

VENONI,

OR,

THE NOVICE OF ST. MARK'S:

A Drama,

IN THREE ACTS.

By M. G. LEWIS.

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TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF YORK,

THIS DRAMA

IS MOST
ACTFULLY INSCRIBED,
NO BETTER ME
ING IN MY POWER TO EXPRESS
RESPECT FOR MANY VIRTUE

AND GRATITUDE FOR MANY FAVOURS.

M. G. LEWIS.

PREFACE.

THIS Drama is in a great measure translated from a French Play in four acts, called "*Les Victimes Célèbres*." — The principal alteration consisted in the M. Deroys character, who in the original was a Republican Mayor, whose sentiments & conduct were by no means adapted to the present times or to the British taste; this character, therefore, I was obliged to new-model entirely.

On the first night of representation the two first acts were well-received, the last was by no means evenly succeeded, and the concluding scene operated so strongly on the risible muscles of the audience, as to make it evident to

me on the third night, that unless I could invent an entirely new last act, the piece must be given up altogether—under this persuasion I set my brain to work, and in four-and-twenty hours I composed the last act, as it now stands, both plot and dialogue. With this alteration the drama was received with unqualified applause; and it had already gone through eighteen representations, when a stop was put to it by the burning down of Drury-Lane Theatre.

This will probably be the last of my dramatic attempts. The act of composition has ceased to amuse me—I feel, that I am not likely to write better, than I have done already—and though the Public have received my plays generally with an indulgence quite equal to their merits, those merits even to myself appear so trifling, that it cannot be worth my while to make any further efforts at the attainment of dramatic fame—here then I shall take my leave of the Theatre, probably for ever; thanking the Public for the lenity with which they have treated my endeavours to amuse, and the Performers for the attention and kind-

ness with which they have uniformly contributed their services towards rendering those efforts successful.

M. G. LEWIS.

London, July 7th, 1809.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Viceroy of Sicily.....	Mr. SIDDONS.
The Marquis Caprara.....	Mr. POWELL.
Father Cœlestino, Prior of } St. Mark's.....	Mr. WROUGHTON.
Venoni.....	Mr. ELLISTON.
Lodovico.....	Mr. EYRE.
Jeronymo,	Mr. HOLLAND.
Michael,	Mr. DE CAMP.
Anastasio,	Mr. COOKE.
Nicolo,	Mr. ADDOCKS.
Benedetto	Mr. ENLEY.
Carlo,	Mr. FISHER.
Pietro,	Servants.
Giovanni,	Mr. SMITH.
Fishermen	Masters HUCKEL and CHOUSSET.
Hortensia, Marchioness Caprara, Mrs. POWELL.	
Veronica.....	Mrs. MUDIE.
Josepha.....	Mrs. H. SIDDONS.
Teresa.....	Mrs. SPARKS.
Sister Lucia.....	Miss LACY.

The Scene lies in Sicily.

VENONI;

OR,

THE NOVICE OF ST. MARK'S.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Port of Messina.—On one side
the Viceroy's Palace*

BENEDETTO, TERESA, CARLO, PIETRO, GIOVANNI; and Servants are discovered.

Benedetto.—Bless my heart! Bless my heart! No signs of them yet! 'Tis past mid-day, and yet not coming? Surely some misfortune has happened, or they must have been in sight ere this.

Teresa.—Your impatience makes the time seem long, Benedetto; else you'd know, that on these great occasions it wouldn't be for the Viceroy's dignity to move with more expedition.

Besides, all the Grandees of Messina are gone out to receive and conduct him to his palace; and with such a croud of gallies and gondolas, take what care they may, I'm sure, 'twill be a mercy, if half the good company don't get tumbled into the water.

Benedetto.—Well, well, Teresa, perhaps you're in the right; but no wonder, that every minute appears an age, till I once more embrace the knees of my excellent master. However I'll be calm, Teresa, I'll be calm; I'll wait quietly for the arrival of the gondolas without uttering a single impatient word. Only, my good Carlo, do just run up the leads of the palace, and try, whether you can't see the gallies coming at a distance.

Carlo.—That I'll do with all my heart, Master Steward, and I'll make what speed I can.

Benedetto.—Oh! I'm not at all impatient; I assure you, I can wait very contentedly for your return: so pray don't hurry yourself; only my dear good fellow, do just make as much haste as you can!

[*Exit Carlo.*]

Benedetto.—Bless my heart! what an agitation I am in! Oh! how happy will Sicily be under this good man's government! How happy too will it make the poor Marchioness, when after an absence of four long years she again embraces her invaluable brother!

Teresa. — The poor Marchioness indeed! Well, Benedetto, for my part I feel no pity for misfortunes which people bring upon themselves. Why did not the Marchioness take her daughter with her to the Court of Naples? Why did a mother ever consent to trust her daughter out of her sight? But forsooth she must be left behind in a convent, where soon afterwards an epidemic complaint attacks the sisterhood, and Josepha (abandoned to the care of strangers) sinks into an untimely grave, the victim of her mother's neglect and imprudence.

Benedetto. — But the dangers of the voyage... . Her confessor had so often assured her, that Josepha would be more safe in the convent.....

Teresa. — More safe? More safe indeed? Where can a daughter be more safe than in the arms of her mother? And then as to her confessor.....

Pietro. — What; the Prior of St. Ma... He with that humble hypocritical air.... walks so softly, and bows so low....

Teresa. — Aye, aye; the same—Oh! I can't bear the sight of him!

Pietro. — Nor I.

Giovanni. — Nor I.

Benedetto. — Stop, stop! not so violent, my good friends, not so violent; for as to the Prior, you must permit me to tell you that for my

part. . . . I can't say *I* like him any better than yourselves.—And yet Signor Venoni (who is a man of great sense) believes that since the world was a world, there never was such a saint as this Father Cœlestino!

Teresa.—Ah! poor Signor Venoni! where is he now, Benedetto?

Benedetto.—Still in St. Mark's Monastery, whither he fled in despair on losing his destined bride, the Lady Josepha.

Pietro.—And his senses. . . . are they right again?

Benedetto.—Why, as he believes Father Cœlestino to be a saint, I should rather suppose, that they must still be very wrong indeed.

Pietro.—Perhaps that Friar, who twice this morning has enquired at the palace whether the Viceroy was arrived, is the bearer of some message from Venoni?

Benedetto.—Very likely! very likely!—and therefore, Pietro, should that Friar call again. . . .

Carlo—[appearing at the balcony of the palace].
Benedetto! *Benedetto!* the gallies! the gallies!

Benedetto.—Indeed? are you sure?—Yes! yes! yes! I hear the music!—[shouting without].—And hark! Teresa, hark! the mob are huzzing like. . . . Bless my heart! I shall certainly expire at his feet for joy!—they come! oh! look, look, look!—

[A marine procession arrives—the Viceroy lands from the state-galley, accompanied by the Grandees of Messina, who conduct him to the palace gate, and take their leaves of him respectfully. While the Grandees, &c. retire, Benedetto and the Servants pay their homage to the Viceroy, who receives them graciously. Teresa and the rest then busy themselves in taking charge of the baggage, and retire into the palace. The Viceroy motions to Benedetto to remain.]

The Viceroy—[to the Servants, as they go off].—Farewell, my friends, and for your own sakes take good care of yonder chests; part of their contents will convince you, that during my absence your fidelity and attachment have still been present to my recollection.

[*Exeunt* Teresa and Servants.]

Manent the VICEROY and BENEDETTO.

Benedetto.—Aye! aye! just the same kind master! ever attentive to others!

The Viceroy.—And without the attention of others, how could I exist myself? Good Benedetto, in imparting pleasure, we receive it in return: to make ourselves beloved is to make our-

selves happy ; and never can others love that man, who is not capable himself of loving others.

Benedetto.—My dear dear Lord !

The Viceroy.—But inform me, Benedetto ; my sister ?

Benedetto.—The Marchioness, my Lord, is still inconsolable ; and in truth, she has good cause to be so. The Marquis wished his daughter to be married immediately ; my Lady chose to defer it for a year, and my Lady was obstinate. The Marquis wished to take his daughter with him to Naples ; my Lady chose her to remain in a convent, and my Lady was obstinate. Her daughter fell ill there, and died ; my Lady says, that she shall never recover her death, and it is but fair that my Lady should be now as obstinate on *this* point, as she has formerly been on every other.

The Viceroy.—Beloved unfortunate Josepha ! — and Venoni ?

Benedetto.—Good-luck ! poor gentleman ! he was absent, when this sad event took place : for you must know, my Lord, that when after the departure of her parents he went to visit his betrothed at the convent-grate, the sour-faced old abbess wouldn't suffer him to see the lady Josepha. Nay, what is the strangest circumstance of all, she produced a letter from the Marchioness commanding positively, that during

her absence no person whatever should have access to her daughter.

The Viceroy.—Most unaccountable!

Benedetto.—The poor Signor was almost frantic with surprise and grief: away he flew for Naples; contrary winds for awhile delayed his arrival; but at length he did arrive, and hastened to plead his cause to the parents of his mistress.

The Viceroy.—And was the Marquis aware of his lady's strange orders to the Abbess?

Benedetto.—Oh! no! and Venoni returned to Messina, authorized to see Josepha as often and for as long as he pleased. Alas! he was destined never to see her more!—the report had reached me, that a contagious disorder had broken out in the Ursuline Convent. I hastened thither.... I enquired for the dear Lady—"she was ill!"—I implored permission to see her; the Marchioness's commands excluded me—I returned the next day; "she was worse"—Another four and twenty hours elapsed and.... Merciful Heaven! she was dead!

The Viceroy—[hiding his face to conceal his tears].—Josepha!—thou wert dear to me as my own child, Josepha!—[after a moment's silence, recovering himself]—And where is Venoni now?

Benedetto.—In the Monastery of St. Mark, of which your sister's confessor is now the superior.

The Viceroy.—What? the Father Cœlestino?

Benedetto.—Even he—Venoni's grief brought him to the brink of the grave. They say, that his senses were disordered for a time. But it is certain, that he only exchanged the bed of sickness for a cell in St. Mark's Monastery, where he shortly means to pronounce his vows.

The Viceroy.—What? so early in life will he quit the world?—his immense wealth too....

Benedetto.—His wealth?—Ah! my good lord, I suspect 'tis that very wealth which has proved the cause of his seclusion from the world. The Prior Cœlestino knew of his riches, and kindly came to comfort him in his distress. He talked to him.... he soothed him.... he flattered him.... he is as subtle as a serpent, and as smooth and slippery as an eel; he wormed himself into Venoni's very heart; the deluded youth threw himself into his arms, and the seducer bore him to the convent.

The Viceroy.—Benedetto, he shall not long remain there. My sister's afflictions claim my first visit; but that duty paid, I'll hasten to St. Mark's, dissipate the illusions by which Venoni's judgment is obscured, and tell him plainly that the man commits a crime, who is virtuous like him, and denies mankind the use and example of his virtues. Venoni has youth, wealth, power, abilities: let him not tell me, that he quits the

world, because it contains for *him* nothing but sufferings ; he must remain in it, to preserve others from suffering like himself. Let him not tell me, that his *own* prospects are for ever closed ; the noblest is still entirely open to him, that of brightening the prospects of others ! — Oh ! shame on the selfish being who looks upon life as worthless, while it gives him the power to impart comfort, or to relieve distress ; who, because happiness is dead to himself, forgets that for others it still exists ; and who loses not the sense of his own *heart's* anguish while contemplating benefits, with which his own *hand's* bounty has blest his fellow-creatures !

[Exit.]

Benedetto—[alone].—Ah ! very true, my good master ! all very true ! — But Lord, Lord, Lord ! it is really mighty difficult to forget one's own dear self. Heaven knows, poor sinner that I am, a few twinges of the gout are always enough to make me as hard-hearted as a rock of adamant ; and even when dear Lady Josephina died, I'm almost afraid I should have felt very little for any body but myself, if just at that time I had happened to have a touch of the tooth-ach ! — Ah ! we are all poor weak creatures ! poor weak creatures ! poor weak creatures ! [Going into the *palace.*]

FATHER MICHAEL enters hastily.

Father Michael.—Friend! Hist!—Friend!

Benedetto—[returning].—Well, friend!—Hey a Monk?—I beg your pardon then; well, Father!

Father Michael.—The Viceroy is at length arrived?

Benedetto.—He is.

Father Michael.—Conduct me to him: I must speak with him instantly.

Benedetto.—Stop, stop!—no hurry—the Viceroy is already gone out.

Father Michael.—Unfortunate!—My business is of such importance....

Benedetto.—Well, well! I dare say, some few hours hence....

Father Michael.—My Superior knows not that I am absent.... I have ventured here without permission.... I dare not stay.... and perhaps my return may be impossible!

Benedetto.—Indeed?—that's a pity!—and is your Superior then so rigid, that he wouldn't excuse.... [looking at his habit] Ha! ha! I see now how it is. Is not your Superior the Prior Cœlestino?

Father Michael.—The same!—and.... [looking round anxiously, and lowering his voice]—and I am no favourite with him.

Benedetto.—No?—That's very much to your credit.

Father Michael—[acquiring confidence].—Nor am *I* partial to him.

Benedetto.—Nor I neither, Heaven knows! there's my hand upon it.—Father, you're a very sensible honest man.

Father Michael.—You appear to be well acquainted with the Prior's character?—[with an expression of terror]—But for heaven's sake, do not betray me!

Benedetto.—*I* betray you?—To be sure one ought not to wish one's neighbour ill.... But if the fire, which lately consumed a wing of your convent, had consumed in it.... You understand me.... I wo'n't say more.... But if a certain event *had* taken place.... I don't believe, I should have broken my heart for grief, Father.

Father Michael.—The Prior was absent at the time of the conflagration; he ran no danger;—but that accident may be the source of other dangers to him, of which at present he little dreams.

Benedetto.—Indeed? as how, pray? as how? as how? Dear, I shall be mighty glad to hear how.

Father Michael.—I dare not explain myself except to your Lord. But tell me, good old

man ; is not the Viceroy greatly interested in the fate of young Venoni ?

Benedetto.—Extremely.

Father Michael.—Is he aware, that to-morrow Venoni will pronounce his vows ?

Benedetto.—Bless my heart ! so soon ?

Father Michael.—The victim of despair.... looking on the world with horror and disgust... . . . considering as the only good left for him on earth, the permission to inhabit an asylum contiguous to that which contains the ashes of his beloved.... [mysterious] For you are aware, that our Monastery is only separated from the Ursuline Convent by a *party-wall*.....

