

THE  
ASTROLOGER;

OR, THE

*EVE OF SAN SEBASTIAN,*

*A Romance,*

By J. M. H. HALES, Esq.

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" Amid the storms of war, with curious eyes,  
" I trace the planets, and survey the skies "

LUCAN

" Be the threats of fate unlimited,  
" I'll not despair "

METASTASIO

" Speak of me as I am—nothing extenuate,  
" Nor set down nught in malice; then must you speak  
" Of one who loved not wisely—but too well "

SHAKESPEARE

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IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

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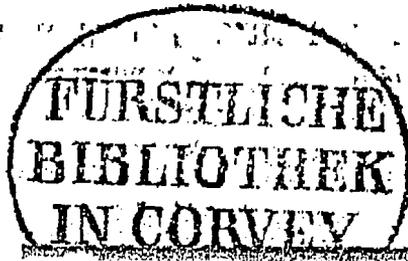
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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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From my boyish days to the present hour, the perusal of works of fancy has been an occupation to which I have devoted much of that time that was not employed in studies or duties more serious and important. With mingled awe and admiration, I have scanned the sublime beauties of a Milton and a Shakspeare; but I have read, with avidity and delight, the fascinating productions of a Radcliffe and a Curties.

On the minds of the young and inexperienced, Novels and Romances are said by the world to

have an evil tendency: from reading such works I was long interdicted; but, with that perverseness inherent in human nature, I nevertheless read them, and with a degree of pleasure I am unable to describe.

Having naturally a taste for that style of writing, and being perhaps of a romantic turn of mind, I had one evening just concluded *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, when I was seized with that malady, to which we daily see so many victims, the *cacoethes scribendi*.

On a little reflection and self-consultation, I found that I was blessed, as well as others, with a moderate genius, a small stock of information, and sufficient sense and judgment to enable me to arrange methodically many ideas which I committed to paper.

Vanity here stepped forward and urged me on to the undertaking I meditated; all the creative powers of imagination were immediately in action; nor slept they until my plot was fully formed, and I forthwith determined to write a Romance.

Having thus introduced myself, I must offer some remarks on the leading incidents of the story: a few of which are partly founded on facts recorded in history; as the siege of Gibraltar, in the reign of Charles III. of Spain, &c. &c.

In drawing the character of the Queen of Spain, I found it necessary to the interest of the work to form an imaginary being; instead of copying any of those who have really existed; for that august personage is one of my principal *drä-*

*matis personæ*; and as the character is merely imaginary, I trust none of my readers will be so cynical as to accuse me of drawing it inconsistently.

Had I intended to write an "Historical Romance," I must surely have painted facts as they were, and better evinced my knowledge of them than to bring the King and Queen in person to the siege; or presume to describe her Majesty's fidelity to her royal consort as weakened by the attractions of a British Officer.

Far, very far indeed have I deviated from history. The Prince Orlando del Oporto is a being entirely the creation of my own brain; such are also the political motives by which Charles of Spain, and the Regent of Portugal are influenced,

in treating about the marriage of the Infanta; the development of which depends on the death of the Prince of Asturias.

It would, however, be an insult to the reader, to point out more circumstantially the liberties I have thus taken. I shall, therefore, merely observe, that had I in those parts retained truth solely as my guide, I must have constructed my story on quite a different plan, and pursued a style, in which so many abler pens than mine have been employed.

Few are the phenomena which are not tolerated in romance; the wild, improbable, and picturesque constitute its leading features; yet these I have endeavoured to avoid, except indeed, in one instance, where I have introduced that im-

portant auxiliary to the marvellous and mysterious—an apparition.

The description of the Inquisition is a sketch drawn by the pencil of fancy, to which I may perhaps be accused of having given the reins too freely. The picture is certainly not an historical one, though some of our first writers of that class have sometimes thought it no crime to decorate the stale and beaten path of truth, with a few embellishments of fiction. It is a path, however, which, as an author, I do not profess to tread; my description will, therefore, convey a very faint idea of the nature of that dreadful tribunal, where such atrocities have been practised as the pen almost recoils from relating.

In the prosecution of this work,

I was solely actuated by the innate pleasure I felt in composing it. I took no model, I borrowed neither language nor sentiments, finding those resources within myself; my plot, language, and sentiments are humble I avow, but their merit is that great one which *all* romances cannot boast;—they are, with the trifling exceptions I have already shewn, original; and with all my faults, plagiarism is a sin I have never been guilty of.

Now, kind and generous Reader, do I venture to dedicate to your liberality, the following pages. In committing them to the public eye; in subjecting them to the lash of criticism, think what sensations I must feel; what anxiety for their fate. Should it be un-

favourable, I shall have been sufficiently punished, and can only promise never again to obtrude myself on your notice: should it be otherwise I shall esteem myself amply rewarded for the time and attention I have devoted to my humble tale.

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THE  
**ASTROLOGER;**

OR, THE

“EVE OF ST. SEBASTIAN.”

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**CHAPTER I.**

“ A black presaging sorrow fills my heart ;  
What could a day like this produce but woe ?”

HILL.

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**T**HE last evening song was over—the solemn tones of the organ had ceased to vibrate on the religious silence, which was only at intervals disturbed by the rustling of the wind, and the monks and nuns were preparing to quit the chapel, when a loud and lengthened peal of the convent bell was heard from the outer portal.

Supposing it to be as usual some hap-

less wanderer come to entreat a refuge for the night, from the storm that raged without, the benevolent Abad Francisco instantly repaired to the gate himself, to admit whoever it might be; while the sisterhood accompanied the Abadessa to the refectory, to finish the preparations for the festival of their patron saint, which was to be celebrated on the ensuing day.

In a few minutes the Abad returned—A smile of pleasure was diffused over his intelligent countenance—and, to the inquiries of the Madre Ulrica, he replied, that a messenger had been sent from the Castello della Vittoria to announce that the Marcheza had just given a son to its illustrious lord, whose wish it was that the infant, having been born on the eve of San Sebastian, should, at its baptism, receive that name; “and what appears a singular coincidence,” continued the Padre, “the birth of an Infanta has this very day added to the royal house

of Bourbon. A courier from the Palazzo del Medina was of course immediately despatched to inform the prime minister; and here are a few lines, in which his Excellenza mentions those happy circumstances:”

The Castello della Vittoria was situated about a mile from the convent; its present noble owners and their ancestors had, since the foundation of the holy edifice, contributed liberally to its aggrandizement and support; and it was now said to be the richest as well as the most ancient monastery in Spain: its nuns and boarders being all of the most distinguished families in the kingdom, amongst whom that of Vittoria was as generally revered for its virtues as it was known for its wealth and splendour; and the birth of an heir, to perpetuate its honours and its virtues, was hailed even more joyfully than the royal Elvira's.

In commemoration of those events a

motet was selected by the Abadessa, to be sung at high mass on the following day; when several dignitaries of the church were expected to be present, as was always customary at the grand feast and oratorio regularly held on the anniversary of San Sebastian.

These arrangements completed, they again proceeded to the chapel, to offer up their midnight thanksgivings and gratitude for the safe deliveries of the Queen and the Marcheza; but scarcely had they uttered the first pious effusions of their hearts when they were suddenly alarmed by the violent ringing of the bell.

At this moment all the elements of nature seemed convulsed; the storm which the gloominess of the day had foretold burst forth with increased fury; the thunder rolled awfully through the murky clouds, succeeded by vivid flashes of lightning, whose horrid glare swept across the portal just as Anselmo,

one of the lay brothers, had opened the gate.

Another messenger had arrived from the Castello, and the lamp which Anselmo carried, shewed the horror and consternation of his looks, as he hastily tried to explain his mission.

“Pardon me, reverendissimo Padre,” said he, in tones almost inaudible through his agitation, while tears quickly coursed each other down his cheeks; “Pardon me for thus disturbing your holy retreat at this late hour; but, alas! I am the bearer of sad tidings, which would admit of no delay, not all the terrors of the lightning could retard me; our noble lady the Marcheza is no more; a rapid fever soon succeeded the birth of the young Conde; and she expired at ten o'clock; his Excellenza requests that your holy community will say masses for the repose of her angel soul.”

“Peace to her departed spirit!”

ejaculated Anselmo, "crossing himself devoutly; "the Marcheza dead!—Oh Father of Heaven, how severe a blow is this; can it indeed be possible that so much excellence has thus soon met the common lot of mortals?" "Yes, yes," sobbed the affectionate Pedro—"She is gone—gone for ever" and raising his hands and eyes towards the great Being he addressed, regardless of the surrounding tempest; "Almighty God," continued he, "She is, I trust, now happy, and singing thy praises amongst the blest."

"God grant," it responded Anselmo, in a voice of deep solemnity; "but forgive me, good Pedro, for in my grief I had forgotten that you were exposed to all the violence of the storm; you had better come in and tarry here until it is somewhat abated."

"No, no, father," replied Pedro, suddenly recollecting himself, "I heed not this mockery of the elements;

worse, far worse is the storm of grief within my bosom; Oh, my beloved, my dearest lady, never shall I see thee again in this world; but Heaven's will be done; good night, holy father, I must away."

Saying this, he waved his hand, and quickly disappeared among the trees that shaded the convent; and Anselmo dejectedly repaired to the chapel, to impart to the rest the melancholy intelligence.

Sorrow now filled every breast, and the tear of regret glistened in every eye. Unable to restrain their feelings, the Madre Ulrica silently wept with the nuns the death of their amiable friend, and withdrew to their respective cells to indulge the sacred tide of grief uninterruptedly.

As the Abad was retiring through the cloisters, he descried in the gloomy perspective one of the monks pacing the arcade, with slow and measured steps; his arms folded across his breast, and

his eyes bent towards the ground; while in a low voice he uttered several inaudible sentences.

“Oh, Osmin,” said the latter, as he approached and recognized him, “how the scene is changed; how vain and airy are the hopes of poor humanity! within this hour have I heard what will grieve thy very soul; the amiable Marcheza della Vittoria is no more!”

“No more!” re-echoed Osmin, dropping the crucifix he had held, and riveting his eyes on the Abad; “but the infant, say, father, has the child Sebastian survived?” he hastily demanded.

“Yes, he still lives,” returned Francisco.

“Then the fates have *not* deceived me; all,—all will be fulfilled.”

“Alas, good Osmin, the fatal horoscope has told you truth; but speak, I beseech you; say, do the stars threaten further ill?”

“They threaten much, and all will

too surely come to pass; 'tis not in mortal power to avert what destiny decrees; for the last three hours I have closely watched the motion of the heavenly bodies, amid this dreadful contention of nature, from the observatory in the turret. Now learn the result of my observations;" and drawing a roll of parchment from beneath his robe, on which were divers astronomical signs, he presented it to the Abad.

"Read this carefully," said he, "and let it be firmly impressed on your memory; 'tis the tablet of what fate has marked out for Sebastian. I have accurately cast the scheme of his nativity, and I find that many are the trials, many the misfortunes, that await him ere he can attain happiness in this sublunary world; and, strange to say, I am fated to be the important agent, who shall bestow it. At a proper age this shall be delivered into his own keeping; but, until that period shall

arrive, let its mysterious contents rest within your bosom in inviolate silence."

Osmin had, from his youth, assiduously applied himself to the study of astrology; it was a science whose abstruse depths were well calculated to exercise his comprehensive abilities; and extraordinary powers of mind; and the darker the labyrinths were through which he had to wind, the more eagerly did he pursue the track, till, with all the energies of his soul bent on attaining the goal he had so long laboured to arrive at, he at length reached the summit of his most ambitious hopes; and the name of Osmin the Astrologer, became universally known and revered through the kingdom.

His sun of glory was, however, soon clouded by a train of domestic losses and calamities, which with all his foresight, he had not been able to avoid; the gloom of misanthropy succeeded; and the lustre of his fame, thus dimmed;

he retired from the uncongenial scenes of busy life to the calm seclusion of his present abode. The dull monotony of a convent could not conceal the brilliancy of his talents, which even there displayed themselves on many occasions.

He had been the oracle of several events which superstition had anticipated; and, perhaps, chance accomplished; and his profound knowledge rendered him the idol of the whole brotherhood.

"Numerous, indeed, are the sorrows allotted to him," observed the Padre; "yet who, in this variable scene of life, is exempt from misfortune in some shape? But, Osmin, what of our young princess? I trust she has been born under a more propitious planet."

"Father you must not question me further about *her*; I durst not predict the fate of royalty, be it what it may; nor should I have unveiled the destiny of Sebastian, were it not in some mea-

sure connected with our holy monastery, from whose tutelar Saint he takes his name."

With awe, nearly amounting to veneration, the Abad returned the parchment, fully confident that its contents would at a future day be realized; and joining his prayers with those of Osmin, for the safety of Vittoria's heir, they separated for the night.

Ere the commencement of the matin-service next day, the chapel was hung round with black velvet, as a tribute of respect to the memory of the Marcheza. At high mass the chapel was crowded with ecclesiastics of the most distinguished orders, whilst the monks joined the sisterhood in chanting a solemn requiem for the repose of the Marcheza's soul: after which, those who were to perform the ode on the birth of the Infanta, and sing in the oratorio, took their seats in the choir.

## CHAPTER II.

To court the great ones, and to soothe their pride,  
 Seems a sweet task to those who never tried;  
 But those who have, know well that danger's near.

CREECH

**THE** Castello della Vittoria, where so lately happiness and joy had been the presiding deities, was now changed to a scene of mourning and affliction: Great, indeed, was the sacrifice which the birth of the unconscious Sebastian had caused: and insensible must be the one who could, unmoved, have contemplated the affecting picture of the disconsolate Marcheze bending over the beauteous corse of his adored Virginia, sustaining on one arm the smiling infant—the other entwining the cold form beside him,

while he bathed her pale cheeks with his copiously-flowing tears.

The regret that accompanied the Marcheza to the tomb, was as sincere as it was universal. The charms and amiable qualities of her mind and person had rendered her the admired and beloved of every heart; and, the last sad ceremony concluded, that separated her from his sight for ever, her inconsolable lord retired to the solitude of a remote apartment, where, for several weeks, he indulged his grief for the loss of so excellent, so idolized, a wife; and whence his parental feelings and public duties were alone able to recall him.

Two children were the offspring of this short-lived union,—Viola and Sebastian; the former was now only four years of age, and too young to be much more sensible than her brother of their general loss. Their innocent endearments in some measure softened the violence of their father's sorrow; and,

but that their tender years required a father's protection, and religion daily soothed him, he would gladly have flown from a world that had become irksome to him, and followed his ever-lamented Virginia to the grave.

Amid the mementos of former happiness and domestic bliss which the Castello on all sides presented, it was not likely that memory could ever wander from the author of them. His mind, constantly engrossed by the same object, his health at length began to decline, and would, probably, have borne him at once to the summit of his wishes, had not the affairs of government, from which the death of the *Marcheza* had sanctioned his temporary retirement, again summoned him into active life, and the performance of his ministerial duties promised to aid in restoring him to himself.

He had long been the bosom favourite of the deceased Ferdinand: his youthful heart had sympathized in all the sorrows

of that exemplary monarch, who, a prey to melancholy, had lately sunk to the tomb of his beloved queen; and Charles of Naples, having succeeded to the Spanish crown, evinced his affection and respect for his brother, and his wisdom and judgment as a prince, in bestowing the same unlimited friendship and confidence on the amiable Don Alvaro, who, by his father's decease, became at the same time *Marcheze della Vittoria* and prime minister of Spain.

Charles was a valorous and enterprising prince, and so strict an adherent to the Bourbon treaty, that his strenuous support of it had nearly cost him the entire forfeiture of his dominions in the north. At this momentous period, the counsel and advice of his minister were indispensable; and the *Marchese*, ever mindful of the good of his country, now unhesitatingly prepared for his return to court.

There the bustle of political affairs

soon diverted his thoughts from their usual course, and turned them towards an object of even greater importance—to subdue, if possible, the hostilities then existing between England and the Spanish colonies in America.

A cessation was at length effected by his wise and judicious administration, and time and change of scene had now mellowed his sorrows almost into oblivion, and enabled him to review the past events with calmness and tranquillity.

At this period the little Viola had attained her seventh year, and Sebastian his third, and the Marcheze experienced less pleasure amid the luxuriousness of a court, than in contemplating the growing beauties of his two lovely children, blooming beneath the peaceful and salubrious shades of Vittoria, whither, at every opportunity, he retired to enjoy himself, and was often accompanied by his Sovereign to that delightful retreat.

With Viola's increasing years, also in-

creased, proportionately, all the peculiar beauties of her sex. She was amiable, handsome, and, though yet in her infancy, endowed with talents and accomplishments that promised to render her at a future day one of the brightest ornaments of society.

Bianca, the old and faithful domestic, who had attended the Marchesa from her childhood, and had received her last sigh, would often gaze on Viola for hours, in admiration of those charms which recalled so forcibly the image of her late revered lady, and with honest enthusiasm would then recapitulate the virtues which had made her mother a blessing to the poor, and a treasure to her family.

To bring those qualifications to perfection in Viola, required more than the watchfulness of a father, or the pomp of ceremony and rank.

She had been several times at the Palazzo, amongst whose royal inmates she was now a general favourite, inso-

much that the Queen, who was about to place the Infanta Elvira at the convent of San Sebastian for her education, proposed that the Lady Viola should accompany her thither, for the same purpose, and that in future she should be the constant companion of the princess.

*This was too flattering a mark of distinction from her Majesty, not to meet the ready concurrence of the Marchese, who had already had it in contemplation to send his daughter to the convent for a few years.*

Between the Infanta and Viola a friendship subsisted not common at so early a period of life. While together at the Palazzo they had ever been inseparable: but now that it had been agreed that they should part no more, their mutual joy was equalled only by the pleasure and delight with which the friendly sisterhood hailed their arrival at the monastery.

The proper education of the young

Conde Montalban was his father's next care; and none appeared fitter to trust that important charge to than Francisco Abad of San Sebastian, and the learned Osmin, who were accordingly fixed upon to superintend his daily studies at the Castello.

Under the tuition of two men, not more famous for their exemplary piety and virtue, than for their profound knowledge and information, it may easily be supposed that, with a disposition naturally versatile, cheerful, and docile, Sebastian made a rapid progress, as creditable to their exertions as it was to his own extraordinary talents.

No assistance that nature required from art, to form the virtuous man, and the elegant and accomplished courtier, was denied him; as he grew up his preceptors became more and more attached to him. Magnanimity and strength of mind displayed themselves in his every word and action; his hand-

some and graceful figure attracted universal observation, and his fine manly features formed a true index of a heart cast in nature's fairest mould. He was the beloved of all who knew him, and the idol of his father, who thought no recompense adequate to the invaluable gift presented to him by the worthy Abad, who had given him back his son a being thus perfect.

Sebastian seldom visited at the convent, though his earlier years were almost entirely spent at Vittoria—but whenever he *did*, he was always admitted to a privilege that no other stranger of his sex enjoyed, that of conversing in the parlour with his sister, and frequently with the princess, who hardly ever allowed herself to be separated from Viola; in his society she found an undefinable something so exquisitely pleasing, that though she found no difficulty in concealing her feelings, she was always ready to weep at his departure.

Their interviews were never opposed or objected to by the Abadessa, unconscious as she was of their dangerous tendency, and not sufficiently aware that the young and unguarded hearts of two persons so amiable and fascinating as Sebastian and Elvira, might easily be made to feel the warmest attachment for each other, or that from those meetings might one day ensue a passion fatal to their peace.

Never was Sebastian's happiness so complete as at those periods when the King and the Marcheze visited the Castello; for never did they then fail to make an addition to the party, by sending to the convent for the princess and Viola, whose stay was generally regulated by the time their fathers remained.

Every succeeding day made Elvira dearer than ever to the Conde, who saw in her a thousand nameless attractions, which he had not before discovered; he felt that the sight of so much loveli-

ness, thus ripening into maturity, had already confirmed sentiments he hardly dared acknowledge even to himself; the consequences of such an attachment he too well foresaw, and however painful might be the sacrifice, reason demanded it; and he at length determined to annihilate it altogether while yet in his power, and in future to absent himself from every place where he might be likely to meet her, as the only means of restoring to his bosom its usual serenity; and with so much prudence and caution did he pursue this plan as to render it almost impossible for any one to suspect the situation of his heart.

But though he escaped the penetration, not only of the King and his father, but even of the venerable guardians of his youth, he was too much an object of their solicitude and attention not to cause many apprehensions for his future safety through life, from Osmin's predictions at his birth; and not all the fa-

vours heaped on him by his Sovereign, whose friend and companion he now was, could banish their fears

... As a proof of his friendship and esteem the King had appointed him to an eligible commission, then on home service, and the signal favours bestowed on him from time to time, talked of and exaggerated through the court, soon excited a general feeling of envy and discontent amongst the other members of it, who were, however, too politic to evince it openly, and Montalban, too generous to triumph in their jealousy, often declined the rewards due to his merit, from motives which nothing could induce him to reveal.

He seldom left his regiment, which was stationed in Catalonia, and only a few days' journey from the Castello della Vittoria, where he sometimes made a long visit, as his sister and the princess had by this time quitted the convent. Whenever, the Marcheze could prevail

on him to accompany him to court, his reluctance was always visible; and he departed from thence in a state of the most indescribable emotion, which, exceeding the grief that family separations usually cause, his father and sister in vain tried to account for.

Of a temper naturally lively and unreserved, the sadness and melancholy that had taken possession of him, were now more striking; he had long tried to combat his feelings, and assume a degree of cheerfulness, and for a while his efforts had been successful enough to baffle all suspicion; but at length the power of dissimulation became too weak to oppose the superior force of agitation of mind, which he could no longer conceal, and the alteration was very soon noticed by his brother officers. Esteemed and beloved as he was by them all, they took too active a part in whatever concerned his happiness, to regard this evident diminution of it, with any

thing like indifference. Their assiduities to restore it were received with gratitude; but their solicitations to discover the cause of such a change, remained unsatisfied; and they could only form conjectures, without his conduct giving to any of them an appearance of reality; for whose was the bosom so true, so sincere, that he durst impart the fatal truth?

At intervals he was animated, and they essayed to rally him out of his sorrows; but they were of too serious a nature to be trifled with; gaiety could not dispel, nor philosophy overcome them. When their conversation took a lively turn their facetiousness sometimes made him smile; they often swore he was in love; an assertion which, whether erroneous or otherwise, he never contradicted; but the smile it occasioned was of short duration; a tear started to his eye, whose pensive glance forbade the further obtrusion of such

observations; and he again became silent and thoughtful.

His regiment lay in a town almost at the base of the Pyrenees, overhung by thick woods of pine, fir, and mountain-ash, beneath whose solitary shades he often wandered, indulging his melancholy undisturbed, and in its gloomy retirement sighing forth his passion to the passing breeze, as if to waft them to his adored Elvira.

The stars had faithfully shewn Sebastian's future destiny—at least Osmin placed so implicit a reliance on what they had foretold, that he now thought it incumbent on him to apprize him at once of all that fate had threatened, hoping that the knowledge of it would put him on his guard against many ills which might otherwise happen to him. This he considered a duty rendered still more imperious by the circumstance of his having been so long intrusted to his guidance, independent of every other

consideration. He loved Sebastian with the fondness of a father, and even the Marcheze was scarcely more interested in his welfare—accordingly, having first consulted the Abad, and gained his approbation, he determined to present to Montalban the important packet the next time he came to the Castello.

The Conde had ever regarded Francisco and Osmin with filial reverence, but in the latter there was something so truly amiable and conciliating, that it was impossible to know and not love him—all his affection was therefore placed upon him that could be spared from his own family, and that did not interfere with what he felt for the princess; and from their long intimacy and perfect knowledge of each other, Osmin felt less reluctance in performing the duty he had imposed on himself.

With trembling impatience, and a sensation of fear, Sebastian broke the seal, and, with an expression of amazement

and horror, his eye ran over the contents.

Instantly the glow of his countenance turned to a deadly pale, which was as quickly succeeded by a feverish flush—the envelope fell from his hand, and tottering to a seat, “Audacious liar!” exclaimed he, in a furious tone, forgetting for a moment the respect due to his sacred character, and every tie of friendship and affection which had hitherto united them so closely, “dost thou, the creature of my father’s bounty, presume to predict such a destiny to the heir of Vittoria—or fool, thinkest thou that these fantasies of thy distempered brain can ever come to pass—preposterous! Go, go, idiot; see if the stars will tell thine own fate—thou art indeed the bigotted pedantic astrologer they would have persuaded me to believe thee.”

During this impassioned speech the features of the Monk continued unruffled, and rising from his seat with all the dig-

nity of conscious virtue and goodness, "Young man," said he, picking up the parchment from the floor and replacing it on the table, "had I foreseen the reception this has met, or had I *not* been your friend, thou shouldst have been left to buffet the storms of fate unheeded and unwarned—thou knowest now all that awaits thee—and mark me, though thy fate hath been foretold by a 'bigotted and pedantic astrologer, the creature of thy father's bounty,' every thing herein predicted, though 'the fantasies of an idiot's brain,' will come to pass with as much certainty as will the death of all our mortal race;—you will then recollect the astrologer—from this moment, we part—the holy office I fill will not permit me to associate longer with the ungrateful boy who thus insults me—farewell."

Osmin had disappeared before Sebastian recovered from the surprise and confusion into which he had been thrown by this firm reply, and the conscious-

ness of his indiscretion. In a moment he felt all the impropriety of his conduct, and the distressing consequences of his impetuosity; almost breathless with haste, and sinking with shame and remorse, he flew through the vestibule, in order to overtake him, if possible, and implore his forgiveness; but 'twas too late—Osmin had vanished—and, bitterly reproaching himself, he returned to his apartment, agonized by the conviction that, with a man of the Monk's determined disposition, the request would now be unavailing; for he knew that the sincerity of his friendship was only equalled by the steadiness of his displeasure against those who had once voluntarily offended him—and his fault, wearing as it did the darkest colouring of ingratitude, allowed of no mitigation. The assurance of having thus rashly forfeited the esteem of a man he had so loved and respected, was almost an adequate punishment, and in the violence of

his grief he forgot the fatal cause of all, until aroused by the entrance of his father. His eyes were still red, for a few tears had stolen down his manly cheek, and the Marcheze, in a voice of tenderness rendered more affecting by the mission on which he had come, inquired what had occasioned his melancholy and disordered appearance, at the same time taking up the roll of parchment which lay on the table beside him.

Sebastian would have taken it from him on some pretence, but he had now opened it, and ere he had time to collect his bewildered ideas, the Marcheze hastily demanded the meaning of those mysterious lines, and by whom they had been written.

The Conde was too much embarrassed to reply immediately, and his father continued in a tone of unusual sternness, while he fixed on him a look that seemed to penetrate his every thought. "Se-

bastian, remember I will be answered, and that without prevarication; there is something dangerous and uncommon in all this, therefore I insist on your informing me who is the author of it."

Sebastian tried to appear composed, and even to force a smile of incredulity; but he saw that his father would not be denied or trifled with, and, entreating him to put it aside and think no more of it, but merely as a set of romantic and chimerical ideas, he endeavoured to disengage it from his hold, adding, "that it was a scheme of nativity which Father Osmin had drawn from imagination for his amusement, and that he had requested it of him as a curiosity he meant to preserve."

"Simpleton," cried the Marcheze, with an ironical smile, "do you then believe it to be merely imaginary—do you pretend not to know that this is the eve of

San Sebastian, your birth-day, or do you not know that Osmin, this monkish hypocrite, is an astrologer?"

"The eve of San Sebastian!" reiterated the Conde, turning paler than before; "yes, my lord, I recollect it now; but whence that look of alarm—nay, I perceive the cause," continued he, rushing over with wildness in his looks, and hastily closing the window-shutters, "has not the aurora borealis appeared on the same night and at the same hour for twenty years past, and surely there is nothing extraordinary in its appearing to-night."

"How terrible it looks," faltered the Marcheze, in a fit of momentary abstraction. "Hold, sir," cried he, waving Montalban from him, and his voice growing louder and more impassioned; "Osmin has pretended to read your destiny in the stars; a dreadful one indeed he would have made it, but thus I treat

such canting stuff—such vile mockery;” and with violent force he tore the parchment to atoms.

“Now,” cried he, viewing the fragments exultingly, “be his prophecy false or true, Osmin shall feel the consequences of presuming too much on the favour of greatness, or daring to offer his fanciful opinions uncalled for. Sebastian, such old-womanish credulity would have disgraced the meanest of my vassals; but *my* son, the illustrious heir of Vittoria, to credit the jargon of an old babbling Monk—shame upon you! Nay, nay, you cannot deceive me; I see too plainly the effect it has had upon you, therefore no equivocation, but away with a subject so degrading—let’s hear no more of it. I am come to communicate something of *rather more* importance, and—”

“But, my lord,” interrupted Sebastian, with a countenance of horror that alarmed his father at the instant,

“say, what is it you threaten to the reverend Osmin; by all that’s sacred I conjure you to think what you are about; surely you would not be so mad as to injure him or incense the holy community to which he belongs. Believe me, he deserves not such severity; already, from the same cause, have I thoughtlessly censured and offended him—I have forfeited his friendship for ever—he has vowed to see me no more; and do not, I beseech you, add to my misery by treating him with further injustice or cruelty.”

“Recollect yourself, Sebastian,” said the Marcheze, “and let not your warmth in his behalf mislead you further, or forfeit *my* friendship by language that so ill becomes a son to use to his father. My indulgence is not to be abused or infringed on; your attachment to Osmin can alone justify you now, but know that my will is absolute, and I will not be dictated to. Your intercourse with that

foolish old man must cease, and if you would avoid my displeasure, I desire you neither to see him nor go to the convent any more."

"Then your Excellenza must satisfy me on one point, ere I can agree to a command so harsh and unreasonable. Assure me of Osmin's safety, that you will still be his friend, and that you will convince him of my perfect contrition for my past unguarded conduct to him."

"I shall by no means give you such an assurance," replied the Marcheze, "lest circumstances might tempt me to break it; I shall certainly no longer treat him as I have hitherto done, and as you are shortly to quit this part of the kingdom, it can be of little consequence to you what becomes of him; therefore I repeat, name him no more."

To use any further argument would have been to exasperate the Marcheze, and that, even for the worthy Osmin,

was not to be hazarded; he therefore listened in silence while his father informed him that the King had ordered his regiment to proceed immediately to Andalusia to assist in besieging Gibraltar.

He received the intelligence with indifference—he had lost the dear friend of his youth—he had determined to fly far from the unattainable object of his hopeless and dangerous passion—misfortune and unhappiness in almost every shape had been foretold to him, and thinking it too probable that the prophecy would be fulfilled, he cared not whither he went, nor whether he should ever return, and almost wished that death, which he was now about to face, would at once disappoint the malignity of fate.

With a heavy heart he departed, and the Marcheze, in spite of his assumed fortitude, could not eventually repress the tear of regret, nor the melancholy

forebodings the Astrologer's prediction had given rise to; for, with all his affected scepticism, he feared its certain fulfilment; and though almost perfectly confident that all would be realized, and that the Monk had told a fatal truth, it was a truth he wished not to hear, and would, if possible, have denied.

As fluctuating as the tide, and as unsubstantial as shadows, are the smiles of fortune and the favours of great men. Alike unaccountably they blaze forth and vanish almost at the same moment.

Of the truth of this maxim sad experience soon convinced Osmin, who, until now, had enjoyed the friendship, confidence, and esteem of the Marcheze Jella Vittoria.

But the sunshine of his happiness had passed away—the determination of the Marcheze was fixed and unalterable—none durst question his authority nor investigate his motives; no sooner had his son set out for Gibraltar than he re-

paired to the convent of San Sebastian, to make known his intentions; the will of the prime minister was indisputable, and in a few days Osmin the Astrologer was heard of no more.

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## CHAPTER III.

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A villain when he most seems kind,  
Is most to be suspected.

LANSDOWNE.

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NEARLY three years had the allied powers of France and Spain carried on their unsuccessful attacks against the impregnable fortress of Gibraltar; all their machinations hitherto had been frustrated by its gallant defenders; and the persevering bravery and valour of the British forces, both by sea and land, had at length began to discourage the hopes of the besiegers; but fortune, which delights in sporting with the affairs of men, and mocking our most serious undertakings, now deserted them

for awhile, and stationed herself amid the Spanish armies, who elated with the newly-risen prospect of victory, renewed their exertions with redoubled vigour, and for a short time anticipated a glorious triumph.

The ardour, however, with which they pursued their operations, and the sanguine hopes they entertained of conquest and exulting in the overthrow of their proud and powerful opponents, proved in the end destructive to their hopes; and the probability of success, which for some time appeared to them was but precursive to their final defeat.

Fortune once more declared in favour of the English; and the scientific arrangements, and cool policy and cleverness of General Elliott, their commander, promised to realize their now well-grounded expectations.

Consternation and dismay disheartened the assailants, and the Spanish court speedily received intelligence of

their discomfiture and the failure of their plans ; all the manœuvres of the Duc de Crillon had proved abortive, and the only chance that remained of regaining the fortress lay in one mighty effort.

The King, after some deliberation, resolved to muster the whole military force of the realm, and to repair at their head himself to the scene of action ; where he trusted that stimulated by his presence, and encouraged by anticipating a victorious result, they would at once annihilate the enemy, and obtain the long-contested possession of Gibraltar.

Having immediately despatched a strong reinforcement to Andalusia, amongst which was Montalban's regiment, and made all the necessary preparations, he told the Queen that he should depart in a few days ; adding, in all the native pride of his heart, while his whole figure looked more than human—"the presence of a Spanish monarch will soon make Eng-

land's petty armies tremble; and had I appeared before them, ere now, victory would already have been mine."

The Queen was still in the prime of youth and beauty; in the formation of her person, nature had done much to complete its loveliness; but had unhappily neglected the more durable qualities of the heart. She was a woman of strong, and, in many instances, un governable passions; impatient of control, emulous of admiration, and a perfect Machiavelian in the attainment of any favourite object, equally regardless whether virtue or vice opposed her.— She loved the King because he was really handsome, accomplished, and elegant, not because virtue and goodness formed his character; but her love was that sort of sentiment she could have felt at the same time for any one else possessed of the same attractions; yet so enthralled was the unsuspecting Charles by her artful blandishments,

and such was the ascendancy her fascinating exterior had gained over him, that he had ever bestowed on her his undivided affection; and the idea that it was reciprocal, afforded him the happiest hours of his life.

To leave her even on an occasion so urgent as the present was, therefore, a sacrifice to which the loss of his whole kingdom seemed almost preferable. She joined in his enthusiastic hopes; she perceived her advantage, and pursued it, and it was finally determined that she should accompany him.

The thundering din of cannons and every weapon of war hailed their arrival at Gibraltar, on the memorable 13th of September, the day of the grand attack. Showers of shots and shells every moment pierced through the clouds of smoke that darkened the air; four hundred pieces of the heaviest artillery vigorously directed all their dreadful vengeance against the besiegers, and the

garrison appeared like a vast globe of fire, from the volumes of flaming balls, poured down from every quarter of it on the enemy's ships

The ensuing evening decided the battle; several of the vessels had taken fire, and blazed with tremendous and unconquerable fury; thousands of rockets flew through the illuminated atmosphere as signals of distress. Rage, malignity, disappointment, and wounded pride were pictured in the blackest characters on most of the countenances of the disappointed Spaniards; the eventful blow had been given to their hopes, and England had proudly wrested the fortress from their aspiring ambition and unjust claims.

The recent continued successes of the English had, in some measure, prepared the king for this defeat, notwithstanding his apparent confidence in the strength and skill of his own naval and military powers; and with dignified composure

he retired from the dreadful scene, to seek a solace for his losses in the tender endearments of his royal consort.

On the following day their majesties were visited by the *Marcheze della Vittoria*, who had come to consult them relative to a treaty of peace, which had on that morning been proposed by the British General, and which the King, under so many advantages that would accrue from it to himself, deemed it politic to accept.

A young officer of high rank in the army had been the General's Ambassador to the hotel of the *Marcheze*, and preliminaries being now settled between the King and his Minister, he was immediately summoned into the royal presence, to receive the answer which the wary Charles had dictated.

The Queen had previously withdrawn to another apartment, attended by her inseparable confidante, *Donna Olivia del Zorio*; and seating herself at one of the

balconies, her attention was attracted by the appearance of Colonel Mortimer below, who had just alighted from his carriage. Never before, even amid the innumerable charms that dazzled the eye throughout the Spanish court, had she beheld a face and form so elegant, so interesting, so beautiful. Instantaneously an undefinable sensation, such as she had never felt before, glowed in her bosom, and mounted in feverish colours to her cheek; a volume of a favourite poet she had opened dropped disregarded from her hand; and, pleading a momentary indisposition, she hastily arose and left the room, requesting Donna Olivia to remain.

Hurried on by the impulse of those new emotions, she flew down the staircase in order to have a timely opportunity of crossing the gallery through which she knew the stranger must pass to the King's apartment, and had just entered it at one end, when, at the other,

a door flew open, and Colonel Mortimer appeared, accompanied by the Minister and his train, who had received him in the vestibule.

At the unexpected sight of the Marchese, the Queen felt all the awkwardness of her situation. To be seen here thus suddenly and unattended, would, she feared, give rise to many unpleasant observations; and, should it be thought premeditated—should her motive be conjectured, her haughty soul sickened at the idea of the indignity it would throw on her character, and she trembled at the suggestion of consequences she deemed still worse.

Abashed by Vittoria's scrutinizing glance, she shrunk a few paces back, and never had the royal Isabella seemed in her own eyes so contemptible as at this moment.

Quickly recollecting herself, she saw that she could only avoid the suspicion she had so much reason to dread, by re-

assuming the proud demeanour and majestic deportment that usually characterized her; and, in an instant, wearing a smile of composure and conscious greatness that might have defied the power of the most skilful physiognomist, she approached and addressed the Marchese, who, making a profound obeisance, introduced the already admiring Mortimer. The magnanimity and sweetness that beamed over his fine manly countenance as he bent on one knee, while his dark and powerfully-expressive eye, surveyed the lovely features of the Queen with an enthusiastic feeling of delight, threw her, for a moment, into such a state of agitation that she did not at first reply to his salutation. "Arise, noble hero," said she, at length, extending her hand of unrivalled symmetry and whiteness, which he respectfully touched with his lips, and hasten to guarantee the treaty which

will in future unite to us a country so rich in valour and renown, and so famed for its prowess and its liberality.'

Mortimer was a true undivided patriot: his mind soared beyond those vulgar prejudices which exist in almost every nation;—but to have bled for his own country—there was in the idea something so delicious to his truly noble soul, that, to have saved the life of the meanest British soldier, he would willingly at any time have sacrificed his own.

He therefore received this compliment in such a manner as left the imprudent Queen no reason to doubt the interest she had secured in his heart; and ignorant how widely different was the nature of it from the sentiments she entertained for him.

As she returned to the room where she had left Donna Olivia, a light foot-step stealing along the corridor above startled her; and looking up, she per-

ceived through the balustrades the latter gliding swiftly along, to avoid being seen; from which it was evident she had secreted herself in the corridor which overlooked the gallery on one side, for the purpose of seeing whither the Queen went, and that she had witnessed her embarrassment in the gallery, and suspected the cause of her going there, she could hardly doubt.

Donna Olivia was a woman of no common stamp, for many of her latter years had been passed in the service of the Queen. There was in her features something bold and commanding, which appeared intended by nature to exact the homage of all who beheld her; but unfortunately, in her disposition were blended so many of the less amiable, not to say, disagreeable qualities, as to completely refute that idea.

She had been brought up at court, under the care of her mother, who was one of the Queen's attendants, and who

at her death, had left her entirely depending on her majesty's promise of providing for her: low artifice, cunning and deceit, formed her disposition; and these, increasing with every succeeding year, rendered her a very fit person to supply the place of her mother, subservient as she was to all the designs of her royal mistress, whether good or evil.

Without appearing to have detected her, the Queen entered arrayed in smiles, and to her inquiries, "whether she was quite recovered," replied in a tone of sweetness and affability which she seldom chose to assume towards an inferior, and taking up her lute, she presented it with the most condescending familiarity to Donna Olivia, at the same time requesting her to sing a beautiful little Spanish ballad which she named.

This unusual complaisance, from one whose haughtiness was proverbial, and who never descended from her stately

dignity but to compass some private end, seemed too much the effect of art, and too like her general mode of accomplishing a project, to be misconceived by the penetrative Olivia; who, had she not been aware of what had passed in the gallery, would now have suspected it.

Taking care however to conceal every shadow of suspicion, under the well-timed smiles of gratified pride, she took the instrument, and passing her delicate fingers over the strings, she accompanied herself in a style so exquisitely fine, for her musical talents and acquirements were of the most superior kind, and sang with so much feeling and pathos, that the soft tear of sensibility stole gently down the cheek of the Queen; who, abstracted, and forgetting that any person was present, involuntarily sighed, "Oh too charming Mortimer!" and at the same instant a cup of chocolate she held in her trembling hand, dropped on the floor.

Donna Olivia, as if suddenly astonished by the exclamation, instantly ceased, and bent her full dark eye on the Queen, who recovering herself in a moment, had with great dexterity disengaged from her neck a valuable chain of diamonds, which she as quickly drew round Olivia's, drawing out, as she fastened the clasp, "Oh sweet siren, my very soul pays tribute to your enchanting powers—take this bagatelle as an earnest of it."

Olivia could hardly credit the evidence of her senses on receiving so rich and uncommon a gift: but recovering from her surprise, she became sensible to the delightful reality; reflecting, however, that something very great was, no doubt, expected of her for this.

"Santa Maria," cried she, rising from the ottoman, and courtesying to the ground—"how have I deserved this excess of kindness from your gracious majesty? surely the services of my whole life would be inadequate to so

magnificent a reward? What *have* I done to merit it, or what *can* I do to evince my boundless gratitude?"

"Nay, my dear, dear Olivia, talk not thus—if ever a saint deserved heaven, *you* deserve my gratitude," said the Queen; "your zeal, integrity, and affection merit the warmest feelings of my heart. I merely wish to prove by this trifle, that I *am* grateful, and that I know how to estimate qualities such as you possess."

Here she was interrupted by a message from the King, requesting her presence below; and, hoping to meet the fascinating Mortimer, to hear the delicious sound of his voice, or perhaps have an opportunity of conversing with him, she hastily broke off, and rapt in those anticipations she descended.

Her expectations were gratified; on entering she found the Colonel still there, who again paid his respects, and handed her majesty to the seat appropriated to

her. Ere she sat down she had almost unconsciously got his hand within the grasp of hers, and obeying the impulse of the moment, she pressed it with fervour; while the soft expression of her eyes at once informed him of the emotions that fluttered at her heart. As if electrified, he started, alarmed and amazed, and fixed on her a look, in which both those feelings were visible; the blood rising in hues of deepest crimson to his cheeks.

Recalled to a sense of her indiscretion, she immediately dropped his hand, and with an unusual gravity of countenance, he retreated just time enough to prevent their confusion from being noticed by the King, who had turned round to address the *Marchese della Vittoria*.

The terms being now settled to the satisfaction of each party, Mortimer was dismissed with his majesty's answer to the General; and the Queen, on her

guard against the danger of betraying herself, or giving cause for the slightest unfavourable conjecture, smiled and conversed with her accustomed liveliness and condescension, and redoubled her politeness and attention to the Marcheze.

“What a handsome noble-looking Cavalier that is,” observed the King, when Mortimer was gone, “the world can boast of very few finer fellows.”

“And if one may judge from knowing so little of him,” added the Marcheze, “his mind is still richer in beauty and elegance than his person; he is indeed an ornament to the illustrious nation he belongs to.”

“And what says your majesty,” smilingly interrogated the monarch, turning to the Queen.

“His manners are agreeable, and in many respects highly polished,” returned she, with apparent *sang froid*, “notwithstanding his ignorance of our court

etiquette; as to his face or figure I have no recollection of either; however, when a proud and noble Spaniard allows such excellence in a foreigner he surely must possess it."

Mortified by the coldness and reserve with which he had taken his leave, and dispirited by the idea that she had perhaps seen him for the last time, the cheerfulness she was thus obliged to assume was very incompatible with the real state of her feelings. She contrived, however, to keep up appearances till the arrival of the Conde Montalban, to pay his respects, gave her an opportunity of retiring again to the society of her dear confidant.

That painful restraint being no longer necessary, she at once threw off all the stateliness of majesty, and though she could have found relief from the tears that already had rushed to her eyes, and which she could with much difficulty re-

press, she saw that she must not yet be too unreserved, and that it was still expedient to dissemble.

“Whom do you think I have just seen,” said she, with an arch smile, drawing her chair close to Donna Olivia? “that delightful creature the Conde Montalban; and if the heart could ever be read in the eyes I have read his.”

Come now, Señora, don't affect to misunderstand me; you know as well as I do what conclusion to draw from the sight of a fine young man, sighing, melancholy, and love-sick. “Happy, happy Olivia! what a prospect of felicity opens to your view,—a union of souls which Heaven has surely formed for each other.”

“Your majesty's kindness makes you ever ready to anticipate the best for me,” sighed the latter,—a glow of satisfaction spreading over her features. “Don Sebastian is every thing my heart could

wish, but he feels not—he—in short, I durst not entertain such a hope,——he is——”

“Worthy of your love, and sensible of your merits,” interrupted the Queen. “I know your sentiments, therefore seek not to conceal them from one who would prove both able to be of use, and anxious to befriend you. My influence is greater than you are aware of.”

“Oh most generous, most exalted of human beings,” cried the enraptured Olivia, “if the free bestowal of my confidence be not unacceptable, not obtrusive, you have it. I have ever adored the noble Montalban. The warmest wish of my soul is to know that that feeling is reciprocal. The wealth and glory of worlds were nothing to the exquisite bliss of such an assurance. Your majesty will, I trust, pardon my enthusiasm, but——”

“Who could see Don Sebastian,” rejoined the Queen, “without admiring,

without loving him? But, my amiable friend, answer me one question with your accustomed ingenuousness." She paused here, as if fearing to give it utterance. "Were you now," she at length resumed, "the contented wife of another, what sort of impression, think you, would the elegant Montalban have made on you?"

In an instant, Olivia perceived the drift of this, and replied, unhesitatingly, "the same, my royal lady, that he has already made."

"But dare you, then, cherish such a passion; dare you acknowledge it; would it not be as hopeless as it would be criminal? In a word, do you think it possible to divide your affections between two people at the same time?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Olivia, foreseeing what the subject was to arrive at. "Our husbands may demand the duty, the obedience, we owe them; but our love is a voluntary tribute to

their deserts,—entirely a gift of the will; and, if we *do* bestow on them a small portion of it, 'tis surely unreasonable and selfish in them to require the whole, or imagine we will not dispose of it as we think fit."

This base and pernicious sophistry was the kind of reasoning exactly suited to the object in view, and calculated to lead the Queen at once to the point.

"Those," said the latter, "are strong and sound arguments, which few but yourself could have thought of; the veriest sceptic must be convinced by them, and, alas! too fatally for my happiness they have convinced *me*."

As she said this, her countenance lost its animated expression—her tones suddenly assumed more of the pathetic, and after a few preparatory sighs, she burst into tears.

Donna Olivia, long practised in her arts, moved closer to her, and with the most affecting softness and well-acted

sensibility, passed her handkerchief across her eyes, and trying to force a tear of sympathy, tenderly inquired what occasioned her emotion.

“Oh Senora!” returned she, “I cannot—dare not reveal the dreadful cause; ’twere madness—treason to let it pass my lips. No, even your gentle and compassionate heart could afford no remedy to my sufferings—yet why do I say sufferings—away with the unworthy term—is it possible that the great, the illustrious Queen of Spain could admit such a feeling for an inferior? No; no; it cannot be love—perish the thought—’tis merely—”

“Love!” interrupted Donna Olivia; “what means my gracious Queen?—surely we never doubted your loyalty and affection to the King.”

“My loyalty and affection to him remain still firm and unshaken,” she petulantly retorted, vexed at her having apparently misunderstood her; “but, my sweet

friend, understand me now—I have presumed to love another!”

“And does your majesty so soon forget or doubt my arguments; even if you *do* love another, let us thank Heaven that 'tis no worse—that 'tis not irremediable.”

“Hush—for mercy's sake, hush,” softly cried the Queen; “'twere death to both of us to be overheard; my agitation has revealed to you a secret which not all the powers on earth besides could have wrested from me—'tis now past recall—but mark me—'tis a secret dangerous and dreadful, whose very sound will not bear an echo—whose very name, if the lips of another durst breathe it forth, would carry with it destruction most certain—most horrible!”

She moved cautiously towards the door, and having opened it, and assured herself that there was nobody within hearing, she resumed her seat.

“Hear me now, Señora,” continued

she, "and beware, as you value your honour and your life, how you treat the confidence of your Queen; mine is of no common nature, and must therefore meet no common ear—nay, not the ear of mortal; save thyself. I have said I love another; I must now confirm it; yes—I have seen—Oh such a being! Alas, fatally for me, I have beheld the handsome, the elegant Mortimer—the gallant young Englishman, who yesterday gained such distinction in the service of his victorious country; and I feel, that to see and to adore so noble a creature are synonymous.

"Mortimer is the all-fascinating Colonel Mortimer!" reiterated Olivia; "Jesu Maria! the whole town are already in love with him, and no wonder that your majesty—"

"Nay, interrupt me not thus!" cried the Queen; "much more remains for you to hear; I have given you my confidence—my fate is in your hands—and

in return I must have a pledge equally important, faithful, and inviolable—an oath of secrecy. Swear by this hallowed cross," taking a row of brilliants from her neck, "that all the tortures of heaven, earth, or hell—all the powers of each combined, shall never, never force this secret from your inmost soul; shall never tempt you to prove false to me. Revenge most direful would instantly fall on thee, and death inevitable would be the portion of both of us."

"Never, as I hope for salvation!" exclaimed Olivia, pressing the crucifix fervently to her lips, while her uplifted eyes seemed to attest the sincerity of her oath, "true to thee as to my Maker shall I prove, so may Heaven deal with me on the last awful day."

"Enough, enough," said the Queen; "on your fidelity will I rely, for on you rests the fulfilment of my plan; its success is, I trust, now certain. I would convey to the heart, not to the ear of

Mortimer, the impression he has made. I would have him feel it intuitively, for words I dare not trust to tell him—feel that I love him—yet know not wherefore that feeling arises, or what bids it increase. To be brief, I would write to him; you, dear partner of my every thought, you must do this for me as I shall dictate.”

Unlocking a small bureau, she took out pens, ink, and paper; and having bolted the door, so as to secure them from intruders, she and her amiable confidant drew their chairs close to the table, and after a few minutes deliberation Donna Olivia took up the pen to write the letter her Majesty had composed.

“Now,” said the Queen, as she folded it, with a smile of approbation, “I am about to put your friendship and firmness to another and more decisive trial. You must be the bearer of this—— nay, start not at the thought; recollect how

many more hazardous situations we have both often been in, and—— but this is mere trifling. What I propose is practicable enough, and thus it is :

“In the dusk of the evening, when Florio my page will be engaged in attendance on me, you must put on one of his usual dresses, and, in that disguise, repair secretly to the Strada del —— at the top of which is the large hotel where the British General and Colonel Mortimer reside. Amid the bustle and confusion which must necessarily be occasioned by the rejoicings to-night for the peace, it will be easy for you to reach it unnoticed; besides which, many of the royal household will be there. By some stratagem (which I leave to your own cleverness to devise), you must find out Mortimer's apartments, and whether he is at home. If you are successful, and he is absent, drop this letter on the table dexterously, and, if possible, unobserved, and return imme-

diately with equal caution. 'Tis, I confess, a bold undertaking, and only worthy the resolute and dauntless spirits we possess.—But hark!—somebody approaches,—conceal the letter instantly,—remember all I have said; and, as you hope for Heaven, so may you now prosper.

Donna Olivia hastily put it into her pocket, and the next moment one of the Queen's pages came to announce that dinner waited for her majesty, who accordingly descended, flushed with various anticipations of the effects of the letter.

In the evening Olivia prepared to go through the dangerous part allotted to her, with all the natural Machiavelian perseverance of her disposition, though she shuddered at the idea of detection, and dreaded the Queen's displeasure should she not succeed; added to which was the recollection of the dreadful and irrevocable oath she had taken; and de-

prayed as she was, perjury was a climax of vice she dared not to think of.

Accordingly having procured one of Florio's habits, and being favoured by the vast crowds assembled in the streets, she proceeded in safety to the hotel.

At the door were several domestics, gazing at the passing throng, amongst whom was a young Englishman, who from his dress she concluded was Mortimer's servant; and summoning all her courage and resolution, for nature had happily endowed her with a sufficient stock of effrontery, she strolled up with an air of nonchalance, and joined the group, while for a moment every eye was fixed on her fine expressive face.

A thousand other objects, however, soon called off their attention.

By degrees they dispersed severally through the street; and Olivia, as she wished, found herself alone with the Colonel's servant, whom she now ad-

dressed, and who was still gazing intently at her.

“This is a grand sight, Senor,” observed she, her features assuming a deep gloom; “and every Spaniard will long remember it with a sigh for our general defeat; but never can refuse the tribute of praise your glorious country so justly merits, nor deny that her heroes have at length humbled the towering pride of Spain.”

“Aye, Signor, Don, or whatever you call yourself,” replied the blunt honest-hearted Robert, while a glow of patriotism mantled his cheeks, “By Saint George that’s spoken like a true well-disposed fellow; and d—n me if it does not do you more honour than all the pride and grandeur of France, Spain, and Portugal put together, and I don’t care who hears me say it; but ’tis a thousand pities you are not an Englishman.”

“I respect the name of a Briton, but surely you would not have me

cherish a sentiment of ingratitude towards the land that gave me birth.”

“No my worthy Spaniard, that I would not: you are a staunch good-hearted young chap, and I like you the better for it; but say what you will, by jingo there’s no place like Old England after all, and so you’d say yourself, if you were after paying a visit to Johnny Bull; I warrant you’d be in no hurry to come back again to your Dons and Signors with all their outlandish names.”

“Indeed ’tis a place I have long been anxious to visit; report speaks highly in favour of the English, and from the little I have seen of *you*, I am sure it speaks justly.”

“Justly!” re-echoed Robert, “it never spoke a greater truth before or since; but in right earnest, how should you like to take a trip to that heavens upon earth?”

“I should like it so much, Senor, that I have been setting all my wits to work

these two months past, for the means of going over; and truly for once I find my wits have failed me."

"Let me see," said Robert emphatically, and laying his hand on his forehead, "I have it; now you're a tight handsome lad, and as I take it, not over rich nor grand no more than myself, and if it's a thing that you've no more pride than riches, why what do you think of going to service, as many a better man has done? That is, I mean being a respectable gentleman's servant, like me; I can match you in a trice; so speak your mind at once—to go, or not to go, as some old play says!"

"Indeed, my friend, I know not how to thank you," returned Olivia, smiling at his honest simplicity, "as to going to service; in a word, I'd go to old Nick to get a sight of England."

"No, no; not so far neither," resumed he, laughing heartily at his wit, "England does not lie on the road from Spain

to hell! . . . But come, now, master Don, you must not mind a bit of a joke."

A frown had certainly darkened Olivia's countenance at this sally, but his good-natured familiarity instantly dispelled it; and, giving her a friendly clap on the shoulder, "Cheer up, my boy," continued he, "I have hit on a plan that will suit you as neat as a new glove, if so be that there's none of your empty pride about you, as I said before; and so now that we're a little acquainted, as a body may say, my name is Robert Wilson, and I hope you'll tell me yours."

"Antonio dello Morviedo," was the reply.

"You've enough of it, in all conscience," thought he, "but I tell you what you'll do. come in with me, and we'll talk of the business comfortably over a glass of as good coniac as ever passed your lips. My master, (God bless him!) gave me a bottle to remind me that these here fine doings are not for nothing; and

"I warrant me you like a comfortable drop now and then as well as another."

This proposal was a striking proof of national hospitality and native generosity of disposition; and as such Olivia could not but admire it, while she in vain strove to smother a laugh at the deception she so successfully practised, and the ludicrous idea of being obliged, consistently with her assumed character, to accept his offer, and talk with him a while over a glass of brandy. However, seeing that there was no alternative, and that her success depended on her compliance, she followed him into the hotel.

"Your master is an Englishman, of course?" inquired she, in a tone of apparent indifference, as she seated herself opposite to him, and began to sip from the bumper he had filled.

"Aye, that he is, and an honour to his country, and one of the finest fellows in it, let the rest be where they may;

but who in the world except yourself has not heard of the brave Colonel Mortimer, that all the ladies of quality,—aye, and every one in England that wears a petticoat, is dying about.”

“Surely I must have heard the name before,” cried Donna Olivia; “is he not uncommonly handsome?”

“Handsome!” repeated the other, in no very gentle tone; “hah! hah! that’s a good one; why, Lord bless you, child! the Venus di—what do you call her?—is a mere ugly log compared to him. They call him Adonis, or some such name, in his own country: and, what’s more, there were two or three young misses of great rank fought a duel about him; and one of them had a bit of her nose shot off,—so there was an end of *her* beauty;—but I’m sure you must have seen him, for he was with the King of Spain to-day, and you seem by your dress to be one of the lacqueys or grooms, and I suppose you often attend his Majesty.—But, now

I think of it, if you have *not* seen him, there's his picture lying in his dressing-room, that he is going to give to Lady Emily Woodville, of Portland-place—(a sweet beautiful creature she is)—he left it out to-day by chance, and if it's there still you shall see it, for it's as like him as one egg is to another;—but first let me fill your glass again.”

Already her scheme seemed half completed; this was just the opportunity she had been wishing for; and, in her joy, unconscious of what she was about, she applied the glass once more to her lips, and drained its contents to the last drop.”

All his entreaties that she would replenish it were in vain; to accomplish this affair it was necessary that she should preserve her equilibrium, which such another draught would undoubtedly have lost to her, the glasses being of no very moderate size.

“Well, you are no drunkard,” observed

Robert, "and that's one thing *my* master would like you for;—but as I was saying—I had almost forgotten—you must know our English gentlefolks—but then they're not like the colonel—they have a mighty fancy for hiring foreign servants, as if they were better than ourselves, (no offence to you, Don,) but one can't help making the remark, however, be that as it may, there's my Lord Charles Minikin that lodges at 72 in Bond-street, has lately lost Durand, his French valet, (an impudent coxcomb he was,) but no matter, the fellow's dead now,—and what do you think?—his lordship fainted and cried after him for three days, like a boarding-school Miss after a sweet-heart. Well! when the fit was over, and he recovered whatever little sense he had, he walked down one morning, in his gown and slippers, and found no less than seven strapping fellows waiting with their characters, if they had any, in one of the first-floor

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### CHAPTER. IV.

At first her rage was dumb, and wanted words,  
 But when the storm found way, 'twas wild and loud,  
 Passion swelled her breast, enlarged her voice,  
 And ruffled all her form. ROWE.

**ROBERT** was in the midst of a long soliloquy on the characteristics of his own countrymen, occasionally expatiating on the very handsome person and interesting manners of his new acquaintance, when his master entered, and summoned him as usual, to attend him in his bedroom.

The pressure of political affairs that occupied Mortimer's thoughts, rendered him more silent and reserved than he was accustomed to be with his faithful servant; who, perceiving that this was

Robert, "and that's one thing *my* master would like you for;—but as I was saying—I had almost forgotten—you must know our English gentlefolks—but then they're not like the colonel—they have a mighty fancy for hiring foreign servants, as if they were better than ourselves, (no offence to you, Don,) but one can't help making the remark, however, be that as it may, there's my Lord Charles Minikin that lodges at 72 in Bond-street, has lately lost Durand, his French valet, (an impudent coxcomb he was,) but no matter, the fellow's dead now,—and what do you think?—his lordship fainted and cried after him for three days, like a boarding-school Miss after a sweet-heart. Well! when the fit was over, and he recovered whatever little sense he had, he walked down one morning, in his gown and slippers, and found no less than seven strapping fellows waiting with their characters, if they had any, in one of the first-floor

apartments. "Heaven defend me!" cried he, in his usual womanish whine, "not a single foreigner amongst them,—all a set of Bulls,—Oh, you brutes! how dare you call me." With these words, he cast a scornful look at them all, and, with an exclamation of contempt, he staggered, almost fainting, out of the room, and swore that if he could not get a foreign valet, he'd have Madame Thingummy, his mother's waiting-maid, to attend him; because, he said, "those English boors knew no more of laying on rouge, curling hair, lacing stays, or folding a neckcloth, than a foreigner does of such vulgar diet as bread, cheese, and beer."

"Well, to come to the point at once, I'm his man whenever you please," hastily interrupted the mock Antonio, fearful that Robert's loquacity would last till his master's return, and so defeat the whole.

"Nay, not so fast, my boy, I have not

told you all," replied he, "unmindful of her anxiety; "to make a long story short, I am going to tell you that Lord Charles knows my master; and when our regiment was coming over, his last parting words were these, as well as I can remember: "Oh! Mortimer, dear, dear Mortimer, Spanish, French, or Italian, I don't care which; only, as you value my peace of mind, let him be a foreigner." The Colonel is now on the lookout, and I think you're just the one for him; so you see how lucky it is that you and I became acquainted to-night; for in good truth these foreigners are such knowing sharpers, and such rogues, that he might have looked long enough before he could have got one to answer so well.

Unconscious of his companion's impatience, and forgetful of every thing relative to the picture, he again filled his glass, and had slowly half emptied it,

when her abrupt remarks and laconic replies at length led to the subject, and Robert, having exhausted every other topic, conducted her to his master's apartment, where, as they had expected, they found the miniature.

After viewing it for some time with no little interest, (for the sight of Colonel Mortimer had made her feel what it was to have a heart susceptible to the tender passion,) she hastily drew out the Queen's letter, and, replacing the picture carefully, she concealed it under it, unobserved by Robert, who, fearing that his master might find them there, hurried her down, and, without questioning her willingness to leave her place at court, he said he would speak to the colonel on the following day about hiring her, and requested her to call at an early hour, when he hoped to have a favourable answer.

Having thus far executed her com-

mission, she appointed a time for calling, when she had previously informed herself that Mortimer would be absent.

Elated with success, and anticipating the approving smiles of the Queen, she took her leave of the good-natured Robert, and, promising to be punctual next day, she returned with the same secrecy to the Palazzo.

## CHAPTER. IV.

At first her rage was dumb, and wanted words,  
 But when the storm found way, 'twas wild and loud,  
 Passion swelled her breast, enlarged her voice;  
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The pressure of political affairs that occupied Mortimer's thoughts, rendered him more silent and reserved than he was accustomed to be with his faithful servant; who, perceiving that this was

no time to remind him of his promise to Lord Charles Minikin, wisely determined to defer it until the morrow.

Mortimer having dismissed him for the night, took up the miniature in order to return it to its case; when how great was his astonishment on finding a letter directed to himself, in the hand-writing of a female. Several conjectures as to the purport of it, suspended his hand for a considerable time; but at length he tore it open, and, with increasing amazement, read the following:—

“The day that saw thee enter Gibraltar, dated the fiat of your future welfare, and led you into the road to wealth, fame, and aggrandizement. Your heart will softly whisper to you the delicious, the flattering truth—you are beloved. But by whom must long remain a secret, to disclose it now, were premature and unavailing. If you are not insensible to the feelings you have excited, one generous effort on your part will fully evince

it—return to England no more: at the Spanish Court, honour, preferment, rank, and the favour of royalty await you, every thing that can compensate for the sacrifice, if such, indeed it be, to resign the mere shadow of happiness for the reality. Reflect on these advantages; and still more reflect how ardent, how sincere and unbounded must that love be, which thus leads a female to lay aside the diffidence and reserve peculiar to her sex, to court thy favour, thy affection. Oh, Mortimer! words are inadequate to paint the conflict of my mind, but love and hope are still its predominant emotions; to repel one, would be to banish the other—and to annihilate both, would be to break a heart that beats for thee alone. If you are the noble being report speaks of, if you are a man, will not this appeal make you act as such towards the woman who, regardless of the dignity of her own station, thus breaks through every law of decorum in confer-

ring riches, wealth, and her best affections, on you. But I will no longer doubt. Already, in anticipation, I hear you exclaim, 'Victorious fair one, your eloquence has vanquished a hero, has subdued a heart that never shrunk from the sword of battle—which all the horrors of war, all the tremendous forms of death, have never appalled: yes, the heart that hath boldly withstood all those, acknowledges thy influence, and yields itself a willing captive to thy charms.'

"In reply, a few words will suffice; deposit them where you will find this, and the same hand will in due time receive it."

Surprise for some moments prevented all utterance, and he still held the letter before him, perusing and re-perusing it, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses; or as if its contents had so much flattered his vanity, as to enchain every faculty.

Very different, however, from vanity were the sentiments it produced; for though he had a heart alive to the softer feelings of the lover, as well as the bolder and more manly ones of the soldier, pity and contempt superseded every other emotion for the unblushing weakness and indelicacy evinced by one of that sex he had learned from nature to respect.

“Return no more to England! Renounce my country for the whining cant of a woman!” exclaimed he, as he flung down the letter, with a momentary feeling of resentment. “What! resign the glories of the field! tear myself from my friends, my home, my Emily, all that I value existence for; to bask in the lap of effeminate voluptuousness, to live in a foreign land! No, no; it shall never be said that Frederick Mortimer forgot the dignity of *his* sex, though a woman, with all those boasted charms, so far o’ersteps the modesty of *hers*; but thus let this

record of her unworthiness perish," and, having once more glanced over it, he threw it indignantly into the fire.

He was at first undetermined whether to answer it, or treat it with the contemptuous silence it merited; he was equally perplexed in conjecturing who could have been the bearer of it; and if his servant had had any knowledge of the circumstance, why he had omitted to mention it, for it did not appear probable that it could have been conveyed thither without Robert's knowing it.

But, after some deliberation, he resolved to inquire next day about it, and, in the interim, at once to undeceive the writer, and prevent the recurrence of a circumstance so disagreeable; and hastening to do so, as if fearful that delay would evaporate the feelings that prompted him to it, he wrote an answer ere he retired to bed, and laying it on the dressing-table, he covered it with the miniature.

When his valet came next morning to awake him, his first question was in what manner had a stranger gained admittance to his chamber the day before, remaining silent respecting the letter.

Robert was above dissimulation or quibbling; and attributing the discovery to the picture's having been misplaced, he gave a full account of his meeting and conversation with the supposed Antonio, without deviating from or withholding any part of the truth; and concluded by exhausting all his rhetoric to persuade his master to take Antonio to England with him, to supply the place of Durand to Lord Charles.

Mortimer, however, saw instantly through the artifice, but forbore to make any other comment than applauding his servant's candour; he therefore confided the letter to his care, desiring him to give it to the stranger when he should call, at the same time adding, that he had already provided a servant for Lord

Charles, though, in fact, he had not recollected until now any thing of that *important* commission; but he deemed this little breach of truth necessary to prevent suspicion from arising in the mind of Robert, who took it for granted that the purport of the letter was to lessen Antonio's disappointment.

This affair concluded, Mortimer returned to his usual occupations, determined to think no more of an occurrence so common throughout the kingdom, and which he attributed to the levity of a Spanish lady of high rank, to whom he had been introduced, and who had already thrown out many hints of her admiration of him.

At the hour fixed on, Donna Olivia again repaired to the hotel in the same disguise. Disappointment and chagrin were visible in the expressive looks of Robert; and, trembling lest some untoward circumstance might have befallen the letter or discovered the author of it,

Olivia durst not for some time trust her voice, and her agitation sufficiently indicated that she expected some unpleasant intelligence.

But how changed in a moment were all her apprehensions! how rich the prospect that burst on her imagination, as Robert reluctantly handed her the letter, and faltered out an expression of regret that his application to the Colonel had been too late, and consequently unsuccessful.

Absorbed in the certainty of having thus served the Queen, and anticipating the glittering rewards of her task, she scarcely heard him. She had no eye or ear for any thing else, and to Robert's reiterated exclamations of sorrow, she had no words wherewith to reply.

He imputed her silence to a different cause, seeing she did not open the letter; and supposing it to be merely a confirmation of what he had told her, he advised her to postpone the perusal of it

to some other time, as she appeared at present too much affected.

As their acquaintance must, he thought necessarily cease, he now took a friendly leave of her, and returned to the other domestics: while, on the wings of joy and expectation, she flew to communicate her success to her royal mistress, whom she found anxiously awaiting her return.

“A letter! and from Mortimer himself!” cried the Queen, as her eye eagerly caught the superscription; the moment Olivia entered, while her whole face was irradiated with joy.

“Yes, madam,” replied Olivia; “thanks to the Madona, I have safely got over the adventure; but this happy result makes ample amends for the danger with which it was attended; receive this proof of Mortimer’s gratitude and love, behold all your hopes and fondest wishes herein realized. I

“O thou dear invaluable friend!” exclaimed the Queen, seizing her hand and the letter at the same moment; “how shall I thank thee, how reward thee, for services so inestimable—for this delicious pledge of what my Mortimer feels for me—this treasure which millions, nay, empires, worlds, could not purchase. But let me know the whole of my happiness at once—let me feast my eyes with even the hand-writing of my beloved!”

Every delightful sensation the human mind is capable of feeling was visible in her countenance as she opened the letter; but how sudden, how dreadful and portentous was the change!

Like the sun which unexpectedly emits its refulgent rays from amongst the gloomy clouds of winter, and is the sure harbinger of an approaching storm, such was the ray of unutterable pleasure that beamed over her features, and such its

awful transition; in an instant her features assumed the most terrific aspect, rage distended her eyes, disappointment and vexation seemed to convulse her whole frame; and, trembling with these violent emotions, she sank on a chair, merely able to articulate, "Presumptuous, ungrateful villain!" and she dashed the letter indignantly from her.

"Spirito Santo! has he dared to hesitate or decline what your Majesty proposed?" cried Donna Olivia, instantly conceiving the truth, and hastening to her assistance. "No, it cannot be possible."

"Yes, Senora, it is possible, the wretch *has* done so," returned the Queen, rising up with strength acquired from the force of passion; "he *has*, but dearly, oh! terribly, shall he pay for it. My hatred to him now is as inveterate as my love was ardent, and my vengeance shall be equal to it. Read what he says, and then, by all the cruelty of offended wo-

man's nature, say what the dastard ingrate merits."

Olivia took the letter, and, affecting a sensibility she did not feel, she slowly perused it, modulating her voice as its contents might have been supposed to influence her; it ran thus:

"Colonel Mortimer knows how to appreciate the honour conferred on him; so flattering to the vanity naturally inherent in man; but while he acknowledges to be thus sensible of it, candour impels him also to avow how ill prepared is his heart to receive an appeal of such a nature—how impossible it is that he can ever realize the hopes which the fair author of it has formed to herself—how fortified his mind is against all the allurements of wealth, rank, and splendour, when put in competition with that happiness which self-approbation alone can bestow, and the duty he owes to his country, his friends, and himself; and, finally, how gratified he feels in being

allowed to remain ignorant of the name of that female, whose generous offers he is compelled to reject, and whose wishes every tie of honour prevents him from complying with."

"Hypocrite!" cried Donna Olivia, when she had finished; "does he think that this mockery, this pretended sense of honour, this respect and gratitude, forsooth, can cloak so palpable an insult?"

"Hear me, Senora," interrupted the Queen; "the Majesty of Spain never yet received an insult with impunity to the one who dared to offer it, and think you that she now will? No; by the Madonna, I will be avenged—Mortimer shall not live to triumph in my weakness, to publish to the world that a woman sought his love and was repulsed—perhaps, oh, Santa Virgine! perhaps to discover that she whom he has thus scorned and insulted is the illustrious Isabella of Spain—to proclaim *this* aloud—O holy saints,

forbid that I should see that day. But no, it cannot, shall not be—Olivia, my remedy is indeed a dreadful one, Mortimer must *die*! Nay, look not thus aghast, start not at the mention of a spectre ere you have beheld it in reality; the deed is still undone, he must, and with him shall die this memento of my folly. Think, Senora, what would be the fate of your royal mistress were he to live to divulge it—what would be *yours*—death, I repeat, inevitable death: 'twere better surely that one life, and one so worthless, should be sacrificed, than that you and I should fall, and Spain thus ignobly lose her Queen.”

“ But does your majesty consider how black and damning is the deed you would do? the horrible crime of murder! Can you indeed resolve deliberately to plunge yourself to perdition?”

“ Talk not to me with this unwarranted freedom, nor question my resolves,

as if, like a child, I formed and broke them in the same moment," cried the Queen, haughtily, though evidently disconcerted by the reproof. "I tell you I *have* determined on it, and do you presume to dispute my will, or do you forget the oath that binds you to my service? But, Senora," continued she, sarcastically, "I cannot blame *you*; the few who are blessed with consciences so pure and unsullied are always tenacious of them, remain, therefore, in quiet possession of a treasure so invaluable, and die gloriously, a martyr to your rigid virtue and purity of heart. I will pursue my plot, and if it should fail, and Mortimer live to triumph in our disgrace, your death be on your own head; and, more than that, the death of your benefactress, your friend, and your Queen."

Every scruple of conscience was overcome by this appeal; the infatuated Olivia remembered her oath of allegiance, and she felt more forcibly than ever the

strong claims she had, at least, upon her gratitude. She argued herself by this sophistry into a belief that even from the commission of crimes the most terrible, the solemn oath by which she had pledged herself, left her not exempt; and throwing herself on her knees, "Not for worlds," said she, "would I prove faithless to your Majesty, whose will is my law; 'tis but for you to command, and me to obey: it shall not be said that your friendship was misplaced, or that you cherished a serpent which stung yourself—I will be every thing you can desire."

"Indeed, my dear Olivia, I did but jest," instantly resumed the Queen; "think you seriously that I could have so greatly wronged you as to doubt your attachment and fidelity? if so, you know me not. No, no, Senora; *you* are as incapable of treachery as *I* am of unkindness; hear then, as a proof of my confidence, my unalterable determination—

Mortimer must die by poison, from *your* hands, 'tis the safest and most certain: would to God it were possible to avoid such a measure, or to avert, by any other means, the dreadful chance of a discovery that would be so fatal to us in its consequences. Heaven only knows with what agony my soul revolts from it, but there is no other alternative, it must be done; and, like desperate diseases which require desperate remedies, so in this case we are left to choose but the sufferings of conscience, or death. And who would prefer the latter? It cuts short at once every hope, and with one decisive blow annihilates every claim to mercy. But though the former may for awhile inflict on us its severest tortures, it leaves us still the power of repentance, a certain consolation for our past errors; and, be they what they may, forgiveness is never then denied us."

Donna Olivia was not such an adept in vice, that her heart could allow much truth in these dangerous maxims; but other circumstances had too firmly placed her in the Queen's power, and she had woven a net around her, from which it was no longer in her own power to disentangle herself. Fear for her personal safety, therefore, compelled her to an obedience which otherwise she would probably have recoiled from.

Regardless of the effect her diabolical scheme produced on Olivia, the Queen proceeded to inform her that all the foreigners of rank were in a few days to be present at an entertainment given by his Majesty, and as Colonel Mortimer would of course be included, his death could easily be accomplished by administering carefully to him a cup of poisoned coffee. To Olivia was the execution of this dreadful deed delegated; she was to select one of the most beautiful

cups, and having cautiously introduced the fatal drug, to place it on a salver, to be presented to Mortimer.

In her usual habits Olivia was vicious and depraved, yet she was not exactly the abandoned wretch the Queen supposed her to be, and she felt her blood chilled at the cool and deliberate manner in which the murder of a fellow-creature was thus planned, and the remorseless principles so unfeelingly betrayed; but, situated as she was, she durst not venture any further opposition, and having promised a ready compliance, she was glad to retire from the Queen's presence, which had now grown more irksome and disagreeable to her than ever.

In the solitude of her chamber she found as little to be pleased with as the society she had just quitted. Retirement seldom had charms for her, as it generally presented a long train of reflections, which she would, if possible, have shrunk from.

The conviction that she was so completely the creature of the Queen, was now rendered more agonizing by the horrid act she had been enjoined to—to poison Mortimer! She felt it such, not only because murder is a crime of so atrocious a nature, but because Mortimer was the fascinating being that he was. Had he been *less* so, those compunctious visitings of nature might have been *less* also; nay, conscience might not have been called into action at all. However, not to judge too harshly of her, we will only say, that so far from intending his death, she secretly determined to prevent it, if it were possible to do so without the knowledge of her Majesty, whose fears for her own safety she knew nothing but the assurance that he no longer existed could quiet; and who, should she find out that her vengeance had been frustrated, would probably turn it all against her.

But how she could so far deceive her,

was to be considered next, for to do so required much caution and cleverness. The consequences of a discovery, Olivia was aware would revert on herself, and she was at present totally at a loss in what manner to proceed.

In this state of mind she prepared to attend the Queen to vespers, in an adjoining chapel, where the service was performed by the monks of San Domingo, a ceremony she did not reflect how very unfit each of them was to go through.

A marble staircase of vast extent wound from the gallery down to the chapel; and the sombre gloom of evening as they passed beside the narrow casements, combined with the darkness of their own thoughts, gave the whole place an aspect more than usually dismal.

The Queen frequently started appalled at the shadows her fancy created; already the dying groans of Mortimer sounded in her ear; she thought she

heard him pronounce her his murderess, and cry aloud for retribution. She stopped, and shuddered with horror, for her companion now asserted that she had really heard a voice; and a low echo from beneath, at the same moment, so terrified them, that neither would venture a step further.

They had, however, nearly reached the bottom, and were hastily turning back, when their progress was arrested by a sepulchral sound, which seemed to come from an inmate of the grave. Instantly a figure clad from head to foot in a long grey cassock, stood before them, and lifting up the hood which covered the upper part of his face, he fixed his eye sternly on the Queen. In his gaze there was a terrific wildness, from which she would have recoiled, but she felt as if chained to the spot by supernatural power, and she in vain tried to turn away.

“I know thee, royal lady,” he at length

articulated in a hollow tone: "though thou knowest not me, full well I know thy murderous plot; thou wouldst poison the hero who nobly rejected thy criminal love; but, beware, I will be the guardian of his fate; unseen I will watch thine every movement, attempt the life of Mortimer, and thy doom, thy terrible doom is fixed; remember!"

Meantime, the Queen had fallen back almost fainting at the sight of a vision so appalling, the awful words of this mysterious being, and the conviction that her black scheme had been discovered

Olivia's attention was for a few minutes occupied in recovering her, and when she had in some measure succeeded, and again looked round, the stranger was no where to be seen, nor could they conjecture whither he had vanished the chapel door on that side being locked, and the key in their possession: the Queen was now too much agitated to think of entering the chapel; and having

sent Donna Olivia to make some slight excuse for her absence to the officiating priest, she hastened back to her apartment, to give way to the storm of anger that raged in her bosom.

On Olivia's return she assailed her with the bitterest reproaches for her supposed perfidy—accusing her of having traitorously tried to compass her death, in revealing a secret on the preservation of which her life almost entirely depended; and now that it had been divulged, certain destruction seemed to await them both.

It was long ere the repeated vows and protestations of the Senora could convince her that her suspicions were unjust, and then the manner in which it could have been found out, and who or what the stranger was, afforded a subject of painful conjecture: and death at the time could hardly have been more dreadful than their apprehensions; in vain Olivia returned to the spot where they had seen

him, and sought for some place where (if mortal) he might have concealed himself.

There was no other avenue from it than the narrow passage leading into the chapel: and they endeavoured to reassure themselves by the idea that he was not indeed an inhabitant of this world, and though he might have visited earth for some solemn and important purpose, perhaps to save the life of Mortimer, it was yet possible that his power over man, extended no further, and that having performed his mission, he had again returned to the abode of departed spirits, whence they trusted he would revisit earth no more.

This circumstance, whether probable or not, was, by no means sufficient to dispel their alarms. To cut off Mortimer, would be undoubtedly followed by death to themselves: and were he permitted to live, was not there a chance of his making known the late adventure, and

boasting of the manner in which he had acquitted himself : for that his penetration would at last discover her to be the author of the letter, she had little doubt, though she considered not how unlikely it was that without any clue, suspicion durst glance at her : at all events nothing more could be done at present, and whatever might occur in consequence of her indiscretion depended wholly on chance.

Too much the slave of her passions, and of a disposition too treacherous to expect any real fidelity, or friendship from another, the Queen's mind was not at all at ease, so far as the secrecy of the transaction rested on Olivia ; we are ever distrustful of our associates in guilt : she knew the Senora too well to suppose her capable of obeying any suggestion of honour, when out-balanced by the more weighty dictates of self-interest, and she knew that were she influenced by a single advantage that might accrue to herself, she would not scruple to betray the whole.

But these fears were unfounded, the weary Olivia durst not risk aught that might criminate herself, but being ignorant of the suspicions of her royal mistress, she did not think it necessary to take more pains than usual to preserve her good opinion.

In the interim a sumptuous entertainment was given as was expected to a numerous and splendid party; amongst which Mortimer was one of the most conspicuous, and highly admired by every individual, except the Queen, who could nearly as well have borne the sight of a basilisk: but she still treated him with every outward mark of attention, and respect, taking care that nothing in her behaviour to him, should appear either like partiality or dislike. So guarded was she in that particular, that Mortimer, who, after some reflection, had at length concluded her to be the enamoured fair one, (a conclusion justified by the recollection of her deportment towards

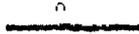
him, at their first meeting) now wondered how he could for a moment have cherished a thought so unworthy of her.

If any thing had power to diminish her fears, it was the welcome intelligence that in a few days he was to accompany his regiment back to England : but when she called to mind, how deeply she was involved in Olivia's power, her terrors and anxiety were renewed.

