Tales and Stories

by Mary Shelley

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THE

TREASURE HOUSE OF TALES

BY

GREAT AUTHORS

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

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TALES AND STORIES

BY

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

NOW FIRST COLLECTED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D.

KEEPER OF THE PRINTED BOOKS, BRITISH MUSEUM

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1891

INTRODUCTION.

It is customary to regard Mary Shelley’s claims to literary distinction as so entirely rooted and grounded in her husband’s as to constitute a merely parasitic growth upon his fame. It may be unreservedly admitted that her association with Shelley,

and her care of his writings and memory after his death, are the strongest of her titles to remembrance. It is further undeniable that the most original of her works is also that which betrays the strongest traces of his influence. Frankenstein was written when her brain, magnetized by his companionship, was capable of an effort never to be repeated. But if the frame of mind which engendered and sustained the work was created by Shelley, the conception was not his, and the diction is dissimilar to his. Both derive from Godwin, but neither is Godwin's. The same observation, except for an occasional phrase caught from Shelley, applies to all her subsequent work. The frequent exaltation of spirit, the ideality and romance, may well have been Shelley's—the general style of execution neither repeats nor resembles him.

Mary Shelley's voice, then, is not to die away as a mere echo of her illustrious husband's. She has the prima facie claim to a hearing due to every writer who can assert the possession of a distinctive individuality; and if originality be once conceded to Frankenstein, as in all equity it must, none will dispute the validity of a title to fame grounded on such a work. It has solved the question itself—it is famous. It is full of faults venial in an author of nineteen; but, apart from the wild grandeur of the conception, it has that which even the maturity of mere talent never attains—the insight of genius which looks below the appearances of things, and perhaps even reverses its own first conception by the discovery of some underlying truth. Mary Shelley's original intention was probably that which would alone have occurred to most writers in her place. She meant to paint Frankenstein's monstrous creation as an object of unmitigated horror. The perception that he was an object of intense compassion as well imparted a moral value to what otherwise would have remained a daring flight of imagination. It has done more: it has helped to create, if it did not itself beget, a type of personage unknown to ancient fiction. The conception of a character at once justly execrable and truly pitiable is altogether modern. Richard the Third and Caliban make some approach towards it; but the former is too self-sufficing in his valour and his villainy to be deeply pitied, and the

latter too senseless and brutal. Victor Hugo has made himself the laureate of pathetic deformity, but much of his work is a conscious or unconscious variation on the original theme of Frankenstein.

None of Mary Shelley's subsequent romances approached Frankenstein in power and popularity. The reason may be summed up in a word—Languor. After the death of her infant son in 1819, she could never again command the energy which had carried her so vigorously through Frankenstein. Except in one instance, her work did not really interest her. Her heart is not in it. Valperga contains many passages of exquisite beauty; but it was, as the authoress herself says, "a child of mighty slow growth;" "laboriously dug," Shelley adds, "out of a hundred old chronicles," and wants the fire of imagination which alone could have interpenetrated the mass and fused its diverse ingredients into a satisfying whole. Of the later novels, The Last Man excepted, it is needless to speak, save for the autobiographic interest with which Professor Dowden's fortunate discovery has informed the hitherto slighted pages of Lodore. But The Last Man demands great attention, for it is not only a work of far higher merit than commonly admitted, but of all her works the most characteristic of the authoress, the most representative of Mary Shelley in the character of pining widowhood which it was her destiny to support for the remainder of her life. It is an idealized version of her sorrows and sufferings, made to contribute a note to the strain which celebrates the final dissolution of the world. The languor which mars her other writings is a beauty here, harmonizing with the general tone of sublime melancholy. Most pictures of the end of the world, painted or penned, have an apocalyptic character. Men's imaginations are powerfully impressed by great convulsions of nature; fire, tempest, and earthquake are summoned to effect the dissolution of the expiring earth. In The Last Man pestilence is the sole agent, and the tragedy is purely human. The tale consequently lacks the magnificence which the subject might have seemed to invite, but, on the other hand, gains in pathos—a pathos greatly increased when the authoress's identity is

recollected, and it is observed how vividly actual experience traverses her web of fiction. None can have been affected by Mary Shelley's work so deeply as Mary Shelley herself; for the scenery is that of her familiar haunts, the personages are her intimates under thin disguises, the universal catastrophe is but the magnified image of the overthrow of her own fortunes; and there are pages on pages where every word must have come to her fraught with some unutterably sweet or bitter association. Yet, though her romance could never be to the public what it was to the author, it is surprising that criticism should have hitherto done so little justice either to its pervading nobility of thought or to the eloquence and beauty of very many inspired passages.

When The Last Man is reprinted it will come before the world as a new work. The same is the case with the short tales in this collection, the very existence of which is probably unknown to those most deeply interested in Mary Shelley. The entire class of literature to which they belong has long ago gone into Time's wallet as "alms for oblivion." They are exclusively contributions to a form of publication utterly superseded in this hasty age—the Annual, whose very name seemed to prophesy that it would not be perennial. For the creations of the intellect, however, there is a way back from Avernus. Every new generation convicts the last of undue precipitation in discarding the work of its own immediate predecessor. The special literary form may be incapable of revival; but the substance of that which has pleased or profited its age, be it Crashaw's verse, or Etherege's comedies, or Hoadly's pamphlets, or what it may, always repays a fresh examination, and is always found to contribute some element useful or acceptable to the literature of a later day. The day of the "splendid annual" was certainly not a vigorous or healthy one in the history of English belles-lettres. It came in at the ebb of the great tide of poetry which followed on the French Revolution, and before the insetting of the great tide of Victorian prose. A pretentious feebleness characterizes the majority of its productions, half of which are hardly above the level of the album. Yet it had its

good points, worthy to be taken into account. The necessary brevity of contributions to an annual operated as a powerful check on the loquacity so unfortunately encouraged by the three-volume novel. There was no room for tiresome descriptions of minutiæ, or interminable talk about uninteresting people. Being, moreover, largely intended for the perusal of high-born maidens in palace towers, the annuals frequently affected an exalted order of sentiment, which, if intolerable in insincere or merely mechanical hands, encouraged the emotion of a really passionate writer as much as the present taste for minute delineation represses it. This perfectly suited Mary Shelley. No writer felt less call to reproduce the society around her. It did not interest her in the smallest degree. The bent of her soul was entirely towards the ideal. This ideal was by no means buried in the grave of Shelley. She aspired passionately towards an imaginary perfection all her life, and solaced disappointment with what, in actual existence, too often proved the parent of fresh disillusion. In fiction it was otherwise; the fashionable style of publication, with all its faults, encouraged the enthusiasm, rapturous or melancholy, with which she adored the present or lamented the lost. She could fully indulge her taste for exalted sentiment in the Annual, and the necessary limitations of space afforded less scope for that creeping languor which relaxed the nerve of her more ambitious productions. In these little tales she is her perfect self, and the reader will find not only the entertainment of interesting fiction, but a fair picture of the mind, repressed in its energies by circumstances, but naturally enthusiastic and aspiring, of a lonely, thwarted, misunderstood woman, who could seldom do herself justice, and whose precise place in the contemporary constellation of genius remains to be determined.

The merit of a collection of stories, casually written at different periods and under different influences, must necessarily be various. As a rule, it may be said that Mary Shelley is best when most ideal, and excels in proportion to the exaltation of the sentiment embodied in her tale. Virtue, patriotism, disinterested affection, are very real things to her; and her heroes and heroines, if generally above the ordinary plane

of humanity, never transgress the limits of humanity itself. Her fault is the other way, and arises from a positive incapacity for painting the ugly and the commonplace. She does her best, but her villains do not impress us. Minute delineation of character is never attempted; it lay entirely out of her sphere. Her tales are consequently executed in the free, broad style of the eighteenth century, towards which a reaction is now fortunately observable. As stories, they are very good. The theme is always interesting, and the sequence of events natural. No person and no incident, perhaps, takes a very strong hold upon the imagination; but the general impression is one of a sphere of exalted feeling into which it is good to enter, and which ennobles as much as the photography of ugliness degrades. The diction, as usual in the imaginative literature of the period, is frequently too ornate, and could spare a good many adjectives. But its native strength is revealed in passages of impassioned feeling; and remarkable command over the resources of the language is displayed in descriptions of scenes of natural beauty. The microscopic touch of a Browning or a Meredith, bringing the scene vividly before the mind's eye, is indeed absolutely wanting; but the landscape is suffused with the poetical atmosphere of a Claude or a Danby. The description at the beginning of The Sisters of Albano is a characteristic and beautiful instance.

The biographical element is deeply interwoven with these as with all Mary Shelley's writings. It is of especial interest to search out the traces of her own history, and the sources from which her descriptions and ideas may have been derived. The Mourner has evident vestiges of her residence near Windsor when Alastor was written, and probably reflects the general impression derived from Shelley's recollections of Eton. The visit to Pæstum in The Pole recalls one of the most beautiful of Shelley's letters, which Mary, however, probably never saw. Claire Clairmont's fortunes seem glanced at in one or two places; and the story of The Pole may be partly founded on some experience of hers in Russia. Trelawny probably suggested the subjects of the two Greek tales, The Evil Eye, and Euphrasia. The Mortal Immortal is a variation on

the theme of St. Leon, and Transformation on that of Frankenstein. These are the only tales in the collection which betray the influence of Godwin, and neither is so fully worked out as it might have been. Mary Shelley was evidently more at home with a human than with a superhuman ideal; her enthusiasm soars high, but does not transcend the possibilities of human nature. The artistic merit of her tales will be diversely estimated, but no reader will refuse the authoress facility of invention, or command of language, or elevation of soul.

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I. THE SISTERS OF ALBANO.

“And near Albano’s scarce divided waves
Shine from a sister valley;—and afar
The Tiber winds, and the broad ocean laves
The Latian coast where sprang the Epic war,
‘Arms and the Man,’ whose re-ascending star
Rose o’er an empire; but beneath thy right
Tully reposed from Rome; and where yon bar
Of girdling mountains intercepts the sight
The Sabine farm was till’d, the weary bard’s delight.”

It was to see this beautiful lake that I made my last excursion before quitting Rome. The spring had nearly grown into summer, the trees were all in full but fresh green foliage, the vine-dresser was singing, perched among them, training his vines: the cicada had not yet begun her song, the heats therefore had not commenced; but at evening the fire-flies gleamed among the hills, and the cooing aziola assured us of what in that country needs no assurance—fine weather for the morrow. We set out early in the morning to avoid the heats, breakfasted at Albano, and till ten o'clock passed our time in visiting the Mosaic, the villa of Cicero, and other curiosities of the place. We reposed during the middle of the day in a tent elevated for us at the hill-top, whence we looked on the hill-embosomed lake, and the distant eminence crowned by a town with its church. Other villages and cottages were scattered among the foldings of mountains, and beyond we saw the deep blue sea of the southern poets, which received the swift and immortal Tiber, rocking it to repose among its devouring waves. The Coliseum falls and the Pantheon decays,—the very hills of Rome are perishing,—but the Tiber lives for ever, flows for ever, and for ever feeds the land-encircled Mediterranean with fresh waters.

Our summer and pleasure-seeking party consisted of many: to me the most interesting person was the Countess Atanasia D——, who was as beautiful as an imagination of Raphael, and good as the ideal of a poet. Two of her children accompanied her, with animated looks and gentle manners, quiet, yet enjoying. I sat near her, watching the changing shadows of the landscape before us. As the sun descended, it poured a tide of light into the valley of the lake, deluging the deep bank formed by the mountain with liquid gold. The domes and turrets of the far town flashed and gleamed, the trees were dyed in splendour; two or three slight clouds, which had drunk the radiance till it became their essence, floated golden islets in the lustrous empyrean. The waters, reflecting the brilliancy of the sky and the fire-tinted banks, beamed a second heaven, a second irradiated earth, at our feet. The Mediterranean, gazing on the sun,—as the eyes of a mortal bride fail and are

dimmed when reflecting her lover's glance,—was lost, mixed in his light, till it had become one with him.—Long (our souls, like the sea, the hills, and lake, drinking in the supreme loveliness) we gazed, till the too full cup overflowed, and we turned away with a sigh.

At our feet there was a knoll of ground, that formed the foreground of our picture; two trees lay basking against the sky, glittering with the golden light, which like dew seemed to hang amid their branches; a rock closed the prospect on the other side, twined round by creepers, and redolent with blooming myrtle; a brook, crossed by huge stones, gushed through the turf, and on the fragments of rock that lay about, sat two or three persons, peasants, who attracted our attention. One was a hunter, as his gun, lying on a bank not far off, demonstrated, yet he was a tiller of the soil; his rough straw hat, and his picturesque but coarse dress, belonged to that class. The other was some contadina, in the costume of her country, returning, her basket on her arm, from the village to her cottage home. They were regarding the stores of a pedlar, who with doffed hat stood near: some of these consisted of pictures and prints—views of the country, and portraits of the Madonna. Our peasants regarded these with pleased attention.

"One might easily make out a story for that pair," I said: "his gun is a help to the imagination, and we may fancy him a bandit with his contadina love, the terror of all the neighbourhood, except of her, the most defenceless being in it."

"You speak lightly of such a combination," said the lovely countess at my side, "as if it must not in its nature be the cause of dreadful tragedies. The mingling of love with crime is a dread conjunction, and lawless pursuits are never followed without bringing on the criminal, and all allied to him, ineffable misery. I speak with emotion, for your observation reminds me of an unfortunate girl, now one of the Sisters of Charity in the convent of Santa Chiara at Rome, whose unhappy passion for a man, such as you mention, spread destruction and sorrow widely around her."

I entreated my lovely friend to relate the history of the nun. For a long time she resisted my entreaties, as not willing to depress the spirit of a party of pleasure by a tale of sorrow. But I urged her, and she yielded. Her sweet Italian phraseology now rings in my ears, and her beautiful countenance is before me. As she spoke, the sun set, and the moon bent her silver horn in the ebbing tide of glory he had left. The lake changed from purple to silver, and the trees, before so splendid, now in dark masses, just reflected from their tops the mild moonlight. The fire-flies flashed among the rocks; the bats circled round us: meanwhile thus commenced the Countess Atanasia:—

The nun of whom I speak had a sister older than herself; I can remember them when as children they brought eggs and fruit to my father's villa. Maria and Anina were constantly together. With their large straw hats to shield them from the scorching sun, they were at work in their father's podere all day, and in the evening, when Maria, who was the elder by four years, went to the fountain for water, Anina ran at her side. Their cot—the folding of the hill conceals it—is at the lake-side opposite; and about a quarter of a mile up the hill is the rustic fountain of which I speak. Maria was serious, gentle, and considerate; Anina was a laughing, merry little creature, with the face of a cherub. When Maria was fifteen, their mother fell ill, and was nursed at the convent of Santa Chiara at Rome. Maria attended her, never leaving her bedside day or night. The nuns thought her an angel, she deemed them saints: her mother died, and they persuaded her to make one of them; her father could not but acquiesce in her holy intention, and she became one of the Sisters of Charity, the nun-nurses of Santa Chiara. Once or twice a year she visited her home, gave sage and kind advice to Anina, and sometimes wept to part from her; but her piety and her active employments for the sick reconciled her to her fate. Anina was more sorry to lose her sister's society. The other girls of the village did not please her: she was a good child, and worked hard for her father, and her sweetest recompense was the report he made of her to Maria, and the fond praises and

caresses the latter bestowed on her when they met.

It was not until she was fifteen that Anina showed any diminution of affection for her sister. Yet I cannot call it diminution, for she loved her perhaps more than ever, though her holy calling and sage lectures prevented her from reposing confidence, and made her tremble lest the nun, devoted to heaven and good works, should read in her eyes, and disapprove of the earthly passion that occupied her. Perhaps a part of her reluctance arose from the reports that were current against her lover's character, and certainly from the disapprobation and even hatred of him that her father frequently expressed. Ill-fated Anina! I know not if in the north your peasants love as ours; but the passion of Anina was entwined with the roots of her being, it was herself: she could die, but not cease to love. The dislike of her father for Domenico made their intercourse clandestine. He was always at the fountain to fill her pitcher, and lift it on her head. He attended the same mass; and when her father went to Albano, Velletri, or Rome, he seemed to learn by instinct the exact moment of his departure, and joined her in the podere, labouring with her and for her, till the old man was seen descending the mountain-path on his return. He said he worked for a contadino near Nemi. Anina sometimes wondered that he could spare so much time for her; but his excuses were plausible, and the result too delightful not to blind the innocent girl to its obvious cause.

Poor Domenico! the reports spread against him were too well founded: his sole excuse was that his father had been a robber before him, and he had spent his early years among these lawless men. He had better things in his nature, and yearned for the peace of the guiltless. Yet he could hardly be called guilty, for no dread crime stained him. Nevertheless, he was an outlaw and a bandit; and now that he loved Anina, these names were the stings of an adder to pierce his soul. He would have fled from his comrades to a far country, but Anina dwelt amid their very haunts. At this period also the police established by the French Government, which then possessed Rome, made these bands more alive to the conduct of their members; and

rumours of active measures to be taken against those who occupied the hills near Albano, Nemi, and Velletri, caused them to draw together in tighter bonds. Domenico would not, if he could, desert his friends in the hour of danger.

On a festa at this time—it was towards the end of October—Anina strolled with her father among the villagers, who all over Italy make holiday by congregating and walking in one place. Their talk was entirely of the ladri and the French, and many terrible stories were related of the extirpation of banditti in the kingdom of Naples, and the mode by which the French succeeded in their undertaking was minutely described. The troops scoured the country, visiting one haunt of the robbers after the other, and dislodging them, tracked them as in those countries they hunt the wild beasts of the forest, till, drawing the circle narrower, they enclosed them in one spot. They then drew a cordon round the place, which they guarded with the utmost vigilance, forbidding any to enter it with provisions, on pain of instant death. And as this menace was rigorously executed, in a short time the besieged bandits were starved into a surrender. The French troops were now daily expected, for they had been seen at Velletri and Nemi; at the same time it was affirmed that several outlaws had taken up their abode at Rocca Giovane, a deserted village on the summit of one of these hills, and it was supposed that they would make that place the scene of their final retreat.

The next day, as Anina worked in the podere, a party of French horse passed by along the road that separated her garden from the lake. Curiosity made her look at them; and her beauty was too great not to attract. Their observations and address soon drove her away; for a woman in love consecrates herself to her lover, and deems the admiration of others to be profanation. She spoke to her father of the impertinence of these men; and he answered by rejoicing at their arrival, and the destruction of the lawless bands that would ensue. When in the evening Anina went to the fountain, she looked timidly around, and hoped that Domenico would be at his accustomed post, for the arrival of the French destroyed her feeling of security. She

went rather later than usual, and a cloudy evening made it seem already dark; the wind roared among the trees, bending hither and thither even the stately cypresses; the waters of the lake were agitated into high waves, and dark masses of thundercloud lowered over the hill-tops, giving a lurid tinge to the landscape. Anina passed quickly up the mountain-path. When she came in sight of the fountain, which was rudely hewn in the living rock, she saw Domenico leaning against a projection of the hill, his hat drawn over his eyes, his tabaro fallen from his shoulders, his arms folded in an attitude of dejection. He started when he saw her; his voice and phrases were broken and unconnected; yet he never gazed on her with such ardent love, nor solicited her to delay her departure with such impassioned tenderness.

“How glad I am to find you here!” she said; “I was fearful of meeting one of the French soldiers: I dread them even more than the banditti.”

Domenico cast a look of eager inquiry on her, and then turned away, saying, “Sorry am I that I shall not be here to protect you. I am obliged to go to Rome for a week or two. You will be faithful, Anina mia; you will love me, though I never see you more?”

The interview, under these circumstances, was longer than usual. He led her down the path till they nearly came in sight of her cottage; still they lingered. A low whistle was heard among the myrtle underwood at the lake-side; he started; it was repeated; and he answered it by a similar note. Anina, terrified, was about to ask what this meant, when, for the first time, he pressed her to his heart, kissed her roseate lips, and, with a muttered “Carissima addio,” left her, springing down the bank; and as she gazed in wonder, she thought she saw a boat cross a line of light made by the opening of a cloud. She stood long absorbed in reverie, wondering and remembering with thrilling pleasure the quick embrace and impassioned farewell of her lover. She delayed so long that her father came to seek her.

Each evening after this, Anina visited the fountain at the Ave Maria; he was not

there: each day seemed an age; and incomprehensible fears occupied her heart. About a fortnight after, letters arrived from Maria. They came to say that she had been ill of the malaria fever, that she was now convalescent, but that change of air was necessary for her recovery, and that she had obtained leave to spend a month at home at Albano. She asked her father to come the next day to fetch her. These were pleasant tidings for Anina; she resolved to disclose everything to her sister, and during her long visit she doubted not but that she would contrive her happiness. Old Andrea departed the following morning, and the whole day was spent by the sweet girl in dreams of future bliss. In the evening Maria arrived, weak and wan, with all the marks of that dread illness about her, yet, as she assured her sister, feeling quite well.

As they sat at their frugal supper, several villagers came in to inquire for Maria; but all their talk was of the French soldiers and the robbers, of whom a band of at least twenty was collected in Rocca Giovane, strictly watched by the military.

“We may be grateful to the French,” said Andrea, “for this good deed; the country will be rid of these ruffians.”

“True, friend,” said another; “but it is horrible to think what these men suffer: they have, it appears, exhausted all the food they brought with them to the village, and are literally starving. They have not an ounce of maccaroni among them; and a poor fellow who was taken and executed yesterday was a mere anatomy: you could tell every bone in his skin.”

“There was a sad story the other day,” said another, “of an old man from Nemi, whose son, they say, is among them at Rocca Giovane: he was found within the lines with some baccallà under his pastrano, and shot on the spot.”

“There is not a more desperate gang,” observed the first speaker, “in the states and the regno put together. They have sworn never to yield but upon good terms. To secure these, their plan is to waylay passengers and make prisoners, whom they keep

as hostages for mild treatment from the Government. But the French are merciless; they are better pleased that the bandits wreak their vengeance on these poor creatures than spare one of their lives."

"They have captured two persons already," said another; "and there is old Betta Tossi half frantic, for she is sure her son is taken: he has not been at home these ten days."

"I should rather guess," said an old man, "that he went there with good-will: the young scapegrace kept company with Domenico Baldi of Nemi."

"No worse company could he have kept in the whole country," said Andrea; "Domenico is the bad son of a bad race. Is he in the village with the rest?"

"My own eyes assured me of that," replied the other.

"When I was up the hill with eggs and fowls to the piquette there, I saw the branches of an ilex move; the poor fellow was weak perhaps, and could not keep his hold; presently he dropped to the ground; every musket was levelled at him, but he started up and was away like a hare among the rocks. Once he turned, and then I saw Domenico as plainly, though thinner, poor lad, by much than he was,—as plainly as I now see—Santa Virgine! what is the matter with Nina?"

She had fainted. The company broke up, and she was left to her sister's care. When the poor child came to herself she was fully aware of her situation, and said nothing, except expressing a wish to retire to rest. Maria was in high spirits at the prospect of her long holiday at home; but the illness of her sister made her refrain from talking that night, and blessing her, as she said good-night, she soon slept. Domenico starving!—Domenico trying to escape and dying through hunger, was the vision of horror that wholly possessed poor Anina. At another time, the discovery that her lover was a robber might have inflicted pangs as keen as those which she now felt; but this at present made a faint impression, obscured by worse wretchedness. Maria was in a deep and tranquil sleep. Anina rose, dressed herself silently, and crept

downstairs. She stored her market-basket with what food there was in the house, and, unlatching the cottage-door, issued forth, resolved to reach Rocca Giovane, and to administer to her lover's dreadful wants. The night was dark, but this was favourable, for she knew every path and turn of the hills, every bush and knoll of ground between her home and the deserted village which occupies the summit of that hill. You may see the dark outline of some of its houses about two hours' walk from her cottage. The night was dark, but still; the libeccio brought the clouds below the mountain-tops, and veiled the horizon in mist; not a leaf stirred; her footsteps sounded loud in her ears, but resolution overcame fear. She had entered yon ilex grove, her spirits rose with her success, when suddenly she was challenged by a sentinel; no time for escape; fear chilled her blood; her basket dropped from her arm; its contents rolled out on the ground; the soldier fired his gun, and brought several others round him; she was made prisoner.

In the morning, when Maria awoke she missed her sister from her side. I have overslept myself, she thought, and Nina would not disturb me. But when she came downstairs and met her father, and Anina did not appear, they began to wonder. She was not in the podere; two hours passed, and then Andrea went to seek her. Entering the near village, he saw the contadini crowding together, and a stifled exclamation of "Ecco il padre!" told him that some evil had betided. His first impression was that his daughter was drowned; but the truth, that she had been taken by the French carrying provisions within the forbidden line, was still more terrible. He returned in frantic desperation to his cottage, first to acquaint Maria with what had happened, and then to ascend the hill to save his child from her impending fate. Maria heard his tale with horror; but an hospital is a school in which to learn self-possession and presence of mind. "Do you remain, my father," she said; "I will go. My holy character will awe these men, my tears move them: trust me; I swear that I will save my sister." Andrea yielded to her superior courage and energy.

The nuns of Santa Chiara when out of their convent do not usually wear their

monastic habit, but dress simply in a black gown. Maria, however, had brought her nun's habiliments with her, and, thinking thus to impress the soldiers with respect, she now put them on. She received her father's benediction, and, asking that of the Virgin and the saints, she departed on her expedition. Ascending the hill, she was soon stopped by the sentinels. She asked to see their commanding officer, and being conducted to him, she announced herself as the sister of the unfortunate girl who had been captured the night before. The officer, who had received her with carelessness, now changed countenance: his serious look frightened Maria, who clasped her hands, exclaiming, "You have not injured the child! she is safe!"

"She is safe—now," he replied with hesitation; "but there is no hope of pardon."

"Holy Virgin, have mercy on her! What will be done to her?"

"I have received strict orders: in two hours she dies."

"No! no!" exclaimed Maria impetuously, "that cannot be! You cannot be so wicked as to murder a child like her."

"She is old enough, madame," said the officer, "to know that she ought not to disobey orders; mine are so strict, that were she but nine years old, she dies."

These terrible words stung Maria to fresh resolution: she entreated for mercy; she knelt; she vowed that she would not depart without her sister; she appealed to Heaven and the saints. The officer, though cold-hearted, was good-natured and courteous, and he assured her with the utmost gentleness that her supplications were of no avail; that were the criminal his own daughter he must enforce his orders. As a sole concession, he permitted her to see her sister. Despair inspired the nun with energy; she almost ran up the hill, out-speeding her guide: they crossed a folding of the hills to a little sheep-cot, where sentinels paraded before the door. There was no glass to the windows, so the shutters were shut; and when Maria first went in from the bright daylight she hardly saw the slight figure of her sister leaning against the wall, her dark hair fallen below her waist, her head sunk on her bosom, over which

her arms were folded. She started wildly as the door opened, saw her sister, and sprang with a piercing shriek into her arms.

They were left alone together: Anina uttered a thousand frantic exclamations, beseeching her sister to save her, and shuddering at the near approach of her fate. Maria had felt herself, since their mother's death, the natural protectress and support of her sister, and she never deemed herself so called on to fulfil this character as now that the trembling girl clasped her neck,—her tears falling on her cheeks, and her choked voice entreating her to save her. The thought—O could I suffer instead of you! was in her heart, and she was about to express it, when it suggested another idea, on which she was resolved to act. First she soothed Anina by her promises, then glanced round the cot; they were quite alone: she went to the window, and through a crevice saw the soldiers conversing at some distance. "Yes, dearest sister," she cried, "I will—I can save you—quick—we must change dresses—there is no time to be lost I—you must escape in my habit."

"And you remain to die?"

"They dare not murder the innocent, a nun! Fear not for me—I am safe."

Anina easily yielded to her sister, but her fingers trembled; every string she touched she entangled. Maria was perfectly self-possessed, pale, but calm. She tied up her sister's long hair, and adjusted her veil over it so as to conceal it; she unlaced her bodice, and arranged the folds of her own habit on her with the greatest care—then more hastily she assumed the dress of her sister, putting on, after a lapse of many years, her native contadina costume. Anina stood by, weeping and helpless, hardly hearing her sister's injunctions to return speedily to their father, and under his guidance to seek sanctuary. The guard now opened the door. Anina clung to her sister in terror, while she, in soothing tones, entreated her to calm herself.

The soldier said they must delay no longer, for the priest had arrived to confess the prisoner.

To Anina the idea of confession associated with death was terrible; to Maria it brought hope. She whispered, in a smothered voice, “The priest will protect me—fear not—hasten to our father!”

Anina almost mechanically obeyed: weeping, with her handkerchief placed unaffectedly before her face, she passed the soldiers; they closed the door on the prisoner, who hastened to the window, and saw her sister descend the hill with tottering steps, till she was lost behind some rising ground. The nun fell on her knees—cold dew bathed her brow, instinctively she feared: the French had shown small respect for the monastic character; they destroyed the convents and desecrated the churches. Would they be merciful to her, and spare the innocent? Alas! was not Anina innocent also? Her sole crime had been disobeying an arbitrary command, and she had done the same.

“Courage!” cried Maria; “perhaps I am fitter to die than my sister is. Gesu, pardon me my sins, but I do not believe that I shall out live this day!”

In the meantime, Anina descended the hill slowly and trembling. She feared discovery,—she feared for her sister,—and above all, at the present moment, she feared the reproaches and anger of her father. By dwelling on this last idea, it became exaggerated into excessive terror, and she determined, instead of returning to her home, to make a circuit among the hills, to find her way by herself to Albano, where she trusted to find protection from her pastor and confessor. She avoided the open paths, and following rather the direction she wished to pursue than any beaten road, she passed along nearer to Rocca Giovane than she anticipated. She looked up at its ruined houses and bell-less steeple, straining her eyes to catch a glimpse of him, the author of all her ills. A low but distinct whistle reached her ear, not far off; she started,—she remembered that on the night when she last saw Domenico a note like that had called him from her side; the sound was echoed and re-echoed from other quarters; she stood aghast, her bosom heaving, her hands clasped. First she

saw a dark and ragged head of hair, shadowing two fiercely gleaming eyes, rise from beneath a bush. She screamed, but before she could repeat her scream three men leapt from behind a rock, secured her arms, threw a cloth over her face, and hurried her up the acclivity. Their talk, as she went along, informed her of the horror and danger of her situation.

Pity, they said, that the holy father and some of his red stockings did not command the troops: with a nun in their hands, they might obtain any terms. Coarse jests passed as they dragged their victim towards their ruined village. The paving of the street told her when they arrived at Rocca Giovane, and the change of atmosphere that they entered a house. They unbandaged her eyes: the scene was squalid and miserable, the walls ragged and black with smoke, the floor strewn with offals and dirt; a rude table and broken bench was all the furniture; and the leaves of Indian corn, heaped high in one corner, served, it seemed, for a bed, for a man lay on it, his head buried in his folded arms. Anina looked round on her savage hosts: their countenances expressed every variety of brutal ferocity, now rendered more dreadful from gaunt famine and suffering.

“Oh, there is none who will save me!” she cried. The voice startled the man who was lying on the floor; he lept up—it was Domenico: Domenico, so changed, with sunk cheeks and eyes, matted hair, and looks whose wildness and desperation differed little from the dark countenances around him. Could this be her lover?

His recognition and surprise at her dress led to an explanation. When the robbers first heard that their prey was no prize, they were mortified and angry; but when she related the danger she had incurred by endeavouring to bring them food, they swore with horrid oaths that no harm should befall her, but that if she liked she might make one of them in all honour and equality. The innocent girl shuddered. “Let me go,” she cried; “let me only escape and hide myself in a convent for ever!”

Domenico looked at her in agony. “Yes, poor child,” he said; “go save yourself: God

grant no evil befall you; the ruin is too wide already." Then turning eagerly to his comrades, he continued: "You hear her story. She was to have been shot for bringing food to us: her sister has substituted herself in her place. We know the French; one victim is to them as good as another: Maria dies in their hands. Let us save her. Our time is up; we must fall like men, or starve like dogs: we have still ammunition, still some strength left. To arms! let us rush on the poltroons, free their prisoner, and escape or die!"

There needed but an impulse like this to urge the outlaws to desperate resolves. They prepared their arms with looks of ferocious determination. Domenico, meanwhile, led Anina out of the house, to the verge of the hill, inquiring whether she intended to go. On her saying to Albano, he observed, "That were hardly safe; be guided by me, I entreat you: take these piastres, hire the first conveyance you find, hasten to Rome, to the convent of Santa Chiara: for pity's sake, do not linger in this neighbourhood."

"I will obey your injunctions, Domenico," she replied, "but I cannot take your money; it has cost you too dear: fear not, I shall arrive safely at Rome without that ill-fated silver."

Domenico's comrades now called loudly to him: he had no time to urge his request; he threw the despised dollars at her feet.

"Nina, adieu for ever," he said: "may you love again more happily!"

"Never!" she replied. "God has saved me in this dress; it were sacrilege to change it: I shall never quit Santa Chiara."

Domenico had led her a part of the way down the rock; his comrades appeared at the top, calling to him.

"Gesu save you!" cried he: "reach the convent—Maria shall join you there before night. Farewell!" He hastily kissed her hand, and sprang up the acclivity to rejoin his impatient friends.

The unfortunate Andrea had waited long for the return of his children. The leafless trees and bright clear atmosphere permitted every object to be visible, but he saw no trace of them on the hill-side; the shadows of the dial showed noon to be passed, when, with uncontrollable impatience, he began to climb the hill, towards the spot where Anina had been taken. The path he pursued was in part the same that this unhappy girl had taken on her way to Rome. The father and daughter met: the old man saw the nun's dress, and saw her unaccompanied: she covered her face with her hands in a transport of fear and shame; but when, mistaking her for Maria, he asked in a tone of anguish for his youngest darling, her arms fell—she dared not raise her eyes, which streamed with tears.

"Unhappy girl!" exclaimed Andrea, "where is your sister?"

She pointed to the cottage prison, now discernible near the summit of a steep acclivity. "She is safe," she replied: "she saved me; but they dare not murder her."

"Heaven bless her for this good deed!" exclaimed the old man fervently; "but you hasten on your way, and I will go in search of her."

Each proceeded on an opposite path. The old man wound up the hill, now in view, and now losing sight of the hut where his child was captive: he was aged, and the way was steep. Once, when the closing of the hill hid the point towards which he for ever strained his eyes, a single shot was fired in that direction: his staff fell from his hands, his knees trembled and failed him; several minutes of dead silence elapsed before he recovered himself sufficiently to proceed: full of fears he went on, and at the next turn saw the cot again. A party of soldiers were on the open space before it, drawn up in a line as if expecting an attack. In a few moments from above them shots were fired, which they returned, and the whole was enveloped and veiled in smoke. Still Andrea climbed the hill, eager to discover what had become of his child: the firing continued quick and hot. Now and then, in the pauses of musketry and the answering echoes of the mountains, he heard a funeral chant; presently,

before he was aware, at a turning of the hill, he met a company of priests and contadini, carrying a large cross and a bier. The miserable father rushed forward with frantic impatience; the awe-struck peasants set down their load—the face was uncovered, and the wretched man fell helpless on the corpse of his murdered child.

The Countess Atanasia paused, overcome by the emotions inspired by the history she related. A long pause ensued: at length one of the party observed, “Maria, then, was the sacrifice to her goodness.”

“The French,” said the countess, “did not venerate her holy vocation; one peasant girl to them was the same as another. The immolation of any victim suited their purpose of awe-striking the peasantry. Scarcely, however, had the shot entered her heart, and her blameless spirit been received by the saints in Paradise, when Domenico and his followers rushed down the hill to avenge her and themselves. The contest was furious and bloody; twenty French soldiers fell, and not one of the banditti escaped,—Domenico, the foremost of the assailants, being the first to fall.”

I asked, “And where are now Anina and her father?”

“You may see them, if you will,” said the countess, “on your return to Rome. She is a nun of Santa Chiara. Constant acts of benevolence and piety have inspired her with calm and resignation. Her prayers are daily put up for Domenico’s soul, and she hopes, through the intercession of the Virgin, to rejoin him in the other world.

“Andrea is very old; he has outlived the memory of his sufferings; but he derives comfort from the filial attentions of his surviving daughter. But when I look at his cottage on this lake, and remember the happy laughing face of Anina among the vines, I shudder at the recollection of the passion that has made her cheeks pale, her thoughts for ever conversant with death, her only wish to find repose in the grave.”

II. FERDINANDO EBOLI.

During this quiet time of peace we are fast forgetting the exciting and astonishing

events of the Napoleonic wars; and the very names of Europe's conquerors are becoming antiquated to the ears of our children. Those were more romantic days than these; for the revulsions occasioned by revolution or invasion were full of romance; and travellers in those countries in which these scenes had place hear strange and wonderful stories, whose truth so much resembles fiction, that, while interested in the narration, we never give implicit credence to the narrator. Of this kind is a tale I heard at Naples. The fortunes of war perhaps did not influence its actors, yet it appears improbable that any circumstances so out of the usual routine could have had place under the garish daylight that peace sheds upon the world.

When Murat, then called Gioacchino, king of Naples, raised his Italian regiments, several young nobles, who had before been scarcely more than vine-dressers on the soil, were inspired with a love of arms, and presented themselves as candidates for military honours. Among these was the young Count Eboli. The father of this youthful noble had followed Ferdinand to Sicily; but his estates lay principally near Salerno, and he was naturally desirous of preserving them; while the hopes that the French government held out of glory and prosperity to his country made him often regret that he had followed his legitimate but imbecile king to exile. When he died, therefore, he recommended his son to return to Naples, to present himself to his old and tried friend, the Marchese Spina, who held a high office in Murat's government, and through his means to reconcile himself to the new king. All this was easily achieved. The young and gallant Count was permitted to possess his patrimony; and, as a further pledge of good fortune, he was betrothed to the only child of the Marchese Spina. The nuptials were deferred till the end of the ensuing campaign.

Meanwhile the army was put in motion, and Count Eboli only obtained such short leave of absence as permitted him to visit for a few hours the villa of his future father-in-law, there to take leave of him and his affianced bride. The villa was situated on one of the Apennines to the north of Salerno, and looked down, over the plain of Calabria, in which Pæstum is situated, on to the blue Mediterranean. A

precipice on one side, a brawling mountain torrent, and a thick grove of ilex, added beauty to the sublimity of its site. Count Eboli ascended the mountain-path in all the joy of youth and hope. His stay was brief. An exhortation and a blessing from the Marchese, a tender farewell, graced by gentle tears, from the fair Adalinda, were the recollections he was to bear with him, to inspire him with courage and hope in danger and absence. The sun had just sunk behind the distant isle of Istria, when, kissing his lady's hand, he said a last "Addio," and with slower steps, and more melancholy mien, rode down the mountain on his road to Naples.

That same night Adalinda retired early to her apartment, dismissing her attendants; and then, restless from mingled fear and hope, she threw open the glass-door that led to a balcony looking over the edge of the hill upon the torrent, whose loud rushing often lulled her to sleep, but whose waters were concealed from sight by the ilex trees, which lifted their topmost branches above the guarding parapet of the balcony.

Leaning her cheek upon her hand, she thought of the dangers her lover would encounter, of her loneliness the while, of his letters, and of his return. A rustling sound now caught her ear. Was it the breeze among the ilex trees? Her own veil was unwaved by every wind, her tresses even, heavy in their own rich beauty only, were not lifted from her cheek. Again those sounds. Her blood retreated to her heart, and her limbs trembled. What could it mean? Suddenly the upper branches of the nearest tree were disturbed; they opened, and the faint starlight showed a man's figure among them. He prepared to spring from his hold on to the wall. It was a feat of peril. First the soft voice of her lover bade her "Fear not," and on the next instant he was at her side, calming her terrors, and recalling her spirits, that almost left her gentle frame, from mingled surprise, dread, and joy. He encircled her waist with his arm, and pouring forth a thousand passionate expressions of love, she leant on his shoulder, and wept from agitation, while he covered her hands with kisses, and gazed on her with ardent adoration.

Then in calmer mood they sat together; triumph and joy lighted up his eyes, and a modest blush glowed on her cheek: for never before had she sat alone with him, nor heard unrestrained his impassioned assurances of affection. It was, indeed, Love's own hour. The stars trembled on the roof of his eternal temple; the dashing of the torrent, the mild summer atmosphere, and the mysterious aspect of the darkened scenery, were all in unison to inspire security and voluptuous hope. They talked of how their hearts, through the medium of divine nature, might hold commune during absence; of the joys of reunion, and of their prospect of perfect happiness.

The moment at last arrived when he must depart. "One tress of this silken hair," said he, raising one of the many curls that clustered on her neck. "I will place it on my heart, a shield to protect me against the swords and balls of the enemy." He drew his keen-edged dagger from its sheath. "Ill weapon for so gentle a deed," he said, severing the lock, and at the same moment many drops of blood fell fast on the fair arm of the lady. He answered her fearful inquiries by showing a gash he had awkwardly inflicted on his left hand. First he insisted on securing his prize, and then he permitted her to bind his wound, which she did half laughing, half in sorrow, winding round his hand a riband loosened from her own arm. "Now, farewell," he cried; "I must ride twenty miles ere dawn, and the descending Bear shows that midnight is past." His descent was difficult, but he achieved it happily, and the stave of a song—whose soft sounds rose like the smoke of incense from an altar—from the dell below, to her impatient ear, assured her of his safety.

As is always the case when an account is gathered from eye-witnesses, I never could ascertain the exact date of these events. They occurred, however, while Murat was king of Naples; and when he raised his Italian regiments, Count Eboli, as aforesaid, became a junior officer in them, and served with much distinction, though I cannot name either the country or the battle in which he acted so conspicuous a part that he was on the spot promoted to a troop.

Not long after this event, and while he was stationed in the north of Italy, Gioacchino, sending for him to headquarters late one evening, entrusted him with a confidential mission, across a country occupied by the enemy's troops, to a town possessed by the French. It was necessary to undertake the expedition during the night, and he was expected to return on that succeeding the following day. The king himself gave him his despatches and the word; and the noble youth, with modest firmness, protested that he would succeed, or die, in the fulfilment of his trust.

It was already night, and the crescent moon was low in the west, when Count Ferdinando Eboli, mounting his favourite horse, at a quick gallop cleared the streets of the town; and then, following the directions given him, crossed the country among the fields planted with vines, carefully avoiding the main road. It was a beauteous and still night; calm and sleep occupied the earth; war, the blood-hound, slumbered; the spirit of love alone had life at that silent hour. Exulting in the hope of glory, our young hero commenced his journey, and visions of aggrandizement and love formed his reveries. A distant sound roused him: he checked his horse and listened; voices approached. When recognising the speech of a German, he turned from the path he was following, to a still straighter way. But again the tone of an enemy was heard, and the trampling of horses. Eboli did not hesitate; he dismounted, tied his steed to a tree, and, skirting along the enclosure of the field, trusted to escape thus unobserved. He succeeded after an hour's painful progress, and arrived on the borders of a stream, which, as the boundary between two states, was the mark of his having finally escaped danger. Descending the steep bank of the river, which, with his horse, he might perhaps have forded, he now prepared to swim. He held his despatch in one hand, threw away his cloak, and was about to plunge into the water, when from under the dark shade of the argine, which had concealed them, he was suddenly arrested by unseen hands, cast on the ground, bound, gagged, and blinded, and then placed into a little boat, which was sculled with infinite rapidity down the stream.

There seemed so much of premeditation in the act that it baffled conjecture, yet he must believe himself a prisoner to the Austrian. While, however, he still vainly reflected, the boat was moored, he was lifted out, and the change of atmosphere made him aware that they entered some house. With extreme care and celerity, yet in the utmost silence, he was stripped of his clothes, and two rings he wore drawn from his fingers; other habiliments were thrown over him; and then no departing footstep was audible; but soon he heard the splash of a single oar, and he felt himself alone. He lay perfectly unable to move, the only relief his captor or captors had afforded him being the exchange of the gag for a tightly-bound handkerchief. For hours he thus remained, with a tortured mind, bursting with rage, impatience, and disappointment; now writhing as well as he could in his endeavours to free himself, now still in despair. His despatches were taken away, and the period was swiftly passing when he could by his presence have remedied in some degree this evil. The morning dawned, and, though the full glare of the sun could not visit his eyes, he felt it play upon his limbs. As the day advanced, hunger preyed on him, and, though amidst the visitation of mightier, he at first disdained this minor, evil, towards evening it became, in spite of himself, the predominant sensation. Night approached, and the fear that he should remain, and even starve, in this unvisited solitude had more than once thrilled through his frame, when feminine voices and a child's gay laugh met his ear. He heard persons enter the apartment, and he was asked in his native language, while the ligature was taken from his mouth, the cause of his present situation. He attributed it to banditti. His bonds were quickly cut, and his banded eyes restored to sight. It was long before he recovered himself. Water brought from the stream, however, was some refreshment, and by degrees he resumed the use of his senses, and saw that he was in a dilapidated shepherd's cot, with no one near him save the peasant girl and a child, who had liberated him. They rubbed his ankles and wrists, and the little fellow offered him some bread and eggs, after which refreshment and an hour's repose Ferdinando felt himself sufficiently

restored to revolve his adventure in his mind, and to determine on the conduct he was to pursue.

He looked at the dress which had been given him in exchange for that which he had worn. It was of the plainest and meanest description. Still no time was to be lost; and he felt assured that the only step he could take was to return with all speed to the headquarters of the Neapolitan army, and inform the king of his disasters and his loss.

It were long to follow his backward steps, and to tell all of indignation and disappointment that swelled his heart. He walked painfully but resolutely all night, and by three in the morning entered the town where Gioacchino then was. He was challenged by the sentinels; he gave the word confided to him by Murat, and was instantly made prisoner by the soldiers. He declared to them his name and rank, and the necessity he was under of immediately seeing the king. He was taken to the guard-house, and the officer on duty there listened with contempt to his representations, telling him that Count Ferdinando Eboli had returned three hours before, ordering him to be confined for further examination as a spy. Eboli loudly insisted that some impostor had taken his name; and while he related the story of his capture, another officer came in, who recognised his person; other individuals acquainted with him joined the party; and as the impostor had been seen by none but the officer of the night, his tale gained ground.

A young Frenchman of superior rank, who had orders to attend the king early in the morning, carried a report of what was going forward to Murat himself. The tale was so strange that the king sent for the young Count; and then, in spite of having seen and believed in his counterfeit a few hours before, and having received from him an account of his mission, which had been faithfully executed, the appearance of the youth staggered him, and he commanded the presence of him who, as Count Eboli, had appeared before him a few hours previously. As Ferdinand stood beside the

king, his eye glanced at a large and splendid mirror. His matted hair, his bloodshot eyes, his haggard looks, and torn and mean dress, derogated from the nobility of his appearance; and still less did he appear like the magnificent Count Eboli, when, to his utter confusion and astonishment, his counterfeit stood beside him.

He was perfect in all the outward signs that denoted high birth; and so like him whom he represented, that it would have been impossible to discern one from the other apart. The same chestnut hair clustered on his brow; the sweet and animated hazel eyes were the same; the one voice was the echo of the other. The composure and dignity of the pretender gained the suffrages of those around. When he was told of the strange appearance of another Count Eboli, he laughed in a frank good-humoured manner, and, turning to Ferdinand, said, “You honour me much in selecting me for your personation; but there are two or three things I like about myself so well, that you must excuse my unwillingness to exchange myself for you.” Ferdinand would have answered, but the false Count, with greater haughtiness, turning to the king, said, “Will your majesty decide between us? I cannot bandy words with a fellow of this sort.” Irritated by scorn, Ferdinand demanded leave to challenge the pretender; who said, that if the king and his brother-officers did not think that he should degrade himself and disgrace the army by going out with a common vagabond, he was willing to chastise him, even at the peril of his own life. But the king, after a few more questions, feeling assured that the unhappy noble was an impostor, in severe and menacing terms reprehended him for his insolence, telling him that he owed it to his mercy alone that he was not executed as a spy, ordering him instantly to be conducted without the walls of the town, with threats of weighty punishment if he ever dared to subject his impostures to further trial.

It requires a strong imagination, and the experience of much misery, fully to enter into Ferdinand’s feelings. From high rank, glory, hope, and love, he was hurled to utter beggary and disgrace. The insulting words of his triumphant rival, and the degrading menaces of his so lately gracious sovereign, rang in his ears; every nerve

in his frame writhed with agony. But, fortunately for the endurance of human life, the worst misery in early youth is often but a painful dream, which we cast off when slumber quits our eyes. After a struggle with intolerable anguish, hope and courage revived in his heart. His resolution was quickly made. He would return to Naples, relate his story to the Marchese Spina, and through his influence obtain at least an impartial hearing from the king. It was not, however, in his peculiar situation, an easy task to put his determination into effect. He was penniless; his dress bespoke poverty; he had neither friend nor kinsman near, but such as would behold in him the most impudent of swindlers. Still his courage did not fail him. The kind Italian soil, in the autumnal season now advanced, furnished him with chestnuts, arbutus berries, and grapes. He took the most direct road over the hills, avoiding towns, and indeed every habitation; travelling principally in the night, when, except in cities, the officers of government had retired from their stations. How he succeeded in getting from one end of Italy to the other it is difficult to say; but certain it is, that, after the interval of a few weeks, he presented himself at the Villa Spina.

With considerable difficulty he obtained admission to the presence of the Marchese, who received him standing, with an inquiring look, not at all recognising the noble youth. Ferdinand requested a private interview, for there were several visitors present. His voice startled the Marchese, who complied, taking him into another apartment. Here Ferdinand disclosed himself, and, with rapid and agitated utterance, was relating the history of his misfortunes, when the tramp of horses was heard, the great bell rang, and a domestic announced “Count Ferdinando Eboli.” “It is himself,” cried the youth, turning pale. The words were strange, and they appeared still more so when the person announced entered; the perfect semblance of the young noble, whose name he assumed, as he had appeared when last at his departure, he trod the pavement of the hall. He inclined his head gracefully to the baron, turning with a glance of some surprise, but more disdain, towards Ferdinand, exclaiming, “Thou here!”

Ferdinand drew himself up to his full height. In spite of fatigue, ill-fare, and coarse garments, his manner was full of dignity. The Marchese looked at him fixedly, and started as he marked his proud mien, and saw in his expressive features the very face of Eboli. But again he was perplexed when he turned and discerned, as in a mirror, the same countenance reflected by the new-comer, who underwent this scrutiny somewhat impatiently. In brief and scornful words he told the Marchese that this was a second attempt in the intruder to impose himself as Count Eboli; that the trick had failed before, and would again; adding, laughing, that it was hard to be brought to prove himself to be himself, against the assertion of a briccone, whose likeness to him, and matchless impudence, were his whole stock-in-trade.

“Why, my good fellow,” continued he, sneeringly, “you put me out of conceit with myself, to think that one, apparently so like me, should get on no better in the world.”

The blood mounted into Ferdinand’s cheeks on his enemy’s bitter taunts; with difficulty he restrained himself from closing with his foe, while the words “traitorous impostor!” burst from his lips. The baron commanded the fierce youth to be silent, and, moved by a look that he remembered to be Ferdinand’s, he said gently, “By your respect for me, I adjure you to be patient; fear not but that I will deal impartially.” Then turning to the pretended Eboli, he added that he could not doubt but that he was the true Count, and asked excuse for his previous indecision. At first the latter appeared angry, but at length he burst into a laugh, and then, apologising for his ill-breeding, continued laughing heartily at the perplexity of the Marchese. It is certain his gaiety gained more credit with his auditor than the indignant glances of poor Ferdinand. The false Count then said that, after the king’s menaces, he had entertained no expectation that the farce was to be played over again. He had obtained leave of absence, of which he profited to visit his future father-in-law, after having spent a few days in his own palazzo at Naples. Until now Ferdinand had listened silently, with a feeling of curiosity, anxious to learn all he

could of the actions and motives of his rival; but at these last words he could no longer contain himself.

“What!” cried he, “hast thou usurped my place in my own father’s house, and dared assume my power in my ancestral halls?”

A gush of tears overpowered the youth; he hid his face in his hands. Fierceness and pride lit up the countenance of the pretender.

“By the eternal God and the sacred cross, I swear,” he exclaimed, “that palace is my father’s palace; those halls the halls of my ancestors!”

Ferdinand looked up with surprise: “And the earth opens not,” he said, “to swallow the perjured man.”

He then, at the call of the Marchese, related his adventures, while scorn mantled on the features of his rival. The Marchese, looking at both, could not free himself from doubt. He turned from one to the other: in spite of the wild and disordered appearance of poor Ferdinand, there was something in him that forbade his friend to condemn him as the impostor; but then it was utterly impossible to pronounce such the gallant and noble-looking youth, who could only be acknowledged as the real Count by the disbelief of the other’s tale. The Marchese, calling an attendant, sent for his fair daughter.

“This decision,” said he, “shall be made over to the subtle judgment of a woman, and the keen penetration of one who loves.”

Both the youths now smiled—the same smile; the same expression—that of anticipated triumph. The baron was more perplexed than ever.

Adalinda had heard of the arrival of Count Eboli, and entered, resplendent in youth and happiness. She turned quickly towards him who resembled most the person she expected to see; when a well-known voice pronounced her name, and she gazed aghast on the double appearance of the lover. Her father, taking her hand, briefly explained the mystery, and bade her assure herself which was her affianced husband.

“Signorina,” said Ferdinand, “disdain me not because I appear before you thus in disgrace and misery. Your love, your goodness will restore me to prosperity and happiness.”

“I know not by what means,” said the wondering girl, “but surely you are Count Eboli.”

“Adalinda,” said the rival youth, “waste not your words on a villain. Lovely and deceived one, I trust, trembling I say it, that I can with one word assure you that I am Eboli.”

“Adalinda,” said Ferdinand, “I placed the nuptial ring on your finger; before God your vows were given to me.”

The false Count approached the lady, and, bending one knee, took from his heart a locket, enclosing hair tied with a green riband, which she recognised to have worn, and pointed to a slight scar on his left hand.

Adalinda blushed deeply, and, turning to her father, said, motioning towards the kneeling youth,—

“He is Ferdinand.”

All protestations now from the unhappy Eboli were vain. The Marchese would have cast him into a dungeon; but at the earnest request of his rival, he was not detained, but thrust ignominiously from the villa. The rage of a wild beast newly chained was less than the tempest of indignation that now filled the heart of Ferdinand. Physical suffering, from the fatigue and fasting, was added to his internal anguish; for some hours madness, if that were madness which never forgets its ill, possessed him. In a tumult of feelings there was one predominant idea: it was to take possession of his father’s house, and to try, by ameliorating the fortuitous circumstances of his lot, to gain the upper hand of his adversary. He expended his remaining strength in reaching Naples, entered his family palace, and was received and acknowledged by his astonished domestics.

One of his first acts was to take from a cabinet a miniature of his father encircled with jewels, and to invoke the aid of the paternal spirit. Refreshment and a bath restored him to some of his usual strength; and he looked forward with almost childish delight to one night to be spent in peace under the roof of his father's house. This was not permitted. Ere midnight the great bell sounded: his rival entered as master, with the Marchese Spina. The result may be divined. The Marchese appeared more indignant than the false Eboli. He insisted that the unfortunate youth should be imprisoned. The portrait, whose setting was costly, found on him, proved him guilty of robbery. He was given into the hands of the police, and thrown into a dungeon. I will not dwell on the subsequent scenes. He was tried by the tribunal, condemned as guilty, and sentenced to the galleys for life.

On the eve of the day when he was to be removed from the Neapolitan prison to work on the roads in Calabria, his rival visited him in his dungeon. For some moments both looked at the other in silence. The impostor gazed on the prisoner with mingled pride and compassion: there was evidently a struggle in his heart. The answering glance of Ferdinand was calm, free, and dignified. He was not resigned to his hard fate, but he disdained to make any exhibition of despair to his cruel and successful foe. A spasm of pain seemed to wrench the bosom of the false one; and he turned aside, striving to recover the hardness of heart which had hitherto supported him in the prosecution of his guilty enterprise. Ferdinand spoke first.

"What would the triumphant criminal with his innocent victim?"

His visitant replied haughtily, "Do not address such epithets to me, or I leave you to your fate: I am that which I say I am."

"To me this boast!" cried Ferdinand scornfully; "but perhaps these walls have ears."

"Heaven, at least, is not deaf," said the deceiver; "favouring Heaven, which knows and admits my claim. But a truce to this idle discussion. Compassion—a distaste to see one so very like myself in such ill condition—a foolish whim, perhaps, on which

you may congratulate yourself—has led me hither. The bolts of your dungeon are drawn; here is a purse of gold; fulfil one easy condition, and you are free."

"And that condition?"

"Sign this paper."

He gave to Ferdinand a writing, containing a confession of his imputed crimes. The hand of the guilty youth trembled as he gave it; there was confusion in his mien, and a restless uneasy rolling of his eye. Ferdinand wished in one mighty word, potent as lightning, loud as thunder, to convey his burning disdain of this proposal: but expression is weak, and calm is more full of power than storm. Without a word, he tore the paper in two pieces and threw them at the feet of his enemy.

With a sudden change of manner, his visitant conjured him, in voluble and impetuous terms, to comply. Ferdinand answered only by requesting to be left alone. Now and then a half word broke uncontrollably from his lips; but he curbed himself. Yet he could not hide his agitation when, as an argument to make him yield, the false Count assured him that he was already married to Adalinda. Bitter agony thrilled poor Ferdinand's frame; but he preserved a calm mien, and an unaltered resolution. Having exhausted every menace and every persuasion, his rival left him, the purpose for which he came unaccomplished. On the morrow, with many others, the refuse of mankind, Count Ferdinando Eboli was led in chains to the unwholesome plains of Calabria, to work there at the roads.

I must hurry over some of the subsequent events, for a detailed account of them would fill volumes. The assertion of the usurper of Ferdinand's right, that he was already married to Adalinda, was, like all else he said, false. The day was, however, fixed for their union, when the illness and the subsequent death of the Marchese Spina delayed its celebration. Adalinda retired during the first months of mourning to a castle belonging to her father not far from Arpino, a town of the kingdom of Naples, in the midst of the Apennines, about 50 miles from the capital. Before she

went, the deceiver tried to persuade her to consent to a private marriage. He was probably afraid that, in the long interval that was about to ensue before he could secure her, she would discover his imposture. Besides, a rumour had gone abroad that one of the fellow-prisoners of Ferdinand, a noted bandit, had escaped, and that the young count was his companion in flight. Adalinda, however, refused to comply with her lover's entreaties, and retired to her seclusion with an old aunt, who was blind and deaf, but an excellent duenna. The false Eboli seldom visited his mistress; but he was a master in his art, and subsequent events showed that he must have spent all his time, disguised, in the vicinity of the castle. He contrived by various means, unsuspected at the moment, to have all Adalinda's servants changed for creatures of his own; so that, without her being aware of the restraint, she was, in fact, a prisoner in her own house. It is impossible to say what first awakened her suspicions concerning the deception put upon her. She was an Italian, with all the habitual quiescence and lassitude of her countrywomen in the ordinary routine of life, and with all their energy and passion when roused. The moment the doubt darted into her mind she resolved to be assured. A few questions relative to scenes that had passed between poor Ferdinand and herself sufficed for this. They were asked so suddenly and pointedly that the pretender was thrown off his guard; he looked confused, and stammered in his replies. Their eyes met; he felt that he was detected, and she saw that he perceived her now confirmed suspicions. A look such as is peculiar to an impostor—a glance that deformed his beauty, and filled his usually noble countenance with the hideous lines of cunning and cruel triumph—completed her faith in her own discernment. "How," she thought, "could I have mistaken this man for my own gentle Eboli?" Again their eyes met. The peculiar expression of his terrified her, and she hastily quitted the apartment.

Her resolution was quickly formed. It was of no use to attempt to explain her situation to her old aunt. She determined to depart immediately for Naples, throw herself at the feet of Gioacchino, and to relate and obtain credit for her strange

history. But the time was already lost when she could have executed this design. The contrivances of the deceiver were complete—she found herself a prisoner. Excess of fear gave her boldness, if not courage. She sought her jailor. A few minutes before she had been a young and thoughtless girl, docile as a child, and as unsuspecting; now she felt as if she had suddenly grown old in wisdom, and that the experience of years had been gained in that of a few seconds.

During their interview she was wary and firm, while the instinctive power of innocence over guilt gave majesty to her demeanour. The contriver of her ills for a moment cowered beneath her eye. At first he would by no means allow that he was not the person he pretended to be, but the energy and eloquence of truth bore down his artifice, so that, at length driven into a corner, he turned—a stag at bay. Then it was her turn to quail, for the superior energy of a man gave him the mastery. He declared the truth: he was the elder brother of Ferdinand, a natural son of the old Count Eboli. His mother, who had been wronged, never forgave her injurer, and bred her son in deadly hate for his parent, and a belief that the advantages enjoyed by his more fortunate brother were rightfully his own. His education was rude; but he had an Italian's subtle talents, swiftness of perception, and guileful arts.

"It would blanch your cheek," he said to his trembling auditress, "could I describe all that I have suffered to achieve my purpose. I would trust to none—I executed all myself. It was a glorious triumph, but due to my perseverance and my fortitude, when I and my usurping brother stood—I, the noble, he, the degraded outcast—before our sovereign."

Having rapidly detailed his history, he now sought to win the favourable ear of Adalinda, who stood with averted and angry looks. He tried by the varied shows of passion and tenderness to move her heart. Was he not, in truth, the object of her love? Was it not he who scaled her balcony at Villa Spina? He recalled scenes of mutual overflow of feeling to her mind, thus urging arguments the most potent with

a delicate woman. Pure blushes tinged her cheek, but horror of the deceiver predominated over every other sentiment. He swore that as soon as they should be united he would free Ferdinand, and bestow competency, nay, if so she willed it, half his possessions on him. She coldly replied, that she would rather share the chains of the innocent, and misery, than link herself with imposture and crime. She demanded her liberty; but the untamed and even ferocious nature that had borne the deceiver through his career of crime now broke forth, and he invoked fearful imprecations on his head if she ever quitted the castle except as his wife. His look of conscious power and unbridled wickedness terrified her; her flashing eyes spoke abhorrence. It would have been far easier for her to have died than have yielded the smallest point to a man who had made her feel for one moment his irresistible power, arising from her being an unprotected woman, wholly in his hands. She left him, feeling as if she had just escaped from the impending sword of an assassin.

One hour's deliberation suggested to her a method of escape from her terrible situation. In a wardrobe at the castle lay, in their pristine gloss, the habiliments of a page of her mother, who had died suddenly, leaving these unworn relics of his station. Dressing herself in these, she tied up her dark shining hair, and even, with a somewhat bitter feeling, girded on the slight sword that appertained to the costume. Then, through a private passage leading from her own apartment to the chapel of the castle, she glided with noiseless steps, long after the Ave Maria, sounded at four o'clock, had, on a November night, given token that half an hour had passed since the setting of the sun. She possessed the key of the chapel door—it opened at her touch; she closed it behind her, and she was free. The pathless hills were around her, the starry heavens above, and a cold wintry breeze murmured around the castle walls; but fear of her enemy conquered every other fear, and she tripped lightly on in a kind of ecstasy for many a long hour over the stony mountain path—she, who had never before walked more than a mile or two from home at any time in her life—till her feet were blistered, her slight shoes cut through, her way utterly lost. At

morning's dawn she found herself in the midst of the wild ilex-covered Apennines, and neither habitation nor human being apparent.

She was hungry and weary. She had brought gold and jewels with her; but here were no means of exchanging these for food. She remembered stories of banditti, but none could be so ruffian-like and cruel as him from whom she fled. This thought, a little rest, and a draught of water from a pure mountain-spring, restored her to some portion of courage, and she continued her journey. Noonday approached; and, in the south of Italy, the noonday sun, when unclouded, even in November, is oppressively warm, especially to an Italian woman, who never exposes herself to its beams. Faintness came over her. There appeared recesses in the mountain sides along which she was travelling, grown over with bay and arbutus: she entered one of these, there to repose. It was deep, and led to another that opened into a spacious cavern lighted from above: there were cates, grapes, and a flagon of wine on a rough-hewn table. She looked fearfully around, but no inhabitant appeared. She placed herself at the table, and, half in dread, ate of the food presented to her; and then sat, her elbow on the table, her head resting on her little snow-white hand, her dark hair shading her brow and clustering round her throat. An appearance of languor and fatigue was diffused through her attitude, while her soft black eyes filled at intervals with large tears as, pitying herself, she recurred to the cruel circumstances of her lot. Her fanciful but elegant dress, her feminine form, her beauty and her grace, as she sat pensive and alone in the rough unhewn cavern, formed a picture a poet would describe with delight, an artist love to paint.

"She seemed a being of another world; a seraph, all light and beauty: a Ganymede, escaped from his thrall above to his natal Ida. It was long before I recognised, looking down on her from the opening hill, my lost Adalinda." Thus spoke the young Count Eboli, when he related this story; for its end was as romantic as its commencement.

When Ferdinando had arrived, a galley-slave in Calabria, he found himself coupled with a bandit, a brave fellow, who abhorred his chains, from love of freedom, as much as his fellow-prisoner did, from all the combination of disgrace and misery they brought upon him. Together they devised a plan of escape, and succeeded in effecting it. On their road, Ferdinand related his story to the outlaw, who encouraged him to hope for a favourable turn of fate; and meanwhile invited and persuaded the desperate man to share his fortunes as a robber among the wild hills of Calabria.

The cavern where Adalinda had taken refuge was one of their fastnesses, whither they betook themselves at periods of imminent danger for safety only, as no booty could be collected in that unpeopled solitude; and there, one afternoon, returning from the chase, they found the wandering, fearful, solitary, fugitive girl; and never was lighthouse more welcome to tempest-tossed sailor than was her own Ferdinand to his lady-love.

Fortune, now tired of persecuting the young noble, favoured him still further. The story of the lovers interested the bandit chief, and promise of reward secured him. Ferdinand persuaded Adalinda to remain one night in the cave, and on the following morning they prepared to proceed to Naples; but at the moment of their departure they were surprised by an unexpected visitant: the robbers brought in a prisoner—it was the impostor. Missing on the morrow her who was the pledge of his safety and success, but assured that she could not have wandered far, he despatched emissaries in all directions to seek her; and himself, joining in the pursuit, followed the road she had taken, and was captured by these lawless men, who expected rich ransom from one whose appearance denoted rank and wealth. When they discovered who their prisoner was, they generously delivered him up into his brother’s hands.

Ferdinand and Adalinda proceeded to Naples. On their arrival, she presented herself to Queen Caroline; and, through her, Murat heard with astonishment the device that had been practised on him. The young Count was restored to his honours and

possessions, and within a few months afterwards was united to his betrothed bride.

The compassionate nature of the Count and Countess led them to interest themselves warmly in the fate of Ludovico, whose subsequent career was more honourable but less fortunate. At the intercession of his relative, Gioacchino permitted him to enter the army, where he distinguished himself, and obtained promotion. The brothers were at Moscow together, and mutually assisted each other during the horrors of the retreat. At one time overcome by drowsiness, the mortal symptom resulting from excessive cold, Ferdinand lingered behind his comrades; but Ludovico, refusing to leave him, dragged him on in spite of himself, till, entering a village, food and fire restored him, and his life was saved. On another evening, when wind and sleet added to the horror of their situation, Ludovico, after many ineffective struggles, slid from his horse lifeless; Ferdinand was at his side, and, dismounting, endeavoured by every means in his power to bring back pulsation to his stagnant blood. His comrades went forward, and the young Count was left alone with his dying brother in the white boundless waste. Once Ludovico opened his eyes and recognised him; he pressed his hand, and his lips moved to utter a blessing as he died. At that moment the welcome sounds of the enemy's approach roused Ferdinand from the despair into which his dreadful situation plunged him. He was taken prisoner, and his life was thus saved. When Napoleon went to Elba, he, with many others of his countrymen, was liberated, and returned to Naples.

III. THE EVIL EYE.

"The wild Albanian kirtled to his knee,

With shawl-girt head, and ornamented gun,

And gold-embroider'd garments, fair to see;

The crimson-scarfed man of Macedon."

—Lord Byron.

The Moreot, Katusthius Ziani, travelled wearily, and in fear of its robber-inhabitants, through the pashalik of Yannina; yet he had no cause for dread. Did he arrive, tired and hungry, in a solitary village,—did he find himself in the uninhabited wilds suddenly surrounded by a band of klephts,—or in the larger towns did he shrink at finding himself, sole of his race, among the savage mountaineers and despotic Turk,—as soon as he announced himself the Pobratimo[1] of Dmitri of the Evil Eye, every hand was held out, every voice spoke welcome.

1. In Greece, especially in Illyria and Epirus, it is no uncommon thing for persons of the same sex to swear friendship. The Church contains a ritual to consecrate this vow. Two men thus united are called pobratimi, the women posestrime.

The Albanian, Dmitri, was a native of the village of Korvo. Among the savage mountains of the district between Yannina and Terpellenè, the deep broad stream of Argyro-Castro flows; bastioned to the west by abrupt wood-covered precipices, shadowed to the east by elevated mountains. The highest among these is Mount Trebucci; and in a romantic folding of that hill, distinct with minarets, crowned by a dome rising from out a group of pyramidal cypresses, is the picturesque village of Korvo. Sheep and goats form the apparent treasure of its inhabitants; their guns and yataghans, their warlike habits, and, with them, the noble profession of robbery, are sources of still greater wealth. Among a race renowned for dauntless courage and sanguinary enterprise, Dmitri was distinguished.

It was said that in his youth this klepht was remarkable for a gentler disposition and more refined taste than is usual with his countrymen. He had been a wanderer, and had learned European arts, of which he was not a little proud. He could read and write Greek, and a book was often stowed beside his pistols in his girdle. He had spent several years in Scio, the most civilised of the Greek islands, and had married a Sciote girl. The Albanians are characterized as despisers of women; but Dmitri, in becoming the husband of Helena, enlisted under a more chivalrous rule, and became

the proselyte of a better creed. Often he returned to his native hills, and fought under the banner of the renowned Ali, and then came back to his island home. The love of the tamed barbarian was concentrated, burning, and something beyond this: it was a portion of his living, beating heart,—the nobler part of himself,—the diviner mould in which his rugged nature had been recast.

On his return from one of his Albanian expeditions he found his home ravaged by the Mainotes. Helena—they pointed to her tomb, nor dared tell him how she died; his only child, his lovely infant daughter, was stolen; his treasure-house of love and happiness was rifled, its gold-excelling wealth changed to blank desolation. Dmitri spent three years in endeavours to recover his lost offspring. He was exposed to a thousand dangers, underwent incredible hardships. He dared the wild beast in his lair, the Mainote in his port of refuge; he attacked, and was attacked by them. He wore the badge of his daring in a deep gash across his eyebrow and cheek. On this occasion he had died, but that Katusthius, seeing a scuffle on shore and a man left for dead, disembarked from a Moreot sacovela, carried him away, tended and cured him. They exchanged vows of friendship, and for some time the Albanian shared his brother's toils; but they were too pacific to suit his taste, and he returned to Korvo.

