The Italian

or

The Confessional of the Black Penitents

vol. 2

Ann Radcliffe

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THE *ITALIAN*,

OR THE

CONFESSIONAL of the BLACK PENITENTS.

A ROMANCE.

BY

ANN RADCLIFFE,

AUTHOR OF THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO, &C. &C.

He, wrapt in clouds of mystery and silence,
Broods o'er his passions, bodies them in deeds,
And sends them forth on wings of Fate to others
Like the invisible Will, that guides us,
Unheard, unknown, unsearchable!

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE *ITALIAN*.

CHAPTER I.

That lawn conceals her beauty
As the thin cloud, just silver'd by the rays,
The trembling moon: think ye 'tis shrouded from
The curious eye?

Wrapt in Olivia's veil, Ellena descended to the music-room, and mingled with the nuns, who were assembled within the grate. Among the monks and pilgrims without it, were some strangers in the usual dress of the country, but she did not perceive any person who resembled Vivaldi; and she considered, that, if he were present, he would not venture to discover himself, while her nun's veil concealed her as effectually from him as from the lady Abbess. It would be necessary, therefore, to seek an opportunity of withdrawing it for a moment at the grate, an expedient, which must certainly expose her to the notice of strangers.

On the entrance of the lady Abbess, Ellena's fear of observation rendered her insensible to every other consideration; she fancied, that the eyes of the Superior were particularly directed upon herself. The veil seemed an insufficient protection from their penetrating glances, and she almost sunk with the terror of instant discovery.

The Abbess, however, passed on, and, having conversed for a few moments with the *padre Abate* and some visitors of distinction, took her chair; and the performance immediately

opened with one of those solemn and impressive airs, which the Italian nuns know how to give with so much taste and sweetness. It rescued even Ellena for a moment from a sense of danger, and she resigned herself to the surrounding scene, of which the *coup-d'œil* was striking and grand. In a vaulted apartment of considerable extent, lighted by innumerable tapers, and where even the ornaments, though pompous, partook of the solemn character of the institution, were assembled about fifty nuns, who, in the interesting habit of their order, appeared with graceful plainness. The delicacy of their air, and their beauty, softened by the lawn that thinly veiled it, were contrasted by the severe majesty of the lady Abbess, who, seated on an elevated chair, apart from the audience, seemed the Empress of the scene, and by the venerable figures of the father *Abate* and his attendant monks, who were arranged without that screen of wire-work, extending the whole breadth of the apartment, which is called the grate. Near the holy father were placed the strangers of distinction, dressed in the splendid Neapolitan habit, whose gay colouring and airy elegance opposed well with the dark drapery of the ecclesiastics; their plumed hats loftily overtopping the half-cowled heads and grey locks of the monks. Nor was the contrast of countenances less striking; the grave, the austere, the solemn, and the gloomy, intermingling with the light, the blooming, and the debonaire, expressed all the various tempers, that render life a blessing or a burden, and, as with the spell of magic, transform this world into a transient paradise or purgatory. In the back ground of the picture stood some pilgrims, with looks less joyous and more demure than they had worn on

the road the preceding day; and among them were some inferior brothers and attendants of the convent. To this part of the chamber Ellena frequently directed her attention, but did not distinguish Vivaldi; and, though she had taken a station near the grate, she had not courage indecorously to withdraw her veil before so many strangers. And thus, if he even were in the apartment, it was not probable he would venture to come forward.

The concert concluded without his having been discovered by Ellena; and she withdrew to the apartment, where the collation was spread, and where the Abbess and her guests soon after appeared. Presently, she observed a stranger, in a pilgrim's habit, station himself near the grate; his face was partly muffled in his cloak, and he seemed to be a spectator rather than a partaker of the feast.

Ellena, who understood this to be Vivaldi, was watchful for an opportunity of approaching, unseen by the Abbess, the place where he had fixed himself. Engaged in conversation with the ladies around her, the Superior soon favoured Ellena's wish, who, having reached the grate, ventured to lift her veil for one instant. The stranger, letting his cloak fall, thanked her with his eyes for her condescension, and she perceived, that he was not Vivaldi! Shocked at the interpretation, which might be given to a conduct apparently so improper, as much as by the disappointment, which Vivaldi's absence occasioned, she was hastily retiring, when another stranger approached with quick steps, whom she instantly knew, by the grace and spirit of his air, to be Vivaldi; but, determined not to expose herself a second time

to the possibility of a mistake, she awaited for some further signal of his identity, before she discovered herself. His eyes were fixed upon her in earnest attention for some moments, before he drew aside the cloak from his face. But he soon did so;—and it was Vivaldi himself.

Ellena, perceiving that she was known, did not raise her veil, but advanced a few steps towards the grate. Vivaldi there deposited a small folded paper, and before she could venture to deliver her own billet, he had retired among the crowd. As she stepped forward to secure his letter, she observed a nun hastily approach the spot where he had laid it, and she paused. The garment of the Recluse wafted it from the place where it had been partly concealed; and when Ellena perceived the nun's foot rest upon the paper, she with difficulty disguised her apprehensions.

A friar, who from without the grate addressed the sister, seemed with much earnestness, yet with a certain air of secresy, communicating some important intelligence. The fears of Ellena suggested that he had observed the action of Vivaldi, and was making known his suspicions; and she expected, every instant, to see the nun lift up the paper, and deliver it to the Abbess.

From this immediate apprehension, however, she was released when the sister pushed it gently aside, without examination, a circumstance that not less surprized than relieved her. But, when the conference broke up, and the friar, hastily retreating among the crowd, disappeared from the apartment, and the nun approached and whispered the

Superior, all her terrors were renewed. She scarcely doubted, that Vivaldi was detected, and that his letter was designedly left where it had been deposited, for the purpose of alluring her to betray herself. Trembling, dismayed, and almost sinking with apprehension, she watched the countenance of the Abbess, while the nun addressed her, and thought she read her own fate in the frown that appeared there.

Whatever might be the intentions or the directions of the Superior, no active measure was at present employed; the Recluse, having received an answer, retired quietly among the sisters, and the Abbess resumed her usual manner. Ellena, however, supposing she was now observed, did not dare to seize the paper, though she believed it contained momentous information, and feared that the time was now escaping, which might facilitate her deliverance. Whenever she ventured to look round, the eyes of the Abbess seemed pointed upon her, and she judged from the position of the nun, for the veil concealed her face, that she also was vigilantly regarding her.

Above an hour had elapsed in this state of anxious suspense, when the collation concluded, and the assembly broke up; during the general bustle of which, Ellena ventured to the grate, and secured the paper. As she concealed it in her robe, she scarcely dared to enquire by a hasty glance whether she had been observed, and would have withdrawn immediately to examine the contents, had she not perceived, at the same instant, the Abbess quitting the apartment. On looking round for the nun, Ellena discovered that she was gone.

Ellena followed distantly in the Abbess's train; and, as she drew nearer to Olivia, gave a signal, and passed on to her cell. There, once more alone, and having secured the door, she sat down to read Vivaldi's billet, trying to command her impatience, and to understand the lines, over which her sight rapidly moved, when in the eagerness of turning over the paper, the lamp dropt from her trembling hand and expired. Her distress now nearly reached despair. To go forth into the convent for a light was utterly impracticable, since it would betray that she was no longer a prisoner, and not only would Olivia suffer from a discovery of the indulgence she had granted, but she herself would be immediately confined. Her only hope rested upon Olivia's arrival before it might be too late to practice the instructions of Vivaldi, if, indeed, they were still practicable; and she listened with intense solicitude for an approaching footstep, while she yet held, ignorant of its contents, the billet, that probably would decide her fate. A thousand times she turned about the eventful paper, endeavoured to trace the lines with her fingers, and to guess their import, thus enveloped in mystery; while she experienced all the various torture that the consciousness of having in her very hand the information, on a timely knowledge of which her life, perhaps, depended, without being able to understand it, could inflict.

Presently she heard advancing steps, and a light gleamed from the passage before she considered they might be some other than Olivia's; and that it was prudent to conceal the billet she held. The consideration, however, came too late to be acted upon; for, before the rustling paper was disposed of,

a person entered the cell, and Ellena beheld her friend. Pale, trembling, and silent, she took the lamp from the nun, and, eagerly running over Vivaldi's note, learned, that at the time it was written, brother Jeronimo was in waiting without the gate of the nun's garden, where Vivaldi designed to join him immediately, and conduct her by a private way beyond the walls. He added, that horses were stationed at the foot of the mountain, to convey her wherever she should judge proper; and conjured her to be expeditious, since other circumstances, besides the universal engagement of the Recluses, were at that moment particularly favourable to an escape.

Ellena, desponding and appalled, gave the paper to Olivia, requesting she would read it hastily, and advise her how to act. It was now an hour and a half since Vivaldi had said, that success depended upon expedition, and that he had probably watched at the appointed place; in such an interval, how many circumstances might have occurred to destroy every possibility of a retreat, which it was certain the engagement of the Abbess and the sisters no longer favoured!

The generous Olivia, having read the billet, partook of all her young friend's distress, and was as willing, as Ellena was anxious, to dare every danger for the chance of obtaining deliverance.

Ellena could feel gratitude for such goodness even at this moment of agonizing apprehension. After a pause of deep consideration, Olivia, said, "In every avenue of the convent we are now liable to meet some of the nuns; but my veil,

though thin, has hitherto protected you, and we must hope it may still assist your purpose. It will be necessary, however, to pass through the refectory, where such of the sisters as did not partake of the collation, are assembled at supper, and will remain so, till the first mattin calls them to the chapel. If we wait till then, I fear it will be to no purpose to go at all."

Ellena's fears perfectly agreed with those of Olivia; and entreating that another moment might not be lost in hesitation, and that she would lead the way to the nun's garden, they quitted the cell together.

Several of the sisters passed them, as they descended to the refectory, but without particularly noticing Ellena; who, as she drew near that alarming apartment, wrapt her veil closer, and leaned with heavier pressure upon the arm of her faithful friend. At the door they were met by the Abbess, who had been overlooking the nuns assembled at supper, and missing Olivia had enquired for her. Ellena shrunk back to elude observation, and to let the Superior pass; but Olivia was obliged to answer to the summons. Having, however, unveiled herself, she was permitted to proceed; and Ellena, who had mingled with the crowd that surrounded the Abbess, and thus escaped detection, followed Olivia with faltering steps, through the refectory. The nuns were luckily too much engaged by the entertainment, at this moment, to look round them, and the fugitive reached, unsuspected, an opposite door.

In the hall, to which they descended, the adventurers were frequently crossed by servants bearing dishes from the

refectory to the kitchen; and, at the very moment when they were opening the door, that led into the garden, a sister, who had observed them, demanded whether they had yet heard the mattin-bell, since they were going towards the chapel.

Terrified at this critical interruption, Ellena pressed Olivia's arm, in signal of silence, and was hastening forward, when the latter, more prudent, paused, and calmly answering the question, was then suffered to proceed.

As they crossed the garden towards the gate, Ellena's anxiety lest Vivaldi should have been compelled to leave it, encreased so much, that she had scarcely power to proceed. "O if my strength should fail before I reach it!" she said softly to Olivia, "or if I should reach it too late!"

Olivia tried to cheer her, and pointed out the gate, on which the moonlight fell; "At the end of this walk only," said Olivia, "see!—where the shadows of the trees open, is our goal."

Encouraged by the view of it, Ellena fled with lighter steps along the alley; but the gate seemed to mock her approach, and to retreat before her. Fatigue overtook her in this long alley, before she could overtake the spot so anxiously sought, and, breathless and exhausted, she was once more compelled to stop, and once more in the agony of terror exclaimed—"O, if my strength should fail before I reach it!—O, if I should drop even while it is within my view."

The pause of a moment enabled her to proceed, and she stopped not again till she arrived at the gate; when Olivia suggested the prudence of ascertaining who was without, and of receiving an answer to the signal, which Vivaldi had proposed, before they ventured to make themselves known. She then struck upon the wood, and, in the anxious pause that followed, whispering voices were distinctly heard from without, but no signal spoke in reply to the nun's.

"We are betrayed!" said Ellena softly, "but I will know the worst at once;" and she repeated the signal, when, to her unspeakable joy, it was answered by three smart raps upon the gate. Olivia, more distrustful, would have checked the sudden hope of her friend, till some further proof had appeared, that it was Vivaldi who waited without, but her precaution came too late; a key already grated in the lock; the door opened, and two persons muffled in their garments appeared at it. Ellena was hastily retreating, when a well-known voice recalled her, and she perceived, by the rays of a half-hooded lamp, which Jeronimo held, Vivaldi.

"O heavens!" he exclaimed, in a voice tremulous with joy, as he took her hand, "is it possible that you are again my own! If you could but know what I have suffered during this last hour!"—Then observing Olivia, he drew back, till Ellena expressed her deep sense of obligation to the nun.

"We have no time to lose," said Jeronimo sullenly; "we have stayed too long already, as you will find, perhaps."

"Farewel, dear Ellena!" said Olivia, "may the protection of heaven never leave you!"

The fears of Ellena now gave way to affectionate sorrow, as, weeping on the bosom of the nun, she said "farewel! O farewel, my dear, my tender friend! I must never, never see you more, but I shall always love you; and you have promised, that I shall hear from you; remember the convent della Pieta!"

"You should have settled this matter within," said Jeronimo, "we have been here these two hours already."

"Ah Ellena!" said Vivaldi, as he gently disengaged her from the nun, "do I then hold only the second place in your heart?"

Ellena, as she dismissed her tears, replied with a smile more eloquent than words; and when she had again and again bade adieu to Olivia, she gave him her hand, and quitted the gate.

"It is moonlight," observed Vivaldi to Jeronimo, "your lamp is useless, and may betray us."

"It will be necessary in the church," replied Jeronimo, "and in some circuitous avenues we must pass, for I dare not lead you out through the great gates, Signor, as you well know."

"Lead on, then," replied Vivaldi, and they reached one of the cypress walks, that extended to the church; but, before

they entered it, Ellena paused and looked back to the garden gate, that she might see Olivia once again. The nun was still there, and Ellena perceived her faintly in the moonlight, waving her hand in signal of a last adieu. Ellena's heart was full; she wept, and lingered, and returned the signal, till the gentle violence of Vivaldi withdrew her from the spot.

"I envy your friend those tears," said he, "and feel jealous of the tenderness that excites them. Weep no more, my Ellena."

"If you knew her worth," replied Ellena, "and the obligations I owe her!"—Her voice was lost in sighs, and Vivaldi only pressed her hand in silence.

As they traversed the gloomy walk, that led to the church, Vivaldi said, "Are you certain, father, that not any of the brothers are doing penance at the shrines in our way?"

"Doing penance on a festival, Signor! they are more likely, by this time, to be taking down the ornaments."

"That would be equally unfortunate for us," said Vivaldi; "cannot we avoid the church, father?"

Jeronimo assured him, that this was impossible; and they immediately entered one of its lonely aisles, where he unhooded the lamp, for the tapers, which had given splendour, at an earlier hour, to the numerous shrines, had expired, except those at the high altar, which were so remote, that their rays faded into twilight long before they reached

the part of the church where the fugitives passed. Here and there, indeed, a dying lamp shot a tremulous gleam upon the shrine below, and vanished again, serving to mark the distances in the long perspective of arches, rather than to enlighten the gloomy solitude; but no sound, not even of a whisper, stole along the pavement.

They crossed to a side door communicating with the court, and with the rock, which enshrined the image of *our Lady of mount Carmel*. There, the sudden glare of tapers issuing from the cave, alarmed the fugitives, who had begun to retreat, when Jeronimo, stepping forward to examine the place, assured them, there was no symptom of any person being within, and that lights burned day and night around the shrine.

Revived by this explanation, they followed into the cave, where their conductor opened a part of the wire-work enclosing the saint, and led them to the extremity of the vault, sunk deep within which appeared a small door. While Ellena trembled with apprehension, Jeronimo applied a key, and they perceived, beyond the door, a narrow passage winding away into the rock. The monk was leading on, but Vivaldi, who had the suspicions of Ellena, paused at the entrance, and demanded whither he was conducting them.

"To the place of your *destination*," replied the brother, in a hollow voice; an answer which alarmed Ellena, and did not satisfy Vivaldi. "I have given myself to your guidance," he said, "and have confided to you what is dearer to me than existence. Your life," pointing to the short sword concealed

beneath his pilgrim's vest, "your life, you may rely upon my word, shall answer for your treachery. If your purpose is evil, pause a moment, and repent, or you shall not quit this passage alive."

"Do you menace me!" replied the brother, his countenance darkening. "Of what service would be my death to you? Do you not know that every brother in the convent would rise to avenge it?"

"I know only that I will make sure of one traitor, if there be one," said Vivaldi, "and defend this lady against your host of monks; and, since you also know this, proceed accordingly."

At this instant it occurring to Ellena, that the passage in question probably led to the prison-chamber, which Olivia had described as situated within some deep recess of the convent, and that Jeronimo had certainly betrayed them, she refused to go further. "If your purpose is honest," said she, "why do you not conduct us through some direct gate of the convent; why are we brought into these subterraneous labyrinths?"

"There is no direct gate but that of the portal," Jeronimo replied, "and this is the only other avenue leading beyond the walls." "And why can we not go out through the portal?" Vivaldi asked.

"Because it is beset with pilgrims, and lay brothers," replied Jeronimo, "and though you might pass them safely enough, what is to become of the lady? But all this you knew

before, Signor; and was willing enough to trust me, then. The passage we are entering opens upon the cliffs, at some distance. I have run hazard enough already and will waste no more time; so if you do not chuse to go forward, I will leave you, and you may act as you please."

He concluded with a laugh of derision, and was re-locking the door, when Vivaldi, alarmed for the probable consequence of his resentment, and somewhat re-assured by the indifference he discovered as to their pursuing the avenue or not, endeavoured to appease him, as well as to encourage Ellena; and he succeeded in both.

As he followed in silence through the gloomy passage, his doubts were, however, not so wholly vanquished, but that he was prepared for attack, and while he supported Ellena with one hand, he held his sword in the other.

The avenue was of considerable length, and before they reached its extremity, they heard music from a distance, winding along the rocks. "Hark!" cried Ellena, "Whence come those sounds? Listen!"

"From the cave we have left," replied Jeronimo, "and it is midnight by that; it is the last chaunt of the pilgrims at the shrine of our Lady. Make haste, Signor, I shall be called for."

The fugitives now perceived, that all retreat was cut off, and that, if they had lingered only a few moments longer in the cave, they should have been surprized by those devotees, some one of whom, however, it appeared possible might

wander into this avenue, and still interrupt their escape. When Vivaldi told his apprehensions, Jeronimo, with an arch sneer, affirmed there was no danger of that, "for the passage," he added, "is known only to the brothers of the convent."

Vivaldi's doubts vanished when he further understood, that the avenue led only from the cliffs without to the cave, and was used for the purpose of conveying secretly to the shrine, such articles as were judged necessary to excite the superstitious wonder of the devotees.

While he proceeded in thoughtful silence, a distant chime sounded hollowly through the chambers of the rock. "The mattin-bell strikes!" said Jeronimo, in seeming alarm, "I am summoned. Signora quicken your steps;" an unnecessary request, for Ellena already passed with her utmost speed; and she now rejoiced on perceiving a door in the remote winding of the passage, which she believed would emancipate her from the convent. But, as she advanced, the avenue appeared extending beyond it; and the door, which stood a little open allowed her a glimpse of a chamber in the cliff, duskily lighted.

Vivaldi, alarmed by the light, enquired, when he had passed, whether any person was in the chamber, and received an equivocal answer from Jeronimo, who, however, soon after pointed to an arched gate that, terminated the avenue. They proceeded with lighter steps, for hope now cheared their hearts, and, on reaching the gate, all apprehension vanished. Jeronimo gave the lamp to Vivaldi, while he began

to unbar and unlock the door, and Vivaldi had prepared to reward the brother for his fidelity, before they perceived that the door refused to yield. A dreadful imagination seized on Vivaldi. Jeronimo turning round, coolly said, "I fear we are betrayed; the second lock is shot! I have only the key of the first."

"We *are* betrayed," said Vivaldi, in a resolute tone, "but do not suppose, that your dissimulation conceals you. I understand by whom we are betrayed. Recollect my late assertion, and consider once more, whether it is your interest to intercept us."

"My Signor," replied Jeronimo, "I do not deceive you when I protest by our holy saint, that I have not caused this gate to be fastened, and that I would open it if I could. The lock, which holds it, was not shot an hour ago. I am the more surprized at what has happened, because this place is seldom passed, even by the holiest footstep; and I fear, whoever has passed now, has been led hither by suspicion, and comes to intercept your flight."

"Your wily explanation, brother, may serve you for an inferior occasion, but not on this," replied Vivaldi, "either, therefore, unclose the gate, or prepare for the worst. You are not now to learn, that, however slightly I may estimate my own life, I will never abandon this lady to the horrors, which your community have already prepared for her."

Ellena, summoning her fleeting spirits, endeavoured to calm the indignation of Vivaldi, and to prevent the

consequence of his suspicions, as well as to prevail with Jeronimo, to unfasten the gate. Her efforts were, however, followed by a long altercation; but, at length, the art or the innocence of the brother, appeased Vivaldi, who now endeavoured to force the gate, while Jeronimo in vain represented its strength, and the certain ruin, that must fall upon himself, if it should be discovered he had concurred in destroying it.

The gate was immoveable; but, as no other chance of escaping appeared, Vivaldi was not easily prevailed with to desist; all possibility of retreating too was gone, since the church and the cave were now crowded with devotees, attending the mattin service.

Jeronimo, however, seemingly did not despair of effecting their release, but he acknowledged that they would probably be compelled to remain concealed in this gloomy avenue all night, and perhaps the next day. At length, it was agreed, that he should return to the church, to examine whether a possibility remained of the fugitives passing unobserved to the great portal; and, having conducted them back to the chamber, of which they had taken a passing glimpse, he proceeded to the shrine.

For a considerable time after his departure, they were not without hope; but, their confidence diminishing as his delay encreased, their uncertainty at length became terrible; and it was only for the sake of Vivaldi, from whom she scrupulously concealed all knowledge of the particular fate, which she was aware must await her in the convent, that

Ellena appeared to endure it with calmness. Notwithstanding the plausibility of Jeronimo, suspicion of his treachery returned upon her mind. The cold and earthy air of this chamber was like that of a sepulchre; and when she looked round, it appeared exactly to correspond with the description given by Olivia of the prison where the nun had languished and expired. It was walled and vaulted with the rock, had only one small grated aperture in the roof to admit air, and contained no furniture, except one table, a bench, and the lamp, which dimly shewed the apartment. That a lamp should be found burning in a place so remote and solitary, amazed her still more when she recollected the assertion of Jeronimo,—that even holy steps seldom passed this way; and when she considered also, that he had expressed no surprize at a circumstance, according to his own assertion, so unusual. Again it appeared; that she had been betrayed into the very prison, designed for her by the Abbess; and the horror, occasioned by this supposition, was so great, that she was on the point of disclosing it to Vivaldi, but an apprehension of the distraction, into which his desperate courage might precipitate him, restrained her.

While these considerations occupied Ellena, and it appeared that any certainty would be less painful than this suspense, she frequently looked round the chamber in search of some object, which might contradict or confirm her suspicion, that this was the death-room of the unfortunate nun. No such circumstance appeared, but as her eyes glanced, with almost phrenzied eagerness, she perceived something shadowy in a remote corner of the floor; and on

approaching, discovered what seemed a dreadful hieroglyphic, a mattrass of straw, in which she thought she beheld the death-bed of the miserable recluse; nay more, that the impression it still retained, was that which her form had left there.

While Vivaldi was yet entreating her to explain the occasion of the horror she betrayed, the attention of each was withdrawn by a hollow sigh, that rose near them. Ellena caught unconsciously the arm of Vivaldi, and listened, aghast, for a return of the sound, but all remained still.

"It surely was not fancied!" said Vivaldi, after a long pause, "you heard it also?"

"I did!" replied Ellena.

"It was a sigh, was it not?" he added.

"O yes, and such a sigh!"

"Some person is concealed near us," observed Vivaldi, looking round; "but be not alarmed, Ellena, I have a sword."

"A sword! alas! you know not——But hark! there, again!"

"That was very near us!" said Vivaldi. "This lamp burns so sickly!"——and he held it high, endeavouring to penetrate the furthest gloom of the chamber. "Hah! who goes there?" he cried, and stepped suddenly forward; but no person appeared, and a silence as of the tomb, returned.

"If you are in sorrow, speak!" Vivaldi, at length, said; "from fellow-sufferers you will meet with sympathy. If your designs are evil—tremble, for you shall find I am desperate."

Still no answer was returned, and he carried forward the lamp to the opposite end of the chamber, where he perceived a small door in the rock. At the same instant he heard from within, a low tremulous sound, as of a person in prayer, or in agony. He pressed against the door, which, to his surprize, yielded immediately, and discovered a figure kneeling before a crucifix, with an attention so wholly engaged, as not to observe the presence of a stranger, till Vivaldi spoke. The person then rose from his knees, and turning, shewed the silvered temples and pale features of an aged monk. The mild and sorrowful character of the countenance, and the lambent lustre of eyes, which seemed still to regain somewhat of the fire of genius, interested Vivaldi, and encouraged Ellena, who had followed him.

An unaffected surprize appeared in the air of the monk; but Vivaldi, notwithstanding the interesting benignity of his countenance, feared to answer his enquiries, till the father hinted to him, that an explanation was necessary, even to his own safety. Encouraged by his manner, rather than intimidated by this hint, and perceiving, that his situation was desperate, Vivaldi confided to the friar some partial knowledge of his embarrassment.

While he spoke, the father listened with deep attention, looked with compassion alternately upon him and Ellena; and some harassing objection seemed to contend with the

pity, which urged him to assist the strangers. He enquired how long Jeronimo had been absent, and shook his head significantly when he learned that the gate of the avenue was fastened by a double lock. "You are betrayed, my children," laid he, "you have trusted with the simplicity of youth, and the cunning of age has deceived you."

The terrible conviction affected Ellena to tears; and Vivaldi, scarcely able to command the indignation which a view of such treachery excited, was unable to offer her any consolation.

"You, my daughter, I remember to have seen in the church this morning," observed the friar; "I remember too, that you protested against the vows you were brought thither to seal. Alas! my child, was you aware of the consequence of such a proceeding?"

"I had only a choice of evils," Ellena replied.

"Holy father," said Vivaldi, "I will not believe, that you are one of those who either assisted in or approved the persecution of innocence. If you were acquainted with the misfortunes of this lady, you would pity, and save her; but there is now no time for detail; and I can only conjure you, by every sacred consideration, to assist her to leave the convent! If there were leisure to inform you of the unjustifiable means, which have been employed to bring her within these walls—if you knew that she was taken, an orphan, from her home at midnight—that armed ruffians brought her hither—and at the command of strangers—that

she has not a single relation surviving to assert her right of independence, or reclaim her of her persecutors.——O! holy father, if you knew all this!"——Vivaldi was unable to proceed.

The friar again regarded Ellena with compassion, but still in thoughtful silence. "All this may be very true," at length he said, "but"——and he hesitated.

"I understand you, father," said Vivaldi—"you require proof; but how can proof be adduced here? You must rely upon the honour of my word. And, if you are inclined to assist us, it must be immediately!—while you hesitate, we are lost. Even now I think I hear the footsteps of Jeronimo."

He stepped softly to the door of the chamber, but all was yet still. The friar, too, listened, but he also deliberated; while Ellena, with clasped hands and a look of eager supplication and terror, awaited his decision.

"No one is approaching," said Vivaldi, "it is not yet too late!—Good father! if you would serve us, dispatch."

"Poor innocent!" said the friar, half to himself, "in this chamber—in this fatal place!"—

"In this chamber!" exclaimed Ellena, anticipating his meaning. "It was in this chamber, then, that a nun was suffered to perish! and I, no doubt, am conducted hither to undergo a similar fate!"

"In this chamber!" re-echoed Vivaldi, in a voice of desperation. "Holy father, if you are indeed disposed to assist us, let us act this instant; the next, perhaps, may render your best intentions unavailing!"

The friar, who had regarded Ellena while she mentioned the nun, with the utmost surprize, now withdrew his attention; a few tears fell on his cheek, but he hastily dried them, and seemed struggling to overcome some grief, that was deep in his heart.

Vivaldi, finding that entreaty had no power to hasten his decision, and expecting every moment to hear the approach of Jeronimo, paced the chamber in agonizing perturbation, now pausing at the door to listen, and then calling, though almost hopelessly, upon the humanity of the friar. While Ellena, looking round the room in shuddering horror, repeatedly exclaimed, "On this very spot! in this very chamber! O what sufferings have these walls witnessed! what are they yet to witness!"

Vivaldi now endeavoured to soothe the spirits of Ellena, and again urged the friar to employ this critical moment in saving her; "O heaven!" said he, "if she is now discovered, her fate is certain!"

"I dare not say what that fate would be," interrupted the father, "or what my own, should I consent to assist you; but, though I am old, I have not quite forgotten to feel for others! They may oppress the few remaining years of my age, but the blooming days of youth should flourish; and they shall

flourish, my children, if my power can aid you. Follow me to the gate; we will see whether my key cannot unfasten all the locks that hold it."

Vivaldi and Ellena immediately followed the feeble steps of the old man, who frequently stopped to listen whether Jeronimo, or any of the brothers, to whom the latter might have betrayed Ellena's situation, were approaching; but not an echo wandered along the lonely avenue, till they reached the gate, when distant footsteps beat upon the ground.

"They are approaching, father!" whispered Ellena. "O, if the key should not open these locks instantly, we are lost! Hark! now I hear their voices—they call upon my name! Already they have discovered we have left the chamber."

While the friar, with trembling hands, applied the key, Vivaldi endeavoured at once to assist him, and to encourage Ellena.

The locks gave way, and the gate opened at once upon the moonlight mountains. Ellena heard once more, with the joy of liberty, the midnight breeze passing among the pensile branches of the palms, that loftily overshadowed a rude platform before the gate, and rustling with fainter sound among the pendent shrubs of the surrounding cliffs.

"There is no leisure for thanks, my children," said the friar, observing they were about to speak. "I will fasten the gate, and endeavour to delay your pursuers, that you may have time to escape. My blessing go with you!"

Ellena and Vivaldi had scarcely a moment to bid him "farewel!" before he closed the door, and Vivaldi, taking her arm, was hastening towards the place where he had ordered Paulo to wait with the horses, when, on turning an angle of the convent wall, they perceived a long train of pilgrims issuing forth from the portal, at a little distance.

Vivaldi drew back; yet dreading every moment, that he lingered near the monastery, to hear the voice of Jeronimo, or other persons, from the avenue, he was sometimes inclined to proceed at any hazard. The only practicable path leading to the base of the mountain, however, was now occupied by these devotees, and to mingle with them was little less than certain destruction. A bright moonlight shewed distinctly every figure, that moved in the scene, and the fugitives kept within the shadow of the walls, till, warned by an approaching footstep, they crossed to the feet of the cliffs that rose beyond some palmy hillocks on the right, whose dusky recesses promised a temporary shelter. As they passed with silent steps along the winding rocks, the tranquillity of the landscape below afforded an affecting contrast with the tumult and alarm of their minds.