Could she have hit on any practicable method of ridding herself of a being so obnoxious ; she would not have hesitated a moment to put it in practice, but to attempt any thing that might eventually fail, was too dangerous to be hazarded, she was therefore obliged to leave to time, to afford her a favourable opportunity of separating from her for ever, without incurring danger to herself.

As to the mysterious stranger, whose timely warning had saved the Queen from the additional crime of murder, whether he was an inhabitant of this sublu-

nary world remains yet uncertain ; they had, however, neither seen nor heard of him again, and by the time they reached Madrid they had almost totally forgotten him.



## CHAPTER V.

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Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,  
Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow ;  
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.

SHAKESPEAR

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**AMID** the storms of war, still had the Princess continued to be the object of Sebastian's every thought ; her beloved image stood constantly before him, and in his present state of inactivity so amply fed his dangerous passion, that he sometimes almost believed there existed not an obstacle to their union.

A visible alteration had taken place in his appearance, he shrunk from the scrutinizing looks of his father : but he could no longer evade the inquiries of his sister, in whose society he passed the chief part of his time while at the Palazzo.

To Viola he had ever imparted his confidence, and in communicating his sorrows to another, he always felt their poignancy lessened, with this hope he determined to intrust her with the secret of his love. She heard it with calmness, but it was the calmness of amazement, at first too powerful for utterance.

“Sebastian,” she demanded, after a long and painful pause; “has reason taken her leave of you: or do you know what you utter? If the former I sincerely sympathize with you; if the latter be the case, I cannot sufficiently condemn your rashness, in yielding to a hope so absurd, so chimerical, and which may be attended with such sinister consequences.”

“I foresaw how you would receive this; I am aware of the folly and madness I am guilty of, and the impossibility of having that hope ever realized; but nature will not be subject to control, love is a passion not to be governed by

the will; and think you, that it will listen to the sophistry you call reason?"

"Beware, Conde," she interrupted, "of running on in this romantic strain, or I tremble for your safety; but hark! I hear the bell which summons me to the Princess: my dear, dear brother, let me persuade you to conquer sentiments so destructive in their tendency, so dangerous to yourself and your family; so inconsistent with the gratitude, respect, and duty you owe your King: resolve firmly to combat them, and difficult as appears the task, you will in time succeed: Heaven grant that when next we meet I shall find you more rational and composed. I must away; farewell for the present; remember, dear Sebastian, how greatly *my* happiness and peace of mind depends on yours."

"O Viola, you know not what you ask; command me to measure the immensity of the ocean, to enumerate its sands; to fathom the depths of the earth

to hurl the universe to its original chaos; to unveil the vast scene of futurity; all would seem insignificant, compared with such a task as this. "Conquer my sentiments," no! sooner could I stop the progress of the stars, make the earth itself stand still; every impossibility yet appears feasible, but this injunction I never can obey."

He now threw himself on a chair and remained in a deep reverie for some hours, from which he was roused by footsteps passing along the gallery outside, and a clock below announcing the hour of three. It was the time at which the Queen was daily accustomed to visit the Infanta, to whose apartments the gallery led; and Sebastian, as he descended towards the vestibule, met Donna Olivia del Zorio hastening to let Elvira know that her Majesty was coming.

Viola returned with her on the Queen's entering. "Your brother, Señora, is in my opinion the handsomest cavalier in all

Spain;" observed Olivia, as Montalban disappeared at a distance. "I am really almost in love with him, and truly I fancy little Cupid has been sporting with his heart; he is so strangely altered within the last few months."

She accompanied these remarks by a sort of smile, from which it was difficult to infer whether she was in jest or earnest. "Yet I think," continued she, "there is something about him more interesting than before: you cannot help being fascinated by the melancholy sweetness of his countenance.—To tell the truth, Lady Viola, I often envy the Princess Elvira; for methinks, they have a penchant for each other, and 'tis well for your own heart that he is your brother."

"The Princess," repeated Viola, turning pale. "The Conde Montalban knows himself too well: surely, Senora, you never had cause for such a suggestion, he sometimes visits us: but I fancy Cupid would find the heart of a soldier, a

hard conquest; therefore there is nothing to be apprehended."

"Only a few sighs," added Olivia, again affecting a smile; "but, my dear Senora, how seriously you take it: in good truth I did but jest, for I intend to lay siege to his heart myself; in which I trust your ladyship will assist me: and the more difficult the enterprise, the more glorious will be the victory."

Here their conversation was interrupted by the approach of Bianca, who on seeing Olivia would have retired, but Viola wishing to get rid of her companion, called her back, pretending she had got some employment for her in her own room.

"Mercy upon us, Lady Viola!" cried Bianca, as she advanced; "how, my lord, your brother, is falling away: the holy Mother preserve him; but he will soon have no more colour in his cheek, than myself; ah, how it would grieve my poor dear Lady, the Marcheza, if she

could look up from her grave and see him now: alas! if he continues in this melancholy way I fear."

"Poor Bianca, I suppose you were never in love yourself," interrupted Donna Olivia.

"Aye Senora, that I was," replied she, regarding her with a peculiar expression; "but I am sure *he* is not, for there is nobody in the whole court half good enough, or beautiful enough, for him to be in love with, except the Infanta herself; and she and my young Lady Viola here are reckoned the handsomest ladies in all Spain."

Piqued at this remark, Olivia was glad to dismiss the subject; and afraid of letting her chagrin be perceived, she made some trifling excuse, and hurried away.

"Well, holy Saint Ursula, forgive me for owing any body an ill-will;" said Bianca, as she handed Viola a glass of water; "but if ever there was any one I could find it in my heart to vex, 'tis

that same Donna Olivia: she is so proud and ill-natured, and (God bless us) I believe she's as wicked as she is proud; nay, some folks dont scruple to say plainly, that, she is the Queen's spy; and that her conscience is not the lighter for it; many a piece of mischief she has done at court; you remember the Duchessa del —, but that is neither here nor there: it does not become a body to babble, though other people will speak their minds—God mend her! that's all I say."

"Hush, hush, good Bianca, her pride or wickedness never can affect us I trust; and 'tis no affair of ours, we must not talk thus of people behind their backs: here now assist me in arranging these ornaments and drawings."

"Ah; may the Madonna pour her blessings on you, that I will. I know these are for poor Josephine, and I am sure the bit of bread they procure for herself and her grandmother will be the sweetest morsel they have ever tasted."

They now began to place them in order, and had nearly done so, when a message arrived from the Marcheze della Vittoria, requesting an interview with Viola, and she descended to one of the saloons to meet him.

The anxiety that appeared in his looks denoted something of importance; and seating himself beside her, he inquired whether Sebastian had confided to her the cause and nature of his unhappiness.

To give a vague or indirect answer was impossible; and deliberately to disavow the knowledge of it would be so gross a violation of truth; that, conscious of the safety, and propriety of reposing such a secret in a father's bosom, she unhesitatingly replied, in the affirmative; and briefly explained what had passed between them.

The Marcheze immediately summoned Sebastian, to his closet: consternation and anger, darkened every feature, which for some time, not all his efforts

at self-command could overcome ; a painful interval of silence ensued ; but at last he made known the purpose for which he had sent for him. "Sebastian," continued he : "I have long experienced obedience from you ; and I expect it now. I have hitherto forborne to make this request, still hoping, that time would conquer any little occurrence, tending to disturb your peace ; but time seems to augment, instead of lessening it, remember 'tis your father who now addresses you ; one who has never denied you his indulgence ; therefore lay aside all reserve, and consider me in the true light, your best friend, and the one most competent to advise you to your good, and promote your happiness and welfare."

Montalban trembled ; his heart beat high, his bosom heaved with alternate apprehensions and hopes ! What power have not the looks, the authority of a parent, over the feelings of a child ! He

was silent for awhile.—the words faltered on his lips.—He almost feared to give them utterance; but they burst forth, and he spoke his real sentiments with unusual warmth.

“Inconsiderate boy, would you thus verify the Astrologer’s dreadful prophecy—would you madly rush headlong into the dangers he idly foretold, because forsooth you think such is your hapless destiny. For your own sake—for the honour and peace of your family, let not such extravagant ideas betray the weakness of your understanding; talk not to me of the will of fate, of planets or schemes of nativity—preposterous!—madness unparalleled! Think what would be the consequence, if the King were to learn this; ruin inevitable to us all! Do you not every day behold ladies of rank and fortune sufficiently worthy of you, and many in point of beauty no way inferior to the princess? don’t you know how my expect-

tations rest on you; that in you are centred my affections and most sanguine hopes, and would you thus ungratefully blast them all for ever? Recollect what advantages you must hereafter possess from your influence at court, where already you are so highly favoured, that even royalty takes you by the hand, suffer not this enthusiasm, the unguarded passions of inexperience and youth, to frustrate those views—Elvira is the daughter of our sovereign, and were it on no other account, should ever command our most profound respect; would you then dare to violate that respect?—would you rob her father of happiness for ever?—or, Sebastian, in a word, would you attempt impossibilities—are you indeed the madman to imagine that the Infanta of Spain would descend from her royal dignity and unite herself to you. Monstrous absurdity!—no, no—it is not possible; but mark me, Conde; hear your father's decision, and learn to obey

it. To be plain with you, the woman you marry shall be of *my* choosing; to be still plainer, I have chosen her already."

"Of *your* choosing! and would you, my lord, thus play the tyrant over my affections,—trample on every law of nature,—and cancel, for your own ends, the duties a father owes his son?"

"Peace!" cried the Marcheze, vehemently "Sébastien, I would chastise this insolence, but that I know the natural warmth of your feelings, and have promised you my indulgence. 'Tis a father's duty to study the interest and welfare of his family;—such have I done for you. The woman destined to be your wife should surely first meet the approbation of your father,—that she has already obtained; and even were the princess to betray any partiality towards you, think you that I would encourage it, or consent to an union so disproportioned?—Never! Has the In-

fanta ever looked on you with an eye of attention? Has she ever condescended to bestow on you a glance to which you might give the appellation of tenderness or love? Assuredly not. Beware, Sebastian, you are not without your enemies. The royal favours you have received have rankled deeply in the hearts of many; who, with the eyes of a lynx, watch an opportunity to ruin you; and a more favourable one than the present (had they a suspicion of it), malice or envy could not furnish them with. Don Malvolio de Cerberos is not your friend, and he, that wily cringing courtier, can read men's very souls: few are the secrets he cannot penetrate, and daring are his measures. If once his suspicious eye falls on you, you are undone, therefore you must neither see nor think of the princess any more. Be prepared for a removal from court, if blind perseverance on your part renders so unpleasant a step necessary. In that case, I

assure you I should write to your commanding officer to limit his indulgence, and should myself entirely prohibit your appearing again in Madrid. Think not that this is the harshness of a tyrannical father. Believe me that nothing but my affection, and the natural dread of the consequences of your rashly persisting in this affair influences me. I trust you will reflect and profit by my counsels: you will then one day have to thank me for snatching you from the verge of a precipice, at whose base lay certain destruction."

Montalban's features fully displayed his internal feelings; and he retired as soon as he could, chagrined, and undetermined how to act. "Can I forgive myself," cried he, "for cherishing a hope so unlikely to be realized. Oh, Elvira! why art thou an object at once so adorable and unattainable. Merciful powers! unattainable!—how that word unnerves me.—And has she, indeed, thus soon

forgotten our youthful friendship—our mutual fondness? No, no, it cannot be,—but my father!—there's the obstacle: a mere trifle. Did not she tell me once she loved me?—that was a jest; merely her childish folly. When young, there was a congeniality in our sentiments, so sweet, so delightful!—O God! O God! is it thou who whispers to me, 'Sebastian, go on and conquer'?—I will; for methinks I should not feel thus if my heart were not instinctively led to attach itself to her. Should I succeed—there's heaven in the thought!—not all the love, duty, or respect, due to father or king, shall prevent me from throwing myself at her feet, avowing the sincerity of my passion, and imploring her to bestow on me the right to be her future protector."

"Hold!" exclaimed the Marcheze, as he burst open the door, and entered with looks indignant; "be silent, Sebastian, nor presume further to rebel

against *my* will. Know who 'tis that issues this command. I am not used to be thus severe; and let not your folly tempt me further, or you may repent it. Compose your distracted senses.—I'll hear these fantasies no longer."

Sebastian felt confounded at this unusual austerity; he made no effort to repress a tear which flowed down his manly cheek, for it was the tear of contrition. "Forgive, my lord this hasty enthusiasm; I will give way to it no more," said he as he took the Marcheze's hand, "hitherto obedience has had a precedence in my filial duties, and shall it now be wanting? Not so, thou best of men; thy will be done not mine."

His father's warm and affectionate pressure soon re-assured him. "May the powers above endue you with fortitude to keep this resolution, to combat entirely so dangerous an attachment, to banish Elvira from your mind for ever!"

Such was the ejaculation of the Mar-

cheze as he quitted the apartment, leaving Montalban in a state of agitation not easily described. How dreadful was the alternative! he must either renounce the hope, delusive as it was, of obtaining Elvira, or forfeit for ever his father's friendship.

In the midst of these reflections the noise of a carriage rolling through the court below reached his ear, intuitively he moved towards the window, and looking out, his eyes met the full gaze of Elvira's, who was reclining in the carriage in which she and Viola were going to take an airing.

His whole frame trembled, and his violent emotion at first prevented him from returning her salute.

"I don't think Don Sebastian looks so well to day as usual," observed the princess.

"Undoubtedly owing to his regret at the idea of our approaching separation,"

replied Viola, "he is about to return to his regiment immediately."

"Immediately—and *his* regiment is amongst those ordered on foreign service 'Tis possible, Senora, we—you I mean, may never see him again; no wonder, therefore, he should be thus sad, and 'tis uncertain whether we shall be at Medina before his departure; you know we are to pass the summer there, at least the Queen has so ordered; and I fancy the officious Donna Olivia has influenced her to it from some secret motive. In truth, I don't half like the dismal solitude of that old Palazzo, and I hope, if we do go we shall have your brother's society, at least for a few days, 'twill be such a satisfaction to you to enjoy his company to the last."

Viola knew not how to reply to this, but though she hastily contrived to change the subject, the princess saw that she had too fully comprehended her

Not less did Montalban revolt from the mandate that was to exile him from the presence of his beloved; but a few short weeks were to elapse ere his departure for America. Oceans would then separate them, and tear from his bosom the last shadow of hope, for he might never return: the idea was agonizing beyond endurance, and in a fatal moment of wild enthusiasm he made a vow that no earthly power should compel him to go. He determined to resign his commission, on the plea of ill-health, and for Elvira's sake to hazard the consequences, be they what they might.

His resolves were generally unalterable; but the solemn oath had passed his lips, and to retract was now impossible. It behoved him, however, to dissemble for awhile, lest suspicion should again revive in his father's breast. The Marcheze was about to visit the Castello della Vittoria, to have it prepared for the reception of the princess and Viola,

who had determined to make it their abode for the season, instead of the Palazza del Medina; and Sebastian knew he should then be left at liberty to arrange his plans.

Meantime, from his emaciated appearance, Viola began to entertain serious apprehensions for her brother's safety; and she felt those combined feelings of censure and commiseration called forth, which his situation was calculated to inspire. She now deemed it prudent to seem to sanction his attachment to Elvira; but, unaccustomed to dissimulation, she found it a most painful task, as other circumstances rendered it absolutely necessary, in order to avert the danger she dreaded.

The reader is, no doubt, already aware of the impression Montalban had made on the susceptible heart of the lovely Elvira; though terror for her situation compelled her to assume the outward composure requisite to guard

against a discovery, her efforts were not proof against the deep-searching eye of Viola, who received her confession with a coldness which more forcibly shewed her the impropriety of indulging so hopeless a passion.

Thus circumstanced, Viola perceived all the difficulties she had to encounter,—fearful that the part she was acting should reach her father's ears, who would assuredly construe it into duplicity,—unwilling to offend the princess, to whom she was so fondly attached,—and dreading, that, to throw off the deception and divulge it, would overwhelm them all in certain ruin, she could only resolve to go through the affair with as much caution as her duty to each party would allow.

After an absence of three weeks, the Marcheze returned to Madrid, on the day previous to that on which Montalban was recalled to Catalonia, whither he

prepared to go without throwing out the slightest hint of his intention to quit the army altogether.

Towards Viola, his deportment had for some time past been cool and reserved, which she in vain tried to account for. The hour arrived when he was to bid adieu to his family and friends; still he received her parting embrace with the same chilling formality, the same distant coldness. He had at first determined to withhold any explanation, but, to have left her thus would have been a violence against his feelings, of which he was incapable.

He took her hand in his. "Oh, Viola," said he, "were it possible to diminish the love I bear you, would not this annihilate it? You have blasted my every hope. Elvira did, indeed, love me; and yet you have destroyed all. But, read this proof of your dissimulation; you who called yourself my friend—my sister.

'Tis in the princess's hand-writing, and was found on the floor by accident and given to me."

Viola took the paper and read in a faltering voice the following lines :

"Elvira! unhappy Elvira! wherefore dost thou weep, or whence these rising sighs? Where is now the cheerful animation thy countenance once boasted? Ah! whither fled the roseate hue of health and tranquillity from these pale and languid cheeks? How vanished from thy bosom its innate happiness and peace. Alas! to see thee thus metamorphosed! Let the stoic steel his breast with stern philosophy, annihilate the very name of pity, and be more or less than mortal, who could, unmoved, behold thee now! Oh love! thou tyrant of the soul, hence! if these are thy pleasing feelings. Sebastian! fatal, fatal sound, conveying sweets to mine ear and poison to my heart,—would to heaven I had never known, never seen thee; then had my

happiness remained unshaken. Yes, Viola,—lovely counsellor,—I will hearken to the voice of reason, nor dread the unblushing gaze of conscious rectitude. Assist me, now, to overcome the weakness of humanity, and guide me once more to that tranquil path from which experience has taught me the danger of deviating.”

“Now,” resumed Montalban, as she folded up the paper and returned it to him; “now have I received a proof beyond denial of Elvira’s pre-existent affection for me, and your ungenerous and unjustifiable conduct; but hear me, Viola, my fraternal love shall ever be bestowed on you, and of this circumstance I will cease to think; my purpose is, however, fixed and unalterable, and if attempted to be marred by you or the Marcheze, by heaven I swear, never, never to forgive you. My father would have me give my hand where I cannot yield my heart. Nay (perhaps,

to one I have never seen, much less made choice of: let him take care; but this is a mere shadow, I am going far, far away, and may never see you more. Now, Viola, promise to comply with my last request: let not a word of this conversation ever escape your lips; on your secrecy my very life depends; if you betray me you lose me for ever."

Viola could no longer conceal her agitation, and as he pronounced his farewell the tears streamed copiously on his hand, which with sisterly warmth she pressed to her lips. The loss of her brother, even for a few months, was to her affectionate heart a pang it had never experienced: but for ever! the thought was maddening; and despairingly throwing herself on his bosom, "Oh, my brother, my beloved Sebastian," cried she, "you must not leave me; have you no pretext for remaining in Spain; say you are ill—are—in short, say any thing—but do not, do not go."

“Yes,” replied Sebastian, “there is one alternative; make me the promise I request and our separation shall be but a short one; say only that you will not divulge what has passed, nor what I shall now impart to you; and I quit not the kingdom.”

“Never, never!” Viola joyfully exclaimed, pressing his hand more fervently than before “in presence of our awful and invincible Judge, I solemnly bind myself to secrecy.”

“Then hear my decision and oppose it not; as soon as I reach Catalonia, I will throw up my commission. The delicate state of my health will furnish a plausible cause, without allowing room for suspicions of my real motives, or an appearance of ingratitude towards the King.”

“But, Sebastian, will not your name your honour, suffer for it? do you thus sacrifice these to a foolish passion, or even to your sister’s tears; oh no, in-

deed when I implored you to stay I meant it not on these terms; I knew not what I said."

"Every thing but salvation would I freely sacrifice to obtain Elvira. Viola you know me resolute—but I thank you even for your objections; my honour and my life are equally dear to you, and be assured that neither of them shall suffer: I must away, and when you least expect me you shall see me again."

On joining his regiment, he found little difficulty in persuading his commander into the belief that a voyage to America would prove detrimental to him; and the latter immediately wrote to the Marcheze della Vittoria, advising that his son should quit the service and repair to the south of France for a few months, in order to recover his health by the salubrious air of that delightful climate.

The Marcheze remonstrated on what he deemed so absurd and unnecessary,

and offered every argument he could devise, against it; but in vain. Montalban had so much ascendancy over the general, that the latter persevered in his applications until at last the Marchese reluctantly gave his consent, little suspecting the real nature of Sebastian's disorder.

It was accordingly settled that Montalban should remain in Catalonia until the embarkation of the regiment, and afterwards return to Madrid, to make preparations for his journey over the Pyrenées.

The princess had now accompanied Viola to the Castello della Vittoria, and the Marchese saw nothing to apprehend from Sebastian's return to court, on the contrary, he wished to accelerate it, having his immediate marriage in contemplation, as we have before stated, and aware that to accomplish it without delay was the only way of erasing his attachment to the princess.

The reader will be not a little surprised to hear that the one he had determined to unite the amiable Montalban to, was no less a personage than Donna Olivia del Zorio.

So far it had been planned under the influence of the Queen, whom the Marchese was too fearful of disobliging, and too eager to gain for his son so splendid an establishment, to hesitate in obeying; and at the instance of her Majesty, and the request of the delighted Donna Olivia, he communicated to Sebastian his views for him, in a long and eloquent letter.

It would be difficult to determine whether Montalban, on perusing it, was more thunderstruck at the proposal it contained, or terrified at the idea of what might be the result; for he had discernment enough to perceive that his father's motives were not wholly disinterested. That Donna Olivia suspected his love for the princess, he was, from

other circumstances, aware; but that she had meditated such a blow as this--that his father could have approved of such a woman for a daughter, he had not before entertained the slightest idea of.

That certain ruin must accrue to him were he to reject the deep-plodding, vindictive Olivia, appeared obvious in her having intimated to his father her suspicions relative to him and Elvira, and made him fully aware how much she had them all in her power.

To obviate the threatened danger required, in the opinion of the Marchese, a comparatively trifling sacrifice; that of bestowing his son on a woman of immense fortune, and the bosom favourite of the queen; but she was one whom, while he feared he found it impossible to esteem, and necessity rather than choice compelled him to it.

On the whole, Sebastian deemed it most prudent to seem to comply with his father's wishes; and, having written

back a promise to that effect, it was by mutual consent settled that the ceremony should take place on his return from Gascony.

That the elegant and accomplished Conde Montalban should have unhesitatingly consented to marry Olivia, was a matter of astonishment to the whole court.

The more ill-natured construed it into avarice and ambition; the less discerning into love. To know Donna Olivia and to love her was impossible, and the queen, aware of that, formed her own conjectures on the occasion, but kept them to herself; while the lady in question prepared for the bridal-day in all the certainty of conscious worth and beauty, and equally certain, that if these should fail, she had a still surer alternative.

About this time a young prince, distantly allied to the royal family, arrived at the Palazzo on a long-intended visit; he

was nephew to the prince of Brazil, the then regent of Portugal; and, as ambition formed a leading part of his character, and present circumstances augured favourably, he had many hopes of succeeding on some future day to the crown of that kingdom.

He was received at Madrid with all the honours due to his rank, and all the attention that appeared likely to contribute to the success of the Spanish monarch's views, which were to unite him to the princess Elvira, and thus join the two families by a more lasting tie.

However sanguine were his hopes, he preserved an inviolable silence on the occasion, as he foresaw that Elvira's charms would act more powerfully on Orlando's haughty bosom than the political motives by which he himself was actuated.

In pursuance of his design, he readily accepted the invitation of his minister to pass a few weeks at the Castello,

whither Prince Orlando and some others of the courtiers agreed to accompany him, and in the interim every necessary arrangement was made for the reception of the illustrious visitors.



## CHAPTER VI.

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Lead on—

In me is no delay—with thee to go  
Is to stay here—without thee here to stay  
Is to go hence unwilling—  
For thou to me art all things under heaven.

MILTON.

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TO the enchanting and picturesque beauties of nature were added all the embellishments that art could afford in forming the romantic landscape that encircled the Castello della Vittoria. This ancient Gothic structure had borne up against the mouldering hand of time; and in many parts it now wore all the elegance of modern improvement, retaining in others the whole of its pristine grandeur, and forming in the whole a scene

so sublime and beautiful, that, in the contemplation of it, our fair heroines appeared like beings regenerated from a former world, without a wish unsatisfied or a care to interrupt the harmony of their thoughts. All the wild enthusiasm of the poet can hardly form in imagination a prospect so truly grand as that which the terrace overlooked; on one side the far-stretching Pyrenées, covered with woods of intermingled shades, and veiling their majestic summits in the clouds—on another, the charming valleys and fertile plains of Castile and Navarre, amongst which the wandering eye found it impossible to be wearied, while it beheld the rich luxuriance of vegetation agreeably watered by the meandering rivulet, which took its source from the cascade that broke on the ear in slow and distant murmurs.

Yet, even in this terrestrial paradise, the instability of human happiness was soon perceived. Insensibly these ob-

jects, at first so charming, began to lose their attractions, and left the minds of our recluses enveloped in gloomy solitude. The princess sighed and wept—she durst not ask herself, *why?* as she pensively sauntered through the groves, leaning on the arm of Viola, who sighed responsively, regretting past events and dreading future ills. The antecedent calm had been suddenly disturbed by the report of the projected union of the Conde Montalban with Donna Olivia.

Elvira was ill prepared to receive such intelligence, and she must have sunk under it had she not given vent to the emotions it excited. Her grief and disappointment were beyond the power of dissimulation, and she could not disavow the revival of her affection, even for one who had apparently proved so unworthy of it.

Viola's sympathy was sincere. To behold the princess thus unhappy was

even more insupportable than the fear of danger. But, although she condemned the inconsistency of Sebastian's proceedings, with what he had himself stated to be his determination, she could not seriously regret it. It seemed sufficient to dispel all her apprehensions; but, when she reflected on his words,—the vehemence of his manner,—the promise he had exacted,—they rushed back with redoubled force. She knew his determined spirit, and shuddered at the suggestion of what it might lead him to.

She was interrupted by somebody knocking softly at the door outside, and, opening it, Bianca entered, pale with fatigue and terror. “Holy San-Marc! I have been so frightened,” exclaimed she, throwing herself on a chair. “Who do you think I have just seen, Senora?—My lord, your brother?”

“My brother!—when?—where?” demanded Viola, eagerly catching her arm.

“In the forest, lady. He has sent

you this note, and, though he bid me fetch him an answer immediately, to tell you the plain truth, I don't half like to go, 'tis so black and so dismal."

"Tell me what passed between you," said Viola, as she hastily glanced over the paper. "What did he say?"

"The whole story is this, Senora:— I had some business in the village, and, on my return home through the forest, (which you know is the shortest way), I perceived a man watching me; (holy Virgin! how I started). I forgot to tell you it was close beside the convent. Well, he thought, forsooth, that I belonged to the Castello; or he knew me; —I don't know which—(it's all the same now.) However, he called to me to stop, (and sure enough the fright made me stop;) so up he came, and put the note into my hand, and said, in such a kind tone, 'Well, good Bianca, how do *you* do?—Who is at the Castello now?' 'Mother Saint Ursula!' says I, for you

know I can always make free with him;—”

“For heaven’s sake, Bianca, tell me at once what he said; a truce with the rest for the present.”

“Now, my dear Lady Viola, am I not telling you as fast as I can.—Do you think I can tell you in a single word? Ah! my poor lady the Marcheza never interrupted me this way; and I’m sure I’d as soon hold my tongue as tell a thing by halves. Well, as I was saying,—‘Mother Saint Ursula!’ says I, ‘who could have thought of seeing you here, my lord?—I vow you have nearly terrified me to death,’ for he looked for all the world like a robber;—pardon me, Senora. ‘Hush, Bianca,’ says he, beckoning me into a more shady spot, ‘you must be as silent as the grave.’ ‘Aye, my Lord Conde,’ says I, ‘I shall soon be there silent and quiet enough.’ ‘Give this to my sister,’ said he, ‘and let nobody else know a word of your having

seen me; and tell her not to delay sending you back with an answer,' and so, my lady, he is waiting for it now in the forest."

"I will go to him myself," said Viola, "and you must conduct me to where he is; but, as you value my favour, you must never mention a syllable of this to mortal."

Bianca, having pledged a promise of secrecy, looked through the corridor to be assured whether there was any chance of their being observed, and both proceeded cautiously down the staircase, the bottom of which they had no sooner reached, than a side-door flew open, and the princess, in passing across the vestibule, turned her eyes that way and beheld them transfixed with confusion.

Viola still held Sebastian's letter in her hand, and Elvira approached with a look of scrutiny and doubt, inquiring how the Marcheze della Vittoria was; adding

that she feared some unpleasant intelligence had reached her.

Viola coloured deeper than before. "This letter is not, I believe——Oh, the Marcheze is in perfect health, thanks to your highness," she at last stammered out.

"You seem flurried, Senora; has any thing occurred to distress you?"

"Distress me!—no, nothing, I assure you," replied she; assuming a smile which her heaving bosom contradicted. "What *could* have occurred?"

"I fancied that something might have alarmed you up stairs in one of those old galleries you are so fond of traversing to gaze on the portraits of your forefathers, for you know 'tis said that their ghosts walk there every night and always leave some mark after them.—Bianca, you look rather scared too, methinks.—But whither are you going?"

"Bless us," returned the latter, "does not your highness remember bid-

ding me this very morning; take some bread and sugar, and several other things; to old Agatha the portress, at San Sebastian's; and my lady Viola is going to do me the honour of coming with me, through the forest; one gets so many frights by one's self in such solitary places; and you know that is what old people cannot bare;"

"For shame, Bianca, to be so silly," said the princess, affecting to believe her; "but stay a moment, Viola and I will go part of the way; the day tempts me to a ramble."

At this proposal Bianca cast a silently-expressive look at Viola, who felt at a loss for a reply. She could not offer an objection; and as the princess was hastening to her apartment to adjust her dress, Bianca said she must remain behind, as the story about the monastery was feigned; she having been there in the morning: "but," added she, "if your ladyship can get away for a moment

from her highness, you will find my lord Sebastian at the rear of the north tower."

With these words she left her. Viola not having heard what she said distinctly, it having been uttered in a half whisper, looked inquiringly after her as if for a repetition, not aware that the princess was within a few paces of them; and Bianca at the top of the stairs, thinking her gone also, cried out—"behind the north tower, Senora," and disappeared the next moment; while Elvira, with mingled curiosity and fear, flew to her chamber, not for the purpose of dressing, but to consider how she could unravel this mystery.

The north tower flanked one side of the Castello, which for several years had been uninhabited, and its interior was now in a state of ruin; which, combined with the frightful reports superstition had raised of it, would have appalled the most intrepid.

The passages leading to the under

part of it were so dreary and intricate, that she feared she should not be able to find her way through them, even could she summon resolution enough for the attempt; and those which communicated with some of the upper rooms were always kept locked, and the keys in possession of Rinaldo the steward; but determined as she was to developé this affair, and seeing no other resource, fear at length yielded to the more powerful impulse of curiosity; and she prepared to explore those gloomy regions, where silence and darkness had so long reigned undisturbed.

She had got a large mantle to throw over her as a disguise, in case of her being observed, and was about to excuse herself from accompanying Viola, when the latter entered, saying that Bianca had gone to the convent by herself, and that she would retire, therefore, to take a little repose, as the heat of the day had made her languid and unwell.

The princess conceiving that this would afford her a more favourable opportunity, did not oppose it, and taking up a book she said she would amuse herself with it until dinner-time: for a few minutes she appeared to be attentively perusing it; but as soon as Viola had departed she threw it aside, and descended to the vaults.

In one hand she held a light, and with the other she pushed back a massy iron bolt, and gradually the door opened on its rusty hinges to receive her. It seemed to her alarmed fancy the yawn of death, and fearfully she started from the impenetrable horrors inside.

For a moment she wavered; then taking hold of a small crucifix which hung from her waist, and repeating her ave marias, she hurried forward, amid all the real and imaginary dangers of the place; and ascending a stone staircase, she found herself in an ancient hall, hung round

with all the banners and trophies of Victoria's illustrious ancestors.

At any other time she would have viewed them with admiration and awe, but she now paid no attention to those mementos of mortality, and, disinclined to contemplation of such a nature, she eagerly made her way to a large Gothic window, and looking from it beheld Montalban and Viola amongst the trees beneath, and Bianca standing at a short distance from them, who instantly caught her ardent gaze, and exclaimed in a voice of terror, "Santa Maria, there's the princess herself."

Viola precipitately fled; Bianca followed; and Montalban stood with his eyes rivetted on Elvira, who seemed incapable of moving, as if she doubted the evidence of her senses, that Sebastian himself stood before her. "Thou beauteous semblance of divinity," cried he, raising his hands with his eyes, "par-

don. I beseech you my presumption in approaching this sacred spot; in viewing thus thy beloved, thy revered, thine hallowed form. Oh! great God, what hours of torture do the past appear when compared with the bliss unutterable of such a moment as this. What *have* I not — what *would* I not have endured for it, thou mistress of my soul; couldst thou but know what I have felt for thee; what I now feel; the adoration, the love with which you have inspired me; assuredly you would not condemn my—”

“Mine ear is unaccustomed to such rhapsody, Don Sebastian; and ’tis dangerous to run on in this strain here; if you should be discovered, you are not aware of the consequences.”

“By heaven, I defy consequences towards myself; for one kind look, one kind word from you would I outbrave all the terrors of futurity; surely, whole ages of misery were recompensed by this interview; long, long have I sought

it, and would you thus spurn me because I love you, and dare to tell you so?"

"Ah, Senor," replied the princess, her assumed severity of tone gradually relaxing; "you judge of me too harshly, would to heaven I might be as unreserved as I wish—but I forget how imprudently I am acting, in telling you of my folly, and remaining here; I cannot, must not stay; we may be overheard."

"But one moment more," cried he, as she waved an adieu; "dare I entreat admittance into the Castello? You smile and say 'entreat admittance beneath your father's roof!' But no, I may not be seen here. I have much to say—much to unbosom myself of to you; in mercy, sweet angel, deny me not; rest assured of the integrity of my views."

She paused and looked as if to read that integrity in his countenance. "Gracious heaven," replied she, "I dare not be so indiscreet; I doubt not your veracity, but should it be found

out that you had entered the Castello clandestinely, and that I had granted you a private interview—'tis terrible even in idea."

"Who *could* find it out? none are here but my father's vassals; and your movements are surely not watched; I could easily conceal myself in the tower."

"Oh Cielo, do you think I would venture into the tower again; not for worlds, nothing should have tempted me to enter it now, but—"

She had gone too far; she paused, much embarrassed, and at a loss for something to add.

"But *what*, lovely being?" he eagerly demanded, while his features glowed with confidence and hope.

Elvira remained silent, but that silence conveyed an affirmative more powerfully than words could have done.

She was again about to withdraw, but some secret charm seemed still to hold her to the spot.

“I conjure you to grant me this request—this single favour,” said Montalban; “say that you will give me a hearing—and where—refuse, and I go hence for ever.”

For some moments she hesitated, and glanced fearfully around. “Sebastian, can you indeed wish me to deviate so far from that strict propriety and delicacy, my rank and sex render it so incumbent on me to observe? Yet stay,” continued she, as he retreated a few paces. “Oh Montalban, I know you honourable, and will fear nothing; be in the garden under the western terrace to-night at ten; I shall be there accompanied by your sister.”

“You know me honourable, and yet have so little confidence in that honour as to require *her* presence. The coldness of her bosom will never make allowances for the warmth of mine; she is a stoic in those affairs—she would oppose all this—would prejudice you

against me, and render your heart as insensible as her own."

"Prejudice me against you; no, Sebastian, to do that is not in human—good God! I know not what I am saying—the consciousness of doing wrong in prolonging this conversation agitates my whole frame. Adieu! adieu for the present; I shall be in the garden at the hour appointed."

"Alone?" demanded Sebastian.—  
"Alone," she repeated, flinging down a small key she had almost forgotten; "this will open the postern-door—till then farewell!"

Her bosom throbbed with the most violent sensations of fear and reproach, as she slowly descended the broken steps. She dreaded to trust herself again in the darkness of the long passages, which the glare of her lamp made yet more horrid; and she blamed herself for having allowed curiosity so far to govern her as to lead her into all the

difficulties and dangers she foresaw would follow. How imprudent was the promise she had given Sebastian! she wished she had not done so; but her regret was momentary, and the only thing that perplexed her was the difficulty of accounting to Viola for her having entered the tower.

Meditating on what she should say on that point, she had reached the last step, when a gleam of light, as if from a torch, that seemed to wind through the gloomy avenues, made her suddenly start back; and presently afterwards a voice, awfully re-echoed through the vaults, exclaimed, "As sure as I live it is a ghost!" but I am not afraid of such things: San Sebastian, protect me. I am not afraid at all; but the place is so dismal. However, I'll follow bravely, — 'twould be a shame to turn back now."

The dread of encountering something supernatural had at first nearly

overcome Elvira's little remaining fortitude, especially as she was in a part of the Castello far remote from the probability of human assistance. But, convinced that this was the voice of a living person, she felt re-assured and hurried on.

From these vaults there was a communication with the ones underneath the chapel, which stood a few paces from the tower, and fancying she heard a hollow and sepulchral groan below, her fears returned and she reascended the stairs, and threw herself, almost out of breath, on an old couch, in a corner of the same apartment she had been in a few minutes before.

The wind as it whistled in shrill murmurs through the broken windows, and shook the waving banners that hung around, seemed to whisper in dismal tones the impropriety of staying long within its damp walls, or inhaling its unwholesome air.

She listened for somebody's approach but the blast completely drowned every other noise, and as she imagined nothing could increase the horror of the present moment, she resolved at all hazards to quit the tower, never to enter it again.

As she descended, a thousand dangers presented themselves to her imagination in the most frightful shapes; and she was about to stop in order to recover herself, when suddenly the light re-appeared on the wall beside her.

Like the coward grown desperate by excess of danger, she now hastily ran forward; the tall figure of a man stood before her, and with a loud scream, she fell senseless into the arms of Rinaldo.

San Sebastian and all the saints in the calendar, protect me, cried the affrighted maggior domo, trying to disburthen himself of the lovely inanimate; and straining his eye-balls on finding in his arms the Infanta of Spain. When assured of it, his faculties instantly re-

turned ; and doubting whether a spark of life remained he grasped her wildly, and bore her to the inhabited part of the Castello.

Restoratives were immediately applied, and after a long elapse of time she began to revive : the first object that met her eye was Viola, bending over her in anxious solicitude, from whom tears of joy broke forth on perceiving returning animation.

Involuntarily she pressed her hand, and inquired what had induced her to visit the tower. The artless tone in which she asked this question spoke instantly to Elvira's heart. She knew not what excuse to offer. She could not dissemble, and undisguisedly she revealed the truth, adding the promise she had made to Montalban to meet him in the garden.

Viola turned pale on hearing it ; and the better to conceal it walked over to the window, beneath which she saw the venerable Rinaldo pacing up and down

dered at the idea of that relative to her brother's destiny, being but too likely to be fulfilled also.

Rinaldo perceiving that his observations had been ill-timed, and had recalled with them the painful remembrance of the Marcheza's death, endeavoured to divert her attention from the melancholy subject, by inquiring again whether the princess was recovered.—“Bless us all,” continued he, “who could have thought of finding her highness in that dreary old haunted tower, which has been shut up so many years; I'll venture my life you were never inside it since you were born, though your ladyship is mistress of the whole place. Ah, there were sad sad, doings there formerly; when the Saracens invaded this kingdom, what a scene of slaughter was Vittoria! how many were butchered in that very tower, where their groaning spirits now ramble every night; I never thought any body but myself would have

turned ; and doubting whether a spark of life remained he grasped her wildly, and bore her to the inhabited part of the Castello.

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Viola turned pale on hearing it ; and the better to conceal it walked over to the window, beneath which she saw the venerable Rinaldo pacing up and down

the lawn, waiting to hear of the princess's recovery: on the pretence of going to inform him of it, she left the room, lest her emotion might be perceived, and increase the indisposition of Elvira.

“To meet Sebastian in the garden, and alone too!” repeated she mentally; “fatality hangs on this affair, but remonstrance is vain: no, no, she could not have been sensible of what she said when she consented to such a proposal; yet she has resolved on it; and gracious heaven! what is there not to be feared; it will be the destruction of us all; a princess of Spain thus to stoop to place her affections on a subject, 'twill drive the King to madness and desperation.”

“Ah, lady Viola,” asked Rinaldo, “tell me, I beseech you, is her highness getting better? truly I am almost as bad myself, for I never got such a fright since the night of my honoured lady, the Marcheza's death, the Eve of San Sebastian; holy mother, what a night it

was; but you don't remember it, and 'tis well for you."

"They say it was a sad night indeed; 'twas the one on which my brother was born."

"Aye, lady," returned he with a sigh, and significant shake of the head, while the big tear rolled down his aged cheek; "would he had been born on any other. 'Tis said an Astrologer foretold his fate in two hours after he came into the world, from a large fiery star that moved right over the convent, in its course from the Castello, and a terrible fate it was."

Viola now recollected the circumstance of the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Father Osmin from the monastery, where he had never since been heard of; but she had hitherto been totally ignorant of his prediction; and having often heard the sisterhood (whom she still visited occasionally) relate many extraordinary events he had foretold, and which had come to pass, she shud-

dered at the idea of that relative to her brother's destiny, being but too likely to be fulfilled also.

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courage to enter it; for as to my lord Marcheze, whenever he went near it he used to tremble even at seeing the owls flying out of their nests of ivy on the battlements. But I was going to tell you, as I was walking slowly near the rampart, thinking of the days of old, when I too fought the battles of my country, methought I saw a distant glimmering through the narrow grating of the vaults, and by watching I was presently convinced of it;—so without taking time to consider whether it was a being ghostly or bodily that carried it, I repaired thither speedily; and (God preserve us!) who should I find there but the princess; and what brought her there is not for me to know.”

“Ha, here comes an express from my lord,” added Rinaldo, looking down a long-shaded road, and seeing a courier approach in full speed, dressed in the court livery. — “You had better

withdraw, Senora, and I will send in the letters."

Viola accordingly went back to the princess, and in a few minutes a packet was brought, containing two letters, one for her and the other for Elvira.

The first few lines of the princess's seemed to surprise her, her countenance gradually changed—"No, I never will consent to this," cried she; "no power on earth shall force me to it;" and she threw the letter on the table, for Viola's perusal.

It was from the King, stating his intention of accompanying the Marcheze, the Prince Orlando, and some other nobles of the court, to the Castello in a day or two; and adding that Orlando had demanded her in marriage, and was about to receive the royal assent.

"And what is there in this to discompose your highness," asked Viola, "your marriage with a prince of his illustrious

birth and high expectations must surely be desirable."

"Lady Viola, you appear to forget the dignity of *my* birth; the unworthiness of Orlando; the baseness of his past conduct; the vow I have made never to forget it. No, no, I never will sacrifice my own happiness to the private interests of another. From my soul I despise Orlando, and you are conscious of it; and yet—oh, admirable policy! you would have me marry one whose very name I loathe."

A blush in which conviction and embarrassment were visible, mantled Viola's cheek, as the reproachful glance of the princess rested on her; and an unusual coolness existed between them for the remainder of the day.

At night the trembling Elvira was punctual to her appointment, and repaired to the garden unaccompanied.—As she left the saloon, the perturbation of her mind was evinced by the alternate

colours that tinged her features; and Viola, though too proud to shew that indifference had not subdued her attachment to the princess, determined to follow unseen, and listen to what Sebastian might have to say; not impelled merely by curiosity, but the fear of some rash resolve her brother might unguardedly lead her into.

From the terrace she descended into the garden, and after several turnings, she came within view of the spot, where stood Montalban, leaning against a tree and impatient for her arrival.

Conscience now whispered to her the impropriety of such a step: until this moment she had not recollected that Sebastian, the one whose hopes she was about to realize; the one she so fondly loved, and to whom she had promised this private interview, was betrothed to another, the affianced lover of Donna Olivia del Zorio.

All the imprudence of her conduct

rushed at once upon her view. She shuddered at having been led away thus far by the blindness of her misplaced affection; and with this conviction she would have hurried back to the Castello, had not Sebastian at the same instant, as if aware of her intention, caught her arm and entreated to be heard.

“Unhand me, I beseech you, Señor,” said she, in an agitated voice; “you know not the remorse I now feel for my unpardonable indiscretion in coming to meet you here, and at such an hour. Oh, my lord, how will you censure me hereafter for this; how ill does it become my sex to act as I have done; how will you not blame me, despise me for my weakness. Leave me, in mercy leave me, and let me return immediately to the Castello; I cannot longer listen to these professions, they disgrace you, Don Sebastian, but never can deceive me.”

“For heaven’s sake what means your highness? surely this is not the reception

you taught me to expect ; or, Elvira, have you indeed raised in my bosom an accumulation of hopes the most sanguine, only to crush them all with one terrible and decisive blow. How have I merited this ?”

“ You but trifle with my feelings, Senor, and accusing me thus, I see you know me not : have you, in the ardour of your love for me, forgotten what is due to your destined bride, Donna Olivia ; have you forgotten that your vows are pledged to her, and that to talk in this strain to me is in the highest degree reprehensible. Had I fortunately recollected it, the opportunity of doing so had been denied you : nay hold—let me speak my sentiments ; you once possessed my heart’s best affections ; to withhold this confession were perhaps injustice to the mutual friendship of our early days, but they can be yours no longer : repeat not to me those vows which honour demands you should retract ; no

longer make my misguided passion your sport, nor augment my misery by these treacherous declarations, by hypocritically smiling in my face while you plunge a dagger to the deepest recesses of my heart; did Donna Olivia know your duplicity, even she would spurn you from her."

"I attached or affianced to Donna Olivia!" reiterated he. "I capable of deceit, or sporting with your feelings! No, Elvira! you shall now hear me; by all the immortal powers, a glow of affection never warmed this breast for her. I know Olivia, and knowing, must abhor and detest her; listen to my final resolve—if ever my hand or heart be hers, may Heaven never receive me!"

"How will you reconcile inconsistencies, Senor? have you not promised, agreeably to the wishes of your father, to become the husband of Olivia; and is not your word inviolable?"

"True, I *have* promised," returned

Montalban, "but on that promise much depended, which you shall hereafter know; had I refused to do so, even you might not have been exempt from the consequences: this is no time for an explanation, the moments are precious, and rest satisfied, that my motives for encouraging in Olivia a hope of that nature, will meet your approbation when I shall inform you of them; and that I never formed even a momentary intention of sacrificing to another that heart so long and so faithfully reserved for——"

The concluding word died away on his lips, as he pressed her hand to them; which received its full import from the sensation it occasioned. "Dearest Elvira," said he, "banish those suspicions so inimical to my peace; fear not to repose your confidence in me, and let time convince you how sacred I hold the trust. Already I have heard of Prince Orlando's offers of marriage, but

I doubt not you will shrink from them with the contempt they merit. From reports I have learnt his character; but many circumstances remain veiled from me in mystery and oblivion:—Ah, Elvirá, if you really love me why cast on me that look of doubt and amazement; I will not live without you:—existence would be to me as the tedious gleam of life to the wretch lingering on the rack in horrid agonies.”

“Sebastián, after what you have told me, I am convinced of your sincerity, and will no longer deny you that confidence you ask: alas! circumstances compel me to confess that I do, even now, love you more fervently than ever. My happiness is at stake, and 'tis incumbent on me to adopt a plan most likely to rescue it from the blow that fate threatens. I will be explicit; you have a powerful rival; not in my affections; but in the will and mandate of the Kings, my father, who has declared his inten-

tion of wedding me to the Prince Orlando, with whom he will arrive here in a few days. "I can no longer wear a mask I should so soon be obliged to lay aside; I am determined, firmly determined, never to agree to such a thing: a father's will becomes tyranny when it thus forces the inclinations of his child; 'tis violating every law of nature."

The tide of confirmed hope, joy, and every rapturous feeling the human mind is susceptible to, now rushed impetuously to the bosom of Montalban; his glowing countenance bespoke the delight he felt, and the tears that stood in the eyes of each, as he knelt in gratitude beside her, were the silent messengers of love from one heart to the other.

The silence was first interrupted by Elvira, who started on hearing the tower clock strike eleven. She had protracted her stay far beyond the intended time; and, fearful of being sought for by some of the domestics, she arose to depart,

saying that she would see him on the morrow.

“ Good God,” cried Sebastian, grasping her hand, “ what may not intervene in the mean time; you do not recollect that to-morrow’s dawn may possibly bring Orlando, and may seal your fate for ever; but surely you cannot, will not consent; have you not told me your heart was mine, and can you refuse to confirm it with your hand: nay, whence that look of alarm? why tremble at the proposal: yes, Elvira, you know what I would ask; till the altar shall witness our mutual vows I cannot believe that heart to be undivided. If you *do love* me we have nought to apprehend: let us unite our destinies, fly to some unknown retreat, where peace and tranquillity will atone for the loss of the more glazing, though less valuable, less durable enjoyments of a court. Where health and cheerfulness will smile on our undisturbed happiness: The blessings of

calm retirement and domestic life will be heightened in the contrast with the fulsome grandeur and voluptuousness of the Palazzo, where the order of nature is wholly reversed, and instead of rational beings, devoted to the great end for which they were created, we behold a degenerate race, amongst whom hypocrisy assumes the mask of innocence; vice, of pleasure; severity and private malice, of justice; envy, of indifference, and flattery, of truth: where virtue sickens at the prostitution of morality and reason, which on all sides presents itself; and can your exalted soul contemplate a scene like this, and yet retain a wish to inhale their contaminated atmosphere. No, Elvira! as the coalition of virtue and vice, of fire and water, of winter's chilling frost with the radiant glow of summer's sun, so is it in you to cherish such a wish—impossible.”

“You are an enthusiast, Sebastian,”

said the princess, with a faint smile; “and fancy promises more than fate seems inclined to perform; her smiles are deceitful, they may create a momentary delusion; but alas, it soon evaporates, and with it all those pleasing images, leaving nought but a gloomy certainty of that delusion behind: we are too eager even in the pursuit of imaginary pleasures; and, when at length the fatal shade stands still, we find but air within our cheated grasp. The warmth of our youthful ideas prevents us from seeing aught to oppose the attainment of our sanguine hopes, or allowing a barrier to interpose, whether its removal may finally tend to injure or benefit us.”

“This is indeed philosophizing too deeply,” observed Montalban, “but the force of *my* enthusiasm will far outweigh *your* sophisms. I know sufficient of the great world to warrant my declaiming thus against it; but moralizing is now ill-

timed: recollect Elvira, that 'tis also cruel to trifle with *me*; that you must either confirm my hopes or cast me off for ever: recollect the event draws near which will render it compulsory, and delay fixes your doom inevitably. At the expiration of three days more I must be at Madrid, where I am expected; and to give the semblance of reality to what I have assumed, must immediately proceed to France. I have, you are aware, given up my military rank; and remember that it was for you; for you have I resigned what my soul long gloried in; for you, Elvira, would I abandon the whole world."

He took her hand, pressed it to his beating bosom, and the tears chased each other down their cheeks, while in a voice scarcely audible she again repeated her assurances that she would never be the wife of another.

The clock now striking the half hour, warned her that it was time to retire,

which Sebastian no longer opposed, conscious as he was of the danger her further stay might be attended by, in alarming the domestics.

Promising to meet him there at the same hour on the ensuing evening to arrange their plans, the princess returned to the Castello, and Montalban repaired to the convent of San Sebastian, where the Padre Abad secretly afforded him an asylum.

## CHAPTER VII.

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Now judge thyself who best deserved my love,  
 I knew you both—and, durst I say—as heaven  
 Fore-knew among the shining angel host,  
 Who should stand firm—who fall?

DRYDEN.

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“YOUR highness has found the garden more than usually pleasant to night,” observed Viola, as the princess entered, whilst she fixed on her a look of scrutinizing earnestness.

A treacherous glow spread over Elvira's features, and declared the import of this remark to have been fully understood.

“I know,” resumed she, “you love a solitary ramble; and, therefore, did not presume to intrude.”

“ You had better reserve the poignancy of your satire for one of a less solitary disposition, Senora,” coldly retorted the princess; and summoning her attendants she bade her good night in the same tone, and withdrew to her own apartment.

Viola instantly sprung from the sofa, in order to follow her, and implore her to be reconciled; to assure her that this unintentional offence had merely been dictated by a wish to prove the extent of her confidence. She recollected, however, that to do so now would be to divulge the affair to other ears; to acknowledge that she had been an unbidden listener to all that had passed in the garden; and reseating herself, she began to ruminate on the several events of the day.

Sebastian had that morning taken his farewell of her, previous to his setting out for France, without intimating either the particular purpose for which he had

come to the Castello, or his intention to remain a few days at the convent. She could, therefore, only form unsatisfactory conjectures, as she had not heard the decisive promise he had obtained from Elvira.

The princess appeared at breakfast next day pale and dejected; but the affectionate Viola, with her usual vivacity, soon compelled her to lay aside her reserve, and they were immediately reconciled.

Viola was even more than usually cheerful; she foresaw not that her bosom friend was to be the destroyer of her happiness; she saw but the deceitful sun-shine of promised joy: she thought of the marriage of Orlando and Elvira, of Sebastian and Donna Olivia, and then she fancied herself already united to the man whom her heart had chosen, Don Manuel d' Orellez; he was expected to accompany the royal visitors to Vittoria. Oh Hope! vain, cruel, deceitful tyrant!

how are thy votaries enslaved, infatuated, misguided, dissapointed!

Slowly and heavily the time passed away until the long wished-for hour of ten was announced from the tower clock. The sound lingering on the air aroused Elvira from her reverie, and she hastily repaired to the garden, where she found Montalban, to her surprise, accompanied by an elderly monk.

“Fear nothing, my beloved,” said Sebastian, approaching, and leading her forward, “you here behold a man revered for his virtues; beloved for the amiable qualities of his mind; my early friend, the worthy, the benevolent Francisco, Abad of San Sebastian; his holy office empowers him with much—the confirmation of all my sublunary wishes, the bestowing on me that blessing, which, next to Heaven, I prize; the privilege of calling you mine, beyond the power of mortal to separate us.”

The Abad partly withdrew his cowl;

and Elyira trembled even at the placid look with which he regarded her, for the holy man, whose precepts she had long been accustomed to revere, was the one who was now about to fix her future destiny.

She saluted him respectfully, and strove to combat her agitation by making inquiries about the health of the Abadessa, and the sisterhood, but she trembled in every limb, and tottering to a seat, nature seemed sinking within her; convulsive sobs heaved her bosom, and were, for a considerable time, the only signs of animation. At length she opened her eyes, and to the anxious inquiries of the Abad and Montalban, replied that she was much better.

The moments rapidly flew on, and Sebastian dreading the consequences of delay, took her passive hand and led her towards the chapel of the Castello, which stood at a little distance from the north tower, followed by Francisco.

“You have, of course,” observed the latter, “determined on some means of avoiding an union with the Prince Orlando.”

“No, holy father,” replied Elvira, “the King will not, I trust, force me to compliance; my only alternative there would be to throw myself at his feet, declare the truth, and tell him at once of my marriage with another.”

“Believe me,” replied the monk, “*that* would only exasperate him, without at all tending to benefit or unyoke you from his authority; he would repeal this marriage: and were he to know how instrumental I am in it, my unavoidable ruin and that of our whole community would follow; I well recollect the fate of Osmin.”

“Nay, good father,” interrupted Sebastian; “Osmin is now no more, and Heaven knows how it grieves my soul; but all this is mistimed; I repeat that she never *shall* be the wife of Orlando, a

few minutes more, and she will be mine, and mine for ever."

"Ah, my son, be not thus impetuous—this is a solemn affair we are about, and had I not blindly yielded you my promise, I would not dare to go through it. Should the event be what I presage, should I be hereafter called to account—oh, no Sebastian, I must not do so; for your own safety's sake and mine proceed no further in it, or if you do, it may prove fatal to us all."

"No further, say you," exclaimed Montalban, in a voice that was re-echoed through the whole chapel. "As soon would I relinquish my hopes of heaven hereafter. Have you so soon forgotten the allegiance to my cause, you promised? Oh, father, you have pledged yourself by a vow most sacred, and you cannot retract."

Elvira shuddered with apprehension at the perhaps fatal step she was about to take: she had come out wholly un-

prepared for such a ceremony; but what were the objections that love's persuasive sophistry, and from Sebastian's lips, could not overrule?

The beams of a full moon shone through the Gothic casements, and displayed the dismal aspect of every object within, for they durst bring no other light for fear of a discovery: a death-like silence ensued for several minutes; disturbed at length by a deep sigh from Francisco, as he turned over the leaves of a large missal. The window above the altar admitted light sufficient to enable him to read; and having found the service, he asked in tremulous accents if they were ready.

"Yes," Montalban eagerly replied—  
"Yes," was feebly articulated by the princess. Already had they knelt down, and the Abad raising his eyes to Heaven, had commenced a short prayer, when—  
oh, horror inconceivable! a voice in the chilling tones of the grave sounded

through the chapel—"Montalban, beware, this must not be!!!"

They heard no more; the princess relapsed into insensibility, and fell from the nerveless grasp of Sebastian, who, overpowered with terror, sunk almost lifeless beside her; while the Abad, uttering a cry of horror, fled from the chapel, nor stopped until he found himself within the walls of the monastery.

A long time elapsed ere Sebastian was so far recovered as to be sensible of his awful situation; he bent his eyes on the still senseless Elvira; not daring to look up, for fear of encountering some appalling spectre. All around was wrapt in the silence of the tomb: in vain he listened for the cheering sound of a human voice; he pronounced Elvira's name, and started, alarmed at the echo. A fearful stillness again succeeded: at length a distant footstep was heard, and revived a gleam of hope; it might be the monk: that hope was transient. Might

it not be somebody from the Castello; the fear of being discovered, and the more terrible idea of an explanation being forced from him drove him almost to madness. Instantly he snatched Elvira in his arms, and was about to flee from the chapel; when suddenly the great Gothic door flew open, and with a torch in one hand, Rinaldo stood before him.

“Holy San Marc, what or whom do I see!” cried he; “do mine eyes deceive me, or is it indeed my lord Sebastian, and the princess Elvira; what in the name of the gospel has brought you here?”

“This is not a time for such an explanation,” replied the Conde: “see the princess; hasten to her assistance, or—but stop; you must first swear by this holy edifice never to reveal a word of what you know now: if you refuse,” continued he; while horrid bodings maddened his brain; “if you refuse, you go not hence: I am desperate, therefore

say at once you will keep this circumstance for ever secret."

"Yes, I swear do so," cried the affrighted Rinaldo, starting back a few paces. "Alas, my dear young lord, your senses have I fear forsaken you; but you do not meditate any ill I hope; if I thought so——"

"I am not to be thus trifled with, old man; swear what I require, or tremble at your fate."

"Then, by San Sebastian himself, I never will disclose it; but, oh Cielo, the princess is expiring; I will instantly summon her attendants."

"Be not alarmed," said Montalban; "her struggles are the efforts of reviving nature; she will be quite well presently; there is no occasion to call any body, only go and fetch a glass of water."

Rinaldo thought himself in a dream, and paused for some minutes inside the chapel-door, during which time Elvira's faculties gradually revived; and she cast

a look of amazement and incredulity on Sebastian.

“Where am I, and for what purpose have I been brought here?” demanded she.

“Alas, Elvira, do you not know your lover, your Montalban; with him you are in safety; but we must part for awhile; I dare not tarry here, in so doing I should endanger your safety indeed, and my own existence.”

“Sebastian,” said she with a sigh, clasping one of his hands in hers, and raising her eyes in silent supplication to Heaven, while a torrent of tears seemed to relieve her, “We must *not* part: no, no,—would you fly me now, and cruelly resign me to another, to Orlando! perish the thought! No, never! surely the fondness that hath led me to take this step, cannot have thus steeled your heart against me.”

“Forbid it, ye powers most high,” exclaimed Montalban, “that the world’s

richest treasure should fall such a sacrifice! No, Elvira; never shall you be Orlando's. Witness Heaven this vow, if ever he can call you his, perdition be my lot; but we must part for the present, my return to Madrid, and journey to France are indispensable. If once the eye of suspicion were to rest on me, God knows what might follow; but time will explain this: I must not be seen again near the Castello, my safety depends on flight: hasten back to your apartment, and remember this my last injunction—let not your lips pronounce my name, even to my sister, nor ever mention ought of this occurrence; all rests on inviolate silence: but let us quit this gloomy place, we must not dwell upon its scenes; the day will yet come when we shall both be happy, and remember this but as a dream. Until then, may your kindred angels watch around you, and carefully preserve that heart for which I go now to brave my destiny.

He pressed her to his heaving bosom, and laid his lips on her cold cheek.—“Hark, hark, Rinaldo approaches,” cried she, as her ear caught the sound of his footsteps; “fly, my Sebastian, fly from danger, and may——” Tears choked her utterance, and she could only motion to him to retire quickly.

He darted out of the chapel, and in an instant was out of sight. Again Elvira grew faint—“he is gone for ever,” cried she, despairingly,—and almost at the same moment, dropped swooning on the arm of Rinaldo.

As soon as the first impressions of fear were over, he conveyed her to the Castello, confounded and amazed at these unfathomable mysteries; his wild and haggard looks alarmed the domestics, to whose interrogations he durst not reply, and his unaccountable deportment soon indicated the derangement of his intellects.

Viola was horror-struck on seeing the princess's senseless form, as she assisted Bianca to put her to bed; the latter crossing herself devoutly, fell on her knees, to pray for her recovery; and the rest of the female attendants in the same attitude presented a scene of general sorrow.

After a long apparent cessation of the vital principle, a deep and heavy respiration at length proclaimed its return, aided by the skill of a physician, who had been immediately sent for, and in a few hours all their hopes were confirmed, she essayed to speak, but the powers of articulation were yet too weak to admit of exertion; and as a slight degree of fever prevailed, the physician ordered her to be left to undisturbed repose.

The affectionate Viola quitted not her bedside; incessantly she watched the lovely slumberer, while her falling tears moistened her burning cheeks; and

whilst she censured the cause, she wept for the effect, for she was well aware whence it had arisen.

Bianca also sat up with her young lady, but as the hours rolled heavily away, and she seemed yielding to the power of the drowsy god, Viola encouraged her to sleep, and took up one of Cervantes' novels, to make the time less dismal, and to dissipate the unpleasant reflections the late events had inspired.

In the perusal of it we shall leave her for awhile, in order to give our readers a sketch of the character of Prince Orlando del Oporto.

Born in a country where superstition is so widely propagated, and the darker passions of the human breast so awfully exemplified, Orlando's infancy was marked by a peculiar sadness and melancholy, which, with succeeding years assumed an aspect of repulsive haughtiness, moroseness, and bigotry.

He passed many of his younger days

at the Spanish court, where his unbending pride made several enemies for him, and produced a misunderstanding between him and the Infanta Elvira; after which a reconciliation was found impracticable; he sought revenge, but prudence and caution baffled his schemes, and he cherished that demon of his country in his vindictive bosom until another visit to Madrid gave him an opportunity of gratifying it to the fullest extent.

The Duca del Marino (one of the noblemen of the court) had a son, young, handsome, amiable, and accomplished; a paragon of almost every excellent quality combined; the idol of his father, beloved and respected by all who knew him: every tongue resounded the virtues of the Marcheze di Rosalva; who, at the age of twenty, was ushered into the great world, amid the plaudits of the rich, and the blessings of the poor.

Until he beheld the all-fascinating Elvira, his bosom had been a stranger to

every other emotion than the pleasure of exercising those talents and virtues with which nature had so bounteously gifted him, and the consciousness that he possessed the power of doing good; until he saw her, he had not known what it was to love: never felt how powerful is the influence of female charms over the susceptible heart of man.

The sweetness of her countenance, the interesting loveliness of her form, and the irresistible fascination of her manners and disposition, involuntarily captivated the affections; whilst the more glaring beauties of her sister, the Princess Lindamira, always struck the beholder at first sight, and seemed better calculated to inspire temporary admiration than lasting esteem.

The Marcheze was soon aware of his passion for Elvira, who on her part now became sensible of the impropriety of the sentiments she had so long cherished for the Conde Montalban; and as the

latter was at this time far distant, and it seemed impossible that they could ever be united, she resolved to act according to the dictates of her better reason, and listen to the suit of the more high-born Ferdinand; but weak and evanescent was such a resolve, and fate seemed determined to oppose it.

Her attachment to Rosalva was publicly talked of, and met universal approbation; and the Duca, who was of royal extraction, arrogant and ambitious, perceived and encouraged his son in his affection for her, vainly hoping that his posterity should one day ascend the throne. It was not, of course, unobserved by the King, who, guided by the advice of his minister, and speculating on marrying Lindamira to Orlando, did not long withhold his consent to the union of Ferdinand and Elvira.

Ere that period the Infanta felt all her love return for Montalban, for the only being on earth she could ever *really* love;

but alas, there appeared no means of retracting now with safety, and reluctantly she assented to the preparations for her marriage, which had already been set on foot. A day was about to be appointed for the ceremony, when Elvira, accompanied by Viola, repaired to the Palazzo del Medina, in gratitude for the past services of Donna Honoria, a faithful attendant, who was rapidly sinking to the grave, and whose last moments their presence tended to tranquillize.

With avidity Orlando seized this opportunity of satisfying the diabolical spirit of vengeance, which had long raged within him, and murmured at control.

Lindamira, like the Queen her mother, was of a temper, dark, designing, and malicious; capable of any enormity to answer her own purposes, that could be veiled in secrecy; impatient of contradiction, enraged at opposition, and jealous of such a rival as her sister.

Orlando and she appeared to have been formed in the same mould; but yet they dreaded, hated, and despised each other inwardly; whilst one being necessary to the accomplishment of the other's plans, they preserved externally that degree of complacency, which if it could not be termed friendship, we may at least call politeness.

With amazement and horror each heard of the King's views, and in the true spirit of contradiction, each secretly determined to frustrate them.

The Marcheze di Rosalva was ardently beloved by Lindamira, and Orlando eagerly became an agent in the gratification of her wishes; stimulated still more to the undertaking by the hope of getting her completely off his hands.

The advice and assistance of another was, however, requisite; another as well versed in the arts of dissimulation and vice as themselves. Donna Olivia del Zorio, devoted as she was to the cause

of wickedness in almost every shape, appeared the more favourable to their designs, as she had ever had an aversion to Elvira, and revered Lindamira; from the assimilation of their talents, and the similarity of their dispositions.

A person better calculated for the dreadful purpose, they could not have chosen to instil the poison of jealousy into the mind of Ferdinand.

About this time Montalban had again arrived with his regiment in Catalonia, and every epithet that could add brilliancy to his character was coupled with his name. None more enthusiastically paid to him the tribute of praise than Elvira; her encomiums reached Olivia's ear; who had long meditated the conquest of his heart.

Stung almost to madness by the idea of being rivalled, she employed all the ingenuity of invention to be revenged; and, bent on gratifying that black and direful passion, she readily coincided in

the plot laid between Orlando and Lindamira, and promised to take the management of it upon herself, a proposal they did not hesitate to agree to, with the proviso that she should use all her influence to alter his affection in favour of the latter.

She saw that this was an affair which required the utmost cleverness and caution to carry her safely through : aware that should it come to the knowledge of the King, the most terrible consequences would ensue ; even from the Queen it was therefore necessary to conceal it, and whilst she daily sought her opportunity, she kept a strict watch over all her words and actions.

In Elvira's absence Ferdinand's visits to the Palazzo were less frequent ; and consequently, Donna Olivia's object, to obtain an interview with him, was very difficult.

The long interval of suspense and expectation, gave her time to reflect on

the danger of what she was about to do. She panted for vengeance, yet trembled to think what the event might be to herself, whether her attempt should succeed or fail; and the fear of such a punishment as the crime deserved overcoming every other sensation, she resolved to make Orlando the instrument of her treachery, and found in him a willing votary to her demoniac plans.

This Prince and the Marcheze had contracted a firm intimacy, and had now become almost inseparable: the poison intended for his ears was, therefore, more easily conveyed, and less liable to detection in the shape of *friendship*.

He began by a few cursory remarks on the intended nuptials, commented on the beauty of Elvira, but largely expatiated on the nobler beauties, and still more exalted virtues of her sister; with whom, he added, political motives entirely forbade his marriage. Elvira was

again named, and that name stamped with perfidy and dishonour; he assured the Marcheze that a secret correspondence had long been carried on between her and the Conde Montalban; and that it was for the purpose of seeing him with more safety, than she could at Madrid, she had gone to Medina.

Ferdinand was shocked, and confounded by the intelligence; Elvira false to him! the thought was distracting: he doubted, feared, but ultimately believed; and having given a promise of secrecy, he thanked the disinterestedness of his *friend*, and the fortunate interposal which had thus saved his honour, his happiness, nay perhaps his life; and Orlando perceived that the long levelled dart had at length inflicted a wound beyond the probability of a cure.

Ferdinand's natural versatility of temper, rendered it a less arduous task to

wean his affections from Elvira; but to transfer them to her sister, required all the stratagem and finesse that Orlando and his coadjutor were capable of.

The Marcheze strove to forget Elvira, but dreadful was the conflict in his bosom. He wept, yet condemned his weakness; at one moment he resolved to lay open the whole affair, and expose her to general censure; but the next put that idea to flight, when he reflected on the illiberality of it, and represented to himself that it would be descending from his dignity to treat her supposed perfidy and duplicity with aught but indifference and contempt.

Yet how was this change to be accounted for to the King; when preliminaries had been so far settled, was it likely that *he* would be trifled with, or bear so gross an insult as it must appear? Perplexed by this suggestion, he acquainted the Duca of the change in his

sentiments, imputing it to a more trivial cause than the real one.

A disappointment to his golden dreams, his ambitious views, his hopes of further aggrandizement, was a blow for which the imperious Duca was not prepared; and more exasperated at the thought of losing such an alliance than concerned at the dis-union of two hearts he had imagined so tenderly attached; he commanded him peremptorily either to revoke his determination, or disavow every further claim to his countenance or protection.

To obey a mandate so unjust and cruel was not the act of a moment; Ferdinand could not yet conquer his love for Elvira, though he tried to persuade himself that he despised her; but he had long since subdued all inclination for an union.

At last, seeing no other alternative, he yielded in favour of Lindamira, whom he fancied he esteemed because she wished to do so; and the appeased Duca

communicated his choice to the King, urging the superior charms of that princess.

When Donna Honoria had been consigned to her native earth, Elvira and Viola again returned to Madrid; the former in gloomy expectance of the event that was to decide her destiny for ever, and destroy at once Montalban's every hope. Its effect would, of course, be more dreadful from his having hitherto been kept in profound ignorance of every thing relative to it.

But how unexpected was the change that had taken place, what a scene of unhappiness still awaited her? Instead of the enraptured lover flying to hail her return, and lead her triumphantly to the altar, she was met by Ferdinand with a coldness and apathy; an indignant and repulsive glance, which instantly informed her that treachery and artifice had been conspiring against her.

In vain she demanded the cause of

so extraordinary a reception: the longer she persisted, the deeper he supposed she was involving herself in hypocrisy and deceit, and the firmer became his determination to avoid and hate her, in spite of all the suggestions of his heart that pleaded for her.

Wearied and disgusted by treatment so unmerited, and unaccountable, she vented her feelings in solitude; but soon reflection taught her to be grateful to the unknown power which had thus prevented her from the sacrifice she had been on the point of making of her own happiness, and that of her now more than ever beloved Sebastian.

It required much time and interest to gain the royal assent to the nuptials of Ferdinand and Lindamira, and a few days previous to that fixed on for their celebration, the latter was suddenly seized with an alarming illness, during which the Marcheze was called to Italy, on an affair of great importance, which

could not be avoided. He delayed, however, until the princess was pronounced out of danger, and promised to use the utmost despatch.

The Duca was at this period confined to his chamber by a fit of the gout, which the business that had summoned his son to Italy by no means tended to allay.

The failure of a Florentine merchant, in whose hands a large portion of his property was invested, threatened the almost entire destruction of the Duca's fortune and estate near that city; but when a statute of bankruptcy was declared, it was discovered that Signor Barozzi had been guilty of some fraudulent practices, which, leading to a severe scrutiny, the supposed bankrupt was detected in time to prevent his emigration to America, laden with the riches of several Italian nobles.

Barozzi was, however, too well versed in the chicanery of the trade, not to be

able to evade even the civil and military powers of Florence, whence he contrived to escape by the irresistible spell that a bribe generally carries; and the very night before Ferdinand's arrival, the whole city proclaimed Barozzi's decampment with the entire of his ill-gotten wealth.

The fatal intelligence was cautiously conveyed to the Duca: horror and rage sat on his contracted brow, and death was depicted in his pale visage as the dreadful shock unnerved him. Overcome by violent passions, he reeled backwards and fell senseless on his bed. He was restored to animation but not to reason; frenzy and delirium succeeded. he had lost his heart's best treasure by villany, the basest villany; and in a few days he sent forth his last breath, invoking curses on the unfortunate Barozzi.

The princess's disorder proved to be a malignant fever, and her convalescence

was slow: Prince Henrico, her brother, had been a constant attendant on her long confinement, for although Elvira was indeed his *favourite*, he loved his elder sister with all the tenderness and respect that her consanguinity and rank demanded:

Alas! to his fraternal duties, so piously fulfilled, he fell an early victim; he caught the infection, which soon manifested its baneful influence. For awhile its virulence seemed in some measure abated, and he was apparently recovering; when his physicians ordered him to Medina. Exercise brought on a speedy relapse, and destroyed every hope of his surviving it.

Conscious of his approaching dissolution, he summoned his sister Elvira to a private interview, a few hours prior to the melancholy event:

“I have sent for you, my Elvira,” said he, as he grasped her trembling hand, “to communicate a secret,

which nought but my present awful situation should compel me to reveal, and which I must do in as few words as possible. You have long been the unsuspecting victim of private pique and malice, from whose power even your exalted qualities of mind could not exempt you. I blush for him whilst I pronounce his name; the Prince Orlando has violated every rule of honour and gratitude; his base artifices prevented your union with the illustrious Rosalva; mistake me not, the man whose affections are transferable from one object to another, is far beneath contempt; I cannot, therefore, regret that he has made choice of Lindamira; it saves you from the pain of knowing that his marrying you was caused by interested motives, and a wish to add to the rank and splendour of his ancient house.

“ Had I not despised the credulity and weakness of the Marcheze, Orlando should have felt the effects of my resent-

ment. I could at first only form conjectures; but time and a strict investigation soon informed me of the truth. How was I shocked! the prince and I had always loved each other like brothers; that consideration kept my lips closed, as on my silence depended his safety, and rather than risk his life, culpable and base as he was, I have hitherto confined it to my own bosom, and now confide it to yours, as a repository the most secret. By all our kindred ties I beseech you never, never to reveal it; let my dying injunction be forcibly impressed on your memory. Give me but this promise, and mine eyes shall close in peace."

Amazement kept the princess for some time silent; but she forbore to comment on what she had heard, and merely promised that she would take no further notice of it.

The young Duca returned shortly to Madrid; to witness the melancholy

events which protracted his marriage, and Orlando having been recalled to Portugal, was prevented from being present when it did take place, nor had he until now revisited the Spanish court.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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Thus stands my state distressed,  
Like to a ship that having 'scaped a tempest,  
Is straightway calmed and boarded with a pirate.

SHAKSPEARE

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THE tolling of the convent bell for the spirit of a departed monk, now falling in solemn cadence, and now swelling in full and sonorous peals on the passing breeze; the dismal cry of the owl, winging its way to its lone retreat; the flitting of the bat amongst the ivy-mantled walls of San Sebastian; and the hollow murmurs of a rivulet that meandered through the labyrinths of the forest, were ill-calculated to dispel the gloom of Montalban's mind.

He had proceeded thus far almost

mechanically, unconscious of every surrounding object; absorbed in reflections on the past; the disappointment of his hopes, just at the moment they were about to be crowned with success; the mysterious warning in the chapel; the danger of disregarding it. "Beware, Montalban!" he mentally repeated, the awful tones still vibrated in his ear: the idea of supernatural agency chilled him; and appalled, he started from his reverie at the approach of a human figure. His vapoured imagination pictured to him an inhabitant of the tomb; he retreated a few paces, but was presently re-assured by the well-known voice of Francisco, who opened the gate to admit him.

"God grant that nothing fatal has occurred at the Castello," said the Abad, surveying him with a look of apprehension; "I trust that I have not betrayed you. Tell me, Senor, have you seen Rinaldo?"

"Betrayed me," repeated Sebastian,

“Oh heavens, then I am undone: but say, what of Rinaldo? *How* have you betrayed me? Holy father, let me know the worst at once.”

“Speak low, or we may be overheard; my son; 'tis not as I feared, Rinaldo did not comprehend me; on my way back to the monastery I met him in the forest, and startled by the unusual wildness of my looks, he inquired the cause. Forgetful of every thing but that cause, I replied that I had been alarmed by an apparition in the chapel, and hurried on, heedless of his entreaties for a further explanation: since that I have endured the most torturing fears for your safety, and delayed attending the brotherhood to prayer, in hopes of your return.”

“Is that *all*,” demanded Sebastian; “there is then nothing to apprehend from Rinaldo; I have silenced him.”

“Silenced him!” re-echoed the Abad, taking him literally, whilst the blood forsook his cheeks—“Oh, Senor, fly

hence instantly; if you are caught here we shall have all the demons of the inquisition within our holy walls in less than an hour, and they will put every living being of us to the rack."

"God preserve us! What of the inquisition, your reverenza?" demanded one of the monks; running forward, almost breathless with terror, and his cheeks assuming a livid paleness.

"Softly, Ambrosio," replied the Abad, "it did not become thee to hearken to our discourse; besides, thou hast been enjoined to strict penance by our community, and 'tis not fit that you should thus be outside the cloisters."

Ambrosio, disconcerted, turned away, counting his beads, and muttering his *ave marias*.

"The inquisition," repeated several voices, as a procession of monks appeared the next moment, passing through the cloisters to the chapel, bearing on their shoulders a coffin, covered with a

large black pall. Instantly their strength seemed to fail them; their tottering limbs refused their office, and with a dreadful noise, the coffin fell to the ground, while the astonished Sebastian stood unable to account for the general alarm.

“Oh, where shall we seek a place of concealment?” cried they; “what shall we do with the corpse?”

“When will they be here?” implored a little fat friar, throwing himself at Montalban’s feet; “or what is the cause that brings them? Mercy on us all! how unfortunate that they should come at such a time as this, when we are preparing the great feast for the Eve of San Sebastian, which will be in a few days.—Father of heaven! what is the matter, Senor? Have you seen any thing, that you start and turn so pale all on a sudden?”

“In three days more comes the Eve of San Sebastian,” cried Montalban,

gazing vacantly around, without attending to the monk's interrogatory; "let me not think of it, for much I fear that the Astrologer prophesied but the truth. What mean you, my friend?" continued he, at last, turning to the monk; *who are coming hither?"*

"The officers of the holy inquisition," answered the Abad, hastily drawing him from the spot. "Let us proceed to the chapel, and pray Heaven to avert their wrath and forgive you; for indeed, my son, I can't find it in my heart to close the gates against you: come quickly, or they may be here. But say, what have you done with Rinaldo's body?"

Sebastian now perceived that the Abad had thus misconceived him, and a few words sufficed to explain the matter satisfactorily.

Francisco entreated him to excuse what had passed, and attribute it to the ferment of his mind. They were both much agitated, and in order to compose

their spirits; they entered the chapel, where the rest of the fraternity were assembled around the coffin, which was placed on a cataletto in the aisle, chanting the requiem, accompanied by the solemn and heavy tones of the organ.

The scene was awful and impressive, and Montalban joined fervently in their devotions!

Behind the grating which divided the chancel from the body of the chapel, were ranged the nuns, whose soft and melodious voices rose in a full strain of divine harmony towards the conclusion of the hymn. Sebastian seemed as if his soul had fled to other regions; every thought soared from earth, and many minutes elapsed after the music had ceased ere he recovered himself.

One of the monks, after a lingering illness, had expired early in the evening, and it was their custom to leave the dead in the chapel for three days and

nights previous to interment, with three tapers constantly burning beside them.

Having said the usual number of masses, and placed the light upon the altar, Francisco told the brotherhood they need be in no dread of seeing the inquisitors; and taking off the lid of the coffin, according to their superstitious rites, they quitted the chapel, and retired for the night to their respective cells.

The one assigned to Montalban was in a remote part of the building, shaded by the widely-spreading foliage of the surrounding trees; and gloomy and dejected he threw himself on his pallet to ruminate on the events of the day, rather than to sleep. In pity, however, to his wearied faculties, the drowsy god soon hung over his couch, and gradually he sunk into a slumber amid the fantasies of his brain; uneasy dreams accompanied it; a thousand visionary terrors flitted

in succession before him. He heard his name—thrice it was repeated; he started—he awoke, and beheld a tall figure bending over him, arrayed in the garments of the grave.

Uttering a cry of terror, he fell back, and for a few minutes every sensation vanished; still the figure remained in the same attitude.

The violence of the shock somewhat abated, he fixed his eyes earnestly on it, but in vain attempted to speak.