Who in the mutilated savage could recognise the handsomest amongst the Arnaoots? His habits kept pace with his change of physiognomy: he grew ferocious and hardhearted; he only smiled when engaged in dangerous enterprise. He had arrived at that worst state of ruffian feeling, the taking delight in blood. He grew old in these occupations; his mind became reckless, his countenance more dark; men trembled before his glance, women and children exclaimed in terror, "The Evil Eye!" The opinion became prevalent; he shared it himself; he gloried in the dread privilege; and when his victim shivered and withered beneath the mortal influence, the fiendish laugh with which he hailed this demonstration of his power struck with worse dismay the failing heart of the fascinated person. But Dmitri could command the arrows of his sight; and his comrades respected him the more for his supernatural

attribute since they did not fear the exercise of it on themselves.

Dmitri had just returned from an expedition beyond Prevesa. He and his comrades were laden with spoil. They killed and roasted a goat whole for their repast; they drank dry several wine skins; then, round the fire in the court, they abandoned themselves to the delights of the kerchief dance, roaring out the chorus as they dropped upon and then rebounded from their knees, and whirled round and round with an activity all their own. The heart of Dmitri was heavy; he refused to dance, and sat apart, at first joining in the song with his voice and lute, till the air changed to one that reminded him of better days. His voice died away, his instrument dropped from his hands, and his head sank upon his breast.

At the sound of stranger footsteps he started up; in the form before him he surely recognised a friend—he was not mistaken. With a joyful exclamation he welcomed Katusthius Ziani, clasping his hand and kissing him on the cheek. The traveller was weary, so they retired to Dmitri's own home,—a neatly plastered, white-washed cottage, whose earthen floor was perfectly dry and clean, and the walls hung with arms—some richly ornamented—and other trophies of his klephtic triumphs. A fire was kindled by his aged female attendant; the friends reposed on mats of white rushes while she prepared the pilaf and seethed flesh of kid. She placed a bright tin-tray on a block of wood before them, and heaped upon it cakes of Indian corn, goat's-milk cheese, eggs, and olives; a jar of water from their purest spring, and skin of wine, served to refresh and cheer the thirsty traveller.

After supper the guest spoke of the object of his visit.

"I come to my pobratimo," he said, "to claim the performance of his vow. When I rescued you from the savage Kakovougnis of Boularias, you pledged to me your gratitude and faith; do you disclaim the debt?"

Dmitri's brow darkened. "My brother," he cried, "need not remind me of what I owe. Command my life; in what can the mountain klepht aid the son of the wealthy

Ziani!”

“The son of Ziani is a beggar,” rejoined Katusthius, “and must perish if his brother deny his assistance.”

The Moreot then told his tale. He had been brought up as the only son of a rich merchant of Corinth. He had often sailed as caravokeiri[2] of his father’s vessels to Stamboul, and even to Calabria. Some years before he had been boarded and taken by a Barbary corsair. His life since then had been adventurous, he said; in truth, it had been a guilty one;—he had become a renegade,—and won regard from his new allies, not by his superior courage, for he was cowardly, but by the frauds that make men wealthy. In the midst of this career some superstition had influenced him, and he had returned to his ancient religion. He escaped from Africa, wandered through Syria, crossed to Europe, found occupation in Constantinople; and thus years passed. At last, as he was on the point of marriage with a Fanariote beauty, he fell again into poverty, and he returned to Corinth to see if his father’s fortunes had prospered during his long wanderings. He found that while these had improved to a wonder, they were lost to him for ever. His father, during his protracted absence, acknowledged another son as his; and, dying a year before, had left all to him. Katusthius found this unknown kinsman, with his wife and child, in possession of his expected inheritance. Cyril divided with him, it is true, their parent’s property, but Katusthius grasped at all, and resolved to obtain it. He brooded over a thousand schemes of murder and revenge; yet the blood of a brother was sacred to him, and Cyril, beloved and respected at Corinth, could only be attacked with considerable risk. Then his child was a fresh obstacle. As the best plan that presented itself, he hastily embarked for Butrinto, and came to claim the advice and assistance of the Arnaoot whose life he had saved, whose pobratimo he was. Not thus barely did he tell his tale, but glossed it over; so that had Dmitri needed the incitement of justice, which was not at all a desideratum with him, he would have been satisfied that Cyril was a base interloper, and that the whole transaction was one of imposture and

villainy.

2. Master of a merchant ship.

All night these men discussed a variety of projects, whose aim was, that the deceased Ziani's wealth should pass undivided into his elder son's hands. At morning's dawn Katusthius departed, and two days afterwards Dmitri quitted his mountain-home. His first care had been to purchase a horse, long coveted by him on account of its beauty and fleetness; he provided cartridges and replenished his powder-horn. His accoutrements were rich, his dress gay; his arms glittered in the sun. His long hair fell straight from under the shawl twisted round his cap, even to his waist; a shaggy white capote hung from his shoulder; his face wrinkled and puckered by exposure to the seasons; his brow furrowed with care; his mustachios long and jet-black; his scarred face; his wild, savage eyes;—his whole appearance, not deficient in barbaric grace, but stamped chiefly with ferocity and bandit pride, inspired, and we need not wonder, the superstitious Greek with a belief that a supernatural spirit of evil dwelt in his aspect, blasting and destroying. Now prepared for his journey, he departed from Korvo, crossing the woods of Acarnania, on his way to Morea.

"Wherefore does Zella tremble, and press her boy to her bosom, as if fearful of evil?" Thus asked Cyril Ziani, returning from the city of Corinth to his own rural abode. It was a home of beauty. The abruptly broken hills covered with olives, or brighter plantations of orange-trees, overlooked the blue waves of the Gulf of Egina. A myrtle underwood spread sweet scent around, and dipped its dark shining leaves into the sea itself. The low-roofed house was shaded by two enormous fig-trees, while vineyards and corn-land stretched along the gentle upland to the north. When Zella saw her husband she smiled, though her cheek was still pale and her lips quivering. "Now you are near to guard us," she said, "I dismiss fear; but danger threatens our Constans, and I shudder to remember that an Evil Eye has been upon

him."

Cyril caught up his child. "By my head!" he cried, "thou speakest of an ill thing. The Franks call this superstition; but let us beware. His cheek is still rosy; his tresses flowing gold. Speak, Constans; hail thy father, my brave fellow!"

It was but a short-lived fear; no ill ensued, and they soon forgot an incident which had causelessly made their hearts to quail. A week afterwards Cyril returned, as he was wont, from shipping a cargo of currants, to his retreat on the coast. It was a beautiful summer evening: the creaking water-wheel, which produced the irrigation of the land, chimed in with the last song of the noisy cicala; the rippling waves spent themselves almost silently among the shingles. This was his home; but where its lovely flower? Zella did not come forth to welcome him. A domestic pointed to a chapel on a neighbouring acclivity, and there he found her; his child (nearly three years of age) was in his nurse's arms; his wife was praying fervently, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. Cyril demanded anxiously the meaning of this scene; but the nurse sobbed; Zella continued to pray and weep; and the boy, from sympathy, began to cry. This was too much for man to endure. Cyril left the chapel; he leant against a walnut-tree. His first exclamation was a customary Greek one, "Welcome this misfortune, so that it come single!" But what was the ill that had occurred? Unapparent was it yet; but the spirit of evil is most fatal when unseen. He was happy,—a lovely wife, a blooming child, a peaceful home, competence, and the prospect of wealth; these blessings were his: yet how often does Fortune use such as her decoys? He was a slave in an enslaved land, a mortal subject to the high destinies, and ten thousand were the envenomed darts which might be hurled at his devoted head. Now, timid and trembling, Zella came from the chapel: her explanation did not calm his fears. Again the Evil Eye had been on his child, and deep malignity lurked surely under this second visitation. The same man, an Arnaoot, with glittering arms, gay attire, mounted on a black steed, came from the neighbouring ilex grove, and, riding furiously up to the door, suddenly checked and

reined in his horse at the very threshold. The child ran towards him: the Arnaoot bent his sinister eyes upon him:—“Lovely art thou, bright infant,” he cried; “thy blue eyes are beaming, thy golden tresses fair to see; but thou art a vision fleeting as beautiful;—look at me!” The innocent looked up, uttered a shriek, and fell gasping on the ground. The women rushed forward to seize him; the Albanian put spurs to his horse, and, galloping swiftly across the little plain, up the wooded hill-side, he was soon lost to sight. Zella and the nurse bore the child to the chapel; they sprinkled him with holy water, and, as he revived, besought the Panagia with earnest prayers to save him from the menaced ill.

Several months elapsed; little Constans grew in intelligence and beauty; no blight had visited the flower of love, and its parents dismissed fear. Sometimes Cyril indulged in a joke at the expense of the Evil Eye; but Zella thought it unlucky to laugh, and crossed herself whenever the event was alluded to. At this time Katusthius visited their abode—“He was on his way,” he said, “to Stamboul, and he came to know whether he could serve his brother in any of his transactions in the capital.” Cyril and Zella received him with cordial affection: they rejoiced to perceive that fraternal love was beginning to warm his heart. He seemed full of ambition and hope: the brothers discussed his prospects, the politics of Europe, and the intrigues of the Fanar: the petty affairs of Corinth even were made subjects of discourse; and the probability that in a short time, young as he was, Cyril would be named Codja-Bashee of the province. On the morrow, Katusthius prepared to depart. “One favour does the voluntary exile ask—will my brother and sister accompany me some hours on my way to Napoli, whence I embark?”

Zella was unwilling to quit her home, even for a short interval; but she suffered herself to be persuaded, and they proceeded altogether for several miles towards the capital of the Morea. At noontide they made a repast under the shadow of a grove of oaks, and then separated. Returning homeward, the wedded pair congratulated themselves on their tranquil life and peaceful happiness, contrasted with the

wanderer's lonely and homeless pleasures. These feelings increased in intensity as they drew nearer their dwelling, and anticipated the lisped welcome of their idolized child. From an eminence they looked upon the fertile vale which was their home: it was situated on the southern side of the isthmus, and looked upon the Gulf of Egina—all was verdant, tranquil, and beautiful. They descended into the plain; there a singular appearance attracted their attention. A plough with its yoke of oxen had been deserted midway in the furrow; the animals had dragged it to the side of the field, and endeavoured to repose as well as their conjunction permitted. The sun already touched its western bourne, and the summits of the trees were gilded by its parting beams. All was silent; even the eternal water-wheel was still; no menials appeared at their usual rustic labours. From the house the voice of wailing was too plainly heard.—"My child!" Zella exclaimed. Cyril began to reassure her; but another lament arose, and he hurried on. She dismounted, and would have followed him, but sank on the road-side. Her husband returned. "Courage, my beloved," he cried; "I will not repose night nor day until Constans is restored to us—trust to me—farewell!" With these words he rode swiftly on. Her worst fears were thus confirmed; her maternal heart, lately so joyous, became the abode of despair, while the nurse's narration of the sad occurrence tended but to add worse fear to fear. Thus it was: the same stranger of the Evil Eye had appeared, not as before, bearing down on them with eagle speed, but as if from a long journey; his horse lame and with drooping head; the Arnaoot himself covered with dust, apparently scarcely able to keep his seat. "By the life of your child," he said, "give a cup of water to one who faints with thirst." The nurse, with Constans in her arms, got a bowl of the desired liquid, and presented it. Ere the parched lips of the stranger touched the wave, the vessel fell from his hands. The woman started back, while he, at the same moment darting forward, tore with strong arm the child from her embrace. Already both were gone—with arrowy speed they traversed the plain, while her shrieks, and cries for assistance, called together all the domestics. They followed on the track of the

ravisher, and none had yet returned. Now as night closed in, one by one they came back: they had nothing to relate; they had scoured the woods, crossed the hills—they could not even discover the route which the Albanian had taken.

On the following day Cyril returned, jaded, haggard, miserable; he had obtained no tidings of his son. On the morrow he again departed on his quest, nor came back for several days. Zella passed her time wearily—now sitting in hopeless despondency, now climbing the near hill to see whether she could perceive the approach of her husband. She was not allowed to remain long thus tranquil; the trembling domestics, left in guard, warned her that the savage forms of several Arnaoots had been seen prowling about: she herself saw a tall figure, clad in a shaggy white capote, steal round the promontory, and, on seeing her, shrink back: once at night the snorting and trampling of a horse roused her, not from slumber, but from her sense of security. Wretched as the bereft mother was, she felt personally almost reckless of danger; but she was not her own, she belonged to one beyond expression dear; and duty, as well as affection for him, enjoined self-preservation. Cyril, again returned: he was gloomier, sadder than before; but there was more resolution on his brow, more energy in his motions; he had obtained a clue, yet it might only lead him to the depths of despair.

He discovered that Katusthius had not embarked at Napoli. He had joined a band of Arnaoots lurking about Vasilico, and had proceeded to Patras with the Protoklepht; thence they put off together in a monoxylon for the northern shores of the Gulf of Lepanto: nor were they alone; they bore a child with them wrapt in a heavy torpid sleep. Poor Cyril’s blood ran cold when he thought of the spells and witchcraft which had probably been put in practice on his boy. He would have followed close upon the robbers, but for the report that reached him that the remainder of the Albanians had proceeded southward towards Corinth. He could not enter upon a long wandering search among the pathless wilds of Epirus, leaving Zella exposed to the attacks of these bandits. He returned to consult with her, to devise some plan of

action which would at once ensure her safety and promise success to his endeavours.

After some hesitation and discussion, it was decided that he should first conduct her to her native home, consult with her father as to his present enterprise, and be guided by his warlike experience before he rushed into the very focus of danger. The seizure of his child might only be a lure, and it were not well for him, sole protector of that child and its mother, to rush unadvisedly into the toils.

Zella, strange to say, for her blue eyes and brilliant complexion belied her birth, was the daughter of a Mainote: yet dreaded and abhorred by the rest of the world as are the inhabitants of Cape Tænarus, they are celebrated for their domestic virtues and the strength of their private attachments. Zella loved her father, and the memory of her rugged rocky home, from which she had been torn in an adverse hour. Near neighbours of the Mainotes, dwelling in the ruder and wildest portion of Maina, are the Kakovougnis, a dark suspicious race, of squat and stunted form, strongly contrasted with the tranquil cast of countenance characteristic of the Mainote. The two tribes are embroiled in perpetual quarrels; the narrow sea-girt abode which they share affords at once a secure place of refuge from the foreign enemy and all the facilities of internal mountain warfare. Cyril had once, during a coasting voyage, been driven by stress of weather into the little bay on whose shores is placed the small town of Kardamyla. The crew at first dreaded to be captured by the pirates; but they were reassured on finding them fully occupied by their domestic dissensions. A band of Kakovougnis were besieging the castellated rock overlooking Kardamyla, blockading the fortress in which the Mainote Capitano and his family had taken refuge. Two days passed thus, while furious contrary winds detained Cyril in the bay. On the third evening the western gale subsided, and a land-breeze promised to emancipate them from their perilous condition; when in the night, as they were about to put off in a boat from shore, they were hailed by a party of Mainotes, and one, an old man of commanding figure, demanded a parley. He was the Capitano of Kardamyla, the chief of the fortress, now attacked by his implacable

enemies: he saw no escape—he must fall—and his chief desire was to save his treasure and his family from the hands of his enemies. Cyril consented to receive them on board: the latter consisted of an old mother, a paramana, and a young and beautiful girl, his daughter. Cyril conducted them in safety to Napoli. Soon after the Capitano's mother and paramana returned to their native town, while, with her father's consent, fair Zella became the wife of her preserver. The fortunes of the Mainote had prospered since then, and he stood first in rank, the chief of a large tribe, the Capitano of Kardamyla.

Thither then the hapless parents repaired; they embarked on board a small sacovela, which dropt down the Gulf of Egina, weathered the islands of Skyllo and Cerigo, and the extreme point of Tænarus: favoured by prosperous gales, they made the desired port, and arrived at the hospitable mansion of old Camaraz. He heard their tale with indignation; swore by his beard to dip his poniard in the best blood of Katusthius, and insisted upon accompanying his son-in-law on his expedition to Albania. No time was lost—the grey-headed mariner, still full of energy, hastened every preparation. Cyril and Zella parted; a thousand fears, a thousand hours of misery rose between the pair, late sharers in perfect happiness. The boisterous sea and distant lands were the smallest of the obstacles that divided them; they would not fear the worst; yet hope, a sickly plant, faded in their hearts as they tore themselves asunder after a last embrace.

Zella returned from the fertile district of Corinth to her barren native rocks. She felt all joy expire as she viewed from the rugged shore the lessening sails of the sacovela. Days and weeks passed, and still she remained in solitary and sad expectation: she never joined in the dance, nor made one in the assemblies of her countrywomen, who met together at evening-tide to sing, tell stories, and wile away the time in dance and gaiety. She secluded herself in the most lonely part of her father's house, and gazed unceasingly from the lattice upon the sea beneath, or wandered on the rocky beach; and when tempest darkened the sky, and each

precipitous promontory grew purple under the shadows of the wide-winged clouds, when the roar of the surges was on the shore, and the white crests of the waves, seen afar upon the ocean-plain, showed like flocks of new-shorn sheep scattered along wide-extended downs, she felt neither gale nor inclement cold, nor returned home till recalled by her attendants. In obedience to them she sought the shelter of her abode, not to remain long; for the wild winds spoke to her, and the stormy ocean reproached her tranquillity. Unable to control the impulse, she would rush from her habitation on the cliff, nor remember, till she reached the shore, that her papooshes were left midway on the mountain-path, and that her forgotten veil and disordered dress were unmeet for such a scene. Often the unnumbered hours sped on, while this orphaned child of happiness leant on a cold dark rock; the low-browed crags beetled over her, the surges broke at her feet, her fair limbs were stained by spray, her tresses dishevelled by the gale. Hopelessly she wept until a sail appeared on the horizon; and then she dried her fast-flowing tears, fixing her large eyes upon the nearing hull or fading topsail. Meanwhile the storm tossed the clouds into a thousand gigantic shapes, and the tumultuous sea grew blacker and more wild; her natural gloom was heightened by superstitious horror; the Morai, the old Fates of her native Grecian soil, howled in the breezes; apparitions, which told of her child pining under the influence of the Evil Eye, and of her husband, the prey of some Thracian witchcraft, such as still is practised in the dread neighbourhood of Larissa, haunted her broken slumbers, and stalked like dire shadows across her waking thoughts. Her bloom was gone, her eyes lost their lustre, her limbs their round full beauty; her strength failed her, as she tottered to the accustomed spot to watch—vainly, yet for ever to watch.

What is there so fearful as the expectation of evil tidings delayed? Sometimes in the midst of tears, or worse, amidst the convulsive gaspings of despair, we reproach ourselves for influencing the eternal fates by our gloomy anticipations: then, if a smile wreathe the mourner’s quivering lip, it is arrested by a throb of agony. Alas!

are not the dark tresses of the young painted grey, the full cheek of beauty delved with sad lines by the spirits of such hours? Misery is a more welcome visitant when she comes in her darkest guise and wraps us in perpetual black, for then the heart no longer sickens with disappointed hope.

Cyril and old Camaraz had found great difficulty in doubling the many capes of the Morea as they made a coasting expedition from Kardamyla to the Gulf of Arta, north of Cefalonia and St. Mauro. During their voyage they had time to arrange their plans. As a number of Moreots travelling together might attract too much attention, they resolved to land their comrades at different points, and travel separately into the interior of Albania: Yannina was their first place of rendezvous. Cyril and his father-in-law disembarked in one of the most secluded of the many creeks which diversify the winding and precipitous shores of the gulf. Six others, chosen from the crew, would, by other routes, join them at the capital. They did not fear for themselves; alone, but well armed, and secure in the courage of despair, they penetrated the fastnesses of Epirus. No success cheered them: they arrived at Yannina without having made the slightest discovery. They were joined by their comrades, whom they directed to remain three days in the town, and then separately to proceed to Terpellenè, whither they immediately directed their steps. At the first village on their way thither, at “monastic Zitza,” they obtained some information, not to direct, but to encourage their endeavours. They sought refreshment and hospitality in the monastery, which is situated on a green eminence, crowned by a grove of oak trees, immediately behind the village. Perhaps there is not in the world a more beautiful or more romantic spot, sheltered itself by clustering trees, looking out on one widespread landscape of hill and dale, enriched by vineyards, dotted with frequent flocks; while the Calamas in the depth of the vale gives life to the scene, and the far blue mountains of Zoumerkas, Sagori, Sulli, and Acroceraunia, to the east, west, north, and south, close in the various prospects. Cyril half envied the Caloyers their inert tranquillity. They received the travellers gladly, and were cordial

though simple in their manners. When questioned concerning the object of their journey, they warmly sympathized with the father's anxiety, and eagerly told all they knew. Two weeks before, an Arnaoot, well known to them as Dmitri of the Evil Eye, a famous klepht of Korvo, and a Moreot, arrived, bringing with them a child,—a bold, spirited, beautiful boy, who, with firmness beyond his years, claimed the protection of the Caloyers, and accused his companions of having carried him off by force from his parents.

"By my head!" cried the Albanian, "a brave Palikar: he keeps his word, brother; he swore by the Panagia, in spite of our threats of throwing him down a precipice, food for the vulture, to accuse us to the first good men he saw: he neither pines under the Evil Eye, nor quails beneath our menaces."

Katusthius frowned at these praises, and it became evident during their stay at the monastery that the Albanian and the Moreot quarrelled as to the disposal of the child. The rugged mountaineer threw off all his sternness as he gazed upon the boy. When little Constans slept, he hung over him, fanning away with woman's care the flies and gnats. When he spoke, he answered with expressions of fondness, winning him with gifts, teaching him, all child as he was, a mimicry of warlike exercises. When the boy knelt and besought the Panagia to restore him to his parents, his voice quivering, and tears running down his cheeks, the eyes of Dmitri overflowed; he cast his cloak over his face; his heart whispered to him: "Thus, perhaps, my child prayed. Heaven was deaf. Alas! where is she now?"

Encouraged by such signs of compassion, which children are quick to perceive, Constans twined his arms round his neck, telling him that he loved him, and that he would fight for him when a man, if he would take him back to Corinth. At such words Dmitri would rush forth, seek Katusthius, remonstrate with him, till the unrelenting man checked him by reminding him of his vow. Still he swore that no hair of the child's head should be injured; while the uncle, unvisited by

compunction, meditated his destruction. The quarrels which thence arose were frequent, and violent, till Katusthius, weary of opposition, had recourse to craft to obtain his purpose. One night he secretly left the monastery, bearing the child with him. When Dmitri heard of his evasion, it was a fearful thing to the good Caloyers only to look upon him; they instinctively clutched hold of every bit of iron on which they could lay their hands, so to avert the Evil Eye which glared with native and untamed fierceness. In their panic a whole score of them had rushed to the iron-plated door which led out of their abode: with the strength of a lion, Dmitri tore them away, threw back the portal, and, with the swiftness of a torrent fed by the thawing of the snows in spring, he dashed down the steep hill—the flight of an eagle not more rapid; the course of a wild beast not more resolved.

Such was the clue afforded to Cyril. It were too long to follow him in his subsequent search; he, with old Camaraz, wandered through the vale of Argyro-Castro, and climbed Mount Trebucci to Korvo. Dmitri had returned; he had gathered together a score of faithful comrades, and sallied forth again; various were the reports of his destination, and the enterprise which he meditated. One of these led our adventurers to Terpellenè, and hence back towards Yannina; and now chance again favoured them. They rested one night in the habitation of a priest at the little village of Mosme, about three leagues to the north of Zitza; and here they found an Arnaoot who had been disabled by a fall from his horse; this man was to have made one of Dmitri’s band: they learned from him that the Arnaoot had tracked Katusthius, following him close, and forcing him to take refuge in the monastery of the Prophet Elias, which stands on an elevated peak of the mountains of Sagori, eight leagues from Yannina. Dmitri had followed him, and demanded the child. The Caloyers refused to give it up, and the klepht, roused to mad indignation, was now besieging and battering the monastery, to obtain by force this object of his newly-awakened affections.

At Yannina, Camaraz and Cyril collected their comrades, and departed to join their

unconscious ally. He, more impetuous than a mountain stream or ocean's fiercest waves, struck terror into the hearts of the recluses by his ceaseless and dauntless attacks. To encourage them to further resistance, Katusthius, leaving the child behind in the monastery, departed for the nearest town of Sagori, to entreat its Belouk-Bashee to come to their aid. The Sagorians are a mild, amiable, social people; they are gay, frank, clever; their bravery is universally acknowledged, even by the more uncivilised mountaineers of Zoumerkas; yet robbery, murder, and other acts of violence are unknown among them. These good people were not a little indignant when they heard that a band of Arnaoots was besieging and battering the sacred retreat of their favourite Caloyers. They assembled in a gallant troop, and, taking Katusthius with them, hastened to drive the insolent klephts back to their ruder fastnesses. They came too late. At midnight, while the monks prayed fervently to be delivered from their enemies, Dmitri and his followers tore down their iron-plated door and entered the holy precincts. The Protoklepht strode up to the gates of the sanctuary, and, placing his hands upon it, swore that he came to save, not to destroy. Constans saw him. With a cry of delight he disengaged himself from the Caloyer who held him, and rushed into his arms: this was sufficient triumph. With assurance of sincere regret for having disturbed them, the klepht quitted the chapel with his followers, taking his prize with him.

Katusthius returned some hours after, and so well did the traitor plead his cause with the kind Sagorians, bewailing the fate of his little nephew among those evil men, that they offered to follow, and, superior as their numbers were, to rescue the boy from their destructive hands. Katusthius, delighted with the proposition, urged their immediate departure. At dawn they began to climb the mountain summits, already trodden by the Zoumerkians.

Delighted with repossessing his little favourite, Dmitri placed him before him on his horse, and, followed by his comrades, made his way over the mountains, clothed with old Dodona's oaks, or, in higher summits, by dark gigantic pines. They

proceeded for some hours, and at length dismounted to repose. The spot they chose was the depth of a dark ravine, whose gloom was increased by the broad shadows of dark ilexes; an entangled underwood, and a sprinkling of craggy isolated rocks, made it difficult for the horses to keep their footing. They dismounted, and sat by the little stream. Their simple fare was spread, and Dmitri enticed the boy to eat by a thousand caresses. Suddenly one of his men, set as a guard, brought intelligence that a troop of Sagorians, with Katusthius as their guide, was advancing from the monastery of St. Elias; while another man gave the alarm of the approach of six or eight well-armed Moreots, who were advancing on the road from Yannina; in a moment every sign of encampment had disappeared. The Arnaoots began to climb the hills, getting under cover of the rocks, and behind the large trunks of the forest trees, keeping concealed till their invaders should be in the very midst of them. Soon the Moreots appeared, turning round the defile, in a path that only allowed them to proceed two by two; they were unaware of danger, and walked carelessly, until a shot that whizzed over the head of one, striking the bough of a tree, recalled them from their security. The Greeks, accustomed to the same mode of warfare, betook themselves also to the safeguards of the rocks, firing from behind them, striving with their adversaries which should get to the most elevated station; jumping from crag to crag, and dropping down and firing as quickly as they could load: one old man alone remained on the pathway. The mariner, Camaraz, had often encountered the enemy on the deck of his caick, and would still have rushed foremost at a boarding, but this warfare required too much activity. Cyril called on him to shelter himself beneath a low, broad stone: the Mainote waved his hand. “Fear not for me,” he cried; “I know how to die!”

The brave love the brave. Dmitri saw the old man stand, unflinching, a mark for all the balls, and he started from behind his rocky screen, calling on his men to cease. Then addressing his enemy, he cried, “Who art thou? Wherefore art thou here? If ye come in peace, proceed on your way. Answer, and fear not!”

The old man drew himself up, saying, “I am a Mainote, and cannot fear. All Hellas trembles before the pirates of Cape Matapan, and I am one of these! I do not come in peace! Behold! you have in your arms the cause of our dissension! I am the grandsire of that child—give him to me!”

Dmitri, had he held a snake which he felt awakening in his bosom, could not so suddenly have changed his cheer;—“the offspring of a Mainote!”—he relaxed his grasp;—Constans would have fallen had he not clung to his neck. Meanwhile each party had descended from their rocky station, and were grouped together in the pathway below. Dmitri tore the child from his neck—he felt as if he could, with savage delight, dash him down the precipice; when, as he paused and trembled from excess of passion, Katusthius, and the foremost Sagorians, came down upon them.

“Stand!” cried the infuriated Arnaoot. “Behold, Katusthius! behold, friend, whom I, driven by the resistless fates, madly and wickedly forswore! I now perform thy wish—the Mainote child dies! the son of the accursed race shall be the victim of my just revenge!”

Cyril, in a transport of fear, rushed up the rock; he levelled his musket but he feared to sacrifice his child. The old Mainote, less timid and more desperate, took a steady aim; Dmitri saw the act, and hurled the dagger, already raised against the child, at him,—it entered his side,—while Constans, feeling his late protector’s grasp relax, sprang from it into his father’s arms.

Camaraz had fallen, yet his wound was slight. He saw the Arnaoots and Sagorians close round him; he saw his own followers made prisoners. Dmitri and Katusthius had both thrown themselves upon Cyril, struggling to repossess themselves of the screaming boy. The Mainote raised himself—he was feeble of limb, but his heart was strong; he threw himself before the father and child; he caught the upraised arm of Dmitri. “On me,” he cried, “fall all thy vengeance! I of the evil race! for the child, he is innocent of such parentage! Maina cannot boast him for a son!”

“Man of lies!” commenced the infuriated Arnaoot, “this falsehood shall not stead thee!”

“Nay, by the souls of those you have loved, listen!” continued Camaraz, “and if I make not good my words, may I and my children die! The boy’s father is a Corinthian, his mother, a Sciote girl!”

“Scio!” the very word made the blood recede to Dmitri’s heart. “Villain!” he cried, dashing aside Katusthius’ arm, which was raised against poor Constans, “I guard this child—dare not to injure him! Speak, old man, and fear not, so that thou speakest the truth.”

“Fifteen years ago,” said Camaraz, “I hovered with my caick, in search of prey, on the coast of Scio. A cottage stood on the borders of a chestnut wood; it was the habitation of the widow of a wealthy islander—she dwelt in it with her only daughter, married to an Albanian, then absent;—the good woman was reported to have a concealed treasure in her house—the girl herself would be rich spoil—it was an adventure worth the risk. We ran our vessel up a shady creek, and, on the going down of the moon, landed; stealing under the covert of night towards the lonely abode of these women.”

Dmitri grasped at his dagger’s hilt—it was no longer there; he half drew a pistol from his girdle—little Constans, again confiding in his former friend, stretched out his hands and clung to his arm; the klepht looked on him, half yielded to his desire to embrace him, half feared to be deceived; so he turned away, throwing his capote over his face, veiling his anguish, controlling his emotions, till all should be told. Camaraz continued:

“It became a worse tragedy than I had contemplated. The girl had a child—she feared for its life, and struggled with the men like a tigress defending her young. I was in another room seeking for the hidden store, when a piercing shriek rent the air—I never knew what compassion was before—this cry went to my heart; but it

was too late, the poor girl had sunk to the ground, the life-tide oozing from her bosom. I know not why, but I turned woman in my regret for the slain beauty. I meant to have carried her and her child on board, to see if aught could be done to save her, but she died ere we left the shore. I thought she would like her island grave best, and truly feared that she might turn vampire to haunt me, did I carry her away; so we left her corpse for the priests to bury, and carried off the child, then about two years old. She could say few words except her own name—that was Zella, and she is the mother of this boy!"

A succession of arrivals in the bay of Kardamyla had kept poor Zella watching for many nights. Her attendant had, in despair of ever seeing her sleep again, drugged with opium the few cakes she persuaded her to eat, but the poor woman did not calculate on the power of mind over body, of love over every enemy, physical or moral, arrayed against it. Zella lay on her couch, her spirit somewhat subdued, but her heart alive, her eyes unclosed. In the night, led by some unexplained impulse, she crawled to her lattice, and saw a little sacovela enter the bay; it ran in swiftly, under favour of the wind, and was lost to her sight under a jutting crag. Lightly she trod the marble floor of her chamber; she drew a large shawl close round her; she descended the rocky pathway, and reached, with swift steps, the beach—still the vessel was invisible, and she was half inclined to think that it was the offspring of her excited imagination—yet she lingered. She felt a sickness at her very heart whenever she attempted to move, and her eyelids weighed down in spite of herself. The desire of sleep at last became irresistible; she lay down on the shingles, reposed her head on the cold, hard pillow, folded her shawl still closer, and gave herself up to forgetfulness.

So profoundly did she slumber under the influence of the opiate, that for many hours she was insensible of any change in her situation. By degrees only she awoke, by degrees only became aware of the objects around her; the breeze felt fresh and free—so was it ever on the wave-beaten coast; the waters rippled near, their dash

had been in her ears as she yielded to repose; but this was not her stony couch, that canopy, not the dark overhanging cliff. Suddenly she lifted up her head—she was on the deck of a small vessel, which was skimming swiftly over the ocean-waves—a cloak of sables pillowed her head; the shores of Cape Matapan were to her left, and they steered right towards the noonday sun. Wonder rather than fear possessed her: with a quick hand she drew aside the sail that veiled her from the crew—the dreaded Albanian was sitting close at her side, her Constans cradled in his arms; she uttered a cry—Cyril turned at the sound, and in a moment she was folded in his embrace.

IV. THE DREAM.

“Chi dice mal d’amore

Dice una falsità!”

—Italian Song.

The time of the occurrence of the little legend about to be narrated, was that of the commencement of the reign of Henry IV. of France, whose accession and conversion, while they brought peace to the kingdom whose throne he ascended, were inadequate to heal the deep wounds mutually inflicted by the inimical parties. Private feuds, and the memory of mortal injuries, existed between those now apparently united; and often did the hands that had clasped each other in seeming friendly greeting, involuntarily, as the grasp was released, clasp the dagger’s hilt, as fitter spokesman to their passions than the words of courtesy that had just fallen from their lips. Many of the fiercer Catholics retreated to their distant provinces; and while they concealed in solitude their rankling discontent, not less keenly did they long for the day when they might show it openly.

In a large and fortified chateau built on a rugged steep overlooking the Loire, not far from the town of Nantes, dwelt the last of her race, and the heiress of their fortunes, the young and beautiful Countess de Villeneuve. She had spent the preceding year in

complete solitude in her secluded abode; and the mourning she wore for a father and two brothers, the victims of the civil wars, was a graceful and good reason why she did not appear at court, and mingle with its festivities. But the orphan countess inherited a high name and broad lands; and it was soon signified to her that the king, her guardian, desired that she should bestow them, together with her hand, upon some noble whose birth and accomplishments should entitle him to the gift. Constance, in reply, expressed her intention of taking vows, and retiring to a convent. The king earnestly and resolutely forbade this act, believing such an idea to be the result of sensibility overwrought by sorrow, and relying on the hope that, after a time, the genial spirit of youth would break through this cloud.

A year passed, and still the countess persisted; and at last Henry, unwilling to exercise compulsion,—desirous, too, of judging for himself of the motives that led one so beautiful, young, and gifted with fortune's favours, to desire to bury herself in a cloister,—announced his intention, now that the period of her mourning was expired, of visiting her chateau; and if he brought not with him, the monarch said, inducement sufficient to change her design, he would yield his consent to its fulfilment.

Many a sad hour had Constance passed—many a day of tears, and many a night of restless misery. She had closed her gates against every visitant; and, like the Lady Olivia in "Twelfth Night," vowed herself to loneliness and weeping. Mistress of herself, she easily silenced the entreaties and remonstrances of underlings, and nursed her grief as it had been the thing she loved. Yet it was too keen, too bitter, too burning, to be a favoured guest. In fact, Constance, young, ardent, and vivacious, battled with it, struggled, and longed to cast it off; but all that was joyful in itself, or fair in outward show, only served to renew it; and she could best support the burden of her sorrow with patience, when, yielding to it, it oppressed but did not torture her.

Constance had left the castle to wander in the neighbouring grounds. Lofty and

extensive as were the apartments of her abode, she felt pent up within their walls, beneath their fretted roofs. The spreading uplands and the antique wood, associated to her with every dear recollection of her past life, enticed her to spend hours and days beneath their leafy coverts. The motion and change eternally working, as the wind stirred among the boughs, or the journeying sun rained its beams through them, soothed and called her out of that dull sorrow which clutched her heart with so unrelenting a pang beneath her castle roof.

There was one spot on the verge of the well-wooded park, one nook of ground, whence she could discern the country extended beyond, yet which was in itself thick set with tall umbrageous trees—a spot which she had forsworn, yet whither unconsciously her steps for ever tended, and where now again, for the twentieth time that day, she had unaware found herself. She sat upon a grassy mound, and looked wistfully on the flowers she had herself planted to adorn the verdurous recess—to her the temple of memory and love. She held the letter from the king which was the parent to her of so much despair. Dejection sat upon her features, and her gentle heart asked fate why, so young, unprotected, and forsaken, she should have to struggle with this new form of wretchedness.

“I but ask,” she thought, “to live in my father’s halls—in the spot familiar to my infancy—to water with my frequent tears the graves of those I loved; and here in these woods, where such a mad dream of happiness was mine, to celebrate for ever the obsequies of Hope!”

A rustling among the boughs now met her ear—her heart beat quick—all again was still.

“Foolish girl!” she half muttered; “dupe of thine own passionate fancy: because here we met; because seated here I have expected, and sounds like these have announced, his dear approach; so now every coney as it stirs, and every bird as it awakens silence, speaks of him. O Gaspar!—mine once—never again will this beloved spot

be made glad by thee—never more!”

Again the bushes were stirred, and footsteps were heard in the brake. She rose; her heart beat high; it must be that silly Manon, with her impertinent entreaties for her to return. But the steps were firmer and slower than would be those of her waiting-woman; and now emerging from the shade, she too plainly discerned the intruder. Her first impulse was to fly:—but once again to see him—to hear his voice:—once again before she placed eternal vows between them, to stand together, and find the wide chasm filled which absence had made, could not injure the dead, and would soften the fatal sorrow that made her cheek so pale.

And now he was before her, the same beloved one with whom she had exchanged vows of constancy. He, like her, seemed sad; nor could she resist the imploring glance that entreated her for one moment to remain.

“I come, lady,” said the young knight, “without a hope to bend your inflexible will. I come but once again to see you, and to bid you farewell before I depart for the Holy Land. I come to beseech you not to immure yourself in the dark cloister to avoid one as hateful as myself,—one you will never see more. Whether I die or live, France and I are parted for ever!”

“That were fearful, were it true,” said Constance; “but King Henry will never so lose his favourite cavalier. The throne you helped to build, you still will guard. Nay, as I ever had power over thought of thine, go not to Palestine.”

“One word of yours could detain me—one smile—Constance”—and the youthful lover knelt before her; but her harsher purpose was recalled by the image once so dear and familiar, now so strange and so forbidden.

“Linger no longer here!” she cried. “No smile, no word of mine will ever again be yours. Why are you here—here, where the spirits of the dead wander, and, claiming these shades as their own, curse the false girl who permits their murderer to disturb their sacred repose?”

“When love was young and you were kind,” replied the knight, “you taught me to thread the intricacies of these woods—you welcomed me to this dear spot, where once you vowed to be my own—even beneath these ancient trees.”

“A wicked sin it was,” said Constance, “to unbar my father’s doors to the son of his enemy, and dearly is it punished!”

The young knight gained courage as she spoke; yet he dared not move, lest she, who, every instant, appeared ready to take flight, should be startled from her momentary tranquillity; but he slowly replied:—“Those were happy days, Constance, full of terror and deep joy, when evening brought me to your feet; and while hate and vengeance were as its atmosphere to yonder frowning castle, this leafy, starlit bower was the shrine of love.”

“Happy?—miserable days!” echoed Constance; “when I imagined good could arise from failing in my duty, and that disobedience would be rewarded of God. Speak not of love, Gaspar!—a sea of blood divides us for ever! Approach me not! The dead and the beloved stand even now between us: their pale shadows warn me of my fault, and menace me for listening to their murderer.”

“That am not I!” exclaimed the youth. “Behold, Constance, we are each the last of our race. Death has dealt cruelly with us, and we are alone. It was not so when first we loved—when parent, kinsman, brother, nay, my own mother breathed curses on the house of Villeneuve; and in spite of all I blessed it. I saw thee, my lovely one, and blessed it. The God of peace planted love in our hearts, and with mystery and secrecy we met during many a summer night in the moonlit dells; and when daylight was abroad, in this sweet recess we fled to avoid its scrutiny, and here, even here, where now I kneel in supplication, we both knelt and made our vows. Shall they be broken?”

Constance wept as her lover recalled the images of happy hours. “Never,” she exclaimed, “O never! Thou knowest, or wilt soon know, Gaspar, the faith and

resolves of one who dare not be yours. Was it for us to talk of love and happiness, when war, and hate, and blood were raging around? The fleeting flowers our young hands strewed were trampled by the deadly encounter of mortal foes. By your father's hand mine died; and little boots it to know whether, as my brother swore, and you deny, your hand did or did not deal the blow that destroyed him. You fought among those by whom he died. Say no more—no other word: it is impiety towards the unreposing dead to hear you. Go, Gaspar; forget me. Under the chivalrous and gallant Henry your career may be glorious; and some fair girl will listen, as once I did, to your vows, and be made happy by them. Farewell! May the Virgin bless you! In my cell and cloister-home I will not forget the best Christian lesson—to pray for our enemies. Gaspar, farewell!"

She glided hastily from the bower: with swift steps she threaded the glade and sought the castle. Once within the seclusion of her own apartment she gave way to the burst of grief that tore her gentle bosom like a tempest; for hers was that worst sorrow which taints past joys, making remorse wait upon the memory of bliss, and linking love and fancied guilt in such fearful society as that of the tyrant when he bound a living body to a corpse. Suddenly a thought darted into her mind. At first she rejected it as puerile and superstitious; but it would not be driven away. She called hastily for her attendant. "Manon," she said, "didst thou ever sleep on St. Catherine's couch?"

Manon crossed herself. "Heaven forefend! None ever did, since I was born, but two: one fell into the Loire and was drowned; the other only looked upon the narrow bed, and returned to her own home without a word. It is an awful place; and if the votary have not led a pious and good life, woe betide the hour when she rests her head on the holy stone!"

Constance crossed herself also. "As for our lives, it is only through our Lord and the blessed saints that we can any of us hope for righteousness. I will sleep on that

couch to-morrow night!”

“Dear, my lady! and the king arrives to-morrow.”

“The more need that I resolve. It cannot be that misery so intense should dwell in any heart, and no cure be found. I had hoped to be the bringer of peace to our houses; and is the good work to be for me a crown of thorns? Heaven shall direct me. I will rest to-morrow night on St. Catherine’s bed: and if, as I have heard, the saint deigns to direct her votaries in dreams, I will be guided by her; and, believing that I act according to the dictates of Heaven, I shall feel resigned even to the worst.”

The king was on his way to Nantes from Paris, and he slept on this night at a castle but a few miles distant. Before dawn a young cavalier was introduced into his chamber. The knight had a serious, nay, a sad aspect; and all beautiful as he was in feature and limb, looked wayworn and haggard. He stood silent in Henry’s presence, who, alert and gay, turned his lively blue eyes upon his guest, saying gently, “So thou foundest her obdurate, Gaspar?”

“I found her resolved on our mutual misery. Alas! my liege, it is not, credit me, the least of my grief, that Constance sacrifices her own happiness when she destroys mine.”

“And thou believest that she will say nay to the gaillard chevalier whom we ourselves present to her?”

“Oh, my liege, think not that thought! it cannot be. My heart deeply, most deeply, thanks you for your generous condescension. But she whom her lover’s voice in solitude—whose entreaties, when memory and seclusion aided the spell—could not persuade, will resist even your majesty’s commands. She is bent upon entering a cloister; and I, so please you, will now take my leave:—I am henceforth a soldier of the cross.”

“Gaspar,” said the monarch, “I know woman better than thou. It is not by

submission nor tearful plaints she is to be won. The death of her relatives naturally sits heavy at the young countess's heart; and nourishing in solitude her regret and her repentance, she fancies that Heaven itself forbids your union. Let the voice of the world reach her—the voice of earthly power and earthly kindness—the one commanding, the other pleading, and both finding response in her own heart—and by my fay and the Holy Cross, she will be yours. Let our plan still hold. And now to horse: the morning wears, and the sun is risen."

The king arrived at the bishop's palace, and proceeded forthwith to mass in the cathedral. A sumptuous dinner succeeded, and it was afternoon before the monarch proceeded through the town beside the Loire to where, a little above Nantes, the Chateau Villeneuve was situated. The young countess received him at the gate. Henry looked in vain for the cheek blanched by misery, the aspect of downcast despair which he had been taught to expect. Her cheek was flushed, her manner animated, her voice scarce tremulous. "She loves him not," thought Henry, "or already her heart has consented."

A collation was prepared for the monarch; and after some little hesitation, arising even from the cheerfulness of her mien, he mentioned the name of Gaspar. Constance blushed instead of turning pale, and replied very quickly, "To-morrow, good my liege; I ask for a respite but until to-morrow;—all will then be decided;—to-morrow I am vowed to God—or"—

She looked confused, and the king, at once surprised and pleased, said, "Then you hate not young De Vaudemont;—you forgive him for the inimical blood that warms his veins."

"We are taught that we should forgive, that we should love our enemies," the countess replied, with some trepidation.

"Now, by Saint Denis, that is a right welcome answer for the novice," said the king, laughing. "What ho! my faithful serving-man, Dan Apollo in disguise! come

forward, and thank your lady for her love."

In such disguise as had concealed him from all, the cavalier had hung behind, and viewed with infinite surprise the demeanour and calm countenance of the lady. He could not hear her words: but was this even she whom he had seen trembling and weeping the evening before?—this she whose very heart was torn by conflicting passion?—who saw the pale ghosts of parent and kinsman stand between her and the lover whom more than her life she adored? It was a riddle hard to solve. The king's call was in unison with his impatience, and he sprang forward. He was at her feet; while she, still passion-driven, overwrought by the very calmness she had assumed, uttered one cry as she recognised him, and sank senseless on the floor.

All this was very unintelligible. Even when her attendants had brought her to life, another fit succeeded, and then passionate floods of tears; while the monarch, waiting in the hall, eyeing the half-eaten collation, and humming some romance in commemoration of woman's waywardness, knew not how to reply to Vaudemont's look of bitter disappointment and anxiety. At length the countess' chief attendant came with an apology: "Her lady was ill, very ill The next day she would throw herself at the king's feet, at once to solicit his excuse, and to disclose her purpose."

"To-morrow—again to-morrow!—Does to-morrow bear some charm, maiden?" said the king. "Can you read us the riddle, pretty one? What strange tale belongs to to-morrow, that all rests on its advent?"

Manon coloured, looked down, and hesitated. But Henry was no tyro in the art of enticing ladies' attendants to disclose their ladies' counsel. Manon was besides frightened by the countess' scheme, on which she was still obstinately bent, so she was the more readily induced to betray it. To sleep in St. Catherine's bed, to rest on a narrow ledge overhanging the deep rapid Loire, and if, as was most probable, the luckless dreamer escaped from falling into it, to take the disturbed visions that such uneasy slumber might produce for the dictate of Heaven, was a madness of which

even Henry himself could scarcely deem any woman capable. But could Constance, her whose beauty was so highly intellectual, and whom he had heard perpetually praised for her strength of mind and talents, could she be so strangely infatuated! And can passion play such freaks with us?—like death, levelling even the aristocracy of the soul, and bringing noble and peasant, the wise and foolish, under one thraldom? It was strange—yet she must have her way. That she hesitated in her decision was much; and it was to be hoped that St. Catherine would play no ill-natured part. Should it be otherwise, a purpose to be swayed by a dream might be influenced by other waking thoughts. To the more material kind of danger some safeguard should be brought.

There is no feeling more awful than that which invades a weak human heart bent upon gratifying its ungovernable impulses in contradiction to the dictates of conscience. Forbidden pleasures are said to be the most agreeable;—it may be so to rude natures, to those who love to struggle, combat, and contend; who find happiness in a fray, and joy in the conflict of passion. But softer and sweeter was the gentle spirit of Constance; and love and duty contending crushed and tortured her poor heart. To commit her conduct to the inspirations of religion, or, if it was so to be named, of superstition, was a blessed relief. The very perils that threatened her undertaking gave a zest to it;—to dare for his sake was happiness;—the very difficulty of the way that led to the completion of her wishes at once gratified her love and distracted her thoughts from her despair. Or if it was decreed that she must sacrifice all, the risk of danger and of death were of trifling import in comparison with the anguish which would then be her portion for ever.

The night threatened to be stormy, the raging wind shook the casements, and the trees waved their huge shadowy arms, as giants might in fantastic dance and mortal broil. Constance and Manon, unattended, quitted the chateau by a postern, and began to descend the hill-side. The moon had not yet risen; and though the way was familiar to both, Manon tottered and trembled; while the countess, drawing her

silken cloak round her, walked with a firm step down the steep. They came to the river's side, where a small boat was moored, and one man was in waiting. Constance stepped lightly in, and then aided her fearful companion. In a few moments they were in the middle of the stream. The warm, tempestuous, animating, equinoctial wind swept over them. For the first time since her mourning, a thrill of pleasure swelled the bosom of Constance. She hailed the emotion with double joy. It cannot be, she thought, that Heaven will forbid me to love one so brave, so generous, and so good as the noble Gaspar. Another I can never love; I shall die if divided from him; and this heart, these limbs, so alive with glowing sensation, are they already predestined to an early grave? Oh no! life speaks aloud within them. I shall live to love. Do not all things love?—the winds as they whisper to the rushing waters? the waters as they kiss the flowery banks, and speed to mingle with the sea? Heaven and earth are sustained by, and live through, love; and shall Constance alone, whose heart has ever been a deep, gushing, overflowing well of true affection, be compelled to set a stone upon the fount to lock it up for ever?

These thoughts bade fair for pleasant dreams; and perhaps the countess, an adept in the blind god's lore, therefore indulged them the more readily. But as thus she was engrossed by soft emotions, Manon caught her arm:—"Lady, look," she cried; "it comes—yet the oars have no sound. Now the Virgin shield us! Would we were at home!"

A dark boat glided by them. Four rowers, habited in black cloaks, pulled at oars which, as Manon said, gave no sound; another sat at the helm: like the rest, his person was veiled in a dark mantle, but he wore no cap; and though his face was turned from them, Constance recognised her lover. "Gaspar," she cried aloud, "dost thou live?"—but the figure in the boat neither turned its head nor replied, and quickly it was lost in the shadowy waters.

How changed now was the fair countess' reverie! Already Heaven had begun its

spell, and unearthly forms were around, as she strained her eyes through the gloom. Now she saw and now she lost view of the bark that occasioned her terror; and now it seemed that another was there, which held the spirits of the dead; and her father waved to her from shore, and her brothers frowned on her.

Meanwhile they neared the landing. Her bark was moored in a little cove, and Constance stood upon the bank. Now she trembled, and half yielded to Manon's entreaty to return; till the unwise suivante mentioned the king's and De Vaudemont's name, and spoke of the answer to be given to-morrow. What answer, if she turned back from her intent?

She now hurried forward up the broken ground of the bank, and then along its edge, till they came to a hill which abruptly hung over the tide. A small chapel stood near. With trembling fingers the countess drew forth the key and unlocked its door. They entered. It was dark—save that a little lamp, flickering in the wind, showed an uncertain light from before the figure of Saint Catherine. The two women knelt; they prayed; and then rising, with a cheerful accent the countess bade her attendant good-night. She unlocked a little low iron door. It opened on a narrow cavern. The roar of waters was heard beyond. "Thou mayest not follow, my poor Manon," said Constance,—"nor dost thou much desire:—this adventure is for me alone."

It was hardly fair to leave the trembling servant in the chapel alone, who had neither hope nor fear, nor love, nor grief to beguile her; but, in those days, esquires and waiting-women often played the part of subalterns in the army, gaining knocks and no fame. Besides, Manon was safe in holy ground. The countess meanwhile pursued her way groping in the dark through the narrow tortuous passage. At length what seemed light to her long-darkened sense gleamed on her. She reached an open cavern in the overhanging hill's side, looking over the rushing tide beneath. She looked out upon the night. The waters of the Loire were speeding, as since that day have they ever sped—changeful, yet the same; the heavens were thickly veiled with

clouds, and the wind in the trees was as mournful and ill-omened as if it rushed round a murderer's tomb. Constance shuddered a little, and looked upon her bed,—a narrow ledge of earth and a moss-grown stone bordering on the very verge of the precipice. She doffed her mantle,—such was one of the conditions of the spell;—she bowed her head, and loosened the tresses of her dark hair; she bared her feet; and thus, fully prepared for suffering to the utmost the chill influence of the cold night, she stretched herself on the narrow couch that scarce afforded room for her repose, and whence, if she moved in sleep, she must be precipitated into the cold waters below.

At first it seemed to her as if she never should sleep again. No great wonder that exposure to the blast and her perilous position should forbid her eyelids to close. At length she fell into a reverie so soft and soothing that she wished even to watch; and then by degrees her senses became confused; and now she was on St. Catherine's bed—the Loire rushing beneath, and the wild wind sweeping by—and now—oh whither?—and what dreams did the saint send, to drive her to despair, or to bid her be blest for ever?

Beneath the rugged hill, upon the dark tide, another watched, who feared a thousand things, and scarce dared hope. He had meant to precede the lady on her way, but when he found that he had outstayed his time, with muffled oars and breathless haste he had shot by the bark that contained his Constance, nor even turned at her voice, fearful to incur her blame, and her commands to return. He had seen her emerge from the passage, and shuddered as she leant over the cliff. He saw her step forth, clad as she was in white, and could mark her as she lay on the ledge beetling above. What a vigil did the lovers keep!—she given up to visionary thoughts, he knowing—and the consciousness thrilled his bosom with strange emotion—that love, and love for him, had led her to that perilous couch; and that while dangers surrounded her in every shape, she was alive only to the small still voice that whispered to her heart the dream which was to decide their destinies. She slept

perhaps—but he waked and watched, and night wore away, as, now praying, now entranced by alternating hope and fear, he sat in his boat, his eyes fixed on the white garb of the slumberer above.

Morning—was it morning that struggled in the clouds? Would morning ever come to waken her? And had she slept? and what dreams of weal or woe had peopled her sleep? Gaspar grew impatient. He commanded his boatmen still to wait, and he sprang forward, intent on clambering the precipice. In vain they urged the danger, nay, the impossibility of the attempt; he clung to the rugged face of the hill, and found footing where it would seem no footing was. The acclivity, indeed, was not high; the dangers of St. Catherine's bed arising from the likelihood that any one who slept on so narrow a couch would be precipitated into the waters beneath. Up the steep ascent Gaspar continued to toil, and at last reached the roots of a tree that grew near the summit. Aided by its branches, he made good his stand at the very extremity of the ledge, near the pillow on which lay the uncovered head of his beloved. Her hands were folded on her bosom; her dark hair fell round her throat and pillowed her cheek; her face was serene: sleep was there in all its innocence and in all its helplessness; every wilder emotion was hushed, and her bosom heaved in regular breathing. He could see her heart beat as it lifted her fair hands crossed above. No statue hewn of marble in monumental effigy was ever half so fair; and within that surpassing form dwelt a soul true, tender, self-devoted, and affectionate as ever warmed a human breast.

With what deep passion did Gaspar gaze, gathering hope from the placidity of her angel countenance! A smile wreathed her lips; and he too involuntarily smiled, as he hailed the happy omen; when suddenly her cheek was flushed, her bosom heaved, a tear stole from her dark lashes, and then a whole shower fell, as starting up she cried, "No!—he shall not die!—I will unloose his chains!—I will save him!" Gaspar's hand was there. He caught her light form ready to fall from the perilous couch. She opened her eyes and beheld her lover, who had watched over her dream

of fate, and who had saved her.

Manon also had slept well, dreaming or not, and was startled in the morning to find that she waked surrounded by a crowd. The little desolate chapel was hung with tapestry—the altar adorned with golden chalices—the priest was chanting mass to a goodly array of kneeling knights. Manon saw that King Henry was there; and she looked for another whom she found not, when the iron door of the cavern passage opened, and Gaspar de Vaudemont entered from it, leading the fair form of Constance; who, in her white robes and dark dishevelled hair, with a face in which smiles and blushes contended with deeper emotion, approached the altar, and, kneeling with her lover, pronounced the vows that united them for ever.

It was long before the happy Gaspar could win from his lady the secret of her dream. In spite of the happiness she now enjoyed, she had suffered too much not to look back even with terror to those days when she thought love a crime, and every event connected with them wore an awful aspect. “Many a vision,” she said, “she had that fearful night. She had seen the spirits of her father and brothers in Paradise; she had beheld Gaspar victoriously combating among the infidels; she had beheld him in King Henry’s court, favoured and beloved; and she herself—now pining in a cloister, now a bride, now grateful to Heaven for the full measure of bliss presented to her, now weeping away her sad days—till suddenly she thought herself in Paynim land; and the saint herself, St Catherine, guiding her unseen through the city of the infidels. She entered a palace, and beheld the miscreants rejoicing in victory; and then, descending to the dungeons beneath, they groped their way through damp vaults, and low, mildewed passages, to one cell, darker and more frightful than the rest. On the floor lay one with soiled and tattered garments, with unkempt locks and wild, matted beard. His cheek was worn and thin; his eyes had lost their fire; his form was a mere skeleton; the chains hung loosely on the fleshless bones.”

“And was it my appearance in that attractive state and winning costume that

softened the hard heart of Constance!" asked Gaspar, smiling at this painting of what would never be.

"Even so," replied Constance; "for my heart whispered me that this was my doing; and who could recall the life that waned in your pulses—who restore, save the destroyer! My heart never warmed to my living, happy knight as then it did to his wasted image as it lay, in the visions of night, at my feet. A veil fell from my eyes; a darkness was dispelled from before me. Methought I then knew for the first time what life and what death was. I was bid believe that to make the living happy was not to injure the dead; and I felt how wicked and how vain was that false philosophy which placed virtue and good in hatred and unkindness. You should not die; I would loosen your chains and save you, and bid you live for love. I sprung forward, and the death I deprecated for you would, in my presumption, have been mine,—then, when first I felt the real value of life,—but that your arm was there to save me, your dear voice to bid me be blest for evermore."

V. THE MOURNER.

"One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws

Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes,

To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,

For which joy has no balm, and affliction no sting!"

—Moore.

A gorgeous scene of kingly pride is the prospect now before us!—the offspring of art, the nursling of nature—where can the eye rest on a landscape more deliciously lovely than the fair expanse of Virginia Water, now an open mirror to the sky, now shaded by umbrageous banks, which wind into dark recesses, or are rounded into soft promontories? Looking down on it, now that the sun is low in the west, the eye

is dazzled, the soul oppressed, by excess of beauty. Earth, water, air drink to overflowing the radiance that streams from yonder well of light; the foliage of the trees seems dripping with the golden flood; while the lake, filled with no earthly dew, appears but an imbasining of the sun-tinctured atmosphere; and trees and gay pavilion float in its depth, more dear, more distinct than their twins in the upper air. Nor is the scene silent: strains more sweet than those that lull Venus to her balmy rest, more inspiring than the song of Tiresias which awoke Alexander to the deed of ruin, more solemn than the chantings of St. Cecilia, float along the waves and mingle with the lagging breeze, which ruffles not the lake. Strange, that a few dark scores should be the key to this fountain of sound; the unconscious link between unregarded noise and harmonies which unclose paradise to our entranced senses!

The sun touches the extreme boundary, and a softer, milder light mingles a roseate tinge with the fiery glow. Our boat has floated long on the broad expanse; now let it approach the umbrageous bank. The green tresses of the graceful willow dip into the waters, which are checked by them into a ripple. The startled teal dart from their recess, skimming the waves with splashing wing. The stately swans float onward; while innumerable waterfowl cluster together out of the way of the oars. The twilight is blotted by no dark shades; it is one subdued, equal receding of the great tide of day. We may disembark, and wander yet amid the glades, long before the thickening shadows speak of night. The plantations are formed of every English tree, with an old oak or two standing out in the walks. There the glancing foliage obscures heaven, as the silken texture of a veil a woman’s lovely features. Beneath such fretwork we may indulge in light-hearted thoughts; or, if sadder meditations lead us to seek darker shades, we may pass the cascade towards the large groves of pine, with their vast undergrowth of laurel, reaching up to the Belvidere; or, on the opposite side of the water, sit under the shadow of the silver-stemmed birch, or beneath the leafy pavilions of those fine old beeches, whose high fantastic roots seem formed in nature’s sport; and the near jungle of sweet-smelling myrica leaves

no sense unvisited by pleasant ministration.

Now this splendid scene is reserved for the royal possessor; but in past years; while the lodge was called the Regent's Cottage, or before, when the under-ranger inhabited it, the mazy paths of Chapel Wood were open, and the iron gates enclosing the plantations and Virginia Water were guarded by no Cerebus untamable by sops. It was here, on a summer's evening, that Horace Neville and his two fair cousins floated idly on the placid lake,

"In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts

Bring sad thoughts to the mind."

Neville had been eloquent in praise of English scenery. "In distant climes," he said, "we may find landscapes grand in barbaric wildness, or rich in the luxuriant vegetation of the south, or sublime in Alpine magnificence. We may lament, though it is ungrateful to say so on such a night as this, the want of a more genial sky; but where find scenery to be compared to the verdant, well-wooded, well-watered groves of our native land; the clustering cottages, shadowed by fine old elms; each garden blooming with early flowers, each lattice gay with geraniums and roses; the blue-eyed child devouring his white bread, while he drives a cow to graze; the hedge redolent with summer blooms; the enclosed cornfields, seas of golden grain, weltering in the breeze; the stile, the track across the meadow, leading through the copse, under which the path winds, and the meeting branches overhead, which give, by their dimming tracery, a cathedral-like solemnity to the scene; the river, winding 'with sweet inland murmur;' and, as additional graces, spots like these—oases of taste—gardens of Eden—the works of wealth, which evince at once the greatest power and the greatest will to create beauty?

"And yet," continued Neville, "it was with difficulty that I persuaded myself to reap the best fruits of my uncle's will, and to inhabit this spot, familiar to my boyhood, associated with unavailing regrets and recollected pain."

Horace Neville was a man of birth—of wealth; but he could hardly be termed a man of the world. There was in his nature a gentleness, a sweetness, a winning sensibility, allied to talent and personal distinction, that gave weight to his simplest expressions, and excited sympathy for all his emotions. His younger cousin, his junior by several years, was attached to him by the tenderest sentiments—secret long—but they were now betrothed to each other—a lovely, happy pair. She looked inquiringly, but he turned away. “No more of this,” he said, and, giving a swifter impulse to their boat, they speedily reached the shore, landed, and walked through the long extent of Chapel Wood. It was dark night before they met their carriage at Bishopsgate.

A week or two after, Horace received letters to call him to a distant part of the country. A few days before his departure, he requested his cousin to walk with him. They bent their steps across several meadows to Old Windsor Churchyard. At first he did not deviate from the usual path; and as they went they talked cheerfully—gaily. The beauteous sunny day might well exhilarate them; the dancing waves sped onwards at their feet; the country church lifted its rustic spire into the bright pure sky. There was nothing in their conversation that could induce his cousin to think that Neville had led her hither for any saddening purpose; but when they were about to quit the churchyard, Horace, as if he had suddenly recollected himself, turned from the path, crossed the greensward, and paused beside a grave near the river. No stone was there to commemorate the being who reposed beneath—it was thickly grown with grass, starred by a luxuriant growth of humble daisies: a few dead leaves, a broken bramble twig, defaced its neatness. Neville removed these, and then said, “Juliet, I commit this sacred spot to your keeping while I am away.”

“There is no monument,” he continued; “for her commands were implicitly obeyed by the two beings to whom she addressed them. One day another may lie near, and his name will be her epitaph. I do not mean myself,” he said, half-smiling at the terror his cousin’s countenance expressed; “but promise me, Juliet, to preserve this

grave from every violation. I do not wish to sadden you by the story; yet, if I have excited your interest, I will satisfy it; but not now—not here."

It was not till the following day, when, in company with her sister, they again visited Virginia Water, that, seated under the shadow of its pines, whose melodious swinging in the wind breathed unearthly harmony, Neville, unasked, commenced his story.

"I was sent to Eton at eleven years of age. I will not dwell upon my sufferings there; I would hardly refer to them, did they not make a part of my present narration. I was a fag to a hard taskmaster; every labour he could invent—and the youthful tyrant was ingenious—he devised for my annoyance; early and late, I was forced to be in attendance, to the neglect of my school duties, so incurring punishment. There were worse things to bear than these: it was his delight to put me to shame, and, finding that I had too much of my mother in my blood,—to endeavour to compel me to acts of cruelty from which my nature revolted,—I refused to obey. Speak of West Indian slavery! I hope things may be better now; in my days, the tender years of aristocratic childhood were yielded up to a capricious, unrelenting, cruel bondage, far beyond the measured despotism of Jamaica.

"One day—I had been two years at school, and was nearly thirteen—my tyrant, I will give him no other name, issued a command, in the wantonness of power, for me to destroy a poor little bullfinch I had tamed and caged. In a hapless hour he found it in my room, and was indignant that I should dare to appropriate a single pleasure. I refused, stubbornly, dauntlessly, though the consequence of my disobedience was immediate and terrible. At this moment a message came from my tormentor's tutor—his father had arrived. 'Well, old lad,' he cried, 'I shall pay you off some day!' Seizing my pet at the same time, he wrung its neck, threw it at my feet, and, with a laugh of derision, quitted the room.

"Never before—never may I again feel the same swelling, boiling fury in my

bursting heart;—the sight of my nursling expiring at my feet—my desire of vengeance—my impotence, created a Vesuvius within me, that no tears flowed to quench. Could I have uttered—acted—my passion, it would have been less torturous: it was so when I burst into a torrent of abuse and imprecation. My vocabulary—it must have been a choice collection—was supplied by him against whom it was levelled. But words were air. I desired to give more substantial proof of my resentment—I destroyed everything in the room belonging to him; I tore them to pieces, I stamped on them, crushed them with more than childish strength. My last act was to seize a timepiece, on which my tyrant infinitely prided himself, and to dash it to the ground. The sight of this, as it lay shattered at my feet, recalled me to my senses, and something like an emotion of fear allayed the tumult in my heart. I began to meditate an escape: I got out of the house, ran down a lane, and across some meadows, far out of bounds, above Eton. I was seen by an elder boy, a friend of my tormentor. He called to me, thinking at first that I was performing some errand for him; but seeing that I shirked, he repeated his ‘Come up!’ in an authoritative voice. It put wings to my heels; he did not deem it necessary to pursue. But I grow tedious, my dear Juliet; enough that fears the most intense, of punishment both from my masters and the upper boys, made me resolve to run away. I reached the banks of the Thames, tied my clothes over my head, swam across, and, traversing several fields, entered Windsor Forest, with a vague childish feeling of being able to hide myself for ever in the unexplored obscurity of its immeasurable wilds. It was early autumn; the weather was mild, even warm; the forest oaks yet showed no sign of winter change, though the fern beneath wore a yellowy tinge. I got within Chapel Wood; I fed upon chestnuts and beechnuts; I continued to hide myself from the gamekeepers and woodmen. I lived thus two days.

“But chestnuts and beechnuts were sorry fare to a growing lad of thirteen years old. A day’s rain occurred, and I began to think myself the most unfortunate boy on

record. I had a distant, obscure idea of starvation: I thought of the Children in the Wood, of their leafy shroud, gift of the pious robin; this brought my poor bullfinch to my mind, and tears streamed in torrents down my cheeks. I thought of my father and mother; of you, then my little baby cousin and playmate; and I cried with renewed fervour, till, quite exhausted, I curled myself up under a huge oak among some dry leaves, the relics of a hundred summers, and fell asleep.

“I ramble on in my narration as if I had a story to tell; yet I have little except a portrait—a sketch—to present, for your amusement or interest. When I awoke, the first object that met my opening eyes was a little foot, delicately clad in silk and soft kid. I looked up in dismay, expecting to behold some gaily dressed appendage to this indication of high-bred elegance; but I saw a girl, perhaps seventeen, simply clad in a dark cotton dress, her face shaded by a large, very coarse straw hat; she was pale even to marmoreal whiteness; her chestnut-coloured hair was parted in plain tresses across a brow which wore traces of extreme suffering; her eyes were blue, full, large, melancholy, often even suffused with tears; but her mouth had an infantine sweetness and innocence in its expression, that softened the otherwise sad expression of her countenance.

“She spoke to me. I was too hungry, too exhausted, too unhappy, to resist her kindness, and gladly permitted her to lead me to her home. We passed out of the wood by some broken palings on to Bishopsgate Heath, and after no long walk arrived at her habitation. It was a solitary, dreary-looking cottage; the palings were in disrepair, the garden waste, the lattices unadorned by flowers or creepers; within, all was neat, but sombre, and even mean. The diminutiveness of a cottage requires an appearance of cheerfulness and elegance to make it pleasing; the bare floor,—clean, it is true,—the rush chairs, deal table, checked curtains of this cot, were beneath even a peasant’s rusticity; yet it was the dwelling of my lovely guide, whose little white hand, delicately gloved, contrasted with her unadorned attire, as did her gentle self with the clumsy appurtenances of her too humble dwelling.

“Poor child! she had meant entirely to hide her origin, to degrade herself to a peasant’s state, and little thought that she for ever betrayed herself by the strangest incongruities. Thus, the arrangements of her table were mean, her fare meagre for a hermit; but the linen was matchlessly fine, and wax lights stood in candlesticks which a beggar would almost have disdained to own. But I talk of circumstances I observed afterwards; then I was chiefly aware of the plentiful breakfast she caused her single attendant, a young girl, to place before me, and of the sweet soothing voice of my hostess, which spoke a kindness with which lately I had been little conversant. When my hunger was appeased, she drew my story from me, encouraged me to write to my father, and kept me at her abode till, after a few days, I returned to school pardoned. No long time elapsed before I got into the upper forms, and my woful slavery ended.

“Whenever I was able, I visited my disguised nymph. I no longer associated with my schoolfellows; their diversions, their pursuits appeared vulgar and stupid to me; I had but one object in view—to accomplish my lessons, and to steal to the cottage of Ellen Burnet.

“Do not look grave, love! true, others as young as I then was have loved, and I might also; but not Ellen. Her profound, her intense melancholy, sister to despair—her serious, sad discourse—her mind, estranged from all worldly concerns, forbade that; but there was an enchantment in her sorrow, a fascination in her converse, that lifted me above commonplace existence; she created a magic circle, which I entered as holy ground: it was not akin to heaven, for grief was the presiding spirit; but there was an exaltation of sentiment, an enthusiasm, a view beyond the grave, which made it unearthly, singular, wild, enthralling. You have often observed that I strangely differ from all other men; I mingle with them, make one in their occupations and diversions, but I have a portion of my being sacred from them:—a living well, sealed up from their contamination, lies deep in my heart—it is of little use, but there it is; Ellen opened the spring, and it has flowed ever since.

