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Fig 27524 d. 23





THE DEVIL IN LOVE

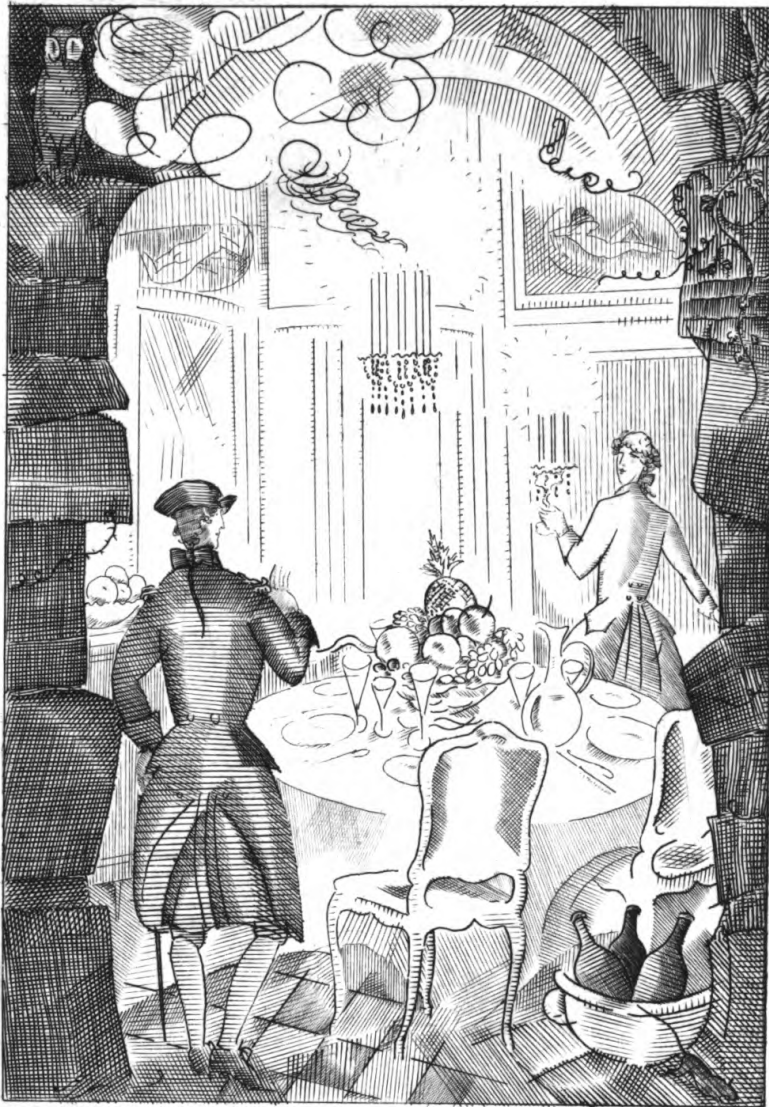
Of this book :

*75 copies
have been printed by Stanley Morison
on Van Gelder paper, with two sets of
the plates. These copies are signed by
M. Laboureur and numbered 1 to 75.*

*320 copies
on Abbey Mill paper numbered 76 to 395.*

No. 154





*Instantly I saw a page go out richly
Dressed in my livery....*

THE DEVIL IN LOVE

From the French of
JACQUES CAZOTTE

With
six engravings on copper by
J. E. LABOUREUR



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN, LTD
1925





PUBLISHER'S NOTE

JACQUES CAZOTTE *was born in Dijon in 1720. His literary work appears to have been little more than a hobby, since he passed most of the years of his life as a Civil Servant, eventually rising to a position of some importance in the Administration de la Marine in Martinique. On his return to Paris he found the Reign of Terror in progress and was soon imprisoned on charges in connection with incriminating documents found in the Tuileries. On the intervention of his daughter he was liberated, only to be rearrested a few days later, tried, and executed in September 1792.*

Le Diable Amoureux is the most famous of Cazotte's works and was published in 1772. An English translation by an unknown hand made its appearance in 1793 and forms the text of this reprint. A generation later another and inferior version was issued under the title of Biondetta or the Enamoured Spirit (1810) which the anonymous translator "dedicated without permission to M. G. Lewis, Esq." whose notorious novel The Monk was, it is alleged, shamelessly plagiarised from Le Diable Amoureux.

The illustrations in this volume are original line-engravings, that is to say, the artist has cut his own designs direct upon the copper plate with a graver. This is an innovation, in

spite of the fact that the process is the oldest method of engraving. But though line-engraving was constantly, and in fact almost exclusively, employed in the eighteenth century for the illustration of books, the engraver was not usually responsible for the designs; in most cases he simply engraved a painter's or a designer's originals. In the nineteenth century etching and particularly wood-engraving almost entirely superseded line-engraving, and later the photographic process superseded both. The novelty of M. Laboureur's illustrations to The Devil in Love lies in the fact that they revive a tradition long since abandoned.

LIST OF PLATES

FRONTISPIECE

- “Instantly I saw a page go out richly dressed in my livery....”
- “I saw her move across the room to my assistance....” *page 22*
- “I recognised some old acquaintances, and made
some new ones....” „ 36
- “Distracted at this event, I jumped on shore....” „ 48
- “I took refuge in a church, the door of which was
open....” „ 62
- “I perceived a black cloud ascending in the air....” „ 82

PREFACE

TO THE ENGLISH EDITION OF 1793

Permit the Editor to say a few words on the subject of this book. It is not, according to custom, a theft from another, but the mere dream of a night, written by the author in one day, for his own amusement; and not without some view to the edification of his contemporaries; for it is very moral. The style is rapid, and free from the witticisms of the times. No metaphysics—no science—and only a little zest of the impieties and extravagancies of modern philosophers—just enough not to offend the present taste, and that is all.

The author seems to think that a man, whose head is turned with love, deserves much pity. But that when a pretty woman is in love with *him*, caresses him, besieges him and determines to seduce him, it is all over with him—it is the Devil.

Many a Frenchman, without bragging of it, has made his invocations in grottos, and has found vile wretches ready to have said, “what would you have?” and upon the answer, a little animal of thirteen or fourteen has appeared, that they thought captivating, and led away to baths—fine clothes—

Preface

the fashions—the polish of masters of all sorts—wealth—contracts—fine houses—every thing flies before them. The animal becomes master, the master animal—and if you ask me, why is all this? I answer that the French are not Spaniards—that the Devil is very *malign*, and not always as ugly as they say he is.

THE DEVIL IN LOVE

At five and twenty I was a Captain of the Guards in the service of the King of Naples, and lived in gay society with my brother officers, that is, women, play, and wine divided our hours, as long as the purse lasted, and when that failed, we philosophized at our quarters.

One evening, after having exhausted ourselves in reasonings of all sorts, over a small pittance of Cyprus wine, and a few dried chestnuts, the discourse turned upon necromancy. One amongst us maintained that it was real, and its operations certain; four of the youngest asserted it was a mass of absurdity, a source of chicanery, which could only impose upon credulous people and children. The eldest of the party smoked his pipe with an *air d'indifférence*, without speaking a word. His *sans souci* and his absence surprised me, surrounded as he was by the tumult of discordant opinions, and prevented me also from taking any part in the discourse, which indeed was too vague to be interesting to me.

We were in the smokers' apartment; the night

The Devil in Love

being far advanced, all the company had taken leave but myself. The ancient captain, with the same degree of phlegm, continuing to smoke his pipe, I waited impatiently, with my elbows upon the table, for him to break silence, wishing to learn his opinion upon the subject which we had been discussing. At length my wish was gratified.

“Young man,” says he, “you have heard a great deal of noise; why did you not join in it?” “Because,” said I, “I had rather hold my tongue, than approve or disapprove of what I do not understand. I even do not know the meaning of the word necromancy.”

“It has a great many significations,” says he, “but that is not the point in question, it is the thing itself. Do you think there is a science that teaches us to transform metals, and to subject spirits to our obedience?”

“I know nothing of spirits, not even of my own, more than that I feel my existence; and as to metals, I know the value of a guinea at play, or at a tavern, etc., but think not about affirming or denying the essence of either one or the other, nor about the modifications and impressions of which they are susceptible.”

“I like your ignorance, my young comrade, it is

The Devil in Love

preferable to the fancied knowledge of your companions. If you are not informed, you are capable of being so: the candour of your nature, the frankness of your character, and the rectitude of your mind, please me. I know a little more than the generality of men: swear by your honour an inviolable secrecy, and that you will conduct yourself with prudence, and I will be your instructor."

