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The Mysterious Murder; or, the Usurper of Naples:
An Original Romance. To Which is Prefixed, The
Nocturnal Assassin; or, Spanish Jealousy.

Isaac Crookenden

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**MYSTERIOUS
MURDER**

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THE
MYSTERIOUS MURDER;

OR, THE
USURPER OF NAPLES:

AN ORIGINAL ROMANCE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
THE
NOCTURNAL ASSASSIN;
OR,
SPANISH JEALOUSY.

BY ISAAC CROOKENDEN,
AUTHOR OF FATAL SECRETS, &c.

*"What need I fear thee? and yet I'll make Assurance
Double sure: he shall not live! that I may tell
Pale-hearted Fear it lies, and sleep in spite of Thunder!"*

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON;
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED,
BY J. LEE,
24, HALF-MOON-STREET, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT:
AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS.

The Mysterious Murder ;

OR,

THE USURPER OF NAPLES.

ABOUT the middle of the fourteenth century, Lusigni de Montarno had his estate in the vicinity of Naples. It stood in one of the most romantic spots in nature ; being seated on a rocky eminence, and sheltered on one side by an immense forest, while the front unfolded a most extensive range of country, where, in many places, “beauty slept in horror’s lap :” the blue waters of the Mediterranean closed the prospect, and the intermediate scene was diversified by many a winding stream, whose glassy surface glittered with the brilliant reflexes of day’s illustrious orb.

Lusigni was a man of a morose countenance, marked with the deep lines of habitual discontent : he was of a proud, revengeful, and austere disposition ; haughtily conscious of his superiority in point of birth and affluence. In his general character he was perfectly paradoxical : for some days he would be so reserved and secret, as scarcely to utter a word, confining himself to his chamber, and consuming the slow-pacing hours in deep and uninterrupted thinking : then suddenly starting from his reverie, he would invite all the neighbouring nobility to his castle : and spend several successive days in luxurious festivity and riotous mirth.

To those who are acquainted with human nature, these actions of the Signor will appear either indicative of a disordered brain; or as the secret stings of conscience operating on a conviction of former guilt: which of these two conjectures are true, will probably appear in the following pages.

The family of Lusigni consisted of one only daughter, who was just past eighteen—Estaphana was her name; and, among many favorites of nature, she shone as conspicuous as the luminary of night amidst the inferior glitter of heaven's glowing gems; but there was an air of tender melancholy in her beautiful countenance, for which nobody could pretend to account: on the contrary, all who knew her imagined that happiness was at her beck, because they knew she was the heiress of beauty and fortune, a conclusion very often made in the present day, and all of a-piece with the following absurdity: viz. That happiness has nothing to do with the mind; but is a modification of matter, and capable of being separated and scattered about like gold and silver. We shall ourselves explain the cause of Estaphana's dejection, by appealing to a circumstance which took place about three months before we introduced this amiable girl to the reader's acquaintance:—On the day that she completed her eighteenth year, the Signor gave a grand entertainment, not only to the surrounding nobility, but to some of the neighbouring peasantry.

After a most splendid supper, the company proceeded to dancing; and, in this exercise, a youth distinguished himself so much in the just celerity of his movements, and the surprising exactness of his steps, that the admiring eyes of the whole assembly were rivetted on him, as if held by enchantment; when he concluded, a burst of applause run round the vaulted hall, which instantly improved the natural colour of the dancer into a glow of self-complacency; at the same time that it extracted a short involuntary sigh from the breast of Estaphana, and planted a deeper bloom on her cheek. The Signor himself could not but notice the sprightliness of the handsome youth: "Who is that young man?" said he to a nobleman standing by him; (Estaphana listened eagerly.) "It is the young Belfoni, who has every thing to

recommend him but riches." Estaphana sighed deeper than before ; but saw, to her surprise, the Signor turn pale, and abruptly change the conversation.

Exactly at one o'clock the hall-doors were thrown open, and the mirthful company renewed their midnight gambols in the beautiful and romantic woods, which were purposely lighted up with variegated lamps, the radiance of which burst with full splendor on the scene ; and almost realized those fabled scenes in ancient story, where favored mortals tread the airy regions of magic. Indeed, the vivacious party actually went so far as to adopt the mythological characters of the Grecian deities. Estaphana was the Daphne of the shades ; and, whether from fate or accident we know not, but Belfoni played the part of Apollo ; and with more success than the disappointed god, as the sequel will shew. To heighten the enchantments of the evening, musical instruments were so disposed as to be touched by unseen hands: the ravishing strains floated in dying cadence through the air. Here and there

*" Satyrs and Sylvan nymphs were seen
Sporting beneath their alleys green."*

Indeed, the whole festivity sweetly exemplified our charming poet's beautiful description of Joy and Love:

*" Last came Joy's extatic trial,
He with viny crown advancing,
First to the lively pipe his hand address ;
But soon he saw the brisk awakening viol,
Whose sweet entrancing voice he lov'd the best :
They would have said, who heard the strain,
They saw in Tempe's vale her native maids
Amidst the festive sounding shades
To some unwearied minstrel dancing :
While as his flying fingers kiss'd the lyre
Love fram'd with Mirth a gay fantastic round,
(Loose were her tresses seen, her zone unbound) ;
And he, amidst his frolic play,
As if he would the charming air repay,
Shook thousand odours from his dewy wings."*

COLLINS.

While this gay assembly footed it away on the green, the economy of the dance often permitted the hands of Belfoni and Estaphana to come in contact: at such times, O! how his nerves acknowledged the irresistible magic of her touch! a nameless sensation shot through his whole frame: The eyes of them both now began to converse in a language peculiar to those intelligent organs; and their harmonizing souls needed no other interpreter to explain their reciprocal feelings: such an exact correspondence has nature maintained between the *eye* and the *mind*. Involuntary sighs issued from the breast of each; but with that caution, which characterizes genuine love, they now began to guard against suspicion; so that the dance happily concluded without any one of the company guessing at their situation.

Fortune seemed resolved to favor Belfoni that night; but, alas! it was only to set a keener edge on his future anguish. He was the only man who preserved the esteem of Estaphana by refraining to drink to excess: and this very circumstance naturally heightened the sentimental character of those sensations she already felt for him.

As the company soon began to form select parties of conversation, Belfoni had better opportunities of particularizing his discourse: and not long after, owing to the riotous confusion which the general inebriety had occasioned, he found himself seated alone with her in one of the beautiful pavilions. They were both agitated, and Estaphana was going to rise, when Belfoni said, "In such seasons as these, Signora, when the fancy is replete with images of mirth and gaiety, yet the contemplative mind finds pleasure in withdrawing a moment from the noisy throng; and reflection asks the heart whether it can be satisfied with such superficial delights." He sighed as he spoke; and, whether from sympathy, or from a conviction of the truth of the sentiment, Estaphana sighed too. Nothing is more true, "continued Belfoni, "than that the human mind is ever on the wing after happiness: alas! how seldom is it found! and how frequently does it appear in the shape of some amiable object, from which nature, by denying us those requisites which would alone deserve it, has for ever debarred us."

