

THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS  
VOLUME III

CHAPTER I

Oppressed with grief, Demetrius obeyed the summons of Princess Constantia.

He travelled with the utmost speed, yet did not reach Felieri, till the close of the third day.

The stillness of the Palace, and the deep gloom of the winter foliage, blackened by night, struck a chill to his heart; faint lamps glimmered only here and there among the once brilliant collonades; and the very breeze that moaned through them, appeared to lower its breath, for fear of disturbing their sepulchral solemnity.

Demetrius could not see the little mountain stream, that here mingled with the Livenza, because of the darkness, and its overhanging bushes: but the well-known sound of its impetuous current, brought to his recollection the last evening he had spent with the Duchess. It was the gay night of her moonlight party; which he justly believed to have been the happiest of his life: she was then, all spirit and energy; and she was now, perhaps, cold and insensible!

His heart turned sick at the thought; for he loved her with the enthusiasm of gratitude.

Alighting from the carriage, he advanced on foot, to the gate of entrance: a venerable servant answered his gentle knock; the aspect of this old man, and the sorrowful exclamation he uttered, were frightful omens.

Demetrius feared to advance: "Does she live?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, my Lord, our good Duchess lives, but there is no hope."

"Then I may once more see her!" exclaimed Demetrius. "Where is the Princess? Let her be told of my arrival — but tell her gently, good Girolamo."

The old servant now softly called a young woman who appeared at one of the doors, and commissioned her with the communication. In a few moments she reappeared, and bade the young Count follow.

The arched passages through which they went, scarcely returned the sound of their swift but light steps: they crossed several halls, and ascended a high flight of stairs, till they reached that side of the Palace occupied by the Duchess.

"This is my Lady's room;" said the girl, stopping before a door, "your Lordship is to go in." —

Demetrius entered.

A single light, dimly showed him the deathbed of his patroness, over which stood his dear Constantia, pale and distracted. No other persons, but the physician and the confessor, were in the apartment. Unused to such scenes, anguish and awe nearly paralysed him: he moved gently forward, and as he reached the bed, the Princess turned round.

At sight of him, the floodgates of her grief, were burst asunder. No longer able to command her feelings, she threw herself into his arms, with a distraction, to which tears and sobs, gave no relief. The emotion of Demetrius showed its excess by a convulsive tremor: he trembled so violently, that he could not articulate; nor support himself without the aid of the physician.

For some hours, the Duchess had lost the power of speech: she now attempted to address her cherished Demetrius, but her quivering lips moved only for an instant: she raised her eyes to heaven, with a celestial expression of christian submission, and then stretched out her hand to him.

Demetrius and Constantia, at the same moment sunk on their knees before her. The Duchess regarded them awhile with a gaze of tender wistfulness: regret and joy, mingled in her countenance. She raised herself with difficulty from the pillow, and took them alternately in her arms; then joining their hands together, sunk back.

The hand uniting those of the unhappy lovers, soon slackened its grasp : Constantia wildly raised her head; and beholding the features of her grandmother, fixed in eternal peace, uttered a piercing shriek. She was conveyed motionless from the room.

The eyes of Demetrius mournfully followed her, as the physician carried her into the air; but they turned again, to the death-bed of the Duchess. There, religious awe, and fond regret, absorbed his dearest cares. He rose not from the ground, still kneeling, to join in the solemn rites of the confessor. — Where is the pen, that can faithfully describe the feelings which are roused by the death of a beloved person? — Those new, and mingled feelings, which only belong to the chamber of death, and which can never be recalled without reviving the anguish that would baffle any attempt! — The heart that has once felt them, will but too well know how to estimate their force. With a fearful hand, therefore, I leave the veil undrawn, which now covers the affliction of Constantia.

When Demetrius was retiring, to indulge his regret in solitude, the monk, took a packet of papers from his breast, and presenting one to him, said "This letter, was entrusted to me, by my late benefactress, with a strict charge to deliver it into your hands at this awful period. These others, are the will, and some documents of consequence, to show the Prince of Nuremberg. You, my

Lord, are I believe, master here. May the Almighty bless you, and make you a worthy successor to the most pious and beneficent Princess that ever lived!”

The confessor then retired, to hide his rising emotion; and Demetrius, merely answering by an inclination of the head, retired to his chamber.