At length it slowly drew aside a sort of cowl, and discovered a face of frightful paleness, but on account of the darkness of the cell the features were not discernible; while in a low sepulchral tone which chilled Montalban with horror, it pronounced his name once more—"Montalban, beware the Eve of San Sebastian!!!" were the last words, and it retreated hastily into the gloom of the cloisters.

"Almighty God! what means this

warning of such dreadful import?" cried the alarmed Montalban. "Speak instantly; say of what world thou art an inhabitant. By all the powers on high, I will follow thee, nor quit the pursuit till thou hast answered me."

In the present state of his mind, danger was so familiarized to him that he could behold it in the most appalling shape almost without shrinking. He quickly arose, and pursuing the steps of the receding figure, he again came in sight of it, in one of the long winding passages, through which the dull glimmer of the moon lighted him, until he found himself near the chapel. Here he paused; the emblems of death had power to terrify him; he trembled violently, and clung to the statue of San Sebastian, which stood on a pedestal beside him. "In the name of Heaven, what art thou," demanded he as firmly as his agitation would allow.

He received no answer: the chapel-

doors unfolded, and the spectre beckoned him to enter. The blood was almost stagnant in his veins, a cold sweat ran over him; he stood irresolute, until, in the same solemn tone it said—"Montalban, approach!"

Involuntarily he obeyed the awful mandate; fearfully he advanced, his eyes wandering for a moment from the apparition, and rested on the ghastly visage in the coffin.

The corpse of Father Bernard lay extended in all the solemnity of death, and the partial glare of the tapers rendered it still more frightful; again he drew back, and again the shrouded spectre recalled him. "Almighty Father! protect me," he exclaimed; and sinking on his knees, he tried to grasp the cold extended hand.

It shrunk from the vain attempt.—  
"Hear me, Montalban, and obey," said the same voice. "I come to avert thy fatal purpose; mine was the warning

thou didst hear when about to embrace destruction, in uniting thyself to the daughter of thy King—it must never be, dismiss her from thy mind for ever—relinquish thy horrible purpose; or dreadful, dreadful, will be the consequences to thee. No ear save thine must hear this, no prying eye foresee what awaits the disobedience of it; yet who, wretched youth, shall avert thy fate—beware the Eve of San Sebastian!!!”

“ ’Tis the shade of mine angel mother,” he exclaimed, raising his hands and eyes—“ Stay, oh sainted spirit—reveal——”

At this instant the convent bell tolled the midnight hour; it sounded to him as the knell of death; with the last chime the apparition vanished. “ My mother,” he faintly articulated, and sunk motionless beside the bier.

After a long elapse of insensibility, he awoke to recollection; his fancy still retained the image of his mother, and his

eyes sought her in silent and reverential awe: as he glanced slowly around, his attention was suddenly arrested by a figure kneeling at the altar, wrapped in a large sable cloak.

The excess of terror he had before experienced, blunted now in some measure his sense of fear; he remained silent as the corpse beside him; but, impelled by nature to ensure his personal safety, and finding no other resource he crept under the bier, whose dusky hangings concealed him from view, but did not prevent him from witnessing what passed outside.

Even of the act of thus secreting himself he was, however, almost unconscious, so entirely were his thoughts occupied by the vision, and the last words—  
“Beware the Eve of San Sebastian!!”

He shuddered as he called to mind the Astrologer's prediction; Osman had indeed prophesied true, and the dreadful day which destiny had marked out

as the day of his nativity—the fatal Eve of San Sebastian, was ever to be a day of horror to the hapless Montalban. Yet, from the approaching one what was he to apprehend beyond the frightful phenomena of those already past? Why was *it* thus particularized, or of *what* had he to beware, but the ills he had so far avoided? The approaching eve must be veiled in some terrible mystery, or be pregnant with some terrible event, or surely it did not appear probable that supernatural agency would be required to warn him against it: what could be the horrible purpose, the spectre had commanded him to relinquish; his mind was yet untainted even with the suggestion of a crime; and the horrible idea that such had been decreed for him, and that he must fulfil his destiny; for a long time absorbed his attention, and kept it from every object.

The voice made him imagine that the figure at the altar was a human being,

and this opinion was presently confirmed on seeing him arise, and look cautiously around as if in dread of having a witness to his actions.

Convinced that he was unobserved, he unfolded his robe, and taking from beneath it a small flask, apparently full of liquor, perhaps the holy water, he applied it to his lips, and with evident satisfaction to himself, took a very copious draught; and resumed his paternosters with increased energy. A second time the flask was uncorked, and drained, no doubt to fill him with religious zeal.—After which, crossing himself devoutly, he arose; but how indescribable were Montalban's emotions on perceiving that instead of a cloak, he was loosely covered by the black pall belonging to the coffin; which had been hung on the railing round the altar. He advanced slowly down the aisle—"Penance," cried he; "preposterous mockery, be thou the food of fools;" and making a

violent motion with his arm, the pall fell off and discovered the *pious* Ambrosio.

The laws of the monastery imposed a rigorous penance on any of its members who transgressed them; which unhappily this poor monk had done on the preceding day, by eating two meals instead of one, it being the third day of the week; for this he was condemned to self flagellation, and obliged to pray an hour each night in the chapel, about this time.

Not over scrupulous, he thought it no unpardonable dereliction from the tenets of his holy profession to omit putting the *first* part of his sentence into execution, and the *latter* he contrived to mitigate by a soothing and *spiritual* cordial, which he religiously kept sacred to his own private use, beyond the reach of any profane eye; so that what it was, we must not presume to conjecture.

His perceptions not being sufficiently acute on entering the chapel, his fea-

tures being shaded by his cowl, and his eyes rivetted on his crucifix and beads, had reached the altar, and thrown himself on his knees before the image of the Virgin, without observing Montalban.

The vacant stare, the wild expression of countenance, the pallid looks of Sebastian, and above all, the conviction that his penitential orgies had been witnessed by another, startled the reverend father, who for some moments seemed rooted to the spot, regarding him with a look of stern inquiry and displeasure. Then suddenly he was about to leave the chapel, as if appalled at contemplating a scene so awful as Sebastian, lying immoveable beneath the bier, presented, when the latter heaved a deep sigh, and he stopped short.

“Presumptuous youth,” cried he, in a tone of severity, “explain instantly the motives which led you hither at such an hour as this; you could not have come on any good design, and your intrusion

into this consecrated place, shall be punished as it deserves."

Montalban, exhausted by mental sufferings, continued as silent as before.

"This moment speak," resumed the monk, "or by all the saints in the calendar I will alarm the whole monastery, and have you sent to the inquisition for sacrilege."

"It was no idle fancy," Sebastian at length articulated, regardless of this threat, and following with his eyes the direction in which the supposed ghost of his mother had vanished: "I have seen it—never, never shall I forget it; but I will beware the Eve of San Seb——."

"Seen, what?" Ambrosio hastily interrupted, knitting his angry brow, "hast thou dared to follow *me* hither to pry into mine actions? Say, *what* hast thou seen?"

"Methinks her angel form yet hovers round me," continued Montalban, still unmindful of the monk. "O sacred

shade of my revered mother, recal thy direful words; knowest thou not I have made a vow to heaven which now is registered in the great book of fate, and dare I violate it; no, no, hell itself shudders at the idea, I must not lay perjury upon my soul. O omnipotent Providence, how inscrutable are thy ways!" ejaculated he, as he raised himself on his knees in a suppliant posture—trembling, they refused to support him, and he relapsed into a state of torpor; so completely were his faculties worn out by want of rest, and the appearance of his awful and mysterious visitor.

It was long ere the affrighted monk could summon courage enough to approach him; in which interval he had again recovered a small portion of strength, and motioned for his assistance.

Ambrosio, assured that his fears for himself were groundless, and supposing Sebastian had walked in his sleep to the chapel under the influence of a dream,

no longer resisted the feelings of sympathy; he assisted him to an opposite bench, and the breeze from the half-open portal soon re-animated him.

When he was tolerably recovered Ambrosio supported him back to his cell, and on the way put many questions to him about his mysterious exclamations.

“Good father, I am indisposed,” replied Montalban, “they meant nothing! I have had a frightful dream, but all will be well to-morrow.”

“You do not perceive, Senor, that it is already day-light,” observed the monk, as they reached the door of his cell, here they separated. Sebastian’s feverish frame required repose, and again he lay down, but not to sleep: busy fancy retraced all the occurrences of the day, and conjured up images to his view inimical to his rest, and hostile to his peace. Again in imagination he beheld the spectre bending over him, in awful ma-

jesty, forewarning him of future ills, of the eventful Eve of San Sebastian. He repeated his vow, the late injunction seemed to weaken it, to threaten its annihilation: suddenly the spectral form receded, and with a look of reproach and displeasure, the princess rose full to his view: thrice with an indignant frown she pronounced his name.

“Montalban,” said she, “wilt thou be unfaithful; can fantasies like these shake thy resolve? Be valorous; fulfil thy vow to save me from Orlando, and I am thine; but a perjurer will I renounce and hate for ever!!!”

“My vow is recorded in heaven,” exclaimed Sebastian, “and mine thou shalt be, though all the powers on earth oppose it.”

“Enough,” said Elvira with a smile of approbation—“fear not the Eve of San Sebastian; to the resolute mind it can bring no terrors,” and waving an adieu she vanished.

During the greatest part of the ensuing day Montalban confined himself to his cell, as his fever had very much increased. The Abad visited him frequently, and offered up prayers for his recovery: he was ignorant of the events of the night; as Ambrosio dreaded that the knowledge of them would lead to truths of himself, not quite consistent with his reputation amongst the rest of the community.

It was now within a few days of the eve of their saint, and they were preparing for the celebration of the festival with great pomp. Francisco, therefore, wished to detain Montalban until it was over; but the latter declared his intention of departing immediately for Madrid, which the Abad heard with the sigh of regret, and a look expressive of many sensations, a look that seemed intended to penetrate the deepest recesses of Montalban's bosom; but the features of the Conde remained unchanged,—

nothing bordering on mystery was visible in them.

“You have resigned the Infanta?” asked Francisco, “may Heaven still strengthen your resolution.”

“No, father, I have *not* resigned her, I never will; my absence will be necessary for awhile; a journey to France will contribute to improve my health, and on my return I trust circumstances will be more propitious to our union—you know what I expect from *you*!!!

“From me! Ah, my son, do not mistake yourself, I cannot accède to your measures; sense and reason revolt from them: you propose to yourself such absurd schemes—to marry a princess of Spain! preposterous! never shall I be an auxiliary towards your destruction; the hand of Divinity has set a barrier, which I dare not remove. Remember the mysterious warning, and (as it bade thee) oh Montalban, beware; but my purpose is unalterable!”

“Unalterable, say you?” demanded Sebastian, “and of what would you have me beware: ’tis a mere bugbear, fit only to frighten striplings.” Father, I am a man, and not to be appalled by such drivelling: I have sworn long since that Elvira shall be mine, no matter how; and I swear now to fulfil that oath.”

“Recollect, Conde, that there is yet an obstacle which may not be easily conquered; I mean the Prince Orlando del Oporto; hear me further—within the last hour the holy Madre Abadessa has had a letter from her majesty the Queen, informing her of the intended nuptials. The Prince himself comes down to Vittoria to-morrow with the King; and on the Eve of San Sebastian, which will be the birth-day of the Infanta, our whole community are to perform an anthem composed on the occasion of the royal union, which will be celebrated in a few days afterwards.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Montalban, interrupting the Abad, “my mother’s warning was just and seasonable; she bade me to beware the Eve of San Sebastian, and I will do so. This is the circumstance of which she admonished me, and if I prevent it not, may that fatal day close mine happiness for ever; but I would *he* were the only obstacle, such a one is easily removed.”

“The only one!” repeated the Abad, “could there be one more insurmountable? Nay, Conde, take this as ’tis meant, the sacred ties our early friendship has connected us by must not be forgotten; affection prompts, and age and experience render me capable of giving you the advice your youthful imprudence demands. Can you madly propose to subvert the designs of your Sovereign? can you meditate a plan so audacious, so treasonable? or by what dreadful means would you accomplish it? Think for a moment how preposterous is your

scheme: "Orlando del Oporto is the destined husband of our princess; chosen by her illustrious father; in a few short days they will be united; and you, forsooth, would dare to oppose it."

"Yes, father, to Heaven have I sworn to do so. Nothing shall swerve me from my vow: Elvira is destined to be mine by the fates, the Astrologer foretold this chain of events at my nativity; the Eve of San Sebastian is *my* birth-day, I heed it not, to me it brings no terrors. Oh ye powers on high, nerve this arm, and every danger, every difficulty it shall overthrow."

"Misguided, infatuated boy," cried Francisco, and a tear rushed to his eye; "can you thus cruelly wound the heart of one who esteems and loves you as I do; whose services have ever been so disinterestedly attached to you and your family? Alas, Montalban, if you *will* break my heart do so, and triumph in the reflection."

Sebastian turned aside to conceal the anguish which his flowing tears betrayed. He dashed away the drops, which for a moment seemed to unman him. "Think on my vow, dear and revered friend of my bosom," said he, as he seized the Abad's hand and pressed it warmly.

They had now reached the gate of the monastery, which was opened by Anselmo, who held the Conde's horse, which had been kept in an old outhouse by the porter; and springing on the saddle, he bade the Abad a last farewell, and was quickly out of sight.

He took not, however, the road to Madrid, very different at present were his intentions. The deepening shadows of twilight cast a dismal horror over the scene, presageful of ill, and for a considerable time he traversed the outskirts of the forest, ere he had courage to enter its gloomy mazes.

Ashamed of his fears, he at length entered by a remote and unfrequented

path, which led him, after various intricate windings, to an ancient grotto, where he knew he might remain in security until the fulfilment of his fatal purpose.

It was the abode of solitude and silence; Not a sound disturbed the stillness of the night, the sombre aspect of the surrounding objects heightened the prophetic sadness of his mind, with which it well accorded.

The interwoven briers and tendrils of ivy which nearly covered the entrance of the grotto; the thick foliage of the trees, and the noxious weeds which grew abundantly about it, declared it to have been neglected for years, and now rendered it a safe retreat for its present inmate, who determined to pass the night beneath its shelter, frightful as it appeared; and having fastened his horse to a tree by a long string, which allowed the animal to seek such sustenance as the ground there afforded, he wrapt himself

in his large travelling coat, and insensible to danger, he entered the grotto, and laying his head upon a moss-covered bench, sleep gradually came on, and shed a temporary oblivion over his cares. The visions of the foregoing day and night disturbed him not; his repose was serene and refreshing; and at an early hour in the morning he awoke considerably recruited in strength and spirits.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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Oh conscience! into what abyss of fears,  
 And horrors hast thou driven me, out of which  
 I find no way—from deep to deeper plunged.

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MILTON

**DURING** the succeeding day the indisposition of the princess continued unabated. But a composing draught administered in the evening obtained for her that rest her situation so much required; and in the morning a change took place for the better. A settled melancholy prevailed over her, which not all the attentions of Viola could divert; and on the arrival of the King it increased, as he was accompanied by Orlando amongst the others, who made his obeisance in form to the lovely being he already considered as his wife.

Struck at once by her beauty, rendered more interesting by the sadness of her air, he could not help paying every tribute it demanded.

She received him with calm dignity : her deportment was cold and reserved, but totally devoid of any thing bordering on rudeness ; and seeing her unable yet to bear the fatigue of conversation, they left her to indulge her sorrows unrestrained, and to fix on some plan to avoid an union which would destroy her happiness on earth for ever.

From Viola she contrived to conceal her griefs ; her generous spirit revolted from the idea of imparting the infection of woe to taint the happiness of another, for her dear Viola was indeed happy, and the joy of her father on seeing her so was only equalled by hers, and exceeded by the raptures of the amiable Don Manuel d' Orellez, to whom her heart had long been attached, which her hand was shortly to ratify.

Every thing now wore the appearance of festivity and rejoicing; every tongue but Elvira's re-echoed the purest joys of the heart, and the beautiful shades of Vittoria once more smiled on the genial happiness beneath them.

Orlando triumphed in the anticipated possession of so much loveliness as was centred in Elvira; and still more in the expectation of the fortune that was to accompany a treasure already so inestimable in itself; while, in order to elude suspicion, she strove to assume a degree of cheerfulness.

Predetermined against a marriage with one whom her soul despised, and trusting to the success of an alternative she meditated, in case of any compulsory measures being had recourse to, her efforts so far succeeded as to deceive her father into a belief of her perfect approval of his choice; while she secretly remained firm to her purpose, and sought an opportunity most favourable

to the disclosure she almost dreaded, yet wished, to make of her aversion to it.

Her suspense was, however, to be of longer duration than she had imagined; as the King had proposed a hunting-match, which was to commence on the next day after their arrival; and surrounded, as he now was, by his ministers and nobles, and all the pageantry of royalty, she knew his mind was by no means in a state to receive a decision so opposite to what he expected, and such a blow to all his ambitious hopes of further aggrandizement, for the wise, the valiant Charles was not exempt from the failings of other great men,

Her memory recurred with alternate hope and fear to the words of Montalban,—“she never should become the wife of Orlando.” With a transient gleam of the former, it recalled the solemn vow he had made, and she felt something mingled in her thoughts like

the horrors that rush on a guilty mind, when a few moments' reflection presents to it, in the most awful colours, all the dreadful terrors of futurity.

Yet hers was pure and spotless as the snow in its descent from the ethereal regions; and unaccustomed to such fearful sensations as Sebastian's last words had produced, she shuddered as if conscious that they contained some terrible mystery.

Again recollection resounded in her affrighted ears, in tones most appalling, the terrific warning which had already sundered them—it plainly evinced the interposition of superhuman power; and should they dare to set it at defiance, horrors most direful arose to her imagination as the consequences of its vengeful wrath; and to dwell long upon the idea of them was almost as shocking as the reality.

The Marcheze della Vittoria had felt disappointed at not seeing Sebastian

(whom he concluded to be on his road to the metropolis) ere his departure for the Castello; and from his constant attendance on the King, he did not think it likely that he should be able to see him before his return from France, until which period the nuptials of Don Manuel and Viola, were of course postponed, as the Marcheze intended to celebrate a double marriage, in uniting his son to Donna Olivia on the same day.

In the mean time Sebastian had heard of the projected chase. The darkening hours gradually increased his mental uneasiness. He had in an unguarded moment resolved on a deed the most horrible to the mind of man: had sworn, solemnly sworn before the Almighty tribunal to execute it; no alternative remained, no other resource could give Elvira to his love. Murder rung its horrid peals in his ear; grim murder and all its fell train stalked in terrific array before his deranged senses. Retributive

vengeance, in a thousand shapes, dreadful to the eye of nature, followed close behind, and death with all the implements of torture closed the scene. He awoke to all the agonizing whisperings of conscience: for a moment his resolution seemed to vanish; but he remembered his vow, and listened no longer to the suggestions of reason. In one moment had the horrible idea suggested itself, and in the next it was fatally resolved on.

The royal party, and their illustrious host had arrived at the Castello, and at length came the morning appointed for the chase; every recollection, every object which before had occupied Montalban's mind, were now buried in one terrible effort, to which all his thoughts were directed. Had there been an alternative he would have seized it; but there was none; he had sworn that Elvira should never be the wife of Orlando—should be *his own*, and in all the infatuation of his blind and enthusiastic

passion, his zeal to execute that vow, he determined on the dreadful remedy of Orlando's death; regardless of consequences, because insensible to all the real horrors of the deed.

At an early hour he left the grotto, and mounting his horse, he emerged from the forest and reached a place of ambush ere the hunters appeared in view.

After the elapse of a considerable time he at length descried them; and Orlando, as if guided by his evil genius, was foremost in the chase.

Suddenly Montalban felt as if every pulsation had ceased; as if the vital current no longer flowed: he looked with horrible sensations on the dreadful weapon; and the unfortunate Orlando, unconscious of the fate that awaited him, now hastened on to his destruction.

The blood ran chill through the nerves of Montalban's arm as he lifted the instrument of death; his eyes rolled in wild agitation; though still hardly conscious

of the enormity of what he was about to do; but the fit was momentary, and just as his victim rode past he presented the deadly weapon; and Orlando fell instantaneously to the ground.

A volume of smoke darkened the whole atmosphere, and a noise like thunder reverberated throughout the forest. In a moment the musket dropped from his hand; the same mysterious being he had seen in the convent rose suddenly from the glen, and in tremendous tones, scarcely distinguishable from the haste with which they were uttered, addressed him thus:—

“ I bade thee beware the Eve of San Sebastian, *this* is that fatal day; it has set in blood, and in characters of blood will stamp thy future destiny!!!”

“ Almighty God, this is indeed the Eve of San Sebastian!” cried the now horror-struck Montalban—“ and thus have I fulfilled what fate in mercy had yet left undone.”

Almost wild with agitation, and fully sensible of his danger, he remounted his horse, and fled precipitately through the wood; from thence he descended into a deep glen, which bore no vestige of having ever been entered before by a human being, from which branched several intricate labyrinths; and unhesitatingly darting into the darkest, he found himself, at the expiration of an hour, upon a desolate unfrequented road, leading to Madrid—his safety rested on instant flight; and knowing this road to be the least dangerous, he put spurs to his horse, and stopped not until he reached the metropolis.

On his arrival at the Palazzo, he alighted at his father's suit of apartments, and was ushered in by his faithful attendant, Bertrand,—who, in his affectionate joy at his return, did not perceive his haggard and disconcerted appearance.

More through fear of encountering

inquiries, than inclination, he partook of a slight repast, and desiring to be denied to all visitors, on the plea of being much fatigued, he retired early to his chamber.

Having securely fastened the door, he was now left alone, a prey to all the agonies of horror and remorse, and the retrospection of the enormous crime he had committed—the most terrible punishments presented themselves to his imagination, and hell arose before him in all its terrors. Wildly he started up, and paced the room with disordered and hurried steps,—he saw his distorted features and frantic gestures reflected in a mirror, and recoiled aghast—for many moments he stood still in awful and prophetic silence. His frenzied eye at length caught a small stiletto, that hung against the wainscot, —instantly rushing forward, he would have seized it, and in a moment of desperation plunged it to his heart, when

suddenly he felt his arm stayed by an invisible power,—the lights in the girandole grew dim, a current of air swept through the room from the open window, and totally extinguished them—the dagger fell from his hand, and the moon, just emerging from beneath a dark cloud, discovered a spectral form standing before him.

Thrice, in hollow tones, was his name pronounced,—while he listened in speechless horror, and fell on his knees in a posture of devotion.

“Sebastian, arise,” said the spectre, “arise, and behold the spirit of thy departed mother, who hath thus wandered for a moment from the mansions of the blest, to warn thee from thine horrible purpose. Nay, mock not an offended Deity by thy despair,—in thy behalf, the voice of mortal can never reach the throne of Divinity—thou hast dared to arrogate to thyself the authority of the Supreme Being, in attempt-

ing to take away what he alone can bestow;—but thy mother's spirit shall intercede for thee,—shall watch thy future destiny—repent—farewell!!”

—As the last word died away on the breeze, the ghost vanished—and Montalban sunk on the bed in a profound stupor, in which he continued until a late hour on the following morning, when he was aroused by the repeated calls of Bertrand, informing him that it was near mid-day.

He had but a faint recollection of the events of the night, but he felt his terrors abated, and the weight at his bosom somewhat lightened, as if, by superhuman influence, though still his features bore visible marks of his agitation of mind. To subdue this he knew was absolutely necessary, in order to ensure his safety—a death the most dreadful and ignominious, would, he was aware, be his lot, if suspicion once rested on him; which not all the inte-

rest he possessed at court could save him from. Still for Elvira's sake did he wish to live,—for the possession of *her* had he thus plunged himself into a vortex of guilt—such was the extraordinary influence of this lovely enchantress over his whole soul—such the dominion of woman—fascinating, infatuating woman, over the heart of man,—for her existence was yet dear to him—without her it would have been a burden, he would have accounted it a blessing to be rid of; and, in all the native enthusiasm of his heart, he poured out his thanks to Heaven for having thus snatched him from the commission of another and more heinous crime,—and thus preserved him for Elvira!

He was met in the corridor by Bertrand, whose terrified looks and heaving bosom denoted that he had something of dreadful import to relate.

“Oh, my lord Conde,” exclaimed he, almost breathless with consternation,

“what a direful day is this! the whole city and Palazzo in arms—treason most foul and most bloody;—has been at work,—the Prince Orlando del Oporto has been assassinated—and all the kingdom cries aloud for the murderer!”

“Gracious God! how! what say you—whom do they suspect?” demanded the trembling Montalban, as he flung himself on a bench beside the window, to which he turned to conceal his violent agitation.

“He has not yet been found, my lord, the whole of the military and civil powers are in pursuit of him—edicts and placards, by the royal command, are posted up throughout the kingdom, and to-morrow the King and his courtiers return from Vittoria, with the corpse of the prince. There will be terrible doings indeed; but, my lord, you appear alarmed—do you suspect any person? Speak, Señor, for the love of heaven, speak.”

“No, no, no!” interrupted Sebastian hastily—“*Whom* should I suspect?—such a shock was indeed sufficient to overpower me—a glass of water, good Bertrand—I shall be better presently—say nothing of my weakness,—I am ashamed of it—but I was not prepared for such horrible intelligence.—”

Bertrand bent his eyes in eager scrutiny upon him, as if prompted by suspicion; and suddenly turning away, he brought the water in a few minutes.

“Ah, my lord, this is a sad, sad, wicked world,” observed he, as he presented it; “but murder is sure to be discovered at one time or another—sooner or later. We shall have terrible doings when his Majesty arrives; you must not, however, take it so much to heart—indeed, Senor, one would suppose you had actually done the deed yourself.”

“Holy Jesu!” exclaimed Montalban, dropping the glass and turning paler.

than before: "Who dare form such an idea? Never, never utter that sound again—it would ruin—it would annihilate me."

"My good lord, this shock has put you beside yourself," cried the now really alarmed Bertrand; "I meant nothing—'tis surely impossible I could have thought you a—a—"

"Say at once, a murderer—Oh Father of mercies, pour down thy forgiveness upon me. *I am* Orlando's murderer,—I cannot longer conceal it; but oh Bertrand, compassionate my guilt,—you know not, you feel not, the sensations that urged me to it; I love—and such a being—yet words do injustice to my feelings. Bertrand, my faithful Bertrand, betray me not."

Bertrand stood for some time incapable of moving from the spot or uttering a word, while he clasped his knees, and in an agony of tears implored him not to reveal it.

“Alas, alas, my dear lord,” said he, wiping the tears from his own eyes, “this is a woful day—a sorry sight it is to me, to see you in this situation; arise, Senor, arise, it becomes you not, to prostrate yourself thus to me. Oh God! oh God! why was not that old astrologer burned ere he foretold such things as these; never have I beheld the dawn of San Sebastian’s Eve, without a secret horror, I could not account for; but now all, all is explained—all the prophecy of that monkish sorcerer fulfilled. Oh, my lord, I shall never be the same again—never shall I think on Osmin the astrologer, without cursing from my inmost heart, the deceitful garb of piety and virtue which covered an infernal wretch—a villain—a demon—in the shape of a monk. No, no; there is no need of these injunctions, all the tortures of the rack shall not force me to betray my master.”

As he said this, he fell on Montalban’s

neck, and wept aloud, whilst the latter, growing weaker from increasing emotion, was no longer able to sustain him, but sunk fainting on the floor.

This recalled Bertrand, who, with a little water, assisted in recovering him, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him tolerably composed.

Aware that the most trifling appearance of agitation would create suspicion in the minds of the domestics, and consequently soon take wing through the court, he made up a composing draught from the Conde's little medicine chest, and administered it to him with all the solicitude and attention that disinterested affection alone could inspire; it had the desired effect; and about two hours afterwards, he descended to the breakfast-room: the table was covered with the choicest viands, on which he gazed mournfully, and left them untouched, his appetite had fled with that tranquillity and peace of mind necessary to

the performance of the bodily functions.

Having advised with Bertrand on the subject of his journey to France; which he designed to commence on the ensuing evening, in order that he might be totally removed from suspicion, or the danger of unwarily betraying himself, he strove to overcome the evidences of his guilt, and assume an air of tranquillity; it being now necessary for him to pay his long-intended visit to the impatient Donna Olivia.

She had already been apprized of his arrival at the Palazzo, and as she, of course, expected that her affianced lord would hasten to embrace her, and testify his joy at the approaching event of their union, he now found her prepared to receive him in all the pomp of courtly grandeur and luxury.

She was reclining negligently on a sofa of rich brocade, opposite a large mirror that reached from the ceiling to

the floor, in which every movement of her finely-turned limbs was advantageously reflected; beneath the pressure of her delicate fingers the strings of a lute trembled in softest harmony, accompanied by her dulcet voice, and the lingering notes made Sebastian almost fearful of hazarding an interruption, by having his name announced.

At length, however, he was shewn in, and in an ecstasy of joy Donna Olivia started up, and extended her hand, which he received with a petrifying coldness; still the fascinating smile she could assume at pleasure was not relaxed, and attributing his reserve either to timidity, or his participating in the general consternation, she entered on the most lively topics, after having dwelt for some time on the dreadful murder of Orlando—the alarm of the whole kingdom—and the frightful death that awaited the perpetrator of it.

An hour thus elapsed, and Montalban

yet dreaded to give utterance to what he had come purposely to disclose.

A momentary suspicion flashed over her mind as she perceived his embarrassment, and fixed her eyes steadfastly on his changing features—they seemed for a while to possess the power of the basilisk, and Montalban would have given worlds to avoid the deep-researching look she fastened on him.

“This evening, I leave Madrid, on my way to France,” faltered he, “provided my intentions are not countermanded by the laws and edicts consequent to this horrible murder.”

“This evening,” repeated she, her respiration growing quicker, her eye full of fury, which she found it impossible to conceal. “Set out this evening! surely you jest, Senor!”

“Indeed, Donna Olivia, I never was more serious!”

“Have you, my lord, really made such a determination; and is it indeed

so unalterable that you cannot postpone it till after our nuptials. I have long been wishing to take a journey to that delightful country; and (continued she, trying to force a smile through the bitterness of her vexation) you must positively indulge me; nay, nay, cruel man, start not; woman is perverse, her will is arbitrary, and I will not be denied."

"I should feel happy in complying; that is, Senora, I should wish—in short, Senora, the delicate state of my health admits of no delay; and besides——"

"Besides what?" she emphatically demanded. "Well, my lord, be it so; and if the state of your health, as you represent, *does* render it so urgent, I yet see no reason why the ceremony should be delayed beyond this very day, which will sanction my accompanying you in the sacred and honourable character of your wife. Why stand on these ridiculous punctilios? Our union has forsooth been protracted—and to what end? to

gratify caprice, and conform to the nonsensical rules your starched cynics and prudes call, etiquette. Away the odious sound! this day let our hands be joined, and let the world maintain its own opinions on the subject; how can their opinions or their censure affect us?—Nothing can prohibit such a step, where 'tis so absolutely necessary; therefore, avaunt all objections—avaunt! avaunt!”

“However you may disregard the world's opinion, Senora, surely you would not thus disregard the *Marcheze*, my father; would *he* ever pardon so precipitate a measure? No! it would incur his just and lasting displeasure, and I should accuse myself of disobedience, dissimulation, and of having acted contrary to my own feelings and—wishes.”

“Don Sebastian,” said she sternly! “I now perceive how little, how very little affection exists on *your* part, or you would not create obstacles so easily removed; or else, my lord, 'tis all disgusting

affectation: pray do me the favour, Senor, to explain yourself?"

"Oh, Donna Olivia, will not this call forth all the nobleness of your nature; let your generosity teach me to esteem, to honour, to reverence you; for alas, I, I, cannot ——"

"You cannot love me!" she anticipated, with a resentful frown; "is *that* what you would say? Speak, Conde Montalban; I am not to be sported with — I am no girl, whose frivolous fancies you are playfully to indulge or trifle with, I am serious, and will instantly be answered?"

"My silence, Senora, must imply what my lips almost feared to pronounce: love is a wayward passion, unfettered and uncontroled by the will. Term me not ungrateful, our affections are not to be forced, they must be spontaneous; and, oh generous woman, pardon this confession; long, long, have mine been placed on another."

“Another! have I then a rival, and do you thus add insult to injury, by your effrontery in *telling* me so; do you thus presume to reject *my* proffered hand and fortune, to insult my rank and sex by your mockery? Senor, I am not the weak and flexible being you suppose, and this is an indignity I never will submit to. All Madrid, nay, all the grandees of the realm anxiously await our marriage; and think you that I would consent to be made a subject for ridicule to every tongue: nay, my lord, talk not to *me* of present circumstances. I already know that the Prince Orlando is slain; but what care I, what relation does *that* affair, however horrible, bear to *this*? Preposterous! talk of loving another: I have a bond, your letter to your father; a contract signed by your own hand—could you *then* have loved another? impossible. Ah, Montalban,” continued she in a milder tone, while a forced smile of incredulity played on her

lips ; “ you could not, would not act so deceitfully ; this is but to put *my* love to the test : you doubted its sincerity, and have employed the most effectual means to convince you of its stability ; the ordeal was indeed severe, but my affection has survived it ; and to assure you that nothing is wanting on my part, I will immediately issue orders for preparations for our nuptials this evening, after which we will proceed on our journey.”

“ Surely, Donna Olivia, you would not thus openly set at defiance every dictate of prudence, decorum, and delicacy.”

“ Prudence !” she reiterated with a scowl of indignation ; “ it will become us to reason and moralize in such a case as this, when the gratification of my wishes can be accomplished by a word. I will go now to the Queen, and inform her of our intentions, which she will no doubt approve of.”

“ Stay, I beseech you,” cried Sebastian, as she moved towards the door,

“ will you not pity and make allowances for my unhappy situation? Recollect my prior attachment. Since nothing else can convince you of the impossibility of our union, let *this* suffice—I am already married.”

“Oh, base, perfidious wretch,” vociferated she, almost overpowered with excess of rage, “how dare you insult mine ears by such a confession, and unblushingly acknowledge your abominable villainy and hypocrisy. Already married! but I will not believe it; 'tis a paltry, a vile subterfuge, false as hell, false as yourself, than whom nothing can be more so. If you *are indeed* married, instantly declare the name of your infamous and unprincipled partner; your refusal to do so confirms you in a lie most damning; or else, too fatally for you, I know more than you are aware of. Yet no, no, it cannot be; the Princess Elvira surely would not sully the royal line; would not thus degrade her-

self. Now, Senor, you know at least my *suspicious*; and tremble at the thoughts of my vengeance."

"The Princess and I are *not* married," said Sebastian, rising indignantly; and, for a moment, forgetting all self-command;—"Nor are you, Senora, authorized to mention her name thus lightly."

"Then, my lord, give me at once the explanation I demand, or, by our holy Mother, you shall repent it. I will brave the consequences of what you term speaking lightly: I will speak my mind: I will reveal what *are* my suspicions."

"I cannot, indeed, I cannot comply, every law of honour binds me to secrecy; and, till circumstances permit me to introduce the woman I have made choice of to public knowledge, she must remain unknown: I relied on your clemency; and let me not be disappointed. You are aware 'tis now irremediable."

"It may be, as you say, irremediable,

but 'tis not unpunishable. I will be avenged, though all the united powers of heaven, earth, and hell, oppose me. You have infringed every law of integrity, honour, and self-respect; and yet you dare to talk of prudence and decorum. Oh! most monstrous, most consummate hypocrite! Mark me; you have made me for ever your implacable enemy; and from every demon below will I call forth instruments of vengeance. I will, moreover, publish your baseness to the world; acquaint the Queen of her daughter's danger; nay, of the danger of the whole state; let offended royalty then take its course. You shall feel what it is to incur the hatred of a woman."

Montalban's apprehensions were now at their height; as his eye met the furious glance of Donna Olivia, which fully spoke a mind resolute in its vengeful purpose. Already had she flung open the door, and was hastening to the

Queen's apartments, when, terrified by the consequences, and reduced by despair to the dreadful alternative, he wildly caught her hand, and said, "Hear me, for a moment, Señora," said he, while fear, abhorrence, and reluctance were depicted on his pale countenance; "if, notwithstanding what I have said in my justification, still revenge prompts you to my ruin, I embrace my last resource; in this day our destinies shall be united;—you shall become my wife."

"What say you?" demanded she, with a look of exultation, which had instantly changed from the baleful expression of madness that had disfigured her features; "beware of deceiving me. I accept your terms; but remember that the event of duplicity will be fatal to you; your sincerity will conciliate my esteem and love; therefore let us consign the past to oblivion and be reconciled."

As she said this, she stretched out her

hand for his; his soul seemed to shudder as her piercing eye scrutinized his every feature. He had ever had an aversion for this prototype of diabolical wickedness; but *now* her very name,—her appearance,—her actions,—her words inspired him with the most loathsome horror, disgust, and hatred; and to call such a monster of vice *his wife!* the thought was almost distracting! it was a fate to which death seemed preferable; yet, between that and the dangers that might otherwise ensue to the Princess and himself, there was no appeal.

Donna Glivia was now sufficiently pacified to propose several arrangements; and saying that in a few hours the ceremony should be performed, she withdrew to prepare for it, and their subsequent journey.

As Sebastian was retiring, he was met by one of the Queen's pages, who, with a profound bow, inquired if he was the Conde Montalban. He hesitated a

moment ; but at last replied in the affirmative, whilst a glow of indescribable emotion flushed his cheek.

“ So please your Excellenza,” continued the page, “ the Senora Eustatia has commanded me to inform you, that her most catholic and most gracious majesty the Queen requires your presence without delay.”

“ My presence !” involuntarily repeated the astonished Sebastian, the crimson of his cheeks turning to a death-like paleness !—“ Say that I shall have the honour of waiting on her majesty presently.”

“ Oh, Heaven ! I am ruined, the vile Olivia has betrayed me ; she has communicated her suspicions !” exclaimed he, as he rushed into his father’s library, and flung himself on a chair. “ All, all is over ; my destiny is fixed ; but my spirit shall cry aloud for retribution ; and if she *has* done so, vengeance shall be mine.”

Agitated and confused, he proceeded through the portals leading to the grand staircase, at each of which the sentinels saluted him unnoticed, so absorbed was he in his fears for the result of this extraordinary summons; and until he found himself in the ante-room, where the Señora Eustatia waited to conduct him to the royal presence, he was alike unmindful of every thing else.

The Queen was alone; and, on his entering, she arose with a dignified air to receive him. When he had made his obeisance, she bade him be seated on a chair that stood beside the Ottoman on which she had been reclining.

The first thing spoken of was, of course, Orlando's murder; but, however so dreadful an occurrence might be supposed to affect her, it was a subject that she evidently wished to skim lightly over, having one grand object in view, to which she directed all her energies

Sebastian trembled; although the smile

on her features indicated not the intelligence he expected; and, after a pause of a few minutes, she told him that Donna Olivia had just been with her. His emotion was now visibly increased, as he anticipated the realization of his fears.

“Donna Olivia,” said she, “has been to request my sanction to the celebration of your nuptials to-day, as she wishes to accompany you to Frattice, whither, she says, you purpose to commence your journey immediately. From what I have learned, her affection has not met a suitable return; and I presume it is not a marriage your heart approves of. Now, Senor, speak your sentiments openly and undauntedly; for, if you are at all averse to it, I will prevent it altogether. In that case, you have nought to dread from her boasted resentment. She is artful, cruel, and unjust; yet, withal, has not the power of putting a single threat into execution

whilst I watch over her actions: my frown or nod possesses a potent spell; for it can instantly disarm her malice of the *means*, though not of the *will*, to gratify its demoniac and iniquitous spirit. If, therefore, you have a wish or thought repugnant to what she proposes, hesitate not to declare it to me, as my power is alike absolute with my inclination to serve you. If, on the other hand, her blandishments and artifices have been able to mislead you, and conceal her depravity, it behoves me to admonish you of the danger of uniting yourself to one on whom *my* hate is irrevocably fixed. She has acquainted me of your passion for the Infanta; that piece of treachery would, of itself, have made her hateful to me. She hoped thereby to influence me the more towards your marriage; but she shall find herself mistaken. As to an attachment to the Princess, beware of encouraging it; if you would avoid the direst wrath of insulted

majesty. I am willing, however, to attribute the insinuation to her malevolence; and, as the effect of such, I shall treat it with silence, on this proviso. Donna Olivia is an object of abhorrence to me: I have long meditated a plan to remove her far, far from my sight for ever; and now an opportunity offers, in which I require your assistance to accomplish the first (and firmest) wish of my soul: but observe well what I say,—I now have *you* also in my power; your refusal to this draws inevitable ruin on you in tempting *my* vengeance; your acquiescence in what I am about to propose, secures you my future favour, bounty, and gratitude.”

Montalban's sensations, as she paused for his reply, were of that confused and mingled cast experienced by the criminal devoted to the horrors of impending death, when almost on the verge of an awful eternity, the fatal fiat is suddenly revoked; quick as lightning a

reprieve is sounded; tumultuous joy enervates the victim's every faculty; and for awhile overwhelms his senses in oblivion, until slowly awaking to its reality, while every horrible doubt is gradually dissipated, he grasps the fearful record of his fate—his eyes run over it in eager transport; but alas, how keen the anguish of disappointed hope! The *benignant* decree cancels the mandate of death, and awards the chilling formidable sentence of—banishment—transportation!!!

Such were his alternate emotions; such their transition from one extreme to another; to wed Donna Olivia would be to seal his unalterable doom, to which, if it were possible, ten thousand deaths, in shapes most horrid, were to be preferred—to reject her, would be equally fatal.

What, then, were his joyous feelings, at the moment that the suggestion—the probability—the certainty that this

dreadful destiny could be avoided, flashed over his mind!—words are insufficient to convey an idea of the momentary rapture that absorbed him. But that Lethean influence was transient; as his perceptions returned, the dreams of fancy vanished, and he beheld the dread alternative.

Enfranchised from the snares of Donna Olivia, still must he be subservient to the dark designs and plodding machinations of the Queen, whose disposition so little differed in subtlety and cruelty from Olivia's.

That he had given a feigned compliance to a marriage with the Senora, our readers will, of course, conclude, was to baffle his father's latent suspicions— he had hoped to meet no difficulty in dissuading her from it, by literally avowing the truth; “that his affections were devoted to another.” Could she be so lost to every sense of shame, delicacy, and humanity, as to

urge a wish inimical to it, after that unreserved and ingenuous confession?— Yes—too sadly was he deceived, in supposing for an instant, that any of these qualities, any thing bearing the stamp of virtue was an attribute of Donna Olivia; his soul scorned the meanness of stooping to a falsehood,—it was humiliating to his inborn greatness; but for once, as the last surviving gleam of hope, he seized on that extremity to save himself—nor himself only, but his Elvira, from destruction.

Her ready acquiescence, when from the wildness of despair he had yielded a reluctant consent, fully evinced the baseness she was capable of, as he had not undeceived her respecting the affirmation of his prior marriage; but now that her treachery was so undeniably proved by the Queen's words, 'twere incompatible with his feelings, longer to have withheld the punishment due to her wickedness, and black polluted cha-

tracter; and though he shuddered at the thought of being influenced by such a woman as the Queen, and made the agent of her deep-laid schemes; though he recoiled at the idea of betraying another to some horrible destiny, yet this was decidedly his only resource; to refuse would be productive of his ruin—to comply, would free him for ever from a being he feared and despised.

A while in silent suspense and dread, his senses remained captive, until aroused by the Queen's emphatically demanding his decision. Still did the varying colours of his cheek evince the lingering ray of irresolution and doubt; but a glance indignant and haughty, shewed her determined to be obeyed; and in a tone of commanding firmness, she interrogated,—"Will you accept the alternative I offer? Speak at once, and be yourself the decider of your future fate, whether good or ill."

That all depended on a word was most certainly the case; the Queen's irritable temper would not brook a refusal; and equally true it was she had him now completely in her power; and the least sign of reluctance, especially in an affair in which she herself was so much interested, would undoubtedly lead her to intimate to the King the intelligence of Donna Olivia, which, by inducing inquiries might cause a discovery of a still more terrible nature.

At the recurrence of this idea a pallid hue overspread his features; fancy recalled the bleeding form of Orlando—the cadaverous spectre bent on him an avenging look, and in a hollow voice called for retribution on the murderer's head: its chill tones struck horror to the bosom of the trembling Sebastian. He gazed wildly at the vacant chair, on which his imagination pictured the ghost, and so great was his agitation that he

could not, for some time, reply to the Queen's second interrogatory.

Every feeling of resentment Olivia's conduct had inspired, urged him to embrace this only remedy be it whatever it might; and throwing himself on his knees, "Behold me," said he, "obedient to your majesty's will; it remains only for you to command, and me to execute."

"'Tis wisely resolved on," observed the Queen, "thus to conciliate my favour; banish now every fear of danger, and hearken attentively to what I am going to communicate. Let no sophistry or false reasoning swerve your allegiance from me; but remember, 'tis for me to command and you to obey." When I first proposed to the Marcheze, your father, your marriage with Donna Olivia, my motives (although wearing to him a very different appearance) were what they now are; to rid

myself of one so hateful to me; and in a similar manner you must now feign a compliance; and let a ceremony take place, such as I have planned; its invalidity can be easily proved, for instead of employing a priest, I will cause one of my male attendants, who is entirely devoted to my interest, to habit himself as a monk, and run superficially through the forms; immediately after which, you shall, along with her, set out for France."

The Superior of St. Marguerite's convent, in Gascony, is one of my most intimate friends, and has been informed of and seconded my views; thither you are to repair with the unsuspecting Olivia; its sequestered retreat is to be her future residence, and I shall give you a letter to the lady abbess, instructing her how to act and empowering her to detain her. It behoves you to be cautious in such an undertaking; if your look or manner should now cause the

slightest degree of suspicion, my project fails, and you are ruined both in incurring my displeasure, and the certainty of being compelled to marry Donna Olivia; if it succeed, you are safe, and we are both freed for ever from her diabolical artifices, and rid of one who has ever been equally an object of detestation to the virtuous and the wicked. Once secured within the massy walls of St. Marguerite's, unavailing will be all her arts, all her hypocrisy; all tears or entreaties to be liberated: vain, impotent will then be her attempts to injure; unalterably her doom will be fixed. Not all her stratagems can avert it: vice shall meet even on earth the punishment of retributive justice; and beneath the veil of repentance she shall expiate her past life of wickedness, and bereft of every sublunary enjoyment endeavour to prepare herself for the life to come. Shrink not from the task, 'tis decreed; the pretended monk shall be

ready in a retired room on the east gallery this evening, at seven o'clock.

“ Be you there punctual to the hour; meantime I will inform Olivia of your perfect willingness to receive her as your bride, and to elude suspicion about the court, I will enjoin her to strict secrecy. When all is over, leave to me the office of accounting to your father for her absence. He accompanies the King back to Madrid; and in the consternation caused by the late catastrophe, so trivial a subject will scarcely be heeded.

“ Horrible, horrible has been the Prince's death, but much more horrible will be that of his murderer. Every instrument of torture that invention can furnish will be exercised on the traitor, who has thus dared to shed the blood of royalty. Fly then from the sanguinary spot, if you wish not to contemplate scenes so appalling to human nature, and Heaven be propitious to our plan.”

Montalban's soul shrunk within him

at the developement of this black and infamous plot; at the idea of being necessitated to practise such a deception.

Revolving doubts and fears agitated him by turns; he knew the hypocrisy of the Queen's disposition, and sometimes fancied this to be a scheme between her and Olivia to beguile him into a measure which might make him in reality the husband of the latter; but again this did not seem probable, as he had already promised a voluntary compliance.

Resolving, however, to scrutinize deeply every thing connected with it, he reluctantly repeated his promise to the Queen, and withdrew for the present to his own apartment, there to await the appointed hour of seven.

END OF VOL. I.

**LONDON**

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THE  
ASTROLOGER;

OR, THE

*EVE OF SAN SEBASTIAN;*

*A Romance,*

By J. M. H. HALES, Esq.

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“ The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate,  
“ Puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors,  
“ Our understanding traces them in vain,  
“ Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search,  
“ Nor sees with how much art the windings run,  
“ Nor where the regular confusion ends.”

ADDISON

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IN THREE VOLUMES,

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THE  
ASTROLOGER;

OR, THE  
EVE OF SAN SEBASTIAN.

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CHAPTER I.

“Hear! and be just!!”

VIRGIL.

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CONSCIOUS that there was no alternative, Montalban tried to justify the step he was about to take, by the recollection of the base and treacherous conduct of Donna Olivia; and having, after a long struggle, with his feelings, assumed sufficient composure to act so difficult a part, as the clock struck seven, he repaired to the gallery; where he found the Queen and Olivia, anx-

ously expecting the arrival of the holy Father; who, in his official robes, shortly arrived, and bowing with reverence, at the same time kissing a small crucifix, which hung from his waist, he took his station beside the table, on which was laid every thing necessary for the ceremony.

The piercing eye of the Conde, as he surveyed him doubtfully, would have thrown Father Bertram completely off his guard and betrayed the whole scheme to Olivia, had not the Queen (perceiving his embarrassment and Sebastian's fears) instantly requested her to withdraw with her into an adjoining apartment for a few moments, in order (as she said) to allow him to prepare for his holy duties, but in reality to give Montalban an opportunity of being convinced that the suspicions she read in his looks, of treachery on her part towards *him*, were totally groundless.

That Bertram's real character was di-

ametrically opposite to the one he now assumed, his confession to the Conde plainly evinced. He had long been the abject creature of the Queen's will, and subservient to her authority; the devoted minion of vice, no plot, no undertaking, however diabolical or difficult, seemed beyond the compass of his Machiavelian disposition and abilities to accomplish.

By the time that the Queen and Olivia returned, the Conde had prepared himself to go through the ceremony with calm fortitude: his resolution was not a little strengthened by the deportment of the latter, on whose features sat a smile of proud exultation, which but ill concealed their natural expression of cunning, artifice, and deceit.

He gazed at her reproachfully, while every remembrance of her hypocrisy rushed to his mind, and flashed a look of indignant fire from his eyes, which fully expressed his feelings of resentment and disgust.

Unconscious of the snare and just punishment she was thus plunging herself into, her haughty glances shewed her sensible of its meaning; but totally regardless of the bitter upbraidings it conveyed; while her every movement evinced the triumph of her supposed security in possession of her long-sought object—she seemed at this moment divested of all the finer and more delicate feelings of woman; and with all her studied graces, and all her natural exterior beauties, she was still the same unchanged and unprincipled being as before: the language of her eyes was too plain to be misunderstood by Sebastian, who could not at the time repress the satisfaction he felt at the idea of the blow he was about to give to all her hopes; and on the Queen's demanding whether he was ready to receive his bride, he replied in the affirmative, and with an air of dignity approached the table.

With all the consummate dissimulation he was master of, Bertram went through the several forms; and receiving a valuable present from Donna Olivia, and a glance of approbation from the Queen, he withdrew.

Her Majesty with the Conde and Olivia proceeded to one of the saloons, to await the arrival of the carriage, which was to convey them through some of the private courts adjoining the gardens of the Palazzo, as the Queen had urged the necessity of secrecy.

After a short time spent in conversation, irksome to each, (but from different causes) the carriage appeared, and Sebastian, having assisted his companion to enter, took hastily from the Queen's hand the letter which was to confirm the deserved fate of Olivia.

Their progress through the city met no opposition, and their journey was as rapid as Sebastian's real apprehensions and Olivia's imaginary dangers could render it.

He dreaded the pursuit and avenging arm of justice; the bleeding shade of Orlando still seemed to hover round him; still cried "retribution!" and he had several times nearly betrayed himself, when suddenly the natural impulse of self-preservation checked him; she feared the vengeance of the Marcheze della Vittoria, when he should discover the truth, as knowing the Queen so well, she did not think it probable that he could remain long ignorant of it; and, aware of the resentment the Marcheze would feel at his son's marrying clandestinely, and the consequent contempt and censure it would draw on herself; she communicated her fears to Montalban, and attributing *his* to the same cause, it was deemed most essential to their safety and security not to stop for even one night until they should have entered France.

In a few days they began to ascend the Pyrenees; the grand sublimity of

those stupendous monuments of nature for awhile dissipated every other idea in the admiration and awe they inspired. Vast masses of rock, towering one above another in frightful projection, sometimes appeared to threaten instant annihilation to the hardy intruder who ventured beneath them; while the horrible, and almost fathomless, precipices that yawned on the other side, ingulphing the loud-roaring cataracts, which dashed with resistless fury from the cliffs, scattering its white spray all around, seemed equally formidable. Advancing farther the scene presented all the luxuriant beauties of a varied landscape; and the richest tints of vegetation, even in those solitary regions, proclaimed the impartial benevolence of an all-wise Providence.

In many places the prospect was pleasingly diversified by the straggling cottages of the shepherds, whose sportive flocks now skipped playfully from

one hillock to another, and then were seen undauntedly browsing on the withered herbage, even on the summits of the highest rocks.

Again, the wandering eye rested upon the immeasurable extent of dark and gloomy forage, which the winding and far-stretching forests displayed; the dull sameness of which, was sometimes interrupted by the lofty battlements, of ancient Gothic structures, whose dilapidated turrets, frowned horribly, as if to warn the unwary traveller, from the dangers they enclosed.

From those more chaotic, and wonderful works of the supreme Being, the fatigued Sebastian and Olivia, gradually emerged into all the enchanting variety of a more cultivated country, and they beheld with rapture, the delightful scenery of Gascony, as it slowly opened to their view.

During the journey, Sebastian had been uniformly cool and reserved; and

Olivia, piqued at his indifference, resolved to preserve her own dignity, and carry herself with the same haughtiness of deportment towards him.

The sombre shadows of twilight had already veiled every object, when their guide, having performed his task, parted from them in Gascony; and the enlivening beams of a full moon soon succeeded, and in some measure cheered the depressed spirits of the Conde.

Olivia had been for almost an hour slumbering in a corner of the carriage, and now awaking, she interrogated whether they were near the end of their journey; adding, that they had better stop for the night at the first *auberge*, where they could be accommodated.

At that moment, Sebastian beheld from the carriage window, the spires of St. Marguerite's glittering in the moon beams; he felt his whole frame chilled at the contemplation of the cruel fate, to which he was compelled thus delibe-

rately, to consign Olivia; and; hateful as she was to him, he would; instantly have obeyed the impulse of his humane and generous heart, had he not had too much reason, to fear the vengeance of the Queen.—“We shall alight presently at your place of destination:” replied he, as the driver turned into the grove, which, surrounded the outward walls of the monastery.”—“My destination;”—repeated the terrified Olivia,—“Good heavens! Senor? where are you conducting me? surely you mean no ill; but this frightful wood alarms me;—for what purpose have we come hither; or what is the dreadful meaning of your words;—is it revenge;—or murder?”

“Your suspicions wrong me, Senora; neither is *my* intent; but a few minutes more will explain all.”

With a tremendous sound, the vesper bell now burst forth; and at the same moment the whole truth flashed across her mind, though she deemed it prudent

to dissemble; and again she demanded whither they were going.

“ To St. Marguerite’s convent, Senora, where we shall alight, as I have some communications to make to the Superior, who can, doubtless, afford you an asylum there; but ’tis now time to throw off this deception, and unveil the truth; the monastery is to be your future residence.”

She heard no more; the violence of the shock which this intelligence produced; completely overpowered her, and she sank back, unable to reply.

They had now reached the portcullis, which was darkened on all sides by the wide-spreading trees that surrounded it; and the driver, having alighted, pulled a chain attached to a large bell on the further side, and in a few minutes, a porteress, in the habit of the order, hastened to obey the summons, at the same time demanding what their business was.

Sebastian desired her to inform the Lady Abbess of the arrival of a new boarder, and his wish to resign her to her charge himself; and Agatha, crossing herself, and making a profound obeisance, after having admitted them within the gates, led the way to the parlour, and repaired with her message to the Abbess.

Olivia was still almost in a state of unconsciousness, and offered no resistance, as Montalban assisted her to alight from the carriage, and supported her into the room appropriated to the reception of strangers; where they now sat down, to wait the coming of the Superior, which, the porteress sent word by one of the lay sisters, would be immediately after the conclusion of the evening service.

In all the conscious and stately dignity of her high office, the Abbess at last made her appearance; she was a woman of majestic and haughty deport-

ment, apparently past the meridian of life; but her features still bore many traces of juvenile beauty. There was something repulsive in her demeanour and looks, which prejudiced every one against her at first sight; but happily her friendship, (if indeed she was capable of feeling such,) was very easily gained; as that and her principal quality avarice, were ever inseparable; and few entered the convent without the most certain and ample means of ensuring one, and gratifying the other; but to those few, she displayed all the ill-natured extremes of the opposite passion.

Montalban arose, and saluted her respectfully; and Olivia, recalled to herself, made an effort to do the same; he presented her Ladyship with the letter, and when she perceived the royal signet, she inquired if she was right in supposing it to be from the Queen of Spain, and requesting them to remain there until her return, she repaired to her

oratory to read it. — “From the Queen!” repeated Olivia; roused at once by the unexpected sound, there is treachery in all this; ’tis some vile plot of hers, and you have all combined to trepan me hither; but I insist, Don Sebastian, that you will explain yourself.”

“My words have already explained my mission hither from her Majesty,” replied the Conde calmly; “henceforth you are devoted to a cloistered life; ’tis the queen’s will that you should embrace this holy profession—a short time will elapse, and then, the forms of the novitiate being dispensed with according to her wish, you are to renounce every worldly idea, and take the veil.”

“Holy Virgin, my lord! are you mad—or think you that I am so; the Queen is an infamous hypocritical wretch; let her look to herself, and not rashly tempt me to vengeance, or fatal to her will be my resolve. In tears of blood shall she lament the day that conducted

Mortimer to her presence. "But dares she dispute the authority of my husband, or rather do *you* thus presume to infringe every conjugal law, and basely consign your wife to a monastery?" "Do not deceive yourself longer, Senora; you are *not* my wife. This disclosure, is indeed, a painful task to me; but the event that calls for it is at hand, and reserve or delicacy were now ill-timed—we were never married according to the forms of our holy church, and the ceremony, which was performed by one of the queen's menials, is of course invalid; circumstances which you are well acquainted with, have compelled me to take this step—and in your own bosom you must seek my justification."

"Not married!" cried the infuriated O'via, with a loud scream, "Oh great God, then I am betrayed—ruined, lost for ever;" and she fell fainting on the floor.

On recovering, she found herself ex-

tended on a couch, and a nun of prépossessioning aspect was standing pensively beside her.

“Where am I,” she demanded, casting her eyes wildly around—begone! and let me instantly quit this odious place—I hate it, I hate you all, and will not stay another moment among you. Where, where is the Conde Montalban, that monster of villany? where is the Queen, that disloyal traitress? where is my rival, let me pour on them all my heaviest curses; may they light on their devoted heads, and crush them to the nether regions. Oh let me fly, if but to satisfy my revenge—to glut upon their downfall. Away I say, thou sanctified dissembler; away, and leave me.”

“Horror-struck at this dreadful denunciation, the affrighted nun called for assistance—and the next moment the Superior entered, saying that the Conde had quitted the convent, and would return no more; and recommending Olivia

to be composed, and patiently bear what was certainly now without a remedy.

“Hush, presumptuous woman,” cried Olivia, “preach not your patience to me—this instant set me free, or tremble for your safety. Oh revenge, sweet delicious sound, one word from me will hurl the Queen herself from the height of her present grandeur, to the lowest depths of ignominy and disgrace; and would you, insolent creature, dare to tempt it? Go, I repeat, and order some conveyance to take me hence, ere further opposition drive me to some desperate deed.”

—“Peace, insolent maniac,” said the offended Abbess; “this is too much, you shall in future learn to respect my rank and dignity, as becomes you! Hence indeed shall you go—but not beyond the convent’s massy walls; never shall its portals open to liberate you. Behold the warrant which invests me with the disposal of you—and do you tremble now!

Senora, at *my* authority " With these words she rang for two of the lay sisters, and bade them convey the wretched Olivia to a dark cell under the cloisters, and lock her within it until morning.

" Know ye who I am?" demanded the enraged culprit, " or do you think I can submit to further indignity? Dare not, fiends, to approach me, or I will curse you as I have my betrayers; my latest breath shall invoke the bitterest wrath of Heaven on you all—and ere I die, the Queen shall feel my vengeance; I will proclaim aloud to the world her disloyalty and shame."

In spite of all her resistance, she was at last overcome by the superior strength of the two lay sisters, who dragged her to her dismal cell, and having got her in, and secured the door, they left her to her own reflections for the night; and returned forming a thousand vague conjectures with regard to her menaces towards the Queen of Spain.

Sister Emmeline was the amiable nun who had assisted in recovering Olivia—and she could not repress a sigh for the hardened sufferer, nor the tear which started to her eye, on seeing the brutal and unfeeling manner in which she had been thrown into a noisome dungeon, which bore more resemblance to a tomb, than a place calculated for the reception of the living. “I think,” observed she, addressing the Abbess, “this lady’s inclinations should not have been so contradicted, nor parental authority so outraged, her mind was never formed for a monastic life.”

“’Tis no parental authority, Ma’am-selle, that sentences her to a life of seclusion,” retorted the Superior, “and though it becomes you not, my daughter, to question *whose* it is, I will nevertheless inform you. Isabella, queen of Spain, commands it, and her, even would I, I durst not disobey; our whole community would otherwise feel the effects of her

resentment, and our holy convent would probably lose much of its present wealth and consequence, and many of its ancient privileges; therefore 'tis no unwarranted affair on my part."

The clock now summoned Emmeline to join the rest of the sisterhood in the refectory; and the Abbess being thus left alone, took out the Queen's letter to re-peruse it—it was as follows:—

"The Majesty of Spain, greets the  
" lady Abbess of Saint Marguerite's with  
" kindest affection; and sincerest wishes  
" for the welfare of the holy commu-  
" nity over which she presides: pre-  
" sents her ladyship with the enclosed  
" sum, in consideration of her services,  
" in receiving the female by whom the  
" bearer of it is accompanied; on this  
" particular, the lady Abbess has al-  
" ready received communications from  
" the Queen, who now bids her farewell  
" with an additional assurance of her  
" friendship."

The Queen had taken care to previously inform the Abbess of Olivia's character; and without distantly adverting to the necessity for her own safety of their separation, she made the Superior believe, that it was rather the desert of her follies and wickedness, than the effect of *her* equally diabolical artifices; and this conviction, desided the fate of the unfortunate victim. Prior to their leaving Madrid, the Conde had written a few lines addressed to Olivia; (for basely as she had acted, he yet could not but pity her,) in justification of the plan he had been obliged to assent to; and, forcibly representing the impossibility of his ever feeling the affections of a husband for her, after the ungenerous and illiberal part she had acted. As far as was consistent with prudence, he revealed to her the Queen's conduct; but advised her to tempt her power no further, nor offer any opposition to her inevitable destiny; and concluded by re-

requesting her acceptance of an enclosure of money, to a large amount, to defray her incident expenses in the convent, and to ensure the respect, and kind offices of the Superior.

Ere he quitted the monastery, he gave this into the hands of the Abbess, with a charge that it should be delivered to Donna Olivia, when she was more tranquil; and taking from his finger a valuable diamond, he requested her acceptance of it, as a pledge of his respect; whether she received it as such, cannot be decided; but certain it is, her eyes sparkled on receiving it, with almost as much brilliancy as the ring itself.

She now considered herself as bound by a double tie to obey the Queen's wishes, and accelerate Olivia's admission amongst the sisterhood; and, as the novitiate was to be dispensed with, she resolved to allow her only an interval of three days, to prepare herself to take

(voluntarily as she hoped,) the dreadful and irrevocable vow, which was to seclude her from the world, for the remainder of her life.

The monastery was an ancient and gloomy building, of vast extent, flanked on all sides with strong towers and buttresses, once its defence, but now in several parts mouldering to decay; it had been formerly the seat of royal grandeur, and bequeathed by one of the French sovereigns, for its present purpose; the then existing convent of the same order, being from age in a state of almost total ruin. On the conversion of the chateau to the holy sanctuary of St. Marguerite's, it had in many places been deprived of the costly magnificence of art; and the extensive suits of splendid apartments, transformed into narrow and dismal chambers, for the reception of the sisters of superior rank, while the more humble were lodged in cells of similar dimensions,

beneath the grand colonnade that intersected the whole length of the chateau.

At one extremity of the enfilade stood the chapel; whose interior was strikingly rich and beautiful, from the number of valuable donations presented from time to time, by different kings, whose names were all respectively affixed.

A small door opened from the chancel into the cloisters, to whose hallowed retirement, few, except the ancients had access, as it was a place almost entirely appropriated to religious meditations.

Underneath this remote and solitary spot, was situated the terror of every member of the convent, but the Abbess; who, to render it, if possible, more than naturally dreadful to the unhappy victims of her malice and cruelty, signalled it by the formidable appellation of the Bastile.

It consisted of a long arcade of dark and dreary vaults, to which the rays of

the sun had never penetrated; and along whose damp walls, hung several instruments of penance and mortification; from the centre arch was suspended a small tripod lamp, whose faint glimmering served merely to make "darkness visible;" and portrayed the most terrific shapes on the party-coloured walls, through the interstices of which, the wind constantly swept in tremendous gusts; and often on the shrill blast of midnight, was borne in solemn, and sepulchral vibrations the lonely cry of youth and innocence, struggling against the fetters of tyranny and oppression; and if the souls of the dead are permitted to re-visit earth, often hither resorted the wandering spirit to hover round the clay-cold tenement, that once it had animated; to mourn its remains, unhonoured by the tear of affection or pity, or the last friendly duties of interment; within a few years, two lovely young novices had here fallen sacrifices

to the ambition of unprincipled and unfeeling parents ; who, callous to all their entreaties and tears, and deaf to all the suggestions of nature, had delivered them over to the merciless authority of the Abbess, to enforce by harsher methods, that compliance which their menaces had hitherto been insufficient to intimidate them into.

When the voice of a parent loses its influence in guiding our inclinations, how futile and despicable are all other resources and attempts, to divert the bent of them ; how weak and incapable are all the stratagems of vice, to subvert the inflexible dignity of conscious innocence and virtue ; so it was with the amiable Angeline and Juliet ; condemned in the prime of beauty and loveliness, to be forever exiled from that society they were born to prove worthy of, and calculated to ornament, no wonder that their young hearts recoiled, terrified and disgusted, at a mandate so appall-

ing from those whom nature had taught them to look up to for the tender affection, the watchful care, the fond solicitude, the pure and spontaneous love, the fostering affection of a father and mother.

By such feelings never had the stern bosoms of Monsieur Giroux or his wife been softened; in them every principle of humanity had been subdued by ambition, since the birth of their eldest daughter, on whom, although they lavished almost every advantage that wealth could afford, they yet had no affection to bestow; and through whom they long sighed for aggrandizement, as to the fortune of Mademoiselle Lucille, they intended to join those of their two younger daughters; and by thus concentrating all the wealth and splendour of the family in her, with the combined attractions of her person, they succeeded at length, in obtaining a noble alliance, and, without a degree of compunction, sacrificed the happiness and, eventually,

the lives of the interesting Angeline and her sister, to their depravity and inordinate ambition.

Saint Marguerite's convent was distinguished throughout France for the severity of its laws, the exactness with which they were put in force, and the restrictions imposed on its inmates, who were never permitted to see the outside of its walls after they had made their vows. To those who had taken the black veil, all intercourse and communication with the other sex was denied; but, as a singular mark of favour, the Superior sometimes permitted the novices in her presence, to converse with their relatives, who were, however, never admitted within the grate; and, in the scrupulous observance of all these rules, she prided herself not a little.

To one better calculated to exercise the cruelties usually consequent on the refusal of a novice to receive the black veil, their inhuman parents could not

have delegated the dreadful power of compulsion. A monastic life was of all others the most rigorous, and ill-suited to a mind full of life and vigour: and these amiable sisters, with whose dispositions its seclusion was incompatible, had resolved never to make those vows with their lips, which their hearts refused to ratify.

With a considerable sum, the Abbess had received them from their father, who, resigning them completely to her jurisdiction, bade her manage them as well as she could: and, informing them that they had no further claims upon him, he took a last farewell of his children, and in a few days afterwards set out for Italy with his lady, and the illustrious family, his eldest daughter had united them too.

Overcome by this barbarous treatment from their parents, the helpless victims remained for two days in a state of mind nearly amounting to despair,

which was soon augmented by the added punishments of the Abbess, who endeavoured to torture them into compliance when she found every other method ineffectual. In vain they besought her with tears and supplications to desist; to give them their liberty; to send them on the world starving and pennyless; to do any thing rather than force them to embrace a profession from which their souls revolted. In vain pleaded the voice of innocence; her obdurate heart remained unmoved; and all the commiseration of the other nuns, who shed the genuine tears of sympathy for their sorrows, served only to render her still more cruel, and every succeeding day beheld fresh instances of her inhumanity, and increased the dislike of many of the sisterhood into abhorrence.

By dint of suffering, and threats of yet more frightful punishments, they had been prevailed upon to take the white veil; and the term of their novi-

tiate was thus dragged out; but their once elegant and bewitching forms were now reduced by despair, and all their charms rapidly yielding to the ravages of melancholy and grief.

Aware that resistance would only embitter by its consequences their last moments, for which with pious resignation they were fully prepared, by the persuasion of several of the nuns whose disinterested friendship they had received many proofs of, they suffered themselves to be led to the altar.

Angeline laid her hands on her bosom, while her eyes were directed to her Creator, accompanied by her thoughts, which ascended in fervent prayer; her mind was now entirely weaned from sublunary objects, and prepared by a long course of earthly suffering for a more suitable state; and almost passively she replied to the interrogatories of the Abbess and priests. The ceremony of professing a nun was always strik-

ingly grand and awful; but their thoughts seemed to soar far beyond the sublimity of the surrounding scene: with a deep sigh she breathed forth the fatal vow, she heard the responsive one of Juliet; the dreadful fiat was passed; fate had now done its worst; entwined in each other's arms, they fell senseless at the foot of the altar; in which state they were re-conveyed to their dismal cells; and, on the following evening, Providence, in pity, re-called their pure spirits to their native heaven.

From thence the bodies were taken to the Bastille, where for many days afterwards nobody had courage enough to enter; and they were extended on a miserable pallet, which had often served the unhappy captives for a bed, presenting an awful instance of the temporary triumph of vice.

At length some of the kindest of the sisterhood proposed to the Superior that they should remove the corpses to the

cemetery; but were prevented by her opposing it.

A similar occurrence had never been known at the monastery before—as, although, a few of its inhabitants still retained a slight *penchant* for the pleasures of the great world, they were generally reconciled during the novitiate to the domestic tranquillity and peaceful solitude it often afforded; and their easy compliance had hitherto rendered unnecessary any measures, so barbarous as those the Abbess had in this instance had recourse to.

The unfeeling Superior, now resolved, however, that the bodies of her two lovely victims should be separately enclosed in coffins, and thus left in their present places, to serve as mementos of the danger of incurring her resentment by disobedience or resistance to her will; and to intimidate and warn any person who might, in future, be rash enough to imitate their example.

Her stern decree was a law inviolable amongst the nuns; none dare thwart it, nor offer an argument against it; her most intimate favourites durst not breath forth a murmur which might reach her ever-listening ear; and, with silent reluctance, this cruel mandate was obeyed.

Tears of anguish and deep regret for their untimely fate fell from the eyes of the officiating sisters; and bedewed the cheeks of the beautiful inanimates, interesting even in death; and their bloodless lips appeared to smile defiance to their unkind stars, to hurt them farther: having encased them within the awful prisons which shut them from sight for ever, it was long ere the affectionate nuns, who had performed the melancholy duties, could tear themselves from beside the coffins.

The patient meekness of the two sufferers—the beauty of their persons, the conciliating sweetness that shone

throughout in their looks and actions—and the pathetic tones of undissembling sorrow, had won every heart of sensibility, and endeared them to almost the whole sisterhood.

After a painful conflict the last sad requiem was sung—a permission which had been granted after much intercession with the Abbess; and the two coffins having, by her order, been placed beside each other in a remote corner of the vault, with streaming eyes they departed, while, in tones that would have excited pity in a stoic's breast, they pronounced their farewell to the beloved Angeline and Juliet.

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## CHAPTER II.

“Where the greater malady is fixed,  
 The lesser is scarce felt—thou’dst shun a bear;  
 But, if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,  
 Thou’dst meet the bear in the mouth.”

SHAKESPEARE

**I**N this dreary repository of the dead was the unfortunate Donna Olivia doomed to pass the night. Superstition had ever held an unlimited ascendancy over her, and magnified the most trivial into the most alarming circumstances; in this instance, however, her fears were not without good grounds, as she had been for some time well acquainted with the disposition and character of the Abbess.

With a cry of horror she shrunk back as one of the lay-sisters, tremblingly,

opened the door, and, holding up her lamp, afforded a partial view of the truly terrific scene within. But, to resist the commands of the Superior would be unavailing; and had her conductors been even inclined to do so, they durst not have disobeyed them, as their doing so would have been attended with similar and inevitable punishments to themselves.

On entering, she sank overpowered with terror on a rocky seat, beneath one of the projecting arches, and for many moments continued devoid of sense or motion. The chilling damp soon recalled her perceptions, and staring around in wild astonishment, she suddenly started up, and attempted to rush out in defiance of every obstacle; but was prevented by the exertions of the sisters, who, almost afraid to remain longer with her, laid down the lamp; and having pointed out the corner where stood her wretched bed, and carefully

removed every thing that desperation might prompt her to make an improper use of, they offered up their prayers to the Virgin for her conversion, and quitted her for the night; almost confident, as was also the Abbess, that they should find her spirit of opposition pretty well subdued on the following morning.

The closing of the door was heavily re-echoed through the vault, and the receding footsteps of the nuns, as they slowly died away in the cloisters above, seemed to penetrate her soul, and bear from thence every degree of fortitude and courage to encounter the dangers by which she was enveloped. Insensibility for awhile benumbed her faculties, but its friendly oblivion was of short duration, and she revived to all the real horrors of her situation. Fearful of moving from the spot, or trusting herself in the maze of darkness before her, she silently contemplated it;

and despair brought on a train of dismal reflections, which again absorbed her for a considerable time.

In the bitterness of her resentment towards the Queen, and the several plans she meditated of revenge, two or three hours passed insensibly away. At first her vindictive spirit appeared unappeasable; no sacrifice, however terrible, seemed sufficient to glut her infuriated passions; words were inadequate to vent her burning rage: her whole form was dilated with all the horrid rage of a demon, and she uttered the most frightful imprecations against the Queen, the Conde Montalban, and the lady Abbess, vowing that she would immediately publish her Majesty's guilty love for Mortimer, and feast on the direful consequences, which, from the national characteristics of the Spaniards, jealousy and revenge, and more than all, from the rage of a Sovereign at find-

ing his Queen unfaithful, she knew would assuredly accrue.

At length the deep-toned bell tolled twelve; she started from the cold bench on which she had been seated; the wind now whistled loudly throughout the vault,—and the Garonne, whose waters washed the eastern walls of the convent, dashed its tremendous waves to and fro, with an harsh and monotonous sound, not at all calculated to lessen her superstitious fears—and knowing that the river could be at no great distance, and that probably a slight partition separated her from it, she fancied that could she by any means, effect her escape from the vault, she should (favoured by the night,) experience no difficulty in escaping from the monastery altogether—trusting that some well-told and plausible tale of her sufferings would excite the pity of some of the fishermen, who were constantly on the river, and induce

them to rescue her by the combined promises of a rich reward.

In her present situation she was far from every possibility of human assistance; and she bent her eyes fearfully around, as if in the hope of seeing what at any other time she would have shuddered to think of; but any alternative seemed eligible, and she almost wished that even supernatural aid would present itself.

She now regretted her listless inactivity hitherto, and considering that nothing could render her condition more frightful; and that no real or visionary object however appalling could augment her terrors, she moved forward, and by the dim light of the lamp, endeavoured to explore minutely every part of her gloomy prison, in the hope of at length finding some means of egress. She listened, in dread that the Abbess might have employed spies to guard and watch her movements; but the

breath of a human being was not distinguishable; her knees smote each other as with cautious steps she advanced towards the interior arch, from which issued a faint gleam of light; here she paused to recover her composure, and when her agitation had in some measure subsided, she eagerly surveyed every thing around; the wind in harsh and discordant murmurs swept through an aperture in one corner, which the darkness completely concealed, and had several times nearly extinguished the lamp she held in her trembling hand; a momentary ray of hope cheered her, and determined to leave no means untried, she again went on, starting alternately at her own shadow, and the horrible phantoms her fancy represented. She had now almost reached the extremity of the vault, and as the darkness became thicker, she stood irresolute whether to proceed.

Once more, however, she conquered

her apprehensions, and moved on, until her steps were impeded by a large heavy substance, which she was stooping to examine, when a rustling behind her suddenly withdrew her attention; and, turning round, she saw a small door slowly opened, a tall majestic figure in robes of deepest black appeared inside the portal the next moment, with a lamp partly hidden by the folds of the drapery, and instantly drew back on seeing her.

Olivia tried to speak, but the terror this spectral form had inspired, deprived her of the power of utterance, and involuntarily averting her face, when she again ventured to look towards the door, the mysterious intruder had vanished, and all was silence and darkness as before.

This occurrence served to renew her hopes, for she saw at once the probability of being able to escape by the

same door; and snatching up her lamp, she was hastily proceeding in search of it, when again her progress was stopped, and looking downwards, her eyes rested on two black coffins. She reeled backwards at the awful sight, and with a scream of horror, which was reverberated through the long arcade, she dropped senseless on the floor. Her faculties had scarcely returned, when at the usual early hour in the morning, the matin-bell summoned the nuns to prayers; its solemn sound was terrifying to her confused senses, and the wildness of her countenance excited a considerable degree of alarm in the bosom of sister Emmeline, who came by desire of the Superior to conduct her to her presence. Some drops administered by the friendly nun soon contributed to her recovery, and aware that a refusal would exasperate the Abbess without benefiting herself, she took the

offered arm of Emmeline, and without speaking a word, accompanied her to the parlour.

The Superior's brow retained its usual expression of haughtiness and severity, and in tones that well accorded with it, she bade her be seated, and made a sign to Emmeline to retire.

Olivia now for the first time felt conscious of her own insignificance, and trembling with terror she obeyed, while her down-cast looks gave her all the appearance of a culprit awaiting the dreadful sentence of the judge.

“Daughter,” said the Abbess, after a long interval of silence, “thou hast by thine impious and daring deportment, profaned our sacred abode; and, thine irreverent and disrespectful language, well merits the chastisement which our holy laws denounce against such insolent offenders, and which I now declare by our most true faith, shall be scrupulously inflicted on thee; at the

expiration of three days, during which our discipline shall, I trust, sufficiently purify thee, thou must take the black veil, without a single murmur of reluctance: look not for a resource to prevent this; it is beyond thy reach; thou art devoted to thy God, and we shall be the blessed instruments of bringing thy soul to salvation; never shalt thou again behold the exterior of this edifice; the tears, prayers, and penitence of a religious life, can alone save thee; take this letter, and when thou hast read it, repair to the chapel to join in our morning devotions, in order to fit thyself for the state thou must so soon enter; after which, again attend me here.

Almost unconsciously she received Sebastian's letter, and glanced over its contents; but conviction instantly struck her, and, at the retrospection of the past, and the contemplation of what she was now doomed to suffer, her heart sunk within her, and she could not help

acknowledging how just and deserved was her fate. Yet few were the sensations of remorse she felt; she regretted her faults, because they were productive of punishment to herself—not for their having tended to injure or destroy the happiness of others; and though the Abbess pointed out so chilling a prospect, she had too much confidence in her own stratagems and finesse, to allow her now to yield to despair.

When matins were concluded, she returned to the parlour, and the Abbess sternly demanded whether she would submit with pious fortitude and resignation to her approaching destiny. An assurance that she should have it in her power to escape from it, particularly as she was to be allowed an interval of three days, rendered her fearless of her authority; and in a resolute voice, she answered—“No, madam, I will not deceive you into a hope I mean not to realize: I never can submit to your

tyranny; the life of a nun I have long viewed with disgust, and not all your threats shall ever compel me to become one; my mind was formed for all the enjoyments due to my sex—and think you that I would thus voluntarily resign them—thus sign the fiat of a fate I abhor? Know me better in future; force shall not compel—nor threats intimidate me. I have now given you my sentiments, and perseverance on your part will be unavailing, for I have determined never to comply, and my resolves once made are not easily broken.”

“Instantly away with this audacious woman to the bastille,” cried the enraged Abbess to the lay-sister, who answered to her call: “let her be there closely confined, and the mother Beatrice shall inflict on her a dozen stripes every morning, until we shall have tamed her insolent spirit into compliance, nor shall she presume to quit it until she voluntarily receives the veil. Now she knows

my determination, and she shall also find that *my* resolves are inflexible."

Without the least opposition, Olivia suffered herself to be led back to her dungeon, the sight of which seemed to irradiate her countenance with a sort of mysterious joy, instead of recalling the horrors of the preceding night; and with a look of defiance she returned the benediction of sister Agnes, and summoning all her resolution, descended into the bastille without demur.

When left to herself, all her fears returned—for all around appeared conspired against her, and with the full conviction of her danger, and the inutility of resistance, she burst into a flood of tears, which she had for some time indulged, when the door flew open, and three of the lay-sisters, with the mother Beatrice, entered to execute the commands of the Superior.

Agnes was the first, and approaching her with the instrument of correction,

she stopped short, on seeing her in tears, and seemed inclined to forbear and pity her. "Hesitate not to perform your duty," said Beatrice, whose harsh features bespoke the inflexible cruelty of her disposition, "I warrant it will soon effect a reformation."

