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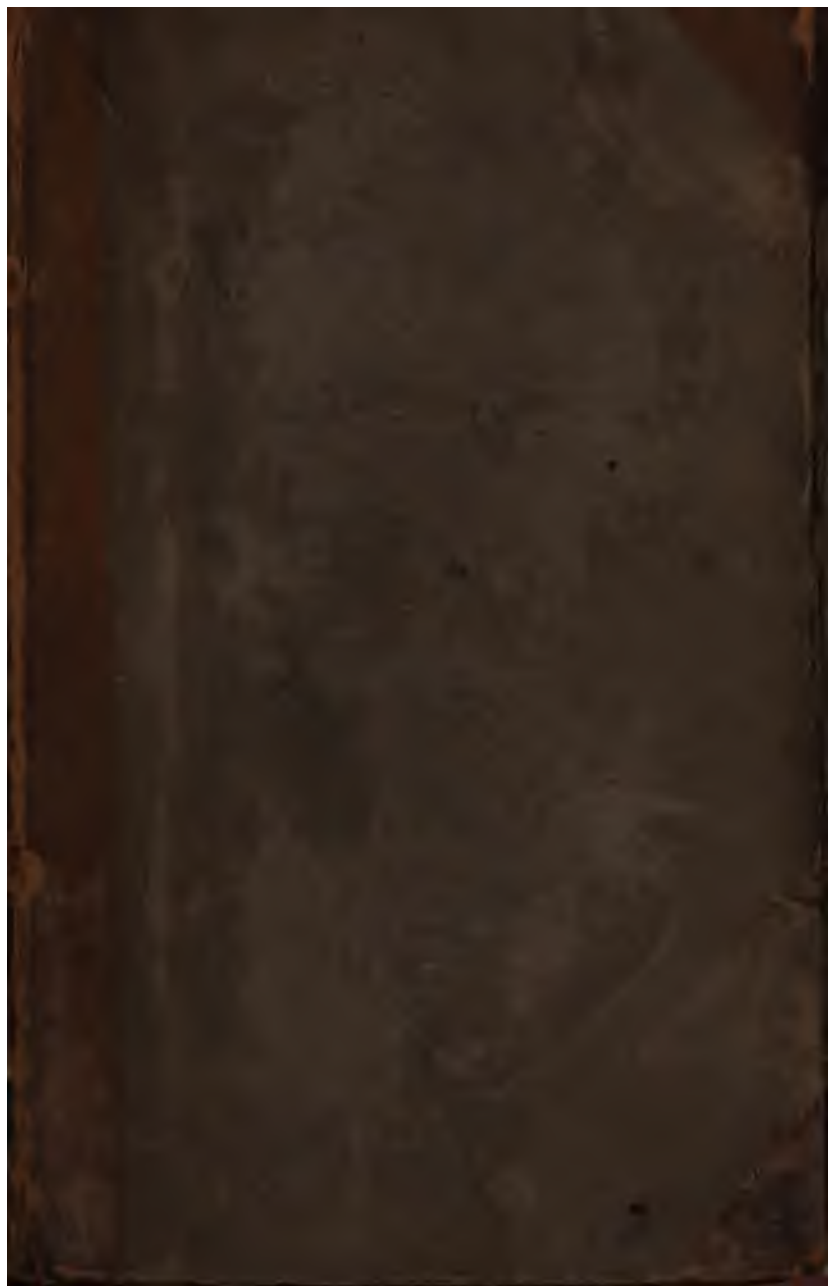
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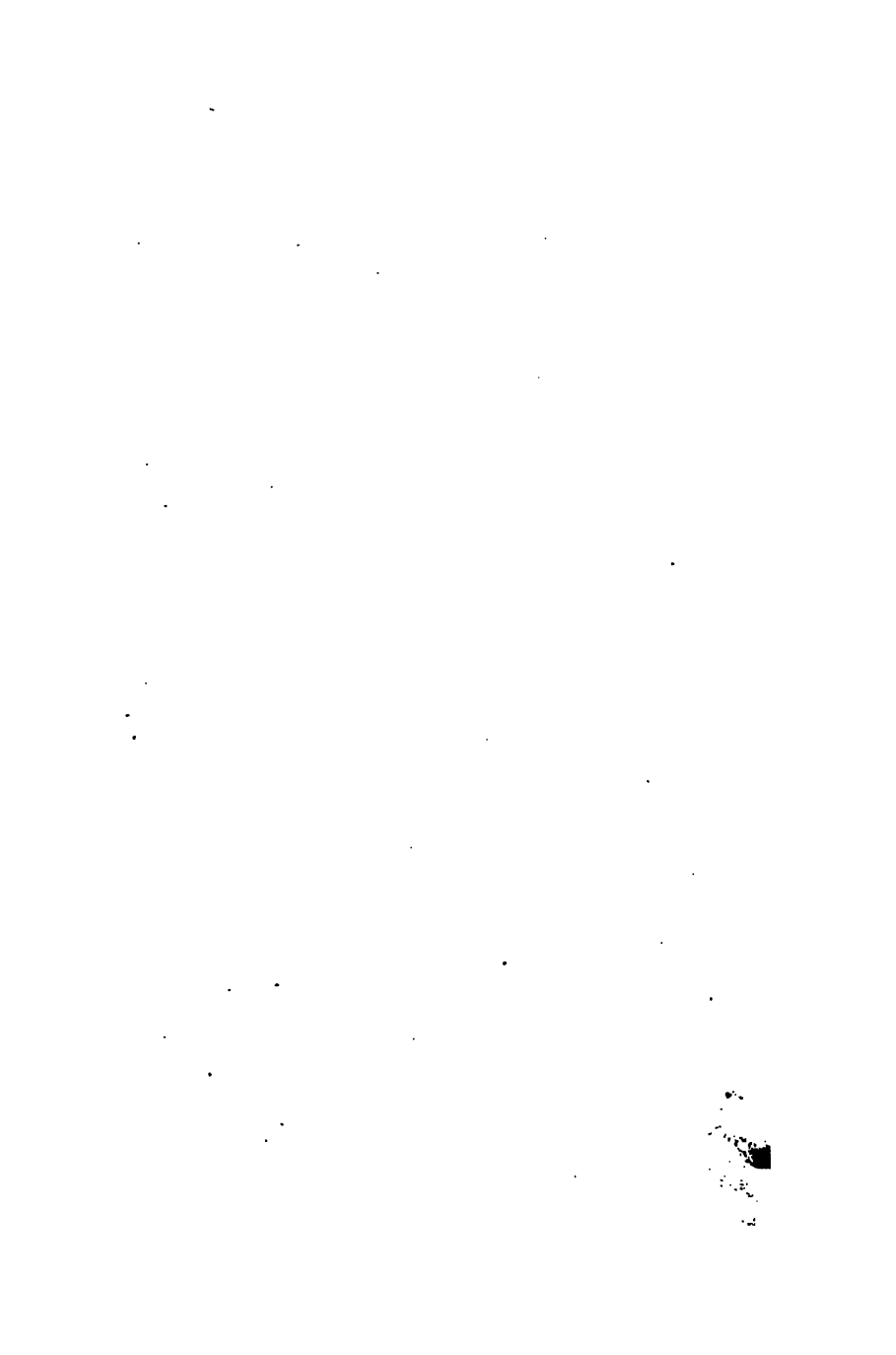
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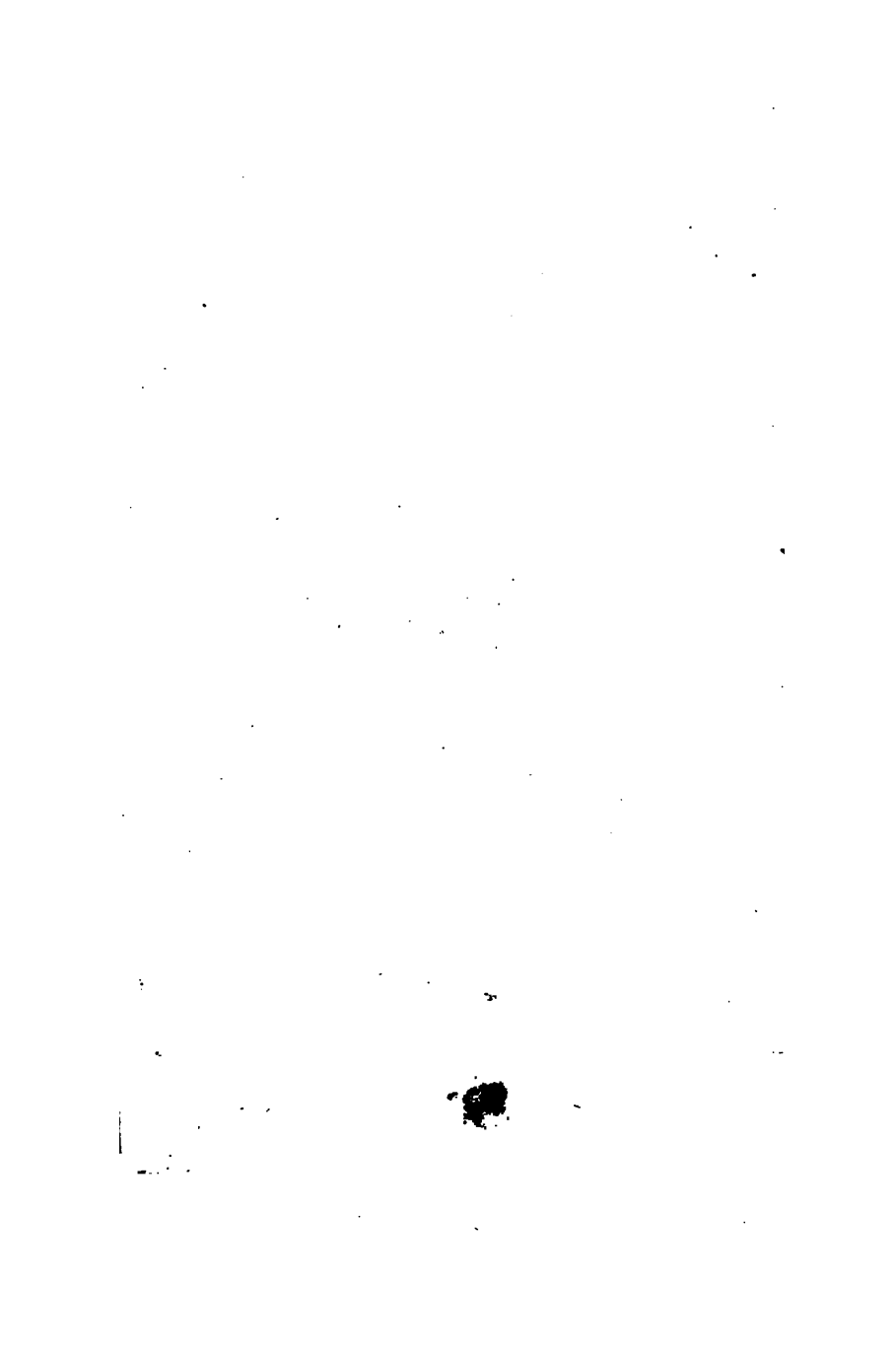


THE
DEMON OF SICILY,

&c. &c. &c.

VOL. I.

Printed by T. Wallis and R. Mills, Little Coram Street,
Brunswick Square.



THE
DEMON OF SICILY.

A ROMANCE,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

EDWARD MONTAGUE ESQ.

Author of *Legends of a Nunnery, the Castle of Berry
Fomeroy, &c. &c. &c.*

Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd?
Bring'st with thee airs from Heaven, or blasts from Hell?
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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THE
DEMON OF SICILY.

CHAP. I.

THE clock of the monastery had told in iron notes the midnight hour ; loudly it reverberated through the long corridors of the edifice and lofty aisles of the chapel, at length, dying away in sullen tones. Padre Bernardo started at the sound,

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Till

Till then his eyes had been intently fix'd on a painting of the Saint to whom the religious pile was dedicated, the Santa Catherina; it was the master-piece of the first Italian painter of those times. A pleasing melancholy dwelt in the beautiful features; the mild blue eyes were raised in seeming adoration to Heaven; her golden locks flowed on her ivory neck, and the swelling charms of her bosom were perhaps too well represented for the gaze of the secluded inhabitants of a monastery, where whatever tends to excite the passions should studiously be avoided. The monk had been intently viewing this painting till he was roused from his meditations by the tolling of the bell; his lamp but faintly

faintly glimmered ; he trimmed it, and again resumed the train of his thoughts. The light now gleamed brightly on the painting, the monk fixed his large black eyes, shaded by his bushy eye brows, on the beautiful representation.

What a lovely face ! said he mentally, what expression ! tis surely such as glows in the countenance of the angel of Mercy when receiving commission from on high to bring tidings of forgiveness to the world ! Sure no earthly woman can possess such charms ; if they did, passion would overcome reason, and steep in forgetfulness the cold vows of seclusion. But what am I saying ? Lovely painting, how hast thou

caused my mind to stray, my passions too—But why were such feelings given us, if they are not to be indulged? I repent me of my vows.

At this moment a low noise was heard in the cell. The monk looked around, the taper dimly illumined the nearer objects with its uncertain rays, beyond them all was enveloped in murky obscurity, and in the dismal gloom uncertain shapes and appearances seemed to flit along.

A strange sensation shook the soul of the monk; he stretched out his tremulous hand to aid the lamp's expiring beams, when, as he fearfully glared
around

around him, he saw close by his side an unusually tall figure in a monastic habit, the close drawn cowl of which completely enveloped the features from view; the arms were folded, and the head bent toward the ground.

Scarcely could Bernardo collect sufficient fortitude to demand the cause of such an unusual visit, when the mystic form thus addressed him. Hollow, deep, and harsh was his voice; it was such as awed the monk into a strict silence.

“ I know, Bernardo, what thou wouldest now say to me; thy other thoughts are also in the page of my remembrance. Thou art right, Padre, man was not

formed to live alone, to whine out his solitary hours in useless meditations and regrets. Padre, thou hast not seen the world; these walls and a few musty volumes contain the extent of thy knowledge, yet hast thy thoughts soared beyond them, thou hast dared to meditate on the most seducing objects in nature. Knowest thou, Bernardo, to what I allude? It now dawns in thy breast—'tis woman! Padre, you think that woman cannot be so beautiful as that painting. Know that it is a faint attempt at the true representation of their charms. Wouldst thou see one, monk?"

Bernardo had in some degree recovered

véred from his astonishment during the speech of the stranger. Attentively he had listened to it; each word sunk deep in his recollection, his curiosity was roused, he had never seen other women than the veiled Nuns of the convent which was contiguous to the monastery of Santa Catherina, and his ideas of their features were only formed from the painting of the Saint which were suspended in his cell. A sudden emotion seized his mind, unlike what he had ever before experienced; he turned himself around; and though he could not avoid a secret dread stealing over his soul as he surveyed the tall figure beside him, he replied,

“ It has long been the wish of my

B 4

wakeful

wakeful hours to survey the master-piece of Nature. The more we see of its wonders, the more we are disposed to adore the Author of them."

Saying these words, he again raised his head to try if he could observe the countenance of the mysterious figure. The cowl had been misplaced, he saw a smile on the dark features, it was a smile of contempt; dreadful was the expression of the lower part of the terrible visage, the upper part was still concealed by the cowl, but a slight motion made by the figure shewed to the monk one of the eyes, which appeared to him like a glowing flame. He started from his seat, and with ideas too
terrible

terrible for utterance, he covered his face with his hand, lest he should again behold such an horrible appearance.

At this moment the bell of the monastery tolled *one!*

“Bernardo!” said the harsh voice, “expect, me here to-morrow at midnight. Let not these vain fears prevent thee from profiting by my condescension.”

The monk heard the words, but unable to reply, he remained in his present posture some time; at length he ventured to look around him. The lamp was nearly expiring, but as well

as he could judge by its dim rays, he was alone, yet no opening or closing door had announced the departure of his visitor ; whom the monk now conjectured was no inhabitant of the convent or even of the earth, but some demon, who, taking advantage of his wandering thoughts, had, watchful of the too fit opportunity, endeavoured to alienate him from his duty. He had promised to be there the next night in order to prosecute his further plans ; there, however, thought the monk, he will fail ; no more will I listen to his specious arguments.

Such was the ruminations of Bernardo after the departure of the terrible nocturnal

turnal intruder. Taking the lamp in his hand he traversed his cell, looking fearfully around him lest in some dark recess should still lurk the horrid figure.

His fears, however, were vain; for at the tolling of the first hour of morn he became the solitary trembling inhabitant of his cell. A mystic awful silence reigned throughout the pile; and the monk, as he paced his chamber, softly trod the floor, for he started at the sound of his own steps, and feared to behold the attendant shadow of his tall figure gliding along the wall.

