CHAPTER VII

Of aery tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
MILTON

It is now necessary to mention some circumstances, which could not be related amidst the events of Emily's hasty departure from Venice, or together with those, which so rapidly succeeded to her arrival in the castle.

On the morning of her journey, Count Morano had gone at the appointed hour to the mansion of Montoni, to demand his bride. When he reached it, he was somewhat surprised by the silence and solitary air of the portico, where Montoni's lacqueys usually loitered; but surprise was soon changed to astonishment, and astonishment to the rage of disappointment, when the door was opened by an old woman, who told his servants, that her master and his family had left Venice, early in the morning, for *Terra Firma*. Scarcely believing what his servants told, he left his gondola, and rushed into the hall to enquire further. The old woman, who was the only person left in care of the mansion, persisted in her story, which the silent and deserted apartments soon convinced him was no fiction. He then seized her with a menacing air, as if he meant to wreak all his vengeance upon her, at the same time asking her twenty questions in a breath, and all these with a gesticulation so furious, that she was deprived of the power of answering them; then suddenly letting her go, he stamped about the hall, like a madman, cursing Montoni and his own folly.

When the good woman was at liberty, and had somewhat recovered from her fright, she told him all she knew of the affair, which was, indeed, very little, but enough to enable Morano to discover, that Montoni was gone to his castle on the Apennine. Thither he followed, as soon as his servants could complete the necessary preparation for the journey, accompanied by a friend, and attended by a number of his people, determined to obtain Emily, or a full revenge on Montoni. When his mind had recovered from the first effervescence of rage, and his thoughts became less obscured, his conscience hinted to him certain circumstances, which, in some measure, explained the conduct of Montoni: but how the latter could have been led to suspect an intention, which, he had believed, was known only to himself, he could not even guess. On this occasion, however, he had been partly betrayed by that sympathetic intelligence, which may be said to exist between bad minds, and which teaches one man to judge what another will do in the same circumstances. Thus it was with Montoni, who had now received indisputable proof of a truth, which he had some time suspected — that Morano's circumstances, instead of being affluent, as he had been bidden to believe, were greatly involved. Montoni had been interested in his suit, by motives entirely selfish, those of avarice and pride; the last of which would have been gratified by an alliance with a Venetian nobleman, the former by Emily's estate in Gascony, which he had stipulated, as the price of his favour, should be delivered up to him from the day of her marriage. In the meantime, he had been led to suspect the consequence of the Count's boundless

extravagance; but it was not till the evening, preceding the intended nuptials, that he obtained certain information of his distressed circumstances. He did not hesitate then to infer, that Morano designed to defraud him of Emily's estate; and in this supposition he was confirmed, and with apparent reason, by the subsequent conduct of the Count, who, after having appointed to meet him on that night, for the purpose of signing the instrument, which was to secure to him his reward, failed in his engagement. Such a circumstance, indeed, in a man of Morano's gay and thoughtless character, and at a time when his mind was engaged by the bustle of preparation for his nuptials, might have been attributed to a cause less decisive, than design; but Montoni did not hesitate an instant to interpret it his own way, and, after vainly waiting the Count's arrival, for several hours, he gave orders for his people to be in readiness to set off at a moment's notice. By hastening to Udolpho he intended to remove Emily from the reach of Morano, as well as to break off the affair, without submitting himself to useless altercation: and, if the Count meant what he called honourably, he would doubtless follow Emily, and sign the writings in question. If this was done, so little consideration had Montoni for her welfare, that he would not have scrupled to sacrifice her to a man of ruined fortune, since by that means he could enrich himself; and he forbore to mention to her the motive of his sudden journey, lest the hope it might revive should render her more intractable, when submission would be required.

With these considerations, he had left Venice; and, with others totally different, Morano had, soon after, pursued his steps across the rugged Apennines. When his arrival was announced at the castle, Montoni did not believe, that he would have presumed to show himself, unless he had meant to fulfil his engagement, and he, therefore, readily admitted him; but the enraged countenance and expressions of Morano, as he entered the apartment, instantly undeceived him; and, when Montoni had explained, in part, the motives of his abrupt departure from Venice, the Count still persisted in demanding Emily, and reproaching Montoni, without even naming the former stipulation.

Montoni, at length, weary of the dispute, deferred the settling of it till the morrow, and Morano retired with some hope, suggested by Montoni's apparent indecision. When, however, in the silence of his own apartment, he began to consider the past conversation, the character of Montoni, and some former instances of his duplicity, the hope, which he had admitted, vanished, and he determined not to neglect the present possibility of obtaining Emily by other means. To his confidential valet he told his design of carrying away Emily, and sent him back to Montoni's servants to find out one among them, who might enable him to execute it. The choice of this person he entrusted to the fellow's own discernment, and not imprudently; for he discovered a man, whom Montoni had, on some former occasion, treated harshly, and who was now ready to betray him. This man conducted Cesario round the castle, through a private passage, to the staircase, that led to Emily's chamber; then showed him a short way out of the building, and afterwards procured him the keys, that would secure his retreat. The man was well rewarded for his trouble; how the Count was rewarded for his treachery, had already appeared.

Meanwhile, old Carlo had overheard two of Morano's servants, who had been ordered to be in waiting with the carriage, beyond the castle walls, expressing their surprise at their master's sudden, and secret departure, for the valet had entrusted them with no more of Morano's designs, than it was necessary for them to execute. They, however, indulged themselves in surmises, and in expressing them to each other; and from these Carlo had drawn a just conclusion. But, before he ventured to disclose his apprehensions to Montoni, he endeavoured to obtain further confirmation of them, and, for this purpose, placed himself, with one of his fellow-servants, at the door of Emily's apartment, that opened upon the corridor. He did not watch long in vain, though the growling of the dog had once nearly betrayed him. When he was convinced, that Morano was in the room, and had listened long enough to his conversation, to understand his scheme, he immediately alarmed Montoni, and thus rescued Emily from the designs of the Count.

