

## THERE IS SOMETHING STILL TO CHEER US.

BY ELDER W. G. MILLS.

By the pebbly shore, on the sterile rock,  
Where the waves give no repose,  
The Velvet-moss on its tender stock  
In its delicate softness grows—  
To cheer the wanderer in pensive mood  
That sees no beauty around,  
That lets his lonely thoughts intrude,  
And deems not a friend can be found.

The Mistletoe thrives in a lonely place  
When Winter his claims has laid,  
And grasps the branch with a warm embrace,  
Though withered and leafless made:  
It tells us a tale to cheer the heart,  
And brighten our gloomiest lot;  
That winter and age can beauty impart,  
And there's life where we thought it not.

The Ivy clings to the mouldering wall,  
That its friendly form receives,  
And covers the ruin from all  
With its garb of verdant leaves.  
Thus should we hide from the envious eye  
The faults in our nature found;  
And our neighbor's follies that open his  
Throw the mantle of love around.

The leafy Pine, and the Cedar too,  
As evergreens appear,  
Fadefless and fresh they continue through  
The mutations of the year;  
And so in the changes that mark our way,  
Through wealth and adversity,  
Though sunshine or storm make out our day  
We should cheerful and changeless be.

Yes! as on the bleak and sterile rock  
The delicate Velvet-moss springs,  
As the Mistletoe thrives on the withered Oak,  
On the ruin the Ivy clings,  
As, in the keen blasts of winter's breath  
Mid the storms of hail and snow,  
The Pine and the Cedar know no death,  
But luxuriantly grow:

So, Heaven be praised! in our human lot,  
Whatever our trials may be,  
There still is some green and fertile spot,  
Something grateful to feel and see,  
Which in coldest hours its tendrils entwines—  
The vigor of life to impart—  
Round the broken arches and crumbling shrines  
Of the desolate fancies of the heart.

G. S. L. CITY, May, 1856.

## A Wonderful Escape from an Austrian State Prison.

Nearly nine months have elapsed since the world was electrified by the news that Felice Orsini had broken jail, and escaped out of the hands of the Austrians.

Orsini is a man of thirty-six years of age. Born of parents in easy circumstances, well educated and bred to the law, endowed with rare qualities, decision, clear mind, courage, patience, his life is a crushing reproach to the rulers of Italy.

He has never been anything but a revolutionist. At twenty-two he conspired against the Pope. At twenty-five he was a state prisoner, in a cell six feet by four, on a general charge of being a dangerous man; and shortly afterward, having undergone an examination of fifteen minutes, was condemned to the galleys for life. At twenty-seven he, with two thousand others, was set at liberty by Pope Pius the Ninth, who desired to inaugurate his accession by a gracious act of clemency. At twenty-eight he was conspiring again in Tuscany, and again in the hands of the police. At twenty-nine he was a leader of the Roman revolutionists.

At thirty-three he was conspiring in Piedmont, was caught, imprisoned, kept in durance vile for a couple of months, then shipped off to England.

But you might as well try to keep a flower from the sunlight as an Italian of the Orsini stamp from conspiracies: In 1854 he was in Italy again, conspiring for a general uprising, and dodging the gens-d'armes; and in the fall of that year, having gone to Transylvania to see about a conspiracy there, he was caught again. This time his career was very nearly brought to a close.

He was locked up in abominable dungeons, and absolutely starved; what he suffered before he was transferred to Vienna was incredible. In February, 1855, he was examined before the police-magistrate at Vienna. The procedure was peculiar. No witnesses were summoned. No charge was made against him. But he was asked all sorts of questions about himself—which he answered truly—and his answers were taken down.

The examination over, he was remanded to prison. His cell was twenty-four feet by twelve; he had five partners in it, all thieves. It was damp, cold, filthy beyond description. Vermin abounded, and the water supplied to the prisoners was so bad that Orsini endured dreadful thirst rather than taste it. His five companions made dice out of pieces of bread, and spent their time in gambling. He shivered with rheumatic fever. He begged to know the ground of his imprisonment. No one would tell him. He implored medical assistance and wholesome food. No one took the least notice of his entreaties.

At the close of March, 1855, he was removed to Mantua, whose castle of St. George is said to be the strongest fortified work in Italy. There he had a clean bed, which was an inestimable blessing. But the prison fare was only fourteen ounces of black bread and a plate of hot water called soup. He positively starved. Prisoners are allowed to purchase what they choose out of their own

money, but Orsini had none with him, and the jailer would not allow him to communicate with his friends. After a time the inspector of the prison was so touched with his suffering that he sent him a loaf from his own table every day. To this Orsini ascribes the salvation of his life.