"Good Mother," replied Agnes, "recollect that this poor lady has feelings as well as us; and when you were once confined in this horrible place yourself, you bore your punishment no better."

This hasty and thoughtless observation, was the impulse of the moment; Agnes possessed a soul of too much sensibility to receive unhurt a wound like this; and in thus making known her feelings, she often drew on herself the anger and chastisement of those she was unhappily bound to obey.

"Insolent creature!" cried the enraged Mother, with a spiteful and demoniac look, "how dare you thus affront

my dignity, or recal the follies of youth to the years of age, wisdom and purity: dare to repeat such an insult, and instantly shall the lady Abbess hear of your inclination to disobedience."

On a sudden she endeavoured to soften the austerity of her looks and tones, and approaching Olivia with a deportment rather milder, "Senora," said she, "do not wrong me by believing me to be in reality the relentless and un pitying being I have appeared to you; from my soul I commiserate your situation, and as a proof that even my stern bosom can be moved to compassion, I now voluntarily offer you conditions on which you may avoid the penance our holy Superior has commissioned me to exercise so rigorously on you—and entirely without her knowledge, as none present dare betray me; in a word, we will remit your punishment, if you will, without reserve, explain the mysteries attached to the character of the Queen of Spain! Any

thing pertaining to a woman so illustrious, must be interesting; I have long known her as one of unsullied honour and probity; but her thus condemning a young and lovely creature to a conventual life, seems worthy of our censure; you have thrown out many severe insinuations against her, and if you have just grounds for those aspersions, you shall find in me a warm and disinterested friend, ready to unite in avenging your wrongs, were Isabella queen of the whole world."

The artful and dexterous manœuvres of Beatrice were, however, all lost on the wary Olivia, who understood deception in every shape too well to be now imposed on by this specious appearance of friendship, from one whose disposition she had already beheld in all its naked deformity. Her determination of betraying the Queen had vanished almost as soon as made; and even had not the recollection of her oath of secrecy deterred

her from it, her unwillingness to gratify the unfeeling Beatrice, would alone have saved the Queen from exposure; and with a look of contempt, she resolutely refused.

“Now, Donna Olivia, you have rashly made *me* your enemy, said Beatrice; fixing on her a petrifying look; “and you shall curse the hour in which you did so. Proceed,” cried she to the trembling Agnes, “and strike while the dread of a similar punishment to yourself nerves your arm.” Agnes had indeed much to apprehend from the treacherous temper of Beatrice; and, conscious of her influence with the Abbess, whose counterpart she was in every respect, she prepared to go mechanically through the painful task, from which her gentle heart revolted.

Olivia perceived her reluctance, and would have taken advantage of it, had not the inhuman Beatrice, with a diabolical grin, instantly snatched the rods

from her weak grasp; and advancing towards her, commanded her in a pre-emptory voice, to bare her shoulders to receive at once, the reward of her obstinacy; and glancing furiously at Agnes, declared she would inform the lady Abbess of her un dutiful and disrespectful conduct.

All Olivia's accustomed firmness now failed her, and on feeling the merciless blows, she screamed aloud; and having undergone her sentence, fainted at the feet of Beatrice, who, unmoved by compassion, left her to the care of sister Blanche, and desiring Agnes to follow her, she repaired to the parlour, where the lady Abbess was seated, and having made her complaint, Agnes was doomed to confinement in her cell for two days, without any other food than bread and water.

Meantime Olivia revived, and the fatigues of body and mind she had suffered rendering repose absolutely ne-

cessary, Blanche assisted her to her bed, where she soon fell into a profound sleep; and her attendant placing the lamp on a small table, hurried away from this awful abode of silence and death.

It was late in the afternoon when she awoke; and in a short time afterwards, the bell rang for vespers: and she heard the footsteps of the nuns in the cloisters, proceeding towards the chapel. As soon as the evening service was over, Beatrice and her train again appeared; and a second time were the same tortures inflicted on her, after which, they departed for the night, leaving her in a state of the most frightful agitation.

Until now, she had almost forgotten the facility of escape which the secret door of her cell afforded her; and unable to bear a repetition of such barbarous cruelty, she arose as soon as she had sufficiently arranged her ideas, and made the best of her way to the little

door, which after much difficulty she forced open; in the joyful prospect of regaining her liberty, she had nearly relapsed into insensibility, when the tall figure she had seen in the vault the night before, hastily passed her; and she now determined to discover if possible, who it might be, or for what design come thither.

She stepped cautiously outside, and found herself on a spacious terrace, which overlooked a large and well stocked garden on one side, and a thick wood on the other; both of which from the situation, she knew belonged to the convent; the terrace appeared to have been for many years untrodden and totally neglected, as it was all overgrown with weeds and briars, which rendered what had been once apparently a gravelled walk, almost impassable; she contrived however to gain the extremity of it; and before she penetrated the copse that separated it from the garden,

she stopped for a few minutes to admire the enchanting scenery around her; her eyes sought the mysterious stranger on all sides, but in vain; all was perfectly still and silent. The romantic view derived a soft and pleasing aspect from the moon-beams; as the checkered rays glittered partially through the foliage; and illuminated the smooth surface of the Garonne, which at a distance crested the trees in beautiful perspective; the song of the bird of night alone disturbed the serenity of nature; and even the bosom of Olivia, while contemplating a scene so emblematic of the tranquillity of conscious virtue, when viewed by the approving eye of an almighty Being, was in these moments able to conceive the delightful sensations and reflections which virtue cannot fail to produce.

All this time she did not forget her own danger, and on turning to take a last view of the Bastille, its horrors rushed back to her memory, and lent

her strength to fly quickly away from it; folding her robes closely about her, she hurried into the wood, notwithstanding its forbidding and solitary gloom; and as she eagerly pressed forward through the intermingled branches, their rustling noise made her often fancy there was somebody in pursuit of her; at length her wearied limbs became unable to support her, and she sat down at the foot of a large tree, in order to recover herself.

She had not been long there, when a light glimmering amongst the trees, made her start; she supposed the Abbess had sent some of the sisters in search of her, and giving herself up for lost, she cried out, despairingly, "Oh in mercy end my life at once, rather than thus slowly torture me to death, you have again found me, but do not, oh do not drag me to your horrible dungeon." "Fear nothing from me, fair unknown," returned a voice in tones of friendship;

“your words declare you to be the victim of persecution, and to afford you any assistance in my power, may in some measure alleviate the pangs of my breaking heart.”

The next moment the stranger stood before her; the same she had seen at the door of her prison.

She stared in doubt and surprise, until having thrown off a large outer garment, the elegant figure of a man revealed itself; and with an exclamation of affright, she would have instantly fled, had she not been prevented by his seizing her hand—and requesting she would not hesitate to confide in him for safety and protection.

Such an offer was too consonant with her wishes to be rejected, and she suffered him to re-seat her, and place himself beside her.

“I trust, ma’am’selle,” said he, in a polite and respectful manner, accompanied by that peculiar something which

always marks the gentleman, "that you will not deem this an impertinent intrusion, or think me really less interested for you than I seem, if I entreat you to explain the nature of your sufferings—and the cause of your being here, whither I was not led by mere chance or impious curiosity.—No, the ties of ardent love and affection have instinctively drawn me to a spot which I hate and execrate, though it contains all that on earth was ever dearest to me. . . . Beneath yonder holy edifice lies my soul's richest treasure,—*holy* do I term it? when it is thus consecrated to all the black purposes of cruelty and vice; there lies the lovely, the adorable Angelne—that most perfect, most lovely of her sex, a flower that once flourished in all the undefinable luxuriance of beauty; destined to be mine—as I foolishly hoped, while fondly I gazed on her expanding charms: but soon, soon came the withering blast, and with one direful blow, swept her to de-

struction, and annihilated my every hope. Oh God, Oh God, how have I deserved this!" continued he, as he raised his eyes towards heaven, as if with his tears to reproach its all-wise decrees, "Angelina! Oh sweet seraph, when last I beheld thy beauteous form, what were our mutual transports, our reciprocal affection; but now, alas! what a dreary blank in my bosom,—now, now all is over; in this world we meet no more,—but in the next, transporting blissful thought! nothing shall sever our loves, not all the barbarity of human invention shall then disunite us." Here he wept abundantly, notwithstanding all his efforts to repress his tears at length, with as much composure as he could assume, he entreated the forgiveness of his companion, to whom he related the particulars of the fate of the two lovely sisters; and when he had ended his pathetic recital of their sorrows, she could not refrain from

weeping with him, and equally censuring the guilty authors of their woes.

Since their deaths, he had repaired many a night to this melancholy spot, and thence to the prison, where the coffins lay, to mourn undisturbed over their remains; and but for the fear of being detected by the inhabitants of the convent, he would have endeavoured to convey them to some hallowed ground, to perform the last religious duties that humanity required.

The venerable Agatha had been his nurse, and the affectionate old woman soon felt the dictates of prudence and discretion overruled by the still lively feelings of fondness and love that pleaded in her bosom for him; and she imagined that the circumstances under which she gave him admittance within the gates of the monastery, rendered her doing so no crime.

Being well acquainted with every part

of the convent, she led him by an intricate, but safe path, through the wood which led up to the private entrance to the bastille, from the terrace, and which she knew remained a secret to the lady Abbess and all the sisterhood.

Olivia had invented a plausible tale of cruelty and injustice, well calculated to excite, in whoever heard it, an interest and concern for her; but though she told the chevalier St. Aubré, (which was the stranger's name), of her being detained in the convent contrary to her inclination, she took care not to let any thing escape her lips, that could lead him to conjecture her real character, or the true source of her present miseries.

When she had made an end of her well-told story, she perceived that it had exactly the wished-for effect on St. Aubré,—who reviled the Lady Abbess in the bitterest terms, and promised to hazard every thing in liberating her, and

bending on one knee, he called a solemn witness to the sincerity of his intentions.

Her bosom heaved with gratitude and delight, while in sudden transport she seized his hand, and pressed it ardently to her lips; as they invoked the blessings of Heaven on his undertaking. Almost confident of success, she already began to congratulate herself with the idea of the revenge she was now bent on taking on the Queen of Spain, and also on the unsuspecting Montalban; nor did they in any degree, obliterate the indignities she had received from the Abbess, to whom she determined to prove for ever an implacable enemy, and on whom she vented the bitterest maledictions that her rage could suggest.

An hour passed in arranging a plan for her future safety, and it was finally agreed that she should accompany the chevalier to Anjou, where Monsieur St. Aubré, his father, possessed a fine estate,

and who, he did not doubt, would receive her with paternal kindness, until she could return to her native country.

This was just what she wished, and as the convent bell tolled eleven, and warned them of the lateness of the hour, she put her arm inside his, and they proceeded together to the extremity of the wood, while she anticipated all the pleasures of liberty, and exulted in the thoughts of what the disappointment and rage of the Abbess would be on finding she had thus outwitted her, and effected her escape.

St. Aubré had lodgings in the vicinity of the convent, and there he knew he should be able to procure horses on the following morning to convey them to Anjou; where he trusted his fair charge would find a secure and comfortable asylum. On seeing him approach accompanied by a female, Agatha, who stood behind the portal with the massy keys in her hand to open the gate,

demanded in a voice of alarm, who she was, and whither she was going,—“ Let this satisfy you, good Agatha,” said St. Aubré, putting a small purse into her willing hand, “ make no further inquiries—’tis enough that I assure you this lady is not one of the sisterhood ; but hasten to let us pass—delay may be dangerous—and to me fatal ; at the expiration of a week you shall see me here again. ”

“ May the holy Virgin bless your sweet face, Monsieur ! ” said Agatha looking for the right key ; “ but where may any of us be at the end of another week ? ”

“ You shall not be here at all events, ” said the hoarse voice of some person unseen ;—“ dearly shall you repent this night’s doings. ”

“ Oh holy St. Marguerite, we are discovered—ruined—undone ! ” cried the terrified porteress, dropping the bunch of keys.

Donna Olivia stood pale and motionless, while St. Aubré endeavoured to force open the gate, and, with a petrifying look, the exasperated Beatrice burst from the thicket which had concealed her.

“Oh! profanation most horrible, most abominable!” exclaimed she, her whole form inflated with fury, “a man within our sacred walls at such an hour; and this his vile and abandoned paramour, thus outbraving all our holy laws. Oh Father of piety and virtue, pour down thine anger on them, and wash away this stain. Begone, sacrilegious wretch,” cried she, darting towards him as if she would have torn his eyes from their sockets, “never, on pain of inevitable death, to be seen within the precincts of our convent again; but as for you two, tremble at the tortures our violated laws shall prepare for you; give me the keys and follow me.”

The watchful Beatrice had seen Oli-

via on the terrace; and a suspicion of her design prompted her to follow her to the wood, where she had overheard the whole of her conversation with St. Aubrè, and made herself fully acquainted with their plan.

She had suffered them to reach the gates in order to discover whether the fidelity of the porteress was to be shaken; and she now vowed that she would make them feel the utmost severity of their laws; and continued those horror-inspiring threats until they found themselves in the presence of the Abbess.

“Well, daughter,” demanded the latter, laying down the missal she had been reading, on the table, and assuming more dignity of voice and manner than could possibly be thought natural: “Well, daughter, what would you with me at so late an hour? Hath this lady committed any new offence, or, is there any thing wrong in the dormitory? For, methinks something of the kind must

have occurred to lead you thus to interrupt my retirement.”

“I have not yet gone the round of the dormitory, Madame; but when you shall have heard what I have to detail to you, the omission will appear less culpable.”

She now threw open the door to admit the other delinquents, and when they had made their obeisance to the Abbess, she gave an elaborate account of the whole transaction, exaggerating every part of it, particularly the epithets which Donna Olivia had made use of in her threats of vengeance against her ladyship.

“Jesu Marie!” cried the Superior, “have mine ears ever heard impiety so horrible as this!—dared the wretch denounce such things towards a mother of the holy catholic church!—Take her instantly from my sight, and let her be confined for the night in the dark chamber beyond the long gallery—let the

abandoned Agatha be thrown into the Bastile ; and to-morrow we will hold a chapter of all the nuns to award the punishments they deserve. ”

With a look of exultation, Beatrice called one of the lay-sisters who had not yet retired to her cell, and desiring her to conduct Olivia to her destination, she accompanied the affrighted Agatha to her prison ; and, having secured the newly-discovered door, so as to leave no possibility of escaping through it, she repaired to her own apartment to endeavour to enjoy that repose which she had driven from the couches of so many others.

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## CHAPTER III.

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“ I follow thee, safe guide,  
“ The path thou leadeſt me, and to the hand of Heaven  
“ Submit, however chaſtening.”

MILTON.

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**DONNA** Olivia was now immured in a narrow apartment, from which, on all ſides the light was totally excluded; and her ſituation ſeemed more dreadful when ſhe contraſted it with what ſhe fancied it would have been, had thoſe hopes been accompliſhed which ſo lately ſhe had cheriſhed.

But now indeed hope was no more:— the moſt diſmal proſpects aroſe before her, and abſorbed her in a ſtate of deſpondency, from which ſhe was, at length, roused by the ſound of a light footſtep

outside, which was presently afterwards followed by a gentle knock at the door of her prison, accompanied by the voice of one of the sisters, which she recollected to be that of Emmeline.

“ Be not alarmed, Senora ——,” said the amiable nun, in a tone of conciliating sweetness, as she cautiously opened the door, and entered uninvited, bearing a lamp in her hand—“ I am come, not as your looks tell me you suspect, an emissary from the Abbess, but to offer you my friendship and to request yours in return. I wish to serve you—to preserve you from the ills that cruelty and superstition are preparing for you—Heaven alone knows how disinterested is that wish: and that nothing else could have tempted me to run the risque I have done; for were the Abbess, or the yet more inflexible mother Beatrice, to find out that I left my cell at such an hour as this, or that I dared to approach or converse with

any one under the displeasure of the Superior, the consequences might perhaps, be fatal to of both us."

She now secured the door, having ascertained that there was nobody in the gallery, and placing the lamp on a small table, she drew from beneath her long robe a little basket, containing some fruit and other refreshments, which she had by stratagem procured from the refectory stores, and which she entreated Olivia to partake of, as a pledge of that friendship she wished to render reciprocal.

For the last two days, the latter had taken very little sustenance, and she partook sparingly of the delicacies which the affectionate Emmeline had singled out for her, but the fear of artifice, and distrust of the nun's sincerity, kept her still reserved; experience had taught her the dangers arising from confidence, incautiously bestowed; and ere she granted hers, she resolved to know the one who sued for it.

Emmeline had sat down beside her, and taking her hand with a look of kind sympathy, which at once declared the purity of her heart, and such as no effort of art could put on, "Ah," continued she, "I plainly perceive by the coldness of your manner towards me, that the harsh and unfeeling treatment you have experienced here, has rendered you distrustful, even to the voice of friendship; and to every face you fear to raise your eyes, in dread of encountering some new persecutor; but your suspicions wrong me, as much as the cruel aspersions of the Abbess do injustice to you; for I cannot suppose you the guilty being they would have me believe; our Superior has been schooled in the rigid disciplines of bigotry, and, a fanatic herself in every affair pertaining to religion, she expects to find the same mistaken and culpable enthusiasm in the bosom of every member of that holy church, to which she has so long

and rigorously devoted herself. Alas! too well I know how the young and wayward heart revolts from the tyrannic sophistry, that would attempt to direct its movements; too well I know what the feelings of a youthful mind unused to restraint must be, when compelled to abandon the delightful projects it has formed; every charming anticipation it has indulged; every future joy it has hoped for; and in one moment to sacrifice all, all to false reasoning and unjust authority, at the shrine of solitude and oblivion. But think not that against a life of solitude I would prejudice you; seclusion ever has its charms for a virtuous mind; but circumstances may give to those charms different complexions; and they exist to us no longer, if in this sacred abode we permit the retrospection of past events to obtrude, and subvert the small portion of happiness, we might have derived in properly estimating the advantages of retirement, from a

world whose delusive pleasures and fatal artifices, here become unveiled to us in the hour of silent reflection, and which we then learn often to despise as ardently as we have before wished for the enjoyment of them.

I myself, was once taught to prize the glittering bauble; to pursue undaunted the dangerous phantom a mistaken world calls pleasure; but when I thought its attractive form within my eager grasp, my cheated senses beheld a shadow, which mocked my credulity, and vanished for ever. Five revolving winters have wept o'er the tomb of my beloved Theodore, since first I pledged my vows of celibacy; first learned to profit by the useful lessons which misfortune teaches. In this holy retreat have my sorrows been lulled to repose by the soothing anodyne, the consoling precepts of religion, whose divine influence has had power to divest even my grief of its poignancy, and teach me

that, however severe we may presume to think the dispensations of Providence, his unerring judgment guides alike the hand of prosperity and affliction, and by visiting us alternately with each, wisely renders us mindful of our dependant and variable state on earth, and prepares us to feel more rapturously the inconceivable and unrevealed joys of heaven hereafter."

These were doctrines to which Olivia had hitherto been a stranger; morality had formed but a small portion of her education, and even the little that nature had implanted, was not long proof against the irreligious pursuits and licentiousness of a court life.

"Ah," said she, while her looks already bespoke her a convert, "Surely thou art some ministering angel, sent to pour on my wounded soul the balm of forgiveness—for much do I indeed require it; I *am* what they represent me—a very wretch; but yet there is another,

oh how much more guilty ; what are the magnitudes of my sins to those of ——”

A few words more, and the dreadful secret would have passed her lips beyond recall ; emotions entirely new to her had hurried her thus far ; and she recollected and checked herself just in time to prevent the violation of her oath.

Emmeline started, and the amazement depicted in her countenance seemed to ask what her lips durst not pronounce ; for Olivia's embarrassment at being so nearly led into an additional crime had not escaped her, but she had too much delicacy to put her confidence to the test at such a moment as this.

“ Surely” added Olivia—and tears started to her eyes at the recollection, “ surely the sufferings I have undergone even within the short time of my being here, have been equal—nay much more than equal to my deserts. Oh great Heaven, why couldst thou permit their

barbarities to go unpunished?—yet shall I dare to censure what thou hast decreed?—No, no, how plainly do such visitations evince thy love towards us: hath it not shewn me the necessity and blessings of repentance, and given me what I have till now never known,—a dread of provoking thy wrathful power—and a confidence in that divine attribute which, to thee alone belongs, and which I now humbly implore,—thy mercy—thy pardon—not for the errors of an untaught heart, but the wickednesses my hands have executed whilst that heart refused its sanction.

“ Oh Lady, if thou art of mortal mould, wilt thou not compassionate a fellow-creature thus sunk—thus degraded? wilt thou not, in thine orisons, intercede for a fallen sister? for to the pleadings of a soul like thine, (which if thy countenance be its true index, is virtue itself,) the Almighty will not refuse to hearken, and

sinful as I have been, I may yet hope through thy pious means, to obtain his forgiveness. Assure me but of this,—and if thine holy sanctuary will deign to receive me, the remainder of my life shall be devoted to solitude, penitence and religion.”

An expression of delight gleamed from the beautiful eyes of the nun. “ Thanks to the Madona,” she exclaimed, “ for this happy realization of my hopes—the wish of my soul is now accomplished, and not all the machinations of the inhuman Beatrice—nor the almost unlimited power of the haughty and revengeful Abbess can hurt you further.”

“ Alas,” replied Olivia, “ you know not what I have yet to go through; you are unacquainted with the rash act I have this evening been guilty of, though by this time, I thought it had been circulated throughout the convent; you have yet to learn that I imprudently at-

tempted to escape, and was detected in the wood by the mother Beatrice herself."

"Of that I have already been informed and know all the particulars; but, Senora, I feel an interest in your fate, which induces me to offer you my advice on another and equally important point, the securing your happiness: long have I wished for an interview with you, long desired to effect this change in your sentiments, to remove the veil of prejudice from before you—to convince you of the solid and lasting blessings religion affords, when we become its sincere and unalienable votaries—and detach our thoughts from worldly vicissitudes and transient joys; nay, mistake me not, Senora,—I am by no means the fanatical enthusiast my arguments may seem to imply, and were I not well aware that you are inevitably devoted to a monastic life by a will and power which it were unavailing to rebel against, I should be

the most strenuous in supporting your objections, and dissuading you from compliance; but you are menaced with further severities—and those I would in time avert. I have heard of your unsuccessful attempt to escape from the monastery, and am of course well acquainted with the usual forms ordained on such occasions by the lady Abbess—whom about half an hour ago, I overheard in a conference with Beatrice, whose cell is next to mine, the result of which amounts to this—a convention of the nuns is to take place in the chapel at noon to-morrow—and her ladyship has determined that the most rigorous sentence our laws allow, shall be denounced against you. But start not at the bare mention of an evil you can avoid; listen confidently to the advice of one whom friendship and humanity alone actuate, and should it appear worthy your consideration, I trust you may profit by it. Sister Antoinette, who is my particular

friend, and withal a favourite of the Superior, has given me an account of what she learned from the Abbess relative to you. I have been informed of many circumstances of your past life, and also of the treacherous plot carried on against you by the wicked Isabella; but of the cause or motives that impelled her to it, I am ignorant, nor becomes it me to pry into it: you are aware of the invalidity of your marriage with the Conde Montalban, and must therefore entirely forget him—nor look on him longer as possessing a claim to any of the warmer sentiments of your heart: but censure him not—remember how many things combined to influence him—nay to make the double part he acted, absolutely necessary; that he had no will of his own, but was compelled to be guided by the arbitrary one of the Queen, that it was *she* who placed you here—and commanded that an pain of her heavy displeasure—(and dreadful indeed would be *her* dis-

pleasure,) you should be immediately professed, and never permitted to quit the convent's gloom."

"No my amiable friend," said Olivia, "I will not utter a reproachful word,—will not conceive a reproachful thought; from my inmost soul I forgive them both. Oh could you but know how culpable I have been, you would say surely that I deserve it all.—Montalban is not to blame, 'tis I who have acted treacherously towards him—yet he too forgives me.—“Could I,” she asked, as she produced Sebastian's letter, and handed it to Emmeline, “could I have perused this, and remained callous to conviction or unconvinced of my great culpability?”

The nun took the letter, and when she came to the following lines, read them slowly and emphatically, as if fearful of robbing them of their impressive and affecting import: “The all-seeing eye  
“that alone can pursue the secrets of

“ the heart and read its feelings, wit-  
“ nesses the anarchy that now pervades  
“ mine; mere words form no language  
“ to convey to mortal an idea of the  
“ agonizing conflict; and, devoid of  
“ power to plead but in the faintest  
“ terms, I may, perhaps, be hastily con-  
“ demned by prejudice. At this mo-  
“ ment that heart I speak of, censures  
“ the cruel task allotted to me, yet it  
“ must be, yes, it must indeed be done;  
“ I have no longer a will of my own,  
“ and even sensibility has almost yielded  
“ beneath the pressure of unhappiness.  
“ Oh Donna Olivia, consult your own  
“ conscience, and then justify and ac-  
“ count for the step I thus reluctantly  
“ take. I dare not waver; the most for-  
“ cible arguments were now inadequate  
“ to quell the rising storm in your breast;  
“ with one execrating burst of ven-  
“ geance and rage you will, I fear, at  
“ once counteract the effect of the little  
“ I have said; but reflection will come

“ at a future day, and you will then view  
“ the conduct of Montalban in a differ-  
“ ent light.”

“ “ Assuredly this ingenuous appeal to  
*your* feelings must have instantly ac-  
quitted him,” observed the nun; “ but I  
cannot doubt the sincerity of the sen-  
timents you have avowed; and, as I  
trust they are alike friendly now to all,  
and resigned to the profession you are  
about to embrace, I shall unhesitatingly  
advise you how to act.

“ The lady Abbess had expected, that  
within the space of three days you  
would receive the veil, and render  
any compulsory measures unnecessary,  
nearly two of which are yet unexpired;  
while you persevere in resistance, you  
are amenable to any punishment the  
Superior may think fit to inflict, in order  
to enforce acquiescence; but afterwards  
they cannot touch you, unless on some  
gross violation of the rules; if, there-  
fore, you would avoid the sufferings

menaced by our formidable tribunal, you have one, and only one resource, that of immediately consenting to take the vows of our order; and, at the same time presenting the Abbess with part of the sum you have received from the Conde Montalban. Such donations we appear to suppose, are appropriated to the support of the convent, but however they may be applied, is a secret to all but Beatrice; and, as they are always acceptable, they generally procure for the donor (if considerable,) the courteous smiles and favour of the lady Abbess."

"Most cheerfully shall I accept the alternative," replied Olivia, "but mistake me not so far as to suppose that I am influenced to it alone by dread of the tyranny or power of the Abbess; nothing can now be more congenial to my soul than this holy retirement, and to-morrow I shall willingly pledge those vows required of me."

“In the morning,” resumed the nun, “you may expect Beatrice here with your breakfast; request that she will inform the Abbess of your intentions; she durst not refuse; nor will her ladyship withhold her consent, or for a moment oppose or retard your determination, particularly when made under terms so advantageous to herself; you must in the mean time prepare for the solemn occasion, and, as I have now, I trust, faithfully discharged the duties of a friend, and obeyed the dictates of my heart, I can retire to my lowly bed, accompanied with a blessing that worlds cannot purchase, a treasure which, compared to all the hordes of the miser, sinks them into nothingness—a calm and self-approving conscience.”

Donna Olivia pressed her hand with all the warmth of gratitude, as she arose to depart. “Good night, angelic counsellor,” she whispered; “the greatest reward you can experience for the good

you have thus wrought, is indeed the approbation of your own bosom; may Heaven remunerate you with its richest blessings hereafter."

Having affectionately embraced her, the good-natured nun at length withdrew, observing the same precautions she had done on entering; and, having carefully replaced the key of Olivia's prison in its usual place of concealment in the dormitory, which she had by chance discovered, she retraced her way to her cell. She now for the first time considered, that it was probable she had been missed by the mother Beatrice, but fortunately the latter had either that night forgotten her usual duties, or from the lateness of the hour had concluded that the nuns were all safe in their cells, and consequently thought her accustomed walk round the dormitory not absolutely necessary. The nun had left Olivia a small lamp, with a strict injunction to extinguish it as soon

as she could fix herself so as to be able to sleep comfortably through the night, and this she promised to do; when Emmeline had retired, she again took up the Conde's letter: "Noble exalted being," she exclaimed, as she glanced over it, and the sum it contained, "what a generous soul must thine be, which can thus magnanimously bestow a favour on the one thou hadst such cause to spurn and hate!" Throughout the whole letter indeed, shone the goodness of Montalban's heart, and the conviction of how undeserving she had been of this last piece of generosity, drew from her the bitterest tears of remorse.

The enclosed draft was to a large amount, and the gratification with which she viewed it, arose chiefly from the reflection that a part of it, appropriately bestowed, might procure a dispensation from the punishments preparing for her. Knowing the mercenary disposition of the Abbess, and, as her favours were ever

to be thus purchased, almost confident that if her voluntary consent to take the veil should fail in exempting her from the sentence of the next day's convention, such an offer would possess too many temptations to be rejected; and, if it could not gain her friendship, would at least tend to make her future residence in the convent, as comfortable and tranquil as other circumstances would allow.

Amid the various emotions that succeeded, sleep gradually approached with drowsy steps, and breathed its oblivious charms over the senses of Olivia, who had, according to her promise, carefully extinguished and concealed the lamp.

She did not awake until roused next morning by the shrill voice of Beatrice; who, bending over her with a malicious grin, desired her to prepare to go with her to the parlour, which being exactly what she wished, she hesitated not to do. They found the Abbess alone, and attired in deep black, it being the dress

always worn whenever a chapter of the nuns was held. With a repulsive and chilling frown she regarded Olivia for a moment, and dismissed Beatrice to superintend for awhile the preparations in the chapel.

The heavy sounding bell now began to toll, and a sensation of sickening apprehension suddenly seized Olivia, who, losing all her presence of mind, and pale with terror, sank on her knees, unable to articulate a word.

Beatrice had returned to say, that most of the nuns were already assembled, and the Superior bade her, in an unfeeling voice, conduct the trembling Olivia to the chapel; adding, "that she should follow as soon as the clock struck twelve."

Olivia was now completely overcome by her agitation; she tried to speak, but the effort was vain; and, grasping the arm of the Abbess, who approached her, her piteous looks seemed to plead more

powerfully for her than words could have done. For many minutes her fixed and silent gaze arrested the attention of the Superior, who, feeling its resistless influence, endeavoured to withdraw her hand. Still, however, Olivia retained her hold; and, nearly choked with those emotions which she had not yet given vent to, a torrent of tears, which had been long ready to gush forth, refused further control, and appeared to have softened the natural asperity of the Abbess's temper.

The sentiment of pity they inspired was momentary; the latter deemed it weakness, and fearful of being obliged to yield to it, and encountering a reproachful glance from Beatrice, she suddenly tore herself from the grasp of the kneeling suppliant; and, waving her hand to Beatrice, bade her instantly bear her thence

The dreadful command thrilled horribly through every nerve of the weep-

ing penitent, who, still denied the power of utterance, shrunk appalled from the advance of Beatrice, and, sobbing convulsively, fell motionless on the floor. The Abbess again approached, and supported her in her arms. Olivia's fears were now raised to the highest pitch, and, with a violent effort, she tried to speak.

"Holy Mother, spare me I beseech you," she cried—"if pity sways your breast; and, oh! let this plead for me if my tears cannot, and show how sincere is my wish to atone for what is past," extending, as she spoke, Montalban's present.

"Atonement!" repeated the Abbess, joy and avarice, which she could not conceal, giving animation to her features; "poor simpleton, think you that I am to be won by gold; that I sell my forgiveness, or that ought *can* atone for your impiety but repentance—sincere repentance, and your taking the veil

this very day; if such indeed be your intentions, I accept this as a pledge, and shall take care to apply it to the benefit of the convent;" at the same time without waiting to hear any other conditions, she took the proffered sum, and deposited it in her bureau.

"Spare me, Lady, I repeat, from further persecution; lead me this moment to the altar, and there I will yield myself a votary to my God and his holy church."

Beatrice bit her nether lip, and the Superior regarded her in silence for a few minutes, apparently considering how she should reply. "Are you aware, daughter, of what you propose?" She at length interrogated; "is this merely the impulse of the moment, or do you solemnly promise to take the veil?"

"Most solemnly, Madame; this very instant I am prepared; nothing can now be more consonant with my feelings."  
"You are forgiven then," resumed the

Abdess, "but beware of trifling with me; you should find it a dangerous attempt; you may now remain here until the mother Beatrice and I shall return from the chapel, whither we must repair, to sanction whatever sentence may be passed on the wicked and abandoned Agatha, and also to inform the community of what you have agreed to."

Olivia felt relieved by their absence; and taking up a small missal, she continued absorbed in her devotional duties until they returned.

It was settled that she should be professed after the evening service; and the whole sisterhood now retired to prepare for the ceremony.

After taking some refreshment, Olivia withdrew to her cell, with sister Emmeline, who was allowed to accompany her; where, joined by the amiable nun, she spent an hour in fervent prayer, and felt her spirits considerably lightened and

invigorated by it; her countenance looked more cheerful and resigned than it had hitherto been; and she was able to converse with her intelligent companion on several interesting subjects, until the vesper bell summoned them to the chapel.

The sacred edifice presented an appearance truly solemn and grand, the walls were hung round with black cloth, and the gilded pillars which supported the arched roof, with the ornaments of gold that decorated the whole interior, formed a contrast with its deep sable hue, which the eye could not behold without admiration; from the centre of the richly ornamented ceiling was suspended a large chandelier of massy gold, and another over the altar, in both of which burned several wax-tapers, that threw a radiant light around, almost surpassing in brilliancy the noon-day sun.

It had been thus fitted up for the ap-

From this period the hearts of Donna Olivia and her beloved Emmeline became cemented by the purest ties of friendship, equally durable and sincere; the same virtuous principles that actuated one appeared sympathetically to influence the other; their every wish and thought was mutually imparted, and their exemplary attachment, and pious fulfilment of their duties, soon gained for them the admiration of every member of the monastery; to the favour of the Abbess Olivia's rich donation, and the presents made from time to time on her account by the Queen of Spain, had long since introduced her; and even the stern mother Beatrice soon ceased to persecute her, and in secret praised those qualities which she yet tried not to imitate.

Until now Olivia had moved in all the voluptuous gaiety, all the artificial pleasures, all the imposing and infatuating splendour of a court; and amid

its luxurious joys conscience shrunk abashed, and care dared not obtrude itself.

How altered was the scene now ; how fully had the maxim, “ out of evil cometh good,” been here illustrated ; the injustice of the Queen, and the conduct of Montalban, she no longer remembered, but as the happiest and most fortunate events of her life.

Within this holy retirement she found that happiness, arising from conscious virtue, which she had long vainly sought in the great world ; serenely glided on her days in the ever-pleasing and instructive society of Emmeline, whose social and amiable virtues had first taught her the useful lessons of humility, resignation and piety, and often now did she bless the hour she had entered St. Marguerite’s convent.

## CHAPTER IV.

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“ My reason in confusion flies,  
 “ And on my cheek th’ uncertain colour dies ;  
 “ While the down-stealing tear betrays  
 “ The lingering flame that on my vitals preys.”

FRANCIS’S HORACE.

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IN about two hours after the party had left the Castello for the chaise, the *tête-à-tête* of the Princess and Viola was interrupted by the entrance of Don Malvolio de Cerberos; the intrusion was as *mal-à-propos* as unexpected, for he had been the subject of their conversation, and he was far from being a favourite with either of the ladies. To the Princess, in particular, he had long been obnoxious; his attentions had ever been coldly repelled, but in his de-

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“Not believe in ghosts, Senora!” exclaimed Bianca, in no very gentle tone, and eager to expatiate on her favourite theme—“Ghosts not in this frightful and extensive Castello—a likely thing indeed! but I forgot to be sure that they never appear in the day-time.”

Bianca had always been a lover of the marvellous; and thinking such things must be equally interesting to every body else, whenever an opportunity offered for introducing one of her stories, she usually contrived, by some means to do so; running on with increasing volubility, without ever considering how romantic and improbable was what she related; and amongst the many privileges granted to this old and faithful domestic, she seemed to prize none so much as the liberty of talking thus unreservedly to Viola, who ever listened to her chattering with the sweetest affability.

“You know, Senora,” continued she,

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portment towards her prevailed a degree of unlicensed familiarity which often alarmed her, and which her repugnance to receive it rather tended to increase.

Unawed by the undisguised and dignified resentment she could not help showing, and apparently unconscious of his presumptuous folly, he had more than once professed himself warmly an admirer of her charms, and a candidate for those affections which he took care should at least not be bestowed on another without his knowledge.

Ere increasing years had matured her judgment, these declarations excited no other sentiment than contempt for their absurdity; and she laughed with Viola at the lengths to which he had ventured; the romantic ardour of his passion, and the sanguine hopes he seemed to cherish.

His manner had, however, lately assumed a greater than usual degree of

boldness and confidence, which could no longer be mistaken, and which had almost terrified Elvira into a determination to represent his conduct to the King; until advised by Viola to treat him with indifference during their stay at Vittoria, as her making it known would disturb the harmony of the whole party and possibly might be attended with fatal consequences; but if on their return to court he should still persist in his addresses, it seemed the only method of putting an end to them.

Her attachment to Viola, and unwillingness to interrupt the happiness she had promised herself in her union with Don Manuel d'Orellez, rendered her consent not to take notice of it at present, easy to be obtained.

“Senor!” said Viola, rather sharply—vexed at his intrusion, “this is an unlooked-for visit—we thought you had joined the hunters.” This observation evidently disconcerted him—and, to

their surprise, he seemed to have lost his usual undaunted air of self-consequence.

“Some letters of importance, which I had to write, detained me at the Castello,” replied he, addressing them both, and at the same time taking a seat beside the Princess; “but surely it has proved a fortunate detention, and compensates me fully in affording me the pleasure of your society.”

Compliments were ever fulsome and unacceptable to them; but from the Senor Malvolio they were, if possible, more disagreeable than they would have been from any body else; this therefore they scarcely noticed. He now joined in their common-place topics of conversation; but there was an unusual restraint and embarrassment in his manner, a dulness in his remarks, and an indescribable fearfulness in his looks, which they knew not how to account

for, and which he seemed unable to divest himself of.

After sitting a considerable time, he withdrew; and Viola, in a short time afterwards, going through the ante-room, met Bianca, who had admitted him.

“Bless me, my lady!” observed the latter, “how the proud Senor Malvolio is changed to-day—he is so pale, and trembles so, he looks for all the world as if he had seen a ghost and truly I warrant he has; for there has he been shut up these two hours in the old oak parlour, at the far end of the vestibule, that was my lord’s study and I am sure——”

“Something has certainly happened to discompose him,” interrupted Viola, with a smile, fearful of talking of him, least he might be within hearing; “but as this is not the age of ghosts we must attribute it to some more probable cause.”

“Not believe in ghosts, Senora!” exclaimed Bianca, in no very gentle tone, and eager to expatiate on her favourite theme—“Ghosts not in this frightful and extensive Castello—a likely thing indeed! but I forgot to be sure that they never appear in the day-time.”

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“You know, Senora,” continued she,

with a significant emphasis, "this very day is, of all others, the eve of San Sebastian; and I am sure, I wish—aye marry, often have I wished that my young Lord Montalban and her gracious highness the Princess had been born on any other; for ever since it has always brought harm with it of some sort. Ah! well I remember what a sad night it was two-and-twenty years ago, when my poor dear Lady the Marcheza died—Oh I shall never forget it; how the whole Castello shook when the young Condè was born—holy Virgin! such a storm of thunder and lightning! it frightened her Excellenza so, that she died in a few hours: there was poor Theresa, my sister, used to say that it was unlucky for a child to be born on the eve of San Sebastian—and she took it so to heart when the Marcheza died, and she saw her words fulfilled, that she did not live long afterwards."

Here a flow of tears interrupted her

for sometime ; but seeing Viola engaged at a drawer near her—she began again when she had wiped them away.

“ Well, as I was saying this day two years, you remember Don Sebastian fell from his horse and was nearly killed ; this day twelvemonth the bravo robbed and attempted to murder him in the Strada del Marino—but Heaven preserve him now wherever he is.”

“ True, Bianca,” observed Viola, “ I own that the eve of San Sebastian is always marked by some peculiar circumstance, and though 'tis the birth-day of my brother and the princess—'tis to me a day of melancholy, from the remembrance that it was the one on which we lost the best of mothers—and all the festivities here to celebrate their births cannot cheer me.”

“ Ah, lady Viola, that *was* a day of sorrow ; many a heart did it cause to ache, many a tear did it cause to be shed ; and well indeed might they weep,

for when she died, both rich and poor lost their best friend: 'twould have broken your gentle heart to hear the lamentations at the convent; every soul there, high and low, monks and nuns, went into mourning, and the holy Madre Abadessa caused midnight masses to be said for a whole month afterwards, for the repose of her soul. Ah how bitterly my lord Marcheze cried when his reverence the Abad Francisco came to comfort him—and the pious Osmin too—but I must not talk of him, you know the Marcheze soon took some private dislike to him—though between you and me, my lady, I think——”

A tear now trickled slowly down Viola's cheek, and Bianca on perceiving it, immediately checked herself, and talked no more on this distressing subject until Viola returned to the Princess, and then, in imagination, she went through all those dismal scenes again.

Elvira was seated in a balcony, over-

looking the lawn below, and Viola, with her drawing materials, took a chair beside her; the eyes of the Princess were fixed intently on the fine prospect her situation commanded—when, suddenly, borne on a litter, the body of Prince Orlando, weltering in blood, to which the cadaverous hue of his countenance formed a contrast horrible to behold, was presented to her view, and with a scream of terror and affright, she fell fainting into the arms of her companion.

A conviction of the dreadful truth had instantaneously struck her—and the first sound her lips gave utterance to on her recovery, was the name of Montalban, breathed forth in accents of agony and despair.

Viola caught the word, and in wild dismay, interrogated its doubtful meaning. Elvira shook her head, and the import of this tacit reply was too intelligible to be misunderstood. Viola stood transfixed with horror, contemplating

the Princess—and for some moments she seemed deprived of every faculty, until the door slowly opened, and Bianca entered, with uplifted hands and eyes.

“ Oh Santa Maria,” exclaimed she, her alarm rendering her forgetful of all ceremony in approaching the Princess, whose cries had hastily summoned her, “ of all the horrid sights my eyes have ever witnessed, I have now seen the worst; of all the black murders that have ever been committed, surely this is the blackest—treason! treason! his highness the Prince Orlando has been assassinated—and nobody knows by whom, the whole Castello is in an uproar—father Francisco has been sent for, and I fear all his holy precepts will not be able to quiet them. Jesu, preserve us! this is indeed the Eve of San Sebastian in good earnest.—I thought, though to be sure I said nothing, that it would bring something before night, as terrible as it has

always done since my lord Montalban's birth; "do, sweet lady, try to compose yourself," she continued, observing Viola's cheek grow suddenly paler than before, and taking her passive hand, "you have not yet seen the bleeding body, and 'tis best that you should not."

"Forbear, I beseech you, Bianca," cried the Princess wildly, and making an effort to rise, "the intelligence has been a shock too violent for her to support calmly, I entreat you to retire; I hear footsteps outside.—Oh for mercy's sake begone."

In amazement at her impatience, Bianca tottered out at one door, while, nearly breathless with agitation, the King rushed in at another, and in a few words related the horrible circumstance. A messenger was immediately despatched to the convent for the Abad, who, with the rest of the community, was busily preparing for the next day's grand festival, and the news of the murder

produced such general consternation as nearly to overthrow the whole.

Viola now awoke from the transient insensibility into which she had fallen, and as she was hastily retiring from the room, lest her emotions should betray the fatal secret of the suspicion she entertained relative to her brother, she was met at the door by the monk, who having bestowed his benediction, approached the King, and told him all was over, and Orlando had breathed his last.

Although this was what he had momentarily expected to hear, the certainty of it suddenly overpowered him, and, with a deep groan, he threw himself on the couch beside his daughter, on whom the Abad fixed a look so scrutinizing—so full of suspicion—it seemed to penetrate her soul—to read her every thought, and she could no longer doubt the nature of his conjectures.

A natural energy of mind and strength of constitution supported her amid all

the fears this gave rise to; and the King having been led to his apartment, Francisco freely communicated his suspicions, which she found corresponded exactly with her own, for their hapless object was Montalban. In quick succession he retraced in his mind all the past events which had, alas! too faithfully fulfilled the prophecy of the long-lost Osmin, Sebastian's fatal attachment, and subsequent vow, the mysterious warning in the chapel, the dreadful performance of that vow that Orlando and Elvira should never be united; he shuddered at the retrospection, it seemed at first like a terrific dream, but reason soon convinced him of its reality. But what a blow to the hopes of towering ambition was Orlando's fall, how destructive to all its visionary prospects; in a moment all the sanguine anticipations, all the fondest wishes, the grandest schemes of a monarch had been disappointed, blasted, annihilated for ever;

the soul-rending conviction penetrated deeply, and despair subdued almost every other sentiment in the King's bosom.

With all her native dignity of character and inward piety, Elvira calmly reviewed the scene; the past, present, and future are alike to the mind of conscientious purity. To one earthly object alone was her soul attached; and, even on the guilty, the blood-stained Montalban (such is the invincible power of true love,) were her dearest affections rivetted; still immutably her fond heart retained its first, its lasting impression, which no sophistical reasoning could efface; and, (like water thrown sparingly upon fire, and thus tending only to augment the flame,) all the arguments and advice of the benevolent monk served but to stimulate her love to resistance, and evince the perverseness of human nature. Her fortitude, however, was by no means stoical, nor the

magnanimity of her breast unmixed with sensibility; she could pity the weaknesses of others, whilst she acknowledged her own; could feel for their misfortunes, whilst she censured their errors, and compassionate their failings and imperfections, whilst she condemned their vices; so regulated was her almost unerring power of discriminating them. Of a temper uniformly tranquil and serene, the tear of sympathy never refused to flow for the sorrows of another. But, she could unmoved contemplate the follies and vain pursuits that occupy little mortals, her passions had ever been under the guidance of reason, her undertakings influenced by prudence and foresight. But, where is to be found the one in whose bosom reason, prudence, and foresight, maintain their empire beneath the despotism of love. Alas, she was unconscious that in its overwhelming power all were swallowed up, that before it every lesser sensation

vanished like chaff before the angry wind; it was a roaring and impetuous torrent that with force resistless bore down every obstacle. Yet Elvira knew she loved, knew the dangers of it; but when that sentiment once implants itself, how insignificant and contemptible appear dangers the most formidable, obstacles the most unconquerable, horrors the most appalling; all are mere bugbears, that mock the resolves of weaker minds, but love laughs them to scorn.

Elvira was young, animated, and cheerful, her disposition amiable, her manners fascinating and engaging; to a natural excellence of understanding and brilliancy of talent, were added all the elegant acquirements, all the refined accomplishments suited to her sex, her rank, and exalted greatness of soul. To her every look and action, her inborn virtue gave additional lustre, and the graceful dignity of her person, the sweet

and benevolent expression of her lovely countenance, were scarcely inferior to the more valuable and durable beauties of her mind; her figure was light and exquisitely formed, uniting the airiness of a Sylph to all the charms of the fabled Venus. But there was a grandeur in her deportment, mingled with an air of complacency and good nature, which commanded the respect, and secured the esteem of all who knew her.

The death of Orlando, as a fellow-creature, she would have lamented; but the terrible circumstances of his untimely fate awakened every emotion of pity and regret her gentle heart was capable of feeling. Yet, amid the melancholy and horror-inspiring reflections it occasioned, there was still a something for which it was impossible to feel the same degree of sorrow; she felt as if relieved from a weight, beneath whose galling yoke her faculties and inclinations had been denied their usual free-

dom of expansion; and, she saw with gratitude to Heaven that the blow had been by its will averted, which had so long menaced the total destruction of her happiness on earth.

To rejoice at an event so shocking as Orlando's murder, because it had freed her from every apprehension and possibility of the evil happening to her which she had so much feared, was wholly incompatible with her virtuous principles, her religious ideas, and moral goodness; but the consciousness that it *had* freed her, contributed to tranquilize her spirits, until a thought more dreadful in its probability than all the rest, suggested itself. Montalban must surely have been his murderer; and, if the dark and deep-searching eye of suspicion glanced on *him*, his death would inevitably be the consequence, the very idea was almost maddening, and it required all the persuasive eloquence, all the consolation and assurances of invio-

lable secrecy on the part of the Abad, to soothe her into any thing like composure. His pious exhortations, however, by no means restored tranquillity to her bosom, for, though no mortal might ever be able to discover Montalban as the perpetrator of this dreadful deed, nothing could screen him from the all-seeing eye of God, or avert the effects of his resentment.

Again, it appeared probable, that, although he might for awhile avoid being suspected, a crime of such magnitude could not always, even in this world, escape the punishment it was usually followed by, and would be revealed at last, however remote the period might be.

What Sebastian's fate would then be she shuddered to think—branded as a murderer, a traitor; should she indeed unite herself to one whose name would cover her with infamy and disgrace. "Yet hold," cried she in the midst of

these painful reflections, "all this may be premature, unfounded, unjust. Good heavens! do I thus criminate Sebastian because I think his love for me would have carried him to this extremity, or ———"

Here she was interrupted by Francisco, who conjured her to give way no longer to emotions that, if observed by other eyes than his, would inevitably betray the subject of her thoughts; and, saying that he should return to the castello in the evening to say mass over the body, he departed for the convent.

As soon as he had withdrawn, the Princess repaired to Viola's apartment, to communicate to her the conversation that had passed; as she moved slowly through the gallery, with her eyes bent towards the floor, a heavy sigh startled her; and, on looking up, she beheld Don Manuel d'Orellez standing at a large bow-window, almost beside the door of the room, whither she was

going. His arms were folded pensively across, his cloak drawn closely about him, and his fine features wore the deep and gloomy impression made by the late tragic occurrence.

“This is indeed an awful day,” observed he, emerging from his reverie, and respectfully approaching the Princess—“memory furnishes not its parallel; the proud Orlando, the darling of Portugal, the hope of your royal sire, fallen—ignobly fallen, by the base hand of an assassin; ’tis a severe trial for your highness. But the same mysterious Power that for its own all-wise purposes, hath permitted a deed so appalling to humanity, will also endue you with fortitude and resignation to submit to its ordinances, and bear patiently and piously the loss; his avenging wrath will pursue the guilty wretch, and hurl destruction on his devoted head.”

“Forbid it, great Providence,” Elvira mentally ejaculated; a glow of resent-

ment mantling her cheek for a moment. "Oh! no, no, he is not, he cannot surely be the wretch they thus dare term him; or, if he *has* done this deed, in mercy pardon the rash impulse of a moment; nor, oh, just God! condemn a penitent offender. Compassionate, Father of mercy, the imprudence his love has drawn him into: surely repentance such as his must be, and tears such as mine, will atone for the crime, if such thine unerring judgment pronounce it."

"I pray your highness to forgive me, if I have further pained you by dwelling on this event," said Don Manuel, misconstruing her silence, "but my mind is so distracted, that I know not what I say. Ah, amiable Princess, how can it be at ease whilst my Viola, my beloved Viola, is indisposed; how cruelly has this day thwarted my fondest hopes—such is the state of mortals. With what refulgence did this morning dawn upon us all; the bright anniversary of the

memorable day that gave Spain a virtuous and exemplary Princess, and an heir as virtuous and exemplary to the illustrious house of Vittoria. And now, alas! how changed; the transient gleam has been succeeded by clouds of sorrow and affliction, but I have heard it said, that the superstitious people of this neighbourhood always dread the eve of San Sebastian, and assert that the death of the Marcheza della Vittoria, the once revered mistress of this castello, happening on the same day of the year, was prophetic of ill."

A tear stood in his dark eye; and the opening of a door at the moment prevented him from observing the agitation Elvira's features betrayed at the mention of Vittoria's heir, and the association of ideas it gave rise to; but their attention was now turned to Bianca, down whose furrowed cheeks the tears still chased each other; she wiped them hastily away, and Don Manuel, in a

paroxysm of terror, caught her arm, and in tones not less wild than his manner, demanded what had happened, and how she had left the lady Viola. "Holy Virgin, your Eccellenza!" cried Bianca, frightened by the suddenness of the action, "my lady is asleep, and—and—but do, Senor, I beseech you, leave this dreary gallery, for she starts so, and raves of such frightful improbabilities, that to hear her will make your Eccellenza more sad."

"Indeed, my lord, she is right;" added the Princess, perfectly comprehending the meaning of Bianca's intelligent glance; "our dear friend will soon, I trust, be better; and your staying here were she to know of it, would but tend to agitate her still more; therefore I would advise you to return to the saloon for the present."

"Let me behold even for a moment her heavenly features calmed in the sweet serenity of sleep; let me convince

myself thus of her safety; then, and not till then, can I consent to go."

"Impossible, Don Manuel; this is no time for such an intrusion; you cannot, must not, see her now; I implore you to withdraw."

"And would your highness impose on me so unreasonable a task; what I depart in this state of suspense? Woman," he continued, turning to Bianca, "what has caused those tears?"

The eloquence of the latter soon done away with the doubts this question implied; and again requesting Elvira's pardon, he was at last prevailed upon to retire: and the Princess with noiseless steps entered Viola's chamber, and took a seat by the side of the bed; where, with her eyes fixed on her slumbering friend, she gave way to a series of reflections of no very tranquillizing nature; which were at intervals interrupted by the wild starts and incoherent exclamations of Viola.

With reluctance she obeyed a summons to dinner : knowing that the King's presence in the saloon rendered an excuse unavailing ; they had already been apprized below of Viola's illness, and consequently *she* was not expected ; and Elvira desiring Bianca to remain with her lady until her return, descended to the saloon.

As she entered, Don Malvolio de Cerberos advanced to meet her, with his hand extended to receive hers, whilst he strove to smile through the natural gloom of his features ; with visible unwillingness she gave him hers, which he pressed with a warmth that startled her, there was an inexplicable something in his looks which increased her alarm, and colouring violently, she hastily withdrew her hand, and seated herself at the table, where with a deep-drawn sigh, he immediately sat down beside her.

As she had of course expected, the meeting was unsociable and distressing,

rendered doubly so to her by the troublesome assiduities of Don Malvolio; all were pensive and reserved, and every countenance was clouded with horror—the liveliness and gaiety that were wont to characterize the parties at which the king or the Marcheze della Vittoria presided were now totally fled; and the two latter, absorbed in deep thought, sat for a considerable time without disturbing the general silence.

The King ate little, and talked still less, and whenever he *did* reply to any observations, it was in so abstracted a manner, that he appeared unconscious of what he said.

Don Manuel's grief and disappointment were visible in his looks; the day that the King intended should unite Orlando and Elvira, was also to have given to him his beloved Viola; but now what a dreary interval must elapse ere he could call her his; ere that fond wish could be accomplished, how many chan-

ges and vicissitudes might take place during the gloomy lapse of three months, the time appropriated by the court to mourn the death of any of its royal members; the melancholy ceremony however accorded with every feeling of his heart, an heart which had never yet lost its confidence in Heaven, nor dared to arraign its (to us) mysterious decrees, and that confidence was alone able to support him through a trial so severe.

Without attracting the particular notice of the King, Don Malvolio paid more than usual attention to the Princess during the cheerless repast; nor did he betray the mortification he felt at the evident reluctance with which she received it.

Vanity was one of his inherent qualities; in the formation of his person nature and art had united their utmost efforts to produce what the world generally terms, "an elegant looking young man;" and so far had indeed succeeded,

for his address was insinuating, and his deportment graceful; but alas, his evil genius, as if envious of their power, had early planted in his bosom the seeds of malignity and vice, in so genial a soil they soon flourished, and grew to maturity ere he had himself attained the age of manhood.

Never had Elvira known moments so full of misery as the present, indignation and offended pride subdued for awhile her efforts to speak; and as soon as the cloth was removed, she rose from the table, and darting an indignant look at Don Malvolio, who attempted to detain her, she pleaded indisposition, and hastened to the apartment of Viola, who she found was still asleep.

Bianca's respect for the Princess could not restrain her usual loquacity, and she appeared now fully prepared to indulge it.

“ Ah, your Highness,” said she, turning

down the leaf of an old Bible she had been reading, "I fear me much this terrible business has turned my poor lady Viola's brain—and (God bless us,) if I had not had this holy book in my pocket, her raving would have frightened me out of my senses, she says such out o'-the-way things of her brother the Conde Montalban,—not that I think any thing of that—nor am I easily scared neither. But then your Highness knows 'tis so dismal to sit here by one's self, and a corpse so near one, and there has not been a prayer said over it yet; and for my part, if father Francisco does not come to say mass, as he promised to do, I would not sit up with it to-night for all the wealth of the Castello, though Dominico and Rosetta are to sit up also,—but what of that,—they would be just as much afraid at midnight as myself, for even if this was not the eve of San Sebastian, and nobody was dead in the

'Castello, that great old clock in the north tower clangs so awfully that 'tis enough to terrify the stoutest heart in Spain."

"Fie, Bianca," said the Princess, "what is there to fear at midnight more than now, if you put your trust in the watchful care of Providence,—I hope He is present in your thoughts in the gloom of darkness as well as in the brightness of day—and surely you are not so silly as to believe in the existence of ghosts."

"Oh your Highness, I am silly enough in many things, but (pardon my freedom,) folks may talk as they choose, and deny the existence of such things, because they have never seen them; but as I said once to my lady Marcheza when she was living, and as much like your highness as one egg is to another, (the Lord rest her soul,) is there any thing impossible to God?"

The justness of this axiom Elvira could not but allow, and she felt confused by the unintentional reproof it

conveyed, while Bianca continued on her favourite topic : “ Aye, God rest our dear lady’s soul, as I said before ; well I remember the night she died—and a dark stormy night it was ; about eleven o’clock I was sent down for father Paulo the confessor.—Oh Santa Maria, how I trembled going down the great Gothic stair-case—and——”

“ This is a dismal subject, good Bianca,” interrupted the Princess having heard the same story repeated more than an hundred times,—and to talk longer on it, will but make us more sad, at present I will dispense with your attendance, and pass the time, until lady Viola awakes, in reading.”

Bianca took the hint, and dropping a low courtesy, she left the Princess to the indulgence of her reflections ; the immediate object that occupied her thoughts was Don Malvolio—she had tried to repress the appearance of the indignation his conduct had inspired, in vain,

and now her tears bedewed the leaves of the book she had taken up to tranquilize her mind.

The effort was unavailing and she replaced it,—again her apprehensions returned, relative to Don Malvolio, and knowing the depravity of his disposition was concealed by a mask that few could penetrate, she trembled at her own surmises, and no wickedness however black and diabolical, appeared too atrocious to be dreaded from him. She therefore resolved, should she perceive any thing further in his behaviour bordering on his late mysterious freedom, to acquaint the King immediately of it, let the consequence be what it might; and, somewhat consoled by this determination, she for awhile watched anxiously for Viola's awaking, who however, now slept so quietly that she soon deemed the wish almost a crime, as sleep was, she knew one of the best restoratives. Elvira therefore took a seat at a large window

that overlooked an extensive country, enriched by all the wild and picturesque beauties of nature, and taking in a space of several miles.

From the romantic verdure of the vales below, her eye wandered to the stupendous boundary of the prospect—the far stretching Pyrenées—that immense chain of mountains that was so soon to sever her from all she held dearest in this subitrary world—from Sebastian, yet she a thousand times blessed that barrier, for would it not also separate him from all the dangers he had so much cause to fear: the confidence of this now rendered the thought of his absence more easily borne, she durst no longer wish him to remain in Spain, where he could not long elude suspicion, or the direful grasp of vengeance; in a few short months Orlando might be forgotten—“and then,” cried she, “then shall Montalban return to love and happiness.”

“ Love and happiness !” she mournfully repeated. “ Alas ! the possession of one has fatally cost him the forfeiture of the other : and to what end has he made so irreparable a sacrifice ? has not Heaven itself interdicted our marriage, dare we hope ever to be united, when the awful voice of the omniscient Being forbids it ?—No, no, it must never be ; grant me resolution, oh God, and we part for ever—in the consciousness of having obeyed thy will, we can alone be happy.”

The pale lustre of the rising moon now feebly shone on her cheek, wet with the tear of sensibility and affection, the serenity of the scene outside was perfectly in unison with her feelings, and she threw up the casement to inhale the refreshing breeze of evening.

## CHAPTER V.

The will  
 And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
 Left him at large. MILTON

IN this state of tranquillity Elvira did not remain long; again her thoughts recurred to Montalban, and again her tears flowed copiously; and, as her frequent sighs were borne away on the passing gale, she appeared to derive some consolation from the idea, that they were wafted to the ear of him she loved. A strain of divine harmony now stole softly on her ear, and attentively she listened, as the swelling peal of distant music was borne on the gentle breeze, and raised her thoughts to the supreme Being whose praises it resounded; it

was the vesper service at the monastery of San Sebastian, and the monks and nuns were chanting a solemn dirge for Orlando's departed spirit. She ceased to weep—Heaven alone seemed the object of her regard, and involuntarily she took up a lute which lay beside her, and swept the trembling strings, whose dulcet sounds were soon lost in the exquisite melody of her voice.

Suddenly she checked herself; for, in the sweet oblivion in which it had rapt her, she had forgotten even Viola, who now awoke with the thrilling sensations of rapture caused by the lingering vibrations, and gazing incredulously round the room, "Ah why," said she, "have I been disturbed in a dream so sweet, so celestial; methought I was conveyed to the regions of immortality, and surrounded by myriads of angels, who sang to their harps the praises of God. Would I had remained in such a state of bliss for ever." Elvira having

put aside the instrument, approached the bed, and took her extended hand, endeavouring to recal her to recollection by her affectionate endearments: the well-known voice soon succeeded, and Viola arose, considerably benefited by the tranquil repose of the last two hours.

Just as the clock struck nine, Bianca entered on tip-toe, to say that Father Francisco and three others of the monks were come to say mass over the corpse, and, on seeing Viola sitting up and so much better, a faint gleam of joy was visible on her features, which, however, vanished on hearing both her and the Princess express their wishes to be present on the awful occasion. In vain she employed all her good-natured rhetoric to dissuade them, and the Marchese della Vittoria, now entering to inquire about Viola, granted their wish: his looks were pale and haggard; he fondly clasped to his bosom his beloved

daughter, whose cheek was blanched by a thousand nameless emotions, while trembling she placed one arm within his, and resting the other on Elvira's, proceeded with them to the chamber of death.

The scene there was exactly calculated to excite those fears they had been trying to subdue, and they started appalled at the gloomy sight. On a large state bed lay the corpse in solemn grandeur; the draperies were of rich black velvet, with narrow borders, and festoons of gold; lined inside with white satin, embossed with the same, and corresponding with the coverlid, which was also edged with deep gold fringe. The face of the deceased was uncovered, the ghastly expression death had given it made them shudder, and they clung firmly to the Marcheze for support.

At the foot of the bed stood a magnificent bier, on which was placed the

coffin, that awful receptacle of mortality, covered by a pall of costly velvet, with a large cross in the centre, wrought in gold: the tapestry that hung round the room was of crimson damask, trimmed with black; from the middle of the ceiling, which represented various scripture pieces painted by the first masters, was suspended a chandelier, in which burned twelve wax candles.

Four more stood on a table in a recess at the further end of the apartment, whither the Marcheze led the Princess and Viola, for whom seats were placed on either side of the King, whose extreme agitation for some time prevented him from observing them.

Slowly and firmly the Abad now began the service for the dead; his voice was clear and distinct, notwithstanding its melancholy tone, and his auditors knelt with reverential awe, whilst their streaming eyes denoted the impression he had made on them. At

the conclusion of the prayers, the pious discourse he delivered to them, restored a degree of composure; after which, joined by the three monks who had accompanied him from the convent, he prepared to sing the requiem. In an alcove opposite stood a fine-toned organ, and beside it a harp, and the Princess and Viola being finished performers on both instruments, were obliged to comply with the earnest request of the King and the Marcheze, in playing the accompaniment to the holy song. The spaciousness of the apartment, and the solemn appearance of every thing around, with the heavenly and brilliant style in which Viola touched the harp, and the grand and sonorous peals of the organ gave to the music an effect too exquisite for description; and, when it was ended, every heart felt at ease, and acknowledged its soothing influence.

As Francisco left the Castello, he

put a sealed billet into the hands of the Princess, which, upon opening, she found to contain a pressing invitation from the Abadessa, for her and Viola to pass a few weeks at the convent, until the commotion caused by the late disastrous event should have in some measure subsided.

Nothing could at present be more consonant to her feelings than the tranquillity of that holy retirement, and finding it equally according with the inclinations of Viola, and having obtained the ready consent of the King and the Marcheza, she wrote a few lines to the worthy Abadessa, expressive of their gratitude, and the gratification it would afford them; and promising that she and her friend would be at the convent on the day after the festival.

The monks now departed, and the Princess and Viola after partaking of some light refreshments, returned to their apartments, too much depressed

for society or conversation, and the former equally fearful of again encountering the impertinent assiduities of Don Malvolio.

Although the night was now considerably advanced, Elvira felt no inclination to sleep ; and, having dismissed her attendants, she was just preparing for her accustomed religious duties, when her attention was suddenly arrested by the trampling of horses in the court beneath ; and looking from the window, she beheld a numerous train of vassals and guards belonging to the Marcheze, who immediately after Orlando's death, had been despatched to explore the neighbouring country in all directions in search of the murderer ; but, as has been already shewn, that search, although prolonged to so late an hour, was wholly unsuccessful.

Offering up her prayers for the preservation of Montalban, Elvira was about to retire from the window, when

a bright gleam of moonshine fell full on two forms in the court, discovering the Abad and Don Malvoño, apparently in close conversation. Francisco had protracted his stay beyond the usual hour for closing the gates of the monastery—and surprise rivetted her to the spot for some moments—some secret impulse independent of mere curiosity, (a quality she had ever despised,) detained her there, for she fancied, (though she scarcely knew why,) that she was the subject of their conference, and she deemed it not only pardonable, but incumbent on her to listen to their discourse, and at once either have her suspicions confirmed or dispelled. The wind had risen high within the last hour, and her ear could only catch an indistinct sentence at intervals between its sullen murmurs, until a loud and angry exclamation from the Abad, left her no longer in doubt that she was indeed the subject on which they spoke.

“ No, Don Malvolio,” cried he vehemently, “ do not thus deceive yourself, I am *not* the sort of friend you would have me—nor the simpleton you *think* me: I dare not make a proposal so preposterous, so presumptuous, so totally inconsistent with reason, to the Princess—and even if I *dare*, I *would* not. Now, Senor, you know my determination—and I trust ~~that~~ reflection will shew you the dangerous folly you would have been guilty of—good night !”

As he said the last words he waved his hand in token of silence, and passed through the portal, while the evidently displeased Don Malvolio with downcast eyes, slowly re-entered the Castello; and Elvira, agitated by what she had overheard, and almost confident of the nature of this Machiavel’s sentiments and designs, endeavoured to lose for awhile the apprehensions it gave rise to in prayer.

Her slumbers through the night were

short and disturbed; visions of unhappiness floated across her brain, and she almost feared to meet Don Malvolio on the following morning at breakfast—her repugnance to his society became now stronger and more deep rooted than ever. but she found some consolation in the idea that Francisco was her friend, and being now acquainted with the Senor's mind, would probably defeat his artifices, or at all events would never concur in any proposal he might make.

During the whole of the day the Abad was detained at the monastery by the grand festival of San Sebastian, to which the party at the Castello had long ago been invited and given a promise to be present at,—circumstances had now unhappily rendered it necessary to retract that promise, and as the King and all the courtiers were to depart for Madrid on the ensuing day, with the body of the Prince, each was so occupied in preparing for the journey, that Elvira saw not Don

Malvolio till the party met at dinner; and there, as she sat far removed from him, he had no opportunity of conversing with her.

Her mind was much more at ease on the following morning, and the prospect of again visiting the revered asylum of her infancy, with her beloved Viola, imparted a degree of cheerfulness, to which the conviction that she should thus, (though only for a short time,) be freed from the sight of a being so hateful to her as Don Malvolio, considerably added, the pleasing anticipation of the affectionate reception she should meet from the Abadessa, her fond and maternal embrace, and the friendly caresses with which the whole sisterhood were wont to hail her, rendered her almost forgetful that any circumstances existed to make her unhappy—and a smile of satisfaction beamed sweetly over her features on seeing that those expectations had pro-

duced a similar effect on the spirits of Viola.

About noon the Princess repaired to her apartment, in order to get the few articles ready which she intended to take with her to the convent: having done so, she took down from a small library a volume of Petrarch, and, absorbed in his pathetic beauties, she heeded not the elapse of time, until the sound of an approaching footstep in the gallery withdrew her attention, and the next moment some person tapped gently at the door. Supposing it to be Viola, she instantly rose and opened it, when, to her unspeakable astonishment and indignation, Don Malvolio stood before her; who, reddening with the confusion her angry and repulsive frown threw him into, entered, and, faltering out a sort of apology for his intrusion, uninvited took a seat.

This gross violation of the respect due

to her rank and sex, seemed to have deprived her for some time of the power of expressing her resentment and offended pride, otherwise than by the petrifying look with which she regarded him. In her every feature were seen the emotions of horror and resentment that struggled for utterance.

At length, assuming as much composure as it was possible to do, she demanded for what purpose he had thus infringed decorum, and the respect he owed her, so basely as to intrude upon her retirement, and unbidden, enter her presence, even in her chamber.

All her dignity of voice and manner was lost upon him, he now threw off all reserve, and advancing to where she stood, he bent upon one knee,—“ Oh divine Princess,” said he, trying to seize her hand, “ you behold at your feet the most wretched and unhappy of the human race ; long have I been the victim of an hopeless, a never-ending passion,—but

no, I will not call it hopeless, why should I now despair—its agonies too long I have already suffered: Eivira, till now, I have never dared to trust to my lips the secret of my heart, lest they should tell it in sounds too cold for such a one as yours. I love, adore you—yes, by heaven, to madness I love you, not more sincerely do I worship our great Creator, than your matchless charms and perfections, nor more ardently do I wish for that heaven, than I do to make you mine !”

“ Instantly unhand me, and begone, presumptuous, impious wretch,” interrupted the Princess, making a violent effort to disengage herself, “ dare not again to offend mine ears by language so gross and insulting—by professions so unworthy my rank to hear, or your audacity shall meet its proper punishment; nay, I will this moment to the King my father, and be your chastisement equal to your desert.”

“ Stay, stay, proud beauty,” said he, still grasping her robe, “ turn not thus scornfully from me, nor think I shall so easily relinquish the hope of obtaining you—now Orlando is no longer in your way; and, mark me, Montalban—ah, start not at the name, the Conde Montalban, I repeat, would make a contemptible rival—poor minion! *his* time is past; he knew not, like me, what an easy conquest is woman to him who shrinks not from trifles—a little perseverance—a few sighs and vows, and she is won; such a one am I—and you shall find that yours are charms I value too highly to think any enterprise too difficult for the attainment of them—O beautiful Elvira,”—and rising, he laid his other hand on her arm, while she stood horror-struck and confounded, “ Oh Elvira,! from my very infancy, have I beheld you with admiration—and gazed with rapture on your increasing loveliness—since nature first taught me what

my heart was formed for, your image has been indelibly impressed on it."

"No more, I command you,—but quit my presence this moment, unmannered hypocrite," cried the terrified Elvira; and with an air of wildness and desperation, she indignantly dashed him from her.

He reeled backwards a few paces, and the crimson tide of madness rushed to his cheek as he again flung himself on a seat to recover breath.

"Remember this affront, Princess," exclaimed he, while rage inflamed his whole face, "and hear what it is to tempt *my* vengeance—Montalban and you love each other—but——"

She heard no more—she had, with a loud cry, thrown open the door, and the Abad Francisco entered.

"Protect me, I beseech you, good Father," said she, taking the arm of the monk; who, being acquainted with Don Malvolio's sentiments, and having

been some hours at the Castello, had suspected and followed him hither unnoticed.

“Silence!” roared Malvolho, in a voice like thunder; “the sword hangs suspended over you, haughty Elvira—breathe but a syllable of what has passed and it falls”

“Peace, miscreant,” said the Abad, darting a contemptuous look at him; “stay not here another moment, or it falls on *you*—begone!”

As if awed by the resolute demeanour of Francisco, he arose; the colour forsook his cheek; his brow became more contracted; and with a demoniac scowl he disappeared.

The Princess was violently agitated, and a considerable time elapsed after his departure ere she was able to reply to the Abad’s inquiries; her answers were vague and unconnected, her whole frame trembled, and every personal danger, every thing pertaining to self,

was almost forgotten in the conviction that Malvolio had indeed learned the secret of her passion for Montalban. At first she had no doubt that his naturally vindictive disposition, combined with the repulse she had just given him, would lead him to disclose immediately the knowledge of it, and betray Montalban into all the dangers to be feared from the too certain indignation of the King, when he should hear of an attachment so unlawful and disproportionate, for, to any that might accrue to herself she was almost wholly indifferent, so tremblingly alive was she to every thing connected with the happiness, or threatening the safety, of Sebastian.

A little reflection, however, shewed her how groundless were her apprehensions concerning him; at least, so far as depended on the silence of Don Malvolio, who, it did not appear probable, would thus hazard a discovery of his own temerity, which, if known, would

draw upon him a punishment equal to, if not much more to be dreaded than any that could happen to Sebastian.

This opinion she communicated to Francisco, who perfectly coincided with her, and the conviction left her mind much more at ease.

Of his interview with Don Malvolio in the court, or the purport of it, the Abad spoke not; but, satisfied of his integrity, Elvira thought it prudent not to advert to it, both from the fear that he might misconstrue the cause; and, at all events, would not approve of her having listened to it; and her reluctance to speak of Malvolio at all, whenever it could be avoided.

“I rejoice, illustrious Lady,” said the monk, “that our holy convent can for awhile afford you and the Senora Viola, the amiable daughter of Vittoria, a retreat from the sorrows and vicissitudes incidental to all the inhabitants of the great and busy world; my sojourn

amongst men was short—and though I am no misanthrope, I saw sufficient to condemn; but this is wandering from the purpose that brought me hither. I am commissioned by the Abadessa to inform you of the anxiety with which she and the sisterhood await the arrival of your highness and Lady Viola at the monastery. With open arms and warm and disinterested hearts, they wait to receive you; and, I trust, your highness will allow me to say that a few hours more will gratify their hopes.”

To this the Princess assented; and the Abad obtained her promise that she and Viola would not delay beyond the time at which the King and his suite were to set out for Madrid.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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The beauties of this place should mourn  
Th' immortal fruits, and flowers at my return  
Should hang their withered heads—for sure my breath  
Is now more poisonous.

DRYDEN'S " *State of Innocence* "

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IN his dying moments Prince Orlando had requested that his remains should not be removed to Portugal: but should be honoured by interment in the vaults of the royal chapel in Madrid, beside those of his early friend and companion, the Prince Henrico; every wish he had expressed was punctually obeyed, and amid the consternation and regret of the whole city; he was consigned to the tomb in all the solemn pomp the occasion demanded.

On the arrival of the dreadful intel-

ligence of his nephew's death, Alonzo, Prince of Brazil, immediately repaired to the Spanish court, by the advice of the Queen of Portugal, his mother; and a week had scarcely elapsed after the funeral, when his approach was announced. This circumstance increased the general confusion and anarchy to an alarming pitch; for Alonzo was a man of known severity; and on the murderer he had denounced the most direful punishments the unconfined laws of the country would allow, or human nature invent whenever he should be found.

But week after week rolled on; no search, nor edict, had succeeded in bringing the mystery to light; for what end it had been perpetrated none could conjecture; at least, their conjectures bore no semblance of probability; and none ever coupled the idea of the illustrious Montalban with the recollection of the murder. At the time it had happened the latter was supposed to have

been in Catalonia; and if, even from any other cause, suspicion had been directed towards him, this supposition would have effectually repelled it; besides it was impossible that a suggestion of such a nature could arise to tarnish the fame of a family so universally respected and beloved as that of Vittoria.

In the mean time, the unhappy Sebastian, though alive to all the horrors of his situation, saw that he was at present safe from personal danger; and that the continuance of that safety probably depended on himself: true, the fatal secret was in the possession of others, but from them he hoped there was nothing to fear; and, although he believed Donna Olivia to be acquainted with it, his apprehensions on that account soon vanished, when he reflected that several reasons would now prevent her ever revealing it.

Owing to the constant agitation of his mind, his health had been little benefited

by his excursion: and his anxiety to return to Madrid, (to gaze once more on the beautiful form of Elvira,) though replete with danger, became stronger every day. The murdered Orlando was ever present in his thoughts; the horrid image, with vindictive visage, and locks stained with gore, pursued his every step by day; and haunted his uneasy pillow by night, pouring in his affrighted ear the most terrible wrath of Heaven.

The state of solitude in which he had for some time confined himself tended to increase those terrific visions, and to preserve his intellects from absolute derangement, he found it necessary to quit it.

A thousand times he resolved to brave the worst at once, to make a full and ingenuous confession—and Oh, no—he durst not hope for mercy, and meet his fate—a fate the most formidable, with the same strength that had hitherto supported him.

Worlds, (had he possessed them) he

would have given, could he have recalled the fatal deed; and willingly would he have thus sacrificed himself; but it was now, alas, too late; and he as often broke through those resolves, reflecting on what would assuredly be the consequences were he to make this now (as he thought) useless confession, the lasting disgrace and ruin of his family, the confiscation of their possessions, the degradation of one of the noblest and most ancient houses of which Spain could boast; and, worse than all, the grief and despair into which he had too much cause to know it would plunge Elvira. Amid these uneasy waverings he commenced his journey towards home. Unhappiness, and a familiarity with sorrow and penitence, had taught him to moralize, and reason with himself against the hasty dictates of the moment; and the retrospection of other circumstances added fresh pangs to his already tortured conscience.

When imagination pictured to him the fate to which he had consigned Donna Olivia; that he had been the minister who had executed the black purposes of the Queen, he felt his brain turn round; and that conscience which he could not disburthen even of a crime so comparatively trivial, he now almost wished to be as flinty and impenetrable as a rock, to the stings of remorse.

He shuddered at the cruel severities to which he fancied Olivia exposed, and her image soon superseded even that of Orlando; the idea that it was possible to free her from them, and even procure her a dispensation from her vows, if she had already pronounced them, (and, knowing her repugnance to a conventual life, at the period when he had parted from her, he sometimes indulged a hope that she had not) stimulated him, to make the attempt.

Returning towards the Pyrenées, he

called at St. Marguerite's, and was admitted to the presence of the Lady Abbess, to whom he made known, the plan he had formed, to rescue Olivia.

“And would you, *Senor*,” asked the sagacious Superior; “would you, indeed, thus brave the vengeance of the Queen?”

The question startled him; that such would follow he could not doubt, and until now, he had not bestowed a thought on it; but even the fear of that would not have biassed him from his design, had not the Abbess detailed to him all that had passed since his last visit to the convent. The reproaches which had at first tormented him were, however, softened by the assurance of Olivia's perfect tranquillity in the monastic state, which had, so happily for her, brought her to a sense of all her former errors, and a reformation so unexpected.

Alternately regretting and rejoicing at this event, he proceeded on his

tedious journey, across the mountains, and soon again found himself on the scene at once of all his happiness and all his misery, the forest of Vittoria, he diligently traced the usual haunts of Elvira, and sighed forth her name in sorrowing murmurs, which were reverberated from every quarter of the lone and dreary spot. But no Elvira answered to his call; she had returned to Madrid long before his arrival, and almost exhausted he would have entered the Castello; but, not thinking it likely that she would remain there after what had happened, he bent his wearied steps towards the convent of San Sebastian, and was met at the portal by the Abad, who was going to make his accustomed excursion through the wood, to the adjoining village, to exercise his holy functions, and distribute his charities amongst its poor inhabitants.

The monk started with a momentary sensation of alarm on seeing him, and a

glow of confusion at once betrayed Montalban's guilt, and declared him conscious of the cause of Francisco's emotion.

"Alas, my son," inquired the latter, hurrying him down a retired path, "your looks tell me that all I have suspected is too true—and you are——"

"A murderer," anticipated Montalban, with a countenance wild and haggard—while tears of agony rolled down his cheeks.

"What can have again led you hither, where every object must fill you with horror—where every breath of wind whispers the deed you have done—and memory conjures up Orlando's bleeding spectre to tell the dread tale with thousand tongues. Oh Sebastian! thou darling of my declining years. Heaven alone knows how fondly I loved you,—Why must I yield to what my heart revolts from, why add to your sufferings, by apparent cruelty, with how much reluctance I do it, Heaven knows,—alas!

I cannot admit you within our hallowed walls—you are, Senor, indeed a murderer, and, as such, we are forbidden to protect on pain of vengeance from the inquisition; you must hasten to some sanctuary where the laws extend not to such rigidity, and there, by penitence and prayer, endeavour to make atonement to God."

They had reached a small arbour, where, sitting beneath its shade, Montalban fully unbosomed his secret to the Abad, whose pious and consolatory counsel considerably relieved his mind.

After the delay of only a few hours, he proceeded to Madrid, where his arrival was hailed with general joy—that sensation was not altogether unmingled with pain in the bosom of Elvira, who dreaded that by his hasty return he had precipitated himself into all the dangers that a longer absence might have averted—though a few days before she had thought any thing besides his absence tolerable.