Montoni, on the following morning, appeared as usual, except that he wore his wounded arm in a sling; he went out upon the ramparts; overlooked the men employed in repairing them; gave orders for additional workmen, and then came into the castle to give audience to several persons, who were just arrived, and who were shown into a private apartment, where he communicated with them, for near an hour. Carlo was then summoned, and ordered to conduct the strangers to a part of the castle, which, in former times, had been occupied by the upper servants of the family, and to provide them with every necessary refreshment. — When he had done this, he was bidden to return to his master.

Meanwhile, the Count remained in a cottage in the skirts of the woods below, suffering under bodily and mental pain, and meditating deep revenge against Montoni. His servant, whom he had dispatched for a surgeon to the nearest town, which was, however, at a considerable distance, did not return till the following day, when, his wounds being examined and dressed, the practitioner refused to deliver any positive opinion, concerning the degree of danger attending them; but giving his patient a composing draught and ordering him to be quiet, remained at the cottage to watch the event.

Emily, for the remainder of the late eventful night, had been suffered to sleep, undisturbed; and, when her mind recovered from the confusion of slumber, and she remembered, that she was now released from the addresses of Count Morano, her spirits were suddenly relieved from a part of the terrible anxiety, that had long oppressed them; that which remained, arose chiefly from a recollection of Morano's assertions, concerning the schemes of Montoni. He had said, that plans of the latter, concerning Emily, were insearchable, yet that he knew them to be terrible. At the time he uttered this, she almost believed it to be designed for the purpose of prevailing with her to throw herself into his protection, and she still thought it might be chiefly so accounted for; but his assertions had left an impression on her mind, which a consideration of the character and former conduct of Montoni did not contribute to efface. She, however, checked her propensity to anticipate evil; and, determined to enjoy this respite from actual misfortune, tried to dismiss thought, took her

instruments for drawing, and placed herself at a window, to select into a landscape some features of the scenery without.

As she was thus employed, she saw, walking on the rampart below, the men, who had so lately arrived at the castle. The sight of strangers surprised her, but still more, of strangers such as these. There was a singularity in their dress, and a certain fierceness in their air, that fixed all her attention. She withdrew from the casement, while they passed, but soon returned to observe them further. Their figures seemed so well suited to the wildness of the surrounding objects, that, as they stood surveying the castle, she sketched them for banditti, amid the mountain view of her picture, when she had finished which, she was surprised to observe the spirit of her group. But she had copied from nature.

Carlo, when he had placed refreshment before these men in the apartment assigned to them, returned, as he was ordered, to Montoni, who was anxious to discover by what servant the keys of the castle had been delivered to Morano, on the preceding night. But this man, though he was too faithful to his master quietly to see him injured, would not betray a fellow servant even to justice; he, therefore, pretended to be ignorant who it was, that had conspired with Count Morano, and related, as before, that he had only overheard some of the strangers describing the plot.

Montoni's suspicions naturally fell upon the porter, whom he ordered now to attend. Carlo hesitated, and then with slow steps went to seek him.

Barnardine, the porter, denied the accusation with a countenance so steady and undaunted, that Montoni could scarcely believe him guilty, though he knew not how to think him innocent. At length, the man was dismissed from his presence, and, though the real offender, escaped detection.

Montoni then went to his wife's apartment, whither Emily followed soon after, but, finding them in high dispute, was instantly leaving the room, when her aunt called her back, and desired her to stay. — "You shall be a witness" said she "of my opposition. Now, sir, repeat the command, I have so often refused to obey."

Montoni turned, with a stern countenance, to Emily, and bade her quit the apartment, while his wife persisted in desiring, that she would stay. Emily was eager to escape from this scene of contention, and anxious, also, to serve her aunt; but she despaired of conciliating Montoni, in whose eyes the rising tempest of his soul flashed terribly.

"Leave the room" said he in a voice of thunder. Emily obeyed, and, walking down to the rampart, which the strangers had now left, continued to meditate on the unhappy marriage of her father's sister, and on her own desolate situation, occasioned by the ridiculous imprudence of her, whom she had always wished to respect and love. Madame Montoni's conduct had, indeed, rendered it impossible for Emily to do either; but her gentle heart was touched

by her distress, and, in the pity thus awakened, she forgot the injurious treatment she had received from her.

As she sauntered on the rampart, Annette appeared at the hall door, looked cautiously round, and then advanced to meet her.

“Dear ma’amselle, I have been looking for you all over the castle” said she. “If you will step this way, I will show you a picture.”

“A picture!” exclaimed Emily, and shuddered.

“Yes, ma’am, a picture of the late lady of this place. Old Carlo just now told me it was her, and I thought you would be curious to see it. As to my lady, you know, ma’amselle, one cannot talk about such things to her.”

“And so” said Emily smilingly “as you must talk of them to somebody —”

“Why, yes, ma’amselle; what can one do in such a place as this, if one must not talk? If I was in a dungeon, if they would let me talk — it would be some comfort; nay, I would talk, if it was only to the walls. But come, ma’amselle, we lose time — let me show you the picture.”

“Is it veiled?” said Emily, pausing.

“Dear ma’amselle!” said Annette, fixing her eyes on Emily’s face, “What makes you look so pale? — are you ill?”

“No, Annette, I am well enough, but I have no desire to see this picture; return into the hall.”

“What! ma’am, not to see the lady of this castle?” said the girl; “the lady, who disappeared to strangely? Well! now, I would have run to the furthest mountain we can see, yonder, to have got a sight of such a picture; and, to speak my mind, that strange story is all, that makes me care about this old castle, though it makes me thrill all over, as it were, whenever I think of it.”

“Yes, Annette, you love the wonderful; but do you know, that, unless you guard against this inclination, it will lead you into all the misery of superstition?”