“Of what did she talk? She recited no past adventures, alluded to no past intercourse with friend or relative; she spoke of the various woes that wait on humanity, on the intricate mazes of life, on the miseries of passion, of love, remorse, and death, and that which we may hope or fear beyond the tomb; she spoke of the sensation of wretchedness alive in her own broken heart, and then she grew fearfully eloquent, till, suddenly pausing, she reproached herself for making me familiar with such wordless misery. ‘I do you harm,’ she often said; ‘I unfit you for society; I have tried, seeing you thrown upon yonder distorted miniature of a bad world, to estrange you from its evil contagion; I fear that I shall be the cause of greater harm to you than could spring from association with your fellow-creatures in the ordinary course of things. This is not well—avoid the stricken deer.’

“There were darker shades in the picture than those which I have already developed. Ellen was more miserable than the imagination of one like you, dear girl, unacquainted with woe, can portray. Sometimes she gave words to her despair—it was so great as to confuse the boundary between physical and mental sensation—and every pulsation of her heart was a throb of pain. She has suddenly broken off in talking of her sorrows, with a cry of agony—bidding me leave her—hiding her face on her arms, shivering with the anguish some thought awoke. The idea that chiefly haunted her, though she earnestly endeavoured to put it aside, was self-destruction—to snap the silver cord that bound together so much grace, wisdom, and sweetness—to rob the world of a creation made to be its ornament. Sometimes her piety checked her; oftener a sense of unendurable suffering made her brood with pleasure over the dread resolve. She spoke of it to me as being wicked; yet I often fancied this was done rather to prevent her example from being of ill effect to me, than from any conviction that the Father of all would regard angrily the last act of His miserable child. Once she had prepared the mortal beverage; it was on the table before her when I entered; she did not deny its nature, she did not attempt to justify herself; she only besought me not to hate her, and to soothe by my

kindness her last moments.—‘I cannot live!’ was all her explanation, all her excuse; and it was spoken with such fervent wretchedness that it seemed wrong to attempt to persuade her to prolong the sense of pain. I did not act like a boy; I wonder I did not; I made one simple request, to which she instantly acceded, that she should walk with me to this Belvidere. It was a glorious sunset; beauty and the spirit of love breathed in the wind, and hovered over the softened hues of the landscape. ‘Look, Ellen,’ I cried, ‘if only such loveliness of nature existed, it were worth living for!’

“‘True, if a latent feeling did not blot this glorious scene with murky shadows. Beauty is as we see it—my eyes view all things deformed and evil.’ She closed them as she said this; but, young and sensitive, the visitings of the soft breeze already began to minister consolation. ‘Dearest Ellen,’ I continued, ‘what do I not owe to you? I am your boy, your pupil; I might have gone on blindly as others do, but you opened my eyes; you have given me a sense of the just, the good, the beautiful—and have you done this merely for my misfortune? If you leave me, what can become of me?’ The last words came from my heart, and tears gushed from my eyes. ‘Do not leave me, Ellen,’ I said; ‘I cannot live without you—and I cannot die, for I have a mother—a father.’ She turned quickly round, saying, ‘You are blessed sufficiently.’ Her voice struck me as unnatural; she grew deadly pale as she spoke, and was obliged to sit down. Still I clung to her, prayed, cried; till she—I had never seen her shed a tear before—burst into passionate weeping. After this she seemed to forget her resolve. We returned by moonlight, and our talk was even more calm and cheerful than usual. When in her cottage, I poured away the fatal draught. Her ‘good-night’ bore with it no traces of her late agitation; and the next day she said, ‘I have thoughtlessly, even wickedly, created a new duty to myself, even at a time when I had forsworn all; but I will be true to it. Pardon me for making you familiar with emotions and scenes so dire; I will behave better—I will preserve myself if I can, till the link between us is loosened, or broken, and I am free again.’

“One little incident alone occurred during our intercourse that appeared at all to

connect her with the world. Sometimes I brought her a newspaper, for those were stirring times; and though, before I knew her, she had forgotten all except the world her own heart enclosed, yet, to please me, she would talk of Napoleon—Russia, from whence the emperor now returned overthrown—and the prospect of his final defeat. The paper lay one day on her table; some words caught her eye; she bent eagerly down to read them, and her bosom heaved with violent palpitation; but she subdued herself, and after a few moments told me to take the paper away. Then, indeed, I did feel an emotion of even impertinent inquisitiveness; I found nothing to satisfy it—though afterwards I became aware that it contained a singular advertisement, saying, 'If these lines meet the eye of any one of the passengers who were on board the St. Mary, bound for Liverpool from Barbadoes, which sailed on the third of May last, and was destroyed by fire in the high seas, a part of the crew only having been saved by his Majesty's frigate the Bellerophon, they are entreated to communicate with the advertiser; and if any one be acquainted with the particulars of the Hon. Miss Eversham's fate and present abode, they are earnestly requested to disclose them, directing to L. E., Stratton Street, Park Lane.'

"It was after this event, as winter came on, that symptoms of decided ill-health declared themselves in the delicate frame of my poor Ellen. I have often suspected that, without positively attempting her life, she did many things that tended to abridge it and to produce mortal disease. Now, when really ill, she refused all medical attendance; but she got better again, and I thought her nearly well when I saw her for the last time, before going home for the Christmas holidays. Her manner was full of affection: she relied, she said, on the continuation of my friendship; she made me promise never to forget her, though she refused to write to me, and forbade any letters from me.

"Even now I see her standing at her humble doorway. If an appearance of illness and suffering can ever he termed lovely, it was in her. Still she was to be viewed as the wreck of beauty. What must she not have been in happier days, with her angel

expression of face, her nymph-like figure, her voice, whose tones were music? ‘So young—so lost!’ was the sentiment that burst even from me, a young lad, as I waved my hand to her as a last adieu. She hardly looked more than fifteen, but none could doubt that her very soul was impressed by the sad lines of sorrow that rested so unceasingly on her fair brow. Away from her, her figure for ever floated before my eyes;—I put my hands before them, still she was there: my day, my night dreams were filled by my recollections of her.

“During the winter holidays, on a fine soft day, I went out to hunt: you, dear Juliet, will remember the sad catastrophe; I fell and broke my leg. The only person who saw me fall was a young man who rode one of the most beautiful horses I ever saw, and I believe it was by watching him as he took a leap, that I incurred my disaster: he dismounted, and was at my side in a minute. My own animal had fled; he called his; it obeyed his voice; with ease he lifted my light figure on to the saddle, contriving to support my leg, and so conducted me a short distance to a lodge situated in the woody recesses of Elmore Park, the seat of the Earl of D——, whose second son my preserver was. He was my sole nurse for a day or two, and during the whole of my illness passed many hours of each day by my bedside. As I lay gazing on him, while he read to me, or talked, narrating a thousand stranger adventures which had occurred during his service in the Peninsula, I thought—is it for ever to be my fate to fall in with the highly gifted and excessively unhappy?

“The immediate neighbour of Lewis’ family was Lord Eversham. He had married in very early youth, and became a widower young. After this misfortune, which passed like a deadly blight over his prospects and possessions, leaving the gay view utterly sterile and bare, he left his surviving infant daughter under the care of Lewis’ mother, and travelled for many years in far distant lands. He returned when Clarice was about ten, a lovely sweet child, the pride and delight of all connected with her. Lord Eversham, on his return—he was then hardly more than thirty—devoted himself to her education. They were never separate: he was a good musician, and

she became a proficient under his tutoring. They rode—walked—read together. When a father is all that a father may be, the sentiments of filial piety, entire dependence, and perfect confidence being united, the love of a daughter is one of the deepest and strongest, as it is the purest passion of which our natures are capable. Clarice worshipped her parent, who came, during the transition from mere childhood to the period when reflection and observation awaken, to adorn a commonplace existence with all the brilliant adjuncts which enlightened and devoted affection can bestow. He appeared to her like an especial gift of Providence, a guardian angel—but far dearer, as being akin to her own nature. She grew, under his eye, in loveliness and refinement both of intellect and heart. These feelings were not divided—almost strengthened, by the engagement that had taken place between her and Lewis:—Lewis was destined for the army, and, after a few years' service, they were to be united.

"It is hard, when all is fair and tranquil, when the world, opening before the ardent gaze of youth, looks like a well-kept demesne, unencumbered by let or hindrance for the annoyance of the young traveller, that we should voluntarily stray into desert wilds and tempest-visited districts. Lewis Elmore was ordered to Spain; and, at the same time, Lord Eversham found it necessary to visit some estates he possessed in Barbadoes. He was not sorry to revisit a scene, which had dwelt in his memory as an earthly paradise, nor to show to his daughter a new and strange world, so to form her understanding and enlarge her mind. They were to return in three months, and departed as on a summer tour. Clarice was glad that, while her lover gathered experience and knowledge in a distant land, she should not remain in idleness; she was glad that there would be some diversion for her anxiety during his perilous absence; and in every way she enjoyed the idea of travelling with her beloved father, who would fill every hour, and adorn every new scene, with pleasure and delight. They sailed. Clarice wrote home, with enthusiastic expressions of rapture and delight, from Madeira:—yet, without her father, she said, the fair scene had been

blank to her. More than half her letter was filled by the expressions of her gratitude and affection for her adored and revered parent. While he, in his, with fewer words, perhaps, but with no less energy, spoke of his satisfaction in her improvement, his pride in her beauty, and his grateful sense of her love and kindness.

“Such were they, a matchless example of happiness in the dearest connection in life, as resulting from the exercise of their reciprocal duties and affections. A father and daughter; the one all care, gentleness, and sympathy, consecrating his life for her happiness; the other fond, duteous, grateful:—such had they been,—and where were they now,—the noble, kind, respected parent, and the beloved and loving child! They had departed from England as on a pleasure voyage down an inland stream; but the ruthless car of destiny had overtaken them on their unsuspecting way, crushing them under its heavy wheels—scattering love, hope, and joy as the bellowing avalanche overwhelms and grinds to mere spray the streamlet of the valley. They were gone; but whither? Mystery hung over the fate of the most helpless victim; and my friend’s anxiety was, to penetrate the clouds that hid poor Clarice from his sight.

“After an absence of a few months, they had written, fixing their departure in the St. Mary, to sail from Barbadoes in a few days. Lewis, at the same time, returned from Spain: he was invalided, in his very first action, by a bad wound in his side. He arrived, and each day expected to hear of the landing of his friends, when that common messenger, the newspaper, brought him tidings to fill him with more than anxiety—with fear and agonizing doubt. The St. Mary had caught fire, and had burned in the open sea. A frigate, the Bellerophon, had saved a part of the crew. In spite of illness and a physician’s commands, Lewis set out the same day for London to ascertain as speedily as possible the fate of her he loved. There he heard that the frigate was expected in the Downs. Without alighting from his travelling chaise, he posted thither, arriving in a burning fever. He went on board, saw the commander, and spoke with the crew. They could give him few particulars as to whom they had

saved; they had touched at Liverpool, and left there most of the persons, including all the passengers rescued from the St. Mary. Physical suffering for awhile disabled Mr. Elmore; he was confined by his wound and consequent fever, and only recovered to give himself up to his exertions to discover the fate of his friends;—they did not appear nor write; and all Lewis' inquiries only tended to confirm his worst fears; yet still he hoped, and still continued indefatigable in his perquisitions. He visited Liverpool and Ireland, whither some of the passengers had gone, and learnt only scattered, incongruous details of the fearful tragedy, that told nothing of Miss Eversham's present abode, though much that confirmed his suspicion that she still lived.

"The fire on board the St. Mary had raged long and fearfully before the Bellerophon hove in sight, and boats came off for the rescue of the crew. The women were to be first embarked; but Clarice clung to her father, and refused to go till he should accompany her. Some fearful presentiment that, if she were saved, he would remain and die, gave such energy to her resolve, that not the entreaties of her father, nor the angry expostulations of the captain, could shake it. Lewis saw this man, after the lapse of two or three months, and he threw most light on the dark scene. He well remembered that, transported with anger by her obstinacy, he had said to her, 'You will cause your father's death—and be as much a parricide as if you put poison into his cup; you are not the first girl who has murdered her father in her wilful mood.' Still Clarice passionately refused to go—there was no time for long parley—the point was yielded, and she remained pale, but firm, near her parent, whose arm was around her, supporting her during the awful interval. It was no period for regular action and calm order; a tempest was rising, the scorching waves blew this way and that, making a fearful day of the night which veiled all except the burning ship. The boats returned with difficulty, and one only could contrive to approach; it was nearly full; Lord Eversham and his daughter advanced to the deck's edge to get in. 'We can only take one of you,' vociferated the sailors; 'keep back on your life! throw the girl

to us—we will come back for you if we can.' Lord Eversham cast with a strong arm his daughter, who had now entirely lost her self-possession, into the boat; she was alive again in a minute; she called to her father, held out her arms to him, and would have thrown herself into the sea, but was held back by the sailors. Meanwhile Lord Eversham, feeling that no boat could again approach the lost vessel, contrived to heave a spar overboard, and threw himself into the sea, clinging to it. The boat, tossed by the huge waves, with difficulty made its way to the frigate; and as it rose from the trough of the sea, Clarice saw her father struggling with his fate—battling with the death that at last became the victor; the spar floated by, his arms had fallen from it; were those his pallid features? She neither wept nor fainted, but her limbs grew rigid, her face colourless, and she was lifted as a log on to the deck of the frigate.

"The captain allowed that on her homeward voyage the people had rather a horror of her, as having caused her father's death; her own servants had perished, few people remembered who she was; but they talked together with no careful voices as they passed her, and a hundred times she must have heard herself accused of having destroyed her parent. She spoke to no one, or only in brief reply when addressed; to avoid the rough remonstrances of those around, she appeared at table, ate as well as she could; but there was a settled wretchedness in her face that never changed. When they landed at Liverpool, the captain conducted her to an hotel; he left her, meaning to return, but an opportunity of sailing that night for the Downs occurred, of which he availed himself, without again visiting her. He knew, he said, and truly, that she was in her native country, where she had but to write a letter to gather crowds of friends about her; and where can greater civility be found than at an English hotel, if it is known that you are perfectly able to pay your bill?

"This was all that Mr. Elmore could learn, and it took many months to gather together these few particulars. He went to the hotel at Liverpool. It seemed that as soon as there appeared some hope of rescue from the frigate, Lord Eversham had

given his pocket-book to his daughter's care, containing bills on a banking-house at Liverpool to the amount of a few hundred pounds. On the second day after Clarice's arrival there, she had sent for the master of the hotel, and showed him these. He got the cash for her; and the next day she quitted Liverpool in a little coasting vessel. In vain Lewis endeavoured to trace her. Apparently she had crossed to Ireland; but whatever she had done, wherever she had gone, she had taken infinite pains to conceal herself, and all due was speedily lost.

"Lewis had not yet despaired; he was even now perpetually making journeys, sending emissaries, employing every possible means for her discovery. From the moment he told me this story, we talked of nothing else. I became deeply interested, and we ceaselessly discussed the probabilities of the case, and where she might be concealed. That she did not meditate suicide was evident from her having possessed herself of money; yet, unused to the world, young, lovely, and inexperienced, what could be her plan? What might not have been her fate?

"Meanwhile I continued for nearly three months confined by the fracture of my limb; before the lapse of that time, I had begun to crawl about the ground, and now I considered myself as nearly recovered. It had been settled that I should not return to Eton, but be entered at Oxford; and this leap from boyhood to man's estate elated me considerably. Yet still I thought of my poor Ellen, and was angry at her obstinate silence. Once or twice I had, disobeying her command, written to her, mentioning my accident, and the kind attentions of Mr. Elmore. Still she wrote not; and I began to fear that her illness might have had a fatal termination. She had made me vow so solemnly never to mention her name, never to inquire about her during my absence, that, considering obedience the first duty of a young inexperienced boy to one older than himself, I resisted each suggestion of my affection or my fears to transgress her orders.

"And now spring came, with its gift of opening buds, odoriferous flowers, and sunny

genial days. I returned home, and found my family on the eve of their departure for London; my long confinement had weakened me; it was deemed inadvisable for me to encounter the bad air and fatigues of the metropolis, and I remained to rusticate. I rode and hunted, and thought of Ellen; missing the excitement of her conversation, and feeling a vacancy in my heart which she had filled. I began to think of riding across the country from Shropshire to Berks for the purpose of seeing her. The whole landscape haunted my imagination—the fields round Eton—the silver Thames—the majestic forest—this lovely scene of Virginia Water—the heath and her desolate cottage—she herself pale, slightly bending from weakness of health, awakening from dark abstraction to bestow on me a kind smile of welcome. It grew into a passionate desire of my heart to behold her, to cheer her as I might by my affectionate attentions, to hear her, and to hang upon her accents of inconsolable despair as if it had been celestial harmony. As I meditated on these things, a voice seemed for ever to repeat, Now go, or it will be too late; while another yet more mournful tone responded, You can never see her more!

"I was occupied by these thoughts, as, on a summer moonlight night, I loitered in the shrubbery, unable to quit a scene of entrancing beauty, when I was startled at hearing myself called by Mr. Elmore. He came on his way to the coast; he had received a letter from Ireland, which made him think that Miss Eversham was residing near Enniscorthy,—a strange place for her to select, but as concealment was evidently her object, not an improbable one. Yet his hopes were not high; on the contrary, he performed this journey more from the resolve to leave nothing undone, than in expectation of a happy result. He asked me if I would accompany him; I was delighted with the offer, and we departed together on the following morning.

"We arrived at Milford Haven, where we were to take our passage. The packet was to sail early in the morning—we walked on the beach, and beguiled the time by talk. I had never mentioned Ellen to Lewis; I felt now strongly inclined to break my vow, and to relate my whole adventure with her; but restrained myself, and we spoke only

of the unhappy Clarice—of the despair that must have been hers, of her remorse and unavailing regret.

“We retired to rest; and early in the morning I was called to prepare for going on board. I got ready, and then knocked at Lewis’ door; he admitted me, for he was dressed, though a few of his things were still unpacked, and scattered about the room. The morocco case of a miniature was on his table; I took it up. ‘Did I never show you that?’ said Elmore; ‘poor dear Clarice! she was very happy when that was painted!’

“I opened it;—rich, luxuriant curls clustered on her brow and the snow-white throat; there was a light zephyr appearance in the figure; an expression of unalloyed exuberant happiness in the countenance; but those large dove’s eyes, the innocence that dwelt on her mouth, could not be mistaken, and the name of Ellen Burnet burst from my lips.

“There was no doubt: why had I ever doubted? the thing was so plain! Who but the survivor of such a parent, and she the apparent cause of his death, could be so miserable as Ellen? A torrent of explanation followed, and a thousand minute circumstances, forgotten before, now assured us that my sad hermitess was the beloved of Elmore. No more sea voyage—not a second of delay—our chaise, the horses’ heads tamed to the east, rolled on with lightning rapidity, yet far too slowly to satisfy our impatience. It was not until we arrived at Worcester that the tide of expectation, flowing all one way, ebbed. Suddenly, even while I was telling Elmore some anecdote to prove that, in spite of all, she would be accessible to consolation, I remembered her ill-health and my fears. Lewis saw the change my countenance underwent; for some time I could not command my voice; and when at last I spoke, my gloomy anticipations passed like an electric shock into my friend’s soul.

“When we arrived at Oxford we halted for an hour or two, unable to proceed; yet we did not converse on the subject so near our hearts, nor until we arrived in sight of

Windsor did a word pass between us; then Elmore said, ‘To-morrow morning, dear Neville, you shall visit Clarice; we must not be too precipitate.’

“The morrow came. I arose with that intolerable weight at my breast, which it is grief’s worst heritage to feel. A sunny day it was; yet the atmosphere looked black to me; my heart was dead within me. We sat at the breakfast-table, but neither ate, and after some restless indecision, we left our inn, and (to protract the interval) walked to Bishopsgate. Our conversation belied our feelings: we spoke as if we expected all to be well; we felt that there was no hope. We crossed the heath along the accustomed path. On one side was the luxuriant foliage of the forest, on the other the widespread moor; her cottage was situated at one extremity, and could hardly be distinguished, until we should arrive close to it. When we drew near, Lewis bade me go on alone; he would wait my return. I obeyed, and reluctantly approached the confirmation of my fears. At length it stood before me, the lonely cot and desolate garden; the unfastened wicket swung in the breeze; every shutter was closed.

“To stand motionless and gaze on these symbols of my worst forebodings was all that I could do. My heart seemed to me to call aloud for Ellen,—for such was she to me,—her other name might be a fiction—but silent as her own life-deserted lips were mine. Lewis grew impatient, and advanced. My stay had occasioned a transient ray of hope to enter his mind; it vanished when he saw me and her deserted dwelling. Slowly we turned away, and were directing our steps back again, when my name was called by a child. A little girl came running across some fields towards us, whom at last I recognised as having seen before with Ellen. ‘Mr. Neville, there is a letter for you!’ cried the child. ‘A letter; where?—who?’ ‘The lady left a letter for you. You must go to Old Windsor, to Mr. Cooke’s; he has got it for you.’

“She had left a letter: was she then departed on an earthly journey? ‘I will go for it immediately. Mr. Cooke! Old Windsor! where shall I find him? who is he?’

“‘Oh, sir, everybody knows him,’ said the child; ‘he lives close to the churchyard;

he is the sexton. After the burial, Nancy gave him the letter to take care of.'

"Had we hoped? had we for a moment indulged the expectation of ever again seeing our miserable friend? Never! O never! Our hearts had told us that the sufferer was at peace—the unhappy orphan with her father in the abode of spirits! Why, then, were we here? Why had a smile dwelt on our lips, now wreathed into the expression of anguish? Our full hearts demanded one consolation—to weep upon her grave; her sole link now with us, her mourners. There at last my boy's grief found vent in tears, in lamentation. You saw the spot; the grassy mound rests lightly on the bosom of fair Clarice, of my own poor Ellen. Stretched upon this, kissing the scarcely springing turf; for many hours no thought visited me but the wretched one, that she had lived, and was lost to me for ever!

"If Lewis had ever doubted the identity of my friend with her he loved, the letter put into our hands undeceived him; the handwriting was Miss Eversham's, it was directed to me, and contained words like these:—

"'April 11.

"'I have vowed never to mention certain beloved names, never to communicate with beings who cherished me once, to whom my deepest gratitude is due; and, as well as poor bankrupt can, is paid. Perhaps it is a mere prevarication to write to you, dear Horace, concerning them; but Heaven pardon me! my disrobed spirit would not repose, I fear, if I did not thus imperfectly bid them a last farewell.

"'You know him, Neville; and know that he for ever laments her whom he has lost. Describe your poor Ellen to him, and he will speedily see that she died on the waves of the murderous Atlantic. Ellen had nothing in common with her, save love for, and interest in him. Tell him it had been well for him, perhaps, to have united himself to the child of prosperity, the nursling of deep love; but it had been destruction, even could he have meditated such an act, to wed the parrici—.

"'I will not write that word. Sickness and near death have taken the sting from my

despair. The agony of woe which you witnessed is melted into tender affliction and pious hope. I am not miserable now. Now! When you read these words, the hand that writes, the eye that sees, will be a little dust, becoming one with the earth around it. You, perhaps he, will visit my quiet retreat, bestow a few tears on my fate, but let them be secret; they may make green my grave, but do not let a misplaced feeling adorn it with any other tribute. It is my last request; let no stone, no name, mark that spot.

"'Farewell, dear Horace! Farewell to one other whom I may not name. May the God to whom I am about to resign my spirit in confidence and hope, bless your earthly career! Blindly, perhaps, you will regret me for your own sakes; but for mine, you will be grateful to the Providence which has snapt the heavy chain binding me to unutterable sorrow, and which permits me from my lowly grass-grown tomb to say to you, I am at peace.

"'Ellen.'"

VI. THE FALSE RHYME.

"Come, tell me where the maid is found

Whose heart can love without deceit,

And I will range the world around

To sigh one moment at her feet."

—Moore.

On a fine July day, the fair Margaret, Queen of Navarre, then on a visit to her royal brother, had arranged a rural feast for the morning following, which Francis declined attending. He was melancholy; and the cause was said to be some lover's quarrel with a favourite dame. The morrow came, and dark rain and murky clouds destroyed at once the schemes of the courtly throng. Margaret was angry, and she grew weary:

her only hope for amusement was in Francis, and he had shut himself up,—an excellent reason why she should the more desire to see him. She entered his apartment: he was standing at the casement, against which the noisy shower beat, writing with a diamond on the glass. Two beautiful dogs were his sole companions. As Queen Margaret entered, he hastily let down the silken curtain before the window, and looked a little confused.

“What treason is this, my liege,” said the queen, “which crimsons your cheek? I must see the same.”

“It is treason,” replied the king, “and therefore, sweet sister, thou mayest not see it.”

This the more excited Margaret’s curiosity, and a playful contest ensued. Francis at last yielded: he threw himself on a huge high-backed settee; and as the lady drew back the curtain with an arch smile, he grew grave and sentimental, as he reflected on the cause which had inspired his libel against all womankind.

“What have we here?” cried Margaret; “nay, this is lêse majesté—

“‘Souvent femme varie,

Bien fou qui s’y fie!’

Very little change would greatly amend your couplet:—would it not run better thus—

“‘Souvent homme varie,

Bien folle qui s’y fie?’

I could tell you twenty stories of man’s inconstancy.”

“I will be content with one true tale of woman’s fidelity,” said Francis drily; “but do not provoke me. I would fain be at peace with the soft Mutabilities, for thy dear sake.”

“I defy your grace,” replied Margaret rashly, “to instance the falsehood of one noble and well-reputed dame.”

“Not even Emilie de Lagny?” asked the king.

This was a sore subject for the queen. Emilie had been brought up in her own household, the most beautiful and the most virtuous of her maids of honour. She had long loved the Sire de Lagny, and their nuptials were celebrated with rejoicings but little ominous of the result. De Lagny was accused but a year after of traitorously yielding to the emperor a fortress under his command, and he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. For some time Emilie seemed inconsolable, often visiting the miserable dungeon of her husband, and suffering on her return, from witnessing his wretchedness, such paroxysms of grief as threatened her life. Suddenly, in the midst of her sorrow, she disappeared; and inquiry only divulged the disgraceful fact, that she had escaped from France, bearing her jewels with her, and accompanied by her page, Robinet Leroux. It was whispered that, during their journey, the lady and the stripling often occupied one chamber; and Margaret, enraged at these discoveries, commanded that no further quest should be made for her lost favourite.

Taunted now by her brother, she defended Emilie, declaring that she believed her to be guiltless, even going so far as to boast that within a month she would bring proof of her innocence.

“Robinet was a pretty boy,” said Francis, laughing.

“Let us make a bet,” cried Margaret: “if I lose, I will bear this vile rhyme of thine as a motto to my shame to my grave; if I win”—

“I will break my window, and grant thee whatever boon thou askest.”

The result of this bet was long sung by troubadour and minstrel. The queen employed a hundred emissaries,—published rewards for any intelligence of Emilie,—all in vain. The month was expiring, and Margaret would have given many bright jewels to redeem her word. On the eve of the fatal day, the jailor of the prison in which the Sire de Lagny was confined sought an audience of the queen; he brought her a message from the knight to say, that if the Lady Margaret would ask

his pardon as her boon, and obtain from her royal brother that he might be brought before him, her bet was won. Fair Margaret was very joyful, and readily made the desired promise. Francis was unwilling to see his false servant, but he was in high good-humour, for a cavalier had that morning brought intelligence of a victory over the Imperialists. The messenger himself was lauded in the despatches as the most fearless and bravest knight in France. The king loaded him with presents, only regretting that a vow prevented the soldier from raising his visor or declaring his name.

That same evening as the setting sun shone on the lattice on which the ungallant rhyme was traced, Francis reposed on the same settee, and the beautiful Queen of Navarre, with triumph in her bright eyes, sat beside him. Attended by guards, the prisoner was brought in: his frame was attenuated by privation, and he walked with tottering steps. He knelt at the feet of Francis, and uncovered his head; a quantity of rich golden hair then escaping, fell over the sunken cheeks and pallid brow of the suppliant.

“We have treason here!” cried the king. “Sir jailor, where is your prisoner!”

“Sire, blame him not,” said the soft faltering voice of Emilie; “wiser men than he have been deceived by woman. My dear lord was guiltless of the crime for which he suffered. There was but one mode to save him:—I assumed his chains—he escaped with poor Robinet Leroux in my attire—he joined your army: the young and gallant cavalier who delivered the despatches to your grace, whom you overwhelmed with honours and reward, is my own Enguerrard de Lagny. I waited but for his arrival with testimonials of his innocence, to declare myself to my lady, the queen. Has she not won her bet! And the boon she asks”—

“Is de Lagny’s pardon,” said Margaret, as she also knelt to the king. “Spare your faithful vassal, sire, and reward this lady’s truth.”

Francis first broke the false-speaking window, then he raised the ladies from their

supplicatory posture.

In the tournament given to celebrate this “Triumph of Ladies,” the Sire de Lagny bore off every prize; and surely there was more loveliness in Emilie’s faded cheek—more grace in her emaciated form, type as they were of truest affection—than in the prouder bearing and fresher complexion of the most brilliant beauty in attendance on the courtly festival.

VII. A TALE OF THE PASSIONS; OR, THE DEATH OF DESPINA.

After the death of Manfred, King of Naples, the Ghibellines lost their ascendency throughout Italy. The exiled Guelphs returned to their native cities; and, not contented with resuming the reins of government, they prosecuted their triumph until the Ghibellines in their turn were obliged to fly, and to mourn in banishment over the violent party spirit which had before occasioned their bloody victories, and now their irretrievable defeat. After an obstinate contest, the Florentine Ghibellines were forced to quit their native town; their estates were confiscated; their attempts to reinstate themselves frustrated; and receding from castle to castle, they at length took refuge in Lucca, and awaited with impatience the arrival of Corradino from Germany, through whose influence they hoped again to establish the Imperial supremacy.

The first of May was ever a day of rejoicing and festivity at Florence. The youth of both sexes, and of all ranks, paraded the streets, crowned with flowers, and singing the canzonets of the day. In the evening they assembled in the Piazza del Duomo, and spent the hours in dancing. The Carroccio was led through the principal streets, the ringing of its bell drowned in the peals that rang from every belfry in the city, and in the music of fifes and drums which made a part of the procession that followed it. The triumph of the reigning party in Florence caused them to celebrate

the anniversary of the first of May, 1268, with peculiar splendour. They had indeed hoped that Charles d'Anjou, King of Naples, the head of the Guelphs in Italy, and then Vicare (President) of their republic, would have been there to adorn the festival by his presence. But the expectation of Corradino had caused the greater part of his newly-conquered and oppressed kingdom to revolt, and he had hastily quitted Tuscany to secure by his presence those conquests of which his avarice and cruelty endangered the loss. But although Charles somewhat feared the approaching contest with Corradino, the Florentine Guelphs, newly reinstated in their city and possessions, did not permit a fear to cloud their triumph. The principal families vied with each other in the display of their magnificence during the festival. The knights followed the Carroccio on horseback, and the windows were filled with ladies who leant upon gold-inwoven carpets, while their own dresses, at once simple and elegant, their only ornaments, flowers, contrasted with the glittering tapestry and the brilliant colours of the flags of the various communities. The whole population of Florence poured into the principal streets, and none were left at home, except the decrepit and sick, unless it were some discontented Ghibelline, whose fear, poverty, or avarice had caused him to conceal his party when it had been banished from the city.

It was not the feeling of discontent which prevented Monna Gegia de' Becari from being among the first of the revellers; and she looked angrily on what she called her "Ghibelline leg," which fixed her to her chair on such a day of triumph. The sun shone in all its glory in an unclouded sky, and caused the fair Florentines to draw their fazioles (veils) over their dark eyes, and to bereave the youth of those beams more vivifying than the sun's rays. The same sun poured its full light into the lonely apartment of Monna Gegia, and almost extinguished the fire which was lighted in the middle of the room, over which hung the pot of minestra, the dinner of the dame and her husband. But she had deserted the fire, and was seated by her window, holding her beads in her hand, while every now and then she peeped from her lattice

(five storeys high) into the narrow lane below; but no creature passed. She looked at the opposite window; a cat slept there beside a pot of heliotrope, but no human being was heard or seen,—they had all gone to the Piazza del Duomo.

Monna Gegia was an old woman, and her dress of green calrasio (stuff) showed that she belonged to one of the Arli Minori (working classes). Her head was covered by a red kerchief, which, folded triangularly, hung loosely over it; her grey hairs were combed back from her high and wrinkled brow. The quickness of her eye spoke the activity of her mind, and the slight irritability that lingered about the corners of her lips might be occasioned by the continual war maintained between her bodily and mental faculties. “Now, by St. John!” she said, “I would give my gold cross to make one of them; though by giving that I should appear on a festa, without that which no festa yet ever found me wanting.” And as she spoke she looked with great complacency on a large but thin gold cross which was tied round her withered neck by a ribbon, once black, now of a rusty brown. “Methinks this leg of mine is bewitched; and it may well be that my Ghibelline husband has used the black art to hinder me from following the Carroccio with the best of them.”—A slight sound, as of footsteps in the street far below, interrupted the good woman’s soliloquy.—“Perhaps it is Monna Lisabetta, or Messer Giani dei Agli, the weaver, who mounted the breach first when the castle of Pagibonzi was taken.”—She looked down, but could see no one, and was about to relapse into her old train of thoughts, when her attention was again attracted by the sound of steps ascending the stairs: they were slow and heavy, but she did not doubt who her visitant was when a key was applied to the hole of the door; the latch was lifted up, and a moment after, with an unassured mien and downcast eyes, her husband entered.

He was a short, stunted man, more than sixty years of age; his shoulders were broad and high; his lank hair was still coal-black; his brows were overhanging and bushy; his eyes black and quick; his lips as it were contradicted the sternness of the upper part of his face, for their gentle curve betokened even delicacy of sentiment, and his

smile was inexpressibly sweet. He had on a low-crowned, red cloth cap, which he drew over his eyes, and, seating himself on a low bench by the fire, he heaved a deep sigh. He appeared disinclined to enter into any conversation, but Monna Gegia was resolved that he should not enjoy his melancholy mood uninterrupted.

“Have you been to mass, Cincolo?” she asked, beginning by a question sufficiently removed from the point she longed to approach.—He shrugged his shoulders uneasily, but did not reply.—“You are too early for your dinner,” continued Gegia; “do you not go out again?”

Cincolo answered “No!” in an accent that denoted his disinclination to further questioning. But this very impatience only served to feed the spirit of contention that was fermenting in the bosom of Gegia.

“You are not used,” she said, “to pass your May days under your chimney.”—No answer.—“Well,” she continued, “if you will not speak, I have done!”—meaning that she intended to begin—“but by that lengthened face of thine I see that some good news is stirring abroad, and I bless the Virgin for it, whatever it may be. Come, tell me what happy tidings make thee so woe-begone.”

Cincolo remained silent for awhile, then turning half round, but not looking at his wife, he replied, “What if old Marzio the lion be dead?”

Gegia turned pale at the idea, but a smile that lurked in the good-natured mouth of her husband reassured her.

“Nay, St. John defend us!” she began, “but that is not true. Old Marzio’s death would not drive you within these four walls, except it were to triumph over your old wife. By the blessing of St. John, not one of our lions have died since the eve of the battle of Monte Aperto; and I doubt not that they were poisoned; for Mari, who fed them that night, was more than half a Ghibelline in his heart. Besides, the bells are still ringing, and the drums still beating, and all would be silent enough if old Marzio were to die. On the first of May too! Santa Reparata is too good to us to

allow such ill-luck;—and she has more favour, I trust, in the seventh heaven than all the Ghibelline saints in your calendar. No, good Cincolo, Marzio is not dead, nor the Holy Father, nor Messer Carlo of Naples; but I would bet my gold cross against the wealth of your banished men, that Pisa is taken—or Corradino—or"—

"And I here! No, Gegia, old as I am, and much as you need my help (and that last is why I am here at all), Pisa would not be taken while this old body could stand in the breach; or Corradino die, till this lazy blood were colder on the ground than it is in my body. Ask no more questions, and do not rouse me: there is no news, no good or ill-luck, that I know. But when I saw the Neri, the Pulci, the Buondelmonti, and the rest of them, ride like kings through the streets, whose very hands are hardly dry from the blood of my kindred; when I saw their daughter crowned with flowers, and thought how the daughter of Arrigo dei Elisei was mourning for her murdered father, with ashes on her head, by the hearth of a stranger,—my spirit must be more dead than it is if such a sight did not make me wish to drive among them; and methought I could scatter their pomp with my awl for a sword. But I remembered thee, and am here unstained with blood."

"That thou wilt never be!" cried Monna Gegia, the colour rising in her wrinkled cheeks. "Since the battle of Monte Aperto thou hast never been well washed of that shed by thee and thy confederates; and how could ye? for the Arno has never since run clear of the blood then spilt."

"And if the sea were red with that blood, still, while there is any of the Guelphs' to spill, I am ready to spill it, were it not for thee. Thou dost well to mention Monte Aperto, and thou wouldst do better to remember over whom its grass now grows."

"Peace, Cincolo; a mother's heart has more memory in it than thou thinkest; and I well recollect who spurned me as I knelt, and dragged my only child, but sixteen years of age, to die in the cause of that misbeliever Manfred. Let us indeed speak no more. Woe was the day when I married thee! but those were happy times when there

was neither Guelph nor Ghibelline;—they will never return."

"Never,—until, as thou sayest, the Arno run clear of the blood shed on its banks;—never while I can pierce the heart of a Guelph;—never till both parties are cold under one bier."

"And thou and I, Cincolo?"

"Are two old fools, and shall be more at peace under ground than above it. Rank Guelph as thou art, I married thee before I was a Ghibelline; so now I must eat from the same platter with the enemy of Manfred, and make shoes for Guelphs, instead of following the fortunes of Corradino, and sending them, my battle-axe in my hand, to buy their shoes in Bologna."

"Hush! hush! good man, talk not so loud of thy party; hearest thou not that some one knocks?"

Cincolo went to open the door with the air of a man who thinks himself ill-used at being interrupted in his discourse, and is disposed to be angry with the intruder, however innocent he might be of any intention of breaking in upon his eloquent complaint. The appearance of his visitor calmed his indignant feelings. He was a youth whose countenance and person showed that he could not be more than sixteen; but there was a self-possession in his demeanour, and a dignity in his physiognomy, that belonged to a more advanced age. His figure was slight, and his countenance, though beautiful, was pale as monumental marble; the thick and curling locks of his chestnut hair clustered over his brow and round his fair throat; his cap was drawn far down on his forehead. Cincolo was about to usher him with deference into his humble room, but the youth stayed him with his hand, and uttered the words "Swabia, Cavalieri!" the words by which the Ghibellines were accustomed to recognise each other. He continued in a low and hurried tone: "Your wife is within?"

"She is."

“Enough. Although I am a stranger to you, I come from an old friend. Harbour me until nightfall; we will then go out, and I will explain to you the motives of my intrusion. Call me Ricciardo de’ Rossini of Milan, travelling to Rome. I leave Florence this evening.”

Having said these words, without giving Cincolo time to reply, he motioned that they should enter the room. Monna Gegia had fixed her eyes on the door from the moment he had opened it, with a look of impatient curiosity; when she saw the youth enter, she could not refrain from exclaiming, “Gesu Maria!”—so different was he from any one she had expected to see.

“A friend from Milan,” said Cincolo.

“More likely from Lucca,” replied his wife, gazing on her visitant. “You are doubtless one of the banished men, and you are more daring than wise to enter this town; however, if you be not a spy, you are safe with me.”

Ricciardo smiled and thanked her in a low, sweet voice. “If you do not turn me out,” he said, “I shall remain under your roof nearly all the time I remain in Florence, and I leave it soon after dusk.”

Gegia again gazed on her guest, nor did Cincolo scrutinize him with less curiosity. His black cloth tunic reached below his knees, and was confined by a black leather girdle at the waist. He had on trousers of coarse scarlet stuff, over which were drawn short boots; a cloak of common fox’s fur, unlined, hung from his shoulder. But, although his dress was thus simple, it was such as was then worn by the young Florentine nobility. At that time the Italians were simple in their private habits: the French army led by Charles d’Anjou into Italy, first introduced luxury into the palaces of the Cisalpines. Manfred was a magnificent prince, but it was his saintly rival who was the author of that trifling foppery of dress and ornaments which degrades a nation, and is a sure precursor of their downfall. But of Ricciardo—his countenance had all the regularity of a Grecian head; and his blue eyes, shaded by

very long, dark eyelashes, were soft, yet full of expression. When he looked up, the heavy lids, as it were, unveiled the gentle light beneath, and then again closed over them, as shading what was too brilliant to behold. His lips expressed the deepest sensibility, and something perhaps of timidity, had not the placid confidence of his demeanour forbidden such an idea.

His host and hostess were at first silent; but he asked some natural questions about the buildings of their city, and by degrees led them into discourse. When mid-day struck, Cincolo looked towards his pot of minestra, and Ricciardo followed his look, asked if that was not the dinner. “You must entertain me,” he said, “for I have not eaten to-day.” A table was drawn near the window, and the minestra, poured out into one plate, was placed in the middle of it, a spoon was given to each, and a jug of wine filled from a barrel. Ricciardo looked at the two old people, and seemed somewhat to smile at the idea of eating from the same plate with them; he ate, however, though sparingly, and drank of the wine, though with still greater moderation. Cincolo, however, under pretence of serving his guest, filled his jug a second time, and was about to rise for the third measure, when Ricciardo, placing his small white hand on his arm, said, “Are you a German, my friend, that you cease not after so many draughts? I have heard that you Florentines were a sober people.”

Cincolo was not much pleased with this reproof, but he felt that it was timely; so, conceding the point, he sat down again, and, somewhat heated with what he had already drank, he asked his guest the news from Germany, and what hopes for the good cause? Gegia bridled at these words, and Ricciardo replied, “Many reports are abroad, and high hopes entertained, especially in the north of Italy, for the success of our expedition. Corradino is arrived at Genoa, and it is hoped that, although the ranks of his army were much thinned by the desertion of his German troops, they will be quickly filled by Italians, braver and truer than those foreigners, who, strangers to our soil, could not fight for his cause with our ardour?”

“And how does he bear himself?”

“As beseems one of the house of Swabia, and the nephew of Manfred. He is inexperienced and young. He is not more than sixteen. His mother would hardly consent to this expedition, but wept at the fear of all he might endure; for he has been nursed in every luxury, and habituated to the tender care of a woman, who, although she be a princess, has waited on him with anxious solicitude. But Corradino is of good heart; docile, but courageous; obedient to his wiser friends, gentle to his inferiors, but noble of soul, the spirit of Manfred seems to animate his unfolding mind; and surely, if that glorious prince now enjoys the reward of his surpassing virtues, he looks down with joy and approbation on him who is, I trust, destined to fill his throne.”

The enthusiasm with which Ricciardo spoke suffused his pale countenance with a slight blush, while his eyes swam in the lustre of the dew that filled them. Gegia was little pleased with this harangue, but curiosity kept her silent, while her husband proceeded to question his guest. “You seem to be well acquainted with Corradino?”

“I saw him at Milan, and was closely connected with his most intimate friend there. As I have said, he has arrived at Genoa, and perhaps has even now landed at Pisa; he will find many friends in that town. Every man there will be his friend; but during his journey southward he will have to contend with our Florentine army, commanded by the Marshals of the usurper Charles, and assisted by his troops. Charles himself has left us, and is gone to Naples to prepare for this war. But he is detested there, as a tyrant and a robber, and Corradino will be received in the Regno as a saviour; so that if he once surmount the obstacles which oppose his entrance, I do not doubt his success, and trust that he will be crowned within a month at Rome, and the week after sit on the throne of his ancestors in Naples.”

“And who will crown him?” cried Gegia, unable to contain herself. “Italy contains no heretic base enough to do such a deed, unless it be a Jew; or he send to

Constantinople for a Greek, or to Egypt for a Mohammedan. Cursed may the race of the Frederics ever be! Thrice cursed one who has affinity to the miscreant Manfred! And little do you please me, young man, by holding such discourse in my house."

Cincolo looked at Ricciardo, as if he feared that so violent a partisan for the house of Swabia would be irritated at his wife's attack; but he was looking on the aged woman with a regard of the most serene benignity; no contempt even was mingled with the gentle smile that played round his lips. "I will restrain myself," he said, and, turning to Cincolo, he conversed on more general subjects, describing the various cities of Italy that he had visited; discussing their modes of government, and relating anecdotes concerning their inhabitants, with an air of experience that, contrasted with his youthful appearance, greatly impressed Cincolo, who looked on him at once with admiration and respect. Evening came on. The sound of bells died away after the Ave Maria had ceased to ring, but the distant sound of music was wafted to them by the night air. Ricciardo was about to address Cincolo, when a knocking at the gate interrupted him. It was Buzeccha, the Saracen, a famous chess-player, who was used to parade about under the colonnades of the Duomo, and challenge the young nobles to play; and sometimes much stress was laid on these games, and the gain and loss became the talk of Florence. Buzeccha was a tall and ungainly man, with all that good-natured consequence of manner which the fame he had acquired by his proficiency in so trifling a science, and the familiarity with which he was permitted to treat those superior to him in rank, who were pleased to measure their forces with him, might well bestow. He was beginning with "Eh, Messere!" when perceiving Ricciardo, he cried, "Who have we here?"

"A friend to good men," replied Ricciardo, smiling.

"Then, by Mahomet, thou art my friend, my stripling."

"Thou shouldst be a Saracen, by thy speech?" said Ricciardo.

"And through the help of the Prophet, so am I. One who in Manfred's time—but no

more of that. We won't talk of Manfred, eh, Monna Gegia? I am Buzeccha, the chess-player, at your service, Messer lo Forestiere."

The introduction thus made, they began to talk of the procession of the day. After a while, Buzeccha introduced his favourite subject of chess-playing; he recounted some wonderfully good strokes he had achieved, and related to Ricciardo how before the Palagio del Popolo, in the presence of Count Guido Novelle de' Giudi, then Vicare of the city, he had played an hour at three chess-boards with three of the best chess-players in Florence, playing two by memory and one by sight; and out of three games which made the board, he had won two. This account was wound up by a proposal to play with his host. "Thou art a hard-headed fellow, Cincolo, and make better play than the nobles. I would swear that thou thinkest of chess only as thou cobblest thy shoes; every hole of your awl is a square of the board, every stitch a move, and a finished pair paid for checkmate to your adversary; eh, Cincolo? Bring out the field of battle, man."

Ricciardo interposed: "I leave Florence in two hours, and before I go, Messer Cincolo promised to conduct me to the Piazza del Duomo."

"Plenty of time, good youth," cried Buzeccha, arranging his men; "I only claim one game, and my games never last more than a quarter of an hour; and then we will both escort you, and you shall dance a set into the bargain with a black-eyed houri, all Nazarine as thou art. So stand out of my light, good youth, and shut the window, if you have heeding, that the torch flare not so."

Ricciardo seemed amused by the authoritative tone of the chess-player; he shut the window and trimmed the torch which, stuck against the wall, was the only light they had, and stood by the table, overlooking the game. Monna Gegia had replaced the pot for supper, and sat somewhat uneasily, as if she were displeased that her guest did not talk with her. Cincolo and Buzeccha were deeply intent on their game, when a knock was heard at the door. Cincolo was about to rise and open it, but Ricciardo

saying, “Do not disturb yourself,” opened it himself, with the manner of one who does humble offices as if ennobling them, so that no one action can be more humble to them than another.

The visitant was welcomed by Gegia alone, with “Ah! Messer Beppe, this is kind, on May Day night.”

Ricciardo glanced slightly on him, and then resumed his stand by the players. There was little in Messer Beppe to attract a favourable regard. He was short, thin, and dry; his face long-drawn and liny; his eyes deep-set and scowling, his lips straight, his nose hooked, and his head covered by a close skull-cap, his hair cut close all round. He sat down near Gegia, and began to discourse in a whining, servile, voice, complimenting her on her good looks, launching forth into praise of the magnificence of certain Guelph Florentines, and concluded by declaring that he was hungry and tired.

“Hungry, Beppe?” said Gegia, “that should have been your first word, friend. Cincolo, wilt thou give thy guest to eat? Cincolo, art thou deaf? Art thou blind? Dost thou not hear? Wilt thou not see?—Here is Messer Giuseppe de’ Bosticchi.”

Cincolo slowly, his eyes still fixed on the board, was about to rise. But the name of the visitant seemed to have the effect of magic on Ricciardo.

“Bosticchi!” he cried—“Giuseppe Bosticchi! I did not expect to find that man beneath thy roof, Cincolo, all Guelph as thy wife is; for she also has eaten of the bread of Elisei. Farewell! thou wilt find me in the street below; follow me quickly.”

He was about to go, but Bosticchi placed himself before the door, saying in a tone whose whine expressed mingled rage and servility, “In what have I offended this young gentleman? Will he not tell me my offence?”

“Dare not to stop my way,” cried Ricciardo, passing his hand before his eyes, “nor force me again to look on thee. Begone!”

Cincolo stopped him. “Thou art too hasty, and far too passionate, my noble guest,”

said he; “however this man may have offended thee, thou art too violent.”

“Violent!” cried Ricciardo, almost suffocated by passionate emotion. “Ay, draw thy knife, and show the blood of Arrigo dei Elisei, with which it is still stained.”

A dead silence followed. Bosticchi slunk out of the room; Ricciardo hid his face in his hands and wept. But soon he calmed his passion, and said: “This is indeed childish. Pardon me; that man is gone; excuse and forget my violence. Resume thy game, Cincolo, but conclude it quickly, for time gains on us. Hark! an hour of night sounds from the Campanile.”

“The game is already concluded,” said Buzeccha sorrowfully; “thy cloak overthrew the best checkmate this head ever planned—so God forgive thee!”

“Checkmate!” cried the indignant Cincolo—“Checkmate! and my queen mowing you down, rank and file!”

“Let us begone!” exclaimed Ricciardo. “Messer Buzeccha, you will play out your game with Monna Gegia. Cincolo will return ere long.” So taking his host by the arm, he drew him out of the room, and descended the narrow high stairs with the air of one to whom those stairs were not unknown.

When in the street he slackened his pace, and, first looking round to assure himself that none overheard their conversation, he addressed Cincolo: “Pardon me, my dear friend; I am hasty, and the sight of that man made every drop of my blood cry aloud in my veins. But I do not come here to indulge in private sorrows or private revenge, and my design ought alone to engross me. It is necessary for me to see speedily and secretly Messer Guielmo Lostendardo, the Neapolitan commander. I bear a message to him from the Countess Elizabeth, the mother of Corradino, and I have some hope that its import may induce him to take at least a neutral part during the impending conflict. I have chosen you, Cincolo, to aid me in this, for not only you are of that little note in your town that you may act for me without attracting observation, but you are brave and true, and I may confide to your known worth. Lostendardo resides

at the Palagio del Governo. When I enter its doors I am in the hands of my enemies, and its dungeons may alone know the secret of my destiny. I hope better things. But if after two hours I do not appear or let you hear of my welfare, carry this packet to Corradino at Pisa. You will then learn who I am; and if you feel any indignation at my fate, let that feeling attach you still more strongly to the cause for which I live and die."

As Ricciardo spoke, he still walked on, and Cincolo observed that, without his guidance, he directed his steps towards the Palagio del Governo.

"I do not understand this," said the old man. "By what argument, unless you bring one from the other world, do you hope to induce Messer Guielmo to aid Corradino? He is so bitter an enemy of Manfred, that although that prince is dead, yet when he mentions his name he grasps the air as it were a dagger. I have heard him with horrible imprecations curse the whole house of Swabia."

A tremor shook the frame of Ricciardo, but he replied, "Lostendardo was once the firmest support of that house, and the friend of Manfred. Strange circumstances gave birth in his mind to this unnatural hatred, and he became a traitor. But, perhaps, now that Manfred is in Paradise, the youth, the virtues, and the inexperience of Corradino may inspire him with more generous feelings, and reawaken his ancient faith. At least I must make this last trial. This cause is too holy, too sacred, to admit of common forms of reasoning or action. The nephew of Manfred must sit upon the throne of his ancestors; and to achieve that I will endure what I am about to endure."

They entered the palace; Messer Guielmo was carousing in the great hall.

"Bear this ring to him, good Cincolo, and say that I wait. Be speedy, that my courage, my life, do not desert me at the moment of trial."

Cincolo, casting one more inquisitive glance on his extraordinary companion, obeyed his orders, while the youth leant against one of the pillars of the court and passionately cast up his eyes to the clear firmament.

“Oh, ye stars!” he cried in a smothered voice, “ye are eternal; let my purpose, my will, be as constant as ye!”

Then, more calm, he folded his arms in his cloak, and with strong inward struggle endeavoured to repress his emotion. Several servants approached him, and bade him follow them. Again he looked at the sky and said, “Manfred,” and then he walked on with slow but firm steps. They led him through several halls and corridors to a large apartment hung with tapestry, and well lighted by numerous torches; the marble of the floor reflected their glare, and the arched roof echoed the footsteps of one who paced the apartment as Ricciardo entered. It was Lostendardo. He made a sign that the servants should retire; the heavy door closed behind them, and Ricciardo stood alone with Messer Guielmo; his countenance pale but composed, his eyes cast down as in expectation, not in fear; and but for the convulsive motion of his lips, you would have guessed that every faculty was almost suspended by intense agitation.

Lostendardo approached. He was a man in the prime of life, tall and athletic; he seemed capable with a single exertion to crush the frail being of Ricciardo. Every feature of his countenance spoke of the struggle of passions, and the terrible egotism of one who would sacrifice even himself to the establishment of his will: his black eyebrows were scattered, his grey eyes deep-set and scowling, his look at once stern and haggard. A smile seemed never to have disturbed the settled scorn which his lips expressed; his high forehead, already becoming bald, was marked by a thousand contradictory lines. His voice was studiously restrained as he said: “Wherefore do you bring that ring?”

Ricciardo looked up and met his eye, which glanced fire as he exclaimed, “Despina!”—He seized her hand with a giant’s grasp: “I have prayed for this night and day, and thou art now here! Nay, do not struggle; you are mine; for by my salvation I swear that thou shalt never again escape me.”

Despina replied calmly: “Thou mayest well believe that in thus placing myself in thy

power I do not dread any injury thou canst inflict upon me, or I were not here. I do not fear thee, for I do not fear death. Loosen then thy hold, and listen to me. I come in the name of those virtues that were once thine; I come in the name of all noble sentiment, generosity, and ancient faith, and I trust that in listening to me your heroic nature will second my voice, and that Lostendardo will no longer rank with those whom the good and great never name but to condemn."

Lostendardo appeared to attend little to what she said. He gazed on her with triumph and malignant pride; and if he still held her his motive appeared rather the delight he felt in displaying his power over her, than any fear that she would escape. You might read in her pale cheek and glazed eye, that if she feared, it was herself alone that she mistrusted; that her design lifted her above mortal dread, and that she was as impassive as the marble she resembled to any event that did not either advance or injure the object for which she came. They were both silent, until Lostendardo leading her to a seat, and then standing opposite to her, his arms folded, every feature dilated by triumph, and his voice sharpened by agitation, he said: "Well, speak! What wouldst thou with me?"

"I come to request, that if you cannot be induced to assist Prince Corradino in the present struggle, you will, at least, stand neutral, and not oppose his advance to the kingdom of his ancestors."

Lostendardo laughed. The vaulted roof repeated the sound, but the harsh echo, though it resembled the sharp cry of an animal of prey whose paw is on the heart of its enemy, was not so discordant and dishuman as the laugh itself. "How," he asked, "dost thou pretend to induce me to comply? This dagger"—and he touched the hilt of one that was half concealed in his vesture—"is yet stained by the blood of Manfred; ere long it will be sheathed in the heart of that foolish boy."

Despina conquered the feeling of horror these words inspired, and replied: "Will you give a few minutes' patient hearing?"

“I will give you a few minutes’ hearing, and if I be not so patient as in the Palagio Reale, fair Despina must excuse me. Forbearance is not a virtue to which I aspire.”

“Yes, it was in the Palagio Reale at Naples, the palace of Manfred, that you first saw me. You were then the bosom friend of Manfred, selected by him as his confidant and counsellor. Why did you become a traitor? Start not at that word: if you could hear the united voice of Italy, and even of those who call themselves your friends, they would echo that name. Why did you thus degrade and belie yourself? You call me the cause, yet I am most innocent. You saw me at the Court of your master, an attendant on Queen Sibilla, and one who, unknown to herself, had already parted with her heart, her soul, her will, her entire being, an involuntary sacrifice at the shrine of all that is noble and divine in human nature. My spirit worshipped Manfred as a saint, and my pulses ceased to beat when his eye fell upon me. I felt this, but I knew it not. You awoke me from my dream. You said that you loved me, and you reflected in too faithful a mirror my own emotions: I saw myself and shuddered. But the profound and eternal nature of my passion saved me. I loved Manfred. I loved the sun because it enlightened him; I loved the air that fed him; I deified myself, for that my heart was the temple in which he resided. I devoted myself to Sibilla, for she was his wife, and never in thought or dream degraded the purity of my affection towards him. For this you hated him. He was ignorant of my passion: my heart contained it as a treasure, which you having discovered came to rifle. You could more easily deprive me of life than my devotion for your king, and therefore you were a traitor. Manfred died, and you thought that I had then forgotten him. But love would indeed be a mockery if death were not the most barefaced cheat. How can he die who is immortalized in my thoughts—my thoughts, that comprehend the universe, and contain eternity in their graspings? What though his earthly vesture is thrown as a despised weed beside the verde, he lives in my soul as lovely, as noble, as entire, as when his voice awoke the mute air; nay, his life is more entire, more true. For before, that small shrine that encased his spirit was all that existed of him;

but now, he is a part of all things; his spirit surrounds me, interpenetrates; and divided from him during his life, his death has united me to him for ever."

The countenance of Lostendardo darkened fearfully. When she paused, he looked black as the sea before the heavily charged thunder-clouds that canopy it dissolve themselves into rain. The tempest of passion that arose in his heart seemed too mighty to admit of swift manifestation; it came slowly up from the profoundest depths of his soul, and emotion was piled upon emotion before the lightning of his anger sped to its destination. "Your arguments, eloquent Despina," he said, "are indeed unanswerable. They work well for your purpose. Corradino is, I hear, at Pisa: you have sharpened my dagger; and before the air of another night rust it, I may, by deeds, have repaid your insulting words."

"How far do you mistake me! And is praise and love of all heroic excellence insult to you? Lostendardo, when you first knew me, I was an inexperienced girl; I loved, but knew not what love was, and circumscribing my passion in narrow bounds, I adored the being of Manfred as I might love an effigy of stone, which, when broken, has no longer an existence. I am now much altered. I might before have treated you with disdain or anger, but now these base feelings have expired in my heart. I am animated but by one feeling—an aspiration to another life, another state of being. All the good depart from this strange earth; and I doubt not that when I am sufficiently elevated above human weaknesses, it will also be my turn to leave this scene of woe. I prepare myself for that moment alone; and in endeavouring to fit myself for a union with all the brave, generous, and wise, that once adorned humanity, and have now passed from it, I consecrate myself to the service of this most righteous cause. You wrong me, therefore, if you think there is aught of disdain in what I say, or that any degrading feelings are mingled with my devotion of spirit when I come and voluntarily place myself in your power. You can imprison me for ever in the dungeons of this palace, as a returned Ghibelline and spy, and have me executed as a criminal. But before you do this, pause for your own sake;

reflect on the choice of glory or ignominy that you are now about to make. Let your old sentiments of love for the house of Swabia have some sway in your heart; reflect, that as you are the despised enemy, so you may become the chosen friend of its last descendant, and receive from every heart the praise of having restored Corradino to the honours and power to which he was born. Compare this prince to the hypocritical, the bloody and mean-spirited Charles. When Manfred died I went to Germany, and have resided at the court of the Countess Elizabeth; I have therefore been an hourly witness of the great and good qualities of Corradino. The bravery of his spirit makes him rise above the weakness of youth and inexperience; he possesses all the nobility of spirit that belongs to the family of Swabia, and, in addition, a purity and gentleness that attracts the respect and love of the old and wary courtiers of Frederic and Conrad. You are brave, and would be generous, did not the fury of your passions, like a consuming fire, destroy in their violence every generous sentiment: how then can you become the tool of Charles? His scowling eyes and sneering lips betoken the selfishness of his mind. Avarice, cruelty, meanness, and artifice are the qualities that characterize him, and render him unworthy of the majesty he usurps. Let him return to Provence, and reign with paltry despotism over the luxurious and servile French; the free-born Italians require another lord. They are not fit to bow to one whose palace is the change-house of money-lenders, whose generals are usurers, whose courtiers are milliners or monks, and who basely vows allegiance to the enemy of freedom and virtue, Clement, the murderer of Manfred. Their king, like them, should be clothed in the armour of valour and simplicity; his ornaments, his shield and spear; his treasury, the possessions of his subjects; his army, their unshaken lover. Charles will treat you as a tool; Corradino as a friend. Charles will make you the detested tyrant of a groaning province; Corradino, the governor of a prosperous and happy people. I cannot tell by your manner if what I have said has in any degree altered your determination. I cannot forget the scenes that passed between us at Naples. I might then have been

disdainful; I am not so now. Your execrations of Manfred excited every angry feeling in my mind; but, as I have said, all but the feeling of love expired in my heart when Manfred died, and methinks that where love is, excellence must be its companion. You said you loved me; and though, in other times, that love was twin-brother to hate,—though then, poor prisoner in your heart, jealousy, rage, contempt, and cruelty, were its handmaids,—yet if it were love, methinks that its divinity must have purified your heart from baser feelings; and now that I, the bride of Death, am removed from your sphere, gentler feelings may awaken in your bosom, and you may incline mildly to my voice. If indeed you loved me, will you not now be my friend? Shall we not hand in hand pursue the same career? Return to your ancient faith; and now that death and religion have placed the seal upon the past, let Manfred's spirit, looking down, behold his repentant friend the firm ally of his successor, the best and last scion of the house of Swabia."

She ceased; for the glare of savage triumph which, as a rising fire at night-time, enlightened with growing and fearful radiance the face of Lostendardo, made her pause in her appeal. He did not reply; but when she was silent he quitted the attitude in which he had stood immovably opposite to her, and pacing the hall with measured steps, his head declined, he seemed to ruminate on some project. Could it be that he weighed her reasonings? If he hesitated, the side of generosity and old fidelity would certainly prevail. Yet she dared not hope; her heart beat fast; she would have knelt, but she feared to move, lest any motion should disturb his thoughts, and curb the flow of good feeling which she fondly hoped had arisen within him: she looked up and prayed silently as she sat. Notwithstanding the glare of the torches, the beams of one small star struggled through the dark window pane; her eye resting on it, her thoughts were at once elevated to the eternity and space which that star symbolized; it seemed to her the spirit of Manfred, and she inwardly worshipped it, as she prayed that it would shed its benign influence on the soul of Lostendardo.

Some minutes elapsed in this fearful silence, and then he approached her. "Despina,

allow me to reflect on your words; to-morrow I will answer you. You will remain in this palace until the morning, and then you shall see and judge of my repentance and returning faith."

He spoke with studious gentleness. Despina could not see his face, for the lights shone behind him. When she looked up to reply, the little star twinkled just above his head, and seemed with its gentle lustre to reassure her. Our minds, when highly wrought, are strangely given to superstition, and Despina lived in a superstitious age. She thought that the star bade her comply, and assured her of protection from Heaven;—from where else could she expect it? She said, therefore, "I consent. Only let me request that you acquaint the man who gave you my ring that I am safe, or he will fear for me."

"I will do as you desire."

"And I will confide myself to your care. I cannot, dare not, fear you. If you would betray me, still I trust in the heavenly saints that guard humanity."

Her countenance was so calm,—it beamed with so angelic a self-devotion and a belief in good, that Lostendardo dared not look on her. For one moment—as she, having ceased to speak, gazed upon the star—he felt impelled to throw himself at her feet, to confess the diabolical scheme he had forged, and to commit himself body and soul to her guidance, to obey, to serve, to worship her. The impulse was momentary; the feeling of revenge returned on him. From the moment she had rejected him, the fire of rage had burned in his heart, consuming all healthy feeling, all human sympathies, and gentleness of soul. He had sworn never to sleep on a bed, or to drink aught but water, until his first cup of wine was mingled with the blood of Manfred. He had fulfilled this vow. A strange alteration had worked within him from the moment he had drained that unholy cup. The spirit, not of a man, but of a devil, seemed to live within him, urging him to crime, from which his long protracted hope of more complete revenge had alone deterred him. But Despina was

now in his power, and it seemed to him as if fate had preserved him so long only that he might now wreak his full rage upon her. When she spoke of love, he thought how from that he might extract pain. He formed his plan; and this slight human weakness now conquered, he bent his thoughts to its completion. Yet he feared to stay longer with her; so he quitted her, saying that he would send attendants who would show her an apartment where she might repose. He left her, and several hours passed; but no one came. The torches burnt low, and the stars of heaven could now with twinkling beams conquer their feebler light. One by one these torches went out, and the shadows of the high windows of the hall, before invisible, were thrown upon its marble pavement. Despina looked upon the shade, at first unconsciously, until she found herself counting one, two, three, the shapes of the iron bars that lay so placidly on the stone. “Those grates are thick,” she said; “this room would be a large but secure dungeon.” As by inspiration, she now felt that she was a prisoner. No change, no word, had intervened since she had walked fearlessly in the room, believing herself free. But now no doubt of her situation occurred to her mind; heavy chains seemed to fall around her; the air to feel thick and heavy as that of a prison; and the star-beams that had before cheered her, became the dreary messengers of fearful danger to herself, and of the utter defeat of all the hopes she had dared nourish of success to her beloved cause.

Cincolo waited, first with impatience, and then with anxiety, for the return of the youthful stranger. He paced up and down before the gates of the palace; hour after hour passed on; the stars arose and descended, and ever and anon meteors shot along the sky. They were not more frequent than they always are during a clear summer night in Italy; but they appeared strangely numerous to Cincolo, and portentous of change and calamity. Midnight struck, and at that moment a procession of monks passed, bearing a corpse and chanting a solemn De Profundis. Cincolo felt a cold tremor shake his limbs when he reflected how ill an augury this was for the strange adventurer he had guided to that palace. The sombre cowls of the priests, their

hollow voices, and the dark burden they carried, augmented his agitation even to terror. Without confessing the cowardice to himself, he was possessed with fear lest he should be included in the evil destiny that evidently awaited his companion. Cincolo was a brave man; he had often been foremost in a perilous assault; but the most courageous among us sometimes feel our hearts fail within us at the dread of unknown and fated danger. He was struck with panic;—he looked after the disappearing lights of the procession, and listened to their fading voices; his knees shook, a cold perspiration stood on his brow; until, unable to resist the impulse, he began slowly to withdraw himself from the Palace of Government, and to quit the circle of danger which seemed to hedge him in if he remained on that spot.

He had hardly quitted his post by the gate of the palace, when he saw lights issue from it, attendant on a company of men, some of whom were armed, as appeared from the reflection their lances' heads cast; and some of them carried a litter, hung with black and closely drawn. Cincolo was rooted to the spot. He could not render himself any reason for his belief, but he felt convinced that the stranger youth was there, about to be carried out to death. Impelled by curiosity and anxiety, he followed the party as they went towards the Porta Romana: they were challenged by the sentinels at the gate; they gave the word and passed. Cincolo dared not follow, but he was agitated by fear and compassion. He remembered the packet confided to his care; he dared not draw it from his bosom, lest any Guelph should be near to overlook and discover that it was addressed to Corradino; he could not read, but he wished to look at the arms of the seal, to see whether they bore the imperial ensigns. He returned back to the Palagio del Governo: all there was dark and silent; he walked up and down before the gates, looking up at the windows, but no sign of life appeared. He could not tell why he was thus agitated, but he felt as if all his future peace depended on the fate of this stranger youth. He thought of Gegia, her helplessness and age; but he could not resist the impulse that impelled him, and he resolved that very night to commence his journey to Pisa, to deliver the packet, to

learn who the stranger was, and what hopes he might entertain for his safety.

He returned home, that he might inform Gegia of his journey. This was a painful task, but he could not leave her in doubt. He ascended his narrow stairs with trepidation. At the head of them a lamp twinkled before a picture of the Virgin. Evening after evening it burnt there, guarding through its influence his little household from all earthly or supernatural dangers. The sight of it inspired him with courage; he said an Ave Maria before it; and then looking around him to assure himself that no spy stood on the narrow landing-place, he drew the packet from his bosom and examined the seal. All Italians in those days were conversant in heraldry, since from ensigns of the shields of the knights they learned, better than from their faces or persons, to what family and party they belonged. But it required no great knowledge for Cincolo to decipher these arms; he had known them from his childhood; they were those of the Elisei, the family to whom he had been attached as a partisan during all these civil contests. Arrigo de' Elisei had been his patron, and his wife had nursed his only daughter, in those happy days when there was neither Guelph nor Ghibelline. The sight of these arms reawakened all his anxiety. Could this youth belong to that house? The seal showed that he really did; and this discovery confirmed his determination of making every exertion to save him, and inspired him with sufficient courage to encounter the remonstrances and fears of Monna Gegia.

He unlocked his door; the old dame was asleep in her chair, but awoke as he entered. She had slept only to refresh her curiosity, and she asked a thousand questions in a breath, to which Cincolo did not reply: he stood with his arms folded looking at the fire, irresolute how to break the subject of his departure. Monna Gegia continued to talk.

"After you went, we held a consultation concerning this hot-brained youth of this morning: I, Buzeccha, Beppe de' Bosticchi who returned, and Monna Lissa from the

Mercato Nuovo. We all agreed that he must be one of two persons; and be it one or the other, if he have not quitted Florence, the Stinchi[3] will be his habitation by sunrise. Eh, Cincolo, man! you do not speak; where did you part with your prince?"

3. The name of the common prison at Florence.

"Prince, Gegia! Are you mad?—what prince?"

"Nay, he is either a prince or a baker; either Corradino himself, or Ricciardo, the son of Messer Tommaso de' Manelli; he that lived o'th' Arno, and baked for all that Sesto, when Count Guido de Giudi was Vicario. By this token, that Messer Tommaso went to Milan with Ubaldo de' Gargalandi, and Ricciardo, who went with his father, must now be sixteen. He had the fame of kneading with as light a hand as his father, but he liked better to follow arms with the Gargalandi. He was a fair, likely youth, they said; and so, to say the truth, was our youngster of this morning. But Monna Lissa will have it that it must be Corradino himself."

Cincolo listened as if the gossip of two old women could unravel his riddle. He even began to doubt whether the last conjecture, extravagant as it was, had not hit the truth. Every circumstance forbade such an idea; but he thought of the youth and exceeding beauty of the stranger, and he began to doubt. There was none among the Elisei who answered to his appearance. The flower of their youth had fallen at Monte Aperto; the eldest of the new generation was but ten; the other males of that house were of a mature age. Gegia continued to talk of the anger that Beppe de' Bosticchi evinced at being accused of the murder of Arrigo de' Elisei. "If he had done that deed," she cried, "never more should he have stood on my hearth; but he swore his innocence; and truly, poor man, it would be a sin not to believe him." Why, if the stranger were not an Elisei, should he have shown such horror on viewing the supposed murderer of the head of that family? Cincolo turned from the fire; he examined whether his knife hung safely in his girdle, and he exchanged his sandal-like shoes for stronger boots of common undressed fur. This last act attracted

the attentions of Gegia.

