

SCENES  
IN  
FEUDAL TIMES.

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SCENES

IN

F E N D A L T I M E S .

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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By R. H. WILMOT.

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Inopem solatur et ægrum.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

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Happy, but for so happy ill secured  
Long to continue, and this high seat your heaven  
Ill fenced for heaven to keep out such a foe  
As now is entered.

MILTON.

BLANCHE's attentions at length succeeded in restoring, in a considerable degree, the strength and composure of Jacqueline; but her countenance still retained an expression of deep and settled grief, and in her manners ap-

peared a solemn and affecting air of resignation.

On reaching her apartment Jacqueline's first inquiries respected her father's health. He had retired early, and by the judicious care of Arthur had been kept ignorant of her mysterious and alarming absence. Understanding that for some time he had enjoyed a tranquil slumber, Jacqueline relinquished her intention of immediately visiting him; and directing Agnes to remain, dismissed the rest of her attendants. Blanche finding Jacqueline continue to decline her repeated offers of staying with her during the night, soon after reluctantly withdrew.

"The circumstances which have occurred this evening," said Jacqueline, addressing Agnes as soon as they were

alone, "render it necessary that I should be informed of the events which took place during the former residence of my parents at the chateau. I have not forgotten that you mentioned an injunction of silence on this subject, which I should never have required you to violate but for the most important reasons."

After some hesitation Agnes replied, "The information which it is in my power to give on this affair is so imperfect that it will only increase your uneasiness. The transactions of that period are involved in a mystery, which, after the lapse of two and twenty years, still remains impenetrable. Those are times of which I often think, but seldom speak. The recital of the little which I know would greatly distress you."



“For that I am prepared,” rejoined Jacqueline. “That they are unfortunate, perhaps shocking, the scene of this evening gives me too just reason to apprehend. With those events I fear the fate of the Lady Eloise was connected.”

“Alas, unhappy lady!” said Agnes with a sigh, “it was indeed.”

“Who was she?” inquired Jacqueline. Agnes was embarrassed. She seemed unwilling to reply; till observing the extreme anxiety with which Jacqueline awaited her answer, she uttered in a faint voice and with evident reluctance, “The baron’s sister.”

“His sister!” exclaimed Jacqueline. “It is astonishing that I never heard her mentioned. I knew not that he ever had a sister.”

"It were better that you had never known it."

"Why?" inquired Jacqueline, surprised at the speech of Agnes; who, casting on her a look of pity, remained silent.

Jacqueline, from what she had overheard of the conversation between Sir Almeric and the unknown, was at no loss to conjecture the reason of this conduct. In it she read the confirmation of her worst fears: she dreaded to question her further; yet longer uncertainty was insupportable, and turning towards Agnes, she said, "How long is it since the Lady Eloise died?"

"Died!" repeated Agnes, "then she is dead?"

“Is not that her tomb in the banquetting-house?”

On hearing these words Agnes dropped into a chair near which she had been standing; and clasping her hands, she uttered in a tone scarcely audible, “O, it is too shocking! Well might he suffer as he did! Well might he tremble to return! There is no longer a hope left.”

These strange and incoherent expressions excited in Jacqueline a combination of emotions, in which horror predominated; and with an almost frenzied earnestness she conjured Agnes to disclose all that she knew. It was some time before Agnes was in a state to comply with her reiterated importunities.

“You, my lady,” Agnes began,



“ know that shortly after the marriage of the baron he repaired to this chateau, which for three years continued to be his principal place of residence. He was accompanied by his sister, the Lady Eloise, for whom he entertained the most tender affection, and whose amiable character soon endeared her to the baroness. At their united request Lady Eloise relinquished her intention of returning to the convent where she had received her education, and continued to reside with them.

“ Those were delightful but transient days. The change which took place in the disposition of Lady Eloise was the first interruption to their felicity. Without any apparent cause her gaiety fled, and she gradually became reserved and melancholy. The baroness, finding that all attempts to learn the source of her uneasiness only

augmented it, desisted from inquiry, and by affectionate attentions sought to prevent her mind from dwelling on unpleasant reflections.

“ Lady Eloise was not insensible to the delicate kindness which the conduct of the baroness expressed, and in return strove before her and the baron, who participated the anxiety of his lady, to assume her former manners.

“ The third year had been closed by the birth of your second brother Sir Edmund, and two months had nearly elapsed since that event; when one evening the baron, accompanied by the Chevalier Sebastian, was observed in apparent agitation passing down a retired path of the garden, from which a private gate opened on the forest. It was more than an hour after, and nearly dark, when the baron returned

alone. Crossing the hall with inconceivable rapidity, he rushed into the saloon in which the baroness was sitting, and with frenzied eagerness conjured her to preserve a life which he valued more than his own. The baroness alarmed, rose and summoned some of the domestics.

“On their entrance the baron sprung from the sofa on which, overcome by his violent emotion, he had thrown himself, and with furious gestures commanded them to quit the apartment. They instantly obeyed; Pierre, Arthur, and myself, by order of the baroness, remaining in the anti-room.

“The door into the saloon was closed, but our conjectures as to the occasion of this extraordinary scene were soon interrupted by the sobs of the



baroness, who seemed in the greatest affliction. The baron with many intervals continued to speak, and frequently in a louder tone than probably he designed. What I then heard I have never uttered, and your ladyship must excuse my repeating it even to you.

“The baroness presently opened the door, and in a tremulous voice directed Pierre to hasten to the banqueting-house, and request the Lady Eloise to come to her immediately. Pierre soon returned pale and breathless, bringing with him the necklace and one of the bracelets which the Lady Eloise had worn that day. He had found them on the steps of the banqueting-house, but the Lady Eloise herself was not there.

“This intelligence threw the baron,

who during Pierre's absence had been traversing the room in a state of great perturbation, into a perfect frenzy. He uttered the most pathetic exclamations, mingled with execrations against himself. The attempts of the baroness to sooth him were vain; and vowing not to survive the loss of his honour, he burst from her, and hurried into the garden, calling wildly on his sister's name.

“ Pierre and Arthur followed him, by command of the baroness, who charged them not to quit him for an instant, and if possible to prevail on him to return. The rest of the domestics were employed in searching the garden and grounds; but without success. The Lady Eloise was nowhere to be found.

“ The baroness, whose consterna-

tion was increased by this news, having dispatched several horsemen to the forest in quest of her, inquired of the attendants belonging to the Lady Eloise where they had last left her. Early in the evening she had gone alone to the banqueting-house, since which time they had not seen her; but some of them said that probably the Chevalier Sebastian might be able to give more information respecting the Lady Eloise, as they had observed him enter the banqueting-house soon after he had passed down the garden with the baron. During the confusion, the absence of the chevalier had not been remarked; nor till the baroness directed that he should be desired to come to her was it recollected that he had not returned since he quitted the chateau with the baron. This circumstance, however, excited no surprise, as it was generally conjectured that he



had followed the baron, who, regardless of the intreaties, and even expostulations, of Pierre and Arthur, had proceeded to the forest.

“Slowly passed the hours of that tedious night. The baroness could not be prevailed on to retire, but remained in the saloon listening and anxious to catch the slightest sound which might announce the baron’s return. Often she started in expectation of his entrance, deceived by the rustling of the wind among the shrubs which grew beneath the windows: sometimes she wept. We beheld her grief in silence: no one was able to offer consolation. We gazed on each other in mute astonishment at the sudden and unaccountable change which had taken place in this before happy family; and with a sensation of chilly dread

awaited the termination of these extraordinary events.

“ The morning had begun to dawn, when a few of the party just despatched reached the chateau. Their looks sufficiently indicated that they had been unsuccessful. After having examined the recesses of the forest, they had pursued the path which led from a private door in the garden, till they arrived at a retired spot. Here traces of feet were visible in the grass; and following them for a short distance to the foot of a tree, they perceived the ground stained with blood; and a little on one side a bloody sword was lying, which on examination they discovered to be the baron's.

“ To this account, which was inconsiderately related to her, the baroness listened with eager attention; but

harassed and exhausted, she was unable to support this new shock, and with a deep sigh she fell back in a swoon.

“ All our attempts to restore her were for a long time ineffectual, and we even began to apprehend that her anxiety had proved fatal. Scarcely had she revived, when the baron, supported by Pierre and Arthur, entered the saloon. He had passed the night in wandering about the forest, insensible to fatigue and deaf to the intreaties of his attendants; till at length totally exhausted, he had sunk to the ground, and even then it was with difficulty he could be prevailed on to suffer himself to be raised and borne to the chateau.

“ For more than a fortnight he remained in a state which hourly threat-



ened to deprive him of existence. In the paroxysms of a violent fever, he frequently invoked the spirit of his sister, and in the most moving terms implored her pardon. He execrated the barbarity which he had shewn towards her, and upbraided the Chevalier Sebastian, whom he imagined present, as the instigator of his atrocity.

“These wild exclamations, though uttered during a delirium, were too much corroborated by other circumstances to be considered the vague effusions of a disordered fancy; and they contributed to guide and confirm the conjectures excited by the mysterious occurrences of that fatal night. Fatal it may truly be called; for from that period to the present the Lady Eloise has never been seen, nor could the most diligent search discover the slightest vestige of her. What was her

fate heaven only knows. That the Chevalier Sebastian participated it was generally believed: for he too disappeared on that eventful evening, nor have any tidings of him been since received.

“ The distress of the baroness almost amounted to despair, when, from the disappointment of all endeavours to discover the Lady Eloise, she at length became convinced that farther researches would prove equally fruitless. Her sufferings were great; but fortitude, aided by affection, enabled her to conceal them from the baron: and restraining her feelings, she continued with tender attention to watch beside him during his long indisposition.

“ By the command of the baroness the names of the Lady Eloise and the

chevalier were never mentioned in the baron's presence ; and as soon as he was sufficiently convalescent to bear the fatigue of travelling, the baroness hastened his removal from the chateau, and accompanied him to England.

“ A few days previous to their departure, some of the attendants of a young Spanish nobleman, the particular friend of the baron, arrived, and inquired for their lord, of whom they were in quest ; his intimacy with the baron, and frequent visits at the chateau, giving them the hope of finding him there. His absence, they related, prolonged beyond the time at which he had appointed to rejoin them, had excited alarm. With difficulty they had traced his route from Spain to a town in Gascony ; and in the expectation of meeting him, they had pressed for-



ward to the chateau. Their chagrin may be easily imagined when informed that he had not been there for several months. Why this circumstance should affect the baroness as it did I could never understand, and her strict injunction of silence towards the baron respecting these inquiries appeared equally inexplicable; but whatever was the reason, it certainly increased her affliction, and evidently rendered her more anxious to leave this place.

“ Her conduct would probably have passed unobserved, had not the recent extraordinary circumstances excited in a peculiar degree the curiosity of the household. It was recollected that the baron, during his delirium, had frequently alluded to the Spanish marquis in terms and in a manner which, connected with the subsequent in-

quiries after that nobleman, gave rise to conjectures of the most unpleasant nature with regard to the fate of the Marquis Villena."

"The Marquis Villena?" said Jacqueline, raising her head, which for some time she had reclined on her hand, partly to conceal the emotion which the narrative of Agnes produced. The name of the marquis brought to her recollection the account which Count Cajetan had given of that nobleman. She also remembered the agitation of the baron on that occasion, and the words of her brother, which implied a knowledge of the baron's guilt. A faintness came over her as these ideas occurred.

Agnes, observing the alteration of her countenance, said, "Alas, my lady, I perceive that you are acquainted

with the marquis's tragical end. It is indeed a dismal subject. You are shocked at what you have already heard : what would you be, if I were to repeat the horrid suspicions entertained by many on the strange and mysterious appearances which we have all witnessed ?”

This speech roused the attention of Jacqueline, and withdrew her from the mournful reverie into which she had fallen. That any further communications could increase her anguish did not seem probable. Few certainties could equal the dreadful surmises which floated in her mind ; and this conviction led her strenuously to urge Agnes to relate all that she knew.

“ A few months only had passed,” rejoined Agnes, “ after the departure of the baron and baroness, before the



awful mementos of that unfortunate evening, which visited this place, too fully proved the lamentable and fatal truth. Darkness and solitude may conceal our crimes from mortals, but the eye of heaven is never closed. Since that period the garden and grounds of the chateau have at uncertain intervals been the resort of some unquiet spirit.

“Often sadly musing it is seen to wander over the lawn; often in the hollow tone of anguish it is heard to complain: but no one ever dared to question it. Years on years have passed, yet it still comes. Of late it had been absent during an unusual interval, till on the evening preceding your arrival Pierre saw it in the garden.”

“Is it often in the oratory?” said Jacqueline.

“Never,” replied Agnes, looking fearfully towards that end of the room: “it has never entered the chateau, and heaven grant that it never may. I should expire were I to meet it. The banqueting-house, commonly imagined to have been the scene of those mysterious transactions, has since that period been universally shunned: it is never even beheld without horror, and the doleful cries which sometimes issue thence, have confirmed the terrible conjectures which other circumstances excited.

“This figure has raised much curiosity and doubt. Some, who have had the best opportunities to observe it, confidently assert that it is nothing earthly; others entertain no doubt of its being the shade of the Lady Eloise; and a few are of opinion that it is the

injured spirit of the Chevalier Sebastian."

Although Jacqueline's belief in the reappearance of the dead was not great, yet she could not wholly resist an impression of awe at this recital. Her imagination was more easily affected by the consideration that this singular being (whatever it might be) was the memorial of her father's guilt. To dwell on this thought was impossible, and with an eagerness which betrayed her internal anguish, she inquired who was the Chevalier Sebastian.

"He was the son of one of the baron's vassals," Agnes replied. "His father having fallen in battle, he early became an orphan. From compassion for his forlorn and destitute situation he was received into the castle and



placed about the person of the baron, whose age was nearly equal. Sebastian knew how to profit by his good fortune; the pity which the baron had first felt towards him was soon changed into affection, and instead of an attendant he became his companion and chosen friend. He participated in the education of his patron; and in every thing he was considered as a brother rather than a dependant.

“ Thus in equal emulation passed their youth. Their friendship strengthened with their years; and when the baron, disdaining inactivity, joined the army, Sebastian, animated by the same spirit, devoted himself to a military life. Introduced as the favourite companion of the baron, his reception was flattering; and his skill and courage soon established a high repu-

tation, and obtained the honour of knighthood.

“ On the marriage of the baron, the chevalier, yielding to his earnest request, quitted the field, and accompanied him to the chateau. Here their friendship not only remained uninterrupted, but even seemed to increase, till that fatal evening. What then happened; or how the chevalier perished, has never been explained.”

“ How is it ascertained that he did perish then ?” said Jacqueline.

“ Ah, my lady,” Agnes replied, “ if he had survived, what prevented his returning ? But,” she continued, “ that he is dead does not admit of doubt. The words which escaped the baron in the first transports of remorse I have

not forgotten. They unhappily render this fact too certain."

