

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

ORMOND; OR, THE
SECRET WITNESS.
VOLUME 3 (OF 3)

Charles Brown
Ormond; Or, The Secret
Witness. Volume 3 (of 3)

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*"Those who plot the destruction of others, very often
fall, themselves the victims."*

CHAPTER I

"My father, in proportion as he grew old and rich, became weary of Aleppo. His natal soil, had it been the haunt of Calmucks or Bedouins, his fancy would have transformed into Paradise. No wonder that the equitable aristocracy and the peaceful husbandmen of Ragusa should be endeared to his heart by comparison with Egyptian plagues and Turkish tyranny. Besides, he lived for his children as well as himself. Their education and future lot required him to seek a permanent home.

"He embarked, with his wife and offspring, at Scanderoon. No immediate conveyance to Ragusa offering, the appearance of the plague in Syria induced him to hasten his departure. He entered a French vessel for Marseilles. After being three days at sea, one of the crew was seized by the fatal disease which had depopulated all the towns upon the coast. The voyage was made with more than usual despatch; but, before we reached our port, my mother and half the crew perished. My father died in the Lazaretto, more through grief than disease.

"My brother and I were children and helpless. My father's fortune was on board this vessel, and was left by his death to the mercy of the captain. This man was honest, and consigned us and our property to the merchant with whom he dealt. Happily for us, our protector was childless and of scrupulous integrity. We henceforth became his adopted children. My brother's education

and my own were conducted on the justest principles.

"At the end of four years, our protector found it expedient to make a voyage to Cayenne. His brother was an extensive proprietor in that colony, but his sudden death made way for the succession of our friend. To establish his claims, his presence was necessary on the spot. He was little qualified for arduous enterprises, and his age demanded repose; but, his own acquisitions having been small, and being desirous of leaving us in possession of competence, he cheerfully embarked.

"Meanwhile, my brother was placed at a celebrated seminary in the Pays de Vaud, and I was sent to a sister who resided at Verona. I was at this time fourteen years old, – one year younger than my brother, whom, since that period, I have neither heard of nor seen.

"I was now a woman, and qualified to judge and act for myself. The character of my new friend was austere and devout, and there were so many incongenial points between us that but little tranquillity was enjoyed under her control. The priest who discharged the office of her confessor thought proper to entertain views with regard to me, grossly inconsistent with the sanctity of his profession. He was a man of profound dissimulation and masterly address. His efforts, however, were repelled with disdain. My security against his attempts lay in the uncouthness and deformity which nature had bestowed upon his person and visage, rather than in the firmness of my own principles.

"The courtship of Father Bartoli, the austerities of Madame

Roselli, the disgusting or insipid occupations to which I was condemned, made me impatiently wish for a change; but my father (so I will call him) had decreed that I should remain under his sister's guardianship till his return from Guiana. When this would happen was uncertain. Events unforeseen might protract it for years, but it could not arrive in less than a twelvemonth.

"I was incessantly preyed upon by discontent. My solitude was loathsome. I panted after liberty and friendship, and the want of these were not recompensed by luxury and quiet, and by the instructions in useful science which I received from Bartoli, who, though detested as a hypocrite and lover, was venerable as a scholar. He would fain have been an Abelard, but it was not his fate to meet with an Eloisa.

"Two years passed away in this durance. My miseries were exquisite. I am almost at a loss to account for the unhappiness of that time, for, looking back upon it, I perceive that an equal period could not have been spent with more benefit. For the sake of being near me, Bartoli importunately offered his instructions. He had nothing to communicate but metaphysics and geometry. These were little to my taste, but I could not keep him at a distance. I had no other alternative than to endure him as a lover or a teacher. His passion for science was at least equal to that which he entertained for me, and both these passions combined to make him a sedulous instructor. He was a disciple of the newest doctrines respecting matter and mind. He denied the impenetrability of the first, and the immateriality of the

second. These he endeavoured to inculcate upon me, as well as to subvert my religious tenets, because he delighted, like all men, in transfusing his opinions, and because he regarded my piety as the only obstacle to his designs. He succeeded in dissolving the spell of ignorance, but not in producing that kind of acquiescence he wished. He had, in this respect, to struggle not only with my principles, but my weakness. He might have overcome every obstacle but my abhorrence of deformity and age. To cure me of this aversion was beyond his power. My servitude grew daily more painful. I grew tired of chasing a comet to its aphelion, and of untying the knot of an infinite series. A change in my condition became indispensable to my very existence. Languor and sadness, and unwillingness to eat or to move, were at last my perpetual attendants!

