

1800

Cronstadt Castle; or, The Mysterious Visitor. An Original Romance.

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Recommended Citation

Cronstadt Castle; or, The Mysterious Visitor. An Original Romance. London: A. Kemmish, c. 1800.

Cronstadt Castle ;

OR, THE

MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

An original Romance.

Be mine the Task, to tell a Tale of Woe,
And from your Bosom draw a pitying Sigh.

Surry :

Printed by A. KEMMISH, 17, King-Street, Borough—for and
Published by J. Ker, 40, London Road, near the Elephant and
Castle, Southwark—Sold also by Hughes, Stationer's Court—
N. and J. Muggeridge, Borough; Wilmott and Hill, 50,
Borough; A. Kemmish, King-Street, Borough; Perks, Sta-
tioner, 12, St. Martin's Lane; Elliott, High-Street, Shadwell;
Barfoot, Norton-Falgate; Dixon, Rochester; Hodgson, 20,
Strand; T. Evans, 79, Long-Lane, West-Smithfield, &c.

Entered at the Stamp Office.

Price SIXPENCE.



CRONSTADT CASTLE, &c.

THE rude storm howled through the forest that surrounded the solitary Castle of the Count de Cronstadt, a nobleman who had long retired from the splendour of a court, and sought, in this gloomy edifice, a retreat in which he could indulge a misanthropy that had taken possession of his soul.—He that had been the life of every party in which he had mixed, and whose vivacity had made his presence so eagerly desired in the polished circles of his friends, had suddenly withdrawn himself from society, and repaired with the amiable Countess, and the lovely Joanna, his daughter, to the former abode of his ancestors, and which had never been inhabited for the three preceding generations. He only took two aged domestics with him, Ambrose and Margaret, and a little orphan girl, who was to be the companion and attendant of his beloved daughter, who had but just passed the seventh year of her life. In this abode they had now passed ten years; nor did any of their friends know whither they had retired. Thus they lived unsought, unknown.

Cronstadt was the only one that knew the reason of this seclusion; it was an entire mystery to the rest of the party, even the Countess was not admitted to the knowledge of events that made the concealment necessary, and she had long ceased to question her Lord on a subject that appeared to give him pain, and to which he only returned short evasive answers.

Their days passed unmarked by any particular occurrence, till the night of the storm, which led to a train of events that laid the foundation of this small novel.

The family usually retired to their respective chambers at an early hour of the night, but the raging of the tempest, which appeared to threaten the destruction of the ancient fabric, made the party assemble in the great hall, and wait the event with the most terrific and painful apprehensions, and vainly endeavoring to inspire each other with hopes that they did not feel in their own breasts.

The clock that was in the blue saloon had scarce struck *one*, when the little circle were alarmed by a violent knocking at the great door of the Castle.

The Count blamed Ambrose for leaving the iron gates unfastened at the end of the avenue, and then extinguishing the lights, ordered the whole party to maintain a strict silence let what would happen. In vain the Countess pleaded for their admission, alledging that the travellers must perish if they were longer exposed to the inclemency of the storm. Cronstadt was inexorable, and with a stern voice bid the Countess preserve the silence he commanded; she heaved a soft sigh, but was forced to acquiesce with a decree, at which her heart revolted. The knocking still continued, and many voices were heard, as if in altercation; some declaring the Castle was inhabited, while the others asserted it was only the haunt of grim spectres, who kept their nightly rendezvous at this ruined abode. A loud and most tremendous clap of thunder now rolled over their heads, accompanied by forked lightning, whose repeated flashes were enough to inspire every soul with horror and affright; and the party without, appeared determined to force the door, and accordingly united their efforts for that purpose; but its strength resisted their attempts, and they at length departed, to the seeming relief of Cronstadt.

The Countess could not avoid gently reproaching her Frederick for his want of hospitality, and expressed

pressed her wish that they might have been admitted to partake of the shelter and refreshments the gloomy Castle afforded.

“Weak woman! you know not what you desire,” said the Count, with apparent anger, and was re-lighting one of the tapers, when they heard footsteps advancing along one of the passages that led to the hall. It was plain that the party had gone round to another part of the Castle, where they had succeeded in gaining the desired entrance, and was now loudly rejoicing in their success.

The Count appeared in agonies of despair, and ordered the whole family to retreat with haste, while there was a possibility of escape to the East turret, and there immure themselves till the intruders should depart; "they will then surmise," said the Count, "the Castle had been inhabited by banditti, who had fled at their entrance, and we shall remain undiscovered." The family had no choice but to obey, and they groped through the dark and intricate windings that led to the turret, where they remained locked in a small chamber, suffering both mental and bodily anguish. It was nearly day-light ere the storm had wholly subsided; nor did the travellers depart till noon—when Cronstadt having watched them till his eyes could no longer discern the objects which had caused him so much uneasiness, (for their fleet couriers soon cleared the forest), he descended with his companions to the saloon, and Ambrose with Margaret, hastened to prepare breakfast.

They found that the visitors had made free with what provisions there was in the Castle, and had left a note, apologizing for the intrusion necessity had forced them to commit, and the uneasiness at creating an alarm in the breasts of those who had taken shelter in the antique retreat. This was signed by the Marquis Mont Aubin and the Chevalier Albert Lannoy—which was accompanied by a handsome present of money, and a small gold ring, in which was set an onyx of considerable value.

Count Cronstadt sighed as he read their signatures, remarking

remarking that their fathers had been his most intimate friends, an almost fraternal affection subsisting among them. He shared the money they had left between his domestics, and presented the ring to Joanna, who was highly pleased with the gift, and from that hour constantly wore it on her finger.

The Count for some days successively watched, fearful the travellers should return, and disturb his solitude. But at length finding themselves in their usual seclusion, they resumed their wonted calmness, and returned to their occupations and diversions, with the content that had hitherto marked their hours; indeed the Count was the only one that ever appeared to harbour sorrow in their breasts. The length of time they had passed in this Castle, rendered it familiar to them, nor did they ever wish to stray beyond its bounds. Ambrose was the only one who ever went to a village about three miles distant, to purchase the provisions and articles of cloaths, &c. of which they stood in need; and as he was always very particular in returning by a different track than that which led directly to the Castle, the villagers were entirely ignorant of the place of his abode; but supposed it to be a much greater distance than it really was.

Several weeks were elapsed in tranquillity, and the Count appeared to be in a more composed state of mind than he had enjoyed since his voluntary exile.

The Countess, her fair daughter, and the young Matilda her companion, were sitting very attentively at work, (the Count and Ambrose being absent on a fishing excursion) some one rapping at the door of the saloon, caught the attention of Joanna, and supposing it could be no other than Margaret, she carelessly told her to come in—when the words, “Ladies I fear I intrude on your retirement,” aroused the astonished fair ones from their seats.

