

**АННА
РАДКЛИФ**

A SICILIAN
ROMANCE

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A Sicilian Romance

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Ann Ward Radcliffe

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by Ann Radcliffe

On the northern shore of Sicily are still to be seen the magnificent remains of a castle, which formerly belonged to the noble house of Mazzini. It stands in the centre of a small bay, and upon a gentle acclivity, which, on one side, slopes towards the sea, and on the other rises into an eminence crowned by dark woods. The situation is admirably beautiful and picturesque, and the ruins have an air of ancient grandeur, which, contrasted with the present solitude of the scene, impresses the traveller with awe and curiosity. During my travels abroad I visited this spot. As I walked over the loose fragments of stone, which lay scattered through the immense area of the fabric, and surveyed the sublimity and grandeur of the ruins, I recurred, by a natural association of ideas, to the times when these walls stood proudly in their original splendour, when the halls were the scenes of hospitality and festive magnificence, and when they resounded with the voices of those whom death had long since swept from the earth. 'Thus,' said I, 'shall the present generation—he who now sinks in misery—and he who now swims in pleasure, alike pass away and be forgotten.' My heart swelled with the reflection; and, as I turned from the scene with a sigh, I fixed my eyes upon a friar, whose venerable figure, gently bending towards the earth, formed no uninteresting object in the picture. He observed my emotion; and, as my eye met his, shook his head and pointed to the ruin. 'These walls,' said he, 'were once the seat of luxury and vice. They exhibited a singular instance of the retribution of Heaven, and were from that period forsaken, and abandoned to decay.' His words excited my curiosity, and I enquired further concerning their meaning.

'A solemn history belongs to this castle, said he, 'which is too long and intricate for me to relate. It is, however, contained in a manuscript in our library, of which I could, perhaps, procure you a sight. A brother of our order, a descendant of the noble house of Mazzini, collected and recorded the most striking incidents relating to his family, and the history thus formed, he left as a legacy to our convent. If you please, we will walk thither.'

I accompanied him to the convent, and the friar introduced me to his superior, a man of an intelligent mind and benevolent heart, with whom I passed some hours in interesting conversation. I believe my sentiments pleased him; for, by his indulgence, I was permitted to take abstracts of the history before me, which, with some further particulars obtained in conversation with the abate, I have arranged in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, this castle was in the possession of Ferdinand, fifth marquis of Mazzini, and was for some years the principal residence of his family. He was a man of a voluptuous and imperious character. To his first wife, he married Louisa Bernini, second daughter of the Count della Salario, a lady yet more distinguished for the sweetness of her manners and the gentleness of her disposition, than for her beauty. She brought the marquis one son and two daughters, who lost their amiable mother in early childhood. The arrogant and impetuous character of the marquis operated powerfully upon the mild and susceptible nature of his lady: and it was by many persons believed, that his unkindness and neglect put a period to her life. However this might be, he soon afterwards married Maria de Vellorno, a young lady eminently beautiful, but of a character very opposite to that of her predecessor. She was a woman of infinite art, devoted to pleasure, and of an unconquerable spirit. The marquis, whose heart was dead to paternal tenderness, and whose present lady was too volatile to attend to domestic concerns, committed the education of his daughters to the care of a lady, completely qualified for the undertaking, and who was distantly related to the late marchioness.

He quitted Mazzini soon after his second marriage, for the gaieties and splendour of Naples, whither his son accompanied him. Though naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition, he was governed by his wife. His passions were vehement, and she had the address to bend them to her own purpose; and so well to conceal her influence, that he thought himself most independent when he was most enslaved. He paid an annual visit to the castle of Mazzini; but the marchioness seldom attended him, and he staid only to give such general directions concerning the education of his daughters, as his pride, rather than his affection, seemed to dictate.

Emilia, the elder, inherited much of her mother's disposition. She had a mild and sweet temper, united with a clear and comprehensive mind. Her younger sister, Julia, was of a more lively cast. An extreme sensibility subjected her to frequent uneasiness; her temper was warm, but generous; she was quickly irritated, and quickly appeased; and to a reproof, however gentle, she would often weep, but was never sullen. Her imagination was ardent, and her mind early exhibited symptoms of genius. It was the particular care of Madame de Menon to counteract those traits in the disposition of her young pupils, which appeared inimical to their future happiness; and for this task she had abilities which entitled her to hope for success. A series of early misfortunes had entended her heart, without weakening the powers of her understanding. In retirement she had acquired tranquillity, and had almost lost the consciousness of those sorrows which yet threw a soft and not unpleasing shade over her character. She loved her young charge with maternal fondness, and their gradual improvement and respectful tenderness repaid all her anxiety. Madame excelled in music and drawing. She had often forgot her sorrows in these amusements, when her mind was too much occupied to derive consolation from books, and she was assiduous to impart to Emilia and Julia a power so valuable as that of beguiling the sense of affliction. Emilia's taste led her to drawing, and she soon made rapid advances in that art. Julia was uncommonly susceptible of the charms of harmony. She had feelings which trembled in unison to all its various and enchanting powers.

The instructions of madame she caught with astonishing quickness, and in a short time attained to a degree of excellence in her favorite study, which few persons have ever exceeded. Her manner was entirely her own. It was not in the rapid intricacies of execution, that she excelled so much in as in that delicacy of taste, and in those enchanting powers of expression, which seem to breathe a soul through the sound, and which take captive the heart of the hearer. The lute was her favorite instrument, and its tender notes accorded well with the sweet and melting tones of her voice.

The castle of Mazzini was a large irregular fabrick, and seemed suited to receive a numerous train of followers, such as, in those days, served the nobility, either in the splendour of peace, or the

turbulence of war. Its present family inhabited only a small part of it; and even this part appeared forlorn and almost desolate from the spaciousness of the apartments, and the length of the galleries which led to them. A melancholy stillness reigned through the halls, and the silence of the courts, which were shaded by high turrets, was for many hours together undisturbed by the sound of any foot-step. Julia, who discovered an early taste for books, loved to retire in an evening to a small closet in which she had collected her favorite authors. This room formed the western angle of the castle: one of its windows looked upon the sea, beyond which was faintly seen, skirting the horizon, the dark rocky coast of Calabria; the other opened towards a part of the castle, and afforded a prospect of the neighbouring woods. Her musical instruments were here deposited, with whatever assisted her favorite amusements. This spot, which was at once elegant, pleasant, and retired, was embellished with many little ornaments of her own invention, and with some drawings executed by her sister. The closet was adjoining her chamber, and was separated from the apartments of madame only by a short gallery. This gallery opened into another, long and winding, which led to the grand staircase, terminating in the north hall, with which the chief apartments of the north side of the edifice communicated.

Madame de Menon's apartment opened into both galleries. It was in one of these rooms that she usually spent the mornings, occupied in the improvement of her young charge. The windows looked towards the sea, and the room was light and pleasant. It was their custom to dine in one of the lower apartments, and at table they were always joined by a dependant of the marquis's, who had resided many years in the castle, and who instructed the young ladies in the Latin tongue, and in geography. During the fine evenings of summer, this little party frequently supped in a pavilion, which was built on an eminence in the woods belonging to the castle. From this spot the eye had an almost boundless range of sea and land. It commanded the straits of Messina, with the opposite shores of Calabria, and a great extent of the wild and picturesque scenery of Sicily. Mount Etna, crowned with eternal snows, and shooting from among the clouds, formed a grand and sublime picture in the background of the scene. The city of Palermo was also distinguishable; and Julia, as she gazed on its glittering spires; would endeavour in imagination to depicture its beauties, while she secretly sighed for a view of that world, from which she had hitherto been secluded by the mean jealousy of the marchioness, upon whose mind the dread of rival beauty operated strongly to the prejudice of Emilia and Julia. She employed all her influence over the marquis to detain them in retirement; and, though Emilia was now twenty, and her sister eighteen, they had never passed the boundaries of their father's domains.

Vanity often produces unreasonable alarm; but the marchioness had in this instance just grounds for apprehension; the beauty of her lord's daughters has seldom been exceeded. The person of Emilia was finely proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair flaxen, and her dark blue eyes were full of sweet expression. Her manners were dignified and elegant, and in her air was a feminine softness, a tender timidity which irresistibly attracted the heart of the beholder. The figure of Julia was light and graceful—her step was airy—her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. Her eyes were dark, and full of fire, but tempered with modest sweetness. Her features were finely turned—every laughing grace played round her mouth, and her countenance quickly discovered all the various emotions of her soul. The dark auburn hair, which curled in beautiful profusion in her neck, gave a finishing charm to her appearance.

Thus lovely, and thus veiled in obscurity, were the daughters of the noble Mazzini. But they were happy, for they knew not enough of the world seriously to regret the want of its enjoyments, though Julia would sometimes sigh for the airy image which her fancies painted, and a painful curiosity would arise concerning the busy scenes from which she was excluded. A return to her customary amusements, however, would chase the ideal image from her mind, and restore her usual happy complacency. Books, music, and painting, divided the hours of her leisure, and many beautiful summer-evenings were spent in the pavilion, where the refined conversation of madame, the poetry of Tasso, the lute of Julia, and the friendship of Emilia, combined to form a species of happiness, such as elevated and highly susceptible minds are alone capable of receiving or communicating. Madame

understood and practised all the graces of conversation, and her young pupils perceived its value, and caught the spirit of its character.

