

A little round pellet had been shot through the spy-hole and was lying on the floor. He laid down the file and stooped to pick up the round thing. It was a bit of rolled paper.

It was a long way to go down and down, with the black waves rushing about him—how they roared——!

Ah, yes! He was only stooping down to pick up the paper. He was a bit giddy; many people are when they stoop. There was nothing the matter with him—nothing.

He picked it up, carried it to the light, and unfolded it steadily.

“Come to-night, whatever happens; the Cricket will be transferred to-morrow to another service. This is our only chance.”

He destroyed the paper as he had done the former one, picked up his file again, and went back to work, dogged and mute and desperate.

One o'clock. He had been working for three hours now, and six of the eight bars were filed. Two more, and then, to climb——

He began to recall the former occasions when these terrible attacks had come on. The last had been the one at New Year; and he shuddered as he remembered those five nights. But that time it had not come on so suddenly; he had never known it so sudden.

He dropped the file and flung out both hands blindly, praying, in his utter desperation, for the first time since he had been an atheist; praying to anything—to nothing—to everything.

“Not to-night! Oh, let me be ill to-morrow!

I will bear anything to-morrow—only not to-night!”

He stood still for a moment, with both hands up to his temples; then he took up the file once more, and once more went back to his work.

Half-past one. He had begun on the last bar. His shirt-sleeve was bitten to rags; there was blood on his lips and a red mist before his eyes, and the sweat poured from his forehead as he filed, and filed, and filed——

After sunrise Montanelli fell asleep. He was utterly worn out with the restless misery of the night and slept for a little while quietly; then he began to dream.

At first he dreamed vaguely, confusedly; broken fragments of images and fancies followed each other, fleeting and incoherent, but all filled with the same dim sense of struggle and pain, the same shadow of indefinable dread. Presently he began to dream of sleeplessness; the old, frightful, familiar dream that had been a terror to him for years. And even as he dreamed he recognized that he had been through it all before.

He was wandering about in a great empty place, trying to find some quiet spot where he could lie down and sleep. Everywhere there were people walking up and down; talking, laughing, shouting, praying, ringing bells, and clashing metal instruments together. Sometimes he would get away to a little distance from the noise, and would lie down, now on the grass, now on a wooden bench, now on some slab of stone. He would shut his eyes and cover them with both hands to keep out the light; and would say to himself: “Now I will get to sleep.” Then the crowds would come

sweeping up to him, shouting, yelling, calling him by name, begging him: "Wake up! Wake up, quick; we want you!"

Again: he was in a great palace, full of gorgeous rooms, with beds and couches and low soft lounges. It was night, and he said to himself: "Here, at last, I shall find a quiet place to sleep." But when he chose a dark room and lay down, someone came in with a lamp, flashing the merciless light into his eyes, and said: "Get up; you are wanted."

He rose and wandered on, staggering and stumbling like a creature wounded to death; and heard the clocks strike one, and knew that half the night was gone already—the precious night that was so short. Two, three, four, five—by six o'clock the whole town would wake up and there would be no more silence.

He went into another room and would have lain down on a bed, but someone started up from the pillows, crying out: "This bed is mine!" and he shrank away with despair in his heart.

Hour after hour struck, and still he wandered on and on, from room to room, from house to house, from corridor to corridor. The horrible gray dawn was creeping near and nearer; the clocks were striking five; the night was gone and he had found no rest. Oh, misery! Another day—another day!

He was in a long, subterranean corridor, a low, vaulted passage that seemed to have no end. It was lighted with glaring lamps and chandeliers; and through its grated roof came the sounds of dancing and laughter and merry music. *Up there*, in the world of the live people overhead, there was some festival, no doubt. Oh, for a place

to hide and sleep; some little place, were it even a grave! And as he spoke he stumbled over an open grave. An open grave, smelling of death and rotteness— Ah, what matter, so he could but sleep!

"This grave is mine!" It was Gladys; and she raised her head and stared at him over the rotting shroud. Then he knelt down and stretched out his arms to her.

