

THE
GERMAN SORCERESS.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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“ Old as I am, for ladies’ love unfit,
“ The charms of women I remember yet,
“ Which warm my heart, and still inspire my wit.”

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S O R C E R E S S .

CHAP. I.

MEANWHILE Cardinal Constantine was solacing himself with the company of a fair neighbour, whose husband was on a voyage to Venice. He was soon apprized of the escape of Ildefonsa. On entering her apartment the next morning, the first object that attracted his notice, was the iron grating torn from the window, and the

VOL. III. B mischief

mischief which had proceeded from its fall. Enraged at the loss of one whose favours he was resolved to obtain, though he purchased them by violence, he committed, in the height of his passion, a thousand acts of extravagance.

“How was it possible,” he exclaimed, “she could remove the grating? How comes it the noise did not disturb me? Who could have assisted her in her escape?”

While he poured out his soul in these agitated expressions, he suddenly revived with the hope of Ildefonsa being yet upon the island.

“She may be concealed, but not yet out of the reach of my power: no ship can have conveyed her hence so suddenly. But may not Bruno and his companions have torn her from me? I know not what to think,

think, but that I am every way wretched from her loss!"

When, however, he obtained undoubted intelligence of her having sailed on the preceding night, he was worked up to a distraction of mind little short of frenzy. The disappointment of love was little less mortifying than the wounds of offended pride; and the indignation he felt at being deceived, as it reflected upon the discretion and vigilance of his conduct, added to the poignancy of his feelings. Revenge soon rose upon his mind, and subdued all other passions to itself. He resolved to gratify it at every hazard, and to sacrifice not only the innocent Ildefonfa, but her family, to his vengeance. Steiner, no less than those whom he suspected of assisting Ildefonfa in her flight, was the object of his greatest inveteracy; and the Cardinal became on a sudden as great an enemy

enemy to the Veneruzzys, as Gennebald to Theodore and the Reinecks.

Although fully intending an immediate pursuit of Ildefonfa, his ardour soon began to cool, on reflecting that, should he at present appear at Venice, all eyes would be upon him, as he had formerly insulted our fair fugitive. To the hints thrown out by Father Bernard, who was at this time doubtless at liberty—to certain words dropped by Steiner concerning the intrigue at Rome—in short, to the high esteem in which the family of Veneruzzo was held by the Doge—all these considerations were sufficient to induce him to desist for the present from prosecuting the plans he had so hastily conceived. He determined, therefore, to pursue a wiser method, and to commence his attack with more prudence and discretion, in order more effectually to ensure

ensure a signal revenge. He had resolved on Ildefonfa's ruin, should she ever again be in his power; and did not a little upbraid himself that she had escaped from him with her innocence inviolate. Although St. Gibard could no longer serve him in his new projects, there were sufficient candidates for his good graces in almost all he saw around him—such as would enter into no plot with reluctance for which they were well paid, and scruple at no crime which was made their interest. He immediately dispatched one of his most trusty emissaries to Venice, with an injunction to observe all that passed, and acquaint him with every circumstance.

The Cardinal's feelings cannot easily be conjectured when he heard of Steiner's return, as also of his having been restored to favour, and married to Ildefonfa—of

• Leontine's reinstatement in his father's affection, and, in short, of the lively interest which the Doge himself had taken in every thing that had lately occurred in the family of Veneruzzy.

Although this information had given rise to a conflict in the mind of Constantine, he was too practised a master of dissimulation to undertake any thing which might suddenly unmask his plans; and notwithstanding the thought of Ildefonza being possessed by another, almost drove him to distraction, yet he had too much prudence to permit the sudden burst of his vengeance to destroy the slow working and deadly effects he intended should finally result from it.

Meantime, he meditated in secret on those projects which a burning hatred dictated, and waited but the slow revolution of opportunity to destroy Ildefonza and her family.

family. Love, however, was not yet wholly extinguished in his breast: he therefore put off the execution of his designs until Theodore and his family should be arrived in Germany.

He was convinced that Venteruzzzy and Sporina would not part with their daughter, and that Steiner would consequently remain with Ildefonfa at Venice. On this conjecture he built his future projects.

He determined, after much meditation, to take a journey to Rome, where his presence was become necessary, and had been already too long deferred. The moment he was informed of Theodore's departure from Venice, he hastened thither, having made at Rome the necessary arrangements for ensuring success to his enterprise.

He had already made an unfavourable report of Steiner, and had circulated an account of Ildefonfa's elopement which differed materially from the truth. He exculpated himself for detaining Ildefonfa under his own roof, by alledging that he had confined her with a view of correcting certain criminal propensities in her nature, and that it was his intention to have delivered her up to the Holy See, that she might have performed certain religious penances.

Previous to the execution of his final plans, it was necessary for himself to be on the spot, directing those minor instruments of his malice, whom he intended as the ministers of his vengeance: he therefore repaired to Venice, where he found Ildefonfa in all the bloom of beauty, and gaiety of youth and happiness. Love and
revenge

revenge awakened at the sight. To overthrow this prosperity, to undermine this felicity, were the constant occupations of his thoughts.

It is certain that Veneruzzzy enjoyed a considerable portion of happiness. Steiner remarked that Father Bernard still entertained the same sentiments for him as before. This observation, as it convinced him of the high integrity of the worthy Father, proved to him likewise that he had a firm and trusty friend, who made his interest his own. The good Father, on his side, transported at the sight of their felicity, forgot that, whilst under confinement, he had vowed never to murmur at his monastic profession; yet was he too frequent a witness of domestic pleasures, not to feel some degree of envy at the superior happiness they inspired. But when, retired to his cell, he

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could

could reason more coolly on the attributes of his profession, he reconciled his mind to the happiness of others, renewed his vows, and implored Heaven for strength to enable him to persevere in virtue.

Theodore and Matilda, previous to taking leave of Veneruzzy, had extorted the promise of a visit in Germany: in truth, this Nobleman was at present occupied in those arrangements which it was necessary should precede his journey, which he concluded might detain him some time from home.

Sporina, who was well acquainted with the wavering disposition of her husband, asked him frequently whether he would not materially feel the change of the warm climate of Italy, for the cold and northern parts of Germany; observing, for her part, that she would sooner renounce all hopes of

seeing her foreign guests, than that her husband should be dissatisfied with his intended visit.

Veneruzzy protested that he anticipated the happiness which would result from the visit with the warmest satisfaction; that Theodore and his family were endeared to him from their first appearance, and that he longed to consolidate a friendship so auspiciously commenced.

“ I am certain,” said Ildefonza, “ that you will be pleased with your journey, and your reception will be that of ancient hospitality. The worthy Marquard, whose friendship you have already experienced, will be rejoiced to see you in his native country; and I shall feel a grateful pleasure in paying him my acknowledgments.”

“ I will introduce you to all our friends and the Knights of our neighbourhood,”

said Steiner; "and I flatter myself, my Lord, you will find in Germany some portion of that polish and delicacy which are the distinction of Italian Noblemen."

"You may perceive," said Veneruzzy, "that I am exerting my utmost endeavours to expedite my voyage; and, if I am not deceived, Father Bernard would not be averse from accompanying us."

"If so," replied Steiner, "the pleasure of such a companion must not be foregone. I cannot see any thing to oppose it. His Convent surely will not refuse him permission. Besides, I can build a monastery on my own domains, of which my friend Bernard shall be Prior."

"I promise you," said Ildefonsa, gaily, "that I will obtain the Superior's consent. —I think, Father," archly, "I can ensure it by a present."

Father Bernard expressed his willingness to accompany them, but desired till the next day to consider of it. In the meantime he cautioned Veneruzzy not to delay his departure a moment.

“Arrange your affairs speedily, my Lord; it is impossible to foresee all those things which may disconcert the best conceived plans. You know that I have had forebodings of ill, which subsequent events have shewn not to be the dreams of superstition. I have lately perceived in this city a face which made me tremble—your Lordship will not be at a loss to guess who it is; be assured he comes not here on any good design.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Ildefonsa, “it can be no other than Cardinal Constantine!—Heavens! with what indignity has he treated me! Believe me, my Lord, he
has

has a malignity of heart seconded by a shrewdness of understanding, which makes me dread the success of any project on which his insatiate revenge may drive him."

"Ildefonso has judged rightly of his character," said Father Bernard, "and I partake of her fears; it is on this account, my Lord, that I advise your speedy departure."

"What," said Steiner, "if I should attempt to set cunning *against* cunning! I will wait on him with pretended thanks for his care of Ildefonso; I will thus sound his design, and may possibly disarm his anger."

"You are not aware," replied Ildefonso, "of Cardinal Constantine's character: he will not be a dupe to *thee*, my dear Steiner, but will rather entrap you in his own snares by his superiority of cunning and wickedness."

"But"

“ But I yet think,” added Steiner, “ he may be convinced of his fruitless efforts to possess thee; at least, he may be deceived for a time. Let us once get clear of Venice, and we are secure from his machinations: he would not dare to follow us; and if he did, he could not injure us.”

“ Something of this nature may be accomplished,” said Father Bernard; “ at least if one part of your scheme displease us, we will not on that account reject the whole. I will also wait on him, notwithstanding my repugnance to hold converse with him. The arms of knavery may be turned against itself; they may be wielded for this purpose by an honest man, without leaving any contamination of guilt behind them.”

“ I agree with Father Bernard,” said Veneruzzy; “ vice would be an overmatch
for

for innocence, unless it sometimes put on the armour of hypocrisy."

"Alas!" said Ildefonza, "in an encounter with malice like the Cardinal's, I fear the success of the best concerted plans. When alone and unprotected, I was at his mercy; when deprived of Steiner's affection, and suffering under the just anger of my parents, what persecution did I not undergo from him! But Heaven has spared me—has restored me to the arms of my parents, who have pardoned all my faults!"

A secret foreboding of misfortune overhung the mind of Ildefonza, who could scarcely think but that the presence of Cardinal Constantine at Venice was meant to accomplish her utter ruin. She well knew his implacability, and the extent to which he would carry his revenge; she was assured
that

that any attempt to circumvent a man of his penetration would be fruitless; and she deprecated the design as pregnant with new misfortunes.

Meanwhile, Constantine, whose mind was feeding upon gloomy projects of vengeance, was himself a victim to the severe contest of conflicting passions; and fear, doubt, and despair alternately predominated in his mind. He was doubtful whether to resort to harsh or milder measures; whether to make use of the means he already had in his power, or to try to insinuate himself into the good graces of the Veneruzzys. He feared lest an injudicious severity should deprive him of all hopes of Ildefonsa, whilst he looked to milder means with better prospects of success.

Such were the reflections which filled his mind, when a valet entering, informed him
that

that Count Steiner desired to speak with him.

“Steiner!” he exclaimed with surprise—
“what can be the object of his visit? Will he have the audacity to affront me in my own house? But this indiscretion, by justifying my revenge, shall make it fall yet heavier on him.”

“Having heard of your Eminence’s arrival,” said Steiner, on being ushered into the apartment, “I thought it was incumbent on me to pay my respects in person. The thanks I owe you it were ungrateful to omit; and indeed, so intent was I upon my purpose, that I should have journeyed to Rome, rather than have omitted my acknowledgments.”

The Cardinal, who thought he perceived a tone of irony lurking under professions

“fessions he knew he did not deserve, enquired what he had done to merit such gratitude.

“Assuredly,” replied Steiner, “Ildefonfa and myself will ever be indebted to your Eminence; and, as she is now mine, accept our united gratitude. She acknowledges the kindness of your protection when I left her in the Island of Corfou; my friend Bruno is no less warm and enthusiastic in his gratitude to your Eminence, and you have been the means of reconciling me to Ildefonfa, and both of us to her family.”

Constantine listened to this address in some confusion. He immediately believed that Ildefonfa had been silent with respect to what had passed, and had even prevailed upon Steiner to pay him this visit.

“Sir Knight,” said he, “pardon me if this courtesy confounds me. I have done

no

no more for Ildefonsa, than what is due to any one of her rank and sex. I was happy in offering her an asylum, and congratulate you sincerely upon your union. My acknowledgments should have been made in person, but that I am unwilling to encounter the coldness of Veneruzzy to an old friend. But if by your means, Sir Knight, an intimacy could be renewed, which I have often lamented having been broken off——”

The conversation was now interrupted by a servant announcing Father Bernard; and Steiner, who was not displeased with an opportunity of withdrawing, took his leave of the Cardinal, who invited him to repeat his visit, as he was anxious to cultivate his friendship.

When Father Bernard found himself alone with the Cardinal, he confessed, as
he

he had before concerted with Steiner, that he had somewhat transgressed against his Eminence; but that, on the other hand, his Eminence must admit that he had been treated with too much severity.

The Cardinal replied, that the usage he met with was to be charged upon his own obstinacy; that the dignity with which he, as Cardinal, was invested, required that his actions should be spoken of with more reverence; that the profession of the Father enjoined discretion; and that unless the reputation of the great was guarded from obloquy, their influence and example would not operate to the benefit of the lower orders.—“ But let us dismiss this subject,” he added; “ I forgive every thing.”

“ This is not the place,” said Bernard,
“ to examine which of us is in the wrong.
My right to liberty is at least more precious
than

than that which your Eminence lays claim to, of having reverence inseparably attached to high rank: of this right you deprived me."

"To give a turn to our discourse," said Constantine, "let me ask if Veneruzzy's indignation against me has yet abated?"

"This is a subject," replied Father Bernard, "which I have refused to listen to. We cannot always command our passions; it is scarcely possible to know those with whom we live: we become wise alone by experience, and I am resolved to put mine to the best profit."

"You are turned philosopher," said the Cardinal; "unite therefore your philosophical with your talents of persuasive excellence, and obtain my re-admission into Veneruzzy's house."

"I cannot

“ I cannot render you that service,” said Bernard.

“ What,” replied Constantine, “ do you refuse your good offices towards reconciling us? You who have so often asserted that you knew your duty, are *you* afraid to trust me? I will candidly confess that I formerly entertained a strong passion for Ildefonza; but this has ceased on her becoming the wife of another man. She has now no further attractions for me; rest, therefore, satisfied on that point.”

Father Bernard still persisted in refusing to introduce Constantine to Veneruzzy, and denied his own efforts to promote the reconciliation; at the same time he assured him that, on presenting himself to that Nobleman, he would meet the reception his rank demanded.

On

On the following morning the Cardinal appeared at Veneruzzy's house, and was received with a freedom and affability unexpected on his part. This change might be attributed to the happy state of his family; the return of his children, the marriage of Ildefonfa, the friendship he had contracted for Theodore and Matilda, whom he soon hoped to visit in their own country—all these occurrences had contributed to restore his wonted placidity. Happy within himself, he was willing to spread happiness around him. Constantine was received with the smile of welcome, introduced to Sporrina, who could not entirely overcome her disgust for him; and his re-admittance into the family might now be considered as established.

Ildefonfa, in concert with her husband,
appeared

appeared to have forgotten the past, but was determined to avoid being alone with Constantine.

Veneruzzy and his family were passing the summer at a country seat on the borders of the Gulph of Venice, surrounded by gardens and delightful groves. Constantine was their constant visitor, watching for an opportunity of private discourse with Ildefonfa. At length an occasion offered. He one day perceived from his window, which commanded the thickest part of the grove, Ildefonfa, who had just entered it as a refuge from the heat. The rest of the family had retired to their several apartments, in expectation of the proper hour of walking, and inhaling the fresh breezes of the evening.

Steiner was gone to Venice, and was not to return until late, that he might avoid the heat.

Ildefonfa had preferred the agreeable shade of the lemon and orange-trees, under which she was sitting, to the retirement of her own chamber. Constantine hastened to join her; the moment seemed auspicious to love, and his heart beat high with hope.

“At length, my dear Ildefonfa,” cried he, “the opportunity so long wished, is afforded me. I may now speak to you without witnesses; I may now pour out before you the homage of my thanks.”

“Thank me, my Lord!” exclaimed Ildefonfa, with surprise, “and for what, I pray you?”

“I enquired of your husband the same thing,” replied the Cardinal, “because his visit perplexed me greatly. The idea must have been your own; it is truly ingenious; and I know not which I should most admire, the invention of the amiable Ilde-

fonfa, or the air of confidence I assumed, that I might not betray the past. I received Steiner so well, he shewed so ardent a zeal for you, mixed with friendship for me, that I think, after having given such a proof of your genius, you may make of him just what you please."

"I confess, my Lord, I am at a loss to comprehend you!"

"He did not inform you then," continued Constantine, "that he came to thank me for having given you an asylum under my roof? Yet I cannot believe he would have taken such a step without your approbation. I presume to flatter myself that your aversion for me is somewhat decreased, and that you are brought at last to confide in my professions."

"My Lord," replied Ildefonfa, "I thought it my duty to hide from my husband

band what, if possible, I would make you forget. I wished not to make him your enemy, by revealing your crime against me; but you deceive yourself if you suppose my sentiments with respect to yourself are changed: they are the same, my Lord, with those I entertained for you when I had the misfortune to be thrown into your power. But now my demand to be unassailed by your base proposals is stronger, as my duties are more multiplied. I declare to you that my life, my parents, and my husband are very dear to me; yet am I not so anxious for the preservation of all these, as for the purity of my conscience. But if you, my Lord, have been induced to renew your connection with my family for the purpose of practising upon my honour, I beg you will desist, and visit this villa no more. Beware lest Steiner should
suspect

suspect you: his noble spirit, spurning at the slightest contagion of infamy, would compass a revenge upon you, should he but half suspect your intentions."

Saying this, she abruptly left him.

Words are unequal to the description of the Cardinal's rage at thus becoming a second time the dupe of a girl whom he plainly perceived to despise him. Angry with himself for having made advances towards a reconciliation with Veneruzzy, and fearful lest the prudence of Ildefonza giving way to indignation, she should unmask him to the world, his love was now converted into a hatred deadly and implacable, and he resolved to concert some projects for a triumphant revenge. He had hastily traversed, for some time, the different paths of the grove, when he observed in a bay of the gulph a vessel which several persons

were employed in lading. The Cardinal paused a moment, and collected his thoughts. It was some matter of surprise to him that a vessel should be in a place where it was not customary to see any. This furnished an object of contemplation, and a half-digested plot had already broken in upon his mind.

Whilst Constantine is occupied in such meditations, anxious to seize every opportunity which offered for revenge, and neglecting nothing to overwhelm in one general ruin a family which had never injured him, let us turn our eyes towards Germany, where we lately left Marquard, having reduced to ashes the Convent of the Augustins.

CHAP. II.

THIS unfortunate Knight, melancholy and dispirited, was wandering without any fixed object in view, desirous only of solitude, in which he might give vent to his grief. He foresaw inevitable evils; he knew that the destruction of a Convent was punished with the utmost rigour. Some of his vassals began already to murmur, and quitting his domains with their property, sought to re-establish themselves in other countries.

His fears were but too well founded;

several complaints had already reached the Emperor.

“ He has then been guilty of a fresh crime,” said Otho, who had forgotten his services; “ I have already forgiven him. Perhaps Gennebald and Werdman were innocent of the crimes which he laid to their charge.”