Grieved and humiliated, Jacqueline concealed her face in her handkerchief; but Agnes was too much interested in her narrative to observe its effect on her auditors. In the complacency of self-importance, and the pride of imparting information, she so far forgot the attention due to the feelings of Jacqueline, as to enlarge on the probability of some of the conjectures to which she had before alluded, and expressed her astonishment at the temerity of the baron in revisiting the chateau. "Your ladyship," said Agnes, "perhaps" recollects, that among the imperfect sentences uttered by the baron on the night of his arrival, many were addressed to the Lady Eloise and the chevalier."

Agnes paused, but finding that Jac-



queline remained silent, and seldom weary of hearing her own eloquence, she proceeded:—"That he still recollects his sister with affection, is apparent; for this afternoon, notwithstanding the intreaties of Arthur, he would enter the cabinet which adjoins his chamber. To this apartment he was formerly very partial; for it contains many paintings from designs by the Lady Eloise, and several admirably executed by herself. The baron used to declare that he considered them among the most splendid ornaments of the chateau.

"The sight of these pictures affected him extremely, even to tears. When his first emotion subsided, he remained gazing around, while his countenance displayed the apathy of despair. At last his eyes rested on the portrait of the Lady Eloise suspended over the mantle-piece. It is a striking likeness of

her when she first came here, and possesses the sweetness and vivacity which characterized her in those happy days. The baron could not speak; he looked again, groaned, and dropped almost insensible into the arms of Arthur. He was immediately removed from the apartment, but the shock has nearly produced a relapse."

During this recital, which, though far from being clear and accurate, impressed conviction of its truth, Jacqueline had endured the severest anguish. Dutiful and affectionate, she listened with shuddering horror to the story of her father's crimes. In her emotion's regret and pity predominated; and, tender both by disposition and education, she did not feel that resentment which in a more masculine character the apprehension of disgrace might probably have excited. When she reflected on the

settled melancholy of the baron, his long and unceasing mental sufferings, every other feeling gave place to compassion. The expiation seemed to her partial judgment as great as the offence. Under the influence of these emotions, and alarmed by the relapse to which Agnes had alluded, she relinquished her intention of seeking repose, and hastened to offer him those attentions to which his misfortunes appeared to have given him a new and sacred claim.

She found the baron in a profound slumber, reclined on a sofa; for unwilling to disturb his repose, his attendants had not attempted to remove him to his couch; and he remained where they had first placed him on his return from the cabinet. While Jacqueline, bending over him, gazed on his venerable countenance, she could not refrain from tears. Her figure, her attitude,



and the expression of her features, imparted to her a character of sublimity : she appeared a being of a superior order, mourning the frailties of mortals.

As she contemplated the baron, the words of the stranger recurred to her memory. This night vengeance might be accomplished. She trembled, and cast an apprehensive glance around the apartment. Her fears were vague, for the danger was uncertain and mysterious; but her anxiety for the baron made her resolve to watch beside him during the remainder of the night ; and at her desire Arthur and the rest of the attendants withdrew into the anteroom.

She seated herself near the sofa on which the baron reposed, and to prevent her thoughts from dwelling on unpleasant subjects, which if indulged might incapacitate her for fulfilling her

self-imposed duty, she opened a book that was lying on the table. It contained a collection of legendary tales; and Jacqueline, attracted by a title which referred to the scenes where her brother was engaged, perused the following story.

## THE CRUSADER :

### A LEGEND.

THE evening was far advanced; and still Sir Herman, alone and restless, continued pacing his tent. The carousals of victory had yielded to the repose of night, the chiefs had retired to their tents, and silence reigned throughout the camp. That day had been auspicious to the fame of Sir Herman. At the head of a small detachment he had attacked a large body of the enemy, and after a severe contest had put them to

flight, and taken prisoner the son of the prince of Damascus, distinguished among the most powerful and inveterate foes of the Christian arms.

For this important achievement Sir Herman had received in presence of the army the thanks of its illustrious commander. The toils and dangers of war were forgotten in mirthful triumph, and surrounded by festivity Sir Herman beheld the sun-set on the plains of Joppa. He knew not that his sun of glory had set for ever.

Exulting in success, in the ardour of youthful ambition he had early retired to plan new and more splendid exploits: but the attempt was vain. He no longer felt pride; the praises of veterans, and the congratulations of friendship, were remembered with indifference. The gaiety which had so lately



delighted his associates gave place to a vague and undefined sensation of impending evil ; and without any apparent cause, Sir Herman experienced that strange emotion which sometimes darkly announces the important epochs in the lives of individuals.

Unconscious of the lapse of time, and unable to fix his attention, he was traversing his tent, when between the folds of the curtain which covered the entrance he thought he perceived a black standing. His lamp, long untrimmed, burned dimly, and the sable colour of the figure rendered it more obscure. While Sir Herman looked to ascertain the reality of this singular appearance, the curtain was slowly raised, and discovered the head of a black encircled by a white turban. The knight drew his sword, and rushed forward. He put aside the curtain, which had

been suddenly closed on his first movement; but the extreme darkness prevented his distinguishing objects. No moon, scarcely even a star, appeared. From a tent at a short distance, a faint stream of light issued; and Sir Herman, imagining that he discerned there the shade of some person who continued stationary, advanced towards it.

On reaching the tent, Sir Herman found at the entrance the knight to whom it belonged, who, oppressed by the excessive heat of the weather, had come there to enjoy the breeze which had lately risen. Sir Herman eagerly inquired whether he had seen any one pass within a few moments. The knight, surprised at the question and the earnestness with which it was made, replied in the negative.

To search further amid the numer-

ous avenues of the camp Sir Herman thought would be useless. Indeed the improbability that any person could elude the vigilance of the numerous sentinels, and wander about undiscovered, induced him to believe that his senses had deceived him.

As Sir Herman entered his tent, he heard the signal given for changing the watch. Surprised, he looked towards the hour-glass: the last grains were falling; it was midnight. Sir Herman impatiently waited till the guard had executed this duty, before he commenced his usual visit to the part of the camp appropriated to his troops; for in the strange confusion of his thoughts this evening, the time at which he was accustomed to perform this circuit had passed unobserved.

As soon as silence was restored in



the camp he sallied forth, anxious to repair this unintentional neglect. The heavy clouds which a little before had obscured the heavens, were now more scattered, and in the spaces between them the moon transiently appeared. One side of the camp was skirted by an extensive forest, so thick as to be deemed an effectual barrier against any hostile attempt, and in consequence of this opinion the centinels here were fewer and at much greater intervals than on any other quarter.

Sir Herman had completed his round, and was returning down this avenue, when in the most lonely part he distinguished, by a sudden ray of the moon, another shadow beside his own. Turning to ascertain the cause of this appearance, he perceived a black closely following him. Except his sword Sir Herman was unarmed, having exchang-

ed his armour for a habit better adapted to the climate. This circumstance, however, (if it occurred to him) did not influence his conduct; for regardless of danger, he sprang towards the black with the intention of seizing him: but at that moment a thick cloud shot rapidly across the moon, and totally obscured it. In vain Sir Herman attempted to penetrate the profound darkness, in vain were his arms extended over the spot where he had seen the black: they encountered only the stones and sand flying before a whirlwind, which, with sudden and desolating fury, rushed along the edge of the forest.

Amid the loud roaring of the storm among the trees Sir Herman distinguished the murmurs of a voice harsh and dissonant: again it sounded. "Sir Knight, follow me," was pronounced so close to the ear of Sir Herman, that he

felt the heat of the breath against his cheek. He started and demanded who was there. "One who has sworn to accomplish his purpose or die. Follow me, and you will soon know more." Sir Herman was about to speak, when a blaze of light issued from the camp, proceeding from a numerous body of soldiers bearing flaming brands; and the name of Sir Herman resounded on all sides. "To night it is impossible; but we shall meet again," said the black: and Sir Herman, turning his head, beheld him enter the forest.

The momentary storm had destroyed a part of the camp in Sir Herman's quarters. The soldiers who repaired to his tent for instructions on this occasion, finding him absent, and apprehensive for his safety, made search after him. Their approach interrupted his interview with the black.



The singularity of his recent adventure, and curiosity to pursue the mystery, induced Sir Herman to suppress all mention of it. After having in a general manner satisfied the inquiries of his friends, he withdrew to his tent, and for a few hours forgot in sleep his perplexity and unsatisfactory conjectures.

Early the next morning, ambassadors from the prince of Damascus arrived at the camp to treat for the ransom of his son. Beside the immense sum in gold and jewels which they were commissioned to tender to Sir Herman for the liberty of their captive prince, they were directed to offer to the Christian allies the surrender of two towns which they had for a long time vainly besieged.

Sir Herman considered these terms highly advantageous. As the captor of

the young prince it was in his power independently to have acceded to them ; but he thought himself bound to consult the other leaders on an affair in which their welfare was so intimately concerned. Affected by the ambassador's pathetic representations of the grief and despair into which the captivity of the prince had plunged his parents, Sir Herman was strongly inclined to grant their request : but in the rest of the commanders this circumstance produced an opposite opinion.

The greatness of the present offers led them to form the most extravagant expectations. They looked forward with confident hope to the possession of the object of all their toils and dangers. The surrender of Jerusalem, as the price of the prince's liberty, seemed to them a probable event. Sir Herman, though less sanguine, yielded to

their judgment, and reluctantly dismissed the ambassadors.

During this day the troops enjoyed repose ; for in the hourly expectation of receiving new proposals from the prince of Damascus the projected operations were suspended. Evening came ; but it brought not the desired intelligence, and many with heavy hearts watched the decline of that sun which had witnessed their hopes. As the day closed, the sounds of mirth ceased, and the soldiers silently retired, with minds cheerless and gloomy as the gathering shades of night.

All was profoundly still ; yet Sir Herman slept not. His fancy continually presented to his view the prince of Damascus and his despairing family, such as the ambassadors had represented them. As in imagination he contem-



plated their distress he accused himself of inhumanity, and regretted, that, listening to the suggestions of a sordid and delusive policy, he had renounced the opportunity of restoring their happiness.

These ideas, if not excited, were at least more strongly impressed on the mind of Sir Herman, since he had visited the captive prince. His tender age (for he had not yet completed his twelfth year) joined to the greatness of his misfortune and the fortitude with which he sustained it, inspired Sir Herman with admiration and compassion. He easily conceived the excessive grief which the loss of such a child under any circumstances must occasion; but in this case he felt it more peculiarly distressing: the three brothers of the young Abdallah had perished in battle, and left him the sole survivor.

Harassed by these unpleasant reflections, Sir Herman quitted his couch, and sought to banish them by reviewing some new and daring plans which he had before sketched. While engaged in this attempt sleep surprised him. From an unsettled slumber he was suddenly awaked by a slight noise; and opening his eyes, he beheld the black standing beside him. Sir Herman started from his seat, and seized his sword, which lay on the table before him.

A dagger was in the hand of the black, who, anticipating the next movement of Sir Herman, presented it to his breast, at the same time saying in a firm though suppressed tone, Move not, if you value your life. It is not that I seek. If it were, what hindered my taking it while you slept? Affection and despair have placed me above fear, and in my difficult and dangerous pur-

pose you alone can aid me." As he spoke his eyes were fixed on Sir Herman. The transient flash of rage, which burst from them, was lost in the glare of settled malignity. His extended arm brandished the dagger on high, while with enthusiastic bitterness he exclaimed, "Grant, holy prophet, revenge; revenge for all our sufferings." The rays of the lamp suspended in the centre of the tent fell on him, and revealed with accuracy his countenance and figure. His stature far exceeded the common height: athletic and vigorous, his port was lofty and commanding; an air of fierce severity characterized his features rough and inharmonious. His large full eyes gleamed with a terrible expression, and in his thick brows defiance lowered.

Sir Herman regarded him attentively. Astonishment and curiosity succeeded



to resentment. The black moved towards the entrance of the tent. "Sir Knight," said he "follow me, silence and darkness be our companions."

"Whither, and for what purpose?" demanded Sir Herman.

"The moments are precious. Follow me, and you will soon know."

Sir Herman paused. Prudence and doubt opposed the ardent desire which he felt to penetrate this mystery. His suspense was short. Bold, impetuous, and young, the latter emotion prevailed. "Proceed," said he to the black; and grasping his sword, he quitted the tent.

The night was dark and heavy. Scarce a star glimmered to guide their steps as they silently passed along one of the most obscure avenues of the camp.

Emerging from the tents, they reached the confines of the forest, unperceived by the centinels.

The black, hastily putting aside the branches and underwood, entered this, as Sir Herman imagined, pathless wilderness. With a swiftness difficult to equal he wound his way among the trees, sometimes turning to the right and to the left, in endless variety.

Sir Herman, bewildered among the numerous intricacies, soon lost all knowledge of the way in which they wandered. He was even uncertain in what direction the camp stood. Neither spoke, as Sir Herman, wondering what would be the termination of this strange adventure, continued to follow his conductor. The winding path at length brought them to a small opening in the forest. "Hasten," exclaimed

the black. A loud rustling was heard among the trees on the opposite side, and from beneath their shade two blacks advanced, each leading a dromedary.

The black immediately sprang on one, and motioning to Sir Herman to mount the other, said, "Our journey is not long, but we must be speedy; for by yonder planet setting behind those trees, it is already near midnight. Come, Sir Knight, despatch," he continued, perceiving him hesitate.

Sir Herman remained musing. It was now that an apprehension of treachery first occurred. He knew that the success which had generally attended his arms had rendered him extremely obnoxious to the infidels: they had even sworn, that, were he once their prisoner, no ransom would induce them to restore his liberty. He fixed his



eyes on the countenance of the black ; who, as if he conjectured what was passing in his mind, solemnly assured him, in the name of the prophet, that no evil was designed against him, but that his purpose would be defeated by delay.

The indecision of Sir Herman did not continue. Again his curiosity triumphed over prudence, and he ascended the animal ; which, bounding forward, eagerly followed its companion. The knight felt reluctance and regret, but they came too late : the moment was past which determined his destiny. It was then that, drooping her head, his better genius with a sigh resigned her charge, and the fatal sisters in their gloomy hall of visions plied their loom. While they wove the dark web of Sir Herman's fate, they sung, in a mournful measure, of beauty's mighty power, of glory lost, of love and death.

After nearly an hour's ride, Sir Herman discerned at no great distance various lights. "We must dismount here," said the black; and having fastened the animals to a tree, he directed Sir Herman to follow him in silence. On quitting the forest, the knight perceived that they were within a camp, and that the lights which he had before observed indistinctly through the trees, proceeded from numerous lamps suspended from a pavilion. The black conducted Sir Herman by an obscure avenue on one side to a tent nearly adjoining to the pavilion, and immediately withdrew.

The suspicions of Sir Herman recurred, and left to himself, he indulged the anxious reflections to which his situation gave rise. Not a sound broke the profound stillness: it seemed as if the camp was uninhabited. Beside the black, Sir

Herman had beheld no human being ; on their approach they had encountered no centinels : silence and uncertainty impressed Sir Herman with a kind of awful expectation. Was this suspense the prelude of death ?

