

*Fazio Rajal.*  
FAULCONSTEIN FORES

BERFUGI  
  
Romantic Tale.

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Le cresse chiome d'or puro lucente,  
E 'l lampeggiar dell' angelico riso,  
Che solean far in terra Paradiso,  
Poca polvere son, che nulla sente;  
Ed io pur vivo.

*Petrarca.*

The golden ringlets that were wont to wreath  
In bright profusion, and the angel eyes,  
Whose beams diffused the bliss of Paradise,  
Are mingled with the dust ; and yet I breathe.

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TO THE

REV. W \* \* \* \* \* B \* \* \* \* \*,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

AS A

TRIFLING MEMORIAL OF AFFECTION,

BY

HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

# ERRATA.

- Page 27, l. 3, *for his read her.*  
28, l. 20, *for was read wast.*  
33, l. 10, *for hand read hands.*  
94, l. 9, *dele of.*



Entered at Stationers' Hall.

## FAULCONSTEIN FOREST.

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THE defeat of the Turks at Orsova dispelled the gloom that had clouded the Hungarian court. Count Faulconstein, who had been detained several hours at the palace, returned about sun-set to his abode in the bosom of the neighbouring forest. He entered the room where his sister was sitting, unperceived. She was reading a letter, which had reached her in the morning from the frontier. Her lovely features betrayed, by turns, solicitude and rapture.

“ Perhaps this seal,” she sighed, “ has touched my Leopold’s lips ;” and she pressed

it with fervor to her own. The Count gazed on her with mournful fondness: to disguise his grief, he lightly swept the chords of her harp, on which he was leaning: the startled girl looked round, and seeing her brother, rose to embrace him. "How shall I punish you, Casimir," she said, "for stealing on me unawares, and discovering my folly? but can you wonder that the idea of Leopold's return bewilders my feeble reason?"

The Count thought it would be cruel to dissolve the enchantment. "I am far from wishing to repress your joy," he replied: "the Marquis of Erlmir deserves your love. Inspired by the ardor of their youthful leader, our troops displayed under the walls of Orsova even more than their wonted intrepidity."

As Ernestine offered her brother some coffee, his serious air surprised her. "What means this pensiveness?" she said; "I have observed, on your return from the palace, you are more than usually thoughtful: the con-

duct of our fair sovereign, I fear, does not accord with your rigid ideas of propriety."

"'Tis even so," answered the Count; "how can I avoid trembling for her? young, gay, and inexperienced, she dreams not of evil, nor suspects the dark designs of her crafty minister. When Ladislaus chose her for the heiress of his throne, he knew not what a fatal legacy he bequeathed her."

"Yet, while you are her bosom counselor," observed Ernestine, "she has little to fear. In defiance of the Cardinal's remonstrance, she hastened to restore to you the honours which her father unjustly wrested from our family; received you at court with flattering distinction, and appointed you warden of the royal forest."

"To ensure her safety," exclaimed the Count, "I would consent to toil for years in the dreary depths of the mine, where no sun-beam ever pierced. Though there the breeze of spring would never fan my blood, yet my heart would bound high, when I re-

flected, that Frederica owed to me her repose, and, swayed by my counsels, instead of sinking in thoughtless indolence, lived to bless her people."

The Count's features, while he spoke, beamed with enthusiasm; but it was momentary; he soon relapsed into his former gloom. To dissipate it, Ernestine went to her harp, and after playing a soft and plaintive symphony, sang one of those artless ditties which never failed to interest him.

#### THE ARAB'S DAUGHTER.

" Take courage, love; the burning breeze,  
That sighed among thy locks, has past:  
O'ercome with toil, thy trembling knees  
Sink 'mid the horrors of the waste.

" Fear not, my love, the lion's feet,  
Imprinted on the dreary sand;  
The tawny foe would dread to meet  
The javelin from thy Lebid's hand.



“ Beneath yon cliff a limpid rill  
 Flows sparkling from the desert cave ;  
 And o’er the brink with living thrill  
 Their foliage the Mimosas wave.

“ Soon shall thy languid beauties press  
 The moss that cloathes the fountain’s side ;  
 And sleep, beguiling thy distress,  
 Through every nerve shall sweetly glide.”

With mournful softness Abra smil’d ;  
 Then bath’d in tears, her eyes she bent,  
 To trace once more beyond the wild  
 The palms that hid her father’s tent :

Their leaves had fann’d her infant brow ;  
 And often with her lute beloved,  
 Alive to pleasure’s purest glow,  
 Beneath their branches she had roved.

“ ’Tis just,” she cried, “ my fainting frame  
 Should languish ’mid the noon-tide beam ;  
 I left my sire to grief and shame,  
 Entranc’d in passion’s frantic dream.

“ But ere the evening tints decline,  
 This fever'd pulse will beat no more;  
 Still thus to press my cheek to thine  
 Breathes comfort on my dying hour.

“ Love whispered, I should bless thy youth;  
 And in misfortune's gloomy day,  
 My smile thy pensive heart would soothe,  
 Soft as the emerald's dewy ray.

“ Yet droop not thus in dark despair;  
 Nor, when these limbs to earth are given,  
 Think thy poor Abra slumbers there,  
 But trace her 'mid the stars of heaven.

“ No terror chills my brow resign'd,  
 As the death-angel hovers near;  
 His pinions rustle in the wind;  
 He frowns, and lifts the shadowy spear.

“ In darkness rolls my dizzy brain;  
 To realms of rest my spirit flies:  
 Lebid, we soon shall meet again  
 Among the bowers of Paradise.”



Ernestine ceased, but her melodious tones still dwelt on Casimir's ear, and diffused a delightful languor over his spirits.

Her blue eyes sparkled with affection as he lifted the ringlets, which almost hid them, and printed a kiss on her ivory forehead. She had never appeared to him so beautiful : her slender foot yet rested on a pedal of the instrument ; and though the robe, which shadowed her delicate limbs, fell over them in a thousand folds, the frame of the harp pressing against her, betrayed the Grecian symmetry of her form.

“ What pity,” thought the Count, “ one bitter drop should be shed into her cup of bliss.”

Ernestine spoke of the pleasant evenings they had passed in the summer, when the Marquis of Erlmir was their guest. “ Do you remember,” she said, “ how often we sat by that oriel window, then thickly mantled by the vine-leaves that wreathed over it, to catch a glimpse of him as he rode through

the park? it was rapture to hear the trampling of his steed!"

"I thought not then," cried her brother in a troubled voice, "for who can lift the veil of futurity, that I should ever mourn the hour when he first crossed our threshold?"

"Do I dream?" exclaimed Ernestine, while a vague terror bewildered her faculties; "Casimir, on my knees I conjure you, unfold the import of those dreadful words."

"Be calm, my love," replied the Count, "and all shall be revealed." Gently raising her from her suppliant posture, he continued; "With infinite reluctance, Ernestine, I disclose a secret which, I fear, will cloud the sunshine of your peace. Had Leopold never plighted his vows to you, he would have become our sovereign. Frederica would have shared with him her throne, and been protected from the power of his ambitious brother."

"Does she then love him?" faltered Ernestine, while the colour faded from her

cheek. Before the Count could reply, she exclaimed, "The mist that mantled my reason, dissolves; it must be so. How could the young and susceptible queen see him among the nobles of her court; how could she be daily in the habit of conversing with him, and resist the fascination. In the full persuasion of his truth, I never dreamed a rival would have power to injure my repose. Least of all did I suspect, Frederica would embitter it. Oh tell me, Casimir, did she confide to you the fatal secret?"

"She received me this morning in her cabinet, alone," replied the Count: "the Cardinal's importunity in pressing her to contract an alliance with the odious Vedova, had at length raised her indignation; and while she dwelt on the Prince's bold avowal of his design to subvert her power, she could not refrain from contrasting his guilty excesses with the good and glorious actions of his brother. In speaking of Leopold her voice faltered, and she bent her eyes on the ground. When

I hinted my suspicions, a burning blush suffused her cheek, and she owned to me how deeply he had interested her heart. The discovery filled me with grief: Frederica was too much confused herself to observe the embarrassment I betrayed; but fearing lest she might repose in me a fuller confidence, I hastened to depart. On my way to Valmir, I revolved the blessings our country would have enjoyed beneath Leopold's just and gentle sway: had I never led him to our seclusion, you would have been still unknown to him, and Frederica's smiles would have soon inspired him with love. I have unconsciously deprived her of his protecting care, and doomed my country to groan under Vedova's tyranny.

“ Our parents taught us, even in childhood, how much we owed to the land of our birth. The ingratitude of Ladislaus did not extinguish the holy flame of patriotism that glowed in their breasts. On their death to me devolved the sweet, but mournful duty of mould-

ing your infant mind. What rapture it gave me, Ernestine, to see their exalted virtues revive in you ! Yet think not I would urge you to relinquish the visions of felicity which you have formed : you have ever obeyed me with more than filial reverence ; nor would I for worlds tyrannise over the freedom of your conduct, by pressing you to renounce the love of Leopold."

Ernestine was deeply touched by this appeal ; though full of softness, she was endowed with more than female energy, and her bosom caught a spark of the fire that burnt in Casimir's. She remained for some moments silent, and entranced in thought—her fair brow raised to heaven—she looked like one inspired.

"Would it not be noble," she reflected, "to devote myself at the shrine of duty, and sacrifice my fondest hopes to Leopold's glory ? the consciousness of having promoted my country's good, will shed into my heart



a soothing balm ; and though not happy, I shall become resigned." The letter of the Marquis, which had fallen on the carpet, at that instant caught her eye ; the powerful spell dissolved at once her heroism.

" Oh ! no," she sighed, gazing on it through her tears, " sooner would I perish on the scaffold, or in the flames, than consent to burst the ties that connect my fate with his. Do not reproach me, Casimir, for shrinking from the dreadful sacrifice—if your affections were enthralled like mine, could you resolve to triumph over them?"

A shade of grief tinged the features of Count Faulconstein, and Ernestine feared lest she had roused some painful recollection ; but the pang was transient, and a sacred transport was blended with it. She knew not how to interpret the smile that beamed on his countenance. " I regret, Ernestine," he said, " having thrown a gloom over your evening : dismiss what has past from your thoughts."

Ernestine retired to her couch ; the fever of her mind prevented her for several hours from sleeping ; and when she sank at length to rest, the dread of losing Leopold recurred to her fancy : she dreamed, a fairy bark wafted her with him over the bosom of the deep towards an isle whose shores were canopied with myrtle ; the zephirs swelled the sails, and the keel already touched the sands, when suddenly the enchanted groves were wrapped in darkness ; the sea heaved wildly, and the tempest bore her far into the waste of waters. Before she could clasp her lover to her heart, the foaming surges swept over them, and she sank a thousand fathoms deep : in a convulsive tremor she awoke ; she feared to recline her head again on the pillow, lest the terrors of her sleep should be renewed.

She rose with the dawn, and strove, by pursuing her usual employments, to banish the melancholy that oppressed her ; her books and



her pencil for a while engaged her thoughts. But she no longer enjoyed the divine calm which used to diffuse itself over her. She feared her dream was but too prophetic. The Count had left Valmir early in the morning: being wildgrave of the forest, he was often obliged to visit its remotest tracks, and she did not expect he would return before the evening. To dissipate her grief, she walked out into the park, and bent her steps towards the dwelling of her friend, the Baroness of Arlberg: it was about a mile distant, and stood at the entrance into the village of Aspern, near the borders of the forest: the sun shone bright; and Ernestine, muffled in a long velvet mantle, defied the winter's wind. The Baroness, who came forth to meet her, observed that her eyes were red with weeping. "What means this drooping mien?" she said, with tender anxiety; "do not conceal from me, my fair friend, the source of your disquietude; my counsels perhaps may restore

you to peace."— "Oh! no," replied the mournful girl, "I hear the voice of duty, yet am led by a resistless impulse to spurn its mandates."

The Baroness was lost in wonder, but she forebore to enquire further; her gaiety and insinuating softness gradually revived the spirits of her visitor, who, on rising to depart, returned her embrace with more than usual warmth.

As she passed through the shrubbery, the youngest son of the Baroness, who was playing on the lawn, hastened to join her, and requested she would permit him to walk with her through the forest. Agilmorn, though he had scarcely reached his eleventh year, was warmly alive to the power of beauty: he was almost persuaded that Ernestine was a celestial being; nor could her bewitching softness wholly divest him of the awe which he felt on approaching her. The day had been bright and calm; but the evening-sky was overcast, and she pressed him to return.

“ Do not oblige me to leave you, lady, before we reach the bridge,” he replied with earnestness ; “ I will point out to you a path through the woods, where not a flake of snow has yet fallen ; it leads to the park-gates of Valmir.”

They came to the margin of the rivulet, which flowed silently beneath the ice that whitened its course. “ I fear you suffer from the cold, lady,” said Agilmorn ; “ would that these leafless oaks were cloathed with the fresh foliage of spring, that you might rest beneath their shade. How often have I climbed these mossy steeps to gather for you the wild strawberries that spread over them : it was heavenly to toil for you.” Ernestine reflected that she should not enjoy again the balmy breath of spring, nor wander through those groves full of life and rapture, as she was wont to do, when peace nestled in her bosom ; and she sighed. Agilmorn, who could not refrain from gazing on her, said in a timid voice, “ What would I not give to possess that bright

chestnut ringlet which has escaped through the folds of your turban." Charmed with his childish homage, Ernestine promised to give it to him.

"See, lady," he exclaimed, "these are the feet of a leveret imprinted on the snow; I will track him to his bed of fern, and bring him as an offering to you."

Before she could speak, he had disappeared among the woody cliffs, leaving her full of alarm, lest some wild beast or poisonous reptile should lurk in their recesses. The path he had taken was strewn with loose fragments of granite which had fallen from the steeps above, and she could not pursue it without infinite difficulty; she listened with a palpitating heart, in the hope of hearing the sound of his footsteps: a low distant moan startled her; it was but the murmur of the wind, that by fits sighed through the faded branches of the beech-trees. Their umbrage threw such an obscurity around, that she was unable to discern the path. She

paused ; suddenly she heard a feeble cry : it was Agilmorn's !—careless of her own peril, she hurried forward, and drew near the glade, where he lay almost breathless : she rushed towards him, but recoiled in terror, and shrieked on descrying a wolf, gaunt with famine, whom his cries for a while kept at bay. The beast had issued from a cavity in the rock, concealed by the roots of an ancient oak, where she was nurturing her young ; her udders were drawn dry, and Ernestine expected every moment to see the tender limbs of Agilmorn quiver in agony beneath her savage fangs : the beast turned round her eyes, which flamed with a lurid glare, and uttering a hideous growl, advanced towards the trembling girl ; a staff of ebony was Ernestine's only defence : her fragile form bespoke her soft and timid ; but in this extremity, a courage, which till then she was unconscious of possessing, braced her nerves with more than manly vigour. As the wolf rushed to seize her, she drew back, and firmly grasping



the staff, drove it with the force of a javelin through the monster's shaggy jaws: the tough grain resisted every effort to break it, and the animal, suffocated with bloody foam, sank on the earth. Agilmorn perceived the peril of his protectress, he flew towards her, and lifting a fragment of the rock, hurled it with such violence, that the blow laid the struggling beast motionless at her feet.

Some minutes elapsed before the fair heroine became conscious that she was safe, her eyes were bent on the cavity of the cliff, whence the wolf had rushed, and a frown of defiance knit her lovely brow. The nerves of her mind, which had been strained beyond their usual tone, by degrees recovered it: in hurried accents she enquired of Agilmorn whether he had suffered any injury; he pressed her hand to his lips with grateful fervor, and by his assurances dispelled her fear: she clasped him to her heart, exulting in the thought of having risked her life to save him: then sinking on her knee, she breathed

her thanks, with pious transport, to the Power who had inspired her feeble arm. Of late she had poured forth her orisons with downcast eyes, and humbled herself to the dust before her God ; she could not reconcile the indulgence of her love for Leopold with her exalted ideas of duty : but now she raised her brow to heaven with filial confidence, believing she was still thought worthy of its care.

Though her devotion was far removed from that mystic enthusiasm, which dreams of an actual intercourse with the Supreme Being, it led her to trace his goodness in all the productions of nature, and habitually to act, speak, and think, under the awful consciousness of his presence. Agilmorn shuddered at the sight of the wolf, whose gory fangs looked terrible even in death, and besought her to quit the dreary glen.

Retracing their steps, they emerged from the woods, and drew near the abode of the Baroness : Ernestine shrunk with modest timidity from the praises which she knew



would be lavished on her, when her friend heard of the imminent peril from which she had rescued Agilmorn : she parted from him at the entrance into the shrubbery, fearing it would be dusk before she reached Valmir. Seeing him wave his hand to her from a distance, and remain rooted to the spot where she had quitted him, she exclaimed, “ How enviable is the mother of such a child ; she observes every hour the graces of his form and mind unfold themselves, and thinks with transport of the solace which he will shed on the autumn of her life : I shall never feel these maternal raptures : the caresses of my children, and Leopold’s tenderness, may drown for a while the reproaches of conscience, but my peace will be embittered by the reflection, that I have abandoned the high principles which once guided my conduct.”

