CHAPTER VI

Ye gods of quiet, and of sleep profound!
Whose soft dominion o'er this castle sways,
And all the widely-silent places round,
Forgive me, if my trembling pen displays
What never yet was sung in mortal lays.
THOMSON

The Count gave orders for the north apartments to be opened and prepared for the reception of Ludovico; but Dorothée, remembering what she had lately witnessed there, feared to obey, and, not one of the other servants daring to venture thither, the rooms remained shut up till the time when Ludovico was to retire thither for the night, an hour, for which the whole household waited with impatience.

After supper, Ludovico, by the order of the Count, attended him in his closet, where they remained alone for near half an hour, and, on leaving which, his Lord delivered to him a sword.

"It has seen service in mortal quarrels" said the Count, jocosely, "you will use it honourably, no doubt, in a spiritual one. Tomorrow, let me hear that there is not one ghost remaining in the château."

Ludovico received it with a respectful bow. "You shall be obeyed, my Lord," said he; "I will engage, that no spectre shall disturb the peace of the château after this night."

They now returned to the supper room, where the Count's guests awaited to accompany him and Ludovico to the door of the north apartments, and Dorothée, being summoned for the keys, delivered them to Ludovico, who then led the way, followed by most of the inhabitants of the château. Having reached the back staircase, several of the servants shrunk back, and refused to go further, but the rest followed him to the top of the staircase, where a broad landing place allowed them to flock round him, while he applied the key to the door, during which they watched him with as much eager curiosity as if he had been performing some magical rite.

Ludovico, unaccustomed to the lock, could not turn it, and Dorothée, who had lingered far behind, was called forward, under whose hand the door opened slowly, and, her eye glancing within the dusky chamber, she uttered a sudden shriek, and retreated. At this signal of alarm, the greater part of the crowd hurried down the stairs, and the Count, Henri and Ludovico were left alone to pursue the enquiry, who instantly rushed into the apartment, Ludovico with a drawn sword, which he had just time to draw from the scabbard, the Count with the lamp in his hand, and Henri carrying a basket, containing provisions for the courageous adventurer.

Having looked hastily round the first room, where nothing appeared to justify alarm, they passed on to the second; and, here too all being quiet, they proceeded to a third with a more tempered step. The Count had now leisure to smile at the discomposure, into which he had been surprised, and to ask Ludovico in which room he designed to pass the night.

"There are several chambers beyond these, your *Excellenza*" said Ludovico, pointing to a door, "and in one of them is a bed, they say. I will pass the night there, and when I am weary of watching, I can lie down."

"Good;" said the Count; "let us go on. You see these rooms show nothing, but damp walls and decaying furniture. I have been so much engaged since I came to the château, that I have not looked into them till now. Remember, Ludovico, to tell the housekeeper, tomorrow, to throw open these windows. The damask hangings are dropping to pieces, I will have them taken down, and this antique furniture removed."

"Dear sir!" said Henri, "here is an armchair so massy with gilding, that it resembles one of the state chairs at the Louvre, more than anything else."

"Yes" said the Count, stopping a moment to survey it "there is a history belonging to that chair, but I have not time to tell it. — Let us pass on. This suite runs to a greater extent than I had imagined; it is many years since I was in them. But where is the bedroom you speak of, Ludovico? — These are only antechambers to the great drawing-room. I remember them in their splendour!"

"The bed, my Lord" replied Ludovico "they told me, was in a room that opens beyond the saloon, and terminates the suite."

"O, here is the saloon" said the Count, as they entered the spacious apartment, in which Emily and Dorothée had rested. He here stood for a moment, surveying the reliques of faded grandeur, which it exhibited — the sumptuous tapestry — the long and low sofas of velvet, with frames heavily carved and gilded — the floor inlaid with small squares of fine marble, and covered in the centre with a piece of very rich tapestry work — the casements of painted glass, and the large Venetian mirrors, of a size and quality, such as at that period France could not make, which reflected, on every side, the spacious apartment. These had formerly also reflected a gay and brilliant scene, for this had been the stateroom of the château, and here the Marchioness had held the assemblies, that made part of the festivities of her nuptials. If the wand of a magician could have recalled the vanished groups, many of them vanished even from the earth, that once had passed over these polished mirrors, what a varied and contrasted picture would they have exhibited with the present! Now, instead of a blaze of lights, and a splendid and busy crowd, they reflected only the rays of the one glimmering lamp, which the Count held up, and which scarcely served to show the three forlorn figures, that stood surveying the room, and the spacious and dusky walls around them.

“Ah!” said the Count to Henri, awaking from his deep reverie, “How the scene is changed since last I saw it! I was a young man, then, and the Marchioness was alive and in her bloom; many other persons were here, too, who are now no more! There stood the orchestra; here we tripped in many a sprightly maze — the walls echoing to the dance! Now, they resound only one feeble voice — and even that will, ere long, be heard no more! My son, remember, that I was once as young as yourself, and that you must pass away like those, who have preceded you — like those, who, as they sung and danced in this once gay apartment, forgot, that years are made up of moments, and that every step they took carried them nearer to their graves. But such reflections are useless, I had almost said criminal, unless they teach us to prepare for eternity, since, otherwise, they cloud our present happiness, without guiding us to a future one. But enough of this; let us go on.”

Ludovico now opened the door of the bedroom, and the Count, as he entered, was struck with the funereal appearance which the dark arras gave to it. He approached the bed with an emotion of solemnity, and, perceiving it to be covered with the pall of black velvet, paused; “What can this mean?” said he, as he gazed upon it.

“I have heard, my Lord” said Ludovico, as he stood at the feet looking within the canopied curtains, “that the Lady Marchioness de Villeroi died in this chamber, and remained here till she was removed to be buried; and this, perhaps, Signor, may account for the pall.”