A young man, whose appearance was at once noble

noble and prepossessing, advanced, and taking the hand of the amiable Countess, intreated her to afford him an asylum for his servant, who in rescuing him from two desperadoes, who had attacked him in the forest, had been very severely wounded; and being obliged to proceed, in hopes of gaining an Inn, which was on the out-skirts of the forest, they had remounted their steeds, but his valet being faint, with loss of blood, had fallen from his seat, and now laid in the utmost danger, a few paces from the outer gates of this Castle.

“My heart revolts,” said the lady, “at the idea of refusing a request of so much importance to your peace, and the existence of your domestic: but, alas! gentle stranger, I dare not grant your suit, for dreadful may be the consequence of my acquiescence.”

“Then my faithful Martin must die!” exclaimed the youth. “His attachment to me has cost him his life! never, never more will my troubled breast be restored to peace. Madam, I go to ———”

“Stay,” exclaimed the Countess, “Generous stranger, I would almost encounter death, to serve generosity like your’s. The western wing of the building contains several chambers, in which the antique furniture still remains; in that we have not entered for some years, and then only induced by curiosity, to ramble through the apartments. Here we will assist you in conveying your servant, and will supply you with every thing requisite to his recovery; but this I can only grant on the condition of your never quitting those apartments, till Martin is able to renew his journey, and you quit the Castle for ever. Believe me, Sir, it might be attended with the most horrid consequences, should my compliance come to the knowledge of my husband.”

“I accept of your kind offer, Madam,” said the youth, with the warmest sentiments of gratitude, “and shall observe your injunctions with the utmost circumspection; and Villeroy shall ever retain a sense of your goodness while his heart continues to beat.”

The

The interesting Villeroy led the way, and the ladies followed to the place where the unfortunate Martin was weltering in his blood.

By their joint endeavors he was conveyed to the apartment assigned him by the Countess, who assisted Villeroy to dress the wounds he had received on his head and left shoulder, which, to their great pleasure, they found to be much less dangerous than they at first imagined. The Countess and her lovely assistants, filled a basket with wine and provisions enough to last their visitors till next day; also some fuel to warm them, for the weather was intense cold; and Villeroy was to light a fire at six o'clock, at which time the Countess assured him the owner of the Castle would be settled for the evening. The ladies then left them, to return to their own apartments. The Count and Ambrose had just arrived from their excursion, and Margaret was searching for them in the adjacent rooms: the Countess merely informed her that they had been to visit the library, in hopes to find some books that were entertaining, and then hastened with her young companions, to the saloon, where dinner was on the table in readiness for their approach.

The Countess had no reason to doubt the fidelity of Margaret; but yet prudence suggested to her that it was best to confine the knowledge of the late transaction to as few persons as possible: she therefore commanded Joanna and Matilda to preserve a strict silence on the subject; likewise charged them to conceal the name of Cronstadt from Villeroy, and his servant, and take that of Launnett.

It was late the next day, ere the Countess and Matilda could visit their patient; Joanna was too indisposed to accompany them, and went to her chamber in hopes of obtaining some repose, for she had passed a sleepless night. The events of the preceding day had made a great impression on the spirits of the fair one. For ten years, she had never seen or conversed with any man but the Count and his aged domestic; excepting, indeed, the transient

view

view she had of the travellers departing from the Castle, on horseback, the morning after the storm. She had, indeed, formed her opinion of the world, by books, and the converse and descriptions of the Countess, who was a very intelligent and well-informed woman. But Villeroy appeared to inspire the maid with love!—and she mourned, with sincere anguish, the barriers fate had placed between them, by her rigid seclusion, and the austere temper of her father, who appeared to have condemned his family to an eternal exile.

The Countess had the pleasure to find that her hospitality had been of great service to Martin, who was so far recovered, as to be able to express his thanks to the good and benevolent lady, who had saved his life. Villeroy inquired for Joanna, with the most tender air; and felt apparent concern when informed of her indisposition, and intreated the Countess to give his unfeigned good wishes to the charming Mademoiselle Launnett.

Villeroy felt extreme anxiety to know the real character and situation of the inhabitants of this remote structure. The deportment of the ladies was such, as inspired him with respect and veneration, and he could not entertain a thought to their prejudice.

The mystery in which the owner of the mansion (for such the Countess had unwarily denominated him) was enveloped, convinced him that some crime had forced him to pass his days in so uncomfortable a seclusion. He communicated his suspicions to his faithful Martin; who replied, that he had no other idea than that the father of Joanna was a leader of the banditti, who infested the out-skirts of the forest. “Heaven forbid!” ejaculated Villeroy, with a fervor that forced a smile from his wounded domestic. “Heaven forbid; but yet I must own I think what you suggest is true.”

Curiosity took possession of the soul of the youthful Villeroy. The fair form of Joanna had almost obtained a conquest over his heart, which in vain
prudence

prudence whispered him to banish ; and he resolved not to quit the Castle, till he was enabled to discover the mystery that perplexed his heart. It was true, that these sentiments did not accord with the promise he had made to the supposed Madame Launnett, but love triumphed over honor, and he determined to leave no method untried, by which he could gain the desired information.

The next day was unfavorable to the usual rambles of the Count—it rained torrents, and the wind was high and bleak ; he therefore amused himself by reading to the ladies, while they worked tapestry, which was to adorn a small chapel, where they usually repaired to their morning devotions.

The Countess was chagrined at not being able to form any pretext, by which she could be absent long enough to visit Villeroy and Martin—being conscious that the Count would suspect some hidden motive for an absence so unusual.

Distressed on the account of their being in want of their usual supplies—she resolved to send Matilda (though it was an expedient urged by necessity, and what the delicacy of the Countess did not approve, as she thought it a task more becoming for a matron) with the provisions she had placed in a basket, as she rose from her bed, intending to have paid her usual visit in the absence of the Count. She made Matilda comprehend her purpose in as few words as possible, and the blooming girl retired under pretence of giving some orders to Margaret. She hastened to the western wing, and entered into Villeroy's apartment—her face suffused with roseate blushes.

The appearance of Matilda, alone, and unaccompanied by either of the ladies, suggested to Villeroy that he might learn from her, some of the particulars of which he was so anxious to be informed.