Annette might have smiled in her turn, at this sage observation of Emily, who could tremble with ideal terrors, as much as herself, and listen almost as eagerly to the recital of a mysterious story. Annette urged her request.

“Are you sure it is a picture?” said Emily “Have you seen it? — Is it veiled?”

“Holy Maria! ma’amselle, yes, no, yes. I am sure it is a picture — I have seen it, and it is not veiled!”

The tone and look of surprise, with which this was uttered, recalled Emily's prudence; who concealed her emotion under a smile, and bade Annette lead her to the picture. It was in an obscure chamber, adjoining that part of the castle, allotted to the servants. Several other portraits hung on the walls, covered, like this, with dust and cobweb.

"That is it, ma'amselle" said Annette, in a low voice, and pointing. Emily advanced, and surveyed the picture. It represented a lady in the flower of youth and beauty; her features were handsome and noble, full of strong expression, but had little of the captivating sweetness, that Emily had looked for, and still less of the pensive mildness she loved. It was a countenance, which spoke the language of passion, rather than that of sentiment; a haughty impatience of misfortune — not the placid melancholy of a spirit injured, yet resigned.

"How many years have passed, since this lady disappeared, Annette?" said Emily.

"Twenty years, ma'amselle, or thereabout, as they tell me; I know it is a long while ago." Emily continued to gaze upon the portrait.

"I think" resumed Annette "the Signor would do well to hang it in a better place, than this old chamber. Now, in my mind, he ought to place the picture of a lady, who gave him all these riches, in the handsomest room in the castle. But he may have good reasons for what he does: and some people do say that he has lost his riches, as well as his gratitude. But hush, ma'am, not a word!" added Annette, laying her finger on her lips. Emily was too much absorbed in thought, to hear what she said.

"'Tis a handsome lady, I am sure" continued Annette: "the Signor need not be ashamed to put her in the great apartment, where the veiled picture hangs." Emily turned round. "But for that matter, she would be as little seen there, as here, for the door is always locked, I find."

"Let us leave this chamber," said Emily: "and let me caution you again, Annette; be guarded in your conversation, and never tell, that you know anything of that picture."

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed Annette "It is no secret; why all the servants have seen it already!"

Emily started. "How is this?" said she — "Have seen it! When? — How?"

"Dear, ma'amselle, there is nothing surprising in that; we had all a little more *curiousness* than you had."

"I thought you told me, the door was kept locked?" said Emily.

"If that was the case, ma'amselle" replied Annette, looking about her "how could we get here?"

"Oh, you mean *this* picture" said Emily, with returning calmness. "Well, Annette, here is nothing more to engage my attention; we will go."

Emily, as she passed to her own apartment, saw Montoni go down to the hall, and she turned into her aunt's dressing-room, whom she found weeping and alone, grief and resentment struggling on her countenance. Pride had hitherto restrained complaint. Judging of Emily's disposition from her own, and from a consciousness of what her treatment of her deserved, she had believed, that her griefs would be cause of triumph to her niece, rather than of sympathy; that she would despise, not pity her. But she knew not the tenderness and benevolence of Emily's heart, that had always taught her to forget her own injuries in the misfortunes of her enemy. The sufferings of others, whoever they might be, called forth her ready compassion, which dissipated at once every obscuring cloud to goodness, that passion or prejudice might have raised in her mind.

Madame Montoni's sufferings, at length, rose above her pride, and, when Emily had before entered the room, she would have told them all, had not her husband prevented her; now that she was no longer restrained by his presence, she poured forth all her complaints to her niece.

"O Emily!" she exclaimed "I am the most wretched of women — I am indeed cruelly treated! Who, with my prospects of happiness, could have foreseen such a wretched fate as this? — Who could have thought, when I married such a man as the Signor, I should ever have to bewail my lot? But there is no judging what is for the best — there is no knowing what is for our good! The most flattering prospects often change — the best judgments may be deceived — who could have foreseen, when I married the Signor, that I should ever repent my *generosity*?"

Emily thought she might have foreseen it, but this was not a thought of triumph. She placed herself in a chair near her aunt, took her hand, and, with one of those looks of soft compassion, which might characterise the countenance of a guardian angel, spoke to her in the tenderest accents. But these did not sooth Madame Montoni, whom impatience to talk made unwilling to listen. She wanted to complain, not to be consoled; and it was by exclamations of complaint only, that Emily learned the particular circumstances of her affliction.

"Ungrateful man!" said Madame Montoni, "he has deceived me in every respect; and now he has taken me from my country and friends, to shut me up in this old castle; and, here he thinks he can compel me to do whatever he designs! But he shall find himself mistaken, he shall find that no threats can alter — But who would have believed? Who would have supposed, that a man of his family and apparent wealth had absolutely no fortune? — No, scarcely a sequin of his own! I did all for the best; I thought he was a man of consequence, of great property, or I am sure I would never have married him — ungrateful, artful man!" She paused to take breath.

"Dear Madam, be composed," said Emily: "the Signor may not be so rich as you had reason to expect, but surely he cannot be very poor, since this castle and the mansion at Venice are his. May I ask what are the circumstances, that particularly affect you?"

"What are the circumstances!" exclaimed Madame Montoni with resentment: "Why is it not sufficient, that he had long ago ruined his own fortune by play, and that he has since lost what I brought him — and that now he would compel me to sign away my settlement (it was well I had the chief of my property settled on myself!) that he may lose this also, or throw it away in wild schemes, which nobody can understand but himself? And, and — is not all this sufficient?"

"It is, indeed" said Emily "but you must recollect, dear madam, that I knew nothing of all this."

"Well, and is it not sufficient" rejoined her aunt "that he is also absolutely ruined, that he is sunk deeply in debt, and that neither this castle, nor the mansion at Venice, is his own, if all his debts, honourable and dishonourable, were paid!"

