

FANNY BURNLEY

THE WANDERER; OR,
FEMALE DIFFICULTIES
(VOLUME 5 OF 5)

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Difficulties (Volume 5 of 5)**

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The Wanderer (Volume 5 of 5) or, Female Difficulties

CHAPTER LXXVII

The final purposes for which man is ordained to move in this nether sphere, will for ever remain disputable, while the doubts to which it gives rise can be answered only by fellow-doubters: but that the basis of his social comfort is confidence, is an axiom that waits no revelation, requires no logic, and dispenses with mathematical accuracy for proof: it is an axiom that comes home, straight forward and intuitively, to our 'business and bosoms;' – there, with life, to lodge.

Juliet, therefore, in this rustic abode, surrounded by the clinging affection of instinctive partiality, felt a sense of security, more potent in its simplicity, than she could have owed to any engagement, even of honour, even of law, even of duty. And, while to the fond mother and her little ones, she was every moment newly endeared, she experienced herself, in their favour, an increase of regard, that excited in her an ardent desire to make this her permanent dwelling, till she could procure tidings from Gabriella.

The night-scene, nevertheless, hung upon her with perplexity. The good dame never reverted to it, evidently not imagining that it had been observed; and persuaded that the entrance, at that moment, of her guest, had been accidental. She constantly evaded to speak of her husband, or of his affairs; while all her happiness, and almost her very existence, seemed wrapt up in her children.

Unable to devise any better method of arriving at the subject, Juliet, at length, determined upon relating the story of the hut. She watched for an opportunity, when the little boy and girl, whom she would not risk frightening, were asleep; and then, while occupied at her needle, began detailing every circumstance of that affair.

The narrative of the place, and of the family, sufficed to draw, at once, from the dame the exclamation, 'O, you been gone, then, to Nat Mixon's? That be just he; and her, too. They be none o' the koindest, that be sure, poor folk!'

But at the history of the calling up in the night; the rising, passing, and precautions; the dame changed colour, and, with palpable disturbance, enquired upon what day of the week this had happened: she revived, however, upon being answered that it was Thursday, simply saying, 'Mercy be proised! that be a day as can do me no harm.'

But, at the description of the sack, the lumpish sound, and the subsequent appearance of a clot of blood, the poor woman turned pale; and, blessing herself, said, 'The La be good unto me! Nat Mixon wull be paid, at last, for all his bad ways! for, sure and sure, the devil do owe un a grudge, or a would no ha' let a straunger in, to bear eye sight to's goings on! 'T be a mercy 't be no worse, for an if 't had bin a Friday – '

She checked herself, but looked much troubled. Juliet, affrighted by her own conjectures, would have stopt; the dame, however, begged her to go on: but when she mentioned the cupboard, and the door smeared with blood, the poor woman, unable to contain her feelings, caught her guest by the arm, and exclaimed, 'You wull no' inform against un, wull you?'

'Indeed, I should be most reluctant,' answered Juliet, 'to inform against people who, be they what they may, admitted me to a night's lodging, when I was in distress: nevertheless – what am I to think of these appearances? Meetings in the dead of the night, so dark, private, and clandestine?'

'But, who could 't be as did call up Nat?' interrupted Dame Fairfield; 'for my husband do go only o' the Friday. – ' and then, giving a loud scream, 'La be good unto me!' she continued, 'if an't be last month, 't be my husband for sure! for a could no' go o' the Friday, being the great fair!'

The expression of horror now depicted upon the countenance of Juliet, told the dame the mischief done by her unguarded speech; and, in a panic uncontrollable, she flung her apron over her face, and sobbed out, "T be all blown, then, and we, we be all no better than ondone!"

Shocked, grieved, and appalled at this detection, and uncertain whither it might lead, or what might be its extent, the thoughts of Juliet were now all engrossed in considering how immediately to abscond from a situation so alarming and perilous.

In a few minutes, Dame Fairfield, starting up, ran precipitately to the bed, calling out, 'Come, my pretty ones, come, my dearys! come and down o' your knees to the good gentlewoman, and praoy her to ha' mercy o' poor daddy; for if so be a come to be honged and transported, you can never show your poor innocent pretty faces agen! Come, little dearys, come! down o' your marrow-bones; and praoy her to be so good as not to be hard-hearted; for if a do be so onkoind as to inform against us, we be all ondone!'

Juliet would have stopt this scene, but it was not possible; the children, though comprehending nothing that was said, and crying at being awaked, obeyed; and, falling at her feet, and supporting themselves by her gown, said, 'Pay, dood ady, don't hurt daddy! pay don't, dood ady!'

Touched, yet filled with augmented dismay by their prayers, Juliet, tenderly embracing, carried them back to bed; and, with words of comfort, and kind promises, soon hushed them again to sleep.

But the mother was not to be appeased; she had flung herself upon her knees, and upon her knees she pertinaciously kept; sobbing as if her heart were bursting, and lamenting that her husband never would listen to her, or things would not have come to such a pass.

Juliet, full of compassion, yet shuddering, attempted to console her, but would enter into no engagement. Pity, in such a case, however sincerely felt, could not take the lead; humanity itself invoked justice; and she determined to let no personal consideration whatsoever, interfere any longer with her causing an immediate investigation to be made into this fearful business.

The poor woman would not quit the floor, even when, in despondence, she gave over her kneeling importunity. Juliet, from the instant that she discovered how deeply the husband was involved, forbore all enquiry that might make the wife an informer against him; and sate by her side, trying to revive her, with offers of friendship and assistance.

But when, anxious to escape from this eventful Forest, and still confiding in the simplicity and goodness of her hostess, she begged a clear direction to the shortest way for getting to the high road; saying, 'Alas! how little had I imagined that there had been any spot in England, where travellers were thus dreadfully waylaid to their destruction!' Dame Fairfield, suddenly ceasing her outcries, demanded what she meant; saying, 'Why sure, and sure, there be no daunger to nobody in our Forest! We do go up it and down it, noight and day, without no manner of fear; and though I do come from afar off myself, being but a straunger in these parts, till I was married; my feather-in-law, who has lived in them, mon and boy, better than ninety and odd years, – for, thof a be still as fresh as a rose, a be a'most a hondred; he do tell me that a would carry his gold watch, if a had one, in his open hand, from top to bottom of our nine walks, in the pitch of the night; and a should aunswer to come to no harm; for a had never heard of a traveller as had had so much as a hair of his head hurt in the New Forest.'

'What is it you tell me, my good dame?' cried Juliet amazed: 'What are these alarming scenes that I have witnessed? And why are your apprehensions for your husband so direful?'

'The La be good unto me!' exclaimed the dame: 'why sure and sure you do no' go to think the poor mon be a murderer?'

'I am disposed to think whatever you will bid me,' replied Juliet, 'for I see in you such perfect truth and candour, that I cannot hesitate in giving you my belief.'

'Why the La be good unto me, my good gentlewoman, there be but small need to make bad worse! What the poor mon ha' done, may bring un to be honged and transported; but if so be a had killed a mon, a might go to old Nick besoides; and no one could say a deserved ony better.'

Juliet earnestly begged an explanation; and Dame Fairfield then confessed, that her husband and Nat Mixon were deer-stealers.

After the tremendous sensations to which the mistake of Juliet, from her ignorance of this species of traffic, had given rise, so unexpected a solution of her perplexity, made this crime, contrasted with the assassination of a fellow-creature, appear venial. But though relieved from personal terrors, she would not hazard weakening the morality, in lessening the fears of the good, but uncultivated Dame Fairfield, by making her participate in the comparative view taken by herself, of the greater with the less offence. She represented, therefore, warmly and clearly, the turpitude of all failure of probity; dwelling most especially upon the heinousness of a breach of trust.

The good woman readily said, that she knew, well enough, that the deer were as much the King's Majesty's as the Forest; and that she had told it over and over to her husband; and bid him prepare for his latter end, if he would follow such courses: 'But the main bleame, it do all lie in Nat Mixon; for a be as bad a mon as a body might wish to set eyes on. And a does always say a likes ony thing better than work. It be he has led my poor husband astray: for, thof a be but a bad mon, at best, to my mishap! a was a good sort of a husband enough, poor mon, till a took to these courses. But a knows I do no' like un for that; and that makes it, that a does no' much like me. But I would no' ha' un come to be honged or transported, if so be a was as onkoind agen! I would sooner go with un to prison; thof it be but a dismal life to be shut up by dark walls, and iron bars for to see out of! but I'd do it for sure and sure, not to forsake un, poor mon! in his need; if so be I could get wherewithal to keep my little dearys.'

Touched by such genuine and virtuous simplicity, Juliet now promised to apply to some powerful gentleman, to take her husband from the temptation of his present situation; and to settle them all at a distance from the Forest.

The good woman, at this idea, started up in an extacy, and jumped about the room, to give some vent to her joy; kissing her little ones till she nearly suffocated them; and telling them, for sure and certain, that they had gotten an angel come amongst them, to save them all from shame. 'For now,' she continued, 'if we do but get un away from Nat Mixon and his wife, who be the worst mon in all the Forest, a wull think no more of selling unlawful goods than unlawful geame.'