Conversation may be divided into two classes—the familiar and the sentimental. It is the province of the familiar, to diffuse cheerfulness and ease—to open the heart of man to man, and to beam a temperate sunshine upon the mind.—Nature and art must conspire to render us susceptible of the charms, and to qualify us for the practice of the second class of conversation, here termed sentimental, and in which Madame de Menon particularly excelled. To good sense, lively feeling, and natural delicacy of taste, must be united an expansion of mind, and a refinement of thought, which is the result of high cultivation. To render this sort of conversation irresistibly attractive, a knowledge of the world is requisite, and that enchanting ease, that elegance of manner, which is to be acquired only by frequenting the higher circles of polished life. In sentimental conversation, subjects interesting to the heart, and to the imagination, are brought forward; they are discussed in a kind of sportive way, with animation and refinement, and are never continued longer than politeness allows. Here fancy flourishes,—the sensibilities expand—and wit, guided by delicacy and embellished by taste—points to the heart.

Such was the conversation of Madame de Menon; and the pleasant gaiety of the pavilion seemed peculiarly to adapt it for the scene of social delights. On the evening of a very sultry day, having supped in their favorite spot, the coolness of the hour, and the beauty of the night, tempted this happy party to remain there later than usual. Returning home, they were surprised by the appearance of a light through the broken window-shutters of an apartment, belonging to a division of the castle which had for many years been shut up. They stopped to observe it, when it suddenly disappeared, and was seen no more. Madame de Menon, disturbed at this phaenomenon, hastened into the castle, with a view of enquiring into the cause of it, when she was met in the north hall by Vincent. She related to him what she had seen, and ordered an immediate search to be made for the keys of those apartments. She apprehended that some person had penetrated that part of the edifice with an intention of plunder; and, disdainful of a paltry fear where her duty was concerned, she summoned the servants of the castle, with an intention of accompanying them thither. Vincent smiled at her apprehensions, and imputed what she had seen to an illusion, which the solemnity of the hour had impressed upon her fancy. Madame, however, persevered in her purpose; and, after long and repeated search, a rusty key, covered with rust, was produced. She then proceeded to the southern side of the edifice, accompanied by Vincent, and followed by the servants, who were agitated with impatient wonder. The key was applied to an iron gate, which opened into a court that separated this division from the other parts of the castle. They entered this court, which was overgrown with grass and weeds, and ascended some steps that led to a large door, which they vainly endeavoured to open. All the different keys of the castle were applied to the lock, without effect, and they were at length compelled to quit the place, without having either satisfied their curiosity, or quieted their fears. Everything, however, was still, and the light did not reappear. Madame concealed her apprehensions, and the family retired to rest.

This circumstance dwelt on the mind of Madame de Menon, and it was some time before she ventured again to spend an evening in the pavilion. After several months passed, without further disturbance or discovery, another occurrence renewed the alarm. Julia had one night remained in her closet later than usual. A favorite book had engaged her attention beyond the hour of customary repose, and every inhabitant of the castle, except herself, had long been lost in sleep. She was roused from her forgetfulness, by the sound of the castle clock, which struck one. Surprised at the lateness of the hour, she rose in haste, and was moving to her chamber, when the beauty of the night attracted her to the window. She opened it; and observing a fine effect of moonlight upon the dark woods, leaned forwards. In that situation she had not long remained, when she perceived a light faintly flash through a casement in the uninhabited part of the castle. A sudden tremor seized her, and she with difficulty supported herself. In a few moments it disappeared, and soon after a figure, bearing a lamp, proceeded from an obscure door belonging to the south tower; and stealing along the outside

of the castle walls, turned round the southern angle, by which it was afterwards hid from the view. Astonished and terrified at what she had seen, she hurried to the apartment of Madame de Menon, and related the circumstance. The servants were immediately roused, and the alarm became general. Madame arose and descended into the north hall, where the domestics were already assembled. No one could be found of courage sufficient to enter into the courts; and the orders of madame were disregarded, when opposed to the effects of superstitious terror. She perceived that Vincent was absent, but as she was ordering him to be called, he entered the hall. Surprised to find the family thus assembled, he was told the occasion. He immediately ordered a party of the servants to attend him round the castle walls; and with some reluctance, and more fear, they obeyed him. They all returned to the hall, without having witnessed any extraordinary appearance; but though their fears were not confirmed, they were by no means dissipated. The appearance of a light in a part of the castle which had for several years been shut up, and to which time and circumstance had given an air of singular desolation, might reasonably be supposed to excite a strong degree of surprise and terror. In the minds of the vulgar, any species of the wonderful is received with avidity; and the servants did not hesitate in believing the southern division of the castle to be inhabited by a supernatural power. Too much agitated to sleep, they agreed to watch for the remainder of the night. For this purpose they arranged themselves in the east gallery, where they had a view of the south tower from which the light had issued. The night, however, passed without any further disturbance; and the morning dawn, which they beheld with inexpressible pleasure, dissipated for a while the glooms of apprehension. But the return of evening renewed the general fear, and for several successive nights the domestics watched the southern tower. Although nothing remarkable was seen, a report was soon raised, and believed, that the southern side of the castle was haunted. Madame de Menon, whose mind was superior to the effects of superstition, was yet disturbed and perplexed, and she determined, if the light reappeared, to inform the marquis of the circumstance, and request the keys of those apartments.

The marquis, immersed in the dissipations of Naples, seldom remembered the castle, or its inhabitants. His son, who had been educated under his immediate care, was the sole object of his pride, as the marchioness was that of his affection. He loved her with romantic fondness, which she repaid with seeming tenderness, and secret perfidy. She allowed herself a free indulgence in the most licentious pleasures, yet conducted herself with an art so exquisite as to elude discovery, and even suspicion. In her amours she was equally inconstant as ardent, till the young Count Hippolitus de Vereza attracted her attention. The natural fickleness of her disposition seemed then to cease, and upon him she centered all her desires.

The count Vereza lost his father in early childhood. He was now of age, and had just entered upon the possession of his estates. His person was graceful, yet manly; his mind accomplished, and his manners elegant; his countenance expressed a happy union of spirit, dignity, and benevolence, which formed the principal traits of his character. He had a sublimity of thought, which taught him to despise the voluptuous vices of the Neapolitans, and led him to higher pursuits. He was the chosen and early friend of young Ferdinand, the son of the marquis, and was a frequent visitor in the family. When the marchioness first saw him, she treated him with great distinction, and at length made such advances, as neither the honor nor the inclinations of the count permitted him to notice. He conducted himself toward her with frigid indifference, which served only to inflame the passion it was meant to chill. The favors of the marchioness had hitherto been sought with avidity, and accepted with rapture; and the repulsive insensibility which she now experienced, roused all her pride, and called into action every refinement of coquetry.

It was about this period that Vincent was seized with a disorder which increased so rapidly, as in a short time to assume the most alarming appearance. Despairing of life, he desired that a messenger might be dispatched to inform the marquis of his situation, and to signify his earnest wish to see him before he died. The progress of his disorder defied every art of medicine, and his visible distress of mind seemed to accelerate his fate. Perceiving his last hour approaching, he requested to have

a confessor. The confessor was shut up with him a considerable time, and he had already received extreme unction, when Madame de Menon was summoned to his bedside. The hand of death was now upon him, cold damps hung upon his brows, and he, with difficulty, raised his heavy eyes to madame as she entered the apartment. He beckoned her towards him, and desiring that no person might be permitted to enter the room, was for a few moments silent. His mind appeared to labour under oppressive remembrances; he made several attempts to speak, but either resolution or strength failed him. At length, giving madame a look of unutterable anguish, 'Alas, madam,' said he, 'Heaven grants not the prayer of such a wretch as I am. I must expire long before the marquis can arrive. Since I shall see him no more, I would impart to you a secret which lies heavy at my heart, and which makes my last moments dreadful, as they are without hope.' 'Be comforted,' said madame, who was affected by the energy of his manner, 'we are taught to believe that forgiveness is never denied to sincere repentance.' 'You, madam, are ignorant of the enormity of my crime, and of the secret—the horrid secret which labours at my breast. My guilt is beyond remedy in this world, and I fear will be without pardon in the next; I therefore hope little from confession even to a priest. Yet some good it is still in my power to do; let me disclose to you that secret which is so mysteriously connected with the southern apartments of this castle.'—'What of them!' exclaimed madame, with impatience. Vincent returned no answer; exhausted by the effort of speaking, he had fainted. Madame rung for assistance, and by proper applications, his senses were recalled. He was, however, entirely speechless, and in this state he remained till he expired, which was about an hour after he had conversed with madame.

The perplexity and astonishment of madame, were by the late scene heightened to a very painful degree. She recollected the various particulars relative to the southern division of the castle, the many years it had stood uninhabited—the silence which had been observed concerning it—the appearance of the light and the figure—the fruitless search for the keys, and the reports so generally believed; and thus remembrance presented her with a combination of circumstances, which served only to increase her wonder, and heighten her curiosity. A veil of mystery enveloped that part of the castle, which it now seemed impossible should ever be penetrated, since the only person who could have removed it, was no more.