As Ernestine approached the forest, its solemn obscurity threw over her spirits a deeper gloom ; from the brow of the hill she

could discern its vast expanse: it extended along the base of the Carpathian mountains, cloathing their lower ridges with its groves of cedar; to the south rose the summits of Iran, buried in eternal snow; and beyond, towered the sublime tract of Alpine scenery, which reaches to the confines of Poland.

In the remote perspective, Ernestine faintly descried the shores of the Danube, where the fading light yet lingered. She could hardly restrain her tears on viewing the river, which in its course flowed by the Turkish frontier, and bathed the walls of Orsova: Leopold might be wandering on its banks, and gazing, like herself, with pensive earnestness on the waves that rolled near the abode of his beloved.

On the day of his departure, when, for the first time, he pressed her to his bosom with impassioned fondness, little did she dream she should ever regret having listened to his vows. "Vain would be my efforts," she cried, "to root out a passion interwoven

with my very being; I will fluctuate no more. How could I for a moment resolve to banish myself from him? on his return from the field of glory I will fly to meet him, and braid his locks with laurel."

A pang of remorse mingled with Ernestine's transport, while she determined to obey the blind impulse of her heart. On reaching the rude bridge thrown over the rivulet, she rested against the balustrade, and contemplated the path that wound along the glen: the remembrance of her intrepidity was awakened by the scene; she could hardly believe that she had performed so courageous an action, and attributed her safety to the interposition of her guardian saint: she washed in the stream her staff, which was dyed with blood; and hastened on, animated by the hope that her brother, on hearing of her conduct, would proudly clasp her to his heart, and own she had expiated all her weakness. Absorbed by this delightful thought, she quickened her steps, unconscious that she had

deviated from the path, and was plunging into the depths of the forest ; nor did she heed the gathering storm, till a flake of snow falling on her neck, roused her from her dream.

She looked round with a confused air, and alarmed at finding herself in an unknown track, stood irresolute whether to return ; but observing a road which branched to the left, she proceeded, thinking it led to the avenue she had quitted : the faster she went, the more was she bewildered in the sylvan labyrinth : the thick masses of pine and chesnut which frowned over the path, conspired with the twilight to obscure it ; their branches skreened her from the storm ; but fatigue soon obliged her to pause : she thought more of the alarm which her brother would feel, than of the perils that threatened her. From the savage wildness of the dell through which she passed, it was evident she had strayed far from the precincts of Valmir.

The path bore no print of human feet ; it

appeared to have been worn by the elk and the buffalo that roamed these unfrequented solitudes : she toiled up the steep which rose before her, in the hope of discerning from its summit some peasant's cabin, where she might seek shelter ; but on gaining the height she looked round in vain ; no cottage-fire shed its cheering rays through the gloom ; all was desolate : she had reached the borders of the forest : its umbrage no longer protected her from the snow, which drove through the darkened air with so much fury, that she could not distinguish the dreary waste beyond, extending to the mountains. Though enveloped in a mantle of ermine, she shivered with the piercing cold, and her delicate feet, covered only with thin sandals, were so much bruised by the flinty crags, that she was unable to proceed.

She threw around an eager look, but hardly durst believe her sight, on discovering at a little distance, the obelisk, which rises on the heath above a league from Valmir. Bereft of all her



fortitude, on finding herself so far from home, she wrung her hands in despair ; then slowly moving towards the spot, she rested on the base of the obelisk, which shaded her from the storm, leaning her head against the sculptured trophies that embossed its side : it was composed of the richest porphyry, and recorded the triumph which the Hungarian troops, led by her father, the renowned Leopold, obtained there over the Turks. She recollected with what enthusiasm she had approached this monument, raised by a grateful nation to its fallen hero, one fine evening in the summer, when Leopold and her brother were the companions of her walk. Her filial grief had been mingled with transport, while she thought of her parent's deathless glory : and she had breathed a secret prayer, that her life might not fleet away without conducing to her country's good : while she rested on the arm of her beloved Leopold, how pleasant seemed her path along the dreary moor ; what a contrast to that heavenly eve-

ning was the night of desolation which now lowered around ! She imagined that by yielding to the impulse of his heart, and disregarding her brother's counsels, she had drawn down the divine indignation : with a gloomy calmness she eyed the tempestuous scene, and welcomed the approach of death, which would expiate her errors and restore her to peace.

Near the obelisk grew a few scattered cypresses. “ Do those funereal emblems warn me of my doom ? ” exclaimed Ernestine, “ or rather, do they lift their heads, robed in unfading verdure, to teach me that virtue droops not beneath the storms of fate, but raises her tranquil and unaltered brow to heaven ? ”

“ What, if the sound that moans among their branches, be my knell ! should it appal me ? The Power who gave me being, and from my cradle has lavished on me his richest bounty, will not desert me in this dreary solitude : his spirit pervades the interminable regions of space, nor can death waft me



beyond the shadow of his protecting wing : He is too just to let his creatures suffer, unless for some high purpose. Amid the horrors of the tempest, I recognise his mercy ; He has ordained, in pity to my weakness, that I shall early leave a world where strong temptation might seduce me from the path of rectitude : I bow in meek submission to his holy will. In the delusion of my glowing fancy, I deemed myself capable of emulating those whose generous actions thrilled me with enthusiasm ; but I mistook a transient instinctive feeling for the energy of virtue : what sinful presumption, to boast of that purity which had never been tried !”

The trembling girl lifted meekly her eyes from the earth, and heedless of the cold which shot through every fibre of her frame, addressed her orisons with pious fervor to the Virgin. “ O thou,” she cried, “ who was once a suffering creature like myself, and though divinely pure, art endued with more than female softness, intercede for me before

the throne of mercy ; strengthen me, that I may vanquish the fatal passion which would fill me with remorse : if I am too weak to resist its power, let me, while yet I may be ranked among the good, sink down beneath those spreading cypresses, and die.”

The storm, while she prayed, appeared to intermit its fury, and the moon breaking forth from the clouds, tinged with its silver radiance the distant pinnacles of Valmir, which were discernible through a long aisle of oaks that extended to the heath. She regarded the sacred light as an earnest of heaven's protection ; and on discovering her abode through the shadowy vista, she yielded for a while to the extatic hope of reaching it ; she breathed more freely, and the vital stream which had almost ceased to flow, circled in warmer eddies round her heart. But her courage died away, when she reflected, that a wild morass intervened, which would preclude her, still more than the distance, from approaching Valmir. This dreary swamp in

summer was almost impassable ; and she was aware, that by attempting to penetrate through it now, she should be inevitably lost. To perish ingulphed beneath its fathomless depths, where no requiem could be chaunted over her corse, no tear of affection bedew her lifeless cheek, would indeed be terrible. While she gazed on her beloved home, a thousand proofs of her brother's tender care rushed to her remembrance : she thought she could resign her being without a murmur, were she suffered to press him once more to her heart, and to assure him how fixed was her resolve, had she survived, to banish herself from Leopold. " It may not be," she murmured ; " the icy blast pierces through every nerve, and I shall soon be cold as the freezing drift around me : yet, my brother, you will be just to me, and feel, that painful as was the conflict in my bosom, the virtuous impulse would at length have triumphed. As you roam through the groves of Valmir, should a pang rend your heart at the thought

that she, who from her infancy looked up to you with reverence and love, will never more rest fondly on your arm, nor animate your solitude, may you find comfort in the full persuasion, that in a brighter sphere your Ernestine enjoys unclouded repose." She could no longer restrain her tears; the pearly drops were congealed by the air, as they trickled down her cheek: she drew her robe more closely round her, but it could not protect her from the bitter cold which chilled the very pulse of life. She durst not suffer her thoughts to dwell on Leopold, lest the remembrance of his tenderness should quite subdue her fortitude; yet she could not refrain from wishing to behold him once again. "Could I see him," she sighed, "though but from the grated loophole of a dungeon, I should die in peace. A faint hope of escaping from the dreary solitude, revived in her bosom; she rose from her seat; the energy of her feelings inspired her with new strength and courage, and she hurried on apace-deep in

snow, towards the borders of the forest. Fatigue soon obliged her to pause: while she stood leaning on her staff, the chime of the vesper-bells from the Carmelite monastery faintly swelled in the wind; she listened almost breathless; again she heard the sullen sound; how melodious did it seem!

Could she reach the convent, beneath its holy roof she might rest in safety: the venerable abbot, whom she had long known, would rejoice in affording her an asylum; she hastened through the glen with renovated hopes. The storm had ceased, but it was so dark, that she could hardly discern the path.

The frowning summits of mount Iran, wrapped in the gathered winter of ages, lowered above her head; and she shuddered on hearing the fall of vast masses of snow and ice, which, severed by the wind, rushed from the heights, and rolling from steep to steep, threatened to crush her in their course.



She recollected that the village of Lindorf, on the northern side of the mountain, had a few months before been overwhelmed by a body of snow : she checked her steps in terror : she knew not whither to fly ; when the clouds that hid the moon dispersed, she perceived that a fragment of the snow had fallen in the path, not twenty paces from her. Her destruction appeared inevitable : she folded her hand meekly on her breast, and in devout submission awaited her doom.

From her neck hung an emerald cross, which Leopold had given her on the morning of his departure : she pressed it in anguish to her lips, and bedewed it with tears. By degrees she grew calmer : she gazed on the precious relick with mingled tenderness and awe ; it was at once the pledge of love and the symbol of divine mercy.

Though she feared not death, an instinctive horror seized her, when she raised her eyes and beheld what remained of the frozen mass hanging from the mountain's summit : it

trembled in the blast, and at length, as if a giant's arm had hurled it from its seat, rushed in thunder down.

Ernestine sank on the earth, bereft of animation ; the snow swept over her like a foaming wave, and buried her beneath it.

Had some spirit revealed to Leopold, as he slumbered in his tent, that his beloved was perishing amid the wild, with what horror would he have started from his couch. In the silence of midnight he often thought of her ; and when he slept, her image fled before him ; but his dreams were never darkened by the slightest presage of her doom : month after month rolled on, and still he continued ignorant of it. He thought, on his return, to find her blooming with health, and full of love and rapture ; after escaping the javelins of the foe, he imagined not that he was destined to suffer pangs more exquisite than they could inflict.

In the battle, when he unhorsed the Turkish sultan, the accents of Ernestine seemed to

tremble in the breeze, and plead for the fallen foe. The Marquis raised him from the earth, restored his sword, and suffered him to depart unransomed. Othman was deeply touched by the chivalrous generosity of the Hungarian chief; and his gallies on the shores of the Black Sea being burnt, he stipulated to retire into Asia with the remnant of his army, and never again to approach the frontiers.

By defeating the Turks, Leopold not only rescued the Hungarian territories, but secured the repose of the Greek empire, till the ambitious Mahomet laid waste its peaceful vales, and triumphantly planted the crescent on the towers of Constantine.

The Marquis of Erlmir dismissed the feudatory troops who had fought under his banners, and proceeded towards Buda with the royal army. The spring was far advanced before he reached it. How toilsome were the mountainous tracts which lay between him and his beloved! When at length he descried the forest

of Faulconstein, extending along the shores of the Danube, and caught a glimpse of the groves that embosomed her retreat, so many fond recollections arose, that he could with difficulty disguise from the nobles who were riding with him the transport he felt. He would have spurred his steed towards Valmir, had not imperious duty bidden him first throw himself at the feet of the queen. On emerging from the forest the troops came in sight of the palace, whose stately domes, rising to the clouds, crowned the eastern margin of the river : Frederica, encircled by a group of ladies, appeared on the terrace, which wound along the woody cliffs above ; she listened with delight to the murmur of enthusiasm which burst from the victorious bands, when they beheld her ; and leaning from the parapet, she discovered, by her eloquent gestures, how grateful she felt for their homage. She received the Marquis of Erlmir, and the knights who were in his train, with captivating grace : when the rest had retired, she

conversed with him on the perils he had encountered, and expressed her sense of his services in such soft and trembling accents, that had not the tumult of his spirits prevented him from observing her confusion, he must have guessed the secret of her heart: when he knelt and pressed her hand to his lips, he perceived not the deep glow that suffused her cheek; nor, when he departed, was he conscious that she followed him with her eyes, till an angle of the terrace concealed him from her.

He passed on, light as air, towards the palace-gardens, intending to remount his steed, and seek the abode of Ernestine. As he descended the steps of the terrace, he heard a familiar voice pronounce his name; he turned and discovered Count Faulconstein; he rushed into the arms of his friend, and exclaimed, almost breathless with joy, "I was flying to your seclusion, Casimir. Where is my beloved Ernestine? does she still bloom like the violet beneath the shade?"



The Count would have replied, but the accents died on his lips. Enveloping his face in his robe, he endeavoured to conceal his grief.

The Marquis then first perceived he was in deep mourning, and a dreadful presage rushed upon his mind : “ Oh ! speak,” he cried ; “ that sable habit, those averted eyes, betoken all is not well : disclose the worst at once ; let me not linger on the torture of suspense.”

“ Would I could speak comfort, Leopold, instead of plunging a dagger into your bosom.”

“ Tell me that Ernestine yet lives,” cried the Marquis, while terror blanched his cheek ; “ tell me only that she lives, and I will endure my lot without a murmur ?”

“ She lives,” the Count replied with mournful solemnity ; “ for Heaven is just and good. In a purer world, where sorrow is unknown, she receives the reward of innocence and virtue. Five months have passed since she resigned her being to Him who gave it.”

Leopold stood as if struck by a bolt of thunder ; the groves of the palace swam before his dizzy sight ; the ground seemed to sink under him, and he fell senseless to the earth. Filled with alarm, Casimir strove in vain to revive him ; he flew to a fountain, and returning with water in the palms of his hands, sprinkled the burning temples of his friend.

How changed were those fine features, which a few moments before beamed with rapture ! With difficulty could the Count sustain the conflict raised in his bosom : he accused himself of being stern and cruel ; while he reflected that he could at once dissipate Leopold's despair : in his grief, Ernestine's name faltered on his lips : thrilled by the sound, the Marquis unclosed his eyes : the Count restrained the imperfect accents, but he feared lest he had already betrayed too much.

“ Who spoke of my beloved ? ” murmured Leopold, looking up ; “ come you from the

abode of seraphs to bear her bidding to me?"

His delirious language pierced the Count to the soul : he raised him gently from the earth ; the fresh air of evening gradually revived him, and Casimir supported him to his chamber in the palace ; but his senses wandered, and a fever ensued, which reduced him to the brink of the grave.

It was long before the friendship of Count Faulconstein had power to soothe his grief : but by degrees he was induced to seek a refuge from himself : he resolved to shake off the gloom which clouded his faculties, that he might exert them in their noblest sphere ; though lost to happiness himself, he might still watch over the repose of his sovereign, and protect her from her hidden, as he had done from her open foes.

The solicitude which he heard she expressed for his recovery, deeply touched him ; and for her sake he determined to support the load of life ; but he often relapsed into

the depth of despondence ; he thought himself a lonely being, and the whole world seemed to him a dreary waste : he durst not reflect on Ernestine ; nor, till time had in some degree tempered the poignancy of his grief, did he acquire fortitude enough to question Casimir respecting her death. The Count briefly related to him the mournful circumstances.

“ On the fatal night,” he said, “ for several hours I traversed the forest in search of her : the traces of her feet led me to the spot, where she lay buried under the fallen snow. Though her countenance was tinted by the hue of death, the divine calm diffused over it, proved how tranquil was her flight from this tempestuous world. She was borne to the neighbouring convent, but our efforts to revive her were fruitless ; the spark of life had fled for ever. In the holy ground adjoining the ruins of Cloister Firnwald, which border on the heath, her remains were consigned to the tomb.”

The Marquis, who in silent horror had listened to the melancholy recital, for some moments sat darkly brooding on the mysterious dispensations of heaven; then, rising from the couch, he said in a trembling voice, "Casimir, do not oppose my wish, let us seek the sacred solitude; I shall derive much comfort from offering the last sad tribute of affection at the tomb of my sainted Ernestine."

The Count acceded to his request, hoping that the burst of grief once past, his spirits would recover their serenity.

They went forth into the woods, and bent their steps towards the ruins of the abbey. The stillness of evening was broken only by the distant sound of pastoral music from the hamlet in the vale below: on drawing nearer, they discovered a group of peasants dancing on the green, before a rustic dwelling: it belonged to Herman, one of Count Faulconstein's vassals. The old man, delighted at seeing his lord, came from the festive throng



to meet them, and bowing respectfully, said he was highly honoured by their presence at his daughter's nuptials.

The blushing Pauline, followed by her youthful bridegroom, approached to welcome their noble guests, but Leopold turned away his head, and sighed deeply: for the first time he contemplated the happiness of his fellow-creatures with a joyless heart; yet he could not look unmoved on the modest nymph-like Pauline; her dark eyes beaming with the tenderest fire, and her form luxuriantly beautiful, awoke in his bosom a sensation of pleasure long unknown to him.