Juliet, though delighted at her happiness, was struck with the words 'unlawful goods;' which she involuntarily repeated. Dame Fairfield, unable, at this moment, to practise any restraint upon her feelings, plumply, then, acknowledged that Nat Mixon was a smuggler, as well as a deer-stealer: and that three of them were gone, even now, about the country, selling laces, and cambrics, and gloves, just brought to land.

This additional misdemeanour, considerably abated the hopes of reformation which had been conceived by Juliet; and every word that, inadvertently, escaped from the unguarded dame, brought conviction that the man was thoroughly worthless. To give him, nevertheless, if possible, the means to amend; and, at all events, to succour his good wife, and lovely children, occupied as much of the thoughts of Juliet as could be drawn, by humanity, from the danger of her own situation, and her solicitude to escape from the Forest.

More fearful than ever of losing her way, and falling into new evil, she again entreated Dame Fairfield to accompany her to the next town on the morrow. The dame agreed to every thing; and then, light of heart, though heavy with fatigue, went to rest; and was instantly visited by the best physician to all our cares.

Juliet, also, courted repose; and not utterly in vain; though it came not to the relief of her anxious spirits, agitated by all the anticipating inquietude of foresight, with the same salutary facility with which it instantly hushed the fears and the griefs of the unreflecting, though feeling Dame Fairfield.

The moment that the babbling little voices of the children reached, the next morning, the ear of Juliet, she descended from her small chamber, to hasten the breakfast, and to quicken her departure. Dame Fairfield, during the preparations and the repast, happy in new hope, and solaced by unburthening her heart, conversed, without reserve, upon her affairs; and the picture which her ingenuous avowals, and simple details, offered to the mental view of Juliet, presented to her a new sight of human life; but a sight from which she turned with equal sadness and amazement.

The wretched man of the hut, of whom the poor dame's husband was the servile accomplice, was the leader in all the illicit adventures of the New Forest. Another cottager, also, was entirely under his direction; though the difficulty and danger attendant upon their principal traffic, great search being always made after a lost deer, caused it to be rarely repeated; but smaller game; hares, pheasants, and partridges, were easily inveigled, by an adroit dispersion of grain, to a place proper for their seizure; and it required not much skill to frame stories for satisfying purchasers, who were generally too eager for possession, to be scrupulous in investigating the means by which their luxury was so cheaply indulged.

The fixed day of rendezvous was every Friday month, that each might be ready for his part of the enterprize.

Juliet, the dame imagined, had been admitted because it was Thursday, and that her husband had not given notice that he should change his day, on account of the fair; besides which, neither Mixon, she said, nor his wife, ever refused money, be it ever so dangerous. He and his family nearly subsisted upon the game which could not be got off in time; or the refuse; or parts that were too suspicious for sale, of the deer. But Dame Fairfield, though at the expence of the most terrible quarrels, and even ill usage from her husband, never would consent to touch, nor suffer her children to eat, what was not their own; 'for I do tell un,' she continued, 'it might strangle us down our throats; for it be all his King's Majesty's; and I do no' know why we should take hisn goods, when a do never come to take none of ours! for we be never mislsted, night nor day. And a do deserve well of us all; for a be as good a gentlemon as ever broke bread! which we did all see, when a was in these parts; as well as his good lady, the Queen, who had a smile for the lowest of us, God bless un! and all their pretty ones! for they were made up of good nature and charity; and had no more pride than the new-born baby. And we did all love 'em, when they were in these parts, so as the like never was seen before.'

With regard to the smuggling, there were three men, she said, who came over, alternately, from beyond seas, with counterband merchandize. They landed where they could, and, if they were surprised, they knew how to hide their goods, and pass for poor fishermen, blown over by foul winds: for they had always fishing tackle ready to shew. They had agents all round the coast, prepared to deal with them; but when they came to the Forest, they always treated with Mixon.

Her friend near the turnpike, at Salisbury, commonly kept a good store of articles; which she carried about, occasionally, to the ladies of the town. 'And I ha' had sums and sums of goods,' she added, 'here, oftentimes, myself; and then I do no dare to leave the house for one yearthly moment; for we be all no better than slaves when the smugglers be here, for fear of some informer. And I do tell my poor husband, we should be mainly happier to work our hands to the bone, ony day of the year, so we did but live by the King's Majesty's laws, than to make money by being always in a quandary. And a might see the truth of what I do say, if a would no' blind his poor eyes; or Nat Mixon, thof a do get a power of money, do live the most pitiful of us all, for the fear of being found out: a does no' dare get un a hat, nor a waistcoat like to another mon. And his wife be the dirtiest beast in all the Forest. And their house and garden be no better than a piggery. So that they've no joy of life. They be but bad people at best, poor folk! And Nat be main cross-grained; for, with all his care, a do look to be took up every blessed day; and that don't much mend a mon's humour.'

Ah, thought Juliet, were the wilful, but unreflecting purchaser, amenable to sharing the public punishment of the tempted and needy instrument, – how soon would this traffic die away; and every country live by its own means; or by its own fair commerce!

They had all, the dame said, been hard at work, to cover some goods under ground, the very night of Juliet's arrival: and they had put what was for immediate sale into hods, spread over with potatoes, to convey to different places. When Juliet had tapped at the door, the dame had concluded it to be her husband, returned for something that had been forgotten; but the sight of a stranger, she said, though it were but a woman, made her think that they were all undone; for the changed dress of Juliet impeded any recollection of her, till she spoke.

In the communication to which this discourse gave rise, Juliet, with surprize, and even with consternation, learnt, how pernicious were the ravages of dishonest cupidity; how subversive alike of fair prosperity, and genial happiness, even in the bosom of retired and beautiful rusticity. For those who were employed in poaching, purloining wood, or concealing illicit merchandize by night, were as incapable of the arts and vigour of industry by day, as they were torpid to the charms and animation of the surrounding beauties of nature. Their severest labour received no pay, but from fearful, accidental, and perilous dexterity; their best success was blighted by constant apprehension of detection. Reproachful with each other, suspicious of their neighbours, and gloomy in themselves, they were still greater strangers to civilized manners than to social morality.

In the midst, however, of the dejection excited by such a view of human frailty, Juliet, whose heart always panted to love, and prided in esteeming her fellow-creatures, had the consolation to gather, that the houses which contained these unworthy members of the community were few, in comparison with those which were inhabited by persons of unsullied probity; that several of the cottagers were even exemplary for assiduous laboriousness and good conduct; and that many of the farmers and their families were universally respected.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

When Dame Fairfield was nearly ready, Juliet, to forward the march, set out with the two children; but had scarcely quitted the house, when the sight of a man, advancing towards the habitation, made her plant herself behind a tree, to examine him before she ventured to proceed.

She observed that he stopt, every two or three minutes, himself, to take an inquisitive view all around him; frequently bending upon the ground, and appearing to be upon some eager search.

As he approached, she thought that his air was familiar to her; she regarded him more earnestly as he drew nearer; what, then, was her horror to recognize the pilot!

She glided back, instantaneously, to the house, beckoning to the children to follow; and, rushing upon Dame Fairfield, and, taking both her hands, she faintly ejaculated, 'Oh my good dame! – hide, conceal me, I entreat! – I am pursued by a cruel enemy, and lost if you are not my friend! – Serve, save me, now, and I will be yours to the end of my life!'

'That I wull!' answered the dame, delighted; 'if you wull but be so kind as to save my poor husband the shame of being hanged or transported, I wull go through fire and water to serve you, to the longest day I have to live upon the face of God's yearth!'

Then, making the children play without doors, that they might not observe what passed, she told Juliet to bolt herself into the upper chamber.

In a few minutes, the children, running into the house, called out, 'Mam, mam, yonder be dad!'

The dame went forth to meet him; and Juliet spent nearly half an hour in the most cruel suspense.

Dame Fairfield then came to her; and, by the discourse that ensued, she found that the pilot was one of the smugglers who brought merchandize to Mixon; and heard that he and Fairfield had thus unexpectedly returned, in search of a piece of fine broad French lace, of great value, which was missing; and which Fairfield suspected to have dropt from one of his parcels, while he was making his assortments, by the light of the lanthorn. She had been, she said, helping them to look for it, high and low; but had stolen away, for an instant, to bring this account; and to beg Juliet not to be frightened, because though, if Fairfield would go up stairs, she could not hinder him, she would take care that the smuggler should not follow.

Juliet was now seized with a panic that nearly bereft her of all hope; and Dame Fairfield was so much touched by the sight of her sufferings, that she descended, unbidden, to endeavour to discover some means to facilitate an escape.

That the pilot should prove to be a smuggler, caused no surprize to Juliet; but that accident should so cruelly be her foe, as to lead her to the spot where he deposited and negociated his merchandize, at the very period when his affairs brought him thither himself; that she should find her chosen retreat her bane; and that, even where she was unpursued, she should be overtaken; was a stroke of misfortune as severe as it was unexpected.