Benedetto.—Indeed ? the Ursuline Convent ? It was there, that Josepha breathed her last—in I remember rightly, it is under Father Cœlestino's direction ?

Father Michael—[expressively]—Under his direction ?—You are right ! Yes !—It is under his direction ;—and who says *that*.... says *every* thing.

Benedetto.—Well, Father ; and so Venoni?

Father Michael—[with energy].—Assists the Superior's views, and languishes till the hour arrives, when he must sacrifice his liberty for ever : when renouncing the world and himself, he will become subject to the insolent caprice, to

the arbitrary commands, to the tyrannical hatred of a man frequently unjust, never to be appeased ; and who is himself the prey of all those worldly passions, which he secretly and dearly cherishes in his own heart, but whose slightest indulgence he punishes without mercy upon others.

Benedetto.—Well, Father, this at least I must say for you, you seem to be perfectly well acquainted with the moral characters of your fellows.—Dear, dear ! and so then it is to-morrow, that this poor gentleman, so amiable . . . with talents so brilliant . . . with a heart so generous and so good. . . .

Father Michael.—His talents? his heart? those perhaps are still unknown to our Superior :—but Venoni is immoderately wealthy, and of that the Prior was perfectly well informed.—But the Viceroy returns not, and I dare not tarry longer.—Good old man, give your Lord this letter; say, that my seeing him before to-morrow is of the utmost importance to Venoni. . . . to himself !

Benedetto.—You will return then?

Father Michael.—Alas ! that will be impossible? Intreat, that for heaven's love, the Viceroy would deign to visit me at my convent—He must enquire for Father Michael.

Benedetto.—For Father Michael?—I'll not forget; and he shall have this letter immediately.

Father Michael.—I thank you?—As to the

manner in which I have spoken of my superior,
the most profound secrecy....

Benedetto—[with an air of discretion].—Oh!
mum's the word.

Father Michael.—Should it reach his know-
ledge ... Blessed Saints, protect me! *Jeronymo*,
the Prior's confident, comes this way!—[drawing
his cowl over his face in great agitation]—Should
he observe me.... my liberty.... Perhaps my
life.... Friend, farewell!—[going.]

Benedetto—[opening a side door in the palace].—
Stay, stay!—Go down this passage—at the end
of it, turn to the left!—It leads to the garden;
—traverse it, and you will find a little door un-
locked, which will let you out unseen within a
bow-shot of your monastery.

Father Michael.—Heaven's blessing be with
you! a thousand, thousand thanks! [Exit hastily.]

Benedetto—[calling after him].—That's right!
a little farther!—Take care, there are two or three
steps—To the left! to the left!—That's it—
your most obedient servant. [with a low bow;
after which he turns from the palace]—and now
.... Mum! Mum!

Enter FATHER JERONYMO.

Jeronymo.—Bless you, Son!

Benedetto.—Save you, Father!

Jeronymo.—Was not a Friar of our order here even now?

Benedetto.—Not that I saw—[aside] there's a good round lye now!

Jeronymo.—I suppose, then, I was mistaken.

Benedetto.—I suppose, you were: I can't conceive any thing more likely.

Jeronymo.—[aside].—I could have sworn, that Father Michael.... this shall be enquired into farther—*Salve, Son!* [Exit.]

Benedetto.—[bowing].—Your Sanctity's most obedient—And this is the Prior's confidant?—then the Prior's confidant is as ill-looking a hang-dog, as I've set my eyes upon this many a day!

Enter FISHERMEN.

Benedetto.—Now, lads, now! why, you look busily?

First Fisherman.—Well we may, Signor: the Viceroy entertains all the Grandees of Messina this evening, and our fish will bear a treble price—Come, come! Look to the nets, lads—[they go to their boats.]

Benedetto.—Aye, aye!—Good luck to you!—and now I'll seek my Lord with this letter—So, so, my reverend Father Cœlestino!—a convent of Nuns under your direction!—only separated

by a party-wall!—Ha! ha! that looks to me very much as if.... Hush! hush! Signor Benedetto! What you are saying is not quite so charitable as it should be! Bless my heart! Bless my heart! how naturally is a man disposed to think the worst he can of his neighbours!—Ah! fy^e upon you, Benedetto! fy^e upon you! [Exit.

First Fisherman—[in the boat].—Now, lads, are you ready?

The Second.—Aye, aye! pull away!

The First.—Off we go then.

All.—Huzza!

GLEE.

Ply the oar, brother, and speed the boat;
 Swift o'er the glitt'ring waves we'll float;
 Then home as swiftly we'll haste again,
 Loaded with wealth of the plunder'd main,
 Pull away, pull away! row, boys, row!
 A long pull, a strong pull, and off we go.

Hark how the neighb'ring convent bell!
 Throws o'er the waves its vesper swell;
 Sullen it comes from shore to shore,
 Blending its chime with the dash of the oar.
 Pull away, pull away! row, boys, row!
 A long pull, a strong pull, and off we go.

SCENE. — *An Apartment in the Caprara Palace.*

The Viceroy enters, followed by HORTENSIA and the MARQUIS; a Servant attending.

Hortensia. — Nay, but in truth, my dear brother, this is carrying your prejudice too far. What! refuse to endure, for a single half hour, Father Cœlestino in your presence, merely because his countenance and manner happen not to be exactly to your taste?

The Viceroy. — His conversation is as little to my taste as his manner and countenance : he uses too much honey to please *my* palate ! — Surely, if there is one thing more odious than another, 'tis your eternal maker of compliments ; one, who lies in wait for opportunities of thrusting down your throat his undesired applause ; and who compels you to bow in return for his nauseous civilities, till he makes *your* neck feel almost as supple as his own.

Hortensia. — You know no ill of him. . . .

The Viceroy. — I know him to be a flatterer : what would you more ?

Hortensia. — Well, I protest, it never struck me, that he flattered.

The Viceroy — [smiling]. — Very likely ; and yet

my good sister, it's possible that he *might* be flattering, while to *you* he appeared to be speaking the pure simple truth.

Hortensia.—However, if not for his own sake, at least endure him for mine. He is my friend; you are now the chief person in the island; and should you compel me to reject his offered visit, such a mark of contempt from the Viceroy of Sicily might injure the good Prior in the world's opinion.

The Viceroy.—If the good Prior be in fact as good as you assert, the contempt of the Viceroy of Sicily or of any other Viceroy, must be to him a matter of the most absolute indifference.—However, be it as you please.

Hortensia.—I thank you—[to the servant]—the Prior's visit will be welcome.

[*Servant bows, and exit.*]

Hortensia.—Ah! did you but know the good man's heart, as well as I do, this unreasonable dislike....

The Viceroy.—Unreasonable? Ah! Hortensia, have we not all then reasons but too strong for abhorring the sight of this Cœlestino? Was it not his advice, which induced you to place Josepha in that fatal convent?

The Marquis.—Right, right, Benvolio; 'twas his advice, 'twas his alone.

Hortensia.—I do not deny it; but I appeal to

yourself, Marquis, whether he gave not good reasons for that advice? the dangers of the voyage.... the inclement season.... Ah! had Josepha lived, perhaps the example of that holy sisterhood might have weaned her heart from worldly follies, and inspired....

The Marquis—[surprised].—How, Hortensia? I hope, that in placing your daughter in that convent, no views concealed from me.... [Hortensia looks confused.]

The SERVANT ushers in the PRIOR, and retires.

Prior.—Humbly I bend in salutation to this illustrious company!—Will the Lady Marchioness deign to confirm my hopes, that at length she begins to bear her afflictions with some serenity?

Hortensia.—Thanks to your pious exhortations, Father, I am at least ~~resigned~~; more shall I never answer.... for my heart is broken.

The Prior—[to the Viceroy].—Little as I dare flatter myself, that a poor Monk's congratulations can be acceptable to your Excellency, I cannot refrain from expressing my joy at your newly-acquired dignity. But it is not the Count Benvolio, whom I congratulate on being appointed Governor of Sicily; 'tis Sicily, on being governed by the Count Benvolio.

The Viceroy—[in an ironical tone].—I am per-

fectedly aware, reverend Sir, that the high-flown elegance of that compliment can only be equalled by its sincerity: believe me no less sincere, when I assure you on my honour, that my gratitude for your approbation bears an exact proportion to the pleasure experienced by yourself at my appointment.

The Prior—[bowing with humility].—More can I not desire.—Yet must I excuse myself for intruding into your presence at a moment, when fraternal attachment must needs make you wish to be undisturbed: but the claims of compassion admit of no delay, and my heart is ever too weak to resist the entreaties of a sufferer.—My noble Lord and Lady, I bring to you the request of an unfortunate youth.... of Venoni.

All—[eagerly].—Venoni?

The Prior.—His novitiate is nearly expired; to-morrow he will pronounce his vows.

The Marquis.—Unhappy youth!

The Viceroy.—To-morrow?

The Prior.—But ere he renounces the world for ever, he entreats permission to take leave of those dear and illustrious persons, who once did not disdain to look upon him as their son.

Hortensia—[greatly agitated].—No, no!—I cannot.... I dare not....

The Viceroy—[seriously].—Sister.... Venoni must not be refused.

The Prior.—Reflect, dear Lady ; the ear of true piety is never closed against the sighs of the wretched. The poor youth is already in the palace, and . . .

The Viceroy—[eagerly]. — Already here?—Where. . . . Where is he?

The Marquis.—Who waits?—[Servant enters]—Signor Venoni. . . . conduct him hither instantly!—away! [Exit Servant.]

The Prior—[observing the Viceroy's emotion.]—Ah! my good Lord, what a heart have you for friendship!—Happy, thrice happy he, whose worth or whose misfortunes can inspire you with such interest and such zeal!—[The Viceroy answers by a gesture of contemptuous impatience.]

VENONI, in the habit of a Novice, pale, wild, and haggard, enters, conducted by the Servant, who retires.

The Viceroy. } Together. } My Friend!
The Marquis. } My Son!

[hastening to receive him.]

Venoni—[embracing them with a melancholy smile].—I am permitted then to see you once more. . . . You, whom I have ever loved so truly. . . . You, the only ones who are still dear to me in the world!—[He sees Hortensia; his countenance becomes disturbed, and he shudders. Then

recovering himself, he bows humbly, but with a look of gloom, and addresses her in a lowered voice, with much respect]—Noble Lady, can you pardon this intrusion? I fear the sight of one so lost, so wretched....

Hortensia—[embarrassed].—Venoni can never be unwelcome.—I have not forgotten.... I never shall forget.... that there was a time when.... that had I not hoped to make my child adopt....

The Prior—[interrupting her hastily].—Dear Lady, compose yourself: your extreme sensibility overpowers you.

The Viceroy.—But answer me, Venoni; why is it, that I see you in this habit?

The Marquis. — Wherefore renounce the world? wherefore adopt a resolution so desperate, so extreme? Your country has a right to your services, and....

The Prior.—My noble Lords, when the voice of Religion calls an unfortunate to her bosom....

Venoni.—The voice of Religion? No, father, no! the voice, which has called *me*, is the voice of Despair—My friends.... I have lost every thing! every thing!—and what then have *I* to do with the world? they who would serve their country, must possess strength of mind and health of body: mine have both yielded to the pressure of calamity!—they who would serve their

country, must possess their reason in full force and clearness : my reason.... it is gone.... quite gone ! Despairing passion has deranged all my ideas.... has ruined all my faculties.... I now have left but one sentiment.... one feeling.... one instinct.... And that one is Love !

The Prior.—What say you, my Son ?

Venoni—[passionately].—I say, that one is love !—and I say the truth !—Father, I have engaged to renounce the world, to descend alive into the tomb.... but I have no engaged to forget, that I *had*, that I still have a heart ; that that heart is broken ; that it burns, and will burn till it ceases to beat, with a passion.... which Heaven cannot blame, since it was an angel who inspired it !—I have told you, that *her* image would accompany me even to the altar's foot ; I have told you, that I would give up the world, but would never give up *her*.... Her who exists no longer except in this sad heart.... this heart, where she shall cease to exist.... till I do !

Viceroy.—Dear unfortunate youth !

Venoni.—Unfortunate, say you ?—Oh ! no !—the day of misfortune, the day of despair was that, when I heard the death-bell sound, and they told me.... 'twas for *her* ! when I asked for whom was that funeral bier, and they told me.... 'twas for *her* !—But from that hour I ceased to suffer—It's true, my heart.... all there is a devouring

fire—My brain.... all *there* is confusion and clouds: but that fire, it was *she* who first kindled it:—but among these gloomy clouds, *she* is the only object, which I still perceive distinctly—She is *there*.... near me.... always *there*.... I see her.... I speak to her.... She replies to me.... Oh! judge then, my friend, whether with justice I can be called unfortunate!—[*Sinking into the Viceroy's arms*].

The Marquis.—Two victims! Hortensia, two victims?—one has already perished, and the other....

Hortensia—[greatly affected].—Oh! spare me, my husband! Could I have foreseen.... never, never shall I cease to reproach myself....

The Prior.—My daughter, this trial is too severe for sensibility like yours. Let me entreat you, retire, and compose your mind!

Hortensia.—You are right, father; you shall be obeyed — Venoni.... farewell, Venoni!—[going.]

Venoni—[starting forward with a frantic look, and grasping her by the arm].—Hold! you must not leave me yet! First tell me, why was the marriage so long delayed?—Why were your orders given, that Josepha should not see me at the convent? — Answer me.... I will be answered!

The Prior.—My son! my son!—you will make

make me repent, that I allowed this interview—
Let us retire!

Venoni—[violently].—No! no! no!—I will stay here.... here.... [with affection, and embracing the Marquis] with my Father—[Returning to Hortensia]—Answer me!

Hortensia.—[terrified].—Venoni!—For heaven's sake!—Have mercy!

Venoni—[furious].—Mercy?—Had you mercy upon me?

The Prior.—Venoni!—Follow me this instant!
—I command you!

Venoni—[violently but firmly].—To-morrow I will obey you; to-day I am still free!—[to Hortensia]—Answer, or.... [turning suddenly to the Marquis, while he releases Hortensia, who throws herself on a couch, and weeps]—You know it well, my father, she was inexorable! you.... you pitied me; but your wife saw my anguish, and her eye was still dry, and her heart was still marble!—She opposed your granting me permission to see Josephine; she even insisted on your resuming that permission; but I rushed from her presence.... I hastened to Messina.... to the Ursuline Convent.... as I approached it.... the death-bell tolled!—the sound echoed to the very bottom of my soul, every stroke seemed to fall upon my heart!—I trembled.... my blood ran cold.... [in a faltering voice] “Who is dead?”

