

VILLASANTELLA.

A ROMANCE.

VILLASANTELLA;

OR

THE CURIOUS IMPERTINENT.

A ROMANCE.

BY

CATHERINE SELDEN,

AUTHOR OF

*THE ENGLISH NUN, COUNT DE SANTERRE, SERENA, VILLA NOVA,  
GERMAN LETTERS, &c. &c.*

LONDON:

*PRINTED FOR*

A.K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1817.

## PREFACE.

*WHEN an Author begins to write a Preface, it is generally with a view of apologizing for the defects of a first work, or for repeated intrusions on the public; but as this is not my first production, the former cannot be my design, nor is the latter in the least my intention. Those who read novels and romances, do it, I imagine, rather for their own amusement, than from any compliment to the authors of them; and though the names of SMITH, BURNEY, RATCLIFFE, or ROBINSON, being prefixed to a work, may induce many persons to turn over those pages that they otherwise would not, yet it will most commonly be found to arise from a fear of their taste being impeached, if WALSINGHAM, CLARENTINE, &c. were unknown to them, than from any other motive. VILLASANTELLA must therefore take his chance in the world into which I am about to usher him; and may the errors of his historian be treated with the same lenity that his have been in these pages. They are alike those of youth, and an imagination perhaps ill regulated, but not, I hope, those of principle or intention.*

*I wish, however, to excuse myself from a charge of plagiarism, that I doubt not will be brought against me, from the similarity of character and circumstances of one female personage of my drama to the Miss BURCHALL, of the incomparable SIDNEY BIDDULPH. But, however I may admire the writings of Mrs. SHERIDAN, I should not certainly wish to pilfer that part of it which pleases me the least; and any person who will take the trouble of investigating the matter, will see that I have not done so. Yet, as it will, I dare say, be thought an unreasonable request to a Novel Reader, I shall just hint that FALKLAND was not the seducer of Miss BURCHALL: he took no pains to gain her affections, or pervert her principles; and was, surely, for an error that could scarcely be*

*called a voluntary one, too severely punished, in the bitterness of that fate, which to a man of any delicacy or honour, is the most dreadful of all others. Between Sir GEORGE BIDDULPH and VILLASANTELLA, no parallel can, I think, be drawn: I only fear that the fault into which both were drawn, by an artful woman, is so common in life, that it will be esteemed unworthy of the dignity of a Romance; under which title, however, the Memoirs of Villasantelle, or the Curious Impertinent, is presented to the Encouragers of Invention.*

*By*

*Their most obedient Servant,*

*C.S.*

## VILLASANTELE.

HENRIQUEZ de Villasantelle, the only son of the Count de Villasantelle, was a native of the city of Seville, where he resided, with his parents and a sister two years older than himself, till he had attained the age when the young men of Spain are in general sent to Salamanca, or some other of the universities.

It was then, that Henriquez accepted the invitation of the Marquis Cambusca, (who had lately married his sister) to accompany them to the mansion of that nobleman, in the territory of the republic of Venice, there to pass the time that must intervene before he commenced his studies at Salamanca.

To the Marquis, a man in middle age, sensible and penetrating, fond of developing characters (particularly in people at an early time of life, when the unrestrained emotions of the heart, and sallies of the imagination, and the propensities inherent in the mind, devoid of all constraint from the watchful prudence of worldly caution, give an energy to the character and sentiments that at a later period of life is too often lost in the apathy attending palled enjoyment, and the wary reserve of a mind inured to frequent disappointment,) the young Henriquez proved a uniform subject for observation, study, and almost constant admiration. His disposition ardent and fiery, yet tractable when treated with reasonable indulgence; his imagination lively, vivid, ready to receive every impression, yet accompanied by a strength of mind that led him closely to investigate their truth, and willing to abandon them the moment he became sensible of their fallacy; his conduct and opinions were frequently wrong, but error was never persisted in, nor its adoption defended.

With an understanding uncommonly acute, and a judgment above his years, the warmth of his passions and his heart often led him into dangers and difficulties, from which his sense and courage could scarcely extricate him.

His person, (though he was not yet twenty-one) was manly and dignified, and in his intelligent countenance were seen such marked traits of gaiety and sweetness as rendered the regularity of his features little attended to.

During their journey through Spain, Henriquez, (in whose character curiosity the most boundless, though never obtrusive or impertinent, was one of the most striking traits,) was particularly inquisitive on the subject, the manners, and customs of the country they were about to enter; and as the Marquis with simplicity and truth described them, his remarks were such as at once to charm and astonish that nobleman.

Henriquez, above the meanness of nationality, and with a mind fond of novelty, quick in its decisions, and ardent in the pursuit of information, freely declared his sentiments upon what he heard. Pride, jealousy, and revenge were too much the characteristics of his own countrymen for them to excite much surprise on finding them also prevalent amongst the Italians; but to the account of their superior activity in the pursuit of science and the arts, he lent a pleased attention, at the same time feeling emulation rising in his bosom.

One day that Henriquez and the Marquis were conversing on this subject, the former, with the vehemence incidental to youth of a lively capacity and quick perceptions, began to form an imaginary plan for the reform of the indolence and haughty ignorance of his countrymen, and in a few moments transformed the proud, the poor, and

lazy hidalgo into something strongly resembling an English yeoman. The Marquis, smiling, interrupted him, saying,

“My dear Henriquez, all this does very well in conversation; it is the bold and visionary scheme of a young man of strong intellect, but who has formed erroneous conclusions. Age and experience will shew you the fallacy of your present ideas, and convince you how impossible it is for this change to be effected.”

“What should prevent it, Sir?” returned Henriquez. “Would some few men in our universities but think rightly, and communicate their ideas to the public through the channel of literature, it is impossible but that the Spaniards (by no means a dull or incomprehensive class of people) would shake off their ancient habits and become at once more rational, more prosperous, and more happy.”

“All this is very plausible:” said the Marquis, “but you revert not to the difficulties that must render it impracticable. You forget, that to succeed, you must teach your hidalgos to read the works of your students: you must eradicate from stubborn and uncultivated minds every prejudice they have been accustomed to cherish: you must endow them with activity and discernment: you must give to some a taste for the arts: others you must convince, that to toil under a burning sun is preferable to reclining under the shade of cork trees, because more useful to others, (whom the hidalgo has never been accustomed to consider) and because tending to improve the kingdom, and enrich the individual.”

Henriquez was a little staggered by the review of difficulties thus held up to him; but still willing to defend his own system, chimerical as it began to appear, he returned:

“The difficulties that strike you, my Lord, are such as I must admit the justice of; but they are, nevertheless, not insurmountable. Let some few men of distinguished abilities, with acuteness, patience, and perseverance, attempt the work,——”

“And,” interrupted the Marquis, “I grant you they *may* effect this *work of wonders*. But you would find, that a plan so almost hopeless of success, and so difficult in the execution, will only be undertaken by young men of ardent imaginations, and romantic singularity of opinions; and that such will grow weary of the enterprise long before any benefit can arise from it.”

“I see,” said Henriquez, with a good-humoured smile, “that you mean a more direct allusion to myself in your censure than you avow: but as the friendship you have always manifested for me does not permit me to suppose you mean to insult my understanding, or sneer at *my* instability in particular, I must conclude that you have a contemptible opinion of youth in general.”

“Very far from it, my dear Henriquez. I think that age may often receive improvement from attending to the fire and genius of youth; but I think that its judgment is seldom correct and its conclusions generally erroneous, and that young people should therefore never form decisions, since they cannot do so with caution.”

“For once, Marquis, let me deviate from your rule, and say, that I *decisively* think you wrong. In matters of opinion, you must permit me to support, that an intelligent person of *any* age is as likely to be right as a person of long experience: and I do not see why I should be discouraged from enquiring into the causes of what I observe; and when I have discovered them judging of their truth. Experience may teach us, that *such things are*; but it is reason, and reason alone can inform us, *why they are?* and thence instruct us how to remedy or change.”

The Marquis shook his head in silence: though stedfast in his own opinion, he was pleased with the acuteness he discovered in his young friend; and was not so eager to make converts as not to perceive that to attempt further arguments might hurt the cause, and estrange Henriquez's heart; thus the conversation terminated here.

With a mind so active, so energetic as was that of Henriquez, it is not astonishing, that finding the Marquis and Marchioness (after spending two months at their villa on the shore of the Adriatic) about to remove to Naples, he resolved to accompany them; unwilling to forego the pleasure of seeing so much more of Italy, though the time was nearly expired when his absence from Salamanca would be permitted.

As the Marquis proposed staying several months in Naples (which was the birth-place of his mother) it was not long before he established himself in an elegant palace on the terrace which overhangs the Bay: and the Marchioness had soon an extensive acquaintance amongst the nobility. Her beauty, her sweetness and vivacity rendered her generally admired, and the palazzo of the Marchesa di Cambusca became a fashionable resort of the politest and most distinguished persons.

But, in the ceremonious circles that almost every evening assembled in the apartments of his sister, Henriquez took no pleasure: and they became particularly disagreeable when the Countess Miranda, not long a widow, placed her daughter in a convent to be educated, and came to reside in the house and under the protection of the Marquis de Cambusca, her brother.

This lady, proud, unfeeling, and imperious, vain of her beauty now visibly in its wane, thinking herself a wit, because possessing a genius for the most illiberal and malevolent satire, and a talent for embellishing the scandalous tales her prying disposition and persevering ill nature led her to discover; fond of admiration (though extorted by the fear of falling under the lash of her tongue) attached herself to Henriquez; imagining that his youth and inexperience would easily lead him to put on her chains, at the same time that his sense of the honor she did him, by accepting his attentions, would render him submissive to her caprices. In this, however, she was mistaken, and had soon the mortification to find, that Henriquez preferred a solitary ramble in the streets of Naples, or its environs, to being her partner in the dance, or sitting next to her at play, listening to her spiteful animadversions on others, or her disgusting flattery of himself.

One evening as Henriquez was sauntering carelessly under the colonnade that runs along the front of the church of St. Theresa, the sweet accents of a female voice speaking to some person within the church drew his attention, and the next instant, a lady whose figure was grace and elegance itself issued from one of the side doors of the great entrance close to him. At the moment that she stepped into the colonnade, a sudden breeze wafted her veil, (which seemed to have been hastily thrown on) to some distance. Henriquez flew to catch it; and presenting it to her, was surprised to see her very beautiful face pale, and bearing evident traces of tears. She reached forth her hand for her veil; but unable to throw it over her head, or to thank him for restoring it, she remained for some moments the mute image of extreme agitation and distress, which almost amounted to desperation. Henriquez not conceiving that her emotion was occasioned by the untoward accident of her veil, and observing that she trembled excessively, offered his arm to lead and support her back to the St. Theresa. The sound of his voice roused her from her torpor; she clasped her hands together, and raising them to her forehead with an air of distraction, exclaimed in a voice equally disturbed with her looks,

“My God! what will now become of me?”

“I hope you are in no danger, Lady.” said Villasantelle soothingly. “From *me* you have nothing to apprehend; and from others I will with my life defend innocence and beauty.”

“Noble Stranger,” returned the Lady more composedly, “I thank you for your kindness; but *she* has nothing to fear who is already undone!”

With these words she was departing, when Henriquez exclaimed,

“Already undone!—Tell me, I conjure you——”

“I can tell you nothing:” interrupted the fair unknown: “but conjure *you* to suffer me to depart unmolested.”

So saying, she sprang to the end of the colonnade, and descending the steps with a rapidity that baffled all pursuit, disappeared.

It was at the abrupt turning of the street of St. Theresa, that Henriquez entirely lost sight of the fair stranger: certain that she had gone that way, he looked up and down the street, but could see no female, except a few of those mean-looking women who sell their humble wares in marble and glass to the idle passenger.

The form of the stranger, tall, light, and graceful, was not one to be confounded with the common herd; and Henriquez, disappointed in his desire of pursuing her, returned slowly through the colonnade, and entered the church of St. Theresa. As he crossed its broad aisle, the brilliant effect of the setting sun, blazing on the stained glass of the west window, struck his fancy, and he remained for some time gazing on it. While he did so, he distinguished the commencement of the vesper service of the convent adjoining. The voices of many of those who joined in the hymn were soft and melodious; the organ was remarkably fine, and with a view of listening to harmony so enchanting to him, Henriquez abandoned his intention of going home directly. But the music did not so entirely take up his attention as to prevent his mind from dwelling on the fair stranger, and forming a thousand wild conjectures concerning her, rendering him scarcely sensible of the cessation of the vesper service, and the approach of night, till suddenly starting he observed that it was nearly dark. He was, however, leaving the place, when the sound of footsteps very near him induced him to look around, and the obscurity of the church scarcely permitted him to discover two persons habited in long dark cloaks walking up and down one of the side aisles, and from the earnestness of their voices, when he could now and then catch a word, appearing deeply engaged in conversation.

Henriquez paused to observe them; and, as they slowly passed him, he heard one of them say, “My blood runs cold at the very thought of that last eventful interview; I still feel the cold languor of death——”

The speaker quickened his pace (as one is apt to do when wishing to escape from disagreeable recollections, and the body partaking of the agitation of the mind, we think that change of place will lessen our feelings of pain, though our lips still dwell on their cause) and was soon out of hearing: as they both returned from the farther end of the church, they stopped close to the pillar, in the shade of which Henriquez was concealed from discovery, and the same person who had before spoken, said,

“Think me not a coward for allowing my mind to be affected by the gloom of the hour, and the still solemnity of this place: I cannot talk more at present; but an hour earlier in the evening of to-morrow I will meet you here. Or,” he added, “can you join me at that hour in some place less liable to observation?”

“You forget,” returned his companion, the deep and hollow tones of whose voice startled Villasantelle, “you forget that this is my sanctuary, and I must not leave it. Here then you will find me to-morrow; but bring a little more courage with you to the conference, since desperate deeds call for a spirit of desperation.”

“Then, vengeance, pride, and love assist me!” exclaimed the other with vehemence.

“Hush!” said his companion, “and I will cross the church with you.”

Henriquez, now perceiving that he would be discovered, hastily left his station and walked down the great aisle. He was seen by the person who had declared himself in sanctuary, and who now, saying to his companion that they were discovered, called aloud, “Who goes there?”

“A friend!” replied Henriquez, and passed on. But footsteps as quick as his own seemed to pursue him, and turning his head, he perceived the two strangers so close behind him that their garments touched his. Alarmed, but not terrified, Henriquez stopped, and the same person who had before addressed him, said, “Good even!” and turned another way, accompanied by the other stranger. Henriquez watched their shadowy forms retreating till they descended into the north cloister, and then quitted the church.

He had passed the colonnade, and was proceeding homewards, when, as he passed a small door of the south aisle of the St. Theresa, a man (who, the light of a lamp hanging in the porch enabled him to see was one of the persons he had left in the church) came out of it, and on Henriquez repeating “Good even!” enquired, “Who greets the passenger?”

“Henriquez de Villasantelle!” he replied: for an idea struck him that he had heard the voice before this evening. The stranger, however said no more, and Henriquez returned home.

When he reached the palace of the Marquis de Cambusca, his mind was in a state of such disturbance, from the tenor of his contemplations from the time he left the St. Theresa, that without considering whither he was going, he went into the saloon, where the Marchioness sat surrounded by a number of persons of both sexes, amongst whom he soon distinguished the Countess Miranda, who beckoned to him to advance to a seat next her’s.

As he did so, the Marchioness affectionately chid him for abandoning the society of her friends, and demanded where he had been?

“Attending vespers in the church of St. Theresa,” replied Henriquez, unaccustomed to prevaricate, though almost certain of meeting the ridicule it drew on him, from the Countess Miranda, who said in a sneering tone,

“Father Henriquez has derived peculiar sanctity from the exercises of the evening, and would doubtless be an eligible confessor.”

“I fear,” said he gaily, “that my veneration for the fair sex would make me too lenient to their offences: but will you try me, Madam, and confess to me this moment?”

“But confessions are not made in public, Signor,” returned the Countess.

“*Your’s* may,” said Henriquez with an air of gallantry, which his inclinations so ill seconded, that he scarcely attended to the Countess, who saying “*I*, however, shall reserve my shrift till we meet in private,” rose from her seat and quitted the saloon. She

had been sitting next to his sister, and Villasantelle took possession of the place she had left.

“Our sister Miranda is less gay than usual,” remarked the Marchioness.

“She is rather less polite,” returned Henriquez pointedly, though coldly.

“Did she not offer you the charge of her conscience, brother?” said the Marchioness smiling; yet surprised at the petulance of Henriquez: a sentiment that was not diminished by his replying, “It is a charge I desire not to undertake.”

“My dear Henriquez are you not well? or has any thing disturbed you?” enquired his sister in a voice of sympathizing softness, and laying her hand on his.

“No, my Julia. But we spoke of the Countess Miranda——.”

“I have forgot what I would have said,” said Julia, and the conversation was no more revived.

“Signor de Villsantelle,” said a Neapolitan nobleman, advancing to Henriquez, “you have no doubt heard that the old Baron de Grijalva, being taken ill, will prevent his son accompanying you on your journey to-morrow.”

Henriquez now, for the first time for many hours, recollected that the following day had been appointed for his commencing his journey to Salamanca with Don Lopez de Grijalva, who was also to become a student of that university; and felt by no means afflicted to find, that their departure from Naples was thus unavoidably delayed. He, however, in due politeness, replied,

“I am extremely concerned to hear of the indisposition of the Baron. Pray how long has he been ill?”

To this enquiry a satisfactory answer was returned, and after some conversation of this subject with the noble Neapolitan, Henriquez internally resolved to repair on the following evening to the church of St. Theresa, in the hope of gaining some information of the designs of the mysterious strangers. That they were desperate, one of the persons had declared; and his curiosity to know more was so strong, as to make him ardently wish for the time to arrive when he might hope to receive some satisfaction on this point.

Had Henriquez known more of Italy and the manners of its inhabitants, it is more than probable that a consideration of his own safety would have prevented him from forming such a project as that of watching these unknown persons, who, should they discover his design, or even suspect it, were but too likely to punish it. But the inquisitive disposition of de Villasantelle had never been accustomed to receive the slightest check from any consideration of a prudential nature, and more particularly where caution might seem like a deficiency of courage, and would not now permit him to attend to those whispers of the imagination, that at some moments represented to him that the gratification of his curiosity in the St. Theresa was pregnant with danger.

During the course of the night, which Henriquez spent without sleep, the beautiful stranger whom he had seen, but so suddenly lost in the colonnade of the St. Theresa, was frequently present to his imagination. Her youth, her extreme loveliness, her agitation, the touching accents of her melodious voice, and above all a veil of mystery that seemed to hang over her, interested not only his curiosity but a thousand nobler passions and sentiments. The words which she had pronounced had made an indelible impression on his memory, and he now a hundred times repeated them, not more with a view of discovering their meaning, than, if possible, to catch the tone in which they were uttered; a tone of such exquisite sensibility and softness as had penetrated his heart. His waking

dreams continually presented her to his enraptured imagination, and ere the night had passed, Henriquez had formed for the fair unknown a history the most romantic, and plans for again seeing her, the wildest and most impracticable.

The morning came, but Henriquez repaired not, as was his custom, to the library of the Marquis, on the contrary he left not his chamber till a much later hour than ordinary, and when he did so, immediately went out of the house.

After a short walk, however, the heat obliged him to return to the house, and having enquired for his sister, and heard she was in her dressing room, he repaired thither.

To reach this apartment, it was necessary that he should pass through a long gallery or corridor, where, during the hottest days in summer, the Marchioness frequently chose to sit, on account of its coolness. Henriquez had just reached this corridor, when he perceived the Countess Miranda walking up and down in it, and though nothing could be more repugnant to him than to meet her, but particularly alone, he proceeded rather hastily till she spoke to him, and after the salutations of the morning had been interchanged, she said, "You seem to have forgotten my promised confession, Signor."

"I have rather recollected that I am unworthy to hear it," returned Henriquez bowing and going to proceed on his way to the Marchioness's apartment.

"As you do not pretend to high dignities in the church, Signor," resumed the Countess, "these disqualifying speeches are superfluous."

As she said this, she carelessly put her arm within his, and as they had at that moment reached the end of the corridor, Henriquez found himself compelled to take a turn with her.

"You appear grave and look ill at ease. Again," resumed the Countess with an air of the tenderest anxiety, "dear Henriquez, tell me what it is that afflicts you?"

"It is too great a condescension in the Countess Miranda, to concern herself on the subject," replied Villasantelle in a manner he designed should appear grateful, but which was in reality of the most frigid reserve.

The Countess had, however, not sufficient delicacy, or was too much determined to carry her point, to observe the repelling coldness of his manner, and said,

"Where an object we love is concerned, no consideration appears trivial."

Henriquez knew not what to reply to this; to take it as pointed to himself, must have looked like the most arrogant vanity; yet to affect to misunderstand her, was, he saw plainly, to provoke her to render herself more intelligible, than, (feeling for her only contempt and detestation) he would find agreeable: he therefore, to elude both, assumed a gay air, saying, "Your confession, Madam, is still unmade."

"I will reserve it till we meet in the church of St. Theresa, Signor. It is your favourite haunt; is it not?"

Henriquez, who conceived she meant nothing more than a malicious reference to the declaration he had made of attending vespers in that church the evening before, readily replied,

"Only once have I been within its walls."

"And *that once*, Signor——"

"I heard vespers there."

"It is a scene for mysteries," resumed the Countess, without heeding his reply.

"Do you know it to be such," exclaimed Henriquez, eagerly.

“*You, at least, do,*” returned the Countess, adding

“Do you forget the stranger, Signor?”

“Santa Maria! Know you aught of them, or their designs?” cried the young Spaniard with emotion.

“I am well aware of them,” answered the Countess, going towards the door of the Marchioness’s apartment.

“I conjure you,” said Henriquez, seizing her hand, “to tell me what they are.”

“Why do you desire to know?” demanded she.

Henriquez blushed deeply as he said

“If they militate against my peace, I must be on my guard.”

“Be on your guard,” returned the Countess, with solemnity, as she disengaged her hand.

“For heaven’s sake, tell me, why am I to be wary, when I know not that I have an enemy?”

“You have many enemies!” returned the lady, with yet increasing energy.

“But this one, Madam! This mysterious stranger,—What is the design on foot against me?”

“To penetrate your heart!” she replied, in an accent that so much dismayed her hearer, that he could not make any effort to detain her, and she passed him to enter the dressing room of the Marchioness.

Villasantelle, perfectly aware that it would be to no purpose to question the Countess farther, in the presence of his sister, now, instead of following her, returned to his own chamber, where he gave himself up entirely to the consideration of the little intelligence he had gained concerning the mysterious strangers of the St. Theresa.

At once he determined to take the first opportunity of seeking, from the Countess, to obtain some more satisfactory information; but recollecting that that opportunity might probably not offer till the time of the appointment was passed, and that he might learn more from their conversation than the Countess would chuse to tell him, he abandoned that design entirely; resolving, however, not to attend the disclosure of their schemes, without a resolute companion.

For this office of friendship, he knew none so proper as Don Lopez de Grijalva, his countryman, who was now with the Baron, his father, at Naples.

Don Lopez, equally ardent and impetuous, but less inquisitive, and not so easily fired by every new occurrence as Henriquez, seemed a person well fitted to join him in such an enterprise, and Villasantelle experienced a sensation of surprise, when, having related to his friend the whole of his observations and suspicions, he manifestly declined taking any part in it, saying

“I perceive, my dear Henriquez, that nothing will ever cure you of giving way to your curiosity, till it has drawn you into some difficulty, from which you will find it impossible to extricate yourself. To what purpose is it that you desire to know what is said in a private conference between two total strangers to you? Besides, are you aware of the danger into which you are going to precipitate yourself?”

“If the consultation of those strangers relates to myself,” said Henriquez, “it certainly concerns me to hear it; and if it does *not*, there can be no danger in my gratifying my desire of knowledge.”

“Your desire of knowledge,” replied Don Lopez, sarcastically, “may, perhaps, be safe to indulge; but you seem determined to justify, though you cannot render it *justifiable*.”

“How comes it, Don Lopez de Grijalva,” resumed Henriquez, a little resentfully, “that I find you disposed to take upon you the office of censor of my actions?”

“I have taken upon me the office of your *friend*, many years since, but I perceive that you have too little relish for the virtue of sincerity, to return my esteem as I feel it, and upon any other terms, I scorn it,” replied Grijalva warmly.

“Excuse me, my dear Lopez,” said Henriquez, instantly sensible of his error, “you did not, I am certain, mean to wound me, by your stricture; but perhaps my proposal appears to you in a preposterous light.”

“I confess it does,” said his friend.

“We then differ in opinion,” returned Villasantelle; “but I had hoped that, knowing me to be determined to brave the event, and thinking there was danger, you would have afforded me the support of your admirable courage and self-command.”

“And I do assure you, my dear Henriquez,” cried Grijalva, clasping his hand as he spoke, “that I require all my self-command to resist your wishes; but,—”

“Oh! pardon me,” interrupted his generous friend, “for being a moment unmindful of the pious duty you have to perform! No, my Lopez, you must not endanger a safety so precious to a tender, and now enfeebled parent. I will go alone.”

“Rather,” eagerly exclaimed Grijalva, “rather let me prevail on you not to go at all! You throw yourself into the way of peril; you court your own destruction, and seek to make me miserable.”

Henriquez pitied the emotion and visible distress of his friend, which, however, he thought less manly than might be expected from one of the true *old Christians*, and assuring him he would be careful of himself, departed, more firmly resolved than ever, to penetrate the mystery of the St. Theresa.

At the hour he had heard appointed for the conference, the young Villasantelle repaired to the church, and in the dim twilight of evening, and the distance, easily discovered the two figures already pacing up and down the aisle; he was advancing silently but hastily to them, when an indistinct noise that struck his ear, made him stop.

Whatever caused the noise seemed to be nearer to him than the strangers, for the sound of their footsteps was not distinguishable, and this was plainly so. Henriquez looked round him, but saw no person near him; no shadowy form broke in upon the uniformity of the long aisle, except a confessional of an uncouth shape, that was placed against the wall, but few yards from where Henriquez stood.

On this he fixed his eyes, to see if any thing moved within it, and in a few moments beheld the tall slender form of a female issue from it, repeating in a low harmonious tone, “Alphonso! Beloved Alphonso!”

Henriquez started; he heard the touching voice; he beheld the fascinating form of the young unknown, who had, during the last twenty-four hours, taken up so much of his thoughts.

At the same instant she discovered him, and, springing back, took refuge in the confessional.

Henriquez hesitated a moment; the flight of the stranger was an unequivocal proof that she wished to avoid him; and the pathetic repetition of the name of Alphonso,

equally proved that she expected someone else, whom his presence might prevent approaching her; but his curiosity, which in this instant he fancied was only his pitying desire to be of service to the fair and unhappy unknown, prevailed, and he, hastily advancing, ascended the two steps into the confessional; but the confessional was empty and he encountered only a damp, chill, current of air, for which he could no more account than for the disappearance of the lady.

Villasantelle, whose mind easily expanded to receive every new impression, which constantly, for a time at least, effaced the last, now forgot the two men in the farther end of the church, to pursue the enquiry that thus presented itself, and in spite of the gloomy obscurity that surrounded him, his quick and penetrating eye soon discovered a narrow door in the back of the confessional. Burning with an ardent curiosity, he threw himself against it with such violence, that the door, which required but little force to unloose it, burst open, and it was not without an effort, that Henriquez saved himself from falling headlong down a flight of winding steps that descended, without any landing-place, from the confessional into what appeared to be a subterraneous passage: but when he reached the bottom of the stairs, and proceeded a few paces, he was convinced that he was within the dreary confines of a sepulchral vault. The floor was simply of earth, so humid as to receive the impression of every foot that passed over it, and from the roof unwholesome dews dropped slow but incessantly, while seven or eight feeble lamps, placed in niches in the raised tombs that seemed to distinguish the most illustrious of the buried dead, cast a faint and misty ray over the extent of this sad receptacle of mortality, and scarcely disclosed another of its outlets on the side opposite that where Henriquez had entered.

Villasantelle, unappalled by those gloomy appearances, still advanced till he trod on something, which, as it crashed beneath his foot, returned a hollow sound! He paused, stooped down to distinguish it more clearly, and beholding the fragments of a human skull, shuddered with a sort of instinctive horror.

It was not that Henriquez felt that impressive awe which reflection would stamp on most minds in discovering such a spectacle; for, like many other young men, had he met with it in any other place, he would scarcely have regarded it more than if it had belonged to an animal of the brute creation, but there was a solemn and almost terrific character in this mansion of death that forced itself on the most careless nature.

Unknown, even to himself, the young adventurer felt a reluctance to proceed, in the dread of meeting some similar memento of death; and casting his eyes anxiously around, he perceived an open grave within a few feet of where he stood, and almost at the same moment discovered that it contained a considerable quantity of white drapery. Henriquez again paused, again moved onwards, and after another pause of deliberation, approached the grave, and looking into it, perceived that a burial dress only remained in it, the body that had evidently enwrapped it being gone.

The moment in which Henriquez made this observation, was one of the most impatient anxiety; and determined to be convinced that his eyes did not deceive him, he took up a part of the dress, when something rustled within it, and he drew a crumpled paper from its folds.

Anxiety for his own safety, horror at what he beheld, and a superstitious terror that he had before felt stealing over his senses, now gave place to his excessive curiosity, and being in the full gleam of one of the sepulchral lamps, he began to peruse the paper;

his hands trembled with eagerness as he endeavoured to smooth the creases, and his agitation was so great, that he could scarcely decypher the following lines:

“Victoria!—cold, senseless, and pale, given to the grave!—Impossible!—Nay, by heaven it shall not be!—Say no more that her disastrous fate renders *that* the only possible termination of her sorrows!—That by consigning Victoria to the tomb, her peace alone can be ensured! My soul shudders at the very idea of such an escape from the misfortunes that alike pursue Victoria and Alphonso.—Is there no alternative?—Alas, none!—And Victoria must be confined in a shroud, or in that fatal veil which condemns its wearer to a living death! Which puts fetters on the person and her manners, whilst the soul is left to range in a wide expanse of misery—

“Victoria!—My love!—You must be free, and the northern confessional——”

Henriquez had only read thus far, when the heavy sound of slow footsteps descending stairs, roused his attention to the consideration of his own danger; his right hand firmly grasped his sword, which he now drew from its scabbard; and dropping the paper from his left, he seized the lamp that had assisted him to read a part of it, waiting with a beating heart for the approach of the intruder.

He came, and Henriquez perceived that he was a monk, shrouded in his cowl, who, advancing a few paces from the outlet opposite, turned into one which Villasantelle had not before observed, and he heard him ascending steps.

Henriquez now followed, and being arrived at the low arch through which the monk had passed, beheld, by the light of the lamp he still held, two flights of stairs leading different ways: without a moment’s consideration he sprang up the one which led to the right, and just as he reached the summit he saw a form gliding away to the further end of the long passage that now opened on his view; but instead of the dark garments of a monk, it was robed in white; and where Henriquez expected to see the clumsy figure of the recluse, he beheld the graceful proportions of the fair unknown.

Animated by the sight, Henriquez wanted no other incentive to pursuit, and he darted forwards just as the unknown disappeared; and when he arrived at the spot where he had lost her, he was again perplexed by two passages: he again turned to the right, and having traversed a considerable extent of the passage, he suddenly perceived a faint light flash from a small grating close to where he stood, and the next moment a face, from which the unbecoming dress of a nun could not take its dignified sweetness, and, though pale, its beauty was presented to his view. As the nun looked through the grating, she perceived Henriquez, and in a tone of earnestness and agitation, exclaimed,

“In the name of the holy Virgin, who are you?”

“A guiltless stranger!” the youth replied, “And my name is Henriquez de Villasantelle!”

“That title bespeaks you a Castilian, Signor,” said the nun with quickness.

“It does. Spain contains my birthplace.”

“Then Signor,” returned the recluse, with a voice and manner of peculiar and encreasing agitation, “you are not unknown to me. But it is past,” she added, “and, without a miracle, your friend is lost beyond your power to save him.”

“Merciful God!” exclaimed Henriquez, stung with the idea that through his means any person should be undone, though he knew them not, “perhaps I may yet be of service.”

“Only by absenting yourself from hence,” said the nun mournfully. “Victoria is destroyed! Alphonso taken! and should you be found here, the bitterest vengeance of earth and Heaven will fall on *me!*”

“Oh!” cried the half distracted youth, “shew me the means by which I can escape so dreadful a catastrophe.”

“Go then;” the nun answered: “Fly from this passage, and when you reach the termination, turn to the right, and ascending some steps ——”

At this moment the increasing light within the grating rendered it scarcely necessary for Henriquez to hear the name of Agnes repeated, to convince him they were interrupted:

The nun waved her hand, and Henriquez retreated a little, but not too far to hear the intruder say,

“Wait you at the grate for father Philippo, daughter?” By which he was assured the speaker must be the abbess of the convent to which the nun probably belonged.