“Happy peasant!” thought Leopold, observing the youth, whose features expressed the rapture of his soul, and shewed how much he triumphed in the love of his fair bride; “kings, in their profusion, could not bestow on him aught so precious as that fond creature’s heart; her caresses will sweeten his toils, and soothe his anxious hours: while I brood over my withered

hopes, and weep for her whose charms are enveloped in the shroud."

Wrapping his mantle around him that he might pass unknown, the Marquis hurried from the scene of mirth which cast his own destiny into deeper shade ; the flute's enlivening melody was discord to his ear ; he beckoned to his friend, and hastened towards the forest.

Westward of the Carmelite monastery are discovered the mouldering arches and roofless aisles of Cloister Firnwald, rising in awful pomp above the groves of cedar, which shelter them from the blasts of Mount Iran. Leopold, leaning on the arm of his friend, proceeded slowly across the lawn : his spirits caught a darker hue from the dreariness and solemnity of the fallen pile, which burst on their sight in all its grandeur : it was built in the richest style of gothic architecture : it had been founded at a remote period by one of the Hungarian queens, who had retired from the splendour of royalty, and devoted

her declining years to the austerities of the cloister. The virgins who composed the sisterhood of St. Githa, were of the noblest families in the land ; and the gloomy rites of monastic superstition derived an imposing charm from the regal magnificence of the structure : but the sanctuary was violated, and nearly reduced to ashes by the Turks, who in the preceding reign spread their ravages to the walls of Buda : the shrines were despoiled of their treasures, and many of the nuns threw themselves into the flames to escape the outrages of the lawless barbarians ; the rest were borne off by the foe, and the abbey was suffered to fall into decay ; for the reigning king was too much immersed in luxury to bestow his attention on it.

Though the rain of thirty winters had beat against the convent's walls, its dark discoloured pillars still betrayed traces of the fire ; the cells had been entirely consumed, but the chapel retained its antient beauty, the side alone, contiguous to the abbey, being

burnt: it was built of the finest marble, and the roof rose into arches, decorated with fret-work, and embossed with gold.

The Count drew his friend towards the portal, and lifting the thick festoons of ivy which hung over it, led him along the aisle. It was strewn with fragments of the edifice, and in some parts hid by a wilderness of weeds: the shrubs had spread through the tracery of the windows, and mantled the niches and clustering columns with foliage and flowers, which seemed to mock the hoary ruins over which they waved.

The Marquis of Erlmir had never in his gayest hours viewed these mouldering cloisters, which whispered the awful warnings of time, without being impressed with a pensiveness bordering on solemnity; but now he felt an undefinable horror steal over him: a thousand shadowy forms appeared to flit through the obscurity of the distant aisles. When the Count pointed beyond an arch to a tuft of laurels, that hid the cemetery where the

remains of his lost love reposed, a mist floated before his eyes, and his knees almost sank under him : in a faint voice, he requested Casimir to wait for him in the abbey, and with faltering feet advanced towards the tomb:

He sank in an agony of grief on the turf at its base, kissed the hallowed sod, and bedewed it with his tears : then rising from the earth, he reclined his drooping head against the funeral urn ; it rested on a pedestal of jasper ; beneath was a marble tablet, surmounted by the crest of the family of Faulconstein, and inscribed with these tributary lines.

Weep not for Ernestine, ye mournful fair,  
Nor round her tomb the gloomy cypress twine ;  
Among the blest she breathes ethereal air,  
And Eden's roses wreath her brow divine.

When in the tempest droop'd her tender form,  
Amid the wild by human feet untrod,  
And o'er her burst the horrors of the storm,  
Trembling she flew for refuge to her God.



While Leopold gazed on the sacred marble, a still soft voice seemed to whisper from the tomb : it bade him regard the fate of his beloved with envy, not with grief.

The sun was sinking behind the woods in all its pomp ; a laburnum, waving in shadowy grace from the neighbouring steep, strewed its golden blossoms over the monument. Lulled by the murmuring leaves, the mourner felt a tender pensiveness steal over him : he yielded to the soothing thought, that Ernestine, though invisible, might hover round his path, and breathe into his soul her heavenly influence. This persuasion shed over his spirits a sacred pleasure ; yet was it mingled with awe. Wrapped in a sublime enthusiasm, he continued kneeling by the tomb till he heard the steps of the Count, who approached from the abbey : in silence he rejoined him. On reaching the tuft of laurels he stopped and cast a lingering look on the funeral urn, which was alone discernable in the cemetery ; the lowly graves of the

nuns being hid by the long grass which spread over them.

The setting sun threw a saffron glow on the cedars beyond, and touched the sepulchral urn with its mystic radiance.

“Never more,” sighed Leopold, “will its warmth animate the fair form that reposes there: the evening gale which used to fan her cheek, and diffuse over her senses its balmy fragrance, does but wave the foliage that canopies her tomb.

The Count gently drew him from the melancholy spot, and they retraced their steps through the forest. But Leopold often repaired alone, at the close of day, to the ruins of Cloister Firnwald, and hung with fond devotion over the funeral urn. He derived an unspeakable comfort from offering this last tribute of love.

During his abode at the palace, he passed many of his hours with Frederica. Being her cousin, he had always access to her presence: she endeavoured to animate him by

her playful gaiety ; she regarded his paleness and languor as the effects of the fever, for he never revealed to her his grief.

Leopold was warmly alive to every tender impulse, and had he not been wholly absorbed by the loss he had sustained, he could not have resisted her fascinating power ; but to suffer another's image to triumph in his heart, would have appeared to him a profanation of his vows.

The young Queen, immersed in the pleasures of a dissipated court, had little leisure to think of Leopold when he was absent, or to cherish for him a passion, which, had she lived in seclusion, might have proved fatal to her repose.

The Marquis seldom suffered a day to elapse without seeing Count Faulconstein, who since his sister's death, had become doubly dear to him. He felt a mournful pleasure in tracing the resemblance between his features and Ernestine's ; though of a darker tint, they were cast in the same Grecian mould :

his eyes too were blue, like hers ; and when he spoke, his tones so forcibly reminded Leopold of her, as to thrill him to the soul. He had always regarded Casimir as a being of a superior order ; but he became every day more deeply impressed with the sense of his exalted powers. What veneration would he have felt for his friend, could he have lifted the veil that hid the sanctuary of his heart, and discovered the sublime principles which actuated him !

The Marquis seldom left Buda, except to visit his mother, the Princess Vedova, who resided at a castle beyond the Carpathian Mountains. One morning, on his return through the forest, he was induced, by the solicitations of Count Faulconstein, to bend his course towards Valmir : as they rode among the groves where he had often strayed with Ernestine, and entered the hall where he had enjoyed so many delightful evenings with her, a thousand tender recollections rushed on his mind, and quite subdued his fortitude.

Wherever he cast his eyes, he discovered some trace of her: the tapestry of the hall was wrought by her needle; and on a table near him he perceived an unfinished drawing, whose beautiful tints betrayed the touches of her pencil: he sighed on approaching the gothic window that opened into the park: it was there he had seen her for the last time: as she bent forward to bid him adieu, the mantling foliage which enwreathed it, half hid her lovely features. How brightly did her eyes beam through their tears! He mournfully contrasted the enchanting hours which he had hoped to pass with her on his return, with the loneliness and gloom that reigned around. The Count endeavoured, by conversing with more than his wonted animation, to raise the sinking spirits of his friend, and gradually succeeded; but when they parted for the night, Leopold in vain reclined on his pillow: he was too much perturbed to rest. Finding he could not sleep, he rose from his couch, and returned to the library,



where they had passed the evening. He opened a volume of poems which lay on the table near him: the following ode recalled to his fancy visions of happiness that had long been banished from it,

THE ACACIAS.

YE zephyrs, fan my drooping hair;  
And lightly wave her auburn hair;  
Through the acacias faintly glow,  
Ye sunbeams, on her neck of snow:  
To shade her cheek their flowers I cull,  
That o'er the lake bend beautiful.

Among the leaves a lurking thorn  
My Hermia's seraph brow has torn:  
Ere drops of blood its lustre stain,  
Oh let me kiss the tender vein;  
And thy fragile form enwreathing  
Press those lips of roses breathing  
Thy blue dissolving eyes respire  
Love's purest, most delicious fire;

And Innocence, thy bosom guest,  
Flutters o'er its hallowed nest.

Could e'er the heart, resigned to shame,  
Feel the bliss that thrills thy frame?  
No,—let the fond impassioned girl,  
Her robe confined with braids of pearl,  
Amid the dance luxuriant glide,  
And grace the festive dome of pride.  
Full oft at midnight, tears of woe  
The fallen angel's eyes o'erflow,  
And on her golden couch, alone,  
She mourns the hours of childhood flown:  
When through the forest's ferny glade,  
Light as the bounding fawn she strayed.

'Twas heavenly o'er thy bed of rest  
To bend, and fold thee to my breast;  
And listen to thy trembling tone,  
When thou did'st call me first thine own.  
Sunk in wild rapture, at thy feet  
I murmured, "Thus to die were sweet."  
The dawn with rosy lustre beamed  
Through the thin veil that round thee streamed,

And shrinking from the glance of day  
 My bride in soft confusion lay.  
 So thrill the light acacia leaves  
 At every sigh that zephyr heaves,  
 Droop o'er the dark green moss, and lave  
 Their blushing flow'rets in the wave.

It was midnight ; and Leopold's spirits caught the sombrous hue of the hour : he rose to leave the apartment : on advancing towards the gallery, he perceived the door of the room where Ernestine used to sit : it was half unclosed, and he could not restrain the desire he felt to enter it.

The deathlike stillness that prevailed, impressed him with an unusual awe, and so tremblingly alive were his nerves, that he started at the shadows which shot across the gloom, as the quivering gleams of the lamp fell upon the walls.

He shuddered on seeing the harp of his beloved ; never more would its tones thrill him with rapture. It stood by an altar where

she was wont to breathe her orisons. The cushion of green velvet on which she used to kneel, still retained the traces of her knees imprinted on it. Leopold pressed it with pious fervor to his lips.

The door of her bed-room was veiled by the silk hangings which fell in festoons from the roof, and drew round the apartment like the curtains of a tent, leaving only a space for a broad mirror which fronted the window: the lattice being open, the distant woods, and the sky, bright with stars, were reflected in the glass. Leopold gazed pensively on it: its polished surface might glow with the beauties of the landscape, but would never again reflect the form and features of his Ernestine: those sunny ringlets, those eyes that beamed with sensibility, now mouldered in the coffin.

The mourner sank on a sofa, where he had often seen her recline: he regarded whatever she had touched as a holy relick. No sooner had he rested on it, than his throbbing breast

grew calm ; a tender languor stole over him, and sleep insensibly sealed his eye-lids.

While he slumbered he heard a voice whose tones thrilled him with mingled delight and horror, and looking up he beheld the spirit of his beloved ! She was clad in drapery whiter than snow, and wings of downy gold hung mantling over her bosom ; a star sparkled on her forehead and threw around her a dazzling radiance.

“ Leopold,” she murmured, “ why do you tremble on seeing your Ernestine ? I came not from the realms of rest to fill you with dread, but to hover near you unseen, and support your sinking virtue. While the thirst of true glory inflames you ; fear not my reproaches. I will banish myself from heaven, that I may raise your soul above all low desires, and point out to you the bright track of excellence. But should you prove faithless to me, or neglect my counsels, far from you will I wing my flight. Among the groves of Paradise I shall sadden at the thought, that I am



forgotten by him for whose dear sake I would have roamed the world, and had he died, have buried myself in cloistered solitude.

Leopold would have spoken, but the words died on his lips ; and when he stretched forth his arms to clasp her, the lovely vision dissolved in air : the effort he made to arrest her flight awoke him ; with fond regret he dwelt on the heavenly tones that he had heard in his sleep, and closed his eyes to dream of his beloved again.

He was startled by a soft breathing near him : he listened, and threw a fearful glance around the chamber. “ ’Tis but the breeze that whispers through the lattice,” he murmured, and again rested his head on the pillow. But how great was his amazement when a warm tear fell on his neck : he looked wildly round, and by the faint gleam of the lamp which was dying away in the socket, discerned a shadow gliding near the foot of the couch. He extended his arms to arrest the fleeting form : they only swept along the

chords of the harp, which returned a strange and solemn sound.

In his terror he was unconscious that he had touched the strings, and he shuddered believing the instrument had been struck by some supernatural power. "This is no illusion," he cried, advancing towards Ernestine's chamber, whither the shadow had seemed to retreat—though he heard a slight rustling, the silken hangings which concealed the door remained motionless, and the bolt was undrawn.

The lamp had gone out, and, the sky having become cloudy, Leopold was left in utter darkness. His brain was bewildered: he knew not what to think of the shadowy being that had eluded his grasp: he began to doubt whether he had really slept, and half-expected to behold again the sainted creature who had appeared to him in his dream. He dreaded not her presence—to see her again, though he were forbidden to approach her, would yet be extacy! But uncertain what incor-

poreal power had glided before him, he felt an instinctive horror which he vainly struggled to repress.

The break of dawn somewhat dissipated his alarm, and when he returned to his chamber his thoughts by degrees became less confused ; he regarded his visionary fears as the illusions of a fevered fancy : he attributed the moving shadow to the effect of the lamp on the hangings, shaken by the breeze ; but the tear that had fallen on his neck was a mystery which he was at a loss to explain.

On rejoining the Count he forbore to mention his nocturnal terrors, lest he should appear superstitious.

They rode together among the woods that clothe the shores of the Danube. On approaching the river, they paused to admire the beautiful landscape expanded at their feet. They contemplated the distant domes and pinnacles of Buda, which were faintly discernible beyond the groves of the palace. The road led through fields of corn, where the

peasants were employed in gathering the harvest. While they heaped up the nodding sheaves, their sun-burnt features beamed with joy. The Marquis reflected that his glorious toils had secured to them their peaceful comforts, and the plenty which smiled around. It was heavenly to think, that, by his genius and valour, he had preserved those abodes of innocence and peace from the ravages of a barbarous foe.

Count Faulconstein expatiated on his country's pre-eminence over the neighbouring states, not only in the richness of its soil, but in the high and generous spirit of its inhabitants ; he inveighed against the corrupt administration of Friuli, which had left the people but the shadow of freedom. " While the senate," he said, " is composed of the nobles only, the nation can never become truly great and prosperous ; were those, who by their superior wisdom are qualified to represent the body of the people, admitted into the diet, the royal prerogative would be re-

strained, and laws would be framed beneficial to every order. To obtain a seat in the assembly, persons of influence and talents would cultivate eloquence, discussion would elicit just ideas of policy, and from this source, by a thousand streams, would be diffused through the empire those opinions that insensibly enlarge the sphere of the human faculties and dignify social life."

"Frederica's repose," he continued, "I fear, will be but transient. Though she has rejected your brother's suit with scorn, the crafty Cardinal, by alarming her fears, may wring from her a consent to these odious nuptials. When the dying Ladislaus bequeathed her his throne, his ambitious nephew reluctantly took the oath of fealty: he may yet raise a revolt among the turbulent nobles."—"I am too fully sensible," replied the Marquis, "of Vedova's dark revengeful nature, to doubt that Frederica's disdain would inflame him with the bitterest hatred; though branded by the just and good, he has yet power enough



to replunge the country into the horrors of war ; nor would he suffer any law, divine or human (with shame and grief I make the avowal), to restrain his desires ; but would hurry on to their gratification, with the dreadful energy that marks his character. The lovely Frederica shall not fall a victim to the intrigues of villainy. We will protect her, Casimir. With a jealous eye we will watch every movement of Vedova, and of the hoary hypocrite Friuli. The baffled traitors may at length perceive she is sheltered by her faithful adherents from fraud and violence, and abandon their purposes in despair."

The Count saw with secret pleasure his friend espouse Frederica's cause so warmly, and trusted that her charms would kindle in his breast a softer sentiment than pity.

Though grief often clouded Leopold's spirits, and he would pass whole hours drooping over the tomb of Ernestine, he found all his former animation revive while he conversed with Frederica : she carefully concealed the

impression he had made on her, yet an attentive observer might have divined, from a variety of symptoms, the secret of her heart.

On her birth-day, when she graced with her presence a tournament held with regal splendour before the palace, her colour fled as Leopold rode into the lists, arrayed in all the pride of chivalry : how did she tremble when his lance shivered in the conflict, and his adversary's faulchion smote off his crest, which fell with its white plumes at her feet ! —what rapture sparkled in her eyes, when she perceived him escape the blow which would have crushed him, and hurl his fierce assailant to the dust !

In the evening, a masque was given at the palace. The Marquis of Erlmir joined the Queen early in her cabinet. She was conversing with the Cardinal : he had again expatiated on the evils she would draw on herself, by spurning the proposed alliance ; and had urged it with so much vehemence, that she could no longer restrain her anger.

breaking off the conference, she haughtily bade him desist from further importunity.

On Leopold's entrance her look of displeasure changed to a smile of bewitching softness. The minister, whose eye was piercing as the lynx's glance, read what was passing in her heart, and a malignant scowl darkened the strong lines of his countenance: unsuspecting of the snares which he had spread for her ruin, she turned to him with an air of sweetness, and touched with remorse at having been so quickly offended, was going to request his forgiveness; but the singular expression of his features inspired her with an undefinable dread, and the accents died on her lips. The Cardinal retired, and she soon regained her usual serenity. Had the slightest foreboding been imparted to her, of the evils which she was doomed to encounter on that fatal night, the bright bloom would have faded from her cheek, and her heart, which now swelled high with transport, would have sunk in horror.