"This offer, my dear Soberano, delights me: curiosity is my predominant inclination; yet I will honestly own it is very little raised by common points of information which are too bounded to gratify my thirst for knowledge; already has my fancy been roaming towards that exalted sphere into which you purpose to initiate me. But what is the first step in the science in which you are to instruct me; for, by what our companions advanced, it is the spirits themselves who are to teach us? Can we ally ourselves to them?"

"You have conjectured right, Alvare; we can comprehend nothing of ourselves, and as to the possibility of alliance with them, I will give you an undeniable proof." As he repeated these words he finished his pipe, and striking it three times, to shake out the ashes that remained at the bottom, he laid it upon the table close by me; then raising his voice,

The Devil in Love

“Calderon,” says he, “go and fill my pipe, light it, and bring it to me.”

He had scarcely given the order when the pipe disappeared, and before I could reason upon it, or ask who that Calderon was to whom he issued these commands, the pipe was returned lighted, and my friend resumed his occupation.

He continued it some time, less I believe to enjoy the tobacco, than my surprise. Then rising, he said, “I mount guard to-morrow, therefore must have some rest; go you also to bed, be discreet, and we will soon meet again.” I retired full of curiosity, and burning with impatience, about these supernatural objects which Soberano was to explain and enlarge upon.

I saw him the next day and the following ones. I had no other passion; I became his shadow. I asked him a thousand questions; he evaded some, and replied to others, in the style of an oracle. At length I pressed him upon the article of natural religion. We entered into some detail upon the subject, and his decisions agreed more with my desires than my principles: but as I was determined to adhere to the point I aimed at, I would not thwart him. “You then command spirits; I will have communication with them too.” “You are hasty, my companion,

The Devil in Love

you have not yet fulfilled any of the conditions under which you can enter into these sublime mysteries.”

“Does it require much time for that?” “Perhaps two years.” “Oh, then I abandon it: I should die with impatience in the interim: you cannot conceive the ardour you have raised in me. I am in agony to—”

“Young man, I thought you had more discretion; you make me tremble for us both. What! would you expose yourself to the danger of invoking spirits without any preparations for it?” “And what would happen to me if I did?” “I do not absolutely say anything would happen to you; they have no other power over us, than what we give them by our pusillanimity, for in reality we are born to command them.” “Then I will command them.”

“You talk intrepidly; but should you lose your recollection, and be disconcerted to a certain point.” —“Oh! if it depends only upon my courage, I defy them to shake that.”—“What! not if you saw the Devil?” “I would pull the ears of the great Devil of Hell.”

“Bravo! if you are so sure of yourself, you may run the risk. I’ll promise you my assistance—dine with me on Friday; you shall meet two of my friends, when your resolution shall be put to the test.”

The Devil in Love

It was only Tuesday—never was a rendezvous more eagerly wished for. At last the time came; I found with my friend two men, whose physiognomy did not prejudice me in their favour. At dinner, the conversation turned upon indifferent things: after which, a walk was proposed towards the ruins of Portici. Those beautiful remains of ancient grandeur, now broken, mouldered, and covered over with ivy, struck my mind with uncommon and solemn ideas:—“There,” I exclaimed, “we may observe the powers of time over the works of pride, and the industry of man.” Still advancing, we came into the midst of the ruins, passing on over rugged stones till we arrived at a narrow passage, which led to a part where not a ray of light penetrated. My old comrade was leading me by the arm; we both stopped, when one of them having lighted a torch, discovered a vault of about twenty-five feet square, in tolerable preservation, having four openings. We kept a profound silence. My friend, with the cane which served him in walking, traced a circle round him in the sand, and writing some characters, quitted it. “Go in, my hero,” said he, “and do not leave it without some good token.” “Explain yourself,” said I, “at what token should I leave it?” “When you have subjected all the spirits to your command; but

The Devil in Love

before that time, if you are seized by any panic that may occasion you to commit an error, you will be in the most extreme peril." He then gave me a form of invocation, short, forcible, and mixed with some words which I shall never forget. "Repeat," says he, "this conjuration with firmness, and call distinctly, three times, Beelzebub; but above all, remember what you promised to do." I recollected I had boasted I would pull his ears—"I will keep my word," said I, not being willing to shrink from it.

"We wish you good success," replied Soberano, "when you have done, you'll inform us. You are opposite the door through which you may rejoin us." Then they retired.

Never was braggard more distressed than I was at this critical moment. I was at the point of calling them back, but shame deterred me; nor could I abandon my hopes. I therefore summoned all the resolution I was master of, and held counsel with myself. "They mean, perhaps, to frighten me, and prove me a boaster," said I, "they are near; and at the conclusion of the invocation, I may expect they will attempt to terrify me; but courage and raillery may be turned against these conspirers."

My deliberations were short, and interrupted by the owls and bats which inhabited these dreary

The Devil in Love

regions, and even the cavern itself. A little reassured, however, by my reflections, I stood erect and fixed, and pronounced the invocation with a clear unfaltering voice, and raising it, called three times, at short intervals, Beelzebub! A chillness ran through my veins, and my hair stood on end. I had scarcely finished, when a window in the top of the cavern flew open, a blaze of light, more dazzling than the sun, darted upon me, and a camel's head, as dreadful from its size as from its form, appeared, with ears immeasurably long. The odious phantom, with a voice which well accompanied his shape, answered me Che-vuoi.

I cannot paint my situation—I cannot tell what sustained my courage, or prevented my sinking under apprehensions which so alarming a representation created, and the still more tremendous sound which assaulted my ears.

I felt the necessity of rallying all my powers, which a cold sweat was depriving me of; I made a vigorous effort. Our souls must have infinite powers and prodigious resources. Thousands of ideas, sentiments and reflections, arising in my heart at the same time, made an instant impression on my mind, and gave me resolution to conquer my terrors.

I looked sternly at the spectre. "What," demanded

The Devil in Love

I, "means the boldness of your appearing under this hideous form?" The phantom hesitated a moment, "You called me," it replied, in a softened voice. "Does a slave pretend to frighten his master? If you come to receive my orders, assume a form more suitable, and a tone more submissive."

"Master," says the phantom, "under what form will it be agreeable to you I should present myself?" The first idea which occurred to me, was that of a little dog. "Come, then, in the figure of a spaniel." Scarcely had I given the order, when the frightful camel stretching out his neck to the length of six feet, stoop'd his head to the middle of the cavern, and vomited out a spaniel beautiful in the extreme; its coat was white and soft as silk, and its ears trailed upon the ground. The window then closed, and everything else disappearing, there was light enough to see that only the dog and myself remained. It ran round the circle wagging its tail, and capering. "Master," said the animal, "I would willingly lick your feet, but the formidable circle which encompasses you repels my approach."

My confidence now amounting to audacity, I came out of the circle, I offered my foot, which the dog immediately licked, and making an attempt to pull its ears, it turned itself upon its back, as if to

The Devil in Love

supplicate my mercy, and I saw it was a little female. "Get up, I pardon you. You see I have company, those gentlemen who are waiting at some distance from here, and who may be fatigued; I would have some fruit, some ices, some sweetmeats, and some Greek wine; let it be well served and lighted; elegant, but not ostentatious. At the end of the collation, you shall come as one of the first performers upon the harp. I will give you a signal for appearing; take care to play your part well, sing with expression and with delicacy and reserve in your manner."

"I shall obey you, master, but upon what conditions?" "Under the condition of obedience. Slave, obey without hesitation, or"—"You don't know me, master, or you would treat me with less rigour; the only condition I should make would be what would both disarm and please you."

The dog had but just finished, when I saw my orders observed with as much expedition as the changes of scenes in an opera. The walls of the cavern, which were before so black, so damp, so covered with moss, took a soft tint, and a form more agreeable, and was now a marble saloon ornamented with jasper, the architecture of which was a dome, supported by Corinthian pillars. Eight crystal giran-

The Devil in Love

doles, with three wax lights in each, gave a brilliancy to the appearance of the whole.

In a moment, the table and the sideboard were spread with a variety of delicacies—the fruits and confectionery were of the rarest sorts, best tasted, and most tempting to the eye. The china which was used was of the most beautiful japan. The little dog made curvets about the room, and about me, as if to hasten the proceedings, and to ask me if I was satisfied. “Very well, Biondetta, put on a livery, and go and tell those gentlemen, who are not far off, that I wish to see them, to partake of a small collation.”