This unpleasant reverie was shortly interrupted. A curtain which he had not before observed, placed on one side of the tent, was withdrawn, and a female voice invited him to advance. Sir Herman looked round for the person who had spoken, and at the opposite extremity perceived a female black, who motioned to him to approach. At the same time she raised the embroidered silk which covered the entrance, and ushered Sir Herman into a most superb pavilion.

On each side, in golden tripods, the choicest perfumes of the east were burn-



ing, and the blaze of innumerable tapers was reflected with dazzling brightness from the hangings highly ornamented and nearly covered with silver. At the farther end, on a sopha a little raised above the rest of the apartment a lady reclined in a dejected attitude; and on either hand, at a respectful distance, three female slaves were standing.

On the entrance of Sir Herman, who paused in astonishment at this unexpected scene, the lady rose from the sopha, and slowly advanced towards him. "Illustrious warrior," said she, "in whose power it has pleased the holy Allah to place the destiny of our house, deign to listen to my supplication. And thou, O great prophet, she continued, dropping on her knee and raising her clasped hands, "who from thy bowers of bliss beholdest our sorrow, inspire his heart with pity!"

While she spoke, her veil slipped aside, and revealed to Sir Herman a countenance of majestic sweetness. Her eyes, in which a tear trembled, met his. It was only for an instant. A deep suffusion stained her cheek; and with eager haste she replaced her veil. Sir Herman remained gazing on her. An emotion new, exquisite, and indescribable, absorbed his faculties; for though educated in a court, he had never before experienced the empire of beauty. With respectful tenderness he raised her; and perceiving her extreme agitation, he besought her to inform him in what manner he could have the happiness to serve her.

After a few minutes she replied, "In me you behold the daughter of the prince of Damascus, the sister of the unfortunate Abdallah." The emotion of the princess obliged her to pause;

but in a short time she subdued her feelings, and with pathetic eloquence implored the liberation of her brother. Sir Herman, indignant and shocked by a request so inimical to his honour, was silent; but his countenance revealed what he forbore to express. There the princess read the annihilation of her hopes.

The generosity and humanity for which Sir Herman was justly celebrated, had induced her to believe with the usual facility of distress, which eagerly seizes the most feeble prospect of relief, that an appeal to his benevolence might perhaps dispose him to relax from the severity of war, and restore the young Abdallah to his afflicted parents. This romantic and chimerical expectation, the offspring of despair, had hitherto supported her spirits. It failed; and destitute of any other resource, she yielded



to the bitterness of hopeless grief. Insensibility did not come to her aid; but she uttered no complaint, as, reclined in the arms of her attendants, she poignantly felt the anguish of disappointment.

Sir Herman beheld her sorrow with compassion: resentment was succeeded by pity. He considered in her request only the affection which dictated it, and which entitled her to respect and esteem.

The attendants, apprehensive of her fainting, had removed her veil. The mingled grief and submission displayed on her countenance, wrought powerfully on the heart of the knight; and anxious to mitigate her distress, he promised to shew every indulgence towards the young prince, and, as far as his duty permitted, to fulfil with solicitous attention her wishes respecting him.

These assurances relieved the apprehensions of the princess, and with graceful dignity she expressed her gratitude. Mutually pleased, they were not conscious of the lapse of time; and both, with surprise and regret, heard the black who had conducted Sir Herman announce that the morning would shortly dawn. Sir Herman lingered yet a few moments, and then reluctantly withdrew.

How different were his emotions on entering and quitting the pavilion! A new and powerful passion engaged his thoughts, as through the intricate mazes of the forest he followed his conductor in silence. On reaching the confines of the camp, the black quitted him, and, unobserved, Sir Herman gained his tent.

The baron moved; and Jacqueline laying the book hastily aside, approach-

ed him. He still slept, but his slumber was feverish; for the agitation of his mind rendered him uneasy. He spoke, and Jacqueline distinguished the names of Eloise and Albert. Those names renewed her terror. She looked fearfully around the room. At that moment the clock of the chateau struck one. She started and trembled. Had it been any other hour, had the sound been repeated, she would have been less affected. To her the silence which ensued after this solitary interruption seemed more awfully profound. "The noon of night," she exclaimed, "is past, and my father is yet safe. Spirits of the new-born day protect him through the remaining hours of darkness!"

The baron soon became more composed, and Jacqueline sought to banish her apprehensions by resuming the perusal of the legend.



## CHAPTER XIX.

Disastrous day! what ruin hast thou bred!  
What anguish to the living and the dead!

FALCONER.

THE next morning Sir Herman, anxious to fulfil his promise to the princess, removed the young Abdallah to a tent adjoining his own; and granting him every possible indulgence, endeavoured to relieve the gloom of captivity. The prince, not insensible to his kindness, soon beheld Sir Herman with pleasure, and the character of conqueror was lost in that of friend.

It was in vain that Sir Herman exerted

his influence with the other leaders to obtain their consent to the liberation of the prince; but vexation at having refused terms which they now with reason apprehended would not be granted, rendered them inaccessible to pity. They were the more confirmed in this determination by recent intelligence that the prince of Damascus, irritated by the rejection of his liberal offers, and by their presumptuous expectations, had repaired to Jerusalem, resolved to defend it to the last extremity, and to effect his son's liberation by force.

The mild and engaging manners of the young prince, joined to his striking resemblance of the princess his sister, daily increased Sir Herman's regard for him; and renouncing gayer society, his leisure hours were spent with the captive Abdallah.

Such was the state of affairs when Sir Herman one night beheld the black enter his tent. After apologising for his intrusion, he informed Sir Herman that the princess was ill, and wished much to see him. The knight hesitated: his inclination and his honour were at variance. To hold a clandestine correspondence with the family of the avowed enemy of his friends and of the cause which he had engaged to support, was repugnant to his principles. He was sensible that he ought not to accept the invitation; yet the consideration of the affliction which his refusal would occasion to the princess, and his extreme desire of once more beholding her, rendered him unable to obey the dictates of prudence. He went. The sight of the princess only increased his fatal passion. Love and pity took full possession of his soul; and notwithstanding the dan-



ger which attended them, these clandestine visits were frequently repeated, in defiance of the constantly violated resolution that each should be the last.

It was not probable that with the greatest caution these nocturnal excursions could long remain unknown. The black was observed one night by the centinels traversing the camp, and he with difficulty eluded their pursuit. His sudden disappearance, joined to his colour and extraordinary stature, impressed the soldiers with awe, and induced them to believe that they had beheld some supernatural being.

This adventure would perhaps have been soon forgotten, but for the envy of a young knight whose glory Sir Herman had eclipsed, and who had long watched an opportunity of destroying his rival's fame. He encouraged and confirmed

the account of the soldiers, by declaring that he had himself more than once witnessed the same appearance, and attempted to follow it, but always lost it near Sir Herman's tent.

This declaration was indeed partly true, but he was also acquainted with other circumstances which at present he did not think it prudent to mention. He had traced the black to Sir Herman's tent, he had followed their steps to that of the young Abdallah, and through an opening in the curtain had beheld the black prostrate himself before the sleeping prince; and had heard Sir Herman renew the solemn promise which he had given to the princess of shortly restoring her brother's liberty.

The strange and marvellous report of the soldiers was soon circulated throughout the camp, and Sir Herman, whom

they most concerned, was as usual the only person ignorant of them: but though unacquainted with the cause, his penetration enabled him to perceive, notwithstanding the artifices used to conceal it, that he was become an object of curiosity.

These conjectures, instead of suspending, only hastened the accomplishment of his resolution. To his affection for the princess he had sacrificed his glory, but not his honour: in no respect had he betrayed the interests of his friends, till, subdued by her pathetic solicitations, he had sworn to liberate the young prince. That hour closed his brilliant prospects: the hopes and objects of pursuit which had filled the long vista of succeeding years, faded from his view. To fulfil his promise, and die with dignity, alone engaged his thoughts.



Abdallah was restored to his kindred and country. Sir Herman accompanied him. It was the last time he should behold the princess. As he witnessed the paternal tenderness of their meeting, he experienced the reward of his benevolence : to insure their happiness he had resigned his own.

Inspired by gratitude, both united in soliciting Sir Herman to remain with them. As the preserver of Abdallah, all the pleasures which wealth and titles could bestow courted his acceptance : he might still be near the object of his fondest affection. Such were the thoughts of Sir Herman, as he listened in silence to their earnest request. He was indeed unable to reply ; for though his resolution was not to be shaken, their kindness made the moment of parting more cruelly severe. Long delayed, it

came at last. With difficulty he tore himself from them. "The bitterness of death is past," he exclaimed, as he rushed from the pavilion.

The day had dawned some time, and as Sir Herman traversed the forest the sun rose with unusual splendour. He stopped to contemplate for the last time this magnificent spectacle. It was the last morning of his existence. To him it had risen never to set. In a few hours, day and night would be to him the same. Awfully sublime ideas filled his mind, as he cast a parting glance around, and slowly pursued his way.

On reaching the camp, he repaired to the tent of the monarch who then commanded the army. Here he found the chiefs assembled. On his entrance their countenances expressed surprise; in some

mingled with joy, but in the greater number with fear. Sir Herman without regarding them advanced to the foot of the throne, and demanded of his native sovereign a private audience.

His request was immediately granted; and to him Sir Herman made a full disclosure of his conduct. With all the particulars, except his motives, the king was already acquainted. The motions of Sir Herman had been observed by the prying eye of envy; and scarcely had he quitted the camp with the young prince, when in consequence of this intelligence he was hastily pursued, but the intricacies of the forest baffled the exertions of his enemies, and soon obliged them to renounce the attempt. At the moment of his arrival, the chiefs were engaged in deciding on his fate.

Sir Herman did not seek to interest



the king in his favour. He confessed his guilt, declared his life forfeited by the laws of military discipline, and desired that the sentence might be immediately executed. But though in the flower of his age he could thus tranquilly resign life, his fame was still dear to him; and he intreated that after his death the motives of his conduct might be made public.

The king's pity was strongly excited by the candid avowal of Sir Herman; but his guilt was too generally known, and his example too dangerous, to admit of pardon. Had it been offered, Sir Herman would have rejected it with scorn: his honour was forfeited, and he disdained to live.

The troops were formed. As Sir Herman entered the fatal circle, they hung their heads; they would not by

their looks insult his fallen fortune. Repeated acts of kindness had greatly endeared him to them; and at this moment they remembered only his benevolence and valour.

The archers prepared their bows, and the signal was given. A deep and general sigh burst from the surrounding multitude as the arrows cut the air. Sir Herman was no more.

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Jacqueline closed the book. The melancholy catastrophe of the tale had increased the oppression of her spirits, and introduced a train of gloomy thoughts. She reflected on the extraordinary circumstances which Agnes had related, and on the conversation which she had imperfectly heard between Sir Almeric and the stranger in the banqueting-house. In several particulars they coincided. She turned her

eyes on the baron and shuddered. "Is my father a murderer?" breathed in a tone scarcely audible, escaped her lips. Jacqueline started; for she fancied that a low but distant whisper replied, "He is."

With frenzied eagerness she explored the apartment. Horrible ideas seized her imagination. "Perhaps," she exclaimed, "the spirits of the murdered hover unseen round their destroyer." Her limbs trembled, and she dropped on her knees beside the sofa on which the baron reclined.

He moved; and unclosing his eyes, perceived her. "Is it you, my daughter?" he said. "Why are you here?" Jacqueline could not reply. The languor of his features, and the wild expression of his eyes, shocked her. She beheld with deep distress the ravages



which the suffering of that evening had produced ; and the tone of affection in which he addressed her, totally overcame her fortitude.

The baron, much surprised at her emotion, tenderly taking her hand, said, " Is it for me you grieve, Jacqueline ? I am better." While he spoke, a sigh belied his words. Jacqueline heard it. " My father," said she, " am I unworthy to share your sorrows ? Why do you so carefully conceal from me the misfortunes with which even your menials are acquainted ?"

" Who has presumed to speak to you on a topic which I have prohibited ?" inquired the baron in a voice of unusual severity.

" Forgive," said Jacqueline, " my introducing a subject painful to us both,

but which the events of this evening compel me to pursue. I cannot know that you are menaced with danger, and be silent. Chance guided my footsteps to the banqueting-house. I have seen the tomb of Eloise."

"Her tomb!" exclaimed the baron.  
"Unhappy Eloise, has death then terminated her sorrows?"

"Do you not know it?"

The baron did not immediately reply; and Jacqueline in a faint tone continued, "Alas! my father, did she not fall by your hand?"

The baron started, and throwing on her a glance of resentment, said, "Is it possible, Jacqueline, that you believe me capable of such atrocity?"

“I know not what to believe or doubt. My tears best speak what my feelings are and have been.”

After a short pause the baron said, “I promised a few days since to communicate to you the disastrous events which have destroyed my happiness. I once hoped that you would never have heard them; but that is past: they have been already related to you with the mistakes and exaggerations of fear and ignorance.

“It is now two and twenty years since that unfortunate period, but the intermediate space seems only as a day; so vivid are my recollections!” The emotion of the baron obliged him to pause; and Jacqueline, shocked by his evident distress, intreated him not to attempt a recapitulation of events which



would only increase his affliction, and besought him rather to turn his attention to the means of averting the danger to which he was exposed from the resentment of Sir Almeric.

These words excited the utmost astonishment in the baron. "Sir Almeric!" said he. "What have I to apprehend from him?"

"He is no longer ignorant of his birth," Jacqueline replied; "and his parents' untimely fate excites his utmost indignation."

The baron in some agitation inquired who were his parents.

Jacqueline regarded him with a look of surprise as she said, "With his father's name I am unacquainted; but is

it possible, my lord, that you do not know he is the son of Eloise?"

"Her son!" exclaimed the baron. "Then my fears were true, my revenge just."

"Most unjust," murmured a deep voice.

The baron and Jacqueline turned hastily, and beheld at the end of the sofa a tall figure completely enveloped in a sable garment. For a moment no one spoke, till the baron demanded who he was.

Jacqueline scarcely respired; for in him she recognized the companion of Sir Almeric in the banqueting-house. Extending her arms towards him, she could only say, "Spare my father."

“Who are you?” the baron again demanded. “For what purpose are you here?”

“To behold and enjoy your misery,” said the stranger. “I am the herald of death. The son of Eloise no longer lives.”

Jacqueline cast on him a glance wild and terrific. Twice the name of Sir Almeric burst from her lips: she was unable to proceed.

The stranger continued, “He rejected the terms on which his safety depended, and with his life I sealed my vengeance.”

“His life!” exclaimed Jacqueline. Her strength failed, a mist overspread her eyes, and her head sunk on the sopha to which she clung for support.



Indignant at the conduct of the stranger, the baron rose and advanced towards him. The spirit of ancient valour once more animated his limbs and flushed his faded cheek.