This Prince, who no longer entertained any friendship for Marquard, after due reflection, declared that he merited the most signal punishment. He cited him before his tribunal; and knowing he would not repair thither without a pass, he sent him one for three months, signed by himself.

The messenger to whom it was entrusted, arrived at Ludenbourg, where the news of his mission spread a general consternation.

Marquard, no less gallant than loyal,
resolved

resolved to obey the summons:—in the meantime, he went to the forest in search of the Hermit, whom he wished to take with him to Magdebourg, where he would serve as a witness of the assassination of Theodore; but he had disappeared, and even his hut was not to be found.

He returned to Ludenbourg, and invited his friends to a feast, which he resolved should be the scene of his last farewell.

“ My friends,” said he, as they were seated at the board together, “ perhaps we shall never again meet. Misfortune pursues me: I am going to Magdebourg, from whence I may probably not return. My conduct will appear criminal before such as only judge by appearances; and, unless I have evidence in my behalf, circumstances will be interpreted against me.

“ But, in spite of all perils, in defiance of death itself, the Emperor shall see that I am a worthy descendant of the unfortunate Theodore, and that, having inherited a portion of his undaunted spirit, no danger shall appal me.”

This festival was any thing but a scene of mirth and hilarity; it was clouded with melancholy and regret, and was, in fact, a very antidote to pleasure. At length the day fixed for his departure arrived. The foreboding mind of Marquard was more than usually oppressed. Clashed in the arms of his beloved Clara, scarcely could he bid her adieu. Whilst pressing her with an unrestrained warmth of affection to his bosom, he exclaimed, in a tone of melancholy which went to her heart—

“ Perhaps this may be our final embrace; something whispers me that I shall
never

"never see you more. But if the measure of my evil destiny be complete, if my son is doomed to be an orphan, do thou sometimes remind him of a father who loved him, and be more than a mother to him."

He then burst from her presence, leaving her in an agony of sorrow.

Marquard hastened from the village, and was accompanied by Bruno and Kurt.

During his absence from Ludenbourg, many events occurred in its vicinity, of which we are now about to enter into a detail.

When Gennebald had assassinated Theodore in the Augustin's Convent, as we have already seen, and, apprehensive of Marquard's resentment, had fled for shelter, he repaired to Magdebourg. Arrived at Amberg, in Bavaria, he saw his brother Werdman, who came to seek him in the

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Convent,

Convent, where he had disguised himself in the habit of a Monk, unacquainted with what had passed. They remained a few weeks at Amberg, where they heard of the complaint brought before the Emperor against Marquard, whose ruin appeared inevitable.

Gennebald was no sooner informed of Marquard's departure for Magdebourg, than he repaired to the environs of that city, accompanied by Werdman and one hundred stipendiary, and concealed himself with his escort in the forest.

Werdman, of a disposition less relentless than his brother, thought they had sufficiently persecuted the unhappy Marquard; but Gennebald was obstinate in his projected revenge. At midnight, and at the head of his followers, he surprised the fortress of Ludenbourg, and made himself
master

master of the Castle. He assassinated all that fell in his way, and plundered without remorse. Clara and her child were dragged from their bed, and seized by their inhuman persecutors. When this work of devastation was complete, Gennebald bore off his prey, and concealed himself in a rocky and almost impenetrable recess.

At a small distance from Ludenbourg is an immense chain of mountains, which separate Bavaria from Carinthia and the Tyrol, of an appearance so majestically terrific as to inspire a degree of awe in every mind. In the center of these mountains Gennebald took refuge with Clara and his plunder. He established himself in the ruins of an ancient fort, and prepared to enjoy the first-fruits of his crimes in the possession of Clara; but her virtue was proof against his entreaties, and the ferocity of his character

rafter had inspired her with an insuperable hatred.

Perceiving that his prayers could not move her to compliance, he assumed a tone of severity; and snatching her child from her arms, he exclaimed—

“This shall be the hostage for your love! Is the life of your infant dear to you?—To comply with my entreaties, is the only way to preserve it.”

Dreadful was the extremity to which Clara was now reduced. Tendernefs for her child, and regard for her husband’s honour, tore her bosom with conflicting passions; but the contest was of short duration.

“Monster!” she exclaimed, “if the death of my guiltless infant be resolved upon, do at least *one* act of mercy, and extend the same fate to *me*! The honour
of

of my husband is in my keeping, and it shall ever remain unfulfilled with me."

"Thou hast pronounced," said Gennebald, "the death-warrant of thy child!"

Clara fainted at these words, and, but for the timely prevention of Wordman, the threat of Gennebald would have been carried into execution.

Clara soon recovered her senses; but it was only to experience a daily repetition of her sufferings. Her anxiety for her husband's health, and the afflicting thought that her infant might become the victim of a monster, unworthy the name of man, had reduced this unhappy woman to a state which it was more easy to conceive than to describe.

In the meantime Marquard had arrived at Magdebourg, and appeared before the Emperor.

"Marquard,"

“Marquard,” said the Prince, in the authoritative tone of a judge, “how long am I to pass over your crimes in impunity?”

“As long as my actions, mighty Prince,” replied Marquard, “are not to be deemed criminal.”

“You deny your guilt then,” said the Emperor, with unusual austerity; “but I see that your measure of wickedness is now full. Alas! perhaps Gennebald and Werdman have been unjustly punished. The bandage, however, is at length removed from my eyes; it is you, it is yourself, Marquard, who have set my authority at defiance!—What demon could inspire you with the infernal purpose of assassinating an Abbot, and reducing his Convent to ashes? Even your vassals have become indignant at such conduct: they have
quitted

quitted your domains, and brought hither their complaints against you."

"My Lord," replied Marquard, "do not thus condemn me unheard: a faithful narrative of what has passed, will clear me of the charge."

Marquard here entered into a full detail of the past occurrences; but Otho did not perceive any thing which might tend to palliate an act so extraordinary. Had the Emperor retained his usual wisdom, had not his prejudice against Marquard dazzled a judgment otherwise not easily deceived, he would doubtless have seen every thing in more favourable colours, and would have pardoned an act of passion, if not of justice, to which Marquard had been hurried by his filial piety: but as the suspicion, which, in despite of his better reason, still rankled in his mind, had changed his former
friendship

friendship for Marquard into an enmity as bitter, he thought differently, and was easily persuaded to consider him as meriting signal punishment.

“ Prove,” said he, “ that Gennebald was in the Convent under the disguise of a Monk, and that your father was murdered there.”

“ Bruno, my brother,” replied Marquard, “ and the brave Louiz saw the body of my father in the place and manner I have related.”

“ The law,” replied the Emperor, “ will not admit of the evidence of a brother and a relation in an affair of this importance; but should you even prove this assertion, answer me, by what right does the exercise of vengeance belong to you? By what right have you destroyed the house of God?”

Marquard

Marquard in vain endeavoured to defend himself; his judge was prejudiced, and his arguments had no other effect than that of increasing the indignation of the Emperor.

“Return home,” said he, “and there await the punishment which your crime merits. My passport will protect you till its expiration, and justice will hereafter summon you to answer its demands. Retire! I cannot consider you but as guilty.”

Marquard departed from Magdebourg without further delay. It was now the month of May, and Nature wore her accustomed livery at this period. The fields smiled with verdure; the gardens and orchards, which bordered the road by which Marquard was travelling, exhaled an odour which revived the hearts of men, and might have

have suspended the sufferings of misery itself.

The Knights, who seldom left their fortresses, acknowledged the genial influence of the season; the gates of their castles were thrown open, and their groves echoed to the notes of the song and dance. Marquard alone was a contrast to this general gaiety of all nature. He continued his journey in silence, and was involved only in the contemplation of the successful wickedness of his enemies.

Upon reaching his territory, such of his vassals as had retained their fidelity, informed him that his castle had been plundered in his absence, and his wife and child carried off.

Even this intelligence produced no increase of emotion, his soul being already overwhelmed

overwhelmed with the weight of his sufferings, and all sentiment of pleasure and pain extinguished within him. Long accustomed to Misfortune, he was at length stunned by her blows; and, from excess of suffering, had almost attained the happy point of insensibility.

Being unable to understand the confused narratives of the peasants, accompanied by Bruno and Kurt, he took the road to Ludenbourg. His arrival was not announced by the keeper of the tower, but he entered the court-yard by a private door.

The pavement and even the stairs were strewn with dead bodies. The sound of their feet echoed through the plundered apartments.

After having searched the Castle, they descended again into the court, and found
several

several children leaping and amusing themselves.

“What are you doing here, my children, and where are your parents?” demanded Bruno.

“They are in the hall,” replied they; and they conducted them thither, and pointed to some men occupied in dressing their wounds.

“Sir Knight,” said one of them, as they saw Marquard, “your absence has been an interval of misfortune to your faithful vassals. We fought with courage, but were overpowered by numbers. It is now eight days since we were surprised in the night by a troop of eight hundred men. The Castle was involved in sleep, when they broke open its doors, and put the nightly sentinels to death. Being awakened
by

by the noise, we rushed out in our defence: many of our comrades have fallen; we alone have escaped alive." Though the two leaders of the brigands were disguised, we had no difficulty in recognising them for Gennebald and Werdman."

"Yes, Bruno," said Marquard, "I could die contented, if I could avenge myself upon these monsters!"

"My friend," said Bruno, "I am going to my father, and will return to-morrow with two hundred chosen cavaliers."

Bruno accordingly departed, leaving Marquard a prey to reflections of the most melancholy nature. His heart was oppressed with grief, and tears of anguish flowed from his eyes. Nothing indeed could be more afflicting than the contrast of his present and past condition. He
endeavoured

endeavoured to repress those busy thoughts of his mind, the indulgence of which led to the loss of his reason. At the approach of night, he threw himself disconsolate upon his bed; sleep overtook him, and the most horrid dreams presented themselves to his imagination.

At daybreak the trumpet summoned him to join the troops of Bruno.

“ They have sworn,” said Bruno, “ to accomplish our revenge, or fall in the attempt. My father has already departed in pursuit of the brigands, to whom we owe our misfortunes.”

“ Let not his haste reproach our delay,” replied Marquard, mounting his horse. “ Life is not life to me, till I have avenged myself upon these hateful monsters !”

With these words, he gave the command to depart, and was obeyed without further delay.

delay. They traversed the forest, and explored the underwood and caverns, in one of the latter of which they were compelled to pass the night. On the following morning Marquard perceived a hut, and, upon the proposal of Bruno, they rode up to it.

It is needless to say that it was the same hut which Marquard had before visited—the abode of the hermit, from whom he had learned the assassination of his father. The first object which presented itself to them as they entered, struck them with horror.

“It is my father!” exclaimed Bruno, with a start of horror.

It was indeed the aged Louiz laying upon a bundle of straw: his sword and armour were placed under his head, and his vestment was covered with blood. He

raised his head upon their entry, seized the hand of Bruno, and pronouncing the name of Clara, and pointing to the mountains where she was detained, he expired.

“He is dead then!” exclaimed Bruno. “Vengeance, vengeance upon his murderers!—he has pointed out to us their retreat. Behold this wound in his back! My mind much deceives me, or he received it from the cowardly sword of Genebald or Werdman. But let us hasten and avenge his death.”

They were upon the point of leaving the hut, when the hermit entered, and went towards the corpse of Louiz, which appeared the first object of his attention.

“Ah!” said he, “death has then anticipated me!—Peace be with thee, thou soul of a righteous man!”

He

He now turned to Marquard.

“Marquard de Reineck,” said he, “listen to what I have to relate. The body which you behold there, is that of Louiz, your friend and feudatory. It is but a few hours since that he entered my hut, and, being unable to support himself, sunk upon the ground, through his loss of blood. He informed me that in the absence of Marquard, Gennebald and Werdman had attacked his Castle by night, had massacred the domestics, and carried off Clara and her child; that, having received information of this catastrophe, he had departed in pursuit of the brigands, at the head of thirty men; and that having traversed all the adjacent country, he had at length come up with them in the mountains; that his followers had fallen in the combat, and that he had not gained my

hut without the greatest difficulty. His weakness now increased. I left him in search of some herbs; but I beheld him, upon my return, beyond all human assistance.—God be with him!”

Bruno and Marquard drew their swords, and again joining their troops, departed in quest of the assassins. Having reached their place of concealment, the combat commenced. Marquard became furious, broke open all the doors, and was thunder-struck when, upon entering one of the apartments, he beheld Clara weltering in her blood!

Gennebald fled, upon the defeat of his brigands, to a Church. Marquard followed him; and forgetting in his indignation the sanctity of the place, plunged his sword into his heart, even in the presence of the altar.

The Monks, assisted by a Knight who happened to be present, seized the exhausted Marquard, and, irritated at the profanation of the sanctuary, and the apparent murder, dragged him chained to their Convent. Upon the following day he was sent to Ratisbon, to take his trial at the ensuing Diet, to which he was already summoned to answer his former transactions. As the enmity of the Emperor towards him was well known, Marquard began already to prepare himself for the scaffold, which he believed to await him.

CHAP. III.

WHILST Marquard was engaged with Gennebald, Bruno had attacked Werdman, and made him prisoner. His sword, however, fell from his hand as he beheld Clara weltering in her blood. He recovered his spirits sufficiently to examine her, and at length discovered that she yet lived. She at length opened her eyes, recognised Bruno, and demanded her child. Upon seeing the floor covered with blood, she imagined it was that of her murdered child,

and

and relapsed into a state of insensibility. By this time a surgeon arrived, and undertook to recover her.

Leaving her in the hands of the surgeon, Bruno departed in search of the child. The cry of an infant, which issued from an adjacent tower, attracted his attention: he ascended, broke open the door, and found the object of his search. Carrying it to the apartment in which he had left its mother, he delivered it into the hands of Kurt, but commanded him to hold it aside till he had prepared the mother for a scene, which menaced so powerful an effect upon her feelings.

Bruno found Clara recovered, by the skill of her surgeon, from her state of insensibility; but she appeared in still greater affliction than before.

“ My brother—my Bruno!” said she, as he approached her, “ why did you leave me? Alas! it is now that I need your fraternal affection.”

“ Compose yourself, my sister!” said Bruno; “ your misfortunes will soon be at an end: Gennebald has fled, and I have captured Werdman.”

“ I have no terrors on my own account, for I have lost every thing: Marquard is at the mercy of an ungrateful Prince, who will sacrifice him to his hatred; and my unhappy infant is I fear murdered. Alas! why have you awakened me from my happy state of insensibility, to a life and consciousness worse than the most painful of deaths? Oh that I could again return to a happy oblivion of misfortunes which are beyond any human efforts to support! Bruno, you have forgotten in these

these efforts your usual-humanity! In restoring me to life, you have only awakened me to misery!"

"Perhaps," replied Bruno, "you over-rate your misfortunes. The horror of your situation has so violently affected your imagination, that you are the victim of terrors which have no existence but in your own fancy. Your child perhaps may yet live."

"Oh!" replied she, "do not endeavour to administer a consolation of which I am no longer capable. My misfortune is complete."

"Your child lives," said Bruno—"I am persuaded of it: promise me that you will exert your fortitude, and support yourself with the tranquillity which is indispensable to your health, and I will bring him to you."

"What do you mean?" said Clara.

“Does my child indeed yet live? And shall I again see him?”

Bruno could no longer see the anxiety of the tender and weeping Clara, without a desire to terminate her doubt in a happy certainty. He made a sign to the surgeon, that he should fetch the young Marquard.

Clara no sooner perceived him, than she seized him from the arms of the surgeon, and pressing him to her bosom with the eager embrace of a young mother, bedewed him with her tears.

Bruno was justly fearful lest the feeble frame of Clara should suffer from this violence of her agitation; with some difficulty, therefore, he took the child from her.

“You must pardon me, my sister,” said he, “that I wish to participate your pleasure, and in my turn embrace your child.”

Clara smiled, and yielded.

She was ignorant that she had thanked Marquard for her rescue, as much as himself. He thought it prudent for the present to conceal this circumstance, lest she should insist upon seeing him, and thus again expose herself to the danger of falling into the hands of Gennebald. He commanded her to be immediately conducted to his Castle.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed after her departure when Kurt arrived almost out of breath, and in loud exclamations required immediate assistance.—Bruno demanded of him the cause of his hurry and alarm.

“Alas! Sir Knight,” he exclaimed, “my Lord, the Count Marquard, is taken prisoner: the domestics of that Convent which you see in the plain, have loaded him

with chains. He was in pursuit of Genne-
bald, who fled to a Church. My master
in the presence of the altar sacrificed him to
his just indignation. The Priest quitted
the altar—the people rose in a tumult—
Marquard was seized, and hurried into the
Convent. Save him, or he must perish!”

Bruno, taking Werdman with him, de-
parted with his warriors. The neighbour-
hood was thronged with people, who ran
thither in crowds, and began to murmur at
what they so ill understood. Bruno forced
his way through the crowd, surrounded the
Convent with his soldiers, and demanded
the immediate release of Marquard.—The
Monks, however, excused themselves, by
saying that they had surrendered him to the
Knight who had been present at the Church
when the act was committed.

Bruno

Bruno summoned the Castle of this Knight. The latter, however, excused himself, by saying that he had sent him to Ratibon. Bruno, enraged, was about to give the command to storm the Castle; but he listened to the prudent advice of Kurt, and returned to Gravenech.

Louitgarde rushed forth to embrace her husband; she demanded of him if he had learned any thing of his father, and why Marquard delayed.

“Alas!” replied he, “I have lost both my brother and my father. Thy brother is loaded with irons, and my father has been killed in the pursuit of the brigands who carried off Clara. Alas! the whole family will soon be extinct. Theodore, Matilda, and my father, are all dead, and Marquard in expectation of his fate. Clara had nearly perished by the hand of Gennebald; the

the latter, however, has at length paid the forfeit of his crimes."

He here related what had befallen her brother.

"I am going," added he, "to endeavour to prevent his death by an unjust sentence; I am going to Ratisbon. In the meantime I must entrust Clara to you: be careful that she learns not her husband's captivity."

Absorbed in that grief which it is easier to conceive than describe, Bruno commenced his journey to Ratisbon, accompanied by Kurt. Having reached the Castle of Ritterhausen, he stopped to refresh his horses. He entered the grove where solitude and silence reigned, and nought was seen to move but the leaves of the trees agitated by the wind. He was tormented by a thousand
afflicting

afflicting thoughts, when he was observed by Menna.

“ Bruno,” said he, awakening him by this address from his melancholy reflections, “ are you come to confirm the intelligence of my daughter’s death? I have received the fatal news from a soldier who fought with you in the combat.”

“ You are deceived, my Lord,” said Bruno; “ Clara has escaped the death which Gennebald had prepared for her. Marquard, however, is in the power of his enemies; he is chained, and a prisoner. Let us unite our efforts, my Lord, and appear in the approaching Diet, to establish his innocence. He is at once your son and your friend, and his sole crime is that he has avenged the death of his father. Why must he perish for an act of equal justice and gratitude? It is a common cause, my Lord;

Lord; we are equally interested in his defence."