"I am shocked by what you tell me, madam" said Emily.

"And is it not enough" interrupted Madame Montoni "that he has treated me with neglect, with cruelty, because I refused to relinquish my settlements, and, instead of being frightened by his menaces, resolutely defied him, and upbraided him with his shameful conduct? But I bore all meekly — you know, niece, I never uttered a word of complaint, till now; no! That such a disposition as mine should be so imposed upon! That I, whose only faults are too much kindness, too much generosity, should be chained for life to such a vile, deceitful, cruel monster!"

Want of breath compelled Madame Montoni to stop. If anything could have made Emily smile in these moments, it would have been this speech of her aunt, delivered in a voice very little below a scream, and with a vehemence of gesticulation and of countenance, that turned the whole into burlesque. Emily saw, that her misfortunes did not admit of real consolation, and, condemning the commonplace terms of superficial comfort, she was silent; while Madame Montoni, jealous of her own consequence, mistook this for the silence of indifference, or of contempt, and reproached her with want of duty and feeling.

"O! I suspected what all this boasted sensibility would prove to be!" rejoined she; "I thought it would not teach you to feel either duty, or affection, for your relations, who have treated you like their own daughter!"

"Pardon me, madam" said Emily mildly "it is not natural to me to boast, and if it was, I am sure I would not boast of sensibility — a quality, perhaps, more to be feared, than desired."

“Well, well, niece, I will not dispute with you. But, as I said, Montoni threatens me with violence, if I any longer refuse to sign away my settlements, and this was the subject of our contest, when you came into the room before. Now, I am determined no power on earth shall make me do this. Neither will I bear all this tamely. He shall hear his true character from me; I will tell him all he deserves, in spite of his threats and cruel treatment.”

Emily seized a pause of Madame Montoni’s voice, to speak. “Dear madam” said she “but will not this serve to irritate the Signor unnecessarily? will it not provoke the harsh treatment you dread?”

“I do not care” replied Madame Montoni “it does not signify: I will not submit to such usage. You would have me give up my settlements, too, I suppose!”

“No, madam, I do not exactly mean that.”

“What is it you do mean then?”

“You spoke of reproaching the Signor” — said Emily, with hesitation.

“Why, does he not deserve reproaches?” said her aunt.

“Certainly he does; but will it be prudent in you, madam, to make them?”

“Prudent!” exclaimed Madame Montoni. “Is this a time to talk of prudence, when one is threatened with all sorts of violence?”

“It is to avoid that violence, that prudence is necessary.” said Emily.

“Of prudence!” continued Madame Montoni, without attending to her, “of prudence towards a man, who does not scruple to break all the common ties of humanity in his conduct to me! And is it for me to consider prudence in my behaviour towards him! I am not so mean.”

“It is for your own sake, not for the Signor’s, madam” said Emily modestly, “that you should consult prudence. Your reproaches, however just, cannot punish him, but they may provoke him to further violence against you.”

“What! would you have me submit, then, to whatever he commands — would you have me kneel down at his feet, and thank him for his cruelties? Would you have me give up my settlements?”

“How much you mistake me, madam!” said Emily, “I am unequal to advise you on a point so important as the last: but you will pardon me for saying, that, if you consult your own peace, you will try to conciliate Signor Montoni, rather than to irritate him by reproaches.”

“Conciliate indeed! I tell you, niece, it is utterly impossible; I disdain to attempt it.”

Emily was shocked to observe the perverted understanding and obstinate temper of Madame Montoni; but, not less grieved for her sufferings, she looked round for some alleviating circumstance to offer her. “Your situation is, perhaps, not so desperate, dear madam” said Emily, “as you may imagine. The Signor may represent his affairs to be worse than they are, for the purpose of pleading a stronger necessity for his possession of your settlement. Besides, so long as you keep this, you may look forward to it as a resource, at least, that will afford you a competence, should the Signor’s future conduct compel you to sue for separation.”

Madame Montoni impatiently interrupted her. “Unfeeling, cruel girl!” said she “and so you would persuade me, that I have no reason to complain; that the Signor is in very flourishing circumstances, that my future prospects promise nothing but comfort, and that my griefs are as fanciful and romantic as your own! Is it the way to console me, to endeavour to persuade me out of my senses and my feelings, because you happen to have no feelings yourself? I thought I was opening my heart to a person, who could sympathise in my distress, but I find, that your people of sensibility can feel for nobody but themselves! You may retire to your chamber.”

Emily, without replying, immediately left the room, with a mingled emotion of pity and contempt, and hastened to her own, where she yielded to the mournful reflections, which a knowledge of her aunt’s situation had occasioned. The conversation of the Italian with Valancourt, in France, again occurred to her. His hints, respecting the broken fortunes of Montoni, were now completely justified; those, also, concerning his character, appeared not less so, though the particular circumstances, connected with his fame, to which the stranger had alluded, yet remained to be explained. Notwithstanding, that her own observations and the words of Count Morano had convinced her, that Montoni’s situation was not what it formerly appeared to be, the intelligence she had just received from her aunt on this point, struck her with all the force of astonishment, which was not weakened, when she considered the present style of Montoni’s living, the number of servants he maintained, and the new expences he was incurring, by repairing and fortifying his castle. Her anxiety for her aunt and for herself increased with reflection. Several assertions of Morano, which, on the preceding night, she had believed were prompted either by interest, or by resentment, now returned to her mind with the strength of truth. She could not doubt, that Montoni had formerly agreed to give her to the Count, for a pecuniary reward; — his character, and his distressed circumstances justified the belief; these, also, seemed to confirm Morano’s assertion, that he now designed to dispose of her, more advantageously for himself, to a richer suitor.