A trembling affirmative had been scarcely given, when the abbess exclaimed “Ha! Is not that the gleam of steel?” and immediately her hideous and forbidding countenance was placed close to the bars.

But the obscurity baffling her endeavours to discover who was there, Henriquez, by the gingling sound he heard, was convinced that she was unlocking a door, and dreading what might be the consequences to the gentle Agnes, fled with such haste that he entirely forgot her unfinished directions for his escape, and hastily passing through the sepulchral vault and the confessional, found himself in the northern aisle of the church.

Here he stopped to recover his breath and recollection, of which the precipitancy of his flight had almost bereft him: and here he soon began to repent having made so hasty a retreat, particularly when he recollected that he had left behind him unread the momentous paper, which, (as it was now beyond his reach) he fancied would have elucidated the whole of the mysterious circumstances which now perplexed his mind. In this persuasion he was just going to return to the vault, the descent into which was divested of its danger by the lamp that he had taken from the tomb, which he was now first aware that he still held in his left hand: but a sentiment of his native generosity impelled him to forbear what might injure another; and with the rapidity natural to him he resolved instantly to extinguish the lamp, that he concealed amongst the projecting ornaments of the confessional, and passed across the church to the narrow aisle where the two strangers had been conversing.

Only one, however, whom by his air Henriquez knew to be him who was in the sanctuary, remained in the church, and *he* was now with a tardy step pacing its length—now resting against one of the pillars that supported the roof. Henriquez continued to observe him for some time, and could not help noting the air of dignity that accompanied his motions, and even shewed itself when his person was in temporary repose.

He was tall, above the common size, and the cloak which was wrapped round him could not conceal that his figure tho’ athletic, was not large above proportion, and his hat, entirely concealing his face, was of that form usually worn by persons in a military capacity.

Villasantelle now no longer doubted that the stranger was a person of some consequence, and became instantly sensible of the impropriety of watching him as he had

hitherto done, to learn what it was evidently his desire, and it was probable was important to him, to keep concealed.

It is thus, that almost unconsciously we are influenced by rank and fortune, even to forego that which we most ardently desire: not, perhaps, that we imagine the affairs of those of a meaner order of less consequence, but that we are accustomed to respect the *feelings* of those of an equal rank with ourselves.

In pursuance of this impulse, Henriquez was quitting the church, when just in the entrance he encountered his friend Don Lopez de Grijalva: he was wrapped in one of the capolas of his own country, and his mien was disordered as he was hastily brushing past Henriquez, but the latter stopped him.

Don Lopez, now seeming to lose all guard over himself, exclaimed,

“Then all is discovered!”

“What mean you, Lopez?”

“Have you not seen Miranda?” returned Grijalva.

“Which way?” enquired Henriquez impatiently.

“Pacing the cloister.”

“No human being is there but the mysterious stranger! But, wherefore came you hither? I thought you occupied by your attendance on the Baron?”

“I came,” replied Don Lopez with hesitation, “to acquit myself of a sacred  
\_\_\_\_\_.”

“I understand you:” interrupted the noble Henriquez: “Go, my friend, perform your pious duty, and Heaven restore an honoured parent to your prayers.”

Saying this with an affectionate pressure of the hand of Don Lopez, he quitted the church, though in doing so he felt a strong reluctance to abandoning all hope of elucidating the mystery of the fair Victoria and the unfortunate Alphonso.

As he slowly proceeded homewards, he perplexed himself with a thousand vague conjectures respecting those unknown personages, and was more than once on the point of returning to the St. Theresa, in the determination of seeking Agnes, in order to question her about them.

Whilst Henriquez was yet at some distance from his home, the last faint rays of evening light had entirely faded from the sky, and the streets were involved in total darkness except where they intersected each other, in which places the yet feeble ray of the rising moon gleamed obliquely on the pavement.

It was at the turning of the Strada del —— where the pillars of a magnificent colonnade cast lengthened shadows across the street, that Henriquez observed a female form glide swiftly along, till, coming quite close to him, it turned abruptly, and the next moment disappeared in the obscurity of a shadowy lane; but its white garment, as it waved, caught the ray of the moon, and enabled Henriquez to follow where it went.

The darkness in which both were now involved seemed unfavourable to the flight of the pursued person, for after following the sound of steps about ten paces, Henriquez caught hold of her robe, which she in vain endeavoured to disengage from his grasp.

Villasantelle, after having several times conjured the stranger to speak, now made a sudden spring, and, quitting the robe, thought to encircle the lady in his arms, but she had unaccountably escaped, and he could not even hear her departing footsteps.

Astonishment held him rooted to the spot for some moments; he then prepared to recommence the pursuit, but at the first step he stumbled, and receiving a violent blow on the head, he sunk motionless on the pavement.

The street in which this accident happened was a retired one, and no passengers coming that way, it was so long before Henriquez recovered the use of his faculties, that the moon had risen to such a height as to direct her beams full on the spot where he lay.

He raised himself a little, and though his head throbbed with intense pain, immediately observed the cause of his misfortune.

The escape of the stranger had been owing to her leaving her garment in his hands, at the very moment when he attempted to catch her in his arms, and it then falling, his feet, on his moving, were entangled in it, and he fell against a pillar of a portico that jutted out just before him.

Henriquez, now perceiving the garment of the stranger on the ground, took it up to examine it: it was of a thin white persian silk, in make very much resembling the cloaks with loose sleeves worn by the Turkish ladies: but this had a large hood, which being drawn over the head, was of a length to reach to the knees, in the fashion of a veil. A slight pattern, with some Turkish characters embroidered in gold, went entirely round its edges, and an embroidered belt, with a gold clasp, confined it at the back, but left the front entirely loose.

Henriquez now debated whether or not he should carry it home with him: nothing deterred him from doing so but the idea that the loss of it would distress the owner: however, as she had suffered so long a time to elapse without returning to seek it, he thought it highly improbable that she would now do so, and concealing it as well as he could with his cloak, he proceeded to the palazzo di Cambusca.

When Villasantelle reached his chamber, his first care was to deposit his prize in a place of safety, and then feeling the contusion on his forehead extremely painful, summoned his servant to apply such remedies as could be had without the observation of the family.

To his own attendant, Filippo, Henriquez gave a strict charge not to mention his accident, which he said had been owing to a porter running against him, and dismissed him for the night, with directions to inform the Marchioness that he intended to set out at break of day on a short excursion.

This was really his serious design, and the meaning of his adopting a resolution apparently so extraordinary was simply this:

He knew the penetration of the Marquis was not to be imposed on by such a story to account for his swelled forehead as he had just told to Filippo, and he was well aware that that nobleman, guessing that he had met with the accident in the pursuit of some plan prompted by what he called a childish curiosity, would take occasion to point the severest ridicule against its indulgence.

Till, in the present instance, conscious that his thirst for developing every thing that looked like mystery (which had often no existence but in his own imagination) had carried him much beyond all bounds of propriety, Henriquez had never been ashamed of his inquisitive disposition, nor had the Marquis de Cambusca though he endeavoured to check, ever condemned it.

But his judgment was so clear, and his sense of honor almost so romantic, that Villasantelle well knew that he would make no allowance for the impetuosity of youth in

pursuing a favourite plan, and that reprehension would probably be added to ridicule when he should know the whole.

It was true, that could Henriquez stoop to deception he might escape the censures of the Marquis: but he preferred making a short excursion till the marks of his adventure should be worn off, to descending to a meanness equally repugnant to his principles and his inclination; and, accordingly, at the dawn of day, he embarked in a small vessel bound for the coast of Calabria; the master of which offered to land him on the nearest part of the island of Caprea, designing to carry the ship to the town or rather village of —— .

In adopting this measure, Henriquez had only consulted his desire of being absent from Naples; but his voyage was scarcely begun, when the beauty of the scenes that unfolded themselves to his view gave him reason to rejoice in the chance that had led him to embark even in a dirty and inconvenient vessel.

To Henriquez, the Bay of Naples, with the rising sun diffusing its radiance over it, and the volumes of black smoke rising from Vesuvius far above the light mist which the morning ray had not sufficient power to disperse, presented the most interesting picture he had ever seen: he was a passionate admirer of the beauties of nature, at the same time that the works of art afforded him the most delightful contemplations! He had ascended the Mountserratt; the Alhambra of Grenada had, as well as the Escorial, come under his observation, yet the Bay of Naples and the superb palaces of the city appeared to him to surpass them all; and when the vessel, stretching out to sea, displayed the various and ever changing forms of the rocks and promontories of Caprea, he allowed the scenery to be most perfectly romantic and picturesque.

But no object could for an instant engage the attention of Henriquez, from the moment that he heard the low soft voice of the fair stranger of the St. Theresa pronounce “Ah, Alphonso! my heart sinks within me, and I feel all the weak terrors of my sex, when I reflect on the dangers I have to encounter. Even when I look back upon those that are past, I shudder unconsciously at the retrospect, and look forward with yet keener foreboding to the dark scene of my future destiny! Alas! happy had it been for the wretched Victoria, had she died in her infancy, and not lived to involve her beloved Alphonso in her misery!”

The sound of this melodious voice, which ascended from the little cabin of the ship, threw Henriquez into such confusion as entirely to prevent him from attending to the answer of Alphonso, and brought on a train of reflections which absorbed every idea, till he was called upon to enter the fishing bark that was to convey him on shore: he then perceived that another boat similar to that in which he was to go had already put off from the ship with two passengers, one of whom was evidently a female.

Henriquez delighted to observe this circumstance, kept his eye steadily fixed on the little bark till the cavalier and his companion landed, which was almost at the same moment that he was himself put on shore, and he was immediately convinced that he had been mistaken.

The female to whom his regards were first directed was of a size and form extremely unlike the slender and elegant Victoria. Her figure, awkward, masculine, and clumsy, far above the common standard of women, was rendered still more striking by a gait between striding and shuffling, as she marched along the beach attended by the cavalier.

This personage was admirably adapted to contrast the athletic graces of the lady he accompanied. His diminutive figure was rendered completely disproportionate by an enormous paunch, and his shoulders bore a hump of such dimensions as to nearly overshadow his head: his legs appeared not only thick, but bandy, and seemed with difficulty to support the mass of deformity with which they were loaded. He wore a hat ornamented with a profusion of party-coloured plumage, and a long sword which continually struck on the ground as he waddled along, and was of a make nearly as original as its owner.

Henriquez, for several minutes continued his observations on these strange forms, and (such was the instability of his humours) was on the point of following them to try by conversation to discover if their interior agreed with the uncouthness of the exterior, when a fisherman belonging to Naples stepped up to him and asked him if he wished to return to that city.

Henriquez suddenly turned and perceiving the vessel in which he had arrived, with swelling sails, bearing towards the coast of Calabria, became sensible of the extremest vexation and disappointment, to think, that by pursuing the strangers, he had probably lost Victoria, who, he doubted not remained on board the vessel to which he now directed the attention of the fisherman, and hastily demanded how long he would be overtaking her in his boat.

“Not an hour, Signor,” replied the man; “grant that she makes the same sail that she does at present; but Pietro, her captain, knows me well, and when he sees me in chase, he will lie by for me.”

Without farther consideration, Henriquez leaped into the boat, which, with four stout hands in her, lay close to the shore, and desiring the boatmen to make what speed they could, was soon at a considerable distance from the island.

At first, whilst the rowers exerted their utmost powers, the eagerness of expectation prevented our young Spaniard from reflecting on what he was doing; but when the ship (as the boatman had predicted,) slackened sail for him to come up, and his bark glided with less rapidity than before, Henriquez began to consider for what purpose he was thus pursuing Victoria, whose desire it evidently was to be unnoticed. But Villasantelle was so little accustomed to reflections of this nature, that they vanished the moment his bark touched the ship’s side, and without saying a word to any person, he darted down into the cabin. But neither Alphonso or Victoria were there; and then as eagerly returning to the deck, he asked Pietro what passengers he had brought with him from Naples?

“Only three, Signor:” said Pietro. “Your excellency, the beautiful Signora, and her gallant, that I left at Caprea.”

“But, are you sure there was no other person?” cried Villasantelle, half angry at what he thought, an attempt to impose on him.

“I can have no interest in deceiving you, Signor,” replied the man rather in a surly tone: “and if the truth were known, perhaps you have as little interest in the persons you enquire for.”

Instantly conceiving that Victoria and her friend were really on board, Henriquez became more urgent with Pietro to tell him the truth, with a promise of reward if he would do so. But however honest Pietro might find himself disposed to accept the latter, he still repeated his assertions, and even desired Villasantelle to search the ship.

The Spaniard instantly descended once more to the cabin, and whilst he was searching every nook, Pietro took a paper from the floor and presented it to him.

The moment he cast his eyes on it, he perceived that it was written in the same hand writing of the one he had found in the grave, at the St. Theresa.

The words were these:

“Every thing is completed, and a few hours will give you liberty!—Agnes, whom I have spoken to at the grate told me how narrowly you escaped detection in both places, together with the loss of your cloak. The sweet sister had nearly undone us by her mistake!—My Castilian friend came not till long afterwards; but the youth to whom she spoke will not betray us!—He has curiosity, it is true, to seek into the affairs of others, but he is a lover of mystery, and his sense of honor is worthy of his descent.—. Fear nothing, therefore, my beloved Victoria! hope for success, boldly step forward, and we are safe.

“Adieu,

“Alphonso.”

This billet presented proof undeniable that Victoria had been in the ship, but for her disappearance, (when, after searching it all over, Henriquez was convinced that she was not on board,) it was impossible to account.

Henriquez at length prepared to return to his boat in Caprea, and he then discovered it was by this time far on its way to Naples; as the owner, not conceiving that Henriquez meant to return, and having been paid before hand, had made the best of his way back.

Obliged now to go on to Calabria, Villasantelle had some leisure to consider what he was about, and the reflection filled him with shame.

“What,” said he to himself, “what had I to do, to pursue those unhappy persons, to whom it is evident concealment is of such consequence? What is my design in doing so!”

The sophistry at all times ready to justify youth to itself, suggested that it was to offer them his assistance to escape from all they dreaded: but, conscience whispered, “Ah Henriquez, you deceive yourself! Is there not another, and a more selfish motive?”

Henriquez blushed as he asked this question of himself; and ever ready to search even his own heart to its inmost recesses, he had soon made the investigation. He was sensible that the beauty and the interesting appearance of Victoria had inspired the tenderest feelings for her; and he then, with a deep and heavy sigh, remembered that Victoria was accompanied by that Alphonso whose name she had pronounced with such touching fondness, and he detested himself for the sentiments and wishes he found residing in his bosom.

In reveries of this nature, to which, notwithstanding the impetuous activity of his disposition, no man could be more subject. Henriquez spent his time till the ship in which he was, reached its destined port, and he was put on shore, to seek, in a wild and scarcely inhabited country, the means of returning to Naples.

The place where he landed bore evident traces of having once been of some consequence, though the flat near the shore exhibited nothing but a few huts of fishermen. At the distance of about a quarter of a mile, however, were the remains of a fortress, which had once been a place of great strength, though now wholly dismantled;

but that some part of it was yet inhabited, Henriquez was convinced, by observing a small column of smoke ascending from one of the chimnies.

It was already evening, and the setting sun which, from whatever reason, lends a charm to every object, beamed brightly on the shore, and the huts, and shone with yet fuller radiance on the ancient castle which Henriquez contemplated, gilding its heavy towers and blazing on the glass that yet remained in the western windows, which appeared to be the inhabited part of the building: but the tall cypresses which grew in the neglected garden were violently agitated at intervals by the blast, that now rose every moment, threatening a violent storm at night.

Observing this, and perceiving that as the sun sunk beneath the horizon a black mist gathered over both the sea and land, Henriquez walked round the fortress in search of an entrance, from whence he might find his way to whoever inhabited this solitary spot, to demand a shelter from the night.

With some difficulty, and scrambling through the brambles and brushwood that grew in the moat, into which Henriquez had by chance descended, he found a path which led him to a small door in what had once been the portal-tower.

Here, though the door was ajar, he knocked for some time without effect, as the violence of the wind created a noise so loud as nearly to drown that made by the young Spaniard. At length he gathered courage to push the wicket entirely open, and to cross the great court into which it admitted him, to the grand entrance. This was a heavy arch of rough marble, but which, from its great size and the correctness of the design and workmanship, had an air of majestic beauty.

Within this arch, which gave admittance to the inside, or lesser court, were two staircases lit from the top, which tho' now in deep shadow from the approach of night, Henriquez perceived must lead to the chambers of the north and south side of the castle.

After some hesitation he ascended on the northern side, and found himself in a small but gloomy chamber, with large folding doors at each end: those at the head of the stairs were wide open, but the others were so nearly closed, that it was not without difficulty that Villasantelle forced a passage into an antique and apparently endless gallery.

Along one side of it was a range of high and narrow windows, in the tops of which were depicted on the glass sundry coats of arms, apparently those of the knights whose armour supported by their lances stood opposite to each: ranged above the armour were an infinite number of banners and other trophies, now all alike black and undistinguishable from ages of neglect.

Whilst with a cautious step and many an anxious glance to each side of him Henriquez advanced, he was struck by the report of a pistol. He listened in trembling agitation, as the pealing echoes again and again returned the sound, and felt an indescribable emotion wholly new to him: it was not fear, for Henriquez had a soul incapable of one cowardly thought: but there was something in the deep gloom of every thing around, which had no striking circumstance to engage his ardent curiosity in pursuit, that impressed his mind with awe almost overpowering his faculties. Whilst he yet hesitated whether to proceed, he cast his eye on an opposite window in the southern buildings, from whence he distinguished the bright blaze of a fire in one of the apartments. Henriquez no longer deliberated, but hastily quitting the gallery he descended

the staircase, and, mounting the other, was in a moment at the folding doors which barred the entrance to the chambers.

Here he again knocked for some time with violence, and at length had the good fortune to make himself heard. A man, whose features he could not distinguish, opened the door just far enough to put his head out, and carefully holding it so, demanded what he wanted?

Henriquez replied, that having that evening landed in Calabria, and the storm being too violent to permit him to return to the ship he came in, (which was the truth) he desired to obtain a night's lodging, for which he would pay.

In order to give the greater weight to this proposal, Villasantelle drew out his purse: but what was his confusion to find that it contained only two sequins, he having given all the rest to the boatmen who rowed him from Caprea. The imprudence of stripping himself of his money appeared trivial at that time, as he meant to return to the island, where resided a relation, who he knew would supply his pecuniary wants. But it now appeared a matter of serious moment, and after a short pause he began to relate to this Cerberus of the Castle how he was situated.

The man (as an English boor would have done) said it was an unlucky thing, but the Signor surely could not expect him to grant him a lodging without some security of being paid for it.

"I'll take you myself, Signor," he continued, "in my boat to Caprea in the morning, if you will pay me when we get there: but how can I be certain that you will not make off in the night without acknowledging my kindness?"

Henriquez by no means understood the hints meant to be given him by the stranger, and at last he boldly asked for some deposit of value sufficient to reimburse him for his civility if Villasantelle escaped in the night: and pointing to his sword at the same time that he glanced his eye over the rest of his dress, said that was the only one worth taking.

With much reluctance, Henriquez drew it from his belt, but refused to surrender it till he saw what sort of reception was prepared for him. The man then unclosed the door, and leading him to the room where was the fire, he gave Henriquez a moment's time to look around him. Close to the hearth sat a woman of about forty, with a face very much sun-burnt, and which seemed never to have boasted either beauty or sweetness of expression: her large and bony arms supported a sleeping infant, and a young girl knelt beside her contemplating the face of the baby.

On the entrance of the stranger, the young person sprung from her knees, and throwing back her head, shook from about her face the fair and curling locks that had shaded it as she stooped.

Strongly susceptible of female charms, the attention of Henriquez was now riveted on this lovely girl. She appeared about sixteen, and her figure was so delicately proportioned, as to have the airy lightness of a sylph: her complexion was beautifully fair, and the blood seemed every moment to rush into her cheeks and recede as her thoughts varied in their tenor: her eyes were of the darkest shade of blue, and shot continually from beneath her long dark eyelashes beams of inconceivable sweetness and gaiety: all the laughing graces played about her lips, on which she now placed her white and taper finger, as if to enjoin silence for fear of disturbing the sleep of the infant.

Henriquez bowed in silence, and gave his sword to the man, whose face he now for the first time saw. His features were harsh; but they bore the stamp of honesty, and Henriquez suffered him to carry away his cloak, which, as it rained very heavily during the last half hour, he hung on a peg near the fire to dry.

The young adventurer now sat down, and began a whispering conversation with the old woman; but his eye soon wandered in search of the beautiful girl. It soon discovered her at a little distance talking to the man; her delicate little hand rested on his shoulder as she seemed to listen anxiously to what he was saying: by degrees the smile faded from her countenance; the tide of youthful spirits that had flowed to her cheek ceased to mantle there, and in a moment or two she burst into tears. Henriquez saw this, and he saw also that the man kissed the hand she put into his as she left the apartment. He then advanced to the fire.

“Whither is Isabel gone?” enquired the woman.

“To her chamber,” said the man.— “I have brought her news she likes not.”

The woman, without speaking, now rose, and carrying the infant in her arms, followed Isabel.

“Is that beautiful girl your daughter?” said Henriquez to the man who alone remained.

“No Signor; my niece.”

“And has she always lived with you in this solitude?”

“No, Signor; No: If she had, how do you think she could come by so pretty an air!”

“She seems,” cried Henriquez with warmth, “as if every thing elegant and graceful were natural to her.”

“Yet, if she had had no better tutor than Paulo, which is myself, she would have been but a country wench.”

Signor Paulo seemed very well inclined to be more communicative, but he could no longer draw the attention of his guest, for the lovely Isabel, once more, with all her dimpling smiles, returned to the room, accompanied by the old woman.

She immediately seated herself by the fire, and taking up a cushion for making lace, quietly began to work. She sighed once or twice as she went on, and then suddenly began to sing.

His native language now struck the ears of Henriquez, for Isabel began the ballad so well known in Spain,

“Madre, la mi madre,” &c.

As she sung, her eyes were intently fixed on her work, and Henriquez, without fear of confusing her, gazed ardently upon her. As the words of a language so dear to him met his ear, conveyed on the sweet tones of the voice of Isabel, he internally exclaimed,

“Victoria! thou art no longer unequalled!”

And, unable to resist the fascination that impelled him, he crept round to the back of Isabel’s chair, saying in a low voice as she concluded her song,

“How sweetly does Spanish proceed from your lips! What spirit does that sonnet derive from your expression.”

Isabel smiled.

“Yet I sing it as a parrot, Signor.”

“What mean you, Isabel?”

Isabel did not again smile: she looked rather displeased as she replied,

“I do not understand the words, Signor.”

“Ah! no Isabel! your looks betrayed that you felt all their meaning.”

Henriquez then with a smile repeated, in Spanish,

“The raptured heart which once hath felt

“A sense of Love’s delight,

“Flies, like the moth’s impetuous wing,

“To find the taper’s light.”

It was not for the sprightly Isabel, who perfectly understood Spanish, to hear with the unconscious vacancy of ignorance this quotation: and she answered him in the words of another Spanish poet, with a purity and elegance in her pronunciation that seemed to proclaim her having received an excellent education.

“Dear Isabel,” cried Henriquez, “tell me what country you are of? Oh! If you are a Spaniard, I shall love you a thousand times more than I do.”

Isabel burst into a laugh.

“And pray, courteous stranger,” she returned, “is it material to you to know where first I drew breath?”

“It is, lovely maid,” answered the enraptured youth.

She now cast her eyes downward, and in a low voice pronounced,

“Seville!”

Henriquez now began to ask her several other questions, which she answered in the most laconic manner, in Italian: nor could he prevail on her to utter another syllable of Spanish.

Impatient of this cautious reserve, Villasantelle attempted to expostulate; but with an arch smile, she shook her head, and glanced her eye to Paulo, who was reclining back in his chair.

“He sleeps,” said Henriquez.

“Like a fox!” whispered Isabel: and directly began to sing a Sicilian ditty.

Provoked by the careless archness of her countenance, as she thus crushed his hopes, Henriquez retires to some distance, and endeavouring to overcome, or rather conceal, his chagrin, began to chat to Madelina, the old woman, who was now employed in dressing some fish for supper. She answered him very laconically, and seemed almost angry with him for addressing her: he had therefore nothing for it but total silence, or another attempt to engage the impracticable Isabel in conversation.

Preferring the latter, he resumed his post at the back of her chair, and, as at the moment he did so, she discontinuing her song, he said

“Is it long, Isabel, since you have inhabited this solitary place?”

“Not very long, Signor: but I believe for a space that you would think tedious.”

“And why is it,” resumed Henriquez, “that you, who seem to have been accustomed to far different scenes, think that time short, which you believe would by me be esteemed long.”

“Oh, Signor!” she answered smiling, “we are very different people, and our opinions vary extremely. You, for instance, think this place a solitude: to me it appears far otherwise! Here I enjoy health, peace, and liberty: and if I happen to entertain any wish for the formal circles, that the world pleases to misname *society*, I can enjoy them in perfection, by paying a visit to the knight’s gallery.”

“But, my lovely Isabel,” cried Henriquez, who by the knight’s gallery, understood she meant the place where he had been before he found out the residence of Paulo, “where have you learned to look thus philosophically on what the generality of your sex, at your age, would esteem pleasure?”

“Nature, Signor, has been my instructress: she never refuses to bestow her lights on those who worship her in her unsophisticated garb. But most of my opinions happen to differ from the generality of young women’s of my age and country, and therefore I abandoned it, for I found I was continually committing some *faux pas*.

“Heaven has been pleased to endow me with reason and vivacity, and I was perpetually outraging custom and propriety, by thinking for myself: I could easily conceal with rouge the complexion nature has given me, because once laid on, it required no further care or recollection, but I could not with equal facility conceal a smile when the forms of polite companies appeared ridiculous to me!”

Henriquez, who, in this observation, discovered the truth, of which he had before been nearly convinced, namely, that Isabel had moved in superior circles, now exclaimed, “Isabel, you astonish me!”

“That is what I have done many people,” she returned gaily. “Donna Agnes, Donna Maria, and a thousand other Donnas have pronounced me mad: but if I am, ’tis a reasonable madness which has led me to prefer freedom and content in an old fortress here, to a state imprisonment in the superb mansion of the Countess de Villasantelle; doubtful how soon I might be transferred to another place of severer bondage.”

At the mention of his aunt, who he knew to be meant, Henriquez felt thunder-struck: he knew that she had had a young girl under her protection for some years, and his astonishment in meeting her for the first time on the shore of Calabria, was boundless: and (considering the romantic turn of mind of the young Spaniard,) might also be said to be highly pleasureable.

With a vehemence that attracted the attention of Madelina and Paulo, and seemed to embarrass Isabel exceedingly, he entreated to be told, what had induced her to quit the protection of his aunt? How long it was since she had left Seville? and asked a thousand questions, with a rapidity that admitted not of reply. He had taken both her hands whilst he spoke, and Isabel now drawing them away with an air of displeasure, said at the same time, with the utmost coldness,

“I am well pleased, Signor, that you would not before suffer me to speak, since I have now an opportunity to answer *all* your questions at once. It cannot by any means import you to know the truth of any one of those points on which you have been so inquisitive; and I fairly tell you that *I will not* inform you!”

“Cruel girl!” cried Henriquez, — “How have I deserved that you should treat me with such reserve?”

“You should rather enquire, Signor, how you were entitled to the confidence with which I spoke to you, before the freedom of your treatment of me warned me that I ought to keep you at a distance.”

Isabel, as she spoke, rose from her seat and retired; leaving Henriquez not only surprised and perplexed, but in some measure ashamed also.

Paulo, for some moments, seemed to regard him with curiosity and distrust, and but ill suppressed a smile of much meaning, as he invited him to partake of the meal which Madelina had now placed on the board.

Henriquez, though all inclination to eat was fled with the severe and incomprehensible Isabel, slowly approached the table, and took a seat opposite the one that remained vacant for his beautiful countrywoman. Madelina helped him to some fish which he merely tasted, his desire of again beholding Isabel inducing him to keep his eyes constantly fixed on the door, but she appeared there no more; and not even the excellent wine with which Paulo regaled his guest could raise the spirits of the young Spaniard sufficiently for him to afford a single smile to the facetious tales of his host, who related, with a considerable portion of rough humour, an infinite number of stories of robberies and murders, with a circumstantial precision that half prompted Henriquez to believe he had been a party in them. The moment this idea entered his brain, Villasantelle became observant, and perceived that Madelina, when she imagined herself unseen, made many signals to him to discontinue his harangues. But Henriquez, who was now as curious to hear his communications as he had before been careless even about his presence, encouraged him, by questions, to go on, and the uneasiness of Madelina visibly increased. At length, however, she said with an air of gaiety to Paulo,

“Why Paulo! Husband! what are you about? You will persuade the good Signor that you are little better than the cut-throat dogs you are talking of.”

“Never mind, wench!” replied the husband, “If the signor takes every man for a thief who can tell a merry tale of our Calabrian heroes, he would have no business to come amongst us.”

“We are honest, Signor,” he added, turning with an uncouth bow to Henriquez, “though we may know those who are otherwise.”

There was something so frank in this speech, that Henriquez instantly gave up his suspicions; and shaking Paulo by the hand, desired to be shewn to a place where he might take some repose.

His host arose, and taking a lamp, with a tardy step, preceded him down the stairs and up those of the opposite building into the gallery he had before been in. If it had then appeared so awful and gloomy a place, how much more so must it do now, when, as Paulo passed along it, his lamp cast a transient ray on every suit of armour by turns: and, by its light, rendered the obscurity without the windows more particularly striking. As the wind was northerly, the storm was heard here more violently than in the apartment of Paulo, and the rain beat with considerable force upon the casements, forcing the wires, that were without, to preserve the painted glass, against them, with a crashing noise that augmented the terrific character of the place.

“It is very cold,” said Paulo shivering, and quickening his pace, which obliged Henriquez to do the same, till they arrived at the farther end of the gallery. Here, while his conductor stopped to unfasten the door, as he set down the lamp, Henriquez was enabled to distinguish through a window, close to which he stood, a light in one of the opposite windows, and he was pretty certain that he beheld the shadows of a number of persons, who were sitting round the fire that caused the light.

Again a sentiment of suspicion darted across his mind, and he was about to declare his resolution to go no farther, when Paulo himself, observing the light, said, "Come, Signor, hasten. Madelina, you perceive, is making up the fire for the night, and will expect me back."

Henriquez then suffered himself to be conducted along a short corridor, which now presented itself, into a large chamber totally unfurnished. He smiled, as he looked round it, saying, "Do you suppose my friend, that I have taken an oath to lie upon the boards, for I see no other couch prepared for me?"

Paulo, without replying, opened another door, which admitted them into an inner apartment, where Henriquez was agreeably surprised to find a good fire, near which was an old cane sofa, on which was a mattress.

"Madelina, Signor," then said Paulo, "thought you would like this couch better than yonder stately bed, which is probably damp, and comfortless. Good night, Signor."

Henriquez was going to entreat to have his sword restored to him, but recollected that such a request could inspire only the same distrust it would manifest, reluctantly pronounced Good night! and was then left to the company of his own thoughts. That, on this occasion, they were not the most agreeable society imaginable, scarcely admits a question: and yet his situation was so little positive, that he several times enquired of himself, what cause there was of uneasiness? He had, when Paulo left him, seated himself by the fire, on which he now intently fixed his eyes, unwilling to withdraw them, for fear of beholding some confirmation of his danger. Determined, however, to conquer what he esteemed a weakness, he arose and walked about the room. The stately old bed, which stood in a part of the room to which the light of the fire, or of the lamp which Paulo had left on the high projecting chimney piece, did not reach, drew his attention, and he advanced to it. It was in the form of a tent; and the cords that had once supported the drapery were now of no further use, and it hung down to the floor, entirely concealing what was within them. Almost at the risk of suffocation, from the cloud of dust that flew from the curtains on being touched, Henriquez drew them aside, and perceived what appeared to be a comfortable down bed, with a coverlet, which, on feeling, he discovered to be velvet spread over it.— Having satisfied his curiosity, or rather terminated his suspicion, that some person might be concealed there, he again drew near the fire, and prepared to stretch himself upon his mattress: but the fire, which he had no fuel to renew, was now burned so low as to afford very little warmth; and the wind rushed with such force through the shattered casements, and through the crevices of both the door of that room and the next, that he found his situation very uncomfortable. The idea then presented itself of retreating to the bed, which he immediately did; and, dreading its dampness, carried thither his mattress, which he placed over the coverlet. His next care was to remove the lamp; to set it on a high stool that was by the bed side, that he might trim it without leaving his couch, should it want it in the course of the night: a new distress now presented itself: Paulo had not replenished the lamp when he had brought it from his own apartment, and the oil was now so nearly spent that the light could not last above a quarter of an hour longer. Henriquez, therefore was obliged to be content, even when (moving the lamp with unguarded haste) it was extinguished, and he was left in total darkness: he then threw himself on his bed, and in despite of the novelty of his situation, which threatened to deprive him of rest, soon fell asleep.