"You need not," said Menna, "be thus earnest in your entreaties: you may believe me that I shall not be wanting in the cause of my son. We will fly together, and throw ourselves at the feet of Otho: he is equally generous and magnanimous; he will forget his enmity in his gratitude, when we shall recall to his memory that he owes his life to him whom he now persecutes as his enemy."

The followers of Bruno now arrived with Werdman in chains.

"What do I behold?" said Menna—"Werdman in your power!"

"Yes," replied Bruno; "I bear him to that tribunal which is assembled for the trial of Marquard."

Let

“ Let us fly then,” said Menna, “ nor lose an instant !”

Menna and Bruno arrived at Ratisbon at the moment that the Emperor was collecting the votes.

“ Stop !” exclaimed Menna ; “ Be careful lest your haste should lead you into the injustice of condemning the innocent. Hear in the behalf of the accused an evidence I can produce.”

“ Or tremble,” said Bruno, “ lest the Supreme Judge should one day call you to an account for your injustice. Here is Werdman, the brother of Gennebald, and an accomplice in his crimes. Prince,” continued he, addressing himself to the Emperor, “ can you so far forget the power of which you are the Vicegerent, as to seek to stain your hands in the blood of the innocent ? Can you forget that Marquard
formerly

formerly saved the life of his Emperor at the risk of his own? Is it a crime to avenge the death of a father upon monsters unworthy the name of men?"

A confused murmur ran through the assembly. Otho arose, and commanded the witnesses to stand forth.

"Let Europe," said he, "acknowledge the justice of their Emperor."

Prince Henry, who presided at the tribunal in the name of the Emperor, put the proper questions to Werdman. He confessed the whole, and acknowledged himself guilty of what Bruno had accused him.

"Alas!" said he, "I fall a just sacrifice to my blind indulgence to the criminal pursuits of my brother; but if any thing can console me upon my execution, it is the reflection that I prevented him from plunging his sword into the bosom of Clara. I have

have well^emerited the sentence which the justice of the Emperor has pronounced.”

Menna^o and Bruno hurried Marquard from a city which had been so nearly fatal to him. He did not thus witness the execution of Werdman. They took the road to Ritterhausen, where they remained some time, that Bruno might prepare Louitgarde and Clara for learning by degrees the happy termination of Marquard's affairs. Nothing indeed could have been more necessary than this prior preparation, as the health of both was much affected by the late events.

The morning after their arrival at the Castle, they were surprised with the sight of a strange cavalier, who, dismounting at the gate of the Castle, demanded to see Count Marquard.

Marquard appearing at this summons —

“ My

“ My Lord,” said the cavalier, “ the Emperor is on his way to your Castle: he has sent me before, to prepare you for his visit. He is accompanied by only two of his guards.”

This visit was so wholly unexpected, that Marquard could only regard the messenger in silent astonishment; but, upon recovering himself, he hastened to inform Menna of this singular event. They hurried to the gates of the Castle, and called forth their vassals and domestics, to receive the Emperor in the manner which suited his illustrious rank. Both, however, were alike unable to conjecture the purpose of the visit. Their conversation, however, was now interrupted by the arrival of their guest.

“ Be not surprised,” said he, “ Marquard,

guard, that your Emperor approaches your Castle. I am come with no other purpose but to solicit your forgiveness of an injustice to which treachery has led me. The conspiracy of your enemies, which was more powerful than ever before united to destroy a private man, has deceived me in common with others. I was taught to believe that you had been guilty of the black treason of seducing the wife of your Sovereign. You can no longer be surprised that my deportment towards you has been so unworthy of your merits; and that instead of one to whom I owed my life, I have ever regarded you as the worst of my enemies. Could I resist what surpassed all human efforts—the united testimony of my Confessor, and the powerful party whom the intrigues of your enemies had united against you? You may remember, my dear Marquard, that upon
my

my return from the army, I received you in a manner which must have given you pain."

"Alas! my Lord," replied Marquard, "the memory of your reception will not be soon erased from my mind. My emotion upon your frowns, had you not been prejudiced, would have been a sufficient testimony of my loyalty. Alas! I have since lamented that I did not then throw myself at your feet, and appeal to your well-known justice, to declare my crime, and permit me to enter upon my defence. I distrusted my own influence rather than the generosity of my Prince. It is to this prejudice of your Majesty perhaps, that I owe all my misfortunes. Seeing me deprived of your protection, and thus as it were an outlaw, my enemies have thought that they might gratify their enmity with impunity. It was thus that Gennebald gave full reins to the wickedness

wickedness of his heart, and crowned his crimes by the death of my venerable father. He doubtless flattered himself that he had nothing to fear from one who had lost the confidence of his Sovereign. Had not Werdman confessed his guilt, I should have perished myself upon the scaffold.

“With regard to what your Majesty has mentioned of the accusation of your Confessor, I am at a loss to know how I have merited his enmity, or upon what he founds his accusation. Your Majesty may remember that you recommended me to the Empress’s care, as having suffered much from loss of blood in battle. The august Princess received me in a manner which equally suited her own exalted rank and the humbler condition of myself. It is true that, from the terms of your recommendation, she considered me as having
conducted

conducted to the preservation of yourself, and therefore attended me during my confinement with something of that friendship and assiduity which has excited the jealousy of the Court—of those who consider Imperial favour as belonging exclusively to themselves, and who think every participation an act of injustice.”

“ Say no more, Lord Marquard,” said the Emperor; “ I am sufficiently convinced of your innocence. Amongst other confessions, Werdman has declared that he had formed a party with my Confessor, and had engaged him to procure your banishment from Court, by exciting in my mind a prejudice against you. I now blush for my weakness. My Confessor, however, possessed my whole confidence, and it was not easy to distrust a man of his sacred character. Alas! how unfortunate are Princes, who

who must chuse their ministers and courtiers, not amongst those who are most worthy, but amongst those whom reasons of state or distinctions of birth give claim to the offices of the government. But I am not the first Prince who has been thus fatally deceived by those whom he trusted. Alas! how many can the pages of history produce who have fallen the victims of this blind confidence! I owe no slight gratitude to Heaven that the affair has stopped where it so fortunately did. How could I have ever excused myself if your life had been the fatal sacrifice!"

"Heaven," replied Marquard, "is always at hand to assist the good intentions of Princes; it is always awake to prevent them from being abused to their ruin. Your Confessor, or I much mistake, will feel and acknowledge its vengeance."

“ But I fear,” replied the Emperor, “ that you have already suffered more than I shall be able to repay you. I have only to add that you may command any thing in my power. Menna and Bruno will assist me in consoling you, and your piety and natural strength of mind will concur in enabling you to bear the trials to which the wisdom of Providence has subjected you.—Speak, Count Menna, what think you?”

“ I think,” replied the Count, “ that imagination is equally apt to overrate the evil as the good. Perhaps Marquard is less unhappy than he at present imagines himself—I mean, that his misfortunes are not so great as he has taught himself to believe. Bruno and myself, fearful of the consequences of such sudden intelligence, have hitherto concealed what may now lessen his uneasiness: I can conceal it, however, no longer:—

longer:—in one word, Marquard, Clara lives—your wife lives!”

“What!” exclaimed Marquard, wild with joy, “does Clara live? does my wife live? shall I again behold her and my son? Leave me not in this suspense, my father! Have they indeed escaped the murdering hand of the infamous Gennebald?”

“Were it not so,” replied Menna, “should I wear this appearance of tranquillity? Would not my despair be visible in my countenance? The speedy return of Bruno will confirm this news.”

“I congratulate you, Marquard,” said the Emperor, “upon this escape from the worst of your misfortunes! I accept for the future the tender you have made me of your services. I do not doubt that your son will inherit the virtues of his father,

and therefore engage myself to take care of his fortune. In consideration of the greatness of your provocation, I pardon you the too hasty destruction of the Convent: but the Holy Father has commanded you to rebuild it, and I do not doubt your immediate compliance. Adieu for the present! Fly to the arms of your beloved wife and child; but when you can spare an hour from your family, I shall expect your presence at Magdebourg. The Empress will rejoice that you have at length met the justice which has been so long withheld."

With these gracious words, the Emperor withdrew. He was no sooner beyond their sight, than Marquard, eager to embrace his wife and child, insisted upon immediately commencing their journey to Gravenech; but Menna found means to temper his
impatience

impatience by a remark that his sudden appearance might produce an effect too powerful upon the already enfeebled health of his wife.

“ Let us leave it to our friend Bruno to prepare them for your arrival. You must already have learned, from fatal experience, that reflection is necessary even in affairs which appear to preclude the possibility of failure. How often have the most fatal effects arisen from the most trivial causes! how often has the event led us to regret that we have so rashly done an act for which, had the event been more happy, we should not have hesitated to take the credit of superior sagacity! I confess, indeed, that I have not myself always practised the lessons which I now dictate. I have been myself rather taught by experience, than by my own judgment. It was thus that I was upon

the point of sacrificing you as the ravisher of my daughter; and if Theodore had not released you from the dungeon in which I detained you, you would have lost your life by my rashness: your innocence would have appeared too late; it would have served no purpose but to augment my remorse. Let us however forget the past; let us enjoy the unexpected happiness which Heaven has reserved for us. I also must embrace my children, and upon the return of Bruno, will accompany you to Gravenech."

Kurt now arrived from Ratisbon, and related to them the execution of Werdman. This wretch had been condemned to lose his head; and as the executioner read his confession upon the scaffold, every one applauded the decree.

Marquard could scarcely restrain the impatience which the delay of Bruno excited.

excited. With the fond hope of seeing him, he hourly visited the road by which he expected his return. His unusual delay began to excite some apprehension, when Marquard at length discerned his approach. He was as yet far off, but he was evidently accompanied by several other persons.

Marquard mounted his horse, and impelled him to his full speed, to come up with them. It is easier to conceive than to describe his joy, when, upon reaching them, he recognised Louitgarde, Clara, and his son. They no sooner saw him, than they dismounted, and flew into his embrace. It would be difficult for the most eloquent writer to describe a scene like this; each pressed the other to their hearts, and from the tears which were shed, a spectator would have thought it a scene rather of misery than happiness.

happiness. The tears, however, our readers need not be informed were rather tears of the latter than the former.

Bruno, aware that the continuance of such strong emotions might render them dangerous, separated each from the embrace of the other, and, under the pretext of the anxiety of Menna, persuaded them to hasten to the Castle.

It is easy to conceive with what tenderness they were received by the venerable Menna. The remainder of the day was spent in a mutual recital of adventures: Clara, however, could not explain one circumstance—that is to say, the blood with which she was covered when found by Bruno. The latter informed them that it flowed from the wounds of one of the soldiers of Gennebald, who had sought
refuge

refuge in the apartment, and whose body had been thrown by Gennebald into the court-yard below.

Clara now remembered that, in traversing the chamber in which she had been found, she had fainted upon seeing the blood with which the floor was covered.

“ My children,” said Menna, when Clara had ceased speaking, “ I thank Heaven that it now presents me with the opportunity of giving you my blessing. After the violent shocks I have sustained, you will not leave me till I am better able to endure your absence. The Castle of Marquard is plundered and devastated; it shall be my care to restore it to its former magnificence. I must hope that you will in the meantime remain with me. I have but a few years of life remaining; I have no other wish but to pass them in the society of

my children. Clara, It cannot be thy wish to abandon thy aged father. Marquard, Bruno, and Louitgarde, you cannot refuse your consent to my proposal."

It is needless to say that they consented without hesitation to remain with Menna; and the latter agreed, when he had re-established the household of Marquard, to pass the short remnant of his life with his son and daughter.

Let us leave Menna and his happy family to that ease which such a lengthened continuance of misfortune had so well purchased, and return to Italy, where we have left Constantine meditating his schemes of revenge.

CHAP. IV.

CONSTANTINE was now fully persuaded that he could no longer indulge any hopes of obtaining any thing from Ildefonfa by flattery. After the visit he had received from Steiner and Father Bernard, he had presumed that the past was forgotten, and that his dignity had awed resentment into silence. He was undeceived, however, by the contempt with which Ildefonfa had treated him in the grove.

Father Bernard had strongly insisted that the secrets of the family should be kept

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from the Cardinal; but from the intimacy which the latter enjoyed with the family of Veneruzzy, this was unfortunately impossible. The prudence of the worthy Father led him to preserve a strict silence with regard to the suspicions he still entertained of the Cardinal. He opposed, however, with the most vigorous perseverance, all the attempts of the Cardinal to renew his former intimacy. The inactive disposition of Veneruzzy prevented him from settling his affairs with the necessary dispatch.

“A few days more, my children,” he would say, “and every thing will be ready for our departure. I have given in my resignation of the office of Procurator, and the Doge has promised to procure me the necessary licence of departure; and dispatch is indeed necessary, as I learn from the
Doge

Doge that the Cardinal is busy in his intrigues."

"The Doge has told you nothing but what I can confirm," said Ildefonza; "the Cardinal hates our whole family with the most destructive enmity. He has not yet conquered the detestable passion with which I have had the misfortune to inspire him. He has pestered me with new proposals, which I have received as they merited."

"And you have concealed this from me," said Steiner; "you have concealed this scandalous return which he continues to make to the hospitality with which he is received. Had you informed me of these continued insults to your honour, I would have revenged your cause in the corrupt blood of this disgrace to his sacred profession."

"And

“ And such vengeance,” replied Ildefonso, “ however well he may deserve it, would have involved us all in a common ruin. He is a Prince, and Cardinal of the Church; and however ill he may merit his honours, we are compelled to venerate them. It is not within the narrow powers of the vulgar to separate the man from the Priest; it is impossible therefore to exercise a just vengeance upon the one, without appearing to have violated the sacred person of the other: and remember, by the laws of Venice, he is here our Superior. Let us therefore restrain our indignation for a time; but should he follow us into Germany, you may there act with greater liberty.”

Father Bernard here entered with looks of great emotion: he informed them that
the

the Doge had been found dead in his chamber.

• This intelligence, at a moment when they so much needed his protection, filled them all with dismay. Veneruzzy himself was unable to support this sudden intelligence of the loss of the friend of his youth; he was seized with an apoplexy, and conveyed senseless to his chamber. Within a few hours, however, he recovered the use of his speech, and, after a longer period, the greater part of his former health.

Father Bernard seized this opportunity to entreat him to embark for Germany.

“ You cannot, my Lord,” said he, “ be blind to the danger which menaces us: I therefore advise you to embark without delay; at least hasten the departure of Steiner and his wife. It is upon their heads that the tempest will first fall: they

will be the first objects of the malice of the Cardinal; I must therefore again insist that they embark without delay."

Steiner, however, well aware that the Cardinal would spare nothing to effect his ruin, refused to depart from Veneruzzy, at least till his health should be more restored. In vain did Father Bernard foretel that he would repent his obstinacy when he experienced its effects.

"Whatever," said he, "may be the event, I must relieve my own conscience, by repeating that this is the moment of departure."

Veneruzzy was so struck with the earnestness of the good Father, that he issued immediate orders for preparation.

From the windows of the saloon Father Bernard now beheld the approach of soldiers.

"Behold,"

“Behold,” said he, “the accomplishment of my presage! Nothing remains but that Steiner and Ildefonza shall betake themselves to immediate flight. I fear these soldiers are sent to arrest them. I have learned by fatal experience to what enormity vice will attain when sheltered from punishment by exalted rank.”

Steiner and Ildefonza no longer hesitated to take the advice of Bernard, and they endeavoured to effect their escape: but their motions were too narrowly watched by the soldiers. The officer who commanded them, ordered their coachman to stop.

“What,” said Steiner, “in a public road! By what authority, Signor?”

“By order of the Republic of Venice,” said the officer; “behold my warrant!”

“You are ignorant, Sir,” said Ildefonza, “of what wickedness you are made the instrument.”

instrument. But, alas! complaint is useless, as you are compelled, like ourselves, to submit to superior authority. But permit me to see my parents before I attend you to my judges."

Veneruzzy, from whom it had been impossible to conceal the object of this military preparation, was so much affected at the occurrence, that a second and more formidable attack of the apoplexy released him at once from all human sufferings. The piercing cries of Sporina, the grief of Father Bernard, the useless yet repeated efforts of the physicians, and the alarm and confusion of the domestics, formed a scene of the most melancholy nature, and which had not terminated upon the return of the carriage with the soldiers.

Steiner and Ildefonsa rushed hastily into the apartment. It is needless to enter
into

into a minute detail of the grief of Ildefonfa; it is sufficient to say that it was that which might be expected both from her own filial piety, and from the indulgence and anxious tenderness which she had ever experienced from her father.

“ My dear Bernard,” said Steiner, “ unite with me in a request that the officer will leave Ildefonfa with her mother.”

“ If your name is Bernard,” said the officer, addressing the worthy Father, “ I am commanded to inform you that you must attend the Cardinal Constantine: he is eager to do a service to these young prisoners. For my own part, I pity them, but must regret that it is not in my power to be of any use: I can only execute my commission.”

It is needless to describe the tender parting between Ildefonfa and her mother.—

Father

Father Bernard was already on his way, to endeavour to reanimate in the bosom of the Cardinal the almost extinguished spark of humanity. Sporina, dissolved in tears, remained by the body of her husband. As soon as she had interred him in the family vault, she hastened to Venice, to see her children.

She found that the seal of the Republic was placed upon all the cabinets: she learned, with equal terror and astonishment, that the accusations against Steiner related to matters of State. Leontine attended her, and with difficulty escaped being arrested.

The Cardinal explained the cause of this unexpected occurrence to Father Bernard, though he was careful to conceal from him that it had no other origin than himself. He demanded of him how Veneruzzy had
formed

formed the design of leaving Venice with all his effects.

“The vessel,” said he, “which was to have conveyed him to France, and thence to Germany, has been stopped: it has thus become evident that some treason against the State was meditated. It is suspected that he had no other purpose than that of betraying the secrets of the State to its enemies. He has long filled one of the most confidential offices of the Republic, and might thus be a traitor of the most dangerous nature. Steiner’s correspondence has been discovered; he is now confined in the State prison. Ildefonza is going to a Convent: Sporina will follow her thither. I have saved Leontine from arrest. Had they resisted, the officer had orders to sacrifice them upon the spot.”

“And

“ And is it thus,” said Father Bernard, “ that innocence is persecuted? Who has ever suspected the generous mind of Veneruzzy of the foul crime of treason? He is dead, however, and therefore beyond the reach of all further malice. No one is suffered to leave the prisons of Venice, and thus the unhappy mother, deprived of her children, will shortly follow the path which her husband has entered before her. For my part, I will hasten to Rome, and relate to the Holy Father in what manner his Cardinals dispense happiness, and those sublime truths of the Gospel of which they are the members. Yes, thou mitred profligate, wouldst thou prevent me from denouncing thy crimes, thou must first precipitate me into the silent grave !”

Having uttered these words, he rushed
from

from the apartment in an agony of grief and mingled indignation.

That Bernard might not execute his threat, the Cardinal resolved to exert his authority against him. In the meanwhile he waited upon the new Doge. He spared nothing to aggravate the imputed crimes of Steiner, and did not hesitate to say that he was an instrument of the Emperor to corrupt some of the more powerful of the senators, and thus enslave the State—a singular charge!