“What are you about, good man?” she cried. “This is no hour to change your dress, but to come to bed. To-night you will not speak; but to-morrow I hope to get it all out from you. What are you about?”

“I am about to leave you, my dear Gegia; and Heaven bless and take care of you! I am going to Pisa.”

Gegia uttered a shriek, and was about to remonstrate with great volubility, while the tears rolled down her aged cheeks. Tears also filled the eyes of Cincolo, as he said, “I do not go for the cause you suspect. I do not go into the army of Corradino, though my heart will be with it. I go but to carry a letter, and will return without delay.”

“You will never return,” cried the old woman: “the Commune will never let you enter the gates of this town again, if you set foot in that traitorous Pisa. But you shall not go; I will raise the neighbours; I will declare you mad”—

“Gegia, no more of this! Here is all the money I have. Before I go, I will send your Cousin ’Nunziata to you. I must go. It is not the Ghibelline cause, or Corradino, that obliges me to risk your ease and comforts; but the life of one of the Elisei is at stake; and if I can save him, would you have me rest here, and afterwards curse you and the hour when I was born?”

“What! is he——? But no; there is none among the Elisei so young as he; and none so lovely, except her whom these arms carried when an infant—but she is a female. No, no; this is a tale trumped up to deceive me and gain my consent; but you shall never have it. Mind that! you will never have it! and I prophesy that if you do go, your journey will be the death of both of us.” She wept bitterly. Cincolo kissed her aged cheek, and mingled his tears with hers; and then recommending her to the care of the Virgin and the saints, he quitted her; while grief choked her utterance, the name of the Elisei had deprived her of all energy to resist his purpose.

It was four in the morning before the gates of Florence were opened and Cincolo could leave the city. At first he availed himself of the carts of the contadini to advance on his journey; but as he drew near Pisa, all modes of conveyance ceased, and he was obliged to take by-roads, and act cautiously, not to fall into the hands of the Florentine outposts, or of some fierce Ghibelline, who might suspect him, and have him carried before the Podesta of the village; for if once suspected and searched, the packet addressed to Corradino would convict him, and he would pay for his temerity with his life. Having arrived at Vico Pisano, he found a troop of Pisan horse there on guard; he was known to many of the soldiers, and he obtained a conveyance for Pisa; but it was night before he arrived. He gave the Ghibelline watchword, and was admitted within the gates. He asked for Prince Corradino: he was in the city, at the palace of the Lanfranchi. He crossed the Arno, and was admitted into the palace by the soldiers who guarded the door.

Corradino had just returned from a successful skirmish in the Lucchese states, and was reposing; but when Count Gherardo Doneratico, his principal attendant, saw the seal of the packet, he immediately ushered the bearer into a small room, where the prince lay on a fox’s skin thrown upon the pavement. The mind of Cincolo had been so bewildered by the rapidity of the events of the preceding night, by fatigue and want of sleep, that he had overwrought himself to believe that the stranger youth was indeed Corradino; and when he had heard that that prince was in Pisa, by a strange disorder of ideas he still imagined that he and Ricciardo were the same; that the black litter was a phantom, and his fears ungrounded. The first sight of Corradino, his fair hair and round Saxon features, destroyed this idea: it was replaced by a feeling of deep anguish, when Count Gherardo, announcing him, said, “One who brings a letter from Madonna Despina dei Elisei, waits upon your Highness.”

The old man sprang forward, uncontrolled by the respect he would otherwise have felt for one of so high lineage as Corradino. “From Despina! Did you say from her?

Oh! unsay your words! Not from my beloved, lost foster-child."

Tears rolled down his cheeks. Corradino, a youth of fascinating gentleness, attempted to reassure him. "Oh! my gracious Lord," cried Cincolo, "open that packet, and see if it be from my blessed child—if in the disguise of Ricciardo I led her to destruction." He wrung his hands. Corradino, pale as death with fear for the destiny of his lovely and adventurous friend, broke the seal. The packet contained an inner envelope without any direction, and a letter, which Corradino read, while horror convulsed every feature. He gave it to Gherardo. "It is indeed from her. She says that the bearer can relate all that the world will probably know of her fate. And you old man, who weep so bitterly, you to whom my best and lovely friend refers me, tell me what you know of her!"

Cincolo told his story in broken accents. "May these eyes be for ever blinded!" he cried, when he had concluded, "that knew not Despina in those soft looks and heavenly smiles. Dotard that I am! When my wife railed at your family and princely self, and the sainted Manfred, why did I not read her secret in her forbearance? Would she have forgiven those words in any but her who had nursed her infancy, and been a mother to her when Madonna Pia died? And when she taxed Bosticchi with her father's death, I, blind fool, did not see the spirit of the Elisei in her eyes. My Lord, I have but one favour to ask you. Let me hear her letter, that I may judge from that what hopes remain;—but there are none—none."

"Read to him, my dear count," said the prince; "I will not fear as he fears. I dare not fear that one so lovely and beloved is sacrificed for my worthless cause." Gherardo read the letter.

"Cincolo de' Becari, my foster-father, will deliver this letter into your hands, my respected and dear Corradino. The Countess Elizabeth has urged me to my present undertaking; I hope nothing from it, except to labour for your cause, and perhaps, through its event, to quit somewhat earlier a life which is but a grievous trial to my

weak mind. I go to endeavour to arouse the feelings of fidelity and generosity in the soul of the traitor Lostendardo; I go to place myself in his hands, and I do not hope to escape from them again. Corradino, my last prayer will be for your success. Mourn not for one who goes home after a long and weary exile. Burn the enclosed packet without opening it. The Mother of God protect thee!"

"Despina."

Corradino had wept as this epistle was reading, but then, starting up, he said, "To revenge or death! we may yet save her!"

A blight had fallen on the house of Swabia, and all their enterprises were blasted. Beloved by their subjects, noble, and with every advantage of right on their side, except those the Church bestowed, they were defeated in every attempt to defend themselves against a foreigner and a tyrant, who ruled by force of arms, and those in the hands of a few only, over an extensive and warlike territory. The young and daring Corradino was also fated to perish in this contest. Having overcome the troops of his adversary in Tuscany, he advanced towards his kingdom with the highest hopes. His arch-enemy, Pope Clement IV., had shut himself up in Viterbo, and was guarded by a numerous garrison. Corradino passed in triumph and hope before the town, and proudly drew out his troops before it, to display to the Holy Father his forces, and humiliate him by this show of success. The cardinals, who beheld the lengthened line and good order of the army, hastened to the papal palace. Clement was in his oratory praying. The frightened monks, with pale looks, related how the excommunicated heretic dared to menace the town where the Holy Father himself resided; adding, that if the insult were carried to the pitch of an assault, it might prove dangerous warfare. The pope smiled contemptuously. "Do not fear," he said; "the projects of these men will dissipate in smoke." He then went on the ramparts, and saw Corradino and Frederic of Austria, who defiled the line of knights in the plain below. He watched them for a time; then turning to his cardinals, he

said, “They are victims, who permit themselves to be led to sacrifice.”

His words were a prophecy. Notwithstanding the first successes of Corradino, and the superior numbers of his army, he was defeated by the artifice of Charles in a pitched battle. He escaped from the field, and, with a few friends, arrived at a tower called Asturi, which belonged to the family of Frangipani, of Rome. Here he hired a vessel, embarked, and put out to sea, directing his course for Sicily, which, having rebelled against Charles, would, he hoped, receive him with joy. They were already under weigh, when one of the family of the Frangipani, seeing a vessel filled with Germans making all sail from shore, suspected that they were fugitives from the battle of Taglicozzo. He followed them in other vessels, and took them all prisoners. The person of Corradino was a rich prey for him; he delivered him into the hands of his rival, and was rewarded by the donation of a fief near Benevento.

The dastardly spirit of Charles instigated him to the basest revenge; and the same tragedy was acted on those shores which has been renewed in our days. A daring and illustrious prince was sacrificed with the mock forms of justice, at the sanguinary altar of tyranny and hypocrisy. Corradino was tried. One of his judges alone, a Provençal, dared to condemn him, and he paid with his life the forfeit of his baseness. For scarcely had he, solitary among his fellows, pronounced the sentence of death against this prince, than Robert of Flanders, the brother-in-law of Charles himself, struck him on the breast with a staff, crying, “It behoves not thee, wretch, to condemn to death so noble and worthy a knight.” The judge fell dead in the presence of the king, who dared not avenge his creature.

On the 26th of October Corradino and his friends were led out to die in the market-place of Naples, by the seaside. Charles was present with all his court, and an immense multitude surrounded the triumphant king, and his more royal adversary, about to suffer an ignominious death. The funereal procession approached its destination. Corradino, agitated, but controlling his agitation, was

drawn in an open car. After him came a close litter, hung with black, with no sign to tell who was within. The Duke of Austria and several other illustrious victims followed. The guard that conducted them to the scaffold was headed by Lostendardo; a malicious triumph laughed in his eyes, and he rode near the litter, looking from time to time first at it and then at Corradino, with the dark look of a tormenting fiend. The procession stopped at the foot of the scaffold, and Corradino looked at the flashing light which every now and then arose from Vesuvius, and threw its reflection on the sea. The sun had not yet risen, but the halo of its approach illuminated the bay of Naples, its mountains, and its islands. The summits of the distant hills of Baiæ gleamed with its first beams. Corradino thought, “By the time those rays arrive here, and shadows are cast from the persons of these men—princes and peasants—around me, my living spirit will be shadowless.” Then he turned his eyes on the companions of his fate, and for the first time he saw the silent and dark litter that accompanied them. At first he thought, “It is my coffin.” But then he recollected the disappearance of Despina, and would have sprang towards it. His guards stopped him; he looked up, and his glance met that of Lostendardo, who smiled—a smile of dread; but the feeling of religion which had before calmed him again descended on him; he thought that her sufferings, as well as his, would soon be over.

They were already over; and the silence of the grave is upon those events which had occurred since Cincolo beheld her carried out of Florence, until now that she was led by her fierce enemy to behold the death of the nephew of Manfred. She must have endured much; for when, as Corradino advanced to the front of the scaffold, the litter being placed opposite to it, Lostendardo ordered the curtains to be withdrawn, the white hand that hung inanimate from the side was thin as a winter leaf, and her fair face, pillowed by the thick knots of her dark hair, was sunken and ashy pale, while you could see the deep blue of her eyes struggle through the closed eyelids. She was still in the attire in which she had presented herself at the house of Cincolo.

Perhaps her tormentor thought that her appearance as a youth would attract less compassion than if a lovely woman were thus dragged to so unnatural a scene.

Corradino was kneeling and praying when her form was thus exposed. He saw her, and saw that she was dead! About to die himself; about, pure and innocent, to die ignominiously, while his base conqueror, in pomp and glory, was spectator of his death, he did not pity those who were at peace; his compassion belonged to the living alone; and as he arose from his prayer he exclaimed, “My beloved mother, what profound sorrow will the news thou art about to hear cause thee!” He looked upon the living multitude around him, and saw that the hard-visaged partisans of the usurper wept; he heard the sobs of his oppressed and conquered subjects; so he drew his glove from his hand and threw it among the crowd, in token that he still held his cause good, and submitted his head to the axe.

During many years after those events, Lostendardo enjoyed wealth, rank, and power. When suddenly, while at the summit of glory and prosperity, he withdrew from the world, took the vows of a severe order in a convent in one of the desolate and unhealthy plains by the sea-shore in Calabria; and after having gained the character of a saint, through a life of self-inflicted torture, he died murmuring the names of Corradino, Manfred, and Despina.

VIII. THE MORTAL IMMORTAL.

July 16, 1833.—This is a memorable anniversary for me; on it I complete my three hundred and twenty-third year!

The Wandering Jew?—certainly not. More than eighteen centuries have passed over his head. In comparison with him, I am a very young Immortal.

Am I, then, immortal? This is a question which I have asked myself, by day and night, for now three hundred and three years, and yet cannot answer it. I detected a grey hair amidst my brown locks this very day—that surely signifies decay. Yet it

may have remained concealed there for three hundred years—for some persons have become entirely white-headed before twenty years of age.

I will tell my story, and my reader shall judge for me. I will tell my story, and so contrive to pass some few hours of a long eternity, become so wearisome to me. For ever! Can it be? to live for ever! I have heard of enchantments, in which the victims were plunged into a deep sleep, to wake, after a hundred years, as fresh as ever: I have heard of the Seven Sleepers—thus to be immortal would not be so burthensome: but, oh! the weight of never-ending time—the tedious passage of the still-succeeding hours! How happy was the fabled Nourjahad!—But to my task.

All the world has heard of Cornelius Agrippa. His memory is as immortal as his arts have made me. All the world has also heard of his scholar, who, unawares, raised the foul fiend during his master's absence, and was destroyed by him. The report, true or false, of this accident, was attended with many inconveniences to the renowned philosopher. All his scholars at once deserted him—his servants disappeared. He had no one near him to put coals on his ever-burning fires while he slept, or to attend to the changeful colours of his medicines while he studied. Experiment after experiment failed, because one pair of hands was insufficient to complete them: the dark spirits laughed at him for not being able to retain a single mortal in his service.

I was then very young—very poor—and very much in love. I had been for about a year the pupil of Cornelius, though I was absent when this accident took place. On my return, my friends implored me not to return to the alchymist's abode. I trembled as I listened to the dire tale they told; I required no second warning; and when Cornelius came and offered me a purse of gold if I would remain under his roof, I felt as if Satan himself tempted me. My teeth chattered—my hair stood on end;—I ran off as fast as my trembling knees would permit.

My failing steps were directed whither for two years they had every evening been

attracted,—a gently bubbling spring of pure living water, beside which lingered a dark-haired girl, whose beaming eyes were fixed on the path I was accustomed each night to tread. I cannot remember the hour when I did not love Bertha; we had been neighbours and playmates from infancy,—her parents, like mine, were of humble life, yet respectable,—our attachment had been a source of pleasure to them. In an evil hour, a malignant fever carried off both her father and mother, and Bertha became an orphan. She would have found a home beneath my paternal roof, but, unfortunately, the old lady of the near castle, rich, childless, and solitary, declared her intention to adopt her. Henceforth Bertha was clad in silk—inhabited a marble palace—and was looked on as being highly favoured by fortune. But in her new situation among her new associates, Bertha remained true to the friend of her humbler days; she often visited the cottage of my father, and when forbidden to go thither, she would stray towards the neighbouring wood, and meet me beside its shady fountain.

She often declared that she owed no duty to her new protectress equal in sanctity to that which bound us. Yet still I was too poor to marry, and she grew weary of being tormented on my account. She had a haughty but an impatient spirit, and grew angry at the obstacles that prevented our union. We met now after an absence, and she had been sorely beset while I was away; she complained bitterly, and almost reproached me for being poor. I replied hastily,—

“I am honest, if I am poor!—were I not, I might soon become rich!”

This exclamation produced a thousand questions. I feared to shock her by owning the truth, but she drew it from me; and then, casting a look of disdain on me, she said,—

“You pretend to love, and you fear to face the Devil for my sake!”

I protested that I had only dreaded to offend her;—while she dwelt on the magnitude of the reward that I should receive. Thus encouraged—shamed by her—led on by

love and hope, laughing at my late fears, with quick steps and a light heart, I returned to accept the offers of the alchymist, and was instantly installed in my office.

A year passed away. I became possessed of no insignificant sum of money. Custom had banished my fears. In spite of the most painful vigilance, I had never detected the trace of a cloven foot; nor was the studious silence of our abode ever disturbed by demoniac howls. I still continued my stolen interviews with Bertha, and Hope dawned on me—Hope—but not perfect joy; for Bertha fancied that love and security were enemies, and her pleasure was to divide them in my bosom. Though true of heart, she was somewhat of a coquette in manner; and I was jealous as a Turk. She slighted me in a thousand ways, yet would never acknowledge herself to be in the wrong. She would drive me mad with anger, and then force me to beg her pardon. Sometimes she fancied that I was not sufficiently submissive, and then she had some story of a rival, favoured by her protectress. She was surrounded by silk-clad youths—the rich and gay. What chance had the sad-robed scholar of Cornelius compared with these?

On one occasion, the philosopher made such large demands upon my time, that I was unable to meet her as I was wont. He was engaged in some mighty work, and I was forced to remain, day and night, feeding his furnaces and watching his chemical preparations. Bertha waited for me in vain at the fountain. Her haughty spirit fired at this neglect; and when at last I stole out during the few short minutes allotted to me for slumber, and hoped to be consoled by her, she received me with disdain, dismissed me in scorn, and vowed that any man should possess her hand rather than he who could not be in two places at once for her sake. She would be revenged! And truly she was. In my dingy retreat I heard that she had been hunting, attended by Albert Hoffer. Albert Hoffer was favoured by her protectress; and the three passed in cavalcade before my smoky window. Methought that they mentioned my name; it was followed by a laugh of derision, as her dark eyes glanced contemptuously

towards my abode.

Jealousy, with all its venom and all its misery, entered my breast. Now I shed a torrent of tears, to think that I should never call her mine; and, anon, I imprecated a thousand curses on her inconstancy. Yet, still I must stir the fires of the alchymist, still attend on the changes of his unintelligible medicines.

Cornelius had watched for three days and nights, nor closed his eyes. The progress of his alembics was slower than he expected: in spite of his anxiety, sleep weighed upon his eyelids. Again and again he threw off drowsiness with more than human energy; again and again it stole away his senses. He eyed his crucibles wistfully. “Not ready yet,” he murmured; “will another night pass before the work is accomplished? Winzy, you are vigilant—you are faithful—you have slept, my boy—you slept last night. Look at that glass vessel. The liquid it contains is of a soft rose-colour: the moment it begins to change its hue, awaken me—till then I may close my eyes. First, it will turn white, and then emit golden flashes; but wait not till then; when the rose-colour fades, rouse me.” I scarcely heard the last words, muttered, as they were, in sleep. Even then he did not quite yield to nature. “Winzy, my boy,” he again said, “do not touch the vessel—do not put it to your lips; it is a philter—a philter to cure love; you would not cease to love your Bertha—beware to drink!”

And he slept. His venerable head sunk on his breast, and I scarce heard his regular breathing. For a few minutes I watched the vessel—the rosy hue of the liquid remained unchanged. Then my thoughts wandered—they visited the fountain, and dwelt on a thousand charming scenes never to be renewed—never! Serpents and adders were in my heart as the word “Never!” half formed itself on my lips. False girl!—false and cruel! Never more would she smile on me as that evening she smiled on Albert. Worthless, detested woman! I would not remain unrevenged—she should see Albert expire at her feet—she should die beneath my vengeance. She had

smiled in disdain and triumph—she knew my wretchedness and her power. Yet what power had she?—the power of exciting my hate—my utter scorn—my—oh, all but indifference! Could I attain that—could I regard her with careless eyes, transferring my rejected love to one fairer and more true, that were indeed a victory!

A bright flash darted before my eyes. I had forgotten the medicine of the adept; I gazed on it with wonder: flashes of admirable beauty, more bright than those which the diamond emits when the sun's rays are on it, glanced from the surface of the liquid; an odour the most fragrant and grateful stole over my sense; the vessel seemed one globe of living radiance, lovely to the eye, and most inviting to the taste. The first thought, instinctively inspired by the grosser sense, was, I will—I must drink. I raised the vessel to my lips. "It will cure me of love—of torture!" Already I had quaffed half of the most delicious liquor ever tasted by the palate of man, when the philosopher stirred. I started—I dropped the glass—the fluid flamed and glanced along the floor, while I felt Cornelius's gripe at my throat, as he shrieked aloud, "Wretch! you have destroyed the labour of my life!"

The philosopher was totally unaware that I had drunk any portion of his drug. His idea was, and I gave a tacit assent to it, that I had raised the vessel from curiosity, and that, frighted at its brightness, and the flashes of intense light it gave forth, I had let it fall. I never undeceived him. The fire of the medicine was quenched—the fragrance died away—he grew calm, as a philosopher should under the heaviest trials, and dismissed me to rest.

I will not attempt to describe the sleep of glory and bliss which bathed my soul in paradise during the remaining hours of that memorable night. Words would be faint and shallow types of my enjoyment, or of the gladness that possessed my bosom when I woke. I trod air—my thoughts were in heaven. Earth appeared heaven, and my inheritance upon it was to be one trance of delight. "This it is to be cured of love," I thought; "I will see Bertha this day, and she will find her lover cold and

regardless; too happy to be disdainful, yet how utterly indifferent to her!”

The hours danced away. The philosopher, secure that he had once succeeded, and believing that he might again, began to concoct the same medicine once more. He was shut up with his books and drugs, and I had a holiday. I dressed myself with care; I looked in an old but polished shield, which served me for a mirror; methought my good looks had wonderfully improved. I hurried beyond the precincts of the town, joy in my soul, the beauty of heaven and earth around me. I turned my steps towards the castle—I could look on its lofty turrets with lightness of heart, for I was cured of love. My Bertha saw me afar off, as I came up the avenue. I know not what sudden impulse animated her bosom, but at the sight, she sprung with a light fawn-like bound down the marble steps, and was hastening towards me. But I had been perceived by another person. The old high-born hag, who called herself her protectress, and was her tyrant, had seen me also; she hobbled, panting, up the terrace; a page, as ugly as herself, held up her train, and fanned her as she hurried along, and stopped my fair girl with a “How, now, my bold mistress? whither so fast? Back to your cage—hawks are abroad!”

Bertha clasped her hands—her eyes were still bent on my approaching figure. I saw the contest. How I abhorred the old crone who checked the kind impulses of my Bertha’s softening heart. Hitherto, respect for her rank had caused me to avoid the lady of the castle; now I disdained such trivial considerations. I was cured of love, and lifted above all human fears; I hastened forwards, and soon reached the terrace. How lovely Bertha looked! her eyes flashing fire, her cheeks glowing with impatience and anger, she was a thousand times more graceful and charming than ever. I no longer loved—Oh no! I adored—worshipped—idolized her!

She had that morning been persecuted, with more than usual vehemence, to consent to an immediate marriage with my rival. She was reproached with the encouragement that she had shown him—she was threatened with being turned out

of doors with disgrace and shame. Her proud spirit rose in arms at the threat; but when she remembered the scorn that she had heaped upon me, and how, perhaps, she had thus lost one whom she now regarded as her only friend, she wept with remorse and rage. At that moment I appeared. “Oh, Winzy!” she exclaimed, “take me to your mother’s cot; swiftly let me leave the detested luxuries and wretchedness of this noble dwelling—take me to poverty and happiness.”

I clasped her in my arms with transport. The old dame was speechless with fury, and broke forth into invective only when we were far on our road to my natal cottage. My mother received the fair fugitive, escaped from a gilt cage to nature and liberty, with tenderness and joy; my father, who loved her, welcomed her heartily; it was a day of rejoicing, which did not need the addition of the celestial potion of the alchymist to steep me in delight.

Soon after this eventful day, I became the husband of Bertha. I ceased to be the scholar of Cornelius, but I continued his friend. I always felt grateful to him for having, unawares, procured me that delicious draught of a divine elixir, which, instead of curing me of love (sad cure! solitary and joyless remedy for evils which seem blessings to the memory), had inspired me with courage and resolution, thus winning for me an inestimable treasure in my Bertha.

I often called to mind that period of trance-like inebriation with wonder. The drink of Cornelius had not fulfilled the task for which he affirmed that it had been prepared, but its effects were more potent and blissful than words can express. They had faded by degrees, yet they lingered long—and painted life in hues of splendour. Bertha often wondered at my lightness of heart and unaccustomed gaiety; for, before, I had been rather serious, or even sad, in my disposition. She loved me the better for my cheerful temper, and our days were winged by joy.

Five years afterwards I was suddenly summoned to the bedside of the dying Cornelius. He had sent for me in haste, conjuring my instant presence. I found him

stretched on his pallet, enfeebled even to death; all of life that yet remained animated his piercing eyes, and they were fixed on a glass vessel, full of a roseate liquid.

“Behold,” he said, in a broken and inward voice, “the vanity of human wishes! a second time my hopes are about to be crowned, a second time they are destroyed. Look at that liquor—you remember five years ago I had prepared the same, with the same success;—then, as now, my thirsting lips expected to taste the immortal elixir—you dashed it from me! and at present it is too late.”

He spoke with difficulty, and fell back on his pillow. I could not help saying,—

“How, revered master, can a cure for love restore you to life?”

A faint smile gleamed across his face as I listened earnestly to his scarcely intelligible answer.

“A cure for love and for all things—the Elixir of Immortality. Ah! if now I might drink, I should live for ever!”

As he spoke, a golden flash gleamed from the fluid; a well-remembered fragrance stole over the air; he raised himself, all weak as he was—strength seemed miraculously to re-enter his frame—he stretched forth his hand—a loud explosion startled me—a ray of fire shot up from the elixir, and the glass vessel which contained it was shivered to atoms! I turned my eyes towards the philosopher; he had fallen back—his eyes were glassy—his features rigid—he was dead!

But I lived, and was to live for ever! So said the unfortunate alchymist, and for a few days I believed his words. I remembered the glorious intoxication that had followed my stolen draught. I reflected on the change I had felt in my frame—in my soul. The bounding elasticity of the one—the buoyant lightness of the other. I surveyed myself in a mirror, and could perceive no change in my features during the space of the five years which had elapsed. I remembered the radiant hues and grateful scent of that delicious beverage—worthy the gift it was capable of bestowing—I was, then,

IMMORTAL!

A few days after I laughed at my credulity. The old proverb, that “a prophet is least regarded in his own country,” was true with respect to me and my defunct master. I loved him as a man—I respected him as a sage—but I derided the notion that he could command the powers of darkness, and laughed at the superstitious fears with which he was regarded by the vulgar. He was a wise philosopher, but had no acquaintance with any spirits but those clad in flesh and blood. His science was simply human; and human science, I soon persuaded myself, could never conquer nature’s laws so far as to imprison the soul for ever within its carnal habitation. Cornelius had brewed a soul-refreshing drink—more inebriating than wine—sweeter and more fragrant than any fruit: it possessed probably strong medicinal powers, imparting gladness to the heart and vigour to the limbs; but its effects would wear out; already were they diminished in my frame. I was a lucky fellow to have quaffed health and joyous spirits, and perhaps long life, at my master’s hands; but my good fortune ended there: longevity was far different from immortality.

I continued to entertain this belief for many years. Sometimes a thought stole across me—Was the alchymist indeed deceived? But my habitual credence was, that I should meet the fate of all the children of Adam at my appointed time—a little late, but still at a natural age. Yet it was certain that I retained a wonderfully youthful look. I was laughed at for my vanity in consulting the mirror so often, but I consulted it in vain—my brow was untrenched—my cheeks—my eyes—my whole person continued as untarnished as in my twentieth year.

I was troubled. I looked at the faded beauty of Bertha—I seemed more like her son. By degrees our neighbours began to make similar observations, and I found at last that I went by the name of the Scholar bewitched. Bertha herself grew uneasy. She became jealous and peevish, and at length she began to question me. We had no children; we were all in all to each other; and though, as she grew older, her

vivacious spirit became a little allied to ill-temper, and her beauty sadly diminished, I cherished her in my heart as the mistress I had idolized, the wife I had sought and won with such perfect love.

At last our situation became intolerable: Bertha was fifty—I twenty years of age. I had, in very shame, in some measure adopted the habits of a more advanced age; I no longer mingled in the dance among the young and gay, but my heart bounded along with them while I restrained my feet; and a sorry figure I cut among the Nestors of our village. But before the time I mention, things were altered—we were universally shunned; we were—at least, I was—reported to have kept up an iniquitous acquaintance with some of my former master's supposed friends. Poor Bertha was pitied, but deserted. I was regarded with horror and detestation.

What was to be done? we sat by our winter fire—poverty had made itself felt, for none would buy the produce of my farm; and often I had been forced to journey twenty miles, to some place where I was not known, to dispose of our property. It is true, we had saved something for an evil day—that day was come.

We sat by our lone fireside—the old-hearted youth and his antiquated wife. Again Bertha insisted on knowing the truth; she recapitulated all she had ever heard said about me, and added her own observations. She conjured me to cast off the spell; she described how much more comely grey hairs were than my chestnut locks; she descanted on the reverence and respect due to age—how preferable to the slight regard paid to mere children: could I imagine that the despicable gifts of youth and good looks outweighed disgrace, hatred, and scorn? Nay, in the end I should be burnt as a dealer in the black art, while she, to whom I had not deigned to communicate any portion of my good fortune, might be stoned as my accomplice. At length she insinuated that I must share my secret with her, and bestow on her like benefits to those I myself enjoyed, or she would denounce me—and then she burst into tears.

Thus beset, methought it was the best way to tell the truth. I revealed it as tenderly as I could, and spoke only of a very long life, not of immortality—which representation, indeed, coincided best with my own ideas. When I ended, I rose and said,—

"And now, my Bertha, will you denounce the lover of your youth?—You will not, I know. But it is too hard, my poor wife, that you should suffer from my ill-luck and the accursed arts of Cornelius. I will leave you—you have wealth enough, and friends will return in my absence. I will go; young as I seem, and strong as I am, I can work and gain my bread among strangers, unsuspected and unknown. I loved you in youth; God is my witness that I would not desert you in age, but that your safety and happiness require it."

I took my cap and moved towards the door; in a moment Bertha's arms were round my neck, and her lips were pressed to mine. "No, my husband, my Winzy," she said, "you shall not go alone—take me with you; we will remove from this place, and, as you say, among strangers we shall be unsuspected and safe. I am not so very old as quite to shame you, my Winzy; and I daresay the charm will soon wear off, and, with the blessing of God, you will become more elderly-looking, as is fitting; you shall not leave me."

I returned the good soul's embrace heartily. "I will not, my Bertha; but for your sake I had not thought of such a thing. I will be your true, faithful husband while you are spared to me, and do my duty by you to the last."

The next day we prepared secretly for our emigration. We were obliged to make great pecuniary sacrifices—it could not be helped. We realized a sum sufficient, at least, to maintain us while Bertha lived; and, without saying adieu to any one, quitted our native country to take refuge in a remote part of western France.

It was a cruel thing to transport poor Bertha from her native village, and the friends of her youth, to a new country, new language, new customs. The strange secret of

my destiny rendered this removal immaterial to me; but I compassionated her deeply, and was glad to perceive that she found compensation for her misfortunes in a variety of little ridiculous circumstances. Away from all tell-tale chroniclers, she sought to decrease the apparent disparity of our ages by a thousand feminine arts—rouge, youthful dress, and assumed juvenility of manner. I could not be angry. Did not I myself wear a mask? Why quarrel with hers, because it was less successful? I grieved deeply when I remembered that this was my Bertha, whom I had loved so fondly, and won with such transport—the dark-eyed, dark-haired girl, with smiles of enchanting archness and a step like a fawn—this mincing, simpering, jealous old woman. I should have revered her grey locks and withered cheeks; but thus!—It was my work, I knew; but I did not the less deplore this type of human weakness.

Her jealousy never slept. Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearances, I was myself growing old. I verily believe that the poor soul loved me truly in her heart, but never had woman so tormenting a mode of displaying fondness. She would discern wrinkles in my face and decrepitude in my walk, while I bounded along in youthful vigour, the youngest looking of twenty youths. I never dared address another woman. On one occasion, fancying that the belle of the village regarded me with favouring eyes, she brought me a grey wig. Her constant discourse among her acquaintances was, that though I looked so young, there was ruin at work within my frame; and she affirmed that the worst symptom about me was my apparent health. My youth was a disease, she said, and I ought at all times to prepare, if not for a sudden and awful death, at least to awake some morning white-headed and bowed down with all the marks of advanced years. I let her talk—I often joined in her conjectures. Her warnings chimed in with my never-ceasing speculations concerning my state, and I took an earnest, though painful, interest in listening to all that her quick wit and excited imagination could say on the subject.

Why dwell on these minute circumstances? We lived on for many long years. Bertha became bedrid and paralytic; I nursed her as a mother might a child. She grew peevish, and still harped upon one string—of how long I should survive her. It has ever been a source of consolation to me, that I performed my duty scrupulously towards her. She had been mine in youth, she was mine in age; and at last, when I heaped the sod over her corpse, I wept to feel that I had lost all that really bound me to humanity.

Since then how many have been my cares and woes, how few and empty my enjoyments! I pause here in my history—I will pursue it no further. A sailor without rudder or compass, tossed on a stormy sea—a traveller lost on a widespread heath, without landmark or stone to guide him—such have I been: more lost, more hopeless than either. A nearing ship, a gleam from some far cot, may save them; but I have no beacon except the hope of death.

Death! mysterious, ill-visaged friend of weak humanity! Why alone of all mortals have you cast me from your sheltering fold? Oh, for the peace of the grave! the deep silence of the iron-bound tomb! that thought would cease to work in my brain, and my heart beat no more with emotions varied only by new forms of sadness!

Am I immortal? I return to my first question. In the first place, is it not more probable that the beverage of the alchymist was fraught rather with longevity than eternal life? Such is my hope. And then be it remembered, that I only drank half of the potion prepared by him. Was not the whole necessary to complete the charm? To have drained half the Elixir of Immortality is but to be half-immortal—my For-ever is thus truncated and null.

But again, who shall number the years of the half of eternity? I often try to imagine by what rule the infinite may be divided. Sometimes I fancy age advancing upon me. One grey hair I have found. Fool! do I lament? Yes, the fear of age and death often creeps coldly into my heart; and the more I live, the more I dread death, even while I

abhor life. Such an enigma is man—born to perish—when he wars, as I do, against the established laws of his nature.

But for this anomaly of feeling surely I might die: the medicine of the alchymist would not be proof against fire—sword—and the strangling waters. I have gazed upon the blue depths of many a placid lake, and the tumultuous rushing of many a mighty river, and have said, peace inhabits those waters; yet I have turned my steps away, to live yet another day. I have asked myself, whether suicide would be a crime in one to whom thus only the portals of the other world could be opened. I have done all, except presenting myself as a soldier or duellist, an object of destruction to my—no, not my fellow-mortals, and therefore I have shrunk away. They are not my fellows. The inextinguishable power of life in my frame, and their ephemeral existence, places us wide as the poles asunder. I could not raise a hand against the meanest or the most powerful among them.

Thus I have lived on for many a year—alone, and weary of myself—desirous of death, yet never dying—a mortal immortal. Neither ambition nor avarice can enter my mind, and the ardent love that gnaws at my heart, never to be returned—never to find an equal on which to expend itself—lives there only to torment me.

This very day I conceived a design by which I may end all—without self-slaughter, without making another man a Cain—an expedition, which mortal frame can never survive, even endued with the youth and strength that inhabits mine. Thus I shall put my immortality to the test, and rest for ever—or return, the wonder and benefactor of the human species.

Before I go, a miserable vanity has caused me to pen these pages. I would not die, and leave no name behind. Three centuries have passed since I quaffed the fatal beverage; another year shall not elapse before, encountering gigantic dangers—warring with the powers of frost in their home—beset by famine, toil, and tempest—I yield this body, too tenacious a cage for a soul which thirsts for freedom,

to the destructive elements of air and water; or, if I survive, my name shall be recorded as one of the most famous among the sons of men; and, my task achieved, I shall adopt more resolute means, and, by scattering and annihilating the atoms that compose my frame, set at liberty the life imprisoned within, and so cruelly prevented from soaring from this dim earth to a sphere more congenial to its immortal essence.

IX. TRANSFORMATION.

“Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench’d

With a woful agony,

Which forced me to begin my tale,

And then it set me free.

“Since then, at an uncertain hour,

That agony returns;

And till my ghastly tale is told

This heart within me burns.”

—Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner.

I have heard it said, that, when any strange, supernatural, and necromantic adventure has occurred to a human being, that being, however desirous he may be to conceal the same, feels at certain periods torn up as it were by an intellectual earthquake, and is forced to bare the inner depths of his spirit to another. I am a witness of the truth of this. I have dearly sworn to myself never to reveal to human ears the horrors to which I once, in excess of fiendly pride, delivered myself over. The holy man who heard my confession, and reconciled me to the Church, is dead. None knows that once—

Why should it not be thus? Why tell a tale of impious tempting of Providence, and

soul-subduing humiliation? Why? answer me, ye who are wise in the secrets of human nature! I only know that so it is; and in spite of strong resolve,—of a pride that too much masters me—of shame, and even of fear, so to render myself odious to my species,—I must speak.

Genoa! my birthplace—proud city! looking upon the blue Mediterranean—dost thou remember me in my boyhood, when thy cliffs and promontories, thy bright sky and gay vineyards, were my world? Happy time! when to the young heart the narrow-bounded universe, which leaves, by its very limitation, free scope to the imagination, enchains our physical energies, and, sole period in our lives, innocence and enjoyment are united. Yet, who can look back to childhood, and not remember its sorrows and its harrowing fears? I was born with the most imperious, haughty, tameless spirit. I quailed before my father only; and he, generous and noble, but capricious and tyrannical, at once fostered and checked the wild impetuosity of my character, making obedience necessary, but inspiring no respect for the motives which guided his commands. To be a man, free, independent; or, in better words, insolent and domineering, was the hope and prayer of my rebel heart.

My father had one friend, a wealthy Genoese noble, who in a political tumult was suddenly sentenced to banishment, and his property confiscated. The Marchese Torella went into exile alone. Like my father, he was a widower: he had one child, the almost infant Juliet, who was left under my father’s guardianship. I should certainly have been unkind to the lovely girl, but that I was forced by my position to become her protector. A variety of childish incidents all tended to one point,—to make Juliet see in me a rock of defence; I in her, one who must perish through the soft sensibility of her nature too rudely visited, but for my guardian care. We grew up together. The opening rose in May was not more sweet than this dear girl. An irradiation of beauty was spread over her face. Her form, her step, her voice—my heart weeps even now, to think of all of relying, gentle, loving, and pure, that she enshrined. When I was eleven and Juliet eight years of age, a cousin of mine, much

older than either—he seemed to us a man—took great notice of my playmate; he called her his bride, and asked her to marry him. She refused, and he insisted, drawing her unwillingly towards him. With the countenance and emotions of a maniac I threw myself on him—I strove to draw his sword—I clung to his neck with the ferocious resolve to strangle him: he was obliged to call for assistance to disengage himself from me. On that night I led Juliet to the chapel of our house: I made her touch the sacred relics—I harrowed her child's heart, and profaned her child's lips with an oath, that she would be mine, and mine only.

Well, those days passed away. Torella returned in a few years, and became wealthier and more prosperous than ever. When I was seventeen, my father died; he had been magnificent to prodigality; Torella rejoiced that my minority would afford an opportunity for repairing my fortunes. Juliet and I had been affianced beside my father's deathbed—Torella was to be a second parent to me.

I desired to see the world, and I was indulged. I went to Florence, to Rome, to Naples; thence I passed to Toulon, and at length reached what had long been the bourne of my wishes, Paris. There was wild work in Paris then. The poor king, Charles the Sixth, now sane, now mad, now a monarch, now an abject slave, was the very mockery of humanity. The queen, the dauphin, the Duke of Burgundy, alternately friends and foes,—now meeting in prodigal feasts, now shedding blood in rivalry,—were blind to the miserable state of their country, and the dangers that impended over it, and gave themselves wholly up to dissolute enjoyment or savage strife. My character still followed me. I was arrogant and self-willed; I loved display, and above all, I threw off all control. My young friends were eager to foster passions which furnished them with pleasures. I was deemed handsome—I was master of every knightly accomplishment. I was disconnected with any political party. I grew a favourite with all: my presumption and arrogance was pardoned in one so young: I became a spoiled child. Who could control me? not the letters and advice of Torella—only strong necessity visiting me in the abhorred shape of an

empty purse. But there were means to refill this void. Acre after acre, estate after estate, I sold. My dress, my jewels, my horses and their caparisons, were almost unrivalled in gorgeous Paris, while the lands of my inheritance passed into possession of others.

The Duke of Orleans was waylaid and murdered by the Duke of Burgundy. Fear and terror possessed all Paris. The dauphin and the queen shut themselves up; every pleasure was suspended. I grew weary of this state of things, and my heart yearned for my boyhood's haunts. I was nearly a beggar, yet still I would go there, claim my bride, and rebuild my fortunes. A few happy ventures as a merchant would make me rich again. Nevertheless, I would not return in humble guise. My last act was to dispose of my remaining estate near Albaro for half its worth, for ready money. Then I despatched all kinds of artificers, arras, furniture of regal splendour, to fit up the last relic of my inheritance, my palace in Genoa. I lingered a little longer yet, ashamed at the part of the prodigal returned, which I feared I should play. I sent my horses. One matchless Spanish jennet I despatched to my promised bride: its caparisons flamed with jewels and cloth of gold. In every part I caused to be entwined the initials of Juliet and her Guido. My present found favour in hers and in her father's eyes.

Still to return a proclaimed spendthrift, the mark of impertinent wonder, perhaps of scorn, and to encounter singly the reproaches or taunts of my fellow-citizens, was no alluring prospect. As a shield between me and censure, I invited some few of the most reckless of my comrades to accompany me: thus I went armed against the world, hiding a rankling feeling, half fear and half penitence, by bravado.

I arrived in Genoa. I trod the pavement of my ancestral palace. My proud step was no interpreter of my heart, for I deeply felt that, though surrounded by every luxury, I was a beggar. The first step I took in claiming Juliet must widely declare me such. I read contempt or pity in the looks of all. I fancied that rich and poor, young and

old, all regarded me with derision. Torella came not near me. No wonder that my second father should expect a son's deference from me in waiting first on him. But, galled and stung by a sense of my follies and demerit, I strove to throw the blame on others. We kept nightly orgies in Palazzo Carega. To sleepless, riotous nights followed listless, supine mornings. At the Ave Maria we showed our dainty persons in the streets, scoffing at the sober citizens, casting insolent glances on the shrinking women. Juliet was not among them—no, no; if she had been there, shame would have driven me away, if love had not brought me to her feet.

I grew tired of this. Suddenly I paid the Marchese a visit. He was at his villa, one among the many which deck the suburb of San Pietro d'Arena. It was the month of May, the blossoms of the fruit-trees were fading among thick, green foliage; the vines were shooting forth; the ground strewed with the fallen olive blooms; the firefly was in the myrtle hedge; heaven and earth wore a mantle of surpassing beauty. Torella welcomed me kindly, though seriously; and even his shade of displeasure soon wore away. Some resemblance to my father—some look and tone of youthful ingenuousness, softened the good old man's heart. He sent for his daughter—he presented me to her as her betrothed. The chamber became hallowed by a holy light as she entered. Hers was that cherub look, those large, soft eyes, full dimpled cheeks, and mouth of infantine sweetness, that expresses the rare union of happiness and love. Admiration first possessed me; she is mine! was the second proud emotion, and my lips curled with haughty triumph. I had not been the enfant gâté of the beauties of France not to have learnt the art of pleasing the soft heart of woman. If towards men I was overbearing, the deference I paid to them was the more in contrast. I commenced my courtship by the display of a thousand gallantries to Juliet, who, vowed to me from infancy, had never admitted the devotion of others; and who, though accustomed to expressions of admiration, was uninitiated in the language of lovers.

For a few days all went well. Torella never alluded to my extravagance; he treated

me as a favourite son. But the time came, as we discussed the preliminaries to my union with his daughter, when this fair face of things should be overcast. A contract had been drawn up in my father's lifetime. I had rendered this, in fact, void by having squandered the whole of the wealth which was to have been shared by Juliet and myself. Torella, in consequence, chose to consider this bond as cancelled, and proposed another, in which, though the wealth he bestowed was immeasurably increased, there were so many restrictions as to the mode of spending it, that I, who saw independence only in free career being given to my own imperious will, taunted him as taking advantage of my situation, and refused utterly to subscribe to his conditions. The old man mildly strove to recall me to reason. Roused pride became the tyrant of my thought: I listened with indignation—I repelled him with disdain.

"Juliet, thou art mine! Did we not interchange vows in our innocent childhood? Are we not one in the sight of God? and shall thy cold-hearted, cold-blooded father divide us? Be generous, my love, be just; take not away a gift, last treasure of thy Guido—retract not thy vows—let us defy the world, and, setting at nought the calculations of age, find in our mutual affection a refuge from every ill."

Fiend I must have been with such sophistry to endeavour to poison that sanctuary of holy thought and tender love. Juliet shrank from me affrighted. Her father was the best and kindest of men, and she strove to show me how, in obeying him, every good would follow. He would receive my tardy submission with warm affection, and generous pardon would follow my repentance;—profitless words for a young and gentle daughter to use to a man accustomed to make his will law, and to feel in his own heart a despot so terrible and stern that he could yield obedience to nought save his own imperious desires! My resentment grew with resistance; my wild companions were ready to add fuel to the flame. We laid a plan to carry off Juliet. At first it appeared to be crowned with success. Midway, on our return, we were overtaken by the agonized father and his attendants. A conflict ensued. Before the city guard came to decide the victory in favour of our antagonists, two of Torella's

servitors were dangerously wounded.

This portion of my history weighs most heavily with me. Changed man as I am, I abhor myself in the recollection. May none who hear this tale ever have felt as I. A horse driven to fury by a rider armed with barbed spurs was not more a slave than I to the violent tyranny of my temper. A fiend possessed my soul, irritating it to madness. I felt the voice of conscience within me; but if I yielded to it for a brief interval, it was only to be a moment after torn, as by a whirlwind, away—borne along on the stream of desperate rage—the plaything of the storms engendered by pride. I was imprisoned, and, at the instance of Torella, set free. Again I returned to carry off both him and his child to France, which hapless country, then preyed on by freebooters and gangs of lawless soldiery, offered a grateful refuge to a criminal like me. Our plots were discovered. I was sentenced to banishment; and, as my debts were already enormous, my remaining property was put in the hands of commissioners for their payment. Torella again offered his mediation, requiring only my promise not to renew my abortive attempts on himself and his daughter. I spurned his offers, and fancied that I triumphed when I was thrust out from Genoa, a solitary and penniless exile. My companions were gone: they had been dismissed the city some weeks before, and were already in France. I was alone—friendless, with neither sword at my side, nor ducat in my purse.

I wandered along the sea-shore, a whirlwind of passion possessing and tearing my soul. It was as if a live coal had been set burning in my breast. At first I meditated on what I should do. I would join a band of freebooters. Revenge!—the word seemed balm to me; I hugged it, caressed it, till, like a serpent, it stung me. Then again I would abjure and despise Genoa, that little corner of the world. I would return to Paris, where so many of my friends swarmed; where my services would be eagerly accepted; where I would carve out fortune with my sword, and make my paltry birthplace and the false Torella rue the day when they drove me, a new Coriolanus, from her walls. I would return to Paris—thus on foot—a beggar—and

present myself in my poverty to those I had formerly entertained sumptuously? There was gall in the mere thought of it.

The reality of things began to dawn upon my mind, bringing despair in its train. For several months I had been a prisoner: the evils of my dungeon had whipped my soul to madness, but they had subdued my corporeal frame. I was weak and wan. Torella had used a thousand artifices to administer to my comfort; I had detected and scorned them all, and I reaped the harvest of my obduracy. What was to be done? Should I crouch before my foe, and sue for forgiveness?—Die rather ten thousand deaths!—Never should they obtain that victory! Hate—I swore eternal hate! Hate from whom?—to whom?—From a wandering outcast—to a mighty noble! I and my feelings were nothing to them: already had they forgotten one so unworthy. And Juliet!—her angel face and sylph-like form gleamed among the clouds of my despair with vain beauty; for I had lost her—the glory and flower of the world! Another will call her his!—that smile of paradise will bless another!

Even now my heart fails within me when I recur to this rout of grim-visaged ideas. Now subdued almost to tears, now raving in my agony, still I wandered along the rocky shore, which grew at each step wilder and more desolate. Hanging rocks and hoar precipices overlooked the tideless ocean; black caverns yawned; and for ever, among the seaworn recesses, murmured and dashed the unfruitful waters. Now my way was almost barred by an abrupt promontory, now rendered nearly impracticable by fragments fallen from the cliff. Evening was at hand, when, seaward, arose, as if on the waving of a wizard’s wand, a murky web of clouds, blotting the late azure sky, and darkening and disturbing the till now placid deep. The clouds had strange, fantastic shapes, and they changed and mingled and seemed to be driven about by a mighty spell. The waves raised their white crests; the thunder first muttered, then roared from across the waste of waters, which took a deep purple dye, flecked with foam. The spot where I stood looked, on one side, to the widespread ocean; on the other, it was barred by a rugged promontory. Round this cape suddenly came, driven

by the wind, a vessel. In vain the mariners tried to force a path for her to the open sea—the gale drove her on the rocks. It will perish!—all on board will perish! Would I were among them! And to my young heart the idea of death came for the first time blended with that of joy. It was an awful sight to behold that vessel struggling with her fate. Hardly could I discern the sailors, but I heard them. It was soon all over! A rock, just covered by the tossing waves, and so unperceived, lay in wait for its prey. A crash of thunder broke over my head at the moment that, with a frightful shock, the vessel dashed upon her unseen enemy. In a brief space of time she went to pieces. There I stood in safety; and there were my fellow-creatures battling, how hopelessly, with annihilation. Methought I saw them struggling—too truly did I hear their shrieks, conquering the barking surges in their shrill agony. The dark breakers threw hither and thither the fragments of the wreck: soon it disappeared. I had been fascinated to gaze till the end: at last I sank on my knees—I covered my face with my hands. I again looked up; something was floating on the billows towards the shore. It neared and neared. Was that a human form? It grew more and more distinct; and at last a mighty wave, lifting the whole freight, lodged it upon a rock. A human being bestriding a sea-chest!—a human being! Yet was it one? Surely never such had existed before—a misshapen dwarf, with squinting eyes, distorted features, and body deformed, till it became a horror to behold. My blood, lately warming towards a fellow-being so snatched from a watery tomb, froze in my heart. The dwarf got off his chest; he tossed his straight, struggling hair from his odious visage.

“By St. Beelzebub!” he exclaimed, “I have been well bested.” He looked round and saw me. “Oh, by the fiend! here is another ally of the mighty One. To what saint did you offer prayers, friend—if not to mine? Yet I remember you not on board.”

I shrank from the monster and his blasphemy. Again he questioned me, and I muttered some inaudible reply. He continued:—

“Your voice is drowned by this dissonant roar. What a noise the big ocean makes! Schoolboys bursting from their prison are not louder than these waves set free to play. They disturb me. I will no more of their ill-timed brawling. Silence, hoary One!—Winds, avaunt!—to your homes!—Clouds, fly to the antipodes, and leave our heaven clear!”

As he spoke, he stretched out his two long, lank arms, that looked like spider’s claws, and seemed to embrace with them the expanse before him. Was it a miracle? The clouds became broken and fled; the azure sky first peeped out, and then was spread a calm field of blue above us; the stormy gale was exchanged to the softly breathing west; the sea grew calm; the waves dwindled to riplets.

“I like obedience even in these stupid elements,” said the dwarf. “How much more in the tameless mind of man! It was a well-got-up storm, you must allow—and all of my own making.”

It was tempting Providence to interchange talk with this magician. But Power, in all its shapes, is respected by man. Awe, curiosity, a clinging fascination, drew me towards him.

“Come, don’t be frightened, friend,” said the wretch: “I am good-humoured when pleased; and something does please me in your well-proportioned body and handsome face, though you look a little woe-begone. You have suffered a land—I, a sea wreck. Perhaps I can allay the tempest of your fortunes as I did my own. Shall we be friends?”—And he held out his hand; I could not touch it. “Well, then, companions—that will do as well. And now, while I rest after the buffeting I underwent just now, tell me why, young and gallant as you seem, you wander thus alone and downcast on this wild sea-shore.”

The voice of the wretch was screeching and horrid, and his contortions as he spoke were frightful to behold. Yet he did gain a kind of influence over me, which I could not master, and I told him my tale. When it was ended, he laughed long and loud:

the rocks echoed back the sound: hell seemed yelling around me.

“Oh, thou cousin of Lucifer!” said he; “so thou too hast fallen through thy pride; and, though bright as the son of Morning, thou art ready to give up thy good looks, thy bride, and thy well-being, rather than submit thee to the tyranny of good. I honour thy choice, by my soul!—So thou hast fled, and yield the day; and mean to starve on these rocks, and to let the birds peck out thy dead eyes, while thy enemy and thy betrothed rejoice in thy ruin. Thy pride is strangely akin to humility, methinks.”

As he spoke, a thousand fanged thoughts stung me to the heart.

“What would you that I should do?” I cried.

“I!—Oh, nothing, but lie down and say your prayers before you die. But, were I you, I know the deed that should be done.”

I drew near him. His supernatural powers made him an oracle in my eyes; yet a strange unearthly thrill quivered through my frame as I said, “Speak!—teach me—what act do you advise?”

“Revenge thyself, man!—humble thy enemies!—set thy foot on the old man’s neck, and possess thyself of his daughter!”

“To the east and west I turn,” cried I, “and see no means! Had I gold, much could I achieve; but, poor and single, I am powerless.”

The dwarf had been seated on his chest as he listened to my story. Now he got off; he touched a spring; it flew open! What a mine of wealth—of blazing jewels, beaming gold, and pale silver—was displayed therein. A mad desire to possess this treasure was born within me.

“Doubtless,” I said, “one so powerful as you could do all things.”

“Nay,” said the monster humbly, “I am less omnipotent than I seem. Some things I possess which you may covet; but I would give them all for a small share, or even

for a loan of what is yours."

"My possessions are at your service," I replied bitterly—"my poverty, my exile, my disgrace—I make a free gift of them all."

"Good! I thank you. Add one other thing to your gift, and my treasure is yours."

"As nothing is my sole inheritance, what besides nothing would you have?"

"Your comely face and well-made limbs."

I shivered. Would this all-powerful monster murder me? I had no dagger. I forgot to pray—but I grew pale.

"I ask for a loan, not a gift," said the frightful thing: "lend me your body for three days—you shall have mine to cage your soul the while, and, in payment, my chest. What say you to the bargain?—Three short days."

We are told that it is dangerous to hold unlawful talk; and well do I prove the same. Tamely written down, it may seem incredible that I should lend any ear to this proposition; but, in spite of his unnatural ugliness, there was something fascinating in a being whose voice could govern earth, air, and sea. I felt a keen desire to comply; for with that chest I could command the worlds. My only hesitation resulted from a fear that he would not be true to his bargain. Then, I thought, I shall soon die here on these lonely sands, and the limbs he covets will be mine no more:—it is worth the chance. And, besides, I knew that, by all the rules of art-magic, there were formula and oaths which none of its practisers dared break. I hesitated to reply; and he went on, now displaying his wealth, now speaking of the petty price he demanded, till it seemed madness to refuse. Thus is it;—place our bark in the current of the stream, and down, over fall and cataract it is hurried; give up our conduct to the wild torrent of passion, and we are away, we know not whither.

He swore many an oath, and I adjured him by many a sacred name; till I saw this wonder of power, this ruler of the elements, shiver like an autumn leaf before my words; and as if the spirit spake unwillingly and perforce within him, at last, he, with

broken voice, revealed the spell whereby he might be obliged, did he wish to play me false, to render up the unlawful spoil. Our warm life-blood must mingle to make and to mar the charm.

Enough of this unholy theme. I was persuaded—the thing was done. The morrow dawned upon me as I lay upon the shingles, and I knew not my own shadow as it fell from me. I felt myself changed to a shape of horror, and cursed my easy faith and blind credulity. The chest was there—there the gold and precious stones for which I had sold the frame of flesh which nature had given me. The sight a little stilled my emotions: three days would soon be gone.

They did pass. The dwarf had supplied me with a plenteous store of food. At first I could hardly walk, so strange and out of joint were all my limbs; and my voice—it was that of the fiend. But I kept silent, and turned my face to the sun, that I might not see my shadow, and counted the hours, and ruminated on my future conduct. To bring Torella to my feet—to possess my Juliet in spite of him—all this my wealth could easily achieve. During dark night I slept, and dreamt of the accomplishment of my desires. Two suns had set—the third dawned. I was agitated, fearful. Oh expectation, what a frightful thing art thou, when kindled more by fear than hope! How dost thou twist thyself round the heart, torturing its pulsations! How dost thou dart unknown pangs all through our feeble mechanism, now seeming to shiver us like broken glass, to nothingness—now giving us a fresh strength, which can do nothing, and so torments us by a sensation, such as the strong man must feel who cannot break his fetters, though they bend in his grasp. Slowly paced the bright, bright orb up the eastern sky; long it lingered in the zenith, and still more slowly wandered down the west: it touched the horizon's verge—it was lost! Its glories were on the summits of the cliff—they grew dun and grey. The evening star shone bright. He will soon be here.

He came not!—By the living heavens, he came not!—and night dragged out its

weary length, and, in its decaying age, “day began to grizzle its dark hair;” and the sun rose again on the most miserable wretch that ever upbraided its light. Three days thus I passed. The jewels and the gold—oh, how I abhorred them!

Well, well—I will not blacken these pages with demoniac ravings. All too terrible were the thoughts, the raging tumult of ideas that filled my soul. At the end of that time I slept; I had not before since the third sunset; and I dreamt that I was at Juliet’s feet, and she smiled, and then she shrieked—for she saw my transformation—and again she smiled, for still her beautiful lover knelt before her. But it was not I—it was he, the fiend, arrayed in my limbs, speaking with my voice, winning her with my looks of love. I strove to warn her, but my tongue refused its office; I strove to tear him from her, but I was rooted to the ground—I awoke with the agony. There were the solitary hoar precipices—there the plashing sea, the quiet strand, and the blue sky over all. What did it mean? was my dream but a mirror of the truth? was he wooing and winning my betrothed? I would on the instant back to Genoa—but I was banished. I laughed—the dwarf’s yell burst from my lips—I banished! Oh no! they had not exiled the foul limbs I wore; I might with these enter, without fear of incurring the threatened penalty of death, my own, my native city.

I began to walk towards Genoa. I was somewhat accustomed to my distorted limbs; none were ever so ill-adapted for a straightforward movement; it was with infinite difficulty that I proceeded. Then, too, I desired to avoid all the hamlets strewed here and there on the sea-beach, for I was unwilling to make a display of my hideousness. I was not quite sure that, if seen, the mere boys would not stone me to death as I passed, for a monster; some ungentle salutations I did receive from the few peasants or fishermen I chanced to meet. But it was dark night before I approached Genoa. The weather was so balmy and sweet that it struck me that the Marchese and his daughter would very probably have quitted the city for their country retreat. It was from Villa Torella that I had attempted to carry off Juliet; I had spent many an hour reconnoitring the spot, and knew each inch of ground in its vicinity. It was

beautifully situated, embosomed in trees, on the margin of a stream. As I drew near, it became evident that my conjecture was right; nay, moreover, that the hours were being then devoted to feasting and merriment. For the house was lighted up; strains of soft and gay music were wafted towards me by the breeze. My heart sank within me. Such was the generous kindness of Torella's heart that I felt sure that he would not have indulged in public manifestations of rejoicing just after my unfortunate banishment, but for a cause I dared not dwell upon.

The country people were all alive and flocking about; it became necessary that I should conceal myself; and yet I longed to address some one, or to hear others discourse, or in any way to gain intelligence of what was really going on. At length, entering the walks that were in immediate vicinity to the mansion, I found one dark enough to veil my excessive frightfulness; and yet others as well as I were loitering in its shade. I soon gathered all I wanted to know—all that first made my very heart die with horror, and then boil with indignation. To-morrow Juliet was to be given to the penitent, reformed, beloved Guido—to-morrow my bride was to pledge her vows to a fiend from hell! And I did this!—my accursed pride—my demoniac violence and wicked self-idolatry had caused this act. For if I had acted as the wretch who had stolen my form had acted—if, with a mien at once yielding and dignified, I had presented myself to Torella, saying, I have done wrong, forgive me; I am unworthy of your angel-child, but permit me to claim her hereafter, when my altered conduct shall manifest that I abjure my vices, and endeavour to become in some sort worthy of her. I go to serve against the infidels; and when my zeal for religion and my true penitence for the past shall appear to you to cancel my crimes, permit me again to call myself your son. Thus had he spoken; and the penitent was welcomed even as the prodigal son of Scripture: the fatted calf was killed for him; and he, still pursuing the same path, displayed such open-hearted regret for his follies, so humble a concession of all his rights, and so ardent a resolve to reacquire them by a life of contrition and virtue, that he quickly conquered the kind old man;

and full pardon, and the gift of his lovely child, followed in swift succession.

Oh, had an angel from Paradise whispered to me to act thus! But now, what would be the innocent Juliet's fate? Would God permit the foul union—or, some prodigy destroying it, link the dishonoured name of Carega with the worst of crimes? To-morrow at dawn they were to be married: there was but one way to prevent this—to meet mine enemy, and to enforce the ratification of our agreement. I felt that this could only be done by a mortal struggle. I had no sword—if indeed my distorted arms could wield a soldier's weapon—but I had a dagger, and in that lay my hope. There was no time for pondering or balancing nicely the question: I might die in the attempt; but besides the burning jealousy and despair of my own heart, honour, mere humanity, demanded that I should fall rather than not destroy the machinations of the fiend.

The guests departed—the lights began to disappear; it was evident that the inhabitants of the villa were seeking repose. I hid myself among the trees—the garden grew desert—the gates were closed—I wandered round and came under a window—ah! well did I know the same!—a soft twilight glimmered in the room—the curtains were half withdrawn. It was the temple of innocence and beauty. Its magnificence was tempered, as it were, by the slight disarrangements occasioned by its being dwelt in, and all the objects scattered around displayed the taste of her who hallowed it by her presence. I saw her enter with a quick light step—I saw her approach the window—she drew back the curtain yet further, and looked out into the night. Its breezy freshness played among her ringlets, and wafted them from the transparent marble of her brow. She clasped her hands, she raised her eyes to heaven. I heard her voice. Guido! she softly murmured—mine own Guido! and then, as if overcome by the fulness of her own heart, she sank on her knees;—her upraised eyes—her graceful attitude—the beaming thankfulness that lighted up her face—oh, these are tame words! Heart of mine, thou imagest ever, though thou canst not portray, the celestial beauty of that child of light and love.

I heard a step—a quick firm step along the shady avenue. Soon I saw a cavalier, richly dressed, young and, methought, graceful to look on, advance. I hid myself yet closer. The youth approached; he paused beneath the window. She arose, and again looking out she saw him, and said—I cannot, no, at this distant time I cannot record her terms of soft silver tenderness; to me they were spoken, but they were replied to by him.

"I will not go," he cried: "here where you have been, where your memory glides like some heaven-visiting ghost, I will pass the long hours till we meet, never, my Juliet, again, day or night, to part. But do thou, my love, retire; the cold morn and fitful breeze will make thy cheek pale, and fill with languor thy love-lighted eyes. Ah, sweetest! could I press one kiss upon them, I could, methinks, repose."

And then he approached still nearer, and methought he was about to clamber into her chamber. I had hesitated, not to terrify her; now I was no longer master of myself. I rushed forward—I threw myself on him—I tore him away—I cried, "O loathsome and foul-shaped wretch!"

I need not repeat epithets, all tending, as it appeared, to rail at a person I at present feel some partiality for. A shriek rose from Juliet's lips. I neither heard nor saw—I felt only mine enemy, whose throat I grasped, and my dagger's hilt; he struggled, but could not escape. At length hoarsely he breathed these words: "Do!—strike home! destroy this body—you will still live: may your life be long and merry!"

The descending dagger was arrested at the word, and he, feeling my hold relax, extricated himself and drew his sword, while the uproar in the house, and flying of torches from one room to the other, showed that soon we should be separated. In the midst of my frenzy there was much calculation:—fall I might, and so that he did not survive, I cared not for the death-blow I might deal against myself. While still, therefore, he thought I paused, and while I saw the villanous resolve to take advantage of my hesitation, in the sudden thrust he made at me, I threw myself on

his sword, and at the same moment plunged my dagger, with a true, desperate aim, in his side. We fell together, rolling over each other, and the tide of blood that flowed from the gaping wound of each mingled on the grass. More I know not—I fainted.

Again I return to life: weak almost to death, I found myself stretched upon a bed—Juliet was kneeling beside it. Strange! my first broken request was for a mirror. I was so wan and ghastly, that my poor girl hesitated, as she told me afterwards; but, by the mass! I thought myself a right proper youth when I saw the dear reflection of my own well-known features. I confess it is a weakness, but I avow it, I do entertain a considerable affection for the countenance and limbs I behold, whenever I look at a glass; and have more mirrors in my house, and consult them oftener, than any beauty in Genoa. Before you too much condemn me, permit me to say that no one better knows than I the value of his own body; no one, probably, except myself, ever having had it stolen from him.

Incoherently I at first talked of the dwarf and his crimes, and reproached Juliet for her too easy admission of his love. She thought me raving, as well she might; and yet it was some time before I could prevail on myself to admit that the Guido whose penitence had won her back for me was myself; and while I cursed bitterly the monstrous dwarf, and blest the well-directed blow that had deprived him of life, I suddenly checked myself when I heard her say, Amen! knowing that him whom she reviled was my very self. A little reflection taught me silence—a little practice enabled me to speak of that frightful night without any very excessive blunder. The wound I had given myself was no mockery of one—it was long before I recovered—and as the benevolent and generous Torella sat beside me, talking such wisdom as might win friends to repentance, and mine own dear Juliet hovered near me, administering to my wants, and cheering me by her smiles, the work of my bodily cure and mental reform went on together. I have never, indeed, wholly recovered my strength—my cheek is paler since—my person a little bent. Juliet

sometimes ventures to allude bitterly to the malice that caused this change, but I kiss her on the moment, and tell her all is for the best. I am a fonder and more faithful husband, and true is this—but for that wound, never had I called her mine.

I did not revisit the sea-shore, nor seek for the fiend's treasure; yet, while I ponder on the past, I often think, and my confessor was not backward in favouring the idea, that it might be a good rather than an evil spirit, sent by my guardian angel, to show me the folly and misery of pride. So well at least did I learn this lesson, roughly taught as I was, that I am known now by all my friends and fellow-citizens by the name of Guido il Cortese.

X. THE SWISS PEASANT.

Why is the mind of man so apt to be swayed by contraries? why does the imagination for ever paint the impossible in glittering tints, and the hearts of wayward mortals cling, with the greatest tenacity, to what, eel-like, is bent on escaping from their grasp? Why—to bring the matter home—is solitude abhorrent to me, now that I enjoy it in perfection? I have apostrophized the coy nymph in ball-rooms, when the bright lamps of heaven were shamed by brighter earth-stars, and lamented her absence at a picnic party, where the nightingale was silenced by the fiddle.

And now, O solitude! I abjure thee, in thy fitting temple—in Switzerland—among cloud-piercing mountains, by the resounding waves of the isle-surrounding lake. I am beside the waters of Uri—where Tell lived—in Brunen, where the Swiss patriots swore to die for freedom. It rains—magic word to destroy the spell to which these words give rise—the clouds envelop the hills—the white mists veil the ravines—there is a roar and a splash in my ears—and now and then the vapours break and scatter themselves, and I see something dark between, which is the hoar side of a dark precipice, but which might as well be the turf stack or old wall that

bounded Cumberland's view as he wrote the Wheel of Fortune.

The sole book that I possess is the Prisoner of Chillon. I have read it through three times within an hour. Its noble author composed it to beguile weary hours like these when he remained rain-bound for three days in a little inn on the shores of the Lake of Geneva; and cannot I, following with unequal steps, so cheat the minutes in this dim spot? I never, by the by, could invent the commonest incident. As a man of honour, of course I never lie; but, as a nursery child and schoolboy, I never did; simply, as I remember, because I never could concoct one;—but a true tale was lately narrated to me by its very heroine, the incidents of which haunt my memory, adorned as they were by her animated looks and soft silvery accent. Let me try to record them, stripped though they must be of their greatest charm.

I was, but a week ago, travelling with my friend Ashburn in a coupée, in the district of Subiaco, in the ecclesiastical territory. We were jolted along a rough ravine, through which the river Anio sped, and beetling mountains and shady trees, a distant convent and a picturesque cell on a hill, formed a view which so awoke the pictorial propensities of my friend, that he stopped the coupée (though we were assured that we should never reach our inn by nightfall, and that the road was dangerous in the dark), took out his portfolio, and began to sketch. As he drew, I continued to speak in support of an argument we had entered upon before. I had been complaining of the commonplace and ennui of life. Ashburn insisted that our existence was only too full of variety and change—tragic variety and wondrous incredible change. "Even," said the painter, "as sky, and earth, and water seem for ever the same to the vulgar eye, and yet to the gifted one assume a thousand various guises and hues—now robed in purple—now shrouded in black—now resplendent with living gold—and anon sinking into sober and unobtrusive grey, so do our mortal lives change and vary. No living being among us but could tell a tale of soul-subduing joys and heart-consuming woes, worthy, had they their poet, of the imagination of Shakespeare or Goethe. The veriest weather-worn cabin is a study for colouring, and

the meanest peasant will offer all the acts of a drama in the apparently dull routine of his humble life."

"This is pure romance," I replied; "put it to the test. Let us take, for example, yonder woman descending the mountain-path."

"What a figure!" cried Ashburn; "oh that she would stay thus but one quarter of an hour!—she has come down to bathe her child—her upturned face—her dark hair—her picturesque costume—the little plump fellow bestriding her—the rude scenery around"—

"And the romantic tale she has to tell."

"I would wager a louis that hers has been no common fate. She steps a goddess—her attitude, her looks, are all filled with majesty."

I laughed at his enthusiasm, and accepted his bet. We hurried to join our fair peasantess, and thus formed acquaintance with Fanny Chaumont. A sudden storm, as we were engaged conversing with her, came, driven down from the tempest-bearing hills, and she gave us a cordial invitation to her cottage.

It was situated on a sunny, yet sheltered slope. There was a look of cheerfulness and aisance about it, beyond what is usually met in that part of Switzerland, reminding me of the cottages of the inhabitants of the free States. There, also, we found her husband. I always feel curious to know on whom a woman, who bears the stamp of superior intellect, who is beautiful and refined—for peasant as she was, Fanny was both—has been induced to bestow herself.

Louis Chaumont was considerably older than his wife; he was handsome, with brown lively eyes, curly chestnut hair, a visage embrowned by the sun, bearing every mark of having led an active, even an adventurous life; there was, besides, an expression which, if it were not ferocity, resembled it, in his vivacious glances, and in the sternness of his deeply-lined forehead; while she, in spite of her finely-formed brow, her majestic person, and her large expressive eyes, looked softness and

patience itself. There was something incongruous in the pair, and more strangely matched they seemed when we heard their story. It lost me my louis, but proved Fanny at once to be a fitting heroine for romance, and was a lesson, moreover, to teach the strange pranks love can play with us, mingling fire and water, blending in one harmonious concord the harsh base and melodious tenor of two differently stringed instruments. Though their child was five years old, Fanny and her husband were attached to each other with the tenderness and passion of early love; they were happy—his faults were tempered by her angel disposition, and her too melancholy and feeling-fraught spirit was enlivened and made plastic to the purposes of this world by his energy and activity.

Fanny was a Bernese by birth: she was the child of humble cottagers, one among a large family. They lived on the brow of one summit and at the foot of another. The snowy mountains were piled about them; thaw-fed torrents brawled around; during the night a sound like thunder, a crash among the tempest-beaten pines would tell of an avalanche; or the snowdrift, whirring past the lattice, threatened to bury the little fabric. Winter was the season of peace in the deep vales, not so in the higher district. The peasant was often kept waking by the soft-falling snow which threatened insidiously to encroach on, and to overwhelm his habitation; or a straying cow would lead him far into the depths of the stormy hills, and his fearful family would count in agony the hours of his absence. Perpetual hardship and danger, however, rather brutify than exalt the soul of man; and those of the Swiss who are most deeply planted among the rocky wilds are often stultified and sullen.