Being now at some distance from the monastery, they rested under the shade of the cliffs, till the procession of devotees, which were traced descending among the thickets and hollows of the mountain, should be sufficiently remote. Often they looked back to the convent, expecting to see lights issue from the avenue, or the portal; and attended in mute anxiety for the sullen murmurs of pursuit; but none

came on the breeze; nor did any gleaming lamp betray the steps of a spy.

Released, at length, from immediate apprehension, Ellena listened to the mattin-hymn of the pilgrims, as it came upon the still air and ascended towards the cloudless heavens. Not a sound mingled with the holy strain and even in the measured pause of voices only the trembling of the foliage above was distinguished. The responses, as they softened away in distance, and swelled again on the wafting breeze, appeared like the music of spirits, watching by night upon the summits of the mountains, and answering each other in celestial airs, as they walk their high boundary, and overlook the sleeping world.

"How often, Ellena, at this hour," said Vivaldi, "have I lingered round your dwelling, consoled by the consciousness of being near you! Within those walls, I have said, she reposes; they enclose my world, all without is to me a desart. Now, I am in your presence! O Ellena! now that you are once more restored to me, suffer not the caprice of possibility again to separate us! Let me lead you to the first altar that will confirm our vows."

Vivaldi forgot, in the anxiety of a stronger interest, the delicate silence he had resolved to impose upon himself, till Ellena should be in a place of safety.

"This is not a moment," she replied, with hesitation, "for conversation; our situation is yet perilous, we tremble on the very brink of danger."

Vivaldi immediately rose; "Into what imminent danger," said he, "had my selfish folly nearly precipitated you! We are lingering in this alarming neighbourhood, when that feeble strain indicates the pilgrims to be sufficiently remote to permit us to proceed!"

As he spoke, they descended cautiously among the cliffs, often looking back to the convent, where, however, no light appeared, except what the moon shed over the spires and tall windows of its cathedral. For a moment, Ellena fancied she saw a taper in her favourite turret, and a belief, that the nuns, perhaps the Abbess herself, were searching for her there, renewed her terror and her speed. But the rays were only those of the moon, striking through opposite casements of the chamber; and the fugitives reached the base of the mountain without further alarm, where Paulo appeared with horses. "Ah! Signormio," said the servant, "I am glad to see you alive and merry; I began to fear, by the length of your stay, that the monks had clapped you up to do penance for life. How glad I am to see you Maestro!"

"Not more so than I am to see you, good Paulo. But where is the pilgrim's cloak I bade you provide?"

Paulo displayed it, and Vivaldi, having wrapt it round Ellena, and placed her on horseback, they took the road towards Naples, Ellena designing to take refuge in the convent della Pieta. Vivaldi, however, apprehending that their enemies would seek them on this road, proposed leaving it as soon as practicable, and reaching the neighbourhood of Villa Altieri by a circuitous way.

They soon after arrived at the tremendous pass, through which Ellena had approached the monastery, and whose horrors were considerably heightened at this dusky hour, for the moonlight fell only partially upon the deep barriers of the gorge, and frequently the precipice, with the road on its brow, was entirely shadowed by other cliffs and woody points that rose above it. But Paulo, whose spirits seldom owned the influence of local scenery, jogged merrily along, frequently congratulating himself and his master on their escape, and carolling briskly to the echoes of the rocks, till Vivaldi, apprehensive for the consequence of this loud gaiety, desired him to desist.

"Ah Signormio! I must obey you," said he, "but my heart was never so full in my life; and I would fain sing, to unburden it of some of this joy. That scrape we got into in the dungeon there, at what's the name of the place? was bad enough, but it was nothing to this, because here I was left out of it; and you, *Maestro*, might have been murdered again and again, while I, thinking of nothing at all, was quietly airing myself on the mountain by moonlight.

"But what is that yonder in the sky, Signor? It looks for all the world like a bridge; only it is perched so high, that nobody would think of building one in such an out-of-the-way place, unless to cross from cloud to cloud, much less would take the trouble of clambering up after it, for the pleasure of going over."

Vivaldi looked forward, and Ellena perceived the Alpine bridge, she had formerly crossed with so much alarm, in the

moonlight perspective, airily suspended between tremendous cliffs, with the river far below, tumbling down the rocky chasm. One of the supporting cliffs, with part of the bridge, was in deep shade, but the other, feathered with foliage, and the rising surges at its foot, were strongly illumined; and many a thicket wet with the spray, sparkled in contrast to the dark rock it overhung. Beyond the arch, the long-drawn prospect faded into misty light.

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Paulo, "to see what curiosity will do! If there are not some people have found their way up to the bridge already."

Vivaldi now perceived figures upon the slender arch and, as their indistinct forms glided in the moonshine, other emotions than those of wonder disturbed him, lest these might be pilgrims going to the shrine of our Lady, and who would give information of his route. No possibility, however, appeared of avoiding them, for the precipices that rose immediately above, and fell below, forbade all excursion, and the road itself was so narrow, as scarcely to admit of two horses passing each other.

"They are all off the bridge now, and without having broken their necks, perhaps!" said Paulo, "where, I wonder, will they go next! Why surely, Signor, this road does not lead to the bridge yonder; we are not going to pick our way in the air too? The roar of those waters has made my head dizzy already; and the rocks here are as dark as midnight, and seem ready to tumble upon one; they are enough to make one

despair to look at them; you need not have checked my mirth, Signor."

"I would fain check your loquacity," replied Vivaldi. "Do, good Paulo, be silent and circumspect, those people may be near us, though we do not yet see them."

"The road does lead to the bridge, then Signor!" said Paulo dolourously. "And see! there they are again; winding round that rock, and coming towards us."

"Hush! they are pilgrims," whispered Vivaldi, "we will linger under the shade of these rocks, while they pass. Remember, Paulo, that a single indiscreet word may be fatal; and that if they hail us, I alone am to answer."

"You are obeyed, Signor."

The fugitives drew up close under the cliffs, and proceeded slowly, while the words of the devotees, as they advanced became audible.

"It gives one some comfort," said Paulo, "to hear cheerful voices, in such a place as this. Bless their merry hearts! theirs seems a pilgrimage of pleasure; but they will be demure enough, I warrant, by and bye. I wish I"——

"Paulo! have you so soon forgot?" said Vivaldi sharply.

The devotees, on perceiving the travellers, became suddenly silent; till he who appeared to be the *Father-director*, as they passed, said, "Hail! in the name of *Our Lady*

of Mount Carmel!" and they repeated the salutation in chorus.

"Hail!" replied Vivaldi, "the first mass is over," and he passed on.

"But if you make haste, you may come in for the second," said Paulo, joking after.

"You have just left the shrine, then?" said one of the party, "and can tell us"—

"Poor pilgrims, like yourselves," replied Paulo, "and can tell as little. Good morrow, fathers, yonder peeps the dawn!"

He came up with his master, who had hurried forward with Ellena, and who now severely reproved his indiscretion; while the voices of the Carmelites, singing the mattin-hymn, sunk away among the rocks, and the quietness of solitude returned.

"Thank heaven! we are quit of this adventure," said Vivaldi.

"And now we have only the bridge to get over," rejoined Paulo, "and, I hope, we shall all be safe."

They were now at the entrance of it; as they passed the trembling planks, and looked up the glen, a party of people appeared advancing on the road the fugitives had left, and a chorus of other voices than those of the Carmelites, were heard mingling with the hollow sound of the waters.

Ellena, again alarmed, hastened forward, and Vivaldi, though he endeavoured to appease her apprehension of pursuit, encouraged her speed.

"These are nothing but more pilgrims, Signora," said Paulo, "or they would not send such loud shouts before them; they must needs think we can hear."

The travellers proceeded as fast as the broken road would permit; and were soon beyond the reach of the voices; but as Paulo turned to look whether the party was within sight, he perceived two persons, wrapt in cloaks, advancing under the brow of the cliffs, and within a few paces of his horse's heels. Before he could give notice to his master, they were at his side.

"Are you returning from the shrine of *our Lady*?" said one of them.

Vivaldi, startled by the voice, looked round, and demanded who asked the question?

"A brother pilgrim," replied the man, "one who has toiled up these steep rocks, till his limbs will scarcely bear him further. Would that you would take compassion on him, and give him a ride."

However compassionate Vivaldi might be to the sufferings of others, this was not a moment when he could indulge his disposition, without endangering the safety of Ellena; and he even fancied the stranger spoke in a voice of dissimulation.

His suspicions strengthened when the traveller, not repulsed by a refusal, enquired the way he was going, and proposed to join his party; "For these mountains, they say, are infested with banditti," he added, "and a large company is less likely to be attacked than a small one."

"If you are so very weary, my friend," said Vivaldi, "how is it possible you can keep pace with our horses? Though I acknowledge you have done wonders in overtaking them."

"The fear of these banditti," replied the stranger, "urged us on."

"You have nothing to apprehend from robbers," said Vivaldi, "if you will only moderate your pace; for a large company of pilgrims are on the road, who will soon overtake you."

He then put an end to the conversation, by clapping spurs to his horse, and the strangers were soon left far behind. The inconsistency of their complaints with their ability, and the whole of their manner, were serious subjects of alarm to the fugitives; but when they had lost sight of them, they lost also their apprehensions; and having, at length, emerged from the pass, they quitted the high road to Naples, and struck into a solitary one that led westward towards Aquila.

CHAPTER II.

"Thus sang th' unletter'd swain to th' oaks and rills,
While the still morn went forth with sandals gray.
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay."—

MILTON.

From the summit of a mountain, the morning light shewed the travellers the distant lake of Celano, gleaming at the feet of other lofty mountains of the Apennine, far in the south. Thither Vivaldi judged it prudent to direct his course, for the lake lay so remote from the immediate way to Naples, and from the neighbourhood of San Stefano, that it's banks promised a secure retreat. He considered, also, that among the convents scattered along those delightful banks, might easily be found a priest, who would solemnize their nuptials, should Ellena consent to an immediate marriage.

The travellers descended among olive woods, and soon after were directed by some peasants at work, into a road that leads from Aquila to the town of Celano, one of the very few roads which intrudes among the wild mountains, that on every side sequester the lake. As they approached the low grounds, the scent of orange blossoms breathed upon the morning air, and the spicy myrtle sent forth all its fragrance from among the cliffs, which it thickly tufted. Bowers of lemon and orange spread along the valley; and among the

cabins of the peasants, who cultivated them, Vivaldi hoped to obtain repose and refreshment for Ellena.

The cottages, however, at which Paulo enquired were unoccupied, the owners being all gone forth to their labour: and the travellers, again ascending, found themselves soon after among mountains inhabited by the flocks, where the scent of the orange was exchanged for the aromatic perfume of the pasturage.

"My Signor!" said Paulo, "is not that a shepherd's horn sounding at a distance? If so, the Signora may yet obtain some refreshment."

While Vivaldi listened, a hautboy and a pastoral drum were heard considerably nearer.

They followed the sound over the turf, and came within view of a cabin, sheltered from the sun by a tuft of almond trees. It was a dairy-cabin belonging to some shepherds, who at a short distance were watching their flocks, and, stretched beneath the shade of chestnuts, were amusing themselves by playing upon these rural instruments; a scene of Arcadian manners frequent at this day, upon the mountains of Abruzzo. The simplicity of their appearance, approaching to wildness, was tempered by a hospitable spirit. A venerable man, the chief shepherd, advanced to meet the strangers; and, learning their wants, conducted them into his cool cabin, where cream, cheese made of goat's milk, honey extracted from the delicious herbage of the mountains, and dried figs were quickly placed before them.

Ellena, overcome with the fatigue of anxiety, rather than that of travelling, retired, when she had taken breakfast, for an hour's repose; while Vivaldi rested on the bench before the cottage, and Paulo, keeping watch, discussed his breakfast, together with the circumstances of the late alarm, under the shade of the almond trees.

When Ellena again appeared, Vivaldi proposed, that they should rest here during the intense heat of the day; and, since he now considered her to be in a place of temporary safety, he ventured to renew the subject nearest his heart; to represent the evils, that might overtake them, and to urge an immediate solemnization of their marriage.

Thoughtful and dejected, Ellena attended for some time in silence to the arguments and pleadings of Vivaldi. She secretly acknowledged the justness of his representations, but she shrunk, more than ever, from the indelicacy, the degradation of intruding herself into his family; a family, too, from whom she had not only received proofs of strong dislike, but had suffered terrible injustice, and been menaced with still severer cruelty. These latter circumstances, however, released her from all obligations of delicacy or generosity, so far as concerned only the authors of her suffering; and she had now but to consider the happiness of Vivaldi and herself. Yet she could not decide thus precipitately on a subject, which so solemnly involved the fortune of her whole life; nor forbear reminding Vivaldi, affectionately, gratefully, as she loved him, of the circumstances which withheld her decision.

"Tell me yourself," said she, "whether I ought to give my hand, while your family—your mother"——she paused, and blushed, and burst into tears.

"Spare me the view of those tears," said Vivaldi, "and a recollection of the circumstances that excite them. O, let me not think of my mother, while I see you weep! Let me not remember, that her injustice and cruelty destined you to perpetual sorrow!"

Vivaldi's features became slightly convulsed, while he spoke; he rose, paced the room with quick steps, and then quitted it, and walked under the shade of the trees in front of the cabin.

In a few moment, however, he commanded his emotion and returned. Again he placed himself on the bench beside Ellena, and taking her hand, said solemnly, and in a voice of extreme sensibility, "Ellena, you have long witnessed how dear you are to me; you cannot doubt my love; you have long since promised—solemnly promised, in the presence of her who is now no more, but whose spirit may even at this moment look down upon us—of her, who bequeathed you to my tendered care, to be mine for ever. By these sacred truths, by these affecting recollections! I conjure you, abandon me not to despair, nor in the energy of a just resentment, sacrifice the son to the cruel and mistaken policy of the mother! You, nor I, can conjecture the machinations, which may be spread for us, when it shall be known that you have left San Stefano. If we delay to exchange our vows, I know, and I feel—that you are lost to me for ever!"

Ellena was affected, and for some moments unable to reply. At length, drying her tears, she said tenderly, "Resentment can have no influence on my conduct towards you; I think I feel none towards the Marchesa—for she is your mother. But pride, insulted pride, has a right to dictate, and ought to be obeyed; and the time is now, perhaps, arrived when, if I would respect myself, I must renounce you."——

"Renounce me!" interrupted Vivaldi, "renounce me? And is it, then, possible you could renounce me?" he repeated, his eyes still fixed upon her face with eagerness and consternation. "Tell me at once, Ellena, is it possible?"

"I fear it is not," she replied.

"You fear! alas! if you *fear*, it is too possible, and I have lost you already! say, O! say but, that you *hope* it is not, and I, too, will hope again."

The anguish, with which he uttered this, awakened all her tenderness, and, forgetting the reserve she had imposed upon herself, and every half-formed resolution, she said, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, "I will neither fear nor hope in this instance; I will obey the dictates of gratitude, of affection, and will *believe* that I never can renounce you, while you are unchanged."

"Believe!" repeated Vivaldi, "only believe! And why that mention of gratitude; and why that unnecessary reservation? Yet even this assurance, feebly as it sustains my hopes, is extorted; you see my misery, and from pity, from *gratitude*,

not affection, would assuage it. Besides, you will neither fear, nor hope! Ah, Ellena! did love ever yet exist without fear—and without hope? O! never, never! I fear and hope with such rapid transition; every assurance, every look of yours gives such force either to the one, or to the other, that I suffer unceasing anxiety. Why, too, that cold, that heart-breaking mention of gratitude? No, Ellena! it is too certain that you do not love me!—My mother's cruelty has estranged your heart from me!"

"How much you mistake!" said Ellena, "You have already received sacred testimonies of my regard; if you doubt their sincerity, pardon me, if I so far respect myself as to forbear entreating you will believe them."

"How calm, how indifferent, how circumspect, how prudent!" exclaimed Vivaldi in tones of mournful reproach. "But I will not distress you; forgive me for renewing this subject at this time. It was my intention to be silent till you should have reached a place of more permanent security than this; but how was it possible, with such anxiety pressing upon my heart, to persevere in that design. And what have I gained by departing from it?—increase of anxiety—of doubt—of fear!"

"Why will you persist in such self-inflictions?" said Ellena. "I cannot endure that you should doubt my affection, even for a moment. And how can you suppose it possible, that I ever can become insensible of your's; that I can ever forget the imminent danger you have voluntarily incurred for my

release, or, remembering it, can cease to feel the warmest gratitude?"

"That is the very word which tortures me beyond all others!" said Vivaldi; "is it then, only a sense of obligation you own for me? O! rather say you hate me, than suffer me to deceive my hopes with assurances of a sentiment so cold, so circumscribed, so dutiful as that of gratitude!"

"With me the word has a very different acceptation," replied Ellena smiling. "I understand it to imply all that is tender and generous in affection; and the sense of duty which you say it includes is one of the sweetest and most sacred feelings of the human heart."

"Ah Ellena! I am too willing to be deceived, to examine your definition rigorously; yet I believe it is your smile, rather than the accuracy of your explanation, that persuades me to a confidence in your affection; and I will trust, that the gratitude *you* feel is thus tender and comprehensive. But, I beseech you, name the word no more! Its sound is like the touch of the Torpedo, I perceive my confidence chilled even while I listen to my own pronunciation of it."

The entrance of Paulo interrupted the conversation, who advancing with an air of mystery and alarm, said, in a low voice,

"Signor! as I kept watch under the almond trees, who should I see mounting up the road from the valley yonder, but the two bare-footed Carmelites, that overtook us in the

pass of Chiari! I lost them again behind the woods, but I dare say they are coming this way, for the moment they spy out this dairy-hut, they will guess something good is to be had here; and the shepherds would believe their flocks would all die, if"——

"I see them at this moment emerging from the woods," said Vivaldi, "and now, they are leaving the road and crossing this way. Where is our host, Paulo?"

"He is without, at a little distance, Signor. Shall I call him?"

"Yes," replied Vivaldi, "or, stay; I will call him myself. Yet, if they see me"——

"Aye, Signor; or, for that matter, if they see me. But we cannot help ourselves now; for if we call the host, we shall betray ourselves, and, if we do not call him, he will betray us; so they must find us out, be it as it may."

"Peace! peace! let me think a moment," said Vivaldi. While Vivaldi undertook to think, Paulo was peeping about for a hiding place, if occasion should require one.

"Call our host immediately," said Vivaldi, "I must speak with him."

"He passes the lattice at this instant," said Ellena.

Paulo obeyed, and the shepherd entered the cabin.

"My good friend," said Vivaldi, "I must entreat that you will not admit those friars, whom you see coming this way, nor suffer them to know what guests you have. They have been very troublesome to us already, on the road; I will reward you for any loss their sudden departure may occasion you."

"Nay for that matter, friend," said Paulo, "it is their visit only that can occasion you loss, begging the Signor's pardon; their departure never occasioned loss to any body. And to tell you the truth, for my master will not speak out, we were obliged to look pretty sharply about us, while they bore us company, or we have reason to think our pockets would have been the lighter. They are designing people, friend, take my word for it; banditti, perhaps, in disguise. The dress of a Carmelite would suit their purpose, at this time of the pilgrimage. So be pretty blunt with them, if they want to come in here; and you will do well, when they go, to send somebody to watch which way they take, and see them clear off, or you may lose a stray lamb, perhaps."

The old shepherd lifted up his eyes and hands, "To see how the world goes!" said he. "But thank you, Maestro, for your warning; they shall not come within my threshold, for all their holy seeming, and it's the first time in my life I ever said nay to one of their garb, and mine has been a pretty long one, as you may guess, perhaps, by my face. How old, Signor, should you take me to be? I warrant you will guess short of the matter tho'; for on these high mountains"——

"I will guess when you have dismissed the travellers," said Vivaldi, "after having given them some hasty refreshment without; they must be almost at the door, by this time. Dispatch, friend."

"If they should fall foul upon me, for refusing them entrance," said the shepherd, "you will come out to help me, Signor? for my lads are at some distance."

Vivaldi assured him that they would, and he left the cabin.

Paulo ventured to peep at the lattice, on what might be going forward without. "They are gone round to the door, Signor, I fancy," said he, "for I see nothing of them this way; if there was but another window! What foolish people to build a cottage with no window near the door! But I must listen."

He stepped on tip-toe to the door, and bent his head in attention.

"They are certainly spies from the monastery," said Ellena to Vivaldi, "they follow us so closely! If they were pilgrims, it is improbable, too, that their way should lie through this unfrequented region, and still more so, that they should not travel in a larger party. When my absence was discovered, these people were sent, no doubt, in pursuit of me, and having met the devotees whom we passed, they were enabled to follow our route."

"We shall do well to act upon this supposition," replied Vivaldi, "but, though I am inclined to believe them emissaries from San Stefano, it is not improbable that they are only Carmelites returning to some convent on the lake of Celano."

"I cannot hear a syllable, Signor," said Paulo. "Pray do listen yourself! and there is not a single chink in this door to afford one consolation. Well! if ever I build a cottage, there shall be a window near——"

"Listen!" said Vivaldi.

"Not a single word, Signor!" cried Paulo, after a pause, "I do not even hear a voice!—But now I hear steps, and they are coming to the door, too; they shall find it no easy matter to open it; though," he added, placing himself against it. "Ay, ay, you may knock, friend, till your arm aches, and kick and lay about you—no matter for that."

"Silence! let us know who it is," said Vivaldi; and the old shepherd's voice was heard without. "They are gone, Signors," said he, "you may open the door."

"Which way did they go?" asked Vivaldi, when the man entered. "I cannot say, as to that, Signor, because I did not happen to see them at all; and I have been looking all about, too."

"Why, I saw them myself, crossing this way from the wood yonder," said Paulo.

"And there is nothing to shelter them from our view between the wood, and this cottage, friend," added Vivaldi; "What can they have done with themselves?"

"For that matter, gone into the wood again, perhaps," said the shepherd.

Paulo gave his master a significant look, and added, "It is likely enough, friend; and you may depend upon it they are lurking there for no good purpose. You will do well to send somebody to look after them; your flocks will suffer for it, else. Depend upon it, they design no good."

"We are not used to such sort of folks in these parts," replied the shepherd, "but if they mean any harm, they shall find we can help ourselves." As he concluded, he took down a horn from the roof and blew a shrill blast that made the mountains echo; when immediately the younger shepherds were seen running from various quarters towards the cottage.

"Do not be alarmed, friend;" said Vivaldi, "these travellers mean you no harm, I daresay, whatever they may design against us. But, as I think them suspicious persons, and should not like to overtake them on the road, I will reward one of your lads if you will let him go a little ways towards Celano, and examine whether they are lurking on that route."

The old man consented, and, when the shepherds came up, one of them received directions from Vivaldi.

"And be sure you do not return, till you have found them," added Paulo.

"No master," replied the lad, "and I will bring them safe here, you may trust me."

"If you do, friend, you will get your head broke for your trouble. You are only to discover where they are, and to watch where they go," said Paulo.

Vivaldi, at length, made the lad comprehend what was required of him, and he departed; while the old shepherd went out to keep guard.

The time of his absence was passed in various conjectures by the party in the cabin, concerning the Carmelites. Vivaldi still inclined to believe they were honest people returning from a pilgrimage, but Paulo was decidedly against this opinion. "They are waiting for us on the road, you may depend upon it, Signor," said the latter. "You may be certain they have some *great design* in hand, or they would never have turned their steps from this dairy-house when once they had spied it, and that they did spy it, we are sure."

"But if they have in hand the great design you speak of, Paulo," said Vivaldi, "it is probable that they have spied us also, by their taking this obscure road. Now it must have occurred to them when they saw a dairy-hut, in so solitary a region, that we might probably be found within—yet they have not examined. It appears, therefore, they have no design

against us. What can you answer to this, Paulo? I trust the apprehensions of Signora di Rosalba are unfounded."

"Why! do you suppose, Signor, they would attack us when we were safe housed, and had there good shepherds to lend us a helping hand? No, Signor, they would not even have shewn themselves, if they could have helped it; and being once sure we were here, they would skulk back to the woods, and lurk for us in the road they knew we must go, since, as it happens, there is only one."

"How is it possible," said Ellena, "that they can have discovered us here, since they did not approach the cabin to enquire."

"They came near enough for their purpose, Signora, I dare say; and, if the truth were known, they spied my face looking at them through the lattice."

"Come, come," said Vivaldi, "you are an ingenious tormentor, indeed, Paulo. Do you suppose they saw enough of thy face last night by moonlight, in that dusky glen, to enable them to recollect it again at a distance of forty yards? Revive, my Ellena, I think every appearance is in our favour."

"Would I could think so too!" said she, with a sigh.

"O! for that matter, Signora," rejoined Paulo, "There is nothing to be afraid of; they should find tough work of it, if they thought proper to attack us, lady."

"It is not an open attack that we have to fear," replied Ellena, "but they may surround us with their snares, and defy resistance."

However Vivaldi might accede to the truth of this remark, he would not appear to do so; but tried to laugh away her apprehensions; and Paulo was silenced for a while, by a significant look from his master.

The shepherd's boy returned much sooner than they had expected, and he probably saved his time, that he might spare his labour, for he brought no intelligence of the Carmelites. "I looked for them among the woods along the road side in the hollow, yonder, too," said the lad, "and then I mounted the hill further on, but I could see nothing of them far or near, nor of a single soul, except our goats, and some of them do stray wide enough, sometimes; they lead me a fine dance often. They sometimes, Signor, have wandered as far as Monte Nuvola, yonder, and got to the top of it, up among the clouds, and the crags, where I should break my neck if I climbed; and the rogues seemed to know it, too, for when they have seen me coming, scrambling up, puffing and blowing, they have ceased their capering, and stood peeping over a crag so sly, and so quiet, it seemed as if they were laughing at me; as much as to say, 'Catch us if you can.'"

Vivaldi, who during the latter part of this speech had been consulting with Ellena, whether they should proceed on their way immediately, asked the boy some further questions concerning the Carmelites; and becoming convinced that they had either not taken the road to Celano, or, having taken

it, were at a considerable distance, he proposed setting out, and proceeding leisurely, "For I have now little apprehension of these people," he added, "and a great deal lest night should overtake us before we reach the place of our destination, since the road is mountainous and wild, and, further, we are not perfectly acquainted with it."

Ellena approving the plan, they took leave of the good shepherd, who could, with difficulty be prevailed with to accept any recompence for his trouble, and who gave them some further directions as to the road; and their way was long cheered by the sound of the tabor and the sweetness of the hautboy, wafted over the wild.

When they descended into the woody hollow mentioned by the boy, Ellena sent forth many an anxious look beneath the deep shade; while Paulo, sometimes silent, and at others whistling and singing loudly, as if to overcome his fears, peeped under every bough that crossed the road, expecting to discover his friends the Carmelites lurking within its gloom.

Having emerged from this valley, the road lay over mountains covered with flocks, for it was now the season when they had quitted the plains of Apulia, to feed upon the herbage for which this region is celebrated; and it was near sun-set, when, from a summit to which the travellers had long been ascending, the whole lake of Celano, with its vast circle of mountains, burst at once-upon their view.

"Ah Signor!" exclaimed Paulo, "what a prospect is here! It reminds me of home; it is almost as pleasant as the bay of

Naples! I should never love it like that though, if it were an hundred times finer."

The travellers stopped to admire the scene, and to give their horses rest, after the labour of the ascent. The evening sun, shooting athwart a clear expanse of water, between eighteen and twenty leagues in circumference, lighted up all the towns and villages, and towered castles, and spiry convents, that enriched the rising shores; brought out all the various tints of cultivation, and coloured with beamy purple the mountains which on every side formed the majestic background of the landscape. Vivaldi pointed out to Ellena the gigantic Velino in the north, a barrier mountain, between the territories of Rome and Naples. Its peaked head towered far above every neighbouring summit, and its white precipices were opposed to the verdant points of the Majella, snow-crowned, and next in altitude, loved by the flocks. Westward, near woody hills, and rising immediately from the lake, appeared Monte Salviano, covered with wild sage, as its name imports, and once pompous with forests of chestnut; a branch from the Apennine extended to meet it. "See," said Vivaldi, "where Monte-Corno stands like a ruffian, huge, scarred, threatening, and horrid!—and in the south, where the sullen mountain of San Nicolo shoots up, barren and rocky! From thence, mark how other overtopping ridges of the mighty Apennine darken the horizon far along the east, and circle to approach the Velino in the north!"

"Mark too," said Ellena, "how sweetly the banks and undulating plains repose at the feet of the mountains; what an image of beauty and elegance they oppose to the awful

grandeur that overlooks and guards them! Observe, too, how many a delightful valley, opening from the lake, spreads its rice and corn fields, shaded with groves of the almond, far among the winding hills; how gaily vineyards and olives alternately chequer the acclivities, and how gracefully the lofty palms bend over the higher cliffs."

"Ay, Signora!" exclaimed Paulo, "and have the goodness to observe how like are the fishing boats, that sail towards the hamlet below, to those one sees upon the bay of Naples. They are worth all the rest of the prospect, except indeed this fine sheet of water, which is almost as good as the bay, and that mountain, with its sharp head, which is almost as good as Vesuvius—if it would but throw out fire!"

"We must despair of finding a mountain in this neighbourhood, so *good* as to do that, Paulo," said Vivaldi, smiling at this stroke of nationality; "though, perhaps, many that we now see, have once been volcanic."

"I honour them for that, Signor, and look them with double satisfaction; but *our* mountain is the only mountain in the world. O! to see it of a dark night! what a blazing it makes! and what a height it will shoot to! and what a light it throws over the sea! No other mountain can do so. It seems as if the waves were all on fire. I have seen the reflection as far off as Capri, trembling all across the gulf, and shewing every vessel as plain as at noon day; ay, and every sailor on the deck. You never saw such a sight, Signor."

"Why you do, indeed, seem to have forgotten that I ever did, Paulo, and also that a volcano can do any mischief. But let us return, Ellena, to the scene before us. Yonder, a mile or two within the shore, is the town of Celano, whither we are going."

The clearness of an Italian atmosphere permitted him to discriminate the minute though very distant features of the landscape; and on an eminence rising from the plains of a valley opening to the west, he pointed out the modern Alba, crowned with the ruins of its ancient castle, still visible upon the splendor of the horizon, the prison and tomb of many a Prince, who, "fallen from his high estate," was sent from Imperial Rome to finish here the sad reverse of his days; to gaze from the bars of his tower upon solitudes where beauty or grandeur administered no assuaging feelings to him, whose life had passed amidst the intrigues of the world, and the feverish contentions of disappointed ambition; to him, with whom reflection brought only remorse, and anticipation despair; whom "no horizontal beam enlivened in the crimson evening of life's dusty day."

"And to such a scene as this," said Vivaldi, "a Roman Emperor came, only for the purpose of witnessing the most barbarous exhibition; to indulge the most savage delights! Here, Claudius celebrated the accomplishment of his arduous work, an aqueduct to carry the overflowing waters of the Celano to Rome, by a naval fight, in which hundreds of wretched slaves perished for his amusement! Its pure and polished surface was stained with human blood, and roughened by the plunging bodies of the slain, while the

gilded gallies of the Emperor floated gaily around, and these beautiful shores were made to echo with applauding yells, worthy of the furies!"

"We scarcely dare to trust the truth of history, in some of its traits of human nature," said Ellena.

"Signor," cried Paulo, "I have been thinking that while we are taking the air, so much at our ease, here, those Carmelites may be spying at us from some hole or corner that we know nothing of, and may swoop upon us, all of a sudden, before we can help ourselves. Had we not better go on, Signor?"