In order to begin the conversation, he asked her, with an air of seeming carelessness, the name of the Castle. "Cronstadt," replied Matilda. "How long have you resided here, Ma'amselle?" said Villeroy, with some quickness. "Ten years, exactly," answered

answered Matilda. "Then the real name of the gentleman who resides here, is not, I presume, Launnett? Tell me, my fair damsel," said the youth, falling on his knees, and taking her by the hand, "tell me, I beseech you—for much depends upon your answer!" The astonished Matilda fled from his grasp, with terror and surprise. Villeroy willing to banish her alarm, in hopes to overtake her, pursued, fearful that she should cause uneasiness in the breast of Madame Launnett, whom he revered, and would sooner perish than add to the sorrow of one who appeared so truly amiable. But his efforts were vain; Matilda fled with redoubled speed, as she heard him approach; and no sooner had she arrived in the great hall, than flinging herself on a bench, she fainted; and to add to her embarrassment, she had scarce recovered, when Count Cronstadt entered, and sternly interrogated as to the cause of her alarm. In vain she attributed her swoon to indisposition—he insisted there was some other cause, and the affrighted Matilda was almost persuaded to discover the truth, when, to her great relief, the Countess entered, and gently rebuked her Lord for his severity; and leading the damsel to an open window, that she might receive benefit from the air, assured the Count that she did not doubt but that Matilda had assigned the right cause. He made no reply, but retired, with a frowning aspect.

The Countess then tenderly urged her weeping favorite to unfold the cause of her sorrow. Matilda informed her, without reserve, of the behaviour of Villeroy; and her fears that she had done unintentional wrong, by telling the name of the Castle, and the length of time they had resided there; and earnestly intreated for pardon. The Countess told her she freely forgave her, but intreated her to be more cautious in future.

As soon as Matilda was recovered, they returned to the saloon, where they endeavored to assume the appearance of cheerfulness. But their efforts were

of

of no avail; for their agonies of mind was too apparent to escape the notice of the affectionate Joanna, who regarded them with looks of tender concern. As for the Count, he fortunately happened to be engaged with his own ideas, and was too much absorbed in thought to pay any attention to the countenances of his fair companions.

The Countess, though she felt much displeasure at the conduct of Villeroy, attributed it to some innate motive in the youth, more than rudeness or childish curiosity—and she felt a presentiment that some horrid catastrophe would be the consequence of Villeroy's reception at the Castle. Some moments she thought of confiding the real knowledge of her situation to Villeroy, as far as she was able to explain, (for, heaven knows, her retirement was a mystery to herself) and by trusting to his generosity prevent worse consequences ensuing: to this, another and another plan succeeded, but none that could meet with the entire concurrence of her heart; and the next morning arrived, without her being able to form a perfect determination on the subject, and she repaired to Villeroy, still irresolute how to act.

The youth, who had been anxiously waiting the arrival of the Countess, went to meet her, but shrunk back with evident concern, when he observed her pale and altered countenance. “Tell me, Madam, I beseech you,” said Villeroy, “whence comes the sorrow that your features convince me has taken place in your breast?” The Countess, without any hesitation, informed him that his behaviour on the preceding day, was the chief cause of her grief.

Villeroy, in faltering accents, endeavored to make an appropriate apology, but his embarrassment was too great to allow him utterance. From this perplexity he was relieved by the kindness of the Countess; who promised before he quitted the Castle to inform him by what mode he could visit them again—assuring him that she would reveal to him the mysterious part of her life, the first moment she had

had liberty to pursue her own inclinations, without injury to those she held most dear to her.

Villeroy swore by all the powers he held most sacred, to conceal from every one the adventure of his residing in the Castle, and its being inhabited by such charming persons. The Countess then attended Martin, who appeared rapidly recovering ; and then returned to her own apartment in a much happier frame of mind than she had enjoyed for some hours.

Martin, by the kind attention of the Countess, was soon able to leave his bed, and sit up some hours at a time ; but as yet he was not able to bear the fatigue of travelling—nor had they horses to convey them home, for at the time of their being received into the Castle, for the better concealment, he had turned their steeds loose in the forest.

It was near midnight, and Villeroy was reading a book which had been lent him by the Countess—Martin had just retired to bed, and all was silent as the grave—when the door of the chamber suddenly flew open, and an ærial form, in a white flowing robe entered, and, with a majestic air, waved its hand, while, in a solemn tone, it called on Villeroy to follow. The youth, astonished at the sight, could scarce credit the evidence of his senses ; and casting the book on the floor, hastened to the bed side of his domestic, to inquire whether the spectacle was visible to him.

But Martin was buried in a sound sleep, out of which all the efforts of his master could not awake him. The Mysterious Visitor still continued to wave its hand towards the door, and Villeroy resolved to follow, and learn what his ærial conductor had to impart. They descended a flight of winding stairs, and entered a small door. They had no other light than what the moon afforded through an iron grating in the wall, yet Villeroy could perceive that he was in a large vault ; the side against which he stood was damp and mouldering. The visionary Being stood for some moments, in a profound meditation.

ditation. It then proceeded to the middle of the vault—uttered a deep sigh, and vanished into air—leaving the poor youth in the utmost astonishment and horror. It was with no small difficulty that he regained his apartment; for the passages by which he had passed were very intricate. Sleep was now banished from his eyes, and he spent the remainder of the night in traversing the chamber, and reflecting on the strangeness of the adventure that had befallen him. Day light no sooner appeared to bless Villeroy, than he hastened to the subterraneous vault. In vain he explored every part—he could find no door, or the smallest vestige of any thing that could lead him to suppose that this obscure place contained any unravelled mystery; and he returned to Martin with a desponding air. That faithful servant would not let his master keep the cause of his dejection undiscovered, so earnestly did he intreat him to unbosem the anxiety which his countenance betrayed. No sooner had Villeroy informed his domestic of the marvellous occurrence, than Martin exclaimed, “ I lay my life that foul murder has been committed in this Castle. Heaven knows, Sir; my Lord, the late Marquis, has long been missing, and from various circumstances, I am led to believe Count de Cronstadt was his murderer.”

“ Hold! I beseech you,” said Villeroy. “ You have no proof to justify an assertion raised by circumstances which appeared like guilt to your imagination—the Count may be innocent, though many, like you, have dared to suspect him. But what has that to do with this Castle, my good fellow?”

“ Why, your honor,” said Martin, “ is not this Cronstadt Castle?—Who can be the refugees but the Count and his family?” Villeroy sighed—while he replied, that “ he knew not what to think, nor how to proceed.” “ I intreat you, my worthy master,” said the affectionate attendant, “ not to expose your real title; still keep the name of Villeroy, or another murder may ensue, should the knowledge

knowledge of our residing here, reach the ears of the Count ; for he, I am well convinced, is the ruler of this edifice."

Villeroy was hindered from replying, by the sudden entrance of the Countess ; whose countenance betrayed the evident marks of fear and terror, and sitting down in one of the window seats, burst into a flood of tears.