He placed the lamp on the table, and advanced to the casement, which

he opened. Chilly blew the blast of morning.

The moon shone on the waving branches of the trees, which thickly tenanted the garden belonging to the monastery, and brightened the gray walls of the building with her silvery beams.

The soul of the monk, disturbed by the occurrence of the night, took no pleasure from the tranquil scene which lay before him. In his bosom there yet remained not only a chaos of contending terrors, but also of contending passions. In the moment of his fears his resolutions had been good, but in
proportion

proportion as they abated, so faded away his resolves to resist the temptations which he conceived about to be thrown in his way.

At any rate, thought he, I will again see this mysterious person, who it appears wishes to enlarge my thoughts, to make me acquainted with the world, from which I have been hitherto excluded. It still lies with me to baffle his evil designs: in struggling with temptations lies the sole proof of virtue.—It is surely no proof of goodness to act well when we cannot do otherwise, when the will has nothing to do with our actions.

Instead, therefore, of being doubtful
of

of himself, he placed confidence in his virtue; he conceived himself able to resist, and therefore no longer thought of flying from temptation—Fatal reliance.

Having staid indulging his reverie some time at the casement, chilled by the cold air, he at length returned from it, and sat down by the table on which was the lamp. The painting which had so greatly fascinated him was again the subject of his meditation, and he recalled to his mind what the nocturnal visitant had said respecting it. Little trouble was there in bringing those words to his remembrance; deeply were they rooted in his breast.

“ If

“ If that ” said he “ is but a faint attempt to represent their charms, what must they be in reality? How anxious I feel for the appointed hour, when I shall judge myself the truth of that assertion. ”

The matin bell roused the monk from meditations so unfit to be held within the walls of a monastery; and by one, too, who at the altar had sworn a solemn and irrevocable oath, registered in Heaven, to dedicate his life, his soul and body, to the worship of Him who dwells far above mortal ken, and is far beyond mortal comprehension.

Reluctantly he joined the train of the
holy

holy fathers, and entered the lofty aisles of the chapel, at the same time that the nuns and boarders of the convent preceded by the Lady Abbess, took their accustomed seats within the gilded skreen that separated the part they occupied from that appropriated for the monks.

The service began—but the thoughts of the monk wandered from the avocations of the hour; he joined in the responses but his heart that morning had no share in the words of his mouth.

His eyes were fixed on the nuns and boarders, if haply he could get a glimpse of their features; there, however, he was disappointed; he listened
to

to their melodious strains with rapture, but it was not the rapture which devotion yields to her pure votaries; it was a rapture sullied with thoughts which the midnight occurrences had awakened in his mind.

He was glad when the service ceased, for conscience told him he was acting wrong in letting his imagination rove on subjects contrary to what ought to have so entirely occupied them as to exclude all worldly ideas; but the arch enemy of man had seized on his fluctuating soul while it lingered in its election of heavenly blessings or earthly pleasures, and, like a wary foe, noticed the breach,
and

and entered the weak bulwark which had so feebly opposed him.

Slowly wore away the tedious hours; often did the monk look to the Heavens, where glowed in meridian splendor the regent of day. At length he began to decline, and the shadows of the larches and tall pines encreased on the earth; slowly he sunk beneath the hilly boundary of the western horizon, but not at the moment that he illumined other worlds was his total departure manifest, for the clouds still retained their borrowed radiance, and the face of nature glowed with their golden reflection.

The

The visper bell then tolled. Again was the monk obliged to attend in the chapel, but his ideas were still more distant from what was then passing than in the morning.

Soon, thought he as he surveyed the nuns, soon I shall behold one of your sex. This night is to present to my view the fairest of Nature's works; but how it is to be effected I know not. Much I have heard of the potency of magic, but surely it must be powerless within these consecrated walls. He, however, who knew my thoughts ere my lips had given them utterance, is surely able to effect his promise.

After

After the hour of repast was over, the monk retired to his cell; he fastened the door to prevent any intrusion. And having carefully examined every part, he sat down, and with anxious expectancy awaited the arrival of the promised visitor.

On the table lay a volume of monastic tales, such as might be supposed to originate from the superstitious and ill-informed minds of those who lived in a still ruder era than when these imperfect records were traced by the hand that now no longer grasps the descriptive pen. The monk had yet two hours to wear away ere his ear would be greeted by the long-sounding
hour

hour of midnight, and he sought to pass the time in the perusal of some of the pages of the ancient volume.

He read a little—he started, and looked around him; he had opened the book where began a gloomy relation which was increased by his expectations of the probable events of the night. Still a kind of anxious curiosity to know the rest of the tale made him again turn his attention to the pages, which in a short time completely engaged it.

The clock now tolled eleven—the Padre counted the reverberating strokes of the ponderous hammer. Another hour,

hour, thought he, in the perusal of this tale will soon pass.

He then trimmed his lamp, looked for some moments anxiously at the painting before him, then gazed around the gloomy chamber, and again fixed his attention on the book.

The legend which had so greatly excited his attention he finished ere half the period of time that remained to the appointed hour was elapsed. Bernardo yawned, he closed the book, his senses were fatigued, the last night he had not slept, and during the day the agitation of his mind made him wish not for repose ; he leaned back in his chair, drew his cowl over his
face,

face, and soon the somniferous deity weighed heavy on his eyelids. Thus we will leave him while we relate the tale that had engaged his attention.

*Leonardi de Vicensio and the Fair
Isabella.*

Furiously flashed the red lightnings, and dreadfully roared the peals of thunder on the bleak mountains!—But what was the lightning, or what the thunder to Ugo De Tracy? Little recked he either; not so his terrified steed that starting and stumbling continually, forced him to alight. Long had De Tracy wandered through the dark folds of night, uncertain of his course; till the lofty walls of a castle appeared to his searching eyes

eyes as the lightning, darting from the black bosom of the low-hung clouds, illumined the dreary waste.

The building appeared ruinous and uninhabited, but as the jaded steed was unable to proceed farther, the Signor determined to seek a shelter for him beneath the ruin during the storm.

Entering the large hall he tied him to a pillar, and a blue glimmering light which seemed slowly to wave in the air at some distance, attracting his notice, he drew forth his trusty faulchion, and advanced toward it.

With some difficulty, however, he
effected

effected this, as the roof laid in heaps on the pavement in many places, and the fragments of the huge columns crossed his path; when at length he had advanced to the further extremity of the hall, he saw that the blue flames whose slow-waving motion had caught his eye proceeded from a lamp, carried by a form that appeared to have been some time claimed by the relentless angel of death: the face was ghastly pale, the eye deep sunk in the socket, and the disgusting traces of putrefaction were visible on the countenance.

Confounded at this horrible appearance, which bore the resemblance of a female, De Tracy stopped, when a hollow voice

said " De Tracy, dost thou not know me? dost thou not know thy Isabella?

" Gracious powers! what mean you by these words! Isabella De Tracy lives not here."

" This is her tomb," again said the spectre seemingly fixing her rayless eyes on him, " follow me !"

Ugo knew not fear; resolutely he replied, " I will walk in the shadow of thy steps, mysterious being, who hast mentioned the name of that much-loved wife, under circumstances which overwhelm my soul with a terrible
dread.

dread. Heaven forbid that any sinister event should have befallen her. ”

The spectre sighed deeply, and turning round, seemed to look sorrowfully at Ugo De Tracy; it then passed on to a pair of folding doors, which, at its approach, flew wide on their massy hinges.

Ugo De Tracy, had just returned to Sicily from a pilgrimage to the Lady of Loretto, and was going to the southern parts of it, where arose his stately castle, when being benighted, he met with the extraordinary and melancholy adventure which is recorded in these pages by Bartolo, one of the first monks who resided in the holy walls of Santa
c 2 Catherina.

Catherina, which building is erected on the same site as that whereon the ruinous castle formerly stood.

Ugo followed the spectre through the corridore. Arrived at the extremity, part of the wainscoting which was pannelled gave way, and disclosed a dark flight of steps. Aided by the feeble gleams of the blue light, which the terrible form carried, he followed it down an almost dismantled staircase for some time, till at length Ugo observing that the steps were cut out of the solid rock, and that they were decending into the bowels of the earth far beneath the foundations of the Castle, suddenly stopped, and thus questioned, the spectre :—

tre:—" Whither wouldst thou lead me? what can be your object in bringing me here? I will proceed no further."

The spectre replied not, slowly it raised its hand to its throat, and a deep sigh echoed through the dull, gloomy place.

The soul of De Tracy, disdainful of the impulses of fear, now determined to follow the form, which having slowly descended to the bottom of the steps, turned into a small chamber, or rather dungeon, where what was De Tracy's horror at beholding the headless trunk of a female lying on the ground!

The spectre stood by the side of it. A hollow voice which seemed to fill the dungeon, slowly said "revenge the deed!" Ugo started; till now his eyes had been fixed on the mangled form at his feet, when suddenly the blue light died away, and he was left in the black horrors of impenetrable darkness.

Isabella was lovely as the rose when first it unfolds its beauties to the morning beams; eight months had she been the happy wife of De Tracy, when Superstition with her ominous voice bade him bend his knee at the shrine of the Lady of Loretto.

Ugo with many sighs embraced his
wife,

and she beheld his departure with the frequent tear of unavailing sorrow; she took her station on the topmost turret of her castle, and while she saw his loved form winding along the valley which it overlooked, she still retained sufficient fortitude to restrain the tide of grief which swelled her sad heart; but when distance had rendered him almost invisible, and an intervening hill obscured him from her anxious sight, then it was, that, dissolved in tears and uttering deep and heartfelt sighs, she sunk almost bereft of animation into the supporting arms of her attendants, who conveyed her from the towering turret to her now cheerless chamber.

Daily, however, did she revisit the turret, daily cast her eyes toward the place where she had last beheld her loved De Tracy, while her sighs would increase the zephyr, and her tears trickle down her lovely checks.

One evening as seated on the turret, she leaned her beauteous head on her snowy arm and was pensively contemplating the splendor of the setting sun as he was sinking in the watery wave, the clash of arms drew her attention toward the place from whence the hostile sounds proceeded; when near the entrance a wood whose leafy tenantry overshadowed a large track of land, she beheld a Knight engaged in furious contest with
four

four seemingly well appointed ruffians; a dart pierced his breast, and he fell from his horse. Isabella shrieked at the sight; she arose from her seat, and summoning her attendants, bade them fly to the succour of the wounded Knight, and offer him an apartment in her castle, if the breath of life lingered in his veins.

Hastily the domestics obeyed the commands of their Lady. From her turret she still surveyed the deeds of the banditti; they were now proceeding to strip off the armor of the Knight, who still lay on the earth. The dart had not been the messenger of death; his sword was still in his hand; rage

strung his nerves, and indignant at the new insult offered him, the Knight raised his glaive, and with a sudden thrust made a passage for the current of life in the breast of one of the ruffians, who fell to the blood-stained earth; the other with terrible execrations were on the point of avenging the death of their comrade; already had they upraised their swords, thirsting for blood, when the approach of the domestics of the Lady Isabella put them to sudden flight.

The wounded Knight was placed on a litter, and borne to the castle, where he was attended by the surgeon of the household. Speedily he recovered, a
few

few days saw him able to his departure, and he desired to be brought to the Signora Isabella to thank her for being the preserver of his life.

He was conducted into her presence ; when, struck with astonishment at the blaze of beauteous charms which concentrated in that lovely female, he remained like one amazed ; and, unknowing of his actions, with difficulty at length he stammered out his thanks to the Signora for her kind conduct toward him ; while his dark expressive eyes rolled unceasing over the beauteous form of Isabella.

Leonardi di Vicensio was the name

c 6

of

of the Knight. He was of gigantic stature, like the hero's of other years, his face was gloomy as the dark lowering clouds of night when the thunder is heard and the lightnings play around the arch of Heaven; his bushy eyebrows protruded far over his darkly rolling eyes; his cheek bones were high; his nose was long and aquiline; a dark smile played at times on his lips, but it was like the ocean, which puts on a serene look just before the storms raise its angry billows to the skies.

Such was Leonardi di Vicensio; who, when he had left the presence of the peaceless Isabella began to meditate on the means to get her to consent to gratify

gratify the base passions which her charms had raised in his bosom.

All night he slept not; he arose ere the lark yet awoke in his downy nest, or ere the breeze of morning had dispersed the unwholesome vapors of night.

Restless was the soul of Leonardi as he strode through the halls of the Castle of De Tracy, revolving in his mind dark and horrible deeds.

Passing by the portals which led to the chapel, he thought he heard a voice within; he listened again; the voice sweetly sounded in his ear, it was like
music

music to the bite of the deadly tarantula, it charmed his senses to a forgetfulness of all beside, for it was that of Isabella.

On her knees before the altar he beheld the lovely wife of De Tracy; with impatience and dissatisfaction he heard her petition the saints for his safe return. At that moment he stood by her side, she turned around,⁰¹ and overcome by a sudden emotion of fear, she shrieked aloud.

Echo alone heard her. Thrice she repeated the exclamation along the vaulted roofs and dreary corridors where she held her reign; but it reached

ed

ed not the ears of other mortal than those of the gloomy Leonardi.

On the step of the altar, seizing the the trembling hand of Isabella, he bent his knee, while through his grated visor, by the light of the bright clouds which tinged with the glories of the sun, who was then fast retiring from other worlds, cast a crimson radiance into the chapel through the twisted panes of the large altar window, she beheld his darkly-rolling eyes.

“ Fair Isabella,” said the Knight,
“ why petition Heaven to bring thee thy
husband? Listen to the suit of Leo-
nardi; he loves, he adores thee; thy
beauties

beauties dwell in his heart; all night he has thought on them; behold him a suppliant who never knelt before."

"And of little use, Sir Knight," said the fear-struck Isabella, "is that lowly posture now. Suffer me, Signor Leonardi, to use my own discretion in retiring from this place, nor longer detain my hand."

"Say not so, beautiful Isabella, suffer me to hope that time and my unceasing attentions may"—

"May what, Signor?" said Isabella, her lofty soul swelling high with indignation. "Know you not that I am the
wife

wife of Ugo De Tracy, who, if he were here, would well chastise thee for this insolence. Like him, I spurn whatever is base and dishonorable, and such I hold the Signor Leonardi."

The Knight rose from his bended knee, in a transport of rage he flung from his grasp the arm of Isabella; he laid his hand on his faulchion, suddenly he withdrew, while he gnashed his teeth, and inwardly muttered curses deep and horrid.

Isabella, with a dignified firmness walked toward the portals of the chapel. Soon her elegant form was lost to the
view

view of the deep-plotting Vicensio; who, when he heard the closing of the distant portals, laid his right hand on the altar, and solemnly swore to be revenged of Isabella De Tracy.

The statue of the Holy Mother started at his horrid oath, while from each marble tomb in the chapel burst a melancholy groan, which deep sounded in the ears of Leonardi.

“ Groan on, and start,” he furiously exclaimed, “ portends and prodigies are lost on me, use your arts, ye mouldering bones, and you, inanimate representative of the immaculate Virgin, may raise your

arms

arms again, and look with horror on me,
I fear not all that you can do."

Dark grew the chapel; a murky
cloud hung before the large casement;
but by the still small glimmering of
light Leonardi beheld himself surround-
ed by tall skeletons, who waved their
fleshless arms for him to depart.

It was then that cold drops of water
stood on the forehead of Leonardi—
"Tremble!" said a voice over the altar.
He raised his eyes, the statue of the
Virgin again appeared animated; its
gaze was fixed on him.

Leonardi fled, he was unable to en-
dure

dure the horror of the moment. With him fled the shadow of night, the murky cloud disappeared, and the frail remains of mortality sought their silent tombs.

Hastily he proceeded to the stables, where snorted his coal-black steed; quickly he saddled him, and vaulting on his back, was soon far from the ken of the tower of De Tracy's castle.

In the bosom of a dark forest, where the beams of day in their meridian lustre faintly glimmered, Leonardi reined in his steed; there he alighted; and there his memory recalled the horrible prodigies he had witnessed; but his
memory

memory likewise retained the charms of Isabella, his dreadful oath, and her insulting expressions.

“ And I will be revenged,” said he, as unlacing his helmet shaded with black plumes he cast it on the verdant grass; “ let but the sun decend, let but the gloomy shade of night be unfurled from the battlements of Heaven, and I will bear away the haughty, lovely Isabella.

Ryno, the black steed of the savage Vicensio, was cropping the herbage, while the Knight, with arms folded, leaned against the stem of a large tree. The increasing shade shewed the sun to
be

be declining from his meridian altitude. Gloomy was his soul, and far more black his thoughts than the fabled river which rolls its sable waves into the vast Tartarean gulph.

