

CHAPTER IX

The image of a wicked, heinous fault
 Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his
 Does show the mood of a much-troubled breast.

KING JOHN

Leaving the gay scenes of Paris, we return to those of the gloomy Apennine, where Emily's thoughts were still faithful to Valancourt. Looking to him as to her only hope, she recollected, with jealous exactness, every assurance and every proof she had witnessed of his affection; read again and again the letters she had received from him; weighed, with intense anxiety, the force of every word, that spoke of his attachment; and dried her tears, as she trusted in his truth.

Montoni, meanwhile, had made strict enquiry concerning the strange circumstance of his alarm, without obtaining information; and was, at length, obliged to account for it by the reasonable supposition, that it was a mischievous trick played off by one of his domestics. His disagreements with Madame Montoni, on the subject of her settlements, were now more frequent than ever; he even confined her entirely to her own apartment, and did not scruple to threaten her with much greater severity, should she persevere in a refusal.

Reason, had she consulted it, would now have perplexed her in the choice of a conduct to be adopted. It would have pointed out the danger of irritating by further opposition a man, such as Montoni had proved himself to be, and to whose power she had so entirely committed herself; and it would also have told her, of what extreme importance to her future comfort it was, to reserve for herself those possessions, which would enable her to live independently of Montoni, should she ever escape from his immediate control. But she was directed by a more decisive guide than reason — the spirit of revenge, which urged her to oppose violence to violence, and obstinacy to obstinacy.

Wholly confined to the solitude of her apartment, she was now reduced to solicit the society she had lately rejected; for Emily was the only person, except Annette, with whom she was permitted to converse.

Generously anxious for her peace, Emily, therefore, tried to persuade, when she could not convince, and sought by every gentle means to induce her to forbear that asperity of reply, which so greatly irritated Montoni. The pride of her aunt did sometimes soften to the soothing voice of Emily, and there even were moments, when she regarded her affectionate attentions with goodwill.

The scenes of terrible contention, to which Emily was frequently compelled to be witness, exhausted her spirits more than any circumstances, that had occurred since her departure from Toulouse. The gentleness and goodness of her parents, together with the scenes of her early happiness, often stole on her

mind, like the visions of a higher world; while the characters and circumstances, now passing beneath her eye, excited both terror and surprise. She could scarcely have imagined, that passions so fierce and so various, as those which Montoni exhibited, could have been concentrated in one individual; yet what more surprised her, was, that, on great occasions, he could bend these passions, wild as they were, to the cause of his interest, and generally could disguise in his countenance their operation on his mind; but she had seen him too often, when he had thought it unnecessary to conceal his nature, to be deceived on such occasions.

Her present life appeared like the dream of a distempered imagination, or like one of those frightful fictions, in which the wild genius of the poets sometimes delighted. Reflection brought only regret, and anticipation terror. How often did she wish to “steal the lark’s wing, and mount the swiftest gale” that Languedoc and repose might once more be hers!

Of Count Morano’s health she made frequent enquiry; but Annette heard only vague reports of his danger, and that his surgeon had said he would never leave the cottage alive; while Emily could not but be shocked to think, that she, however innocently, might be the means of his death; and Annette, who did not fail to observe her emotion, interpreted it in her own way.

But a circumstance soon occurred, which entirely withdrew Annette’s attention from this subject, and awakened the surprise and curiosity so natural to her. Coming one day to Emily’s apartment, with a countenance full of importance, “What can all this mean, ma’amselle?” said she. “Would I was once safe in Languedoc again, they should never catch me going on my travels any more! I must think it a fine thing, truly, to come abroad, and see foreign parts! I little thought I was coming to be caught up in an old castle, among such dreary mountains, with the chance of being murdered, or, what is as good, having my throat cut!”

“What can all this mean, indeed, Annette?” said Emily, in astonishment.

“Aye, ma’amselle, you may look surprised; but you won’t believe it, perhaps, till they have murdered you, too. You would not believe about the ghost I told you of, though I showed you the very place, where it used to appear! — You will believe nothing, ma’amselle.”

“Not till you speak more reasonably, Annette; for Heaven’s sake, explain your meaning. You spoke of murder!”

“Aye, ma’amselle, they are coming to murder us all, perhaps; but what signifies explaining? — you will not believe.”

Emily again desired her to relate what she had seen, or heard.

“O, I have seen enough, ma’am, and heard too much, as Ludovico can prove. Poor soul! They will murder him, too! I little thought, when he sung those sweet

verses under my lattice, at Venice!" — Emily looked impatient and displeased. "Well, ma'amselle, as I was saying, these preparations about the castle, and these strange looking people, that are calling here every day, and the Signor's cruel usage of my lady, and his odd goings-on — all these, as I told Ludovico, can bode no good. And he bid me hold my tongue. So, says I, the Signor's strangely altered, Ludovico, in this gloomy castle, to what he was in France; there, all so gay! Nobody so gallant to my lady, then; and he could smile, too, upon a poor servant, sometimes, and jeer her, too, good-naturedly enough. I remember once, when he said to me, as I was going out of my lady's dressing room — Annette, says he —"

"Never mind what the Signor said" interrupted Emily; "but tell me, at once, the circumstance, which has thus alarmed you."

"Aye, ma'amselle" rejoined Annette "that is just what Ludovico said: says he, Never mind what the Signor says to you. So I told him what I thought about the Signor. He is so strangely altered, said I: for now he is so haughty, and so commanding, and so sharp with my lady; and, if he meets one, he'll scarcely look at one, unless it be to frown. So much the better, says Ludovico, so much the better. And to tell you the truth, ma'amselle, I thought this was a very ill-natured speech of Ludovico: but I went on. And then, says I, he is always knitting his brows; and if one speaks to him, he does not hear; and then he sits up counselling so, of a night, with the other Signors — there they are, till long past midnight, discoursing together! Aye, but says Ludovico, you don't know what they are counselling about. No, said I, but I can guess — it is about my young lady. Upon that, Ludovico burst out a-laughing, quite loud; so he put me in a huff, for I did not like that either I or you, ma'amselle, should be laughed at; and I turned away quick, but he stopped me. 'Don't be affronted, Annette,' said he, 'but I cannot help laughing;' and with that he laughed again. 'What!' says he, 'do you think the Signors sit up, night after night, only to counsel about thy young lady! No, no, there is something more in the wind than that. And these repairs about the castle, and these preparations about the ramparts — they are not making about young ladies.' Why, surely, said I, the Signor, my master, is not going to make war? 'Make war!' said Ludovico, 'what, upon the mountains and the woods? for here is no living soul to make war upon that I see.'

'What are these preparations for, then?' said I; why surely nobody is coming to take away my master's castle! 'Then there are so many ill looking fellows coming to the castle every day,' says Ludovico, without answering my question, 'and the Signor sees them all, and talks with them all, and they all stay in the neighbourhood! By holy St. Marco! some of them are the most cut-throat looking dogs I ever set my eyes upon.'

"I asked Ludovico again, if he thought they were coming to take away my master's castle; and he said, No, he did not think they were, but he did not know for certain. 'Then yesterday,' said he, but you must not tell this, ma'amselle, 'yesterday, a party of these men came, and left all their horses in the castle stables, where, it seems, they are to stay, for the Signor ordered them

all to be entertained with the best provender in the manger; but the men are, most of them, in the neighbouring cottages.'

"So, ma'amselle, I came to tell you all this, for I never heard anything so strange in my life. But what can these ill looking men be come about, if it is not to murder us? And the Signor knows this, or why should he be so civil to them? And why should he fortify the castle, and counsel so much with the other Signors, and be so thoughtful?"

