

Supra Regia. 1827

MONTONI;

OR,

THE CONFESSIONS OF

THE MONK OF SAINT BENEDICT.



BY EDWARD MORTIMER, ESQ.

Author of Friar Hildargo.

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.

VOL. I.

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MONTONI.

CHAP. I.

THE sun had long sunk behind the western hills, and the sable mantle of night had sometime enveloped the face of nature in its gloomy folds, when Alphonso, retiring to his chamber, reflected on the events of the past day. A stranger had arrived at the castello, the possessor of which, the Duca de Rodolpho, had been his protector from his infantile years.

The duca, shortly after his arrival, had introduced him to Alphonso, as his particular friend, the Signor Torralto, who scarcely had beheld him when his frame seemed to be convulsed by some horrible internal agitations; his eyes, stretched to their utmost extent, were rivetted on him.

“Oh, Heavens!” said he, in broken accents, “Hide me, hide me from this dreadful spectre.”

Having thus said, he rushed out of the apartment, and the duca, who appeared in the utmost astonishment at his conduct, without speaking to Alphonso, followed him.

The Castello de Rodolpho was an
immense

immense pile of buildings, constructed in those times when Italy and the neighbouring countries were the seat of contentious factions; when each petty state strove for mastery over its neighbours; and when the mountains, and seemingly impenetrable forests, were the secure residence of numerous and well-appointed banditti, whose swords were at the service of the highest bidder, and who, not unfrequently, attacked and desolated whole provinces.

To secure themselves against these depredators, the nobles resided in fortresses so constructed, as to bid defiance to any sudden attack, and of such vast extent, as to afford an asylum for their vassals and numerous retainers, in case of an attack.

One of these was the Castello de Rodolpho; its long extending walls covered an immense tract of ground, and its lofty, ponderous battlements rose in stern and proud magnificence over the surrounding forests. It was situated amongst the Alpine mountains, and had served as a retreat for many a haughty despot, who there in gloomy security, derided the power of the state, and with impunity continued in his lawless courses.

When Alphonso left the apartment he entered a large corridor, which, even in day's meridian beam, was gloomy; for the approach of the light was obstructed by the mantling ivy which crept along the casements, and whose panes were covered with armorial bearings.

Alphonso,

Alphonso, lost in thought, seated himself on a bench which was placed in a deep recess on one side of the corridor; he had not, however, remained there long, when he heard the sound of footsteps advancing along the passage, and shortly after the voices of the duca and the Signor Torralto; and as they were passing near the place where he was sitting, he heard the duca say—

“You are right, Torralto, it may be so, and we cannot be too careful.”

“I am glad you see it in the same light as I do,” returned the other, “and when the midnight bell has tolled, I will meet you.”

More words were spoke, but in a

low tone; and they entered a chamber, the door of which not being closed, Alphonso still heard their voices in deep and earnest conversation; but he who had been confided in his youth to the instructive voice of the venerable Father Anselmo, the confessor to the inhabitants of the castello, from whose precepts he had imbibed every virtuous and honourable principle, and was in his nature incapable of a mean action, disdaining to listen to the private conversation of others, quitted his seat and immediately proceeded to his apartments, where, in the entertaining society of Anselmo, he passed the time till they were summoned to the evening banquet.

A gloomy silence prevailed. The
Signor

Signor Torralto seemed deeply involved in thought : at intervals he would raise his fierce, expressive eyes on Alphonso, and instantly withdraw them with horror strongly depicted in his countenance. The duca also seemed to examine him with great attention, but his guarded looks did not betray any particular sensation.

It was these circumstances which occupied the thoughts of Alphonso, when he retired to his chamber. From the conversation which he had overheard, he concluded, that some deed was to be performed which shunned the light, else why was the privacy of night requisite, why was the midnight hour appointed, when sleep would rest on the inhabitants of the castle. It

also appeared to him, that he was in some way connected with their conversation, which seemed to be the result of the evident distraction of Torralto when he first saw him, yet the idea seemed improbable, for he did not recollect even to have heard his name before, and was certain too that he had never seen him.

While Alphonso was thus involved in a labyrinth of conjectures, the deep tones of the clock resounding through the lofty halls and silent corridors of the castello, while announcing the midnight hour, disturbed him from his reverie.

His lamp, which he had long neglected, was nearly expiring, when as
he

he arose to trim it, he thought he heard a distant footfall, he stopped and listened, but the sound was not repeated; he now approached the table, on which was the lamp, when his attention was again excited by a noise seemingly in his chamber, like the slow moving of a pannel : he looked at the part from whence the sounds proceeded, but the expiring lumen of his lamp threw its rays but faintly around, and the further end of the apartment was so thickly enwrapt in gloom, that no object was discernable.

The words he had heard in the corridor now returned to his recollection ; the time that had been fixed on, and the dark, meanful looks of Torralto, all served to convince him that he was the

person against whom their plans were directed: his ruminations were, however, disturbed, by hearing a low whispering, and presently after a rustling motion in the tapestry convinced him that the intruders were already in his chamber.

Alphonso drew his sword, and looking anxiously towards that part from whence the sounds proceeded, awaited the approach of the nocturnal visitants with determined courage; for his soul was a stranger to fear, and his conscience could not reproach him with any act, which could give him reason to suppose he had made any one his enemy.

At this moment the light, which for
some

some time past doubtfully fluttered round the wick, was suddenly extinguished by a blast of air which seemed to come from some opened portal. And the words, "He sleeps, now is the time," was uttered in the well-known voice of the duca—footsteps, cautious and slow, now seemed approaching his couch ; and sudden repeated blows too clearly convinced him of the foul intents of Rodolpho and his associate.

Alphonso would without hesitation have attacked those treacherous assassins, but deeply as he abhorred the foul conduct of the duca, he could not bear to shed the blood of one whose roof had protected his helpless infancy—his heart shuddered at the thought.

He advanced with noiseless paces to the door of his apartment, and descending a long flight of steps which terminated the corridor, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he mounted his favourite steed and left the castello, in total ignorance where to direct his steps, resolved only as to one thing, which was to quit for ever the duca : as for his future abode——

“The world was all before him, where to
chuse

“His place of rest, and providence his
guide.”

He rode from the castle oppressed with painful ruminations, he was but too well convinced that there was a design against his life. Yet why?
Whom

Whom had he injured? He was the son of a poor peasant, who resided at an estate the duca possessed, among the Appenines—a dependant on his bounty, and consequently not an object that could in any respect interfere with his views.

Looking back on the castello, he beheld lights appearing at different casements, from which circumstance, concluding that a search was making for him, he spurred his steed, and soon was far from it.

After many resolutions as to his future mode of life, he determined to direct his steps to his father's cottage. Absorbed in melancholy ideas, he pursued his way over the lofty Alps, whose

whose stupendous boundaries presented scenes calculated to inspire enthusiastic astonishment to all but Alphonso. Wrapt in contemplation on his own situation, he heeded not the approach of morning. The cheerful song of the feathered creation met not his ear; nor did nature, waking with new animation, attract his eye: neither did the rays of the sun impede his progress, or oblige him to turn into the covert of the neighbouring woods, to shield him from his scorching heat.

At length he sunk to other worlds,
and soon

“Twilight grey

“Had in her sober livery all things clad.”

Alphonso now looked around for a
cottage,

cottage, to shelter him for the night, and where he could procure that rest for his wearied steed, which his agitated state of mind prevented him from being capable of enjoying.

He had proceeded some way down a steep mountain, when, turning to the right, he saw, in a small vale formed by the hollow of two projecting cliffs, a cottage, surrounded by a hedge of beautiful myrtle. On a green plat before the door, which was margined by beds of wild flowers, interspersed with the sweet-scented violet and auricula, sat a peasant and his family, enjoying the refreshing zephyrs of the evening.

The man arose from his rustic seat when he perceived Alphonso approaching
ing,

ing, and welcomed him to his humble roof, while his wife, by his directions, immediately got ready the simple fare their cottage afforded ; and, seeing he was faint and weary, pressed him so repeatedly to partake of it, that, to be rid of their importunities, he at last acquiesced, and, after a slight repast, retired to the lowly pallet, where, in the possession of a peaceful unrepublishing conscience, sleep soon lulled him into a sweet forgetfulness of woe.

Alphonso arose in the morning, refreshed by his slumbers, and, amply rewarding his kind host, disregarding his solicitations to make his cottage his abode during that day (for the gloomy appearance of the weather, and the black-clustering clouds, foreboded
a storm),

a storm), mounted his horse, and proceeded on his journey.

Advancing towards the Italian boundaries, the objects became more terrific, and the prospects more diversified. On one side, huge mountains rose, in awful solemnity, above each other, till they penetrated the clouds; while, on the other, were deep precipices, falling beneath the massy and seemingly impenetrable bosoms of the forests of ancient pines, which stretched along their base, or hung on their romantic sides. In other parts appeared stupendous rocks, interspersed with gloomy woods and obscure caverns, while the deafening roar of cataracts, bellowing among the cliffs, at times caught the ear of Alphonso, who had not travelled far before

before he wished that he had accepted the peasant's invitation ; for the storm, that had so long been brooding in the air, now descended in all its fury.

The clouds poured down in torrents, and the frequent flashes of vivid lightning startled his horse. The lofty pines and spreading larches bent fearfully to the violent blast, while the dreadful gloom deepened around, till nature was involved in darkness, save where the lightning, bursting from the bosom of a black cloud, disclosed the horrors of the scene to Alphonso. Alighting from his trembling steed, he endeavoured to trace the path, which in some places was covered with the torrents from the neighbouring mountains—in others, obstructed by large masses

masses of the rocks, which, sapped from their foundations by the rain, fell, with hideous roar, down the steep declivities, hurling destruction on every thing that opposed their progress. Frequently he had to climb over them and the ancient inhabitants of the forest, which, thrown down by the furious violence of the storm, crossed the rugged path.

Though the awful peals of thunder, which rolled unceasingly along the arch of Heaven, seemed to shake nature to her deep foundation, yet the heart of Alphonso was devoid of fear. He trusted in his protecting power who will ever secure from harm the innocent and the oppressed. The horrors of superstition had never taken root in his

his mind. Anselmo had carefully warned him against becoming a victim to imaginary delusions, or he might well have looked on the storm to have been raised by dæmoniac agency, for the perpetration of deeds of blackest hue.

With difficulty he was pursuing his way along the side of a steep mountain, when the distant tolling of the bell of a monastery was faintly heard, between the angry gusts of wind. The sound was welcome to Alphonso, for the rain had penetrated the folds of his armour, and he was drenched with the "pelting of the pitiless storm." In vain he endeavoured to survey the part he was traversing: all before him was a void. At length, however, directed

directed by the deep voices of monks chaunting the vesper service, he arrived at the gates of the edifice, when he rung some time before the loud roaring of the storm would permit his application to be heard.

A small wicket was at length slowly unclosed, and an aged monk appeared,

“Holy father,” said Alphonso, “a weary traveller stands in need of your hospitality.”

“On such a dreadful night as this, to refuse your request,” replied the monk, “is cruel indeed. Nevertheless, I am obliged to do it: the orders of the abbot must be obeyed.
Follow

Follow the course of the walls of the monastery, and, at the end of them, turn to the right, and the road will conduct you to a small village, rather more than a league from this. Good night, my son: the saints protect you!"

Saying this, the monk was closing the gate, when Alphonso, who was too much fatigued to proceed to the village, again intreated to be admitted till the storm should be over, or there should be sufficient light for him to continue his journey without danger.

The father seemed to pity his situation, and, promising to make it known to the superior, who perhaps might be induced

induced to grant his request, left the gate, and entered the interior of the monastery.

Alphonso was greatly astonished at the orders of the abbot; for, independent of the want of common humanity which seemed to mark his conduct, the holy fathers, who lived such sequestered lives, delighted in and sought with avidity the converse of strangers.

The monk at length returned, and told Alphonso that the superior, induced by his representation of his situation, had permitted him to enter into the monastery, under certain restrictions; and, opening the gate, requested he would follow him.

Alphonso,

Alphonso, glad to have found a shelter for the night, passed through the gates, and, having led his horse into a shed, crossed the court-yard, and entered a large hall. Near the hearth, on which blazed a comfortable fire, sat a monk, who, advancing towards him, offered his services in assisting to take off his armour, which he then placed before the fire to dry.

Alphonso requested to be introduced to the superior, that he might return him his thanks for the shelter he had allowed; but Father Francisco, with a melancholy air, told him the superior could not be seen. An event, strange and mysterious, had taken place in the convent, which had filled its inhabitants with terror: that, in consequence

consequence of that circumstance, he must be content with the poor accommodation the hall afforded, and which he would be required to leave as soon as the morning dawned.

The bell of the monastery, now hollowly echoing through the lofty hall, reminded its inhabitants that it wanted but two hours of midnight. At that sound Father Pierre started, and, looking at Francisco with affright, said, in a low agitated voice, "The time approaches, Francisco: the saints protect us!"

The curiosity of Alphonso was roused: he looked at Father Francisco for an explanation; but the monk, who

seemed wrapt up in dismal ruminations, was silent.

The hall he was in next became the object of his attention. It was of great extent, divided into aisles by two rows of lofty columns; and, in the gloom that enveloped the remote parts, as the blazes of the wood-fire died away, Alphonso could just distinguish the solitary figure of a monk, who was silently crossing it.