Instantly I saw a page go out richly dressed in my livery, with a lighted flambeau in his hand. He soon returned, conducting my Flemish comrade and his two friends. They were prepared for something extraordinary, by the compliment I sent them by the page; but not for the amazing change they saw in the place wherein they had left me. Had not my thoughts been occupied, I should have entertained myself more with the surprise, which broke forth in exclamations, and was evident in their countenances and gestures.

“Gentlemen,” said I, “you have come a great way to serve me, and have the same distance to

The Devil in Love

return; I therefore thought a little regale would not be unpleasant, and that you would excuse so trifling a repast, as the time for preparing it has been so limited.”

The ease with which I said this disconcerted them still more than the wonderful scene before them. I perceived it, but determined to put as quick an end as possible to an adventure which internally disturbed me. I resolved, however, to carry it through with all the spirit I could assume, and putting on a gaiety, foreign to my character, I requested them to take their places at the table. The page instantly furnished them seats, and we sat down. I filled their glasses, and presented them with sweetmeats and fruits; but my mouth alone was employed in eating and talking; for their faculties seemed to be totally absorbed in astonishment. At last, however, my conduct inspiring them with a degree of confidence, I prevailed upon them to taste the fruits. I drank the health of the prettiest courtesan in Naples; and they followed my example. I spoke of the new opera, and of the famous Improvisatrice, lately arrived from Rome, whose talents were spoken of with admiration at court.

I then turned the conversation to sciences, to music, painting, and sculpture, and then took occa-

The Devil in Love

sion to remark to them the beauties of the marbles which decorated the saloon.

The first bottle is emptied, a still better replaces it. The page is in all places at once, to supply our wants. I had now, for the first time, leisure to cast a look at Biondetta, who appeared like a divinity in disguise. I observed my companions viewed the same object with surprise, admiration, and inquietude. But the sameness of this scene displeasing me, I thought it time to vary it. "Biondetta," said I, "the Signora Fiorentina promised to afford me a few minutes of her time; see if she is arrived."

The page left the room; my friends had not time to wonder at the singularity of my message, before the door opened, and Fiorentina entered with her harp. She was simply attired in a travelling dress, a hat with a veil of gauze exceedingly transparent over her eyes—placing the harp, she courtesied with graceful modesty.

"Signior Don Alvare," says she, "I was ignorant of your having company, or I should not have appeared in this dishabille: I hope these gentlemen will excuse a person who is upon her journey." She sat down, and we all vied with each other in offering her some of the remains of our little entertainment, which she just tasted in compliance with our request.

The Devil in Love

“What, Madam, do you only pass through Naples, can't you be persuaded to make some stay with us?”

“A pre-engagement prevents me—The generous encouragement I was favoured with at the last Carnival at Venice gives them a claim to my return; indeed, I am under a promise to do so; had I not been so fettered, I could not have resisted the advantageous offers made me by this court, nor the hope of meriting the approbation of the nobility of Naples, who are distinguished for the elegance of their taste before any others of Italy.”

The Neapolitans bowed their acknowledgments for this compliment to their country, being almost persuaded that the scene before them was real. I press'd the beautiful musician to give us a specimen of her skill. She pleaded having a cold and being much fatigued, and dreaded lest, under these circumstances, she might forfeit the high opinion we had formed of her talents. At last, she was prevailed upon to attempt a recitative and pathetic air, from the third act of an opera in which she was to perform at Naples. She touched the instrument with a grace which charmed us; and even in this prelude gave a proof of her powers, in which she displayed a most beautiful, white, and finely-shaped arm, with elegant tapering fingers, terminated by most exquisite

The Devil in Love

polished nails. Already we thought we heard a most delightful concert.

She began to sing; our admiration was unbounded, and it is impossible to express what raptures the fine thrill of her melodious voice excited. It was with an expression which enchanted me, and made me almost forget that the voice and form, which thus transported me, was of my own creation. She addressed the tender parts of her song to me, accompanying them by looks which were at once inconceivably soft and passionate. Her eyes seemed not unknown to me; and upon examining her features, as much as the veil permitted, I discovered that Fiorentina and the little Biondetta were the same, but the dress in which I now saw her displayed the elegance of her shape to much more advantage than that of a page had done.

When she ceased singing we bestowed those ample praises upon her which her excellent performances so justly merited. I tried to prevail on her to favour us with a lively air, that we might have an opportunity of admiring the diversity of her talents.

“No,” said she, “I should acquit myself very ill in the disposition I am in at present; you must have perceived the effort I made to obey you thus far, as

The Devil in Love

the fatigue of the journey has affected my voice, and as I am under the necessity of pursuing it, I trust you will admit my excuses, and allow me to withdraw."

Saying this, she arose, and taking her harp, was going; I took it from her, and carrying it, conducted her to the door, and returned to my company.

Instead of the gaiety which I expected to have found, I saw only constraint and reserve in their looks. I had again recourse to the Cyprus wine, which I had before experienced to be both delicious and invigorating, and calculated to inspire that intrepidity and presence of mind which my situation so much required.

As it grew late, I said to my page (who had returned to his place behind my chair) "go and order my coach." Biondetta flew to obey my commands.

"Have you an equipage here?" said Soberano. "Yes," said I, "I desired it might follow me, thinking, if our party was prolonged, you would not dislike so commodious a conveyance: but let us fill our glasses again; as we shall not trust to ourselves, we can be in no danger."

I had scarcely finished this sentence, when the page entered, followed by two tall well-made footmen, superbly dressed in my livery. "Signior Don

The Devil in Love

Alvare," says Biondetta, "the ruins of this place impeded the coach drawing up so near as I wished." We then immediately getting up, the page and the footmen preceded us.

The straitness of the path would admit of but two walking abreast; and Soberano chancing to be the one by my side, he squeez'd me by the hand, saying, "You have given us a very fine regale, my friend, but it will cost you dear." "My friend," replied I, "I am very happy if I have given you any pleasure, you have it for what it cost me."

Arriving at the carriage, we found two more footmen, a coachman, and postillion; a handsome travelling coach, as elegant as possible, of which I did the honours, and proceeded gently towards Naples.

We continued some time silent; at length one of Soberano's friends remarked, that I must have made very singular conventions; never was any one so attended as I had been; as in forty years that he had dealt in this art he had never gained a quarter of those compliances which I had obtained in one evening.

"You know your own affairs best—but you are young, void of reflection, eager in the extreme, and follow your pleasures too precipitately." Bernadello (that was his name) spoke with so much deliberation

The Devil in Love

that it afforded me time to think how I should answer him.

“From whence I have derived such distinguished favours I am ignorant. I prophesy that they will be but of short continuance, but my satisfaction will be that I shared them with my friends.” Seeing I declined being communicative, he dropped the subject.

The silence that ensued gave me liberty to take a retrospect of my proceedings; I compared what Soberano and Bernadello had said, and concluded from thence that I had been led by a vain curiosity and a reprehensible temerity to the brink of a precipice from which I should find it difficult to retreat. I could not plead ignorance for thus involving myself, as I had been educated under the eye of my father, Don Bernado Maravillas, a gentleman of most unexceptionable character, and my mother Donna Mercia, the most religious and most respectable woman in all Estremadura.

“Oh! my mother, what would you think of your son if you saw him now? But this shall not last, I pawn my word it shall not.”

In the meanwhile we arrived at Naples, and I conducted Soberano’s friends to their abode, and he and I went to our quarters.

The Devil in Love

The grandeur of my equipage dazzled the guard; but the beauties and graces of Biondetta, who was placed on the front part of the carriage, attracted their notice still more. The page dismissed the coach and livery servants, and taking a flambeau from one of them, lighted me across the barracks to my apartment.

My valet-de-chambre, in the utmost astonishment, began to question me how I came to be attended with this unusual train.

“Enough of this, Charles,” said I, as I entered my room, “I can do without you to-night, and to-morrow we will talk more about it.”

He went out, and Biondetta shut the door. Being left together, my situation became more critical and embarrassing than when surrounded by company. Resolving, however, to terminate these illusions as quickly as possible, I retired into myself, to ruminate upon the most likely methods of doing it; when, accidentally looking upon the page, whose eyes seemed fixed upon the floor, and face suffused with the deepest blushes, at once discovering visible perplexity and emotion, I thus spoke:

“Biondetta, you have served me well, with alacrity and elegance; but as you were paid beforehand, I imagine you have no further demands.”