Villeroy was much affected at her grief, and tenderly inquired the cause ; though he was rather apprehensive that she had overheard his conversation ; but from this painful thought he was soon relieved, by the Lady exclaiming, " Villeroy, behold in me, the unfortunate Countess de Cronstadt ! Never, till this day, did I know the extent of my miseries. Heaven is miraculous in all its ways, and it surely guided you hither at this afflicting period. O take pity on me and mine, and let not the scene to which I am now going to conduct you, harden your heart against my intreaties." She arose and left the chamber, intreating Villeroy to follow. He obeyed in silent wonder ; and they proceeded to the saloon, where the family usually resided. The hapless Count was laying on the ground, apparently in the agonies of death !—the blood flowing in a rapid stream from his right side ; while he uttered the most piercing groans. The Countess approached, and with extreme agitation, exclaimed, " Frederick, he is come." He raised his eyes, and gazed wildly on the youth—at length he held out his hand—Villeroy pressed it with energy between his own.

The Count attempted to speak, but the words died on his quivering lips. "*Henry, forgive—!*" was all that was articulate ; and with a heavy groan expired. The Countess remained in silent agony : Matilda clung round her, heaving the most piteous sighs ; while the two domestics tore their hair, with a frantic grief, that excited the utmost compassion in the breast of Villeroy—but the pitiable situation of the lovely Joanna, pierced his heart with woe.—He raised her from the ground, on which she had

fallen in a state of insensibility, and taking her in his arms, conveyed her into the court-yard, in hopes that the air would facilitate her recovery. He seated her on a stone that had fallen from the mouldering ruins, while her head reclined on his shoulder—at length, when he was almost in despair, she began to revive. Villeroy uttered his fervent thanks to heaven, and raising the hand of Joanna to his lips, he was going to imprint on it an impassioned kiss, when he beheld his ring on her finger! (for he was one of the former visitors of the Castle, when the storm obliged him to take shelter). The accidental circumstance of her wearing it, filled him with delight and admiration. Matilda now came to his assistance, and by their tender efforts Joanna was soon restored to life, but not to happiness. She would have fain returned to the saloon; but this Villeroy would not permit—he led her to her chamber, and leaving Matilda to offer what consolation was in her power to the fair mourner, he returned to seek the Countess, whom he found weeping over the body of her deceased Lord. Martin, who had been alarmed for his master's safety, had left his chamber, and with some difficulty, crawled to the saloon, where he now stood, transfixed with horror and amazement; at length he exclaimed in tremulous accents, (his eyes fixed on Villeroy) “Tell me, I beseech you, have you, urged by wrath, stained your hands in human gore?” Villeroy perceived by this question, that his servant suspected the Count to have fallen by his hands, and anxious to remove the painful error, he informed him, that he was as yet, ignorant of the cause of his death.—The Countess, with a deep sigh, told them that she would retire to her closet for an hour, in order to compose her mind, and then she would relate the cause of this unfortunate event. In the mean time she intreated Villeroy to give what orders he should consider necessary; and to remain in the habitable part of the Castle, during his stay: to this he bowed assent, the sorrowing Lady was led to her own apartment, by her faithful sympathising Margaret.

Villeroy, with the aid of Ambrose, conveyed the remains of the unfortunate Count to a distant chamber, where they, with pious care, performed the last offices due to the dead. The old man, by direction of the youth, set off to the next town to procure an undertaker, as he was anxious the funeral obsequies should be performed as soon as possible.

The Countess, as soon as she returned to the saloon, desired the presence of Villeroy, in order to make the promised disclosure—and she began as follows :

“ The task I have to perform, is painful in the extreme ; yet it was imposed on me by my late Lord, whom I have ever loved, and shall never cease to regret—though the dire knowledge of his crimes, almost distract my troubled brain. (She wiped off the tears that would intrude, and then proceeded). My Lord—for so you must permit me to call you, since concealment is now no longer requisite on either side.”

Henry bowed ; and informed the Countess that Villeroy was a name he inherited from his birth, at the desire of an uncle, who had made, on that account, a considerable addition to his fortune ; and that when he travelled in a private manner, he found that appellation more convenient than the ostentatious one of the Marquis Mont Aubin.”

“ Suppose,” said the Countess, with a languid smile, “ that I should tell Lord Henry that he has no right to the title of Marquis.”

“ Ha !—what mean you, Madame ?” said the youth, interrupting her.

“ Your father lives !——Here, in this Castle, dwells that ill treated man !”

“ My dear Countess !” said the astonished Henry, “ how could you have the heart so long to conceal from me this mysterious circumstance.”

“ Believe me, noble youth,” replied the Lady, “ that this fatal morning only, disclosed to me the knowledge of these strange events ; and I would fain explain what I know, ere I join you in attempting

to discover in what part of the Castle your father is confined. For some days past the Count had betrayed a more than usual agitation ; and he was more frequently absent from the Castle than he had been accustomed to : this change gave me much uneasiness, and last night I ventured to inquire the cause—but was only answered by a groan, expressive of heart-felt sorrow. We went to bed, but sleep never closed my eyes for a single moment.—My unhappy husband was equally under the influence of woe. He arose at an early hour of the morning, and left me without speaking a word, but in the most evident perturbation of mind. I hastily arose, intending to follow, and observe his actions, for my spirits were depressed by the thought that some dire event was about to take place.

“ The Count remained locked up in his study nearly two hours : there was a small closet adjoining, which received light by an inner window made in the wall of the study. Hither I repaired, and to my extreme relief, perceived he was busily employed at his pen. Thinking his mind had now become composed, I went to the saloon, and ordered breakfast ; as soon as my Joanna and her companion appeared, I sent Ambrose to beg the company of the Count to our repast. A loud cry from the old man alarmed me, and I hastened to the study.—Ambrose had knocked some time, but could gain no admission, and an impulse of affectionate zeal for his master, made him force the door. The Count endeavored to conceal a wound he had given himself in his side, by placing a napkin against the place, and complaining of a rheumatic pain, sternly bid Ambrose retire, and not dare to obtrude on his privacy. The old man was about to obey his order, when he saw a dagger lay on the floor, whose hue gave evidence of the fatal deed, which a copious stream of blood confirmed, and caused Ambrose to give that shriek of terror that made me hasten to the Count.

“ My unhappy husband intreated me to summons
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all my fortitude, and assist Ambrose in leading him to the saloon, in which place, he told me, he wished to have some few moments conversation with the son of the Marquis Mont Aubin.

“ I thought his intellectual faculties were deranged—and slowly replied, ‘ Would it were in my power, dear Frederick, to gratify your wish.’ ”

“ It is, Antonia,” said the Count ; “ the youth whom you have acted so nobly by, and who is now in the Western wing of this Castle, is the son of my once valued friend.” “ Here,” said the Countess, “ I shrieked ; and exclaimed, that my imprudence had been the cause of his committing this rash, and sinful deed. This, to the great relief of my almost bursting heart, he asserted to be false.—He then told me that he had left on his escrutoire, a written paper, that would inform me of the dire cause that led to our long seclusion ; and the event that had now made him desperately rush, unbidden, into the presence of his Maker. The Count was faint, with exertion and loss of blood ; and he again conjured me, in accents that will be ever impressed on my memory, to hasten, and fetch Lord Henry, ere he breathed his last. I flew to your apartment, in a state of agonizing woe, that no language can delineate with justice to my feelings.