—[with a loud burst of agony] She! she! your daughter! my betrothed! — my brain whirled round and round—I rushed into the chapel—a bier.... a coffin.... it inclosed your daughter! my betrothed! my happiness! my life! —I sprang towards it—I extended my arms to clasp it.... what followed I know not—I was at peace—I was happy—I had ceased to feel—but oh! the barbarians, they restored me to sense, and 'twas only to the sense of misery!—[He falls weeping upon the Viceroy's neck.]

Hortensia.—Every word he utters.... seems a dagger to my heart!

The Prior—[aside].—Ah! how I repent.... !

Venoni—[recovering, and looking round].—'Twas here.... in this very room.... that I have passed so many happy, happy hours!—'Twas here, that I received your sanction to our union —'twas in yon alcove, that I endeavoured to transmit to canvas Josepha's features:.... features impressed upon my heart indelibly! — Love guided my pencil.... that portrait.... 'tis there! —'tis she! —'tis Josepha!—[He suddenly draws away the curtain, and discovers a picture of Josepha at full length. The Prior stands forward on the scene, his hands tremble with passion, and his countenance expresses extreme vexation and stifled rage.—On the picture's being discovered, Hortensia springs forward, sinks on her knees

and extends her arms towards it—the Marquis turns away from the picture (towards which his left hand points), while he hides his face on the Viceroy's bosom; the Viceroy stands in an attitude of grief with his arms extended towards the picture; he and the Marquis are rather behind the other persons—Venoni stands before the picture, which is to the left of the audience, and gazes upon it with rapture.]

Hortensia.—My child! my child!

The Marquis.—My Josepha!

The Prior—[aside].—Oh! rage!

Hortensia.—I expire! — [Venoni on hearing Hortensia's last exclamation, turns round, hastens to raise her from her kneeling attitude, places her on the couch, and throws himself at her feet.]

Venoni.—You weep?—You repent?—Ah! then my resentment is over, and I find my mother once more! [kissing her hand affectionately, and in the gentlest voice].—Look on me, my mother! cast on me one kind look; 'twill be the last; you will never see the wretched frantic youth again—to-morrow. . . . oh! Hortensia, before we part for ever, tell me that you forgive me. . . . tell me, that do not hate me for having thus wounded your feelings. . . . for having inflicted on you this unnecessary pain!

Hortensia.—[embracing him passionately as he kneels]—Forgive you?—Yes, yes, my son! my beloved son!—I pardon you—Heaven knows, I pardon you—And oh! in return may Heaven and you pardon me!

The Prior—[aside].—Ah!—How I suffer!

Venoni.—I thank you!—'Tis enough!—Now then I have no more to do with the world!—[To the *Prior*]—Good Father, your pardon: I offended you even now; I remember it well.

The Prior—[embracing him with dissembled affection].—And I, my son, had already forgotten it—but 'tis time for us to retire—Come!

Venoni.—Yes!—Yes!—Let us away—farewell, my friends! my mother, farewell!—I shall never see you more; but you will never cease to be dear to me, never! never!—[to the picture]—and you too, my Josepha.... farewell! for a little while farewell!—Whom Death hath divided, Death shall soon re-unite—Come, Father, come!—Farewell!—Bless you!—Bless you!—Oh! come, come, come!—[During this speech, his voice grows fainter; he leans on the *Prior*, who conducts him slowly towards the door; at the end of the speech he sinks totally exhausted on the bosom of the *Prior*, who conveys him away; while the Viceroy and the Marquis lead off *Hortensia* on the other side.]

ACT II.

The Gardens of St. Mark—in the background is a Gothic Chapel, to which you ascend by a flight of steps; adjoining is the Cemetery of the Ursuline Convent, and several Tombs are visible through a large iron gate.

[*Vespers are performing in the Chapel; the last words are chaunted, while the curtain rises—the organ plays a voluntary, while the Prior and his Monks descend from the Chapel in procession. Father Jeronymo enters hastily, and accosts the Prior, who comes forward; he starts at the information given him, and hastily bestows his benediction on the Monks, who go off.]—*

Manent the PRIOR and FATHER JERONYMO.

The Prior.—Father Michael, say you?—He wishes to see Father Michael?

Father Jeronymo.—Wishes? Nay, he *insists* upon seeing him.

The Prior.—What business can he have with Father Michael? What connexion can possibly subsist between them? How should it be even known to the Viceroy, that such a being as Father Michael exists?

Father Jeronymo.—On these points I can give you no information—Yet now I recollect, that this very morning I observed a Friar, whose air greatly resembled Father Michael's, loitering about the Viceroy's palace.

The Prior.—Indeed?—Jeronymo, I have long suspected this Michael to be a false Brother—there is an affectation of rigid principles about him, . . . of philosophical abstinence, . . . of reserve respecting his own conduct, and of vigilance respecting that of others, which make me look on him as a dangerous inmate of our house. However, he has not yet encountered the Viceroy?

Father Jeronymo.—Fortunately, it was to me that Count Benvolio exprest his wish to see this Friar. I promised to go in search of him, and

instantly commanded Father Michael, in *your* name, not to presume till further orders to set his foot beyond the precincts of his cell. I then returned, to inform the Viceroy, with pretended regret, that the person whom he desired to see was not at that time to be found in the Monastery.

The Prior.—Good!

Father Jeronymo.—He appeared much disappointed, and announced his intention of waiting the Friar's return. I was compelled to promise, that as soon as he should re-enter these walls, Father Michael should be sent to him.

The Prior.—The Viceroy then is still here?

Father Jeronymo.—He is: I left him in the garden-parlour adjoining the refectory.

The Prior.—No matter: night approaches, and then he will be compelled to withdraw—Yet that he should rather desire to see Father Michael than Venoni....that, I own, appears to me unaccountable.—I was prepared for his endeavouring to obtain another sight of his friend, and using every possible means to disgust him with the idea of renouncing the world for ever. Secure of my influence over Venoni, absolute master of his understanding, and feeling my *own* strength in the knowledge of *his* weakness, I meant not to object to their interviews; and would have suffered Count Benvolio to exert all his efforts

freely, convinced that all his efforts would have been exerted in vain.

Father Jeronymo.—And in acting thus, you would have done wisely: else, if the Viceroy had been denied admittance to his friend, he might have spread abroad, that you feared lest his arguments should dispel Venoni's illusion.

The Prior.—True; therefore should he demand to see our Novice, even let his wish be gratified—this hated youth is ours beyond reprieve, this Venoni whom Josepha preferred to me, this Venoni to whom alone I impute my disappointment. I had worked upon the superstition and enthusiasm of the weak-minded Hortensia; I had persuaded her, that happiness and virtue existed not, except within the walls of a Convent; already she saw in fancy her daughter's head encircled with a wreath of sainted glory, and she placed her in the Ursuline Convent, in hopes, that the example of the Nuns might induce her to join their sisterhood—Josepha was in my power defenceless!

Father Jeronymo.—And yet she defeated your views!

The Prior.—She did (oh! sage); though snares were laid for her at every step, though where'er she turned, her eye met seductions of such enchanting power, as might have thawed the

frozen bosom of Chastity herself! but virtuous love already occupied Josepha's whole heart; and no room was left for impurer passions:—or if for a moment she felt her wavering senses too forcibly assailed, she only pronounced the name of Venoni, and turned with disgust from every thought of pleasure, whose enjoyment would have made her less worthy of his love.—But the hour of my revenge approaches! Venoni.

Father Jeronymo.—His last abode is prepared: his wealth once secured to our Monastery, the donor shall be soon disposed of.

The Prior.—I hear a noise—'tis Venoni: ever about this hour he comes to bathe yonder grating with his tears.—Let us retire: solitude and the ideas which Josepha's tomb suggests, can but increase the confusion of his mind, and rivet the chains which bind him in our power.—He is here: follow me in silence.

[*Exeunt.*]

[As they go off on one side, Venoni enters on the other; he walks slowly; his arms are folded, and his head reclines on his shoulder.]

Venoni.—It was no mistake! — Oh! man, man! frail and inconstant! Yes; for an instant I felt pleasure, and yet Josepha is no more—but the dream was of thee, my beloved, and oh! it was so fair, so lovely!—However it is gone, and

I am myself again; again am fit for the dead, and I hasten to thee, my Josepha!—[turning to the grate]—I salute ye, cruel bars, which separate my beloved and me: another day has past, and again I mourn beside you!—ye are cold:—[kissing them]—so is Josepha's heart; so too will mine be shortly.—[rapidly]—Yet while still that heart shall palpitate, while one spark of that fire still lives in it which was kindled by her eyes, still will I mourn beside you, cruel bars; still kneel and mourn beside you!—[kneeling, and resting his head against the grate.]

The VICEROY enters.

The Viceroy.—That plaintive voice.... I cannot be mistaken—'Tis he! 'tis Venoni!—My friend!

Venoni—[starting].—Benvolio!—You within these walls!—Ah! did I not entreat.... I told you, I repeat it now, I am *dead* to the world.—I exist for no one.... for nothing.... but grief and the memory of Josepha.—Leave me! leave me!—[he resumes his despondent attitude].

The Viceroy.—Not till I have obtained one last, last interview. Venoni, I claim it in the name of that paternal friendship which I have borne you for so many years, and which even now I feel for you as strong as ever. I claim it

in the name of that sacred union, once so near connecting us by the most tender ties : I claim it in the name of her, who while living was alike the darling of both our hearts, and in whose grave the affection of both our hearts alike lies buried—Venoni, I claim it in the name of Josepha.

Venoni.—[quitting the grate].—Of Josepha?—Say on!—You shall be heard.

The Viceroy.—Tell me then, cruel friend, what is your present object? Why busy yourself in this abode of regret and sorrow, of repentance and despair? What reason, nay, what *right* have you to deprive society of talents, bestowed on you by Nature to employ for the benefit of mankind? and what excuse can you make for resigning into the hands of strangers that wealth, which it is your sacred duty to distribute with your own? Heaven has endowed you with talents, capable of making your own existence *useful*; and your ungrateful neglect renders the gift of no avail: Heaven has bestowed on you wealth, capable of making the existence of others *happy*; and your selfish indolence declines an office, which the Saints covet, and for which even the Angels contend!

Venoni.—Friend!—Benvolio!—In pity!

The Viceroy.—You are neither weak nor credulous: vulgar prejudices, superstitious terrors,

enthusiastic dreams have never subjugated a mind whose innate purity can have left you nothing to *fear*, and whose genuine piety must have made you feel, that everything is yours to *hope*. Why then do I find you in this seclusion? what good is to arise from this servile renunciation of yourself, this forgetfulness of the dignity of human nature, this disgraceful sinking under afflictions which are the common lot of all mankind? 'tis but too frequently the fate of man to encounter calamity; but to bear it with resignation is always his duty. Now, speak, Venoni, and say, what arguments can defend your present conduct.

Venoni—[weakly and despondingly].—Be ~~vivo~~lio.... I am wretched!—I have lost every thing—my strength of mind is broken—my heart is the prey of despair.

The Viceroy.—Of despair? Oh! blush to own it!—True, you have met with sorrows; and who then is exempt from them? True, your hopes have been deceived; accident has dissolved your dream of happiness, death has deprived you of the mistress of your choice: but you are a man and a citizen; you have a country which requires your services, and yet (Oh! shame!) you resign yourself to despair?—Venoni, where is your fortitude?

Venoni.—Fortitude?—Oh! I have none....

none but to sue for death at the hand of *heaven*: had I possest *less* fortitude, my own hand would have given me what I sue for long since !

The Viceroy.—And say, that death be the only blessing left *yourself* to wish for ; is it then only for yourself, that you wish for blessings ? say, that your heart be *dead* to pleasure, ought it not still to *live* for virtue ? your prospects of happiness may indeed be closed, but the field of your duties remains still open : mark me, Venoni ; life may become to man but one long scene of misery ; yet surely the spirit of *benevolence* should never perish but *with* life.

Venoni.—Nor shall mine perish even *then*, Benveno. In the hands of those virtuous men to whom I shall confide my treasures, they will become the patrimony of the widow and the orphan, of the wanderer in a foreign land, and of him on whom the hand of sickness lies heavy. When my bones shall be whitened by time, still shall my riches feed the fainting beggar. When this heart, (itself so heavy) shall be mouldered away into dust, my bounty shall still make light the *heavy hearts* of my fellow-sufferers ! yes ; even in his grave, Venoni shall still make *others* happy !

The Viceroy.—And how can you hope that these friars will perform that duty hereafter, which you now through indolence refuse to per-

form yourself? you, who decline the task of distributing your wealth to advantage, how can you expect to find in *strangers* the spirit of benevolence more active?—Would you have your fortune well administered, at least set yourself an example to your heirs: summon your fortitude, return to the world once more, and...

Venoni.—I cannot!—'Tis impossible!—I am here... here I must remain.—My understanding impaired.... A wretched creature, quite alone in the wide, wide world.... a feeble reed, crushed and broken by the tempest.... I required support.... I require it still—the Superior of this house.... the good man regrets my beloved, and mingles his tears with mine. I have found no one but him whose heart was open to my affliction... . who would listen to my complaints unwearied —who would talk to me of Josepha.—I am here.... and Josepha.... *She* is here too!—Nothing separates us except those bars: I am near her grave.... I am near *her*.... I live near her.... I will die near her!—[leaning against the grate]:

The Viceroy.—The Superior of this house?— And are you *sure*, you know his real character?—Mark me, Unfortunate!—yet should we be overheard....

Venoni.—We are alone—proceed.

The Viceroy.—Know you a Friar, called in his monastery by the name of Michael?

Venoni.—I have seen the man—and now it strikes me, that unusual care has been always taken to prevent our being left alone.

The Viceroy.—This Michael has written to me—but I know not, if I ought.... Venoni, should you betray....

Venoni.—How, *Benvolio?*—you doubt....

The Viceroy.—I doubt the soundness of your head, not the sentiments of your heart—yet it must be risked—Venoni, I came hither in search of Father Michael; I heard your voice, and hastened to embrace you once more. Doubtless, I shall not be permitted to see this Friar; be that *your* care. He writes, that what he has to disclose is of extreme importance; that it concerns But you shall hear his letter—[reading]—“I have secrets to divulge of consequence too great to be confided to paper. Suffice it, that your friend Venoni is in danger; totally in the power of his most cruel enemy....”