The charges preferred by the Republic were of a more serious nature, and carried with them a greater appearance of truth. The Veneruzzys being one of the most noble of the Venetian families, had been dishonoured by the elopement to which Steiner had seduced Ildefonza. The carrying off a daughter of an illustrious house

was

was a crime which the laws of Venice punished with death. Although none of the parties most concerned had denounced this affair, it was unfortunately proved by some of the papers of the late Doge. The parents however had since consented; and as the nuptials had been celebrated by a Priest, their validity was beyond dispute. The evidence of Sporina would have proved that Veneruzzy had given his consent; and had the accused been permitted a sufficient advocate, this intricate affair would have been easily unravelled: but as prejudice was against Steiner, every thing which could confirm his guilt was produced, and every thing of a contrary nature withheld.

The Cardinal scrupled at nothing to accomplish his purpose; he was resolved upon the ruin of Steiner, as necessary to his future success.

Previous

Previous to his departure for Rome, he sent for Leontine. This Nobleman had been employed in business upon some of his more distant estates. Upon his return, he found the family seat in possession of the Republic, and his father dead. The arrest of his sister and her husband completed the melancholy tissue of family misfortunes. He waited upon the Doge, who, irritated at the warmth of his manner, was upon the point of sending him to the State prison, when Constantine, who happened to be present, interposed his good offices, and extricated him from this imminent misfortune.

Upon the entrance of Leontine, the Cardinal addressed him with a species of complacent severity.

“ Was it necessary, Signor, that I should send for you? Is my friendship for your
family,

family, and my eagerness to assist your own elevation, so little known to you?"

"My Lord," replied Leontine, "I seek no other favour from your Eminence but that you will be pleased to intermit the persecution with which you have so long pursued my family. I have no other purpose in my present visit but to implore your pity for a family whom you once honoured with the name of your dearest friends, but whom you have lately persecuted as the most hated of your enemies. In what has my brother, my sister, and my mother offended your Eminence, that they are thus treated?"

"Say nothing of your brother and sister," replied the Cardinal: "engage that you will leave them to the justice of the laws which they have offended, and that you will no longer importune me in their behalf,
and

and I will procure you the restoration of your property. What say you? Speak, Signor! Do you accept my terms?"

"My Lord, my Lord," replied Leone, "can you so far forget both yourself and me as to make me a proposal like this? Look at me, my Lord: do I not wear the shape of humanity? do I not participate that countenance, the image of my divine Maker, to which natural affection is allied? Must I then forsake a family to whom nature, and the gratitude which I owe for their well-proved affection towards myself, has so strongly attached me? No, my Lord, let the Republic keep its seals upon my palace; they may rob me of my wealth, but my honour, my natural affection, are beyond their tyranny. The Doge has menaced me with imprisonment; but I would have him reflect that I am a Nobleman of

Venice as well as himself: the Doge^u is only entrusted with the power of executing the laws; I have broken no laws, and therefore am in no way an object of his power. With regard to yourself, though as a Christian I bow to the purple, I despise your threats; and though the sanctity of your profession places you beyond the reach of my vengeance, do not flatter yourself with impunity. The Holy Father is as far superior to your Eminence as your Lordship is to me."

With these words he left the apartment. The Cardinal was for a moment penetrated with remorse; but his preparations to anticipate the arrival of St. Bernard in Rome obliterated these momentary impressions.



CHAP. V.

IN the meantime Ildefonsa had been conducted to Rome, and immured in the Convent of Penitents. Her uncertainty with regard to the fate of her husband, was the most cruel part of her calamity. She enquired of the Superior, but obtained no other answer than an admonition to forget him, as she would perhaps never see him again.

The Superior was not upon the whole a woman deficient either in good-nature or

good sense; but she had passed nearly the whole of her life in a Convent, and thus knew nothing of the world but what she learned from casual visitors. As she knew no greater duty than that of a strict performance of vows, she increased the misery of Ildefonza already extreme, by a rigorous exaction of attention to the duties of religion. To every demand of Ildefonza as to the present fate of her husband, she replied that Steiner was unworthy of her.

“How so, Madam?” said Ildefonza.

“He invaded the rights of the Church,” replied she, “or, what is the same thing, he did not oppose the invasion when attempted by another. He allowed you to be forcibly seized from the house of my brother.”

“From your brother’s house!” said

Ildefonza,

Ildefonfa, with astonishment—"who then is your brother?"

"The Cardinal Constantine," replied the Abbess; "he wishes you well, and has recommended you to my care with as much zeal as if you were his sister. I can assure you I have been not a little surprised at this warmth of recommendation; but you doubtless owe it to your worth. It is equally creditable to you both. It is only a singular piety upon your part that could recommend you to this distinguished notice from a Cardinal; and it is a proof of equal piety in him, that he so warmly patronizes it in another."

Ildefonfa made no reply to this harangue, which from any other mouth than that of the good, but simple Abbess, would have had no other appearance than that of raillery.

Leontine having vented his indignation against the Cardinal in the manner we have related, returned to the Doge, and there learned that Steiner had little to hope, as the charges, for the greater part, were such as himself must confess, and such as the laws of Venice punished with the most implacable severity. He was informed moreover that his sister was confined in the Convent of Penitents at Rome, and that it would not be a matter of little difficulty to procure her deliverance. He left the Doge with precipitation, shuddering with the dread of what might befall his unfortunate brother.

Leontine went immediately in pursuit of Father Bernard, but he was not to be found. The Prior of the Convent having learned that he was the brother of Ildefonso, took him aside.

“ I must.

“ I must tell you, my Lord,” said he, “ that some change has occurred in my Convent. The former Prior was a creature of Cardinal Constantine, and under his influence was persuaded to confine Father Bernard as a madman. I have succeeded him, and despise the vices of the Cardinal too much to become in any degree his instrument. In defiance of his prohibition, I have permitted him to depart for Rome, where I doubt not he will exert himself in the cause of your sister. You will find him there under the assumed name of Alonzo—a prudence to which our dread of his being prematurely discovered by the Cardinal, has led us.”

Leontine, upon this intelligence, returned to his mother; and as it was doubtless that they could do nothing towards the release of Steiner, they resolved to hasten to

Rome, and, if possible, preserve Ildefonfa from the power of the Cardinal.

With regard to Steiner, they thought it prudent to conceal his present situation from the Reinecks, lest they might hasten to his assistance, and thus become victims to their barbarous persecutor.

It was thus that the family of Steiner had received no intelligence from Italy. Some letters had arrived at Venice with an account of the deliverance of Marquard, and a narrative of those events which had brought him so near to the ruin which the Sorcerers had presaged. These letters were delivered into the hands of Steiner's judges.

Father Bernard reached the Roman capital before Constantine could arrive. The new Prior, of whom we have lately spoken, had given him letters of introduction to a
Cardinal,

Cardinal, whose character was far different from that of Constantine. He was one of those rare Prelates whose virtues were worthy of his profession, and who lamented, with the purity of the ancient Church, the corruption of its present members. It is impossible to conceive his indignation when Father Bernard related to him the conduct of Constantine. From some knowledge of his character, he had opposed with vehemence his admission into the Sacred College: the adventure of Ulla had reached his ears, and induced him to give full credit to Bernard. To the Papal authority alone was he indebted for his unmerited elevation to a seat which his vices disgraced.

Constantine now arrived in Rome at a period when the Cardinal, the friend of Bernard, was preparing to prefer his complaint before the Consistory. The latter

resolved to remonstrate with the former in private, before he exposed him to the disgrace of a public accusation.

It is needless to say that Constantine was somewhat confounded at this unexpected charge. He denied it however with his usual audacity, and menaced the Cardinal with prosecution as a calumniator. The Cardinal gazed at him with a mixed emotion of pity and contempt.

Constantine knew not to whom to impute this discovery ; he at length, however, suspected that Father Bernard had escaped from his confinement in the Convent. With some difficulty he had at length discovered the object of his search, though Bernard had not forgotten the prudent caution of concealing himself under an assumed name.

Leontine had not concealed from the new Prior of Della Maggiore that Constantine
had

had informed him of the retreat of Ildefonfa in the Convent of Penitents. Father Bernard, under the name of Father Alonzo, repaired thither. He announced himself to the Superior as coming from the Cardinal; he told her that as his Eminence still consulted the welfare of Ildefonfa, he had commanded him to attend upon her as her spiritual adviser; he added that the Lady Abbess (the Superior to whom he was speaking) would inform Ildefonfa that if she were willing to avail herself of his offices, he would wait for her in the Church.

Ildefonfa immediately conjectured the contrivance, and eagerly accepted a consolation which she so much required. She hastened to the appointed place. A circumstance more to her wishes could not have occurred; and although he had little to communicate, her mind was greatly relieved

relieved by this unexpected interview. He confessed that he had not been sent by the Cardinal; but that having learned from the Prior that she was in the Convent of Penitents, and that the sister of Constantine was the Abbess, he had fixed upon this pretext as the only means of obtaining admission to her.

When Ildefonza appeared to dwell with rapture upon the hope of again returning to the arms of her husband, the good Father surveyed her with pity, and in despite of himself, discovered his secret emotion.

Ildefonza knew that Steiner was not wholly blameless, but she could not believe with Father Bernard, that he would be condemned to death. With respect to herself, he advised her to make the Lady Abbess her confidante, to inform her of her true situation,

situation, and the persecution to which the libertine conduct of the Cardinal, her brother, exposed her. The worthy Father promised to bring her mother to her as soon as circumstances would admit. With this promise and this advice, he withdrew.

Ildefonza adhered to his advice. She told the Superior that her brother had nothing which suited a member of the Holy Church but his purple. She entered into a narrative of her former life, and the unremitting persecution of the Cardinal. She concluded by soliciting her countenance and protection, and that if the Cardinal should demand her, the Abbess might refuse to deliver her into his hands.

“Should I lose my husband,” said she, “I have but one motive for continuing to live when life becomes a burden. I shall yield

yield myself up wholly to the consolation of my parents, and endeavour by my filial attention to smooth the remnant of their days."

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the Abbess upon this narrative. She was suspended between the internal evidence of the narrative itself, and her inclination to judge more favourably of her brother. She did not hesitate, however, in giving her consent that Ildefonfa should at all events remain under her protection. She concluded with a promise that she would not redeliver her into the hands of the Cardinal.

The Cardinal, however, had no sooner arrived in Rome, than he sent a duenna to demand Ildefonfa. The mind of the Abbess was now confirmed in her belief of
what

what Ildefonfa had related: she refused, therefore, to permit her to depart.

Enraged at this refusal, and ignorant to what cause to impute it, the Cardinal flew to the Convent. He reproached her in the bitterest terms; but received no other reply than advice to amend his life, and no longer disgrace the sacred honours with which he was invested. With mingled rage, and contempt of female advice, the Cardinal at length withdrew.

Ildefonfa, informed by the Abbess of this visit, affectionately embraced her, and so moved the pious Superior, that she renewed her promises of protection with increased warmth. She confessed, moreover, that she had no longer any doubt of the truth of what Ildefonfa had related; for that something had reached her ears which had convinced her that he was unworthy of the
holy

holy purple. She added that Father Bernard had repeated his visit to the Convent; and having been received under the protection of the good Cardinal, to whom his letters had introduced him, had resumed his real name.

“With regard to your present condition, my daughter,” said the Abbess, “you may lay aside all care; nothing shall be wanting to your comfort and security which the Convent can supply—consider me as your mother.”

To return to Constantine. Previous to his departure from Venice, he had obtained an order that Steiner should be immediately put upon his trial upon the charges he had exhibited against him. A Secretary of the Tribunal entered his prison, and informed him that sentence of death had been passed upon him.

“May

“ May I demand the cause of such an award?” said Steiner.

“ Doubtless,” said the secretary: “ the laws of Venice condemn no one without cause. You have transgressed a law, to the breach of which the policy of our Republic has affixed the punishment of death: you have carried off a Venetian lady. It is not however, upon this law that you have been condemned, because the subsequent consent of her parents to your union has taken this from the list of your crimes: your capital charge is, that you intended to seduce from the State one of its hereditary senators. Nothing can save you, as Veneruzzy, the object of your imputed crime, is now dead, and therefore cannot appear to clear you: nor would you escape the axe of the law, though even this crime should be cleared; you are charged with a yet heavier one,
that

that of having forced an entry into the house of the Cardinal at Corfou, and carried Ildefonfa from the protection of the Church. It is true that it cannot be proved that you assisted in person in the commission of this act of execrable wickedness; but it is considered as sufficient evidence of your concurrence, that you afterwards married the person who was thus seized. Your excuses therefore could be of no avail; and as they could answer no purpose but to delay for a few minutes the hour of your punishment, they will be considered in no other view than in that of want of fortitude:—in a word, your punishment is decreed; prepare for it this night.”

Steiner demanded whether he would be permitted to take a farewell of his wife.

The Secretary replied that she was in Rome, but that the laws of Venice would
permit

permit him no communication but with his Confessor.

A Confessor, indeed, now entered.

Steiner demanded of him whether he knew any thing of the present condition of the family of Veneruzzy; but his distress was greatly increased by the Priest replying in the negative.

The executioner entered. The solemn bell of midnight sounded; before its last stroke, Steiner was no more!—the block streamed with his blood!

In the meantime Constantine had found it impossible to prevent his brother Cardinal from explaining the whole of this detestable transaction to the Pope. The Superior of the Penitents instituted a similar process against her brother, for his attempts to seize Ildefonza from her Convent.

His Holiness reproached the Cardinal
with

with unusual asperity, and menaced him with a vengeance which should know no limits, if he continued thus to add to the obloquy with which his conduct had already loaded the Church.

Nothing could alleviate the sense of this disappointment in the mind of the Cardinal, but the intelligence which he now received of the death of Steiner. He lost not a moment in sending a messenger to the Convent of the Penitents, to overwhelm the unhappy Ildefonsa with this intelligence of the fate of her husband.

“ Let the message be delivered,” said he, “ without any suspense of preparation. If I lose every thing else, I will still have vengeance. Let her feel what I can inflict !”

The Superior had not as yet found leisure to converse with Sporina since her arrival at the Convent : she had permitted her, however, to remain with her daughter, and

and was conversing with both in their own apartment, when the Friar, the messenger of Constantine, entered. He had scarcely uttered the fatal words (words dictated by the Cardinal, and which were delivered without the preface of a single syllable)—“Steiner is no more—he has expiated his crimes upon the block!” than Ildefonsa uttered a scream of horror, and fell to the ground.

“Go,” said the Superior to the messenger, “and tell my brother that his cruelty surpasses even his former wickedness: tell him not to hug himself in his imagined impunity; his purple will not avail before the awful tribunal of Heaven. Tell him to repent, or tremble! Depart, thou messenger of evil!”

“And is he indeed dead, my mother—is my husband, is my Steiner dead?”

“Compose

“Compose thyself, my child,” replied Sporina, “and repose secure under the protection of Providence: consider, moreover, thy condition; remember thou art about to give birth to a being to whom thou owest all thy care and attention. Thy child may supply to thee his murdered father.”

The countenance of Ildefonsa here changed: she trembled, the light vanished from her eyes, and she fell upon the floor. Her mother and the pious Abbess hurried her to her chamber. Their conjectures were confirmed: the sudden shock produced premature pains of labour. To the equal satisfaction of both (for the Abbess had become as much attached to her as if she were her own child), she at length gave birth to a girl. Sporina, rejoiced at this happy termination, presented the infant to its mother.

Ildefonsa

Ildefonfa pressed it with rapture to her bosom.

“My child,” said she, “forgive a parent who gives thee birth in this moment of misfortune. Alas! never wilt thou enjoy the endearing caresses of a father—of a father, whom, alas! I tenderly loved, and who owes his death only to his love for me. But mayst thou ever remain ignorant of those misfortunes, the knowledge of which could only destroy thy relish of life! Alas! thy father has been the victim of the most inhuman of monsters.”

Sporina and the Abbess exerted themselves to console her, and with some difficulty succeeded.

Father Bernard called upon them the following morning. He pronounced his blessing upon the new-born infant, and

exhorted the mother to receive it as the gift of Heaven.

“ Let it become,” said the worthy Father, “ the sole object of your earthly attentions; consider it as a compensation of a loss otherwise irreparable. I shall then behold you as happy as this world of tribulation will permit.”

“ Your words breathe comfort into my wounded spirit. Yes, I submit to the decrees of Providence, and receive my child as its gift. Happy am I to have retained a friend like yourself. Console my mother, for she appears to exert a fortitude beyond her strength. She needs the consolations of religion.”

Leontine was now announced. Ildefonfa was eager to embrace her brother; but as her situation required tranquillity,
the

the Abbess insisted that he should not be as yet admitted.

Sporina descended to receive her son. She returned with a mingled emotion of grief and satisfaction.

“ I have still,” said she, “ to thank Heaven for something; if I have lost one child, I have two others still left. Leone-tine is equally worthy as a son and a brother. Ildefonfa, he received the intelligence of your health and welfare with a rapture which suits his fraternal affection.”

“ Surely,” said Ildefonfa, “ I have little reason to repine, when possessed of such relations. But indeed I love my brother.”

“ Be it your first care,” said Father Bernard, “ to recover your health, that you may receive him with the frequency his fraternal affection merits. I will withdraw at present, and endeavour to obtain your permission

permission to leave this Convent. I have already commenced some preparations for this purpose. Farewell! I shall return to-morrow."

The good Father did not forget his promise: he returned on the following morning.

"My children," said he, "I have obtained more than I requested. Here is an order of the Holy Father, which not only gives you the desired permission to depart from hence, but denounces an anathema against whosoever shall molest you. Upon leaving the Convent yesterday, I sought the worthy Cardinal: I imparted to him your present condition and misfortune. It is impossible to describe the transports of his indignation at this recital. He refused to permit my departure from his presence till I had drawn up a memorial

of what I had related; and he engaged himself to present it to his Holiness. Having attended him again this morning, as previously agreed, he informed me that the Pope had resolved to enquire into the subject of the memorial, and no longer suffer the Sacred College to be disgraced by the imputation of this passive indulgence to the vices of its members. You may now perceive," continued he, "the strength of that resource to which I recommended you: you may perceive that Providence never abandons those who confide in him. But I must now take my leave, as I have promised to inform Leontine of my proceedings."

Ildefonsa could only reply with tears.

"Come, come," added the Father, "resume your courage, and prepare to meet adversity with a bolder front."

“ My friend,” said Ildefonsa, “ they flow but from gratitude; I must thus pay the tribute which I owe your goodness.”

“ Your daughter,” said the Father, turning towards Sporina, to conceal his emotion, “ is very interesting. I do not wonder that she engages every heart—Heaven will not abandon her.”

Ildefonsa now began quickly to recover her health. The little Aurora (for thus was the child named) never quitted the arms of its mother for those of the transported Sporina. The Superior never failed in her daily and even hourly visits to them, and spared no efforts to render their situation as pleasing as possible. Father Bernard, whom the Cardinal had made his almoner, spent all the time with them which the duties of his new office did not require.

At length Ildesonsa, finding herself re-established in health, Sporina proposed that they should leave the Convent, and seek some quiet and obscure retreat in the country, where they might spend their days with Leontine, and devote their time and attention to those fond maternal offices which the education of the little Aurora would demand. Father Bernard was employed in fixing upon a spot for their retreat.