So many events had followed each other, with such whirling rapidity, that the overtaken spirit of Demetrius, could no longer keep up with them: he now threw himself upon a couch, with that sensation of exhaustion and stupor, which often follows great mental exertion; and his senses were immediately steeped in total oblivion.

After the salutary sleep of a few hours, he awoke; and finding it still night, he rose, trimmed his fading lamp, and sat down by the remains of a wood fire, to think and to grieve.

An involuntary idea that the departed spirit was then hovering over him, created a sacred awe, which checked his gathering tears: he frequently raised his surcharged eyes with an ineffable emotion, as if expecting to behold the visible beatification of that soul, which had used the blessings of her own lot, only to bless that of others.

The letter given him by the monk, now demanded his attention: he softly separated the wax, and read the following :

“ If I should not live to see and speak with you, my dearest Demetrius, you must consider these lines as my dying words.

“Accept my blessing: and with it, the half of my fortune.

“ If, as I hope, inclination should hereafter lead you to offer my beloved grandchild, a husband’s protection, be assured, that such an inclination has my fullest sanction. It had always been my intention to learn your wishes on that subject whenever we should meet again; but I scarcely doubt them: your ingenuous heart speaks too plainly in your countenance, to be misinterpreted.

“Should you really love my Constantia, do not stifle the expression of so natural a sentiment, from any erroneous notions of her character: she is not the slave of such narrow opinions, as generally bound the intellects of high-born women. You are already very dear to her: it therefore, rests with yourself, to make her love you with the energy necessary to your mutual happiness.

“Opposition from her imperious uncle, is, of course, to be expected: but even that has its limits: two years of constancy, and patient submission to his authority, will release you both from restraint.

“I may perhaps appear blameable, for thus preparing a cause of family dissension: willingly would I avoid it: but the substantial good of my Constantia must not be sacrificed to the blind prejudice of her uncle. Where nothing can

be urged against the man of her choice, but inequality of nominal rank, the objection grows contemptible.

“I make you rich; noble by descent, you are already; nobler still, by your virtues: why then, should the Prince of Nuremberg’s pernicious worldliness, be submitted to?”

“However, should my fond belief, prove the vain chimera of a heart anxious to unite its two dearest objects: should you be otherwise attached, or simply indifferent to the merits of my Constantia, recollect that the bequest of half my property, is not made to the lover of my grandchild, but to the preserver of her life. Take it freely, therefore, bestow it, and yourself, on whomever you choose, and may God grant you that solid happiness which has been the daily subject of all my prayers!”

“Farewell! I embrace you with the affection of a mother

“COLOMBA DI FELIERI.”

It was now that tears fell from the eyes of Demetrius. Gratitude, admiration, regret, and love, all swelled the womanish tide. He contemplated what he might have possessed, and what he was about to refuse, with a softness that unnerved his mental strength: and as he held the blistered paper to his lips, he breathed the name of Zaire, with bitterness of soul.

Let the object of a guilty passion, tremble at the frail tenure by which she holds the affections of a man, not wholly depraved! The first ray of light that breaks in on his before-benighted soul, shows him the deformity of a passion, which she grows distasteful, for having inspired: while the recollections which virtuous love delights to cherish, are by him banished with affrighted quickness

Demetrius still retained a tender regard for Madame de Fontainville, but he shrunk from the thought of making her his wife. That full consent of every faculty of his mind, every sentiment of his heart (which always accompanied the contemplation of Constantia), was there, painfully wanting: he could not steadily gaze, with growing admiration, upon her character, as he did on that of his Princess. — Ah! No! — He glanced rapturously for a moment upon a feature of bewitching beauty, and then hastily avoided the sight of its neighbouring imperfection.

While reading his departed friend’s letter, Demetrius had been thrilled to agony, at the single expression — “a husband’s protection.” How much interdicted felicity, did these three little words, present to his warm fancy! and how firmly did he believe, for the moment, that it would be impious in him to give that hand to Madame de Fontainville, which had been joined with Constantia’s by her dying parent! —

Lost in a fluctuation of resolutions, to which not even virtue herself knew how to give the palm, he saw the morning light spread its rosy glow over the

new wing of the palace; now, nearly rebuilt: Father Pietro visited him soon after; and from him he learned that the Princess was unable to see anyone that day. —

Whilst Constantia's hours were spent in her devotions, he sat alone by the corpse of his benefactress; laying to heart the salutary lesson of mortality; wondering at the tumultuous feelings which still agitated him, even while witnessing the brevity of human joy, or human suffering?

