

## CHAPTER IV

And poor Misfortune feels the lash of Vice.

THOMSON

Emily seized the first opportunity of conversing alone with Mons. Quesnel, concerning La Vallée. His answers to her enquiries were concise, and delivered with the air of a man, who is conscious of possessing absolute power and impatient of hearing it questioned. He declared, that the disposal of the place was a necessary measure; and that she might consider herself indebted to his prudence for even the small income that remained for her. "But, however," added he "when this Venetian Count (I have forgot his name) marries you, your present disagreeable state of dependence will cease. As a relation to you I rejoice in the circumstance, which is so fortunate for you, and, I may add, so unexpected by your friends." For some moments Emily was chilled into silence by this speech; and, when she attempted to undeceive him, concerning the purport of the note she had inclosed in Montoni's letter, he appeared to have some private reason for disbelieving her assertion, and, for a considerable time, persevered in accusing her of capricious conduct. Being, at length, however, convinced that she really disliked Morano and had positively rejected his suit, his resentment was extravagant, and he expressed it in terms equally pointed and inhuman; for, secretly flattered by the prospect of a connection with a nobleman, whose title he had affected to forget, he was incapable of feeling pity for whatever sufferings of his niece might stand in the way of his ambition.

Emily saw at once in his manner all the difficulties, that awaited her, and, though no oppression could have power to make her renounce Valancourt for Morano, her fortitude now trembled at an encounter with the violent passions of her uncle.

She opposed his turbulence and indignation only by the mild dignity of a superior mind; but the gentle firmness of her conduct served to exasperate still more his resentment, since it compelled him to feel his own inferiority, and, when he left her, he declared, that, if she persisted in her folly, both himself and Montoni would abandon her to the contempt of the world.

The calmness she had assumed in his presence failed Emily, when alone, and she wept bitterly, and called frequently upon the name of her departed father, whose advice to her from his deathbed she then remembered. "Alas!" said she, "I do indeed perceive how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude than the grace of sensibility, and I will also endeavour to fulfil the promise I then made; I will not indulge in unavailing lamentation, but will try to endure, with firmness, the oppression I cannot elude."

Somewhat soothed by the consciousness of performing a part of St. Aubert's last request, and of endeavouring to pursue the conduct which he would have approved, she overcame her tears, and, when the company met at dinner, had recovered her usual serenity of countenance.

In the cool of the evening, the ladies took the *fresco* along the bank of the Brenta in Madame Quesnel's carriage. The state of Emily's mind was in melancholy contrast with the gay groups assembled beneath the shades that overhung this enchanting stream. Some were dancing under the trees, and others reclining on the grass, taking ices and coffee and calmly enjoying the effect of a beautiful evening, on a luxuriant landscape. Emily, when she looked at the snow capped Apennines, ascending in the distance, thought of Montoni's castle, and suffered some terror, lest he should convey her thither, for the purpose of enforcing her obedience; but the thought vanished, when she considered, that she was as much in his power at Venice as she could be elsewhere.

It was moonlight before the party returned to the villa, where supper was spread in the airy hall, which had so much enchanted Emily's fancy, on the preceding night. The ladies seated themselves in the portico, till Mons. Quesnel, Montoni, and other gentlemen should join them at table, and Emily endeavoured to resign herself to the tranquillity of the hour. Presently, a barge stopped at the steps that led into the gardens, and, soon after, she distinguished the voices of Montoni and Quesnel, and then that of Morano, who, in the next moment, appeared. His compliments she received in silence, and her cold air seemed at first to discompose him; but he soon recovered his usual gaiety of manner, though the officious kindness of M. and Madame Quesnel, Emily perceived, disgusted him. Such a degree of attention she had scarcely believed could be shown by M. Quesnel, for she had never before seen him otherwise than in the presence of his inferiors or equals.

When she could retire to her own apartment, her mind almost involuntarily dwelt on the most probable means of prevailing with the Count to withdraw his suit, and to her liberal mind none appeared more probable, than that of acknowledging to him a prior attachment and throwing herself upon his generosity for a release. When, however, on the following day, he renewed his addresses, she shrunk from the adoption of the plan she had formed. There was something so repugnant to her just pride, in laying open the secret of her heart to such a man as Morano, and in suing to him for compassion, that she impatiently rejected this design and wondered, that she could have paused upon it for a moment. The rejection of his suit she repeated in the most decisive terms she could select, mingling with it a severe censure of his conduct; but, though the Count appeared mortified by this, he persevered in the most ardent professions of admiration, till he was interrupted and Emily released by the presence of Madame Quesnel.

During her stay at this pleasant villa, Emily was thus rendered miserable by the assiduities of Morano, together with the cruelly exerted authority of M. Quesnel and Montoni, who, with her aunt, seemed now more resolutely determined upon this marriage than they had even appeared to be at Venice. M. Quesnel, finding, that both argument and menace were ineffectual in enforcing an immediate conclusion to it, at length relinquished his endeavours, and trusted to the power of Montoni and to the course of events at Venice.

Emily, indeed, looked to Venice with hope, for there she would be relieved in some measure from the persecution of Morano, who would no longer be an inhabitant of the same house with herself, and from that of Montoni, whose engagements would not permit him to be continually at home. But amidst the pressure of her own misfortunes, she did not forget those of poor Theresa, for whom she pleaded with courageous tenderness to Quesnel, who promised, in slight and general terms, that she should not be forgotten.

Montoni, in a long conversation with M. Quesnel, arranged the plan to be pursued respecting Emily, and M. Quesnel proposed to be at Venice, as soon as he should be informed, that the nuptials were concluded.

It was new to Emily to part with any person, with whom she was connected, without feeling of regret; the moment, however, in which she took leave of M. and Madame Quesnel, was, perhaps, the only satisfactory one she had known in their presence.

Morano returned in Montoni's barge, and Emily, as she watched her gradual approach to that magic city, saw at her side the only person, who occasioned her to view it with less than perfect delight. They arrived there about midnight, when Emily was released from the presence of the Count, who, with Montoni, went to a Casino, and she was suffered to retire to her own apartment.

On the following day, Montoni, in a short conversation, which he held with Emily, informed her, that he would no longer be *trifled* with, and that, since her marriage with the Count would be so highly advantageous to her, that folly only could object to it, and folly of such extent as was incapable of conviction, it should be celebrated without further delay, and, if that was necessary, without her consent.

Emily, who had hitherto tried remonstrance, had now recourse to supplication, for distress prevented her from foreseeing, that, with a man of Montoni's disposition, supplication would be equally useless. She afterwards enquired by what right he exerted this unlimited authority over her, a question, which her better judgment would have withheld her, in a calmer moment, from making, since it could avail her nothing, and would afford Montoni another opportunity of triumphing over her defenceless condition.