After having traversed the environs of Rome, they resolved to chuse the village of Ardea, in the vicinity of the capital. The scene of their destined retreat was picturesque and romantic: a small but lofty wood on one side, groves of orange and citron on the other; extensive pastures, interspersed with vine-clad hills, and the Mediterranean flowing at their feet, contributed

buted to form the group of beauties in this rural solitude. Leoptine engaged for their residence a small house, and a park with some enclosures adjoining. At the extremity of the park was a pavilion built upon the wall that enclosed it, serving as a vista to that part of the house intended for his mother and sister. This pavilion commanded a view of the sea, and the ships that were riding at anchor: an apartment, moreover, was reserved for Father Bernard, whenever he should visit Ardea.

The Superior of the Convent regretted the approaching departure of her guests, for whose fate she entertained no common interest.

Ildefonsa, embracing her, thanked her in tones scarcely articulate from her excess of gratitude, for her humanity and benevolence.

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The Superior was no less moved, and pressed Ildefonfa to her bosom with equal warmth. Father Bernard promised to give her constant information of the health of her guests, and Leontine, conducting them into a carriage, they soon arrived at Ardea.

Sporina and Ildefonfa were much pleased with their new residence; the latter left to her mother the choice of an apartment, who insisted upon occupying the one adjoining to her daughter's. Their household for some time consisted of two women and a gardener whom they found upon the spot.

Father Bernard was unwilling to return to Rome until the family were settled in their retreat. A few days after his return, he was informed that the worthy Cardinal intended employing him in a mission to Venice, for the purpose of adjusting some

concerns in which his Eminence was involved. He assured the family that his absence would not exceed two months, and that he hoped to be able to serve them in Venice.

“Your property, Ildefonfa,” said he, “cannot be confiscated. I know not the nature of the order Constantine obtained against you, but I am convinced it is now done away, and that no charge has been preferred either against you, Sporina, or Leontine. The good Cardinal, my benefactor, has commissioned me to offer you his protection; he is uncle to the Doge, who, on his request, cannot refuse to take off the sequestration, and restore you to your inheritance. However indifferent you may be to your own welfare, that of your child requires your exertions in this affair, to save you from all future reproach.—

Leontine

Leontine I think might accelerate my project, and it would be fit he should accompany me."

The proposal of the good Father met with an immediate concurrence, and Leontine prepared to accompany him.

Sporina, on leaving Venice, had brought away with her all the jewels she possessed; but Ildefonsa, who had been stopped on the point of escaping with her husband, had not leisure to think of any thing, but, in her greater misfortunes, had lost all thought of providing means for future support.

The Cardinal's offer was thus of most essential service. Antonio, son of the old gardener Jeronimo, who had conceived a strong attachment to Leontine, wished much to accompany him to Venice, but he was made sensible that his presence was most

necessary at home, to assist his mother and sister, should any accident befall them.

“ When our affairs are in a better posture,” said Leontine, “ I promise thee, my honest Antonio, that thou shalt accompany me wherever thou wilt, in case thy Father give his consent.”

Father Bernard had received orders to depart for Venice sooner than he expected; he accordingly sent notice to Leontine, who hastened to join him at Rome.

Leontine, on their arrival at Venice, having no inducement to conceal himself, accompanied Father Bernard in his visit to the Doge, to whom he delivered the letter of the worthy Cardinal. In this letter the Doge was reprimanded by his uncle for complying with Constantine, and becoming an instrument of his unjust vengeance on a young

young stranger, and spreading desolation in a family of a name and estimation equal to any in the country. He added, that there was only one method of reparation remaining, and that was, to expedite the business which had brought Leontine to Venice.

The Doge was sensibly moved by this letter. He assured him, that nothing prevented his taking possession of his property, as well in his own name as in that of his mother and sister, if he were furnished with the necessary powers. He then caused an order to be issued, which would procure him admission into his late father's house; and in three weeks every thing was adjusted. Sporina and Ildefonsa had resolved never to return to Venice, where every thing served but to remind them of their past misfortunes: they had, therefore, charged Leontine to request the permission of Government

Government for the sale of their property, which he obtained without the least obstruction.

Our travellers, having nothing further to detain them, proceeded on their return to Rome; but Leontine, impatient to revisit his mother and Ildefonsa, refused to make any stay in that city. He brought with him consolation, which he was in haste to communicate to those who had already tasted so bitterly of affliction.

The little family being now in circumstances more prosperous, enjoyed, with a redoubled pleasure, the quiet of their retreat.

Constantine had been banished to a Convent, at the distance of four leagues from Rome, to which he was strictly confined, under the penalty of his Holiness's displeasure.

Father Bernard often visited Ardea, and was delighted with the change he beheld, and to which his own good exertions had contributed, in the family of the Veneruzzys. The satisfaction of his own conscience kept pace with every increase of their happiness.

Three years had elapsed since they had retired to Ardea, when Leontine, whom business had called to Rome, returned from the city, with an air of strong concern and melancholy. On being asked the reason of this dejection, he informed them that the Pope had been attacked by the palsy the day before.

“ This alarms me greatly,” he continued; “ should his Holiness die, we are deprived of our protector: his successor will not be bound by the same obligations,
and

and we shall be compelled to leave our retreat."

"The trials I have undergone," said Ildefonfa, "have rendered me indifferent to all events, and Heaven is my witness that anxiety for my daughter's welfare alone makes me solicitous about the future; but to that infant I wholly devote myself, my life, and all my cares, and I am now going to communicate to you a project which I submit to my mother's wisdom. Whatever may happen here, it is in our power to seek refuge in the Venetian territories, and live there in the same retirement as we do at present. But this not according with our design of never revisiting our native country, our only resource is to take refuge in Germany, in the family of the worthy Theodore, who will not refuse us an asylum."

Ildefonfa

Ildefonfa knew not the death of the unhappy Theodore.

“With what pleasure,” she continued, “shall I again behold Louitgarde and Matilda!—But to you, my mother, I submit every thing.”

“This will at least be preferable,” said Sporina, “to returning to the Venetian Republic. Since we have been permitted to dispose of our property, we may take its value with us into another country; and in Germany we shall enjoy it in safety, for probity is the distinguished character of that people.”

“Let us then resolve upon this latter plan,” said Ildefonfa; “let not a moment be wasted in superfluous deliberation: from this hour let us make our preparations for carrying it into execution, not knowing how soon circumstances may render our journey

journey necessary. The age of his Holiness considered, the course of nature will not suffer him to reign much longer, and disease may even now have cut him short."

Having adopted the resolution of departing for Germany, arrangements were made for their journey; and it was their intention to proceed thither on the first notice of a change in the government.

Father Bernard now came to Ardea, with intelligence of the ill health of the Pontiff. He was not yet declared out of danger, but his physicians entertained hopes of his recovery.

The good Father proposed to spend some time at Ardea, when the family imparted to him their design of retiring to Germany, should affairs take the turn they apprehended.

“ My children,” said he, “ I cannot but approve of your intentions, though your absence will much afflict me; for if the Holy Father should not survive his malady, I fear Constantine will renew his persecutions. Time and opportunity are but wanting to let him loose against you, and with an augmented thirst for revenge. I have already perceived one of his emissaries loitering about the Vatican, in order to gain information of his Holiness’s health, and with more eagerness of enquiry than those who are more interested in it. If the Pontiff die, the term of Constantine’s exile is at an end, and possibly the good Cardinal may not be able to induce his successor to protect you. Meanwhile, I will communicate to you whatever intelligence I may learn.”

CHAP. VI.

LEONTINE was uneasy at the thought of leaving Ardea, to which a peaceful residence of three years had insensibly attached him. The melancholy habit he had acquired since his banishment from the presence of his father, and his being compelled to relinquish the woman of his choice, grew by degrees upon him, and even preyed upon his health. He frequented the most solitary recesses, and did not return to the pavilion but at late and unseasonable hours, where

where he was certain of finding Antonio expecting his return.

It happened one time that, after late watching, Antonio fell asleep. On waking, he was greatly surprised to see the sun already above the horizon. He ran instantly to Leontine's chamber, but, to his surprise, did not find him in it, and his bed had no appearance of having been slept in. Alarmed, he hastened to inform Sporina and her daughter. They knew not what to think of so unexpected an incident.

“ Perhaps,” said Ildefonsa, “ he may have extended his walk, and, overtaken by night, would not expose himself to the danger of returning: he will certainly be with us shortly. My brother has no enemies, and but few acquaintances; where
there

there is no cause for alarm, let us not perplex ourselves with imaginary fears."

Several days passed, and Leontine did not return. The search of Jeronimo and his son in the woods, though constantly kept up, as it was fruitless, only increased their anxiety. Antonio was inconsolable, and Ildefonza began to despair of again seeing her brother.

Sporina, in want of consolation herself, was unable to administer it to her daughter: in short, the misery of suspense was such, that they would almost have exchanged it for the most fatal certainty. The little Aurora was now the only object which supported them under the heavy weight of their present affliction.

To add to their late misfortune, Father Bernard informed them of the death of the Pope.

"And

“And now indeed,” said he, “you must prepare to bid adieu to Ardea; Constantine is at present at Rome, and the foremost in the intrigues of the conclave. Avail yourself of their having assembled, and seize the auspicious moment of escape!”

When the good Father was informed of Leontine’s sudden disappearance, he instantly fixed upon Constantine as the author of it.

“This man,” cried he, “whom you know to be capable of any wickedness, has methodized his revenge, and fixed the date of its second commencement from the death of the Pope. By removing one whom he considered the greatest obstacle to his designs, he conceives that he shall again have it in his power to make a second attempt upon Ildefonsa. Let us then neglect nothing for your safety. Repose in
Jeronimo

Jeronimo and Antonio a secret which the nature of circumstances compels you to entrust to them: they are both attached to your interests, and will protect you to the full extent of the little power they possess."

Jeronimo shuddered with horror on being informed of the dangers which his good mistress had incurred. Antonio was more particularly moved, and could restrain his indignation within no bounds. With satisfaction would he have plunged a dagger into the heart of Constantine; and the command of Father Bernard could scarcely restrain him from a deed which would have completed the ruin of the family of the Veneruzzys.

"Time and patience," said the good Father, "will discover to us the author of the plot against Leontine; but I must repeat, it is necessary that you should depart
instantly

instantly from Ardea. Remember, I gave you the same advice at your country seat; and had it been followed, Steiner would not have fallen a sacrifice to the machinations of his persecutor. My utmost efforts shall be directed to the discovery of your son; meantime, rely upon my friendship, and the protection of Providence. The worthy Cardinal is indisposed, and I cannot be absent from him long; but in three days I will return, and hope to bring news that will console you."

Jeronimo and his family were now admitted to the confidence of Ildefonza; and, taking the strongest interest in her welfare, they requested not to be dismissed from her service.

Ildefonza was greatly moved at this testimony of affection, and willingly complied with their request.

Sporina was no less pleased, as she considered a regard to their safety required some protector on their journey, and that they might have every reliance on the fidelity of these honest people. She desired Jeronimo to inform his wife and youngest daughter that she would cause them to be taken care of in his absence, and that as soon as she arrived in Germany, she would send for them to live under her protection.

Ildefonfa retained the eldest girl in her service.

Father Bernard returned, according to his promise, but without any intelligence of Leontine.

Sporina and her daughter were compelled to depart in a few days. Every preparation was hastening, and the day following the visit of the Father was fixed upon for leaving Ardea.

Ildefonfa

Ildefonfa was inconsolable, from the necessity she was under of departing without her brother; but it was in vain to complain: the severity of her destiny could only be lightened by a calm submission to it. She made Father Bernard promise that, in case of the good Cardinal's death, he would hasten to join them.

Jeronimo and Antonio swore never to desert their mistresses; the former recommended to his wife the most diligent search after Leontine, and desired her to send by the quickest dispatch any intelligence she might collect.

Sporina and Ildefonfa had been some time on their journey, which they pursued by easy stages, accompanied by their little escort, when they reached the frontiers of Franconia, the misfortune of Leontine still fresh upon their memory.

Ildefonfa had frequently observed the dejection of Antonio, had seen his cheeks moistened with tears, and heard the sighs that rent his bosom. One evening she ordered the carriage to stop at the entrance of a small wood, in order to refresh themselves under its overhanging shade. The grateful notes of a thousand birds made the wood echo with their varied harmony; the salutary fragrance of the breeze, and the gentle rustling of the zephyr, invited them to repose in a spot pregnant with all the delights of solitude.

Sporina and her daughter, seated on the green turf, were attentively listening to the melody of the feathered songsters, when on a sudden they were startled by the most piercing cries.

Antonio, ever generous and humane, sprung towards the spot whence the sounds
4
seemed

seemed to proceed. Jeronimo took his arms, and encouraged Sporina and Ildefonsa. The little Aurora who was in her mother's lap, clung more closely to her bosom, whilst all looked anxiously around them.

At length Jeronimo perceived at some distance an old man, who was endeavouring to hasten his progress among the bushes which impeded his steps. He beckoned him to come forward, unwilling to desert his mistress.

The old man, with eyes denoting wildness and fear, and hands raised up to heaven, thus addressed them—

“ Strangers, whoever you are, assist me to save my child. Good God, avert all evil from him! I take him to this wood every day, to inure him to fatigue. Having

sufficiently exercised ourselves, and being on our return, we perceived on a sudden a she-wolf creeping from out some under-wood, and menacing us, as if in defence of her little ones. I need not tell you that this wood is frequented by wild beast, and that the wolf is more destructive than any other. The sight alarmed my child, who immediately fled, screaming most violently; and I have neither been able to come up with him, or make him hear me."

"Be not uneasy," replied Sporina; "one of my attendants is gone in search of him, and will no doubt bring him back."

Whilst speaking to the old man, she was attentively examining his features, as if endeavouring to recollect where she had seen him. At length she expressed some recollection, and demanded his name.

"My

“ My name, noble Lady,” said the old man, “ is Kurt; I think likewise I have some remembrance of your features.”

“ Kurt, say you!” exclaimed Sporina—
“ what, Sir Marquard’s Esquire!”

“ Yes,” he replied, “ and for the fate of *his* son it is that I am thus anxious.”

Ildefonfa could not hear the name of Marquard without being greatly affected, as it came connected with the memory of her unfortunate husband.

“ We are at no great distance then from your master’s country?” said Sporina.

“ My noble Lady,” replied Kurt, “ you are now in his domains; but he has been absent from hence about a fortnight.— Anxious to hear from his brother, he resolved to make a voyage to Venice, in company with his friend Bruno. Their wives are at Ludenbourg, where they will

be glad to receive you, should you honour them with a visit."

"How I pity Marquard!" said Ildefonfa to her mother; "what must be his feelings, when he shall learn the fate of his unfortunate brother!"

"Alas!" exclaimed Kurt, "has any misfortune befallen Count Steiner?"

"Melancholy indeed has been his fate!" replied Ildefonfa, with a deep sigh.

"Are the worthy Theodore and Matilda in good health?" enquired Sporina.

"They are delivered from all affliction," replied Kurt, "after much severe suffering."

Antonio appeared at this instant, leading young Marquard by the hand.

Kurt, rejoiced at his safety, presented him to the ladies, who caressed him with much fondness, and took him with them in their carriage.

Antonio

Antonio insisted upon Kurt mounting his horse, and they then continued their route, desirous of arriving at Ludenbourg before night.

Kurt requested leave to go forward, that he might acquaint Louitgarde and Clara of their expected visitors.

Great indeed was the astonishment of Louitgarde at the sight of Ildefonfa and Sporina. She tenderly embraced them, and conducted them to the hall, where they were served with refreshments.

"Why, my dear Ildefonfa," said Louitgarde, "is not my brother Steiner here? Is he determined never to return to his native country? Is the enchantment of Italy so strong, that he cannot break from it a moment to revisit his friends?"

The reply of Ildefonfa was a shower of tears.

Louitgarde and Clara, amazed at this grief, dared not question her any further. Sporina at length informed them of Steiner's tragical end, as well as of the persecution of Cardinal Constantine, which threatened the utter ruin of the family. She then informed them of the protection afforded them by the worthy Cardinal, and of the sudden disappearance of Leontine from their retreat at Ardea, which had almost reduced them to despair.

“ Father Bernard,” continued Sporina, “ has promised to make every enquiry after him, and send us intelligence of the result. That persecutor of my unhappy family, whom no vengeance can satiate, Cardinal Constantine, has been released from his banishment by the death of the Pontiff: he is now in Rome, and engaged in the intrigues of the Conclave. The interest of
our

our worthy protector, it was feared, would not be so strong with the successor to the vacant chair, as to enable him to bind the hands of Constantine from his projected vengeance. Farther Bernard, therefore, who imputed the disappearance of Leontine to some contrivance of our enemy, advised us to quit that retirement which had so long and happily sheltered us, and to seek a refuge in Germany."

When Spolina had finished her short narrative, Louitgarde exclaimed that she always stood in fear of the Cardinal, and that had Steiner and Ildefonsa been advised by her, they would, on their marriage, have instantly departed for Germany.—"But Veneruzzy would not permit his daughter to leave him, and his excess of affection has caused Steiner's ruin. I am greatly concerned for Leontine," continued Louitgarde;

garde; "I shall never forget his exertions to save my life. Were I a man, I would immediately revenge myself on that unworthy Cardinal: but I will write to Marquard and Bruno an account of these melancholy events, and they will remit no efforts to discover your brother's retreat."

"My mother and myself," added Ildefonfa, "will likewise write to Father Bernard, to engage him to join us in fulfilment of his promise."

A messenger to whom these dispatches might be entrusted, was easily found. Antonio's fidelity laid claim to this commission: he was to proceed to Venice, and if the objects of his search were not there, to hasten to Rome, and join Father Bernard.

Louitgarde, with her usual vivacity, which no sorrow could long overcloud, and
Clara,

Clara, with her mild and winning benevolence, exerted themselves to console their guests. The former, who was only a guest to Clara during her husband's absence, invited them, after their visit was concluded, to spend some time with her at Graveneck. She remitted no efforts for their accommodation. In their frequent walks, with the warm confidence of affection, she gave them a recital of the many adventures in which with her husband she had been engaged, and pointed out the grotto which had been the refuge of Theodore and Matilda whilst their Castle was besieged by Gennebald.

Clara now proposed a visit to her father, who she knew would be delighted by an acquaintance with the lovely strangers.

They passed a fortnight with Menna, after which they returned to Ludenbourg,
in

in hopes of receiving intelligence from Bruno and Marquard.

In the meantime Sporina requested Louitgarde to accompany her to the ruins of the Convent which Marquard had destroyed. Theodore had been interred there by the Monks, and she felt a secret pleasure in treading the spot, now more than ever consecrated by the remains of a good man.

Louitgarde willingly complied, but confessed her dislike of visiting a spot which affected her too much.

“ I am terrified to that degree,” said she, “ that sometimes I imagine I see my father receiving his death-wound at the hands of Gennebald. His last words are continually sounding in my ear, and fill my heart with anguish unutterable: but I will accompany you nevertheless. Sorrow, they say, softens
the

the heart; it is the lot of humanity, and we must submit to it with patience."