He then retired to another apartment, where he devoted himself to the task of candidly detailing his past faults, and present involvement, in a letter to the young Princess.

What a task was this! — To disclose the very part of his life, which he wished struck out for ever from the records of memory! To sketch, even with a trembling hand, the portrait of a lawless passion, and present it before the eyes of her whom he loved to devotion! To breathe out assurances of this devoted love, yet voluntarily renounce its permitted hopes! How was he capable of so mastering himself?

The task, however, was accomplished; and on the third day, he saw Constantia.

The anguish of disappointed affection was visible in her youthful countenance; but gentle courage, and innocent candour, were there also. She stretched out her hand to him as he entered the room, and pressing his softly, said "Demetrius! — My dear brother! —"

At this last epithet, the resolution of Demetrius forsook him: he fell at her feet, and incoherently bewailed his errors and his misfortunes.

She raised him with great emotion. "Repress this grief, I beseech you." she cried " Oh, you know not how it tears my heart! — Perhaps I am wrong in now confessing that you are dearer to me, than the whole world, and that the thought of passing my life with you, was the only consolation of these last sad days; but I cannot hide it: I thought it praiseworthy to love one so good, and one to whom I owed so much: I never dreamt of a blow like this! — But it must be borne;" she added, trying to smile away her tears, "it shall be borne: I will think you are my brother, so shall we all be happy at last."

" Never! Never!" exclaimed Demetrius wildly, "There is no happiness for me! My peace is lost, wrecked for ever. Never, in this world, can anything repay me for such a sacrifice to virtue, such an atonement for error!"

"Then in another world —" the Princess whispered, and bent her gushing eyes over the hand she still held.

The silenced, but not comforted spirit of her impetuous lover, answered with a heavy groan. He was again the impassioned, stormy Demetrius, whose terrifying sensibility, so often swept away all the boundaries of reason.

Alternately melted and alarmed, Constantia wept as much with pity as with love.

“O Demetrius!” she exclaimed, gazing tenderly on his convulsed features; “why this extravagant indulgence of a sorrow, that cannot exceed mine? — What is it you expect from it? — Can I change our lot? — Alas, no! — I have no cheering prospect left, but the hope of one day seeing you happy, and of adding to that happiness, by striving to forget that I ever wished for more. — With this hope remaining, I am still ready to call existence a blessing — you will live to think so too, when your former attachment shall have revived, and the sacred feelings of a parent — when children perhaps —”. Here she broke off abruptly, concealing her gushing tears with her hands.

Demetrius suddenly clasped her in his arms; but instantly pushing her from him, exclaimed “No — no — I must see you no more, hear you no more, if I would retain my senses and be just —”.

He was then quitting the room in distracted haste, when she followed, and detained him. Not thus, Demetrius — not thus you ought to leave me. Do you believe that I too, have no feelings to spare, or to be pitied? — Oh, could you see my heart! —”

The melting tones, and tender reproof of Constantia checked his frenzy — he turned quickly round, caught her hands in both his, covered them with kisses, and suffered her to lead him to a seat.

The Princess then stifling the expression of her own sorrow, exerted herself to moderate his: she was calculated to persuade and to sooth; and the agitated passions of Demetrius, gradually subsided under every fall of her touching voice.

She pleaded with tearful earnestness, for Madame de Fontainville, whose situation she truly compassionated ; striving to revive in Demetrius some portion of that partiality which could alone reconcile him to his fate.

The too wakeful sensibility of her auditor, took alarm at her zeal: he hastily said “Say not that I am dear to you — mock me not, with so false a comfort — for if it were so, how could you urge the claims of another?”

At this injurious charge, Constantia’s colour forsook her; tears forced themselves through her quivering eyelids. — “My life shall answer you,” was her reply.

Demetrius felt the whole of what these words conveyed : he was pierced with remorse — Constantia saw it.

