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**The White Pilgrim; or, Castle of Olival: An Interesting and Affecting Tale, Founded on Singular Facts. Translated From That Highly-Popular French Novel, Le Pelerin Blanc**

Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson

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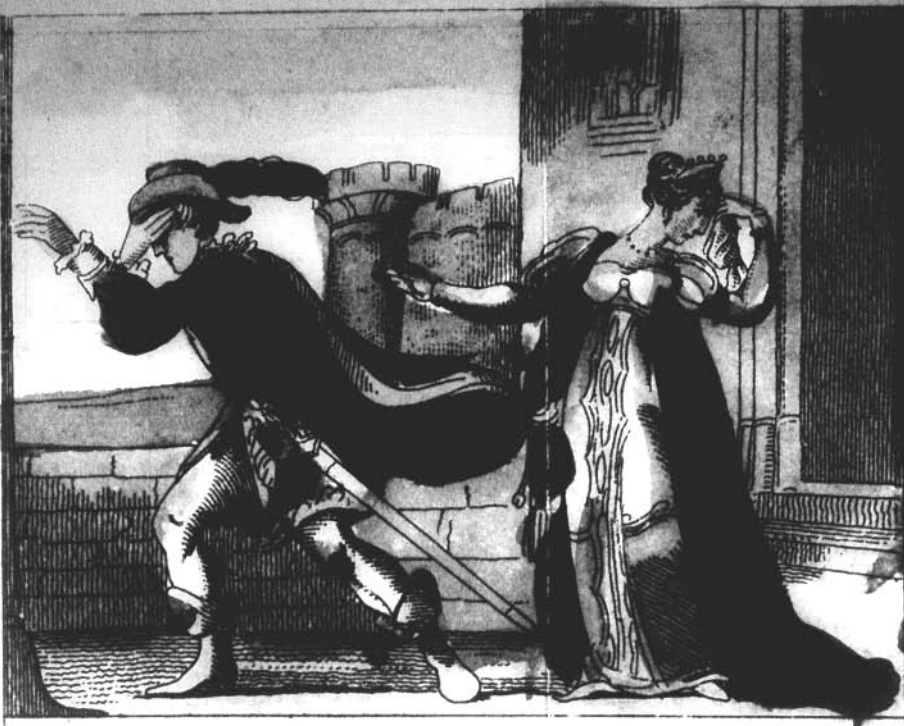


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*The separation of the Count from*



*Roland in the Dungeon with*

THE  
**WHITE PILGRIM;**

OR,  
**CASTLE OF OLIVAL:**

**1**   
*AN INTERESTING AND AFFECTING TALE,*

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FOUNDED ON SINGULAR FACTS.



TRANSLATED  
From that highly-popular French Novel,  
**LE PELERIN BLANC,**

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BY  
**SARAH SCUDGELL WILKINSON.**

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"HEAVEN is ever watchful o'er the innocent."



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# THE WHITE PILGRIM.



NOT far removed from the noted canton of Berne, in Switzerland, the traveller is struck with delight at viewing the really beautiful and picturesque hamlet of Olival, (so named from the quantity and luxuriance of its olive fields, by the produce of which the principal part of its inhabitants are supported). The castle of Olival is seen majestically raising its white turrets above the woods by which it is surrounded on three of its sides, while the grounds on the southern and open division are terminated by the river Durance.

About fifty years since, the Castle of Olival had for its owner the truly amiable and liberal Horatio Count Castelli. In early youth his heart was captivated by the graces and beauty of Amabel, a young lady of good birth, but small portion, her family having been reduced in the world by a train of disastrous, but not dishonorable, circumstances.

Having no father to whom, possibly, such a marriage might have been objectionable, the young Count followed the dictates of his own heart; and as soon as his minority was ended, and he took possession of his own domains, he led the blushing Amabel to the altar of Hymen, whose torch for four years kept burning with undiminished lustre, when it was suddenly and painfully extinguished, and that in a most mysterious manner.

Amabel presented her adoring Count with two sons, Paul and Justin. At the time our tale commences, the

former was three years old, and the latter scarce numbering twelve months. Paul was the very image of his noble father, and Justin gave promise of having the sweet, but finely-turned, features of his mother.

It is almost superfluous to mention how much these sweet and endearing blossoms added to the happiness of the Count and his wife; they entered no more than what their high situation absolutely demanded into the pleasures of the world; their joys were domestic, and their amusements refined and rational.

Next to their dear infants and immediate household dependants, their tenants called forth their solicitude. Horatio took an active part in their prosperity, aided the industrious by small portions of land for them to cultivate, and, in short, took every means to add to their comfort; Amabel visited the sick and lying-in, the aged, and the helpless, all partook her bounty, and were honored by her salutary advice: the noble pair made their domain a second Eden, and peace and plenty seemed to have fixed on Olival as their favorite abode.

The Countess was again pregnant, and the noble pair imparted their wishes to each other on this happy occasion that Heaven would favor them with a daughter; they hoped anxiously for this addition to their nuptial felicity, not that they extended their desire to presumption, or the least inclination to murmur at another son; no, they would be content and happy with what Providence ordained for them; yet their request to Him who rules all things, was a natural one in their situation.

When Amabel was advanced as far as the seventh month of her pregnancy, the Count was obliged to repair to a town about thirty miles distant, to settle a legal affair of some consequence, which could not be settled without his presence. Though his absence, take it at the outside, would not exceed three or four days, he felt a reluctance at going that seemed to him ridiculous, but yet he could not shake it off; and what made this impression the deeper, the Countess seemed affected with a similar impulse; for when the page announced the chariot to be in waiting at the castle-gate, she flung herself on her husband's bosom, and dissolving into an agony of tears, besought him to be careful of himself.

Horatio could almost have wept in sympathy, but rousing himself to comfort and encourage his interesting wife, he asked her with a fond smile, what danger she could possibly apprehend in such a trifling excursion.