"By what right!" cried Montoni, with a malicious smile "By the right of my will; if you can elude that, I will not inquire by what right you do so. I now remind you, for the last time, that you are a stranger, in a foreign country, and that it is your interest to make me your friend; you know the means; if you compel me to become your enemy — I will venture to tell you, that the punishment shall exceed your expectation. You may know *I* am not to be trifled with."

Emily continued, for some time after Montoni had left her, in a state of despair, or rather stupefaction; a consciousness of misery was all that remained in her mind. In this situation Madame Montoni found her, at the sound of whose

voice Emily looked up, and her aunt, somewhat softened by the expression of despair, that fixed her countenance, spoke in a manner more kind than she had ever yet done. Emily's heart was touched; she shed tears, and, after weeping for some time, recovered sufficient composure to speak on the subject of her distress, and to endeavour to interest Madame Montoni in her behalf. But, though the compassion of her aunt had been surprised, her ambition was not to be overcome, and her present object was to be the aunt of a Countess. Emily's efforts, therefore, were as unsuccessful as they had been with Montoni, and she withdrew to her apartment to think and weep alone. How often did she remember the parting scene with Valancourt, and wish, that the Italian had mentioned Montoni's character with less reserve! When her mind, however, had recovered from the first shock of this behaviour, she considered, that it would be impossible for him to compel her alliance with Morano, if she persisted in refusing to repeat any part of the marriage ceremony; and she persevered in her resolution to await Montoni's threatened vengeance rather than give herself for life to a man, whom she must have despised for his present conduct, had she never even loved Valancourt; yet she trembled at the revenge she thus resolved to brave.

An affair, however, soon after occurred, which somewhat called off Montoni's attention from Emily. The mysterious visits of Orsino were renewed with more frequency since the return of the former to Venice. There were others, also, besides Orsino, admitted to these midnight councils, and among them Cavigni and Verezzi. Montoni became more reserved and austere in his manner than ever; and Emily, if her own interests had not made her regardless of his, might have perceived, that something extraordinary was working in his mind.

One night, on which a council was not held, Orsino came in great agitation of spirits, and dispatched his confidential servant to Montoni, who was at a Casino, desiring that he would return home immediately; but charging the servant not to mention his name. Montoni obeyed the summons, and, on meeting Orsino, was informed of the circumstances, that occasioned his visit and his visible alarm, with a part of which he was already acquainted.

A Venetian nobleman, who had, on some late occasion, provoked the hatred of Orsino, had been waylaid and poniarded by hired assassins: and, as the murdered person was of the first connections, the Senate had taken up the affair. One of the assassins was now apprehended, who had confessed, that Orsino was his employer in the atrocious deed; and the latter, informed of his danger, had now come to Montoni to consult on the measures necessary to favour his escape. He knew, that, at this time, the officers of the police were upon the watch for him, all over the city; to leave it, at present, therefore, was impracticable, and Montoni consented to secrete him for a few days till the vigilance of justice should relax, and then to assist him in quitting Venice. He knew the danger he himself incurred by permitting Orsino to remain in his house, but such was the nature of his obligations to this man, that he did not think it prudent to refuse him an asylum.

Such was the person whom Montoni had admitted to his confidence, and for whom he felt as much friendship as was compatible with his character.

While Orsino remained concealed in his house, Montoni was unwilling to attract public observation by the nuptials of Count Morano; but this obstacle was, in a few days, overcome by the departure of his criminal visitor, and he then informed Emily, that her marriage was to be celebrated on the following morning. To her repeated assurances, that it should not take place, he replied only by a malignant smile; and, telling her that the Count and a priest would be at his house, early in the morning, he advised her no further to dare his resentment, by opposition to his will and to her own interest. "I am now going out for the evening" said he "remember, that I shall give your hand to Count Morano in the morning." Emily, having, ever since his late threats, expected, that her trials would at length arrive to this crisis, was less shocked by the declaration, that she otherwise would have been, and she endeavoured to support herself by the belief, that the marriage could not be valid, so long as she refused before the priest to repeat any part of the ceremony. Yet, as the moment of trial approached, her long harassed spirits shrunk almost equally from the encounter of his vengeance, and from the hand of Count Morano. She was not even perfectly certain of the consequence of her steady refusal at the altar, and she trembled, more than ever, at the power of Montoni, which seemed unlimited as his will, for she saw, that he would not scruple to transgress any law, if, by so doing, he could accomplish his project.

While her mind was thus suffering and in a state little short of distraction, she was informed that Morano asked permission to see her, and the servant had scarcely departed with an excuse, before she repented that she had sent one. In the next moment, reverting to her former design, and determining to try, whether expostulation and entreaty would not succeed, where a refusal and a just disdain had failed, she recalled the servant, and, sending a different message, prepared to go down to the Count.

The dignity and assumed composure with which she met him, and the kind of pensive resignation, that softened her countenance, were circumstances not likely to induce him to relinquish her, serving, as they did, to heighten a passion, which had already intoxicated his judgment. He listened to all she said with an appearance of complacency and of a wish to oblige her; but his resolution remained invariably the same, and he endeavoured to win her admiration by every insinuating art he so well knew how to practise. Being, at length, assured, that she had nothing to hope from his justice, she repeated, in a solemn and impressive manner, her absolute rejection of his suit, and quitted him with an assurance, that her refusal would be effectually maintained against every circumstance, that could be imagined for subduing it. A just pride had restrained her tears in his presence, but now they flowed from the fulness of her heart. She often called upon the name of her late father, and often dwelt with unutterable anguish on the idea of Valancourt.

She did not go down to supper, but remained alone in her apartment, sometimes yielding to the influence of grief and terror, and, at others,

endeavouring to fortify her mind against them, and to prepare herself to meet, with composed courage, the scene of the following morning, when all the stratagem of Morano and the violence of Montoni would be united against her.

The evening was far advanced, when Madame Montoni came to her chamber with some bridal ornaments, which the Count had sent to Emily. She had, this day, purposely avoided her niece; perhaps, because her usual insensibility failed her, and she feared to trust herself with a view of Emily's distress; or possibly, though her conscience was seldom audible, it now reproached her with her conduct to her brother's orphan child, whose happiness had been entrusted to her care by a dying father.

Emily could not look at these presents, and made a last, though almost hopeless, effort to interest the compassion of Madame Montoni, who, if she did feel any degree of pity, or remorse, successfully concealed it, and reproached her niece with folly in being miserable, concerning a marriage, which ought only to make her happy. "I am sure," said she, "if I was unmarried, and the Count had proposed to me, I should have been flattered by the distinction: and if I should have been so, I am sure, niece, you, who have no fortune, ought to feel yourself highly honoured, and show a proper gratitude and humility towards the Count, for his condescension. I am often surprised, I must own, to observe how humbly he deports himself to you, notwithstanding the haughty airs you give yourself; I wonder he has patience to humour you so: if I was he, I know, I should often be ready to reprehend you, and make you know yourself a little better. I would not have flattered you, I can tell you, for it is this absurd flattery that makes you fancy yourself of so much consequence, that you think nobody can deserve you, and I often tell the Count so, for I have no patience to hear him pay you such extravagant compliments, which you believe every word of!"