Amidst the reproaches, which Morano had thrown out against Montoni, he had said — he would not quit the castle *he dared to call his*, nor willingly leave *another* murder on his conscience — hints, which might have no other origin than the passion of the moment: but Emily was now inclined to account for them more seriously, and she shuddered to think, that she was in the hands of

a man, to whom it was even possible they could apply. At length, considering, that reflection could neither release her from her melancholy situation, nor enable her to bear it with greater fortitude, she tried to divert her anxiety, and took down from her little library a volume of her favourite Ariosto; but his wild imagery and rich invention could not long enchant her attention; his spells did not reach her heart, and over her sleeping fancy they played, without awakening it.

She now put aside the book, and took her lute, for it was seldom that her sufferings refused to yield to the magic of sweet sounds; when they did so, she was oppressed by sorrow, that came from excess of tenderness and regret; and there were times, when music had increased such sorrow to a degree, that was scarcely endurable; when, if it had not suddenly ceased, she might have lost her reason. Such was the time, when she mourned for her father, and heard the midnight strains, that floated by her window near the convent in Languedoc, on the night that followed his death.

She continued to play, till Annette brought dinner into her chamber, at which Emily was surprised, and enquired whose order she obeyed. “My lady’s, ma’amselle” replied Annette: “the Signor ordered her dinner to be carried to her own apartment, and so she has sent you yours. There have been sad doings between them, worse than ever, I think.”

Emily, not appearing to notice what she said, sat down to the little table, that was spread for her. But Annette was not to be silenced thus easily. While she waited, she told of the arrival of the men, whom Emily had observed on the ramparts, and expressed much surprise at their strange appearance, as well as at the manner, in which they had been attended by Montoni’s order. “Do they dine with the Signor, then?” said Emily.

“No, ma’amselle, they dined long ago, in an apartment at the north end of the castle, but I know not when they are to go, for the Signor told old Carlo to see them provided with everything necessary. They have been walking all about the castle, and asking questions of the workmen on the ramparts. I never saw such strange looking men in my life; I am frightened whenever I see them.”

Emily enquired, if she had heard of Count Morano, and whether he was likely to recover: but Annette only knew, that he was lodged in a cottage in the wood below, and that everybody said he must die. Emily’s countenance discovered her emotion.

“Dear ma’amselle” said Annette, “to see how young ladies will disguise themselves, when they are in love! I thought you hated the Count, or I am sure I would not have told you; and I am sure you have cause enough to hate him.”

“I hope I hate nobody” replied Emily, trying to smile; “but certainly I do not love Count Morano. I should be shocked to hear of any person dying by violent means.”

"Yes, ma'amselle, but it is his own fault."

Emily looked displeased; and Annette, mistaking the cause of her displeasure, immediately began to excuse the Count, in her way. "To be sure, it was very ungenteel behaviour," said she, "to break into a lady's room, and then, when he found his discoursing was not agreeable to her, to refuse to go; and then, when the gentleman of the castle comes to desire him to walk about his business — to turn round, and draw his sword, and swear he'll run him through the body! To be sure it was very ungenteel behaviour, but then he was disguised in love, and so did not know what he was about."

"Enough of this" said Emily, who now smiled without an effort; and Annette returned to a mention of the disagreement between Montoni, and her lady.

"It is nothing new," said she: "we saw and heard enough of this at Venice, though I never told you of it, ma'amselle."

"Well, Annette, it was very prudent of you not to mention it then: be as prudent now; the subject is an unpleasant one."

"Ah dear, ma'amselle! — To see now how considerate you can be about some folks, who care so little about you! I cannot bear to see you so deceived, and I must tell you. But it is all for your own good, and not to spite my lady, though, to speak truth, I have little reason to love her; but —"

"You are not speaking thus of my aunt, I hope, Annette?" said Emily gravely.

"Yes, ma'amselle, but I am, though; and if you knew as much as I do, you would not look so angry. I have often, and often, heard the Signor and her talking over your marriage with the Count, and she always advised him never to give up to your foolish whims, as she was pleased to call them, but to be resolute, and compel you to be obedient, whether you would, or no. And I am sure, my heart has ached a thousand times, and I have thought, when she was so unhappy herself, she might have felt a little for other people, and —"

"I thank you for your pity, Annette," said Emily, interrupting her: "but my aunt was unhappy then, and that disturbed her temper perhaps, or I think — I am sure — You may take away, Annette, I have done."

"Dear ma'amselle, you have eat nothing at all! Do try, and take a little bit more. Disturbed her temper truly! Why, her temper is always disturbed, I think. And at Toulouse I have heard my lady talking of you and Mons. Valancourt to Madame Merveille and Madame Vaison, often and often, in a very ill natured way, as I thought, telling them what a deal of trouble she had to keep you in order, and what a fatigue and distress it was to her, and that she believed you would run away with Mons. Valancourt, if she was not to watch you closely; and that you connived at his coming about the house at night, and —"

"Good God!" exclaimed Emily, blushing deeply, "it is surely impossible my aunt could thus have represented me!"

"Indeed, ma'am, I say nothing more than the truth, and not all of that. But I thought, myself, she might have found something better to discourse about, than the faults of her own niece, even if you had been in fault, ma'amselle; but I did not believe a word of what she said. But my lady does not care what she says against anybody, for that matter."

"However that may be, Annette" interrupted Emily, recovering her composure "it does not become you to speak of the faults of my aunt to me. I know you have meant well, but—say no more.—I have quite dined."

Annette blushed, looked down, and then began slowly to clear the table.

"Is this, then, the reward of my ingenuousness?" said Emily, when she was alone; "the treatment I am to receive from a relation — an aunt — who ought to have been the guardian, not the slanderer of my reputation — who, as a woman, ought to have respected the delicacy of female honour, and, as a relation, should have protected mine! But, to utter falsehoods on so nice a subject — to repay the openness, and, I may say with honest pride, the propriety of my conduct, with slanders — required a depravity of heart, such as I could scarcely have believed existed, such as I weep to find in a relation. O! what a contrast does her character present to that of my beloved father; while envy and low cunning form the chief traits of hers, his was distinguished by benevolence and philosophic wisdom! But now, let me only remember, if possible, that she is unfortunate."