The marquis arrived on the day after that on which Vincent had expired. He came attended by servants only, and alighted at the gates of the castle with an air of impatience, and a countenance expressive of strong emotion. Madame, with the young ladies, received him in the hall. He hastily saluted his daughters, and passed on to the oak parlour, desiring madame to follow him. She obeyed, and the marquis enquired with great agitation after Vincent. When told of his death, he paced the room with hurried steps, and was for some time silent. At length seating himself, and surveying madame with a scrutinizing eye, he asked some questions concerning the particulars of Vincent's death. She mentioned his earnest desire to see the marquis, and repeated his last words. The marquis remained silent, and madame proceeded to mention those circumstances relative to the southern division of the castle, which she thought it of so much importance to discover. He treated the affair very lightly, laughed at her conjectures, represented the appearances she described as the illusions of a weak and timid mind, and broke up the conversation, by going to visit the chamber of Vincent, in which he remained a considerable time.

On the following day Emilia and Julia dined with the marquis. He was gloomy and silent; their efforts to amuse him seemed to excite displeasure rather than kindness; and when the repast was concluded, he withdrew to his own apartment, leaving his daughters in a state of sorrow and surprise.

Vincent was to be interred, according to his own desire, in the church belonging to the convent of St Nicholas. One of the servants, after receiving some necessary orders concerning the funeral, ventured to inform the marquis of the appearance of the lights in the south tower. He mentioned the superstitious reports that prevailed amongst the household, and complained that the servants would not cross the courts after it was dark. 'And who is he that has commissioned you with this story?' said the marquis, in a tone of displeasure; 'are the weak and ridiculous fancies of women and servants

to be obtruded upon my notice? Away—appear no more before me, till you have learned to speak what it is proper for me to hear.' Robert withdrew abashed, and it was some time before any person ventured to renew the subject with the marquis.

The majority of young Ferdinand now drew near, and the marquis determined to celebrate the occasion with festive magnificence at the castle of Mazzini. He, therefore, summoned the marchioness and his son from Naples, and very splendid preparations were ordered to be made. Emilia and Julia dreaded the arrival of the marchioness, whose influence they had long been sensible of, and from whose presence they anticipated a painful restraint. Beneath the gentle guidance of Madame de Menon, their hours had passed in happy tranquillity, for they were ignorant alike of the sorrows and the pleasures of the world. Those did not oppress, and these did not inflame them. Engaged in the pursuits of knowledge, and in the attainment of elegant accomplishments, their moments flew lightly away, and the flight of time was marked only by improvement. In madame was united the tenderness of the mother, with the sympathy of a friend; and they loved her with a warm and inviolable affection.

The purposed visit of their brother, whom they had not seen for several years, gave them great pleasure. Although their minds retained no very distinct remembrance of him, they looked forward with eager and delightful expectation to his virtues and his talents; and hoped to find in his company, a consolation for the uneasiness which the presence of the marchioness would excite. Neither did Julia contemplate with indifference the approaching festival. A new scene was now opening to her, which her young imagination painted in the warm and glowing colours of delight. The near approach of pleasure frequently awakens the heart to emotions, which would fail to be excited by a more remote and abstracted observance. Julia, who, in the distance, had considered the splendid gaieties of life with tranquillity, now lingered with impatient hope through the moments which withheld her from their enjoyments. Emilia, whose feelings were less lively, and whose imagination was less powerful, beheld the approaching festival with calm consideration, and almost regretted the interruption of those tranquil pleasures, which she knew to be more congenial with her powers and disposition.

In a few days the marchioness arrived at the castle. She was followed by a numerous retinue, and accompanied by Ferdinand, and several of the Italian noblesse, whom pleasure attracted to her train. Her entrance was proclaimed by the sound of music, and those gates which had long rusted on their hinges, were thrown open to receive her. The courts and halls, whose aspect so lately expressed only gloom and desolation, now shone with sudden splendour, and echoed the sounds of gaiety and gladness. Julia surveyed the scene from an obscure window; and as the triumphal strains filled the air, her breast throbbed; her heart beat quick with joy, and she lost her apprehensions from the marchioness in a sort of wild delight hitherto unknown to her. The arrival of the marchioness seemed indeed the signal of universal and unlimited pleasure. When the marquis came out to receive her, the gloom that lately clouded his countenance, broke away in smiles of welcome, which the whole company appeared to consider as invitations to joy.

The tranquil heart of Emilia was not proof against a scene so alluring, and she sighed at the prospect, yet scarcely knew why. Julia pointed out to her sister, the graceful figure of a young man who followed the marchioness, and she expressed her wishes that he might be her brother. From the contemplation of the scene before them, they were summoned to meet the marchioness. Julia trembled with apprehension, and for a few moments wished the castle was in its former state. As they advanced through the saloon, in which they were presented, Julia was covered with blushes; but Emilia, tho' equally timid, preserved her graceful dignity. The marchioness received them with a mingled smile of condescension and politeness, and immediately the whole attention of the company was attracted by their elegance and beauty. The eager eyes of Julia sought in vain to discover her brother, of whose features she had no recollection in those of any of the persons then present. At length her father presented him, and she perceived, with a sigh of regret, that he was not the youth she had observed from the window. He advanced with a very engaging air, and she met him with an unfeigned welcome. His figure was tall and majestic; he had a very noble and spirited carriage; and

his countenance expressed at once sweetness and dignity. Supper was served in the east hall, and the tables were spread with a profusion of delicacies. A band of music played during the repast, and the evening concluded with a concert in the saloon.

CHAPTER II

The day of the festival, so long and so impatiently looked for by Julia, was now arrived. All the neighbouring nobility were invited, and the gates of the castle were thrown open for a general rejoicing. A magnificent entertainment, consisting of the most luxurious and expensive dishes, was served in the halls. Soft music floated along the vaulted roofs, the walls were hung with decorations, and it seemed as if the hand of a magician had suddenly metamorphosed this once gloomy fabric into the palace of a fairy. The marquis, notwithstanding the gaiety of the scene, frequently appeared abstracted from its enjoyments, and in spite of all his efforts at cheerfulness, the melancholy of his heart was visible in his countenance.

In the evening there was a grand ball: the marchioness, who was still distinguished for her beauty, and for the winning elegance of her manners, appeared in the most splendid attire. Her hair was ornamented with a profusion of jewels, but was so disposed as to give an air rather of voluptuousness than of grace, to her figure. Although conscious of her charms, she beheld the beauty of Emilia and Julia with a jealous eye, and was compelled secretly to acknowledge, that the simple elegance with which they were adorned, was more enchanting than all the studied artifice of splendid decoration. They were dressed alike in light Sicilian habits, and the beautiful luxuriance of their flowing hair was restrained only by bandellets of pearl. The ball was opened by Ferdinand and the lady Matilda Constanza. Emilia danced with the young Marquis della Fazelli, and acquitted herself with the ease and dignity so natural to her. Julia experienced a various emotion of pleasure and fear when the Count de Vereza, in whom she recollected the cavalier she had observed from the window, led her forth. The grace of her step, and the elegant symmetry of her figure, raised in the assembly a gentle murmur of applause, and the soft blush which now stole over her cheek, gave an additional charm to her appearance. But when the music changed, and she danced to the soft Sicilian measure, the airy grace of her movement, and the unaffected tenderness of her air, sunk attention into silence, which continued for some time after the dance had ceased. The marchioness observed the general admiration with seeming pleasure, and secret uneasiness. She had suffered a very painful solicitude, when the Count de Vereza selected her for his partner in the dance, and she pursued him through the evening with an eye of jealous scrutiny. Her bosom, which before glowed only with love, was now torn by the agitation of other passions more violent and destructive. Her thoughts were restless, her mind wandered from the scene before her, and it required all her address to preserve an apparent ease. She saw, or fancied she saw, an impassioned air in the count, when he addressed himself to Julia, that corroded her heart with jealous fury.

At twelve the gates of the castle were thrown open, and the company quitted it for the woods, which were splendidly illuminated. Arcades of light lined the long vistas, which were terminated by pyramids of lamps that presented to the eye one bright column of flame. At irregular distances buildings were erected, hung with variegated lamps, disposed in the gayest and most fantastic forms. Collations were spread under the trees; and music, touched by unseen hands, breathed around. The musicians were placed in the most obscure and embowered spots, so as to elude the eye and strike the imagination. The scene appeared enchanting. Nothing met the eye but beauty and romantic splendour; the ear received no sounds but those of mirth and melody. The younger part of the company formed themselves into groups, which at intervals glanced through the woods, and were again unseen. Julia seemed the magic queen of the place. Her heart dilated with pleasure, and diffused over her features an expression of pure and complacent delight. A generous, frank, and exalted sentiment sparkled in her eyes, and animated her manner. Her bosom glowed with benevolent affections; and she seemed anxious to impart to all around her, a happiness as unmixed as that she experienced. Wherever she moved, admiration followed her steps. Ferdinand was as gay as the scene around him. Emilia was pleased; and the marquis seemed to have left his melancholy in the castle. The marchioness alone

was wretched. She supped with a select party, in a pavilion on the sea-shore, which was fitted up with peculiar elegance. It was hung with white silk, drawn up in festoons, and richly fringed with gold. The sofas were of the same materials, and alternate wreaths of lamps and of roses entwined the columns. A row of small lamps placed about the cornice, formed an edge of light round the roof which, with the other numerous lights, was reflected in a blaze of splendour from the large mirrors that adorned the room. The Count Muriani was of the party;—he complimented the marchioness on the beauty of her daughters; and after lamenting with gaiety the captives which their charms would enthral, he mentioned the Count de Vereza. 'He is certainly of all others the man most deserving the lady Julia. As they danced, I thought they exhibited a perfect model of the beauty of either sex; and if I mistake not, they are inspired with a mutual admiration.' The marchioness, endeavouring to conceal her uneasiness, said, 'Yes, my lord, I allow the count all the merit you adjudge him, but from the little I have seen of his disposition, he is too volatile for a serious attachment.' At that instant the count entered the pavilion: 'Ah,' said Muriani, laughingly, 'you was the subject of our conversation, and seem to be come in good time to receive the honors allotted you. I was interceding with the marchioness for her interest in your favor, with the lady Julia; but she absolutely refuses it; and though she allows you merit, alleges, that you are by nature fickle and inconstant. What say you—would not the beauty of lady Julia bind your unsteady heart?'