“ The scene that directly followed, you, my Lord, are better acquainted with than myself ; for my grief was too high wrought to permit my noticing it minutely. While I was gone to perform the request of my hapless Frederick, he found that his existence was about to receive its final period ; and he desired Ambrose to inform me, that the Marquis Mont Aubin, who had so long been supposed dead, and the title borne by his son, was a prisoner in one of the vaults ; desiring me to convey him nourishment, and then restore him to liberty and affluence.—Ambrose ventured to ask, in what particular vault the unfortunate nobleman was immured ; but the Count was now too weak to explain, though he frequently endeavored to articulate his meaning. Of this

this circumstance, Ambrose informed me as soon as I had entered my own apartment. I then went to the Count's study, and perused the fatal papers—they account for the crime, but, alas! they give no clue that can guide us to the place where the good Mont Aubin now suffers the most unmerited confinement. I would commit the papers to your own perusal, but my fears lest the delay that might occasion should be prejudicial to the existence of the Marquis, who might now be in great want of sustenance." She judged it proper that they should immediately explore every subterraneous part of the Castle, that they might find an object so dear to Lord Henry.

The youth recollected his mysterious visitant, and the drear vault to which it conducted him; he mentioned the circumstance to the Countess, who concurred in the idea that the prison of his father was not far distant from the spot.

Hither they repaired, accompanied by Margaret; (for Ambrose was not yet returned, and Martin was unable to sustain the fatigue of descending so many stairs) they each carried lights, to assist their researches. Lord Henry, after having passed through several vaults, recognised the individual one, that had been the place where the vision vanished from his sight; and had already been that of his fruitless endeavors, to penetrate into the mystery which had made so deep an impression on his mind.

This attempt for the desired recovery, appeared for some time, to promise no better success than the preceding ones; and they were about to retire in the utmost dejection, when the Countess most fortunately happened to strike her foot against some hard substance—she stooped, and held down the light, that she might discover what it was that thus impeded her progress.

The Countess uttered an involuntary exclamation of joy, on perceiving a large iron ring, apparently fastened in a piece of wood. As soon as she was able to recover from the tremor her emotion had caused

caused, she desired Henry to raise it ; he did so, and to his great joy, perceived a cavity just sufficient to let one person descend at a time, and to which was fixed a steep ladder.

He would fain have persuaded the Countess to remain in the vault while he examined this dismal retreat, but the amiable Antonia would not consent to his intreaties, and her anxiety to discover the Marquis, made her regardless of danger.

Lord Henry descended, and then called to his fair companion to follow with extreme care ; observing, that the rails of the ladder were much worn by age, or frequent use. The Countess hastened to join her conductor, and Margaret followed, more through fear of being left alone in the vault, from which place she was conscious she could not find her way back, should any grim spectre appear to her view, than from any particles of heroism in her breast, which led her to investigate the dungeon's gloom.

They now found themselves in a vault of the same shape and dimensions as the one from which they had just descended, but very cold and damp.

By the aid of their torches they discovered an aperture in the wall—they advanced towards it, and found it to be a very short passage, at the end thereof was a door, which stood a little open. Henry alone gently approached, and on a miserable pallet he discerned a human being ; who, with a faint voice, was beseeching heaven to take him to its mercy !

The youth returned to the Countess, and besought her to enter the dungeon and interrogate the prisoner, as he found his spirits unequal to the task.—Antonia entered, and with faltering steps approached the victim of her husband's cruelty.

He raised his head, and beheld the lady with the utmost astonishment. The Countess presented him with some refreshments she had brought, in case she should be so fortunate as to meet with success in her search. This end was now accomplished, and she rejoiced that she had provided herself with what he appeared so much to need.

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He took the victuals, and ate with much eagerness, till he had satisfied his appetite. He then thanked heaven for relieving him, in the very moment he expected to die with hunger, and thirst.—He then turned to the weeping Countess, and thus addressed her :

“ Madam, it is long since I was gratified with the sight of one who possesses a heart tender enough to sympathize in another’s woe. In you I almost could persuade my imagination that it beheld a celestial being. Your benign countenance forbids me to harbour a single thought of your being a confederate in the vile Count de Cronstadt’s guilt. Then tell me, how came you to be admitted to the cell, where none has entered but himself and the base Rodolpho, these ten long years ?” The Countess uttered a deep sigh as she informed him, that the wretched Cronstadt had that morning committed suicide.

“ Then by whom am I now to be imprisoned ?” said the Marquis eagerly.

“ By no one,” said the Countess ; “ you are this moment free ; and my attendants will help me to conduct you to a more comfortable apartment.”—The Countess then stepped to the door, and making a sign to the young Lord to approach, whispered him to conceal his emotions, for fear the surprise should be too much for the old Marquis, in his present weak state.

She then returned to the Marquis, and calling for Henry and Margaret, they entered to give the desired aid.

“ Henry !” sighed Mont Aubin, “ how dear is that name to me ! Alas ! my Henry may now be no more—or like his wretched father, a victim to injustice.”

The Marquis then suffered them to lead him along, but he was too weak to ascend the ladder ; and the Countess and Margaret placing him on Henry’s back, he cheerfully conveyed his beloved burden till they arrived at the ground floor, when he

he was assisted by the trio till he arrived at the saloon, where they seated him in an arm chair, before a good fire.

The Marquis appeared in an extacy of joy, and gratitude ; and he frequently exclaimed, " Would to heaven I could now behold my dear son !"—and he was impatient to hear how his own deliverance had been brought about.

The Countess informed him that he should know all, as soon as they had dined, and the small party the Castle contained, were assembled together.

Ambrose now returned, and Lord Henry retired with the undertaker, to give the requisite orders for a private funeral—which was to take place in three days ; and by the Count's desire, at the Monastery across the forest, which belonged to the monks of St. Francis.

The Countess perceiving the terror of her aged domestics, proposed that on this day they should have their repast in common—to this Mont Aubin consented, with a smile of pleasure.

The Countess contrived to place Henry in a seat directly opposite his father. The Marquis could scarce eat for gazing at the youth ; though, indeed, he often fixed his eyes on Matilda, in a manner that excited much surprise ; the more so, as he appeared to take very little notice of Joanna. Dinner was soon finished, and the cloth removed ; for the whole company was too much engrossed by sorrow and their own reflections, to enjoy their meal.