The Count made no reply, but stood for a few moments engaged in thought, and evidently much affected. Then, turning to Ludovico, he asked him with a serious air whether he thought his courage would support him through the night? “If you doubt this” added the Count “do not be ashamed to own it; I will release you from your engagement, without exposing you to the triumphs of your fellow servants.”

Ludovico paused; pride, and something very like fear, seemed struggling in his breast; pride, however, was victorious; — he blushed, and his hesitation ceased.

“No, my Lord” said he “I will go through with what I have begun; and I am grateful for your consideration. On that hearth I will make a fire, and, with the good cheer in this basket, I doubt not I shall do well.”

“Be it so” said the Count; “but how will you beguile the tediousness of the night, if you do not sleep?”

“When I am weary, my Lord” replied Ludovico “I shall not fear to sleep; in the meanwhile, I have a book that will entertain me.”

“Well” said the Count “I hope nothing will disturb you; but if you should be seriously alarmed in the night, come to my apartment. I have too much confidence in your good sense and courage to believe you will be alarmed on

slight grounds; or suffer the gloom of this chamber, or its remote situation, to overcome you with ideal terrors. Tomorrow, I shall have to thank you for an important service; these rooms shall then be thrown open, and my people will be convinced of their error. Good night, Ludovico; let me see you early in the morning, and remember what I lately said to you."

"I will, my Lord; good night to your *Excellenza*; let me attend you with the light."

He lighted the Count and Henri through the chambers to the outer door. On the landing place stood a lamp, which one of the affrighted servants had left, and Henri, as he took it up, again bade Ludovico good night, who, having respectfully returned the wish, closed the door upon them, and fastened it. Then, as he retired to the bedchamber, he examined the rooms through which he passed, with more minuteness than he had done before, for he apprehended that some person might have concealed himself in them, for the purpose of frightening him. No one, however, but himself, was in these chambers, and leaving open the doors through which he passed, he came again to the great drawing room, whose spaciousness and silent gloom somewhat awed him. For a moment he stood, looking back through the long suite of rooms he had quitted, and as he turned, perceiving a light and his own figure reflected in one of the large mirrors, he started. Other objects too were seen obscurely on its dark surface, but he paused not to examine them, and returned hastily into the bedroom, as he surveyed which, he observed the door of the oriel, and opened it. All within was still. On looking round, his eye was arrested by the portrait of the deceased Marchioness, upon which he gazed for a considerable time with great attention and some surprise; and then, having examined the closet, he returned into the bedroom, where he kindled a wood fire, the bright blaze of which revived his spirits, which had begun to yield to the gloom and silence of the place, for gusts of wind alone broke at intervals this silence. He now drew a small table and a chair near the fire, took a bottle of wine and some cold provision out of his basket, and regaled himself. When he had finished his repast, he laid his sword upon the table, and, not feeling disposed to sleep, drew from his pocket the book he had spoken of. — It was a volume of old Provençal tales. Having stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, he began to read, and his attention was soon wholly occupied by the scenes which the page disclosed.

The Count, meanwhile, had returned to the supper room, whither those of the party who had attended him to the north apartment had retreated, upon hearing Dorothée's scream, and who were now earnest in their enquiries concerning those chambers. The Count rallied his guests on their precipitate retreat, and on the superstitious inclination which had occasioned it, and this led to the question, whether the spirit, after it has quitted the body, is ever permitted to revisit the earth; and if it is, whether it was possible for spirits to become visible to the sense. The Baron was of opinion, that the first was probable, and the last was possible, and he endeavoured to justify this opinion by respectable authorities, both ancient and modern, which he quoted. The Count, however, was decidedly against him, and a long conversation ensued, in which the usual arguments on these subjects were on both sides brought

forward with skill, and discussed with candour, but without converting either party to the opinion of his opponent. The effect of their conversation on their auditors was various. Though the Count had much the superiority of the Baron in point of argument, he had considerably fewer adherents; for that love, so natural to the human mind, of whatever is able to distend its faculties with wonder and astonishment, attached the majority of the company to the side of the Baron; and, though many of the Count's propositions were unanswerable, his opponents were inclined to believe this the consequence of their own want of knowledge on so abstracted a subject, rather than that arguments did not exist which were forcible enough to conquer his.

Blanche was pale with attention, till the ridicule in her father's glance called a blush upon her countenance, and she then endeavoured to forget the superstitious tales she had been told in her convent. Meanwhile, Emily had been listening with deep attention to the discussion of what was to her a very interesting question, and, remembering the appearance she had witnessed in the apartment of the late Marchioness, she was frequently chilled with awe. Several times she was on the point of mentioning what she had seen, but the fear of giving pain to the Count, and the dread of his ridicule, restrained her; and, awaiting in anxious expectation the event of Ludovico's intrepidity, she determined that her future silence should depend upon it.

When the party had separated for the night, and the Count retired to his dressing room, the remembrance of the desolate scenes he had lately witnessed in his own mansion deeply affected him, but at length he was aroused from his reverie and his silence. "What music is that I hear?" said he suddenly to his valet "Who plays at this late hour?"

The man made no reply, and the Count continued to listen, and then added, "That is no common musician; he touches the instrument with a delicate hand; who is it, Pierre?"

"My lord!" said the man, hesitatingly.

"Who plays that instrument?" repeated the Count.

"Does not your lordship know, then?" said the valet.

"What mean you?" said the Count, somewhat sternly.

"Nothing, my Lord, I meant nothing" rejoined the man submissively — "Only — that music — goes about the house at midnight often, and I thought your lordship might have heard it before."

"Music goes about the house at midnight! Poor fellow! — Does nobody dance to the music, too?"

"It is not in the château, I believe, my Lord; the sounds come from the woods, they say, though they seem so near; — but then a spirit can do anything!"

“Ah, poor fellow!” said the Count “I perceive you are as silly as the rest of them; tomorrow you will be convinced of your ridiculous error. But hark! — What voice is that?”