"I know not how it is," replied Amabel, "but my spirits are unusually weak and depressed: last night, I had fearful dreams; I suppose it is their baneful influence that has operated on my brain. The Count laughed aloud. "What! Amabel superstitious? this is indeed a novelty, for which I was unprepared."

"I knew you would laugh at me, Horatio," said the lady, "but so it is; the visions of the night haunt me, and I cannot shake them off; when you are gone, I must visit my nursery, and a romp with Paul and Justin will set all to rights."

"I hope so, my love," replied the Count, "I just now took leave of the smiling cherubs, but kiss them again for me."

The amiable pair now tenderly embraced, and the reluctant Horatio descended the steps that led to the castle portal.

Here he found the Chevalier Roland, Seneschal of the castle, waiting to take leave of him, along with Otho, Captain of the Guard; he politely returned their compliments, and pressing a hand of each, strongly recommended his Lady and the children to their protecting care.

The carriage had got in the midst of the wood, when they were obliged to stop, and extract a sharp pebble that had ran into the foot of one of the leading horses. While this was performing they were most dismally serenaded by screech-owls and crows.

"A murrain on your throats!" exclaimed Claude, the postillion; "I wish I had the twisting of them all, ye ill-omened screamers: no luck will attend on this journey, I warrant it; I wish we were well at the end of it, and back again at our good castle."

A few miles further the vehicle was nearly upset, through a fallen tree. Claude again vented his ill-humour on the ill-omened birds; but when a storm overtook him, he was really outrageous, and threatened vengeance on the offenders with guns and snares, should it please St. Bernard, his patron saint, to let him see home once more.

At length they arrived in safety at the Count Vassali's, where Horatio was invited to remain while his business was transacting. Claude crossed himself, blest heaven they were there, and said it was more than he expected.

The Count Castelli, though he made no comment or observation on what he had heard, for though kind and condescending to his inferiors, he always avoided undue familiarity, could not help being highly amused by the simplicity and superstition of poor Claude, in attributing all his disasters, even the pelting storm that had drenched his jacket, to the influence of the ill-omened crows and screech-owls.

The Count passed a cheerful evening with his friend: it was long since they had met, and had, of course, much to talk on, and ask each other.

"You must accompany me, when I return to Olival," said the Count; "I long to introduce you to my charming Amabel, and our dear children; I trust, the sight of my domestic felicity will induce you to give a mistress to your elegant home; I must really chide you for your tardiness: five years older than myself, Augustus, and still a bachelor."

"Dear Horatio," replied Vassali, pressing his friend's hand, "you have unconsciously touched on a topic that wounds my heart: I have been unfortunate in a most ardent attachment: I am impelled to secrecy, even from thee; now let us drop the painful subject,"

Horatio cast a look of sympathy and regret at his friend, and was careful afterwards not to make love or hymenial joys the thread of their conversation.

The next day was given to business, and the evening to conviviality; for Vassali invited a number of friends to meet his esteemed Horatio; and they did not retire to their chambers till the third hour of morning.

Horatio had scarce closed his eyes in a tranquil slumber when he was awakened by his valet, who told him there was a letter come by express from the castle of Olival.

"From the Countess?" asked the alarmed husband. "No, my Lord; it is in the hand-writing of the Seneschal, who ordered Ruffo to make all dispatch, and take care that the Count had the letter delivered to him the very instant of his arrival at the Villa of Vassali."

The Count was in an instant out of bed, and slipping on his *robe de chambre*, began to break the seal with trembling fingers. "My wife! my babes!" he exclaimed, "Heaven, in its mercy, forbid that aught amiss has happened to my heart's best treasures!"

When he had perused the fatal lines, he was like a distracted being, and tore his hair in agony; and had it not been for the soothing of Count Vassali, Horatio seemed on the point of self-destruction.

When he became more composed, the Count ordered the carriage to be instantly got ready. "You will not, surely, set out at this unseasonable hour, my friend?" said Vassali.

"Read that note, my dear Augustus, and then you will not wonder at my impatience to be gone; I assure you, the very minutes appear lengthened into hours!"

The letter from Roland was very short and laconic, but of dreadful import. It stated that the Countess had been missing from the castle ever since the preceding morning; that her flight, from several circumstances, seemed to be voluntary; but he urged the Count to return immediately.

"I will depart immediately," said the Count. "Of course," replied Vassali, "and I must be the companion of your journey; I can by no means allow you to proceed alone."

Horatio thankfully accepted the offer and they were soon on the road. The Count, as he entered the chariot, heard the voice of Claude exclaiming against the screech-owls, &c. "I was right," said he; "I knew our journey would come to no good." He sighed heavily, and began to be almost as superstitious as the poor lad. "Amabel, my love, my life; ah! where art thou now?" exclaimed he, aloud; "our melancholy forebodings at parting were certainly the effect of some secret inspirations. I wish we had attended to it, and not separated."

"Surely," said Augustus, "a woman, such as you have described your wife, would never willingly desert her home."

"Never! never!" replied Horatio; "she was one of the tenderest of wives, and literally doated on her children; she could not endure the shortest absence from them; something dreadful must have occurred to her.

I would stake the vital blood that now palpitates my throbbing heart on the virtue, fidelity, and propriety of my Amabel."

The road appeared double its real length to the noble, but sorrowing traveller; repeatedly did he urge the postillions to hasten, though they assured him further speed was impossible without endangering his safety; yet when the carriage stopt at the entrance of the castle, he felt a dread to alight and hear the particulars of his misery.

He crossed the hall, and entered the usual breakfast-room; there hung a full length of the absent Countess; it met his eye, and with a piercing groan he rushed out of the apartment and proceeded immediately to his dressing-closet, where the Seneschal and Captain Otho were ordered to attend him.

"Speak," said he "my friends: tell me all you know, though my brain should fire on hearing it, for it seems already on the verge of lunacy."

