

*Review Revue 1808*

# MONTONI;

OR,

THE CONFESSIONS OF

THE MONK OF SAINT BENEDICT.

A ROMANCE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BY EDWARD MORTIMER, ESQ.

*Author of Friar Hildargo.*

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Avaunt, and quit my sight, let the earth hide thee;  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
That thou dost glare with.

SHAKESPEARE.

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VOL. III.

LONDON:

*Printed by B. Clarke, Well-Street, Cripplegate,*  
FOR J. F. HUGHES, WIGMORE-STREET,  
CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

1808.



# MONTONI.

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## CHAP. I.

**T**HE greatest confusion was occasioned at the pallazio of Conte Manfred by the absence of Victoria.

The neighbouring woods and houses were strictly searched, and the minutest inquiries made in every part of Genoa.

All the gondoleiri in the city were closely examined, rewards offered them, and such prevailing measures employed



for her recovery, as nothing but the cautious management of Spignoletti and his companions could have rendered utterly abortive.

The gondoleiri persisted, without variation, in their assertions that no person of her description had left Genoa in their gondolas.

This unexpected misfortune sunk deep in the heart of the contessa, whose health, naturally delicate, was unable to support so terrible a calamity.

Conte Manfred, seeing the dreadful change that grief had occasioned, for a long time almost hourly dreaded her dissolution, as the result of her continued laments.

He

He was therefore unable to make any researches in person, and was obliged to rely on the efforts of the several parties he had sent different ways in search of his daughter.

The arrival of the Duca de Rodolpho at this period at Genoa contributed, as he had intended it should, to lull the suspicion that had naturally arisen in Conte Manfred's breast, of his being the author of Victoria's disappearance.

When Alphonso had seen the unfortunate Leonora de Gonzales safe within the walls of the convent, he turned his steps towards Genoa, in hopes that there he should be able to find Hubert.

After a long and fatiguing journey, he at length reached that city: but what was his horror and anguish to hear that the beloved idol of his heart was missing.

He repaired immediately to the residence of Conte Manfred, and was instantly admitted to him.

The good conte seemed, with the excess of his grief at the increasing and alarming illness of his amiable wife, and the loss of his beloved daughter, to be fast sinking in the grave himself.

He seemed somewhat pleased to see Alphonso, for whom he had a sincere regard; but, unable to speak, he  
pressed



pressed his hand, and pointed to a seat.

Alphonso respected his feelings, and endeavoured to controul his own, which raged unceasing in his bosom.

When Manfred at length recited to him the sad particulars of the loss of Victoria, he hid his face in his mantle, and for á while gave vent to his heart-felt sorrow.

At length he arose from his seat.

“The moments,” said he, mournfully, “are precious. This hour will I leave Genoa, and from that black villain, Rodolpho (for too fatally am I convinced that Victoria is in his  
B 3 power),

power), will I demand her; and perhaps heaven will be so kind as to smile on my endeavours to restore her to your arms."

"Alphonso," said Manfred, "be not precipitate. Your single arm could effect little against the armed hosts of Rodolpho.

"Go, then, my friend, and seek to assure yourself whether my poor child is in his castello or not.

"Should she be there, the forces of the state shall be employed to reduce its lofty walls, and liberate her: but I much doubt that the duca has perpetrated this atrocious act, as he has been for some time at Genoa. Nevertheless,  
my

my friend, go ; and may Heaven grant you success in your search !”

Alphonso took a hasty leave of Manfred, and instantly embarked for Savona, as the most expeditious mode of reaching the Castello de Rodolpho.

A favourable breeze soon wafted his bark to the destined port.

After he had travelled for three days, he arrived in the vicinity of the Castello de Rodolpho. Recollecting a cave which was in the wood on one side of the castello, he bent his steps towards it, intending to remain concealed there, till night had spread her dusky veil over the face of nature.



The azure blue of the heavens had, for some time, been hid from the view by dark-louring clouds, which now poured forth their watery stores on the earth.

Alphonso arrived at the cave, weary and drenched with the rain, which penetrated the joints of his armour.

From an eminence which commanded a view of the castello, Alphonso perceived that the banners of the duca were not on the walls.

From this circumstance, he concluded that he was not there, which vexed him, because he thought that Victoria, if she was in his power, would, in all probability, be with him;  
and

and that therefore his long journey was fruitless.

The cavern which he entered for shelter was of great extent, and full of rough crags and brambles, which rendered a great part of the interior impassable.

While Alphonso, seated on a piece of rock, was pensively ruminating on his misfortunes, and awaiting the close of day, he was suddenly disturbed by the sound of horsemen approaching.

Not wishing to be seen, he hastily retired into the remote parts of the cavern, to escape their notice; for he concluded that, like himself, they were

seeking its friendly covert from the storm that raged without.

The travellers, now entering the cavern, having tied their horses to the trees which were before it, struck a light.

Gathering some of the withered branches which lay about the place, they soon made a fire, which illumined the rugged walls with its cheerful blaze.

Alphonso was rather alarmed at this circumstance; for, observing from their dress that they belonged to the duca, he was fearful of being discovered; and existence was precious to him,

now



now that Victoria was in need of his services.

From his place of retreat, Alphonso now observed a person in earnest conversation with four or five of the duca's domestics, whom he had taken apart.

From the well-remembered tones of his voice, he recognized him to be his deadly enemy, Torralto.

The subject of their discourse was himself; and from it he learned, that they had just come from Genoa, where they had been long in search of him.

“How unfortunate it was,” said Torralto, “that we never could get  
B 6            a convenient

a convenient opportunity to sheath our daggers in his heart! I wonder where Manfred has secreted him. The duca is so anxious to rid himself of the fears he entertains respecting Alphonso by his death, that I am certain if any of you should succeed, he would double the reward he has promised."

"I would travel Italy over," said one of the men, "to serve his excellenza; for it must be confessed he is very liberal when he wants these sorts of jobs performed; but without the smallest information to guide one, it would be useless."

"A little patience," said another, "and we shall fall in him with some day or other. Who would have thought

thought that we should so easily have got the Signora, the daughter of Conte Manfred, when she was almost within hearing of the people at his palazzo?"

"Ay," said the man who spoke first, "that affair was, indeed, well managed; but Spignoletti is as cunning as the diavolo himself."

Alphonso, the better to hear the converse of these men, which was so interesting to him, had climbed up to a projecting piece of the rock, on which he supported himself, but which unfortunately at this moment gave way with his weight. In falling to the ground, he incautiously uttered an exclamation.

At



At the sound of his voice, Torralto and the men who were with him started, and, drawing their swords, rushed forwards to the place from whence the noise had proceeded, in order to find who it was that had thus overheard their converse.

Fortunately, at that eventful moment, a blast of wind entered the cave, which, scattering wide the burning branches, soon extinguished them.

The men now stopped, unable to advance for want of light.

Alphonso, determining to take that opportunity of effecting his escape, drew his sword, and retreated amongst the bushes.

The

The rustling noise which he made terrified the men.

Uncertain of the number of people they might have to encounter, they suddenly left the cavern, and, after a short debate, mounted their horses, and departed.

Alphonso blessed Heaven for this great and wonderful interposition in his favour.

When they were gone some time, and the sounds of their horses' feet were no longer heard, he collected the scattered embers, which he blew into a flame.

Having

Having lighted a withered branch, he advanced into the recesses of the cave, in order to examine a part which had attracted his notice while it was illumined by the fire which Rodolpho's people had kindled.

Here was a heap of faggots, piled up against one of the rocks.

These he imagined could hardly be placed there for the mere purpose of their preservation; and in that idea he afterwards found he was right.

On removing them, he perceived a small door, which being unfastened, he opened it.

He



He entered a vaulted passage, the walls of which were mouldering away; and, from the chilling damp air within, the place did not appear to have been used for a great length of time.

Without reflecting whither it might lead him, and indulging a hope that, like the subterranean passage at Montoni, this one might lead to the interior of the Castello de Rodolpho, he hurried on.

After various turnings and windings, he arrived at the foot of a stone staircase.

Here his light, which had hitherto  
enabled

enabled him to proceed through these dreary passages, failed him.

Alphonso, however, ascended the steps, which were of great length, and dangerous, from the many delapidations caused by the hand of time.

Still, however, his hopes urged him on; and, arriving at the summit, by the light of the moon, which entered a casement, he discovered that the place he was in appeared to be an apartment.

He was unable to judge as to its extent; but, on looking through the casement, he found, to his delight,  
that

that he was now in the interior of the castello.

From the conversation he had overheard, he had every reason to suppose that Victoria was in the castello.

He well knew that its remote situation and concealed chambers were well adapted for such a purpose.

Knowing the duca so well as he did, he was well assured that he would never venture to bring her to Genoa, where her detention would soon be discovered.

He therefore, now that he had effected an entrance within its walls unperceived,



perceived, determined to examine every part of it.

From his present observations, he judged he was in the western wing, and leaving the chamber, passed through a long corridor, and ascending some stairs, came to a gallery which communicated with several chambers.

This part of the castello had been for many years uninhabited, and therefore was very ruinous; many of the casements in the gallery were broken by the storms, and most of the chambers being no longer habitable, the duca had ordered the communications with it from the other parts to be closed up.

While

While Alphonso was looking through the casement, which afforded a view of the court-yard, he distinctly saw two men, one of whom carried a torch, pass hastily by an opposite casement: he was unable to recognize who they were, but fancied one of them was Spignoletti.

Alphonso passed some time in surveying the deserted western chambers, in doing which he was often obliged to wait till the dark clouds, which were floating in the vast aerial expanse, ceased to prevent the pale lamp of night from shedding her welcome beams on the earth.

He had traversed a great many places which were utterly unknown  
to

to him, when, in a small apartment which appeared to be on a level with the court-yard, a heap of something in a corner, on which the moon shone, attracting his attention, he stooped down to examine it: it was a long black mantle, rotten with age; it appeared like one of those which formerly were much worn by persons of distinction.

On his attempting to raise it, it fell to pieces in his hand. Other garments then appeared, beneath which, having removed, he beheld the ghastly head of a skeleton. He started at a sight so unexpected, when suddenly a hollow blast of wind shook the edifice, a folding portal at the further extremity of the chamber flew wide on its massy hinges,



hinges, and a glaring light shone through the opening.

Clad in complete armour, with the vizor down, a form appeared standing beneath the archway of the portal; one arm held a truncheon, the other rested on a sword. Alphonso was struck with amazement, for the figure exactly resembled that of the painting of the late Duca de Rodolpho.

The figure remained motionless for some moments beneath the portal, and Alphonso heard the following words—

“ The maid of thy bosom demands thy assistance, delay not a moment to rescue her, and when circumstances permit, give to those mortal remains  
the

the last holy rites of the church, for once in them dwelt the voice which now warns thee of the danger of her who is so dear to thee."

This said, the form, slowly raising the hand on which was the truncheon, pointed to an opposite portal, and suddenly the light died away, and the supernatural appearance was no longer visible.

Alphonso, though lost in amazement, neglected not to comply with the words of the form, and hastily approaching the door, which he opened, entered a large chamber, which was entirely destitute of furniture; there he looked around him and listened, but all was silent.

A few

A few steps at one end of the room attracting his attention, he approached them, and saw at the bottom a door under a low archway, the fastenings of which were on the outside.

While he was endeavouring to loose them, he heard a low noise as of people in conversation, and presently after it grew louder, and a faint scream, like that of a female, assailed his ears.

He now redoubled his exertions, and had nearly drawn the bolts which were rusted in the wall, when the screams became more violent, and he distinctly heard a female voice begging for mercy; instantly he recognized it to be Victoria's; and, wild  
VOL. III. c with



with horror and distraction, he tore away the yet remaining impediments, and throwing the door open, rushed in, and beheld her struggling in the firm grasp of the Duca de Rodolpho, her lovely hair all in disorder, her garments tore, and her pale quivering lips beseeching of heaven to protect her.

Like the lion, who, traversing the wild Numidian wastes, nearly famished, beholds a tyger feasting on a newly-slain heifer, suddenly he erects his mane, his eyes glare with rage, his long talons are protended, and he flies with irresistible fury on his hated foe.