"Our horses are, perhaps, sufficiently rested," replied Vivaldi, "but, if I had not long since dismissed all suspicion of the evil intention of those strangers, I should not willingly have stopped for a moment."

"But pray let us proceed," said Ellena.

"Ay, Signora, it is best to be of the safe side," observed Paulo. "Yonder, below, is Celano, and I hope we shall get safe housed there, before it is quite dark, for here we have no mountain, that will light us on our way! Ah! if we were but within twenty miles of Naples, now,—and it was an *illumination* night!"—

As they descended the mountain, Ellena, silent and dejected, abandoned herself to reflection. She was too sensible of the difficulties of her present situation, and too apprehensive of the influence, which her determination must

have on all her future life, to be happy, though escaped from the prison of San Stefano, and in the presence of Vivaldi, her beloved deliverer and protector. He observed her dejection with grief, and, not understanding all the finer scruples that distressed her, interpreted her reserve into indifference towards himself. But he forbore to disturb her again with a mention of his doubts, or fears; and he determined not to urge the subject of his late entreaties, till he should have placed her in some secure asylum, where she might feel herself at perfect liberty to accept or to reject his proposal. By acting with an honour so delicate, he unconsciously adopted a certain means of increasing her esteem and gratitude, and deserved them the more, since he had to endure the apprehension of losing her by the delay thus occasioned to their nuptials.

They reached the town of Celano before the evening closed, when Vivaldi was requested by Ellena to enquire for a convent, where she might be lodged for the night. He left her at the inn, with Paulo for her guard, and proceeded on his search. The first gate he knocked upon belonged to a convent of Carmelites. It appeared probable, that the pilgrims of that order, who had occasioned him so much disquietude, were honest brothers of this house; but as it was probable also, that if they were emissaries of the Abbess of San Stefano, and came to Celano, they would take up their lodging with a society of their own class, in preference to that of any other, Vivaldi thought it prudent to retire from their gates without making himself known. He passed on, therefore, and soon after arrived at a convent of Dominicans, where he learned,

that there were only two houses of nuns in Celano, and that these admitted no other boarders than permanent ones.

Vivaldi returned with this intelligence to Ellena, who endeavoured to reconcile herself to the necessity of remaining where she was; but Paulo, ever active and zealous, brought intelligence, that at a little fishing town, at some distance, on the bank of the lake, was a convent of Ursalines, remarkable for their hospitality to strangers. The obscurity of so remote a place, was another reason for preferring it to Celano, and Vivaldi proposing to remove thither, if Ellena was not too weary to proceed, she readily assented, and they immediately set off.

"It happens to be a fine night," said Paulo, as they left Celano, "and so, Signor, we cannot well lose our way; besides, they say, there is but one. The town we are going to lies yonder on the edge of the lake, about a mile and a half off. I think I can see a gray steeple or two, a little to the right of that wood where the water gleams so."

"No, Paulo," replied Vivaldi, after looking attentively. "I perceive what you mean; but those are not the points of steeples, they are only the tops of some tall cypresses."

"Pardon me, Signor, they are too tapering for trees; that must surely be the town. This road, however, will lead us right, for there is no other to puzzle us, as they say."

"This cool and balmy air revives me," said Ellena; "and what a soothing shade prevails over the scene! How

softened, yet how distinct, is every near object; how sweetly dubious the more removed ones; while the mountains beyond character themselves sublimely upon the still glowing horizon."

"Observe, too," said Vivaldi, "how their broken summits, tipt with the beams that have set to our lower region, exhibit the portraiture of towers and castles, and embattled ramparts, which seemed designed to guard them against the enemies, that may come by the clouds."

"Yes," replied Ellena, "the mountains themselves display a sublimity, that seems to belong to a higher world; their besiegers ought not to be of this earth; they can be only spirits of the air."

"They can be nothing else, Signora," said Paulo, "for nothing of this earth can reach them. See! lady, they have some of the qualities of your spirits, too; see! how they change their shapes and colours, as the sun-beams sink. And now, how gray and dim they grow! See but how fast they vanish!"

"Every thing reposes," said Vivaldi. "Who would willingly travel in the day, when Italy has such nights as this!"

"Signor, that *is* the town before us," said Paulo, "for now I can discern, plain enough, the spires of convents, and there goes a light! Hah, hah! and there is a bell, too, chiming from one of the spires! The monks are going to mass; would we were going to supper, Signor!"

"That chime is nearer than the place you point to, Paulo, and I doubt whether it comes from the same quarter."

"Hark! Signor, the air wafts the sound! and now it is gone again."

"Yes, I believe you are right, Paulo, and that we have not far to go."

The travellers descended the gradual slopes, towards the shore; and Paulo, some time after, exclaimed, "See, Signor, where another light glides along! See! it is reflected on the lake."

"I hear the faint dashing of waves, now," said Ellena, "and the sound of oars, too! But observe, Paulo, the light is not in the town, it is in the boat that moves yonder."

"Now it retreats, and trembles in a lengthening line upon the waters," said Vivaldi. "We have been too ready to believe what we wish and have yet far to go."

The shore they were approaching formed a spacious bay for the lake, immediately below. Dark woods seemed to spread along the banks, and ascend among the cultivated slopes towards the mountains; except where, here and there, cliffs, bending over the water, were distinguished through the twilight by the whiteness of their limestone precipices. Within the bay, the town became gradually visible; lights twinkled between the trees, appearing and vanishing; like the stars of a cloudy night; and, at length was heard the

melancholy song of boatmen, who were fishing near the shore.

Other sounds soon after struck the ear. "O, what merry notes!" exclaimed Paulo, "they make my heart dance. See! Signora, there is a group, footing it away so gaily on the bank of the lake, yonder, by those trees. O, what a merry set! Would I were among them! that is, I mean, if you, *Maestro*, and the Signora were not here."

"Well corrected, Paulo."

"It is a festival, I fancy," observed Vivaldi. "These peasants of the lake can make the moments fly as gaily as the voluptuaries of the city, it seems."

"O! what merry music!" repeated Paulo. "Ah! how often I have footed it as joyously on the beach at Naples, after sunset, of a fine night, like this; with such a pleasant fresh breeze to cool one! Ah! there are none like the fishermen of Naples for a dance by moonlight; how lightly they do trip it! O! if I was but there now! That is, I mean, if you, *Maestro*, and the Signora were there too. O! what merry notes!"

"We thank you, good Signor Paulo," said Vivaldi, "and I trust we shall all be there soon; when you shall trip it away, with as joyous an heart as the best of them."

The travellers now entered the town, which consisted of one street, straggling along the margin of the lake; and having enquired for the Ursaline convent, were directed to

it's gates. The portress appeared immediately upon the ringing of the bell, and carried a message to the Abbess, who as quickly returned an invitation to Ellena. She alighted, and followed the portress to the parlour, while Vivaldi remained at the gate, till he should know whether she approved of her new lodging. A second invitation induced him, also, to alight; he was admitted to the grate, and offered refreshment, which, however, he declined staying to accept, as he had yet a lodging to seek for the night. The Abbess, on learning this circumstance, courteously recommended him to a neighbouring society of Benedictines, and desired him to mention her name to the Abbot.

Vivaldi then took leave of Ellena, and, though it was only for a few hours, he left her with dejection, and with some degree of apprehension for her safety, which, though circumstances could not justify him in admitting, he could not entirely subdue. She shared his dejection, but not his fears, when the door closed after him, and she found herself once more among strangers. The forlornness of her feelings could not be entirely overcome by the attentions of the Abbess; and there was a degree of curiosity, and even of scrutiny, expressed in the looks of some of the sisters, which seemed more than was due to a stranger. From such examination she eagerly escaped to the apartment allotted for her, and to the repose from which she had so long been withheld.

Vivaldi, meanwhile, had found an hospitable reception with the Benedictines, whose sequestered situation made the visit of a stranger a pleasurable novelty to them. In the

eagerness of conversation, and, yielding to the satisfaction which the mind receives from exercising ideas that have long slept in dusky indolence, and to the pleasure of admitting new ones, the Abbot and a few of the brothers sat with Vivaldi to a late hour. When, at length, the traveller was suffered to retire, other subjects than those, which had interested his host, engaged his thoughts; and he revolved the means of preventing the misery that threatened him, in a serious separation from Ellena. Now, that she was received into a respectable asylum, every motive for silence upon this topic was done away. He determined, therefore, that on the following morning, he would urge all his reasons and entreaties for an immediate marriage; and among the brothers of the Benedictine, he had little doubt of prevailing with one to solemnize the nuptials, which he believed would place his happiness and Ellena's peace, beyond the influence of malignant possibilities.

CHAPTER III.

"I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares."

MILTON.

While Vivaldi and Ellena were on the way from San Stefano, the Marchese Vivaldi was suffering the utmost vexation, respecting his son; and the Marchesa felt not less apprehension, that the abode of Ellena might be discovered; yet this fear did not withhold her from mingling in all the gaieties of Naples. Her assemblies were, as usual, among the most brilliant of that voluptuous city, and she patronized, as zealously as before, the strains of her favourite composer. But, notwithstanding this perpetual dissipation, her thoughts frequently withdrew themselves from the scene, and dwelt on gloomy forebodings of disappointed pride.

A circumstance, which rendered her particularly susceptible to such disappointment at this time, was, that overtures of alliance had been lately made to the Marchese, by the father of a lady, who was held suitable, in every consideration, to become his daughter; and whose wealth rendered the union particularly desirable at a time, when the expences of such an establishment as was necessary to the

vanity of the Marchesa, considerably exceeded his income, large as it was.

The Marchesa's temper had been thus irritated by the contemplation of her son's conduct in an affair, which so materially affected the fortune, and, as she believed, the honour of his family; when a courier from the Abbess of San Stefano brought intelligence of the flight of Ellena with Vivaldi. She was in a disposition, which heightened disappointment into fury; and she forfeited, by the transports to which she yielded, the degree of pity that otherwise was due to a mother, who believed her only son to have sacrificed his family and himself to an unworthy passion. She believed, that he was now married, and irrecoverably lost. Scarcely able to endure the agony of this conviction, she sent for her ancient adviser Schedoni, that she might, at least, have the relief of expressing her emotions; and of examining whether there remained a possibility of dissolving these long-dreaded nuptials. The phrenzy of passion, however, did not so far overcome her circumspection as to compel her to acquaint the Marchese with the contents of the Abbess's letter, before she had consulted with her Confessor. She knew that the principles of her husband were too just, upon the grand points of morality, to suffer him to adopt the measures she might judge necessary; and she avoided informing him of the marriage of his son, until the means of counteracting it should have been suggested and accomplished, however desperate such means might be.

Schedoni was not to be found. Trifling circumstances encrease the irritation of a mind in such a state as was her's.

The delay of an opportunity for unburthening her heart to Schedoni, was hardly to be endured; another and another messenger were dispatched to her Confessor.

"My mistress has committed some great sin, truely!" said the servant, who had been twice to the convent within the last half hour. "It must lie heavy on her conscience, in good truth, since she cannot support it for one half hour. Well! the rich have this comfort, however, that, let them be ever so guilty, they can buy themselves innocent again, in the twinkling of a ducat. Now a poor man might be a month before he recovered his innocence, and that, too, not till after many a bout of hard flogging."

In the evening Schedoni came, but it was only to confirm her worst fear. He, too, had heard of the escape of Ellena, as well as that she was on the lake of Celano; and was married to Vivaldi. How he had obtained this information he did not chuse to disclose, but he mentioned so many minute circumstances in confirmation of it's truth, and appeared to be so perfectly convinced of the facts he related, that the Marchesa believed them, as implicitly as himself; and her passion and despair transgressed all bounds of decorum.

Schedoni observed, with dark and silent pleasure, the turbulent excess of her feelings; and perceived that the moment was now arrived, when he might command them to his purpose, so as to render his assistance indispensable to her repose; and probably so as to accomplish the revenge he had long meditated against Vivaldi, without hazarding the favour of the Marchesa. So far was he from attempting to

sooth her sufferings, that he continued to irritate her resentment, and exasperate her pride; effecting this, at the same time, with such imperceptible art, that he appeared only to be palliating the conduct of Vivaldi, and endeavouring to console his distracted mother.

"This is a rash step, certainly," said the Confessor; "but he is young, very young, and, therefore, does not foresee the consequence to which it leads. He does not perceive how seriously it will affect the dignity of his house;—how much it will depreciate his consequence with the court, with the nobles of his own rank, and even with the plebeians, with whom he has condescended to connect himself. Intoxicated with the passions of youth, he does not weigh the value of those blessings, which wisdom and the experience of maturer age know how to estimate. He neglects them *only* because he does not perceive their influence in society, and that lightly to resign them, is to degrade himself in the view of almost every mind. Unhappy young man! he is to be pitied fully as much as blamed."

"Your excuses, reverend father," said the tortured Marchesa, "prove the goodness of your heart; but they illustrate, also, the degeneracy of his mind, and detail the full extent of the effects which he has brought upon his family. It affords me no consolation to know, that this degradation proceeds from his head, rather than his heart; it is sufficient that he has incurred it, and that no possibility remains of throwing off the misfortune."

"Perhaps that is affirming too much," observed Schedoni.

"How, father!" said the Marchesa.

"Perhaps a possibility does remain," said he.

"Point it out to me, good father! I do not perceive it."

"Nay, my lady," replied the subtle Schedoni, correcting himself, "I am by no means assured, that such possibility does exist. My solicitude for your tranquillity, and for the honour of your house, makes me so unwilling to relinquish hope, that, perhaps, I only imagine a possibility in your favour. Let me consider.——Alas! the misfortune, severe as it is, must be endured;—there remain no means of escaping from it."

"It was cruel of you, father, to suggest a hope which you could not justify," observed the Marchesa.

"You must excuse my extreme solicitude, then," replied the Confessor. "But how is it possible for me to see a family of your ancient estimation brought into such circumstances; its honours blighted by the folly of a thoughtless boy, without feeling sorrow and indignation, and looking round for even some desperate means of delivering it from disgrace." He paused.

"Disgrace!" exclaimed the Marchesa, "father, you—you—Disgrace!—The word is a strong one, but——it is, alas! just. And shall we submit to this?—Is it possible we *can* submit to it?"

"There is no remedy," said Schedoni, coolly.

"Good God!" exclaimed the Marchesa, "that there should be no law to prevent, or, at least, to punish such criminal marriages!"

"It is much to be lamented," replied Schedoni.

"The woman who obtrudes herself upon a family, to dishonour it," continued the Marchesa, "deserves a punishment nearly equal to that of a state criminal, since she injures those who best support the state. She ought to suffer"——

"Not nearly, but quite equal," interrupted the Confessor, "she deserves——death!"

He paused, and there was a moment of profound silence, till he added—"for death only can obliviate the degradation she has occasioned; her death alone can restore the original splendor of the line she would have sullied."

He paused again, but the Marchesa still remaining silent, he added, "I have often marvelled that our lawgivers should have failed to perceive the justness, nay the necessity, of such punishment!"

"It is astonishing," said the Marchesa, thoughtfully, "that a regard for their own honour did not suggest it."

"Justice does not the less exist, because her laws are neglected," observed Schedoni. "A sense of what she

commands lives in our breasts; and when we fail to obey that sense, it is to weakness, not to virtue, that we yield."

"Certainly," replied the Marchesa, "that truth never yet was doubted."

"Pardon me, I am not so certain as to that," said the Confessor, "when justice happens to oppose prejudice, we are apt to believe it virtuous to disobey her. For instance, though the law of justice demands the death of this girl, yet because the law of the land forbears to enforce it, you, my daughter, even you! though possessed of a man's spirit, and his clear perceptions, would think that virtue bade her live, when it was only fear!"

"Hah!" exclaimed the Marchesa, in a low voice, "What is that you mean? You shall find I have a man's courage also."

"I speak without disguise," replied Schedoni, "my meaning requires none."

The Marchesa mused, and remained silent.

"I have done my duty," resumed Schedoni, at length. "I have pointed out the only way that remains for you to escape dishonour. If my zeal is displeasing——but I have done."

"No, good father, no," said the Marchesa; "you mistake the cause of my emotion. New ideas, new prospects, open!—they confuse, they distract me! My mind has not yet attained

sufficient strength to encounter them; some woman's weakness still lingers at my heart."

"Pardon my inconsiderate zeal," said Schedoni, with affected humility, "I have been to blame. If your's is a weakness, it is, at least, an amiable one, and, perhaps, deserves to be encouraged, rather than conquered."

"How, father! If it deserves encouragement, it is not a weakness, but a virtue."

"Be it so," said Schedoni, coolly, "the interest I have felt on this subject, has, perhaps, misled my judgment, and has made me unjust. Think no more of it, or, if you do, let it be only to pardon the zeal I have testified."

"It does not deserve pardon, but thanks," replied the Marchesa, "not thanks only, but reward. Good father, I hope it will some time be in my power to prove the sincerity of my words."

The Confessor bowed his head.

"I trust that the services you have rendered me, shall be gratefully repaid—rewarded, I dare not hope, for what benefit could possibly reward a service so vast, as it may, perhaps, be in your power to confer upon my family! What recompence could be balanced against the benefit of having rescued the honour of an ancient house!"

"Your goodness is beyond my thanks, or my desert," said Schedoni, and he was again silent.

The Marchesa wished him to lead her back to the point, from which she herself had deviated, and he seemed determined, that she should lead him thither. She mused, and hesitated. Her mind was not yet familiar with atrocious guilt; and the crime which Schedoni had suggested, somewhat alarmed her. She feared to think, and still more to name it; yet, so acutely susceptible was her pride, so stern her indignation, and so profound her desire of vengeance, that her mind was tossed as on a tempestuous ocean, and these terrible feelings threatened to overwhelm all the residue of humanity in her heart. Schedoni observed all its progressive movements, and, like a gaunt tyger, lurked in silence, ready to spring forward at the moment of opportunity.

"It is your advice, then, father," resumed the Marchesa, after a long pause,—"it is your opinion—that Ellena."—— She hesitated, desirous that Schedoni should anticipate her meaning; but he chose to spare his own delicacy rather than that of the Marchesa.

"You think, then, that this insidious girl deserves"——She paused again, but the Confessor, still silent, seemed to wait with submission for what the Marchesa should deliver.

"I repeat, father, that it is your opinion this girl deserves severe punishment."——

"Undoubtedly," replied Schedoni, "Is it not also your own?"

"That not any punishment can be too severe?" continued the Marchesa. "That justice, equally with necessity, demands——her life? Is not this your opinion too?"

"O! pardon me," said Schedoni, "I may have erred; that only *was* my opinion; and when I formed it, I was probably too much under the influence of zeal to be just. When the heart is warm, how is it possible that the judgment can be cool."

"It is *not* then, your opinion, holy father," said the Marchesa with displeasure.

"I do not absolutely say that," replied the Confessor.—"But I leave it to your better judgment to decide upon its justness."

As he said this, he rose to depart. The Marchesa was agitated and perplexed, and requested he would stay; but he excused himself by alledging, that it was the hour when he must attend a particular mass.

"Well then, holy father, I will occupy no more of your valuable moments at present; but you know how highly I estimate your advice, and will not refuse, when I shall at some future time request it."

"I cannot refuse to accept an honour," replied the Confessor, with an air of meekness, "but the subject you

allude to is delicate"——

"And therefore I must value, and require your opinion upon it," rejoined the Marchesa.

"I would wish you to value your own," replied Schedoni; "you cannot have a better director."

"You flatter, father."

"I only reply, my daughter."

"On the evening of to-morrow," said the Marchesa, gravely, "I shall be at vespers in the church of San Nicolo; if you should happen to be there, you will probably see me, when the service is over, and the congregation is departed, in the north cloister. We can there converse on the subject nearest my heart, and without observation.——Farewell!"

"Peace be with you, daughter! and wisdom council your thoughts!" said Schedoni, "I will not fail to visit San Nicolo."

He folded his hands upon his breast, bowed his head, and left the apartment with the silent footstep, that indicates weariness and conscious duplicity.

The Marchesa remained in her closet, shaken by ever-varying passions, and ever-fluctuating opinions; meditating misery for others, and inflicting it only upon herself.

CHAPTER IV.

Along the roofs sounds the low peal of Death,
And Conscience trembles to the boding note;
She views his dim form floating o'er the aisles,
She hears mysterious murmurs in the air,
And voices, strange and potent, hint the crime
That dwells in thought, within her secret soul.

The Marchesa repaired, according to her appointment, to the church of San Nicolo, and, ordering her servants to remain with the carriage at a side-door, entered the choir, attended only by her woman.

When vespers had concluded, she lingered till nearly every person had quitted the choir, and then walked through the solitary aisles to the north cloister. Her heart was as heavy as her step; for when is it that peace and evil passions dwell together? As she slowly paced the cloisters, she perceived a monk passing between the pillars, who, as he approached, lifted his cowl, and she knew him to be Schedoni.

He instantly observed the agitation of her spirits, and that her purpose was not yet determined, according to his hope. But, though his mind became clouded, his countenance remained unaltered; it was grave and thoughtful. The sternness of his vulture-eye was, however, somewhat softened, and its lids were contracted by subtlety.

The Marchesa bade her woman walk apart, while she conferred with her Confessor.

"This unhappy boy," said she, when the attendant was at some distance. "How much suffering does his folly inflict upon his family! My good father, I have need of all your advice and consolation. My mind is perpetually haunted by a sense of my misfortune; it has no respite; awake or in my dream, this ungrateful son alike pursues me! The only relief my heart receives is when conversing with you—my only counsellor, my only disinterested friend."

The Confessor bowed. "The Marchese is, no doubt, equally afflicted with yourself," said he; "but he is, notwithstanding, much more competent to advise you on this delicate subject than I am."

"The Marchese has prejudices, father, as you well know; he is a sensible man, but he is sometimes mistaken, and he is incorrigible in error. He has the faults of a mind that is merely well disposed; he is destitute of the discernment and the energy which would make it great. If it is necessary to adopt a conduct, that departs in the smallest degree from those common rules of morality which he has cherished, without examining them, from his infancy, he is shocked, and shrinks from action. He cannot discriminate the circumstances, that render the same action virtuous or vicious. How then, father, are we to suppose he would approve of the bold inflictions we meditate?"

"Most true!" said the artful Schedoni, with an air of admiration.

"We, therefore, must not consult him," continued the Marchesa, "lest he should now, as formerly, advance and maintain objections, to which we cannot yield. What passes in conversation with you, father, is sacred, it goes no farther."

"Sacred as a confession!" said Schedoni, crossing himself.

"I know not,"—resumed the Marchesa, and hesitated; "I know not"—she repeated in a yet lower voice, "how this girl may be disposed of; and this it is which distracts my mind."

"I marvel much at that," said Schedoni. "With opinions so singularly just, with a mind so accurate, yet so bold as you have displayed, is it possible that you can hesitate as to what is to be done! You, my daughter, will not prove yourself one of those ineffectual declaimers, who can think vigorously, but cannot act so! One way, only, remains for you to pursue, in the present instance; it is the same which your superior sagacity pointed out, and taught me to approve. Is it necessary for me to persuade *her*, by whom I am convinced! There is only one way."

"And on that I have been long meditating," replied the Marchesa, "and, shall I own my weakness? I cannot yet decide."

"My daughter! can it be possible that you should want courage to soar above vulgar prejudice, in action, though not

in opinion?" said Schedoni, who, perceiving that his assistance was necessary to fix her fluctuating mind, gradually began to steal forth from the prudent reserve, in which he had taken shelter.

"If this person was condemned by the law," he continued, "you would pronounce her sentence to be just; yet you dare not, I am humbled while I repeat it, you dare not dispense justice yourself!"

The Marchesa, after some hesitation, said, "I have not the shield of the law to protect me, father: and the boldest virtue may pause, when it reaches the utmost verge of safety."

"Never!" replied the Confessor, warmly; "virtue never trembles; it is her glory, and sublimest attribute to be superior to danger; to despise it. The best principle is not virtue till it reaches this elevation."

A philosopher might, perhaps, have been surprized to hear two persons seriously defining the limits of virtue, at the very moment in which they meditated the most atrocious crime; a man of the world would have considered it to be mere hypocrisy; a supposition which might have disclosed his general knowledge of manners, but would certainly have betrayed his ignorance of the human heart.

The Marchesa was for some time silent and thoughtful, and then repeated deliberately, "I have not the shield of the law to protect me."

"But you have the shield of the church," replied Schedoni; "you should not only have protection, but absolution."

"Absolution!—Does virtue—justice, require absolution, father?"

"When I mentioned absolution for the action which you perceive to be so just and necessary," replied Schedoni, "I accommodated my speech to vulgar prejudice, and to vulgar weakness. And, forgive me, that since you, my daughter, descended from the loftiness of your spirit to regret the shield of the law, I endeavoured to console you, by offering a shield to conscience. But enough of this; let us return to argument. This girl is put out of the way of committing more mischief, of injuring the peace and dignity of a distinguished family; she is sent to an eternal sleep, before her time.—Where is the crime, where is the evil of this? On the contrary, you perceive, and you have convinced me, that it is only strict justice, only self-defence."

The Marchesa was attentive, and the Confessor added, "She is not immortal; and the few years more, that might have been allotted her, she deserves to forfeit, since she would have employed them in cankering the honour of an illustrious house."

"Speak low, father," said the Marchesa, though he spoke almost in a whisper; "the cloister appears solitary, yet some person may lurk behind those pillars. Advise me how this business may be managed; I am ignorant of the particular means."

"There is some hazard in the accomplishment of it, I grant," replied Schedoni; "I know not whom you may confide in.—The men who make a trade of blood"——

"Hush!" said the Marchesa, looking round through the twilight—"a step!"

"It is the Friar's, yonder, who crosses to the choir," replied Schedoni.

They were watchful for a few moments, and then he resumed the subject. "Mercenaries ought not to be trusted,"—

"Yet who but mercenaries"—interrupted the Marchesa, and instantly checked herself. But the question thus implied, did not escape the Confessor.

"Pardon my astonishment," said he, "at the inconsistency, or, what shall I venture to call it? of your opinions! After the acuteness you have displayed on some points, is it possible you can doubt, that principle may both prompt and perform the deed? Why should we hesitate to do what we judge to be right?"

"Ah! reverend father," said the Marchesa, with emotion, "but where shall we find another like yourself—another, who not only can perceive with justness, but will act with energy."

Schedoni was silent.

"Such a friend is above all estimation; but where shall we seek him?"

"Daughter!" said the Monk, emphatically, "my zeal for your family is also above all calculation."

"Good father," replied the Marchesa, comprehending his full meaning, "I know not how to thank you."

"Silence is sometimes eloquence," said Schedoni, significantly.

The Marchesa mused; for her conscience also was eloquent. She tried to overcome its voice, but it would be heard; and sometimes such starts of horrible conviction came over her mind, that she felt as one who, awaking from a dream, opens his eyes only to measure the depth of the precipice on which he totters. In such moments she was astonished, that she had paused for an instant upon a subject so terrible as that of murder. The sophistry of the Confessor, together with the inconsistencies which he had betrayed, and which had not escaped the notice of the Marchesa, even at the time they were uttered, though she had been unconscious of her own, then became more strongly apparent, and she almost determined to suffer the poor Ellena to live. But returning passion, like a wave that has recoiled from the shore, afterwards came with recollected energy, and swept from her feeble mind the barriers, which reason and conscience had begun to rear.

"This confidence with which you have thought proper to honour me," said Schedoni, at length, and paused; "This affair, so momentous"——

"Ay, this affair," interrupted the Marchesa, in a hurried manner,—"but when, and where, good father? Being once convinced, I am anxious to have it settled."

"That must be as occasion offers," replied the Monk, thoughtfully.—"On the shore of the Adriatic, in the province of Apulia, not far from Manfredonia, is a house that might suit the purpose. It is a lone dwelling on the beach, and concealed from travellers, among the forests, which spread for many miles along the coast."

"And the people?" said the Marchesa.

"Ay, daughter, or why travel so far as Apulia? It is inhabited by one poor man, who sustains a miserable existence by fishing. I know him, and could unfold the reasons of his solitary life;—but no matter, it is sufficient that *I know him*."

"And would trust him, father?"

"Ay, lady, with the life of this girl——though scarcely with my own."

"How! Is he is such a villain he may not be trusted! Think further. But now, you objected to a mercenary, yet this man is one!"

"Daughter, he may be trusted, when it is in such a case; he is safe and sure. I have reason to know him."

"Name your reasons, father."

The Confessor was silent, and his countenance assumed a very peculiar character; it was more terrible than usual, and overspread with a dark, cadaverous hue of mingled anger and guilt. The Marchesa started involuntarily as, passing by a window, the evening gleam that fell there, discovered it; and for the first time she wished, that she had not committed herself so wholly to his power. But the die was now cast; it was too late to be prudent; and she again demanded his reasons.

"No matter," said Schedoni, in a stifled voice——"she dies!"

"By his hands?" asked the Marchesa, with strong emotion. "Think, once more, father."

They were both again silent and thoughtful. The Marchesa, at length, said, "Father, I rely upon your integrity and prudence;" and she laid a very flattering emphasis upon the word integrity. "But I conjure you to let this business be finished quickly, suspense is to me the purgatory of this world, and not to trust the accomplishment of it to a second person." She paused, and then added, "I would not willingly owe so vast a debt of obligation to any other than yourself."

"Your request, daughter, that I would not confide this business to a second person," said Schedoni, with displeasure, "cannot be accorded to. Can you suppose, that I, myself"——

"Can I doubt that principle may both prompt and perform the deed," interrupted the Marchesa with quickness, and anticipating his meaning, while she retorted upon him his former words. "Why should we hesitate to do what we judge to be right?"

The silence of Schedoni alone indicated his displeasure, which the Marchesa immediately understood.

"Consider, good father," she added significantly, "how painful it must be to me, to owe so infinite an obligation to a stranger, or to any other than so highly valued a friend as yourself."

Schedoni, while he detected her meaning, and persuaded himself that he despised the flattery, with which she so thinly veiled it, unconsciously suffered his self-love to be soothed by the compliment. He bowed his head, in signal of consent to her wish.

"Avoid violence, if that be possible," she added, immediately comprehending him, "but let her die quickly! The punishment is due to the crime."

The Marchesa happened, as she said this, to cast her eyes upon the inscription over a Confessional, where appeared, in

black letters, these awful words, "*God hears thee!*" It appeared an awful warning. Her countenance changed; it had struck upon her heart. Schedoni was too much engaged by his own thoughts to observe, or understand her silence. She soon recovered herself; and considering that this was a common inscription for Confessionals, disregarded what she had at first considered as a peculiar admonition; yet some moments elapsed, before she could renew the subject.

"You was speaking of a place, father," resumed the Marchesa——"you mentioned a"——

"Ay," muttered the Confessor, still musing,—"in a chamber of that house there is"——

"What noise is that?" said the Marchesa, interrupting him. They listened. A few low and querulous notes of the organ sounded at a distance, and stopped again.

"What mournful music is that?" said the Marchesa in a faultering voice. "It was touched by a fearful hand! Vespers were over long ago!"

"Daughter," said Schedoni, somewhat sternly, "you said you had a man's courage. Alas! you have a woman's heart."

"Excuse me, father; I know not why I feel this agitation, but I will command it. That chamber?"——

"In that chamber," resumed the Confessor, "is a secret door, constructed long ago."——

"And for what purpose constructed?" said the fearful Marchesa.