Villasantelle was unconscious how long he had enjoyed his repose, when the opening of a door near where he lay awoke him, and prepared him for (what he had all along expected) a visit from his treacherous host, or some of his colleagues. He now heard heavy footsteps, and presently afterwards the sound of the voices of men: he started up and felt for his sword, but recollecting how imprudently he had disposed of it, he retreated behind the curtains of the bed, and watched through an opening the approach of the intruders.

In a moment the door of the room opened and two men entered: one of them bore a small and feeble lamp, which gave not light sufficient for Henriquez to discover what it was his companion carried, which caused an odd sort of rattling sound.

As they advanced through the room, one of them, observing the couch that was near the hearth, enquired what it did there?

“You must know,” replied his companion, stopping, “that when honest Signor Paulo has a guest——”

“He does not pretend to entertain strangers, does he?” interrupted the other man, in a tone of surprise and displeasure.

“Why you know that if a gay Signor desires a lodging, and many there be that come after his little girl, I warrant——”

“Come, come,” again interrupted the first who had spoken, “let us not stand prating here: we have other work to do.”

They then again moved onwards, but as they had passed the bed, Henriquez could no longer see them, without incurring the danger of being himself discovered by leaving his place. Suddenly, however, the light vanished, and the sound of their footsteps ceased at once, leaving Villasantelle no means of certifying whether they remained in his chamber, or had left it by some passage he had not in his examination of the room discovered.

In this state of perplexity the young Spaniard continued for about ten minutes, not daring to move, lest he should rush on the point of the sword of one of those ambushed ruffians, who, he was convinced, had come with no good design.

At length, however, they returned; each assisting in supporting the weight of some load that called for their utmost exertions, though Henriquez could not (from the obscurity) discover what it was. When they reached the door, which they had left open, it was shut, and he who appeared the most cautious, or timid, of the two, exclaimed “How comes this?”

“’Tis the wind,” said his companion; “Do you not mind how it rushes through the rooms?”

The load they bore was then laid on the floor, and one of the men having opened the door, they again resumed it, and marched away.

Henriquez now, suddenly took the resolution of following them, to see whither they went, and, if possible, to discover what they carried. He therefore left his place of concealment, and, guided by the light, overtook them just as they reached the gallery: he then slackened his pace, not to come too near them, though he was not too distant to overhear their conversation.

“How I hate to pass this long gallery!” said he who had before manifested his cowardly disposition, “when I think that the owners of all this armour have been murdered; I wonder that their ghosts do not walk out with it on.”

His companion answered him by a loud laugh, and in the midst of it, exclaimed with ill counterfeited alarm,

“Ha! Bertrand, what is that?”

“What!” cried the terrified Bertrand, stopping.

“See you not yonder helmet! How it moves! —There! —See, Bertrand, how it bows! ——”

“Santa Maria! Marco! How you talk! Do hold thy tongue: thou knowest not what may happen.”

Marco now, seeming delighted at the distress of his companion, persisted in tormenting him, and pointing to a particular suit of armour, soon convinced the credulous fellow that every part of it was in motion, and then with peals of laughter ridiculed his fears. And yet, was not this bravo more courageous than the simple Bertrand, for when they came near the armour, which had afforded him so much mirth at the expense of his comrade, he hung back, and betrayed such averseness to passing it, that Bertrand in his turn began to ridicule *him*, exclaiming,

“Why, valiant Marco! Art afraid of a ghost, man! —Why ’twill not hurt thee.”

And, with a laugh, which to Henriquez betrayed his superstitious terrors, he defied his companion to touch the mysterious helmet.

Marco enraged, instantly recollected himself, and summoning all his courage, advanced to the armour, and gave it so violent a blow that the lance which supported it snapped in two, and it all falling together created a noise which completely terrified both the men, and they retreated with the utmost expedition, not forgetting, however, their burthen.

Henriquez, once more in darkness, and in greater perplexity than ever, unable to follow his visitors further, from the suddenness and haste of their departure, whilst he was himself obliged to advance with cautious steps, now thought it best to grope his way back to his chamber; and, having at last found his bed, he once more lay down, but could not again resign himself to sleep. All the remainder of the night he spent in listening to the howling of the wind, and, towards morning, as it subsided into a calm, the stillness of every thing around, the darkness, and his weariness of mind and body, united to throw him into an unrefreshing slumber.

When next Villasantelle awoke, it was day, and he instantly sprung from his couch with an intention of immediately seeking Paulo: but suddenly recollecting the Signors Bertrand and Marco, he first began a search for the outlet by which it was pretty evident they had left the room, when they first visited it.

The apartment was hung round with tattered arras, which Henriquez, certain that something strange and mysterious would present itself, began to raise in every part, seeking a private door. But instead of discovering, as he expected, a narrow door plated with iron and strongly barred, the arras (two compartments of which joined immediately over the place) alone concealed an arched door case, from which if there ever was a door, it had been removed, and he entered a circular closet, evidently formed by one of the round towers of the fortress: but as it was entirely empty, and there were no hangings that could conceal any thing, Henriquez was about to quit it, when a crimson stain, that dyed a great part of the floor, drew his attention and fixed it in horrible certainty of all he had suspected. He continued motionless, with his eyes fixed on it for some moments, unable to give any form to the croud of ideas that rushed on his mind, as he recollected the

midnight visit of the two men he had seen the night before, and remembered the dead and heavy sound that their burthen produced when let fall on the floor. He recalled also to mind the terrors of Bertrand and Marco, and the observation of the former, that the owners of the armour had all been murdered.

When once suspicion of any kind finds its way into a romantic mind, there is no circumstance, however trifling, that does not lend strength to it; and Henriquez now fancied that he had undoubted proof of the culpability of his two nocturnal visitors: but he was too generous to include Paulo in the list of the guilty, till he had obtained better information on the subject, which he determined if possible to procure.

In pursuance of a plan that he now began to form, he repaired to the gallery, to search for some weapon of defence; which, if he could procure, he resolved to spend another night in the same apartment where he had done the last, and watch whither the two men went to, should they return, which was, however, it must be confessed, rather improbable. But, probability was not what Henriquez most attended to, and he accordingly persisted in his design.

As he walked down the gallery, looking for a sword, the armour that Marco had thrown down met his eye, and instantly suggested a change in his measures: he took it all up piece by piece, and little conversant as he was with things of that nature, drew a tolerably accurate conclusion that it would fit him, and resolved upon conveying it secretly to his chamber after Paulo should have taken leave of him, and equipping himself in it, to place himself where it had been supported by the lance, and thus, (perhaps unsuspected,) watch those whose behavior had so much interested him, or, if discovered, might easily impose himself on their credulity as a ghost.

But, in order to provide for his safety at all events, he selected from many others a strong and weighty falchin, which he providently conveyed on the instant to the concealment of his bed; that he might not be destitute of all defence should he be prevented from putting the rest of his scheme in execution.

When he had deposited his sabre in safety, he made his way to the room where he had supped the night before. Only Madelina and Isabel were there; the former busied in preparing breakfast, and the latter sat near the fire supporting on her knees the infant on which she had been gazing when Henriquez first beheld her. Her countenance was now pale, and had an undescribable expression of softness in it, as she bent over the baby: Henriquez approached her in silence, unperceived, and leaning over her observed two cristal tears fall on the forehead of the child, and as he gazed on the glittering drops, he felt an irresistible desire to kiss them off.

This little action drew the attention of Isabel, and clasping the infant closer to her breast, she looked almost fearful of his again touching it.

Henriquez now beheld the lovely Isabel in a new character, and he felt veneration rising in his bosom, from what had been only admiration of her beauty, and her vivacity.

“Why do you remove that sweet child?” enquired Henriquez, in a tone of gentle reproach. “Ah Isabel, does even my touch, my very looks, seem contaminating?”

Isabel appeared struck with the difference of his respectful manner this morning, and its vehemence the night before; and with a faint smile held the child towards him; but instantly drawing it back, pressed it to her heart, and burst into a flood of tears.

Villasantelle would have given the world to know whether her sorrow and solitude really originated in maternal fondness? but he could not force himself to enquire,

lest Isabel should think the question impertinent, and give a similar rebuke to the one with which they had last parted.

In a few moments, the agitation of Isabel subsided into a pensiveness, that gave a sentiment to her beauty, which rendered it a thousand times more attractive to Henriquez, with whom she now conversed without any apparent reluctance.

Paulo soon came in, and breakfast passed over quietly. When it was concluded Paulo addressed Henriquez, saying,

“You are a prisoner here, Signor, for this day at least. The sea is so rough from the storm of last night, that I dare not venture to take you to Caprea: but the morning is fine, if you wish to walk about and see a little more of Calabria.”

Henriquez replied with rather more alacrity than he meant should appear, that “since he could not leave the place, he must submit to remain in it with a good grace.”

When Isabel retired after breakfast, Villasantelle having no relish for the company of the vulgar Madelina, arose and left the fortress. He walked towards the village that lay along the sea shore, but he found there nothing to interest him. He saw two or three pretty girls to whom he spoke, but they did not understand him, and the language in which they expressed their ignorance was so barbarous and so entirely unlike that of Paulo and Madelina, that he had no difficulty in discovering, that they could not have always lived in Calabria. Henriquez then endeavoured to obtain some knowledge of the country, from the men who were preparing their nets for fishing; but though they all seemed extremely ignorant, he observed that their language was much more intelligible than that of the women, which he attributed to their visits to Caprea and Sicily.

Henriquez now again turned towards the fortress, and as he ascended the narrow path that led to it, felt a renewal of all the sensations he had felt in a similar contemplation of the edifice the evening before; nay, his admiration was augmented as he could now distinctly see every part of it, which he had then been prevented from doing, by the gathering of the tempest. It was of very great extent, and though, when in a state of repair it might have been a gloomy object, it was now no longer so. The fortifications on the side of the land had never been equally strong with those to the sea, and were now almost entirely in ruins.

There had been a high wall with towers entirely encircling the hill on which it stood, very little of which now remained, and the garden which had been within this boundary, was now quite exposed; it was planted with a great variety of evergreens, that with the spiral forms of the Lombardy poplars, formed a contrast, that displayed taste as well as beauty; and Henriquez observed under their shade a white building, which he quickened his pace to examine.

When he reached it, he found it to be a tomb, on the top of which was placed an urn; but though there were numerous inscriptions on it, they were too much defaced for him to discover more than that they were in the Moorish language, of which he understood but a very little.

Whilst Villasantelle was examining the tomb, a rustling amongst the leaves of the laurels that surrounded it made him start; and looking up he perceived a man, whose air proclaimed him not one of the vulgar, but with whose style of dress he was totally unacquainted, walking towards the village: his pace was very slow, and he held a book in his hand, which he was attentively perusing; but though he read aloud, and was near enough to be distinctly heard, Henriquez was a perfect stranger to the language of the

author. For a few moments, he suffered this to give him much perplexity: but happening to catch a view of the light form of Isabel standing at the gate fronting the path in which the stranger was, he hastily advanced and joined her.

A deep blush tinged the fair face of Isabel, at the moment that Henriquez saluted her; but the confusion that had caused it did not prevent her from entering into conversation with him, and displaying the same sportive vivacity that had at first so much charmed him.

Every word that issued from her ruby lips, increased his desire of knowing her story, and the occasion of her having left the protection of his aunt. "Isabel," said he, after a silence of several minutes on his part; "Isabel, I am conscious that I have no right to interfere in your concerns, and well aware that my curiosity on those points merits your reproofs; yet I cannot resist the passionate desire I feel to know every circumstance that has the least relation to your situation. By right of kindred, I claim permission to interest myself in your destiny; for I am very nearly related to your late protectress."

"If from her, then, Signor," replied Isabel indignantly, "If from her, you claim your right, know, that it is one I never will admit. I am no longer a slave! The Countess de Villasantelle no longer possesses that power over me, which she would have employed to deprive me of every blessing the genial mother of all affords even to the most humble of mankind."

"You mistake me, Isabel!" cried Henriquez, timidly taking her hand, to prevent her leaving him: "From my aunt I can claim *no* right: since I have seldom seen her: never with affection or confidence."

"Then, for what purpose, Signor, should I inform you of what you are so desirous to know? My fame has already received all the injury my flight from Seville could draw on it: and, as the Countess will probably never have an opportunity to vilify me to you, I can have no excuse for breaking those bonds of gratitude, which still render her character sacred to me!"

"Noble, generous girl!" exclaimed the young Spaniard, looking on Isabel with the same devout admiration that he would at the Lady of Loretta herself: "Far be it from me, to influence you to do that of which you could repent: but tell me, is Paulo really your uncle?"

"How can you suppose him such?" returned Isabel smiling. "No, no, my good friend; it may be convenient for me to call him a relative; but——."

At this moment they were interrupted by Paulo himself, who came up from the village; and Isabel, laying her finger on her lip, with an arch nod at Henriquez, ran into the castle.

The remainder of the day, and the evening, passed away without any remarkable occurrence, and at night Henriquez was once more conducted to his gloomy chamber. He remained there, however, only long enough to give Paulo time to retire from the gallery, and then sallied thither himself in quest of the armour, on which he had cast an anxious eye as he passed, wishing it were practicable to take it with him, and avoid the risk of returning for it.

With the utmost caution, and without the slightest noise, Villasantelle made his way to the gallery, and brought from thence to his own chamber the suit of armour, in which, with some difficulty, he equipped himself, and taking his falchin from its

concealment, girded it on before he took his way to the place where he had determined to watch.

It was not till near the break of day that he met with any interruption, and it was then, as he expected, from two men, one of whom he easily discovered by his voice to be the credulous Bertrand.

They advanced in the same order that they had done the preceding night, and Villasantelle now perceived three large keys in the hand of one of his visitors, to which he attributed the clinking sound that had so much disturbed him on the last night. They passed him without observing him, and Henriquez cautiously followed them into the chamber in which he should have slept; but he found it would be impossible to go farther without a certainty of being discovered; but he, nevertheless, ventured to unclose the arras that concealed the passage, and look into the closet. He then saw that the men had raised up a trap door, which Bertrand supported with both hands as he bent forward over the cavity. The light was below, and the gleam that it cast on the face of Bertrand, which gave it the most ghastly appearance imaginable, was the only relief to the obscurity which saved Villasantelle from detection. After a stay of considerable length, the other man at last prepared to ascend into the closet, and Bertrand assisted him to raise what appeared to be a sack filled with something very heavy, from the trap-door. It was then closed, and each lending a hand, they bore the sack into the chamber from which Henriquez hastened as speedily as possible, and from thence into the knight's gallery, in which he took his stand where he had done before: but to his infinite disappointment, the men, instead of retreating as they had done on the preceding night, turned exactly a contrary way. Fearing to lose sight of them, Henriquez moved after, as it proved, with greater alacrity than he should have ventured in habiliments so uncouth, as now stiffened his light and agile form; for some part of his armour clashing, he fell at full length on the floor, and found himself considerably bruised, and in total darkness.

Not, however, discomfited, he endeavoured to rise, but ineffectually, and his struggles occasioned a noise, which for some time deadened every other sound. At length, quite exhausted, he resigned himself to his fate, and he then found that he was not alone; for two persons at least were laughing loudly and immoderately.

Vexed and irritated, our young Spaniard could not prevail on himself to ask assistance: and indeed from his not having heard the approach of any person, or having observed the entrance of the light that now shone full on his eyes, he was tempted to suppose himself the jest of some malicious demon. But those, whose noisy merriment had so much offended him, were not totally devoid of humanity, for Henriquez now felt himself raised from behind by a strong hand; and sitting upright on the floor, beheld Isabel exactly opposite to him, with a lamp in her hand, and almost in convulsions of laughter. Ashamed of his situation, he turned away from her to the person that had assisted him, who was now standing beside him, and who he discovered to be the same person whom he had seen going to the village in the morning.

Henriquez did not yet speak, but was making an effort to get on his feet, when Isabel, with a mock solemnity in her air and countenance, approached, and desired to have the honour of assisting him. This action was performed with a grace so truly comic, as to totally to vanquish the ill assumed gravity of the cavalier, and the laugh again became so violent, that Henriquez, mortified as he was, could not refrain from joining in

it, and an explanation of how he came to be thus disguised, was impatiently demanded by Isabel, and immediately given by Villasantelle.

He then found from the stranger, who spoke tolerable Spanish, that the coast had of late been frequently visited by piratical ravagers, who had carried away the corn, the wine, and other provisions: that, in order to preserve their property, the villagers had concealed it in various private places of the fortress; (Bertrand having the care of it all) that the closet inside the Spaniard's apartment was a repository for corn and wine and that the villagers usually came to carry the former to be ground before the dawn of day.

This account was not by any means calculated to diminish the confusion of Henriquez, who now blushed for that credulous folly which had led him into so ludicrous a predicament. But, though sorely nettled by the railleries of Isabel, he politely accepted the offer of the stranger to assist in taking off his coat of mail, and while he was doing so, he observed from the dress of Isabel, that she was only just risen from her bed; for she had very little other garments than a long wrapping gown, which was folded round her. The stranger now urgently pressed her to retire, at the same time advising Henriquez to return to his chamber, where he assured him he would have no more visitors. He then bade him good night, and went into a room, the door of which was open, and near where they had been standing. Isabel also retreated a few steps, and stopped; Henriquez though he was moving towards his chamber observed her, and would have spoken, but to his inexpressible mortification, she passed on into the room the stranger had entered, and carefully shut the door.

The opinion that Villasantelle had hitherto entertained of the fair Isabel was considerably shaken by this circumstance: the romantic fit was now gone off, and he was not so credulous as to imagine that Isabel's connection with the young cavalier could be other than an illicit one.

For the remainder of the night, or rather morning, Henriquez slept not. The fair Isabel, and the fairer Victoria contended incessantly for the first place in his ideas: he drew a thousand comparisons between them, and each served only to convince him of the folly of his being so interested in the story of the former, whilst he was yet in uncertainty respecting the latter.

At breakfast Isabel evidently observed the cool, and almost contemptuous glances of her young countryman, for she took an opportunity, when Madelina and Paulo were engaged in discourse, to say to Henriquez, in a low hesitating voice, and at the same time blushing, "Once, Signor, I was honored by your esteem ——."

"No Isabel; esteem is not a spontaneous sentiment," returned Villasantelle, in an accent in which regret mingled with the reprehension of simple virtue: "I admired you, it is true; but ask your own heart, if you deserve my respect!"

The accusation of Isabel's heart rushed in blushes to her cheeks, but instantly retreating, left her pale as ashes: Henriquez could not endure the thought of paining a female bosom, at the same time that virtue forbade his apologizing for his severity.

"Ah, Isabel!" said he in a tone of commiseration, "why are you not in every thing an angel?"

"Ah, Signor! Why are *you* not in every thing candid?"

Isabel spoke with renovated spirit and gaiety, as if she wished to retort her former confusion on the Spaniard; but his soul was too upright, and he was too well convinced of

his own purity of sentiment and intention to be confounded by giddy raillery, and replied—

“You cannot, Isabel, accuse me of being uncandid. I beheld the tears of maternal sorrow and virtuous shame flow from your eyes, yet I gave not to the sentiment a name, till too clearly convinced of its nature. Had you even blushed at the degraded light in which you appeared, I should not have had the cruelty to observe the circumstances of suspicious tendency.”

“But, wherefore, Signor, should I blush, when unconscious of culpability: in conforming to the unerring laws of nature, what cause have I for shame?”

“Ah! Isabel, those arguments are weak and detestable, when proceeding from one of a sex too much licenced in depravity; but when adopted by your gentle sex, when female honor sets aside those barriers raised for the defence of its weakness, it divests itself of all those charms that lead us to compassionate its frailties. Farewell then, lovely self-deluded girl! may your error but support you at that fearful hour, when we shall all be called upon to account for the abuse of those talents committed to us.”

Villasantelle turned from her as he spoke; the glow of ingenuous indignation crimsoned his cheek, whilst his glistening eyes told but too plainly his generous regret for the existence of the failing he reproved.

Though the soul of Isabel was contaminated by vice, it was not insensible to the beauty of virtue. Endowed by nature with a lively disposition and quick perception, she but too readily entered into all that sophistry by which men justify illicit love: her passions naturally strong, assisted in the final deception that betrayed her to ruin; and though, when alone with her own thoughts, she felt the fallacy of those reasonings to which she had sacrificed the pride of virgin honor, she would endeavour to blind the understandings of others by the same false lights that had dazzled her own. She could not, however, resist the touching kindness of Villasantelle: she caught his hand, and pressing it fervently to her lips, her eyes swam in grateful tears, and she hurried from the apartment in violent agitation.

Had Henriquez been inclined to follow and console the lovely Isabel, it was not in his power, as Paulo at that moment summoned him to begin his voyage to Caprea; a place he sincerely regretted having so precipitously left, and to which he was now most anxious to return; not because there was every probability that Victoria was concealed in the island, but that it would bring him nearer to Naples. The effect of the contusion on his forehead had now entirely disappeared, and he desired nothing so much as to enjoy the rational conversation of the Marquis de Cambusca.

The voyage to Caprea was prosperous and agreeable; and Henriquez having, by the assistance of his relation, discharged his obligation to honest Signor Paulo, would not be prevailed on to remain a night in the island; but hiring a bark to convey him, was, late in the evening, landed on the steps of the Cambusca palace.

The Marchioness received him with that placid pleasure to which genuine affection gives all its sweetness: the Countess Miranda, with a joy that she endeavoured in part to repress, because conscious that it partook too much of the baleful and malignant sentiments of her narrow soul, and the Marquis, ever benevolent, ever amiable, saluted him with that warmth of cordial kindness that so much endeared him to his youthful brother.

On being required by the Marquis, Henriquez gave an entertaining account of his late voyage: not by an means hesitating to relate his own ludicrous adventure with the peasants of Caprea. He had in the course of his narrative mentioned Isabel as a very lovely girl, the niece of his host; and as he did so, he observed the eyes of the Countess Miranda to strike a fire that sufficiently discovered the hateful envy that burnt in her bosom, and without appearing to design it, he contrived to mortify her by praises of Isabel, at the same time that he was obstinately incomprehensible to her oblique questions, in order to discover more of her story than he chose to hint at.

The first enquiries of Henriquez had been for his venerable friend, and the old Baron de Grijalva; and he had heard from the Marquis, that that nobleman, being now somewhat restored, had resolved that his son should not lose the advantage to be derived from repairing immediately to his studies at Salamanca, and Don Lopez was therefore to set out for that celebrated university in two days. Villasantelle now declared his resolution to accompany his young countryman on his journey: a measure that the Marquis entirely approved. Not so, to appearance, the Countess Miranda: she colored deeply when the design was mentioned, and immediately afterwards left the room.

“Poor Miranda!” said the Marchioness, in a tone of commiseration, as the door closed and shut her from view.

Henriquez looked surprised: the designs of the fair Countess upon himself, had been too often the subject of railery to Don Lopez de Grijalva, and many other of his young acquaintance, to be unknown to him, and he very naturally attributed the disorder of the lady to the prospect of his sudden departure from Naples: but he thought the heart of his sister compounded of too soft materials to permit her to indulge a sarcasm at the expense of her relative and guest. Nor, in fact, was there in her manner of saying, Poor Miranda, the slightest tincture of ridicule or satire.

Villasantelle’s enquiring glances were comprehended by his sister, who now said, “The distress which now renders the Countess Miranda a pitiable object, is so greatly above the error that has caused it, that perhaps it might better be permitted to rest in oblivion: but as you will most probably hear it from some other person, and may in the mean time, from ignorance, increase her sufferings by a thoughtless expression, I think it right to mention to you, that a most mortifying event had, since your departure, happened in the family of the countess.—Her daughter, whom she some time since placed in a convent, and whom her vanity induced her to represent as a mere child, eloped on the very night before you sailed for Calabria. Her plans have been so well concerted, that not any person knows who were the accomplices, or who the companions of her flight. But there are strong reasons for believing the Count Miranda, her half brother, to have assisted her. This nobleman, of whom the Countess speaks as a most abandoned character, has for some time been proscribed, on account of a tumult raised in the city, in which one of the magistrates who was killed by Miranda, who was lately discovered to have been concealed in the island of Caprea; to which place, though not then detected, (as he left a short time before the elopement of his sister, and was supposed to have come to Naples) there appear just grounds for concluding him to have assisted, if not instigated her flight.”

“My dear Julia,” said Henriquez, when his sister had concluded, “pardon me if I say that in this instance you seem to have taken leave of that generous candour for which I have ever revered your character. I wish not to shake your good opinion of the

Countess, by enforcing the probability, that a stepdame's prejudice may have heightened the coloring of those vices she so liberally imputes to the young Count Miranda: and simply enquire what rational motive can be assigned for supposing him to have instigated the disgraceful step his sister has taken. Because a man has become obnoxious to the police of the country he inhabits, by the fatal termination of an affray, in which perhaps he has not been originally to blame, is that a reason to suppose him lost to every principle of rectitude and honor? To believe him, on those grounds alone, guilty of the enormous depravity of leading the unwary steps of a sister into imprudence and vice?—Let us, my dear Julia, till we have some more just grounds of condemnation than the present, think better of this unfortunate youth! Let us at least enquire of the Marquis, what character he bore before the fatal event you mention compelled him to leave Naples!”

The Marchioness, as she always did, yielded to the generous suggestions of Henriquez, who did not fail to take the first opportunity of making his purposed enquiries of the Marquis, who had left the room at the commencement of the conversation related above. But from him he acquired little information.

The Marquis had been too long an alien from the birth place of his mother to know any thing of the young men who had grown up since he paid it his last visit: of this number was Count Miranda, with whom, or with his father, he had never any connection, as the marriage of the Countess had been totally repugnant to every one of her family. Miranda was, however, spoken of by a few, as a youth of much promise, while the generality of men gave him the character of being proud, vindictive, and unamiable.

Henriquez felt an involuntary sorrow at hearing this unfavorable account of a man, whom he felt himself, he knew not why, inclined to esteem; though perhaps that sentiment might be more justly attributed to the Spaniard's detestation of the Countess, which was so entire as to render him inclined to favor those of whom she declared her disapprobation. And in *this* instance, he was the more disposed to do so, as certainly nothing but malice could have prompted the idea of his being concerned in the projection of the young lady's elopement.

On the morning after his return to Naples, Henriquez did not neglect to call upon his friend Don Lopez de Grijalva, to adjust with him the plan of their journey, and to relate to him every circumstance that had occurred to him, not only during his absence from the palace of the Marquis Cambusca, but on the evening previous to his leaving the city.

Don Lopez heard his narrative with steady attention, and when it was concluded, very freely condemned his temerity in venturing to pursue the agile Victoria, who, being acquainted with those passages that he must *explore*, was almost certain to escape, whilst the danger of detection to himself was extreme, as he had certainly violated the retirement of a nunnery.

“And could you really suppose, Lopez,” exclaimed Villasantelle with animation, “that I could be such a prosing dotard, as to stop to deliberate on all those chances, whilst the most lovely woman in creation, with all the speed of a feather-footed Mercury, was flying before me? No, no! I have too much of the true chivalric spirit in my composition to think of danger or difficulty, whilst love, hope, or pity urges me to the pursuit of a beautiful female.”

“But, to which of those sentiments,” enquired his friend, smiling, “is to be attributed your late exertions?”

“Believe me, Lopez, if I know my own heart.—to simple pity, uncontaminated by any selfish motive! It is true, that except the frail, but fascinating Isabel, I have never seen a woman with half the charms of Victoria! But Alphonso —— Ah, my friend, were it acting a part worthy of one who boasts the title of a Spaniard, to form even a wish to possess the person or affections of a woman, on whose constancy another builds his hopes of happiness. Victoria is beautiful beyond all my former conceptions of female perfection, and the purity of her soul must equal it: it speaks in the soft accents of her voice, and shone in those tears that bedewed her cheeks, at my first interview with her.”

“How fallible, my dear Henriquez,” said his friend, “are the evidences from which you derive your exalted opinion of this charmer? Reflect a moment upon the events of the three last days, and then tell me with truth and sincerity whether you did not form precisely the same opinion of the fair Isabel?”

“I grant ye. But that opinion was unsupported by any of those testimonies that may be adduced in favor of the purity of Victoria. Isabel had no saintly Agnes to proclaim her worth, by her anxiety for her safety: she had no ——

“I will subscribe to whatever you wish me, my dear Henriquez,” interrupted Don Lopez, “if you will answer me one question. Does it, or does it not tend to establish the *saintly* character of Agnes, that she should assist a young novice to fly from those engagements she had been on the point of voluntarily entering into?”

Henriquez felt for a moment, too much wounded by the keenness of this question, to take it in its entire import; and he said with some warmth to Don Lopez,

“What reason you may have for your insinuations, I desire not to know: but I cannot even guess, why you should be so anxious to draw conclusions to the disadvantage of the most perfect of nature’s works.”

“Reflect a moment, Villasantelle, and you will see that I am not so cruel or unjust as you may at first be inclined to suppose me. In speaking of this Victoria to whom you must be assured I am a stranger, I cannot possibly lie under the imputation of personality: I simply urge the inferences that may reasonably be drawn from events; and endeavour to shew my friend the weakness and folly of standing forth the champion of a woman with whose history he is totally unacquainted; whom appearances do not by any means favour, and who, so far from throwing herself on your generosity, sedulously shuns you, and is the tender companion of another man.”

The mind of Henriquez has always been painted as open to conviction, and it may therefore be readily supposed that he could not withstand the clear and rational suggestions of his friend, at the same time that he felt less satisfied at hearing them from him, than he would have done from the penetrating and mature experience of his brother, the Marquis de Cambusca.

On that evening, Villasantelle had the mortification during supper, of hearing the Countess Miranda talk familiarly of what she intended to do in the ensuing autumn, when she was to accompany her brother on his return to Spain. One of these plans was to visit Salamanca, where she would have the pleasure of being initiated by Signor de Villasantelle into all the mysteries of that celebrated university.

Henriquez, whose spirits were too much depressed by the idea of parting from his sister on the morrow, to be very brilliant in his comprehension of the lady’s rhapsodies, gave her a look of astonishment not unmixed with contempt, and in despite of all the gallantry of a Spaniard, turned, without any further notice of her, to the Marchioness,

whom he requested to favor him with her company in her dressing room, and immediately left the saloon himself.

Distracted by the frigid indifference of a boy, whom she had taught herself to believe she highly honored by her notice, though her haughty spirit could not avoid perceiving she was despised, the Countess Miranda determined upon ample revenge for the slights put upon her by the ungrateful Villasantelle, and retired to her chamber to spin the wily web, in which, if she could entangle his heart, she was resolved to stifle his happiness.

On the appointed morning Villasantelle and Grijalva, attended by four servants, began their journey, which was prosperous and delightful, till they entered Spain, where the miserable accommodations that they met with there, and which (of late accustomed to more sumptuous fare, and cleaner lodgings) all their nationality could not render agreeable, or even excuse. But as every evening when they stopped to repose themselves at the miserable wine-houses, they found groups of the peasant girls, with all the hilarity and much of the national beauty of their country, dancing with castanets under the shade of the cork trees, and sometimes even in the wretched galleries that almost universally take up one half of the second stories of the houses; their time passed not disagreeably. Sometimes Henriquez who was more lively than his friend would seize the hand of some rustic charmer, and join in the simple gaiety of the villagers, with infinitely a greater *gout* than he had ever done in the courtly amusements of persons of his own rank.

One evening in particular, that the two young travellers had halted rather earlier than usual, in order to partake of the festivity of a village bridal, Henriquez was particularly pleased at observing the dress, the graceful motions in the dance, and in listening to the voices of a group of young girls, consisting of six, who performed one of those dances that are said to have been introduced into Spain by the Moors, and are the last trace of moorish manners amongst the Spaniards. Their dresses were according to the moorish fashion, and they were all masked; whilst, on some account or other, they were all connected together with chains.

Whilst the girls were dancing, Don Lopez asked his friend, if he could possibly conceive the meaning of the fair morisca's being thus fettered; to which he replied,

"It is probably the fancy of some one who possessing more taste or vanity than the rest, devised them as a most graceful ornament."

"Do you observe that girl who dances in the part of the circle directly opposite to us? Is it possible to conceive any thing more replete with elegance than the motion of her arms, whilst her chains hang down in so graceful a curve uniting her with her fellows?"

"I have long observed that girl," replied Don Lopez, "and her air strikes me as being infinitely superior to any one here: there is a dignity in her mien, and a soft grace in every motion, that agrees not with the undistinguished agility of her companions."