The Countess retired to the study, to fetch the papers that were to elucidate these horrid mysteries ; the young ladies accompanied her, that they might cheer her spirits, and enable her, as far as their own woes would permit them to enter that fatal apartment. Ambrose and Margaret, by their mistresses desire, quitted the saloon, on pretence of domestic business, that Henry might be alone with the Marquis.

An explanation soon took place—Mont Aubin clasped his beloved son to his bosom, and declared he was the happiest of the happy.

Martin now rushed in, and kneeling at the feet of his old Master, who had brought him up from a little infant, (being the child of a favorite butler) and with tears of joy, welcomed his return to liberty.

The Marquis was much affected—and inquired where he had been during the dinner hour; when he informed him that the Countess did not think it was right for him to appear till Lord Henry had made himself known to his father.

Mont Aubin declared that his son's features were perfectly familiar to him, from the first moment he beheld him in the dungeon; but from the great alteration time had made in his growth and appearance, he should have found it impossible to recognize Lord Henry had not he called him Father, when conviction, in a moment, rushed to his enraptured heart.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the Countess, with the rest of the family.

Lord Henry took the paper the Count had written previous to the rash act, from the hands of the afflicted Countess; and by her desire, read the contents aloud.

“ I, Frederick, Count de Cronstadt, declare myself to be the assassin of the late Chevalier Lannoy, who was found murdered in a wood near Munich, above ten years back from the period that I am now writing this confession; and I now detain his brother, the Marquis of Mont Aubin, in this Castle of Cronstadt. The reason of these horrid, treacherous crimes, I shall disclose, and then hasten to finish the tragedy, by putting a period to my wretched existence—fervently petitioning heaven to protect my innocent Countess, and the lovely Joanna, my darling child; and that the amiable Matilda may be restored to her own friends: for this purpose I desire my Antonia carefully to search the papers that are placed by her bedside, in a small iron chest, the key being in my waistcoat pocket.”

Here the attention of the company was called to Matilda, who had fainted as Henry was concluding the sentence in which she was so much interested.

As soon as Matilda was restored to life, Henry proceeded with the confession of the Count.

“ Soon after I married the amiable Antonia, who was the heiress of the rich Marquis de Souza, I formed an intimacy with the Chevalier Lannoy, and the Marquis Mont Aubin, two noblemen of the most illustrious fortune, and brilliant talents.

“ Antonia had been chosen by my father, as a proper person for the bride of a son, whom he adored with too much partiality—blind to his failings or imperfections.

“ I beheld the fair object of his choice with ardent esteem and admiration, both for her person and the virtues she so eminently possessed. As yet I had never had any fixed attachment, and I gave my hand to Antonia with a firm wish that I might be able to make her as happy as her incomparable merit deserved.

“ In the early part of the second year of our marriage, the Countess gave birth to our Joanna—I regarded my Antonia in a more tender light than ever; and we passed our days in the greatest harmony and happiness.

“ About this time the Chevalier Lannoy came to reside at Munich, in a beautiful villa near my estate. Being neighbours, we often took the diversion of hunting, fishing, &c. as our inclinations led. He introduced me to his brother, the Marquis of Mont Aubin, who resided at the Chateau St. Aubin, only a few miles distant. We then began to visit at each other's houses, and for three years we were like brothers.

“ The Chevalier was now absent for three or four months, being gone to Vienna, to fulfil a contract of marriage he had made some time back, with a young lady of great beauty, but small fortune.—From one of his principal domestics, whose name was Rodolpho, I learnt that the bride (who was some years younger than the Chevalier) was very averse to the marriage; but had yielded to the wishes of her friends, on the dread prospect of being immured in a convent for life.

“ As soon as the Chevalier and Madame Lannoy arrived, I hastened to the Villa to pay my respects to the bride. I was ushered into an apartment filled with people of the first fashion, who were come with the same polite intention as myself—(the Countess did not accompany me, being at that time engaged in attending her infant son, who was dangerously ill, and expired in the course of the following week). The Chevalier introduced me to his fascinating Julia. I was enraptured with her appearance, and in an instant became a captive to her beauty ; and, for the first time in my life, I felt what it was to be truly enamoured.

“ In vain I tried to stifle this hapless passion, that was both dishonorable to my friend, and injurious to that best of women, my amiable wife.

“ In comparison of beauty and accomplishments, I must own that Antonia was evidently superior, but there was a certain *je ne sçai quoi* in Julia, which greatly interested me.

“ Scarce a day elapsed without my visiting at the Villa, or inviting Lannoy and his Lady to the Mansion where I resided. At the end of the year Julia had a son, but she evinced very little affection for the child.

“ Soon after the birth of his little Edward, the Chevalier was obliged to go to England, on some affair of great importance, and which would occasion him to be absent for a considerable time—and he earnestly intreated me to protect Julia and his child, till he should return to them.

“ During his absence, Julia no longer awed by the presence of a man she did not love, and importuned by me, with the most ardent and assiduous solicitations, yielded her honor to my unwarrantable desires.

“ Antonia, ignorant of her wrongs, and that Julia was the mistress of her husband, visited and received her rival with the utmost complacency.

“ For some months Julia and myself experienced all the rapture of mutual love—but, alas, a criminal passion like ours, is always sure to experience a sad

reverse. Julia discovered that she was pregnant! and to add to our confusion, we received a letter from the injured Lannoy, that he was about to embark for France, from whence he should travel by land to Munich; and that we might expect him in about six weeks from the receipt of that letter.

"Julia was almost distracted, and I knew not what course to pursue, to avert the threatened evil.

"I was returning from the Villa one evening, in a state of torture; when my attention was aroused by hearing some one call my name: I turned round—it was Rodolpho—and hastily demanded what he wanted?

"My Lord," said Rodolpho, "you expect the Chevalier home."

"Well, Sir, what then?"

"The man hesitated some moments, and then replied, he had reason to believe his master's appearance would be no more welcome to me, than to himself.

"Have you dared," said I, seizing him by the collar, and dashing him to the ground, "to become a spy on my actions?"

"Hold, my Lord," exclaimed Rodolpho, "nor rashly destroy one who is your friend."

"I assisted him to rise, and soon learnt he was in full possession of the secret that I was so careful in preserving. Alicia, the chief waiting woman, was the only confidant Julia and I had made in our amour; and this, from many circumstances, was unavoidable. Rodolpho had, it seems, been privately married to Alicia, soon after she arrived at Munich. From her he had gained the knowledge of my intrigue with her mistress, and determined to take his measures accordingly. I soon understood, that for some reasons he did not declare to me, that he entertained a mortal enmity to the Chevalier, and I brought him over, by the promise of a large sum, as soon as the deed was committed, to murder him in his way to the Villa, and thus we parted.