And, soon after, she found her situation still more terrible than she had imagined it. Fairfield, presently entering the kitchen, to take some food, accused his wife, in a loud and angry tone, of having abetted an imposter. Mounseer, the smuggler, he said, had not come to these parts, this time, merely for his own private business. He had been offered a great reward for discovering a young gentlewoman who had run away; and who turned out to be no other than the very same that she had been such a ninny as to impose upon Dame Goss, at Salisbury; and who had made off without paying for her board and lodging.

The dame warmly declared, that this could not be possible; that it must be some other gentlewoman; for that a person who could be so kind to her children could not have so black a heart.

Fairfield, with bitter reproaches against her folly, persisted in the accusation: stating, that, upon Dame Goss's going to the post-office for a letter, it had been refused to her, because of its being

directed to a person advertised in the public news-papers; and Dame Goss had been sent back, with an excuse, to while away the time, till somebody should follow, to confront the gentlewoman with the advertisement. But Dame Goss, instead of keeping a sharp watch, had been over-persuaded to go of an errand; and she had no sooner turned her back, than the gentlewoman made off. However, they had written to the news-papers that she was somewhere in those parts; and they could do no more; for there was no right to seize her; for the advertisement only desired to know where she might be heard of, and found. It had made a rare hue and cry in the town; and Mounseer, the smuggler, who had come down to Salisbury along with another outlandish man, had traced the gentlewoman as far as to Romsey; but could not find out what had become of her afterwards. The other outlandish man, who was as rich as a Duke, and was to pay the reward, had stopt at Salisbury, for tidings: upon which Mounseer, the smuggler, thought he might as well come on, and see a bit after his own business by the way; for it would not lose much time; and he might not get to these parts again for months.

The silence that ensued, gave Juliet an afflicting presentiment that she had lost, by this history, her friend and advocate: and accordingly, when, upon her husband's returning to his search, the dame re-mounted the stairs, her air was so changed, that Juliet, again clasping her hands, cried, 'Oh! Dame Fairfield! – Kind, good Dame Fairfield! judge me not till you know me better! Aid me still, my good dame, in pity, in charity aid me! – for, believe me, I am innocent!'

'Why then so I wull!' cried the dame, resuming her looks of mild good will; 'I wull believe you! And I'll help you too, for sure: for now you be under my own poor roof, 'twould be like unto a false heart to give you up to your enemies. Besoides, I do think in my conscience you wull pay every one his own, when you've got wherewithal. And it be but hard to expect it before. And I do say, that a person that could be so koinde to my little Jacky and Jenny, in their need, must have a good heart of her own; and would no' wrong no yearthly creature, unless a could no' help it.'

She then promised to watch the moment of the smuggler's turning round to the garden-side of the house, to assist her flight; and, once a few yards distant, all would be safe; for her change of clothes from what she had worn at Salisbury, would secure her from any body's recollection.

This, in a few minutes, was performed; and, without daring to see the children, who would have cried at her departure, Juliet took a hasty leave, silent but full of gratitude, of the good dame; into whose bosom, as her hand refused it, she slipt a guinea for the little ones; and, having received full directions, set forward, by the shortest cut, to the nearest high road.

She reached it unannoyed, but breathless; and seated herself upon a bank by its side; not to hesitate which way to turn; the right and the left were alike unknown to her, and alike liable to danger; but to recover respiration, and force to proceed.

She could now form no plan, save to hasten to some other part of the country; certain that here she was sought all around; and conscious that the disguise of her habiliment, if not already betrayed, must shortly, from a thousand accidents, prove nugatory.

In her ignorance what course the pilot might take, upon quitting the cottage of Fairfield, she determined upon seeking, immediately, some decent lodging for the rest of the day; hoping thus, should he pursue the same route, to escape being overtaken.

She had soon the satisfaction to come to a small habitation, a little out of the high road, where she was accommodated, by a man and his wife, with a room that precisely answered her purpose: and here she spent the night.

Thankful in obtaining any sort of tranquillity, she would fain have remained longer; but she durst not continue in the neighbourhood of Fairfield; and, the following morning, she re-commenced her wanderings.

She asked the way to Salisbury, though merely that she might take an opposite direction. She ventured not to raise her eyes from the earth, nor to cast even a glance at any one whom she passed. She held her handkerchief to her face at the sound of every carriage; and trembled at the approach

of every horseman. Her steps were quick and eager; though not more precipitate to fly from those by whom she was followed, than fearful of being observed by those whom she met.

In a short time, the sight of several hostlers, helpers, and postilions, before a large house, which appeared to be a capital inn, made her cross the way. She wished to turn wholly from the high road; but low brick-walls had now, on either side, taken place of hedges, and she searched in vain for an opening. Her earnestness to press onward, joined to her fear of looking up, made her soon follow, unconsciously, an ordinary man, till she was so close behind him, as suddenly to perceive, by his now well known coat, that he was the pilot! A scream struggled to escape her, in the surprize of her affright; but she stifled it, and, turning short back, speeded her retrograde way with all her force.

She had reason, however, to fear that her uncontrollable first emotion had caught his notice, for she heard footsteps following. Hopeless of saving herself, if watched or suspected, by flight; as she knew that there was no turning for at least half a mile; she darted precipitately into the inn; which seemed alone to offer her even a shadow of any chance of concealment. She rushed past ostlers, helpers, postilions, and waiters; seized the hand of the first female that she met; and hastily begged to be shewn to a room.

The chambermaid, astonished at such a request from a person no better equipped, pertly asked what she meant.

Juliet, whose apprehensive eyes roved everywhere, now saw the pilot at the door.

She held the maid by the arm, and, in a voice scarcely audible, entreated to be taken any where that she might be alone; and had the presence of mind to hint at a recompence.

This instantly prevailed. The maid said, 'Well, come along!' and led her to a small apartment up stairs.

Juliet put a shilling into her hand, and was then left to herself.

In an agony of suffering that disordered her whole frame, What a life, she cried, is this that I lead! How tremendous, and how degrading! Is it possible that even what I fly can be more dreadful?

This question restored her fortitude. Ah yes! ah yes! she cried, all passing evil is preferable to such a termination!

She now composed her spirits, and, while deliberating how she might make a friend of the maid, to aid her escape, perceived, from the window, the pilot, in a stable-yard, examining a horse, for which he seemed to be bartering.

This determined her to attempt to regain the cottage which she had last quitted, and thence to try some opposite route.

Swiftly she descended the stairs; a general bustle from some new arrival enabled her to pass unnoticed; but a chaise was at the door, and she was forced to make way for a gentleman, who had just quitted it, to enter the house. Unavoidably, by this movement, she saw the gentleman also; the colour instantly forsook her cheeks and lips; her feet tottered, and she fell.

She was immediately surrounded by waiters; but the gentleman, who, observing only her dress, concluded her to belong to the house, walked on into the kitchen, and asked, in broken English, for the landlord or landlady.

Juliet, whose fall had been the effect of a sudden deprivation of strength, from an abrupt sensation of horror, had not fainted. She heard, therefore, what passed, and was easily helped to rise; and, shaded by her packet, which, even in her first terrour, she had instinctively held to her face, she made a motion to walk into the air. One of the men, good naturedly, placed her a chair without doors; she sat upon it thankfully, and almost as quickly recovered as she had lost her force, by a reviving idea, that, even yet, thus situated, she might make her escape.

She had just risen with this view, when the voice of the pilot, who was coming round the house, from the stable-yard, forced her hastily to re-enter the passage; but not before she heard him enquire, whether a French gentleman were arrived in that chaise?

Again, now, she glided on towards the stairs; hearing, as she passed, the answer made by the French gentleman himself: '*Oui, oui, me voici. Quelles sont les nouvelles?*'¹

The voices of both proved each to be advancing to the passage, to meet the other. Juliet was no longer sensible of bodily weakness; nor scarcely of bodily existence. She seemed to herself a mere composition of terror. She flew up the stairs, meaning to regain her little chamber; but, mistaking her way, found herself in a gallery, leading to the best apartments. Glad, however, rather than sorry, in the hope she might here be less liable to be sought, she opened the first door; and, entering a large room, locked and bolted herself in, with such extreme precipitance, that already she had sunk upon her knees, in fervent prayer, before a shadow, which caught her eyes, made her look round; when she perceived, at a distant window, a gentleman who was writing.

In the deepest consternation, she arose, hurrying to find the key; which, in her perturbation, she had taken out, and let drop she knew not where.

While earnestly searching it, the gentleman, mildly, yet in a tone of some surprize, enquired what she wanted.

Startled at the sound of his voice, she looked up, and saw Harleigh.

Her conflicting emotions now exceeded all that she had hitherto experienced. To seem to follow, even to his room, the man whom she had adjured, as he valued her preservation, to quit and avoid her; joined sensations of shame so poignant, to those of horror and anguish, with which she was already overwhelmed, that, almost, she wished her last hour to arrive; that, while finishing her wretchedness, she might clear her integrity and honour.