Fanny opened her youthful eyes and observation on this scene. She was one of those lovely children whose beauty is heartfelt but indescribable: hers was the smooth candid brow, the large hazel eyes, half soft, half wild; the round dimpled cheek, the full sensitive mouth, the pointed chin, and (as framework to the picture) the luxuriant curly chestnut hair, and voice which is sweetest music. The exceeding beauty of little Fanny gained her the observation of the wife of the owner of the

chateau which overlooked and commanded the district, and at ten years of age she became a frequent visitor there. Fanny's little soul was love, so she soon twined herself round the kind lady's heart, became a pet with her husband, and the favourite playmate of their only son.

One fête day Fanny had dined at the chateau. It had been fine warm spring weather, but wind and storm came on with the setting sun; the snow began to fall thickly, and it was decided that Fanny must pass the night in the chateau. She had been unusually eager to return home; and when the tempest came on, she crept near her protectress, and begged to be sent to her mother. C'est impossible—Fanny pressed no further, but she clambered to a window, and looked out wistfully to where, hidden by the hills, her parents' cottage stood. It was a fatal night for her: the thunders of frequent avalanches, the roaring of torrents, the crash of trees, spoke of devastation, and her home was its chief prey. Father, mother, brothers, and sisters, not one survived. Where, the day before, cottage and outhouse and flower garden had stood, the little lawn where she played, and the grove that sheltered her, there was now a monumental pile of snow, and the rocky path of a torrent; no trace remained, not one survivor to tell the tale. From that night Fanny became a constant inmate of the chateau.

It was Madame de Marville's project to give her a bourgeois education, which would raise her from the hardships of a peasant's life, and yet not elevate her above her natural position in society. She was brought up kindly, but humbly; it was the virtues of her disposition which raised her in the eyes of all around her—not any ill-judged favour of her benefactress. The night of the destruction of her family never passed away from her memory; it set a seal of untimely seriousness on her childish brow, awoke deep thoughts in her infant heart, and a strong resolve that while she lived, her beloved friends should find her, as far as her humble powers admitted, a source of good alone—a reason to rejoice that they had saved her from the destruction that had overwhelmed her family.

Thus Fanny grew up in beauty and in virtue. Her smiles were as the rainbows of her native torrents: her voice, her caresses, her light step, her unalterable sweetness and ceaseless devotion to the wishes of others, made her the idol of the family. Henry, the only child of her protectors, was of her own age, or but a few months her senior. Every time Henry returned from school to visit his parents, he found Fanny more beautiful, more kind, more attractive than before; and the first passion his youthful heart knew was for the lovely peasant girl, whose virtues sanctified his home. A look, a gesture betrayed his secret to his mother; she turned a hasty glance on Fanny, and saw on her countenance innocence and confidence alone. Half reassured, yet still fearful, Madame de Marville began to reflect on some cure for the threatened evil. She could not bear to send away Fanny; she was solicitous that her son should for the present reside in his home. The lovely girl was perfectly unconscious of the sentiments of the young seigneur; but would she always continue so? and was the burning heart that warmed her gentle bosom to be for ever insensible to the despotic and absorbing emotions of love?

It was with wonder, and a curious mixture of disappointed maternal pride and real gladness, that the lady at length discovered a passion dawning in fair Fanny’s heart for Louis Chaumont, a peasant some ten years older than herself. It was natural that one with such high-wrought feelings as our heroine should love one to whom she could look up, and on whom to depend, rather than her childhood’s playmate—the gay, thoughtless Henry. Louis’s family had been the victim of a moral ruin, as hers of a physical one. They had been oppressed, reduced to poverty, driven from their homes by a feudal tyrant, and had come poor and forlorn from a distant district. His mother, accustomed to a bourgeois’ life, died broken-hearted: his father, a man of violent passions, nourished in his own and in his son’s heart, sentiments of hatred and revenge against the “proud oppressors of the land.” They were obliged to labour hard, yet in the intervals of work, father and son would read or discourse concerning the ills attendant on humanity, and they traced all to the social system, which made

the few the tyrants of the many.

Louis was handsome, bold, and active; he excelled his compeers in every hardy exercise; his resolution, his daring, made him, in spite of his poverty, a kind of leader among them. He had many faults; he was too full of passion, of the spirit of resistance and revenge; but his heart was kind; his understanding, when not thwarted, strong; and the very depth of his feelings made him keenly susceptible to love. Fanny, in her simple but majestic beauty, in her soft kindness of manner, mingled with the profoundest sensibility, made a deep impression on the young man's heart. His converse, so different and so superior to those of his fellows, won her attention.

Hitherto Fanny had never given utterance to the secrets of her soul. Habitual respect held her silent with Madame, and Henry, as spirited and as heedless as a chamois, could ill understand her; but Louis became the depository of the many feelings which, piled up in secrecy and silence, were half awful to herself; he brought reason, or what he deemed such, to direct her heart-born conclusions. To have heard them talk of life and death, and all its shows, you would have wondered by what freak philosophy had dressed herself in youth and a peasant's garb, and wandered from the schools to these untaught wilds.

Madame de Marville saw and encouraged this attachment. Louis was not exactly the person she would have selected for Fanny; but he was the only being for whom she had ever evinced a predilection; and, besides, the danger of a misalliance which threatened her own son, rendered her eager to build an insurmountable wall between him and the object of his affections. Thus Fanny enjoyed the heart-gladdening pride of hearing her choice applauded and praised by the person she most respected and loved in the world. As yet, however, love had been covert; the soul but not the apparent body of their intercourse. Louis was kept in awe by this high-minded girl, and Fanny had not yet learned her own secret. It was Henry who made the discovery

for them;—Henry, who, with all the impetuosity of his vivacious character, contrived a thousand ways to come between them, who, stung by jealousy to injustice, reviled Louis for his ruin, his poverty, his opinions, and brought the spirit of dissension to disquiet a mind entirely bent, as she imagined, on holy and pure thoughts.

Under this clash of passion, the action of the drama rapidly developed itself, and, for nearly a year, a variety of scenes were acted among these secluded mountains of no interest save to the parties themselves, but to them fateful and engrossing. Louis and Fanny exchanged vows; but that sufficed not. Fanny insisted on the right of treating with uniform kindness the son of her best friend, in spite of his injustice and insolence. The young men were often, during the rural festivals, brought into angry collision. Fanny was the peacemaker: but a woman is the worst possible mediator between her rival lovers. Henry was sometimes irritated to complain to his father of Louis' presumption. The spirit of the French Revolution then awakening, rendered a peasant's assumptions peculiarly grating; and it required Madame de Marville's impartial gentleness to prevent Fanny's betrothed, as now he was almost considered, from being further oppressed.

At length it was decided that Henry should absent himself for a time, and visit Paris. He was enraged in the extreme by what he called his banishment. Noble and generous as he naturally was, love was the tyrant of his soul, and drove him almost to crime. He entered into a fierce quarrel with his rival on the very eve of his departure: it ended in a scene of violence and bloodshed. No great real harm was done; but Monsieur de Marville, hitherto scarcely kept back from such a measure by his wife, suddenly obtained an order for Louis (his father had died a year before) to quit the territory within twelve hours. Fanny was commanded, as she valued the favour of her friends, to give him up. The young men were both gone before any intercession could avail; and that kind of peace which resembles desolation took possession of the chateau.

Aware of the part she had taken in encouraging Fanny's attachment to her peasant-lover, Madame de Marville did not make herself a party to the tyranny of her husband; she requested only of her protégée to defer any decisive step, and not to quit her guardianship until the return of her son, which was to take place the following year. Fanny consented to such a delay, although in doing so she had to resist the angry representations of her lover, who exacted that she should quit the roof of his oppressors. It was galling to his proud spirit that she should continue to receive benefits from them, and injurious to his love that she should remain where his rival's name was the constant theme of discourse and the object of interest. Fanny in vain represented her debt of gratitude, the absence of Henry, the impossibility that she could feel any undue sentiment towards the young seigneur; not to hate him was a crime in Louis' eyes; yet how, in spite of his ill-conduct, could Fanny hate her childhood's playmate—her brother? His violent passions excited to their utmost height—jealousy and the sense of impotent indignation raging in his heart—Louis swore to revenge himself on the Marvilles—to forget and to abhor his mistress!—his last words were a malediction on them, and a violent denunciation of scorn upon her.

"It will all be well yet," thought Fanny, as she strove to calm the tumultuous and painful emotions to which his intemperate passion gave rise. "Not only are storms the birth of the wild elements, but of the heart of man, and we can oppose patience and fortitude alone to their destructive violence. A year will pass—I shall quit the chateau; Louis will acknowledge my truth, and retract his frightful words."

She continued, therefore, to fulfil her duties cheerfully, not permitting her thoughts to dwell on the idea, that, in spite of her struggles, too painfully occupied her—the probability that Louis would in the end renounce or forget her; but committing her cause to the spirit of good, she trusted that its influence would in the end prevail.

She had, however, much to endure; for months passed, and no tidings reached her of

Louis. Often she felt sick at heart; often she became the prey of the darkest despair; above all, her tender heart missed the fond attentions of love, the bliss of knowing that she bestowed happiness, and the unrestrained intercourse to which mutual affection had given rise. She cherished hope as a duty, and faith in love, rather than in her unjust and cruelly neglectful lover. It was a hard task, for she had nowhere to turn for consolation or encouragement. Madame de Marville marked with gladness the total separation between them. Now that the danger that threatened her son was averted, she relented having been influential in producing an attachment between Fanny and one whom she deemed unworthy of her. She redoubled her kindness, and, in the true Continental fashion, tried to get up a match between her and some one among her many and more prosperous admirers. She failed, but did not despair, till she saw the poor girl's cheek grow pale and her vivacity desert her, as month after month passed away, and the very name of Louis appeared to be forgotten by all except herself.

The stirring and terrible events that took place at this time in France added to Fanny's distress of mind. She had been familiarized to the discussion of the theories, now attempted to be put in practice, by the conversations of Chaumont. As each fresh account brought information of the guilty and sanguinary acts of men whose opinions were the same as those of her lover, her fears on his account increased. In a few words I shall hurry over this part of her story. Switzerland became agitated by the same commotions as tore the near kingdom. The peasantry rose in tumult; acts of violence and blood were committed; at first at a distance from her retired valley, but gradually approaching its precincts, until at last the tree of liberty was set up in the neighbouring village. Monsieur de Marville was an aristocrat of the most bigoted species. In vain was the danger represented to him, and the unwarlike state of his retinue. He armed them—he hurried down—he came unawares on the crowd who were proclaiming the triumph of liberty, rather by feasting than force. On the first attack, they were dispersed, and one or two among them were wounded; the pole

they had gathered round was uprooted, the emblematic cap trampled to the earth. The governor returned victorious to his chateau.

This act of violence on his part seemed the match to fire a train of organized resistance to his authority, of which none had dreamt before. Strangers from other cantons thronged into the valley; rustic labours were cast aside; popular assemblies were held, and the peasants exercised in the use of arms. One was coming to place himself at their head, it was said, who had been a party in the tumults at Geneva. Louis Chaumont was coming—the champion of liberty, the sworn enemy of M. de Marville. The influence of his presence soon became manifest. The inhabitants of the chateau were besieged. If one ventured beyond a certain limit he was assailed. It was the resolve of Louis that all within its walls should surrender themselves to his mercy. What that might be, the proud curl of his lip and the fire that glanced from his dark eyes rendered scarcely problematic. Fanny would not believe the worst of her lover, but Monsieur and Madame de Marville, no longer restrained by any delicacy, spoke of the leveller in unmeasured terms of abhorrence, comparing him to the monsters who then reigned in France, while the danger they incurred through him added a bitter sting to their words. The peril grew each day; famine began to make its appearance in the chateau; while the intelligence which some of the more friendly peasants brought was indicative of preparations for a regular attack of the most formidable nature. A summons at last came from the insurgents. They were resolved to destroy the emblem of their slavery—the feudal halls of their tyrants. They declared their intention of firing the chateau the next day, and called on all within to deliver themselves up, if they would not be buried in its ruins. They offered their lives and free leave to depart to all, save the governor himself, who must place himself unconditionally at the mercy of their leader. “The wretch,” exclaimed his lady, “who thirsts for your blood! Fly! if there is yet time for flight; we, you see, are safe. Fly! nor suffer these cruel dastards to boast of having murdered you.”

M. de Marville yielded to these entreaties and representations. He had sent for a military force to aid him—it had been denied. He saw that he himself, as the detested person, was the cause of danger to his family. It was therefore agreed that he should seek a châlet situated on a mountain ten leagues distant, where he might lie concealed till his family joined him. Accordingly, in a base disguise, he quitted at midnight the walls he was unable to defend; a miserable night for the unfortunate beings left behind. The coming day was to witness the destruction of their home; and they, beggars in the world, were to wander through the inhospitable mountains, till, with caution and terror, they could unobserved reach the remote and miserable châlet, and learn the fate of the unhappy fugitive. It was a sleepless night for all. To add to Madame's agony, she knew that her son's life was in danger in Paris—that he had been denounced—and, though yet untaken, his escape was still uncertain. From the turret of the castle that, situated high on a rock, commanded the valley below, she sat the livelong night watching for every sound—fearful of some shout, some report of firearms, which would announce the capture of her husband. It was September; the nights were chill; pale and trembling, she saw day break over the hills. Fanny had busied herself during these anxious hours by preparing for their departure; the terrified domestics had already fled; she, the lady, and the old lame gardener were all that remained. At dawn she brought forth the mule, and harnessed him to the rude vehicle which was to convey them to their place of refuge. Whatever was most valuable in the chateau had already been sent away long before, or was secreted; a few necessaries alone she provided. And now she ascended the turret stairs, and stood before her protectress, announcing that all was ready, and that they must depart. At this last moment, Madame de Marville appeared deprived of strength; she strove to rise—she sank to the ground in a fit. Forgetful of her deserted state, Fanny called aloud for help, and then her heart beat wildly as a quick, youthful step was heard on the stairs. Who could he be? would he come to insult their wretchedness—he, the author of their woe? The first glance changed the object of

her terror. Henry flew to his mother's side, and, with broken exclamations and agitated questions, demanded an explanation of what he saw. He had fled for safety to the habitation of his parents—he found it deserted; the first voice he heard was that of Fanny crying for help—the first sight that presented itself was his mother, to all appearance dead, lying on the floor of the turret. Her recovery was followed by brief explanations, and a consultation of how his safety was to be provided for. The name of Chaumont excited his bitterest execrations. With a soldier's haughty resolve, he was darting from the castle to meet and to wreak vengeance on his rival. His mother threw herself at his feet, clasping his knees, calling wildly on him not to desert her. Fanny's gentle, sweet voice was of more avail to calm his passion. "Chevalier," she said, "it is not thus that you must display your courage or protect the helpless. To encounter yonder infuriated mob would be to run on certain death; you must preserve yourself for your family—you must have pity on your mother, who cannot survive you. Be guided by me, I beseech you."

Henry yielded to her voice, and a more reasonable arrangement took place. The departure of Madame de Marville and Fanny was expected at the village, and a pledge had been given that they should proceed unmolested. But deeply had the insurgents sworn that if the governor or his son (whose arrival in the chateau had been suspected) attempted to escape with them, they should be immediately sacrificed to justice. No disguise would suffice—the active observation of their enemies was known. Every inhabitant of the castle had been numbered—the fate of each ascertained, save that of the two most detested—the governor, whose flight had not been discovered, and his son, whose arrival was so unexpected and ill-timed. As still they consulted, a beat to arms was heard in the valley below: it was the signal that the attack on the empty castle walls would soon begin. There was no time for delay or hesitation. Henry placed himself at the bottom of the charrette; straw and a variety of articles were heaped upon him; the two women ascended in trepidation; and the old gardener sat in front and held the reins.

In consequence of the disturbed state of the districts through which they were to pass,—where the appearance of one of the upper classes excited the fiercest enmity, and frightful insult, if not death, was their sure welcome,—Madame and her friend assumed a peasant's garb. And thus they wound their way down the steep; the unhappy lady weeping bitterly; Fanny, with tearless eyes, but with pale cheek and compressed lips, gazing for the last time on the abode which had been her refuge when, in helpless infancy, she was left an orphan—where kindness and benevolence had waited on her, and where her days had passed in innocence and peace. "And he drives us away!—him, whom I loved—whom I love!—O misery!"

They reached the foot of the eminence on which the chateau was placed, and proceeded along the road which led directly through the village. With the approach of danger, vain regrets were exchanged for a lively sense of fear in the bosom of the hapless mother, and for the exertion of her courage and forethought in Fanny's more energetic mind. They passed a peasant or two, who uttered a malediction or imprecation on them as they went; then groups of two or three, who were even more violent in gesture and menace; when suddenly the sound of many steps came on their ears, and at a turn of the road they met Chaumont with a band of about twenty disciplined men.

"Fear not," he said to Madame de Marville; "I will protect you from danger till you are beyond the village."

With a shriek, the lady, in answer, threw herself in Fanny's arms.

"Fear not, Madame—he dares not injure you. Begone, Louis! insult us not by your presence. Begone! I say."

Fanny spoke angrily. She had not adopted this tone, but that the lady's terror, and the knowledge that even then the young soldier crouched at their feet, burnt to spring up and confront his enemy, made her use an authority which a woman always imagines that a lover dare not resist.

“I do not insult you,” repeated Chaumont—“I save you. I have no quarrel with the lady; tyrants alone need fear me. You are not safe without my escort. Do not you, false girl, irritate me. I have ensured her escape; but yours—you are in my power.”

A violent movement at the bottom of the charrette called forth all Fanny’s terrors.

“Take me!” she cried; “do with me what you please; but you dare not, you cannot raise a finger against the innocent. Begone, I say! let me never see you more!”

“You are obeyed. On you fall the consequences.”

Thus, after many months of separation, did Fanny and her lover meet. She had purposed when she should see him to make an appeal to his better nature—his reason; she had meant to use her all-persuasive voice to recall him from the dangerous path he was treading. Several times, indeed, since his arrival in the valley, she had endeavoured to obtain an interview with him, but he dreaded her influence: he had resolved on revenge, and he feared to be turned back. But now the unexpected presence of his rival robbed her of her self-possession, and forced her to change her plans. She saw frightful danger in their meeting, and all her endeavours were directed to the getting rid of her lover.

Louis and his companions proceeded towards the chateau, while the charrette of the fugitives moved on in the opposite direction. They met many a ferocious group, who were rushing forward to aid in the destruction of their home; and glad they were, in that awful hour, that any object had power to divert the minds of their enemies from attention to themselves. The road they pursued wound through the valley; the precipitous mountain on one side, a brawling stream on the other. Now they ascended higher and now again descended in their route, while the road, broken by the fall of rocks, intersected by torrents, which tore their way athwart it, made their progress slow. To get beyond the village was the aim of their desires; when, lo! just as they came upon it, and were in the very midst of its population, which was pouring towards the castle, suddenly the charrette sank in a deep rut; it half upset,

and every spoke in the wheel giving way rendered the vehicle wholly useless.

Fanny had indeed already sprung to the ground to examine what hope remained: there was none. “Grand Dieu! we are lost!” were the first words that escaped her, while Madame stood aghast, trembling, almost insensible, knowing that the hope of her life, the existence of her son, depended on these miserable moments.

A peasant who owed Fanny some kindness now advanced, and in a kind of cavalier way, as if to blemish as much as he could the matter of his offer by its manner, told them, that, for the pleasure of getting rid of the aristocrats, he would lend his car—there it was, let them quickly bestow their lading in it and pursue their way. As he spoke, he caught up a box, and began the transfer from one car to the other.

“No, no!” cried Madame de Marville, as, with a scream, she sprang forward and grasped the arm of the man as he was in the very act of discovering her son’s hiding-place. “We will accept nothing from our base enemies!—Begone with your offers! we will die here, rather than accept anything from such canaille.”

The word was electric. The fierce passions of the mob, excited by the mischief they were about to perpetrate, now burst like a stream into this new channel. With violent execrations they rushed upon the unfortunate woman: they would have torn her from the car, but already her son had sprung from his hiding-place, and, striking a violent blow at the foremost assailant, checked for a moment their brutal outrages. Then again, with a yell, such as the savage Indians alone could emulate, they rushed on their prey. Mother and son were torn asunder, and cries of “A bas les aristocrats!”—“A la lanterne!” declared too truly their sanguinary designs.

At this moment Louis appeared—Louis, whose fears for Fanny had overcome his indignation, and who returned to guard her; while she, perceiving him, with a burst of joy, called on him to rescue her friends. His cry of “Arretez-vous!” was loud and distinct amidst the uproar. It was obeyed; and then first he beheld his rival, his oppressor, his enemy in his power. At first, rage inflamed every feature, to be

replaced by an expression of triumph and implacable hatred. Fanny caught the fierce glance of his eye, and grew pale. She trembled as, trying to be calm, she said, “Yes, you behold he is here. And you must save him—and your own soul. Rescue him from death, and be blest that your evil career enables you at least to perform this one good action.”

For a moment Louis seemed seeking for a word, as a man, meaning to stab, may fumble for his dagger’s hilt, unable in his agitation to grasp his weapon.

“My friends,” at length he said, “let the women depart—we have promised it. Ye may deal with the young aristocrat according to his merits.”

“A la lanterne!” burst in response from a hundred voices.

“Let his mother first depart!”

Could it be Louis that spoke these words, and had she loved this man? To appeal to him was to rouse a tiger from his lair. Another thought darted into Fanny’s mind; she scarcely knew what she said or did: but already knives were drawn; already, with a thrill of horror, she thought she saw the blood of her childhood’s playmate spilt like water on the earth. She rushed forward—she caught the upraised arm of one—“He is no aristocrat!” she cried; “he is my husband!—Will you murder one who, forgetting his birth, his duty, his honour, has married a peasant girl—one of yourselves?”

Even this appeal had little effect upon the mob; but it strangely affected her cruel lover. Grasping her arm with iron fingers, he cried, “Is this tale true? Art thou married to that man—his wife?”

“Even so!”—the words died on her lips as she strove to form them, terrified by their purport, and the effect they might produce. An inexplicable expression passed over Chaumont’s face; the fierceness that jealousy had engendered for a moment was exalted almost to madness, and then faded wholly away. The stony heart within him softened at once. A tide of warm, human, and overpowering emotion flowed into his

soul: he looked on her he had loved, on her whom he had lost for ever; and tears rushed into his eyes, as he saw her trembling before him.

“Fear not,” at last he said; “fear neither for him nor yourself. Poor girl! so young, you shall not lose all—so young, you shall not become a widow. He shall be saved!”

Yet it was no easy task, even for him, to stem the awakened passions of the bloodthirsty mob. He had spent many an hour in exciting them against their seigneurs, and now at once to control the violence to which he had given rise seemed impossible. Yet his energy, his strong will overcame all opposition. They should pierce the chevalier’s heart, he swore, through his alone. He prevailed. He took the rein of their mule, and led them out of the village. All were silent; Fanny knew not what to say, and surprise held the others mute. Louis went with them until a turn in the road hid them from the view of the village. What his thoughts were, none could guess: he looked calm, as resigning the rein into the chevalier’s hands, he gently bade them “Farewell,” touching his hat in reply to their salutations. They moved on, and Fanny looked back to catch a last view of her lover: he was standing where they left him, when suddenly, instead of returning on his steps into the village, she saw him with rapid strides ascend the mountain-side, taking a well-known path that conducted him away from the scene of his late exploits. His pace was that of a man flying from pursuers—soon he was lost to sight.

Astonishment still kept the fugitives silent, as they pursued their way; and when at last joy broke forth, and Madame de Marville, rejoicing in their escape, embraced again and again her son, he with the softest tenderness thanked Fanny for his life: she answered not, but wept bitterly.

Late that night they reached the destined châlet, and found Monsieur de Marville arrived. It was a half-ruined miserable habitation perched among the snows, cold and bare; food was ill to be obtained, and danger breathed around them. Fanny attended on them with assiduous care, but she never spoke of the scene in the

village; and though she strove to look the same, Henry never addressed her but she grew pale, and her voice trembled. She could not divine her absent lover's thoughts, but she knew that he believed her married to another; and that other, earnestly though she strove to rule her feelings, became an object of abhorrence to her.

Three weeks they passed in this wretched abode; three weeks replete with alarm, for the district around was in arms, and the life of Monsieur de Marville loudly threatened. They never slept but they dreaded the approach of the murderers; food they had little, and the inclement season visited them roughly. Fanny seemed to feel no inconvenience; her voice was cheerful: to console, encourage, and assist her friends appeared to occupy her whole heart. At length one night they were roused by a violent knocking at the door of their hut: Monsieur de Marville and Henry were on their feet in a moment, seizing their weapons as they rose. It was a domestic of their own, come to communicate the intelligence that the troubles were over, that the legal government had reasserted its authority, and invited the governor to return to Berne.

They descended from their mountain refuge, and the name of Louis hovered on Fanny's lips, but she spoke it not. He seemed everywhere forgotten. It was not until some time afterwards that she ascertained the fact that he had never been seen or heard of since he had parted from her on the morning of their escape. The villagers had waited for him in vain; they suspended their designs, for they all depended upon him; but he came not.

Monsieur and Madame de Marville returned to their chateau with their son, but Fanny remained behind. She would not inhabit the same roof as Henry; she recoiled even from receiving further benefits from his parents. What could she do? Louis would doubtless discover the falsehood of her marriage, but he dared not return; and even if he communicated with her, even though yet she loved him, could she unite herself with one accused too truly of the most frightful crimes? At first, these doubts

agitated her, but by degrees they faded as oblivion closed over Chaumont's name; and he came not, and she heard not of him, and he was as dead to her. Then the memory of the past revived in her heart; her love awoke with her despair; his mysterious flight became the sole occupation of her thoughts; time rolled on and brought its changes. Madame de Marville died—Henry was united to another—Fanny remained, to her own thoughts, alone in the world. A relation, who lived at Subiaco, sent for her, and there she went to take up her abode. In vain she strove to wean herself from the memory of Louis—her love for him haunted her soul.

There was war in Europe, and every man was converted into a soldier; the country was thinned of its inhabitants, and each victory or defeat brought a new conscription. At length peace came again, and its return was celebrated with rejoicing. Many a soldier returned to his home—and one came back who had no home. A man, evidently suffering from recent wounds, wayworn and sick, asked for hospitality at Fanny's cottage; it was readily afforded, and he sat at her cottage fire, and removed his cap from his brow. His person was bent, his cheeks fallen in; yet those eyes of fire, that quick animated look, which almost brought the bright expression of youth back into his face, could never be forgotten. Fanny gazed almost in alarm, and then in joy, and at last, in her own sweet voice, she said, "Et toi, Louis—tu aussi es de retour."

Louis had endured many a sorrow and many a hardship, and, most of all, he had been called on to wage battle with his own fierce spirit. The rage and hate which he had sedulously nourished suddenly became his tormentors and his tyrants—at the moment that love, before too closely allied to them, emancipated itself from their control. Love, which is the source of all that is most generous and noble in our nature, of self-devotion and of high intent, separated from the alloy he had blended with it, asserted its undivided power over him; strange that it should be so at the moment that he believed that he had lost her he loved for ever!

All his plans had been built for revenge. He would destroy the family that oppressed him; unbuild, stone by stone, the proud abode of their inheritance; he would be the sole refuge and support of his mistress in exile and in poverty. He had entered upon his criminal career with this design alone, and with the anticipation of ending all by heaping benefits and the gifts of fortune upon Fanny. The very steps he had taken, he now believed to be those that occasioned his defeat. He had lost her—the lovely and the good—he had lost her by proving unworthy, yet not so unworthy was he as to make her the victim of his crimes. The family he had vowed to ruin was now hers, and every injury that befell them visited her; to save her he must unweave his pernicious webs; to keep her scatheless, his dearest designs must fall to the ground.

A veil seemed rent before his eyes; he had fled, for he would not assist in the destruction of her fortunes; he had not returned, for it was torture to him to know that she lived, the wife of another. He entered the French army, but in every change his altered feelings pursued him, and to prove himself worthy of her he had lost was the constant aim of his ambition. His excellent conduct led to his promotion, and yet mishap still waited on him. He was wounded, even dangerously, and became so incapable of service as to be forced to solicit his dismission. This had occurred at the end of a hard campaign in Germany, and his intention was to pass into Italy, where a friend, with whom he had formed an intimacy in the army, promised to procure him some employment under Government. He passed through Subiaco in his way, and, ignorant of its occupiers, had asked for hospitality in his mistress's cottage.

If guilt can be expiated by repentance and reform, as is the best lesson of religion, Louis had expiated his. If constancy in love deserve reward, these lovers deserved that, which they reaped, in the happiness consequent on their union. Her image, side by side with all that is good in our nature, had dwelt in his heart, which thus became a shrine at which he sacrificed every evil passion. It was a greater bliss than he had ever dared to anticipate, to find, that in so doing, he had at the same time been conducing to the welfare of her he loved, and that the lost and idolized being whom

he worshipped founded the happiness of her life upon his return to virtue, and the constancy of his affection.

XI. THE INVISIBLE GIRL.

This slender narrative has no pretensions to the regularity of a story, or the development of situations and feelings; it is but a slight sketch, delivered nearly as it was narrated to me by one of the humblest of the actors concerned: nor will I spin out a circumstance interesting principally from its singularity and truth, but narrate, as concisely as I can, how I was surprised on visiting what seemed a ruined tower, crowning a bleak promontory overhanging the sea, that flows between Wales and Ireland, to find that though the exterior preserved all the savage rudeness that betokened many a war with the elements, the interior was fitted up somewhat in the guise of a summer-house, for it was too small to deserve any other name. It consisted but of the ground-floor, which served as an entrance, and one room above, which was reached by a staircase made out of the thickness of the wall. This chamber was floored and carpeted, decorated with elegant furniture; and, above all, to attract the attention and excite curiosity, there hung over the chimney-piece—for to preserve the apartment from damp a fireplace had been built evidently since it had assumed a guise so dissimilar to the object of its construction—a picture simply painted in water-colours, which deemed more than any part of the adornments of the room to be at war with the rudeness of the building, the solitude in which it was placed, and the desolation of the surrounding scenery. This drawing represented a lovely girl in the very pride and bloom of youth; her dress was simple, in the fashion of the beginning of the eighteenth century; her countenance was embellished by a look of mingled innocence and intelligence, to which was added the imprint of serenity of soul and natural cheerfulness. She was reading one of those folio romances which have so long been the delight of the enthusiastic and young; her

mandoline was at her feet—her parroquet perched on a huge mirror near her; the arrangement of furniture and hangings gave token of a luxurious dwelling, and her attire also evidently that of home and privacy, yet bore with it an appearance of ease and girlish ornament, as if she wished to please. Beneath this picture was inscribed in golden letters, “The Invisible Girl.”

Rambling about a country nearly uninhabited, having lost my way, and being overtaken by a shower, I had lighted on this dreary-looking tenement, which seemed to rock in the blast, and to be hung up there as the very symbol of desolation. I was gazing wistfully and cursing inwardly my stars which led me to a ruin that could afford no shelter, though the storm began to pelt more seriously than before, when I saw an old woman’s head popped out from a kind of loophole, and as suddenly withdrawn;—a minute after a feminine voice called to me from within, and penetrating a little brambly maze that screened a door, which I had not before observed, so skilfully had the planter succeeded in concealing art with nature, I found the good dame standing on the threshold and inviting me to take refuge within. “I had just come up from our cot hard by,” she said, “to look after the things, as I do every day, when the rain came on—will ye walk up till it is over?” I was about to observe that the cot hard by, at the venture of a few rain drops, was better than a ruined tower, and to ask my kind hostess whether “the things” were pigeons or crows that she was come to look after, when the matting of the floor and the carpeting of the staircase struck my eye. I was still more surprised when I saw the room above; and beyond all, the picture and its singular inscription, naming her invisible, whom the painter had coloured forth into very agreeable visibility, awakened my most lively curiosity; the result of this, of my exceeding politeness towards the old woman, and her own natural garrulity, was a kind of garbled narrative which my imagination eked out, and future inquiries rectified, till it assumed the following form.

Some years before, in the afternoon of a September day, which, though tolerably

fair, gave many tokens of a tempestuous night, a gentleman arrived at a little coast town about ten miles from this place; he expressed his desire to hire a boat to carry him to the town of —— about fifteen miles farther on the coast. The menaces which the sky held forth made the fishermen loathe to venture, till at length two, one the father of a numerous family, bribed by the bountiful reward the stranger promised, the other, the son of my hostess, induced by youthful daring, agreed to undertake the voyage. The wind was fair, and they hoped to make good way before nightfall, and to get into port ere the rising of the storm. They pushed off with good cheer, at least the fishermen did; as for the stranger, the deep mourning which he wore was not half so black as the melancholy that wrapt his mind. He looked as if he had never smiled—as if some unutterable thought, dark as night and bitter as death, had built its nest within his bosom, and brooded therein eternally; he did not mention his name; but one of the villagers recognised him as Henry Vernon, the son of a baronet who possessed a mansion about three miles distant from the town for which he was bound. This mansion was almost abandoned by the family; but Henry had, in a romantic fit, visited it about three years before, and Sir Peter had been down there during the previous spring for about a couple of months.

The boat did not make so much way as was expected; the breeze failed them as they got out to sea, and they were fain with oar as well as sail to try to weather the promontory that jutted out between them and the spot they desired to reach. They were yet far distant when the shifting wind began to exert its strength, and to blow with violent though unequal blasts. Night came on pitchy dark, and the howling waves rose and broke with frightful violence, menacing to overwhelm the tiny bark that dared resist their fury. They were forced to lower every sail, and take to their oars; one man was obliged to bale out the water, and Vernon himself took an oar, and rowing with desperate energy, equalled the force of the more practised boatmen. There had been much talk between the sailors before the tempest came on; now, except a brief command, all were silent. One thought of his wife and children, and

silently cursed the caprice of the stranger that endangered in its effects, not only his life, but their welfare; the other feared less, for he was a daring lad, but he worked hard, and had no time for speech; while Vernon bitterly regretting the thoughtlessness which had made him cause others to share a peril, unimportant as far as he himself was concerned, now tried to cheer them with a voice full of animation and courage, and now pulled yet more strongly at the oar he held. The only person who did not seem wholly intent on the work he was about, was the man who baled; every now and then he gazed intently round, as if the sea held afar off, on its tumultuous waste, some object that he strained his eyes to discern. But all was blank, except as the crests of the high waves showed themselves, or far out on the verge of the horizon, a kind of lifting of the clouds betokened greater violence for the blast. At length he exclaimed, “Yes, I see it!—the larboard oar!—now! if we can make yonder light, we are saved!” Both the rowers instinctively turned their heads,—but cheerless darkness answered their gaze.

“You cannot see it,” cried their companion, “but we are nearing it; and, please God, we shall outlive this night.” Soon he took the oar from Vernon’s hand, who, quite exhausted, was failing in his strokes. He rose and looked for the beacon which promised them safety;—it glimmered with so faint a ray, that now he said, “I see it;” and again, “it is nothing:” still, as they made way, it dawned upon his sight, growing more steady and distinct as it beamed across the lurid waters, which themselves became smoother, so that safety seemed to arise from the bosom of the ocean under the influence of that flickering gleam.

“What beacon is it that helps us at our need?” asked Vernon, as the men, now able to manage their oars with greater ease, found breath to answer his question.

“A fairy one, I believe,” replied the elder sailor, “yet no less a true: it burns in an old tumble-down tower, built on the top of a rock which looks over the sea. We never saw it before this summer; and now each night it is to be seen,—at least when it is

looked for, for we cannot see it from our village;—and it is such an out-of-the-way place that no one has need to go near it, except through a chance like this. Some say it is burnt by witches, some say by smugglers; but this I know, two parties have been to search, and found nothing but the bare walls of the tower. All is deserted by day, and dark by night; for no light was to be seen while we were there, though it burned sprightly enough when we were out at sea."

"I have heard say," observed the younger sailor, "it is burnt by the ghost of a maiden who lost her sweetheart in these parts; he being wrecked, and his body found at the foot of the tower: she goes by the name among us of the 'Invisible Girl.'"

The voyagers had now reached the landing-place at the foot of the tower. Vernon cast a glance upward,—the light was still burning. With some difficulty, struggling with the breakers, and blinded by night, they contrived to get their little bark to shore, and to draw her up on the beach. They then scrambled up the precipitous pathway, overgrown by weeds and underwood, and, guided by the more experienced fisherman, they found the entrance to the tower; door or gate there was none, and all was dark as the tomb, and silent and almost as cold as death.

"This will never do," said Vernon; "surely our hostess will show her light, if not herself, and guide our darkling steps by some sign of life and comfort."

"We will get to the upper chamber," said the sailor, "if I can but hit upon the broken-down steps; but you will find no trace of the Invisible Girl nor her light either, I warrant."

"Truly a romantic adventure of the most disagreeable kind," muttered Vernon, as he stumbled over the unequal ground; "she of the beacon-light must be both ugly and old, or she would not be so peevish and inhospitable."

With considerable difficulty, and after divers knocks and bruises, the adventurers at length succeeded in reaching the upper storey; but all was blank and bare, and they were fain to stretch themselves on the hard floor, when weariness, both of mind and

body, conduced to steep their senses in sleep.

Long and sound were the slumbers of the mariners. Vernon but forgot himself for an hour; then throwing off drowsiness, and finding his rough couch uncongenial to repose, he got up and placed himself at the hole that served for a window—for glass there was none, and there being not even a rough bench, he leant his back against the embrasure, as the only rest he could find. He had forgotten his danger, the mysterious beacon, and its invisible guardian: his thoughts were occupied on the horrors of his own fate, and the unspeakable wretchedness that sat like a nightmare on his heart.

It would require a good-sized volume to relate the causes which had changed the once happy Vernon into the most woful mourner that ever clung to the outer trappings of grief, as slight though cherished symbols of the wretchedness within. Henry was the only child of Sir Peter Vernon, and as much spoiled by his father's idolatry as the old baronet's violent and tyrannical temper would permit. A young orphan was educated in his father's house, who in the same way was treated with generosity and kindness, and yet who lived in deep awe of Sir Peter's authority, who was a widower; and these two children were all he had to exert his power over, or to whom to extend his affection. Rosina was a cheerful-tempered girl, a little timid, and careful to avoid displeasing her protector; but so docile, so kind-hearted, and so affectionate, that she felt even less than Henry the discordant spirit of his parent. It is a tale often told; they were playmates and companions in childhood, and lovers in after days. Rosina was frightened to imagine that this secret affection, and the vows they pledged, might be disapproved of by Sir Peter. But sometimes she consoled herself by thinking that perhaps she was in reality her Henry's destined bride, brought up with him under the design of their future union; and Henry, while he felt that this was not the case, resolved to wait only until he was of age to declare and accomplish his wishes in making the sweet Rosina his wife. Meanwhile he was careful to avoid premature discovery of his intentions, so to secure his beloved girl

from persecution and insult. The old gentleman was very conveniently blind; he lived always in the country, and the lovers spent their lives together, unrebuked and uncontrolled. It was enough that Rosina played on her mandoline, and sang Sir Peter to sleep every day after dinner; she was the sole female in the house above the rank of a servant, and had her own way in the disposal of her time. Even when Sir Peter frowned, her innocent caresses and sweet voice were powerful to smooth the rough current of his temper. If ever human spirit lived in an earthly paradise, Rosina did at this time: her pure love was made happy by Henry's constant presence; and the confidence they felt in each other, and the security with which they looked forward to the future, rendered their path one of roses under a cloudless sky. Sir Peter was the slight drawback that only rendered their tête-à-tête more delightful, and gave value to the sympathy they each bestowed on the other. All at once an ominous personage made its appearance in Vernon Place, in the shape of a widow sister of Sir Peter, who, having succeeded in killing her husband and children with the effects of her vile temper, came, like a harpy, greedy for new prey, under her brother's roof. She too soon detected the attachment of the unsuspicious pair. She made all speed to impart her discovery to her brother, and at once to restrain and inflame his rage. Through her contrivance Henry was suddenly despatched on his travels abroad, that the coast might be clear for the persecution of Rosina; and then the richest of the lovely girl's many admirers, whom, under Sir Peter's single reign, she was allowed, nay, almost commanded, to dismiss, so desirous was he of keeping her for his own comfort, was selected, and she was ordered to marry him. The scenes of violence to which she was now exposed, the bitter taunts of the odious Mrs. Bainbridge, and the reckless fury of Sir Peter, were the more frightful and overwhelming from their novelty. To all she could only oppose a silent, tearful, but immutable steadiness of purpose: no threats, no rage could extort from her more than a touching prayer that they would not hate her, because she could not obey.

"There must be something we don't see under all this," said Mrs. Bainbridge; "take

my word for it, brother, she corresponds secretly with Henry. Let us take her down to your seat in Wales, where she will have no pensioned beggars to assist her; and we shall see if her spirit be not bent to our purpose."

Sir Peter consented, and they all three took up their abode in the solitary and dreary-looking house before alluded to as belonging to the family. Here poor Rosina's sufferings grew intolerable. Before, surrounded by well-known scenes, and in perpetual intercourse with kind and familiar faces, she had not despaired in the end of conquering by her patience the cruelty of her persecutors;—nor had she written to Henry, for his name had not been mentioned by his relatives, nor their attachment alluded to, and she felt an instinctive wish to escape the dangers about her without his being annoyed, or the sacred secret of her love being laid bare, and wronged by the vulgar abuse of his aunt or the bitter curses of his father. But when she was taken to Wales, and made a prisoner in her apartment, when the flinty mountains about her seemed feebly to imitate the stony hearts she had to deal with, her courage began to fail. The only attendant permitted to approach her was Mrs. Bainbridge's maid; and under the tutelage of her fiend-like mistress, this woman was used as a decoy to entice the poor prisoner into confidence, and then to be betrayed. The simple, kind-hearted Rosina was a facile dupe, and at last, in the excess of her despair, wrote to Henry, and gave the letter to this woman to be forwarded. The letter in itself would have softened marble; it did not speak of their mutual vows, it but asked him to intercede with his father, that he would restore her to the place she had formerly held in his affections, and cease from a cruelty that would destroy her. "For I may die," wrote the hapless girl, "but marry another—never!" That single word, indeed, had sufficed to betray her secret, had it not been already discovered; as it was, it gave increased fury to Sir Peter, as his sister triumphantly pointed it out to him, for it need hardly be said that while the ink of the address was yet wet, and the seal still warm, Rosina's letter was carried to this lady. The culprit was summoned before them. What ensued none could tell; for their

own sakes the cruel pair tried to palliate their part. Voices were high, and the soft murmur of Rosina's tone was lost in the howling of Sir Peter and the snarling of his sister. "Out of doors you shall go," roared the old man; "under my roof you shall not spend another night." And the words infamous seductress, and worse, such as had never met the poor girl's ear before, were caught by listening servants; and to each angry speech of the baronet, Mrs. Bainbridge added an envenomed point worse than all.

More dead then alive, Rosina was at last dismissed. Whether guided by despair, whether she took Sir Peter's threats literally, or whether his sister's orders were more decisive, none knew, but Rosina left the house; a servant saw her cross the park, weeping, and wringing her hands as she went. What became of her none could tell; her disappearance was not disclosed to Sir Peter till the following day, and then he showed by his anxiety to trace her steps and to find her, that his words had been but idle threats. The truth was, that though Sir Peter went to frightful lengths to prevent the marriage of the heir of his house with the portionless orphan, the object of his charity, yet in his heart he loved Rosina, and half his violence to her rose from anger at himself for treating her so ill. Now remorse began to sting him, as messenger after messenger came back without tidings of his victim. He dared not confess his worst fears to himself; and when his inhuman sister, trying to harden her conscience by angry words, cried, "The vile hussy has too surely made away with herself out of revenge to us," an oath the most tremendous, and a look sufficient to make even her tremble, commanded her silence. Her conjecture, however, appeared too true: a dark and rushing stream that flowed at the extremity of the park had doubtless received the lovely form, and quenched the life of this unfortunate girl. Sir Peter, when his endeavours to find her proved fruitless, returned to town, haunted by the image of his victim, and forced to acknowledge in his own heart that he would willingly lay down his life, could he see her again, even though it were as the bride of his son—his son, before whose questioning he quailed like the veriest coward; for

when Henry was told of the death of Rosina, he suddenly returned from abroad to ask the cause—to visit her grave, and mourn her loss in the groves and valleys which had been the scenes of their mutual happiness. He made a thousand inquiries, and an ominous silence alone replied. Growing more earnest and more anxious, at length he drew from servants and dependents, and his odious aunt herself, the whole dreadful truth. From that moment despair struck his heart, and misery named him her own. He fled from his father's presence; and the recollection that one whom he ought to revere was guilty of so dark a crime, haunted him, as of old the Eumenides tormented the souls of men given up to their torturings. His first, his only wish, was to visit Wales, and to learn if any new discovery had been made, and whether it were possible to recover the mortal remains of the lost Rosina, so to satisfy the unquiet longings of his miserable heart. On this expedition was he bound when he made his appearance at the village before named; and now, in the deserted tower, his thoughts were busy with images of despair and death, and what his beloved one had suffered before her gentle nature had been goaded to such a deed of woe.

While immersed in gloomy reverie, to which the monotonous roaring of the sea made fit accompaniment, hours flew on, and Vernon was at last aware that the light of morning was creeping from out its eastern retreat, and dawning over the wild ocean, which still broke in furious tumult on the rocky beach. His companions now roused themselves, and prepared to depart. The food they had brought with them was damaged by sea-water, and their hunger, after hard labour and many hours' fasting, had become ravenous. It was impossible to put to sea in their shattered boat; but there stood a fisher's cot about two miles off, in a recess in the bay, of which the promontory on which the tower stood formed one side; and to this they hastened to repair. They did not spend a second thought on the light which had saved them, nor its cause, but left the ruin in search of a more hospitable asylum. Vernon cast his eyes round as he quitted it, but no vestige of an inhabitant met his eye, and he began to persuade himself that the beacon had been a creation of fancy merely. Arriving at

the cottage in question, which was inhabited by a fisherman and his family, they made a homely breakfast, and then prepared to return to the tower, to refit their boat, and, if possible, bring her round. Vernon accompanied them, together with their host and his son. Several questions were asked concerning the Invisible Girl and her light, each agreeing that the apparition was novel, and not one being able to give even an explanation of how the name had become affixed to the unknown cause of this singular appearance; though both of the men of the cottage affirmed that once or twice they had seen a female figure in the adjacent wood, and that now and then a stranger girl made her appearance at another cot a mile off, on the other side of the promontory, and bought bread; they suspected both these to be the same, but could not tell. The inhabitants of the cot, indeed, appeared too stupid even to feel curiosity, and had never made any attempt at discovery. The whole day was spent by the sailors in repairing the boat; and the sound of hammers, and the voices of the men at work, resounded along the coast, mingled with the dashing of the waves. This was no time to explore the ruin for one who, whether human or supernatural, so evidently withdrew herself from intercourse with every living being. Vernon, however, went over the tower, and searched every nook in vain. The dingy bare walls bore no token of serving as a shelter; and even a little recess in the wall of the staircase, which he had not before observed, was equally empty and desolate. Quitting the tower, he wandered in the pine wood that surrounded it, and, giving up all thought of solving the mystery, was soon engrossed by thoughts that touched his heart more nearly, when suddenly there appeared on the ground at his feet the vision of a slipper. Since Cinderella so tiny a slipper had never been seen; as plain as shoe could speak, it told a tale of elegance, loveliness, and youth. Vernon picked it up. He had often admired Rosina’s singularly small foot, and his first thought was a question whether this little slipper would have fitted it. It was very strange!—it must belong to the Invisible Girl. Then there was a fairy form that kindled that light—a form of such material substance that its foot needed to be shod; and yet how

shod?—with kid so fine, and of shape so exquisite, that it exactly resembled such as Rosina wore! Again the recurrence of the image of the beloved dead came forcibly across him; and a thousand home-felt associations, childish yet sweet, and lover-like though trifling, so filled Vernon's heart, that he threw himself his length on the ground, and wept more bitterly than ever the miserable fate of the sweet orphan.

In the evening the men quitted their work, and Vernon returned with them to the cot where they were to sleep, intending to pursue their voyage, weather permitting, the following morning. Vernon said nothing of his slipper, but returned with his rough associates. Often he looked back; but the tower rose darkly over the dim waves, and no light appeared. Preparations had been made in the cot for their accommodation, and the only bed in it was offered Vernon; but he refused to deprive his hostess, and, spreading his cloak on a heap of dry leaves, endeavoured to give himself up to repose. He slept for some hours; and when he awoke, all was still, save that the hard breathing of the sleepers in the same room with him interrupted the silence. He rose, and, going to the window, looked out over the now placid sea towards the mystic tower. The light was burning there, sending its slender rays across the waves. Congratulating himself on a circumstance he had not anticipated, Vernon softly left the cottage, and, wrapping his cloak round him, walked with a swift pace round the bay towards the tower. He reached it; still the light was burning. To enter and restore the maiden her shoe, would be but an act of courtesy; and Vernon intended to do this with such caution as to come unaware, before its wearer could, with her accustomed arts, withdraw herself from his eyes; but, unluckily, while yet making his way up the narrow pathway, his foot dislodged a loose fragment, that fell with crash and sound down the precipice. He sprung forward, on this, to retrieve by speed the advantage he had lost by this unlucky accident. He reached the door; he entered: all was silent, but also all was dark. He paused in the room below; he felt sure that a slight sound met his ear. He ascended the steps, and entered the upper chamber; but blank obscurity met his penetrating gaze, the starless night admitted not even a twilight

glimmer through the only aperture. He closed his eyes, to try, on opening them again, to be able to catch some faint, wandering ray on the visual nerve; but it was in vain. He groped round the room; he stood still, and held his breath; and then, listening intently, he felt sure that another occupied the chamber with him, and that its atmosphere was slightly agitated by another's respiration. He remembered the recess in the staircase; but before he approached it he spoke;—he hesitated a moment what to say. "I must believe," he said, "that misfortune alone can cause your seclusion; and if the assistance of a man—of a gentleman"—

An exclamation interrupted him; a voice from the grave spoke his name—the accents of Rosina syllabled, "Henry!—is it indeed Henry whom I hear?"

He rushed forward, directed by the sound, and clasped in his arms the living form of his own lamented girl—his own Invisible Girl he called her; for even yet, as he felt her heart beat near his, and as he entwined her waist with his arm, supporting her as she almost sank to the ground with agitation, he could not see her; and, as her sobs prevented her speech, no sense but the instinctive one that filled his heart with tumultuous gladness, told him that the slender, wasted form he pressed so fondly was the living shadow of the Hebe beauty he had adored.

The morning saw this pair thus strangely restored to each other on the tranquil sea, sailing with a fair wind for L——, whence they were to proceed to Sir Peter's seat, which, three months before, Rosina had quitted in such agony and terror. The morning light dispelled the shadows that had veiled her, and disclosed the fair person of the Invisible Girl. Altered indeed she was by suffering and woe, but still the same sweet smile played on her lips, and the tender light of her soft blue eyes were all her own. Vernon drew out the slipper, and showed the cause that had occasioned him to resolve to discover the guardian of the mystic beacon; even now he dared not inquire how she had existed in that desolate spot, or wherefore she had so sedulously avoided observation, when the right thing to have been done was to

have sought him immediately, under whose care, protected by whose love, no danger need be feared. But Rosina shrunk from him as he spoke, and a deathlike pallor came over her cheek, as she faintly whispered, “Your father’s curse—your father’s dreadful threats!” It appeared, indeed, that Sir Peter’s violence, and the cruelty of Mrs. Bainbridge, had succeeded in impressing Rosina with wild and unvanquishable terror. She had fled from their house without plan or forethought—driven by frantic horror and overwhelming fear, she had left it with scarcely any money, and there seemed to her no possibility of either returning or proceeding onward. She had no friend except Henry in the wide world; whither could she go?—to have sought Henry would have sealed their fates to misery; for, with an oath, Sir Peter had declared he would rather see them both in their coffins than married. After wandering about, hiding by day, and only venturing forth at night, she had come to this deserted tower, which seemed a place of refuge. How she had lived since then she could hardly tell: she had lingered in the woods by day, or slept in the vault of the tower, an asylum none were acquainted with or had discovered: by night she burned the pinecones of the wood, and night was her dearest time; for it seemed to her as if security came with darkness. She was unaware that Sir Peter had left that part of the country, and was terrified lest her hiding-place should be revealed to him. Her only hope was that Henry would return—that Henry would never rest till he had found her. She confessed that the long interval and the approach of winter had visited her with dismay; she feared that, as her strength was failing, and her form wasting to a skeleton, that she might die, and never see her own Henry more.

An illness, indeed, in spite of all his care, followed her restoration to security and the comforts of civilised life; many months went by before the bloom revisiting her cheeks, and her limbs regaining their roundness, she resembled once more the picture drawn of her in her days of bliss before any visitation of sorrow. It was a copy of this portrait that decorated the tower, the scene of her suffering, in which I

had found shelter. Sir Peter, overjoyed to be relieved from the pangs of remorse, and delighted again to see his orphan ward, whom he really loved, was now as eager as before he had been averse to bless her union with his son. Mrs. Bainbridge they never saw again. But each year they spent a few months in their Welsh mansion, the scene of their early wedded happiness, and the spot where again poor Rosina had awoke to life and joy after her cruel persecutions. Henry's fond care had fitted up the tower, and decorated it as I saw; and often did he come over, with his "Invisible Girl," to renew, in the very scene of its occurrence, the remembrance of all the incidents which had led to their meeting again, during the shades of night, in that sequestered ruin.

XII. THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

AN ITALIAN STORY.

It is well known that the hatred borne by one family against another, and the strife of parties, which often led to bloodshed in the Italian cities during the Middle Ages, so vividly described by Shakespeare in "Romeo and Juliet," was not confined to the Montecchi and Ciapelletti of Verona, but existed with equal animosity in almost every other town of that beautiful peninsula. The greatest men among them were the victims; and crowds of exiles—families who but the day before were in the full enjoyment of the luxuries of life and the endearing associations of home—were every now and then seen issuing from the gates of their native cities, deprived of every possession, and with melancholy and slow steps dragging their wearied limbs to the nearest asylum offered them, thence to commence a new career of dependence and poverty, to endure to the end of their lives, or until some lucky accident should enable them to change places with their enemies, making those the sufferers who were late the tyrants. In that country, where each town formed an independent State, to change one for the other was to depart from the spot cherished as a country and a

home for distant banishment—or worse; for as each city entertained either hatred or contempt for its neighbour, it often happened that the mourning exile was obliged to take up his abode among a people whom he had injured or scoffed. Foreign service offered a resource to the young and bold among the men. But lovely Italy was to be left, the ties of young hearts severed, and all the endearing associations of kin and country broken and scattered for ever. The Italians were always peculiarly susceptible to these misfortunes. They loved their native walls, the abodes of their ancestors, the familiar scenes of youth, with all the passionate fervour characteristic of that clime.

It was therefore no uncommon thing for any one among them, like Foscari of Venice, to prefer destitution and danger in their own city, to a precarious subsistence among strangers in distant lands; or, if compelled to quit the beloved precincts of their native walls, still to hover near, ready to avail themselves of the first occasion that should present itself for reversing the decree that condemned them to misery.

For three days and nights there had been warfare in the streets of Siena,—blood flowed in torrents,—yet the cries and groans of the fallen but excited their friends to avenge them—not their foes to spare. On the fourth morning, Ugo Mancini, with a scanty band of followers, was driven from the town; succours from Florence had arrived for his enemies, and he was forced to yield. Burning with rage, writhing with an impotent thirst for vengeance, Ugo went round to the neighbouring villages to rouse them, not against his native town, but the victorious Tolomei. Unsuccessful in these endeavours, he next took the more equivocal step of seeking warlike aid from the Pisans. But Florence kept Pisa in check, and Ugo found only an inglorious refuge where he had hoped to acquire active allies. He had been wounded in these struggles; but, animated by a superhuman spirit, he had forgotten his pain and surmounted his weakness; nor was it until a cold refusal was returned to his energetic representations, that he sank beneath his physical sufferings. He was stretched on a bed of torture when he received intelligence that an edict of perpetual

banishment and confiscation of property was passed against him. His two children, beggars now, were sent to him. His wife was dead, and these were all of near relations that he possessed. His bitter feelings were still too paramount for him to receive comfort from their presence; yet these agitated and burning emotions appeared in after-times a remnant of happiness compared to the total loss of every hope—the wasting inaction of sickness and of poverty.

For five years Ugo Mancini lay stretched on his couch, alternating between states of intense pain and overpowering weakness; and then he died. During this interval, the wreck of his fortunes, consisting of the rent of a small farm, and the use of some money lent, scantily supported him. His few relatives and followers were obliged to seek their subsistence elsewhere, and he remained alone to his pain, and to his two children, who yet clung to the paternal side.

Hatred to his foes, and love for his native town, were the sentiments that possessed his soul, and which he imparted in their full force to the plastic mind of his son, which received like molten metal the stamp he desired to impress. Lorenzo was scarcely twelve years old at the period of his father’s exile, and he naturally turned with fondness towards the spot where he had enjoyed every happiness, where each hour had been spent in light-hearted hilarity, and the kindness and observance of many attended on his steps. Now, how sad the contrast!—dim penury—a solitude cheered by no encouraging smiles or sunny flatteries—perpetual attendance on his father, and untimely cares, cast their dark shadows over his altered lot.

Lorenzo was a few years older than his sister. Friendless and destitute as was the exile’s family, it was he who overlooked its moderate disbursements, who was at once his father’s nurse and his sister’s guardian, and acted as the head of the family during the incapacity of his parent. But instead of being narrowed or broken in spirit by these burdens, his ardent soul rose to meet them, and grew enlarged and lofty from the very calls made upon it. His look was serious, not careworn; his manner

calm, not humble; his voice had all the tenderness of a woman—his eye all the pride and fire of a hero.

Still his unhappy father wasted away, and Lorenzo's hours were entirely spent beside his bed. He was indefatigable in his attentions—weariness never seemed to overcome him. His limbs were always alert—his speech inspiriting and kind. His only pastime was during any interval in his parent's sufferings, to listen to his eulogiums on his native town, and to the history of the wrongs which, from time immemorial, the Mancini had endured from the Tolomei. Lorenzo, though replete with noble qualities, was still an Italian; and fervent love for his birthplace, and violent hatred towards the foes of his house, were the darling passions of his heart. Nursed in loneliness, they acquired vigour; and the nights he spent in watching his father were varied by musing on the career he should hereafter follow—his return to his beloved Siena, and the vengeance he would take on his enemies.

Ugo often said, I die because I am an exile:—at length these words were fulfilled, and the unhappy man sank beneath the ills of fortune. Lorenzo saw his beloved father expire—his father, whom he loved. He seemed to deposit in his obscure grave all that best deserved reverence and honour in the world; and turning away his steps, he lamented the loss of the sad occupation of so many years, and regretted the exchange he made from his father's sick bed to a lonely and unprized freedom.

The first use he made of the liberty he had thus acquired was to return to Siena with his sister. He entered his native town as if it were a paradise, and he found it a desert in all save the hues of beauty and delight with which his imagination loved to invest it. There was no one to whom he could draw near in friendship within the whole circuit of its walls. According to the barbarous usage of the times, his father's palace had been razed, and the mournful ruins stood as a tomb to commemorate the fall of his fortunes. Not as such did Lorenzo view them; he often stole out at nightfall, when the stars alone beheld his enthusiasm, and, clambering to the highest part of

the massy fragments, spent long hours in mentally rebuilding the desolate walls, and in consecrating once again the weed-grown hearth to family love and hospitable festivity. It seemed to him that the air was more balmy and light, breathed amidst these memorials of the past; and his heart warmed with rapture over the tale they told of what his progenitors had been—what he again would be.

Yet, had he viewed his position sanely, he would have found it full of mortification and pain; and he would have become aware that his native town was perhaps the only place in the world where his ambition would fail in the attainment of its aim. The Tolomei reigned over it. They had led its citizens to conquest, and enriched them with spoils. They were adored; and to flatter them, the populace were prone to revile and scoff at the name of Mancini. Lorenzo did not possess one friend within its walls: he heard the murmur of hatred as he passed along, and beheld his enemies raised to the pinnacle of power and honour; and yet, so strangely framed is the human heart, that he continued to love Siena, and would not have exchanged his obscure and penurious abode within its walls to become the favoured follower of the German Emperor. Such a place, through education and the natural prejudices of man, did Siena hold in his imagination, that a lowly condition there seemed a nobler destiny than to be great in any other spot.

To win back the friendship of its citizens and humble his enemies was the dream that shed so sweet an influence over his darkened hours. He dedicated his whole being to this work, and he did not doubt but that he should succeed. The house of Tolomei had for its chief a youth but a year or two older than himself—with him, when an opportunity should present itself, he would enter the lists. It seemed the bounty of Providence that gave him one so nearly equal with whom to contend; and during the interval that must elapse before they could clash, he was busy in educating himself for the struggle. Count Fabian dei Tolomei bore the reputation of being a youth full of promise and talent; and Lorenzo was glad to anticipate a worthy antagonist. He occupied himself in the practice of arms, and applied with

perseverance to the study of the few books that fell in his way. He appeared in the market-place on public occasions modestly attired; yet his height, his dignified carriage, and the thoughtful cast of his noble countenance, drew the observation of the bystanders;—though, such was the prejudice against his name, and the flattery of the triumphant party, that taunts and maledictions followed him. His nobility of appearance was called pride; his affability, meanness; his aspiring views, faction;—and it was declared that it would be a happy day when he should no longer blot their sunshine with his shadow. Lorenzo smiled,—he disdained to resent, or even to feel, the mistaken insults of the crowd, who, if fortune changed, would the next day throw up their caps for him. It was only when loftier foes approached that his brow grew dark, that he drew himself up to his full height, repaying their scorn with glances of defiance and hate.

But although he was ready in his own person to encounter the contumely of his townsmen, and walked on with placid mien, regardless of their sneers, he carefully guarded his sister from such scenes. She was led by him each morning, closely veiled, to hear mass in an obscure church. And when, on feast-days, the public walks were crowded with cavaliers and dames in splendid attire, and with citizens and peasants in their holiday garb, this gentle pair might be seen in some solitary and shady spot, Flora knew none to love except her brother—she had grown under his eyes from infancy; and while he attended on the sick-bed of their father, he was father, brother, tutor, guardian to her—the fondest mother could not have been more indulgent; and yet there was mingled a something beyond, pertaining to their difference of sex. Uniformly observant and kind, he treated her as if she had been a high-born damsel, nurtured in her gayest bower.

Her attire was simple—but thus, she was instructed, it befitted every damsel to dress; her needle-works were such as a princess might have emulated; and while she learnt under her brother’s tutelage to be reserved, studious of obscurity, and always occupied, she was taught that such were the virtues becoming her sex, and no idea of

dependence or penury was raised in her mind. Had he been the sole human being that approached her, she might have believed herself to be on a level with the highest in the land; but coming in contact with dependants in the humble class of life, Flora became acquainted with her true position; and learnt, at the same time, to understand and appreciate the unequalled kindness and virtues of her brother.

Two years passed while brother and sister continued, in obscurity and poverty, cherishing hope, honour, and mutual love. If an anxious thought ever crossed Lorenzo, it was for the future destiny of Flora, whose beauty as a child gave promise of perfect loveliness hereafter. For her sake he was anxious to begin the career he had marked out for himself, and resolved no longer to delay his endeavours to revive his party in Siena, and to seek rather than avoid a contest with the young Count Fabian, on whose overthrow he would rise—Count Fabian, the darling of the citizens, vaunted as a model for a youthful cavalier, abounding in good qualities, and so adorned by gallantry, subtle wit, and gay, winning manners, that he stepped by right of nature, as well as birth, on the pedestal which exalted him the idol of all around.

It was on a day of public feasting that Lorenzo first presented himself in rivalship with Fabian. His person was unknown to the count, who, in all the pride of rich dress and splendid accoutrements, looked with a smile of patronage on the poorly-mounted and plainly-attired youth, who presented himself to run a tilt with him. But before the challenge was accepted, the name of his antagonist was whispered to Fabian; then, all the bitterness engendered by family feuds; all the spirit of vengeance, which had been taught as a religion, arose at once in the young noble’s heart; he wheeled round his steed, and, riding rudely up to his competitor, ordered him instantly to retire from the course, nor dare to disturb the revels of the citizens by the hated presence of a Mancini. Lorenzo answered with equal scorn; and Fabian, governed by uncontrollable passion, called together his followers to drive the youth with ignominy from the lists. A fearful array was mustered against the

hateful intruder; but had their number been trebled, the towering spirit of Lorenzo had met them all. One fell—another was disabled by his weapon before he was disarmed and made prisoner; but his bravery did not avail to extract admiration from his prejudiced foes: they rather poured execrations on him for its disastrous effects, as they hurried him to a dungeon, and called loudly for his punishment and death.

Far from this scene of turmoil and bloodshed, in her poor but quiet chamber, in a remote and obscure part of the town, sat Flora, occupied by her embroidery, musing, as she worked, on her brother's project, and anticipating his success. Hours passed, and Lorenzo did not return; the day declined, and still he tarried. Flora's busy fancy forged a thousand causes for the delay. Her brother's prowess had awaked the chilly zeal of the partisans of their family;—he was doubtless feasting among them, and the first stone was laid for the rebuilding of their house. At last, a rush of steps upon the staircase, and a confused clamour of female voices calling loudly for admittance, made her rise and open the door;—in rushed several women—dismay was painted on their faces—their words flowed in torrents—their eager gestures helped them to a meaning, and, though not without difficulty, amidst the confusion, Flora heard of the disaster and imprisonment of her brother—of the blood shed by his hand, and the fatal issue that such a deed ensured. She grew pale as marble. Her young heart was filled with speechless terror; she could form no image of the thing she dreaded, but its indistinct idea was full of fear. Lorenzo was in prison—Count Fabian had placed him there—he was to die! Overwhelmed for a moment by such tidings, yet she rose above their benumbing power, and without proffering a word, or listening to the questions and remonstrances of the women, she rushed past them, down the high staircase, into the street; and then with swift pace to where the public prison was situated. She knew the spot she wished to reach, but she had so seldom quitted her home that she soon got entangled among the streets, and proceeded onwards at random. Breathless, at length, she paused before the lofty portal of a large palace—no one was near—the fast fading twilight of an Italian evening had

deepened into absolute darkness. At this moment the glare of flambeaux was thrown upon the street, and a party of horsemen rode up; they were talking and laughing gaily. She heard one addressed as Count Fabian: she involuntarily drew back with instinctive hate; and then rushed forward and threw herself at his horse's feet, exclaiming, "Save my brother!" The young cavalier reined up shortly his prancing steed, angrily reproving her for her heedlessness, and, without deigning another word, entered the courtyard. He had not, perhaps, heard her prayer;—he could not see the suppliant, he spoke but in the impatience of the moment;—but the poor child, deeply wounded by what had the appearance of a personal insult, turned proudly from the door, repressing the bitter tears that filled her eyes. Still she walked on; but night took from her every chance of finding her way to the prison, and she resolved to return home, to engage one of the women of the house, of which she occupied a part, to accompany her. But even to find her way back became matter of difficulty; and she wandered on, discovering no clue to guide her, and far too timid to address any one she might chance to meet. Fatigue and personal fear were added to her other griefs, and tears streamed plentifully down her cheeks as she continued her hopeless journey! At length, at the corner of a street, she recognised an image of the Madonna in a niche, with a lamp burning over it, familiar to her recollection as being near her home. With characteristic piety she knelt before it in thankfulness, and was offering a prayer for Lorenzo, when the sound of steps made her start up, and her brother's voice hailed, and her brother's arms encircled her; it seemed a miracle, but he was there, and all her fears were ended.

Lorenzo anxiously asked whither she had been straying; her explanation was soon given; and he in return related the misfortunes of the morning—the fate that impended over him, averted by the generous intercession of young Fabian himself; and yet—he hesitated to unfold the bitter truth—he was not freely pardoned—he stood there a banished man, condemned to die if the morrow's sun found him within the walls of Siena.

They had arrived, meanwhile, at their home; and with feminine care Flora placed a simple repast before her brother, and then employed herself busily in making various packages. Lorenzo paced the room, absorbed in thought; at length he stopped, and, kissing the fair girl, said,—

"Where can I place thee in safety? how preserve thee, my flower of beauty, while we are divided?"

Flora looked up fearfully. "Do I not go with you?" she asked; "I was making preparations for our journey."

"Impossible, dearest; I go to privation and hardship."

"And I would share them with thee."

"It may not be, sweet sister," replied Lorenzo, "fate divides us, and we must submit. I go to camps—to the society of rude men; to struggle with such fortune as cannot harm me, but which for thee would be fraught with peril and despair. No, my Flora, I must provide safe and honourable guardianship for thee, even in this town." And again Lorenzo meditated deeply on the part he should take, till suddenly a thought flashed on his mind. "It is hazardous," he murmured, "and yet I do him wrong to call it so. Were our fates reversed, should I not think myself highly honoured by such a trust?" And then he told his sister to don hastily her best attire; to wrap her veil round her, and to come with him. She obeyed—for obedience to her brother was the first and dearest of her duties. But she wept bitterly while her trembling fingers braided her long hair, and she hastily changed her dress.

At length they walked forth again, and proceeded slowly, as Lorenzo employed the precious minutes in consoling and counselling his sister. He promised as speedy a return as he could accomplish; but if he failed to appear as soon as he could wish, yet he vowed solemnly that, if alive and free, she should see him within five years from the moment of parting. Should he not come before, he besought her earnestly to take patience, and to hope for the best till the expiration of that period; and made

her promise not to bind herself by any vestal or matrimonial vow in the interim. They had arrived at their destination, and entered the courtyard of a spacious palace. They met no servants; so crossed the court, and ascended the ample stairs. Flora had endeavoured to listen to her brother. He had bade her be of good cheer, and he was about to leave her; he told her to hope; and he spoke of an absence to endure five years—an endless term to her youthful anticipations. She promised obedience, but her voice was choked by sobs, and her tottering limbs would not have supported her without his aid. She now perceived that they were entering the lighted and inhabited rooms of a noble dwelling, and tried to restrain her tears, as she drew her veil closely around her. They passed from room to room, in which preparations for festivity were making; the servants ushered them on, as if they had been invited guests, and conducted them into a hall filled with all the nobility and beauty of Siena. Each eye turned with curiosity and wonder on the pair. Lorenzo's tall person, and the lofty expression of his handsome countenance, put the ladies in good-humour with him, while the cavaliers tried to peep under Flora's veil.

"It is a mere child," they said, "and a sorrowing one—what can this mean?"

The youthful master of the house, however, instantly recognised his uninvited and unexpected guest; but before he could ask the meaning of his coming, Lorenzo had advanced with his sister to the spot where he stood, and addressed him.