"Pardon me, daughter; 'tis sufficient that it is there; we will make a good use of it. Through that door—in the night—when she sleeps"——

"I comprehend you," said the Marchesa, "I comprehend you. But why, you have your reasons, no doubt, but why the necessity of a secret door in a house which you say is so lonely—inhabited by only one person?"

"A passage leads to the sea," continued Schedoni, without replying to the question. "There, on the shore, when darkness covers it; there, plunged amidst the waves, no stain shall hint of"——

"Hark!" interrupted the Marchesa, starting, "that note again!"

The organ sounded faintly from the choir, and paused, as before. In the next moment, a slow chaunting of voices was heard, mingling with the rising peal, in a strain particularly melancholy and solemn.

"Who is dead?" said the Marchesa, changing countenance; "it is a requiem!"

"Peace be with the departed!" exclaimed Schedoni, and crossed himself; "Peace rest with his soul!"

"Hark! to that chaunt!" said the Marchesa, in a trembling voice; "it is a first requiem; the soul has but just quitted the body!"

They listened in silence. The Marchesa was much affected; her complexion varied at every instant; her breathings were short and interrupted, and she even shed a few tears, but they were those of despair, rather than of sorrow. "That body is now cold," said she to herself, "which but an hour ago was warm and animated! Those fine senses are closed in death! And to this condition would I reduce a being like myself! Oh, wretched, wretched mother! to what has the folly of a son reduced thee!"

She turned from the Confessor, and walked alone in the cloister. Her agitation encreased; she wept without restraint, for her veil and the evening gloom concealed her, and her sighs were lost amidst the music of the choir.

Schedoni was scarcely less disturbed, but his were emotions of apprehension and contempt. "Behold, what is woman!" said he——"The slave of her passions, the dupe of her senses! When pride and revenge speak in her breast, she defies obstacles, and laughs at crimes! Assail but her senses, let music, for instance, touch some feeble chord of her heart, and echo to her fancy, and lo! all her perceptions change:——she shrinks from the act she had but an instant before believed meritorious, yields to some new emotion, and sinks—the victim of a sound! O, weak and contemptible being!"

The Marchesa, at least, seemed to justify his observations. The desperate passions, which had resisted every remonstrance of reason and humanity, were vanquished only by other passions; and, her senses touched by the mournful melody of music, and her superstitious fears awakened by the occurrence of a requiem for the dead, at the very moment when she was planning murder, she yielded, for a while, to the united influence of pity and terror. Her agitation did not subside; but she returned to the Confessor.

"We will converse on this business at some future time," said she; "at present, my spirits are disordered. Good night, father! Remember me in your orisons."

"Peace be with you, lady!" said the Confessor, bowing gravely, "You shall not be forgotten. Be resolute, and yourself."

The Marchesa beckoned her woman to approach, when, drawing her veil closer, and leaning upon the attendant's arm, she left the cloister. Schedoni remained for a moment on the spot, looking after her, till her figure was lost in the gloom of the long perspective; he then, with thoughtful steps, quitted the cloister by another door. He was disappointed, but he did not despair.

CHAPTER V.

"The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament!
From haunted spring, and dale,
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thicket mourn."

MILTON.

While the Marchesa and the Monk were thus meditating conspiracies against Ellena, she was still in the Ursaline convent on the lake of Celano. In this obscure sanctuary, indisposition, the consequence of the long and severe anxiety she had suffered, compelled her to remain. A fever was on her spirits, and an universal lassitude prevailed over her frame; which became the more effectual, from her very solicitude to conquer it. Every approaching day she hoped she should be able to pursue her journey homeward, yet every day found her as incapable of travelling as the last, and the second week was already gone, before the fine air of Celano, and the tranquillity of her asylum, began to revive her. Vivaldi, who was her daily visitor at the grate of the convent; and who, watching over her with intense solicitude, had hitherto forbore to renew a subject, which, by agitating her spirits, might affect her health, now, that her health strengthened, ventured gradually to mention his fears lest the

place of her retreat should be discovered, and lest he yet might irrecoverably lose her, unless she would approve of their speedy marriage. At every visit he now urged the subject, represented the dangers that surrounded them, and repeated his arguments and entreaties; for now, when he believed that time was pressing forward fatal evils, he could no longer attend to the delicate scruples, that bade him be sparing in entreaty. Ellena, had she obeyed the dictates of her heart, would have rewarded his attachment and his services, by a frank approbation of his proposal; but the objections which reason exhibited against such a concession, she could neither overcome or disregard.

Vivaldi, after he had again represented their present dangers, and claimed the promise of her hand, received in the presence of her deceased relative, Signora Bianchi, gently ventured to remind her, that an event as sudden as lamentable, had first deferred their nuptials, and that if Bianchi had lived, Ellena would have bestowed, long since, the vows he now solicited. Again he intreated her, by every sacred and tender recollection, to conclude the fearful uncertainty of their fate, and to bestow upon him the right to protect her, before they ventured forth from this temporary asylum.

Ellena immediately admitted the sacredness of the promise, which she had formerly given, and assured Vivaldi that she considered herself as indissolubly bound to wed him as if it had been given at the altar; but she objected to a confirmation of it, till his family should seem willing to receive her for their daughter; when, forgetting the injuries

she had received from them, she would no longer refuse their alliance. She added, that Vivaldi ought to be more jealous of the dignity of the woman, whom he honoured with his esteem, than to permit her making a greater concession.

Vivaldi felt the full force of this appeal; he recollected, with anguish, circumstances of which she was happily ignorant, but which served to strengthen with him the justness of her reproof. And, as the aspersions which the Marchese had thrown upon her name, crowded to his memory, pride and indignation swelled his heart, and so far overcame apprehension of hazard, that he formed a momentary resolution to abandon every other consideration, to that of asserting the respect which was due to Ellena, and to forbear claiming her for his wife, till his family should make acknowledgment of their error, and willingly admit her in the rank of their child. But this resolution was as transient as plausible; other considerations, and former fears pressed upon him. He perceived the strong improbability, that they would ever make a voluntary sacrifice of their pride to his love; or yield mistakes, nurtured by prejudice and by willing indulgence, to truth and a sense of justice. In the mean time, the plans, which would be formed for separating him from Ellena, might succeed, and he should lose her for ever. Above all, it appeared, that the best, the only method, which remained for confuting the daring aspersions that had affected her name, was, by proving the high respect he himself felt for her, and presenting her to the world in the sacred character of his wife. These considerations quickly determined him to persevere in his suit; but it was impossible

to urge them to Ellena, since the circumstances they must unfold, would not only shock her delicacy and afflict her heart, but would furnish the proper pride she cherished with new arguments against approaching a family, who had thus grossly insulted her.

While these considerations occupied him, the emotion they occasioned did not escape Ellena's observation; it encreased, as he reflected on the impossibility of urging them to her, and on the hopelessness of prevailing with her, unless he could produce new arguments in his favour. His unaffected distress awakened all her tenderness and gratitude; she asked herself whether she ought any longer to assert her own rights, when by doing so, she sacrificed the peace of him, who had incurred so much danger for her sake, who had rescued her from severe oppression, and had so long and so well proved the strength of his affection.

As she applied these questions, she appeared to herself an unjust and selfish being, unwilling to make any sacrifice for the tranquillity of him, who had given her liberty, even at the risk of his life. Her very virtues, now that they were carried to excess, seemed to her to border upon vices; her sense of dignity, appeared to be narrow pride; her delicacy weakness; her moderated affection cold ingratitude; and her circumspection, little less than prudence degenerated into meanness.

Vivaldi, as apt in admitting hope as fear, immediately perceived her resolution beginning to yield, and he urged again every argument which was likely to prevail over it. But

the subject was too important for Ellena, to be immediately decided upon; he departed with only a faint assurance of encouragement; and she forbade him to return till the following day, when she would acquaint him with her final determination.

This interval was, perhaps, the most painful he had ever experienced. Alone, and on the banks of the lake, he passed many hours in alternate hope and fear; in endeavouring to anticipate the decision, on which seemed suspended all his future peace, and abruptly recoiling from it, as often as imagination represented it to be adverse.

Of the walls, that enclosed her, he scarcely ever lost sight; the view of them seemed to cherish his hopes, and, while he gazed upon their rugged surface, Ellena alone was pictured on his fancy; till his anxiety to learn her disposition towards him arose to agony, and he would abruptly leave the spot. But an invisible spell still seemed to attract him back again, and evening found him pacing slowly beneath the shade of those melancholy boundaries that concealed his Ellena.

Her day was not more tranquil. Whenever prudence and decorous pride forbade her to become a member of the Vivaldi family, as constantly did gratitude, affection, irresistible tenderness plead the cause of Vivaldi. The memory of past times returned; and the very accents of the deceased seemed to murmur from the grave, and command her to fulfil the engagement, which had soothed the dying moments of Bianchi.

On the following morning, Vivaldi was at the gates of the convent, long before the appointed hour, and he lingered in dreadful impatience, till the clock struck the signal for his entrance.

Ellena was already in the parlour; she was alone, and rose in disorder on his approach. His steps faultered, his voice was lost, and his eyes only, which he fixed with a wild earnestness on her's, had power to enquire her resolution. She observed the paleness of his countenance, and his emotion, with a mixture of concern and approbation. At that moment, he perceived her smile, and hold out her hand to him; and fear, care, and doubt vanished at once from his mind. He was incapable of thanking her, but sighed deeply as he pressed her hand, and, overcome with joy, supported himself against the grate that separated them.

"You are, then, indeed my own!" said Vivaldi, at length recovering his voice—"We shall be no more parted—you are mine for ever! But your countenance changes! O heaven! surely I have not mistaken! speak! I conjure you, Ellena; relieve me from these terrible doubts!"

"I am yours, Vivaldi," replied Ellena faintly, "oppression can part us no more."

She wept, and drew her veil over her eyes.

"What mean those tears?" said Vivaldi, with alarm. "Ah! Ellena," he added in a softened voice, "should tears mingle with such moments as these! Should your tears fall upon my

heart now! They tell me, that your consent is given with reluctance—with grief; that your love is feeble, your heart—yes Ellena! that your whole heart is no longer mine!"

"They ought rather to tell you," replied Ellena, "that it is all your own; that my affection never was more powerful than now, when it can overcome every consideration with respect to your family, and urge me to a step which must degrade me in their eyes,—and, I fear, in my own."

"O retract that cruel assertion!" interrupted Vivaldi, "Degrade you in your own!—degrade you in their eyes!" He was much agitated; his countenance was flushed, and an air of more than usual dignity dilated his figure.

"The time shall come, my Ellena," he added with energy, "when they shall understand your worth, and acknowledge your excellence. O! that I were an Emperor, that I might shew to all the world how much I love and honour you!"

Ellena gave him her hand, and, withdrawing her veil, smiled on him through her tears, with gratitude and reviving courage.

Before Vivaldi retired to the convent, he obtained her consent to consult with an aged Benedictine, whom he had engaged in his interest, as to the hour at which the marriage might be solemnized with least observation. The priest informed him, that at the conclusion of the vesper-service, he should be disengaged for several hours; and that, as the first hour after sun-set was more solitary than almost any other,

the brotherhood being then assembled in the refectory, he would meet Vivaldi and Ellena at that time, in a chapel on the edge of the lake, a short distance from the Benedictine convent, to which it belonged, and celebrate their nuptials.

With this proposal, Vivaldi immediately returned to Ellena; when it was agreed that the party should assemble at the hour mentioned by the priest. Ellena, who had thought it proper to mention her intention to the Abbess of the Ursalines, was, by her permission, to be attended by a lay-sister; and Vivaldi was to meet her without the walls, and conduct her to the altar. When the ceremony was over, the fugitives were to embark in a vessel, hired for the purpose, and, crossing the lake, proceed towards Naples. Vivaldi again withdrew to engage a boat, and Ellena to prepare for the continuance of her journey.

As the appointed hour drew near, her spirits sunk, and she watched with melancholy foreboding, the sun retiring amidst stormy clouds, and his rays fading from the highest points of the mountains, till the gloom of twilight prevailed over the scene. She then left her apartment, took a grateful leave of the hospitable Abbess, and, attended by the lay-sister, quitted the convent.

Immediately without the gate she was met by Vivaldi, whose look, as he put her arm within his, gently reproached her for the dejection of her air.

They walked in silence towards the chapel of San Sebastian. The scene appeared to sympathize with the spirits

of Ellena. It was a gloomy evening, and the lake, which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks. She observed with alarm the heavy thunder clouds, that rolled along the sides of the mountains, and the birds circling swiftly over the waters, and scudding away to their nests among the cliffs; and she noticed to Vivaldi, that, as a storm seemed approaching, she wished to avoid crossing the lake. He immediately ordered Paulo to dismiss the boat, and to be in waiting with a carriage, that, if the weather should become clear, they might not be detained longer than was otherwise necessary.

As they approached the chapel, Ellena fixed her eyes on the mournful cypresses which waved over it, and sighed. "Those," she said, "are funereal mementos—not such as should grace the altar of marriage! Vivaldi, I could be superstitious.—Think you not they are portentous of future misfortune? But forgive me; my spirits are weak."

Vivaldi endeavoured to soothe her mind, and tenderly reproached her for the sadness she indulged. Thus they entered the chapel. Silence, and a kind of gloomy sepulchral light, prevailed within. The venerable Benedictine, with a brother, who was to serve as guardian to the bride, were already there, but they were kneeling, and engaged in prayer.

Vivaldi led the trembling Ellena to the altar, where they waited till the Benedictines should have finished, and these were moments of great emotion. She often looked round the dusky chapel, in fearful expectation of discovering some

lurking observer; and, though she knew it to be very improbable, that any person in this neighbourhood could be interested in interrupting the ceremony, her mind involuntarily admitted the possibility of it. Once, indeed, as her eyes glanced over a casement, Ellena fancied she distinguished a human face laid close to the glass, as if to watch what was passing within; but when she looked again, the apparition was gone. Notwithstanding this, she listened with anxiety to the uncertain sounds without, and sometimes started as the surges of the lake dashed over the rock below, almost believing she heard the steps and whispering voices of men in the avenues of the chapel. She tried, however, to subdue apprehension, by considering, that if this were true, an harmless curiosity might have attracted some inhabitants of the convent hither, and her spirits became more composed, till she observed a door open a little way, and a dark countenance looking from behind it. In the next instant it retreated, and the door was closed.

Vivaldi, who perceived Ellena's complexion change, as she laid her hand on his arm, followed her eyes to the door, but, no person appearing, he enquired the cause of her alarm.

"We are observed," said Ellena, "some person appeared at that door!"

"And if we are observed, my love," replied Vivaldi, "who is there in this neighbourhood whose observation we can have reason to fear? Good father, dispatch," he added, turning to the priest, "you forget that we are waiting."

The officiating priest made a signal that he had nearly concluded his orison; but the other brother rose immediately, and spoke with Vivaldi, who desired that the doors of the chapel might be fastened to prevent intrusion.

"We dare not bar the gates of this holy temple," replied the Benedictine, "it is a sanctuary, and never may be closed."

"But you will allow me to repress idle curiosity," said Vivaldi, "and to enquire who watches beyond that door? The tranquillity of this lady demands thus much."

The brother assented, and Vivaldi stepped to the door; but perceiving no person in the obscure passage beyond it, he returned with lighter steps to the altar, from which the officiating priest now rose.

"My children," said he, "I have made you wait,—but an old man's prayers are not less important than a young man's vows, though this is not a moment when you will admit that truth."

"I will allow whatever you please, good father," replied Vivaldi, "if you will administer those vows, without further delay;——time presses."

The venerable priest took his station at the altar, and opened the book. Vivaldi placed himself on his right hand, and with looks of anxious love, endeavoured to encourage Ellena, who, with a dejected countenance, which her veil but ill concealed, and eyes fixed on the ground, leaned on her

attendant sister. The figure and homely features of this sister; the tall stature and harsh visage of the brother, clothed in the gray habit of his order; the silvered head and placid physiognomy of the officiating priest, enlightened by a gleam from the lamp above, opposed to the youthful grace and spirit of Vivaldi, and the milder beauty and sweetness of Ellena, formed altogether a group worthy of the pencil.

The priest had begun the ceremony, when a noise from without again alarmed Ellena, who observed the door once more cautiously opened, and a man bend forward his gigantic figure from behind it. He carried a torch, and its glare, as the door gradually unclosed, discovered other persons in the passage beyond, looking forward over his shoulder into the chapel. The fierceness of their air, and the strange peculiarity of their dress, instantly convinced Ellena that they were not inhabitants of the Benedictine convent, but some terrible messengers of evil. Her half-stifled shriek alarmed Vivaldi, who caught her before she fell to the ground; but, as he had not faced the door, he did not understand the occasion of her terror, till the sudden rush of footsteps made him turn, when he observed several men armed, and very singularly habited, advancing towards the altar.

"Who is he that intrudes upon this sanctuary?" he demanded sternly, while he half rose from the ground where Ellena had sunk.

"What sacrilegious footsteps," cried the priest, "thus rudely violate this holy place?"

Ellena was now insensible; and the men continuing to advance, Vivaldi drew his sword to protect her.

The priest and Vivaldi now spoke together, but the words of neither could be distinguished, when a voice, tremendous from its loudness, like bursting thunder, dissipated the cloud of mystery.

"You Vincentio di Vivaldi, and of Naples," it said, "and you Ellena di Rosalba, of Villa Altieri, we summon you to surrender, in the name of the most holy Inquisition!"

"The Inquisition!" exclaimed Vivaldi, fiercely believing what he heard. "Here is some mistake!"

The official repeated the summons, without deigning to reply.

Vivaldi, yet more astonished, added, "Do not imagine you can so far impose upon my credulity, as that I can believe myself to have fallen within the cognizance of the Inquisition."

"You may believe what you please, Signor," replied the chief officer, "but you and that lady are our prisoners."

"Begone, impostor!" said Vivaldi, springing from the ground, where he had supported Ellena, "or my sword shall teach you to repent your audacity!"

"Do you insult an officer of the Inquisition!" exclaimed the ruffian. "That holy Community will inform you what you

incur by resisting it's mandate."

The priest interrupted Vivaldi's' retort, "If you are really officers of that tremendous tribunal," he said, "produce some proof of your office. Remember this place is sanctified, and tremble for the consequence of imposition. You do wrong to believe, that I will deliver up to you persons who have taken refuge here, without an unequivocal demand from that dread power."

"Produce your form of summons," demanded Vivaldi, with haughty impatience.

"It is here," replied the official, drawing forth a black scroll, which he delivered to the priest, "Read, and be satisfied!"

The Benedictine started the instant he beheld the scroll, but he received and deliberately examined it. The kind of parchment, the impression of the seal, the particular form of words, the private signals, understood only by the initiated—all announced this to be a true instrument of arrestation from the *Holy Office*. The scroll dropped from his hand, and he fixed his eyes, with surprize and unutterable compassion, upon Vivaldi, who stooped to reach the parchment, when it was snatched by the official.

"Unhappy young man!" said the priest, "it is too true; you are summoned by that awful power, to answer to your crime, and I am spared from the commission of a terrible offence!"

Vivaldi appeared thunderstruck. "For what crime, holy father, am I called upon to answer? This is some bold and artful imposture, since it can delude even you! What crime—what offence?"

"I did not think you had been thus hardened in guilt!" replied the priest, "Forbear! add not the audacity of falsehood, to the headlong passions of youth. You understand too well your crime."

"Falsehood!" retorted Vivaldi, "But your years, old man, and those sacred vestments, protect you. For these ruffians, who have dared to implicate that innocent victim," pointing to Ellena, "in the charge, they shall have justice from my vengeance."

"Forbear! forbear!" said the priest, seizing his arms, "have pity on yourself and on her. Know you not the punishment you incur from resistance?"

"I know nor care not," replied Vivaldi, "but I will defend Ellena di Rosalba to the last moment. Let them approach if they dare."

"It is on her, on her who lies senseless at your feet," said the priest, "that they will wreck their vengeance for these insults; on her—the partner of your guilt."

"The partner of my guilt!" exclaimed Vivaldi, with mingled astonishment and indignation——"of my guilt!"

"Rash young man! does not the very veil she wears betray it? I marvel how it could pass my observation!"

"You have stolen a nun from her convent," said the chief officer, "and must answer for the crime. When you have wearied yourself with these heroics, Signor, you must go with us; our patience is wearied already."

Vivaldi observed, for the first time, that Ellena was shrouded in a nun's veil; it was the one which Olivia had lent, to conceal her from the notice of the Abbess, on the night of her departure from San Stefano, and which, in the hurry of that departure, she had forgotten to leave with the nun. During this interval, her mind had been too entirely occupied by cares and apprehension to allow her once to notice, that the veil she wore was other than her usual one; but it had been too well observed by some of the Ursaline sisters.

Though he knew not how to account for the circumstance of the veil, Vivaldi began to perceive others which gave colour to the charge brought against him, and to ascertain the wide circumference of the snare that was spread around him. He fancied, too, that he perceived the hand of Schedoni employed upon it, and that his dark spirit was now avenging itself for the exposure he had suffered in the church of the Spirito Santo, and for all the consequent mortifications. As Vivaldi was ignorant of the ambitious hopes which the Marchesa had encouraged in father Schedoni, he did not see the improbability, that the Confessor would have dared to hazard her favour by this arrest of her son; much less could

he suspect, that Schedoni, having done so, had secrets in his possession, which enabled him safely to defy her resentment, and bind her in silence to his decree.

With the conviction, that Schedoni's was the master-hand that directed the present manœuvre, Vivaldi stood aghast, and gazing in silent unutterable anguish on Ellena, who, as she began to revive, stretched forth her helpless hands, and called upon him to save her. "Do not leave me," said she in accents the most supplicating, "I am safe while you are with me."

At the sound of her voice, he started from his trance, and turning fiercely upon the ruffians, who stood in sullen watchfulness around, bade them depart, or prepare for his fury. At the same instant they all drew their swords, and the shrieks of Ellena, and the supplications of the officiating priest, were lost amidst the tumult of the combatants.

Vivaldi, most unwilling to shed blood, stood merely on the defensive, till the violence of his antagonists compelled him to exert all his skill and strength. He then disabled one of the ruffians; but his skill was insufficient to repel the other two, and he was nearly overcome, when steps were heard approaching, and Paulo rushed into the chapel. Perceiving his master beset, he drew his sword, and came furiously to his aid. He fought with unconquerable audacity and fierceness, till nearly at the moment when his adversary fell, other ruffians entered the chapel, and Vivaldi with his faithful servant was wounded, and, at length, disarmed.

Ellena, who had been withheld from throwing herself between the combatants, now, on observing that Vivaldi was wounded, renewed her efforts for liberty, accompanied by such agony of supplication and complaint, as almost moved to pity the hearts of the surrounding ruffians.

Disabled by his wounds, and also held by his enemies, Vivaldi was compelled to witness her distress and danger, without a hope of rescuing her. In frantic accents he called upon the old priest to protect her.

"I dare not oppose the orders of the Inquisition," replied the Benedictine, "even if I had sufficient strength to defy it's officials. Know you not, unhappy young man, that it is death to resist them?"

"Death!" exclaimed Ellena, "death!"

"Ay lady, too surely so!"

"Signor, it would have been well for you," said one of the officers, "if you had taken my advice; you will pay dearly for what you have done," pointing to the ruffian, who lay severely wounded on the ground.

"My master will not have that to pay for, friend," said Paulo, "for if you must know, that is a piece of my work; and, if my arms were now at liberty, I would try if I could not match it among one of you, though I am so slashed."

"Peace, good Paulo! the deed was mine," said Vivaldi then addressing the official, "For myself I care not, I have done my duty—but for her!—Can you look upon her, innocent and helpless as she is, and not relent! Can you, will you, barbarians! drag her, also, to destruction, upon a charge too so daringly false?"

"Our relenting would be of no service to her," replied the official, "we must do our duty. Whether the charge is true or false, she must answer to it before her judges."

"What charge?" demanded Ellena.

"The charge of having broken your nun's vows," replied the priest.

Ellena raised her eyes to heaven; "Is it even so!" she exclaimed.

"You hear she acknowledges the crime," said one of the ruffians.

"She acknowledges no crime," replied Vivaldi; "she only perceives the extent of the malice that persecutes her. O! Ellena, must I then abandon you to their power! leave you for ever!"

The agony of this thought re-animated him with momentary strength; he burst from the grasp of the officials, and once more clasped Ellena to his bosom, who, unable to speak, wept, with the anguish of a breaking heart, as her head

sunk upon his shoulder. The ruffians around them so far respected their grief, that, for a moment, they did not interrupt it.

Vivaldi's exertion was transient; faint from sorrow, and from loss of blood, he became unable to support himself, and was compelled again to relinquish Ellena.

"Is there no help?" said she, with agony; "will you suffer him to expire on the ground?"

The priest directed, that he should be conveyed to the Benedictine convent, where his wounds might be examined, and medical aid administered. The disabled ruffians were already carried thither; but Vivaldi refused to go, unless Ellena might accompany him. It was contrary to the rules of the place, that a woman should enter it, and before the priest could reply, his Benedictine brother eagerly said, that they dared not transgress the law of the convent.

Ellena's fears for Vivaldi entirely overcame those for herself, and she entreated, that he would suffer himself to be conveyed to the Benedictines; but he could not be prevailed with to leave her. The officials, however, prepared to separate them; Vivaldi in vain urged the useless cruelty of dividing him from Ellena, if, as they had hinted, she also was to be carried to the Inquisition; and as ineffectually demanded, whither they really designed to take her.

"We shall take good care of her, Signor," said an officer, "that is sufficient for you. It signifies nothing whether you

are going the same way, you must not go together."

"Why, did you ever hear, Signor, of arrested persons being suffered to remain in company?" said another ruffian, "Fine plots they would lay; I warrant they would not contradict each other's evidence a tittle."

"You shall not separate me from my master, though," vociferated Paulo; "I demand to be sent to the Inquisition with him, or to the devil, but all is one for that."

"Fair and softly," replied the officer; "you shall be sent to the Inquisition first, and to the devil afterwards; you must be tried before you are condemned."

"But waste no more time," he added to his followers, and pointing to Ellena, "away with her."

As he said this, they lifted Ellena in their arms. "Let me loose!" cried Paulo, when he saw they were carrying her from the place, "let me loose, I say!" and the violence of his struggles burst asunder the cords which held him; a vain release, for he was instantly seized again.

Vivaldi, already exhausted by the loss of blood and the anguish of his mind, made, however, a last effort to save her; he tried to raise himself from the ground, but a sudden film came over his sight, and his senses forsook him, while yet the name of Ellena faultered on his lips.

As they bore her from the chapel, she continued to call upon Vivaldi, and alternately to supplicate that she might once more behold him, and take one last adieu. The ruffians were inexorable, and she heard his voice no more, for he no longer heard—no longer was able to reply to her's.

"O! once again!" she cried in agony, "One word, Vivaldi! Let me hear the sound of your voice yet once again!" But it was silent.

As she quitted the chapel, with eyes still bent towards the spot where he lay, she exclaimed, in the piercing accents of despair, "Farewel, Vivaldi!—O! for ever——ever, farewel!"

The tone, in which she pronounced the last "farewel!" was so touching, that even the cold heart of the priest could not resist it; but he impatiently wiped away the few tears, that rushed into his eyes, before they were observed. Vivaldi heard it—it seemed to arouse him from death!—he heard her mournful voice for the last time, and, turning his eyes, saw her veil floating away through the portal of the chapel. All suffering, all effort, all resistance were vain; the ruffians bound him, bleeding as he was, and conveyed him to the Benedictine convent, together with the wounded Paulo, who unceasingly vociferated on the way thither, "I demand to be sent to the Inquisition! I demand to be sent to the Inquisition!"

CHAPTER VI.

"In earliest Greece to thee, with partial choice,
The grief-full Muse address'd her infant tongue;
The maids and matrons on her awful voice,
Silent and pale, in wild amazement hang."

COLLINS'S ODE TO FEAR.

The wounds of Vivaldi, and of his servant, were pronounced, by the Benedictine who had examined and dressed them, to be not dangerous, but those of one of the ruffians were declared doubtful. Some few of the brothers displayed much compassion and kindness towards the prisoners; but the greater part seemed fearful of expressing any degree of sympathy for persons who had fallen within the cognizance of the Holy Office, and even kept aloof from the chamber, in which they were confined. To this self-restriction, however, they were not long subjected; for Vivaldi and Paulo were compelled to begin their journey as soon as some short rest had sufficiently revived them. They were placed in the same carriage, but the presence of two officers prevented all interchange of conjecture as to the destination of Ellena, and with respect to the immediate occasion of their misfortune. Paulo, indeed, now and then hazarded a surmise, and did not scruple to affirm, that the Abbess of San Stefano was their chief enemy; that the Carmelite friars, who had overtaken them on the road, were

her agents; and that, having traced their route, they had given intelligence where Vivaldi and Ellena might be found.

"I guessed we never should escape the Abbess," said Paulo, "though I would not disturb you, Signor mio, nor the poor lady Ellena, by saying so. But your Abbesses are as cunning as Inquisitors, and are so fond of governing, that they had rather, like them, send a man to the devil, than send him no where."

Vivaldi gave Paulo a significant look, which was meant to repress his imprudent loquacity, and then sunk again into silence and the abstractions of deep grief. The officers, mean while, never spoke, but were observant of all that Paulo said, who perceived their watchfulness, but because he despised them as spies, he thoughtlessly despised them also as enemies, and was so far from concealing opinions, which they might repeat to his prejudice, that he had a pride in exaggerating them, and in daring the worst, which the exasperated tempers of these men, shut up in the same carriage with him, and compelled to hear whatever he chose to say against the institution to which they belonged, could effect. Whenever Vivaldi, recalled from his abstractions by some bold assertion, endeavoured to check his imprudence, Paulo was contented to solace his conscience, instead of protecting himself, by saying, "It is their own fault; they would thrust themselves into my company; let them have enough of it; and, if ever they take me before their reverences, the Inquisitors, *they* shall have enough for it too. I will play up such a tune in the Inquisition as is not heard there every day. I will jingle all the bells on their fool's caps,

and tell them a little honest truth, if they make me smart for it ever so."

Vivaldi, aroused once more, and seriously alarmed for the consequences which honest Paulo might be drawing upon himself, now insisted on his silence, and was obeyed.

They travelled during the whole night, stopping only to change horses. At every post house, Vivaldi looked for a carriage that might inclose Ellena, but none appeared, nor any sound of wheels told him that she followed.

With the morning light he perceived the dome of St. Peter, appearing faintly over the plains that surrounded Rome, and he understood, for the first time, that he was going to the prisons of the Inquisition in that city. The travellers descended upon the Campania, and then rested for a few hours at a small town on its borders.

When they again set forward, Vivaldi perceived that the guard was changed, the officer who had remained with him in the apartment of the inn only appearing among the new faces which surrounded him. The dress and manners of these men differed considerably from those of the other. Their conduct was more temperate, but their countenances expressed a darker cruelty, mingled with a sly demureness, and a solemn self-importance, that announced them at once as belonging to the Inquisition. They were almost invariably silent; and when they did speak, it was only in a few sententious words. To the abounding questions of Paulo, and the few earnest entreaties of his master, to be informed of the

place of Ellena's destination, they made not the least reply; and listened to all the flourishing speeches of the servant against Inquisitors and the Holy Office with the most profound gravity.