Henriquez was about to reply to this remark, when his attention was drawn from the fair morisca to the persons of a man and a woman, who now came and seated themselves at the root of a tree near that which sheltered the two young friends. Their habits were similar to those worn by the peasants of the country, but there was something in the air of both that seemed to proclaim them of a superior rank. The figure of the woman was tall and well-formed, and her face, if not perfectly beautiful, was at least singularly interesting and expressive. She appeared to be verging towards thirty, but her countenance had lost none of the spirit of earlier youth: her complexion, though dark,

resembled rather the clear brunette of British beauty than the dusky olive of the children of the south: her eyes were of a dark grey, rather melting than brilliant; her hair was long and of the colour of a ripe chestnut; and in the whole of her face there was a dignity blended with humility and softness, that enchanted Henriquez, though he considered her as an old woman.

The person of her companion was extremely tall and thin, and the saturnine cast of his countenance, together with the dark hue of his skin, seemed to proclaim him of true Spanish extraction. His features were strongly marked by a large aquiline nose and large black eyes, whose beams were replete with the fire of penetration and spirit, and the form of his mouth displayed, in speaking, teeth of a pearly whiteness, that no smile ever visited his face to discover.

They both spoke too low for their words to be distinguishable: but the voice of the man was of so singular a tone that it particularly attracted Villasantelle, and he was convinced that he had heard it somewhere before. He mentioned this to Don Lopez, who, after listening for some time would not agree that there was any thing uncommon in the accents, though in the few sentences he could hear, there certainly was, in the purity of the Spanish proceeding from a person of his appearance.

Henriquez, whose attention was very seldom long confined to the same object, now left his friend to go in pursuit of something new, whilst Don Lopez stretched himself under the tree to sleep.

After rambling about for some time, Henriquez unexpectedly found himself within a few paces of the back of the tree which still shaded the seat of the two interesting peasants, and as he discovered by their conversation that he was unseen by them, curiosity prompted him to draw nearer with precaution, and seat himself in a place where he was entirely concealed from observation by some low shrubby plants.

“How it delights me,” said the female, taking the hand of her companion and looking affectionately in his face, “to behold the recovered gaiety of our dear Camilla! She seems transported almost out of herself by the general hilarity that prevails around her, and to enjoy it with so true a taste, that I almost fancy nature designed her for the happy state of rustic simplicity in which she now appears to such advantage.”

“No, my Leonora:” returned her companion, “I cannot in this instance agree with you. Camilla bears in her countenance, she displays in every movement, the traces of that exalted rank for which heaven and nature destined her. But, though to save her from the malice of a female demon (who cannot forgive the daughter she gave birth to, for being younger and more attractive than herself) I assume with her the humble habit of the native inhabitants of those plains; I cannot cease to regret, that the years of her bloom are wearing away unnoticed but by the shepherds who surround her: that my Leonora is deprived of all the advantages of her rank, and that at an age when all my brother cavaliers wield the lance of victory, my sword is degraded into a crook, and that for an act which fills my soul with triumph, I am obliged to conceal myself from enemies, who, did they dare to meet me in the field, would tremble at my looks! I feel, my Leonora, like the lion of the desert, whom his foes pretend to shun, that he may with greater facility be betrayed into the snares they spread for him; and who, if once they take him in their toils, will be subjected to all the vindictive insults of little minds, that though they tremble at his roarings whilst he ranges at liberty, will try to mock him by their brayings, when his vengeance is prevented.”

“For the holy Virgin’s sake,” said Leonora, in a voice of alarm, “be more moderate! Your fate is indeed hard, but is it without a parallel? How many unfortunate beings are at this moment persecuted by that dreadful tribunal for crimes that have not the same apparent atrocity as the one of which you are accused? Alas! How many are at this moment groaning beneath the tortures inflicted by that sanguinary court, to oblige them to confess that of which they have no knowledge.”

“But, does the equally, or perhaps *more* severe fate of others,” enquired the cavalier, (as he may most properly be called) render mine more sufferable? Because the galley-slave is chained, even during his sleep to the oar, am I to be satisfied to exist in a prison? And will the rack on which perhaps I am destined to be extended, appear a softer couch to me, because the person whose frame last groaned with its horrible tension expired in the revulsion of the diabolical machine. No, Leonora! Not all the miseries to which the rest of mankind are doomed can reconcile me to my own; and though to save you or my Camilla, I would devote myself to the most shocking torments, I should never thank the mercy of those who permitted me only the choice of mental or bodily agonies.”

The stranger spoke with all the vehemence of the keenest suffering; his eyes shot fire—he knashed his teeth, and when he had finished speaking, rested his head against the trunk of the tree as if exhausted by his emotion.

“No!” said he at length, starting from the ground, “I can no longer endure this! Miranda is not a monster to be hunted thus from the society of his equals! Let but that infernal woman to whom my misguided father entrusted the power and influence of his family but go to the reward of her malice, her falshood, and her cruelty, and truth shall once more triumph! When the groaning earth is no longer outraged by her detestable presence, I will break through the cloud that obscures my fame; and, at the name of Miranda, the foes of my country shall again tremble!”

The cavalier as he said this walked hastily away, leaving Leonora drowned in tears, and Villasantelle in the utmost astonishment.

“How singular,” said he to himself, “is my meeting with this unfortunate man. Surely I am destined by heaven to be the instrument of saving him from an interview with the formidable Countess, whose malicious hatred of him will let her spare no pains to deliver him up to the inquisition.”

After a few moment’s hesitation, Henriquez determined at once to address himself to the interesting Leonora: to inform her of the probability of her friend being discovered by his mother-in-law, in her purposed journey through that part of Spain: and to counsel him to fly into some protestant country.

Villasantelle now quitting his concealment, approached Leonora, whom he respectfully saluted; and encouraged, by observing that she did not attempt to leave her place, but returned his salute by an inclination of her head, he advanced, and seated himself beside her on the grass. Leonora then prepared to rise, but Henriquez, taking her hand, prevented her, saying,

“Pardon, Madam, I entreat you, the seeming liberty that I take with you, and let me be indebted to you for your good opinion till I have proved myself not unworthy of it. No sentiment of weak and impertinent curiosity led me to the discovery, that the companion who has this moment left you is named Miranda; and it was not *now* that I first heard the fatal circumstances that obscure his glory, and endanger his life. I but too well know the malignant fiend, who pursues the vengeance of others with such savage

eagerness, and I am sorry to say, that this peaceful plain will be no refuge from her malice, nor will the humble habits that cloud the dignity of your rank shield the Count from discovery, should he be seen by his persecutrix in her journey through Spain to Salamanca. That it is her intention to make this tour, I heard her declare but a few days since, but *when* or what stay she means to make on the road is yet undecided.”

Henriquez paused; and Leonora, who had been endeavouring to suppress her tears and speak with firmness, now said,

“Whoever you may be, Signor, or whatever may be your motives for your present conduct, your kindness calls for my gratitude; nor will I presume to dispute the words of a cavalier of your appearance. To what lengths, however, your intelligence may carry Count Miranda, must depend solely on himself: I have only to pray that your goodness, if sincere, may be rewarded by that heaven which judgeth all hearts. Farewell, Senor: consider me ever as your debtor.”

As she pronounced these words, the graceful Leonora, bowing, walked after the Count, whom Henriquez observed her to join; but as it was at a considerable distance, and they moved away still farther, he could not catch a word of their conversation. They remained but a few moments longer in sight, and though Villasantelle afterwards sought them every where among the croud, he could no more discover them.

Villasantelle when he entirely lost all traces of Miranda and Leonora, deliberated for some time, whether he should relate to his friend Don Lopez the purport of the conversation he had overheard: but, at length decided upon being silent regarding the discovery he had made, nor run any risk of betraying those unfortunate persons. He could not, however, resist making some enquiries of Grijalva relative to the Count, mentioning at the same time the contradictory reports he had heard concerning his character.

“Count Miranda,” said Don Lopez, “was formerly not unknown to me: he resided for several years in the neighbourhood of my uncle of Valladolid, who was nearly related to Donna Lucina de Merida his mother. It was there that I became acquainted with his merits, and there that I was a witness to the commencement of his misfortunes. They originated in his violent attachment to Donna Leonora de Stafford, the beautiful daughter of an English merchant of Cadiz of that name, who was, when about seventeen, brought by her father on a visit to some friends he had near Valladolid.

“It was with those friends that Miranda, then not nineteen years of age, saw the amiable Leonora, and became attached to her. But she was at that time contracted to a young gentleman of her own country, and of her father’s profession; Miranda therefore despaired, and it was five years before the news of her release, by the death of her lover, reached him. He then repaired secretly to Cadiz, where he soon met with Donna Leonora, and as soon made himself an interest in her heart. Their love was no secret to her father, who immediately wrote to the old Count Miranda, the father of my friend, who was resident at Venice, for his consent to their union. This the Countess, his second wife, prevailed on him to deny. Well knowing the impetuous spirit of her son-in-law, she hoped that constraint would rouse him to shake off obedience to his father, and that some how or other it might benefit herself.

“The old Count Miranda wrote to Senor Stafford, declaring his entire disapprobation of the proposed union, and denouncing vengeance not only against his son, but the unoffending Leonora, if he was disobeyed.

“As the Countess imagined, Miranda could not brook this opposition; and as the Senor Stafford persisted in using his influence also to divide them, my friend prevailed on his Leonora to become his, privately.

“Shortly after this union was completed,” continued Don Lopez, “Miranda tore himself from his lovely bride, and, to avoid suspicion, repaired to Naples, where the old Count was then in a miserable state of health.

“By a strange concatenation of circumstances, business of a mercantile nature called the Senor Stafford to Naples, and as Leonora had for some time (partly owing to her state of pregnancy, and partly to grief for the absence of her husband) drooped exceedingly, he took her with him for the change of air.

“It is scarcely necessary to say, that Miranda there contrived to see her frequently, and was then informed of the situation of his wife.

“This called for active measures, which the next meeting with Leonora hastened; she then told him, that an old nobleman, one of the magistrates of Naples, had fallen in love with her, and that her father was determined she should marry him.

“The injustice and the sin of obedience in this case was warmly represented to the wife by her husband, and he promised to free her from the power of her parent, before the day for her marriage could be appointed.

“But the unfortunate Miranda was cruelly deceived! On that very day his Leonora was carried by her father and her lover to a villa several leagues distant from Naples, without her husband being able to trace whither she was gone, and was there informed that she must give her hand to the Baron in four and twenty hours. The person employed to impart this intelligence was no other than the inhuman Countess Miranda, who was related to Leonora’s lover, and chose to be herself a witness to that ceremony, which she fancied would render her son-in-law for ever miserable; as, from his apparent patient acquiescence in the will of the old Count, she had no hopes of procuring his reprobation.

“In vain did the wretched Leonora entreat for pity!—in vain plead her marriage with Miranda! The former existed not in the hearts of her cruel persecutors, and as she could bring no proof of the latter, the savage Countess only made the confession of her situation a plea to load her with the bitterest revilings. Leonora could no longer support herself: she fell into successive fainting fits, and recovered only to a state of torpid existence. Whilst she yet remained scarcely sensible of any vivifying principle, though she appeared in the same health as usual, the nuptial benediction was pronounced, and the wife of Miranda was (almost unresistingly) violated by the Baron, under the character of a husband.

“It was not till after the premature birth of her child, that Leonora was perfectly sensible of all she had endured, and she would then have concealed herself for ever from Miranda, but her servant officiously informed him of the whole, and also of the day when her lady, her father, the Baron, and Countess Miranda, meant to return to Naples.

“I was then in the city, and Miranda flew to me with the shocking intelligence; mentioned to me his design to rescue his wife, and desired my permission to conceal her for a few hours in my apartments.

“You may suppose,” continued Don Lopez, “that I could not deny him, and accordingly after the rescue, (in which the Baron was shot by the injured husband) was effected, she was brought to my lodgings. Though near five years have since elapsed, I shall never forget the frenzy with which Miranda contemplated the lovely ruin of what

*had* been Leonora. I never beheld her till then, and so could not be a competent judge of the alteration that a deadly paleness, an emaciation almost frightful, and looks of despair and misery, made in her person: but my wretched friend carried her from my lodgings two hours after he brought her there, and under cover of the night escaped by sea from Naples. He is not supposed to have since visited it: nor has even the Countess Miranda or the inquisition yet discovered his residence, though both have with unceasing malice pursued every trace of him that *could* be discovered.”

“Have you never,” enquired Villasantelle, “kept up any correspondence with him?”

“Never! Nor do I desire to be acquainted with his retreat; it is a secret too momentous for me to wish to have in charge.”

This declaration fixed Henriquez in his determination of being silent on the subject of the Count and Leonora; and the following morning the friends pursued their journey.

Henriquez de Villasantelle had been nearly two months pursuing his studies at Salamanca, and was beginning to think of paying a visit to his parents at Seville, when he formed an acquaintance, in the pleasures of which he for a time forgot his intention.

At the house of a nobleman to whom he was related, he was introduced to a young English gentleman of the name of Stafford, whom he instantly recognised as the companion of Isabel, on the memorable night in Calabria, when he had exhibited himself in so ludicrous a manner in the armour. Had he not instantly recollected this circumstance, he would have been at a loss to account for a violent fit of laughter with which the gentleman was seized on first observing to whom he was presented.

“Senor de Villasantelle,” said Mr. Stafford, as soon as he could articulate, “you must pardon my risibility, when I behold the redoubtable knight of Calabria, who so infinitely amused me near three months ago: but, believe me, I am extremely happy to have the honor of knowing one of so adventurous a disposition.”

Henriquez now perceived, that the leading feature in this gentleman’s character was an extravagant gaiety; for he immediately turned to the nobleman who had introduced them to each other, and who now stood aghast at his behaviour, and began to give him an account of the adventure he alluded to, in terms so humorous as to entirely conquer the almost immovable gravity of a Spanish grandee; and he laughed almost as violently as the relater had done.

The jest soon went round the circle, and though every one enjoyed it, there was not one who did not exert themselves to lessen the embarrassment of the unfortunate hero of the tale, who, though he affected to join in the mirth, could not entirely relish being the object of it.

Unpromising as was this commencement of an acquaintance, Mr. Stafford paid so much attention to Henriquez, who found in him so much to admire and love, that they very soon became perfectly intimate. The young Briton, with an imagination more lively, possessed a temper as energetic as was that of Villasantelle: but though nearly of the same age, the variety of the scenes he had been engaged in rendered him so much more a master of the science of *human nature* than was his candid, unexperienced friend.

One day that Henriquez had been arguing in support of some of his opinions almost too romantic to be relished even by a Spaniard, Mr. Stafford said, gaily,

“For the first time, Villasantelle, I have in you discovered those chivalric notions which accompanied me at my first setting out in life, and which I for a long time was led to believe existed universally in Spain, but in Spain alone. Your romantic ideas of honor so exactly correspond with those I imbibed from an old maiden aunt, and an antiquated tutor, in a haunted castle in the mountains of Wales, that I could almost fancy you had been brought up by the same persons.”

“I am not so ignorant of the customs of your country,” said Henriquez, “as not to know that the manner in which you mention to have been brought up is by no means a common one: but I am astonished to hear you deduce from thence your adoption of opinions to which you seem to attach something ridiculous. Imperial England I have always conceived to be the soil where liberty, virtue, and true honor are seen to flourish in their highest perfection, where without making constancy in love a part of your religion, falshood was seldom seen, and treated with horror and disgust: where courage untainted with the savage ferocity of more southern climes, was only rivalled by a humanity unacquainted with weakness: where patriotism received no check from the consideration of private interest: where every peasant was free as his lord, and delighted to share his blessings with the less fortunate foreigner.”

“Your ideas of England, my friend,” returned Stafford, “are those I should expect to find adopted by a liberal and intelligent man, whose notions could only be derived from books, and those pamphlets which every foreigner who desires to understand the *present politics* of Britain will not fail to study: it is from those works only, that the existing state of the government of a great nation can be known, as it is only from works of a still more frivolous nature that the *manners* of the times, in a country where they are so fluctuating as in England, can be traced. But if you decide implicitly from those authorities, you will often become the dupe of that *curse of Britain—party!* and attribute to particular men, or bodies of men, a turpitude which has no existence but in the rancorous spirit of the opposite contending faction.

“Yet I will confess, that though I believe Great Britain to be the most glorious country and government in the world, it is very far from having attained that very superior rank in the annals of private or public virtue, which you ascribe to it.

“That liberty, virtue, and true honor flourish in Imperial England, as in their native soil, is very true; but as there are immense tracts of country where one of the glories of our island, the kingly oak, will not be prevailed upon to exhibit more than a stunted and sickly growth, so there are vast masses of Britons whose *liberty* consists in *fawning* where they *fear*, and in *licentiousness* where they do not, and to whom *virtue* and *honor* are known only by *name*.

“It is only from a Spaniard that I could expect to meet constancy in love classed amongst the patriotic virtues—I will yet give my opinion of it, which is, that it is a merit little known, and the want of it as little regarded in the general opinion as in Turkey! The bravery of the English, and their moderation and humanity as victors, is the boast and the pride of every son of our isle; but of the patriotism I shall speak less freely: it is a flower of rare growth, and most of the species of it are of spurious origin.”

“I should be extremely glad to know,” said Henriquez, “those circumstances of your past life that have rendered your judgment at this early age so extremely severe as I cannot but think it is.”

“They are not,” answered Stafford, “by any means uncommon or striking. Except in the single point of having received an entirely private education in the house of a female relation, my early years were spent as they are by the generality of young men: I played when I *dared*, and studied when I *must*, though in general not unwillingly; as the constant reward of my diligence and attention to Greek and Latin, was, permission to read to my aunt for a whole evening the romantic tales that formed her only amusement. From these strange and indeed improper studies, I acquired a set of notions, the most absurd that can be imagined; and when, at nearly seventeen, my aunt, having purchased me a commission, herself presented me the sword with which her father had immortalized his name on the plain of Fontenoy, I was as completely unfit for the world I was obliged to enter, as if I had been born not two years before.

“On the morning that we parted, my aunt read me a long lecture upon virtue and honor, with her fervent hope that I would bravely use the sword she committed to me, which I then thought most admirable, but I am convinced I should think very sad stuff now, and presenting me a large purse of her own work pretty well filled, she bade me adieu. Thus did this truly worthy and affectionate woman contribute by her bounty to lessen the effects of her precepts: for if a very young and very inexperienced lad joins his regiment in England with two hundred guineas in his purse, it is more than probable that he cannot be very long before he is initiated into all those scenes of pleasure of which he can *afford* to partake.

“I know it was the case with me, and had I not fortunately attracted the notice and regard of the lieutenant colonel of the regiment, who was an old man of the most respectable and benevolent character, my health would have become a sacrifice to all the vicious pleasures in which I was soon engaged, and I should have been ill fitted to have encountered the pestilential air of the West Indies, whither our regiment was ordered six months after I joined it.

“In the midst of the most dissipated scenes in which I had for some time revelled, I had never lost sight of the high souled principles of honor, which I had imbibed from my aunt and tutor: and I had not an idea that those men who were retained in the army and treated with respect could be deficient in them. Of humanity, too, I had high notions, and much of the horror I should otherwise have felt in going to the seat of war was done away by the delight I felt in the idea that I should share with my brother officers the glorious task of assisting the wounded, consoling the mourning survivors, and softening to the prisoner the horrors of captivity! Who should perform all those gracious acts towards me, (should I be in a situation to claim them) was a matter of no consideration; but I concluded, that as all brave men were alike humane and generous, I should not need succours, should it be my lot to suffer.

“But, alas, how cruelly did I feel myself disappointed! I saw numbers of officers falling daily victims to a pestilential disease, unattended by their companions, who were more fortunate in escaping the contagion, and their death was considered too much a matter of course, to inspire any other regret than that which results from the consideration of *whose turn may come next*, and which is completely washed away in a double portion of Madeira.

“How often have I heard the wretched prisoner ordered to execution by the existing tyrant of a small detachment, to save the trouble of guarding him, or weakening their force by sending an escort to a proper place of confinement! How often have I felt

humanity outraged by the social indifference of a commander, who, in the very moment that he was informed of a total loss of a post of consequence, by some of the bravest of our troops who guarded it being slaughtered to a man, could turn to a gentleman present and exclaim against the awkwardness of servants who had nearly destroyed a set of trumpery china he had brought from England! This I was destined to hear, and to behold the silent indignation of the other officer, who brought the intelligence of the loss of the companies that had fallen victims to the enemy! Every day I have seen some absurd quarrel bring men into the field as enemies, that were united in one common cause; and duelling on the most trifling accounts made a system amongst me, who by the laws of arms incurred the ignominious punishment of dismissal from the service, for giving or accepting a challenge.

“For some time these observations gave me the greatest uneasiness, but I soon became accustomed to them, or rather soon ceased to make them, and I found my time pass much more agreeably. But your ideas so strongly reminded me of my good aunt’s, that I could not refrain from mentioning her.”

Several times after this conversation, as he had also done before, Henriquez endeavoured to learn from Stafford, some intelligence of Isabel, but this was a subject on which he was invincibly reserved, and Villasantelle could never gain the slightest satisfaction.

As he had no connection with the Countess de Villasantelle, the widow of his father’s elder brother, and was not in the way of meeting any of her acquaintances, he could not, by that channel, learn any thing of Isabel’s story, he was obliged to remain in ignorance.

Stafford sometimes mentioned his short residence in the Calabrian fortress, but never his companion: he, however, mentioned his stay there not to have exceeded a month; but whether it was his only visit, or whether he had often met Isabel there, was not to be discovered by a person of so little art as Henriquez.

In about six weeks after his intimacy with Mr. Stafford commenced, our young Spaniard repaired to the house of his father, whom he most unexpectedly found reconciled to his sister-in-law, the Countess, who was on a visit to him, in his palace at Seville. But what was the astonishment of Henriquez, when his father, after having introduced him to his aunt, presented him to Donna Isabel de Sallada, and he recognized his fair Calabrian acquaintance. It was evidently with some difficulty that the lady restrained her risible propensities when she first beheld him: but she blushed very deeply when he first saluted her, though one of the archest smiles imaginable dimpled about her beautiful mouth.

“So young, yet so abandoned!” — thought Henriquez, as he turned from her towards his aunt.

This lady was one of those personages so very common in all civilized countries, who are neither bad nor good. She loved talking, and she loved to be thought wise; she therefore said many absurd things, and was frequently guilty of detraction, yet she was not malicious. She was so outrageously virtuous that she could not allow the smallest charity to the frail of either sex, but was, notwithstanding, often imposed upon by the intrigues of the artful, to give her countenance to women not perfectly immaculate: she prized her own judgment above that of every other person, yet she was as easily led as a child to adopt opinions in direct opposition to her own, and to defend them as *her’s* with

the utmost obstinacy. She was vain, trifling, and self sufficient, without much evil in her character, from the same imbecility that prevented it having much good.

Such was Donna Theresa, Countess de Villasantelle; but her manner was plausible, and with the facility of being imposed on by women, so common to all men, Henriquez was led to hold her in esteem as a woman of understanding and much knowledge of the world. This opinion she was not slow to observe he entertained, and (as her vanity was not of her person) she was pleased with the idea of the deference paid to her judgment by a young man of so great promise, and became more circumspect than common to preserve it.

For some days that Henriquez was now in the house with Isabel, without being able to speak to her in private, her character was attentively studied by him. From a certain sly archness that accompanied her in every word and look, he could not for a moment doubt that by the most consummate art alone she preserved the good opinion and protection of Donna Theresa; yet there was at times an appearance of innocence in her vivacity, that together with the certainty that her absence from her protectress must be known to her, might have staggered the belief of almost any other person. At his first meeting with Isabel, Henriquez had set her down in his own mind as an angel, but his opinion of her once shaken, he was now as obstinate in believing her artful and debased.

Henriquez had been near a week at home, when one day, at table, he took an opportunity of mentioning his lately formed intimacy with Mr. Stafford, and as he did so, looked attentively at Isabel to see how she was affected by it: he could perceive a blush rise to her fair cheeks, but almost in the same instant it faded away, and she betrayed no other sign of emotion. The next morning, however, he found that she assiduously sought his conversation, and having engaged him in discourse with her, continued to converse with the most enchanting gaiety till the room was deserted by every other person; her spirits then seemed to subside and she remained silent for several minutes. At length Henriquez said, with an air he designed should appear careless—

“You do not enquire after the health of your friend, Isabel.”

“What friend, Senor de Villasantelle?” she returned gravely.

“Your companion in your Calabrian retreat, the Senor Stafford.”

Henriquez, as he pronounced these words, could not check a glance of contempt, though it was contrary both to his intentions and principles to hurt her feelings, or those of any woman.

Isabel made no reply for some moments: she seemed doubtful what conduct to pursue, and blushed more deeply than ever, but soon said,

“I am at a loss, Senor de Villasantelle, to know whether you really mean to affect an interest in my concerns.”

“I *affect* nothing. I take the interest of curiosity in your concerns; and did you invite it by confidence, I should take that of pity and friendship.”

“Of pity, Senor?”

“Yes, of pity.”

“And reproof, Senor.”

“Why should you think of *reproof*? Ah, Isabel! are you conscious of deserving it?”

“I am not. But having once met with it, is it wonderful that I expect it, Senor?”

“But wherefore do you blush, Isabel?”

“I? I blush at my own weakness in desiring to obtain the good opinion of a man, whom I know to be swayed by prejudice.”

“Isabel!”

“Senor.”

“Are you united to Stafford?”

“I was; but am no longer so. The inclination that formed, dissolved our union.”

“And your child?”

“Is dead.”

Villasantelle, though extremely shocked by the indifference with which she pronounced the last words, yet could not refrain from asking her how she had contrived to elude the notice of his aunt in her connection with Stafford.

“It was all very easy,” she replied, “till the time advanced for my being delivered; but we managed *that* too very cleverly. I was then with Donna Theresa at Naples, though I did not chuse to let you suppose so: she was confined to her bed, and I also pretended to be severely ill. Stafford carried me to Calabria, where Madelina, whose daughter had nursed me, lived with her second husband. The physician and her maid, (who were the only persons Donna Theresa saw) were in our secret, and persuaded her I was in the next room to her’s, in a dying state. In three weeks I returned to Naples, relieved of my care, and your aunt not at all the wiser.”

“But, Stafford has now forsaken you?”

“Not absolutely so. He was not so constant as he might have been: but he soon ceases to consult my pleasure alone: he was often grave when I was gay, and frowned when he saw me laugh. He still loved me though, and would have espoused me: but I despised him for his secession from the principles he had taught me, and refused to be his wife: so we parted.”

“Wretched, wretched girl!” exclaimed Henriquez involuntarily, as he hastened from the presence of a woman, whom he now thought the most abandoned of her sex.

For some weeks after this conversation, Henriquez rather shunned the society of the fair syren, for such he esteemed Isabel: but he could not always avoid being alone with her; nor could the known depravity of *her* heart prevent *his* from receiving an impression from her beauty, and the charms of her wit. For a long time he resisted this inclination; but he could not fail to perceive the partiality with which she regarded him; and it is not in the nature of man, to resist the alluring smiles of a lovely woman, whom they know to be “frail as fair.” It is not therefore surprising that the young Villasantelle gave the reins to his passions, and was for a few weeks blest in the delirium of mutual tenderness with the beautiful but inconstant Isabel.

It was not long, however, till he awoke from this dream of degrading softness, and to a sense of shame for having ever yielded to it, which made him abruptly take leave of his family and hasten to Salamanca. To Isabel his adieu was hasty, and he left her overwhelmed by sorrow, not so much for his departure, as for the privation of those loose pleasures in which she had for some time indulged.

At Salamanca, almost the first person who gave him welcome was Stafford, to whom he had not written since the first week of his stay at Seville, and who now gaily reproached him for his silence.

Villasantelle could not now resolve, as he had at first proposed, to inform his friend of all his weakness; but when Stafford eagerly enquired whether the lovely Donna

Isabel de Sallada was as lively and fascinating as ever, a sighing affirmation was all the answer he could give.

“It should seem Villasantelle,” returned he smiling, “as if *you* too had been favored and forsaken by the syren! But no,” he added, his features assuming a cast of gravity very unusual to them, “Isabel, though inconstant, cannot be abandoned! I should be the most miserable of all created beings, could I conceive she had practiced the lessons I was accursed enough to teach her, to sink me still deeper in perdition!”

“To sink *you* ——” repeated Henriquez in astonishment, which chased the blush from his cheek that the name of Isabel had raised there.

“Yes, Villasantelle: to me she owes her ruin: I found her lovely, young, and innocent! I took advantage of a soft heart, and an enquiring disposition! I perverted her principles, rendered her an outcast from virtue, and a sceptic in religion!”

“But, is it not more than probable, that, had she never seen you, the natural levity of her disposition would have led her into the same errors?”

“No, Henriquez,” cried the generous Stafford, “I am not base enough to palliate my own crimes by casting upon an unhappy female the imputation of a depravity her soul might ever, but for me, have abhorred.”

“You then suppose,” said Villasantelle, “that, to your seductions alone, Isabel would have given such boundless fondness?”

“No, my friend,” Stafford replied: “I am vain; but I am also candid! Many men might have made an equal impression on her heart; but few could have resolved to deprive the lovely, tender, artless Isabel of the purity of her mind, and her confidence in heaven.”

“Why, why then,” exclaimed Villasantelle, the occurrences of the last five weeks flashing on his recollection, and giving rise to an emotion the most painful, “Why did you desert her?”

“Heaven is my witness,” returned his friend, “such was never my intention! So far from it, I would have repaired her loss of honor with marriage, but she spurned the offer. Delicate in herself, constant and true as the dove, she was shocked by those rovings into which my impetuous passions led me, and separated herself from a man who adored her, because he was not constant in his devotions.”

“But is it not possible that a desire for change might have caused her to withdraw herself from you?”

“Distract me not with such an idea, unless you can blot from my remembrance how soft, how innocent, how timid was my Isabel de Sallada, when first I laid my snares for her virtue! I might then say with the sweet bard of my own country,

“The blossom opening to the day

“The dews of Heaven refined;

“Could not of purity display,

“To emulate her mind!”

“Yet this mind so pure, so delicate, did I by my accursed sophistry contaminate! Yet that angelic person, so rich in every grace of modesty, did I rifle of its sweetness! and shall I not be answerable for every deviation from virtue she may in future commit?”

This was too much for the ingenuous, the feeling heart of Villasantelle to endure! In violent emotion, he rushed from the presence of his friend, sensible only of a wish to avoid him, and if possible to lose the anguish that had seized on his mind, in change of place, as he flew rather than walked towards a grove at a small distance from the scene of their conversation.

In this lovely and sequestered spot, Henriquez threw himself upon the grass, and soon, in part at least, the agitation that had brought him hither subsided. It was near the closing hour of evening, and nothing could exceed the tranquil beauty of the scene that surrounded Henriquez.— From the foot of the grove of beech and chestnut that sheltered him, the ground descended in a gradual grassy slope, often broken by the clusters of cork trees whose broad shadows were lengthened in the evening beam, to a pool nearly surrounded by willows and poplars, mingling with a wood of oaks that entirely covered the abrupt declivity on the opposite side of the water.

To the left of the chestnut grove arose one of those bare and sandy downs so common in Spain, which, if it added nothing to the beauty of the scenery, gave it the charm of fragrance from the profusion of lavender, thyme, and rosemary, that was scattered over it. To the right were cornfields divided by narrow strips of land appropriated to the culture of the vine.

As Villasantelle contemplated the prospect before him, the ripened ears of gold that waved in the soft breeze, and the glowing clusters that hung from the treillage of the vines, reminded him that it was autumn, the season when the Marquis de Cambusca, with his beloved Julia, proposed returning to Spain; but the recollection that the hated Countess Miranda was to accompany them, destroyed almost every vestige of pleasure from the anticipation of seeing relatives so respected, and so dear.

These thoughts disturbed that tranquillity Henriquez was beginning to enjoy: he arose from the grass, and moved a few steps round an angle of the wood, when an object drew his attention, that fixed it entranced in pity and admiration.

It was a female, who leaned against a sycamore tree at a few paces distant. The departing sun-beams which, gleaming through the foliage, tinted it with the most brilliant hues, shed a sort of glory around a form truly celestial! So slight, so fragile, appeared the lovely figure, that it seemed not of this world; an idea that its long white robes and flowing veil, now gracefully thrown back from her face, favored: it displayed her long light hair, which waved on her polished bosom, and decorated a face, beautiful beyond all conception, though pale and thin. Tears glittered “on the fringed curtains of her eyes,” which were bent on a picture that she held in one white hand, whilst the other was held to her cheek, on which, from the pressure, a faint glow mantled.

Emboldened by supposing herself in a total solitude, she had unclasped the fore part of her dress, by which means not only more of her form was discovered, but a chain of costly pearls, to which the picture she gazed at was attached. After a few moments she raised it to her lips, and then, as she concealed it in her bosom, in a voice low, sad, and harmonious, she exclaimed

“Why, beloved image, is it not given thee, like thy original, to speak peace to the sad heart to which thou art so dear! Ah! too surely the consideration that the woes of others are keener than our own, is weak to console us under misfortune! otherwise, thy mild and placid features, and the remembrance of thy sufferings, would teach me fortitude!”