The Devil in Love

“Don Alvare is too noble to think he can acquit himself so easily.” “If you think you have exceeded the bounds of duty you owed me, and I am still in your debt, give me your account, but which you must not expect will be soon discharged, for my last quarter’s pay is already expended, and I owe at play—at the tavern—to my taylor—”

“Your pleasantry is unseasonable.”

“If I quit the tone of pleasantry, it will be to desire you to retire; it is late, and I must go to bed.”

“And would you send me uncivilly away at so late an hour? I could not have expected such treatment from a Spanish Cavalier: your friends know that I accompanied you here, your soldiers, your servants saw me, and have guessed my sex. Was I the vilest courtezan, you would shew some regard to the decency due to that—Your treatment of me is ignominious and disgraceful, there is not a woman who would not feel herself debased by it.”

“You are pleased now then to be a woman to claim my attentions; very well, to avoid the scandal of your retreat, please to have that consideration for yourself as to pass through the key-hole of the lock.”

“What! are you in earnest, in permitting me to go without wishing to know who I am?”

“Can I be ignorant of it?”

The Devil in Love

“You are ignorant of it; I tell you, you listen only to your prejudices. But whatever I am, I throw myself, bathed in tears, at your feet as a suppliant, to implore your protection. An imprudence greater than your own, excusable only from your being the object, has made me this day risk and sacrifice everything to obey you, to give myself to you, and to follow you. This conduct has stirred up against me the most cruel resentments. I have no protection but your’s, no asylum but your room. Will you turn me out of it, Alvare? Shall it be said a Spanish Cavalier has treated with such rigour and indignity one who has given up all for him? A feeling soul, a weak being, bereft of all succour but his; in short—a female.”

I endeavoured to retreat from this painful and distressing situation; but she followed me upon her knees, while she was embracing mine, till the side of the room prevented my retiring farther.

“Rise, rise,” said I, “you have unknowingly taken me by my vow. When my mother gave me my first sword, she made me swear upon the hilt to defend and protect the fair sex, and never to offend one, though it should be as I *now* apprehend it is.”

“Well, cruel as you are, whatever name you please to give me, permit me to remain with you.”

The Devil in Love

“Yes, I will, for the singularity of the request, and put an end to my whimsical adventure; but be cautious I neither see nor hear you, for on the first motion which gives me any disturbance, I shall raise my voice in my turn to ask Che-vuoi.”

I turned my back, and approached the bed to undress.

“Shall I help you?”

“No, I am a military man, and can serve myself,” and retired to my bed.

Through my gauze curtains I perceived my pretended page in a corner of the room, upon an old mat which she had found in the wardrobe; she sat upon it, and entirely undressed herself, then wrapping herself up in one of my cloaks which was upon a chair, she put out the light, and the scene closed for a moment; but soon recommenced, as I could not sleep.

The figure of Biondetta haunted my imagination; I fancied I saw the page's image at the top of the bed; I saw nothing but that. In vain I tried to connect that ravishing object with the frightful phantom I had seen. The first apparition served only as a foil to the last. The melodious singing I heard in the vault—that fascinating voice—those expressions which seemed to derive their source from



I saw her move across the room to my assistance....

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The Devil in Love

the heart, revibrated in mine, and made me tremble for myself.

“Ah! Biondetta, if you were not that fantastic being—if you were not that vile dromedary. But why do I thus permit myself to be carried away with such ideas? I have triumphed over fear, why not root out a sentiment still more dangerous; what felicity can I expect? Will it not always partake of the nature of its origin? The ardour of her looks, which are so insinuating, so soft, were they not baneful—that mouth so exquisitely formed—those lips so fresh, with expressions so *naïve* flowing from them, never open but to deceive—that heart (if it is one) is warm but for destruction?”

While I was occupied by these reflections, occasioned by the different emotions with which I was agitated, the moon shone resplendently in an unclouded sky, and darted her rays into my room, through three large windows. In turning violently in my bed, the frame of it, not being new, gave way, and I came to the floor with great force.

Biondetta, apparently alarmed at the crash, ran to me, seemingly in a great fright. “Don Alvare, what misfortune has happened to you?”

As I had never lost sight of her, in spite of my accident, I saw her move across the room to my

The Devil in Love

assistance, and her only covering being a page's shirt, the brightness of the moon displayed to my view her polished limbs, and its rays appeared more brilliant from the reflection.

I was very little concerned at the accident which had happened to my bed, which only rendered it less commodious, but was much more so to find myself clasped in Biondetta's arms.

"I am not hurt," said I, "begone, you are in danger of hurting yourself, and taking cold by walking without slippers."

"But you are ill at ease."

"Yes, and it is you that occasion me to be so; begone, or if you will persist in thus continuing with, and being near me, I shall order you to sleep in that spider's net in yonder corner of the room."

She did not stay to hear the end of my menace before she returned again to the mat, sobbing at my treatment.

The night was far advanced, and being overcome with fatigue, I at length fell asleep for a short time, and waking at daylight, it may readily be imagined what direction my eyes took. I looked for Biondetta, she was dressed all but her coat, and was sitting upon a little stool she had found; she had loosened her hair, which flowed in natural ringlets over her back,

The Devil in Love

shoulders and face, and was disentangling it with her fingers; never did the finest ivory comb pass through more beautiful, more soft, or more luxuriant tresses.

Perceiving I was awake, she put them aside, and appeared to my view like Aurora in the spring, breaking through the vapours of the morning, with all her freshness and perfumes.

“Biondetta,” said I, “take a comb, you’ll find some in the commode.” She obeyed, tied up her hair with becoming elegance, and completing her dress by putting on her coat, sat down with an anxious, timid and embarrassed air, which strongly solicited compassion. I made an effort and collected my thoughts. I reflected, that if I was thus for ever to be exposed to these varying temptations, each one more alluring than the last, it would not be in nature to withstand them—it became absolutely necessary for me to break through this cruel entanglement; I determined to dismiss her.

“Biondetta,” said I, “it is now day; having complied with your request of passing the night in my apartment, you may now depart without fear of ridicule.”

“I am at present above that fear, a more forcible one now prevails, and your interest and mine will not permit us to separate.”

The Devil in Love

“You must explain that.” “I am going to do so, Alvare. Your youth and imprudence make you ignorant of the dangerous situation in which we have involved ourselves. When I saw you in the vault, unappalled by the appearance of that hideous phantom, your courage, your intrepidity charmed me. If, says I, to myself, to obtain happiness, I must unite myself to a mortal, and take a human form, now’s the time, there’s the hero worthy of me. Let the vile rivals I sacrifice to him be incensed and resent it; what signifies it? Lov’d by Alvare, united to Alvare, they and nature will be subjected to us.

“You know what followed, and now hear the consequences. Envy, jealousy, spite and rage are preparing the most cruel punishments, which a being of my sort, degraded by her own choice, is capable of experiencing, and you only can save me; it is hardly day, and already the informers are on their way to accuse you of necromancy before a tribunal, whose severity you cannot be ignorant of.—In an hour—”

“Stop,” cried I, putting my hand before my eyes, “you are the most artful and adroit of evil spirits; you talk of love, and are the image of it; but you poison the idea. Let me compose myself enough, if I can, to form some resolution. If I must fall into

The Devil in Love

the hands of the tribunal, I cannot balance a minute between them and you. But if you assist to extricate me—to what do I engage myself; can I withdraw from you when I will? I will command you to answer me with clearness and precision.”

“To separate you from me, Alvare, you have only to make known your will, and I to regret that I could not make this submission a voluntary one. If you continue to distrust me, you will, in the end, expose yourself to be ungrateful and imprudent.”

“I believe nothing, I am convinc’d of nothing, but that I must depart.—I *will* go—Wake my valet-de-chambre, and send him for horses—I must have money too; I will go to Venice, to Bontinelli, my mother’s banker.”

“You want money; I was aware of that, and have some at your service.”

“Keep it; if you were a woman it would be mean to accept it.”

“I offer it as a loan, not as a gift; give me an order upon your banker for it, leave a list of your debts here, and desire Charles to discharge them. Write to your commanding officer to excuse your departing without leave, which indispensable business occasioned. I will go and procure a carriage and horses. But as, in quitting you, I must relapse

The Devil in Love

into my former fears, say, before I depart, ‘Spirit, who have taken an human form for me, and me alone, I accept you as my vassal, and will afford you my protection.’”