Emily threw her veil over her, and went down to walk upon the ramparts, the only walk, indeed, which was open to her, though she often wished, that she might be permitted to ramble among the woods below, and still more, that she might sometimes explore the sublime scenes of the surrounding country. But, as Montoni would not suffer her to pass the gates of the castle, she tried to be contented with the romantic views she beheld from the walls. The peasants, who had been employed on the fortifications, had left their work, and the ramparts were silent and solitary. Their lonely appearance, together with the gloom of a lowering sky, assisted the musings of her mind, and threw over it a kind of melancholy tranquillity, such as she often loved to indulge. She turned to observe a fine effect of the sun, as his rays, suddenly streaming from behind a heavy cloud, lighted up the west towers of the castle, while the rest of the edifice was in deep shade, except, that, through a lofty gothic arch, adjoining the tower, which led to another terrace, the beams darted in full splendour, and showed the three strangers she had observed in the morning. Perceiving them, she started, and a momentary fear came over her, as she looked up the long rampart, and saw no other persons. While she hesitated, they approached. The gate at the end of the terrace, whither they were advancing, she knew, was always locked, and she could not depart by the opposite extremity, without meeting them; but, before she passed them, she hastily drew a thin veil over her face, which did, indeed, but ill conceal her beauty. They looked earnestly at

her, and spoke to each other in bad Italian, of which she caught only a few words; but the fierceness of their countenances, now that she was near enough to discriminate them, struck her yet more than the wild singularity of their air and dress had formerly done. It was the countenance and figure of him, who walked between the other two, that chiefly seized her attention, which expressed a sullen haughtiness and a kind of dark watchful villany, that gave a thrill of horror to her heart. All this was so legibly written on his features, as to be seen by a single glance, for she passed the group swiftly, and her timid eyes scarcely rested on them a moment. Having reached the terrace, she stopped, and perceived the strangers standing in the shadow of one of the turrets, gazing after her, and seemingly, by their action, in earnest conversation. She immediately left the rampart, and retired to her apartment.

In the evening, Montoni sat late, carousing with his guests in the cedar chamber. His recent triumph over Count Morano, or, perhaps, some other circumstance, contributed to elevate his spirits to an unusual height. He filled the goblet often, and gave a loose to merriment and talk. The gaiety of Cavigni, on the contrary, was somewhat clouded by anxiety. He kept a watchful eye upon Verezzi, whom, with the utmost difficulty, he had hitherto restrained from exasperating Montoni further against Morano, by a mention of his late taunting words.

One of the company exultingly recurred to the event of the preceding evening. Verezzi's eyes sparkled. The mention of Morano led to that of Emily, of whom they were all profuse in the praise, except Montoni, who sat silent, and then interrupted the subject.

When the servants had withdrawn, Montoni and his friends entered into close conversation, which was sometimes checked by the irascible temper of Verezzi, but in which Montoni displayed his conscious superiority, by that decisive look and manner, which always accompanied the vigour of his thought, and to which most of his companions submitted, as to a power, that they had no right to question, though of each other's self-importance they were jealously scrupulous. Amidst this conversation, one of them imprudently introduced again the name of Morano; and Verezzi, now more heated by wine, disregarded the expressive looks of Cavigni, and gave some dark hints of what had passed on the preceding night. These, however, Montoni did not appear to understand, for he continued silent in his chair, without discovering any emotion, while, the choler of Verezzi increasing with the apparent insensibility of Montoni, he at length told the suggestion of Morano, that this castle did not lawfully belong to him, and that he would not willingly leave another murder on his conscience.

"Am I to be insulted at my own table, and by my own friends?" said Montoni, with a countenance pale in anger. "Why are the words of that madman repeated to me?" Verezzi, who had expected to hear Montoni's indignation poured forth against Morano, and answered by thanks to himself, looked with astonishment at Cavigni, who enjoyed his confusion. "Can you be weak enough to credit the assertions of a madman?" rejoined Montoni "or, what is the same thing, a man possessed by the spirit of vengeance? But he has succeeded too well; you believe

what he said."

"Signor" said Verezzi, "we believe only what we know."

— "How!" interrupted Montoni, sternly: "Produce your proof."

"We believe only what we know," repeated Verezzi, "and we know nothing of what Morano asserts."

Montoni seemed to recover himself. "I am hasty, my friends" said he "with respect to my honour; no man shall question it with impunity — you did not mean to question it. These foolish words are not worth your remembrance, or my resentment. Verezzi, here is to your first exploit."

"Success to your first exploit," re-echoed the whole company.

"Noble Signor" replied Verezzi, glad to find he had escaped Montoni's resentment "with my good will, you shall build your ramparts of gold."

"Pass the goblet" cried Montoni.

"We will drink to Signora St. Aubert," said Cavigni.

"By your leave we will first drink to the lady of the castle." said Bertolini. —

Montoni was silent. "To the lady of the castle," said his guests. He bowed his head.

"It much surprises me, Signor" said Bertolini "that you have so long neglected this castle; it is a noble edifice."

"It suits our purpose" replied Montoni "and *is* a noble edifice. You know not, it seems, by what mischance it came to me."

"It was a lucky mischance, be it what it may, Signor" replied Bertolini, smiling. "I would, that one so lucky had befallen me."

Montoni looked gravely at him. "If you will attend to what I say" he resumed, "you shall hear the story."

The countenances of Bertolini and Verezzi expressed something more than curiosity; Cavigni, who seemed to feel none, had probably heard the relation before.