Frederica never looked more lovely : her form, moulded by the Graces, was enveloped in a robe which shadowed, but did not conceal its beautiful symmetry : her charms would have warmed the frozen breast of a hermit. Count Faulconstein, who stood apart engaged in discourse with Baron Arduf, could not refrain from gazing on her with enthusiastic homage : for awhile he forgot his secret resolution. She sat in a careless attitude, her elbow resting on a table ; near her stood an alabaster lamp that diffused over her features its tempered lustre.

“ How far,” thought Casimir, “ does the radiance of her smile surpass that soft and shadowy light ; the transparent vase cannot contend with her neck in whiteness ; no, she is loveliness itself ; purer than the mountain breeze ;—and must she be the victim of craft and treachery ? Never, if I can shield her ?”

Count Faulconstein, though highly born, for he was descended from the ancient kings of Hungary, had early shrunk from pomp and

power; he was of a gentle and philosophic character, full of sensibility and fire, but thoughtful and unambitious. Royalty had no charm for him; whatever was perishable he regarded as beneath the aim of a creature formed for eternity; he panted for that fame which will live when the recording brass and monumental marble have mouldered into dust. From his childhood he had imbibed an ardent love for his country; and the sacred flame burnt brighter, the more lowering were the storms that threatened to overwhelm his native land: sensible how much its prosperity depended on the conduct of the young queen, he sought her confidence, and obtained over her so powerful an ascendancy, as to impress her with an earnest desire of redressing the grievances under which her people had groaned, during the corrupt administration of Friuli: he breathed but to restore to them the blessings which they once enjoyed: his noon-tide walks, his midnight vigils, were devoted to this great purpose. But Frederica's image



would often float before his fancy, and his country became yet more dear to him because she was its tutelary angel : to secure its happiness and hers, he had sacrificed what was more precious to him than life. She would have regarded her youthful monitor with veneration and love, had she seen through the cloud which enveloped his conduct : but Casimir was conscious that his design would prove abortive, were it revealed to any human being ; and he concealed it under an impenetrable veil of mystery.

Fearful of betraying his emotion to Baron Ardulf, he passed through the folding-doors into the Turkish hall, which was already thronged with guests.

It was constructed in the Eastern style of architecture, and decorated with Asiatic splendour. The roof rose into a dome : the windows, reaching to the floor, opened on a conservatory, and were mantled with festoons of exotic flowers, which shed a delicious fragrance through the saloon. The nobles lis-

tened to the strains of the minstrel, mingled in the dance, or reclining on couches, whispered in the ear of some admired fair-one their tender flattery.

Encircled by a train of ladies, Frederica seated herself under the regal canopy : no one enjoyed more deeply the gaieties of the night : she looked earnestly round the room to discover the Marquis of Erlmir : her heart fluttered with pleasure when she saw him approach. He was dressed in a Moorish habit, which displayed the elegance of his figure, and had taken off his masque, that he might converse with her more freely.

“ I am come, Princess,” he said, “ from the wilds of Africa to offer you my homage. By what potent magic have you thus drawn together the natives of every clime ? the elves who frolick on the moonlight green form not such wild and grotesque groups as these.”

She replied in the same sportive strain ; yet the fair sorceress distrusted the force of her

charms; she feared they were not powerful enough to enthrall him.

They continued in discourse till they were summoned to the banquet. After a rich repast the guests returned into the hall. The Queen, fatigued with the revelry of the night, and almost overpowered by sleep, went out on the terrace to inhale the fresh morning air.

It was not yet day-break, but the grey clouds that streaked the eastern sky, began to assume a lighter tint. The zephyr gently fanned her neck, which was flushed with the heat. The tumultuous gaiety that reigned in the palace was here scarcely heard: the warbling of a woodlark, hid among the foliage of a magnolia, alone broke the stillness: the shrub lifted its branches to the terrace from the grove beneath; it was in full bloom, and its dying fragrance diffused over her senses a voluptuous languor.

While she rested her arm on the parapet, and contemplated the beauties of the reposing

landscape, she heard a footstep near, and perceived a masque advance towards her.—“It is Leopold,” she whispered, observing the Moorish habit that he wore.

He approached her, and said in a low unsteady voice, “May I solicit a minute’s private audience? What I have to unfold is of the deepest import, and will excuse the seeming strangeness of my request.”

Surprise for a while kept Frederica silent; at length with softness she replied: “I can repose in you a perfect confidence: but whither do you lead me?”—“Beneath those spreading cedars, Princess, we may talk unobserved.”

A thousand confused ideas bewildered her, and half-expecting to hear from Leopold a confession of love, she suffered herself to be conducted down the steps of the terrace, yet, conscious of her indiscretion, she descended with a palpitating heart; and on finding that the palace was hid from her sight by a tuft of cedars, that spread in shadowy pomp, and

threw a deep gloom over the grass, she drew back with modest timidity, and said: "Let us leave this obscurity, my lord; what you have to unfold may be disclosed as well beneath the open sky."

"No, lady," he replied, "you must not quit this shade till you have listened to the full avowal of my passion: too long has the smothered flame burnt in my breast, and hurried me to madness."

"These are not Leopold's accents," faltered the Queen. "What villain has decoyed me to this lonely spot? Presumptuous! dread the punishment such treacherous craft deserves."

A gleam of light glancing through the foliage, as it waved in the breeze, discovered the features of her mysterious conductor; she perceived it was Vedova who clasped her in his arms.

Though her bosom fluttered with alarm, she repulsed him with an air of indignant contempt, which for a moment awed him;



but he was too much hardened in guilt to recoil at the frown of offended innocence.

“Kill me not, cruel fair-one,” he cried, “with the lightning of those eyes ; knit not that lovely brow ; nor let anger untune a voice, formed but for tones of tenderness. Long have I doated on you, and your scorn has only blown into a fiercer flame the fire which consumes me. Driven from your presence, I had no mode but this of imploring your pity, and urging you to revoke the harsh decree that dooms me to despair. For your own repose I plead : should you consent, our haughty nobles, who refuse to bow beneath a female’s sway, will hush their murmurs. Years of affection shall atone for the wild follies of my youth ; and my fair Queen will pardon the artifice which led her to listen to my vows.”

“Release me, Prince ; this ruffian violence would impress me, did I waver in my opinion, with a full sense of your baseness. Had you

lived free from the taint of dishonour ; had you been beloved by the friends of your youth, instead of having converted them into the bitterest enemies, I might have been proud of your alliance. But your conduct has inspired me with abhorrence ; and I can attribute this outrage only to the blackest motives,”

“ ’Tis well, insulter,” he replied, his lip quivering with passion ; “ the witchery of your form for a while unnerved me, but your contemptuous scorn rouses the resentment which has long boiled within my veins. Off ! disguise. Think not, Frederica, I drew you to this secret shade, that I might kneel and play the tame submissive suitor ; my fondness is extinct, but revenge has risen from the ashes of love.

“ Within a sequestered cove, opening on the river, even now a bark is moored, which soon will waft us to the further shore : my courser thence will swiftly thread the labyrinths of the mountain, and we shall reach

in a few hours the secret shade, where no one dares dispute my power—no intruder can break in upon our solitude.”

The Queen strove in vain to escape from the remorseless Vedova, who clasped her waist, and endeavoured to raise her in his arms. She would have cried for aid, but terror deprived her of utterance. At length she extricated herself from the ruffian's grasp ; and perceiving the covered walk of acacias, which leads round to the eastern side of the terrace, in the faint hope of reaching it, she fled across the lawn with the swiftness of the antelope when it escapes the panther's talons.

On approaching the entrance of the walk, she saw two persons muffled in dark cloaks, who came towards her. Uncertain whether they were friends or foes, she sank, panting for breath, and quite exhausted, at their feet. “ Rescue me, or I am lost,” she wildly exclaimed. “ Hush, lady,” muttered one of the strangers. “ Be wise, and yield to imperi-

ous necessity. Provoke no further Vedova's resentment."—"Then I am betrayed—undone," cried the Queen.

Though the unknown strove to disguise his voice, it seemed familiar to her, and looking at the wrinkled hand that grasped her, she observed on his finger an opal ring, which she had often seen Friuli wear. She perceived too, beneath his cloak, the sleeve of scarlet silk which was peculiar to the Cardinal's habit.

Had an adder coiled round her its scaly folds, she could not have felt more horror: overpowered by the sense of his atrocious villainy, she fainted on the ground.

On recovering her consciousness, she found herself again in the power of Vedova, who was bearing her in his arms through the woods.

He reached the Lugar's side, and called aloud on the boatman, who had wandered from the cove; but the echoes of the mountain alone replied in hoarser murmurs. As

he placed his fair victim in the bark, his eyes sparkled with a ferocious joy, and he printed a kiss on her cheek with an air of triumph.

“Nay, struggle not,” he cried, “nor bruise those delicate limbs with fruitless efforts. Once, Frederica, to have obtained your smiles, I would have traversed the burning sands of the desert, and braved the direst perils; but the delusion is past. Though you offered me your throne, I would not forego the transport of satiating my vengeance: to triumph over your disdainful virtue, and see you in the dust cling to my knees, and bathe them with the tears of shame, will give me a deeper joy than I should once have felt, had you conferred on me your virgin heart. Kingdoms should not bribe me to relinquish my purpose: though it were to rain fire, and the earth should yawn under my feet, yet would I strain you to my bosom, and listen to the music of your shrieks, till the sense of hearing were drowned in death.”

“Mark me, haughty fair-one: Among the



Carpathian mountains stands a solitary castle, inaccessible but to those who know the mazy defiles leading to it : impervious woods surround the sanctuary, and hide it even from the wandering goatherd : there we will consecrate the hours to love ; there shall you hide your blushes in my arms, and own my boldness merited the conquest it had gained."

While he spoke, Vedova eyed the trembling queen with savage exultation ; then raising his voice, he shouted to the boatman :

"What, ho ! Bertrand !—where can the slave be loitering ?"

Impatient of delay, and pale with wrath, the Prince at length unmoored the boat, and began to ply the oars. With difficulty could he resist the violence of the stream.

Swollen by the autumn rains, the river rolled impetuously towards the Falls of Hela : not half a league from the cove where they embarked, it fell in one vast sheet of foam from a tremendous precipice, and was lost in the yawning chasm beneath, till it

burst again from a cavern at some distance, and brawling over a bed of rocks, mingled its turbid surges with the waters of the Danube.

The terrified Frederica threw an eager glance around: the mists that curled in thick wreaths over the bosom of the stream, prevented her from seeing distinctly the further shore; but she descried lurking among the cliffs, some horsemen, whose savage mien and strange attire gave them the air of robbers.

Vedova hailed them, and they rode towards a projecting point of the mountain, where the tufted pines concealed them from her sight. "Am I then," she exclaimed, wringing her hands, "to be the sport of ruffians!"

The Prince regarded her distress with the malignity of a fiend, and a bitter smile convulsed his features.

As the bark glided near an ozier isle, which rose in the midst of the river, a swan, that had often fed from her hand, came swimming to-

wards her with its callow brood, and breasting the waves, stretched out its jetty beak, and ruffled its plumage with joy. "My poor favourite," she murmured, "you cannot aid me." The stream near the isle was hardly half a fathom deep, and she could discern the yellow sand beneath its glassy waves: were she to leap from the boat, she thought a grateful instinct might lead the swan to guide her in safety to the shore.

The bird approached as if it hastened to her rescue, but soon, scared by the dashing oars, swam back to its nest.

Desperate, and bewildered by her fears, Frederica attempted to impede the progress of the bark, as it grazed a bed of reeds, by grasping their tufted heads, that nodded high above the stream.

With a withering frown Vedova rose from his seat, and roughly seized her wrist: in his haste he forgot the oars, which slid from the boat, and were borne far away by the current.

The bark went rapidly down the river, and soon the thunder of the Falls, before but faintly heard, deepened on the breeze.

Vedova looked aghast, and bit his lips with rage ; appalled by the sound, he stood on the prow, and threw an eager glance towards the woody cliffs, among which his associates were concealed. His fair victim sat gloomily resigned to her fate : though terrible, it was preferable to dishonour. To perish in the torrent was less dreadful, than to be clasped in Vedova's hated arms. Yet her courage died away, when she beheld the groves of the palace, which extended on the left to the margin of the Lugar.

She had often roved with her favourite Elfrida, along the steeps above. Two evenings before, the Marquis of Erlmir joined them in their walk : enchanted by his discourse, she wandered on till the shadows of twilight warned her to return. From the dell below they viewed with silent enthusiasm the river falling through the

rifted rocks. She could not avoid shuddering at the awful sight, though the horrors of the cataract were softened by the interposing masses of foliage that hid the crags, and discovered only the descending sheet of foam, tinted by the rays of the setting sun; though her arm was locked in Leopold's, and he laughed at her fears, she had hastened from the terrific spot. What a transition! an hour had scarcely elapsed, since she was seated by him at the banquet; she was then the most enviable of women. From the pinnacle of greatness she had been betrayed into the power of a villain, whose designs were so atrocious, that she welcomed, as a refuge from them, the dreadful death which menaced her.

The deafening din of the torrent every moment increased: it echoed from the caverns beneath the fall, like subterranean thunder. Escape seemed hopeless, so irresistible was the strength of the current.

The livid hue of Vedova's countenance bespoke his dismay, but in this terrible emer-



gence, the young Queen, though nursed in softness and indolence, and warmly attached to the pleasures of life, displayed a courage till now unknown to her : she resolved not to disgrace her high birth, but to meet her doom with the calmness of conscious innocence.

“ Casting on the Prince a look of scorn, “ Baffled traitor,” she cried, “ vain was your boast of exulting in my dishonour. When hurried with me down yon falling flood, or dashed on some crag beneath, will you enjoy my dying groans, and eye my mangled form with barbarous triumph, as if you lay upon a couch of roses ? I shall resign my being unsullied by the taint of sin, and heaven will receive me to its mercy. But you in that appalling moment will be filled with horror and remorse ; nor will you dare to plead for pardon before the tribunal of an offended God : many a tender friend will mourn my doom, and think of me with fond regret ; but your fate will excite no tear of pity : the good and just will load your name with curses !”

Rage convulsed Vedova's lips while she spoke, and his eyes, beneath their lowering brows, flamed with a lurid glare. "Confusion ! must I bear these taunts from a woman, from one whose baleful beauties have been my ruin ! I laugh at your wild prophetic threats of future retribution. Were not this globe the sport of chance, or blind fatality, would innocence and beauty, such as yours, be left a prey to the remorseless flood ? Monks may delude with mouldering legends their weak and superstitious votaries — I scorn alike their hopes and fears. My desires have centred on this world's pleasures—but I can renounce them, and boldly plunge into eternal night.

"Yet wherefore should I seek the jaws of death ? Mark me, insulting fair : though you have loaded me with unjust reproaches, I still would wish to snatch you from destruction ; and at least deserve a fond return. Plunge with me into the waves, and I will strive to bear you to the land."

“No, Vedova ; I had rather die a thousand deaths than owe my life to you. I confide it to the protecting care of heaven.”

“Scorn you my generous offer?” exclaimed the indignant Prince : “then rush into perdition.”

He leaped from the boat, and for a while struggled with the raging tide. But at length he sank. Frederica shuddering, turned away. Her doom seemed inevitable. She cast a wistful look towards the groves of the palace : how quick beat her heart on discovering Leopold, who stood on the verge of a beetling crag, marking with agony the course of the bark.

Her hair had escaped from the wreath of jewels that confined it, and streamed in the wind : she raised towards him her dark eyes floating in tears : a transient glow suffused her cheek ; and she clasped her hands with momentary rapture, on beholding him once more.

Though she cherished not the faintest hope,

it gave her a mournful pleasure to reflect that she should live in his remembrance, and be mourned to his latest breath. Had she perished in the abyss, unseen by any human eye, her fate would never have been discovered: she might have been suspected tamely to have yielded to Vedova's power, on being borne to some distant fortress among the Carpathian mountains, and the breath of obloquy might have soiled her fame: but now the tears of her sorrowing country would bedew her hearse, and her doom would inspire even her enemies with remorse and pity.

To calm the distraction of Leopold, she endeavoured to conceal her terror; but when the winding of the shore hid him from her, and the bark was hurried beneath an overshadowing rock, through whose obscurity no creature had ever passed, without being lost in the Fall; her fortitude fled, and she abandoned herself to despair.

The roar of the cataract was here so loud, that the vulture feared to build its nest in the

cavities of the cliffs above. Stunned by the horrid sound, she drooped her head against the side of the bark; the blood froze in her veins, and she lay almost deprived of animation.

An ancient oak, half-uprooted by the tempest, hung frowning over the torrent; the mighty force of the waters produced a perpetual trembling of the rock it grew from; and every blast threatened to hurl it into the foaming gulph. While Leopold gazed on it, its shattered branches appeared to approach still nearer the flood. By advancing along it, he thought that he might possibly snatch the fair victim from destruction.