"Is this all you have to tell, Annette?" said Emily. "Have you heard nothing else, that alarms you?"

"Nothing else, ma'amselle!" said Annette; "why, is not this enough?"

"Quite enough for my patience, Annette, but not quite enough to convince me we are all to be murdered, though I acknowledge here is sufficient food for curiosity." She forbore to speak her apprehensions, because she would not encourage Annette's wild terrors; but the present circumstances of the castle both surprised, and alarmed her. Annette, having told her tale, left the chamber, on the wing for new wonders.

In the evening, Emily had passed some melancholy hours with Madame Montoni, and was retiring to rest, when she was alarmed by a strange and loud knocking at her chamber door, and then a heavy weight fell against it, that almost burst it open. She called to know who was there, and receiving no answer, repeated the call; but a chilling silence followed. It occurred to her — for, at this moment, she could not reason on the probability of circumstances — that some one of the strangers, lately arrived at the castle, had discovered her apartment, and was come with such intent, as their looks rendered too possible — to rob, perhaps to murder, her. The moment she admitted this possibility, terror supplied the place of conviction, and a kind of instinctive remembrance of her remote situation from the family heightened it to a degree, that almost overcame her senses. She looked at the door, which led to the staircase, expecting to see it open, and listening, in fearful silence, for a return of the noise, till she began to think it had proceeded from this door, and a wish of escaping through the opposite one rushed upon her mind. She went to the gallery door, and then, fearing to open it, lest some person might be silently lurking for her without, she stopped, but with her eyes fixed in expectation upon the opposite door of the staircase. As thus she stood, she heard a faint breathing near her, and became convinced, that some person was on the other side of the door, which was already locked. She sought for other fastening, but there was none.

While she yet listened, the breathing was distinctly heard, and her terror was not soothed, when, looking round her wide and lonely chamber, she again considered her remote situation. As she stood hesitating whether to call for assistance, the continuance of the stillness surprised her; and her spirits would have revived, had she not continued to hear the faint breathing, that convinced her, the person, whoever it was, had not quitted the door.

At length, worn out with anxiety, she determined to call loudly for assistance from her casement, and was advancing to it, when, whether the terror of her mind gave her ideal sounds, or that real ones did come, she thought footsteps were ascending the private staircase; and, expecting to see its door unclose, she forgot all other cause of alarm, and retreated towards the corridor. Here she endeavoured to make her escape, but, on opening the door, was very near falling over a person, who lay on the floor without. She screamed, and would have passed, but her trembling frame refused to support her; and the moment, in which she leaned against the wall of the gallery, allowed her leisure to observe the figure before her, and to recognise the features of Annette. Fear instantly yielded to surprise. She spoke in vain to the poor girl, who remained senseless on the floor, and then, losing all consciousness of her own weakness, hurried to her assistance.

When Annette recovered, she was helped by Emily into the chamber, but was still unable to speak, and looked round her, as if her eyes followed some person in the room. Emily tried to sooth her disturbed spirits, and forbore, at present, to ask her any questions; but the faculty of speech was never long withheld from Annette, and she explained, in broken sentences, and in her tedious way, the occasion of her disorder. She affirmed, and with a solemnity of conviction, that almost staggered the incredulity of Emily, that she had seen an apparition, as she was passing to her bedroom, through the corridor.

“I had heard strange stories of that chamber before” said Annette: “but as it was so near yours, ma’amselle, I would not tell them to you, because they would frighten you. The servants had told me, often and often, that it was haunted, and that was the reason why it was shut up: nay, for that matter, why the whole string of these rooms, here, are shut up. I quaked whenever I went by, and I must say, I did sometimes think I heard odd noises within it. But, as I said, as I was passing along the corridor, and not thinking a word about the matter, or even of the strange voice that the Signors heard the other night, all of a sudden comes a great light, and, looking behind me, there was a tall figure, (I saw it as plainly, ma’amselle, as I see you at this moment), a tall figure gliding along (Oh! I cannot describe how!) into the room, that is always shut up, and nobody has the key of it but the Signor, and the door shut directly.”

“Then it doubtless was the Signor” said Emily.

“O no, ma’amselle, it could not be him, for I left him busy a-quarrelling in my lady’s dressing-room!”

“You bring me strange tales, Annette,” said Emily: “it was but this morning, that you would have terrified me with the apprehension of murder; and now you would persuade me, you have seen a ghost! These wonderful stories come too quickly.”

“Nay, ma’amselle, I will say no more, only, if I had not been frightened, I should not have fainted dead away so. I ran as fast as I could, to get to your

door; but, what was worst of all, I could not call out; then I thought something must be strangely the matter with me, and directly I dropt down.”

“Was it the chamber where the black veil hangs?” said Emily.

“O! no, ma’amselle, it was one nearer to this. What shall I do, to get to my room? I would not go out into the corridor again, for the whole world!” Emily, whose spirits had been severely shocked, and who, therefore, did not like the thought of passing the night alone, told her she might sleep where she was. “O, no, ma’amselle” replied Annette “I would not sleep in the room now for a thousand sequins!”

Wearied and disappointed, Emily first ridiculed, though she shared, her fears, and then tried to sooth them; but neither attempt succeeded, and the girl persisted in believing and affirming, that what she had seen was nothing human. It was not till some time after Emily had recovered her composure, that she recollected the steps she had heard on the staircase — a remembrance, however, which made her insist that Annette should pass the night with her, and, with much difficulty, she, at length, prevailed, assisted by that part of the girl’s fear, which concerned the corridor.

Early on the following morning, as Emily crossed the hall to the ramparts, she heard a noisy bustle in the courtyard, and the clatter of horses’ hoofs. Such unusual sounds excited her curiosity; and, instead of going to the ramparts, she went to an upper casement, from whence she saw, in the court below, a large party of horsemen, dressed in a singular, but uniform, habit, and completely, though variously, armed. They wore a kind of short jacket, composed of black and scarlet, and several of them had a cloak, of plain black, which, covering the person entirely, hung down to the stirrups. As one of these cloaks glanced aside, she saw, beneath, daggers, apparently of different sizes, tucked into the horseman’s belt. She further observed, that these were carried, in the same manner, by many of the horsemen without cloaks, most of whom bore also pikes, or javelins. On their heads, were the small Italian caps, some of which were distinguished by black feathers. Whether these caps gave a fierce air to the countenance, or that the countenances they surmounted had naturally such an appearance, Emily thought she had never, till then, seen an assemblage of faces so savage and terrific. While she gazed, she almost fancied herself surrounded by banditti; and a vague thought glanced athwart her fancy — that Montoni was the captain of the group before her, and that this castle was to be the place of rendezvous. The strange and horrible supposition was but momentary, though her reason could supply none more probable, and though she discovered, among the band, the strangers she had formerly noticed with so much alarm, who were now distinguished by the black plume.

While she continued gazing, Cavigni, Verezzi, and Bertolini came forth from the hall, habited like the rest, except that they wore hats, with a mixed plume of black and scarlet, and that their arms differed from those of the rest of the party. As they mounted their horses, Emily was struck with the exulting joy, expressed on the visage of Verezzi, while Cavigni was gay, yet with a shade of

thought on his countenance; and, as he managed his horse with dexterity, his graceful and commanding figure, which exhibited the majesty of a hero, had never appeared to more advantage. Emily, as she observed him, thought he somewhat resembled Valancourt, in the spirit and dignity of his person; but she looked in vain for the noble, benevolent countenance — the soul's intelligence, which overspread the features of the latter.