“O my Lord! That is the voice we often hear with the music.”

“Often!” said the Count “How often, pray? It is a very fine one.”

“Why, my Lord, I myself have not heard it more than two or three times, but there are those who have lived here longer, that have heard it often enough.”

“What a swell was that!” exclaimed the Count, as he still listened “And now, what a dying cadence! This is surely something more than mortal!”

“That is what they say, my Lord” said the valet; “they say it is nothing mortal, that utters it; and if I might say my thoughts —”

“Peace!” said the Count, and he listened till the strain died away.

“This is strange!” said he, as he turned from the window “Close the casements, Pierre.”

Pierre obeyed, and the Count soon after dismissed him, but did not so soon lose the remembrance of the music, which long vibrated in his fancy in tones of melting sweetness, while surprise and perplexity engaged his thoughts.

Ludovico, meanwhile, in his remote chamber, heard, now and then, thefaint echo of a closing door, as the family retired to rest, and then the hall clock, at a great distance, strike twelve. “It is midnight” said he, and he looked suspiciously round the spacious chamber. The fire on the hearth was now nearly expiring, for his attention having been engaged by the book before him, he had forgotten everything besides; but he soon added fresh wood, not because he was cold, though the night was stormy, but because he was cheerless; and, having again trimmed his lamp, he poured out a glass of wine, drew his chair nearer to the crackling blaze, tried to be deaf to the wind, that howled mournfully at the casements, endeavoured to abstract his mind from the melancholy that was stealing upon him, and again took up his book. It had been lent to him by Dorothée, who had formerly picked it up in an obscure corner of the Marquis’s library, and who, having opened it and perceived some of the marvels it related, had carefully preserved it for her own entertainment, its condition giving her some excuse for detaining it from its proper station. The damp corner into which it had fallen had caused the cover to be disfigured and mouldy, and the leaves to be so discoloured with spots, that it was not without difficulty the letters could be traced. The fictions of the Provençal writers, whether drawn from the Arabian legends, brought by the Saracens into Spain, or recounting the chivalric exploits performed by the crusaders, whom the Troubadors accompanied to the east, were generally splendid and always marvellous, both in scenery and incident; and it is not wonderful, that Dorothée

and Ludovico should be fascinated by inventions, which had captivated the careless imagination in every rank of society, in a former age. Some of the tales, however, in the book now before Ludovico, were of simple structure, and exhibited nothing of the magnificent machinery and heroic manners, which usually characterised the fables of the twelfth century, and of this description was the one he now happened to open, which, in its original style, was of great length, but which may be thus shortly related. The reader will perceive that it is strongly tinctured with the superstition of the times.

THE PROVENÇAL TALE

"There lived, in the province of Bretagne, a noble Baron, famous for his magnificence and courtly hospitalities. His castle was graced with ladies of exquisite beauty, and thronged with illustrious knights; for the honour he paid to feats of chivalry invited the brave of distant countries to enter his lists, and his court was more splendid than those of many princes. Eight minstrels were retained in his service, who used to sing to their harps romantic fictions, taken from the Arabians, or adventures of chivalry, that befel knights during the crusades, or the martial deeds of the Baron, their lord; — while he, surrounded by his knights and ladies, banqueted in the great hall of his castle, where the costly tapestry, that adorned the walls with pictured exploits of his ancestors, the casements of painted glass, enriched with armorial bearings, the gorgeous banners, that waved along the roof, the sumptuous canopies, the profusion of gold and silver that glittered on the sideboards, the numerous dishes, that covered the tables, the number and gay liveries of the attendants, with the chivalric and splendid attire of the guests, united to form a scene of magnificence, such as we may not hope to see in these *degenerate days*.

"Of the Baron, the following adventure is related. One night, having retired late from the banquet to his chamber, and dismissed his attendants, he was surprised by the appearance of a stranger of a noble air, but of a sorrowful and dejected countenance. Believing, that this person had been secreted in the apartment, since it appeared impossible he could have lately passed the anteroom, unobserved by the pages in waiting, who would have prevented this intrusion on their lord, the Baron, calling loudly for his people, drew his sword, which he had not yet taken from his side, and stood upon his defence. The stranger slowly advancing, told him, that there was nothing to fear; that he came with no hostile design, but to communicate to him a terrible secret, which it was necessary for him to know.

"The Baron, appeased by the courteous manners of the stranger, after surveying him, for some time, in silence, returned his sword into the scabbard, and desired him to explain the means, by which he had obtained access to the chamber, and the purpose of this extraordinary visit.

"Without answering either of these enquiries, the stranger said, that he could not then explain himself, but that, if the Baron would follow him to the

edge of the forest, at a short distance from the castle walls, he would there convince him, that he had something of importance to disclose.

"This proposal again alarmed the Baron, who could scarcely believe, that the stranger meant to draw him to so solitary a spot, at this hour of the night, without harbouring a design against his life, and he refused to go, observing, at the same time, that, if the stranger's purpose was an honourable one, he would not persist in refusing to reveal the occasion of his visit, in the apartment where they were.

"While he spoke this, he viewed the stranger still more attentively than before, but observed no change in his countenance, or any symptom, that might intimate a consciousness of evil design. He was habited like a knight, was of a tall and majestic stature, and of dignified and courteous manners. Still, however, he refused to communicate the subject of his errand in any place, but that he had mentioned, and, at the same time, gave hints concerning the secret he would disclose, that awakened a degree of solemn curiosity in the Baron, which, at length, induced him to consent to follow the stranger on certain conditions.

"'Sir knight' said he 'I will attend you to the forest, and will take with me only four of my people, who shall witness our conference.'

"To this, however, the Knight objected.