He rushed towards a tuft of shrubs, which he imagined hid the path to it, resolving to rescue her or perish: but he found himself on the verge of a wild chasm, formed by some great convulsion of nature. The oak was inaccessible from the ridge of the mountain on which he stood, and where the steep was less precipitous, it was covered with imper-



vious underwood. If he were to retrace his steps, and attempt penetrating through the glen, long before he could reach the cliff the hapless Queen would be inevitably lost, for the boat was within fifty paces of the Fall.

He measured with horror the space she had yet to pass, before her tender limbs would be ingulphed by the raging waters, and wrung his hands in despair.

“Oh for an eagle’s wing,” he cried, “that I might speed to yon lovely creature’s rescue!”

What were his feelings when he beheld Count Faulconstein, who had parted from him in the woods, spring from the glade beyond the chasm, and climb the brow of the cliff.

Casimir rushed towards the oak, without a moment’s pause.

The boldest mariner that ever ploughed the deep, one inured to sleep upon the giddy mast, in defiance of the storm, would not have dared expose his life to such dreadful peril; but

he was raised by a sublime impulse above all fear. With an intrepid step he pressed the knotted oak, though it groaned beneath his weight, and the branches were washed by the spray of the descending flood.

The Marquis of Erlmir scarcely breathed through alarm—he trembled not less for his friend than for the Queen, and shuddered to think, that the two beings, for whom alone he wished to live, might the next moment be buried in the abyss !

Count Faulconstein stood calm, and collected, amid the uproar of the waters. The sacred love which glowed in his bosom was a powerful amulet, that in this terrible emergency inspired him with more than mortal courage.

His eyes were riveted on the bark, which came slowly on : as the eddy whirled it round, he perceived with horror that the terrified Queen had enveloped her face in her robe, and sunk bereft of animation against the stern.

He called to her in the accent of despair,

but his voice was drowned by the deafening din.

“Awake! Frederica, awake to life!” he cried in a louder tone.

She heard him : she threw back the mantle from her eyes : she beheld him kneeling on the incumbent oak. He stretched towards her his guardian arms.

She started from her seat, and as the eddy hurried her beneath, raised her clasped hands.

The energy of Count Faulconstein’s feelings endued him with herculean powers ; a lion’s sinew nerved his arm. Grasping with one hand a branch of the oak, with the other he caught the fair trembler by the wrist, and raised her from the boat, which the next instant was precipitated down the Fall and dashed to atoms !

With difficulty could he support her in his arms : but at length rising on his feet, he bore her slowly along the mossy trunk, that shook under his tread.

What extacy did the Marquis of Erlmir

feel, on seeing him reach the cliff in safety, with his lovely burthen !

He hastened to join them, but some minutes elapsed before he was able to discover the path through the woods.

The Count meanwhile bore Frederica, who had fainted through horror, to a sequestered grotto, at some distance from the Fall.

He laid her on a bed of moss, where St. Githa, who once tenanted the sacred cell, used to repose. He hung anxiously over her ; but when he felt her breath fan his neck, and her heart throb against his own, his solicitude yielded to rapture.

She still clung trembling to her preserver's arm, and her cheek drooped on his bosom : the faint flush that tinged it would have deepened to the glow of modest shame, had she known how fondly she clasped him.

Count Faulconstein had long thought Frederica the most captivating of women ; but till now he was unconscious how deeply he loved her. He could not forbear gazing on

the charms which the disorder of her dress revealed : her eye-lashes were still humid with tears, and her features caught a more touching expression, from the terror yet imprinted on them. In his conduct towards her none but the purest desires had hitherto actuated him. He would have been restrained by the modest diffidence of his nature from aspiring to her affections, even had they been free, and had every obstacle to the wishes of his heart been removed.

Though she reposed in him unbounded confidence, he had always borne himself towards her with the most distant respect ; but now, while she encircled him with her ivory arms, and reclined her head on his bosom, he forgot the solemn covenant he had ratified ; he forgot that her heart was Leopold's : he gazed on her till his senses were inebriated.

Her balmy lips seemed to incline towards his, and he could not refrain from gently pressing them : the soft contact recalled her to life : she raised her head, but a mist still con-



fused her faculties, and she detected not the enamoured Casimir.

On looking round she thought herself in some Elysian bower: the sun shone through the foliage of the shrubs that canopied the hermitage, and darted its quivering rays on the fractured masses of jasper which formed the roof.

The features of the Count being lost in shadow, she mistook him for the Marquis of Erlmir, and softly pronounced the name of Leopold.

Casimir felt a pang of remorse: he recollected the promise he had given, to promote her union with the Marquis, and the parting tones of his beloved sister vibrated on his ear.

Frederica did not distinguish the countenance of her preserver, at the moment of her escape from the Falls: she imagined it was Leopold who rescued her. On discovering the Count, she at once perceived her error; she clasped his hand, and tears of gratitude trembled in her eyes.

As the sound of the torrent swelled on the breeze, "Oh Casimir," she exclaimed, "but for your noble intrepidity, this heart would, ere now, have ceased to beat. Dashed from the tremendous height, on some craggy rock, I should have writhed in agony; and the Lugar's waves would have run crimson with my blood. I might have perished amid the chasms of unknown depths, the unfathomable abyss my sepulchre! No more should I have beheld yon sky that beams so beautiful through the grotto's rifted roof, nor those woods and lawns spangled with dew. How can I repay you? I shall never again view the orient sun without reflecting that to you I owe the gift of life, and preferring my orisons for your happiness."

While Frederica recurred to the horrors which had threatened her, the Count shuddered to think, that ere then, she might have been lost in the foaming gulph, mangled, and despoiled of every charm. While she breathed forth her grateful thanks, he perceived how

resistless was her softness. On beholding her amid the pomp and gaiety of her court, inebriated by the incense floating around her, he had often grieved to see a creature, who might command the homage of the good and wise, resign herself to indolence, and suffer the breath of flattery to soil the purity of her feelings.

She discovered now the diviner impulses of her soul, blended with whatever could fascinate the senses in woman. Her bosom, white as the cygnet's plume, was half-revealed through the loosened folds of her vest. She marked the roving glance of Casimir, and blushed as she fastened round her waist the zone, which, in her efforts to escape, had burst the ruby clasps that confined it.

Rising from the seat of moss, she said :  
 " Let us proceed to the palace, I shall be able to reach it without difficulty."

The Count did not oppose her wish : he felt how dangerous it would be to his peace to linger with her in that sequestered gloom.

He durst not raise his eyes to hers, lest she should read what passed in his heart ; but hastened to lead her from the hermitage.

“ This is enchanted ground,” he said to himself, “ and vain are my efforts to dissolve the spell that enthrals me. What demon tempts me to my ruin ! Methinks the genius of the abyss, the jealous power who reigns over yon dreadful flood, to punish me for having robbed him of his prey, in his wrath has frozen the powers of my soul, and roused these wild presumptuous wishes, which tend to plunge me in dishonour.”

Frederica gently reproached the Count for his silence ; and so soft were her accents, that he was almost induced to reveal his love.

His resolution was put to the severest proof, when she paused in a shadowy walk, being unable to discern the path through the obscurity. He raised his timid eyes to hers, but quickly averted them : he felt that another glance would prove his ruin. On emerging from the woods, they perceived at a distance

the Marquis of Erlmir, who hastened towards them. Not a shade of jealousy clouded Count Faulconstein's brow, as she sprang forward to meet his friend. He reflected with rapture on the happiness which he had bestowed.

The Lady Elfrida, and Baron Ardulf, who, in the greatest terror, had wandered through every walk in search of the Queen, joined them near the entrance of the gardens. They shuddered at the perils that had menaced her; and the Baron flew to dispel the alarm which her disappearance had produced through the palace.

Every Hungarian regarded her with enthusiasm, rescued as she had been from the verge of death. The warmest praise was lavished on her preserver, even by those who most envied his influence over her; but he shrunk from their applause, and fearing to trust himself within the sphere of the enchantress, hurried to his seclusion.

Among the shades of Valmir he revolved with confusion the evils which would have



flowed from the discovery of his love. Though indulgent to the conduct of others, he was a rigid censor of his own; and he severely reproached himself for having cherished for a moment the desire of possessing Frederica. He resolved not to see her again till she had become the wife of Leopold; but he could not help thinking of her: it was heavenly to reflect, that he had snatched her from destruction, and that he should often rise to her remembrance, though exiled from her.

No solicitations could induce him to approach the precincts of the palace, nor did he quit his retreat except to attend the council of the state. When he rose to assert his country's rights, the genius imprinted on his features, his graceful mien, his finely modulated voice, and the lucid clearness of his reasonings, captivated all who heard him, and the deepest attention reigned through the turbulent assembly. But when he inveighed against oppression, his eyes flashed fire, and the guilty trembled at his indignant frown.

After exerting his powers so nobly, he returned with a lighter heart to Valmir. He was serene, though pensive; and Leopold, who was often his guest, suspected not his secret disquietude.

One day as they were hawking in the forest, they lingered behind their train. It was sultry, though the foliage was touched by the tints of autumn.

They wound up the steep of Mount Iran, to breathe the pure air on its lower summit.

From the height they contemplated in silent awe the boundless expanse of mountains beyond, which formed a fine contrast to the rich vales on the borders of the Danube.

Leopold, who, since fate had bereft him of Ernestine, had become more deeply susceptible of religious impressions, exclaimed with fervor, "Among these solitudes, the most thoughtless would be inspired with devotion. Nature speaks in the murmur of the woods and streams, and warns us that we live in the presence of an all-powerful God."

“Her soft but clear voice,” replied his friend, “tells us too, that the goodness of the Divinity is as infinite as his power.”

“Do you think,” said Leopold, “if we had not received a ray of light from heaven, we should be enabled to pierce the sacred gloom, and to justify the divine dispensations?”

“The gospel,” replied Casimir, “could alone have diffused over the mass of mankind the persuasion that God regards his creatures with a father’s love, and has destined them for immortality. But these great truths, I am convinced, may be clearly deduced by the philosophic mind from the light of nature.”

“The Creator’s benevolence is not only revealed by the virtuous feelings which he has implanted in the human heart, but by the vast preponderance of good over evil in the world.

“How many of our hours flow on in peaceful enjoyment, for one that is embittered by bodily or mental pain.

“ We see around us an infinity of creatures, happy in their existence.

“ In every production of the earth a benevolent design is discernible. The evil that results, is but casual; clearly not the object for which the production was created. The ultimate tendency is always beneficial.

“ Had God been regardless of his creatures, would so rich a provision have been made for our enjoyment, in the exercise of the social affections, and the cultivation of the mental powers? Would he have annexed so high a pleasure to the indulgence of the animal appetites, when a sensation of pain, or a blind instinct, would as perfectly have fulfilled the design?

“ No. In all the economy of nature we recognise benevolence, nor can we avoid regarding this divine attribute as unbounded. For, since God has formed us to love and revere whatever is generous and just, and to receive the purest pleasure from doing good, he must

necessarily possess these moral feelings in the highest perfection.

“ Why then are the innocent and virtuous exposed to misfortune ?

“ We cannot refrain from believing, when we contemplate the immensity of nature, that the power which created so harmonious a system, would have been fully adequate to the removal of all the evils which injure our repose.

“ The proofs of the Creator’s infinite power and goodness being admitted, one inference alone can be drawn from the evils of which we complain. They must have been ordained for some benevolent purpose ; and since it is evident that in this world the divine intention is unfulfilled, we must unavoidably conclude, that in another all will be perfected.

“ These arguments, drawn from a consideration of the attributes of God, have impressed me with the deepest persuasion, that the soul is immortal ; yet, if more were required, what a variety might be offered !



“ The opinion has prevailed in every age and clime, even among the rudest tribes of savages.

“ The soul is clearly of a purer essence than the body, which rather confines its powers, than is necessary to its existence.

“ Its reverence for virtue ; the strange discordance between its ideas of moral excellence, and the course of human affairs ; its reasoning faculties ; and its tendency to look beyond the present scene ; all encourage the persuasion, that it is designed for another world.

“ This at once reconciles every appearance of disorder. The contrary supposition, that it perishes with the body, involves us in a maze of the wildest absurdity.

“ The changes observable in the material world, are quite as inconceivable, and evince as great an exertion of power, as the flight of the soul into a higher sphere.

“ The birth of a living creature is a mystery as incomprehensible.

“ Those majestic oaks rose from acorns, which must have contained their undeveloped organs.

“ Seeds, that the nicest inquisition of the sense cannot distinguish from each other, are converted into plants of a totally different species, by a process which baffles all our search.

“ Those insects, that fly from flower to flower, once were grubs, and grovelled on the earth ; but they have shaken off their torpor, unfolded their radiant wings, and risen into the air, endued with new organs and capacities for enjoyment.”

While Casimir conversed with his friend, a sacred calm diffused itself over his troubled spirit. They parted on reaching the forest. The Count returned to Valmir, and Leopold rode towards the moor, where the falconers were pursuing their game.

He checked his steed on discovering, at a little distance, the Queen, attended by Elfrida and Baron Ardulf. The road along

the side of the mountain was so steep, that she was induced to quit her carriage, and walk homeward through the dell. He gave his horse to the care of a page, and hastened to join her. Her eyes beamed with pleasure on his approach. He offered her his arm, the path being strewn with fragments from the cliffs of marble that frowned above.

“How beautiful,” she exclaimed, “is the autumnal foliage! How finely does it harmonize with the rich tint of those crags over which it waves in picturesque luxuriance! I could rove for hours among these solitudes. What stillness reigns! the woodpecker’s cry alone is heard, that clings to the bark of yonder beach.

“You see, Leopold, I have of late fallen in love with the wild charms of nature. It would be more wise, I own, surrounded as I am by insidious foes, to trace the diversities of the human character, than the varied shades of the forest. I would it were as easy to distinguish the good from the deceitful, as to

class the tribes of shrubs and flowers ; that I might avoid the traitor, who, like the nightshade, twines round my heart to poison its repose."

"And confide in him," interrupted the Marquis, "who would shelter you, as the oak does the tender woodbine that enwreathes it."

Frederica smiled, and unconsciously pressed the supporting arm of Leopold.

"How difficult," she rejoined, "must this science prove to our weak sex, who yet most need its guidance."

"You think too humbly of your powers, lady: the female mind surpasses the boasted intellect of man, not only in fineness of feeling and brilliant fancy, but in that quick intuitive discernment which no disguise can elude."

"I wish not to refute your opinion," said the Queen with gaiety; "but though we may vie in sensibility with you, and perceive what is beautiful, and what is defective in points

of taste, I fear, in depth, and expansion of mind, we are far inferior. These are the qualities that enable their possessor to see through the mists of prejudice, to deduce from the gathered wisdom of ages just views of human affairs, and to unveil the recesses of the heart. Were I gifted with this highest species of knowledge, from how many suspicions should I be relieved!—You shall be my instructor, Leopold.”

“To gain so lovely a pupil,” he replied, “I will assume the air of a sage; but you will soon detect my ignorance. Count Faulconstein would give you wiser lessons.”

“I despair of drawing the recluse from his cell,” said the Queen. “Since he came like a guardian spirit to my rescue, I have scarcely seen him. I thought to have proved myself not wholly undeserving of his care, but he has ceased to take an interest in my fate. Buried amongst those woods, he regards the world with a fastidious eye; and if he emerge



from his seclusion, he will have contracted the austerity of a hermit.—I shall shrink from the counsels of so stern a moralist.”

“Unjust Frederica!” interrupted the Marquis, “in whom will you repose confidence, if not in Casimir? He flies to the sequestered shade, not to brood, like the misanthrope, over the imperfections of his unhappy species, but to meditate how best he may promote their happiness.—Nor are you forgotten in his lonely musings. He often regrets, that there are spirits base enough to conspire against your peace.”

Frederica blushed, while she listened to her reprover. She besought him to hide from his friend the culpable suspicions she had harboured. It was delightful to reflect that she had been in an error.

She walked on, wrapped in pensive thought, till her attention was roused by a distant strain of music.

It died away in a sweet and plaintive

cadence. She stopped, and cast around an eager glance, to discover whence it proceeded; but she could perceive no one.

“Among those woody cliffs,” exclaimed Elfrida, “some fairy lurks, and breathes his warblings to their echoes.”

“Such melody,” said the Queen, “would soothe the jealous Oberon himself. But look; beyond the mountain-ash, whose scarlet berries hang in such rich clusters, the mournful lutanist reclines. He is clad in the habit of a Carmelite, and doubtless belongs to the neighbouring monastery.

“The birch that lifts its glossy stem from the rock beneath, and half conceals him, is less light and elegant than his form.

“Listen, he sweeps the chords of the instrument. Let us not lose a note.”