The closing of a distant portal, shortly after, announced his having left the hall. The two monks seemed not yet to have recovered from their terrors; for they started at the sound. Their behaviour—the dismal gloom that

that reigned in the hall—and his own situation, increased Alphonso's melancholy, and almost made him conceive the surrounding shades to be the shroud to nameless shapes and strange appearances.

CHAP. II.

ALPHONSO, filled with an ardent desire to penetrate the mysteries that seemed to surround him, at length thus addressed himself to the monks :

“ If aught has occurred, holy fathers, which may be deemed improper to communicate to strangers, excuse the curiosity of youth, which urges my inquiry ; but if it is not incorrect, relate, I pray you, the cause of your present uneasiness ; and if my services can be of any use, you may freely command them.”

As he pronounced these last words, he thought that Father Pierre seemed by his looks to encourage Francisco to reveal the cause of his inquiry, who, at length, after much apparent hesitation, during which time he took a fearful survey of the hall, thus began:

“ You will not, Signor, be surprised at your reception, when I unfold to you a circumstance that happened last night, and which has struck us with terror and dismay.

“ A brother died yesterday morning, in most excruciating torments. His deep and dreadful groans were distinctly heard in the most remote parts of this extensive edifice, while, at

c 3

times,

times, sentences of the most horrible import escaped him.

“ Some dreadful deeds, in which, I much fear, he was but too deeply concerned, seemed almost to impede the departure of his soul from its mortal tenement.

“ When near his last moments, he confessed his worldly crimes to the superior, whose agitated countenance shewed how greatly the relation had affected him. He immediately retired to his apartments, and has not been out of them since.

“ When informed of your solicitation for admission, he peremptorily refused

refused your request; but, won over by the intreaties of Father Pierre, who explained your situation, he relented so far as to suffer you to make this hall your abode for a few hours.

“ Last night [here both the monks crept closer to the fire, and devoutly crossed themselves], as one of the brethren sat up with the corpse, at the midnight hour, he witnessed some dreadful sight, that caused his senses to wander; nor is it supposed he can long survive the shock he has sustained.

“ The abbot has ordered us to watch the body to-night; but our frail natures are ill adapted for such a task. It now draws nigh to the time when

we must repair to the apartment ; and this was the cause of our agitation, which you observed when the bell tolled ; for Father Pierre is as unable as myself to encounter the dreadful scene which, doubtless, awaits us."

Alphonso smiled at their terrors, the effects of superstition, and which, indeed, the gloomy life the inhabitants of a monastery are devoted to might well excuse.

" If," said he, " holy fathers, you will allow me, I will watch the corpse this night by myself. I fear no bad spirit ; for the tyrant conscience hath not impressed me with his iron fangs. A good one will not hurt me. Believe me the solitary hour, the gloom
of

of night, and the awful employment of watching the dead, have raised ideas in the mind of the monk, for which there could be no probable foundation."

Glad to be excused the much-dreaded office, the monks consented, with eagerness, to his offer; nor did they even reflect, that in so doing they disobeyed the commands of the abbot, so agitated were they with the idea of what they supposed they must suffer.

After having laid before him a simple repast, of which Alphonso gladly partook, the monks helped him to buckle on his armour, the quilting of which was now dry.

“Come, holy father,” said he, “conduct me to the chamber; it now draws nigh the hour.”

Trembling at the idea of even approaching the abode of death, Francisco took up a torch, and having given a lamp to Alphonso, conducted him to a staircase which ascended beneath an immense and gloomy arch, to a spacious vaulted corridor, on one side of which was a long range of apartments, at the further end of which the monks having pointed out a particular portal, hastily gave him their benediction and retired.

Alphonso entered the chamber, which he surveyed with attention; it was large and ruinous; the wainscot
was

was of cedar or some other dark wood, the floor was formed of the same, and appeared greatly decayed. All the cornices and mouldings were thickly covered with dust and cobwebs; and the cold, damp chill of the room, proved it to have been some time since it was aired by the enlivening fire.

A lofty canopied couch stood at the further end of the chamber, on which was a coffin covered with a large pall; the lid of the coffin was off and laying down on one side of the couch; on the other was a large projecting chimney piece of rude sculpture, on which was coarsely carved the arms of the founder of the monastery.

Two worm-eaten chairs and a table

in the same condition, completed the furniture.

Alphonso shuddered at the melancholy appearance of every thing around him, to which was added the lonely situation of the chamber. His lamp dimly burnt, and its faint lumen rendered it impossible to see any distant object a little beyond him. All was lost in obscurity.

But Alphonso disdained the impulse of fear.

“If,” thought he, “what I have been informed is true, it must be to divulge some horrible transaction, which death is not allowed to conceal, that a spirit is permitted to linger on
the

the earth after having quitted its mortal tenement. It were impious, therefore, not to attend to warnings which could not be given without the express sanction of Providence. The fear of the monk has hitherto rendered futile its wishes, but, with the blessing of Heaven, I will learn the tale, if any, that it would unfold, that the dead may be at rest.

He then advanced to the coffin, and was going to lift up the pall, but an unaccountable sensation denying him the power, he walked away, and set his lamp on the table; but a moment's reflection made him smile at his terrors. "How strange it is," thought he, "that we so much dread to behold, what, at last, we must all come to:

to : the sight of the dead is indeed at all times awful, and the reflection should never be absent from our thoughts, that

“Time was, like us they life possest,
“And time shall be, when we shall rest.”

Approaching the coffin, he threw aside the pall—but, gracious Heaven ! what a sight met his eyes. Hastily he covered the body, and sat down to regain his wonted fortitude. A thousand times he wished he had not been so curious ; for what he had beheld was no common sight

A volume which was laying open on the table now attracted his notice ; it was a legendary tale, and seemed to
be

be of great antiquity : he took it up to read a few pages, in order to divert those serious thoughts and perturbations produced by the shocking spectacle which he had so lately seen : where the book had been opened, his attention was so much excited by the following tale, that he by degrees almost forgot his unpleasant situation, and though the history appeared strongly tainted with the gloomy superstition of past years, yet he with avidity perused it.—

***** Manfredo then almost frantic with rage, seized hold of the hand of the trembling Rosaline, and almost dragged her down a long flight of steps, which led to the dungeons of the castle : arrived at one he threw
back

back the door and thrust her in-
to it.

“There,” said he, “you shall stay
and feed on mouldy bread, and water
taken from the standing pool, till you
confess the author of your shame.”

“Oh, my father,” said the distract-
ed Rosaline, “believe me I am bound
by a most solemn oath not to reveal
his name. Would you wish your
daughter to perjure herself? Oh, for-
give me my disobedience, my dear
father, but it is impossible, I cannot be
guilty of so great a crime.”

“Then Rosaline, mark my words,
on no other condition shall you ever
emerge from this dungeon. This then

is

‘is your tomb,’ returned the baron, as he closed the door, and strode away burning with rage to his apartments; and when he had arrived there, he summoned to his presence his confidential domestic.

“Ruffo,” said he, “take a small portion of black, mouldy bread, and some of the water from the moat, to the dungeon where Romaldo breathed his last.”

Ruffo, with a horrible and ghastly smile, obeyed, and having set the allotted provision by the side of the wretched captive, who beheld and turned from it with disgust, he retired.

“Oh, my Osmund,” said the unfortunate

fortunate Rosaline, “ why hast thou bound me by an oath which I dare not break. Ere thou canst return, I shall be no more ; and thy infant, the dear pledge of our fond love, will die ere it sees the light of day.”

Thus in fruitless tears and lamentations passed the first day of her captivity ; on the next, the calls of hunger added to the torturous sensations of her breast—she lifted up the bread, smelt it, and hastily threw it aside.

Ruffo soon after entered bringing in more ; while a smile of satisfaction illumined his dark, malicious features, as he beheld the pallid countenance of the wretched Rosaline, and saw the untouched food.

“ Here,”

“ Here,” said the ruthless jailer, “ here is more food ; in a day or two you will perhaps not refuse it, and, in time, use may reconcile you to it.”

Rosaline replied not but by sighs and tears, and the savage wretch departed.

Her wants now grew acute—another day passed—when no longer able to refrain, with a greedy rapacity she devoured with disgust the mouldered bread, and put the loathsome water to her trembling lips.

Thus passed a long miserable fortnight. Almost a month had now to elapse ere Osmund would return: and the pains of a mother, already began to assail her.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile the baron became every day more gloomy. Sometimes he thought of Rosaline, then of his disappointment, in not being able to marry her to the Lord St. Oswyth, who had been a suitor for her hand ; while a thousand curses heaped on his hapless daughter passed his pallid lips.

“ When she becomes a mother,” thought he, “ I will tear in pieces before her face her death-devoted offspring, I will dash it against the walls of the dungeon and strew its mangled limbs over her.

At the dreadful idea, a horrid pleasure glanced over his ferocious features, which were softened into a ghastly smile.

It was then night, and, as he was retiring to his couch, loud blasts shook the chamber—deep groans were heard intermixed with sounds like the shrieks of dæmons—blue lightnings flashed frequent through the casement.—The soul of the baron was disturbed—a sudden peal of battling thunders rocked the castle—the portal of his chamber was burst open, and to his astonished vision appeared Romaldo.

Fear shook the soul of the baron, as he gazed on the countenance of his brother; it was wan, and from the temples, and a deep deadly gash in the side, still seemed to trickle the sanguine stream of life.

“Dost thou know me?” said a hollow voice.

“Yes,”

“Yes,” tremblingly replied the baron, “thy form is that of Romaldo.”

“How then,” returned the spectre, “must thy conscience reproach thee, when thou beholdest the wounds inflicted by thy murderous hand. Do they not agonize thy soul?”

“No,” said the baron, who endeavoured to summon up his courage, “thou stood between me and my wishes: for that I destroyed thee.”

“Wretched, lost man, beware then of an hereafter: I came to warn thee of thy approaching fate, but thou art lost to repentance,” uttered the hollow voice, and suddenly faded from the sight.

“An

“An hereafter,” said the baron, musing on the last words of the spectre, “I believe not in an hereafter; ’tis only an idea invented by crafty priests. And if there is, I care not for it; no, though all the devils that exist in their fancied hell, should be my tormenters.”

“Fear them not,” said a voice.

And the baron turning suddenly round, beheld a form of exquisite beauty and of a commanding stature: the countenance, however, was dejected, and malice and revenge seemed seated on the brow.

“The inhabitants of hell,” continued the visitant, “are thy friends, and if thou wilt but sign this paper I
promise

promise thee thou shalt see Rosaline, the bride of Lord St. Oswyth."

Saying this the dæmon stretched out the fatal scroll, in which was an iron pen.—"Add thy name," continued he, "to the many whom thou see'st have done so before thee, and thou shalt enjoy all thy heart desires."

"And wilt thou then faithfully promise, that I shall see Rosaline united to the Lord St. Oswyth?" said the baron.

"I do," replied the dæmon, "and invoke the powers of hell to witness my solemn covenant."

Hastily then the baron signed the
scroll,

scroll, and, well pleased with the fatal mission, the dæmon dissolved from his view, with a malicious smile imprinted on his dark countenance.

Now it was that the baron bethought him of Rosaline; it was many days since he had seen her, but from Ruffo he had heard that she still existed.

Rosaline, during that time, had endured acute pains, and in one of them nature delivered to the world an infant, the tender pledge of her affection for her beloved Osmund. She took it in her arms, and while she affectionately embraced it, forgot, for a while, the horrors of her situation.

It was at this moment that the baron

arrived at the door of the dungeon; he listened, and heard the plaintive voice of the infant, and Rosaline attempting to lull it to sleep.

Furies seized his mind; hastily he unbarred the door, and, entering the dungeon, discovered his hapless daughter stretched on the ground, with the infant laying on her bosom. He started at the sight; while Rosaline, clasping her child in her arms, struck with some horrible anticipation, shrieked out.

“ Give me the detested wretch,” said the baron, throwing his torch on the ground, “ that I may destroy the effects of your shameful acts.”

Thus

Thus saying he advanced towards her, full of his murderous intents.

Unable to resist, the miserable Rosaline rent the air with her screams; but the ruthless baron heeded them not: and, seizing the child, was about to dash it to the earth, when his attention being suddenly excited by a clash of arms, and the sound of hasty footsteps descending the stone steps, he paused in his horrible project, and in the next instant was secured by the officers of justice for the murder of the Baron Romaldo.

Resistance was vain, the guards, taking the child from Manfredo, confined him with massy chains; when a cavalier entering the dungeon, clasped

the fainting Rosaline in his arms, when instantly at his tender pressure and the well known tones of his voice, Rosaline revived; and, calling him by the dear name of husband, put his infant in his paternal arms.

“ And who art thou ? ” said the enraged baron, endeavouring to loose himself from the rough grasp of the archers—“ Who art thou, that hast dared to unite thyself without my sanction to my daughter ? ”

“ The Lord St. Oswyth,” replied the cavalier; “ he who usurped my name, and forcibly withheld from me my title and estates, has paid for his insolent daring with his life.”

The baron groaned; the promise of the dæmon had been fulfilled, for which he had bartered his soul; a horrible dread suddenly overwhelmed him, and he sunk almost senseless on the earth.