"Your patience, madam, cannot suffer more cruelly on such occasions, than my own" said Emily.

"O! That is all mere affectation" rejoined her aunt. "I know that his flattery delights you, and makes you so vain, that you think you may have the whole world at your feet. But you are very much mistaken; I can assure you, niece, you will not meet with many such suitors as the Count: every other person would have turned upon his heel, and left you to repent at your leisure, long ago."

"O that the Count had resembled every other person, then!" said Emily, with a heavy sigh.

"It is happy for you, that he does not" rejoined Madame Montoni; "and what I am now saying is from pure kindness. I am endeavouring to convince you of your good fortune, and to persuade you to submit to necessity with a good grace. It is nothing to me, you know, whether you like this marriage or not, for it must be; what I say, therefore, is from pure kindness. I wish to see you happy, and it is your own fault if you are not so. I would ask you, now, seriously and

calmly, what kind of a match you can expect, since a Count cannot content your ambition?"

"I have no ambition whatever, madam" replied Emily "my only wish is to remain in my present station."

"O! That is speaking quite from the purpose" said her aunt "I see you are still thinking of Mons. Valancourt. Pray get rid of all those fantastic notions about love, and this ridiculous pride, and be something like a reasonable creature. But, however, this is nothing to the purpose — for your marriage with the Count takes place tomorrow, you know, whether you approve it or not. The Count will be trifled with no longer."

Emily made no attempt to reply to this curious speech; she felt it would be mean, and she knew it would be useless. Madame Montoni laid the Count's presents upon the table, on which Emily was leaning, and then, desiring she would be ready early in the morning, bade her good night. "Good night, madam," said Emily, with a deep sigh, as the door closed upon her aunt, and she was left once more to her own sad reflections. For some time she sat so lost in thought, as to be wholly unconscious where she was; at length, raising her head, and looking round the room, its gloom and profound stillness awed her. She fixed her eyes on the door, through which her aunt had disappeared, and listened anxiously for some sound, that might relieve the deep dejection of her spirits; but it was past midnight, and all the family except the servant, who sat up for Montoni, had retired to bed. Her mind, long harassed by distress, now yielded to imaginary terrors; she trembled to look into the obscurity of her spacious chamber, and feared she knew not what; a state of mind, which continued so long, that she would have called up Annette, her aunt's woman, had her fears permitted her to rise from her chair, and to cross the apartment.

These melancholy illusions at length began to disperse, and she retired to her bed, not to sleep, for that was scarcely possible, but to try, at least, to quiet her disturbed fancy, and to collect strength of spirits sufficient to bear her through the scene of the approaching morning.

CHAPTER V

Dark power! with shudd'ring, meek submitted thought  
Be mine to read the visions old  
Which thy awak'ning bards have told,  
And, lest they meet my blasted view,  
Hold each strange tale devoutly true.

COLLINS' ODE TO FEAR

Emily was recalled from a kind of slumber, into which she had, at length, sunk, by a quick knocking at her chamber door. She started up in terror, for Montoni and Count Morano instantly came to her mind; but, having listened in silence for some time, and recognising the voice of Annette, she rose and opened the door. "What brings you hither so early?" said Emily, trembling excessively. She was unable to support herself, and sat down on the bed.

"Dear ma'amselle!" said Annette "Do not look so pale. I am quite frightened to see you. Here is a fine bustle below stairs, all the servants running to and fro, and none of them fast enough! Here is a bustle, indeed, all of a sudden, and nobody knows for what!"

"Who is below besides them?" said Emily, "Annette, do not trifle with me!"

"Not for the world, ma'amselle, I would not trifle for the world; but one cannot help making one's remarks, and there is the Signor in such a bustle, as I never saw him before; and he has sent me to tell you, ma'am, to get ready immediately."

"Good God support me!" cried Emily, almost fainting, "Count Morano is below, then!"

"No, ma'amselle, he is not below that I know of" replied Annette "only his *Excellenza* sent me to desire you would get ready directly to leave Venice, for that the gondolas would be at the steps of the canal in a few minutes: but I must hurry back to my lady, who is just at her wits' end, and knows not which way to turn for haste."

"Explain, Annette, explain the meaning of all this before you go," said Emily, so overcome with surprise and timid hope, that she had scarcely breath to speak.

"Nay, ma'amselle, that is more than I can do. I only know that the Signor is just come home in a very ill humour, that he has had us all called out of our beds, and tells us we are all to leave Venice immediately."

"Is Count Morano to go with the Signor?" said Emily, "and whither are we going?"

“I know neither, ma’am, for certain; but I heard Ludovico say something about going, after we get to *Terra Firma*, to the signor’s castle among some mountains, that he talked of.”

“The Apennines!” said Emily, eagerly, “O! Then I have little to hope!”

“That is the very place, ma’am. But cheer up, and do not take it so much to heart, and think what a little time you have to get ready in, and how impatient the Signor is. Holy St. Mark! I hear the oars on the canal; and now they come nearer, and now they are dashing at the steps below; it is the gondola, sure enough.”

Annette hastened from the room; and Emily prepared for this unexpected flight, as fast as her trembling hands would permit, not perceiving, that any change in her situation could possibly be for the worse. She had scarcely thrown her books and clothes into her travelling trunk, when, receiving a second summons, she went down to her aunt’s dressing room, where she found Montoni impatiently reproving his wife for delay. He went out, soon after, to give some further orders to his people, and Emily then enquired the occasion of this hasty journey; but her aunt appeared to be as ignorant as herself, and to undertake the journey with more reluctance.

The family at length embarked, but neither Count Morano, nor Cavigni, was of the party. Somewhat revived by observing this, Emily, when the gondolieri dashed their oars in the water, and put off from the steps of the portico, felt like a criminal, who receives a short reprieve. Her heart beat yet lighter, when they emerged from the canal into the ocean, and lighter still, when they skimmed past the walls of St. Mark, without having stopped to take up Count Morano.

The dawn now began to tint the horizon, and to break upon the shores of the Adriatic. Emily did not venture to ask any questions of Montoni, who sat, for some time, in gloomy silence, and then rolled himself up in his cloak, as if to sleep, while Madame Montoni did the same; but Emily, who could not sleep, undrew one of the little curtains of the gondola, and looked out upon the sea. The rising dawn now enlightened the mountain tops of Friuli, but their lower sides, and the distant waves, that rolled at their feet, were still in deep shadow. Emily, sunk in tranquil melancholy, watched the strengthening light spreading upon the ocean, showing successively Venice and her islets, and the shores of Italy, along which boats, with their pointed latin sails, began to move.