Roland informed him that on the night after his departure, the Lady Countess retired to her chamber at the usual hour of rest; but when her attendant, Theresa, went to call her in the morning, she was surprised at not finding her mistress there, nor, what was more, had the bed been slept in. Instantly struck the young woman, that her Ladyship, not liking to sleep by herself in that spacious chamber, so remote from the other apartments, had passed the night in the nursery bedroom, where there was sufficient accommodation for that purpose; and with this idea, she hastened hither; but her hope was vain; the Countess had not been there since the preceding evening, when she came to bless her sleeping infants, and to pray for their safe repose.

An alarm was now given throughout the castle of the disappearance of its lovely mistress: on repairing again to the bed-chamber, accompanied by the Seneschal, and several others, Theresa missed a small casket of diamonds from off the dressing-table; this led them to investigate the wardrobe, when it was discovered by the waiting-maid, who had an inventory as well as a thorough knowledge of her Lady's apparel, that some linen and three suits of clothes had been conveyed away, which seemed a plain proof that her absence arose from a preconcerted plan of her own, and not by the treachery of others.

"It may so seem," said the Count, "but I must have stronger proof of her guilty intention, before I degrade my Amabel, even by the shade of a suspicion: is this *all* you have to tell me?"

"Alas! no," replied the Seneschal, "letters, it seems, have of late been frequently given to Theresa by a page drest in green and gold, with orders never to deliver them to the Countess, when you were present; and her ladyship used to return answers, and rewarded her maid with several presents for carrying on the secret correspondence, which, she told Theresa, was with a near relation of her own, whom you had forbid the castle, some vile enemy having poisoned your mind against him. "Her attendant," continued Roland, "was faithful to her mistress, till her flight having taken place, suspicion was awakened and she confessed this to me."

"Do you vouch for the truth of this, Theresa?" said the Count, in great agitation. "Yes, my lord, I do;" replied the girl, bursting into tears, and dropping on her knees; but pray forgive me; I am young and ignorant, and thought I was obliged to pay obedience to the commands of my mistress, be they what they would."

The Count waved his hand for her to quit the room. "I do not blame you: this is, indeed, dreadful!"

A silence ensued, the Count seemingly overcome with acute anguish; the pause was broken by Otho, who observed, that as he was crossing the park belonging to the Castle on the night in question, just at the dusk of evening, he observed, at some distance from him among the trees, the Countess conversing with a tall portly man. "I did not in the least recognize his person, nor, indeed, did I try to do it; for I supposed it to be some friend of the family's, or a messenger from your lordship; for the amiable and chaste deportment of the lady did not allow me to harbour a thought to her disadvantage, until she was missing; then, indeed, and connecting it with Theresa's account, I could not avoid it."

"If Amabel is a wanton, I will never believe that virtue can reside in a female form again: some deep deception must have been used on her unsuspecting mind; yet when I think on what you have advanced, I am plunged into doubt and perplexity: my wretchedness is indeed extreme."

It was long before his friend Vassali could persuade

the bereaved and afflicted husband to seek some repose, nor would he then retire to his usual chamber, for he observed, that his bridal bed now looked to him like a sepulchre; he therefore took that belonging to Otho; and the gallant captain shared a two-bedded room with the steward.

The Count slept many hours, and his slumber seemed profoundly heavy, and his respiration difficult. His friend anxiously watched his awaking, and then found his fears realized to the full extent. He awoke, his eyes convulsively calling on Amabel, and saying, she was murdered, and he had seen the assassins, and would revenge her innocent blood with letting loose the polluted stream from their base hearts.

"Alas! he raves," said Ronald. "He is in a high fever," rejoined Otho. Both their remarks were true; and, for a whole month, he lingered between life and death; at length he slowly recovered, but three weeks more elapsed ere he was considered out of danger.

Vassali shewed himself a friend in the real sense of the word; he flew not from the house of mourning; no, he tenderly watched over the afflicted Horatio, and his interests; nothing escaped his vigilance or scrutiny. His own affairs wanted him at home, but this most excellent man regarded all self concerns as nought, while Horatio was suffering; but when he was convalescent, he persuaded him to return to the villa, and stay for the present with him. "But my Amabel, I want to hear tidings of her." "That you may do as well at my residence as at your own; consider the short distance, and should any intelligence arrive here, the senechal will send an express off to us; but, alas! during your insensibility, we have made every enquiry, but without the least success, or even without gaining a clue towards what at present seems an affair wrapt in impenetrable mystery."

As the Count's mind recovered its vigour, his delight centred in his children, though they often caused him tears of agonizing sensibility and remembrance of past pleasure; the infant Justin grew daily more like his fascinating mother, and testified, by a number of plaintive regrets, that he remembered her fond attentions and missed them.

"I cannot leave my babes," said the Count; "my soul seems bound up in them."

"They shall go with us," replied his friend, "and their nurses too; you shall not stay brooding over your sorrows here."

This arrangement was soon made, and preparations began for their journey.

Previous to quitting the Castle of Olival, the Count wished to speak with Therasa; he wished to hear if she were indeed certain that part of her lady's wardrobe had been secretly removed; but to his surprise, he was informed that, on the third day of his late fever, she had demanded her dismissal from Roland, and that it had been granted.

"Where do her parents live?" said the Count.

"About ten miles hence, in the Valley Correlli," was the reply of the seneschal.

"Let her be instantly fetched hither; order Claude to go with a pair of mules; and escort her to the castle: I feel an irresistible impulse to converse with her."

Roland promised his will should be obeyed, and Claude was sent; he returned sooner than the Count expected, but no Theresa. The father and mother, accompanied by the damsel in question, had quitted their dwelling within a very few days of her return home, selling off all their goods: they assigned no reason to their neighbours, nor left any traces by which they could be found. "It was observed," said Claude, "that they *must* have met with some sudden windfall, for on going away they appeared very flush of money, and they had been poor enough before."

Both of the nobleman remarked that all this was strange, and looked as if in some way connected with the unfortunate affair of the Countess's absence.

"I should presume, my lord," said Ronald, who was present, "that Theresa, notwithstanding her avowed repentance, and the information she gave, is in the confidence of her mistress, and gone to attend on her."