As she was hoping, she scarcely knew why, that Montoni would accompany the party, he appeared at the hall door, but un-accoutred. Having carefully observed the horsemen, conversed awhile with the cavaliers, and bidden them farewell, the band wheeled round the court, and, led by Verezzi, issued forth under the portcullis; Montoni following to the portal, and gazing after them for some time. Emily then retired from the casement, and, now certain of being unmolested, went to walk on the ramparts, from whence she soon after saw the party winding among the mountains to the west, appearing and disappearing between the woods, till distance confused their figures, consolidated their numbers, and only a dingy mass appeared moving along the heights.

Emily observed, that no workmen were on the ramparts, and that the repairs of the fortifications seemed to be completed. While she sauntered thoughtfully on, she heard distant footsteps, and, raising her eyes, saw several men lurking under the castle walls, who were evidently not workmen, but looked as if they would have accorded well with the party which was gone. Wondering where Annette had hid herself so long, who might have explained some of the late circumstances, and then considering that Madame Montoni was probably risen, she went to her dressing room, where she mentioned what had occurred; but Madame Montoni either would not, or could not, give any explanation of the event. The Signor's reserve to his wife, on this subject, was probably nothing more than usual; yet, to Emily, it gave an air of mystery to the whole affair, that seemed to hint there was danger, if not villany, in his schemes.

Annette presently came, and, as usual, was full of alarm; to her lady's eager enquiries of what she had heard among the servants, she replied:

“Ah, madam! nobody knows what it is all about, but old Carlo; he knows well enough, I dare say, but he is as close as his master. Some say the Signor is going out to frighten the enemy, as they call it: but where is the enemy? Then others say, he is going to take away somebody's castle: but I am sure he has room enough in his own, without taking other people's; and I am sure I should like it a great deal better, if there were more people to fill it.”

“Ah! you will soon have your wish, I fear” replied Madame Montoni.

“No, madam, but such ill-looking fellows are not worth having. I mean such gallant, smart, merry fellows as Ludovico, who is always telling droll stories, to make one laugh. It was but yesterday, he told me such a *humoursome* tale! I can't help laughing at it now. — Says he —”

“Well, we can dispense with the story” said her lady.

“Ah!” continued Annette “He sees a great way further than other people! Now he sees into all the Signor’s meaning, without knowing a word about the matter!”

“How is that?” said Madame Montoni.

“Why he says — but he made me promise not to tell, and I would not disoblige him for the world.”

“What is it he made you promise not to tell?” said her lady, sternly. “I insist upon knowing immediately — what is it he made you promise?”

“O madam” cried Annette “I would not tell for the universe!”

“I insist upon your telling this instant” said Madame Montoni.

“O dear madam! I would not tell for a hundred sequins! You would not have me forswear myself madam!” exclaimed Annette.

“I will not wait another moment,” said Madame Montoni. Annette was silent.

“The Signor shall be informed of this directly” rejoined her mistress; “he will make you discover all.”

“It is Ludovico, who has discovered” said Annette: “but for mercy’s sake, madam, don’t tell the Signor, and you shall know all directly.” Madame Montoni said, that she would not.

“Well then, madam, Ludovico says, that the Signor, my master, is — is — that is, he only thinks so, and anybody, you know, madam, is free to think — that the Signor, my master, is — is —”

“Is what?” said her lady, impatiently.

“That the Signor, my master, is going to be — a great robber — that is — he is going to rob on his own account; — to be, (but I am sure I don’t understand what he means) to be a — captain of — robbers.”

“Art thou in thy senses, Annette?” said Madame Montoni; “or is this a trick to deceive me? Tell me, this instant, what Ludovico *did* say to thee; — no equivocation; — this instant.”

“Nay, madam,” cried Annette, “if this is all I am to get for having told the secret —” Her mistress thus continued to insist, and Annette to protest, till Montoni, himself, appeared, who bade the latter leave the room, and she withdrew, trembling for the fate of her story. Emily also was retiring, but her aunt desired she would stay; and Montoni had so often made her a witness of their contention, that he no longer had scruples on that account.

“I insist upon knowing this instant, Signor, what all this means:” said his wife — “what are all these armed men, whom they tell me of, gone out about?” Montoni answered her only with a look of scorn; and Emily whispered something to her. “It does not signify,” said her aunt: “I will know; and I will know, too, what the castle has been fortified for.”

“Come, come” said Montoni “other business brought me here. I must be trifled with no longer. I have immediate occasion for what I demand — those estates must be given up, without further contention; or I may find a way —”

“They never shall be given up,” interrupted Madame Montoni: “they never shall enable you to carry on your wild schemes; — but what are these? I will know. Do you expect the castle to be attacked? Do you expect enemies? Am I to be shut up here, to be killed in a siege?”

“Sign the writings” said Montoni “and you shall know more.”

“What enemy can be coming?” continued his wife. “Have you entered into the service of the state? Am I to be blocked up here to die?”

“That may possibly happen” said Montoni “unless you yield to my demand: for, come what may, you shall not quit the castle till then.” Madame Montoni burst into loud lamentation, which she as suddenly checked, considering, that her husband’s assertions might be only artifices, employed to extort her consent. She hinted this suspicion, and, in the next moment, told him also, that his designs were not so honourable as to serve the state, and that she believed he had only commenced a captain of banditti, to join the enemies of Venice, in plundering and laying waste the surrounding country.

Montoni looked at her for a moment with a steady and stern countenance; while Emily trembled, and his wife, for once, thought she had said too much. “You shall be removed, this night” said he “to the east turret: there, perhaps, you may understand the danger of offending a man, who has an unlimited power over you.”

Emily now fell at his feet, and, with tears of terror, supplicated for her aunt, who sat, trembling with fear, and indignation; now ready to pour forth execrations, and now to join the intercessions of Emily. Montoni, however, soon interrupted these entreaties with a horrible oath; and, as he burst from Emily, leaving his cloak, in her hand, she fell to the floor, with a force, that occasioned her a severe blow on the forehead. But he quitted the room, without attempting to raise her, whose attention was called from herself, by a deep groan from Madame Montoni, who continued otherwise unmoved in her chair, and had not fainted. Emily, hastening to her assistance, saw her eyes rolling, and her features convulsed.

Having spoken to her, without receiving an answer, she brought water, and supported her head, while she held it to her lips; but the increasing convulsions

soon compelled Emily to call for assistance. On her way through the hall, in search of Annette, she met Montoni, whom she told what had happened, and conjured to return and comfort her aunt; but he turned silently away, with a look of indifference, and went out upon the ramparts. At length she found old Carlo and Annette, and they hastened to the dressing-room, where Madame Montoni had fallen on the floor, and was lying in strong convulsions. Having lifted her into the adjoining room, and laid her on the bed, the force of her disorder still made all their strength necessary to hold her, while Annette trembled and sobbed, and old Carlo looked silently and piteously on, as his feeble hands grasped those of his mistress, till, turning his eyes upon Emily, he exclaimed, "Good God! Signora, what is the matter?"

Emily looked calmly at him, and saw his enquiring eyes fixed on her: and Annette, looking up, screamed loudly; for Emily's face was stained with blood, which continued to fall slowly from her forehead: but her attention had been so entirely occupied by the scene before her, that she had felt no pain from the wound. She now held a handkerchief to her face, and, notwithstanding her faintness, continued to watch Madame Montoni, the violence of whose convulsions was abating, till at length they ceased, and left her in a kind of stupor.