"It is now near twenty years" said Montoni "since this castle came into my possession. I inherit it by the female line. The lady, my predecessor, was only distantly related to me; I am the last of her family. She was beautiful and rich; I wooed her; but her heart was fixed upon another, and she rejected me. It is probable, however, that she was herself rejected of the person, whoever he

might be, on whom she bestowed her favour, for a deep and settled melancholy took possession of her; and I have reason to believe she put a period to her own life. I was not at the castle at the time; but, as there are some singular and mysterious circumstances attending that event, I shall repeat them."

"Repeat them!" said a voice.

Montoni was silent; the guests looked at each other, to know who spoke; but they perceived, that each was making the same enquiry. Montoni, at length, recovered himself. "We are overheard" said he: "we will finish this subject another time. Pass the goblet."

The cavaliers looked round the wide chamber.

"Here is no person, but ourselves," said Verezzi: "pray, Signor, proceed."

"Did you hear anything?" said Montoni.

"We did," said Bertolini.

"It could be only fancy" said Verezzi, looking round again. "We see no person besides ourselves; and the sound I thought I heard seemed within the room. Pray, Signor, go on."

Montoni paused a moment, and then proceeded in a lowered voice, while the cavaliers drew nearer to attend. "Ye are to know, Signors, that the Lady Laurentini had for some months shown symptoms of a dejected mind, nay, of a disturbed imagination. Her mood was very unequal; sometimes she was sunk in calm melancholy, and, at others, as I have been told, she betrayed all the symptoms of frantic madness. It was one night in the month of October, after she had recovered from one of those fits of excess, and had sunk again into her usual melancholy, that she retired alone to her chamber, and forbade all interruption. It was the chamber at the end of the corridor, Signors, where we had the affray, last night. From that hour, she was seen no more."

"How! seen no more!" said Bertolini "Was not her body found in the chamber?"

"Were her remains never found?" cried the rest of the company all together.

"Never!" replied Montoni.

"What reasons were there to suppose she destroyed herself, then?" said Bertolini.

—"Aye, what reasons?" said Verezzi. — "How happened it, that her remains were never found? Although she killed herself, she could not bury herself." Montoni looked indignantly at Verezzi, who began to apologise.

“Your pardon, Signor” said he: “I did not consider, that the lady was your relative, when I spoke of her so lightly.”

Montoni accepted the apology.

“But the Signor will oblige us with the reasons, which urged him to believe, that the lady committed suicide.”

“Those I will explain hereafter,” said Montoni: “at present let me relate a most extraordinary circumstance. This conversation goes no further, Signors. Listen, then, to what I am going to say.”

“Listen!” said a voice.

They were all again silent, and the countenance of Montoni changed. “This is no illusion of the fancy” said Cavigni, at length breaking the profound silence.

— “No” said Bertolini; “I heard it myself, now. Yet here is no person in the room but ourselves!”

“This is very extraordinary” said Montoni, suddenly rising. “This is not to be borne; here is some deception, some trick. I will know what it means.”

All the company rose from their chairs in confusion.

“It is very odd!” said Bertolini. “Here is really no stranger in the room. If it is a trick, Signor, you will do well to punish the author of it severely.”

“A trick! What else can it be?” said Cavigni, affecting a laugh.

The servants were now summoned, and the chamber was searched, but no person was found. The surprise and consternation of the company increased. Montoni was discomposed. “We will leave this room” said he “and the subject of our conversation also; it is too solemn.” His guests were equally ready to quit the apartment; but the subject had roused their curiosity, and they entreated Montoni to withdraw to another chamber, and finish it; no entreaties could, however, prevail with him. Notwithstanding his efforts to appear at ease, he was visibly and greatly disordered.

“Why, Signor, you are not superstitious” cried Verezzi, jeeringly; “you, who have so often laughed at the credulity of others!”

“I am not superstitious” replied Montoni, regarding him with stern displeasure “though I know how to despise the commonplace sentences, which are frequently uttered against superstition. I will enquire further into this affair.” He then left the room; and his guests, separating for the night, retired to their respective apartments.

CHAPTER VIII

He wears the rose of youth upon his cheek.
SHAKESPEARE

We now return to Valancourt, who, it may be remembered, remained at Toulouse, some time after the departure of Emily, restless and miserable. Each morrow that approached, he designed should carry him from thence; yet tomorrow and tomorrow came, and still saw him lingering in the scene of his former happiness. He could not immediately tear himself from the spot, where he had been accustomed to converse with Emily, or from the objects they had viewed together, which appeared to him memorials of her affection, as well as a kind of surety for its faithfulness; and, next to the pain of bidding her adieu, was that of leaving the scenes which so powerfully awakened her image. Sometimes he had bribed a servant, who had been left in the care of Madame Montoni's château, to permit him to visit the gardens, and there he would wander, for hours together, rapt in a melancholy, not unpleasing. The terrace, and the pavilion at the end of it, where he had taken leave of Emily, on the eve of her departure from Thoulouse, were his most favourite haunts. There, as he walked, or leaned from the window of the building, he would endeavour to recollect all she had said, on that night; to catch the tones of her voice, as they faintly vibrated on his memory, and to remember the exact expression of her countenance, which sometimes came suddenly to his fancy, like a vision; that beautiful countenance, which awakened, as by instantaneous magic, all the tenderness of his heart, and seemed to tell with irresistible eloquence — that he had lost her for ever! At these moments, his hurried steps would have discovered to a spectator the despair of his heart. The character of Montoni, such as he had received from hints, and such as his fears represented it, would rise to his view, together with all the dangers it seemed to threaten to Emily and to his love. He blamed himself, that he had not urged these more forcibly to her, while it might have been in his power to detain her, and that he had suffered an absurd and criminal delicacy, as he termed it, to conquer so soon the reasonable arguments he had opposed to this journey. Any evil, that might have attended their marriage, seemed so inferior to those, which now threatened their love, or even to the sufferings, that absence occasioned, that he wondered how he could have ceased to urge his suit, till he had convinced her of its propriety; and he would certainly now have followed her to Italy, if he could have been spared from his regiment for so long a journey. His regiment, indeed, soon reminded him, that he had other duties to attend, than those of love.