The sorrowful emphasis which accompanied these last words, together with an involuntary trembling which seized his voice as he concluded, struck the very soul of Estaphana. Her sympathetic heart told her that Belfoni's words could apply to none but herself; this was a proof, not of her *vanity*, but of her *innocence*: for whatever we love, it is natural to hope will love us again: besides although it might seem that Belfoni's words were ambiguous; yet the language of his eyes was more legible. The reply of Estaphana to his last expressions, was executed in such a disjointed manner; filled so many monosyllables, and tautological repetitions, and such unsuccessful attempts to give it a general turn: that its want of eloquence was the very thing that rendered it *too* eloquent; agreeable to that maxim of the amorous poet:

"And nonsense shall be eloquent in love."

We might fill at least five pages more, were we to relate all the steps that our hero took to come to an eclaireissement with Estaphana; who, notwithstanding all her delicate subterfuges, fully owned that Belfoni had secured her esteem, and partially acknowledged he had made an impression on her heart; but however pleasing such a progressive intimacy was to them, we are afraid the recital will prove rather tedious to the reader, and shall therefore hasten on to more important events.

From this celebrated festival, Estaphana must date the origin of that melancholy langour which dwelt on her features; occasioned, no doubt, by a consideration of those mountaneous obstacles, which she knew would impede her union with Belfoni. —That youth was supposed to be the son of an old man, who lived not far from Lusigni's castle. He was at this time just turned of twenty, and was beloved by the whole neighbourhood, for his fine proportionable figure, the masculine beauty of his face; but more for the natural kindness and affability of his temper. Indeed, some went so far as to hint that Belfoni was the proper owner of the castle; and that Lusigni was no better than an usurper: the circulation of this tale, however, as he had no proof of its truth, he nobly discouraged; yet he sometimes could not help

thinking that nature had originally assigned him a different station from that he filled at present; and, when he thought of Estaphana, he wished he had been born in a more elevated sphere. He had seen her but once and that had proved to be *once* too often: "O that I had not seen her at all;" sighed he, "or that I was permitted to gaze on her for ever!" However he sought in vain an opportunity to see her again, and, as his heart was compelled to seek relief *some way*, he wrote, her a letter, which shall be unfolded to the reader when we come to speak of Estaphana.

In the interim love began to rob Belfoni's cheek of its rosy bloom: he had been in the habit of strolling through that part of the forest, which stretched itself round the castle walls, in order to be as near the idol of his affections as possible. One night he was taking his mournful ramble as usual, when he came to an angle of the building, which he before, but very superficially observed; looking up, he discerned to his surprise a light streaming through a small window; and in the next moment a voice like harmony itself, sung a mournfully dying air, which might infuse sensibility even into the breast of stoicism itself: what then did our hero feel, who was a warm impassioned lover, and who instantly recognized the enchanting voice of Estaphana? The deep sigh that burst from his heart, suspended the song, and made the lovely songstress look from the window: the moon enabled her to distinguish the features of her lover; and the first idea that rushed into her mind was the letter she received from him: a sense of delicacy made her start back involuntary; but a superior sensation impelled her again, as suddenly, to the window.

The heart of Belfoni seemed as if it would fly up to meet her; a sudden impulse made him spread his arms and elate his breast toward her, while he eagerly exclaimed, "Estaphana! my sweet Estaphana! what agonies I have endured since last I saw you!—and do my eyes once more behold that face so dear to my heart! O! how shall I express my feelings!" — "Belfoni!" answered she, "I will not again affect to misunderstand you; nor will I conceal that your virtues have made my heart take a decided interest in your fate: but (O how shall I speak it?) *I never can be*

yours !" Belfoni staggered, as if struck to the heart. "I am at this moment confined, by my father, in this turret, because I refuse to give my hand to the Duke de Savelli."

After a pause, Belfoni replied, " My Estaphana, these cruel tidings have dashed the transport which your former words began to inspire ; and can you then tamely submit to have the rights of nature so grossly violated ? surely not ! O my Estaphana !—" He was going on, but at this moment he thought he heard a rustling among the trees, and looking round, he discerned a figure glide along and disappear suddenly. Their discourse was now conducted in a lower voice, and, after much difficulty, Belfoni obtained a promise from her, that she would escape with him from her tyrannic father to some happy rural spot, where they might live a life of Arcadian bliss ; till the relenting Lusigni should sanction, with his smiles, their mutual love. They then took an affectionate leave of each other, not however till the sky had become overcast ; in a little time flashes of lightening darted from the clouds, and the thunder grumbled like the roaring of the celestial lion. Torrents of rain poured from the gaping clouds, the darkness increased, and Belfoni frequently stumbled over unseen roots of trees ; and at length he stepped on something which proved to be a trap-door, for it precipitated him several feet into the earth, and instantly flew up again as if by a spring—Chaos itself was not darker than the place where Belfoni now found himself.

He had been stunned by the fall, but as soon as recollection returned, he eagerly groped for an outlet ; and, while thus employed, his hand encountered an object, which, for awhile, lulled every other sensation to sleep ; but *horror* unfixed his hair, and made every nerve shrink from the ghastly touch ! In short, he put his hand on the cold clammy, half-consumed face of a corpse. Such a shocking object, and in such a dismal place, opened our hero's mind to reflections of the most agonizing nature ; a sort of desperation urged him to make a second effort to manumit himself. As he passed his hand along the walls, he touched cold iron ; he found it to be a large lock ; luckily a chasm above afforded room for the insertion of his hand ; and placing his knee upon the

projecting part of the lock, and making a sudden exertion of his body, he attained a sufficient elevation to look through the opening. He discerned, to his astonishment, Lusigni kneeling before a little ivory crucifix, placed on a small square table, on each end of which was a lamp and dagger. Belfoni halloed as loud as he could for deliverance; Lusigni started in amaze, and shot round an angle of the passage at the very same instant our hero's knee slipped from the lock, and he fell to the ground! However, he did not stay here long; for Lusigni soon appeared, and sternly commanded him to follow through the passages. After severely interrogating him as to the manner of his coming there, he conducted him through various turnings, windings, and ascents, (pointing a dagger all the way to his breast) 'till he secured him in a dungeon; and, having strongly barricaded the door, left him to his meditations.

At present, we shall leave him too; and carry the reader back a little, in order to account for the appearance of Estaphana in the turret: A week or two after the festival, her confidential maid gave her the following letter from Belfoni:

“*Amiable Estaphana,*

When the eye can no longer satiate itself by gazing on a beloved object, how natural it is for the heart to command the hand to transcribe its feelings upon paper!—transcribe its feelings, did I say? O, this is impossible! I can truly say, mine are indescribable: Ah! how dull and languid every thing appears, unenlivened by your presence:—Surely Nature has produced you as a specimen of what she can do!—Is there not that charming exactness, that exquisite softness, that bewitching je ne sçai quoy of beauty in your face, by which perfection itself is ascertained? But O! your eyes, Estaphana! Heaven has dipped those beauteous balls in its own liquid blue: how shall I explain my feelings when they bend on me their soft expressive light; when my soul sweetly expires under the overpowering splendor. There fate maintains its awful seat and divides with love the glory of your numerous conquests! O! why has nature made you so faultless? did ever such a rich profusion of

beauty meet before in one person? surely not: Even your very idea presents my very fancy with its richest banquet; but your face gives my heart its dearest alarm; and love's sweet enchantress heaves all her extacies from Estaphana's sacred bosom.

Fernando Belfoni."