The accent in which these words were delivered thrilled through the soul of Henriquez: it quickened his recollection of the person of the speaker: he heard the voice, he beheld the fair form of the beautiful Victoria, and sprang towards her. Surprise and (as she glanced at the disorder of her dress) confusion crimsoned the averted face of Victoria; but left her not power to move from the spot where she stood. With the utmost gentleness, Villasantelle took her trembling hand, and as he pressed it respectfully to his lips, assured her, on the honor of a Spaniard, that he meant no injury, but entreated to be allowed to serve her.

“Alas, Señor!” said she bursting into tears, “no kindness can serve the wretched Victoria. For were your power of action equal to the benevolence of your wishes, a fatal ——

She hesitated, and Henriquez exclaimed

“Ah! what fatal destiny hangs over *your* prospects; are they, like mine, chilled by despair, at the moment that my whole soul glows with the ardor of passion?”

“What mean you, Señor?”

“Only *you*, too lovely Victoria, could ask such a question!—Oh! when I behold you beautiful as admiring angels, and as pure; yet see you weep, in all the agony of fondness, over this beloved image ——

As he spoke, the hand of Henriquez gently pressed the picture, the form of which was easily discerned through her robe, and he was unable to continue.

With an air of scorn and displeasure, Victoria removed his daring hand, but observing the mild dejection that overspread his features, she sighed involuntarily.

“Forgive me!” he exclaimed; “Forgive me, I entreat you! and believe that I would not for worlds give pain to that lovely bosom.”

“I do believe it, Señor,” she replied with dignity, “but let the proof be, your leaving me instantly, or suffering me to depart.”

“Without protection!” exclaimed Henriquez. “No, cruel Victoria, it cannot be: you must not go without protection!”

“Under the same protection that I came hither, Señor, I shall be safe in returning,” said Victoria.

“Barbarous girl! It is not necessary that you should remind me of my happy rival! That lover, whose resemblance is worshipped in tears and solitude.”

“I comprehend you not,” said Victoria, in evident astonishment.

Villasantelle had taken her hand, which he now, with an air of pique, relinquished, saying, “Ah! Donna Victoria—Alphonso!”

“Alphonso!” she repeated; whilst a deep glow rushed to her late pale face.

“Is he not dear to you?” enquired Henriquez with trembling eagerness, and in the fond hope of being contradicted.

“Dear to me!” Victoria again repeated; her eyes beaming with the animation of her soul: “Dearer than worlds! A thousand times more dear than my existence!”

This confirmation of his misfortune, in finding the woman he was destined to love devoted to another, gave so cruel a wound to the sensible heart of Henriquez, that he had not power again to address Victoria, till he beheld her moving away; he then darted after her, exclaiming

“Tell me, I conjure you, under whose protection came you hither?”

“That of innocence and heaven!” she replied, in a tone the most impressive, and instantly began to ascend the hill on the left.

Henriquez had lost all desire to accompany, but he could not resist his inclination to follow her, which he did, till, by a narrow path that wound round the hill, he saw her enter a small building, which he would have taken for a shepherd’s cottage, had not the insignia of a wine-house informed him that it was one.

This seemed a strange habitation for the lovely elegant Victoria: but he could not doubt that it was her present residence, as on drawing near the open casement of a room on the ground floor, he heard her inform the hostess that she should immediately retire to rest. Villasantelle then heard the hostess express a hope that she might not find any disturbance from the villagers, who had agreed to assemble and dance on the green before the door an hour after sunset: and a plan struck him, which he did not long hesitate to determine on putting in practice. He felt an invincible desire to pass the night under the same roof with Victoria, and the means now presented themselves. He knew that in the hurry of the dance the hostess of the wine-house would not be so inquisitive as she might otherwise be concerning his motive for requiring a night’s lodging in her house; and he thought it not improbable that he might, sometime before he left the place in the morning, again see the too-lovely Victoria.

Accordingly, when the peasants had been for about an hour enjoying the pleasures of the dance, by moon light, Henriquez accosted the hostess, and made known his desire of having a chamber: she readily conducted him to one, where she left him, without giving herself much concern about the accommodation of a comfortable bed; and he sat down to ruminate on the fair object of his wishes, the soft tones of whose voice he easily distinguished as she put up a fervent prayer to the Virgin to guard her through the night.

The apartment of Victoria, and that which contained Henriquez, were both situated in the same gallery, and the partition between them was so slight, that every movement was heard from one chamber to the other. The silent attention with which Villasantelle listened to every sound in the adjoining room, saved him from detection, but not a single word that escaped the lovely Victoria was unheeded by Henriquez. He heard her, as before, address herself to the picture in terms of fondness and complaint; but her expressions were now so equivocal as to inspire him with a faint hope that it might be the resemblance of a woman; and he would have given worlds to have been satisfied on this point.

In a few moments he heard her lay herself on her bed, which, if it resembled that prepared for him, he fancied must preclude repose: she sighed frequently during a short time, but then, from her regular low breathing, he was led to imagine she had fallen asleep.

After spending near an hour in silence and solitude, Henriquez began to revolve in his mind the possibility of stealing unobserved into the chamber of Victoria, and by a single glance terminate all his doubts and uneasiness respecting the picture.

With the stimulous of curiosity, he was never long in deliberating on any plan before he put it into execution, and with a cautious step he advanced into the apartment which contained the idol of his heart.

To his great relief, he had, on opening the door, perceived her lamp still burning, and had therefore extinguished his own, lest the increase of the light should disturb the fair sleeper. As he approached the table, which stood near the bed, and on which he

expected to find the object of his search, the heart of Henriquez beat high with hope and expectation, which soon gave place to disappointment, for the picture was not there; and after looking round the room for it in vain, he prepared to depart: but a sentiment which was something more than curiosity, though much resembling it, induced him first softly to undraw the scanty curtain, which, though nothing more than a musquito net, almost concealed the beautiful Victoria.

The night was uncommonly warm, even in the temperament of Spain, and the repose of Victoria seemed disturbed by some unpleasant vision, for she had thrown the coverings partly off her bosom; one white arm hung down upon the floor, her head-dress had fallen off, and her hair was in the wildest disorder.

For several minutes, Henriquez contemplated with surprise and admiration a face and form so perfect as that which now lay before him; but not a single thought inconsistent with the most delicate purity, found entrance in his breast, as he bent over her. His curiosity was, however, revived, when, amongst the luxuriant tresses that shaded one side of her neck, he perceived the chain to which the picture was attached. The portrait was concealed in her bosom, and there he should have esteemed it sacred from his touch, but powerful curiosity suggested, that by pulling the chain, he could easily obtain a sight of it, without offending the delicacy of Victoria, were she even awake. Cautiously, therefore, he put forth his hand, but it trembled so excessively, that he was several times obliged to withdraw it, before he could venture to seize the chain.

“I only wish to gratify a harmless curiosity!” whispered Henriquez to himself; and, acquiring fresh courage, the chain was in a moment in his fingers; but before he could draw out the miniature, Victoria started, and opened her eyes! For a few seconds she appeared bewildered by the strangeness of her situation, but she had been too often involved in sudden difficulties and alarms not to be able to command herself from having recourse to cries and screams: she instantly recognized Henriquez, and darting on him such a look of disdain and reproach, as penetrated to his heart, she said,

“Is this, Senor, the protection you so officiously pressed upon me? Is it thus you evince your regard for the honor of a Spaniard?”

“Pardon me, I conjure you, Victoria!” cried Villasantelle throwing himself on his knees at a little distance from the bed; “I swear by the holy Virgin and all the host of heaven, I meant you no injury, or even the slightest disrespect! An uncontrollable but inoffensive curiosity led me to your chamber ——.”

“Do you call it *inoffensive*, Senor?” interrupted the indignant Victoria. “So, the base violator of sleeping innocence excuses his depravity, as harmless curiosity, and by uncontrollable desire.”

Stung to the quick by this reproach, which however (in reality) undeserved, he certainly appeared to merit, Henriquez was unable to explain the real motive of his indecorous visit: he could only humbly sue for pardon for his offence, and request to see Victoria in the morning: both which requests she steadily denied, saying at length,

“Why, Senor, do you persist in demanding a forgiveness, which, if pronounced, would proceed only from the compulsory measure you employ, in remaining in my chamber, and in which there could be no sincerity? Go, Senor; and when you have lost the inclination to offer me another insult, I may pardon this!”

“Proud, implacable Victoria!” exclaimed Villasantelle, enraged at the resolution she expressed.

“This anger becomes you, Senor,” she returned indignantly, “when excited by the pride of injured innocence, and the unyielding spirit of honor!”

Already more than half vanquished by his own consciousness of wrong, Henriquez could no longer persist in remaining in the chamber of the incensed Victoria, and quitted it, as he immediately did the wine-house, in an agony of disappointment and self reproach.

These sentiments accompanied him to his apartments in the town of Salamanca, and led him at length to reflect seriously on what he had done, and caused him the most bitter regrets. He found that he had offered a most unprovoked insult to a lovely female, who appeared destitute of every other defence but that which innocence and beauty should always find in the hearts of the virtuous and truly noble. With the consciousness of loving her to distraction, he had put it out of his power to render her those attentions and services that might contribute (if she really were separated from Alphonso) to create an interest in his favor in her heart, and he had also rendered it impossible for him ever to discover, except by some very strange chance, what engagements had subsisted betwixt Alphonso and herself.

It was some days before Henriquez was sufficiently reconciled to himself, to return to those pursuits and amusements that had occupied him before his visit to Seville, or even when he did, to find the same enjoyment from them. A week had scarcely elapsed since his memorable interview with Victoria, when passing along a street which led to the lodgings of his friend Stafford, he caught a transient view of her elegant form, as she turned down into an obscure lane: with the utmost speed he followed, but did not arrive at the spot where he lost sight of her, soon enough to discover, into which of two houses, whose doors adjoined each other, she entered; but he was convinced it was one of them, and his curiosity, as usual, predominating over what little prudence he possessed, he hastily advanced, and finding the door of the one nearest to him open, he passed into it. A large room, with scarcely an appearance of furniture, presented itself, and convinced him that Victoria was not there; but a narrow staircase that he espied in a dark corner revived his hope, and he ascended it.

The door of the apartment to which it led was also open; and within it Henriquez beheld a sight that banished every idea but one of pity and sympathy. Seated in an old arm chair, on the back of which yet hung some tattered fragments of its velvet covering, wrapped in a shabby capota, and trembling in an ague-fit, though his countenance still bore the exalted expression of resignation and fortitude, Henriquez beheld the noble, the persecuted Count Miranda! A female was in the room. He saw her stoop, to take from under the pillow of a miserable truckle bed (from which the invalid appeared just risen) a handkerchief, with which she wiped the drops of perspiration from the forehead of Miranda, who, laying his head on her bosom, looked up with the fondest gratitude to the face of his lovely interesting Leonora. Her appearance was very much changed since Villasantelle had last seen her, but though much paler and thinner, and instead of the placid smile, the deepest sorrow was alone depicted on her features, he thought her infinitely more beautiful than he had done at that time.

Henriquez had ample time to observe this unfortunate pair, for it was several minutes before either of them observed him.

When at length the Count perceived that a stranger and one of Villasantelle's appearance was present, his native dignified politeness made him rise from his seat, saying,

"You are welcome, Senor, though to the abode of squalid wretchedness! The name of Villasantelle is an evidence of honor which I cannot question."

Astonishment to find himself known, added to the other emotions of Henriquez, deprived him of the power to answer, or to move, till he observed Miranda sinking through weakness, notwithstanding the support of Leonora; he then sprang forward, and assisting her to place her husband in his chair, he entreated them both to treat him as a friend, and tell him what he should do to relieve that misery, which (he delicately hinted) it was evident they suffered.

"Think me not ungracious, Senor," replied the Count with firmness, "when in one short word I tell you—Nothing! Proscribed by the persecuting tribunal of the inquisition—sought by the malice of a female demon—it is only in obscurity that I can be secure! On such terms Miranda would disdain existence: but that, if he is violently torn from the arms of those dear beings who are dependent on him, their fate would be dreadful!—I dare not even ask for those few comforts I yet can purchase, and which my health demands, lest it should betray me to the fiends that seek to hunt me down! Were I certain to suffer singly, I might, perhaps, be reconciled; but when I think that too probably my family may be implicated in the crimes attributed to me! that at all events they will be disgraced by my ignominious fate, I feel almost contented to die here like a dog ——."

The emotions of Miranda rendered his words perfectly inarticulate, and seemed to shake his debilitated frame almost to annihilation.

"Why, why, dearest Miranda," cried Leonora, as she supported him in her arms, "why need you give yourself up to despair? You may yet procure comforts and restoratives in this obscurity, if this worthy Senor will permit his charity to be their ostensible source."

The soul of Miranda was not humbled by his misfortunes: at the mention of *charity*, the colour mounted for a moment to his face, and a glance half reproachful was directed to Leonora, but the tears which filled her eyes spoke her regret for having wounded his feelings, and reconciled him to the expression she had made use of.

"Ah!" exclaimed Villasantelle, "as a relative, as a brother, permit me to assist you! Suffer me to lessen to the Countess the fatigue of watching over the restoration of your health! Let me furnish you with those comforts your state demands; and give me only in return, the honored title of *your friend!*"

"Generous young man!" said Miranda with animation, as he seized one of his hands, whilst the amiable Leonora took the other, and with a look of the sweetest gratitude pressed it to her bosom.

It seemed to be already forgotten by the pleased trio, not only that they were strangers almost to each other, but that two of them were, or had ever been unfortunate: so true it is, that the voice of sympathy or friendship possesses a charm to render us unmindful even of the sorrows that excited it.

Henriquez remained a considerable time with Miranda, who, conjured him not on any account to mention his title.

“I have,” said he, “for some time abandoned the dress and appearance of a peasant, in which I found myself continually subject to discovery from my awkwardness and inability to support the character. I now declare myself one of the ex-noblesse of France, whom the late unhappy reign of terror has driven from my country; and, as such, am pitied, despised, and neglected. I call myself Count Philippe de Grasse, and the peasants of the country, who only ever speak to me, have changed my title to Don Philip de Grasso, by which name only I am known. I should not,” he added, “have assumed any rank, had I not found it impossible to break my Leonora and my sister of their custom of calling me Count!”

With unspeakable astonishment, and some little mortification, Henriquez heard Miranda mention his sister, as it proved her to be with him; a circumstance to which he was averse to give his belief, from thinking, that affording that imprudent young lady his protection and assistance, was unworthy of the character of his new friend.

“To what lengths,” said Villasantelle to himself, “will the detestation of any particular person carry a man: when his aversion to his mother-in law can make the noble-minded Miranda forgetful of what is due to a sister’s honor.”

With this reflection in his head and at his heart, Henriquez rose to depart, promising, however, to return in the evening.

“Not *this* evening, Senor,” replied Miranda. “Till the return of this hour on the morrow, you must excuse our seeing you! To-night,” he added with a hesitation proceeding from his efforts to subdue his feelings, “To-night, my lovely, my unhappy sister takes leave of my Leonora and me, for a long, long time.—Dreading discovery from the prying malice of her detestable mother, she flies far from hence, without any other guide or protector than providence. But she shall be safe,” said Miranda with a noble firmness; “Heaven, though it may permit the wicked to persecute for its own wise purposes, will not suffer the innocent to become their prey!”

It was in vain that Henriquez entreated the Count to permit *him* to be the protector of his sister till she arrived in a place of safety. “It must not be,” he said.—“Though she has made an elopement, the *fame* of my sister is still as unsullied as her mind; but were I to permit your attendance on her, to her place of destination, her *innocence* only would remain.”

Thus forbidden to engage himself in the service of the unhappy Count, in the way that would have been most agreeable to him, Henriquez took his leave, and retired till the next day, when he should have permission to repeat his visit.

On his way home, the singularity of the circumstances that had thus twice introduced him to the notice of Count Miranda could not fail to occupy the mind of Villasantelle, and it was only now that he recollected the object of his pursuit, when he had ascended to the chamber of that unfortunate nobleman. But his mind having now found another object for the exercise of its enthusiasm, Victoria ceased to be its first consideration: and though he painfully felt the importance she was of to his peace, the conviction which his feelings for Miranda afforded him, that in the exercise of friendship and benevolence there was a source of felicity for him, in some measure reconciled him to the duty he thought incumbent on him, namely, that of endeavouring to think of the woman he loved, only as the wife or mistress of another man. Yet still he could not banish her idea from his heart: her beauty still haunted his imagination, adorned with every grace of mental acquirements, and the recollection of how deeply and wilfully he

had offended her, inflicted a pang infinitely more severe than even the certainty that Victoria's tenderness was not destined for him.

Often, while a prey to those reflections, did he wish himself within the reach of the fascinations of the fair and faithless Isabel; and as often did he reproach himself for the debasing thought; so unworthy of the true and romantic love of a Spaniard, though its object was beyond his hopes.

In his present state of mind, it is natural to suppose, that he rather avoided than sought the society of his friend Stafford; but that gentleman came to him in the evening full of some important intelligence, which, however, he did not think proper to divulge: but his countenance was animated by the most lively transport, as he informed Henriquez that he meant to set out immediately for Seville, on business the most consequential to his happiness. With less warmth than usual, but with the utmost sincerity, Villasantelle congratulated his friend on his prospects; but, to his enquiry, if there was any person besides his parents to whom he wished his remembrances conveyed, he replied in the negative.

"What," said Stafford, "no message to your aunt? None to her protégée?"

"Only my best wishes."

"Does not Isabel appear entitled to more?" enquired Stafford, smiling.

Henriquez who fancied these words alluded to his friend's suspicion of his intrigue with that lady, made no reply; and Stafford, too much engrossed by his own happy reflections, to heed his embarrassment, bade him an affectionate adieu, and departed.

When, at the time specified by Count Miranda, Henriquez entered the lower room of his miserable dwelling, the first object he beheld was Leonora, looking more languid and dejected than even the preceeding day, and leaning against the rail at the foot of the stair-case. Her veil was fastened to her head dress, and proved that she either had been, or was going out, but it did not conceal her face, though with it she dried the tears that flowed from her eyes on her bosom.

Henriquez saluted her; and, as she ascended the stairs with him, she said,

"I am just come from church, Senor, where I have been to pray for the safety of our beloved Camilla, dear girl! Heaven avert from her the evils with which she is threatened!"

"You seem," returned Henriquez, "to feel them even more keenly than the Count!"

"The Count," she answered, "knows only that his sister is in danger of falling into the power of her unnatural mother."

"And is Donna Camilla really in danger from any other quarter?"

"Ah, Senor! a thousand dangers menace a young and beautiful female, that men never dream of. A tender and susceptible heart, like Victoria's, is in itself a powerful enemy."

As Leonora said this, she was about to open the door of her chamber; but Henriquez hastily removed her hand from the latch, exclaiming,

"Stay one moment, and satisfy me in this point. You speak of Camilla and Victoria as one person. Tell me, I conjure you, is the latter name borne by your sister?"

"Is it. The other was only assumed."

"And the Count's is ——."

“Alphonso!” said Leonora.

“And he assisted her to leave the St. Theresa, at Naples?” cried the Spaniard.

“He did. And oh! heaven forgive him for the well meant sacrilege!”

The pious ejaculation of the beautiful Leonora, though pronounced with the utmost fervency, her white hands folded on her bosom, and her meek eyes raised to heaven, was totally unheeded by Henriquez, who had already relinquished her hand, and who was too much engrossed by the intelligence he had just heard, to attend even to her leaving him, though in doing so, she shut him out of the apartment of the Count.

It was some time before Villasantelle could recall his ideas, even sufficiently to remember where he was; but when he did so, he had presence of mind enough to recollect that, in the present disordered state of his mind, his intended visit to Miranda had better be postponed, and therefore quitted the house to ramble in the adjacent streets till his recovered composure should render him more proper for a visitor.

To attempt to describe the situation of his thoughts during nearly two hours, would be a task so almost impossible, that it is best not to attempt it, but accompany him at once in his return to the abode of the Count Miranda.

On reaching the house, where, at his two former visits, he had not seen a human being but those whom he now came to seek, his astonishment was extreme to behold the lower room half filled with the common people, men, women, and children, who appeared to be assembled to see something extraordinary; and to observe among them two, whom, by their dress, he knew to be officers of justice.

One of these advanced towards Henriquez, who from him demanded the occasion of this bustle? and received for answer, that his comrades had had the good fortune to find the Count at home, and had escorted him on a visit to the prison: that as soon as they had seen him accommodated, they had returned to seek for his papers, and that himself and the other officers staid below to prevent their being interrupted in the discharge of their duty.

“But, may I not speak to them?” demanded Villasantelle: “There may be some mistake in this business.”

“No, no, Senor!” replied the officer, “There is no fear of that! It is well known now, who the Count is; and he need not doubt speedy notice will be taken of his pretensions to justice.”

“Alas, unfortunate Miranda!” exclaimed Henriquez, with emotion; “Thy fate is then decided, and thy destruction is certain!”

“Ha, Lonquilez!” cried the officer, calling to his companion, at the same time that he nimbly drew the sword of Villasantelle from its scabbard; “here is a youth who declares his knowledge of the redoubtable Count Miranda! We must provide him a lodging, I fancy.”

Lonquilez, with a savage delight in his countenance, came forwards, and assisted his comrade to seize the already disarmed Villasantelle, and having called a third of their troop to their assistance, they, without any farther ceremony, conveyed him, in a carriage which waited at the end of the lane, to the prison of the town, where, having thrust him into a large room with grated windows, they barred the door and left him.

Those summary proceedings of the officers of justice, for a time deprived Henriquez of the power of reflection, nor could he even when his faculties had in a great measure recovered from the shock, conceive what was meant to be done with him. If his

friend were already discovered, he could not understand why such importance was annexed to the confession he had made of his knowledge of him, unless the officers had mistaken him for some of those concerned in the fray in which the Baron —— had been killed, on the rescue of the hapless Leonora.

On his first entrance into this gloomy apartment, Villasantelle had thrown himself on a stone bench under one of the windows, covering his face with his cloak; but when a quarter of an hour had elapsed in silence, and he found the officers did not return, he rose to pace the room up and down.

In doing so, he perceived that he was not entirely alone: a female sat in an obscure corner of the prison, and though her face was concealed by her veil, Henriquez imagined from her dress that she could be no other than Leonora. A second glance convinced him, and he approached her.

At the sound of his footsteps close to her, the fair mourner started, and looked up.

“Ah!” she cried, on discovering who it was; “how kind is this, Senor! To visit for the unfortunate Count, not only the abode of poverty, but that of guilt.”

“You owe me no kindness, dear Senora;” returned Villasantelle. “My being here is entirely involuntary, since it is my prison as well as the Count’s.”

“*Your’s*, Don Henriquez!” repeated Leonora in astonishment.

“Yes, Senora. I have been brought hither by force, to answer for having acknowledged my friendship for Count Miranda!”

“No wonder then,” returned the lady, “that I see you a prisoner. But I hope your innocence may appear, without obliging him to discover himself.”

“How Senora! Is not the Count arrested on account of former transactions in Naples?”

“Gracious Mary!” exclaimed Leonora, clasping her hands in thankfulness to heaven, “How near have we been to destruction, by the fatal similitude of Alphonso’s real and assumed title. No, Senor, we are not yet undone. The discovery of the officers of justice is a chimerical one, for they have arrested us as spies of the French government, and ill affected towards that of Spain; but, as yet, they know not that the proscribed Miranda is in their hands.”

“It is true they suspect it; and mean on that account to detain us in prison till they can receive from Naples an accurate description of the person of the Count, or some one who will bear witness to his identity. But could we escape from Salamanca before that arrives, we would endeavour to reach England before they could again come up with us.”

Henriquez heard this explanation with an astonishment not unmingled with pleasure; he saw plainly that it was in his power to render an essential service to his distressed friends, and he hesitated not to form a resolution, singular indeed, but noble in the highest degree. It was well, however, that Villasantelle did not occupy much time in deliberation; for, at this moment, the persons who had brought him to the prison came to convey him to the hall of examination, and he could only say to Leonora, “Fear not Senora that Don Philip will not soon be at liberty!” before he was obliged to leave the place.

On entering the hall of justice, Henriquez was not much surprised to behold not a single person except the magistrate who was to examine him, and his own conductors: but the observation pleased him, as there was thence no fear of any obstruction to his design.

As soon as Villasantelle was led towards the table where sat the administrator of the laws, he was called upon to declare his name, but this he positively refused to do till informed of his crime. To this the magistrate, who was neither the most intelligent, or the least humane of his profession, readily replied, "that he was brought there upon suspicion of knowing, yet concealing, where the Count Miranda, a murderer and a sacrilegious heretic, was to be found, thereby impeding the proper course of justice."

"That I at this moment," replied Henriquez, "have the most perfect knowledge where that persecuted nobleman may be found, is most true: but before I will give any further satisfaction on that or any other point, I have to ask a few questions, on your answering which depends your ever knowing more, for tortures shall not wring the secret from me."

Observing the magistrate about to refuse compliance with his demand, Villasantelle resumed,

"I am no stranger to the process of affairs in these courts, and I am well aware that it is your intention to refer me to a higher tribunal, as a person of refractory manners and unsafe to be dealt with, where none of the penalties due only to guilt can be employed to force me to give evidence. But I warn you that such a proceeding will not avail any thing; and that although by complying with my terms, you may procure intelligence of Count Miranda; if I am treated with harshness I never will betray him."

"Ask your questions," said the Magistrate in a surly tone.

"Is not," Henriquez began, "Philippe Count de Grasse vulgarly stiled Don Philip de Grasso, an emigrant French nobleman, now within those walls? And is he not accused, by those who are conscious of his innocence, of being a spy for the government of that country?"

The magistrate having replied to both those questions in the affirmative, the prisoner resumed,

"Then I demand that his liberty be instantly restored to him."

"That cannot be," answered the magistrate, "since he is detained on suspicion of being that very Miranda, on whose account you are brought hither."

"It is I," said Villasantelle, "who can best inform you, whether he is that nobleman, or is not. But before I reply to that point, I must know, whether there is any other impediment to his being immediately discharged from this place?"

"There is not."

"Then suffer him instantly to depart. *I acknowledge myself to be Count Miranda!*"

The magistrate looked all astonishment at this unexpected declaration; and his satellites, (who were four in number) as if they had imagined that having confessed himself to be the famous Miranda, gave a degree of savage ferocity to their prisoner, all at once seized on him and attempted to throw him on the floor, that they might bind him. But Henriquez, indignantly shaking them off, called on the magistrate to protect him from insult, till he was proved guilty of crimes such as had been ascribed to him.

"Having," he continued, "voluntarily given myself up, when I might have deposed your suspicions of the innocent Don Philip to be just, I do not conceive that there is any reason for treating me like a wild beast. I surrender myself into the hands of justice, not into the power of savages; and I demand yet one more indulgence, besides that of respectful treatment."

“Speak your wishes,” said the magistrate mildly, “and, if they *can* be complied with, till you reach Naples, they *shall*.”

“I desire then, to be permitted to write to Don Philip. You need not fear to allow me this.” Henriquez added, observing the unpropitious looks of the magistrate, “You shall yourself see what I shall write, which shall be but a very few lines.”

Pen and ink were immediately provided by the order of the magistrate, and Villasantelle, being permitted to sit down, wrote the following billet:

“To Philippe Count de Grasse.

“Let not the acknowledgement I have made surprise you, since it was no very uncommon effort. In confessing myself to be the injured and so long persecuted Miranda, I incur no danger! Recollect that although I am become amenable to an inquisitorial court, its proceedings are no longer concealed under the veil of darkness and mystery, which so often proved fatal to innocence. My trial must be in the face of my country, and neither suspicion or error can avail against me. You know that I am not guilty of the death of Baron ——. Adieu, my friend. You will soon be at liberty, and England holds out to you a comfortable assylum.

HENRIQUEZ.”

Villasantelle hesitated a little before he would venture to sign the name of Henriquez, which could alone render his billet intelligible to the Count: but fortunately the magistrate, into whose hands he now gave it, was ignorant that it was not the real name of Miranda.

He read it, however, and laying his finger on the words, ‘I am not guilty of the death of Baron ——,’ he said

“You make a bold assertion here! But I will own, Count, that I wish you may be able to prove it at Naples, whither you must be conveyed.”

Henriquez, grateful to this humane gentleman for the interest he appeared to take in his concerns, after having received his promise that the billet and his discharge should be immediately given to Don Philip, forced a ring of considerable value upon his finger, and, attended by two officers, mounted the carriage that was to convey him to Italy, and which was escorted by several armed men on horseback.

The journey upon which Henriquez had now entered, may easily be conceived a complete contrast to that he had performed only a few months before over the same road, but in the society of the intelligent Marquis de Cambusca and his beloved Julia.

As he could not entertain a doubt of being discharged the moment he arrived at Naples, where the deception he had put upon the magistrate at Salamanca must be discovered, he would have consoled himself in the idea of having saved the life of his friend, and in the prospect of so soon seeing his sister and her husband; but he could scarcely believe that they had not already left the Neapolitan territories, and in that case he knew not how long he might be without seeing them. His being conducted as a state prisoner, must also prevent his going in search of the lovely wandering Victoria, whom he ardently desired to discover, that (as he fancied) he might conduct her to her brother.

Hitherto Henriquez had endeavoured, as much as possible, to check the passion that every interview with Victoria augmented; but since he had discovered that Alphonso at least was a rival by no means formidable to his hopes of her heart, he rather cherished his attachment, and during his long journey to the boundary of the Neapolitan dominions, his thoughts were seldom a moment unoccupied by her image.

On the day when Villasantelle quitted his Spanish conveyance for an Italian one, he was much surprised on his carriage drawing up to the house where the change was to be made, to see that one similar to it had arrived before it, to replace which a Neapolitan carriage was already provided.

As the place of his destination was known to him, and he went voluntarily with his guards, he was not prevented from looking out of the windows as much as he pleased, and the appearance of a fellow prisoner being near, attracted his attention, and made him endeavour to see who it was. That it was a female, he could not long doubt, for, on the door of the carriage being opened, he heard loud and repeated shrieks; and when one of the men who surrounded it lifted her out in his arms, to remove her to the conveyance prepared for her, her struggles having displaced her veil, Henriquez could no longer flatter himself that his worst fears were not realized, for he plainly discerned the features of his adored Victoria.

Distracted at beholding her in such a situation, Villasantelle wildly called to her guards, to desist from forcing her to go with them, declaring that he would himself be her companion and protector, if it was necessary that she should be a prisoner. At the same time, without taking any notice of his own guards, he opened the door of the carriage he was in, and springing from it, attempted to pursue that of Victoria, which had driven from the post-house; but he was almost instantly taken again into custody; and the consequence of his frantic behaviour was, his being obliged to perform the remaining part of his journey with the blinds of the carriage drawn up, which entirely prevented him from seeing whether his mistress was pursuing the same road.

It was now that Henriquez indeed regretted his confinement, noble as had been the motive that induced him to incur it. But it would be to no purpose for him at such a time to declare the deception he had practiced, since, as his own confession was the only evidence that had been given of his being Count Miranda, it was not to be supposed that his denial would now avail him any thing.

Whilst our young Spaniard thus travelled almost in total darkness and in silence, his arms, too, bound on the first day that his route lay through Italy, his reflections were not the most agreeable imaginable: he now rested his only hope of seeing Victoria, on the probability that as her brother was suspected to have assisted her to escape from her convent, he might, under that character, be confronted with her on his trial for that offence, which he understood had procured him the title of a sacrilegious heretic.

The court before which Villasantelle was now to appear, was, as he had said in his billet to Miranda, inquisitorial, but yet materially different from that tremendous tribunal whose decrees were involved in mystery, and where the unhappy object of its criminal recognizance fell a victim to its sanguinary laws, without the knowledge of any friend or relative, who could not even discover whether he suffered death, or was for years a prisoner in its dungeons. Persons who possessed interest were certain of gaining admission to hear the trials; and Henriquez knew that it was not customary to deny criminals the aid of any witnesses whose presence they chose to demand, or would appear, to do them any service.

As he had hoped, but as could scarcely be expected, the first cause on which Henriquez was brought before the court, was to answer for having aided and abetted Victoria de Miranda, daughter of the late Count Miranda, a novice in the convent of St.

Theresa, to escape from thence, in violation of her vows to heaven, and in an heretical contempt of the church.

Before his entrance, the trial of the lady herself had commenced, and as she was about to plead her own cause, he was not immediately noticed, and had time to observe who were present.