"Madame Roselli was alarmed at my condition. The sources of my inquietude were incomprehensible to her. The truth was, that I scarcely understood them myself, and my endeavours to explain them to my friend merely instilled into her an opinion that I was either lunatic or deceitful. She complained and admonished; but my disinclination to my usual employments would not be conquered, and my health rapidly declined. A physician, who was called, confessed that my case was beyond his power to understand, but recommended, as a sort of desperate expedient, a change of scene. A succession and variety of objects might possibly contribute to my cure.

"At this time there arrived, at Verona, Lady D'Arcy, – an

Englishwoman of fortune and rank, and a strenuous Catholic. Her husband had lately died; and, in order to divert her grief, as well as to gratify her curiosity in viewing the great seat of her religion, she had come to Italy. Intercourse took place between her and Madame Roselli. By this means she gained a knowledge of my person and condition, and kindly offered to take me under her protection. She meant to traverse every part of Italy, and was willing that I should accompany her in all her wanderings.

"This offer was gratefully accepted, in spite of the artifices and remonstrances of Bartoli. My companion speedily contracted for me the affection of a mother. She was without kindred of her own religion, having acquired her faith, not by inheritance, but conversion. She desired to abjure her native country, and to bind herself, by every social tie, to a people who adhered to the same faith. Me she promised to adopt as her daughter, provided her first impressions in my favour were not belied by my future deportment.

"My principles were opposite to hers; but habit, an aversion to displease my friend, my passion for knowledge, which my new condition enabled me to gratify, all combined to make me a deceiver. But my imposture was merely of a negative kind; I deceived her rather by forbearance to contradict, and by acting as she acted, than by open assent and zealous concurrence. My new state was, on this account, not devoid of inconvenience. The general deportment and sentiments of Lady D'Arcy testified a vigorous and pure mind. New avenues to knowledge, by converse

with mankind and with books, and by the survey of new scenes, were open for my use. Gratitude and veneration attached me to my friend, and made the task of pleasing her, by a seeming conformity of sentiments, less irksome.

"During this interval, no tidings were received by his sister, at Verona, respecting the fate of Sebastian Roselli. The supposition of his death was too plausible not to be adopted. What influence this disaster possessed over my brother's destiny, I know not. The generosity of Lady D'Arcy hindered me from experiencing any disadvantage from this circumstance. Fortune seemed to have decreed that I should not be reduced to the condition of an orphan.

"At an age and in a situation like mine, I could not remain long unacquainted with love. My abode at Rome introduced me to the knowledge of a youth from England, who had every property which I regarded as worthy of esteem. He was a kinsman of – Lady D'Arcy, and as such admitted at her house on the most familiar footing. His patrimony was extremely slender, but was in his own possession. He had no intention of increasing it by any professional pursuit, but was contented with the frugal provision it afforded. He proposed no other end of his existence than the acquisition of virtue and knowledge.

"The property of Lady D'Arcy was subject to her own disposal, but, on the failure of a testament, this youth was, in legal succession, the next heir. He was well acquainted with her temper and views, but, in the midst of urbanity and gentleness,

studied none of those concealments of opinion which would have secured him her favour. That he was not of her own faith was an insuperable, but the only, obstacle to the admission of his claims.

"If conformity of age and opinions, and the mutual fascination of love, be a suitable basis for marriage, Wentworth and I were destined for each other. Mutual disclosure added sanctity to our affection; but, the happiness of Lady D'Arcy being made to depend upon the dissolution of our compact, the heroism of Wentworth made him hasten to dissolve it. As soon as she discovered our attachment, she displayed symptoms of the deepest anguish. In addition to religious motives, her fondness for me forbade her to exist but in my society and in the belief of the purity of my faith. The contention, on my part, was vehement between the regards due to her felicity and to my own. Had Wentworth left me the power to decide, my decision would doubtless have evinced the frailty of my fortitude and the strength of my passion; but, having informed me fully of the reasons of his conduct, he precipitately retired from Rome. He left me no means of tracing his footsteps and of assailing his weakness by expostulation and entreaty.

"Lady D'Arcy was no less eager to abandon a spot where her happiness had been so imminently endangered. Our next residence was Palermo. I will not dwell upon the sensations produced by this disappointment in me. I review them with astonishment and self-compassion. If I thought it possible for me to sink again into imbecility so ignominious, I should be disposed

to kill myself.

"There was no end to vows of fondness and tokens of gratitude in Lady D'Arcy. Her future life should be devoted to compensate me for this sacrifice. Nothing could console her in that single state in which she intended to live, but the consolations of my fellowship. Her conduct coincided for some time with these professions, and my anguish was allayed by the contemplation of the happiness conferred upon one whom I revered.