The Knight prepared to depart : he stooped to take from the ground his helmet, when he hastily drew back on perceiving that a snake had made it his abode.

He had not as yet armed his hands with the ponderous gauntlet. Sullenly he drew them on. Approaching the snake which had twisted its scaly folds in the hollow of his casque, he suddenly seized on its head which rested in the midst.

The

The poisonous reptile twisted its speckled form round the body of the Knight, but its efforts were vain, for the head was soon crushed in the gauntlet, and it for ever ceased to dart its deadly tongue.

Leonardi smiled horribly. "What other men," said he, "would have converted into an omer of bad import, I construe into success. Scaly wretch, thou shalt adorn my helm with the bright colors of thy variegated skin."

This said, he bound around his casque the long body of the snake, unmindful of the black gore which dropped from
the

the lacerated head, and then called to Ryno his steed.

The sable courser at the well-known voice of his master threw up his head in the air, and neighed aloud. In an instant he came up to the place where stood the vindictive Knight.

Leonardi was on his saddle in a moment; the steed measured back his swift paces, and soon arrived at the skirts of the forest.

A gloomy horror presided over Nature. The sun had sunk to other worlds; the crimson of the clouds had disappeared; a misty vapor enveloped
the

the face of creation; a mournful silence reigned around, save that at a distance was heard the unceasing roaring of Etna in her fiery caverns.

Leonardi looked toward the place where the mountain rose, but the flames were obscured by the gloomy vapor.

This opaque mist, thought Leonardi, favors my design; under its kind covert I can, unseen, approach the castle of the peerless Isabella, and, if fortune will befriend me, bear her away.

He now drew near its lofty walls.

Ryno he placed in the concealing recess of a buttress while he strode into the hall with cautious pace, his hand grasping his glaive.

Unseen he crossed it; and entering the chapel, leaned against the column which was nearest to the portals, for his soul had not yet forgot the terrific omens of the morning.

The storm that had been long gathering in the gloomy clouds now burst forth in awful fury, blue lightnings darted around the chapel which vibrated at the tremendous peals of thunder that roared unceasing in the arch of Heaven. The rain poured down in torrents, and,
driven

driven by the blast, dashed against the painted casements of the chapel. At times he heard the wild shrieks of the spirits of the mountains between the pauses of the angry gusts of wind ; but he derided the utmost fury of the storm, and waited impatiently in the hope of seeing Isabella enter the chapel.

Nor long did he hope in vain ; the unfortunate wife of De Tracy, alarmed by the storm, left her chamber to supplicate at the altar for the safety of her husband.

With a cautious, trembling hand, she opened the portal ; she raised her lamp to illuminate the dusky aisle, but its feeble

rays pierced the surrounding gloom but a few paces before her.

Leonardi concealed his gigantic form behind a column, and as the Signora advanced he rushed forward, and caught her in his arms.

She rent the air with her shrieks, but her exclamations were lost in the wild howling of the storm ; and soon her senses forsook her, and she lay inanimate in his iron grasp.

Hastily he bore her through the hall, and coming to the buttress looked in vain for Ryno ; scared by the peals of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning, he

he had wandered from the place. Loudly he called on him, and soon the faithful steed appeared through the dull gloom.

The sound of his voice awoke the hapless Isabella from her insensate state to a knowledge of the extent of her misery. She was placed on the steed ; Leonardi held her in one arm, while the other grasped the reins ; and swiftly as the arrow from the bow of the hunter they darted through the stormy vapors which clustered around.

Their course lay by the base of Etna :
as they approached toward it, the flames

lighted them on their way. Isabella trembled when she beheld the fiery torrents which descended the mountain sides, but she trembled more at being in the power of the unprincipled Leonardi.

Swiftly the steed proceeded obedient to his master's will the whole of that night. When gloomily the morning dawned the turrets of a dismantled castle rose to view.

At the decayed bridge Leonardi alighted, he conducted the trembling form of Isabella through the broken portals. Well knew the Knight the subterraneous recesses of the castle ; within

its

its tottering walls his own arm had perpetrated dark deeds of horror.

Down many a step which seemed to be a passage to the bowels of the earth, he forced the wretched Isabella, till at length they entered a dungeon.

“ Now, lady,” said he in harsh accents, “ ’tis like thou mayest repent of the deep insult you have offered me. No longer a suitor, I command thee to yeild to my wishes; dreadful indeed will be the punishment of disobedience, for my soul yet burns with the remembrance of the injury I have received. ”

The soul of Isabella rose above the
D 4 horrors

horrors of her situation ; she seized the dagger that glittered in the girdle of the gloomy Leonardi.

“ Barbarian,” said she, “ I fear thee not ; in a moment I can put myself beyond thy infamous design. Powers of mercy, receive my soul ! ”

The dagger she had directed to her bosom here interrupted her ; she fell to the ground, her pure blood dyed her garments.

Furious grew Leonardi at being disappointed of his expected prey ; he looked blackly on the prostrate Isabella ; she still lived, for the wound was not mortal.

Since

“ Since not my desires, I can however yet satiate my revenge; the pangs of death from my hand shall torture thee.”

Thus said, he drew his glaive; he divided the lovely head of Isabella from the convulsed body; he caught it by the beautiful long black tresses, and strode away with it to another chamber; he set it on a piece of a broken column, and contemplated with a demoniac satisfaction the features once so lovely, so interesting, but now ghastly with the agonies of death. “ Those eyes,” said he “ will no longer look indignant on me; neither will that mouth further insult me. Would I could have increased the torture of death; gladly would I have done

it; for her groans were comfort to my soul."

Some days he continued indulging his black revenge; at length a new thought struck him; "I will go" said he, "to the cell where her body lies, and take from it her proud heart; I shall find pleasure in trampling on it."

He was going; when strange terrors shook his soul; on a sudden his imagination hears the complaining spectre of the murdered Isabella groan, his hair stiffens, he starts, the headless shade seems to pursue him through the gloom—his blood chilled, he stood leaning on his faulchion, while with a pale, disordered

erd countenance, he questioned thus himself :

“ What ! shall Leonardi become the slave of superstitious terrors ? shall his mighty soul yeild to the fever of imagination ? perish the thought, perish myself first ! No, I am resolved I will tear out the heart of Isabella ! ”

Mournful was the soul of Ugo de Tracy when the supernatural appearance faded from his view ; and the blue light ceasing to illumine the dreary cell left him in the murky shades of night ; left him too with the murdered, headless

body which he was told was that of his beloved Isabella.

Suddenly he heard a heavy step sounding through the subterraneous caverns of the castle; the clank of armor accompanied the echoing paces.

Bearing a torch, entered a gigantic figure clothed in sable armor; round his helmet, shaded with black plumes, was twisted a large snake, the poisonous head hung loosely in the air; in his left hand he bore the head of a female, as appeared by the dark flowing locks, in his right an unsheathed faulchion and the torch.

His

His vizor was up. Dark as the shades of night when the lightnings fly and thunder is heard, was his countenance. His eyes rolled gloomily dreadful.

De Tracy, anxious to know the purport of his coming, drew back into the gloom of the cell. Nor long staid he there.

“ Thus, ” said the sable, black-hearted Knight, “ do I seek my last revenge. I will find that heart, that proud, vaunting heart of Isabella, which made her defy me, which made her resist the desires of my bosom. ”

Thus having spoke, he flung to the
earth

earth the head ; it rolled toward De Tracy, the light of the torch gleamed on the sunken features, he beheld in them the mortal remains of his adored wife. Rage, bloody rage, strung his nerves ; he drew his glaive, and as the Knight was tearing away the garments that once concealed the swelling beauties of Isabella's bosom, he strode from his murky recess.

“ Fiend of Hell ! ” in accents hoarse with rage he exclaimed, “ my eyes have seen thy deed, my ears have heard thy speech, look up, before thee stands Ugo de Tracy ! ”

Leonardi stopped his dreadful employment ; he rolled his eyes on Ugo.

“ Thou,

“Thou, then,” said he “art the husband of that Isabella who lies between us. There lies her head, this sword separated it from her body; it has the like office to perform on thee.”

Furiously rushed the knights to combat. Leonardi flung his torch to the earth; dreadful was the contest, for the fierce power of just passion swelled the soul of Ugo de Tracy, black malice and revenge the heart of Leonardi de Vincensio.

The combat long hung in doubtful balance, till at length Ugo pierced the throat of his dire opponent; dreadful he fell, the clash of his armor rung through
the

the vaulted caverns of the castle, a black torrent of blood rolled out his soul, the attendant fiends of hell in anxious expectation stood awaiting its escape from its mortal coil, they seized it in their sharp talons, grining horribly they darted through the bosom of rifted earth, and plunged it deep in red oceans of unextinguishable flames.

Sadly mourned Ugo de Tracy over the body of his beloved Isabella; he kissed the wan lips, he raised the earth over the once so much adored form; but the body of her savage murderer he left uncovered.

Such was the fate of the fair Isabella;
such

such was the punishment of Leonardi de Vicensio. The avenging Deity who surveys the sinful actions of men at last brought on him the retributive arm of justice.

Pray for his soul, ye who read these pages, for it endures horrible torments. His bones yet lay embruised, the left wing of the monastery covers the dragons cell, where it is said his spectre on the first of every moon is compelled to come and view them whitening through time, while the attendant furies lash him with their whips formed of scorpions' deadly stings. Such is the punishment destined for the murderer, and

which

which Leonardi de Vicensio will endure to the end of time.

Such was the tale which the Padre Bernardo perused while awaiting the arrival of the Demon. It was sad, it was horrible. Bartolo, the monk whose hand had traced the descriptive characters, had increased the gloom of the tale ; perhaps his soul was as melancholy as his writing, for the breasts of the inhabitants of a monastery, shut out from the enlivening intercourses of the world, are too frequently the receptacles of superstition; which heightened by the monastic gloom which pervades around them, produce nothing but ideas of horror and images of woe.

CHAP. II.

NEAR the town of Pollizzi, in a beautiful valley stood the ancient residence of the noble family of Carlentini. Nobility of birth was indeed all that the Marchese had to boast of, for the dissipation of his ancestors had only left to him the estate on which he resided, the late Marchese having, in order to raise a sum of money, disposed of it, under a particular restriction that it should be the property of his son during his
life

life time ; by this he thought he had amply fulfilled his duty as a parent ; and he had also provided for himself the means to continue in his career of dissipation.

Such was the limited state of the pecuniary resources of Rodrigo de Carlentini, the present Marchese, when, in consequence of the death of his father, he came to the estate and title ; but, though poor in his purse, he was rich in love, for the beautiful Louisa de Bononi returned his sincere passion.

During the life time of his father his solcitude was great lest his attachment to his adored Louisa should come to his
know-

knowledge ; for well he knew how greatly he should incur his anger, as the object of his passion resided with her mother, who was possessed of a trifling independency on the estate of the Marchese, whither she had retired with her daughter on recovering the afflicting intelligence of the death of her husband, a Sicilian officer who had fallen in one of the contests which so often disturbed the Italian states.

To see Louisa and not to admire her were imposible, but to be acquainted with her, to enjoy the charms of her conversation, to beheld those nameless excellencies she possessed, and not to love, to adore her, were equally so.

Ricardo

Ricardo returning from the chase beheld this lovely female sitting on a bank shaded by the myrtle and jessamine beside her neat but lowly residence. She had not put on her veil as the weather was very warm, that the gentle zephyrs, no longer heated by the rays of the ardent sun, might the better refresh her, being languid from the heat of the day.

Her dark brown hair, braided after the Sicilian mode, and adorned with a few simple flowers, the beauties of her interesting countenance, and her harmonious voice, which accompanied the soft notes of a lute, made Ricardo start with astonishment, and an expres-
sion

sion of admiration proceeded from his lips.

Surprized at his voice, the enchanting musician raised her lovely eyes, and when she saw the Signor standing at the low paling which separated the garden from the road, she instantly ceased to charm the listering inhabitants of the groves with her voice, or touch the trembling strings of her lute; she blushed deeply, but it was the pure blush of innocence unacquainted with the ways of the world, and, in the already enamoured eyes of Ricardo it added to her resistless charmes.

Ricardo would not add to her confusion by his longer stay, but saluting her respectfully,

respectfully, rode toward the Castello.

Lousia gracefully returned his salute, for she knew him to be the son of the Marchese to whom the domain belonged, and had often before seen him pass her humble residence. She had admired his graceful form, and his countenance, which now leaving the uncertain features of youth, were assuming a manly expression. Among the Sicilan nobility who sometimes visited the Castle she had seen no one so interesting as Ricardo, and no one occupied her thoughts so much as he did.

She felt for him an indefinable sensation,

tion, pure as the morning zephyr, when, rushing from ambrosial caves, it first touches the summit of the western waves.

Her bosom was the blissful seat of innocence; it was like the heart of the rose before it opens to the sun; it was the residence of unadulterated sweets. Hitherto, whatever were her thoughts she disclosed them to her beloved mother, but now she kept secret her growing friendship for Ricardo.

Strange it is that she should feel such a sensation for one whom she had never spokento; but what mortal can account for the sensations of our hearts?

A pleasing exterior at all times commands attention. Ricardo was the most graceful Louisa had ever seen; she thought too that his heart must be endued with equal attractions as his person; she thought that where the Deity had stamped a godlike form, he had endowed it with godlike attributes. Such, indeed, is sometimes the case; and in the judgment Louisa had formed of Ricardo she had not erred.

When Ricardo rode from the cottage where he had seen the lovely Louisa, his whole soul dwelt on her melodious voice and her fascinating beauties. Often he looked back, his eyes wandered around the cottage, but the little arbor hid from his view the lovely form that rose with such

such strong emotions to his imagination.

The Castello was situated on the gentle rising of a verdant hill. It was an irregular fabric of considerable extent, and seemed formed for the abode of a numerous train, such as in those days were necessary, either for the purpose of ostentatious magnificence, or as a residence for the troops which sometimes it was requisite to entertain in the turbulent times, which often witnessed the destruction of the efforts of the peasants, the ensanguined field, and drew the tear of misery from the aching eye of the widow and orphan.

The present inhabitants occupied

little more than one wing of the extensive building, the other parts were desolate and gloomy. The Marchese had neither the wish nor the ability to restore the place to its ancient splendor; indeed he was not often at his estate himself, for he resided almost constantly at Palermo, the gaiety and dissipation of which place agreed more with his ideas than the retirement of his Castello. Seldom were any inquiries made by him concerning its inhabitants, who in its silent courts and melancholy halls passed their monotonous hours.

During a few of the hottest weeks in the year the Marchese would repair to his estate, attended by some of his dissipated companions, and consume
the

the hours in wild revelry and debauchery.

For his son he shewed little if any affection. His wife was said to have died suddenly before Ricardo had attained his fourth year ; but there were strange reports concerning her sudden dissolution ; and whether it was the solitary situation of the Castle which excited the idea, or that the fearful fancies of the domestics had been acted upon by some of those almost unaccountable sounds which are heard in ruinous places, is not certain ; but it was reported, and generally believed by the peasantry, that the spirit of the Lady haunted the apartments of the Southern Angle Tower, and that the rays of a lamp had been

frequently seen at night gleaming through the apertures that were made in the wall to give light to the circular steps which led to the chambers.

The situation of the tower made it the more likely to be fixed on by the domestics as the residence of an unquiet spirit, for it reared its frowning black walls at the extremity of a dilapidated pile of buildings which had not been inhabited in the memory of any of the present inhabitants of the Castle.

Ricardo could not feel much love for a father who seemed to have so very little for him, and he rather rejoiced than otherwise when he saw the day arrive on which the Marchese and his riotous

riotous companions returned to Palermo.

The only companion he had in the castle was Father Grimaldi, a monk who had been many years confessor to its inhabitants. He was a man of gloomy deportment,¹ and stern exterior, his manners were particularly forbidding and unpleasant to the young Ricardo, ^{re-} from his infancy was disgusted with whatever seemed to wear the semblance of disguise and mystery.

Yet strange to relate, this monk, repugnant as he appeared in his manners and behaviour to the inhabitants of the Castle, was the constant companion of the Marchese in his retired hours. Whe-

ther it was that the monk unbent the austerity of his demeanour before the Marchese, or that the advice of the father was necessary to him in some of his schemes, remains to be developed. Certain it is that he appeared to have great sway over the Marchese.

It was on the evening of the day succeeding that on which Ricardo first beheld the lovely Louisa, that, having made himself acquainted with her name, he alighted at the door of the Cottage, and desired the female attendant who appeared to acquaint the Signora Benoni that he was come to pay his respects to her.

Though she wished to remain perfectly

fectly secluded from visitors during her necessary retirement, yet it was impossible to refuse the attention which the son of the Marchese seemed disposed to pay to her.