It must be owned that this letter was conceived in the true spirit of love; and Estaphana could not doubt that Belfoni was inspired with a genuine passion: the delight she felt in the indulgence of this idea, was inexpressible. She frequently said to herself, "Belfoni loves me! ravishing thought!" She imagined she should never know sorrow and trouble again; alas! how did her young and inexperienced heart deceive her!

A few days after the receipt of this letter, Lusigni informed his daughter that the Duke de Savelli had professed himself enamoured of her, and had made proposals of marriage. This news afflicted Estaphana so much, that, for a few minutes, she was unable to utter a word; at length she summoned courage enough to tell her father that the Duke's addresses were painful to her, and supplicated him to have pity on her, and not to sacrifice the happiness of his daughter at the shrine of wealth and ambition. Instead of softening the rigors of the relentless Signor, this innocent petition called forth all that was malignant in his nature. He raved, cursed, and swore like a fiend red-hot from the sulfurous chambers of hell! Estaphana, frightened almost out of her senses, dropped on her knees at her father's feet, and caught hold of his cloak; but he spurned the lovely suppliant with such brutal violence that she fell with force on the floor, and remained a few moments void of sense and motion: while the barbarous Signor, without taking the least notice of her exquisite distress, rushed into another apartment to meditate on what measures he should take to induce her to comply with his designs.

We have before asserted that Lusigni was naturally proud in his disposition; and, to gratify this passion, he scrupled not to sacrifice his *conscience*: for, he determined, whatever might be the consequence, that Estaphana should marry the Duke. To accomplish this unwarrantable purpose, he alternately threatened

and soothed her ; but she could not be brought to sign the death-warrant of her own happiness ; though, when Lusigni attacked her with kindness, her peace was more endangered than by all his menaces. At length his anger at her obstinacy, was roused to fury, and he confined her in a small turret in the castle, till she should consent to marry the Duke. Her confidential maid was allowed to attend on her, and she, in a great measure, deceived the *ennui* of imprisonment by having recourse to a library in her apartment : for reading was an employment of which she was passionately fond. Often did she read and weep over Belfoni's letter : " Ah, Belfoni ! " would she say, " how little do you think what I suffer through my affection for *you* ! Had you not been in existence, perhaps I might have conquered my aversion to Savelli ; but your sudden appearance has forced me to make such a comparison of your several merits as must for ever turn the scale in your favour, and which makes me approach nearer and nearer to the very *nadir* of misery, in proportion as I strive to obey the will of my father ! and yet, perhaps," she added, pausing, " the time is now come, when, to prove myself worthy of your esteem, I ought entirely to relinquish you." This certainly was a very refined sentiment ; but the whispers of her heart told her it was impossible to act up to it.

Her father, in a few days, desired to know her final determination respecting the Duke, and she once more rejected him as a husband : in consequence of which, Lusigni, with a tremendous oath, declared that, within four days, she should be compelled to unite her fate with him in the chapel in the castle.

When he left her, the Duke de Savelli, as might be expected, wished to know the result of their conference ; and, notwithstanding the palliating disguise which the Signor threw over her refusal, the pride of her noble admirer felt a severe shock at the unalterable dislike she had conceived for him. The scheme of her father to terrify her into compliance, he saw would be ineffectual, and he secretly resolved to adopt a different measure ; at the same time he *apparently* entered into Lusigni's plan of forcing her to the chapel.

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some openings in a wall. The man was evidently alarmed, and hasted to find a trap-door, which he remembered he had ascended; having found it, he reached the bottom, took his way along another passage, the end of which, by a short steep ascent delivered him into the woods. He now unbound Estaphana, placed her on a ready-prepared horse, and mounting behind her, set off at a rate as if he meant to dispute swiftness with *Pegasus* himself.

Tears and supplications had no more effect on this man, than the declamations of Demostenes had upon the raging ocean: he had probably been before, engaged in similar transactions; for we take this opportunity of informing the reader, that it was one of the Duke's servant's, who had seized Estaphana; and he was now conveying her whither he was ordered. The heavens themselves disapproved of the dark design: an universal blackness covered the face of the sky; now and then the vivid flash darted from the sulfureous clouds, following by a rattling peal of heaven's awful artillery: caverns and rocks in a multiplied series of appalling echoes, reverberated the tremendous sounds.

They travelled all that night and part of the next day, before they had any refreshment: this was procured at an obscure cottage. and the man soon set forward again. Poor Estaphana tried to interest the compassion of the cottagers; but the Duke's servant whispered something in their ears, which rendered them resolutely deaf to all her entreaties.

Evening again threw her mantle over nature's face, while they were travelling along the side of an extensive wood; the dark solemnity of which threw a shade of awe upon the walls of a tower, rising as it were, from the trees: a light issued from one of the windows, and the man setting spurs to his horse, was soon at the gate of the building, and Estaphana understood she was arrived at the place of her destination. She was introduced to an old man and woman, between whom and her conductor a few mysterious whispers took place. The afflicted Estaphana complaining of fatigue, was shewn to her chamber, where, by tears and supplications, she endeavoured to excite the pity of

Jacquilina (the name of the woman,) and in some measure she did so: but alas! not to that degree as to extort a promise of emancipation: "Signora," said she, "believe me when I say I compassionate your distress; but I am dependent for my very existence on the Duke, and I cannot go against his will."—"O heaven!" exclaimed our heroine, "am I indeed imprisoned by the Duke's orders? lost, undone Estaphana!"—"Do not give way to despair, Signora; the Duke to be sure loves you passionately; but you may rely on it he will never proceed to———" "Loves me!" interrupted Estaphana: "O do not prophane that sacred passion, by saying that the Duke possesses it: Is not love founded on esteem? and how can he esteem a person whom he takes such pains to render miserable?"

After other conversation of the same nature, she sought in sleep a short oblivion to her woes. Two days passed away, and the Duke did not come: one night Estaphana was looking from the window of her apartment upon the woods below: the moon rode high in the heavens, and shed a silvery light on the tops of the trees; the firmament was studded with glittering stars; a gentle breeze was stirring, and all things conduced to lead the mind to contemplation. Estaphana raised her eyes to heaven, and inwardly prayed for the protection of the supreme Being; while sending up her pious ejaculations, she was interrupted by a *groan*, which seemed to proceed from her left hand: she started in surprise mixed with terror, and threw a wild glance round the room; but all remained still as death. "Sure it was more than fancy!" said she. When she had in some measure recovered the alarm, and not hearing a repetition of the groan, she addressed a fervent prayer to the Almighty, and laid down to repose, leaving the light burning, which expired in the socket before she resigned her senses to forgetfulness. In spite of her reason, she now found a nameless terror creep through her veins: While in this situation, she heard, or imagined she heard, the sound of horses feet under her window. The probable arrival of the Duke alarmed her so, that the bed shook under her; and,

in the first emotion of fear, she started up and went to secure the door more firmly, while there she listened with breathless agitation, and really imagined there was an unusual bustle below; however, she laid down again; not to sleep, but to wait with anxiety for the morning. In half an hour, she discerned to her astonishment a door open in a part of the chamber, where she knew nothing of such an aperture; a tall figure entered bearing a light; he made toward a part of the room opposite her, and, as the light flashed in his face, she discovered the Duke himself! Excessive fear took from her the power of utterance; she lay trembling, and bathed in a cold sweat. Savelli, however, never noticed her: he opened a small door in the wall, and entered the very place where she thought the groan had issued. It was not more than a quarter of an hour before the Duke again came out, and crossed her room, disappearing through the former door; leaving her to explain, or rather to puzzle herself with conjectures concerning this mystery. At length the morning dawned, and she arose languid, unrefreshed, and trembling with illness.