So rushed Alphonso on the duca: he waited not to draw his sword, but with his gauntlet struck him to  
the

the floor, and Victoria, raising her tearful eyes, beheld Alphonso once more her deliverer.

The horrors of her late dreadful situation had nearly rendered her senseless, but animated by the presence of her lover, who raised her up, she exerted herself, and leaning on his arm, left the chamber, and guided by him, proceeded in the direction of that part where he had gained an entrance into the castello by the subterraneous passage.

The agitation of Alphonso, lest he should be pursued by the emissaries of the duca, and his often stopping to endeavour to recollect his way, considerably lengthened the time before  
c 2 they

they arrived at the stairs which led to the passage which communicated with the cavern.

The weather, which had at intervals been fine and serene, now again changed; the wind arose, and drove together the dark clouds, and as they traversed the passage, could hear it howling through the turrets above.

Victoria, clinging to the arm of Alphonso, silently proceeded, for she was confident that her safety was extremely doubtful, and feared to speak lest she should be heard.

At length they entered the cavern where Alphonso so miraculously escaped destruction; and when they arrived



arrived at the entrance, he extinguished the lamp which he had taken from Victoria's chamber.

The shades of night had now enveloped the earth with more than usual darkness, when the trembling Victoria, leaning on the arm of Alphonso, entered the mazes of the forest, and proceeded as quick as possible, hoping by their exertions to escape being discovered by the vassals of Rodolpho.

The thick underwood impeding their progress, they proceeded with difficulty, while the storm, breaking forth in all its fury, vented on them its merciless rage, and Victoria's thin garments were soon drenched with the rain.

This was, however, no time to seek a shelter, and Alphonso, knowing that at little more than a league from the castello there was a convent of Ursulines, where Victoria would be in safety, hastily directed his steps towards it.

When Victoria had recovered in some degree from her terrors, she asked Alphonso if he had lately seen her parents. He shuddered at her question, for the dangerous state in which he had left the contessa scarcely admitted of a hope that she yet lingered in existence; and perhaps, too, the sorrowing Manfred might also have followed her pure spirit to regions of eternal joys.

The present moment, however, was ill suited to inform Victoria of the real situation of her family, and he therefore evaded as much as he possibly could without exciting suspicion, to answer correctly her frequent questions.

They were now proceeding along one of the beaten paths which led through the forest to the castello, when suddenly the noise of horses' feet was distinctly heard between the raging gusts of wind. They seemed rapidly approaching them, and Alphonso had scarcely time to lead Victoria from the path, and to conceal themselves in the recesses of the forest, when the party rode by.



That the men were in pursuit of them could not be doubted, and Alphonso thought it would be most advisable for them to remain where they were till the morning dawned, which would enable them better to find out the way to the convent, through the devious paths of the forest, with greater safety; but scarcely had they made choice of the shelter of a clump of oaks from the pitiless pelt-  
ing of the rain, when the party were again heard returning.

They stopped at that part of the road which Alphonso had quitted, in order to seek the concealment of the forest, and from which he, being but a short distance, could distinctly hear their discourse.

“ I tell

“ I tell you,” said one, “ that I am certain this was the place where I had a glimpse of them.—Suppose we search just about here ?”

To this the rest agreed, and Alphonso drew his sword in order to protect his trembling charge ; but hardly had he done so, when he was observed, and the whole party riding up, commanded him to surrender.

“ Not while I have life,” returned Alphonso ; “ whoever advances one pace further dies.”

One of the men hearing this, spurred his horse, and furiously drove at him with his long battle spear. Alphonso, with some difficulty, avoided

the intended thrust, and at the same moment sheathed his sword in his body. Groaning, he fell off his horse, which Alphonso seizing, leaped into the saddle, and, undaunted by their numbers, when he had Victoria to protect, rode up, and with his single arm opposed their numerous weapons.

Already two of those who dared to face him sunk beneath the keen edge of his sword, and the rest seeing the fate of their comrades, drew back.

Alphonso seeing this, rode up to Victoria, and was helping her to ascend the horse, when the party advanced, and he was obliged to desist. The conflict was dreadful, but still  
Alphonso



Alphonso was unhurt, and he began to hope that he should be able to effect the escape of his beloved Victoria, when, his horse's feet entangling in the underwood and long trailing brambles, he fell, and in that instant, while he was endeavouring to free himself from the horse, the whole party rushed on him, and having disarmed him they tied his hands and placed him on a horse, and one of them having also set the trembling, fainting Victoria before him on his steed, they proceeded towards the Castello de Rodolpho, where they shortly after arrived.

The duca, who was stunned by the blow he had received, lay for a short time senseless on the floor of the chamber : when he recovered he found

himself in the dark, and to all appearance alone.

What a moment of horror was that to the fearful Rodolpho ! To be alone in the very chamber where his unfortunate wife had become a victim to his cruelty, and where her remains yet lay.

Trembling he arose, and, having found out the door, hastily repaired to Spignoletti, who was waiting his return at the end of the corridor, and, having made him acquainted with what had passed, ordered him to proceed immediately to the spot where Torralto and his people were awaiting his coming, and to direct them to search the wood for Alphonso and  
Victoria,

Victoria, and to bring him, if possible, alive to the castello, that he might have the horrible satisfaction of revenging himself for the blow he had received, by the tortures which it was his intent he should endure.

How, unfortunately for Alphonso and Victoria, those orders were obeyed has been related, and they were immediately conducted into the presence of the duca, who, when he cast his malignant eyes on Alphonso, his countenance changed to a ghastly paleness, and the emotions he suffered from some unknown cause were visible to all around.

At length he seemed to endeavour to shake off the sudden terror which had  
seized



seized him, and assuming a furious look——

“Vile slave,” said he, “’tis well, thou art now my prisoner, and for thy daring act in lifting thy hand against thy lord, the second dawn shall see thy detested features blackening on the highest turret of my castello, and thy limbs, yet quivering with the most excruciating pangs which the torturous rack can inflict, shall be cast to feed the hungry vultures.”

“Duca,” replied Alphonso, “know that I do not fear thy threats: ’tis true I am now in thy power, and my crime, no doubt, in thy sight is dreadful, for it was preventing thee the commission of an offence, black and  
detestable

detestable in the eyes of the fiends of hell; but know that the hour of retribution is at hand; that there is a just and terrible power above, terrible indeed to thee, thou most abhorred of men. But why do I waste my time by holding converse with so fell a tyrant, who can oppress an unprotected female. Lead me to my dungeon, its solitude will have a thousand charms, for there I can ruminate on the scenes of happiness, which, I trust, will await me in another world, where the murderer and oppressor of the innocent will be for ever banished."

"Guards!" exclaimed the almost frantic duca, "away with him this moment! Why do you suffer this wretched

wretched slave to vent his insolence in my presence? Chain him with your heaviest fetters to the humid ground of the deepest dungeon beneath Coredó : there shall he remain excluded the light of Heaven; an inmate with the poisonous reptiles whose pertiferous breath shall taint the air he inhales, till the most dreadful engines of torture ever formed by the fertile invention of man can be prepared."

Victoria, unable to support the tormenting idea of the sad fate of Alphonso, now threw herself on her knees before the savage Rodolpho.

"Duca," said she, "in pity hear me; let me whom you have so greatly wronged



wronged implore you to spare Alphonso ; taint not your name with a deed so foul, so horrible as his murder.”

“ What, Signora,” said Rodolpho, “ do you petition for the caitiff ? Then mark my words—his doom is certain, far beyond the power of man to change, and thou shalt witness his last groans. Yet stay, Victoria, there is yet a way to save him.”

“ To save him ! Name it then.” exclaimed Victoria.

“ If you will become my bride,” returned the duca, “ Alphonso shall live, his forfeit life shall be preserved. Speak then, Victoria, pronounce his  
doom,

doom, or save him from the hands of the executioner."

"Oh, Victoria!" said Alphonso, "rather let my life blood flow this moment before thee, than for a moment hesitate in repulsing with scorn the offers of the vile monster who dares to make such a proposal.—No, tyrant, the daughter of Conte Manfred will act worthy her noble origin, nor will she stoop to be allied to blood and rapine in the Duca de Rodolpho."

"Peace, slave," vociferated the enraged Rodolpho, "or my sword shall quickly send thee to the dark abyss of hell. Speak for yourself, Victoria, let me know your fixed resolves; but  
remember

remember well, that the life of this caitiff is in thy power."

Encouraged by the intreaties of Alphonso, the trembling Victoria at length firmly replied:—

"In the words of Alphonso, duca, you have heard my answer. Nor ever hope that I will yield to thy request, for sooner than wed thee would I suffer death in a thousand soul-appalling forms."

"Bear him then away to the dungeon," said Rodolpho to the men, "and Spignoletti, do you conduct this haughty fair to the eastern turret, and see that preparations be made in the  
court



court below it, for the execution of this insolent, that she may from her casement behold the death of the man she might have preserved."

Alphonso, carefully guarded, was now conducted from the hall where the enraged Rodolpho was, and descending the steps which led to the dungeons, was conducted agreeable to the orders Spignoletti had given the leader of the party, along the caverned passages of the earth, whose yawning excavations hollowly re-echoed the steps of the men.

In some places these passages assumed a bold and lofty aspect, and in others, by continued gradations, became

came so very narrow as scarcely to admit of more than a single person's advance.

Ascending several steps, the deep branching recesses of the caverns now began to lessen, and soon after Alphonso perceived a small iron grated door at the extremity.

This being unfastened, the party entered a long vaulted passage, which Alphonso well knew led to one of the cemeterys of the castello, and when the door at the further end was unbolted, found himself amongst the mouldering remains of coffins and heaps of human bones, which were scattered about in an ancient sepulchral receptacle.

The

The noisome vapours which had been so long pent up in these dreary abodes of the dead, almost subdued the efforts of nature, and the men seemed unwilling to proceed.

They were, however, urged on by the leader of the party, who, when they had traversed this dreary place, opened a door strongly studded and cased with iron: they then thrust Alphonso into the gloomy void, and after securely fastening the door they departed.

Thus left in impenetrable darkness, Alphonso ruminated on his ill-starred fortune.

“No more,” said he, “shall I behold



hold the lovely beams of the sun, when rising in majestic splendor they gladden the face of the creation. No more shall my eyes be cheered with the beauties of indulgent nature.—Ye gentle rivulets, ye flow no more for me.—Ye breezes, no more will your refreshing gales cool my fainting bosom. My sun is setting fast, even now its last beams but faintly illumine the horizon of my existence:—hope, that might have irradiated my dungeon's gloom, is for ever gone, and in a few short hours Alphonso will be no more. Oh, Victoria, what will then become of thee? Faithful to my memory while I exist shall be thy generous intercession for my life; for 'twill cheer the last sad hours of my worldly pilgrimage. Gracious Heaven, be it  
thy

thy care to watch over and protect her; endue her with fortitude to support the horrors of her present situation, and confound the wicked plans which Rodolpho is devising against her peace.—O, would that I could meet thee, base, ungenerous monster, in the trackless wilds of some forest, far from the protection of thy vassals: if thou didst then escape the keen edge of my sword, urged by my fierce revenge, then would I ask of Heaven to forgive thee.”

Alphonso, in endeavouring to find out the extent of his dungeon, which was filled with the same unwholesome vapour as the adjoining cemetery, felt along the walls, and found in many places large staples, with rings fixed in

in them, such as were then used to confine criminals, and in one corner of the dungeon, he found the bones of a skeleton inclosed in a grating of iron.

“ Oh, Rodolpho ! ” said he, “ how many are the dreadful sins which thou hast to answer for, before the great tribunal at the awful day of retribution—how many sighs and groans of the hapless objects of thy hate will ascend on that day to the throne of judgment.”

Alphonso had now nearly paced round his dungeon, when he came to a heap of rubbish, over which he stumbled : as it impeded his approach to the wall he climbed over it, and



stretched out his hand, in order to discover where it was, but his surprise was great to find a pile of mouldering coffins meet his touch.

Alphonso immediately conjectured that the wall which separated him from the cemetery, had fallen down; and now hope dawned in his bosom, for if he could get into the adjoining vault he might yet escape; might yet preserve Victoria and be revenged of Rodolpho.