His love was not more gratified in again beholding one for whom he felt every sentiment short of adoration, than his contempt was awakened to the artifices of the Queen, who communicated to him the tale by which she had accounted for the absence of Donna Olivia, who, it was firmly believed, had eloped with a young Italian nobleman, who had resided a long time at Madrid, and had set out for his native country before the King's return from Vittoria and the Conte Ridolfo being a young man of known gallantry and personal attractions, the story was more easily credited.

Thus ended the hopes of the Marchese della Vittoria, of uniting the Queen's principal favourite to his son.

Not long antecedent to this period Don Malvolio de Cerberos had been called into Andalusia, by a letter from a dying relative, to whose property he was sole heir, and as there was every

reason for supposing he would make a long stay there, Elvira forbore to say any thing of his conduct to the King, to Montalban she had already determined not to mention it, for she felt that to do so, would be breaking through the restrictions she had imposed on herself, and however ill such restrictions as denying herself the society of Montalban, or the indulgence of a hope that she should one day be his wife, accorded with the genuine feelings of her heart, she resolved to act consistently—in doing so, she foresaw not the additional guilt and horror into which she was plunging Sebastian, nor the sorrows she was drawing on herself.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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“ It is jealousy's peculiar nature  
To swell small things to great, nay out of nought  
To confuse much, and then to lose its reason  
Amid the hideous phantoms it hath formed ”

YOUNG.

“ Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
As proofs of holy writ—————”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ I have turned o'er the catalogue of woes  
That sting the heart of man, and found none equal ”

YOUNG,

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THE Prince of Brazil, notwithstanding his natural severity, was a man of elegant and insinuating manners, refined acquirements, and fascinating appearance; to his handsome features the sadness of grief gave additional sweetness,

in them there was something which forcibly appealed to the heart, and seldom failed to leave his image stamped on the more susceptible one of the other sex; few could boast of more attractive qualities, or more enviable conquests,—and few knew better than Alonzo how to appreciate them. Struck by the loveliness of Elvira, his bosom had learned from experience a lesson of vanity not easily forgotten; he had seldom beheld her equal in beauty, and still seldomer wanted sufficient confidence in his own perfections to influence his projects and urge him to the attainment of his wishes, the subjugation of every heart that he deemed a worthy tribute.

Pride and ambition were his leading characteristics, but he had also many amiable traits in his disposition, which Elvira certainly admired, while she overlooked those exterior beauties that immediately strike the eye: but in him she found not her kindred soul, nor that con-

geniality of sentiment which had so soon attached her to Montalban.

He possessed little of the gloomy reserve of his country, though inheriting all its superstition; his society was enlivening and agreeable, and often succeeded in drawing Elvira's thoughts insensibly from the melancholy subjects that occupied them, to others of a less serious nature. Amid his grief for Orlando, his soul disdained not to own the softer emotions which in reality dignify the man and ornament the christian; with his conversation, at once amusing and instructive, it was impossible not to be pleased,—and Elvira, while she admired his talents, knew not that in manifesting that admiration, she was leading him into a total misconception of her feelings and sentiments.

To the watchful eye of jealousy every thing is discernible, and from that of Montalban, Alonzo's partiality to Elvira,

could not long remain concealed; he magnified it into a circumstance the most alarming and destructive to his hopes, while she, in conscious rectitude and innocence, thought not of discouraging the polite attentions of the Prince, nor for a moment suspected the motive from which they sprung, nor did it occur to her that a circumstance, apparently so trivial, could have caused the least disquietude to Montalban.

Vexed and mortified by her conduct, the latter daily sought an opportunity of letting her know the unhappiness it gave rise to—but in her presence his resolution fled—and he could not entertain a doubt of her faithfulness to the vows her lips had so often pronounced: “yet if faithful to them,” said he to himself, “why not at once consent to accompany me to the altar, there to ratify those vows by marriage—fly with me to some remote and peaceful abode, where in the

enjoyment of domestic virtue and mutual love, we may spend our remaining years?"

Here the voice of reason interrupted his soliloquy to represent the imprudence of such a step,—“if in your flight, Sebastian, you should be overtaken, should you not be made to feel the nature of your offence—and, in the ill-matched husband of Elvira, would be discovered the murderer of Orlando. Await patiently the hour that fate hath destined to unite you—and all may be well.”

To this he assented,—the remembrance of Orlando's death, the oblivious power of time was gradually diminishing, and the period was now almost arrived when the long-intended and long-wished for union of Don Manuel and Viola was to take place.

He had ever affectionately loved his sister, and to behold her in the possession of all that can be termed happiness on earth, was one of the first wishes of

his heart—to bid her a last adieu, ere he witnessed the event which would secure it to her, he could not resolve on, for he thought it probable that were Elvira to elope with him, they should quit the kingdom for ever; these romantic suggestions made him give up the idea for the present.

Meanwhile the Princess was far from enjoying in reality the serenity she assumed; her mind was continually harassed by the recollection of past occurrences, and in particular by the words of Don Malvolio. How he could have discovered the object of her love; she could only account for, by supposing he had been informed of it by Donna Olivia; and the indignities he had offered to herself were no little augmentations to her uneasiness, which was very soon increased by a serious declaration from Prince Alonzo of his passion for her.

To encourage a hope which she did not intend to realize, would, she knew, be

criminal in the extreme—and to decidedly reject him, and prohibit his addresses, would be indiscreet, as it would undoubtedly lead him to declare his sentiments immediately to the King, which, awaiting her approbation, he had not yet done,—and she feared that the latter would be too eager for such a powerful ally as the prince of Brazil, to reflect that in securing him, he should sacrifice the peace and happiness even of this his beloved daughter.

She therefore deemed it politic at present, to return an evasive reply to his suit; determined if Montalban's love and attachment still continued as firm as her own; after the ordeal by which she meant to try them, to terminate his suspense, and reward his constancy by bestowing entirely on him that heart and hand for which so many competitors had hitherto sued in vain. In her subsequent deportment to Alonzo, she was more reserved; but Sebastian, now disinclined to

put a favourable construction on her conduct, became a prey to the most agonizing pangs of jealousy, which had no sooner taken root in his breast, than, finding a soil that afforded ample nourishment, the baneful weed quickly vegetated and poured its venom through his heart.

With lynx-eyed scrutiny he pursued the movements of Alonzo, and having frequent access to the presence of all the royal family, he had opportunities of discovering many things tending to inflame his jealousy still more.

On several nights since Alonzo's arrival, Montalban had observed him going into the chapel of the Palazzo, where he continued for a considerable time,—and though he could not at first conceive the purport of his visits there at such late hours, he soon formed conjectures militating against his honour, and resolved to be convinced of their truth or fallacy even at the hazard of his existence.

Having fixed on a certain night for this purpose, with a mind prepared for any event that might ensue, he repaired to the chapel, a little before the Prince's usual hour.

A few scattered stars glimmered on the firmament—the night was gloomy and tempestuous—he stopped awhile; the scene reminded him of the eve of San Sebastian, and the loud whistling gale seemed to forewarn him of danger. He laid his hand on his bosom, which throbbed with violent emotion—his whole frame trembled—but his resolution was not to be thus shaken, and wiping the cold moisture from his forehead, he proceeded. He had not yet reached the colonnade that fronted the chapel, when he perceived, in the long perspective, two figures enter by the principal door, which they immediately afterwards closed, as the echo of its hollow sound told.

Almost convinced that Elvira was one

of them, and enraged by the idea of her supposed perfidy, he hastily walked on, and gently opening the door, he went in, and shut it with equal caution—knowing that none had the privilege of entering at pleasure this holy sanctuary except the royal family.

Uncertain what direction to take, he stood still for some time, panting for that vengeance he had vowed to take, for all within was profoundly silent and dark, though he had seen a light borne by one of those who had passed through the same door. At length an indistinct sound of voices directed him, and he moved softly along one of the back aisles leading to the royal mausoleum. Again stopping, he listened a moment, and heard indeed the voice of—Elvira.

At the same time he saw a faint gleam of light, which was in an instant extinguished by the wind, whose dismal gusts blew from every quarter of this ancient edifice, and heard the Princess

fearfully exclaim, “ Santa Maria ! there is somebody in the chapel, and without a light we cannot find the way out ; but we must, if possible, get away unobserved, for whoever it may be, such a visitor bodes us no good—and if we stay here, we but subject ourselves to impertinent intrusion—therefore let us be gone.”

They got out of the mausoleum, and ran along another aisle, and suddenly they flitted across towards the middle of the chapel, where they appeared to rest ; but owing to the darkness, and their long sable robes, he was unable to distinguish the sex of Elvira’s companion, and had only known *her* by her voice.

“ Then she *has* deceived me—she is false,” thought the agonized Montalban, “ but, oh justice and vengeance equal to my wrongs, ye are now mine—and be it mine to crush the Circean and perjured ingrate—to blast her in the midst of her dishonour. One of them falls by

this hand—it matters not which,—if Elvira, she meets but the fate her crime deserves—and I shall have struck the blow which her country would have done on her and her paramour. I now fear not death—for her sake I have encountered it, her perjury and ingratitude have sealed my death-warrant, and I fly to meet it—content in thus disappointing the haughty Alonzo, and punishing the unfaithfulness of Elvira.”

His blood appeared boiling at the maddening thought,—his limbs shook, his lips quivered, and he became unconscious to every thing but the spirit of vengeance which burned within him

“Ye powers, direct this to her false heart,” he exclaimed—his eyes grew dim—his reason fled; and, lost to all else, he rushed forward at once, and struck the dreadful blow.

It was instantly succeeded by the noise of somebody falling, accompanied by a loud scream, which somewhat re-

called his senses, and which he supposed to have proceeded from Elvira.

Heedless of his own safety, he retreated a few paces, and leaned against one of the pillars, almost in a state of stupefaction, from which he was aroused by a voice crying, " Good heaven ! I am murdered,—oh receive my soul !"

It was the voice of his sister—and in a moment the whole chapel resounded with mingled cries. A man who was passing outside with a torch, rushed in, and by its blue glare discovered the horrible spectacle of Viola extended on the ground, weltering in blood, and the Princess lying motionless beside her.

Almost speechless with terror, he was about to fly for assistance, when Montalban, (whom a sense of his awful situation had now seized,) conjured him not to mention his name or betray him, and then endeavoured to stop the blood which flowed from Viola's side. " Oh Sebastian—my brother !" she exclaimed

as she turned her closing eyes mournfully on him, "can it indeed be possible, is it you who have done this?—but support me—I have not many minutes to live, see, see—how the red stream flows, all is just over—fly hence instantly or you are lost!" She waved her hand for him to retire,—but still with a look of frenzy and despair he clung to her. Her voice grew fainter, for a moment her half-opened eyes fell languidly on the deathlike form of Elvira, and, with a grasp which seemed the last effort of expiring nature, she caught her to her bleeding bosom, "Oh this is indeed too much for me to support," she feebly articulated, as she exerted herself to embrace the senseless Elvira.

As if to verify her words, nature now seemed to sink at once beneath this accumulation of horrors. With a look of anguish and affection indescribably mingled, she turned towards the statue-like form of her brother—her last breath

implored forgiveness to him, and a blessing on all her friends; she would have called for her father—but words failed her, her eyes closed—her lips grew pale and bloodless—the hand she had held out to Sebastian dropped nerveless by her side, and she ceased to breathe.

Let fancy now portray the shocking scene, and behold the Conde bending over the senseless forms of Viola and the Princess in agonies too wild for description. The short suspirations of the latter assured him that she lived, if that could be any consolation to him after the measure of his guilt and infatuation had been thus completed. His eyes rolled fiercely, as through the obscurity around, they sought Alonzo—but he was now convinced that the Prince had not been there at all.

That his suspicions had deeply wronged Elvira, he could doubt no longer; and even that conviction alone would have wrought his agitated soul almost

to madness ; yet in the midst of this appalling scene, the love of life implanted in us all by nature still prevailed in him, (perhaps gained strength by the revival of the Princess,) over the desperate impulse that had led him to tempt destruction. Aware that it would inevitably overtake him if he remained there, and that his stay was dangerous to himself, without benefiting Elvira, who he saw was slowly recovering, he glided quickly through one of the side portals leading more directly to his own apartments, and had merely time to close it, when the great Gothic door was flung open, and Don Manuel d'Orellez entered, followed by several others of the courtiers.

At first Don Manuel could hardly credit the evidence of his senses, but it was too palpable to be long distrusted ; and when he approached the inanimate and still bleeding Viola, he reeled back and fell fainting on the floor, from which he was raised and supported to a seat,

while the Princess, roused by the bustle, opened her eyes; but they had no sooner rested on the appalling object beside her, than she uttered a piercing cry, and relapsed into the same state of insensibility.

At this moment the Marcheze della Vittoria rushed in with distracted looks. On encountering a sight so horrible he was falling, when one of the courtiers, who stood near, supported him in his arms, while the Princess and Don Manuel were taken from the chapel for the benefit of medical assistance.

They had prepared a sort of litter for the body of Viola—and having placed her on it, were about to convey her to the Palazzo, when the Marcheze suddenly tore himself from those who held him, and throwing himself beside the corpse, frantically bade them desist.

Aware of the danger of complying, (as from his wild and vacant stare, they feared his reason was disordered,) they

appeared regardless of his exclamation, until he snatched up the fatal dagger, which yet lay on the floor, and vowed to plunge it in the bosom of the first who should attempt to remove her.

Meantime the man who had first given the alarm, was secured on suspicion of his being an accomplice in this dreadful transaction, (if not the sole perpetrator,) but the thoughts of what he might be condemned to suffer, could not terrify the noble-hearted Velasquez, from the fidelity he had vowed to the Conde Montalban, who had long been his generous friend and patron: his gratitude and attachment were inviolable; he had ever loved Sebastian with the fondness of a brother, and now, determined to preserve him even at the risk of his life, he suffered himself to be imprisoned without resistance, trusting for his safety to the never-failing protection of Providence, and serene in the consciousness of his innocence.

The sudden shock had, indeed, deranged the senses of the Marcheze, who evinced several symptoms of insanity; the bye-standers again attempted to separate him from the body; but fearing another fatal event if they persisted, they were obliged to give over, and retreat a few paces from him, terrified by the fixedness and frenzied expression of his look.

Tears chased each other rapidly down his cheeks; suddenly he started, and the exertion seemed to restore the power of speech; he laid his hand on Viola's pale cheek,—“ Ah,” said he in a low voice as if fearful of awaking her, “ ah she sleeps,—sweet, oh sweet are her slumbers. Angels are thy guardians, lovely innocent, therefore sleep on,—I will watch beside thee,—yet no, no—how—what is this—'tis the last cold sleep of death: she breathes not,—nor smiles so as she was wont to do. She is damp, cold as death—cold as the tomb, me-

thinks my blood runs chill too. Alas !  
how blanched are her beauteous features,  
how white and inanimate her lips, her  
eyes are closed—she will not look on  
me ! Thou darling of my soul, awake,—  
I am impatient to embrace thee,—see  
she moves,—ah, 'tis her wedding-day,—  
come, my Viola, 'tis time,—they are  
already in the chapel,—come, my love,  
or we shall be late,—hark ! they call,—we  
will obey presently ; she stirs not yet,—  
Viola, speak,—speak comfort to thy  
father's drooping spirit. Wherefore art  
thou thus silent and unmoved by my  
tears, by the tears of thy fond father ?—  
She wakes not,—moves not ;—no, the  
rose will never return to her cheeks  
See, she smiles, as if to say, “ Oh never ”  
But hush,—I hear her voice,—celestial  
sound, she bids me follow her,—she is  
dead,—and her soul has mounted to  
regions of eternal bliss. Hark to that  
strain ! 'tis she,—'tis my Viola, divinity  
breathes in the harmonious strings, be-

neath her touch,—it ceases,—how finely it dies away on the passing gale;—I hear it no longer. Where is she gone? my sight grows heavy,—they have taken her away;—then let me follow her, and bid the world a last farewell!!!”

He raised the dagger towards his breast; its point was still stained with blood, and, shuddering, he gazed on it for some moments; when one of the nobles, who was nearest to him, perceiving what he was about to do, darted forward, and in time snatched it from him.]

A fixed gaze of dreadful meaning proclaimed his defeated purpose, and the mental agonies he suffered.

“Wouldst thou thus keep me from my child, inhuman monster?” exclaimed he, in a tone of horrid exultation, while a frightful paleness overspread his countenance; “but, fiend, thou art disappointed!”

He faintly articulated Viola's name,

and grasped her hand in his; he stared wildly around, as if to defy all earthly power to separate them; and, with a convulsive laugh, he dropped speechless across the body, and was borne with it to the Palazzo, on the same bier.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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“ There too, they say, through all the burthened air  
“ Long groans are heard, shrill sounds and distant cries,  
“ That, uttered by the demon of the night,  
“ Warn the devoted wretch of woe and death.”

THOMSON.

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**VIVID** flashes of lightning, accompanied by peals of thunder, loudly reverberating through the vacant courts, on the north of the Palazzo, at intervals checkered the awful darkness of the night, in the early part of which the lowering clouds, had foretold a violent storm.

The commotion of the elements, sadly ominous to Sebastian, accorded with the anarchy in his bosom; and, as he swiftly passed along the gloomy Piazza, he shrunk, appalled at each tremendous crash, while every dreadful sound it

sent forth appeared to swell, with the vengeance of an offended Deity, and to menace him with instant annihilation.

Trembling with this idea, he reached his apartments, and sank on his knees, but the prayers he would have uttered, faltered on his lips, and in despair he forbore.

“ ’Tis impious mockery in *me*, to supplicate,” exclaimed he, starting from his kneeling posture; “Heaven hath nought to do, with such a wretch as I am; all hope is past; I have plunged myself to perdition; murdered my sister!”

“Murdered her!” he frantically reiterated, as he struck his forehead, and paced the room in violent disorder.

The sound of hasty footsteps, was suddenly heard coming along the vestibule; aghast with terror, Montalban retreated towards an opposite door, and was precipitately flying through the corridor, on which it opened, when, pale and almost breathless, Bertrand

his servant entered, and, as loudly as his agitation would permit, called to him to stop.

“Oh Monsenor, you are betrayed; all—all is discovered, and nothing but instant flight can save you,” cried the affrighted Bertrand, forcing his master back to his chamber, and securing the entrance to the corridor.

“Betrayed!—how, what mean you?” demanded the latter, in momentary unconsciousness. “To whom, my lord, belongs this dagger?” said the servant; “view it, and recollect;” and he drew forth the fatal weapon from beneath his cloak.

“Hah!” exclaimed Montalban, averting his face, and pushing him from him; “away with that damning record of my guilt; avaunt, thou treacherous dog; miscreant, begone; thou hast undone me.”

“No, Conde, holy San Sebastian, forbid I should be such a villain; in

your humble domestic, you now behold your best friend; one who would spill the last drop of his blood to serve you. But this is not a time for explanation, you are accused of murder; and what is still worse, of disrespect to our holy catholic church; in a few minutes the officers of the Inquisition will be here to drag you to tortures; and if you do not endeavour to escape without delay, your death is certain."

"The Inquisition!" repeated Montalban, as he seized the arm of Bertrand, and fixed on him a look, in which, gratitude seemed contending with horror, "the Inquisition!"

"Even so, my lord; the officials have been sent for, and trust me, 'tis too sure that they will come; 'tis said, (pardon me, Monsenor,) but I only tell you, 'tis reported throughout the Palazzo, that you have killed the lady Vi——"

"Dare not name her, or 'twill drive me to frenzy," interrupted Sebastian,

vehemently; "let us begone this moment; already do I fancy myself within their merciless grasp, enclosed in their infernal dungeons; let's away I say; or if my death must be, bury this poniard at once in my heart; do any thing with me; but, Oh! let me avoid the Inquisition."

"For the love of God, stop Senor: and beware equally of being incautious," said Bertrand, pulling him forcibly from the vestibule door, which he had flung open, and was hastening through; "you cannot go that way; there are sentinels at the extremities of all the passages, both in that direction, and at the farther end of the corridor, waiting for the arrival of the Inquisitors, and there is but one way left by which we may escape; 'tis a frightful way to be sure; but if you hesitate, you are lost for ever."

"Name any way; even death is pre-

fërable to suspense; nothing can terrify me equal to this."

"Then, my lord, lose no time in reflection, collect quickly your jewels and portable articles of value; and follow me."

"Yet whither shall I follow? have you not said that we are guarded on every side?"

"Hark, I hear voices in the corridor," cried Bertrand, in wild despair; "they come, Senor—they come,—another moment's delay seals the fiat of your destruction."

The lattices of the apartment descended to the ground, and opened on a spacious court, planted round with jessamine and orange trees; partially illumined by the lightning, which still burst forth in flashes of rapid succession; the scene was truly awful to Montalban, who, having wrapped himself in a large domino with which Bertrand had furnish-

ed him, was in the act of passing through the lattice, which stood half open, when a voice like thunder, summoned him back,—and, turning, he beheld the room filled with the attendants of the officials, the chief of whom, in his inquisitorial robes, made his appearance the next moment.

“ In the name of the holy Inquisition, we do here make thee, Sebastian di Montalban, our prisoner, to answer before our most sacred tribunal, certain charges, which thou shalt hereafter hear,” roared the official. “ Bind him and take him hence,” continued he,—turning to the familiars.

“ Never!” cried Montalban, with energy acquired from his desperate situation,—never will I yield to this hypocritical mummery. Who dares to approach me with hostile hand shall find me resolute,—begone I say, ye canting hell-hounds—or this sword shall hurl

you hence to the infernal regions whence ye come."

"Oh abandoned, impious youth," replied the priest, regarding him with a scowl of malignity and contempt, "art thou ignorant of the consequences of insulting a member of our order?—on pain of *immediate* death, I command thee to surrender. Here, Antonio—Paulo, to your duty, duty—away with him to the holy office."

Further resistance was unavailing; and, overpowered by their numbers, he was borne through the vestibule, which was lined by the military guards from one end to the other, and placed securely in the close carriage that was to convey him to the inquisition, between two men of ruthless aspect, and repulsive manners.

A death-knell from a neighbouring convent, now beat mournfully on the loud blast of midnight, which a clock in an adjoining cathedral responsively pro-

claimed, in sounds like the hollow echoing of distant thunder. It seemed prophetic of Sebastian's fate, and recalled the dying voice of his sister; a cold chill ran over him, as the wind sometimes swelled the tones of the passing-bell, and then, as the wind subsided, they sank in a solemn cadence: in a few minutes the bell ceased, and a strain of devotional harmony rose full upon the breeze, and thrilled on every fibre of his heart; it proceeded from the monastery of Santa Virginia, the nuns of which were assembled at midnight mass, and were chanting a requiem to the spirit of Viola, whose decease had been already announced, and in a voice almost inarticulate, Montalban asked one of his companions whether it *was* for her, unconscious that he was thus criminating himself, and leading to the confession they intended to extort.

“Peace be with the departed,” ejaculated the sullen Antonio, and folded

his arms across his breast, without deigning to reply to Sebastian's question

“Peace to the departed!” reiterated Paulo, crossing himself, and endeavouring to shrink, if possible, from beside his captive.

“Then she *is* gone—for ever gone,—and on earth we meet no more,” cried the latter, clasping his hands in violent agitation. “O Justice, now do thy worst, let thy fellest tortures be heaped upon me,—I fear thee not;—nerve thine arm with the direst vengeance of the inquisition itself; still, weak bugbear, what art thou?—I have a conscience!—hear *that* and avaunt with thine idle mockeries, Viola—my sister, dead,—murdered,—and by me! Oh horror, horror!—O Almighty Providence, can earth produce a parallel to my guilt or to my sufferings? deserted,—cast off, hated by the whole world,—an assassin: O God, O good and gracious God, do not thou also abandon me,—do not cut off *all* hope.”

Further utterance was denied him, his quick breathings and convulsive sobs declared the agony of his feelings, and, sinking back in the carriage, he burst into tears.

The severity depicted on the countenances of Antonio and Paulo, seemed to relax into a sort of momentary pity, but they regarded him in silence; their features soon resumed their usual characters, and Sebastian wept unrestrainedly and continued absorbed within himself, until aroused by the stopping of the vehicle, and the ringing of a large bell.

After driving through several obscure streets, they had at length arrived at the holy office, and one of the carriage windows having been opened, Montalban now, for the first time, perceived that they were attended by a military escort, and his eyes then took a hasty view of the dreadful and stupendous building to which they were about to consign him,

he supposed for the few remaining hours he had to live.

It was chiefly enclosed by a wall of immense extent and height, each extremity of which reached the borders of the Manzanares, whose almost unfathomable depth of waters washed its base on the south.

The entrance was an ancient Gothic portal, strongly plated with iron, which was now slowly opened by a man, whose gaunt and demoniac appearance made Sebastian shudder with horror at the idea of entering a place of which such a being was an inhabitant.

He was led from the carriage through a long vaulted passage, at the further end of which hung a small lamp, over an iron door, which was unlocked by one of the men who kept guard there, and grating harshly on its rusty hinges, it unfolded to their view, as far as the eye could reach by the assistance of a lamp

that a familiar carried, a succession of arches, whose extremity was lost in the profound darkness that enveloped every farther object.

Montalban's countenance proclaimed his reluctance to venture forward amid the dangers that every thing seemed to threaten, notwithstanding the despair in which he had been plunged a few minutes before; but a significant and ill-meaning glance from Antonio checked the useless remonstrance he would have uttered; and, in unbroken silence, they hurried him on, and, with a sound that reverberated tremendously through all the vaults and labyrinths of this abode of horror, the iron door was instantly closed.

Not a word escaped from the lips of his conductors; no sound interrupted the death-like stillness, but the echo of their footsteps, and the frequent sighs of Montalban, whose blood ran chill at the suggestion that he was now most

probably traversing the mansions of the dead, amongst whom he might soon be numbered.

From appearances he had nothing to hope; and, as he eyed the two officials in their long black robes, in every feature of whose faces "Villain," was legibly stamped; and the guard, whose lowering countenance and contracted brow betrayed a mind capable of any enormity, he gave himself up for lost.

On each side the glare of the torch discovered a range of dreary cells, within which were entombed the wretched victims of this dreadful tribunal; and, having reached the remote end, they descended a steep and narrow staircase, where the sentinel produced a massy bunch of keys, and with one of them opened the grating, which let them into a spacious and gloomy hall, where they were received by an official, to whom the guard delivered the keys.

The latter, making signs to them to

follow him, turned down an avenue of considerable length, at the bottom of which he stopped for a few moments, and apparently put some questions to the other officials, in language unintelligible to Montalban; who clung involuntarily to one of the pillars that supported the roof, on beholding him draw back the huge bolts and chains of a large trap-door of iron, which having, after much exertion, succeeded in unclosing, he repeated the same signs for them to pass through.

An exclamation of terror burst from Montalban at sight of the frightful chasm it presented; a few stone steps near the top were merely rendered visible by the torch; but beyond, all was impenetrable darkness; and, during a momentary pause, he fancied he heard a groan of anguish re-echoed through the dungeons beneath.

A last dying moan again broke on his attentive ear; his blood felt chill at the

dreadful scenes imagination presented, of racks, tortures and death, in all the cruellest shapes; and powerless of proceeding, he sank almost senseless upon the pavement.

The fear of personal danger was least predominant in the emotions by which he was thus overcome, as he looked on his own fate as certain as it was terrible; and every idea of escaping the diabolical machinations of the Inquisition, as hopeless, now that they had him so entirely in their power.

His thoughts, however, were not long permitted to wander from himself; the officials raised him from the ground, without speaking a word, or appearing, even by their looks, to be at all affected by his situation.

Banco, the guard, undauntedly descended the steps, and Montalban, compelled to do the same, was followed by the officials, and instantly afterwards the trap-door fell into its place,

and enclosed them in this horrible abyss.

After winding down a considerable depth, through the noisome vapours that arose from below, the flight terminated in a dark vault, of extent immeasurable to the eye, from every corner of which branched long and dreary passages, equally dark, leading to other remote vaults and caverns.

Near the stairs was a door of immense magnitude, at which the chief official knocked, and the next moment it was slowly unclosed by another sentinel; who, making the sign of the cross as they passed, sounded the watchword to his other companion, who was pacing an area at some distance, from which a few dim and imperfect rays of light proceeded. From the centre of the roof of this area hung the lamp whose sickly gleam was merely sufficient to render "darkness visible."

The little light, however, that it did

emit fell full on a large black pedestal immediately under it, on which stood the appalling figure of death, leaning on his scythe, with one foot resting on a coffin, and the other on a scull.

Here they again stopped, and the official opened an iron chest, and drew from it a pair of manacles of the same metal; the clanking of whose chains suddenly aroused Montalban from the torpor into which he had fallen; and he beheld several instruments of torture scattered around, and recesses in the wall filled with skeletons and many disunited parts of human bones.

Ere he had averted his face from a sight so shocking, a door in another passage opened, and a loud groan of agony was in a moment resounded in gradation throughout the whole subterraneous space, and succeeded by an expiring voice, which in hollow tones ejaculated, "Father of Heaven, receive my soul," and sank to eternal silence.

Montalban grew sick and faint, and reeled back as the door closed again; but his unfeeling conductors hurried him on, and scarcely had they quitted the area, when suddenly another door flew open, and two familiars emerged from the interior, carrying torches, and bearing on their shoulders a black frame, on which was extended a corpse, partly covered by a large pall. Its spirit had but just taken its flight from the mangled body, whose distorted features struck the almost unconscious eye of Montalban, as they passed hastily through the long perspective, at the far extremity of which they descended into the burial vaults.

All his energy and strength of mind now forsook him, and glancing at an inscription over the door of the chamber whence they had issued,—“Who enters here returns not alive;” the firmness with which he had resolved to meet his doom fled; a cold perspiration moistened

his forehead, the functions of his heart seemed to cease,—and with a sigh of despair, he fell senseless at the feet of the chief official, who immediately sent Banco to an adjoining cell for some of the familiars to put on his manacles, as it could be more easily done while he remained in that state. They lost not a moment in obeying the summons, and when they had bound the hands of their victim together, they assisted to convey him back to the area, where a small mug of water was procured from a cistern, sunk in the ground, and poured down his throat, after which the significant nod of the official bade them withdraw.

Montalban's colourless cheek, and the long suspension of faculty and motion, made them apprehensive that death had already anticipated their cruel purpose; and, in pity to the unhappy sufferer, had visited him in a shape less dreadful than that they were preparing for him, and

prematurely snatched him from their merciless and barbarous power.

For some time they continued to gaze in silence on his inanimate form, beside which Banco stood with the torch, whose yellow glare heightened the awfulness of his appearance,—and impressed with the belief that life was wholly extinct, the official repaired to the tribunal chamber, to inform the grand inquisitor, who, having made it known to the assembled fathers, and consulted with them by mysterious signs for near half an hour, gave orders for his interment, as the laws of the holy office strictly forbade that the deceased, of whatever rank, should on any pretence be taken away; their uncontrolled jurisdiction giving them the most absolute power over a prisoner, when he had once passed within their death-boding walls, where their abstruse and direful proceedings baffled every attempt to elucidate them,

and seldom even afforded the accused person an opportunity of vindicating himself, or asserting his innocence of the imputed offence.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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“ Something like

“ That voice I should have somewhere heard ,

“ But floods of woes have hurried it far off

“ Beyond my ken of soul ————— ”

DRYDEN

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THE official, having received his commands from the tribunal, quickly returned to the hall, whither four of the familiars were summoned, who, wrapt in the dismal habiliments of their order, which shaded their livid and murderous-looking faces in the large cowl attached to each, entered the area in solemn procession, preceded by a creature who looked like an inhabitant of the nether regions, carrying a torch in each hand.

Having placed the Conde on the bier they had brought for the purpose, they

retraced their way back through the long avenue, and descended a flight of broken steps, leading to the cold and gloomy repositories of the dead.

After several turnings and windings through the immensity of this silent abode of mortality, they reached a remote vault, in a corner of which they meant to consign Montalban to his native earth, and, impatient to finish a task so awful even to hardened and diabolical wretches such as they were, they threw the bier off their shoulders to the ground with a force that recalled the vital functions of Montalban into action, and he breathed forth a deep sigh, which however escaped their hearing, as they were all occupied in measuring a newly-made grave.

Having ascertained it to be the proper size, they were approaching to drag their victim to it, when suddenly either Montalban moved, or the wind shook the pall which covered him, and they were

transfixed with terror to the spot; but seeing it again violently agitated, they became too much alarmed to reflect on what might be the consequence of a desertion from their duty, and instantly the torches dropped from their hands, and they rushed out of the vault.

Montalban gradually revived as if from a frightful dream, and the wildness of his countenance would have been almost as terrific to a beholder, as the surrounding scene. It is impossible to conceive the exact nature of his feelings on perceiving himself in a situation whose unparalleled horrors bade defiance to description.

When he had so far recovered his senses that he could no longer mistake reality for an illusion, he formed the most terrible conjectures; and the idea that he had been conveyed to a place apparently so remote from the habitations of the living, and so far from every chance of rescue, and left to die in a manner the

most shocking to human nature, nearly again overcame him, and he closed his eyes to avoid the chilling objects the vault presented as far as it was in the power of vision to reach.

Graves newly dug yawned frightfully on each side of him, and at his feet was one that had been lately filled up,—and contained, as he supposed, the corpse he had seen borne from the room of torture, which but an hour before had been a living being like himself,—but now how awfully changed was its state, reduced in one short hour to a heap of corruption and dust.—Man! one of the noblest of nature's works, now food for the worms of the grave!

“ O Omnipotence! can such things be?” he mentally ejaculated; “ for what inscrutable purpose dost thou permit atrocities like these to pass unpunished? why hast thou endued the soul of man with the faculty of reasoning and thinking,—the power of acting—and knowing

to discriminate between good and evil, if thus thy blessings are perverted? Canst thou unmoved behold thy creatures thus presumptuously violating every law human and divine,—thus fearlessly braving thy wrath—and usurping the power that to thee alone belongs, destroying what thou alone canst bestow, and daring to justify to themselves and others their enormities, by their own barbarous notions of what ought to be? But who am I that reason against the folly and wickedness of mortals?—a wretch—fallen far beneath the dignity of man! unworthy his high prerogative. An assassin,—the murderer of a sister too!—Oh if possible, let me shroud myself in eternal obscurity,—and here end the horrible conviction with my life!”

Recalling his thoughts to himself, he could not contemplate his present state with any thing like composure; and again opening his eyes, he appeared as

if only now conscious of the dangers of it.

He started from off the bier, aroused by the sight of the pall, which the familiars had thrown over him,—and the dreadful thought that one of the graves beside him had been intended for himself. To support such a supposition calmly, required more than human firmness; and, with steps rendered unsteady by his agitation, he was quitting the vault, determined to hazard all the tortures the inquisition could inflict rather than remain there, to expire from a cause he shuddered to think of, so appalling—so unnatural, to starve to death, and in such a place. When an indistinct sound of distant voices reached his ear—and he paused awhile in expectation of some one's approach, as every other species of cruelty and wretchedness seemed to him comparatively sufferable.

Presently a group of figures was seen

in the distant gloom, whose aspect was by no means calculated to dispel his dismal sensations as they drew near.

Their long sable robes, which covered them from head to foot, corresponded with the dusky livery of every thing around; the cowls allowed but a partial view of the lower part of their grim visages, as small openings for the eyes were made in the upper folds, and the torches they carried threw over their whole forms an air truly hideous and worthy the office of demons,—so that altogether, he almost fancied himself in the regions of infernal spirits.

They moved along in profound silence, and on entering the vault they took hold of Montalban, without speaking a word, and led him back to the area, through the same dreary passages he had traversed before; where he found the officials and guards ready to receive him. Almost the first object his eyes rested

on there, was the frowning form of death, to one side of the pedestal that supported it, the chief official applied an iron rod of a singular shape; and instantaneously, as if by talismanic power, a secret door flew open, and discovered another dilapidated stone staircase, whose base was hidden in 'obscurity impenetrable from above; he now beckoned to one of the familiars, who came forward with a fillet, which he was ordered to bind round Montalban's eyes—and the latter prepared for the worst that might befall him, and resigned to the endurance of a fate he imagined could alone expiate by its severity in any degree his guilt, did not attempt to oppose it.

In a few minutes he felt himself descending, and concluded, from the length of time they took in reaching the bottom, that they were several fathoms under ground, and amongst the lowest dungeons of the inquisition, as almost

all its prisons were subterraneous, especially those for culprits who were likely to be condemned to die.

After conducting him through innumerable intricacies, they at length stopped, and unbound him, and the chief official, now advancing and looking sternly at him, broke the long silence and addressed him:—

“ Our holy tribunal,” said he, “ is not at present sitting,—with the first hour of morning it dissolves,—and thine arrival here was too long after midnight to permit thy trial to come on, as it is of too momentous a nature to be got over hastily—at the third hour they assemble again—and till the bell chimes ‘ three,’ this is thy prison.”

Without waiting to see the effect this awful intelligence produced on him, they immediately quitted the cell, and having locked and bolted the door, they departed and left him at leisure to con-

template all the circumstances of his desperate situation.

Connecting and ruminating slowly on each, he busied his thoughts in retracing all the past events of his life. The epoch of his misfortunes was too evidently the commencement of his passion for the Infanta to allow him to deny the conviction; but soon she rushed on his fancy in all her native loveliness; he thought alone of the object of his long and ardent attachment, his unchanged affection—his invincible courage—his dauntless spirit; and for awhile forgot all the consequences, forgot how mistaken he had been in the ardour of that attachment, forgot the unhappiness, misery, horror and guilt, into which it had plunged him,—and only remembered that to obtain her, he must go on still farther. The oblivion however quickly passed away, and retrospection burst on him in all its terrors—he now recollected

the prophetic warnings he had received, and beheld the dire effects of his disobedience fully displayed.

That an inhabitant of another world should have been permitted to revisit this earth, for the purpose of admonishing him of what would ensue, were he to set the power of fate at defiance, was so striking a proof of Heaven's omnipotence and goodness, that he shuddered with the most terrible apprehensions of its wrathful vengeance for the crimes his imprudent love had hurried him into the commission of. The murdered Orlando and Viola presented themselves, writhing in the horridest agonies of assassination, crying aloud for retribution, and the expiring breath of a sister reproaching him with her murder; the idea was frightful beyond the conception of any one of lighter conscience, and he endeavoured in vain to dismiss it.

These dreadful circumstances had

been the immediate consequences of his unfortunate attachment and fatal vow, and, even had they not been of a nature so tremendous and impressive as to render every effort to forget them unavailing, yet ere he could cease to remember the effects, it was necessary that he should also banish from his memory the cause from whence they had sprung; but memory was not to be cheated of its fondest, its dearest object, an object which it seemed too likely to retain.

The anguish of his mind was augmented by the reflection, that the late event was scarcely more dreadful than what had given rise to it was groundless and unwarrantable.

That he could for a moment have harboured a thought in any way inimical to one so faultless, so perfect, (if perfection is to be found among the human race,) as to an imagination glowing as his was with all the enthusiasm of love,

Elvira had ever appeared, seemed so unnatural, so inconsistent with reason, so contradictory to his feelings, that were it not for the too certain and incontrovertible proofs of it that existed, he would have doubted his having done so. But love, as well as every other passion, has its errors, its eccentricities, its weaknesses and oversights, in (as many affirm) a much greater proportion; and, every one who feels it is the slave of their capricious influence, susceptible alike to prejudice and extravagant fondness, yielding hourly to the most romantic suggestions, unguided by judgment, and unjustified by any appearance of probability; captious and jealous of the merest trifles, and sanguine and unalterable in its more serious resolves. Through all these extremes had Montalban progressively gone: hope,—the hope of attainment had hitherto been the mainspring of all his movements and actions, but now indeed Hope and her

delusive train had taken their flight, for, at the morrow's dawn it did not seem likely that he should be an inhabitant of earth.

To that recollection he was soon awakened, and the association of painful ideas it caused, almost deprived him of his little remaining fortitude, by the conviction that he was in reality the wretched outcast he had fancied, abandoned even by his father, consigned to the power of a tribunal formidable to all Spain, the Inquisition; given up a victim to their unlimited barbarities, their atrocities unknown to all but their wretched unfortunate victims, and by a parent!

“ Oh most cruel, most unnatural,” cried he, as with hasty steps he paced his cell, “ but he is my father, and I must not curse him—I am a murderer.” He could pronounce no more; suddenly he dropped on his knees, and tried to offer up a short prayer, a cold tremor seized him, and falling against the wall, he sunk

to the ground, and for sometime he lay in a state of unconsciousness.

While wrapt in uneasy slumbers, fancy still presented the tortures of the Inquisition in the most appalling shapes; and the frightful punishments it conjured up were nearly as bad (worse they could not be) as those that were really intended to be inflicted upon him. After awhile, however, these terrific scenes faded from his view, and he became more composed; from this wild disorder of his senses he gradually sank into a calm and profound sleep, rendered more sweet and soothing by dreams of happiness to come, unalloyed by the remembrance of past or present sufferings

From these pleasing visions he was at length aroused by a slight noise, like the gentle tread of footsteps near him; he listened for awhile, and all was perfectly still, but presently he thought he felt the hand of some person unseen laid upon his shoulder, and a low voice,

merely audible, and apparently fearful of being overheard, bade him arise, and again embrace his liberty.

The sound of liberty thrilled through his bosom with a sensation of the most exquisite pleasure: convinced that he had heard a human voice, and that its tones were familiar to his ear, he started up, but nobody was to be seen, all was silent as before; the delusion seemed the effect of his dreams, and he would have again tried to sleep, had he not, in spite of reason, fancied that the same friendly voice still addressed him. That he had heard that voice before (though when or where, he tried in vain to recollect) he was now confident, and equally so that it was that of some person he knew, and whose friendship he valued. But then the improbability of finding a friend in such a place as the Inquisition, almost staggered this belief, and, perplexed with contrary opinions, he again walked to and fro. But it is

impossible to determine what were his predominant feelings on beholding a narrow opening in the wall beside him, sufficiently large for one person to pass through, which had not before been perceptible, as by the dim ray of light which descended through the gratings of several upper cells, built over each other, and raised apparently to the top of the structure, he was enabled to grope round the walls, in order if possible to find some means of escape, but, the natural impulse that attaches us all to life, forced its way to his heart, amid all its contending emotions.

But here the strictest caution was necessary, for beyond the aperture, every thing (if space there was) was profoundly dark and silent: and he was inclined to think, that so singular a circumstance must have been accomplished by supernatural means, or else, a snare contrived by some of the members of the Inquisition, to lure him to some still

more remote and horrible dungeon, where his destruction could be effected without the trouble of a trial, and whose secrecy might defy the utmost scrutiny of mortal. But now, that he had been thus voluntarily delivered into the power of the holy office, the obscurity of whose transactions none were bold enough to pry into, it did not appear probable, that any body was interested about him, or cared what might be his fate: he durst not hope, that even Elvira thought of him but with horror, his crimes were loathsome to himself, his hands stained with human blood, and the atrocious outrage he had committed on the veneration due to their holy church; already he saw, in anticipation, all the tortures the inquisitorial laws denounced on such offenders; and already he almost fancied himself clad in the Santo Benito, led in the awful procession of the *auto da fé*, and dragged to the fatal stake; yet, worse than all this was the thought that Elvira now abhorred him.

On consideration it now appeared probable, that some mysterious being within the walls of the Inquisition was indeed his friend; and, re-assured by this idea (though it was impossible to conjecture who it might be, if not the Almighty alone), a gurgling noise, like the distant roaring of waters, broke on his attention; and, as he eagerly listened to its faint murmur, a gleam of hope revived in his bosom, though he scarcely knew why, for he was not aware that his prison was sunk almost beneath the depth of the Manzanares, which never, he conjectured, ran close by its walls, and, absorbed in his unhappy state, he had not observed it before.

At this time it was long after two o'clock; and at length the half-hour struck dismally, and warned him that, if there was a chance of escape, he must no longer hesitate to seize it.

It was certain that his situation could not possibly be worse, as he was here

in the same danger of death as he should be in any other part of the Inquisition; and, every circumstance tending to stimulate him to the attempt, he approached the aperture, and, extending his hand outside, it rested on the small door, which he found was so formed as to open and shut without noise, by means of a secret spring; he therefore concluded, that, in his fall, he must have touched that spring; and thus, accidentally, or rather providentially, been directed to the only way by which he might avoid the otherwise-certain death he should have met.

In his ardour he forgot every obstacle, and thought not of the absurdity of attempting to escape from a place that might truly have answered for the abode of Lucifer, and the horrors of which it is scarcely in the power of human comprehension to form a just picture of.

A dark and mouldering cell, dug far

below the level of the earth, that looked more like a grave than an habitation for mortal, its natural sickening atmosphere was rendered yet more unwholesome by the constant damps from the water that flowed outside, almost from its base to the top; its dismal gloom was augmented by a solitary glimmer of light that penetrated the long succession of gratings in the centre of every cell above it; and all parts of the edifice were strongly fortified by nature and art, environed on every side, but that of the river, by thick and insurmountable walls, and vigilantly guarded by people long devoted to the laws, and subservient to the will of the holy office. So that altogether, had Montalban taken much time to deliberate, he must have yielded to despair.

Confident of success, he breathed forth a short but fervent prayer of gratitude to Heaven; and, without considering that it might merely lead him

further into those labyrinths of death, he ascended an extensive flight of steps, which seemed to wind round a sort of tower; he had got (as he supposed) about half-way, when, in the pauses of the blast, he thought he heard a strain of music, whose mellow tone seemed to proceed from some person on the river, and, stopping to listen, he was in a moment assured of it. He fancied these sounds were also familiar to his ear, though he could not at first call to mind where he had heard them before. But he soon conjectured aright, as in a few minutes more he was happily convinced.

With redoubled alacrity he pursued his way, and after ascending nearly an hundred steps more, he reached the summit, and found himself on a spacious rampart, that overlooked the broad expanse of the Manzanares.

His whole frame was dilated with new sensations on being again enabled

to respire freely, and, intent on liberty at any hazard, he looked anxiously around.

Notwithstanding the darkness of the night, as the storm had ceased a considerable time, he espied a little boat, sailing to and fro on the water, close to the wall of the dungeon he had just quitted; and presently afterwards he recognized the voice of his faithful Bertrand; and calling him by name, the latter instantly looked up, and joyfully exclaimed—"Oh, Senor! my dear, dear Lord, I have found you at last; thanks to all our holy saints."

There was another man in the boat with him, who immediately checked the ardour of his affectionate eloquence, aware that they risked their lives in this perilous undertaking; and added, just loud enough for Montalban to hear; "Indeed we cannot tarry here much longer, and I fancy the Senor must make a desperate effort if he would escape, for

there is not a single window or opening on this side of the building.”

It was only now that Sebastian felt sensible of his almost hopeless condition, for his mind had been so fully occupied by the idea of liberty, that he had not thought of any means by which he could actually effect it; and as he sought in vain for some other descent that might deliver him from this fatal spot, he was nearly tempted to return to his cell, and await the terrible doom he would undoubtedly have been consigned to. This resolve was however momentary, and the calls of Bertrand roused him into energy and exertion; but again he paused, he saw no way of escape, save one—and that one was indeed dreadful, even in idea; his eye measured eagerly the tremendous depth from the rampart,—and while he stood fearful and irresolute, the great clock in the court below proclaimed the hour of “three.”

Its heavy sound was quickly followed

by a loud and discordant noise in the prisons underneath, as the familiars flung open the massy iron doors, to drag forth their victims to their direful fates; and a bell sullenly sounded through the interior of the building, to convene the inquisitors to the tribunal; probably they had by this time missed, and were in search of him,—horrible suggestion! “Yet in flying from death in one shape,” thought he, “am I not rushing to it in another?” At all events nothing but desperation could save him; he looked once more on the immense height on which he stood from the water, and, shuddering at the thought of taking such a leap, he recoiled, and was again descending to his cell, when the same mysterious voice he had before heard, recalled him,—and bade him throw himself at once into the river, or the delay of another minute would prove fatal to him.

The conviction that it *would* prove so,

instantly rushed on his mind, and without waiting to consider who this unseen friend might be, he mounted the battlements—and in a moment of despair he plunged headlong into the profundity of waters beneath.

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## CHAPTER X.

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“ Till fate condemns me to the silent tomb  
 “ No hostile hand can antedate my doom ,  
 ‘ Fix’d is the term to all the race of earth,  
 “ And such the hard condition of our birth ,  
 “ No force can then resist—no flight can save,  
 “ All sunk alike, the fearful and the brave.”

POPE'S ILLIAD

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“ **HOLY** San Pedro, my Lord is drown-  
 ed !” exclaimed the affrighted Bertrand  
 as his eyes strove to follow the Conde,  
 who had sunk instantly, without a  
 struggle, in one of the deepest parts of  
 the river. The immensity of the per-  
 pendicular height from which he had  
 fallen, made them conclude that he was  
 lifeless; and had indeed sunk to rise no  
 more ; and Bertrand, with a loud and dis-

tracted cry, was about to fling himself out of the boat, determined to find him or perish in the attempt ; when suddenly the body rose to the surface of the water, which it tinged with an effusion of blood that poured violently from the mouth and nose. In a moment his presence of mind returned, and hastily snatching one of the oars from the trembling hand of old Carlos, with one spring he dexterously drew up the skiff, and assisted by his companion, succeeded, after much exertion, in rescuing his beloved master from a watery grave.

Their first care was to strike off the manacles from the benumbed hands of Montalban, which it required much force and perseverance to do, after which they wrapt him in a large woollen coat belonging to Carlos, and laid him in the bottom of the vessel, having previously divested him of the greatest part of his wet clothes.

They then rowed towards the little dwelling of the good fisherman, knowing that it would be equally dangerous and unavailing to trifle with him by trying to restore animation at present,—and Carlos, though of a disposition naturally humane, and heedless of any hazard in relieving a fellow-creature, had so very reluctantly ventured within sight of the black and ponderous walls of the Inquisition, whose terrific scenes he had often heard of, that he now steered down the rapid stream with redoubled speed.

The cottage stood at the distance of about a mile, on the bank of the river, but so closely sheltered by overhanging rocks, and the interwoven branches of a cluster of oak trees that surrounded it, that, until they landed, it was not discernible.

Having moored the boat on the beach they took Sebastian in their arms, and

bore him through a coppice of under-wood leading up almost to the door, where the aged Ursula was anxiously awaiting the return of her husband.

“ Bless me, dame, what can have kept you up to such an hour as this ?” interrogated the latter with much surprise ; “ who could have thought of finding you out of your warm bed so late, and standing at the door in a night like this ?”

“ Ah Carlos,” replied she, in a tone of mingled joy and reproach, while she eyed Bertrand and their burthen inquisitively, “ how can you wonder at it, when you know very well that you were yourself the cause, but the holy Mother be praised, you are safe—God knows, and myself, what I have suffered on your account—there have I been for three long hours wandering up and down the beach, exposed to the pinching cold and wet, and mingling my tears with the

rain which fell upon my cheeks—and all for you—and I had such a nice comfortable bit of supper prepared for you—and a clear fire of wood—for, (said I,) my poor man will want something to warm him this stormy night—and I sat down to my netting then with a light heart—but, oh San Pedro! when the thunder and lightning came on, I was frightened almost to death—and when I found you did not come home at your usual time, I thought you had been lost in the river, and so went in search of you, and you may easily guess how I felt ever since. But who is this other Sencr—and what have you got in that great bundle, for I am sure you could not have caught so much fish to night?”—

“Come now, good dame,” said Carlos, half smiling at the last observation, “you must not scold me for staying out this once, for I have caught as much trout as will sell for half a dozen piastres in tomorrow’s market—but no more about it

now—we have something of much more consequence to look to in this bundle as you call it ; we have got a Don of quality almost dead, and nothing but instant assistance can save him, for we have just taken him out of the water.”

“Out of the water !” reiterated Ursula, as she led the way in, “ Mercy on us, no wonder his Excellenza should be almost dead—but I hope we shall be able to recover him still—poor dear soul, if he is not entirely lifeless I don’t despair—for, though I say it myself, I have saved many a one before by my humble skill”—

“ Aye, wife, that you have—and God will reward you for it,” said Carlos, laying the benumbed form of the Conde on a bench, before a cheerful blazing fire, which, notwithstanding the unseasonableness of the hour, the affectionate Ursula had kept beside her husband’s supper.

Bertrand now stripped him of his wet garments, and having made a small bed

near the hearth, they placed him on it, and began chafing his hands and temples and applying heat to the soles of his feet; while Ursula was assiduously endeavouring to force some of her cordials and medicated balsams into his mouth.

A quarter of an hour passed in unceasing applications—but without effect—and Montalban lay to all appearance dead.

Bertrand had no sooner felt the dreadful conviction than he fell back, and burst into tears—he had almost determined instantly to summon medical or surgical assistance, but he considered that if a chance of returning animation still remained to his master, such proceeding would defeat its own purpose, for when it should be known that he had escaped from the Inquisition, and that the good fisherman and his wife harboured him in their cottage, they should feel the vengeance of the holy office, and the

fatal blow would strike all indiscriminately.

Ursula's tears flowed copiously as she held the cold hand of the Conde in hers, and hung over him in sorrow almost as poignant as Bertrand's. A flush on her withered cheek announced some sudden thought, it seemed the inspiration of Heaven, and with a smile of hope and confidence, she suggested that bleeding might succeed in restoring him, if a spark of life yet remained—the proposal was too congenial with the wishes of each, and the probability of its good effects too apparent to be rejected—but again they hesitated; how was an operation that required so much caution and skill to be performed?

In his youthful days Carlos had been employed in some of the domestic offices of an hospital, and by a little curiosity and attention he had acquired an insight into many trifling things attached to the surgical department, and still pre-

served several relics of his former pleasing occupations, amongst which was an old case of lancets—his hand was however so unsteady now that he was aware of the rashness of his attempting to bleed, although he perfectly recollected the manner in which he had so often seen it done.

Conscious that, however desperate was the alternative, it was assuredly better to have recourse to it than leave any means untried—as if he were not already dead, nature at least was too much exhausted to recover spontaneously, or without their utmost exertions.

As Carlos therefore was incapable of performing this last office, Bertrand, wiping away his tears, sprang forward, and throwing himself at the feet of the old man—“I beseech you,” he cried, “let me try—the urgency of the case must plead against my inexperience, and perhaps through Heaven’s will I may succeed”—he seemed to have anticipated

the thoughts of Carlos, who having fetched one of the lancets, with a basin and some old linen, desired Ursula to bare one of the Conde's arms, and directed by him, Bertrand gently opened the most prominent vein.

For some time the blood came only in drops, but with a little dexterity they soon induced an uninterrupted stream, and when they had got about a pint, Ursula, laying her hand on his wrist, felt a slight pulsation. By the time that his arm was bound up, the symptoms of returning life were unequivocal, and all with one voice fervently exclaimed, "Oh Father of mercies! there is nothing to thee impossible," and sunk on their knees in joyful and pious effusions of gratitude to Heaven.

A sigh from Montalban recalled their attention—and Ursula reaching a goblet of home-made wine she had mulled for him, with much difficulty forced him to swallow some of it which contributed in

a great measure to re-animate him, and at length his gradually unclosing eyes rested with a melancholy expression on Bertrand, who clung to him with all the affection his warm heart was capable of—convinced that he lived, all ceremony and distinction were forgotten, and he clasped him to his bosom with a cry of joy.

Pleasure and self-approbation beamed on the benevolent countenances of Carlos and his wife, on witnessing the success of their unwearied efforts, in the recovery of Montalban, who was, however, alike unconscious of their friendship and its effects; and his wild and unmeaning gaze soon filled them with apprehensions of the derangement of his intellects.

“Hah! who art thou?” cried he in a frantic voice—suddenly starting and dashing Bertrand violently from him—  
“Avaunt, black minister of hell, thou shouldst thyself be stretched on the

rack thou art in vain preparing for me; but thinkest thou that I cannot escape from this dungeon? Oh, I could tell such tales of the Inquisition, that Heaven, listening to the horrid description, would blast it and thee and all thy demoniac tribe to perdition. Away—yet no—come hither, thou canst not be one of them—thou gavest me life and liberty; speak to me of my love—my Elvira. I did not stab *her*, but don't talk of my sister, for oh, I murdered her—I—I——!!!”

Convulsive sobs prevented further utterance, and he wept till worn out with fatigue and anguish, he dropped into Bertrand's arms, where he remained until his senses were composed by a light sleep.

Ursula having prepared their best bed for the Conde's reception, he was conveyed to it, while Bertrand, determined to watch beside him, thanked the good old couple for their humane

attention, and services, promising that they should not be long unrewarded; after which they retired to repose for the remainder of the night, happy in the consciousness of what they had done, and wondering, not without a degree of alarm, at the frightful exclamations of the Conde, of whose name, rank and misfortunes they were yet entirely ignorant. But when they recollected what he had last said relative to the murder of his sister, they shuddered with horror at the suggestion that it was not merely a chimera of the brain, but in all probability the crime for which he had been imprisoned in the Inquisition.

After a long pause Carlos significantly shook his head, and cast on Ursula a look expressive of surprise and doubt; and observing that, "should it prove to be the case, they had rendered themselves amenable to the tortures of the holy office in rescuing and sheltering

him, he offered up a prayer to the all-wise 'Disposer of events, and sunk by degrees into the sweet sleep of innocence and peace.

While Bertrand sat beside his master's bed, watching his every movement with anxious fidelity, and almost inhaling his every deep-drawn sigh, he strove to connect some evasive story which might baffle the inquisitive loquacity of Carlos and his wife, relative to the Conde, about whom, he naturally supposed they would make many minute inquiries on the following day.

When the officials from the Inquisition had made Montalban their captive, had Bertrand been guided by the immediate impulse of his heart, he would have unhesitatingly followed, to share his sufferings and confinement. But fortunately the promptitude of reason and foresight, which strong and vigorous minds alone are capable of retaining, withheld the impellent power by its

superior and more energetic claims, and convinced him of the inutility and imprudence of such a step; in adopting which he would have voluntarily, yet unconsciously, consigned him to almost certain death, by turning his back upon the only chance that might enable him to avert it; and a little reflection made him sensible that his duty and affection could be better evinced by sacrificing his present enthusiastic feelings even to the mere possibility of ultimate advantage in the project he had suddenly conceived. He could not, however, help feeling that it was also possible, nay, probable, that his plan might fail; that they should meet no more; and that the machinations of the Inquisition were too deep, mysterious and inevitable to allow the indulgence of a sanguine hope.

When the officials had taken him away he walked on mechanically, with streaming eyes, to the entrance of an

extensive subterraneous passage, leading to the outskirts of the city, and through which he had intended that his master and himself should accomplish their escape.

By some stratagem he had procured the key of this place, which had hung in a closet near the Conde's apartment in the Palazzo; and which, from having been stationary for a long time, was now almost entirely covered with rust.

Having rubbed it with a little oil from the lamp he carried beneath his outside vesture, the better to conceal it and himself, after many repeated efforts he forced the lock to yield. With a creaking noise the door opened, at the same time unfolding to his view the various horrors of an old and dreary cavern, which had been shut up for several years past

He was not much inclined to superstition or ideal terrors; therefore recol-

lecting his master's situation, and that he might be the instrument of his preservation, he readily entered, notwithstanding the almost suffocating vapours that arose from the chapel vaults, which communicated with it by many intricate turnings. It was however an undertaking to which had there been a less powerful incitement, he might not have had sufficient courage to go through, for ere he had got half-way he was so wearied by stumbling over old fragments of the arched roof which had fallen in, and so sickened by the offensive air, that he was obliged to rest for some minutes against a broken statue of San Lorenzo, to whom in former days the cavern and chapel had been dedicated, and these holy relics of antiquity had lain here neglected and forgotten for almost a century.

At every step he took, the mutilated image of a saint, or the time-eaten busts of their most celebrated devotees pre-

sented themselves to his gaze, and awakened a solemn sort of feeling little short of the enthusiasm their originals had once felt.

After a tedious search, he at length found the door in the opposite extremity, and having opened it with the same key that had unlocked the other, he entered a thick grove of high trees, which ran along some huge mountains down to the river-side.

Near the bank, and extending a considerable distance, he knew there were several little fishing-boats, belonging to the poor inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets, always stationed after their day's toil; and his determination being fixed, he quickly glided amongst the trees, and emerged from their shade just time to hear and stop the footsteps of an old man, who, moaning with fatigue, was at that late hour carrying home the fruits of his dangerous cruise.

“ Stop, I prithee, my friend,” cried

Bertrand—"I would a few words with you: you see I am defenceless, and mean no harm."

This sudden greeting acted like electricity on the terrified Carlos, who, concluding him to be a robber in search of prey, the solitude of the place being favourable to people of that description, staggered against a tree, while his little cargo of fish fell to the ground, as he exclaimed—"There, there, Senor, take them, and welcome; much good may they do you—but, oh! in mercy spare my life."

Though agitated by contrary emotions, Bertrand could not help smiling at the simplicity of the poor man, and cautiously advancing, lest others might be within hearing, he said, in a low voice—"Be not alarmed; I know not what you take me for—but you can materially serve me, and if you will do so, you shall be well rewarded, as an earnest of which take this little purse."

There was an ingenuousness in Bertrand's manner, which even Carlos could not mistake; and first glancing at the purse, and then looking strait in his face, as if unwilling to be too hastily biassed, he faltered out—"If you are not upon any evil design, Senor Conde, or whatever your *Excellenza* may be, this is surely a strange hour for you to be prowling about such a deserted place. Now, Senor, I should like to know what you want of me; it cannot be money, for, by San Jago, I am not worth a single rial—but say at once what can I do for you."

"Lend me your boat, and come with me a little way down the river," said Bertrand.

"Oh, Giesu!" cried Carlos, more terrified than before, and shrinking back towards the tree he had quitted—"Down the river again, indeed! No, no, I have had quite enough of it for this night, but I now understand you, Senor; you

want to decoy me on the water to drown me, and then go off with the boat and the fish together—truly a hopeful reward I should get for the loan of my boat.”

“In truth,” said Bertrand, half laughing, and half vexed at this ridiculous suggestion—“you are an odd fish yourself, to entertain so absurd an idea; but come, don’t trifle thus with me, do what I require, and you may depend on my word for your safety, and a noble recompense.”

“No,” returned Carlos, “if I am an odd fish, I am also an old one, and will not be taken by your bait. So, good night, Senor.” With these words he made a sudden dart at the basket of trout, and was out of sight in a moment.

Bertrand, regarding the delay of every instant as pregnant with danger to his master, and thinking it useless to follow the old man, without further hesitation approached one of the skiffs, and tried to

untie the huge knot by which it was secured to the bank. All his perseverance was however without effect; and, with an expression of bitter disappointment, he was about to relinquish his scheme altogether, when turning, he saw Carlos again coming towards him, who, having deposited his basket in a place of concealment; and, not thinking that the boat was quite safe, had returned to watch beside it at any risk, while the object of his fears remained.

Bertrand now recovered his wavering resolution, and not intimidated by the suspicious look that Carlos fixed on him, he caught the hand of the latter, and besought him to listen quietly to a short explanation.

The zealous glow that animated his countenance, and the moving pathos of his voice soon operated on the feelings of his kind-hearted auditor; who, viewing his features, desired him to proceed.

“ I am fully aware,” resumed Ber-

trand, "that appearances are much against me,—and allow the justness of your remark, that my being here at this late and silent hour looks like no good intent,—but mark me,—I call Heaven to witness the purity of my heart, and the worthy enterprise I am about to undertake. My master, (whom next to my God I love and reverence,) is a man of high rank and consequence, a trifling affair has involved him in the hands of justice, justice do I say,—this night I have beheld him dragged to the Inquisition, whence, unless he be immediately rescued, he never can escape; it may so happen, that his prison will be on the side of the building which overlooks the river,—and if you will accompany me, we will at least make the only attempt in our power to liberate him,—nay Heaven itself inspires the thought, and whispers that we shall succeed."

At the mention of the Inquisition, Carlos could not conceal his terror, but

from the resolute manner of Bertrand, he saw that remonstrance would be unavailing, and feeling the whole circumstance as a claim on his humanity, he dismissed every interested idea, and with that promptitude of friendship which generally marks the Spanish character, when called forth by the sufferings of a fellow-creature, he went with Bertrand into the boat, which in a short time, bore them to the walls of the holy office.

The latter now took out a small flute, on which he was an excellent performer, and played several pathetic little airs, which had often caught the attention of his master, not however without apprehensions that sounds so unusual might attract the notice of some other members of the Inquisition, and perhaps lead to a discovery: for harmony had probably never before softened the horrors of this dreary spot; but the reader is acquainted of the fortunate result.

The Conde now awoke ; a long sleep had composed his senses, but had not been able to repel the attacks of an illness which threatened to be tedious in its progress, and not unattended with danger ; the benignity that sparkled in his intelligent eyes, as he turned them gratefully on his preservers, (for Bertrand had made him sensible of his present situation and all he had undergone,) spoke to their very souls those feelings of acknowledgment which words would not have been powerful enough to express.

Carlos and Ursula came at an early hour to see how he had passed the night, and found him labouring under a low fever, which increased in the course of the day to such an alarming height, that Carlos, who was going to the city to market, urged the necessity of having medical advice ; but aware how unsafe his situation was in other respects, and that such a measure would subject him

to discovery and probably to consequent death, he decidedly declined it, not altogether because he feared to die, and, alas! for death and an after-state he reflected he was ill prepared; but still he felt that something, which, throughout his errors and misfortunes, had yet attached him to life, and from which the image of Elvira had never been separated.

Too faithfully did memory now portray past scenes, at once delightful to view, and dreadful to dwell upon; he loved Elvira with that pure and exalted fervour of soul which knows no disparity of rank, and which alone can dignify the too-often misapplied term; and, finding its kindred glow in her bosom, their vivid coalescence gave to each an equal portion of that sublime passion which so truly ennobles the human mind.

But oh! how enormous and irreparable were the sacrifices he had made! his peace on earth—perhaps—oh horrid,

horrid thought! perhaps his salvation hereafter; to attain his object, he had dared even to become a murderer! how tremendous the depth into which one rash step had hurled him, far beyond the power of mortal to extricate him; for who can blot from the register of our conduct, our crimes and errors here on earth, or from an ever-waking conscience, this dreadful violation of the bounds which Heaven has set to the passions of man? His sister, too, had fallen a victim to those unguarded passions, all the tortures of the rack would have been more easily borne than that consideration; and he almost wished that he had awaited death in the most formidable shape the inquisitors could devise.

And yet he was not deserted entirely; he still beheld by his side friendship in the most inviting forms, in the persons of Bertrand and his generous hosts, whose every look, word, and movement,

corresponded with the ideas he had formed of them. The voice of friendship had reached him even in the Inquisition, which surely proved beyond a doubt that God had not wholly abandoned him, for was it not by the divine will that he had been so mysteriously liberated at a moment when the sword of death was about to fall on him; and to human means alone it seemed ungrateful and impious to attribute it. From this circumstance he could not doubt that God was still his friend, that still he extended his clemency towards him, and watched over him wherever he went; and, if so, he had every thing to hope. This thought re-animated him, and he no longer gave way to despair, round his bed frisked Rosa, his little attendant, the grand-daughter of the venerable Ursula; and, her playful vivacity and artless observations amused him for awhile, in spite of the rapid progress of his disorder; but it was

coming to a crisis that threatened a fatal event, if medical aid were longer withheld.

A week had he now lain beneath this hospitable roof, during which time no entreaties could prevail on Bertrand to quit the apartment for ten minutes together; and, when he slumbered, his head reclined on the same pillow that supported the aching one of his lord.

No inquiries, or even the most distant hint that might lead to the elucidation of the mystery which hung over their guests, had hitherto escaped the lips of Carlos or his wife: it was sufficient to their humane hearts that Montalban was a fellow-creature, that his sorrows demanded their sympathy, his misfortunes their commiseration, and his declining health every exertion and attention they could bestow. Providence had indeed elevated their lowly condition in life far above the pageantry of wealth, or the glittering pomp of titles: in these poor

and unambitious cottagers: He had implanted an independent spirit of virtue and goodness, which, reared in the wholesome soil of humility, flourished in its maturity, safe from the withering power which the luxurious glow of rank and splendour possesses, and with which it seldom fails to subvert it.

The interesting appearance of the Conde, his handsome features, whose fine expression even sickness could not change, and the winning affability of his manners, had soon gained their admiration, love, and esteem; and the pretty Rosa, as she sometimes innocently fixed her eyes on him, while she prattled her little tales to amuse him, declared that she loved him dearly because he was so like the sweet young Senora who used to come so often to see them, and always gave them money and clothes.

“And, when Sunday comes,” added she, “you shall see the fine frock she gave me, for my grandmother says I

must not wear it on any other day; and, she makes me pray for her every night and morning, and I will pray for you also, because I always remember you when I think of her."

The smile or kiss that Rosa's entertaining chat usually obtained for her, she thought the highest reward she could have received. Thus did she pass the day, and when night arrived she parted from Montalban with tearful eyes, as Ursula put her early to bed,—and flew to him again as soon as she rose next morning.

Carlos and Ursula, while they treated their guest with the respect due to his rank, (which many circumstances made them conclude to be very superior,) were led insensibly to feel for him an attachment almost parental, which was every day strengthened by some new instance of the natural goodness of his disposition. As soon as there appeared in his disease a probability of danger, Carlos

no longer hesitated to follow his own will in summoning a physician ; he communicated his intention to his wife, who was of opinion, that at least Bertrand ought to be apprized of it, as he knowing his master's critical situation, they doubted not he would readily concur in their proposal, and agree with them on the propriety of it, trusting that the Conde would afterwards pardon a disobedience now so essential to his safety.

Accordingly, when Carlos had got his instructions with regard to the necessary caution and secrecy, but in a manner that could not awaken suspicion, he set out with his little stock of fish to Madrid, and having disposed of it, he proceeded to execute the rest of his commission.

The gloom of twilight shaded Montalban's chamber, and Rosa was, as usual, trying to amuse him, when an exclamation of affright, which she suddenly uttered, drew his attention towards the door, which had been thrown open to

admit a tall skeleton-looking figure, dressed in black, and of no very prepossessing appearance, who, carrying his hat in his hand, and bowing almost to the ground, approached the bed.

Just as he entered, the child had hidden her face behind the curtain ;—but the moment she ventured to peep forth, and beheld his lean and sallow visage, and awkward movements, as he continued bowing at every step, she burst into a loud laugh ; while Montalban, raising his languid eyes, stared in astonishment, and vainly tried to account for the intrusion of such a strange-looking creature.

“ So please your *Excellenza*,” said Bertrand, endeavouring to check a smile, and turning to his master, “ this *Senor* is a physician, whom my fears for you have made me take the liberty of applying to—and I hope for your forgiveness when you consider the motives that influenced me.”

“ Yes, *Senor*,” interrupted the stran-

ger, gaining courage from this introduction, and assuming an air of importance, " I am the far-famed, illustrious genius of physic,—the renowned Dottore Ambrosio del Sudorifico, the inventor of a patent lotion, that makes the old young, the ugly handsome, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; in short, Il Dottore Solomon's balm of Gilead is a mere slop compared to it. By-the-by I never run down my neighbours but when they deserve it; I hate puffing, but as I was saying, I have travelled over half the globe in search of knowledge, my fame has traversed the whole universe,—and now here I stand *in propria persona*, at your service."

At this ludicrous speech, Bertrand could no longer keep his risible muscles within the bounds of gravity, and, unable to smother a laugh, which evidently disconcerted the poor doctor, he turned aside, while an involuntary smile stole over the pallid features of Sebastian,

who thought it would be unkind to censure this proof of his servant's attachment, and being, from illness and confinement, almost indifferent to the risk of a discovery, he resolved to gratify Bertrand, by allowing Il Dottore to prescribe for him.

“ To what an outrageous exacerbation has your malady arrived,” said the latter, taking Sebastian's wrist between his fore-finger and thumb, with an air of profound solemnity, “ I protest, Senor, from the unbounded rapidity of your pulse, your soul seems ready to disen-  
thral itself from the functions nature has assigned to it, and to soar from its arid abode for ever ; but while there is life there is hope,—pardon me, “ *dum vita spes est,*” I should have said—let me see, you must have a *haustus effervescens, tertii quaque hora, cum guttis octo,*—no, no,—*cum guttis decem,*—aye that will do, *guttis decem,*—ten drops of—of—I'll consider presently ; excuse me, Senor, you are on

your travels I presume; and 'tis very unfortunate that you are obliged to remain in this miserable cottage. I have three rooms, and part of a fourth at my house in Madrid, with which I could at present accommodate you, on very reasonable terms; but of course you will not be long here; and no doubt you will have every thing else that money can purchase; well, I must absolutely go home now; for I left seven dying patients, to come to you; besides, I have to meet Il Dottore Camphorio at a consultation; *à propos* of Il Dottore; he lives near the Palazzo, and tells me there were terrible doings there lately; but things are now, I fancy, on the mending hand."

"On the mending hand!" Sebastian involuntarily repeated, and raised himself in the bed for a moment—"Good Dottore, what has happened—nothing fatal I hope?"

To any other person than Il Dottore,

who was too much wrapt in his own consequence, Sebastian's agitation would have betrayed him; but Sudorifico, gravely projecting his under lip, again felt his pulse, and told him, he must now try to compose himself to sleep, and allow nobody to disturb him. "*Nil desperandum*, Senor," said he, "I will now send you something, to keep the vital spark in action, and shall return here *cras meridie* to see their effect, and then I'll tell you all the news of Madrid."

Saying this, he made another low bow, and giving some directions necessary to be observed towards his patient, he departed, leaving Sebastian in a state of mind not easily described, from its alternate sensations of doubt, hope, and fear. The idea that his sister yet lived had instantaneously arisen with the mysterious affirmation of the Dottore, whose eccentricities were totally forgotten in the emotions it caused.

Rapid in succession were his various feelings and conjectures; the mere thought of Viola's recovery shook his whole soul with undefinable sensations; and then the consciousness of its almost evident impossibility seemed for awhile to suspend his every faculty; there was in it something that more awfully and forcibly impressed the senses, than even the terrible certainty of her death, and the conflict produced by such opposite ideas was nearly too agonizing to be borne. A thousand times he would have given them utterance, would have execrated himself for allowing any consideration to prevent him from demanding an immediate explanation; but the impulse was ever checked, when he reflected how soon the faint ray of hope might be totally extinguished; in all the tortures of suspense, (and of all mental sufferings suspense is one of the most poignant,) rendered doubly so by the restraint under which

it placed him, he was obliged to make every effort to calm the perturbation of his spirits, and, at all events, assume as much composure as he could; to which the implicit obedience the poor people paid to the physician's orders, in leaving him alone, in order that he might obtain some repose, did not a little contribute.

In the course of the evening Bertrand entered with a small basket of medicines, of no very tempting colour or taste. Sebastian opened the first vial that presented itself, and mechanically swallowed the nauseous drug it contained; in three hours afterwards he repeated the dose, as directed, and ere the hour allotted for the third had arrived, he was buried in a deep sleep, in which he continued until late on the ensuing day—when, slowly awaking, he beheld seated beside him “the illustrious Genius of Physic,” who, having congratulated him on the alteration for

the better which his draughts had produced, while his eager looks bespoke a fund of interesting intelligence, at length, with an air of gravity and importance, to render it more impressive, turned the conversation to the topic most wished-for by Sebastian, which, to avoid tautology, we shall give in the following chapter, in our own words.

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## CHAPTER XI.

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“ It bade her feel  
No future pain for *him*, but instant wed  
A lover more proportion'd to her bed.”

PRIOR.

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ON the arrival of the bodies of the Marcheze della Vittoria and his daughter, the catastrophe seemed complete; for the Princess had not yet been restored to animation, notwithstanding the exertions of her attendants, and the skill of Dottore Camphorio, who had been immediately summoned to her and Don Manuel d'Orellez. The respirations of the latter were so short and faint, that for a considerable time he appeared to be gradually sinking beneath the cold pressure of death.

Such an accumulation of horrible events as had marked the course of this night, seemed almost indicative that some inscrutable fatality hung over the royal house of Spain, which had commenced in the dreadful and ominous murder of Orlando; and, too probably would not end there; that suggestion gave even a more terrific aspect to the present circumstances, and soon becoming prevalent through the Palazzo, it augmented the general consternation to a still more alarming height.

The veneration in which the Catholic church is held by the Spaniards, and their implicit belief in, and adherence to, all its doctrines, needs hardly be told to the reader; from the Prince to the peasant the powerful influence of religion is manifested in their almost every action, and the zeal with which they fulfil the duties its tenets prescribe, renders them jealous of every thing in the least degree connected with them;

in their observance of them, there is, however, a degree of bigotry, even beyond the enthusiasm of other countries which embrace the catholic faith. One of their chief characteristics, and indeed one most fatal to themselves, is the absurd confidence in the intercession of saints, which almost all classes acknowledge, and to such an excess has it sometimes carried them, as to have been productive of material injury.

History furnishes us with a remarkable instance of the dire effects of their superstition, in the losses sustained by the companies of insurance in the American war, each company having its tutelary saint, to whom they scrupulously allotted a certain dividend, depending upon such powerful associates for the success of all their undertakings. In this blind confidence they ventured to insure the French West Indiamen at fifty per cent, when the Dutch and English had declined it on any terms, and the conse-

quence was the ruin of almost all the companies. So tenacious do they seem of the character they have thus acquired, that their most violent passions, as if at will, are in an instant calmed by the voice of piety and religion, nor can any thing tend to excite those passions so much as an offence against the church they worship, the faith they profess

Their indignation at the heinous crime of which the Conde Montalban had been guilty, was therefore not confined to a few individuals; almost every tongue was loud in condemning him, and almost all united in declaring that, until the chapel should have been purified by the most eminent clergy of Madrid, it would be unsafe for any of the royal family to enter it.

When the first ebullition of the shock had somewhat subsided, and given way to the deeper pangs of grief, the weeping domestics assisted to convey the body of their beloved lady Viola to her

chamber, where they laid her on a bed prepared for the occasion, to be ready against the arrival of the Padre Jerome from the convent of San Stefano, whither he had been sent for, as well to administer his holy consolations to her afflicted family, as to say mass over her.

Meanwhile the Marcheze and Don Manuel revived slowly, but their recollection of what had passed was confused and bewildered. Dottore Camphorio having prescribed some composing medicines, and being assured that they were completely out of danger, ordered that they should not be spoken to, nor any thing mentioned to recall to their minds their lost Viola, after which he devoted his whole attention to the princess; having opened a vein, a copious flow of blood, and a spasmodic heaving at her bosom at length proclaimed that life once more circulated through her; but when she became sensible of every thing around her, she continued for a long

time without speaking or moving, inso-  
much that her attendants again grew  
alarmed. As if with one effort to plunge  
herself and sorrows into oblivion, she  
threw herself on the arm of the Abad,  
and bursting into a violent torrent of  
tears, she sank from a strong hysteric  
fit into the same state of insensibility.

A loud bustle was now heard in the  
courts below the windows of the prin-  
cess's apartment; and when her senses  
again returned, one of the first sounds  
that caught her attention was the Conde  
Montalban's name, pronounced in tones  
prophetic of his doom, and without a  
moment's consideration she rushed over  
to the window and heard the confirma-  
tion of her fears.

“This dagger is Don Sebastian's—  
here is his name, and he is undoubtedly  
the murderer”—cried a number of voices  
at once—“the vilest wretch—the bloodi-  
est assassin on earth (save Montalban,)  
would not have done such a deed—and

in our holy church too—Oh profanation! defilement most shocking and abominable!—but he has struck his own death-blow, and will feel its severest agonies in the Inquisition.”

“The Inquisition!” re-echoed Elvira, dropping on a chair almost motionless—“Oh cruel, cruel fate! have they dragged him thither—given him up to their merciless judgment!—his destruction is now indeed certain—once within their fatal walls he is lost for ever!”—

In vain the monk remonstrated with her on the excessive indulgence of her grief, and the ill effects it might perhaps be productive of. Her tears still flowed abundantly to the memory of her dear Viola, and the destiny to which her lover had been consigned—and Padre Jerome, finding it impossible to tranquilize her, left her to the care of Dottore Camphorio, and proceeded to the room where lay the body of Viola.

The affectionate Bianca was bathed in

tears—her moans and sobs, whilst she kept her eyes rivetted on the pallid features of her lady, would have been sufficient to operate strongly on the feelings of the Abad, and call forth all his sensibility—but when he beheld the beautiful countenance of Viola, over which was yet spread a sweet and placid smile, the internal monitor with all its doctrines was unable to guard him against betraying that it had forcibly appealed to his feelings—and his cowl, falling back, discovered the sympathetic tear which rolled down his cheek, and bedewed her fair hand as he involuntarily pressed it to his lips.

The confusion that prevailed through the Palazzo was increased by the arrival of the officials from the Inquisition, who had been immediately apprized of the whole affair on their finding the dagger in the chapel, with the Conde's name engraved on the hilt, which circumstance had at once declared him to be the per-

petrator of it, the officials had therefore proceeded quickly to exercise the power with which they were invested, as the punishment of every crime against the church belonged exclusively to them.

The Padre Jerome was a man who had ever scrupulously adhered to the tenets of his religion; and, amongst the brothers of San Stefano he passed as a model of every virtue that human nature can possess combined. He was known to possess a disposition as excellent as his understanding was comprehensive, in many high families in Madrid, where he was confessor. But though thus true even to superstition to the Catholic faith, nothing had ever been able to conquer his abhorrence of the Inquisition and its members; his indignation at their mysterious proceedings he did not hesitate to avow openly, nor did he fear as openly to assert that such a tribunal was a disgrace to the whole kingdom. From his opinion none actually dissented.

nor durst any one be heard to concur in it, whilst everybody wondered at the temerity of an individual who ventured so undisguisedly to declare sentiments which they feared would prove his ruin. Such, however, was the popularity and esteem he had acquired, that it even seemed that the Inquisitors held him as a being too sacred to meddle with. The Padre started on hearing Montalban's name re-echoed along the galleries, and the trampling of horses, and noise of the guards in the court, together with the frequent exclamations of "The officers of the holy Inquisition are come," "the Conde Montalban's fate is nigh," announced what was passing below.