The youth, unconscious of being heard, after a soft and solemn prelude, sang the following sonnet:

## SONNET.

Ye fir-crown'd cliffs, as mournfully I rove  
 Among your mossy crags, my pensive ear  
 The parting tones of Hermia seems to hear,  
 In every breeze that waves the woods above.  
 Her neck in sorrow drooped beneath the shade  
 Of her fine hair, and as she sigh'd "farewell,"  
 Her dark blue eyes were bath'd in tears that fell  
 O'er her fair bosom.—'Mid the forest glade,  
 Where the dim convent's spiry turrets frown,  
 Tinged by the fading beam, the sisters breathe  
 Their orisons; and hark! the rocks beneath  
 In echoes faint reply; my spirits own  
 The influence of the soft religious lay,  
 As on the evening gale it dies away.

Frederica was so much enchanted by the  
 melody that she marked not the disordered  
 mien of Leopold: his color fled, his knees  
 trembled, and he would have sunk to the  
 earth, had not his hunting spear supported  
 him.

“Tread gently,” she whispered to Elfrieda, “lest we affright this songster from his nest.”

Again he touched the strings, and sang these stanzas:

Why steals o'er my, Hermia so pensive a gloom,  
As the leaves of the poplar are strewn in the glade?  
Do they warn thee, fair mourner, that youth's brightest  
bloom,  
Like them, in the blast of the autumn must fade?

Cease, lovely enthusiast: the light sunny hair,  
That floats o'er thy neck, may be silvered by age,  
Yet still shall the softness, that breathes through thine air,  
The homage of taste and of feeling engage.

With tender devotion I oft shall repeat

The vows that in life's vernal morning were given,  
And turn from the gay and the haughty, to meet

Those glances that beam with the azure of heaven!

The Marquis of Erlmir thought himself  
in a dream. He had composed those very

airs, and Ernestine had often sung them to him. While he listened to the strain, her thrilling tones seemed to vibrate on his ear, and he almost believed her spirit had assumed that holy garb. He could not divest himself of the dread which seized him.

The distance prevented him from discerning the Carmelite's features. "'Tis an illusion," he exclaimed—"yet I must see the face of this unknown."

Observing a path that wound up the steeps, he pursued it with hurried steps, hoping to reach the brow of the cliff, where the stranger was seated. But he soon lost himself among the mazes of the mountain.

The youth meanwhile descended beneath the umbrage of the shrubs that embossed the declivity, and drew near his auditors. The interposing branches hid them from him, and as he advanced slowly among the mossy crags, with his eyes bent upon the ground, Frederica had leisure to observe the singular



beauty of his features, and the reposing dignity of his mien.

From his neck hung a rosary of black beads, forming a contrast to the white habit of his order.

As the Queen approached, the rustling of the leaves startled him, and in his confusion, on seeing her, he dropped the lute, which, gliding down the velvet slope, fell in her path.

She took it up, and returning it to him, said: "Stranger, I should grieve to see this instrument injured; for never before have I heard such heavenly sounds."

The Carmelite kneeling, received it with a modest and respectful air. She was desirous to learn what had led one so young to bury himself in the gloom of a cloister; he seemed hardly fifteen, the down of manhood not yet having darkened his lip.

His light hair diffused a golden gleam, as it waved over his shoulders; it shadowed a

forehead which no violent passion had ever contracted to a frown.

The Queen was touched by the sublime feeling that beamed from his eyes.

What pity, thought she, those fine features should be hid under the cowl, and those ringlets be clipped into the monastic tonsure. "Come you from the Carmelite Convent?" she demanded.

The novice bowed assent: he was too much embarrassed to speak.

"I knew not that its walls held one so highly gifted; and though I venerate religion's votaries, it fills me with regret to see those, who might do good in the world, consume their days in fasts and penance. The aged, who have outlived their friends, or been crushed by calamity, wisely seek refuge in the cloister; but you, I trust, have not suffered from the frowns of fate. I fear the undue authority of your parents has doomed you to assume the religious habit."

“My own free choice, lady, alone determined me,” replied the youth, in a trembling voice; which gradually, as his confusion decreased, became clear and harmonious. “To you, who have been used to regal splendor, the monastery must appear a gloomy prison; yet many of its votaries regard it as a haven which protects them from the tempest.”

“May no misfortune, Princess, cloud the heaven of your brow! May you not find the pleasures of life deceitful, as the flowers among whose leaves lurk scorpions; nor live to envy the pensive inmate of the cloister!”

“Think me not the foreboder of evil,” continued the enthusiast, while a celestial radiance darted from his eyes, and he seemed inspired with a prophet’s fervor. “I see the storms that threatened you, disperse. I see you the patroness of genius, the consoler of the unfortunate, shedding on all the sacred incense of your bounty.”

The Queen scarcely breathed, that she might not lose a syllable. The youth’s ærial

form, and the faultless beauty of his features, seemed designed for a purer orb ; and she almost believed her tutelary saint had assumed that holy garb to remind her of her duties.

She enquired whether he had fixed his abode at the monastery.

“ I cannot part with you,” she said, “ without knowing when I shall see you again.”

“ To-morrow, lady, I depart for a far distant land. I may never more kneel at your feet ; but wherever I bend my pilgrim steps, up the toilsome steep, or through the burning desert, I shall not tell my beads without offering my orisons for your safety.”

The Queen, charmed by the youth’s enthusiastic homage, turned to see whether Leopold was near. She beheld him coming from the path that led among the cliffs.

He faintly smiled as he approached her, but started and stood rooted to the earth, on discovering the Carmelite,

She was surprised at his altered look : a

rustling in the air at that moment drew her attention. A falcon, with a wild-fowl struggling in his talons, flew towards them, and dropped his fluttering prey at her feet. The hawk then clung to Leopold's arm, ruffling his plumes in exultation.

He roughly shook off the bird, and rushed to the spot where the unknown had stood : it was deserted.

In vain he explored the dell. No vestige of the stranger was discernible.

He enquired of Baron Arlberg, who came from the woods in search of his game, whether a Carmelite had passed him. " I have seen no living creature," answered the Baron ; " he could not have quitted the glen unobserved, even had he fled swifter than the antelope. But I perceive, my lord, you wish to divert my thoughts from the Queen. Who would not leave the pursuit of the moor-fowl, or the forest-deer, when so fair a being crossed his path ? I am not blind to her power over you. Did you think me hood-winked like my fal-



con? Why do you suffer her to proceed alone? She has already reached the extremity of the grove."

The Baron rejoined his partners of the chace, and the Marquis of Erlmir, so perturbed, as to be hardly conscious what he did, hurried along the glade.

The disappearance of the Carmelite seemed to him almost supernatural: he recollected the shadowy form, which had glided by the couch at Valmir; and the aërial strains he had often heard among the ruins of Cloister Firnwald.

"It is the offended spirit of Ernestine," he exclaimed, after combining every fearful circumstance. "She haunts my path, and silently reproaches me for suffering another's charms to interest my heart. Are then my attentions to Frederica so obvious, as to attract even Arlberg's careless eye; and am I alone blind to the sorcery she exerts on me? Oh no! the affection I cherish for her, is such only as a sister might inspire. The faith I

plighted to you, my sainted love, shall be inviolate: my perfidy shall never cast over your bliss the slightest shade of grief. In the hope of being re-united to you in heaven, I will relinquish every earthly pleasure; and live but for the performance of what is great and good!"

On drawing near the Queen, Leopold endeavoured to conceal his perturbation; but, habituated as she was to observe every variation of his countenance, he could not deceive her: she gently reproved him for hiding the source of his disquietude. Touched by the anxiety she evinced, he promised to reveal it to her, when he had recovered sufficient calmness.

He took leave of her on reaching the palace. She passed the evening bewildered by a thousand vague conjectures: she feared lest some unknown fair had rivalled her in his affections.—Had she dreamed of the perils which threatened him, how quickly would have vanished all solicitude for herself!

Vedova, who she thought had been drowned in the Lugar, still lived. His associates had rescued him from the waves. Burning with jealousy against his brother, he meditated a deed of the darkest dye. He had discovered her love, and reflecting, that, but for Leopold, he might himself have won her heart, he panted for revenge on the destroyer of his hopes.

He lurked in disguise near Buda, and every night conferred with Friuli, who wrought him, by his crafty insinuations, almost to phrenzy.

One evening, as he entered a retired oratory in the Cardinal's palace, where they usually met, he was startled by seeing with the minister a Carmelite friar.

"This is Oswald, your brother's almoner," said Friuli: "I have unfolded to him our purpose." The monk bowed respectfully, and seated himself in the recess of an antique window: its obscurity concealed his features; but when the taper's light glanced on them,

their strong lines and livid hue betrayed the dark working of his soul. He seemed a fit instrument for deeds of villainy.

“Father,” demanded the Cardinal, “have you yet tracked the Marquis in his lonely walks through the forest, and discovered his haunt?”

“Three evenings ago, my lord, he passed me, as I was returning to vespers, and to my surprise, bent his steps towards Cloister Firnwald.

“I followed with caution, and concealed myself in the vestibule of the chapel, behind the shrine of St. Githa. It is so thickly mantled by the shrubs which spread over the ruined side of the abbey, that, though he came close to me, I lay unseen.

“The central aisle, where the roof has fallen in, being open to the sky, I could discern every movement of his features. He often paused, and raised his brow to heaven. After traversing for a while the vestibule, he sat down at the base of the statue, and folding

his arms, became absorbed in thought : some vast design seemed to enchain his faculties.

“ At length, murmuring some inarticulate sounds, he drew from his neck a miniature. It was richly set with jewels, and represented a female young and lovely.

“ As I bent forward to discern it more clearly, the rustling leaves startled him. He hastily hid it under his vest, and rising up, passed through a distant arch and disappeared. Fearful of being discovered, I did not follow him, but returned to the monastery.”

“ Doubtless it was Frederica’s picture, on which he feasted his gloating eyes,” exclaimed Vedova, grasping the hilt of his dagger. “ It will not prove a preserving amulet to shield his bosom from my vengeance.”

“ Among those ruins,” said the Cardinal with a malignant smile, “ some moralists would meditate on the instability of pomp and power. Your brother muses on his elevation to the throne, and exults in the thought of seeing you bend at his footstool.



“As he paces the aisles, where the cold vestals kept their midnight vigils, he contrasts their penance with the raptures that await him in the heaven of Frederica’s arms.”

“Confusion ! madness !” cried Vedova, “torture me no more. At nightfall we will seek the ruins, friar ; not to pour forth the mummeries of prayer. His blood alone can calm the tempest of my brain. It shall flow in rich libations to the powers of darkness, who, as legends say, hold their orgies there. Well remembered — The abbey is a fit place for deeds that shun the light. Should the passing peasant hear Leopold’s dying groans, he would fancy them the shrieks of some suffering demon, and speed his flight far from the haunted precincts, never suspecting the sounds were such as the earth owned.”

The Cardinal, who had feared lest nature might plead in Vedova’s breast, and shake his resolution, triumphed on seeing his lips quiver, and a livid paleness blanch his cheek ; but aware, if Leopold resisted, that the at-

tempt might fail, he felt some alarm, when it was proposed for the approaching night.

“ Restrain, Prince,” he said, “ this burst of passion. Once already has your rashness nearly involved us in ruin. Remember the Falls of Hela, and avoid blindly rushing into peril : a safer scheme may be devised. Is not the Marquis, friar, a rigid observer of religion’s rites ?”

“ He will attend to-morrow, my lord, the mass in our cathedral. He bade me for some secret reason conceal his coming from the Abbot.”

“ ’Tis well,” rejoined Friuli, “ his love of secrecy favours my purpose.”

After a pause he went to a table, unclosed a hidden drawer, and taking thence a phial, “ Oswald,” he said, in a lower tone, “ you officiate at the altar. When you pour out the consecrated wine, shed a few drops of this liquid into the chalice. Be resolute, and the rich monastery of Arpinflur is your reward. Put up your poignard, Prince ; this is a surer

instrument of vengeance, a sovereign philtre to calm the fever of desire and ambition: without convulsing the limbs, or freckling the skin with tell-tale spots, its potent essence corrupts the vital current, and quickly spreads a deadly torpor through the frame."

"Hark ! what sound was that !" muttered the monk. A dreadful pause ensued. He looked fearfully through the lattice. The dashing of the fountain could alone be heard, that shot its spray into a basin of black marble in the centre of the court.

"Though no mortal ear," continued Oswald, "listens to our counsels ; should there exist a power, whose intelligence pervades the world, and searches the recesses of the heart, what perdition do we heap on ourselves ! And must I then drug the hallowed cup with poison—profane the very blood of the Redeemer ! The boldest scoffer of our rites regards with homage that awful pledge of divine pardon. Guilt of so deep a dye would plunge me beyond the utmost reach of mercy !"

“Dotard!” cried the Prince, “go, waste your hours in sack-cloth and in ashes. The strong and self-poised mind laughs at the dreams of superstition. By removing those who would injure our happiness, we obey the great law of nature. Our passions, like the instincts, which urge the eagle and the lion to seize their prey, were doubtless given us, that we might crush those whom we have cause to hate.”—“To lift the veil of nature,” Oswald replied, “far exceeds my power. I wish not to reflect. Immersed in luxury, I shall drown the voice of conscience. Give me the fatal phial.”

Its touch curdled the blood in his veins, but with an air of firmness he assured Friuli and the Prince, that they might rest on him the fullest reliance, and departed.

The appointed hour drew nigh. Oswald, who had passed the night revolving the horrid deed, and fluctuating between the desire of greatness, and the dread of retribution, thought he had gone too far to recede:

but the matin bell of the cathedral smote on his heart, and as he advanced among the brotherhood, who were ranged on each side of the aisle, he drew his cowl closer to conceal his dismay and confusion.

He imagined every eye regarded him with suspicion. The solemnity that reigned around, heightened by the clouds of incense rising from the censers, and the organ's swell, would have inspired an atheist with awe.

Oswald could not suppress a groan on seeing his destined victim approach the altar. The Marquis of Erlmir, whom an anxious desire of discovering the mysterious stranger had led to the monastery, threw an eager glance among the novices, but could not recognise him.

The sky was lowering and tempestuous, and as the friar mingled the draught of death, the thunder rolled in a tremendous peal. Leopold, while he received the host, was struck by his haggard features, which caught a lurid gleam from the gathering storm.



Muttering inaudibly the awful exhortation, Oswald proffered the chalice, when a louder burst of thunder shook the fane, and the blue rays of lightning glanced against the silver crucifix on the high altar. The poisoned cup dropped from the friar's hand, and tottering a few paces, he sank into the arms of a monk, who sprang to support him. The brotherhood, attributing the tremor that seized him to sudden illness, bore him to his cell. When the disturbance had subsided, another monk officiated at the shrine.

Oswald lay on his pallet of straw tortured by remorse. The wild laugh of fiends rang in his ears. The shock he had received had broken an artery, and he felt himself dying. What would he not consent to suffer, could he unfold to Leopold the black conspiracy against him, and relieve his soul by this expiation from the guilt that weighed it down! Every moment he breathed with more pain. He listened in trembling hope, but no step approached his cell.

The Marquis of Erlmir, wholly occupied in looking for the novice, reflected not on the friar's strange demeanor, which would at another time have raised his suspicion. He lingered in the cathedral, observing the monks as they retired ; but none of them bore any resemblance to the unknown. " It was no mortal being ; but Ernestine herself, whom I beheld in the forest," he exclaimed. " I have incurred her displeasure : she deigned not to speak to me : she fled on my approach. But never more will I offend her by offering my homage to Frederica : she will pardon me on seeing my grief ; she will descend again to counsel and protect me."

An ineffable fear mingled with the pleasure Leopold felt, while he yielded to the persuasion that Ernestine haunted his steps.

From childhood he had believed that the ghosts of the departed were permitted on high occasions to hold intercourse with mortals. His religious feelings had strengthened this

impression ; nor did he wish to divest himself of it. From an analogy with the material world, he thought it highly probable that there existed an infinity of creatures rising in a progressive chain of excellence till they approached the perfection of the Divinity. The Supreme Being might choose to effect his purposes by their ministry, and might ordain that they should influence the human race by their awful admonitions.

This opinion had prevailed over every region of the globe. It was not only sanctioned by the wisest sages of antiquity, but by the inspired volume itself.

Leopold, rapt in sublime enthusiasm, resolved to seek the tomb of his beloved, and there invoke her shade.

The last rays of the sun tinged the Carpathian mountains, as he bent his steps towards the woods that embosomed Cloister Firnwald. An undefinable foreboding of evil oppressed him, and so tremblingly alive were his nerves, that every sylvan sound startled him ; his heart

fluttered, if but a withered cone from the cedar fell in his path, or the yellow leaves of autumn whirled in the eddying breeze. The serene beauty of the evening landscape gradually soothed his troubled fancy; but on discovering the spires of the abbey, he paused, and for a while could not summon courage to proceed.

The ruins wore an air of more than their wonted desolation, involved as they were in the mystic obscurity of twilight: horror brooded on the fallen pile.

The Marquis, as he approached it, imagined he could perceive a shadowy form flit along the aisles; he advanced a few paces, but could not discern it again.

He feared to traverse the intricate cloisters, and passing through the laurel grove, he reached the cemetery by a circuitous path.