Full of this hope, he attempted to climb over the receptacles for the dead; but scarcely did his weight rest on them when they gave way, and Alphonso found himself almost buried  
amongst

amongst bones and chapless skulls—horrid and disgusting even to think of.

He, however, toiled on, endeavouring both to advance and to extricate himself from his dangerous situation, in the hopes that liberty might be the result of his present efforts, and he should be able to rescue his adored Victoria.

Frequently did his face come in contact with a loathsome scull, and his hands often grasped others that once possessed life and strength, now inanimate and returning to their original dust.

Still, however, Alphonso persevered

vered with a resolution undaunted by his dreadful situation, and wading through the fragments of mortality, with the greatest exertions, he at length emerged from them.

Fatigued with his efforts, he sat on the ground to recover himself, and to endeavour to recollect in what direction the iron portal of the cemetery was, as there was a possibility that the men might not have thought it necessary to fasten it.

This was a matter of some difficulty, as the cemetery was large and divided in many places by the piles of coffins.

However, when he had cautiously paced some part of it, he at length to his



his great delight felt the door; but his joy soon ceased, and his resolution failed him, when he found that it resisted his utmost efforts, and that while he was endeavouring to force it he heard the party returning along the vaulted passage.

Alphonso now began to despair: he heard the clanking of chains, which were intended to confine him, as the men were dragging them along, when suddenly he thought of an expedient, which, though dreadful, was the only way in which he could hope to escape.

Some of the coffins near the door were yet entire, and, from their situation, were in all probability the last

that had been put into the cemetery; he hastily searched for one of them, and, tearing off the lid, dragged the half-perished corpse out of it, which he threw as far as he could from him, and instantly lay down in the coffin and placed the lid over him.

Scarcely had he effected this, when the door opened, and the former party appeared accompanying Spignoletti, who came to see the orders of the duca obeyed respecting the confinement of Alphonso.

One of the men, stepping forwards to the door of the dungeon, drew back the fastenings and stepped into it.

“ Holy

"Holy San Marco!" said he, "the prisoner is gone."

“Gone!” said Spignoletti, “’tis impossible: hold the torch higher, he is at the further end perhaps. No, by St. Pedro, he is not here. Govanni, do you know any thing of this? You must have neglected to fasten the door. Look to it, and recollect you must answer for the prisoner’s escape to his excellenza.”

Giovanni swore by all the saints in the calendar, that he had left the prisoner in the dungeon, and appealed to his comrades if he had not fastened the door, who readily asserted the same.

“If that be the case,” said Spigno-  
D 4 letti,



letti, "how could he have escaped? Search round the walls and try if there is any place where he could have got out."

The men immediately complying with his orders, soon beheld the aperture in the wall, and the broken coffins shewed the way Alphonso had effected his egress.

None of them chose to follow the path he had made amongst the decayed coffins and mouldering bones; but went into the cemetery by the door, and there carefully looked around them, while, as the ghastly remnants of mortality which strewed the place met their gaze, pale fear was strongly impressed on their dark countenances.

"It

“ It is useless looking about here any longer,” said Spignoletti. “ Bring the torch this way: he must have gone out by the narrow passage which leads to the trap-door; and if we are not quick, he will soon be in the woods.”

The party instantly hastened to accompany him, when one of them, in his hurry, lest he should be left behind, stepped on the coffin in which Alphonso lay concealed; and his weight bursting the lid, his foot came on the breast of Alphonso, who, hurt by the sudden pressure, uttered a deep groan.

Almost petrified by fear, the man had scarce strength to disengage himself from the broken lid of the coffin.

He ran to join his companions, who, nearly as much terrified as himself (for they had likewise heard the groan), fled along the vaulted passage as fast as they were able.

Alphonso, as soon as he could with safety, emerged from his miserable place of concealment, in order to observe where the passage was, on the finding of which rested all his hopes of escape.

The footsteps of the party were for a few moments indistinct; but, shortly after, he heard them again, and saw the light of their torches gleaming on the distant sides of the passage.

He soon after heard the rough  
voice



voice of Spignoletti, speaking to his companions.

Alphonso now hastily laid himself in the coffin, and, replacing the broken cover as well as he was able, with much agitation awaited their return.

Fortunately for him, the men were so greatly terrified by the groan they had heard, that they did not wait a moment in the cemetery; but, hurrying through it, fastened the iron portal and departed, to acquaint the duca with the wonderful circumstance of Alphonso's escape.

Once more Alphonso, shuddering with indescribable sensations of disgust and



and horror at his abode, rose from the coffin.

In so doing, his foot hit against something in it which was placed at the end.

Having felt it, it appeared to be a small box. He took it with him, and proceeded with caution along the passage, with which he had so fortunately become acquainted, by the observation of Spignoletti that it led to the woods; or, after all his exertions, he might not have been able to extricate himself from the cemetery, which would probably have become his tomb.

Through the passages he wandered  
some

some time, endeavouring to find the trap-door.

After many a weary step, when his hopes had well nigh failed him, his foot struck against some substance which sounded like iron.

Stooping down, to find out what it was, he felt it to be a ring. That this was the handle of the trap-door he soon ascertained; for by it he raised a stone, which covered a hole formed in the ground.

He now felt for the stairs, which he soon found, and hastily proceeded down them, taking care first to secure the stone, by forcing some bolts, which  
were



were beneath it, into the frame which surrounded it.

When he arrived at the bottom of the steps, he still found himself in other subterraneous parts beneath the castello.

Not having the smallest glimpse of light to guide him, he was at a loss which way to proceed.

He continued, however, to advance along those awful abodes of night and silence, whose damp and unwholesome air proved it had been long since the pure breath of heaven had visited them; uncertain whether the next step he took might not plunge him into  
some

some horrible abyss, and for ever terminate all possibility of his protecting his beloved Victoria.

As he proceeded, with cautious paces, along these dark caves, he thought that the air grew somewhat more pure.

From this circumstance, he began to entertain the hope that he should shortly meet with the outlet to the woods.

Alphonso's desponding thoughts now wore away; and he listened, much pleased, to the hollow rushing of a heavy gale along the passages before him.

Guided by it, he advanced with greater certainty, till he emerged from them, when he found himself on the side of the rock on which the castello was erected.

Once more he gladly inhaled the invigorating breath of nature.

A steep-winding path lay before him, down which he went, and was soon hid amongst the shady recesses of the extensive forest, whose umbrageous tenantry covered a vast tract of the surrounding country.



## CHAP. II.

WHEN the Duca de Rodolpho heard of the escape of Alphonso, he grew frantic with rage and fear.

He well knew, that should he arrive safely at Genoa, his detention of the daughter of Conte Manfred would be known, and which, with the other atrocious acts of his life, would draw on him the eyes of the state.

Giovanni was the first that felt the consequences of his deadly passions.

In

In the heat of his resentment, he thrust his sword into the bosom of the ill-fated wretch, who groaned out his soul at his feet.

The others would, in all probability, have shared the same fate; but they hastily quitted his presence, and secreted themselves in the most retired parts of the castello.

Spignoletti was the only one who dared to approach him; for he knew he was too necessary to the duca to entertain any fears respecting his life.

He endeavoured, in order to appease his master's rage, to hint that there  
was

was yet a possibility that Alphonso might be taken.

“ Might I venture to advise your excellenza,” said he, “ some parties should be instantly sent out to search the woods and caves hereabouts ; for Alphonso cannot as yet have proceeded far, and there is little doubt but that he will be found.”

This hope somewhat calmed the duca's outrageous passions.

He directly issued orders for his people to search every part of the forest which surrounded the castello.

As a stimulus to their exertions,  
he



he promised a large reward to whoever should discover Alphonso.

The storm, which had been so long brooding, now burst forth in all its horrors.

The dark threatening clouds, filled with sulphureous combustion, hung, louring, in terrific masses, on the troubled air; while the forked lightnings, darting from their sable bosoms along the horizon, withered the lofty pines, and rived the knotted oaks.

The thunder rolled along, sometimes in awful peals, and at others in battling vollies, shaking the castello to its deep rooted foundations; while the  
howling

howling blasts, rushing through the long galleries, sent forth moaning sounds, which busy fancy, or the ear of superstition might have concluded to be the groans of unquiet spirits.

For some moments, all was quiet ; and the silence seemed like a dreadful pause in nature, and added to the horrors of the scene.

It was soon, however, interrupted by a nearer and more dreadful peal of thunder, which appeared sufficient to hurl the ponderous castello from its towering height.

The lightnings glared awfully over the troubled water, which appeared in a foam lashing the rocky sides on  
which

which the castello was erected with furious rage.

Some distant walls were at this moment heard to fall, and the domestics, concluding them as the forerunners of the destruction of the building, rushed out of it into the court-yard, trembling with their apprehensions of being entombed in its ruins.

But though the wind, increasing in its tremendous fury, howled with terrific rage amongst the extensive battlements of the castello, though the thunder shook the globe, and the lightnings darted wildly around, the vast pile, built of the most durable materials in a manner which seemed to bid defiance



ance to time itself, proudly arose amongst the surrounding woods, and rearing, far above their summits, its ponderous and gigantic towers, braved the conflicting elements with frowning majesty.

The parties which the duca had sent in search of Alphonso now returned, weary and drenched with the terrible storm, unable, though they had searched the forest as well as they could without their torches, to discover the smallest trace of the object of their search.

Enraged at their ill success, the duca ordered them out again, in spite of the furious storm, which, compared to

to that within his breast, was as the gentle undulation of a rivulet to the foaming waves of the ocean.

The trouble of his people was however fruitless, for amidst the black horrors of the night to discover a single fugitive was totally impossible, and trembling, they returned to encounter the savage rage of the angry duca, who, still unwilling to give up the hope of overtaking him, ordered a party of horsemen out; but the horses, scared by the frequent flashes of the vivid lightning, and the deafening peals of thunder, became incapable of restraint, and rushed terrified through the surrounding woods, where the low branches of the trees coming  
in

in contact with the riders, dashed them on the earth, from whence some of them rose no more.

The Duca de Rodolpho was therefore obliged to wait till the storm should cease, or the wished for dawn should arrive, which would enable him to continue the search. He, however, had hopes that the outrageous elements would impede the progress of Alphonso, and that he should find him the next morning.

Amid this dreadful conflict of nature, Alphonso pursued his way through the forest with as much speed as the rugged path and the storm would permit.



Often was he on the point of turning back, in order to attempt the rescue of Victoria from the remorseless duca, but he reflected that should he be once more taken, all hopes of Victoria's release would be for ever frustrated in his immediate destruction.

As there was little doubt but that Rodolpho would use every possible exertion to get him into his power, he avoided all appearance of frequented paths, and continued his journey, uncertain whither he was going, and for the present only anxious to increase the distance between him and the abode of the duca, till the dark mass of clouds began to separate over the eastern hills, and the grey dawn gave  
to

to the inquiring eye of Alphonso a prospect of the surrounding scenery.

He ascended a rising ground, the better to survey the country, which appeared wild and uncultivated; the vast spreading bosom of an immense forest was the principal object, and which on one side was bounded only by the distant mountains which rose at the verge of the horizon whose lofty summits appeared to reach the clouds.

On the other side was a long tract, as far as the eye could command, of a barren heath. From the view he had of this part of the country, Alphonso believed he was at a considerable dis-

tance from the castello, as he did not recollect ever to have seen those wild and apparently unfrequented places before.

He now continued his journey, cheered by the blythe notes of the early choristers, and the invigorating heat of the beams of the rising sun, which had chased away the storms of night: the leaves of the forest appeared gemmed with precious stones, as the rays of the luminary of day glittered in the drops of rain which depended from them.

Alphonso was disturbed from a deep reverie caused at the recollection of the events of his life by the wants of nature, which nearly awoke him to  
a sense



a sense of other woes, for it was near three days since he had tasted any food, and in that part of the country there did not seem the least probability of his obtaining what now was absolutely necessary to enable him to continue his journey.

Faint and weary, he continued wandering in the forest, frequently raising his eyes in the hope of seeing the curling smoke of the peasant's lowly cot; but, alas! no such welcome object greeted his search.