In prescribing me this formula, she had thrown herself at my feet, had taken my hand, and pressing it, bathed it with her tears. I was beside myself, not knowing how to act. She still continued pressing my hand, and sobbing over it, while I was repeating those words which were so important to her, and which I had scarcely pronounced ere she arose, and in a transport cried, “I am yours, and may become the happiest of all creatures”; and in a moment she muffled herself up in a great coat and hat, which she pulled over her eyes, and left the room.

I remained in the utmost state of surprise and perturbation; however, I found the amount of my debts, counted out the money, and left a written order for Charles to pay them: wrote two letters, one to my commanding officer, the other to an intimate friend, both of which were probably thought very extraordinary ones.

By the time I had done all this I heard the carriage already at the door, and the postillion flourishing his whip. Biondetta, still with her face in her cloak, came and hurried me away, and meet-

The Devil in Love

ing Charles (whom the noise had awakened) in the passage, I bid him go to my bureau, where he would find my orders. I went down and instantly getting into the coach, Biondetta followed, and placing herself opposite to me, it drove off.

When we had passed through the town, she took off her hat, which overshadowed her, and discovered a face exquisitely beautiful, resplendent from its own perfections, though robbed of all ornament, her hair being bound up close with a crimson fillet, which served to shew the extreme transparency of her skin. Her countenance at once displayed openness, gentleness and innocence, and it was hardly possible to conceive how these could be united in one whose eyes express'd so much slyness.

I caught myself making these remarks; but judging they were dangerous to my repose, I shut my eyes to try to sleep. My attempt was not in vain, sleep took possession of my senses, and the most charming dreams occupied my imagination, and refreshed my wearied mind, which had been labouring under such frightful ideas. It was so long that when I was some time after relating my adventures to my mother she thought it was not a natural one, for I did not awake till we were on the banks of the canal, on which we were to embark for Venice.

The Devil in Love

A porter came to the coach window, begging to be employed in conveying my luggage; but I had little need of his assistance, for I had come with so much precipitation that I had not even brought a night-cap.

Biondetta presented herself on the other side and informed me there was a boat ready to convey me. I descended from the carriage almost mechanically, got into the felucca, and again fell into my former lethargy.

The next morning I found myself in the best apartment of the most capital inn in Venice, which I instantly recollected. A handsome night-gown and linen were laid ready for my use; yet I could not suppose this attention was paid by the landlord to one who came so destitute of everything. I got up, and casting my eyes about the room to see if any other was there, I looked for Biondetta; but ashamed of her being the first object of my thoughts, I was, upon a little reflection, thankful for my good fortune in not finding her there.

“This spirit is not then inseparable from me. I am released, and after the hazards I have run, if I lose only my company in the guards, may reckon myself happy.

“Courage, Alvare, there are other pursuits and

The Devil in Love

other sovereigns than the King of Naples; you may derive wisdom from the experience you have had, if you are not incorrigible, and may in future conduct yourself better. If they refuse your services, a tender mother at Estremadura, and a decent patrimony, are still left you. But what would this imp, who has not quitted me for so long a time, have? It took a most seducing form—it has given me money—I will immediately repay it.”

While I was yet speaking my creditor entered and informed me two servants and a gondolier were procured for me, the master of the inn having engaged for their qualifications and fidelity, being proper to have some attendance till Charles arrived. “I am content with your arrangement, Biondetta. Do you lodge in this house?” With downcast eyes she replied, “I have chosen a room in your apartments, the most distant from your excellency’s, to incommode you as little as possible.”

I thought there was propriety and delicacy in fixing upon rooms so distant, and approved of it. “Well,” thought I, “if this spirit should be determined to haunt me invisibly I cannot prevent it; I had better therefore know where she is.” So, satisfied with these reasons, I lightly assented to her proposals. Intending to go to my mother’s correspondent,

The Devil in Love

Biondetta gave orders for my things to dress, which, when I had finished, I paid my purposed visit.

When I arrived at the banker's I was surprised at my reception; he was in his counting-house and ran down with eagerness to me. "Don Alvare, I did not know you were in Venice; you come very opportunely to prevent my committing a blunder, I was just going to send you a letter and some money."

"Oh, my quarter's pay."

"Yes, and something more: two hundred sequins brought to me by an old gentleman, to whom I gave a receipt, from your mother Donna Mercia, who not having heard of you for some time, was afraid you were indisposed and sent that sum by a Spaniard of your acquaintance, to be remitted through my hands to you." "Did he tell you his name?" "I wrote it upon the receipt: it is Don Michael Pimiento; he said he had been an equerry in your family, but not expecting you, I did not take his address."

I took my money and opened the letters. My mother complained of her health and of my silence; but did not mention the two hundred sequins; and I felt myself the more obliged for her kindness.

Seeing my purse so well and so opportunely furnished, I returned gaily to the inn and went in search of Biondetta's room, which I had some diffi-

The Devil in Love

culty in finding, as it was a very remote one and the passage that led to it was very far from my door; I found it at last by chance and perceived her very earnest near the window, arranging the jacks of an harpsichord, which she was putting together.

“I have got some money,” said I, “and have brought that I owe you, Biondetta.”

She blushing (which she always did before she spoke) took the money and brought me the security I had given her, saying, “she was sorry I would not oblige her by keeping it longer,” and added, “you are too exact.” “But this is not all, as you paid the expenses upon the road and at the inn; give me the account.” I discharged that also. I was then about quitting the room, apparently with a great deal of *sang-froid*, when she asked, “Have you any orders to give?” I said, “No.”

She turned from me and resumed her work. I observed her some time; she appeared much occupied with what she was about, and discovered as much earnestness as skill in what she was doing.

Returning thoughtfully to my room: “There alas! is the counterpart of that Calderon who lighted Soberano’s pipe, and though she has assumed a more pleasing form, yet still she is of the same diabolic nature; but if she does not intrude, and

The Devil in Love

exact nothing, why should not I retain her, and more particularly as her staying depends upon my will? I'll wait a little—I can at any time dismiss her.”

These reflections were interrupted by a summons to dinner. I sat down—Biondetta, dressed in superb livery, waited behind my chair, and by her extreme attention even anticipated my wants. I had no occasion to turn about to look at her, as three large glasses, which were in the saloon, presented her to my view. She retired when dinner was over.

The master of the inn came up; I was not unknown to him; it being the season of the Carnival, he expressed no surprise at seeing me, but congratulated me upon my increase of fortune, which the number of my attendants seemed to denote, and dwelt much upon the qualifications of my page, and said he was the handsomest, most affectionate, most obliging, most intelligent young man he ever saw; then asked me, if I did not mean to partake in the amusements of the Carnival? I told him I purposed doing so, and putting on a masquerade habit, I got into my gondola.

I hurried from place to place; I went to the play—to all the public amusements—I played, won forty sequins, and returned home late, having sought for dissipation wherever I thought it was to be found.



The Devil in Love

My page met me at the bottom of the stairs with a lighted flambeau, and then resigned me to the care of my valet-de-chambre, after asking me what time I chose to be called. I answered at the usual hour; without knowing what I said, or without recollecting that those now about me were unacquainted with my usual hour.

I did not wake till late the next morning; I got up in haste; and it chanced the first thing that presented itself to my view was my mother's letter which I had left upon the table. "Worthy woman," cried I, "what do I here—why do I not fly to receive the benefit of your good and maternal counsels? yes, I will, I will go, it is my last resource, and the only one left me."

Biondetta found, by my speaking so loud, that I was awake, and entered the room. I now felt the force of my reasonings, as the modest, submissive and disinterested air with which she appeared made me feel my situation still more alarming and dangerous.

She introduced a taylor, with various patterns of stuffs, for my approbation; and when I had made my choice, she withdrew with him, and I saw her no more till the hour of dinner.

I ate but little and that very quickly, and hastened to throw myself amidst the gay throng and whirl of

The Devil in Love

pleasure which abounds at Venice at this season. I joined the masques—listened to them—and made a vain attempt to answer their repartees with some spirit. I therefore went to the opera and concluded the evening with play, to which I had always been much inclined, and won a much larger sum than I had done the night before.

Ten days passed in the same disposition of heart and mind, and in nearly the same recreations. I recognized some old acquaintances, and made some new ones. I was introduced into some of the most distinguished assemblies, and admitted by some of the nobility into their casinos.