On the following morning at sunrise, they took the road leading to the Convent, which was scarcely more than a league from Ludenbourg. Heaps of stones obstructed their way; the ground around them was dry and barren; the trees, which formerly overhung the gardens of the Monastery, were reduced to ashes. An awful silence was only interrupted at intervals by the melancholy croaking of the raven, which seemed to fly from this scene of desolation. Every object of the scene was awful and terrific, and diffused a chilly horror over the mind of Sporina.

For some time they traversed the ruins, frequently obstructed in their passage by the bones of the Monks whom the flames had consumed. Jeronimo was compelled often-
times

times to clear them away, to prevent their being trodden under foot.

At length they sat down upon an eminence, from which they could have a full view of the devastated Convent.

Jerónimo continued his passage among the ruins. Sporina and Louitgarde observed him, sometimes climbing such parts of the walls as were left standing, at other times descending into the vaults which were not filled up. At length they perceived him emerge from a cavern, and in company with another person, who seemed to have ascended from the same place.

“To whom were you speaking?” said Sporina, as he drew near.

“Having penetrated,” he replied, “into a deep cavern, which received a feeble light from an aperture in the ruins, I beheld in a dark corner of it, a being scarcely human,

human, who sought to avoid me. Such an apparition filled me at first with horror; but upon composing myself, I exclaimed—

‘Whoever thou art, fear not! I am a stranger, whom curiosity has led to this scene of horror. I wish not to disturb the retirement which you have chosen, if this spot be, in truth, your residence.’

‘Alas!’ he replied, fetching a deep sigh, “well may a sight like this fill you with horror! This is the only asylum suitable to an unfortunate wretch, who has partaken of the crimes of those who were once inhabitants of this Monastery, and who submitted to be an accomplice, because he could not prevent them.”

‘I do not understand you,’ I replied; ‘explain yourself. But first let us leave this dreary place, and breathe a purer air.’

“My

“ My drawn sword was in my hand, and fear perhaps influenced his obedience. On assisting him into open daylight, I drew back with horror. An emaciated body, covered with a sort of ragged tunic, a livid aspect, half concealed by a long and thick beard, which grew over his mouth; his eyes were sunk, and his head bald and wrinkled; a smell, to a degree infectious, tainted the air around him; his naked feet and hands—in short, his whole appearance was rather monstrous than human.

‘ As you are a stranger,’ he said, ‘ you are doubtless unacquainted with the cause of the ruins you behold; I will therefore relate some particulars, which will convince you that Heaven, in its appointed time, sets some boundary to human crimes. Count Marquard was the chosen instrument
in

in the hands of Providence to punish those who not only disgraced their profession, but their being. You must know then that a brave Knight of this province, the worthy Theodore——’

“He stopped, observing you, my noble mistress, beckoning me to approach you.

‘Another time,’ he added, ‘I will reveal circumstances to you which, as important, must be communicated to Count Marquard. Call on me again; you will find me here daily: at night I wander throughout these ruins, avoiding the sight of every one. I have imposed a penance on myself, of which a residence in this spot of horrors is the most grievous part. I live a life among the dead, and am, as it were, dead among the living.’

“He finished; you again beckoned, and I left him.”

The

The company were much amazed at this adventure of Jeronimo. Marquard it seemed was concerned! It appeared a mystery worth elucidating. Impatient to learn what this man had further to reveal to Jeronimo, they desired him not to fail observing the promised appointment.— With this he would readily have complied, but it was necessary that he should attend his mistress to Ludenbourg, who feared lest a longer absence might alarm Clara and Ildefonsa.

The conversation of the two ladies was now occupied with the man of the cavern, which continued till they were within a short distance of the Castle. It was then Louitgarde perceived a cavalier riding to them with full speed, whom she instantly pointed out to Sporina: but the cloud of dust that enveloped him would not permit her

her to distinguish his person. Jeronimo assured them it was his son.

“But he is alone,” said Sporina; “he has not been able then to discover either Marquard or Bruno.”

Their apprehension was intolerable. In the midst of their conjectures they heard the cavalier exclaim—

“I have found him! I have found him!—He is here! he is here!”

Antonio, whom it really was, at length came up with them. He leaped from his horse, and having first paid his obedience to his father, thus addressed Sporina and Louitgarde.

“Leontine, my dearest master, is found. They will *all* be here in an hour—even to my mother and my youngest sister, who would not be denied accompanying us. Leontine’s goodness would not suffer them
to

to remain behind; but he gave them a coach to convey them, and money for their expences on the journey. Oh my most worthy master! I could never give him up as lost! I was satisfied I should see him again. I met Marquard and Bruno on the moment of their departure for Rome: when they had read my dispatches—

‘Young man,’ said they, ‘go and rest yourself; we will defer our journey till to-morrow.’

“Having consulted on the information I gave them, they took their measures accordingly, and at daybreak the following morning we set out for Rome; and here, my honoured ladies, I am at present, having been sent on before them to announce their coming: I must hasten, therefore, to apprize Clara and Ildefonfa.”

“Since

“ Since Antonio,” said Sporina, “ is about to carry the news to the Castle, I propose that we wait for our travellers in the great walk.”

Louitgarde assented.

They were not kept long in expectation; clouds of dust soon announced their approach.

Clara, whom Marquard did not at first perceive with them, hastened with Ildefonza and the little children to meet him. On their arrival at the Castle, the first moments were consumed in the most tender congratulations. The vassals who had thronged together to express their joy on the safe return of their master, filled the air with acclamations. Festivity was now promoted on all sides; wine was served out, and meat bestowed upon all who solicited it.

When

When the refreshments were removed, Marquard was requested to relate the occurrences of his voyage. He needed no second invitation, but commenced in the following terms.

CHAP. VII.

“YOU need not be told,” addressing himself to Sporina and Ildefonfa, “the uneasiness we felt at not hearing from Steiner, though we had so repeatedly written to him; at length, weary of suspense, Bruno and myself resolved to go in search of him.

“ On

“On our arrival at Venice, we alighted at the Hotel of Veneruzzy; but great was our surprise on finding it inhabited by strangers. We made enquiries respecting the Procurator’s family, but they led to no precise information; all we learned was, that the property had been sold. Bruno advised me to solicit an audience with the Doge, from whom some information might be gained. We went without delay to the Palace. Understanding we were strangers, we were admitted instantly to his presence. He recounted to us the misfortunes which had befallen the Veneruzzys, the death of Steiner, and the melancholy particulars which you already know. He confessed his own remorse in having listened to the suggestions of Constantine, which had impelled him to a tyrannous exertion of his power, to the ruin of a young stranger, in

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the catalogue of whose crimes nothing more black could be found, than that he had the fortune to possess the beautiful Ildefonso for his wife.

“ The Doge added that he had laboured to make an atonement, in some measure, for the injustice to which he had been persuaded, by giving an account to the Holy Father of the excesses of the debauched Cardinal; and that the Pope, to prevent the Church from being scandalized by his conduct, had banished him to a Convent a few leagues from Rome, with an order that the Superior should not allow him any correspondence.

“ The Doge further informed us that Leontine had obtained permission for the sale of his family estates, and had returned to Rome with Father Bernard, but that he knew not in what part of that capital he resided. He advised us, moreover, to
expedite

expedite our journey thither; since, the Pope being dead, Constantine, freed from restraint, would again struggle hard for the possession of Ildefonsa. He added that an advantage might be taken of the assembly of the Conclave to adjust our affairs; and concluded with an offer of his services, and a recommendation to the Cardinal, his uncle.

“ We were on the point of departing, when Antonio brought us his dispatches, which relieved us from all suspense as to the fate of Sporina and Ildefonsa, on learning that they were at Ludenbourg. But Bruno advised our commencing a search after Leontine in the neighbourhood of Rome. Antonio, whose knowledge of that part of the country was better than our's, was added to our escort.

“ We arrived at that city on the third day of the sitting of the Conclave. Bruno

wrote to Father Bernard, requesting his presence at our hotel. The good Father came immediately, impatient to learn intelligence of Ildefonfa and Sporina.

“ Bruno acquainted him that anxiety to learn something of the family of Veneruzzy, had determined us to make a journey to Venice, in which city we were informed of those disastrous events which had overwhelmed them; and that Antonio had there joined us with dispatches from his mistresses, recommending the strictest search after Leontine.

“ Father Bernard then assured Bruno that he had neglected no step which might enable him to procure intelligence concerning him.

‘ I mentioned this affair,’ said he, ‘ to the worthy Cardinal, my patron, who thinks it some project of Constantine, and

and laments that the sacred College should suffer so discreditable a member to continue with them. He is fully resolved to exhibit his conduct to the world after the Pope's election; but since you are here, and the sitting of the Conclave affords us leisure, we will mutually exert ourselves to discover our unfortunate friend.'

" In fact, we departed from Rome the following day, accompanied by Antonio. To prevent being noticed, we separated, in order to visit different districts, appointing, as a general rendezvous, the house formerly occupied by Sporina. For fifteen days, our researches were fruitless: Antonio was despondent; Bruno feared lest treachery should have cut off his friend; as for myself, I was every hour more discouraged, but Father Bernard was steadfast in maintaining hopes

hopes of success. We were, nevertheless, determined to persevere.

“ Bruno, having one day stopped at an hotel, to take shelter from the heat of the day, was conducted into a room already occupied by two in clerical habits. Overcome by fatigue and the weather, he had fallen asleep; but he was disturbed by their loud whispering, and, looking around, perceived them in deep conversation. He had a faint recollection of having seen one of them before, and was endeavouring to recall his name, when, their eyes meeting, one of the ecclesiastics appeared confused. He at length rose, and drawing near to Bruno—

‘ Sir Knight,’ said he, ‘ I think I have seen you before. Is not your name Bruno, whom I saw some years back at the Island of Corfou?’

‘ My

‘My stay there was so short,’ replied our Knight, ‘that I should thank you to mention some circumstances which may remind me of it.’

‘You were then in search of Ildefonfa and Steiner,’ answered the Priest, ‘and Cardinal Constantine directed you for information to St. Gibard, who at that time could not enter into all the details within his knowledge.’

‘And you, Sir,’ exclaimed Bruno, ‘are that Prelate! I now remember you. I am not now seeking Ildefonfa, but her brother Leontine, who has suddenly disappeared.’

“Bruno then gave St. Gibard an account of what had befallen Ildefonfa and her husband since he had left Corfou.

“The Bishop was much affected at learning Steiner’s misfortunes. He told Bruno that

that the climate of Corfou not agreeing with his health, he had solicited and obtained an exchange to a Convent four leagues distant from Rome, whither Constantine had been banished. He added that the Cardinal had informed him of his unabated passion for Ildefonsa; that he had sent emissaries every where, in order to discover her retreat; and that, believing she was in indigence, from the confiscation of her property, it was his intention to offer her a settlement, in case she should listen to his passion.

“ St. Gibard moreover informed Bruno that Constantine had learned of his emissaries that she resided in the vicinity of Rome with her mother, and in the village of Ardea, a short time previous to the death of the Pope. From all these circumstances, it was probable that the
Cardinal

Cardinal had procured the seizure of Leontine, in order to remove an obstacle to his designs upon Ildefonsa.

“ The Bishop requested Bruno to commit to his confidence what he had told him, being unwilling to draw upon himself the enmity of a man who was implacable in his revenge.

“ Bruno satisfied him on this point, assuring him of his short stay in Italy, whither he had only been brought for the purpose of discovering Leontine.

“ On the same evening Bruno, full of this intelligence, related to Marquard and Father Bernard what he had learned from St. Gibard. On hearing this, they resolved to await the breaking up of the Conclave, and in the meantime to give over their search, lest they should draw upon themselves a general observation. They

resolved to take up their residence in the cottage of Ardea, which still belonged to Sporina, whose term of renting it had not yet expired. The worthy Father kept a constant watch over every action of Constantine, who still believed Ildefonsa to be at Ardea, since, busy in the intrigues of the Conclave, he had not employed himself to gain further intelligence.

“A few days after Father Bernard’s return to Rome, Antonio announced the arrival of a messenger with a letter, which he seemed in haste to deliver.

‘Rejoice, my friends,’ said the good Father, from whom the letter came; ‘we have now a man elected to the Pontificate who will fill it with honour. The Cardinal, my patron, has been elected almost

almost unanimously; one voice alone opposed his elevation. Constantine voted for himself, but had none to second him. It was curious to observe him paying his respects to the new Pope; complimenting a man whom he most inveterately hated, as indeed he does all who know his baseness. His valet informed me that he sets out tomorrow for his seat, about a league distant from Ardea; therefore, my friends, do not lose sight of him. I cannot join you at present, as I fear my absence might offend my patron. After the installation, I shall meet you at our appointed rendezvous; in the meantime adieu!

“ We had no sooner read this letter, than we sent Antonio to watch the Cardinal. This young man, whose address was only
1 6 equalled

equalled by his zeal for Leontine, formed an intimacy with one of the Cardinal's domestics. He took him to a house of refreshment, where he treated him on the plea of a new acquaintance, and feigned a desire of entering into his master's service. He cajoled him in a manner to answer his purpose, and plied him constantly with wine. At length the servant became free and loquacious, and Antonio made him drink a succession of bumpers. By dint of these, he learned that his master, the Cardinal, had in confinement, in a dungeon of his Castle, a young man, who had been brought thither in the middle of the night by armed men in Constantine's pay, under pretence of saving him from further misfortune. It was pretended that he was the son of one of the Cardinal's friends, and that the powers of the Inquisition were
armed

armed against him, for maintaining doctrines hostile to the established Church.

“ He added that it fell to *his* lot to carry him food, which he gave him through a wicket, his master not trusting out of his own hands the key of his dungeon. From the description this man gave of the prisoner, Antonio instantly knew him to be Leontine. He then asked if the Cardinal intended to make a long stay in the country.

‘ I know not,’ replied the domestic ;
‘ but I have heard the housekeeper say that he means to take a voyage to the Island of Corfou, whither he is to conduct a young niece of his, who lives secluded in a small house in the neighbourhood. He proposes going for her to-morrow night, accompanied only by two of his domestics.’

“Antonio having gathered more intelligence than he expected, went with his companion to the Castle-gate, and hastened to acquaint us with his discovery. It may easily be imagined that we remitted nothing of our usual vigilance on that night. Constantine could not enter on any side of the house without scaling the walls. We kept strict watch round the premises, agreeing to give each other due notice, should any attack be made. Previous to the night's setting in, we visited every part of the park and mansion, and knew not how Constantine could contrive to enter.

‘A thought strikes me,’ said Antonio. ‘The door of the pavilion formerly inhabited by Leontine, having no inside bolts, may be with ease opened.’

‘You are in the right,’ said I; ‘it is on
this

this door he refts his hopes of entrance. This accounts for his carrying off Leontine.'

“ Having taken Antonio's advice, we pofted ourfelves in a lower apartment of the pavilion, near the entrance. The night being dark, was favourable to our defigns. All was hufhed around us. Nothing could be heard but the folitary found of the village clock, which had juft warned us of midnight. At length Antonio, who was neareft the door, heard fome one trying the lock; he gave the fignal, and we obferved a ftrict filence. The door was opened with the greateft precaution, and five armed men, conducted by a fixth holding a lanthorn, entered the pavilion, but ftopped not a moment.

“ Antonio ran to the door, which he clofed, and, to prevent their return, drove
a ftrong

a strong nail into the keyhole. We followed the men at about thirty paces distant; they had only an iron gate to pass, which separated them from the house. Whilst trying to open it, we sprang upon them, and three being thrown upon the ground, the others, without attempting a defence, fled precipitately. We followed them closely, and came up with them on the point of re-entering the pavilion. They threw down their arms, and begged their lives. We promised to spare them, on condition of their obedience to our orders, and naming their employer.

“ They acknowledged that Constantine headed them, who had come thither with the view of protecting his niece from the researches of the Inquisition, and that he had endeavoured to save himself by flight the moment he saw them attacked.

“ Antonio’s

“ Antonio’s precaution we knew must have prevented his escape. Bruno went to the pavilion to seize the Cardinal, but did not find him. Our search for some time was fruitless; at length we discovered him behind a thick bush in the garden. Bruno whispered me that *he* would not speak, lest the Cardinal, who had seen him at Corfou, should recognise his voice.

‘ Come forth, my Lord,’ said I; ‘ your Eminence cannot be much at your ease in that posture.’

“ Still he did not stir.

‘ You may as well appear,’ added I, ‘ of your own accord, or we must compel your Lordship.’

“ He now crawled out on his hands and knees, and I desired the two men whom we had disarmed, to lead him to the pavilion, whither

whither Bruno and I followed, whilst Antonio went to his mother for a light.

“ Having quickly returned with it, we went up to Leontine’s apartment, where we found every thing in its place. Bruno had lowered the visor of his helmet, and we held our drawn swords in our hands. I then addressed Constantine in an authoritative tone.

‘ Wretch!’ I exclaimed, ‘ thou hast now heaped up the measure of thy iniquity; vengeance is thy due, and thy punishment is now certain. Thou art still polluted with the blood of the innocent, whom thou hast sacrificed to thy rage. But before you undergo the sentence of your crimes, write immediately to the gaoler of Leontine, who is thy prisoner, commanding his instant release.’

“ He

“He immediately obeyed, perceiving the strong necessity of compliance. I sent the note by Antonio.

‘Sir Knight,’ said Constantine, ‘I confess my fault; but I entreat that you will permit me to retire as soon as Leontine arrives: my character demands that my absence from my Castle should not be noticed.’

‘Hypocrite!’ I replied, ‘the imposture which is concealed under thy robes, shall at length be laid bare to the public. Thy injustice to Leontine is the least of thy crimes against the noble family of Veneruzzy. The blood of the murdered Steiner calls aloud for vengeance. The peace of his unhappy wife is lost by thy villany, and the gratification of a base passion brought thee here: but Ildefonsa is beyond thy power.’

“At

“ At this name he turned pale ; but recovering himself, he said—

‘ What induces you to interest yourself in her behalf? She herself was the cause of her husband’s death. Enraged by her treatment of me beyond all bounds, I resolved on her husband’s destruction. My crime is love—love irritated and repulsed : it is a crime which can excuse all others !’

“ I scarcely know what I replied, but I became outrageous at this insolent justification of himself. I insisted on the sanctity of his profession, which forbade the encouragement of unlawful appetites ; I magnified his duplicity, and told him it should no longer protect him. I bade him expect no mercy from me, who was an instrument in the hands of Heaven to punish him.

“ The arrival of Leontine put a stop to a conversation which did not much heighten
the

the satisfaction of Constantine. It was necessary to preserve the strictest secrecy in what we intended to do, and it was no less proper to remain strangers in a superstitious country, where the vulgar would have thought it an unpardonable crime to chastize a man whom they were accustomed to regard with reverence.

‘What do I see!’ exclaimed Leontine, on entering. ‘How is it that Cardinal Constantine is at Ardea at so late an hour?’

‘It is to this unseasonable visit,’ I replied, ‘you are indebted for your liberty. Perhaps you know not where you have been hitherto confined, nor on what account. Learn then that the Cardinal caused you to be arrested, and conveyed you to his Castle.’