In the evening, he climbed up the steep side of a rock, and looked around him with a languid gaze, but no human habitation was visible. He seemed far removed from the busy haunts

of men ; his strength now failed him, and he lay down almost insensible on the rugged rock.

The night was free from storms, the moon rose in unclouded majesty, attended by myriads of scintillating stars : the gentle zephyrs still breathed around. Alphonso stretched on the rock, with the star-bespangled sky for his lofty canopy, for a short period became unconscious of his woes, for sleep sealed his heavy eye-lids, and steeped his senses in forgetfulness—soon, alas ! to recur with double force to his tortured bosom.

When he awoke, day was approaching in the east. He was somewhat refreshed by his long repose, and rising  
from

from his damp and hard couch, he offered up his morning orisons, meekly in them declaring his resignation to the will of the all-powerful disposer of events, and feebly entreating of heaven to deliver Victoria from the power of her savage and implacable enemy.

He now proceeded on his journey, and whenever he arrived at any open part of the forest, anxiously looked around, but in vain, for no cottage met his view.

The sun, broad-rising from behind the distant hills in majestic splendor, now threw his cheering rays over the forest, but to Alphonso their influence was lost, for his sunken eyes and  
E 4 parched



parched lips told the fever that raged in his veins.

Fainting with fatigue, hunger, and thirst, he was now unable to move his weary limbs, and throwing himself on the earth, he feebly uttered—

“ O, my adored Victoria ! And is it then not permitted me to succour thy lovely form from the rude insults of the base Rodolpho ? And must I perish in these inhospitable wilds unpitied and unknown, without a friend to close my eyes, and bear to thee my last blessings.—O pitying angels, look down from your bright abodes, and protect her,”

Thus did Alphonso, oppressed with  
the

the deepest heartfelt sensations of misery, bewail the hapless situation of Victoria and himself.

He endeavoured to rise from the ground, but was unable. The sharp pangs of hunger and thirst preyed on his wearied and exhausted frame; and through the long comfortless night he lay extended on the earth, while his groans became every hour more faint as his strength decreased.

The morning came with its beams, but, alas! it brought to Alphonso no succour, no friendly aid; life was ebbing fast.

The sun threw his rays on his woe-worn form, and for a while his heat

E 5                      afforded

afforded some comfort, but it was only a momentary ease. He looked up to the heavens, clasped his hands together, and struggling some time for utterance, at length devoutly recommended his soul to him who gave it, and in whose awful presence he too plainly felt he should soon be.

“ And oh ! ” he continued, “ thou Almighty Creator of the universe, from whose searching gaze no deeds of mortals can be hid, and who, for the wisest of purposes, sometimes inflicts thy creatures with misfortunes, in order to see how they will support thy divine pleasure, suffer me to beseech thee to terminate the miseries of my adored Victoria, preserve her with thy all-powerful arm from the dreadful



ful calamities that threaten her, and let her once more be happy in the arms of her parents, or shorten her days, that her pure soul may ascend with mine to worship thee in realms of bliss."

His powers of speech now nearly failed him. A cold tremor shook his weak frame. "Victoria," he sighing said, "farewell in this world of woe, may we meet hereafter in eternal joys—Receive, oh receive my latest blessing—and sometimes think on thy Alphonso."

His senses now forsook him, a deep groan issued from his quivering lips, that yet essayed to utter the lovely

name of Victoria. A thick mist hung before his eyes—soon they closed, and Alphonso ceased to breathe.

## CHAP. III.

VICTORIA had not been long in the apartment to which she was conducted by Spignoletti, when he again entered and remarking that the storm increased and the night was cold, threw a bundle of faggots on the hearth, to which having put a light he departed.

The quick transition of events which had taken place within the last few hours now recurred to her mind, and the threats of the savage Duca de Rodolpho to deprive her beloved Alphonso of existence almost annihilated her.



her. Her own situation was dreadful, but that was unthought of while he was in such danger. Before, she thought she was enduring all the miseries which a wretched mortal could endure ; but, alas ! they were light in comparison to what she now suffered.

She sought for consolation from the throne of mercy, and throwing herself on her knees, poured forth an earnest supplication to Heaven for Alphonso's safety.

Victoria felt more composed, she placed a firm reliance on the goodness of Providence, who had not as yet failed in protecting her even in that dreadful moment when hope was extinct in her bosom.

The

The cheerful blaze on the hearth served in some measure to reanimate her drooping form, for she trembled with the cold, as her garments were so completely drenched with the rain.

She was thankful for this comfort, which probably prevented her from more severely suffering from the effects of the storm, and when she had dried her garments as well as she could, hardly able to support her weak frame, she threw herself on the bed, and passed the night in harrassing ruminations on the danger that threatened her lover.

She arose the next morning pale and ill, for the exertions she had made and  
the

the misery she endured were far too much for her weak frame to support.

With a trembling and slow pace she approached the casement, which was strongly secured by an iron grating.

From it she beheld part of the massy towers of the castello, and the distant waters of the lake winding on their course amidst the thick umbrageous shades of the o'erhanging woods.

The apartment was better furnished than her last, and seemed to have been lately inhabited. At the further end of it in a deep recess, stood a lofty canopied bed, the drapery and hang-  
ings



ings of which were of dark green velvet.

The walls were covered with tapestry, and against them were placed some ancient furniture, and near the side of the bed stood a cabinet of curious workmanship.

The chamber was very large, and although much more comfortable than the one she had lately been confined in, appeared to the unhappy Victoria dreary and cheerless.

Near the hearth stood a table richly inlaid, and a large chair by the side of it, on which the wretched and despairing Victoria seated herself.

When

When Spignoletti came with her provisions he informed her that the duca would shortly visit her.

This unpleasant information, though it greatly distressed her, yet she determined to intercede with her bitter enemy for the preservation of Alphonso's life, and, at all events, endeavour to postpone the day appointed for his dissolution, in the hopes that in the interim some event would take place to preserve him.

Remarking the difference of Spignoletti's conduct (for he now appeared all submission), she ventured to speak to him concerning Alphonso.

The old ruffian, who never entertained

tained the most remote idea that the duca had any thoughts of an alliance with his hapless captive before the last night, now concluding that the marriage would take effect, altered his conduct in order to gain her favour when she was in a situation in which she might recompense him for his attentions, and, in answer to her question, gave her the whole account of Alphonso's wonderful escape, and added that all the parties which the duca had sent out, were returned without having discovered any traces of him.

At this welcome intelligence, Victoria felt released from an indescribable weight of melancholy, and pleasing hopes began to dawn in her bosom.

“ He



“ He will now,” thought she, “ go to my dear father, and I shall be delivered out of the hands of the savage enemy of my repose, and again caress my parents, and once more have the pleasure of seeing my preserver.”

When Rodolpho had somewhat recovered from his rage at the escape of Alphonso, he resolved on instantly returning to Genoa, in order to observe the movements of his enemies when they knew of his detention of Victoria, and as a further incitement to this journey was the hopes of overtaking Alphonso before he conveyed that important intelligence to Conte Manfred.

He wished to see Victoria once more, in order to persuade her, if possible,

sible, to an alliance, which would at once end all his fears ; but if she still continued resolute he then determined to depart in order to foil the schemes of his foes while yet in their birth.

Repairing to the apartment where Victoria was, he saw her standing at the casement.

Her appearance somewhat astonished him, for though she was pale, which seemed the effect of her late agitations, still she appeared to labour under little, if any, depression of spirits, and there was an animation in her eyes that he was at a loss to account for, being ignorant that she was acquainted with the escape of Alphonso.

He

He now endeavoured by gentle language to win her consent; and in the mildest terms his savage nature would permit, thus addressed her:—

“Lovely Victoria, why will you make miserable the man who adores you, who offers to share with you his extensive possessions, and to preserve the life of one who has so greatly deserved to forfeit it?—If not urged by love, yet methinks gratitude for the services which I understand he has rendered you should influence your conduct in complying with my request and restoring him to freedom. Sweet maid, let me conjure you to delight my ears with your acquiescence. Believe me, I love you, most ardently and tenderly love you, and it is only  
the



the fear of losing the jewel I prize so much that forces me to resort to a harsh conduct, which makes me almost as miserable as if I were deprived of the dear happiness of seeing you—give me your consent, and the door of your chamber shall no more prevent your egress.”

“Love indeed,” returned Victoria, “delights not in making the object miserable in a lawless confinement, and if you think, duca, that by such steps you will gain mine, you are mistaken ; for the consequences of your conduct are horror and hatred inexpressible. Concerning Alphonso’s safety I am not alarmed ; Heaven, which has so wonderfully preserved him from your murderous intents, will, I doubt not, continue

tinue to protect him from your emissaries."

The duca turned pale, and trembled with rage. He, however, though ineffectually, endeavoured to conceal his emotion, and, after a short silence, said——

"When Conte Manfred, your father, Victoria, gave his consent, you were not averse to the alliance. How is it that your mind has so suddenly changed?"

"My acquiescence," returned Victoria, "was directed by the duty I owed my parents—my heart had no share in the consent—it was ever averse to the union, and I was amply repaid

repaid for my obedience, which cost me many a sorrowful hour : when my father withdrew his consent, then indeed I most sincerely rejoiced. Since that how much reason have I had to be grateful to Heaven that I was spared so dreadful a curse, and soon, I trust, my father will avenge his daughter's wrongs."

"Think you so?" said Rodolpho, with a scornful sneer. "Know then, for thy comfort, that it is impossible for your messenger to reach him with the intelligence of your abode, without encountering a thousand daggers. Yes, the steps I have taken to silence your minion, are too well planned to fail of success ; therefore, do not hope ever to see your doating father here. No,



no, Rodolpho fears him not, nor all the mercenaries he could collect. But since thou canst brave my anger, I will even now reward myself, proud beauty, for the scorn I have so long and so patiently endured."

He now clasped her in his arms, and would forcibly have kissed her glowing cheeks, when the insulted Victoria with a violent struggle burst from him, and solemnly swore that if he dared to persist, she would dash herself against the walls of her prison and terminate her miserable existence.

Amazed at the firm and resolute manner in which she conducted herself, and fearing lest he should urge  
her

her to some act of desperation, the duca desisted, and as he was retiring from the chamber said——

“For this once, Victoria, you are safe; but mark my words, I am now going to Genoa, and on my return you must and shall be mine, in spite of your desperate threats, which only make me smile.”

Saying this, he went away, leaving Victoria delighted at his departure, for she trusted that Providence would protect Alphonso, and that she should again enfold her parents in her arms.

Some days now passed in a dull and listless manner.

Spignoletti informed her that Rodolpho departed the castello soon after she had last seen him; and thus left to the quiet possession of herself and thoughts, she again enjoyed a degree of ease, and passed her hours in anticipating the happy period of her release.

One morning as she was looking round her chamber, she observed that the key which unlocked the fastenings of the cabinet was laying on the floor beneath it: she took it up, and to divert the tedious hours opened the cabinet in order to examine its interior.

Nothing, however, of importance met her search amongst the various drawers and partitions which it contained,



tained, and she was going to close it, when she discovered a spring, which, when she pressed it, unfastened a small drawer, in which she beheld a few sheets of paper, and taking them out she read on the first——

*“Whoever thou art into whose hands these lines may fall, drop a tear to the memory of the unfortunate Duchess de Rodolpho.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

Victoria, greatly agitated at the perusal of these words, sat down at the table, and read as follows:——

\* \* \* \* \*

“ It is now midnight, and sleep has closed every eye-lid but mine—I am unable to enjoy the comforts of repose—sleep flies far from my couch—I watch the course of the pale lamp of night, and view the stars dim twinkling through the mists, till my eyes, suffused in tears, have no longer the power of vision.—But let me not dwell on my sorrows, lest they should render me unable to relate my hapless situation.

“ Rodolpho, what have I done to offend thee? My bosom is unrepublishing, my conscience does not accuse me of any crime—disturbing the silence of my prison at the solemn midnight hour, does thy wretched wife call on thee or justice.

“ For

“ For what end didst thou have me taken a wretched captive, far from this castello to the wilds of Calabria, and from thence to this chamber—mysterious and unfathomable were thy deeds with regard to me.