Everything went well but play; at that my good fortune had changed to the reverse, and I lost in one night thirteen hundred sequins, which I had before gained. Never did anybody play with such ill luck. At three o'clock in the morning I retired, with not only that loss, but an hundred sequins in debt. Chagrin was visible in my countenance and manner; Biondetta seemed affected with it, but did not speak.

The next morning I was very miserable, and traversed my room with hasty strides; and not being able to eat any breakfast, it was removed. But, contrary to her usual custom, she remained, and



*I recognised some old acquaintances,
and made some new ones*



The Devil in Love

looking stedfastly at me, said "You have lost money, Don Alvare, perhaps more than you can pay."

"Should that be the case, where can I find means?"

"You hurt me by thus disdain and refusing my assistance. I meant only to offer to lend you any sum which you may think yourself obliged to pay immediately. Will you permit me to sit down, as I feel an agitation which makes me unable to support myself, and I have subjects of importance to talk upon? Would you ruin yourself; why will you play for such large sums, when you do not understand it?"

"All the world knows how to play at games of hazard."

"Can anyone learn them?" "Yes, they may, for games of Chance you falsely call hazard. There is no such thing as hazard in the world; everything has been, and ever will be, a series of necessary combinations, that cannot be understood but by the science of numbers, in which the principles lie, and are so abstruse and profound that it is impossible to comprehend them without a master to instruct you."

"I cannot explain this sublime knowledge otherwise than by representing it as a chain of numbers that form the bounds of the universe, and rule events

The Devil in Love

that are supposed to be fortuitous, and called lucky, but are forced by invisible influence so to fall out, each in their turn, from the most important things that happen in the distant spheres, to the little miserable chance that has now robbed you of your money.”

This long scientific speech from so young a mouth, with the sudden proposition of giving me a master, made me shudder, and occasioned me to experience some of those sensations which I was seized with in the vaults of Portici. But looking steadily at Biondetta (who cast down her eyes), “I will not have a master, I shall be afraid of knowing too much; but try and prove that a gentleman may know a little more of the game, and avail himself of it without sullyng his character, and taking up that thesis.” This is the abridged substance of her demonstration.

“The bank is formed on the footing of an immense profit, to which every fresh tally contributes; and if it did not run some risks, the republic would be a manifest pillager of each particular person. But taking the calculations we can make for granted, the bank will always have great gains, in holding against ten thousand dupes, for one that is well instructed.”

The conviction of what she had said soon fol-

The Devil in Love

lowed; for being taught one single combination, apparently simple, though I did not comprehend the principle, from that night I found the infallibility from the success of it. In one word, I regained the next night all I had lost, paid the debts I had contracted at play, and returned home with sufficient money to pay what I had borrowed of Biondetta to try my fortune. I had still some remaining, but my embarrassments increased.

My suspicions were again revived about the dangerous being whom I had permitted to assist me, and I was doubtful if it was now in my power to separate myself from her, and moreover, I had not even resolution to wish to do so. I tried to banish her from my thoughts, but in vain, for her idea was ever present to my imagination. Play no longer interested me; even faro, that I once loved so passionately from the certainty of winning, lost its charm. The buffoons of the Carnival were tiresome to me—the public places insipid.

Had my heart been enough at ease to make me wish to form any connection with women of fashion, I should have been deterred from it by the languor, constraint, and ceremony attendant upon the character of a Cicisbeo.

There remained then only the casinos of the

The Devil in Love

nobles (where I no longer played) and the company of courtezans. Amongst those of the latter description, some of them were more distinguished by the elegant style of their living, and the cheerfulness of their society, than by their personal beauty. I found a real liberty and a noisy gaiety, which stunned, if it did not please me; in short, an abuse of reason, which, for a time, drew me from reflecting upon my own entanglements.

I gallanted with all the women of this cast, without having a design upon any; but the most famous amongst them had one upon me, which she soon made known.

Her name was Olympia, she was twenty-six years old, was possessed of a great deal of beauty, admirable talents, and a lively wit. She soon discovered a partiality towards me, and without my having any for her. I yet precipitately entered into the connection from the motive I have before mentioned, of forgetting myself. Our intimacy proceeded rapidly; and as I found but little pleasure in it, I concluded it would end in the same manner, and that she would soon be disgusted with my inattentions and seek a more assiduous lover, the more particularly as our amour was not a pecuniary one. But our fates had otherwise decreed, and either for the punishment of

The Devil in Love

that lovely but violent woman, or to add to my difficulties, she conceived an unbounded love for me.

Already I was not enough master of my own actions to return to my lodgings at night, and in the day she persecuted me with messages and *billets doux*, and was a constant spy upon all my steps. She complained of my coldness, was jealous of every woman, and would have required me to have been even rude and impolite, could she have fixed upon any particular object.

It was displeasing to live in this perpetual torment; yet I did not withdraw, and tried in good earnest to attach myself to Olympia, thinking it was the only method of diverting my ill-played affections, which I was sensible had taken a too serious hold of me.

But a more animating scene was preparing for me. I was slyly watched at my inn. "How long have you had that handsome page," demanded Olympia, "who interests you so much, and for whom you have such a regard, and leave me for, and follow with your eyes when he attends upon you; what makes you oblige him to live so retired; he is never seen in Venice?"

"My page, Madam, is a young man well born, and of good education, and one I am bound to take care of; he is—"

The Devil in Love

“’Tis,” exclaimed she, with her eyes flashing with rage, “traitor, ’tis a woman, I am assured of it by a trusty friend who has seen her dress, through the key-hole of the door.”

“I give you my word of honour it is not a woman.”

“Don’t add a falsehood to treason; that woman has been seen to weep, she is unhappy—you are born to torment those hearts that are devoted to you—you have betrayed and forsaken her, as you would do me. Send that young person back to her parents, and if you have by your extravagance deprived yourself of the power of providing for her, I will do it. You owe her an establishment, and I will secure it to her. But I insist upon her departing to-morrow.”

“Olympia, I have said, and I repeat it to you, and swear to you, it is not a woman—and please heaven—”

“What is the meaning of all these lies, and please heaven!—monster, send her back, I say, or. . . . But I have other resources, I will discover you, and *she* shall hear reason, if *you* won’t.”

I was overcome with this torrent of abuse and reproach, but I would not appear so, and returned to my own lodgings, though it was so late. My arrival there surprised my servants, but more especially Biondetta, who expressed some fears for my health.

The Devil in Love

I assured her I was well. I had scarcely spoken to her since my connection with Olympia, nor had she chang'd her conduct towards me; but, upon examining her countenance, there was evidently a melancholy languor upon it.

The next morning I was but just awake when Biondetta entered the room with an open letter in her hand, which she gave me and I read as follows:

To the pretended Biondetta

I know not who you are, Madam, nor why you are with Don Alvare, but you are too young not to be excusable, and in too bad hands not to excite compassion. The gentleman may have promised you what he has promised to us all, and what he swears to me every day, though he means to deceive us. I am told you are as sensible as beautiful, therefore open to good advice. You are of an age, Madam, to repair the faults you may have been drawn into; one who feels your misfortunes offers you the means. I will not attempt to make an agreement with you for the sacrifice you are to make for your repose; it must be proportioned to your condition, and the views you may have given up, or may in future expect, consequently you must regulate that yourself.

If you persist in being deceived and unhappy, and making others so, you may prepare yourself for everything that despair can suggest to a desperate rival. I expect your answer.

After I had read the letter I returned it to Biondetta. "Answer this letter, and tell this woman she is mad, and that you know it still better than I."

"You who know her, Don Alvare, have you no apprehensions from her?"

"I apprehend nothing, but that she shall tease me

The Devil in Love

no longer; I will quit her, and to deliver myself from her more effectually, I am this morning going to hire a house that has been offered to me on the banks of the Brente.”

I got up directly, and went out to conclude my bargain. By the way Olympia's threats occurred to me: “foolish woman,” said I, “she would kill”—I could not, nor never could tell why I pronounced that word.

As soon as I had finished the business, I went home and dined; and fearing that force of habit might lead me to the courtesan, I would not go out any more that day. I took up a book; but incapable of applying myself to reading, I laid it down, and went to the window, where the crowd and variety of objects rather disturbed than amused me. I then walked briskly about my apartment, seeking to forget the agitation of my mind in the rapidity of my steps.