[At this moment the Prior enters; the Viceroy hastily conceals the letter in his bosom.]

The Prior—[in a humble voice].—I heard, that your Excellence was in the convent, and was unwilling to deprive you of an uninterrupted interview with your friend. But the hour is come, when our rules enjoin us solitude; pardon me then, when my duty compels me to observe....

The Viceroy.—I understand you, Father; it is

time that I should retire : yet surely your rules are not so strict as to prohibit my conversing with Venoni for one half hour more ?

The Prior.—It grieves me to inform your Excellence, that I have already in some degree infringed upon the scrupulous observance of our regulations—It may not be.

Venoni.—How, Father ?—a single half-hour surely....

The Prior.—Ah ! what do you request of me, my Son ?—the Viceroy's visit aims at depriving me of my dearest friend ; of that friend whom I have selected from all mankind ; and shall I not oppose the perseverance of his efforts ?—I know well the Count Benvolio's influence over your mind, and tremble at the power of his persuasions. I cannot, and I ought not to abandon you to the tender anxious insinuations of generous but misjudging friendship ; and I must not permit your eyes to dwell too long upon the deceitful pleasures of that world, which you have quitted with so much reason, and to which with such mistaken kindness your friends would force you back.

The Viceroy.—Father, this eagerness....—

The Prior.—You have promised to be my brother, to be that which is far dearer, my friend : and shall I renounce a treasure so invaluable at the very moment, which ought to make it mine for-

ever? No, no! Venoni, nor will I fear your exacting from me so great a sacrifice. He, whose tears I have dried, whose sorrows I have shared.... who has told me a thousand times that *I* was his only consolation, and that my sympathy shed the only gleam over his days of mourning.... No! never will I believe that he will now reward my friendship with caprice, with desertion, with ingratitude so cruel, so cutting, so unlooked for!

Venoni.—Oh! good Father.... I know not how....

The Viceroy.—You talk, Sir, much of your friendship?—*I* too profess to feel for Venoni no moderate share of that sentiment; and I think, that I prove my friendship best, when I advise him not to renounce a world, to which he owes the service of his talents and the example of his virtues.—Yes, Sir, yes! I advise Venoni to return into the world.... and at least in giving that advice, I am certain that no one will suspect *me* of having views upon his fortune.

The Prior—[to *Venoni*].—You hear this accusation, my Son? you hear it, and are silent? You, who are acquainted with my whole heart; you who know well how little I regard your wealth; that wealth, which perhaps I might desire without a crime, since it would only be

placed in *my* hands, in order that *might* pass into those of the unfortunate :—that wealth, which you would aid me yourself to distribute, and which.... You turn away your eyes?.. You are afraid to encounter mine?—the blow then is struck; I see.... I feel too well that my friend is lost to me!

Venoni—[eagerly].—Oh! no, no, no! never shall I forget the share which you have taken in my misfortunes; never shall I forget how much I owe to your consoling attentions, to your sympathy and pity.—But yet.... I confess.... *Benvolio's remonstrances*.... the duties which he has recalled to my contemplation.... My country's claims upon my services....

The Viceroy—[embracing him].—Courage, my friend! proceed! Dare to become a man once more, and restore to your native land that most precious treasure, a virtuous citizen!

The Prior—[with assumed gentleness].—I have no more to say: since such is your choice, return to the world, my Son; I oppose it no longer. Undoubtedly you will there meet with pleasures and indulgences, such as the sad and silent cloister could little hope to offer you—Perhaps, you act wisely; perhaps in the tumult of society, surrounded by gay and fascinating objects, who will spare no pains to charm and please

you, at length you may succeed in forgetting that Unfortunate, to whose remembrance you once were prepared to sacrifice every thing.

Venoni—[starting in horror at the idea].—I? I forget her?—Forget Josepha?

The Prior.—And in fact.... why renounce all the delights of life for one who cannot know the sacrifice.... who now is nothing more than an unconscious heap of ashes....

Venoni.—Josepha!

The Prior.—No more will you kneel at yonder grate; no more will that tomb....

Venoni.—Josepha!

The Viceroy—[indignant at the Prior's success].—This artifice.....this insidious language....

The Prior—[pressing his point].—Yes! yes! —I see how it will be! She, whom Heaven scarcely balanced in your heart, soon abandoned, soon forgotten, soon replaced....

Venoni—[almost frantic].—Never! never!

The Viceroy.—Rash youth! pronounce not..

The Prior.—You have sworn a thousand times to live near her, to die near her....

Venoni—[in the most violent agitation].—I have!—I have sworn it! I will keep my vow, and Hark!—[the bell strikes nine; at the first sound Venoni starts, and utters a dreadful shriek; the blood seems to curdle in his veins, and he re-

mains in an attitude of horror, like one petrified.]

The Prior—[triumphant].—Aye! listen to that bell!—'Twas at this very hour, that Josepha's eye-lids closed for ever! 'twas at this very hour, that.... [the bell ceases to strike: Venoni recovers animation.]

Venoni.—Josepha!—Oh! my Josepha!—[He rushes towards the grate, sinks on his knees, and extends his arms through the bars towards the tomb].

Venoni—[after a short pause starts up, comes forward, and embraces the Viceroy in a hurried manner].—Farewell!—I am grateful for your zeal—But my fate is irrevocable!

The Viceroy.—Cruel youth! yet hear....

Venoni.—No more! no more!—I am dead to the world!—yet forget not, that while I lived, I lived to love you—Farewell, Benvolio.... Farewell for ever! [Breaks from him, and Exit.

[The Viceroy remains in an attitude of profound grief; the Prior surveys him in silence with a look of malignant joy—at length he advances towards him.]

The Prior—[in a hypocritical tone].—May I without offence represent to your Excellence, that night approaches?—It must be near the time, when our rules require, that the monastery gates should be closed.

The Viceroy.—I read your soul, and your inhuman joy bursts out in spite of your hypocrisy. Exult; but your triumph will be short.—I have eyes.... They are fixed upon you!—Tremble!

[*Exit.*]

Prior—[*fiercely*].—And you who talk so loudly and so high.... Tremble for *yourself*!—Vain man, you little dream, to what heights I can extend my vengeance!

[*During the following Scene, Night comes on, and the Moon rises.*]

FATHER JERONYMO enters with a dark lanthorn.

Father Jeronymo.—Even now I encountered Venoni, his eyes wild, his lips pale, his whole frame trembling with agitation. I almost dread to enquire the issue of this interview. Say, what result ...

The Prior.... Jeronymo, there was one dreadful moment, when I gave up all for lost—Venoni was on the point of escaping from my power.

Father Jeronymo.—What! the Viceroy's arguments....

The Prior.—Spoke but too forcibly to Venoni's heart. He talked to him of his duties; he painted the world as a spacious field for the exercise of

virtue, and Venoni no longer looked upon the world with disgust.

Father Jeronymo.—But surely his love.... his despair.... the shock which his understanding has received....

The Prior.—Right ; 'tis to them that we are indebted for retaining our captive in his chains.—His resolution was shaken ; the Viceroy already triumphed ; but I pronounced Josepha's name, and instantly he forgot all but her. He is ours once more ; to-morrow will see him resign his wealth and liberty into my hands ; and much time shall not elapse, ere that first sacrifice is followed by a second.

Father Jeronymo.—And does then this Count Benvolio inspire you with no apprehensions ? As Viceroy of Messina his power is great ; and how to escape the vigilance of his suspicious eye....

The Prior.—And by what means then have I veiled from *every* eye the fate of the wretched Lodovico, who for twenty years has expiated in the gloom of our subterraneous cells the crime of having revealed our convent secrets ; and yet who on earth suspects, that he has not long since sought the grave, the victim of an accidental malady ? Jeronymo, fear nothing ; give me but time, and the success of my design is certain.

Father Jeronymo.—I would fain believe it so—yet forget not, that Father Michael....

The Prior.—His fate is decided. It's true, I as yet accuse him only on suspicions; but these suspicions are enough. I will not live in fear, and to-morrow.... Some one approaches.

Father Jeronymo.—As well as the moonlight enables me to discern, 'tis Venoni—perhaps he returns hither, hoping that the Viceroy may not be yet departed.

The Prior.—Let us retire; I have still much to say to you—summon our friends to my cell, that our proceedings may be finally arranged. Afterwards we will rejoin Venoni, and spare no pains to confirm him in that resolution, which secures at once *his* destruction and *my* revenge—
Silence! he is here!

[*Exeunt.*]

VENONI enters hastily.

Venoni.—Benvolio!—Friend!—He is gone!—How abruptly did I quit him!—How ungratefully have I repaid his kindness!—Ah! whither is my reason fled!—He said.... I was in danger!—In danger?—And what then have I left to fear?—What have I still left to lose?—My life?—Oh! I were happy.... too, too happy.... if the moment of parting with it were even now arrived!

Enter FATHER MICHAEL, with a dark lanthorn ; which he afterwards just opens to observe VENONI, and having ascertained his person, closes it again, looking round cautiously..

Father Michael—[in a low, hurried voice].—That voice could be none but his.—Venoni !—Answer !—Is it thou, Venoni ?

Venoni.—Who speaks ?—Ha ! — Father Michael ?—

Father Michael—[closing the lanthorn].—I sought you.... I must speak with you.... I must save you !

Venoni.—Save me ?

Father Michael.—The Viceroy has been here : was he admitted ?

Venoni.—He was—I saw him.

Father Michael.—Mentioned he a letter ?

Venoni.—He did.

Father Michael.—I was not suffered to see him : they suspect me, and confined me in my cell a prisoner, till he had left the monastery. I am compelled then to address myself to you ; but I must be speedy : one moment only is allowed me, while the Prior and his confederates are engaged in their secret councils.—Venoni, collect your powers of mind ; summon up all your strength ; this is a moment, which demands

courage and resolution—your Josepha is lost to you....

Venoni.—For ever!

Father Michael.—And know you the man who tore her from your arms?—know you the man who.... murdered her?

Venoni.—Murdered her?—Almighty Powers!—What mean you?—Whom mean you?

Father Michael.—Your rival! your Friend!—the man, who to-day possesses most influence over your mind, and who to-morrow will become despotic master of your destiny: the tiger, whose tongue submissively licks your hand to-day, and whose talons will tear out your heart to-morrow.

Venoni.—Whom? whom?

Father Michael.—The Father Cœlestino.

Venoni—[in the greatest horror].—He?—the Prior?—Powers of Mercy!—[then with decision]—Away! It cannot be.

Father Michael.—You doubt me?—Be convinced then. Some months are past, since a tremendous fire broke out in this convent at midnight. The Prior was absent; his apartment was in flames: I burst the door, and rescued such articles as appeared to be of most importance; a crucifix of value; his casket; his papers....

Venoni.—Go on! go on!

Father Michael.—Among these papers one let-

ter was half open : Unintentionally the first words caught my eye, and their import compelled me to read the rest. It was from the Abbess of the Ursulines, whose chapel is only separated from ours by a party-wall. It informed me, that a communication exists between the two convents, unknown to all but the Prior and his confidents; that the most scandalous abuses....

Venoni—[frantic with impatience].—Josepha.... Josepha.... Oh ! speak to me of Josepha !

Father Michael.—Other letters leave no doubt, that the Prior's motive for secluding her in the Ursuline convent was a licentious passion for your bride. In that convent every art was employed to corrupt her heart, but every art was employed in vain. She endeavoured to escape ; she was watched and closely confined.—Your return was expected daily—Josepha threatened her tyrants with disclosure of this atrocious secret—the Prior and his accomplice stood on the brink of an abyss, and to prevent it, she was precipitated into an untimely grave.

Venoni—[leaning against a tree].—My brain turns round.

Father Michael.—Nay, sink not beneath the blow!—Think upon Josepha's murder, and hasten to avenge it—think upon the dreadful fate which awaits yourself.—I come hither to rescue you, and....

Venoni.—Stay!—Stay! My brain.... my ideas.... Oh! God! Oh! God! can there be men so cruel.... can there be hearts so hard!—He!—He who supported my aching head on his bosom.... who wept with me.... who pitied me.... Rage!—Distraction!—But no!—[shuddering]—This crime is too horrible—Nature revolts at it—This crime is impossible!

Father Michael.—Impossible? then read this—[taking out a letter]—I have seen the Prior show you notes from the Abbess, in which she affected to pity your situation, and lament the loss of Josepha—You recollect her writing?

Venoni.—Recollect it? Oh! heaven, too well!—let me look on the letter!—[Father Michael opens the lanthorn, and throws the light upon the paper, at the same time shading it with his habit to prevent its being observed at the convent].—Yes! this is her hand; I should know it among a thousand others.

Father Michael.—Read! Read, and be convinced.

Venoni—[reading, while emotion frequently chocks his voice].—“We are undone, Cœlestino; her parents have written to me; and in a few days we must expect Venoni’s return. The incensed Josepha threatens to reveal all that has past; prayers and menaces have been tried in vain; she has determined on our destruction, and nothing can

preserve us but her removal from the world. You must decide immediately. Answer me but one word, and before three days are elapsed, Josepha and this dangerous secret shall be buried together, and for ever!"—[He sinks upon a bank of turf, as if stupefied, and sits there in an attitude of motionless despair].—

Father Michael.—Josepha's death, which happened within three days after this letter's date, declares but too plainly, what was the villain's answer. You are now master of the whole plot. 'Tis evident, that your life also is aimed at: you are a rival, whom the Prior abhors, and whom it was first necessary to deceive, before he could gratify his vengeance. Your vows once pronounced.... Your wealth secured.... Separated from your friends.... Deprived of all assistance.... *then* it is that the storm of revenge and malice will burst in all its horrors on your devoted head.—You will be dead to all the rest of nature, but you will still exist for Cœlestino; will exist to feel the whole extent of his barbarity, to experience every refinement of torture and every species of agony, and without being really permitted to expire, daily to suffer a thousand and a thousand deaths. You answer not?—You move not?—Rouze! Rouze, Venoni; let us hasten from this dangerous abode: *My* fate is no less certain than your own, and flight alone can save me. It's true, the gates are locked, but I pos-

sess the key to a private door of the garden. We are yet unobserved; rise then, and let us hence.