At his approach the stranger loosed the folds of his garment, and throwing it back, revealed his countenance. His eyes were fixed on the baron while with stern solemnity he said, "Do you know me?"

His features revived some indistinct recollections in the mind of the baron as he regarded him in silence.

"Am I so changed," the stranger proceeded, "as to have lost all trace of what I was? Has time utterly effaced me from your remembrance?"

"Were it possible," replied the baron,

after a short pause, "I should say you were Sebastian. But how altered!"

"I am he," rejoined the stranger.

"My friend," said the baron, at the same time extending his hand, "Why so long absent? Why this strange return?"

"Friend!" cried the stranger with a wild laugh of mingled hatred and contempt: "Your enemy, your bitter unrelenting enemy. But for thee I might have been ——— but let me not think of what I was and what I am, lest madness interpose and disappoint revenge. Fiends of despair, who have so long tended my steps, behold another victim. Fitzbaynham," he continued, "live. I spare your life, and resign you to the more lingering pangs of hopeless grief and remorse. When Albert perished, you

slew the husband of your sister, the father of Sir Almeric."

The baron groaned. For an instant he stood the image of guilt and horror.

"Wretch!" exclaimed the baron, as he attempted to seize the stranger, who, stepping back, easily eluded his feeble grasp, "was it not you who stimulated my resentment? Accursed hour, when I listened to your delusions! What urged you to deceive me?"

"Love, ambition, and revenge. Your pride forbade my hopes; scorn repaid my love; death defeated my ambition: but revenge is, and shall be, mine. With the torment of demons I have purchased it. Yes, Eloise, over your dying couch I vowed eternal enmity to all your kindred. The husband and the son have fallen; but you, Fitzbaynham, shall live



to feast my eyes with the spectacle of your hopeless anguish. In your pangs I may find consolation for my own."

A Satanic smile of triumph appeared on the countenance of the stranger, and with an air of insolent defiance he viewed the baron's distress. "For the present we part," he continued; "but I shall be ever near you; my steps will follow yours." He wrapped his dark garment round him, and turned to depart.

"Stop," exclaimed the baron, roused from his lethargy of grief. "I have much to inquire."

"I did not come to be interrogated," replied the stranger, and again moved on.

The baron, highly provoked, and anxious to prevent his escape, summoned

his attendants. Arthur, with those in the anteroom, immediately entered. "Detain him," said the baron to them, while with his hand he directed their attention to the stranger, who, hastily retreating, was almost lost in the obscurity in which the extremity of the apartment was involved.

The domestics no sooner beheld the dusky figure of the stranger, than, uttering a cry of terror, they fled. Arthur alone remained, though equally alarmed: duty and affection prevented him from forsaking his lord. It was in vain that the baron called to them to return: they were far beyond the reach of his voice.

Astonished and irritated by this sudden and to him wholly unaccountable desertion, the baron seized a taper and advanced with as much speed as his weak state permitted. They examined

the extremity of the chateau, but the stranger was not there; and as they passed the door which communicated with the cabinet, they perceived it to be unclosed.

The way by which the stranger had departed was evident; for the windows of that apartment opened on a gallery, which, extending the length of that side of the chateau, was terminated by a flight of steps leading to the garden. Arthur, who trembling had followed the baron, implored him not to pursue further the mysterious object of his alarm.

The danger to which Jacqueline believed the baron exposed, dispelled the stupor of grief, and restored her faculties; for excess of terror, and the rapid succession of her emotions, had prevented her fainting, and she was conscious of all that passed. She rose and



hastened after the baron, intreating him to return. His weakness compelled him to comply; for the transient strength which indignation had imparted was soon exhausted, and supported by Jacqueline and Arthur he with difficulty reached the sofa.

In the mean time the terrified domestics by their clamour had collected the rest of the household. The cause of alarm was quickly circulated, and “a ghost,” “a ghost,” was eagerly repeated on all sides, as if it were a matter of competition who could utter it with the most celerity. Nothing more readily produces good fellowship and equality than fear. All those little distinctions of which the ignorant and self-important are so tenacious were forgotten, and the highest and lowest of this motley group crowded together with so much zeal, that a spectator might have supposed

they were trying to ascertain the smallest space in which it was possible to stand.

In this close conclave was debated the most proper mode of conduct to be adopted in this dreadful emergency; and it was at length agreed to proceed in a body to the baron's apartment. But in carrying this plan into execution a new difficulty occurred; for the forms of good breeding were so strictly adhered to, and each so vehemently declined the honour of precedence, that there seemed little probability of their ever quitting the hall.

From this dilemma they were relieved by the temerity of Simon, who, anxious to rescue his character from the suspicions to which his fright in the banquet-house had exposed it, voluntarily offered to lead the van. The rest of his

brave associates followed in a close compact order. Each was eager to shun the rear ; and to acquire and maintain a place in the centre became the sole object of ambition. Their progress was slow ; for to their terrified imaginations every sound appeared ominous, and they often started at the whistling of the wind as they passed along the gallery. After many needless alarms, and as many retrograde movements, they reached the entrance of the baron's apartment.

Resolved not to incur the censure of rashness, or deviate from the prudent caution which had hitherto regulated their conduct in this affair, they stopped to listen ; and encouraged by the unbroken silence, they ventured to unclosethe door.

They beheld only the baron, with Jacqueline and Arthur ; and soon convinc-



ed that their alarm was groundless, their fear changed its object, and dreading the just displeasure of their lord, they separated with nearly as much haste as they had collected. The principal domestics, and personal attendants of the baron, alone remained.

The recent agitation of the baron had reduced him to a most alarming state of weakness, and rendered him equally unable to express his indignation or punish their criminal desertion. He long continued nearly insensible, till at length the usual restoratives recalled the feeble and almost exhausted functions of life.

The distress of Jacqueline nearly overcame her fortitude; and her filial affection alone enabled her to subdue her feelings. Restored by her tender attentions to some degree of composure, the baron observed the grief and even an-

guish impressed on her countenance, and the difficulty with which she laboured to conceal from him her emotion. Acquainted with the sensibility of her disposition, and not ignorant of her sentiments in favour of Sir Almeric, he conceived the extent and violence of her sorrow.

Anxious and apprehensive for her health, he declared himself much better; and desiring her to be careful of herself for his sake, intreated her to retire. Jacqueline, unable longer to contend with her increasing indisposition, yielded to his request, and accompanied by Blanche, who had a little before joined them, reluctantly withdrew.

## CHAP. XX.

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Be but great,  
With praise or infamy leave that to fate.

POPE.

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THE mental sufferings of Jacqueline produced a severe and dangerous malady. Several days elapsed before any favourable symptom appeared, to promise her restoration. During this doubtful period Blanche was unremitting in her attentions. Influenced by a friendship no less ardent than sincere, she omitted no opportunity of testifying it; and to her kindness Jacqueline was principally indebted for her recovery.



In affectionate attendance on the baron, whose health still continued very precarious, and in the society of Blanche, Jaqueline sometimes experienced an alleviation of those distressing recollections which incessantly occupied her mind. The death of Sir Almeric had closed for ever her visions of future felicity; to her the world was become a blank. With no prospect to animate her to exertion, no hope to be realized, no object of pursuit, her days passed in listless inactivity, monotonous and melancholy as her thoughts. She rather endured than enjoyed life.

Though in the presence of the baron she endeavoured to restrain her feelings, it was impossible wholly to conceal them. Fearful of increasing her distress, he forbore to make any inquiries respecting her visit to the banqueting-house; while Jacqueline was withheld by delicacy, and

a similar consideration towards the Baron, from seeking to learn the misfortunes of Sir Almeric's parents, and what she was particularly anxious to know, the circumstances which had produced the unhappy termination of his father's existence.

The third week since the appearance of Sebastian was drawing to a close, when one morning Jacqueline was surprised by the abrupt entrance of Blanche, pale and in great agitation. Jacqueline besought her to explain the cause of her alarm, but she was not immediately able to reply. Grasping the hand of Jacqueline, she could only explain, "My friend, we must part. I shall be torn for ever from you. My fate is certain."

Jacqueline regarded her in mute astonishment; and Blanche, having regained some degree of composure, informed

her that the marquis and marchioness with Count Catejan had just arrived at the chateau.

This intelligence reduced Jacqueline to a state nearly similar to that of Blanche. She trembled to behold herself in the power of the marquis, whom from experience she knew to be obstinate and unrelenting ; and she considered with additional terror that he was under the influence of the depraved and unfeeling marchioness. But restraining her own emotions, Jacqueline endeavoured briefly to reassure Blanche, and sooth the first transports of her just alarm ; and then hastened to the apartment of the baron : for apprehensive of the effect which the unexpected presence of the marquis might produce, she was anxious to prevent his being abruptly informed of his arrival.



As she passed along the gallery, she distinguished the voices of the count and marchioness, who were giving some directions in the hall. Jacqueline shuddered as these sounds reached her, and quickened her steps; for since Blanche had acquainted her with their true characters, she felt towards them an emotion of disgust not unmingled with horror.

The intention of Jacqueline, to prepare the baron for the reception of his unwelcome guests, was disappointed: for to her surprise and vexation, she found the marquis already there. He was speaking, but on her entrance he stopped; and then upbraided her for having clandestinely quitted his protection. From his rash and inconsiderate discourse the baron learned with astonishment the cause of Jacqueline's till now unexplained absence from Fitzbaynham.

castle, which regard to his feelings had induced her carefully to conceal from him.

The marquis, unchecked by the distress which his words produced in the baron, pursued the subject with increased eagerness. After having indulged himself at some length in censuring his sister's conduct, he exhorted her not to exasperate him farther, by continuing to reject the count's proposals. "The family is sufficiently dishonoured," said he, casting a glance on the baron. "Those who ought to have guarded its dignity at the peril of their lives, have loaded it with ignominy; but the mystery artfully thrown over those deeds is pierced. Since your residence here," continued the marquis, turning towards Jacqueline, "you must have heard many particulars of which you were before ignorant, and no doubt understand to what events I

allude. That they really happened, you can no longer hesitate to believe."

Jacqueline did not reply. She took the hand of the baron, and tenderly besought him to calm his agitation.

"Let your affection," interrupted the marquis, "appear in your actions, not words. It is in your power to prevent the evil which you dread."

"In my power!" exclaimed Jacqueline in surprise.

"I possess the proofs of guilt," the marquis rejoined; "and it depends on your acceptance or refusal of the count's offer whether I suppress or publish them. Consider whose fate rests on your decision. I have passed my word to the count, and you would do well to



fulfil the engagements into which I have entered."

For a few minutes all were silent ; till the baron, collecting his remaining strength, addressed Jacqueline with affecting solemnity. He conjured her not to let her determination be influenced by any consideration respecting him, and intreated her to spare him the intolerable anguish of beholding her misery. " You are young," said he. " Do not barter the happiness of your future years, to purchase for me a short and wretched existence." Overpowered by conflicting emotions, he was unable to proceed. A film spread before his sight, and he would have fallen from his seat, had not the marquis hastened to his assistance.

His head reclined on the bosom of

his son. Pale and motionless the functions of his life seemed to have ceased.

“He is gone,” exclaimed Jacqueline, as she hung over him in an agony of grief. “You have destroyed him.” She fell on her knees before the baron, and clasping his cold hand, her words were lost in sobs. At this spectacle even the unfeeling marquis was sensible of pity. Those long-forgotten sentiments of respectful esteem with which he had formerly regarded his father, occurred to his recollection, associated with the remembrance of his paternal kindness.

The marquis relented. Those motives which had urged him to violate the sacred duty of a child, lost their power: he reflected with wonder and contrition on his conduct, and ardently wished he could recal the past. As for

a moment he traced his actions, and beheld how far he had deviated from the path of virtue, remorse and despair seized him.

The baron's faculties slowly returned; and perceiving by whom he was supported, he raised his languid eyes to the countenance of his son, who unable to endure the silent accusation expressed in them, turned aside, and resigning his station to Jacqueline, continued for a short time pacing the apartment.

Relieved from the terror which the baron's sudden indisposition had occasioned, his former thoughts and designs resumed their empire, and expelled his new and better intentions. He perceived the advantage which the alarm of Jacqueline gave him over her feelings; and unrestrained by pity or delicacy, he resolved to improve to the utmost so



favourable an opportunity, and by strongly exciting her fears for the life of the baron, extort her consent to the count's suit.

That he ever really meant to make public the mysterious transactions in which his father had been the principal actor, can scarcely be imagined. He knew that they would not only affect the baron, but cover the whole family with disgrace; for the strange uncertainty which rested on them would justly give countenance to suspicions of the most dishonourable and infamous nature. So total indeed was the obscurity in which they were involved, that he was himself ignorant of many particulars; and certainly he had exceeded the truth, when he asserted that he possessed sufficient proofs of the baron's guilt.

The fear of ridicule had no small

share in determining him to persevere in his cruel persecution of his sister; and effectually steeling his bosom against every movement of compassion rendered him careless of the misery to which he consigned her. Acquainted with her great affection for the baron and her high sense of duty, he did not doubt of compelling her acquiescence in his plans; and he had triumphantly assured the marchioness and count that he would bring her to comply with their wishes. To fail after his confident boasts of success was a humiliation which neither his haughtiness nor vanity could endure.

Assailed by the pressing arguments and threats of the marquis, and beholding the sufferings of her father, Jacqueline, agitated and almost sinking under her accumulated emotions, yielded at length a hasty and scarcely audible as-

sent. In the dawn of life, she renounced every hope, and doomed herself to a state of wretchedness from which death alone could release her. She only stipulated for a delay of three days; an indulgence which the marquis at first refused, but afterwards with some difficulty was prevailed on to grant.

The baron, astonished and confounded by the great and unexpected sacrifice which Jacqueline had made to filial affection, was not immediately able by words to express his feelings, but his looks were eloquent. In them were blended love, pity, and admiration. He could appreciate her effort. He knew that her first tender emotions were consecrated to Sir Almeric: and though the death of that knight had nipped them in the bud, yet from his knowledge of her disposition he was aware that those widow-



ed hopes could never be forgotten, much less devoted to another object.

The conduct of Jacqueline, while it engaged the esteem and gratitude of the baron, excited also in his mind an emotion of indignation. He disdained by such means to purchase life. "Unhappy girl," he exclaimed, "What have you done? Do you suppose me so base as to accept existence on such terms?"

Surprise and vexation appeared on the countenance of the marquis, as he alternately regarded the baron and Jacqueline. The latter, shocked, terrified, and distressed, remained gazing on her father, who, struggling with his weakness, continued to address her. "Let not affection for me," said he, "betray your happiness. Were I capable of taking advantage of your tenderness, I

should indeed abhor myself." He attempted to proceed, but the transient animation which his anxiety for Jacqueline had inspired suddenly failed, and he relapsed into the state from which he had so recently been recalled.