"It is, indeed, too probable," said Horatio; "and here the affair must rest, until it pleases Providence to develop the mystery."

The castle was left to the care of the seneschal; and the times being troublesome, a stronger guard was appointed, under the command of Otho.

The Count Castelli, his children, and suite, remained two whole years at the villa belonging to the philanthro-

pic Augustus, who paid them every delicate attention that his excellent heart could suggest.

About this time it was evident that he became the prey of anxious cares, but he confined the scene of them to his own breast. He informed Horatio that he was going to absent himself from home for an uncertain length of time, and intreated him to remain if he chose, at the Villa; but that nobleman determined on returning to Olival.

The castle, however, seemed very irksome to him, and he resolved to devote a year or two to travelling, thinking it would at once benefit and improve his mind, which had now been too long inactive.

To take his children with him, was impossible: he provided them with a proper tutor, and engaged a widow lady, who resided on the domain, of the name of Marcella, and had been a great friend of the Countess's, to superintend those concerns that properly belonged to the province of a female.

About two miles from the Castle of Olival, stood a farmhouse, belonging to Gervaise, a blunt, honest man, well to do in the world; apartments were here provided for Paul and Justin, and their attendants; their father alleging he should feel more satisfied in leaving them under this domestic roof, than in their own dwelling. The Seneschal Roland remonstrated against this arrangement; he wished to have the care of the children; but the Count adhered to this plan, and Gervaise, and Jacquinet, his nephew, vowed to protect them with their lives.

"I know not," said the Count, as he took leave, "that I have any thing to fear; but from the loss of my Amabel, I have never considered either myself or children to be in perfect safety."

The Count meant to pass through France, and cross the Pyrenees, into Spain; but just as he was on the eve of setting out, letters arrived from Vassali, stating, that he was in London, and conjuring Horatio to join him there immediately. In a postscript, he added, "Keep your intention of leaving the children at the farmhouse; danger may stalk in the Castle; the suspicions I imparted to you are strengthened by an unlooked for circumstance. I sincerely hope this will reach you before you depart on your intended tour."

Of course, the Count was all impatience to join his

friend; he again repeated his injunctions to all those concerned to be watchful of the children, and had a long interview with another person who at present must remain concealed in the back ground.

The Count travelled fast by land; the wind and waves were propitious; and the two friends had soon the satisfaction of again meeting each other.

Horatio congratulated Augustus on his altered looks. "Thank Heaven, my friend, I am once more happy," replied the latter; "and can now unbosom my former sorrows to you."

"A young lady, of superior beauty and fortune, but an orphan, under the controul of a guardian, who had his own interested views to serve, came to our province for the benefit of her health. I met her at my aunt's, became enamoured of her beauty, and soon possessed the confidence of the amiable Frances; from her I learned, that she had not a relation in the world but her uncle, who was her guardian; and her father had so willed his property, that if she died under age, or unmarried, the fortune was her uncle's; if she lived to attain the period of twenty-one, she then became mistress of her own person and fortune; neither could she marry unless she had the consent of her guardian, or forfeit all her wealth.

"I do not harbour the least idea that my uncle," said Frances, "would shorten my days by unfair means, but I am certain he wishes me in the cold tomb, that he might possess the sordid trash; these wishes he can but ill disguise; he is a very tyrant to me, and it was with a heavy heart he gained my compliance to leave my native place with him; alas! though it little signifies where I am, there, here, every where, he is my absolute ruler, and I am the victim of his caprice."

"Love soon cemented our hearts together; I applied to her uncle; but, as we expected, he was inexorable; I hastened to Frances, and implored her to become mine; I had enough of wealth for us both, and I found life would be nothing without her; at first, she refused to become a portionless bride, but my intreaties overpowered her faint scruples, and she consented.

"Her uncle had overheard our discourse; he was concealed in the viranda, and now rushed into the room, assailing us with the most bitter invectives, and

accusing his niece of falsely aspersing his character, to favor her own licentious views.

"This was too much for my patience; I retorted, but was restrained by the gentle sufferer, who commanded me, if I loved her, to be silent. I knelt to the tyrant, and offered to take the gentle Frances to my protecting arm without a shilling.

"I thought he was going to consent, but after a pause, his countenance took another turn. 'If I consent to the marriage, I expose myself to litigation on that plea.'

"'I am honorable,' I replied, 'and will give you receipts of idemnity, the same as if I had received her fortune, and make equal settlements on my bride.'

"'Yes, and thus stamp me for a miserly knave. I tell you what, young man, wait till she is of age; then she can be your's, without my interference, unless death, that grim king of terrors, first claims her as wife; and, indeed, I think it would more become her to make preparations for the grave, than a bridal bed.'

"My indignation at this cruel remark was extreme; words ran high; Frances swooned with terror, and I was forced from the house.

"The next morning, after a night of painful agitation, during which I never went to bed, I repaired to the house so dear to me—my beloved's dwelling. I had hit on a plan which I hoped would accommodate affairs with her uncle, as he wished to enrich himself without the stigma of gaining it by unfair means.

"As I drew near, I observed, with an horror I cannot describe, that all the blinds were closed. 'She is dead!' I exclaimed, 'the gentle spirit of my Frances has sunk beneath the conflict.'

"This, however, was not the case; I discovered, from an old woman left in the care of the villa, that **Mr. Clifden**, and the young signora, with their attendants, had removed in the night.

"I traced them to Lausanne, but every research from that hour was abortive. About three months after that period, I received a letter from Frances. I recognized the dear hand-writing in the superscription, and tore it open with inconceivable agitation. It had no date; she informed me she had, urged by the imperious necessity of the affair, been guilty of bribing one of her uncle's servants to convey these few lines to my hand,

which she had undertaken on condition that she did not reveal the place of their abode to me; she wrote that she was on the verge of dissolution, for her decline had been very rapid; that her uncle had behaved with great tenderness towards her, and procured her the benefit of the most eminent physicians, but in vain. She took a most impressive leave of me, and enclosed a ringlet of her hair.