As soon as he was well enough, he was brought up for trial. The judge, a faithful servant of Austria, Counselor Sanchez, opened the case by saying:

"Grave accusations are brought against you; I have my own convictions of their justice. It is with you a question of life and death."

Orsini asked of what crime he stood accused. The answer was inimitable:

"Reply to the questions put to you. It is for the judge to take the lead. Do not imagine you will get any information out of us."

It must be pretty hard work for any prisoner to establish his innocence, when, in reply to his inquiry respecting the charge against him, he is told that "he must not expect any information from the court." Happily, in Orsini's case, this peculiarity of Austrian jurisprudence mattered little.

After a host of questions, a paper was produced in the prisoner's handwriting; it was a letter of instructions to some Italian revolutionists. Without a moment's hesitation, Orsini acknowledged himself the writer. "Instead of dying for my country on the battlefield, I shall die for her on the scaffold," said he, quietly; "sooner or later it must have ended thus."

"Death," said the Judge, sententiously, "is certainly the punishment of high treason. Had you been tried by the military tribunal, you would have been shot twelve hours hence: we allow time. While there is life, there is hope."

With this comforting apothegm, Orsini was remanded to his prison.

Of all the brave men who had been his fellow conspirators, the one whom he loved best, and about whose fate he felt most anxious, was Fortunato Calvi, an ex-colonel in the Austrian army, and a bold champion of Italian independence. Calvi had been betrayed by a guide, and taken about the same time as Orsini; but what had befallen him since then his friend could not discover. He asked every official, judge, and jailer about him; but some declined altogether to answer, while others answered evasively. One thing only seem certain—Calvi was under sentence of death.

Orsini had established a communication with his fellow prisoner in the next cell on the left, by rapping on the wall. At the sound of the raps, the two poor fellows laid their ears to the wall, and contrived to whisper cheering messages to each other. Though this intercourse was contraband, and was maintained under great difficulties, and though Orsini had never seen his neighbor, he felt the liveliest sympathy for him; and when, some days after his examination, he ascertained that he had been removed, he was overwhelmed with grief and loneliness.

In the cell on the right of the one he occupied another prisoner was confined. This poor man also attempted to communicate with Orsini by rapping on the wall. But from some indefinable reason, Orsini could not make up his mind to reply to the friendly sounds. It was not till his friend on the left had been taken away that he reasoned with himself upon his churlishness, and replied to the raps. The inmate of the cell rapped his gratitude eagerly, and asked, in a hoarse whisper,

"Who are you?"

"Hernagh," said Orsini, giving a name which he had assumed; "and who are you?"

"Calvi."

Orsini slept little that night. At every opportunity the two friends communicated to each other the story of their respective misfortunes, and speculated on their fate. Orsini had made up his mind to die. Calvi believed that he would be sentenced to twenty years of *carcere duro*. Each in his heart believed that the other would end his career on the scaffold, though each strove by words to cheer up his companion. But whatever happened there was a world of happiness in being so near a dear friend.

On the 2d of July, at daybreak, the prison inspector roused Calvi, and led him into the court-room. Sentence of death was passed upon him. He was asked if he had anything to say. He merely said, "*Bene, Benissimo!*" The judge had the Emperor's pardon, it is said, in his pocket; he asked Calvi if he would throw himself upon the mercy of the Emperor and beg forgiveness?

"Never!" said the stern Italian. "My hatred of Austria is stronger than my love of life!"

On the morning of 4th of July, 1855, when the people of the United States were preparing to celebrate their national anniversary, Calvi was taken from his cell, and conveyed by a strong body of gens-d'armes to a scaffold near the Bridge of St. George. He mounted the scaffold lightly, turned to the executioner and said, "I am ready." The cord was tightened and all was over. All that livelong day, while America was resounding with republican festivities, this brave Italian hung, a corpse, with the dogs snuffing about the foot of the scaffold.

When Orsini rapped at the wall of his cell, an unknown voice replied.

"Where is Calvi?" asked Orsini, a feeling of sickness creeping over him.

When the truth was told, he fell back senseless. He rapped at the wall on the opposite side, and related the terrible news to his left hand neighbor.

"I knew it," was the answer; "and, to tell you the truth, I was afraid to rap on the wall, lest you should be gone too."