"I never thought, Count Fabian, to stand beneath your roof, and much less to approach you as a suitor. But that Supreme Power, to whose decrees we must all bend, has reduced me to such adversity as, if it be His will, may also visit you, notwithstanding the many friends that now surround you, and the sunshine of prosperity in which you bask. I stand here a banished man and a beggar. Nor do I repine at this my fate. Most willing am I that my right arm alone should create my fortunes; and, with the blessing of God, I hope so to direct my course, that we may yet meet upon more equal terms. In this hope I turn my steps, not unwillingly, from

this city; dear as its name is to my heart—and dear the associations which link its proud towers with the memory of my forefathers. I leave it a soldier of fortune; how I may return is written in the page where your unread destiny is traced as well as mine. But my care ends not with myself. My dying father bequeathed to me this child, my orphan sister, whom I have, until now, watched over with a parent's love. I should ill perform the part intrusted to me, were I to drag this tender blossom from its native bower into the rude highways of life. Lord Fabian, I can count no man my friend; for it would seem that your smiles have won the hearts of my fellow-citizens from me; and death and exile have so dealt with my house, that not one of my name exists within the walls of Siena. To you alone can I intrust this precious charge. Will you accept it until called upon to render it back to me, her brother, or to the juster hands of our Creator, pure and untarnished as I now deliver her to you? I ask you to protect her helplessness, to guard her honour; will you—dare you accept a treasure, with the assurance of restoring it unsoiled, unhurt?"

The deep expressive voice of the noble youth and his earnest eloquence enchained the ears of the whole assembly; and when he ceased, Fabian, proud of the appeal, and nothing loath in the buoyant spirit of youth to undertake a charge which, thus proffered before his assembled kinsmen and friends, became an honour, answered readily, "I agree, and solemnly before Heaven accept your offer. I declare myself the guardian and protector of your sister; she shall dwell in safety beneath my kind mother's care, and if the saints permit your return, she shall be delivered back to you as spotless as she now is."

Lorenzo bowed his head; something choked his utterance as he thought that he was about to part for ever from Flora; but he disdained to betray this weakness before his enemies. He took his sister's hand and gazed upon her slight form with a look of earnest fondness, then murmuring a blessing over her, and kissing her brow, he again saluted Count Fabian, and turning away with measured steps and lofty mien, left the hall. Flora, scarcely understanding what had passed, stood trembling and

weeping under her veil. She yielded her passive hand to Fabian, who, leading her to his mother, said: “Madam, I ask of your goodness, and the maternal indulgence you have ever shown, to assist me in fulfilling my promise, by taking under your gracious charge this young orphan.”

“You command here, my son,” said the countess, “and your will shall be obeyed.” Then making a sign to one of her attendants, Flora was conducted from the hall, to where, in solitude and silence, she wept over her brother’s departure, and her own strange position.

Flora thus became an inmate of the dwelling of her ancestral foes, and the ward of the most bitter enemy of her house. Lorenzo was gone she knew not whither, and her only pleasure consisted in reflecting that she was obeying his behests. Her life was uniform and tranquil. Her occupation was working tapestry, in which she displayed taste and skill. Sometimes she had the more mortifying task imposed on her of waiting on the Countess de’ Tolomei, who having lost two brothers in the last contest with the Mancini, nourished a deep hatred towards the whole race, and never smiled on the luckless orphan. Flora submitted to every command imposed upon her. She was buoyed up by the reflection that her sufferings wore imposed on her by Lorenzo; schooling herself in any moment of impatience by the idea that thus she shared his adversity. No murmur escaped her, though the pride and independence of her nature were often cruelly offended by the taunts and supercilious airs of her patroness or mistress, who was not a bad woman, but who thought it virtue to ill-treat a Mancini. Often, indeed, she neither heard nor heeded these things. Her thoughts were far away, and grief for the loss of her brother’s society weighed too heavily on her to allow her to spend more than a passing sigh on her personal injuries.

The countess was unkind and disdainful, but it was not thus with Flora’s companions. They were amiable and affectionate girls, either of the bourgeois class,

or daughters of dependants of the house of Tolomei. The length of time which had elapsed since the overthrow of the Mancini, had erased from their young minds the bitter duty of hatred, and it was impossible for them to live on terms of daily intercourse with the orphan daughter of this ill-fated race, and not to become strongly attached to her. She was wholly devoid of selfishness, and content to perform her daily tasks in inoffensive silence. She had no envy, no wish to shine, no desire of pleasure. She was nevertheless ever ready to sympathize with her companions, and glad to have it in her power to administer to their happiness. To help them in the manufacture of some piece of finery; to assist them in their work; and, perfectly prudent and reserved herself, to listen to all their sentimental adventures; to give her best advice, and to aid them in any difficulty, were the simple means she used to win their unsophisticated hearts. They called her an angel; they looked up to her as to a saint, and in their hearts respected her more than the countess herself.

One only subject ever disturbed Flora's serene melancholy. The praise she perpetually heard lavished on Count Fabian, her brother's too successful rival and oppressor, was an unendurable addition to her other griefs. Content with her own obscurity, her ambition, her pride, her aspiring thoughts were spent upon her brother. She hated Count Fabian as Lorenzo's destroyer, and the cause of his unhappy exile. His accomplishments she despised as painted vanities; his person she contemned as the opposite of his prototype. His blue eyes, clear and open as day; his fair complexion and light brown hair; his slight elegant person; his voice, whose tones in song won each listener's heart to tenderness and love; his wit, his perpetual flow of spirits, and unalterable good-humour, were impertinences and frivolities to her who cherished with such dear worship the recollection of her serious, ardent, noble-hearted brother, whose soul was ever set on high thoughts, and devoted to acts of virtue and self-sacrifice; whose fortitude and affectionate courtesy seemed to her the crown and glory of manhood; how different from the trifling flippancy of

Fabian! “Name an eagle,” she would say, “and we raise our eyes to heaven, there to behold a creature fashioned in Nature’s bounty; but it is a degradation to waste one thought on the insect of a day.” Some speech similar to this had been kindly reported to the young count’s lady mother, who idolized her son as the ornament and delight of his age and country. She severely reprimanded the incautious Flora, who, for the first time, listened proudly and unyieldingly. From this period her situation grew more irksome; all she could do was to endeavour to withdraw herself entirely from observation, and to brood over the perfections, while she lamented yet more keenly the absence, of her brother.

Two or three years thus flew away, and Flora grew from a childish-looking girl of twelve into the bewitching beauty of fifteen. She unclosed like a flower, whose fairest petals are yet shut, but whose half-veiled loveliness is yet more attractive. It was at this time that on occasion of doing honour to a prince of France, who was passing on to Naples, the Countess Tolomei and her son, with a bevy of friends and followers, went out to meet and to escort the royal traveller on his way. Assembled in the hall of the palace, and waiting for the arrival of some of their number, Count Fabian went round his mother’s circle, saying agreeable and merry things to all. Wherever his cheerful blue eyes lighted, there smiles were awakened and each young heart beat with vanity at his harmless flatteries. After a gallant speech or two, he espied Flora, retired behind her companions.

“What flower is this,” he said, “playing at hide and seek with her beauty?” And then, struck by the modest sweetness of her aspect, her eyes cast down, and a rosy blush mantling over her cheek, he added, “What fair angel makes one of your company?”

“An angel indeed, my lord,” exclaimed one of the younger girls, who dearly loved her best friend; “she is Flora Mancini.”

“Mancini!” exclaimed Fabian, while his manner became at once respectful and kind. “Are you the orphan daughter of Ugo—the sister of Lorenzo, committed by him to

my care?" For since then, through her careful avoidance, Fabian had never even seen his fair ward. She bowed an assent to his questions, while her swelling heart denied her speech; and Fabian, going up to his mother, said, "Madam, I hope for our honour's sake that this has not before happened. The adverse fortune of this young lady may render retirement and obscurity befitting; but it is not for us to turn into a menial one sprung from the best blood in Italy. Let me entreat you not to permit this to occur again. How shall I redeem my pledged honour, or answer to her brother for this unworthy degradation?"

"Would you have me make a friend and a companion of a Mancini?" asked the countess, with raised colour.

"I ask you not, mother, to do aught displeasing to you," replied the young noble; "but Flora is my ward, not our servant;—permit her to retire; she will probably prefer the privacy of home, to making one among the festive crowd of her house's enemies. If not, let the choice be hers—Say, gentle one, will you go with us or retire?"

She did not speak, but raising her soft eyes, curtsied to him and to his mother, and quitted the room; so, tacitly making her selection.

From this time Flora never quitted the more secluded apartments of the palace, nor again saw Fabian. She was unaware that he had been profuse in his eulogium on her beauty; but that while frequently expressing his interest in his ward, he rather avoided the dangerous power of her loveliness. She led rather a prison life, walking only in the palace garden when it was else deserted, but otherwise her time was at her own disposal, and no commands now interfered with her freedom. Her labours were all spontaneous. The countess seldom even saw her, and she lived among this lady's attendants like a free boarder in a convent; who cannot quit the walls, but who is not subservient to the rules of the asylum. She was more busy than ever at her tapestry frame, because the countess prized her work; and thus she could in some

degree repay the protection afforded her. She never mentioned Fabian, and always imposed silence on her companions when they spoke of him. But she did this in no disrespectful terms. “He is a generous enemy, I acknowledge,” she would say, “but still he is my enemy, and while through him my brother is an exile and a wanderer upon earth, it is painful to me to hear his name.”

After the lapse of many months spent in entire seclusion and tranquillity, a change occurred in the tenor of her life. The countess suddenly resolved to pass the Easter festival at Rome. Flora’s companions were wild with joy at the prospect of the journey, the novelty, and the entertainment they promised themselves from this visit, and pitied the dignity of their friend, which prevented her from making one in their mistress’s train; for it was soon understood that Flora was to be left behind; and she was informed that the interval of the lady’s absence was to be passed by her in a villa belonging to the family situated in a sequestered nook among the neighbouring Apennines.

The countess departed in pomp and pride on her so-called pilgrimage to the sacred city, and at the same time Flora was conveyed to her rural retreat. The villa was inhabited only by the peasant and his family, who cultivated the farm, or podere, attached to it, and the old cassiére or housekeeper. The cheerfulness and freedom of the country were delightful, and the entire solitude consonant to the habits of the meditative girl, accustomed to the confinement of the city, and the intrusive prattle of her associates. Spring was opening with all the beauty which that season showers upon favoured Italy. The almond and peach trees were in blossom; and the vine-dresser sang at his work, perched with his pruning-knife among the vines. Blossoms and flowers, in laughing plenty, graced the soil; and the trees, swelling with buds ready to expand into leaves, seemed to feel the life that animated their dark old boughs. Flora was enchanted; the country labours interested her, and the hoarded experience of old Sandra was a treasure-house of wisdom and amusement. Her attention had hitherto been directed to giving the most vivid hues and truest

imitation to her transcript with her needle of some picture given her as a model; but here was a novel occupation. She learned the history of the bees, watched the habits of the birds, and inquired into the culture of plants. Sandra was delighted with her new companion; and, though notorious for being cross, yet could wriggle her antique lips into smiles for Flora.

To repay the kindness of her guardian and his mother, she still devoted much time to her needle. This occupation but engaged half her attention; and while she pursued it, she could give herself up to endless reverie on the subject of Lorenzo's fortunes. Three years had flown since he had left her; and, except a little gold cross brought to her by a pilgrim from Milan, but one month after his departure, she had received no tidings of him. Whether from Milan he had proceeded to France, Germany, or the Holy Land, she did not know. By turns her fancy led him to either of these places, and fashioned the course of events that might have befallen him. She figured to herself his toilsome journeys—his life in the camp—his achievements, and the honours showered on him by kings and nobles; her cheek glowed at the praises he received, and her eye kindled with delight as it imaged him standing with modest pride and an erect but gentle mien before them. Then the fair enthusiast paused; it crossed her recollection like a shadow, that if all had gone prosperously, he had returned to share his prosperity with her, and her faltering heart turned to sadder scenes to account for his protracted absence.

Sometimes, while thus employed, she brought her work into the trellised arbour of the garden, or, when it was too warm for the open air, she had a favourite shady window, which looked down a deep ravine into a majestic wood, whence the sound of falling water met her ears. One day, while she employed her fingers upon the spirited likeness of a hound which made a part of the hunting-piece she was working for the countess, a sharp, wailing cry suddenly broke on her ear, followed by trampling of horses and the hurried steps and loud vociferations of men. They entered the villa on the opposite side from that which her window commanded; but,

the noise continuing, she rose to ask the reason, when Sandra burst into the room, crying, “O Madonna! he is dead! he has been thrown from his horse, and he will never speak more.” Flora for an instant could only think of her brother. She rushed past the old woman, down into the great hall, in which, lying on a rude litter of boughs, she beheld the inanimate body of Count Fabian. He was surrounded by servitors and peasants, who were all clasping their hands and tearing their hair as, with frightful shrieks, they pressed round their lord, not one of them endeavouring to restore him to life. Flora’s first impulse was to retire; but, casting a second glance on the livid brow of the young count, she saw his eyelids move, and the blood falling in quick drops from his hair on the pavement. She exclaimed, “He is not dead—he bleeds! hasten some of you for a leech!” And meanwhile she hurried to get some water, sprinkled it on his face, and, dispersing the group that hung over him and impeded the free air, the soft breeze playing on his forehead revived him, and he gave manifest tokens of life; so that when the physician arrived, he found that, though he was seriously and even dangerously hurt, every hope might be entertained of his recovery.

Flora undertook the office of his nurse, and fulfilled its duties with unwearied attention. She watched him by night and waited on him by day with that spirit of Christian humility and benevolence which animates a Sister of Charity as she tends the sick. For several days Fabian’s soul seemed on the wing to quit its earthly abode; and the state of weakness that followed his insensibility was scarcely less alarming. At length, he recognised and acknowledged the care of Flora, but she alone possessed any power to calm and guide him during the state of irritability and fever that then ensued. Nothing except her presence controlled his impatience; before her he was so lamb-like, that she could scarcely have credited the accounts that others gave her of his violence, but that, whenever she returned, after leaving him for any time, she heard his voice far off in anger, and found him with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, all which demonstrations subsided into meek acquiescence when she

drew near.

In a few weeks he was able to quit his room; but any noise or sudden sound drove him almost insane. So loud is an Italian's quietest movements, that Flora was obliged to prevent the approach of any except herself; and her soft voice and noiseless footfall were the sweetest medicine she could administer to her patient. It was painful to her to be in perpetual attendance on Lorenzo's rival and foe, but she subdued her heart to her duty, and custom helped to reconcile her. As he grew better, she could not help remarking the intelligence of his countenance, and the kindness and cordiality of his manners. There was an unobtrusive and delicate attention and care in his intercourse with her that won her to be pleased. When he conversed, his discourse was full of entertainment and variety. His memory was well-stored with numerous fabliaux, novelle, and romances, which he quickly discovered to be highly interesting to her, and so contrived to have one always ready from the exhaustless stock he possessed. These romantic stories reminded her of the imaginary adventures she had invented, in solitude and silence, for her brother; and each tale of foreign countries had a peculiar charm, which animated her face as she listened, so that Fabian could have gone on for ever, only to mark the varying expression of her countenance as he proceeded. Yet she acknowledged these attractions in him as a Catholic nun may the specious virtues of a heretic; and, while he contrived each day to increase the pleasure she derived from his society, she satisfied her conscience with regard to her brother by cherishing in secret a little quiet stock of family hate, and by throwing over her manners, whenever she could recollect so to do, a cold and ceremonious tone, which she had the pleasure of seeing vexed him heartily.

Nearly two months had passed, and he was so well recovered that Flora began to wonder that he did not return to Siena, and of course to fulfil her duty by wishing that he should; and yet, while his cheek was sunk through past sickness, and his elastic step grown slow, she, as a nurse desirous of completing her good work, felt averse to his entering too soon on the scene of the busy town and its noisy pleasures.

At length, two or three of his friends having come to see him, he agreed to return with them to the city. A significant glance which they cast on his young nurse probably determined him. He parted from her with a grave courtesy and a profusion of thanks, unlike his usual manner, and rode off without alluding to any probability of their meeting again.

She fancied that she was relieved from a burden when he went, and was surprised to find the days grow tedious, and mortified to perceive that her thoughts no longer spent themselves so spontaneously on her brother, and to feel that the occupation of a few weeks could unhinge her mind and dissipate her cherished reveries; thus, while she felt the absence of Fabian, she was annoyed at him the more for having, in addition to his other misdeeds, invaded the sanctuary of her dearest thoughts. She was beginning to conquer this listlessness, and to return with renewed zest to her usual occupations, when, in about a week after his departure, Fabian suddenly returned. He came upon her as she was gathering flowers for the shrine of the Madonna; and, on seeing him, she blushed as rosy red as the roses she held. He looked infinitely worse in health than when he went. His wan cheeks and sunk eyes excited her concern; and her earnest and kind questions somewhat revived him. He kissed her hand, and continued to stand beside her as she finished her nosegay. Had any one seen the glad, fond look with which he regarded her as she busied herself among the flowers, even old Sandra might have prognosticated his entire recovery under her care.

Flora was totally unaware of the feelings that were excited in Fabian’s heart, and the struggle he made to overcome a passion too sweet and too seductive, when awakened by so lovely a being, ever to be subdued. He had been struck with her some time ago, and avoided her. It was through his suggestion that she passed the period of the countess’s pilgrimage in this secluded villa. Nor had he thought of visiting her there; but, riding over one day to inquire concerning a foal rearing for him, his horse had thrown him, and caused him that injury which had made him so

long the inmate of the same abode. Already prepared to admire her—her kindness, her gentleness, and her unwearied patience during his illness, easily conquered a heart most ready and yet most unwilling to yield. He had returned to Siena resolved to forget her, but he came back assured that his life and death were in her hands.

At first Count Fabian had forgot that he had any but his own feelings and prejudices, and those of his mother and kindred, to overcome; but when the tyranny of love vanquished these, he began to fear a more insurmountable impediment in Flora. The first whisper of love fell like mortal sin upon her ear; and disturbed, and even angry, she replied:—

“Methinks you wholly forget who I am, and what you are. I speak not of ancient feuds, though these were enough to divide us for ever. Know that I hate you as my brother’s oppressor. Restore Lorenzo to me—recall him from banishment—erase the memory of all that he has suffered through you—win his love and approbation;—and when all this is fulfilled, which never can be, speak a language which now it is as the bitterness of death for me to hear!”

And saying this, she hastily retired, to conceal the floods of tears which this, as she termed it, insult had caused to flow; to lament yet more deeply her brother’s absence and her own dependence.

Fabian was not so easily silenced; and Flora had no wish to renew scenes and expressions of violence so foreign to her nature. She imposed a rule on herself, by never swerving from which she hoped to destroy the ill-omened love of her protector. She secluded herself as much as possible; and when with him assumed a chilling indifference of manner, and made apparent in her silence so absolute and cold a rejection of all his persuasions, that had not love with its unvanquishable hopes reigned absolutely in young Fabian’s heart, he must have despaired. He ceased to speak of his affection, so to win back her ancient kindness. This was at first difficult; for she was timid as a young bird, whose feet have touched the limed

twigs. But naturally credulous, and quite inexperienced, she soon began to believe that her alarm was exaggerated, and to resume those habits of intimacy which had heretofore subsisted between them. By degrees Fabian contrived to insinuate the existence of his attachment—he could not help it. He asked no return; he would wait for Lorenzo's arrival, which he was sure could not be far distant. Her displeasure could not change, nor silence destroy, a sentiment which survived in spite of both. Intrenched in her coldness and her indifference, she hoped to weary him out by her defensive warfare, and fancied that he would soon cease his pursuit in disgust.

The countess had been long away; she had proceeded to view the feast of San Gennaro at Naples, and had not received tidings of her son's illness. Her return was now expected; and Fabian resolved to return to Siena in time to receive her. Both he and Flora were therefore surprised one day, when she suddenly entered the apartment where they both were. Flora had long peremptorily insisted that he should not intrude while she was employed on her embroidery frame; but this day he had made so good a pretext, that for the first time he was admitted, and then suffered to stay a few minutes—they now neither of them knew how long; she was busy at her work; and he sitting near, gazing unreproved on her unconscious face and graceful figure, felt himself happier than he had ever been before.

The countess was sufficiently surprised, and not a little angry; but before she could do more than utter one exclamation, Fabian interrupted, by entreating her not to spoil all. He drew her away; he made his own explanations, and urged his wishes with resistless persuasion. The countess had been used to indulge him in every wish; it was impossible for her to deny any strongly urged request; his pertinacity, his agitation, his entreaties half won her; and the account of his illness, and his assurances, seconded by those of all the family, that Flora had saved his life, completed the conquest, and she became in her turn a suitor for her son to the orphan daughter of Mancini.

Flora, educated till the age of twelve by one who never consulted his own pleasures and gratifications, but went right on in the path of duty, regardless of pain or disappointment, had no idea of doing aught merely because she or others might wish it. Since that time she had been thrown on her own resources; and jealously cherishing her individuality, every feeling of her heart had been strengthened by solitude and by a sense of mental independence. She was the least likely of any one to go with the stream, or to yield to the mere influence of circumstances. She felt, she knew, what it became her to do, and that must be done in spite of every argument.

The countess's expostulations and entreaties were of no avail. The promise she had made to her brother of engaging herself by no vow for five years must be observed under every event; it was asked from her at the sad and solemn hour of their parting, and was thus rendered doubly sacred. So constituted, indeed, were her feelings, that the slightest wish she ever remembered having been expressed by Lorenzo had more weight with her than the most urgent prayers of another. He was a part of her religion; reverence and love for him had been moulded into the substance of her soul from infancy; their very separation had tended to render these impressions irradicable. She brooded over them for years; and when no sympathy or generous kindness was afforded her—when the countess treated her like an inferior and a dependant, and Fabian had forgotten her existence, she had lived from month to month, and from year to year, cherishing the image of her brother, and only able to tolerate the annoyances that beset her existence, by considering that her patience, her fortitude, and her obedience were all offerings at the shrine of her beloved Lorenzo's desires.

It is true that the generous and kindly disposition of Fabian won her to regard him with a feeling nearly approaching tenderness, though this emotion was feeble, the mere ripple of the waves, compared to the mighty tide of affection that set her will all one way, and made her deem everything trivial except Lorenzo's

return—Lorenzo's existence—obedience to Lorenzo. She listened to her lover's persuasions so unyieldingly that the countess was provoked by her inflexibility; but she bore her reproaches with such mildness, and smiled so sweetly, that Fabian was the more charmed. She admitted that she owed him a certain submission as the guardian set over her by her brother; Fabian would have gladly exchanged this authority for the pleasure of being commanded by her; but this was an honour he could not attain, so in playful spite he enforced concessions from her. At his desire she appeared in society, dressed as became her rank, and filled in his house the station a sister of his own would have held. She preferred seclusion, but she was averse to contention, and it was little that she yielded, while the purpose of her soul was as fixed as ever.

The fifth year of Lorenzo's exile was now drawing to a close, but he did not return, nor had any intelligence been received of him. The decree of his banishment had been repealed, the fortunes of his house restored, and his palace, under Fabian's generous care, rebuilt. These were acts that demanded and excited Flora's gratitude; yet they were performed in an unpretending manner, as if the citizens of Siena had suddenly become just and wise without his interference. But these things dwindled into trifles while the continuation of Lorenzo's absence seemed the pledge of her eternal misery; and the tacit appeal made to her kindness, while she had no thought but for her brother, drove her to desperation. She could no longer tolerate the painful anomaly of her situation; she could not endure her suspense for her brother's fate, nor the reproachful glances of Fabian's mother and his friends. He himself was more generous,—he read her heart, and, as the termination of the fifth year drew nigh, ceased to allude to his own feelings, and appeared as wrapt as herself in doubt concerning the fate of the noble youth, whom they could scarcely entertain a hope of ever seeing more. This was small comfort to Flora. She had resolved that when the completion of the fifth year assured her that her brother was for ever lost, she would never see Fabian again. At first she had resolved to take refuge in a convent, and in

the sanctity of religious vows. But she remembered how averse Lorenzo had always shown himself to this vocation, and that he had preferred to place her beneath the roof of his foe, than within the walls of a nunnery. Besides, young as she was, and, despite of herself, full of hope, she recoiled from shutting the gates of life upon herself for ever. Notwithstanding her fears and sorrow, she clung to the belief that Lorenzo lived; and this led her to another plan. When she had received her little cross from Milan, it was accompanied by a message that he believed he had found a good friend in the archbishop of that place. This prelate, therefore, would know whither Lorenzo had first bent his steps, and to him she resolved to apply. Her scheme was easily formed. She possessed herself of the garb of a pilgrim, and resolved on the day following the completion of the fifth year to depart from Siena, and bend her steps towards Lombardy, buoyed up by the hope that she should gain some tidings of her brother.

Meanwhile Fabian had formed a similar resolve. He had learnt the fact from Flora, of Lorenzo having first resorted to Milan, and he determined to visit that city, and not to return without certain information. He acquainted his mother with his plan, but begged her not to inform Flora, that she might not be tortured by double doubt during his absence.

The anniversary of the fifth year was come, and with it the eve of these several and separate journeys. Flora had retired to spend the day at the villa before mentioned. She had chosen to retire thither for various reasons. Her escape was more practicable thence than in the town; and she was anxious to avoid seeing both Fabian and his mother, now that she was on the point of inflicting severe pain on them. She spent the day at the villa and in its gardens, musing on her plans, regretting the quiet of her past life—saddened on Fabian’s account—grieving bitterly for Lorenzo. She was not alone, for she had been obliged to confide in one of her former companions, and to obtain her assistance. Poor little Angeline was dreadfully frightened with the trust reposed in her, but did not dare expostulate with or betray her friend; and she

continued near her during this last day, by turns trying to console and weeping with her. Towards evening they wandered together into the wood contiguous to the villa. Flora had taken her harp with her, but her trembling fingers refused to strike its chords; she left it, she left her companion, and strayed on alone to take leave of a spot consecrated by many a former visit. Here the umbrageous trees gathered about her, and shaded her with their thick and drooping foliage;—a torrent dashed down from neighbouring rock, and fell from a height into a rustic basin, hollowed to receive it; then, overflowing the margin at one spot, it continued falling over successive declivities, till it reached the bottom of a little ravine, when it stole on in a placid and silent course. This had ever been a favourite resort of Flora. The twilight of the wood and the perpetual flow, the thunder, the hurry, and the turmoil of the waters, the varied sameness of the eternal elements, accorded with the melancholy of her ideas, and the endless succession of her reveries. She came to it now; she gazed on the limpid cascade—for the last time; a soft sadness glistened in her eyes, and her attitude denoted the tender regret that filled her bosom; her long bright tresses streaming in elegant disorder, her light veil and simple, yet rich, attire, were fitfully mirrored in the smooth face of the rushing waters. At this moment the sound of steps more firm and manly than those of Angeline struck her ear, and Fabian himself stood before her; he was unable to bring himself to depart on his journey without seeing her once again. He had ridden to the villa, and, finding that she had quitted it, sought and found her in the lone recess where they had often spent hours together which had been full of bliss to him. Flora was sorry to see him, for her secret was on her lips, and yet she resolved not to give it utterance. He was ruled by the same feeling. Their interview was therefore short, and neither alluded to what sat nearest the heart of each. They parted with a simple “Good-night,” as if certain of meeting the following morning; each deceived the other, and each was in turn deceived. There was more of tenderness in Flora’s manner than there had ever been; it cheered his faltering soul, about to quit her, while the anticipation of the

blow he was about to receive from her made her regard as venial this momentary softening towards her brother's enemy.

Fabian passed the night at the villa, and early the next morning he departed for Milan. He was impatient to arrive at the end of his journey, and often he thrust his spurs into his horse's sides, and put him to his speed, which even then appeared slow. Yet he was aware that his arrival at Milan might advance him not a jot towards the ultimate object of his journey; and he called Flora cruel and unkind, until the recollection of her kind farewell consoled and cheered him.

He stopped the first night at Empoli, and, crossing the Arno, began to ascend the Apennines on the northern side. Soon he penetrated their fastnesses, and entered deep into the ilex woods. He journeyed on perseveringly, and yet the obstructions he met with were many, and borne with impatience. At length, on the afternoon of the third day, he arrived at a little rustic inn, hid deep in a wood, which showed signs of seldom being visited by travellers. The burning sun made it a welcome shelter for Fabian; and he deposited his steed in the stable, which he found already partly occupied by a handsome black horse, and then entered the inn to seek refreshment for himself. There seemed some difficulty in obtaining this. The landlady was the sole domestic, and it was long before she made her appearance, and then she was full of trouble and dismay; a sick traveller had arrived—a gentleman to all appearance dying of a malignant fever. His horse, his well-stored purse, and rich dress showed that he was a cavalier of consequence;—the more the pity. There was no help, nor any means of carrying him forward; yet half his pain seemed to arise from his regret at being detained—he was so eager to proceed to Siena. The name of his own town excited the interest of Count Fabian, and he went up to visit the stranger, while the hostess prepared his repast.

Meanwhile Flora awoke with the lark, and with the assistance of Angeline attired herself in her pilgrim's garb. From the stir below, she was surprised to find that

Count Fabian had passed the night at the villa, and she lingered till he should have departed, as she believed, on his return to Siena. Then she embraced her young friend, and taking leave of her with many blessings and thanks, alone, with Heaven, as she trusted, for her guide, she quitted Fabian's sheltering roof, and with a heart that maintained its purpose in spite of her feminine timidity, began her pilgrimage. Her journey performed on foot was slow, so that there was no likelihood that she could overtake her lover, already many miles in advance. Now that she had begun it, her undertaking appeared to her gigantic, and her heart almost failed her. The burning sun scorched her; never having before found herself alone in a highway, a thousand fears assailed her, and she grew so weary, that soon she was unable to support herself. By the advice of a landlady at an inn where she stopped, she purchased a mule to help her on her long journey. Yet with this help it was the third night before she arrived at Empoli, and then crossing the Arno, as her lover had done before, her difficulties seemed to begin to unfold themselves, and to grow gigantic, as she entered the dark woods of the Apennines, and found herself amidst the solitude of its vast forests. Her pilgrim's garb inspired some respect, and she rested at convents by the way. The pious sisters held up their hands in admiration of her courage; while her heart beat faintly with the knowledge that she possessed absolutely none. Yet, again and again, she repeated to herself, that the Apennines once passed, the worst would be over. So she toiled on, now weary, now frightened—very slowly, and yet very anxious to get on with speed.

On the evening of the seventh day after quitting her home, she was still entangled in the mazes of these savage hills. She was to sleep at a convent on their summit that night, and the next day arrive at Bologna. This hope had cheered her through the day; but evening approached, the way grew more intricate, and no convent appeared. The sun had set, and she listened anxiously for the bell of the Ave Maria, which would give her hope that the goal she sought was nigh; but all was silent, save the swinging boughs of the vast trees, and the timid beating of her own heart; darkness

closed around her, and despair came with the increased obscurity, till a twinkling light, revealing itself among the trees, afforded her some relief. She followed this beamy guide till it led her to a little inn, where the sight of a kind-looking woman, and the assurance of safe shelter, dispelled her terrors, and filled her with grateful pleasure.

Seeing her so weary, the considerate hostess hastened to place food before her, and then conducted her to a little low room where her bed was prepared. “I am sorry, lady,” said the landlady in a whisper, “not to be able to accommodate you better; but a sick cavalier occupies my best room—it is next to this—and he sleeps now, and I would not disturb him. Poor gentleman! I never thought he would rise more; and under Heaven he owes his life to one who, whether he is related to him or not I cannot tell, for he did not accompany him. Four days ago he stopped here, and I told him my sorrow—how I had a dying guest, and he charitably saw him, and has since then nursed him more like a twin-brother than a stranger.”

The good woman prattled on. Flora heard but little of what she said; and overcome by weariness and sleep, paid no attention to her tale. But having performed her orisons, and placed her head on the pillow, she was quickly lapped in the balmy slumber she so much needed.

Early in the morning she was awoke by a murmur of voices in the next room. She started up, and recalling her scattered thoughts, tried to remember the account the hostess had given her the preceding evening. The sick man spoke, but his accent was low, and the words did not reach her;—he was answered—could Flora believe her senses? did she not know the voice that spoke these words?—“Fear nothing, a sweet sleep has done you infinite good; and I rejoice in the belief that you will speedily recover. I have sent to Siena for your sister, and do indeed expect that Flora will arrive this very day.”

More was said, but Flora heard no more; she had risen, and was hastily dressing

herself; in a few minutes she was by her brother's, her Lorenzo's bedside, kissing his wan hand, and assuring him that she was indeed Flora.

"These are indeed wonders," he at last said; "and if you are mine own Flora you perhaps can tell me who this noble gentleman is, who day and night has watched beside me, as a mother may by her only child, giving no time to repose, but exhausting himself for me."

"How, dearest brother," said Flora, "can I truly answer your question? to mention the name of our benefactor were to speak of a mask and a disguise, not a true thing. He is my protector and guardian, who has watched over and preserved me while you wandered far; his is the most generous heart in Italy, offering past enmity and family pride as sacrifices at the altar of nobleness and truth. He is the restorer of your fortunes in your native town"—

"And the lover of my sweet sister.—I have heard of these things, and was on my way to confirm his happiness and to find my own, when sickness laid me thus low, and would have destroyed us both for ever, but for Fabian Tolomei"—

"Who how exerts his expiring authority to put an end to this scene," interrupted the young count. "Not till this day has Lorenzo been sufficiently composed to hear any of these explanations, and we risk his returning health by too long a conversation. The history of these things and of his long wanderings, now so happily ended, must be reserved for a future hour; when assembled in our beloved Siena, exiles and foes no longer, we shall long enjoy the happiness which Providence, after so many trials, has bounteously reserved for us."

XIII. THE PARVENUE.

Why do I write my melancholy story? Is it as a lesson, to prevent any other from wishing to rise to rank superior to that in which they are born? No! miserable as I am, others might have been happy, I doubt not, in my position: the chalice has been

poisoned for me alone! Am I evil-minded—am I wicked? What have been my errors, that I am now an outcast and wretched? I will tell my story—let others judge me; my mind is bewildered, I cannot judge myself.

My father was land steward to a wealthy nobleman. He married young, and had several children. He then lost his wife, and remained fifteen years a widower, when he married again a young girl, the daughter of a clergyman, who died, leaving a numerous offspring in extreme poverty. My maternal grandfather had been a man of sensibility and genius; my mother inherited many of his endowments. She was an angel on earth; all her works were charity, all her thoughts were love.

Within a year after her marriage, she gave birth to twins—I and my sister; soon after she fell into ill-health, and from that time was always weakly. She could endure no fatigue, and seldom moved from her chair. I see her now;—her white, delicate hands employed in needlework, her soft, love-lighted eyes fixed on me. I was still a child when my father fell into trouble, and we removed from the part of the country where we had hitherto lived, and went to a distant village, where we rented a cottage, with a little land adjoining. We were poor, and all the family assisted each other. My elder half-sisters were strong, industrious, rustic young women, and submitted to a life of labour with great cheerfulness. My father held the plough, my half-brothers worked in the barns; all was toil, yet all seemed enjoyment.

How happy my childhood was! Hand in hand with my dear twin-sister, I plucked the spring flowers in the hedges, turned the hay in the summer meadows, shook the apples from the trees in the autumn, and at all seasons, gambolled in delicious liberty beneath the free air of heaven; or at my mother’s feet, caressed by her, I was taught the sweetest lessons of charity and love. My elder sisters were kind; we were all linked by strong affection. The delicate, fragile existence of my mother gave an interest to our monotony, while her virtues and her refinement threw a grace over our homely household.

I and my sister did not seem twins, we were so unlike. She was robust, chubby, full of life and spirits; I, tall, slim, fair, and even pale. I loved to play with her, but soon grew tired, and then I crept to my mother's side, and she sang me to sleep, and nursed me in her bosom, and looked on me with her own angelic smile. She took pains to instruct me, not in accomplishments, but in all real knowledge. She unfolded to me the wonders of the visible creation, and to each tale of bird and beast, of fiery mountain or vast river, was appended some moral, derived from her warm heart and ardent imagination. Above all, she impressed upon me the precepts of the gospel, charity to every fellow-creature, the brotherhood of mankind, the rights that every sentient creature possesses to our services. I was her almoner; for, poor as she was, she was the benefactress of those who were poorer. Being delicate, I helped her in her task of needlework, while my sister aided the rest in their household or rustic labours.

When I was seventeen, a miserable accident happened. A hayrick caught fire; it communicated to our outhouses, and at last to the cottage. We were roused from our beds at midnight, and escaped barely with our lives. My father bore out my mother in his arms, and then tried to save a portion of his property. The roof of the cottage fell in on him. He was dug out after an hour, scorched, maimed, crippled for life.

We were all saved, but by a miracle only was I preserved. I and my sister were awoke by cries of fire. The cottage was already enveloped in flames. Susan, with her accustomed intrepidity, rushed through the flames, and escaped; I thought only of my mother, and hurried to her room. The fire raged around me; it encircled—hemmed me in. I believed that I must die, when suddenly I felt myself seized upon and borne away. I looked on my preserver—it was Lord Reginald Desborough.

For many Sundays past, when, at church, I knew that Lord Reginald's eyes were fixed on me. He had met me and Susan in our walks; he had called at our cottage.

There was fascination in his eye, in his soft voice and earnest gaze, and my heart throbbed with gladness, as I thought that he surely loved me. To have been saved by him was to make the boon of life doubly precious.

There is to me much obscurity in this part of my story. Lord Reginald loved me, it is true; why he loved me, so far as to forget pride of rank and ambition for my sake, he who afterwards showed no tendency to disregard the prejudices and habits of rank and wealth, I cannot tell; it seems strange. He had loved me before, but from the hour that he saved my life, love grew into an overpowering passion. He offered us a lodge on his estate to take refuge in; and while there, he sent us presents of game, and still more kindly, fruits and flowers to my mother, and came himself, especially, when all were out except my mother and myself, and sat by us and conversed. Soon I learnt to expect the soft-asking look of his eyes, and almost dared answer it. My mother once perceived these glances, and took an opportunity to appeal to Lord Reginald's good feelings, not to make me miserable for life, by implanting an attachment that could only be productive of unhappiness. His answer was to ask me in marriage.

I need not say that my mother gratefully consented; that my father, confined to his bed since the fire, thanked God with rapture; that my sisters were transported by delight: I was the least surprised then, though the most happy. Now, I wonder much, what could he see in me? So many girls of rank and fortune were prettier. I was an untaught, low-born, portionless girl. It was very strange.

Then I only thought of the happiness of marrying him, of being loved, of passing my life with him. My wedding day was fixed. Lord Reginald had neither father nor mother to interfere with his arrangements. He told no relation; he became one of our family during the interval. He saw no deficiencies in our mode of life—in my dress; he was satisfied with all; he was tender, assiduous, and kind, even to my elder sisters; he seemed to adore my mother, and became a brother to my sister Susan. She

was in love, and asked him to intercede to gain her parents' consent for her choice. He did so; and though before, Lawrence Cooper, the carpenter of the place, had been disdained, supported by him, he was accepted. Lawrence Cooper was young, well-looking, well disposed, and fondly attached to Susan.

My wedding day came. My mother kissed me fondly, my father blessed me with pride and joy, my sisters stood round, radiant with delight. There was but one drawback to the universal happiness—that immediately on my marriage I was to go abroad.

From the church door I stepped into the carriage. Having once and again been folded in my dear mother's embrace, the wheels were in motion, and we were away. I looked out from the window; there was the dear group: my old father, white-headed and aged, in his large chair; my mother, smiling through her tears, with folded hands and upraised looks of gratitude, anticipating long years of happiness for her child; Susan and Lawrence standing side by side, unenvious of my greatness, happy in themselves; my sisters conning over with pride and joy the presents made to them, and the prosperity that flowed in from my husband's generosity. All looked happy, and it seemed as if I were the cause of all this happiness. We had been indeed saved from dreadful evils; ruin had ensued from the fire, and we had been sunk in adversity through that very event from which our good fortune took its rise. I felt proud and glad. I loved them all. I thought, I make them happy—they are prosperous through me! And my heart warmed with gratitude towards my husband at the idea.

We spent two years abroad. It was rather lonely for me, who had always been surrounded, as it were, by a populous world of my own, to find myself cast upon foreigners and strangers; the habits of the different sexes in the higher ranks so separate them from each other, that, after a few months, I spent much of my time in solitude. I did not repine; I had been brought up to look upon the hard visage of life, if not unflinchingly, at least with resignation. I did not expect perfect happiness.

Marriages in humble life are attended with so much care. I had none of this: my husband loved me; and though I often longed to see the dear familiar faces that thronged my childhood's home, and, above all, pined for my mother's caresses and her wise maternal lessons, yet for a time I was content to think of them, and hope for a reunion.

Still many things pained me. I had, poor myself, been brought up among the poor, and nothing, since I can remember forming an idea, so much astonished and jarred with my feelings as the thought of how the rich could spend so much on themselves, while any of their fellow-creatures were in destitution. I had none of the patrician charity (though such is praiseworthy), which consists in distributing thin soup and coarse flannel petticoats—a sort of instinct or sentiment of justice, the offspring of my lowly paternal hearth, and my mother's enlightened piety, was deeply implanted in my mind, that all had as good a right to the comforts of life as myself, or even as my husband. My charities, they were called—they seemed to me the payment of my debts to my fellow-creatures—were abundant. Lord Reginald peremptorily checked them; but as I had a large allowance for my own expenses, I denied myself a thousand luxuries, for the sake of feeding the hungry. Nor was it only that charity impelled me, but that I could not acquire a taste for spending money on myself—I disliked the apparatus of wealth. My husband called my ideas sordid, and reproved me severely, when, instead of outshining all competitors at a fête, I appeared dowdily dressed, and declared warmly that I could not, I would not, spend twenty guineas on a gown, while I could dress many sad faces in smiles, and bring much joy to many drooping hearts, by the same sum.

Was I right? I firmly believe that there is not one among the rich who will not affirm that I did wrong; that to please my husband, and do honour to his rank, was my first duty. Yet, shall I confess it? even now, rendered miserable by this fault—I cannot give it that name—I can call it a misfortune—I have wasted at the slow fire of knowing that I lost my husband's affections because I performed what I believed to

be a duty.

But I am not come to that yet. It was not till my return to England that the full disaster crushed me. We had often been applied to for money by my family, and Lord Reginald had acceded to nearly all their requests. When we reached London, after two years' absence, my first wish was to see my dear mother. She was at Margate for her health. It was agreed that I should go there alone, and pay a short visit. Before I went, Lord Reginald told me what I did not know before, that my family had often made exorbitant demands on him, with which he was resolved not to comply. He told me that he had no wish to raise my relatives from their station in society; and that, indeed, there were only two among them whom he conceived had any claims upon me—my mother and my twin-sister: that the former was incapable of any improper request and the latter, by marrying Cooper, had fixed her own position, and could in no way be raised from the rank of her chosen husband. I agreed to much that he said. I replied that he well knew that my own taste led me to consider mediocrity the best and happiest situation; that I had no wish, and would never consent, to supply any extravagant demands on the part of persons, however dear to me, whose circumstances he had rendered easy.

Satisfied with my reply, we parted most affectionately, and I went on my way to Margate with a light and glad heart; and the cordial reception I received from my whole family collected together to receive me, was calculated to add to my satisfaction. The only drawback to my content was my mother's state; she was wasted to a shadow. They all talked and laughed around her, but it was evident to me that she had not long to live.

There was no room for me in the small furnished house in which they were all crowded, so I remained at the hotel. Early in the morning, before I was up, my father visited me. He begged me to intercede with my husband; that on the strength of his support he had embarked in a speculation which required a large capital; that many

families would be ruined, and himself dishonoured, if a few hundreds were not advanced. I promised to do what I could, resolving to ask my mother's advice, and make her my guide. My father kissed me with an effusion of gratitude, and left me.

I cannot enter into the whole of these sad details; all my half-brothers and sisters had married, and trusted to their success in life to Lord Reginald's assistance. Each evidently thought that they asked little in not demanding an equal share of my luxuries and fortune; but they were all in difficulty—all needed large assistance—all depended on me.

Lastly, my own sister Susan appealed to me—but hers was the most moderate request of all—she only wished for twenty pounds. I gave it her at once from my own purse.

As soon as I saw my mother I explained to her my difficulties. She told me that she expected this, and that it broke her heart: I must summon courage and resist these demands. That my father's imprudence had ruined him, and that he must encounter the evil he had brought on himself; that my numerous relatives were absolutely mad with the notion of what I ought to do for them. I listened with grief—I saw the torments in store for me—I felt my own weakness, and knew that I could not meet the rapacity of those about me with any courage or firmness. That same night my mother fell into convulsions; her life was saved with difficulty. From Susan I learned the cause of her attack. She had had a violent altercation with my father: she insisted that I should not be appealed to; while he reproached her for rendering me undutiful, and bringing ruin and disgrace on his grey hairs. When I saw my pale mother trembling, fainting, dying—when I was again and again assured that she must be my father's victim unless I yielded, what wonder that, in the agony of my distress, I wrote to my husband to implore his assistance.

Oh, what thick clouds now obscured my destiny! how do I remember, with a sort of thrilling horror, the boundless sea, white cliffs, and wide sands of Margate! The

summer day that had welcomed my arrival changed to bleak wintry weather during this interval—while I waited with anguish for my husband's answer. Well do I remember the evening on which it came: the waves of the sea showed their white crests, no vessel ventured to meet the gale with any canvas except a topsail, the sky was bared clear by the wind, the sun was going down fiery red. I looked upon the troubled waters—I longed to be borne away upon them, away from care and misery. At this moment a servant followed me to the sands with my husband's answer—it contained a refusal. I dared not communicate it. The menaces of bankruptcy; the knowledge that he had instilled false hopes into so many; the fears of disgrace, rendered my father, always rough, absolutely ferocious. Life flickered in my dear mother's frame, it seemed on the point of expiring when she heard my father's step; if he came in with a smooth brow, her pale lips wreathed into her own sweet smile, and a delicate pink tinged her fallen cheeks; if he scowled, and his voice was high, every limb shivered, she turned her face to her pillow, while convulsive tears shook her frame, and threatened instant dissolution. My father sought me alone one day, as I was walking in melancholy guise upon the sands; he swore that he would not survive his disgrace. "And do you think, Fanny," he added "that your mother will survive the knowledge of my miserable end?" I saw the resolution of despair in his face as he spoke.—I asked the sum needed, the time when it must be given.—A thousand pounds in two days was all that was asked. I set off to London to implore my husband to give this sum.

No! no! I cannot step by step record my wretchedness—the money was given—I extorted it from Lord Reginald, though I saw his very heart closed on me as he wrote the cheque. Worse had happened since I had left him. Susan had used the twenty pounds I gave her to reach town, to throw herself at my husband's feet, and implore his compassion. Rendered absolutely insane by the idea of having a lord for a brother-in-law, Cooper had launched into a system of extravagance, incredible as it was wicked. He was many thousand pounds in debt, and when at last Lord Reginald

wrote to refuse all further supply, the miserable man committed forgery. Two hundred pounds prevented exposure, and preserved him from an ignominious end. Five hundred more were advanced to send him and his wife to America, to settle there, out of the way of temptation. I parted from my dear sister—I loved her fondly; she had no part in her husband's guilt, yet she was still attached to him, and her child bound them together; they went into solitary, miserable exile. "Ah! had we remained in virtuous poverty," cried my broken-hearted sister, "I had not been forced to leave my dying mother."

The thousand pounds given to my father was but a drop of water in the ocean. Again I was appealed to; again I felt the slender thread of my mother's life depended on my getting a supply. Again, trembling and miserable, I implored the charity of my husband.

"I am content," he said, "to do what you ask, to do more than you ask; but remember the price you pay—either give up your parents and your family, whose rapacity and crimes deserve no mercy, or we part for ever. You shall have a proper allowance; you can maintain all your family on it if you please; but their names must never be mentioned to me again. Choose between us—you never see them more, or we part for ever."

Did I do right—I cannot tell—misery is the result—misery frightful, endless, unredeemed. My mother was dearer to me than all the world. I did not reply—I rushed to my room, and that night, in a delirium of grief and horror, I set out for Margate—such was my reply to my husband.

Three years have passed since then; and during all this time I was grateful to Heaven for being permitted to do my duty by my mother; and though I wept over the alienation of my husband, I did not repent. But she, my angelic support, is no more. My father survived my mother but two months; remorse for all he had done, and made me suffer, cut short his life. His family by his first wife are gathered round me;

they importune, they rob, they destroy me. Last week I wrote to Lord Reginald. I communicated the death of my parents; I represented that my position was altered; and that if he still cared for his unhappy wife all might be well. Yesterday his answer came.—It was too late, he said;—I had myself torn asunder the ties that united us—they never could be knit together again.

By the same post came a letter from Susan. She is happy. Cooper, awakened to a manly sense of the duties of life, is thoroughly reformed. He is industrious and prosperous. Susan asks me to join her. I am resolved to go. Oh! my home, and recollections of my youth, where are ye now? envenomed by serpents' stings, I long to close my eyes on every scene I have ever viewed. Let me seek a strange land, a land where a grave will soon be opened for me. I desire to die. I am told that Lord Reginald loves another, a high-born girl; that he openly curses our union as the obstacle to his happiness. The memory of this will poison the oblivion I go to seek. He will soon be free. Soon will the hand he once so fondly took in his and made his own, which, now flung away, trembles with misery as it traces these lines, moulder in its last decay.

XIV. THE POLE.

It was near the close of day that a travelling calèche, coming from Rome, was seen approaching at full gallop towards Mola di Gaeta. The road leading to the inn is rocky and narrow; on one side is an orange grove, extending to the sea; on the other, an old Roman wall, overgrown by blossoming shrubs, enormous aloes, floating tangles of vines, and a thousand species of parasite plants peculiar to the South. Scarcely had the calèche entered this defile, when the careless postillion drove one of the wheels over a protruding ledge of rock, and overturned it; and, in the next moment, a crowd of people came running to the spot. Not one of them, however, thought of relieving the traveller within the fallen vehicle; but, with violent gestures

and loud outcries, began to examine what damage the calèche had sustained, and what profit they might derive from it. The wheelwright declared every wheel was shattered; the carpenter that the shafts were splintered; whilst the blacksmith, passing and repassing under the carriage, tugged at every clamp and screw and nail, with all the violence necessary to ensure himself a handsome job. The traveller it contained having quietly disengaged himself from various cloaks, books, and maps, now slowly descended, and for a moment the busy crowd forgot their restlessness, to gaze upon the noble figure of the stranger. He seemed to be scarcely two-and-twenty. In stature he was tall, and his form was moulded in such perfect proportions, that it presented a rare combination of youthful lightness and manly strength. His countenance, had you taken from it its deep thoughtfulness and its expression of calm intrepid bravery, might have belonged to the most lovely woman, so transparently blooming was his complexion, so regular his features, so blond and luxuriant his hair. Of all those present, he seemed the least concerned at the accident; he neither looked at the calèche, nor paid any attention to the offers of service that were screamed from a dozen mouths; but, drawing out his watch, asked his servant if the carriage was broken.

“Pann,[4] the shafts are snapped, two of the springs are injured, and the linch-pin has flown.”

4. My Lord, in Polish.

“How long will it take to repair them?”

“Twenty-four hours.”

“It is now four o’clock. See that everything be in order again by to-morrow’s daybreak.”

“Pann, with these lazy Italians, I fear it will be impossible”—

“Ya paswalam,”[5] replied the traveller coldly, but decidedly. “Pay what you will, but let all be ready for the hour I have mentioned.”

5. I will it, in Polish.

Without another word, he walked towards the inn, followed by the crowd, teasing for alms. A few seconds ago they had all been active and healthy beings, so full of employment they could not afford to mend his calèche unless tempted by some extraordinary reward; now the men declared themselves cripples and invalids, the children were orphans, the women helpless widows, and they would all die of hunger if his Eccellenza did not bestow a few grani. “What a tedious race!” exclaimed the traveller, casting a handful of coins upon the ground, which caused a general scramble, and enabled him to proceed unmolested. At the inn new torments awaited him; a fresh crowd, composed of the landlord, the landlady, and their waiters and hostlers, gathered round, and assailed him with innumerable questions. The landlord hoped none of his limbs were broken, and begged him to consider himself master of the house; the waiters desired to know at what hour he would sup, what fare he chose, how long he intended to stay, where he came from, whither he was going; and the landlady led him, ostentatiously, through all the rooms of the inn, expatiating endlessly upon the peculiar and indescribable advantages of each. Ineffably weary of their officiousness, the traveller at last traversed a long and spacious hall, and took refuge in a balcony that looked upon the bay of Gaeta.

The inn is built upon the site of Cicero’s Villa. Beneath the balcony, and on each side, along the whole curve of the bay, stretched a thick grove of orange-trees, which sloped down to the very verge of the Mediterranean. Balls of golden fruit, and blossoms faint with odour, and fair as stars, studded this amphitheatre of dark foliage; and at its extremity the liquid light of the waves pierced the glossy leaves, mingling their blue splendour with earth’s green paradise. Every rock and mountain glowed with a purple hue, so intense and soft, they resembled violet vapours dissolving into the pale radiance of the evening sky. Far away in the deep broad flood of the ocean rose the two mountain islands of Ischia and Procida, between which Vesuvius thrust in his jagged form, and his floating banner of snow-white

smoke. The solitary heaven was without sun or moon, without a star or cloud, but smiled in that tender vestal light which speaks of eternal, immutable peace.

It would be difficult to define the feelings of the traveller as he gazed on this scene: his countenance, uplifted to heaven, was animated with a profound and impassioned melancholy, with an expression of an earnest and fervid pleading against some vast and inevitable wrong. He was thinking of his country; and whilst he contrasted its ruined villages and devastated fields with the splendour and glow of the fair land before him, was breathing inwardly a passionate appeal against that blind and cruel destiny which had consigned Poland to the desolating influence of Russian despotism. His reverie was interrupted by the sound of a female voice singing in Polish among the orange-trees at his feet. The singer was invisible; but the sweetness of her voice, and the singular reference of the words (the following prose translation conveys their meaning) to the thoughts of his own mind, filled the traveller with surprise:—

“When thou gazest upon the azure heaven, so mighty in its calm, do not say, O bright enchantment, hast thou no pity, that thou dawnest thus in unattainable loveliness upon my world-wearied eyes.

“When the southern wind softly breathes, do not say reproachfully, Thy cradle is the ether of the morning sun, thou drinkest the odorous essence of myrtle and lemon blossoms; thou shouldst bear upon thy wings all sweet emotions, all soft desires; why bringest thou then no healing to the anguish I endure?

“Neither in the dark hour, when thou thinkest upon thy country and thy friends, say not with grief, They are lost! They are not! Say rather with joy, They were illustrious! and it is bliss to know that they have been!”

It were wise in me to obey thy lesson, sweet songstress, thought the traveller; and revolving in his mind the singularity of the serenade, he continued to gaze upon the trees below. There was no rustling amid their branches, no sound which told a

human being was concealed beneath their foliage; nothing was heard beyond the almost imperceptible breathings of the evening air. Did such things exist anywhere but in the imagination of the poet? He could almost have believed that the spirit of that divine scene had assumed a human voice and human words to soothe his melancholy, so floating and airy had been the strain, so deep the silence that succeeded it. One moment more, and there arose from the same spot cries for help uttered in Italian, and shrieks of distress so piercing, they made the traveller fly with the speed of lightning through the great hall, down the staircase into the garden. The first object that met his eyes was the figure of a girl about sixteen, her one arm tightly embracing the stem of a tree, her other angrily repelling a young man who was endeavouring to drag her away.

“I will not go with you—I love you no longer, Giorgio—and go with you, I will not,” shrieked the girl, in tones of mingled violence and fear.

“You must—you shall,” retorted her aggressor in a voice of thunder.

“I have found you again, and I won’t be duped by your fooleries, Marietta.—And who are you, and who begged you to interfere?” added he, turning fiercely upon the traveller, whose strong grasp had torn him from Marietta.

“An officer, as it should seem by your dress;—be pleased to know that I am also an officer, and risk my displeasure no further.”

“No officer would ill-treat a defenceless girl,” the Pole replied with quiet contempt.

At this taunt Giorgio quivered with rage. His features, handsome and regular as those of Italians generally are, became quite distorted. His hands with convulsive movements sought about his breast for the dagger that was concealed there, his dark flashing eyes fixed intently at the same time upon his adversary, as if he hoped the fiendish spirit that burned within them might previously annihilate him.

“Be on your guard—he is a perfect wretch,” cried Marietta, rushing towards her protector.

The arrival of several servants from the inn dispelled all idea of present danger: they dragged off Giorgio, telling him that, although the girl was his sister, he had no right to separate her from the corps d'opera, with whom she was travelling through Gaeta.

"E vero è verissimo," cried Marietta with joyful triumph.

"What is it to him if I like my liberty, and prefer wandering about, singing here and there."

"Marietta! beware! dare not to speak ill of me!" screamed the retiring Giorgio, looking back over his shoulder, and accompanying his words with a look of such frightful menace as completely subdued his sister.

She watched in anxious silence till he had disappeared, and then, with affectionate humility and a graceful quickness that allowed not of its prevention, knelt lightly down, and pressed the stranger's hand to her lips.

"You have more than repaid me for the song I sang to you," she said, rising and leading the way to the inn; "and, if you like it, I will sing others to you whilst you sup."

"Are you a Pole?" inquired the traveller.

"A fine demand! how can I be a Pole? Did you not say yourself there was no longer any such country as Poland?"

"I? not that I recollect."

"If you did not say it, confess at least that you thought it. The Poles are all become Russians, and for nothing in the world, Signor, would I be a Russian. Why in all their language they have no word that expresses honour.[6] No! rather than be a Russian, much as I hate it, I would go with Giorgio."

6. This is true. The Russian language is without that word.

"Are you an Italian?"

"No—not exactly."

“What are you, then?”

“Um! I am what I am; who can be more? But, Signor, one thing I must beg of you, do not ask me any questions about myself, nor any about Giorgio. I will sing to you, talk to you, wait upon you—anything of that kind you please, but I will not answer questions on those subjects.”

Seating herself upon a stool, in a dark corner of the traveller’s apartment, as far removed as possible from him, and all other interruptions, Marietta passed the evening in playing on her guitar and singing. She was a most accomplished singer, possessing and managing all the intricacies of the art with perfect ease, but this scarcely excited admiration in comparison with the natural beauty of her voice. There was a profound melancholy in its intense sweetness, that dissolved the soul of the traveller in grief. All that was dear to him in the memory of the past,—the joys of home and childhood, the tenderness and truth of his first friendships, the glow of patriotism; every cherished hour, every endeared spot, all that he had loved, and all that he had lost upon earth, seemed again to live and again to fade, as he listened to her strains. Without paying any attention to him, and apparently without any effort to herself, she breathed forth melody after melody for her own pleasure, like some lone nightingale, that, in a home of green leaves, sings to cheer its solitude with sweet sounds. Her countenance and figure would have been beautiful had they been more fully developed. They resembled those sketches of a great artist in which there are only a few lightly-traced lines, but those so full of spirit and meaning, that you easily imagine what a masterpiece it would have been when finished.

The first visit of our traveller, on arriving, next day, at Naples was to the Princess Dashkhoff. She was a Russian lady, whose high birth, immense wealth, and talents for intrigue, had procured for her the intimacy of half the crowned heads of Europe, and had made her all-powerful at the Court of St. Petersburg. Detesting the cold barbarism of her native country, she had established herself at Naples, in a splendid

mansion, near the Strada Nuova; and affecting an extravagant admiration for Italy, by her munificent patronage of the arts and artists, and by perpetual exhibitions of her own skill, in drawing and singing, dancing and acting, had obtained the name of the Corinna of the North. Her salon was the evening resort of the wise, the idle, the witty, and the dissipated. Not to know Corinna was to be yourself unknown; and not to frequent her conversazioni was, as far as society was concerned, to be banished from all that was fashionable or delightful in Naples.

It was the hour of evening reception. The Pole burned with impatience to speak to the Princess, for on her influence, at Petersburg, depended the fate of his only brother. A splendid suite of apartments, blazing with lights, crowded with company, lay open before him; without allowing himself to be announced, he entered them. When a highly imaginative mind is absorbed by some master feeling, all opposing contrasts, all glowing extremes, serve but to add depth and intensity to that feeling. The festal scene of marble columns garlanded by roses, the walls of Venetian mirror, reflecting the light of innumerable tapers, and the forms of lovely women and gay youths floating in the mazy dance, seemed to him deceitful shows that veiled some frightful sorrow; and with eager, rapid steps, as if borne along by the impulse of his own thoughts, he hurried past them. Scarcely knowing how he had arrived there, he at length found himself standing beside the Princess, in a marble colonnade, open above to the moonlight and the stars of heaven, and admitting at its sides the odours of the blossoming almond trees of the adjacent gardens.

“Ladislas!” exclaimed the lady, starting; “is it possible—to see you here almost exceeds belief.”

After remaining some moments in deep silence, collecting and arranging his thoughts, the Pole replied. A conversation ensued, in so low a voice as to be only audible to themselves; from their attitudes and gestures it might be inferred that Ladislas was relating some tale of deep anguish, mixed with solemn and impressive

adjurations, to which the Princess listened with a consenting tranquillizing sympathy.

They issued from the recess, walked up the colonnade, and entered a small temple that terminated it. From the centre of its airy dome hung a lighted alabaster lamp of a boat-like shape, beneath which a youthful female was seated alone sketching a range of moonlight hills that appeared between the columns. “Idalie,” said the Princess, “I have brought you a new subject for your pencil—and such a subject, my love—one whose fame has already made him dear to your imagination; no less a person than the hero of Ostrolenka[7] and the Vistula. So call up one of those brightest, happiest moods of your genius, in which all succeeds to you, and enrich my album with his likeness,” spreading it before her.

7. At Ostrolenka, the Russian and Polish armies were in sight of one another. The destruction of the Poles seemed inevitable; not expecting the attack, their lines were not formed, and the Russians were triple in number, and advancing in the most perfect order. In this emergency, three hundred students from the University of Warsaw drew hastily up in a body, and, devoting themselves willingly to death, marched forward to meet the onset of the enemy. They were headed by a young man, who distinguished himself by the most exalted courage, and was the only one of their numbers who escaped. He stationed his band in a small wood that lay directly in the path of the Russians, and checked their progress for the space of three hours. Every tree of that wood now waves above a patriot’s grave. In the meantime the Polish army formed, bore down, and gained a brilliant victory.

It is difficult to refuse any request to a person who has just granted us an important favour. Ladislas suffered himself to be seated, and as soon as the Princess had quitted them, the gloom which had shadowed his brow at the names of Ostrolenka and the Vistula vanished. The surpassing beauty of the young artist would have changed the heaviest penance into a pleasure. She was lovely as one of Raffaelle’s

Madonnas; and, like them, there was a silent beauty in her presence that struck the most superficial beholder with astonishment and satisfaction. Her hair, of a golden and burnished brown (the colour of the autumnal foliage illuminated by the setting sun), fell in gauzy wavings round her face, throat, and shoulders. Her small, clear forehead, gleaming with gentle thought; her curved, soft, and rosy lips; the delicate moulding of the lower part of the face, expressing purity and integrity of nature, were all perfectly Grecian. Her hazel eyes, with their arched lids and dark arrowy lashes, pierced the soul with their full and thrilling softness. She was clad in long and graceful drapery, white as snow; but, pure as this garment was, it seemed a rude disguise to the resplendent softness of the limbs it enfolded. The delicate light that gleamed from the alabaster lamp above them was a faint simile of the ineffable spirit of love that burned within Idalie's fair, transparent frame; and the one trembling, shining star of evening that palpitates responsively to happy lovers, never seemed more divine or more beloved than she did to Ladislas, as she sat there, now fixing a timid but attentive gaze upon his countenance, and then dropping it upon the paper before her. And not alone for Ladislas was this hour the dawn of passionate love. The same spell was felt in the heart of Idalie. One moment their eyes met and glanced upon each other, the look of exalted, eternal love—mute, blessed, and inexpressible. Their lids fell and were raised no more. Rapture thrilled their breasts and swelled their full hearts; for, motionless, and in deep silence, as if every outward faculty were absorbed in reverence, they continued, each inwardly knowing, hearing, seeing nothing but the divine influence and attraction of the other.

I know not if the portrait was finished. I believe it was not. Noiselessly Idalie arose and departed to seek the Princess, and Ladislas followed. "Who is that lovely being!" inquired an English traveller some time afterward, pointing out Idalie from a group of ladies.

"A Polish girl—a protégée of mine," was the reply of the Princess; "a daughter of one of Kosciusko's unfortunate followers, who died here, poor and unknown. She

has a great genius for drawing and painting, but she is so different in her nature from the generality of people, that I am afraid she will never get on in the world. All the family are wild and strange. There is a brother who they say is a complete ruffian; brave as a Pole and as unprincipled as an Italian! a villain quite varnished in picturesque, like one of your Lord Byron's corsairs and giaours. Then there is a younger sister; the most uncontrollable little creature, who chose to pretend my house was insupportable, and ran away into Calabria or Campagna, and set up as a prima donna. But these, to be sure, are the children of a second wife, an Italian; and Idalie, I must confess, has none of their lawlessness, but is remarkably gentle and steady."

Disgusted with this heartless conversation, which disturbed his ecstasy, Ladislas hastily quitted the Dashkhoff palace, and entered the Villa Reale, whose embowering trees promised solitude. Not one straggler of the gay crowds that frequent this luxurious garden from morning till midnight was now to be seen. With its straight walks buried in gloom and shadow; its stone fonts of sleeping water; its marble statues, its heaven-pointing obelisks, and its midnight air, it was silent as a deserted oratory, when the last strain of the vesper hymn has died away, the last taper has ceased to burn, the last censer has been flung, and both priests and worshippers have departed. Ladislas cast himself upon a stone seat in the ilex grove that skirts the margin of the bay. "I dreamt not of love," he exclaimed; "I sought her not! I had renounced life and all its train of raptures, hopes, and joys. Cold, and void of every wish, the shadow of death lay upon my heart; suddenly she stood before me, lovely as an angel that heralds departed spirits to the kingdom of eternal bliss. Fearless, but mild, she poured the magic of her gaze upon my soul. I speak the word of the hour. She shall be mine—or I will die!"

Reclining in the ilex grove, Ladislas passed the remaining hours of that too short night, entranced in bliss, as if the bright form of his beloved were still shining beside him. Gradually every beauty of the wondrous and far-famed Bay of Naples

impressed itself upon his attention. The broad and beamless moon sinking behind the tall elms of Posilippo; the broken starlight on the surface of the waves—their rippling sound as they broke at his feet; Sorrento's purple promontory, and the gentle wind that blew from it; the solitary grandeur of Capri's mountain-island rising out of the middle of the bay, a colossal sphinx guarding two baths of azure light; Vesuvius breathing its smoke, and flame, and sparks, in the cloudless ether;—all became mingled in inexplicable harmony with his new-born passion, and were indelibly associated with his recollection of that night.

The next morning Idalie was sketching in the Villa Reale. She had seated herself on the outside of a shady alley. Two persons passed behind her, and the childish petulant voice of one of them drew her attention. That voice, so sweet even in its impatience, certainly belonged to her fugitive sister. "It is she!" exclaimed Idalie, gliding swift as thought between the trees, and folding the speaker to her bosom. "Marietta—my dear little Marietta! at last you are come back again. Cattivella! now promise to stay with me. You know not how miserable I have been about you."

"No! I cannot promise anything of the kind," replied Marietta, playing with the ribands of her guitar. "I choose to have my liberty."

Idalie's arms sunk, and her eyes were cast upon the ground when she heard the cold and decided tone in which this refusal was pronounced. On raising the latter, they glanced upon the companion of her sister, and were filled with unconquerable emotion at discovering Ladislas, the elected of her heart.

"I met your sister here a few minutes ago," explained he, partaking her feelings; "and having been so fortunate the other day as to render her a slight service"—

"Oh yes," interrupted Marietta; "I sung for him a whole evening at Gaeta. It was a curious adventure. His carriage was overturned close to the inn. I had arrived there half an hour before, and was walking in an orange grove near the spot, and saw the accident happen, and heard him speak in Polish to his servant. My heart beat with

joy. He looked wondrous melancholy. I thought it must be about his country, so I crept as softly as a mouse among the trees under his balcony, and sung him a salve-song in Polish. I improvised it on the spur of the moment. I do not very well recollect it, but it was about azure heavens, southern winds, myrtle and lemon blossoms, and the illustrious unfortunate; and it ought to have pleased him. Just as I had finished, out starts our blessed brother, Giorgio, from the inn, and began one of his most terrific bothers. Imagine how frightened I was, for I thought he was gone to Sicily with his regiment. However, they got him away, and I followed this stranger into his room, and sang to him the rest of the evening. All my best songs,—the 'Mio ben quando verrà,' 'Nina pazza per Amore,' the 'All' armi' of Generali; the 'Dolce cara patria,' from Tancredi; the 'Deh calma,' from Otello,—all my whole stock I assure you." Thus rattled on Marietta; and then, as if her quick eye had already discovered the secret of their attachment, she added, with an arch smile, "but don't be frightened, Idalie, though his eyes filled with tears whilst I sung, as yours often do, not a word of praise did the Sarmatian bestow on me."

"Then return and live with me, dear Marietta, and I will praise you as much, and more than you desire."

"Santa Maria del Piê di Grotta! What a tiresome person you are, Idalie. When you have got an idea into your head, an earthquake would not get it out again. Have I not told you that I will not. If you knew the motive you would approve my resolution. I said I liked my liberty, and so forth; but that was not the reason of my flight. I do not choose to have anything to do with Giorgio and the Princess; for, believe me, dearest Idalie, disgraceful as my present mode of life seems to you, it is innocence itself compared with the crimes they were leading me into."

"Some suspicion of this did once cross my mind," her sister replied with a sigh, "but I rejected it as too horrible. Dear child, think no more about them. Do you not know that I have left the Princess' house, and am living by myself in a little pavilion far up

on the Strada Nuova. There you need not fear their molestations."

"Is not Giorgio then with you?"

"No; I have not seen him for some time. I doubt if he be in Naples."

"So Messer Giorgio, you have deceived me again. But I might have known that, for he never speaks a word of truth. Be assured, however, he is in Naples, for I caught a glimpse of him this morning, mounting the hill that leads to the barracks at Pizzofalcone, and he is as intimate with the Princess as ever, though she pretends to disown him. As for me, I am engaged at San Carlos; the writing is signed and sealed, and cannot be broken without forfeiting a heavy sum of money; otherwise I should be happy to live peacefully with you; for you know not, Idalie, all I have had to suffer; how sad and ill-treated I have been! how often pinched with want and hunger; and worse than that, when Giorgio takes it into his head to pursue me, and plants himself in the pit, fixing his horrible looks upon me as I sing! how many times I have rushed out of the theatre, and spent the nights in the great wide Maremma, beset by robbers, buffaloes, and wild boars, till I was almost mad with fear and bewilderment. There is a curse upon our family, I think. Did not our father once live in a splendid castle of his own, with a hundred retainers to wait upon him; and do you remember the miserable garret in which he died? But I cannot stay any longer. I am wanted at the rehearsal: so, farewell, dearest Idalie. Be you at least happy, and leave me to fulfil the evil destiny that hangs over our race."