"My aunt must remain quiet" said Emily. "Go, good Carlo; if we should want your assistance, I will send for you. In the mean time, if you have an opportunity, speak kindly of your mistress to your master."

"Alas!" said Carlo "I have seen too much! I have little influence with the Signor. But do, dear young lady, take some care of yourself; that is an ugly wound, and you look sadly."

"Thank you, my friend, for your consideration" said Emily, smiling kindly: "the wound is trifling, it came by a fall."

Carlo shook his head, and left the room; and Emily, with Annette, continued to watch by her aunt. "Did my lady tell the Signor what Ludovico said, ma'amselle?" asked Annette in a whisper; but Emily quieted her fears on the subject.

"I thought what this quarrelling would come to," continued Annette: "I suppose the Signor has been beating my lady."

"No, no, Annette, you are totally mistaken, nothing extraordinary has happened."

"Why, extraordinary things happen here so often, ma'amselle, that there is nothing in them. Here is another legion of those ill looking fellows, come to the castle, this morning."

"Hush! Annette, you will disturb my aunt; we will talk of that by and bye."

They continued watching silently, till Madame Montoni uttered a low sigh, when Emily took her hand, and spoke soothingly to her; but the former gazed with unconscious eyes, and it was long before she knew her niece. Her first words then enquired for Montoni; to which Emily replied by an entreaty, that she would compose her spirits, and consent to be kept quiet, adding, that, if she wished any message to be conveyed to him, she would herself deliver it. "No" said her aunt faintly "no — I have nothing new to tell him. Does he persist in saying I shall be removed from my chamber?"

Emily replied that he had not spoken on the subject since Madame Montoni heard him; and then she tried to divert her attention to some other topic; but her aunt seemed to be inattentive to what she said, and lost in secret thoughts. Emily, having brought her some refreshment, now left her to the care of Annette, and went in search of Montoni, whom she found on a remote part of the rampart, conversing among a group of the men described by Annette. They stood round him with fierce, yet subjugated, looks, while he, speaking earnestly, and pointing to the walls, did not perceive Emily, who remained at some distance, waiting till he should be at leisure, and observing involuntarily the appearance of one man, more savage than his fellows, who stood resting on his pike, and looking, over the shoulders of a comrade, at Montoni, to whom he listened with uncommon earnestness. This man was apparently of low condition; yet his looks appeared not to acknowledge the superiority of Montoni, as did those of his companions; and sometimes they even assumed an air of authority, which the decisive manner of the Signor could not repress. Some few words of Montoni then passed in the wind; and, as the men were separating, she heard him say, "This evening, then, begin the watch at sunset."

"At sunset, Signor," replied one or two of them, and walked away; while Emily approached Montoni, who appeared desirous of avoiding her: but, though she observed this, she had courage to proceed. She endeavoured to intercede once more for her aunt, represented to him her sufferings, and urged the danger of exposing her to a cold apartment in her present state.

"She suffers by her own folly," said Montoni, "and is not to be pitied; — she knows how she may avoid these sufferings in future — if she is removed to the turret, it will be her own fault. Let her be obedient, and sign the writings you heard of, and I will think no more of it."

When Emily ventured still to plead, he sternly silenced and rebuked her for interfering in his domestic affairs, but, at length, dismissed her with this concession — That he would not remove Madame Montoni, on the ensuing night, but allow her till the next to consider, whether she would resign her settlements, or be imprisoned in the east turret of the castle, "where she shall find" he added, "a punishment she may not expect."

Emily then hastened to inform her aunt of this short respite and of the alternative, that awaited her, to which the latter made no reply, but appeared thoughtful, while Emily, in consideration of her extreme languor, wished to sooth her mind by leading it to less interesting topics: and, though these efforts

were unsuccessful, and Madame Montoni became peevish, her resolution, on the contended point, seemed somewhat to relax, and Emily recommended, as her only means of safety, that she should submit to Montoni's demand. "You know not what you advise" said her aunt. "Do you understand, that these estates will descend to you at my death, if I persist in a refusal?"

"I was ignorant of that circumstance, madam" replied Emily "but the knowledge of it cannot withhold me from advising you to adopt the conduct, which not only your peace, but, I fear, your safety requires, and I entreat, that you will not suffer a consideration comparatively so trifling, to make you hesitate a moment in resigning them."

"Are you sincere, niece?"

"Is it possible you can doubt it, madam?"

Her aunt appeared to be affected. "You are not unworthy of these estates, niece" said she: "I would wish to keep them for your sake — you show a virtue I did not expect."

"How have I deserved this reproof, madam?" said Emily sorrowfully.

"Reproof!" replied Madame Montoni: "I meant to praise your virtue."

"Alas! Here is no exertion of virtue," rejoined Emily, "for here is no temptation to be overcome."

"Yet Monsieur Valancourt —" said her aunt.

"O, madam!" interrupted Emily, anticipating what she would have said "Do not let me glance on that subject: do not let my mind be stained with a wish so shockingly self-interested." She immediately changed the topic, and continued with Madame Montoni, till she withdrew to her apartment for the night.

At that hour, the castle was perfectly still, and every inhabitant of it, except herself, seemed to have retired to rest. As she passed along the wide and lonely galleries, dusky and silent, she felt forlorn and apprehensive of — she scarcely knew what; but when, entering the corridor, she recollected the incident of the preceding night, a dread seized her, lest a subject of alarm, similar to that, which had befallen Annette, should occur to her, and which, whether real, or ideal, would, she felt, have an almost equal effect upon her weakened spirits. The chamber, to which Annette had alluded, she did not exactly know, but understood it to be one of those she must pass in the way to her own; and, sending a fearful look forward into the gloom, she stepped lightly and cautiously along, till, coming to a door, from whence issued a low sound, she hesitated and paused; and, during the delay of that moment, her fears so much increased, that she had no power to move from the spot. Believing, that she heard a human voice within, she was somewhat revived; but, in the next moment, the door was opened, and a person, whom she conceived to be Montoni, appeared, who

instantly started back, and closed it, though not before she had seen, by the light that burned in the chamber, another person, sitting in a melancholy attitude by the fire. Her terror vanished, but her astonishment only began, which was now roused by the mysterious secrecy of Montoni's manner, and by the discovery of a person, whom he thus visited at midnight, in an apartment, which had long been shut up, and of which such extraordinary reports were circulated.

While she thus continued hesitating, strongly prompted to watch Montoni's motions, yet fearing to irritate him by appearing to notice them, the door was again opened cautiously, and as instantly closed as before. She then stepped softly to her chamber, which was the next but one to this, but, having put down her lamp, returned to an obscure corner of the corridor, to observe the proceedings of this half-seen person, and to ascertain, whether it was indeed Montoni.

Having waited in silent expectation for a few minutes, with her eyes fixed on the door, it was again opened, and the same person appeared, whom she now knew to be Montoni. He looked cautiously round, without perceiving her, then, stepping forward, closed the door, and left the corridor. Soon after, Emily heard the door fastened on the inside, and she withdrew to her chamber, wondering at what she had witnessed.

It was now twelve o'clock. As she closed her casement, she heard footsteps on the terrace below, and saw imperfectly, through the gloom, several persons advancing, who passed under the casement. She then heard the clink of arms, and, in the next moment, the watchword; when, recollecting the command she had overheard from Montoni, and the hour of the night, she understood, that these men were, for the first time, relieving guard in the castle. Having listened till all was again still, she retired to sleep.