If ever a condition in life could justify self-destruction, that of Orsini and his fellow-prisoners might have done so. The text of the law under which they were confined runs thus:

"The condemned shall be confined in a dungeon secluded from all communication, with only so much light and space as is necessary to sustain life. He shall be constantly loaded with heavy fetters on the hands and feet. He shall never, except during the hours of labor, be without a chain attached to a circle of iron round his body. His diet shall be bread and water; a hot ration (slices of bread steeped in hot water and flavored with tallow) every second day; but never any animal food. His bed shall be composed of naked planks, and he shall be forbidden to see any one without exception."

In case of refractory conduct, the prisoner was sentenced to the *cavalletto* or little horse. This is a bench about eight feet long, on which the culprit is stretched face downwards. A moveable vice screws the waist to the bench so that motion is impossible; the arms are stretched beyond the head and fastened by the wrists to irons; rings likewise encircle the ankles so that the feet project beyond the bench. A corporal chosen for strength and brutality, inflicts the punishment of the bastinado, which is often continued until the sufferer faints. When the object of the punishment is to extort information, it is repeated from day to day until the prisoner confesses. What worse did the Spanish Inquisition ever perpetrate than these proceedings of the Austrian courts in 1855 and 1856?

The police of Austrian state prisons is really admirable, so far as precaution is concerned. Thirteen times in the twenty-four hours is the prisoner visited by the turnkeys or inspectors; the longest interval of peace being between one and six a.m. At each visit, the official requires to see the prisoner's face so as to identify him. And so shrewd and sharp-eyed are the jailors, that on one occasion Orsini's inspector observed on visiting him, "Hal Signor, you have been cutting your nails, I see. Well! well!"

After Calvi's death, Orsini's feelings underwent a change. Up to that moment he had looked forward to death as a certainty and was quite resigned to it. He intended to cry "Viva l'Italia" on the scaffold, and to leave his name a heritage to the future saviors of Italy. But the horrible proximity of death dispelled these visions. Life grew dearer, sweeter. He began to think of future days, and of their opportunity. He recalled his children's faces to mind. Through his high window he could see a narrow strip of sky, which was sometimes bright and gladsome; he could not bear the idea of not seeing it again.

The jailor had lent him a volume of Byron. The Englishman's stirring verse roused the man within him, and he suddenly—like a flash, an electrical impulse—resolved to escape. The resolution made, excitement overpowered him. He raised himself to his window, and grasped the bars in his hand; leaping down again, he had difficulty in restraining himself from screaming with joy. He almost felt himself free.

In reality the obstacles were monstrous. The cell in which he was confined had but one window, seven feet from the floor, in the embrasure. Twelve iron bars, three inches thick, crossed each other, and were inserted in the stone casement; and a second frame-work of similar bars occurred at three feet distance. The outside of the window was covered with an iron grating. From the window to the ground outside was one hundred and four feet, and this ground was the bottom of a wet ditch. On the other side of the ditch ran a wall perpendicular for twenty feet, and very thick. And this wall surmounted, there yet remained a bridge to cross, which was closed at night, and guarded by armed sentinels. Here were difficulties enough to daunt any man. They did not frighten Orsini.

He began by gaining the confidence of the turnkeys and jailors. His gentle demeanor and submission to his lot were a subject of common remark. Other prisoners were told that if they were like that "povero Signor Orsini," they might have hope. Jailors remarked that any cell would do for Orsini, for so mild and pleasant a gentleman would never give trouble, and might be relied upon implicitly.

He undertook the composition of a history; whenever the inspector visited him he was to be seen engaged in literary labor, and the altered manner of the man was ascribed to the soothing effect of study.

Meanwhile, by means which, for obvious reasons, are not explained, Orsini obtained from without a supply of money to corrupt the turnkeys with wine, and a small bundle of steel saws.

The first question was, What was the safest time to work? Night naturally suggested itself at first blush; but on reflection Orsini soon bethought himself that the silence of the sleeping hours would add very considerably to the chance of his being overheard by the sentinels. In day time, on the contrary, the chances of their hearing him were slender, especially as the church bells at Mantua ring long and loud. He put himself through a course of acoustics to detect the footfalls of the turnkeys as they approached his door, and at last attained such accuracy of hearing that he could hear a man approach on tiptoe when the bells were deafening the people outside.