"My friend could not be charged with dissimulation and artifice. Her character had been mistaken by herself as well as by me. Devout affections seemed to have filled her heart, to the exclusion of any object besides myself. She cherished with romantic tenderness the memory of her husband, and imagined that a single state was indispensably enjoined upon her by religious duty. This persuasion, however, was subverted by the arts of a Spanish cavalier, young, opulent, and romantic as herself in devotion. An event like this might, indeed, have been easily predicted, by those who reflected that the lady was still in the bloom of life, ardent in her temper, and bewitching in her manners.

"The fondness she had lavished upon me was now, in some degree, transferred to a new object; but I still received the treatment due to a beloved daughter. She was solicitous as ever to promote my gratification, and a diminution of kindness would not have been suspected by those who had not witnessed the excesses of her former passion. Her marriage with the Spaniard

removed the obstacle to union with Wentworth. This man, however, had set himself beyond the reach of my inquiries. Had there been the shadow of a clue afforded me, I should certainly have sought him to the ends of the world.

"I continued to reside with my friend, and accompanied her and her husband to Spain. Antonio de Leyva was a man of probity. His mind was enlightened by knowledge and his actions dictated by humanity. Though but little older than myself, and young enough to be the son of his spouse, his deportment to me was a model of rectitude and delicacy. I spent a year in Spain, partly in the mountains of Castile and partly at Segovia. New manners and a new language occupied my attention for a time; but these, losing their novelty, lost their power to please. I betook myself to books, to beguile the tediousness and diversify the tenor of my life.

"This would not have long availed; but I was relieved from new repinings, by the appointment of Antonio de Leyva to a diplomatic office at Vienna. Thither we accordingly repaired. A coincidence of circumstances had led me wide from the path of ambition and study usually allotted to my sex and age. From the computation of eclipses, I now betook myself to the study of man. My proficiency, when I allowed it to be seen, attracted great attention. Instead of adulation and gallantry, I was engaged in watching the conduct of states and revolving the theories of politicians.

"Superficial observers were either incredulous with regard to

my character, or connected a stupid wonder with their belief. My attainments and habits they did not see to be perfectly consonant with the principles of human nature. They unavoidably flowed from the illicit attachment of Bartoli, and the erring magnanimity of Wentworth. Aversion to the priest was the grand inciter of my former studies; the love of Wentworth, whom I hoped once more to meet, made me labour to exclude the importunities of others, and to qualify myself for securing his affections.

"Since our parting in Italy, Wentworth had traversed Syria and Egypt, and arrived some months after me at Vienna. He was on the point of leaving the city, when accident informed me of his being there. An interview was effected, and, our former sentiments respecting each other having undergone no change, we were united. Madame de Leyva reluctantly concurred with our wishes, and, at parting, forced upon me a considerable sum of money.

"Wentworth's was a character not frequently met with in the world. He was a political enthusiast, who esteemed nothing more graceful or glorious than to die for the liberties of mankind. He had traversed Greece with an imagination full of the exploits of ancient times, and derived, from contemplating Thermopylæ and Marathon, an enthusiasm that bordered upon frenzy.

"It was now the third year of the Revolutionary War in America, and, previous to our meeting at Vienna, he had formed the resolution of repairing thither and tendering his service to the Congress as a volunteer. Our marriage made no change in

his plans. My soul was engrossed by two passions, – a wild spirit of adventure, and a boundless devotion to him. I vowed to accompany him in every danger, to vie with him in military ardour, to combat and to die by his side.

"I delighted to assume the male dress, to acquire skill at the sword, and dexterity in every boisterous exercise. The timidity that commonly attends women gradually vanished. I felt as if imbued by a soul that was a stranger to the sexual distinction. We embarked at Brest, in a frigate destined for St. Domingo. A desperate conflict with an English ship in the Bay of Biscay was my first introduction to a scene of tumult and danger of whose true nature I had formed no previous conception. At first I was spiritless and full of dismay. Experience, however, gradually reconciled me to the life that I had chosen.

"A fortunate shot, by dismasting the enemy, allowed us to prosecute our voyage unmolested. At Cape François we found a ship which transported us, after various perils, to Richmond, in Virginia. I will not carry you through the adventures of four years. You, sitting all your life in peaceful corners, can scarcely imagine that variety of hardship and turmoil which attends the female who lives in a camp.

"Few would sustain these hardships with better grace than I did. I could seldom be prevailed on to remain at a distance, and inactive, when my husband was in battle, and more than once rescued him from death by the seasonable destruction of his adversary.