“Leontine exclaimed indignantly at these

these words—‘How! was he not contented with the ruin of my family?’

‘He still retains the hope,’ said I, ‘of possessing Ildefonsa, and with that view broke into the pavilion at midnight, attended by an armed troop of his servants, who have fallen victims to their master’s project.’

‘Has my sister escaped all violence?’ eagerly enquired Leontine.

‘Be satisfied,’ I replied; ‘she is safe.’

‘Monster!’ cried Leontine, ‘thou shalt now then be rewarded for all thy misdeeds.’

“He was on the point of plunging a dagger into his heart, when I stopped him, saying—

‘It is true this man has disgraced a profession which chastity, temperance, and every virtue are expected to adorn; but though claims of this sacred nature have
not

not deterred him from the commission of crimes which would justify us in taking his life, yet the respect I bear to the sanctity of the priesthood, shall here be his protection from personal violence, though not from public disgrace. We will dismiss him. Passion at first transported me, but reason has painted things in a better light; and what I resolved upon in the frenzy of rage, I reject in the calmness of reflection. I again therefore repeat, let us dismiss him.'

'How!' they exclaimed; 'shall he insult over us again? Shall we again be subject to his atrocities?'

'No,' said I; 'his character shall be publicly exposed, and we have now, upon an explanation of his conduct to his Holiness, sufficient interest to get him deposed from his dignity. His Cardinal's hat shall be

be taken from him, and then his power to injure us is at an end.'

"We then dismissed the affrighted Cardinal, who was no less base than pusillanimous; and his attendants conducted him to his Castle.

"As soon as they were gone, Bruno made himself known to Leontine. We informed him of all that had passed, and I need not paint his surprise at the recital.

"We now resolved to continue no longer at Ardea, but departed immediately, that we might be at some distance by daybreak. We gave notice of our intentions to Antonio's mother, whom we appointed to join us as soon as possible at some town without the papal territory.

"Bruno wrote a full account to Father Bernard of the whole transaction, and
invited

invited him to join us at the same place which was fixed upon for Antonio's mother.

“We arrived in a few days at the town agreed upon, where we received the answer of the good Father. It contained his acceptance of the offer we had made him of coming to live with us, and an assurance that as soon as he could obtain his Holiness's permission, he would prepare to join us. He added, that he should then be able to bring intelligence of the consequence of our rencounter with Constantine.

‘There is no doubt,’ he said, in conclusion, ‘but that, upon a representation to the Sacred College, the Cardinal will be deprived of his hat. Your evidence is indisputable, and, his crimes being proved, the slightest punishment they can inflict on him, is *this deprivation.*’

Marquard thus concluded his narrative, to the satisfaction of all parties. Ildefonsa testified much joy at the hopes of seeing once more the worthy Bernard, whose services had been so steady and faithful to their interest.

Leontine evinced the purest satisfaction at being again restored to his mother and sister, who, in their turn, questioned him concerning the manner in which he had been conveyed away.

He told them that, having one day wandered further than usual, he was attacked at nightfall by four armed men, against whom he could not defend himself, as he was without arms. They threw a veil over his face, and led him to a very high chamber, from whence he could see nothing but a thick wood; and he was ignorant into
whose

whose hands he had fallen, until Antonio released him, and conducted him to the pavilion.

The unlicensed depravity of Constantine, and the unrelenting vengeance with which he had persecuted a whole family, now became the subject of their conversation. It was, indeed, difficult to account for these atrocities, but by imputing them to the effects of a flighted love.

“This man,” said Marquard, “is one of those who disgrace a profession which suffers more than any other for the faults of its individual members. Vices in a Priest are, by the narrow and prejudiced, reflected upon the whole body; and he who suffers an injury from an Ecclesiastic, is generally inflamed with an inveterate animosity against the establishment itself. This is unjust;

but it is an error into which common minds are apt to fall, and furnishes a strong argument in favour of a rigid inspection over the morals of the Clergy. I know indeed that the prejudices of mankind affix greater depravity to an inferior vice in a Priest, than they do to the most enormous in a layman: but this prejudice is not wholly without reason; it has something in it which deserves consideration. The Church indeed exclaims against this usage as unfair; it says truly—‘ Its members are but men, and failings are incidental to all the human species.’

“ But it should be remembered that the vices of the Ecclesiastics are only more censured because they are more detrimental; they are looked up to as examples, and the conduct of the lower order is to be modelled

modelled by their's. Since, therefore, purity of character is more required from them, it is fit all deviation from it should be more severely punished."

CHAP. VIII.

AT length our little society began to experience the happiness of a renewed union, in a country where tranquillity and peace reigned; and their happiness was unendangered from any assaults of resentment or ambition.

Gennebald and Werdman, who had so long persecuted Marquard and his family, had met with the just reward of their crimes, whilst Constantine himself was in a course of punishment, since the Sacred College had already commenced an examination of his guilt. Health and contentment beamed upon every cheek, and gladdened the prospect of the coming years. The lovely Aurora increased in beauty, and supplied to her mother the lamented loss of a husband. Young Marquard grew up with hopes more sanguine than ever, and inherited all the virtues of his father.

A letter was now received from Father Bernard, announcing the Pope's consent to his residing among them. He added that he should shortly visit them, and that, in respect to Constantine, his degradation

was

was almost finally resolved upon, his Holiness having insisted on his signal punishment.

Sporina and Louitgarde had informed Marquard and his friend of their visit to the ruins of the Augustine Convent. Jeronimo had again called upon the man of the cavern, from whom he received the following narration.

“ You must know,” said he, “ that the most worthy Knight of our province, the brave Theodore, having been attacked by Gennebald at the head of thirty men, and compelled to yield to numbers, was conducted, loaded with chains, to a dungeon beneath this Convent. I, who was a subject of Theodore, and had several means of saving him, was yet barbarous enough to refuse him my assistance. It

belonged to me to convey him the daily food which was allowed him, and oftentimes with his eyes did he implore my compassion; but I stifled every sentiment of humanity, and turned away from the wretched Knight, who was left to linger in the rigour of captivity, without one struggle to preserve him.

“ There was a narrow passage in the cavern in which Theodore was confined, and of which the Prior and Gennebald had taken no notice; this led to another and more spacious cave, whence an escape was easy, by means of a small window which looked towards yonder forest. It would have been in my power to have aided the flight of Theodore, without incurring any suspicion.

On the evening preceding the day on
which

which Gennebald had resolved to put him to death, I went to take him his last meal, and found him stretched upon the straw.

‘Is it you, my good brother?’ said he, in a tone which penetrated my heart. ‘Alas! your charitable offices will soon close. I feel my end approaching, and the pain of my undressed wounds is intolerable. But I thank you nevertheless for your kindness.’

‘My kindness!’ said I to myself—‘rather say my cruelty!’

“I was unable to answer him: grief for his sufferings at length roused me to compassionate them, and pity determined me to attempt putting an end to them.

“Having provided myself with an instrument to release him from his chains, I

went to the top of the aperture; but finding it too far from the ground for Theodore to reach it, I arranged several large stones in the form of a staircase, to facilitate his ascent. I then returned to my cell, resolved to wait till all should be quiet. Fatigue, from the labour I had undergone, entirely overpowered me. I awoke as the clock struck one, and ran in haste to the cave. A silence the most profound reigned around me. I drew near the door; but all my efforts to open it were ineffectual, having by mistake taken the wrong key. I went back to fetch another, but it was gone from the place where it usually hung. It immediately struck me that the Prior and Gennebald had taken it down, to execute their murderous intentions. Time was precious; I therefore ran to the great cave
which

which communicated with Theodore's dungeon, and having explored my way into it, I groped about for the old man. On a sudden I stumbled against something which I had reason to think was not in the cavern before: on touching it, I knew it to be a coffin! My blood was chilled with horror.

‘Heavens!’ I exclaimed, ‘the unhappy man has been murdered!’

“I then retreated precipitately from the fatal spot, and regained my cell, scarcely knowing how I got thither. A cold sweat bedewed my limbs, and I was on the point of fainting. When I had recovered a little from the strong impression left upon my mind, I prostrated myself on the earth, and accused myself of partaking in the murder of an innocent man, whom I might have saved but for my delay. In

these agonies of mind, heightened by a sharp sense of guilt, I continued some time. My desperation had worked me up to a high fever, and in a frenzy I threw myself upon my bed. My brethren came to visit me at the cell, and observing my condition, had me conveyed to the infirmary. Here I remained six weeks in a struggle between life and death. When restored to health, I enquired after Marquard, desirous of unfolding to him the dreadful secret which preyed upon my mind. I was told he was absent from home. With anxiety I awaited his return; but my first notice of it was his investment of this Convent, and his speedily reducing it to ashes. The Monks interred the body of Theodore in a remote cave, where they thought it could not be found, to rise up in evidence against them.

All

All our brethren and domestics were put to the sword: I being the only one who escaped the general massacre, by taking shelter in the cavern in which you found me. In that cavern the remains of Theodore are at rest; and there I made a vow to dwell until his son should cause them to be buried in the tomb of his ancestors. It is on this grave I seek that repose which I fear has for ever fled me."

During Jeronimo's recital, Marquard shed many tears at the tragical end of his father. He resolved immediately to have the corpse conveyed to the family vault: he therefore ordered a body of his vassals to arm themselves, and, in company with Bruno, he proceeded to the cave which contained the precious deposit. The earth which covered it was soon taken away, and the coffin drawn

drawn up by two men; when Marquard, kneeling, received it with respect. Whilst he put up his orisons to the Divine Being, Bruno ranged the men in two lines, and four of the attendants having put the coffin on a litter, the procession set out for Reinebourg.

Sporina, with Louitgarde and Ildefonsa, having been informed of its arrival, came to meet it in the outer court. A great concourse of the vassals had assembled on this occasion.

The bearers of the corpse having reached the great square, they placed the coffin on two stands, where it remained for public view during two hours, whilst the place of interment was preparing. The pious ceremony over, the company returned to Ludenbourg. Silence and melancholy
6 reigned

reigned throughout the Castle, until Father Bernard's arrival. He was received with much joy: the kindness which his fidelity deserved, was amply repaid him. On being questioned concerning Constantine, he spoke as follows:—

“ This unhappy man is now become an object rather of pity than indignation: he is deposed with public ignominy from his former dignities, stripped of his Cardinal's hat, and deprived of all his temporalities. His luxurious appetites have now no friends to support them; and he is compelled to live upon the charity of a Convent, of which he was formerly patron, but of which the very Monks despise him, as they were accomplices in his vices, and hate him because he can no longer corrupt them.”

Sporina had long been meditating how to procure an establishment for Father Bernard. On a certain day, when they were assembled in the great hall of the Castle, recounting the many obligations which they owed to Bernard, Sporina asked her son and daughter if they were willing she should assign him a maintenance from her own property when she was dead.

They not only approved this, but assured her that they would make him such a provision, as would leave him no room for regretting his native country.

Marquard, with his usual benevolence of heart, warmly supported this proposal, and begged leave to make another.

“ Our children,” said he, “ will have a very considerable inheritance at our death; and I think we may spare, without prejudice

judice to their interest, a part of our savings in repairing that which despair and revenge induced me to destroy. Since the ashes of Theodore are now at rest with those of his ancestors, and vengeance has worked a retributive justice on the head of his assassins, I have it in agitation to rebuild the Augustine Monastery. We may rely upon Father Bernard for a choice of Monks to reside therein. The Priory I purpose to bestow on the good Father:—he will render it respectable by his example, and will continue to us those sentiments of affectionate esteem which it will be the pride of our lives to deserve. We will request of him likewise to receive among the number of his brethren the unfortunate being to whom we owe this information of my father's fate, and who
has

has well expiated the remiss performance of his duty, by the severe penance he has imposed upon himself."

"I the more willingly applaud your intention," said Leontine, "as I mean to contribute most cheerfully to further your benevolent purposes. I am determined on a perpetual celibacy; the sacrifice I shall make will be less felt by me than by you, who have children to provide for."

Father Bernard, entering at this juncture, interrupted the conversation. He had been with Jeronimo, walking towards the ruins of the Convent, and appeared much affected with the scene of devastation he had witnessed. The company immediately imparted to him the plan they had been debating.

He

He agreed as to its propriety, but dwelt upon the greatness of the expence.

Marquard and Leontine made him easy on that head, by observing that the country produced a great plenty of timber, and that labour would prove the most material concern.

The ladies agreeing to share in the expence of the undertaking, Father Bernard gave his consent. It was easy to perceive, by the animation of his features, how much he was gratified by their agreeable proposal. He was desired to obtain the Pope's leave for the establishment of a Convent, of a different order from that which had formerly existed on the spot.

The next day Marquard informed his vassals of his intention, and immediately fifteen hundred offered their services, contented,

tented, in so pious an undertaking, to work for one half their usual wages. Such was in those days the happy power of superstition, that the foundation of a Monastery was believed to be a work of that merit which would atone for all their sins.

Notwithstanding the number of hands employed in its reconstruction, the edifice was not finished in the period of three years. Father Bernard was architect, and to him was left every necessary arrangement. Leontine had requested to have a small apartment, which he should fix on for his residence and retreat.

Since the fatal loss he had sustained, he was habitually melancholy. For some time past he had conceived an intention of endowing the Monastery with the greater part of his property; but Father Bernard, who
had

had nothing of Monkish greediness in his disposition, would not permit him. He represented to him that it was not just to deprive his relations of that fortune of which he ought to consider himself only as a steward; that the new establishment was already well endowed, as his Holiness had given him permission to reclaim the property formerly belonging to the Augustines.

Whilst the works were proceeding, Father Bernard, by the authority of the Pope, had visited several Monasteries in the province, and had obtained from their Superiors such Monks as he thought would do most honour to the new institution.

It was consecrated with a more than usual pomp, in the presence of an immense concourse of people, who had collected

lected from all parts to witness so august a ceremony.

Shortly afterwards died the faithful Kurt, bending under a green old age.

Marquard deplored the loss of the friend of his childhood, and requested leave of Father Bernard to inter him in the Convent.

The deceased Kurt had a nephew, whom he had taken care of since his brother's death. Marquard provided for him in quality of Esquire to his son, and he had already exhibited testimonies of bravery and fidelity.

Having weathered out the numerous storms to which he had been frequently exposed, Marquard began to taste the sweets of a retirement which he had so dearly purchased.

His

His son, the worthy successor of his father's virtues, had now attained the age of maturity, and had for some time sighed in secret for the amiable Aurora, who, in her turn, had testified a most tender affection for him. He had already served four campaigns under the Emperor Otho, who was still waging war against the Danes. A ten years' truce had brought him back to his parents, who more than once had trembled for a life so dear to them.

Ildefonsa had long desired the union of Aurora with one so eminently deserving as the son of Marquard.

Marquard, who loved his niece sincerely, persuaded his sister-in-law to attempt engaging the confidence of her daughter's sentiments with respect to her cousin.

Aurora

Aurora was not the scholar of refinement or dissimulation; a natural simplicity and candour of manners, as they are the best foundations for a noble affection, so they seldom inspire that coquetry which modesty disowns. She openly confessed her passion to her mother.

Sporina and Leontine were rejoiced at the lengthened prospect of happiness this union afforded them. Preparations for the nuptials were commenced. Leontine resolved to settle his fortune on his niece: Sporina did the same.

Ildefonsa entreated her mother not to quit her. She was eager to smooth the gradual descent of old age by the anxiety of a daughter's love, and to contribute to the happiness of her who, for her daughter, had forfeited her own.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

SUCH at length was the happiness of the chief personages of our narrative, that they appeared to have gained the port, and to be safe from the further persecutions of their hitherto unrelenting fortune. Father Bernard taught them to acknowledge the justice and wisdom of Providence, who best knows through what trials to mature and to confirm that virtue which he afterwards intends to reward.

It was now the season of summer, and the heart of man, in common with all nature, expanded under the genial influence. The happiness of the family of Marquard was such as well suited them to an enjoyment of the beauties of scenery. Every hour in which the heat of the sun would permit them that indulgence, was passed in walks through the glens and woods which adjoined to the Castle. The son of Marquard would here whisper into the ear of Aurora the "honeyed tale of his love;" and the kindling cheeks of the lovely Aurora would give no slight clue to the spectators to conjecture the soft subject of their converse. Ye days of love and youth, why do you fly thus fast? Thou spring of life, thou short interval of real happiness, why fliest thou with a foot so swift?

It was in one of these walks that the unusual heat of the sun led our family party to seek the shade and repose of one of the rural arbours with which the taste of Marquard had ornamented the woods in the neighbourhood of the Castle. Aurora proposed that some one should suggest an employment to pass away their time.

“Be it mine to propose,” said Marquard. “The greater part of us present have experienced many of the vicissitudes of life; the narrative of these has been so often related, that it will never be erased from the memory of those who have heard it: there is one, however, in our present company who has not been without his share of the common lot of life, but with whose adventures, with their detail at least, we are as yet ignorant. I propose, therefore,

that Count Leontine be invited to relate his life."

The whole party joined in the request, and Leontine, thus assailed, found it necessary to give way.

"You will remember," said he, "that this relation is a task which you have been pleased to impose upon me, and not one which I have myself assumed: you will pardon me, therefore, if I should execute it more tediously than you expect. With this indulgence, I will begin."

The History of Leontine.

"I need not inform you that my father educated me in a manner which was suited to my rank in the Republic. At the age of eighteen, having already passed a course
under

under the most learned of the Venetian Doctors, my father sent me to Padua, the University of which was at that time considered as the most distinguished in Italy, and of course in Europe. I here became the pupil of the celebrated Vincenzo; and as I happened to catch something of the ardour of my preceptor, my reputation for classic ability soon raised me to general esteem.

“ I had now continued this course upwards of a year; and as I had naturally much of the spirit of emulation, and was further inflamed by the praises of the eloquent Vincenzo, I have no doubt but I should soon have attained the eminence of Paduan learning, and should have at length become first sophist in that celebrated University. A circumstance however occurred at this period which gave a new turn to my ambi-

tion, and led me to pursue another course, and to seek another palm than the one I had hitherto followed.

“ When I review in my imagination the history of my life, though I cannot altogether rank this incident amongst its happy events, I am still grateful to Fortune that it happened at this period; for had it occurred before, it would have given me a taste and turn of mind which would have reduced me to the level of the present Italian Nobility, have rendered me ignorant, and without any other passion than that of pleasure.

“ This circumstance was no other than a casual acquaintance, gradually increased to the greatest intimacy, with one of my fellow-students. It has been justly remarked that the greater events, whether of happiness or misery, in the life of man, may,
usually

usually be traced to the slightest causes—to an origin which appears altogether unequal to produce such effects. My life will furnish a convincing example of this truth—though not mine alone, for I am mistaken or you may all draw the same conclusion from what has occurred to yourselves.

“ This cavalier was nearly of the same age as myself; his name was Lorenzo: he was the son of a noble family at Milan, and, like myself, was sent to Padua, to complete his education. He was altogether the most singular character I have ever met with: his talents were brilliant, but he professed a contempt for literary reputation. Happening to visit me one day at my apartments, he found me, as usual, involved in a studious application to a learned folio.