Louisa blushed when she heard of the arrival of Ricardo; his earnest gaze, his respectful salute, and his frequent examination of the cottage as he retired, immediately recurred to her. Studious to escape the eye of her mother, she turned aside, and seemed to be busily employed in arranging some flowers in a vase when Ricardo entered.

Hastily his eyes were rivetted on the magnet which had attracted him to that place; he beheld her far more enchant-

ing than he had at first conceived; and from that moment love entered his heart.

But it was not the love of the voluptuary, it was not the base passion which inflames the breast of the seducer; it was that pure flame which animates pure hearts; it was such as may be conceived to exist in disembodied souls.

His agreeable and respectful deportment soon made his visit productive of pleasure to the Signora Bononi. Louisa too never passed so happy an hour; the moments flew unheeded by on the downy pinions of young loves.

She

She sighed when he departed; Ricardo sighed too. He felt that in leaving Louisa he left all that was dear to him, all that could charm the rugged path of life, and make it appear bedecked with roses.

To be united to her, what happiness! what ecstasy! to be always with her, to sit beside her on the margin of the murmuring rivulet, to listen to her converse, to ascend the lofty enclosure of the valley, to mark the beauties of the rising or the setting sun, to view the variegated beauties of indulgent Nature, to view herself, the greatest charm of the creation! to anticipate her wishes, to possess her love, oh! that were indeed to possess Paradise.

Such were Ricardo's thoughts as he pursued his way toward the Castle. How dull, how gloomy it seemed, as he entered it; he almost was astonished to think how he could possibly have existed so many years in it; while the cottage where dwelt Louisa seemed decked with all that could charm the senses. He recollected the little bower, the green lattices, the simple vases filled with flowers gathered by her hand; there, whatever he saw gave him pleasure; here, all around filled him with disgust.

Horror seemed to sit brooding over the time-dismantled turrets of the Castle; she had spread around her sable

wings,

wings, which added an additional gloom to the scene.

Hastily Ricardo crossed the dull hall, and entered his chamber; he sat down by the casement, and leaning his arm on the stone frame-work, remained deeply absorbed in meditation.

It is easy to divine that the fair Louisa was the bright subject of his thoughts; and remained so till his attendant, entering the chamber with a light, for awhile stopped the train of his ideas.

“The Padre, Signor,” said the man, “awaits you, at the supper table.”

“Tell

“Tell him, Carlo, that I am not well enough to attend.”

The domestic bowed, and Ricardo was left by himself. At no time did he like the company of the father, but at the present moment his dislike of the monk's forbidding manners, was greatly increased by the remembrance of the delightful society in which he had passed that evening.

Weary at length, with indulging the long train of thoughts which crowded into his mind, he threw himself on his couch.

In his slumber, fancy brought him back to the cottage where Louisa
was

was; again he conversed with her, again he sighed, again he suffered the pain of parting from her. At that moment he awoke, he started at the unusual glare of light which appeared in his chamber, but soon perceived that it was the silver radiance of the Queen of Night, who threw her bright beams through his casement; he watched her through the Heavens in cloudless majesty; perhaps, thought he, bright planet, thou dost likewise illumine the chamber of Louisa, perhaps she too views thee with emotions of wonder and rapture.

In the morning Ricardo arose; he went to the casement, and looked toward the valley, but his apartments
being

being in the northern angle, but a small part of it could be seen.

Leaving his room, he passed through the long corridore which conducted him to the grand staircase that led to the North Hall, whose lofty roof, supported by triple rows of black marble columns, and the partial light that entered from the casement, tinted with armorial bearings, made it appear gloomy, even in the bright meridian glare. Hastily he crossed the hall, and wound round the Castle till he came to that part which commanded a view of the side of the valley, where he saw rising amidst the almost unbowing shrubs the white walls of the cottage where Louisa dwelt.

He

He was now standing nearly oposite the Southen Angle Tower, and he immediately formed a wish to have his apartments in it; from thence he thought he should at times behold the lovely Louisa, and he could always gaze on the spot where she resided.

From that moment the lovely situation of the tower and the various reports concerning it were thought of no longer, and he determined to ask leave to reside there from the Padre Grimaldi, who ordered every thing in the Castle during the absence of the Marchese.

Having staid some time with his eyes fixed on the distant walls of Louisa's residence, he retraced his steps, delighted

ed in the idea of at least living where he could gratify his sight at pleasure.

When he entered the Castle he found that the hour for the morning repast was not arrived, and that the Padre had not yet left his chamber, he was therefore obliged to exercise his patience, and employ his thoughts in forming plans of frequently visiting his new acquaintance, and of disclosing to the lovely cause the tender passion which gathered strength with the revolving moments.

At length when the Castle bell proclaimed the hour for the morning repast Padre Grimaldi appeared in the hall ; he saluted Ricardo in his usual
austere

austere manner, which he returned with more than his accustomed courtesy.

“ Father,” said Ricardo, “ the beauty of the morning has made me an early riser. Among the many enchanting views which the Castle commands, I know of none that has more extent and variety than that which is seen from the Southern Angle Tower.”

The Padre started ; for a moment he raised his dark eyes with a deep penetrating look on Ricardo, while an inward chill blanched his cheeks ; he said not a word, but seemed immediately after to have fallen into a reverie, which, from the effect it had on his frame, was on no pleasing subject.

Ricardo

Ricardo observed the agitation of Grimaldi with great surprise; he, however, affected not to notice it, but after a short pause continued his speech.

“ I should feel obliged, father, by your allowing me to have the keys, that I may see that part of the Castle; and, if you have no objection, I should like to reside in the tower.”

“ To reside in the tower ? ” said Grimaldi, in a deep voice, rendered almost inarticulate by the apparent emotions of his mind; “ Signor Ricardo, you know not what you ask.”

Suddenly the Padre arose from his seat, he strode about the hall in a gloomy
silence,

silence, his actions increased Ricardo's desire to be acquainted with the mystery that he saw clearly was connected with the tower.

After awhile the monk resumed his seat ; he seemed to have recovered from the agitation the request of Ricardo had plunged him into.

“ Have you,” said he, looking steadfastly at him, “ have you any particular reasons for wishing to see that tower? for as to residing in it, you must be well aware that its ruinous state will render that impossible.”

“ It was the wish of living there, father,”

repli-

replied Ricardo, "that made me ask to have the keys to procure an entrance."

"Probably," said Grimaldi, with a scrutinizing glance, "you wish to look for the supernatural beings who are said to haunt it, and to endeavour to raise your fame in the opinion of the vassals as being daring enough to perform so desperate an enterprize."

"The idea," replied Ricardo, "never entered my mind; the beauty of the scenery delighted me; neither am I superstitious enough to believe that there is any truth in the report of the peasantry."

"No!" replied the father, in a deeper voice, after some moments of reflection

reflection, "I was once of your opinion, but I have witnessed a sight there—horrible indeed it was."

Here he ceased to speak, for the thoughts that then seemed to rush to his memory denied him the power. Again he traversed the hall, sometimes stopping and looking on the ground, then casting a side-glance at Ricardo, who, greatly amazed, sat with his eyes intently fixed on him.

"The recalling of past terrors," said Grimaldi, stopping opposite to Ricardo, "sometimes shocks as much as if the scenes were but then acting. It is always so with me; but my sufferings the night I entered that tower were such as will in
future

future teach me the folly of incredulity." Here the monk paused awhile, and then said, "If after what I have advanced you wish to visit that ruin, I will give you the keys, and this night you may commence your search."

"And why not by day, father?" said Ricardo, somewhat amazed.

"What so soon afraid, Signor?" said Grimaldi. "You have heard, no doubt, that the unquiet spirits who haunt that place appear only at midnight, and therefore would wisely shun a possibility of meeting with them by going there in the morning; this is indeed a rare proof of courage."

Ricardo

Ricardo felt angry at the words of the father, and as his curiosity was roused by what he had said concerning the Southern Tower, he immediately replied that it was not fear which made him desire to inspect that part of the Castle by daylight; and that if the father pleased, he would at midnight explore the long deserted recesses of that building.

To this Grimaldi assented, and promised to deliver him the keys which opened the gates of the court-yard, and of the folding portals of the South Hall, from which there was a communication with the tower. He then left the hall, and Ricardo to his own reflection; on the singular behaviour of the Padre Grimal-

di, and permitting him to explore a place where, according to his own account, he had witnessed a terrible sight; and indeed it was very apparant from his agetation at the mention of the South Angle Tower that some dark mystery was connected with that building, which however Ricardo hinted the coming night would fully develope.

A gloomy reserve sat on the features of Grimaldi when Ricardo met him in the hall; at the hour of dinner he seemed to be revolving somewhat of dark purport in his mind, for a frown dwelt on his forehead, and his eyes glared fiercely beneath his bushy brows. He eat little, and spoke not to Ricardo, whose mind was too intently employed in thinking of
of

of the beauties of Louisa, to feel a desire to interrupt a silence which corresponded with his wishes.

When the repast was concluded, the father arose from his seat. Ricardo was on the point of demanding the promised keys, but was prevented by Grimaldi's saying.

“When the bell tolls eleven, Signor, I shall await you in the hall.”

“Do you then mean to accompany me father?” demanded Ricardo.

“By no means!” replied the Padre; “reflect on what I said this morning; after that, you will find it not likely

that I should wish to seek to renew the horrors I have endured."

Saying this, he left the hall ; and Ricardo walked on the verdent lawn which gently descended to the valley. He soon found himself winding along the margin of a beautiful stream of water, which fertilized the plains around. He continued advancing immersed in thought, till suddenly raising his eyes, the neat habitation of the Signora Bononi appeared before him. The temptation was irresistible ; and he was proceeding toward it when he saw before him that Signora and the lovely Louisa.

The heart of Ricardo beat high with emotions of delight at the unexpected
pleasure

pleasure. He soon joined them, and entered into conversation with the Signora Bononi, now and then casting an enamoured glance at her charming daughter.

When at length, Ricardo bid the Signora Benoni adieu, he tenderly gazed on Louisa, her eyes were at that moment fixed on him; blushing deeply she turned asside, and so great was her confusion, that she omitted the common forms of parting.

Ricardo noticed her conduct. Good Heavens! thought he, if the lovely Louisa should servey me with the eyes of affection, what happiness!

Indulging the pleasing reflections

excited by the behaviour of Louisa, Ricardo found himself near the Castle.

Somewhat fatigued with his long walk, he sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree, and continued musing till the Castle bell reminded him that it wanted but one hour to his appointment with Grimaldi.

It was now completely dark, the moon had not yet peeped over the eastern hills, and the deep shades of night prevailed. Ricardo was seated nearly opposite the ruinous part of the Castle, and as he looked toward its grey walls his attention was suddenly rivetted by a faint gleam of light which appeared at one of the broken casements of the southern

southern buildings. It was however soon removed, and all again was enveloped in darkness; when a few minutes after he plainly discovered a figure bearing a lamp slowly pass along the hall.

This was then a proof that the reports concerning that part of the Castle were not without foundation, and Ricardo was somewhat shaken from his intention of exploring those mysterious chambers.

He arose from his seat and directed his steps to the hall, pondering in his mind on what he had seen. At length however, his curiosity surmounted his fears, and he was determined to as-

ertain whether aerial or corporeal beings made those chambers their residence.

It was near eleven when he entered the hall ; a few lamps hung against the black pillars served to shew the extent of the place, and to add to the gloomy horrors which always seemed to reside in it.

A distant pace made Ricardo look forward, and he soon recognised the father Grimaldi; at that instant the bell tolled.

“ You look pale, Ricardo,” said the Padre, fixing his dark gaze on him, “ do you repent your undertaking ? ”

“ No

“ No, father,” said Ricardo, “ on the contrary, I feel most anxious to commence my intended search.”

“ But that must not take place before twelve ; the moon will then assist you” replied the father; “ recollect that when you have opened the portals of the hall, you continue straight forward, the door at the opposite end leads through a narrow passage to the Southern Angle Tower. Do you take any arms ?”

“ Most assuredly” replied Ricardo, who was almost on the point of relating what he had seen that night, but suddenly stopped through fear of being

prevented going; "I shall take my sword and a trombone."

"Your sword will do without the trombone," said Grimaldi; "the report, should you be tempted to fire it, might endanger your life in bringing down some of the old walls of the buildings. Besides a sword is surely a sufficient security against ghosts; I should certainly advise you not to trouble yourself with a trombone."

Ricardo consented to take only his sword with him; and having received the keys from Grimaldi, he went to his apartment to make the necessary preparations for his bold undertaking.

He concealed his lamp and sword
beneath

beneath his cloak, and waiting till the clock had tolled twelve, when, assisted by the light of the moon, which shone brightly on the castle walls, he crossed several passages of the castle, till his progress was stopped by a large iron gate which led into the southern court-yard.

The rusty wards of the lock made it extremely difficult to turn the key in it; but at length Ricardo forced back the bolt, and pushing against the gate, it slowly yeilded to his efforts, harshly creaking on the time-worn hinges.

The court-yard was choaked up by rank grass and weeds, through which Ricardo with some trouble forced his

way; and had it not been for the moon, he would have been perplexed to have discovered the door of the South Hall. Its beams however rested on it, and Ricardo searching for the key forced it into the large lock.

At that moment a dismal clank was heard in the hall, which echo repeated in various gradations of melancholy sound that smote chilly on the senses of Ricardo.

He started back, leaving the key in the lock, and awaited in dismal expectancy the result. The noise, however, died away in sullen murmurs, and at length all was hushed. Ricardo endeavoured to compose his agitation; and again ad-
van ci ng

vancing to the portals, threw them open ; he drew his sword, and raising his lamp surveyed with caution the dusky recess. All seemed silent within ; and the beam of the moon streaming through some of the further casements, served to shew the great extent of the hall.

At length he entered. The sound of his steps ran in loud whispers around the place. At first he paused, and looked about, for the echo had so often repeated his steps that he thought there must be more than his.

He now continued on in a direct line, according to the instructions of Grimaldi, in order to find the door that opened to the passages leading to the Angle Tower ,
stopping

stopping, however, at intervals, for the continual echo of his steps grew painful and ever dangerous, as they might conceal the approach of an enemy, who could unseen advance toward him though the gloom that reigned around.

In one of those places he was conscious that he heard another pace, though at some distance. This circumstance, combined with what he had already witnessed in that hall but a short time before, almost made him resolve on turning back.

Something laying in a heap before him, at the foot of a column, at this moment attracted his attention. It was a heap of old armour that had fallen from its
station

III

station on the column, and in all likelihood was what occasioned the noise that he had heard when he stood at the outside of the hall portals.

In the moment of terror the being able to account for any one circumstance of alarm that occurs often composes the mind. Such was the case with Ricardo ; he smiled at the fears which had seized him when he heard the clanking sound of armour against the marble floor of the hall, and began to think the footstep he had heard might be nothing more than a continued reverberation of his own.

The door he sought was half open ; he could just discover it by the aid of
his

his lamp; and his fears being greatly abated by the view of the fallen armour, he at length advanced softly toward it.

When he came within a few paces, and just as he was going to stretch out his arm to push it back, it was suddenly closed against him with a thundering noise, and a low hollow groan assailed his ears.

Ricardo staggered back to a column against which he leant with his eyes fixed on the door, expecting every moment to see some spectre issue from it, which busy fancy soon depicted with a horrible and soul-appalling form.

When

When at length Ricardo was able to think, various ideas crowded on his mind. At one time he determined to stay where he was till the morning, but then he feared his lamp would not last so long; and to be in the dark, in the lonely hour of night, in such a place, would be more than his spirits, considerably weakened by the shock he had received, could support. Had there been any wind that night he would willingly attribute to that the sudden closing of the door, and even the dreadful moan he had heard; but not a breath of wind was abroad even the zephyr slept in distant caves.

After remaining near half an hour in ruminating on what he had heard

and

and seen, Ricardo left the column, and advanced toward the door, curious to know whether it had been fastened or not; but the door yielding to his slight pressure, opened, and the rays of the lamp gleamed on the walls of a corridore.

Half determined to proceed, and prepare to turn back on the slightest alarm, Ricardo crossed the threshold. In the corridore he felt more secure than he did in the hall, for his lamp gave a better light than it could in that extensive place.

Still irresolute, he slowly advanced, at times looking behind him on the door, and then before him, half expecting to

see some dreadful form in the distant shades.

Hardly had he proceeded many paces, when a hollow voice said, " Stop ! " and to the astonished eyes of Ricardo a bloody sword and arm seemed thrust out of the solid wall, and which, waving furiously in the air, prevented his further advance. At the same moment deep and dismal groans, and now and then a shriek, with a dreadful discordant laugh, was heard. These repeated by the attentive echos became a thousand times more dreadful than even the noise itself.