A deeper gloom darkened his spirits as he drew near the sepulchral urn: instead of reflecting on the blissful repose of his Ernestine, he gazed on the hallowed turf with a

gloomy wildness; as if his eye pierced the darkness of the grave, and discerned her pale and lifeless, despoiled of every charm, and covered with the shroud. "Here," he exclaimed, "did the sisterhood of St. Hermogild chaunt the solemn dirge, while the white plumes of her hearse waved in the winter wind: there was her coffin lowered into the vault, and the cold earth thrown on it."—The dismal sound seemed to vibrate on his brain!

He started from the tomb, and was hurrying towards the forest, when near him he descried through the dusk a shadowy figure.

Though he could not see it distinctly, the moon being veiled in clouds, he was impressed with a persuasion that it was no terrestrial being. He shuddered, and an icy tremor crept through his nerves.

For a few moments the phantom remained motionless, then glided towards the ruins, and disappeared among the clustering pillars. "Tis she; 'tis my sainted love," murmured



Leopold; while a thrill of ineffable rapture darted through his shivering frame. Though he could not distinguish her features, he heard the rustling of her garments as she passed; and drawn on by a resistless spell, he rushed towards the abbey.

On reaching the vestibule of the chapel, he looked around in vain—no trace of her was discernible. A thousand wild fears bewildered him. Had it been his departed Ernestine who fled before him, he thought she would not have vanished without speaking to him, and at least giving him some assurance that he was still dear to her. The neighbouring peasants shunned the ruins with superstitious horror; they believed that the ghosts of the nuns, who, when the abbey was wrapped in flames, yielded in violation of their vows to the wishes of the sacrilegious spoilers, yet hovered among its cloisters, and did penance for their guilt.

The witches of the glen too, it was reported, held their revels there; and often assumed

a fascinating form to lure their victims, whom they left to perish, lost in the intricate vaults beneath, while with horrid mockery they laughed at their groans.

“Wherefore should I tremble?” said the Marquis; “if my beloved comes, like the angel of death, to bear me from the world, I would receive my doom without a murmur: and as for the ministers of darkness, none but the guilty should dread them. Tempt me they may, but though they plunge me down to the earth’s centre, I shall not be beyond the protecting care of heaven.”

His courage revived: he approached the shrine of St. Githa: the wasting flames had not injured the statue of the virgin martyr; it was half-hid by the shrubs that hung over the roofless side of the edifice. While he gazed on it, he thought its garments resembled those of the phantom, and he almost expected to see the marble glow with life, and descend from the pedestal.

He had not wholly subdued this illusion,

when, on drawing nearer the shrine, he perceived the foliage move. He recoiled in terror. Suddenly a deer rose from its bed of fern, near the base of the statue, and bounding along the fractured pavement, sought the forest.

Leopold smiled at his fears, and resting on a fragment of the ruin, contemplated the features of the sculptured saint. The divine resignation imprinted on them, transfused itself into his bosom, and he felt elevated above all earthly terrors. He was roused by a voice, whose tones thrilled every fibre of his frame with mingled awe and rapture.

“Leopold,” it repeated : he started up, and led by the magic sound, rushed along an aisle, on which the moonlight fell.

Through an arch he discerned the shadowy being who had glided from the tomb. A cold shivering seized him at the consciousness that he was in the presence of a supernatural power ; his ears tingled, his hair rose up, and every faculty was suspended with horror.

He stood as if touched by the wand of a sorcerer, with his eyes bent wildly on the apparition.

She was near the altar. The garments of a Carmelite enveloped her airy form; a flood of roseate light beamed over them, and by fits played on her colourless features; her cowl was thrown back, and her hair streamed over her shoulders in beautiful profusion.

What was Leopold's emotion on beholding again the features of Ernestine! He gazed on her with holy transport, but it was tinged with terror.

As she moved up the steps of the altar, a strain of sweet, but solemn music rose on the breeze; it seemed to come from an invisible choir of seraphs. Leopold listened in extacy, but Ernestine's silence repressed his joy. Her eyes, he thought, sparkled with indignation.

"Come you, fair spirit," he cried, "from the realms of bliss, to reprove me for suffering another's beauties to beguile my grief for you?—Ah! no. That smile of heavenly

softness dispels my fears. Do you revisit this dark world to animate my drooping virtue, or to prepare me for that fatal hour, terrible even to the just and good, when they are uninspired by celestial aid?"

Thrice did the vision raise her arm to speak: at length she murmured; "Fear not my reproaches, Leopold: though fate should waft me beyond the furthest star that sparkles in the depths of ether, thither I should bear the fond remembrance of you. Eternity itself will not efface the deep impression.

"I haunt not your path to spread a gloom over the transient gleams of happiness this earth bestows. I have led you to this sacred solitude to warn you against your treacherous brother. He pants to plunge his dagger in your heart. Beware then of him, and for your country's sake, if not your own, preserve your precious life.

"Farewell, my Leopold, till in a purer orb we meet again."

Tears rushed into her eyes as she turned



away. The Marquis fearing he should never see her more, approached the shrine, and extended his hands to arrest her flight.

She shrunk back, and bade him forbear ; but perceiving her colour fade, her knees sink under her, he sprang forward with instinctive alarm and caught her in his arms.

Amazement ! the lovely being whom he clasped was no aërial phantom.—

His Ernestine, warm with life, though breathless with emotion, lay panting on his bosom.

The bewildered Leopold almost doubted the evidence of his senses. He feared to press the trembler to his heart, lest she should dissolve in air, and mingle with the mist of evening.

“ ’Tis she ! ’tis she herself ! ” he cried, while he hung over her in extacy, “ my own dear Ernestine,—she breathes,—she lives. Heaven has restored her to me from the grave. Yet can it be ? Am I the sport of witchcraft, or is this the delusion of a dream ? Soft—she

revives, her eyes unclose, they beam on me with affection,—rapture unutterable ! I again clasp her to my bosom.”

Leopold was almost bereft of reason: he knew not what to think: he lifted the ringlets from the neck of Ernestine, and perceiving the dark mole which stained its lustre, he kissed it with fervor. How often had his fascinated eye dwelt on that lovely stain !

The blushing girl gently strove to disengage herself from his caress. Conscious of having nearly defeated by her weakness the great design on which the fate of her country hung, she was filled with confusion ; but she vainly struggled to repress her feelings. The joy of seeing him again, bereft her of all her energy, and reclining her cheek against his, she yielded to the delicious sensations which overflowed her heart.

Suddenly she started from his arms, and looking fearfully round, exclaimed, “ Let us leave this gloom, my Leopold: I tremble for your life. The dying Oswald scarcely

two hours ago, as I stood by his couch, confessed to me that he had been employed by the remorseless Vedova to destroy you. I flew to warn you of your brother's villainy. He may track your steps. I shudder at the thought! should he discover you among these unfrequented aisles,——”

“Be not alarmed,” interrupted the Marquis; “while with you, I am beneath the shadow of an angel's wing. To return through the forest might be dangerous, but here no lurker could steal on me unperceived, and my sword will defend me.”——“Let us at least seek the open glade,” rejoined the trembling girl.”

Leopold imagined himself in Paradise, while she drew his arm within hers, and pointing to the moonlight lawn, besought him to hasten from the gloom of the abbey.

He paused on hearing the solemn melody which had inspired him with so much awe. It died away in a soft and plaintive cadence.

“ ‘Tis but the organ’s peal from the Carmelite monastery,” said his fair conductress, “ the monks are performing a requiem.”

As they passed the window fronting the shrine, Leopold discovered that the rosy light which had streamed over Ernestine’s robe in the abbey, was produced by the moon beaming through the tinted glass; and he smiled at his superstitious fears. On approaching the funeral urn a thousand confused ideas floated over his fancy; the fair creature, whose arm fondly clung to his, and whose breath fanned his neck, he had believed lay in her coffin beneath.

“ What means this hallowed marble?” he exclaimed. “ Unfold, my beloved, the mystery that has involved your fate. Surely my senses do not wander—if this be an illusion, may it never dissolve. Yet no,—though endued with a seraph’s purity, you are still a being of this world. That dear familiar voice recalls the enchanting hours, when we strayed among the groves of Val-

mir. I thought myself too happy for an earthly creature, and trembled lest some unforeseen misfortune should befall me. How prophetic were my fears ! But tell me, dear one, where have you been ? What power has torn you from me ? I was led to believe you had perished in the wild."

"I was indeed exposed to the tempest's fury," she replied, "and lay buried under the snows of Mount Iran. The pulse of life had almost ceased to beat, when my brother, led by the traces of my feet, discovered me."

"One fatal evening, on his return from the palace, Casimir had revealed to me that Frederica loved you. Though the thought of the calamities which I might bring on my country, by preventing your elevation to the throne, plunged me in the deepest grief, I could not consent to resign you. But when I was preserved from death as if by divine interposition, in the fervor of my gratitude I resolved to sacrifice what was most dear to me on earth, and pursue the path of duty, however



fatal it might prove to my happiness. I regarded my brother as the instrument of heaven, and determined to obey the principles which he had taught me to revere. I had, till now, been rather the child of innocence, than the votaress of virtue ; but the severest of trials awaited me. The voice of duty bade me banish myself from you for ever : I shrunk from the dreadful ordeal,—but my courage revived, when I reflected on the blessings which our country would enjoy beneath your sway. Frederica would be protected from the power of Vedova : her tenderness would gradually soothe your grief for my loss.”

“ Generous, exalted creature !” cried the Marquis, regarding her with enthusiastic veneration. “ But could you believe, Ernestine,” he continued, while a conscious blush suffused his cheek, “ after devoting my affections to you, I could have transferred them to another.”

“ While you deemed me living,” she replied, “ no persuasions, I was sensible, would

induce you to relinquish me. I therefore suffered the report to prevail that I had perished beneath the horrors of the storm. With reluctance did my brother consent to deceive you, but at length I overcame his scruples. It was my design to seclude myself from every eye, till his sympathizing friendship had softened the poignancy of your grief, and then to bid a long adieu to Valmir. We were to depart together for the Castle of Ombra. It is situated on the Austrian frontier. Casimir hoped I should gradually recover my tranquillity when re-united to my sister, who since her marriage had been separated from me. To remove every shadow of doubt respecting my death, by the counsel of the venerable Ceofrid, the funeral rites were performed with mournful pomp, and this tomb was raised. The abbot, who was to travel with me as far as the confines of the Carpathian mountains, induced me yesterday to disguise myself in the habit of a Carmelite, that I might escape observation, and to re-

side at the monastery till my departure : it was fixed for to-morrow. My continuance here has twice exposed me to the risque of a discovery : once, when with my lute I was beguiling my grief among the woods,—and three months ago at Valmir, when, unconscious you were so near me, I approached the sofa, where you slept.”

“ Would I had arrested your flight,” interrupted the Marquis, “ and discovered that my nocturnal visitor was my lost love ! How many hours of anguish should I have avoided !”

“ Oh, my Leopold,” she replied with mournful softness, “ fate forbids that our glowing visions of happiness should be realized. Do not renew the conflict, which my reason has decided. Our beloved Sovereign’s peace, and the prosperity of our country, require that we should part for ever. The evening before you left us, you conversed with Casimir on the patriotism displayed by the just and good of ancient

times : while I listened, my fancy burned with emulative fire, and I felt how sublime it was to devote ourselves for our native land. Then seek not to dissuade me from my purpose : fulfil your exalted destiny."

"What ! Ernestine,—abandon you ! throw from me a creature so fair, so tender, so divinely good !—impossible. Were I exiled to the dreariest desert of Siberia, with you I should be happy. Those smiles would invest the polar winter of its gloom. While you reposed on my bosom, how dear would be my lowly hut ! how far more enviable than yonder regal dome !"

Ernestine could not resist this fond appeal. Reclined on each other's neck, for some minutes they yielded in silence to the rapture that overpowered them.

Though the surrounding groves were embrowned by the winds of autumn, the air was serene as in the finest nights of June. The lovers were seated on the base of the tomb, and a spreading acacia extended over

them its living canopy. Though the aromatic shrubs no longer exhaled their summer fragrance, the faint odours of the fading foliage gently soothed the sense.

As the moonbeams, quivering through the leaves, threw by fits a flood of silver radiance over Ernestine, and then left her in shadow, Leopold thought she had become more touchingly beautiful since he parted from her. He fondly hoped she would relinquish her design of leaving him. But his caresses could not stifle the warning voice, that murmured in her ear, and exhorted her to pursue the path of duty. She raised her swimming eyes to heaven, and contemplated the orb of night rolling in tranquil glory. The stars were lost in its effulgence: one planet alone sparkled among the clouds that fled over the dark expanse.

What a contrast did the calmness of those ethereal regions form to the tumult and disorder of her soul!

While she gazed on them, her thoughts



imbibed a portion of their divine serenity. The world seemed to recede: she rose above the mists of passion, and her towering spirit disdained to be fettered by the bonds which had enslaved it. The Power, who had inspired her with courage to rescue the child of her friend from the fangs of the famished wolf, she was assured would strengthen and support her in the virtuous conflict.

She felt how dangerous it was to linger with Leopold, and though the consciousness of the pang she should inflict on him deepened her own grief, she resolved to bid him an eternal farewell.

She strove to speak, but the accents died on her lips. Her melting eyes beamed through their silken lashes with the tenderest fire. For a moment she drooped her head on the neck of her lover—then, extricating herself from him, she fled towards the abbey.

The Marquis of Erlmir in vain besought her to return. He sprang from his seat and

pursued the path she had taken. He paused at the entrance of the cloisters, and listened, but no foot-fall sounded along the pavement, nor could he discern any trace of the fugitive.

His eyes had rested so long on the bright moon-light green, that for some moments his dazzled sense could not pierce the obscurity thrown by the massive pillars. While he stood irresolute, he observed a gliding form, enveloped in a dark mantle, steal towards the shrubs that canopied the statue of St. Githa, and lurk among them. Through the gloom it seemed gigantic. Leopold advanced towards the shrine, heedless of the peril that menaced him : on reaching it he could perceive no one. The dubious light, that gleamed from an opening in the roof, might have deceived him. He threw around an eager glance. What was his transport on beholding through an oriel window, near the shrine, his Ernestine !

She seemed panting for breath, and was

leaning against a fragment of the ruin. Though the painted glass no longer enriched the mouldering window, the tracery branching over it precluded him from rushing to her. On seeing him she started up, and turned towards the forest.

“ Oh, Ernestine,” he cried, “ can you then depart without bidding me one fond adieu ? Though the fiercest tortures should never force me to resign you, I would not for worlds fetter your freedom : return then for a few moments. If you refuse me this last proof of affection, never more will I behold the sun. Within these gloomy aisles, on the cold marble I will lay me down, and perish.”

“ Then perish,” echoed a terrible voice. Leopold saw the gleaming dagger—he started back ; he caught the ruffian’s arm, and warded off the blow ;—else had the dark denunciation been fulfilled. While he struggled with the assassin, and, grasping his wrist, strove to wrest the poignard from him,

his foot slipped, and he fell on the pavement. His head dashing against the broken mosaic, he lay stunned by the blow. The murderer, with a dreadful scowl, rushed on his prey.

“Hold! barbarian,” shrieked Ernestine, as she darted through the aisle, and flew to protect her lover.

Terror deprived her of utterance, but she stretched forth her arms to keep the ruffian off, and her eloquent features, more lovely in their wildness, spoke such deep agony as would have melted a fiend to pity.

She recoiled with horror, on discovering, by the faint gleams of moon-light, that the assassin was Vedova. The baleful fire that reddened in his eyes, and the quivering of his lips, disclosed the fell resolve which had brought him thither.

Deceived by the monastic habit which the suppliant wore, with a withering frown he bade her retire. But the delicacy of her features, her snowy neck, half hid by the

profusion of her glossy ringlets, and the heaving of her bosom, which betrayed itself beneath the folds of her vest, soon revealed to him that a female knelt before him, young and lovely. Lost in wonder, and overpowered by her charms, he felt his fury subside. Yet her modest air, and the ideal beauty of her countenance, could not restrain his lawless wishes. He regarded her as a creature over whom he might obtain an easy conquest, and his heart throbbed with passion. While she clasped his knees in supplication, the fancied wrongs he had sustained from Leopold rushed on his brain: it was he who had robbed him of Frederica. It was for him that the fair-one, who trembled at his feet, pleaded with such melting energy.

“Cease, lady,” he said, “to intercede for my bitterest enemy. Did you know his baseness and falsehood, you would yourself fear his perfidy, and own my hatred was just. Repose on me for protection, and you



shall revel in luxury and splendor.—Nay, tears are fruitless. No earthly power—not hell itself, should bribe me to forego the transport of revenge!”

The gloomy fierceness that darkened his countenance, filled her with dismay; but she renewed her appeal to his mercy, and strove to draw down on herself the wrath that menaced her beloved.

“Through me it was,” she cried, “that Frederica centred her affections on Leopold; ’twas I who foiled your hopes of empire! then wreak on me your vengeance—twist your hands in these streaming locks; drag me along the shaggy cliff, or hurl me headlong from yon beetling tower,—but do not injure him! Remember, Prince, one mother gave you birth.”

On hearing Ernestine’s piercing accents, Leopold unclosed his dizzy eyes, and raising himself on his arm, said, “Deign not, my love, to kneel before a ruffian. Fly from this gloom, lest he should prophane your inno-

cence! The traitor, who durst outrage his sovereign, would not respect even your seraphic purity: after that sacrilege, what could restrain his passions?"