"His fate," repeated the shuddering monk, "oh God, oh God, what a direful one will it be! Can it be real, or is all this but a continued illusion; the young and amiable Montalban about to be hurled into the dungeons of the Inquisition, for murder too, committed within

yon hallowed walls ; yes, yes, it is too true, memory furnishes not such another instance of depravity—that fate is a just one.”

“Oh holy father, do not thus condemn my dear young Lord,” cried Bianca, while in a paroxysm of despair she rushed to the bed, and clasped the inanimate Viola in her arms, and in convulsive agitation, which alarmed the monk, clung to it in spite of all his efforts to force her away ; uttering the most moving lamentations, and every tender epithet that could express her love and grief for her lady.

Exhausted by this violent burst of sorrow, her head dropped on the pillow, which her tears had wet ; and her eyes closed for awhile in an uneasy slumber.

Jerome continued steadfastly gazing on them from the couch on which he had flung himself, while he directed his thoughts to Heaven ; imploring that

Omnipotence, to whom nothing is impossible; to soften this dreadful calamity.

His meditations were interrupted by a loud scream from Bianca, who suddenly started from the bed, and, throwing herself at his feet, exclaimed "Holy Father, my lady still lives; her heart beats; oh run for the sake of the Virgin, and bring help instantly."

"Be composed; Bianca," replied the incredulous monk, "tis alas, all over with the lady Viola; long ere this she has ceased to live."

"See, see, she moves; she breathes," exclaimed Bianca, pointing towards her, with a wild cry of joy; "she does indeed live: will not your reverenza believe your own eyes?" And throwing open the door, she hurried, almost breathless with anxiety, through the galleries, nor stopped until in the Princess's apartment she was met by Dottore Camphorio, who instantly returned with her.

Every eye was now turned towards the same interesting and beloved object; and every bosom was again cheered with hope; for, as Bianca had asserted, Viola yet lived; it almost seemed as if Heaven had no sooner heard the prayers of the good monk, than they had been granted, and, impressed with this idea, Bianca beheld him almost in the light of a divinity; and while she invoked all the blessings of Heaven on him, she threw herself on her knees to receive his benediction.

The countenance of the Dottore assumed an aspect more expressive than words, and with the look and voice of a ministering angel, he appeared to them a being almost super-human, as he declared it his opinion that the lady Viola would recover.

On her removal from the chapel, large quantities of wine, and other stimulants had been forced down her throat, in

order to restore animation, if yet a gleam remained.

It now proved that these had assisted nature in her struggles; and in a great measure made up for the loss of blood; and to their efficacy the Dottore partly attributed her revival.

The wound in her side was minutely re-examined, and it appeared that the dagger had taken an oblique direction, without seriously injuring any vital part; so that hopes were now reasonably entertained, and Camphoric, and Dottore Speranza, (who had also been summoned) having entirely washed away the congealed blood, and dressed the wound, administered some restorative medicines; and in a few hours their exertions were amply rewarded by the recovery of their lovely patient.

THE  
ASTROLOGER;

OR, THE

*EVE OF SAN SEBASTIAN,*

*A Romance,*

By J. M. H. HALES, Esq.

---

“ Unequal task a passion to resign,  
“ For hearts so touched, so pierced, so lost as mine,  
“ Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state  
“ How often must it love—how often hate,  
“ How often hope—despair—resent—regret,  
“ Conceal—disdain—do all things but forget.”

POPE

“ Yet Providence—that ever-waking eye,  
“ Looks down with pity on the feeble toil  
“ Of mortals lost to hope—and lights them safe  
“ Through all the dreary labyrinths of fate.”

THOMSON

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IN THREE VOLUMES,

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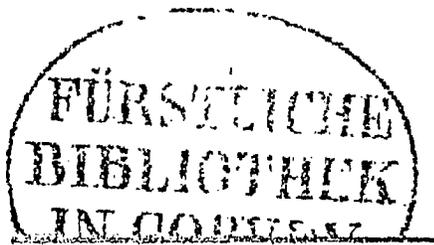
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THE  
ASTROLOGER;

OR, THE  
EVE OF SAN SEBASTIAN.

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CHAPTER I.

“ When Love's well-timed, 'tis not a fault to love,  
The strong, the brave, the virtuous, and the wise,  
Sink in the soft captivity together ”

ADDISON'S CATO.

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THE restoration of Viola from apparent death seemed indeed a miracle worked by the hand of Providence; for what earthly power could alone have accomplished it? Every shade of sorrow, every painful recollection, in a word, every minor consideration, gave way for awhile to the sincere and heartfelt joy it inspired. Every individual wept in a

transport of delight, they had not hitherto imagined themselves capable of feeling. The raptures of the domestics were almost unbounded, and it was with much difficulty they were prevented from entering the room where she lay, to testify their unanimous joy.

But their intrusion was strictly prohibited by the medical attendants, who were of opinion that it ought not to be communicated to the Princess, the Marchese, or Don Manuel, till they should have acquired sufficient strength to bear without danger such unexpected and happy intelligence.

With every branch of the royal family Viola had always been a favourite, and the attention shewn her on the present occasion, the grief they had evinced at her supposed death, and the unfeigned pleasure they now manifested at her recovery, gave her the most flattering proofs of it.

Immediately on hearing that she

shewed symptoms of returning life, the Queen repaired in person to her apartment, where she watched the progress of her recovery with solicitude almost maternal, and a tenderness nearly equal to what she felt for the Princess her daughter.

Not less anxious about her appeared the King, from whom several messengers came in the course of the night, to make inquiries how she was going on; and he had each time the satisfaction to learn that she still grew better.

But, notwithstanding all the pleasure this circumstance imparted, sadness again found its way to their hearts, when they recollected the guilt of their favourite: the Conde Montalban,—the fate to which he had been condemned; he who had been the beloved, the idolized, of all who knew him, (except those whose envy his superior qualifications, and the dignities they were rewarded with, had excited,) was now a murderer,

his hand stained with a sister's blood:— for though she had been thus providentially recovered, still his crime remained the same.

What dreadful purpose could have led him to such a deed it was impossible to conjecture, much less determine. But in the breasts of those whose sanctity partook less of bigotry than others, resentment for the crime soon gave way to pity and compassion for the consequences to him:—grief for the misery into which he had plunged his family, the blemish he had brought on his hitherto unsullied character, and the probability that they might never see or hear of him again.

In this instance, however, the King had determined to exert his influence at the Holy Office to have Sebastian liberated,—both in consideration of the eternal stigma his perishing in the Inquisition would bring on the illustrious House of Vittoria, and the high estima-

tion in which he, as well as every body else, held the Marchese his father, exclusive of the partiality with which he had ever regarded the Conde.

For that purpose he drove thither at an early hour on the following morning, but 'tis impossible to conceive his astonishment and dismay on hearing that the object of his anxiety was nowhere to be found.

This assertion he at first discredited, recollecting, that the Inquisitors had oftener than once braved even his authority, and carried into effect many barbarous laws unsanctioned by him; and fearful that they had now been no less hasty or arbitrary, that their proceedings had been no less atrocious or cruel, and that to those cruelties Sebastian had already fallen a victim.

They had made him their prisoner without the royal authority, having obtained immediate intelligence of the transaction from the emissaries they

kept always employed to find out such persons as were hostile to their holy tribunal, or who had committed any crime that came within the cognizance of their laws.

In this, too, they had been aided by the officiousness of several individuals about the court, whose sentiments had long been inimical to Sebastian; and, without waiting for any decision from the King, (who had been at one of his country palazzos on the fatal evening until a late hour,) they had at once hurried him off.

His Majesty was, therefore, the more incensed at it, as it appeared probable that Montalban had fallen a sacrifice to jealousy and private pique, both of which he knew never failed to pursue the favourites of a court.

This idea drove him almost to madness; and it was with the greatest difficulty the Inquisitors could convince him of the truth.

On entering the dungeon to summon Sebastian to the tribunal hall, amazement and consternation seized them at finding he was gone, nobody knew how or whither.

A gust of wind had fortunately blown back the secret door into its place, and the Heads of the Inquisition, thinking it was not known to any person besides themselves, and confident of the fidelity of those to whom the keys of the prisons were intrusted, did not for a moment suppose that he had discovered it;—thence it did not appear likely that any person in the Holy Office had been accessory to his escape.

A strict investigation was, however, set on foot, and the result was only so far satisfactory as to make them feel convinced that this supposition was right, and that no human aid had been afforded him in his flight.

Not less firm than others in their superstitious ideas, they unanimously con-

cluded, that one who could be guilty of such enormities as murder, and so violent an outrage on the respect and reverence due to the Catholic church, must assuredly be in league with some infernal power; and consequently, as the Conde could not have fled without assistance, that which had been rendered to him was from some evil spirit, or inhabitant of the nether world; nay, perhaps from Lucifer himself.

Even within the sanctified bosoms of these Holy Fathers,—these models of rigid piety and virtue,—these reverend defenders of the church, did this horrible thought find a place; nor did they scruple to communicate their belief of it to the King, who shuddered with disgust at such innate wickedness, and whose mind education had happily too much enlightened to allow him to become a convert to this opinion.

Satisfied by their repeated assurances, that Sebastian had by some means es-

caped the fate that threatened him in the Inquisition, the King lost all resentment in the idea of his favourite's safety, and his countenance fully displayed the satisfaction he felt. The Inquisitors regarded each other in silent amazement, and their expressive looks declared what they durst not otherwise avow: their indignation at his Majesty's incredulity, and the partiality he manifested towards one who had committed so flagrant an outrage against their church.

Regardless of their chagrin, and his thoughts occupied solely by Montalban, (for whose safety he again began to entertain alternate hopes and fears) the King returned; and the intelligence of his flight was the only consolation his friends at the Palazzo could receive.

The distressing state of suspense they were in respecting him, considerably retarded the re-establishment of Viola's health, and but for that circumstance

they would have been soon restored to a state of comparative happiness.

The Marchese was sensibly affected by the guilt, and the loss of his darling son, though he dared hardly wish his return to face the opprobrium now heaped upon his character.

The passionate and sincere lover, whom fate had deprived for awhile of his most adored object, and then in a moment unexpectedly restores it, can best conceive the feelings of Don Manuel, when again he heard the voice of his beloved Viola, and again pressed her fair hand to his lips with all the fervency of esteem and love,—when he again received the delightful assurance that she would be his, and that her affections were devoted to him as warmly as ever.

Until some satisfactory information with regard to Montalban could be obtained, it was, however, impossible that an affair of this nature could be brought to a conclusion,—and their not hearing

of him from any quarter, daily increased their anxiety; but altogether the merciful goodness and miraculous power of Providence had been so incontestably evinced, that in the enthusiasm and gratitude it excited, every lesser consideration appeared impious and unreasonable.

Notwithstanding all that had taken place, the Princess still continued firm in her secret attachment to Montalban: though she could not but own to herself that it was imprudent, dangerous, nay, criminal, to cherish it longer;—for though he was the chosen of her heart,—the all that can captivate woman,—the every thing that nature forms to please,—yet he was what nature shudders at,—he was to all intents and purposes a murderer; and even were affection so far to mislead her as to induce her to unite herself to such a man, by the strongest ties that bind mortals here on earth;—surely she durst not be so rash,—so deaf to the voice of reason,—so lost to every sense of pro-

priety, as thus to sully the royal name she bore—thus to insult the Majesty of Spain. Still in her bosom he had many pleaders; through all the mazes of opposition, difficulty, danger, and even guilt, yet had his affection remained unconquerable.

If love were prone to philosophize, this last extremity into which it had driven him would have appeared an antidote to all the rest; but so much are its suggestions guided by sophistry, and yet so obvious are its axioms, that the heart receives, while reason disavows them; and though she regarded the crime with all the horror it was calculated to inspire, she could not help thinking that his attachment to her was in some way connected with it. She felt that her love was as ardent as before: but though she could not subdue it, she resolved at least, however painful might be the effort, to confine it to her own bosom,—to summon reason to her aid,—to recollect

all the dignity of her situation,—and if Sebastian should return, to destroy (as far at least as appearances could do so) all those hopes she had hitherto so fondly encouraged him to indulge.

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## CHAPTER II.

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“ Then whilst thou goest th’ extremes of fate to prove,  
I’ll share that fate, and expiate thus my love ”

POPE

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LIKE the sun, suddenly emanating in glorious refulgence from the dark and lowering clouds of winter, which with resplendent majesty it hurls from the face of nature, so had these joyful tidings flashed through the gloom which enveloped Montalban; and so did their re-animating brightness dispel for awhile every trace of sorrow, and that despair to which he had abandoned himself so long.

The Dottore was fortunately too much occupied in improving and commenting on the facts of his narration, to ob-

serve the uncommon degree of interest his auditor felt, and the different changes of his countenance.

From this period the indisposition of the Conde took a favourable turn; but his mental and bodily health kept not pace with each other. Every undertaking at all conducive to the attainment of his object, however formidable, had hitherto appeared feasible: but now hope was no more; every possibility of obtaining Elvira seemed annihilated, and retrospection was attended with every pang that tortures the guilty mind; for, alas, to what a dreadful extremity had his chimerical pursuit now led him;—the past was as a fantastic dream,—the wild enthusiasm of fancy but the present was no visionary scene,—it was indeed reality; and the recollection of his romantic passion, for one whom fate had apparently placed so far beyond his reach, caused a momentary smile at its absurdity: while he regretted his weakness,

and determined to atone for it if possible, by discarding the image of Elvira from his bosom for ever.

Love has seldom aught to do with the rigid ethics of a moralist; and when we hearken to the sophisms of one, we are usually deaf to all the doctrines of the other. Of the truth of this Sebastian was, however, not an instance, for he could love, and at the same time admit every principle of reason and morality; and though he found it impossible to think of the Princess with any other sentiment, he resolved to subdue his hopes and wishes of obtaining her,—for to both did his truant heart sometimes yield, according as reason told him, how futile and unavailing they were.

Supported in this resolution by religion and philosophy, he fancied he had at last learned the government of his heart, and feared not to inspect it; but the soporific had nearly worn off,—its emotions only slumbered, and required

but the least stimulus to arouse them again into action.

In the meantime, he was not so abstracted as to be unmindful of his precarious situation at present, and the necessity of determining what course he should pursue. He shuddered at the sickening thought, that home and friends were now no more to him—(for of their grief for him, and anxiety at that home, he was totally ignorant) that at the very moment when he most required the advice and consolations of the latter, he must turn his back on his paternal roof, without a prospect—without a hope—and, alas! almost without a wish ever to return:—an exile from all he held dear on earth,—a wretched unfriended outcast, on a pitiless world, to whom he durst not make himself known; and whither should he turn to seek that comfort from which at home he had been driven. How dreary were the thoughts of the future!

Never would the arms of a parent again open to receive him. Never would the sweet smile, to welcome him again, beam on a sister's lips. And, worst of all, never should he behold Elvira; no more assure her, that for her sake he had thus braved every storm of adverse fortune,—no more hear the magic sound of her voice breathing forth ten thousand rewards in her promises of unalterable affection. For now all the avenging powers of fate seemed combined against him. Better, he thought, had he awaited the stroke of death in the Inquisition, which would have ended all his wretchedness at once;—but this wish was momentary; for what were all his present sufferings, when compared to the dread of a world beyond the grave.

Independent of other circumstances, which interdicted his return, the idea of again seeking protection or favour, or even of asserting those claims which nature had given him, from those whose

hearts seemed to have been divested by stern justice, of every feeling of humanity, (for he knew not how undeservedly he thus implicated his father in the late proceedings against him) was repugnant to the magnanimity of his soul. And miserable as his lot might henceforth be, he resolved to endeavour to make peace with that God he had so wickedly incensed, and bear with resignation and fortitude the buffets of the world. The consciousness of having preserved the native dignity of his character, and withstood the pressure of all exigencies, amid the bitterest misfortunes, would, he knew, afford him a degree of consolation, which nothing at the expense of his pride could bestow.

Fain would he have passed the rest of his life in his present calm retirement, contented with the peaceful society of its humble inhabitants, and the playful endearments of the pretty Rosa to cheer his melancholy hours.

But even that solitary pleasure he was denied, as reflection shewed him the absurdity of imagining that here he could tranquillize his griefs, or that its seclusion could afford security against incidental ills; and, exclusive of that, the mysterious light in which his doing so would appear to the cottagers, and the fear of the conjectures it would naturally excite, aided by the advice of his ever-faithful Bertrand, finally prevailed.

He had in his immediate possession a considerable sum of money, besides a large stock of valuable articles of jewellery, which had fortunately escaped the search of the Inquisitors, and which he knew would, when disposed of, produce sufficient to maintain him and his servant, until revolving fortune should prove more favourable.

After ruminating on various plans, a journey to the interior of France was ultimately fixed on, as the place most likely to wean his mind, if possible, from

past events. But, alas! change of scene was not the “oblivious antidote” that could “rase out the written troubles of *his* brain,” or “pluck from his memory its rooted sorrow.” And though society was now irksome to him, unfit as he was to partake of its enjoyments, solitude was more calculated to cherish than dispel it. In solitude, indeed, he might remain for ever concealed from that world he resolved to abandon. But what could conceal him from himself, or from the all-seeing eye of an offended God; what could recal his former happy state of innocence, without which the crowded city and the lonely forest are equally desert,—the crowned monarch and the lowly mendicant are equally wretched. “But,” cried he, clasping his hands together in all the fervour of confidence, in the goodness of that great Power he addressed, “repentance is ever acceptable to thee, O God of mercy! Alike thine ear inclineth to the supplications

of the good, and the contrite prayer of the wicked; and thou rejoicest over one sinner who repenteth more than ninety and nine just persons, therefore will I not despair."

It was decided that they should set out as soon as his constitution should be so much strengthened as to be able to bear the unavoidable fatigue of so long a journey, and, in the interim, he sought the benefit of moderate exercise to invigorate him.

Thus had a month elapsed, and the day named for his departure was to be one of the ensuing week. Time had much improved his health, and the depression of his spirits, insomuch that he could behold with composure the scene of grief which the idea of his being about to leave them had occasioned in the cottage, when he considered the circumstances which forbade his longer stay.

In his usual rambles, in which Rosa was almost always his companion, along

the verdant banks of the river, part of which was shaded by projecting cliffs, and part by clusters of small trees in full foliage, they had unconsciously wandered one day far beyond the length they intended, so absorbed was Mont-alban in the perusal of one of his favourite poets, which he had procured from Madrid by means of Carlos, and so intent was the little prattler in forming a wreath of wild flowers to ornament the neck of a lap-dog he had bought for her.

They had reached a kind of recess in the rock, where a rude seat induced him to rest awhile, in order to enjoy the refreshing breeze from the water, of which it commanded a full view, while the adventurous Rosa clambered to its exterior summit, which overlooked a turning of the main road, to procure some plants, whose gaudy blossoms had immediately attracted her eye.

The book that engaged Sebastian's

attention was a volume of Ariosto, into one of whose sublimest passages he had just entered, when he was roused by a sudden cry of joy from the outside; and the next moment Rosa had sprang from the rock, and thrown herself into his arms, almost breathless with rapture.

“What is the matter, my sweet child?” inquired he, smiling sympathetically.

“Oh, Senor, do come and see,” replied she, putting her little fat hand inside his, and climbing on his knee, to throw one of her arms round his neck, “I was afraid she never would come near us again, she has stayed away so long.”

“Who,” demanded he, a faint glow overspreading his cheeks, “whom do you mean, Rosa?”

“Why I mean,” said the latter, “the good Senora, whom I said you were so like, and who makes me so fond of you when I remember her; now do come, and I am sure when you see her you will

say the same, and I will never refuse to kiss you again."

"You must pay me first then," said he, pressing his lips to hers; and suffering her to lead him, he put the book in his pocket, and approached an angle of the rock, at the moment that an open carriage, with two ladies in it, drove swiftly past, and took the road that led down to the cottage.

"You must excuse me, Rosa," said the Conde, recollecting the imprudence of exposing himself to the observation of strangers, "those ladies would probably be displeased at my intrusion, and I prefer remaining here till they are gone."

"Indeed, Senor," replied the artless child, while her eyes filled with tears, "I don't think they would, for somehow you look like a grand lord, and I am sure you *are* one; and so I'll tell them; for you know they could not be angry with a lord."

"No, no, Rosa, even if I were one,

you must by no means mention me to them; for lords are neither better nor wiser than other men, nor *greater*, but in their empty titles."

"Ah! now, Senor, I see you are offended with me," cried she, wiping away her tears; "but if I had thought it would vex you, I would not have asked you at all."

"No, indeed, my little cherub, I am *not* vexed with you," replied he, gently patting her head, and again taking the hand she had withdrawn, "and to convince you, I will partly comply with your wish, we will now walk towards the cottage, and while you go in to save your grandmother the trouble of searching for you, I will wait under the shade of the trees beside it, where I shall have a view of the ladies as they pass."

"Oh! but you will see only one of them, Senor; the other, who is, I am sure, some very great proud donna of

quality, always remains in the carriage, and grandmother says she must be some rich Senora, at court I think she calls it."

"And do you not know the name of your benefactress?" asked the Conde, the colour of his cheek turning alternately from pale to red.

The resemblance which, by Rosa's account, his features bore to those of this fair unknown, and the mention of the court, at once raised a conjecture that it might be his sister.

The benevolence of Viola extended to all the "sons and daughters of indigence;" and her charities were always private, well applied, and without ostentation. Innumerable circumstances tended to strengthen this idea, and he was on the point of stopping abruptly, when the repeated entreaties of Rosa again shook his resolution, and he went on.

"No, Senor," answered she, we never

knew her name; and grandmother says, too, that 'tis not for us poor folks to ask great ones such questions."

By this time they had reached the spot where Montalban was to wait; and Rosa, requesting him to watch attentively, bounded forward in a transport of delight, and was in a few moments beside Ursula, ready to hail their kind visitor, with that hospitality which ever characterized these generous-hearted rustics.

At length he espied a female figure winding round an acclivity at a short distance, followed by a servant in the undress livery of the Marcheze, his father.

The Senora's face was closely veiled from his view; but her form and air, and the attire of the page, left him no longer in doubt. As if a mist had suddenly spread itself before his eyes, he put his hand up to shade them; but

scarcely had he uncovered them, when turning them full upon her, he had merely power to exclaim, "My sister!" and trembling, he sank against a tree beside him.

Instantaneously she recognised his voice, (for it was indeed his sister,) and almost at the same moment she pronounced his name with a wild scream of joy. She seemed falling to the earth; but Montalban's presence of mind quickly returned. "I am Sebastian," cried he, "behold your affectionate brother once more; and, springing from his concealment time enough to save her from falling, he caught her fainting in his arms, and bore her immediately to the cottage, while the servant hastened to the carriage, to procure a small bottle of drops that lay in a corner of it.

The Princess Elvira sitting in it, with a book which she appeared to be attentively perusing, was startled at the coun-

tenance of alarm the man wore, and demanded the cause, as she handed him the drops from a little straw and gold basket of Viola's.

“ So please you Royal Highness,” returned he, “ my lord, the Conde Montalban has been found, and Donna Viola has fainted at suddenly seeing him.”

“ Found! how, when, where? where have you found him? where is he now?” impatiently she inquired, forgetful at the moment of all ceremony,— of every thing but Sebastian.

“ Near the old fisherman's hut, your Highness; and I believe he has fainted as well as my lady, his sister.”

“ Shall I attend your Highness there?” continued he, seeing her motion to him to open the carriage-door.

“ No,” said she, as she alighted in visible agitation; and, taking the phial from him, said she would go by herself, as they were so near the cottage, and

desired him to wait with the other attendants beside the carriage until she and Donna Viola should return.

In the delightful thought of again beholding Sebastian, every doubt as to the propriety of it vanished, and with a beating heart she approached the humble abode that contained him; and thus containing all she held dearest on earth, she viewed it with infinitely more pleasure, than she would have done the gilded palazzos of the King, her father.

Montalban was seated on a sort of couch, made of rushes and dried seaweeds, supporting his sister's head on his bosom, and anxiously awaiting the return of the servant, though Ursula had good-naturedly administered one of her most valuable and efficacious cordials, and to some purpose, for the colour was slowly returning to Viola's cheeks.

But the instant the angelic form of Elvira met his wandering eye, his arm dropped powerless by his side, and he

fell backwards on the couch, overcome with the emotions her sudden and unexpected appearance excited.

The Princess would have instantly shrunk from his vacant stare, but her feet refused to support her, and stretching out her hand to give the bottle of drops to the astonished Ursula, she averted her face, and took a seat to prevent her falling.

What a painful variety of opposite sensations did she experience at that moment. Was this the reception she deserved, or had expected, from Montalban? How totally different was this coldness from the warmth of affection, which absence should, in her opinion, have rather matured than diminished. Could such a look of indifference be construed into the rapturous expression of *love*? Was it for this she had made so many sacrifices? "Oh Sebastian! perfidious, inconstant, ungrateful being," thought she, "no longer boast of the

superior firmness, the superior virtues, of *thy* sex; too severe hath thine heart found the test, which mine, with all its female weakness, hath immutably withstood. Shame on thy dastard spirit, thine ingratitude, thy perjury! But no, I will think of thee no longer, unworthy as thou art; and should my heart's vital current flow from the wound, I will tear thine hated image from it for ever."

Viola was now tolerably recovered; and the Princess rose involuntarily from her seat, and was approaching her, when another glance from Sebastian, who in vain essayed to speak, transfixed her to the spot, and she stood irresolute. Again she looked; again met his silent and melancholy gaze; a chillness came over her.

Ursula advanced with a respectful air, though ignorant of the rank of the illustrious lady, who honoured the cottage with her presence; and, hoping she would excuse such a liberty, she begged

an explanation of the mystery. But Elvira, too much abstracted in her thoughts to reply, and too much wounded by the apparent apathy of the Conde to continue longer in his presence, hastily walked to the door, where stopping for a moment, she turned towards Ursula, and requesting she would assist Viola after her to the carriage, she proceeded by the path-way to where it stood, and, having ordered the roof to be closed, she threw herself in, and burst into tears.

“*I will forget him,*” cried she; as if gaining a victory over herself,—“against the remembrance of him shall every avenue of my bosom be henceforth closed; or if for an instant memory, spite of my efforts, shall recur to him, it shall be with contempt and hatred, as deep-rooted as my love has hitherto been firm and unshaken.” She was interrupted by seeing one of the servants, assisted by the Conde and Ursula, lead-

ing Viola round the rock towards the carriage.

The health of the latter was yet languid from her late severe illness; but this unexpected meeting with a brother so much beloved, notwithstanding his faults, even his crimes, and whom she had supposed lost to her for ever, had so much agitated her whole frame, that her delicate limbs now seemed scarce able to support her.

Montalban accompanied her nearly to the carriage-door, and his eye again caught that of the Princess, to whose cheek resentment had given an unusual glow, and, darting a disdainful glance at him, she turned her head aside just at the moment that, forgetful of the restrictions he had laid down for himself, and the impropriety of doing so at the present time, he was about to speak to her, and apologize for the scene that had passed at the cottage.

He now construed her embarrassment

there into horror and displeasure at again beholding him, and recollecting how much cause there was for such sensations, he could hardly blame her; but he still loved her as fervently, and was as captious and jealous of all those trifles as ever. This slight, however deserved, mortified him; it appeared a plain proof that she wished to avoid him altogether. He felt something like a pang of grief for awhile at being thus cruelly cast off by the one he so fondly adored, and for whom he had suffered so much; but he was angry with himself for indulging it, and summoning every spark of pride to his aid, his efforts to appear unruffled fortunately succeeded just time enough to prevent the secret of his love for her from being divulged to the astonished attendants.

Viola being seated in the carriage, after parting from her brother with an affectionate embrace, read at once in Elvira's countenance what was passing

within; and for a considerable time neither seemed to have power or inclination to speak.

She dreaded to mention Sebastian, lest her doing so should oblige her to revert to the late event, in which he had been so deeply, so criminally concerned; and she would, if possible, have entirely obliterated it from her memory. But to Elvira she wished to make him appear less guilty,—less an object of horror than she apparently deemed him, from the repulsive frown with which she had just turned from him.

“Your Highness has of course seen my brother,” observed Viola, after a long pause, “and remarked how much, how very much, he is altered for the worse in his looks, and it was to me a meeting as joyful as it was—Oh no, ’twas misery—agony.”

“I have seen him, Venora,” interrupted Elvira, “I have seen the Conde Montalban, and for the last time, I hope;

but Viola, as you value my peace of mind, you must never—never mention his name to me again; I will see him no more.”

“That injunction is hardly necessary. Alas! we have all too much reason to fear that we shall behold him no more. He is going far, far away, where the commiseration of his friends, and the censures and revilings of his enemies, will be alike unheard by him. His resolution is, I fancy, *now* (and on the word “now” she laid a particular emphasis) unalterable; we shall most probably lose him for ever.”

“Santa Maria,” involuntarily cried Elvira, the idea of his being lost to her for ever instantly chasing away every thought inimical to him, ‘surely you are not, you cannot be serious. Don Sebastian, I trust, has not formed any rash design, nor would ungratefully fly from the very ones who *are* his friends, who will welcome and protect him. Is

he indeed ignorant of the King's friendship: and, possessing that, say what hath he to fear?"

" Ah, Donna Elvira, he knows all this. But friendship is a poor balsam to a wounded spirit such as his. He is about to quit this kingdom, the scene of all his happiness, and all his misery; to choose a residence in some foreign land, where congenial solitude may in some measure tranquillize him."

" Impossible," exclaimed the Princess, a thousand contending passions almost impeding utterance; no, no, he cannot be such a wretch. Hath he not won from me my soul's best affections? and would he hurl me to madness and despair—nay, to destruction? Oh no, he is not the villain you depict him; or, if he *did* make the mad resolve, 'twas prompted by jealousy. It was but momentary; yet I deserve it; I alone am to blame; 'tis I have driven him to this; I will forgive him all. I implore you to

go back, and assure him of my unabated attachment. Say I must see him this very evening by some means: that I am ready to fly with him to the remotest corner of the earth."

"I pray your Highness be composed," said Viola, wondering at the inconsistency of this with her first declaration; "in the same moment you have condemned and absolved him; but 'tis, I fear, to no purpose, although he loves you as sincerely as ever; yet is he determined to bid adieu to Spain, and—"

"He dare not," cried Elvira. "Are not our vows plighted to each other; our vows of eternal love and constancy, and are they not registered in Heaven? Oh, do not sport thus with me! Tell him I am all his own. Tell him any thing: but let me see him this evening in the garden of the Palazzo."

The Princess would have ordered the driver to stop; but the terrified Viola prevented her by the assurance that she

should see him again; after which she recounted their conversation in the cottage.

When Elvira had left it, Montalban felt relieved from the internal warfare of his feelings the sight of her had occasioned; and on being sufficiently composed to reply to his sister's numerous inquiries, he, at her entreaty, gave a cursory detail of his late sufferings. He recounted to her the various horrors he had experienced in the Inquisition, his miraculous escape and preservation from it; mentioning also the mysterious agent through whose means he had accomplished it.

She was deeply affected at his recital of the sufferings he had endured from his consequent illness and agitation of mind. Nor was her gratitude less excited by his minute account of the kindnesses and attention shewn him by Carlos and Ursula, whose hospitable cottage

had so long afforded him a secure and comfortable retreat.

The feelings which his father's supposed cruelty inspired, (for to such an extent, as, he imagined, even a parent had been led by a strict sense of justice, he could give no gentler appellation,) he scrupled not to reveal.

Viola was shocked at hearing of the mistake which had thus misled him—at hearing her father censured for an act in which he had been in no way a participator.

Sebastian noticed not her look of wild amazement. “Oh, horrible! horrible!” cried he, seizing her hand, and interrupting her as she was about to speak, “to cast me amongst the demoniac dogs of the Inquisition—unnatural, unpardonable! Never again shall the Marcheze della Vittoria see the son he basely, inhumanly condemned to butchery the most shocking. Even to thy tears,

Viola, must I deny this: I never, never can consent to return."

Now, she thought, was the happy moment to remove all his apprehensions and doubts—to make him at once retract the determination he had made; and the shock that determination caused was less severe than it would have been, had not a probability appeared of easily overruling and dissuading him from it. Every objection—every remembrance of the dreadful act he had committed, now disappeared, in her anxious solicitude to have him restored to that paternal home, which had a right to shelter him. She no longer viewed him as the desperate being, who had unaccountably aimed at her existence an almost destructive blow. She sought not an explanation, which might have more deeply wounded her feelings; she forgot it altogether. She looked on him, not as one whom she ought perhaps to avoid and abhor---

the recollection of it vanished in all the generous warmth of sisterly love.

But in vain she tried to combat his resolution; he did not leave her long to the indulgence of such a hope,—in vain she represented the folly, the cruelty of the step he meant to take,—the misery it would occasion to his family.

Strenuously did she plead her father's cause, and portray his grief and anxiety concerning him, imploring him to return and restore peace to their bosoms once more.

But *could* his return have restored peace to the bosom of either? No. It was satisfactory, it was delightful to him to know that his father, so far from deserving his unjust opinion, still loved him with undiminished affection, and (guilty as he was) still wished for his return, and would have given him such a reception as Viola described. But the circumstances that urged his departure

were of no common nature; and even when Viola was most eloquently beseeching him to change his intention, she felt conscious of the imprudence of trying to persuade him, at least at present, to return to Madrid, where public opinion and report were so hostile to him, and from which even the power and favour of majesty could not shield him.

On her knees she entreated him to revoke his sentence of voluntary exilement, or at least to inform her of the place of his destination; while she poured forth a torrent of tears on the hands she clasped.

“Inestimable sister,” said he, as he raised her up, and folded her to his bosom,—“you know not what you ask;—you are not aware, that by complying I should completely annihilate what time, absence and penitence may revive,—my peace of mind, if indeed to do so be possible; setting aside every other consideration, think you that I would remain

here to see myself abandoned, perhaps despised by the very one for whom I have attempted all that mortal dare,—by Elvira;—but I will mention her no more,—oh no, I have at length learned how to master my passions, and as she has slighted me, so will I try for the future to forget her; to forget that such a one exists, and soon, soon shall I succeed. Stay here to behold a rival! no, no, such a blow would crush the spirit that hath so long withstood all the shafts of calamity,—the fatigues of perseverance, and the bitterness of disappointment.

With fortitude we may bear misfortune, but the most rigid philosophy will shrink from insult. The Princess has made me unhappy, but she shall never witness to triumph in having done so. Besides, I *dare* not continue longer here; I am,—oh Viola, must I utter a sound so ungrateful to your ears,—a murderer!—am not I liable to the punishment our

laws award to such, can *you* view me without sensations of horror and detestation? But surely were you acquainted with *all*, even *you* would make allowances for my crime."

"Indeed, my Sebastian, you distress me, by reverting thus to things long forgotten,—by doubting my tenderness,—by distrusting my assurances of your safety, and my father's love; the king, too, is your zealous friend, and, therefore, what have you to fear?"

To resist the pleadings, the tears of a sister so amiable, so affectionate, was almost as painful to Montalban as would have been the ills he so much dreaded, as the consequence of his compliance. He knew that a parent's love alone could not constitute happiness; not only that, but self-approbation, and the good opinion of the world, were essential to it,—and these now appeared lost to him for ever, there were few sacrifices he would not have made to the wishes of a parent

so beloved, and nothing he more fervently desired than to be restored to him; but in this instance reason and prudence, nay, regard for his safety, seemed to interdict the sacrifice required of him, even to filial duty.

Man may, undaunted, contemplate the field of battle, clad in carnage and blood,—may hear unappalled the din of war, the cannon's awful roar,—may stand before death, fearless of its tremendous terrors,—but few there are, however intrepid, who will brave the frowns and contumely of a censorious world, so much does our peace and happiness, our very existence, often depend on that ever-varying thing, “public opinion.”

With all the natural impetuosity that marked his character, Sebastian possessed a mind of the most acute sensibility, and he would rather now have met death in its most formidable shape, than the obloquy and disgrace which he must

have inevitably encountered by returning to Madrid.

This interview presented a scene the most affecting; it was, however, unwitnessed by a third person, as Ursula had with her usual thoughtfulness and discretion, retired with Rosa into another room, while the Conde and his sister remained in conversation.

All Viola's tears and importunities proved unavailing; if any thing could have moved Sebastian to compliance, her affectionate endearments,—her soft and melting voice,—her sobs, as she hung on his bosom, must have done so. But the die was cast; and he might as well have attempted to arrest the sun in its course, as to turn him from his determination of quitting the kingdom.

Viola could not but perceive, that to urge him farther on this subject would but add to his distress. His purpose was unalterable, and she at length forbore, conscious that many of the objec-

tions he made were indeed well founded, and that at present, while the recent occurrence agitated the minds of the people against him, he could by no means enjoy that happiness she had promised him. She feared that to encourage a hope respecting Elvira, would be leading him still further into error.

From the time of his imprisonment in the Inquisition, the Princess had studiously avoided to mention him, and Viola naturally concluded that she now saw the folly and impropriety, nay, the danger of such an attachment, and had accordingly made an effort to forget, if not absolutely to abhor him. In this respect she wished to deceive herself, almost contrary to the evidence of her senses, for Elvira was no longer the same animated picture of health and loveliness as before; the colour had forsaken her cheeks, and an air of melancholy prevailed in every thing she said and did, which her family attributed to the

violence of the shock she had so lately experienced.

Viola viewed with affright the dreadful precipice on which the House of Victoria stood; for she saw, that if an union between her brother and the Princess were now to take place, its fall would be the more tremendous; and though she *could not* wish Elvira to regard him with abhorrence, it was inconsistent with her ideas of rectitude and prudence, and her apprehensions for the safety of her family; it was *impossible* that she should not wish her to cease to *love* him. And in supposing this to be the case, she fancied herself authorized by the strict silence of Elvira with regard to him. She felt that to raise a hope which she could never wish to see realized, (even should her doing so prove the means of restoring Sebastian) would be a piece of unpardonable cruelty; on consideration there appeared a degree of selfishness even in her wish to retain him, aware

that in absenting himself, at all events for some time, lay his only chance of regaining his tranquillity ; and, resolving to sacrifice that wish to every thing that appeared at all conducive to his happiness, she no longer opposed his departure.

To recur to any subject in which Elvira was concerned, was agonizing to the feelings of Sebastian ; his opinion of her varied almost every succeeding moment ; sometimes he fancied her all that his fond heart could wish ; at others she appeared fickle, inconstant, ungrateful, every thing that merited his hate. Such was the impression left on his mind by the confusion she had betrayed in the cottage ; and maugre all his exertions, the tears he had lately dried now began to stream afresh down his manly cheeks, as he drew from his bosom a little miniature, as exact a resemblance of the beautiful original, as it was in the power of art to produce.

“ And can perfidy and ingratitude

“dwell within so fair a tenement?” cried he, kissing it with a momentary sensation of rapture:—“but the basest heart may be concealed beneath the loveliest exterior; oh false, cruel, deceitful, too fascinating Elvira, would I had never seen, never known thee: then had I been happy,—for then had I been innocent; but now I am a wretch,—an outcast from society,—the very brutes will shun and mock my miseries.”

His agitation nearly overcame him; he dashed the picture from his lips;—“here,” said he, extending it to Viola, “take the hateful image from my sight, bear it to her as a record of her unworthiness, and say, that I parted from it without a pang, without a sigh;—mistake not the cause of this emotion, ’tis not for Elvira, ’tis for my own wretchedness; I feel not a sentiment like love, all, *all* is turned to contempt,—to hatred; my only consolation is, that I shall soon be no longer thought of by her; every

vestige of her remembrance of me I would tear from her heart; the only satisfaction the deeply-injured Montalban seeks, is to be forgotten by her; if such indeed it be to wish that she should forget her baseness; I will at least leave nothing undone to effect it. Tell her I *wish* it, and when you give her this portrait, her returning *mima* must be the pledge of her doing so. I *must* have it this evening; at nine o'clock I will in disguise repair to the eastern gate of the garden of the Palazzo, where I shall expect you to meet me unaccompanied; then, my beloved Viola, must we bid each other a long farewell. But this is not the fortitude you promised; your tears will unman me, and render me unable to sustain the weight of my sorrows;—in pity then, forbear.”

Viola tried to obey him, “to conquer her feelings, but the effort was long unsuccessful. “You will at least write to me,” said she, “and give the satisfac-

tion of knowing you are well, would I might hope happy. Surely you will not deny me this single gratification; I ask no more."

"I must not, dare not do so, even to *you*, I must not write; on the strictest secrecy my safety entirely depends; repeat not this request, Viola, for I cannot comply; Heaven knows with what reluctance I refuse; a few years may restore us to each other; until then, the distant solitude whose friendly shade shall conceal me, must remain unknown; this meeting must also be kept a profound secret; not for worlds would I have it known; beware of mentioning it to my father,—to any body; nay, more, I conjure you, by the love you profess for me, to caution those who *have* seen me, and perhaps witnessed my emotions, from divulging it; bid them be as silent as the grave on this subject,—my safety demands it. And, knowing this, I feel convinced you will hold my wish sacred."

‘ Viola was obliged to promise compliance, and now rose to depart, fearful that the Princess would be displeased at being delayed so long.

Notwithstanding all the resentment he had expressed towards Elvira for her supposed perfidy, the idea that he had probably seen her for the last time, was insupportable to Montalban, and almost forgetting for awhile all his imaginary wrongs, he determined to see her once more, and accordingly exerted himself to attend his sister to the carriage.

“ Yes, spite of my better reason, (which says, ‘ Montalban, thou shouldst not go,’) I will again see her, for, alas! I feel, that in my bosom yet lingers a gleam of, of——oh no, ’tis not affection; ’tis that waywardness of nature which still attaches us in some measure to the object we fain would hate, but cannot; I no longer love her,—but there is a sort of melancholy pleasure in contemplating charms *once* so valued, so beloved;

and 'tis the *only* pleasure now left me; I have steeled my heart against all softer emotions,—for woman shall it never again feel a pang. I may have spoken of her too harshly and unkindly; but surely her unfaithfulness almost deserved it all, and has at length subdued my fatal passion; yes, it has completely annihilated it, and there can be no impropriety in my only *seeing* her, therefore will I go.”

Thus soliloquized Sebastian, while he prepared to accompany Viola, who in the meantime had distributed the various presents she had brought for the good Ursula and her favourite little Rosa.

Viola did not think it absolutely necessary to relate *all* the particulars of this conversation; nay, there were *some* that prudence and delicacy forbade her to reveal. She could not so far wound the pride and feelings of Elvira, as to mention the severe and reproachful manner

in which Sebastian had spoken of her, even should her doing so prove the most effectual means of detaching her affection from him, and severing their hearts at once.

She therefore briefly informed her of his unalterable intention to exile himself from the kingdom, beyond the reach of either friends or foes; assigning as the most plausible motives, many of those he had already given, omitting, however, all that might lead her to suppose he still felt the least degree of partiality for her, as that was an idea she now wished completely to put an end to.

She trusted, that the miniature being returned, would be a sufficient evidence of the change that had apparently taken place in Sebastian's sentiments, and also effect a similar alteration in hers.

Impressed with this opinion, she softened her detail as much as truth would allow.

On producing the picture, she ob-

served Elvira's countenance suddenly change to a death-like paleness, while her whole frame seemed agitated, as if she guessed that Montalban's would be demanded in return; and that *hers* was indeed the unwelcome messenger that proclaimed the cessation of his love.

Viola thought this emotion an omen no way favourable to her hopes; but assuming as much composure as possible, she tried every argument that reason suggested, tempered with all her natural mildness, in general so persuasive, to convince her that virtue and propriety exacted this sacrifice on both sides; and that, influenced by those, her brother, considering even were their attachment otherwise approved, that the stigma attached to his name rendered him now unworthy of her, had determined to submit the dictates of his heart to those of his judgment, and resign every claim to her affection, adding his request to have his own likeness restored; and conclud-

ing with the appointment she had made to meet him in the garden, on the following evening.

Now, indeed, were her pride and love put to a test as severe as it was peremptory and decisive. To receive such a message from Montalban, one of her father's subjects, upon whom she had condescended to bestow her heart, seemed an humiliation almost too great to be borne. To be thus slighted by one who had in reality rendered himself unworthy of her, was an insult that pride at first would have led her to resent. But a stronger power, and more eloquent pleader here interposed in his behalf, and the arguments of love soon triumphed over the sophisms of pride.

“Methinks,” said she, endeavouring if possible to appear calm and unembarrassed, and hoping the glow this conflict had given to her cheeks, would be mistaken by Viola for that pride she had effectually repressed; “Methinks

in this affair, as well as in every other where he is concerned, the Conde Montalban has acted rather precipitately, perhaps rashly, but when reflection comes to his aid, he will probably too late, regret this piece of ingratitude. Be that reflection his punishment for the loss of me. He *knew* I loved him,—and yet in a fit of desperate heroism, a sense of *propriety* induced him to reject the prize almost within his grasp,—and why,—because, forsooth, it was the gift of fortune, too great for even his ambition to expect,—because it was offered to his acceptance, divested of those common drudgeries by which little mortals obtain the joys of life, those pusillanimous prejudices, and ridiculous forms which deluded man miscalls the dictates of reason, prudence, and *propriety*; tell your brother, Senora, that the sting he meant for me reverts on himself; as to his picture, it shall of course be——”

She could dissemble no longer;—the

tears trickled rapidly down her cheeks, and she hid her face in her handkerchief. "Ah, Viola," said she, sobbing as she spoke, "I cannot conceal my real feelings; maugre all the dictates of *my* judgment, yet will they shew themselves. Nature will not be controlled by art; and though my senses may for awhile have been governed by the latter, my heart hath ever remained the faithful pupil of the former; yes, still is Montalban dear to me as ever, —still as fervently beloved; and I find he is as necessary to my happiness, as air is to our existence,—as inseparable from my heart as goodness from the Deity."

Viola's looks sufficiently declared that she was not prepared to hear such a declaration, and she still held the miniature towards the Princess till the latter declined taking it.

"Viola," said she, in a tone of displeasure unusual to her, at the same time regarding her with a look in which

anger was predominant, “ this is cruel, unkind, illiberal ; ’tis not the friendship I have been hitherto accustomed to meet from you. Either my sentiments, notwithstanding I have so plainly expressed them, are to you unintelligible, or with that perverseness, which is said to be inherent in the female bosom, you would crush my hopes of happiness in the bud, though their growth e’en tended to promote your own ; for would it not indeed make you happy—would it not more than gratify every spark of vanity that ever dwelt in the breast of Vittoria’s daughter, to behold the brother she professes to love united to the Infanta of Spain, for whose hand there have been already so many suitors.”

“ Neither vanity nor ambition, Princess, are amongst my failings,” replied Viola, somewhat indignantly, “ were they, they could not have lain dormant so long, flattered as they would have been by *your* love for my brother.”

Elvira felt all the sharpness of this involuntary retort; but, conscious that her own severity deserved it, and that gentler means must be used to bring Viola to her purpose, in a softened accent, a tear yet trembling in her eye, she continued :

“ How often have you told me, Senora, that you loved me as a sister—that we were such, in all but the name—that my friendship and happiness were dear to you as life—would *ever* be so—and yet how different are your sentiments now. But this is, perhaps, too severe a proof to put the fragile and inconstant friendship of any of our sex to. Upon *yours* I may probably have but a slender claim; and, therefore—”

“ Nay, Princess, you wrong me much, in any thing that can *really* constitute your happiness, I shall always most warmly concur; and the strongest proof I can give you that I *do* regard it, is by sacrificing the gift thus offered me. This

proffered alliance would make you indeed my sister; but to peace and happiness then adieu for ever. On *my* head would be the guilt; on *yours* the consequences. *Your* royal house would be overwhelmed with wretchedness and sorrow; the family of Vittoria in ignominy and disgrace."

Thus ended every hope of Viola's approbation or assistance in this affair. But not so Elvira's intentions; and, though she deemed it necessary to the accomplishment of her plan to seem convinced by them, all these arguments had been entirely lost upon her.

The effort was, however, attended with success; and even Viola was deceived by the calm regret and resignation with which she promised to separate the image of Montalban from her bosom for ever.

"I am now aware of the dangers you have snatched me from, Senora," said she, "and yet with terror I behold the

gulf into which my own indiscretion would have plunged me. Ere now but for you, my best counsellor, had it received me. I shall remember Montalban as a friend; for whose prosperity, as *your* brother, I must ever feel interested; but from this hour I cease to love him."

To hear this afforded Viola the only degree of satisfaction she was now capable of feeling, and, every doubt removed; she gave back the miniature, requesting that of Sebastian from the Princess.

"Your judgment and advice," replied the latter, "have so far guided me. I have paid to them such implicit deference, that you cannot reasonably deny me a favour I have to ask. Nay, look not thus; little, very little, depends on it. 'Tis merely a whim, and you know," continued she, with a smile apparently forced, "you are accustomed to humour *my* whims. I have many. I wish to

return your brother's picture into his own hands, as from them I received it; with my own lips to absolve him from the vows that his have pledged; myself to assure him of the altered state of my heart—of the barrier that divides us; that the same sense of propriety by which *he* is influenced has caused that alteration. Thus shall I stand acquitted; and should he hereafter feel a sentiment of love which I cannot requite, be his alone the blame, the censure, or the pity, it may inspire.”

This was a stroke that Viola knew not how to parry; she hesitated, and looked confused. “But,” said she, “you know—that is, your Highness does not consider; I mean such a meeting could not be; at least, my brother's state of mind may not be equal to it, and therefore I think——”

“You need not take the trouble to advance any more of your apprehensions or thoughts on the subject, Señora,”

replied the Princess angrily, then in a tone of coldness and reserve—"I plainly perceive your ungenerous suspicions, Donna Viola," said she; "but I suppose the Conde Montalban's mind is at present in such a state of sweet tranquillity, that the softest breath would ruffle it. Forgive the selfish thought; I, of course, abandon it" and taking the portrait from a small chain, almost concealed in her bosom—"Now let suspicion rest for ever," added she, as she extended it to Viola, who, blaming herself for entertaining fears apparently without foundation, instantly replaced it, and with a smile that reconciled them immediately, she promised to comply with Elvira's request, and procure her the wished-for interview with Montalban.

On arriving at the Palazzo, the Princess and Viola retired to their respective apartments, the former exulting at the success of the part she had played while she made the necessary prepara-

tious for the conclusion of the drama, which she resolved that Fate itself should no longer retard ; and the latter to weep for the sorrows and exilement of her brother

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## CHAPTER III.

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————— “ I might call him  
A thing divine, for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble ”

SHAKSPEARE

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ALL his prejudices against the Princess, and the painful conviction of her unworthiness revived in the bosom of Montalban, as he slowly retraced the path leading to the cottage, wishing if possible to divert his mind to other objects, and banish entirely the remembrance of her.

Rosa had followed the steps of her benefactress to a considerable distance, and now joined the Conde, sobbing, “ the sweet Senora is gone, and we shan’t see her again for a long, long time ”

Her tears were, however, soon dis-

pelled by a second sight of the toys that had been presented to her; but the moment they had lost the attraction of novelty, she turned towards Montalban, and seeing him melancholy, and absorbed in thought, she regarded him earnestly for a few minutes; and then, as if thinking he counterfeited it, with an arch smile she sprang into his lap.

“ Ah now, Senor,” said she, throwing her arms round his neck, “ you are as sorry as any body else that beautiful Señora is gone, a’nt you ?”

“ *Beautiful,*” interrupted Ursula, her countenance indicating the volumes she would have uttered, and longing to gratify the propensity she felt for talking; “ Aye marry, that she is—as beautiful as an angel, and as good as one; aye, too good to live in such a wicked world as this. Many and many a blessing have I and my old man called down upon her; and, alas! that’s all *we* have to give in return for what she does for us. But a

poor body's blessing, they say, often succeeds; and, I am sure, if deeds of charity can make one happy, she is so."

"How did you first get acquainted with her," inquired Sebastian, his features animated with pleasure at hearing these encomiums.

"Aye, Senor, that is what I was just going to tell you; for I thought, to be sure, *you* would like to know: for, somehow or another, I think—that is, I fancy, you know more of her than myself. Well, as I was saying, the Senora;—Lord! I quite forget her name; my old brains are now a wool-gathering. Do just put me in mind of it, Senor."

"Oh! we will not mind the name, Ursula; 'tis of little consequence; you will remember it by and bye."

"'Tis some grand name at all events," said Ursula; "and, I am sure, she is some Donna of rank herself; and, I think, the other Donna was as great also, they both looked so handsome and so like

Princesses. Mayhap they are, but, Lord help my foolish head, to think a Princess would come into a poor cottage like this! Well, to be sure, you will laugh at me."

Still her curiosity remained unsatisfied, and her disappointment was visible, as she related the manner in which she had first attracted the notice of "*the grand Senora.*"

The introduction had been brought about by Rosa, whose beauty had first struck Viola one day, as she was taking an airing along the bank of the Manzanares, accompanied by the Princess; and saw her sportively frisking about, with a group of children of her own age and size, but distinguished from them all by the sweetness of her countenance and vivacity of her manner.

Viola was always partial to children, but with this interesting little girl she felt more than usually pleased, and, with her accustomed philanthropy and

benevolence, determined to find out who were her parents ; in order, if they required it, to enlist them amongst the number of those who already shared her patronage and bounty, and intending, should they hereafter prove worthy of it, to take Rosa as an attendant upon her.

Thus proposal was approved by the Princess—as few, indeed, were not that Viola made.

On their return, they beheld the little urchin on the summit of one of the rocks—where, in all the gaiety of innocence and youth, she was merrily singing and dancing for the amusement of her laughing, but less venturesome, companions, who stood below, applauding her courage in having clambered to such a height, while she viewed them with proud exultation at the merit they allowed her, alternately reproaching them for fearing to imitate their leader, and laughing at her own frolics as loudly as any of them.

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thing untoward might have happened, or the Conde had fallen into one of his usual fits of melancholy.

Sebastian, however, no sooner found himself alone with Bertrand, than he informed him of the whole affair; of all he had already done, and all he still designed; for, although Bertrand was his *servant*, he had ever found him a faithful counsellor and a trust-worthy friend. Nor did a false idea of superiority, or a suggestion of pride, prevent him acknowledging it.

It was settled that in the evening they should bid farewell to their present peaceful abode, and proceed in disguise to the grove at the eastern extremity of the Palazzo, where Bertrand should remain until his master's return from the garden.

At this period Carlos and Ursula had become so much attached to their amiable guest, as to have almost forgotten that he had ever been a stranger, or that it

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At first the Princess and Viola could not refrain from smiling at such a sight; but terror was soon the predominant feeling in their bosoms. The blushing Rosa suddenly turned round at the noise of the carriage, and, abashed at having her wild gambols thus witnessed by strangers—those strangers being also, as their equipage and appearance bespoke, “folks of great quality,” she hid her face in her apron, and running she knew not whither, in order to get out of sight, her foot slipped, she slid a little way, and an arm of the rock that fortunately projected upwards, alone saved her from falling to the bottom, and being dashed to pieces.

Her cries, which proceeded from fear more than from any hurt she had received, were instantly heard; and the Princess despatched their attendants, to rescue her from her perilous situation, after which she was placed in the car-

riage, and conveyed home, whither she was soon sufficiently recovered to point out the way

Encouraged by their assiduity and kindness, she replied to their questions with her natural frankness, giving an artless description of Carlos and Ursula, the manner in which they maintained themselves and her, and concluded by expressing her delight at the surprise her grandmother would be in at seeing her in such a fine gold carriage with such grand Senoras.

Already prepossessed in her favour, Viola was yet more pleased, on entering the neat cottage of Ursula, to whom she conducted the now-smiling Rosa, and, after relating the circumstance that led her to it, and forcing them to receive a small present, she took her leave, pleased and interested with her new acquaintances, though humble, and resolved to put her proposal in practice.

From that time she continued to visit and contribute to the comforts of these poor people, carefully concealing her name and rank—her only rewards (and to her generous bosom the most grateful) their benedictions, and the plaudits of her own heart.

“ Don’t you love the Senora?” demanded Rosa, again fixing her eyes on Sebastian’s face. “ Ah! I am sure you do, because you are so like her; and I am sure, too, you know her, or she would not have talked to you so long. I think she is fond of you, at all events; for, when she was going, her fine eyes were red, and looked as if she had been weeping.”

“ Envidable little being,” thought Sebastian, while her endearments forced a smile from him, succeeded by a deep sigh, “ who thus unmoved can talk of *loving*? Heaven grant that thou hast not been born to know what it is—to expe-

nence: every species of torture all comprehended in that little word—that fascinating sound—that alluring, deceitful, and destructive, meteor, love—to feel as I have felt—to do—

“As I have done,” he was about to add; he shuddered, and the words escaped him not.

His meditations were here interrupted by the entrance of Bertrand, who with amazement observed the agitation visible yet in his master’s looks.

Ursula cast an inquiring glance at Bertrand, as if to read in his countenance a solution of the whole mystery; but the latter, having been in the woods, trying to procure a conveyance from thence to the Pyrenées, as there were several houses about the outskirts for the reception of travellers, where carriages and mules were often easily obtained, was totally ignorant of the circumstance, and could only conjecture that some-

thing untoward might have happened, or the Conde had fallen into one of his usual fits of melancholy.

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At this period Carlos and Ursula had become so much attached to their amiable guest, as to have almost forgotten that he had ever been a stranger, or that it

would ever be necessary for him to leave them;—and the sudden prospect of losing him (in all probability for ever) overwhelmed them for a considerable time in all the agony and bitterness of grief, to which there was no remedy.

In their parting scene, Montalban's heart was all sympathy; misfortune had softened it so as to leave it susceptible to the slightest impressions of sorrow. He had, indeed, felt "the whips and scorns of time;" and the unfeigned tenderness of those truly hospitable people was more grateful and soothing to him, than would have been all the insincere and insipid forms of polished life, or the studied and varnished effusions of politeness. He revered this venerable couple with almost filial respect and fondness; and he wept copiously as he pressed their wrinkled hands to his burning lips, while he endeavoured to stammer a farewell.

This excess of affliction was support-

able until the lovely and innocent little Rosa came running in, unconscious of what was going forward, and smiling at the fanciful manner in which she had adorned her lap-dog, which she playfully caressed as she approached, and bade Sebastian admire it.

“ Ab, Senor, you are weeping, and you know it will make me weep too,” said she, as he averted his face; *do* now take me in your arms, and tell me what ails you; for, you know, I am fonder of you than of anybody else, except my dear, dear grandfather and grandmother; and if ever you were to leave me, I should die after you, and so should we all.”

“ Oh, Rosa, he *is* going indeed, and 'twill break our poor hearts,” cried Ursula, in a voice almost overpowered by convulsive sobs.

The affectionate child heard no more.

“ No, no, he must not go from us,” exclaimed she, clasping him by the neck,

as if the hold had power to detain him, and with a violent torrent of tears her head dropped upon his bosom.

“Heaven bless thee, my little angel! my darling, my sweet child, farewell,” cried he, straining her to his breast, and eagerly kissing her rosy cheek; “adieu, adieu for ever.”

He could articulate no more. Until now he had not known how much the pretty Rosa had endeared herself to him. With one effort to tear himself away, he put her into the arms of the weeping Ursula, and Bertrand, having seized this opportunity of doing it unnoticed, placed a large sum of money, which they had strenuously persisted to refuse, on the table, with some presents for Rosa, they both bade a last farewell, and hastened from the cottage.

The evening was serene, and the moon rising majestically from a dark cloud, threw her pale and lucid rays over the vast expanse of the Manzanares, while

the plaintive bird of night mingled her soft melody with the gentle murmuring of the water. Every feeling of Sebastian's bosom was soon in unison with this sweet harmony of nature. All his sorrows for awhile were tranquillized, forgotten; the scene before him alone seemed to occupy his thoughts, and sending Bertrand on to the place where, by appointment, he was to wait for him, he seated himself on the brow of a rock to contemplate the beautiful prospect.

The clock of a neighbouring monastery had just struck eight, so that another hour was to intervene ere he could see his sister.

Montalban's admiration of the works of nature was ever tinctured with enthusiasm; of a rich and glowing imagination, he possessed a peculiar taste for the sublime and picturesque; and a scene better calculated to feast those noble feelings of the soul than the one he at

present viewed, even the magic pencil of fancy could hardly have drawn.

Spite of all his efforts to forget her, the Princess was still the principal object of his thoughts, from which she was indeed almost as inseparable as he was from hers. And though her late behaviour made him believe that she was no longer worthy of his love, he yet found it impossible either to forget, or think of her without regretting that there was no longer a hope of obtaining her.

Severe, indeed, was the proof to which his affection had been put; and still more so it appeared now to lose her. But could it be otherwise after her ingratitude; could he stoop to sue for a heart which, having been withheld when she might have bestowed it without a blush, would surely now be denied him, nay, was perhaps in the possession of another. He spurned the unworthy thought; pride and indignation drove it

from his bosom—and though he had a moment before been almost sorry for having returned her picture, and would, if possible, have recalled the reproaches he had uttered, he now congratulated himself on his having done so. Then suddenly raising his eyes in search of some new object to divert his mind from one so painful, they rested on the dark and ponderous walls of the Inquisition.

An universal tremor seized him as he viewed this dreadful prison, and thought of the wretched victims within its infernal dungeons, doomed to undergo the cruellest tortures that demons in human shape could devise—agonies infinitely worse than death, and a tear of pity for their sufferings fell from him. But the sensations of horror the sight of it caused were soon lost in those of gratitude to that almighty Being, who had so mercifully interposed to save him from a

similar fate; and his whole soul ascended in fervent prayer and thankfulness to Heaven.

Education, a long intercourse with mankind, and a thorough knowledge of morality and religion, had expanded his ideas, and, of course, enlightened his understanding. But he was by no means divested of *all* the superstitious prejudices, which in those days gave so strong a colouring to the characters of his countrymen.

Supported in his opinions by various illustrations from holy writ, and instances he had himself seen of the miraculous power of God, he did not doubt that supernatural agency was as probably employed by the Deity in his dealings with men, as it was possible to his omnipotence. Nay, sometimes he scrupled not to aver what many so strongly deny,—that there were in reality such beings on earth as disem-

bodied spirits, concluding with the generally-allowed axiom—that “to God *all* things are possible.”

In this way did he account for his deliverance from the Inquisition; and when he recollected that, some time before, the spirit of his mother had appeared either to his waking or sleeping fancy, and the mysterious and awful manner in which he had been warned against an union with Elvira, it seemed the more likely for, that a friend or mortal mould could have existed for him in the Inquisition appeared an absurd improbability. Insensibly he forgot his present situation,—imagination transported him back to the peaceful scenes of his youth, the delightful shades of Vittoria; beneath which, in the midst of happiness and innocence, he so often had wandered with Osmin, his early friend and preceptor, unconscious of evil, and far from foreseeing the miseries that fate had in store for him.

“ O Osmin,” cried he, “ thou revered and invaluable friend, who would have guarded me from ill; how truly didst thou foretel the dangers and vicissitudes that have overwhelmed me since; all, all hath indeed been fulfilled. The malignant star that watched my birth still glimmers in the horizon with anger unappeased,—threats unabated. Much I fear there is yet to come. Misfortune is one of those bequests of fate which the longest life of man cannot exhaust; alas! how hath it been lavished upon me. Yet, Osmin, had I attended to thy wise counsels, had I believed thy faithful prophecy, nor exposed it to the incredulity of my father, *all* this had not been. Had I not mistaken thy prediction for the wild effusion of an overcharged brain, then—though misfortune had pursued me to the very grave, I had at least been spared from *guilt*, but too late I perceive my error,—thy sacred admonitions have been lost on me,—thy prophecy

disbelieved, despised,—thyself spurned, banished, forgotten. Oh, base return for thy paternal care of me ! But I did not spurn, banish, or forget thee,—’twas my father who——.’

He trembled at what his lips had almost pronounced ; he recollected the respect due to his father, and while it silenced him, he dropped a tear to the memory of the good Osman.

The vesper bell of an opposite convent at length broke on the stillness of the evening, and interrupted his soliloquy ; he turned his eyes in that direction. The grey walls of that abode of innocence and religion were embosomed in a beautiful grove of intermingled pine and ash, and he could not help contrasting the happiness its unambitious inhabitants enjoyed, with his own sad and cheerless situation. “ Such a life,” thought he, “ is at least a passport to that happiness it denies to many itself.”

A thousand painful remembrances

rushed on his mind at the moment; he thought of the unwilling victim he had consigned to the rigorous Monastery of St. Marguerite's, and prayed aloud for forgiveness to this only voluntary act of cruelty he had ever committed.

“But not on *my* head be the crime,” said he; “surely in the eye of Heaven the Queen alone is guilty; *her* threats compelled me to a measure from which my soul revolted. Be hers then repentance and remorse as sincere as mine.”

He had long suspected, though he durst not impart that suspicion to mortal, that the Queen hardly stood less in need of repentance than himself; he was well acquainted with what few, except her own creatures, had ever been able to discover,—her Majesty's real character.

The mysterious accusation uttered against her by Donna Olivia, he had at first attributed to malice and revenge, prompted by rage at the snare she had

been so unwarily hurried into, beyond a possibility of extricating herself

But though he could not conceive the nature of what she accused her of, and threatened to disclose, he was now of opinion that it was not entirely without foundation; but whatever it might have been, he knew that it would remain buried in oblivion, as he trusted revenge, or any other sinful passion, was no longer an inmate of Olivia's bosom.

The convent clock at length struck nine, and warned him to proceed to his appointment, as Viola was doubtless already waiting for him; with a beating heart he rose; he was about to hear Elvira's name pronounced for the last time, and heavy sighs frequently escaped from his surcharged breast. He wished, yet hardly knowing *why*, to behold her again. He tried to form some idea of how she would receive her picture; how part with *his*. He felt that it would be a consolation to know she regretted him,

He lingered awhile; but soon shaking off those ideas, he walked hastily on, and found the garden-gate half open to receive him.

Viola was slowly pacing an adjacent walk, shaded on each side by tall umbrageous trees, anxiously expecting him. Her face was still clouded with melancholy, and her eyes dim with tears, visible by the pale light of the moon, whose rays at intervals penetrated the foliage.

Taking her hand he led her to a seat, and gazed on her pallid features for awhile with inexpressible tenderness. At length recovering from his emotion, which he saw only tended to increase hers, he ventured to ask for the portrait, as he was to depart in half an hour, and had not very long to delay.

Viola looked confused, and for some time knew not what reply to make. She fancied the sentiments her brother had expressed for Elvira to be his real ones; she believed that he no longer loved

her, and she feared that he would not only disapprove of the promise she had given to the Princess, but decline fulfilling it altogether.

Sebastian," said she, in a faltering voice, "I have given the miniature to the Princess; but yours she would not, —I mean, she wished to——"

"To retain," interrupted he?—his respiration growing quicker, a glow of pleasure mantling his face for a moment, which Viola mistook for disapprobation. The sensation, however, *was* but momentary, her answer chilled him.

"By no means," said she; "the Princess wishes to prove to you the triumph she has gained over her imprudent passion. by the indifference with which she can resign your picture, and personally assure you, that reason has taught her that 'tis also *her* duty to forget *you*, that to do so, no exertions will be wanting on her part, and to evince the fortitude with which she can meet you thus,

to part for ever. I have promised to bring about an interview between you; and with such sentiments as these there can be nothing to apprehend from it."

This sentence inflicted a blow that struck cold to Sebastian's heart. "Yet why," thought he, "should I feel vexed or disappointed? what is there in this that I was not prepared for? Surely it has neither destroyed nor given rise to a single thought or wish before unknown. But yes, the approaching meeting rejoices me. She alone shall not exult, we shall at least share the triumph,—she shall feel that with equal indifference I can resign *her*,—not a sigh shall it cost me. I will wound her very soul by the pleasure it will give me to say to her:—"Princess, I go never to return, peace and happiness will quickly resume their place in my bosom,—farewell,—a long farewell, for in this world we meet no more."

After conversing for awhile on sub-

jects interesting to themselves, his sister proposed to conduct him to where the Princess waited, and, his bosom heaving with different emotions, he silently accompanied her.

A long dark walk brought them, after many windings, to a bower of intermingled orange, jessamine, and rose-trees, around which were several parterres of the rarest and most beautiful flowers, clad in all the gay colouring and rich luxuriance of the season, and pouring all their sweets upon the surrounding atmosphere.

Within its fragrant shade the light drapery of Elvira floated on the breeze; its hue of solemn black, partially silvered by the moon-beams, seemed to impart to her sylphid form even more than its usual loveliness; while its soft and melancholy gloom was finely contrasted by the smile that involuntarily stole over her features as Sebastian entered; never perhaps, in all the glowing charms of

perfect health and liveliness, had she looked so truly interesting,—so bewitching as at this moment.

Montalban felt the influence of such a look, (though unintentionally); instantaneously he forgot all her supposed ingratitude, and sank at her feet.

All nature appeared to stand still, as if expecting a tender reconciliation between them. But Elvira quickly recollecting herself, and alarmed lest Viola might have witnessed this scene, in a voice of assumed firmness, bade him arise

The tone in which she pronounced this command, and the resentful look with which it was accompanied, would have discouraged any one less warmly devoted to her. He forgot every part of his assumed character, and snatching her hand,—“ Elvira,” cried he, “ such mockery is ill-timed,—Heaven knows I have been long enough the sport of fortune; and is it for you to dally with me

thus, or trifle with my present feelings? —No, no, say at once you loathe and detest me,—and you behold the object of your aversion no more; with one destructive word annihilate every hope—cast me off for ever; any thing I can bear, but this refinement of cruelty.”

“Consult your own heart, Conde,” replied the Princess, “and you will find that you are no longer entitled to——”

“I *have* done so,” he interrupted; “I am undeserving of you,—a murderer,—a villain, unfit to live,—plunged in the very lowest depths of guilt; but remember, Elvira, that it was for—you—I became such,—be your ingratitude my earthly punishment; soon my repentant spirit shall, I trust, soar beyond the knowledge of sublunary misery.—I cannot survive this blow.”

“Sebastian,” said the Princess, as she arrested his arm, and prevented him from rushing out. “Why do you lament these miseries of your own creating;—

your real misfortunes are fewer than your imaginary ones."

"Oh powers of fancy, is it then in imagination only that I have suffered all the dreadful evils that awaited me in my passage through life;—that for you I became a wretch,—that I murdered Orlando,—that my soul felt all the pangs of jealousy at the attentions you received from Alonzo,—that I mistook my own sister for a rival, and attempted her life? All, forsooth, for an imaginary being! Is it only in imagination that I am now driven to despair,—thus abandoned by you? Oh Elvira, had I foreseen this, the same weapon that my hand aimed at the bosom of a supposed rival, should a thousand times have been plunged to the inmost depths of mine heart, and every plunge should have borne to it a thousand curses, for ever having loved one so false, so unworthy."

"A rival!" reiterated Elvira, letting his arm drop, and fixing an inquiring

look on him, as if unable to comprehend his meaning,—“Giesu Maria! what fresh instance of baseness or error on your part is this, Senor? Say, Montalban,” continued she, the severity of her voice relaxing into all its natural gentleness,—“who do you think *could* have rivalled you in my affection?”

The emphasis on the word *could*, seemed to act with the force of electricity; the expression of his countenance changed instantly to that of joy, but again it varied.

“Alas,” thought he, “where is the woman whose vain and inconstant heart will not admit competitors; words are mere deceptive sounds. Yet surely, Elvira,” he suddenly exclaimed, “I *may* believe thee,—that angel face would not speak what the heart did not feel,—you are still the same.”

“Hold, Senor,” said she, interrupting him, “I conjure you to explain your ambiguous words,—you have been mis-

led and misinformed,—your suspicions have wronged, deeply wronged me; but tell me all; much is there to be explained on both sides ”

“ A few words then, my Elvira, will suffice to end our doubts and suspicions,” said Montalban; and seating himself beside her, he gave a brief sketch of the late events, and the circumstances that had led to them.

On the culpability it threw upon him she forbore to offer a comment; but as it was necessary to elucidate the affair so far as it concerned herself, she addressed him with an air of reserve, while offended pride darkened her brow, and contradicted what her words had before implied

“ The Prince Alonzo,” said she, “ has long been in the habit of nightly visiting Orlando’s tomb, from a motive that time alone must explain to *you*, and for which there is a great deal to be apprehended for your safety; nay, start not,—not

question me,—'tis an awful mystery, which I must not attempt to solve,—'tis said to be connected with 'the Eve of San Sebastian,'—and methinks some fatal planet rules that ominous day, for never does it come unattended by ill. And oh, Montalban, the same day,—the same presageful hour, gave birth to each of us."

A deadly paleness superseded the glow on Montalban's cheek; he trembled violently, and seemed scarce able to support himself,—horror was visible in every feature. "Yet wherefore these alarms," thought he, "that fatal star hath spent its anger upon me. I fear not 'the Eve of San Sebastian,' I have repented, and it can hurt me no more, even *could* it, where shall I be when next it comes?—far, far hence,—beyond the reach of all their machinations;—therefore, I laugh their threats to scorn. But I have interrupted your highness, I pray you continue."

“Your sister and I,” resumed the Princess, “have frequently gone at the same hour to the chapel, where we have sat undaunted amid its sacred gloom, experiencing a melancholy pleasure in the reflections it gave rise to. Sometimes we have sang to our harps a requiem for the souls of the departed. On one of those nights,—Oh, Conde, I cannot dwell on that dreadful night,—memory shrinks from it, as we would recoil from the poisoned serpent;—but hear me. Suspicion lurks in the minds of many hostile to you; it is a latent flame, ready to burst forth at the first breeze that fans it. I need hardly tell you, that you are thought to be the murderer of Orlando,—nor suggest the sacrifice that reason commands you to make,—to fly your country for ever;—that step alone secures you; yes, if you would save yourself from all the vengeance of our offended laws, you must fly, henceforth we must forget each

other;—the fiat of relentless fate separates us;—this night, this hour, we must take a last farewell.”

“Hear me, Elvira, as you hope for heaven,” cried Montalban, flinging himself before her, and catching her arm in all the wildness of despair;—“hear me for an instant, nor condemn me thus hastily to destruction. Alive we must never part,—never. Can you,—*dare* you forget our plighted vows,—have you forgotten that ‘Eve of San Sebastian,’ when, beneath the convent’s holy walls, we swore to each other eternal fidelity;—swore, that as we were born, so would we live and love together? Remember them now, thou traitress, to all those sacred pledges, and shudder at the reflection that your violation of them would have hurled you into the deepest abyss of perdition,—you are mine for ever,—even in death would I secure you;—repeat again that damning word ‘farewell,’ and from our reeking bosoms this

dagger shall send our souls together, to tell the reward of faithless love and perjury."

This terrific appeal seemed for some moments to have stagnated the blood in Elvira's veins, and suspended every faculty; but soon recovering, she snatched the dagger from his yet uplifted hand, and dashed it away.

"Sebastian," said she, "the hour to which fate has limited *our* misfortunes is, I trust, at length arrived;—deception is now no more;—that I have put your love for me to such a proof was preordained when destiny cast the horoscope of our eventful lives;—and thus have its decrees been faithfully fulfilled;—say that you will live for me,—love me,—fly with me,—protect me, make me your wife, and I am yours. No earthly power shall again divide us."

The rapid transition from despair to joy was too much for the almost exhausted spirits of Montalban, and it was

long ere he was able to utter a word. He caught her to his bosom, and tears proclaimed his feelings more eloquently than words could have done;—tears such as he had never shed before. The rapture he experienced at this moment seemed to more than counterbalance all his sufferings, and in the fulness of his heart he sobbed, “ Oh Elvira, beloved of my soul,—who would *not* suffer all I have undergone, to be thus rewarded by the richest treasure earth could boast of.”

The looks of each proclaimed the happiness they felt, and not a thought to damp that happiness for a considerable time intruded;—the nightingale seemed to have ceased her warbling, and the moon to have veiled herself in the slowly passing clouds, as if ashamed of being thus surpassed in loveliness, for they looked indeed the loveliest of nature's works.

A slight rustling amongst the branches

startled them; it was caused by the entrance of Viola, and terror at the probability that she had overheard them, had nearly thrown them off their guard.

This alarm was momentary, but it was succeeded by one of a more serious nature. Viola's manner convinced them of her being totally unacquainted with the conversation that had passed between them, and the reconciliation that had taken place. But with a countenance indicating some danger at hand, she informed them that she had just seen the King crossing one of the walks at the opposite extremity of the gardens, who would probably seek the Princess in her favourite bower, and discover Montalban if he delayed there longer

Each was aware, that to the Conde, the consequences of such a discovery would be fatal, or at all events would draw on him the severest displeasure of his Majesty, who they did not doubt

would also evince it towards his family, by entirely withdrawing from them his favour and friendship.

Though the King was now so warm a friend to the house of Vittoria, they knew he was too tenacious of his regal dignity,—too conscious of the respect and homage due to royalty, to suffer such an affront to go unpunished, as a subject's presuming to address his daughter in the language of love.

Elvira saw, too, that in giving way to the natural feelings of her heart, in loving Montalban, and disavowing those sophistical ideas of superiority and distinction, she yet was acting contrary to her duty, and infringing the circumscribed bounds which the painful forms inseparable from her high rank prescribed to her actions. For Montalban, though of noble and illustrious birth, was still a subject, and as *such* she knew their laws would not sanction his union with her. But the laws of *nature* had

sanctioned the union of their hearts, and she determined to appeal to no other.

Elvira felt conscious, (and Viola's looks shewed that she also thought so) that in thus meeting Sebastian alone, there was a degree of impropriety and indelicacy, inconsistent with the characteristic modesty of her sex.

But she soon found an excuse for this, on reflecting, that had she not done so, Sebastian would have been lost to her for ever.

But how soon, alas, might they now be separated, and that too, to meet no more.

After they had apparently overcome every difficulty, impediment, and danger, had thus nearly attained the summit of their wishes, to be torn from each other, even at the blissful moment of reconciliation, was in idea more dreadful than all the sufferings they had hitherto undergone.

To avert the threatened blow required

all their fortitude and presence of mind, as nothing could do so but immediate flight; but to this the presence of Viola was an obstacle not easily removed—for, trembling for their safety, she still continued urging her brother to retire without delay, and the Princess to return instantly to the Palazzo, lest the King should come that way, and notice her agitation.

Dissimulation and stratagem were now necessary, as all depended on them, but they knew not how to get Viola out of the way without exciting her suspicions.

The Princess drew her veil closely over her face, and assuming an air of coldness and reserve, the better to deceive Viola, (though her mind was a stranger to deception, and under any other circumstances she would have revolted from it), she bade Montalban farewell, at the same time giving back

*her own* picture (which Viola did not observe).

“ Here, Conde,” said she, “ take back this once-valued gift, and from this moment let all remembrance of our imprudent love, with that love itself, cease. Adieu! if you regard your safety, you must immediately begone.”

Montalban perfectly understood her; and putting up the miniature hastily. “ Princess,” replied he, “ your wishes I hold sacred, they shall be obeyed. I will endeavour to forget you, or if in the dreary solitude where I shall spend the remainder of my days, I should for a moment think of you, it will be with self-reproach for having presumed to aspire to a heart destined for some one more fortunate, more exalted, more happy, and more deserving than I am.”

With these words he moved from her, as if about to depart, when (as they had expected) Viola bade him stay for a few

moments, while she went out on the walk to ascertain whether there was any danger of the King's coming in that direction, and the nearest path by which he could get out of the garden, without being observed by his Majesty.

This was the wished-for opportunity; without it, all their promised happiness, all their plans, had probably been marred for ever and for ever had they been separated.

“ Oh! what a weight of dreadful doubts and fears am I now relieved from,” cried the impatient Montalban, “ for the first time in my life I felt my sister's presence torture nearly insupportable. But she is gone; let us seize this favourable moment—instant flight alone can prevent our being now sundered. Oh! if you would not see me die, (for I will meet death sooner than voluntarily resign you,) let us instantly away. We will take the most private path through the gardens, and, when

we have reached the wood beyond them, we shall find all in readiness to bear us hence. Then, Fate, I set thee at defiance.”

“Nay, Conde, be not thus precipitate; such a step would entirely defeat its object. But, fear not our being separated; henceforth to oblivion I consign all the irksome grandeur and pomp of courts; I shall forget that I have ever been a Princess.—ever known the fulsome state of royalty. With you I will retire to some remote spot, where in health and, I trust, happiness, each succeeding day shall weaken the remembrance of the past. In this world nothing but death shall part us. Meantime you must dissemble before Viola, and suffer her to conduct you from the gardens. I have secretly in my possession a key to one of the private doors—and in an hour hence———Oh, Montalban, what a sacrifice am I making of the modesty and propriety of my sex; my constancy

to you is hurrying me on to a step I blush to contemplate—to fly with you thus clandestinely—set prudence and decorum aside. Oh! most shameful Surely you too, Senor, will blush for me; thus degraded, will you not pity and despise me?—will you not, in your cooler moments, condemn me for this outrage on every doctrine prescribed to woman?”