In the course of this exercise, I accidentally went into a dark room, where my people had put by my luggage, and things which were not immediately in use, and where I had never before been. The darkness of the place pleased me. I sat myself down upon a trunk for some minutes: whilst I was there, I heard a noise in the next room, and observing a small ray

The Devil in Love

of light, I approached it, and found it came from the key-hole of a door which had been put by, through which I looked. I saw Biondetta plac'd near her harpsichord, with her arms across, and in an attitude of a person in a profound reverie. At last she broke silence.

“Biondetta! Biondetta!” says she, “he calls me Biondetta; 'twas the first, 'tis the only endearing word which he has ever uttered.” She then ceased speaking, and again fell into a reverie. She soon after began touching that same harpsichord which I had seen her putting together—there was an open book upon a desk before her; she played a prelude, then sang with a low voice, accompanying it with the instrument. I soon discovered it was not a regular composition she was playing, and listening more attentively, I heard my own name, and that of Olympia. She bemoaned in plaintive accents her own situation, and the more happy fate of her rival, and lamented the harshness of my treatment of her, and the doubts which occasioned a mistrust, that prevented my happiness, and deprived her of the power of leading me to riches, grandeur, and science, which would have constituted her felicity.

“Alas!” says she, “that is now become impossible, for should he be convinced of what I am, my feeble

The Devil in Love

charms would fail to attach him to another." A violent flood of tears then succeeded, which almost choked her, and rising from her seat, she took out her handkerchief, and wiping her eyes, she again approached the instrument; but the seat being too low and inconvenient, she took the book from the desk, and laying it upon the seat, she sat down and played another prelude.

Her present performance was in a very different style from her last. The air I knew to be one which was at this time much in fashion in Venice. She played it twice over, and then, with a more assured and distinct voice, sang the following words:

Hélas! quelle est ma chimere,
Fille du ciel & des airs?
Pour Alvare & pour la terre
J'abandonne l'Univers;
Sans éclat & sans puissance,
Je m'abaisse jusqu'aux fers;
Et quelle est ma récompense?
On me dédaigne, & je sers.

Coursier, la main qui vous mene,
S'empresse à vous caresser:
On vous captive, on vous gêne,
Mais on craint de vous blesser.
Des efforts qu'on vous fait faire,
Sur vous l'honneur rejailit,
Et le frein qui vous modere,
Jamais ne vous avilit.

The Devil in Love

Alvare, une autre t'engage,
Et m'éloigne de ton cœur.
Dis-moi par quel avantage
Elle a vaincu ta froideur?
On pense qu'elle est sincère,
On s'en rapporte à sa foi;
Elle plaît; je ne puis plaire,
Le soupçon est fait pour moi.

La cruelle défiance
Empoisonne le bienfait.
On me craint en ma présence:
En mon absence on me hait.
Mes tourmens: je les suppose;
Je gémis; mais sans raison.
Si je parle, j'en impose;
Je me tais, c'est trahison.

Amour, tu fis l'imposture,
Je passe pour l'imposteur;
Ah! pour venger notre injure,
Dissipe enfin son erreur.
Fais que l'ingrât me connoisse,
Et, quel qu'en soit le sujet;
Qu'il déteste une foiblesse,
Dont je ne suis pas l'objet.

Ma Rivale est triomphante,
Elle ordonne de mon sort,
Et je me vois dans l'attente
De l'exil ou de la mort:
Ne brisez pas votre chaîne,
Mouvemens d'un cœur jaloux;
Vous éveillerez la haine;
Je me contrains: taissez vous.

The sound of her voice—the song—the peculiar
turn of it, caused a perturbation in me which I

The Devil in Love

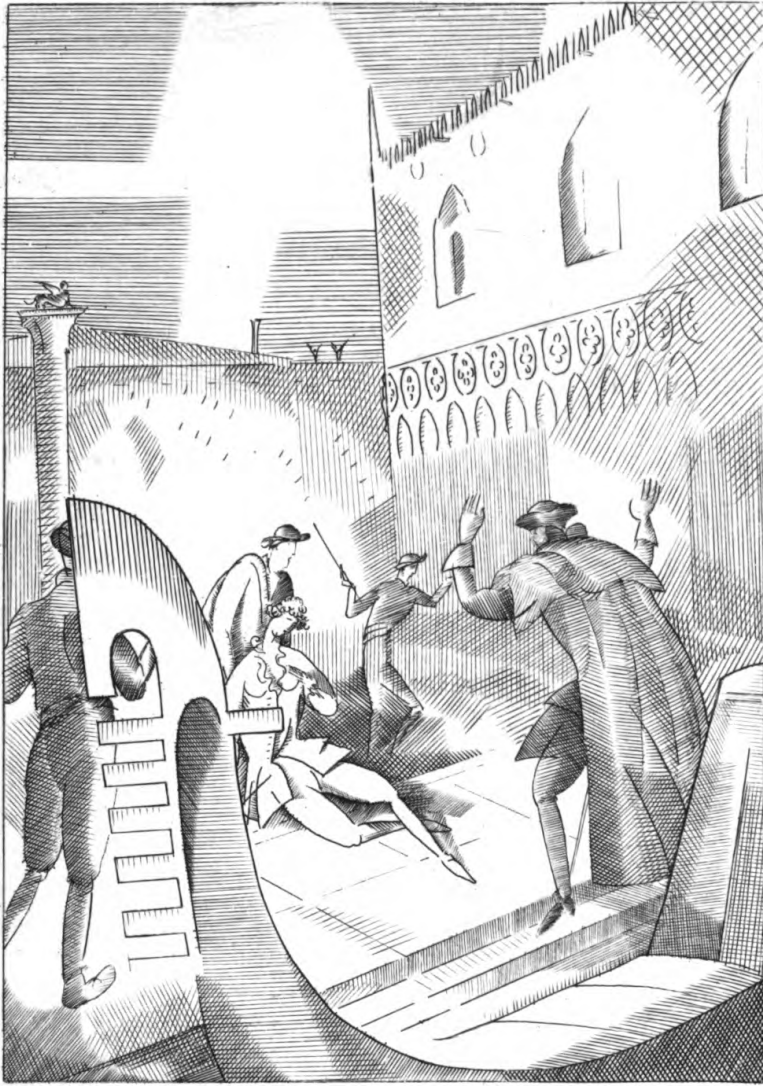
cannot express. "Fantastic being! dangerous impostor!" cried I, as I rapidly went from the place where I had already staid too long, "how can deceit thus put on the semblance of truth and nature?"

It is fortunate for me I did not sooner discover this key-hole, for I could not have resisted the temptation of coming to a spot which might have proved fatal to my peace, and contributed still more to my perplexities.

"I will leave this place—I will go to my house to-morrow—I will fly to-night." I instantly called for one of my servants, and ordered him, without delay, to put a few necessary things for the night into a gondola, as I meant to pass it in my new habitation.

It would have been dangerous remaining where I was; I therefore left it, and walked at random into the street till my orders were obeyed, where I thought I saw Bernadillo and Soberano (who had accompanied me in the walk to Portici) enter a coffee-house. "More phantoms," exclaimed I, "I am pursued by them."

I got into my gondola, and went all over Venice, from one canal to another, and though it was eleven o'clock before I got back to the inn, I still persevered in my intention. But my gondoliers being



Distracted at this event, I jumped on shore....



The Devil in Love

tired, they refused to conduct me and I was obliged to send for others, and my servants having prepared my things preceded me into the gondola. Biondetta followed.

I had hardly set my foot into the vessel when I heard a violent scream, and turning about saw Biondetta was stabbed by a mask, who said, "You have robbed me of my lover, die! die! odious rival!"

This vile act was perpetrated so suddenly that the gondolier who remained on the bank could not prevent it, though he tried to do so, by running a lighted flambeau in his face. But another mask came up, and with a thundering voice, which struck me as Bernadillo's, put him back. Distracted at this event, I jumped on shore; but the murderers had disappeared, and by the light of the flambeau I saw Biondetta bathed in blood and expiring.

My horror was beyond description—every other idea was effaced and I only saw an adored woman who had fallen a victim to my ridiculous scruples, and, through my means, had been thus exposed to the most cruel outrage. I called eagerly for assistance and revenge; and a surgeon, who had been drawn there by the report of the accident, helped me to carry her to my apartment, for I could not trust her to any other care than my own.

The Devil in Love

When she was undressed, and I saw her beautiful body disfigured by two such ghastly wounds, each of which seemed to endanger her life, I said and did a thousand extravagant things. Biondetta was so deprived of her senses, as not to be capable of hearing; notwithstanding which the inn-keeper, the surgeon, and two physicians, who had been called in, thinking it improper I should be there, got me out of the room.