"Gladys! Gladys! Have a little pity on me; let me creep into this narrow space and sleep. I do not ask you for your love; I will not touch you, will not speak to you; only let me lie down beside you and sleep! Oh, love, it is so long since I have slept! I cannot bear another day. The light glares in upon my soul; the noise is beating my brain to dust. Gladys, let me come in here and sleep!"

And he would have drawn her shroud across his eyes. But she shrank away, screaming:

"It is sacrilege; you are a priest!"

On and on he wandered, and came out upon the sea-shore, on the barren rocks where the fierce light struck down, and the water moaned its low, perpetual wail of unrest. "Ah!" he said; "the sea will be more merciful; it, too, is wearied unto death and cannot sleep."

Then Arthur rose up from the deep, and cried aloud:

"This sea is mine!"

"Your Eminence! Your Eminence!"

Montanelli awoke with a start. His servant was knocking at the door. He rose mechanically and opened it, and the man saw how wild and scared he looked.

"Your Eminence—are you ill?"

He drew both hands across his forehead.

"No; I was asleep, and you startled me."

"I am very sorry; I thought I had heard you moving early this morning, and I supposed——"

"Is it late now?"

"It is nine o'clock, and the Governor has called. He says he has very important business, and knowing Your Eminence to be an early riser——"

"Is he downstairs? I will come presently."

He dressed and went downstairs.

"I am afraid this is an unceremonious way to call upon Your Eminence," the Governor began.

"I hope there is nothing the matter?"

"There is very much the matter. Rivarez has all but succeeded in escaping."

"Well, so long as he has not quite succeeded there is no harm done. How was it?"

"He was found in the courtyard, right against the little iron gate. When the patrol came in to inspect the courtyard at three o'clock this morning one of the men stumbled over something on the ground; and when they brought the light up they found Rivarez lying across the path unconscious. They raised an alarm at once and called me up; and when I went to examine his cell I found all the window-bars filed through and a rope made of torn body-linen hanging from one of them. He had let himself down and climbed along the wall. The iron gate, which leads into the subterranean tunnels, was found to be unlocked. That looks as if the guards had been suborned."

"But how did he come to be lying across the path? Did he fall from the rampart and hurt himself?"

"That is what I thought at first, Your Emi-

nence; but the prison surgeon can't find any trace of a fall. The soldier who was on duty yesterday says that Rivarez looked very ill last night when he brought in the supper, and did not eat anything. But that must be nonsense; a sick man *couldn't* file those bars through and climb along that roof. It's not in reason."

"Does he give any account of himself?"

"He is unconscious, Your Eminence."

"Still?"

"He just half comes to himself from time to time and moans, and then goes off again."

"That is very strange. What does the doctor think?"

"He doesn't know what to think. There is no trace of heart-disease that he can find to account for the thing; but whatever is the matter with him, it is something that must have come on suddenly, just when he had nearly managed to escape. For my part, I believe he was struck down by the direct intervention of a merciful Providence."

Montanelli frowned slightly.

"What are you going to do with him?" he asked.

"That is a question I shall settle in a very few days. In the meantime I have had a good lesson. That is what comes of taking off the irons—with all due respect to Your Eminence."

"I hope," Montanelli interrupted, "that you will at least not replace the fetters while he is ill. A man in the condition you describe can hardly make any more attempts to escape."

"I shall take good care he doesn't," the Governor muttered to himself as he went out. "His Eminence can go hang with his sentimental scru-

ples for all I care. Rivarez is chained pretty tight now, and is going to stop so, ill or not."

"But how can it have happened? To faint away at the last moment, when everything was ready; when he was at the very gate! It's like some hideous joke."

"I tell you," Martini answered, "the only thing I can think of is that one of these attacks must have come on, and that he must have struggled against it as long as his strength lasted and have fainted from sheer exhaustion when he got down into the courtyard."

Marcone knocked the ashes savagely from his pipe.

"Well, anyhow, that's the end of it; we can't do anything for him now, poor fellow."

"Poor fellow!" Martini echoed, under his breath. He was beginning to realize that to him, too, the world would look empty and dismal without the Gadfly.