The gondolieri were frequently hailed, at this early hour, by the market people, as they glided by towards Venice, and the lagune soon displayed a gay scene of innumerable little barks, passing from *Terra Firma* with provisions. Emily gave a last look to that splendid city, but her mind was then occupied by considering the probable events, that awaited her, in the scenes, to which she was removing, and with conjectures, concerning the motive of this sudden journey. It appeared, upon calmer consideration, that Montoni was removing her to his secluded castle, because he could there, with more probability of success, attempt to terrify her into obedience; or, that, should its gloomy and

sequestered scenes fail of this effect, her forced marriage with the Count could there be solemnized with the secrecy, which was necessary to the honour of Montoni. The little spirit, which this reprieve had recalled, now began to fail, and, when Emily reached the shore, her mind had sunk into all its former depression.

Montoni did not embark on the Brenta, but pursued his way in carriages across the country, towards the Apennine; during which journey, his manner to Emily was so particularly severe, that this alone would have confirmed her late conjecture, had any such confirmation been necessary. Her senses were now dead to the beautiful country, through which she travelled. Sometimes she was compelled to smile at the *naïveté* of Annette, in her remarks on what she saw, and sometimes to sigh, as a scene of peculiar beauty recalled Valancourt to her thoughts, who was indeed seldom absent from them, and of whom she could never hope to hear in the solitude, to which she was hastening.

At length, the travellers began to ascend among the Apennines. The immense pine-forests, which, at that period, overhung these mountains, and between which the road wound, excluded all view but of the cliffs aspiring above, except, that, now and then, an opening through the dark woods allowed the eye a momentary glimpse of the country below. The gloom of these shades, their solitary silence, except when the breeze swept over their summits, the tremendous precipices of the mountains, that came partially to the eye, each assisted to raise the solemnity of Emily's feelings into awe; she saw only images of gloomy grandeur, or of dreadful sublimity, around her; other images, equally gloomy and equally terrible, gleamed on her imagination. She was going she scarcely knew whither, under the dominion of a person, from whose arbitrary disposition she had already suffered so much, to marry, perhaps, a man who possessed neither her affection, nor esteem; or to endure, beyond the hope of succour, whatever punishment revenge, and that Italian revenge, might dictate. — The more she considered what might be the motive of the journey, the more she became convinced, that it was for the purpose of concluding her nuptials with Count Morano, with that secrecy, which her resolute resistance had made necessary to the honour, if not to the safety, of Montoni. From the deep solitudes, into which she was emerging, and from the gloomy castle, of which she had heard some mysterious hints, her sick heart recoiled in despair, and she experienced, that, though her mind was already occupied by peculiar distress, it was still alive to the influence of new and local circumstance; why else did she shudder at the idea of this desolate castle?

As the travellers still ascended among the pine forests, steep rose over steep, the mountains seemed to multiply, as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be only the base of another. At length, they reached a little plain, where the drivers stopped to rest the mules, whence a scene of such extent and magnificence opened below, as drew even from Madame Montoni a note of admiration. Emily lost, for a moment, her sorrows, in the immensity of nature. Beyond the amphitheatre of mountains, that stretched below, whose tops appeared as numerous almost, as the waves of the sea, and whose feet were concealed by the forests — extended the *campagna* of Italy, where cities

and rivers, and woods and all the glow of cultivation were mingled in gay confusion. The Adriatic bounded the horizon, into which the Po and the Brenta, after winding through the whole extent of the landscape, poured their fruitful waves. Emily gazed long on the splendours of the world she was quitting, of which the whole magnificence seemed thus given to her sight only to increase her regret on leaving it; for her, Valancourt alone was in that world; to him alone her heart turned, and for him alone fell her bitter tears.

From this sublime scene the travellers continued to ascend among the pines, till they entered a narrow pass of the mountains, which shut out every feature of the distant country, and, in its stead, exhibited only tremendous crags, impending over the road, where no vestige of humanity, or even of vegetation, appeared, except here and there the trunk and scathed branches of an oak, that hung nearly headlong from the rock, into which its strong roots had fastened. This pass, which led into the heart of the Apennine, at length opened to day, and a scene of mountains stretched in long perspective, as wild as any the travellers had yet passed. Still vast pine forests hung upon their base, and crowned the ridgy precipice, that rose perpendicularly from the vale, while, above, the rolling mists caught the sunbeams, and touched their cliffs with all the magical colouring of light and shade. The scene seemed perpetually changing, and its features to assume new forms, as the winding road brought them to the eye in different attitudes; while the shifting vapours, now partially concealing their minuter beauties and now illuminating them with splendid tints, assisted the illusions of the sight.

Though the deep valleys between these mountains were, for the most part, clothed with pines, sometimes an abrupt opening presented a perspective of only barren rocks, with a cataract flashing from their summit among broken cliffs, till its waters, reaching the bottom, foamed along with unceasing fury; and sometimes pastoral scenes exhibited their "green delights" in the narrow vales, smiling amid surrounding horror. There herds and flocks of goats and sheep, browsing under the shade of hanging woods, and the shepherd's little cabin, reared on the margin of a clear stream, presented a sweet picture of repose.

Wild and romantic as were these scenes, their character had far less of the sublime, than had those of the Alps, which guard the entrance of Italy. Emily was often elevated, but seldom felt those emotions of indescribable awe which she had so continually experienced, in her passage over the Alps.

Towards the close of day, the road wound into a deep valley. Mountains, whose shaggy steeps appeared to be inaccessible, almost surrounded it. To the east, a vista opened, that exhibited the Apennines in their darkest horrors; and the long perspective of retiring summits, rising over each other, their ridges clothed with pines, exhibited a stronger image of grandeur, than any that Emily had yet seen. The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending, whose long shadow stretched athwart the valley, but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest, that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full

splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle, that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade, which involved the valley below.

“There,” said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, “is Udolpho.”

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.

The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind, and she almost expected to see banditti start up from under the trees. At length, the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and, soon after, reached the castle gates, where the deep tone of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the fearful emotions, that had assailed Emily. While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice: but the gloom, that overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know, that it was vast, ancient and dreary. From the parts she saw, she judged of the heavy strength and extent of the whole. The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them. The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of a huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam, that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war. — Beyond these all was lost in the obscurity of evening.

While Emily gazed with awe upon the scene, footsteps were heard within the gates, and the undrawing of bolts; after which an ancient servant of the castle appeared, forcing back the huge folds of the portal, to admit his lord. As the carriage wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court, into which she

passed, served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify.