Venoni—[recovering from his stupor, and suddenly starting up].—Where is he?—Where does the monster hide himself?—I will revenge her!—I will punish her murderers!

Father Michael—[violently alarmed].—What would you do?—Whither would you go?

Venoni.—Whither?—Whither?—To revenge Josepha!

Father Michael.—For mercy's sake, recollect yourself!—this way!—Let us fly!

Venoni—[raving].—What?—Fly? and leave her unavenged?—Never!—I will die! I will die! But I will punish her assassins!

Father Michael.—Silence! Silence!—these shrieks.... We shall be betrayed!—You destroy yourself, Venoni! yourself, and me!

Venoni—[with frantic screams].—Josepha!—Josepha!

Father Michael—[endeavouring to force him away].—I must be gone!—Follow me, or you are lost!—Hark!—Holy Saints, they are at hand, wretched youth, they bring the death warrant of us both!—Come! come!—for heaven's sake come!

Venoni—[without heeding him].—The miscreant!—the monster!—Oh! Josepha!

Father Michael—[in despair, releasing him].

—Remain, then, madman, since thou wilt have it so!—Remain, and perish!— [Exit hastily.

Venoni—[alone, and wandering about the garden with a distracted air].—Where shall I direct.... where seek.... a cloud obscures my eyes.... Despair.... Rage.... Powers of vengeance! Powers of fury! guide me.... Desert me not.... give me strength to.... My limbs refuse to bear me.... I faint.... I die!—[he falls upon the ground].

The PRIOR, the Fathers JERONYMO, ANASTASIO, and NICOLO, and other MONKS enter with torches

The Prior—[speaking without].—What clamours make the garden resound? Who thus disturbs the hallowed silence which.... How?—*Venoni*!—Alone!—Stretched on the earth!—He is insensible!—Yet surely there was some one with him!—Speak, Jeronymo; heard you not....?

Father Jeronymo.—Two voices certainly seemed to mingle, and the dispute was earnest.

Father Anastasio.—Whoever was here, cannot have yet gone far. Let us seek....

The Prior.—Lose not a moment: be Nicolo your companion. [Exeunt Anastasio and Nicolo.

The Prior.—Meanwhile, be it our care to restore Venoni to himself: his fortune is not yet in

our possession.—[*He kneels, and supports Venoni in his arms*].—My son! — Venoni! — Look up, Venoni!

Venoni—[*reviving*].—Who names me?—Who speaks to me?

The Prior.—One, whom your situation cuts to the very heart.—What has produced this new distress?—Tell me, my son?

Venoni—[*whom the Prior has assisted to rise, casts round him a wild unconscious look, and unable to support himself reclines his head on the Prior's bosom*]. What has happened?—Where am I?

The Prior.—In the arms of that tender friend, whose sympathy. . . .

Venoni—[*struck by the voice, and recollecting every thing, raises his head, fixes his eyes on the Prior, and repulses him with a look of extreme horror*].—Thou? — Thou?—Oh! eternal Justice!

The Prior—[*astonished*].—How is this?—You drive me from you?—and does then the sight of me inspire you with disgust?

Venoni—[*shuddering*].—Disgust?

The Prior.—In what have I offended?—What is my crime?

Venoni—[*exasperated beyond bounds*].—And still dare you ask, Inhuman? still dare you ask—“what is your crime?”—Oh! monstrous hypocrisy! Oh! guilt beyond belief!—She is dead;

she is dead !—and still dare you ask—“ in what have you offended ?”

Enter FATHER ANASTASIO and FATHER NICOLO.

Father Anastasio.—’Tis in vain that....

The Prior.—Silence !—[with calm dignity].—Hear me, Venoni ! ’Tis plain, that your senses are disordered, and I therefore listen to these insults without resentment, these insults which I have so little deserved from *you*.—But I know well, that your injustice proceeds not from your heart ; and when this paroxysm of delirium is past....

Venoni.—Delirium ?—No, no ! Do not hope it !—Excess of misery.... Desire of vengeance have restored my reason : I feel but too well both for myself and you, that my senses are right again, and tremble thou to hear they are so ! I see you now in your true colours, in all the horrors of your atrocious guilt ! your hour is arrived ; your cup is full ; and the abyss already yawns beneath your feet, which within an hour shall bury you in its womb for ever !—Farewell !—[going].

The Prior.—Yet stay, Venoni !—You must not.... you shall not leave me thus. What means this talk of guilt.... of vengeance ? Declare at once what troubles you !—I boldly challenge an immediate explanation.

Venoni—[furious].—What ?—You brave me ?

—Ha!—Read!—Read then, monster!—[Gives him the letter, which he received from Father Michael: but immediately afterwards becoming aware of his imprudence, he endeavours to regain it.]—Merciful heavens, what have I done!

The Prior—[after examining the letter turns to the Monks, and says in a calm decided tone].—Every thing is discovered—We are betrayed.

Father Jeronymo.—How? How?

Anastasio.—What must be done?—We are lost!

Father Jeronymo.—But one moment is still ours....

Father Nicolo.—There is but one chance of escape....

The Prior.—Silence!—[during these speeches he seems to have been collecting his thoughts; he advances to Venoni, and says in a firm decided tone]—Those words, in which you threatened my destruction, assured your own—[in a voice of thunder]—Die!—Die, and be our dangerous secret buried for ever in your grave!—[To Jeronymo.]—Unclose the chapel-door, and raise the secret stone.

JERONYMO enters the Chapel.

The Prior—Seize him!

Venoni—[who during the above speeches has re-

mained in silent consternation, on being seized by Father Anastasio, &c. bursts out into the most passionate exclamations] — What, barbarians? — Do you dare....?

The Prior. — Bear him to the chapel!

Venoni — [struggling]. — Inhuman monsters! — the vengeance of heaven.... My friends.... My cries.... Help! — Save me!

The Prior. — Stifle his shrieks! — Away with him! — [the Monks surround him — an handkerchief is thrown over his face, and he sinks into their arms exhausted — the scene drops, as they are conveying him towards the chapel, the Prior being the last who follows, pointing to him with a look of triumphant vengeance.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A dungeon with a concealed door on one side, a tomb on the other, and a gallery above—a grated door in the back.*

Lodovico—[with an iron bar in one hand and lamp in the other, comes feebly from the concealed door].—My efforts are unavailing! wretched, wretched Lodovico, the hopes of escape, which thou hast so long indulged, must at length be abandoned for ever!—In vain has the labour of twenty years forced for me a passage from my own cell into this adjoining dungeon: in vain has my persevering vigilance at length succeeded in discovering yonder private door, whose artful concealment during whole years eluded my

enquiries—the upper portal.... its massive bars its inflexible locks.... increasing age.... increasing weakness.... Farewell Hope! I will make the attempt no more. [*He throws down the iron bar.*]—Oh ! faint.... faint!—my efforts have quite exhausted me.... Now, even were the means of flight mine, weakness would forbid I will regain my own cell, sink on my couch of straw, pardon my enemies, and expire! —Let me see !—Yes!—'twas about this spot that I made the opening, and these stones removed....

The Prior—[*above*].—For a few moments wait above: you, Jeronymo, precede me with the torch.

Lodovico.—Heavens ! 'tis the Prior ! Twenty years have elapsed since I heard it ; but too well do I remember that dreadful voice, which pronounced on me the sentence of separation from the world for ever.—What business.... perhaps, my death.... alas ! alas ! I fear it !—Wretched as my existence is, frail as is the fibre by which I am attached to life, still the moment is awful, which must sever it for ever—whither shall I turn.... how avoid.... I dare not regain my prison.... this cell too will doubtless be searched [*a light flashes across the gallery*]—He comes ! 'tis to this very dungeon, that his steps are address.... where then, Oh ! where shall I

drag my fainting limbs.... Ha ! perhaps, that secret passage may be unknown even to the Prior.... perhaps it may awhile conceal.... it must be tried—See, see ! he is here ! away ! away ! [Exit, and closes the door after him.]

Enter The PRIOR and JERONYMO (with torches.)

The Prior.—I tell you this dungeon is impenetrable: in vain will our enemies seek its entrance.

Jeronymo.—But still the Viceroy's suspicions aided by his authority. Besides, is not Father Michael fled ?

The Prior.—Father Michael ! absurd !—And how then, is it in his power to betray us—we reposed in him no confidence—he has never been initiated into our mysteries, and can have no possible reason for suspecting even the existence of this dungeon.

Jeronymo.—Yet still I cannot but fear—

The Prior.—Your fears are groundless—I am aware that Venoni will be enquired after; but how plausible will be the answer? “ he has escaped from us in the night, and whither delirium may have led the wanderer, we are ignorant.”—Say that the Viceroy insists, that Venoni is still within these walls ! we have no objection to his searching through the whole Monastery, per-

fectedly secure that his search must be of no avail.
 'Tis already midnight.—Place the lamp upon yonder tomb ; place too that dagger near it, the only mercy which my hatred can allow him—then when Despair shall reach its height, when he feels that Hope is lost to him, and that existence is a curse, then if he has courage let him grasp that weapon, and thank the clemency of Cœlestino.—Come!—All is prepared!

Enter ANASTASIO and NICOLO, with VENONI,
 [whom they throw upon the floor.]

The Prior.—Object of everlasting hate! Object of never to be sated vengeance, lie thou there!—live to feel the pangs of dying with every moment of the day, that day whose light thou never shalt behold again.—follow me!

[*Exeunt Prior, &c.*]

LODOVICO appears at the private door.

Lodovico.—They are gone—their victim remains—Oh ! let but his escape be effected through my aid, and then how soon this old weak frame ceases to feel, I care not!—[*He descends.*]

Venoni.—Where am I ? have they left me?—the mist which obscures my sight allows me to distinguish nothing—the objects which surround

me seem all confused—a thousand wild distorted images distract my brain—I must give way.

Lodovico.—Alas! poor youth! on the ground?—I'll hasten to pour upon his wounded heart the balm of consolation—yet hold! may they not return?—Yet a few moments....

Venoni—[*rising*].—The clouds disperse.—I am alone—they are gone.... doubtless are gone for ever!—What? and shall then the barbarian triumph? shall then Josepha die unavenged? she must! she must!—then farewell, liberty; farewell hope!—Despair, despair!—Ha! what glitters.... a dagger? a tomb?—doubtless designed for me—'tis there that all sorrows terminate! 'tis there, that I shall dread no more the treachery and crimes of man, his perfidious friendship, his dissembled spite, his infernal thirst for vengeance! Ha! and if all this indeed be so—why not this instant seize a blessing within my grasp? why not at once defeat the malice of my jailors? it shall be so, and thus.... [*going to stab himself, when Lodovico arrests his arm.*]

Lodovico.—Hold! hold! ungrateful!

Venoni.—Ha! a stranger?

Lodovico.—Short-sighted mortal! blush to have attempted that impious act! you despaired of succour; you doubted the goodness of Providence; and at that very moment Heaven had commissioned me to comfort and preserve you!

Venoni.—What are you?—what mean you?—speak, oh! speak!—

Lodovico.—Like yourself, I am the object of Cœlestino's hatred; like yourself was I condemned to descend alive into the tomb.—Mark me, young man! I knew well, that between these vaults and those belonging to the adjoining Convent there existed various private communications—the faint hope of discovering one of them formed the only amusement of my solitary hours: I sought it.... I persevered.... youth, I have found it—

Venoni.—Have found it? Go on, for heaven's sake.

Lodovico.—Have found it here; found it, where its existence is probably unknown even to the Prior, since he selected this dungeon for your confinement—observe this private door [*opening it*]—this passage leads to a closed portal; its fastenings are massy.... I endeavoured but in vain to force them; that bar, which I wrenched from my dungeon door....

Venoni.—That bar?—'tis mine! I have it!—come Father, come! To the portal!

Lodovico.—Alas! my son, the ponderous fastenings.... the bolts.... the bars will resist!....

Venoni.—Oh! talk not to me of resistance! what force can oppose the efforts of a lover, a frantic desperate lover!—Father, there was a

maiden..... how fair she was, nothing but thought can imagine.... how I adored her, nothing but this heart can feel ! Father, this maiden they tore her from me.... they murdered her.... murdered her barbarously.... 'Tis for her sake that I wish for liberty ! 'tis to avenge her murder that I go to labour ; and can you doubt my success ? No, no ! that thought will turn my blood into consuming fire, will harden every nerve into iron, will endow every limb, every joint, every muscle with vigour, and strength and powers Herculean—come, Father, come !

Lodovico.—Oh ! that I could !—But age.... but infirmity.... Co, go, my son, I will remain, and pray for you.

Venoni.—What ? go, and leave you still in the power of your foe !—Never, never !

Lodovico.—Dear generous youth, you must !—I should but impede your flight ; I should but mar your exertions. Away then ! effect your own escape.... then return, and rescue me, if possible—but should you find me dead, oh ! believe, that it will have sweetened the bitter hour to think, that my existence lasted long enough to preserve yours.

Venoni.—Thou good old man....

Lodovico.—Yet one word ! should you force the portal, and reach the interior of the Ursuline Convent in safety, shape your course towards

the garden: the wall is low....to scale it is easy, and....

Venoni.—Enough! Enough! and now....
[going]

Lodovico.—And when you are free....when smiling friends surround you....when all for *you* is liberty and peace and happiness, do not....oh! do not quite forget, that a poor captive languishing in his solitary cell....

Venoni.—Forget *you*?—never! by that life which you now give me, never; I swear it!—Once at liberty, my first care shall be to effect your rescue, my second to secure your happiness.—Oh! surely if aught in life is sweet, it is when the heart overflows with gratitude, and the hand has the power to perform, what that grateful heart dictates and desires: oh! surely if there is aught which gives mortals a foretaste of the bliss of angels, it is when affection brings a smile upon the furrowed cheeks of those, to whom we are indebted for our existence. 'Tis to *you* that I owe that gift; and while I have life, never will I forget that it *is* to *you* I owe it.—Now then away! One embrace; one blessing; then pray for me, Father, pray for me, and farewell!

[Exit with the lamp.]

Lodovico—[alone].—Spirits who favour virtue oh! strengthen his arm! aid him! support him! Hark! he is at the door!—I hear him!—Again,

again!—repeat the blow!—Hark! hark!—It breaks! It shivers!—and see....

VENONI, [appearing above with the lamp].

Venoni.—Freedom! freedom! freedom!—Friend, farewell! I speed to rescue you! [Exit.

Lodovico.—Fly! fly! you bear with you my blessing!—[kneeling]—Heaven, I adore and thank you!—I have preserved a fellow creature's life! [The scene closes.