A short time after his arrival at his brother's house, he was summoned to join his brother officers, and he accompanied a battalion to Paris; where a scene of novelty and gaiety opened upon him, such as, till then, he had only a faint idea of. But gaiety disgusted, and company fatigued, his sick mind; and he became an object of unceasing raillery to his companions, from whom, whenever he could steal an opportunity, he escaped, to think of Emily. The scenes around him, however, and the company with whom he was obliged to mingle, engaged his attention, though they failed to amuse his fancy, and thus

gradually weakened the habit of yielding to lamentation, till it appeared less a duty to his love to indulge it. Among his brother officers were many, who added to the ordinary character of a French soldier's gaiety some of those fascinating qualities, which too frequently throw a veil over folly, and sometimes even soften the features of vice into smiles. To these men the reserved and thoughtful manners of Valancourt were a kind of tacit censure on their own, for which they rallied him when present, and plotted against him when absent; they gloried in the thought of reducing him to their own level, and, considering it to be a spirited frolic, determined to accomplish it.

Valancourt was a stranger to the gradual progress of scheme and intrigue, against which he could not be on his guard. He had not been accustomed to receive ridicule, and he could ill endure its sting; he resented it, and this only drew upon him a louder laugh. To escape from such scenes, he fled into solitude, and there the image of Emily met him, and revived the pangs of love and despair. He then sought to renew those tasteful studies, which had been the delight of his early years; but his mind had lost the tranquillity, which is necessary for their enjoyment. To forget himself and the grief and anxiety, which the idea of her recalled, he would quit his solitude, and again mingle in the crowd — glad of a temporary relief, and rejoicing to snatch amusement for the moment.

Thus passed weeks after weeks, time gradually softening his sorrow, and habit strengthening his desire of amusement, till the scenes around him seemed to awaken into a new character, and Valancourt, to have fallen among them from the clouds.

His figure and address made him a welcome visitor, wherever he had been introduced, and he soon frequented the most gay and fashionable circles of Paris. Among these, was the assembly of the Countess Lacleur, a woman of eminent beauty and captivating manners. She had passed the spring of youth, but her wit prolonged the triumph of its reign, and they mutually assisted the fame of each other; for those, who were charmed by her loveliness, spoke with enthusiasm of her talents; and others, who admired her playful imagination, declared, that her personal graces were unrivalled. But her imagination was merely playful, and her wit, if such it could be called, was brilliant, rather than just; it dazzled, and its fallacy escaped the detection of the moment; for the accents, in which she pronounced it, and the smile, that accompanied them, were a spell upon the judgment of the auditors. Her *petits soupers* were the most tasteful of any in Paris, and were frequented by many of the second class of literati. She was fond of music, was herself a scientific performer, and had frequently concerts at her house. Valancourt, who passionately loved music, and who sometimes assisted at these concerts, admired her execution, but remembered with a sigh the eloquent simplicity of Emily's songs and the natural expression of her manner, which waited not to be approved by the judgment, but found their way at once to the heart.

Madame *La Comtesse* had often deep play at her house, which she affected to restrain, but secretly encouraged; and it was well known among her friends,

that the splendour of her establishment was chiefly supplied from the profits of her tables. But her *petits soupers* were the most charming imaginable! Here were all the delicacies of the four quarters of the world, all the wit and the lighter efforts of genius, all the graces of conversation — the smiles of beauty, and the charm of music; and Valancourt passed his pleasantest, as well as most dangerous hours in these parties.

His brother, who remained with his family in Gascony, had contented himself with giving him letters of introduction to such of his relations, residing at Paris, as the latter was not already known to. All these were persons of some distinction; and, as neither the person, mind, nor manners of Valancourt the younger threatened to disgrace their alliance, they received him with as much kindness as their nature, hardened by uninterrupted prosperity, would admit of; but their attentions did not extend to acts of real friendship; for they were too much occupied by their own pursuits, to feel any interest in his; and thus he was set down in the midst of Paris, in the pride of youth, with an open, unsuspicious temper and ardent affections, without one friend, to warn him of the dangers, to which he was exposed. Emily, who, had she been present, would have saved him from these evils by awakening his heart, and engaging him in worthy pursuits, now only increased his danger; — it was to lose the grief, which the remembrance of her occasioned, that he first sought amusement; and for this end he pursued it, till habit made it an object of abstract interest.

There was also a Marchioness Champfort, a young widow, at whose assemblies he passed much of his time. She was handsome, still more artful, gay and fond of intrigue. The society, which she drew round her, was less elegant and more vicious, than that of the Countess Lacleur: but, as she had address enough to throw a veil, though but a slight one, over the worst part of her character, she was still visited by many persons of what is called distinction. Valancourt was introduced to her parties by two of his brother officers, whose late ridicule he had now forgiven so far, that he could sometimes join in the laugh, which a mention of his former manners would renew.

The gaiety of the most splendid court in Europe, the magnificence of the palaces, entertainments, and equipages, that surrounded him — all conspired to dazzle his imagination, and reanimate his spirits, and the example and maxims of his military associates to delude his mind. Emily's image, indeed, still lived there; but it was no longer the friend, the monitor, that saved him from himself, and to which he retired to weep the sweet, yet melancholy, tears of tenderness. When he had recourse to it, it assumed a countenance of mild reproach, that wrung his soul, and called forth tears of unmixed misery; his only escape from which was to forget the object of it, and he endeavoured, therefore, to think of Emily as seldom as he could.

Thus dangerously circumstanced was Valancourt, at the time, when Emily was suffering at Venice, from the persecuting addresses of Count Morano, and the unjust authority of Montoni; at which period we leave him.