Ricardo hastily retreated ; he crossed the hall, and rushed out of the portals,
then

then passed the court-yard, and, locking the iron gate, began to breathe.

He now repented of his temerity in persisting in his visit to the ruins after the hints thrown out by Grimaldi of what he had witnessed in them; and when he was able, retraced his way, and soon arrived in the North Hall, from whence he proceeded to his chamber.

Having closed the door, he laid his sword and lamp on the table; and throwing himself into a seat, endeavoured to compose the agitations of his mind, which shook his frame to a dreadful degree.

His

His mind resembled a chaos of half-formed ideas, which it was totally impossible to reduce to order; his brain became confused, and, at length, in hopes of enjoying a slumber which would compose his disturbed faculties, he laid down on his couch without taking off his cloaths.

After some time he closed his eyes in sleep; but his distempered fancy tortured him with a repetition of the horrors of the night, adding thereto whatever extravagant forms inventive air-born fancy could produce. Still however Ricardo slumbered; but it was a slumber that, far from composing his faculties, plunged them deeper in wild disturbance.

At

At length the beams of the morning robbed sleep of its unfluence on his eyelids; he started as he awoke, and wildly looked around the chamber. On the table he saw the keys, the sword, and the lamp. "Tis all true then," said he; "would it had been but a dream."

His brain seemed on fire; an acute pain throbbd in his temples; he arose from the couch and threw open the casement. Morning was just arising in the east, the rays of the sun feebly penetrated the mist of night, the grass yet bent beneath the dew, the hedges glittered with the transparent drops of water that were suspended from their branches, the sheep were heard bleating in the valley and on the verdant hills, and the birds
of

of the forest gaily hailed the lovely approach of day.

Ricardo for a time surveyed the peaceful scene before him ; it composed his mind, the gentle gale that slowly wined through the valley cooled the burning heat of his forehead, and now the idea of Louisa, with all her lovely charms, recurred to his memory. Intent on the pleasing ideas which he permitted his thoughts to revel in, the transactions of the night grew dim on his recollection.

Thus his mind became more composed ; and when the hour arrived for the morning repast, the traces of the

terrors

terrors of the night were but faintly visible on his countenance.

Father Grimaldi seemed to be awaiting the entrance of Ricardo in the hall. When he entered he raised his eyes on him, and a momentary surprise seemed to dwell in his countenance.

“Your curiosity, Signor,” said he at length, “is no doubt satisfied.”

Ricardo came prepared to answer the interrogations of the Padre, and therefore told him what he had heard and seen, and that his progress being stopped by the bloody sword, he had not been able to enter the Angle Tower.

The

The monk heard the whole relation of Ricardo without interrupting him. When he had concluded, he said, "you have doubtless now, Signor, given up all idea of visiting or residing in apartments where you must be well convinced supernatural beings have taken their abode."

Ricardo could not help owning that he had; "yet still," said he "I could wish, with you, father, and some attendants, to endeavour to penetrate into those mysteries."

The Padre was silent some minutes; at length he said, "have you brought back the keys, Signor?"

“ I have, all but the one which opens the portal of the South Hall ; it is in the lock.”

“ After what I have witnessed there,” said Grimaldi, “ and what you have yourself seen, I do not deem it proper for any one to disturb those mysterious places. Should my lord the Marchese, when he comes, think proper to listen to your request, I will give up the keys, but till then I will not part with them.”

The determined air with which he spoke those words rendered it needless for Ricardo to say more, for he well knew that the Padre Grimaldi was not of a disposition to be moved by any entreaty. In silence they now concluded

ed

ed the repast, and the father immediately rose from the table, and requested Ricardo would send him the keys, which he instantly complied with, and now calmly brought to his remembrance the event of the night, which however served to involve him in a mist of tormenting and fruitless ideas.

CHAP. III.

PADRE BERNARDO was awoke from his slumbers by the bell of the monastery tolling twelve. Scarcely had the last tones died away in distance, when the supernatural visitant made his appearance; he was habited in the same manner as on the last night, and carried a wand in his hand; his features were carefully concealed.

The

The monk, whose memory still dwelt on the pages of the volume, and whose mind, from his being just awakened from sleep, had not resumed its natural strength, trembled with an internal horror as in discordant tones the following words grated harshly on his ears:

“ Padre, I am come to make my promise good, if thou art willing; but I must first attain thy assenting signature to this scroll, for without the wish of its members I may not act within these walls.”

“ And who is there that can restrain thee, whose power appears so great?”

“ e 3 demanded

demanded the monk in an inquiring tone.

“Those who are too curious sometimes pass unanswered,” replied the mysterious voice

“Of what nature is the contents of the schedule to which I am to give my assent? surely that may not be conceived an improper question?”

“No;” replied the voice, “but it shows that baneful suspicion lurks in your breast. Your thoughts, during the day, when other subjects occupied your mind, ill agree with this cautious mode; you then longed anxiously for the night that would bring to your view a woman
far

far lovelier than that inanimate representation before you ; and you now consume the time by idle questions. What view, Padre, can I have but your pleasure ? is not man master of his own actions, in every sense a free agent ? can I guide the secret workings of his soul from the channel into which it is his will they should flow ? as easy could I force you to repose on the bosom of the invisible gale, as form your ideas contrary to your own consent.— In thee I am disappointed ; I thought you possessed a mind restless and cautious ; I knew you were without the means of attaining perhaps even the smallest of your desires, I pitied your situation ; you know the rest. From what passed in

your heart I knew you wished to see me, I obeyed even thoughts to which you had not given utterance. Where is there one of the Saints you worship who would do the like? thou mayest call on them, I defy them to attend thy invocation."

The monk was going to reply, and even to sign the scroll without any further delay; when loud claps of thunder bust in tremendous peals over the monastery.

"The Saints protect me!" said the terrified monk, starting from his seat, and holding to a rude pillar to support his agitated frame, for the earth was convulsed, and the cell rocked with the
dreadful

dreadful visitations of nature, when on a sudden a bright blaze illumined its dusky sides. The monk turned his gaze toward his visitant; tremblingly he stood in the spot where he had first beheld him; and in proportion as the brightness increased around, his gigantic form dissolved, till at length, like the uncertain vision of the night-born fancy, it existed but in idea.

Another object, far more pleasing, now attracted the attention of the monk. Soft and harmonious melodies sounded throughout the chamber, which was perfumed with aromatic odors. The monk cast his eyes upwards; the roof of the cell no longer was there, and a dazzling bright cloud, in which

was reclined a still brighter form; slowly descended to the floor; the radiant mist separated, and Bernardo beheld, from the known expression of the features, the Santa Catherina.

The Saint surveyed Bernardo with a mild but sorrowful look; while the monk, lost in sensations of ecstasy, gazed on her lovely form; her golden locks, enriched by a *tiara* of brilliants, waved in captivating ringlets on her bosom; the rose of youth sported in her lovely checks; but how shall the pen of man describe the beauties of a Saint? —vain presumptuous effort!

“Padre,” said the lovely Saint, in a voice in which was concentered the
melody

melody of a thousand harps, " what form was that which faded away on my approach? Who hast thou suffered to gain entrance within walls devoted to my service?"

Abashed the monk held down his head, but yet beneath his overhanging brows his dark eyes gazed on the Saint.

" I know him not, celestial visitant; neither gave I him entrance here; he came unsought, unasked, unwished."

" Say not so, misguided mortal, 'tis like thou didst not invoke his presence, but by indulging wicked thoughts, Bernardo, you permitted him to enter; and after you had once seen him, after you had heard him ridicule the reli-

gion to which you belong, you again wished to see him. Thou seest how superior is my power to his; how like a guilty wretch he slunk away, even at the reflection of the radiance which surrounds me. Listen to him, Bernardo, and dreadful will be the state of your soul when death has done his office on your corporeal form. But repent of your faulty conduct, amend your future life, and by tears, fasting, and penitence, render yourself worthy to become an inhabitant of the blissful regions of Paradise. Behold now, Bernardo, the fate of those who are impious in this world!"

This said, a chasm yawned hideously in the earth at the feet of the monk,
who

who, when at length his eyes had wandered down the dreadful profundity, beheld a sea of liquid fire, like the metallic ore which the alchymist melts in his crucibles in order to pour into the mould to receive its destined form. Of boundless extent appeared this horrid ocean, which raised its fiery waves in lofty ridges; deep plunged in this abyss of misery inexpressible appeared thousands of forms, whose screams deep and soul-felt rushed to the ears of the terrified monk; groups of fiends at times amused themselves by taking the burning wretches from the fiery sea and plunging them in rivers whose water appeared stagnant with intense cold; dreadful was the change, dreadful the torture to the sufferers, but to the fiends it afforded

forded delight, manifested by their hideous, discordant yells of merriment.

Slow stalking over the burning sea appeared a figure of unusual size; his form was noble; a beautiful symmetry dwelt in his limbs, but his countenance bore the marks of regret, disappointed ambition, and inveterate malice; dark and dreadful passions had marked his features with their gloomy hue, and by his eyes of fire the monk recognized in him his nocturnal visitant.

Terrified and horror-struck, Bernardo hid his face with his hands, and shook with the agitation of his mind.

The lovely eyes of the Saint were
fixed

fixed on him ; but she who could read the dark volumes of futurity, to whom the deeds of other years, and what is to occur in the boundless tide of eternity appeared without a shade before her, sighed deeply.

“ Lift up thy view now, Bernardo, and weigh well the difference in the existence of the immortal soul after a life virtuously employed.”

The monk obeyed ; but so many dazzling glories met his view, that his eyes shrunk from the transcendent effulgence ; again he ventured to raise his eyelids, the horrid cham at his feet was closed, and the roar from those regions of horror no longer appalling his soul,
made

made him the more freely indulge in the blissful scene of Paradise.

Myriads of bright forms, seated on thrones of silver canopied by golden clouds, unceasing in grateful adorations tuned, their harps to hymns of praise. Beauty dwelt around, each of the celestial inhabitants appeared to have just attained the age when the loves and graces unite to bring to perfection the human frame, no cares, no sorrows seemed to dwell among the heavenly host; all was joy in its most perfect state.

After the astonishment of the monk had in some degree ceased, he began to contemplate the scene before him with
the

the eye of the voluptuary: here were no envious veils to conceal the lovely beatific charms of the radiant host; little attire suited their beauteous forms, for guiltless were there minds. A zone of immortal make pressed to their taper waists the transparent robes that gently floated on the fragrant wing of the zephyrs. Deeply sighed the monk, greatly he panted to be amongst those lovely forms, when the Santa Catherina, shocked to see so much depravity inhabit a human being, closed the view from his unhallowed gaze.

Discontented the monk turned his eyes on her who thus addressed him:

“ Now, Benardo, I leave you to make
your

your election ; you have seen the result of a wicked and of a well-spent life, conduct yourself piously, and I will be your friend ; act the reverse, and I leave you to the common enemy of mankind, who will fawn before you to accomplish his dark designs, and finally rejoice over you when writhing in unutterable agonies such as you have but seen the guilty suffer, you toss on unfathomable boundless oceans of liquid fire."

Slowly the bright cloud united in front of the Saint, who directing her beauteous eyes to Heaven, slowly ascended toward those exalted regions of bliss. The cell grew dark, the monk lost in thought, leaned against a pillar,
revolving

reëvolving in his mind what he had heard and seen ; at length turning round, he beheld the table, the volume, the lamp and the chair, in the same position as when he left them ; he advanced with faltering steps, and taking the lamp, held it up to the painting, but what had before given him so much pleasure, now disgusted him. "How feeble," said he, "are the efforts of the painter to afford even a single idea of the angelic charms of the Santa Catherina."

The monk threw himself into his seat, deeply ruminating on the past, or rather on the beauties he had beheld, and which entirely obliterated from his mind the regions of despair and horror which had been open to his view. His
soul

soul was far gone in guilty thoughts and wishes. "If" said he, "the women of this world are as lovely as those in the next, methinks I could tear down these my prison walls to enjoy their enchanting converse."—

Suddenly a means arose in his mind by which there was a slight possibility of gratifying his curiosity; 'tis true the greatest danger attended it, and therefore the attempt would call forth all his art, skill, and dexterity; he reflected on it with sensations of pleasure, and though at that moment he meditated no real crime, yet he knew not that by it he threw himself into temptations to him irresistible.

The near approach of the morning beams rendered it impossible for him to make the attempt at that time, he was therefore obliged to defer it till the next night; he then lay down on his pallet, and endeavoured to court a short repose ere the mornin bell should call him to the duties of the day.

Rest however awaited him not there; he turned from side to side, but in no posture would calm sleep steep in forgetfulness the agitation of his mind. He arose, and leaving his cell, walked into the gardens belonging to the monastery as the bell tolled four. Ascending an eminence which commanded an extensive view there, he beheld the sun rising in radiant majesty from the calm waves of the
the

the sea ; first he threw his broad beams on the aspiring summit of Mount Etna, then emitting volumes of black smoke, which ascending became condensed in the air till driven abroad by the western breeze, which rolled them toward the Ionian Sea.

The monastery and convent of Santa Catherina was erected on the side of one of the lofty hills which form the well-known Val de Demone, which lays in the north-east part of the island of Sicily. To the north it commanded a view of the Mediterranean sea and the isles of Lipare; to the west it overlooked a vast extent of country interspersed with several castles and large towns,
parti-

particularly those of Randasso and
Lingua Crossa.

From the eminence which the restless mind of the monk had made him desirous to ascend was seen a part of the convent gardens which were separated from those belonging to the monastery by a lofty wall. Eagerly did Bernardo gaze toward that place; and it was evident that not the wish of seeing the sun arise from other worlds to perform his daily course over this hemisphere, or to survey the beauties of the lovely prospect which now so sweetly opened to the view, drew the monk to that elevated spot; some dark, some deep design, evidently was on the anvil of his mind, and which as it appeared, shunned the inquiring

ing

face of day, as he had fixed on the coming night to accomplish his purpose, whatever it might be.

Well it might be supposed that the events which had so strongly marked the past night would have obliterated from his mind all ideas of doing any thing that was not consistent with the rule of right; but the monk now remembered the whole but as a baseless vision, excepting, indeed, the remembrance that he cherished of the heavenly charms he had beheld, and which acted as a powerful stimulant to urge him to the completion of his intentions; so hard is it to turn the current of evil thoughts when virtue holds but a doubtful sway over the mind.

Bent

Bent on the accomplishment of his wishes, he had sullenly listened to the voice of the immaculate Santa Catherina, who had so graciously evinced her solicitude for the welfare of his soul by condescending to be herself his monitor.

The dreadful view which she had disclosed of the regions of eternal horrors suited not the religious tenets of the monk, who looked only to a short duration in purgatory for a remission of all worldly offences, should the abbot refuse to grant him absolution before death ; neither did he approve of acts of mortification and penance, for the Padre Bernardo was well affected to-

ward the indulgence of his appetites, and he almost began to believe the whole brought about through the means of the mysterious visitant, in order to prove whether he was worthy of his efforts to serve him. In this disposition he thought of him no longer with terror, and he determined that, as he meant to make some attempt to satisfy his curiosity that night, the next should be the one when he would see the supernatural being and comply with his requests, on condition that he should perform whatever was required of him.

In such a melancholy determination as this the sound of the matin bell broke on the silence of the morning,
and

and the Padre Bernardo hastened from the eminence in the garden of the monastery to join the train, and in the chapel to appear as an assistant in what was so far distant from his thoughts, which now grew each hour darker, and more pregnant with evil designs.

CHAP. IV.

LOUISA'S breast, unknown almost to herself, cherished the most pure love for Ricardo. She thought it was really the sensations of friendship and esteem that made her continually ruminate on that Signor, but the subtle deity of hearts had made her completely his vassal ere she was conscious of it. She began to feel a distaste to whatever before had
attracted

attracted her attention and had given her pleasure ; her flowers were sometimes neglected for whole days, the jessamine which wantoned round her favorite bower wanted her attentive hand ; she often sighed without being conscious of it ; and whenever a horseman passed the cottage, she would raise her eyes to see if it was not Ricardo, while a sudden suffusion crimsoned her lovely countenance.

In the mean time various emotions possessed the soul of the Signor. He found it impossible to drive from his mind the mysterious events of the past night. The noises he had heard at the time the sword was waved against him,

increased by the attendant echo, were such as might be supposed to proceed from the dark bosom of the bottomless pit where the souls of the wicked are continually undergoing a new series of tortures and horrors.

Neither that day nor the next did he stir from the Castle. Grimaldi, whom he only saw at the hour of repast, never turned the conversation to the ruins; he seemed, indeed, either to have forgotten what had so lately taken place in them, or to wish to do so, and his general conversation was on the expected arrival of the Marchese, a courier having been dispatched from Palermo bearing intelligence to that effect.