Scene.—*An Anti-Chamber in the VICEROY's Palace.*

Enter **BENEDETTO, CARLO, PIETRO, &c.**

Benedetto—[entering].—Here! Pietro! Carlo! Where are you all!—they call for more iced water!—the supper room is not half lighted—and Carlo, Carlo!—Bless my heart! I had almost forgotten!—Carlo, take three of your fellows, and help to bring out the fat Countess of Calpi, who has just fainted away in the ball room.

[*Exeunt Servants.*

Benedetto—[alone].—What heat! what a croud!—Nay, for that matter the fat Countess of Calpi is a croud of herself, and though it were the depth of winter, her presence would raise the thermometer to “boiling water.”—Well! I must

say, its mighty inconsiderate in corpulent people to come abroad in sultry weather ; and if I were a Senator, I'd make it high treason for persons above a certain weight to squeeze themselves into public places after the first of May.

Enter TERESA.

Benedetto.—So, Teresa!—Gay doings!—Lord bless their elbows, how the fiddlers are shaking them away in the ball room!

Teresa.—Gay in truth.—But good-luck! it only serves to make me melancholy by reminding me, how the dear Lady Josephina would have ornamented such an entertainment!—I see, the Marchioness is here:—well! how she can find spirits to enter into scenes of gaiety....!

Benedetto.—Nay, nay, Teresa, the Viceroy insisted on her coming; but though the scene around her is gay, that her heart is sad is but too evident.

Teresa.—Ah! and well it may be sad—after shutting her daughter up in the Convent, where she caught that fatal malady....

Benedetto.—Could she foresee that?—and why lay all the blame upon the Marchioness? surely the Marquis is almost as culpable for consenting that....

Teresa.—By no means, Benedetto, by no means; the Marquis only did what every sensible man ought to do; he obeyed his wife—But as for the Marchioness.... Oh! I have no patience with *her*!

Benedetto.—So it appears, *Teresa*; and shall I tell you why?—Because the Marchioness is a woman, and *you* are a woman too: now I've always observed that when a female has done wrong, she ever meets with least indulgence from persons of her own sex; and whenever I want to hear the foibles of *one* woman properly cut up, I never fail to ask another woman, what *she* thinks of them.

Servants—[without].—Benedetto! Benedetto!

Benedetto.—Coming! Coming! [Exit.]

Teresa.—Well, there is one thing that seems to me very strange: Benedetto has certainly an excellent understanding.....and yet he isn't always of my opinion—now that appears to me quite unaccountable!—[going.]

FATHER MICHAEL rushes in, out of breath.

Father Michael.—Heaven be praised! Then I am arrived at last.

Teresa—[turning].—A Friar?—Your business, Father?

Father Michael.—'Tis with the Viceroy; good daughter, lead me to him this instant!

Teresa.—This instant?—Oh! mercy on me, you can't see him to-night, if you'd give your eyes.

Father Michael.—I must, I tell you! I must!—My business is of such importance, that....

Enter BENEDETTO.

Benedetto.—Why Teresa! Dawdling here, while the maids.... [*Exit TERESA.*]

Father Michael.—'Tis the same! how fortunate!—worthy old man....

Benedetto.—Is it you, Father?—Why, you were out, when his Excellence went this evening to....

Father Michael.—I was at home.... But the Prior's suspicions.... I was a prisoner, and.... but this is no time for explanation—lead me to your Lord! Away!

Benedetto.—Impossible, Father! All the Grands of Messina..... a banquet..... a ball..... don't you hear the music?—But doubtless to-morrow....

Father Michael.—To-morrow will be too late! Alas! perhaps it is too late already! perhaps, at this very moment Venoni is no more!

Benedetto.—No more? Venoni? Follow me, Father, follow me this instant—stay, stay! as I live, here comes his Excellence himself.

Enter the VICEROY and HORTENSIA.

The Viceroy.—Nay, dear Hortensia.... How now? What would you, Father?

Father Michael.—Pardon my intrusion, noble sir, but my business will not brook delay—I am that Friar, whose letter this morning....

The Viceroy.—Father Michael?—Speak! come you from Venoni?

Father Michael.—He is in danger.... perhaps, is already no more! oh! speed for his aid; rescue him, if possible; if too late, avenge him!—If he still lives, I suspect the place of his confinement, and can guide you thither: if the bloody deed is already accomplished, at least let us punish the crimes of his assassin, the monster Cœlestino!

The Viceroy.—His Assassin?

Hortensia.—Cœlestino?—Stay, brother, stay!—Will you on the word of an unknown believe, that a man whose whole course of life has been so pure, so pious....

Father Michael.—Nay, Lady, for Heaven's love delay us not: these moments are precious,

are dreadful!—these moments decide the life or death of a human being!—Come, come, my Lord! let the Prior be seized; terror will doubtless compel him to confess my charge! secure too the Abbess of the Ursulines; *she* can confirm my story; *she* well knows, that the Prior's licentious love for your neice, for the murdered Josephine....

Hortensia.—Murdered? my child?—

The Viceroy.—Horror crouds on horror!—Within there!—my servants! my guards!—away to the Monastery; if there denied admittance, we'll force the gates! Venoni, thou shalt be preserved, or avenged most dreadfully.—On, on, good Friar! away!

[*Exeunt.*]

Hortensia—[alone].—Can it be?—Celestino.... the Abbess.... *He*, whom I ever thought so holy.... *She*, in whom I reposed such fatal confidence?—Distracting doubts, I must be satisfied—yes! I'll hasten to the Ursulines; I'll interrogate the Abbess myself!—I'll question.... I'll threaten; and if I find her guilty.... Oh! then if her heart possesses but one feeling fibre, it will surely writhe with agony, when she hears the groans, when she sees the anguish of a despairing, of a childless mother!

[*Exit.*]

Scene III.—An apartment in the Ursuline Convent decorated for a festival—the back-part is filled up by a dark-coloured curtain.—Night.

The Prior enters, preceded by a Friar (with a torch) and followed by VERONICA.

Veronica.—Yet, hear me, Cœlestino !

The Prior.—Idle remonstrances ! What I shall I have plunged into guilt, and reap no fruits from it but the danger ?—Abbess, Josepha must be mine : remember my power, and obey me !

Veronica.—You have been obeyed—your victim is even now conducting hither ; the banquet the lights the choral harmony every thing is prepared, that can seduce her senses—but all these temptations she has already resisted she will resist them still : then spare me the odious the unavailing office

The Prior.—Perform it well, and it will not be unavailing. For twelve long months cut off from all society deprived of every joy, of every comfort, even deprived of light then when suddenly the radiance of a thousand torches blazes upon her wondering eye, when music swells upon her ear, and (still more melting, still more melodious) when the voice of affection

speaks touchingly to her heart... Nay, if she then prefers her gloomy cell to liberty and pleasure, Josepha's virtue must be more than human.

Veronica.—But *should* it prove so... oh! then at least forbear to persecute the unfortunate! —Let her swear never to divulge our secrets— Let some well imagined tale account for her reported death, and....

The Prior.—How? and dare *you*, the creature of my will, whose life depends but upon my breath....

Veronica.—While you speak, forget not also, that *my* fate involves your own—I too can divulge....

The Prior.—Speak but such another threatening word, and the whole measure of your offences shall be made public throughout Messina —my mind is resolved; my resolutions are taken: *I* can dare every thing; but *you*.... weak trembling doubting woman.... dare you die!

Veronica—[terrified].—Oh! no, no, no! you know but too well, I dare not.

The Prior.—No more, then, but obey me. To-night be it your care to fascinate Josepha's senses and inflame her heart. To-morrow I will once more present myself before her, and prove, whether Virtue and Venonni can counterbalance at once the allurements of present pleasure, and

the apprehension of future pain.—You have heard my will; obey it!—Should Josepha escape, I swear, that my vengeance shall drag you to the scaffold, even though I ascend it with you myself.—[to the Friar]—Lead to the Monastery.

[*Exeunt.*

Veronica.—[alone].—I struggle in vain to escape; the snares of guilt are wound too closely round me.—Hark! she comes! 'Tis Josepha! I heard the plaintive murmur of that voice, so sweet, so tender, so touching!—I dare not meet her yet—oh! Josepha, gladly would I share thy gloomy dungeon, could I but share with it thy uncorrupted heart.

[*Exeunt.*

[A Nun enters (with a lamp) she is followed by SISTER LUCIA, who conduct JOSEPHA blind-folded.]

Josepha.—Oh! why is this mysterious silence?—For what purpose have you taken me from my prison?—Who are you, and whither have you brought me?—have mercy on my agony!—see, how this silence terrifies me: see how I kneel at your feet; see how I kiss them and bathe them with my tears. Answer me....in pity answer me.—still no reply? still no kind consoling sound? [Lucia motions to leave her] Oh! no, no, no!—do not leave me! even though you speak not,

stay, oh ! stay ! let me at least be consious,
 that there is a human being near me....
 that I am not the only thing within these mourn-
 ful walls, which possesses life and feeling !—Stay,
 stay, in charity !—[*the Nuns break from her and
 exēunt*]—they leave me—they are gone !—Hark !
 a door closes !—I hear their retiring footsteps !—
 alas ! alas ! even in the noise of that closing door,
 even in the echo of those departing steps, there
 was some little comfort ; they at least betokened
 the existence of a human being——I am alone—
 let me remove the bandage, and examine....
 dark ! dark ! all dark ! still all silence, still all
 gloom !—where am I ?—I dare not advance lest
 some abyss.... Oh ! light ! light ! glorious light !
 shall I then never see thee more ?—Any thing
 but this dead and hollow silence ! any thing
 but this sepulchral, this dreadful, this heart-op-
 pressing gloom.

CHORUS [*within, very full and sweet.*].

—“O ! Love ! sweet Love !”—

Josepha.—Hark ! voices ! I heard them ! I am
 sure, I heard them ! it was music ! melody ! en-
 chantment—hark ! hark ! again.

CHORUS.

" Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
For Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love.*—"

During this chorus, the curtain rolls up, and discovers a banquet splendidly illuminated; large folding doors are in the centre; chandeliers descend, and the stage becomes as light as possible — Veronica and Nuns are in the front.

Josepha.—See ! see ! all bright ! all brilliant ! —a dream.... a fairy vision.... the blaze overpowers me; my eyes are dazzled; my brain grows dizzy : I cannot support the rapture— [she sinks against a pillar].

Veronica.—Josepha !

Josepha—[starting].—Surely that voice.... the Abbess.... what can mean....

Veronica.—How ? not speak to me, my child? not look upon your mother ?

Josepha.—Mother? child?—oh ! it is so long since I heard those dear dear names.... my heart my feelings [throwing herself into her arms]— Oh if I am your child, then mother, mother ! be to me a mother indeed !

* From "The Lay of the last Minstrel."

Veronica.—And do I not prove myself one, my Josepha, when now in spite of all your past perverseness, I again clasp you to my bosom, I again put it in your own choice to live in liberty, in society, in delight? look round you, my daughter! see how every countenance smiles to welcome you; see, how every heart springs towards you; see, how....

Josepha.—[starting away from her, exclaims with energy].—Ha! now I understand it all! the mystery is cleared! the web is unravelled! yes, yes, the meaning bursts at once upon me, all in the broad blaze of its daring villany, in all the hypocrisy of its deep-laid odious art!

Veronica.—What art? what villany?—When kindly I woo you to....

Josepha.—Speak not! proceed not!—Let not the unholy words pass through your lips, as you value your own soul! I guess your meaning; Oh! then pronounce it not; great as are your crimes let me save you from committing one so monstrous as this! the lessons of vice from *any* lips appear disgusting; but when a woman gives them breath....'tis horrible! 'tis dreadful! 'tis unnatural!

Veronica.—[aside].—Oh! if I dared....no, no! it cannot be.

Josepha.—Ah! you melt?—Oh! then behold me kneeling before you; see my anguish, my

fears, my hopes... I have none but in *you!* remember your sex, your habit, your former affection for me. You loved me *once!* even now you called me your child, and when I was a child, often have you prest me to your heart with all a mother's tenderness—oh! then by that tender name I charge you, I implore you, tempt me not to vice; rather aid me to persevere in virtue. Let me depart; restore me to my parents; I will never divulge your dreadful secrets. It's true I once threatened you; I would fain have terrified you into penitence, but *you* know my heart, All-merciful! you know, that I would not willingly hurt even a worm!—She weeps! she pities me! Blessings on you, eternal blessings! —Oh! let me hasten.... [going, *Veronica starts in terror: the Nuns oppose her progress.*]

Veronica.—Hold! — Detain her! — *Josepha,* that I suffer.... that I feel for you.... it were fruitless to deny—but alas! unfortunate, your fate is decided; *your* fate and mine! —the Prior.... the unrelenting Prior.... oh! so guilty as I am, I dare not look on death.—Yield, then, *Josepha*, yield! —all hope is lost to you....

Josepha.—Nay, not so, Lady! strong as are my fetters, Heaven may one day break them; but robbed of innocence, then indeed not Heaven *itself* could save me. When rains beat heavy, the rose for awhile may droop its head oppressed;

but the clouds will disperse, and the sun will burst forth, and the reviving flower will raise its blushing cup again ; but all the flames of the sun and all the zephyrs of the south can never restore its fragrance and its health to the once-gathered lily.

Veronica.—Alas ! alas ! to protect you is beyond my power ! you will be plunged once more alive into the grave.... will be deprived of every comfort....

Josephina.—No, Lady, no ! even in the depth of your subterraneous dungeon, *one* comfort still is mine, and never will forsake me ! 'tis the consciousness, that my sufferings are transitory, but that my reward will be eternal ; 'tis the consciousness of an *hereafter* ! 'tis this which supports me during all my daily sorrows ; 'tis this, which irradiates all my nightly dreams. Then this poor wretched globe with all its crimes and all its follies rolls away from before me : then all seems fair, and pure, and glorious : cherubs shed the roseate lustre of their smiles upon my stoney couch, and guardian saints encourage me to suffer with patience, to hope, and to adore !— Such are *my* dreams : now, Lady, paint if you dare the visions, which you behold in your own.

Veronica.—She tortures my heart ! her re-

proaches fire my brain—I can endure them no longer.... remove her ! away !

Josepha—[kneeling]. — Oh ! drive me not from you ! pity me ! protect me ! save me !....

Veronica.—I cannot ! I dare not !—Take her from my sight, and.... and for ever !