CHAPTER X

And shall no lay of death
With pleasing murmur sooth
Her parted soul?
Shall no tear wet her grave?

SAYERS

On the following morning, Emily went early to the apartment of Madame Montoni, who had slept well, and was much recovered. Her spirits had also returned with her health, and her resolution to oppose Montoni's demands revived, though it yet struggled with her fears, which Emily, who trembled for the consequence of further opposition, endeavoured to confirm.

Her aunt, as has been already shown, had a disposition, which delighted in contradiction, and which taught her, when unpleasant circumstances were offered to her understanding, not to enquire into their truth, but to seek for arguments, by which she might make them appear false. Long habit had so entirely confirmed this natural propensity, that she was not conscious of possessing it. Emily's remonstrances and representations, therefore, roused her pride, instead of alarming, or convincing her judgment, and she still relied upon the discovery of some means, by which she might yet avoid submitting to the demand of her husband. Considering, that, if she could once escape from his castle, she might defy his power, and, obtaining a decisive separation, live in comfort on the estates, that yet remained for her, she mentioned this to her niece, who accorded with her in the wish, but differed from her, as to the probability of its completion. She represented the impossibility of passing the gates, secured and guarded as they were, and the extreme danger of committing her design to the discretion of a servant, who might either purposely betray, or accidentally disclose it. — Montoni's vengeance would also disdain restraint, if her intention was detected: and, though Emily wished, as fervently as she could do, to regain her freedom, and return to France, she consulted only Madame Montoni's safety, and persevered in advising her to relinquish her settlement, without braving further outrage.

The struggle of contrary emotions, however, continued to rage in her aunt's bosom, and she still brooded over the chance of effecting an escape. While she thus sat, Montoni entered the room, and, without noticing his wife's indisposition, said, that he came to remind her of the impolicy of trifling with him, and that he gave her only till the evening to determine, whether she would consent to his demand, or compel him, by a refusal, to remove her to the east turret. He added, that a party of cavaliers would dine with him, that day, and that he expected that she would sit at the head of the table, where Emily, also, must be present. Madame Montoni was now on the point of uttering an absolute refusal, but, suddenly considering, that her liberty, during this entertainment, though circumscribed, might favour her further plans, she acquiesced, with seeming reluctance, and Montoni, soon after, left the apartment. His command struck Emily with surprise and apprehension, who shrank from the thought of

being exposed to the gaze of strangers, such as her fancy represented these to be, and the words of Count Morano, now again recollected, did not sooth her fears.

When she withdrew to prepare for dinner, she dressed herself with even more simplicity than usual, that she might escape observation — a policy, which did not avail her, for, as she repassed to her aunt's apartment, she was met by Montoni, who censured what he called her prudish appearance, and insisted, that she should wear the most splendid dress she had, even that, which had been prepared for her intended nuptials with Count Morano, and which, it now appeared, her aunt had carefully brought with her from Venice. This was made, not in the Venetian, but, in the Neapolitan fashion, so as to set off the shape and figure, to the utmost advantage. In it, her beautiful chestnut tresses were negligently bound up in pearls, and suffered to fall back again on her neck. The simplicity of a better taste, than Madame Montoni's, was conspicuous in this dress, splendid as it was, and Emily's unaffected beauty never had appeared more captivantly. She had now only to hope, that Montoni's order was prompted, not by any extraordinary design, but by an ostentation of displaying his family, richly attired, to the eyes of strangers; yet nothing less than his absolute command could have prevailed with her to wear a dress, that had been designed for such an offensive purpose, much less to have worn it on this occasion. As she descended to dinner, the emotion of her mind threw a faint blush over her countenance, and heightened its interesting expression; for timidity had made her linger in her apartment, till the utmost moment, and, when she entered the hall, in which a kind of state dinner was spread, Montoni and his guests were already seated at the table. She was then going to place herself by her aunt; but Montoni waved his hand, and two of the cavaliers rose, and seated her between them.

The eldest of these was a tall man, with strong Italian features, an aquiline nose, and dark penetrating eyes, that flashed with fire, when his mind was agitated, and, even in its state of rest, retained somewhat of the wildness of the passions. His visage was long and narrow, and his complexion of a sickly yellow.

The other, who appeared to be about forty, had features of a different cast, yet Italian, and his look was slow, subtle and penetrating; his eyes, of a dark grey, were small, and hollow; his complexion was a sunburnt brown, and the contour of his face, though inclined to oval, was irregular and ill-formed.

Eight other guests sat round the table, who were all dressed in a uniform, and had all an expression, more or less, of wild fierceness, of subtle design, or of licentious passions. As Emily timidly surveyed them, she remembered the scene of the preceding morning, and again almost fancied herself surrounded by banditti; then, looking back to the tranquillity of her early life, she felt scarcely less astonishment, than grief, at her present situation. The scene, in which they sat, assisted the illusion; it was an ancient hall, gloomy from the style of its architecture, from its great extent, and because almost the only light it received was from one large gothic window, and from a pair of folding doors,

which, being open, admitted likewise a view of the west rampart, with the wild mountains of the Apennine beyond.

The middle compartment of this hall rose into a vaulted roof, enriched with fretwork, and supported, on three sides, by pillars of marble; beyond these, long colonnades retired in gloomy grandeur, till their extent was lost in twilight. The lightest footsteps of the servants, as they advanced through these, were returned in whispering echoes, and their figures, seen at a distance imperfectly through the dusk, frequently awakened Emily's imagination. She looked alternately at Montoni, at his guests and on the surrounding scene; and then, remembering her dear native province, her pleasant home and the simplicity and goodness of the friends, whom she had lost, grief and surprise again occupied her mind.

When her thoughts could return from these considerations, she fancied she observed an air of authority towards his guests, such as she had never before seen him assume, though he had always been distinguished by a haughty carriage; there was something also in the manners of the strangers, that seemed perfectly, though not servilely, to acknowledge his superiority.

During dinner, the conversation was chiefly on war and politics. They talked with energy of the state of Venice, its dangers, the character of the reigning Doge and of the chief senators; and then spoke of the state of Rome. When the repast was over, they rose, and, each filling his goblet with wine from the gilded ewer, that stood beside him, drank "Success to our exploits!" Montoni was lifting his goblet to his lips to drink this toast, when suddenly the wine hissed, rose to the brim, and, as he held the glass from him, it burst into a thousand pieces.

To him, who constantly used that sort of Venice glass, which had the quality of breaking, upon receiving poisoned liquor, a suspicion, that some of his guests had endeavoured to betray him, instantly occurred, and he ordered all the gates to be closed, drew his sword, and, looking round on them, who stood in silent amazement, exclaimed, "Here is a traitor among us; let those, that are innocent, assist in discovering the guilty."

Indignation flashed from the eyes of the cavaliers, who all drew their swords; and Madame Montoni, terrified at what might ensue, was hastening from the hall, when her husband commanded her to stay; but his further words could not now be distinguished, for the voice of every person rose together. His order, that all the servants should appear, was at length obeyed, and they declared their ignorance of any deceit — a protestation which could not be believed; for it was evident, that, as Montoni's liquor, and his only, had been poisoned, a deliberate design had been formed against his life, which could not have been carried so far towards its accomplishment, without the connivance of the servant, who had the care of the wine ewers.

This man, with another, whose face betrayed either the consciousness of guilt, or the fear of punishment, Montoni ordered to be chained instantly, and confined in a strong room, which had formerly been used as a prison. Thither,

likewise, he would have sent all his guests, had he not foreseen the consequence of so bold and unjustifiable a proceeding. As to those, therefore, he contented himself with swearing, that no man should pass the gates, till this extraordinary affair had been investigated, and then sternly bade his wife retire to her apartment, whither he suffered Emily to attend her.