"Here, Vedova!" he cried, throwing open his robe, "here satiate the hatred that boils in your heart! By imbruing your hands in a brother's blood, complete the measure of your guilt!"

Leopold's haughty and indignant tone, instead of touching his savage brother with remorse, fired him to madness, and wholly dispelled the softer feelings which Ernestine's eloquent fervor had inspired. His bitter smile thrilled her with horror, but she caught a faint hope on hearing the sound of voices swell on the breeze.

"Betrayed — confusion!" muttered the Prince, looking eagerly towards the woods. "Think not, Leopold, to triumph over me, and trample me in the dust. Thus, thus I seal your doom!" He raised his arm to strike the fatal blow; but, to shield her

beloved, the trembling girl threw herself between them ; and instead of piercing Leopold's heart, Vedova plunged the dagger into the bosom of Ernestine ! —

She shrieked not. In her fears for him she loved, she felt not the pang of the wound. She followed with her eyes the course of the poignard, which the ruffian held up bathed in her blood, till a mist obscuring her sight, she drooped her head on the neck of Leopold, and strove to hide from him her features writhing with pain. In speechless horror he hung over her, and endeavoured to restrain the precious stream that gushed from her bosom.

His brain was on fire ; his ideas grew confused ; he gazed on the fading eyes of Ernestine with unutterable despair, and bade Vedova in pity rid him of a loathed existence.

On discerning the gleam of the torches which trailed along the further aisles, the murderer stood aghast. There was no time

to pause. He dropped the dagger, and precipitately fled towards the woody cliff overhanging the Lugar; but he fled not unobserved. Count Faulconstein, followed by Ardulf and several of the Carmelites, rushed through the cloisters.

On discovering his sister, who had fainted in Leopold's arms, seemingly bereft of life, — her garments sprinkled with blood, he uttered an exclamation of horror, and sprang towards her.

“Pursue the assassin!” cried Ardulf; “he has already reached the river.”

Casimir's eyes flashed fire; he drew his sword, and hurried to avenge his dying Ernestine.

Vedova, on gaining the verge of the steep, saw his pursuers approach. There was no path by which he could escape.

Filled with dismay, yet dreading an ignominious death, he paused on the beetling brow of the precipice, and eyed the fearful depth. — But perceiving the Count only a few

paces from him, with desperation he darted forward, and threw himself headlong down the abyss.

Casimir smiled with gloomy joy on hearing his limbs dash against the crags below : but he checked the unholy feeling, and as the agonizing caitiff's groan swelled on the breeze, he shuddered, and turning away, retraced his steps towards the abbey, where his sister languished.

The venerable Ceofrid had bound up her wound : she had recovered her consciousness, and was endeavouring to calm the frantic grief of her lover, who knelt by her, watching with the deepest solicitude every variation of her features. Her faint but heavenly accents for a while soothed his despair.

On seeing the Count, she stretched forth her arms towards him, and said with mournful sweetness, " Droop not, my brother, when I am gone, but comfort your afflicted friend. His silent gloomy anguish deepens the pang of parting : in meek submission



I bow to the awful decree. Could I have resisted the fond pleadings of my heart, and banished myself from Leopold, I should have been a desolate and lonely creature. To breathe the vital air, exiled for ever from those we love, is not to live. 'Tis far more enviable to expire at once. Yet think not, Casimir, your tender care in rescuing me from the wild has been exerted in vain. I should then have sunk into the grave, without having conferred one benefit on my country. I have saved its hero from an untimely death: I have deserved its grateful homage. When the wise and good speak of those who have nobly perished, they will own that Ludolf's daughter did not sully the lustre of her parent's fame. It is sweet — it is heavenly to reflect, that though the voice of duty forbade me to live for my beloved, I am yet suffered to die for him.

“Farewell, my Leopold; let not my loss throw a gloom over your future days, but sometimes think of me with fond regret.”

“Think of you!—Oh, Ernestine! death shall not divide us—one hearse shall bear our relics to the tomb—one requiem waft our souls to heaven!”

Impressed by the wild solemnity of his air, she conjured him to banish such forebodings, and live for his country.

The effort exhausted her: she sank back into Ceofrid's arms, and closed her swimming eyes. Leopold thought she was dying. “Powers of mercy!” he murmured, “preserve this innocent creature's life, or let me perish with her!”

Her pulse became weaker and more rapid, and the Abbot feared every sigh she heaved would be her last. The monks having formed a couch, by spreading their garments on some cedar branches, bore her on it towards the palace, whither Ardulf bade them direct their course. The Queen no sooner heard what had past, than she came forth and approached the mournful train, her bosom palpitating with terror. She shuddered

at the crimson drops that dyed the fair stranger's garments. Though pale as the anemone, Ernestine was yet beautiful, and her eyes beamed with a celestial fire.

Frederica hung over her with the tenderest sympathy. She was lost in wonder, on perceiving that the novice with whom she had conversed in the forest, and the lovely victim, were one ; and her solicitude increased on discovering her to be the sister of her preserver, Count Faulconstein.

The torches borne by the friars threw at intervals a bright glow over her features, and gave them an air of returning animation, which impressed Frederica with an idea that she might recover. The Abbot, who was famed for his skill in surgery, having traced the course of the dagger, which had pierced her neck below the shoulder, did not destroy the flattering hope ; though from the profusion of blood she had lost, he greatly feared the event. She was borne to an apartment in the palace. Frederica watched near her

couch, and could not be induced to leave her till the dawn. When the sufferer sank to sleep, her breathing was so faint, that the Queen dreaded lest she had closed her eyes for ever.

But death forbore to strike the fatal blow : Heaven ordained that she should live ; should enjoy, in the bosom of her family, many years unclouded by misfortune, and teach her sex, that they were endued with the power of triumphing over all their passions—even over love itself.

Frederica was somewhat relieved from her alarm, on hearing, when she rose, that her suffering guest had awaked free from pain, and that her fever had subsided.

The Marquis of Erlmir, who during this interval had yielded to the gloomiest despair, became more calm, and cherished a faint hope of her recovery.

Her brother's grief had not been less profound. He referred the evils that had befallen her, to the influence of his fatal

counsels, nor could the purity of the motives which had actuated him, soothe his regret. Had she not sacrificed her love, instead of being reduced to the brink of the grave, through Vedova's jealous phrenzy, she would have been happy in the possession of her Leopold — would ere then have been the wife of his bosom.

After a few days of anxious suspense, Ernestine was pronounced out of danger, and the fears of her friends were changed to rapture.

The Queen already regarded her with a sister's fondness : it was raised to enthusiasm when Ceofrid revealed the mystery which hung over her fate.

Frederica stifled the grief she felt, on reflecting that Leopold could never be hers. She flew to the couch of her rival, and assured her that the highest pleasure she could receive, would flow from seeing her the Marquis of Erlmir's bride.

“ Believe me, my sweet friend,” she said, with a smile of divine softness, “ no jealous



pang thrilled my heart, when I discovered his affection for you."

Vedova's death having dispelled the perils which threatened her country and her sovereign, Ernestine perceived that the voice of duty no longer opposed her union, and she owned, while tears trembled in her eyes, that were she bereft of Leopold, she should regret having been snatched from the grasp of death.

With what transport did the Marquis, when he was suffered to see her, press to his heart the lovely creature, who, to shield his bosom from the poignard, had received it in her own. How interesting was the languor diffused over her ! her faded beauties were far more captivating in his eyes, than if they had been flushed with the brightest bloom.

Though Ernestine enjoyed unclouded serenity, several weeks elapsed before she was restored to perfect health. Frederica's love had fled like a dream, yet when the remem-

brance of it floated across her fancy, she sighed to think how illusive her hopes had proved. The deep sense of human depravity, which she had received from the treachery of her minister, and Vedova's guilt, conspired to shed over her a pensive gloom. She flew for refuge from the fatiguing gaieties of the court, to the bosom of Ernestine.

Though she envied not the heavenly repose, which her friend enjoyed, when the morning came, appointed for the nuptials, which she had requested might be solemnized in the palace, a vague undefinable sadness oppressed her.

She reproached herself for yielding to it, and to recover her serenity, walked into the park, and bent her steps toward the lake.

As she wandered through the blooming wilderness of shrubs and flowers, a delicious languor diffused itself over her; but it was tinged with melancholy when she reflected, that instead of attracting the tender

homage she wished to inspire, her beauty and exalted birth had only exposed her to the attempts of villainy.

On the margin of the lake she checked her steps, and stood observing the deer, that clustered under a spreading oak to avoid the noontide heat. Some advanced knee-deep into the water, and browsed on the anemones, that mantled its surface.

“Once,” she exclaimed, “I could as lightly press the mossy turf, as those wild inmates of the wood, unsuspecting of the toils spread for my ruin; but I have lived to find that mistrust, revolting as it is, can alone protect me from craft and perfidy.”

The fair moralist drew nearer the lake: not a zephyr ruffled its bosom, and her image was reflected in the watery mirror. While she viewed with conscious pride the charms which heaven had lavished on her, she owned her murmurs were unjust. A secret pleasure fluttered in her breast, till a

sudden sense of her vanity covered her with confusion

“Had Ernestine,” she exclaimed, “discovered me tracing my features in the glassy flood, I should have irretrievably sunk in her opinion, much more in Casimir’s.”—

She perceived on the grass near the margin of the lake a set of tablets, which seemed to have been dropped there by accident. They were richly wrought, and closed with clasps of gold. She could not repress her desire of opening them, for she knew they belonged to Count Faulconstein. Over the first leaves were scattered several pieces of poetry. They breathed a refined and romantic tenderness, and she burned with curiosity to discover who was the fair-one that had inspired them.

On approaching a sequestered fountain she beheld the Count reclining at the foot of a plane, that spread over him its canopy of leaves. His eye rested on an antique statue

of the nymph Egeria. In the air and attitude of the sculptured naiad, was that calm reposing majesty, which belongs to immortal beings, and her lifted hand seemed to warn prophane intruders from the hallowed spot.

The Queen pressed the velvet turf so gently, that he heard not her steps. He continued gazing on the statue, and at length exclaimed : “Those features, though modelled after the idea of perfect beauty, which resides only in the imagination, could not vie with her’s. Oh ! that she dwelt like this fabled divinity, in some sylvan solitude, that I might offer her my heart without being accused of guilty ambition. Here every scene nourishes the fire that consumes me. Farewell then for ever, ye haunts of my beloved.” “ ’Tis strange,” thought the Queen, “Count Faulconstein should conceal his love, through the dread of being charged with presumption. If I can influence the scornful fair-one, he shall not sigh in vain.—Why



should my presence startle you?" she said, coming forward. The Count was too much confused to reply, nor did his embarrassment diminish, when he saw his tablets in her hand.

"I come," she resumed smiling, "to dissipate the cloud of despair. Who is this cruel beauty? Do not refuse to confide in me."

"What do I hear," cried the impassioned Casimir, "do you then bid me reveal my love?—No. I deceive myself: yet I have gone too far to recede. Pardon, Frederica, the presumptuous avowal: I was unconscious how fatal your charms would prove to my repose, till chance gave me the power of rescuing you from the Falls of Hela. I perceived my peril: I fled from the fascination, and buried myself in solitude. But since I have discovered that your affections are free, in vain have I struggled to stifle the flame which burns and must for ever burn in my bosom."

The Queen thought her senses deceived

her: she had never imagined that Casimir sighed for her, and a vague distrust fled across her mind.

“ I dreamed not,” she said after a pause, “ that Count Faulconstein was so aspiring.”

Casimir was thunderstruck. Grief bereaved him for some moments of utterance; but Frederica’s heart replied: she reproached herself for harbouring the slightest doubt of his integrity.

“ Do you then suspect me,” he cried, “ of being swayed by the desire of power? Unjust Frederica. Rather plunge this sword into my heart at once, than torture it so cruelly. Your lovely self I covet, not your throne. One tear of affection from those eyes would be more precious to me than all the jewels in your diadem.”

Frederica wished to undeceive him, but the accents expired on her lips, and she turned away to hide from him her blushes.

“ I must hear no more, my lord,” she said.

“ Hold not my robe,—release me.”

Before Casimir could recover from his confusion, she was gone. He pursued her to implore her forgiveness, but the Lady Elfrida had joined her at the extremity of the walk.

He returned to the fountain, and threw himself on the moss that margined its brink, overpowered with grief and shame. "With what an air of offended majesty," he exclaimed, "she turned away from me. The glow of indignation flushed her cheek. She flies me;—she abandons me to despair. Deprived of her esteem, regarded by her as designing and ambitious, in vain should I seek shelter under the laurels of my conscience. Yet though Frederica scorns me, I will not cease to watch over her. In being banished from her presence, what grieves me most is my inability to warn her against the perils which may gather round her."

Count Faulconstein's musings were interrupted by the faint swell of the organ from the royal chapel. He started up: it was the hour appointed for his sister's nuptials. He

hurried towards the palace. "I will not suffer my griefs," he cried, "to cloud the happiness of Ernestine." His heart beat quick on entering the hall : it was thronged with guests ; but the Queen had not yet appeared.

The blushing bride sat near her Leopold. On seeing her brother, her eyes beamed with affection, and she gently reproached him for his absence. "I was beginning to regard it," she said, "as an evil omen."

The Cardinal stood apart from the guests, observing with malignant pleasure the secret confusion of Casimir. As the leaves of the door unfolded, leading to the cabinet of Frederica, the Count turned pale, and cast down his eyes, fearing to meet her glance. Instead of receiving the nobles, as she was wont to do, with a smile of captivating sweetness, she looked round with a haughty air, and for some moments was silent. Baron Ardulf, who came in with her, was visibly impressed with the most painful feelings.

“What does the hypocrite deserve, my lords,” she said in a tone of indignation, “who, under colour of the most ardent zeal, has carried on a design to subvert my power, and deprive me of my freedom?”

She bent her frowning eyes on Casimir. Their lightning pierced his soul. He was going to fall at her feet, when Friuli, who triumphed in his humiliation, exclaimed: “The dreariest dungeon, the most galling chains would be too mild a punishment for his guilt. He deserves to be broken on the wheel.”

“Such then be the traitor’s doom,” cried Frederica, drawing a letter from beneath her robe: the Count thought it his death-warrant.

“Read this, holy Cardinal,” she said, “and your sentence, perhaps, will be more merciful.”

No sooner did Friuli glance on the scroll, than a livid paleness overspread his countenance; and it dropped from his trembling



hand. It was a letter which he had written some months before to Vedova, urging him to hasten his atrocious design against the Queen.

The guests were lost in amazement. "Your own lips," resumed Frederica, "have pronounced your doom, but mercy shall incline the scale of justice. Live, Friuli, but pass the remnant of your days in ignominious exile." The Minister bowed in silence, and, unable to bear the scorn imprinted on every countenance, rushed from the hall.

"With reluctance," said Frederica, "I have been induced to fulfil this duty. You will believe how abhorrent to my feelings it is, to punish even the guilty. I will atone, my lords, for having thrown a gloom over this sacred hour, by an act of justice far more suited to it."

While she spoke, a brighter fluid sparkled in her eyes. "I have been importuned by the council of the state to choose a partner of my throne. I might endanger the liberties of

my people by an alliance with a foreign prince!" —

"The Hungarians," interrupted Leopold, perceiving her voice falter, "jealous as they are of their rights, regard their Queen with such enthusiastic homage, that they would scorn to fetter the freedom of her choice."

"I am persuaded," resumed Frederica, "they will approve of it; for I have centred my affections in one, who, though descended from a line of kings, is yet more enobled by the royalty of his soul; on one, who has not only preserved me from a dreadful death, but has sacrificed what was dearest to him on earth, to secure my repose and his country's. Need I proclaim that this disinterested being is Count Faulconstein!"

The bewildered Casimir thought himself in a dream. He hardly durst believe his senses. He sank at Frederica's feet, and unable to speak, pressed to his lips the hand she offered him.

What a magic transition from the abyss

of despair, to the consciousness that her heart beat in unison with his own ! How heavenly was it to reflect, that ere many weeks had fled, she would be his ! By adhering to the principles of rectitude, he had foiled the base designs against her, and prospered in his fondest hopes.

The Queen read, in the approving murmurs that ran through the assembly, and in the tears of Ernestine, whom she prevented from kneeling at her feet and tenderly embraced, how deep a sensation of joy the avowal of her regard for Count Faulconstein had produced. She bade the Abbot no longer defer the nuptial rites, and, drawing the arm of the bride within her own, proceeded through the palace-gardens to the chapel.

As she caught a glimpse of the fountain, she reminded the Count how falsely he had interpreted her surprise and confusion.

“ But for you, Casimir,” she said, “ what a gloomy misanthrope should I have become.

Deceived by those in whom from my childhood I had reposed confidence, I should have regarded the whole world with a jaundiced eye, had not you and Ernestine by your conduct proved to me, that there were on earth beings who deserved my reverence and love, and that with all its dark shades, our fallen nature yet retains the traces of its primeval excellence.

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Finis.

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