"At the repulse of the Americans at Germantown, Wentworth was wounded and taken prisoner. I obtained permission to attend his sick-bed and supply that care without which he would assuredly have died. Being imperfectly recovered, he was sent to England and subjected to a rigorous imprisonment. Milder treatment might have permitted his complete restoration to health; but, as it was, he died.

"His kindred were noble, and rich, and powerful; but it was difficult to make them acquainted with Wentworth's situation. Their assistance, when demanded, was readily afforded; but it came too late to prevent his death. Me they snatched from my voluntary prison, and employed every friendly art to efface from my mind the images of recent calamity.

"Wentworth's singularities of conduct and opinion had estranged him at an early age from his family. They felt little regret at his fate, but every motive concurred to secure their affection and succour to me. My character was known to many officers, returned from America, whose report, joined with the influence of my conversation, rendered me an object to be gazed at by thousands. Strange vicissitude! Now immersed in the infection of a military hospital, the sport of a wayward fortune, struggling with cold and hunger, with negligence and contumely. A month after, passing into scenes of gayety and luxury, exhibited at operas and masquerades, made the theme of inquiry and encomium at every place of resort, and caressed by the most illustrious among the votaries of science and the

advocates of the American cause.

"Here I again met Madame de Leyva. This woman was perpetually assuming new forms. She was a sincere convert to the Catholic religion, but she was open to every new impression. She was the dupe of every powerful reasoner, and assumed with equal facility the most opposite shapes. She had again reverted to the Protestant religion, and, governed by a headlong zeal in whatever cause she engaged, she had sacrificed her husband and child to a new conviction.

"The instrument of this change was a man who passed, at that time, for a Frenchman. He was young, accomplished, and addressful, but was not suspected of having been prompted by illicit views, or of having seduced the lady from allegiance to her husband as well as to her God. De Leyva, however, who was sincere in his religion as well as his love, was hasty to avenge this injury, and, in a contest with the Frenchman, was killed. His wife adopted at once her ancient religion and country, and was once more an Englishwoman.

"At our meeting her affection for me seemed to be revived, and the most passionate entreaties were used to detain me in England. My previous arrangements would not suffer it. I foresaw restraints and inconveniences from the violence and caprice of her passions, and intended henceforth to keep my liberty inviolate by any species of engagement, either of friendship or marriage. My habits were French, and I proposed henceforward to take up my abode at Paris. Since his voyage to Guiana, I

had heard no tidings of Sebastian Roselli. This man's image was cherished with filial emotions, and I conceived that the sight of him would amply reward a longer journey than from London to Marseilles.

"Beyond my hopes, I found him in his ancient abode. The voyage, and a residence of three years at Cayenne, had been beneficial to his appearance and health. He greeted me with paternal tenderness, and admitted me to a full participation of his fortune, which the sale of his American property had greatly enhanced. He was a stranger to the fate of my brother. On his return home he had gone to Switzerland, with a view of ascertaining his destiny. The youth, a few months after his arrival at Lausanne, had eloped with a companion, and had hitherto eluded all Roselli's searches and inquiries. My father was easily prevailed upon to transfer his residence from Provence to Paris."

Here Martinette paused, and, marking the clock, "It is time," resumed she, "to begone. Are you not weary of my tale? On the day I entered France, I entered the twenty-third year of my age, so that my promise of detailing my youthful adventures is fulfilled. I must away. Till we meet again, farewell."

CHAPTER II

Such was the wild series of Martinette's adventures. Each incident fastened on the memory of Constantia, and gave birth to numberless reflections. Her prospect of mankind seemed to be enlarged, on a sudden, to double its ancient dimensions. Ormond's narratives had carried her beyond the Mississippi, and into the deserts of Siberia. He had recounted the perils of a Russian war, and painted the manners of Mongols and Naudowessies. Her new friend had led her back to the civilized world and portrayed the other half of the species. Men, in their two forms of savage and refined, had been scrutinized by these observers; and what was wanting in the delineations of the one was liberally supplied by the other.

Eleven years in the life of Martinette was unrelated. Her conversation suggested the opinion that this interval had been spent in France. It was obvious to suppose that a woman thus fearless and sagacious had not been inactive at a period like the present, which called forth talents and courage without distinction of sex, and had been particularly distinguished by female enterprise and heroism. Her name easily led to the suspicion of concurrence with the subverters of monarchy, and of participation in their fall. Her flight from the merciless tribunals of the faction that now reigned would explain present appearances.