Josepha—[rising]. — For ever ? No, cruel woman ; do not hope it ! listen to these sighs ; look upon these tears ! in your gayest happiest moments, such sighs shall scare away delight ; when you lift to your lips the cup of pleasure, you shall find the draught embittered by such tears : and when that hour arrives which you dread so justly, a form like mine shall stand beside your pillow, and a voice like mine shall shriek in your ear—“ Welcome, murderer ! welcome to that grave, to which you sent me ! ”—

Veronica.—Insupportable !—away with her ! she kills me !

Josepha.—Oh ! let me stay yet a few moments more ! let me gaze but a little longer on the lovely friendly blessed light ! let me still hear a human voice, even though it threaten me ; let me still look upon a human face, even though it be the face of an enemy—[the Nuns endeavour to force her away]—Mercy ! mercy !—Help me aid me !

VENONI rushes in (by a side door).

Venoni.—Who shrieks for help.... for mercy ! —*I.... I* will give them!—[Veronica and Nuns utter a cry of surprize.]

Veronica.—Ah ! a stranger ?

Josepha—[bursting from the Nuns with a violent effort].—'Tis he ! 'tis he himself!—Save me, Venoni ! Oh ! save me, save me!—[she rushes to throw herself into his arms, and sinks fainting at his feet.]—

Veronica.—Venoni ! —Betrayed ! undone ! Lucia !—[she whispers Lucia.]

Ven.—She knows me ?—Look up, look up, unfortunate ! I will protect you ! I will preserve you, and.... Josepha ! 'tis Josepha !—Speak to me, Josepha ! oh ! speak to your Venoni !

Veronica.—But one moment is still ours.... [to Lucia]—Fly !—hasten !—[Lucia goes off by the door through which Venoni entered.]

Venoni.—The monsters ! the barbarians ! oh ! my beloved, how have the wretches made you suffer.—

Josepha.—Suffer ? oh, say but that you love me still, all, all will be forgotten.

Venoni.—Do I love thee ?—Oh, Heaven ! thou, my soul ! my life ! best half of my existence ! but come ! let us quit this hated place.....

let us away, and.... [*to Veronica*]—Nay, Lady, shrink not at my approach : how you may answer to the Viceroy, be that your care; but dread no reproaches from *me*! *I* shall still respect that sacred habit, though *you* have felt for it so little reverence; *I* shall still remember your sex, though you seem yourself to have forgotten it. Give me the means to quit the Convent.... furnish me with the portal key....

Veronica—[confused].—My Lord.... the keys they shall be produced.... I have sent for them.... even now you saw a Sister leave the chamber..... she returns..... I hear her.... speak !—

LUCIA returns.

Veronica.—Have you found them?

Lucia.—I have.

Venoni.—And where are they ?

The PRIOR rushes in followed by Monks.

The Prior.—Here!—Art thou found again, my fugitive—seize him.—

Josepha.—Venoni! oh! Venoni!

The Prior.—Tear them asunder.

Josepha.—No, no! I will never leave him!— While I have life, thus will I cling to him; if I

must die, it shall be at his feet—[they are forced asunder]—Oh! cruel, cruel man!—[she sinks into the arms of the Nuns—Veronica is in the greatest agitation.]

The Prior.—Away with him!—[he precedes; the Monks, bearing Venoni, follow him] Venoni, your death-hour has struck!

FATHER MICHAEL rushes in followed by the VICEROY, &c. and grasps the PRIOR's arm.

Father Michael.—Tyrant, no; 'twas for thyself it sounded.

The Monks release Venoni, and the Nuns Josepha; the lovers fall into each other's arms—at the same time the folding-doors are burst open, and the Marquis, Hortensia, &c. enter.

Hortensia—[speaking without].—Where is she?—Where is the Abbess?

Josepha.—My mother's voice?—Here! here! my mother, behold your Josepha at your feet.

Hortensia.—Powers of mercy!—She lives!—she lives!—my Josepha! my joy! my treasure!—oh! can you forget....

Josepha.—Every thing, every thing.... except that I am still dear to you.

The Viceroy.—Officers, you know your prisoners! remove them, their sight is painful.—
[*The Prior is conducted away by the guards; Veronica is leading off, when Josepha addresses her.*]

Josepha.—Lady.... you felt for me.... you pitied me; I too can pity and feel for you—if have influence, you shall find mercy.

Veronica.—Josepha!.... angel... your prayers.... oh! pray for me! pray for me!

[*Exit with guards.*

Venoni.—My joy.... my amazement.... but oh! let me fly to rescue.... Follow me, my friends—there is a poor old man.... a captive....

The Viceroy.—Be calm, dear youth—Lodovico is in safety: in guiding us to *your* dungeon, this worthy Friar discovered and released him.

Venoni.—My friend! my preserver!—how can I reward....

The Viceroy.—If my power.... if my whole fortune can recompense....

Father Michael.—I have preserved innocence, I have detected vice, I have served the cause of humanity: I find a sufficient reward in the feelings of my own heart.—But, my good Lords, let us quit this scene of horror; suffer me, my son, to unite your hand with Josepha's at the altar;

then retiring to some more virtuous fraternity
....

The Viceroy.—What, Father? after such experience of a Convent's interior will you again....

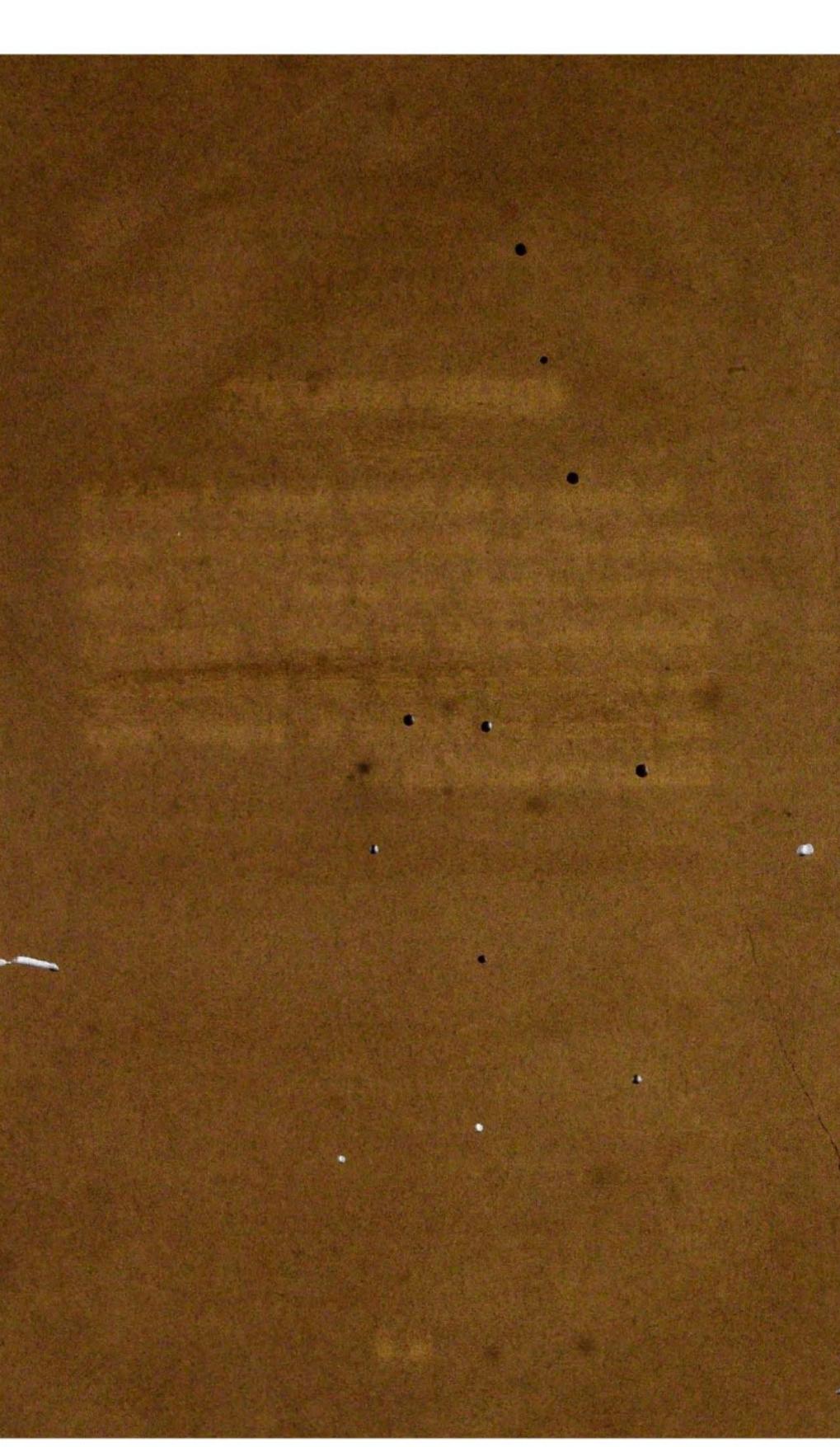
Father Michael.—Ah! forbear, my Lord, nor brand a whole profession with disgrace, because some few of its professors have been faulty—'tis not the *habit* but the *heart*, 'tis not the name he bears but the principles he has imbibed, which make men the blessing or reproach of human-nature.—Virtue and Vice reside equally in Courts and Convents; and a heart may beat as purely and as nobly beneath the Monk's scapulary, as beneath the ermine of the judge, or the breast-plate of the warrior.

Venoni.—The good Friar says right, my friend—then let us scorn to bow beneath the force of vulgar prejudice, and fold to our hearts as brethren in one large embrace men of all ranks, all faiths, and all professions. The Monk and the Soldier, the Protestant and the Papist, the Mendicant and the Prince, let us *believe* them all alike to be virtuous till we *know* them to be criminal, and engrave on our hearts, as the first and noblest rule of moral duty and of human justice, those blessed words,

—“BE TOLERANT!”—

ADVERTISEMENT.

In justice to the French Author, I think it right to add the Third Act, as it originally stood — It was evidently not so well adapted to the English taste, as the one which I substituted; but still partiality for my own production does not prevent my thinking the original design infinitely the best of the two.



THE ORIGINAL THIRD ACT.

The Scene represents the Interior of two of those vaulted Dungeons, termed (in monastic language) "vade in pace."—They are separated by a Wall of immense thickness, supposed to be that which divides the Monastery of St. Mark from the Ursuline Convent. The Dungeon to the left of the Audience contains a miserable pallet, at the head of which is a block of stone supporting a basket, a pitcher, a small flask of oil, and an iron lamp—the other dungeon is entirely dark; in the back is a large iron-grated door, through which a winding Staircase afterwards becomes visible.—On each side of the door is a kind of Tomb formed of rough-hewn Stone.

JOSEPHA, pale and emaciated, with her hair dishevelled, is discovered asleep on the pallet. She suddenly utters a loud cry, and starts as if affrighted by some terrible dream.

Joseph—a [on her knees].—Save me!—Peace, peace, my heart! Twas but a dream alarmed me!—a dream? alas! alas! How painful is even the sleep of the wretched!—If exhausted by faintness and sorrow, I feel my eyelids close for a moment, instantly such fearful visions

croud before me....! Oh! 'tis hard, that even in the arms of rest the consciousness of sufferings should still pursue me; that I should still retain the recollection of my woes, and groan beneath their burthen! Happy are they, who sleep....to wake no more!—[she sinks again upon the pallet.]—To be torn in the first bloom of youth from societyfrom libertyfrom Love! —[with impetuosity]—And how then had I injured the barbarians?—It's true, I threatened them with exposure; I fain would have alarmed them into penitence: but you know my heart, All-merciful! you know, that willingly I would not harm even a worm!—yet now they doom meBut let me not dwell on that:—It might drive me frantic.—[She rises, and examines the dungeon, supporting herself by the walls, and tottering through weakness, as she moves slowly along.]

Silly that I am!—Alas!—I know too well, 'tis fruitless to resume my search—there is no out-let; None!—yet once there was a ray of hope....'Twas there....[pointing to the party-wall]—Against that wall, that I heard the noise;—Or was it an illusion?—It seemed, as if some one laboured to force a way into my prison: but now during many many days the noise has quite ceased,—Hark!—No: I can hear nothing—Perhaps 'twas some captive like myself, some other victim of the unfeeling Abbess—Perhaps the Unfortunate is dead:—Or has she regained her freedom? Oh! then at least for her I thank you, kind Heaven: Dead or free, at liberty or in the grave, she is happy!—while I....while I....[she drags herself towards the pallet].—Ah! me!—What deadly sickness....Such a cold shivering too....my eyes grow dim!—The moment....Is it then come at last?...

.. Venoni ! .. . Venoni !—Oh ! Venoni !——[She falls senseless on the pallet.]

The PRIOR and FATHER JERONIMO are seen descending the winding stairs : the former bears a torch—the noise of heavy bars falling and locks drawing back is heard—the grated door opens.

Enter the PRIOR and FATHER JERONIMO.

The Prior.—I tell you, this dungeon is impenetrable; in vain will our enemies seek its entrance.

Father Jeronymo.—But still the Viceroy's suspicions aided by his authority.... Besides, is not Father Michael fled?

The Prior.—Father Michael? Absurd!—And how then is it in his power to betray us? We reposed in him no confidence: he has never been initiated into our mysteries, and can have no possible reason for suspecting even the existence of this dungeon: much less can he guide Venoni's friends through the intricate passages, by which it must be reached.—[He lights a lamp, and places it on one of the tombs.]

Father Jeronymo.—Yet still I cannot but fear....

The Prior.—Your fears are groundless—I am aware, that Venoni will be enquired after: but how plausible will be the answer?—"His senses were disordered; he has escaped from us in the night, and whither delirium may have led the wanderer we are ignorant"—Say, that the Viceroy insists that Venoni is still within these walls?—We have no objection to his searching through the whole monastery.... perfectly secure that his search must be of no avail.—Be composed, I tell you: 'tis already midnight:

Every hostile eye is closed in sleep.—Come! all is prepared ! and 'tis time to perfect our designs.—[they re-ascent the staircase, and disappear, Josepha, during the Prior's speeches gradually revives, and raises herself with difficulty.]

Josepha.—And I still live!—the moment so long expected is still deferred!—Well! It cannot be far off—I thought, I saw him!—I thought, I heard him call “*Josepha!*”—but the hand with which he beckoned me, was stained with blood; and the bosom, to which he would have prest me, there was a wound on it!—Alas! Venoni, Josepha still exists....but exists no longer for *you*!—[she sinks back, supporting her head upon the block of stone.]