Ricardo

Ricardo then determined to visit Louisa, for he was fearful that when the Marchese arrived he should not have many opportunities of doing so unobserved. On the evening of the third day he approached the cottage, and when he entered it, to his inexpressible delight found the lovely Louisa sitting by herself; the Signora Bononi having gone to a neighbouring cottage to assist a poor woman who was unwell.

The innate modesty of Louisa made her blush deeply as Ricardo entered the apartment. Secluded as she had hitherto been from society, it was the first time she was ever alone with a stranger. Some other emotions which it is

likely she also felt, contributed to increase her confusion.

Such an opportunity of declaring the sentiments of his breast was eagerly seized by Ricardo; he threw himself at the feet of the trembling and almost alarmed Louisa, he poured forth his soul to her.

“ Beautiful Louisa! the first moment that gave thy lovely form to my eyes my heart no longer owned my sway, but when I became acquainted with your virtues and the numberless and nameless graces that adorn you, my whole soul became yours. Do not conceive, most amiable Louisa, that I am
guided

guided by other motives than those of honor and virtue. Oh! Louisa, avert not that sweet face from me; let me gaze on those beauties I must ever adore."

"Rise, Signor, said Louisa; "the lowly posture you have taken distresses me; you forget yourself, or the son of the Marchese de Carlentini would not surely thus address himself to the humble Louisa."

"Love, dearest maid of my heart," replied Ricardo, "love levels all distinctions; but were I possessed of a crown, I should lay it at Louisa's feet. Suffer me," continued he, taking hold of her hand, "suffer me to hope that the at-

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tentions,

tentions, the adoration, of Ricardo, will one day be blessed with a return from the divine object of them."

"Signor," said Louisa, "whatever were the sentiments of my heart, they could be of no import to you; the future Marchese de Carlentini must look to one of equal rank with himself as his wife."

"By the powers of love I swear, if Louisa listens not to my vows of adoration, never to wed; the thought of other than you is torture to my soul. O Louisa! lovely! dearest Louisa, let not my heart burst with agony. Perhaps, oh! heavens, perhaps another has
your

your love. O envied mortal! speak, my Louisa, tell me my fate, but be merciful."

Here his speech failed, his eyes suffused in tears were fixed on the pallid Louisa, who, affected at his emotions, sought to comfort him.

"Signor, if the assurance that the humble Louisa has no other acquaintance than yourself, (if I may be allowed the honor of ranking you as such,) is of any importance to your comfort, I should be wrong not to mention it. I am yet too young even to dream of love; but if the friendship, the esteem of Louisa, are worth ac-

H 6

ceptance,

ceptance, no one possesses them more than the Signor Ricardo."

In ecstasy at this speech, which freed the bosom of Ricardo from an insupportable burthen, he kissed the tender hand he held, nor did the now blushing Louisa seek to prevent him. At her solicitation he arose from his suppliant posture, while Hope with her golden pinions fluttered around him, and sweetly whispered in his ear that Louisa would be his.

Scarcely had she time to compose the agitation of her mind, when her mother entered the apartment. She seemed surprised to find her daughter alone
with

with Ricardo, and an air of gravity prevailed over her features. He instantly observed it; and, elate with the reception he had met with from Louisa, determined no longer to conceal from her his sentiments concerning her daughter; he therefore took an opportunity when Louisa was out of the apartment to commence the interesting conversation.

All attempts on the part of the Signora Bononi to convince him that an union with her daughter would be little short of madness, were in vain; and with difficulty she obtained a promise from him not to mention to the Marchese his wild project, for she well
knew

knew that both herself and the innocent Louisa would become the immediate objects of his persecution. And she had also the welfare of her daughter too much in view not secretly to rejoice at the attachment of Ricardo, particularly as she had every reason to believe it mutual.

With his breast lightened of an oppressive load, and hopes of future days of halcyon joy, Ricardo quitted the cottage where dwelt his only comfort, the bright star which was to lead him to the flowery paths of domestic bliss.

When he entered the Castle, he found some of the servants of the Marchese
already

already arrived, and making preparations for his reception and the Signors who usually accompanied him. The gloom that had so long reigned within its lofty walls now began to be dispersed, the apartments were furnished in a sumptuous style, and the long tables were once more laid in the centre of the hall.

The next day the merry trumpeters announced the approach of the Marchese, and Ricardo, with the Padre Grimaldi, staid in the North Hall to meet and welcome him to his residence. He was accompanied by three Signors, and a numerous train of domestics followed them. He slightly embraced his son as he entered, and having presented
him

him to the Signors who were with him, he passed on to father Grimaldi to whom he spoke for some time, but in such low tones, that Ricardo, who was engaged in conversation with the companions of the Marchese, could not hear a word. The steward now attended to shew the strangers their apartments, and the Marchese quitted the hall with Grimaldi.

Ricardo thus left alone, had leisure to reflect on the companions of his father. In the Count Altona, he saw a combination of the most repulsive manners that, according to his ideas, could possibly exist in one person ; dissimulation, pride, and envy, formed the leading traits of his

his disposition. The Signor Roderigo de Romanzo appeared little better than the captain of a banditti, his person was gigantic, his face almost covered by a pair of enormous whiskers, a long Roman nose, and black piercing eyes, glared beneath his overhanging brows, while his whole countenance was shaded by a large plume of black feathers, which he wore in his military hat, and which added to the sombre appearance of his features. The third person was the young Count de Leoni, in whom Ricardo saw one who perhaps possessed a congenial disposition with his own thoughts. At the first interview, it was almost impossible to judge, but each seemed to be pleased with

the other, and to feel a desire to cultivate his friendship.

An elegant entertainment was prepared in the North Hall, of which the Marchese and his three companions, with Grimaldi and Ricardo, partook; and Ricardo found, that when the enlivening flask had gone briskly round, and each character began to develope itself, that he was not mistaken in the opinion he had formed of the haughty Count Altona, and the ferocious looking Signor Roderigo de Romanzo. All of them seemed to pay the greatest attention to the Count de Leoni, Grimaldi excepted, who still retained his usual repulsive manners, notwithstanding the
evident

evident exertions of the Marchese to induce him to unbend from his stern deportment.

When at length they retired from the banquet, the company proceeded to the apartments of the Marchese, where they sat down to play. Ricardo was astonished at the vast sums which were staked, and concerned to see that the Count de Leoni, and the Signor Rodrigo de. Romanzo, who were opposed to the Marchese and the Count Altana, lost to a considerable amount.

He at length retired from the apartment, and in the solitude of his own reflected on his beloved Louisa; but his reflections

reflections occasioned both joy and sorrow ; joy, that she seemed to regard him in a favourable light ; and sorrow, that it would be impossible to be united to her during the life-time of his father.

In such reflections the hours wore sadly away, when the stillness which hitherto had reigned around was interrupted by sudden bursts of laughter and merriment, which appeared to come from the North Hall.

Ricardo now for the first time reflected that it was long past the hour of supper, which had sounded unobserved during his meditations. He, however,
felt

felt curious to know what it was that occasioned such noisy merriments, and for that purpose leaving his chamber, proceeded to the extremity of the corridore, where a small portal opened on a gallery which ran round the hall.

From thence he perceived the Marchese and his companions, who appeared in a state of inebriation. Their exclamations were loud, and their conversation disgusting to the ear of Ricardo, who rejoiced that his absence of mind had prevented him from joining such a dissipated crew.

At one side of the table sat the father Grimaldi, who alone partook not
of

of the general festivity. He appeared to be indulging his usual gloomy ideas, even in the midst of such a licentious scene.

Surely, thought Ricardo, that man must have committed some horrible act which seems unceasingly to embitter his existence, and renders him a burden to himself and unpleasant to every one around.

Weary with viewing the scene which presented itself to his sight, Ricardo left the gallery and returned to his couch, where sleep awaited to close his eyes, and the powers of fancy to bring

bring to his imagination his beloved Louisa.

In a few days, Ricardo having found an opportunity to speak to the Marchese, informed him of the events that had taken place in the southern wing of the Castle, and requested to be permitted to search them with a party of domestics.

The Marchese listened to him with impatience, and when Ricardo had concluded, thus addressed him :

“From Father Grimaldi I have already been informed of your adventures in the ruins, and I cannot conceive the

reason

reason of your wish to explore them. Tell me, Ricardo," continued the Marchese, fixing his eyes stedfastly on him, "is it not in consequence of some idle reports which I understand exist among the peasant and domestics? Have you been so weak as to listen to them? It must be so, or your curioity could never have been so greatly roused. Answer me truly."

Ricardo ingenuously owned that his first wish was to reside in the Southern Angle Tower, as it commanded so beautiful and extensive a prospect, and that afterwards the appearance of the figure bearing the lamp excited his curiosity

curiosity to examine the deserted chamber.

“Idle chimeras of the brain,” replied the Marchese, whom Ricardo could not help observing turned pale at the mention of the South Angle Tower; “henceforth Ricardo, let me hear no more on this subject, thou wilt infect all the inhabitants with thy fears, which I am sorry to say can only exist in a weak and uninformed mind. Or supposing that what you have asserted were true, is it possible, think you, to drive away aerial beings? Reflect on the absurdity only for a moment, and recollect too that I charge you never to attempt to

enter those ruins, and never to make them the subject of your conversation as you fear my displeasure.

Such was the result of Ricardo's conversation with the haughty Marchese, who immediately left the hall and joined the Count Altona and Signor Romanzo who were walking on the lawn; while Ricardo, somewhat confused at the stern comportment of his father, retired to his chamber; and leaning over the stone frame of the casement, gave way to the reflections his conduct had excited.

While he was thus employed a low murmur of voices made him look on the terrace below, where he saw the Marchese

chese in earnest conversation with his two companions; he heard them once or twice pronounce the name of the Count de Leoni, from which circumstance it was evident he was the subject of their discourse.

“It ought to be shared equally amongst us,” said Romanzo, in a tone loud enough to be heard by Ricardo.

To this the Marchese replied, and a long conversation ensued, the result of which was the departure of Romanzo in evident anger from the Marchese and Altona, who still continued to converse together long after the enraged Romanzo had quitted the terrace.

The Count Altona then departed, and the Marchese continued slowly pacing the terrace, at times leaning over the wall and betraying tokens of suspense and anxiety; at length, however, Altona appeared with Romanzo; the Marchese hastily advanced toward him; and, by their gestures, the difference that had taken place seemed to be amicably adjusted.

They then left the terrace, and Riccardo to his reflections on their conduct, which indeed was little in favor of the rectitude of their intentions toward the Count de Leoni; and he shuddered at the horrid sur-
mises

mises which he could not prevent entering his mind.

At times he almost felt inclined to disclose his suspicions to the Count himself; but the idea of the foul light in which he must represent his father obliged him to be silent.

He had improved his acquaintance with Leoni, and used to ride out with him about the estate, which was extensive and beautifully diversified with the luxuriant productions of Nature, and he observed with regret that the features of the Count at times bore an air of deep melancholy, and which seemed to increase upon him.

The cause was unknown to Ricardo, who now never mixed in the evening parties of the Marchese, but generally used after the banquet to turn his steps to the dwelling of Louisa, where his hours passed in sweet converse with the beloved of his heart.

She at length blessed him with an avowal of a mutual affection, and on the downy pinions of delight happily passed the fleeting hours; blessing and blessed they looked to each other for happiness, and found it in the endearing smile and tender pressure, warm with the emotions of pure and sincere affection.

Such

Such is the happiness attendant on virtuous love; each moment increases the dear charm, each moment it becomes more interwoven with existence itself. It is like the pure flame which the Virgins of the Sun attend, and which never expires.

Deeply impressed with sentiments sacred to love, the happy pair indulged without reserve in transports known only to those whose bosoms have felt the sweet influence, but in which the most rigid attention to modesty was never violated.

Happy lover, recollect what your emotions were when you learned that

the soul of her you adored was free, peaceful, and unconquered, and that you might aspire to the supreme felicity of teaching it to love; recollect too the ravishing delight which seized your soul, when the sweet confession of a mutual affection slowly proceeded from the coral lips of the beauty of your heart; were not those moments of ecstatic bliss? Recollect what you then felt, and confess that the delights of that moment were worth ages of pain.

Such happiness did Ricardo enjoy; and which would have been without alloy were it not for the constant fear he was in lest the Marchese should
come

come to the knowledge of his attachment.

One morning when he had just taken leave of Louisa, at the gate which opened to the road, he was suddenly accosted by the Count Altona, who, it seems was at that moment riding past. He saluted Ricardo, and after a short conversation, invited him to join him in the ride.

Ricardo, although vexed that he had been seen at the cottage, comforted himself with the idea that Louisa could hardly have been observed by the Count, and in order to find out if she had, readily consented to the

15 invitation,

invitation, and accompanied him through the extensive and beautiful valley; but the Count was silent respecting Louisa, and Ricardo felt assured that his secret was safe.

He saw with the greatest concern the increasing melancholy that marked the features of the Count de Leoni; when that day they had assembled in the Hall at the banquet he drank frequently, and evidently appeared to endeavour to drown obtruding thoughts in the inebriating juice of the grape. When the repast was concluded, they repaired as usual to the apartments of the Marchese, and Ricardo to his own chamber, for he was fearful of
going

going that evening to the residence of Louisa.

The misty shades of night were advancing with rapid strides, for the sun had long ceased to illumine the valley, and was pursuing his bright journey to other worlds, who were now rejoicing at his gladdening approach.

A hasty step on the terrace made Ricardo lean over the lower frame of the casement, and to his astonishment he beheld the Count de Leoni. His gestures betrayed the anguish of his mind, and as he passed under the casement, Ricardo heard him speak

disordered accents the following words. —“Oh Heavens! wretch that I am not sooner to see the snare that was laid for me! Ruined—utterly ruined! **Accursed walls,**” said he, looking at the Castle, “why did you not fall and overwhelm the vile crew ye shelter ere my destruction was completed?” Thrice he smote his forehead, then looking over the wall and seeing some of his domestics, he ordered them to bring his horse directly, and then quitted the terrace.

The astonishment of Ricardo, the shame he felt, rendered him incapable of action; to be the son of a man who was guilty of so much baseness, afflicted

afflicted him more than the weak pen can describe. He still staid at the casement, and in a few minutes beheld the unfortunate Count gallop furiously across the lawn, and disappear in the surrounding shades.

The Castle bell soon after announced the hour of supper, and Riccardo determined to station himself in the gallery, to see what would pass between the Marchese and his companions on hearing of the absence of the Count. Accordingly he took his station in a place where he could not be seen, and when the Marchese and his associates met, he perceived they were in unusual spirits; when the
domestics

domestics announced the Count de Leoni, a smile was visible on their features, and they gaily sat down to the repast.

Their conversation, while the domestics were in the room, was on general topics; but when they were away, the Marchese thus addressed his companions:—

“Count Altona, I am sorry to be obliged to renew the subject in which the Signor Romanzo appeared to conceive himself unfairly dealt with. You know,” said he, lowering his voice, “that the terms of our agreement with the Signor was to allow him one thousand gold

gold ducats, on condition of his introducing to us the Count de Leoni."

"You will do well, Marchese," sullenly replied the Signor Romanzo, "to recollect the conversation I held with you before we came to the Castle, and also the promise you made before the Count Altona, that I was to share with you equally the pillage of Leoni."

"We did that" replied the Count, "in order to keep you quiet; the Marchese and myself are willing to conform to our first promise. What pretensions, Signor Romanzo, can you possibly have to such a partition? Content

yourself

yourself with the thousand ducats; the next time you shall have more."

"The Saints curse me if I do!" furiously replied the Signor Romanzo; "give me one third, or by the Virgin I will expose you at Palermo.—Marchese, I address myself to you; it was with you my agreement was made."

"You know my resolves," said the Marchese, "nor am I to be intimidated by the threats of Signor Romanzo, whom I have honored by permitting to reside beneath my roof."

"I am resolved to have my right," said Romanzo, "or"—

"Or

“ Or what? ” replied the Marchese.

“ Or dispute it with my sword.”

“ Your sword,” said the Marchese, “ will do little for you. No one fears it here. There are your ducats,” continued he, throwing a large purse on the table.

“ Marchese,” said the furious Romanzo, rising up and unsheathing his sword, “ hear me—you are a villain.”

“ That word shall be your last,” said the angry Marchese, and instantly drawing, attacked Romanzo.

Ricardo

Ricardo rushed from his place of concealment in the gallery, and flew toward the Hall; he had, however, arrived too late, for the Marchese was wounded and lay on the floor weltering in his blood.

“Count Altona,” exclaimed Romanzo “’tis your turn now.”

“No, villain!” exclaimed Ricardo, snatching from the hand of his dying father the sword which had been of so little use, “first you must fight with me.”