"'What I would disclose' said he, with solemnity, 'is to you alone. There are only three living persons, to whom the circumstance is known; it is of more consequence to you and your house, than I shall now explain. In future years, you will look back to this night with satisfaction or repentance, accordingly as you now determine. As you would hereafter prosper — follow me; I pledge you the honour of a knight, that no evil shall befall you; — if you are contented to dare futurity — remain in your chamber, and I will depart as I came.'

"'Sir knight' replied the Baron 'how is it possible, that my future peace can depend upon my present determination?'

"'That is not now to be told' said the stranger, 'I have explained myself to the utmost. It is late; if you follow me it must be quickly; — you will do well to consider the alternative.'

"The Baron mused, and, as he looked upon the knight, he perceived his countenance assume a singular solemnity."

[Here Ludovico thought he heard a noise, and he threw a glance round the chamber, and then held up the lamp to assist his observation; but, not perceiving anything to confirm his alarm, he took up the book again and pursued the story.]

"The Baron paced his apartment, for some time, in silence, impressed by the last words of the stranger, whose extraordinary request he feared to grant, and feared, also, to refuse. At length, he said 'Sir knight, you are utterly unknown to me; tell me yourself — is it reasonable, that I should trust myself alone with a stranger, at this hour, in a solitary forest? Tell me, at least, who you are, and who assisted to secrete you in this chamber.'

"The knight frowned at these latter words, and was a moment silent; then, with a countenance somewhat stern, he said

"'I am an English knight; I am called Sir Bevys of Lancaster — and my deeds are not unknown at the Holy City, whence I was returning to my native land, when I was benighted in the neighbouring forest.'

"'Your name is not unknown to fame' said the Baron 'I have heard of it.' (The Knight looked haughtily.) 'But why, since my castle is known to entertain all true knights, did not your herald announce you? Why did you not appear at the banquet, where your presence would have been welcomed, instead of hiding yourself in my castle, and stealing to my chamber, at midnight?'

"The stranger frowned, and turned away in silence; but the Baron repeated the questions.

"'I come not' said the Knight 'to answer enquiries, but to reveal facts. If you would know more, follow me, and again I pledge the honour of a Knight that you shall return in safety. — Be quick in your determination — I must be gone.'

"After some further hesitation, the Baron determined to follow the stranger, and to see the result of his extraordinary request; he, therefore, again drew forth his sword, and, taking up a lamp, bade the Knight lead on. The latter obeyed, and, opening the door of the chamber, they passed into the anteroom, where the Baron, surprised to find all his pages asleep, stopped, and, with hasty violence, was going to reprimand them for their carelessness, when the Knight waved his hand, and looked so expressively upon the Baron, that the latter restrained his resentment, and passed on.

"The Knight, having descended a staircase, opened a secret door, which the Baron had believed was known only to himself, and, proceeding through several narrow and winding passages, came, at length, to a small gate, that opened beyond the walls of the castle. Meanwhile, the Baron followed in silence and amazement, on perceiving that these secret passages were so well known to a stranger, and felt inclined to return from an adventure that appeared to partake of treachery, as well as danger. Then, considering that he was armed, and observing the courteous and noble air of his conductor, his courage returned, he blushed, that it had failed him for a moment, and he resolved to trace the mystery to its source.

"He now found himself on the heathy platform, before the great gates of his castle, where, on looking up, he perceived lights glimmering in the different casements of the guests, who were retiring to sleep; and, while he shivered in the blast, and looked on the dark and desolate scene around him, he thought of the comforts of his warm chamber, rendered cheerful by the blaze of wood, and felt, for a moment, the full contrast of his present situation."

[Here Ludovico paused a moment, and, looking at his own fire, gave it a brightening stir.]

"The wind was strong, and the Baron watched his lamp with anxiety, expecting every moment to see it extinguished; but, though the flame wavered, it did not expire, and he still followed the stranger, who often sighed as he went, but did not speak.

"When they reached the borders of the forest, the Knight turned, and raised his head, as if he meant to address the Baron, but then, closing his lips in silence, he walked on.

"As they entered beneath the dark and spreading boughs, the Baron, affected by the solemnity of the scene, hesitated whether to proceed, and demanded how much further they were to go. The Knight replied only by a gesture, and the Baron, with hesitating steps and a suspicious eye, followed through an obscure and intricate path, till, having proceeded a considerable way, he again demanded whither they were going, and refused to proceed unless he was informed.

"As he said this, he looked at his own sword, and at the Knight alternately, who shook his head, and whose dejected countenance disarmed the Baron, for a moment, of suspicion.

"'A little further is the place, whither I would lead you' said the stranger; 'no evil shall befall you — I have sworn it on the honour of a knight.'

"The Baron, reassured, again followed in silence, and they soon arrived at a deep recess of the forest, where the dark and lofty chesnuts entirely excluded the sky, and which was so overgrown with underwood, that they proceeded with difficulty. The Knight sighed deeply as he passed, and sometimes paused; and having, at length, reached a spot, where the trees crowded into a knot, he turned, and, with a terrific look, pointing to the ground, the Baron saw there the body of a man, stretched at its length, and weltering in blood; a ghastly wound was on the forehead, and death appeared already to have contracted the features.

"The Baron, on perceiving the spectacle, started in horror, looked at the Knight for explanation, and was then going to raise the body and examine if there were yet any remains of life; but the stranger, waving his hand, fixed

upon him a look so earnest and mournful, as not only much surprised him, but made him desist.

"But, what were the Baron's emotions, when, on holding the lamp near the features of the corpse, he discovered the exact resemblance of the stranger his conductor, to whom he now looked up in astonishment and enquiry? As he gazed, he perceived the countenance of the Knight change, and begin to fade, till his whole form gradually vanished from his astonished sense! While the Baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words: — "

[Ludovico started, and laid down the book, for he thought he heard a voice in the chamber, and he looked toward the bed, where, however, he saw only the dark curtains and the pall. He listened, scarcely daring to draw his breath, but heard only the distant roaring of the sea in the storm, and the blast, that rushed by the casements; when, concluding, that he had been deceived by its sighings, he took up his book to finish the story.]