Rosaline and her infant were now conveyed from their gloomy abode to her chamber, where, in the fond embraces of her Osmund, she was consoled for her late sufferings. He there briefly unfolded to her the cause of his late conduct.

“Knowing, my beloved Rosaline,” said he, “the intentions of the Baron Manfredo to unite you to the usurping lord, I concealed, even from you, my real name, fearful lest it should come

to the knowledge of the baron, who, I had every reason to suppose, would, in conjunction with my bitter enemy, endeavour to increase the difficulty and danger of my openly asserting my claims before the completion of the proper steps for it. During my travels for that purpose, from the confession of a wretch who was dying through age and want in the gloomy recesses of a vast forest, I discovered the author of the murder of the Baron Romaldo, and also that Manfredo is not your father."

"No?" exclaimed Rosaline, greatly astonished—"And did you learn to whom I am indebted for my existence?"

"To

“ To Romaldo,” returned Osmund.

“ Romaldo my father? Dear Osmund, explain this wonderful circumstance.”

“ Romaldo and Manfredo,” continued Osmund, “ as you well know, were brothers, and lived together at the Castello de Romaldo, many leagues from this ; Romaldo, unknown to her parents, had been privately married to the Signora Angellina, whom Manfredo had scarce beheld ere he became enamoured of, and determined to possess. Assisted by the man from whom I learnt this tale, and Ruffo, he contrived to have her conveyed from the castello on the fourth night after her marriage, and Romaldo was also
D 4 brought

brought to this place, where he was confined in that same dungeon you were in.

“Manfredo then spread about a report that his mother had been murdered by banditti, and some time after obliged a monk to unite him to Angellina, who, when she had given birth to thee, my beloved Rosaline, closed her eyes for ever.—As the marriage of Romaldo was never made public, every one, of course, concluded that you were the daughter of Manfredo.”

“And what,” said Rosaline, impatiently, “became of the unfortunate Romaldo?”

“He was murdered by his inhuman brother,”

brother," replied Osmund ; " for which horrible deed I have caused him to be apprehended."

Rosaline, with bitter tears, bewailed the fate of her unfortunate parent, while her indignation rose high against the savage Manfred ; Osmund's tender assiduities, however, greatly softened her sorrows, and soon lulled the griefs of her bosom to a melancholy calm.

Meanwhile the gloomy baron remained confined in his own dungeon. It was near midnight when, ruminating on his dreadful anticipations, he hollowly exclaimed—" Curses eternal light on the dæmon who has deceived me by his bare promises."

“ And how have I deceived thee ?” suddenly returned a furious voice.

Manfredo trembled, and turning round, beheld by his side not the angelic looking visitant he had before seen, but a terrific gigantic form, the countenance of which was dark as the shades of night, when the sable clouds are rolled together, and the thunder was in their gloomy caverns. In his hand he grasped a massy club, and his angry blood-shot eyes seemed to dart forth flames of fire as he sternly gazed on the baron.

“ In what have I deceived thee ?” again he hollowly demanded—“ Was not my covenant with thee, that thou should'st see thy daughter, the bride of

the Lord St. Oswyth? And that event has taken place."

"One point thou hast performed," replied the terrified baron—"but thou promised me happiness—aid me in my escape from this dungeon, and complete your covenant."

"I cannot," returned the dæmon—"there is a higher power than myself, whose decrees I dare not interfere with."

"Why, then," sternly said Manfred, "did you basely promise what you had no certainty of performing?"

A contemptuous smile sat on the countenance of the dæmon.—"I de-

ride," said he, " thy fruitless rage; thou art mine, and thy soul I shall claim ere to-morrow's sun has traversed one quarter of the globe."

The dæmon now became invisible to the sight of the fear-struck baron ; but not long had he to reflect on his words, for, ere the morning dawned, a party of armed men entered his dungeon, and conveyed him to one of the prisons of the state, and heaped on him a load of heavier chains.

In that state he was tried : Ruffo made clear his guilt, and he was condemned to suffer publicly for the horrible crime of parricide in the short space of two hours.

Now

Now it was that the savage Manfred trembled: he looked towards Heaven, but a dark mist rolled before his eyes, and shut out from his view the external of the residence of the offended deity; he endeavoured to pray, but was not able. Suddenly the bell tolled, he started with affright, for it was the signal for his execution. The door of his dungeon was thrown open, and the baron was dragged to the fatal scaffold. Thousands of voices curse the murderer and behold the preparations for his death with a savage joy.

The baron was soon stretched on the rack, where, one by one, his limbs were broken by an iron bar. His
agonies

agonies were great, and his groans terrible.

The blow which would free his soul from its shattered abode, was now ordered to be given, when a mighty noise, as of contending blasts, was heard, and in the air appeared the dark, horrible form of an enormous vulture, whose broad black pinions soon overshadowed the place where lay the groaning baron. Darting down with the swiftness of thought, and fixing deep its long claws into his convulsed body, it bore it instantaneously from the scaffold, and soon traversing the immense ærial space, it hovered over a horrible rolling ocean of liquid fire, and released the body of the baron, which,

which, whirling down from the immense height, was soon entombed in the flaming billows, while the dæmon, for he it was who had assumed the vulture's form, well pleased, alighted on the summit of a lofty rock, and, resuming his natural form, returned again to the earth to search for more prey.

Somewhat startled at this horrible relation, which Alphonso easily conceived was the invention of a monk, he laid the volume aside, and endeavoured to regain the composure of his mind.

“ This tale is highly coloured,” thought he, “ which doubtless is done to make a stronger impression on the mind,

mind, but surely nothing can be more horrible, more frightful ; and yet there was a time when it would have met with credence ; but the dark age of superstition is now admitting the beams of knowledge, and soon, I trust, the dismal gloom will be entirely dispersed."

Alphonso here started, for he imagined he had seen a motion in the pall. The lamp seemed scarcely to give any light ; he trimmed it, and again looked towards the bed. Every thing there was, however, quiet ; yet Alphonso could not conquer the sudden alarm he had experienced.

" I'll read no more," said he, as he closed the volume—" It is evident
that

that by pondering over these tales the mind of the monk was so disturbed as to make him fancy what did not exist, for even myself, at this moment, could almost conceive the gloom of this dreary chamber to be the shroud of horrible spectres."

Alphonso arose from his seat, and in order to divert the melancholy reflections the tale he had been perusing excited for the hapless situation of Rosaline, when she gave birth to the child of Osmund, still hung upon his remembrance, he walked about the chamber, which he again more attentively examined.

Over the chimney hung a full length painting of a lady. It was a beautiful countenance,

countenance, but great sorrow was depicted in the mild blue eyes, which were raised up to heaven full of resignation under the calamities she was apparently enduring. In her arms she held a smiling infant, which, unconscious of its mother's miseries, was playing with a crucifix, which hung from its neck.

That the representation of a female should have been allowed to be brought into a monastery excited some small surprise in Alphonso, who well knew that it was directly contrary to the rigid rules observed in them.

Nothing else to engage his attention appearing in the other parts of the chamber, he sat down, and for some
time

time deeply pondered on his melancholy situation ; for he had no friend to whom he could apply in his present necessitous situation ; his father was poor and unable to supply his wants, unfortunately increased by an acquaintance with the luxuries of life.

The midnight bell, hollowly sounding through the vast halls and silent corridors of the edifice, disturbed his sad ruminations.

Scarcely had the echoes of its deep tones died away in sullen silence when a hollow groan made him start, and looking on the bed he saw the pall laying in a heap on the floor ; his attention was rivetted on the coffin, in
which

which lay the ghastly remains of the monk.

No movement, however, caught his eye, and after he had gazed on it some time he began to imagine, that the hasty manner in which he had replaced the pall when so much disturbed by the horrid appearance of the corpse had occasioned it to slide off the coffin on the ground, and the groan might, perhaps, be only the wind rushing through the deserted chambers, or sighing among the time-dismantled turrets.

Conceiving he had, in some degree, accounted for those circumstances, he turned about, when a sight met his
eyes

eyes which beggars description. Standing erect by his side, clad in the awful habiliments of the dead, was the similitude of the figure he had seen in the coffin; the blood fixed in the upper part of the face—the eyes nearly starting from their swoln sockets—the nostrils dilated to their utmost extent—the under-jaw almost hanging on the breast—to add to the horrible spectre, putrefaction seemed to have commenced its ravages on the form—a blue tinge was perceptible on the damp skin of the face, the distortion of which appeared to have been caused by the most acute agonies of death.

A dreadful groan of long continuance was now heard; and a hollow voice,

voice, which seemed to proceed from the terrible apparition, slowly uttered—

“ Seek the Castello de Montoni.—
In the southern chamber is a trap door.
—Thee it concerns to revenge, and
bring that bloody deed to light.”

The senses of Alphonso, wound up to a pitch of horror far beyond their bearing, here deserted him, and he sunk lifeless on the floor.

In that state he continued for a long time, till at length returning animation slowly revisited his frame. He opened his eyes and gazed around him, fearful of again beholding the spectre, but from such a sight he was happily spared.

Shuddering

Shuddering with returning recollection, he looked towards the couch. Nothing extraordinary, however, appeared : every thing was quiet, and apparently in the same state as when he first entered the chamber.

“ Good heavens ! ” thought he, “ have I then been labouring under the delusion of some horrible dream ? Can what I have seen and heard been only in a mental vision. ”

But his sensations too clearly evinced, that the events of that night were no delusions of his brain ; and he saw, too, that he was concerned in the elucidation of some dreadful and horrible transaction.

After

After much reflection, he determined not to mention this dreadful occurrence, or give the monks the slightest reason to suppose that any thing particular had taken place; for he thought it would be sufficient time to do so, after he had made the search at the castello, as directed, and had there discovered the dreadful secret which he was led to conclude the southern chambers contained.

The beams of the morning now began to penetrate through the tinted casement of the chamber, the door of which soon after slowly opened, and the two monks, with trembling steps, entered.

“The saints preserve you, my son!”
said

said Francisco—"Have you been disturbed in your nightly watch?"

Alphonso, agreeable to his resolution of concealing every thing which had taken place, said, with a smile—

"You see, holy fathers, every thing is as you left it."

"I am happy it is so," returned Pierre: "this day is appointed for the interment of the body; so that we need not fear our repose being again disturbed, by so unwelcome an order as the abbot gave us, and which, but for you, we must have obeyed."

Alphonso, whose eyes were at that moment intently fixed on the painting, without minding what Pierre said, interrupted him, by demanding the name of the deceased monk.

“Bernardo,” returned Father Francisco; “and that painting, which you are surveying, is, as we suppose, in some degree connected with the circumstance which made him so miserable.

“He has frequently been discovered gazing at it, while tears have rolled down his cheeks, and expressions of the most heartfelt regret for some dreadful deed have escaped him.”

Do

“Do you know the name of the original?” said Alphonso.

“She was, I believe,” replied the monk, “a marchesa de Montoni, and that child her son. Bernardo brought it with him, when he sought admittance into this monastery; and, in consequence of some charitable deeds he performed, the superior allowed him to have it in his apartment.”

“Bernardo! Montoni!” uttered Alphonso, as, deeply ruminating, he brought to his recollection the words of the spectre.

“And how long is it,” said he, after

a pause of some minutes, “since Bernardo entered this monastery?”

“About ten years, I believe,” said Pierre: but, my son, sorry am I to remind you of the commands of the abbot respecting your departure. Happy, indeed, should we be to shew our gratitude to you for your kind services, and to endeavour to alleviate the sorrow under which we observe you labour. Let us quit this mournful apartment, and set before you some refreshment, to enable you to continue your journey.”

Alphonso then accompanied the two monks to the hall below, where he partook of a slight repast, and, recommending

mending himself to their prayers, he mounted his steed, and departed, though not before the fathers had extorted a promise from him, that, should he ever come that way, he would call at the monastery of St. Benedict.

CHAP. III.

MUSING on the recent events, and endeavouring to draw some conclusion from them, Alphonso proceeded on his journey.

The storm had now completely subsided, and the peasantry were busily employed in clearing the roads from its dreadful effects. The sun, rising in majestic splendour, soon chased away the nocturnal vapours, and gladdened the face of nature with his orient beams. The lovely strains of the feathered creation echoed round, and nature smiled in all her various works.

The

The part of the country Alphonso was now travelling through suited his romantic ideas. On one side was a beautiful valley, through which gently glided a transparent stream, on whose verdant banks were many small hamlets, where peace and contentment seemed to have taken their residence.

On the other side, immense craggy rocks, rising above each other, pierced the low clouds that glided along on the bosom of the morning breeze. On them was seen the solitary figure of the bold chamois-hunter pursuing his prey ; while, on a slender bridge that united two towering cliffs, a peasant was seen proceeding on his venturous course. Frequently, interspersed amongst the hanging rocks that frowned

destruction on all beneath, appeared a cottage, the seeming tranquillity of whose inhabitants, attending their daily labours, while their children were sporting, in innocent festivity, on the green plats before the doors, formed a striking contrast with the surrounding scene.

Alphonso now for some time journeyed on, lost in thought; for the events of the two preceding days left not a vacancy in his mind.