"What does she think?" the smuggler asked, glancing towards the other end of the room, where Gemma sat alone, her hands lying idly in her lap, her eyes looking straight before her into blank nothingness.

"I have not asked her; she has not spoken since I brought her the news. We had best not disturb her just yet."

She did not appear to be conscious of their presence, but they both spoke with lowered voices, as though they were looking at a corpse. After a dreary little pause, Marcone rose and put away his pipe.

"I will come back this evening," he said; but Martini stopped him with a gesture.

"Don't go yet; I want to speak to you." He dropped his voice still lower and continued in almost a whisper:

"Do you believe there is really no hope?"

"I don't see what hope there can be now. We can't attempt it again. Even if he were well enough to manage his part of the thing, we couldn't do our share. The sentinels are all being changed, on suspicion. The Cricket won't get another chance, you may be sure."

"Don't you think," Martini asked suddenly; "that, when he recovers, something might be done by calling off the sentinels?"

"Calling off the sentinels? What do you mean?"

"Well, it has occurred to me that if I were to get in the Governor's way when the procession passes close by the fortress on Corpus Domini day and fire in his face, all the sentinels would come rushing to get hold of me, and some of you fellows could perhaps help Rivarez out in the confusion. It really hardly amounts to a plan; it only came into my head."

"I doubt whether it could be managed," Marcone answered with a very grave face. "Certainly it would want a lot of thinking out for anything to come of it. But"—he stopped and looked at Martini—"if it should be possible—would you do it?"

Martini was a reserved man at ordinary times; but this was not an ordinary time. He looked straight into the smuggler's face.

"Would I do it?" he repeated. "Look at her!"

There was no need for further explanations; in saying that he had said all. Marcone turned and looked across the room.

She had not moved since their conversation began. There was no doubt, no fear, even no grief in her face; there was nothing in it but the shadow of death. The smuggler's eyes filled with tears as he looked at her.

"Make haste, Michele!" he said, throwing open the verandah door and looking out. "Aren't you nearly done, you two? There are a hundred and fifty things to do!"

Michele, followed by Gino, came in from the verandah.

"I am ready now," he said. "I only want to ask the signora——"

He was moving towards her when Martini caught him by the arm.

"Don't disturb her; she's better alone."

"Let her be!" Marcone added. "We shan't do any good by meddling. God knows, it's hard enough on all of us; but it's worse for her, poor soul!"

CHAPTER V.

FOR a week the Gadfly lay in a fearful state. The attack was a violent one, and the Governor, rendered brutal by fear and perplexity, had not only chained him hand and foot, but had insisted on his being bound to his pallet with leather straps, drawn so tight that he could not move without their cutting into the flesh. He endured everything with his dogged, bitter stoicism till the end of the sixth day. Then his pride broke down, and he piteously entreated the prison doctor for a dose of opium. The doctor was quite willing to give it; but the Governor, hearing of the request, sharply forbade "any such foolery."

"How do you know what he wants it for?" he said. "It's just as likely as not that he's shamming all the time and wants to drug the sentinel, or some such devilry. Rivarez is cunning enough for anything."

"My giving him a dose would hardly help him to drug the sentinel," replied the doctor, unable to suppress a smile. "And as for shamming—there's not much fear of that. He is as likely as not to die."

"Anyway, I won't have it given. If a man wants to be tenderly treated, he should behave accordingly. He has thoroughly deserved a little sharp discipline. Perhaps it will be a lesson to him not to play tricks with the window-bars again."

"The law does not admit of torture, though," the doctor ventured to say; "and this is coming perilously near it."

"The law says nothing about opium, I think," said the Governor snappishly.

"It is for you to decide, of course, colonel; but I hope you will let the straps be taken off at any rate. They are a needless aggravation of his misery. There's no fear of his escaping now. He couldn't stand if you let him go free."

"My good sir, a doctor may make a mistake like other people, I suppose. I have got him safe strapped now, and he's going to stop so."

"At least, then, have the straps a little loosened. It is downright barbarity to keep them drawn so tight."

"They will stop exactly as they are; and I will thank you, sir, not to talk about barbarity to me. If I do a thing, I have a reason for it."