In about half an hour, he followed to the dressing-room; and Emily observed, with horror, his dark countenance and quivering lip, and heard him denounce vengeance on her aunt.

“It will avail you nothing” said he to his wife “to deny the fact; I have proof of your guilt. Your only chance of mercy rests on a full confession; — there is nothing to hope from sullenness, or falsehood; your accomplice has confessed all.”

Emily’s fainting spirits were roused by astonishment, as she heard her aunt accused of a crime so atrocious, and she could not, for a moment, admit the possibility of her guilt. Meanwhile Madame Montoni’s agitation did not permit her to reply; alternately her complexion varied from livid paleness to a crimson flush; and she trembled — but, whether with fear, or with indignation, it were difficult to decide.

“Spare your words” said Montoni, seeing her about to speak “your countenance makes full confession of your crime. — You shall be instantly removed to the east turret.”

“This accusation,” said Madame Montoni, speaking with difficulty, “is used only as an excuse for your cruelty; I disdain to reply to it. You do not believe me guilty.”

“Signor!” said Emily solemnly “This dreadful charge, I would answer with my life, is false. Nay, Signor” she added, observing the severity of his countenance, “this is no moment for restraint, on my part; I do not scruple to tell you, that you are deceived — most wickedly deceived, by the suggestion of some person, who aims at the ruin of my aunt:— it is impossible, that you could yourself have imagined a crime so hideous.”

Montoni, his lips trembling more than before, replied only “If you value your own safety” addressing Emily, “you will be silent. I shall know how to interpret your remonstrances, should you persevere in them.”

Emily raised her eyes calmly to heaven. “Here is, indeed, then, nothing to hope!” said she.

“Peace!” cried Montoni “Or you shall find there is something to fear.”

He turned to his wife, who had now recovered her spirits, and who vehemently and wildly remonstrated upon this mysterious suspicion: but Montoni’s rage heightened with her indignation, and Emily, dreading the event

of it, threw herself between them, and clasped his knees in silence, looking up in his face with an expression, that might have softened the heart of a fiend. Whether his was hardened by a conviction of Madame Montoni's guilt, or that a bare suspicion of it made him eager to exercise vengeance, he was totally and alike insensible to the distress of his wife, and to the pleading looks of Emily, whom he made no attempt to raise, but was vehemently menacing both, when he was called out of the room by some person at the door. As he shut the door, Emily heard him turn the lock and take out the key; so that Madame Montoni and herself were now prisoners; and she saw that his designs became more and more terrible. Her endeavours to explain his motives for this circumstance were almost as ineffectual as those to sooth the distress of her aunt, whose innocence she could not doubt; but she, at length, accounted for Montoni's readiness to suspect his wife by his own consciousness of cruelty towards her, and for the sudden violence of his present conduct against both, before even his suspicions could be completely formed, by his general eagerness to effect suddenly whatever he was led to desire and his carelessness of justice, or humanity, in accomplishing it.

Madame Montoni, after some time, again looked round, in search of a possibility of escape from the castle, and conversed with Emily on the subject, who was now willing to encounter any hazard, though she forbore to encourage a hope in her aunt, which she herself did not admit. How strongly the edifice was secured, and how vigilantly guarded, she knew too well; and trembled to commit their safety to the caprice of the servant, whose assistance they must solicit. Old Carlo was compassionate, but he seemed to be too much in his master's interest to be trusted by them; Annette could of herself do little, and Emily knew Ludovico only from her report. At present, however, these considerations were useless, Madame Montoni and her niece being shut up from all intercourse, even with the persons, whom there might be these reasons to reject.

In the hall, confusion and tumult still reigned. Emily, as she listened anxiously to the murmur, that sounded along the gallery, sometimes fancied she heard the clashing of swords, and, when she considered the nature of the provocation, given by Montoni, and his impetuosity, it appeared probable, that nothing less than arms would terminate the contention. Madame Montoni, having exhausted all her expressions of indignation, and Emily, hers of comfort, they remained silent, in that kind of breathless stillness, which, in nature, often succeeds to the uproar of conflicting elements; a stillness, like the morning, that dawns upon the ruins of an earthquake.

An uncertain kind of terror pervaded Emily's mind; the circumstances of the past hour still came dimly and confusedly to her memory; and her thoughts were various and rapid, though without tumult.

From this state of waking visions she was recalled by a knocking at the chamber-door, and, enquiring who was there, heard the whispering voice of Annette.

“Dear madam, let me come in, I have a great deal to say” said the poor girl.

“The door is locked” answered the lady.

“Yes, ma’am, but do pray open it.”

“The Signor has the key” said Madame Montoni.

“O blessed Virgin! what will become of us?” exclaimed Annette.

“Assist us to escape” said her mistress. “Where is Ludovico?”

“Below in the hall, ma’am, amongst them all, fighting with the best of them!”

“Fighting! Who are fighting?” cried Madame Montoni.

“Why the Signor, ma’am, and all the Signors, and a great many more.”

“Is any person much hurt?” said Emily, in a tremulous voice.

“Hurt! Yes, ma’amselle — there they lie bleeding, and the swords are clashing, and — O holy saints! Do let me in, ma’am, they are coming this way — I shall be murdered!”

“Fly!” cried Emily “Fly! we cannot open the door.”

Annette repeated, that they were coming, and in the same moment fled.

“Be calm, madam,” said Emily, turning to her aunt, “I entreat you to be calm, I am not frightened — not frightened in the least, do not you be alarmed.”

“You can scarcely support yourself” replied her aunt; “Merciful God! What is it they mean to do with us?”

“They come, perhaps, to liberate us” said Emily “Signor Montoni perhaps is — is conquered.”

The belief of his death gave her spirits a sudden shock, and she grew faint as she saw him in imagination, expiring at her feet.

“They are coming!” cried Madame Montoni — “I hear their steps — they are at the door!”

Emily turned her languid eyes to the door, but terror deprived her of utterance. The key sounded in the lock; the door opened, and Montoni appeared, followed by three ruffian-like men. “Execute your orders” said he, turning to them, and pointing to his wife, who shrieked, but was immediately carried from the room; while Emily sunk, senseless, on a couch, by which she had endeavoured to support herself. When she recovered, she was alone, and

recollected only, that Madame Montoni had been there, together with some unconnected particulars of the preceding transaction, which were, however, sufficient to renew all her terror. She looked wildly round the apartment, as if in search of some means of intelligence, concerning her aunt, while neither her own danger, nor an idea of escaping from the room, immediately occurred.

When her recollection was more complete, she raised herself and went, but with only a faint hope, to examine whether the door was unfastened. It was so, and she then stepped timidly out into the gallery, but paused there, uncertain which way she should proceed. Her first wish was to gather some information, as to her aunt, and she, at length, turned her steps to go to the lesser hall, where Annette and the other servants usually waited.

Everywhere, as she passed, she heard, from a distance, the uproar of contention, and the figures and faces, which she met, hurrying along the passages, struck her mind with dismay. Emily might now have appeared, like an angel of light, encompassed by fiends. At length, she reached the lesser hall, which was silent and deserted, but, panting for breath, she sat down to recover herself. The total stillness of this place was as awful as the tumult, from which she had escaped: but she had now time to recall her scattered thoughts, to remember her personal danger, and to consider of some means of safety. She perceived, that it was useless to seek Madame Montoni, through the wide extent and intricacies of the castle, now, too, when every avenue seemed to be beset by ruffians; in this hall she could not resolve to stay, for she knew not how soon it might become their place of rendezvous; and, though she wished to go to her chamber, she dreaded again to encounter them on the way.