We shall return to Estaphana's lover, who, the reader will remember, was confined by Lusigni in the dungeons of the castle, for presuming to pry, as he made out, into his secret affairs.

A lamp, which hung from the ceiling, discovered to Belfoni the horrors of the place; a bed of straw was the only couch on which he could repose: often did he dwell on the beloved name of Estaphana with an agonizing emphasis. In this state Lusigni found him when he came with his supply of provisions, which happening on the same night that Estaphana was carried off by the Duke's servant, occasioned the latter's alarm on seeing the light of Lusigni's torch gleam through the openings in the walls.

Having left the provisions, Lusigni quitted the dungeon, satisfied that escape was impossible. The next morning he sent for his daughter, fully resolved she should be the Duke's that day: the maid returned with an account that her young mistress's room was empty, and she no where to be found. Lusigni's astonishment almost equalled his rage; Savelli also counterfeited surprise and chagrin very naturally, and so earnestly entreated that he might be permitted to go in pursuit of her himself, that an

idea of the Duke's being concerned in her disappearance never once entered his head. The whole castle was presently searched, but no Estaphana was there ; and Lusigni grew very gloomy and thoughtful.

About a week after her disappearance, as Belfoni was one night exploring the dungeon, he came to a part which he had not before examined ; and, to his unspeakable joy, discovered an aperture near the ground, large enough to admit his body ; accordingly he issued through the chasm, having the precaution to take the lamp with him : after some difficulty he found the trap-door, descended the steps, and arrived in safety at the end of the passage : a door now obstructed him, and, while he was seeking how to open it, he heard somebody from without drawing of bolts ; as the door opened, he drew back, concealing the lamp under his cloak. Lusigni himself entered, and, as he proceeded along the passage, he was heard to say, " While he lives, I cannot sleep in peace ! " At the same time, the lamp he held discovered to Belfoni the blade of a dagger ! The latter now darted out of the passage, and found himself in the forest. A saddled horse was fastened to a tree, which belonged to one of the Duke's attendants, who had just returned from a vain pursuit of Estaphana. Our hero instantly mounted it, and galloped off as chance directed : he travelled that night through a track of wild, mountainous country ; and, in the morning, found himself near the sea-side. The sight of a fisherman's hut cheered his drooping spirits : it afforded him the refreshment he so much wanted,

He left this place, and travelled onward along the margin of the sea, till night again overtook him ; the wind arose, and the roaring of the sea made it beyond description awful ; dark clouds crossed the air, obscuring the face of the moon, and the hemisphere was soon nothing but one dark collected mass of vapour : presently the lightening's forked glare shot from the dark portentous sky ; and, true to the flash, the prolonged, aggravated roar of thunder came rattling on the wings of the wind ; torrents of rain poured down, and rendered this fearful conflict of the elements completely tremendous ! Belfoni, to his joy, discerned a light at a distance to the left, and he made toward it with all the speed that the darkness would permit.

As he proceeded, the roaring of the sea became fainter, and he found himself riding on the side of a wood; he still kept the light in view, though he seemed to approach it by slow degrees; every now and then the screams of sea-fowl were borne on the breeze, mixed with the boding outcries of the gloomy owl. In this situation we shall leave Belfoni awhile, travelling toward the light, and return to some other of our personages.

The Duke de Savelli was by birth a Sicilian; he had married a lady of exquisite beauty, and great fortune; but his domineering spirit, together with his criminal intrigues with other women, was *supposed* to have broken her heart. He had by this lady, one child, a daughter, who, while yet an infant, was stolen from his palace, and notwithstanding the most vigorous search was made, she was never discovered.

Savelli had several estates about Naples, and it was while going to visit one of these that he got acquainted with Lusigni de Montarno, with whose daughter he became enamoured. The Duke, who had never been used to have his inclinations thwarted, imagined that he had only to signify his will, in order to obtain Estaphana; he was, therefore, stung so the soul at her rejection of the *honour* which, he thought, he conferred on her by the proposed alliance. His pride made him resolve not to give up the pursuit; though he would rather have been indebted to her voluntary surrender, than to the hazardous success of his own perseverance: for, though it must be granted the Duke's notions of love were not very refined, yet he had discernment enough to know that Estaphana was a desirable object. He had often been in her company, and could not but acknowledge that her beauty exceeded that of any woman he had ever known; and then such a sweet affability pervaded the whole of her behaviour; such a judicious mixture of frankness and reserve, of candour and discretion, as was very rarely to be met with in one of her age. Savelli was eager to possess a woman of these enviable qualifications; and, as he could not obtain her lawfully, he resolved to employ power to make her his own: accordingly he projected, and one of his servants exe-

cuted, a plan of carrying her to one of his old estates in a forest, inhabited by an old man and woman, whom the Duke kept there for his own purposes; and we have seen that he was but too successful in his stratagem.

When he had reached the place of Estaphana's confinement, he thought proper to refrain from seeing her for a day or two, knowing how disgusting his presence must be to her, and in hopes that this forbearance would induce her to look on him with a more favourable eye.

During these two days, Estaphana was permitted to stay in her chamber, to her no small joy; for she dreaded the moment that was to summons her to the Duke's presence. However, the time at length arrived that the reluctant interview was to take place.

Estaphana was one morning summoned to breakfast with the Duke. "O Jaquilina!" said she, "what shall I do? my soul recoils from meeting him." Jaquilina advised her not to irritate him by refusing to go down; accordingly she suffered herself to be ushered into the parlour where Savelli sat at breakfast. An involuntary trembling seized her as soon as she saw him; but pride and resentment soon came to her assistance. The Duke, assuming a tender accent, said, "Charming Estaphana! I know this step of mine appears harsh and unjustifiable to you; but why did you force me to use it? are you so blind to your own interest, and so utterly regardless of your father's honour, as still to reject my alliance?"—"My Lord," (striving to keep her indignation within the bounds of temperance) "I will be candid with you: if I had before conceived any affliction for you, this unwarrantable proceeding would have completely annihilated it: love, my Lord, is built on esteem, and what esteem can I have for a man, whose actions have set at defiance the very first principle of nature—that of personal liberty?"

No sooner had she uttered this spirited reply, than she was convinced it was an imprudent one, by the dark frown which loomed on his brow. His answer was conveyed in such terms as gave her little to hope should she continue obstinately to refuse his addresses; and they passed their breakfast in an uncomfortable silence.

That day the Duke permitted her to walk in the woods surrounding the old castle; taking care that she should have an attendant with her, thus endeavouring to subvert the prejudice she had conceived against him, by partial acts of kindness. He, however, soon found that her decided aversion to his suit was absolutely unconquerable by any means he had formerly tried: enraged at this mortifying discovery, all the fiery passions of his nature were called into action, and he resolved to possess her by violence.