“ Elvira, torture me not thus with fears and scruples so absurd—so unjustifiable; it would seem as if you were actuated less by your love for me than a sense of all I have undergone in order to obtain you. Can there, indeed, at such a moment as this be difficulties, solely of your own creating, or is it that you doubt?—But hark! Viola comes; say, Oh say at once, that you *will* meet me.”

Elvira had merely time to reply, “ In an hour hence expect me,” ere Viola

entered, and beckoned her brother to follow her, and, glancing significantly at the Princess, he obeyed.

Viola now became violently agitated. Till this moment the agonies of a parting interview had been almost forgotten in her apprehensions for his safety; but now that she was about to lose her beloved brother, perhaps for ever, all her strength and fortitude forsook her, and bursting into a torrent of tears, she sunk on one of the benches, having merely power to point to a path that led to the gate by which he had entered, and with an almost inarticulate "Farewell," bid him hasten to escape, or he might be overtaken by the King.

At first he could not resolve to leave her in this state, though aware that every moment was replete with danger to him; and, approaching with a look of grief and tenderness, he tried to comfort her by the assurance, that if

hereafter any circumstance should arise to induce him to return, he would certainly take advantage of it.

But she, knowing the risk he ran in delaying thus, and it only tending to increase her uneasiness, waved one hand as a sign to him to be gone, while with the other she covered her face, endeavouring if possible to smother her sobs.

Sensible that in remaining here he hazarded his life and honour, and (what was as dear to him) that of the Princess, he took a last embrace of the amiable Viola, and hurried from the gardens.

He found his faithful servant at the place of rendezvous, and confided to him all that had passed, as his assistance was yet most essential to the accomplishment of their plan.

On the borders of the wood was a house of accommodation, whither travellers resorted from all parts of the kingdom, and there Bertrand had en-

gaged a carriage and mules returning to France.

The driver was a native of that country, and understood very little of the Spanish language, but sufficient to enable him to understand the offer of a considerable bribe, if he would preserve inviolable secrecy, relative to the passengers he was to take across the Pyrenées.

This he evinced no great reluctance in accepting; and accordingly promised Bertrand to be at an appointed spot at ten o'clock, where he would await his coming.

The Conde highly approved of all that Bertrand had done, and committing to his care a few small packages, containing clothes, papers, &c., he sent him immediately to where the carriage was waiting, there to remain until his arrival with the Princess.

Montalban now recollected that, in his hurry and agitation, he had forgotten

to fix with Elvira any particular place for their meeting; and this circumstance perplexed him not a little.

There was, however, no remedy but to wait in that part of the wood nearest the gardens, as it seemed probable that she would come that way in preference to a more circuitous one.

He counted almost every moment that intervened; never had an hour appeared so tedious: he listened for her voice in every murmur of the wind—looked for her shadow as the branches were gently agitated to and fro; and at length, as the convent bell proclaimed half past ten, a tall figure, in the distant perspective, closely muffled and veiled, approached with cautious steps, as if fearful of being overtaken and detected, and in a few minutes he was joined by the Princess.

“O Montalban!” said she, “what a risk have I run—what dangers have I braved—and all, all has been for you.”

“ This is, indeed,” replied he, “ a proof of your love I never shall forget, to venture thus alone, exposed to the breeze of night, and the dangers of this solitude. Surely for *such* a proof, the services of my whole life devoted to you would be a poor, a trifling compensation. Elvira, my heart, my soul shall——”

“ Oh! let us instantly hence,” she interrupted; “ on this subject we will talk more opportunely. I tremble to think, that even now we may be pursued; and should it indeed be the case—should we be taken, our fates would be most direful.”

They now hurried into the thickest part of the wood, whose dark labyrinths at this unseasonable hour would have appalled any hearts but theirs. They were, however, insensible to every other danger but that of being overtaken in their flight, by people sent in search of them, and separated.

They were both so completely dis-

guised, as to render it almost impossible to recognize in their persons the Conde Montalban or the Princess Elvira; and when they had reached the place where the carriage was waiting, their rustic appearance made them almost escape the observation of the muleteer, who, with the politeness that distinguishes his country, merely making an obeisance, which he always considered due to his superiors of whatever rank, received their orders, and mounted one of the mules while Bertrand got on the back of the other, after having handed his Lord and the Princess into the carriage.

A mutual intimacy was soon formed between Bertrand and his new companion, Jacques, whose shrewd observations soon informed him, that he guessed our travellers were a pair of lovers in disguise; but *who*, or of what quality, they were he appeared to be totally ignorant.

Bertrand was at first much alarmed,

and tried to convince him to the contrary; reminding him, at the same time, that such remarks were inconsistent with his promise of secrecy; but, though Jacques had too much penetration and cunning to allow him to be deceived, and credulity was by no means one of his characteristics, he nevertheless possessed a heart, whose excellent qualities would have dignified the most exalted rank; and his fidelity, when once won, was not to be shaken. Bertrand's apprehensions were, therefore, soon at an end; and they continued their journey as comfortably as the circumstances that rendered secrecy so necessary would allow.

Sometimes the steep descent of the glens enveloped them in awful darkness, and then, as they suddenly arose, the pale luminary of the night, whose mellow rays faintly tinged the woody heights, served to light them, until having gained the extremity of the wood, they found

themselves about four leagues from Madrid.

Here they stopped at a small village to procure some refreshment; and it had been agreed that the ceremony should here take place, which would give Montalban a lawful right to protect his adored Elvira, in the sacred character of a husband.

It was now midnight, and most of the peaceful inhabitants of the village had long retired to repose; and, although there was a convent of Monks near the house where they had alighted, they feared that to disturb the silence of the holy retreat, or summon one of the brotherhood for such a purpose as that of performing the marriage rites at so late an hour, would excite suspicion, and probably give a clue to their pursuers on the following day.

Each was aware of the impropriety of its being longer deferred. Montalban was not less actuated by the scrupulous

delicacy of Elvira, than by his impatience to secure her to himself by the indissoluble ties of matrimony; and accordingly, having made the landlord believe a story that effectually concealed the truth, he asked if it was possible to find any person who would unite them immediately, as they were on a long journey, and should not again have an opportunity for several days.

“Truly, Señor,” replied the host, a good-natured, talkative man, “I have had many a marriage in my house, and I gave away seven fine daughters myself—aye, as fine girls as you could see in seven days; but I never had any thing of the kind at such a time as this. But ’tis no business of mine. Why, now you could not have come at a patter time: for there is the good Padre Alfonso, of the convent of San Nicolo, hard by, who has been sitting up all night (Ah! San Nicolo, too, bless him for it,) with one of the poor pensioners

belonging to the monastery, who is dying with remorse for having forgotten to fast on the last eve of our saint; and, if you wish, I will go and fetch his reverenza, as the poor soul must be dead by this time."

He would have indulged his propensity for talking to a much greater length, had he not been interrupted by the Conde, whose anxiety was increased by a circumstance so favourable to his wishes, in compliance with which he repaired instantly to summon the Padre Alfonso.

He quickly returned, accompanied by the Abad, a short fat man, who did not look as if he thought abstinence one of the virtues compatible with his holy profession—as he, in truth, bore very little of the appearance of a Monk besides his monastic garb; and all the delight of his soul seemed to emanate from his little grey eyes, (having, out of respect to the noble-looking strangers,

thrown back his cowl,) as he fixed them on the glittering reward, which the Conde put into his hand at the conclusion of that happy ceremony, which gave to the latter a wife so rich in every thing amiable and lovely.

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## CHAPTER IV

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“ Se a ciascun l' interno affanno  
“ Si legesse in fronte scritto,  
“ Quanti mai, che invidia fanno  
“ Ci farabbero pietà ”

METASTASIO

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THE malice of fate seemed long since exhausted; in dividing Montalban so long from all his heart held dearest on earth, it appeared to have done its worst: but now, in possession of Elvira, the adored object of his affection, he thought on the past but as a dream, and defied the power of destiny to hurt him farther.

He was sensible to little more than what he at present enjoyed; he forgot for awhile even the guilt that almost

constantly tortured him, and fancied his happiness complete. He even now blamed himself for having allowed the prophecy of the Monk Osmin to give him a moment's uneasiness, when all the Astrologer had foretold had been thus overcome, every obstacle had been removed, and he had attained the summit of his desires.

He smiled on recollecting the apparently belied prediction of the latter, "that he (Osmin) was ordained to be the messenger of joy and happiness to him, and that he alone could be instrumental in bestowing them."

True, the first part of his prediction had been verified. Many sorrows had indeed been allotted to Montalban, and he had experienced them. But surely Osmin had in no way contributed to the felicity of the present hour; *he* had not given him Elvira; the idea was preposterous. Many years had elapsed since Osmin had disappeared from the Con-

vent of San Sebastian; from which period every individual of that holy community scrupulously avoided mentioning his name. From this mysterious circumstance many conjectures, unfavourable to his father's fame, arose, and it seemed probable, that the ill-fated Astrologer was no longer an inhabitant of this world. Such a conclusion was natural; and thus was the failure of the latter part of the prophecy accounted for

To prevent the possibility of a discovery, and render their situation secure, it was necessary for them to assume another name, and pass for the natives of another kingdom. The more effectually to elude suspicion, they had attained a perfect knowledge of the Italian manners, customs, and language, and Bertrand, according to the instructions he had received, spoke of them as Florentines, who were making the tour of Spain and several other countries; taking care, however, to conceal from

their host, and his friend, Alfonso the Monk, that in their tour France was to be included.

We must now bring them forward on their journey, and introduce them to the reader under their new titles of the Conte and Contessa Vicenza.

Jacques was well acquainted with all the private roads; and, being not altogether ignorant of the secrecy a clandestine love-affair requires, the natural goodness of his disposition led him to feel too great an interest in the happiness of our travellers, of whose generosity he had had many proofs, to neglect any of the requisite precautions for their safety. His guidance, therefore, brought them in perfect security to France, where, on being dismissed, he was most liberally rewarded.

The charms contained in every part of this salubrious and beautiful country amply compensated them for the fatigues of their long journey. Luxuriant land-

scapes, alternately hill and dale, wood and water—the sweet serenity of the atmosphere—every thing that could delight the heart, and fascinate the eye, hailed their arrival, and was admired with the highest degree of enthusiasm.

They chose their retreat in a retired and romantic part of the province of Orleans; and, could they have thrown the veil of oblivion over past events, they had now indeed enjoyed all the happiness apportioned to mortals.

They were, however, in possession of every domestic comfort to be derived from their affection for each other. The cultivation of the talents with which Heaven had gifted them, and the exercise of the virtues it had enjoined, added to the society of a few select acquaintances, resident at a short distance from their little villa, and the cheerfulness and tranquillity these pursuits imparted, prevented them, for a considerable time,

from being objects of particular observation or curiosity.

Time, instead of diminishing, seemed, if possible, to augment their love. But, alas! they found that mutual love does not always give birth to mutual happiness.

There were moments when they were relieved from obtrusive remembrances of the past, and absorbed in the transitory pleasures of the present, and the contemplation of the harmony by which they were surrounded. But when these evanescent charms gave way to retrospection, how sad was the contrast—when conscience, stung by the most agonizing reflections, the most horrible of crimes—murder;—a guilty conscience, that corroder of our tranquillity, burst suddenly forth in all its horrors amid their short-lived joys, then, indeed, was the Conte completely miserable.

They had not betrayed to anybody

their real rank or titles; and, being obliged to be constantly on their guard against a discovery, at length became so irksome, that they agreed mutually to return to Spain, make known all at the feet of the King, and trust to his characteristic clemency, and the love he bore his daughter Elvira, for pardon—any hazard appearing preferable to remaining longer in a place, where curiosity had now fixed its prying eye on them, and marked them as victims of its insatiable appetite.

Their assumed title of Vicenza had been for many years extinct, and had belonged to a distant branch of the family of Vittoria, then governing a small principality in the Italian states; and the non-existence of it being proved, gave rise to suspicions, that circumstances of no common nature compelled them to the concealment of their names; and that Italy had been their birth-place most people in reality discredited.

About this time, too, the consternation and disorder that the Infanta's flight had caused at the court of Spain, was talked of throughout France; consequently, with all the occurrences that had since taken place there, our hero and heroine were perfectly acquainted.

On the night of the Princess's elopement her absence had been unnoticed until a late hour, when her not returning excited the most dreadful alarm.

She had been accustomed to enjoy the evening air in the gardens of the Palazzo, beneath whose delightful shades she often wandered for several hours, either accompanied only by Viola, or entirely unattended—the atmosphere in that warm climate being generally too oppressive before sun-set to allow her to walk, an exercise she was particularly partial to. The gardens were, on all sides, enclosed by high walls, and each of the gates was opened by a key of peculiar construction, only in the pos-

session of the royal family, and a few high personages of the Court; so that it was impossible for a stranger to gain admittance, unsanctioned by them.

Thus secured from intrusion, there appeared no impropriety or danger in those solitary rambles; and Elvira was left free to the indulgence of her favourite amusement.

Immediately after Montalban had left her, she had repaired, privately and unobserved by any of her ladies or attendants, to her apartment, where, with all the haste her plan required, she collected her money and most valuable jewels in as small a compass as possible, after which she proceeded with the same caution and privacy to the wood, where she had consented to meet Montalban.

When the Princess walked out alone, her retirement was seldom intruded on; but at length, her protracted stay causing surprise and apprehension, several of her attendants went in quest of her

through the gardens. Their search was, however, in vain; their calls and lamentations were unanswered, except by the shrill echoes amongst the trees; and with countenances full of horror they returned to the Palazzo, to tell the dreadful tidings that the Princess was no where to be found.

A scene of consternation that baffles description, ensued; to the Queen the effects of the shock were nearly fatal, and the grief and distraction of the King at the loss of his favourite daughter, were such as he had never before known.

Whither, with whom, or for what cause she had fled, they could form no probable conjecture, till Viola, (who was known to have been with her), was questioned minutely on the subject by her father, and to evade those questions, without an actual dereliction from truth was impossible.

Falsehood had ever been a stranger to the heart of Viola; and as soon as the

Princess was missed, her suspicions instantly rested on Montalban as the sole cause and companion of her flight.

Notwithstanding her affection for her brother, she could not help feeling the highest degree of resentment against the author of such a misfortune, particularly when she recollected the duplicity he had practised in order to accomplish his purpose ; and thus indignant at his conduct, which she deemed so deserving of censure, she replied with less reluctance to the inquiries of the *Marchezc*

The latter had been already aware, that time had not subdued his son's attachment to *Elvira*, though until now he had thought *Sebastian* wished to conceal it, from the conviction of the impropriety of cherishing it,—but he was now undeceived,—his residence at the cottage of *Carlos* after his escape from the *Inquisition*,—his interview with *Viola*, and the *Princess*,—all was revealed,—and the suspicions he had entertained

before Viola's explanation, were turned to a dreadful certainty,—the fatal truth was divulged,—his son, once his pride and happiness, was now a curse to him! —the destroyer of his illustrious house, —and, in the bitterness of his indignation and sorrow, a malediction against him had almost escaped his lips.

He immediately repaired to communicate this intelligence to the King; as to conceal it would, he knew, implicate himself; it was received as he had expected;—his Majesty's rage was almost unbounded, he uttered the severest invectives and reproaches against the Marcheze, whom he viewed with every feeling of resentment that Montalban's conduct could inspire, and denounced disgrace and exilement to his whole family, if within six months the Princess was not found.

The unfortunate Vittoria had foreseen all this, but he heard without a murmur the harsh sentence, conscious that no ac-

tion of his own deserved it, and unable to offer any extenuation in behalf of his son.

In a short time the circumstance became generally known throughout the court and city. Detachments of the military were forthwith despatched in various directions, in search of the fugitives; all public business was suspended, —and this affair alone occupied the mind of every body.

Meanwhile, owing to the cleverness of their guide, and his knowledge of the several roads, Montalban and the Princess were safe from their pursuers, every individual of whom was stimulated by a promise the King had given, to grant whatever request the first who brought intelligence of the Infanta, should make of him. The pursuit was continued for several weeks; nothing was left undone by which it seemed likely they should hear any thing of her. But all proved ineffectual; and consternation,

regret, and disappointment, succeeded to their hopes.

The Marcheze had received a similar promise from his Majesty, of the grant of any favour he should demand on the same condition; but he wanted not that to induce him to make every possible effort to discover their retreat; he was actuated by different motives. However abhorrent such an idea would have been to him at any other time, there were now many circumstances that led him to fear that Sebastian was the murderer of Prince Orlando. It was repugnant to his feelings to mention the horrible suggestion to Viola, though his suspicions had chiefly originated in what she had related; and he concluded that she already harboured some idea of it.

From feelings of gratitude to his sovereign, from whom he had received such high and distinguished favours, he would have made every exertion in his

power to find the Princess, and restore her to her disconsolate family.

Ambition was one of the failings of the Marcheze, and he had, by policy and cleverness, raised himself to a pinnacle of greatness, from which, he now saw, one rude blast would inevitably hurl him. Regard for the safety and honour of his noble house was a powerful incentive; but, independent of all these, he was influenced by principles of justice, with which he vowed that no sentiments of filial tenderness should interfere, should Sebastian's guilt be proved; even the lasting unhappiness and shame that would accrue to himself was a minor consideration; and should it be necessary, he determined to sacrifice his dearest interests,—his ambition and pride, to the rigorous claims of justice.

From so many calamitous events, the Spanish court had long been a continued scene of confusion and dismay. Peace and happiness seemed to have fled for

ever, and sorrow had converted it to its gloomy abode. Amusements of every description were put a stop to; even the union of Don Manuel d'Orellez and Viola was suspended, every other wish giving way to that of again beholding their amiable Princess.

However exasperated at Montalban's conduct the King had been, no suspicions like what the Marcheze entertained had yet entered his bosom, though there were now many who could not help thinking with the latter, that none but a lover would have dared to remove an obstacle so powerful as Orlando; and that lover was the esteemed and unfortunate Conde Montalban, for amidst the ignominy and disgrace thus heaped upon him, still his amiable and endearing qualities could not be forgotten.

From the first intimation of his passion for the Infanta, he was, however, the only object of the Queen's suspicions, though for many reasons she

dreaded to reveal them. Under any other circumstances her indignation at Montalban's having aspired to the possession of Elvira would have burst forth; but determined to render her knowledge of it subservient to her own purposes, and fearing to hazard an accusation of so tremendous a nature as that of murder, as it might prove without foundation, and perhaps be eventually the means of exposing many things of herself that she wished concealed, she was silent on the subject,—but the most anxious wish of her heart was, that other people might be induced to betray their suspicions, aware that she was deeply in the power of Montalban, and trusting, that if they proved well founded, justice would at length rid her of one whom she so much feared; and a circumstance occurred shortly afterwards, from which, with secret joy, she anticipated the realization of her hopes.

The Prince Regent of Portugal still

remained at Madrid, a prey to melancholy for the death of his darling nephew, whose murderer not all the most indefatigable exertions of government had yet been able to discover;—grief, too, for the absence of Elvira, indignation against Montalban, and rage at the destruction of his ambitious projects, increased his mental sufferings. It had been his determination to make proposals of marriage for Elvira, as a wife not only calculated to make him happy in every respect, but also one, through whose alliance to the Spanish throne, he could, he hoped, carry into execution his secret schemes of aggrandizement.

His hopes thus overthrown, and his views defeated, he continually execrated the Conde as the cause of all. It was no longer his intention to sue for the hand of the Infanta, even should she return, though her marriage with Montalban was no obstacle to it, as a dispensation could easily be obtained from the

Pope; but after the proof she had given of her predilection for another, it was not to be supposed that she would ever willingly consent to become his. And such was the partiality of the King her father towards her, that he knew no consideration, independent of the good of his kingdom, would induce him to constrain her inclinations, nay, that he would infinitely prefer seeing her the happy wife of the Conde Montalban, than behold her on the throne of Portugal, in the midst of splendid misery.

Under these circumstances, it did not appear probable that his suit would be successful, and to depart so far from his high dignity as to hazard a refusal, was not to be thought of.

Revenge took possession of his whole soul at the recollection that his purpose had been thus twice baffled; and he burned with impatience for the return of the Eve of San Sebastian, having dreamt, that if he went to the chapel, beneath

which Orlando's corpse was deposited, on that night, at his accustomed hour, the ghost of the murdered Prince would reveal the assassin's name, in order that he might be brought to justice.

Credulity was one of Alonzo's known weaknesses, and this dream made so strong an impression on his mind, that he resolved to obey the injunction implicitly, and accordingly he put his determination in practice, when the long wished-for night arrived.

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## CHAPTER V.

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“ Cowards in ill, like cowards in the field,  
“ Are sure to be defeated,—to strike home  
“ In both is prudence,—guilt begun must fly  
“ To guilt consummate to be safe.”

YOUNG.

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EARLY on the Eve of San Sebastian, the Prince secretly prepared for his awful visit to the chapel. It was a large edifice, of very ancient date, but had been enriched by many modern improvements, and was almost surrounded by a spacious planted enclosure, at one corner of which was a private door into the mausoleum, under which ran an extensive range of vaults, long said to be haunted by the shades of departed royalty.

Until near midnight the Prince had delayed to go; and, as it approached, his courage began to fail him: but at length he endeavoured to subdue his fears, and cautiously proceeded, in the most indescribable state of mind.

The night was awfully dark, and the wind, in tremendous and long-continued blasts, howled loudly along the echoing colonnade that fronted the chapel, whose black shadow was rendered yet more terrific by the partial rays from the lamp he carried in his unsteady hand, as trembling he advanced more slowly, and cast his eyes over the stupendous building, within whose lonely walls he was about to trust himself at this awful hour of darkness.

Believing that so important a discovery now depended on his perseverance, he resolved to brave every thing to accomplish it. Hastily unlocking the chapel-door, he flung it open, and an

unpropitious blast, occasioned by the suddenness of the motion, at the same instant extinguished his lamp.

Thus enveloped in total darkness, he again hesitated whether he should go on or turn back; but ashamed of his weakness, he summoned all his resolution and entered.

The aisles in frightful sounds reverberated his footsteps, which, mingling with the hollow breeze that swept through the lofty arches, he again began to waver, and was obliged to lean against one of the massy pillars for support.

The great clock now slowly tolled a quarter past twelve, and immediately after was heard the dismal watch-word of the sentinels on guard about the Palazzo, who were about to be relieved by others, who, as they advanced within a short distance of the chapel, with their torches, opposite a large Gothic window, somewhat lower than the rest, discovered to Alonzo, by the momentary

flash that fell beside him, and glared horribly on a large streak of blood, with which the base of one of the pillars was stained, that he now stood on the very spot where the Lady Viola di Montalban had so nearly fallen beneath the pomard of her brother. His previous terrors had not prepared him sufficiently for this shock, to prevent him from uttering an exclamation of horror, which vibrating through the immense avenues that branched off the body of the chapel, his resolution was once more nearly overcome.

“ How preposterous is all this,” said he, as he bent his steps fearfully towards the door.—“ Fool that I have been, to yield to the ridiculous fantasies of the brain, or imagine that the common course of nature would be disturbed merely for my gratification, or to elucidate a mystery Heaven hath so long kept to itself! I will return, and by prayer atone for my presumption.”

“ At thy peril stir not hence ! ” interrupted a voice, in death-like tones, which seemed to proceed from the tombs beneath ; and as it fell in dreadful cadence on the slow blast, spread through the whole building in a sound so appalling, that he stood transfixed with terror to the spot, whilst his eyes were bent in the direction whence the voice had issued, not doubting that he had been accosted by an inhabitant of another world.

The noise of a fall of rain beating heavily against the windows, recalled his fleeting senses, and presently he heard his name repeated in the same sepulchral tone.

“ Fear nought, Alonzo, ” it continued, “ thy prayer for retribution hath been heard ; and I, the spirit of thy murdered kinsman, am now permitted to reveal the assassin. I am the vision whom thou sawest in thy dream, appointed to execute the will of Heaven, in return for

which, thou must dedicate to this holy place, to erect a monument over this memorable spot, a sum such as thou shalt hear. To-morrow, at this solemn hour of midnight, be here where now thou standest, nor dare to approach further, as thou dost value thine existence; bring with thee a purse containing ten thousand deuble pistoles, and half thy most valuable jewels; place them at the foot of the altar, and there thou shalt find thine object accomplished. Delay not in the chapel a moment afterwards, if thou wouldst avoid death certain and dreadful,—nor breathe a syllable of this to mortal;—farewell.”

“ Divine oracle, thou shalt be obeyed,” exclaimed he, throwing himself on his knees, whilst a cold perspiration moistened his forehead, and he shuddered as the appalling sound still dwelt on the air.

Almost unconsciously he quitted the chapel, and regained his apartments un-

observed. Through the night he was restless and feverish, and he arose next morning languid and unwell, from want of repose, having merely had short intervals of uneasy slumbers, during which the shade of Orlando seemed to hover over him, urging him to vengeance, while the same dreadful voice addressed him, in hollow and sepulchral tones, that chilled his very soul.

One of Alonzo's principal favourites at court was Don Vincentio, a young nobleman of the most amiable disposition, and attractive manners, who had so far won his friendship and esteem, that the Prince considered, that to withhold his confidence from him, even in this affair, wherein he had received such a strict injunction to secrecy, would be a breach of that friendship which had so long existed between them. After some deliberation, he resolved to send for him, and communicate the occurrence of the pre-

ceding night, trusting that no ill could accrue from his reposing the secret in the bosom of one so confidential, and who would never betray it to another.

Don Vincentio at first seemed disinclined to credit the assertion of a circumstance so awful and extraordinary, until, venturing to express his doubts, the Prince regarded him with a look of stern displeasure.

“Speak not thus rashly, Senor,” said he, “or tremble for what the consequences may be. Canst thou, poor mortal, dare indeed to dispute the Supreme Power, or think such things *cannot* be, because to thy weak understanding they appear improbable, or do not occur amongst the common events of life; nay, you shall this night accompany me to the chapel, there to see and hear such things as an atheist dare not deny. But, mark me; you must be silent as the grave, if you would preserve us

both from destruction. Meet me in the western court, a few minutes before midnight; till then farewell."

Astonished beyond measure at this mysterious affair, but yet incredulous, in spite of the arguments of the Prince, Vincentio, who possessed invincible courage and presence of mind, resolved at all events, to go with him to the chapel to see the result.

Accordingly, when the appointed time arrived, they repaired thither together, with a lamp, and the money and jewels

Alonzo was again horror-struck on entering; and though he had at first regretted his having confided the affair to the sceptical Vincentio, his fears were now considerably lessened, by having him for a companion. They advanced to the altar with reverential awe, inspired rather by the solemnity of the place, than any apprehension of danger; and laying down the offering, the Prince perceived at his feet a small musket,

with a piece of paper attached to it, on which were written in an almost illegible hand, these words, "the silver plate on the end will reveal all; take it, and depart."

Alonzo eagerly snatched it up, and, fearing to view it in this awful spot, put it in his pocket, and made a motion to retire; when, to his astonishment and dismay, Vincentio requested permission to descend into the vaults.

The Prince started at the proposal, as those dismal mansions of the dead were fully believed to be the haunts of souls long departed from this world, and he fancied he heard their sighs in every breath of wind. He remonstrated with him on the imprudence of doing so, and the perils to which he would thus expose himself, by vainly attempting to pry into those solemn secrets, from the knowledge of which they were interdicted. He entreated him, as his most valued friend, not to tempt dangers that might deprive him of him for ever.

But, however attached Vincentio was to him, his determination to investigate this transaction was too firm to be shaken by fears that appeared so absurd and pusillanimous; which Alonzo perceiving, he at length resolved to await the event, and reluctantly sanctioned his descent into the vaults.

Vincentio had previously provided a second light, and drawing back the grating, he was out of sight in a few minutes. But scarcely had the trembling Alonzo retreated a few paces to seat himself on one of the benches, when a voice like thunder vociferated beneath, "Die, presumptuous intruder,—thus take the just and fatal reward of thy curiosity!"

This dreadful exclamation was instantly succeeded by an explosion, so tremendous, that it seemed almost to have hurled the whole edifice to the ground, and echoed with loud vibrations

for several moments through the long arcade of vaults.

With unusual firmness of mind, Alonzo rushed from the chapel, and summoned assistance, which, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and the intense darkness, he immediately procured from the Palazzo.

Accompanied by several of the military, and others well armed, however impious it would have been deemed at any other time to bear hostile weapons within those sacred walls, he proceeded into the vaults, when the first object that presented itself, through the dusky cloud of smoke, was the corpse of the ill-fated Don Vincentio, weltering in blood.

Few can conceive, much less describe the scene that ensued. The inconsolable and enraged friends of Vincentio demanded sternly the purport of this nocturnal visit to such a place; and

under circumstances so suspicious, they would have openly accused Alonzo of the murder, and seized him, notwithstanding his high rank and dignity, had he not unreservedly explained his dream, appealing to his confidential servant, to whom he had imparted it, for the truth of his assertion; to prove which, he drew forth the musket, and, looking on the end of it, beheld, engraved in small letters, the Conde Montalban's name!

The horror with which this discovery filled every one present, was hardly surpassed by the frightful appearance of the corpse, the face of which seemed scarcely human, so shockingly was it mangled; one side of the head presented a wound large and hideous; the eyes had been driven from their sockets, the jaws almost completely broken, and the so lately handsome Vincentio, but a few short minutes before blooming amid all the graces and fascinating qualifications

that can adorn manhood, could now be recognised only by his dress.

Exclamations were every where heard from his disconsolate relatives, denouncing vengeance and imprecations on all concerned in this horrible catastrophe. Every part of the vaults accessible to a human being was explored in vain; the assassin had by some means effected his escape, if indeed Vincentio had fallen by the arm of mortal; to many it appeared improbable that a living being would be daring enough to enter a place whose very name brought terror with it, for so diabolical a purpose, and alone,—at an hour too when the most courageous individual in Spain would have shuddered at the idea of being left by himself there, so widely had superstition propagated the horrors of it.

It was soon, however, almost the general opinion, that Don Vincentio had met his death from super-human power.

This idea was strengthened by the strongly-presumptive proofs they had, in having thus miraculously discovered the murderer of Orlando; and, with regard to the latter circumstance, there were few now who entertained a doubt.

With this conviction, they bore the bleeding body from the vault, amidst the heart-rending groans and tears of his friends, and the most terrible denunciations of vengeance on Montalban, who was now the principal object of their fury and resentment, which was not even superseded by their horror at this new catastrophe.

Even for the safety of Alonzo there were serious apprehensions entertained at first, from the exasperated crowd; but fortunately for him, the gold and jewels still lay at the foot of the altar untouched, as if, by corroborating the truth of what he had stated, in his defence, the same mysterious power that had willed this event had also intended

to preserve him thus singularly from the almost certain death that it appeared probable he would otherwise have been consigned to.

The news of the murder, and all the circumstances attending it, spread rapidly; and, in less than half an hour, the whole Palazzo presented a scene of consternation and uproar. The extraordinary and long-sought discovery that had been made, and the horrible and mysterious assassination of Don Vincentio, were the awful themes that employed every tongue. The unfortunate Montalban was now, indeed, stigmatized as a murderer—a disgrace to his family, to his country, and to human nature. The enormity of the crime, too, seemed aggravated by the high rank of his victim. What intelligence for the ears of a father! This dreadful confirmation of all that he had until now only suspected, gave a shock to his feelings that words are inadequate to describe.

While Sebastian appeared deserving of it, he had ever loved him with paternal tenderness; but now he regarded him as an object of abhorrence and detestation;—as a wretch, whom every law, human and divine, rendered it incumbent on him to seek, and deliver up to justice; and, to accomplish this, as well as to restore the Princess, he determined to leave no means untried—indignation and horror superseding every other sentiment in his bosom.

That determination gained strength, as he daily witnessed the languishing state of the King's health, who, inconsolable for the loss of his beloved daughter, and incensed at the affront that had been offered to his royal house, had sunk into a consuming melancholy, from which the Infanta's return seemed the only thing likely to recover him.

The resentment of the people was again almost simultaneously roused against Montalban by the late discovery; for,

although some expressions had dropped from Viola, during her conversation with her father, which gave him to understand, that, on the night she had so nearly fallen a sacrifice in the chapel beneath the dagger of her brother, he had been actuated to the almost fatal crime by his jealous fears, that Alonzo had gained the affections of Elvira—by his detestation of a supposed successful rival—and forthwith had reached the public ear,—although, for this, opprobrium and censure had been heaped on him, while still they had made allowances for the baneful influence of jealousy under which he had laboured,—until now the foul enormity of actual murder had not been registered in the catalogue of his misfortunes and guilt.

Even Alonzo, with all his prejudices, had not dared to conceive a suspicion so horrible. Nay, by many, all was until now almost forgotten, in their zeal and anxiety for the restoration of their

Sovereign's health, and the return of their adored Princess. The amiable qualities of Montalban had, however, endeared him to many of the friends of his early youth; and, even in the contemplation of his guilt, still did they pity him—while they condemned him, still was their friendship not withdrawn.

Montalban now stood forth as a being who must shortly be brought before the awful tribunal of justice, charged with crimes of the most heinous nature, for which his life would surely be the forfeit. To entertain a hope that the royal clemency would be extended to him seemed absurd. Time, instead of meliorating the health and spirits of the King, daily made him more depressed. He was not less exasperated than at first against Montalban, that presumptuous traitor, who had at once insulted his regal dignity, and robbed him of his daughter and his happiness. Nay, so ungovernable at last became his resent-

ment, when six months had nearly expired, without bringing the most trifling intelligence of Elvira, that every succeeding day seemed to threaten the downfall of the noble House of Vittoria.

Even had there existed a hope of his Majesty's pardon, it would have availed little, when opposed to the denunciations of Alonzo and his determinate vows, that justice should take its course, and no earthly power interfere to rob it of its right. The Prince was intent on revenge for the murder of his kinsman, and, should Montalban be found, and proved guilty, his inevitable death would be the consequence.

But this important affair yet required much further investigation; for amongst Montalban's friends were a sceptical few who discredited, nay suspected some mischievous policy lurked beneath, the late mysterious occurrence; for to them the intervention of super-human power seemed highly improbable—insomuch

that they did not scruple openly to declare their doubts, regardless of the disapprobation their incredulity generally elicited. The musket, on which was engraved his name, had been brought forward against the Conde, and to several it appeared an incontestable evidence of his guilt. But was the life of a fellow-creature (in reality perhaps innocent of it) to be staked on a transaction so obscure and unaccountable? Was it likely that, had Heaven employed its missionaries to reveal the perpetrator of so vile a deed, it would, through the same agency, have wrought a catastrophe so horrible as the murder of Don Vincentio? Certainly not. It appeared an offence against Heaven to believe such a thing probable; and to this opinion the friends of Vincentio soon became converts; and in their zeal to elucidate the mystery, and discover the murderer of their lamented relative,

they were obliged to espouse the cause of the Conde Montalban.

To Vittoria affairs wore the most alarming aspect, as a fortnight only now remained unexpired of the prescribed time, within which the unhappy Marcheze was either to produce the Princess, or to suffer for the offences of his son, by the forfeiture of his honours, and the confiscation of all that part of his property he inherited from the crown.

The thought of such a degradation was worse than death to his haughty soul. To be thus stripped of his dignities, exiled for ever from the favour of his Sovereign, and the scenes of all his glory and greatness. Spurned, shunned by those who had once courted his smiles, and trembled at his frown; or with cringing flattery fawned upon him; suing for his friendship and his favours, required all his fortitude and strength of mind to support, even in idea.

Already he felt, in anticipation, all the horrors of the fate that threatened him. He fancied himself hurled into an abyss of disgrace and ruin, from which no effort could recover him. Plunged into it, too, by his son; that son, once the boast of his noble house, the darling idol of his soul, through whom he had fondly hoped the honours of his ancient family would descend to a long line of posterity—now a wretched, guilty outcast—a traitor to his King—a murderer!

The contemplation of such accumulated miseries, added to the agonizing wound his feelings as a father had received, nearly drove him to distraction.

He had now given up every hope of discovering the retreat of the fugitives, though in several parts of Spain, France, and Italy, he had employed spies for that purpose, apparently without success.

No chance seemed to remain to him by which he might save himself from

destruction, and he had almost yielded to despair, when the sudden arrival of a letter produced a total alteration in his appearance,—from a state of frantic wildness and grief his spirits in some degree returned, and he was at least tranquil and composed.

From this change it was generally concluded, that the letter contained some intelligence of Sebastian and the Princess. All were anxious to learn its contents,—to have their doubts set aside, but their interrogatories and conjectures remained unsatisfied. Even from the King was the purport of it kept a secret; and it was at length supposed to contain some communication that required the strictest concealment.

In a few days, however, after the receipt of this mysterious and wonder-exciting letter, the Marcheze, regardless of their anxiety and curiosity, departed privately from Madrid, nobody knew whither.

## CHAPTER VI.

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“ Oh cursed lust of gold, when for thy sake  
 “ The fool throws up his interest in both worlds ”

BLAIR.

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“ I am in blood  
 “ Stept in so far, that should I wade no more,  
 “ Returning were as tedious as going o'er  
 “ Strange things I have in head that will to hand,  
 “ And must be acted ere they may be scann'd.”

SHAKESPEARE.

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AMONGST those, who (like many others, professing what they do not feel) had ever pretended to be Montalban's friends—while, in reality, they would have undermined every thing that tended to his advantage—was Don Malvolio de Cerberos, a young nobleman, whom we have had occasion to mention before.

He was by birth an Andalusian, and

had been schooled in all the vices of a court, where he had progressively insinuated himself, by a happy knack he possessed of courting the attentions and flattering the foibles of the great and powerful.

With the few virtues to be found there he was totally unacquainted. The natural depravity of his heart was concealed beneath an exterior handsome and prepossessing. His countenance was of a peculiar cast, and sometimes betrayed a mind capable of actions the boldest and most daring. His manners were, in general, affable and courteous—a smile of complacency would beam over his features, even at the moment that all the black passions of his soul were forming some diabolical plan, and none but Uberto, his confidential servant and trusty agent in many a nefarious scheme, knew his real disposition. In the attainment of any favourite object he was a perfect Machiavel: and so many detestable qua-

lities contended for ascendancy in his bosom, that even Uberto could not determine what composed the ruling traits of his character.

His mind replete with every demoniac invention that hell itself could furnish the means of carrying into execution, his perverted ideas no sooner led him to the completion of one crime, than they set him on the rack of torment and impatience for the accomplishment of the next.

Jealous of superior merits in others, and ambitious of their superior dignities, he had always regarded Montalban with envy, hatred, and malice, though motives of policy induced him to conceal those hostile sentiments under the specious appearance of friendship and esteem. His dislike was increased by the distinguished marks of royal favour perpetually lavished on the Conde; and he burned with impatience for an opportunity of gratifying the malevolent

propensities he entertained towards him. The latter was, however, too much on his guard against giving any offence, and too securely screened from the effects of private pique to feel any apprehensions from the ill-will which he was aware several people bore him, and from which he knew few courtiers, enjoying the favour of their Sovereign, are exempt.

Amongst the vices that disgraced the character of Malvolio was that hideous one that gives birth to almost every other—an unconquerable love of gambling. To the dangerous pleasures and (to him) resistless allurements of the gaming-table had he sacrificed all the noblest feelings of the human heart—every thing that renders life desirable, and gives splendour to adversity and the humblest station—honour, piety, and virtue. Therefore, though possessing the luxurious enjoyments the body alone is capable of relishing, it was im-

possible, even hardened as he was, that he could be happy.

On the demise of his father, a rich patrimony had devolved to him, besides considerable sums of money, which proved, however, a fatal bequest, as it enabled him to indulge still further his passion for play, and to run into excesses and debaucheries which otherwise he must have avoided.

This career of profligacy was for many years unchecked, until the exhausted state of his finances, the impoverished aspect of all his domestic affairs, and mortgage of his paternal estate, in consequence of the enormous debts he had contracted, at length presented to his view a picture from which he recoiled with horror.

He saw disgrace and misery ready to overwhelm him; and, still worse, he dreaded the exposure of his character, and the ignominy that would be heaped upon him; and rendered desperate more

by that thought, than regret for the past, or a pang at the contemplation of the ruin that surrounded him, he anxiously sought for some means by which, at one bold stroke, he could retrieve his shattered fortunes, and again pursue his favourite occupations.

Mischief is ever ready to assist its votaries; and from this dilemma he was for awhile relieved by a circumstance, that augured too favourably at first not to be taken advantage of—as it promised at once to supply his exigencies, and afford him a certain and secure method of gratifying the malicious and envious feelings of his breast towards Montalban.

He had in his possession, since the fatal day of Prince Orlando's murder, a musket, with the Conde's name engraved on it, though by what means he had procured it even Uberto was not able to discover; and this was now to be the instrument of his *chef-d'œuvres*—which he had soon an

opportunity to make use of. He would not have so long delayed to exercise his malevolence against this object of his jealousy and hatred, could he have done so with safety to himself, and certainty of success. Nothing did he more ardently wish for than Montalban's ruin; and to effect that, he would have relinquished almost every other enjoyment his heart panted for. But he was aware that he was himself by no means a general favourite at court; he had many enemies, and few friends; and individually to stand forward and accuse the Conde of so dreadful a crime, without any other evidence to support the charge, seemed too hazardous to be attempted.

The Prince, Alonzo's extraordinary dream had for some time afforded a subject of conversation at court. From several it gained decided credit that it would be fulfilled; while others, less prone to superstition, believed it to be merely the effect of his disordered ima-

gination, and thought of it no more. One of those incredulous auditors was Malvolio, who, perceiving however Alonzo's reliance on it, and how sanguinely he anticipated the event, determined to turn it to his advantage, and make the Prince's weakness subservient to his own villany.

Having previously taken every precaution he deemed necessary, and, with the assistance of Uberto, concerted his plan, he beheld with joy the arrival of the Eve of San Sebastian.

From many of the subterranean passages beneath the courts ran long winding avenues into the burial vaults of the chapel. Those communications had been formed by the mouldering hand of time; but the damp and noisome vapours rendered them in several places so obscure, that only by the minutest search could they be discovered; and thus, after much trouble, had Don Malvolio gained entrance into this solemn abode of decayed

mortality, to complete his horrid purpose, furnished with a light and weapons of defence, in case there should be any necessity for their use.

The dismal gloom of the place, and its unwholesome exhalations, at first appalled him, and almost compelled him to return, without proceeding in the affair any farther. But, on hearing Alonzo in the chapel, he was quickly re-assured, and able to go through his sacrilegious enterprise—relying for its success on the bigotry and credulity of the latter, and still more on a loaded musket, which it had been one of his chief cares to provide.

The result of this, his first visit, was all he could desire. The Prince had promised implicit obedience to his injunction, so mysteriously, so impiously delivered. He already fancied the golden prize within his grasp—already in imagination saw the most ardent wishes of his heart fulfilled; himself in possession

of immense wealth—and Montalban dragged to the tribunal, that would condemn him for a murderer, and pronounce his dreadful and inevitable fate.

True to his appointment, and flushed with hope, he repaired thither on a second night, at the same hour; and, with the same caution, he listened fearfully, and heard somebody in the chapel; it was Alonzo, who was approaching the altar, where he had now deposited the golden treasure for which he panted. With joy he heard the departing footsteps of the Prince; no music could have been sweeter to his soul. His heart beat quickly with emotions of delight and rapture—which were, however, soon changed to alarm, on hearing a low whispering in the chapel—from which it was evident that the Prince was not unaccompanied.

His attentive ear caught almost every word of the conversation that passed;

he heard with terror Vincentio's determination to enter the vaults, in order to investigate the affair; and, in the first moments of his agitation, he was almost induced to fly, as the only means of ensuring his safety. But the idea of abandoning so rich a prize, now so nearly in his possession, seemed absurd and culpable; to obtain it he thought no risk too great. He, therefore, resolved to run every hazard; and had scarcely been prepared to defend himself with his formidable weapon against an intruder, when the unfortunate Vincentio appeared, descending from the chapel, who, ere he had advanced three steps lower, met the direful fate that awaited him.

Malvolio now beheld with horror and affright the deed he had done, and shuddered as the consequences of it rushed upon his mind. Life had instantly fled from the body of Vincentio; and the blood flowed so copiously from the

wounds, as in a few moments to render it so awful a spectacle, that even he, hardened as he was, could not contemplate it without being appalled, and feeling his conscience oppressed by the enormity of the crime.

Though he had before determined to encounter every danger, rather than relinquish so rich a prize; yet now that he looked on the bleeding corse of Vincentio, the sight of death in so terrific a shape had power to change his resolution—to check even his avarice. To fly would be to lose all; all, for which he had sacrificed so much—for which he had bartered his happiness and peace for ever. But this moment was a critical one; to remain would be to wait for certain death, as he knew the report of the musket would, of course, draw a crowd into the vaults, and then his fate would be inevitable. 'T would surely, he thought, be the action of a madman to rush deliberately on destruction; and

the dreadful conviction that, instead of being prepared for death, he was now plunged into the deepest abyss of villainy and guilt, roused him more strongly to a sense of the dangers of delaying; and at the same moment hearing a loud noise of several voices in the court, evidently of persons approaching, he at once made a precipitate escape.

Arrived at his apartments, he shrunk from the scrutinizing glances of Uberto in confusion. He trembled violently; and desired to be left alone. The officious valet, however, contrived to remain, in order to discover, if possible, what fresh crimes he was involved in; and, being not over scrupulous in obeying his master's orders, from a justifiable opinion, that, since they had become mutual accomplices in many an act unfit to meet the light, that vast distinction no longer existed between them, which, from the rank of Don Malvolio, he had formerly acknowledged.

His excessive agitation and incoherent expressions soon betrayed to Uberto the iniquitous undertaking he had been concerned in.

From the time the latter had first entered the service of Malvolio, his principles had been perverted. He had long been accustomed to the commission of crimes, and few were they that he could not view without remorse. Even in this affair he had, in some degree, assisted his master, without being aware to what his preparations tended.

But now, on hearing of this most horrible transaction, a climax of enormity to which he thought no human being, however abandoned, would ever proceed, he involuntarily started from him in terror and abhorrence. Those sensations, however, soon wore off, as Malvolio hinted that the prize he had lost might yet be recovered. The latter saw that he had unguardedly committed his secret to a wretch who would not

hesitate to betray him, did there appear a probability of any advantage accruing to himself from doing so; and that it was necessary to purchase his silence by a bribe, which the possession of Prince Alonzo's gold could alone enable him to do—gaming and dissipation having reduced his once splendid fortune to the lowest pitch; and how it was to be obtained now became a subject of deliberation.

At the mention of this, the case appeared to Uberto in a more favourable light. The deed seemed much less atrocious, when he considered that it would probably turn out so profitably to him. He even persuaded his master into a sort of self-approbation, at the certainty there appeared of his thus enriching himself; and the secure and, he trusted, effectual method of revenge he had employed against the man whom most he hated—one whose privileges, advantages, and enjoyments, had so long

jarred with his own interests—as they could entertain no doubt of the steps that would be taken against Montalban.

By degrees, this topic became divested of its horrors; they were familiarized to scenes of depravity and bloodshed, and Vincentio's death was soon thought of with as much apathy and indifference as one of the most common occurrences of life.

With all the freedom he considered himself authorized to use, Uberto upbraided his master for what he termed his pusillanimity and folly in abandoning what he had gone to such lengths to obtain, without even one bold effort to secure it. Don Malvolio, however, was not in a state of mind to brook reproaches; but he also knew that he was too deeply in the power of his treacherous confidant to vent his indignation without fear of the consequences, as he would otherwise have done, and that his safety now depended on his keeping on

strictest secrecy from Uberto, (a promise which a higher reward than what he expected from his master, would easily have induced him to violate) Don Malvolio, on whom as yet suspicion had not glanced, made a successful application to some of his usual associates, and procured the supplies he required, which, to his great joy, he very soon turned to good account. His good genius, which had so long deserted him, now hailed with propitious smiles his re-appearance at the hazard table.

The first onset was critical,—it was ominous; he had staked an enormous sum, with the sanguine hope of seeing it immediately doubled, in which expectation he was not disappointed. It was doubled,—trebled;—he ventured still more, and at every throw the dice favoured him; his eyes sparkled,—his whole form seemed dilated with joy, while rage and envy inflamed the countenances of his unfortunate antagonists

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terms of amity with this insolent menial—one whom he would otherwise have spurned with contempt; and, being obliged to listen to those taunts from a creature he deemed so despicable, and whom he so feared and detested, was almost as galling to his haughty soul as the approach of death would have been terrifying to him. As there was no remedy, he tried to content himself with the hope, that the wealth he had relinquished to ensure his personal safety was not irrecoverable. It was possible that Alonzo might either have forgotten it in the bustle and consternation that ensued after the murder; or perhaps, uninfluenced by the general disbelief, was yet so far the dupe of superstition, as to have left it for the ostensible purpose for which it had been brought; and, while he condemned the credulity of the Prince, and ridiculed him for allowing his judgment and reason to be thus blind-folded, he resolved to follow Uberto's advice, by

again repairing to the vaults, and gaining an entrance by some means into the chapel, in case there should be no danger of his meeting, or being observed by any body,—when, if all was as he wished, he could beat off his prize in security.

This resolution was put in practice almost as soon as formed, some hours having now elapsed since the murder. Avarice had banished every softer passion from Malvolio's bosom, and with a daring spirit, and yet irresolute step, he proceeded towards the chapel. As he approached the sacred edifice, he shuddered, not at the terrible retrospection of his past enormities, for he was callous to remorse; nor did he for a moment consider how grossly he had violated the reverence due to the church; he was now sensible only of the danger and inutility of attempting to regain what he had lost, or perceiving that there were lights still in the chapel, from which he concluded that people

had been left to watch there; and in the vaults, during the night.

Thus foiled, and apprehensive of being perceived lurking there at so unseasonable an hour, which would of course render him liable to be suspected of being led thither by some evil design, he hastened back; and as quickly as the remarks and impertinent interrogatories of his servant would permit, threw himself on his uneasy couch, not to repent or weep for his crimes, but to devise some means of binding Uberto to secrecy, his life being now in the power of a miscreant almost as avaricious, mercenary, and abandoned as himself.

A thousand times did he curse the necessity that had compelled him to relinquish what perhaps the delay of a few moments might have made his own. And yet, again, it seemed equally probable, that delay would have been fatal to him, nay, he soon felt assured that there would have been not only a pro-

bability, but a certainty of it, for had he not heard, immediately after he had effected his escape, the murder proclaimed on all sides by innumerable voices, with the mysterious circumstances attending it, and surely had he remained, he had been discovered, amidst every thing that would prove his guilt, he would have been instantly condemned,—even now his doom might have been fixed; he therefore saw more reason to congratulate himself on his flight than to regret it.

His second attempt, had he persevered, would most likely have ended in the same manner,—besides, Alonzo might have been convinced of the stratagem that had been practised, and consequently seen the folly and danger of his credulity and too great confidence in the intervention of immortal power.

In this opinion he was not mistaken; Alonzo had indeed acknowledged his error, when he beheld its fatal conse-

quences, which, alas, no atonement could now repair; he felt his humiliation, and the censure to which he had exposed himself, by having suffered his reason to be so led away by the bigotted ideas he had early imbibed. But princes have their failings, their weaknesses, their faults, and defects, as well as other men. From no mortal does indulgent Heaven expect perfection; error is not peculiar to a few unenlightened beings, it is common to all human nature, and the most vigilant and circumspect, the most heedless and unwary, may fall into the same snare.

Several restless hours, spent in torturing reflections and fears, could furnish Don Malvolio with no other resource than the gaming-table, to enable him to ensure what was so essential to his safety; inviolate secrecy on the part of Uberto; yet on this how little reliance was to be placed,—at best the chances

of the dice were fluctuating and uncertain.

Fortune sometimes favoured dissipation's votaries,—adventitious luck had fallen to many, but to him it had been almost constantly adverse. Many desperate throws had he made, nay, he had squandered an immense income arising from an extensive estate, which he had at length been compelled to mortgage; from those who deemed his *honour* a sufficient pledge for the payment, he had borrowed considerable sums,—all had he staked and lost. As the only chance left of saving him from actual ruin,—of preserving even his life, he resolved to venture again. Should fortune once smile upon him, he trusted she would continue to befriend him, having often observed that her reverses were sudden and unexpected, but generally of long duration.

Having obtained a promise of the

strictest secrecy from Uberto, (a promise which a higher reward than what he expected from his master, would easily have induced him to violate) Don Malvolio, on whom as yet suspicion had not glanced, made a successful application to some of his usual associates, and procured the supplies he required, which, to his great joy, he very soon turned to good account. His good genius, which had so long deserted him, now hailed with propitious smiles his re-appearance at the hazard table.

The first onset was critical,—it was ominous; he had staked an enormous sum, with the sanguine hope of seeing it immediately doubled, in which expectation he was not disappointed. It was doubled,—trebled;—he ventured still more, and at every throw the dice favoured him; his eyes sparkled,—his whole form seemed dilated with joy, while rage and envy inflamed the countenances of his unfortunate antagonists

That joy, however, produced by his continued success, was soon damped by innumerable claims on all sides from those with whom he had contracted debts, which they now considered him able to pay. The demands were as incessant as they were numerous, and, persecuted by the importunities of the host of duns that surrounded him, and the bitter taunts of those by whose losses he was thus rapidly profiting, the irascibility of his temper soon got the better of his judgment at play; in almost every game whose success depended on skill, he lost; with the dice he frequently won, but on the whole, he saw his finances again on the decline.

Some months passed in this manner, during which he experienced much of the variableness of fortune, meeting its frowns and smiles alternately, and endeavouring (though reluctantly) to discharge his numerous debts, aware, that if he did not do so, any future applica-

tion of the same nature that he might be necessitated to make would fail.

Meanwhile he had neglected to fulfil, almost indeed forgotten, his agreement with Uberto. Time, and a constant round of gaming and dissipation, had weakened his fears with regard to the dreadful secret with which he had unwarily intrusted him. Nor did he reflect that his safety depended much more on the fulfilment of it than on any natural fidelity of disposition in his servant. Few things were able to withdraw his attention from those scenes of dissipation in which he was almost continually engaged,—even to the danger of his situation, or the probability of Uberto's betraying him, he was hardly sensible.

The whole kingdom was at present in a state of civil discord, and especially throughout the court all was agitation and alarm; the minds of the nobles and grandees were actuated and inflamed by

different passions. The prospect of the prime minister's disgrace was to the enemies of Vittoria the richest banquet they could enjoy. Ambition was on the wing, and treachery and deceit did not scruple to come forward, if possible, to endeavour at once to supplant him by their specious arts. The friends of the Marcheze were no less indignant at the idea of his fall, nor less grieved at the apparent impossibility of preventing it, well knowing how arbitrary was the temper of their sovereign.

Besides the commotion caused by this important affair, the feelings of the people were powerfully called forth, and alarm, excited by the dreadful occurrences that had marked the course of the last twelve months, and the mysterious manner in which they had happened,—particularly the murder of Don Vincentio. All were now zealous and active in tracing every thing to its source, hoping at length to obtain a clue

by which they could effect a discovery so momentous to the nation. Yet so infatuated was Malvolio by the alluring baits that vice held out to him,—so enthralled was he in its dangerous pleasures,—so beguiled from prudence and reflection, that a fatal blow was about to fall on him, even at the moment when he fancied himself in perfect security.

From a person of Uberto's habits and disposition, little fidelity was to be expected towards even a master the most liberal, the most amiable,—much less towards such a one as Don Malvolio; and the indifference with which the latter had treated him for the last few months, and his omitting to give what (had he received it) must have bound him to conceal the murder, now became a cause of triumph and satisfaction.

He had been hitherto prevented from revealing it, by the fear that in the violence of their indignation the people would implicate himself; and thinking

him an accomplice in the crime, would also make him a participator in the punishment of his master. But when that violence was somewhat abated,—when he considered, that by concealing it he was himself in imminent danger; above all, when he thought of the reward he should obtain on delivering a murderer to justice, he at once determined to lay open the terrible catalogue of Malvolio's enormities,—to cut him off in the midst of vice,—to let the sword of justice fall on him in an unguarded moment; this would be retaliating as his master deserved;—'twould be what his violated promise merited,—'twould be indeed a sweet, a noble revenge,—'twould be enriching himself, and performing a duty he owed to God and man. From these *conscientious* motives did he betray the guilty, the ill-fated Malvolio, whose crimes for the most part coming within the cognizance of the Inquisition, he was immediately cited before that most

dreadful tribunal. - And, now to "har-row-up his soul," to send death's minister in all its terrors, the King's command was made known to him that he should be sent thither. With yet unshaken fortitude he received this intimation, but when he found himself enclosed within one of the horrible dungeons of the Inquisition, while the cries of the wretched sufferers pierced his heart, conveying a faint idea of the doom he might expect, at a time too when the most diabolical cruelties were hourly practised there, all his intrepidity vanished.

- On entering the awful death-boding court, where sat his stern judges in formidable array, whose countenances were emblems of their blacker hearts, and foretold his fate at once; the confession of his guilt burst from his lips, his colour fled, his eyes rolled in wild and frightful despair, his limbs trembled, and sobbing convulsively, he fell pros-

trate on the floor. For a long time he appeared as if the vital spark was extinct, but a deep groan at length proclaimed reviving animation. Having gone through all the necessary forms of trial, his unfeeling judges bade him entertain no hopes of mercy from them; and, after advising him to make his peace with offended Heaven, and prepare for an after-state of happiness, which repentance and atonement could alone render him deserving of, while in his power, to spend the few short hours he had to live in prayer, the final sentence was passed—a sentence, however, which he owned was not more dreadful than just; and, in consideration of his high birth he was to be beheaded on the following evening, instead of undergoing the usual ceremony of the *auto da fé*, burning at the stake.

He now sunk fainting in the arms of one of the familiars, and was reconducted to his cell, whither the holy

father confessor was to be sent to him. A dreary and death-like silence prevailed around—unbroken by the sound of a human voice—a pitying word or look would have been grateful to his heart—but his conductors spoke not—and, in a few moments the door of his prison was closed with a tremendous sound—it struck an icy chilliness through his whole frame, and he dropped on the ground almost in a state of torpor, from which he was shortly roused by the entrance of Father Rosario, the confessor. “This is an awful night to thee, my son,” observed the monk in a kind and gentle tone, “but God grant that thy penitence may be sincere ere thy soul’s departure from this world of sin and sorrow.”

“Penitence! alas, reverend father, what can it avail me now, when I am on the very brink of eternity. Oh, I have done such deeds as nature shudders at, you would not hear them; no,

no, do not thus mock my miseries by trying to create a hope which another hour would for ever annihilate." "This impiety, Senor, becometh not thy last moments," said the benevolent monk, with a look that spoke all the virtues of his heart; and the zeal with which he performed his holy functions, while Malvolio wondered that such a man should be an inhabitant of the Inquisition. Rosario took one of the hands of the kneeling culprit in his:—"Let me thus save from ruin, a valuable soul," continued he; "Think not that the Being thou dost address hath ever turned from the contrite prayer of a penitent, surely thou canst not doubt the mercy of the Almighty, when after thy many grievous sins he yet permitted thee to live, that thou mightest repent." "Oh, good father, teach me how to pray," cried the weeping Malvolio, "long have my lips forgotten to utter words so sacred; long since my

bosom hath known sensations such as thou inspirest; oh, what comfort, what joy hast thou spoken to my soul! If, indeed, contrition and sincerity, *can* expiate crimes such as mine, tell me, tell me, that I may hope for heaven; then will the cold embrace of death be welcome to me." "So may I be received there myself," said Rosario, kneeling beside him and opening a small missal, over which they both bent in long and uninterrupted devotion.

As they arose the clock struck the awful hour of midnight; "the fatal moment draws nigh, father," observed Malvolio, first breaking silence, but with a voice and countenance perfectly composed. "It does, my son, but thy soul I trust is safe, and death is divested of its terrors; consider it is a journey thou must take to another and a better world." "Would that all was over," said Malvolio; at the same instant the muffled drums sent their hollow and dismal

sounds throughout the building, to announce that the familiars were approaching to bring forth the prisoner. A hectic glow flushed his cheek, and was succeeded by a deadly paleness: "Attend, holy father, to my last request, and, as you fulfil this charge, so may Heaven deal with you at the awful day when our souls shall meet beyond the grave." Drawing a small packet from his bosom, he presented it to the monk, while he continued in an impressive voice:—"Guard this as a miser would his treasure, nay as if 'twere all on which thy salvation depends; on the envelope you will find directions how you are to dispose of its enclosure, at present trust not thy sight with them, peruse them when I am no more, and discharge the important duties they enjoin, or never shall my spirit find a resting-place." "Enough," said the monk, "faithfully shall thine injunction be obeyed; witness this, high Heaven."

The bell now tolled, the next moment the door of the cell was thrown open, and Malvolio was summoned to his fate. At the entrance of a long passage were assembled the officials who were to attend the ceremony, wrapped in cloaks of gloomy black, and at a short distance beyond stood the familiars, each bearing a torch. At sight of these messengers of death Malvolio sickened; his agony was insupportable, and nature afforded him a temporary relief, by locking his perceptions in a state of insensibility; he was thus borne to the scaffold, where recovering for a moment, and ejaculating a short and fervent prayer, he laid his head on the block, and rose no more.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain?

SHAKESPEARE.

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THE serenity the Conte and Contessa Vicenza hoped to enjoy in their present abode, was not of long duration. Curiosity is ever on the alert, and scandal, its almost inseparable companion, follows its footsteps, ready to prey upon every thing that it has discovered.

Notwithstanding the precautions they took to avoid any appearance of mystery or secrecy, their actions wore an air of fearful reserve, which they found it impossible to divest themselves of, and

which did not escape the notice of many; nor failed to give rise to various conjectures.

An opinion was soon prevalent, that they were not in reality what they appeared, but personages of much higher rank in disguise; and for assuming that disguise there were evidently strong reasons. No sooner was heard the extraordinary intelligence, that a Princess of Spain had eloped with a young nobleman of her father's court, nobody knew whither, than suspicion fell on them, and they became objects of universal observation, from the circumstances connected with their relative situations; thus discovered, and aware that it would be absurd and unavailing to attempt further concealment, the deception was thrown off, they beheld themselves exposed to every thing that could make them unhappy, and render their situation irksome and insupportable; any alternative, by which they

could rush from those miseries seemed preferable, and then it was that they first formed the resolution of returning to Spain: of two evils, however, they had chosen the most formidable, like many who prefer a remedy often worse than the disease; but so many things seemed to conspire against them, that they determined to remain no longer in a place where they suffered continual persecution.

That Sebastian could enjoy any real happiness was impossible, his conscience burthened by a crime of such magnitude as the murder of Orlando; he fancied, too, that his concealment of it hitherto was a crime; but many were the storms he had encountered, numerous the sacrifices he had made to obtain his adored Elvira, and no sacrifice short of his soul's happiness and safety would he have stopped at.

All the consolation, however, was his that could be derived from the hope

that sincere repentance and prayer had made his peace with Heaven, and all the pleasure any earthly object could afford him he found in the possession of Elvira.

He was now universally regarded with horror by every body else—stigmatized as a murderer—shunned by the few whose worthless friendship had been before proffered to him—treated with contempt even by his inferiors, and talked of every where as the abandoned being who had dared, by acts of treason and bloodshed, to interrupt the peace of a whole nation, the parricide who had drawn dishonour and destruction on his family.

Of nothing that had passed all this time at the Spanish court was he ignorant; his mind was in a great measure prepared for the dreadful sentence he was aware his crimes deserved; he shuddered at a fate so horrible as that which threatened him, and which it now

seemed impossible to avoid, as he should doubtless, he thought, be pursued to even the remotest retreat he could fly to; but it did not give such a shock to his feelings as that of exilement and disgrace denounced against the Marcheze his father, for he, alas! was the guilty cause of it.

But it was not yet too late to try to avert the blow. To save his father, surely no sacrifice consistent with honour and integrity could be too great, it might perhaps be some atonement for his past conduct: for, oh! how greatly would it add to the enormity of his sins, to be the cause of a parent's ruin.

The only reparation in his power now to make, was to preserve him, by restoring Elvira, relinquishing every claim to her, and delivering himself at once into the hands of justice. This would indeed be sacrificing largely, but agonizing as it might be, he secretly determined on it. Yet how could he bear

to make such a proposal to Elvira—she, who loved him so fondly, so disinterestedly, notwithstanding all his failings, all his crimes, would assuredly never consent to his voluntarily consigning himself to certain death; for, though she had readily agreed with him, that it would be better to return to Madrid, and sue for the royal pardon; yet the idea that he meant to resign her, and forget that she had ever been his wife, had never entered her mind; she entertained the most sanguine hopes of being able to move the King to forgiveness; and had she thought for a moment, that death would be Montalban's portion, not even to prevent the downfall of the Marcheze would she have allowed him to venture back to Spain.

As it was, however, their departure was fixed upon, after various delays on her part, unwilling as she was that Sebastian should hasten to meet the frowns of a monarch, so much and so justly in-

censed,—and, but for this alone, she would have accelerated the preparations for their journey, no local object whatever having attached her to their present residence.

The necessary arrangements were at length completed—and a day for their setting out appointed: as it approached Montalban became more and more dejected, his spirits suddenly entirely forsook him; for the few last days of his stay, he resolved to seek the most dismal solitude, where he might, undisturbed, ruminate on all his sorrows, and even the presence of his beloved Elvira was now irksome; it was now, indeed, that he felt the magnitude of those sorrows,—the extent of his miseries—the wretchedness, the horrors of his situation,—the strongest mind would have wavered before such a prospect as he beheld; it was unenlivened by a single hope,—all, all within his bosom was despair,—the conflict between filial duty, and the ties

that bound him to Elvira was almost too painful to be borne, each seemed equally to demand the sacrifice of the other,—to acquit himself of both as his heart wished was impossible,—and therefore in yielding to the claims of one, the other must be relinquished and forgotten; in preserving his father from the ruin that threatened him, he must give up Elvira for ever,—and he saw the unconditional, the imperious necessity of doing either; the idea of death was less appalling than the latter, and that this too would be his fate, appeared almost certain, aware that it was what every law of nature awarded to a crime like his.

He suffered not the too-confident hopes of the Princess to deceive him into a belief that a ready forgiveness awaited them both on their return to Spain, notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances report had circulated. He well knew the determined disposition of the King; his friendship when conciliated,

was steady,—his enmity when provoked, almost implacable, and difficult was the task to appease it. Besides even should he relent, and be inclined to yield their pardon to the tears and entreaties of his favourite daughter, still she should be the forfeit, by which that pardon should be purchased—and without her, life would be irksome, and devoid of a single charm to attach him to it.

Independent of this, too, the inexorable temper of the Prince of Brazil, precluded every hope; he had made a vow that the murder of his nephew should not go unrevenged, and be the assassin who he might, justice should take its course. From him, therefore, no clemency was to be expected: him no tears, no entreaties, could move; he loudly called for retribution,—surely then, death would be inevitable, and he must lose his Elvira for ever,—this was the more galling, as it was reported that the King had it in contemplation to ap-

ply to the Pope to grant a dispensation of her marriage with Montalban, and to unite her afterwards to Alonzo.

She would, probably, on some future day, be seated on the throne of Portugal, where, amidst universal homage and all the luxuries of regal pomp, she might forget that such a being had ever existed as the unfortunate Montalban.

Yet was it not in the power of the latter to prevent all this? Had she not already expressed a desire to fly with him to some remote part of the world, where vengeance could never reach them, and where they could spend the remainder of their days unknown and unmolested. Should he not thus secure her as his own for ever,—yes—but what would be the consequences,—his father's banishment and ruin.

“No, no,” cried Montalban, “this must never be, never shall the Marcheze suffer for the wickedness, the villany of

his son,—on me alone be inflicted the punishment of my guilt; in resigning Elvira,—in giving myself up to the fate I merit,—myself alone shall suffer, for surely, surely there can be none so illiberal, so unjust, so base, as would breathe a sentence to sully his character because obloquy and infamy have blasted mine.”

They were now on the eve of their departure, all was finally settled, and this consideration imparted a degree of serenity to his mind that he had not thought it capable of receiving; the sombre shades of twilight were in unison with his feelings, as he viewed from a window near which he was seated, the varied and extensive prospect it was not likely he should ever behold again. It was bounded on one side by a chain of gigantic rocks, whose towering summits seemed almost to touch the clouds, concealed at their base by an immense extent of wood and water, on whose silvery

surface the beautiful luminary of night, at length unveiling herself from amid the clouds, was radiantly reflected.

On the other side the mind of the contemplatist was feasted with all the wild and charming varieties of nature in their rudest and most pleasing garb. The rising grounds exhibited the scattered cottages of the goatherds, which overlooked the fertile vales and extensive lakes below, while the melody of the nightingale, and the faint murmur of a far distant waterfall, gave a softness and harmony to the sylvan scene that imperceptibly captivated the senses

Whose are the sorrows and misfortunes that those sublime emblems of the divinity could not tranquillize? Where is to be found the one whose heart disavows the soothing influence of a scene like this? Let the most savage and untutored inhabitant of the remotest clime view but for a moment, so grand an image of the Deity, and will he not acknowledge

every shape, will he not feel conscious that the same Almighty Being who presides over the boundless immensity of nature, has also created him, and for his own all-wise purposes, allotted to him the track he pursues through life, however rugged, or however smooth?

Can the civilized bosom withhold this confession, or through the changes and vicissitudes, joys and woes, we are here destined to experience, lose his trust in that God whose attributes he dares not deny, and whose unsearchable ends he may not pry into, whose eye sees through the darkness of night as clearly as the noon-day, who watches our actions, who shields the innocent from harm, and turns the guilty to repentance.

To Montalban this great truth forcibly recurred, he felt as if his soul was dilated with ideas entirely new, and he dwelt with rapture on an axiom so undeniable, and so calculated to lessen the weight of sorrow that oppressed him.

A train of mournful, but not unpleasing, reflections arose as he reviewed his past life; for, though numerous had been his sins, the mercies of Heaven were still more so, and he despaired not of those mercies being extended to him, for his penitence was indeed sincere.

Since his arrival in France the image of the cloistered Donna Olivia del Zorio was seldom absent from his mind; the treacherous part that had been acted towards her was still fresh in his memory, and even the consciousness that he had been but the agent of the Queen in that nefarious business, that he had too been compelled to be that agent by circumstances so imperious, could not reconcile him to himself. - Often had he wished to visit St. Marguerite's convent, to gain an interview if possible with Olivia; avow to her the motives of that scheme by which she had been trepanned, to confess all that had urged him to it, and obtain her forgiveness

from her own lips, for he felt how necessary this was, ere he could forgive himself; but, to take such a journey unknown to Elvira would be impossible, and to inform her whither he was going; to tell her that Donna Olivia, instead of having eloped to Italy with a young nobleman of that country, (as she had been made to believe) was secluded in the convent of St. Marguerite, a victim to the Queen's treachery; to reveal her mother's baseness to the gentle Elvira was more than he could resolve on; and he was also aware that should his disclosure of it reach the ear of her Majesty, though it would immediately overwhelm her in shame and disgrace, it would also be the means of hastening his own fate.

The road, however, that they were now to take, lay through the province of Gascony, and on their journey he meant to stop at an *auberge*, a few miles from the monastery; where leaving the Prin-

cess for a short time, he could easily find an excuse for his absence, and proceed thither. To have obtained Olivia's forgiveness, for basely as she had acted towards him, he still felt it was his duty to do so, would, he thought, render his penitence more acceptable to Heaven; it would tranquillize his last moments, and divest death of all its terrors, for surely it would soften the sting that still remained within his bosom---then should he meet death calmly and unappalled---then, in the hope of the Almighty's entire forgiveness, he should peacefully descend to the tomb, and end his earthly career of sorrow: it would, indeed, be a welcome resting-place after all the cares and miseries attendant on our course through this world; and, oh blissful thought! surely repentance had fitted him for another and a better one. Then indeed would the astrologer's prediction be in one sense fulfilled; this would be ending his sorrows in happiness. une-

quailed on earth; but, would Osmin have presumptuously pretended to anticipate the divine will, would he have dared to promise the favour of Heaven to erring mortal? No, no, such impiety had never tainted the mind of that holy man; all he had foretold had been, alas, so far, but too exactly fulfilled; yet had Osmin even lived, the latter part of his prophecy must have proved fallacious—every hope of happiness on earth was past.

A quick footstep outside suddenly interrupted his meditations; he had forbidden the intrusion of any person, and wondered who was thus about to break in on his retirement. In a few moments, however, his conjectures were at an end, the door was flung open, the Princess in violent agitation, and with a countenance of alarm, rushed in, exclaiming, “Oh heavens; I have seen your father—yes, Sebastian, the Marcheze himself is below—rage is stamped on his every fea-

ture—I viewed him from the gallery that overlooks the hall, where I heard him ordering Bertrand to make known to us his arrival.” “My father!” repeated Montalban, the colour instantly fading from his cheek—“Now indeed we are lost; vengeance only can have brought him hither; but be composed, my Elvira, I knew not what I said, you my angel are safe. I am prepared for death, I can meet his frowns, can listen to his reproaches and invectives, all, all, can I bear with fortitude; but to see you thus is too much for me.” “Oh Montalban, do you preach composure to me at such a moment as this, when the expectation of your death is forsooth the consolation you offer. Talk of composure to the warring elements, the raving maniac, but not to me: no, no, if mercy be estranged from the bosom of the King; if it be no longer the seat of paternal affection; if he have sent the Marcheze to denounce this fate, then by all that’s

sacred, we go not back to Spain, or going, we die together." "Not so, my Elvira," said Montalban, assuming an air of tranquillity, in order to calm her fears, "my words are the mere effervescence of momentary agitation; let us not hesitate to return, we will confide in the clemency of the King, and all I trust will yet be well."

Very different were his real feelings from the hopes he thus professed: he too well foresaw the reception that awaited him at Madrid. To his own fate he was resigned; but he now dreaded the effects of Elvira's disappointed hopes. He well knew how fondly she loved him, and the consciousness of it was almost perfect happiness, yet now he almost wished that she loved him less. Nay, the conviction that he was hateful to her, would have been welcome to his heart; for then had he not felt the fears, that now distracted him, of her falling a sacrifice to her love

or taking some desperate vengeance for his death.

A servant now entered, to inform them of the arrival of the *Marcheze della Vittoria*; and his request to be admitted.

This was indeed the moment that demanded all their fortitude and presence of mind. Sebastian, notwithstanding all his reasoning, had *not* been prepared for this meeting, and he wished that he had not been obliged thus unexpectedly to encounter the keen reproaches and stern looks of a father he had so much incensed, and whose severe displeasure he had so much cause to fear. But as there was no alternative, it was, they thought, adviseable to receive him without hesitation.

He fancied that the presence of *Elvira* would act as a check on the impetuous anger of the *Marcheze*; or, otherwise, that its violence would fall equally on both.

The Princess, therefore, as if antici-

pating from his looks what he was about to suggest, proposed that she should withdraw, aware that it would be more prudent to let the first interview between Vittoria and his son take place unwitnessed by another.

“Conduct his Excellenza to the saloon, and say, I will wait on him there presently,” said Montalban, turning to the servant, who immediately retired. He then requested Elvira to remain where she was; fearful, that should she accompany him, the Marcheze might, in the first moments of his anger, forget the respect due to her rank; and load her also with reproaches which she might not brook, and which would make him too forgetful of the respect and deference due to a father, in resenting any affront that might be offered to her.

Elvira too was conscious that this might probably be the case; and, if so, would entirely unfit Montalban to see his father. She; therefore; the more

readily consented to stay; and Sebastian, having adjusted himself, and summoned all his resolution, descended to the saloon.

The Marcheze was slowly pacing the room, his arms folded pensively across, and his eyes bent intently towards the ground. On Montalban's entering, he suddenly raised them, and started, as if they had encountered some hideous and loathsome object. The latter had never so acutely felt how degraded guilt makes us appear even to ourselves, as at this moment. He stood abashed, dreading to meet another glance, from which, had death instantly snatched him, it would have been almost as welcome.

At length, however, after a long and painful silence, he ventured to speak. "Oh, my father," faltered he, "if by that sacred appellation I may still accost you, will you not pity a fallen, but repentant, sinner? Forgive, my lord, what has inflicted such wretchedness on

myself; my repentance is sincere, and do not, oh do not spurn a son, whom once you so much loved."

"Hold, Conde Montalban," interrupted the Marcheze, with an indignant scowl; "do not thus insult me, nor suffer yourself to be mistaken; you no longer have any claim to that title, and, once forfeited, it can never be redeemed. *My* son should be a man of honour, virtue, and integrity; his principles yet more noble than his title. You, sir, are a villain, a traitor, a murderer, a wretch sunk beneath the dignity of man; your crimes have drawn infamy on your own head, and sorrow upon mine. In ensnaring the affections of the wife you have (unfortunately for yourself) chosen, you broke through every duty you owed a parent, the respect and allegiance you owed your Sovereign. In murdering the Prince Orlando—ah, well may you stand aghast at the mention of that horrible deed—you violated every law,

human and divine—you dared to usurp the high prerogative of the Almighty, in taking away that which he alone can bestow—you trampled on every precept of religion and morality—you set at defiance Heaven's power to punish, nay, annihilate you in a moment, and plunged deliberately into a vortex of guilt—thus rendering yourself wholly unworthy of the protection of that Supreme Being, who abandoned you, and left you to the guidance of him who led you to destruction.”

Something like indignation swelled the bosom of Montalban at the severity of the Marcheze, which the deep glow that mantled his cheeks immediately betrayed; and he felt, for a moment, almost inclined to resent it, so keen was the wound it had inflicted; until he recollected that he who had so justly reproached him, who had thus renounced him, was, withal, his father; and he forced himself, to remain yet silent,

though his lips seemed ready to give vent to his feelings.

“Lost, infatuated, mistaken boy,” continued the Marcheze—“I perceive how unwelcome, how galling are these upbraidings; but worse, infinitely more poignant must be those of your conscience, if indeed you are not entirely deaf to it.”

“Can you then suppose, my lord, that I *am* so abandoned, so hardened in vice, as to review without remorse the crimes my fatal attachment has led me to?—No, Marcheze; I am not the wretch you think me, else would not the tranquillity reign within my breast which arises from the confidence of Heaven’s forgiveness; if it deem my repentance not unworthy of pardon, surely you, my lord, will not withhold yours.”

“No, no,” cried Vittoria, angrily—“hope not for mine—I cannot grant it; you have irreparably broken the last slender claim to it: you first became a

murderer ; and then, as if you had not discharged your diabolical duties towards that infernal power, under whose control you were, you washed from your memory the blood of Orlando ; you married that unfeeling princess, whose rank alone entitled her to be his wife, for which the King had intended her, you dared to elope with an infanta of Spain, thus rendering yourself a traitor to your Sovereign, and bringing me to the very brink of ruin and disgrace ; into which, had I remained but a few days more ignorant of your retreat, I should have been inevitably hurled ; think of all this, and wonder how you durst presume to hope for my forgiveness.”

“Enough, my lord,” retorted Montalban—“I ask it no more : I own my unworthiness ; and, if my death can atone for my offences—can save you from the ruin you mention, let my life be the forfeit. But breathe nought against the Princess ; she is free as angels are

from guilt: I—I alone must suffer. I won her love, and treasured it as the dearest gift of fortune; our affections are not always in our own keeping, and, though she is a Princess, and I but the Conde Montalban, I am the one for whom her heart was destined; nature allows not those distinctions; she is free, and as fate hath designed us for each other, and allotted to me the trials I have undergone, so have its decrees been fulfilled; and death comes rapidly to close the scene: it had not been so, perhaps, had Osmin lived!!!”

“Let me hear that name no more!” said the Marcheze, sternly—“talk not to me of the decrees of fate; yet had the astrologer who dared to predict such evils been burned at the stake twenty years before your birth, then, sir, perhaps you had not been a villain—for then had there been no necessity for you to become one, in order to fulfil the prophecy of an ignorant monk.”

“This is too much, my lord,” replied Sebastian, unable to contain himself longer—“I expected your censure, your bitterest anger; but was unprepared to parry such illiberal observations: guilty as I am, I do not deserve them. If your heart has ever been sensible to the charms, the worth, of a lovely and amiable woman, in whom you found every virtue and attraction that can ornament a female, combined; if by such a one you have ever been beloved, conceive the rapture I felt when Elvira, she whom nations have admired, bestowed her affections on me. ’Twas a conquest that monarchs might have envied me; yet I sought her not from vanity; nor for her exalted rank, but because she was every thing my soul could love; and so pure, so fervent was that love, angels themselves might not have blushed to own it; yet many were the obstacles that opposed it; they were surely not the mere work of chance—

No, no; there is a fate that governs all of us, and what it ordains will be, unless the intervention of some higher power prevent it; so have Elvira and I, great as is the disparity of our stations, been destined to love each other, and hence have we been united; hence, too, must we so soon part for ever."

A tear rolled down his cheek at these last words, and a heavy sigh accompanied it. The Marcheze was softened, his countenance lost much of its severity, and he had nearly so far forgotten himself as to take his hand and say he forgave him.

Montalban observed his emotion, and also that he averted his face to prevent it, if possible, from being seen; he sprang forward, and throwing himself on his knees, he snatched one of the Marcheze's hands in his, which he bathed with his now fast-flowing tears. "Oh, my father, my revered, my beloved father," sobbed he, "say that you for-

give me—that you will not curse me, and I shall die happy.”

Against a sight so moving the Marcheze was not proof; with all his severity he possessed an excellent heart: he gazed for a moment on the weeping Montalban; paternal affection again resumed its empire in his bosom, and exclaiming—“Yes, Sebastian, my long-estranged son, I do forgive you,”—he threw his arms round his neck, and their tears were mingled together.