"While the Baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words: —

"The body of Sir Bevys of Lancaster, a noble knight of England, lies before you. He was, this night, waylaid and murdered, as he journeyed from the Holy City towards his native land. Respect the honour of knighthood and the law of humanity; inter the body in christian ground, and cause his murderers to be punished. As ye observe, or neglect this, shall peace and happiness, or war and misery, light upon you and your house for ever!"

"The Baron, when he recovered from the awe and astonishment, into which this adventure had thrown him, returned to his castle, whither he caused the body of Sir Bevys to be removed; and, on the following day, it was interred, with the honours of knighthood, in the chapel of the castle, attended by all the noble knights and ladies, who graced the court of Baron de Brunne."

Ludovico, having finished this story, laid aside the book, for he felt drowsy, and, after putting more wood on the fire and taking another glass of wine, he reposed himself in the armchair on the hearth. In his dream he still beheld the chamber where he really was, and, once or twice, started from imperfect slumbers, imagining he saw a man's face, looking over the high back of his armchair. This idea had so strongly impressed him, that, when he raised his eyes, he almost expected to meet other eyes, fixed upon his own, and he quitted his seat and looked behind the chair, before he felt perfectly convinced, that no person was there.

Thus closed the hour.

CHAPTER VII

Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber;
Thou hast no figures, nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.
SHAKESPEARE

The Count, who had slept little during the night, rose early, and, anxious to speak with Ludovico, went to the north apartment; but, the outer door having been fastened, on the preceding night, he was obliged to knock loudly for admittance. Neither the knocking, nor his voice was heard; but, considering the distance of this door from the bedroom, and that Ludovico, wearied with watching, had probably fallen into a deep sleep, the Count was not surprised on receiving no answer, and, leaving the door, he went down to walk in his grounds.

It was a grey autumnal morning. The sun, rising over Provence, gave only a feeble light, as his rays struggled through the vapours that ascended from the sea, and floated heavily over the wood tops, which were now varied with many a mellow tint of autumn. The storm was passed, but the waves were yet violently agitated, and their course was traced by long lines of foam, while not a breeze fluttered in the sails of the vessels, near the shore, that were weighing anchor to depart. The still gloom of the hour was pleasing to the Count, and he pursued his way through the woods, sunk in deep thought.

Emily also rose at an early hour, and took her customary walk along the brow of the promontory, that overhung the Mediterranean. Her mind was now not occupied with the occurrences of the château, and Valancourt was the subject of her mournful thoughts; whom she had not yet taught herself to consider with indifference, though her judgment constantly reproached her for the affection, that lingered in her heart, after her esteem for him was departed. Remembrance frequently gave her his parting look and the tones of his voice, when he had bade her a last farewell; and, some accidental associations now recalling these circumstances to her fancy, with peculiar energy, she shed bitter tears to the recollection.

Having reached the watchtower, she seated herself on the broken steps, and, in melancholy dejection, watched the waves, half hid in vapour, as they came rolling towards the shore, and threw up their light spray round the rocks below. Their hollow murmur and the obscuring mists, that came in wreaths up the cliffs, gave a solemnity to the scene, which was in harmony with the temper of her mind, and she sat, given up to the remembrance of past times, till this became too painful, and she abruptly quitted the place. On passing the little gate of the watch-tower, she observed letters, engraved on the stone postern, which she paused to examine, and, though they appeared to have been rudely cut with a pen-knife, the characters were familiar to her; at length, recognising

the handwriting of Valancourt, she read, with trembling anxiety the following lines, entitled

SHIPWRECK

'Til solemn midnight! On this lonely steep,
Beneath this watch-tow'r's desolated wall,
Where mystic shapes the wonderer appall,
I rest; and view below the desert deep,
As through tempestuous clouds the moon's cold light
Gleams on the wave. Viewless, the winds of night
With loud mysterious force the billows sweep,
And sullen roar the surges, far below.
In the still pauses of the gust I hear
The voice of spirits, rising sweet and slow,
And oft among the clouds their forms appear.
But hark! what shriek of death comes in the gale,
And in the distant ray what glimmering sail
Bends to the storm? — Now sinks the note of fear!
Ah! wretched mariners! — no more shall day
Unclose his cheering eye to light ye on your way!

From these lines it appeared, that Valancourt had visited the tower; that he had probably been here on the preceding night, for it was such a one as they described, and that he had left the building very lately, since it had not long been light, and without light it was impossible these letters could have been cut. It was thus even probable, that he might be yet in the gardens.

As these reflections passed rapidly over the mind of Emily, they called up a variety of contending emotions, that almost overcame her spirits; but her first impulse was to avoid him, and, immediately leaving the tower, she returned, with hasty steps, towards the château. As she passed along, she remembered the music she had lately heard near the tower, with the figure, which had appeared, and, in this moment of agitation, she was inclined to believe, that she had then heard and seen Valancourt; but other recollections soon convinced her of her error. On turning into a thicker part of the woods, she perceived a person, walking slowly in the gloom at some little distance, and, her mind engaged by the idea of him, she started and paused, imagining this to be Valancourt. The person advanced with quicker steps, and, before she could recover recollection enough to avoid him, he spoke, and she then knew the voice of the Count, who expressed some surprise, on finding her walking at so early an hour, and made a feeble effort to rally her on her love of solitude. But he soon perceived this to be more a subject of concern than of light laughter, and, changing his manner, affectionately expostulated with Emily, on thus indulging unavailing regret; who, though she acknowledged the justness of all he said, could not restrain her tears, while she did so, and he presently quitted the topic. Expressing surprise at not having yet heard from his friend, the Advocate at Avignon, in answer to the questions proposed to him, respecting the estates of

the late Madame Montoni, he, with friendly zeal, endeavoured to cheer Emily with hopes of establishing her claim to them; while she felt, that the estates could now contribute little to the happiness of a life, in which Valancourt had no longer an interest.