It appeared evident, that although he had never seen the Signor Toralto before, that he was well known to him; else, why his wish to deprive him of existence; but that the Duca de Rodolpho should be so deeply concerned,

cerned, whom he had every reason to look on as his friend, who had been his protector and patron from his infantine years, and for whose kindness his heart had been ever truly grateful, was a subject of too dark and intricate a nature for him to unravel. He knew that the duca's passions were easily roused, and, when so, most fierce and ungovernable : he had ever considered his word and wish as an irrevocable law ; and the absolute authority which he possessed over a great number of vassals, trembling at his nod, gave him the power of enforcing implicit obedience to his will. Yet Alphonso could not recollect, that in any one instance he had incurred his displeasure.

From these unpleasant ruminations,

his thoughts wandered to the mysterious occurrences of the past night, at the convent of Benedictines.

It was evident to him, that he was fixed on to make a discovery of some dark transaction, which it was of importance for him to know ; and his impatience and desire to elucidate that history every moment increased.

His parents, who resided near the Castello de Montoni, might probably be able to assist him to developé this mysterious affair. Inspired with this hope, he hastened on as fast as his steed would permit him ; and so intent was he on arriving at the end of his journey, that he continued it without any intermission, till the declining rays of the

SUN

sun warned him to seek a shelter from the approaching night.

A cottage, situated at the bottom of a valley, attracted his notice. It was separated from the rest of the village by hedges of myrtles and laurestinas. A small wood wound round it. Mingling its rich entangled verdure with the bright hues of the flowers, evergreens, and rose-bushes, which decorated the garden, the mantling woodbine crept round the small casements, and the bushes overshadowed the gate and neat paling which adorned the front.

When he arrived at it, he found the peasant to whom it belonged just returned from his daily labour: his wife,

with fond solicitude, was preparing his frugal repast, while his children, with health planted on their rosy countenances, were crowding round him, each appearing anxious to obtain his kind regards.

Alphonse, having for some time beheld this pleasing picture of domestic felicity with heartfelt delight, at length addressed the peasant.

“ Friend,” said he, “ will you grant a night’s shelter to a weary traveller ?”

A cheerful compliance beamed in the benevolent countenance of the man.

“ Enter, and welcome, Signor,” said he.

he. “Benedetto never denied the shelter of his humble roof to the traveller ; though, from your appearance, Signor, I fear that my poor endeavours will be insufficient to procure you those comforts you are doubtless accustomed to.”

Alphonso, alighting from his horse, thanked his host for his solicitude, and, entering the cottage, took his place by the fire-side, in the best chair, which, by the pressing entreaties of Margueritta, he was forced to accept.

Their simple repast was now produced, consisting of the fruits of the season, bowls of the milk of their goats, and brown bread. Benedetto, who had been absent, providing a lodging

ing

ing for Alphonso's horse, now returned, and pressed his guest to eat.

“ You seem fatigued, Signor,” said he. “ I wish I had better to offer you: such as it is, you are heartily welcome to it; and a clean, though perhaps a harder pallet than you have been accustomed to, awaits you, whenever you would like to retire.

Alphonso, cheerfully consenting to the hospitable entreaties of Benedetto, partook of the frugal repast, and, in the course of conversation, inquired to whose domain his cottage belonged.

“ You must be come very far from this, Signor,” said the man, “ not to know that these lands belong to the
great

great Conte Manfred; and he is as good as he is great: heaven bless him, I say, for he makes us all happy. Margueretta and I have lived here more than sixteen years before that we were vassals of the Duca de Rodolpho at Montoni."

"Did the duca live there long?" demanded Alphonso.

"No," replied the communicative Benedetto, "for soon after the death of the Marchesa de Montoni, it was reported that some strange appearance had alarmed him, and he went to reside at the castello he has among the Alps."

"Was

“ Was not the marchese married ? ”
said Alphonso.

“ Yes, signor,” returned the man,
“ and had an infant son, but she soon
went after her lord, I don’t believe
she survived him many weeks. I fol-
lowed her to the grave. Ah, there
was not a dry eye amongst us, except
indeed the duca’s.”

“ The child then is yet alive, I con-
clude,” said Alphonso.

“ No,” replied Benedetto, “ that
likewise died suddenly, and then the
duca claimed the estate, and for a
short time lived in great magnificence
at the castello, but he was frightened
away signor, as I said before ; and ever
since

since that I have heard it has not been inhabited."

"The duca was a relation of the Marchese Montoni, I conclude," said Alphonso, "or was the estate left to him."

"I have heard that he was distantly related to the marchese," said Benedetto, "but it seems that when the marchesa and the child were gone, he was the next heir. Ah, there were many odd sayings about it, Signor; but it is not my business to meddle with the affairs of my superiors."

The painting at the monastery of St. Benedict, and the recollection of what the monks had said respecting Bernardino,

nardo, now occurred to Alphonso, and from the conversation and hints of Benedetto, there appeared to be some hidden deed of horror, which shunned the beam of day. This deed he doubted not but he was destined to unfold, from the words uttered by the horrible spectre; and his impatience to visit the chambers of the castello was now doubly increased.

Alphonso soon after repaired to his humble bed, which the fatigues he undergone the preceding day, made appear more comfortable than the downy couch he had been accustomed to.

Thus it is with the labouring poor, sleep hovers over them the moment they

they stretch their weary limbs on their hard pallets, and closes their eyes in peaceful slumbers. Health smiles in their dwellings, and contentment presides at their frugal board ; while often those who wanton in every luxury which riches can obtain, or invention procure, press in vain their downy pillows, and sigh for repose.

The day had already dawned when Alphonso awoke : he arose and opening his casement, inhaled the pure zephyrs of the morning, and contemplated the beauties of the surrounding scenery ; among which were the almost trackless woods and nearer mountains, o'er which he had travelled.

The sun rising from the wide world
of

of waters, had just o'ertopped the eastern hills—light and airy clouds spread their fleecy forms on the bosom of the gentle wind—here streaked with crimson, and there variegated with gold and silver tints. In the west, the ætherial blue of the heavens enlivened the landscape, and the dark precipices of the Alps seemed to smile.

These precipices were in some places broken into immense crags, which impended far beyond their base; and in others rose in huge misshapen points, shaded by larch or darkened by lines of gloomy pine, suspended along their rocky chasms; from whence the eye reposed on the thick woods, which sunk abruptly to the vale beneath,
uniting

uniting in a mass of deep and indistinct foliage.

Through an opening in the wood, which thickly rose in front of Benedetto's cottage, Alphonso from his casement beheld a large sheet of water : the beams of the sun as he emerged from the hills, were reflected on its gently moving surface, just ruffled by the morning breeze, which stilly breathed amongst the leaves of the forest.

The air was chill ; a solemn tranquillity pervaded all around ; and it seemed like an awful pause in nature, to convey a soothing serenity to the inhabitants of the earth.

“ How

“How calm,” thought Alphonso, “are the objects which surround me! how grand the waving outline of these mountains! how beautiful the woods that seem to repose at their feet—what a peaceful meditative tranquillity is diffused over the face of nature.—Alas! the repose I view, dwells not in my bosom; there, contending sensations, sad retrospections, and still more sad anticipations, exclude all hope of comfort—my thoughts once to me a source of pleasure, are now the source of all my torments. I am not the same who once felt only agreeable sensations, whose heart expanded with benevolence to the world: even when nature displays her various beauties to my view, I heed them not. I see unmoved the distant hills, the sun dispersing
the

the mists of morning, cheering the distant prospects with his golden beams ; or the transparent stream, winding its level, undulating course ; for my heart is blind and insensible to all but grief.”

Anxious to dispel for a moment the deep melancholy excited by his mournful reflections, he descended from his chamber, and entering the small apartment below, found Margueritta busily employed in preparing her husband's morning repast, who was getting ready for his daily labour.

Scarcely had he answered their kind attentive inquiries, when the noise of horses' feet exciting his curiosity, he looked out at the casement, and seeing
at

at a distance some of the domestics of the Duca de Rodolpho directing their course towards the cottage, he drew back.

“Benedetto,” said he, “my life is at this moment in your power, the followers of the Duca de Rodolpho have doubtless traced me here, and, should their numbers prevail against my arm, he will certainly carry into effect his murderous intents, which to avoid I have fled his castello.”

“You have trusted to me, Signor,” said the honest peasant, “and Benedetto was always a friend to the unfortunate. You had better go to your chamber above, and depend on my fidelity to mislead them. The Duca de Rodolpho

de Rodolpho shall for once fail in his cruel designs."

Alphonso having left the apartment, soon after heard the horses stop at the gate, and himself minutely described by one of the duca's servants.

Benedetto, however, was his friend, and asserted his ignorance of having seen any such person.

"But in case you should, my friend," said one, "do not fail to secure him, and a purse of twenty ducats will be your reward."

"Indeed," said Benedetto, "that would be a good day's work."

“Ay, would it,” exclaimed a rough voice: “that plaguy storm delayed us a whole day and night, or we should soon have been up with him: we must hasten on, as it is most likely he has come this road; for the monks at the convent told us he was going to Montoni.”

“To Montoni! I know it well,” said Benedetto, “but this is not the right way: another has lately been made at the foot of yonder mountain, it runs through the village of Casoni: he must have gone that road, for he could not easily have passed by here without being seen.”

Entirely deceived by the unsuspecting conduct of Benedetto, the party
made

made a few more inquiries concerning the way, and shortly after rode hastily from his cottage.

Alphonso descending from his chamber, thanked his kind preserver in the most grateful manner.

“I want no thanks, Signor,” said Benedetto, “it is my duty to protect my fellow creatures. Your countenance tells me, Signor, you are not capable of doing a bad act; besides, I know more of the duca’s character than it’s safe to tell—to be the object of his hate is to be innocent. Ah, I well remember the tales I heard at Montoni; but no matter, Benedetto, poor as he is, would not have his conscience for all his lands and fine estates—how-

ever, it's none of my business. I hope, Signor, that you will escape him—you are safe here now, and my cottage is at your service."

"I thank you, my friend," said Alphonso, "but a mysterious business calls me hence. I must immediately repair to Montoni."

"To Montoni!" said the friendly Benedetto, with astonishment, "only reflect, Signor, you will certainly be discovered."

"I trust not," replied Alphonso, "that same power which has hitherto protected me, will not, I hope, discontinue its fostering care; besides, my friend, if I pursue a contrary road,
what

what chance have they of meeting me ?”

“ Not on the road, I grant, but at Montoni they may,” returned the anxious peasant.

“ Well,” said Alphonso, “ I will stay here till the sun has nearly run his daily course, and then I think there will be little chance of danger in proceeding on my journey.”

Benedetto was obliged to be content with the promise of Alphonso, for the kind-hearted peasant, who, it seems, had heard of the ferocious, revengeful disposition of Rodolpho, was anxious for his safety.

His daily labour now obliged him to leave the cottage: and Alphonso retired to his lowly chamber, where he ruminated on the proceedings of the duca.

“Ah!” thought he, “how little did I think, when I was repining at the storm, that to it I was indebted for my life. How apt are we blind mortals to murmur at the dispensations of Providence, without considering that an All-wise Creator has so commanded that ultimately the miseries we endure, if we bear them with submissive patience, become in the end blessings to us. Should not this true and consoling reflection support me in all my misfortunes, and enable me to resist the impiety of despair, although
overwhelmed

overwhelmed in the darkest abyss of misery."

Such were the precepts instilled by the good Father Anselmo, into the youthful mind of Alphonso, whose conduct had ever proved him worthy of his care.

Towards evening Alphonso took leave of Benedetto, who again earnestly pressed him to remain in his cottage till the danger that threatened him was averted.

But he still remained deaf to his intreaties, and Benedetto, finding his persuasions of no effect, pointed out to him a road which it was not probable his pursuers would travel, as it lay

F 4 . . .

through

through dreary woods, and being in some places almost impassable, was very little known.

Alphonso promising to follow his kind directions, pressed his hand with truly grateful sensations, and departed.

He travelled on as fast as his steed would allow him, when the deepening gloom of night compelled him to think of a shelter, till the returning light should enable him to continue his journey.

He was now in the midst of a vast forest, whose venerable tenants, stretching their extravagant arms across the path, assisted to obscure the small remains of twilight; while his progress

was

was impeded by the briars and under-wood, whose trailing branches frequently entangled the feet of his horse.

As he advanced further into the recesses of the wood, the gloom became more dense, and he could now scarcely discern his way.

Continuing slowly to proceed for some time, he at length entered a more open part of the forest, where fearful of losing his path, he stopped and listened for some welcome sounds of human beings which might direct his search for their abode, where he might procure a shelter ; but all was quiet : scarcely a breath of wind interrupted the solemn silence.—At length,

RAJA

F 5

The

“ The moon,
Rising in unclouded majesty,
Unveiled her peerless light,
And o’er the dark her silver mantle threw.”

Aided by her bright lumen, he discerned that the open space he was in was the avenue to a ruinous pile of towers, which appeared of great extent: the crumbling walls had filled up the moat, and the gates had long deserted their holds, and were lying down, almost covered by tall grass and weeds.

From the desolate appearance of the building, Alphonso concluded it was deserted by human beings. He, however, determined to try if it would afford him a shelter for the night, and,
quitting

quitting his steed, climbed over the remains of what once had been a wall, and, passing through the shattered gateway, entered a large hall, the ruinous state of which was proved by the frequent views of the sky, which appeared through the roof, large fragments of which lay in heaps on the floor.

To endeavour to explore any of the chambers of the ruin would have been dangerous, as well as difficult, without the assistance of a light.