“Such was my regret for this lovely woman,—such my lively remembrance of her chaste and impassioned tenderness,—that I found no preference ever enter my heart towards another woman; and a life of celibacy was my free choice.

“Guess then guess my astonishment, on receiving a letter from England. It was from a late servant of my own, who had accompanied the Marquis Pellutti to that country. He knew of my disappointment, and the supposed death of Miss Clifden, for he was an intelligent young man, in whom I had placed much confidence.

“He informed me he had seen Miss Clifden in an opposite house to that in which he resided. I own I was sceptical of the fact, but it rendered me miserable.

“Another letter followed almost immediately; he had seen Miss Clifden and spoke to her; she conjured me to hasten to England immediately; a most important event had taken place,—her uncle lay dead; he had been thrown from his horse, and killed on the spot.—Awful punishment!

“Oh! Horatio, from the time Frances was removed from Switzerland, she had been kept in close confinement, under a rigid and unfeeling woman, whom her uncle had engaged to aid his tyranny; and she was compelled to write that delusive letter which I had received, in order to stay my pursuit after the idol of my heart: nor did their stratagems end here; they contrived to induce her to believe I was married, and conveyed the news in such an artful manner, by inserting a paragraph in a magazine, that she did not doubt the intelligence.

“Though her health was in a precarious state, she was allowed no medical advice, and the idea of my faithlessness added to her sufferings. The *apropos* appearance of my servant (whom she knew) on the very day of her uncle's death, set all to rights; and restored us to love and happiness; but when I behold her fragile

form, I tremble with apprehension ; but peace and every requisite attention, I trust, will soon restore her."

The Count congratulated his friend on the prospects of felicity that seemed to await him. "As for myself," continued he, "I despair; and, were it not for my children, should wish myself a tenant of the quiet grave, where none can molest."

"Do not despair, my dear Horatio," replied Augustus, "nor suppose that I just sent for you here to listen to my adventures; no; I am interested for you and your's. I have much to say, but I told you my affairs first, as I supposed afterwards you would be too impatient to listen to them."

"Good Heavens!—what mean you, dear Augustus?—know you aught of my Amabel?"—

"No; but I think she was innocent of her flight, and basely betrayed."

"Alas! I knew not that I had an enemy who could thus wish to plunge me into misery; of this I am certain, I never give any man cause."

Vassali rung the bell, and ordered the servant to conduct the *young woman* to the drawing-room.

In the pale, hollow-eyed, ill-dressed being that appeared before him, Horatio did not recognize the once gay, smart, and blooming attendant of his lady, Theresa, till Augustus pronounced her name.

"I had scarce arrived in London," said the Count Vassali, "and was proceeding with a guide along Oxford-street, when I beheld this young woman, and an infant in her arms, setting on a step; she was crying, and some ejaculations that she made in my language, concerning her distress, awakened my interest; she told me that she had come with her parents to this country; that they were both dead; that she had espoused a young man, who had deserted her and her child, after depriving her of a considerable sum of money, and her clothes, and had left her to perish, 'But, my Lord Vassali, I deserve it all.' I started at her knowledge of me; but she soon explained it,—'You are a friend of the Count Castelli, and came with him to the Castle of Olival when my dear lady was missing.'

"'But why do you deserve this misery?' 'Ah! my Lord Count, there is the sting! I was made a tool of the villain Ronald's, who not only had an impure love

for the Countess, but wishes to get the whole domain in his power ; and Otho is accessory to his schemes.'

" I was now determined not to live sight of Theresa again ; I had a coach called, and conveyed her to my new establishment, which I have hired during my stay in London, and placed her under the care of the house-keeper ; and, miserable as she now looks, she is much amended since she has been under her care."

Theresa now acknowledged that no letter had ever been delivered to her by a page, as she formerly asserted, and declared that the whole was a base fabrication ; that the articles taken from the wardrobe, she had given to Roland at his own request, and she had every reason to believe that her lady had been secretly assassinated by Roland, out of the hatred he bore the Count. Both the nobleman groaned in anguish at this suggestion.

In vain they questioned Theresa as to her guilty knowledge. She declared, most solemnly, that she knew no more, though she believed her father had some hand in the removal of the Countess, for he expressed as much, in great agony, as he lay expiring.

Ronald had bribed both father and daughter to his purpose, but he hurried them from Switzerland the hour after his purpose, as far as related to them, was completed ; and they never prospered afterwards, for their ill-got gold only proved a curse to them.

Leaving the Count and Vassali to pursue their measures, we will give an account of Roland. He was the natural brother of Horatio, and two years his elder, and was left by his father with a very slender provision ; as for his mother, she died during his infancy : she was a person of obscure birth and illiterate manners.

The young Count took a great fancy to this illegitimate brother, and thinking his father had done too little for him, he fell into the opposite extreme, and did too much, and showered favours on him with a lavish hand, till the ingrate forgot himself, and his birth, and thought, as the son of the late Count, and the elder, he had more right to the domains of Olival than Horatio ; and to add to his unjust hate and envy, he no sooner beheld Amabel, than he entertained a strong passion for her.

On the death of the good old Seneschal of the castle Roland intreated the post. The Count laughed at

the idea, and said, he meant to raise him to higher honors; but the other protested it was the height of his ambition to live near Horatio; and he gained his point, which was a subtle one.

The Countess having children so fast, vexed him, as, cutting him off more than ever from obtaining the estates he panted for.

On her third pregnancy, he resolved to delay no longer; and taking advantage of the absence of the Count, he effected his purpose by the aid of the treacherous Otho and the father of Theresa; they removed Amabel, while in a state of insensibility, through a sleeping potion, into a subterranean cavity which he had discovered in the castle grounds, and had caused to be enlarged by the ready tools of his villany, and the entrance to it was most artfully concealed by a root bridge over a small moat in which the opening was situated.