Vivaldi was struck with the circumstance of the guard being changed, and still more with the appearance of the party, who now composed it. When he compared the manners of the late, with those of the present guard, he thought he discovered in the first the mere ferocity of ruffians; but in the latter, the principles of cunning and cruelty, which seemed particularly to characterize Inquisitors; he was inclined to believe, that a stratagem had enthralled him, and that now, for the first time, he was in the custody of the *Holy Office*.

It was near midnight when the prisoners entered the *Porto del Popolo*, and found themselves in the midst of the Carnival at Rome. The *Corso*, through which they were obliged to pass, was crowded with gay carriages and masks, with processions of musicians, monks, and mountebanks, was lighted up with innumerable flambeaux, and resounded with the heterogeneous rattling of wheels, the music of serenades, and the jokes and laughter of the revellers, as they sportively threw about their sugar-plumbs. The heat of the weather made it necessary to have the windows of the coach open, and the prisoners, therefore, saw all that passed without. It was a scene, which contrasted cruelly with the feelings and circumstances of Vivaldi; torn as he was from her he most loved, in dreadful uncertainty as to her fate, and himself about to be brought before a tribunal, whose

mysterious and terrible proceedings appalled even the bravest spirits. Altogether, this was one of the most striking examples, which the chequer-work of human life could shew, or human feelings endure, Vivaldi sickened as he looked upon the splendid crowd, while the carriage made its way slowly with it; but Paulo, as he gazed, was reminded of the Corso of Naples, such as it appeared at the time of Carnival, and, comparing the present scene with his native one, he found fault with every thing he beheld. The dresses were tasteless, the equipages without splendor, the people without spirit; yet, such was the propensity of his heart to sympathize with whatever was gay, that, for some moments, he forgot that he was a prisoner on his way to the Inquisition; almost forgot that he was a Neapolitan; and, while he exclaimed against the dullness of a Roman carnival, would have sprung through the carriage window to partake of its spirit, if his fetters and his wounds had not withheld him. A deep sigh from Vivaldi recalled his wandering imagination; and, when he noticed again the sorrow in his master's look, all his lightly joyous spirits fled.

"My *maestro*, my dear *maestro*!"—he said, and knew not how to finish what he wished to express.

At that moment they passed the theatre of San Carlo, the doors of which were thronged with equipages, where Roman ladies, in their gala habits, courtiers in their fantastic dresses, and masks of all descriptions, were hastening to the opera. In the midst of this gay bustle, where the carriage was unable to proceed, the officials of the Inquisition looked on in solemn silence, not a muscle of their features relaxing in sympathy,

or yielding a single wrinkle of the self-importance that lifted their brows; and, while they regarded with secret contempt those, who could be thus lightly pleased, the people, in return, more wisely, perhaps, regarded with contempt the proud moroseness, that refused to partake of innocent pleasures, because they were trifling, and shrunk from countenances furrowed with the sternness of cruelty. But, when their office was distinguished, part of the crowd pressed back from the carriage in affright, while another part advanced with curiosity; though, as the majority retreated, space was left for the carriage to move on. After quitting the Corso, it proceeded for some miles through dark and deserted streets, where only here and there a lamp, hung on high before the image of a saint, shed it's glimmering light, and where a melancholy and universal silence prevailed. At intervals, indeed, the moon, as the clouds passed away, shewed, for a moment, some of those mighty monuments of Rome's eternal name, those sacred ruins, those gigantic skeletons, which once enclosed a soul, whose energies governed a world! Even Vivaldi could not behold with indifference the grandeur of these reliques, as the rays fell upon the hoary walls and columns, or pass among these scenes of ancient story, without feeling a melancholy awe, a sacred enthusiasm, that withdrew him from himself. But the illusion was transient; his own misfortunes pressed too heavily upon him to be long unfelt, and his enthusiasm vanished like the moonlight.

A returning gleam lighted up, soon after, the rude and extensive area, which the carriage was crossing. It appeared,

from it's desolation, and the ruins scattered distantly along its skirts, to be a part of the city entirely abandoned by the modern inhabitants to the reliques of its former grandeur. Not even the shadow of a human being crossed the waste, nor any building appeared, which might be supposed to shelter one. The deep tone of a bell, however, rolling on the silence of the night, announced the haunts of man to be not far off; and Vivaldi perceived in the distance, to which he was approaching, an extent of lofty walls and towers, that, as far as the gloom would permit his eye to penetrate, bounded the horizon. He judged these to be the prisons of the Inquisition. Paulo pointed them out at the same moment. "Ah, Signor!" said he despondingly, "that is the place! what strength! If, my Lord, the Marchese were but to see where we are going! Ah!"——

He concluded with a deep sigh, and sunk again into the state of apprehension and mute expectation, which he had suffered from the moment that he quitted the Corso.

The carriage having reached the walls, followed their bendings to a considerable extent. These walls, of immense height, and strengthened by innumerable massy bulwarks, exhibited neither window or grate, but a vast and dreary blank; a small round tower only, perched here and there upon the summit, breaking their monotony.

The prisoners passed what seemed to be the principal entrance, from the grandeur of its portal, and the gigantic loftiness of the towers that rose over it; and soon after the carriage stopped at an arch-way in the walls, strongly

barricadoed. One of the escort alighted, and, having struck upon the bars, a folding door within was immediately opened, and a man bearing a torch appeared behind the barricado, whose countenance, as he looked through it, might have been copied for the

"Grim-visaged comfortless Despair"

of the Poet.

No words were exchanged between him and the guard; but on perceiving who were without, he opened the iron gate, and the prisoners, having alighted, passed with the two officials beneath the arch, the guard following with a torch. They descended a flight of broad steps, at the foot of which another iron gate admitted them to a kind of hall; such, however, it at first appeared to Vivaldi, as his eyes glanced through its gloomy extent, imperfectly ascertaining it by the lamp, which hung from the centre of the roof. No person appeared, and a death-like silence prevailed; for neither the officials nor the guard yet spoke; nor did any distant sound contradict the notion, that they were traversing the chambers of the dead. To Vivaldi it occurred, that this was one of the burial vaults of the victims, who suffered in the Inquisition, and his whole frame thrilled with horror. Several avenues, opening from the apartment, seemed to lead to distant quarters of this immense fabric, but still no footstep whispering along the pavement, or voice murmuring through the arched roofs, indicated it to be the residence of the living.

Having entered one of the passages, Vivaldi perceived a person clothed in black, and who bore a lighted taper, crossing silently in the remote perspective; and he understood too well from his habit, that he was a member of this dreadful tribunal.

The sound of footsteps seemed to reach the stranger, for he turned, and then paused, while the officers advanced. They then made signs to each other, and exchanged a few words, which neither Vivaldi or his servant could understand, when the stranger, pointing with his taper along another avenue, passed away. Vivaldi followed him with his eyes, till a door at the extremity of the passage opened, and he saw the Inquisitor enter an apartment, whence a great light proceeded, and where several other figures, habited like himself, appeared waiting to receive him. The door immediately closed; and, whether the imagination of Vivaldi was affected, or that the sounds were real, he thought, as it closed, he distinguished half-stifled groans, as of a person in agony.

The avenue, through which the prisoners passed, opened, at length, into an apartment gloomy like the first they had entered, but more extensive. The roof was supported by arches, and long arcades branched off from every side of the chamber, as from a central point, and were lost in the gloom, which the rays of the small lamps, suspended in each, but feebly penetrated.

They rested here, and a person soon after advanced, who appeared to be the jailor, into whose hands Vivaldi and Paulo

were delivered. A few mysterious words having been exchanged, one of the officials crossed the hall, and ascended a wide stair-case, while the other, with the jailor and the guard, remained below, as if awaiting his return.

A long interval elapsed, during which the stillness of the place was sometimes interrupted by a closing door, and, at others, by indistinct sounds, which yet appeared to Vivaldi like lamentations and extorted groans. Inquisitors, in their long black robes, issued, from time to time from the passages, and crossed the hall to other avenues. They eyed the prisoners with curiosity, but without pity. Their visages, with few exceptions, seemed stamped with the characters of demons. Vivaldi could not look upon the grave cruelty, or the ferocious impatience, their countenances severally expressed, without reading in them the fate of some fellow creature, the fate, which these men seemed going, even at this moment, to confirm; and, as they passed with soundless steps, he shrunk from observation, as if their very looks possessed some supernatural power, and could have struck death. But he followed their fleeting figures, as they proceeded on their work of horror, to where the last glimmering ray faded into darkness, expecting to see other doors of other chambers open to receive them. While meditating upon these horrors, Vivaldi lost every selfish consideration in astonishment and indignation of the sufferings, which the frenzied wickedness of man prepares for man, who, even at the moment of infliction, insults his victim with assertions of the justice and necessity of such procedure. "Is this possible!" said Vivaldi internally, "Can this be in human nature!—Can such horrible

perversion of right be permitted! Can man, who calls himself endowed with reason, and immeasurably superior to every other created being, argue himself into the commission of such horrible folly, such inveterate cruelty, as exceeds all the acts of the most irrational and ferocious brute. Brutes do not deliberately slaughter their species; it remains for man only, man, proud of his prerogative of reason, and boasting of his sense of justice, to unite the most terrible extremes of folly and wickedness!"

Vivaldi had been no stranger to the existence of this tribunal; he had long understood the nature of the establishment, and had often received particular accounts of its customs and laws but, though he had believed before, it was now only that conviction appeared to impress his understanding. A new view of human nature seemed to burst, at once, upon his mind, and he could not have experienced greater astonishment, if this had been the first moment, in which he had heard of the institution. But, when he thought of Ellena, considered that she was in the power of this tribunal, and that it was probable she was at this moment within the same dreadful walls, grief, indignation, and despair irritated him almost to frenzy. He seemed suddenly animated with supernatural strength, and ready to attempt impossibilities for her deliverance. It was by a strong effort for self command, that he forbore bursting the bonds, which held him, and making a desperate attempt to seek her through the vast extent of these prisons. Reflection, however, had not so entirely forsaken him, but that he saw the impossibility of succeeding in such an effort, the moment he had conceived

it, and he forbore to rush upon the certain destruction, to which it must have led. His passions, thus restrained, seemed to become virtues, and to display themselves in the energy of his courage and his fortitude. His soul became stern and vigorous in despair, and his manner and countenance assumed a calm dignity, which seemed to awe, in some degree, even his guards. The pain of his wounds was no longer felt; it appeared as if the strength of his intellectual self had subdued the infirmities of the body, and, perhaps, in these moments of elevation, he could have endured the torture without shrinking.

Paulo, meanwhile, mute and grave, was watchful of all that passed; he observed the revolutions in his master's mind, with grief first, and then with surprize, but he could not imitate the noble fortitude, which now gave weight and steadiness to Vivaldi's thoughts. And when he looked on the power and gloom around him, and on the visages of the passing Inquisitors, he began to repent, that he had so freely delivered his opinion of this tribunal, in the presence of its agents, and to perceive, that if he played up the kind of tune he had threatened, it would probably be the last he should ever be permitted to perform in this world.

At length, the chief officer descended the stair-case, and immediately bade Vivaldi follow him. Paulo was accompanying his master, but was withheld by the guard, and told he was to be disposed of in a different way. This was the moment of his severest trial; he declared he would not be separated from his master.

"What did I demand to be brought here for," he cried, "if it was not that I might go shares with the Signor in all his troubles? This is not a place to come to for pleasure, I warrant; and I can promise ye, gentlemen, I would not have come within an hundred miles of you, if it had not been for my master's sake."

The guards roughly interrupted him, and were carrying him away, when Vivaldi's commanding voice arrested them. He returned to speak a few words of consolation to his faithful servant, and, since they were to be separated, to take leave of him.

Paulo embraced his knees, and, while he wept, and his words were almost stifled by sobs, declared no force should drag him from his master, while he had life; and repeatedly appealed to the guards, with—"What did I demand to be brought here for? Did ever any body come here to seek pleasure? What right have you to prevent my going shares with my master in his troubles?"

"We do not intend to deny you that pleasure, friend," replied one of the guards.

"Don't you? Then heaven bless you!" cried Paulo, springing from his knees, and shaking the man by the hand with a violence, that would nearly have dislocated the shoulder of a person less robust.

"So come with us," added the guard, drawing him away from Vivaldi. Paulo now became outrageous, and, struggling

with the guards, burst from them, and again fell at the feet of his master, who raised and embraced him, endeavouring to prevail with him to submit quietly to what was inevitable and to encourage him with hope.

"I trust that our separation will be short," said Vivaldi, "and that we shall meet in happier circumstances. My innocence must soon appear."

"We shall never, never meet again, Signormio, in this world," said Paulo, sobbing violently, "so don't make me hope so. That old Abbess knows what she is about too well to let us escape; or she would not have catched us up so cunningly as she did; so what signifies innocence! O! if my old lord, the Marchese, did but know where we are!"

Vivaldi interrupted him, and turning to the guards said, "I recommend my faithful servant to your compassion; he is innocent. It will some time, perhaps, be in my power to recompence you for any indulgence you may allow him, and I shall value it a thousand times more highly, than any you could shew to myself! Farewell, Paulo,——farewel! Officer, I am ready."

"O stay! Signor, for one moment—stay!" said Paulo.

"We can wait no longer," said the guard, and again drew Paulo away, who looking piteously after Vivaldi, alternately repeated, "Farewel, dear maestro! farewel dear, dear maestro!" and "What did I demand to be brought here for? What did I demand to be brought here for?—what was it for,

if not to go shares with my maestro?" till Vivaldi was beyond the reach of sight and of hearing.

Vivaldi, having followed the officer up the stair-case, passed through a gallery to an anti-chamber, where, being delivered into the custody of some persons in waiting, his conductor disappeared beyond a folding door, that led to an inner apartment. Over this door was an inscription in Hebrew characters, traced in blood-colour. Dante's inscription on the entrance of the infernal regions, would have been suitable to a place, where every circumstance and feature seemed to say, "*Hope, that comes to all, comes not here!*"

Vivaldi conjectured, that in this chamber they were preparing for him the instruments, which were to extort a confession; and though he knew little of the regular proceedings of this tribunal, he had always understood, that the torture was inflicted upon the accused person, till he made confession of the crime, of which he was suspected. By such a mode of proceeding, the innocent were certain of suffering longer than the guilty; for, as they had nothing to confess, the Inquisitor, mistaking innocence for obstinacy, persevered in his inflictions, and it frequently happened that he compelled the innocent to become criminal, and assert a falsehood, that they might be released from anguish, which they could no longer sustain. Vivaldi considered this circumstance undauntedly; every faculty of his soul was bent up to firmness and endurance. He believed that he understood the extent of the charge, which would be brought against him, a charge as false, as a specious confirmation of it, would be terrible in it's consequence both to Ellena and

himself. Yet every art would be practised to bring him to an acknowledgment of having carried off a nun, and he knew also, that, since the prosecutor and the witnesses are never confronted with the prisoner in cases of severe accusation, and since their very names are concealed from him, it would be scarcely possible for him to prove his innocence. But he did not hesitate an instant whether to sacrifice himself for Ellena, determining rather to expire beneath the merciless inflictions of the Inquisitors, than to assert a falsehood, which must involve her in destruction.

The officer, at length, appeared, and, having beckoned Vivaldi to advance, uncovered his head, and bared his arms. He then led him forward through the folding door into the chamber; having done which, he immediately withdrew, and the door, which shut out Hope, closed after him.

Vivaldi found himself in a spacious apartment, where only two persons were visible, who were seated at a large table, that occupied the centre of the room. They were both habited in black; the one, who seemed by his piercing eye, and extraordinary physiognomy, to be an Inquisitor, wore on his head a kind of black turban, which heightened the natural ferocity of his visage; the other was uncovered, and his arms bared to the elbows. A book, with some instruments of singular appearance, lay before him. Round the table were several unoccupied chairs, on the backs of which appeared figurative signs; at the upper end of the apartment, a gigantic crucifix stretched nearly to the vaulted roof; and, at the lower end, suspended from an arch in the wall, was a dark curtain, but whether it veiled a window, or shrowded some object or

person, necessary to the designs of the Inquisitor, there were little means of judging. It was, however, suspended from an arch such as sometimes contains a casement, or leads to a deep recess.

The Inquisitor called on Vivaldi to advance, and, when he had reached the table, put a book into his hands, and bade him swear to reveal the truth, and keep for ever secret whatever he might see or hear in the apartment.

Vivaldi hesitated to obey so unqualified a command. The Inquisitor reminded him, by a look, not to be mistaken, that he was absolute here; but Vivaldi still hesitated. "Shall I consent to my own condemnation?" said he to himself, "The malice of demons like these may convert the most innocent circumstances into matter of accusation, for my destruction, and I must answer whatever questions they choose to ask. And shall I swear, also, to conceal whatever I may witness in this chamber, when I know that the most diabolical cruelties are hourly practised here?"

The Inquisitor, in a voice which would have made a heart less fortified than was Vivaldi's tremble, again commanded him to swear; at the same time, he made a signal to the person, who sat at the opposite end of the table, and who appeared to be an inferior officer.

Vivaldi was still silent, but he began to consider that, unconscious as he was of crime, it was scarcely possible for his words to be tortured into a self-accusation; and that, whatever he might witness, no retribution would be

prevented, no evil withheld by the oath, which bound him to secresy, since his most severe denunciation could avail nothing against the supreme power of this tribunal. As he did not perceive any good, which could arise from refusing the oath; and saw much immediate evil from resistance, he consented to receive it. Notwithstanding this, when he put the book to his lips, and uttered the tremendous vow prescribed to him, hesitation and reluctance returned upon his mind, and an icy coldness struck to his heart. He was so much affected, that circumstances, apparently the most trivial, had at this moment influence upon his imagination. As he accidentally threw his eyes upon the curtain, which he had observed before without emotion, and now thought it moved, he almost started in expectation of seeing some person, an Inquisitor perhaps, as terrific as the one before him, or an Accuser as malicious as Schedoni, steal from behind it.

The Inquisitor having administered the oath, and the attendant having noted it in his book, the examination began. After demanding, as is usual, the names and titles of Vivaldi and his family, and his place of residence, to which he fully replied, the Inquisitor asked, whether he understood the nature of the accusation on which he had been arrested.

"The order for my arrestation informed me," replied Vivaldi.

"Look to your words!" said the Inquisitor, "and remember your oath. What was the ground of accusation?"

"I understood," said Vivaldi, "that I was accused of having stolen a nun from her sanctuary."

A faint degree of surprise appeared on the brow of the Inquisitor. "You confess it, then?" he said, after the pause of a moment, and making a signal to the Secretary, who immediately noted Vivaldi's words.

"I solemnly deny it," replied Vivaldi, "the accusation is false and malicious."

"Remember the oath you have taken!" repeated the Inquisitor, "learn also, that mercy is shewn to such as make full confession; but that the torture is applied to those, who have the folly and the obstinacy to withhold the truth."

"If you torture me till I acknowledge the justness of this accusation," said Vivaldi, "I must expire under your inflictions, for suffering never shall compel me to assert a falsehood. It is not the truth, which you seek; it is not the guilty, whom you punish; the innocent, having no crimes to confess, are the victims of your cruelty, or, to escape from it, become criminal, and proclaim a lie."

"Recollect yourself," said the Inquisitor, sternly. "You are not brought hither to accuse, but to answer accusation. You say you are innocent; yet acknowledge yourself to be acquainted with the subject of the charge which is to be urged against you! How could you know this, but from the voice of conscience?"

"From the words of your own summons," replied Vivaldi, "and from those of your officials who arrested me."

"How!" exclaimed the Inquisitor, "note that," pointing to the Secretary; "he says by the words of our summons; now we know, that you never read that summons. He says also by the words of our officials;—it appears, then, he is ignorant, that death would follow such a breach of confidence."

"It is true, I never did read the summons," replied Vivaldi, "and as true, that I never asserted I did; the friar, who read it, told of what it accused me, and your officials confirmed the testimony."

"No more of this equivocation!" said the Inquisitor, "Speak only to the question."

"I will not suffer my assertions to be misrepresented," replied Vivaldi, "or my words to be perverted against myself. I have sworn to speak the truth only; since you believe I violate my oath, and doubt my direct and simple words, I will speak no more."

The Inquisitor half rose from his chair, and his countenance grew paler. "Audacious heretic!" he said, "will you dispute, insult, and disobey, the commands of our most holy tribunal! You will be taught the consequence of your desperate impiety.—To the torture with him!"

A stern smile was on the features of Vivaldi; his eyes were calmly fixed on the Inquisitor, and his attitude was

undaunted and firm. His courage, and the cool contempt, which his looks expressed, seemed to touch his examiner, who perceived that he had not a common mind to operate upon. He abandoned, therefore, for the present, terrific measures, and, resuming his usual manner, proceeded in the examination.

"Where were you arrested?"

"At the chapel of San Sebastian, on the lake of Celano."

"You are certain as to this?" asked the Inquisitor, "you are sure it was not at the village of Legano, on the high road between Celano and Rome?"

Vivaldi, while he confirmed his assertion, recollected with some surprise that Legano was the place where the guard had been changed, and he mentioned the circumstance. The Inquisitor, however, proceeded in his questions, without appearing to notice it. "Was any person arrested with you?"

"You cannot be ignorant," replied Vivaldi, "that Signora di Rosalba, was seized at the same time, upon the false charge of being a nun, who had broken her vows, and eloped from her convent; nor that Paulo Mendrico, my faithful servant! was also made a prisoner, though upon what pretence he was arrested I am utterly ignorant."

The Inquisitor remained for some moments in thoughtful silence, and then enquired slightly concerning the family of Ellena, and her usual place of residence. Vivaldi, fearful of

making some assertion that might be prejudicial to her, referred him to herself, but the inquiry was repeated.

"She is now within these walls," replied Vivaldi, hoping to learn from the manner of his examiner, whether his fears were just, "and can answer these questions better than myself."

The Inquisitor merely bade the Notary write down her name, and then remained for a few moments meditating. At length, he said, "Do you know where you now are?"

Vivaldi, smiling at the question, replied, "I understand that I am in the prisons of the Inquisition, at Rome."

"Do you know what are the crimes that subject persons to the cognizance of the Holy Office?"

Vivaldi was silent.

"Your conscience informs *you*, and your silence confirms *me*. Let me admonish you, once more, to make a full confession of your guilt; remember that this is a merciful tribunal, and shews favour to such as acknowledge their crimes?"

Vivaldi smiled; but the Inquisitor proceeded.

"It does not resemble some severe, yet just courts, where immediate execution follows the confession of a criminal. No! it is merciful, and though it punishes guilt, it never applies the torture but in cases of necessity, when the

obstinate silence of the prisoner requires such a measure. You see, therefore, what you may avoid, and what expect."

"But if the prisoner has nothing to confess?" said Vivaldi, —"Can your tortures make him guilty? They may force a weak mind to be guilty of falsehood; to escape present anguish, a man may unwarily condemn himself to the death! You will find that I am not such an one."

"Young man," replied the Inquisitor, "you will understand too soon, that we never act, but upon sure authority; and will wish, too late, that you had made an honest confession. Your silence cannot keep from us a knowledge of your offences; we are in possession of facts; and your obstinacy can neither wrest from us the truth, or pervert it. Your most secret offences are already written on the tablets of the Holy Office; your conscience cannot reflect them more justly,—Tremble, therefore, and revere. But understand, that, though we have sufficient proof of your guilt, we require you to confess; and that the punishment of obstinacy is as certain, as that of any other offence."

Vivaldi made no reply, and the Inquisitor, after a momentary silence, added, "Was you ever in the church of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?"

"Before I answer the question," said Vivaldi, "I require the name of my accuser."

"You are to recollect that you have no right to demand any thing in this place," observed the Inquisitor, "nor can you be

ignorant that the name of the Informer is always kept sacred from the knowledge of the Accused. Who would venture to do his duty, if his name was arbitrarily to be exposed to the vengeance of the criminal against whom he informs? It is only in a particular process that the Accuser is brought forward."

"The names of the Witnesses?" demanded Vivaldi.

"The same justice conceals them also from the knowledge of the Accused," replied the Inquisitor.

"And is no justice left for the Accused?" said Vivaldi. "Is he to be tried and condemned without being confronted with either his Prosecutor, or the Witnesses!"

"Your questions are too many," said the Inquisitor, "and your answers too few. The Informer is not also the Prosecutor; the Holy Office, before which the information is laid, is the Prosecutor, and the dispenser of justice; its Public Accuser lays the circumstances, and the testimonies of the Witnesses, before the Court. But too much of this."

"How!" exclaimed Vivaldi, "is the tribunal at once the Prosecutor, Witness, and Judge! What can private malice wish for more, than such a court of *justice*, at which to arraign it's enemy? The stiletto of the Assassin is not so sure, or so fatal to innocence. I now perceive, that it avails me nothing to be guiltless; a single enemy is sufficient to accomplish my destruction."

"You have an enemy then?" observed the Inquisitor.

Vivaldi was too well convinced that he had one, but there was not sufficient proof, as to the person of this enemy, to justify him in asserting that it was Schedoni. The circumstance of Ellena having been arrested, would have compelled him to suspect another person as being at least accessary to the designs of the Confessor, had not credulity started in horror from the supposition, that a mother's resentment could possibly betray her son into the prisons of the Inquisition, though this mother had exhibited a temper of remorseless cruelty towards a stranger, who had interrupted her views for that son.

"You have an enemy then?" repeated the Inquisitor.

"That I am here sufficiently proves it," replied Vivaldi. "But I am so little any man's enemy, that I know not who to call mine."

"It is evident, then, that you have no enemy," observed the subtle Inquisitor, "and that this accusation is brought against you by a respecter of truth, and a faithful servant of the Roman interest."

Vivaldi was shocked to perceive the insidious art, by which he had been betrayed into a declaration apparently so harmless, and the cruel dexterity with which it had been turned against him. A lofty and contemptuous silence was all that he opposed to the treachery of his examiner, on whose countenance appeared a smile of triumph and self-

congratulation, the life of a fellow creature being, in his estimation, of no comparative importance with the self-applauses of successful art; the art, too, upon which he most valued himself—that of his profession.

The Inquisitor proceeded, "You persist, then, in withholding the truth?" He paused, but Vivaldi making no reply, he resumed.

"Since it is evident, from your own declaration, that you have no enemy, whom private resentment might have instigated to accuse you; and, from other circumstances which have occurred in your conduct, that you are conscious of more than you have confessed,—it appears, that the accusation which has been urged against you, is not a malicious slander. I exhort you, therefore, and once more conjure you, by our holy faith, to make an ingenuous confession of your offences, and to save yourself from the means, which must of necessity be enforced to obtain a confession before your trial commences. I adjure you, also, to consider, that by such open conduct only, can mercy be won to soften the justice of this most righteous tribunal!"

Vivaldi, perceiving that it was now necessary for him to reply, once more solemnly asserted his innocence of the crime alledged against him in the summons, and of the consciousness of any act, which might lawfully subject him to the notice of the Holy Office.

The Inquisitor again demanded what was the crime alledged, and, Vivaldi having repeated the accusation, he

again bade the secretary note it, as he did which, Vivaldi thought he perceived upon his features something of a malignant satisfaction, for which he knew not how to account. When the secretary had finished, Vivaldi was ordered to subscribe his name and quality to the depositions, and he obeyed.

The Inquisitor then bade him consider of the admonition he had received, and prepare either to confess on the morrow, or to undergo the question. As he concluded, he gave a signal, and the officer, who had conducted Vivaldi into the chamber, immediately appeared.

"You know your orders," said the Inquisitor, "receive your prisoner, and see that they are obeyed."

The official bowed, and Vivaldi followed him from the apartment in melancholy silence.

CHAPTER VII.

Call up the spirit of the ocean, bid
Him raise the storm! The waves begin to heave,
To curl, to foam; the white surges run far
Upon the darkening waters, and mighty
Sounds of strife are heard. Wrapt in the midnight
Of the clouds, sits Terror, meditating
Woe. Her doubtful form appears and fades,
Like the shadow of Death, when he mingles
With the gloom of the sepulchre, and broods
In lonely silence. Her spirits are abroad!
They do her bidding! Hark, to that shriek!
The echoes of the shore have heard!

Ellena, meanwhile, when she had been carried from the chapel of San Sebastian, was placed upon a horse in waiting, and, guarded by the two men who had seized her, commenced a journey, which continued with little interruption during two nights and days. She had no means of judging whither she was going, and listened in vain expectation, for the feet of horses, and the voice of Vivaldi, who, she had been told, was following on the same road.

The steps of travellers seldom broke upon the silence of these regions, and, during the journey, she was met only by some market-people passing to a neighbouring town, or now and then by the vine-dressers or labourers in the olive grounds; and she descended upon the vast plains of Apulia, still ignorant of her situation. An encampment, not of

warriors, but of shepherds, who were leading their flocks to the mountains of Abruzzo, enlivened a small tract of these levels, which were shadowed on the north and east by the mountainous ridge of the Garganus, stretching from the Apennine far into the Adriatic.

The appearance of the shepherds was nearly as wild and savage as that of the men, who conducted Ellena; but their pastoral instruments of flageolets and tabors spoke of more civilized feelings, as they sounded sweetly over the desert. Her guards rested, and refreshed themselves with goats milk, barley cakes, and almonds, and the manners of these shepherds, like those she had formerly met with on the mountains, proved to be more hospitable than their air had indicated.

After Ellena had quitted this pastoral camp, no vestige of a human residence appeared for several leagues, except here and there the towers of a decayed fortress, perched upon the lofty acclivities she was approaching, and half concealed in the woods. The evening of the second day was drawing on, when her guards drew near the forest, which she had long observed in the distance, spreading over the many-rising steeps of the Garganus. They entered by a track, a road it could not be called, which led among oaks and gigantic chestnuts, apparently the growth of centuries, and so thickly interwoven, that their branches formed a canopy which seldom admitted the sky. The gloom which they threw around, and the thickets of cystus, juniper, and lenticus, which flourished beneath the shade, gave a character of fearful wildness to the scene.

Having reached an eminence, where the trees were more thinly scattered, Ellena perceived the forests spreading on all sides among hills and vallies, and descending towards the Adriatic, which bounded the distance in front. The coast, bending into a bay, was rocky and bold. Lofty pinnacles, wooded to their summits, rose over the shores, and cliffs of naked marble of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance, obtruded themselves far into the waves, breasting their eternal fury. Beyond the margin of the coast, as far as the eye could reach, appeared pointed mountains, darkened with forests, rising ridge over ridge in many successions. Ellena, as she surveyed this wild scenery, felt as if she was going into eternal banishment from society. She was tranquil, but it was with the quietness of exhausted grief, not of resignation; and she looked back upon the past, and awaited the future, with a kind of out-breathed despair.

She had travelled for some miles through the forest, her guards only now and then uttering to each other a question, or an observation concerning the changes which had taken place in the bordering scenery, since they last passed it, when night began to close in upon them.

Ellena perceived her approach to the sea, only by the murmurs of its surge upon the rocky coast, till, having reached an eminence, which was, however, no more than the base of two woody mountains that towered closely over it, she saw dimly it's gray surface spreading in the bay below. She now ventured to ask how much further she was to go, and whether she was to be taken on board one of the little

vessels, apparently fishing smacks, that she could just discern at anchor.

"You have not far to go now," replied one of the guards, surlily; "you will soon be at the end of your journey, and at rest."