Alphonso contented himself with the shelter of a deep recess, which probably led to some portal: he lay down on the floor, and, resting his head on a

broken column, endeavoured to pass the hours, which would bring on the wished-for return of day, in sleep.

Scarcely, however, had he closed his eyes, when he was disturbed by the opening of a distant door.

He started up and listened, when the echoes of the portal, as it closed, hollowly sounded through the hall. His attention was roused by this circumstance, and he arose from his recumbent posture,

For some time all was silent; and, concluding that what he had heard was the effect of the wind, he was again endeavouring to take repose, when

when the echoes of distant footsteps convinced him that he was not the sole inhabitant of the ruined pile.

The paces appeared as if in some gallery or passage above him, and, after continuing for some time, at length ceased.

This circumstance, while it proved to Alphonso the extent of the building, convinced him also, that it was not in so ruinous a condition as he had at first conceived it.

A door now slowly grated on its hinges, at the further extremity of the hall ; and, soon after, a slow pace was heard. As the nocturnal wanderer, whoever he was, seemed as if approaching

ing

ing Alphonso, he drew his sword, and awaited the event in silence.

As he gazed in the direction the person was approaching, by the feeble reflexes of the pale moon, which entered the hall through the roof, he discerned, for a few moments, a tall figure, enveloped in a large mantle, slowly passing the spot where he stood.

The surrounding gloom soon made it invisible. Meanwhile the paces continued; and, shortly after, a door closed, in the direction the figure had gone.

While Alphonso was reflecting what course he should pursue—whether to watch where this mysterious person
had

had gone, who, he thought, might probably belong to some banditti who had taken their abode in that solitary ruin; or to leave a place where there were dangers which human foresight or courage could not guard against—his ears were assailed by a repetition of low groans, which evidently proceeded from that part of the hall where he had heard the door close.

Those melancholy sounds were evidently not the consequences of corporeal, but mental anguish.

Alphonso, ever alive to the tender emotions of pity, determined to endeavour to discover the cause of them.

“Haply,” thought he, “it may be
in

in my power to alleviate the distress of the unfortunate sufferer ; or, perhaps, I am reserved for more trials. The mysteries which surround me seem continually increasing. However, let what may be the result, I will endeavour to find out the reason of those lamentations.

Saying this, he cautiously crossed the heaps of ruins which were strewed on the floor of the hall.

Guided by the moans, which still continued, he found a door, which being left unfastened, he gently pushed it open.

Advancing, he found himself in an empty chamber. A dismantled case-
ment

ment admitting the small light which the waning moon afforded, he discovered another portal, whose time-worn pannels, mouldering in their frames, permitted him to see the interior of the apartment to which it led, and which was illumined by the feeble rays of a glimmering lamp.

Seated at a table, attentively surveying a miniature, was the same person whom he had seen in the hall.

His head was reclined on a coffin. His countenance was pale, and expressive of the most heartfelt grief.

That he was a person of no common birth, was evident by his noble air; and the curiosity of Alphonso was so
much

much roused, that he was on the point of appearing before the melancholy recluse, when he again deeply groaned as mournfully he surveyed the miniature, and slowly uttered the following words:—

“ My angelic Leonora, how does thy loved remembrance increase the tide of woe, which flows unceasingly in my breast ! The dreadful uncertainty of thy fate—whether the grave conceals thy beauteous form, or thou art still suffering on earth—is alike unknown to me !

“ How slow have rolled on the tedious years of misery since you were torn from my arms ! Shall I ever be blessed with the sight of you on earth,

or

or shall that happiness not be mine, till my soul, disrobed of its mortal coil, flies to realms of bliss, to be united to thy ethereal essence?"

More words were uttered, but in a lower tone; and the nocturnal mourner, having pressed to his lips the miniature of his beloved Leonora, arose, and, with a deep sigh, placed it in the coffin.

Alphonso felt a glow of shame at having obtruded on the secret sorrows of a stranger.

Not wishing to be seen, he cautiously quitted the apartment, and, retracing his steps, arrived at the obscure recess, where he soon after heard
the

the door close, and beheld the mourner pass by.

The steps he a short time after heard in the gallery, or corridor above, informed him that he had quitted the hall.

Wrapt up in his melancholy reflections, which were not a little increased by the sad scene he had witnessed, Alphonso thought not of rest, but at length sleep stole insensibly on his wearied senses, from which the beams of the morning at length disturbed him.

Hastily he arose from his hard couch, and his first thoughts were to seek the midnight mourner ; but when he considered that he was not able to
alleviate

alleviate his sorrows, and that it would appear that he had, from motives of curiosity, witnessed them, he desisted from that wish.

Passing over the gate-way and the fragments of the mouldering walls, he beheld his horse grazing on the luxuriant herbage with which indulgent nature has adorned the earth.

At his well-known call, the snorting animal approached him ; and, hastily vaulting into his saddle-seat, Alphonso pursued his way to the Castello de Montoni.

CHAP. IV.

THE sun had just risen from the bosom of the ocean, and the summit of the lofty mountain of Cenano was tipped with his golden beams.

In gratitude to their Creator for his unbounded blessings the feathered choristers speeding their aerial journey on the fragrant breath of morn, which gave new life to all around, were tuning their early notes to his praise.

Occupied as Alphonso was, [in ruminating on the late mysterious events,

events, yet he could not avoid admiring the beauty of the surrounding scene, and his heart expanded with gratitude for the goodness of that Providence who had so wonderfully protected him from the machinations of his enemies,

Conscious as he was that he had never given offence to any one, he could little imagine what reason there could be for the attempt against his life.

No ambitious views could possibly present themselves to him who was a peasant's offspring, and who had passed his days in peaceful quiet in the Castello de Rodolpho without ever quitting its domains, for, although the
duca

duca was almost constantly at Genoa, he never desired Alphonso to accompany him, nor did he wish to leave the instructive society of Father Anselmo for the gay pursuits of pleasure.

While at the castello the duca was scarcely visible for whole days, he frequently remained in his apartments, secluded from the sight of every one; his reasons for such conduct were unknown; but even when in society his mind seemed always occupied by some dark rumination, which evidently employed his retired hours.

It has been mentioned that his anger would admit of no controul, he was a perfect slave to his ungovernable passions—the most trivial opposition
to

to his will aroused in an instant his most deadly revenge; and the dungeons of his castle, constructed in those times when Italy was the seat of factious and domestic troubles, witnessed many a dark scene, and their echoes repeated the unavailing lamentations of the miserable captives who inhabited their gloomy interiors.

In the marriage state he had not enjoyed those felicities the warm and fervent imaginations of youth so frequently paint, and which the glowing colours of distant fancy, when approximated too often, prove unreal; it was owing, as report in loud murmurs suggested, to himself, as his lady was gentle and complying, but perhaps

knew not the art to conciliate his stormy passions.

Such was their situation when he took her with him to a distant part of the country, where it was reported she died; and Rodolpho returning to his castello in the ill feigned mockery of grief, lamented her loss.

Spignoletti, an old servant of the duca's, seemed to be the sole repository of his thoughts and companion of his retired hours; with this man he was often seen in private discourse, and Alphonso now recollected that he was the leader of the party who were sent in pursuit of him.

There

There was something so unpleasant in Spignoletti's countenance and figure that Alphonso always turned from it with horror.

A pair of small red eyes, that seemed almost to possess the baneful quality of the basilisk, glared from beneath his large bushy eye-brows—then, with a crooked nose, large mouth, lank red hair, which hung down his back, and a stoop in his shoulders, rendered him a perfect image of disgust.—No bold lines of openness and candour marked his features, which appeared but too true an index to his mind—he was confused when any one looked at him, and evidently shrunk from observation.

Such was the constant companion of the duca while at the castello.

From these reveries the beauty of the road now carried Alphonso; he had emerged from the gloomy forest where he had passed so unquiet a night, and had ascended the lofty summit of a mountain.

On one side was seen the ocean spreading its restless bosom to an immeasurable distance, and at length seemingly intermixing with the azure canopy of the world; on the other was an extensive landscape, crowned at the verge of the horizon by the lofty Appenines.

The green vales of Piedmont lay
beneath

beneath him, and at a small distance the neat town of St. Remo, with the lofty towers and spires of its monasteries, and the white villas, embosomed in the dark olive groves, met his view.

Far off appeared mount Cenano, rearing aloft its threatening head that divided the clouds in their ærial flight; its abrupt base was cloathed with thickets of evergreens, and the pure waters of the Nervia, which glided at its feet, formed a striking contrast with the tremendous appearance of the crags above, which were bare of vegetation, except that in some parts the bleak appearance was relieved by a few scanty lichens.

Descending the lofty mountain, from whence his gaze had wandered on the varied scenery, above feebly described, Alphonso pursued his way through obscure and solitary woods, whose thick clustering foliage denied entrance to the rays of the bright regent of day.

The report of trombones and a sudden clashing of swords now attracted the attention of Alphonso, who, spurring on his steed in the direction of the sounds, at length discovered a person of noble appearance, who, with his domestics, were defending themselves against a numerous and well-appointed banditti.

Alphonso, whose delight was to
assist

assist the injured and oppressed, without delay rode up to the scene of action, and, drawing his trusty sword, immediately attacked those lawless ruffians with invincible courage. Two of them instantly rushed towards him, but, though thus opposed, he declined not the combat, and the foremost, having received a deadly thrust, fell from his horse, and the other falling over his dying comrade, became an easy victim. Two having thus met the reward of their crimes, the cavalier and his party seemed to acquire fresh courage by this unlooked-for aid.

They had defended themselves with the utmost bravery—one of the ruffians was wounded at the commencement of the encounter—another had

fallen—however, as more than double their number still remained, and the cavalier being wounded, and one of his people killed, but for the timely assistance of Alphonso, they could not have resisted much longer; but on seeing the havoc already occasioned by his arm, and the death of another of their gang, the banditti immediately retreated with great precipitation to the interior of the forest, where they concealed themselves in its intricate recesses.

The cavalier now approached Alphonso, and having hastily thanked him for his timely assistance, proceeded immediately to a carriage, which was in the road at some distance from the scene of action. It contained his daughter,

daughter, who had fainted during the conflict ; but the well known tones of her father's voice recalled her fleeting spirits, and she raised her eyes in silent gratitude to Heaven for his preservation ; he helped her out of the carriage, and seating her on a bank by the side of the road, the air soon completely restored her languid senses.

The Conte Manfred, for he it was whom Alphonso had rescued from destruction, now introduced him to his daughter.

“ Thank this gallant stranger, my dear Victoria,” said he, “ he has been our preserver ; but for him your father would perhaps, ere this, have perished,

and you, my child—Ah, heavens ! what would have been your fate ?”

Victoria blushed as in animated terms she expressed her gratitude to Alphonso for his fortunate assistance ; but her looks said far more than her words.

She was uncommonly handsome : her beautiful eyes and fine forehead were shaded by luxuriant glossy ringlets, which were confined in the Grecian manner, by strings of pearl—her veil, which, when she fainted, had fallen back, disclosed to view her lovely features, while the roseate hue of her cheeks, deepened by the delight of beholding her father in safety, and of having escaped such an imminent danger,

danger, displayed that full and glowing tint which only exercise, or the quick and exquisite emotions of the soul, could call forth. She was rather above the common height, and while her beauties engaged admiration, her mode of conducting herself commanded respect.

Such was Victoria, daughter of Conte Manfred.

Alphonso now felt a sensation to which his bosom had hitherto been a stranger, and so completely did the lovely countenance of Victoria, as she smiled on him, excite his admiration and attention, that he was almost unable to reply to the conte, and her re-

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peated

peated acknowledgments of the important services he had rendered them.

The domestics had now adjusted the equipage, and leaving some of their comrades to bury the bodies of the banditti who had fallen in the fierce encounter, were ready to proceed.

Alphonso, unable to resist the conte's pressing intreaties to accompany him to his castello, which was at no great distance from St. Remo, rode by the side of the carriage conversing with him and his lovely daughter.

The Castello de Voltorno rose on the summit of an immense rock, its
lofty

lofty turrets commanding an extensive view of the ocean: it was a large, but irregular pile of towers, built with all the grandeur that the dawning genius of the Gothic age afforded, and with the strength which the former troublesome and factious time rendered necessary. A broad and deep moat surrounded it, except where nature had rendered it impregnable by the steepness of the rock.

Crossing the drawbridge and entering the fore-court, the conte having alighted from his carriage, conducted Alphonso through a hall of vast extent, the lofty roof of which was supported by columns of white marble, whose broad trunks were decorated with the spoils of warfare.

At

At the further end of the hall was a pair of folding doors which disclosed a broad marble staircase.

Ascending them Alphonso entered a most magnificent apartment. The furniture was of blue velvet, richly fringed with gold; the walls were adorned with paintings by the first Italian artists. Large Venetian mirrors, that, reflecting in various directions the gilt ornaments of the apartment on their bright surfaces, dazzled the light.

A costly lamp of crystal was suspended by chains of silver from the roof.

Such was the splendid chamber
Alphonso

Alphonso was conducted to by the conte, at the farther end of which, on a couch richly embroidered with gold, sat the Contessa de Manfred.

The conte related to her the signal services which Alphonso had rendered her family, and while she expressed her sense of the obligations she was under to him, the starting tear of gratitude evinced it came from her heart.