Another gate delivered them into the second court, grass-grown, and more wild than the first, where, as she surveyed through the twilight its desolation — its lofty walls, overtopped with briony, moss and nightshade, and the embattled towers that rose above — long-suffering and murder came to her thoughts. One of those instantaneous and unaccountable convictions, which sometimes conquer even strong minds, impressed her with its horror. The sentiment was not diminished, when she entered an extensive gothic hall, obscured by the gloom of evening, which a light, glimmering at a distance through a long perspective of arches, only rendered more striking. As a servant brought the lamp nearer partial gleams fell upon the pillars and the pointed arches, forming a strong contrast with their shadows, that stretched along the pavement and the walls.

The sudden journey of Montoni had prevented his people from making any other preparations for his reception, than could be had in the short interval, since the arrival of the servant, who had been sent forward from Venice; and this, in some measure, may account for the air of extreme desolation, that everywhere appeared.

The servant, who came to light Montoni, bowed in silence, and the muscles of his countenance relaxed with no symptom of joy. — Montoni noticed the salutation by a slight motion of his hand, and passed on, while his lady, following, and looking round with a degree of surprise and discontent, which she seemed fearful of expressing, and Emily, surveying the extent and grandeur of the hall in timid wonder, approached a marble staircase. The arches here opened to a lofty vault, from the centre of which hung a tripod lamp, which a servant was hastily lighting; and the rich fretwork of the roof, a corridor, leading into several upper apartments, and a painted window, stretching nearly from the pavement to the ceiling of the hall, became gradually visible.

Having crossed the foot of the staircase, and passed through an anteroom, they entered a spacious apartment, whose walls, wainscoted with black larch-wood, the growth of the neighbouring mountains, were scarcely distinguishable from darkness itself. “Bring more light,” said Montoni, as he entered. The servant, setting down his lamp, was withdrawing to obey him, when Madame Montoni observing, that the evening air of this mountainous region was cold, and that she should like a fire, Montoni ordered that wood might be brought.

While he paced the room with thoughtful steps, and Madame Montoni sat silently on a couch, at the upper end of it, waiting till the servant returned, Emily was observing the singular solemnity and desolation of the apartment, viewed, as it now was, by the glimmer of the single lamp, placed near a large Venetian mirror, that duskily reflected the scene, with the tall figure of Montoni passing slowly along, his arms folded, and his countenance shaded by the plume, that waved in his hat.

From the contemplation of this scene, Emily's mind proceeded to the apprehension of what she might suffer in it, till the remembrance of Valancourt, far, far distant, came to her heart, and softened it into sorrow. A heavy sigh escaped her: but, trying to conceal her tears, she walked away to one of the high windows, that opened upon the ramparts, below which, spread the woods she had passed in her approach to the castle. But the nightshade sat deeply on the mountains beyond, and their indented outline alone could be faintly traced on the horizon, where a red streak yet glimmered in the west. The valley between was sunk in darkness.

The scene within, upon which Emily turned on the opening of the door, was scarcely less gloomy. The old servant, who had received them at the gates, now entered, bending under a load of pine branches, while two of Montoni's Venetian servants followed with lights.

"Your *Excellenza* is welcome to the castle," said the old man, as he raised himself from the hearth, where he had laid the wood: "it has been a lonely place a long while; but you will excuse it, Signor, knowing we had but short notice. It is near two years, come next feast of St. Mark, since your *Excellenza* was within these walls."

"You have a good memory, old Carlo" said Montoni: "it is thereabout; and how hast thou contrived to live so long?"

"A-well-a-day, sir, with much ado; the cold winds, that blow through the castle in winter, are almost too much for me; and I thought sometimes of asking your *Excellenza* to let me leave the mountains, and go down into the lowlands. But I don't know how it is — I am loth to quit these old walls I have lived in so long."

"Well, how have you gone on in the castle, since I left it?" said Montoni.

"Why much as usual, Signor, only it wants a good deal of repairing. There is the north tower—some of the battlements have tumbled down, and had liked one day to have knocked my poor wife (God rest her soul!) on the head. Your *Excellenza* must know —"

"Well, but the repairs" interrupted Montoni.

"Aye, the repairs" said Carlo: "a part of the roof of the great hall has fallen in, and all the winds from the mountains rushed through it last winter, and whistled through the whole castle so, that there was no keeping one's self warm, be where one would. There, my wife and I used to sit shivering over a great fire in one corner of the little hall, ready to die with cold, and —"

"But there are no more repairs wanted," said Montoni, impatiently.

"O Lord! Your *Excellenza*, yes — the wall of the rampart has tumbled down in three places; then, the stairs, that lead to the west gallery, have been a long

time so bad, that it is dangerous to go up them; and the passage leading to the great oak chamber, that overhangs the north rampart — one night last winter I ventured to go there by myself, and your *Excellenza* —”

“Well, well, enough of this,” said Montoni, with quickness: “I will talk more with thee tomorrow.”

The fire was now lighted; Carlo swept the hearth, placed chairs, wiped the dust from a large marble table that stood near it, and then left the room.

Montoni and his family drew round the fire. Madame Montoni made several attempts at conversation, but his sullen answers repulsed her, while Emily sat endeavouring to acquire courage enough to speak to him. At length, in a tremulous voice, she said “May I ask, sir, the motive of this sudden journey?” — After a long pause, she recovered sufficient courage to repeat the question.

“It does not suit me to answer enquiries” said Montoni “nor does it become you to make them; time may unfold them all: but I desire I may be no further harassed, and I recommend it to you to retire to your chamber, and to endeavour to adopt a more rational conduct, than that of yielding to fancies, and to a sensibility, which, to call it by the gentlest name, is only a weakness.”

Emily rose to withdraw. “Good night, madam,” said she to her aunt, with an assumed composure, that could not disguise her emotion.

“Good night, my dear,” said Madame Montoni, in a tone of kindness, which her niece had never before heard from her; and the unexpected endearment brought tears to Emily’s eyes. She curtsied to Montoni, and was retiring; “But you do not know the way to your chamber,” said her aunt. Montoni called the servant, who waited in the anteroom, and bade him send Madame Montoni’s woman, with whom, in a few minutes, Emily withdrew.

“Do you know which is my room?” said she to Annette, as they crossed the hall.

“Yes, I believe I do, ma’amselle; but this is such a strange rambling place! I have been lost in it already: they call it the double chamber, over the south rampart, and I went up this great staircase to it. My lady’s room is at the other end of the castle.”

Emily ascended the marble staircase, and came to the corridor, as they passed through which, Annette resumed her chat — “What a wild lonely place this is, ma’am! I shall be quite frightened to live in it. How often, and often have I wished myself in France again! I little thought, when I came with my lady to see the world, that I should ever be shut up in such a place as this, or I would never have left my own country! This way, ma’amselle, down this turning. I can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and, some night or other, I suppose I shall see fairies too, hopping about

in that great old hall, that looks more like a church, with its huge pillars, than anything else.”