The night arrived that he had fixed upon: Estaphana was in her chamber, but not in bed: she had been alarmed by a repetition of the groan she had heard before, and remembering the circumstance of the door in the wall, she could not help thinking that some poor wretch was confined by the Duke. This idea inflamed her curiosity; she examined the arras to find the door, but before she had discovered it, the Duke entered at another part of the room, with slow and treacherous caution; his face was pale, and his steps irregular, and there was a wildness in his eyes that alarmed Estaphana so much that she almost shrieked. Suspecting his intention from the agitation he was in, she ran to the other end of the room, and supplicated him to have mercy on her. "What do you fear?" said the Duke. "Oh, my Lord!" answered she, "to what am I to impute this unseasonable visit? indeed, I never injured you; why do you thus persecute me? For heaven's sake, my Lord, let me pass." "Why are you up at this late hour?" asked the Duke. The question begot additional distress in Estaphana's mind; for it implied a certainty that he *expected she had been in bed*; and she more than ever distrusted the purport of his visit. She gave him an evasive answer, and endeavoured to pass him, that she might get out of the chamber: the Duke detained her. "Estaphana," said he, in evident agitation, "your proud spirit has disdained my love, and I swear by heaven and earth I will this night seal a full revenge in your embraces."

At that moment a dreadful clap of thunder shook the building; for the night was unusually stormy. "Merciful God! what will become of me?" exclaimed the distressed girl. "Hark, my Lord, the very heavens declare against you; and dares your guilt confront your Maker's angry frown?"

The Duke felt a temporary alarm; but a few minutes restored him to his presumptuous boldness: he caught Estaphana in his arms; she screamed; her dress became deranged; he devoured her charms with his eyes, and violated the treasures of her bosom with his hand; her shrieks became fainter, and Savelli had nearly obtained the conquest of a villain; when a new and unheard of event secured her honour: Jaquilina burst into the room, exclaiming, "Forbear! she is your own daughter! it is Julia de Savelli!" The Duke started in amazement and horror. "I repeat it," said Jaquilina, very much agitated, "she is your daughter, I have just made the discovery: I have found a letter addressed to Estaphana de Montarno, written by some Signor who loves her. Montarno never had a child: seventeen years ago he found an infant at his castle gates, and adopted it as his own: that infant was Signora Estaphana: had I known before, she bore the name of Montarno, this mischief had been prevented. I demand to be confronted with Lusigni, that I may substantiate what I have said. Ah! as I live and breathe," added she, snatching up a miniature picture which had fallen from the bosom of Estaphana upon the floor, "here is fresh evidence; the very picture of her unfortunate mother."

The Duke gazed on the miniature: it was the exact likeness of the Dutchess his wife, taken soon after he had married her, and he had never set his eyes upon it since the day his infant child had disappeared. "Accursed woman!" said the Duke to Jaquilina, "I take the reward of thy treachery!" (at the same time he stabbed her in the breast) "for it could have been nobody but you who stole my infant. And this, too, heaven requires!" (stabbing himself); now I am but half a monster!"—"O villain!" said Jaquilina, faintly, while the purple stream gushed from her wound, "is this your gratitude for my preventing you from deflowering your own child? You say *I* stole her from you: let hell rejoice, and let my soul taste one last ray of bliss while I tell you that you have spoken *truth*: *I did* steal her; yes, I have found a way to revenge my wrongs: look at me, villain; has seventeen years of poverty so much altered me, that you can see nothing in me like Emily de Salerno?" The Duke made a sudden movement, and

fixed his eyes, already swimming in the shades of death, upon the expiring woman : “ Ab, it may well rouse you, wretch ; yes, I am Emily de Salerno, whom you seduced and abandoned. When I first saw you at Sicily, you passed for a single man, and, villain like, took every opportunity of ingratiating yourself in my affections, till, in an evil hour, my chastity was sacrificed at the shrine of your libidinous passion. But my soul now is sweetly revenged. I only regret that I prevented you from debauching your own child, and by that means giving you a full certificate through the gates of hell.” Here she became suddenly convulsed, and soon after expired with a groan. The Duke survived her but a few minutes ; he would fain have spoken, but not being able to articulate a word, he pointed significantly to the exact place where Estaphana had imagined the groans to have proceeded, and then at the miniature picture, shook his head, turned his dying eyes upon Estaphana, and with an heavy sigh, his soul was dislodged from its earthly mansion.

This tragical scene overpowered her spirits so much, that she was rushing from the apartment, when she heard an approaching voice exclaim—“What horrid deeds are here !—Merciful heaven ! mock me not with a shadow ! is it possible ? can it be ? it is, yes it is Estaphana I see !” and she instantly found herself in the arms of Belfoni.

Nothing is more easy to be accounted for than this meeting, however mysterious it may appear to the reader. We left Belfoni travelling toward a light that he discerned at a distance glimmering through the trees ; this light proceeded from the decayed castle where Estaphana was confined, though he little imagined so. The darkness of the night made it very difficult for him to reach the place ; however, at last he effected it ; the light darting through a large gothic window, discovered the remains of a gate broken almost off its hinges ; through this he was admitted into a dark avenue, at the end of which he entered the building, through a door which yielded to his hand. Turning to his right hand, he entered a room like a large parlour ; one window overlooked the woods, and he believed it the same through which he had seen the light ; for a lamp hung suspended from the ceiling. Still he

saw no inhabitants; a large piece of furniture stood at one end of the room, which, on examination, he found to be a ponderous organ, decayed in several places; but the most pleasing object that Belfoni observed, was a fire blazing in a grate. This was a most seasonable relief to one who had been so long exposed to the bitterness of a furious storm.

While drying his clothes, he suddenly heard a confused uproar over head; he listened attentively, and became convinced that some nefarious transaction was going forward above. With much difficulty he discovered the staircase, which he hastily ascended, and arrived at that room which had witnessed such a scene of horror, just as the Duke had breathed his last.

The raptures of Belfoni were great indeed on meeting Estaphana; but notwithstanding the joy which the latter felt on seeing her lover again, a thousand disagreeable reflections weighed on her mind. The tragical end of the Duke, who had proved to be her father, was the first idea that agonized her heart; the miniature, which was said to resemble her mother; the unaccountable groan, and the mysterious actions of the dying Duke, all conspired to excite in her breast a thrilling curiosity to explore these wonders.

She related the most remarkable events that happened to her, since she had seen our hero, at which he expressed great astonishment; and in his turn, he gave her an account of his falling through the trap-door in the forest; the horrid object he encountered there, and his subsequent imprisonment in the dungeons of the castle, with the way of his escape; all which, when Estaphana understood, the tear stood in her eye, and she no longer wondered at his failing to keep the appointment made at the window of her turret. She now related to Belfoni her suspicions respecting the *groan* she had heard, and they both agreed that no time should be lost in exploring that part of the building which the door in the arras might lead to. Accordingly they opened it, by drawing back a small iron bolt, and entered upon a narrow passage; as they proceeded cautiously along, the lamentable moans of some person in distress became very audible. Guided by the sounds, they reached another door, on the right of the passage; the moans

now became very distinct: Estaphana trembled, with an unaccountable sensation, as the door yielded to Belfoni's hand. They now entered a small square room, feebly enlightened by the dim rays of a gloomy lamp; but that which arrested their attention was a bed of straw in one corner, on which was extended the emaciated form of a woman.