“I can pardon many things, now;” she resumed, “Demetrius is not himself: but he is not the less dear to me for that. Alas, alas, how much dearer!”

She then talked of her departed relative, and that with a tender resolution which bore the most honourable testimony to her heart.

Constantia was never deterred from what she believed her duty, by any selfish consideration; and though every question she now asked, pierced her bleeding bosom, like so many daggers; she persisted in mentioning all that was necessary, for the solemn interment of the Duchess.

Tears trickled silently down her cheeks, while Demetrius assured her, that since the first evening, he had himself watched nightly by the remains of his Patroness; and had suffered no rite to be omitted, that was used to express regret and respect.

Constantia wept awhile over a little ivory crucifix, which was the last thing her grandmother touched, and which now hung at her own breast; then struggling against this weakness, rose to depart.

“Let us separate,” she said, averting her streaming eyes — “we will meet again, tomorrow. If my uncle arrive in the interim, he shall be conducted to me immediately: my simple assurance that you are engaged to another, will prevent any misunderstanding between you. I would not have you endure insult as well as sorrow for my sake.” — Breathless with an emotion that was now increasing beyond her utmost efforts to conceal, she hastily returned the pressure of his hand, and left the apartment.

At that moment, Demetrius believed his soul must have burst the bonds that tied it to a hateful life. He rushed away to his own chamber, where for awhile, he refused to think of any thing but Constantia.

The next morning, better feelings resumed their influence: he saw the necessity of yielding to the consequences of his own culpable conduct; and now sorrowed more for the Princess, than for himself. A glimpse of one of the Prince of Nuremberg’s avant-couriers, changed the current of his thoughts; and other cares, besides those of love, then occupied him.

Two hours afterwards, he was told that his Highness requested the honour of seeing him in the library.

A glow of self-respect dignified the youthful beauty of Demetrius, as he followed the servant. At his entrance, the Prince turned pale, and lowered his eyes: his features were strongly expressive of anger and pride; for Constantia, when declaring the engagements of Demetrius, had nobly confessed her preference, and disappointment.

“I understand Sir,” said the Prince abruptly (yet with an air of mortified restraint), “that I am henceforth to consider myself your guest. This palace, and these domains, I hear with astonishment, are now the property of a stranger.”

Constantia advanced trembling: Demetrius instantly calmed her fear.

“I know not whether your Highness be rightly informed,” he answered, “but if so, be assured I am incapable of using the power such unexpected munificence has given me, in any other way, than that of immediately renouncing it.”

“I do not comprehend you, Sir ?”

“Can I do otherwise,” said Demetrius, “than restore it to Princess Constantia? I had no claim on the generosity of my illustrious Patroness: enough for me to cherish the respected remembrance of her friendship.”

“Indeed!” — and the Prince eyed him with a mixture of incredulity and envy.

Constantia turned aside to conceal her agitation.

“The Will is to be opened this evening,” resumed the unfeeling Prince, “of course, Sir, we shall have the honour of dining together, after which, you can have no objection to hear it read. I believe you will then find my niece amply provided for — all the domestics provided for — no one, in short, overlooked, but the only person entitled to expect the bulk of this unwieldy fortune.”

An exclamation of horror, at her uncle’s savage coldness, escaped the Princess she wildly passed him, repelling his outstretched hand; and then flew into another room.

Demetrius looked at Nuremberg with aversion, and at that instant saw in him, only the man that once sought his life.

“As the Princess has left us;” he said with some austerity, “I may explicitly tell your Highness, that whatever testimony of overwrought gratitude and unmerited regard, the will of the late Duchess may contain, I shall resign it to her acknowledged heiress; in whose hands I am certain, it will become an instrument of blessing to thousands. After which, I can have no other wish, than to be permitted the indulgence of that respectful friendship, which the Duchess di Felieri suffered me to avow for the Princess.”

“With her friendships,” returned Nuremberg, “I do not interfere ; but I profess myself no advocate for such a sentiment between persons of different sex, and far different rank. Pardon my frankness, Sir! — I have no intention to offend you ; on the contrary, I beg you to accept my thanks, for the very handsome 24 THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS. manner in which you withdraw your claim on the Duchess di Felieri’s fortune. Should you ever visit Nuremberg or Munich, I shall have pleasure in showing you any civility in my power. But I must entreat

you to remember, Sir, that an indiscreet friendship may injure the establishment of my niece: I have great views for her, with which this would never assimilate. As I am sure, her husband will not see the thing in the false light, I am inclined to do."