The marquis, either unable or unwilling to behold the sufferings which he had occasioned, summoned the baron's attendants, and committed him to their care. In the wild disorder of Jacqueline's countenance and manner, he perceived the excess of her affection; and apprehensive lest her resolution should fail if the baron again addressed her, he was impatient to terminate the interview. But neither his intreaties nor remonstrances could prevail on her to quit the baron till he began to revive; nor would she then have left him had she not dreaded the effect of the agitation which

her presence excited in his debilitated state.

The marquis followed Jacqueline into the anteroom, and reminding her of the importance of fulfilling her engagement, in order to put it out of her power to retract, promised to convey to the count the pleasing intelligence of her surrender.

With faltering steps Jacqueline reached her apartment, scarcely daring to reflect on what she had done. On her appearance, Blanche, who was still there, sprang forward to meet her; but she clasped only a statue; for pale, cold, and motionless, Jacqueline remained insensible in her arms. The endeavours of Blanche to restore her were long unsuccessful: Jacqueline still continued the image of death. At length recalled



from this state of oblivion, a confused idea of the recent scene occurred to her recollection. As her perceptions became more clear, the shadows of hope fled, and a horrid certainty succeeded.

How many actions are accomplished by those who once thought them impossible! Had it been predicted only an hour before, that Jacqueline would have consented to become the count's wife, she would as readily have believed the most incredible among the tales of superstition.

Blanche anxiously sought to mitigate the distress of Jacqueline, but when informed of the cause, astonishment for a few minutes superseded every other emotion. To her the destiny of Jacqueline appeared more dreadful, because wholly unexpected; and she reflected with additional regret, that by having revealed the real

character of the count, she had undesignedly increased her misery. Prevented by delicacy from attempting to learn the cause of this sudden acceptance of a suit evidently still disagreeable, and unable to offer consolation, she remained silent, but her tears betrayed her sentiments; and so much was her sympathy excited that for a short time she forgot the dangers which more immediately threatened herself.

Never is the value of friendship so justly appreciated as in adversity; never had Blanche been so dear to Jacqueline as at this moment. But even the sad comfort of weeping together was not long permitted them. A message from the marchioness soon required the immediate attendance of Blanche.

Jacqueline not doubting that in consequence of the concession she had just

made, her desire would be readily granted, requested that Blanche might be permitted to remain with her; but this indulgence was refused, and a second more peremptory summons compelled Blanche reluctantly to obey. Her spirits, already depressed by the real calamities of her situation, disposed her to yield more easily to imaginary evils. At the moment of parting a foreboding seized her mind that they should never meet again; and overcome by this new idea, she hung on the arm of Jacqueline in speechless grief.

Though Jacqueline participated her fears, she endeavoured to conceal her own apprehensions, and to inspire Blanche with hopes of future happiness. This friendly artifice in some degree succeeded in restoring her composure; and pronouncing a last adieu, she hurried from the apartment.



Jacqueline, left to herself, indulged for a short time the grief which she had before restrained. On the troubled ocean of futurity rested an awful gloom, no ray of comfort illumined its lowering and portentous horizon. On every side she beheld only the wrecks of former happiness and former hope. Endowed with an unusual degree of fortitude, she did not shrink from the dreary survey, but with a fixed eye contemplated the accumulated evils which awaited her. She even seemed to gather from their view fresh vigour to encounter them. She looked round, as Milton has expressed it, to see what consolation she might take from hope, what courage from despair.

The consideration that many of these misfortunes were irremediable, assisted in no small degree in enabling her to fulfil the resolution which she formed

to support them with dignity. But it is more easy to resolve than execute ; and it was not without some struggles that Jacqueline adhered to this determination.

She sedulously endeavoured to banish all ideas inimical to her plan. She even sought to forget Sir Almeric ; but this attempt only revived his image more strongly in her memory, and with a sigh she recollected how different her prospects had once been. While her tears fell for his untimely fate, she became convinced that had he still existed, she could never have completed the sacrifice which duty required.

As the hour of dinner approached, Jacqueline, not without some difficulty, overcame her repugnance to meet the marchioness and count. But as she descended, all the horrors to which she

had resigned herself rushed anew on her mind. Surprised, but not subdued, a few moments restored her fortitude, and she entered the saloon with a serenity which she had scarcely dared to expect.

On her entrance the count rose, and leaving the marchioness, with whom he was conversing, advanced towards her. At his approach Jacqueline involuntarily recoiled, and withdrew the hand which he attempted to take. The count, though provoked and hurt by her conduct, which after what the marquis had told him, was wholly unexpected, affected not to perceive it, and concealing his vexation, in elaborate terms thanked her for the honour which she had conferred on him. Jacqueline, during this speech, of which she scarcely heard a word, endured the most cruel distress; for the count's presence renewed the strong dislike with which she always had beheld



him, and her countenance, the faithful index of her thoughts, betrayed disgust and even horror.

Her agitation was apparent ; and the count, with no small degree of astonishment, and more tenderness than he had ever before shewn, inquired the cause, and besought her to inform him by what means he had been so unfortunate as to incur her displeasure.

The marquis had attentively watched Jacqueline. He perceived with indignation her hesitation and confusion ; and aware that this moment would decide her acceptance or rejection of the count, he hastily approached her, and with a look which she could not misconstrue, softly said, " Remember." That word seemed endowed with an electric power, so sudden and great was its effect on Jacqueline. The danger to which her

weakness had exposed her father, flashed on her imagination, and at once restored her fortitude.

From the difficult, and as it would probably have proved, useless attempt of apologizing to the count, she was happily relieved by the marchioness joining them. After slightly noticing Jacqueline with cold politeness, she gaily addressed the count, and drawing him aside, contrived by various artifices to detain him near her during the rest of the entertainment, though evidently against his inclination.

Blanche was not present; and Jacqueline, though surprised and anxious on her account, did not immediately notice her absence, in the hope that she would soon appear. But at length finding the fallacy of this expectation, she inquired for her with friendly earnest-

ness. "Blanche," said the marchioness, "is absent by my orders. Your ladyship is not ignorant of the just cause of offence she has given me; and as a slight punishment I have confined her to her apartment for a few days. Her ingratitude would have justified me in adopting more severe measures; but lenity is the foible of my disposition, and I always wish, where it is possible, to correct with mildness. You will excuse my having included even your visits in my prohibition during her seclusion." Without waiting for a reply, the marchioness immediately changed the conversation to a more lively topic, which she supported with her usual ease and vivacity.

But though with refined dissimulation she was able to conceal under a countenance of smiles and an engaging sweetness, the fierce and turbulent passions



which raged within her bosom, she had never before experienced so severe a trial. Envy, hatred, and revenge at once occupied her soul. In Jacqueline she beheld a successful rival, who had alienated from her that heart for whose possession honour, innocence, and the most sacred duties had been violated. Every reflection produced almost madness, and much longer to support her assumed gaiety she was sensible would not be possible.

Jacqueline, pleading indisposition, rose early to withdraw, but both the count and marquis strenuously importuned her not to deprive them so soon of her society; and she would probably have been compelled by their joint solicitations to relinquish her intention, had not the marchioness interfered, and seizing this opportunity to free herself from the presence of Jacqueline, with an ap-

pearance of friendly interest prevailed on them not to oppose her departure.

Forlorn and melancholy, Jacqueline retired to her apartment. She wished to visit her father, but feared lest unable to control her feelings before him she should betray the anguish with which she contemplated her approaching marriage. The recent interview had increased her aversion to the count: his duplicity excited her abhorrence. Her imagination seemed to have conspired against her peace, and with endless fertility presented to her view distressing possibilities. Her thoughts were sad, her prospects dreary; yet Jacqueline, surrounded by afflictions and threatened by impending evils, was really less an object of compassion than the party which she had quitted.

To their bosoms, the empire of the

passions, peace never came. In the midst of the highest festivities their hearts were joyless. The memory of their crimes rose as a frightful spectre to their view, and snatched untouched the cup of pleasure from their lips. De-signing and unprincipled, each regarded the other with distrust; and mutually deceiving and deceived, they sought in intemperance a respite from reflection.



## CHAPTER XXI.

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Couched close he lies, and meditates the prey.

POPE.

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WHEN the marchioness sought to secure the affections of Count Cajetan by disdaining the restraints of prudence and honour, she prepared for herself only misery and disappointment. The duplicity which she practised towards her father, and her ready concurrence in all the plans devised to impose on him, produced an effect totally opposite to her wishes and expectations. The count, possessing little generosity, and judging of others by himself, did not consider this conduct so much a proof

of her regard for him as an evidence of the depravity of her disposition ; and the slight respect and esteem which he had before felt towards her, were quickly succeeded by aversion and contempt. While she was anxiously labouring to remove the obstacles to their union, he secretly resolved that she should never become his wife.

Of this determination, or the change in his sentiments which had produced it, the marchioness was entirely unsuspecting : for the same assiduity appeared in his attentions ; and his professions of inviolable attachment became more ardent in proportion as they were less sincere.

It was at this period that the marquis, then Lord Richard, arrived in Italy. Eager in the pursuit of pleasure, he plunged into every dissipation ; and it

was at the gaming table, where they accidentally met, that his acquaintance with Count Cajetan commenced. The insinuating manners of the latter soon improved this casual rencounter into intimacy; for in Lord Richard he beheld a proper object to complete the interested plans which he had formed; and it was by the count's desire that De Sombreuil introduced his lordship to the marchioness.

His heart, artfully prepared by the count to receive a deeper impression, was immediately captivated by the splendour of her beauty and accomplishments; and the dignity of her rank, and the immense possessions to which she was heirless, engaged his ambition in the interests of his love. With his usual impetuosity he did not wait till time had enabled him to judge of her disposition, but satisfied with her brilliant exterior, all



his attention was directed to the attainment of her hand. Sanguine, and not deficient in vanity, his rage and disappointment when the marchioness rejected his offer were indescribable; and it was not without difficulty that the count prevailed on him to await the effect of his mediation.

All the address of the count was required to overcome the objections of the marchioness, and render her subservient to his views. He declared that the violence of his affection rendered him unable to endure existence absent from her, and under the influence of that consciousness he conjured her to accept the addresses of Lord Richard; protesting that his regard for her alone compelled him to renounce the hopes which he had before indulged of aspiring to the honour of her hand; but convinced that her father would never countenance their

union, he could not endure by his ill-fated passion to expose her to the miseries of indigence. If she persevered in refusing Lord Richard, it was his fixed resolution, rather than she should incur the risk of her father's displeasure should their attachment be discovered, to banish himself, though sensible that he could not survive the loss of her society.

The marchioness, surprised and vexed, could not refrain from tears. That the count, after all the sacrifices she had made, should voluntarily relinquish his claims to her hand, and strenuously recommend a rival to her favour, was so great and unexpected an indignity, mortifying alike to love and vanity, and at once destructive of all the hopes which she had fondly indulged, that resentment rendered her unable immediately to reply.

The count perceived her agitation, and conjecturing what was passing in her mind, took this opportunity to re-iterate in still stronger terms his resolution of quitting Italy. It was on this threat, which he had no intention of fulfilling, that he placed his greatest reliance: for well acquainted with the violent passions of the marchioness and the little restraint which she was accustomed to impose on them, he knew that no motive of prudence or honour would have sufficient power to influence her conduct, when opposed to her wishes.

Of the extent of her affection for the count she had given too decisive proofs to admit of doubt, and he was well convinced that rather than expose herself to the loss of his society she would gladly enter into any compromise to detain him near her.



The event showed that this opinion was not erroneous ; for the dread of the count's absence achieved what no arguments or remonstrances could have effected : yet was her compliance not unmingled with censures on his unkindness. The count easily exculpated himself from this charge, and scrupling no professions, even contrived to turn it to his advantage. He lamented the necessity which obliged him to give advice so opposite and even ruinous to his happiness, and expressed his hope that she would not drive him to despair by suffering this new engagement to deprive him of her regard. Assured that he still possessed her affection, he should endeavour to wait with patience some period more propitious to their love.

“ Perhaps,” said he, “ the sacrifice which we now make to prudence will ultimately insure success, and these ma-

trimonial fetters which you so unwillingly accept, lead to liberty. Lord Richard is not immortal."

This ambiguous speech produced in the mind of the marchioness the effect which the count designed, and rendered her less unwilling to comply with his advice.

Such were the auspices under which the nuptials of Lord Richard were celebrated; while he, unconscious of the deception practised on him, and blinded by the charms of the marchioness and the artful demeanor of the count, considered them as models of a perfect wife and friend. As the relative of the marchioness and the protégée of her father, the count was received by him with unsuspicious freedom; and in the opportunities which their intimacy afforded, he so successfully studied the character

of the marquis, and so skilfully adapted himself to his sentiments and prejudices, as shortly to acquire a distinguished ascendancy over his mind.

He perceived that avarice and ambition were his master passions. The latter, controled by an habitual indolence, which it was not sufficiently vigorous to counteract, did not appear in its usual character of enterprize and activity, and would probably have escaped a less interested observer. But in the conduct of the marquis he plainly traced its influence; too weak indeed to stimulate him to great or splendid attempts, but sufficiently apparent in the safer though ignoble and sordid solicitude with which he sought aggrandisement. It was on these unpromising traits in the disposition of the marquis that the count depended for the realization of his plans of independence.



The conduct of the count was the result of reflection and design, not caprice. He was descended from an illustrious family of which he was the sole representative ; and inheriting all the pride which had distinguished his ancestors, but without their wealth, he felt with poignant anguish his dependence. It was an earnest desire to extricate himself from a condition so uncongenial to his birth and character, which had induced him to seek the favour of the marchioness. Had she been amiable, he would have persevered in this design, and secure of her affection waited till the death of her father should put him into possession of her hand and property ; but this intention was of short duration. Their intercourse had not continued long, before the imprudent conduct of the marchioness forfeited his esteem, and convinced him of her unworthiness. His necessities were great, but he disdained

to purchase wealth by an alliance with her. It was not without difficulty that he concealed his alienation, and with culpable ingratitude he would have immediately abandoned her, had he not been restrained by new views of interest. His acquaintance with the marquis, recently commenced, had opened a flattering prospect to his ambition.

Vanity and envy often led the marquis to mention the large possessions which had been bequeathed to Jacqueline, and to regret that they were not his. To these discourses the count listened with attention. The fortune of Jacqueline, scarcely inferior to that of the marchioness, was not dependent on the caprice of her father. Her fame was spotless, and from her brother's description she appeared to possess those qualities which constitute the happiness of domestic life. Could he obtain her

in marriage, all his wishes would be at once accomplished. Many obstacles, nearly insuperable, were opposed to this scheme, but the count possessed a persevering temper, and with such a goal in view resolved to hazard the attempt.

To disengage himself from the marchioness without forfeiting her friendship, was a primary step, and the success which crowned this undertaking stimulated him to fresh exertions. He seized a favourable opportunity to declare his design to the marchioness, and solicit her consent; and this delicate point he contrived by his artful representations to accomplish, and even procure her co-operation to promote his suit.