“ Merciful Heaven, thou knowest if I ever deserved the treatment I have experienced from thee!—My youth hath thou steeped in misery—my eyes are become the continual sluices for my tears—confined perhaps for life.—Oh, why does vengeance slumber? Why are such deeds permitted? Why is not the wretch hurled headlong to the punishment he merits, and suffering virtue set free? Oh, God! thy ways are mysterious indeed!

\* \* \* \* \*



“ Again I resume my pen, many days are past since I wrote the foregoing lines, many days—and yet I still drag on a miserable existence, enduring the loss of liberty.

“ How often have I prayed to be released from my sufferings! How often, when I have closed my eyes, do I pray that I may never more open them in this world; but, alas! the measure of my woes is not yet full.

“ I am ignorant of the crime for which I am a miserable prisoner. Rodolpho never deigns to see me!

“ Often have I wrote to him—often  
implored

implored him to inform me of the offence for which I suffer !

“ Once, indeed, he answered me ; but it was only to insult, and raise my indignation.

“ Could the shades of my sainted parents behold my sufferings, how great would be their affliction !

“ Alas ! little did they think, when they confided me to the pretended affection of Rodolpho, that they allied me to villainy and oppression.

“ What is now to become of me ? I am prepared for the worst. Death will be to me a passport to happiness ! Misery has so long weighed me down

with its grievous burden, that I now shall await my dissolution, not only with composure, but pleasure.

“The duca spares me the pain of his presence. He, no doubt, feels how torturing the sight of the oppressor is to the hapless object of oppression.

\* \* \* \* \*

“When wearied nature yields to the broken slumber, horrid images rise to my mental vision, to distract my senses!

“I think I see Rodolpho, armed with a dagger, preparing to plunge it into my bosom. I feel its point rushing through my palpitating heart; and, screaming with horror, I awake!

“Often,



“ Often, too, when harassed by my sufferings, I endeavour to seek in sleep a momentary oblivion to my grief, no slumber kindly seals up my weary eyelids. For me there is no repose ; and, perhaps ere the moon has completed half her course, I rise, unrefreshed, restless, and wretched !

“ The day passes like the night. No moment of sweet forgetfulness comes, to enable me to support my grief.

“ No tears allay the fever of my brain. All is parched up, and seems a dreary waste !

“ Tears would be to me like the soft dews that descend on the earth by night, and revive its fading verdure.

“ How often do I pray for them, as the weary traveller, in some desert plain, for water !

“ Once, indeed, I could weep : my eyes would then give vent to the sorrows of my bosom : but now the intenseness of my grief has dried up their sources, perhaps for ever !

\* \* \* \* \*

“ God, of all power and mercy ! Strengthen my weakened senses, that I may relate some of the horrors I have endured, ere my departing faculties have quite deserted me !

“ Alas, I am not able ! The powers of my mind are destroyed by the miseries

ries which the unrelenting Duca de Rodolpho has heaped, unpitying, on me.

“ I was torn from my home—from my couch, at the dead hour of night ; and borne to a far-distant country.

“ I was kept closely confined in a dreary dungeon, where for many days the invigorating breath of nature was not allowed me, and I constantly inhaled the unwholesome pent-up vapours of the earth.

“ What horrors did I there endure ! My brain seems to turn, and my senses wander at the recollection.

“ From thence, almost in the welcome



come embrace of death, I was removed, and, no guardian angel interfering, was placed in this apartment.

“The cruel Rodolpho urged his people to that act of injustice: Since that day, I have never beheld the ruthless monster.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Oh, days—oh, nights of horror and torment! when will you end? When—ah! when will my soul quit its desolated mansion, and give to my senses an eternal oblivion of my woes?

“The domestic who brings my provisions has just left me. He says I am to remove from this apartment to-night;

night ; but whither, he knows not.  
What deed is now to be done ?

“ Hark ! is not that the raven  
hoarsely croaking on yonder battle-  
ment ? His ill-boding shriek fore-  
warns me of my fate.

“ Ye sacred shades of my beloved  
parents ! soon will ye see the flitting  
spirit of your ill-fated offspring. Per-  
haps ye are now hovering over me, to  
conduct my soul, when emancipated,  
from this world of misery to regions  
of eternal bliss.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Here the lines, which so feebly en-  
deavoured to express the deep-felt mi-  
sery

sery of the Duchesa de Rodolpho, concluded.

Victoria wiped away the fast-falling tears from her lovely eyes ; and long did she continue in a silent stupor of grief ; for well she knew the unfortunate end of the unhappy writer of these sad pages.

Alas ! too well she remembered having seen her mouldering remains, and the instrument of her destruction still remaining in them !

The dreadful recollection unnerved her, and for a long time she was overwhelmed with grief.



## CHAP. IV.

WHEN Alphonso opened his eyes, he found himself lying on a pallet, and an elderly man watching over him with the tenderest solicitude.

Unable to speak for some moments, he endeavoured to recal to mind the past, which appeared to him like a dream.

He again looked at the stranger, whose noble and intelligent countenance, strongly marked with the deep-drawn furrows of grief, greatly interested him.

“ Where

“Where am I?” said he, in a faint voice—“To whom am I indebted for the prolongation of my existence?”

“To an all-seeing Providence,” returned the stranger, “who sent me to you in time to hear your groans. Life seemed to have entirely quitted you, ere I could convey you to my humble abode.

“For many hours I despaired of my efforts being attended with success, but at length have happily succeeded so far, and, with the blessing of Heaven, trust I shall prosper.

“Do not ask any more questions,” continued he, seeing Alphonso was about to reply; “for life in you is but  
newly

newly born ; and let me intreat you not to agitate yourself with useless solitudes or painful retrospections, but wait with thankful patience your recovery."

" Benevolent stranger," said Alphonso, " such actions as your's deserve to be noted down in the records of Heaven. 'Tis to your goodness I am indebted, then, for my life : your exertions will not be unrewarded either in this world or the next."

" My success will be my reward, Signor : I want no other," returned the recluse. " Let me now intreat you to drink a little wine, which, I trust, will animate your drooping senses."

Alphonso,



Alphonso, assisted by the friendly stranger, who raised his languid head, complied with his request, and soon felt returning strength.

The place he was in appeared to be a small cave, which was illumined by the cheerful blaze of a wood fire; there was no other furniture in it, besides the pallet he lay on, than a small table and a chair.

The recluse having exacted silence from Alphonso, sat by the side of his pallet the remainder of that day and the whole of the night, constantly attending him, and making him swallow cordials to re-animate his vital faculties.

The next morning he informed Alphonso that he was obliged to proceed to a village which was but at a short distance from his abode, in order to procure some provisions, and entreated him not to disturb his mind during his absence by any ruminations on the probably unfortunate reason of his being in the situation in which he had found him, but to endeavour to seek repose.

Alphonso promised to comply, and for some time a willing slumber contributed to restore him to health and strength. When he awoke, he found himself still alone, and now he returned thanks to Heaven for having thus in so miraculous a manner rescued him from the jaws of destruction.

Once

Once more did he think of his Victoria — again hope dawned in his breast. He anticipated the moment when he should be able to direct his steps to Genoa, and was planning schemes for her liberation, when he was disturbed from his reveries by the arrival of his benevolent host.

With evident solicitude he approached Alphonso, and seeing his pallid cheeks and hollow eyes freed 'from the languor of death which had hung over them, appeared greatly pleased with his charitable exertions. He had been to a small hamlet in order to procure his provisions, which, had he proceeded but a few paces further, he must have seen—but Providence ordered it otherwise.

Alphonso



Alphonso, in a few more hours, was so greatly revived by the kind attentions of his host, that he was able to sit up and enter into conversation with him. He took his hand, and with all the warmth of a grateful heart, pressed it to his bosom.

“ Benevolent friend,” said he, “ how shall I be ever able to make you an adequate return for your humane assistance ? ”

“ By being thankful to providence,” returned the recluse, “ who guided my steps to where you lay, apparently in the cold embrace of death. A feeble pulsation at your heart happily convinced me that the vital spark was not extinct, and with the greatest difficulty  
I conveyed

I conveyed you to my abode, for my limbs are enfeebled by the heart-rending sorrows of my bosom."

Here the recluse suddenly stopped; the most intense grief seemed to have overwhelmed him, for his frame trembled with his violent agitation.

Alphonso seeing his emotions, sought to alleviate them by condoling with him.

"Alas!" said he, "great indeed must be thy sorrows, since the revived recollection so painfully affects thee—But can they equal mine?—Oh no, even now perhaps—but let not the soul harrowing idea rise in my mind.—My angelic Victoria, may angels guard thee,

thee, and nerve my arm to revenge thy wrongs.”

“ Art thou too,” said the recluse, who had listened to him with attention, “ so soon, so green in years, the child of woe? Some beloved object, perhaps, in whom all thy happiness was centered, dead or torn from thy arms. If such is thy case, I pity thee, for I have seen the beloved wife of my bosom carried off by a remorseless villain, who first, with the assistance of his abandoned associates, committed to the devouring flame my residence, and left me covered with wounds amid the smoaking ruins, to bewail the loss of the angel I adore.—O, why does not my reason forsake me at the horrible recollection! Why, indeed, is not

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the wretched Gonzales numbered with the peaceful dead?"

"Gonzales," exclaimed Alphonso—"speak quickly.. "Is thy other name Roderigo?"

"The same," returned the recluse, with astonishment. "Hast thou, then, heard of that most unfortunate of men?"

Alphonso, scarcely able to articulate his words, again hastily demanded if the Signora he so greatly lamented was not Leonora de Ramirez.

"The same," replied Gonzales. "Dost thou know any thing of her?"  
Oh,

Oh, tell me, I beseech you; keep me not in a suspense far more dreadful than the agonizing pangs of dissolution."

"The saints be praised," returned Alphonso. "Live, Gonzales, and be happy, for know that Leonora is safe from the power of her cruel oppressor Gomez, out of whose dreary abode I delivered her but a short time since, and conducted her to the convent of Carmelites at Telano."

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed Gonzales, "is this true, or is it only a delusion? Torture me not, I entreat you. Speak to me; assure me that I am not in a dream."

"I call the sovereign of the uni-

verse to witness the truth of my relation," solemnly replied Alphonso.

Gonzales for a long time raised his hands and eyes towards Heaven, while his lips articulated a fervent thanksgiving for the happy intelligence he had received, and then demanded of Alphonso every particular relative to Leonora's escape, with which he gladly complied; and when he had ended—

"Behold," said the pious Roderigo, "the inscrutable decrees of a wonder-working Providence. Thou hast delivered thy beloved Leonora from worse than death, and I have been the happy instrument of preserving your life."

Some



Some time was now passed in ecstasies of delight and expressions of gratitude to Alphonso by the happy Roderigo: it was the first dawn of happiness to his bosom after a series of years which had rolled on since his separation from Leonora.

The person of Don Roderigo was familiar to the recollection of Alphonso, but not so the place where he had seen it; till suddenly recollecting himself, he asked him if he had not resided some time in a ruined castello in the forest of Lavagno.

“ Near three years of my miserable pilgrimage in search of my Leonora did I make that lonely place my abode.

“ It was scarcely possible that you should have seen me there, for excepting an old domestic, who is since dead, who used to bring the provisions, I never beheld a human creature.”

Alphonso then related the circumstance of his curiosity being roused by the sorrowful expressions he had heard, and of his being an innocent eye-witness of his grief at the castello.

“ It is too true,” said Gonzales; “ those melancholy hours were my only consolation, since the cruel moment I was separated from my adored Leonora.—But the night wears away, endeavour, dear friend, to sleep, whilst I will watch by your side.

“ With

“ With what delight shall I dedicate this, the happiest night I have known for many years, to him who has relieved my bosom from an indescribable weight of woe.”

Alphonso was too much agitated by the occurrences of the day to be able to sleep ; and in order to pass the hours, Gonzales gave him a short detail of the occurrences of his life, and the adventures he met with during his long search for his Leonora.

“ To describe my sensations, Signor, when I beheld my beloved Leonora dragged away by the remorseless Gomez, and myself unable to assist her, would be impossible, for in the engagement with his party, I had received



ceived some wounds, which rendered me incapable of making the least exertion.