Romanzo, eyeing him contemptuously, aimed a furious blow at his head.

head. Ricardo avoided the stroke, and at the same instant pierced his unguarded side. The sword reached his heart; and the gigantic Romanzo with a hideous groan fell lifeless on the marble pavement.

The domestics, alarmed by the clashing of swords, had rushed into the Hall. They instantly conveyed the Marchese to his couch, and Grimaldi, who was skilled in surgery, dressed his wound.

But the feeble efforts of man wanted power to assist the Marchese; life was ebbing fast; the sword had pierced

some

some of the vital parts, and the wound was mortal.

Ricardo was standing mournfully by the side of the couch, when the Marchese opening his eyes, thus with difficulty addressed him:—

“Thou hast done well, my son, to revenge the wound I have received by the death of Romanzo. I feel the lamp of life is near expiring, and ere it is quite extinguished, I would unburthen my conscience of a dreadful secret which weighs heavy on my soul.”

Father Grimaldi, who was in the
chamber,

chamber, now hastily came to the side of the couch ; his countenance was pale and agitated.

“ Signor Ricardo,” said he, suddenly interrupting the speech of the Marchese, “ may I request your absence for a few minutes ; the mind of the Marchese seems disordered, and needs, while he is able to receive it, the holy rites of the church.”

Ricardo reluctantly, and greatly surprised at the earnest request of the father, withdrew, and left him alone with the Marchese. It was, however, but a short time before Grimaldi came to
inform

inform him he might again enter the chamber, which he instantly did.

The countenance of Grimaldi had recovered its usual composure, but that of the Marchese seemed dreadfully agitated. The sharp pangs of death assailed him; his eyes rolled about with a dreadful meaning, while the crimson flush on his cheek indicated the fever that was preying on his vitals.

“Why am I thus surrounded” said he, looking wildly about him; “did not I tell you how it happened; ask Grimaldi, it was his fault.”

Again the confessor approached the bed.

“Marchese”

“Marchese,” said he, “recollect yourself; there are none in the chamber but your son and myself.”

“Grimaldi, deny it not; it was your fault,” said the Marchese. “Oh! how the recollection tortures me. Now would I could recal that hour. How the demons stare at me—they are waiting for my soul—oh! Ricardo, hold me; let me not go; they will tear me to pieces—mercy—oh, mercy!—Heaven have mercy on my”—

“Soul!” he would have said, but death for ever stopped his further speech. A groan of long and horrible continuance announced the departure of the breath of life. Now he lay
motionless

motionless; his countenance blackened and distorted by his struggles with the relentless power and the pangs of his body, and what was far worse, his conscience, for Ricardo too plainly perceived that there was some dreadful secret which he wished to unfold, but was prevented either by Grimaldi or the pangs he endured.

Ricardo now left the chamber, and Grimaldi being left alone, approached the breathless form of the Marchese; he gazed at it while he said in a low voice "had but a few minutes more of existence been allowed thee, thou wouldst have betrayed me to the world."

Now I am secure, save from that aveng-
ing

ing Power which doubtless now hovers over me grasping the retributive sword of justice. Would I could fly from conscience; would I could fly from death! Oh! what tortures must be mine in that awful moment when the soul is leaving its mortal coil and going to give an account of its deeds before the dreadful throne of judgment.—But let me not think of it, lest I hasten my dissolution; let me steel my heart, and resist the attacks of conscience, which renders my existence one scene of horror.”

Such were the words of Grimaldi, who now left the side of the couch, and summoned the attendants to perform the last offices to the body of the Marchese de Carlentini.

Ricardo mourned with filial affection the loss of his father, though he had so little demeaned himself as one. Yet he forgot all the instances of his unkindness, and remembered only those few moments in which he had shewn the most trifling marks of affection for him.

On the evening of the second day a train of monks arrived from a neighbouring monastery, which was near the town of Pollizzi, and the body of the late Marchese was conveyed into the chapel, which was hung with black, and lit by the torches carried by the domestics. Ricardo attended the awful ceremony. The deep voices of the
Fathers

Fathers chaunting the Requiem was alone heard ; the solemn sounds floated in the air, and Echo, with all her busy train, increased the mournful harmony. At length the mortal remains were consigned to the peaceful tomb ; and the service being concluded, the procession left the chapel.

The superior of the monastery remained some time with Ricardo, in order to pour into his bosom the consolation of religious discourse ; and when the ebullitions of Ricardo's sorrow had in some degree subsided, he left him, and proceeded to his peaceful abode.

The Count Altona had, the day after

death of the Marchese, sent a message of condolence to Ricardo, and had departed with his people from the Castle, as had also the domestics of the unfortunate Count de Leoni in search of their master; and the people belonging to the Signor Romanzo with his breathless remains.

Such was the termination of the dreadful events which an unprincipled motive of ruining an unwary, and unfortunate youth, gave rise to. Associates in a bad cause never long agree; if Justice does not overtake them, they generally inflict it on themselves.

No longer in fear of his attachment
ment

ment to Louisa being known, Ricardo sent a messenger to her with earnest inquiries after her health, and that of the Signora Bononi.

The answer of Louisa was long; she condoled with him on the late unfortunate events at the Castle, and represented her mother and herself as being perfectly well; but there was an air of melancholy diffused throughout the letter which greatly distressed Ricardo. It seemed written as if she was labouring under some calamity, and which she wished not to divulge, but which had taken such hold on her faculties that she was unable to avoid almost expressing it by her style of writing.

The recent events at the Castle rendered it improper for Ricardo to leave it; and his respect for his father was such as to make him rigidly conform to the rules which custom had rendered unavoidable.

In searching among the papers of his late father, in order to ascertain whether he had left any will, he found a large packet, which on inspection he found to contain the writings relative to the estates of the Count de Leoni.

Delighted beyond measure at an opportunity of rendering justice to the unfortunate Count, he instantly despatched messengers after him, to acquaint

quaint him with the circumstances that had taken place at the Castle, and that if he would repair there, he would be informed of a circumstance of the utmost importance to him.

Having done this his mind became more composed, and he waited with much anxiety for the return of his messengers, in the fond hope of making the Count de Leoni every satisfaction for the wrongs which he had received from his father and his agents.

But the people returned after having been to Palermo, and to the estates which the Count had possessed, without being able to gain the least intel-

ligence where the Count was ; and Ricardo, when he recollected the despair and distraction which was but too apparent in his actions on the evening he had left the Castle, at times greatly feared that he had, in one of his fits of desperation, laid violent hands on himself.

The father Grimaldi seldom appeared in the presence of Ricardo ; he was almost always shut up in his apartment, and sometimes, either very early in the morning, or when the shades of evening enveloped in their dusky mantle all around, he would walk on the lawn, and seek to find relief from the evident disturbance which reigned within his breast ;

breast; his face grew meagre; his eyes and cheeks were hollow, and it was evident he was labouring under some dreadful evil which was fast hurrying him to "that bourne from whence no traveller e'er returned."

At length he entirely confined himself to his apartment, and soon after to his bed; a fever preyed on his vitals, and reduced him to the dreary brink of the grave.

In this extremity he sent for Ricardo, who immediately complied with his request, and came to his apartment. He was greatly shocked to see the dreadful change that had taken place in so

short a time, and that even now the hand of death was on the mysterious Grimaldi.

After motioning to his domestic to quit the chamber, he thus addressed Ricardo:—

“My hour is at length arrived. I already feel the cold chill of dissolution anticipate the dreadful moment of my departure from this world; dreadful indeed to me, whose evil deeds weigh down my soul! No gleam of comfort animates me; hope is extinct; deeply have I sinned; dreadful must be my atonement. But there is mercy; and my
long

long repentance may perhaps at last be considered as some alleviation of my crime. Thou wilt, ere long, Signor, know the mystery of the South Angle Tower.—These papers will inform you with the extent of my guilt; but I entreat with my dying breath that you will not break the seal 'till I am in my grave; and if it be possible, do not curse me, for misery and despair have have been my portion since I committed the dreadful deed.—Surely”—

At that moment a pang sharp and heartfelt, the harbinger of death, distorted the countenance of the monk; he groaned dreadfully, and turned up

his eyes to Heaven with an expression of contrition which seemed to come from a heart almost hopeless of mercy.

Ricardo wished to speak to him words of comfort, but was unable; he was ignorant of the crime he had committed; but from the continual torture he seemed to endure, and the last words of his father, which vibrated in his ears, he was convinced it was an offence dark and dreadful, and which concerned himself.

He promised that he would not break the enclosure of the packet till the time he had mentioned; and Grimaldi,
who

who had now become a little composed by the discontinuance of the pangs of death, in a faint voice continued:—

“ Surely the torments I have endured in this world will be considered. Nor peace, nor comfort, have I know for many years. Oh! had virtue ever been the constant attendant on my actions, how widely different would this awful hour appear to me. On the brink of eternity, stained with the blackest crime that human nature can be capable of! O earth, swallow me up, nor let my soul escape; imprison it deep, deep in thy dark bowels; let it not ascend to give an account of my offences; let it not descend to endure
the

the torments it merits. Ah! now are fast opening the gates of eternal life—have mercy Heaven!—have mercy on the soul of a murderer!”

Ricardo started at the dreadful word, which was the last that Grimaldi spoke in this world; the angel of death had claimed him as his prey, and his soul had fled to those dreaded regions above to give an account of the dreadful crimes it had been guilty of.

Ricardo pensively left the chamber with the packet given him by Grimaldi in his hand, deposited it in his cabinet, and perceiving that the moon was breaking over the eastern horizon,

which

which now glowed with the near approach of the radiant regent of day, he determined to stay an hour in his chamber; and then to see Louisa, as he was anxious to know if his suspicions respecting the state of her mind when she wrote to him were right.

The recent events crowded so thick upon his mind that more than an hour passed ere he was aware of it; he now descended from his chamber, and hastily, with the fond impatience of an anxious love, proceeded to the residence of Louisa. But dreadful was the intelligence that awaited him there; he entered the cottage, and not seeing any one in the apartment where the Signora

Bononi

Bonomi and her daughter used to sit; he was proceeding into the garden, when the sound of lamentation assailed his ears; hastily he flew, directed by them, into a chamber, where he saw the Signora Bononi and her domestic gagged and bound with cords in such a manner, as to render them unable to stir. He immediately released them, and in reply to his almost distracted inquiries concerning Louisa, was informed by the Signora Bononi that late the preceding evening, three men in masks had entered the cottage, and after having confined herself and servant in the manner he had found them, had carried off Louisa.

CHAP. V.

WHEN the Padre Bernardo left the rest of the monks he went to his cell, and having replenished his lamp with oil, he repaired to the chapel:

Darkness and silence reigned in the long-drawn aisles. Often the monk started at the echoes of his slow paces as they reverberated along the vaulted roof.

At

At length he stopped at the gilded screen which divided the part allotted to the nuns of the convent. With scrupulous attention he examined the fastenings of the folding gates, and applied several keys to the lock, but without success.

Though doomed to meet a disappointment at this place, he did not despair; but turning from the screen, he crossed the aisle, and opening a large door, proceeded down several steps, taking care to shroud his lamp from the blasts that rushed in melancholy moans through the dreary subterraneous repositories for the departed monks of Santa Catherina; for it
was

was the cemetery of the monastery that Bernardo was now in.

He often looked around to see if his steps were followed; but no human sound broke on his ear. The ground he was now traversing rose in many small hillocks terminated by a cross, which marked the spot where lay the mouldering remains of the Monks.

Strange ideas disturbed the mind of Bernardo which was naturally superstitious, his terrors increased every moment; that beings who belonged not to this world were allowed to visit it he was well assured of, and he each moment expected

pected to see the graves burst open, and their inmates rise from their silent recesses and stop his further progress.—In fancy he saw them stalking around him. The bell now tolled eleven.

The monk collecting his courage proceeded rather quicker than before ; and leaving the cemetery, advanced into another cavern, which he crossed.

This place was of great extent, and the roof was supported by a number of rude pillars ; it was immediately beneath the chapel ; and Bernardo, after he had noticed every part of the opposite wall, hastily returned

turned to the cemetery, and taking from thence the implements with which the graves were made, began to open the ground in a retired corner, where it was not likely the most prying eye would discover his operations.

In a short time he effected his purpose, for the stones which composed the wall fell down deprived of their support; and the monk crossing through the aperture he had made, found himself, to his great delight, in the cemetery of the convent.

Eagerly he proceeded forward, holding his lamp up to enable him to discover
cover

cover what course he should pursue, when suddenly a deep sigh met his affrighted ear, and as he looked toward the place where the sound proceeded, he saw a figure seemingly rise out of one of the graves, and, with a lanthorn in its hold, proceeded slowly and mournfully from the place.

The terrified monk staggered back to the wall, against which he leant almost deprived of reason; his large eyes were fixed intently on the figure which was crossing the cemetery, and shortly after ascended some steps on which the lamp gleamed. Soon it arrived to the summit, and the light of the lamp was lost. A closing door then assured

sured the monk that he was rid of the object that had so greatly alarmed him.

He hesitated for some time to proceed; however at length he slowly went forward, glancing his eyes around in every direction. He looked with particular attention toward the spot from whence he had beheld the figure rise, and saw a grave which appeared by the freshness of the earth to have been made the preceding day. While he was looking on it he heard a groan as if beneath his feet, and these words faintly uttered:—

“Help!—Oh! mercy!—I shall die!”

These

These words Bernardo was confident came from the new-made grave.

“Good Heaven!” said he, “a human being, a female too, has been interred alive.”

Hastily he ran for his spade, and threw aside the earth that scantily covered the coffin, the lid of which he tore open, and beheld in it a nun clothed in the habiliments of the grave.

Wildly she arose from her dreary abode, and gazed silently for some time on the monk. “For what horrible purpose,” said she at length, “was I here

I here enclosed? Oh! too well I am convinced this was the work of sister Agatha."

During her speech the monk surveyed her features; they were interesting, but a languid, pallid hue, like that of death, prevailed over them.

He now was struck with the danger he ran of being discovered, and was greatly perplexed what he should do with the nun, who, exhausted with the efforts she had made to release herself from the grave, was sitting down on the coffin of which she had been so lately the tenant.

Nothing short of the attendant cir-

cumstances could have prevented the monk, who now for the first time was alone with a woman, from taking advantage of her defenceless situation. It was at this moment that the Demon, darting his watchful eyes through the centre of the terraqueous globe, beheld the monk, and knew the dark passions which assailed his breast; he smiled with a malignant satisfaction, and felt assured he should succeed in his designs, and add another victim to his numerous bands.

The monk would willingly have bore the nun to his cell, but his fears of a discovery alone forced him to relinquish

quish that idea; he therefore thus addressed her: —

Whatever was my motive in visiting these vaults, to you, at least, they have proved fortunate, since ere a few more moments had elapsed you would have been annihilated. You must now take a solemn oath not to mention the means by which you escaped, or that you saw here a monk of Santa Catharina."

The nun acquiesced with the wishes of Padre Bernardo, and swore on the cross which had been raised at the head of her grave not to divulge the circumstances of her wonderful escape.

Bernardo then assisted her to the steps which he had observed the figure that had so greatly alarmed him ascend, and throwing open the door found himself in that part of the chapel which was behind the screen, and appropriated solely for the convent. He then bade his wan companion sit down on the steps of the altar, and there await the coming dawn.

Vexed at the interruptions which had attended him, he then retraced his steps, and having replaced his tools, and closed the passage he had made with the loose stones, he cautiously entered his cell, fully determined to return to the convent the next night.

He

He threw himself on the pallet and lay ruminating on the past events, when the tolling of the convent bell made him start up, and proceed to the casement which commanded a view of its grey walls.

Light gleamed momentarily from many of the casements, and his eye caught the forms of the nuns proceeding hastily past them. Soon the bell ceased, and all was silent.

The monk then returned to his couch ruminating on the probable cause of the disturbance in the convent, which at length he attributed
to

to its right source, namely, the appearance of the nun whom he had rescued from the grave.

The abbot of Santa Catherina, disturbed by the bell at that unusual hour, arose, and throwing on his garments proceeded to the parlour of the convent, where he saw the venerable abbess, who related to him the wonderful event that had taken place respecting sister Marianne, who, after she had been interred in the cemetery, had returned again to a mortal existence.

A deep and inexplicable mystery seemed to attend the transaction; the nun was also mysterious in her answers,

swers, and it appeared necessary that the abbot should exert his authority in order to make her declare how she had effected her escape from the grave, from which she had emerged without assistance.

Such was the relation which Bernardo heard among the fathers of Santa Catherina. Greatly did he tremble lest the nun should not pay a strict observance to her oath.