When they returned to the château, Emily retired to her apartment, and Count De Villefort to the door of the north chambers. This was still fastened, but, being now determined to arouse Ludovico, he renewed his calls more loudly than before, after which a total silence ensued, and the Count, finding all his efforts to be heard ineffectual, at length began to fear, that some accident had befallen Ludovico, whom terror of an imaginary being might have deprived of his senses. He, therefore, left the door with an intention of summoning his servants to force it open, some of whom he now heard moving in the lower part of the château.

To the Count's enquiries, whether they had seen or heard Ludovico, they replied in affright, that not one of them had ventured on the north side of the château, since the preceding night.

"He sleeps soundly then" said the Count "and is at such a distance from the outer door, which is fastened, that to gain admittance to the chambers it will be necessary to force it. Bring an instrument, and follow me."

The servants stood mute and dejected, and it was not till nearly all the household were assembled, that the Count's orders were obeyed. In the mean time, Dorothée was telling of a door, that opened from a gallery, leading from the great staircase into the last ante-room of the saloon, and, this being much nearer to the bedchamber, it appeared probable, that Ludovico might be easily awakened by an attempt to open it. Thither, therefore, the Count went, but his voice was as ineffectual at this door as it had proved at the remoter one; and now, seriously interested for Ludovico, he was himself going to strike upon the door with the instrument, when he observed its singular beauty, and withheld the blow. It appeared, on the first glance, to be of ebony, so dark and close was its grain and so high its polish; but it proved to be only of larch wood, of the growth of Provence, then famous for its forests of larch. The beauty of its polished hue and of its delicate carvings determined the Count to spare this door, and he returned to that leading from the back staircase, which being, at length, forced, he entered the first anteroom, followed by Henri and a few of the most courageous of his servants, the rest awaiting the event of the enquiry on the stairs and landing place.

All was silent in the chambers, through which the Count passed, and, having reached the saloon, he called loudly upon Ludovico; after which, still receiving no answer, he threw open the door of the bedroom, and entered.

The profound stillness within confirmed his apprehensions for Ludovico, for not even the breathings of a person in sleep were heard; and his uncertainty was not soon terminated, since the shutters being all closed, the chamber was too dark for any object to be distinguished in it.

The Count bade a servant open them, who, as he crossed the room to do so, stumbled over something, and fell to the floor, when his cry occasioned such panic among the few of his fellows, who had ventured thus far, that they instantly fled, and the Count and Henri were left to finish the adventure.

Henri then sprung across the room, and, opening a window-shutter, they perceived, that the man had fallen over a chair near the hearth, in which Ludovico had been sitting; — for he sat there no longer, nor could anywhere be seen by the imperfect light, that was admitted into the apartment. The Count, seriously alarmed, now opened other shutters, that he might be enabled to examine further, and, Ludovico not yet appearing, he stood for a moment, suspended in astonishment and scarcely trusting his senses, till, his eyes glancing on the bed, he advanced to examine whether he was there asleep. No person, however, was in it, and he proceeded to the oriel, where everything remained as on the preceding night, but Ludovico was nowhere to be found.

The Count now checked his amazement, considering that Ludovico might have left the chambers, during the night, overcome by the terrors, which their lonely desolation and the recollected reports, concerning them, had inspired. Yet, if this had been the fact, the man would naturally have sought society, and his fellow servants had all declared they had not seen him; the door of the outer room also had been found fastened, with the key on the inside; it was impossible, therefore, for him to have passed through that, and all the outer doors of this suite were found, on examination, to be bolted and locked, with the keys also within them. The Count, being then compelled to believe, that the lad had escaped through the casements, next examined them, but such as opened wide enough to admit the body of a man were found to be carefully secured either by iron bars, or by shutters, and no vestige appeared of any person having attempted to pass them; neither was it probable, that Ludovico would have incurred the risk of breaking his neck, by leaping from a window, when he might have walked safely through a door.

The Count's amazement did not admit of words; but he returned once more to examine the bedroom, where was no appearance of disorder, except that occasioned by the late overthrow of the chair, near which had stood a small table, and on this Ludovico's sword, his lamp, the book he had been reading, and the remnant of his flask of wine still remained. At the foot of the table, too, was the basket with some fragments of provision and wood.

Henri and the servant now uttered their astonishment without reserve, and, though the Count said little, there was a seriousness in his manner, that expressed much. It appeared, that Ludovico must have quitted these rooms by some concealed passage, for the Count could not believe, that any supernatural means had occasioned this event, yet, if there was any such passage, it seemed inexplicable why he should retreat through it, and it was equally surprising, that not even the smallest vestige should appear, by which his progress could be traced. In the rooms everything remained as much in order as if he had just walked out by the common way.

The Count himself assisted in lifting the arras, with which the bedchamber, saloon and one of the ante-rooms were hung, that he might discover if any door had been concealed behind it; but, after a laborious search, none was found, and he, at length, quitted the apartments, having secured the door of the last antechamber, the key of which he took into his own possession. He then gave orders, that strict search should be made for Ludovico not only in the château, but in the neighbourhood, and, retiring with Henri to his closet, they remained there in conversation for a considerable time, and whatever was the subject of it, Henri from this hour lost much of his vivacity, and his manners were particularly grave and reserved, whenever the topic, which now agitated the Count's family with wonder and alarm, was introduced.

On the disappearing of Ludovico, Baron St. Foix seemed strengthened in all his former opinions concerning the probability of apparitions, though it was difficult to discover what connection there could possibly be between the two subjects, or to account for this effect otherwise than by supposing, that the mystery attending Ludovico, by exciting awe and curiosity, reduced the mind to a state of sensibility, which rendered it more liable to the influence of superstition in general. It is, however, certain, that from this period the Baron and his adherents became more bigoted to their own systems than before, while the terrors of the Count's servants increased to an excess, that occasioned many of them to quit the mansion immediately, and the rest remained only till others could be procured to supply their places.