"No! no!" exclaimed Ladislas, "that must not be—the writing must be cancelled,"—and then, with the affection and unreserve of a brother, he entered into their sentiments; with sweet and persuasive arguments overcame their scruples of receiving a pecuniary obligation from him; and finally, taking Marietta by the hand, led her away to San Carlos, in order to cancel her engagement.

And in another hour it was cancelled. Marietta was once more free and joyful; and, affectionate as old friends, the three met again in the little pavilion, which was

Idalie's home. It stood alone in a myrtle wood on the last of the green promontories which form the Strada Nuova, and separate the Bay of Naples from the Bay of Baia,—a lonely hermitage secluded from the noise and turmoil of the city, whose only visitors were the faint winds of morning and evening, the smiles of the fair Italian heaven, its wandering clouds, and, perchance, a solitary bird. From every part of the building you could see the Baian Ocean sparkling breathlessly beneath the sun; through the windows and the columns of the portico you beheld the mountains of the distant coast shining on, hour after hour, like amethysts in a thrilling vapour of purple transparent light, so ardent yet halcyon, so bright and unreal, a poet would have chosen it to emblem the radiant atmosphere that glows around elysian isles of eternal peace and joy. Marietta soon left the building to join some fisher boys who were dancing the tarantella upon the beach below. Idalie took her drawing, which was her daily employment, and furnished her the means of subsistence, and Ladislas sat by her side. There was no sound of rolling carriages, no tramp of men and horse, no distant singing, no one speaking near; the wind awoke no rustling amid the leaves of the myrtle wood, and the wave died without a murmur on the shore. Ladislas' deep but melodious voice alone broke the crystal silence of the noonday air. Italy was around him, robed in two splendours of blue and green; but he was an exile, and the recollections of his native land thronged into his memory. During the three months it had taken him to effect his escape from Warsaw to Naples, his lips had been closed in silence, whilst his mind had been wrapt in the gloom of the dreadful images that haunted it. In Idalie's countenance there was that expression of innocence and sublimity of soul, of purity and strength, that excited the warmest admiration, and inspired sudden and deep confidence. She looked like some supernatural being that walks through the world, untouched by its corruptions; like one that unconsciously, yet with delight, confers pleasure and peace; and Ladislas felt that, in speaking to her of the dark sorrows of his country, they would lose their mortal weight and be resolved into beauty, by her sympathy. In glowing terms he

described the heroic struggle of Poland for liberty; the triumph and exultation that had filled every bosom during the few months they were free; the hardships and privations they had endured, the deeds of daring bravery of the men, the heroism it had awakened in the women; and then its fall—the return of the Russians; the horrible character of Russian despotism, its sternness and deceit, its pride and selfish ignorance; the loss of public and private integrity, the disbelief of good, the blighted, hopeless, joyless life endured by those whom it crushes beneath its servitude.

Thus passed the hours of the forenoon. Then Ladislas fixing his eyes upon the coast of Baia, and expressing at the same time his impatience to visit that ancient resort of heroes and of emperors, Idalie led the way by a small path down the hill to the beach. There they found a skiff, and, unmooring it from its rocky haven, embarked in it. It had been sweet to mark the passage of that light bark freighted with these happy lovers, when borne by its sails it swept through the little ocean-channel that lies between the beaked promontories of the mainland and the closing cliffs of the island of Nisida; and when with gentler motion it glided into the open expanse of the Bay of Baia, and cut its way through the translucent water, above the ruins of temples and palaces overgrown by seaweed, on which the rays of the sun were playing, creating a thousand rainbow hues, that varied with every wave that flowed over them. In all that plane of blue light it was the only moving thing; and as if it had been the child of the ocean that bore it, and the sun that looked down on it, it sped gaily along in their smiles past the fortress where Brutus and Cassius sought shelter after the death of Cæsar; past the temples of Jupiter and Neptune; by the ruins of that castle in which three Romans once portioned out the world between them, to the Cumean hill that enshadows the beloved Linternum of Scipio Africanus, and in which he died. The whole of this coast is a paradise of natural beauty, investing with its own loveliness the time-eaten wrecks with which it is strewn; the mouldering past is mingled with the vivid present; ruin and grey annihilation are decked in eternal spring. The woody windings of the shore reveal, in their deep

recesses, the gleaming marble fragments of the abodes of ancient heroes; the verdurous hues of the promontories mingle with the upright columns of shattered temples, or clothe, with nature's voluptuous bloom, the pale funereal urns of departed gods; whilst the foliage and the inland fountains, and the breaking waves upon the shore, were murmuring around their woven minstrelsy of love and joy. Earth, sea, and sky blazed like three gods, with tranquil but animated loveliness; with a splendour that did not dazzle—with a richness that could not satiate. The air on that beautiful warm coast was as a field of fragrance; the refreshing sea-breeze seemed to blow from Paradise, quickening the senses, and bringing to them the odour of a thousand unknown blossoms. "What world is this?" exclaimed Ladislas in a tone of rapture that nearly answered its own question. "I could imagine I had entered an enchanted garden; four heavens surround me,—the one above; the pure element beneath me with its waves that shine and tremble as stars; the adorned earth that hangs over it; and the heaven of delight they create within my breast. 'Morning is here a rose, day a tulip, night a lily; evening is, like morning, again a rose, and life seems a choral-hymn of beautiful and glowing sentiments, that I go singing to myself as I wander along this perpetual path of flowers.'"

It was night ere they again reached the pavilion. It stood dark and deserted in the clear moonshine; the door was locked. After calling and knocking repeatedly without obtaining any answer, it became evident that Marietta had quitted the dwelling. In the first moment of surprise which this occurrence occasioned, they had not observed a written sheet of paper, of a large size, which lay unfolded and placed directly before the door, as if to attract attention. Idalie took it up and read the following lines, traced by Marietta:—

"Oh, Idalie! but a few hours ago, how calm and secure we were in happiness—now danger and perhaps destruction is our portion. One chance yet remains; the moment you get this, persuade—not only persuade—but compel that adorable stranger to fly instantly from Naples. He is not safe here an instant longer. Do not doubt what I say,

or his life may be the forfeit. How can I impress this on your mind? I would not willingly betray any one, but how else can I save him? Giorgio has been here. Oh! the frightful violence of that man. He raved like an insane person, and let fall such dark and bloody hints as opened worlds of horror to me. I am gone to discover what I can. I know his haunts, and his associates, and shall soon find out if there be any truth in what he threatens. I could not await your return, neither dare I leave the pavilion open. Who knows if, in the interval between my departure and your return, an assassin might not conceal himself within; and your first welcome be, to see the stranger fall lifeless at your feet. His every step is watched by spies armed for his destruction. I know not what to do—and yet it seems to me that my going may possibly avert the catastrophe."

"Marietta"

Ladislas listened to these lines unmoved; but the effect they produced on Idalie was dreadful. She gave implicit credence to them, and every word sounded as a knell. She lost all presence of mind; every reflection that might have taught her to avert the stroke she so much dreaded, was swallowed up in anguish, as if the deed that was to be consummated were already done. What task can be more difficult than to describe the overwhelming agony which heavy and unexpected misery produces. To have lived the day that Idalie had just lived—a day in which all the beauty of existence had been unveiled to its very depths; to have dreamt, as she had done, a dream of love that steeped her soul in divine and almost uncommunicable joy; and now to sink from this pinnacle of happiness into a black and lampless cavern, the habitation of death, whose spectral form and chilling spirit was felt through all the air! This is but a feeble metaphor of the sudden transition from rapture to misery which Idalie experienced. She looked upon Ladislas, and beheld him bright and full of life; the roseate hues of health upon his cheek, his eyes beaming with peaceful joy, his noble countenance varying not in the least from that imperturbable self-possession which was its habitual expression. And as her imagination made

present to her the fatal moment, when beneath the dagger of the assassin this adored being should sink bleeding, wounded, and then be for ever lost in death, her blood rushed to her heart, a deadly pause ensued, from which she awoke in a bewildering mist of horror. Ladislas beheld her excess of emotion with pain, in which, however, all was not pain, for it was blended with that triumphant exultation that a lover ever feels when he for the first time becomes assured that he is beloved by the object of his love with an affection tender and intense as his own.

As soon as Idalie recovered some presence of mind, with passionate supplications she entreated Ladislas to leave her, to fly this solitary spot, and to seek safety amid the crowded streets of Naples. He would not hear of this; he gently remonstrated with her upon the unreasonableness of her terrors, urging how little probable it was that his passing rencontre with Giorgio at Gaeta could have awakened in him such a deadly spirit of revenge as Marietta represented. He viewed the whole thing lightly, attributing it either to the vivacity of Marietta’s imagination, which had made her attach a monstrous import to some angry expressions of her brother, or looking upon it as a merry device which she had contrived in order to frighten them; and tranquillized Idalie by assurances that they would shortly see her wild sister return laughing, and full of glee at the success of her plot. In this expectation two hours passed away, but still no Marietta appeared, and it had grown too late to seek another shelter without exposing Idalie to the slander of evil-minded people. They passed the rest of the night therefore in the portico, Idalie sometimes pale and breathless, with recurring fears, and sometimes calm and happy, as Ladislas poured forth his tale of passionate love. His feelings, on the contrary, were pure and unalloyed. Where Idalie was, there was the whole universe to him; where she was not, there was only a formless void. He had an insatiable thirst for her presence, which only grew intenser with the enjoyment of its own desire; and he blessed the fortunate occurrence that prolonged his bliss during hours which otherwise would have been spent pining in absence from her. No other considerations intruded.

Blessings kindled within his eyes as he gazed upon that lovely countenance and faultless form, and angels might have envied his happiness.

Morning came, bright and serene; the sun arose, the ocean and the mountains again resumed their magic splendour; the myrtle woods and every minuter bloom of the garden shone out beneath the sun, and the whole earth was a happy form made perfect by the power of light. They recollected that they had promised to join the Princess Dashkhoff, and a large party of her friends, at eight o'clock, in an excursion to Pæstum. The point of meeting was the shore of the Villa Reale, where the numerous guests were to embark in a steamer which had been engaged for the occasion. In Idalie's present homeless and uncertain condition, this plan offered some advantages. It would enable them to pass the day in each other's society under the auspices of the Princess, and it was to be hoped that on their return the mystery of Marietta's disappearance would be unravelled, and Idalie find her home once more open to her. They had scarcely settled to go, ere one of those horse calessini which ply in the streets of Naples was seen coming towards them. Its driver, a ragged boy, sat on the shaft, singing as he drove; another urchin, all in tatters, stood as lacquey behind, and between them sat Marietta; the paleness of fear was on her cheeks, and her eyes had the staggered, affrighted look of one who has gazed upon some appalling horror. She hastily descended, and bade the calessino retire to some distance, and await further orders.

"Why is he yet here?" said she to her sister. "You foolish, blind Idalie, why did you not mind my letter?—too proud, I suppose, to obey any but yourself; but mark, you would not hear my warnings—we shall lose him, and you will feel them in your heart's core." She then, with all the violent gesticulation of an Italian, threw herself at the feet of Ladislas, and with a countenance that expressed her own full conviction in what she said, besought him to fly instantly, not only from Naples, but from Italy, for his life would never be safe in that land of assassins and traitors. With entreaties almost as violent as her own, Ladislas and Idalie urged her to explain, but

this only threw her into a new frenzy; she declared the peril was too urgent to admit of explanation—every moment was precious—another hour's stay in Naples would be his death.

The situation of Ladislas was a curious one. He had served in the Russian campaigns against Persia and Turkey, and had been there daily exposed to the chances of destruction; in the late struggle between Poland and Russia, he had performed actions of such determined and daring bravery as had made his name a glory to his countrymen, and a terror to their enemies. In all these exploits he had devoted himself so unreservedly to death, that his escape was considered as a miraculous interposition of Heaven. It was not to be expected that this Mars in a human form, this Achilles who had braved death in a thousand shapes, should now consent to fly before the uplifted finger and visionary warnings of a dream-sick girl; for such Marietta appeared to him to be. He pitied her sufferings, endeavoured to soothe her, but asserted he had seen no reason that could induce him to quit Naples.

A full quarter of an hour elapsed before an explanation could be wrung from Marietta. The chaos that reigned in her mind may easily be imagined. She had become possessed of a secret which involved the life of two persons. Ladislas refused to save himself unless she revealed what might place her brother's life in jeopardy. Whichever way she looked, destruction closed the view. Nature had bestowed on her a heart exquisitely alive to the sufferings of others, a mind quick in perceiving the nicest lines of moral rectitude, and strenuous in endeavouring to act up to its perceptions. Any deviations in her conduct from these principles had been the work of a fate that, strong and fierce as a tempest, had bent down her weak youth like a reed beneath its force. She had once loved Giorgio; he had played with and caressed her in infancy—with the fond patronage of an elder brother had procured her the only indulgences her orphaned childhood had ever known. Fraternal love called loudly on her not to endanger his life; gratitude as loudly called on her not to allow her benefactor to become his victim. This last idea was too horrible to be

endured. The present moment is ever all-powerful with the young, and Marietta related what she knew.

Well might the poor child be wild and disordered. She had passed the night in the catacombs of San Gennaro, under Capo di Monte. In these subterranean galleries were held the nightly meetings of the band of desperate bravi of whom Giorgio was in secret the chief. The entrance to the catacombs is in a deserted vineyard, and is overgrown by huge aloes; rooted in stones and sharp rocks, they lift their thorny leaves above the opening, and conceal it effectually. A solitary fig-tree that grows near renders the spot easily recognisable by those already acquainted with the secret. The catacombs themselves are wide winding caves, the burial-place of the dead of past ages. Piles of human bones, white and bleached by time, are heaped along the rocky sides of these caverns. In one of these walks, whilst they were friends, Giorgio had shown the place to Marietta. In those days he feared not to entrust his mysterious way of life to her; for although in all common concerns she was wild and untractable, yet in all that touched the interests of those few whom she loved, Marietta was silent and reserved as Epicharis herself. The menaces Giorgio let fall in his visit on the preceding forenoon had excited her highest alarm, and she determined, at any risk, to learn the extent of the danger that hung over the stranger. After waiting in vain for Idalie's return till the close of evening, she had hastened to Capo di Monte, entered the catacombs alone, and, concealed behind a pile of bones, had awaited the arrival of the confederates. They assembled at midnight. Their first subject of consultation was the stranger. Giorgio acquainted them with his history, which he told them had been communicated to him that very morning by a Russian lady of high rank, who had likewise charged him with the business he had to unfold to them. He described Ladislas as a fugitive, unprotected by any Government; he bore about his person certain papers which had been found in the palace of Warsaw, and were the confidential communications of the Russian Autocrat to his brother the Viceroy of Poland, and were of such a nature as to rouse all Europe against their

writer. These papers had been entrusted to Ladislas, whose intention was to proceed to Paris and publish them there. Private business, however, of the greatest importance, had forced him to visit Naples first. The Russian Government had traced him to Naples, and had empowered a certain Russian lady to take any step, or go any lengths, in order to obtain these papers from Ladislas. This lady had made Giorgio her emissary; her name he carefully concealed, but Marietta averred, from his description, that it could be no other than the Princess Dashkhoff. After much consulting among the band, the assassination of the Pole had been decided upon. This seemed to be the only sure method; for he carried the papers ever about his person, was distinguished for his bravery, and if openly attacked would resist to the last. Giorgio was no stickler in the means he employed, and told his companions he had the less reason to be so in this case, as he had received assurances from the highest quarter that his crime should go unpunished, and the reward be enormous. Ladislas was almost unknown in Naples; the Government would not interest itself for a fugitive, without passport, country or name; and what friends had he here to inquire into the circumstances of his destruction, or to interest themselves to avenge it?

Such was Marietta’s tale, and Ladislas instantly acknowledged the necessity of flight. He was too well acquainted with Russian perfidy to doubt that even a lady of a rank so distinguished as the Princess Dashkhoff might be induced to undertake as foul a task as that attributed to her by Marietta. The worldly and artificial manners of this lady, in an Italian or a French-woman, would only have resulted from habits of intrigue; but a Russian, unaccustomed to look on human life as sacred, taught by the Government of her own country that cruelty and treachery are venial offences, wholly destitute of a sense of honour, concealed, under such an exterior, vices the most odious, and a callousness to guilt unknown in more civilised lands. Ladislas knew this; and he knew that the badness of the Neapolitan Government afforded scope for crime, which could not exist elsewhere; and he felt that on every account it

were better to withdraw himself immediately from the scene of danger.

While musing on these things, Idalie's beseeching eyes were eloquent in imploring him to fly. He consented; but a condition was annexed to his consent, that Idalie should share his flight. He urged his suit with fervour. It were easy for them on a very brief notice to seek the young lady's confessor, induce him to bestow on them the nuptial benediction, and thus to sanctify their departure together. Marietta seconded the lover's entreaties, and Idalie, blushing and confused, could only reply,—

"My accompanying you would but increase your danger, and facilitate the bravo's means of tracing you. How could I get a passport? How leave this place?"

"I have a plan for all," replied Ladislas; and he then related that the Sully steam-packet lay in the harbour of Naples, ready to sail on the shortest notice; he would engage that for their conveyance, and so speedily bid adieu to the shores of Naples, and all its perils.

"But that boat," exclaimed Idalie, "is the very one engaged by the Princess for the excursion to Pæstum."

This, for a time, seemed to disarrange their schemes, but they considered that no danger could happen to Ladislas while one of a party of pleasure with the Princess, who from this act of his would be quite unsuspicious of his intended departure. At night, upon their return from Pæstum, when the rest of the party should have disembarked at Naples, Ladislas and Idalie would remain on board, and the vessel immediately commence its voyage for France. This plan thus assumed a very feasible appearance, while Ladislas, in accents of fond reproach, asked Idalie wherefore she refused to share his fortunes, and accompany him in his journey; and Marietta, clapping her hands exclaimed, "She consents! she consents! Do not ask any more, she has already yielded. We will all return to Naples. Ladislas shall go immediately to seek out the captain of the Sully, and arrange all with him; while,

without loss of time, we will proceed to the convent of Father Basil, and get everything ready by the time Ladislas shall join us, which must be with as much speed as he can contrive."

Idalie silently acquiesced in this arrangement, and Ladislas kissed her hand with warm and overflowing gratitude. They now contrived to stow themselves in the little calessino, and as they proceeded on their way, Ladislas said: "We seem to have forgotten the future destiny of our dear Marietta all this time. The friendless condition in which we shall leave her fills me with anxiety. She is the preserver of my life, and we are both under the deepest obligations to her. What shall you do, Marietta, when we are gone?"

"Fear not for me," exclaimed the wild girl; "it is necessary I should remain behind to arrange those things which Idalie's sudden departure will leave in sad disorder; but you will see me soon in Paris, for how can I exist apart from my sister?"

When near to Naples, Ladislas alighted from the calessino, and directed his steps towards the port, while the fair girls proceeded on their way to the convent. What the bashful, conscious Idalie would have done without her sister's help, it is difficult to guess. Marietta busied herself about all; won over the priest to the sudden marriage, contrived to put up articles of dress for the fair bride's journey, and thinking of everything, seemed the guardian angel of the lovers. Ladislas arrived at the convent; he had been successful with the master of the steam-packet, and all was prepared. Marietta heard this from his own lips, and carried the happy news to Idalie. He did not see her till they met at the altar, where, kneeling before the venerable priest, they were united for ever. And now time, as it sped on, gave them no moment to indulge their various and overpowering feelings. Idalie embraced her sister again and again, and entreating her to join them speedily in Paris, made her promise to write, and then, escorted by her husband, proceeded to the Sully, on board of which most of the party were already assembled.

The steamer proceeded on its course. Farewell to Naples!—that elysian city, as the poet justly calls it; that favourite of sea and land and sky. The hills that surround it smooth their rugged summits, and descend into gentle slopes and opening defiles, to receive its buildings and habitations. Temples, domes, and marble palaces are ranged round the crescent form of the bay, and above them arise dark masses, and wooded clefts, and fair gardens, whose trees are ever vernal. Before it the mighty sea binds its wild streams, and smoothes them into gentlest waves, as they kiss the silver, pebbly shore, and linger with dulcet murmur around the deep-based promontories. The sky—who has not heard of the Italian sky?—one intense diffusion, one serene omnipresence, for ever smiling above the boundless sea, and for ever bending in azure mirth over the flowing outlines of the distant mountains.

They first passed Castel-a-Mare, and then the abrupt promontories on which Sorrento and ancient Amalfi are situated. The sublimity and intense loveliness of the scene wrapt in delight each bosom. The hills, covered with ilex, dark laurel, and bright-leaved myrtle, were mirrored in the pellucid waves, which the lower branches caressed and kissed as the winds waved them. Behind arose other hills, also covered with wood; and, more distant, forming the grand background, was sketched the huge ridge of lofty Apennines. Still proceeding on their way to Pæstum, they exchanged the rocky beach for a low and dreary shore. The dusky mountains retired inland, and leaving a waste—the abode of malaria, and the haunt of robbers—the landscape assumed a gloomy magnificence, in place of the romantic and picturesque loveliness which had before charmed their eyes. Ladislas leaned from the side of the vessel, and gazed upon the beauty of nature with sentiments too disturbed for happiness. He was annoyed by the unpropitious presence of the idle and the gay. He saw Idalie in the midst of them, and did not even wish to join her while thus situated. He shrank into himself, and tried, forgetting the immediate discomforts of his position, to think only of that paradise into which love had led him, to compensate for his patriotic sorrows. He strove patiently to endure the tedious hours of this never-ending day,

during which he must play a false part, and see his bride engaged by others. While his attention was thus occupied, the voice of the Princess Dashkhoff startled him, and, looking up, he wondered how a face that seemed so bland, and a voice that spoke so fair, could hide so much wickedness and deceit. As the hours passed on, his situation became irksome in the extreme. Once or twice he drew near Idalie, and tried to disengage her from the crowd; but each time he saw the Princess watching him stealthily, while his young bride, with feminine prudence, avoided every opportunity of conversing apart with him. Ladislas could ill endure this. He began to fancy that he had a thousand things to say, and that their mutual safety depended on his being able to communicate them to her. He wrote a few lines hastily on the back of a letter with a pencil, conjuring her to find some means of affording him a few minutes' conversation, and telling her that if this could not be done before, he should take occasion, while the rest of the company were otherwise occupied, to steal from them that evening to the larger temple, and there await her joining him, for that everything depended on his being able to speak to her. He scarcely knew what he meant as he wrote this; but, driven by contradiction and impatience, and desirous of learning exactly how she meant to conduct herself on the Princess's disembarking at Naples, it seemed to him of the last importance that his request should be complied with. He was folding the paper when the Princess was at his side, and addressed him.

"A sonnet, Count Ladislas; surely a poetic imagination inspires you; may I not see it?"

And she held out her hand. Taken unaware, Ladislas darted at her a look which made her step back trembling and in surprise. Was she discovered? The idea was fraught with terror. But Ladislas, perceiving the indiscretion of his conduct, masked his sensations with a smile, and replied: "They are words of a Polish song, which I wish Idalie to translate for the amusement of your friends;" and, stepping forward, he gave Idalie the paper, and made his request. All pressed to know what the song

was. Idalie glanced at the writing, and, changing colour, was scarcely able to command her voice to make such an excuse as was rendered necessary. She said that it required time and thought, and that she could not at that moment comply; then crushing the paper between her trembling fingers, began confusedly to talk of something else. The company interchanged smiles, but even the Princess only suspected some lover-like compliment to her protégée.

“Nay,” she said, “we must at least know the subject of these verses. What is it? tell us, I entreat you.”

“Treachery,” said Ladislas, unable to control his feelings. The Princess became ashy pale; all her self-possession fled, and she turned from the searching glance of the Pole with sickness of heart.

They were now drawing near their destination. Idalie, grasping the paper, longed to read it before they should reach the shore. She tried to recede from the party, and Ladislas, watching her movements, in order to facilitate her designs, entered into conversation with the Princess. He had effectually roused her fears and her curiosity; and she eagerly seized the opportunity which he offered her of conversing with him, endeavouring to find out whether he indeed suspected anything, or whether her own guilty conscience suggested the alarm with which his strange expression had filled her. Ladislas thus contrived to engross her entire attention, and led her insensibly towards the stern of the vessel; and as they leant over its side, and gazed on the waters beneath, Idalie was effectually relieved from all observation. She now disengaged herself from the rest of the party, and, walking forward, read the lines pencilled by Ladislas. Then, terrified by the secret they contained, she tore the paper, as if fearful that its contents might be guessed, and was about to throw the fragments into the sea, when she perceived the position of the Princess and Ladislas, and was aware that the lady’s quick eye would soon discern the floating scraps as the boat passed on. Idalie feared the least shadow of danger, so she retreated from

the vessel's side, but still anxious to get rid of the perilous papers, she determined to throw them into the hold. She approached it, and looked down. Had the form of a serpent met her eye, she had not been more horror-struck. A shriek hovered on her lips, but with a strong effort she repressed it, and, staggering on, leant against the mast, trembling and aghast. She could not be deceived; it was Giorgio's dark and scowling eye that she had encountered—his sinister countenance, upturned, could not be mistaken. Was danger, then, so near, so pressing, or so inevitable? How could she convey the fatal intelligence to her husband, and put him on his guard? She remembered his written request, with which she had previously determined in prudence not to comply. But it would now afford her an opportunity, should no other offer, of informing him whom she had seen.

Thus perfidy, hate, and fear possessed the hearts of these human beings, who, had a cursory observer seen them as they glided over that sea of beauty, beneath the azure heaven, along that enchanted shore, attended by every luxury, waited on by every obvious blessing of life—he would have imagined that they had been selected from the world for the enjoyment of perfect happiness. But sunny sky and laughing sea appeared to Idalie only as the haunt and resort of tigers and serpents; a dark mist seemed to blot the splendour of the sky, as the guilty souls of her fellow-creatures cast their deforming shadows over its brightness.

They had now arrived close on the low shore, and horses and two or three light open carriages were at the water's edge to convey them to the temples. They landed. Ladislas presented himself to hand Idalie across the plank from the vessel to the beach. "Yes?"—he asked her in a voice of entreaty, as he pressed her hand. She softly returned the pressure, and the word "Beware" trembled on her lips, when the young Englishman who had before admired her, and had endeavoured to engross her attention the whole day, was again at her side, to tell her that the Princess was waiting for her in her carriage, and entreated her not to delay.

The party proceeded to where those glorious relics stand, between the mountains and the sea, rising from the waste and barren soil, alone on the wide and dusky shore. A few sheep grazed at the base of the columns, and two or three wild-eyed men, clothed in garments of undressed sheepskin, loitered about. Exclamations of wonder and delight burst from all, while Ladislas, stealing away to the more distant ruin, gladly escaped from the crowd, to indulge in lonely reverie. “What is man in his highest glory?” he thought. “Had we burst the bonds of Poland; and had she, in her freedom, emulated the magical achievements of Greece; nevertheless when time, with insidious serpent windings, had dragged its length through a few more centuries, the monuments we had erected would have fallen like these, and our monuments—a new Pæstum—have existed merely to excite idle wonder and frivolous curiosity!”

Ladislas was certainly in no good-humour while he thus vented his spleen; but was annoyed by two circumstances, sufficient to irritate a young philosopher: he beheld a scene, whose majestic beauty filled his soul with sensibility and awe, in the midst of a crowd of pretenders, more intent on the prospect of their picnic dinner, than on regarding the glories of art; and he saw his bride, surrounded by strangers, engrossed by their conversation and flattery, and unable to interchange one word or look of confidence with him. He sighed for the hours passed under the portico of Idalie’s solitary pavilion, and the near prospect of their voyage did not reconcile him to the present; for his soul was disturbed by the necessity of interchanging courtesies with his enemy, and haunted by images of treacherous attempts, from which his valour could not protect him.

It had been arranged that the party should dine at the archbishop’s palace, and not embark again until ten o’clock, when the moon would rise. After a couple of hours spent among the ruins, the servants informed them that their repast was ready; it was now nearly six o’clock, and after they had dined, more than two hours must elapse before they could depart. Night had fallen on the landscape, and the darkness did not

invite even the most romantic to wander again among the ruins; the Princess, eager to provide for the amusement of her guests, contrived to discover a violin, a flute, and a pipe, and with the assistance of this music, which in the hands of Italian rustics was as true to time and expression as if Weippert himself had presided, they commenced dancing. Idalie's hand was sought by the Englishman; she looked round the room, Ladislas was not there; he had doubtless repaired to the temple to wait for her, and ignorant of the presence of Giorgio, wholly unsuspicious, and off his guard, to what dangers might he not be exposed? Her blood ran cold at the thought; she decidedly refused to dance, and perceiving the Princess whirling round in a waltz, she hastily quitted the house, and hurried along over the grass towards the ruins. When she first emerged into the night, the scene seemed wrapped in impenetrable darkness, but the stars shed their faint rays, and in a few moments she began to distinguish objects, and as she drew near the temple, she saw a man's form moving slowly among the columns; she did not doubt that it was her husband, wrapped in his cloak, awaiting her. She was hurrying towards him, when, leaning against one of the pillars, she saw Ladislas himself, and the other, at the same moment, exchanging his stealthy pace for a tiger-like spring. She saw a dagger flashing in his hand; she darted forward to arrest his arm, and the blow descended on her. With a faint shriek, she fell on the earth, when Ladislas turned and closed with the assassin; a mortal struggle ensued; already had Ladislas wrested the poignard from his grasp, when the villain drew another knife. Ladislas warded off the blow, and plunged his own stiletto in the bravo's breast; he fell to earth with a heavy groan, and then the silence of the tomb rested on the scene; the white robe of Idalie, who lay fainting on the ground, directed Ladislas to her side. He raised her up in speechless agony, as he beheld the blood which stained her dress; but by this time she had recovered from her swoon; she assured him her wound was slight, that it was nothing; but again sank into his arms insensible. In a moment his plan was formed; ever eager and impetuous, he executed it ere any second thought could change it. He had before

resolved not to rejoin the party in the archbishop's palace, but after his interview with Idalie, to hasten on board the steamboat; he had therefore ordered his horse to be saddled, had led it to the temple, and fastened it to one of the columns. He lifted the senseless Idalie carefully in his arms, mounted his horse, and turning his steps from the lighted and noisy palace, wound his way to the lonely shore, where he found the captain and his crew already preparing for their homeward voyage. With their help Idalie was taken on board, and Ladislas gave orders for the instant heaving of the anchor, and their immediate departure. The captain asked for the rest of the company. "They return by land," said Ladislas. As he spoke the words, he felt a slight sensation of remorse, remembering the difficulty they would have to get there; and how, during the darkness of night, they might fear to proceed on their journey on a tract of country infested by banditti; but the senseless and pale form of Idalie dissipated these thoughts: to arrive at Naples, to procure assistance for her, and then if, as he hoped, her wound was slight, to continue their voyage before the Princess Dashkhoff's return, were motives too paramount to allow him to hesitate. The captain of the Sully asked no more questions; the anchor was weighed; and in the silver light of the moon, they stood off from the shore, and made their swift way back to Naples. They had not gone far before the care of Ladislas revived his fair bride. Her wound was in her arm, and had merely grazed the skin. Terror for her husband, horror for the mortal strife which had endangered his life, had caused her to faint more than pain or loss of blood. She bound up her own arm; and then, as there appeared no necessity for medical aid, Ladislas revoked his orders for returning to Naples, but stretching out at once to sea, they began their voyage to Marseilles.

Meanwhile, during a pause in the dance, the absence of Ladislas and Idalie was observed by the feasters in the archbishop's palace. It excited some few sarcasms, which as it continued grow more bitter. The Princess Dashkhoff joined in these, and yet she could not repress the disquietude of her heart. Had Ladislas alone been

absent, her knowledge of the presence of Giorgio, and his designs, had sufficiently explained its cause and its duration to her; but that Idalie also should not be found might bring a witness to the crime committed, and discover her own guilty share in the deed of blood perpetrated at her instigation. At length the rising of the moon announced the hour when they were to repair to the shore. The horses and carriages were brought to the door, and then it was found that the steed of Ladislas was missing.

“But the Signora Idalie, had she not provided herself with a palfrey?” asked the Englishman, sneering. They were now about to mount, when it was proposed to take a last look of the temples by moonlight. The Princess opposed this, but vainly; her conscience made her voice faint, and took from her the usual decision of her manner; so she walked on silently, half fearful that her foot might strike against some object of terror, and at every word spoken by the party, anticipating an exclamation of horror; the fitful moonbeams seemed to disclose here and there ghastly countenances and mangled limbs, and the dew of night appeared to her excited imagination as the slippery moisture of the life-blood of her victim.

They had scarcely entered the temple, when a peasant brought the news that the steamboat was gone;—he led Ladislas’ horse, who had put the bridle into the man’s hands on embarking; and the fellow declared that the fainting Idalie was his companion. Terror at the prospect of their dark ride, indignation at the selfish proceeding of the lovers, raised every voice against them; and the Princess, whom conscience had before made the most silent, hearing that the Pole was alive and safe, was now loudest and most bitter in her remarks. As they were thus all gathered together in dismay, debating what was to be done, and the Princess Dashkhoff in no gentle terms railing at the impropriety and ingratitude of Idalie’s behaviour, and declaring that Poles alone could conduct themselves with such mingled deceit and baseness, a figure all bloody arose from the ground at her feet, and as the moon cast its pale rays on his yet paler countenance, she recognised Giorgio. The ladies

shrieked, the men rushed towards him, while the Princess, desiring the earth to open and swallow her, stood transfixed, as by a spell, gazing on the dying man in terror and despair.

“He has escaped, lady,” said Giorgio; “Ladislas has escaped your plots, and I am become their victim.” He fell as he spoke these words, and when the Englishman drew near to raise, and if possible assist him, he found that life had entirely flown.

Thus ended the adventures of the Pole at Naples. The Princess returned in her calèche alone, for none would bear her company; the next day she left Naples, and was on her way to Russia, where her crime was unknown, except to those who had been accomplices in it. Marietta spread the intelligence of her sister’s marriage, and thus entirely cleared Idalie’s fair fame; and quitting Italy soon after, joined the happy Ladislas and his bride at Paris.

XV. EUPHRASIA.

A TALE OF GREECE.

It was not long after the breaking out of the Greek Revolution that Harry Valency visited Greece. Many an Englishman was led thither at that time by the spirit of adventure, and many perished. Valency was not nineteen; his spirit was wild and reckless;—thought or care had never touched his brow; his heart was too light for love. Restless and energetic, he longed to try his powers, with the instinct that leads the young deer to butt against trees, or to wrestle with each other in the forest-dells. He was the only son of a widowed mother, whose life was wrapped in his, and he loved her fondly; yet left her, impelled by a desire for adventure, unable to understand what anxiety and fear meant; and in his own person eager to meet even misfortune, so that it came in a guise to call forth manly and active struggles. He longed to have the pages of his young life written over by deeds that would hereafter be memories, to which he could turn with delight. The cause of Greece warmed his

soul. He was in a transport of ecstasy when he touched the shores of that antique land, and looked around on mountain and mountain-stream, whose names were associated with the most heroic acts, and the most sublime poetry man ever achieved or wrote. Yes, he was now in Greece. He was about to fight in her cause against the usurping Turk. He had prepared himself by a sedulous study of Romaic; he was on his way to the seat of Government, to offer his services. To proceed thither from the spot where he had disembarked was a matter of some difficulty; the Turkish troops being then in possession of many of the passes. At length he heard that a band of about fifty Greek soldiers, headed by a young but brave and renowned chief, was about to pursue the same road; he asked, and obtained leave to accompany them.

How delightful was the commencement of the journey! How beautiful the country—defile and steep hill-side, by which they proceeded; where the grey olive clothed the upland, or vines, embracing elms, red now with late summer tints, varied the scene. The mountain-tops were bare, or crowned with pines, and torrents ran down the sides and fed a stream in the dell. The air was balmy; the cicada loud and merry—to live was to be happy. Valency was mounted on a spirited horse; he made it leap and caracole. He threw a spear against a tree, and dashed after to recover it. He fired at a mark as he hurried on at full gallop; every feat was insufficient to tame his exhaustless spirits.

The chief marked him with eyes, whose deep melancholy expression darkened as he gazed. He was known as bravest among the brave; yet gentle as a woman. He was young and singularly handsome; his countenance was stamped with traces of intellectual refinement, while his person was tall, muscular, and strong, but so gracefully formed, that every attitude reminded you of some Praxitilean shape of his own native land. Once he had been more beautiful; joy, as well as tenderness, and a soldier’s ardour had lighted up his dark eye; his lip had been the home of smiles, and the thoughts, which presided in his brow, had been as clear and soft and gladsome as that godlike brow itself. Now this was changed. Grief had become a master passion:

his cheeks were sunken; his eye seemed to brood eternally over melancholy regrets; his measured harmonious voice was attuned to the utterance of no light fancy or gay sallies; he spoke only the necessary words of direction to his followers, and then silence and gloom gathered over his face. His sorrow was respected; for it was known to be well founded, and to spring from a recent disaster. If any of his troop desired to indulge in merriment, they withdrew from his vicinity. It was strange to them to hear the light laugh of the English youth ring through the grove, and to catch the tones of his merry voice, as he sang some of their own gayest songs. The chief gazed with interest. There was a winning frankness in the boy; he was so very young, and all he did was in graceful accordance with his age. We are alike mere youths, thought the chief, and how different! Yet soon he may become like me. He soars like an eagle; but the eagle may be wounded, and stoop to earth; because earth contains its secret and its regret.

Suddenly Valency, who was some hundred yards in advance, was encountered by a Greek, riding at full speed towards the advancing troop.

“Back! back! silence!” the man cried. He was a scout, who had been sent on before, and now brought tidings that a troop of three or four hundred of the Turkish army were entering the defile, and would soon advance on the handful of men which Valency accompanied. The scout rode directly up to the leader, and made his report, adding,—

“We have yet time. If we fall back but a quarter of a mile, there is a path I know, by which I can guide you across the mountain; on the other side we shall be safe.”

A smile of scorn for a moment wreathed the lip of the chief at the word safety, but his face soon reassumed its usual sad composure. The troop had halted; each man bent his eye on the leader. Valency, in particular, marked the look of scorn, and felt that he would never retreat before danger.

“Comrades!” the chief thus addressed his men, “it shall never be said that Greeks

fell back to make way for the destroyers; we will betake ourselves to our old warfare. Before we entered this olive wood, we passed a thick cover, where the dark jutting mountain-side threw a deep shadow across our path, and the torrent drowned all sound of voice or hoof. There we shall find ambush; there the enemy will meet death."

He turned his horse's head, and in a few minutes reached the spot he named; the men were mostly eager for the fray—while one or two eyed the mountain-side, and then the path that led to the village, which they had quitted that morning. The chief saw their look, and he glanced also at the English youth, who had thrown himself from his horse, and was busy loading and priming his arms. The chief rode up to him.

"You are our guest and fellow-traveller," he said, "but not our comrade in the fight. We are about to meet danger—it may be that not one of us shall escape. You have no injuries to avenge, no liberty to gain; you have friends—probably a mother—in your native land. You must not fall with us. I am going to send a message to warn the village we last passed through—do you accompany my messengers."

Valency had listened attentively at first; but as the chief continued, his attention reverted to his task of loading his pistols. The last words called a blush into his cheek.

"You treat me as a boy," he cried; "I may be one in aspect, but you shall find me a man in heart this day. You also young, I have not deserved your scorn!"

The chief caught the youth's flashing eye. He held out his hand to him, saying, "Forgive me."

"I will," said Valency, "on one condition; give me a post of danger—of honour. You owe it to me in reparation of the insult you offered."

"Be it so," said the chief; "your place shall be at my side."

A few minutes more and his dispositions were made;—two of the most

down-hearted of the troop were despatched to alarm the village, the rest were placed behind the rocks; beneath the bushes, wherever broken ground, or tuft of underwood, or fragment from the cliff, afforded shelter and concealment, a man was placed; while the chief himself took his stand on an elevated platform, and, sheltered by a tree, gazed upon the road. Soon the tramp of horses, the busy sound of feet and voices were heard, overpowering the rushing of the stream; and turban and musket could be distinguished as the enemy's troop threaded the defile.

The shout of battle—the firing—the clash of weapons were over. Above the crest of the hill, whose side had afforded ambush to the Greeks, the crescent moon hung, just about to dip behind; the stars in her train burnt bright as lamps floating in the firmament; while the fire-flies flashed among the myrtle underwood and up the mountain-side; and sometimes the steel of the arms strewn around, dropped from the hand of the dead, caught and reflected the flashes of the celestial or earthly stars. The ground was strewn with the slain. Such of the enemy as had cut their way through were already far—the sound of their horses' hoofs had died away. The Greeks who had fled across the mountain had reached a place of safety—none lay there but the silent dead—cold as the moonbeam that rested for a moment on their pale faces. All were still and motionless; some lay on the hill-side among the underwood—some on the open road—horses and men had fallen, pell mell—none moved—none breathed.

Yet there was a sigh—it was lost in the murmur of the stream; a groan succeeded, and then a voice feeble and broken, "My mother, my poor mother!"—the pale lips that spoke these words could form no other, a gush of tears followed. The cry seemed to awake another form from among the dead. One of the prostrate bodies raised itself slowly and painfully on its arm, the eyes were filmy, the countenance pallid from approaching death, the voice was hollow, yet firm, that said, "Who speaks?—who lives?—who weeps?"

The question struck shame to the wounded man; he checked his overflow of passionate sobbings. The other spoke again, “It was not the voice of a Greek—yet I thought I had saved that gallant boy—the ball meant for him is now in my side.—Speak again, young Englishman—on whom do you call?”

“On her who will weep my death too bitterly—on my mother,” replied Valency, and tears would follow the loved name.

“Art thou wounded to death?” asked the chief.

“Thus unaided I must die,” he replied; “yet, could I reach those waters, I might live—I must try.” And Valency rose; he staggered a few steps, and fell heavily at the feet of the chief. He had fainted. The Greek looked on the ghastly pallor of his face; he half rose—his own wound did not bleed, but it was mortal, and a deadly sickness had gathered round his heart, and chilled his brow, which he strove to master, that he might save the English boy. The effort brought cold drops on his brow, as he rose on his knees and stooped to raise the head of Valency; he shuddered to feel the warm moisture his hand encountered. It is his blood; his life-blood he thought; and again he placed his head on the earth, and continued a moment still, summoning what vitality remained to him to animate his limbs. Then with a determined effort he rose, and staggered to the banks of the stream. He held a steel cap in his hand—and now he stooped down to fill it; but with the effort the ground slid from under him, and he fell. There was a ringing in his ears—a cold dew on his brow—his breath came thick—the cap had fallen from his hand—he was dying. The bough of a tree, shot off in the morning’s melée, lay near;—the mind, even of a dying man, can form swift, unerring combinations of thought;—it was his last chance—the bough was plunged in the waters, and he scattered the grateful, reviving drops over his face; vigour returned with the act, and he could stoop and fill the cap, and drink a deep draught, which for a moment restored the vital powers. And now he carried water to Valency; he dipped the unfolded turban of a Turk in the stream, and bound the

youth's wound, which was a deep sabre cut in the shoulder, that had bled copiously. Valency revived—life gathered warm in his heart—his cheeks, though still pale, lost the ashy hue of death—his limbs again seemed willing to obey his will—he sat up, but he was too weak, and his head dropped. As a mother tending her sick first-born, the Greek chief hovered over him; he brought a cloak to pillow his head; as he picked up this, he found that some careful soldier had brought a small bag at his saddle-bow, in which was a loaf and a bunch or two of grapes; he gave them to the youth, who ate. Valency now recognised his saviour; at first he wondered to see him there, tending on him, apparently unhurt; but soon the chief sank to the ground, and Valency could mark the rigidity of feature, and ghastliness of aspect, that portended death. In his turn he would have assisted his friend; but the chief stopped him—"You die if you move," he said; "your wound will bleed afresh, and you will die, while you cannot aid me. My weakness does not arise from mere loss of blood. The messenger of death has reached a vital part—yet a little while and the soul will obey the summons. It is slow, slow is the deliverance; yet the long creeping hour will come at last, and I shall be free."

"Do not speak thus," cried Valency; "I am strong now—I will go for help."

"There is no help for me," replied the chief, "save the death I desire. I command you, move not."

Valency had risen, but the effort was vain: his knees bent under him, his head spun round; before he could save himself he had sunk to the ground.

"Why torture yourself?" said the chief. "A few hours and help will come: it will not injure you to pass this interval beneath this calm sky. The cowards who fled will alarm the country; by dawn succour will be here: you must wait for it. I too must wait—not for help, but for death. It is soothing even to me to die here beneath this sky, with the murmurs of yonder stream in my ear, the shadows of my native mountains thrown athwart. Could aught save me, it would be the balmy airs of this

most blessed night; my soul feels the bliss, though my body is sick and fast stiffening in death. Such was not the hour when she died whom soon I shall meet, my Euphrasia, my own sweet sister, in heaven!”

It was strange, Valency said, that at such an hour, but half saved from death, and his preserver in the grim destroyer’s clutches, that he should feel curiosity to know the Greek chief’s story. His youth, his beauty, his valour—the act, which Valency well remembered, of his springing forward so as to shield him with his own person—his last words and thoughts devoted to the soft recollection of a beloved sister,—awakened an interest beyond even the present hour, fraught as it was with the chances of life and death. He questioned the chief. Probably fever had succeeded to his previous state of weakness, imparted a deceitful strength, and even inclined him to talk; for thus dying, unaided and unsheltered, with the starry sky overhead, he willingly reverted to the years of his youth and to the miserable event which a few months before had eclipsed the sun of his life and rendered death welcome.

They—brother and sister, Constantine and Euphrasia—were the last of their race. They were orphans; their youth was passed under the guardianship of the brother by adoption of their father, whom they named father, and who loved them. He was a glorious old man, nursed in classic lore, and more familiar with the deeds of men who had glorified his country several thousand years before than with any more modern names. Yet all who had ever done and suffered for Greece were embalmed in his memory, and honoured as martyrs in the best of causes. He had been educated in Paris, and travelled in Europe and America, and was aware of the progress made in the science of politics all over the civilised world. He felt that Greece would soon share the benefits to arise from the changes then operating, and he looked forward at no distant day to its liberation from bondage. He educated his young ward for that day. Had he believed that Greece would have continued hopelessly enslaved, he had brought him up as a scholar and a recluse: but, assured of the impending struggle, he made him a warrior; he implanted a detestation of the oppressor, a yearning love for

the sacred blessings of freedom, a noble desire to have his name enrolled among the deliverers of his country. The education he bestowed on Euphrasia was yet more singular. He knew that though liberty must be bought and maintained by the sword, yet that its dearest blessings must be derived from civilisation and knowledge; and he believed women to be the proper fosterers of these. They cannot handle a sword nor endure bodily labour for their country, but they could refine the manners, exalt the souls—impart honour, and truth, and wisdom to their relatives and their children. Euphrasia, therefore, he made a scholar. By nature she was an enthusiast and a poet. The study of the classic literature of her country corrected her taste and exalted her love of the beautiful. While a child, she improvised passionate songs of liberty; and as she grew in years and loveliness, and her heart opened to tenderness, and she became aware of all the honour and happiness that a woman must derive from being held the friend of man, not his slave, she thanked God that she was a Greek and a Christian; and holding fast by the advantages which these names conferred, she looked forward eagerly to the day when Mohammedanism should no longer contaminate her native land, and when her countrywomen should be awakened from ignorance and sloth in which they were plunged, and learn that their proper vocation in the creation was that of mothers of heroes and teachers of sages.

Her brother was her idol, her hope, her joy. And he who had been taught that his career must be that of deeds, not words, yet was fired by her poetry and eloquence to desire glory yet more eagerly, and to devote himself yet more entirely and with purer ardour to the hope of one day living and dying for his country. The first sorrow the orphans knew was the death of their adopted father. He descended to the grave full of years and honour. Constantine was then eighteen; his fair sister had just entered her fifteenth year. Often they spent the night beside the revered tomb of their lost friend, talking of the hopes and aspirations he had implanted. The young can form such sublime, such beautiful dreams. No disappointment, no evil, no bad passion shadows their glorious visions. To dare and do greatly for Greece was the

ambition of Constantine. To cheer and watch over her brother, to regulate his wilder and more untaught soul, to paint in celestial colours the bourne he tended towards by action, were Euphrasia's tasks.

"There is a heaven," said the dying man as he told his tale,—"there is a paradise for those who die in the just cause. I know not what joys are there prepared for the blest; but they can scarcely transcend those that were mine as I listened to my own sweet sister, and felt my heart swell with patriotism and fond, warm affection."

At length there was a stir through the land, and Constantine made a journey of some distance, to confer with the capitani of the mountains, and to prepare for the outbreak of the revolution. The moment came, sooner even than he expected. As an eagle chained when the iron links drop from him, and with clang of wing and bright undazzled eye he soars to heaven, so did Constantine feel when freedom to Greece became the war-cry. He was still among the mountains when first the echoes of his native valleys repeated that animating, that sacred word. Instead of returning, as he intended, to his Athenian home, he was hurried off to Western Greece, and became a participator in a series of warlike movements, the promised success of which filled him with transport.

Suddenly a pause came in the delirium of joy which possessed his soul. He received not the accustomed letters from his sister—missives which had been to him angelic messengers, teaching him patience with the unworthy—hope in disappointment—certainty of final triumph. Those dear letters ceased; and he thought he saw in the countenances of his friends around a concealed knowledge of evil. He questioned them: their answers were evasive. At the same time, they endeavoured to fill his mind with the details of some anticipated exploit in which his presence and co-operation was necessary. Day after day passed; he could not leave his post without injury to the cause, without even the taint of dishonour. He belonged to a band of Albanians, by whom he had been received as a brother and he

could not desert them in the hour of danger. But the suspense grew too terrible; and at length, finding that there was an interval of a few days which he might call his own, he left the camp, resting neither day nor night; dismounting from one horse only to bestride another, in forty-eight hours he was in Athens, before his vacant, desecrated home. The tale of horror was soon told. Athens was still in the hands of the Turks; the sister of a rebel had become the prey of the oppressor. She had none to guard her. Her matchless beauty had been seen and marked by the son of the pasha; she had for the last two months been immured in his harem.

"Despair is a cold, dark feeling," said the dying warrior; "if I may name that despair which had a hope—a certainty—an aim. Had Euphrasia died I had wept. Now my eyes were horn—my heart stone. I was silent. I neither expressed resentment nor revenge. I concealed myself by day; at night I wandered round the tyrant's dwelling. It was a pleasure-palace, one of the most luxurious in our beloved Athens. At this time it was carefully guarded: my character was known, and Euphrasia's worth; and the oppressor feared the result of his deed. Still, under shadow of darkness I drew near. I marked the position of the women's apartments—I learned the number—the length of the watch—the orders they received, and then I returned to the camp. I revealed my project to a few select spirits. They were fired by my wrongs, and eager to deliver my Euphrasia."—

Constantine broke off—a spasm of pain shook his body. After this had passed he lay motionless for a few minutes; then starting up, as fever and delirium, excited by the exertion of speaking, increased by the agonies of recollection, at last fully possessed him. "What is this?" he cried. "Fire! Yes, the palace burns. Do you not hear the roaring of the flames, and thunder too—the artillery of Heaven levelled against the unblest? Ha! a shot—he falls—they are driven back—now fling the torches—the wood crackles—there, there are the women's rooms—ha! poor victims! lo! you shudder and fly! Fear not; give me only my Euphrasia!—my own Euphrasia! No disguise can hide thee, dressed as a Turkish bride crowned with flowers, thy lovely

face, the seat of unutterable woe—still, my sweet sister, even in this smoke and tumult of this house, thou art the angel of my life! Spring into my arms, poor, frightened bird; cling to me—it is herself—her voice—her fair arms are round my neck—what ruin—what flame—what choking smoke—what driving storm can stay me? Soft! the burning breach is passed—there are steps—gently—dear one, I am firm—fear not!—what eyes glare?—fear not, Euphrasia, he is dead—the miserable retainers of the tyrant fell beneath our onset—ha! a shot—gracious Panagia, is this thy protection?" Thus did he continue to rave: the onset, the burning of the palace, the deliverance of his sister, all seemed to pass again vividly as if in present action. His eyes glared; he tossed up his arms; he shouted as if calling his followers around him; and then in tones of heartfelt tenderness he addressed the fair burden he fancied that he bore—till, with a shriek, he cried again, "A shot!" and sank to the ground as if his heartstrings had broken.

An interval of calm succeeded; he was exhausted; his voice was broken.

"What have I told thee?" he continued feebly; "I have said how a mere handful of men attacked the palace, and drove back the guards—how we strove in vain to make good our entrance—fresh troops were on their way—there was no alternative; we fired the palace. Deep in the seclusion of the harem the women had retreated, a herd of frightened deer. One alone stood erect. Her eyes bent on the intruders—a dagger in her hand—majestic and fearless, her face was marked with traces of passed suffering, but at the moment the stern resolution her soft features expressed was more than human. The moment she saw me, all was changed; the angel alone beamed in her countenance. Her dagger fell from her hand—she was in my arms—I bore her from the burning roof—the rest you know; have I not said it? Some miscreant, who survived the slaughter, and yet lay as dead on the earth, aimed a deadly shot. She did not shriek. At first she clung closer to my neck, and then I felt her frame shiver in my arms and her hold relax. I trusted that fear alone moved her; but she knew not fear—it was death. Horses had been prepared, and were waiting; a

few hours more and I hoped to be on our way to the west, to that portion of Greece that was free. But I felt her head fall on my shoulder. I heard her whisper, ‘I die, my brother! carry me to our father’s tomb.’

“My soul yearned to comply with her request; but it was impossible. The city was alarmed; troops gathering from all quarters. Our safety lay in flight, for still I thought that her wound was not mortal. I bore her to the spot where we had left our horses. Here two or three of my comrades speedily joined me; they had rescued the women of the harem from the flames, but the various sounds denoting the advance of the Turkish soldiery caused them to hurry from the scene. I leapt on my horse, and placed my sweet sister before me, and we fled amain through desert streets, I well knew how to choose, and along the lanes of the suburbs into the open country, where, deviating from the high-road, along which I directed my companions to proceed in all haste—alone with my beloved burden, I sought a solitary, unsuspected spot among the neighbouring hills. The storm which had ceased for a time, now broke afresh; the deafening thunder drowned every other sound, while the frequent glare of the lightning showed us our path; my horse did not quail before it. Euphrasia still lay clinging to me; no complaint escaped her; a few words of fondness, of encouragement, of pious resignation, she now and then breathed forth. I knew not she was dying, till at last entering a retired valley, where an olive wood afforded shelter, and still better the portico of a fallen ancient temple, I dismounted and bore her to the marble steps, on which I placed her. Then indeed I felt how near the beloved one was to death, from which I could not save her. The lightning showed me her face—pale as the marble which pillowed it. Her dress was dabbled in warm blood, which soon stained the stones on which she lay. I took her hand; it was deathly cold. I raised her from the marble; I pillowed her cheek upon my heart. I repressed my despair, or rather my despair in that hour was mild and soft as herself. There was no help—no hope. The life-blood oozed fast from her side; scarce could she raise her heavy eyelids to look on me; her voice could no longer articulate my

name. The burden of her fair limbs grew heavier and more chill; soon it was a corpse only that I held. When I knew that her sufferings were over, I raised her once more in my arms, and once more I placed her before me on my horse, and betook me to my journey. The storm was over now, and the moon bright above. Earth glittered under the rays, and a soft breeze swept by, as if heaven itself became clear and peaceful to receive her stainless soul, and present it to its Maker. By morning's dawn, I stopped at a convent gate, and rang. To the holy maidens within I consigned my own fair Euphrasia. I kissed but once again her dear brow, which spoke of peace in death; and then saw her placed upon a bier, and was away, back to my camp, to live and die for Greece."

He grew more silent as he became weaker. Now and then he spoke a few words to record some other of Euphrasia's perfections, or to repeat some of her dying words; to speak of her magnanimity, her genius, her love, and his own wish to die.

"I might have lived," he said, "till her image had faded in my mind, or been mingled with less holy memories. I die young, all her own."

His voice grew more feeble after this; he complained of cold. Valency continued: "I contrived to rise, and crawl about, and to collect a capote or two, and a pelisse from among the slain, with some of which I covered him; and then I drew one over myself, for the air grew chill, as midnight had passed away and the morning hour drew near. The warmth which the coverings imparted calmed the aching of my wound, and, strange to say, I felt slumber creep over me. I tried to watch and wake. At first the stars above and the dark forms of the mountains mingled with my dreamy feelings; but soon I lost all sense of where I was, and what I had suffered, and slept peacefully and long.

"The morning sunbeams, as creeping down the hill-side they at last fell upon my face, awoke me. At first I had forgotten all thought of the events of the past night, and my first impulse was to spring up, crying aloud, where am I? but the stiffness of

my limbs and their weakness, soon revealed the truth. Gladly I now welcomed the sound of voices, and marked the approach of a number of peasants along the ravine. Hitherto, strange to say, I had thought only of myself; but with the ideas of succour came the recollection of my companion, and the tale of the previous night. I glanced eagerly to where he lay; his posture disclosed his state; he was still, and stiff, and dead. Yet his countenance was calm and beautiful. He had died in the dear hope of meeting his sister, and her image had shed peace over the last moment of life.

“I am ashamed to revert to myself. The death of Constantine is the true end of my tale. My wound was a severe one. I was forced to leave Greece, and for some months remained between life and death in Cefalonia, till a good constitution saved me, when at once I returned to England.”

XVI. THE ELDER SON.

My father was the second son of a wealthy baronet. As he and his elder brother formed all the family of my grandfather, he inherited the whole of his mother’s fortune, which was considerable, and settled on the younger children. He married a lady whom he tenderly loved; and having taken orders, and procured preferment, retired to his deanery in the north of Ireland, and there took up his abode. When I was about ten years old he lost my mother. I was their only child.

My father was something of an ascetic, if such name can be given to a rigid adherence to the precepts of morality, which arose from the excess, and not the absence of feeling. He adored my mother; he mourned for her to the verge of insanity; but his grief was silent, devouring, and gloomy. He never formed another matrimonial engagement: secluding himself entirely from society, and given up to the duties of his sacred calling, he passed his days in solitude, or in works of charity among the poor.

Even now I cannot remember him without awe. He was a tall and, I thought, a

venerable-looking man; for he was thin and pale, and he was partly bald. His manners were cold and reserved; he seldom spoke, and when he did it was in such measured phrase, in so calm and solemn a voice, and on such serious topics, as resembled rather oracular enunciation than familiar conversation. He never caressed me; if ever he stroked my head or drew me on his knee, I felt a mingled alarm and delight difficult to describe. Yet, strange to say, my father loved me almost to idolatry; and I knew this and repaid his affection with enthusiastic fondness, notwithstanding his reserve and my awe. He was something greater, and wiser, and better, in my eyes, than any other human being. I was the sole creature he loved; the object of all his thoughts by day and his dreams by night. Abstracted and even severe as he seemed, he has visited my bedside at night, subdued by womanly fears, and hung over me for hours, to assure himself of my life and well-being. He has watched by me in sickness night after night with unwearied assiduity. He never spoke harshly to me, and treated me at once with a distance and gentleness hard to be understood.

When I was eighteen he died. During his last illness the seal was taken from his lips, and his heart threw off that husk within which he had hitherto concealed its true nature. He died of a rapid consumption, which terminated his existence within six months of his being first taken ill. His body wasted under the effects of mortal disease; but his soul assumed new life and energy, and his temper became as soft and demonstrative as it had hitherto been repulsive and concentrated. He became my father, friend, and brother all in one; a thousand dear relationships combined in one stronger than any. This sudden melting, this divine sensibility, which expanded at once, having been so long shut up and hid, was like a miracle. It fascinated and entranced me. I could not believe that I was about to lose him at the moment when we discovered each other’s worth: I mean by that expression, as regards myself, all the happiness that he derived from the truth and vivacity of my filial affection.

It were vain to attempt to refer even to our conversations: the sublime morality he

inculcated; the tenderness and charity of his expressions; the overflowing and melting eloquence with which he talked of the affections of this world, and his aspirations after a better. He died suddenly at last, as I was playing to him a simple air my mother loved. It was a moment of horror, yet of solemn and pious resignation: his soul had sought its native heaven and congenial companion—might it be blest! Yet I had lost him, and grief immeasurable was the result. The impression of the misery I suffered can never be entirely worn from my mind: I often wonder my heart did not break with the violence of my sorrow.

I had been brought up at the deanery, apart from all acquaintances. I had had a governess, a most worthy woman, who married just before my father was taken ill, and who kindly came to me when all was over, to endeavour to console the inconsolable. One of my father's objects in life had been to accumulate a fortune for me; not for the sake of placing me in the dangerous situation of an heiress, but to render me independent. It thus happened that by his ever-lamented death I inherited considerable wealth. His own fortune, my mother's, and his savings, formed the sum of fifty thousand pounds. He left me under the guardianship of his elder brother, Sir Richard Gray, with only one restriction, that I was not to marry, even with my uncle's consent, till I was twenty-one. He wished thus to secure me freedom of choice, and time for deliberation. To this sagacious clause I owe the happiness of my life.

As soon as my health and the first agony of my grief would permit, I left the deanery. My kind governess accompanied me to Dublin, and Sir Richard Gray came hither himself to fetch me, and to carry me to his seat in England. I was beyond measure surprised when I saw my uncle. He was a year older than my father—my venerable father—and he looked in comparison a boy. He was indeed under fifty, and had at first sight a juvenility of aspect quite astonishing. On examination, the traces of years and care became perceptible; and there was a haggardness in his face which contrasted strangely with its expression of thoughtlessness. No one could be

kinder than he was to me, and yet his very kindness was revolting, from the contrast he formed with my lost parent. The world, society, and pleasure occupied his time and thoughts. Solitude and misery were synonymous terms with him; and he called everything solitude that did not include the idea of a crowd. He rattled away during our journey, thinking his anecdotes and good stories would enliven me. He was so sorry that it was not the season that I could go to London—he would have invited his daughter, Lady Hythe, to his seat, that he might arrange a party to enliven it for me; but she was on the Continent, and his other married daughter was resident in Scotland. What was to be done? He had engagements himself during the shooting season at various gentlemen's houses; and I should be moped to death at Beech Grove. This account of the seclusion of my retreat was all my comfort. I declared that nothing should induce me to go into society for several years. He stared, and then smiled, and in his usual caressing gallant manner said, I should do as I liked; he would never contradict me in anything: he only hoped that he should be always able to please and gratify me.

My uncle's story is soon told. He married, very early in life, a girl of inferior rank. His relations were exceedingly enraged, and discarded him. His father died; and his grandfather, fearing that he would sell his expectations and squander the whole property, offered him a large immediate income, upon condition that he would entail the estate upon his eldest son. He consented. A few years after, his grandfather died, and he came into the titles and estate. The new Lady Gray made herself many friends from the extreme propriety of her conduct. They had a large family, but lost many children; and she died in childbed of her youngest. Five only survived. The eldest son was abroad: two daughters were well married, and the youngest, a girl of only twelve years of age, lived with her governess at the family seat at Hampshire. Sir Richard talked kindly of his children, but chiefly of his eldest son, against whom therefore I conceived a prejudice; because, from his father's description, I considered him dissipated and worthless. Such, indeed, was my uncle; but I did not

dislike him, for by the charm of manner he vanquished aversion, and I transferred to his favourite son the disapprobation he had at first excited. I was glad to hear that my cousin was at Vienna, and that I was not likely to see him.

We arrived at Beech Grove on the 29th August. It was a fine summer day, and the country in all its glory. The house was spacious and elegant, and situated in an extensive park, laid out with infinite taste, and kept up with extreme care. All looked so gay and smiling, so unlike the sombre scenes I had left on the shores of the dark northern ocean, that I contemplated my new abode with distaste: such is the force of habit. My uncle had expected that I should be enchanted with the novel beauty of an English park and mansion, and was disappointed at my languid praise. There were no rocks, no sea, no extensive moors. Groves of beech, a river threading verdant wooded banks, a variety of upland and valley, glade and copse, did not command my admiration; so true it is that we seldom admire that which is absolutely new. A few months totally altered this first impression. The cheerfulness of the scene imperceptibly acted on my spirits. I became reconciled to its (to a certain degree) tameness, and learnt at last to love its refined and elegant beauty.

Sir Richard talked of visiting and company. He would have called his neighbours round us, and forced me to accept invitations at the various houses where, in the shooting season, were assembled large parties of the rich and gay. I earnestly assured him that my depressed spirits and deep-rooted sorrow needed tranquillity—that the seclusion which his house promised was its principal attraction—that I was most happy to be alone. He could not believe my assertions; it hurt his feelings to leave me in this desert; he actually delayed his departure for two days, not liking to quit me. At last he went; and speedily, in the pursuit of pleasure, forgot my existence.

I was not absolutely alone in his house; my cousin Marianne inhabited it with me. She was a pretty, agreeable girl, of twelve years of age; and we got on very well

together. I had recourse to her society when over-weary of thought; and she was so young that I could leave her, and betake myself to my mournful, lonely reveries, whenever I liked, without ceremony.

I had not been at Beech Grove more than a week, when late one afternoon, on returning from a drive, we distinguished lights in the dining-room. “Can it be my brother?” cried Marianne; “can Clinton have arrived?”

“I hope not,” I said.

“Oh, do not say so,” replied the little girl; “you would love Clinton; he is so lively and dear—everybody loves him.”

She scarce waited for the steps to be let down, but jumped from the carriage. She returned to me in a minute with an air of disappointment, “It is only my brother Vernon,” she said.

“And you do not care about him?”

“Oh yes,” she replied, “Vernon is very good, and all that; but he is quite different from Clinton; he may stay a month in the house and I not see him twice.”

The habit of solitude had rendered me a little bashful I had dined early with my cousin, and the new-comer was at dinner. I went into the drawing-room therefore, and made her stay with me, and awaited his entrance with some alarm. He soon joined us. As he entered, I was struck with his being the handsomest man I had ever seen. His complexion was a clear olive; his eyes a dark blue; his head small and well shaped; his figure scarcely above the middle size, but slender and elegant. I expected the courteous manners of my uncle to correspond with the grace of his appearance; but Vernon had no vivacity, no softness. His words were pregnant with meaning, and his eyes flashed fire as he spoke; but his address was abrupt, his conversation pointed and sarcastic, and a disagreeable ironical smile in which he indulged deteriorated greatly from his good looks. Still, he was very handsome, very clever, and very entertaining.

One part of Marianne's description at least was erroneous. He spent every day and all day with us. He rode or walked with us in the morning; read to us in the evening; conversed as we worked or painted; and did all that a person most sedulous to please could do, except turning over the leaves of our music-books. He did not like music—of which my father was so passionately fond; in all else his tastes seemed mine. He gave me Italian lessons; and, except when I drove him away, was never absent from our side. Marianne declared that her brother Vernon was an altered man. I thought that I knew whence the alteration sprung.

What girl of eighteen, just emerged from solitude, could perceive the birth of love in the heart of a young, accomplished, and handsome man, and not feel her vanity gratified? My peculiar education had prevented my having any of the coquettishness of beauty or the insolence of wealth. I own I felt elated. I became of consequence in my own eyes; and my silly heart swelled with conscious triumph. Vernon grew each day more openly devoted to me, more solicitous to please, more flattering and attentive. He advanced with imperceptible steps to the desired bourne, and no impatience of temper disturbed for a moment his progress. Stealthy as a serpent, and as wily, he became necessary to my comfort; and I had compromised myself by displaying my vain triumph in my conquest before he betrayed himself by a word.

When I found that he sought a return for his love, I was frightened. I discovered that with all his talents and agreeable qualities I scarcely liked him, and certainly could never feel a sentiment more tender than friendship. I reproached myself for my ingratitude—I felt ashamed of my vacillation. He saw my struggles—he was all humility—he did not deserve better—he was satisfied if I would only be a sister to him—pity him—endure his presence. I agreed, and reassumed my familiarity and good-humour.

It is impossible to describe his refined artifice, or the wonderful assiduity with which he watched by his concealed net till I was completely immeshed. He contrived first

that I should consent to listen to him talking of his passion; then he excited my pity for his sufferings—he was eloquent in describing them and in exalting my merits. He asked for so little, he seemed so humble; but he was importunate, and never gave up the smallest advantage he had once gained. Forgotten by my uncle, unknown and unregarded by the rest of the world, I was delivered over to his machinations. Day after day he renewed them. He discerned and worked upon every weakness of my character. My fear to do wrong; my alarm at the idea of being the occasion of pain; my desire to preserve my integrity without a flaw,—these might be termed virtues; but, distorted and exaggerated by natural conceit and youthful inexperience, they rendered me a too easy prey. At last he extracted from me a promise to marry him when I should be of age. This pledge seemed the only method left me to prove my delicacy and truth. I gave it the more readily because I admired his talents, and believed that he deserved a better wife than I, and that my want of love was a fault in me for which I ought to compensate to him. With all the rashness and inexperience of my age, I confess that I even tried to conceal my latent aversion; so that when, after having obtained my promise, he went away for a week, I willingly assented to his request that I should correspond with him, and my letters were full of affection. I found it easier to write than speak what I did not really feel, and was glad to show my gratitude and my sense of his attachment at an easy rate. At the same time, I consented to keep our engagement secret, that thus I might have an excuse for preserving the reserve of my conduct. I took advantage of this wish on his part to insist on his leaving me for a time. I was glad when he went, yet mortified at the readiness of his obedience.

I must not be unjust. Vernon had many faults, but coldness of feeling was not among them. Vehemence and passion were his characteristics, though he could unite them to a deliberation in design, and a wiliness in execution, without example. He had determined before he saw me to win me and my fortune; but such was the violence of his disposition, that he was unavoidably caught in his own toils; and the project

that was founded on self-interest ended in making him the slave of love—of a girl whom he despised. He went when I bade him eagerly; but he fulfilled his aim better by so doing. My letters were to be confirmations strong against me—in case that hereafter, as he too justly feared, I should wish to retract my vows. I heedlessly accomplished his ends, beyond his most sanguine expectations. My letters were those of a betrothed bride; and what they might want in tenderness was made up by their uncompromising acknowledgment of our relative position. Having obtained these testimonies, he returned. I was not sorry. I was too little pleased with myself to be in love with solitude. His presence kept alive the feeling of irresistible fate to which I had yielded; and his society enlivened the monotonous quiet of Beech Grove.

At length Christmas came, and my uncle returned and filled his house with visitors. Then the darker shades of Vernon's character became apparent. He was as jealous as an Italian. His disposition was sombre and averse to sociable pleasures. God knows grief sat too heavy at my heart to allow me to be very vivacious; still, I wished to please my uncle, and thought that I had no right to cloud the good-humour of the company; and added to this was the elastic spirit of youth, which sprung eagerly and spontaneously from the gloom and mystery of Vernon's artifices into the more congenial atmosphere of friendly intercourse. He saw me unlike anything he had ever seen in me before—sprightly, and ready to share the amusement of the hour. He groaned in bitterness of spirit. He reproached—reprehended—and became a very taskmaster. I was naturally timid and docile—in vain did my spirit revolt from his injustice: he gained and kept complete ascendency over me. Yet my soul was in arms against him even while I submitted to his control, and dislike began to develop itself in my bosom. I tasked myself severely for my ingratitude. I became in appearance kinder than ever; but every internal struggle and every outward demonstration had unfortunately one result—to alienate my affections more and more from my lover-cousin.