Martinette brought to their next interview an air of uncommon exultation. On this being remarked, she communicated the tidings of the fall of the sanguinary tyranny of Robespierre. Her eyes sparkled, and every feature was pregnant with delight, while she unfolded, with her accustomed energy, the particulars of this tremendous revolution. The blood which it occasioned to flow was mentioned without any symptoms of disgust or horror.

Constantia ventured to ask if this incident was likely to influence her own condition.

"Yes. It will open the way for my return."

"Then you think of returning to a scene of so much danger?"

"Danger, my girl? It is my element. I am an adorer of liberty, and liberty without peril can never exist."

"But so much bloodshed and injustice! Does not your heart shrink from the view of a scene of massacre and tumult, such as Paris has lately exhibited and will probably continue to exhibit?"

"Thou talkest, Constantia, in a way scarcely worthy of thy good sense. Have I not been three years in a camp? What are bleeding wounds and mangled corpses, when accustomed to the daily sight of them for years? Am I not a lover of liberty? and must I not exult in the fall of tyrants, and regret only that my hand had no share in their destruction?"

"But a woman – how can the heart of woman be inured to the shedding of blood?"

"Have women, I beseech thee, no capacity to reason and infer? Are they less open than men to the influence of habit? My hand

never faltered when liberty demanded the victim. If thou wert with me at Paris, I could show thee a fusil of two barrels, which is precious beyond any other relic, merely because it enabled me to kill thirteen officers at Jemappe. Two of these were emigrant nobles, whom I knew and loved before the Revolution, but the cause they had since espoused cancelled their claims to mercy."

"What!" said the startled Constantia; "have you fought in the ranks?"

"Certainly. Hundreds of my sex have done the same. Some were impelled by the enthusiasm of love, and some by a mere passion for war; some by the contagion of example; and some – with whom I myself must be ranked – by a generous devotion to liberty. Brunswick and Saxe-Coburg had to contend with whole regiments of women, – regiments they would have formed, if they had been collected into separate bodies.

"I will tell thee a secret. Thou wouldst never have seen Martinette de Beauvais, if Brunswick had deferred one day longer his orders for retreating into Germany."

"How so?"

"She would have died by her own hand."

"What could lead to such an outrage?"

"The love of liberty."

"I cannot comprehend how that love should prompt you to suicide."

"I will tell thee. The plan was formed, and could not miscarry. A woman was to play the part of a banished Royalist, was to

repair to the Prussian camp, and to gain admission to the general. This would have easily been granted to a female and an ex-noble. There she was to assassinate the enemy of her country, and to attest her magnanimity by slaughtering herself. I was weak enough to regret the ignominious retreat of the Prussians, because it precluded the necessity of such a sacrifice."

This was related with accents and looks that sufficiently attested its truth. Constantia shuddered, and drew back, to contemplate more deliberately the features of her guest. Hitherto she had read in them nothing that bespoke the desperate courage of a martyr and the deep designing of an assassin. The image which her mind had reflected from the deportment of this woman was changed. The likeness which she had, feigned to herself was no longer seen. She felt that antipathy was preparing to displace love. These sentiments, however, she concealed, and suffered the conversation to proceed.

Their discourse now turned upon the exploits of several women who mingled in the tumults of the capital and in the armies on the frontiers. Instances were mentioned of ferocity in some, and magnanimity in others, which almost surpassed belief. Constantia listened greedily, though not with approbation, and acquired, at every sentence, new desire to be acquainted with the personal history of Martinette. On mentioning this wish, her friend said that she endeavoured to amuse her exile by composing her own memoirs, and that, on her next visit, she would bring with her the volume, which she would suffer Constantia to read.

A separation of a week elapsed. She felt some impatience for the renewal of their intercourse, and for the perusal of the volume that had been mentioned. One evening Sarah Baxter, whom Constantia had placed in her own occasional service, entered the room with marks of great joy and surprise, and informed her that she at length had discovered Miss Monroe. From her abrupt and prolix account, it appeared that Sarah had overtaken Miss Monroe in the street, and, guided by her own curiosity, as well as by the wish to gratify her mistress, she had followed the stranger. To her utter astonishment, the lady had paused at Mr. Dudley's door, with a seeming resolution to enter it, but presently resumed her way. Instead of pursuing her steps farther, Sarah had stopped to communicate this intelligence to Constantia. Having delivered her news, she hastened away, but, returning, in a moment, with a countenance of new surprise, she informed her mistress that on leaving the house she had met Miss Monroe at the door, on the point of entering. She added that the stranger had inquired for Constantia, and was now waiting below.