Our young friends drew near the mournful object; her form was worn away by illness and affliction; the remains of a beauty, once very exquisite, was visible in her face, and those eyes which once transmitted the darts of love to the soul, were now sunken and lustreless. It was evident that the iron hand of death was on her; she lifted her dying eyes, and fixed them on Estaphana; the glance begot reciprocal emotions; our heroine thought of the words of Jaquilina, and produced the miniature, which she no sooner saw than she exclaimed, "Mysterious heaven! whom do I see! it must—yes it must be my daughter!" "O my mother! my dear mother!" cried Estaphana, sinking down by the bed. "Am I indeed still in this world!" said the astonished Dutchess, "or has my spirit left my body? It is surely my child Julia! Has then the Duke relented? and shall I again——" The effort she made to utter these words was the last that expiring nature was capable of, and she fell back upon the straw, resigning her soul into the guardian hands of ministering angels, who were waiting to escort it into the inaccessible regions of eternal blessedness!

Estaphana was taken from her mother's body in a state of insensibility.

It is now time for us to relate those events which led to the imprisonment of the Duchess de Savelli, and, in this account, we shall of necessity involve an exposure of that part of Jaquilina's history which is yet in the shades, together with the explanation of some mysteries relating to Estaphana.

It has already been said that the Duke was very much given to a licentious life even after marriage; indeed, to speak the truth, love had no influence in leading him to the altar; but he had married merely to satisfy his pride, which, in this instance, drew all its *eclat* from beauty and fortune.

At this period there was a female who came to visit Palermo with an aunt: Emily de Salerno was her name, and she was reckon-

ed exceedingly beautiful, especially by those who admired the Roman stile of beauty. Pride and vanity, the reigning passions of the Duke, made him resolve to try every art to possess himself of Emily's affections in order to pave the way to the intrigue he meditated. They met first at an assembly, and afterwards at a masquerade; at which latter place that criminal intimacy was consummated, which, in the end, proved so fatal to them both. Flattered by the riches, and allured by the promises of the Duke, with whose marriage she was wholly unacquainted, in an evil hour her virtue fell a prey to his loose desires.

Savelli continued constant to her, much longer than to any of the other unhappy women he had seduced; till her extravagant demands upon his purse began to alarm him; and, being now fully satiated with possession, he resolved to discard her for ever: he accordingly wrote her a letter of dismissal; the contents of which filled her soul with rage, and she vowed *vengeance!* to gratify this passion she conceived a design of stealing the Duke's child, the infant Julia, who was not yet a year old; this, she after much difficulty effected, and instantly embarked on the streights of Messina for Naples.

A violent storm arose, and every soul on board imagined they should never more touch the land; the blackened sky vomitted sheets of sulfureous flame, and heaven's tremendous battery burst in frightful explosions from the lowering clouds; while the yawning ocean ever and anon disclosed its dark abyss, and the shore resounded with the furious lashes of its liquid serge: the shrieks of sea-fowl, mingled with the bellowing confusion of the warring elements, added horror to the scene: the Norman Lom,* sat on the point of a rock, and uttered cries exactly resembling those of a drowning man.

At length this fearful conflict of elements subsided, and the terrified Emily de Salerno, with the infant Julia, landed on the opposite shores.

Having once deserted the path of virtue, it was not long before Emily had a second paramour; in the mean time, as she had now

* This bird is indigenious to Normandy; and we are informed that it really possesses the above very extraordinary faculty.

satisfied her revenge upon the Duke, she determined that his child should be no incumbrance to her, although she did not possess that barbarity as to leave it to perish without any assistance, she had heard that Lusigni de Montarno had no child to inherit his great estates; she therefore contrived to lay the infant Julia at the inner door of the castle, under cover of a very dark night. She now believed that Julia was irretrievably lost to the Duke, for she never doubted that Lusigni would gladly adopt it for his own, and besides she knew nothing of Savelli having any seat at Naples.

The event answered her wishes, for Lusigni having no child, willingly adopted the little foundling, and thus gradually threw off the slur cast on his virility.

A few years after this, the imprudent Emily, in consequence of her dissipation, involved herself in inextricable embarrassments; and was obliged precipitately to leave Naples. She was followed in her retreat by one of her last admirers, who, like herself, had been unfortunate at the gaming-table, and was now avoiding his creditors.

They at length came to that old, decayed, gothic building, where Estaphana was afterwards confined; there was an obscure village within four miles, which, in their circumstances, rendered the old castle a desirable residence: for they could get food at the village, and with frugality contrive to pass the time tolerably, till they might appear at Naples with safety.

The Duke, dissatisfied with his wife only because it did not please heaven to render her prolific a second time, not only used her with indifference; but went so far as to curtail her liberty! he imprisoned her for years in a dungeon of one of his estates at Naples; till the servant who attended her, was so affected at the unmerited distress she endured, that he refused any longer to be her keeper, and besought the Duke to release her. The servant was discharged; and, however strange it may appear, he, in a few days, totally disappeared and was never afterwards seen. Whether the Duke had employed any means to entrap him, fearful that he might divulge any thing relative to the confined Duchess, must for ever remain a secret. One thing is certain: that soon after this period, the Duke paid a visit to his old castle in the forest, which he had neglected so long, owing to the horrid gloominess

of the spot. Here he found Jaquilina and her old dotard, who had now lived eleven years in this secluded place; but the alterations that poverty, illness, and misfortunes had produced in her face, entirely effaced her recollection from the mind of the Duke. As he rightly concluded that those people had been forced by fate to fly from human society, he gradually unfolded his purpose respecting the Duchess; and offered to supply their every want, if they would become accessory to his will in the confinement of his wife. Their poverty induced them to consent; though Emily was struck with horror at the cruelty of the Duke, whom she instantly recognized.

The unhappy Dutchess was accordingly conveyed to this place, and imprisoned in that chamber, where her daughter afterwards found her! Emily had discovered that our heroine was Julia de Savelli from reading Belfoni's letter, which she accidentally dropt, from her pocket, directed to her as the daughter of Montarno; and this discovery was confirmed on seeing the miniature of her mother, which her struggle with the Duke had broken from the chain, and caused to fall to the ground. This picture had been wrapt up in the linen in which the infant Julia was found, and when she grew up Lusigni had suffered her to wear it.

The tragical fate of Emily and the vicious Duke, will, I hope, deter our readers from pursuing sinful pleasures: and excite them to a laudable emulation of those virtues which shone so conspicuous in Belfoni and our lovely heroine,

They both now hastened to Naples to explain these events to Lusigni: they found him on his death-bed, in consequence of a severe fall he had the very night he meditated our hero's murder: When he found his prisoner had escaped, he issued from the dungeon in a paroxysm of rage, and forgetting he left the trap-door open, he fell from the top to the bottom and wounded himself severely.

When he saw our hero, he ordered all to leave the room, but two, besides Estaphana; then addressing Belfoni, he said, in a faint voice: "I feel the heavy hand of death upon me: I will no longer dissemble with my Maker: you now see before you a murderer! Your father, O thou much injured youth! was the right-

ful heir of this castle, and all its demesnes: I was his younger brother, but my avaricious soul brooked not a younger brother's fortune—I seduced two ruffians, with large promises, to my purpose: they way-laid your father in the forest; he was imprisoned in the dungeons of the castle, and, after some time, his lingering confinement was terminated by——by——by———”

Lusigni's voice trembled; he seemed as if he could not pronounce the word; till the horror-struck Belfoni, recollecting the corpse his hand had encountered when he fell down the trap-door, exclaimed, “Murder!” and Lusigni groaned. After a pause, he said “Thus did I, like a villain, usurp my brother's honours which ought to have descended to you, who have hitherto past for the peasant Belfoni's son; nor have I set my eyes on you since, till you danced at the festival given in honor of Estaphana. This is the time also to undeceive you with respect to her: *she is not my daughter*: she was found at the castle-gate early one morning, on the sixteenth of October, 1341; and on the anniversary of that day I have uniformly held a festival, as if it was her birthday. But, though I know not who her parents were, I doubt not she is nobly descended, and every way worthy your alliance. Be not surprised; I have long suspected your partiality; and if any thing could relieve the horrors of dying, after knowing that you are restored to your lawful possessions, it would be in the thought that Estaphana and you will be united.”