But these concessions were extorted more by necessity and fear, than by the importunity or arguments of the count. She was too much in his power to refuse



or even dispute the proposal ; lest, exasperated by her opposition, he should acquaint the marquis with her crimes. Her own prodigality also, joined to the improvident profusion with which she supplied the extravagance of the count, rendered even her large revenue insufficient to gratify his increasing demands.

The count took advantage of these difficulties to urge the benefits which would result from his marriage with Jacqueline. He assured the marchioness that interest was his sole motive, for his heart was unalterably devoted to her ; and as he had never seen Jacqueline there could be no cause to suspect the truth of this assertion : and he hinted that unless this connection took place, he could not with propriety so frequently enjoy her society, and when she quit-

ted Italy their separation would be inevitable.

The marchioness hesitated and knew not what to resolve. Her love for the count was still too ardent for her readily to admit a rival in his affections. He perceived her irresolution, and with insinuating tenderness declared that he found it impossible any longer to conceal the plan with which he had intended to surprise her.

“Dismiss,” said he, “your fears respecting Jacqueline. They are flattering to my pride, but injurious to my love: yet I cannot censure them, for this new proof of your regard renders you still dearer to me.” He then proceeded to inform her, that it was his intention to place Jacqueline, as soon as he had by marriage secured her fortune, in a convent, either in France or Italy,

and oblige her to assume the veil. "It will not be difficult," he continued, "to execute this project. A report of her death will prevent any further trouble on her account, and leave us at liberty to enjoy in undisturbed security these easily acquired treasures."

Had not the guilty passion of the marchioness rendered her heart callous to the impulse of humanity, and even warped her understanding, this monstrous depravity must surely have excited abhorrence and suspicion; but her views were as contracted as selfish; and while her wishes were gratified, she was regardless of the means. She listened and approved. Her apprehensions were removed. She no longer doubted the sincerity of his professions, but deluded by his artful insinuations of endless attachment, consented to assist his design; the more readily, as she believed it



would always be in her power to terminate it, should it become displeasing to her : and she undertook to engage the marquis in his interest.

Few proposals could have been more agreeable to the marquis, and it required little persuasion to obtain his cordial concurrence to a suit so consonant to his wishes. His vanity was flattered by the prospect of so splendid an alliance ; for the marchioness, to render the intimacy of the count more acceptable, had always represented him as one of the most illustrious of the Neapolitan nobles, not less distinguished by his birth and merit, than by his large possessions. The count, in order to engage him more strongly in his interest, insinuated that on his marriage he should renounce all claim to the considerable sums which the marquis had lost to him. This hint was irresistible to the avarice of the

marquis. His former friendship to Earl Godemar was no longer remembered. He now feared what he had before wished; and anxious lest Jacqueline should be brought to favour the earl's suit, he hastened his departure from Italy.

Such were the views of the count when he accompanied the marquis and marchioness to England, and his artifices, skilfully adapted to the characters of those whom they were designed to influence, were attended by the fullest success, till the unexpected disapprobation of Jacqueline threatened to annihilate his hopes.

His disappointment and vexation were extreme. It was no longer interest but love which attached him to her, for in her he beheld all that could charm the

senses and engage the mind : but these sentiments he carefully concealed from the marchioness, and so well supported the appearance of indifference and even dislike towards Jacqueline, that she entertained no suspicion of his duplicity, and zealously seconded his endeavours to obtain her hand.

The cautious conduct of the count gave no ground for jealousy, but the marchioness could not without uneasiness behold him daily in the society of one who possessed so many attractions, and whom she could not help considering as a rival. To remove him from this hazardous situation, and at once terminate the affair, she devised the plan of carrying Jacqueline to Etonbury castle, with the intention of immediately transporting her to Italy ; and as soon as by marriage the count had secured her



estates, to secure her in a convent of which the marchioness was patroness, and which was therefore entirely under her control.

In these arrangements the count readily concurred, and with his usual insincerity promised what he did not design to perform; for the idea of confining Jacqueline, first suggested by him, was merely a delusion to remove the mistrust of the marchioness and obtain her acquiescence and co-operation in his suit. Once possessed of Jacqueline and independence, his real intentions were very different.

Neither the blandishments of the count, nor his protestations of unalterable attachment, could entirely dissipate the apprehensions of the marchioness as the hour approached which was to separate

them. She considered the influence which Jacqueline might acquire over him during the voyage, and trembled lest his affections should be estranged. Reflection increased her fears, and she resolved, as some security against the evil which she dreaded, that the Chevalier de Sombreuil, on whom she had a perfect reliance, should accompany them.

The delay which the adjustment of this affair occasioned, gave Blanche, to whom an accident had a few hours before partially revealed their intentions, an opportunity of effecting her own and Jacqueline's escape.

When this event was discovered, the rage of the marchioness was unbounded; for she dreaded lest Blanche, freed from her power, should reveal the guilty se-

crets of her life ; and with a resentment proportioned to her fear, she denounced against her a severe punishment. The emotions of the count, though different, were not less violent. He beheld his hopes annihilated at the moment which had promised to accomplish them. In the first transports of vexation, his general habits of deception had nearly failed, and his excessive agitation must have betrayed to the marchioness his affection for Jacqueline, had she been sufficiently composed to observe him.

The whole castle was a scene of confusion, and the marquis, roused by the tumult, soon joined the marchioness and count. Ignorant of the baseness designed against his sister, his resentment, stimulated by avarice, was not inferior to theirs. He was convinced that Jacque-



line and Blanche could not have quitted the castle without assistance, and gave immediate orders for a diligent search. The domestics were all strictly examined; and Maurice, who alone was privy to their escape, contrived to elude suspicion, and even received praise for the zeal which he had displayed on this occasion. By various artifices he protracted the search; for his own safety made him anxious that the fugitives should not be overtaken: and when the marquis and count resolved to pursue them, he retarded their progress as much as possible without exposing himself to detection. Little did Jacqueline and Blanche imagine, when they fled with so much precipitation on hearing him inquiring at the cottage of Gilbert, that he was equally desirous to avoid them.

The marquis, expecting that Jacque-

line would return to Fitzbaynham castle, directed his course thither. But so much time had been lost in exploring the adjoining country, and by the artful delay of Maurice, that the evening began to close as they entered a small town; where the marquis, fatigued and unwilling to encounter the hazard of travelling during the night, yielded to his natural indolence, and proposed to remain till the morning, although the count, really uneasy for the situation of Jacqueline, reminded him of the danger to which she might be exposed, and urgently pressed him to proceed. Remonstrances and intreaties were alike ineffectual; and the marquis, unaccustomed to regard the feelings or wishes of others when they opposed his own, could not be induced to alter his intention.

Early on the following morning they arrived at Fizbaynham castle. The gates, partly broken, were unclosed; and on all sides the destructive effects of the recent attack were visible. The marquis gazed in silent astonishment, and quickening his pace, entered the outer court. On his appearance, a few vassals who had ventured to collect there, hastily advanced towards him. From them he first learned the outrage committed by Earl Godemar, and the subsequent absence of the baron.

The marquis, less affected by the uncertainty which involved the fate of his father and sister, than by the indignity offered to himself, as he imagined, in this hostile attempt made with the design of accomplishing a purpose which he had prohibited, felt the utmost indignation against the earl; and in the first



ebullition of passion he vowed to take a complete and terrible revenge. Had he at that moment possessed the power, he would have immediately executed these threats; but the regular troops of the baron were either slain or dispersed, and before a sufficient number could be assembled his indignation gave place to his usual habits of irresolution and inactivity; and all his mighty menaces terminated in a demand, couched in imperious terms, of the liberation of the prisoners.

The earl, well acquainted, during their former intimacy, with the inefficient character of the marquis, and suffering under the anguish of disappointment and the severe wounds which he had received in the encounter, not only rejected this application with contemptuous insolence, but indulging his vindictive tem-

per, more rigorously confined the captives.

In the mean time the count was anxiously endeavouring to gain intelligence of Jacqueline, but all his efforts were ineffectual, and he at length began to fear that some sinister accident must have befallen her. The harassing conjectures which this apprehension excited were soon banished, and his hopes once more revived, by the intelligence which the Chevalier De Sombreuil transmitted to the marchioness.

Immediately after the flight of Jacqueline, the chevalier had passed over to the continent; and in his journey through the south of France he discovered her retreat with the baron and Blanche at the chateau. As soon as the marchioness received this welcome in-

formation, she hastened, with the marquis and count, to Guienne; resolved to accomplish their designs, and in spite of her opposition compel Jacqueline to accept the count's offer.



## CHAP. XXII.

---

Stars, hide your fires!

Let not light see my black and deep desires.

SHASKEPEAR.

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THE count really experienced for Jacqueline that affection which he had only feigned towards the marchioness. A sentiment of respect mingled with his love. He admired her beauty, but still more the amiable merits of her character and the dignified propriety of her conduct.

Thus tenderly attached, he perceived with extreme regret that his passion was

not returned ; for the manners of Jacqueline, although the marquis assured him that she had willingly accepted his suit, still retained the same coldness and reserve, if not aversion. Wholly unconscious that her affections were engaged, he imagined that the caution and apparent indifference which he was obliged to assume before the marchioness, had impressed her with an unfavourable opinion of him. Firmly persuaded of the truth of this conjecture, his pride was not hurt by her behaviour, nor his regard lessened ; and he confided that his subsequent conduct, and the full explanation of his motives which he designed, after their marriage, to give to Jacqueline, would be entirely satisfactory ; and that all her doubts being dispelled, and the strength of his affection proved, he should at length be rewarded by her love.

But amid the delightful scenes of future happiness which fancy sketched, he was not insensible of the danger which menaced his laboured plans, even at the moment of completion ; for, long accustomed to observe the emotions of the marchioness, and acquainted with the predominating passions and weaknesses of her character, he possessed the key to her thoughts, and in spite of her dissimulation, could generally trace her actions to their real origin.

The marchioness, with an affectation of friendship and an apparent concern for Jacqueline, after noticing her visible reluctance, had endeavoured to prevail on the count and marquis to delay the nuptials, which it had been agreed should take place on the expiration of the three days granted by the marquis to Jacqueline's request. But this pro-



posal, though from different motives, was decidedly rejected by the marquis and count.

By this insidious attempt the marchioness betrayed to the count her jealousy; and though she sought to conceal her vexation at its unsuccessful termination, by an appearance of unconcern, and more than usual levity, he was not deceived as to the real state of her mind. He saw, that, believing herself supplanted in his affections, and urged at once by love, wounded pride, and hatred, she meditated a terrible revenge on Jacqueline.

The count perceived, but knew not how to avert the danger. He even feared that his hasty and decisive rejection of the marchioness's proposal would only accelerate her vengeance; for cruel and

vindictive as the count knew her, he was aware that no pity or remorse would intervene and induce her to spare one who had, however innocently, thwarted her wishes.

Reflection made the count more sensible of the necessity of speedily removing Jacqueline beyond the reach of the marchioness's machinations; and it was his intention, if he could prevail on her to assent to their immediate marriage, directly to accompany her to Italy. With anxious eagerness he sought an interview with Jacqueline, but since the day of their arrival she had, under a plea of indisposition, which the marchioness readily received, excused herself from mingling in their society. The count, despairing of being able otherwise to see her, and not choosing to commit to writing so important a com-

munication, repeatedly solicited her to grant him an audience : but Jacqueline, disgusted by his importunities, and wholly unsuspecting of the motives which prompted these reiterated requests, persevered in her determination of not meeting him. Harassed and distressed, she had secluded herself in the hope of acquiring sufficient fortitude and resignation to submit with dignity to the destiny which seemed inevitable. Her struggles were long and severe. Nothing, she was sensible, but the conviction that her father's fame and life depended on her compliance, could induce her to fulfil an engagement against which her whole soul revolted. There were times when she would have welcomed death as a refuge from this detested marriage.

These natural feelings gave place to



others more generous and disinterested when she contemplated her father. At those moments no sacrifice appeared too great which could restore him to health and tranquillity. From him Jacqueline so carefully concealed her anguish, that he began to hope that she had overcome her former repugnance to the count; but considering this change in her sentiments as effected principally by the death of Sir Almeric, he forbore to enter on a subject perhaps still too tender for conversation, and which might disturb her composure.

Every hour which she could snatch from grief Jacqueline passed with the baron, by her soothing attentions beguiling the tedious monotony of illness; and in the success which attended her endeavours she experienced the only happiness of which she was susceptible.

It was late in the evening of the second of the three days which were to intervene before her marriage with the count, when Jacqueline with a heavy heart quitted the baron, and withdrew to her apartment. Her attendants were soon dismissed; for little disposed to rest, she designed by reading to banish the sad ideas which intruded on her mind. But no author had power to fix her attention, or withdraw her thoughts from real to fictitious woes.

In replacing the books on the table, Jacqueline observed, on the top of a parcel which she had not moved, a letter addressed to her in an unknown hand. For a moment she was surprised, but immediately concluded that her attendants had put it there, and afterwards through forgetfulness had neglected to mention it. A hope that it came from

Blanche made her eagerly open it ; but the first glance destroyed this pleasing expectation, and with no small astonishment she read the following lines.

“ Once more assume the courage which you have before displayed, and be in the cedar walk to night at twelve. The hour is solemn, and so is the occasion. In the unbroken stillness of midnight, while nature sleeps unconscious of the passing horrors, the dark fate of Eloise ought to be revealed. If you value the honour of your family, your own peace, or the life of the baron, fail not. What will then be disclosed no other ear must witness.”

The paper dropped from the hand of Jacqueline. Her mind, enfeebled by grief, was seized by superstitious apprehensions. She looked with terror to-



wards the oratory, in the expectation of beholding the mysterious visitor whom once before she had seen there; for that this singular address proceeded from him she did not doubt.

All within her apartment was silent; and a few minutes, dispelling her illusions, restored her usual fortitude: yet the idea which had first impressed her mind remained. She hesitated, and knew not how to decide. The clock of the chateau had already struck eleven, and but little time was left for reflection. Again she looked at the note. Her father's safety was involved; and she resolved to go. A wish, though almost unknown to herself, that this interview might furnish some obstacle to her marriage with the count, made her more readily adopt this determination.

The name of Eloise recalled with

more than usual tenderness the memory of Sir Almeric and his untimely fate. "Let me know all," she exclaimed; "I am prepared for horrors, but surely no realities can exceed the terrific imaginations of uncertainty." As Jacqueline uttered these words she rose, and hastily throwing round her a long veil, advanced towards the oratory. At the door she paused, and with an eager glance surveyed the altar. No object of alarm met her sight. All was silent and vacant. The missal of Eloise still lay on the step. For an instant Jacqueline gazed on it: then yielding to an impulse of affection which she was unable to resist, she raised it to her lips. It had belonged to the sister of the baron, to the mother of Sir Almeric.

Leaving her taper on the altar, Jacqueline approached the balcony, which by a flight of steps communicated with

the garden ; for she considered herself less likely to be observed this way than if she were to pass through the chateau.