“ I lay for a long time on the earth, groaning with the agonies, both corporeal and mental, which I endured ; for when I reflected on the events of that night, my wife torn from me, and my sister a victim to the flames, which had consumed my dwelling, it is a matter of the utmost wonder to me how I have since retained my senses.

“ An old domestic, who resided in a small hut at some distance from my abode, seeing the flames, had directed his steps towards it, and hearing my groans, came to my assistance. He bound up my wounds, and waited by me

me till I was able to proceed to his dwelling with his feeble assistance.

“ There, however, I did not remain long, for distracted at the situation of my beloved Leonora, I determined to seek her; and, careless as to the dangers attendant on myself from travelling in the weak state in which I then was, I set out, accompanied by the ancient Ugo, and commenced my search. Every where did I make inquiries, but, alas ! I failed in obtaining the least information where Gomez had conveyed my Leonora.

“ In this miserable state of mind did I continue my endeavours to find her, without a day’s respite for two years, when in the course of my tra-  
vels

vels I passed some time at Genoa, where I had friends, who pressed me to stay with them, that they might endeavour to divert the grief that preyed so heavily on my mind.

“ At that time, Signor, my appearance was far different from what you now behold it. Alas ! what will not eight years of suffering effect in the human frame ! When passed in joy, in happiness, how swiftly glides away the years ; but when grief dwells in the bosom, the moments lag heavily on. It was, while at Genoa, that an adventure took place, the relation of which will serve to pass the darksome hours of night.

“ Amongst the many ladies who  
graced



graced the splendid entertainments which my friends, anxious to divert my sorrows, frequently gave, was the Signora Vicensio de Palmyra, an Italian lady of noble extraction, possessed of immense riches, and uncommonly beautiful.

“ Her husband, the Conte de Palmyra, to whom she was married when very young, had been dead near four years. Her passions were violent in the extreme, and her mode of living strongly partaking of the voluptuous and licentious manners of Italy.

“ The nobility of Genoa were constantly in her train, each sighing to be the happy mortal to possess such transcendant charms.

“ Vallantino, the Doge's nephew, was her constant attendant: he loved her to distraction, and his jealousy was as great as his love. When in her company, he would keep his gaze fixed on her, to discover if she looked at any one; and if by accident he saw her smile, or enter into familiar conversation with any cavalier, his countenance would change, and the difficulty with which he restrained his furious passions was visible to all who beheld him.

“ The Signora Palmyra did not, however, seem to be particularly attached to him; her affections, as I too soon found, had centered in me, although she was not ignorant of my situation, in being united to a lovely  
deserving

deserving woman, whom I constantly lamented.

“ Vallantino soon perceived the preference with which she treated me ; his pride received a most humiliating check by the discovery, and from that moment he became my bitter enemy.

“ One evening I was wandering in the gardens which belonged to the pallazio of my friend, and being weary with my walk, I entered a small arbour, where, somewhat surprized, I beheld Palmyra seated. I was somewhat confused, for at that moment I recollected that in my absence of mind I had intruded on the grounds which belonged to her, and which joined those of my friend.

“ I made



“ I made her a hasty apology, and was going to retire, when she called me back.

“ Gonzales,” said she, in a tender voice, “ you need not depart, unless you are so constant to your Leonora as to think it a breach of your fidelity to hold a converse with a female.”

“ I returned for answer, that the reason I was going, was a consciousness of having intruded myself, but that since it was her request, I would with pleasure stay.

“ I then seated myself in the arbour, when she conversed with me some time about Leonora, frequently hinting that in all likelihood she was

no more, and advised me to give up all further search.

“ I answered, that as long as I existed I would never cease in my endeavours to find out where she was, that I might liberate her, and revenge myself of Gomez.

“ My reply was far from pleasing her, for she changed colour at my resolution; but at length conceiving that I did not understand her motives for her advice, or the languishing expressions of her lovely eyes, she overthrew all bounds of modesty, and confessed her love for me.

“ Signora,” I replied, “ though I cannot but feel honoured by your predilection

dilection in my favour, yet I trust you will not be offended when I tell you that my heart has long been Leonora's, and that, whether she is yet in existence, or that the grave contains her adored form, still never shall my affections be fixed on any other object."

"Saying this, I took my leave of the enraged Palmyra, whose countenance proved how ill she could brook being rejected.

"She was silent, and did not deign to speak to me again, and I departed from the harbour.

"I wandered some time, unconscious where I was going, while I reflected on the conduct of Palmyra,  
when



when a hasty step behind me made me turn to see who it was, and I beheld the enraged Vallantino.

“ Signor,” said he in a haughty voice, “ I wish to know the reason of your being in yonder harbour with the Signora Palmyra.”

“ Angry at his abrupt manner, I replied, that I saw no right he had to question me about my conduct, and that his demand would therefore go unanswered.

“ ’Tis well,” said he, drawing his sword; “ defend yourself, I love the Signora Palmyra, and one of us must fall, for I will not brook a rival.”

“ I had

“ I had no time to reply, for he attacked me so furiously, that I was obliged instantly to defend myself. In the heat of his rage he continually left himself unguarded, and seemed so intent on putting a period to my existence, that at length I was obliged, in order to save myself, to wound him, and my sword entered his body.

“ Vallantino fell ; I hastened to him, and tore open his cloaths, to endeavour to staunch the blood.

“ Good Heavens !” said I, “ had you been less hasty, this would not have happened. I was forced to wound you in my own defence, but now, if it will be any consolation to you, believe me, I am no rival of your’s with Palmyra,

myra, on the contrary, I am going instantly to leave Genoa, never to return to it again."

"Generous friend," said Vallantino, "I feel indeed ashamed of my precipitancy—Forgive me—Leave this place: should I die your life will be endangered."

"No," I replied, "I will not leave you till I see you safe in some house, where your wound may be dressed. I trust it will not be attended with dangerous consequences."

"I now assisted Vallantino to rise, who, leaning on my arm, we slowly walked towards some cottages, into one of which I conducted him, and immediately



mediately sent to Genoa to procure him advice and attendants.

“ When they were arrived, I departed from the cottage, intending to go to my apartments, and hasten my departure, but had not proceeded far when five men suddenly rushed out of a thicket, and seized me before I had an opportunity of making the least resistance. They took my sword from me, and conducted me through a narrow lane, at the end of which was a carriage, into which I was placed with two of the party, who, to my repeated demands of the reason of their conduct, preserved a steady silence, while the carriage proceeded on its destination with the greatest rapidity.

“ The

“ The deportment, and indeed the whole conduct of the men was so singular, that I could not form a conjecture of their intentions; as they had no arms, it was evident that they had no design against my life, nor could I suppose it could be any stratagem of Gomez, for his agents would not have treated me with the lenity I experienced from my fellow travellers, who were all masked.

“ Therefore, finding that my questions were not answered, I determined to wait with patience the result of this strange occurrence.

“ After travelling some time, the moon began to illumine the hemisphere, when the men drew up the blinds of  
the

the carriage, which, after proceeding for a short time, stopped, and the door opening, I found we were beneath a large gateway.

“ Having left the carriage I was blindfolded and conducted up a large flight of stone steps, and, after passing along some passages, the bandage was taken off, and I found myself in a small chamber, where my conductors left me, carefully fastening the door after them.

“ In that chamber I remained the rest of the day, being attended by a domestic, who procured me whatever I chose to call for, and when the evening approached, brought me some books and a lamp, that I might amuse myself



myself as well as I could during my confinement.

“ About midnight, as I was laying on my couch, I heard a soft step approaching my chamber, and presently the door opened and a female entered and beckoned to me to follow her.

“ I immediately complied, expecting now that I should know the reason of my being brought there.

“ The female conducted me to a most superb apartment, brilliantly illuminated, and displaying all the elegant and voluptuous taste of the most sensual votary of pleasure.

“ Around

“ Around the room, which was perfumed with the fragrance of odoriferous flowers, which were placed in various parts, in vases of solid gold, were low couches of pale blue sattin, inviting to repose.

“ The walls were ornamented with highly finished paintings, representing various occurrences in the heathen mythology.

“ In one, the lovely Europa was conveyed through the seas by Jupiter in the shape of a white bull: the painter had expressed her agitation in the most lively colours, and the animal appeared delighted with his beautiful burthen.

“ Another

“ Another represented the judgment of Paris. Here again the wonderful art of the painter was manifest; the naked goddesses seemed to breathe, and the beauties of their bosoms seemed to rise to the view.

“ I was proceeding to look at the other paintings, when the door opened, and a female entered covered with a long veil that entirely obscured her features.

“ She seated herself on a couch, and desired me to sit by her side, which I complied with, when she thus addressed me :——

“ You are, no doubt, surprised at



the temerity of a female, who can trust herself with so dangerous a cavalier as Don Roderigo de Gonzales.'

"I replied, that if misfortunes and continual grief could make a man dangerous, I must indeed be so, and requested she would unveil, and inform me the reason of my detention.

"Oh, Signor," said she, 'I fear you will blame me for my rash and inconsiderate conduct. Can you forgive, can you love one, who, to see you, has broken through every tie of decorum, and who exists but for you?'

"Saying this, she gently pressed my  
hand

hand, and apparently overcome with her emotions, leaned on me for support.

“ At that moment I was not master of myself—I raised her veil—it was the lovely Vicensia de Palmyra.

“ Her balmy breath mingled with mine, two pouting coral lips touched mine ; the lovely tint of the rose adorned her downy cheek ; her eyes looked languishingly on me, while her quick panting bosom betrayed her agitation ; her lovely dark hair fell in beautiful ringlets over her forehead, and her long glossy tresses were confined by bands of pearls : such was the lovely figure which now appeared before me.

“ But a moment’s consideration made me start from the couch. My adored Leonora rushed to my thoughts. How indeed was it possible, that I could for a moment have forgot thee, my adored wife !

“ Signora Palmyra,’ I said, ‘ your arts will always fail of success with me, for a female lost to modesty, though her form be that of an angel, will ever be an object of disgust to Gonzales.’

“ Then,’ said the infuriated Palmyra, ‘ since you despise my love, you shall dread my hate, and know what it is to treat me with scorn. I did love you, did adore you ; but now, the venomous serpent is not more odious,



odious, more disgusting to my sight than you are,' and to your cost you shall find what a woman is capable of doing.'

“ Having said this she left the apartment, and I was not long by myself ere the party who had conducted me there entered it, and one of them in a harsh voice told me to follow him; resistance was useless, for I was unarmed, and complying with his mandate I left the apartment, and after traversing some passages and descending as well as I could guess, the same steps as I had passed over when I first entered the mansion, I was conducted into a narrow space between some walls, in one of which was a small door; this they opened and thrust me

H 3 into

into a small dungeon, in which was a grating that gave air and light to it.

“ Thus did Palmyra endeavour to revenge herself on me for slighting her offers, and in that miserable dungeon I concluded her hate would induce her to detain me as long as she existed.

“ I had been there near three weeks, during which time I never saw or heard any thing of Palmyra, when one night as I was sitting melancholy on my pallet, I heard the gates unlocked which opened to the yard, and shortly after the door of my dungeon being thrown back, to my utter astonishment I beheld the Signor Vallantino.

“ He

“ He hastily approached, and embracing me, said——

“ My dear friend, I am come to release you from your confinement, which I happily heard two days ago from a confidential female in the service of Palmyra, since which I have been trying all methods to find out where you were. My endeavours have been crowned with success, and you are at liberty. Promise me only that you will not let Palmyra know to whom you are indebted for it, which would excite her displeasure against me, and, in spite of all her failings, I still adore her. She is now at Genoa. Your stay there will be attended with danger, therefore, you had better

H 4

make



make it as short as possible. for in her revenge she knows no bounds.'

"I thanked Vallantino for his advice and kind interest in my favour, and following him out of the courtyard, we came to the gateway, beneath which was a domestic who was taking care of two horses.

"Vallantino requested me to mount one of them, and taking the other for himself, we were soon far from the abode of the vindictive Palmyra.

"I did not remain long at Genoa, for having made my friend acquainted with my recent adventure, he counselled me to quit it as quickly as possible.

ble, and accordingly I departed for Venice, making every inquiry as I travelled for the dear object of my love, but without effect."