The PRIOR descends the staircase : he bears a torch and is followed by the FATHERS JERONYMO, ANASTASIO, and NICOLO, who conduct VENONI.—His head is still enveloped in the handkerchief; he is dragged along by the three Monks, and seems too much exhausted to resist, or even to support himself—the Monks throw him on the ground, where he remains motionless—the PRIOR surveys him for a few moments in silence.

The Prior.—Object of everlasting hate! Object of never to be sated vengeance, lie thou there!—Live!—Live....to feel the pangs of dying with every moment of the day....that day, whose light thou never shalt behold again!—Follow me!—[they go out, locking and barring the grated door after them—they re-ascent the staircase and disappear].

Josepha—[raising herself on her knees with difficulty, and resting in that attitude, as if overcome by the exer-

tion].—And yet painful as is my life, the thought of parting with it quite is dreadful ! Ah ! am I not dead already to all things, but the sense of suffering ?—[she rises.]—[during this speech Venoni has gradually recovered animation : he now removes the handkerchief from his eyes, and half raises himself upon one arm.]

Venoni.—Where am I?—Have they left me?—the mist . . . which obscures my sight . . . allows me to distinguish nothing—the objects which surround me seem all confused.—A thousand wild distorted images distract my brain—I must give way!—[he again closes his eyes, and remains motionless.]

Josepha.—The pretended funeral . . . the report of my illness . . . Yes ; every one must have been deceived—doubtless, I am thought to be no more . . . perhaps am already forgotten !

Venoni.—The clouds disperse—I feel my strength returning—but still the confusion of my brain . . . Spirit of Josepha, look down on your poor Venoni ! Compassionate his sufferings ! Enable him to avenge your wrongs !

Josepha—[looking at the door of her dungeon].—Will that door then never unclose again ?—Never ?

Venoni—[rising].—I am quite alone—But will they not return ?—While I am yet unobserved, by the assistance of this lamp let me examine . . . [he takes the lamp and looks all around him.]

Josepha.—The order of time no longer exists—I know not now, how many wretched days since I entered this dungeon. At first they gave food at regular intervals, and that assisted the flight of time : but of late such ages a elapse, and no one approaches . . . !—[she walks towards the door.]

Venoni.—Nothing but frowning vaults....walls of impenetrable thickness....a grated door....the bars seem massive, yet let me try whether....[he places the lamp on one of the tombs, and endeavours to force the grating.]

Josephina—[turning away from the door].—"Tis so long, since they were here with food....so long!—they will come no more!—My sufferings have at length disarmed their cruelty, and I am permitted to die!—"Tis fruitless to expect them—No; they will come no more!

Venoni—[abandoning the attempt].—Vain efforts!—Idle rage!—Despair! Despair!—[he falls exhausted against one of the tombs.]

Josephina—[turns her eyes towards the lamp, which now gives only a feeble light, and rushes towards it with a loud shriek].—Ah! 'tis expiring!—[she kneels down, pours fresh oil into the lamp, and clasping her hands addresses it in a tone of passionate affection]—Oh! forsake me not, my only comfort, my only friend! Beauteous light! kind, cheerful lively flame! Thou the only thing that has warmth in this sad dungeon! Thou the only thing near me, which possesses life! Abandon me not, blessed flame! abandon me not in pity!

Venoni—[looking round].—A tomb?—Another?—them no doubt destined for me!—"Tis there, that vs terminate! 'Tis there, that I shall dread no treachery and crimes of man, his perfidious p, his dissembled spite, his infernal thirst for !—Ha!—And if all this indeed be so....why not this instant seize a blessing within my power? why not at once defeat the malice of my jailors?

—Poisons, daggers, these are not in my power, 'tis true; but thus.... but thus.... [rushing with frantic fury to dash his head against the wall which divides the dungeons, he suddenly starts back, and for an instant remains motionless, gazing upon the wall]—Eternal Powers!—Is it not an illusion?—[he hastens to bring the lamp.]

Josepha—[rises].—*Venoni!*—Dear *Venoni*!—Ah! how often have these vaults heard that loved name repeated!—[she advances towards the party-wall, against which she leans her head.]

Venoni—[raising the lamp and gazing on the wall].—Yes!—Yes!—there are characters engraved upon the stone!—But the light is so feeble.... [reading]—“Search!—Hope!”—Hope?—Oh! heaven! and can then a ray of hope penetrate even into these caverns of despair?—“Search?—Where?—In what place.... Let me examine.... [He wanders through the dungeon with hasty and uncertain steps].

Josepha—[with a look of surprise and pleasure].—What can this mean?—A strange unknown sensation... a sudden change....

Venoni.—Perhaps.... Perhaps this tomb.... [he pushes back the stone that covers it]—Horror!—A breathless.... human form!—[closing the tomb with a movement of disgust, and supporting himself against the gratings].

Josepha.—My strength seems renovated!—and my heart feels so light! and my blood too flows so rapidly....!

Venoni—[recovering].—Time flies!—Let me.... [opening the second tomb].—A heap of stones of fragments.... May they not conceal.... [he places the lamp on the first tomb, after which he stoops]

the contents of the other]—the habit of a Monk—a linen cloth—Heaven and Earth!—'Tis covered with characters traced in the wretched writer's blood!—Oh! let me read . . .!—[he hastens to the light].—

Josepha—What then can have happened?—My mind feels at once so soothed and tranquil!—Some strange sympathy . . . Some unknown power seems to call me back to life, and almost bids me . . . *Hope!* . . .

Venoni—[reading in extreme agitation]—“Profit by the toils of twenty years—the wall is hollow—A bar, which served to fix this tomb against the dungeon's side . . . hid among the fragments of . . .” Oh! if still there . . . [he runs to explore the tomb].—

Josepha.—Hope, thou most precious gift of heaven, and art thou then still mine?—I stand on the brink of the grave, and even there wilt thou not yet forsake me?

Venoni—[rushing forward with the iron bar in his hand, and exclaiming with exultation].—'Tis here!—'Tis mine!—Now then . . . now . . . [continuing to read].—“A few minutes would complete my work, but I die—Farewell—Escape, and bless Lodovico!”—[He drops the cloth, and sinks upon his knees, raising his hands and eyes to heaven].—Thou, whose goodness I doubted!—Thou, whose goodness I adore! Pardon a repentant sinner!—complete thy work!—Hear me!—Save me!—[he rises.]

Josepha.—And yet for me to hope . . . Oh! 'tis frenzied!—[she seats herself on the pallet, leaning her head on her hands in an attitude of despondency.]

Ni—[who has been sounding the walls in different parts of the iron bar].—No!—All . . . all solid!—The captive's attempt discovered . . . His kind

intention frustrated....Hark ! [striking the party-wall a second time.]—'Tis sound !—'Tis hollow !—Liberty, thou shalt be mine again !—Fall, fall, detested walls !—[after a few blows, he stops, and rests, supporting himself by the bar.]—Oh ! fail me not now, my strength ; now, when I so greatly need you !—Revive ! revive !—and aid my resolution.—To the trial once more !—[He resumes his work : after a few moments two or three of the stones fall]—

Josepha—[starting up and exclaiming with a shriek of surprize and hope].—Merciful Heaven ! what do I hear ?

Venoni—[working with increased energy].—Success !—success beyond my hopes !—let me not lose a moment.....

Josepha.—The noise ! the same noise !—[rushing towards the wall, she stops suddenly and throws herself upon her knees]—Have mercy on me !—you know, that I have not deserved my sufferings !—Mercy ! mercy ! let me owe to you a second life !

Venoni.—Freedom ! blessed freedom ! strengthen me, precious idea !—[the stones fall in great quantity].

Josepha.—A voice !—a human voice !—I heard it !—I am sure of it ! it penetrated to my very heart !

Venoni—[stopping for a moment].—What soundsyet no matter.—[continuing to work with eagerness]—

Josepha—[trying to force a large stone out of the wall].—I will aid you, stranger ; I will aid you !—I will endeavour.....alas ! these feeble hands....I despair....'tis in vain, that....[a few stones

fall into Joseph'a's dungeon]—Oh! blessed light! that opening.....

Venoni—[astonished].—Surely I heard a voice!

Joseph'a—[extending her clasped hands towards the opening].—Whoever thou art, have mercy on me! have mercy on a wretched woman!—Save me! save me!

Venoni.—A woman?—a captive?—Fear nothing!—Courage! courage for a few moments, and we are free—[at this moment the greatest part of the wall falls]—

Joseph'a.—What said he?—What sounds....Oh! is it possible.....[she hastily seizes her lamp; at the instant that Venoni passes through the breach, the light is thrown full upon his countenance]—'Tis he!—'tis he!—I expire!—[she falls senseless upon the ground, and her lamp is extinguished.]

Venoni.—Where are you?—answer me?—where are you?—Doubtless another victim....[he repasses into his own dungeon, and takes up his own lamp]—I will deliver her, or perish in the attempt—[he returns into Joseph'a's prison. She is still insensible, and her long dishevelled hair entirely conceals her face]—Another dungeon?—nothing but dungeons?—Where....where is the unfortunate?—On the ground?—[he sets down his lamp, kneels beside her, and raises her gently, supporting her with his left arm]—Rise!—recollect yourself!—fear nothing!—I will be your deliverer....your friend....[as her head sinks upon his shoulder, her hair falls back from her face: he utters a dreadful cry]—Joseph'a!—She!—Joseph'a! speak to me, Joseph'a!—

Josepha.—[opening her eyes].—Who spoke?—Who called me?—[seeing him]—'Twas not a dream then!—[clasping him in her arms wildly.]

Venoni.—*Josepha*!

Josepha.—Dear, dear *Venoni*!

Venoni.—The monsters!—the barbarians!—Oh! my beloved, how have the wretches made you suffer!

Josepha.—Suffer?—Oh! say but that you love me still; all, all will be forgotten!

Venoni.—Do I love thee?—Oh, Heaven!—thou! thou, my soul, my life, best half of my existence!—but I forget....these moments are precious—collect your strength, my love—summon all your force of mind!—assist me to break your fetters and my own. Liberty, life, happiness....these are at stake! these will be the reward of our success.

Josephina.—What must be done?—speak?—whither....[he is advancing towards the door of *Josephina's* dungeon; cries, shouts, and tumult are suddenly heard without.]—

Josephina.—Hark!—what noise....

Venoni.—We are discovered!—I fear....I fear....the wall in falling has alarmed....

Josephina.—[wringing her hands].—Undone!—undone!

Venoni.—The noise directs its course towards my dungeon!—'Tis the Prior: I hear his voice!—doubtless he comes to complete his....this embrace! 'tis our last! farewell for ever!—[going towards the breach.]—

Josephina.—You will not leave me?

Venoni.—Remain! remain!—'tis your only chance for safety!

Josepha.—Death alone shall part us !

Venoni.—I intreat.... I conjure you.....

Josepha.—Never will I leave you more !—never !

The noise grows louder—*Venoni* during the last speeches has re-entered his dungeon ; *Josepha*, from whom he vainly endeavours to free himself, is dragged along by him on her knees : *Venoni* still grasps the iron bar, and has his arm raised ready to fell to the ground the first person who approaches him—the noise of a door breaking open above is heard.

Father Michael—[speaking without].—He is here, I tell you !—down with the door !—down with it, and set him free !

[*The door gives way* ; *Father Michael* rushes down the winding stairs, followed by the Viceroy and Guards with torches—the grated door is burst open.]—

Father Michael—[entering].—This is the place !—
Venoni!—behold him !

Venoni—[dropping the iron bar].—Father Michael !

Father Michael.—How !—a female too !

The Viceroy—[hastening to embrace *Venoni*].—Oh ! my friend.... Merciful Heaven !—do I behold....

Josepha—[throwing herself on his bosom].—Your *Josepha* !

The Viceroy.—My lamented child!—m
but how in this dungeon?—tis true, I w
you still lived: finding his guilt detected,
in his terror revealed that secret, and even now
anxious parents in the adjoining Convent are seeking....

Hortensia—[without].—My child? — where is my
child?

Josepha.—My mother's voice?—[she hastens back
into the other dungeon, the door of which is thrown
open, and Hortensia rushes in wildly, followed by the
Marquis, Teresa, Benedetto, Nuns and Servants with
torches.]—

Hortensia.—Where....where is she?

Josepha—[prostrate before Hortensia].—At your feet,
my mother?

Hortensia—[raising her].—To my heart, my dearest!
—to my heart!—Oh! can you forgive....can you for-
get....

Josepha.—Every thing!—every thing!—except that I
still dear to you!—[seeing the Marquis, who now
enters, she flies to him, and throws herself into his
arms]—Father! my dear father!

The Marquis.—My child!—I cannot.....cannot
speak!

Benedetto and Teresa.—Dear, dear Lady!—[strug-
gling to kiss Josepha's hand, while the rest of the
servants form a groupe round Josepha and her pa-
rents.]

Venoni—[to the Viceroy].—But by what means did
you discover....

The Viceroy—[pointing to Father Michael].—Be-

liverer : had it not been for the good Friar,
would have been impenetrable.

chael.—Carefully did the Prior conceal it
. but I traced his steps, and dared to follow
him unperceived even to the very doors of this dun-
geon.

Venoni—[grasping his hand].—My friend, my pre-
server !—how can I reward

The Viceroy.—If my power if my whole fortune
can recompense

Father Michael.—I have preserved innocence, I have
detected vice, I have served the cause of humanity : I
find a sufficient reward in the feelings of my own heart.
—But my good Lords, let us quit this scene of horror :
suffer me, my son, to unite your hand with Josepha's
at the altar ; then retiring to some more virtuous fra-
ternity

The Viceroy.—What, Father ? after such experienc
of a Convent's interior, will you again

Father Michael.—Ah ! forbear, my Lord, nor br
a whole profession with disgrace, because some few of
its professors have been faulty—'tis not the *habit* but the
heart, 'tis not the name he bears but the principles he
has imbibed, which make man the blessing or reproach
of human-nature.

Venoni.—The good Friar says right, my friend—
then let us scorn to bow beneath the force of vulgar
prejudice, and fold to our hearts as brethren in one large
embrace men of all ranks, all faiths, and all professions.
The Monk and the Soldier, the Protestant and the Papist,
the Mendicant and the Prince, let us *believe* them all