The sojourn of the Count and his children at Vassali was a great annoyance to his plans; but he began to exercise such tyranny amongst the dependants, that he roused their hatred and revenge; and many reports to his prejudice reached Horatio, and staggered his opinion of him.

But suspicions of a deep and dangerous nature were first called forth by the account of Ruffo, a man whose countenance belied his nature; he looked ill-favored, dark, and morose, but he had a heart replete with humanity and kindness, and might almost be said to adore the young Paul and Justin; he had overheard many dark expressions between the Seneschal and Otho; but they were too vague to be acted on; he was therefore enjoined to be wary and silent, and see if he could not make some effectual discovery of their villainy, for the Count was fearful of a premature attack, lest it should defeat its own purpose, or be founded on false representations.

To Ruffo's suggestions it were owing, that the children were placed at the farm-house, instead of the castle.

Here they were treated in the kindest manner, and their improvement under their excellent tutor and the Lady Marcella was very great. Roland frequently, under some pretext or other, sent to invite them to the castle, but this was never complied with.

At length came the heart-rending intelligence that the Count was lost on his return to Switzerland: his im-

patience would not allow him to wait for Vassali and his bride, and the small packet in which he came, was lost at sea, in a violent storm, and only one sailor escaped to tell the dismal tidings.

Roland now produced a will, in which he was declared sole guardian of the children; and as no one dared to dispute the claim, they were given up to his power; he placed new tutors and dependants about them; at first he made a very great shew of kindness, and lulled the suspicions of those around him to sleep.

Just at this period, a pilgrim, clad in white, his robes, his hat, and staff, were all of that virgin hue; and his long silver beard, which flowed down to his girdle, added to the singularity of the palmer's appearance, and inspired a reverential awe, even in the profligate bosoms of Roland and Otho, and the former, contrary to his usual custom, for charity was not amongst the catalogue of his virtues, granted his request to stay and rest his aged and feeble limbs, nearly exhausted with performing his vow of pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Lerretto.

"And think you, holy palmer," said Roland, with great levity of manner, "that such a penance will wash out stains of conscience?—if so, I think it will be wise for us to hire you to return and conduct us thither, and shew us how to perform the ceremony."

This indecent and presumptuous jest was lost on the white pilgrim. "I can perceive," said the venerable man, "that the signior addresses himself to me; but I cannot benefit by his condescension, being impenetrably deaf; I have, for these three years past, lost my auricular powers through a hurt on the head I got in a scuffle with some banditti."

"Deaf!" exclaimed the profligate Otho, "so much the better; and since he cannot hear, and can scarce totter, he is heartily welcome to remain here as long as suits his convenience; else he might have been in our way."

"True," replied Roland, "for we have great designs on the eve of accomplishment: give me a horn of wine; and, Ruffo, hand another to our guest."

The man obeyed, and the white pilgrim, raising the vessel to his lips, drank,

"Long life and success to the owner of this castle."

Roland bowed to the white pilgrim, taking the compliment as to himself.

"You are not owner yet," whispered Otho.

"There are now but slight barriers in my way," returned Roland; "continue my friend, and the victory is ours. I must be the ostensible owner, but we will share the spoils." Ruffo, by appearing to join in the views of Roland and Otho, got possession of their secret designs. Roland determined to poison the orphans, and then assert his claim to the heirship, by the pretended will of Count Olival, and also by the false assertion that his father had been privately married to the woman who gave him (Roland) birth. As for the poor imprisoned Countess, her death was also determined on; she had long since become an object of disgust and hatred to her betrayer, for she had nobly resisted every attempt to despoil her of her honor and fidelity.

Long had Ruffo been ignorant of the fate of the persecuted Amabel, till now that he was admitted to the full confidence of the ruthless villains. With a pious wish to save his lady, he intreated to take the trouble off their hands of daily attending with her food, but was refused, the principals not choosing to trust a charge of so much importance to any one but themselves; nor though they revealed to him that she was within the precincts of the castle, did they declare the spot.

"I have yet a proposal to make to the obstinate captive; if she consents, I shall want your assistance, Ruffo," said Roland, rendered more than usually communicative by the copious libations of the evening, "to carry my plan into execution, and your fortune will be made for ever: if she refuses this last offer that ever will be made on my part, she must take the consequence; she must no longer incumber me."

"She is a lovely woman," replied Ruffo, "and you must not begrudge time or trouble to subdue her to your purpose."

"She *was* a lovely woman," said Roland; and even the wretch sighed as he spoke of the change caused by his infamy; "but were you to see her now, you would own my passion for her person could exist no longer; she is a wretched object; indeed, it would be a mercy to end her gloomy existence; 'tis her own fault; she might have been happy, had she chose it; but no, for-

sooth, she must reject my offers with ill-judged scorn. But look to the pilgrim, he makes motions that he wishes to retire to rest; be it your care to conduct him to his chamber."

The next day, the Count Vassali and his Lady came to the castle gates, but were rudely refused admittance, though his lordship urged the delicate health of his fair partner as wanting rest after so long a journey as they had taken to visit the orphans. Roland was obdurate, and ordered the warden to close the portal.

The good Gervaise, the farmer, who by a fortunate chance was passing at the time, stepped up to the carriage, and invited them to his home, if they would so far condescend, and said he would accommodate them to the best of his power, till the Countess should choose to proceed to her own home. This was gratefully accepted, for the amiable Frances was quite exhausted with her journey from England, and they had taken a circuitous route that they might embrace the children of their lamented friend, but in which they were now disappointed by the presumption of the miscreant Roland.

Count Vassali discovered the farmer to be an honest, intelligent man, and he conversed with him freely about the poor orphans. He found that it was generally believed about the domain that the children had fallen into a very perilous situation, and that Roland would never stay at his iniquitous proceedings, till he was at the summit of his unlawful ambition, Lord of Olival, "Ah! Count Vassali, we at first blamed the Countess Amabel as a wanton, who had left her husband and pretty babes; but now our opinions are changed, and we suspect the sweet lady was foully murdered in the absence of our good ruler."