The night was serene. A gentle breeze softly murmured among the trees, and the last rays of a setting moon partially revealed the surrounding scene. She looked towards the cedar walk, which, totally obscured by the thickness of the foliage, was dark and gloomy. A sudden and involuntary dread made her stop, and at that instant the sound of a distant footstep reached her. From an opposite path she observed a person issue, muffled in a cloak, who moved swiftly, keeping under the shade of the trees ; and shortly after a low whispering induced her to believe that she had been joined by a companion, but the light was too feeble for her to ascertain. For some time she continued to watch,



expecting to see them return, but they were gone beyond her hearing, and all remained profoundly still.

Jacqueline hesitated whether to proceed. As she reflected on the hour and the distance from the chateau, her perplexity increased; for this incident had excited strange conjectures, and her undefined emotion seemed to restrain her. But an extreme desire to penetrate the mystery which involved her family, an apprehension of the important, perhaps fatal consequences to the baron, should she neglect this opportunity, overcame personal considerations; and all remaining quiet, she ventured to descend.

As Jacqueline crossed the lawn, she frequently paused to listen. Even the rustling of the leaves shaken by the wind filled her with alarm, and more

than once she started, mistaking in the dusky light the waving and uncertain shadows of the trees for the motion of persons. Dismayed and trembling she looked back to the chateau, scarcely visible in the distant obscurity, except by the faint glimmer of the taper which she had left in the oratory. Had Jacqueline yielded to her fears, she would have returned ; for it required no small degree of resolution to persevere. She was alone, encompassed by darkness and mystery, at an hour of the night consecrated by superstition to the wanderings of unearthly beings, and in a place their reputed haunt. She was about to meet an unknown stranger, for a purpose most distressing ; to learn the errors, too probably the crimes, of her father.

It was this last idea that urged Jacque-

line to proceed. "Perhaps," she exclaimed, "he is less guilty than his own remorse and the malicious insinuations of the marquis have made me apprehend. What have I not suffered from uncertainty; and shall I now shrink with weak timidity from an explanation in which his safety may be involved?"

At the entrance of the cedar walk she stopped, for the darkness was so profound under the thick branches, that she was unable to distinguish any object; and she considered that she should be more readily observed there by the person whom she came to meet than in the interior.

The clock of the chateau announced the appointed hour, and Jacqueline anxiously endeavoured to penetrate the surrounding gloom. In the stillness which



ensued she distinguished the breathing of a person near her ; and listening more attentively, was convinced that the sounds were real. Some moments elapsed, and though the breathing continued, no one either moved or spoke. Nothing could be more dreadful than the situation of Jacqueline : her eyes turned in every direction, sought vainly in the profound darkness to confirm or dissipate the horrible surmises which she entertained respecting her unseen companion. Reason was scarcely able to withstand the terrific suggestions of imagination. Excess of apprehension and an indescribable emotion rendered her immovable : with difficulty she respired. Her doubts, augmented by the awful silence, were no longer to be supported ; and with a desperate boldness she inquired who was there.

In the voice which replied, she recog-

nized that of her conductor on the night when she was conveyed to Etonbury castle; and though ignorant for what purpose, she immediately perceived that she had been deluded. Precipitately quitting the cedar walk, she sought by flight to escape; but she had not proceeded many steps before her arm was seized. "Lady, you must go with me," the same voice said; and in spite of her opposition and remonstrances Jacqueline was hurried along by her unknown guide.

The schemes which the count had formed to snatch Jacqueline from the vindictive designs of the marchioness, were rendered abortive by her perseverance in refusing to grant him an interview. Anxious for her safety, he was more than once tempted to press the marquis to hasten the period of their marriage. The count knew that he

could easily prevail on him not only to consent to his design, but strenuously to promote it; but he feared that the opposition of Jacqueline could not be overcome, and he foresaw that to make the attempt unsuccessfully would be only to increase her danger by betraying his suspicions.

The count therefore redoubled his attentions to the marchioness, hoping by this conduct to abate her jealousy, and by his continued presence to frustrate any sinister plan which she might form: but he soon perceived the futility of these expectations, and became convinced that the rancour which she bore towards Jacqueline was not to be appeased by common means. On the evening of the second day preceding that appointed for his marriage, his worst apprehensions were confirmed by the arrival of the Chevalier De Sombreuil.



To the intimate confidence which existed between the marchioness and De Sombreuil the count was no stranger. Of its full extent he was indeed ignorant, as well as of the horrid crime which those accomplices in guilt had perpetrated at Venice. He knew, however, sufficient to inspire the most alarming apprehensions, and to convince him that the safety of Jacqueline required her immediate removal. But while he felt the necessity of this measure, he felt that he was wholly destitute of the means of effecting it. In this extremity he condescended to ask the advice of one of his principal attendants who enjoyed the largest share of his confidence, and whose ingenuity had frequently assisted to extricate him from the difficulties in which his extravagance repeatedly plunged him.

This man in the short period of their residence at the chateau had gathered

from the thoughtless loquacity of some of the baron's household, a knowledge of the mysterious events which had formerly happened there, and the eagerness with which Jacqueline sought to discover them. Possessing this information, when his lord applied to him, he did not think it difficult to lure Jacqueline into his power.

It was at his suggestion that the note to Jacqueline was written; and while she was with the baron, he had dexterously seized an opportunity to place it on her dressing table. The caution and despatch with which his plan was arranged encouraged the count to indulge the most sanguine expectations of success; and the better to provide against the possibility of disappointment, he resolved for some days to forego the pleasure of Jacqueline's society, that by re-

maintaining at the chateau he might remove all suspicion from himself, and be able to mislead and render unavailing the pursuit which would be made as soon as her flight was discovered.

The count had intended to leave the execution of this enterprize to his agent; but as the hour drew near, his anxiety overcame his prudence, he was no longer able to maintain even the appearance of tranquillity, and seizing an opportunity while the attention of the marchioness was otherwise engaged, he abruptly quitted the saloon, and concealing himself in his cloak, hurried to the cedar walk.

He had scarcely joined his attendant when they observed a female wrapped in a long veil gliding through the shrubbery which on one side extended



to the chateau. She appeared in great agitation, and often, but without slackening her pace, looked round, as if uncertain which way to proceed. On reaching the end of an avenue which crossed the cedar walk, she stopped for a moment. The count, unable to suppress his joy, rushed towards her; but at the sound of his steps, uttering a faint scream, she darted into a path leading to the canal.

The count entertaining no doubt of her being Jacqueline, was astonished by this precipitate flight, which, though he repeatedly called to her, she continued, till, her strength and breath failing, she would have sunk to the ground, had he not hastened forward in time to catch her in his arms. She had fainted, and the count, distressed and perplexed by this unexpected accident, knew not what

course to pursue. To procure assistance from the chateau was impossible, without risking discovery and the destruction of his hopes. This conviction induced him to hearken more readily to the importunities of his confident, who urged him not to delay her removal.

The same motives of caution which restrained the count from accompanying Jacqueline, obliged him to commit her solely to the care of his man whom he had early in the evening openly despatched to Italy, lest the unexplained absence of one of his retinue at this conjuncture should excite suspicion: but, as had been concerted between them, the man had lingered in the forest till it was dark, and then had entered the garden by a private gate, of which he had taken care to secure the key. His horse was waiting at a little distance; and the count

having strictly enjoined him to use the utmost diligence, and as soon as he reached the place of his destination, to see that every attention was paid to his still insensible charge, beheld his departure with the joy of one who suddenly finds his fond dreams of happiness realized.

The count immediately returned to the chateau, exulting in his success, and unconscious that his absence had been remarked. Seldom had his manners been more insinuating; and the elegant vivacity of his conversation almost banished the suspicions with which the suggestions of De Sombreuil had inspired the marchioness.

The coldness and aversion which marked the count's reception of De Sombreuil were too apparent to escape



the notice of the latter; and his haughty temper prompted him to seek some means of retaliation. The agitation of the count, which in spite of his endeavours to conceal it, continually appeared, quickly presented the opportunity; for De Sombreuil, previously apprized by the marchioness of the situation of affairs, quickly formed no inaccurate conjecture of the cause of the count's embarrassment.

Convinced, by the manner of the count's withdrawing from the saloon, that his suspicions were not without foundation, De Sombreuil ventured to disclose them to the marchioness. As she had never entertained the slightest suspicion of such an attempt, her surprise and indignation may be easily imagined: but believing that her designs against Jacqueline were totally unsus-

pected by the count, she saw no motive to urge her to adopt such a measure, and on reflection imagined that the zeal of De Sombreuil had made him overstep the bounds of probability. The protracted absence of the count inclined her at length to place more confidence in his communication; and her fears, increased by the insidious remarks of De Sombreuil, led her to despatch him in quest of the count.

He had scarcely left the saloon when the count returned. His presence restored hilarity; and the animation which he displayed, removing distrust, was shortly communicated to his associates. His joy was great but transient: for their festivity was quickly interrupted by the entrance of Sombreuil and Jacqueline. The former, casting on the count a look of triumph, related the manner

in which he had discovered Jacqueline in the garden.

This intelligence roused the indignation of the marquis to a dreadful height, and with the usual impetuosity of his disposition he indulged the first transports unrestrained by pity or affection. The resentment of the marchioness, though not inferior, appeared in her countenance and gestures, not words. Her eyes, alternately directed to the count and Jacqueline, expressed envy, hatred, and every malignant passion; and with an emotion of pleasure worthy of a demon, she beheld the distress of her rival, and listened to the denunciations of the marquis.

Of this scene the count, overpowered by astonishment, rage, and vexation, was a silent spectator. Utterly unable to



account for the presence of Jacqueline whom he supposed by this time many miles distant, he almost doubted the evidence of his senses; while she, pale, trembling, and sinking under a conflict of emotions, among which the conviction that her own credulity had exposed her to this humiliation was not the least painful, did not attempt to interrupt the unfeeling reproaches of her brother. Reply, she knew, would only aggravate his violence, and with the dignified calmness of insulted innocence she turned to quit the apartment.

A moment's reflection was sufficient to shew the count, long accustomed to perceive and convert to the best advantage every casual opportunity, the important use which might be made of this apparently unfavourable incident to promote and perhaps finally accomplish his views. He knew that the marquis,

heated by wine, would readily second any plan which tended to gratify his resentment, and he trusted that Jacqueline, already distressed, taken by surprise, and terrified by the vehemence and threats of her brother, would be obliged to comply.

Encouraged by this hope, he hastily advanced towards Jacqueline, who had nearly reached the door. At his approach she quickened her pace, and casting on him a look of displeasure, would have withdrawn, but the count seized her hand, and after apologizing for detaining her, expressed his wishes that he could prevail on her to anticipate the period fixed for their nuptials; a measure which he asserted circumstances rendered necessary.

This proposal, as the count had rightly conjectured, received the immediate

sanction of the marquis; and listening only to the suggestions of avarice and indignation, he swore, that, however unreasonable the hour, the ceremony should be no longer delayed. Jacqueline expostulated, and pleaded his promise for an interval of three days; but he alleged that her attempt to escape freed him from an engagement into which he ought never to have entered.

Jacqueline, too well acquainted with the obstinacy of the marquis, was sensible that further opposition would be unavailing, and that an appeal to the baron could alone rescue her from his unjust power: but duty and affection withheld her from adopting this expedient. She recoiled from the idea of involving the baron in a contention which would certainly hazard his hap-



piness, and perhaps in his debilitated state his life.

Though Jacqueline had sufficient magnanimity to adopt this resolution, and to persevere in it, she left no other means untried. As a last effort, she condescended to implore the pity of the marquis, and conjured him to spare himself the too late remorse of having rendered her miserable. But the marquis, irritated by intreaty, and utterly regardless of her extreme anguish, reiterated with still greater asperity his unalterable resolution that her marriage with the count should be immediately celebrated.

This peremptory and decisive declaration excited in Jacqueline grief and despair; in the marchioness a tumult of passions. Disappointed love, hatred, revenge, raged at once with a fury bor-

dering on phrenzy. All the settled habits of her mind were overthrown; dissimulation was at an end; the secret of her soul trembled on her convulsed lips. But from this excess of desperation she was preserved by the sudden entrance of a domestic to announce the flight of Blanche.

A pause of silence ensued. Words are unable to express the new and various emotions and ideas produced by this intelligence. Absence, instead of abating, had rather increased the admiration and regard which the marquis had formerly professed towards Blanche; and since his arrival in Guienne he had arranged a plan which in a few days would have placed her in his power. He suspected that this design had been betrayed to the marchioness, and attributed to her jealousy the sudden removal of Blanche at this critical conjuncture.

But more anxious to recover her than to ascertain the cause of her absence, he lost no time in forming or uttering useless conjectures, and whatever suspicions he entertained, prudently confined them to his own bosom. To overtake Blanche before she could reach any place of security, was his first object; to punish those who had projected or assisted to convey her from the chateau was a future consideration. In his own more immediate interests those of the count were forgotten, at least disregarded; and the marriage of Jacqueline was postponed with as little ceremony and an equal degree of precipitancy as it had been before urged. By his orders she was conducted to her apartment, which he declared she should no more be permitted to quit till he led her to the altar.

The hopes of the marchioness revived. During this delay her revenge on Jac-



queline might be accomplished; and that it should be, she firmly resolved. Relieved from the terror of this hated marriage, she reflected with extreme uneasiness, and no small degree of dread, on the evils to be apprehended from the escape of Blanche, which, though from different reasons, was as unwelcome to her as to the marquis; and she was equally zealous for the success of the pursuit which he immediately commenced.

The count seemed destined to be the sport of fortune. All his plans, by a strange coincidence of circumstances, were annihilated at the moment which promised to accomplish them: and to increase his mortification, the very means which he employed to promote them, ultimately proved their destruction. Retrospection was useless. It was vain to

regret that the darkness had prevented his recognizing Blanche in the garden. That it was she whom he had mistaken for Jacqueline, did not admit of doubt ; but since that unfortunate event had occurred, to hinder the marquis from regaining her was of the utmost importance. With this view he had joined in the pursuit, and without exciting any suspicion completely frustrated the utmost efforts of the marquis and De Sombreuil.

The agitation and anxiety of the marquis during the search, and his deep concern on its failure, betrayed to the court the nature of his sentiments towards Blanche. This discovery was no less welcome than unexpected. He was now assured of having the marquis at his disposal ; and while he retained Blanche, he no longer dreaded the ex-

ertions of the marchioness to prevent his marriage with Jacqueline.

Delighted with the prospects which this circumstance rendered more easy of attainment, the count was eager to return. But it was evening before they reached the chateau; for the marquis, though convinced that further pursuit would probably be useless, yet lingered, unwilling to renounce the hope which he had indulged. Vexed and irritated by disappointment, he for the first time beheld with coldness the smiling reception of the marchioness. His suspicion, that she had contrived the removal of Blanche, still continued, and he ascribed to dissimulation the extreme regret which she manifested at the unsuccessful termination of the search.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

I feel as if all hell were in my heart,  
And I in hell.

OTWAY.