Constantia took no time to reflect upon an incident so unexpected and so strange, but proceeded forthwith to the parlour. Martinette only was there. It did not instantly occur to her that this lady and Mademoiselle Monroe might possibly be the same. The inquiries she made speedily removed her doubts, and it now appeared that the woman about whose destiny she had formed so many conjectures and fostered so much anxiety was no other than the daughter of Roselli.

Having readily answered her questions, Martinette inquired, in her turn, into the motives of her friend's curiosity. These were explained by a succinct account of the transactions to which the deceased Baxter had been a witness. Constantia concluded with mentioning her own reflections on the tale, and intimating her wish to be informed how Martinette had extricated herself from a situation so calamitous.

"Is there any room for wonder on that head?" replied the guest. "It was absurd to stay longer in the house. Having finished the interment of Roselli, (soldier-fashion,) for he was the man who suffered his foolish regrets to destroy him, I forsook the house. Roselli was by no means poor, but he could not consent to live at ease, or to live at all, while his country endured such horrible oppressions, and when so many of his friends had perished. I complied with his humour, because it could not be changed, and I revered him too much to desert him."

"But whither," said Constantia, "could you seek shelter at a time like that? The city was desolate, and a wandering female could scarcely be received under any roof. All inhabited houses were closed at that hour, and the fear of infection would have shut them against you if they had not been already so."

"Hast thou forgotten that there were at that time at least ten thousand French in this city, fugitives from Marat and from St. Domingo? That they lived in utter fearlessness of the reigning disease, – sung and loitered in the public walks, and prattled at their doors, with all their customary unconcern? Supposeth

thou that there were none among these who would receive a countrywoman, even if her name had not been Martinette de Beauvais? Thy fancy has depicted strange things; but believe me that, without a farthing and without a name, I should not have incurred the slightest inconvenience. The death of Roselli I foresaw, because it was gradual in its approach, and was sought by him as a good. My grief, therefore, was exhausted before it came, and I rejoiced at his death, because it was the close of all his sorrows. The rueful pictures of my distress and weakness which were given by Baxter existed only in his own fancy."

Martinette pleaded an engagement, and took her leave, professing to have come merely to leave with her the promised manuscript. This interview, though short, was productive of many reflections on the deceitfulness of appearances, and on the variety of maxims by which the conduct of human beings is regulated. She was accustomed to impart all her thoughts and relate every new incident to her father. With this view she now hied to his apartment. This hour it was her custom, when disengaged, always to spend with him.

She found Mr. Dudley busy in revolving a scheme which various circumstances had suggested and gradually conducted to maturity. No period of his life had been equally delightful with that portion of his youth which he had spent in Italy. The climate, the language, the manners of the people, and the sources of intellectual gratification in painting and music, were congenial to his taste. He had reluctantly forsaken these

enchancing seats, at the summons of his father, but, on his return to his native country, had encountered nothing but ignominy and pain. Poverty and blindness had beset his path, and it seemed as if it were impossible to fly too far from the scene of his disasters. His misfortunes could not be concealed from others, and every thing around him seemed to renew the memory of all that he had suffered. All the events of his youth served to entice him to Italy, while all the incidents of his subsequent life concurred to render disgusting his present abode.

His daughter's happiness was not to be forgotten. This he imagined would be eminently promoted by the scheme. It would open to her new avenues to knowledge. It would snatch her from the odious pursuit of Ormond, and, by a variety of objects and adventures, efface from her mind any impression which his dangerous artifices might have made upon it.

This project was now communicated to Constantia. Every argument adapted to influence her choice was employed. He justly conceived that the only obstacle to her adoption of it related to Ormond. He expatiated on the dubious character of this man, the wildness of his schemes, and the magnitude of his errors. What could be expected from a man, half of whose life had been spent at the head of a band of Cossacks, spreading devastation in the regions of the Danube, and supporting by flagitious intrigues the tyranny of Catharine, and the other half in traversing inhospitable countries, and extinguishing what remained of clemency and justice by intercourse with savages?

It was admitted that his energies were great, but misdirected, and that to restore them to the guidance of truth was not in itself impossible; but it was so with relation to any power that she possessed. Conformity would flow from their marriage, but this conformity was not to be expected from him. It was not his custom to abjure any of his doctrines or recede from any of his claims. She knew likewise the conditions of their union. She must go with him to some corner of the world where his boasted system was established. What was the road to it he had carefully concealed, but it was evident that it lay beyond the precincts of civilized existence.