Lusigni languished two days after this confession, and expired in the deepest contrition for his past crimes; and, as the gates of mercy are never absolutely barred against sincere repentance, religion teaches us to hope the best concerning his departed soul. Belfoni, now Marquis de Montarno, was united to the amiable, accomplished, and beautiful Julia de Savelli, who was put in legal possession of her rich estates: thus peace and prosperity flourished on the tomb of the USURPER OF NAPLES.



The Nocturnal Assassin ;

OR,

SPANISH JEALOUSY.

ENVELOPED in the darkest horrors of an hideous dungeon lay the young and unfortunate Don Lopez de Palatina ; who had been imprisoned by his unnatural uncle, Count Malco, in an old moorish castle, on the banks of the Tagus, in Spain. He was betrothed to the young and lovely Donna Floriela, whose father, an old Castilian by birth, had recently met his death in the field of battle.

Malco had been the guardian of his nephew ; but thirsting after his riches ; and moreover burning with desire for the early beauties of Floriela, he hired two ruffians to intercept young Palatina, while he was returning from her house, who, according to the secret directions of Malco, threw him into the dungeons of one of his own estates. He lay with no other comfort than what a straw bed, and a solitary lamp afforded ; on the third day of his confinement, his uncle made his appearance, and then it was that this unhappy youth comprehended the motive of his extraordinary captivity. The discovered perfidy of his unnatural relation shock-

ed him to that degree, that it was a considerable time before he could utter a word, or even believe the evidences of his senses. Malco, after representing himself to be in very embarrassed circumstances, unfolded a parchment and offered him instant liberty, if he would make over to him the half of his estates. This Palatina refused to do; and being again urged, he once more rejected the proposal with indignation, "Use me as you please," said he, "you will find I am not that pusillanimous wretch as to be thus easily scared by the threats of a villain: neither will I purchase my liberty by such a tame renunciation of my rights!" "Then you shall soon curse your obstiancy," said Malco, "I have hit on a scheme of revenge that will harrow up your very soul: when you see me again, it shall be in *blood*!" As he said the last word, his lips parted, and discovered his teeth firmly closed together; and he left the place with fury in his countenance. Palatina pondered on his mysterious menace, and it taught him to expect something horrible: "Perhaps," said he to himself, "he has resolved on my own death!" This thought made him start, and he began to reflect whether he had not better sign the deed. If there had been but himself in the case, perhaps, he might have done it: but his beloved Floriela! he could not bear the idea of parting with any of his property, which, on their marriage, would become her own: yet his refusing might be the very reason of his union being prevented: However, Providence might at last open a way for his deliverance, though he saw no such way at present: at any rate, he could but sign when reduced to the last extremity. But now, another thought occurred: "Will my signing be of any use?" and he paused; "yes, it may be of use to him, but not to myself: will the man who has been guilty of *injustice*, stick at *treachery*? I may sign my property away; but be a prisoner notwithstanding: besides, will he not be afraid that I shall expose his villainy?" The result of these reflections was, that young Lopez felt more repugnance than before, to sign the deed which his uncle had made the condition of his liberation. He resolved to search minutely, every corner of his dungeon, in hopes of finding some means of escape; he therefore took the lamp, and began to explore the dark

and dismal abode ; in doing this, his foot struck against something, which, on taking up, he discovered was a dagger, the blade of which was stained with blood ! Horrid ideas crossed his mind, as he gazed on this murderous instrument : the convexity of his eyes, his lengthened face, and open mouth, indicated horror and affright ; and the vacant stare which his eyes assumed, shewed that his thoughts had retired within themselves. Coming a little to himself, he heaved a deep sigh, “ Who can tell,” exclaimed he, “ the dreadful deed which this instrument has perpetrated !” He yet proceeded in his examinations ; and, soon after, came to a part of the wall where was an arched recess ; he entered this, and, to his surprise, discovered an inner-recess : into this also he went, and holding forward the lamp, he saw a large chest, at one end of the place ; he endeavoured to open it, but found it was locked ; he then bent his head over the lid, and seemed as if he would pierce the boards with his eye, to come at the contents ; at last he applied the dagger to the lock, and, with a kind of desperation, forced it open ; but no sooner did he look in it, than the lid escaped his hand and closed again, while Lopez stood the statue of horror ! The chest contained the body of a woman in the last stage of putrescence ! Our young nobleman was struck with terror at the confirmation of those fears which his heart imbibed when he found the dagger : All his subsequent search after an outlet was ineffectual ; and he threw himself on his bed of straw, in a state of mind easier conceived than described : ghastly train of images haunted his fancy : the “ blood-stained dagger,” and the horrible object which the chest disclosed, were perpetually presented to his mind. These thoughts were succeeded by the image of the young and blooming Floriela—she made him feel all the weight of his captivity.—“ Alas !” cried the agonized lover, “ she is completely lost to me ! her modest beauties will never bless my arms, nor shall my soul ever more extract delight from gazing on her face, or listening to her conversation ; that eye, whose rays formed my sun and gave animation to my existence, will no more shine on the unhappy Lopez, whose days are now doomed to wear away in darkness and despair, n t unaccompanied with horror !”

While Don Lopez was experiencing the fiercest extremes of sorrow in this dungeon, Donna Floriela could not but be very much astonished at his unaccountable absence. As she loved him with sincere affection, her heart was tortured with anxiety concerning his welfare: "O my Lopez!" she cried, "till I hear or see from you, I shall not taste of bliss!" At this moment her maid, Elvira, entered the garden, and her heart being ready to burst, sought to relieve itself by unburdening its woes: "O Elvira!" said the lovely girl, with a mournful voice, "no news yet from Don Lopez; ah! how dark and gloomy every object seems! tinged with the sable hue of my sad thoughts: how I envy thy happiness, Elvira"—"Envy me, Signora!" said the maid, "Indeed *you* are a *real* object of envy: young, rich, beautiful, and in love with such a nobleman, as Don Lopez! I've been told, my lady, that *love* is the sweetest passion of the heart," she sighed as she spoke, "and that no persons are so happy as those mutually in love." Here Elvira sighed again. "And pray," asked her lady, smiling at the girl's simplicity, "who told you so, Elvira?"—"O, my lady," replied she, blushing and playing with her fingers, "that I must keep a secret, even from you."—"Indeed! then I will not seek to know; but listen to me, Elvira; if yet thy heart is retained within its zone, of which however I have my doubts," added she, archly: "but, if so, 'tis prudent that you keep it there; guard well its movements; they cannot be recalled at pleasure; discretion's voice in vain will bid its wanderings cease; nor will the beck of reason stay its operations; the sweets of love are fully balanced by its pangs: when scorned, or unreturned, it opens the vein where wild distraction reigns!"—"My lady does not speak from experience?" said the maid.—"No, Elvira, thank heaven I do not: Don Lopez has a noble, generous soul; 'twas his numerous virtues first won my heart, and he must change his nature before he can be false: O that I could hear from him!"