'I know not how I have deserved that character of the marchioness,' said the count with a smile, 'but that heart must be either fickle or insensible in an uncommon degree, which can boast of freedom in the presence of lady Julia.' The marchioness, mortified by the whole conversation, now felt the full force of Vereza's reply, which she imagined he pointed with particular emphasis.

The entertainment concluded with a grand firework, which was exhibited on the margin of the sea, and the company did not part till the dawn of morning. Julia retired from the scene with regret. She was enchanted with the new world that was now exhibited to her, and she was not cool enough to distinguish the vivid glow of imagination from the colours of real bliss. The pleasure she now felt she believed would always be renewed, and in an equal degree, by the objects which first excited it. The weakness of humanity is never willingly perceived by young minds. It is painful to know, that we are operated upon by objects whose impressions are variable as they are indefinable—and that what yesterday affected us strongly, is to-day but imperfectly felt, and to-morrow perhaps shall be disregarded. When at length this unwelcome truth is received into the mind, we at first reject, with disgust, every appearance of good, we disdain to partake of a happiness which we cannot always command, and we not unfrequently sink into a temporary despair. Wisdom or accident, at length, recal us from our error, and offers to us some object capable of producing a pleasing, yet lasting effect, which effect, therefore, we call happiness. Happiness has this essential difference from what is commonly called pleasure, that virtue forms its basis, and virtue being the offspring of reason, may be expected to produce uniformity of effect.

The passions which had hitherto lain concealed in Julia's heart, touched by circumstance, dilated to its power, and afforded her a slight experience of the pain and delight which flow from their influence. The beauty and accomplishments of Vereza raised in her a new and various emotion, which reflection made her fear to encourage, but which was too pleasing to be wholly resisted. Tremblingly alive to a sense of delight, and unchilled by disappointment, the young heart welcomes every feeling, not simply painful, with a romantic expectation that it will expand into bliss.

Julia sought with eager anxiety to discover the sentiments of Vereza towards her; she revolved each circumstance of the day, but they afforded her little satisfaction; they reflected only a glimmering and uncertain light, which instead of guiding, served only to perplex her. Now she remembered some instance of particular attention, and then some mark of apparent indifference. She compared his conduct with that of the other young noblesse; and thought each appeared equally desirous of the favor of every lady present. All the ladies, however, appeared to her to court the admiration of Vereza, and she trembled lest he should be too sensible of the distinction. She drew from these reflections no

positive inference; and though distrust rendered pain the predominate sensation, it was so exquisitely interwoven with delight, that she could not wish it exchanged for her former ease. Thoughtful and restless, sleep fled from her eyes, and she longed with impatience for the morning, which should again present Vereza, and enable her to pursue the enquiry. She rose early, and adorned herself with unusual care. In her favorite closet she awaited the hour of breakfast, and endeavoured to read, but her thoughts wandered from the subject. Her lute and favorite airs lost half their power to please; the day seemed to stand still—she became melancholy, and thought the breakfast-hour would never arrive. At length the clock struck the signal, the sound vibrated on every nerve, and trembling she quitted the closet for her sister's apartment. Love taught her disguise. Till then Emilia had shared all her thoughts; they now descended to the breakfast-room in silence, and Julia almost feared to meet her eye. In the breakfast-room they were alone. Julia found it impossible to support a conversation with Emilia, whose observations interrupting the course of her thoughts, became uninteresting and tiresome. She was therefore about to retire to her closet, when the marquis entered. His air was haughty, and his look severe. He coldly saluted his daughters, and they had scarcely time to reply to his general enquiries, when the marchioness entered, and the company soon after assembled. Julia, who had awaited with so painful an impatience for the moment which should present Vereza to her sight, now sighed that it was arrived. She scarcely dared to lift her timid eyes from the ground, and when by accident they met his, a soft tremour seized her; and apprehension lest he should discover her sentiments, served only to render her confusion conspicuous. At length, a glance from the marchioness recalled her bewildered thoughts; and other fears superseding those of love, her mind, by degrees, recovered its dignity. She could distinguish in the behaviour of Vereza no symptoms of particular admiration, and she resolved to conduct herself towards him with the most scrupulous care.

This day, like the preceding one, was devoted to joy. In the evening there was a concert, which was chiefly performed by the nobility. Ferdinand played the violoncello, Vereza the German flute, and Julia the *piana-forte*, which she touched with a delicacy and execution that engaged every auditor. The confusion of Julia may be easily imagined, when Ferdinand, selecting a beautiful duet, desired Vereza would accompany his sister. The pride of conscious excellence, however, quickly overcame her timidity, and enabled her to exert all her powers. The air was simple and pathetic, and she gave it those charms of expression so peculiarly her own. She struck the chords of her *piana-forte* in beautiful accompaniment, and towards the close of the second stanza, her voice resting on one note, swelled into a tone so exquisite, and from thence descended to a few simple notes, which she touched with such impassioned tenderness that every eye wept to the sounds. The breath of the flute trembled, and Hippolitus entranced, forgot to play. A pause of silence ensued at the conclusion of the piece, and continued till a general sigh seemed to awaken the audience from their enchantment. Amid the general applause, Hippolitus was silent. Julia observed his behaviour, and gently raising her eyes to his, there read the sentiments which she had inspired. An exquisite emotion thrilled her heart, and she experienced one of those rare moments which illuminate life with a ray of bliss, by which the darkness of its general shade is contrasted. Care, doubt, every disagreeable sensation vanished, and for the remainder of the evening she was conscious only of delight. A timid respect marked the manner of Hippolitus, more flattering to Julia than the most ardent professions. The evening concluded with a ball, and Julia was again the partner of the count.

When the ball broke up, she retired to her apartment, but not to sleep. Joy is as restless as anxiety or sorrow. She seemed to have entered upon a new state of existence;—those fine springs of affection which had hitherto lain concealed, were now touched, and yielded to her a happiness more exalted than any her imagination had ever painted. She reflected on the tranquillity of her past life, and comparing it with the emotions of the present hour, exulted in the difference. All her former pleasures now appeared insipid; she wondered that they ever had power to affect her, and that she had endured with content the dull uniformity to which she had been condemned. It was now only that she appeared to live. Absorbed in the single idea of being beloved, her imagination soared into

the regions of romantic bliss, and bore her high above the possibility of evil. Since she was beloved by Hippolitus, she could only be happy.

From this state of entranced delight, she was awakened by the sound of music immediately under her window. It was a lute touched by a masterly hand. After a wild and melancholy symphony, a voice of more than magic expression swelled into an air so pathetic and tender, that it seemed to breathe the very soul of love. The chords of the lute were struck in low and sweet accompaniment. Julia listened, and distinguished the following words;

SONNET

Still is the night-breeze!—not a lonely sound
Steals through the silence of this dreary hour;
O'er these high battlements Sleep reigns profound,
And sheds on all, his sweet oblivious power.
On all but me—I vainly ask his dews
To steep in short forgetfulness my cares.
Th' affrighted god still flies when Love pursues,
Still—still denies the wretched lover's prayers.

An interval of silence followed, and the air was repeated; after which the music was heard no more. If before Julia believed that she was loved by Hippolitus, she was now confirmed in the sweet reality. But sleep at length fell upon her senses, and the airy forms of ideal bliss no longer fled before her imagination. Morning came, and she arose light and refreshed. How different were her present sensations from those of the preceding day. Her anxiety had now evaporated in joy, and she experienced that airy dance of spirits which accumulates delight from every object; and with a power like the touch of enchantment, can transform a gloomy desert into a smiling Eden. She flew to the breakfast-room, scarcely conscious of motion; but, as she entered it, a soft confusion overcame her; she blushed, and almost feared to meet the eyes of Vereza. She was presently relieved, however, for the Count was not there. The company assembled—Julia watched the entrance of every person with painful anxiety, but he for whom she looked did not appear. Surprised and uneasy, she fixed her eyes on the door, and whenever it opened, her heart beat with an expectation which was as often checked by disappointment. In spite of all her efforts, her vivacity sunk into languor, and she then perceived that love may produce other sensations than those of delight. She found it possible to be unhappy, though loved by Hippolitus; and acknowledged with a sigh of regret, which was yet new to her, how tremblingly her peace depended upon him. He neither appeared nor was mentioned at breakfast; but though delicacy prevented her enquiring after him, conversation soon became irksome to her, and she retired to the apartment of Madame de Menon. There she employed herself in painting, and endeavoured to beguile the time till the hour of dinner, when she hoped to see Hippolitus. Madame was, as usual, friendly and cheerful, but she perceived a reserve in the conduct of Julia, and penetrated without difficulty into its cause. She was, however, ignorant of the object of her pupil's admiration. The hour so eagerly desired by Julia at length arrived, and with a palpitating heart she entered the hall. The Count was not there, and in the course of conversation, she learned that he had that morning sailed for Naples. The scene which so lately appeared enchanting to her eyes, now changed its hue; and in the midst of society, and surrounded by gaiety, she was solitary and dejected. She accused herself of having suffered her wishes to mislead her judgment; and the present conduct of Hippolitus convinced her, that she had mistaken admiration for a sentiment more tender. She believed, too, that the musician who had addressed her in his sonnet, was not the Count; and thus at once was dissolved all the ideal fabric of her happiness. How short a period often reverses the character of our sentiments,

rendering that which yesterday we despised, to-day desirable. The tranquil state which she had so lately delighted to quit, she now reflected upon with regret. She had, however, the consolation of believing that her sentiments towards the Count were unknown, and the sweet consciousness that her conduct had been governed by a nice sense of propriety.