Near the judge, who was a man of dignified aspect, with the traits of sense and penetration strongly marked in his countenance, and who appeared in rather the decline of life, was seated the detestable Countess Miranda, with a cruel exultation in her looks, as she scowled upon the trembling Victoria, who, though a prisoner, had been accommodated with a seat. At the back of the latter's chair, and seemingly encouraging her, stood the Marquis de Cambusca, towards whom from time to time the Countess shot glances of fury and malice; but they were unheeded by him, or at least had not power to disturb the placid dignity of his countenance and mien. Two or three persons evidently of inferior rank, and as evidently parties on the side of the prisoner, were near the Marquis, and, at a little distance from the Countess Miranda, were several priests, and one man, who appeared to be of rank, was placed by her side, and the area was crowded with spectators.

It was several minutes before Victoria could summon courage to speak. The death-like silence that expectation caused throughout the whole court seemed to appal her, and it was not till a murmur arose at her long delay, that she stood up, and, leaning on the arm of the Marquis, entered on her defence.

The first few sentences that she pronounced were unintelligible to those who were placed at such a distance as was Henriquez, but her voice becoming stronger, he heard the continuation.

"Repugnant," said Victoria, "as it must be supposed it is, for me thus publicly to declare the stigma that rests on my birth, sooner would I avow it to be the most infamous, than permit it any longer to be believed, that I am the daughter of that cruel woman, who, acknowledging me to be such, could subject me to a situation such as that from which I have recently been extricated, or that in which I now find myself.

"I now call upon Ursula Cellini, once known by the name of Elvira de Cambusca, but for several years as Countess Miranda, to declare before men and angels, whether I am her child or not?"

At this solemn adjuration, the Countess was observed by all present, to turn pale, and tremble; but it was apparently with rage; for on being commanded by the judge to reply to the demand made by the prisoner, she said haughtily,

"I am not called upon. The name of Ursula Cellini belongs not to me!"

She was reminded that she had also been called upon, as Countess Miranda, and was again desired to plead; but as she persisted in remaining inflexibly silent, she was ordered to be taken into custody for contempt of the court, and Victoria was commanded to continue her tale, which, after a moment's recollection, she did in these terms:

"To the numberless friends of the Cambusca family now present, it is well known, that the late Marquis was, about forty-five years since, appointed to a government in the island of Cuba, to which place he removed soon afterwards with his lady, leaving their only child, the Marquis, now present, behind them in Spain.

"It was near seven years afterwards, that the Marchioness gave birth to a daughter, who was named Elvira, and in a few months she died, leaving her child in the

care of a faithful servant, called Agnes de Cellini, who was the mother of Ursula, now present.

“Till Elvira attained the age of seventeen, her life glided tranquilly on, in the restraints common to Spanish ladies of high rank; but her peace was then broken by the death of her father and of Agnes her nurse, (who was not less dear to her) both being carried off by the same contagious distemper.

“For the first time Elvira now found it necessary to act for herself, and she formed the resolution of coming to Europe, to place herself under the protection of her brother, the present Marquis de Cambusca. Every thing was, in less than a year from her father’s death, prepared for this voyage, in which Ursula Cellini, only one year older than herself, was to be the companion of the hapless Elvira.

“But, in the galleon in which she sailed, there was another passenger of rank, who possessed a commandery of Malta.

“You, my Lord,” continued Victoria, addressing herself more particularly than she had before done to the judge himself; “You, my Lord, knew Don Pacheco de Merrida, and feel how difficult it would be for me at the present moment to give a just idea of him.

“He was, my Lord, at the time I mention, something above the age of 30: his long military services had not then destroyed the appearance of youth, though change of climate had deepened his complexion, and begun to blanch his hair; but to the qualities of his mind, to graces of his manners, I can never do the justice I am bound to, by my promise to the sweet saint, whose dying entreaties to unfold this tale, and paint him as he was, now ring in my ears.

“Elvira had often seen and admired Don Pacheco, before their tedious confinement in the same ship brought them more intimately acquainted with each other’s merits. They were transcendent, and a passion violent as sincere took root in their hearts.

“Spare me, my Lord, (for you are no stranger to them) a recital of the events that preceded and accompanied the fall from virtue of the unfortunate Elvira; they were such as in every candid bosom would tend to exculpate both the lovers.

“But Elvira too well knew the unyielding honor of her family, not to dread the very idea of meeting them, when she found what was likely to be the consequence of her indiscretion! She knew that she had nothing to expect but infamy for herself, and reprobation for her child.

“In this dilemma, in which Don Pacheco was equally involved, the sufferings of both were augmented to a dreadful degree: Elvira’s to see her beloved Ursula sicken with the small-pox; and Don Pacheco, two days afterwards, to observe the fell contagion stealing over the languid frame of his adored Elvira; the delicacy of whose state of health rendered her ill able to struggle against the distemper.

“At length, however, the crisis arrived, and was favourable to the *lives* of both the sufferers, but to the *beauty* of Elvira alone; Ursula in the early stages of her recovery retained scarcely a vestige of her former self, though she has since in some measure lost the disfiguring traces of her malady.

“The time now began to draw nigh when the voyage must terminate, and the dread of it increased the debility of the unfortunate Elvira.

“Think, my Lord, what were the sufferings of Don Pacheco! He beheld the woman he adored restored to him as it were from the brink of the grave, but yet on the

point of being torn from him for ever. His child, too, for whom we may suppose he already felt a parental interest, about to be devoted to obscurity and disgrace, or perhaps to destruction. He had at once to lament the outraged honor of the most lovely and amiable of her sex, and the impossibility of repairing it, from the fatal circumstance of his religious vow!”

Victoria paused; but her meek eyes were still fixed on those of the judge; and as the universal gaze of the court was on her, a total silence prevailed in the hall of justice, till, with a deep and heavy sigh, the judge, in an under voice, commanded her to continue her narration.

“Elvira, trembling for the fate of her expected treasure,” resumed Victoria, “could taste no repose till an expedient struck her for saving the discovery of her shame, which she communicated to the partner of her uneasiness, and, in the miserable state of his mind, easily gained his acquiescence.

“It was no other than to invest Ursula de Cellini in all the pomps of the daughter of the Marquis de Cambusca; and under her name, for the hapless Elvira, to seek in retirement a refuge from the indignation of her family, and the contempt of the world.

“This plan, so feasible from the alteration of Ursula’s features from the small-pox, was immediately put into execution, and on their arrival at Cadiz, *she* presented herself to the Cambusca family as Elvira, and as a supposed effort of generosity, gave to the real Senora de Cambusca a pension on which to retire into obscurity, as the daughter of Agnes Cellini.

“In the obscure cottage amongst the mountains of Alpuxares, to which Elvira retired, she gave birth to the unfortunate being whose sad task it is to recite the history of her sorrows.

“I was born amidst the contrite tears of my angel mother, with no fond father near, to press me with smiles to the heart which my birth had eased of its fears for the life of a beloved object, or inspired with the first emotions of paternal fondness. One of the descendants of the exiled Moors received me in her laborious arms, and it was many hours before my mother consecrated her babe with the first tender embrace.

“In the mean time Ursula, continually dreading that the deprivation of the elegancies she had been accustomed to might weary Elvira of her plan of concealment, and induce her to confess the deception they had practised, took the first opportunity of securely establishing herself, by espousing the late Count Miranda, though totally in opposition to the wishes of her supposed relations.

“Soon after her marriage, which took place about a month before I was born, the Count Miranda was obliged to leave his lady (who had already declared herself likely to present him with an heir) and make a voyage to India, accompanied by his son, then quite a boy.

“As the Count was, at his departure, in a state of health that gave little promise of his ever returning, and the Countess knew that the fortune he had settled on her, independent of her child, was very inconsiderable, her miscarriage, which happened two months after his leaving her, was an event so fatal to her hopes, that she resolved to conceal it from all the world, and at the proper time for her delivery to substitute another child.

“It was now that she first sought out the humble habitation of Elvira, and opposing maternal pride to maternal fondness, prevailed on her to permit me to pass for

the daughter of Count Miranda, which, as I was a very small child, might easily be done, though I was already four months old.

“In due course of time, the Countess pretended to be delivered of a daughter: I was introduced into her chamber, but immediately consigned to an ignorant nurse, who was to take me to her own cottage, till the Countess thought proper to recover sufficiently, to remove with me to Naples.

“Hither my beloved mother privately followed us, as she had stipulated with Ursula that she should have the liberty of seeing me as often as she pleased, and also have the care of my education. In this city she again met Don Pacheco de Merrida, who was here on private business of his order, and found him as passionately attached to her as ever. Ursula had now reason to rejoice in the religious vow of Don Pacheco, as nothing else could now have prevented the reunion of those unhappy lovers. But their marriage was thus interdicted; and when pressed by Don Pacheco to renew their former connection, Elvira rejected the very thought, with affected horror, but with tears of the bitterest regret.

“Shall I, my Lord,” continued Victoria, “suppress the remainder of my evidence, too much tending to criminate a parent? or, shall I reveal the whole with impartiality? Yes, beloved saint!” Victoria added with enthusiasm, “I must be explicit.

“Disappointed in the hopes he had formed from the tenderness of his Elvira, by her assumed coldness; and stung by what he esteemed her prudery, Don Pacheco was cruel enough to employ force a second time to violate the woman, whom by his first error he had already plunged in misery!

“This outrage could never be pardoned, even by the meek and yielding Elvira; and to secure herself from a repetition of it, she took refuge in the convent of the St. Theresa, in this city, where, under the name of Agnes, she secreted herself from my father, till her year of probation being past, she took the veil.

“In that convent was I placed by my supposed mother, under the care of my real parent, only leaving it once to visit the Count and Countess Miranda during their residence at Venice.

“On their return to this place, I accompanied them, and though I frequently went to the convent, I did not take up my abode there, till after the death of the Count, who left his whole fortune to me after the death or on the marriage of his lady.

“This was a restriction of which she so little approved, that she determined to elude it, by obliging me to take the veil, and I was accordingly placed in the convent of St. Theresa, and informed that there I must spend my life, as I was totally dependant on the Countess.

“But the sweet sister Agnes (for I knew her by no other name) observing my extreme repugnance to the monastic life, pleaded for me with the cruel Ursula, but in vain: she knew her own power to be absolute, as Elvira had made her a solemn promise never while she lived to divulge her story to more than one person, and Ursula thought that confidence was already placed in one of the nuns to whom my mother was much attached, but who in fact knew her only as sister Agnes.

“Thus situated, my mother resolved to free me from the convent, which she did by means of my counterfeiting a violent illness, which was supposed to reduce me to death; but before I departed she unveiled to me the whole of the mystery of my birth.

“Since that time I have been in Spain endeavouring to conceal myself from the malicious cruelty of Ursula Countess Miranda. Vainly has it been attempted, since I am now before this court: and since her long uncertainty of my fate has broken the heart of my unfortunate parent, and in the grave once prepared for her daughter she now reposes!

“Spare me, my Lord, a further discussion of the few remaining occurrences of my short life, and condescend to acquire the proofs of my birth from the witnesses here present.

“Here, my Lord, is the husband of Ursula Cellini’s nurse! You behold in this woman the person who attended both her and my poor mother during their confinement with the small pox, and who will testify what I related of the deception practised on the Cambusca family; and the woman who was a witness of my birth, with her who introduced me into the chamber of the Countess Miranda during her supposed labour, are also ready to witness the truth of what I have said.

“But here, my Lord Judge,” continued Victoria, drawing a folded paper from her bosom, and unclasping from its chain the miniature suspended to her neck, “here are two proofs that you, who knew Don Pacheco, will not doubt.

“This is a letter, written by my mother on her death-bed, to my father, conjuring him to acknowledge his child!—This, my Lord, is his hair! See it is decorated with the cross of Malta! Here,” and she pressed the picture (on the back of which was Don Pacheco’s hair) fervently to her lips, “Here is the resemblance of my sainted parent herself!”

During the last explanations of Victoria, Henriquez, who still remained guarded amongst the croud, had observed the countenance of the Judge to undergo several changes, and saw him lean eagerly forwards to obtain a nearer view of the picture, which when Victoria, with a trembling hand, presented to him, he hastily seized; and, after gazing on it for some moments, with a frenzied ardour, “Oh, Elvira!” he exclaimed; “Pure persecuted Spirit! Thou art avenged!” Then dashing the miniature from him, he descended with precipitation from his seat, and throwing himself on his knees before Victoria, caught both her hands, which he bathed with tears of unspeakable agony.

The croud now closed so entirely round the interesting scene, that Villasantelle was unable longer to distinguish even whether the principal actors in it remained in the hall; but his attention was soon attracted to a new point.

The portrait of Elvira, when flung from the hand of the Judge, happened to fall at the feet of the Countess Miranda, who, taking it up, seemed to look on it with emotions something similar to those of the person by whose means she obtained it. For some minutes, the deepest gloom overspread her features, not, however, unmingled with the malignancy of expression so usual to them; she then appeared actuated by rage, and wishing to destroy the painful resemblance: but just as she was with that intention placing it between her teeth, which she violently was gnashing, one of the guards of Henriquez, who observed the little diamond cross of Malta on the back, darted forwards, and snatched it from the furious woman, who, thus disappointed of her vengeance on the harmless trinket, stamped on the pavement, and absolutely screamed with passion.

The man who was now in possession of the miniature heeded her not, but returning to his prisoner, shewed him his prize; which Henriquez no sooner beheld, than he offered to exchange his purse for it, though its contents were of more than treble its value.

Villasantelle had scarcely secured the treasure of Victoria, when his attention was again drawn to the Countess, whose behaviour had become so violent and frantic, that the persons appointed to take her into custody for her former contempt of the court, were now obliged to force her from the hall of justice, declaredly to lodge her in prison.

She was no sooner gone, than a fresh tumult arose in the place: the croud began with one accord to fall back, and a universal murmur prevailed; but the meaning of it Villasantelle was not permitted to discover; for he was immediately hurried back to his prison, where his guards, having seen him in security, left him alone.

In this situation, debarred of even the hope of obtaining the satisfaction of knowing the meaning of the extraordinary scene he had witnessed, the impatience of Henriquez almost past all reasonable bounds: and any person who had heard his ravings at his confinement would have conceived it due to him, if not as a murderer, at least to a maniac.

The second week of his imprisonment (for he had arrived at Naples several days before that appointed for the examination of Victoria) passed away as the first had done, in vain wishes for his release; but conjecture had now a wider field to range in. At first he had submitted with a tolerable grace to having his communication with any person without the prison prevented, as it gave Miranda a longer time to secure his escape; but now he repined at it incessantly. He had seen that the Marquis de Cambusca was still in Naples; he had seen also that Victoria was under his protection; and he now dreaded their leaving the city, whilst his trial was delayed from day to day.

At length the pleasing intelligence was brought him, that on the following morning, which was the twenty-second of his imprisonment, he was to appear before his judge, to take his trial for the murder of the Baron; and about an hour after this information was officially conveyed to him, he was surprised to see a monk enter his prison, the door of which was instantly closed on him, and they were left together.

In the appearance of this man, there was something that struck Villasantelle, as extremely particular. The long black garments of the order to which he seemed to belong, were folded round him in such a manner as only to permit the extraordinary height of his figure to be observed; but his legs, which were bare almost to the knee, and his feet, on which were only sandals of rope, resembled rather those of a skeleton than of any creature of flesh and blood. The drawn down cowl shaded his face from the observer, but a withered hand held it sufficiently raised for him to look round the apartment.

As, by turns, he examined every object it contained, deep groans burst from his bosom; and when he had concluded his investigation, he muffled up his head in his garments, exclaiming in a voice nearly inarticulate—

“To what an abode has the genius of disinterested friendship consigned the most generous of men!”

The voice was not unknown to Henriquez; but, astonished beyond measure, he advanced to the monk, who was still standing in the middle of the prison room, and laying his hand on his shoulder, assayed to speak, but could not.

“For Miranda dost thou suffer this?” again exclaimed the religious, turning from him and moving towards the door, against which he laid his head, and sighed convulsively.

Henriquez followed! He gently drew aside the cowl, which was now unconfined by the wearer, and beheld the emaciated features of the Count Miranda, impressed with the stamp of despair!

When the surprise that even a confirmation of his first suspicion gave Villasantelle, subsided, he hastily demanded, "Wherefore the Count had come to Naples, instead of instantly, on obtaining his freedom, flying to England?"

"It is plain that I am but little known to you," returned Miranda, "else you would scarcely ask me, wherefore I was not the abject villain to secure my own safety, when the most noble of men and of friends was suffering imprisonment and contumely for my sake, by personating a man amenable to justice for tumult and murder!"

"But you should have known," said Henriquez, "that I was in no danger! Though forbidden to send to them, I have powerful friends in Naples, and but for circumstances, the most extraordinary of which I was a witness ten days since, I scarcely doubt my trial would have been appointed to an earlier day than the morrow."

"What circumstances?" said Miranda. "Did they occur in the abode with which *my* supposed crimes provided you?"

Villasantelle, who saw the distracted state of his mind, though he dare not enquire into the cause for fear of more deeply wounding it, now, in some measure, at least, to call off his attention from his particular distress, related to him all the various events of that memorable day, on which he had witnessed a part of the trial of Victoria.

His auditor listened at first with little attention, but as he continued the narrative he became extremely interested, though he spoke not, except when Don Pacheco de Merrida was first mentioned: he then exclaimed "Oh, my revered Uncle!" and afterwards, when the Countess Miranda's conduct was spoken of, his features assumed the wildest expression: "Curses, curses!" he cried, "Curses, black as her own corrupted soul, pursue that vengeful fiend! That d——d enemy to my repose!"

"Oh Leonora?" he added, in a softened tone, but one of indescribable anguish, "How can I think of the barbarous cruelties practised on thee, and not fly to tear from the bosom of that demon the cankered heart that caused thy miseries."

Alarmed by the violence of his emotions, which seemed to threaten his reason, Villasantelle endeavoured to sooth the unhappy man. He succeeded in part, for the paroxysm of rage was followed by one of sorrow; and, leaning on the shoulder of Henriquez, the firm, the indignant Miranda, even wept!

"Villasantelle!" said he at length, "you suppose me mad; or accuse me of unmanly weakness! But did you know the whole of my sorrows and my wrongs, you would wonder that confirmed distraction has not overtaken me! But you *shall* know all! At present the mention of that beloved brother of my mother, has too much softened me.

"I cannot now be of service to you in resuming my title, but in the evening I will return and relate my story; and to-morrow I will accompany you to the court, where Miranda shall throw off the ignominious veil that conceals him."

Saying these words, after having embraced Henriquez, he departed, leaving him more perplexed than ever by some parts of his discourse.

In the evening, or rather at night, Miranda was faithful to his promise of again visiting Henriquez, whom he found impatiently expecting him.

No sooner were they both seated, than the Count began to relate his story: but he seemed to suffer so much in giving an account of the wrongs of Leonora, that

Villasantelle thought it best to inform him that, with the circumstances preceding his flight from Naples, he had been already acquainted, by Don Lopez de Grijalva.

Miranda then resumed the thread of the narrative in these words:

“When, on that memorable night, I conveyed my Leonora from the apartments of Lopez, we lost no time in embarking in a boat belonging to the Maltese galley commanded by my uncle Don Pacheco de Merrida (who then and has since that time borne the title of Count Altoni) in which we sailed for the island of Caprea, where he possessed a small house in which he thought we should be perfectly secure, till such time as my wife was enough recovered to take a passage for England.

“But though a few months shewed my Leonora perfectly restored to health, we enjoyed such uninterrupted quiet in this charming retreat, that we remained there nearly six years, at the end of which time we were discovered by the emissaries of justice, at a time when it became otherwise necessary to leave Caprea.

“With Victoria, whom I always till this day believed to be my sister, I had always had private communication; and she had, a short time before my residence in the island was discovered, informed me that the Countess Miranda meant to force her to take the veil in the St. Theresa; but that she had found a friend who would assist her to escape, conjuring me to devise some means for her to join Leonora and me.

“On finding that I must quit Caprea, I came secretly to Naples, where no person supposed I would trust myself, and recollecting that the St. Theresa was one of the most sacred sanctuaries in the city, I took refuge there, in order to be near Victoria.

“During the day time I kept myself as much concealed as possible, and in the evenings Victoria used, by the connivance of sister Agnes, to join me in the church, to which she came by a private passage which led through the burial vault of the church (which also served as a place of interment for the monks of an adjacent convent, that had also an entrance to those vaults) into a confessional in the north aisle of the St. Theresa. But, in order to see sister Agnes, (which in concerting our plan of escape was often necessary,) I was obliged to traverse this passage, and enter one of the avenues of the convent, in which, through a small grating in one of the doors, I used to converse with her.

“On the second evening of my abode in the church, I was much surprised to see Don Lopez de Grijalva standing near me, and attentively examining my person, which he appeared to recognize.

“In this persuasion I spoke to him, and found I was not mistaken: he knew me, and his astonishment was extreme to find me in Naples.

“I briefly related to him the cause, and conjured him so far from betraying, to assist me in conveying Victoria from the place. The former he readily promised not to do; but my other request he absolutely negatived; and I soon discovered that he was entangled in the artful snares of the Countess Miranda, with whom he had an intrigue, and feared to offend.

“Dreading that this degrading weakness might betray me undesignedly, I found it necessary to make a temporary breach between the lovers; by working up his feelings to the highest degree to make him abhor her; and, for that purpose recapitulated with all the touching eloquence in my power, the circumstances of our last meeting, and recalling all his pity for my Leonora.

“As soon as I found I had succeeded, I made a pretence to dismiss him for that night, and made him promise to return on the following one. It was in crossing the church with him that I had the first rencontre with you; but hearing your character from Don Lopez, I thought it of little consequence.

“I have some reason to believe that Don Lopez was not perfectly faithful to me; for the Countess certainly discovered that night the intention of Victoria to escape from the convent: though, as I had not told Grijalva the destined means, she could not prevent it; but hearing of your visit to the St. Theresa, imagined that by some chance you had seen Victoria, and meant to assist her.

“The occurrences of the next evening you can scarcely forget; and I need only mention that sister Agnes to whom I had only mentioned, having met with a Castilian friend, mistook you for Don Lopez; and was giving you directions to follow Victoria to the place where she had flown to conceal herself, when she was interrupted by the lady abbess.

“How you escaped from the convent I know not; but from what Don Lopez told me of having met you at the door of the church, with the place and time when Victoria lost her cloak, I imagine you was the cause of that misadventure. It was not however, of much consequence, as she immediately on joining me at the rendez-vous agreed on, put on the disguise of a cavalier, the most singularly deformed and grotesque you can imagine; and I, personating a lady almost as uncouth, accompanied her to a little vessel procured by Grijalva, in which we sailed for Caprea; where, having joined Leonora, and hired another bark, we all set out for Spain, where we had not long been established in the disguise of peasants, when we so fortunately attracted your first notice.

“On being informed by you of the intended journey of the Countess Miranda, we left our retreat, and thought to cross Spain to Cadiz; but as we travelled on foot, and consequently very slowly, we only reached Salamanca, on our way, six weeks before you discovered us there; and where, after a contagious fever, which made me oblige my sister to take lodgings in a wine-house, at some distance from the town, I was seized with an ague, from which I am not yet recovered.

“When I received the billet you left for me, from the magistrate at Salamanca, I will confess, that to take your advice and fly to England was my first idea: but when I recollected that it was possible that the infernal Countess, disappointed of her wished for prey, might persecute you, for having aided my escape, I resolved to follow you, and, if necessary, avow myself.

“But my first care was to procure an assylum for my poor Leonora. Her father she knew was dead; and she knew also, that his nephew and the heir of his fortune resided in or near Salamanca. To him I made her write, to entreat his protection, which was readily granted; and so warm was the interest taken by the young Senor Stafford in our concerns, that I was induced to visit him; and was, under a feigned name, obliged to consent to be introduced to his lovely lady, with whom he had just arrived from Seville.

“With Donna Isabel de Sallada, or as her husband (according to the custom of his own country) chuses to stile her, the Senora Isabel Stafford, I have left my beloved Leonora, in the cruelest terrors, for what may befall me.”

Here the Count paused for some time, being quite out of breath; and it was fortunate that he did so, as Henriquez had by this time lost all power of attending to the continuation of his narrative.

Had the fair wanton Isabel then consented to be united by the ties of marriage to Stafford? was his first unconscious self enquiry: but “Ah,” thought he, “what ties can religion form—of power to bind a heart so depraved—inclinations so variable—and passions as uncontrollable as her’s?”

But though he lamented the fate of his friend, he could not help feeling the retributive justice of his punishment, for having first undermined every moral and religious principle of the youthful Isabel.

After a silence of near a quarter of an hour, Miranda thus resumed the discourse:

“Since I parted from you this morning, I have introduced myself to my uncle Pacheco, Count Altoni, whom I found rejoicing in the discovery of his daughter Victoria; (for you must by this time know that her father was the Judge to whom she related her story) and he has promised me that you shall be discharged from this cruel confinement the moment you appear in the court. He has also informed me, that he has been for six years fruitlessly negotiating my pardon at the court of Rome, but that his incapability of paying for it, only, has hitherto impeded his success: but that (as from the discovery of the deceptions of the Countess Miranda, the testament of my father must be set aside) as I shall shortly possess great wealth, he thinks there is little doubt of his procuring the pardon in a few days: for which time only I need conceal myself.

“My uncle has also undertaken to inform the Marquis de Cambusca, under whose protection and that of your sister, Victoria still remains, of your situation; that he may be in court to-morrow, to give you any assistance that may be necessary.”

Miranda having ceased speaking, was warmly congratulated by Villasantelle, on the happy prospects that appeared opening for him: he then enquired what had been the events he alluded to; to which the discovery of Victoria’s remaining parent had been owing.

“My uncle has informed me,” returned Miranda, “that his daughter was, by the Marquis de Cambusca (to whom she first related her story, on being permitted to see him at the grate of the convent in which she was confined on her arrival from Salamanca) acquainted of the existence of her father, and of his bearing the title of Count Altoni, as also of his being one of the principal magistrates of this city: but it was not till the morning that she was to make her appearance in court, that the Marquis brought her the information, that the Count, my uncle, was to preside in it. Her various and touching appeals to the judge, which you so much noticed, were, from the many years that he has borne the title of Altoni, intelligible only to himself; and perhaps on that account made the greater impression on the other witnesses to the transactions of that day.

“What the feelings of Pacheco were during her narrative, he could give me only an imperfect idea, but they may be readily conceived; he did not, however, mean to avow himself at that time, but the sight of Elvira’s picture, (which by some accident or other has been lost) entirely threw him off his guard, and at the feet of Victoria he entreated her forgiveness for his offences against her unfortunate mother.

“The agitation of Victoria was so excessive that she was obliged to be removed from the Court; but her father would not suffer her to be a moment from his sight, and the indecorum of his leaving the hall with her, prevented any further proceedings on that day.

“The Count Altoni accompanied his daughter to the palazzo di Cambusca, where fuller explanations of past events took place; and it was some hours before Pacheco

recollected that he was to have sat in judgment on his unfortunate nephew, as he had already done on his child.

“He was also informed of the imprisonment of Ursula Cellini, on account of the outrageous behavior you described to me; and was obliged to give an order for her liberation: not without hopes that the disgrace she had incurred on the trial of Victoria would prevent her from appearing against me, (as it is supposed I am the person now in custody) but I fear that they were fallacious, and that malice predominates over every other feeling in her cankered heart. You have, however, nothing to fear from her, as her credit is so completely overturned by the late events, that only against guilt, supposed so palpable as mine, would her testimony avail any thing.”

Miranda now took leave of Henriquez for the night, leaving him in a state of comparative bliss, from the intelligence he had communicated. All that night Villasantelle (though by the interest, or rather the *bribes* of the Marquis Cambusca, accommodated with a better chamber and a softer bed than he had hitherto enjoyed in his prison) slept not: his mind was too full of the idea of the lovely Victoria, whom in a few hours he hoped to see, and perhaps to induce to pardon him for the adventure of the wine-house, near Salamanca, to permit him to taste repose; but his feelings were not on this night, as they had been on many preceding ones, of a nature to exhaust his strength and spirits; and when the first beams of dawn-light shone into his apartment, he sprang from his couch with alacrity, to watch from his grated window, the approach of that day which was to restore him to the embraces of a beloved sister, the company of a revered friend, and to the sight of the woman he adored.

He continued for some time at the window, but the tardy morning seemed to linger in its approach, and rendered him impatient and restless: he walked to and fro, in his confined apartment; and curiosity, or a hope of changing the scene even for a moment, induced him to attempt unclosing his door, the hinges of which, from being much rusted, appeared to retain scarcely strength to support it. They were still, however, firmer than he had imagined; but to his infinite surprise, he found that the gaoler, in locking the door the night before, had been so careless as not to examine whether the bolt had shot home, and the prisoner was now at liberty to enter a narrow passage into which the room opened. But his inclination to explore farther was here interrupted by a strong iron grating that ran entirely across the passage, secured by two strong spring locks, and he was obliged to return: but as he was proceeding to do so, his attention was attracted by the accents of a voice he thought not unknown to him, which seemed to proceed from one of the grates of the dungeon beneath the place where he stood, which had a long low window closely barred looking out upon the court of the prison.

Henriquez paused to listen: the voice was of a female, and the accent appeared that of supplication, but too low for the words to be distinguishable for some time, and it was not till the natural violence of her temper breaking out, she spoke in a louder key, that Villasantelle discovered that it was the detestable Countess Miranda. As he had heard of the order being given for her liberation from prison, his astonishment to find her in one of its dungeons, would have been excessive, had not her own words explained the circumstance.

“Ungrateful wretch!” she furiously exclaimed, “have I incurred the danger of suspicion by bribing the avarice of your insatiate gaoler: have I condescended to enter a filthy dungeon for your sake; to have my solicitude requited by a sullen silence, to which

you obstinately adhere, notwithstanding you must be sensible of what consequence it is to me to have my enquiries answered? I again demand if the important work is performed?"

"What is it you would say?" enquired a voice, as of one just awaked from slumber.

"I would ask if———. Tell me, Lopez, sleeps he securely?"

"Oh God! Oh God!" seemed to proceed as from a soul in agony: but Villasantelle could not ascertain, whether it was from the person to whom the Countess spoke, or from some unhappy captive in one of the adjoining dungeons.

Ursula again assumed the tone of supplication, and Henriquez could no longer hear what she said; but in a few moments her companion exalted his voice considerably.

"Leave me, infernal fury!" he cried. "No longer persecute the victim of your crimes! But for your accursed witcheries, and my own weak culpability, these limbs had not now been loaded with chains, in a loathsome prison, nor my soul lacerated with the torments of remorse!—Was it not enough that I should be led by you to betray the unsuspecting confidence of persecuted innocence! Was it not enough that I was the slave of your horrible machinations, till led on from step to step, like the powerless, self-sold agent of an arch-fiend, I stained my hands with kindred blood—but must I now be goaded by your malice to the last crime of which human nature is capable, and rush on death to avoid your persecutions! Go! false and inexorable monster! Leave me, and glut your savage nature with the view of him whom you have murdered!"

"That *I* have murdered!" retorted the furious Ursula. "No, I did but put the poniard into the hands of a cruel coward, and it found its way to the bosom of truth and innocence! Convict me if thou canst of a word to prompt the fatal deed! Did I not tell thee, miscreant, that it would be an act worthy of heaven, to spare him whose death could alone secure us the enjoyments of life? Did I not represent the possibility of escaping from his power without shedding his blood! Did I not ——."

"Peace, fiend of hell!" interrupted her agonized companion. "Leave on my soul the weight of this last detested crime, and reflect if thou canst boast of innocence! Canst thou even make reparation for thy deeds? Canst thou restore to the injured Miranda the violated honor of his wife—violated by thy cursed cruelty? Canst thou save him from the ignominious death to which thy persecuting spirit has brought him? Canst thou recall to life the heart-broken Elvira? When, by a single word, thou couldst have withdrawn the slow consuming poison of grief from her heart, didst thou not delight to behold her agonies, and, by barbarous taunts, to sink her deeper in despair? What is even murder to this? The stiletto of the assassin gives but a momentary and corporeal pang, but thou hast loved to torture by the year ——."

Henriquez could distinguish no more; the voice of Ursula, hoarse with fury, predominated over that of the last speaker; and for some moments the uproar was so great, that Villasantelle attributed to the bribes of the Countess a marvellous power, since they could render the keeper of the prison deaf to it.

In a short time, however, the contest ceased, and Henriquez heard the Countess say in a softened tone, "Have you not secured the momentous pardon?"

"I have! 'Twas amongst his papers in the box; which I conveyed from the carriage to the wood-side."

"Then give it," cried the Countess; "Give it to me quickly!"

She seemed to have obtained her wish, for, in a voice of exulting transport, she added, "Now Miranda, where is thy fancied security? Thou shalt not escape me! I will yet see thy shattered bones blanching in the sun-beam where my lover fell!"

Villasantelle next heard the fastenings of the dungeon removed, for the Countess's departure, and despairing of knowing more, he returned to his own chamber. As he stood at the window, ruminating on what he had overheard, and particularly on the last speech of Ursula, he saw her accompanied by the gaoler pass the outer gate of the prison: the latter immediately returned, but *she* was seen no more.

