day and escaped. A fellow prisoner fired at me with the guard's rifle and wounded me. They will be after me soon.'

'Alas, son! This is a bad business,' the monk, as he said this, glanced nervously around, as if apprehensive of detection in thus succouring a prisoner of State who had escaped.

'Do not leave me here, father,' I whispered. 'I am innocent of murder. I swear it.'

The monk seemed to hesitate a moment. 'I will not leave you,' he muttered. 'I

will not leave you. But your wound must be bound. The bleeding must be checked.

'There is no time to do it here,' I said. 'Get me away—anywhere out of sight. I can stand it.'

'Take another swallow of this good brandy,' he said, again putting the welcome flask to my lips. I took a long pull, and felt much invigorated thereby.

The monk put his hands under me and lifted me gently from the ground. I seemed to be but a child in his arms. Holding me across the back of his mule, he easily mounted, and, speaking to the animal, we were soon moving up the mountain side.

Nothing was said by either of us during the ride. In fact, I was so much hurt by the slight jolting motion of the mule that my dizziness and weakness came on again, and it seemed as if the bleeding from my wound had broken out afresh.

We did not travel far in this way—perhaps a quarter of a mile. Then we had come to a thick portion of the forest, and we were in a rugged mountain region. The monk had been peering from side to side, as if in search of something, and evidently halted his mule before a tall, white-barked tree that stood near the edge of the road.

'I thought I knew the place,' he murmured to himself. 'That is certainly the tree.'

Sliding from the saddle to ground, the monk took me in his arms and carried me into the forest. He spoke to his mule, and the animal followed him.

He carried me carefully over rocks and fallen trees and through seemingly impassable places. He seemed to know fully every foot of the uneven ground and to be looking for some particular spot.

'Ah!' he exclaimed at last. 'It is here. The soldiers of the *prefetto* will have work to find you here.'

'And you will not betray me, father?' I asked.

'Nay, I know full well the ease with which the *prefetto* imprisons falsely. You are safe here. And you will be free.'

'I thank you, father,' I said, in gratitude.

We had entered a grotto. The air inside was cool and sweet. I could hear the murmur and ripple of a spring and mountain stream near by. I felt a sense of rest and security, and my trust in the monk was firm.

The grotto was a large one, lighted by the opening, and farther in by a small hole in the roof, which was nearly covered with vines. The rocks inside were bare and white. It was a marble hall in verity. Scattered around were various articles, which indicated that once this grotto had been inhabited. Here was a drinking cup, carefully placed on a ledge of rock near the bubbling spring. In another spot stood a little stove, upon which the former occupant, perhaps, cooked his meals. And in another place, where the rock was flat and projecting some five feet from the wall, a pile of furs was laid, as if for a couch or bed.

Upon this I was laid by the monk, who at once began to relieve me of my clothing and to dress my wound. I was perfectly conscious when he began. I felt his presence, though he said but little. But there came a reaction, and I felt myself sinking gradually into a dreamy state. I felt a burning sensation in my head. I lost the power of sight. I was keenly athirst, and called incessantly for water, which was given me.

I felt that I was dying. No longer was I in the grotto with the monk. I was in New York, sitting in the window of the Lotus Club chatting gaily with the major and Dilkins. I was enjoying a supper at Delmonico's, with the well-known waiter banding over me to listen to my orders, the bright electric lights around me, groups of handsome men and beautiful women laughing and talking at the different tables, and the major sitting opposite, telling me the latest story of high life.

I was even at times plunging through the paths in Central Park on my splendid horse, and the gay equipages that I passed, the groups of riders from the schools near the Grand Circus, the gray-coated park police, all were as natural as if they were not the phantasmagoria of a brain fever.

I was now at the circus and gazing with wonder and admiration at Nita Barlotti, the trapeze queen, and at Maubikeck, the lion-tamer, in their respective acts.

Then the visit to Ralph Graviecourt's rooms and the discovery of the photograph was as vivid in my mind as on the day it actually occurred.

And again the circus, the blazing rope, the danger that Barlotti was in, the efforts of the lion-tamer and myself to save her.

And so on, I lived over and over again the stirring scenes of my last days in New York, and the departure of Maubikeck and myself on the steamer.

And then the accident; Maubikeck rushing into my room and carrying me on deck; the scene at the rail; my departure in the small boat—all were vivid and real to me again. But instead of the darkness and the fog that covered everything and obscured my vision, I saw, surrounded by blazing light that seemed to come from heaven, the calm, silent figure of Maubikeck, standing with folded arms amid a score of frightened, demented creatures, waiting for the death that was inevitable. And I saw the vessel lurch and go down, with the silent figure at the rail. Down, down she went—in a moment more all would be lost—now all worse down.

But no! The vessel, indeed, had sunk. And there, standing on top of a wave, still in the glare of the light from heaven, stood Maubikeck, and above him, in red letters, seemingly of fire floating in the air, I saw the words, 'If you are saved and I am not, save Nita from Maligni.'

The flame and the white light went out together, and I was in Italy bargaining with Signor Brandari for a guide and interpreter to go with me to the island of Sardinia.

I was vaguely conscious of a lapse of time as I lived over these scenes. I seemed to feel that some one was near me. At times I thought I heard my name called out in the darkness that surrounded me, and I thought I replied. But I knew nothing real. There was nothing of actual life about me. After a time I seemed to feel that my body was cold and like stone, and my soul was free. It soared away and mingled with other white-robed figures, all bathed in a light like that which had streamed upon Maubikeck on the sinking steamer. And Maubikeck was there, only instead of being a soul, like myself, having left the clay behind, he was Maubikeck, as I had known him, still in his magnificent flesh form, and as magnificent in the heavenly surroundings as he had been among earthly scenes.

And he stretched forth his hand to me, and said:

'You have done well, Wilberton. Be not despairing, for out of your trouble shall come happiness. I have seen your efforts

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