"Heaven forbid!" replied the Count, "and yet it scarce admits a doubt. 'Tis strange, my friend should be so wrapped up in the fancied honor and probity of such a base wretch; I soon suspected him, but I found it no easy matter to instil the same in the bosom of my unfortunate Horatio; possessing every amiable quality himself, he was slow to admit the existence of vice in others, till conviction burst on him when too late. Have the poor children no friend within the now hated walls of Olival?"

"None, that I know of," replied Gervaise, "but an

excellent young creature, Louisa, the niece of Signior Marcella, and betrothed to my nephew Jacqueline; she was the only one that Roland would permit to remove from the farm with the children, and she has since discovered that he looked on her with a lascivious purpose; still she would not quit the children, and seems confident in her own virtue: yet what is a weak girl opposed to such a villain and his adherents? for he has brought all my late Lord's vassals to join in his purposes by promises of gain. My nephew is very uneasy about the maiden, as latterly it has been difficult to gain access to her, and he daily expects it will be entirely denied; there is Ruffo, indeed, he gave us important information respecting Roland, but latterly we have not seen him; perhaps he is won over to the usurper's interests, now my lord is dead."

He had not done speaking when Ruffo entered the chamber, and delivering a folded paper to Count Vassali, quitted the house without uttering a sentence. Gervaise called after him, but he proceeded with the swiftness of an affrighted deer pursued by the hunters.

The Count on perusing the lines turned deadly pale; he rose from his seat, but fell back again, and seemed on the point of swooning. The dame gave him a glass of an exquisite cordial, that she preserved for particular cases, and it had a beneficial effect.

"Farmer," said he, you must lend me and my valet two of your fleetest steeds; I fly on the wings of friendship; I may yet save them;—ask me no questions; all will soon be revealed. Shew Carlo where the horses are, and he will get them ready, while I inform my Countess of this sudden journey."

Frances received the news of her Lord's intended departure with regret; but when he informed her of the motives, her heart was too philanthropic to allow any considerations of self to preponderate.

It was past the mid-hour of night when the inmates of the farm of Olival were roused from their slumbers by repeated ringings at the front gate, that enclosed the court-yard, the only entrance pertaining to the immediate dwelling. Gervaise, accompanied by his nephew Jacqueline, and one of the men, for they were fearful of plunderers that then infested the neighbourhood, and went well armed, to answer the unexpected summons.

As they proceeded across the yard, they called out to

know who was there, but received no answer; they proceeded to the gate, but all was silent, nor did any person make their appearance. "This is a sorry joke," said the farmer, "to disturb people from their beds in this manner; I wish I'd the beating of the dust out of their jackets." "Stay, uncle," exclaimed Jacqueline, "what noise is this?"

A few moanings, accompanied by piteous sighs, were now heard.

Gervaise opened the gate, and a female form lay extended along the ground; they lifted her up, and conveyed her into the house, when they found a paper on which was scrawled a few words hastily written with a pencil, and pinned to her breast:—

"Cherish, and protect this hapless creature; carefully conceal her, as the lives of several may depend on that caution: her deliverer trusts soon to see you."

Gervaise summoned his dame, and the Countess Vassali, who had risen when the peals of the bell were given, from the apprehension that some accident had caused her Lord's return, joined the astonished and commiserating party.

Never was such an object seen as the one that now met their eyes; her long hair was matted and dishevelled: her complexion obscured by filth and dirt; her whole form emaciated, and covered with rags, the outer garment of thin silk being completely in ribbons; and devoid of either shoes or stockings.

She gazed wildly around her, but spoke not, and seemed in a state of ideotism. "Who can she be? from whence can she come?—" "Never mind," said the farmer, "time will shew. All that I know is, she is here: and we will cherish and comfort her as directed; no one can want it worse," and the tear of compassion glistened in his eye.

"Convey her to the chamber with green hangings," said the dame, "and leave her to my care." "Me and my attendant will assist you," said the amiable Frances, whose true sensibility forbade her to abandon the distress, and not shrink from it, like many who boast that their fine feelings will not allow them to witness the affliction of their fellow creatures.

"The poor unfortunate sufferer," she continued, "appears to be much of the same height as myself; we, therefore, can supply her from my travelling trunk."

It took both time and trouble to humanize the appearance of the stranger, as her features appeared to view refreshed by cleanliness. Marietta, the farmer's wife, seemed much interested and agitated. "Do you know her?" asked Frances, "I cannot say, my lady; there is a likeness,—but still——" At this moment in removing the rugged garments a small miniature dropped out, and the poor woman interrupted her own unfinished sentence with a loud shriek.

Gervaise rushed to the door, and putting his head in, said, "Is our charge dead, that you cry out so?"

"Oh! no, no; but I shall die myself, I verily think, with astonishment; husband, 'tis the dear injured Countess of Castelli that we have under our roof." Her speech acted like electricity on the minds of her auditors; it was indeed the portrait of the late Count that that had dropped from her bosom, and confirmed the ideas her face and form had previously impressed on Mariette.

Three years had elapsed since she was lost to the world, but she looked more than ten older.

As soon as they had placed her in bed, Mariette went to warm some wine for the invalid, but when she returned with it, her charge had already sunk into a composed and tranquil sleep, which lasted undisturbed till morning, and the most salutary effects resulted from the change she had experienced.

This had also been an eventful night at the Castle. Roland had felt a depression of spirits on his return from visiting his captive, and making a proposal to her of release, if she would consent to be conveyed to a distant country, where she should have every comfort, if she would take a solemn oath to conceal what was past, and never impart her real name, or any particulars of her family. "You have nothing to hope," said the villain, "your husband and children are no more, and I am Lord of this domain. You refused my love; that time is gone; I now pity you, I do not wish to take your life, but I am weary of such an incumbrance; I am also going to travel. I give your choice,—freedom, or death. Give me your promise, and I will send you from hence under the care of Ruffo."