The public rejoicings at the castle closed with the week; but the gay spirit of the marchioness forbade a return to tranquillity; and she substituted diversions more private, but in splendour scarcely inferior to the preceding ones. She had observed the behaviour of Hippolitus on the night of the concert with chagrin, and his departure with sorrow; yet, disdaining to perpetuate misfortune by reflection, she sought to lose the sense of disappointment in the hurry of dissipation. But her efforts to erase him from her remembrance were ineffectual. Unaccustomed to oppose the bent of her inclinations, they now maintained unbounded sway; and she found too late, that in order to have a due command of our passions, it is necessary to subject them to early obedience. Passion, in its undue influence, produces weakness as well as injustice. The pain which now recoiled upon her heart from disappointment, she had not strength of mind to endure, and she sought relief from its pressure in afflicting the innocent. Julia, whose beauty she imagined had captivated the count, and confirmed him in indifference towards herself, she incessantly tormented by the exercise of those various and splenetic little arts which elude the eye of the common observer, and are only to be known by those who have felt them. Arts, which individually are inconsiderable, but in the aggregate amount to a cruel and decisive effect.

From Julia's mind the idea of happiness was now faded. Pleasure had withdrawn her beam from the prospect, and the objects no longer illumined by her ray, became dark and colourless. As often as her situation would permit, she withdrew from society, and sought the freedom of solitude, where she could indulge in melancholy thoughts, and give a loose to that despair which is so apt to follow the disappointment of our first hopes.

Week after week elapsed, yet no mention was made of returning to Naples. The marquis at length declared it his intention to spend the remainder of the summer in the castle. To this determination the marchioness submitted with decent resignation, for she was here surrounded by a croud of flatterers, and her invention supplied her with continual diversions: that gaiety which rendered Naples so dear to her, glittered in the woods of Mazzini, and resounded through the castle.

The apartments of Madame de Menon were spacious and noble. The windows opened upon the sea, and commanded a view of the straits of Messina, bounded on one side by the beautiful shores of the isle of Sicily, and on the other by the high mountains of Calabria. The straits, filled with vessels whose gay streamers glittered to the sun-beam, presented to the eye an ever-moving scene. The principal room opened upon a gallery that overhung the grand terrace of the castle, and it commanded a prospect which for beauty and extent has seldom been equalled. These were formerly considered the chief apartments of the castle; and when the Marquis quitted them for Naples, were allotted for the residence of Madame de Menon, and her young charge. The marchioness, struck with the prospect which the windows afforded, and with the pleasantness of the gallery, determined to restore the rooms to their former splendour. She signified this intention to madame, for whom other apartments were provided. The chambers of Emilia and Julia forming part of the suite, they were also claimed by the marchioness, who left Julia only her favorite closet. The rooms to which they removed were spacious, but gloomy; they had been for some years uninhabited; and though preparations had been made for the reception of their new inhabitants, an air of desolation reigned within them that inspired melancholy sensations. Julia observed that her chamber, which opened beyond madame's, formed a part of the southern building, with which, however, there appeared no means of communication. The late mysterious circumstances relating to this part of the fabric, now arose to her imagination, and conjured up a terror which reason could not subdue. She told her emotions to madame, who, with more prudence than sincerity, laughed at her fears. The behaviour of the marquis, the dying words of

Vincent, together with the preceding circumstances of alarm, had sunk deep in the mind of madame, but she saw the necessity of confining to her own breast doubts which time only could resolve.

Julia endeavoured to reconcile herself to the change, and a circumstance soon occurred which obliterated her present sensations, and excited others far more interesting. One day that she was arranging some papers in the small drawers of a cabinet that stood in her apartment, she found a picture which fixed all her attention. It was a miniature of a lady, whose countenance was touched with sorrow, and expressed an air of dignified resignation. The mournful sweetness of her eyes, raised towards Heaven with a look of supplication, and the melancholy languor that shaded her features, so deeply affected Julia, that her eyes were filled with involuntary tears. She sighed and wept, still gazing on the picture, which seemed to engage her by a kind of fascination. She almost fancied that the portrait breathed, and that the eyes were fixed on hers with a look of penetrating softness. Full of the emotions which the miniature had excited, she presented it to madame, whose mingled sorrow and surprise increased her curiosity. But what were the various sensations which pressed upon her heart, on learning that she had wept over the resemblance of her mother! Deprived of a mother's tenderness before she was sensible of its value, it was now only that she mourned the event which lamentation could not recall. Emilia, with an emotion as exquisite, mingled her tears with those of her sister. With eager impatience they pressed madame to disclose the cause of that sorrow which so emphatically marked the features of their mother.

'Alas! my dear children,' said madame, deeply sighing, 'you engage me in a task too severe, not only for your peace, but for mine; since in giving you the information you require, I must retrace scenes of my own life, which I wish for ever obliterated. It would, however, be both cruel and unjust to withhold an explanation so nearly interesting to you, and I will sacrifice my own ease to your wishes.

'Louisa de Bernini, your mother, was, as you well know, the only daughter of the Count de Bernini. Of the misfortunes of your family, I believe you are yet ignorant. The chief estates of the count were situated in the *Val di Demona*, a valley deriving its name from its vicinity to Mount Aetna, which vulgar tradition has peopled with devils. In one of those dreadful eruptions of Aetna, which deluged this valley with a flood of fire, a great part of your grandfather's domains in that quarter were laid waste. The count was at that time with a part of his family at Messina, but the countess and her son, who were in the country, were destroyed. The remaining property of the count was proportionably inconsiderable, and the loss of his wife and son deeply affected him. He retired with Louisa, his only surviving child, who was then near fifteen, to a small estate near Cattania. There was some degree of relationship between your grandfather and myself; and your mother was attached to me by the ties of sentiment, which, as we grew up, united us still more strongly than those of blood. Our pleasures and our tastes were the same; and a similarity of misfortunes might, perhaps, contribute to cement our early friendship. I, like herself, had lost a parent in the eruption of Aetna. My mother had died before I understood her value; but my father, whom I revered and tenderly loved, was destroyed by one of those terrible events; his lands were buried beneath the lava, and he left an only son and myself to mourn his fate, and encounter the evils of poverty. The count, who was our nearest surviving relation, generously took us home to his house, and declared that he considered us as his children. To amuse his leisure hours, he undertook to finish the education of my brother, who was then about seventeen, and whose rising genius promised to reward the labours of the count. Louisa and myself often shared the instruction of her father, and at those hours Orlando was generally of the party. The tranquil retirement of the count's situation, the rational employment of his time between his own studies, the education of those whom he called his children, and the conversation of a few select friends, anticipated the effect of time, and softened the asperities of his distress into a tender complacent melancholy. As for Louisa and myself, who were yet new in life, and whose spirits possessed the happy elasticity of youth, our minds gradually shifted from suffering to tranquillity, and from tranquillity to happiness. I have sometimes thought that when my brother has been reading to her a delightful passage, the countenance of Louisa discovered a tender interest, which seemed to

be excited rather by the reader than by the author. These days, which were surely the most enviable of our lives, now passed in serene enjoyments, and in continual gradations of improvement.

'The count designed my brother for the army, and the time now drew nigh when he was to join the Sicilian regiment, in which he had a commission. The absent thoughts, and dejected spirits of my cousin, now discovered to me the secret which had long been concealed even from herself; for it was not till Orlando was about to depart, that she perceived how dear he was to her peace. On the eve of his departure, the count lamented, with fatherly yet manly tenderness, the distance which was soon to separate us. "But we shall meet again," said he, "when the honors of war shall have rewarded the bravery of my son." Louisa grew pale, a half suppressed sigh escaped her, and, to conceal her emotion, she turned to her harpsichord.

'My brother had a favorite dog, which, before he set off, he presented to Louisa, and committing it to her care, begged she would be kind to it, and sometimes remember its master. He checked his rising emotion, but as he turned from her, I perceived the tear that wetted his cheek. He departed, and with him the spirit of our happiness seemed to evaporate. The scenes which his presence had formerly enlivened, were now forlorn and melancholy, yet we loved to wander in what were once his favorite haunts. Louisa forbore to mention my brother even to me, but frequently, when she thought herself unobserved, she would steal to her harpsichord, and repeat the strain which she had played on the evening before his departure.