But when he heard that she had confessed that she was bound by a solemn promise not to disclose the manner of her regaining her liberty
from

from the grave, and that the abbot had sent to the Pope for authority to absolve her from that oath, his bosom then became the seat of a thousand fears lest it should be discovered that he had dared to seek an entrance within the forbidden walls of the convent.

The rules of the monastery were particularly severe with respect to women, who were excluded from attending divine service in the chapel, except on the celebration of the festival of the Santa Catherina, which took place but twice in a century. As that period was now near at hand, many of those monks who had been placed there

there from their infancy, and which was the case with the Padre Bernardo, had not seen the face of a woman, the forms of the nuns of the convent, with their long black veil seen through the chapel screen, was all they had to form their ideas from respecting that fascinating sex. But the monk Bernardo in the conversation of the Padre Pietro was made acquainted with what happy had it been for his soul he had never known. His passions were roused by the ill-judged relations of Pietro, and daily and nightly did he gaze and sigh at the inanimate representation of the tutelary Saint of the monastery, as the reader has already seen in the first pages of these records.

The soul of the monk chilled with fear when he reflected on the danger he ran of being discovered in his nocturnal attempt to enter the convent. In a few days the messenger would return from Rome with the necessary indulgence from the Pope to absolve the nun from all guilt in divulging the circumstances she had sworn to conceal.

He was fearful of putting his design in practice the next night, which he passed in his cell in a state of agitation which deprived him of rest. Often was he going to invoke the presence of the Demon, but as often was he deterred by the feeble voice of virtue,

tue, which in some small degree restrained him in his rapid advances to vice.

In the midst of these meditations the passing bell of the Convent tolled. All the monks were roused from their pallets, and attended in the chapel to pray for the repose of the departing soul.

High was raised the soft harmonious melody of the nuns; mixed with the deep voices of the monks, the sounds floated along the vaulted roof; and borne on the breeze of night, ascended toward the heavens.

Soon the ceasing of the bell told

the dissolution of the frail mortal whose soul was now winging its rapid flight through the vast aerial space toward the dreadful tribunal, to give an account of the offences it committed while it animated its mortal coil.

Slowly the monks left the chapel. Bernardo spoke not to any of the fathers, but wrapt in gloomy meditations, retired to his cell.

A heavy slumber stole on his eyelids; when the dreadful visions of the night clustered around him, and appeared to his wakeful imagination.

He thought he beheld a woman,
fairer

fairer, if possible, than any of the radiant groups which the Santa Catharina had displayed to his view ; eagerly he ran toward her, when suddenly the earth yawned between them ; he now thought he saw the Demon advancing toward him, who at his request made the earth unite. In ecstasies of delight he conducted the fair to the verdant banks of a rivulet, where they sat down on the grassy slope beneath the shade of a wide spreading larch. He then thought he drew near to embrace her ; his arms encircled her lovely waist ; when suddenly the beautiful form faded to his view, the flesh deserted the bones, and a hideous skull was before him. Forth from the eye-less sockets rushed two snakes, who

who instantly twined around his shuddering limbs their scaly folds; hastily he dropped the loathsome skeleton, the bones rattled as they fell to the ground.

The face of Nature, so beautiful before, now suddenly changed; the verdant bank, the shady tree, the sparkling rivulet vanished, and Bernardo thought himself on a huge ridge of aspiring Etna. On one side he saw a dreadful abyss, on the other he beheld the fiery bowels of the mountain casting forth volumes of flames and smoke. He dared not move, for he conceived himself so nicely poised on the ridge that the least inclination one way or the

the

the other must either cause him to be dashed to pieces down the steep, or to perish in the fiery caverns of the mountain.

In this state of dreadful agitation he awoke; cold drops of sweat stood on his pallid face; for some time he thought what he had seen was a dreadful reality, and he feared almost to move in his bed from a recollection of his imaginary situation. At length he started from his pallet, and having opened his casement, the bright beams of the morning illumined his chamber. By degrees his senses became more composed, and ere the matin bell had warned him to the chapel, the effect

effect of pale fears and deep terror were banished his countenance.

When in the refectory, he learned that the nun who had made her escape from the grave in so wonderful a manner, had been recalled to it, and that it was her for whom the bell had tolled during the night.

Joy illumined the countenance of the monk at this so unlooked-for escape from his worst fears, and he scarcely listened to the many surmises which escaped the fathers on a circumstance so mysterious ; but when some of them expressed their apprehension that sister Marianne had not been fairly dealt with,
that

that part of their conversation struck Bernardo and recalled to his mind that at the moment of the nun coming to the use of her reason and speech, she had accused sister Agatha as being the author of her then melancholy situation.

In the delight occasioned by the intelligence, the remembrance of the night faded on his recollection.

Thinking there was now no danger in putting his designs into execution, he determined that night, if no sinister event took place, to visit the convent, he knew that according to custom, the body of the nun would not
be

be interred till the next morning, and he thought if he did not go then, that some person might be appointed to watch the grave ; he therefore resolved to take advantage of the present time, as the next night his attempt might be attended with the danger of a discovery.

Having thus formed his resolves, he waited anxiously till the descending shades of night should render it safe for him to put his design into execution, for the monk was wary and cautious to a great degree, as he well knew the dreadful punishment that would be his portion should his proceeding be discovered, for the disposition

tion of the abbot was haughty, cruel, and vindictive, and hapless was the life of him who displeased the stern superior.

At length the shades of night gradually prevailed, and the gay scenes of mid-day splendor gave place to the solemnity of twilight; the peaceful moon with captivating majesty rose slowly to the height of Heaven.

But the silence of night, which increases the harmony of the feelings of those whose unaccusing conscience produce nothing but anticipation of happiness, ill agreed with the restless soul of the monk, who was preparing to
turn

turn his cautious steps toward the convent, when a fear of being discovered made him pause; his dream too returned to his recollection with the dreadful sensations he had endured, but at the same time it brought to his imagination the visionary charms of the female; passion and curiosity impelled him to advance, while fear kept him back.

“The mysterious visitant” said he, gloomily, “might advise me—would I could see him, but it wants near an hour of midnight. I will stay till then, perhaps he may come here.”

Seated on an ebon throne, high raised over the burning sea, the Demon darting

ing his piercing eyes through the regions of night and horror which surrounded his dreadful dominions, saw the monk, and though deep plunged in the centre of the globe, he heard his request, and determined at the hour when he was permitted to visit the earth to accede to the wishes of the wretched monk, whose soul he sanguinely hoped would be added to the number of those, who, tortured with intolerable torments, vexed the murky regions of contaminated vapours which hung around his horrific regions with their dreadful unavailing plaints.

Having formed his wish, fatally pregnant with future horrors, the monk threw himself into a seat; his eyes
glared

glared about the chamber, the baneful passions which existed in his bosom darkened his sallow visage, he folded his arms, sunk his head on his breast, and waited with impatience till the tedious moments should bring on the midnight hour.

Slowly, as if anticipating the miseries it would produce, sounded the long-toned bell of midnight; and as echo ceased to reverberate the sullen sounds, and the breeze had borne them afar to other parts, the Demon appeared before the monk.

Though anticipating his presence, though wishing to him, yet the monk
trembled,

trembled, and the half-formed sentence died away ere he could give it utterance.

“ You wished to see me, Padre ; you wished my advice ; behold me ready to serve you. You need not,” continued he, “ tell me your purpose, I know your thoughts as soon as they are formed ; this night there will be danger in going to the convent ; had you attempted it, you would have been discovered, and to-morrow would have seen you shut out from the society of man, the inhabitant, perhaps for life, of a gloomy dungeon.”

The monk trembled, “ but your
power

power doubtles" said he, "could have emancipated me."

"Yes," replied the Demon, "even if mountains had been piled upon thee, easily could I upraise them."

Security glowed in the countenance of Bernardo ; he now feared not human power, since he could so easily escape its thralls ; and in proportion as those fears died away, his reliance on the Demon increased. Alas ! he little knew that he was forging the fetters that were to bind his soul for ever to him.

"As it would not be prudent," said
the

the arch Demon, "to visit the convent this night; suffer me to bring you to a place where you may behold the greatest beauty in Sicily."

"How?" said the monk astonished; "I go? I cannot climb the lofty walls."

The Demon smiled ghastly "Did I not tell thee," said he, "that were mountains thrown on thy trembling form, I could hurl them off? and thinkest thou that these walls are in my eye as any restraint? To me they seem formed of passive air; the strongest embattled ramparts give way to my
approach,

approach, and I can dive into the bowels of the earth as easily as the bird wings his fleet course on the zephyrs of day. Say then, monk, wilt thou trust thy self with me for a short space of time? for ere the clock has tolled the coming hour thou wilt be in thy present place.

Eagerly the monk consented. At that moment a strong grasp seized his arm, the walls of the cell divided to let him pass, and he was instantly elevated in the regions of air. The Demon spread two broad black pinions to the wind that shadowed the plains below, and in a moment of time, even ere the fears which his novel situation

uation might well occasion had taken any hold on his frame, he found himself in a large garden opposite the dingy doors of a pavilion which was illumined with tapers.

“We are both,” said the Demon, invisible to mortal sight. In that pavilion is the lovely female I wish you see; she now awaits the arrival of her lover; we will enter and observe their meeting.”

They now entered the pavilion. Power of love! what a sight met the eyes of the monk. Reclined on a superb

perb couch lay the most elegant female, such as even the strong powers of fancy would fail in ability to raise to the imagination. Beautifully arched eyebrows, eyes sparkling with lustre, cheeks where the rose appeared but newly blown, and a mouth breathing ambrosial sweetness around; her bosom partially covered with a thin gauze, that by the slight concealment of her panting orbs permitted the imagination to revel in ideal charms.—Her lovely dark hair flowed on her ivory neck in glossy ringlets, part sported over her polished forehead, and part was confined by strings of pearls, whose whiteness improved the beauty of her tresses

This lovely female was leaning on her arm and looking toward the door when the monk entered. The Idea of being invisible was new, and for a moment he thought he was discovered; he drew back confused, but the Demon badé him enter. The lovely Signora knew not what dangerous spirits were now so near her; she was in anxious expectation of the promised arrival of her lover.

Scarcely could the monk restrain himself from rushing toward her; his passions at the sight of so lovely an object were wound up to the highest pitch of frenzy. The Démon smiled at his emotions; he meant to raise

them still more, he meant too to make him feel other sensations, which would more completely bring about the dark designs he was forming, and make the monk irrevocably his.

A hasty step was now heard; the lovely Signora raised herself on the sofa, the door flew open, and a young cavalier of extraordinary beauty rushed to her arms.

What a sight was this for the monk; his bosom burned with rage, his breath grew convulsed, his eyes rolled on the intruder with expressions of the blackest revenge and hatred. The Demon knew what was passing in the
mind

mind of the monk, but restrained him from darting on the Signor by his iron grasp.

“Wait yet a little while,” said he to the Padre, “you shall have your wishes; I read your thoughts, my friend, I will serve you.”

Somewhat comforted by this, the monk again fixed his impassioned gaze on the lovely countenance of the Signora, who, as she lifted her eyes to the cavalier, which seemed by turns animated with lively passion, by turns melting with the softest languor, seemed now more beautiful than ever. The presence of the beloved object

of her affections restored to her countenance the rose which expectation had made pale on her cheek ; her fair bosom trembled to her sighs—sighs which increased the force of every charm, and expiring on her ruby lips invited the kiss.

Her dress was of light thin gauze, on which the wanton zephyrs played, whose balmy breath was the fragrance of the new-blown rose

The monk listened to their soft expressions of mutual love ; love which constitutes the perfection of earthly happiness ; he saw too that as enamoured
they

they conversed the fire of love concentrated in their eyes.

The pavilion was beautifully ornamented with whatever could charm the senses ; lovely paintings, done by the ablest Italian masters, decorated the walls ; curtains of the richest silk flowed in profusion before the casements ; Etruscan vases, supported on silver tripods, held the lamps that illumined the chamber, which was perfumed by aromatic flowers, which richly breathed their fragrance around. The enchanting place seemed animated by a spirit of tenderness ; a soft languor seized the soul of the monk—

how

how did every snare of voluptuousness encircle him.

Philomel sweetly tuned her plaintive strains in the adjoining grove; she chaunted in weak notes, yielding to the sorrows of her heart.

The moon was seen sweetly gleaming on the waving outline of the trees from a casement which was inclosed; a sweet tranquillity pervaded each scene; the monk felt the influence of the place, and his eyes expressed it; but at times, when the raging fever of jealousy pervaded his soul, his countenance grew dark as the stormy clouds

clouds of night, and the flash of rage and anger from his eyes was as the lightning gleaming through the shades ; while his whole frame would shake with the new-born emotions of his soul.

Delicious to the lovers was the reciprocal tale of love ; sweet was to them the love-inspiring look, the gentle pressure of the hand, and the fond expressions of their eyes, which seemed to dart to each others soul.

At times they mentioned the approaching festival which was to take place at the monastery of Santa Catherina,

therina, as the period which would render them truly happy.

The eyes of the monk were never weary of gazing at the lovely female; the raging passion, now first known, and under such a powerful incitement, pervaded his whole frame; but the Demon, who saw that the purpose for which he brought the monk there shewed every prospect of success, now told him that the morning hour would in a few minutes arrive, and that he must convey him back to the monastery.

“ Let me stay, mysterious being ;
let me stay here, I conjure you ; can
I leave

I leave that divinity, leave her too with that man? O torture! torture!— give me but a dagger, I feel myself capable of any act, however atrocious. I will murder him, and then with your assistance I shall prevail, I shall be truly happy. What concession would I not make to you for so great an indulgence.”

However willing the Demon might be to accord with the desires of Bernardó, and thereby add to his long black list another hapless soul, yet it was not in his power to grant his request. As to what respected the ruin of that Signora, he had no power over a virtuous mind, but the moment it
made

made a false step, then his influence began.

“ I would, ” said he, “ willingly grant what you ask, but the time will not permit; you reflect not, Padre, that you are now near twenty leagues from the monastery of Santa Catherina ; wait with patience, you will have the beautiful Signora in your power, that I can promise you.”

Ere the monk could reply, and while yet his gaze lingered on the lovely form before him, he felt himself rising from the place whereon he stood; the roof of the pavilion divided to let him pass, he heard the wide flapping
of

of the black pinions which the Demon spread to the breeze of night, and cleaving the air a thousand degrees swifter than the arrow from the bow of the hunter, in a few moments the monk was in his cell.

“To-morrow night,” said the Demon, “thou mayest enter the convent; there is a female there whose charms, though not equal to those thou hast gazed on this night, are nevertheless such as boast many attractions. I will dispose her heart to thee; but be not precipitate, thou must be cautious, and reflect on the dangers attendant on a discovery.”

The

The bell of the monastery now tolled one; the monk, whose gaze was fixed on the form of the Demon, saw it gradually dissolving into air, and vanish from his sight ere echo had ceased to reverberate the sound through the vast pile.

The monk trimmed the dim lamp, and throwing himself into a seat, reflected on the events of the last hour. The Demon had promised him that he should have the lovely Signora in his power; that promise alone was his comfort in his absence; but though he thought almost unceasingly of her, yet the words of the Demon respecting the female in the convent escaped not
his

his recollection. But how, thought he, shall I discover her among so many? to me it appears impossible to be effected; but doubtless he who seems to possess such power will throw her in my way.

The nun who had escaped from the grave, and who had so strangely ceased to exist, had been again committed to the silent repository for the dead, and the past morning had witnessed the solemn ceremony, therefore he did not fear being disturbed in his nocturnal visit on that account.

Other ideas now crowded on his mind. The festival of Santa Catharina drew near, and the Signora and her

her lover had mentioned it as the period which would render them happy ; from that he conceived that they meant to be united there. That, thought he, if I have any interest with the Demon, shall never take place. No, I would terminate his existence at the very altar itself ere he should be the possessor of so much loveliness.

The remembrance that the Demon had promised he should have that lovely woman in his power now again recurred to him, and soothed the rising tempest of his soul ; while the new prospect which was opening to his view of the nun, a boarder of the convent, whom he should see the next night,

night, served to assuage the disquietude of his mind, and to make him long for the hour when he was to enter those forbidden walls.

Amidst his various meditations the sombrous deity of slumber weighed heavy on his senses; he retired to his couch, where sleep closed his eye-lids, while his restless and perturbed imagination brought to his view the lovely female, whom he oft essayed, but in vain, to clasp in his embrace, for as often as he opened his arms, the visionary form eluded his purpose.

The summons for matin service
awoke

awoke him from his deep slumbers, and the Padre Bernardo rising from his couch, entered the chapel, where his ideas wandered to what he had beheld in the pavilion, and to the adventure he was that night to have in the convent, while the devotional duties of the morning were neglected and were unthought of.

END OF VOL. I