Our guests left us. My uncle went up to town. He told me he hoped I would accompany him there as soon as Lady Hythe returned to chaperon me. But I was more averse than ever to visiting London. Bound to Vernon by my promises, and wishing to keep my faith with him, I did not like to expose myself to the temptation of seeing others I should like better. Besides, the memory of my father was still unfaded, and I resolved not to appear in public till the year of mourning was expired. Vernon accompanied his father to town, but returned again to us almost immediately. We appeared to revert to our former mode of life; but the essence of it was changed. He was moody—I anxious. I almost ventured to accuse him of ill-temper and tyranny, till, reading in my own heart its indifference, I was inclined to consider myself the cause of his discontent. I tried to restore his complacency by kindness, and in some degree succeeded.

One day Sir Richard suddenly appeared at Beech Grove. He seemed surprised to find Vernon, and care and even anxiety clouded his usual hilarity. He told us that he expected Clinton daily, and should immediately on his arrival bring him down to Hampshire.

“To celebrate my birthday?” asked Vernon, with a sardonic smile; “I am of age on Friday.”

“No,” said his father; “he will not be here so soon.”

“Nor I so honoured,” said Vernon; “Clinton’s coming of age was celebrated by tumultuous rejoicings; but he is the Elder Son.”

Sir Richard gave Vernon, who spoke sneeringly, a quick glance—an indescribable expression of pain crossed his countenance.

“Have you been staying here since Christmas?” he asked at last. Vernon would have replied evasively, but Marianne said,—

“Oh yes! he is always here now.”

“You appear to have become very fond of Beech Grove of a sudden,” continued his

father. I felt that Sir Richard's eye was fixed on me as he spoke, and I was conscious that not only my cheeks, but my temples and neck were crimsoned with blushes. Some time after I saw my uncle in the shrubbery; he was alone, and the want of society was always so painful to him, that I thought it but a mark of duteous kindness to join him. I wondered, as I approached, to see every token of haggard care on a face usually so smiling. He saw me, and smoothed his brow; he began talking of London, of my elder cousin, of his desire that I should conquer my timidity, and consent to be presented this spring. At length he suddenly stopped short, and scrutinizing me as he spoke, said,—

"Pardon me, dear Ellen, if I annoy you; but I am your guardian, your second father—am I not? Do not be angry, therefore, if I ask you, are you attached to my son Vernon?"

My natural frankness prompted one reply, but a thousand feelings, inexplicable but powerful, hung on my tongue. I answered, stammering: "No—I believe so—I like him."

"But you do not love him?"

"What a question, dear uncle!" I replied, covered with confusion.

"Is it even so?" cried Sir Richard; "and is he to succeed in all?"

"You mistake," I said; for I had a horror of confessing an attachment which, after all, I did not feel, and so of making our engagement more binding. But I blushed deeply as I spoke, and my uncle looked incredulous, and said,—

"Yet it would make you very unhappy if he married another."

"Oh no!" I cried, "he has my free leave. I should wish him joy with all my heart."

The idea—the hope that he was playing me false, and might release me from my trammels, darted through my mind with a quick thrill of delight. Sir Richard saw that I was in earnest, and his countenance cleared.

“What a strange thing is maiden coyness,” he observed; “you blushed so prettily, Ellen, that I could have sworn you had given your heart to Vernon. But I see I was mistaken; I am glad of it, for he would not suit you.”

No more was said, but I felt conscience-stricken and miserable. I had deceived my uncle, and yet I had not. I had declared that I did not love him to whom I had pledged my hand; and the whole was a mystery and an entanglement that degraded me in my own eyes. I longed to make a full confession; yet then all would be over—we should both be inextricably bound. As it was, some caprice might cause Vernon to transfer his affection to another, and I could give him entire freedom, without any human being knowing how foolishly I had acted.

We had no guests at dinner; Sir Richard was to leave us early the next morning. After dinner I speedily retired to the drawing-room, leaving father and son together; they remained two hours. I was on the point of withdrawing to my own room, to avoid a meeting which alarmed me, I knew not why, when they entered. It seemed as if, in the interval of my absence, they had received sudden intelligence of a dear friend’s death; and yet not quite so, for though Vernon looked absorbed in thought, his gloom was strangely interspersed with glances of swelling triumph; his smiles were no longer sneers—yet they did not betray a sunshine of the heart, but rather joy on a bad victory. He looked on me askance, with a kind of greedy satisfaction, and at his father with scorn. I trembled, and turned to my uncle; but sadness and confusion marked his features—he was stamped as with disgrace, and quailed beneath my eye; though presently he rallied, drew a chair near, and was kinder than ever. He told me that he was going up to town on the morrow, and that Vernon was to accompany him; he asked me if there was anything he could do for me, and testified his affection by a thousand little attentions. Vernon said nothing, and took leave of me so coldly, that I thought his manner implied that he expected to see me in the morning. Thinking it right to indulge him, I rose early; but he did not come down till long after Sir Richard, who thanked me for my kindness in disturbing

myself on his account. They went away immediately after breakfast, and Vernon's formal adieu again struck me with wonder. Was it possible that he was indeed going to marry another? This doubt was all my comfort, for I was painfully agitated by the false position in which I had entangled myself, by the mystery that enveloped my actions, and the falsehood which my lips perpetually implied, if they did not utter.

I was habitually an early riser. On the third morning after the departure of my relations, before I rose, and while I was dressing, I thought that pebbles were thrown at my window; but my mind was too engrossed to pay attention, till at last, after my toilette had been leisurely completed, I looked from my window, and saw Vernon below, in the secluded part of the park which it overlooked. I hurried down, my heart palpitating with anxiety.

"I have been waiting for you these two hours," he said angrily; "did you not hear my signal?"

"I know of no signal," I replied; "I am not accustomed to clandestine appointments."

"And yet you can carry on a clandestine engagement excellently well! You told Sir Richard that you did not love me—that you should be glad if I married another."

An indignant reply was bursting from my lips, but he saw the rising storm and hastened to allay it. He changed his tone at once from reproach to tender protestations.

"It broke my heart to leave you as I did," he said, "but I could do no less. Sir Richard insisted on my accompanying him—I was obliged to comply. Even now he believes me to be in town. I have travelled all night. He half-suspected me, because I refused to dine with him to-day; and I was forced to promise to join him at a ball to-night. I need not be there till twelve or one, and so can stay two hours with you."

"But why this hurried journey?" I asked. "Why do you come?"

He answered by pleading the vehemence of his affection, and spoke of the risk he ran of losing me for ever. "Do you not know," he said, "that my father has set his

heart upon your marrying my brother?"

"He is very good," I replied disdainfully. "But I am not a slave, to be bought and sold. My cousin Clinton is the last person in the world whom you need fear."

"Oh, Ellen, how much do you comfort—transport me, by this generous contempt for wealth and rank! You ask why I am here—it were worth the fatigue, twice ten thousand times told, to have these assurances. I have trembled—I have feared—but you will not love this favoured of fortune—this elder son!"

I cannot describe Vernon's look as he said this. Methought envy, malice, and demoniac exultation were all mingled. He laughed aloud—I shrunk from him dismayed. He became calmer a moment after.

"My life is in your hands, Ellen," he said;—but why repeat his glossing speeches, in which deceit and truth were so kneaded into one mass, that the poison took the guise of the wholesome substance, while the whole was impregnated with destruction. I felt that I liked him less than ever; yet I yielded to his violence. I believed myself the victim of a venial but irreparable mistake of my own. I confirmed my promises, and pledged my faith most solemnly. It is true that I undeceived him as much as I could with regard to the extent of my attachment; at first he was furious at my coldness, then overwhelmed me with entreaties for forgiveness—tears even streamed from his eyes—and then again he haughtily reminded me that I forfeited every virtue of my sex, and became a monument of falsehood, if I failed him. We separated at last—I promised to write every day, and saw him ride away with a sensation as if relieved from the infliction of the torture.

A week after this scene—my spirits still depressed, and often weeping my dear father's death, which I considered the root of every evil—I was reading, or rather trying to read, in my dressing-room, but in reality brooding over my sorrows, when I heard Marianne's cheerful laugh in the shrubbery, and her voice calling me to join her. I roused myself from my sad reverie, and resolved to cast aside care and misery,

while Vernon's absence afforded me a shadow of freedom; and, in fulfilment of this determination, went down to join my young light-hearted cousin. She was not alone. Clinton was with her. There was no resemblance between him and Vernon. His countenance was all sunshine; his light-blue eyes laughed in their own gladness and purity; his beaming smile, his silver-toned voice, his tall, manly figure, and, above all, his open-hearted engaging manners, were all the reverse of his dark mysterious brother. I saw him, and felt that my prejudices had been ridiculous; we became intimate in a moment. I know not how it was, but we seemed like brother and sister—each feeling, each thought, being laid bare to the other. I was naturally frank, but rendered timid by education; so that it charmed me doubly when the unreserve of another invited me to indulge in the unguarded confidence of my disposition. How speedily the days now flew! they contained but one drawback, my correspondence with my cousin—not that I felt myself unfaithful towards him; my affection for my new-found relation did not disturb my conscience—that was pure, undisguised, sisterly. We had met from across the ocean of life—two beings who formed a harmonized whole; but the sympathy was too perfect, too untinged by earthly dross, to be compared with the selfish love given and exacted by Vernon. Yet I feared that his jealousy might be awakened, while I felt less inclined than ever to belie my own heart; and with aversion and hesitation penned letters containing the formula of affection and engaged vows.

Sir Richard came down to Beech Grove. He was highly pleased to see the cordial friendship that subsisted between his son and me.

"Did I not tell you that you would like him?" he said.

"Every one must," I replied; "he is formed to win all hearts."

"And suits you much better than Vernon?"

I did not know what to answer; it was a tender string that he touched; but I resolved not to feel or think. Sir Richard's were all flying visits; he was to leave us in the

evening. He had, during the morning, a long conversation with Clinton; and immediately after he sought for an opportunity to talk to me.

“Ellen,” he said, “I have not been a wise but I am a fond father. I have done Clinton many injuries, of which he, poor fellow, is wholly unconscious; and I have wished to compensate for all in giving him a wife worthy of him. His temper is generous; his spirit clear and noble. By my soul, I think he has every virtue under heaven; and you alone deserve him. Do not interrupt me, I beseech you; hear me this once. I confess that ever since you became my ward this has been my favourite project. There have been several obstacles; but the most serious ones seem to vanish. You have seen each other, and I flatter myself have each discovered and appreciated the good qualities of the other. Is it so, Ellen? I know not whence my fears arise, and yet they intrude themselves. I fear, while I have been endeavouring to secure my boy’s happiness, I may have been adding to the ruin already heaped on his head by my means. I have talked with him to-day. He has no disguise in his nature, and he avows that he loves you. I know that this confession would come better from himself; but your fortune, your beauty, make him fear to be misinterpreted. Do not mistake—he is wholly unaware of my intention of speaking to you. I see your distress, dear Ellen; have patience but for one word more—do not trifle with Clinton’s feelings, as sometimes—forgive me—it has appeared to me that you have trifled with Vernon’s—do not foster hopes not to be fulfilled. Be frank, be honest, despite the bashfulness and coquetry of your sex.”

After these words, fearful of having offended—overcome by more agitation than I could have imagined him capable of feeling—my uncle drew me towards him, pressed me convulsively to his bosom, and then rushed from the room.

I cannot describe the state in which he left me—a spasm of pain passed through my frame; I became sick and faint, till a flood of tears relieved my bursting heart. I wept long—I sobbed in agony—I felt the veriest wretch that ever trod the earth.

My uncle had rent the veil that concealed me from myself. I loved Clinton—he was the whole world to me—all the world of light and joy, and I had shut myself out from him for ever. And he also was my victim. I beheld his dear face beaming with hope; I heard his thrilling voice harmonized by love; and saw the fearless cordiality of his manners, which bespoke his confidence in my sympathy; while I knew that I held a poisoned dagger which I was about to plunge into his heart. Sometimes I thought to treat him coldly, sometimes—oh! I cannot tell the various imaginations that haunted me—some self-sacrificing, others wicked and false—all ended in one way. My uncle departed; we were left together, our full hearts beating to respond to each other without any division or reserve. I felt that every moment might cause Clinton to open his soul to me, and to seek in mine for a feeling too truly and too fondly alive there, but which was sinful and fatal to both. To prevent his confession, my own preceded it. I revealed to him my engagement to Vernon, and declared my resolve not to swerve from my faith. He commended me. I saw despair at losing me painted in his countenance, mingled with horror at supplanting his brother; and alarm that he, the elder born, gifted by fortune with every blessing, should be suspected of the intention of stealing the sole remaining good, which Vernon had won by his diligence, perhaps by his deserts. Forbid it, Heaven! I saw in the clear mirror of his expressive countenance the struggle of passion and principle, and the triumph of honour and virtue exalted over the truest love that ever warmed man's breast.

Our gaiety was flown; our laughter stilled. We talked sadly and seriously together, neither lamenting our fate nor acknowledging our sufferings; tamed to endurance, and consoling each other by such demonstrations of affection as were permitted to our near relationship. We read clearly each other's hearts, and supported each other in the joint sacrifice; and this without any direct acknowledgment. Clinton talked of returning to the Continent; I of my seclusion and tranquillity at Beech Grove. The time was distant—two years was an eternity at our age—before Vernon could claim

my hand; and we did not advert to that fatal consummation. We gave up each other; and that single misery sufficed without a more cruel addition. I was calm, pale, and tearless. I had brought it all on myself, and must submit. I could not cast aside the younger son to select the elder; and if in my secret thoughts I cherished a hope to induce Vernon to forego his claims, that very circumstance would the more entirely divide me from Clinton. As my brother-in-law, I might see him—in some sort, our fortunes were shared; but as a rival to Vernon, a stream of blood separated us for ever.

The hours of sad sympathy which we passed were very dear to us. We knew that they were brief. Clinton had fixed the day and hour of his departure—each moment it drew nearer. We should never meet again till after my marriage; but till the hour of separation, for two short days, we were all in all to each other, despite the wall of adamant which was raised between us. We tried each to pretend to think and talk of indifferent subjects; and we never spoke of that nearest our hearts;—but how superfluous are words as interpreters between lovers! As we walked or rode, and spent hours in each other's society, we exchanged thoughts more intimately during long periods of absolute silence, than Vernon with his vehemence and eloquence could have conceived. Had we spoken folio volumes, we could have said no more. Our looks—the very casting down of our eyes and mutual tacit avoidance, told our resolve to fulfil our duties and to conquer our love; and yet how, by a glance or a faltering word, when the future was alluded to, did we promise never to forget, but to cherish mutual esteem and tenderness as all that was left of the paradise from which we were so ruthlessly driven! Now and then a playful expression on his part, or a blush on mine, betrayed more feeling than we considered right; the one was checked by a sigh, the other by an assumption of indifference.

I had been spending many hours in tears and anguish, when, resolved to overcome my weakness, and to recover an appearance of serenity before my cousin returned from his ride, I went into Marianne's schoolroom and took up a book. The

exhaustion of weeping had calmed me; and I thought of my kinsman—his endearing qualities, and of the tie between us, with softened feelings. As I indulged in reverie, my head resting on my hand, my book falling from my fingers, my eyes closed, I passed from the agitated sense of life and sorrow into the balmy forgetfulness of sleep. Clinton had wished to make a portrait of me, yet had not ventured to ask me to sit—he came in at this moment; Marianne, whispering, told him not to disturb me. He took her drawing materials, and made a hasty sketch, which genius and love united to render a perfect likeness. I awoke and saw his work; it was beyond our contract; I asked him for it; he felt that I was right, and gave it. This sacrifice on his part proved that he did not palter with his sense of right. On the morrow we were to part; and he would preserve no memorial beyond a remembrance which he could not destroy.

That morrow came. Clinton asked me and his sister to walk through the park with him, to join his chariot at the farther lodge. We consented; but, at the moment of going, Marianne, who knew nothing certainly, but who darkly guessed that all was not right, excused herself. I joined him alone. There was something in his person and manner that so promised protection and tenderness, that I felt it doubly hard to be torn from him. A dignified reserve, foreign to his usual nature, founded on a resolve to play only the brother’s part, checked me somewhat; yet I loved him the more for it; while I would have laid down my existence so that it had only been permitted us to throw aside the mask but for one short hour, and to use the language of nature and troth. It could not be; and our conversation was upon indifferent subjects. When we approached the lodge, we found that the chariot had not come, and we retreated a little, and sat down on a turfy bank; then Clinton said a few words, the only ones that at all revealed the agitation he was enduring.

“I have a little more experience than you, Ellen,” he said; “and, besides, I am haunted by strange presentiments; we seem to know what we ought to do, and what we are to do, and act accordingly—yet life is a strange, wild thing. I wish to ensure

for you a friend more willing and active than Sir Richard. I have a sister to whom I am fondly attached; she is now on the Continent, but I shall hasten to her, and entreat her to afford you a friendship you so richly deserve. You will love Lady Hythe for her own sake as well as for mine."

I was desirous of thanking him for this mark of kindness, but my voice failed me, and I burst into tears, overcome by the excess of anguish that deluged my heart I tried to conceal my tears—I could not.

"Do not, Ellen, dear Ellen, I beseech you—command yourself."

Clinton spoke in a voice so broken, so full of misery, that he inspired me at once with fear and courage. The tread of a horse roused us—a horse at swift gallop. I raised my eyes, and uttered a shriek; for, reining in the animal with a sudden strong pull, Vernon halted close to us. The most violent passions convulsed his countenance. He threw himself from the horse, and, casting the bridle from him, came up. What he meant to say or do I cannot tell; perhaps to conceal the workings of his heart—and the quick departure of Clinton would have smoothed all; but I saw the barrel of a pistol peep from the pocket of his coat. I was seized with terror—I shrieked aloud. Clinton, terrified at my alarm, would have supported me, but Vernon pushed him rudely away.

"Dare not to approach or touch her, as you value your life!" he cried.

"My life! you talk idly, Vernon. I value her security—one moment of peace to her—far more."

"You confess it!" exclaimed Vernon; "and you, too, false and treacherous girl! Ha! did you think to betray me, and be unpunished? Do you think, if I so chose it, that I would not force you to look on till the blood of one of the brothers flowed at your feet? But there are other punishments in store for you."

The expressions of menace used towards myself restored my courage, and I exclaimed, "Beware that you do not break the tie that binds us—at least, that bound

us a moment ago—perhaps it is already broken."

"Doubtless," he cried, grinding his teeth with rage, "it is broken, and a new one created to bind you to the elder son. Oh yes! you would fain cast aside the poor, miserable beggar, who has vainly fawned on you, and madly loved—you would take the rich, the honourable, and honoured Sir Clinton! Base, hollow-hearted fool!"

"Vernon," said Clinton, "whatever your claims are on our cousin, I cannot stand by and see her insulted. You forget yourself."

"The forgetfulness, sir, is on your part; proud in your seniority, to rival your brother, to drive him from his all, has been a May-game for you; but know, proud fool, or villain—take which name you will—your hour is passed by—your reign at an end! Your station is a fiction, your very existence a disgrace!"

Clinton and I both began to think that Vernon was really mad—a suspicion confirmed by his violent gestures. We looked at each other in alarm.

"Stay!" exclaimed the infuriated man, seizing my arm with a fierce grasp; while, fearful to induce Clinton's interference, I yielded. "Stay, and listen to what your lover is—or shall I wound your delicate ears? There are soft phrases and silken words to adorn that refuse of the world—a bastard!"

"Vernon, dare not!—beware, sir, and begone!"

Clinton's face crimsoned; his voice, his majestic indignation almost forced the ruffian to quail; he threw my arm from him.

"Take him, fair Ellen! it is true you take what I say—a natural son. Do you think that my information is not correct? Ask our father, for he is yours, Clinton, and our mother is the same; you are the first-born of Richard Gray and Matilda Towers; but I am the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Gray."

It could not have been that Vernon would have acted this cowardly and foolish part had he not been driven by a kind of madness. In truth, Sir Richard had, to quench his

hopes for ever, with that carelessness of truth—his fatal propensity—affirmed that Clinton and I were acknowledged lovers; and he came goaded by worse than jealousy—by a spirit of hatred and revenge. Seeing us together, obviously engaged by the most engrossing feelings, his temper, which had been worked into fury during his journey, burst forth beyond the bounds he had prescribed for himself. I have called him a serpent, and such he was in every respect; he could crawl and coil, and hide his wily advance; but he could erect his crest, dart out his forked tongue, and infix the deadly venom, when roused as he now was. Clinton turned alternately pale and red.

“Be it as you will,” he said; “my fortunes and yours are of slight moment in comparison to Ellen’s safety. If there is any truth in this tale of yours, there will be time enough to discover it and to act upon it. Meanwhile, dear cousin, I see they have brought my chariot to the lodge. You cannot walk home—get into it; it will drive you to the house, and come back for me.”

I looked at him inquiringly.

“Do not fear to be deserted by me,” he said, “or that I shall do anything rashly. Vernon must accompany me to town—to our father’s presence, there to expiate this foul calumny, or to prove it. Be assured he shall not approach you without your leave. I will watch over him, and guard you.”

Clinton spoke aloud, and Vernon became aware that he must yield to this arrangement, and satisfied that he had divided us. Clinton led me to his carriage.

“You will hear soon from some one of us, Ellen,” he said; “and let me implore you to be patient—to take care of yourself—to fear nothing. I can make no remark—affirm, deny nothing now; but you shall not be kept in suspense. Promise me to be patient and calm.”

“And do you,” I said at last, commanding my trembling voice, “promise not to be rash; and promise not to leave England without seeing me again.”

“I promise not to leave England for any time without your leave. Oh, trust me, my dear cousin; it is not in such storms as these that you shall be ashamed of me; one sentiment may subdue me, but poverty, disgrace, and every angry passion I can master.”

Vernon did not dare interrupt us. He felt that he had destroyed his carefully woven web through his own rashness, and gnawed his lips in silent rage. I looked at him once, and turned away my eyes in contempt. I got into the chariot; it drove me to the house, and went back to take Clinton up to town. Thus we were separated, as we intended; and yet, how differently! Hope was reborn in my heart, out of the very ashes of its despair.

Two mortal days passed, and I was still in my solitude, receiving no intelligence, except, indeed, such as was contained in a letter from Vernon. In this he demanded me as a right, and fiercely insisted that I should keep my faith with him; but he did not allude to the scene in the park, nor to his strange assertions there. I threw the letter from me as unworthy of notice or thought. The third morning brought me one from my uncle. I tore it open with uncontrollable impatience: these were the contents:—

“Clinton, my dear Ellen, insists that I should join you at Beech Grove; but I cannot persuade myself to do so till I have your leave—till I have confessed my villainy, and besought your forgiveness, in addition to that of my noble-hearted boy, whom I devoted to ruin before his birth, and who has pardoned me. It is a hateful subject—unfit for your ears, my gentle, virtuous girl, and I must hurry it over. When I first knew Miss Towers, I had no idea of marrying her; for she was poor and of humble birth. We loved each other, and she was willing to become mine on my own terms. Our intercourse was betrayed to her parents; and to appease them, and please Matilda, I declared that we were married. My assertion was credited; Matilda assumed my name, and all the world, all her little world, was deceived; while at the

same time I declared to my father that she was merely my mistress. He did not believe me. Thus I became entangled. A little before the birth of our second boy my father died, and my grandfather offered me two thousand a year on condition that I would secure the whole estate to my eldest son. I loved Matilda; my fears were dissipated by my father's death, and by this acknowledgment of my union by my grandfather. I married her; and, three days after Vernon's birth, signed the settlement of entail. Such is my story. Lady Gray's character necessitated the concealment from every human being of the period when the marriage was celebrated. My noble, beloved Clinton assumed the elder son's place. I dared not reveal the truth; nay, I fancied that I benefited him by allowing him to fill this false position till my death. He has undeceived me; but he has not cursed me. From the moment I saw you, I designed that you should repair my faults towards him, as you alone could. I believed that you were formed for each other; I was not mistaken there. I meant to acknowledge all before your marriage, but I believed that if once your affections were engaged, you would not reject my son from base and worldly-minded considerations. Am I not right also in this? Meanwhile, Clinton was abroad, and I became uneasy at observing the pains which Vernon took to ingratiate himself with you, and the intimacy which you encouraged. I forbade him to remain with you at Beech Grove—he defied me. Then I tried to entice him away from you; and, as a last bribe, disclosed the secret of his birth: he, in return, promised to leave the field open to Clinton. You know the rest. He never meant to give you up; he was my heir, and he grasped at your fortune besides—shall he succeed? Clinton is all kindness, and soothing angelic goodness—but he insists on no longer filling a situation to which he has no claim, and—is gone abroad. He fears to leave you exposed to Vernon's violence, and has made me promise to go down to Beech Grove, and to prevent his brother from seeing you without your free and entire consent. As I have said, I cannot prevail on myself to visit you till you are in full possession of all the facts. Now they are in your hands. You may expect me

to-morrow. Do not fear Vernon; I will take care that he shall not commit further outrage on you, nor injure the interest which I fondly trust that you preserve for my godlike, my beloved Clinton."

I read and reread this letter a thousand times; my soul was in tumults. At first I could only think of the facts that it contained, and proudly and joyfully determined to compensate to Clinton, as I believed I could, for every evil; and then again I read the letter, and many parts of it filled me with wonder and dismay. Clinton was gone abroad—against his promise—without a word; and there was something so indelicate in the way in which my uncle espoused his cause. It was strange—unlike any conduct I had expected on my dear cousin's part. Of course he would write—and yet he was gone, and no letter came! And then I dreaded to see Sir Richard, the wrongful, penitent father: the total indifference which he displayed to moral principle—not founded, like Vernon's, on selfishness, but on weakness of character and natural callousness to truth—revolted me. Where was my own dear father? He had thrown me from the sacred shelter of his virtue into a system of dissimulation and guilt, which even Clinton, I thought, deserting me as he did, did not redeem. I struggled with these feelings, but their justice confounded and overcame me. Yet, even in the midst of these disquieting reflections, a deep sense of happiness pervaded my soul. The mystery, the tyranny which had enveloped me, was brushed away like a spider's web. I was free—I might follow the dictates of my feelings, and it was no longer sin to love him to whom my heart was irrevocably given. The hours of the day flew on, while I lived as in a dream, absorbed by wonder, hope, doubt, and joy. At length, at six in the evening, a carriage drove up the avenue; a kind of terror at the expectation of seeing my uncle seized me, and I retreated hastily to my own room, gasping for breath. In a few minutes my servant tapped at my door; she told me that it was Lady Hythe who had arrived, and delivered me a letter. The letter was from Clinton; it was dated the same day, in London. I pressed it passionately to my lips and heart, and devoured its contents

with eagerness. “At length, dear Ellen,” he wrote, “I am satisfied; I was long uneasy on your account. I besought my father to go down to you, yet even that did not content me—for you did not so much need protection as sympathy and true disinterested friendship. My thoughts turned towards my earliest and dearest friend, my sister Caroline. She was on the Continent—I set out immediately to meet her, to tell everything, and to ask her advice and assistance. Fortune befriended me—I found her at Calais—she is now with you. She is my better self. Her delicacy of character, her accurate judgment and warm heart, joined to her position as a woman, married to the best and most generous fellow breathing, render her the very person to whom I can intrust your happiness. I do not speak of myself—fortune cannot overcome my spirits, and my way is clear before me. I pity my father and family; but Caroline will explain to you better than I can my views and hopes. Adieu, dear cousin! Heaven bless you as you deserve! Your fortitude, I am sure, has not deserted you; yet I am very anxious to hear that your health has not suffered by my brother’s violence. Caroline will write to me, and rejoice me by telling me of your well-being.”

I hurried down immediately to welcome Clinton’s sister; and from that moment my perplexities and sorrows vanished. Lady Hythe was a feminine likeness of Clinton; the same active kindness of heart, gentleness of temper, and adorable frankness. We were friends and sisters on the instant, and her true affection repaid me for every suffering; none of which I should have experienced had she been in England on my arrival. Clinton had told her of his love, but left me to reveal my own sentiments, detailing only the artifices and jealousy of Vernon. I was without disguise, for we were all one family, with the same objects, hopes, and pleasures. We went up to town immediately, and there I saw Clinton, and we exchanged our reserved, sad intercourse for a full acknowledgment of every thought and feeling.

The only piece of prudence that Sir Richard had practised was placing Clinton in the army, and purchasing promotion for him. He was so beloved by his fellow-officers

that, on the discovery of his unfortunate birth, they all united in giving him the support of their friendship and good opinion. Clinton resolved, therefore, to enter at once on active service, and to follow up his profession with energy. Two years were to elapse before I could marry, and he expressed a wish that we should neither of us consider ourselves under any engagement. How vain are such words! Heaven designed us for each other, and the mere phrase of engagement or freedom could not affect a tie founded on affection, esteem, or, beyond this, the passion that caused us to find happiness in each other only. He went with his regiment to Ireland, and we were a good deal divided during the two years that elapsed before I was twenty-one. I continued to reside with Lady Hythe, and enjoyed with her that peace of mind which true friendship affords.

At length the day came when I completed my twenty-first year. Sir Richard had wished to be present at our nuptials, but was unable from ill-health. I went to him, and saw him for the first time since the fatal discovery; for, on finding that I was happily placed with his daughter, he had carefully avoided seeing me. His character, indeed, was wholly changed. While carrying on a system of dissimulation, he had appeared gay; he was extravagant; given up to pleasure, and spending even beyond his large income, despite the ruin in which he knew that his son would be involved on his death. He made him indeed a princely allowance, as if that was to compensate to him; while, in fact, Clinton was only thus habituated to expense. As soon as the discovery was made, Sir Richard, by one of those inconceivable changes which sometimes occur in the history of human nature, set his heart on saving a fortune for his beloved boy. He thought that I might be fickle; he feared his own death and the loss of power to benefit him. He gave up his establishment in town—he let Beech Grove—he saved every farthing that he could, and was enabled to settle twenty thousand pounds on Clinton on the day of our marriage.

I went to see him in a little lodging at Camberwell, whither he had retreated. He was emaciated and ill; his eyes brightened a little on seeing Clinton and me together.

“I would fain live a little longer,” he said, “to increase my son’s fortune; but God’s will be done—you will make him happy, Ellen.”

We were inexpressibly shocked. He had concealed his penurious style of life and declining health all this time; and nothing but his illness, and our insisting upon seeing him, caused him to betray it now. Our first care after our marriage was to oblige him to take up his abode with us; and we devoted ourselves to calming his remorse and smoothing his path to the grave. He survived only four months; but he had the comfort of knowing that Clinton was satisfied and happy; and that we both from our hearts forgave the errors which he at last expiated so dearly.

We never saw Vernon again; nor can I tell what has happened to him, except that he lives the life of the rich in England, apparently attended by prosperity. Lady Hythe stood between me and him, and screened me from his violence and reproaches. He has never married. I have never seen him since the day when, in the park at Beech Grove, he unawares conferred on me every blessing of life, by releasing me from the ties that bound me to him.

The happiness of Clinton and myself has been unclouded. I at last persuaded him to give up his profession, and we live principally abroad. Lord and Lady Hythe frequently visit us; and every event of our lives—the unimportant events of domestic life—tends to increase our prosperity, and the entire affection we cherish for each other.

XVII. THE PILGRIMS.

The twilight of one of those burning days of summer whose unclouded sky seems to speak to man of happier realms, had already flung broad shadows over the valley of Unspunnen; whilst the departing rays of a gorgeous sunset continued to glitter on the summits of the surrounding hills. Gradually, however, the glowing tints deepened; then grew darker and darker; until they finally yielded to the still more sober hues of

night.

Beneath an avenue of lime-trees, which, from their size and luxuriance, appeared almost coeval with the soil in which they grew, Burkhardt of Unspunnen wandered to and fro with uneasy step, as if some recent sorrow occupied his troubled mind. At times he stood with his eyes stedfastly fixed on the earth, as if he expected to see the object of his contemplation start forth from its bosom; at other times he would raise his eyes to the summits of the trees, whose branches, now gently agitated by the night breeze, seemed to breathe sighs of compassion in remembrance of those happy hours which had once been passed beneath their welcome shade. When, however, advancing from beneath them, he beheld the deep blue heavens with the bright host of stars, hope sprang up within him at the thoughts of that glory to which those heavens and those stars, all lovely and beauteous as they seem, are but the faint heralds, and for a time dissipated the grief which had so long weighed heavily upon his heart.

From these reflections he was suddenly aroused by the tones of a manly voice addressing him. Burkhardt advancing, beheld, standing in the light of the moon, two pilgrims, clothed in the usual coarse and sombre garb, with their broad hats drawn over their brows.

“Praise be to God!” said the pilgrim who had just before awakened Burkhardt’s attention, and who, from his height and manner, appeared to be the elder of the two. His words were echoed by a voice whose gentle and faultering accents showed the speaker to be still but of tender years.

“Whither are you going, friends? what seek you here, at this late hour?” said Burkhardt. “If you wish to rest you after your journey enter, and with God’s blessing, and my hearty welcome, recruit yourselves.”

“Noble sir, you have more than anticipated our petition,” replied the elder pilgrim; “our duty has led us far from our native land, being bound on a pilgrimage to fulfil

the vow of a beloved parent. We have been forced during the heat of the day to climb the steep mountain paths; and the strength of my brother, whose youth but ill befits him for such fatigues, began to fail, when the sight of your castle's towers, which the moon's clear beams discovered to us, revived our hopes. We resolved to beg a night's lodging under your hospitable roof, that we might be enabled, on to-morrow's dawn, to pursue our weary way."

"Follow me, my friends," said Burkhardt, as he, with quickened step, preceded them, that he might give some orders for their entertainment The pilgrims rejoicing in so kind a reception, followed the knight in silence into a high-vaulted saloon, over which the tapers that were placed in branches against the walls cast a solemn but pleasing light, well in accordance with the present feelings of the parties.

The knight then discerned two countenances, the pleasing impression of which was considerably heightened by the modest yet easy manner with which the youthful pair received their host's kind attentions. Much struck with their appearance and demeanour, Burkhardt was involuntarily led back into the train of thoughts from which their approach had aroused him; and the scenes of former days flitted before him as he recollected that in this hall his beloved child was ever wont to greet him with her welcome smile on his return from the battle or the chase; brief scenes of happiness, which had been followed by events that had cankered his heart, and rendered memory but an instrument of bitterness and chastisement.

Supper was soon after served, and the pilgrims were supplied with the greatest attention, yet conversation wholly languished; for his melancholy reflections occupied Burkhardt, and respect, or perhaps a more kindly feeling, towards their host and benefactor, seemed to have sealed the lips of his youthful guests. After supper, however, a flask of the baron's old wine cheered his flagging spirits, and emboldened the elder pilgrim to break through the spell which had chained them.

"Pardon me, noble sir," said he, "for I feel it must seem intrusive in me to seek the

cause of that sorrow which renders you so sad a spectator of the bounty and happiness which you liberally bestow upon others. Believe me, it is not the impulse of a mere idle curiosity that makes me express my wonder that you can thus dwell alone in this spacious and noble mansion, the prey to a deeply-rooted sorrow. Would that it were in our power to alleviate the cares of one who with such bounteous hand relieves the wants of his poorer brethren!"

"I thank you for your sympathy, good pilgrim," said the old noble, "but what can it avail you to know the story of those griefs which have made this earth a desert? and which are, with rapid pace, conducting me where alone I can expect to find rest. Spare me, then, the pain of recalling scenes which I would fain bury in oblivion. As yet, you are in the spring of life, when no sad remembrance gives a discordant echo of past follies, or of joys irrecoverably lost. Seek not to darken the sunshine of your youth with a knowledge of those fierce, guilty beings who, in listening to the fiend-like suggestions of their passions, are led astray from the paths of rectitude, and tear asunder the ties of nature."

Burkhardt thus sought to avoid the entreaty of the pilgrim. But the request was still urged with such earnest though delicate persuasion, and the rich tones of the stranger's voice awoke within him so many thoughts of days long, long past, that the knight felt himself almost irresistibly impelled to unburden his long-closed heart to one who seemed to enter into its feelings with a sincere cordiality.

"Your artless sympathy has won my confidence, my young friends," said he, "and you shall learn the cause of my sorrow.

"You see me here, lonely and forsaken. But fortune once looked upon me with her blandest smiles; and I felt myself rich in the consciousness of my prosperity, and the gifts which bounteous Heaven had bestowed. My powerful vassals made me a terror to those enemies which the protection that I was ever ready to afford to the oppressed and helpless brought against me. My broad and fertile possessions

enabled me, with liberal hand, to relieve the wants of the poor, and to exercise the rights of hospitality in a manner becoming my state and my name. But of all the gifts which Heaven had showered upon me, that which I most prized was a wife, whose virtues had made her the idol of both the rich and the poor. But she who was already an angel, and unfitted for this grosser world, was too soon, alas! claimed by her kindred spirits. One brief year alone had beheld our happiness.

“My grief and anguish were most bitter, and would soon have laid me in the same grave with her, but that she had left me a daughter, for whose dear sake I struggled earnestly against my affliction. In her were now centred all my cares, all my hopes, all my happiness. As she grew in years, so did her likeness to her sainted mother increase; and every look and gesture reminded me of my Agnes. With her mother’s beauty I had, with fond presumption, dared to cherish the hope that Ida would inherit her mother’s virtues.

“Greatly did I feel the void that my irreparable loss had made; but the very thought of marrying again seemed to me a profanation. If, however, even for a single instant I had entertained this disposition, one look at our child would have crushed it, and made me cling with still fonder hope to her, in the fond confidence that she would reward me for every sacrifice that I could make. Alas! my friends, this hope was built on an unsure foundation! and my heart is even now tortured when I think on those delusive dreams.

“Ida, with the fondest caresses, would dispel each care from my brow; in sickness and in health she watched me with the tenderest solicitude; her whole endeavour seemed to be to anticipate my wishes. But, alas! like the serpent, which only fascinates to destroy, she lavished these caresses and attentions to blind me, and wrap me in fatal security.

“Many and deep were the affronts, revenged indeed, but not forgotten, which had long since caused (with shame I avow it) a deadly hatred between myself and

Rupert, Lord of Wädischwyl, which the slightest occasion seemed to increase to a degree of madness. As he dared no longer throw down the gauntlet, he found means, much harder than steel or iron, to glut his revenge upon me.

“Duke Berchtold of Zähringen, one of those wealthy and powerful tyrants who are the very pests of that society of whose rights they ought to be the ready guardians, had made a sudden irruption on the peaceful inhabitants of the mountains, seizing their herds and flocks, and insulting their wives and daughters. Though possessed of great courage, yet being not much used to warfare, these unhappy men found it impossible to resist the tyrant, and hastened to entreat my instant succour. Without a moment’s delay, I assembled my brave vassals, and marched against the spoiler. After a long and severe struggle, God blessed our cause, and our victory was complete.

“On the morning that I was to depart on my return to my castle, one of my followers announced to me that the duke had arrived in my camp, and wished an immediate interview with me. I instantly went forth to meet him; and Berchtold, hastening towards me with a smile, offered me his hand in token of reconciliation. I frankly accepted it, not suspecting that falsehood could lurk beneath so open and friendly an aspect.

“‘My friend,’ said he, ‘for such I must call you; your valour in this contest has won my esteem, although I could at once convince you that I have just cause of quarrel with the insolent mountaineers. But, in spite of your victory in this unjust strife, into which doubtless you were induced to enter by the misrepresentations of those villains, yet as my nature abhors to prolong dissensions, I would willingly cease to think that we are enemies, and commence a friendship which, on my part, at least, shall not be broken. In token, therefore, that you do not mistrust a fellow-soldier, return with me to my castle, that we may there drown all remembrance of our past dissensions.’

“During a long time I resisted his importunity, for I had now been more than a year absent from my home, and was doubly impatient to return, as I fondly imagined that my delay would occasion much anxiety to my daughter. But the duke, with such apparent kindness and in such a courteous manner, renewed and urged his solicitations, that I could resist no longer.

“His Highness entertained me with the greatest hospitality and unremitted attention. But I soon perceived that an honest man is more in his element amidst the toils of the battle than amongst the blandishments of a Court, where the lip and the gesture carry welcome, but where the heart, to which the tongue is never the herald, is corroded by the unceasing strifes of jealousy and envy. I soon, too, saw that my rough and undisguised manners were an occasion of much mirth to the perfumed and essenced nothings who crowded the halls of the duke. I however stifled my resentment, when I considered that these creatures lived but in his favour, like those swarms of insects which are warmed into existence from the dunghill, by the sun’s rays.

“I had remained the unwilling guest of the duke during some days, when the arrival of a stranger of distinction was announced with much ceremony; this stranger I found to be my bitterest foe, Rupert of Wädischwyl. The duke received him with the most marked politeness and attention, and more than once I fancied that I perceived the precedence of me was studiously given to my enemy. My frank yet haughty nature could ill brook this disparagement; and, besides, it seemed to me that I should but play the hypocrite if I partook of the same cup with the man for whom I entertained a deadly hatred.

“I resolved therefore to depart, and sought his Highness to bid him farewell. He appeared much distressed at my resolution, and earnestly pressed me to avow the cause of my abrupt departure. I candidly confessed that the undue favour which I thought he showed to my rival, was the cause.

"'I am hurt, deeply hurt,' said the duke, affecting an air of great sorrow, 'that my friend, and that friend the valiant Unspunnen, should think thus unjustly, dare I add, thus meanly of me. No, I have not even in thought wronged you; and to prove my sincerity and my regard for your welfare, know that it was not chance which conducted your adversary to my court. He comes in consequence of my eager wish to reconcile two men whom I so much esteem, and whose worth and excellence place them amongst the brightest ornaments of our favoured land. Let me, therefore,' said he, taking my hand and the hand of Rupert, who had entered during our discourse, 'let me have the satisfaction of reconciling two such men, and of terminating your ancient discord. You cannot refuse a request so congenial to that holy faith which we all profess. Suffer me therefore to be the minister of peace, and to suggest that, in token and in confirmation of an act which will draw down Heaven's blessing on us all, you will permit our holy Church to unite in one your far-famed lovely daughter with Lord Rupert's only son, whose virtues, if reports speak truly, render him no undeserving object of her love.'

"A rage, which seemed in an instant to turn my blood into fire, and which almost choked my utterance, took possession of me.

"'What!' exclaimed I, 'what, think you that I would thus sacrifice, thus cast away my precious jewel! thus debase my beloved Ida? No, by her sainted mother, I swear that rather than see her married to his son, I would devote her to the cloister! Nay, I would rather see her dead at my feet than suffer her purity to be sullied by such contamination!'

"'But for the presence of his Highness,' cried Rupert wrathfully, 'your life should instantly answer for this insult! Nathless, I will well mark you, and watch you, too, my lord; and if you escape my revenge, you are more than man.'

"'Indeed, indeed, my Lord of Unspunnen,' said the duke, 'you are much too rash. Your passion has clouded your reason; and, believe me, you will live to repent

having so scornfully refused my friendly proposal.'

"'You may judge me rash, my Lord Duke, and perhaps think me somewhat too bold, because I dare assert the truth in the courts of princes. But since my tongue cannot frame itself to speak that which my heart does not dictate, and my plain but honest manner seems to displease you, I will, with your Highness's permission, withdraw to my own domain, whence I have been but too long absent.'

"'Undoubtedly, my lord, you have my permission,' said the duke haughtily, and at the same time turning coldly from me.

"My horse was brought, I mounted him with as much composure as I could command, and I breathed more freely as I left the castle far behind.

"During the second day's journey I arrived within a near view of my own native mountains, and I felt doubly invigorated as their pure breezes were wafted towards me. Still the fond anxiety of a father for his beloved child, and that child his only treasure, made the way seem doubly long. But as I approached the turn of the road which is immediately in front of my castle, I almost then wished the way lengthened; for my joy, my hopes, and my apprehensions crowded upon me almost to suffocation. 'A few short minutes, however,' I thought, 'and then the truth, ill or good, will be known to me.'

"When I came in full sight of my dwelling, all seemed in peace; nought exhibited any change since I had left it. I spurred my horse on to the gate, but as I advanced the utter stillness and desertion of all around surprised me. Not a domestic, not a peasant, was to be seen in the courts; it appeared as if the inhabitants of the castle were still asleep.

"'Merciful Heaven!' I thought, 'what can this stillness forebode! Is she, is my beloved child dead?'

"I could not summon courage to pull the bell. Thrice I attempted, yet thrice the dread of learning the awful truth prevented me. One moment, one word, even one

sign, and I might be a forlorn, childless, wretched man, for ever! None but a father can feel or fully sympathize in the agony of those moments! none but a father can ever fitly describe them!

“I was aroused from this inactive state by my faithful dog springing towards me to welcome my return with his boisterous caresses, and deep and loud-toned expressions of his joy. Then the old porter, attracted by the noise, came to the gate, which he instantly opened; but, as he was hurrying forward to meet me, I readily perceived that some sudden and painful recollection checked his eagerness. I leaped from my horse quickly, and entered the hall. All the other domestics now came forward, except my faithful steward Wilfred, he who had been always the foremost to greet his master.

“‘Where is my daughter? where is your mistress?’ I eagerly exclaimed; ‘let me but know that she lives!’

“The faithful Wilfred, who had now entered the hall, threw himself at my feet, and with the tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks, earnestly pressed my hand, and hesitatingly informed me that my daughter lived: was well, he believed, but—had quitted the castle.

“‘Now, speak more quickly, old man,’ said I hastily, and passionately interrupting him. ‘What is it you can mean? my daughter lives; my Ida is well, but she is not here. Now, have you and my vassals proved recreants, and suffered my castle in my absence to be robbed of its greatest treasure? Speak! speak plainly, I command ye!’

“‘It is with anguish, as great almost as your own can be, my beloved master, that I make known to you the sad truth that your daughter has quitted her father’s roof to become the wife of Conrad, the son of the Lord of Wädischwyl.’

“‘The wife of Lord Rupert’s son! my Ida the wife of the son of him whose very name my soul loathes!’

“My wrath now knew no bounds; the torments of hell seemed to have changed the

current of my blood. In the madness of my passion I even cursed my own dear daughter! Yes, pilgrim, I even cursed her on whom I so fondly doted; for whose sake alone life for me had any charms. Oh! how often since have I attempted to recall that curse! and these bitter tears, which even now I cannot control, witness how severe has been my repentance of that awful and unnatural act!

“Dreadful were the imprecations which I heaped upon my enemy; and deep was the revenge I swore. I know not to what fearful length my unbridled passion would have hurried me, had I not, from its very excess, sunk senseless into the arms of my domestics. When I recovered, I found myself in my own chamber, and Wilfred seated near me. Some time, however, elapsed before I came to a clear recollection of the past events; and when I did, it seemed as if an age of crime and misery had weighed me down, and chained my tongue. My eye involuntarily wandered to that part of the chamber where hung my daughter’s portrait. But this the faithful old man—who had not removed it, no doubt thinking that to do so would have offended me—had contrived to hide, by placing before it a piece of armour, which seemed as though it had accidentally fallen into that position.

“Many more days elapsed ere I was enabled to listen to the particulars of my daughter’s flight, which I will, not to detain you longer with my griefs, now briefly relate.—It appeared that, urged by the fame of her beauty, and by a curiosity most natural, I confess to youth, Conrad of Wädischwyl had, for a long time sought, but sought in vain, to see my Ida. Chance at length, however, favoured him. On her way to hear mass at our neighbouring monastery, he beheld her; and beheld her but to love. Her holy errand did not prevent him from addressing her; and well he knew how to gain the ear of one so innocent, so unsuspicious as my Ida! Too soon, alas! did his flatteries win their way to her guiltless heart.

“My child’s affection for her father was unbounded; and readily would she have sacrificed her life for mine. But when love has once taken possession of the female

heart, too quickly drives he thence those sterner guests, reason and duty. Suffice it therefore to say she was won, and induced to unite herself to Wädischwyl, before my return, by his crafty and insidious argument that I should be more easily persuaded to give them my pardon and my blessing, when I found that the step that she had taken was irrevocable. With almost equal art, he pleaded too that their union would doubtless heal the breach between the families of Wädischwyl and Unspunnen; and thus terminate that deadly hatred which my gentle Ida, ever the intercessor for peace, had always condemned. By this specious of sophistry my poor child was prevailed upon to tear herself from the heart of a fond parent, to unite herself with the son of that parent's most bitter enemy."

The pain of these recollections so overcame Burkhardt, that some time elapsed ere he could master his feelings. At length he proceeded.

"My soul seemed now to have but one feeling, revenge. All other passions were annihilated by this master one; and I instantly prepared myself and my vassals to chastise this worse than robber. But such satisfaction was (I now thank God) denied me; for the Duke of Zähringen soon gave me memorable cause to recollect his parting words. Having attached himself with his numerous followers to my rival's party, these powerful chiefs suddenly invaded my domain. A severe struggle against most unequal numbers ensued. But, at length, though my brave retainers would fain have prolonged the hopeless strife, resolved to stop a needless waste of blood, I left the field to my foes; and, with the remnant of my faithful soldiers, hastened, in deep mortification, to bury myself within these walls. This galling repulse prevented all possibility of reconciliation with my daughter, whom I now regarded as the cause of my disgrace; and, consequently, I forbade her name even to be mentioned in my presence.

"Years rolled on; and I had no intelligence of her until I learned by a mere chance that she had with her husband quitted her native land. Altogether, more than twenty,

to me long, long years, have now passed since her flight; and though, when time brought repentance, and my anger and revenge yielded to better feelings, I made every effort to gain tidings of my poor child, I have not yet been able to discover any further traces of her. Here therefore have I lived a widowed, childless, heart-broken old man. But I have at least learned to bow to the dispensations of an all-wise Providence, which has in its justice stricken me, for thus remorselessly cherishing that baneful passion which Holy Law so expressly forbids. Oh! how I have yearned to see my beloved child! how I have longed to clasp her to this withered, blighted heart! With scalding tears of the bitterest repentance have I revoked those deadly curses, which, in the plenitude of my unnatural wrath, I dared to utter daily. Ceaselessly do I now weary Heaven with my prayers to obliterate all memory of those fatal imprecations; or to let them fall on my own head, and shower down only its choicest blessings on that of my beloved child! But a fear, which freezes my veins with horror, constantly haunts me lest the maledictions which I dared to utter in my moments of demoniac vindictiveness, should, in punishment for my impiety, have been fulfilled.

“Often, in my dreams, do I behold my beloved child; but her looks are always in sadness, and she ever seems mildly but most sorrowfully to upbraid me for having so inhumanly cast her from me. Yet she must, I fear, have died long ere now; for, were she living, she would not, I think, have ceased to endeavour to regain the affections of a father who once loved her so tenderly. It is true that at first she made many efforts to obtain my forgiveness. Nay, I have subsequently learned that she even knelt at the threshold of my door, and piteously supplicated to be allowed to see me. But my commands had been so peremptory, and the steward who had replaced Wilfred, after his death, was of so stern and unbending a disposition, that, just and righteous as was this her last request, it was unfeelingly denied to her. Eternal Heaven! she whom I had loved as perhaps never father loved before—she whom I had fondly watched almost hourly lest the rude breeze of winter should chill

her, or the summer's heat should scorch her—she whom I had cherished in sickness through many a livelong night, with a mother's devotion, and more than a mother's solicitude, even she, the only child of my beloved Agnes, and the anxious object of the last moments of her life, was spurned from my door! from this door whence no want goes unrelieved, and where the very beggar finds rest! And now, when I would bless the lips that even could say to me 'she lives,' I can nowhere gather the slightest tidings of my child. Ah, had I listened to the voice of reason, had I not suffered my better feelings to be mastered by the wildest and fellest passions, I might have seen herself, and perhaps her children, happy around me, cheering the evening of my life. And when my last hour shall come, they would have closed my eyes in peace, and, in unfeigned sorrow have daily addressed to Heaven their innocent prayers for my soul's eternal rest.

"You now know, pilgrims, the cause of my grief; and I see by the tears which you have so abundantly shed, that you truly pity the forlorn being before you. Remember him and his sorrows therefore ever in your prayers; and when you kneel at the shrine to which you are bound, let not those sorrows be forgotten."

The elder pilgrim in vain attempted to answer; the excess of his feelings overpowered his utterance. At length, throwing himself at the feet of Burkhardt, and casting off his pilgrim's habits, he with difficulty exclaimed,—

"See here, thine Ida's son! and behold in my youthful companion, thine Ida's daughter! Yes, before you kneel the children of her whom you so much lament. We came to sue for that pardon, for that love, which we had feared would have been denied us. But, thanks be to God, who has mollified your heart, we have only to implore that you will suffer us to use our poor efforts to alleviate your sorrows, and render more bright and cheerful your declining years."

In wild and agitated surprise, Burkhardt gazed intently upon them. It seemed to him as if a beautiful vision were before him, which he feared even a breath might dispel.

When, however, he became assured that he was under the influence of no delusion, the tumult of his feelings overpowered him, and he sank senselessly on the neck of the elder pilgrim; who, with his sister's assistance, quickly raised the old man, and by their united efforts restored him, ere long, to his senses. But when Burkhardt beheld the younger pilgrim, the very image of his lost Ida, bending over him with the most anxious and tender solicitude, he thought that death had ended all his worldly sufferings, and that heaven had already opened to his view.

"Great God!" at length he exclaimed, "I am unworthy of these Thy mercies! Grant me to receive them as I ought! I need not ask," added he after a pause, and pressing the pilgrims to his bosom, "for a confirmation of your statement, or of my own sensations of joy. All, all tells me that you are the children of my beloved Ida. Say, therefore, is your mother dead? or dare I hope once more to clasp her to my heart?"

The elder pilgrim, whose name was Hermann, then stated to him that two years had passed since his parent had breathed her last in his arms. Her latest prayer was, that Heaven would forgive her the sorrow she had caused her father, and forbear to visit her own error on her children's heads. He then added that his father had been dead many years.

"My mother," continued Hermann, drawing from his bosom a small sealed packet, "commanded me, on her deathbed, to deliver this into your own hands. 'My son,' she said, 'when I am dead, if my father still lives, cast yourself at his feet, and desist not your supplications until you have obtained from him a promise that he will read this prayer. It will acquaint him with a repentance that may incite him to recall his curse; and thus cause the earth to lie lightly on all that will shortly remain of his once loved Ida. Paint to him the hours of anguish which even your tender years have witnessed. Weary him, my son, with your entreaties; cease them not until you have wrung from him his forgiveness.'

"As you may suppose, I solemnly engaged to perform my mother's request; and as

soon as our grief for the loss of so dear, so fond a parent, would permit us, my sister and myself resolved, in these pilgrim's habits, to visit your castle; and, by gradual means, attempt to win your affections, if we found you still relentless, and unwilling to listen to our mother's prayer."

"Praise be to God, my son," said Burkhardt, "at whose command the waters spring from the barren rock, that He has bidden the streams of love and repentance to flow once more from my once barren and flinty heart. But let me not delay to open this sad memorial of your mother's griefs. I wish you, my children, to listen to it, that you may hear both her exculpation and her wrongs."

Burkhardt hid his face in his hands, and remained for some moments earnestly struggling with his feelings. At length he broke the seal, and, with a voice which at times was almost overpowered, read aloud the contents.

"My beloved father,—if by that fond title your daughter may still address you,—feeling that my sad days are now numbered, I make this last effort, ere my strength shall fail me, to obtain at least your pity for her you once so much loved; and to beseech you to recall that curse which has weighed too heavily upon her heart. Indeed, my father, I am not quite that guilty wretch you think me. Do not imagine that, neglecting every tie of duty and gratitude, I could have left the tenderest of parents to his widowed lonely home, and have united myself with the son of his sworn foe, had I not fondly, most ardently, hoped, nay, had cherished the idea almost to certainty, that you would, when you found that I was a wife, have quickly pardoned a fault, which the fears of your refusal to our union had alone tempted me to commit. I firmly believed that my husband would then have shared with me my father's love, and have, with his child, the pleasing task of watching over his happiness and comfort. But never did I for an instant imagine that I was permanently wounding the heart of that father. My youth, and the ardour of my husband's persuasions, must plead some extenuation of my fault.

“The day that I learnt the news of your having pronounced against me that fatal curse, and your fixed determination never more to admit me to your presence, has been marked in characters indelible on my memory. At that moment it appeared as if Heaven had abandoned me, had marked me for its reprobation as a parricide! My brain and my heart seemed on fire, whilst my blood froze in my veins. The chillness of death crept over every limb, and my tongue refused all utterance. I would have wept, but the source of my tears was dried within me.

“How long I remained in this state I know not, as I became insensible, and remained so for some days. On returning to a full consciousness of my wretchedness, I would instantly have rushed to you, and cast myself at your feet, to wring from you, if possible, your forgiveness; but my limbs were incapable of all motion. Soon, too, I learned that the letters which I dictated were returned unopened; and my husband at last informed me that all his efforts to see you had been utterly fruitless.

“Yet the moment I had gained sufficient strength, I went to the castle, but, unfortunately for me, even as I entered, I encountered a stern wretch, to whom my person was not unknown; and he instantly told me that my efforts to see his master would be useless. I used prayers and entreaties; I even knelt upon the bare ground to him. But so far from listening to me, he led me to the gate, and, in my presence, dismissed the old porter who had admitted me, and who afterwards followed my fortunes until the hour of his death. Finding that all my attempts were fruitless, and that several of the old servants had been discarded on my account, with a heart completely broken, I succumbed to my fate, and abandoned all further attempt.

“After the birth of my son (to whose fidelity and love I trust this sad memorial), my husband, with the tenderest solicitude, employed every means in his power to divert my melancholy, and having had a valuable property in Italy bequeathed to him, prevailed upon me to repair to that favoured and beauteous country. But neither the fond attentions of my beloved Conrad, nor the bright sunshine and luxurious

breezes, could overcome a grief so deeply rooted as mine; and I soon found that Italy had less charms for me than my own dear native land, with its dark pine-clad mountains.

“Shortly after we had arrived at Rome, I gave birth to a daughter;—an event which was only too soon followed by the death of my affectionate husband. The necessity of ceaseless attention to my infant in some measure alleviated the intense anguish which I suffered from that most severe loss. Nevertheless, in the very depth of this sorrow, which almost overcharged my heart, Heaven only knows how often, and how remorsefully, while bending over my own dear children in sickness, have I called to mind the anxious fondness with which the tenderest and best of fathers used to watch over me!

“I struggled long and painfully with my feelings, and often did I beseech God to spare my life, that I might be enabled to instruct my children in His holy love and fear, and teach them to atone for the error of their parent. My prayer has in mercy been heard; the boon I supplicated has been granted; and I trust, my beloved father, that if these children should be admitted to your affections, you will find that I have trained up two blessed intercessors for your forgiveness, when it shall have pleased Heaven to have called your daughter to her account before that dread tribunal where a sire’s curse will plead so awfully against her. Recall then, oh, father! recall your dreadful malediction from your poor repentant Ida! and send your blessing as an angel of mercy to plead for her eternal rest. Farewell, my father, for ever! for ever, farewell! By the cross, whose emblem her fevered lips now press; by Him, who in His boundless mercy hung upon that cross, your daughter, your once much loved Ida, implores you, supplicates you, not to let her plead in vain!”

“My child, my child!” sobbed Burkhardt, as the letter dropped from his hand, “may the Father of All forgive me as freely as I from the depths of my wrung heart forgive you! Would that your remorseful father could have pressed you to his heart, with his

own lips have assured you of his affection, and wiped away the tears of sorrow from your eyes! But he will cherish these beloved remembrances of you, and will more jealously guard them than his own life."

Burkhardt passed the whole of the following day in his chamber, to which the good Father Jerome alone was admitted, as the events of the preceding day rendered a long repose absolutely necessary. The following morning, however, he entered the hall, where Hermann and Ida were impatiently waiting for him. His pale countenance still exhibited deep traces of the agitation he had experienced; but having kissed his children most affectionately, he smilingly flung round Ida's neck a massive gold chain, richly wrought, with a bunch of keys appended to it.

"We must duly install our Lady of the Castle," said he, "and invest her with her appropriate authorities.—But, hark! from the sound of the porter's horn it seems as if our hostess would have early calls upon her hospitality. Whom have we here?" continued he, looking out up the avenue. "By St. Hubert, a gay and gallant knight is approaching, who shall be right welcome—that is, if my lady approve. Well, Willibald, what bring you?—a letter from our good friend the Abbot of St. Anselm. What says he?"

"I am sure that you will not refuse your welcome to a young knight, who is returning by your castle to his home, from the Emperor's wars. He is well known to me, and I can vouch for his being a guest worthy of your hospitality, which will not be the less freely granted to him because he does not bask in the golden smiles of fortune."

"No, no, that it shall not, my good friend; and if fortune frown upon him, he shall be doubly welcome. Conduct him hither instantly, good Willibald."

The steward hastened to usher in the stranger, who advanced into the hall with a modest but manly air. He was apparently about twenty-five years of age; his person was such as might well, in the dreams of a young maiden, occupy no unconspicuous place.

“Sir Knight,” said Burkhardt, taking him cordially by the hand, “you are right welcome to my castle, and such poor entertainment as it can afford. We must make you forget your wounds, and the rough usage of a soldier’s life. But, soft, I already neglect my duty in not first introducing our hostess,” added the aged knight, presenting Ida. “By my faith,” he continued, “judging from my lady’s blushing smile, you seem not to have met for the first time. Am I right in my conjecture?”

“We have met, sir,” replied Ida, with such confusion as pleasantly implied that the meeting was not indifferently recollected, “in the parlour of the abbess of the Ursulines, at Munich, where I have sometimes been to visit a much valued friend.”

“The abbess,” said the young knight, “was my cousin; and my good fortune more than once gave me the happiness of seeing in her convent this lady. But little did I expect that amongst these mountains the fickle goddess would again have so favoured a homeless wanderer.”

“Well, Sir Knight,” replied Burkhardt, “we trust that fortune has been equally favourable to us. And now we will make bold to ask your name; and then, without useless and tedious ceremony, on the part of ourselves and our hostess, bid you again a hearty welcome.”

“My name,” said the stranger, “is Walter de Blumfeldt; though humble, it has never been disgraced; and with the blessing of Heaven, I hope to hand it down as honoured as I have received it.”

Weeks, months rolled on, and Walter de Blumfeldt was still the guest of the Lord of Unspunnen; till, by his virtues, and the many excellent qualities which daily more and more developed themselves, he wound himself around Burkhardt’s heart, which the chastened life of the old knight had rendered particularly susceptible of the kindlier feelings. Frequently would he now, with tears in his eyes, declare that he wished he could convince each and all with whom his former habits had caused any difference, how truly he forgave them, and desired their forgiveness.

"Would," said he one day, in allusion to this subject, "that I could have met my old enemy, the Duke of Zähringen, and with a truly heartfelt pleasure and joy have embraced him, and numbered him amongst my friends. But he is gathered to his fathers, and I know not whether he has left any one to bear his honours."

Each time that Walter had offered to depart, Burkhardt had found some excuse to detain him; for it seemed to him that in separating from his young guest he should lose a link of that chain which good fortune had so lately woven for him. Hermann, too, loved Walter as a brother; and Ida fain would have imagined that she loved him as a sister; but her heart more plainly told her what her colder reasoning sought to hide. Unspunnen, who had for some time perceived the growing attachment between Walter and Ida, was not displeased at the discovery, as he had long ceased to covet riches; and had learnt to prize the sterling worth of the young knight, who fully answered the high terms in which the Prior of St. Anselm always spoke of him. Walking one evening under the shade of that very avenue where he had first encountered Hermann and Ida, he perceived the latter, at some little distance, in conversation with Walter. It was evident to Burkhardt that the young knight was not addressing himself to a very unwilling ear, as Ida was totally regardless of the loud cough with which Burkhardt chose to be seized at that moment; nor did she perceive him, until he exclaimed, or rather vociferated,—

"Do you know, Walter, that, under this very avenue, two pilgrims, bound to some holy shrine, once accosted me; but that, in pity to my sins and forlorn condition, they exchanged their penitential journey for an act of greater charity, and have ever since remained to extend their kind cares to an aged and helpless relative. One, however, of these affectionate beings is now about to quit my abode, and to pass through the rest of this life's pilgrimage with a helpmate, in the person of the fair daughter of the Baron de Leichtfeldt, and thus leave his poor companion with only the tedious society of an old man. Say, Sir Knight, will thy valour suffer that such wrong be done; or wilt thou undertake to conduct this forsaken pilgrim on her way, and guide

her through the chequered paths of this variable life? I see by the lowliness with which you bend, and the colour which mantles in your cheek, that I speak not to one insensible to an old man's appeal. But soft, soft, Sir Knight, my Ida is not yet canonized, and therefore cannot afford to lose a hand, which inevitably must occur if you continue to press it with such very ardent devotion. But what says our pilgrim; does she accept of thy conduct and service, Sir Knight?"

Ida, scarcely able to support herself, threw herself on Burkhardt's neck. We will not raise the veil which covers the awful moment that renders a man, as he supposes, happy or miserable for ever. Suffice it to say that the day which made Hermann the husband of the daughter of the Baron de Leichtfeldt, saw Ida the wife of Walter de Blumfeldt.

Six months had passed rapidly away to the happy inhabitants of Unspunnen, and Burkhardt seemed almost to have grown young again. He was one of the most active in the preparations which were necessary in consequence of Walter suggesting that they should spend Ida's birthday in a favourite retreat of his and hers. This chosen spot was a beautiful meadow, in front of which meandered a small limpid stream; at the back was a gorgeous amphitheatre of trees, the wide-spreading branches of which cast a refreshing shade over the richly enamelled grass.

In this beauteous retreat were Burkhardt, Walter, and his Ida passing the sultry hours of noon, when Walter, who had been relating some of his adventures at the court of the Emperor, and recounting the magnificence of the tournaments, turning to his bride, said,—

"But what avails all that pomp, my Ida. How happy are we in this peaceful vale! we envy neither princes nor dukes their palaces or their states. What say you, my Ida, could you brook the ceremony of a court, and the pride of royalty? Methinks even the coronet of a duchess would but ill replace the wreath of blushing roses on your head."

“Gently, my good husband,” replied Ida, laughing; “they say, you know, that a woman loves these vanities too dearly in her heart ever to despise them. Then how can you expect so frail a mortal as your poor wife to hold them in contempt? Indeed, I think,” added she, assuming an air of burlesque dignity, “that I should make a lofty duchess, and wear my coronet with most becoming grace. And now, by my faith, Walter, I recollect that you have this day, like a true and gallant knight, promised to grant whatever boon I shall ask. On my bended knee, therefore, I humbly sue that if you know any spell or magic wile, to make a princess or a duchess for only a single day, that you will forthwith exercise your art upon me; just in order to enable me to ascertain with how much or how little dignity I could sustain such honours. It is no very difficult matter, Sir Knight: you have only to call in the aid of Number Nip, or some such handy workman of the woods. Answer, most chivalrous husband, for thy disconsolate wife rises not until her prayer is granted.”

“Why, Ida, you have indeed craved a rare boon,” replied Walter; “and how to grant it may well puzzle my brain till it becomes crazed with the effort. But, let me see, let me see,” continued he musingly; “I have it!—Come hither, love, here is your throne,” said he, placing her on a gentle eminence richly covered with the fragrant wild thyme and the delicate harebell; “kings might now envy you the incense which is offered to you. And you, noble sir,” added he, addressing Burkhardt, “must stand beside her Highness, in quality of chief counsellor. There are your attendants around you; behold that tall oak, he must be your Highness’s pursuivant; and yonder slender mountain ashes, your trusty pages.”

“This is but a poor fulfilment of the task you have undertaken, Sir mummer,” said Ida, with a playful and arch affectation of disappointment.

“Have patience for a brief while, fair dame,” replied Walter, laughing; “for now I must awaken your Highness’s men-at-arms.”

Then, taking from his side a silver horn, he loudly sounded the melodious reveille.

As he withdrew the instrument from his lips, a trumpet thrillingly answered to the call; and scarcely had its last notes died away, when, from the midst of the woods, as if the very trees were gifted with life, came forth a troop of horsemen, followed by a body of archers on foot. They had but just entirely emerged, when numerous peasants, both male and female, appeared in their gayest attire; and, together with the horsemen and the archers, rapidly and picturesquely ranged themselves in front of the astonished Ida, who had already abdicated her throne, and clung to the arm of Walter. They then suddenly divided, and twelve pages in richly-emblazoned dresses advanced. After them followed six young girls, whose forms and features the Graces might have envied, bearing two coronets placed on embroidered cushions. In the rear of these, supporting his steps with his abbatial staff, walked the venerable Abbot of St. Anselm, who, with his white beard flowing almost to his girdle, and his benign looks that showed the pure commerce of the soul which gave life to an eye the brightness of which seventy years had scarcely diminished, seemed to Ida a being of another world. The young girls then advancing, and kneeling before Walter and his wife, presented the coronets.

Ida, who had remained almost breathless with wonder, could now scarcely articulate,—

“Dear, dear Walter, what is all this pomp—what does—what can it mean?”

“Mean! my beloved,” replied her husband; “did you not bid me make you a duchess? I have but obeyed your high commands, and I now salute you, Duchess of Zähringen!”

The whole multitude then made the woods resound with the acclamation,—

“Long live the Duke and Duchess of Zähringen!”

Walter, having for some moments enjoyed the unutterable amazement of the now breathless Ida, and the less evident but perhaps equally intense surprise of Burkhardt, turning to the latter, said,—

“My more than father, you see in me the son of your once implacable enemy, the Duke of Zähringen. He has been many years gathered to his fathers; and I, as his only son, have succeeded to his title and his possessions. My heart, my liberty, were entirely lost in the parlour of the Abbess of the Ursulines. But when I learnt whose child my Ida was, and your sad story, I resolved ere I would make her mine to win not only her love, but also your favour and esteem. How well I have succeeded, this little magic circle on my Ida’s finger is my witness. It will add no small measure to your happiness to know that my father had for many years repented of the wrongs which he had done you; and, as much as possible to atone for them, entrusted the education of his son to the care of this my best of friends, the Abbot of St. Anselm, that he might learn to shun the errors into which his sire had unhappily fallen. And now,” continued he, advancing, and leading Ida towards the abbot, “I have only to beg your blessing, and that this lady, whom through Heaven’s goodness I glory to call my wife, be invested with those insignia of the rank which she is so fit to adorn.”

Walter, or, as we must now call him, the Duke of Zähringen, with Ida, then lowly knelt before the venerable abbot, whilst the holy man, with tears in his eyes, invoked upon them the blessings of Heaven. His Highness then rising, took one of the coronets, and placing it on Ida’s head, said,—

“Mayst thou be as happy under this glittering coronet, as thou wert under the russet hood in which I first beheld thee.”

“God and our Lady aid me!” replied the agitated Ida; “and may He grant that I may wear it with as much humility. Yet thorns, they say, spring up beneath a crown.”

“True, my beloved,” said the duke, “and they also grow beneath the peasant’s homely cap. But the rich alchemy of my Ida’s virtues will ever convert all thorns into the brightest jewels of her diadem.”

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