The features of the contessa bore evident remains of beauty, and her complexion, which appeared to have suffered from a delicate state of health which had banished the roses from her cheeks, was still attractive by its winning softness. Her lofty and commanding

manding deportment caught his attention, but the conscious dignity which attended her manner, was tempered with sweetness and an engaging politeness.

Conte Manfred soon after his entrance retired to have his wound examined, which happily appeared to be of little consequence, for the sword which one of the ferocious banditti had aimed at his heart, had fortunately glanced against a rib, which had prevented its further progress.

The apprehension of the contessa and the lovely Victoria, respecting his safety, having now ceased, Alphonso was pressed to partake of a repast
which

which was prepared in an adjoining apartment, equal in beauty to the one he had left.

The hospitality of Manfred prolonged it to a late hour, ere which the lovely Victoria retired with her mother.

Alphonso's gaze was fixed on the beauteous object which had already cost him some sighs, and when the portal closed her from his view, a sudden sadness oppressed his senses; he felt as if all that could render him happy was now excluded from his sight: and his countenance plainly evinced the melancholy that dwelt in his bosom.

Conte Manfred perceiving that his guest was oppressed by some secret grief,

grief, sought to divert his thoughts from resting on the cause of his woe by engaging him in conversation, and amongst other subjects, the events of the day being mentioned, he informed Alphonso that it was on his return from visiting a distant part of his estate, when he was so fiercely attacked by the banditti, and concluded by observing that he shortly meant to pay a friendly visit to the Duca de Rodolpho, to whom he had promised the hand of his daughter.

At that name Alphonso started, but at the conclusion of the sentence he turned pale.

“How, conte!” said he, “did I hear you aright: and is it possible that such
can

can be your intent? Excuse my agitation, which is excited by the dangerous predicament in which the happiness of your daughter is involved."

"The happiness of my daughter!" said Manfred, observing his emotion, and fixing on him an inquiring eye—"you have roused a father's anxiety by your words: tell me your motives for them. What have you heard of the Duca de Rodolpho?"

"Alas!" said Alphonso, "I know him too well. I am, as I have every reason to believe, a peasant's son; the duca protected me from my infantine years—my gratitude was great for his kindness: and I unceasingly studied to render myself worthy of it. But
mark

mark the sequel, without having in any way offended him, as I take Heaven to witness, he attempted to destroy me. Yes, conte, like the midnight assassin, did Rodolpho enter my chamber. Happily, however, I escaped his foul intents and fled the castello."

"You amaze me, Signor," returned the conte, "with your relation of the dark deed of the duca's. I have heard many reports of him; yet I always thought that it was the gale of malice, which, on its broad pinions, bore the envenomed tale, on purpose to hurt Rodolpho in my opinion. Your tale has awakened them in my remembrance, and I now conclude that they were founded in truth. Therefore, I'll not
be

be hasty, but consider further ere I venture my child's happiness on so uncertain a foundation : and should I determine to break off the intended alliance, Victoria will not be sorry, for her heart went not with it."

"I fear," returned Alphonso, "that Rodolpho's disposition is not likely to make any one happy. Believe me, conte, it is not from motives of mean revenge that I speak, but knowing as much as I do of him, it would be an injustice in me not to warn you of the certain wreck of your daughter's happiness, if it is dependent on him."

"So indeed say all my friends," returned the conte, "but your report of the



the duca is too serious to be neglected, and my resolution is fixed; for Manfred will not be allied to a man capable of performing an act of so dark a hue."

Alphonso's heart seemed lightened of an oppressive burthen.

"The duca was, he well knew, ill calculated to make a woman happy, and ill deserving of so inestimable a treasure as Victoria; but his fears lest Rodolpho should be united to her, had their rise from a circumstance of which he was as yet ignorant; for his solicitude, which he ascribed to friendship, was in reality the dawnings of a passion unknown to him, for the bosom of

Alphonso

Alphonso had hitherto been free from love.

Conte Manfred now inquired of Alphonso, what course he meant to pursue, which brought from him the relation of the events which took place at the monastery of St. Benedict, and concluded with acquainting him, that his determination was to proceed immediately to the Castello de Montoni, to endeavour to elucidate the mystery which seemed to hang over him.

“From your mention of the search that is now making after you,” said the conte, “I think you would act very unadvisedly, at so early a period, to visit Montoni. Wait for some time,
till

till there is reason to conclude that your enemy has ceased in his endeavours to find you.

“ If, in the meanwhile, you will reside within these walls, you will increase the obligation I am under to you. We intend going soon to Genoa, and perhaps the change of scene may dissipate the melancholy which your early misfortunes have produced.”

“ Your goodness, Conte,” returned Alphonso, “ is far beyond my desert. 'Tis true, there might be danger in going to Montoni, and therefore I will accept your invitation for a few days.”

The hour of midnight now sounded
from

from the deep-toned bell of the castello, and the Conte Manfred and Alphonso, shortly after, separated for the night.

CHAP. V.

THE gloom which pervaded the mind of Alphonso, owing to the many singular events which he had witnessed, was soon lightened by the pleasing society of Manfred, the contessa, and the lovely Victoria, who all endeavoured to contribute to restore his wonted serenity of mind.

In this they were urged, as well by their gratitude as by the increasing esteem which they felt for him.

For a short time, their kind endea-

yours

yours were attended with success; but Alphonso soon too sensibly perceived, that the unknown sensations he felt at the first interview with Victoria were the commencement of a passion, of which his sleepless nights and agitated hours soon convinced him of the strength.

In vain did he endeavour to combat with his feelings: in vain did he bring to his remembrance his own situation, and the lowness of his origin: and in vain did he, day after day, make resolutions of departing from the Castello de Voltorno—resolutions which a single glance from the lovely Victoria was sufficient to render fruitless.

Frequently did he wander in the forest which was near the castello : there, unseen, did he nurse his tender passion, by bringing to his mental vision the charms of Victoria.

In these solitary excursions, his attention was attracted by a romantic ruin, which appeared to have formerly been a chapel.

Many of the columns which had supported the roof still remained, while others, thrown down, were almost concealed by the long-waving grass. The roof was lying, in scattered fragments, amongst the tombs, which had formerly told whose noble ashes they contained ; but the descriptive marble
was

was defaced by the destroying hand of time.

Alphonso often wandered among the ruins, pausing with veneration at the mouldering monuments—the frail mementos of departed heroes.

Sometimes, seated on a broken column, he remained unconscious of every thing but the ardent love for Victoria which possessed his bosom, and, with uplifted eyes, would he intreat of Heaven to listen to his fervent petition that he might be the envied possessor of so much excellence.

As he was one day indulging his hopeless passion, and giving full scope

to those tender emotions which increased it, his attention was excited by the sound of some footsteps.

Looking around, he perceived, at the extremity of the ruin, a man stealing from the shade of a deep recess, who, when he saw that he was observed, started back, and instantly retired from the place.

It was evident to Alphonso, that the man came there to observe him; and his flight manifested that his intents were such, that he sought concealment.

Supposing, therefore, that he was some emissary of Rodolpho's, he instantly

stantly pursued him ; but the fugitive, darting into the bosom of the forest, the trees soon obscured him from his sight.

This circumstance convinced him that his place of residence was discovered, and he now determined to accept the conte's invitation, and accompany him to Genoa, where he hoped he should be able to evade the search of his enemies.

Conte Manfred had, shortly after his conversation with Alphonso, sent a messenger to Rodolpho, acquainting him, that the wishes of his daughter not leaning to the projected alliance, and her happiness being his dearest object, he was therefore obliged to de-

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cline

cline the honour offered him by the duca.

The incoherent sentences with which Rodolpho charged the messenger, on receipt of the letter, expressive of his rage and threats of revenge, received a suitable return from Conte Manfred.

The solicitude of Alphonso was alarmed by these events. He knew the unbounded power of Rodolpho: he knew also, that his disposition was full of deadly hatred and black revenge, when he conceived himself insulted, and he dreaded the consequences.

The Conte Manfred, however, determining

termining to resent any outrage, was prepared for the worst.

The lovely Victoria's spirits seemed to increase every day since she heard of her father's resolution. The idea of the addresses of the Duca de Rodolpho was hateful to her.

Now sometimes, smiling to herself, she would make the comparison between his haughty imperious air, and the winning gentleness of Alphonso, whose countenance, full of candour and sincerity, formed a striking contrast to the dark, savage, and malignant gaze of Rodolpho.

While indulging these reflections, a

sigh would sometimes escape her, of which she knew not the cause.

Many days had now elapsed ; and as the Duca de Rodolpho was not heard of, the alarm occasioned by his threats, which had disturbed the peace of the inhabitants of the castello, now by their apparent security, and the lenient hand of time, began to subside.

Rodolpho was at last forgotten, and the necessary preparations were made for the intended journey to Genoa.

Conte Manfred, with his numerous train of attendants, departed from Voltorno, on one of those mild mornings which

which are peculiar to the delightful climate of Italy.

Not a cloud obscured the azure vault of Heaven. A gentle breeze prevented the heat of the sun from being oppressive, while his beams, resting on the thick foliage of the distant forests, shewed the various tints of their umbrageous tenants, in full luxuriance, to the view.

Clumps of ancient oaks, of a deep brown, were surrounded by the dark-green fir, intermixed with the light hazle, the pale poplar, and the aspiring birch—in some parts, the abrupt brows of some enormous rock, rising amidst the various verdure, reflected, with increasing brightness, the torrid beams

of the sun, while, amongst the deep cliffs and vales amidst the surrounding mountains, a deep and perpetual shade prevailing, formed a pleasing contrast, and by variety increased the beauty of the surrounding scenery.

The lovely views of nature deeply engaged the attention of Victoria, whose gay heart, saddened by no misfortunes, enjoyed sweet tranquillity, while the enamoured Alphonso, riding by her side, pointed out the various beautiful prospects which he thought would delight her romantic fancy.

Winding along the road, towards the evening the travellers approached Finale, where they remained for the night. The next day, continuing their journey,

journey, they arrived at Savona, from whence they embarked in a felucca to Genoa.

The sun had withdrawn his sultry rays from the hemisphere; and the gentle zephyrs of evening, awaking from their slumbers, crept over the bosom of the ocean, which they slightly ruffled with their light wings.

The serene sky, unobscured by clouds, exhibited the ætherial blue peculiar to that enchanting climate; and the surrounding objects, mellowed by distance and by the mists of evening, became every moment more interesting; while afar off were seen the tall vessels, gliding along, and diminishing by degrees,

degrees, till their masts were hid by the intervening waves.

Victoria, sitting by the side of Alphonso, on the deck of the little vessel, contemplated the beauties of the placid scene ; and the moon, now slowly rising in the east, shed the rays around, and the waters reflected her silver light.

The song of the fishermen, who were spreading their snares for the finny tribe, and the rippling of the waters, as stemmed by the crooked keel of their vessel, were the only sounds that were heard. The little wind there was soon died away, and the felucca became almost stationary on the water during the night.

This

This calm weather prevented their arrival at Genoa in the time that short voyage is usually made; and the next morning, the wind changing, it was with the greatest difficulty the vessel continued its proper course.

The superb city of Genoa, rising from the sea, at length appeared. Its lofty spires first attracted their attention; then the beauty of the magnificent residences of the nobles; while the gardens on the roofs of the several buildings added to the interesting scenery.

But while they were observing the various views around them, the wind increased, the clear azure of the heavens was suddenly o'ercast with clouds, and

and the seamen began to be apprehensive of the approach of a storm; for, unable any longer to resist the violence of the gale, they were now obliged to bear away from the port, which they expected to have been able to reach in a few hours.

Soon the port of Genoa lessened to the view, and at length was totally obscured by the dark mists that descended on the ocean; and the deepening gloom, added to the increasing violence of the gale, contributed to make their situation truly alarming.

A sudden gust of wind, ere the seamen could provide against its fury, now tore the sails from the yards, and carried away one of the masts.

All

All was a scene of confusion. The vessel, heeling to the gale, shipped the briny billows ; and unable to resist the force of the water, which rushed in at the opened seams, they were obliged to set the pump to work in order to prevent it from foundering.

Alphonso, trembling for the fate of Victoria, exerted himself to the utmost to avoid the impending dangers ; he endeavoured to animate the men as much as was in his power, to continue their labours for the general safety. And with his own hands, while the waves beat over him, cleared away the wreck of the mast, which, hanging over the vessel's side, increased their dangerous situation.

The boisterous motion of the sea became more and more dreadful; one while their little vessel was raised on the summit of a lofty wave, another moment the receding waters left her in a deep abyss.

Against this dreadful storm the vessel had no power to contend.

The remaining mast and rigging were soon after torn away by the unpitying winds, while the raging waters attacked her with equal violence, hurling her about on their huge surges without the least respite.

The men who navigated the vessel, unaccustomed to so dreadful a storm, had but little idea of managing it, and
their

their terrors rendered them less capable every moment. Despair seemed to have taken possession of their faculties, and as the vessel rolled from side to side, encreased the horrors of the scene by their frequent exclamations that it was sinking.

Conte Manfred was with his family in the small cabin belonging to the vessel, endeavouring to comfort them in their distressing situation; but hearing the repeated cries of the sailors, he came on the deck as they were hoisting the small boat over the vessel's side.