To saw the bars he was obliged to stand on tiptoe on the rail of the back of the chair. This position was the more inconvenient as he was very liable to fall, when the noise might have created alarm and led to suspicion. However he set to work, and in four days sawed through one of the inside bars. Just as he

finished the job his saw—which he had held at either end in his hand—broke in two. He perceived that he must have a handle. From the underside of his table he cut two strips of wood, which he fastened with wax to either side of a new saw; then binding these firmly with tape, he had the satisfaction of finding that he had made an excellent handle. A mixture of bread crumbs and wax answered very well to hide the traces of the saw on the bars. Thus provided he went to work with new energy. The toil was excessive. Often he was obliged to desist from numbness of the fingers and arm. His side sometimes became so painful that he was forced to lie down to rest. His whole strength sometimes gave way, and it was only by forcing his mind to dwell upon the subject of his little daughters that he could rouse himself to pursue his task. His appetite failed altogether, and he rarely slept, nervousness having suspended the ordinary working of the vital machine.

At last he had succeeded in sawing through seven bars, and effecting an opening through which he could crawl. He could not resist the temptation to try it. Passing first his right arm, then his head, and catching hold of the bars of the second frame work, he dragged himself through with severe effort, laying open his side in doing so, against the oblique end of one of the cut bars; and there he sat, between the two sets of bars, with his legs dangling into the cell.

Having made a brief reconnaissance of the labor to be done, he proceeded to re-enter his cell. Horror of horrors! he could not get in! He pushed and squeezed, and tore himself, and wrenched with all his might at the bars—he could not pass. From the position of his body, he presented a larger surface than he had done when he crawled through: he could not get back. The hour was rapidly approaching for the turnkey's visit; it was utter ruin to be there. A dizziness overcame him, and he nearly fainted.

Providence, by extraordinary favor, detained the turnkey a few minutes that day; Orsini, recovering, succeeded, by long and judicious efforts—holding his breath while he moved, and smoothing his clothes—in creeping back into his cell and replacing the bars just in time.

The bars were so thick, that Orsini determined to saw only one of the second set, and to make a hole in the stone work by its side. To do this, he was forced to work in the embrasure of the window, and, consequently, to do the labor at night, when he could not be seen. He had a terrible fright the first night he began his excavations; he had hardly set to work when he saw lanterns flashing outside, heard the guard turned out, and officers shout angrily; then a heavy tramp of men in the passage near his door. He crept out of his window sill in a cold perspiration, got into bed, and lay still, his heart beating pretty fast. But no one troubled him. Next morning a communicative turnkey let him know that a prisoner who had tried to escape, had been caught by the guard.

"The rascal," said the jailor; "if he plays the fool any more, we shall put him in this cell and move you to No. 3."

The bare idea froze poor Orsini's blood. "I am used to this place," he muttered, feebly, "and I would rather stay here."

"Well, well," said the turnkey, sipping his wine, "we shall see; you are such a well bred gentleman that you would be safe anywhere."

Having sawed through the bar in the second grating, Orsini next extracted two nails from the window shutters, and with his saw handle contrived an instrument to scoop a hole in the wall. It was hard work at first, as the outside cement was very hard; but when he got to the bricks he made great progress; in a short time he had eight bricks out, all of which, together with the cement extracted, he lodged in his straw mattress.

On 26th March last the President of the Court visited him, and complimented him, as usual, upon his studious life.

"Is your work terminated yet?" he asked, politely, though with a slight sneer.

"Not quite yet," replied Orsini, whose head ran upon another work; "but, with God's help, it soon will be."

Two nights afterward all was ready. He had obtained an extra pair of sheets and two extra towels. These he tore into strips, each strip being strong enough to support his weight. After the visit at 9.30 p.m., he hastily climbed in the embrasure of the window, made fast his rope and prepared to descend.

But at that moment his feelings overpowered him. He was without strength or nerve. Regardless of consequences, he sprang back into his cell and lay down in his bed, beside himself with excitement, and his lips and mouth parched with fever. The sentinel, hearing the noise of his leap, came in to know what was the matter. Orsini complained of fever, and asked for water, which was brought; the sentinel then retired without remark.

On the next day, 29th, he resolved to force himself to eat, as he felt a want of strength. All day long he practised swinging from his cord, both in order to test it and to train his arms, which were weak. He sent out for some oranges, prudently foreseeing that some accident might befall him, and knowing the refreshment that fruit affords to a wounded man.

At ten o'clock at night he renewed his attempt. This time, greatly to his surprise, he was perfectly cool and collected. He put his room in perfect order, fastened his rope, wrote a letter to the governor, and lay down to wait for the half-past-one visit. He was amazed at his own calmness. The turnkeys came, as usual, and went away without remark. As they entered the next cell, Orsini climbed the