They descended to the shore, and presently came to a lonely dwelling, which stood so near the margin of the sea, as almost to be washed by the waves. No light appeared at any of the lattices; and, from the silence that reigned within, it seemed to be uninhabited. The guard had probably reason to know otherwise, for they halted at the door, and shouted with all their strength. No voice, however, answered to their call, and, while they persevered in efforts to rouse the inhabitants, Ellena anxiously examined the building, as exactly as the twilight would permit. It was of an ancient and peculiar structure, and, though scarcely important enough for a mansion, had evidently never been designed for the residence of peasants.

The walls, of unhewn marble, were high, and strengthened by bastions; and the edifice had turretted corners, which, with the porch in front, and the sloping roof, were falling fast into numerous symptoms of decay. The whole building, with it's dark windows and soundless avenues, had an air strikingly forlorn and solitary. A high wall surrounded the small court in which it stood, and probably had once served as a defence to the dwelling; but the gates, which should have closed against intruders, could no longer perform their office; one of the folds had dropped from it's fastenings, and

lay on the ground almost concealed in a deep bed of weeds, and, the other creaked on its hinges to every blast, at each swing seeming ready to follow the fate of it's companion.

The repeated calls of the guard, were, at length, answered by a rough voice from within; when the door of the porch was lazily unbarred, and opened by a man, whole visage was so misery-struck, that Ellena could not look upon it with indifference, though wrapt in misery of her own. The lamp he held threw a gleam athwart it, and shewed the gaunt ferocity of famine, to which the shadow of his hollow eyes added a terrific wildness. Ellena shrunk while she gazed. She had never before seen villainy and suffering so strongly pictured on the same face, and she observed him with a degree of thrilling curiosity, which for a moment excluded from her mind all consciousness of the evils to be apprehended from him.

It was evident that this house had not been built for his reception; and she conjectured, that he was the servant of some cruel agent of the Marchesa di Vivaldi.

From the porch, she followed into an old hall, ruinous, and destitute of any kind of furniture. It was not extensive, but lofty, for it seemed to ascend to the roof of the edifice, and the chambers above opened around it into a corridor.

Some half-sullen salutations were exchanged between the guard and the stranger, whom they called Spalatro, as they passed into a chamber, where, it appeared that he had been sleeping on a mattress laid in a corner. All the other furniture

of the place, were two or three broken chairs and a table. He eyed Ellena with a shrewd contracted brow, and then looked significantly at the guard, but was silent, till he desired them all to sit down, adding, that he would dress some fish for supper. Ellena discovered that this man was the master of the place; it appeared also that he was the only inhabitant; and, when the guard soon after informed her their journey concluded here, her worst apprehensions were confirmed. The efforts she made to sustain her spirits, were no longer successful. It seemed that she was brought hither by ruffians to a lonely house on the sea-shore, inhabited by a man, who had "villain" engraved in every line of his face, to be the victim of inexorable pride and an insatiable desire of revenge. After considering these circumstances, and the words, which had just told her, she was to go no further, conviction struck like lightning upon her heart; and, believing she was brought hither to be assassinated, horror chilled all her frame, and her senses forsook her.

On recovering, she sound herself surrounded by the guard and the stranger, and she would have supplicated for their pity, but that she feared to exasperate them by betraying her suspicions. She complained of fatigue, and requested to be shewn to her room. The men looked upon one another, hesitated, and then asked her to partake of the fish that was preparing. But Ellena having declined the invitation with as good a grace as she could assume, they consented that she should withdraw. Spalatro, taking the lamp, lighted her across the hall, to the corridor above, where he opened the door of a chamber, in which he said she was to sleep.

"Where is my bed?" said the afflicted Ellena, fearfully as she looked round.

"It is there—on the floor," replied Spalatro, pointing to a miserable mattress, over which hung the tattered curtains of what had once been a canopy. "If you want the lamp," he added, "I will leave it, and come for it in a minute or two."

"Will you not let me have a lamp for the night?" she said in a supplicating and timid voice.

"For the night!" said the man gruffly; "What! to set fire to the house?"

Ellena still entreated that he would allow her the comfort of a light.

"Ay, ay," replied Spalatro, with a look she could not comprehend, "it would be a great comfort to you, truly! You do not know what you ask."

"What is it that you mean?" said Ellena, eagerly; "I conjure you, in the name of our holy church, to tell me!"

Spalatro stepped suddenly back, and looked upon her with surprise, but without speaking.

"Have mercy on me!" said Ellena, greatly alarmed by his manner; "I am friendless, and without help!"

"What do you fear?" said the man, recovering himself; and then, without waiting her reply, added—"Is it such an

unmerciful deed to take away a lamp?"

Ellena, who again feared to betray the extent of her suspicions, only replied, that it would be merciful to leave it, for that her spirits were low, and she required light to cheer them in a new abode.

"We do not stand upon such conceits here," replied Spalatro, "we have other matters to mind. Besides, it's the only lamp in the house, and the company below are in darkness while I am losing time here. I will leave it for two minutes, and no more." Ellena made a sign for him to put down the lamp; and, when he left the room, she heard the door barred upon her.

She employed these two minutes in examining the chamber, and the possibility it might afford of an escape. It was a large apartment, unfurnished and unswept of the cobwebs of many years. The only door she discovered was the one, by which she had entered, and the only window a lattice, which was grated. Such preparation for preventing escape seemed to hint how much there might be to escape from.

Having examined the chamber, without finding a single circumstance to encourage hope, tried the strength of the bars, which she could not shake, and fought in vain for an inside fastening to her door, she placed the lamp beside it, and awaited the return of Spalatro. In a few moments he came, and offered her a cup of sour wine with a slice of

bread; which, being somewhat soothed by this attention, she did not think proper to reject.

Spalatro then quitted the room, and the door was again barred. Left once more alone, she tried to overcome apprehension by prayer; and after offering up her vespers with a fervent heart, she became more confiding and composed.

But it was impossible that she could so far forget the dangers of her situation, as to seek sleep, however wearied she might be, while the door of her room remained unsecured against the intrusion of the ruffians below; and, as she had no means of fastening it, she determined to watch during the whole night. Thus left to solitude and darkness, she seated herself upon the mattress to await the return of morning, and was soon lost in sad reflection; every minute occurrence of the past day, and of the conduct of her guards, moved in review before her judgment; and, combining these with the circumstances of her present situation, scarcely a doubt as to the fate designed for her remained. It seemed highly improbable, that the Marchesa di Vivaldi had sent her hither merely for imprisonment, since she might have confined her in a convent, with much less trouble; and still more so, when Ellena considered the character of the Marchesa, such as she had already experienced it. The appearance of this house, and of the man who inhabited it, with the circumstance of no woman being found residing here, each and all of these signified, that she was brought hither, not for long imprisonment, but for death. Her utmost efforts for fortitude or resignation could not overcome the cold tremblings, the

sickness of heart, the faintness and universal horror, that assailed her. How often, with tears of mingled terror and grief, did she call upon Vivaldi—Vivaldi, alas! far distant—to save her; how often exclaim in agony, that she should never, never see him more!

She was spared, however, the horror of believing that he was an inhabitant of the Inquisition. Having detected the imposition, which had been practised towards herself, and that she was neither on the way to the Holy Office, nor conducted by persons belonging to it, she concluded, that the whole affair of Vivaldi's arrest, had been planned by the Marchesa, merely as a pretence for confining him, till she should be placed beyond the reach of his assistance. She hoped, therefore, that he had only been sent to some private residence belonging to his family, and that, when her fate was decided, he would be released, and she be the only victim. This was the sole consideration, that afforded any degree of assuagement to her sufferings.

The people below sat till a late hour. She listened often to their distant voices, as they were distinguishable in the pauses of the surge, that broke loud and hollow on the shore; and every time the creaking hinges of their room door moved, apprehended they were coming to her. At length, it appeared they had left the apartment, or had fallen asleep there, for a profound stilness reigned whenever the murmur of the waves sunk. Doubt did not long deceive her, for, while she yet listened, she distinguished footsteps ascending to the corridor. She heard them approach her chamber, and stop at the door; she heard, also, the low whisperings of their voices,

as they seemed consulting on what was to be done, and she scarcely ventured to draw breath, while she intensely attended to them. Not a word, however, distinctly reached her, till, as one of them was departing, another called out in a half-whisper, "It is below on the table, in my girdle; make haste." The man came back, and said something in a lower voice, to which the other replied, "she sleeps," or Ellena was deceived by the hissing consonants of some other words. He then descended the stairs; and in a few minutes she perceived his comrade also pass away from the door; she listened to his retreating steps, till the roaring of the sea was alone heard in their stead.

Ellena's terrors were relieved only for a moment. Considering the import of the words, it appeared that the man who had descended, was gone for the stiletto of the other, such an instrument being usually worn in the girdle, and from the assurance, "she sleeps," he seemed to fear that his words had been overheard; and she listened again for their steps; but they came no more.

Happily for Ellena's peace, she knew not that her chamber had a door, so contrived as to open without sound, by which assassins might enter unsuspectedly at any hour of the night. Believing that the inhabitants of this house had now retired to rest, her hopes and her spirits began to revive; but she was yet sleepless and watchful. She measured the chamber with unequal steps, often starting as the old boards shook and groaned where she passed; and often pausing to listen whether all was yet still in the corridor. The gleam, which a rising moon threw between the bars of her window, now

began to shew many shadowy objects in the chamber, which she did not recollect to have observed while the lamp was there. More than once, she fancied she saw something glide along towards the place where the mattress was laid, and, almost congealed with terror, she stood still to watch it; but the illusion, if such it was, disappeared where the moonlight faded, and even her fears could not give shape to it beyond. Had she not known that her chamber-door remained strongly barred, she would have believed this was an assassin stealing to the bed where it might be supposed she slept. Even now the thought occurred to her, and vague as it was, had power to strike an anguish, almost deadly, through her heart, while she considered that her immediate situation was nearly as perilous as the one she had imaged. Again she listened, and scarcely dared to breathe; but not the lightest sound occurred in the pauses of the waves, and she believed herself convinced that no person except herself was in the room. That she was deceived in this belief, appeared from her unwillingness to approach the mattress, while it was yet involved in shade. Unable to overcome her reluctance, she took her station at the window, till the strengthening rays should allow a clearer view of the chamber, and in some degree restore her confidence; and she watched the scene without as it gradually became visible. The moon, rising over the ocean, shewed it's restless surface spreading to the wide horizon; and the waves, which broke in foam upon the rocky beach below, retiring in long white lines far upon the waters. She listened to their measured and solemn sound, and, somewhat soothed by the solitary grandeur of the view, remained at the lattice till the moon had risen high into the

heavens; and even till morning began to dawn upon the sea, and purple the eastern clouds.

Re-assured, by the light that now pervaded her room, she returned to the mattress; where anxiety at length yielded to her weariness, and she obtained a short repose.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then,
When your eyes roll so. … … … …
… … … … … … … … … … …
Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on me."

SHAKSPEARE.

Ellena was awakened from profound sleep, by a loud noise at the door of her chamber; when, starting from her mattress, she looked around her with surprise and dismay, as imperfect recollections of the past began to gather on her mind. She distinguished the undrawing of iron bars, and then the countenance of Spalatro at her door, before she had a clear remembrance of her situation—that she was a prisoner in a house on a lonely shore, and that this man was her jailor. Such sickness of the heart returned with these convictions, such faintness and terror, that unable to support her trembling frame, she sunk again upon the mattress, without demanding the reason of this abrupt intrusion.

"I have brought you some breakfast," said Spalatro, "if you are awake to take it; but you seem to be asleep yet. Surely you have had sleep sufficient for one night; you went to rest soon enough."

Ellena made no reply, but, deeply affected with a sense of her situation, looked with beseeching eyes at the man, who advanced, holding forth an oaten cake and a bason of milk. "Where shall I set them?" said he, "you must needs be glad of them, since you had no supper."

Ellena thanked him, and desired he would place them on the floor, for there was neither table nor chair in the room. As he did this, she was struck with the expression of his countenance, which exhibited a strange mixture of archness and malignity. He seemed congratulating himself upon his ingenuity, and anticipating some occasion of triumph; and she was so much interested, that her observation never quitted him while he remained in the room. As his eyes accidentally met her's, he turned them away, with the abruptness of a person who is conscious of evil intentions, and fears lest they should be detected; nor once looked up till he hastily left the chamber, when she heard the door secured as formerly.

The impression, which his look had left on her mind, so wholly engaged her in conjecture, that a considerable time elapsed before she remembered that he had brought the refreshment she so much required; but, as she now lifted it to her lips, a horrible suspicion arrested her hand; it was not, however, before she had swallowed a small quantity of the milk. The look of Spalatro, which occasioned her surprise, had accompanied the setting down of the breakfast, and it occurred to her, that poison was infused in this liquid. She was thus compelled to refuse the sustenance, which was become necessary to her, for she feared to taste even of the

oaten cake, since Spalatro had offered it, but the little milk she had unwarily taken, was so very small that she had no apprehension concerning it.

The day, however, was passed in terror, and almost in despondency; she could neither doubt the purpose, for which she had been brought hither, nor discover any possibility of escaping from her persecutors; yet that propensity to hope, which buoys up the human heart, even in the severest hours of trial, sustained, in some degree, her fainting spirits.

During these miserable hours of solitude and suspense, the only alleviation to her suffering arose from a belief, that Vivaldi was safe, at least from danger, though not from grief; but she now understood too much of the dexterous contrivances of the Marchesa, his mother, to think it was practicable for him to escape from her designs, and again restore her to liberty.

All day Ellena either leaned against the bars of her window, lost in reverie, while her unconscious eyes were fixed upon the ocean, whose murmurs she no longer heard; or she listened for some sound from within the house, that might assist her conjectures, as to the number of persons below, or what might be passing there. The house, however, was profoundly still, except when now and then a footstep sauntered along a distant passage, or a door was heard to close; but not the hum of a single voice arose from the lower rooms, nor any symptom of there being more than one person, beside herself, in the dwelling. Though she had not heard her former guards depart, it appeared certain that they

were gone, and that she was left alone in this place with Spalatro. What could be the purport of such a proceeding, Ellena could not imagine; if her death was designed, it seemed strange that one person only should be left to the hazard of the deed, when three must have rendered the completion of it certain. But this surprise vanished, when her suspicion of poison returned; for it was probable, that these men had believed their scheme to be already nearly accomplished, and had abandoned her to die alone, in a chamber from whence escape was impracticable, leaving Spalatro to dispose of her remains. All the incongruities she had separately observed in their conduct, seemed now to harmonize and unite in one plan; and her death, designed by poison, and that poison to be conveyed in the disguise of nourishment, appeared to have been the object of it. Whether it was that the strength of this conviction affected her fancy, or that the cause was real, Ellena, remembering at this moment that she had tasted the milk, was seized with an universal shuddering, and thought she felt that the poison had been sufficiently potent to affect her, even in the inconsiderable quantity she might have taken.

While she was thus agitated, she distinguished footsteps loitering near her door, and attentively listening, became convinced, that some person was in the corridor. The steps moved softly, sometimes stopping for an instant, as if to allow time for listening, and soon after passed away.

"It is Spalatro!" said Ellena; "he believes that I have taken the poison, and he comes to listen for my dying groans! Alas! he is only come somewhat too soon, perhaps!"

As this horrible supposition occurred, the shuddering returned with encreased violence, and she sunk, almost fainting, on the mattress; but the fit was not of long continuance. When it gradually left her, and recollection revived, she perceived, however, the prudence of suffering Spalatro to suppose she had taken the beverage he brought her, since such belief would at least procure some delay of further schemes, and every delay afforded some possibility for hope to rest upon. Ellena, therefore, poured through the bars of her window, the milk, which she believed Spalatro had designed should be fatal in its consequence.

It was evening, when she again fancied footsteps were lingering near her door, and the suspicion was confirmed, when, on turning her eyes, she perceived a shade on the floor, underneath it, as of some person stationed without. Presently the shadow glided away, and at the same time she distinguished departing steps treading cautiously.

"It is he!" said Ellena; "he still listens for my moans!"

This further confirmation of his designs affected her nearly as much as the first; when anxiously turning her looks towards the corridor, the shadow again appeared beneath the door, but she heard no step. Ellena now watched it with intense solicitude and expectation; fearing every instant that Spalatro would conclude her doubts by entering the room. "And O! when he discovers that I live," thought she, "what may I not expect during the first moments of his disappointment! What less than immediate death!"

The shadow, after remaining a few minutes stationary, moved a little, and then glided away as before. But it quickly returned, and a low sound followed, as of some person endeavouring to unfasten bolts without noise. Ellena heard one bar gently undrawn, and then another; she observed the door begin to move, and then to give way, till it gradually unclosed, and the face of Spalatro presented itself from behind it. Without immediately entering, he threw a glance round the chamber, as if he wished to ascertain some circumstance before he ventured further. His look was more than usually haggard as it rested upon Ellena, who apparently reposed on her mattress.

Having gazed at her for an instant, he ventured towards the bed with quick and unequal steps; his countenance expressed at once impatience, alarm, and the consciousness of guilt. When he was within a few paces, Ellena raised herself, and he started back as if a sudden spectre had crossed him. The more than usual wildness and wanness of his looks, with the whole of his conduct, seemed to confirm all her former terrors; and, when he roughly asked her how she did, Ellena had not sufficient presence of mind to answer that she was ill. For some moments, he regarded her with an earnest and sullen attention, and then a sly glance of scrutiny, which he threw round the chamber, told her that he was enquiring whether she had taken the poison. On perceiving that the bason was empty, he lifted it from the floor, and Ellena fancied a gleam of satisfaction passed over his visage.

"You have had no dinner," said he, "I forgot you; but supper will soon be ready; and you may walk up the beach

till then, if you will."

Ellena, extremely surprised and perplexed by this offer of a seeming indulgence, knew not whether to accept or reject it. She suspected that some treachery lurked within it. The invitation appeared to be only a stratagem to lure her to destruction, and she determined to decline accepting it; when again she considered, that to accomplish this, it was not necessary to withdraw her from the chamber, where she was already sufficiently in the power of her persecutors. Her situation could not be more desperate than it was at present, and almost any change might make it less so.

As she descended from the corridor, and passed through the lower part of the house, no person appeared but her conductor; and she ventured to enquire, whether the men who had brought her hither were departed. Spalatro did not return an answer, but led the way in silence to the court, and, having passed the gates, he pointed toward the west, and said she might walk that way.

Ellena bent her course towards the "many-sounding waves," followed at a short distance by Spalatro, and, wrapt in thought, pursued the windings of the shore, scarcely noticing the objects around her; till, on passing the foot of a rock, she lifted her eyes to the scene that unfolded beyond, and observed some huts scattered at a considerable distance, apparently the residence of fishermen. She could just distinguish the dark sails of some skiffs turning the cliffs, and entering the little bay, where the hamlet margined the beach; but, though she saw the sails lowered, as the boats

approached the shore, they were too far off to allow the figures of the men to appear. To Ellena, who had believed that no human habitation, except her prison, interrupted the vast solitudes of these forests and shores, the view of the huts, remote as they were, imparted a feeble hope, and even somewhat of joy. She looked back, to observe whether Spalatro was near; he was already within a few paces; and, casting a wistful glance forward to the remote cottages, her heart sunk again.

It was a lowering evening, and the sea was dark and swelling; the screams of the sea-birds too, as they wheeled among the clouds, and sought their high nests in the rocks, seemed to indicate an approaching storm. Ellena was not so wholly engaged by selfish sufferings, but that she could sympathise with those of others, and she rejoiced that the fishermen, whole boats she had observed, had escaped the threatening tempest, and were safely sheltered in their little homes, where, as they heard the loud waves break along the coast, they could look with keener pleasure upon the social circle, and the warm comforts around them. From such considerations however, she returned again to a sense of her own forlorn and friendless situation.

"Alas!" said she, "I have no longer a home, a circle to smile welcomes upon me! I have no longer even one friend to support, to rescue me! I—a miserable wanderer on a distant shore! tracked, perhaps, by the footsteps of the assassin, who at this instant eyes his victim with silent watchfulness, and awaits the moment of opportunity to sacrifice her!"

Ellena shuddered as she said this, and turned again to observe whether Spalatro was near. He was not within view; and, while she wondered, and congratulated herself on a possibility of escaping, she perceived a Monk walking silently beneath the dark rocks that overbrowed the beach. His black garments were folded round him; his face was inclined towards the ground, and he had the air of a man in deep meditation.

"His, no doubt, are worthy musings!" said Ellena, as she observed him, with mingled hope and surprise. "I may address myself, without fear, to one of his order. It is probably as much his wish, as it is his duty, to succour the unfortunate. Who could have hoped to find on this sequestered shore so sacred a protector! his convent cannot be fair off."

He approached, his face still bent towards the ground, and Ellena advanced slowly, and with trembling steps, to meet him. As he drew near, he viewed her askance, without lifting his head; but she perceived his large eyes looking from under the shade of his cowl, and the upper part of his peculiar countenance. Her confidence in his protection began to fail, and she faultered, unable to speak, and scarcely daring to meet his eyes. The Monk stalked past her in silence, the lower part of his visage still muffled in his drapery, and as he passed her looked neither with curiosity, nor surprise.

Ellena paused, and determined, when he should be at some distance, to endeavour to make her way to the hamlet, and throw herself upon the humanity of it's inhabitants, rather

than solicit the pity of this forbidding stranger. But in the next moment she heard a step behind her, and, on turning, saw the Monk again approaching. He stalked by as before, surveying her, however, with a sly and scrutinizing glance from the corners of his eyes. His air and countenance were equally repulsive, and still Ellena could not summon courage enough to attempt engaging his compassion; but shrunk as from an enemy. There was something also terrific in the silent stalk of so gigantic a form; it announced both power and treachery. He passed slowly on to some distance, and disappeared among the rocks.

Ellena turned once more with an intention of hastening towards the distant hamlet, before Spalatro should observe her, whose strange absence she had scarcely time to wonder at; but she had not proceeded far, when suddenly she perceived the Monk again at her shoulder. She started, and almost shrieked; while he regarded her with more attention than before. He paused a moment, and seemed to hesitate; after which he again passed on in silence. The distress of Ellena encreased; he was gone the way she had designed to run, and she feared almost equally to follow him, and to return to her prison. Presently he turned, and passed her again, and Ellena hastened forward. But, when fearful of being pursued, she again looked back, she observed him conversing with Spalatro. They appeared to be in consultation, while they slowly advanced, till, probably observing her rapid progress, Spalatro called on her to stop, in a voice that echoed among all the rocks. It was a voice, which would not be disobeyed. She looked hopelessly at the

still distant cottages, and slackened her steps. Presently the Monk again passed before her, and Spalatro had again disappeared. The frown, with which the former now regarded Ellena, was so terrific, that she shrunk trembling back, though she knew him not for her persecutor, since she had never consciously seen Schedoni. He was agitated, and his look became darker.

"Whither go you?" said he in a voice that was stifled by emotion.

"Who is it, father, that asks the question?" said Ellena, endeavouring to appear composed.

"Whither go you, and who are you?" repeated the Monk more sternly.

"I am an unhappy orphan," replied Ellena, sighing deeply, "If you are, as your habit denotes, a friend to the charities, you will regard me with compassion."

Schedoni was silent, and then said—"Who, and what is it that you fear?"

"I fear—even for my life," replied Ellena, with hesitation. She observed a darker shade pass over his countenance. "For your life!" said he, with apparent surprise, "who is there that would think it worth the taking."

Ellena was struck with these words.

"Poor insect!" added Schedoni, "who would crush thee?"

Ellena made no reply; she remained with her eyes fixed in amazement upon his face. There was something in his manner of pronouncing this, yet more extraordinary than in the words themselves. Alarmed by his manner, and awed by the encreasing gloom, and swelling surge, that broke in thunder on the beach, she at length turned away, and again walked towards the hamlet which was yet very remote.

He soon overtook her; when rudely seizing her arm, and gazing earnestly on her face, "Who is it, that you fear?" said he, "say who!"

"That is more than I dare say," replied Ellena, scarcely able to sustain herself.

"Hah! is it even so!" said the Monk, with encreasing emotion. His visage now became so terrible, that Ellena struggled to liberate her arm, and supplicated that he would not detain her. He was silent, and still gazed upon her, but his eyes, when she had ceased to struggle, assumed the fixt and vacant glare of a man, whose thoughts have retired within themselves, and who is no longer conscious to surrounding objects.

"I beseech you to release me!" repeated Ellena, "it is late, and I am far from home."

"That is true," muttered Schedoni, still grasping her arm, and seeming to reply to his own thoughts rather than to her words,—"that is very true."

"The evening is closing fast," continued Ellena, "and I shall be overtaken by the storm."

Schedoni still mused, and then muttered—"The storm, say you? Why ay, let it come."

As he spake, he suffered her arm to drop, but still held it, and walked slowly towards the house. Ellena, thus compelled to accompany him, and yet more alarmed both by his looks, his incoherent answers, and his approach to her prison, renewed her supplications and her efforts for liberty, in a voice of piercing distress, adding, "I am far from home, father; night is coming on. See how the rocks darken! I am far from home, and shall be waited for."

"That is false!" said Schedoni, with emphasis; "and you know it to be so."

"Alas! I do," replied Ellena, with mingled shame and grief, "I have no friends to wait for me!"

"What do those deserve, who deliberately utter falsehoods," continued the Monk, "who deceive, and flatter young men to their destruction?"

"Father!" exclaimed the astonished Ellena.

"Who disturb the peace of families—who trepan, with wanton arts, the heirs of noble houses—who—hah! what do such deserve?"

Overcome with astonishment and terror, Ellena remained silent. She now understood that Schedoni, so far from being likely to prove a protector, was an agent of her worst, and as she had believed, her only enemy; and an apprehension of the immediate and terrible vengeance, which such an agent seemed willing to accomplish, subdued her senses; she tottered, and sunk upon the beach. The weight, which strained the arm Schedoni held, called his attention to her situation.

As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps; came back again, and bent over it—his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity. At one moment, he stepped towards the sea, and taking water in the hollows of his hands, threw it upon her face; at another, seeming to regret that he had done so, he would stamp with sudden fury upon the shore, and walk abruptly to a distance. The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions. He, who had hitherto been insensible to every tender feeling, who, governed by ambition and resentment had contributed, by his artful instigations, to fix the baleful resolution of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and who was come to execute her purpose,—even he could not now look upon the innocent, the wretched Ellena, without yielding to the momentary weakness, as he termed it, of compassion.

While he was yet unable to baffle the new emotion by evil passions, he despised that which conquered him. "And shall the weakness of a girl," said he, "subdue the resolution of a

man! Shall the view of her transient sufferings unnerve my firm heart, and compel me to renounce the lofty plans I have so ardently, so laboriously imagined, at the very instant when they are changing into realities! Am I awake! Is one spark of the fire, which has so long smouldered within my bosom, and consumed my peace, alive! Or am I tame and abject as my fortunes? hah! as my fortunes! Shall the spirit of my family yield for ever to circumstances? The question rouses it, and I feel it's energy revive within me."

He stalked with hasty steps towards Ellena, as if he feared to trust his resolution with a second pause. He had a dagger concealed beneath his Monk's habit; as he had also an assassin's heart shrouded by his garments. He had a dagger—but he hesitated to use it, the blood which it might spill, would be observed by the peasants of the neighbouring hamlet, and might lead to a discovery. It would be safer, he considered, and easier, to lay Ellena, senseless as she was, in the waves; their coldness would recal her to life, only at the moment before they would suffocate her.

As he stooped to lift her, his resolution faultered again, on beholding her innocent face, and in that moment she moved. He started back, as if she could have known his purpose, and, knowing it, could have avenged herself. The water, which he had thrown upon her face, had gradually revived her; she unclosed her eyes, and, on perceiving him, shrieked, and attempted to rise. His resolution was subdued, so tremblingly fearful is guilt in the moment when it would execute it's atrocities. Overcome with apprehensions, yet agitated with shame and indignation against himself for being so, he gazed

at her for an instant in silence, and then abruptly turned away his eyes and left her. Ellena listened to his departing steps, and, raising herself, observed him retiring among the rocks that led towards the house. Astonished at his conduct, and surprised to find that she was alone, Ellena renewed all her efforts to sustain herself, till she should reach the hamlet so long the object of her hopes; but she had proceeded only a few paces, when Spalatro again appeared swiftly approaching. Her utmost exertion availed her nothing; her feeble steps were soon overtaken, and Ellena perceived herself again his prisoner. The look with which she resigned herself, awakened no pity in Spalatro, who uttered some taunting jest upon the swiftness of her flight, as he led her back to her prison, and proceeded in sullen watchfulness. Once again, then, she entered the gloomy walls of that fatal mansion, never more, she now believed, to quit them with life, a belief, which was strengthened when she remembered that the Monk, on leaving her, had taken the way hither; for, though she knew not how to account for his late forbearance, she could not suppose that he would long be merciful. He appeared no more, however, as she passed to her chamber, where Spalatro left her again to solitude and terror, and she heard that fateful door again barred upon her. When his retreating steps had ceased to sound, a stilness, as of the grave, prevailed in the house; like the dead calm, which sometimes precedes the horrors of a tempest.

CHAPTER IX.

"I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat."

SHAKSPEARE.

Schedoni had returned from the beach to the house, in a state of perturbation, that defied the controul of even his own stern will. On the way thither he met Spalatro, whom, as he dispatched him to Ellena, he strictly commanded not to approach his chamber till he should be summoned.

Having reached his apartment, he secured the door, though not any person, except himself, was in the house, nor any one expected, but those who he knew would not dare to intrude upon him. Had it been possible to have shut out all consciousness of himself, also, how willingly would he have done so! He threw himself into a chair, and remained for a considerable time motionless and lost in thought, yet the emotions of his mind were violent and contradictory. At the very instant when his heart reproached him with the crime he had meditated, he regretted the ambitious views he must relinquish if he failed to perpetrate it, and regarded himself with some degree of contempt for having hitherto hesitated on the subject. He considered the character of his own mind with astonishment, for circumstances had drawn forth traits, of which, till now, he had no suspicion. He knew not by what

doctrine to explain the inconsistencies, the contradictions, he experienced, and, perhaps, it was not one of the least that in these moments of direful and conflicting passions, his reason could still look down upon their operations, and lead him to a cool, though brief examination of his own nature. But the subtlety of self-love still eluded his enquiries, and he did not detect that pride was even at this instant of self-examination, and of critical import, the master-spring of his mind. In the earliest dawn of his character this passion had displayed its predominancy, whenever occasion permitted, and it's influence had led to some of the chief events of his life.

The Count di Marinella, for such had formerly been the title of the Confessor, was the younger son of an ancient family, who resided in the duchy of Milan, and near the feet of the Tyrolean Alps, on such estates of their ancestors, as the Italian wars of a former century had left them. The portion, which he had received at the death of his father, was not large, and Schedoni was not of a disposition to improve his patrimony by slow diligence, or to submit to the restraint and humiliation, which his narrow finances would have imposed. He disdained to acknowledge an inferiority of fortune to those, with whom he considered himself equal in rank; and, as he was destitute of generous feeling, and of sound judgment, he had not that loftiness of soul, which is ambitious of true grandeur. On the contrary, he was satisfied with an ostentatious display of pleasures and of power, and, thoughtless of the consequence of dissipation, was contented with the pleasures of the moment, till his exhausted resources compelled him to pause, and to reflect. He perceived, too late

for his advantage, that it was necessary for him to dispose of part of his estate, and to confine himself to the income of the remainder. Incapable of submitting with grace to the reduction, which his folly had rendered expedient, he endeavoured to obtain by cunning, the luxuries that his prudence had failed to keep, and which neither his genius or his integrity could command. He withdrew, however, from the eyes of his neighbours, unwilling to submit his altered circumstances to their observation.