At this painful hint, the blood fled from the cheeks of Demetrius, and his heart died within him: afraid of betraying himself, he faltered out, "I shall meet your Highness at dinner;" and abruptly retired.

The Prince, wishing to believe he had awed the usurper of his rights into restitution, yet feeling that he was himself awed by his disinterestedness, eyed the furniture of the library, a few moments, in dissatisfied silence, and then sought his wife. She had retired from the breakfast room, with Constantia, leaving him time to reflect back, all his suspicions of Demetrius.

During the short period in which their regiments were encamped together, after the battle of Novi, Colonel Wurtzburg had artfully insinuated so many proofs of his young officer's familiarity at Felieri, that the Prince in great alarm, interrogated him further.

Wurtzburg then acknowledged his fear that a silly attachment had taken place between the young people, for which, the Duchess could alone be censured. He besought the Prince not to mention his name in the affair, as he sincerely regarded the imprudent boy, for whose sake he should rejoice to hear that the intercourse was interrupted: and having cunningly irritated, while he appeared striving to appease, roused the Prince into a fury which took the murderous direction he wished.

These past insinuations now came with double force to the remembrance of Nuremberg. This liberal renunciation of the Felieri estates, might be a pantomime trick, played off between Constantia and her lover, in order to cheat him into countenancing their acquaintance, which they would at last conclude by a marriage.

No sooner had his contemptible spirit suggested this idea, than he became as sure of its reality, as of his own existence, and though not an hour before, he had reviled Demetrius for daring to decline the hand of a Princess of Nuremberg, from any other motive than a sense of her superiority (so inconsistent is malice), he now burst into Constantia's retirement, fulminating reproaches, and denouncing Demetrius as a presumptuous hypocrite.

The Princess made a spirited defence of her lover's sincerity, ending it thus:

"It is not to himself, Sir, that you dare utter these unmanly threats. No! The man that could insult and terrify a woman, would not have the courage to brave, even the frown of an honourable man —".

With these words she shut herself into another apartment. The spirit of Constantia was not to be intimidated: injustice and tyranny, roused her

otherwise lamblike nature, into that of the lion; and she would have despised herself, for yielding to terror, what she could not have denied to kindness.

Egregiously had the Prince mistaken the character of his niece, when he believed himself able to sway her actions by a few horrid sounding words. He was thunderstruck at the flash of her undaunted eyes, as she pronounced the last sentence; and still more amazed at the declaration she made, of devoting the remainder of her life, to a single state.

Could it be possible, that this figure which suddenly seemed to dart forth rays of majesty, was the timid, girlish Constantia? Were these commanding eyes the eyes he had always seen smiling in delight? This intrepid spirit, the one that had hitherto been all balmy gentleness? He paused on these questions: for the Prince of Nuremberg, had never known how to separate softness from imbecility; and had yet to learn, that the meekness of a heart which can never be moved to virtuous indignation, is a meekness without worth. He stood an instant motionless; then disregarding the fearful upbraiding of his wife, hurried from the place.

The sound of the door which he pulled furiously after him, and a sobbing apology of his Princess, brought Constantia forth again. Tenderness once more beamed from her lovely face, and spoke in her voice: she soothed the distress of her well-meaning aunt; assuring her, she was grieved for her sake, at having been forced to forget the respect due to her guardian.

It had not been Constantia's intention to appear at dinner; but perceiving a necessity for her presence, she submitted to the pain of again sitting at the table, where her dear grandmother had so amiably presided.

When the small party assembled, grief was on every face, except that of Nuremberg's. Constantia and Demetrius forgot everything but their irreparable loss; and frequently during the mournful meal, the sight of some domestic, or some view from the windows, brought a flood of tears, to the relief of the Princess.

The settled and manly sorrow that was fixed on the brow of Demetrius, awed the base suspicions of Nuremberg into temporary silence.

Before the will was opened, Constantia left the room. She hastened to throw herself on her knees by the corpse of her only friend, there to pour out the repressed anguish of a heart overpowered with its first and heaviest affliction. Meanwhile, the chief persons of the Duchess's household, were assembled, and the important will, was produced.