The mist now began to clear away, and to unfold to their view the horrors of the storm: the conte hastened into the
cabin

cabin, to conduct his wife and daughter to the deck, in order to be ready to get into it, when, as they were standing by the vessel's side, a tremendous wave broke over her, and carried the lovely Victoria with it into the sea.

What was the horror of Alphonso when he saw her at some distance from the felucca struggling with the waves! Instantly he plunged into the foaming billows, and, exerting his utmost strength, swam towards her, and caught her in one arm, while with the other he supported himself on the water till the boat arrived, in which, assisted by the sailors, he had the happiness of depositing his lovely and almost lifeless charge.

The men then rowed back to the vessel, and the afflicted and terrified Conte Manfred and his wife throwing themselves into it, their attendants followed their example, and left the vessel to her fate. Fortunate indeed it was that they did so, for it was not many minutes ere the merciless waves swallowed it up.

A brigantine now happily appeared in sight, and having observed their signals of distress, crowded her canvass, and bearing up, fortunately rescued them from their imminent danger.

Victoria, who was nearly senseless, was taken into the cabin, where she soon recovered from the dreadful agitation she had undergone.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile the vessel steered its course through the tempestuous billows to Genoa.

The storm did not in the least abate, but there was little danger to be apprehended, as the brigantine was in good condition, and her people well acquainted with the management of her.

Victoria's grateful looks amply repaid Alphonso for the risk he had run in preserving her ; nor were the Conte Manfred or the contessa silent : and he felt delighted beyond expression in having been so fortunate as to save the woman he loved.

Genoa now again greeted the eyes
of

of the unfortunate voyagers, and cheered their dejected countenances.

They arrived there a short time after sunset, and repaired with sensations of heart-felt delight to the sumptuous residence belonging to the Conte Manfred.

The pallazio was a most magnificent structure, situated near the sea-shore, at a short distance from the superb edifices in which the principal Genoese nobility dwelt; a spacious lawn fronted it, and at the side next the sea was a terrace of great length, affording a most delightful walk after sun-set, when the refreshing breezes which swept the liquid plain of the Mediterranean

ranean

ranean were an ample recompense for the heat endured in the day.

The view from the terrace was particularly pleasing.

The ample gulph of Genoa, receiving in its capacious bosom the vessels which were hourly arriving with the various produce of distant climes, formed a continued scene of motion, which could not fail of engaging the attention.

Afar off appeared the romantic peaks of the Appenines, rearing their lofty summits amidst the clouds, while the beholder, surveying the trackless plains of the ocean, oft-times was pleased with the view of

The

—— The dim sail
That from the sky mix'd wave
Dawns on the sight.

The interior of the pallazio was furnished and decorated in the most magnificent manner, pillars of the Corinthian order supported the fretted roof of the lofty hall, which was paved with tessellated marble—the large case-ments were adorned with armorial bearings, which cast a pleasing gloom in its extensive interior, in a country where the eye is fatigued by the strong glare of light.

The principal apartments were adorned with all the fascinating luxuries produced by Italian art; the walls were hung with paintings, by the most
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celebrated artists—canopies of rich silks were suspended over the beautiful and richly embroidered sofas, inviting repose during the heats of the day—etruscan lamps, with chains of silver, depended from the lofty painted ceilings—large Venetian mirrors, in rich gilt frames, reflected the brilliancy of the surrounded objects, and vases, supported on tripods of silver, filled with the most beautiful aromatic flowers, impregnated the air with their exquisite perfumes.

Conte Manfred welcomed Alphonso with fresh emotions of gratitude to his superb edifice: twice had kind fortune given him the felicity of being the preserver of Victoria, which added to his modest, unassuming deportment, and

and the melancholy which seemed to oppress him and diffused a languor over his intelligent countenance, rendered him an object of the highest interest in Manfred's estimation. He endeavoured, as far as he was able, to detach him from his melancholy thought, but was concerned to find that his efforts were of no avail, and that the grief of Alphonso seemed daily to increase.

Victoria was more than grateful to Alphonso for the important services he had rendered her, she thought of them so often, and that with increasing gratitude, that at last she found that, as a reward for his acts, Alphonso possessed her affections.

Still, however, in hopes of deceiving herself, she called the tender sentiments she entertained for him by the cold name of friendship, for she feared to think of it in any other light, for the lowness of his origin was an insurmountable barrier to the idea of a union with him.

The nobility of Genoa soon thronged the pallazio, and the most sumptuous entertainments were given to welcome their arrival.

But amidst the festive crowd Alphonso was alone; for his thought, unoccupied by the surrounding objects, dwelt solely on the lovely Victoria, whose adored image was never absent from his mental view,

. One evening, when, according to her usual custom, Victoria was enjoying the refreshing coolness of the evening breeze, which gently breathed over the ruffled surface of the ocean, on the terrace that looked to the spacious gulph of Genoa, she beheld Alphonso walking at a short distance from her, apparently deeply immersed in a melancholy reverie, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the ground ; she distinctly heard him sigh, and perceived that he was greatly agitated by the sensations which seemed to afflict him.

Compassion for his situation induced Victoria to approach him ; gratitude, too, shared in her wishes to endeavour to draw from him the cause of his

griefs, that she might attempt to ameliorate them, but, to her great astonishment, Alphonso darted away, and hid himself in the recesses of the gardens belonging to the pallazio.

The tear of pity trembled in the eyes of Victoria, as sadly she pursued her walk, meditating on the probable cause of the deep melancholy which had for so long overspread the intelligent and interesting countenance of Alphonso.

Unheeding the surrounding object she passed on till she arrived at a romantic grotto at the extremity of the gardens, which she entered, and was going to sit down to repose her weary frame on the mossy seats which was
round

round it, when a deep sigh roused her from her ruminations, and looking up she perceived the cause of them—attentively gazing at a miniature, which, on perceiving Victoria, he hastily put into his bosom, and rising up, was going to depart from the grotto, when, in his hasty movement, the miniature fell out of his bosom on the ground, and opening, discovered to Victoria the resemblance of herself!

Alphonso, perceiving that she was attentively examining it, and that by her astonishment she had discovered who the painting was intended to represent, threw himself on his knees before her, and in an agitated voice said:—

“ Lovely Victoria, excuse the temerity I have been guilty of in endeavouring to delineate those beauties I must ever adore—to-morrow’s sun will behold me far distant from Genoa, and perhaps for the last time I was indulging the swelling griefs of my bosom, excited by gazing on the imperfect resemblance of your loved form in the place your presence has often blessed : but oh, Victoria, before I leave you, perhaps for ever, deign to assure me that you forgive my presumption.”

“ Believe me, Alphonso, I do,” replied Victoria, whose breast was agitated by a variety of emotions during his speech, for she reflected that twice at the imminent hazard of his

his own life he had preserved her's. For those services she felt truly grateful; and pity, in the greatest degree, for his sufferings, pervaded her bosom.

She endeavoured to speak comfort to him; but her swelling heart denied her the power of utterance. Reflecting on the impropriety of her present situation, should any person see Alphonso on his knees before her, she was going to depart, when, urged by the emotions of her bosom, she stretched out her hand to the enraptured Alphonso, who, tenderly and respectfully, pressed it to his lips, while he faintly uttered—

“ Ah, Victoria, go not, I entreat you, before I have unfolded to you the

sorrows of my heart. A few short moments—and perhaps I may be separated, for ever, from you, whom I adore—whom I love far dearer than my existence.”

“To what, Alphonso, does your conversation tend?” said the trembling, agitated Victoria. “What is the reason you are going so suddenly to leave my father? Does he know of your intended departure?”

“Not yet,” answered Alphonso. “I awaited an interview with you, on which the future happiness of my life depends. Long did I, through a consciousness of my lowly origin, delay disclosing the emotions of my heart.

“Perhaps

“ Perhaps now, if you had not observed the miniature, the loved companion of my lonely hours, I should not have dared to reveal the ardent flame that will shortly put an end to the existence of the ill-fated Alphonso.

“ Your elevated situation will not allow me to hope, that you will suffer the offspring of a peasant to hold a place in your thoughts for a moment.

“ There is, alas ! not even a ray of comfort to cheer my existence ; and in the cold bosom of the grave can I alone hope for repose !”

Here his agitations became so great

as to deny him the power of utterance.

Victoria beheld his countenance pale and grief-worn, his frame trembling with the agonizing emotions of his bosom.

She was sensibly affected. She had long admired his virtues—had long been grateful for the important services he had rendered her; and she could not see his grief, without endeavouring to give him some consolation.

“Alphonso,” said she, “the grateful recollection of the services you have rendered me can never be effaced from my mind. Think, then, if I can
be

be a witness of your griefs, without feeling the sincerest regret at them.

“ Recover yourself, Alphonso : pursue your long-delayed researches at Montoni. Happiness may yet be in store for you. It shall be my sincere prayer that your sorrows may soon terminate ; and, if it will give you any pleasure, think sometimes of Victoria.”

These words had the desired effect on Alphonso. Rising up, he prepared, with trembling steps, to depart.

“ Adieu, lovely Victoria !” said he—
“ I go, then, to unfold the mysteries which surround me. Should fate be propitious, you will again see me.

Again

Again shall I be blessed with the sight of all that is dear to me on earth. But if my unkind stars do not permit me to develope the cause of the mysterious events of my life—then, Victoria, loved idol of my soul ! must I bid you adieu for ever !”

A deep and long-drawn sigh, at the too-great reason he had to fear he should be self-banished from all he adored, burst from Alphonso ; and, casting a long, lingering look on Victoria, he tore himself away, and was soon hid from her view by the intervening foliage.

Victoria, wiping from her lovely eyes the tears which had started from them, with a heart ill at ease, repaired
to

to her apartments, where she gave way to the melancholy which oppressed her; for she reflected that many days must elapse before she would again behold Alphonso, or perhaps, indeed, that she had seen him for the last time.

Such were her reflections, which lasted till night drew her shadowy veil over nature's beauties, and her servant entered her chamber.

Annette had been, from her earliest years, in the family of Conte Manfred, and, having been accustomed to be with Victoria, when a child, frequently used a liberty of speech which made her smile; but as Annette only meant to amuse, she never could find in her heart to stop her loquacity.

This

This girl, observing how melancholy her mistress was, instantly exclaimed :

“La ! Signora, what can be the matter with you ? I believe you have caught the infection from Signor Alphonso. I am sure my heart aches for him. Oh, Signora, if you had but heard him the other day, when he was talking about you.”

“Sure, you jest, Annette,” said Victoria, her lively countenance suffused with blushes—“The Signor Alphonso talking about me !”

“Oh yes, Signora,” returned the attendant : “he has often spoke to me about you. He is so mild, and speaks

so condescendingly ; and then he looks so charming when he smiles, that it is a pleasure to see him. Don't you think so, Signora ?”

This question was put in such an artless manner to Victoria, that a sigh escaped her breast ere she was aware of it. She, however, hastily recollected herself, and, assuming a grave air, said—

“ I must request, Annette, that you will not make me the subject of your discourse with the Signor Alphonso.”

“ La ! Signora, what harm is there in it ? You know he saved your life twice ; and if he does love you, I know
who

who ought to return it. But I was going to tell you what he said ; for I happened to meet him on the grand staircase two days ago. ‘ Annette,’ said he——”

“ I must insist,” said Victoria, gravely, “ that you cease this idle love of talking, and also that, in future, you restrain the freedom of your speech to me, as you fear to excite my displeasure.”

“ Holy Virgin protect thee, Signora ! You are grown so particular ! I was only going to say what the Signor Alphonso told me——”

“ Be silent,” said Victoria : “ I will
not

not hear you. Leave me, Annette :
I chuse to be alone."

The reserve and dignity of her manner instantly awed the attendant to silence.

Victoria, though she felt herself offended, scarcely knew why she was so. 'Tis true, she was curious to know what it could be that Alphonso had been saying concerning her to her domestic ; but she was fearful, that if she lent too ready an ear to Annette's tales, she might betray the secret, which she even wished, but found impossible, to hide from herself.

She, however, some time after, discovered that Annette had magnified a
few

few words, of little signification, which Alphonso had happened to address to her, into a multiplicity of conversations, at different periods, of which she was the subject.

CHAP. VI.

ALPHONSO, the same evening on which he bid adieu to Victoria, took his leave of Conte Manfred and his amiable contessa, and the next morning with a heavy heart, ere the sunbeams had dried up the damp mists of night, he proceeded towards the Castello de Montoni, at which place he arrived fortunately without meeting any of the people belonging to the Duca de Rodolpho.

His first care was to find Hubert his father, whom he had not seen for
many

many years, but was much disappointed to learn, that he had left the place for some time, as it was believed, with an intention to proceed to Genoa ; but of this circumstance, the neighbouring peasantry could not inform him with any degree of certainty.

Alphonso now approached the castello, which was situated on the decline of a hill, surrounded with a ditch full of water.

The drawbridge being up, and not seeing any means of access, he despaired of being able to enter it.

The building was of great extent—and with a watchful gaze he viewed the southern turrets, whose interior he
was

was directed to examine, but how to gain admittance to them was a subject which long engaged his thoughts.

At one time he determined to swim across the ditch; but then it would have been impossible for him to scale the walls on the opposite side.