“Yes” said Emily, smiling, and glad to escape from more serious thought “if we come to the corridor, about midnight, and look down into the hall, we shall certainly see it illuminated with a thousand lamps, and the fairies tripping in gay circles to the sound of delicious music; for it is in such places as this, you know, that they come to hold their revels. But I am afraid, Annette, you will not be able to pay the necessary penance for such a sight: and, if once they hear your voice, the whole scene will vanish in an instant.”

“O! If you will bear me company, ma’amselle, I will come to the corridor, this very night, and I promise you I will hold my tongue; it shall not be my fault if the show vanishes. — But do you think they will come?”

“I cannot promise that with certainty, but I will venture to say, it will not be your fault if the enchantment should vanish.”

“Well, ma’amselle, that is saying more than I expected of you: but I am not so much afraid of fairies, as of ghosts, and they say there are a plentiful many of them about the castle: now I should be frightened to death, if I should chance to see any of them. But hush! ma’amselle, walk softly! I have thought, several times, something passed by me.”

“Ridiculous!” said Emily “You must not indulge such fancies.”

“O ma’am! they are not fancies, for aught I know; Benedetto says these dismal galleries and halls are fit for nothing but ghosts to live in; and I verily believe, if I *live* long in them I shall turn to one myself!”

“I hope” said Emily “you will not suffer Signor Montoni to hear of these weak fears; they would highly displease him.”

“What, you know then, ma’amselle, all about it!” rejoined Annette. “No, no, I do know better than to do so; though, if the Signor can sleep sound, nobody else in the castle has any right to lie awake, I am sure.” Emily did not appear to notice this remark.

“Down this passage, ma’amselle; this leads to a back staircase. O! If I see anything, I shall be frightened out of my wits!”

“That will scarcely be possible,” said Emily smiling, as she followed the winding of the passage, which opened into another gallery: and then Annette, perceiving that she had missed her way, while she had been so eloquently haranguing on ghosts and fairies, wandered about through other passages and galleries, till, at length, frightened by their intricacies and desolation, she called aloud for assistance: but they were beyond the hearing of the servants, who were on the other side of the castle, and Emily now opened the door of a chamber on the left.

“O! do not go in there, ma’amselle” said Annette “you will only lose yourself further.”

“Bring the light forward” said Emily “we may possibly find our way through these rooms.”

Annette stood at the door, in an attitude of hesitation, with the light held up to show the chamber, but the feeble rays spread through not half of it. “Why do you hesitate?” said Emily, “let me see whither this room leads.”

Annette advanced reluctantly. It opened into a suite of spacious and ancient apartments, some of which were hung with tapestry, and others wainscoted with cedar and black larch-wood. What furniture there was, seemed to be almost as old as the rooms, and retained an appearance of grandeur, though covered with dust, and dropping to pieces with the damp, and with age.

“How cold these rooms are, ma’amselle!” said Annette: “Nobody has lived in them for many, many years, they say. Do let us go.”

“They may open upon the great staircase, perhaps” said Emily, passing on till she came to a chamber, hung with pictures, and took the light to examine that of a soldier on horseback in a field of battle. — He was darting his spear upon a man, who lay under the feet of the horse, and who held up one hand in a supplicating attitude. The soldier, whose beaver was up, regarded him with a look of vengeance, and the countenance, with that expression, struck Emily as resembling Montoni. She shuddered, and turned from it. Passing the light hastily over several other pictures, she came to one concealed by a veil of black silk. The singularity of the circumstance struck her, and she stopped before it, wishing to remove the veil, and examine what could thus carefully be concealed, but somewhat wanting courage. “Holy Virgin! what can this mean?” exclaimed Annette. “This is surely the picture they told me of at Venice.”

“What picture?” said Emily.

“Why a picture — a picture” replied Annette, hesitatingly — “but I never could make out exactly what it was about, either.”

“Remove the veil, Annette.”

“What! I, ma’amselle! — I! Not for the world!”

Emily, turning round, saw Annette’s countenance grow pale. “And pray, what have you heard of this picture, to terrify you so, my good girl?” said she.

“Nothing, ma’amselle: I have heard nothing, only let us find our way out.”

“Certainly: but I wish first to examine the picture; take the light, Annette, while I lift the veil.” Annette took the light, and immediately walked away with

it, disregarding Emily's call to stay, who, not choosing to be left alone in the dark chamber, at length followed her. "What is the reason of this, Annette?" said Emily, when she overtook her, "what have you heard concerning that picture, which makes you so unwilling to stay when I bid you?"

"I don't know what is the reason, ma'amselle," replied Annette, "nor anything about the picture, only I have heard there is something very dreadful belonging to it — and that it has been covered up in black *ever since* — and that nobody has looked at it for a great many years — and it somehow has to do with the owner of this castle before Signor Montoni came to the possession of it — and —"

"Well, Annette" said Emily, smiling "I perceive it is as you say — that you know nothing about the picture."

"No, nothing, indeed, ma'amselle, for they made me promise never to tell:— but —"

"Well" rejoined Emily, who observed that she was struggling between her inclination to reveal a secret, and her apprehension for the consequence, "I will enquire no further —"

"No, pray, ma'am, do not."

"Lest you should tell all," interrupted Emily.

Annette blushed, and Emily smiled, and they passed on to the extremity of this suite of apartments, and found themselves, after some further perplexity, once more at the top of the marble staircase, where Annette left Emily, while she went to call one of the servants of the castle to show them to the chamber, for which they had been seeking.

While she was absent, Emily's thoughts returned to the picture; an unwillingness to tamper with the integrity of a servant, had checked her enquiries on this subject, as well as concerning some alarming hints, which Annette had dropped respecting Montoni; though her curiosity was entirely awakened, and she had perceived, that her questions might easily be answered. She was now, however, inclined to go back to the apartment and examine the picture; but the loneliness of the hour and of the place, with the melancholy silence that reigned around her, conspired with a certain degree of awe, excited by the mystery attending this picture, to prevent her. She determined, however, when daylight should have reanimated her spirits, to go thither and remove the veil. As she leaned from the corridor, over the staircase, and her eyes wandered round, she again observed, with wonder, the vast strength of the walls, now somewhat decayed, and the pillars of solid marble, that rose from the hall, and supported the roof.

A servant now appeared with Annette, and conducted Emily to her chamber, which was in a remote part of the castle, and at the very end of the corridor,

from whence the suite of apartments opened, through which they had been wandering. The lonely aspect of her room made Emily unwilling that Annette should leave her immediately, and the dampness of it chilled her with more than fear. She begged Caterina, the servant of the castle, to bring some wood and light a fire.

“Aye, lady, it’s many a year since a fire was lighted here” said Caterina.

“You need not tell us that, good woman,” said Annette; “every room in the castle feels like a well. I wonder how you contrive to live here; for my part, I wish myself at Venice again.” Emily waved her hand for Caterina to fetch the wood.