Thus she sat, trembling and hesitating, when a distant murmur broke on the silence, and grew louder and louder, till she distinguished voices and steps approaching. She then rose to go, but the sounds came along the only passage, by which she could depart, and she was compelled to await in the hall, the arrival of the persons, whose steps she heard. As these advanced, she distinguished groans, and then saw a man borne slowly along by four others. Her spirits faltered at the sight, and she leaned against the wall for support. The bearers, meanwhile, entered the hall, and, being too busily occupied to detain, or even notice Emily, she attempted to leave it, but her strength failed, and she again sat down on the bench. A damp chillness came over her; her sight became confused; she knew not what had passed, or where she was, yet the groans of the wounded person still vibrated on her heart. In a few moments, the tide of life seemed again to flow; she began to breathe more freely, and her senses revived. She had not fainted, nor had ever totally lost her consciousness, but had contrived to support herself on the bench; still without courage to turn her eyes upon the unfortunate object, which remained near her, and about whom the men were yet too much engaged to attend to her.

When her strength returned, she rose, and was suffered to leave the hall, though her anxiety, having produced some vain enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, had thus made a discovery of herself. Towards her chamber she now hastened, as fast as her steps would bear her, for she still perceived, upon her

passage, the sounds of confusion at a distance, and she endeavoured, by taking her way through some obscure rooms, to avoid encountering the persons, whose looks had terrified her before, as well as those parts of the castle, where the tumult might still rage.

At length, she reached her chamber, and, having secured the door of the corridor, felt herself, for a moment, in safety. A profound stillness reigned in this remote apartment, which not even the faint murmur of the most distant sounds now reached. She sat down, near one of the casements, and, as she gazed on the mountain view beyond, the deep repose of its beauty struck her with all the force of contrast, and she could scarcely believe herself so near a scene of savage discord. The contending elements seemed to have retired from their natural spheres, and to have collected themselves into the minds of men, for there alone the tempest now reigned.

Emily tried to tranquillize her spirits, but anxiety made her constantly listen for some sound, and often look out upon the ramparts, where all, however, was lonely and still. As a sense of her own immediate danger had decreased, her apprehension concerning Madame Montoni heightened, who, she remembered, had been fiercely threatened with confinement in the east turret, and it was possible, that her husband had satisfied his present vengeance with this punishment. She, therefore, determined, when night should return, and the inhabitants of the castle should be asleep, to explore the way to the turret, which, as the direction it stood in was mentioned, appeared not very difficult to be done. She knew, indeed, that although her aunt might be there, she could afford her no effectual assistance, but it might give her some comfort even to know, that she was discovered, and to hear the sound of her niece's voice; for herself, any certainty, concerning Madame Montoni's fate, appeared more tolerable, than this exhausting suspense.

Meanwhile, Annette did not appear, and Emily was surprised, and somewhat alarmed for her, whom, in the confusion of the late scene, various accidents might have befallen, and it was improbable, that she would have failed to come to her apartment, unless something unfortunate had happened.

Thus the hours passed in solitude, in silence, and in anxious conjecturing. Being not once disturbed by a message, or a sound, it appeared, that Montoni had wholly forgotten her, and it gave her some comfort to find, that she could be so unnoticed. She endeavoured to withdraw her thoughts from the anxiety, that preyed upon them, but they refused control; she could neither read, nor draw, and the tones of her lute were so utterly discordant with the present state of her feelings, that she could not endure them for a moment.

The sun, at length, set behind the western mountains; his fiery beams faded from the clouds, and then a dun melancholy purple drew over them, and gradually involved the features of the country below. Soon after, the sentinels passed on the rampart to commence the watch.

Twilight had now spread its gloom over every object; the dismal obscurity of her chamber recalled fearful thoughts, but she remembered, that to procure a light she must pass through a great extent of the castle, and, above all, through the halls, where she had already experienced so much horror. Darkness, indeed, in the present state of her spirits, made silence and solitude terrible to her; it would also prevent the possibility of her finding her way to the turret, and condemn her to remain in suspense, concerning the fate of her aunt; yet she dared not to venture forth for a lamp.

Continuing at the casement, that she might catch the last lingering gleam of evening, a thousand vague images of fear floated on her fancy. "What if some of these ruffians" said she "should find out the private staircase, and in the darkness of night steal into my chamber!" Then, recollecting the mysterious inhabitant of the neighbouring apartment, her terror changed its object. "He is not a prisoner," said she, "though he remains in one chamber, for Montoni did not fasten the door, when he left it; the unknown person himself did this; it is certain, therefore, he can come out when he pleases."

She paused, for, notwithstanding the terrors of darkness, she considered it to be very improbable, whoever he was, that he could have any interest in intruding upon her retirement; and again the subject of her emotion changed, when, remembering her nearness to the chamber, where the veil had formerly disclosed a dreadful spectacle, she doubted whether some passage might not communicate between it and the insecure door of the staircase.

It was now entirely dark, and she left the casement. As she sat with her eyes fixed on the hearth, she thought she perceived there a spark of light; it twinkled and disappeared, and then again was visible. At length, with much care, she fanned the embers of a wood fire, that had been lighted in the morning, into flame, and, having communicated it to a lamp, which always stood in her room, felt a satisfaction not to be conceived, without a review of her situation. Her first care was to guard the door of the staircase, for which purpose she placed against it all the furniture she could move, and she was thus employed, for some time, at the end of which she had another instance how much more oppressive misfortune is to the idle, than to the busy; for, having then leisure to think over all the circumstances of her present afflictions, she imagined a thousand evils for futurity, and these real and ideal subjects of distress alike wounded her mind.

Thus heavily moved the hours till midnight, when she counted the sullen notes of the great clock, as they rolled along the rampart, unmingled with any sound, except the distant foot-fall of a sentinel, who came to relieve guard. She now thought she might venture towards the turret, and, having gently opened the chamber door to examine the corridor, and to listen if any person was stirring in the castle, found all around in perfect stillness. Yet no sooner had she left the room, than she perceived a light flash on the walls of the corridor, and, without waiting to see by whom it was carried, she shrunk back, and closed her door. No one approaching, she conjectured, that it was Montoni going

to pay his midnight visit to her unknown neighbour, and she determined to wait, till he should have retired to his own apartment.

When the chimes had tolled another half hour, she once more opened the door, and, perceiving that no person was in the corridor, hastily crossed into a passage, that led along the south side of the castle towards the staircase, whence she believed she could easily find her way to the turret. Often pausing on her way, listening apprehensively to the murmurs of the wind, and looking fearfully onward into the gloom of the long passages, she, at length, reached the staircase; but there her perplexity began. Two passages appeared, of which she knew not how to prefer one, and was compelled, at last, to decide by chance, rather than by circumstances. That she entered, opened first into a wide gallery, along which she passed lightly and swiftly; for the lonely aspect of the place awed her, and she started at the echo of her own steps.

On a sudden, she thought she heard a voice, and, not distinguishing from whence it came, feared equally to proceed, or to return. For some moments, she stood in an attitude of listening expectation, shrinking almost from herself and scarcely daring to look round her. The voice came again, but, though it was now near her, terror did not allow her to judge exactly whence it proceeded. She thought, however, that it was the voice of complaint, and her belief was soon confirmed by a low moaning sound, that seemed to proceed from one of the chambers, opening into the gallery. It instantly occurred to her, that Madame Montoni might be there confined, and she advanced to the door to speak, but was checked by considering, that she was, perhaps, going to commit herself to a stranger, who might discover her to Montoni; for, though this person, whoever it was, seemed to be in affliction, it did not follow, that he was a prisoner.