Concerning several years of his life, from this period, nothing was generally known; and, when he was next discovered, it was in the Spirito Santo convent at Naples, in the habit of a Monk, and under the assumed name of Schedoni. His air and countenance were as much altered as his way of life; his looks had become gloomy and severe, and the pride, which had mingled with the gaiety of their former expression, occasionally discovered itself under the disguise of humility, but more frequently in the austerity of silence, and in the barbarity of penance.

The person who discovered Schedoni, would not have recollected him, had not his remarkable eyes first fixed his attention, and then revived remembrance. As he examined his features, he traced the faint resemblance of what Marinella had been, to whom he made himself known.

The Confessor affected to have forgotten his former acquaintance, and assured him, that he was mistaken respecting himself, till the stranger so closely urged some circumstances, that the former was no longer permitted to

dissemble. He retired, in some emotion, with the stranger, and, whatever might be the subject of their conference, he drew from him, before he quitted the convent, a tremendous vow, to keep secret from the brotherhood his knowledge of Schedoni's family, and never to reveal without those walls, that he had seen him. These requests he had urged in a manner, that at once surprised and awed the stranger, and which at the same time that it manifested the weight of Schedoni's fears, bade the former tremble for the consequence of disobedience; and he shuddered even while he promised to obey. Of the first part of the promise he was probably strictly observant; whether he was equally so of the second, does not appear; it is certain, that after this period, he was never more seen or heard of at Naples.

Schedoni, ever ambitious of distinction, adapted his manners to the views and prejudices of the society with whom he resided, and became one of the most exact observers of their outward forms, and almost a prodigy for self-denial and severe discipline. He was pointed out by the fathers of the convent to the juniors as a great example, who was, however, rather to be looked up to with reverential admiration, than with an hope of emulating his sublime virtues. But with such panegyrics their friendship for Schedoni concluded. They found it convenient to applaud the austerities, which they declined to practise; it procured them a character for sanctity, and saved them the necessity of earning it by mortifications of their own; but they both feared and hated Schedoni for his pride and his gloomy austerities, too much, to gratify his ambition by any thing further than

empty praise. He had been several years in the society, without obtaining any considerable advancement, and with the mortification of seeing persons, who had never emulated his severity, raised to high offices in the church. Somewhat too late he discovered, that he was not to expect any substantial favour from the brotherhood, and then it was that his restless and disappointed spirit first sought preferment by other avenues. He had been some years Confessor to the Marchesa di Vivaldi, when the conduct of her son awakened his hopes, by showing him, that he might render himself not only useful but necessary to her, by his councils. It was his custom to study the characters of those around him, with a view of adapting them to his purposes, and, having ascertained that of the Marchesa, these hopes were encouraged. He perceived that her passions were strong, her judgment weak; and he understood, that, if circumstances should ever enable him to be serviceable in promoting the end at which any one of those passions might aim, his fortune would be established.

At length, he so completely insinuated himself into her confidence, and became so necessary to her views, that he could demand his own terms, and this he had not failed to do, though with all the affected delicacy and finesse that his situation seemed to require. An office of high dignity in the church, which had long vainly excited his ambition, was promised him by the Marchesa, who had sufficient influence to obtain it; her condition was that of his preserving the honour of her family, as she delicately termed it, which she was careful to make him understand could be secured only

by the death of Ellena. He acknowledged, with the Marchesa, that the death of this fascinating young woman was the only means of preserving that honour, since, if she lived, they had every evil to expect from the attachment and character of Vivaldi, who would discover and extricate her from any place of confinement, however obscure or difficult of access, to which she might be conveyed. How long and how arduously the Confessor had aimed to oblige the Marchesa, has already appeared. The last scene was now arrived, and he was on the eve of committing that atrocious act, which was to secure the pride of her house, and to satisfy at once his ambition and his desire of vengeance; when an emotion new and surprising to him, had arrested his arm, and compelled his resolution to falter. But this emotion was transient, it disappeared almost with the object that had awakened it; and now, in the silence and retirement of his chamber, he had leisure to recollect his thoughts, to review his schemes, to re-animate his resolution and to wonder again at the pity, which had almost won him from his purpose. The ruling passion of his nature once more resumed it's authority, and he determined to earn the honour, which the Marchesa had in store for him.

After some cool, and more of tumultuous, consideration, he resolved that Ellena should be assassinated that night, while she slept, and afterwards conveyed through a passage of the house communicating with the sea, into which the body might be thrown and buried, with her sad story, beneath the waves. For his own sake, he would have avoided the danger of shedding blood, had this appeared easy; but he had too

much reason to know she had suspicions of poison, to trust to a second attempt by such means; and again his indignation rose against himself, since by yielding to a momentary compassion, he had lost the opportunity afforded him of throwing her unresistingly into the surge.

Spalatro, as has already been hinted, was a former confident of the Confessor, who knew too truly, from experience, that he could be trusted, and had, therefore, engaged him to assist on this occasion. To the hands of this man he consigned the fate of the unhappy Ellena, himself recoiling from the horrible act he had willed; and intending by such a step to involve Spalatro more deeply in the guilt, and thus more effectually to secure his secret.

The night was far advanced before Schedoni's final resolution was taken, when he summoned Spalatro to his chamber to instruct him in his office. He bolted the door, by which the man had entered, forgetting that themselves were the only persons in the house, except the poor Ellena, who, unsuspicious of what was conspiring, and her spirits worn out by the late scene, was sleeping peacefully on her mattress above. Schedoni moved softly from the door he had secured, and, beckoning Spalatro to approach, spoke in a low voice, as if he feared to be overheard. "Have you perceived any sound from her chamber lately?" said he, "Does she sleep, think you?"

"No one has moved there for this hour past, at least," replied Spalatro, "I have been watching in the corridor, till

you called, and should have heard if she had stirred, the old floor shakes so with every step."

"Then hear me, Spalatro," said the Confessor. "I have tried, and found thee faithful, or I should not trust thee in a business of confidence like this. Recollect all I said to thee in the morning, and be resolute and dexterous, as I have ever found thee."

Spalatro listened in gloomy attention, and the Monk proceeded, "It is late; go, therefore, to her chamber; be certain that she sleeps. Take this," he added, "and this," giving him a dagger and a large cloak—"You know how you are to use them."

He paused, and fixed his penetrating eyes on Spalatro, who held up the dagger in silence, examined the blade, and continued to gaze upon it, with a vacant stare, as if he was unconscious of what he did.

"You know your business," repeated Schedoni, authoritatively, "dispatch! time wears; and I must set off early."

The man made no reply.

"The morning dawns already," said the Confessor, still more urgently. "Do you faulter? do you tremble? Do I not know you?"

Spalatro put up the poniard in his bosom without speaking, threw the cloak over his arm, and moved with a loitering step towards the door.

"Dispatch!" repeated the Confessor, "why do you linger?"

"I cannot say I like this business, Signor," said Spalatro surlily. "I know not why I should always do the most, and be paid the least."

"Sordid villain!" exclaimed Schedoni, "you are not satisfied then!"

"No more a villain than yourself, Signor," retorted the man, throwing down the cloak, "I only do your business; and 'tis you that are sordid, for you would take all the reward, and I would only have a poor man have his dues. Do the work yourself, or give me the greater profit."

"Peace!" said Schedoni, "dare no more to insult me with the mention of reward. Do you imagine I have sold myself! 'Tis my will that she dies; this is sufficient; and for you—the price you have asked has been granted."

"It is too little," replied Spalatro, "and besides, I do not like the work.—What harm has she done me?"

"Since when is it, that you have taken upon you to moralize?" said the Confessor, "and how long are these cowardly scruples to last? This is not the first time you have

been employed; what harm had others done you! You forget that I know you, you forget the past."

"No, Signor, I remember it too well, I wish I could forget; I remember it too well.—I have never been at peace since. The bloody hand is always before me! and often of a night, when the sea roars, and storms shake the house, *they* have come, all gashed as I left them, and stood before my bed! I have got up, and ran out upon the shore for safety!"

"Peace!" repeated the Confessor, "where is this frenzy of fear to end? To what are these visions, painted in blood, to lead? I thought I was talking with a man, but find I am speaking only to a baby, possessed with his nurse's dreams! Yet I understand you,—you shall be satisfied."

Schedoni, however, had for once misunderstood this man, when he could not believe it possible that he was really averse to execute what he had undertaken. Whether the innocence and beauty of Ellena had softened his heart, or that his conscience did torture him for his past deeds, he persisted in refusing to murder her. His conscience, or his pity, was of a very peculiar kind however; for, though he refused to execute the deed himself, he consented to wait at the foot of a back stair-case, that communicated with Ellena's chamber, while Schedoni accomplished it, and afterward to assist in carrying the body to the shore. "This is a compromise between conscience and guilt, worthy of a demon," muttered Schedoni, who appeared to be insensible that he had made the same compromise with himself not an hour before; and whose extreme reluctance at this moment, to perpetrate with

his own hand, what he had willingly designed for another, ought to have reminded him of that compromise.

Spalatro, released from the immediate office of an executioner, endured silently the abusive, yet half-stifled, indignation of the Confessor, who also bade him remember, that, though he now shrunk from the most active part of this transaction, he had not always been restrained, in offices of the same nature, by equal compunction; and that not only his means of subsistence, but his very life itself, was at his mercy. Spalatro readily acknowledged that it was so; and Schedoni knew, too well, the truth of what he had urged, to be restrained from his purpose, by any apprehension of the consequence of a discovery from this ruffian.

"Give me the dagger, then," said the Confessor, after a long pause, "take up the cloak, and follow to the stair-case. Let me see, whether your valour will carry you thus far."

Spalatro resigned the stiletto, and threw the cloak again over his arm. The Confessor stepped to the door, and, trying to open it, "It is fastened!" said he in alarm, "some person has got into the house,—it is fastened!"

"That well may be, Signor," replied Spalatro, calmly, "for I saw you bolt it yourself, after I came into the room."

"True," said Schedoni, recovering himself; "that is true."

He opened it, and proceeded along the silent passages, towards the private stair-case, often pausing to listen, and

then stepping more lightly;—the terrific Schedoni, in this moment of meditative guilt, feared even the feeble Ellena. At the foot of the stair-case, he again stopped to listen. "Do you hear any thing?" said he in a whisper.

"I hear only the sea," replied the man.

"Hush! it is something more!" said Schedoni; "that is the murmur of voices!"

They were silent. After a pause of some length, "It is, perhaps, the voice of the spectres I told you of, Signor," said Spalatro, with a sneer. "Give me the dagger," said Schedoni.

Spalatro, instead of obeying, now grasped the arm of the Confessor, who, looking at him for an explanation of this extraordinary action, was still more surprised to observe the paleness and horror of his countenance. His starting eyes seemed to follow some object along the passage, and Schedoni, who began to partake of his feelings, looked forward to discover what occasioned this dismay, but could not perceive any thing that justified it. "What is it you fear?" said he at length.

Spalatro's eyes were still moving in horror, "Do you see nothing!" said he pointing. Schedoni looked again, but did not distinguish any object in the remote gloom of the passage, whither Spalatro's sight was now fixed.

"Come, come," said he, ashamed of his own weakness, "this is not a moment for such fancies. Awake from this idle

dream."

Spalatro withdrew his eyes, but they retained all their wildness. "It was no dream," said he, in the voice of a man who is exhausted by pain, and begins to breathe somewhat more freely again. "I saw it as plainly as I now see you."

"Dotard! what did you see!" enquired the Confessor.

"It came before my eyes in a moment, and shewed itself distinctly and outspread."

"What shewed itself?" repeated Schedoni.

"And then it beckoned—yes, it beckoned me, with that blood-stained finger! and glided away down the passage, still beckoning——till it was lost in the darkness."

"This is very frenzy!" said Schedoni, excessively agitated. "Arouse yourself, and be a man!"

"Frenzy! would it were, Signor. I saw that dreadful hand—I see it now—it is there again!—there!"

Schedoni, shocked, embarrassed, and once more infected with the strange emotions of Spalatro, looked forward expecting to discover some terrific object, but still nothing was visible to him, and he soon recovered himself sufficiently to endeavour to appease the fancy of this conscience-struck ruffian. But Spalatro was insensible to all he could urge, and the Confessor, fearing that his voice, though weak and stifled, would awaken Ellena, tried to

withdraw him from the spot, to the apartment they had quitted.

"The wealth of San Loretto should not make me go that way, Signor," replied he, shuddering—"that was the way *it* beckoned, it vanished that way!"

Every emotion now yielded with Schedoni, to that of apprehension lest Ellena, being awakened, should make his task more horrid by a struggle, and his embarrassment encreased at each instant, for neither command, menace, or entreaty could prevail with Spalatro to retire, till the Monk luckily remembered a door, which opened beyond the stair-case, and would conduct them by another way to the opposite side of the house. The man consented so to depart, when, Schedoni unlocking a suit of rooms, of which he had always kept the keys, they passed in silence through an extent of desolate chambers, till they reached the one, which they had lately left.

Here, relieved from apprehension respecting Ellena, the Confessor expostulated more freely with Spalatro, but neither argument or menace could prevail, and the man persisted in refusing to return to the stair-case, though protesting, at the same time, that he would not remain alone in any part of the house; till the wine, with which the Confessor abundantly supplied him, began to overcome the terrors of his imagination. At length, his courage was so much re-animated, that he consented to resume his station, and await at the foot of the stairs the accomplishment of Schedoni's dreadful errand, with which agreement they

returned thither by the way they had lately passed. The wine with which Schedoni also had found it necessary to strengthen his own resolution, did not secure him from severe emotion, when he found himself again near Ellena; but he made a strenuous effort for self-subjection, as he demanded the dagger of Spalatro.

"You have it already, Signor," replied the man.

"True," said the Monk; "ascend softly, or our steps may awaken her."

"You said I was to wait at the foot of the stairs, Signor, while you"——

"True, true, true!" muttered the Confessor, and had begun to ascend, when his attendant desired him to stop. "You are going in darkness, Signor, you have forgotten the lamp. I have another here."

Schedoni took it angrily, without speaking, and was again ascending, when he hesitated, and once more paused. "The glare will disturb her," thought he, "it is better to go in darkness.—Yet——." He considered, that he could not strike with certainty without light to direct his hand, and he kept the lamp, but returned once more to charge Spalatro not to stir from the foot of the stairs till he called, and to ascend to the chamber, upon the first signal.

"I will obey, Signor, if you, on your part, will promise not to give the signal till all is over."

"I do promise," replied Schedoni. "No more!"

Again he ascended, nor stopped till he reached Ellena's door, where he listened for a sound; but all was as silent as if death already reigned in the chamber. This door was, from long disuse, difficult to be opened; formerly it would have yielded without sound, but now Schedoni was fearful of noise from every effort he made to move it. After some difficulty, however, it gave way, and he perceived, by the stilness within the apartment, that he had not disturbed Ellena. He shaded the lamp with the door for a moment, while he threw an enquiring glance forward, and when he did venture farther, held part of his dark drapery before the light, to prevent the rays from spreading through the room.

As he approached the bed, her gentle breathings informed him that she still slept, and the next moment he was at her side. She lay in deep and peaceful slumber, and seemed to have thrown herself upon the mattress, after having been wearied by her griefs; for, though sleep pressed heavily on her eyes, their lids were yet wet with tears.

While Schedoni gazed for a moment upon her innocent countenance, a faint smile stole over it. He stepped back. "She smiles in her murderer's face!" said he, shuddering, "I must be speedy."

He searched for the dagger, and it was some time before his trembling hand could disengage it from the folds of his garment; but, having done so, he again drew near, and prepared to strike. Her dress perplexed him; it would

interrupt the blow, and he stooped to examine whether he could turn her robe aside, without waking her. As the light passed over her face, he perceived that the smile had vanished—the visions of her sleep were changed, for tears stole from beneath her eye-lids, and her features suffered a slight convulsion. She spoke! Schedoni, apprehending that the light had disturbed her, suddenly drew back, and, again irresolute, shaded the lamp, and concealed himself behind the curtain, while he listened. But her words were inward and indistinct, and convinced him that she still slumbered.

His agitation and repugnance to strike encreased with every moment of delay, and, as often as he prepared to plunge the poniard in her bosom, a shuddering horror restrained him. Astonished at his own feelings, and indignant at what he termed a dastardly weakness, he found it necessary to argue with himself, and his rapid thoughts said, "Do I not feel the necessity of this act! Does not what is dearer to me than resilience—does not my consequence depend on the execution of it? Is she not also beloved by the young Vivaldi?—have I already forgotten the church of the Spirito Santo?" This consideration re-animated him; vengeance nerved his arm, and drawing aside the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised it to strike; when, after gazing for an instant, some new cause of horror seemed to seize all his frame, and he stood for some moments aghast and motionless like a statue. His respiration was short and laborious, chilly drops stood on his forehead, and all his faculties of mind seemed suspended. When he recovered, he stooped to examine again the miniature, which had

occasioned this revolution, and which had lain concealed beneath the lawn that he withdrew. The terrible certainty was almost confirmed, and forgetting, in his impatience to know the truth, the imprudence of suddenly discovering himself to Ellena at this hour of the night, and with a dagger at his feet, he called loudly, "Awake! awake! Say, what is your name? Speak! speak quickly!"

Ellena, aroused by a man's voice, started from her mattress, when, perceiving Schedoni, and by the pale glare of the lamp, his haggard countenance, she shrieked, and sunk back on the pillow. She had not fainted; and believing that he came to murder her, she now exerted herself to plead for mercy. The energy of her feelings enabled her to rise and throw herself at his feet, "Be merciful, O father! be merciful!" said she, in a trembling voice.

"Father!" interrupted Schedoni, with earnestness; and then, seeming to restrain himself, he added, with unaffected surprise, "Why are you thus terrified?" for he had lost, in new interests and emotions, all consciousness of evil intention, and of the singularity of his situation. "What do you fear?" he repeated.

"Have pity, holy father!" exclaimed Ellena in agony.

"Why do you not say whose portrait that is?" demanded he, forgetting that he had not asked the question before.

"Whose portrait?" repeated the Confessor in a loud voice.

"Whose portrait!" said Ellena, with extreme surprise.

"Ay, how came you by it? Be quick—whose resemblance is it?"

"Why should you wish to know?" said Ellena.

"Answer my question," repeated Schedoni, with encreasing sternness.

"I cannot part with it, holy father," replied Ellena, pressing it to her bosom, "you do not wish me to part with it!"

"Is it impossible to make you answer my question!" said he, in extreme perturbation, and turning away from her, "has fear utterly confounded you!" Then, again stepping towards her, and seizing her wrist, he repeated the demand in a tone of desperation.

"Alas! he is dead! or I should not now want a protector," replied Ellena, shrinking from his grasp, and weeping.

"You trifle," said Schedoni, with a terrible look, "I once more demand an answer—whose picture?"——

Ellena lifted it, gazed upon it for a moment, and then pressing it to her lips said, "This was my father."

"Your father!" he repeated in an inward voice, "your father!" and shuddering, turned away.

Ellena looked at him with surprise. "I never knew a father's care," she said, "nor till lately did I perceive the want of it.—But now."——

"His name?" interrupted the Confessor.

"But now," continued Ellena—"if you are not as a father to me—to whom can I look for protection?"

"His name?" repeated Schedoni, with sterner emphasis.

"It is sacred," replied Ellena, "for he was unfortunate!"

"His name?" demanded the Confessor, furiously.

"I have promised to conceal it, father."

"On your life, I charge you tell it; remember, on your life!"

Ellena trembled, was silent, and with supplicating looks implored him to desist from enquiry, but he urged the question more irresistibly. "His name then," said she, "was Marinella."

Schedoni groaned and turned away; but in a few seconds, struggling to command the agitation that shattered his whole frame, he returned to Ellena, and raised her from her knees, on which she had thrown herself to implore mercy.

"The place of his residence?" said the Monk.

"It was far from hence," she replied; but he demanded an unequivocal answer, and she reluctantly gave one.

Schedoni turned away as before, groaned heavily, and paced the chamber without speaking; while Ellena, in her turn, enquired the motive of his questions, and the occasion of his agitation. But he seemed not to notice any thing she said, and, wholly given up to his feelings, was inflexibly silent, while he stalked, with measured steps, along the room, and his face, half hid by his cowl, was bent towards the ground.

Ellena's terror began to yield to astonishment, and this emotion encreased, when, Schedoni approaching her, she perceived tears swell in his eyes, which were fixt on her's, and his countenance soften from the wild disorder that had marked it. Still he could not speak. At length he yielded to the fulness of his heart, and Schedoni, the stern Schedoni, wept and sighed! He seated himself on the mattress beside Ellena, took her hand, which she affrighted attempted to withdraw, and when he could command his voice, said, "Unhappy child!——behold your more unhappy father!" As he concluded, his voice was overcome by groans, and he drew the cowl entirely over his face.

"My father!" exclaimed the astonished and doubting Ellena —"my father!" and fixed her eyes upon him. He gave no reply, but when, a moment after, he lifted his head, "Why do you reproach me with those looks!" said the conscious Schedoni.

"Reproach you!—reproach my father!" repeated Ellena, in accents softening into tenderness, "*Why* should I reproach my father!"

"*Why!*" exclaimed Schedoni, starting from his seat, "Great God!"

As he moved, he stumbled over the dagger at his foot; at that moment it might be said to strike into his heart. He pushed it hastily from sight. Ellena had not observed it; but she observed his labouring breast, his distracted looks, and quick steps, as he walked to and fro in the chamber; and she asked, with the most soothing accents of compassion, and looks of anxious gentleness, what made him so unhappy, and tried to assuage his sufferings. They seemed to encrease with every wish she expressed to dispel them; at one moment he would pause to gaze upon her, and in the next would quit her with a frenzied start.

"Why do you look so piteously upon me, father?" Ellena said, "why are you so unhappy? Tell me, that I may comfort you."

This appeal renewed all the violence of remorse and grief, and he pressed her to his bosom, and wetted her cheek with his tears. Ellena wept to see him weep, till her doubts began to take alarm. Whatever might be the proofs, that had convinced Schedoni of the relationship between them, he had not explained these to her, and, however strong was the eloquence of nature which she witnessed, it was not sufficient to justify an entire confidence in the assertion he

had made, or to allow her to permit his caresses without trembling. She shrunk, and endeavoured to disengage herself; when, immediately understanding her, he said, "Can you doubt the cause of these emotions? these signs of parental affection?"

"Have I not reason to doubt," replied Ellena, timidly, "since I never witnessed them before?"

He withdrew his arms, and, fixing his eyes earnestly on hers, regarded her for some moments in expressive silence. "Poor Innocent!" said he, at length, "you know not how much your words convey!—It is too true, you never have known a father's tenderness till now!"

His countenance darkened while he spoke, and he rose again from his seat. Ellena, meanwhile, astonished, terrified and oppressed by a variety of emotions, had no power to demand his reasons for the belief that so much agitated him, or any explanation of his conduct; but she appealed to the portrait, and endeavoured, by tracing some resemblance between it and Schedoni, to decide her doubts. The countenance of each was as different in character as in years. The miniature displayed a young man rather handsome, of a gay and smiling countenance; yet the smile expressed triumph, rather than sweetness, and his whole air and features were distinguished by a consciousness of superiority that rose even to haughtiness.

Schedoni, on the contrary, advanced in years, exhibited a severe physiognomy, furrowed by thought, no less than by

time, and darkened by the habitual indulgence of morose passions. He looked as if he had never smiled since the portrait was drawn; and it seemed as if the painter, prophetic of Schedoni's future disposition, had arrested and embodied that smile, to prove hereafter that cheerfulness had once played upon his features.

Though the expression was so different between the countenance, which Schedoni formerly owned, and that he now wore, the same character of haughty pride was visible in both; and Ellena did trace a resemblance in the bold outline of the features, but not sufficient to convince her, without farther evidence, that each belonged to the same person, and that the Confessor had ever been the young cavalier in the portrait. In the first tumult of her thoughts, she had not had leisure to dwell upon the singularity of Schedoni's visiting her at this deep hour of the night, or to urge any questions, except vague ones, concerning the truth of her relationship to him. But now, that her mind was somewhat recollected, and that his looks were less terrific, she ventured to ask a fuller explanation of these circumstances, and his reasons for the late extraordinary assertion. "It is past midnight, father," said Ellena, "you may judge then how anxious I am to learn, what motive led you to my chamber at this lonely hour?"

Schedoni made no reply.

"Did you come to warn me of danger?" she continued, "had you discovered the cruel designs of Spalatro? Ah! when I supplicated for your compassion on the shore this evening,

you little thought what perils surrounded me! or you would——"

"You say true!" interrupted he, in a hurried manner, "but name the subject no more. Why will you persist in returning to it?"

His words surprized Ellena, who had not even alluded to the subject till now; but the returning wildness of his countenance, made her fearful of dwelling upon the topic, even so far as to point out his error.

Another deep pause succeeded, during which Schedoni continued to pace the room, sometimes stopping for an instant, to fix his eyes on Ellena, and regarding her with an earnestness that seemed to partake of frenzy, and then gloomily withdrawing his regards, and sighing heavily, as he turned away to a distant part of the room. She, meanwhile, agitated with astonishment at his conduct, as well as at her own circumstances, and with the fear of offending him by further questions, endeavoured to summon courage to solicit the explanation which was so important to her tranquillity. At length she asked, how she might venture to believe a circumstance so surprising, as that of which he had just assured her, and to remind him that he had not yet disclosed his reason for admitting the belief.

The Confessor's feelings were eloquent in reply and, when at length they were sufficiently subdued, to permit him to talk, coherently, he mentioned some circumstances concerning Ellena's family, that proved him at least to have

been intimately acquainted with it; and others, which she believed were known only to Bianchi and herself, that removed every doubt of his identity.

This, however, was a period of his life too big with remorse, horror, and the first pangs of parental affection, to allow him to converse long; deep solitude was necessary for his soul. He wished to plunge where no eye might restrain his emotions, or observe the overflowing anguish of his heart. Having obtained sufficient proof to convince him that Ellena was indeed his child, and assured her that she should be removed from this house on the following day, and be restored to her home, he abruptly left the chamber.

As he descended the stair-case, Spalatro stepped forward to meet him, with the cloak which had been designed to wrap the mangled form of Ellena, when it should be carried to the shore. "Is it done?" said the ruffian, in a stifled voice, "I am ready;" and he spread forth the cloak, and began to ascend.

"Hold! villain, hold!" said Schedoni, lifting up his head for the first time, "Dare to enter that chamber, and your life shall answer for it."

"What!" exclaimed the man, shrinking back astonished —"will not *her*'s satisfy you!"

He trembled for the consequence of what he had said, when he observed the changing countenance of the Confessor. But Schedoni spoke not: the tumult in his breast was too great for utterance, and he pressed hastily forward.

Spalatro followed. "Be pleased to tell me what I am to do," said he, again holding forth the cloak.

"Avaunt!" exclaimed the other, turning fiercely upon him; "leave me."

"How!" said the man, whose spirit was now aroused, "has *your* courage failed too, Signor? If so, I will prove myself no dastard, though you called me one; I'll do the business myself."

"Villain! fiend!" cried Schedoni, seizing the ruffian by the throat, with a grasp that seemed intended to annihilate him; when, recollecting that the fellow was only willing to obey the very instructions he had himself but lately delivered to him, other emotions succeeded to that of rage; he slowly liberated him, and in accents broken, and softening from sternness, bade him retire to rest. "Tomorrow," he added, "I will speak further with you. As for this night——I have changed my purpose. Begone!"

Spalatro was about to express the indignation, which astonishment and fear had hitherto overcome, but his employer repeated his command in a voice of thunder, and closed the door of his apartment with violence, as he shut out a man, whose presence was become hateful to him. He felt relieved by his absence, and began to breathe more freely, till, remembering that this accomplice had just boasted that he was no dastard, he dreaded lest, by way of proving the assertion, he should attempt to commit the crime, from which he had lately shrunk. Terrified at the possibility, and even

apprehending that it might already have become a reality, he rushed from the room, and found Spalatro in the passage leading to the private stair-case; but, whatever might have been his purpose, the situation and looks of the latter were sufficiently alarming. At the approach of Schedoni, he turned his sullen and malignant countenance towards him, without answering the call, or the demand, as to his business there; and with slow steps obeyed the order of his master, that he should withdraw to his room. Thither Schedoni followed, and, having locked him in it for the night, he repaired to the apartment of Ellena, which he secured from the possibility of intrusion. He then returned to his own, not to sleep, but to abandon himself to the agonies of remorse and horror; and he yet shuddered like a man, who has just recoiled from the brink of a precipice, but who still measures the gulf with his eye.

CHAPTER X.

——But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger.

MILTON.

Ellena, when Schedoni had left her, recollected all the particulars, which he had thought proper to reveal concerning her family, and, comparing them with such circumstances as the late Bianchi had related on the same subject, she perceived nothing that was contradictory between the two accounts. But she knew not even yet enough of her own story, to understand why Bianchi had been silent as to some particulars, which had just been disclosed. From Bianchi she had always understood, that her mother had married a nobleman of the duchy of Milan, and of the house of Marinella; that the marriage had been unfortunate; and that she herself, even before the death of the Countess, had been committed to the care of Bianchi, the only sister of that lady. Of this event, or of her mother, Ellena had no remembrance; for the kindness of Bianchi had obliterated from her mind the loss and the griefs of her early infancy; and she recollected only the accident which had discovered to her, in Bianchi's cabinet, after the death of the latter, the miniature and the name of her father. When she had enquired the reason of this injunction, Bianchi replied, that the degraded fortune of her

house rendered privacy desirable; and answered her further questions concerning her father, by relating, that he had died while she was an infant. The picture, which Ellena had discovered, Bianchi had found among the trinkets of the departed Countess, and designed to present it at some future period to Ellena, when her discretion might be trusted with a knowledge of her family. This was the whole of what Signora Bianchi had judged it necessary to explain, though in her last hours it appeared that she wished to reveal more; but it was then too late.

Though Ellena perceived that many circumstances of the relations given by Schedoni, and by Signora Bianchi, coincided, and that none were contradictory, except that of his death, she could not yet subdue her amazement at this discovery, or even the doubts which occasionally recurred to her as to it's truth. Schedoni, on the contrary, had not even appeared surprised, when she assured him, that she always understood her father had been dead many years; though when she asked if her mother too was living, both his distress and his assurances confirmed the relation made by Bianchi.

When Ellena's mind became more tranquil, she noticed again the singularity of Schedoni's visit to her apartment at so sacred an hour; and her thoughts glanced back involuntarily to the scene of the preceding evening on the sea-shore, and the image of her father appeared in each, in the terrific character of an agent of the Marchesa di Vivaldi. The suspicions, however, which she had formerly admitted, respecting his designs, were now impatiently rejected, for she was less anxious to discover truth, than to release herself

from horrible suppositions; and she willingly believed that Schedoni, having misunderstood her character, had only designed to assist in removing her beyond the reach of Vivaldi. The ingenuity of hope suggested also, that, having just heard from her conductors or from Spalatro, some circumstances of her story, he had been led to a suspicion of the relationship between them, and that in the first impatience of parental anxiety, he had disregarded the hour, and come, though at midnight, to her apartment to ascertain the truth.