As Father Pietro presented it to the professional man, appointed to make known its contents, Demetrius addressed the Prince. "Before I learn the contents of a will, in which I am said to be particularly noticed, I here solemnly renounce any donation which may be made to me in it. Whatever has been there bequeathed to me, I promise (in the presence of these witnesses) to restore to

Princess Constantia; and that, not from disrespectful ingratitude to the illustrious memory of the best of women, but injustice to my own character, which such unheard-of bounty, might hereafter render suspected: also, as a testimony of admiration and reverence for her most beloved granddaughter.”

He spoke this with a steady voice, though an agitated heart; and bowed in sign of having concluded.

The will was then opened.

Nothing could exceed the rage and resentment of the Prince, when he found, that after liberal annuities to all her servants, legacies to her confessor, physician, and secretary, and a valuable one to himself, as the son of her brother, the Duchess had appointed the vast remains of her fortune to be divided between Demetrius and Constantia: leaving Felieri to the former, and a much finer mansion in Venice, to the young Princess.

The bequest to each, was prefaced by so affecting an avowal of her anxiety for them; so many prayers for their happiness, which Demetrius well knew how to interpret, that hastily covering his face with his handkerchief, he was rising to withdraw, when the Prince mistaking his agitation, said bitterly, “Do you repent your rash resolution?” — Without answering, Demetrius turned round, and advancing to where a gentleman of the law was seated, seized a pen, and signed the deed (which he had before ordered to be prepared), and which now transferred to Constantia, an additional property of countless thousands — he then retired.

What was this sacrifice to Demetrius, compared with that which he had lately made of his tenderest wishes! — Certain that he owed much of the Duchess di Felieri’s fondness, to her belief of his future union with her grandchild; and shuddering at the thought of sharing the wealth given under such a belief, with any other woman, conscience would have prompted the act, even had inclination been against it.

The funeral took place the next day. Sad and solemn was the magnificence with which the lamented clay of the Duchess, was carried to its last abode — the tears of the poor that she had made rich, the wretched that she had made happy, watered the path to her tomb: these were inaudible prayers for her virtuous soul, which if prayers could then avail, might well have found favour from the *Most High*.

Demetrius easily obtained permission to supply the Prince’s absence (whose duty it was, to see the earth closed over her grave), he retreated almost overcome with the scene, and his heart melted, as his eyes fell on the darkened window of the room, where Constantia was weeping.

Unexpected comfort met him in the palace. It was that letter from Charles, in which he mentioned the desired exchange; detailing the events that had

changed his destiny, and summoning him back to Germany to witness his union with Adelaide.

The joy of Demetrius was ardent, though chastised by a sense of his own disappointments: he pondered on this interesting letter, exclaiming with a sigh—"Blessed, ever blessed, be this best and dearest of brothers! O, may the bitterness of disappointment, be known only to me! May his heart be as happy as it is blameless! Mine has erred widely, and mine ought to suffer."

Several salutary reflections now flowed from a contemplation of their different situations: he became convinced that it is the character which shapes the destiny; and that when he first lost sight of virtue, his own hand opened a gate for all the future miseries of his life. Humbled and reconciled, he then bowed before the chastisement which he was conscious of having merited.

To leave Felieri, and take an eternal farewell, perhaps, of Constantia, was the hardest trial remaining: yet he roused himself to meet it. The next day, he sent to ask permission to see her alone, and was admitted to her study.

Her fair eyes were swelled with weeping, and the languor of indisposition, was now added to the mournfulness of grief. When he told her for what purpose he was come, she was unable to repel her tears. "I seek not to detain you, my dear Demetrius," she said, "it is better that we should part awhile. Though I should never see you more, my heart would not cease to beat more warmly for you, than for any other: alas! What have I in the world besides you and Adelaide? But do not imagine I give way to useless regret at the necessity which severs us: no! In many things I shall find consolation; in none more, than in the knowledge of your retaining for me, no other sentiment than that of friendship."

Demetrius only answered with a sigh: but such a sigh! Long, long after, did the remembrance of it, chill every vein of Constantia.