Whatever were her ultimate decision, it was at least proper to delay it. Six years were yet wanting of that period at which only she formerly considered marriage as proper. To all the general motives for deferring her choice, the conduct of Ormond superadded the weightiest. Their correspondence might continue, but her residence in Europe and converse with mankind might enlighten her judgement and qualify her for a more rational decision.

Constantia was not uninfluenced by these reasonings. Instead of reluctantly admitting them, she somewhat wondered that they had not been suggested by her own reflections. Her imagination anticipated her entrance on that mighty scene with emotions little less than rapturous. Her studies had conferred a thousand ideal charms on a theatre where Scipio and Cæsar had performed their parts. Her wishes were no less importunate to gaze upon the Alps

and Pyrenees, and to vivify and chasten the images collected from books, by comparing them with their real prototypes.

No social ties existed to hold her to America. Her only kinsman and friend would be the companion of her journeys. This project was likewise recommended by advantages of which she only was qualified to judge. Sophia Westwyn had embarked, four years previous to this date, for England, in company with an English lady and her husband. The arrangements that were made forbade either of the friends to hope for a future meeting. Yet now, by virtue of this project, this meeting seemed no longer to be hopeless.

This burst of new ideas and now hopes on the mind of Constantia took place in the course of a single hour. No change in her external situation had been wrought, and yet her mind had undergone the most signal revolution. Tho novelty as well as greatness of the prospect kept her in a state of elevation and awe, more ravishing than any she had ever experienced. Anticipations of intercourse with nature in her most august forms, with men in diversified states of society, with the posterity of Greeks and Romans, and with the actors that were now upon the stage, and, above all, with the being whom absence and the want of other attachments had, in some sort, contributed to deify, made this night pass away upon the wings of transport.

The hesitation which existed on parting with her father speedily gave place to an ardour impatient of the least delay. She saw no impediments to the immediate commencement of

the voyage. To delay it a month, or even a week, seemed to be unprofitable tardiness. In this ferment of her thoughts, she was neither able nor willing to sleep. In arranging the means of departure and anticipating the events that would successively arise, there was abundant food for contemplation.

She marked the first dawnings of the day, and rose. She felt reluctance to break upon her father's morning slumbers, but considered that her motives were extremely urgent, and that the pleasure afforded him by her zealous approbation of his scheme would amply compensate him for this unseasonable intrusion on his rest. She hastened therefore to his chamber. She entered with blithesome steps, and softly drew aside the curtain.

CHAPTER III

Unhappy Constantia! At the moment when thy dearest hopes had budded afresh, when the clouds of insecurity and disquiet had retired from thy vision, wast thou assailed by the great subverter of human schemes. Thou sawest nothing in futurity but an eternal variation and succession of delights. Thou wast hastening to forget dangers and sorrows which thou fondly imaginedst were never to return. This day was to be the outset of a new career; existence was henceforth to be embellished with enjoyments hitherto scarcely within the reach of hope.

Alas! thy predictions of calamity seldom failed to be verified. Not so thy prognostics of pleasure. These, though fortified by every calculation of contingencies, were edifices grounded upon nothing. Thy life was a struggle with malignant destiny, – a contest for happiness in which thou wast fated to be overcome.

She stooped to kiss the venerable cheek of her father, and, by whispering, to break his slumber. Her eye was no sooner fixed upon his countenance, than she started back and shrieked. She had no power to forbear. Her outcries were piercing and vehement. They ceased only with the cessation of breath. She sunk upon a chair in a state partaking more of death than of life, mechanically prompted to give vent to her agonies in shrieks, but incapable of uttering a sound.

The alarm called her servants to the spot. They beheld her

dumb, wildly gazing, and gesticulating in a way that indicated frenzy. She made no resistance to their efforts, but permitted them to carry her back to her own chamber. Sarah called upon her to speak, and to explain the cause of these appearances; but the shock which she had endured seemed to have irretrievably destroyed her powers of utterance.

The terrors of the affectionate Sarah were increased. She kneeled by the bedside of her mistress, and, with streaming eyes, besought the unhappy lady to compose herself. Perhaps the sight of weeping in another possessed a sympathetic influence, or nature had made provision for this salutary change. However that be, a torrent of tears now came to her succour, and rescued her from a paroxysm of insanity which its longer continuance might have set beyond the reach of cure.

Meanwhile, a glance at his master's countenance made Fabian fully acquainted with the nature of the scene. The ghastly visage of Mr. Dudley showed that he was dead, and that he had died in some terrific and mysterious manner. As soon as this faithful servant recovered from surprise, the first expedient which his ingenuity suggested was to fly with tidings of this event to Mr. Melbourne. That gentleman instantly obeyed the summons. With the power of weeping, Constantia recovered the power of reflection. This, for a time, served her only as a medium of anguish. Melbourne mingled his tears with hers, and endeavoured, by suitable remonstrances, to revive her fortitude.