'We had the pleasure to hear from time to time that he was well: and though his own modesty threw a veil over his conduct, we could collect from other accounts that he had behaved with great bravery. At length the time of his return approached, and the enlivened spirits of Louisa declared the influence he retained in her heart. He returned, bearing public testimony of his valour in the honors which had been conferred upon him. He was received with universal joy; the count welcomed him with the pride and fondness of a father, and the villa became again the seat of happiness. His person and manners were much improved; the elegant beauty of the youth was now exchanged for the graceful dignity of manhood, and some knowledge of the world was added to that of the sciences. The joy which illumined his countenance when he met Louisa, spoke at once his admiration and his love; and the blush which her observation of it brought upon her cheek, would have discovered, even to an uninterested spectator, that this joy was mutual.

'Orlando brought with him a young Frenchman, a brother officer, who had rescued him from imminent danger in battle, and whom he introduced to the count as his preserver. The count received him with gratitude and distinction, and he was for a considerable time an inmate at the villa. His manners were singularly pleasing, and his understanding was cultivated and refined. He soon discovered a partiality for me, and he was indeed too pleasing to be seen with indifference. Gratitude for the valuable life he had preserved, was perhaps the groundwork of an esteem which soon increased into the most affectionate love. Our attachment grew stronger as our acquaintance increased; and at length the chevalier de Menon asked me of the count, who consulted my heart, and finding it favorable to the connection, proceeded to make the necessary enquiries concerning the family of the stranger. He obtained a satisfactory and pleasing account of it. The chevalier was the second son of a French gentleman of large estates in France, who had been some years deceased. He had left several sons; the family-estate, of course, devolved to the eldest, but to the two younger he had bequeathed considerable property. Our marriage was solemnized in a private manner at the villa, in the presence of the count, Louisa, and my brother. Soon after the nuptials, my husband and Orlando were remanded to their regiments. My brother's affections were now unalterably fixed upon Louisa, but a sentiment of delicacy and generosity still kept him silent. He thought, poor as he was, to solicit the hand of Louisa, would be to repay the kindness of the count with ingratitude. I have seen the inward struggles of his heart, and mine has bled for him. The count and Louisa so earnestly solicited me to remain at the villa during the campaign, that at length my husband consented. We

parted—O! let me forget that period!—Had I accompanied him, all might have been well; and the long, long years of affliction which followed had been spared me.'

The horn now sounded the signal for dinner, and interrupted the narrative of Madame. Her beauteous auditors wiped the tears from their eyes, and with extreme reluctance descended to the hall. The day was occupied with company and diversions, and it was not till late in the evening that they were suffered to retire. They hastened to madame immediately upon their being released; and too much interested for sleep, and too importunate to be repulsed, solicited the sequel of her story. She objected the lateness of the hour, but at length yielded to their entreaties. They drew their chairs close to hers; and every sense being absorbed in the single one of hearing, followed her through the course of her narrative.

'My brother again departed without disclosing his sentiments; the effort it cost him was evident, but his sense of honor surmounted every opposing consideration. Louisa again drooped, and pined in silent sorrow. I lamented equally for my friend and my brother; and have a thousand times accused that delicacy as false, which withheld them from the happiness they might so easily and so innocently have obtained. The behaviour of the count, at least to my eye, seemed to indicate the satisfaction which this union would have given him. It was about this period that the marquis Mazzini first saw and became enamoured of Louisa. His proposals were very flattering, but the count forbore to exert the undue authority of a father; and he ceased to press the connection, when he perceived that Louisa was really averse to it. Louisa was sensible of the generosity of his conduct, and she could scarcely reject the alliance without a sigh, which her gratitude paid to the kindness of her father.

'But an event now happened which dissolved at once our happiness, and all our air-drawn schemes for futurity. A dispute, which it seems originated in a trifle, but soon increased to a serious degree, arose between the *Chevalier de Menon* and my brother. It was decided by the sword, and my dear brother fell by the hand of my husband. I shall pass over this period of my life. It is too painful for recollection. The effect of this event upon Louisa was such as may be imagined. The world was now become indifferent to her, and as she had no prospect of happiness for herself, she was unwilling to withhold it from the father who had deserved so much of her. After some time, when the marquis renewed his addresses, she gave him her hand. The characters of the marquis and his lady were in their nature too opposite to form a happy union. Of this Louisa was very soon sensible; and though the mildness of her disposition made her tamely submit to the unfeeling authority of her husband, his behaviour sunk deep in her heart, and she pined in secret. It was impossible for her to avoid opposing the character of the marquis to that of him upon whom her affections had been so fondly and so justly fixed. The comparison increased her sufferings, which soon preyed upon her constitution, and very visibly affected her health. Her situation deeply afflicted the count, and united with the infirmities of age to shorten his life.

'Upon his death, I bade adieu to my cousin, and quitted Sicily for Italy, where the *Chevalier de Menon* had for some time expected me. Our meeting was very affecting. My resentment towards him was done away, when I observed his pale and altered countenance, and perceived the melancholy which preyed upon his heart. All the airy vivacity of his former manner was fled, and he was devoured by unavailing grief and remorse. He deplored with unceasing sorrow the friend he had murdered, and my presence seemed to open afresh the wounds which time had begun to close. His affliction, united with my own, was almost more than I could support, but I was doomed to suffer, and endure yet more. In a subsequent engagement my husband, weary of existence, rushed into the heat of battle, and there obtained an honorable death. In a paper which he left behind him, he said it was his intention to die in that battle; that he had long wished for death, and waited for an opportunity of obtaining it without staining his own character by the cowardice of suicide, or distressing me by an act of butchery. This event gave the finishing stroke to my afflictions;—yet let me retract;—another misfortune awaited me when I least expected one. The *Chevalier de Menon* died without a will, and his brothers refused to give up his estate, unless I could produce a witness of my marriage. I returned to Sicily, and, to my

inexpressible sorrow, found that your mother had died during my stay abroad, a prey, I fear, to grief. The priest who performed the ceremony of my marriage, having been threatened with punishment for some ecclesiastical offences, had secretly left the country; and thus was I deprived of those proofs which were necessary to authenticate my claims to the estates of my husband. His brothers, to whom I was an utter stranger, were either too prejudiced to believe, or believing, were too dishonorable to acknowledge the justice of my claims. I was therefore at once abandoned to sorrow and to poverty; a small legacy from the count de Bernini being all that now remained to me.

'When the marquis married Maria de Vellorno, which was about this period, he designed to quit Mazzini for Naples. His son was to accompany him, but it was his intention to leave you, who were both very young, to the care of some person qualified to superintend your education. My circumstances rendered the office acceptable, and my former friendship for your mother made the duty pleasing to me. The marquis was, I believe, glad to be spared the trouble of searching further for what he had hitherto found it difficult to obtain—a person whom inclination as well as duty would bind to his interest.'

Madame ceased to speak, and Emilia and Julia wept to the memory of the mother, whose misfortunes this story recorded. The sufferings of madame, together with her former friendship for the late marchioness, endeared her to her pupils, who from this period endeavoured by every kind and delicate attention to obliterate the traces of her sorrows. Madame was sensible of this tenderness, and it was productive in some degree of the effect desired. But a subject soon after occurred, which drew off their minds from the consideration of their mother's fate to a subject more wonderful and equally interesting.

One night that Emilia and Julia had been detained by company, in ceremonial restraint, later than usual, they were induced, by the easy conversation of madame, and by the pleasure which a return to liberty naturally produces, to defer the hour of repose till the night was far advanced. They were engaged in interesting discourse, when madame, who was then speaking, was interrupted by a low hollow sound, which arose from beneath the apartment, and seemed like the closing of a door. Chilled into a silence, they listened and distinctly heard it repeated. Deadly ideas crowded upon their imaginations, and inspired a terror which scarcely allowed them to breathe. The noise lasted only for a moment, and a profound silence soon ensued. Their feelings at length relaxed, and suffered them to move to Emilia's apartment, when again they heard the same sounds. Almost distracted with fear, they rushed into madame's apartment, where Emilia sunk upon the bed and fainted. It was a considerable time ere the efforts of madame recalled her to sensation. When they were again tranquil, she employed all her endeavours to compose the spirits of the young ladies, and dissuade them from alarming the castle. Involved in dark and fearful doubts, she yet commanded her feelings, and endeavoured to assume an appearance of composure. The late behaviour of the marquis had convinced her that he was nearly connected with the mystery which hung over this part of the edifice; and she dreaded to excite his resentment by a further mention of alarms, which were perhaps only ideal, and whose reality she had certainly no means of proving.

Influenced by these considerations, she endeavoured to prevail on Emilia and Julia to await in silence some confirmation of their surmises; but their terror made this a very difficult task. They acquiesced, however, so far with her wishes, as to agree to conceal the preceding circumstances from every person but their brother, without whose protecting presence they declared it utterly impossible to pass another night in the apartments. For the remainder of this night they resolved to watch. To beguile the tediousness of the time they endeavoured to converse, but the minds of Emilia and Julia were too much affected by the late occurrence to wander from the subject. They compared this with the foregoing circumstance of the figure and the light which had appeared; their imaginations kindled wild conjectures, and they submitted their opinions to madame, entreating her to inform them sincerely, whether she believed that disembodied spirits were ever permitted to visit this earth.