She pressed his hand: "You are going to your brother; with him I hope you will find comfort. I shall hear of you from Adelaide: to write to you myself, would be folly; for until our mutual weakness is conquered, what would it avail? — The romantic generosity with which you have destroyed my dear grandmamma's affectionate intentions, surprises everyone but me: I expected it, and yet I blame it: While under my uncle's guardianship, I understand, no deed of mine can be valid; but assure yourself, that until the period of my liberty arrives, I retain the estates only in trust — it will then be my business to convince you, that annulling the will of a departed friend, is a species of impiety."

Demetrius combatted this assertion, by arguments drawn from his peculiar situation: — Constantia shook her head; without proceeding to reprove him, she said, "Tell Adelaide, that I cannot answer the letter she has just sent me; but my heart truly participates in her prospects: we shall soon meet perhaps, for I leave Felieri with my aunt in a few days. Farewell Demetrius! Farewell!"

She rose trembling, as she spoke, and the paleness of death spread over her face: a thick mist gathered before the eyes of Demetrius: he wrapped his arms round her as she stood beside him, and their cold cheeks rested against each other. Grief locked up the power of speech, and he embraced her for the last time, in mute despair.

Constantia plucked from her neck the ivory crucifix of the Duchess, and at the same moment, wildly kissing his picture which she wore there also, put the little cross into his hand, and tore herself away.

Demetrius fell to the ground, deprived of sense. As no one entered the chamber where he lay, it was long ere he revived: when he did so, the full sense of his misery burst on him like the light. But frenzy was over: he committed the ivory relic to his bosom; after which, he went to take a ceremonial farewell of the Prince and Princess of Nuremberg.

Professions of goodwill, and a cold compliment to his just notion of the Duchess's injustice, were made him by the Prince. Demetrius hastily interrupted them.

"Your highness must pardon me, if I avow myself actuated by very different sentiments, and call the Will surprising, but not unjust. The bounty of the Duchess was proportioned to her affection for me, not indeed to my deserts; yet her fortune was as much her own to bestow, as her friendship. I therefore protest against such an ungrateful inference, and beg leave to state my real motives. —"

"Well Sir, state them, if you please." And the Prince bit his lips as he spoke.

"I believed, that when the Duchess executed that noble deed, she did it under the impression that I would hereafter aspire to a felicity, from which my presumptuous eyes, are now averted for ever."

A sigh burst forth with these words, and Demetrius paused for a moment: Nuremberg's blood crimsoned his face. The former resumed. "It would have been dishonesty, therefore, to preserve what was given me, by a deed so executed. I was certain, also, that without the knowledge of circumstances which never can be promulgated, the world might suspect my integrity, and accuse my disinterestedness: this, for my own part, I could front serenely; conscious honour, being an unpierceable shield but, distinguished by the favour of Princess Constantia, it becomes the duty of my life, and it shall be the business of it, to preserve her from censure, by proving, that the man so honoured, has the spirit of his birth, rather than of his fortune."

He stopped; and his countenance glowed with the loftiness of his feelings.

"Then Sir," replied the Prince coldly, "obligation on my part, ceases. Till now, I really had no idea that so rational and equitable an action, had its source in romance and self-consideration."

“ I would not have you Sir,” returned Demetrius, looking full at him, “ believe yourself under the slightest obligation to me — nay, I wish you to know, that had a fortunate destiny given me the illustrious treasure of your niece’s hand, I should not have presumed to alter one article of the Duchess’s will: and had I never known Princess Constantia, I should have preserved this vast gift, even at the price of your highness’s approbation.”

Demetrius waited a moment to give the Prince time to answer this galling avowal, but the latter only gnawed his under lip: the other bowed and withdrew.

Demetrius was still rash, still imprudent, and would have spurned the counsel, that urged only the caution of silence: what he felt, he burned to show; believing that to hide his feelings, was equivalent to the more impudent falsehood of denying them.

A flush was still on his cheek, when he crossed the hall to depart. The sight of the domestics gathered there to bless and bewail him, and the dejected countenance of father Pietro, who had long been the confident of the Duchess, banished this glow. He shook hands with the servants, embraced father Pietro, and then looking round the hall, as if bidding eternal farewell to its senseless walls, hastened through the portico, to the vehicle that was to convey him forever from Felieri.