Harleigh, to whom her dress, as he had not caught a view of her face, proved a complete disguise of her person, concluded her to be some light nymph of the inn, and suffered her to search for the key, without even repeating his question: but when, upon her finding it, he observed that her shaking hand could not, for some time, fix it in the lock, he was struck with something in her general form that urged him to rise, and offer his assistance.

Still more her hand shook, but she opened the door, and, without answering, and with a head carefully averted, eagerly quitted the room; shutting herself out, with trembling precipitation.

Harleigh hesitated whether to follow; but it was only for a moment: the next, a shriek of agony reached his ears, and, hastily rushing forth, he saw the female who had just quitted him, standing in an attitude of despair; her face bowed down upon her hands; while an ill-looking man, whom he presently recollected for the pilot, grinning in triumph, and with arms wide extended, to prevent her passing, loudly called out, '*Citoyen! Citoyen! venez voir! c'est Elle! Je la tien!*'²

Harleigh would have remonstrated against this rude detention; but he had no sooner begun speaking, than Juliet, finding that she could not advance, retreated; and had just put her hand upon the lock of a door, higher up in the gallery; when another man, dressed with disgusting negligence, and of a hideous countenance, yet wearing an air of ferocious authority; advancing by large strides, roughly seized her arm, with one hand, while, with the other, he rudely lifted up her bonnet, to examine her face.

'*C'est bien!*' he cried, with a look of exultation, that gave to his horrible features an air of infernal joy; '*viens, citoyenne, viens; suis moi.*'³

Harleigh, who, when the bonnet was raised, saw, what as yet he had feared to surmise, – that it was Juliet; sprang forward, exclaiming, 'Daring ruffian! quit your hold!'

'*Ose tu nier mes droits?*' cried the man, addressing Juliet; whose arm he still griped; — '*Dis! – parles! – l'ose tu?*'⁴

¹ 'Yes, yes; here I am. What's your news?'

² 'Tis she, citizen! come and see! I have her safe!'

³ 'Tis well! come, citizen, come along! follow me.'

⁴ 'Darest thou deny my rights? – say! – speak! darest thou?'

Juliet was mute; but Harleigh saw that she was sinking, and bent towards her to save her fall; what, then, was his astonishment, to perceive that it was voluntary! and that she cast herself at the feet of her assailant!

Thunderstruck, he held back.

The man, with an expression of diabolical delight at this posture, cast his eyes now upon her, now upon her appalled defendant; and then, in French, gave orders to the pilot, to see four fresh horses put to the chaise: and, in a tone of somewhat abated rage, bid Juliet arise, and accompany him down stairs.

'Ah, no! – ah, spare – ah, leave me yet! – ' in broken accents, and in French, cried the still prostrate Juliet.

The man, who was large made, tall, and strong, seized, then, both her arms, with a motion that indicated his intention to drag her along.

A piercing shriek forced its way from her at his touch: but she arose, and made no appeal, no remonstrance.

'*Si tu peux le conduire toute seule,*' said the man, sneeringly, '*soit! Mais vas en avant! Je ne le perdrai plus de vu.*'⁵

Juliet again hid her face, but stood still.

The man roughly gave her a push; seeming to enjoy, with a coarse laugh, the pleasure of driving her on before him.

Harleigh, who saw that her face was convulsed with horror, fiercely planted himself in the midst of the passage, vehemently exclaiming, 'Infernal monster! by what right do you act?'

'*De quel droit me le demandez vous?*'⁶ cried the man; who appeared perfectly to understand English.

'By the rights of humanity!' replied Harleigh; 'and you shall answer me by the rights of justice! One claim alone can annul my interference. Are you her father?'

'*Non!*' he answered, with a laugh of scorn; '*mais il y a d'autres droits!*'⁷

'There are none!' cried Harleigh, 'to which you can pretend; none!'

'*Comment cela? n'est-ce pas ma femme? Ne suis-je pas son mari?*'⁸

'No!' cried Harleigh, 'no!' with the fury of a man seized with sudden delirium; 'I deny it! – 'tis false! and neither you nor all the fiends of hell shall make me believe it!'

Juliet again fell prostrate; but, though her form turned towards her assailant, her eyes, and supplicating hands, that begged forbearance, were lifted up, in speechless agony, to Harleigh.

Repressed by this look and action, though only to be overpowered by the blackest surmises, Harleigh again stood suspended.

Finding the people of the inn were now filling the staircase, to see what was the matter, the foreigner, in tolerable English, told them all to be gone, for he was only recovering an eloped wife. Then, addressing Juliet, 'If you dare assert,' he said, 'that you are not my wife, your perjury may cost you dear! If you have not that hardness, hold your tongue and welcome. Who else will dare dispute my claims?'

'I will!' cried Harleigh, furiously. 'Walk this way, Sir, and give me an account of yourself! I will defend that lady from your inhuman grasp, to the last drop of my blood!'

'Ah, no! ah, no!' Juliet now faintly uttered; but the man, interrupting her, said, 'Dare you assert, I demand, that you are not my wife? Speak! Dare you?'

⁵ 'If you can walk alone, well and good; but go on first. I shall lose sight of you no more.'

⁶ 'By what right do you enquire?'

⁷ 'No; but there are other rights!'

⁸ 'How so? Is she not my wife? Am I not her husband?'

Again she bowed down her face upon her hands, – her face that seemed bloodless with despair; but she was mute.

'I put you to the test;' continued the man, striding to the end of the gallery, and opening the last door: 'Go into that chamber!'

She shrieked aloud with agony uncontrollable; and Harleigh, with an emotion irrepressible, cast his arms around her, exclaiming, 'Place yourself under my protection! and no violence, no power upon earth shall tear you away!'

At these words, all the force of her character came again to her aid; and she disengaged herself from him, with a reviving dignity in her air, that shewed a decided resolution to resist his services: but she was still utterly silent; and he saw that she was obliged to sustain her tottering frame against the wall, to save herself from again sinking upon the floor.

The foreigner seemed with difficulty to restrain his rage from some act of brutality; but, after a moment's pause, fixing his hands fiercely in his sides, he ferociously confronted the shaking Juliet, and said, 'I have informed your family of my rights. Lord Denmeath has promised me his assistance and your portion.'

'Lord Denmeath!' repeated the astonished Harleigh.

'He has promised me, also,' the foreigner, without heeding him, continued, 'the support of your half-brother, Lord Melbury, –'

'Lord Melbury!' again exclaimed Harleigh; with an expression that spoke a sudden delight, thrilling, in defiance of agony, through his burning veins.

'Who, he assures me, is a young man of honour, who will never abet a wife in eloping from her husband. I shall take you, therefore, at first, and at once, to Lord Denmeath, who will only pay your portion to your own signature. Go, therefore, quietly into that room, till the chaise is ready, and I promise that I won't follow you: though, if you resist, I shall assert my rights by force.'

He held the door open. She wrung her hands with agonizing horror. He took hold of her shoulder; she shrunk from his touch; but, in shrinking, involuntarily entered the room. He would have pushed her on; but Harleigh, who now looked wild with the violence of contending emotions; with rage, astonishment, grief, and despair; furiously caught him by the arm, calling out, 'Hold, villain, hold! – Speak, Madam, speak! Utter but a syllable! – Deign only to turn towards me! – Pronounce but with your eyes that he has no legal claim, and I will instantly secure your liberty, – even from myself! – even from all mankind! – Speak! – turn! – look but a moment this way! – One word! one single word! –'

She clapped her hands upon her forehead, in an action of despair; but the word was not spoken, – not a syllable was uttered! A look, however, escaped her, expressive of a soul in torture, yet supplicating his retreat. She then stepped further into the room, and the foreigner shut and double-locked the door.

Triumphantly brandishing the key, as he eyed, sidelong, the now passive Harleigh, he went into the adjoining apartment; where, seating himself in the middle of the room, he left the door wide open, to watch all egress and regress in the passage.

Harleigh now appeared to be lost! The violence of his agitation, while he concluded her to be wrongfully claimed, was transformed into the blackest and most indignant despondence, at her unresisting, however wretched acquiescence, to commands thus brutal; emanating from an authority of which, however evidently it was deplored, she attempted not to controvert the legality. The dreadful mystery, more direful than it had been depicted, even by the most cruel of his apprehensions, was now revealed: she is married! he internally cried; married to the vilest of wretches, whom she flies and abhors, – yet she is married! indisputably married! and can never, never, – even in my wishes, now, be mine!

A sudden sensation, kindred even to hatred, took possession of his feelings. Altered she appeared to him, and delusive. She had always, indeed, discouraged his hopes, always forbidden his

expectations; yet she must have seen that they subsisted, and were cherished; and could not but have been conscious, that a single word, bitter, but essentially just, might have demolished, have annihilated them in a moment.