'My children,' said she, 'I will not attempt to persuade you that the existence of such spirits is impossible. Who shall say that any thing is impossible to God? We know that he has made us, who are embodied spirits; he, therefore, can make unembodied spirits. If we cannot understand how such spirits exist, we should consider the limited powers of our minds, and that we cannot understand many things which are indisputably true. No one yet knows why the magnetic needle points to the north; yet you, who have never seen a magnet, do not hesitate to believe that it has this tendency, because you have been well assured of it, both from books and in conversation. Since, therefore, we are sure that nothing is impossible to God, and that such beings *may* exist, though we cannot tell how, we ought to consider by what evidence their existence is supported. I do not say that spirits *have* appeared; but if several discreet unprejudiced persons were to assure me that they had seen one, I should not be proud or bold enough to reply—'it is impossible.' Let not, however, such considerations disturb your minds. I have said thus much, because I was unwilling to impose upon your understandings; it is now your part to exercise your reason, and preserve the unmoved confidence of virtue. Such spirits, if indeed they have ever been seen, can have appeared only by the express permission of God, and for some very singular purposes; be assured that there are no beings who act unseen by him; and that, therefore, there are none from whom innocence can ever suffer harm.'

No further sounds disturbed them for that time; and before the morning dawned, weariness insensibly overcame apprehension, and sunk them in repose.

When Ferdinand learned the circumstances relative to the southern side of the castle, his imagination seized with avidity each appearance of mystery, and inspired him with an irresistible desire to penetrate the secrets of his desolate part of the fabric. He very readily consented to watch with his sisters in Julia's apartment; but as his chamber was in a remote part of the castle, there would be some difficulty in passing unobserved to her's. It was agreed, however, that when all was hushed, he should make the attempt. Having thus resolved, Emilia and Julia waited the return of night with restless and fearful impatience.

At length the family retired to rest. The castle clock had struck one, and Julia began to fear that Ferdinand had been discovered, when a knocking was heard at the door of the outer chamber.

Her heart beat with apprehensions, which reason could not justify. Madame rose, and enquiring who was there, was answered by the voice of Ferdinand. The door was cheerfully opened. They drew their chairs round him, and endeavoured to pass the time in conversation; but fear and expectation attracted all their thoughts to one subject, and madame alone preserved her composure. The hour was now come when the sounds had been heard the preceding night, and every ear was given to attention. All, however, remained quiet, and the night passed without any new alarm.

The greater part of several succeeding nights were spent in watching, but no sounds disturbed their silence. Ferdinand, in whose mind the late circumstances had excited a degree of astonishment and curiosity superior to common obstacles, determined, if possible, to gain admittance to those recesses of the castle, which had for so many years been hid from human eye. This, however, was a design which he saw little probability of accomplishing, for the keys of that part of the edifice were in the possession of the marquis, of whose late conduct he judged too well to believe he would suffer the apartments to be explored. He racked his invention for the means of getting access to them, and at length recollected that Julia's chamber formed a part of these buildings, it occurred to him, that according to the mode of building in old times, there might formerly have been a communication between them. This consideration suggested to him the possibility of a concealed door in her apartment, and he determined to survey it on the following night with great care.

CHAPTER III

The castle was buried in sleep when Ferdinand again joined his sisters in madame's apartment. With anxious curiosity they followed him to the chamber. The room was hung with tapestry. Ferdinand carefully sounded the wall which communicated with the southern buildings. From one part of it a sound was returned, which convinced him there was something less solid than stone. He removed the tapestry, and behind it appeared, to his inexpressible satisfaction, a small door. With a hand trembling through eagerness, he undrew the bolts, and was rushing forward, when he perceived that a lock withheld his passage. The keys of madame and his sisters were applied in vain, and he was compelled to submit to disappointment at the very moment when he congratulated himself on success, for he had with him no means of forcing the door.

He stood gazing on the door, and inwardly lamenting, when a low hollow sound was heard from beneath. Emilia and Julia seized his arm; and almost sinking with apprehension, listened in profound silence. A footstep was distinctly heard, as if passing through the apartment below, after which all was still. Ferdinand, fired by this confirmation of the late report, rushed on to the door, and again tried to burst his way, but it resisted all the efforts of his strength. The ladies now rejoiced in that circumstance which they so lately lamented; for the sounds had renewed their terror, and though the night passed without further disturbance, their fears were very little abated.

Ferdinand, whose mind was wholly occupied with wonder, could with difficulty await the return of night. Emilia and Julia were scarcely less impatient. They counted the minutes as they passed; and when the family retired to rest, hastened with palpitating hearts to the apartment of madame. They were soon after joined by Ferdinand, who brought with him tools for cutting away the lock of the door. They paused a few moments in the chamber in fearful silence, but no sound disturbed the stillness of night. Ferdinand applied a knife to the door, and in a short time separated the lock. The door yielded, and disclosed a large and gloomy gallery. He took a light. Emilia and Julia, fearful of remaining in the chamber, resolved to accompany him, and each seizing an arm of madame, they followed in silence. The gallery was in many parts falling to decay, the ceiling was broke, and the window-shutters shattered, which, together with the dampness of the walls, gave the place an air of wild desolation.

They passed lightly on, for their steps ran in whispering echoes through the gallery, and often did Julia cast a fearful glance around.

The gallery terminated in a large old stair-case, which led to a hall below; on the left appeared several doors which seemed to lead to separate apartments. While they hesitated which course to pursue, a light flashed faintly up the stair-case, and in a moment after passed away; at the same time was heard the sound of a distant footstep. Ferdinand drew his sword and sprang forward; his companions, screaming with terror, ran back to madame's apartment.

Ferdinand descended a large vaulted hall; he crossed it towards a low arched door, which was left half open, and through which streamed a ray of light. The door opened upon a narrow winding passage; he entered, and the light retiring, was quickly lost in the windings of the place. Still he went on. The passage grew narrower, and the frequent fragments of loose stone made it now difficult to proceed. A low door closed the avenue, resembling that by which he had entered. He opened it, and discovered a square room, from whence rose a winding stair-case, which led up the south tower of the castle. Ferdinand paused to listen; the sound of steps was ceased, and all was profoundly silent. A door on the right attracted his notice; he tried to open it, but it was fastened. He concluded, therefore, that the person, if indeed a human being it was that bore the light he had seen, had passed up the tower. After a momentary hesitation, he determined to ascend the stair-case, but its ruinous condition made this an adventure of some difficulty. The steps were decayed and broken, and the looseness of the stones rendered a footing very insecure. Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, he was undismayed,

and began the ascent. He had not proceeded very far, when the stones of a step which his foot had just quitted, loosened by his weight, gave way; and dragging with them those adjoining, formed a chasm in the stair-case that terrified even Ferdinand, who was left tottering on the suspended half of the steps, in momentary expectation of falling to the bottom with the stone on which he rested. In the terror which this occasioned, he attempted to save himself by catching at a kind of beam which projected over the stairs, when the lamp dropped from his hand, and he was left in total darkness. Terror now usurped the place of every other interest, and he was utterly perplexed how to proceed. He feared to go on, lest the steps above, as infirm as those below, should yield to his weight;—to return was impracticable, for the darkness precluded the possibility of discovering a means. He determined, therefore, to remain in this situation till light should dawn through the narrow grates in the walls, and enable him to contrive some method of letting himself down to the ground.

He had remained here above an hour, when he suddenly heard a voice from below. It seemed to come from the passage leading to the tower, and perceptibly drew nearer. His agitation was now extreme, for he had no power of defending himself, and while he remained in this state of torturing expectation, a blaze of light burst upon the stair-case beneath him. In the succeeding moment he heard his own name sounded from below. His apprehensions instantly vanished, for he distinguished the voices of madame and his sisters.

They had awaited his return in all the horrors of apprehension, till at length all fear for themselves was lost in their concern for him; and they, who so lately had not dared to enter this part of the edifice, now undauntedly searched it in quest of Ferdinand. What were their emotions when they discovered his perilous situation!

The light now enabled him to take a more accurate survey of the place. He perceived that some few stones of the steps which had fallen still remained attached to the wall, but he feared to trust to their support only. He observed, however, that the wall itself was partly decayed, and consequently rugged with the corners of half-worn stones. On these small projections he contrived, with the assistance of the steps already mentioned, to suspend himself, and at length gained the unbroken part of the stairs in safety. It is difficult to determine which individual of the party rejoiced most at this escape. The morning now dawned, and Ferdinand desisted for the present from farther enquiry.

The interest which these mysterious circumstances excited in the mind of Julia, had withdrawn her attention from a subject more dangerous to its peace. The image of Vereza, notwithstanding, would frequently intrude upon her fancy; and, awakening the recollection of happy emotions, would call forth a sigh which all her efforts could not suppress. She loved to indulge the melancholy of her heart in the solitude of the woods. One evening she took her lute to a favorite spot on the seashore, and resigning herself to a pleasing sadness, touched some sweet and plaintive airs. The purple flush of evening was diffused over the heavens. The sun, involved in clouds of splendid and innumerable hues, was setting o'er the distant waters, whose clear bosom glowed with rich reflection. The beauty of the scene, the soothing murmur of the high trees, waved by the light air which overshadowed her, and the soft shelling of the waves that flowed gently in upon the shores, insensibly sunk her mind into a state of repose. She touched the chords of her lute in sweet and wild melody, and sung the following ode:

EVENING

Evening veil'd in dewy shades,
 Slowly sinks upon the main;
See th'empurpled glory fades,
 Beneath her sober, chasten'd reign.