“ We had intelligence of the Chevalier being on the road, about a fortnight after my rencontre with Rodolpho. His faithless servant set off to watch his motions ; and to his joy discovered that Lannoy had left his servants with his baggage, which was heavy and valuable, and was proceeding by himself for the last stage, impatient to behold his Julia, Rodolpho waited for him in the wood, stabbed him to the heart, and then flew to me with the intelligence, and to receive the reward of his barbarity.

“ By my advice he returned, and stripped the body of every article of value, that it might appear to have been the deed of common robbers.

“ Julia pretended to feel the most poignant anguish at her loss, denied herself to all company, and remained shut up in her own apartment—only Alicia being permitted to attend her. I sometimes called to inquire for her health, as a matter of form, to blind the domestics—while Alicia introduced me every evening into Julia’s chamber, where I generally remained some hours.

“ One night as I was returning through the wood, I found I had been watched by some one, who, the moment he perceived himself observed, darted into the thickest part of the trees, and all my endeavors to trace his steps were vain.

“ This circumstance made me uneasy ; and I was communicating my fears to Julia the following evening, when the Marquis Mont Aubin rushed into the apartment, with a drawn sword in his hand !—“ Is it for this, Madam,” said he, “ that I am denied admittance ?” Julia arose with the affright his presence caused, and he perceived her situation.—He loaded us with the most severe expressions—called me the murderer of his brother, and was transported with rage. I soon found it was him that had watched me from the Villa the preceding night, and had entered this evening, unperceived, into an anti-chamber, that he might discover the reason of my visits to the widowed Julia. This was enough for me ; I thought if I could remove the Marquis
all

all would be well, and I sent for Rodolphe instantly by Alicia.

“ Mont Aubin instantly challenged me to decide the contest by the sword ; but I replied neither the time nor place was fitting to his wish. I contrived to keep him arguing on this point, till Rodolphe entered—and knowing the extreme danger that attended a recent discovery, had brought with him a small party of banditti, with whom he had long been intimate, and were enough in his power for him to trust them with the conveying of Mont Aubin to the desolate Castle of Cronstadt. Rodolphe went to guard him, till such time as I could visit the prisoner, and decide on his fate.

“ The fright threw the miserable Julia into a premature labour—the infant expired a few minutes after its birth, and I buried it in a remote part of the wood ; its hapless mother continued several days and nights, enduring the utmost agony of mind and body—incessantly beseeching me to appease the wrath of heaven, by repentance ; and making me promise not to take the life of the Marquis, she expired in my arms—her last moments expressing the torments of her guilty soul.

“ The burden of my troubled soul was too great to be endured ; the world had no longer any charms for the guilty Cronstadt—no one looked me in the face, but I thought he could read my atrocities in my countenance. Lannoy was murdered, and Julia but for me, might still have been living, and innocent. The Marquis was torn from his orphan son and nephew, and I had no remedy but flight ; my emotions must have betrayed me to society. Rodolphe retired with his ill-got wealth (for he had purloined a great deal of treasure from the late Chevalier) to the forest that surrounded the Castle, and there became the Captain of a formidable banditti, spending his time in the utmost revelry and extravagance. Alicia having the care and management of a secret recess to which they resorted.

“ I have frequently offered to restore the Marquis

to liberty, on condition of his taking a solemn oath to impose on the world a false account of his absence, and not to criminate me; but this he always rejected with contempt and anger."

The Count then mentions that he was passing through the trees, when he heard Lord Henry telling his servant that he would convey him to the Castle, where they had once taken shelter from the storm, let it be inhabited by banditti, or what it would.—He added, that he could not bear the idea of injuring Lord Henry, though his present safety demanded it—and he was often tempted to dye his hands in the blood of the youth and his servant, and was actually proceeding one night to their chamber, for that horrid purpose; (when the form of the murdered Chevalier stood before him, and he returned to his own apartment, appalled with terror.) This was, doubtless the same that led Lord Henry to the vault.

The Count then proceeds as follows. "It was late yesterday evening when I returned from the place where I had been to seek Rodolpho—I could not find him: this caused me much vexation, as I had, for three or four days, repaired to the usual rendezvous in vain, for I could not meet with him, nor any of his followers. I was near the gates of the Castle, when a man put a letter into my hand, and darted across the forest. I opened it, and a universal tremor ran through my limbs; it briefly informed me, that Rodolpho had been apprehended for a crime of great magnitude; and that on his being put to the torture, he made a full confession of all the crimes in which he had been engaged—and all my guilt was known; and if I wished to save my life I must fly instantly!—Fly! No; I will no longer drag on a wretched existence. I will end it while it is in my power to save myself from an ignominious death on a scaffold; and bid adieu to a world that I can no longer support."

Here ended the narrative of the wretched Cronstadt.

As soon as the Countess had recovered her spirits, she sent Ambrose for the papers in the iron chest.—The Marquis inspected them, for he was eager in the research, through the great likeness Matilda bore to his family—and found her to be the daughter of his sister, long since deceased—who, afraid of owning a private marriage, had committed her to the care of the Count, who introduced her to his Countess, as a cottager's orphan; but he had always treated her with kindness and respect. Her father, who at the time of her birth was but a banker's clerk, had since amassed a large fortune. He had been dead about two years, and had left his fortune to Matilda, whom he declared to be the ward of Count Cronstadt—though he was ignorant where they had retired.

Early the next morning, the officers of justice arrived to convey the Count to prison; but on being informed of the late catastrophe, they withdrew.

As soon as the funeral was over the whole party set off for Munich, where Henry and Joanna were happily united; and in less than six months Albert Lannoy and his beautiful cousin, followed their example.

Antonia lived in the mansion she had formerly inhabited at Munich, to a revered old age—happy as the reflection of former circumstances would permit; respected by every one who knew her, and by none more than by the Marquis and Lord Henry.



THE UNFORTUNATE VICTIM.

LUDOVISIO Carantani, a native of Verofa, a city of the Milanese, had only two daughters, by a wife who had brought him a considerable fortune ; but that parental affection which ought to have been divided between them, was confined to the eldest, whose name was Victoria, though she was not near so amiable as Olympia her sister. This capricious preference was evident even in their infancy.—Victoria enjoyed all the caresses of her father, nor could her sister obtain the smallest token of his tenderness or affection. Her mother's love, indeed, made some amends for this indifference—but death having deprived her of this consolation, she was exposed to continual ill treatment.

Victoria's beauty, and the fortune she might expect from the wealth and partiality of her father, soon drew about her a number of suitors ; and Carantani, that he might marry his favorite to greater advantage, was determined to sacrifice to her interest the happiness of Olympia, whom he put into a Convent, and reported that she had resolved upon a religious life.