\* \* \* \* \*

Here Gonzales being somewhat fatigued, stopped and intreated Alphonso to endeavour to sleep, promising to finish the detail of his adventures the next day, which now was rapidly approaching, for from the small casement which was placed beside the humble door, the rosy tints of morn were seen faintly glimmering over the summits of the lofty hills.

Alphonso complied with his request, and sunk into a slumber, from which

he did not awake till the sun had sometime darted over the hemisphere his fiery beams, and was quickly approaching his meridian altitude.



## CHAP. V.

GONZALES, according to his promise, resumed his narrative.

“As I was proceeding to Venice, with Ugo, whom no persuasions could induce to leave me, we were benighted on a lonely road, and, as I had often done before during my wanderings, I alighted from my steed and sat down on a bank, where I meant to pass the time till it was sufficiently light for me to proceed.

“Ugo took the horses to a spot

H 6

where

where some scanty herbage grew, and during that time, fatigued with the long journey which I had taken, I sunk into a deep sleep.

“How long I continued in that state I know not, but I was awoke by the pressure of some cords round my legs and wrists, and when I opened my eyes beheld two men busied in securing my person, and which they had done so completely that my efforts to procure my liberty were of no avail.

“I was now lifted on a horse and conveyed several miles along the road, but it was too dark for me to discover any part of the country through which I passed.

“I often

“ I often looked round for Ugo, but he was not to be seen, a circumstance which I was greatly surprised at, and even at times suspected that my present situation was owing to some treacherous conduct of his, but I soon banished that idea when I reflected on his long faithful services.

“ We continued travelling the greatest part of the next day, when we entered the forest of Lavagno, where at a cottage my conductors alighted and led me up the narrow stairs into a miserable apartment, which was completely dark, for in order to make it secure the casements were boarded up.

“ There was no furniture in this  
wretched



wretched place. A truss of straw was given me, which served me as a bed by night and a seat by day.

“ Here on the coarsest fare did I live near two months, when one night I was awoke from my sleep by the light of a lamp, and horror-struck I beheld the infuriated countenance of Vicensia de Palmyra, who brandished over my naked bosom an unsheathed dagger, and the lamp was borne by a man whose features being turned towards me, disclosed the well-known countenance of that Ugo whom I had believed so faithful to me.

“ At last,’ said Palmyra, ‘ I shall have my revenge. No power on earth  
can

can now preserve thee—the arm that would have embraced thee, is now nerved to direct the instrument of death to thy heart—I shall behold thy dying agonies with delight.’

“ This said, she raised her arm, but in that eventful moment Ugo struck from her hold the intended weapon of my destruction, and I started from my lowly couch and hastened from the chamber.

“ Ugo followed me and took the precaution the moment he was out to close the door, and thus Palmyra was prevented from pursuing us.

“ I was on the point of asking Ugo  
for

for an explanation of this extraordinary event, but he prevented me by saying,—‘ Ask no questions now, Signor, at a more convenient time I will explain every think, I trust, to your satisfaction; but we must now be cautious, for the attendants of your enemy are not far off.’

“ We now left the house, and striking into the woods, became at length so completely involved in its mazy intricacies that we judged ourselves perfectly secure, and as we were sitting down to rest ourselves, Ugo gave me the following relation.

“ That on the night when I was seized, he was returning from the place  
where



where he had left the horses to graze, when he perceived three men securing my legs and arms.

“ Advanced as he was in years, to have made any attempts towards my release would have been madness, and, therefore, he contented himself with watching their motions, and when I was placed on the horse he followed my conductors at a cautious distance, and having noticed the cottage where I was taken, he remained some time about it, in order to find if there were any possibility of releasing me.

“ At length he saw two of the men who had taken me there leave it, and direct their steps towards Genoa, whither

ther he also followed them, in order to find out by whom they were employed, and when he saw them enter the residence of Palmyra, he no longer doubted but that it was her who had again got me in her power.

“ As he was unknown to any of her domestics, he determined if possible to get a situation in her mansion, with the hope that he might be employed to attend on me, and so procure my liberty.

“ He succeeded in one part of his scheme, and when he was admitted into the family, he by degrees wound himself into the confidence of one of the men whom he had followed, and from him learnt that I still lived, but  
that

that he had reason to think it would not be long, as the Signora was so enraged against me that nothing but my death would satisfy her.

“Ugo acted his part so well, and pretended to be so willing to forward any plans to please his mistress, often hinting how ready he would be to prevent me from troubling her any more; that this conduct of his at last reaching the ears of Palmyra, she took him with her on that night when she was resolved to wreak her revenge by destroying me herself.

“Such was the principal part of Ugo's relation, whose fidelity I could not sufficiently admire.

“We



“ We now continued our journey, till arriving at the forest of Lavagno I beheld the ruinous castello where you witnessed my unceasing griefs : its situation agreed with my gloomy thoughts, and I determined to make it my future abode.

“ There I remained three years, at the expiration of which time the faithful old Ugo died. I sincerely lamented his loss, and with my own hands made his grave.

“ After I was deprived of him, I determined to quit that place, and soon after having found this cave, resolved to pass the remainder of my life in it, far removed from all who once knew the unfortunate Gonzales.

“ I should

“ I should have observed before, that Ugo in his visits to a village where he used to purchase my provisions, learnt that Palmyra, having remained some time in the apartment where I had been confined, without being able to make the people of the house hear her, at length, as it was supposed, became impatient of the delay, and in her endeavours to force the door burst a blood vessel, and the next morning was discovered by her domestics, who, astonished at her long stay, had entered the apartment, lying nearly senseless on the floor. She was conveyed immediately to Genoa, where, on the second day, she expired.”

Thus did Gonzales terminate the  
relation

relation of his adventures, and Alphonso, in return, gave him an account of the events of his life, which greatly astonished him.

The next morning Alphonso endeavoured to persuade Don Roderigo de Gonzales to set out to meet his Leônora, but this the generous Spaniard would not consent to.

“ As you are bending your way to Genoa, Signor Alphonso,” said he, “ Telano lies in both our ways, and I hope you will not believe me capable of leaving you for a moment, to whom I am under such vast obligations.

“ As soon as you are able we will  
set .



set out, but I solemnly declare I will not depart hence without you."

Alphonso, seeing he was so firmly resolved, ceased to importune him with solicitations, more particularly as he found his health returning, and concluded that in a short time he should be able to travel.

He now left his pallet, and as he was looking round him, beheld the small iron box that he had taken out of the coffin in which he had hid himself during the search of Spignoletti and his associates.

He took it up, and after some difficulty forced open the lid: its contents were some valuable diamond and  
pearl

pearl ornaments, and some pieces of gold coin.

Alphonso did not hesitate to conclude this circumstance as another interposition of providence in his favour, for without this assistance he would have been unable to proceed on his intended journey to Genoa, and he had no scruples in appropriating to his use what, had he not found, the grave alone would have been the possessor.

Owing to the constant care and attention of Gonzales, Alphonso was now fast recovering, and at the expiration of two days more declared his resolution of setting out the next morning towards Genoa. And Gonzales

zales being of opinion that he was able, did not oppose him in his wishes, and made the few preparations which were necessary for the journey.

Scarcely had the lark, with her blithsome notes, bespoke the first dawn of morning, and ere the rays of the sun had shone on the summits of the distant mountains, or had tinged the still more distant clouds with his roseate beams, when Alphonso and Gonzales departed from their lowly habitation, each animated by fond anticipations of future happiness with their dearest earthly treasures.

Without any particular occurrence they arrived near Telano, where they parted with mutual sentiments of  
VOL. III. I esteem,



esteem, Roderigo, hastening to the convent with anxious impatience, to embrace his beloved Leonora, and to terminate her anxieties on his account, and Alphonso proceeding to Genoa, eager to acquaint Manfred with the situation of his daughter, that he might employ means to force him to deliver her up, resolving to release her, or die in the attempt.

When he arrived at Genoa, he flew to the pallazio of the conte, and there, breathless with agitation, informed him of the situation of his daughter.

Manfred instantly went to the doge, who immediately dispatched an officer with his mandate to the Duca de Rodolpho, commanding him to answer to  
the

the senate for the detention of the Signora Victoria, and to produce her in six days to her father at the peril of his life.

Rodolpho had, in the interim, left his castello for Genoa; but Torralto, who was still there, received the order, and sent it off privately to the duca; who, with proud defiance, refused to obey it, alleging that she was his affianced wife, and that he was on the point of celebrating his nuptials with her; and then, in haughty terms, bade the senate to remember, that the Duca de Rodolpho was not to have his actions questioned by those whom his large possessions and rank rather entitled him to give laws to than to receive orders from.

This answer he conveyed to Torralto, who delivered it to the doge's officer, who by this means was deceived as to the residence of the duca, who well knowing that he could not be safe at Genoa, where he had no means of defence, remained there concealed, that he might watch the further motions of his enemies.

The officer now returned, to report the result of his mission to the senate, who, justly enraged at the insolent deportment of the duca, immediately invested the Conte Manfred and Alphonso in the command of a large party of the troops of the state, with orders to attack the Castello de Rodolpho, and take prisoner, if possible, the duca, who was forthwith to be conducted



conducted to Genoa, there to answer for his late conduct and other acts of a more black and atrocious nature, which had been alleged against him by the superior of the monastery of St. Benedict. And the order further instructed them to take the persons of Carlo Torralto and Dominic Spignoletti, and all other persons who should be accomplices with the duca in resisting the forces of the state.

With this order, and a considerable number of troops, to which Manfred added his numerous vassals, who were to join his party at a place appointed on the road to the castello, did the conte and Alphonso prepare to leave Genoa, while the unhappy contessa hourly offered up her pious sollicita-

tions to Heaven to preserve her husband, and to grant him success in his present undertaking.

The exertions that were now making to restore her beloved daughter to her fond maternal arms, and the hope that Heaven would grant them success, availed more in lessening the alarming indisposition of the contessa, than the weak efforts of medicines, which cannot heal the deep-rooted disorders of the mind.

## CHAP. VI.

THOUGH the duca had taken every step human caution could suggest to intercept Alphonso, yet, as it was possible he might escape his well-laid plans, he deemed it necessary to return to Genoa, that he might the more readily observe the movements of Conte Manfred, who would probably, on gaining information of his daughter's situation, use such means to deliver her, as, if not timely prevented, might endanger his safety.

He therefore commissioned Torralto to hire a certain number of men with



all possible secrecy from a neighbouring state, who were commanded by the Signors Orlando, Verezzio, and Rhinaldo, men of desperate fortunes, and ready to expose their lives in any cause, however repugnant to laws human or divine.

These troops he ordered to be secreted in the huts of the peasants on his domains, leaving a sufficient number at the castello to protect it from any sudden attack; and thus having taken every step to ensure his safety that could be thought of, he waited impatiently the event.

His rage was ungovernable when he learnt that Alphonso had escaped the many snares he had laid for him,  
and

and which, indeed, he must have fallen into, if he had not lost his way in the immense forest; which circumstance, added to his narrow escape from the relentless hand of death, had so greatly delayed him, that all the parties which for some time had been employed in traversing the different roads by which he must have passed in order to reach Genoa, returned to the Castello de Rodolpho, concluding that he had already escaped them—a signal proof of the watchful protection of an almighty providence, who, under the garb of misfortunes, which, could we look into futurity, we should find were blessings bestowed on us, and keeps us from real evils.

When, therefore, the duca found that Conte Manfred, assisted by Alphonso, was assembling with the greatest expedition both his own vassals and the troops of the state to attack his castello, he hastily retraced his way back from Genoa, and, on his arrival, summoned to his presence the head warder.

“Warder,” said he, “take the war trumpet, and blow a blast from the towering summit of the castello, and wave on high the banners of thy lord.”

The warder, bowing low, instantly prepared to obey, and ascending a lofty turret, gave to the breeze the sonorous notes of war.



The lengthened and redoubled sounds rolled on the distant summits of the Alps, and winding along the sides of those terrific mountains, descended to the vallies below.

Thrice did he repeat it, and thrice on high did the proud banner of Rodolpho wave in the passing gale; and at the well known signal the numerous vassals and hired troops, hastily arming themselves, repaired to the castello.