“I wonder, ma’am, why they call this the double chamber?” said Annette, while Emily surveyed it in silence and saw that it was lofty and spacious, like the others she had seen, and, like many of them, too, had its walls lined with dark larch wood. The bed and other furniture was very ancient, and had an air of gloomy grandeur, like all that she had seen in the castle. One of the high casements, which she opened, overlooked a rampart, but the view beyond was hid in darkness.

In the presence of Annette, Emily tried to support her spirits, and to restrain the tears, which, every now and then, came to her eyes. She wished much to enquire when Count Morano was expected at the castle, but an unwillingness to ask unnecessary questions, and to mention family concerns to a servant, withheld her. Meanwhile, Annette’s thoughts were engaged upon another subject: she dearly loved the marvellous, and had heard of a circumstance, connected with the castle, that highly gratified this taste. Having been enjoined not to mention it, her inclination to tell it was so strong, that she was every instant on the point of speaking what she had heard. Such a strange circumstance, too, and to be obliged to conceal it, was a severe punishment; but she knew, that Montoni might impose one much severer, and she feared to incur it by offending him.

Caterina now brought the wood, and its bright blaze dispelled, for a while, the gloom of the chamber. She told Annette, that her lady had enquired for her, and Emily was once again left to her own sad reflections. Her heart was not yet hardened against the stern manners of Montoni, and she was nearly as much shocked now, as she had been when she first witnessed them. The tenderness and affection, to which she had been accustomed, till she lost her parents, had made her particularly sensible to any degree of unkindness, and such a reverse as this no apprehension had prepared her to support.

To call off her attention from subjects, that pressed heavily on her spirits, she rose and again examined her room and its furniture. As she walked round it, she passed a door, that was not quite shut, and, perceiving, that it was not the one, through which she entered, she brought the light forward to discover whither it led. She opened it, and, going forward, had nearly fallen down a steep, narrow staircase that wound from it, between two stone walls. She wished to know to what it led, and was the more anxious, since it communicated so

immediately with her apartment; but, in the present state of her spirits, she wanted courage to venture into the darkness alone. Closing the door, therefore, she endeavoured to fasten it, but, upon further examination, perceived, that it had no bolts on the chamber side, though it had two on the other. By placing a heavy chair against it, she in some measure remedied the defect; yet she was still alarmed at the thought of sleeping in this remote room alone, with a door opening she knew not whither, and which could not be perfectly fastened on the inside. Sometimes she wished to entreat of Madame Montoni, that Annette might have leave to remain with her all night, but was deterred by an apprehension of betraying what would be thought childish fears, and by an unwillingness to increase the apt terrors of Annette.

Her gloomy reflections were, soon after, interrupted by a footstep in the corridor, and she was glad to see Annette enter with some supper, sent by Madame Montoni. Having a table near the fire, she made the good girl sit down and sup with her; and, when their little repast was over, Annette, encouraged by her kindness and stirring the wood into a blaze, drew her chair upon the hearth, nearer to Emily, and said — “Did you ever hear, ma’amselle, of the strange accident, that made the Signor lord of this castle?”

“What wonderful story have you now to tell?” said Emily, concealing the curiosity, occasioned by the mysterious hints she had formerly heard on that subject.

“I have heard all about it, ma’amselle” said Annette, looking round the chamber and drawing closer to Emily; “Benedetto told it me as we travelled together: says he, ‘Annette, you don’t know about this castle here, that we are going to?’ ‘No,’ says I, ‘Mr. Benedetto, pray what do you know?’ But, ma’amselle, you can keep a secret, or I would not tell it you for the world; for I promised never to tell, and they say, that the Signor does not like to have it talked of.”

“If you promised to keep this secret,” said Emily, “you do right not to mention it.”

Annette paused a moment, and then said, “O, but to you, ma’amselle, to you I may tell it safely, I know.”

Emily smiled, “I certainly shall keep it as faithful as yourself, Annette.”

Annette replied very gravely, that would do, and proceeded — “This castle, you must know, ma’amselle, is very old, and very strong, and has stood out many sieges as they say. Now it was not Signor Montoni’s always, nor his father’s; no; but, by some law or other, it was to come to the Signor, if the lady died unmarried.”

“What lady?” said Emily.

“I am not come to that yet” replied Annette “it is the lady I am going to tell you about, ma’amselle: but, as I was saying, this lady lived in the castle, and

had everything very grand about her, as you may suppose, ma'amselle. The Signor used often to come to see her, and was in love with her, and offered to marry her; for, though he was somehow related, that did not signify. But she was in love with somebody else, and would not have him, which made him very angry, as they say, and you know, ma'amselle, what an ill-looking gentleman he is, when he is angry. Perhaps she saw him in a passion, and therefore would not have him. But, as I was saying, she was very melancholy and unhappy, and all that, for a long while, and — Holy Virgin! what noise is that? did not you hear a sound, ma'amselle?"

"It was only the wind" said Emily "but do come to the end of your story."

"As I was saying — O, where was I? — as I was saying — she was very melancholy and unhappy a long while, and used to walk about upon the terrace, there, under the windows, by herself, and cry so! it would have done your heart good to hear her. That is — I don't mean good, but it would have made you cry too, as they tell me."

"Well, but, Annette, do tell me the substance of your tale."

"All in good time, ma'am; all this I heard before at Venice, but what is to come I never heard till today. This happened a great many years ago, when Signor Montoni was quite a young man. The lady — they called her Signora Laurentini, was very handsome, but she used to be in great passions, too, sometimes, as well as the Signor. Finding he could not make her listen to him — what does he do, but leave the castle, and never comes near it for a long time! but it was all one to her; she was just as unhappy whether he was here or not, till one evening, Holy St. Peter! ma'amselle," cried Annette, "look at that lamp, see how blue it burns!" She looked fearfully round the chamber.

"Ridiculous girl!" said Emily, "why will you indulge those fancies? Pray let me hear the end of your story, I am weary."

Annette still kept her eyes on the lamp, and proceeded in a lower voice. "It was one evening, they say, at the latter end of the year, it might be about the middle of September, I suppose, or the beginning of October; nay, for that matter, it might be November, for that, too, is the latter end of the year, but that I cannot say for certain, because they did not tell me for certain themselves. However, it was at the latter end of the year, this grand lady walked out of the castle into the woods below, as she had often done before, all alone, only her maid was with her. The wind blew cold, and strewed the leaves about, and whistled dismally among those great old chesnut trees, that we passed, ma'amselle, as we came to the castle — for Benedetto showed me the trees as he was talking — the wind blew cold, and her woman would have persuaded her to return: but all would not do, for she was fond of walking in the woods, at evening time, and, if the leaves were falling about her, so much the better.

"Well, they saw her go down among the woods, but night came, and she did not return: ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock came, and no lady! Well,

the servants thought to be sure, some accident had befallen her, and they went out to seek her. They searched all night long, but could not find her, or any trace of her; and, from that day to this, ma'amselle, she has never been heard of."