The most strenuous search after Ludovico proved unsuccessful, and, after several days of indefatigable enquiry, poor Annette gave herself up to despair, and the other inhabitants of the château to amazement.

Emily, whose mind had been deeply affected by the disastrous fate of the late Marchioness and with the mysterious connection, which she fancied had existed between her and St. Aubert, was particularly impressed by the late extraordinary event, and much concerned for the loss of Ludovico, whose integrity and faithful services claimed both her esteem and gratitude. She was now very desirous to return to the quiet retirement of her convent, but every hint of this was received with real sorrow by the Lady Blanche, and affectionately set aside by the Count, for whom she felt much of the respectful love and admiration of a daughter, and to whom, by Dorothée's consent, she, at length, mentioned the appearance, which they had witnessed in the chamber of the deceased Marchioness. At any other period, he would have smiled at such a relation, and have believed, that its object had existed only in the distempered fancy of the relater; but he now attended to Emily with seriousness, and, when she concluded, requested of her a promise, that this occurrence should rest in silence. "Whatever may be the cause and the import of these extraordinary occurrences" added the Count "time only can explain them. I shall keep a wary eye upon all that passes in the château, and shall pursue every possible means of discovering the fate of Ludovico. Meanwhile, we must be prudent and be silent. I will myself watch in the north chambers, but of this we will say nothing, till the night arrives, when I purpose doing so."

The Count then sent for Dorothée, and required of her also a promise of silence, concerning what she had already, or might in future witness of an extraordinary nature; and this ancient servant now related to him the particulars of the Marchioness de Villeroi's death, with some ofwhich he appeared to be already acquainted, while by others he was evidently surprised and agitated. After listening to this narrative, the Count retired to his closet, where he remained alone for several hours; and, when he again appeared, the solemnity of his manner surprised and alarmed Emily, but she gave no utterance to her thoughts.

On the week following the disappearance of Ludovico, all the Count's guests took leave of him, except the Baron, his son Mons. St. Foix, and Emily; the latter of whom was soon after embarrassed and distressed by the arrival of another visitor, Mons. Du Pont, which made her determine upon withdrawing to her convent immediately. The delight, that appeared in his countenance, when he met her, told that he brought back the same ardour of passion, which had formerly banished him from Château-le-Blanc. He was received with reserve by Emily, and with pleasure by the Count, who presented him to her with a smile, that seemed intended to plead his cause, and who did not hope the less for his friend, from the embarrassment she betrayed.

But M. Du Pont, with truer sympathy, seemed to understand her manner, and his countenance quickly lost its vivacity, and sunk into the languor of despondency.

On the following day, however, he sought an opportunity of declaring the purport of his visit, and renewed his suit; a declaration, which was received with real concern by Emily, who endeavoured to lessen the pain she might inflict by a second rejection, with assurances of esteem and friendship; yet she left him in a state of mind, that claimed and excited her tenderest compassion; and, being more sensible than ever of the impropriety of remaining longer at the château, she immediately sought the Count, and communicated to him her intention of returning to the convent.

"My dear Emily" said he "I observe with extreme concern, the illusion you are encouraging — an illusion common to young and sensible minds. Your heart has received a severe shock; you believe you can never entirely recover it, and you will encourage this belief, till the habit of indulging sorrow will subdue the strength of your mind, and discolour your future views with melancholy and regret. Let me dissipate this illusion, and awaken you to a sense of your danger."

Emily smiled mournfully "I know what you would say, my dear sir" said she "and am prepared to answer you. I feel, that my heart can never know a second affection; and that I must never hope even to recover its tranquillity — if I suffer myself to enter into a second engagement."

"I know, that you feel all this" replied the Count; "and I know, also, that time will overcome these feelings, unless you cherish them in solitude, and, pardon

me, with romantic tenderness. Then, indeed, time will only confirm habit. I am particularly empowered to speak on this subject, and to sympathise in your sufferings" added the Count, with an air of solemnity, "for I have known what it is to love, and to lament the object of my love. Yes" continued he, while his eyes filled with tears, "I have suffered! — but those times have passed away — long passed! and I can now look back upon them without emotion."

"My dear sir" said Emily, timidly, "what mean those tears? — they speak, I fear, another language — they plead for me."

"They are weak tears, for they are useless ones" replied the Count, drying them "I would have you superior to such weakness. These, however, are only faint traces of a grief, which, if it had not been opposed by long continued effort, might have led me to the verge of madness! Judge, then, whether I have not cause to warn you of an indulgence, which may produce so terrible an effect, and which must certainly, if not opposed, overcloud the years, that otherwise might be happy. M. Du Pont is a sensible and amiable man, who has long been tenderly attached to you; his family and fortune are unexceptionable; — after what I have said, it is unnecessary to add, that I should rejoice in your felicity, and that I think M. Du Pont would promote it. Do not weep, Emily" continued the Count, taking her hand, "there *is* happiness reserved for you."

He was silent a moment; and then added, in a firmer voice "I do not wish, that you should make a violent effort to overcome your feelings; all I, at present, ask, is, that you will check the thoughts, that would lead you to a remembrance of the past; that you will suffer your mind to be engaged by present objects; that you will allow yourself to believe it possible you may yet be happy; and that you will sometimes think with complacency of poor Du Pont, and not condemn him to the state of despondency, from which, my dear Emily, I am endeavouring to withdraw you."

"Ah! my dear sir" said Emily, while her tears still fell "do not suffer the benevolence of your wishes to mislead Mons. Du Pont with an expectation that I can ever accept his hand. If I understand my own heart, this never can be; your instruction I can obey in almost every other particular, than that of adopting a contrary belief."