It was not till near noon, that Henriquez was summoned to the court of justice; but when he was, what was his astonishment on entering it, to behold it very much crowded indeed, but not a single person there whom he had expected to attend.

The person who instead of Count Altoni filled the judgment seat, was a man of austere aspect and haughty demeanour: no trait of mercy or benevolence adorned the expression of his dark and ungracious countenance; nor did any beam of understanding or intelligence flash from his scowling and sunken eye, to make amends for its deficiency of every gentle affection.

In vain did Henriquez gaze upon the surrounding croud, if possible to discover the benign countenance of the Marquis de Cambusca; he was not there: and those who were, seemed occupied more with gratifying their curiosity, from the hearsay reports of their neighbours than from listening to the proceedings of the court.

"He must certainly die!" said one.

"It is said there was a mistake in the person of the man," said another.

"The holy Virgin defend us from the crime of murder!" exclaimed a woman, vehemently crossing herself, as she whispered an *ave Marie!*

Henriquez, in the mean time, attended by his guards, drew near the tribunal, and took his stand in the place appointed for arraigned criminals.

His air was steady; his countenance serene; and, disappointed though he felt himself, no such sentiment seemed to impress his features.

In a few moments, he was charged by the name and title of Alphonso Count Miranda, to plead guilty or not, of the crime of murder.

Without hesitation, he pleaded "not guilty;" and the Judge was about to summon the witnesses to prove the fact, when Henriquez requested to be heard. On his prayer being granted, he said firmly:

"My Lord, it is unfit, that a mockery be made of the sacred proceedings of this court; and though you should, on the clearest evidence, convict Alphonso Count Miranda of murder, know that Justice would be as far as ever from the completion of her sentence: and were you to execute him you would condemn, you would yourself be stained with innocent blood. I am not the Count Miranda! Let any person who has ever seen that unfortunate nobleman approach, and answer whether I am he!"

The witnesses now, with one voice, declared, that the prisoner in no respect resembled him whom they were to give evidence against.

"Who then are you?" enquired the Judge of the prisoner.

"I am called Henriquez de Villasantelle."

"What is your country?"

"Spain. Seville was my birth place."

“Did you not at one time answer to the name of Alphonso Count Miranda?” said the Judge.

“I did.”

“What was your motive for so doing?”

“Friendship!” replied Villasantelle calmly.

“Did you not then know that he was a murderer?”

“I did not; nor I do not now. I knew him to be persecuted: I saw him actuated by the very soul of honor; and I believed—and I *still* believe him innocent!”

“Know you not that he was guilty of the death of Baron ——?”

“That he *caused* the death of that nobleman I know; not that he was *guilty* of it.”

“You make nice distinctions, young Signor,” returned the Judge frowning.

“Only those which custom authorises, and of which the laws set us the example. There is only this difference. The distinctions of the *law* are calculated to favor the guilty: *mine* to set innocence in its true light.”

“Beware, young man, how you enter upon controversy!” said the Judge in a stern voice.

Villasantelle saw at once all the subtlety of an inquisitor, in this apparent caution, and smiled contemptuously, but remained silent as long as it was possible, answering only in monosyllables to the various artful questions put to him by the Judge, in order to entangle him by his words.

The Administrator of Justice at length demanded, whether he was unacquainted with the rules of the Church, which excommunicated all such persons as should shield or conceal a murderer.

“I have never heard of such a law:” replied Henriquez, “though I have of one that calls on murderers to take sanctuary in the very bosom of the church, and there defends them from the power of offended justice and outraged humanity.”

This answer seemed favourable to the designs of the Judge, but Henriquez was too cautious to fall into the snare prepared for him; though from his knowledge of the design to entrap him he could venture to play in safety round the very brink of danger.

Weary at length, with his vain efforts to betray the destined victim, the Judge gave over the attempt, and recurring to his having assumed the name of Miranda, and his avowed motives for doing so, demanded if he knew where the Count was?

Henriquez without hesitation replied in the affirmative, disdaining even to take advantage of his uncertainty as to the immediate spot where Miranda might be found, to declare what he esteemed a falsehood.

The process of *justice* was in this case *just as usual*. The prisoner was commanded to declare the hiding place of his friend, and, on his refusal, was condemned to the torture, to induce him to confess.

But, before this horrible sentence could be put into execution, a loud cry was heard in a distant part of the hall, which, by the confusion it produced, for some minutes, impeded the operation of stripping Henriquez, to bind him on the machine.

The croud now suddenly with one accord fell back on each side, and Count Miranda, (his countenance flushed with the emotions of his mind) rushed forwards. In his right hand he held aloft a long poniard, with the terror of which he had opened himself a passage amongst the croud; and in his left was seen a parchment, to which hung the well-known seal of papal authority; his monk’s habit torn in many places and the fragments

trailing on the ground, scarcely served to cover his large but meagre person; his eyes flashed with even more than their usual fire and spirit; but to the astonishment of all present, they were in an instant suffused with tears, and throwing himself on the neck of Henriquez, his agitation overpowered him, and he sobbed like an infant.

This scene, though universally interesting, seemed unintelligible to all except the Marquis de Cambusca, who having followed Miranda into the court, contemplated it with sympathy and evident pleasure: when Miranda had a little recovered himself, the Marquis also embraced Henriquez; and then, turning to the Judge, demanded to be heard.

“It is, I believe, well known to every person in Naples, excepting the Senor de Villasantelle,” the Marquis began, “that last night, between the hours of eight and nine, about half a league from this city, on the road to Rome, the Count Altoni was assaulted by ruffians, and received a wound, which, though not dangerous, was very near being fatal.

“The excessive perturbation of the assassin rendered his blow uncertain; but the Count fell from the door of the carriage which had been burst open, and was for some moments stunned. It must have been during this interval that a box of papers was taken from the carriage, and rummaged by one of the ruffians, who took from thence the pardon of Count Miranda, which Altoni had only that evening procured from the person who had brought it from Rome.

“As soon as the Count Altoni recovered his senses, he sent his servants in pursuit of the assassin, whom they easily came up with, and who proved to be Don Lopez de Grijalva, a young gentleman whom some time since I knew a credit to his family.

“Having been informed yesterday by Count Miranda of the singular imprisonment of my relative Don Henriquez, I went to the keeper of the prison to intercede for some indulgences for him, though I was not permitted to see him.

“I succeeded, and my gratitude pleased the gaoler; but late at night I was much surprised to receive a message from him, importing a desire to see me immediately. When I went to him he told me that he had had a visit from Ursula Cellini, Countess Miranda, who was extremely urgent for a few minutes conversation with the assassin Don Lopez, who was lodged in one of the dungeons; and asked my advice whether or not he should consent to it, as he hoped from thence some elucidation of the motives that induced the attempt to murder Count Altoni.

“I counselled him to gratify the lady, at the same time told him, that at the hour appointed for the conference, I would bring a notary to take down every thing that was said, which by concealing ourselves in the dungeon adjoining that of Don Lopez could easily be done.

“Half an hour before day-break, I took my station, with the notary, and Ursula was admitted by the gaoler, to her friend.

“From the conversation that ensued, the motive of the intended murder was plainly discovered. Ursula knew the Count Altoni to be the uncle of Miranda, and that so long as he lived, she had no chance of regaining possession of the old Count’s fortune, and she therefore by the most diabolical arts instigated Don Lopez, who has long been a favored lover, to murder him on that very evening that she knew he went to meet the friend, who had procured him the pardon of his nephew; which important paper she also desired to have in her possession to destroy.

“Don Lopez had it concealed about his person in the dungeon, and she having taken it from him, left the place: but before she had got ten paces from the prison, she was seized by persons whom I had set to watch for, and take her into custody.

“She is now close confined in the prison from whence Don Henriquez has just been brought; and the Count Miranda holds in his hand the full and entire pardon of his Holiness, for slaying the late Baron ——.”

The business of all parties was now very soon concluded; and Villasantelle, accompanied by Miranda, whose emotions were by this time much subsided, and the Marquis repaired to the palace of the latter.

When they entered the saloon of the Cambusca residence, a group the most interesting imaginable presented itself. On a sofa, near one of the windows, the Count Altoni, pale from the effects of his wound, reclined, supported by Victoria, and surrounded by the Marchioness, Leonora Stafford, and his beautiful Isabel.

Julia instantly flew into the arms of her brother; and Miranda, in the tender unexpected embrace of his Leonora, found all his sufferings requited. But all the transport of meeting was not confined to these four persons: it was perfectly general, and no person enjoyed it more than the Marquis. Victoria hung on her cousin, whom she had so long considered as a brother, then embraced Leonora, and a thousand times congratulated both; till her father, charmed by her sensibility, again drew her towards him, to bestow on her the most rapturous caresses.

As soon as the Marchioness permitted Henriquez to notice any other person, Stafford advanced to him leading Isabel, whom with exulting fondness, he presented to him.

The recent miscarriage of the Senora Stafford had restored to her shape all its beautiful symmetry, and given a delicate languor to her countenance which increased all its fascinations: and as Henriquez saluted her, the restraint visible in his manner was a happy contrast to the ease of her's. She blushed it is true, but it was the glow of triumph at observing the power she still retained, as she thought, over the heart of Villasantelle. Stafford, who was gazing on her with the most impassioned fondness, observed the augmentation of her beauty from the suffusion, and though his bosom swelled with triumph at the effect of her charms, he seemed to fear it would be too great for his friend's fidelity to him, and gently drew her to some distance.

Henriquez was now introduced to the Count Altoni, and had leisure to congratulate Leonora on the safety of her husband; but to Victoria he did not yet venture to speak, though his respectful bow had been noticed and returned by her.

It was not long, however, before he found an opportunity of addressing her, and unheard by any other person, making a hesitating apology for his conduct at their last meeting, and the most fervent promise of under-rating respect in future.

“For your behaviour near Salamanca, Signor,” said she with dignity, “no excuses are necessary: it is only those whom we regard, whose offences against us, we find difficult to forgive! Your protestations of respect, in future, are equally needless.

I am well aware that it is only when innocence is in an obscure and unprotected situation, that it is at all subject to insult.”

The coldness of her manner whilst she uttered such cutting reproofs, distracted Henriquez a thousand times more than her anger could have done:

Ah Victoria!" exclaimed he, "it is then only because you despise, that you do not hate me: but my faults deserve punishment; and I will gladly submit to any you can inflict, if, after you have chastised me, you will permit this sweet mediatrix to plead for me."

Saying this he drew from his bosom the portrait of her mother, which he had purchased from his guard, the day on which she thought it had been lost, and held it towards her.

She attempted to take it; but he drew it back.

"Victoria!" said he, "does not its restoration demand a reward? can you behold that sweet and saint-like countenance, and not practice those benevolent lessons she implanted in your mind?"

"What do you demand as the price of its restoration to me?" enquired Victoria, half smiling.

"A pledge of future amity," he replied. "Victoria, I only ask, that you should willingly give me your hand."

The Signora hesitated a moment, and then with a smile that enchanted Henriquez, extended it, which he pressed repeatedly to his lips, vowing eternal love and constancy.

"Hold, Signor!" said Victoria; "I have given you the pledge of peace, but not partiality! Remember that I cease to be your friend, the moment *you* appear in any other character."

"Cruel Victoria! Do you then forbid me to love you?"

"Love, Signor, cannot exist, where disrespect has ever entered, or resentment burned!"

"Ah, Incredulous!" he exclaimed, placing the white hand of Victoria upon his heart, "Do those throbbings speak a tale of indifference?"

Victoria gravely withdrew her hand, which trembled as he held it, and blushing deeply, turned from him without speaking, and advanced to Isabel, who, with Leonora, was standing in a distant window. This was a neighbourhood into which he did not chuse to follow her; and he remained where she left him, contemplating the various charms of the lovely trio of females.

In despite of his adoration of Victoria, Villasantelle could not, even to himself, deny that the Senora Stafford must bear away the palm of beauty; since with more regular features, their expression was more various, and equally fascinating with that of her two competitors. But in the soft blushes that mantled on the fine formed cheeks of Victoria, whenever her eyes were directed towards him, he beheld the enchanting glow of ingenuous modesty, and he could have knelt and worshipped her as something above mortality.

In a few minutes the Marquis and Miranda, who had been absent, returned to the saloon; the latter divested of his monkish disguise, and being equipped with the splendor becoming his rank, appeared a most complete cavalier. A smile of fond satisfaction brightened the countenance of Leonora, as she advanced to meet him: he took her hand, and kissing it, led her to his uncle, beside whose couch they both seated themselves. Villasantelle joined them, and for the remainder of the day, all was harmony and joy, uninterrupted even by the remembrance of the detestable Ursula, or her colleague Lopez.

In process of time, however, both those persons were brought to trial. As their guilt was sufficiently evident, they were both condemned to die; but their sentence was,

by the interest of those they had most injured, reversed: Don Lopez de Grijalva, who appeared more weak than wicked, being pardoned; and the Countess confined during life in a convent, as a spirit like her's there was no hope of subduing, or of reforming a heart so entirely depraved.

Notwithstanding the coldness with which Victoria continued to treat Henriquez, during several weeks that they now spent under the same roof, he would have found himself happy in contemplating the felicity of his friends; had not the conduct of Isabel, when she could for a moment escape from the watchful idolatry of her husband, given him the greatest uneasiness.

Not unfrequently, when she found Henriquez alone, (which she seemed to watch for opportunities of doing) she would speak of the time they spent together at Seville, in a strain which proved she thought him too unmindful of the privileges she had there allowed him; and plainly gave him to understand, that they had been suspended longer than was necessary.

"Isabel!" said he to her one day, "I entreat you no more to mention a period which I esteem as the most guilty of my life. There was a time when my senses were enslaved by your charms, but my heart or my understanding never paid you homage. Great God! had I then conceived that your connection with Stafford would ever have the sanction of the church ———"

"Isabel," he added in a tone of less agitation, "you are now endowed with the sacred rights of a wife! The honor of an amiable man, (to whose heart you are the most precious of all earthly things) is now in your keeping! Guard it, Isabel, as the most holy treasure, and forget all that ever past between us!"

The words of Villasantelle had their usual effect on Isabel: she appeared much affected, and in an agitated voice said:

"No, Henriquez! I will if possible keep in mind your reproofs, which have more than once revived the ashes of my lost virtue! I will if possible be every thing you would have me!"

At this moment Stafford entered the room; and Henriquez had a convincing proof how little the contrite emotions of Isabel were to be relied on for amending her future conduct.

Stafford observed the tear that had started from her eye; and wiping it off her cheek, enquired tenderly what had caused it.

"Your friend," said she, "has been relating the mournful history of my beloved Leonora." Saying this she quitted the room.

"Ah, Villasantelle!" exclaimed Stafford, "am I not blessed in the possession of such an angel?"

"With beauty such as her's, how seldom do we find a soul so tender, so true to every amiable sensibility!"

Though, unconscious of intentional offence towards his friend, those words seemed to strike like a dagger to the heart of Henriquez; and he would have given worlds to blot the guilty page of his late visit to Seville from the annals of time. He could not cherish the most distant hope of the reformation of Isabel, and he might perhaps have rejoiced at the blindness of his friend, had he not dreaded the severity of the shock, should he ever discover her irregularities.

True, she might in the estimation of most people have had the excuse of retaliation in the conduct of Stafford, who was incessantly seduced into temporary infidelity by every fair form he beheld. The beauty of his wife was still the object of his most passionate admiration; but his fickle nature refused to be confined within the bounds that seemed imposed by duty. Thus is the love of forbidden pleasures so deeply implanted in the heart of man, that not only the most virtuous but the most beautiful wife is neglected for a wanton, whose only charm is to be found in the libertine life that ought to render her detestable.

Henriquez had been for some time in the habit of leaving the Cambusca palace in an evening, whenever he saw Victoria avoided his conversation, and wandering, as had been his former custom, on foot, through the environs of Naples: sometimes entering the churches during the vesper-service, to which he was particularly partial, and not unfrequently hiring the boats of the lazzaroni, and nearly crossing the passage leading to the island of Caprea; or walking along the shores of the Bay, watching the numerous groups of dancers that at the closing hour of day assemble on the beach.

One evening in particular that he had been extremely urgent with Victoria to allow him an opportunity of laying open his heart before her, and that she had, with some little impatience in her manner, pleaded the necessity of her going on that evening (which was the vigil of a saint) to confession: disappointed and irritated by her persevering indifference, he quitted his home, and wandered along a high narrow path which skirted the side of one of those mountains that form the boundary of the Bay of Naples.

The evening, though it was near the close of autumn, was beautifully serene, and the cool freshness of the air from the sea was a happy relief from the sultry heat of the day, which had been unusual even in that southern climate. The setting sun shone brightly on the surrounding headlands, and on the Bay which was covered with fishing boats; while in the perspective of boundless ocean, a band of darkish vapour, the common forerunner of high winds, seemed rapidly rising, like an immense distant continent, stretching itself entirely across the harbour.

The path which Henriquez had chosen was in an ascending direction, and though extremely rugged, and in many places almost choked up by the masses of stone that had rolled down from the mountain, did not discourage him from proceeding to a considerable distance from the city. Near an abrupt angle of the path, Henriquez at length observed one of those rustic monuments of religion, surmounted with a cross of considerable dimensions, which in most parts of Italy are common, to mark the immediate spot that has been stained with murder: and as some few of them bear inscriptions, he advanced to examine if this was so distinguished. On coming nearer, he observed a man wrapped in a long cloak, evidently calculated for a disguise, leaning against the stones that supported the cross, and, as he approached, heard him sigh more than once: his eyes were bent on the ground, and he did not seem to perceive Henriquez till he was almost close to him. He then started, as if in alarm, and retired behind a projection of the rock which concealed the path that wound round it's foot.

Villasantelle took the place which the stranger had occupied, and found that it commanded the most various and beautiful prospect imaginable; but recollecting the abstracted air of the stranger, "How dull" said he to himself, "or how sadly occupied must that mind be, which could resist the fascination of a scene like this."

A noise, apparently occasioned by the rolling of a stone down the cliff that descended nearly perpendicularly to the sea, made Henriquez look round to see what had removed it from its former situation; but he could discover no person whose unwary tread could have occasioned its rolling: he continued looking towards the angle of the path for some moments, and as he did so, he observed a man to steal cautiously from behind the projecting rock, and having looked round, he again disappeared. It was the person whom he had disturbed in his musings: but Henriquez could not account for the appearance of watching him. Determined, however, if possible to ascertain his motive, he passed round the rock after him. He then found that the path widened suddenly, descending gradually to a cluster of cottages near the beach, but unshaded even by a single tree, till it reached the village. The stranger was walking slowly down, seemingly absorbed in meditation. Henriquez quickened his pace, and in a few moments passed him: in doing so, he had caught a glimpse of his features, and recognized those of Don Lopez de Grijalva, who it was thought had left Naples immediately on his liberation from prison.

Villasantelle involuntarily shuddered; and he was not sorry that Don Lopez, in evident confusion, muffled up his face in his cloak. For several paces Henriquez proceeded without looking back, but when he did so, he perceived Don Lopez, with hasty steps, retreading the path towards Naples.

As he was now become an object of curiosity to his young countryman, Henriquez almost as hastily followed, and kept him in view, till, on entering the city, the number of the streets perplexed his pursuit, and he lost him.

Such speed had Henriquez made, that the evening had not yet entirely closed in, though the bright rays of the moon, which was nearly full, already illuminated every part of the city through which he was obliged to pass in his way homewards. As he was slowly proceeding along the Strada del Rè, he was not a little surprised to see an elegant looking female cross just before him, and go down a narrow street which led to the right; but the chief cause of his astonishment was, the conviction that the lady was no other than Victoria.

Recollecting her declared intention of going to confession (though he thought it extraordinary that the daughter, or as she was called the niece of Count Altoni, should be on foot in the streets) he concluded she was returning home from the completion of her pious work, and immediately followed, though his pride would not permit him to attempt overtaking her.

He pursued her at a cautious distance through many intricate windings, which he knew lay in a contrary direction from the Cambusca palace, and at length observed her to stop at an obscure house in the suburbs of the city. Convinced from its appearance that Victoria could only be bent on a visit of charity, as soon as she entered he drew near to a casement on the ground-floor, the lattice of which being a little open, shewed a faint light in the room.

Henriquez looked through the opening, and beheld Don Lopez de Grijalva, in an attitude of attention, standing near the door of the room. The lamp from which the light proceeded was fastened to the wall, and cast but a faint ray through the chamber, but enough to discover a small table with fruit, and two flasks of wine standing near a couch at the farthest end of it.

Bewildered with conjecture, Henriquez was motionless for some minutes; but what were his sensations when he saw the door softly open, and Victoria, the lovely, the fondly adored Victoria, rush into the arms of Don Lopez.

Overwhelmed with astonishment and grief, Henriquez leaned his head against the window-frame, and, shuddering convulsively, closed his eyes to shut out the hateful sight: again, however, he compelled himself to look, and saw her led towards the table by Don Lopez. Fain would Villasantelle have believed that he was mistaken in the person of the lady; but it was impossible: her height and air, together with the cloak which she constantly wore, convinced him; that the cold insensible Victoria was only cold to *him*: only insensible to the ardor of *his* passion.

“Oh woman! woman!” he exclaimed in an inarticulate voice; and rushing from the place, wandered for some hours about the city, in a state almost amounting to distraction.

At length, however, he returned to the palace of the Marquis Cambusca; and, avoiding the saloon, went to the dressing-room of his sister, which was now generally unoccupied at the same hour.

On entering, he found Julia seated at work, and beside her he beheld the false Victoria practising upon the harp, an instrument which she had not long learned to play upon. Nothing could exceed the graceful air of her person, or the artless sweetness of her countenance during her present occupation, and Henriquez almost condemned himself for admitting a doubt of her purity, till he beheld at once a remembrancer and a witness of her disgrace in her cloak which she had hung carelessly across a chair. Scarcely knowing what he did, he took it up: the long Persian hood or veil attached to it, and the gold embroidery that encircled its edges, were alternately the objects of his fixed attention, and each were damning proofs of the identity of Victoria. He sighed deeply; and dropping the mantle on the floor, hastened out of the room.

His excessive perturbation was noticed by his sister, who followed, and overtook him just as he had reached his own apartment. In turning to shut the door, he perceived her, and enquired if she had any business with him?

“None, my dear Henriquez: but I fear you are unwell! You look disturbed.”

“Do I?” was his almost unconscious reply.

“Indeed you do, my beloved brother. Why did you leave us so abruptly?”

“I know not,” he answered; “I am strangely affected by music.”

“You are not usually so,” remarked his sister.

“Perhaps not; but —————” he hesitated.

“Victoria is not always the musician. Ah, my brother!”

“No.—Perhaps.—Yes.” said Henriquez; his agitation increasing every moment.

Julia took his hand: She looked in his face with an expression of pity in her soft features, that almost overcame him.

“Why,” said she tenderly, “do the charms and accomplishments of Victoria give birth to emotions evidently so painful? You love her, my Henriquez, and happiness is within your grasp; though, like a wayward child, you fly from that for which, notwithstanding, you pine.”

Villasantelle gazed mournfully on his sister, who added, “Victoria, I am well convinced, loves you.”

“What is it you say, Julia?—Alas, no! Assure yourself to the contrary.—Victoria regards not *me!*”

The emphasis that he placed on the last word surprised the Marchioness.

“What is it *you* would say?” she enquired in evident consternation. “You cannot think she favors another?”

“Julia, question me no more: my mind is indeed disturbed!”

“But from what cause; my Henriquez?” said the gentle Marchioness, much affected by the sudden distraction of his manner, and the tremulous tone of his voice.

“Tell me, Julia,” returned Villasantelle solemnly, though to all appearance scarcely sensible of what he was saying, “is it harshness to call those enquiries persecution, that tend to widen the wounds of a heart still throbbing with their painful lacerations; and entirely to overturn the reason that struggles to recover itself after a shock the most severe to human hopes?”

The Marchioness burst into tears: This appeal from the cruelty of her own well-meant solicitude was more than her sensibility could bear, and she retired, sobbing, along the gallery. Henriquez was moved; he followed, and taking her hand, drew her to his bosom, where he held her some minutes in a tender embrace; then, without pronouncing a word, hurried back to his chamber, whilst Julia repaired to that she had left.

To her great satisfaction, Victoria was no longer there, having descended to the saloon during her absence. The Marchioness loved the Signora Altoni, (as she was now called) and a few minutes before would have reposed in her the most unbounded confidence: but Julia idolized her brother; she had seen him a prey to misery, of which she was well convinced Victoria was the cause, and she was guilty of a not uncommon species of injustice incident to sensible minds, to which one object is particularly dear; and, without knowing why, felt her regard for her friend considerably diminished by the contemplation of her brother’s wretchedness.

After remaining in her dressing-room till she thought the traces of tears had disappeared from her countenance, the Marchioness went to the saloon, where she found the Marquis, Miranda, Leonora, and Stafford together with Victoria: Isabel was absent; a circumstance which she regretted, as the vivacity of her conversation was so generally attractive, that the Marchioness had need to take little care to entertain her guests: she, however, contrived to avoid Victoria for the remainder of the evening.

From the time his sister left him till the dawn-light, Henriquez spent traversing his chamber in an agony of mind not to be described. Instead of endeavouring to banish the image of Victoria from his mind, since convinced of her unworthiness, he incessantly tormented himself by recalling every trifling circumstance which had when passing augmented his admiration; but which now seemed only to afford proofs of the consummate art of her conduct.

“Oh, woman!” he exclaimed; “dissembling sex! Ye are all alike false and depraved! Isabel, I have wronged thee! I thought thou wert single in vice, and my abhorrence was proportioned to that idea; but I find thou art only like the rest: superiour to them in being above hypocrisy!”

Henriquez, in the anguish of disappointment, forgot for a moment that his sister, the most gentle and amiable of human beings, was one of a sex he was thus devoting to perdition; but when he recollected *her* virtues, he blushed for his own injustice.

The sun had risen above an hour, when Villasantelle, weary and feverish from the effects of his disturbed and sleepless night, wandered into the gardens, which were only

divided from those of the adjoining palaces by a low fence on either side, and a high treillage supporting vines.

On his first entering the gardens, he had been surprised by observing a man, whose air or dress was not at all like that of the persons employed in its cultivation, stealing amongst the orange trees, and seeming to dread observation, at the same time that he was himself on the watch for some purpose, apparently not the most honorable. At any other time the curiosity of Henriquez would have led him to pursue, or at least to watch this person; but at the moment he regarded him but little; nor was it till he saw Victoria walking down the same path where he had appeared, that he thought deeply of the occurrence. Extraordinary as her late conduct had been, he had no scruple of ascribing her early ramble to some improper motive; and he was more hurt than surprised when, a quarter of an hour afterwards, turning an abrupt angle of the path leading to the orange grove, he beheld her talking with the man he had at first observed, and who proved to be Don Lopez de Grijalva.

Villasantelle was too proud to avoid them; and continued his pace, till coming sufficiently near to distinguish their words, he heard Victoria say,

“Farewell, Signor! be mindful of your promise, and be happy.”

“Be mindful—angel of sympathising softness and loveliness!—Can I forget——.”

Henriquez could hear no more of the speech of Don Lopez; as Victoria accompanied him to a small gate near them, where they separated: the cavalier departing, the lady returning to the gardens.

Villasantelle was by this time close to her, and perceiving him, she gave him the salutation of the morning with more kindness in her manner than usual. She appeared to be in more than customary good spirits: the soft smile of satisfaction illumined her features, and if the evidence of her speaking eyes might be credited, she seemed to feel happy in herself, and to wish to share her pleasurable feelings with those who were near her. She did not, therefore, as she generally did when she met Henriquez in her walks, coldly salute him and pass on; but stopped and asked him in a gentle voice, how long he had been in the gardens?

“I came hither,” he replied, suppressing as well as he could his emotions, “some time before you did.”

“You then saw me enter the orangery, Signor? Yet I did not observe *you*,” said Victoria.

“That is not wonderful, Signora;” returned Villasantelle. “My mind was unoccupied, whilst your’s ——”

The pause his hesitation made, Victoria filled up: “Was very far otherwise.”

She looked innocently in his face whilst she was speaking, and saw that his eyes were fixed on her with a steady and almost reproving cast of expression: she understood its meaning and resumed;

“Then you probably saw the person whom thus early I came to meet?”

“Who?” said Henriquez sternly, and with strange abruptness.

“Don Lopez de Grijalva.”

“I should not have expected to hear of a lady’s appointment with the intended assassin of her father. But custom, Signora,” continued Villasantelle, “reconciles one to any thing.”

“I do not understand you, Signor.”

“There was a time,” returned the Spaniard half mournfully, “when Victoria was not so slow of comprehension: but use, whilst it reconciles the mind to guilt checks the suffusion of modesty, that at first betrayed its consciousness.”

“Do you mean your words to apply to me, Signor?” demanded Victoria with dignity.

“You, Signora,” he replied, “are the best judge of, whither they will bear the application.”

“If I am qualified to judge in my own cause, Signor, my decision is in one instance at least easily formed: Good morning, Don Henriquez; Truth I see would avail nothing with determined prejudice.”

There was a contemptuous coolness in the manner in which Victoria pronounced those last words, and in the air of the bow she made as preparing to depart, that stung Henriquez to the soul, because it made him appear mean in his own eyes. Such was the influence Victoria possessed over his mind, that he now almost imagined her justification possible: but he had not courage sufficient to avow his sentiments, lest they should be proved unjust. In this respect, Henriquez differed something in character from what he had been a few months before; but it is not often that the mind retains for any length of time that generous candour which distinguishes it at first setting out in life.

He now seized the hand of the retreating Victoria, and conjured her to tell him the meaning of a conduct to appearance so strange. After the hesitation of a minute, she said,

“While, from the candor of your judgment, I thought you worthy of my esteem, I should have been glad, Signor, to have to thank you for your good opinion; it is now a matter of so little consequence, that was not my conduct subject to yet wider censures from your animadversions on it, I should not take the trouble of explaining what I shall now do.

“It is some days since the Count Altoni discovered Don Lopez de Grijalva to be, from pecuniary distress, still a resident in Naples: these distresses he employed me to relieve; and thus you may account for our meeting here this morning.”

“But is this the first time you have met?” enquired Villasantelle with an air of sternness that seemed much to surprise Victoria, though she smiled as she said,

“You assume I think the tone of an inquisitor, Signor! This is *not* the first time that I have seen Don Lopez.”

Saying this she disengaged her hand, and hastened from the gardens, leaving Henriquez perplexed beyond measure by her explanation.

Two days now elapsed, in which nothing particular occurred; but on the evening of the second, Stafford accompanied Villasantelle in his walk, with the intention of going to contemplate the beautiful view which Henriquez had discovered from the cross upon the mountain.

It was late when they were returning; and as they passed the Strada della Madonna, where Villasantelle had three nights before seen Victoria, he was not much surprised to behold her light form again tripping across the path, and vanishing as she had done before. The two friends were yet at a little distance from the street down which she went, and Henriquez would if possible have prevented the notice of Stafford by slackening his pace; but the Englishman had caught a view of the fair fugitive, and though her being known to him never entered his conception, the appearance of mystery

in her air seemed to promise an adventure well calculated to amuse his enterprising spirit, and he insisted that his friend should accompany him in his pursuit of the incognita, as he gaily termed her.

Villasantelle in vain represented the folly and even the impertinence of following a stranger: (for he wished to conceal the frailty of Victoria) Stafford seized his arm, and, laughing, hurried him along the lanes and by-streets, through which the object of his curiosity hastened with fairy lightness.

At length she arrived at the same house which Henriquez had before seen her enter: she went in, and Stafford, still holding the arm of his friend, took post with him at the casement, the lattice of which was now entirely open. Again Don Lopez, who was the tenant of the lower room, was seen, by both gentlemen, to embrace his fair visitor; but Stafford seemed to behold the scene with stronger emotion than Villasantelle: he trembled; the light of the lamp within the room shewed his countenance change swiftly from pale to red as his passions varied in their turn; "Yet it cannot be her!" he exclaimed at length.

"Would that *I* could doubt!" returned Henriquez with a sigh at the detection of Victoria.

Stafford gazed for another moment, as if his eye-balls would start from their sockets with eagerness: then "By heavens it *is* my wife!" he cried, and instantly darted through the window into the room.

Henriquez in undescribable consternation followed, but was too late to prevent the worst he dreaded.

He saw Stafford attempt to draw his sword, but in leaping through the window, it had been shivered to pieces, and left him to the mercy of the more fortunate Don Lopez, whose toledo lay upon the table: he snatched it up, and having dyed it with the life blood of the unfortunate husband, precipitately escaped.