"Is this true, Annette?" said Emily, in much surprise.

"True, ma'am!" said Annette, with a look of horror, "yes, it is true, indeed. But they do say," she added, lowering her voice, "they do say, that the Signora has been seen, several times since, walking in the woods and about the castle in the night: several of the old servants, who remained here some time after, declare they saw her; and, since then, she has been seen by some of the vassals, who have happened to be in the castle, at night. Carlo, the old steward, could tell such things, they say, if he would."

"How contradictory is this, Annette!" said Emily "You say nothing has been since known of her, and yet she has been seen!"

"But all this was told me for a great secret" rejoined Annette, without noticing the remark "and I am sure, ma'am, you would not hurt either me or Benedetto, so much as to go and tell it again." Emily remained silent, and Annette repeated her last sentence.

"You have nothing to fear from my indiscretion" replied Emily "and let me advise you, my good Annette, be discreet yourself, and never mention what you have just told me to any other person. Signor Montoni, as you say, may be angry if he hears of it. But what inquiries were made concerning the lady?"

"O! A great deal, indeed, ma'amselle, for the Signor laid claim to the castle directly, as being the next heir, and they said, that is, the judges, or the senators, or somebody of that sort, said, he could not take possession of it till so many years were gone by, and then, if, after all, the lady could not be found, why she would be as good as dead, and the castle would be his own; and so it is his own. But the story went round, and many strange reports were spread, so very strange, ma'amselle, that I shall not tell them."

"That is stranger still, Annette" said Emily, smiling, and rousing herself from her reverie. "But, when Signora Laurentini was afterwards seen in the castle, did nobody speak to her?"

"Speak — speak to her!" cried Annette, with a look of terror; "no, to be sure."

"And why not?" rejoined Emily, willing to hear further.

"Holy Mother! Speak to a spirit!"

"But what reason had they to conclude it was a spirit, unless they had approached, and spoken to it?"

“O ma’amselle, I cannot tell. How can you ask such shocking questions? But nobody ever saw it come in, or go out of the castle; and it was in one place now, and then the next minute in quite another part of the castle; and then it never spoke, and, if it was alive, what should it do in the castle if it never spoke? Several parts of the castle have never been gone into since, they say, for that very reason.”

“What, because it never spoke?” said Emily, trying to laugh away the fears that began to steal upon her.

“No, ma’amselle, no;” replied Annette, rather angrily “but because something has been seen there. They say, too, there is an old chapel adjoining the west side of the castle, where, any time at midnight, you may hear such groans! — It makes one shudder to think of them! — And strange sights have been seen there —”

“Pr’ythee, Annette, no more of these silly tales” said Emily.

“Silly tales, ma’amselle! O, but I will tell you one story about this, if you please, that Caterina told me. It was one cold winter’s night that Caterina (she often came to the castle then, she says, to keep old Carlo and his wife company, and so he recommended her afterwards to the Signor, and she has lived here ever since) Caterina was sitting with them in the little hall, says Carlo, ‘I wish we had some of those figs to roast, that lie in the store closet, but it is a long way off, and I am loath to fetch them; do, Caterina,’ says he, ‘for you are young and nimble, do bring us some, the fire is in nice trim for roasting them; they lie,’ says he, ‘in such a corner of the store-room, at the end of the north gallery; here, take the lamp,’ says he, ‘and mind, as you go up the great staircase, that the wind, through the roof, does not blow it out.’ So, with that, Caterina took the lamp — Hush! ma’amselle, I surely heard a noise!”

Emily, whom Annette had now infected with her own terrors, listened attentively; but everything was still, and Annette proceeded:

“Caterina went to the north-gallery, that is the wide gallery we passed, ma’am, before we came to the corridor, here. As she went with the lamp in her hand, thinking of nothing at all — There, again!” cried Annette suddenly — “I heard it again! — It was not fancy, ma’amselle!”

“Hush!” said Emily, trembling. They listened, and, continuing to sit quite still, Emily heard a low knocking against the wall. It came repeatedly. Annette then screamed loudly, and the chamber door slowly opened. — It was Caterina, come to tell Annette, that her lady wanted her. Emily, though she now perceived who it was, could not immediately overcome her terror; while Annette, half laughing, half crying, scolded Caterina heartily for thus alarming them; and was also terrified lest what she had told had been overheard. — Emily, whose mind was deeply impressed by the chief circumstance of Annette’s relation, was unwilling to be left alone, in the present state of her spirits; but, to avoid offending

Madame Montoni, and betraying her own weakness, she struggled to overcome the illusions of fear, and dismissed Annette for the night.

When she was alone, her thoughts recurred to the strange history of Signora Laurentini and then to her own strange situation, in the wild and solitary mountains of a foreign country, in the castle, and the power of a man, to whom, only a few preceding months, she was an entire stranger; who had already exercised a usurped authority over her, and whose character she now regarded, with a degree of terror, apparently justified by the fears of others. She knew, that he had invention equal to the conception and talents to the execution of any project, and she greatly feared he had a heart too void of feeling to oppose the perpetration of whatever his interest might suggest. She had long observed the unhappiness of Madame Montoni, and had often been witness to the stern and contemptuous behaviour she received from her husband. To these circumstances, which conspired to give her just cause for alarm, were now added those thousand nameless terrors, which exist only in active imaginations, and which set reason and examination equally at defiance.

Emily remembered all that Valancourt had told her, on the eve of her departure from Languedoc, respecting Montoni, and all that he had said to dissuade her from venturing on the journey. His fears had often since appeared to her prophetic — now they seemed confirmed. Her heart, as it gave her back the image of Valancourt, mourned in vain regret, but reason soon came with a consolation which, though feeble at first, acquired vigour from reflection. She considered, that, whatever might be her sufferings, she had withheld from involving him in misfortune, and that, whatever her future sorrows could be, she was, at least, free from self-reproach.

Her melancholy was assisted by the hollow sighings of the wind along the corridor and round the castle. The cheerful blaze of the wood had long been extinguished, and she sat with her eyes fixed on the dying embers, till a loud gust, that swept through the corridor, and shook the doors and casements, alarmed her, for its violence had moved the chair she had placed as a fastening, and the door, leading to the private staircase stood half open. Her curiosity and her fears were again awakened. She took the lamp to the top of the steps, and stood hesitating whether to go down; but again the profound stillness and the gloom of the place awed her, and, determining to enquire further, when daylight might assist the search, she closed the door, and placed against it a stronger guard.

She now retired to her bed, leaving the lamp burning on the table; but its gloomy light, instead of dispelling her fear, assisted it; for, by its uncertain rays, she almost fancied she saw shapes flit past her curtains and glide into the remote obscurity of her chamber. — The castle clock struck one before she closed her eyes to sleep.