He dragged himself back to his apartment, and resolutely shut his door; gloomily bent to nourish every unfavourable impression, that might sicken regret by resentment. But no indignation could curb his grief at her loss; nor his horror at her situation: and the look that had compelled his retreat; the look that so expressively had concentrated and conveyed her so often reiterated sentence, of 'leave, or you destroy me!' seemed rivetted to his very brain, so as to take despotic and exclusive hold of all his faculties.

In a few minutes, the sound of a carriage almost mechanically drew him to the window. He saw there an empty chaise and four horses. It was surely to convey her away! – and with the man whom she loathed, – and from one who, so often! had awakened in her symptoms the most impressive of the most flattering sensibility! —

The transitory calm of smothered, but not crushed emotions, was now succeeded by a storm of the most violent and tragic passions. To lose her for ever, yet irresistibly to believe himself beloved! – to see her nearly lifeless with misery, yet to feel that to demand a conference, or the smallest explanation, or even a parting word, might expose her to the jealousy of a brute, who seemed capable of enjoying, rather than deprecating, any opportunity to treat her ill; to be convinced that she must be the victim of a forced marriage; yet to feel every sentiment of honour, and if of honour of happiness! rise to oppose all violation of a rite, that, once performed, must be held sacred: – thoughts, reflections, ideas thus dreadful, and sensations thus excruciating, almost deprived him of reason, and he cast himself upon the ground in wild agony.

But he was soon roused thence by the gruff voice, well recollected, of the pilot, who, from the bottom of the stairs, called out, '*Viens, citoyen! tout est pret.*'⁹

With horror, now, he heard the heavy step of the foreigner again in the passage; he listened, and the sound reached his ear of the key fixing – the door unlocking. – Excess of torture then caused a short suspension of his faculties, and he heard no more.

Soon, however, reviving, the stillness startled him. He opened his door. No one was in the passage; but he caught a plaintive sound, from the room in which Juliet was a prisoner: and soon gathered that Juliet herself was imploring for leave to travel to Lord Denmeath's alone.

What an aggravation to the sufferings of Harleigh, to learn that she was thus allied, at the moment that he knew her to be another's! for however the violence of his admiration had conquered every obstacle, he had always thought, with reluctance and concern, of the supposed obscurity of her family and connections.

Juliet pleaded in vain. A harsh refusal was followed by the grossest menace, if she hesitated to accompany him at once.

The pilot, repeating his call, now mounted the stairs; and Harleigh felt compelled to return to his room; but, looking back in re-entering it, he saw Juliet forced into the passage; her face not merely pale, but ghastly; her eyes nearly starting from her head.

To rescue, to protect her, Harleigh now thought was all that could render life desirable; but, while adoring her almost to madness, he respected her situation and her fame, and re-passed into his chamber, unseen by the foreigner.

Yet he could not forbear placing himself so that he might catch a glance of her as she went by; he held the door, therefore, in his hand, as if, accidentally, at that moment, opening it. She did not turn her head, but assumed an air of resignation, and walked straight on; yet though she did not meet his eye, she evidently felt it; a pale pink suffusion shot across her cheeks; taking place of the

⁹ 'Come, citizen; all is ready.'

death-like hue they had exhibited as she quitted her room; but which, fading away almost in the same moment, left her again a seeming spectre.

A nervous dimness took from Harleigh even the faculty of observing the foreigner. She loves me! was his thought; she surely loves me! And the idea which, not many minutes sooner, would have chased from his mind every feeling but of felicity, now rent his heart with torture, from painting their mutual unhappiness. It was not a sigh that he stifled, nor a sigh that escaped him; but a groan, a piercing groan, which broke from his sorrows, as he heard her tottering step reach the stairs, while internally he uttered, She is gone from me for ever!

When he thought she would no longer be in sight, he followed to the first landing-place; to catch, once more, even the most distant sound of her feet: but the passage to and fro of waiters, forced him again to mount to his chamber. There, he hastened to the window, to take a view, a last view! of her loved form; but thence, shuddering, retreated, at sight of the chaise and four; destined to whirl her everlastingly away from him, with a companion so undisguisedly dreaded! – so evidently abhorred!

Yet, at the first sound, he returned to the window; whence he perceived Juliet just arrived upon the threshold; looking like a picture of death, and leaning upon a chambermaid, to whom she clung as to a bosom friend; yet not attempting to resist the foreigner; who, on her other side, dragged her by the arm, in open triumph. But, when she came to the chaise-step, she staggered, her vital powers seemed forsaking her; she heaved a hard and painful sigh, and, but for the chambermaid, who knelt down to catch her, had fallen upon the ground.

Harleigh was already half way down the stairs, almost frantic to save her; before he had sufficient recollection to remind him, that any effort on his part might cause her yet grosser insult. He was then again at his window; where he saw a second chambermaid administering burnt feathers, which had already recovered her from the fainting fit; while the mistress of the house was presenting her with hartshorn and water.

She refused no assistance; but the foreigner, who was loudly enraged at the delay, said that he would lift her into the chaise; and bid the pilot get in first, to help the operation.

She now again looked so sick and disordered, that all the women called upon the foreigner to let her re-enter the house, and take a little rest, before her journey. Her eyes, turned up to heaven with thankfulness, even at the proposal, encouraged them to grow clamorous in their demand; but the man, with a scornful sneer, replied that her journey would be her cure; and told the pilot, who was finishing a bottle of wine, to make haste.

The wretched Juliet, resuming her resolution, though with an air of despair, faintly pronounced, that she would get into the carriage herself; and, leaning upon the woman, ascended the steps, and dropt upon the seat of the chaise.

CHAPTER LXXIX

At this moment, a horseman, who had advanced full gallop, hastily dismounting, enquired aloud, whether any French gentleman had lately arrived.

All who were present, pointed to the foreigner; who, not hearing, or affecting not to hear the demand, began pushing away the women, that he might follow Juliet.

The horseman, approaching, asked the foreigner his name.

'*Qu'est ce que cela vous fait?*'¹⁰ he answered.

'You must come with me into the inn,' the horseman replied, after stedfastly examining his face.

The foreigner, with a loud oath, refused to stir.

The horseman, holding out a paper, clapped him upon the shoulder, saying, that he was a person who had been looked for some time, in consequence of information which had been lodged against him; and that he was to be sent out of the kingdom.

This declaration made, he called upon the master of the house to lend his assistance, for keeping the arrested person in custody, till the arrival of the proper officers of justice.

The man, at first, could find no vent for his rage, except horrid oaths, and tremendous imprecations; but, when he was positively seized, with a menace of being bound hand and foot, if he offered any opposition, he swore that his wife, at least, should accompany him; and put forth his hand towards the chaise, to drag out Juliet.

But Juliet was saved from his grasp by the landlady; who humanely, upon seeing her almost expiring condition, had entered the carriage, during the dispute, with a viol of sal volatile.

The horseman, who was a peace-officer, said that he had no orders to arrest any woman. She might come, or stay, as she pleased.

The foreigner vociferously claimed her; uttering execrations against all who unlawfully withheld her; or would abet her elopement. He would then have passed round to the other door of the chaise, to seize her by force; but the peace-officer, who was habitually deaf to any appeal, and resolute against any resistance; compelled him, though storming, raging, and swearing, his face distorted with fury, his under-jaw dropt, and his mouth foaming, to re-enter the inn.

Juliet received neither relief nor fresh pain from what passed. Though no longer fainting, terroure and excess of misery operated so powerfully upon her nerves, that his cries assailed her ears but as outrage upon outrage; and, though clinging to the landlady, with instinctive entreaty for support, she was so disordered by her recent fainting, and so absorbed in the belief that she was lost, that she knew not what had happened; nor suspected any impediment to her forced journey; till the landlady, now quitting her, advised her to have a room and lie down; saying that no wife could be expected to follow such a brute of a husband to jail.

Amazed, she enquired what was meant; and was answered, that her husband was in the hands of justice.

The violence of the changed, yet mixed sensations, with which she was now assailed, made every pulse throb with so palpitating a rapidity, that she felt as if life itself was seeking a vent through every swelling vein. But, when again she was pressed to enter the house, and not to accompany her husband to prison; she shuddered, her head was bowed down with shame; and, making a motion that supplicated for silence, she seemed internally torn asunder with torturing incertitude how to act.

During this instant, – it was scarcely more, – of irresolution, the landlady alighted, and the chaise was driven abruptly from the door. But Juliet had scarcely had time for new alarm, ere she found that she had only been removed to make way for another carriage; from the window of which she caught a glimpse of Sir Jaspar Herrington.

¹⁰ 'What is that to you?'

Nor had she escaped his eye; her straw-bonnet having fallen off, without being missed, while she fainted, her head was wholly without shade.

With all of speed in his power, the Baronet hobbled to the chaise. She covered her face, sinking with every species of confusion and distress. 'Have I the honour,' he cried, 'to address Miss Granville? The Honourable Miss Granville?' —

'Good Heaven! — ' Juliet astonished, and raising her head, exclaimed.

'If so, I have the dulcet commission,' he continued, 'to escort her to her brother and sister, Lord Melbury, and Lady Aurora Granville.'