While these thoughts passed over her mind, and left her still in hesitation, the voice spoke again, and, calling "Ludovico" she then perceived it to be that of Annette; on which, no longer hesitating, she went in joy to answer her.

"Ludovico!" cried Annette sobbing — "Ludovico!"

"It is not Ludovico, it is I — Mademoiselle Emily."

Annette ceased sobbing, and was silent.

"If you can open the door, let me in" said Emily "here is no person to hurt you."

"Ludovico! — O, Ludovico!" cried Annette.

Emily now lost her patience, and her fear of being overheard increasing, she was even nearly about to leave the door, when she considered, that Annette might, possibly, know something of the situation of Madame Montoni, or direct her to the turret. At length, she obtained a reply, though little satisfactory, to her questions, for Annette knew nothing of Madame Montoni, and only conjured

Emily to tell her what was become of Ludovico. Of him she had no information to give, and she again asked who had shut Annette up.

“Ludovico” said the poor girl “Ludovico shut me up. When I ran away from the dressing-room door today, I went I scarcely knew where, for safety; and, in this gallery, here, I met Ludovico, who hurried me into this chamber, and locked me up to keep me out of harm, as he said. But he was in such a hurry himself, he hardly spoke ten words, but he told me he would come, and let me out, when all was quiet, and he took away the key with him. Now all these hours are passed, and I have neither seen, nor heard a word of him; they have murdered him — I know they have!”

Emily suddenly remembered the wounded person, whom she had seen borne into the servants’ hall, and she scarcely doubted, that he was Ludovico, but she concealed the circumstance from Annette, and endeavoured to comfort her. Then, impatient to learn something of her aunt, she again enquired the way to the turret.

“O! You are not going, ma’amselle” said Annette “for Heaven’s sake, do not go, and leave me here by myself.”

“Nay, Annette, you do not think I can wait in the gallery all night,” replied Emily. “Direct me to the turret; in the morning I will endeavour to release you.”

“O holy Mary!” exclaimed Annette, “Am I to stay here by myself all night! I shall be frightened out of my senses, and I shall die of hunger; I have had nothing to eat since dinner!”

Emily could scarcely forbear smiling at the heterogeneous distresses of Annette, though she sincerely pitied them, and said what she could to sooth her. At length, she obtained something like a direction to the east turret, and quitted the door, from whence, after many intricacies and perplexities, she reached the steep and winding stairs of the turret, at the foot of which she stopped to rest, and to reanimate her courage with a sense of her duty. As she surveyed this dismal place, she perceived a door on the opposite side of the staircase, and, anxious to know whether it would lead her to Madame Montoni, she tried to undraw the bolts, which fastened it. A fresher air came to her face, as she unclosed the door, which opened upon the east rampart, and the sudden current had nearly extinguished her light, which she now removed to a distance; and again, looking out upon the obscure terrace, she perceived only the faint outline of the walls and of some towers, while, above, heavy clouds, borne along the wind, seemed to mingle with the stars, and wrap the night in thicker darkness. As she gazed, now willing to defer the moment of certainty, from which she expected only confirmation of evil, a distant footstep reminded her, that she might be observed by the men on watch, and, hastily closing the door, she took her lamp, and passed up the staircase. Trembling came upon her, as she ascended through the gloom. To her melancholy fancy this seemed to be a place of death, and the chilling silence, that reigned, confirmed its character. Her spirits faltered. “Perhaps,” said she, “I am come hither only to learn a

dreadful truth, or to witness some horrible spectacle; I feel that my senses would not survive such an addition of horror.”

The image of her aunt murdered — murdered, perhaps, by the hand of Montoni, rose to her mind; she trembled, gasped for breath — repented that she had dared to venture hither, and checked her steps. But, after she had paused a few minutes, the consciousness of her duty returned, and she went on. Still all was silent. At length a track of blood, upon a stair, caught her eye; and instantly she perceived, that the wall and several other steps were stained. She paused, again struggled to support herself, and the lamp almost fell from her trembling hand. Still no sound was heard, no living being seemed to inhabit the turret; a thousand times she wished herself again in her chamber; dreaded to enquire farther — dreaded to encounter some horrible spectacle, and yet could not resolve, now that she was so near the termination of her efforts, to desist from them. Having again collected courage to proceed, after ascending about half way up the turret, she came to another door, but here again she stopped in hesitation; listened for sounds within, and then, summoning all her resolution, unclosed it, and entered a chamber, which, as her lamp shot its feeble rays through the darkness, seemed to exhibit only dew-stained and deserted walls. As she stood examining it, in fearful expectation of discovering the remains of her unfortunate aunt, she perceived something lying in an obscure corner of the room, and, struck with a horrible conviction, she became, for an instant, motionless and nearly insensible. Then, with a kind of desperate resolution, she hurried towards the object that excited her terror, when, perceiving the clothes of some person, on the floor, she caught hold of them, and found in her grasp the old uniform of a soldier, beneath which appeared a heap of pikes and other arms. Scarcely daring to trust her sight, she continued, for some moments, to gaze on the object of her late alarm, and then left the chamber, so much comforted and occupied by the conviction, that her aunt was not there, that she was going to descend the turret, without enquiring farther; when, on turning to do so, she observed upon some steps on the second flight an appearance of blood, and remembering, that there was yet another chamber to be explored, she again followed the windings of the ascent. Still, as she ascended, the track of blood glared upon the stairs.

It led her to the door of a landing place, that terminated them, but she was unable to follow it farther. Now that she was so near the sought for certainty, she dreaded to know it, even more than before, and had not fortitude sufficient to speak, or to attempt opening the door.

Having listened, in vain, for some sound, that might confirm, or destroy her fears, she, at length, laid her hand on the lock, and, finding it fastened, called on Madame Montoni; but only a chilling silence ensued.

“She is dead!” she cried — “Murdered! — Her blood is on the stairs!”

Emily grew very faint; could support herself no longer, and had scarcely presence of mind to set down the lamp, and place herself on a step.

When her recollection returned, she spoke again at the door, and again attempted to open it, and, having lingered for some time, without receiving any answer, or hearing a sound, she descended the turret, and, with all the swiftness her feebleness would permit, sought her own apartment.

As she turned into the corridor, the door of a chamber opened, from whence Montoni came forth; but Emily, more terrified than ever to behold him, shrunk back into the passage soon enough to escape being noticed, and heard him close the door, which she had perceived was the same she formerly observed. Having here listened to his departing steps, till their faint sound was lost in distance, she ventured to her apartment, and, securing it once again, retired to her bed, leaving the lamp burning on the hearth. But sleep was fled from her harassed mind, to which images of horror alone occurred. She endeavoured to think it possible, that Madame Montoni had not been taken to the turret; but, when she recollected the former menaces of her husband and the terrible spirit of vengeance, which he had displayed on a late occasion; when she remembered his general character, the looks of the men, who had forced Madame Montoni from her apartment, and the written traces on the stairs of the turret — she could not doubt, that her aunt had been carried thither, and could scarcely hope, that she had not been carried to be murdered.

The grey of morning had long dawned through her casements, before Emily closed her eyes in sleep; when wearied nature, at length, yielded her a respite from suffering.