Carantani already congratulated himself upon the success of his scheme. As he had always hated the amiable Olympia with severity, he was persuaded she would be soothed by the tranquility of a Convent, and think herself happy to have escaped the rudeness and neglect she suffered at home. Nor was he altogether mistaken ; for at the solicitation of several of her relations, who were gained over by her father, she consented to take the habit of a novice or probationer, in the Monastery of San Martino. But at that time Olympia's heart was widely different from the wish of a life of Monastic devotion.—She was beautiful, young, and lively—and on the point of becoming a victim to her father's ambition.

On the very day, however, of the ceremony, she saw amongst the company, assembled as usual, on those occasions, an amiable Cavalier, who had made

a deep impression on her heart. Immediately the thoughts of a Convent became intolerable ; and she reflected with horror, upon the sacrifice she was just about to make, of all the advantages which she might promise herself in this world.

The nuns and her relations, who soon perceived the change, endeavored, in vain, to bring her back to her first resolution. All the answer they received from her was, that her circumstances being equal with her sister, she had no inclination to sacrifice herself to her ambition, and the partiality of her father ; that her design was to marry a young Cavalier of a very good family, by whom she knew she was beloved.

It is easy to imagine the astonishment of Carantani, at a resolution, which quite frustrated the scheme he had formed for raising the fortune of his dear Victoria. He earnestly intreated the nuns to redouble their endeavors to make Olympia alter her determination. But those endeavors only increased her disgust for a Monastic life ; nor did she conceal her sentiments even from her father, who came frequently to see her, in order to discover the effects of the remonstrances of his friends ; but perceiving that this expedient did not succeed, he had recourse to menaces ; assuring her that if she did not resolve on a religious life, he would take her home again, where she might expect to be the most wretched of women.

Olympia, who knew her father's unkindness, by a long and cruel experience, did not doubt but he would keep his word ; yet she endeavored to mollify him, by the most tender and pathetic expostulations ; but neither arguments, intreaties, nor tears, made the least impression on his heart.

As Victoria's match, was, by this change in Olympia's resolution, in danger of being broken off, her lover growing indifferent, in proportion as her fortune became precarious, Carantani became so much enraged, that the next time he visited Olympia, he told her, in a transport of fury, " that if she did not take the veil when her noviciate expired,

he would put her to death with his own hand."—"If I die," said Olympia, calmly, "it will not be by your hand. I have often represented to you my aversion to a Monastic life, yet you command me to sacrifice myself to the fortune of my sister, and to that excessive fondness which you have always shewn for her; and if it be impossible for me to prevail on you to retract this command, you shall be obeyed; but you and my sister will have perpetual cause to regret the cruel sacrifice which you oblige me to make you;" adding that he might, whenever he thought proper, order the necessary preparations for the ceremony.—She then withdrew.

Carantani, who probably did not know to what lengths despair might carry a young mind, when love has once seized on the heart, pleased himself with the thoughts of having made her change her resolution. He went, therefore, with an air of triumph, to carry the news to his dear Victoria and her lover, who were then together. They exulted exceedingly at the news, and deemed themselves arrived at the summit of felicity.

As the time appointed for Olympia's taking the veil was now near, Carantani made all the usual preparations, and, as if he thought the unhappy victim knew not to whom she was to be sacrificed, he took measures for solemnizing the marriage of his Victoria at the same time.

On the day preceding that which was fixed for this double ceremony, Olympia thought it her duty to make a last effort to soften her father, and, if possible, divert him from so barbarous a sacrifice.—For this purpose she again reasoned and intreated; but Carantani was equally deaf to the voice of reason, nature, and religion; he continued inflexible, and confirmed his threatenings by the most horrid oaths. "Ah! my dear father," said the amiable Olympia, with a look of unutterable tenderness and grief, "consider well, what you are about; consider, that to me, your answer is life or death! and be assured, that if you sacrifice me to my sister's fortune, you will repent when it is too late: the phan-

toms that mislead you, will vanish at once—you will perceive with horror, the effects of your delusion, and feel the pangs of remorse, when they are aggravated by despair. But I will withdraw, and do not give your final answer till to-morrow. Yet, remember, if *I* perish, *you* will be wretched; and that in refusing mercy to your daughter, you give sentence to yourself." With these words she left the parlour.

Carantani disregarded all she said—and the preparations for Victoria's marriage engrossed his attention. He thought of nothing but how to make it splendid and magnificent. The relations who were invited to this double ceremony, were already assembled in the Church of the Convent, and Olympia was dressed in her richest apparel, and most splendid ornaments, which at these times are put on only to be renounced with the greater solemnity. —The dreadful moment arrived, in which this lovely victim was to be conducted to the altar—then knowing she had nothing farther to hope, though she concealed her despair, she asked leave of the nuns who were about her, to go up into her cell, under pretence of having forgot something, which was necessary to the weighty business she had to transact. This was readily granted, and Olympia went up—not into her cell, but into a garret that was over it; and after having deplored her misfortunes, and prayed to God for pardon, she fastened to one of the beams, a cord which she had taken from one of the nuns, who used it as a girdle, put it about her neck, threw herself from a little bench on which she stood, and in a few minutes expired.

In the mean time the company, who had been almost an hour assembled in the Church, waited with impatience the beginning of the ceremony. The abbess was acquainted with it, who was equally surprised at the delay, and asking the nuns the reason of it, was informed of Olympia's request—they waited some time longer, but still Olympia did not appear; they then went to seek her in her cell, but she was not to be found; other parts of the Convent were

searched, but without success. At length, after much time spent in a fruitless inquiry, one of the nuns thought of going up to the garret. — What a mournful sight! — What an horrid spectacle was there! The unfortunate Olympia hanging in the fatal cord with which she had put a period to her existence.

Seized with horror at the ghastly sight, she ran down stairs, and rushing into the choir, where the nuns were assembled, she filled them with terror, by her outcries. The alarm soon spread itself to the Church, where all the relations, with the utmost affliction, received the news of the sudden death of the unhappy Olympia, the most shocking circumstances of which the abbess prudently concealed. At first they would not believe it: they demanded a sight of her, and going out of the Church in a body, the ladies, and Carantani himself, entered the Convent. — What a spectacle was this for a father! One of the most amiable young women, the victim of a violent despair, all the horrors of which was still visible in her countenance.

Carantani, now too late accused himself as the murderer of his daughter, and stung with this tormenting thought, he fled from the Convent, and even from the City. He mounted his horse, with a design to conceal his shame, in the obscurity of a country seat. He had not rode far, when his horse taking fright, threw him, and his foot hanging in the stirrup, he was dragged at full speed, till every limb was broken, and he suffered a death more dreadful than his unhappy daughter. Victoria, who was an eye witness of this fatal event, could not sustain the complicated calamity which was heaped upon her. The death of her sister and her father, together with the loss of her lover, who had refused to enter into an alliance with a family which suicide had dishonored, made so deep an impression on her mind, that she died two days afterwards—closing by her death, the most disastrous series of events, which were ever recorded in any country. — *Finis.*