'Is it possible? Is it possible?' cried Juliet, in an ecstasy that seemed to renovate her whole being: 'I dare not believe it! — Oh Sir Jaspar! dear, good, kind, generous Sir Jaspar! delude me not, in pity!'

'No, fairest syren!' answered Sir Jaspar, in a rapture nearly equal to her own; 'if there be any delusion to fear, 'tis poor I must be its victim!'

'Oh take me, then, at once, — this instant, — this moment, — take me to them, my benevolent, my noble friend! If, indeed, I have a brother, a sister, — give me the heaven of their protection! — '

Sir Jaspar, enchanted, invited her to honour him by accepting a seat in his chaise. With glowing gratitude she complied; though the just returning roses faded from her cheeks, as she alighted, upon perceiving Harleigh, aloof and disconsolate, fixed like a statue, upon a small planted eminence. Yet but momentarily was the whiter hue prevalent, and her skin, the next instant, burned with blushes of the deepest dye.

This transition was not lost upon Harleigh: his eye caught, and his heart received it, with equal avidity and anguish. Ah why, thought he, so sensitive! why, at this period of despair, must I awaken to a consciousness of the full extent of my calamity! Yet, all his resentment subsided; to believe that she participated in his sentiments, had a charm so softening, so all-subduing, that, even in this crisis of torture and hopelessness, it dissolved his whole soul into tenderness.

Juliet, faintly articulating, 'Oh, let us be gone!' moved, with cast down eyes, to the carriage of the Baronet; forced, from remaining weakness, to accept the assistance of his groom; Sir Jaspar not having strength, nor Harleigh courage, to offer aid.

Sir Jaspar demanded her permission to stop at Salisbury, for his valet and baggage.

'Any where! any where!' answered the shaking Juliet, 'so I go but to Lady Aurora!'

Astonished, and thrilled to the soul by these words, Harleigh, who, unconsciously, had advanced, involuntarily repeated, 'Lady Aurora? — Lady Aurora Granville?' —

Unable to answer, or to look at him, the trembling Juliet, eagerly laying both her hands upon the arm of the Baronet, as, cautiously, he was mounting into the carriage, supplicated that they might be gone.

A petition thus seconded, from so adored a suppliant, was irresistible; he kissed each fair hand that thus honoured him; and had just accepted the offer of Harleigh, to aid his arrangements; when the furious prisoner, struggling with the peace-officers, and loudly swearing, re-appeared at the inn-door, clamorously demanding his wife.

The tortured Juliet, with an impulse of agony, cast, now, the hands that were just withdrawn from the Baronet, upon the shoulder of Harleigh, who was himself fastening the chaise-door, tremulously, and in a tone scarcely audible, pronouncing, 'Oh! hurry us away, Mr Harleigh! — in mercy! — in compassion!'

Harleigh, bowing upon the hands which he ventured not to touch, but of which he felt the impression with a pang indescribable, called to the postilion to drive off full gallop.

With a low and sad inclination of the head, Juliet, in a faltering voice, thanked him; involuntarily adding, 'My prayers, Mr Harleigh, — my every wish for happiness, — will for ever be yours!'

The chaise drove off; but his groan, rather than sigh, reached her agonized ear; and, in an emotion too violent for concealment, yet to which she durst allow no vent, she held her almost bursting

forehead with her hand; breathing only by smothered sighs, and scarcely sensible to the happiness of an uncertain escape, while bowed down by the sight of the misery that she had inflicted, where all that she owed was benevolence, sympathy, and generosity.

Not even the delight of thus victoriously carrying off a disputed prize, could immediately reconcile Sir Jaspar to the fear of even the smallest disorder in the economy of his medicines, anodynes, sweetmeats, and various whims; which, from long habits of self-indulgence, he now conceived to be necessities, not luxuries.

But when, after having examined, in detail, that his travelling apparatus was in order, he turned smilingly to the fair meddler of his exertions; and saw the deep absorption of all her faculties in her own evident affliction, he was struck with surprise and disappointment; and, after a short and mortified pause, 'Can it be, fair ænigma!' he cried, 'that it is with compunction you abandon this Gallic Goliath?'

Surprised, through this question, from the keen anguish of speechless suffering; retrospection and anticipation alike gave way to gratitude, and she poured forth her thanks, her praises, and her wondering delight, at this unexpected, and marvellous rescue, with so much vivacity of transport, and so much softness of sensibility for his kindness, that the enchanted Sir Jaspar, losing all forbearance, in the interest with which he languished to learn, more positively, her history and her situation, renewed his entreaties for communication, with an urgency that she now, for many reasons, no longer thought right to resist: anxious herself, since concealment was at an end, to clear away the dark appearances by which she was surrounded; and to remove a mystery that, for so long a period, had made her owe all good opinion to trust and generosity.

She pondered, nevertheless, and sighed, ere she could comply. It was strange to her, she said, and sad, to lift up the veil of secrecy to a new, however interesting and respectable acquaintance; while to her brother, her sister, and her earliest friend, she still appeared to be enveloped in impenetrable concealment. Yet, if to communicate the circumstances which had brought her into this deplorable situation, could shew her sense of the benevolence of Sir Jaspar, she would set apart her repugnance, and gather courage to retrace the cruel scenes of which he had witnessed the direful result. Her inestimable friend had already related the singular history of all that had preceded their separation; but, uninformed herself of the dreadful events by which it had been followed, she could go no further: otherwise, from a noble openness of heart, which made all disguise painful, if not disgusting to her, Sir Jaspar would already have been satisfied.

The Baronet, ashamed, would now have withdrawn his petition; but Juliet no longer wished to retract from her engagement.

CHAPTER LXXX

The first months after the departure of Gabriella, were passed, Juliet narrated, quietly, though far from gaily, in complete retirement. To lighten, through her cares and services, the terrible change of condition experienced by her benefactress, the Marchioness, and by her guardian, the Bishop, was her unremitting, and not successless endeavour: but even this sad tranquillity was soon broken in upon, by an accidental interview with a returned emigrant, who brought news of the dangerous state of health into which the young son of Gabriella had fallen. Too well knowing that this cherished little creature was the sole consolation and support of its exiled mother, the Marchioness earnestly desired that her daughter should possess again her early companion; who best could aid to nurse the child; or, should its illness prove fatal, to render its loss supportable. It was, therefore, settled, that, guarded and accompanied by a faithful ancient servant, upon whose prudence and attachment the Marchioness had the firmest reliance, Juliet should follow her friend: and the benevolent Bishop promised to join them both, as soon as his affairs would permit him to make the voyage.

To obtain a passport being then impossible, Ambroise, this worthy domestic, was employed to discover means for secretly crossing the channel: and, as adroit as he was trusty, he found out a pilot, who, though ostensibly but a fisherman, was a noted smuggler; and who passed frequently to the opposite shore; now with goods, now with letters, now with passengers. By this man the Marchioness wrote to prepare Gabriella for the reception of her friend, who was to join her at Brighthelmstone; whither, in her last letter, written, as Juliet now knew, in the anguish of discovering symptoms of danger in the illness of her darling boy, Gabriella had mentioned her intended excursion for sea-bathing. The diligent Ambroise soon obtained information that the pilot was preparing to sail with a select party. The Marchioness would rather have postponed the voyage, till an answer could have been received from her daughter; yet this was not an opportunity to be neglected.

The light baggage, therefore, was packed, and they were waiting the word of command from the pilot, when a commissary, from the Convention, arrived, to purify, he said, and new-organize the town, near which, in a villa that had been a part of her marriage-portion, the Marchioness and her brother then resided. To this villa the commissary made his first visit. The Bishop, by this agent of the inhuman Robespierre, was immediately seized; and, while his unhappy sister, and nearly adoring ward, were vainly kneeling at the feet of his condemner, – not accuser! to supplicate mercy for innocence, – not for guilt! the persons who were rifling the Bishop, shouted out, with savage joy, that they had found a proof of his being a traitor, in a note in his pocket-book, which was clearly a bribe from the enemy to betray the country. The commissary, who, having often been employed as a spy, had a competent knowledge of modern languages, which he spoke intelligibly, though with vulgar phraseology and accent; took the paper, and read it without difficulty. It was the promissory note of the old Earl Melbury.

He eagerly demanded the Citoyenne Julie; swearing that, if six thousand pounds were to be got by marrying, he would marry without delay. He ordered her, therefore, to accompany him forthwith to the mayoralty. At her indignant refusal, he scoffingly laughed; but, upon her positive resistance, ordered her into custody. This, also, moved her not; she only begged to be confined in the same prison with the Bishop. Coarsely mocking her attachment for the priest, and holding her by the chin, he swore that he would marry her, and her six thousand pounds.

A million of deaths, could she die them, she resolutely replied, she would suffer in preference.

Her priest, then, he said, should away to the guillotine; though she had only to marry, and sign the promissory-note for the dower, to set the parson at liberty. Filled with horror, she wrung her hands, and stood suspended; while the Marchioness, with anguish indescribable, and a look that made a supplication that no voice could pronounce, fell upon her neck, gasping for breath, and almost fainting.