"I will make no terms with such a wretch as you," replied the Countess. "If, indeed, my husband and chil-

dren are no more, I have nought to live for; let me perish in my dungeon; I am decaying fast, deprived as I am of every necessary; or slay me, if you please; This is my determination, and from it I will not swerve."

Still Roland felt infirm of purpose; he did not wish to strike the blow himself, and he did not like to trust it to another. He returned into the Castle; Otho was absent, and he sat in the cedar-parlour, deeply ruminating till he was weary of himself and shocked at his own crimes.

He heard a deep convulsive sigh, he turned round, and he beheld frowning on him Horatio Count Olival!

Roland fell insensible to the floor, in which state he was some time afterward found by his attendants, and conveyed to bed. A monk was sent for to bleed him, but it was long before he recovered: he then called out in alarm for the keys he had left in the cedar parlour; they were found on the table, and brought to him, when he became more composed and argued himself into a belief that he must have dozed when he beheld Horatio. He rose with a fresh gust for horrid deeds, and, at the first, resolved to destroy Amabel. He liked not the vicinity of Vassali; he, therefore, resolved to be prompt in his measures, and secure the domain of Olival, when he could better defy any scrutiny.

He repaired to the prison of the captive lady, as he supposed,—but it was vacant, and the door wide open; his brain was on fire to know what had become of her; she was too weak to walk without assistance, even a few steps, even if he had not turned the key in the lock previous to withdrawing it, which he felt conscious that he did.

He rushed back into the Castle, his mind in torture indescribable, to the guiltless babes, and taking the poison he had prepared from a small cabinet, repaired to the room where they were sitting with Louisa at breakfast; he embraced them tenderly, and saying that he having remarked lately some appearance of a heat rash about them, he had spoken to the good monk Ambrosio, who favoured him with the powders, which he then emptied into the milk and bread, and which the children devoured with a good appetite. Roland then quitted the room.

His manner and unusual stay, together with the

interest with which he watched Paul and Justin, struck the maiden with the fact of what he had done, and she shrieked aloud. Roland returned, and clasping his arms round her, enquired the cause of her alarm; she struggled, and got from him. "Off, murderer!" said she, "assassin of the innocent," and as such I will proclaim thee to the whole world!"

"You must have my leave first, fair maiden," exclaimed he, in a sarcastic tone, and forcing her into a turret-chamber, locked the door on her; and not content with this outrage, the fiend in human shape conveyed the screaming children to a loathsome dungeon beneath the Castle.

He ordered the drawbridge to be raised, and made active preparation for defence, for his conscience had begun to argue the worst from the mysterious escape of the Countess, of whom he could hear no tidings, though he had taken many secret measures for that purpose; but Gervaise and his family most cautiously concealed their guest, who was now restored to the full possession of her senses, which had been disordered by the suddenness and manner of her rescue.

She recounted to them the horrors of her confinement; her rejection of the love of Roland, and to become an accomplice in his designs, was followed by unheard-of barbarity; she was delivered prematurely of a child, who died the same night; she was allowed no assistance, and having wept many days over her dear blossom, she buried it with her own hands in one corner of the damp dungeon. She informed them of her last interview with Roland. "When I heard my dungeon open in the dead of night, I, of course, expected he was come to murder me; but the voice of my husband pronounced my name! my senses fled under the surprise.—You know the rest.—My Horatio is no more, you indeed inform me, or else I could still cherish the dear delusion that he was my deliverer; my children, you assure me, live; and in that my gaoler deceived me; but when he discovers my flight, he may possibly wreck his vengeance on them. What is to be done—the King must know my piteous story. I shall soon be able to kneel at his feet, for the comfort and attention I receive hourly regenerates my frame."

"From your deliverance, noble Lady," said Gervaise,

"'tis plain you have a potent friend, and I flatter myself Count Vassali is gone from hence in pursuance of some intelligence received from the Castle; so let us hope the best."

Jacqueline repaired to the castle, but could gain no admittance; all was in a defensive state, and he returned full of fears for Louisa.

No stranger had been allowed to remain in the castle, even the White Pilgrim was ordered thence, but Ruffo, to whom the message was given, declaring that he lay stretched on the couch apparently for death, Ronald and Otho made some indecent jests on the occasion, and the subject dropt.

The next day the castle was suddenly surrounded with soldiers, led by Count Vassali, who demanded the usurper, in the King's name, to surrender, but he refused. At this moment, some one came to tell him that the children were not dead, but advancing along the battlements led by the White Pilgrim. "See, see! he has thrown them from the walls, they are caught below by the soldiers, treachery! treachery! Ruffo has opened the gates: I saw the villain do it!"

Fierce was the conflict; Otho was slain by the White Pilgrim; no tottering old man, but a powerful young one, armed with justice, and casting off his disguise, the real Count Olival stood before the expiring Ronald, who was mortally wounded by one of the troopers; and the surrender of the castle to the legal owner was the consequence.

"Wretch!" said Horatio, "my real appearance terrified you into a swoon. I had previously watched your motions, and discovered the prison of my Amabel; the effect was as I anticipated; I took the keys, and relieved her; she is safe: the poison Otho purchased for you, thanks to my pretended deafness, I knew of, and changed for a harmless powder; 'twas I that burst their prison doors, 'twas I that saved them. My escape from shipwreck put me on this stratagem; and Count Vassali, ignorant of my preservation, was sent opportunely to aid me."

Roland expired in agonies both mortal and bodily shocking to behold.—Such is the end of the wicked!

Jacqueline, who had entered with the soldiers, was the hero who delivered the half-famished and terrified Louisa

from her prison to share the general joy, and she soon after rewarded the rustic knight with her hand. Theresa perished at sea as she was crossing over with the Count.

Amabel was cautiously inform of all that occurred and the blessings Providence had in its mercy preserved for her. Her health rapidly recovered, and in due time she presented her Lord with a lovely girl, who became the wife of the Count Vassali's eldest son, thus cementing a friendship always held inviolable. Gervaise, the good farmer, was not forgotten; for he and his family received the favor their goodness merited.

FINIS.