While she soothed herself with this explanation of a circumstance, which had occasioned her considerable surprise, she perceived on the floor the point of a dagger peeping from beneath the curtains! Emotions almost too horrible to be sustained, followed this discovery; she took the instrument, and gazed upon it aghast and trembling, for a suspicion of the real motive of Schedoni's visit glanced upon her mind. But it was only for a moment; such a supposition was too terrible to be willingly endured; she again believed that Spalatro alone had meditated her destruction, and she thanked the Confessor as her deliverer, instead of shrinking from him as an assassin. She now understood that Schedoni, having discovered the ruffian's design, had rushed into the chamber to save a stranger from his murderous poniard, and had unconsciously rescued his own daughter, when the portrait at her bosom informed him of the truth. With this conviction Ellena's eyes overflowed with gratitude, and her heart was hushed to peace.

Schedoni, meanwhile, shut up in his chamber, was agitated by feelings of a very opposite nature. When their first excess was exhausted, and his mind was calm enough to reflect, the images that appeared on it struck him with solemn wonder. In pursuing Ellena at the criminal instigation of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, it appeared that he had been persecuting his own child; and in thus consenting to conspire against the innocent, he had in the event been only punishing the guilty, and preparing mortification for himself on the exact subject to which he had sacrificed his conscience. Every step that he had taken with a view of gratifying his ambition was retrograde, and while he had been wickedly intent to serve the Marchesa and himself, by preventing the marriage of Vivaldi and Ellena, he had been laboriously counteracting his own fortune. An alliance with the illustrious house of Vivaldi, was above his loftiest hope of advancement, and this event he had himself nearly prevented by the very means which had been adopted, at the expence of every virtuous consideration, to obtain an inferior promotion. Thus by a singular retribution, his own crimes had recoiled upon himself.

Schedoni perceived the many obstacles, which lay between him and his newly awakened hopes, and that much was to be overcome before those nuptials could be publicly solemnized, which he was now still more anxious to promote, than he had lately been to prevent. The approbation of the Marchesa was, at least, desirable, for she had much at her disposal, and without it, though his daughter might be the wife of Vivaldi, he himself would be no otherwise benefited

at present than by the honour of the connection. He had some peculiar reasons for believing, that her consent might be obtained, and, though there was hazard in delaying the nuptials till such an experiment had been made, he resolved to encounter it, rather than forbear to solicit her concurrence. But, if the Marchesa should prove inexorable, he determined to bestow the hand of Ellena, without her knowledge, and in doing so he well knew that he incurred little danger from her resentment, since he had secrets in his possession, the consciousness of which must awe her into a speedy neutrality. The consent of the Marchese, as he despaired of obtaining it, he did not mean to solicit, and the influence of the Marchesa was such, that Schedoni did not regard that as essential.

The first steps, however, to be taken, were those that might release Vivaldi from the Inquisition, the tremendous prison into which Schedoni himself, little foreseeing that he should so soon wish for his liberation, had caused him to be thrown. He had always understood, indeed, that if the Informer forbore to appear against the Accused in this Court, the latter would of course be liberated; and he also believed, that Vivaldi's freedom could be obtained whenever he should think proper to apply to a person at Naples, whom he knew to be connected with the *Holy Office* of Rome. How much the Confessor had suffered his wishes to deceive him, may appear hereafter. His motives for having thus confined Vivaldi, were partly those of self-defence. He dreaded the discovery and the vengeance, which might follow the loss of Ellena, should Vivaldi be at liberty immediately to pursue his

enquiries. But he believed that all trace of her must be lost, after a few weeks had elapsed, and that Vivaldi's sufferings from confinement in the Inquisition would have given interests to his mind, which must weaken the one he felt for Ellena. Yet, though in this instance self-defence had been a principal motive with Schedoni, a desire of revenging the insult he had received in the church of the Spirito Santo, and all the consequent mortifications he experienced, had been a second; and, such was the blackness of his hatred, and the avarice of his revenge, that he had not considered the suffering, which the loss of Ellena would occasion Vivaldi, as sufficient retaliation.

In adopting a mode of punishment so extraordinary as that of imprisonment in the Inquisition, it appears, therefore, that Schedoni was influenced, partly by the difficulty of otherwise confining Vivaldi, during the period for which confinement was absolutely necessary to the success of his own schemes, and partly by a desire of inflicting the tortures of terror. He had also been encouraged by his discovery of this opportunity for conferring new obligations on the Marchesa. The very conduct, that must have appeared to the first glance of an honest mind fatal to his interests, he thought might be rendered beneficial to them, and that his dexterity could so command the business, as that the Marchesa should eventually thank him as the deliverer of her son, instead of discovering and execrating him as his Accuser; a scheme savoured by the unjust and cruel rule enacted by the tribunal he approached, which permitted anonymous Informers.

To procure the arrestation of Vivaldi, it had been only necessary to send a written accusation, without a name, to the *Holy Office* with a mention of the place where the accused person might be seized; but the suffering in consequence of this did not always proceed further than the *question*; since, if the Informer failed to discover himself to the Inquisitors, the prisoner, after many examinations, was released, unless he happened unwarily to criminate himself. Schedoni, as he did not intend to prosecute, believed, therefore, that Vivaldi would of course be discharged after a certain period, and supposing it also utterly impossible that he could ever discover his Accuser, the Confessor determined to appear anxious and active in effecting his release. This character of a deliverer, he knew he should be the better enabled to support by means of a person officially connected with the *Holy Office*, who had already unconsciously assisted his views. In the apartment of this man, Schedoni had accidentally seen a formula of arrestation against a person suspected of Heresy, the view of which had not only suggested to him the plan he had since adopted, but had in some degree assisted him to carry it into effect. He had seen the scroll only for a short time, but his observations were so minute, and his memory so clear, that he was able to copy it with at least sufficient exactness to impose upon the Benedictine priest, who had, perhaps, seldom or never seen a real instrument of this kind. Schedoni had employed this artifice for the purpose of immediately securing Vivaldi, apprehending that, while the Inquisitors were slowly deliberating upon his arrest, he might quit Celano, and elude discovery. If the deception succeeded, it would enable him

also to seize Ellena, and to mislead Vivaldi respecting her destination. The charge of having carried off a nun might appear to be corroborated by many circumstances, and Schedoni would probably have made these the subject of real denunciation, had he not foreseen the danger and the trouble in which it might implicate himself; and that, as the charge could not be substantiated, Ellena would finally escape. As far as his plan now went, it had been successful; some of the bravoes whom he hired to personate officials, had conveyed Vivaldi to the town, where the real officers of the Inquisition were appointed to receive him; while the others carried Ellena to the shore of the Adriatic. Schedoni had much applauded his own ingenuity, in thus contriving, by the matter of the forged accusation, to throw an impenetrable veil over the fate of Ellena, and to secure himself from the suspicions or vengeance of Vivaldi, who, it appeared, would always believe that she had died, or was still confined in the unsearchable prisons of the Inquisition.

Thus he had betrayed himself in endeavouring to betray Vivaldi, whose release, however, he yet supposed could be easily obtained; but how much his policy had, in this instance, outrun his sagacity, now remained to be proved.

The subject of Schedoni's immediate perplexity was, the difficulty of conveying Ellena back to Naples; since, not chusing to appear at present in the character of her father, he could not decorously accompany her thither himself, nor could he prudently entrust her to the conduct of any person, whom he knew in this neighbourhood. If was, however, necessary to form a speedy determination, for he could

neither endure to pass another day in a scene, which must continually impress him with the horrors of the preceding night, nor that Ellena should remain in it; and the morning light already gleamed upon his casements.

After some further deliberation, he resolved to be himself her conductor, as far at least as through the forests of the Garganus, and at the first town where conveniencies could be procured, to throw aside his Monk's habit, and, assuming the dress of a layman, accompany her in this disguise towards Naples, till he should either discover some secure means of sending her forward to that city, or a temporary asylum for her in a convent on the way.

His mind was scarcely more tranquil, after having formed this determination, than before, and he did not attempt to repose himself even for a moment. The circumstances of the late discovery were almost perpetually recurring to his affrighted conscience, accompanied by a fear that Ellena might suspect the real purpose of his midnight visit; and he alternately formed and rejected plausible falsehoods, that might assuage her curiosity, and delude her apprehension.

The hour arrived, however, when it was necessary to prepare for departure, and found him still undecided as to the explanation he should form.

Having released Spalatro from his chamber, and given him directions to procure horses and a guide immediately from the neighbouring hamlet, he repaired to Ellena's room, to prepare her for this hasty removal. On approaching it, a

remembrance of the purpose, with which he had last passed through these same passages and stair-case, appealed so powerfully to his feelings, that he was unable to proceed, and he turned back to his own apartment to recover some command over himself. A few moments restored to him his usual address, though not his tranquillity, and he again approached the chamber; it was now, however, by way of the corridor. As he unbarred the door, his hand trembled; but, when he entered the room, his countenance and manner had resumed their usual solemnity, and his voice only would have betrayed, to an attentive observer, the agitation of his mind.

Ellena was considerably affected on seeing him again, and he examined with a jealous eye the emotions he witnessed. The smile with which she met him was tender, but he perceived it pass away from her features, like the aërial colouring that illumines a mountain's brow; and the gloom of doubt and apprehension again overspread them. As he advanced, he held forth his hand for her's, when, suddenly perceiving the dagger he had left in the chamber, he involuntarily withdrew his proffered courtesy, and his countenance changed. Ellena, whose eyes followed his to the object that attracted them, pointed to the instrument, took it up, and approaching him said, "This dagger I found last night in my chamber! O my father!"—

"That dagger!" said Schedoni, with affected surprize.

"Examine it," continued Ellena, while she held it up, "Do you know to whom it belongs? and who brought it hither?"

"What is it you mean?" asked Schedoni, betrayed by his feelings.

"Do you know, too, for what purpose it was brought?" said Ellena mournfully.

The Confessor made no reply, but irresolutely attempted to seize the instrument.

"O yes, I perceive you know, too well," continued Ellena, "here, my father, while I slept"——

"Give me the dagger," interrupted Schedoni, in a frightful voice.

"Yes, my father, I will give it as an offering of my gratitude," replied Ellena, but as she raised her eyes, filled with tears, his look and fixed attitude terrified her, and she added with a still more persuasive tenderness, "Will you not accept the offering of your child, for having preserved her from the poniard of an assassin?"

Schedoni's looks became yet darker; he took the dagger in silence, and threw it with violence to the furthest end of the chamber, while his eyes remained fixed on her's. The force of the action alarmed her; "Yes, it is in vain that you would conceal the truth," she added, weeping unrestrainedly, "your goodness cannot avail; I know the whole."——

The last words aroused Schedoni again from his trance, his features became convulsed, and his look furious. "What do

you know?" he demanded in a subdued voice, that seemed ready to burst in thunder.

"All that I owe you," replied Ellena, "that last night, while I slept upon this mattress, unsuspicious of what was designed against me, an assassin entered the chamber with that instrument in his hand, and——"

A stifled groan from Schedoni checked Ellena; she observed his rolling eyes, and trembled; till, believing that his agitation was occasioned by indignation against the assassin, she resumed, "Why should you think it necessary to conceal the danger which has threatened me, since it is to you that I owe my deliverance from it? O! my father, do not deny me the pleasure of shedding these tears of gratitude, do not refuse the thanks, which are due to you! While I slept upon that couch, while a ruffian stole upon my slumber—it was you, yes! can I ever forget that it was my father, who saved me from his poniard!"

Schedoni's passions were changed, but they were not less violent; he could scarcely controul them while he said in a tremulous tone—"It is enough, say no more;" and he raised Ellena, but turned away without embracing her.

His strong emotion, as he paced in silence the furthest end of the apartment, excited her surprize, but she then attributed it to a remembrance of the perilous moment, from which he had rescued her.

Schedoni, meanwhile, to whom her thanks were daggers, was trying to subdue the feelings of remorse that tore his heart; and was so enveloped in a world of his own, as to be for some time unconscious of all around him. He continued to stalk in gloomy silence along the chamber, till the voice of Ellena, entreating him rather to rejoice that he had been permitted to save her, than so deeply to consider dangers which were past, again touched the chord that vibrated to his conscience, and recalled him to a sense of his situation. He then bade her prepare for immediate departure, and abruptly quitted the room.

Vainly hoping that in flying from the scene of his meditated crime, he should leave with it the acuteness of remembrance, and the agonizing stings of remorse, he was now more anxious than ever to leave this place. Yet he should still be accompanied by Ellena, and her innocent looks, her affectionate thanks, inflicted an anguish, which was scarcely endurable. Sometimes, thinking that her hatred, or what to him would be still severer, her contempt, must be more tolerable than this gratitude, he almost resolved to undeceive her respecting his conduct, but as constantly and impatiently repelled the thought with horror, and finally determined to suffer her to account for his late extraordinary visit in the way she had chosen.

Spalatro, at length, returned from the hamlet with horses, but without having procured a guide to conduct the travellers through a tract of the long-devolving forests of the Garganus, which it was necessary for them to pass. No person had been willing to undertake so arduous a task; and Spalatro, who

was well acquainted with all the labyrinths of the way, now offered his services.

Schedoni, though he could scarcely endure the presence of this man, had no alternative but to accept him, since he had dismissed the guide who had conducted him hither. Of personal violence Schedoni had no apprehension, though he too well understood the villainy of his proposed companion; for he considered that he himself should be well armed, and he determined to ascertain that Spalatro was without weapons; he knew also, that in case of a contest, his own superior stature would easily enable him to overcome such an antagonist.

Every thing being now ready for departure, Ellena was summoned, and the Confessor led her to his own apartment, where a slight breakfast was prepared.

Her spirits being revived by the speed of this departure, she would again have expressed her thanks, but he peremptorily interrupted her, and forbade any further mention of gratitude.

On entering the court where the horses were in waiting, and perceiving Spalatro, Ellena shrunk and put her arm within Schedoni's for protection. "What recollections does the presence of that man revive!" said she, "I can scarcely venture to believe myself safe, even with you, when he is here."

Schedoni made no reply, till the remark was repeated. "You have nothing to fear from him," muttered the Confessor,

while he hastened her forward, "and we have no time to lose in vague apprehension."

"How!" exclaimed Ellena, "is not he the assassin from whom you saved me! I cannot doubt, that you know him to be such, though you would spare me the pain of believing so."

"Well, well, be it so," replied the Confessor; "Spalatro, lead the horses this way."

The party were soon mounted, when, quitting this eventful mansion, and the shore of the Adriatic, as Ellena hoped for ever, they entered upon the gloomy wilderness of the Garganus. She often turned her eyes back upon the house with emotions of inexpressible awe, astonishment, and thankfulness, and gazed while a glimpse of it's turretted walls could be caught beyond the dark branches, which, closing over it, at length shut it from her view. The joy of this departure, however, was considerably abated by the presence of Spalatro, and her fearful countenance enquired of Schedoni the meaning of his being suffered to accompany them. The Confessor was reluctant to speak concerning a man, of whose very existence he would willingly have ceased to think. Ellena guided her horse still closer to Schedoni's, but, forbearing to urge the enquiry otherwise than by looks, she received no reply, and endeavoured to quiet her apprehensions, by considering that he would not have permitted this man to be their guide, unless he had believed he might be trusted. This consideration, though it relieved her fears, encreased her perplexity respecting the

late designs of Spalatro, and her surprise that Schedoni, if he had really understood them to be evil, should endure his presence. Every time she stole a glance at the dark countenance of this man, rendered still darker by the shade of the trees, she thought "assassin" was written in each line of it, and could scarcely doubt that he, and not the people who had conducted her to the mansion, had dropped the dagger in her chamber. Whenever she looked round through the deep glades, and on the forest-mountains that on every side closed the scene, and seemed to exclude all cheerful haunt of man, and then regarded her companions, her heart sunk, notwithstanding the reasons she had for believing herself in the protection of a father. Nay, the very looks of Schedoni himself, more than once reminding her of his appearance on the sea-shore, renewed the impressions of alarm and even of dismay, which she had there experienced. At such moments it was scarcely possible for her to consider him as her parent, and, in spite of every late appearance, strange and unaccountable doubts began to gather on her mind.

Schedoni, meanwhile, lost in thought, broke not, by a single word, the deep silence of the solitudes through which they passed. Spalatro was equally mute, and equally engaged by his reflections on the sudden change in Schedoni's purpose, and by wonder as to the motive, which could have induced him to lead Ellena in safety, from the very spot whither she was brought by his express command to be destroyed. He, however, was not so wholly occupied, as to be unmindful of his situation, or unwatchful of an opportunity

of serving his own interests, and retaliating upon Schedoni for the treatment he had received on the preceding night.

Among the various subjects that distracted the Confessor, the difficulty of disposing of Ellena, without betraying at Naples that she was his relative, was not the least distressing. Whatever might be the reason which could justify such feelings, his fears of a premature discovery of the circumstance to the society with whom he lived, were so strong, as often to produce the most violent effect upon his countenance, and it was, perhaps, when he was occupied by this subject, that it's terrific expression revived with Ellena the late scene upon the shore. His embarrassment was not less, as to the excuse to be offered the Marchesa, for having failed to fulfil his engagement, and respecting the means by which he might interest her in favour of Ellena, and even dispose her to approve the marriage, before she should be informed of the family of this unfortunate young woman. Perceiving all the necessity for ascertaining the probabilities of such consent, before he ventured to make an avowal of her origin, he determined not to reveal himself till he should be perfectly sure that the discovery would be acceptable to the Marchesa. In the mean time, as it would be necessary to say something of Ellena's birth, he meant to declare, that he had discovered it to be noble, and her family worthy, in every respect, of a connection with that of the Vivaldi.

An interview with the Marchesa, was almost equally wished for and dreaded by the Confessor. He shuddered at the expectation of meeting a woman, who had instigated him to the murder of his own child, which, though he had been

happily prevented from committing it, was an act that would still be wished for by the Marchesa. How could he endure her reproaches, when she should discover that he had failed to accomplish her will! How conceal the indignation of a father, and dissimulate all a father's various feelings, when, in reply to such reproaches, he must form excuses, and act humility, from which his whole soul would revolt! Never could his arts of dissimilation have been so severely tried, not even in the late scenes with Ellena, never have returned upon himself in punishment so severe, as in that which awaited him with the Marchesa. And from it's approach, the cool and politic Schedoni often shrunk in such horror, that he almost determined to avoid it at any hazard, and secretly to unite Vivaldi and Ellena, without even soliciting the consent of the Marchesa.

A desire, however, of the immediate preferment, so necessary to his pride, constantly checked this scheme, and, finally made him willing to subject every honest feeling, and submit to any meanness, however vicious, rather than forego the favourite object of his erroneous ambition. Never, perhaps, was the paradoxical union of pride and abjectness, more strongly exhibited than on this occasion.

While thus the travellers silently proceeded, Ellena's thoughts often turned to Vivaldi, and she considered, with trembling anxiety, the effect which the late discover was likely to have upon their future lives. It appeared to her, that Schedoni must approve of a connection thus flattering to the pride of a father, though he would probably refuse his consent to a private marriage. And, when she further

considered the revolution, which a knowledge of her family might occasion towards herself in the minds of the Vivaldi, her prospects seemed to brighten, and her cares began to dissipate. Judging that Schedoni must be acquainted with the present situation of Vivaldi, she was continually on the point of mentioning him, but was as constantly restrained by timidity, though, had she suspected him to be an inhabitant of the Inquisition, her scruples would have vanished before an irresistible interest. As it was, believing that he, like herself, had been imposed upon by the Marchesa's agents, in the disguise of officials, she concluded, as has before appeared, that he now suffered a temporary imprisonment by order of his mother, at one of the family villas. When, however, Schedoni, awaking from his reverie, abruptly mentioned Vivaldi, her spirits fluttered with impatience to learn his exact situation, and she enquired respecting it.

"I am no stranger to your attachment," said Schedoni, evading the question, "but I wish to be informed of some circumstances relative to it's commencement."

Ellena, confused, and not knowing what to reply, was for a moment silent, and then repeated her enquiry.

"Where did you first meet?" said the Confessor, still disregarding her question. Ellena related, that she had first seen Vivaldi, when attending her aunt from the church of San Lorenzo. For the present she was spared the embarrassment of further explanation by Spalatro, who, riding up to Schedoni, informed him they were approaching the town of Zanti. On looking forward, Ellena perceived houses peeping

from among the forest-trees, at a short distance, and presently heard the cheerful bark of a dog, that sure herald and faithful servant of man!

Soon after the travellers entered Zanti, a small town surrounded by the forest, where, however, the poverty of the inhabitants seemed to forbid a longer stay than was absolutely necessary for repose, and a slight refreshment. Spalatro led the way to a cabin, in which the few persons, that journied this road were usually entertained. The appearance of the people, who owned it, was as wild as their country, and the interior of the dwelling was so dirty and comfortless, that Schedoni, preferring to take his repast in the open air, a table was spread under the luxuriant shade of the forest-trees, at a little distance. Here, when the host had withdrawn, and Spalatro had been dispatched to examine the post-horses, and to procure a lay-habit for the Confessor, the latter, once more alone with Ellena, began to experience again somewhat of the embarrassments of conscience; and Ellena, whenever her eyes glanced upon him, suffered a solemnity of fear that rose almost to terror. He, at length, terminated this emphatic silence, by renewing his mention of Vivaldi, and his command that Ellena should relate the history of their affection. Not daring to refuse, she obeyed, but with as much brevity as possible, and Schedoni did not interrupt her by a single observation. However eligible their nuptials now appeared to him, he forbore to give any hint of approbation, till he should have extricated the object of her regards from his perilous situation. But, with Ellena, this very silence implied the opinion it was meant to conceal,

and, encouraged by the hope it imparted, she ventured once more to ask, by whose order Vivaldi had been arrested; whither he had been conveyed, and the circumstances of his present situation.

Too politic to intrust her with a knowledge of his actual condition, the Confessor spared her the anguish of learning that he was a prisoner in the Inquisition. He affected ignorance of the late transaction at Celano, but ventured to believe, that both Vivaldi and herself had been arrested by order of the Marchesa, who, he conjectured, had thrown him into temporary confinement, a measure which she, no doubt, had meant to enforce also towards Ellena.

"And you, my father," observed Ellena, "what brought you to my prison,—you who was not informed with the Marchesa's designs? What accident conducted you to that remote solitude, just at the moment when you could save your child!"

"Informed of the Marchesa's designs!" said Schedoni, with embarrassment and displeasure: "Have you ever imagined that I could be accessary—that I could consent to assist, I mean could consent to be a confidant of such atrocious"—— Schedoni, bewildered, confounded, and half betrayed, checked himself.

"Yet you have said, the Marchesa meant only to confine me," observed Ellena; "was that design so atrocious? Alas, my father! I know too well that her plan was more atrocious, and since you had too much reason to know this, why do you

say that imprisonment only was intended for me? But your solicitude for my tranquillity leads you to"——

"What means," interrupted the suspicious Schedoni, "can I particularly have of understanding the Marchesa's schemes? I repeat, that I am not her confidant; how then is it to be supposed I should know that they extended further than to imprisonment?"

"Did you not save me from the arm of the assassin!" said Ellena tenderly; "did not you wrench the very dagger from his grasp!"

"I had forgotten, I had forgotten," said the Confessor, yet more embarrassed.

"Yes, good minds are ever thus apt to forget the benefits they confer," replied Ellena. "But you shall find, my father, that a grateful heart is equally tenacious to remember them; it is the indelible register of every act that is dismissed from the memory of the benefactor."

"Mention no more of benefits," said Schedoni, impatiently; "let silence on this subject henceforth indicate your wish to oblige me."

He rose, and joined the host, who was at the door of his cabin. Schedoni wished to dismiss Spalatro as soon as possible, and he enquired for a guide to conduct him through that part of the forest, which remained to be traversed. In this poor town, a person willing to undertake that office was

easily to be found, but the host went in quest of a neighbour whom he had recommended.

Meanwhile Spalatro returned, without having succeeded in his commission. Not any lay-habit could be procured, upon so short a notice, that suited Schedoni. He was obliged, therefore, to continue his journey to the next town at least, in his own dress, but the necessity was not very serious to him, since it was improbable that he should be known in this obscure region.

Presently the host appeared with his neighbour, when Schedoni, having received satisfactory answers to his questions, engaged him for the remainder of the forest-road, and dismissed Spalatro. The ruffian departed with sullen reluctance and evident ill-will, circumstances which the Confessor scarcely noticed, while, occupied by the satisfaction of escaping from the presence of the atrocious partner of his conscience. But Ellena, as he passed her, observed the malignant disappointment of his look, and it served only to heighten the thankfulness his departure occasioned her.

It was afternoon before the travellers proceeded. Schedoni had calculated that they could easily reach the town, at which they designed to pass the night, before the close of evening, and he had been in no haste to depart during the heat of the day. Their track now lay through a country less savage, though scarcely less wild than that they had passed in the morning. It emerged from the interior towards the border of the forest; they were no longer enclosed by impending

mountains; the withdrawing shades were no longer impenetrable to the eye, but now and then opened to gleams of sunshine-landscape, and blue distances; and in the immediate scene, many a green glade spread it's bosom to the sun. The grandeur of the trees, however, did not decline; the plane, the oak, and the chestnut still threw a pomp of foliage round these smiling spots, and seemed to consecrate the mountain streams, that descended beneath their solemn shade.

To the harassed spirits of Ellena the changing scenery was refreshing, and she frequently yielded her cares to the influence of majestic nature. Over the gloom of Schedoni, no scenery had, at any moment, power; the shape and paint of external imagery gave neither impression or colour to his fancy. He contemned the sweet illusions, to which other spirits are liable, and which often confer a delight more exquisite, and not less innocent, than any, which deliberative reason can bestow.

The same thoughtful silence, that had wrapt him at the beginning of the journey, he still preserved, except when occasionally he asked a question of the guide concerning the way, and received answers too loquacious for his humour. This loquacity, however, was not easily repressed, and the peasant had already begun to relate some terrible stories of murder, committed in these forests upon people, who had been hardy enough to venture into them without a guide, before the again abstracted Schedoni even noticed that he spoke. Though Ellena did not give much credit to these narratives, they had some effect upon her fears, when soon

after she entered the deep shades of a part of the forest, that lay along a narrow defile, whence every glimpse of cheerful landscape was again excluded by precipices, which towered on either side. The stilness was not less effectual than the gloom, for no sounds were heard, except such as seemed to characterize solitude, and impress it's awful power more deeply on the heart,——the hollow dashing of torrents descending distantly, and the deep sighings of the wind, as it passed among trees, which threw their broad arms over the cliffs, and crowned the highest summits. Onward, through the narrowing windings of the defile, no living object appeared; but, as Ellena looked fearfully back, she thought she distinguished a human figure advancing beneath the dusky umbrage that closed the view. She communicated her suspicion to Schedoni, though not her fears, and they stopped for a moment, to observe further. The object advanced slowly, and they perceived the stature of a man, who, having continued to approach, suddenly paused, and then glided away behind the foliage that crossed the perspective, but not before Ellena fancied she discriminated the figure of Spalatro. None but a purpose the most desperate, she believed, could have urged him to follow into this pass, instead of returning, as he had pretended, to his home. Yet it appeared improbable, that he alone should be willing to attack two armed persons, for both Schedoni and the guide had weapons of defence. This consideration afforded her only a momentary respite from apprehension, since it was possible that he might not be alone, though only one person had yet been seen among the shrouding branches of the woods. "Did you not think he resembled Spalatro?" said

Ellena to the Confessor, "was he not of the same stature and air? You are well armed, or I should fear for you, as well as for myself."

"I did not observe a resemblance," replied Schedoni, throwing a glance back, "but whoever he is, you have nothing to apprehend from him, for he has disappeared."

"Yes, Signor, so much the worse," observed the guide, "so much the worse, if he means us any harm, for he can steal along the rocks behind these thickets, and strike out upon us before we are aware of him. Or, if he knows the path that runs among those old oaks yonder, on the left, where the ground rises, he has us sure at the turning of the next cliff."

"Speak lower," said Schedoni, "unless you mean that he should benefit by your instructions."

Though the Confessor said this without any suspicion of evil intention from the guide, the man immediately began to justify himself, and added, "I'll give him a hint of what he may expect, however, if he attacks us." As he spoke, he fired his trombone in the air, when every rock reverberated the sound, and the faint and fainter thunder retired in murmurs through all the windings of the defile. The eagerness, with which the guide had justified himself, produced an effect upon Schedoni contrary to what he designed; and the Confessor, as he watched him suspiciously, observed, that after he had fired, he did not load his piece again. "Since you have given the enemy sufficient intimation where to find us,"

said Schedoni, "you will do well to prepare for his reception; load again, friend. I have arms too, and they are ready."

While the man sullenly obeyed, Ellena, again alarmed, looked back in search of the stranger, but not any person appeared beneath the gloom, and no footstep broke upon the stilness. When, however, she suddenly heard a rustling noise, she looked to the bordering thickets, almost expecting to see Spalatro break from among them, before she perceived that it was only the sounding pinions of birds, which, startled by the report of the trombone from their high nests in the cliffs, winged their way from danger.

The suspicions of the Confessor had, probably, been slight, for they were transient; and when Ellena next addressed him, he had again retired within himself. He was ruminating upon an excuse to be offered the Marchesa, which might be sufficient both to assuage her disappointment and baffle her curiosity, and he could not, at present, fabricate one that might soothe her resentment, without risk of betraying his secret.

Twilight had added its gloom to that of the rocks, before the travellers distinguished the town, at which they meant to pass the night. It terminated the defile, and its grey houses could scarcely be discerned from the precipice upon which they hung, or from the trees that embosomed them. A rapid stream rolled below, and over it a bridge conducted the wanderers to the little inn, at which they were to take up their abode. Here, quietly lodged, Ellena dismissed all present apprehension of Spalatro, but she still believed she had seen

him, and her suspicions, as to the motive of his extraordinary journey, were not appeased.

As this was a town of ampler accommodation than the one they had left, Schedoni easily procured a lay-habit, that would disguise him for the remainder of the journey; and Ellena was permitted to lay aside the nun's veil, for one of a more general fashion; but, in dismissing it, she did not forget that it had been the veil of Olivia, and she preserved it as a sacred relique of her favourite recluse.

The distance between this town and Naples was still that of several days journey, according to the usual mode of travelling; but the most dangerous part of the way was now overcome, the road having emerged from the forests; and when Schedoni, on the following morning, was departing, he would have discharged the guide, had not the host assured him, he would find one still necessary in the open, but wild, country through which he must pass. Schedoni's distrust of this guide had never been very serious, and, as the result of the preceding evening proved favourable, he had restored him so entirely to his confidence, as willingly to engage him for the present day. In this confidence, however, Ellena did not perfectly coincide; she had observed the man while he loaded the trombone, on Schedoni's order, and his evident reluctance had almost persuaded her, that he was in league with some person who designed to attack them; a conjecture, perhaps, the more readily admitted while her mind was suffering from the impression of having seen Spalatro. She now ventured to hint her distrust to the Confessor, who paid little attention to it, and reminded her, that sufficient proof of

the man's honesty had appeared, in their having been permitted to pass in safety, a defile so convenient for the purpose of rapine as that of yesterday. To a reply apparently so reasonable, Ellena could oppose nothing, had she even dared to press the topic; and she re-commenced the journey with gayer hopes.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

[The end of *The Italian, Vol. 2 of 3* by Anne Ratcliffe]