At length it occurred to him, that there must be some other outlet, or the people who had drawn up the bridge would not have been able to leave the castello, and that it was uninhabited there could be little doubt.

A forest of great extent crowned the hill, on which the castello was erected: and amongst its intricate mazes he long searched

searched, in hopes of finding some subterranean communication with it.

His efforts were at length crowned with success, for he discovered in a deep hollow, among some thick planted underwood, a door strongly fastened. He soon contrived to force back the rusty bolts, and at length succeeding in opening it, entered a low vaulted passage, which was intirely dark.

He proceeded, however, by the side of the wall a considerable way, till he entered a small chamber, which was lighted by a grating, which he looked through, in order to discover his situation; and saw at a short distance below, the waters of the ditch, which
proved

proved he was now in the interior of Montoni.

Surveying the chamber, he found an arched door, the fastenings of which being on the outside, he easily removed : and opening, it presented before him a flight of stone steps, which ascending, he entered a small passage, and at the further end was a portal which opened into an extensive hall, the appearance of which was a proof that the castello had not been inhabited for many years.

The walls were hung with armour covered with rust, and the faded banners that once adorned the columns, waved mournfully with the gale,

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which entered from the frequent delapidations which time had made in the roof.

Passing through the hall, Alphonso ascended a magnificent flight of marble stairs, which led him to a lofty corridor, on one side of which were several portals, which he supposed were the state apartments.

On the other were the lofty narrow casements, through whose dusty panes the light feebly entered.

All the doors were fastened, but he forced one of them open, and entered a spacious apartment, which, from the antiquity of the furniture, and the desolated

solated state in which it had been left, apparently for many years, bore the most gloomy aspect.

Its Gothic casements, dimmed by time, and covered with the snareful labours of the spider, hardly admitted the meridian beam, while the dark wainscotting assisted to increase the sombre appearance of all around.

A few portraits ornamented the panels, some of which were entire, but the canvass of many were rotted by the damps, and dropping in torn fragments from the massy frames, hung upon the furniture below, whose former beauty was now sullied and obscured by the dust which had settled upon them.

Through this apartment Alphonso passed into a second, which exhibited a similar state of ruin ; except that opposite to the casements, a full length portrait of a more modern appearance than those he had seen in the first apartment, attracted his notice.

It represented a warrior clad in complete armour, with his vizor raised, resting on his sword.

On this he gazed for some time, with an indescribable emotion of curiosity.

The next pannel was vacant, but Alphonso remarked that there had formerly been also a painting in it, which he immediately concluded must have
been

been that of the late Marchesa de Montoni and her child, which he had seen at the convent of Benedictines ; for the style of painting seemed to be the same as the portrait he was viewing, which he concluded must be the representation of the deceased Marchese.

Determined to explore the whole of the deserted chambers of the castello, he passed through most of them which the corridor led to ; and after he had examined the whole range, he traversed the numerous passages and galleries which connected the several apartments ; but in none of them did any particular object, worthy of remark, meet his view.

Returning to the corridor, he perceived at the extremity of it, a large folding portal, which before had missed his observation.

He threw it open, and entered a large saloon: there, however, nothing but the destructive hand of time, which had intirely destroyed the once elegant furniture, engaged his attention; and he passed through it to an opposite door which opened into a long gallery, which, he conceived, must be in a different wing of the castello to that where he entered.

Two doors were at the extremity, one of which opened into a bed-chamber, which, by the magnificence of the furniture, Alphonso concluded
must

must have belonged either to the marchese or the marchesa.

A large purple velvet canopy, richly fringed with gold, was suspended by gilt cords over the couch, the feet of which were carved into a resemblance of griffin's claws.

At the upper end of the chamber, under a casement, was a marble table, on which lay a lute and a small ebony crucifix.

Having examined every part of this apartment, he proceeded to the next, which appeared to have been left in a state of the greatest confusion.

The casements were open, and the

rains had apparently frequently entered into the room; for the oaken floor was much decayed, and in many places sunk beneath the pressure of his feet—a broken table was lying in the centre of the chamber—a sofa, the covering of which was scarcely discernable for the mildew, was on one side of the apartment, and on it were some female garments, which seemed to have been thrown there in a hurry.

As he walked along he perceived, amongst the fragments of the broken table, a small roll of paper, which taking up, appeared to have been written on: he took off the outside sheets, which were falling to pieces, and perceiving that he should possibly be able to decypher some of the contents,

tents, he reserved it for his examination at a more convenient season.

He now removed some of the clothes from the settee—they appeared to have been formerly white, and from the richness of the embroidery could not have belonged to any other person than the Marchesa de Montoni—examining them still closer he recoiled with horror and astonishment, for he plainly perceived that some of them were discoloured with blood.

This at once explained the mysterious appearance of every thing around him, and he sighed while he recalled to his recollection the hints which Benedetto had thrown out respecting

the sudden dissolution of the family of Montoni, and he felt almost certain that it must have been in the apartment where he now was that the unfortunate marchesa met her fate.

A sudden thought struck him that perhaps he was now in the southern chambers of the castello, and he hastily went to the casement to find out if his conjectures were right, but he found that the southern towers rose above the secret communication where he had so fortunately effected his entrance; he therefore now left the chamber, and tracing his steps to the hall below found out the passages which led to that part of the castello where he was directed to make the search

search by the spectre, in order to develope some dark and nefarious transaction.

He, however, searched all the lower apartments of the southern turret without having seen any extraordinary object, and was ascending the stairs which led to those above, when on one side of the wall he discovered a door, which opened to a passage lighted by loop holes, the upper end of which terminated in a steep flight of steps, which were narrow and winding; and as he wound up them his progress was often interrupted by frequent breaches in them, and loose fragments of stone; at length arriving at the summit he entered into a chamber, which, from its remote and concealed situation, he

concluded was the place where he was to make the discovery in which, as informed by the spectre at the monastery of benedictines, he was concerned.

Alphonso now anxiously surveyed every part of the chambers for the trap-door, but could nowhere perceive the smallest appearance of one; determined, however, to leave no part without a strict examination, exerting all his strength, he at last effected the removal of a large chest, which was on one side of the room, when beneath it he discovered a ring; this he hastily took hold of, and after some trouble a part of the flooring appeared to loosen from the rest; encouraged by this he continued his exertions, and at length

length succeeded in raising the trap-door; all was dark within, and Alphonso hesitated to descend, for the steps seemed to be too weak through age to support him; resolving, however, since he had proceeded thus far, and that the existence of the trap-door proved a part of the mysterious information he had received, to be correct he cautiously descended, but, however, had not proceeded far before he stopped, for at the bottom of the steps with horror and amazement he plainly discovered two skeletons!

For a while he gazed on the miserable remnants of mortality, and then attentively examined the cavity.

Nothing else, however, met his
search

search that could throw any light on the cause of their being secreted in that place; he therefore returned, and having replaced the trap-door, sat down to recover the agitation occasioned by the unexpected sight he had beheld.

When he returned to the hall below he recollected the roll of paper he had found in the apartment, which he concluded had witnessed the assassination of the marchesa; and wishing to peruse it in hopes that from its contents he might learn if his suspicions were true or not, he drew it from his bosom and examined it; time and the damp had made the greatest part of the sheets completely unintelligible, but a few pages, which were somewhat
preserved

preserved by being in the inside of the roll, contained the following disjointed sentences :—

* * * * *

* * * * * But, though I

cannot flatter myself that these lines will fall into the hands of any one who will drop a tear over my misfortunes, yet I feel a melancholy satisfaction in committing the sorrows of my heart to paper in the hope that they may meet with some feeling peruser, and that the world may not be in ignorance of my wrongs.

“ Alas ! to what a dreadful situation am I reduced, a prisoner in my own castello ! My domestics, whom I once thought faithful, won over by the

the bribes of the vilest of men, are become my jailers.

“ Spirit of my injured Montoni, perhaps, even now, thou art hovering over me, even now art beholding the miseries of thy hapless wife, art hearing her agonizing groans, and viewing the frequent tears which roll from my aching eyes.

“ Yet no, rather let me hope that thou art spared so great an affliction.

“ Alas, 'tis too evident to me that thou fell a victim to thy goodness in sheltering the remorseless wretch to whose detested addresses I am exposed without thy arm to protect me from his insults,

“ Ferdinando,

“ Ferdinando, my poor Ferdinando, is my only tie on earth, he is now slumbering on my bosom ; alas ! soon, I fear, will he lose his only parent.

“ Ah, good heavens ! is there no thunder to crush the murderer ? Must he still live to perpetrate fresh crimes ? Yet I will not repine, since 'tis thy Almighty will that I should be persecuted in this world, and to it I bow with resignation.

“ Yet may it haply please thy divine grace to protect my poor fatherless child ; let him not perish ; for much, alas, I fear, he will, since when I am no more, he will then be the only obstacle to my savage persecutor's

tor's possessing the estates belonging to the castello.

“ Oh, if I could but indulge the hope that one day he would avenge the wrongs of his parents how much it would comfort me, but too certain I am that * * * * *.

“ Alas ! how often have I watched the faint beams of the dawning sun as they glittered on my casements, how often have I hoped that ere its lingering beams descended below the eastern mountains some friendly power would avenge my wrongs, and liberate me from my present cruel confinement, and what, alas, is far worse, the solicitation of abandoned insolence.

— Grant

“Grant me patience, kind Heaven,
to support such accumulated misfor-
tunes.

“O God ! whatever ills my sad des-
tiny may have in store for me, be thou
the guardian of my child : forsake him
not ; for he has no one but thee to fly
to.

“Alas ! when I think on my situa-
tion, my brain maddens, and the fre-
quent tear of agony obliterates the
characters formed by my trembling
pen.

“Again I resume my mournful oc-
cupation.

“Many

“Many days have passed in a continued series of sorrow and increasing distress, since I traced the foregoing lines : forced—do I live to say so?—forced to hear the addresses of a villain, and not have the power to spurn him from my presence.—He has just told me, that if within a week I do not consent—horror, I can write no more.

* * * “My resolution is fixed, and Ferdinando, my poor Ferdinando, soon will you be left an helpless orphan. Sure he cannot, dare not, harm thee : thy innocent, endearing smile, would arrest his blood-stained hand, outstretched with murderous intent against thy life.

* * * “Three

* * * * * “ Three days
are gone by, three dreary, melancholy
days, and still I am a prisoner.

“ My time draws nigh. Some secret, some instinctive power, informs me, that in these walls I am doomed to perish—in early youth too—my conscience is calm, and reproaches me with no crime;—but yet I shudder at the thought; for it is the prevailing weakness of human nature, to cling to existence.

“ Oh, God! thou knowest my heart: to thee will I yet look for consolation; for thou art omnipotent, and if it seemeth best to thee, couldst in a moment set wide my prison doors.

* * * “ What

* * * “ What a scene!—Grant me patience, kind Heaven, to bear up against the insults of my tormentor.

“ This morning he entered my apartment, seized my hands, and, with an insulting familiarity, pressed them to his detested lips—the agony I experienced from this treatment, was far beyond the weak powers of description. I struggled to free myself from him, but was unable:—my terrors increased—I shrieked, and implored for assistance. Alas! no friend was near to hear my cries; no hand was upraised in my defence:—he persevered in detaining me, and, at length, throwing his arms round my trembling form, would have proceeded to greater insults.

“ With

“With an effort almost incredible, I started from his grasp.

“A smile of malice distended his lips, pale and quivering with rage; and, as he left my chamber, bade me remember that the week was nearly expired, when he would no longer wait for the accomplishment of his wishes.

“Heaven knows what the baseness of his heart, and the malvolence of his nature may prompt him to. * *

* * * * *

* * * I am unable to describe my feelings—the morning of the dreaded day slowly dawns in the east—perhaps I shall not view his setting beams.

“A dreadful

A dreadful presentiment, an awful foreboding, I have generally found prophetic, cling insurmountably to me, and steeps my senses in despair.

“ Perhaps—but I dare not think. An icy chillness arrests the circulation in my veins, and a strange and horrible terror overwhelms me.

“ O Montoni ! In this world we have been most barbarously separated ; but in that which is to come, our happiness, I trust, will be perfect.”

The tear of sensibility stood trembling in the eyes of Alphonso, as with difficulty he perused the mournful lines traced by the hand of the unfortunate marchesa.

“ Thou

“Thou art at least,” said he, “a hapless victim to the villainy of man, the consolation which thou didst wish; and if thy gentle spirit still lingers in this gloomy vale of life, perchance it may behold me sorrowing at thy fate; it may behold a stranger dropping over the time-worn characters, which thou past many a mournful hour in tracing, the gently falling tear of sympathy.”

That part of the manuscript which probably contained the name of her oppressor was destroyed by the rains, which had apparently often overflowed the chamber.

Nor could Alphonso, though he
VOL. I. L diligently

diligently searched every part of the papers, become acquainted with that circumstance so necessary for him to know; nor was he able, from the manuscript of the marchesa, to account for the skeletons he had seen, for, as there were two in the place where he was directed to make his search, at times he was tempted to conclude that neither of them could be that of the unfortunate marchesa, and that there was some still more fatal event to be developed.

He now retraced his steps through the subterranean passage; his mind involved in melancholy reflections on the scene he had witnessed.

He

He now determined to return to Genoa, in the hope of there seeing Hubert, and after he had rested from his fatigue a few hours he again mounted his horse.

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