'Ah, Madam!' Juliet cried, 'what is your will? I am yours, – entirely yours! command me!' — The Marchioness could not speak; but her sighs, her groans, rather, were more eloquent than any words.

'Bind the priest!' the commissary cried. 'His trial is over; bind the traitor, and take him to the cell for execution.'

The Marchioness sunk to the floor.

'No!' cried Juliet, 'bind him not! Touch not his reverend and revered person! – Give me the paper! I will sign what you please! I will go whither you will!'

'Come, then,' cried the commissary, 'to the mayoralty.'

Juliet covered her face, but moved towards the door.

The Bishop, hitherto passive and meekly resigned, now, with a sudden effort of strength, repulsing his gaolers, while fire darted from his eyes, and a spirit of command animated all his features, exclaimed, 'No, generous Juliet! my own excellent child, no! Are a few years more or less, – perhaps but a few minutes, – worth purchasing by the sacrifice of truth, and the violation of every feeling? I will not be saved upon such terms!'

'No preaching,' cried the commissary; 'off with him at once.'

The men now bound his hands and arms; while, returning to his natural state of calmness, he lifted up his eyes towards heaven, and, in a loud and sonorous voice, ejaculated, in Latin, a fervent prayer; with an air so absorbed in mental and pious abstraction, that he seemed unconscious what became of his person.

Juliet, who had shrunk back at his speech, again advanced, and, with agony unspeakable, held out her hand, in token of consent. The commissary received it triumphantly, at the moment that the Bishop, upon reaching the door, turned round to take a last view of his unhappy sister; who, torn with conflicting emotions, seemed a statue of horror. But no sooner did he perceive the hand of his ward unresistingly grasped by the commissary, than again the expression of his face shewed his soul brought back from its heavenly absorption; and, stopping short, with an air which, helpless and shackled as he was, overawed his fierce conductors, 'Hold yet a moment,' he cried. 'Oh Juliet! Think, – know what you are about! 'Tis not to this world alone you are responsible for vows offered up at the altar of God! My child! my more than daughter! sacrifice not your purity to your affections! Drag me not back from a virtuous death to a miserable existence, by the foul crime of wilful perjury!'

Juliet affrighted, again snatched away her hand, with a look at the commissary which pronounced an abhorrent refusal.

The commissary, stamping with fury, ordered the Bishop instantly to the cell of death. Where guilt, he said, had been proved, there was no need of any tribunal; and the execution should take place with the speed called for by his dangerous crimes.

Juliet, cold, trembling, and again irresolute, was involuntarily turning to the commissary; but the Bishop, charging her to be firm, pronounced a pious blessing upon her head; faintly spoke a last adieu to his miserable sister, and, with commanding solemnity, accompanied his gaolers away.

The horror of that moment Juliet attempted not to describe; nor could she recur to it, without sighs and emotions that, for a while, stopt her narration.

Sir Jaspar would have spared her the resumption of the history; but she would not, having thus raised, trifle with his curiosity.

The commissary, she continued, then took possession of all the money, plate, and jewels he could find, and pursued what he called his rounds of purification.

How the Marchioness or herself out-lived that torturing day, Juliet declared she could with difficulty, now, conceive. She was again willing to become a victim to the safety of her guardian; but even the Marchioness ceased to desire his preservation upon terms from which he himself recoiled as culpable. Early the next morning they were both conducted to a large house upon the market-

place, where, in the most direful suspense, they were kept waiting for more than two hours; in which interval, such was the oppression of terror, neither of them opened their lips.

The commissary, at length, broke into the room, and, seating himself in an arm-chair, while, humbly and tremblingly, they stood at the door, demanded of Juliet whether she were become more reasonable. Her head drooped, but she would not answer. 'Follow me,' he cried, 'to this balcony.' He opened a door leading to a large apartment that looked upon the market-place. She suspected some sinister design, and would not obey. 'Come you, then!' he cried, to the Marchioness; and, taking her by the shoulder, rudely and grossly, he pushed her before him, till she entered upon the balcony. A dreadful scream, which then broke from her, brought Juliet to her side.

Here, again, overpowered by the violence of bitter recollections, which operated, for the moment, with nearly the force of immediate suffering, Juliet was obliged to take breath before she could proceed.

'Oh Sir Jaspur!' she then cried, 'upon approaching the wretched Marchioness, what a distracting scene met my eyes! A scaffolding, – a guillotine, – an executioner, – were immediately opposite me! and in the hand of that hardened executioner, was held up to the view of the senseless multitude, the ghastly, bleeding head of a victim that moment offered up at the shrine of unmeaning though ferocious cruelty! Four other destined victims, kneeling and devoutly at prayers, their hands tied behind them, and their heads bald, were prepared for sacrifice; and amidst them, eminently conspicuous, from his dignified mien, and pious calmness, I distinguished my revered guardian! the Marchioness had distinguished her beloved brother! – Oh moment of horror exceeding all description! I cast myself, nearly frantic, at the feet of the commissary; I embraced his knees, as if with the fervour of affection; wildly and passionately I conjured him to accept my hand and fortune, and save the Bishop! – He laughed aloud with triumphant derision; but gave an immediate order to postpone the execution of the priest. I blest him, – yes, with all his crimes upon his head! – and even again I should bless him, to save a life so precious!

'The Marchioness, recovering her strength with her hopes, seized the arm of the messenger of this heavenly news, hurrying him along with a force nearly supernatural, and calling out aloud herself, from the instant that she entered the market place, "*Un sursit! Un sursit!*"¹¹

"Now, then," cried the commissary, "come with me to the mayoralty;" and was taking my no longer withheld, but shaking hand, when some soldiers abruptly informed him that an insurrection had broken out at – , which demanded his immediate presence.

'I caught this moment of his engaged attention to find my way down stairs, and into the market-place: but not with a view to escape; every feeling of my soul was concentrated in the safety of the Bishop. I rushed forward, I forced my way through the throng, which, though at first it opposed my steps, no sooner looked at me than, intimidated by my desperation, or affected by my agony, it facilitated my passage. Rapidly I overtook the Marchioness, whose age, whose dignified energy, and loud cries of Reprieve! made way for her through every impediment, whether of crowd or of guards, to the scaffolding. How we accomplished it, nevertheless, I now wonder! But a sense of right, when asserted with courage, is lodged in the lowest, the vilest of mankind; – a sense of right, an awe of justice, and a propensity to sympathize with acute distress! The reprieve which our cries had anticipated, and which the man whom we accompanied confirmed, was received by the multitude, from an ardent and universal respect to the well known excellencies of the Bishop, with shouts of applause that exalted our joy at his deliverance into a felicity which we thought celestial! At his venerable feet we prostrated ourselves, as if he had been a martyr to religion, and already was sainted. He was greatly affected; though perhaps only by our emotion; for he looked too uncertain how this event had been brought to bear, to partake of our happiness; and at me he cast an eye so full of compassion, yet so interrogative, that mine sunk under it; and, far from exulting that I had thus devoted

¹¹ 'A Reprieve! a reprieve!'

myself to his preservation, I was already trembling at the acknowledgement I had to make, when I was suddenly seized by a soldier, who forced me, from all the tenderest interests of my heart, back to the stormy commissary. Oh! what a change of scene! He roughly took me by the arm, which felt as if it were withered, and no longer a part of my frame at his touch; and, with accusations of the grossest nature, and vows the most tremendous of vengeance, compelled me to attend him to the mayoralty; deaf to my prayers, my entreaties, my kneeling supplications that he would first suffer me to see the Bishop at liberty.

'At the mayoralty he was accosted by a messenger sent from the Convention. Ah! it seemed to me, at that moment, that a whole age of suffering could not counterbalance the delight I experienced, when, to read an order thus presented to him, he was constrained to relinquish his hard grasp! Still greater was my relief, when I learnt, by what passed, that he had received commands to proceed directly to – , where the insurrection was become dangerous.

'Such a multiplicity of business now crowded upon him, that I conceived a hope I might be forgotten; or, at least, set apart as a future prey: but alas! the promissory-note was still in his hand, and, – if heart he has any, – if heart be not left out in his composition, there, past all doubt, the six thousand pounds were already lodged. All my hopes, therefore, faded away, when he had given some new directions; for, seizing me again, by the wrist, he dragged me to the place, – I had nearly said of execution! – There, by his previous orders, all were in waiting, – all was ready! – Oh, Sir Jaspar! how is it that life still holds, in those periods when all our earthly hopes, and even our faculties of happiness, seem for ever entombed.'

The bitterest sighs again interrupted her narration; but neither the humanity nor the politeness of Sir Jaspar could combat any longer his curiosity, and he conjured her to proceed.

'The civil ceremony, dreadful, dreadful! however little awful compared with that of the church, was instantly begun; in the midst of the buz of business, the clamour of many tongues, the sneers of contempt, and the laughter of derision; with an irreverence that might have suited a theatre, and with a mockery of which the grossest buffoons would have been ashamed. Scared and disordered, I understood not, – I heard not a word; and my parched lips, and burning mouth, could not attempt any articulation.