‘ What!’ said he, ‘ is it thus a cavalier of your age and your rank spends the best days

days of his life? Have you come to Padua for purposes like these?

‘Are not the distinctions of learning worth contending for?’ said I.

‘Not at all,’ replied he, ‘except by those who are hopeless of attaining any other distinctions: your allowance from your father is liberal, and suited to your rank. Pleasure therefore is within your reach, and pleasure of a more substantial kind than any that is to be derived from learning.’

‘I have heard from Vincenzio,’ said I, ‘that no one despised the rewards and reputation of learning but such as are without the talents to obtain them.’

‘Then I will make it appear,’ replied he, ‘that Vincenzio has deceived you. You know that a prize is to be given to-morrow for the most satisfactory essay upon “the constituent

constituent essence of things;"—what will you say to Vincenzo's remark, if this prize should be carried by one who holds learning in contempt? But at present farewell!" said he. "In talking of learning, I shall lose a happiness which learning cannot give me."

"With these words he abruptly took his leave. He had scarcely left my apartment, when Vincenzo entered it.

"My friend," said this learned Doctor, "a prize, as you must know, is to be given away to-morrow for the best essay upon "the constituent essence of things." I must confess I could wish you if possible to attain it, as it will confer a brilliant reputation not only upon yourself, but upon me as your preceptor. The subject is doubtless very difficult, but industry may do wonders."

“ With this encouragement, I immediately commenced my efforts, and having finished my essay, delivered it into the Chancery of the University the same evening. As I gave it into the hands of the Verger, I demanded of him whether there were many candidates.

‘ Yes,’ replied he ; ‘ no prize has ever had so many to contend for it. The difficulty of the subject, and the reputation which will follow the victory, have induced every Doctor of the University to impose their commands upon their pupils to attempt it.’

“ The morning at length came. I hurried to the Hall, where an immense number of spectators were assembled. You may conceive the eagerness with which I expected the entrance of the judges who were to pronounce the decision : they at
length

length appeared. A paper was held up, and the writer of it declared to have carried the prize. He was called forth to receive it, and acknowledge his private mark. No one appeared. He was again summoned. No one answered. Every one looked around them in astonishment. Such a thing had never before happened in Padua!—in a word, the assembly broke up, and the prize remained unbestowed.

“ As I left the hall, I saw Lorenzo. I demanded of him, as I saw he had not been present, if he knew who had obtained the prize.

‘ Yes,’ replied he. ‘ Do you forget my words yesterday, that the prize would be carried by one who holds the rewards of learning and its reputation in contempt? What do you now say to Vincenzio?—Here behold the copy of the prize essay,

and the counterpart of the private mark!—
Yes, my friend, the prize, as you see, is mine; and you see how much I value it. Confess now that I do not despise learning, because I have not the talents to attain it. From this time henceforth I bid it a long adieu, and give myself up wholly to pleasure.’

“ I have related the whole of this incident, as it so strongly illustrates the character of Lorenzo, and accounts for that immediate and singular influence which he gained over me. In a word, he gave another turn to my ambition. I threw my books aside, and endeavoured to conform myself to the model of my friend. From a hard student, I became a man of pleasure. Lorenzo and myself were now inseparable. A jubilee, which Pope Sextus at this time granted, rendered all the cities of Italy a
scene

scene of festive joy. Padua itself followed the example; and though a University, rivalled Rome itself in gallantry. Lorenzo and myself set the example. Every night we gave a ball or masquerade in our apartments. Signor Doctor Vincenzo remonstrated. We listened, but continued the same course. Our folly, for such I must now consider it, did not terminate with the jubilee: our gallantries daily increased, and reached the ears of the Chiefs of the University. They menaced us with expulsion. We laughed. They at length executed their menaces, and Lorenzo and myself were expelled.

“ As I happened to possess a good sum, and a liberty of drawing at pleasure upon my father, I resolved not to return as yet to Venice. I proposed to Lorenzo, therefore, to accompany him to Milan. He
accepted

accepted my offer with pleasure, and we departed from Padua the following day. A curious thought here entered the imagination of Lorenzo.

‘What think you of pleasure, my friend?’ said he: “does not variety make a part of it?”

‘Yes,’ replied I. ‘To talk like a student, it is its constituent essence and essential substance.’

‘Well,’ said he, ‘then let us endeavour to introduce some variety in our pleasures: let us lay aside our habits of cavaliers, and assume those of peasants; let us perform our journey upon foot, and my word for it we shall neither want for variety or adventures.’

“In a word, we did not hesitate to adopt this wild suggestion. We purchased for ourselves, at the nearest town, the habits
of

of peasants; but as our vanity suggested that their shape was rather uncomely, and such as would exhibit us to little advantage, under the pretext of wanting them for masquerade dresses, we procured them to be altered to something of more elegance. With these habits we left Verona, and took the road across the country to Milan.

“ Upon the noon of the second day we reached a forest, above the trees of which, at no great distance, we discerned the pinnacles of a Convent. We had travelled some miles without having passed a village: we resolved therefore to request refreshment at the Convent, and if any questions were asked, agreed to pass as brothers. We soon reached the gates. The portress supplied us with food, and seeing our peasants' dress, demanded of us whither we were going.

‘ We

‘ We are travelling the country in pursuit of work,’ said Lorenzo.

‘ I should imagine that was not very difficult to find,’ replied the portress. ‘ Can you take care of a garden?’

“ We replied in the affirmative.

‘ Well,’ said she, ‘ then I believe your search will soon be at an end. Our gardener has left us for what he is pleased to think a better place, and I think our Abbess will not hesitate to engage you in his room.’

“ The Abbess appeared. In a word, having put to us the same questions, and received the same answers as the portress, she hired us without further delay, and desired us to commence our work the same afternoon.

“ Behold us thus introduced into an
Italian

Italian Convent, in which there were many boarders. For the first day, however, we saw none of them: upon the noon of the second, the season being summer, and the sun unusually hot, we had sought the repose of an arbour in the most recluse part of the garden. To pass away our time, I took my flageolet, and my friend accompanied me with his voice, singing some of the lines of Ariosto. I do not know what inspired me, but I thought I never before played so well. I happened suddenly to turn my eyes to the side of the arbour; through the interstices of the interwoven boughs I beheld the white dresses of two of the boarders. Lorenzo beheld them in the same instant. Taking some flowers which he had gathered, he hastened towards them, and presented them.

‘ Your

‘Your companion plays well, gardener: where did he learn?’

‘I know not, Madam,’ said Lorenzo: ‘perhaps he is only suddenly inspired.’

‘What book is that you have in your hand?’ said the same lady.

‘Ariosto, Madam.’

‘Oh! then you are inspired too,’ said she, ‘I suppose.’

“With these words she took the nose-gay, and retired.

“I will not enter into the detail of all the subsequent dialogues which occurred between these ladies and ourselves; suffice it to say, that the name of the first, she who had spoken to Lorenzo, was Adelaide, the daughter of the Marquis of Cozzo, an Italian Nobleman. Her companion was the daughter of an English officer, who had

had died in Italy, and left this child in her infancy. He had desired in his will that she should be sent to this Convent; and as he had left behind him a sufficient sum for her pension and support, the community had willingly admitted her.

“ With these two boarders Lorenzo and myself became daily admitted to more familiar conversation: we at length flattered ourselves that we had made some impressions in our favour, and under this persuasion, avowed our love. The lovely Caroline, the name of my mistress, was with difficulty reconciled to what bore so much the appearance of intrigue: she did not hear, however, without pleasure, that my rank rendered me not unworthy of her love. She confessed that she had given me her heart before she had known this secret; but she acknowledged that my conversation
had

had led her to conclude that I was not what my habit appeared to signify.

“ I was now so happy in my present situation, and particularly as our mistresses had consented to keep our secret, that I had no wish to lay aside my peasant's habit. Lorenzo appeared equally contented ; and I know not how long we should have continued in that situation, if an incident at this period had not rendered our departure necessary. We were one day expecting our mistresses at the usual place of meeting : Adelaide alone appeared ; her features wore the impression of terror.

‘ Where is Caroline ? ’ exclaimed I. ‘ What has happened ? ’

‘ You gave a picture to Caroline the other day,’ replied she. ‘ This circumstance has produced a discovery : one of the boarders happened to see it, and informed
the

the Abbess of it. The Superior is thus persuaded that Caroline secretly encourages a lover, though she cannot discover who it is, as no cavaliers or other men than aged Priests, are allowed to enter our walls. Caroline has refused to give the Abbess any satisfaction, and for a punishment is confined to one of the cells of our Convent.'

'Confined!' exclaimed I.

'Yes,' replied she: 'such are the rules of the house, that the Abbess has no other law than her own will; and Caroline, for many causes, will be treated with more rigour than any other in the same situation. She is wholly as it were the child of the house. She was left in her infancy to their protection. They have thus educated her for a Nun. I know not to what length of persecution this unfortunate discovery may not tend. But farewell! I must leave you,

as I have reason to suspect that the Abbess begins to regard me with suspicion. 'I will meet you again at our usual time.'

"Adelaide here left us. You may conceive my impatience till the arrival of the appointed moment of our next interview. The hour came; Lorenzo and myself waited with equal patience, but Adelaide did not appear. It was now becoming dark, and we were about to leave the spot in despair, when a sudden thought suggested itself to my mind. It was now the season in which the Convent celebrated the feast of its patron Saint; I proposed therefore to take my flageolet, and, accompanied by the voice of my friend, to walk around the Convent, playing the carols usual at this period.

'Our mistresses will hear, and doubtless recognise us; they may thus contrive to
give

give some signal, by which we may discover the place of their confinement.'

"Lorenzo agreed to this proposal, and we executed it without delay. The Nuns appeared at the windows, and threw us out money and other small acknowledgments. A billet at length fell at my feet. I took it up; but, to avoid suspicion, continued to play some time longer. After some interval, we retired. We found the billet addressed to Lorenzo. We tore it open. Its contents were as follow.

'It is now, my friends, that you must give us proofs of the sincerity of your love, or consent to lose us for ever. I have already told you that Caroline was in part discovered, and a prisoner. I added that

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that I had reason to believe that the Abbess was not without her suspicions of myself: I did not however think that my conjectures were about to be so soon verified. I had no sooner entered the Convent, than I was summoned to her presence. She told me that I was the constant companion of Caroline, and that I must therefore be supposed acquainted with her secrets. She commanded me, by the obedience I owed her, to inform her of what I knew. You may guess in what manner I replied. The Abbess, irritated at my obstinate silence, has confined me to my apartment.

‘ I have said that it is now you must give us proofs of your love, or consent to lose us for ever. I will explain this. There is a rule in the Convent that all the children of the house—that is to say, all those who have been educated in it from
their

their infancy, and to whom the Community have been appointed guardians, shall be compelled to take the veil at the pleasure of the Abbess. Caroline and myself are both in this situation. The Abbess has appointed the hours of public prayer to-morrow for both of us to take the veil.

‘ You will not find it difficult to enter the private chapel of the Convent exactly at midnight: you shall find Caroline and myself there, for we must both attend chapel, preparatory to taking the veil to-morrow. Two Nuns will accompany us. Meet us there. Pledge yourselves at the altar that you will respect our honour and reputation till the Church has united us. Do this, and we consent to fly with you from the Convent.

‘ ADELAIDE.’

“ We resolved, without hesitation, to follow the line of conduct which this letter prescribed. In the course of our abode at the Convent we had become acquainted with a travelling Franciscan Friar. As we knew the poverty, and were not without many proofs of the lax principles of this man, we flattered ourselves that he would not resist a bribe; we made the attempt, and the event justified our hopes.

“ Having prepared every thing necessary to the accomplishment of our scheme, Lorenzo, myself, and the Franciscan entered the chapel, and awaited in concealment the arrival of our mistresses. They at length appeared, and, attended by two Nuns, approached the altar. We rushed forwards, and seizing the two Nuns, prevented them from giving the alarm. The
Franciscan

Franciscan then united the hands of Caroline and myself; Lorenzo and Adelaide succeeded us: in a word, we effected our escape from the chapel and gardens of the Convent without molestation. The Franciscan here took leave of us.

“ We continued our flight till we had advanced within a few miles of Milan. By the desire of our mistresses, we procured the marriage ceremony to be again performed. It was not till after this solemnity that they chose to consider themselves as our wives.

“ Lorenzo introduced his wife to his family at Milan; and though they had something of Italian bigotry, and did not approve of an elopement from a Convent, they received her as her merit deserved; and the more particularly so, as her birth was

superior to that of Lorenzo: in a word, Lorenzo and Adelaide had nothing further to wish as necessary to their happiness. "

" I lived for some months with my friend; and as every day discovered new virtues and new accomplishments in my Caroline, our happiness was but little inferior to that of Lorenzo and Adelaide. It is true that the remembrance of the peculiar character of my father, and the reflection, that I had formed without his knowledge one of the most important of connections, would sometimes interpose to check my self-congratulation. This thought would cloud my gaiety, and impress my features with the emotions of my mind: but the kindness of my friend, and the affection of my wife, spared no efforts to dissipate my chagrin; and what will not friendship and love effect?

' It

‘It is impossible,’ said Lorenzo, ‘that my Lord Procurator can relent a choice which has added to his family such a member as the lovely, the amiable Caroline. Believe me, my friend, you indulge but groundless apprehensions.’

“These arguments of my friend reduced me to tranquillity; and I know not how long I should have remained in the same situation—that is to say, should have supported myself and my wife upon my private allowance, and have concealed my marriage from my father, if an unexpected incident had not hastened this avowal.

“A letter was forwarded to me from Padua. I recognised with trembling the characters of my father’s hand-writing. I had scarcely sufficient courage to open it.—At length I broke the seal. The usual
M 3 address—

address—"My dear Leontine," renewed my hopes. I perused it. Its conclusion filled me with terror. My father still believed me to be at the University of Padua. He desired me to hasten home, to accomplish the engagement he had formerly made in my name, that at a certain age I should marry the daughter of a noble Venetian.

"I now found it necessary to avow my marriage, and at length collected sufficient courage to send this information to my father. I will say nothing as to the manner in which he answered me. Suffice it to say, that he commanded me to see him no more, and, enclosing a considerable sum, added that it was the last I should ever receive. He accused me of having caused him to break his pledged word, and thus of having disgraced the sacred honour of a Venetian Noble.

"I will

“ I will not enter into a detail of the domestic misfortunes which followed this rejection from paternal favour. I will not call up the ashes of my father, to accuse them of unrelenting vengeance for an act which, however indefensible, was not so high upon the scale of moral depravity, as to merit a punishment like that of exile from my name, family, and country : suffice it to say, that the virtues of my Caroline caused me to forget every thing but herself, and that I thought no condition of life intolerable, in which it was left me to enjoy her society and love. I am persuaded, from my own experience, that such is the value of domestic good, its possessor must be without either common fortitude or common sensibility, if in possession of this, he cannot support the frowns of the most

adverse fortune. Experience has likewise taught me another and equally useful truth—that it is only in the actual contest that we become acquainted with our real strength, and that many of us consider some misfortunes as beyond our strength to support, which, when they happen, are found unusually easy, and gradually become deprived even of their first weight.”



CHAP. X.

NOTHING now remained to complete the general happiness, but the union of Aurora and the son of Marquard. Each of these, as we have before mentioned, was equally worthy of their excellent parents; the young Marquard giving a promise of becoming as valiant a Knight as his father, whilst the beauty and amiable disposition of the young Aurora were in nothing inferior to the same qualities in her mother.

mother. Marquard resolved that the nuptials of his son should be celebrated with unusual magnificence. Leontine was equally eager that every thing should suit the dignity of his family, and that his niece should appear like a worthy member of the House of Veneruzzy:—nothing therefore was spared upon either side to render the marriage of Aurora and the young Marquard the most brilliant *fête* which Bavaria had ever witnessed.

The day at length arrived. The neighbouring Knights thronged to the Castle: all was splendour, happiness, and animation. It had been agreed that the ceremony should take place in the chapel of the new Convent, and that Father Bernard, as Prior, and the most beloved friend of the two families, should officiate. Twenty-four of
the

the most beautiful girls of the province, and all of them members of noble houses, followed the bride in procession from the Castle to the Convent. Their beauty, and the splendour of their dresses gave a richness to the scene, which it is more easy to conceive than to describe. The young Marquard was attended by the same number of young and noble Knights, each according to the custom of the age, on horseback and in his armour. The meridian sun darting upon the polished steel, silver, and gold, of which the several parts of their armour were composed, produced a spectacle of unequalled lustre. The vassals of Marquard marched in the rear, and appeared proud of belonging to the same family with the bride and bridegroom. In this manner they advanced to the Convent.

At

At the doors of the chapel appeared Father Bernard, as Prior, at the head of his Monks. Having received the bride and bridegroom, he led the way to the altar. The organ pealed through the vaulted roofs, and appeared to hail the presence of the founders of the house. The ceremony was performed.—Father Bernard reconducts the new-married couple to the chapel doors. The young Knights, the companions of Marquard, remount their horses, and presenting their spears, salute the bride and bridegroom. The vassals of Marquard, considering this as their signal, rend the air with a general shout of joy: the echoes of the forest repeat it, and animate them to renew it.

The procession returned to the Castle in the same order as it had left it to proceed
to

to the Monastery. The feast, the dance, the revelry now began. The park was almost one continued chain of tents, from the Castle to the Convent. The inhabitants of the whole province appeared to be collected in it.

It is beneath the office of an historian to enter into a detailed narrative of the various viands which the banquet presented. From the days of Tacitus to the present period, the Germans have ever been distinguished from other nations for the two qualities of the unlimited hospitality and boundless luxury of their entertainments. Marquard, this day at least, verified this remark. Every one appeared equally gratified and astonished at the scene before him.

The feast was concluded by a ball both in the Castle and in the Park. The fairy figure

figure of the blushing Aurora, floating in airy elegance through the involved mazes of the dance, excited, amongst the more youthful Knights, a transient emotion of envy at the happiness of Marquard, in becoming possessor of a treasure like this: but when they beheld the young Marquard himself move with equal, though more manly grace—when they beheld his courtesy, his benevolence, his hospitality, their envy passed into more friendly sentiments, and they acknowledged that none could be more worthy of each other than Marquard and Aurora.

The feasts continued with equal splendour for many successive days, and it was some time before the young couple were left to enjoy their happiness in tranquillity. The guests, however, at length departed,
and

and Marquard and Aurora were left to the calm of domestic happiness.

Leontine insisted on retiring to the asylum which was prepared for him in the Convent.

The worthy Bernard again retired to his Convent, where he lived in the practice of those duties he taught—a bright example to others, and the delight of all around him.

And now in happy contentment rolled on the years of Aurora, young Marquard, and Ildefonfa. Happiness indeed it was, if such may be called the perfection of earthly bliss.

Often on a winter's evening does Ildefonfa still relate to her prattling grandchildren the story of her former calamities; and whilst she folds each lisping cherub to her bosom,

bosom, drops a tear upon their forehead, and prays in secret that their lot, less chequered by bad fortune than her own, may yet terminate as happily.

FINIS.

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