The filial passion is perhaps instinctive to man; but its

energy is modified by various circumstances. Every event in the life of Constantia contributed to heighten this passion beyond customary bounds. In the habit of perpetual attendance on her father, of deriving from him her knowledge, and sharing with him the hourly fruits of observation and reflection, his existence seemed blended with her own. There was no other whose concurrence and council she could claim, with whom a domestic and uninterrupted alliance could be maintained. The only bond of consanguinity was loosened, the only prop of friendship was taken away.

Others, perhaps, would have observed that her father's existence had been merely a source of obstruction and perplexity; that she had hitherto acted by her own wisdom, and would find, hereafter, less difficulty in her choice of schemes, and fewer impediments to the execution. These reflections occurred not to her. This disaster had increased, to an insupportable degree, the vacancy and dreariness of her existence. The face she was habituated to behold had disappeared forever; the voice whose mild and affecting tones had so long been familiar to her ears was hushed into eternal silence. The felicity to which she clung was ravished away; nothing remained to hinder her from sinking into utter despair.

The first transports of grief having subsided, a source of consolation seemed to be opened in the belief that her father had only changed one form of being for another; that he still lived to be the guardian of her peace and honour, to enter the recesses

of her thought, to forewarn her of evil and invite her to good. She grasped at these images with eagerness, and fostered them as the only solaces of her calamity. They were not adapted to inspire her with cheerfulness, but they sublimed her sensations, and added an inexplicable fascination to sorrow.

It was unavoidable sometimes to reflect upon the nature of that death which had occurred. Tokens were sufficiently apparent that outward violence had been the cause. Who could be the performer of so black a deed, by what motives he was guided, were topics of fruitless conjecture. She mused upon this subject, not from the thirst of vengeance, but from a mournful curiosity. Had the perpetrator stood before her and challenged retribution, she would not have lifted a finger to accuse or to punish. The evil already endured left her no power to concert and execute projects for extending that evil to others. Her mind was unnerved, and recoiled with loathing from considerations of abstract justice, or political utility, when they prompted to the prosecution of the murderer.

Melbourne was actuated by different views, but on this subject he was painfully bewildered. Mr. Dudley's deportment to his servants and neighbours was gentle and humane. He had no dealings with the trafficking or labouring part of mankind. The fund which supplied his cravings of necessity or habit was his daughter's. His recreations and employments were harmless and lonely. The evil purpose was limited to his death, for his chamber was exactly in the same state in which negligent security had

left it. No midnight footstep or voice, no unbarred door or lifted window, afforded tokens of the presence or traces of the entrance or flight of the assassin.

The meditations of Constantia, however, could not fail in some of their circuities to encounter the image of Craig. His agency in the impoverishment of her father, and in the scheme by which she had like to have been loaded with the penalties of forgery, was of an impervious and unprecedented kind. Motives were unveiled by time, in some degree accounting for his treacherous proceeding; but there was room to suppose an inborn propensity to mischief. Was he not the author of this new evil? His motives and his means were equally inscrutable, but their inscrutability might flow from her own defects in discernment and knowledge, and time might supply her defects in this as in former instances.

These images were casual. The causes of the evil were seldom contemplated. Her mind was rarely at liberty to wander from reflection on her irremediable loss. Frequently, when confused by distressful recollections, she would detect herself going to her father's chamber. Often his well-known accents would ring in her ears, and the momentary impulse would be to answer his calls. Her reluctance to sit down to her meals without her usual companion could scarcely be surmounted.

In this state of mind, the image of the only friend who survived, or whose destiny, at least, was doubtful, occurred to her. She sunk into fits of deeper abstraction and dissolved away

in tears of more agonizing tenderness. A week after her father's interment, she shut herself up in her chamber, to torment herself with fruitless remembrances. The name of Sophia Westwyn was pronounced, and the ditty that solemnized their parting was sung. Now, more than formerly, she became sensible of the loss of that portrait which had been deposited in the hands of M'Crea as a pledge. As soon as her change of fortune had supplied her with the means of redeeming it, she hastened to M'Crea for that end. To her unspeakable disappointment, he was absent from the city; he had taken a long journey, and the exact period of his return could not be ascertained. His clerks refused to deliver the picture, or even, by searching, to discover whether it was still in their master's possession. This application had frequently and lately been repeated, but without success; M'Crea had not yet returned, and his family were equally in the dark as to the day on which his return might be expected.

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