Isabel (for *she* indeed it was) attempted to follow, but by a violent effort Stafford caught hold of her robe and detained her. For some moments they gazed on each other, as Henriquez did on *them*, in agonized silence: fear was evidently the predominant feeling of Isabel, for she struggled to get free; but Stafford held her with a dying grasp, and all his weak tenderness again overflowing at his heart, he cried,

"Fly not, I conjure you, Isabel!—Incur not, in the world's opinion, the censure for my fate!—Stay, Oh, too fondly beloved of my soul!—Let me expire in your arms, and I shall be satisfied to die!"

The faithless woman seemed moved by the entreaties of her victim to stay with him, yet the impression seemed far from being deep; she knelt beside him, and permitted him to rest his head on her bosom; but her air was abstracted, and there appeared so little of feeling in her manner, that Henriquez, shocked beyond measure at all that had passed, was going to remove her from his expiring friend; but the unhappy man suddenly threw his arms round her, and breathed his last in embracing her.

The ghastly roll of his glassy eyes as he suffered the last fearful pang, seemed to terrify the hardened Isabel: she shrieked, and tried to disengage herself; but the corpse had fallen on her garments as they lay upon the crimsoned floor, and, unable to draw them away, horror overcame her, and she fainted.

Fearful was now the situation of Villasantelle! Covered with the blood of the unfortunate Stafford, and alone with his corpse and the equally insensible Isabel, what

could he do. Should he call for assistance, the most dreadful consequences were to be apprehended from the appearance of affairs. He had been accustomed when he walked out to be armed only with a short dagger, which is as often worn by the natives of Spain *with* a sword, as a substitute for one: the toledo of Don Lopez (which bore a crimson proof that it was the instrument of death) lay on the floor, together with the hilt of Stafford's sword, the fragments of which, remaining in the scabbard, were a sufficient evidence that the rencontre was not a fair or honorable one.

But these circumstances claimed not, as yet, the notice of Villasantelle; so entirely was his mind occupied by horror and grief. Isabel he scarcely observed, and tried no means for her recovery, but bending over the corpse of his friend which he supported in his arms, he was unconscious almost of where he was, till the Senora of herself revived. But the shock she had suffered was too severe for its effects immediately to go off, and she was restored to animation only to fall into a violent hysteric fit.

The screams of Isabel had the effect that might be reasonably expected, and in a few moments drew together as many of the neighbours as the room could hold, or as could contrive from the window to be spectators of the dreadful scene within: amongst the rest a police officer found entrance, and observing the suspicious situation of Villasantelle, in a few seconds summoned several of his comrades, with whose assistance the young Spaniard, the bleeding body of Stafford, and the still shrieking Isabel were instantly conveyed to prison. The corpse was left in an outer apartment; the gaoler vacated his own for the accommodation of the lady, and Henriquez was conducted to one of the deepest dungeons within the walls, where as the fastenings of the door were too secure to need the prisoner being immediately chained, he was left to ruminate on the late dreadful events.

Villasantelle had not long been in possession of his dreary abode, when he recalled to mind the certainty he had felt (till so fatally convinced to the contrary) that Victoria had been the private visitor of Don Lopez; and which had been formed from the similitude of their persons, and Isabel's wearing a cloak exactly like the very remarkable one worn constantly by the Signora Altoni: but of this garment a little recollection led him to discover the mystery. On his return to the palazzo di Cambusca, he found the apartment he had on his former visit occupied, had been appropriated to Stafford and Isabel; and it now struck him, that he had, in one of the cabinets of that chamber, deposited the mantle of Victoria, on the night it came into his possession; and doubted not but that Isabel finding it there, and seeing it totally unlike any thing she was accustomed to wear, made use of it as a disguise.

Though immured in a dungeon, to which only a small grating at top admitted the breezes of heaven, accused of the murder of a friend he sincerely loved, and with scarcely a hope of exculpating himself from the charge, the severest pang that now wrung the heart of Henriquez, was the recollection of the manner in which he had, under the influence of appearances only, treated Victoria in the gardens of the Cambusca palace, two mornings before. He recollected the sweet and innocent smile that beamed on her countenance when she addressed herself to him, and execrated his own incredulous folly, that had persisted in wronging the purity of her soul: he remembered the mild dignity with which she had explained her meeting with Don Lopez that morning, with her declaration that had she esteemed, she would have left him to his own conjectures, convinced that honor would prevent his repeating his suspicions, should he even entertain

any such; and he imagined he would gladly endure the most painful death, to be innocent of any offence towards the woman he adored.

All through the long and dreary night did Villasantelle suffer every agony of mind that his situation and 'meditation even to madness' might be supposed to inflict, and to which the very faint beam of day that could find its way into his dungeon gave not the least relief. About two hours after Henriquez had perceived the first approach of dawn, his prison was entered by the gaoler followed by two men, one of whom bore a heavy chain, with rings to receive the wrists and ancles, and the other a strong rope, apparently to bind the prisoner should he make any resistance in having his fetters put on.

As those persons were preparing to execute their purpose, Henriquez began to remonstrate with the gaoler on the injustice of loading a man with irons who had not been proved guilty of any crime, without even any legal investigation of the circumstances which led conjecture to esteem him culpable; more particularly when no attempt to escape had been, or could be made, from a place so well secured; but the man, who had already experienced the bounty of the Marquis Cambusca to procure indulgences for his brother, thought no means so likely to ensure a second bribe as an appearance of necessary severity; and the chains were therefore locked upon the unfortunate Henriquez, who was again left in solitude and silence.

Isabel in the meantime had recovered from her fits in a sufficient degree to inform the gaoler, who assiduously attended her, that she was the wife of the murdered gentleman, and to desire to be immediately conducted to a convent, as she had internally resolved never more to enter the Cambusca palace: and, by the influence of a valuable gem which she presented to the gaoler, prevailed upon him to accompany her as soon as it was day to an obscure convent about a mile from the city, where she resolved to secrete herself, at least till the search she doubted not Henriquez would cause to be made for her, as the accomplice of Stafford's murderer, should be past.

Conscious as Isabel was of the innocence of Villasantelle, and having been conveyed from the scene of bloodshed in a state of insensibility, she had not the most remote idea that he was confined, and charged with the crime of Grijalva, to which she knew he had not been accessory, but in which she had no doubt he had or would implicate *her*. She therefore took care to involve the gaoler in the offence of conniving at and assisting her escape, before she would venture to make any enquiries about the last night's adventure; and it was not till she had reached the gate of the convent, that she demanded if the assassin had been taken?

"That he has, Signora," replied the gaoler, "and he now lies fast bound in chains in one of the lower dungeons of my cage."

Isabel, whose partiality to Don Lopez did not render her insensible to the weak cowardice of his disposition, no sooner heard that he (for she immediately concluded that he was the person in custody) was in prison, than she began to dread his accusing *her* as the accomplice of his guilt; and being perfectly conscious her own conduct would serve to substantiate his evidence, she delayed not to propose terms to the gaoler for his immediate release, and so artfully managed at once his avarice, and his fear of having his corruption discovered, that he left her at the convent; promising that night to set the supposed assassin at liberty.

Thus did the hardened and wily Isabel, while she thought she was securing *herself* from all danger, in procuring the liberty of her murderous paramour, give freedom to the

only person who could decidedly criminate her; since there needed no more to convict her as being the accomplice of the assassin than the price she paid for his liberation; and though this could not be advanced by Don Lopez, yet it might by Villasantelle and his friends be easily turned against her, by bringing her to a confession of whom she meant to extricate, whilst she remained ignorant of the mistake.

The dreadful night now commemorated, did not pass more happily with the remaining inhabitants of the palazzo di Cambusca, than with the imprisoned Henriquez. Amongst the numerous spectators of the latter part of the fatal scene, were some who knew the relationship Henriquez bore to the Marquis, as well as the terms on which the unfortunate Stafford had been with the family; and they officiously conveyed the intelligence, that the latter had been murdered by Villasantelle in an obscure house in the suburbs.

“Henriquez is not—cannot be a murderer!” exclaimed the Marquis indignantly. “The Signor and he went out amicably together; but if Stafford is indeed dead, and has fallen by the hand of his friend, their rencontre must have been an honorable one.”

“Your Excellency must pardon me;” returned the informer: “I myself saw the sword of the Signor Stafford shattered in its scabbard; and, after the wound he received, he could not have replaced it there.”

“But my brother, I am certain, wore no sword.”

The Marquis was proved to have said this rather mal-à-propos, for the intelligencer instantly returned, “He was not unarmed with a dagger or a stiletto, doubtless; and he is therefore more palpably guilty of *murder*.”

“On what account was this quarrel supposed to have arisen?” said the Marquis.

“I have already told your Excellency, that it was about a lady, the wife of the Signor Stafford.”

“On account of Isabel!” exclaimed the Marquis wildly; “How know you this?”

“She was present, my Lord. I saw her covered with the blood of the murdered person, and in convulsions.”

This information, though it served in some measure (in appearance) to elucidate the mystery of this horrible affair, did not cause the Marquis the least surprise. He had, from the time she became a resident in his house, marked, with a steady eye, the conduct of Isabel. Her character soon unfolded itself to his penetrating mind: he was convinced that she was vain and light, and he saw that the seeds of the greatest depravity lurked in her heart, though he had not imagined they had so early blossomed and already brought their fruit to perfection.

He had long before suspected her of entertaining a partiality for Henriquez; but he fancied he perceived the horror it inspired, and on the innocence of Villasantelle respecting her, he would willingly have pledged his life; though, from the impetuous character of Stafford, he by no means doubted that he had, on suspicion alone, forced his friend to take the chance of the sword to prove himself guiltless.

The only circumstance that remained to be accounted for, was the *manner* of Stafford’s death; which the person who called himself a witness of the conclusion of the affair, persisted in declaring had been caused by the wound of a dagger or stiletto.

At an early hour in the morning, the Marquis repaired to the prison, and demanded of the gaoler (who was just returned from leaving Isabel at the convent) permission to see Villasantelle: which, however, was positively refused; and, to the

infinite astonishment of the Marquis, gold had no effect in procuring him this indulgence, and he was obliged to be satisfied to remain in suspense till noon, when the gaoler informed him, Henriquez would be publicly examined.

At noon, the noble Cambusca did not fail to be in the hall of justice; but Henriquez was not there: and when, after waiting two hours, he enquired if his young relative was not to be examined: he was informed that the Judge had not received the proper intimation of his being in custody; and the whole of that day was therefore appropriated to the hearing of other causes. Certain now that he could not see his brother-in-law for four and twenty hours more, the Marquis and the Count Miranda, who had accompanied him, returned with the news to the miserable Julia, and almost equally afflicted Leonora.

It may probably be surmised that the delay in the examination of Villasantelle was owing to the honest gaoler, which was really the fact.

It must be remembered that Isabel had promised him a considerable sum for favoring the escape of the assassin; and on the way homewards, a thought darted across his mind, which represented it as not improbable that the liberty of his prisoner might be procured without his interference: since, were he brought to a public examination, presumptive, being the only evidence of his crime, it was not unlikely that the powerful intercession of his friends might obtain his immediate discharge. Now the gaoler had promised Isabel to let the prisoner *escape*: “And,” said this conscientious personage, “if he is liberated by the civil power, I must either lose the reward, which I certainly shall not do, or cheat a distressed lady.”

Henriquez was, therefore, destined to remain a whole day in his dungeon.

It was at the silent hour of midnight, when no sound interrupted the stillness of the prison except now and then the clanking of a chain, that sounded doubly loud from the surrounding quietness, or the watch-word of the centinels, Giovanni the gaoler, with a lantern in his hand, entered the cell of Villasantelle, and, without saying a word, began deliberately to unlock the chains from his feet.

Henriquez, who had heard that the examinations of the inquisition were held at midnight, and recollected the subtlety with which the Judge who had tried him on Miranda’s account, had endeavoured to betray him into declaring heretical opinions; now fancied he was liberated only to be brought before that horrible tribunal, (which still in secret practised its cruelties) and remained totally silent till Giovanni had completed his work, when he was almost petrified by hearing him pronounce, “You are at liberty!”

“At liberty!” he repeated: “Who has given the order for my release?”

“Why, Signor,” said Giovanni, “that is a form sometimes dispensed with, when prisoners happen to be rich and generous nobles.”

“But I am no noble,” returned Villasantelle in astonishment; “Neither have you had any proof that I am generous or rich.”

“But if a man’s friends are disposed to be generous for him, Signor,” said Giovanni, with a significant nod.

Henriquez immediately concluded that the Marquis Cambusca had paid a price for his freedom; but the idea gave him no pleasure.

“Alas!” said he to himself, “is that noble friend so convinced of my guilt, that he thinks it necessary to *purchase* my liberty?”

“You are lucky, let me tell you, Signor,” resumed Giovanni, in a low voice, as he led Villasantelle along the passages, “to have found a generous friend, for had you *not*, two days more would have shewn your carcass, on the wheel, ill enough off.”

“What!” said Henriquez, “without proof of my guilt!”

“Marry, Signor, you seem to know but little of justice: if such evidence as is against you would not convict a man of murder, there had no need to be a punishment for it.”

“Why so?”

The mind of Villasantelle was unconscious of a crime, and horror had occupied his faculties, till they became familiar to it; and he could therefore question Giovanni with composure; nay, even be interested in his answers.

“Because no person would ever be proved guilty of it.” replied the gaoler bluntly.

“Do you then think that if it was no longer treated as a crime, murder would cease to be committed?” enquired Villasantelle.

“No, Signor; No. Men kill each other in what you fine sparks call ‘an honorable encounter with the sword,’ yet that is not murder. You never heard of a noble being broken alive upon the wheel for *that*.”

“Then in what consists my danger from the laws?” demanded Henriquez. “The utmost I am accused, of is nothing more.”

“By St. Januarius, Signor, but it is! You forget that the broken sword tells a tale.”

“What broken sword?—What tale does it tell?” cried Henriquez in the utmost surprise; for he had not noted the circumstance of Stafford’s sword being shivered, in his hasty entrance to the scene of his dishonor and death.

Giovanni made no reply; but made a sign to Villasantelle to keep silence, and seizing his arm, hurried him along the guarded avenues of the prison, at the same time shading the light. When they reached the outer gate, he stopped, and giving Villasantelle the long cloak that he himself wore, to serve as a disguise, desired him to repair to the convent of St. Agnes, on the hill without the western entrance to the city, where he would find the person who had procured his freedom: and charging him to hasten thither, he left him.

Giovanni had given those directions to Villasantelle by the desire of Isabel, with whom he had the evening before had a second interview: and Villasantelle followed them, because he conceived they had been given by the Marquis Cambusca.

When he reached the convent of St. Agnes, he found the chapel (which was a sanctuary) open, and partly illuminated by several tapers that burned before the altar: but there was no light in the nave; or not even a lamp in that part of the church without the iron grating that separates the nuns from the persons who come to hear mass. The curtain which usually hangs before the grate, was in part undrawn; and Henriquez, on advancing and looking through the opening, fancied no person was in the chapel: and having satisfied himself on this head, was returning to the entrance, to look whether the Marquis was coming; when a noise near the altar made him turn, and again look through the grating.

He now perceived that a female was kneeling in one of the little recesses near the altar. In the back of it was a small statue of St. Agnes, before which a lamp was burning; a large book lay on a shelf formed by the pedestal, and it was the shutting of this by the fair reader that had occasioned the noise.

She now arose from her knees, and Henriquez observed that her dress was partly secular, and partly that of a noviciate nun; but of the latter habit, she seemed to have selected such parts only as were the best calculated to set off a fine figure.

“Oh vanity!” whispered Henriquez, “What region is there where thy influence in the female heart exists not?”

The lady now turned towards the grate, and gracefully raised the veil that covered her face; but what was the astonishment of Villasantelle, when he beheld the beautiful features of Isabel! At the same moment she knew him, and was going to draw down her veil, when an exclamation from him of “Isabel!” arrested her hand, and threw her into a fit of trembling.

Each gazed on the other for some minutes in total silence: Isabel was the first to recover from her surprise, and assuming all that softness which she could at will put on, when tenderness or contrition was the part she had to perform:

“Ah! Henriquez!” said she, “I little expected such a visitor in this retreat! I had hoped here to spend the remainder of my days in peace and penitence!”

“Penitence, Signora,” returned Henriquez in a tone of steady reproof, but immediately melting into pity; “Penitence, Signora, well becomes you; but will the spirit of your murdered husband permit you to taste repose?”

The ready tears that started from the eyes of the Syren weakened the resolution of Henriquez: he intended to upbraid her and to insist on knowing the late haunts of Don Lopez, which he doubted not she was acquainted with; but he thought it would be unmanly to oppress an already afflicted female, and was silent.

But his silence did not serve the purpose of Isabel, who ardently desired to know what had brought him to the convent; and *as* ardently, that he should leave it before Don Lopez arrived: nor was she long deliberating before she found an expedient for gratifying her curiosity.

Raising her tearful eyes to those of Henriquez, she said humbly,

“Villasantelle, I always knew you to be the best and most generous of men; yet I cannot hope that the desire of seeing *me*, alone brought you hither.”

“It did not, Isabel,” he replied, “I will not deceive you; I wait here for the Marquis Cambusca.”

“The Marquis Cambusca!” said Isabel, losing at once all the languishing softness of her manner. “Cruel, perfidious man! you will then betray me to destruction!—It will be a rich sacrifice to your frozen heart, to see the Isabel de Sallada, whom at Seville you so often swore to love, condemned as the accomplice of a murderer!—Such a stoic as thou art will feel no pang to behold the form, once adored, mangled by a common executioner!”

There was a fierceness flashing from the eyes of Isabel, and a bold defiance in her air, as she pronounced those words, that made Villasantelle turn from her with a detestation almost amounting to disgust. He made a few steps from the grate: a creaking sound made him look back, and with the utmost astonishment he saw Isabel open a narrow door in the iron frame-work and enter the nave of the church. She seized his hand, and conjured him wildly to hear her.

“Will you,” she cried, “swear to protect me, if I deliver up the assassin to you and justice?”

“What is it you say?” exclaimed Henriquez impatiently. “Tell me instantly where I may find the murderer of my friend?”

At this moment footsteps were heard without the chapel; and Isabel, in an agony of fear, arrested the hasty steps Villasantelle was making towards the porch, saying in a hurried voice,

“I every moment expect that Don Lopez will visit this place! Remain here and forget not your promised protection of my person and liberty.”

Though the promise had not been given, Villasantelle was too much agitated to observe the artful claim of Isabel; and being freed from her grasp, ran towards the porch: but no person was to be seen through the dusk of receding night, and every thing around the convent was perfectly still and quiet.

When convinced that Don Lopez was not immediately at hand, Henriquez advised Isabel again to retire within the grate, which she did; but left the door open, and sat down beneath the statue of St. Agnes.

Villasantelle in the mean time, with as silent steps as possible, traversed the church to and fro; his dagger, which Giovanni had restored to him, was in his hand, prepared for defence, should any be necessary in seizing the murderer.

In this manner, near half an hour elapsed: Henriquez then went to the porch and took his station within it in such a manner as not to be easily perceived by any person entering, though not even a passer by could escape his view. The entrance to the church fronted the east, and Villasantelle, in the most impatient suspense, watched the slowly advancing dawn: by degrees the sea, late one pale grey surface, shone with a silvery brightness, except where the eastern promontory opposite to him cast a deeper shade than before, contrasting the clear light purple of the horizon. A quarter of an hour elapsed; Henriquez heard it struck by several of the clocks of the churches in the city beneath where he was posted; but no Lopez appeared, and he almost fancied Isabel had deceived him.

He returned to the chapel, and saw her still sitting near the altar: he drew near the grate: “The day advances rapidly!” said he with some perturbation.—“Isabel, if you have deceived me!”—he paused: but she assured him she had not, and he returned down the church.

Before, however, he could reach the porch, he saw a man habited in a long cloak, enter the chapel, and he sprang forward to meet him. The idea that it was Don Lopez, entirely deprived him of prudence and recollection, and seizing him by the throat, he exclaimed, “Assassin, hold!”

The mild, but firm voice of the Marquis Cambusca demanded the meaning of this outrage; and Henriquez threw himself on his neck entreating forgiveness.

Mutual, but hasty and almost incoherent explanations now took place, and Villasantelle found that the Marquis, having been informed by bribes and questions to Giovanni, that Isabel was in the convent of St. Agnes, had come at the first dawn of day to see and speak to her. Henriquez had scarcely related, in a hurrying manner, the events of the last thirty hours, when the attention of both was drawn to a man who rushed into the chapel with such precipitation that he left his cloak hanging on a hook that had caught it near the door, and displayed to their view the person of Don Lopez de Grijalva.

Henriquez, who was nearest to him, instantly laid hold of him with his left hand, his right still grasping his dagger, which was providential for him, as it served him to

strike from the hand of his opponent the stiletto that would otherwise have been buried in his bosom.

Don Lopez seeing himself foiled, and at the mercy of his adversary, exclaimed, "The fortune of the day is thine!" and threw himself upon the dagger of Henriquez which entered his heart. He sunk upon the pavement, and only articulating "Conceal my infamy from my Father!" expired without even a groan.

Villasantelle remained standing by the corpse in a state of indescribable consternation, while Isabel, who had advanced to the fatal spot, seemed almost petrified with fear and horror.

The Marquis gazed on the whole in silence, but his acute and penetrating mind, which could in a moment expand to take in a view of consequences, led him to form a determination, hasty indeed, but reasonable.

"It is in vain," said he to Henriquez, "to stand musing on the fate of this unhappy wretch, whilst your own destiny is doubtful. To expose *his* infamy, or that of this pernicious Syren, would be to no purpose, since it would fail to exculpate you from the charge of Stafford's death. You must therefore leave the Neapolitan dominions, this night; nor would I counsel you again to enter the city. There is a house in the suburbs belonging to me, which has been some time inhabited only by an old servant on whose fidelity you may depend, and there you may remain till night.

"For this lady," he turned as he spoke to Isabel, who was gently retreating to the grate of the choir, and seized her arm, adding, "For you, Madam, no punishment can be too severe; and I shall take upon myself to inflict a part of it. Do not conceive that you shall be at liberty to make more mischief with that fatal beauty: you shall return with me to my palace, and *assume* at least the appearance of mourning for your murdered husband, till I can arrange your affairs finally.

"Nay, Madam," continued the Marquis, more firmly grasping her arm, which she tried to withdraw, "you *must* come instantly with us, and as your value your life, pronounce not a single word till we reach Naples: *there* I will be answerable for your silence."

Isabel saw herself compelled to submit, and suffered the Marquis quietly to lead her from the church: as they passed the spot where the cloak of Don Lopez had been caught, the Marquis took it down, and wrapped it round his fair prisoner, whom he desired Villasantelle to support on the other side till they should reach the place of his destined concealment.

In this order they descended the hill without meeting a single person; and the sun was just rising above the horizon, when the Marquis having committed his brother to the care of the good old Vasquez, and promised to send him every thing he could want, by a trusty person, took leave of him, and still conducting Isabel, hastened towards the Cambusca palace.

Villasantelle had now leisure to ruminate upon his strange and wayward destiny. He saw himself obliged to fly from friends he loved, and a city he admired, branded with the title of a murderer, and feeling that he was, though unintentionally, the cause of the unprepared death of Lopez: he thought on the misery the fatal news would inflict on the venerable Baron de Grijalva, and he wildly cursed the day that had involved him in such complicated mischiefs.

Nor was Victoria at this painful moment forgotten: her image haunted his fancy, and added another link to his chain of mournful ideas, that almost reduced him to despair. Could he quit Naples without taking a last leave of her? was the question he asked his heart; and it replied that it would be worse than death to him. But he could not hope to see her; and therefore, with a trembling hand, wrote the following billet, to send to her by the Marquis's promised messenger.

“*To Victoria,*

“From the first moment that I beheld you, my heart has never lost the impression you made on it! This, Signora, I have often repeated to you, and you have cruelly affected to disbelieve me. But I am no deceiver, and least of all would I dare to pronounce a falshood to you. Victoria, I know not what I write! I am destined to bid you an eternal adieu; and the certainty that I must do so, bewilders my senses. A few days since all my hopes were centred in calling you mine for ever; but a fatal deception made me behave to you in a manner that I fear you can never forgive. Your pardon, Victoria, is all I now desire!—Miserable as I feel myself, from the stigma that blasts my fame, and in the consciousness that my hands, though innocently, are stained with blood, I could not desire you to share my fate.

“Adieu then, dear and inestimable Victoria! we shall meet no more; since I am for ever exiled from the land where the office of the Count Altoni must detain you probably during life. I desire only to be forgiven; and then, if it must be so, be *forgotten*, by Victoria.”

“HENRIQUEZ.”

Villasantelle had scarcely concluded this incoherent billet, which he wished to re-write, when he was obliged (inadequate as it was to conveying an idea of his feelings) to dispatch it: and from the moment he lost sight of the person to whom he gave it, his impatience to receive an answer was boundless and almost agonizing. He traversed every apartment of the solitary mansion to which he was confined, in hopes to meet with something that by amusing him might lessen his anxiety. But nothing could be more completely uninteresting, than a suite of large gloomy apartments, without furniture, and filled with unwholesome vapours, owing to dampness, and being long shut up. Yet to those chambers he was glad to retreat, to avoid the importunities of Vasquez to oblige him to eat of the delicacies sent by the Marquis, which he would not himself venture to touch.

A great part of the day was spent in this manner; and it was not till near evening that a messenger arrived, who only stayed to deliver the following billet to Villasantelle:

“To Henriquez de Villasantelle.

“No, unkind Henriquez! not *forgotten!*” Even though you should be cruel enough to desire it, your remembrance must ever be dear to Victoria.—This is no season for a prudish affectation of indifference: you tell me you are miserable, in the same moment that you profess to love me! That I have never doubted the sincerity of the professions you have hitherto made, let this letter convince you. Your heart, I have too long considered as my dearest treasure, not to be perfectly acquainted with its virtues, and they now call for an exertion on my part. My father, who lives but in my happiness,

permits me to offer you my hand, and with it the fortune of the late Elvira Cambusca and his own. They are ample—but why do I mention fortune to my Henriquez, whom I know to be superior to every mercenary thought! Whilst you continued happy in the bosom of your family and friends, I concealed *my* real sentiments from you, because I wished you to be better acquainted with your *own* before your destiny was decided by marriage: now, it would be ungenerous in me longer to dissemble.

“I have been informed of the circumstances that oblige you to leave Naples; but the Count Altoni assures me you will incur no danger by coming an hour before dark to the church of the St. Theresa: he will meet you there accompanied by a friend.

“Adieu ———

“VICTORIA.”

Nothing could exceed the rapture with which Henriquez perused this artless testimony of the affection of Victoria. It brought her image more strongly than ever to his imagination, decked with a thousand graces he had never before imagined she possessed! He fancied he beheld her no longer the frigid monitor of his love, but glowing with equal tenderness; and he chid the tardy sun, for not instantly sinking beneath the waves, that he might fly to his appointment with Count Altoni and his friend: Ah! should that friend be Victoria herself! The thought was too much for his prudence, and though it was yet an hour till sun-set, he immediately flew to the St. Theresa.

He had not expected to find the Count already there, so was not disappointed to see that the church was entirely empty: he had fancied that the time would pass less tardily if he was in a place where he had ever seen Victoria, and therefore repaired to the St. Theresa; but now he imagined he should not have suffered such agonizing impatience, had he remained quietly in the abode of Vasquez: but could not resolve to return thither, since every footstep that he heard without the church, he fancied must be that of the Count.

Whilst Henriquez was thus tormenting himself with vain hopes, a priest came from the cloisters into the church, and civilly saluted him as he passed: Henriquez demanded the hour of the day.

“The evening is just at the close, my Son:” replied the priest. “I go to the celebration of vespers.”

“Are they not by far later than usual, Father?”

“No, my Son. It wants yet ten minutes of the usual time. Yonder clock has not yet struck the hour of prayer.”

Villasantelle looked up to the clock to which the Father pointed, and saw that he was right: he had made this observation before, but fancied it impossible that the hands were in motion.

At length the vesper service (the most tedious Henriquez thought he had ever heard) concluded, and the church was deserted by all but himself and the priest, who after saying a private prayer of some length, seated himself near the altar, in apparent expectation. Villasantelle continued to pace up and down the aisle, till suddenly turning towards the great entrance, he perceived that he had been going from those he so ardently desired to meet, for the Count Altoni, leading his daughter, was already in the middle of the church.

Henriquez flew towards them, and seizing the hand of the Count, pressed it to his lips: at the same instant Victoria threw up her veil, and, smiling, extended her's to him: She was no longer frigid and reserved: but her cheek flushed by the emotions of her heart, and her eyes beaming with tenderness, she repelled not the embrace of her lover, who, encouraged by the softness of her smile, clasped her in his arms.

The soul of Victoria was devoid of passion, but it was the seat of every gentle affection: delicacy had induced her to conceal her sentiments of regard from Henriquez, but, having once avowed them, she no longer sought to suppress the emotions she did not blush to feel.

Henriquez was transported; but he had never felt truer veneration for Victoria than at the moment when folding her to his heart, he felt the soft pressure of her lips. The Count was entirely forgotten by both, till his melancholy and touching repetition of the name of Elvira reminded them that their happiness must recall a thousand pangs to the heart of the venerable Altoni, and as if by mutual consent, forbore to make him a witness of its expression.

“My beloved children!” exclaimed the Count, embracing each in turn: “My noble Henriquez! My sweet Victoria! may ye for ever be blest!—Villasantelle, take this inestimable creature! She is the last treasure of an unhappy father, and he consigns her to you: beware how you encrease his misery by obliging him to repent his confidence!”

The Count now gently led his lovely child to the altar, before which the priest had again knelt: the signal was understood by Villasantelle, who still held the hand of Victoria, and in silent respect they waited till the priest had concluded his devotions. The Signora leaned on the shoulder of her parent, till called upon by the holy man, and then collecting all her firmness and composure, a few minutes made her the wife of Villasantelle.

As soon as the nuptial benediction was pronounced, the Count conducted the youthful pair to a carriage that waited at the entrance of the church: they all got into it and it drove away. Henriquez was too much occupied by his transports at finding himself by the side of his beloved Victoria, never more to leave her, to recollect that he was obliged to fly from Naples, or to observe that the carriage proceeded along the streets leading to the Cambusca palace. Victoria, however, mentioned it to her father, glancing her eyes at the same time towards Henriquez, with a sort of fearful expression in them that proved the meaning of her remark.

“The coachman, my Love,” replied the Count, “proceeds by my directions: but be not apprehensive for the safety of our beloved Villasantelle! He is no longer amenable to the police of Naples.

“Be not surprised, my dear Henriquez,” continued the venerable Count; “The villain Lopez survived the death you thought certain long enough, before both the holy fathers of St. Agnes, to make a solemn declaration of your innocence of any design to take his life. He has also confessed the murder of the ill-fated Stafford; from any share in the guilt of which, he even exculpated Isabel. Unfortunate woman! Her spirit seems much broken by the late horrid events; but unless she can be recalled to a sense of religion she has long lost, her fate in the next world will not I fear be happier than in this.”

As the Count concluded the last sentence, the carriage stopped at the gate of the palazzo di Cambusca, where the Marquis, who was the confidant of the intentions of

Count Altoni, waited to receive them, and to conduct them to their expecting friends, who were already acquainted with the marriage of Villasantelle and Victoria.

The deep mourning that the Count Miranda and Leonora wore for their relative, Stafford, whose corpse had only that morning been interred, prevented any appearance of festivity in the mansion where they were guests, but the party were not the less happy because the public expression of their joy was thus forbidden. Of the whole group, Henriquez was the only one who had been attached to Stafford; but his thoughts seldom wandered towards him during the evening, which was decidedly the happiest of his life.

On the following morning, Isabel signified her desire of retiring to a convent, in which no person took the trouble of opposing her, and she repaired to that of St. Theresa. Here the arguments of the father confessor, and the persuasions of the nuns soon restored her to a sense of the comforts of the religion she had long since ceased to consider as more than a jest. But as the most determined unbelievers become (if once converted) the most outrageous bigots, she thought the order of St. Theresa much too mild a one, and took the veil in the convent of one of the severest Orders in Italy.

This step gave the greatest satisfaction to the Count Miranda, who while she remained at large was in continual dread of her bringing still deeper disgrace on the name his Leonora had once borne; and after her seclusion eased him of those fears, he never knew an uneasy moment, till his adored wife was seized with the illness of which, in the thirty-second year of their union, she died; leaving three sons, the eldest of whom, in six months afterwards, succeeded to the title and fortune of his father.

The Marquis Cambusca and his amiable Julia never being blessed with children, adopted one of the daughters of Henriquez and Victoria, whom they both lived to see united to the second son of Count Miranda.

During a long and prosperous life, the attachment of Villasantelle to his Victoria, never knew diminition; nor did their happiness suffer the least interruption, except from the decease of old friends, the first of whom was the Count Altoni, who rejoined his Elvira within two years after he had seen his beloved Victoria, the contented wife of Henriquez de Villasantelle.

FINIS.