"Leave me to understand your heart" replied the Count, with a faint smile. "If you pay me the compliment to be guided by my advice in other instances, I will pardon your incredulity, respecting your future conduct towards Mons. Du Pont. I will not even press you to remain longer at the château than your own satisfaction will permit; but though I forbear to oppose your present retirement, I shall urge the claims of friendship for your future visits."

Tears of gratitude mingled with those of tender regret, while Emily thanked the Count for the many instances of friendship she had received from him; promised to be directed by his advice upon every subject but one, and assured him of the pleasure, with which she should, at some future period, accept the

invitation of the Countess and himself — If Mons. Du Pont was not at the château.

The Count smiled at this condition. “Be it so” said he “meanwhile the convent is so near the château, that my daughter and I shall often visit you; and if, sometimes, we should dare to bring you another visitor — will you forgive us?”

Emily looked distressed, and remained silent.

“Well” rejoined the Count “I will pursue this subject no further, and must now entreat your forgiveness for having pressed it thus far. You will, however, do me the justice to believe, that I have been urged only by a sincere regard for your happiness, and that of my amiable friend Mons. Du Pont.”

Emily, when she left the Count, went to mention her intended departure to the Countess, who opposed it with polite expressions of regret; after which, she sent a note to acquaint the lady abbess, that she should return to the convent; and thither she withdrew on the evening of the following day. M. Du Pont, in extreme regret, saw her depart, while the Count endeavoured to cheer him with a hope, that Emily would sometimes regard him with a more favourable eye.

She was pleased to find herself once more in the tranquil retirement of the convent, where she experienced a renewal of all the maternal kindness of the abbess, and of the sisterly attentions of the nuns. A report of the late extraordinary occurrence at the château had already reached them, and, after supper, on the evening of her arrival, it was the subject of conversation in the convent parlour, where she was requested to mention some particulars of that unaccountable event. Emily was guarded in her conversation on this subject, and briefly related a few circumstances concerning Ludovico, whose disappearance, her auditors almost unanimously agreed, had been effected by supernatural means.

“A belief had so long prevailed” said a nun, who was called sister Frances, “that the château was haunted, that I was surprised, when I heard the Count had the temerity to inhabit it. Its former possessor, I fear, had some deed of conscience to atone for; let us hope, that the virtues of its present owner will preserve him from the punishment due to the errors of the last, if, indeed, he was a criminal.”

“Of what crime, then, was he suspected?” said a Mademoiselle Feydeau, a boarder at the convent.

“Let us pray for his soul!” said a nun, who had till now sat in silent attention. “If he was criminal, his punishment in this world was sufficient.”

There was a mixture of wildness and solemnity in her manner of delivering this, which struck Emily exceedingly; but Mademoiselle repeated her question, without noticing the solemn eagerness of the nun.

“I dare not presume to say what was his crime” replied sister Frances; “but I have heard many reports of an extraordinary nature, respecting the late Marquis de Villeroi, and among others, that, soon after the death of his lady, he quitted Château-le-Blanc, and never afterwards returned to it. I was not here at the time, so I can only mention it from report, and so many years have passed since the Marchioness died, that few of our sisterhood, I believe, can do more.”

“But I can,” said the nun, who had before spoke, and whom they called sister Agnes.

“You then” said Mademoiselle Feydeau “are possibly acquainted with circumstances, that enable you to judge, whether he was criminal or not, and what was the crime imputed to him.”

“I am” replied the nun; “but who shall dare to scrutinize my thoughts — who shall dare to pluck out my opinion? God only is his judge, and to that judge he is gone!”

Emily looked with surprise at sister Frances, who returned her a significant glance.

“I only requested your opinion” said Mademoiselle Feydeau, mildly; “if the subject is displeasing to you, I will drop it.”

“Displeasing!” — said the nun, with emphasis. — “We are idle talkers; we do not weigh the meaning of the words we use; *displeasing* is a poor word. I will go pray.” As she said this she rose from her seat, and with a profound sigh quitted the room.

“What can be the meaning of this?” said Emily, when she was gone.

“It is nothing extraordinary” replied sister Frances “she is often thus; but she had no meaning in what she says. Her intellects are at times deranged. Did you never see her thus before?”

“Never” said Emily. “I have, indeed, sometimes, thought, that there was the melancholy of madness in her look, but never before perceived it in her speech. Poor soul, I will pray for her!”

“Your prayers then, my daughter, will unite with ours” observed the lady abbess, “she has need of them.”

“Dear lady” said Mademoiselle Feydeau, addressing the abbess, “what is your opinion of the late Marquis? The strange circumstances, that have occurred at the château, have so much awakened my curiosity, that I shall be pardoned the question. What was his imputed crime, and what the punishment, to which sister Agnes alluded?”

"We must be cautious of advancing our opinion" said the abbess, with an air of reserve, mingled with solemnity, "we must be cautious of advancing our opinion on so delicate a subject. I will not take upon me to pronounce, that the late Marquis was criminal, or to say what was the crime of which he was suspected; but, concerning the punishment our daughter Agnes hinted, I know of none he suffered. She probably alluded to the severe one, which an exasperated conscience can inflict. Beware, my children, of incurring so terrible a punishment — it is the purgatory of this life! The late Marchioness I knew well; she was a pattern to such as live in the world; nay, our sacred order need not have blushed to copy her virtues! Our holy convent received her mortal part; her heavenly spirit, I doubt not, ascended to its sanctuary!"

As the abbess spoke this, the last bell of vespers struck up, and she rose. "Let us go, my children" said she "and intercede for the wretched; let us go and confess our sins, and endeavour to purify our souls for the heaven, to which *she* is gone!"

Emily was affected by the solemnity of this exhortation, and, remembering her father, "The heaven, to which *he*, too, is gone!" said she, faintly, as she suppressed her sighs, and followed the abbess and the nuns to the chapel.