Around her ear the pensive Hours,
In sweet illapses meet the sight,
Crown'd their brows with closing flow'rs
Rich with chrystal dews of night.

Her hands, the dusky hues arrange
O'er the fine tints of parting day;
Insensibly the colours change,
And languish into soft decay.

Wide o'er the waves her shadowy veil she draws.
As faint they die along the distant shores;
Through the still air I mark each solemn pause,
Each rising murmur which the wild wave pours.

A browner shadow spreads upon the air,
And o'er the scene a pensive grandeur throws;
The rocks—the woods a wilder beauty wear,
And the deep wave in softer music flows;

And now the distant view where vision fails,
Twilight and grey obscurity pervade;
Tint following tint each dark'ning object veils,
Till all the landscape sinks into the shade.

Oft from the airy steep of some lone hill,
While sleeps the scene beneath the purple glow:
And evening lives o'er all serene and still,
Wrapt let me view the magic world below!

And catch the dying gale that swells remote,
That steals the sweetness from the shepherd's flute:
The distant torrent's melancholy note
And the soft warblings of the lover's lute.

Still through the deep'ning gloom of bow'ry shades
To Fancy's eye fantastic forms appear;
Low whisp'ring echoes steal along the glades
And thrill the ear with wildly-pleasing fear.

Parent of shades!—of silence!—dewy airs!
Of solemn musing, and of vision wild!
To thee my soul her pensive tribute bears,
And hails thy gradual step, thy influence mild.

Having ceased to sing, her fingers wandered over the lute in melancholy symphony, and for some moments she remained lost in the sweet sensations which the music and the scenery had inspired. She was awakened from her reverie, by a sigh that stole from among the trees, and directing her eyes whence it came, beheld—Hippolitus! A thousand sweet and mingled emotions pressed upon

her heart, yet she scarcely dared to trust the evidence of sight. He advanced, and throwing himself at her feet: 'Suffer me,' said he, in a tremulous voice, 'to disclose to you the sentiments which you have inspired, and to offer you the effusions of a heart filled only with love and admiration.' 'Rise, my lord,' said Julia, moving from her seat with an air of dignity, 'that attitude is neither becoming you to use, or me to suffer. The evening is closing, and Ferdinand will be impatient to see you.'

'Never will I rise, madam,' replied the count, with an impassioned air, 'till'—He was interrupted by the marchioness, who at this moment entered the grove. On observing the position of the count she was retiring. 'Stay, madam,' said Julia, almost sinking under her confusion. 'By no means,' replied the marchioness, in a tone of irony, 'my presence would only interrupt a very agreeable scene. The count, I see, is willing to pay you his earliest respects.' Saying this she disappeared, leaving Julia distressed and offended, and the count provoked at the intrusion. He attempted to renew the subject, but Julia hastily followed the steps of the marchioness, and entered the castle.

The scene she had witnessed, raised in the marchioness a tumult of dreadful emotions. Love, hatred, and jealousy, raged by turns in her heart, and defied all power of controul. Subjected to their alternate violence, she experienced a misery more acute than any she had yet known. Her imagination, invigorated by opposition, heightened to her the graces of Hippolitus; her bosom glowed with more intense passion, and her brain was at length exasperated almost to madness.

In Julia this sudden and unexpected interview excited a mingled emotion of love and vexation, which did not soon subside. At length, however, the delightful consciousness of Vereza's love bore her high above every other sensation; again the scene more brightly glowed, and again her fancy overcame the possibility of evil.

During the evening a tender and timid respect distinguished the behaviour of the count towards Julia, who, contented with the certainty of being loved, resolved to conceal her sentiments till an explanation of his abrupt departure from Mazzini, and subsequent absence, should have dissipated the shadow of mystery which hung over this part of his conduct. She observed that the marchioness pursued her with steady and constant observation, and she carefully avoided affording the count an opportunity of renewing the subject of the preceding interview, which, whenever he approached her, seemed to tremble on his lips.

Night returned, and Ferdinand repaired to the chamber of Julia to pursue his enquiry. Here he had not long remained, when the strange and alarming sounds which had been heard on the preceding night were repeated. The circumstance that now sunk in terror the minds of Emilia and Julia, fired with new wonder that of Ferdinand, who seizing a light, darted through the discovered door, and almost instantly disappeared.

He descended into the same wild hall he had passed on the preceding night. He had scarcely reached the bottom of the stair-case, when a feeble light gleamed across the hall, and his eye caught the glimpse of a figure retiring through the low arched door which led to the south tower. He drew his sword and rushed on. A faint sound died away along the passage, the windings of which prevented his seeing the figure he pursued. Of this, indeed, he had obtained so slight a view, that he scarcely knew whether it bore the impression of a human form. The light quickly disappeared, and he heard the door that opened upon the tower suddenly close. He reached it, and forcing it open, sprang forward; but the place was dark and solitary, and there was no appearance of any person having passed along it. He looked up the tower, and the chasm which the stair-case exhibited, convinced him that no human being could have passed up. He stood silent and amazed; examining the place with an eye of strict enquiry, he perceived a door, which was partly concealed by hanging stairs, and which till now had escaped his notice. Hope invigorated curiosity, but his expectation was quickly disappointed, for this door also was fastened. He tried in vain to force it. He knocked, and a hollow sullen sound ran in echoes through the place, and died away at a distance. It was evident that beyond this door were chambers of considerable extent, but after long and various attempts to reach them, he was obliged to desist, and he quitted the tower as ignorant and more dissatisfied than he had entered it.

He returned to the hall, which he now for the first time deliberately surveyed. It was a spacious and desolate apartment, whose lofty roof rose into arches supported by pillars of black marble. The same substance inlaid the floor, and formed the stair-case. The windows were high and gothic. An air of proud sublimity, united with singular wildness, characterized the place, at the extremity of which arose several gothic arches, whose dark shade veiled in obscurity the extent beyond. On the left hand appeared two doors, each of which was fastened, and on the right the grand entrance from the courts. Ferdinand determined to explore the dark recess which terminated his view, and as he traversed the hall, his imagination, affected by the surrounding scene, often multiplied the echoes of his footsteps into uncertain sounds of strange and fearful import.

He reached the arches, and discovered beyond a kind of inner hall, of considerable extent, which was closed at the farther end by a pair of massy folding-doors, heavily ornamented with carving. They were fastened by a lock, and defied his utmost strength.

As he surveyed the place in silent wonder, a sullen groan arose from beneath the spot where he stood. His blood ran cold at the sound, but silence returning, and continuing unbroken, he attributed his alarm to the illusion of a fancy, which terror had impregnated. He made another effort to force the door, when a groan was repeated more hollow, and more dreadful than the first. At this moment all his courage forsook him; he quitted the door, and hastened to the stair-case, which he ascended almost breathless with terror.

He found Madame de Menon and his sisters awaiting his return in the most painful anxiety; and, thus disappointed in all his endeavours to penetrate the secret of these buildings, and fatigued with fruitless search, he resolved to suspend farther enquiry.

When he related the circumstances of his late adventure, the terror of Emilia and Julia was heightened to a degree that overcame every prudent consideration. Their apprehension of the marquis's displeasure was lost in a stronger feeling, and they resolved no longer to remain in apartments which offered only terrific images to their fancy. Madame de Menon almost equally alarmed, and more perplexed, by this combination of strange and unaccountable circumstances, ceased to oppose their design. It was resolved, therefore, that on the following day madame should acquaint the marchioness with such particulars of the late occurrence as their purpose made it necessary she should know, concealing their knowledge of the hidden door, and the incidents immediately dependant on it; and that madame should entreat a change of apartments.

Madame accordingly waited on the marchioness. The marchioness having listened to the account at first with surprise, and afterwards with indifference, condescended to reprove madame for encouraging superstitious belief in the minds of her young charge. She concluded with ridiculing as fanciful the circumstances related, and with refusing, on account of the numerous visitants at the castle, the request preferred to her.

It is true the castle was crowded with visitors; the former apartments of Madame de Menon were the only ones unoccupied, and these were in magnificent preparation for the pleasure of the marchioness, who was unaccustomed to sacrifice her own wishes to the comfort of those around her. She therefore treated lightly the subject, which, seriously attended to, would have endangered her new plan of delight.

But Emilia and Julia were too seriously terrified to obey the scruples of delicacy, or to be easily repulsed. They prevailed on Ferdinand to represent their situation to the marquis.

Meanwhile Hippolitus, who had passed the night in a state of sleepless anxiety, watched, with busy impatience, an opportunity of more fully disclosing to Julia the passion which glowed in his heart. The first moment in which he beheld her, had awakened in him an admiration which had since ripened into a sentiment more tender. He had been prevented formally declaring his passion by the circumstance which so suddenly called him to Naples. This was the dangerous illness of the Marquis de Lomelli, his near and much-valued relation. But it was a task too painful to depart in silence, and

he contrived to inform Julia of his sentiments in the air which she heard so sweetly sung beneath her window.

When Hippolitus reached Naples, the marquis was yet living, but expired a few days after his arrival, leaving the count heir to the small possessions which remained from the extravagance of their ancestors.

The business of adjusting his rights had till now detained him from Sicily, whither he came for the sole purpose of declaring his love. Here unexpected obstacles awaited him. The jealous vigilance of the marchioness conspired with the delicacy of Julia, to withhold from him the opportunity he so anxiously sought.

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