The Duca de Rodolpho, mounted on a superb courser, that, impatient of controul with foaming mouth, champ-ed the golden bit, was pacing the extensive area in front of the castello, viewing the troops as in crowds they rush-

ed through the great gates, and were marshalled in military order by their commanders.

Well pleased with the numerous and hardy bands that soon were ranged before him, whom he feared not would be able to resist every attempt that the insulted state were able to make in order to reduce him to submission, he felt no fears on that account, and hastened to give them their instructions, that he might visit Victoria, whom he burnt with impatience again to behold after so long an absence.

“Rinaldo,” said he, calling to one of the leaders of his mercenaries,  
“place

“ place a double guard on the walls of the castello.

“ From what I have learnt from Genoa, Manfred, with the scanty forces of the state, means to attack me.—Foolish man ! In such a contest he seeks his own destruction, for in these strong walls I can defy him, and all the efforts of the Genoese senators.

“ When the guards are placed, let the troops have some refreshment, and then the breaches time has made in our lofty walls must be repaired.—And, Rinaldo, let the other leaders know we hold a war council in the north hall at sunset.”



The troops were now dismissed, in order to refresh themselves, and prepare for their ensuing labours.

Accustomed to implicit obedience, they hardly inquired the nature of the cause they were engaged in, well knowing, that whether it was right or wrong, it was of little consequence to them, as they must obey.

The trumpet soon summoned them from their hasty repast ; many parties were employed on the walls ; the breaches were soon repaired ; the cannon mounted on the ramparts, the embrasures cleared of the choaking weeds. The guards were posted, and received their different orders ; the ancient inhabitants of the forest were hewn down

in

in order to form the huge portcullises and strengthen the gateways.

The drawbridges were repaired. The warders of the castello were busied in inspecting the ponderous chains and fastenings, and the cannoneers in examining the cannons, which were grown rusty with long disuse.

Proudly did the banners which were decorated with the arms of the duca wave with the gale, from the stern battlements of the castello, whose towers were now filled with the armed soldiery.

As soon as evening approached, the trumpet sounded; the drawbridges, creaking on their ponderous hinges, were

were drawn up ; the night-watch was commenced, and the rest of the men, retiring to the lofty halls, cheered themselves after their laborious employ with the enlivening flask.

The Duca de Rodolpho, attended by his captains, surveyed the works with the minutest attention.

He ordered large parties to proceed to the neighbouring states, to procure provisions for the troops, because he expected that his enemies, finding all attempts against the castello fruitless, would endeavour to starve him into a surrender, which circumstance he determined by a proper foresight to prevent.



As soon as the watch was set, Rhinaldo, with Orlando and Verezzio, repaired to the north hall, as directed by the duca, in order to consult with him concerning the necessary steps which should be taken respecting their future operations.

Rhinaldo and Orlando were both men of long tried courage.

Orlando was of an ardent disposition, hating controul. His capacities were great, and his resolutions quickly formed. At one glance he could discover the secret springs that set a plot in motion, and as suddenly he could devise means to counteract the scheme. He was of a commanding figure,  
and

and seemed formed for great enterprises.

On the other hand, Rhinaldo was possessed of a great share of cunning, and was of a dark, designing disposition. His countenance never betrayed the secret workings of his heart—he could hold a conversation with and profess a friendship to the man, whom perhaps the next moment he would grasp a dagger to destroy.

Crafty in his plans, he proposed to the others to attack Conte Manfred's party on their march, by concealing themselves in the defiles through which they must pass.

But

But this was opposed by Orlando, who represented the danger of weakening their forces when no real advantage could be gained by lessening those of the enemy, who would doubtless return in double numbers. At present, Manfred and his people were, no doubt, in their ideas confident of success, and it was better to let them remain so, as they would be easier surprised when before the walls of the castello, and the party cut off without leaving one to carry back to Genoa the news of their defeat.

Spignoletti, who was admitted to the consultation, seemed to exult in this idea—blood was his delight—his savage soul knew no other joy than  
in



in the destruction of his fellow creatures.

Verezzio, having asked the duca how far the forces of Conte Manfred were from the castello when the last accounts arrived, roused him from a deep reverie, which he was indulging without attending to the disputes of Rhinaldo and Orlando, and he replied, that they were then near the wood of Valdarno, and, that in all probability, they would arrive before the castello in two or three days.

Having said this he again relapsed into his deep ruminations, from which, however, he was once more disturbed by the loud disputes of Rhinaldo and Orlando.

Orlando

Orlando bitterly reproached his opponent for wishing to overcome the enemy by stratagem rather than in an open and honourable way, and made some unpleasant reflections on his suspected courage.

Stung to the quick, Rhinaldo replied by drawing his sword to attack Orlando, who immediately returned his charge with the greatest fury.

Rodolpho now undauntedly stepped between the combatants, and haughtily bade them put up their swords, and to reserve their courage and blood for the approaching contest, not to spill it in idle quarrels, like children.

Awed by his commands, they at length,

length, though with evident reluctance, complied.

But when Orlando's back was turned, Rhinaldo, watching for an opportunity, stabbed him with his stiletto, and was going to repeat the blow, when the enraged duca perceiving him, drew his sword and sheathed it in his body.

Both Rhinaldo and Orlando fell, and the marble floor of the hall was stained with the sanguine stream which flowed from their wounds.

Some of the soldiers were now called in, who bore them from the hall to their chambers, where their wounds were



were examined: that of Orlando appeared to be slight, but Rhinaldo's had a more serious appearance.

The Castello de Rodolpho rose on the summit of a romantic steep, at the bottom of which rolled the waves of a large lake.

The sides of the precipices were covered with trees of various kinds, which grew among the interstices of the rocks, and concealed their rugged forms: amongst them the larch and pine were the most frequent.

The front of the castello was opposite to a large space of ground, which was covered with huge trees, whose clustering foliage excluding the beams  
of

of the sun, even in his meridian glare : they seemed to frown with midnight gloom over the earth they covered.

As on the sides of the castello which rose above the precipice, but little danger could be apprehended from the attack of an enemy, the walls were slight ; but on the other sides, where the hostile attacks might be expected, there the means of resistance were the greatest. The walls were of an impenetrable thickness.

The moat was broad, and full of water, and could only be crossed by means of the ponderous bridges, which were drawn up when the castello was attacked.

Loop-holes

Loop-holes were constructed in the walls, in every part where the archers could annoy the enemy, and merlons raised on the walls, to protect the cannoneers from the weapons of the besiegers.

The Duca de Rodolpho was seriously disturbed by the fatal events which terminated the consultation, as by it he had, at least for a time, lost the assistance of two of his captains, who were esteemed to be very expert in the wily stratagems of warfare.

Vigilant to extremes, he neglected nothing that could contribute to the defence of his castello, although he despised his enemy, and felt confident of success.



At an early hour the next morning he sent for Spignoletti, and Verezzio, and was for a long time busily employed with them in surveying the exterior of the castello.

Under the idea that the trees which fronted it would obstruct the flight of the balls and arrows, and afford protection to the enemy, he ordered a great part of them to be cut down.

Victoria had, for many days after the departure of Rodolpho, indulged the hope that she should shortly be liberated; but when some weeks had elapsed, and that desired event had not taken place, she then gave way to her melancholy ruminations; for she concluded that Alphonso had perished in attempting to reach Genoa.

As she was one day sitting mournfully at her casement, which commanded a view of a distant part of the ramparts, she was astonished to hear the loud blasts of the trumpet, and, shortly after, to see a number of men busily employed about the walls.

She now concluded that the duca was returned from Genoa, and that he would put his threats into execution.

She thought of her father, her indulgent mother, and deplored the supposed fate of Alphonso.

Amid her griefs, she raised her tearful eyes to Heaven.

“ Yes, there,” said she—“ there we shall be united, when this earthly substance shall be no more.

“ When the last sigh has departed my pale lips, I shall fly to realms of bliss, to meet thee, my beloved parents, thee, my adored Alphonso.

“ With what pleasure shall I quit this vale of misery, when it pleases thee, oh, Father of the Universe, to require my soul !

“ Till then, strengthen, I beseech thee, my pious resolutions to bear with resignation thy almighty will. Protect me from the dreadful horrors with which I am threatened ! Protect me from my bitter enemy, Rodolpho !”

Thus sadly did Victoria pass that day.

When night had drawn her shadowy  
veil.



veil over the scene around, she was somewhat surprised to hear the regular responses of the watch.

From this circumstance she concluded that the duca expected to be attacked; and trusting that Alphonso had safely arrived at Genoa, her hopes returned, and gave her strength to undergo the miseries of confinement, and await with patience the event which would decide her fate.

She had not as yet seen the duca, and concluded his being intent on the preparations of which she had a faint glimpse, was the cause.

In the morning, as she was looking around, she thought she saw him and Spignoletti, on the distant ramparts,

giving directions to some workmen; but of this she was uncertain, as she had only a hasty view of him as he passed along.

When Spignoletti came with her provisions, she ventured to ask him the cause of the preparations she had partially witnessed, and was delighted to hear that her father and Alphonso were coming to attempt her release.

The remainder of Spignoletti's information, however, somewhat allayed the happiness she felt; for from him she understood that the duca was approaching her chamber.

He had scarcely informed her of that circumstance, when Rodolpho entered, and Spignoletti retired.

“ Once

“Once more, Victoria,” said he, “am I come a suitor for your hand. I would wish you to give willingly what else I shall take by force.

“Do not hope that the approach of Conte Manfred will give you freedom; for, in attacking me, he seeks his certain destruction, and renders thee more securely mine.

“Therefore, Victoria, prepare; for to-morrow’s dawn must behold thee my bride.

“I swear by the powers above, that nothing shall shake my resolution.

“No: though the yawning graves were to give up their dead, and they were to assume the most hideous forms

to



to appal me, still would I persevere in my determination.

“Indulge not then, Victoria, vain hopes; for the bride of Rodolpho thou must be.”

“Rather may I be united to my grave!” firmly returned Victoria—  
“rather endure the most lingering departure from this world—rather be torn to pieces by the wild inhabitants of the forest, than be allied to sin and murder, blackened tenfold in thee!

“No, Rodolpho: rather than call thee husband, I would tear out my tongue, and dash it, quivering with life, to the earth, to preserve it from such a contaminating word.”

While Victoria was speaking, the  
dark

dark countenance of the duca assumed a livid hue.

He trembled with extreme rage, on finding that no intreaties, no fears, could have any effect to undermine her fortitude, and induce her to consent.

“Haughty fair!” said he, “do not think to alarm me by thy high-sounding words; for I shall yet find a way to tame thy proud spirit, and stop those ebullitions of childish passion, of no import except to accelerate my purposes.”

So saying, he left the dungeon, and Victoria to her miserable thoughts.

No mode short of self-destruction presented itself, by which she could hope to avoid the detestable union.

“What!”

“What!” thought she, “must I then become a suicide, to avoid the fell barbarian? Is there no other way? Gracious Heaven, look down, and in thy mercy protect me!

“Thou art my only comfort, in this extremity of woe!

“In thy never-failing goodness will I now, though surrounded by horrors from which every hope of escape seems excluded, most piously rely!”

Here Victoria paused; for whether it was the echo of her voice, or effected by some supernatural power, is uncertain; yet she distinctly heard the last word repeated.

“Father of Mercies!” said she,  
“what



“ what was that ? Surely it could not be the echo of my voice. Ah, no ! let me think it was some good benevolent angel, sent to comfort me, in this dreadful crisis of my fate.

“ Oh, Power Supreme ! that with thy all-seeing eye surveys my hapless mate ; listen, I beseech thee, to my petitions, and comfort me with thy gracious mercy, beneath the pressure of my calamities ; for much, oh, much ! do I need thy powerful support.”

Amidst these ejaculations, the evening approached.

Victoria, too much agitated to think of repose, passed the night in a state of misery not to be described.

She

She watched the shades of evening, as they deepened into the gloom of night ; then gazed on the silver moon, as it rolled majestic through the heavens.

She trembled, on observing the ruddy streaks of the east, and its lustre gradually fade away, as the rising sun threw his broad beams over the hemisphere, and brought on the eventful moon

END OF VOL. III.

*B. CLARKE, Printer, Well-Street, Cripplegate.*