As they thus discoursed, they had unconsciously strayed to the borders of a wood, and the approaching darkness indicated the necessity of their return. At that moment two ruffians darted

from the wood, and one of them replied to her words, said, "You shall see him within these six hours, and in all the misery that hell can devise!" At the same time he seized the screaming beauty, and conveyed her to a carriage concealed among the trees: while the other villain bound the maid to the trunk of a large beech. Here she was discovered in the morning by one of the servants of the castle; but, alas! her young lady seemed to be irrecoverably gone.

To let the reader into a secret, the man who seized Donna Floriela was no other than Count Malco, who brought her to the Moorish castle on the banks of the Tagus, where her lover was confined. When she arrived there, he assigned her a room in one of the towers; she had not been here long, before she discovered a light moving along the mountains that her window overlooked, at the same time she heard the Ceverro bells, by which she knew some muleteer was driving his beasts down the mountains.

The night seemed dark and mysterious as the fate of our heroine: for one time it appeared to smile on the inhabitants of the world; and at another period it would hang out a face of determined hostility. In the room where Floriela now was, she found an old Spanish romance, and she endeavoured to prevent her mind from dwelling on her mysterious and critical situation, by reading a page or two of fabled history: A few of the first leaves were destroyed, and other parts of the paper stained by the hand of time; about the middle of the book engaged her attention to such a degree, that, impatient to see the conclusion, she turned to the latter end, and had just discovered the catastrophe was fatal, when the door of her apartment slowly opened, and Count Malco entered. A malignant delight dwelt on his features, while he proceeded to lead the astonished girl from the chamber; and as she mechanically drew back, the unfeeling monster dragged her along. "For mercy's sake!" exclaimed the agonized girl, "whither am I going?" But he answered not a word. In this barbarous manner he drew her into the very dungeon where her unfortunate lover was confined; when she saw him in this mournful state, her sorrow received a distracting emphasis. As soon as Don Lopez saw her,

“O!” cried he, “the first ray of light darting into chaos, looked not more bright than does that angelic form in this horrid gloom!”

“Don Lopez,” said Malco, “the last time we parted, I promised, when we met again, it should surely be in blood! behold me now how I *perform* that promise.” He then suddenly drew a poinard, and raised his hand to strike the fatal blow. “O my dear uncle! only hear me: all my estates shall be your’s; but spare, O spare her precious life;” cried Lopez. At that moment, Malco received a desperate wound in the breast, from one of the men whom he had employed in this business, and who had conceived himself not sufficiently rewarded for his services. The vicious Count fell instantly to the earth, and, ere he expired, disclosed crimes of which he was not suspected.

“O Lopez,” said the dying man, “how just is the hand of heaven! in a few moments my guilty soul will be forced to appear at the bar of its incensed Maker: let me, therefore, hasten to confess those enormities which hang such a leaden weight on its hopes of heavenly bliss. Your father was my elder brother, and as my early extravagance had left me very slenderly provided with pecuniary resources, his fraternal affection induced him to assist me in my necessities: I frequently received ample supplies at his generous hands, accompanied with salutary advice concerning my future conduct, which, had I taken, my conscience would not have been contaminated with guilt: As the venemous spider embibes poison from the sweetest flower, so did my depraved heart extract infernal designs from my noble brother’s liberality; and I, at length, laid the horrible plan of having him privately assassinated! To accomplish this unnatural purpose, I hired two villains, and by promises of large rewards, engaged them to perpetrate the dreadful act. The time arriving when he usually visited his estate near the Escureal; I watched narrowly his motions, and he was intercepted while passing through a forest: one of the ruffians dragged him from his horse, and the other pierced him to the heart with a sword!”

No sooner did Lopez hear this tragical tale, than he clasped

his hands before his eyes, in the agony of suffocating sorrow; his dying uncle thus went on.

“They buried the murdered body in a cavity of the forest, and I gave them the reward I promised. My next care was how to deceive your mother, with respect to his death; at length I contrived to spread it abroad that he had been murdered by a banditti. She was, for a considerable time, inconsolable for his loss, as I believe no one couple, since the creation of man, ever lived in greater happiness, ’till I, like the arch fiend of old, envied their felicity, and resolved to annihilate it. Before my deceased brother had married his wife, I myself had conceived a passion for her, which, as she did not return, my soul endured the stings of mortified pride: my brother knew not of my love, neither would I condescend to tell him. I therefore suffered them to be married in peace; but my revengeful soul resolved ’ere long to give them both a horrible specimen of Spanish Jealousy. I had reason to think that your mother soon suspected that I was concerned in the dark transaction of your father’s murder, and she now looked on me with eyes of horror and aversion. I therefore resolved to bear her scorn no longer, but, as I had her in my power, to avail myself of it. But, O heaven! with what indignant astonishment did she receive my first professions of love! it seemed as if the mention of it, had raked up anew the ashes of her beloved Lord: her tears flowed afresh; her bosom was convulsed with tumultuous heavings, the exquisite distress she was in, enhanced the value of her charms; night and silence conspired to heighten my illegal desires; my evil genius whispered that this was the moment of my triumph; I drew near, and caught her in my arms; her screams were uttered in vain, for nobody was within hearing; my sacrilegious hand invaded the sacred treasures of her bosom; but my infuriated passion went farther than this, for amidst sighs, tears, and heart-rending anguish, during agonizing exclamations on the name of her murdered Lord, I obtained an inglorious conquest over her honor! Diabolical as the dark deed was, yet my depraved soul conceived new horrors for her: I had her privately conveyed to this dreadful dungeon, and imposed on the world by a

fiction account of her death. While here, I several times endeavoured, by alternate promises of emancipation, and threats of immolation, to extort from her, a written renunciation of her estates, but to no purpose: she was as firm in her refusal to part with them, as you have been. Enraged at her obstinacy, I suddenly gave the fatal orders for her execution, and she was murdered by one of my infernal instruments; who had before done me a similar horrible service: her body was inclosed in a chest and secreted in an obscure recess in this very place."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Don Lopez, "was it then my own mother whom I saw!" The dying Malco turned an eye upon him of confusion and surprize; it was his last look, his face became convulsed, and he expired with a deep groan.

In consequence of his dying confessions, it appeared that the putrid corpse our hero discovered in the chest, was that of his *own mother*! who had been debauched and imprisoned by his depraved uncle and at last murdered!

Thus died a man, whose life had a whole scene of iniquity, flowing from three impure sources: *prodigality*, *jealousy*, and *illicit* love! how necessary is it, therefore, my reader, to guard thine heart against the allurements of fashionable depravity! and to resist with virtuous indignation, the groveling joys of terrestrial sensuality! the unsullied purity of your great original, teaches you to refuse to pinion your affection to this sublunary scene; but to mount, with divine ambition, up to that glorious Being, who has opened in your soul, an insatiable thirst after happiness, on purpose to lead you to him, who is the inexhaustable fountain of true felicity!

After these mournful scenes were worn off their minds, Lopez and Floriela were united at the altar of Hymen, which event, as it had its origin in real love, produced a felicity, that, during their whole lives was never once embittered by SPANISH JEALOUSY!

THE END.

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