“Yet, Sebastian, I will not deceive you,” said the Marcheze, “nor allow you to cherish a hope which may not be realized; my forgiveness is yours, but ’twill avail you little; it cannot gain the pardon of your exasperated Sovereign, much less can your contrition or my supplications appease the haughty, the jealous Alonzo. No earthly power can set a bar to his vengeance—Orlando fell by your hand; and as you cannot accomplish impossibilities, you cannot

divest yourself of the guilt, and transfer it to another, so cannot you from him expect mercy.”

“ I ask none of him, my father—for Elvira’s sake alone did I wish to live: this world were nought without her, but as it cannot be, I am resigned; yet one thing more would I entreat of you—let her not know the doom that awaits me; and, oh! have I lived to make such a request? Let us be separated on our arrival at Madrid; say I have fled—am banished—or—— Oh! tell her any thing but of my death!—the intelligence would be fatal to her.”

To hear a son, whom he still could not help loving, talk thus calmly of meeting such a fate, deeply affected Vittoria; and, however absurd such a request appeared, he promised compliance.

It was improbable—nay, impossible, that an affair of so much importance, and which would excite such general interest and attention, as the trial of the Conde

Montalban, could be concealed from the Princess, and the event which would occupy the tongues of nations, it was preposterous to suppose could be kept a secret from one to whom he was so dear, his wife,—this was, however, a title which it was not likely she should long retain; he knew the King wished her to marry the Regent of Portugal, and that it was his intention, should she give her consent to it, (having already gained that of Alonzo,) to dissolve the marriage between her and Montalban, and unite her to the Prince, who was destined to be, one day, the ruler of a flourishing kingdom.

This measure was intended to promote the welfare and happiness of the Princess; and that such it might be productive of, Montalban sincerely wished; though it seemed to him a match by no means calculated to render her happy; for surely she could never love Alonzo, and without that, happiness was a

stranger to the marriage state. Something whispered to him that Elvira never would agree to be the wife of another, and that when he died, she would cherish his memory as fondly as she loved him while living; as his father had persuaded him that at least time would reconcile her to her loss, though she might refuse to wed the Prince.

The Marcheze now gave him a brief sketch of all that had lately occurred at Madrid, which we have before related, and which he too had known previously, including all the circumstances attendant on the murder of Don Vincentio and the consequent death of the unfortunate Malvolio.

The recital powerfully affected the feelings of each; and the Marcheze, yielding to the pleadings of nature in behalf of his son, deeply regretted the vow he had made; for now the death of the latter must be the consequence; it was sacred and irrevocable, he had pledged

himself by an oath the most binding to shake off the feelings of the father; and see justice fully and rigorously performed, should Sebastian be proved that most guilty of human beings—a murderer; and such indeed he was by his own confession, therefore must his vow be put in execution. To the King he had given a solemn promise to use every exertion to discover the place whither the Princess and Sebastian had fled;—and now that he *had* discovered it by means of a correspondent in France, who had given him a sketch of the Conte and Contessa Vicenza, he durst not think of concealment; should he thus attempt to screen his son from punishment by countenancing his escape, as it certainly was in his power to do, should he venture to return unaccompanied, at least by the Princess, to Madrid, he should not only have been guilty of violating his vow; but also be considered as an abettor to Montalban, and treated accordingly.

There was, therefore, no alternative ; but a little reflection in some measure reconciled him to the fate of his son. Though paternal love had so far gained ascendancy over every other sentiment in his bosom at the moment he had been induced to forgive him, still the crime remained the same,—still was Montalban a murderer ; and though of principles virtuous and amiable, the fatal deed had branded his character with ignominy,—and none beheld him without horror

It was deemed adviseable neither imprudently to encourage, nor suddenly to check the sanguine hopes of Sebastian's pardon, that Elvira entertained ; to do either seemed equally cruel ; but soon they feared the delusion would alas ! be no more, and should they at present undeceive her, the consequences would in all probability be dangerous to each. It was, therefore, necessary to dissemble before the Princess, and as-

sume an appearance of composure that ill accorded with the state of their minds. Elvira fancied appearances at least more favourable than otherwise; the alarm first excited by the arrival of the Marcheze gradually subsided; her tears shewed that she deeply lamented the unhappiness she had caused to the King her father, whom she tenderly loved, and of whom she seldom ceased to speak; and after a night of painful anxiety, and restlessness to each, they set forward on their journey.

The road they took lay through the pleasantest part of Gascony, but the face of nature, though beautiful and luxuriant, no longer possessed a charm to attract their attention,—all within their bosoms was silent sadness and sorrow.

Having reached the nearest village to St. Marguerite's convent, where they stopped for a few hours, Montalban prepared for his visit to Donna Olivia. He

knew not how to account to his father or the Princess for absenting himself, naturally concluding that the former would oppose it, from an apprehension that it was merely a plan to effect his escape, for surely it would seem like such, and to declare the truth was impossible, without betraying the Queen. So that he thought it better to take an opportunity of going thither unobserved or without saying a word to either.

Now indeed might he have easily escaped, had life appeared worth preserving, thus separated from Elvira forever, or had the fear of death been sufficiently powerful to conquer the resolution he had formed of meeting it. Far from his thoughts, however, was such an intention, and in order soon to put an end to any alarm or misconstruction his absence might give rise to, he pursued his way with expedition to the monastery, and was immediately admitted to the presence of the Superior.

She was clad in deep black, and the sombre appearance of every thing within the convent, indicated a general mourning for the decease of one of its pious recluses.

An air of profound melancholy shaded the features of the Abbess, beside whom was seated the Mother Beatrice, with an open missal and her beads before her; and on Montalban's entrance they arose, and received him with every mark of kindness and respect—a reception which a liberal present he had made at his last visit had ensured to him.

“My intrusion, madame, is, I fear, unseasonable,” observed the Conde, addressing himself to the Abbess. “Sorrow seems to have taken up its abode within these holy walls, and here I hold it too sacred to be disturbed.”

“Sorrow is indeed our companion, my lord, and many a month will elapse ere it will cease to be so. But think not that you are less welcome than

when happiness stood in the midst of our peaceful circle, smiling on every one around. We have lost one of our convent's worthiest members—one, to whose memory, you too, methinks, will not refuse a sigh. It is now two days since the soul of our daughter Olivia del Zorio took its flight for ever from this wicked world."

Montalban uttered a deep groan, and clasping his hands, "Oh Heaven," cried he, "if possible, forgive me, forgive the Queen, for we, we have done this—we have caused her death—and though the Queen alone may, in thine eye, be guilty, I too have been accessory to it. Say, lady, did she not execrate us in her last moments; did she not call for vengeance on the heads of her murderers?"

"By no means, my lord; her death was as the sleep of angels, mild and placid; resentment was then a stranger to her gentle bosom—and, a moment

ere she had expired, her lips pronounced forgiveness and good will towards all mankind."

"Said she aught of me, holy mother? did she say she forgave the Conde Montalban?—did she, indeed, not utter one reproachful word against those who sacrificed her thus?—for, surely, had she never been forced to become a nun, she had still been living."

"Yes, my lord, a blessing from her lips accompanied your name. But talk not so strangely—you have been her preserver—had you not conducted her to this holy sanctuary, she had yet lived amidst all the pomps and vanities of the great world, where nought but wickedness exists. Here hath her spirit been purified and rendered fit for the mansions of the blest. Fortunate to her was the hour that made her a nun; she had else been now the daughter of sin, and dreadful to her would death have been—but,

thanks to St. Marguerite, her soul is saved."

"Heaven be praised for what I hear," exclaimed Montalban. "But tell me, lady, was she, after having taken the veil, quite reconciled to a monastic life? did she never express a wish to mingle again with the world?"

"Ah, Señor, it was long ere her thoughts were entirely weaned from it, for, though she strictly performed all her religious duties, and wished (sweet angel!) to appear cheerful and perfectly happy; yet, such deep, such piteous sighs have I sometimes heard from her, that my mind misgave me, all was not right within, and I ventured to express my fears that she still pined for the enjoyments she had lost. From that period, her every thought was directed to her God. She was pious, amiable, and charitable; and had gained the love of all our community, when the hand of

death came upon her, and snatched her from us. But Heaven's will be done. Since first she came amongst us, something seemed to weigh heavily on her mind; but she was silent, and would disclose it to nobody, until the approach of dissolution, when she begged I would send the Confessor to her,—and to Father Dominique alone did she confide it."

That in this confession Donna Olivia had divulged much of the Queen's character, Montalban did not doubt. To the Abbess, however, he forbore to make any comment, she being already sufficiently acquainted with it, and having learned that the Confessor, who was confined to his cell by indisposition, had maintained the same silence on the subject as Olivia.

Far from wishing to expose the Queen further, Montalban hoped that with Olivia's death the secret might sink wholly into oblivion; and to the artful observations of the Superior, who wished

to discover *all* that she suspected, he knew of her Majesty, his replies were short and evasive, but without being rude. His spirits were too much depressed to admit of much conversation, and after a short stay, he took his leave, having first prevailed on the Superior to accept a small present towards the support of the numerous dependants on their community, and received her benediction in return.

As he had expected, he found his father and the Princess in a state of anxiety and alarm at his absence, though the fears of each were of a different nature. His countenance was more sorrowful and dejected than usual; but this they naturally attributed to the distressing object of their present journey, and each stood too much in need of consolation, to be capable of offering it to the other.

In the retirement of a small room, whither he repaired to refresh himself

after the fatigues of travelling, and prepare for those to come, tears of sincere regret flowed to the memory of Donna Olivia.

“ Surely,” thought he, “ she must have been the saint-like being she is represented: She must have been truly amiable, when even the flinty bosom of the Abbess has been thus softened by grief—when even the tears of that cruel woman pay tribute to her virtues: Yes, Olivia, she said aright; ’twas I, indeed, who snatched you from the vices of the world: The best of us all might envy a death like thine. Far otherwise had it been, had you run your full course unbridled. But all is now over—and your blessing is my reward.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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“ Can such things be,  
“ And overcome us, like a summer's cloud,  
“ Without our special wonder:”      SHAKESPEARE.

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NEVER perhaps was a journey taken under more unpleasant circumstances than the present one of our illustrious travellers; nor ever did one appear sooner at an end, for still they wished it prolonged; though many days of fatigue and sorrow had elapsed ere their arrival at Madrid. That sorrow was augmented, if indeed it was capable of receiving any addition, by the melancholy intelligence which they heard on the way thither, of the death of the prince of Asturias, heir-apparent to the Spanish crown, and the much-loved

brother of Elvira. From having caught a severe cold he had long laboured under that treacherous but generally fatal disorder consumption, from which a few entertained hopes of his recovery, while others pronounced him its certain victim: the favourable appearances, however, which it had lately assumed, inspired the most sanguine hopes in the bosoms of the royal family, and the whole nation had participated in their joy at the prospect of his restoration to health, though embittered by the recollection of the Infanta's flight: yet, even that small portion they did not long retain, the Prince's disorder had suddenly worn an aspect the most flattering, and reports of his rapid convalescence were circulated throughout Spain and the neighbouring kingdoms, when a blow for which they were wholly unprepared crushed their hopes for ever: a violent attack of fever, attended with a cough seized him, and he sunk under it;

thus turning the current of political affairs in Spain, and leaving his countrymen and his royal consort to mourn the loss of one universally admired and beloved.

This affliction was almost too much for the king to bear, weighed down as he already was with grief for his daughter, and even her sudden appearance was not at first able to arouse him from it. So absorbed indeed was the whole nation in their sorrow at an event so calamitous, that her reception was, as she expected, far different from what it would otherwise have been. Her meeting with the royal family was of the most affecting nature, and, when her father was so far awakened from the lethargy of woe as to be sensible of the presence of his long-lost Elvira, the sudden transport of joy that succeeded, as he caught her to his paternal bosom, overcame him, and he sank fainting in her arms. They found Madrid an entire

scene of mourning; every public place was closed, and all public business suspended; the several courts of justice were by the royal command shut up, and ordered to remain so for a month.

In consequence of this, of course the trial of Conde Montalban could not at present take place, a circumstance productive of much consolation to the afflicted Elvira, and the many friends he still possessed: the most confident hopes were now entertained that the restoration of his daughter had so far softened the heart of the King, and the nation's grief had so far wrought on the feelings of Alonzo, that the Conde's pardon would eventually be granted; such too were the hopes of Sebastian, who had apartments in the Palazzo assigned to him. He was, however, in a state of splendid imprisonment; everything consistent with his situation he had at command; he was permitted to enjoy the society of his select friends,

but, alas, he was torn from from his Elvira, though as yet the nuptial ceremony had not been dissolved: he had, he feared, seen her for the last time, and the being deprived of liberty, guarded strongly on all sides, nay, almost any privation or suffering, seemed a state of comparative happiness to this: he had imagined he should be able to bear their separation with fortitude, but now that they were indeed sundered, probably for ever, all his strength of mind forsook him; he wept incessantly, and that life he had wished for her sake to preserve, became a burden which he at length prayed to Heaven to take from him, or had suicide been a crime of a less horrible nature, it was a burden he would not have borne long.

Every hope, every wish to live had again forsaken his bosom, yet as the time approached when he expected the last awful fiat of his fate, his mental sufferings became more acute; the pre-

sence of his father became so painful to him, that the latter was obliged to absent himself almost entirely; that father of whom he fancied himself wholly unworthy, and whom his crimes and his ignominious death would soon have covered with obloquy and shame.

The lips of the Marcheze had, it is true, pronounced his forgiveness at a time when all the feelings of the parent were called forth by the sufferings of the child; but he now regretted the weakness he had been guilty of, he viewed him but as the author of his disgrace, the one who had brought a stigma on his noble name, and this, with all his humanity, all his paternal love, he could not pardon; his bosom was not sufficiently steeled against pity to *wish* for the death of his son, which would also be an event that would render that stigma for ever indelible, but he foresaw that to sue for the royal mercy towards him would be useless; in vain

had numerous applications been made in Montalban's favour to the King and to Alonzo ; in vain had flowed the tears, in vain been uttered the prayers of Elvira ; the hopes that Sebastian's friends had hitherto cherished were now at an end, even the importunities of the Queen in his behalf were unavailing, for policy influenced her to try to save him, as it seemed probable that in his dying moments he would confess the part he had acted, under her direction, towards Donna Olivia, of whose decease she had been lately apprized, though yet ignorant of the confession *she* had made ; and, had she not been induced by the dread of this discovery to make every exertion in his favour, she would on the contrary have longed for his death as an event that would free her at once from all apprehensions of exposure.

So much had the unhappy situation of her brother affected the lady Viola, that she had not yet been permitted to see

him; the Marcheze having immediately after his return sent her to take up her residence for the present at the Castello della Vittoria, where she might be far distant from the melancholy scenes that were passing at Madrid, and where a malady had seized her, which her physicians predicted the death of Sebastian would put a fatal period to—for Elvira too the same dreadful fears were entertained—as soon as her entreaties to save Montalban had met the stern and unalterable refusal of Alonzo—when she heard that on that day week his trial was to take place, and that not a doubt existed of what his fate would be—nor a possibility of rescuing him from it, unless Heaven itself should work a miracle in his favour—her senses forsook her—despair usurped the empire of reason over her—and denouncing vengeance on the prince, as the murderer of her beloved husband, she frantically rushed to where Montalban was confined, and demanded

entrance, which it was deemed dangerous to deny her.

The interview between this affectionate, but unhappy pair, thus separated from each other in spite of every law of nature, was neither without witnesses, nor permitted to be of long duration — Montalban was totally unable to conceal his feelings, and Elvira's agitation was so violent, as to cause the most serious alarm; she was therefore forcibly removed, and, notwithstanding all her struggles and entreaties to be allowed to remain with him, was immediately conducted to her apartment, where a high fever ensued, accompanied by paroxysms of mental derangement, and for several days her recovery was doubtful.

Along with the recent calamity that had befallen the royal family, the danger of the Infanta naturally led the king to relent towards Montalban—for to preserve a daughter he so much loved, he would have freely pardoned him, nay

more, he would have sanctioned their union, and caused it to be publicly acknowledged, and celebrated throughout Spain—for Vittoria, though a Spanish subject, was yet heir to the principality of Vicenza, from which he derived a considerable income, and notwithstanding his having rejected the title of its prince, it was in his power to accept it when he chose, as the greatest part of his property was centered there.

The resentment that had so long inflamed the bosom of the king, at a marriage he deemed so unworthy of his daughter, now vanished; on reflection he saw there was by no means so great a disparity of rank; for the Conde Montalban was of royal origin, and there appeared no probability that, were he to be publicly, and with the consent of the royal family, espoused to the Infanta, his father would hesitate to take the title of prince of Vincenza, which would render Montalban more worthy of her, as in case the

latter lived, it was a title he should also at some future day bear.

Thus for a while the king reasoned with himself; but he had forgotten that the one he would have allied to his family was a murderer, about to expiate his guilt on the scaffold; and he shuddered at the wishes he had for a moment formed, and thanked Heaven that the marriage of Montalban and the princess was illegal, inasmuch that it was contrary to the laws of the realm.

To save Montalban seemed impossible, nay, it would be an injustice—rank, wealth and power are the gifts of chance, they add not to our worth, but are merely the instruments by which that worth that few possess is made known.—All these the Conde could boast,—yet why should they shield him from the doom that the poor man without them would be compelled to meet.

The prince of Brazil had made an irrevocable vow, that no consideration

should induce him to spare the murderer of his nephew, and even though two lives so valuable as Elvira's and Viola's seemed to depend on the preservation of his; a vow so solemnly pledged, and which Heaven itself had been called to witness, durst not be violated. This it was that the Marcheze foreseeing, made him forbear to join in the general voice in favour of his son—he knew the inutility, the wickedness, of remonstrating with the prince, or urging him to break an oath so sacred—and thus situated, his son, once the pride of his heart, the one he had fondly hoped would perpetuate the honours of his house, now about to end his life on a scaffold—his amiable and beloved Viola—one of the loveliest of her sex, daily sinking under the burden of her grief—while Don Manuel, the chosen of her heart, watched beside her couch, absorbed in grief no less poignant—the state of Vittoria's mind was such as no description can convey a just

idea of

The King, in pursuance of his promise, had offered to Vittoria the grant of any request he should make, except the life of his son, which was not in his power.

Such an offer, however flattering, (coming from the lips of his Majesty), was now of little value to the Marcheze. Ambition had been driven from his bosom, where all now was tenderness and sorrow: he had not a wish unconnected with his family. The dignity and splendour he had once so prized, he would joyfully have resigned, could his doing so restore Viola to health, and Sebastian to innocence and happiness. The only favour he would have asked—the life of Montalban—he could not grant; and, with expressions of gratitude, he declined it for the present.

Meantime, the bull from the Pope, that was to disunite the Conde and Princess for ever, was daily expected to arrive; and it was necessary to dis-

solve their marriage immediately, as there were now only a few days to elapse before that fixed for the trial, the event of which nobody doubted would be fatal.

Never before had the Spanish Court presented a scene of such deep and universal sorrow. The griefs of the Royal Family for the death of the Prince of Asturias, and the present almost hopeless situation of the Infanta, excited general sympathy and concern, for they were equally beloved and revered by their subjects. Nor were they less affected at the sufferings of the Vittoria family; by all who knew them, the Marcheze was esteemed and respected, his daughter caressed and admired, and even the unfortunate Sebastian possessed too many endearing qualities, not to secure the friendship of many. The voice of friendship, however, was not calculated to soothe affliction such as theirs, which was now, indeed, almost at its acme.

The messenger had returned from Rome, with the bull for the dissolution of the marriage; for though it was illegal, and, consequently, could be dissolved at pleasure by the King, yet it was deemed advisable to obtain a dispensation from his Holiness. It was on the following day to be declared void; and on the next, Montalban's trial was to take place.

The Conde heard the intelligence with as much composure as was natural to his situation. Penitence the most sincere had prepared him for death, and he would have been comparatively happy had he beheld those around him as resigned to his fate as himself. But it was far otherwise: no philosophy could reconcile the disconsolate Marcheze to such an event; Viola was equally inconsolable; and, worst of all, the recovery of Elvira was now despaired of.

Montalban could not but reproach himself for the multiplied sorrows he

had brought upon them all. Fancy presented to him the pallid form of the once beautiful Elvira, her charms withering from all the loveliness of health, into the decay of sickness and death, thus prematurely sinking to the tomb, a martyr to her unhappy and unconquerable attachment—he heard her expiring sighs as she articulated, “This, Sebastian, this is the sacrifice my love for you hath cost me—had I never known you, life and happiness had still been mine.”

Her bitterest reproaches, nay, her hatred, would have been more acceptable to him than her love at such a price as this, and he wept in agony as he contemplated the melancholy picture his imagination had drawn.

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the Marcheze, who came to conduct him to the King's council-chamber, where his Majesty required his attendance.

Wondering at this message, which he dared not ask an explanation of, he followed his father into the royal presence, where a few of the courtiers were assembled. On the throne sat the King and Queen, beside whom, on the right, were the Prince Regent of Portugal, and the Duca and Duchessa del Marino. At the foot of the throne stood an aged man in the Inquisitorial garb; a monk's cowl concealed the upper part of his face, and along with him was Uberto, the servant of the late unfortunate Don Malvolio de Cerberos.

A deep silence prevailed for a few moments, and all earnestly regarded the Monk, as if in expectation of some important intelligence from him.

“Now, Holy Father,” said the King, after Montalban had made his obeisance and taken his place, “all are here assembled whose presence you require, therefore, we pray you, unfold to us the

purport of your visit; say for what extraordinary and urgent intelligence you have thus demanded our audience."

"I am Rosário, a priest of the Inquisition, sire," replied the monk, "and this will make known my business, which indeed is most weighty and momentous," at the same time kneeling before the throne, and presenting a small packet to his Majesty. "I attended Don Malvolio de Cerberos in his last moments. This I received from him, with a solemn injunction to obey the directions the envelope contains; and, through Heaven's will, I am deputed to save the honour of Vittoria's noble house—the life of its heir, Sebastian Conde Montalban. Yes, my liege, he is innocent of the crime for which our laws would have sentenced him to die; no member of this august assembly is freer from the sin of murder—the stain of human blood—than is Montalban: so let the confession of the penitent Malvolio attest."

“Innocent!” interrupted Sebastian, with a wild and almost hysteric cry; but growing more composed, “No—no—no,” continued he, “Impossible, I murdered Orlando myself.—I saw him fall.—I am guilty. Oh, good Father, your generosity has devised this stratagem to save me. But no: I never will consent to live at the expense of your integrity.”

“Young man,” said Rosario, in a tone of displeasure, “’twould ill beseem me, in the sacred habit I wear, to employ falsehood or stratagem to save even mine own life. I repeat, *you* did not murder Orlando. Heaven is witness that I speak nought but the truth; and, spite of thine incredulity, I will preserve thee.”

“It must—it must be so,” cried Montalban. He heard no more; but at once, overcome by his emotion, he dropped almost senseless on the bosom of the Marcheze, who, scarcely less agitated with joy at the conviction of his son’s innocence, shed over him the

tears of genuine affection and rapture, as he fondly clasped him to his bosom

All present seemed as if thunderstruck—amazement for some time kept every one silent: that the Conde was innocent nobody had supposed, after the avowal of guilt from his own lips; but now that Rosario had pronounced him so, some deemed it impiety to doubt it longer, or question the authority of an holy monk—a priest of the Inquisition, whom they held in high veneration; while others were by no means inclined to believe that Montalban, if innocent, could be unconscious of it, or that he would voluntarily declare himself guilty of a crime he knew he had not committed; it certainly seemed inconsistent, but the general opinion was in his favour.

At length the Monk, perceiving that doubt still existed in the minds of some, and that Alonzo in particular appeared to discredit his assertions, addressed

the king, whose attention was directed towards the Marcheze and his son, and entreated him to open and read aloud the contents of the packet, which also being the hand-writing of Don Malvolio, and witnessed by Uberto, would immediately set aside every doubt, and satisfy them of the Conde's innocence of the crime for which he had been about to suffer.

In compliance with this request, the King, who was easily persuaded in favour of Montalban, unfolded the paper, and as soon as the latter was sufficiently recovered to listen with composure, he read the following confession of Don Malvolio, which he had made on being betrayed to justice, and caused Uberto (the mercenary wretch who had brought him to punishment) to attest it by his signature, thus endeavouring to make every reparation for his crimes, and prepare for the awful state of futurity.

## CHAPTER IX.

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Thoughts cannot form themselves in words so horrid,  
As can express my guilt.

The ways of Heaven,  
Though dark, are just; and oft some guardian power  
Attends unseen to save the innocent.

DRYDEN.

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“THE sword of justice hath long waver-  
ed o’er my head, and is at length fallen;  
my course is run, and, oh! how frightful  
is the goal to which I have arrived—how  
dreadful is the retrospection of the past,  
and the contemplation of the present!  
Vice hath been the companion of my  
journey through life, and punishment  
will in death accompany my last sigh;  
yet how comparatively insignificant will  
it be to the bitter pangs of remorse I

now feel; for great and manifold are my sins. But, Oh! humanity refuse not to shed the tear of compassion over this recital, nor let horror at my crimes extinguish every spark of pity for my fate; for at this awful hour, when I have already received the mandate that summons me to it, still doth hope not quite forsake me; for repentance is within my reach, and may yet preserve me from perdition. Think of the frailty of all human nature, and condemn not further a poor, fallen sinner, but avoid the fatal path I have trodden.

“Whoever thou mayest be, into whose care I shall commit this disclosure of my guilt, Oh! let it be thy most important duty to snatch from the ignominy and peril that surround him, the one I have so deeply wronged—the Conde Montalban; clear his character from the obloquy that at present shades it. Acquit him of the crime of which I alone am guilty—I it was who shed the

blood of Orlando; such a sin hath never stained Montalban's soul—he is innocent of it as the yet unborn infant: may this confession save him from dishonour, and in some degree atone for the injuries I have heaped upon him—nay, surely it will; for even now do I feel the burden of my crimes lightened by it. Into the hands of his most Catholic majesty the King, let the enclosed packet be conveyed; let it be read before all on whom Montalban's safety depends; implore his forgiveness towards me; convince the Prince Alonzo—convince *all* of his innocence; do so 'ere it be too late: Oh! save him, save him, and then shall my spirit rest in peace, for this alone gives me hopes of Heaven— \* \*

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\* \* \* \* \* My feelings are at this moment wound up to the highest pitch of agony, and my pen almost recoils from the detail of such enormities. I shudder as I write, but the recital shall be brief,

for the one who peruses it will, with horror and impatience, hurry over such a list of crimes.

“I was introduced at court at an early age, when vice had not yet sullied the purity of my soul. There, however, my young mind soon became inured to profligacy and dissipation—fashionable follies and vices, which their infatuated votaries glossed over with the specious names of pleasure, and “the pursuits befitting high life.”

“I expected, like others, to be flattered, courted, and caressed, by my superiors—to bask in the favour of royalty; but, like others who sought the same by means equally despicable, I was disappointed; and what augmented the bitterness of that disappointment was the friendship shewn towards the Conde Montalban by the King,—the kindness and benefits constantly lavished on him, excited my deadly hatred against Montalban; and, though policy induced me.

to dissemble—to profess myself his friend—to conceal all my real feelings, still was his sight, his very name, odious to me—and, maugre all his good, his truly amiable, qualities, I hated and detested him.

“My thoughts were, however, suddenly diverted to a different object; love and ambition filled my soul, passions then first known to it. Ere I had three times beheld the too beautiful, too fascinating, Elvira, that soul became her captive. In vain I summoned reason to my aid, to dispel so dangerous a charm, so absurd, so hopeless, so fatal to my peace. I owned the presumption and impropriety of cherishing it. I pictured to myself the dreadful consequences that might accrue from the indulgence of it. All—all was I conscious of; but yet my love remained unabated. To court the affections of a Princess of Spain seemed the most preposterous folly—madness unparalleled; and still did I love her

fervently—though, Heaven can judge, her deportment was, towards me, ever such as to awe and repel those sentiments I once ventured cautiously to express to her.

“The conviction that my affection was unreturned—nay, received with horror and disgust—that it was impossible for the Princess and me to be united, drove me almost to despair; and in that state of mind, while resentment at the repulse I had met from her raged within me, I heard the Prince Orlando de Casdela nominated her approved suitor by her royal father.

“The miseries I had hitherto endured from the repulsive demeanour of the Princess were comparatively trifling to this. The idea of a rival was agony almost intolerable; and, had it been in my power, I would have sacrificed her, rather than see the one my soul adored the wife of another.

“Nay, so desperate had I been ren-

dered, that I made a solemn vow, that, at least, if she did not become mine, Orlando (whom I now hated as my rival, and on whom I burned with impatience to be revenged) should never lead her to the altar; and, to fulfil that vow—to prevent the possibility of its being defeated, I at once determined on his death.—Oh! horrible to repeat—to cut him off either by poisoning or shooting him; and, after some time spent in deliberating which method I should employ, the latter appeared most feasible.

“ An invitation I received, with some other nobles of the court, to accompany the King and Prince Orlando to the Castello della Vittoria, afforded me the wished-for opportunity; and the day appointed for the chase was destined to be Orlando’s last. Having long meditated the horrid deed, my mind was now familiarized to it; and I contemplated what I was about to do rather with exultation than dread. I already fancied my ab-

horréd rival wounded—gasping—breath-  
less at my feet; and I hastened to com-  
plete the picture my fancy had drawn.

“I found it necessary to communicate  
my design to Uberto, my servant, with-  
out whose assistance it was impossible  
to accomplish it; and, having first ex-  
torted an oath of secrecy, which he durst  
not violate, I cautiously revealed it; and  
had the satisfaction to perceive that it  
met his entire concurrence.”

“It had before been whispered to me  
by Donna Olivia del Zorio, one of the  
Queen’s favourites, that the Infanta en-  
tertained a partiality for the Conde  
Montalban. I knew Olivia’s disposition,  
and believed this to have been prompted  
by resentment at the indifference with  
which Montalban regarded herself, as I  
was aware that she had long held him  
in high admiration; and that the Mar-  
cheze della Vittoria and the Queen were  
treating about a marriage between them.  
I, therefore, heard it without concern.

but, after awhile, thinking it might not be altogether unfounded, I determined to watch the conduct of the Princess and Montalban. With the eyes of an Argus I observed them, and soon found that Donna Olivia's report was but too true. They loved each other indeed. My revenge had now two objects in view, and I resolved to sacrifice both; that Orlando should fall first—and then that the poniard should end at once the passion and the life of the Conde.

“My plan thus fixed, I waited impatiently for the hour to begin the work of death; and Uberto, equally anxious, had every thing prepared that I required. At length it came. With secret pleasure I saw the party leave the Castello for the chase—the ill-fated Orlando, the happiest amongst them. On the preceding day I had feigned a slight indisposition, the better to prevent suspicion from falling on me afterwards, and now pleaded a continuance of it—adding,

also, that a letter of consequence I had to write would detain me—so that my attendance was dispensed with.

“Immediately after their departure, I withdrew to the Marcheze’s study, on pretence of writing there. From thence a small door opened into the wood, in a retired part of which I found Uberto waiting with my horse and a pair of loaded muskets.

“Being well acquainted with the route they were to take, we proceeded through a long defile leading to one of the roads they were to pass, at the extremity of which was an extensive range of trees whose branches were, in many parts, so closely interwoven that we could, unobserved, see every object without; and, concealed by their thick foliage, we stopped there. We were not, however, so near the road as to render our escape difficult, even had it not been impossible for anybody to cross from the other side to where we were, without making a

considerable circuit. We had left our horses at some distance, to prevent their noise from discovering us in our flight, and I anxiously awaited the approach of my victim.

“ A rustling noise behind a thicket, a little lower down suddenly startled us, and, on looking attentively, we saw to our dismay, a man half concealed from our view, standing apparently on some hostile design, having in his hand the same instrument of death as mine. His back however, being towards us, we knew he had not perceived us, and we could, unseen, distinguish all his movements, but to discover who he was, was impossible.

“ At first I would have instantly fled, the possibility of the stranger's detecting us, rushing on my mind with all the terror it could inspire; nay, I even suggested that he might perhaps have secreted himself there for that purpose;

but Uberto was more desperate than I imagined—and withheld me.

“ There was not a moment to be lost in conjecture, for just then the hunters appeared in view, amongst whom the gay Orlando was foremost, and riding almost at full speed, alas! he little thought of the fate he was about to meet. Uberto for an instant, arrested my uplifted arm, and pointed towards the stranger, who it was evident, had come there for a similar purpose, and whose attention was totally abstracted from every other object; he had raised his musket and seemed about to fire, when suddenly it dropped undischarged from his trembling grasp, and his hands fell apparently powerless, beside him; at the same instant Orlando rode up, and I fired off the contents of my deadly weapon with unerring aim.

“ The stranger had instantaneously disappeared, convinced that he himself had done the horrible deed, and in his alarm,

forgetful of the musket that had fallen from him; nor were Uberto, and I, less active in retreating, but we deemed it necessary to follow each a different path towards the Castello, and accordingly I darted across under a row of palm trees, and the first thing I beheld, was the musket lying on the ground, I snatched it up, and concealing it beneath my cloak, I looked around in every direction, but no trace of its owner was to be seen. I strove to appear tranquil and unagitated, which, hardened as I was in guilt, I yet found a difficult task,—and hastening back to that part of the wood whence we had set out for this atrocious act, I met Uberto; we there renewed our oaths of secrecy, and he led the horses to their stable with his usual caution, and, unseen by any body, while I returned to the study, but in a different mood from that in which I entered it before.

“The horror—the dread—the apprehensions I felt cannot be described; a

murderer alone can conceive what the nature of my feelings was, I fancied myself surrounded by the officers of justice, dragged to torments: and in a fit of desperation, I drew forth the stranger's loaded musket, intending to end my career of diabolical villany, when almost petrified with surprise, I beheld the Conde Montalban's name engraved on it. My purpose was instantly altered; it was obvious that Montalban was not only my rival—but Orlando's: that Elvira had sanctioned his addresses, and that the prospect of his love being blasted by the forced marriage of the Infanta and Orlando, had led him to the desperate alternative from which, at the moment he would have employed it, he involuntarily had recoiled, and from the guilt of which my vow had saved him.

“But he was still my rival, my loathed rival, the one who had long stood between me and the favour I expected from the King. And though I now no

longer loved the Princess, the warfare and horror of my feelings dispelling that sentiment; though I no longer envied him the affections of the charming Elvira; though the spell that had hitherto bound my heart was now no more, I yet determined on his downfall, and gloried in the thought. But it was not yet the time thus to glut the spirit of vengeance that burned within me.

“Montalban had been some weeks in Catalonia, and was still supposed to be there; his being at Vittoria now would therefore seem incredible, and were I at once to produce the musket, and accuse him as the murderer, I should, I feared, in so doing, betray myself—instead of succeeding in fixing the guilt on him; it would naturally be asked *how, when and where* I had found it. My remaining at the Castello would give rise to suspicion, the appearance of innocence and composure would be construed into dissimulation.—All would be inves-

tigated—and end in the discovery of my guilt; I wished not now to shed the blood of Montalban myself,—and with the hope that an opportunity would soon occur when I might criminate him with safety to myself, I for awhile abandoned it, and cautiously guarded my conduct from rendering me liable to suspicion.

“The opportunity I wished for did indeed arrive—nor did I fail to take advantage of it. \* \* \* \* \*

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\* \* \* \* \* Here let me pause—my hand trembles,—I sicken at the contemplation of what I have revealed—and the retrospect chills me;—I can proceed no further:—I had resolved to enumerate all—but my pen refuses,—’tis unnecessary to do so.—My crimes are already known—and shall have met their punishment long ere Montalban knows the guilty author of his sufferings.—Oh let him not curse the unfortunate, the fallen Malvolio.—No, no, rather will he

intercede for me with that great Being who sees his innocence, and will hearken to his prayer; and that this may be some atonement—that it may preserve the Conde Montalban for a happier destiny, shall also be the latest prayer of the penitent Malvolio.”

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* Here followed Uberto's attestation, which he now confirmed in the most solemn manner: there was, however, little occasion to appeal to him, the hand-writing of Don Malvolio was easily recognised—and was a sufficient evidence of the truth; every sentiment unfavourable to the Conde now vanished, he stood fully acquitted by all—even Alonzo could no longer doubt his innocence—nor hesitate to pronounce his pardon. Montalban at first appeared to discredit what he had heard,—and directed a wild look of incredulity towards the prince; but being assured of the truth—“Oh Father of heaven! I thank

thee," exclaimed he; "surely this discovery is owing to thy mediation;" and thou more than mortal," cried he, rushing over to embrace the overjoyed Rosario, "thou venerable saint, who hast thus saved me from death,—my family from dishonour,—Heaven's joys alone can reward thee adequately for the action thou hast performed,—bless, oh bless thee, my saviour, my——" He could articulate no more, sinking on his knees he caught Rosario's hand, and pressed it to his lips; convulsive sobs prevented utterance, his tears flowed,—they were tears of rapture,—the overflowings of his grateful heart, and for a considerable time he was permitted to indulge them.

He received the congratulations of all present, which were indeed sincere, for by all was he loved and respected, not less so was their gratitude towards his preserver. Rosario was loaded with acknowledgments, and such was their

sense of the happy event he had been so instrumental to; that the king and Alonzo, eager to evince their feelings, desired him to express any wish in their power to grant, and it should be complied with. This was truly even more than Rosario could have expected; and he remained some moments silent, grateful for their condescension, and deliberating how to profit by it. The impulses of his noble and generous heart were always prompt. Kindness and magnanimity in him were ever predominant. "My gracious sovereign, and thou oh mighty Prince," said he, as he knelt before the royal personages he addressed, "I obey what ye command. Hear then my only wish yet ungratified; extend your mercy and forgiveness to this repentant offender," pointing to Uberto,— "accept his contrition for the guilty part he hath acted, and by bestowing yours, teach him also to hope for the pardon of Heaven."

“Oh most excellent, most exalted of human beings,” cried they with one voice, “the grant of kingdoms were an inadequate reward for goodness such as thine. Thou hast thy wish; through thine intercession yonder culprit is forgiven; let him depart hence, he must forthwith quit this city, never more to be seen within its walls.”

Uberto was still on his knees, his hands raised in a suppliant manner towards the throne; a shower of tears streamed from his eyes as he heard a sentence so lenient, so contrary to what he had expected. In the most contrite terms he expressed his thanks as well as his agitation would permit. Then turning towards the monk, with a countenance in which his feelings were more strongly depicted than words could have conveyed them, he fervently implored all Heaven’s best blessings on him, and withdrew, to prepare for his departure from Madrid.

“ Having thus far acquitted myself of the important duties that led me hither,” said Rosario, addressing the Queen, “ I shall now complete the remaining, and perhaps no less important part of my mission, though to me, what I have done, seems the first duty of humanity and justice.” Producing a letter, he presented it to the Queen, who, struck with astonishment, while something like fear was visible in her countenance, demanded whence it came.

“ Two days ago,” replied Rosario, “ I received it from the hands of a person lately arrived from France. Journeying through Gascony, he stopped at St. Marguerite’s Convent, to see his friend the Father Dominique, who is Abbot to that pious community, and with whom I have for many years been acquainted. Alas! he found the holy man in the last stage of life; death had already laid his icy hand on him,—but ere he closed his eyes for ever, he commissioned the

weeping Antoine to confide this letter to my care, with a strict injunction that I would deliver it into the hands of your Majesty. This trust we have both faithfully executed. On no common or trivial occasion have I presumed to request this gracious audience; and having thus accomplished the great purposes for which I came, and for which, thou best of monarchs, and ye illustrious personages assembled, may Heaven amply reward you. Having thus restored the dignities of Vittoria to their original lustre, and been the messenger of happiness to the Conde Montalban, whose sorrows I trust are at length at an end, the duties of my mission are fulfilled, and in peace shall I return to the gloomy seclusion whence I came."

"Stay, oh stay, reverend Father," cried the Queen, in an agitated voice; and hastily descending from the throne, as if her words were not sufficient to detain him. She had opened the letter that Ro-

sario had given her, and having glanced over its contents, she now held it towards him, while her whole frame trembled, and she caught his arm. "Oh Rosario," cried she with energy, "great and important are the deeds thou hast done, but one still greater yet remains for thee to perform,—an act that a whole nation,—nay Heaven itself will doubly bless thee for,—read what thou hast brought me, to conceal it is impossible, and would but augment my guilt,—employ the influence thou hast acquired with the King,—intercede in my behalf, and save, oh save thy Queen from disgrace."

An exclamation of surprise and horror burst from the King; and rising from his seat, he demanded to see the letter, which the Queen instantly extended to him, falling on her knees beside him, while, with a countenance of fury, he perused it. It had been written by Donna Olivia del Zorio, a short time previous to her death, and contained a full disclosure of

all the nefarious transactions in which she had been concerned, under the influence of the Queen, before she had entered the convent. She confessed in the most penitent terms, the part she had acted so unsuccessfully, to win the love of Mortimer for her Majesty, after the siege of Gibraltar. The treachery she had carried on against the Infanta, with regard to the Duca del Marino,—the duplicity she had long practised towards the Conde Montalban; and ended by making known the stratagem by which she had been conveyed to St. Marguerite's,—and the severities she had at first been obliged to endure there, —allowing, however, that they had eventually proved the means of her conveyance, and in her expiring moments, were therefore remembered with pious gratitude, instead of resentment.

This confession Olivia had confided to the Abbot, charging him at the same time never to reveal it to another, or ex-

pose the Queen, but to convey it carefully to her; but Dominique soon afterwards paid the debt of nature—death cut short his intention of visiting Spain himself, and, as we have before related, he delegated the important trust to another.

“What means this base and traitorous composition, madam?” demanded the King, appearing to discredit it, and trying to conceal his indignation; “who has thus dared to insult our royal dignity by a forgery so vile, shall tremble at the consequences of her temerity—from the lowly peasant to the high-born noble—with *all* the person of majesty, the very name of royalty should be held sacred, and none shall offend against it with impunity; for surely this must be a fabrication. The Queen of Spain durst not commit so gross an outrage on the fidelity she owes her husband and Sovereign. She durst not thus dishonour our love, nor so far o’erstep the modesty of

her sex, and the bounds of her elevated station, as to bestow, even for an instant, on another, the affection she owes her consort. A man, too, of low and undistinguished birth—Oh preposterous!—it cannot be.”

Being still on her knees, the King now attempted to raise her; while all present were equally shocked at beholding their Queen in this suppliant attitude, and at hearing these ambiguous expressions.

She, however, resisted his efforts.—“No, no, my liege,” cried she, “this posture best becometh me at present. Alas! would to God this letter were but a forgery; all—all is true—strictly true. I *did* admire the amiable, the gallant, Mortimer; yet Heaven can witness to the purity of his conduct—the breath of slander durst not sully it; he knew not that he had inspired such a feeling in the bosom of a Queen; that admiration was temporary—nought ensued that could reflect a shadow of dishonour on

your Majesty. Never—never did I prove a traitress to your royal bed; so may Heaven hear this assertion, and deal with me accordingly.”

She burst into tears as she finished the last sentence; and the Duchessa del Marino, rushing forward, supported her in her arms, as she seemed ready to fall.

Awed by the angry voice and manner of the King, Rosario had hitherto continued silent; but the scene now became truly distressing and embarrassing to all, who, except him, would instantly have withdrawn, fearful that their presence would be thought obtrusive and unpleasant, had not the Queen expressed a wish that they should remain.

“In mercy go not thus,” said she; “to condemn me unheard—to believe me more guilty than I am. As I have thus far betrayed myself, ye shall hear all—nay, all *must* be heard ere I can offer any extenuation. Olivia has con-

fessed no more than truth sanctions; yet, indeed, 'am I less, much less, culpable than you think me. My errors (if such I may term them) have been more of the head than the heart. Nor wealth, rank, or power, are barriers to temptation; all are equally liable to deviate from the path that Heaven first prescribed to them:—and, though I am a Queen—though fortune has placed me in a station so far exalted above the rest of my species, still am I no more than mortal; and who amongst us shall say, 'I have never erred?'"

A tear was visible in every eye at the humiliating situation of the Queen, while she briefly recounted the particulars of what Olivia had confessed, and penitently acknowledged the treacherous and guilty part she had acted.

On seeing her royal mother thus exposed her crimes, her crimes and errors thus laid open, the Duchess<sup>a</sup> del Marínò was covered with confusion; but when

that part of the letter which concerned herself was explained—when the arts and duplicity she had made use of, to win the affections of the Duca, and estrange his heart from Elvira, were made known—shame, remorse, and agitation, completely overcame her, and she fell beside the Queen almost in a state of insensibility.

“Oh Heaven! what a sight is this!” exclaimed the King, starting back in horror, and clenching his hands violently; “the King of Spain, thus degraded—insulted; his Queen thus fallen—pitied—despised by our subjects. A Princess of our royal blood, too, guilty of such baseness. No—it cannot—it must not be forgiven—by all the”—

“Hold—hold, my gracious Sovereign,” interrupted Rosario, as he flung himself at the feet of the King; “I beseech your Majesty do not rashly abjure the godlike attribute of mercy—a quality which so truly ennobles even

the meanest of your subjects—which adds dignity to rank, and splendour to virtue; without it, rank and splendour were empty sounds—mere painted baubles. Magnanimity should be the chief constituent of a Monarch's character, integrity and justice should be the mainsprings of his actions, attempered by clemency and mildness—from which they derive their greatest lustre. Nay, hear me, Sire, nor spurn the admonitions of a father of the holy church. All these qualities have hitherto characterized you; let them continue to do so. Forgive the weaknesses of the Queen; restore her to that place in your bosom she has ever held; and dearer will she then be to you than had she never erred. For surely it ill beseemeth us to deny to our fellow-mortals that mercy which we daily pray to Heaven to grant ourselves.”

“Oh, excellent old man,” replied the King, deeply affected by this appeal; “thou art indeed, well calculated for

thine holy office, 'to bring the sinner to repentance, and raise up them that fall;' yet how unworthy is she, for whom thou pleadest thus strongly."

"Permit me, my liege, to join in the solicitations of the pious Rosario," said the Marcheze della Vittoria; "now do I clam your Majesty's promised boon, the grant of aught I might request; it is a privilege I dare not use unworthily, nor can it be more nobly employed than in this instance; deny me not what even for my son I forbore till now to ask. The humiliation our gracious Queen has been thus exposed to, has surely been her punishment; add not therefore to it by withholding your forgiveness; this, sire, is the grant I ask; pardon, forget all: be not less magnanimous than the Duca del Marino; forgive your royal consort, as he has done his; let not the day that restores your subject here to honour and happiness condemn your Queen to disgrace; the morning rose in clouds of

sorrow, and sadness; let our evening set in gladness and joy."

"'Tis done," said the King, "be thy boon then granted: to thee, noble Vittoria, and thee, Rosario, let the Queen pour forth her gratitude, from this hour we will think of her offence no more; Olivia is no longer an inhabitant of earth; and thus let this memento of her sins die with her, (tearing the letter); thus let every stain that sullied our Queen vanish; nor let us even forget that beautiful maxim, "to err is human; to forgive divine."

The most melancholy part of the scene was now over; all was to be forgiven and forgotten, nor beyond the present circle was a word of this circumstance to transpire; the Queen would have expressed her thanks to the Marcheze, and Rosario, had they permitted it; but theirs was the reward that ever results from the performance of a good and generous action, self-

approbation ; and they sought no other ; the Queen therefore withdrew to her apartment with the Duchessa, and Rosario would also have departed at the same time, had he not been detained by the King, who was desirous of having some conversation with him.

“Holy Father,” said his Majesty, “we mean not to acknowledge by mere words, what thou hast this day done ; the service thou hast performed for our trusty counsellor, the Marcheze della Vittoria, and Montalban his noble son ; to thee, the latter owes his life, nay all that can render life desirable, his reputation and honour ; much more dost thou deserve. Hear therefore, how we are determined to reward thee ; thou art no longer a priest of the Inquisition, the austerities that are practised there must ill accord with the gentleness and benevolence of thy disposition ; thou shalt forthwith repair to Gascony ; where, at our desire, thou shalt be

nominated to succeed the deceased Dominique, as confessor at St. Marguerite's convent; provided it shall meet thine own approbation."

"Oh my kind, my generous Sovereign," replied Rosario, and as he spoke, tears of gratitude flowed down his aged cheeks; "how have I deserved the favour of royalty; how merited such condescension and goodness? In preserving Montalban, I have been but the agent of a higher Power; nought have I done, but what was one of the imperious duties of my station; what gratitude bound me to do; what justice demanded, and what fate decreed!!!"

"Almighty Powers! 'tis he," exclaimed Montalban wildly; "and thus is all fulfilled." Forgetful of every ceremony and etiquette observed in the royal presence, he obeyed the genuine impulse of his heart, and rushing forward, he threw himself at the feet of the monk a second time. "Oh let me

embrace and bless thee, my earliest, best of friends; my more than parent; my guardian; my preserver; for every thing thou didst foretell hath happened, and thou art indeed, at length the messenger of happiness and joy to me."

"Thou art not deceived, my son," replied the monk, "I am he who ventured to foretell thy destiny, on the memorable Eve of San Sebastian, yet, if *all* that I predicted hath not come to pass; if in one instance I have o'erstepped the bounds of nature, or of truth, even now disown me as thy friend for ever." He threw his arms round Montalban's neck, in his agitation the cowl which had hitherto almost completely veiled his face, slid off; and discovered to the astonished and horror-struck Marcheze, the well-remembered features of Osmin the Astrologer.

## CHAPTER X.

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“Great minds, like Heaven, are pleased with doing good.”

Rowe

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**OSMIN** was a native of Gibraltar, born of respectable parents, whose circumstances in his earlier years were sufficiently ample to afford him the means of acquiring such an education as his natural talents seemed to entitle him to; in the cultivation of those talents no expense was spared, nor opportunity lost; he diligently applied himself to the study of the occult sciences of nature, and so rapid was the progress he made, that he soon became an object of envy to his competitors; of wonder and admiration to his friends.

Soon after the death of his parents, however, a series of domestic losses and calamities compelled him to quit his birth-place—to seclude himself from the world, and bury that brilliant genius, so long and so justly admired, in the solitude of a monastery.

There he soon attracted the particular notice of its patrons, the family of Vittoria; and so great was the reputation his literary acquirements had gained him amongst the community, that his society was almost constantly desired at the Castello; and to his care, and that of the Abad Francisco, was intrusted the education of the young Conde Montalban.

The docility, gentleness, and amiable qualities of their youthful charge, were not long in securing him a place in their hearts. He won their warmest friendship and esteem; and, independent of their gratitude and respect for his family, they felt so high a degree of interest

about him as only his own native excellence and worth could have inspired.

With increasing years, however, the anxiety with which Osmin watched over his beloved pupil increased also; and at length their mutual confidence induced the former to reveal his prophecy concerning him, and warn him of what fate had menaced him with at his birth. The siege of Gibraltar now rapidly approaching rendered Osmin more fearful for the safety of our hero; but, as the reader has already been informed how the communication of the Astrologer was received at the Castello, we shall merely relate the particulars of his exilement from the Convent of San Sebastian.

The Marcheze, actuated by resentment at Osmin's having presumed to predict unhappiness to his noble house, immediately employed his influence with the heads of the monastery to have him privately banished.

Conscious that none durst oppose his authority, or question his will, he made known his wish in terms almost imperative. In sorrow and dismay the rest of the Monks heard the sentence pronounced; and, oh ungrateful requital for the care, attention, and love, with which he had guarded the youthful days of Vittoria's heir. The unfortunate Osmin was sent from the convent on the following day.

Thus driven again on that unfeeling world he had long before determined to abandon for ever, still did the ingratitude of the Marcheze not diminish his attachment; and, regarding Montalban with almost the feelings of a father, he resolved to revisit Gibraltar in disguise, a place once so dear to him—and where he could yet, unseen, enjoy the pleasure of being near him.

Being well acquainted with every part of the town and fortress, this was easily accomplished; and, as Montalban's quar-

ters adjoined the temporary residence appropriated to the King and Queen, and Osmin had many opportunities of seeing their Majesties; he shortly discovered the impression the attractions of the handsome Mortimer had made on the bosom of the Queen, part of whose conversation with Donna Olivia he had accidentally overheard.

Thunderstruck at the impropriety of such sentiments, the astonished Monk resolved to watch secretly the progress of this affair; and several private passages in the Castello, known but to few, enabled him to do so with safety.

The reception her letter to Mortimer had met he easily guessed, on hearing her horrible proposal to cut him off by poison.

To intimidate her, and prevent such a deed, he could devise no other plan than either to inform the King, or the one whose life was thus in danger—or to remain concealed in a passage adjoining

the chapel, whither she was daily in the habit of going, and there, if possible, deter her from her purpose by a warning apparently supernatural. The latter seemed to him the most adviseable, and he forthwith employed this stratagem. Such was the mysterious being who caused so much alarm to her and Donna Olivia.

Many local circumstances had attached him to the neighbourhood of the convent; and, at the conclusion of the siege, he returned thither, and took up his abode within a short distance of it, in an obscure cavern hewn in the rocks, that bounded on one side the forest of Vittoria; where he hoped, in the disguise he had assumed, to remain free from all danger of being discovered by the Marcheze.

There, for a considerable time, he subsisted on the charity of the inhabitants of an adjacent village, as he durst not venture to shew himself at the mo-

nastery; and there too, by some means, he learned the secret of Montalban's love for the Princess. This discovery filled him with more disquiet than even his own banishment and sufferings. He saw at once that it was the forerunner of misfortune and sorrow, and that his prophecy would indeed be fulfilled; for now that he and Montalban were so completely separated, it was impossible, by admonition, to prevent the growth of what he deemed so dangerous a passion; and, in the caution, he was constantly obliged to observe, with regard to his concealment, he had few opportunities even of hearing what was passing at the Castello, where the Princess Elvira now was.

Venturing, however, one evening to extend his walk, having learned that the Marcheze had not yet left Madrid, he had reached a little grove adjoining the garden, when his attention was suddenly roused by the appearance of the Conde,

who, with the Abad Francisco, crossed the path a little below him, so engrossed by conversation that they did not perceive him. They were proceeding hastily towards the Castello—and, following them at a short distance, taking care, however, that they should not observe him, he saw Montalban unlock a gate leading into the garden, which they both entered.

Wondering what the purport of the Abad's visit could be, a suspicion of the truth flashed across his mind; yet he tried to chase away the idea, still fancying a thousand other causes, until, wandering on almost unconsciously, he at length found himself at the gate; the key had been forgotten in it—it was merely closed. This was a favourable opportunity to discover what had brought the Abad hither. It seemed even more than the effect of chance; no common or idle curiosity impelled him. Montalban was foremost in his thoughts; and

the imprudent measures he might have been hurried into by his love for Elvira, and which Francisco might have sanctioned—it almost seemed as if he was destined to prevent them. With this idea he cautiously entered. His conjectures were but too well founded; he saw the Conde, the Abad, and the Princess, go into the chapel—for what purpose there was no room for a doubt. To snatch Montalban from the gulf he was thus about to precipitate himself into, there was now but one remedy in his power. That he immediately tried; and the mysterious voice that, the reader may remember, interdicted the ceremony which Francisco was commencing, was no other than that of Osmin.

It appeared, as if that unfortunate exile had been appointed by fate to watch over the actions of Montalban, for, on the Eve of San Sebastian, he it was who had issued from the dell, where he had unperceived, witnessed Orlando's

fall; he had closely watched Don Malvolio, ignorant, however, of his rank or name; he saw the contents of the weapon he pointed towards the Prince discharged, and prove fatal, while at the same moment that of the trembling Montalban fell to the ground.

But not even the evidence of his own eyes could altogether satisfy him, that in this murder the latter had been no participator; he doubted and feared; yet had he felt confident that the Conde was not the perpetrator of it, still would he have deemed it safer to be silent on the occasion; he could bring forward no witness, no proof, and had he interfered in it, the innocent might perhaps have suffered instead of the guilty.

Not long after this transaction, his retreat was discovered by the Marcheze, who still indignant at the prediction of misfortune to his darling son, and considering Osmin's having ventured to prophesy *such* an insult to his house,

and incensed at finding him even within the precincts of Vittoria, had him forthwith imprisoned in the Inquisition, where, fortunately for him, he met in the person of one of the priests of that tribunal, a former acquaintance, and intimate friend. Notwithstanding Osmin's confinement, and the severity of the rules and restrictions, their friendship and familiarity were shortly renewed: though no actual charge was brought against the persecuted monk, still was he confined and treated with all the barbarous rigidity for which the holy office was so notorious, for several months; till at last, through the influence of Father Rosario, he was permitted by the higher authorities to leave his cell, but not for an instant to go beyond the walls of the Inquisition.

It was not in the nature of Osmin not to be grateful for such a piece of kindness, disinterested as it was, and singular from an inhabitant of such a place,

but he was still more indebted to him afterwards, when the benevolent priest about to yield his virtuous soul into the hands of his Creator, had him elected in that place himself was soon to resign for ever.

All this was done without the knowledge of the Marcheze, who bestowed not a thought on the fate to which he had consigned him; and, the pious Osmin had just entered his new office, when, with amazement and horror, he recognized in one of the unhappy beings committed to the Inquisition, the Conde Montalban, and learned the enormous crime with which that nobleman was charged. Whether it was his early partiality that now made him regard the Conde favourably, or that a doubt of his guilt operated on the mind of the monk, cannot be proved; but certain it is that, being perfectly acquainted with all the secret doors and passages of the Inquisition, he determined to liberate

him, and that determination he on the same night put into execution. Thus had Montalban effected his escape so unexpectedly from the horrible dungeon in which he had been enclosed, and by means apparently so mysterious.

Many similar acts of benevolence, unknown to the inquisitors, had Rosario done, (for Osmin had changed his name, and taken that of his deceased friend, from gratitude and respect;) but not all his self-approbation, not all the consciousness of the good he had done, the sufferings he had relieved, the woes he had ended, had been able to afford him any thing like the gratification, the rapture, he experienced when the confession of Don Malvolio assured him of the innocence of that being he so loved and esteemed—the Conde Montalban—

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* Some of these circumstances Rosario now found it necessary to relate, but he forbore to mention any

thing relative to the Queen; and, with all his native goodness of heart he easily forgave the wrongs he had suffered from the Marcheze, generously justifying and making as much allowance for them as he could, by representing his own imprudence in declaring so inauspicious a prophecy to his benefactor, and his friend. On the part of the Marcheze of course no further prejudices existed towards Rosario. Struck by the generosity he displayed, and the inestimable service he had performed, he could not but feel grateful to the one who had thus preserved his son from death and disgrace; wishing to be reconciled and to make every possible atonement, he disdained not to own those wrongs and ask his forgiveness, and he and Montalban joined the King in urging him to accept the place of the deceased Dominique at St. Marguerite's convent, but this he begged permission to decline.

“Words,” said he, “are a language

too weak, much too weak to convey an idea of what my feelings are, and how truly sensible I am of this condescension; but to bestow on me so high an office, unfit as mine age would shortly render me to fulfil the important duties of it, as I should wish, would be as bestowing some rare gift on one ignorant of its value or its use; such honours as ye kindly proffer me would ill-beseem my declining years; yet as the liberty of choice is thus graciously offered to me, I will venture to make known one wish which mine heart fondly retains; I would return and end my days in my former station, in the peaceful monastery of San Sebastian."

"It shall be so, father," said the King; "far be it from us to deny thy wish; yet think not, in complying with this trivial request, our debt of gratitude to thee is paid. Henceforth the Inquisitorial power over thee is at an end. Our pleasure shall be notified at the holy office to-morrow; and in a few days the

convent of San Sebastian shall again receive thee, where thou shalt have sufficient means to gratify the benevolence of thine heart, to relieve the children of sorrow and distress, to smooth thy journey to another and a better world, where alone thy virtues shall be rewarded as they deserve."

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## CHAPTER XI.

“ I charge thee, fling away ambition,  
 “ By that sin fell the angels, how can man then,  
 “ The image of his maker, hope to win by't.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ Yea, even that which mischief means most harm,  
 “ Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.”

MILTON.

AFTER expressing his acknowledgments, Rosario withdrew, accompanied by the Marcheze and Montalban, who, thus restored to honour, liberty, and happiness, in the fulness of his heart felt as if he could almost have knelt down and worshipped his preserver as something more than human; and had the latter permitted it, he would have continued for hours to dwell on this subject.

But in all the enthusiasm of his gratitude, Elvira—she for whose sake he thus rejoiced to live, was not forgotten. Hopes, the most sanguine and delightful, now filled his bosom; he longed impatiently to fly to her—to assure her of his innocence. Oh, how delightful to her ears would be such a sound!—to tell her that his honour was unsullied—the opprobrious name of murderer was his no longer—his father restored to the favour of his Sovereign—that she might now, without a blush, own the husband she had chosen; for surely, he now had every thing to recommend him, but equality of birth, and this might, perhaps, be overlooked; for though he was a subject, still should he be, at some future day, a prince, and that circumstance would operate in his favour.

These flattering ideas, however, were the offspring of that excess of joy to which he had yielded himself, and as it subsided, they also gradually vanished

He recollected that their marriage was about to be dissolved, according to the mandate of the Pope, and, as he supposed, the wishes of the King and Alonzo, whom he fancied on the point of claiming her as his affianced bride. But he had yet to learn, that happiness greater than any he had hitherto experienced was preparing for him, and that all those chances which had threatened so long to disunite him from Elvira, were now at an end.

The King and Alonzo remained alone in the council-chamber, the latter wishing to have a private conference with his Majesty, on an affair of the highest importance to all; the particulars of which, however, he required should be revealed no further, at least it should only be known that, actuated by a sense of justice to Montalban, whose acquittal rejoiced him, (for though ambitious and daring, Alonzo was by no means a stranger to other feelings that dignify the

human mind,) and for whom the Princess had shown so desisive a preference, nay, to whom she was already married—by respect for the ancient house of Vittoria, he had nobly resigned his claim to Elvira, and advised the King to have her union with the Conde publicly solemnized.

“ However vast the sacrifice I am about to make,” said Alonzo, “ though deep may be the wound my pride, all my feelings, will sustain from this avowal of the chief motives that led me to seek an alliance with your royal house—though your Majesty condemn those motives, nor deign even to applaud the candour of this confession, yet will I not now act less generously, less disinterestedly, than the example I have just seen. I will no longer deserve the name of an ambitious usurper, endeavouring to reach a summit that Heaven wills not I should attain, trying to monopolize a place in Elvira’s bosom,

which that Heaven hath destined for another. . . I will not be outdone in magnanimity—and if to acknowledge our faults, be such, hear from my own lips the policy by which I have hitherto been influenced.

“ When first Orlando sought the hand of the Infanta, at my instance, there were inducements still more powerful than his love for her. Your Majesty is aware that, as my nephew, he was presumptive heir to the crown of Portugal, and as *such*, regarded by me as the one to whom all its dignities would devolve. About that period, the Prince of Asturias was seized with that baleful malady which has since proved fatal to him, and which first gave rise to our ambitious project. An alliance with the Spanish crown we eagerly desired—nay, it appeared easily accomplished. We aspired still further; the case of its royal heir soon appeared hopeless—no doubt of his speedy death did we entertain—and thus, speculating

on beholding the throne left without a male heir, we jointly concerted our deep-laid plans. Orlando, in marrying Elvira, was to have usurped the female right of succession—he was to have employed every stratagem to have his pretensions sanctioned, and then to have united the whole kingdom to that of Portugal, thus exterminating the glory of the Bourbons, and rendering both countries entirely subject to one government—to his own. In this enterprise—(the burning blush of shame crimsoned my cheek to own it,) he was to have received powerful auxiliaries from me. Of their failure we entertained not a fear; the deepest policy—the soundest judgment, our plans were founded on—and but for Orlando's fall at that very critical time, *all* would have been accomplished, and Spain have lost her independence for ever.

“ I had fed my towering hopes with the brightest prospects of success, and

this was a blow that, had I been more a philosopher, would at once have crushed them,—but I gave not way to reflection,—I considered not that the hand of Providence had thus interposed between me and the object of my impious ambition,—all within my bosom was rage and disappointment. Orlando was to have been the instrument of my aggrandizement,—and for this, rather than for himself, I grieved. So far my scheme had been baffled, yet did I not despair;—I vowed to pursue his murderer with vengeance, and having annihilated him, to sue for Elvira myself,—and thus render the end I had in view still more attainable. I was not at first so deficient in vanity and confidence, as to apprehend a refusal. Nor until I heard of her union with Montalban did I waver from that intention. Even that circumstance did not altogether alter it. I resolved on the death of my rival, while the idea of his being the assassin yet prevailed.

then would every barrier have been removed, and conquest been mine.

“ How did I repine at the murder of my nephew,—how wickedly did I arraign that Power which had permitted such a deed, and suffered the perpetrator to go so long unpunished. . . But after this, who shall presume to call to account the will of Heaven, however mysterious;—who shall dare to say what it ordains is wrong, or question its all-wise purposes? It is indeed a striking instance of divine interposition,—an awful lesson to insignificant mortals, to shew how worthless, how fallible is all human wisdom,—the Deity alone can regulate the course of nature, and foresee all that betides us, or good or ill. . . . When Orlando was assassinated, horror, indignation, and regret, were the general feelings it inspired,—yet had he lived,—had not Providence allowed that deed, the same voices that then called loudly for retribution, would have uttered the lan-

guage of despair,—and the miseries of civil war would have been scattered throughout the realm.

“The preservation of the Conde Montalban has averted these calamities. Had he died, all had probably happened;—it has saved *me* from what I should in death repent;—nay, more, has saved your royal daughter from sorrow which would be fatal to her,—from an union that nothing but filial obedience would have led her to consent to. It has given to your Majesty a son-in-law worthy of that honourable title,—to Elvira the beloved husband of her choice. His birth, I need not remind you, is illustrious,—his right to her now unquestionable, and their mutual love unalterable. Montalban has preserved your kingdom from usurpation, and well indeed does he merit this reward. To him, therefore, I resign her,—let two so formed for each other be no longer separated,—let letters be sent to the Pope, acquainting him

with all that Father Rosario has this day made known,—tell him of Montalban's innocence,—the magnitude of our joy;—and that you now intend to exalt him to that dignity his guilt would have forfeited.

“The recital of so bold, so great a project, has, I perceive, irritated your majesty,—filled you with amazement and horror;—but all is over now,—every thought, every wish for such an enterprise is now at an end. I dare not further tempt the power of Heaven,—what it has interdicted must not, *cannot* be. I am not the first whom ambition has for a while led astray,—'tis a weed, that having once taken root in the heart of man, soon blights the growth of almost every other passion, till having arrived at full maturity, amidst all its greatness, it falls and dies. Such have been the growth and fall of mine,—or if, to aught I may yet aspire, 'tis still to retain that place in your esteem I have ever held,—still

to enjoy the confidence with which you have ever honoured me; nay, think me not unworthy of it, though much I would once have dared, never yet has an unworthy action sullied my character, and more, infinitely more, do I value the lesson I have now received, than even the throne of wealthy Portugal. Hear, then, mighty sovereign, my last request, and if still Alonzo possesses a claim to your friendship, deny it not,—let what I have revealed rest in eternal oblivion,—say you forgive me,—that you approve of my resigning the Infanta,—that you will unite her publicly to the Conde Montalban, thus rendering them both as happy as they deserve to be;—promise that no other ear shall ever hear this discourse;—let me but behold Montalban thus nobly rewarded, and if any thing can atone to me for my renunciation of the amiable Elvira, it will surely be the contemplation of their mutual happiness, and the approbation of my own heart;

in promoting, instead of blasting it for ever!"

Amazement had indeed chained the faculties of the King, at the development of a plot so daring, so unparalleled, and his countenance wore an expression of horror as he silently regarded the Regent of Portugal, during the recital; fatal to either party would have been such an enterprise;—kingdoms would have groaned under the miseries of civil war and bloodshed, and the rights of Spain been trampled on by an ambitious and traitorous usurper.

“Omnipotence, I thank thee,” he ejaculated, as soon as he found utterance, clasping his hands, and raising them in an attitude of devotion;—“to thine infinite wisdom do I owe the safety of my kingdom, which, but for Orlando’s death, and Montalban’s acquittal, would have lost its glorious freedom;—thine omniscience, oh God, could alone foresee, alone ordain all that has happened,—and

to save a nation, 'twas fit Orlando should fall, however horrible and unnatural appeared the deed!"

His features now lost much of their severity; and, turning towards the Prince, notwithstanding the resentment he had at first felt, he readily gave the promises he required; and in consideration of the candid and honourable part Alonzo had now acted, they were immediately reconciled.

If Montalban had for awhile lost a portion of the King's favour, and endured the sufferings that the prospect of ignominy and death had inflicted, soon was his situation reversed,—soon indeed from being one of the most miserable he became one of the happiest of mortals; and if in our earthly state, we can experience true and perfect happiness, such was surely his. Few could have thought that those sufferings were but a prelude to the highest honours and enjoyments he could attain; or that instead

of expiating on the scaffold the alleged crimes of murder and treason, he was to be the approved son-in-law of his Sovereign,—the chosen consort of the illustrious Elvira.

The King had already determined this; and having summoned the Marcheze, he made known his intentions with regard to Sebastian, desiring him to acquaint his son of the dignities that were preparing for him.

This was, indeed, a climax of greatness far beyond Vittoria's highest expectations, for though he was himself next in succession to the title of Prince of Vicenza, yet to have his family allied to the blood royal of Spain, seemed to him a prospect at the contemplation of which ambition itself might have stood still with amazement and incredulity.

He hastened joyfully to communicate it to Montalban, and if the rapture he felt on being convinced of his son's innocence, was capable of being augmented,

surely, the idea of that son's elevation to so exalted a rank, could not fail to do so; the pleasure, however, that the intelligence afforded the latter did not arise from the flattering views of pomp and grandeur thus presented to him; these were secondary considerations; Elvira was the object on which, next to Heaven, were placed the warmest affections of his heart; he loved her truly "for herself alone;" in possession of her, the meanest habitation would have been as a palace to him, the humblest fare been as the most delicious viands; without her, wealth, rank, and splendour would have been irksome and unvalued.

The morning of this day, had, indeed, according to the words of the Marcheze, risen in clouds of sorrow; sadness had sat heavy on every heart, and was the predominant expression in every face; but what a change did the evening present, how altered was the entire scene! Those hearts now throbbed with pleasure;

on those faces beamed smiles of joy; and all seemed eager to testify their feelings to the Conde Montalban on so happy an occasion.

To render it complete, as well as to have preparations made for the speedy union of his daughter with Don Manuel d'Orellez, the Marcheze determined to set out on the ensuing day for the Castello della Vittoria in order to conduct the lady Viola back to Madrid, naturally anticipating the salutary effects this intelligence of her beloved brother would be productive of.

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## CHAPTER XII.

"Happily I have arrived at last

"Unto the wished-for haven of my bliss."

\* \* \* \* \*

"And here I'll rest,—as, after much turmoil,

"A blessed soul doth in Elysium—"

SHAKESPEARE.

"Alas by some degree of woe

"We every bliss must gain ;

"Ne'er can the heart a transport know

"That never feels a pain——"

LYTTLETON

TO the Queen and the Duchessa del Marino, devolved the pleasing task of communicating the events of the evening to Elvira. As they entered her apartment, she had just awoke from an uneasy slumber, in which her disturbed imagination had represented Montalban already prostrate beneath the stroke of the exe-

cutioner,—his head already severed from his bleeding body. This idea gave a frightful wildness to her countenance that at first alarmed them; she fancied they came to announce the fatal deed; and her agitation was so great that they found much difficulty in composing her. She was at length restored to reason on hearing that Montalban yet lived, but it required the utmost caution to disclose the rest, to inform her of his innocence; that he had not only been acquitted and pardoned by the King, but that their marriage had now received the royal sanction, and they were to be again united, never more to part.

A sudden transition from excessive grief to joy would, they feared, prove dangerous, and it was not until she was perfectly calm that they ventured to acquaint her of all that had occurred.

Gentle reader, if ever you have mourned the supposed death of a friend whom

on earth you most sincerely valued,— that friend endeared to you by the fondest ties of affection, and then heard suddenly the delightful, unexpected and almost incredible intelligence that he lived and was on the point of being restored to you, you alone can justly conceive what Elvira's feelings were on this most joyful and unprecedented occasion.

To a description of them, language is inadequate, the heart alone can *feel* those sensations which the tongue cannot express; and only by her tears and her countenance could Elvira make hers known, as she threw herself on the bosom of the Queen, and wept for a considerable time without restraint. But the most interesting scene was yet to come—her meeting with Montalban,— Oh what a meeting! what ecstacy was portrayed on the features of each! Then indeed flowed copiously tears of genuine affection, tears of rapture, such

as she had never shed before, and she found an unspeakable luxury in the indulgence of them.

No less affecting was the first interview between Sebastian and the affectionate Viola, who in a few days afterwards, with her father, arrived at Madrid, in almost perfect health and spirits.

The expectations of the Marcheze were fully justified by the event,—for nothing had so materially contributed to her recovery as the intelligence he brought. Over this part of the picture, let us, however, draw a veil, the imagination of the reader can alone do it justice, for words would but feebly paint a scene that it requires all the powers of fancy to delineate.

Had these events happened at any other time, but the present, their happiness would indeed have been complete; but, that it could now be so was impossible, while the whole nation

mourned the calamity that had befallen them, in the loss of their beloved prince. —Elvira's spirits were of course languid and depressed after this tumult of joy had subsided, and, it was long before she could conquer her grief for the death of her brother. But Time, that all-powerful restorative and friendly balm, that healer of our sorrows, which daily alleviates and ministers to them, however acute they may be, failed not with them in its usual effects; their affliction gradually became less poignant; the striking and important lesson they had received had taught them to meet with resignation all the ordinations of the Deity, and their hearts were too virtuous and pious to reject the enjoyments that Heaven had yet kindly reserved for them. In order to render his son in rank more worthy to become the avowed consort of the Infanta of Spain, the Marcheze had in the interval visited his estates in Italy, for the purpose of being

created prince of Vicenza; which title having been confirmed to by him the Pope, and approved of by the King, he was now universally hailed such on his return to court; and Conde Montalban, the descendant of the illustrious houses of Vicenza and Vittoria, was in a few days to fulfil all that his father had fondly predicted of him in his youth—to marry as happily and splendidly as his heart could wish—to be the pride and ornament of his family, at once contributing to its happiness and aggrandizement.

Meantime Rosario had been reinstated agreeably to his wish, in his former peaceful abode, the convent of San Sebastian, where the reception he met bore ample testimony of his worth; and the respect and veneration in which he was held by the whole community.

In the favourable termination of this drama he had indeed acted a most im-

portant and valuable part; and, he was universally hailed with expressions of the liveliest gratitude, joy, and welcome, by all classes round the neighbourhood of the convent and the Castello della Vittoria, so generally was he beloved whom he had preserved.

If his profound knowledge, and the brilliancy of his talents had before rendered Rosario an object of wonder and admiration, how much was that admiration now increased at the fulfilment of his last prediction; even the prince of Vicenza, prejudiced as he had been, could no longer withhold the praise he merited, nor condemn the science of astrology, as what he had once deemed it, absurd and fit only to occupy the romantic and fanciful minds of childhood and dotting old age.

All now looked forward with anxiety for the day on which the ceremony was to take place, the Eve of San Sebastian; for as on that ominous day Montalban

and the Princess had been born, so was it appointed, according to the wishes of each party, for the marriage. Not less impatiently was it wished for, by Don Manuel d'Orellez, for that day was also to crown his earthly happiness, to reward his long and ardent attachment, in uniting him to the lovely and amiable Viola: thus, a double marriage was to be celebrated, and the Eve of San Sebastian, the day whose approach they had hitherto regarded with awe, almost amounting to terror, was now to be the most joyful that had ever yet risen upon them.

Etiquette required that the Regent of Portugal should postpone his return until these ceremonies were over, for which the most splendid preparations were making: the whole court was a scene of magnificence, of bustle, and joy. Montalban's late sufferings had rendered him dear to the people; Elvira too, was the beloved of every heart,

and every thing conducive to their happiness and welfare: all who knew them participated in; for, in being such; it contributed to their happiness also.

Gratitude had ever been one of Montalban's predominant feelings, and amidst these enjoyments he had not forgotten the services of old Carlos the fisherman, and his wife Ursula; nor the affectionate endearments of the pretty Rosa, whose exertions to enliven and amuse him through many a tedious hour, were still fresh in his memory.

The kindness and hospitality he had received from them, he valued more, because disinterested and prompted entirely by the native generosity of their hearts; it was beyond all reward; yet, now that he had it in his power to prove himself grateful, he one day sought their peaceful little abode, accompanied by his sister, and found all three seated round their humble, but happy fireside.

His whole appearance was altered from the pallid hue of sickness, such as he had worn when last they saw him, to the handsome and manly glow of health; he was no longer the delicate and almost enervated being they had so carefully nursed; he looked all health, happiness, and beauty; and his rustic admirers could not possibly have seen him to greater advantage.

Even in the midst of illness there was in his deportment something so noble, dignified, and interesting that they had often declared they had never before seen so handsome a cavalier.

Seeing him, however, accompanied by Viola, their generous benefactress, (whom they did not yet know to be his sister,) respect predominated over every other feeling his appearance excited; and while their tongues acknowledged the honour this visit conferred on them, their eyes alone could express their admiration.

From a remuneration for the kind offices they had performed for the Conde, and which they considered to be no more than their duty, their honest hearts recoiled, and they at first would have positively declined it; but to persist in doing so, would they perceived, offend Montalban and Viola; besides which, the Prince of Vicenza had previously determined with his son that a comfortable competency should forthwith be settled on them as a recompense their services well deserved.

Understanding, therefore, that such was the will of his Highness, they durst no longer reject an offer so advantageous, and it was arranged that Carlos and Ursula should be thus provided for; and Viola was to take her favourite Rosa under her entire protection.

The happy trio tried to express their thanks; Rosa was all liveliness and joy, and it was with mingled emotions of

gratitude and regret, they beheld the departure of their noble visitors.

The Eve of San Sebastian at length dawned upon the anxious party; bands of music, and harmonious peals from the bells of every church in Madrid and its environs, ushered in the joyful morning; the whole city was decorated with emblems of loyalty and respect, in which its busy inhabitants seemed all trying to outvie each other; from every quarter were heard the benedictions and prayers of the people, for the happiness of the illustrious pairs, who were about to ratify their sacred vows at the altar of Hymen.

Rejoicings sounded in all directions; within several miles of the metropolis the roads were thronged with persons of every rank, all eager to testify their feelings towards individuals so universally beloved; for after the ceremony the Conde Montalban and his royal consort, with Don Manuel d'Orellez, and

his bride, were immediately to set out for the Castello della Vittoria, where the most sumptuous preparations had been made for their reception, such as befitted their dignity, and the rank, and munificence of its owner, the Prince of Vicenza.

On this occasion the royal chapel, in which the marriage was to be performed, was more richly ornamented than usual, almost every part of it was occupied by the principal nobility, grandees, and personages of the highest distinction; at four o'clock, the King and his family, arrived at the grand entrance door, through which they proceeded in magnificent and devout procession, to the seats appropriated to their use.

A beautiful anthem had been purposely composed, and instantly on the entrance of the royal party it was sang by the choir, accompanied by the rich and solemn tones of the organ; when it had ceased, Montalban and the Princess,

approached the altar; Don Manuel and Viola followed, attended by the King, the Queen and the Prince Regent of Portugal.

The service was now begun; and in a few minutes the sentence was read, which united our lovers in life to part no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the evening they quitted Madrid with a large and superb retinue; the city was splendidly illuminated, and along the roads they were to pass were innumerable spectators, many bearing torches, whose clear light almost rivalled the radiance of noon day; it was indeed a most interesting and gratifying sight; enthusiasm and delight filled every bosom, and at almost every step they were hailed with the most rapturous acclamations; nor were these rejoicings confined to the neighbourhood of Madrid; that of the Castello della

Vittoria, and the convent of San Sebastian presented a similar scene; from the latter place a procession of monks had come to meet, and conduct them to the chapel of the monastery, where all the rest of their order were assembled to offer up their pious thanksgivings for this happy event. *Te Deum* was then sang by the nuns, whose clear and mellifluous voices sounded more enchantingly than they had ever done before; after which the Lady Abadessa paid her respects in person, to the Princess, and Donna Viola d'Orellez; who, at her request, accompanied her into the convent, to receive the congratulations of the sisterhood.

At the same time the venerable Father Rosario approached the Conde Montalban; an expression of god-like beneficence irradiated his countenance, as he addressed him, and looked around on the homage and marks of love thus

shewn to one whom he so valued and esteemed.

“ Oh my Lord, who shall not now rejoice,” said he, “ when sufferings such as thou hast undergone are terminated thus ; when love and constancy such as thine are thus nobly rewarded ; many are the days I have numbered, of mingled joys and sorrows, yet never before hath a day like this blessed mine eyes ; the contemplation of thy happiness gives new life, and energy to my whole frame ; it seems as if years had suddenly vanished from mine age ; and my heart, methinks, now beats lighter than ever it did in the liveliness and vigour of youth. In beholding thee, thus happily united to her whom nature taught thy young heart to love, all my fondest wishes are fulfilled ; none other now remains unaccomplished ; and when such is Heaven’s will, I can, without a sigh, receive its summons to eternity ; yet while I remain on earth, my

prayers shall still be for thy welfare, and  
 all the inhabitants of this holy convent  
 shall in future hail with joy and gladness  
 the Eve of San Sebastian." \* \* \* \*

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THE END.

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