THE marchioness was no stranger to the motives of the marquis, when yielding to his pressing importunities she permitted Blanche to accompany them to England. Though fully aware of the difficulties in which this compliance would probably involve her, she feared to irritate the marquis by a refusal which might perhaps provoke him to retaliate, in prohibiting the attendance of the count.

Blanche had long been an object of hatred to the marchioness. In her she envied those merits and superior perfections of which she knew herself to be deficient. But these emotions were weak compared with those which took possession of her mind when she discovered that Blanche had attracted the admiration and affection of the marquis.

In the first transports of resentment and jealousy she was tempted to sacrifice her unfortunate rival, but cooler reflection shewed the hazard of such precipitation, and inclined her to conceal under an appearance of friendship the fierce passions which rankled in her bosom. Stifled not extinguished, they only waited for a proper opportunity to break forth with accumulated fury. The flight of Blanche from Etonbury castle had delayed, not destroyed, her vindictive

plans; and with unfeeling exultation she triumphed over her victim once more in her power.

Since the arrival of the marchioness in Guienne, Blanche had endured a rigorous confinement; and her present sufferings were increased by the dread of future and greater evils. In spite of the vigilance with which she was guarded, the marquis found means to renew his former insolent offers. He assured her that she might confidently rely on the efforts he was making to ensure her safety, and that he hoped soon to remove her from the persecution of the marchioness.

The cruel insults of the marquis provoked the indignation and contempt of Blanche, but these emotions were soon superseded by terror when she consider-



ed her desolate situation ; and apprehensive of the desperate schemes which the temerity of the marquis might urge him to adopt, she was inclined to throw herself on the protection of the marchioness : but she hesitated to take this important and decisive step. Her appeal would perhaps be disregarded, or it might only accelerate the fate to which she was consigned, for the stern ungenerous disposition of the marchioness precluded every hope that even this instance of candour would induce her to suspend or modify her designs.

Blanche was still undecided when the Chevalier De Sombreuil arrived at the chateau. His appearance she considered as the signal of her fate : what that fate might be she trembled to think. Every moment gave strength to the cruel forebodings which his presence authorized ;

at every step which sounded in the adjoining corridor she started. Vague undefined fears perplexed her thoughts, and with frenzied eagerness she looked round to see whether it were possible to escape.

The windows of her apartment opened on the garden. They had been left unfastened, their height from the ground being considered a sufficient security. Blanche approached them. The feeble rays of the moon shewed her that the attempt would be dangerous, but she was not to be deterred, and with desperate courage ventured to descend. Light and agile she reached the lawn unhurt, and fearful of being observed immediately entered the shrubbery which on one side skirted this part of the garden. Soon bewildered in its intricate mazes, and uncertain what course to pursue,

she paused : at that instant the sound of approaching steps induced her to believe that she was followed. With a speed, which fear only could have enabled her to use, she fled down the first path that presented itself. The voice of the count calling to her augmented her alarm : her pursuer evidently gained on her ; and overpowered with fatigue and terror she fainted.

The flight of Blanche operated, most unfavourably for Jacqueline on the mind of the marchioness. Her indecision was at an end. She no longer hesitated to adopt the atrocious project which De Sombreuil had been summoned to the chateau to execute. In the escape of Blanche she beheld the effect of procrastination ; and taking warning from this example she resolved by celerity and firmness to prevent the recurrence



of a similar event in the case of Jacqueline. Both were her rivals, their crime was the same ; but in the estimation of the marchioness it involved very different degrees of guilt.

The marquis she had never loved, his affection she had never valued ; and therefore the loss of what she neither esteemed nor felt essential to happiness, excited little regret. But that one whom she had always considered so much her inferior, possessed sufficient attractions to attach a heart once devoted to her, was a humiliation which her haughty disposition could ill endure. Her pride was deeply mortified, and on the unfortunate Blanche she resolved to inflict a punishment sufficient to gratify her resentment.

If offended vanity alone could prompt

the marchioness to adopt severe and unjustifiable measures, it will not appear surprising that when joined to disappointed love it impelled her to resort to the most violent extremities. No revenge short of death could appease the implacable hatred which she felt towards Jacqueline. The recent scene had convinced the marchioness that she no longer possessed the heart of the count. His confusion and vexation when Jacqueline and De Sombreuil entered the saloon had not escaped her notice. The previous suggestions of the latter, and her own observations, induced her to form a conjecture not very distant from the real intentions of the count; and not conceiving it possible that any one could behold him with indifference, she attributed to dissimulation the aversion which Jacqueline uniformly expressed.

Partly from irresolution, and partly

from the interruption which Blanche's escape occasioned, the marchioness had not yet communicated to De Sombreuil the full extent of her designs. It was late in the evening before she found the opportunity which she ardently sought, of withdrawing unobserved with him. Apprehensive that in the garden their discourse might be heard, they quitted it by a private gate opening on the forest, and entered a large grove which had formerly been a favourite resort with the baroness. It was thickly skirted on both sides by shrubs and underwood, and the branches of the lofty trees intermingled formed above a natural arch. Beneath their shade the marchioness and De Sombreuil continued slowly to proceed. Both intently engaged with their own thoughts were for some time silent; the deep gloom which surrounded them effectually concealing the strong though



different passions impressed on the countenance of each.

The execrable scheme which the marchioness meditated against Jacqueline was not the ebullition of sudden resentment. It had long been familiar to her thoughts, though various reasons had induced her to suspend and sometimes wholly to reject it. In moments of dispassionate reflection she was sensible of the enormity of this sanguinary project; but the frequent recurrence of the idea weakened its force. Goaded by jealousy, and directing her attention principally to the agreeable consequences which she expected, her abhorrence of the means became gradually less. This first step taken, it was not difficult, so ingenious is the human mind, and so prone to self-delusion, to excuse or even justify what she so ardently wished.

But however successful the marchioness had been in deceiving herself, she was at a loss to explain or palliate her intentions to another. The sophistry which had silenced the remonstrances of her own mind she perceived could not endure the scrutiny of a stranger: and though she remained steady in her purpose, she found it difficult to assign reasons which might dispose her associate to a similar resolution; ashamed to avow her real motives, and unable to invent others either valid or plausible.

Her reluctance to commit herself to De Sombreuil on this subject was augmented by the suspicious caution of her character: not that she had any cause to mistrust him, or to expect that her confidence would be abused; but though he had rendered her many services, though he had participated and aided

her guilty projects, he was still a stranger to her. A mystery enveloped him, which during their closest intimacy she had never been able to penetrate.

The circumstances in which their acquaintance had commenced were not calculated to impress the marchioness with a high opinion of either his rank or honour; but his superior talent attracted her notice and admiration. In many respects their sentiments were similar, and a general congeniality of feeling soon banished reserve, at least on the part of the marchioness. In the situation into which she had precipitated herself she needed an adviser and confidant. For this office no one was better qualified than De Sombreuil. With her thoughts and wishes he seemed already acquainted, and to him therefore the humiliating recapitulation of her



errors was unnecessary. He entered into all her views, and soon became the depositary of her most secret designs. To him a hint was sufficient: the half-expressed idea he followed through its ramifications, and at once conceived the purpose which she wished yet hesitated to utter.

Throughout the whole of their intercourse De Sombreuil preserved the haughty independence which marked his manners. For his services he received no remuneration, and the liberal offers of the marchioness were uniformly rejected with scorn. Wrapped in a gloomy reserve, he seemed intent on some hidden design. Alone in the midst of company, conviviality never relaxed the strict silence which he maintained respecting himself. Of his family, of his connections, even of his

country, the marchioness was ignorant. The melancholy which at intervals oppressed him, contrasted with the vigour and decision of his general conduct, excited interest and curiosity. An air of wild grandeur characterized him. His mind, once pre-eminent, but overthrown by strong passions, retained only the shattered ruins of what it had been.

Though accustomed to the eccentricity of De Sombreuil, his presence always impressed the marchioness with an emotion of awe, of which she found it impossible to divest herself. She dreaded to hear from him those painful truths which with the unrestrained freedom of an associate in guilt he sometimes ventured to address to her.

Conscious that her present purpose deserved censure, the marchioness felt a reluctance to enter on it. After all that

had passed, she imagined that De Sombreuil would not be wholly ignorant of her intentions; and she paused for some time expecting that he would spare her the disagreeable task of beginning the subject; but this expectation was vain.

De Sombreuil, absorbed in reflection and the recollections which the scene excited, continued to move mechanically. The marchioness, with all relating to her, was forgotten, till the sound of her voice dispelled his reverie, and put to flight the tender remembrance of days of innocence and peace long past. Twice she spoke before De Sombreuil was sufficiently himself to hear or answer her.

“De Sombreuil,” said the marchioness, “it would be insulting to suppose you ignorant of the purpose of this interview. You know me; you know



how I love, and how that love is wronged. Blanche has eluded my power, and perhaps in security derides my impotent attempts at vengeance. I have too long pursued lenient and indecisive measures, but my determination is now fixed. Jacqueline remains, and I hate her."

De Sombreuil was silent, and the marchioness continued—"The difficulties from which" your advice and active exertions have extricated me are remembered with gratitude, and in your friendship I repose with confidence."

The marchioness was proceeding, but De Sombreuil interrupted her—"Flattery," said he, "on me has lost its influence. Dismiss idle thanks. The circumstances and principles which cement our association preclude esteem,

and beyond our own interest neither regards the other. You need my services. What are your wishes?"

"To be happy. A serpent stands in my way, and while I hesitate to crush it, inflicts a mortal sting. De Sombreuil, free me from its loathed presence, free me from Jacqueline."

The marchioness as she spoke grasped the arm of De Sombreuil. She found it tremble, and eagerly inquired the cause.

"Joy," he exclaimed in a tone of exultation, "thrills my nerves. My hopes are realized. The long desired period is arrived."

His wild manner alarmed the mar-

chioness. She relinquished her hold, and retreated a few steps. "De Sombreuil, why are you thus moved? I am terrified! Your violence shocks me!"

"What do you apprehend?" said he, hastily following her. "This puerile weakness is incompatible with the designs you meditate. Do you shrink from the accomplishment of that which you desire?" "This is not the first death that you have decreed. I am not to be trifled with. If your resolution wavers, I am gone."

"Forgive," said the marchioness, "the transient inconsistency of my conduct. My resolution is as permanent as my hatred. I live in jeopardy while Jacqueline exists."

"She dies," replied De Sombreuil;



“but the time, the place! Why not this hour?”

“Such is my intention. It must be this night or never. To-morrow gives her to the count. All the household have retired. She is now alone in her apartment. That key will admit you from the garden.”

“It is enough,” exclaimed De Sombreuil; “leave the rest to me.”

“But,” said the marchioness, “it must seem her own deed. The dagger should be left beside her.”

The marchioness hesitated, and either from an involuntary emotion of pity, or from affectation, perhaps both, she added, “Though her death is essential to my happiness, I would spare her all un

necessary suffering. Let the first blow be at once fatal. To linger would be dreadful."

"Surely," said De Sombreuil, in a sarcastic tone, "you forget that I am not a novice. Has that night at Venice no place in your remembrance?"

"Stop," exclaimed the marchioness; "Why at this moment must you revert to that scene?"

She turned towards De Sombreuil, but he was gone. Already he had reached the end of the grove, and she could indistinctly discern him cross towards the garden. While she looked, a second shadow passed the end of the avenue, and followed the same direction that De Sombreuil had taken.

The marchioness started. What per-

son could be in that retired spot at such an hour? Were her intentions suspected? Had her discourse been overheard? Perhaps it was the count. This idea increased her agitation. If it were, she had for ever forfeited his esteem; her hopes were utterly destroyed. She wished to recall De Sombreuil: not that she regretted his sanguinary errand, but because she feared to meet the shame and punishment which its discovery would involve. The wish was vain. De Sombreuil was out of sight, and much too distant to hear her voice.

Oppressed with apprehension the marchioness slowly returned to the garden. As she passed along the margin of the canal, which on its clear surface revealed another heaven, and beheld the gentle motion of the few light clouds which seemed to float on its sparkling bosom, she felt the deepest anguish. To



the tranquil calm of this delightful scene the storm of passions which shook her soul formed a distressing contrast. To her disturbed fancy the shrubs and trees which shaded the banks of the stream agitated by the wind, seemed in sad whispers to lament the untimely fate of Jacqueline, while mysterious accents, half-lost in the distant rustling of the forest, pronounced her guilt.

The marchioness had chosen a retired circuitous path in her return to the chateau, partly to elude observation, and partly because it was more distant from the apartment of Jacqueline; for however reluctant to confess it, she was sensible that in the present state of her feelings, to witness the perpetration of the crime which she had planned was impossible.

She had nearly reached the end of an

avenue which terminated in the cedar walk, when she was startled by hearing other steps. The marchioness hurried forward, for terror prevented her distinguishing from what quarter they approached. Perhaps it was De Sombreuil returning from the execution of his purpose. She shuddered. Solitude, darkness, and anxiety, had subdued the usual energy of her character, and she dreaded to encounter him.

Such were her thoughts, when from an abrupt angle in the path close to her a person issued. At this sudden meeting both uttered an exclamation of surprise, and by their voices recognized each other.

“This happiness is as great as unexpected,” said the count, for it was he. “What, my dear marchioness, could bring you here at such an hour?”

“ I might make a similar inquiry,” she replied; and taking his arm, she turned into a path which led from the chateau.

This meeting was no less unwelcome and alarming to the marchioness than to the count. Each considered the other as a spy; each knew that their conduct would not admit of explanation or excuse. The count had hastened towards the marchioness, mistaking her approach for that of his confident whose return he was then awaiting in the cedar walk. At first he conjectured that the marchioness had been informed of the intended interview, and designed by her presence to prevent it; but a few minutes convinced him, though unable to form any other more probable, that this opinion was erroneous.

The count was sensible that whatever



reasons had induced the marchioness to undertake this nocturnal ramble, it was his interest to remove any suspicions which she might entertain. With this view he assumed that graceful insinuation which distinguished his manners, and with an air of tender gaiety adverted to the early period of their love; to the splendid scenes in which she had presided, the admiration that greeted her appearance, the voluptuous joys, the elegant delights so dear to the marchioness.

Embodied by his animating description, they seemed again to exist; again they exerted their magic influence over the marchioness. She listened enraptured: a paradise opened before her. To secure the heart of the count, what dangers, what crimes were too great? Images of future happiness, improved by fancy, occupied her thoughts, and

expelled all gloomy ideas. Her feelings underwent a sudden and violent alteration. All the strong and selfish passions resumed their empire, and with exultation she reflected that by this time Jacqueline no longer existed.

The pleasure which the marchioness derived from the society of the count induced her to prolong her stay. Even the apprehension lest De Sombreuil should meet them, which had at first excited her uneasiness, was forgotten; for while in the presence of the count, she experienced a respite from the remorse which in his absence incessantly preyed on her mind and deprived her of peace. It was not till his patience had undergone a severe trial, that she withdrew to the chateau.

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