'In a minute or two, this pretended formality was interrupted, by information that a new messenger from the Convention demanded immediate admittance. The commissary swore furiously that he should wait till the six thousand pounds were secured; and vociferously ordered that the ceremony should be hurried on. He was obeyed! and though my quivering lips were never opened to pronounce an assenting syllable, the ceremony, the direful ceremony, was finished, and I was called, – Oh heaven and earth! – his wife! his married wife! – The Marchioness, at the same terrible moment, broke into the apartment. The conflict between horror and tenderness was too violent, and, as she encircled me, with tortured pity, in her arms, I sunk senseless at her feet.

'Upon recovering, the first words that I heard were, "Look up, my child, look up! we are alone!" and I beheld the unhappy Marchioness, whose face seemed a living picture of commiserating woe. The commissary had been forced away by a new express; but he had left a charge that I should be ready to give my signature upon his return. The Marchioness then, with expressions melting, at once, and exalting, condescended to pour forth the most soothing acknowledgments; yet conjured me not to leave my own purpose unanswered, by signing the promissory-note, till the Bishop should be restored to liberty, with a passport, by which he might instantly quit this spot of persecution. To find something was yet to be done, and to be done for the Bishop, once more revived me; and when the commissary re-entered the apartment, neither order nor menace could intimidate me to take the pen, till my conditions were fulfilled. My life, indeed, at that horrible period, had lost all value but what was attached to the Bishop, the Marchioness, and my beloved Gabriella; for myself, it seemed, thenceforth, reserved not for wretchedness, but despair!

'The passport was soon prepared; but when the Bishop was brought in to receive it in my presence, he rejected it, even with severity, till he heard, – from myself heard! – that the marriage-ceremony, as it was called! was already over. Into what a consternation was he then flung! Pale grew his reverend visage, and his eyes glistened with tears. He would not, however, render abortive the sacrifice which he could no longer impede, and I signed the promissory-note; while the Marchioness wept floods of tears upon my neck; and the Bishop, with a look of anguish that rent my heart, waved, with speechless sorrow, his venerable hand, in token of a blessing, over my head; and, deeply sighing, silently departed.

'The commissary, forced immediately away, to transact some business with his successor at this place, committed me to the charge of the mayor. I was shewn to a sumptuous apartment; which I entered with a shuddering dread that the gloomiest prison could scarcely have excited. The Marchioness followed her brother; and I remained alone, trembling, shaking, almost fainting at every sound, in a state of terrou and misery indescribable. The commissary, however, returned not; and the mayor, to whom my title of horror was a title of respect, paid me attentions of every sort.

'In the afternoon, the Marchioness brought me the reviving tidings that the Bishop was departed. He had promised to endeavour to join Gabriella. The rest of this direful day passed, and no commissary appeared: but the anguish of unremitting expectation kept aloof all joy at his absence, for, in idea, he appeared every moment! Nevertheless, after sitting up together the whole fearful night, we saw the sun rise the next morning without any new horror. I then received a visit from the mayor, with information that the insurrection at – had obliged the commissary to repair thither, and that he had just sent orders that I should join him in the evening. Resistance was out of the question. The tender Marchioness demanded leave to accompany me; but the mayor interposed, and forced her home, to prepare and deliver my wardrobe for the journey. It was so long ere she returned, that the patience of the mayor was almost exhausted; but when, at last, she arrived, what a change was there in her air! Her noble aspect had recovered more than its usual serenity; it was radiant with benevolence and pleasure; and, when we were left an instant together, "My Juliet!" she cried, while beaming smiles illumined her fine face, "my Juliet! my other child! blessed be Heaven, I can now rescue our rescuer! I have found means to snatch her from this horrific thralldom, in the very journey destined for its accomplishment!"

'She then briefly prepared me for meeting and seconding the scheme of deliverance that she had devised with the excellent Ambroise; and we separated, – with what tears, what regret, – yet what perturbation of rising hope!

'All that the Marchioness had arranged was executed. Ambroise, disguised as an old waggoner, preceded me to the small town of – , where the postilion, he knew, must stop to water the horses. Here I obtained leave to alight for some refreshment, of which an old municipal officer, who had me in charge, was not sorry, in idea, to partake; as he could not entertain the most distant notion that I had formed any plan of escape. As soon, however, as I was able to disengage myself from his sight, a chambermaid, who had previously been gained by Ambroise, wrapt me in a man's great coat, put on me a black wig, and a round hat, and, pointing to a back door, went out another way; speaking aloud, as if called; to give herself the power of asserting, afterwards, that the evasion had been effected in her absence. The pretended waggoner then took me under his arm, and flew with me across a narrow passage, where we met, by appointment, an ancient domestic of the Bishop's; who conveyed me to a small house, and secreted me in a dark closet, of which the entrance was not discernible. He then went forth upon his own affairs, into such streets and places as were most public; and my good waggoner found means to abscond.

'Here, while rigidly retaining the same posture, and scarcely daring to breathe any more than to move, I heard the house entered by sundry police-officers, who were pursuing me with execrations. They came into the very room in which I was concealed; and beat round the wainscot in their search; touching even the board which covered the small aperture, not door, by which I was hidden from

their view! I was not, however, discovered; nor was the search, there, renewed; from the adroitness of the domestic by whom I had been saved, in having shewn himself in the public streets before I had yet been missed.

'In this close recess, nearly without air, wholly without motion, and incapable of taking any rest; but most kindly treated by the wife of the good domestic, I passed a week. All search in that neighbourhood being then over, I changed my clothing for some tattered old garments; stained my face, throat, and arms; and, in the dead of the night, quitted my place of confinement, and was conducted by my protector to a spot about half a mile from the town. There I found Ambroise awaiting me, with a little cart; in which he drove me to a small mean house, in the vicinity of the sea-coast. He introduced me to the landlord and landlady as his relation, and then left me to take some repose; while he went forth to discover whether the pilot were yet sailed.

'He had delivered to me my work-bag, in which was my purse, generously stored by the Marchioness, with all the ready money that she could spare, for my journey. For herself, she held it essential to remain stationary, lest a general emigration should alienate the family-fortune from every branch of her house. Excellent lady! At the moment she thus studied the prosperity of her descendants, she lived upon roots, while deprived of all she most valued in life, the society of her only child!

'To repose the good Ambroise left me; but far from my pillow was repose! the dreadful idea of flying one who might lay claim to the honoured title of husband for pursuing me; the consciousness of being held by an engagement which I would not fulfil, yet could not deny; the uncertainty whether my revered Bishop had effected his escape; and the necessity of abandoning my generous benefactress when surrounded by danger; joined to the affliction of returning to my native country, – the country of my birth, my heart, and my pride! – without name, without fortune, without friends! no parents to receive me, no protector to counsel me; unacknowledged by my family, – unknown even to the children of my father! – Oh! bitter, bitter were my feelings! – Yet when I considered that no action of my life had offended society, or forfeited my rights to benevolence, I felt my courage revive, for I trusted in Providence. Sleep then visited my eye-lids, though hard was the bed upon which I sought it; hard and cold! the month was December. Happy but short respite of forgetfulness! Four days and nights followed, of the most terrible anxiety, ere Ambroise returned. He then brought me the dismaying intelligence, that circumstances had intervened, in his own affairs, that made it impossible for him, at that moment, to quit his country. Yet less than ever could my voyage be delayed, the commissary having, in his fury, advertised a description of my person, and set a price upon my head; publicly vowing that I should be made over to the guillotine, when found, for an example. Oh reign so justly called of terror! How lawless is its cruelty! How blest by all mankind will be its termination.

'It now became necessary to my safety, that Ambroise, who was known to be a domestic of the Marchioness, should not appear to belong to me; and that, to avoid any suspicion that I was the person advertised by the commissary, I should present myself to the pilot as an accidental passenger.

'Ambroise had found means, during his absence, to communicate with the Marchioness; from whom he brought me a letter of the sweetest kindness; and intelligence and injunctions of the utmost importance.

'The commissary, she informed me, immediately upon my disappearance, had presented the promissory-note to the bankers; but they had declared it not to be valid, till it were either signed by the heir of the late Earl Melbury, or re-signed, with a fresh date, by Lord Denmeath. The commissary, therefore, had sent over an agent to Lord Denmeath, to claim, as my husband, the six thousand pounds, before my evasion should be known. The Marchioness conjured me, nevertheless, to forbear applying to my family; or avowing my name, or my return to my native land, till I should be assured of the safety of the Bishop; whom the commissary had now ordered to be pursued, and upon whom the most horrible vengeance might be wreaked, should my escape to this happy land transpire, before his own should be effected: though, while I was still supposed to be within reach of our cruel persecutor,

the Bishop, even if he were seized, might merely be detained as an hostage for my future concession; till happier days, or partial accident, might work his deliverance.

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