My servants were left to attend me; and one of them having unguardedly informed me that the faculty pronounced the wounds to be mortal, I uttered piercing shrieks. Fatigued at length by such violent exertions I sank into a sort of stupor, which ended in sleep.

I dreamt I was relating to my mother my adventures; and, the better to explain them, I led her towards the ruins of Portici. "Do not let us go there, my son," said she, as we passed through a narrow passage, "you are in imminent danger." A hand (which I knew to be Biondetta's) suddenly pushed me, and I fell upon the edge of a precipice. Another hand as suddenly drew me back, and I found myself in my mother's arms panting with fear. "Dear and revered mother," cried I, "you do not abandon me even in my dreams. Biondetta, your

The Devil in Love

plan is to ruin me; but dreams are but the effects of a disturbed imagination. Avaunt all ideas which will make me deficient in gratitude and humanity.”

I immediately sent a servant to enquire how she was. He told me that the two surgeons who had sat up with her, being apprehensive of a fever, had bled her copiously. The next day, upon taking off the dressings, they pronounced the wounds to be no further alarming, than from their depth; but bad consequences were to be dreaded from the fever which was coming on, and bleeding was again necessary. I was so urgent in my entreaties to be permitted to have leave to enter her apartment that they could no longer refuse me.

I found Biondetta delirious and incessantly repeating my name; and looking at her I thought I never saw her so exquisitely handsome. “Is this,” said I, “what I took for a phantom, composed of airy particles, brilliant only to deceive and mislead me? She exists like myself and loses her life by my voluntarily exposing it—doubting her—I am a monster—a savage. Dear and amiable object, should I lose you, whose kindness I have so ungraciously returned, I am determined not to survive you. I will die, after having sacrificed that vile Olympia upon your tomb. If you are restored to me I shall be

The Devil in Love

yours, and will gratefully acknowledge your goodness, and reward your patience and virtues. I will unite myself to you by indissoluble bonds and shall consider it as my duty to promote your happiness, and implicitly to submit my sentiments and inclinations to yours."

I will not attempt to describe the painful efforts of art and nature to restore a life, which appeared to be sinking under those very endeavours which were used to recover it.

One and twenty days passed during this cruel conflict of hope and fear; at length the fever abated and the invalid gave some signs of returning sense. I called her my dear Biondetta; she pressed my hand and from that instant she became sensible of everything that passed around her.

I stood at the foot of the bed; her eyes were fixed upon me, mine were suffused with tears. I cannot paint the graces of her countenance when she looked upon me, nor the expression of that smile when she said, "Dear Biondetta, I am the dear Biondetta of Alvare." She would have said more, but again they forced me from her sight; but I determined not to quit the room, so placed myself where she could not see me till I was again permitted to converse with her. Then I informed Biondetta I was trying to

The Devil in Love

discover those barbarous ruffians who attempted to assassinate her. "Ah, spare them! spare them! they have been the cause of my happiness. If I die, I die for you, if I live, it will be to love you."

I shall abridge the description of the many tender scenes which passed till the time when the physicians informed me I might safely remove Biondetta to my house upon the banks of the Brente, as the air of the place they thought might be conducive to the re-establishment of her health. We therefore fixed ourselves there. I had appointed two women to attend upon her, from the time her sex was ascertained, and which, from the necessity of dressing her wounds, was become evident. I provided her with everything which I thought would accelerate her recovery and amuse her mind, which was my sole occupation; and my endeavours succeeded so effectually that each hour appeared to bring returning health and increasing beauty.

I now entered into interesting conversations without apprehending any bad consequences from doing so. "Oh! Biondetta, I love, I adore you—persuaded that you are not that fantastic being that I once thought you and convinced that your passion for me is unabated by that repulsive conduct with which I have hitherto treated you. You best can

The Devil in Love

tell if those suspicions were well founded. Unfold to me the mystery of that strange apparition, so frightful to behold, which appeared to me in the vaults of Portici; from whence did it come? What became of that horrid monster and that little dog, who preceded your arrival? Why, wherefore did you succeed then to attach yourself to me? Who were they? What are you? Conclude these wonders by reassuring a heart that is entirely yours and would devote itself to you for ever—but for these doubts.”

“Alvare, the necromancers, astonished at your audacity, would gladly have made a sport of humiliating you and sought by terror to have reduced you to be a slave to their wills. They prepared you beforehand a fright by provoking you to invoke the most powerful and most formidable of all the spirits; and, by the assistance of those whom their art had subdued, they presented to you an object that would have made you die with terror had not the greatness of your soul enabled you to turn their own stratagems against themselves. The Sylphs, the Salamanders, and the Gnomes, were captivated by your courage and intrepidity, and determined to give you every advantage over your enemies.

“I am, by origin, a Sylph, and the most considerable amongst them. I appeared in the form of a

The Devil in Love

little dog and received your orders and we all strove with eagerness to obey you. The more haughtiness, the more resolution, the more ease and intelligence that you assumed in regulating our motions, the more we redoubled our admiration and assiduity. You commanded me to attend you as a page, to amuse you as a musical performer; I submitted with joy and found such charms in my obedience that from that moment I resolved to be for ever yours.

“Let me, therefore,” said I, “decide upon my destiny and happiness; abandoned as I am to the uncertainty of the spheres, where I am without sensations, without enjoyments—slave to the invocations of the necromancers—the sport of their fancies—of necessity bounded in my powers, as well as my knowledge. Shall I then any longer balance in the choice of the means by which I can elevate my being? I am permitted to become a substance, and associate myself with one eminent for his wisdom. There is the person—should I submit myself to the simple estate of a woman, and lose, by this voluntary resignation, the natural rights of Sylphs, and the assistance of my companions, I shall be recompensed by the happiness of loving and being loved. I shall serve my vanquisher and instruct him in the sublimity of his existence, the prerogatives of which he

The Devil in Love

is at present ignorant of. He will subjugate those elements, the empire of which I have quitted, and the spirits of all the spheres. He is formed to be the king of the world and I shall be the queen of it—and the queen adored by him.

“These reflections, which were incredibly sudden, in a being unencumbered with organs, instantly determined me; and retaining my form I entered into the state of a woman, never to quit it more. Scarcely had the change taken place, Alvare, when I discovered I had a heart. I admired, I loved you—but what were my feelings when I perceived your repugnance and even hatred. But there was no retreating and I could not even repent; and having exposed myself to all the vicissitudes which attend upon you mortals, drawn upon me the anger of the spirits, the implacable resentment of the necromancers, without your protection I became the most wretched creature under heaven. Became! did I say? I shall still be so without your love.”

The inexpressible graces in her manner, and the sweet tone of her voice rendered her extremely interesting; but I did not comprehend what I had heard, indeed the whole of my adventure was incomprehensible. “All this appears as a dream to me,” said I, “but what else is human life? I only

The Devil in Love

dream more extraordinary than other people!—my eyes have witnessed that she has been upon the brink of the grave and experiencing such pains and weakness as required all the skill of the faculty to recover her from. Man was formed out of the earth, why may not a woman be composed of dew, vapours and rays of light, the remains of a condensed rainbow? Where is the absurdity or impossibility of this?”

The event of these thoughts was that I indulged myself in the *penchant*, while I fancied I was consulting my reason. I overpowered Biondetta with my endearments and innocent caresses, which she yielded to with a frankness that enchanted me, and with that modesty which is naturally the result of having neither reflection nor fear.

A month passed in this delightful and intoxicating manner; and Biondetta's health being now perfectly re-established, she accompanied me in my walks. I had a habit made for her in the style of an Amazon; and in this dress, and a hat which was overshadowed with plumes of feathers, she drew attention wherever she appeared.

I was flattered by perceiving I was an object of envy to the happy people, who in the fine weather inhabited the houses on the banks of the river, and

The Devil in Love

even the women seemed to have renounced the jealousy by which they are actuated towards a rival beauty, or perhaps were awed by a superiority which was undeniable, or disarmed by that modest air which shewed she was unconscious of her advantages.

Known as I was to be the favoured lover of so charming a woman my pride and exaltation kept pace with my love, and I was still more elated when I reflected upon the brilliancy of her origin.

I could not doubt of her being possessed of every elevated knowledge and I had every reason to suppose she meant to make me a sharer of it; but as yet she only entertained me with common subjects and appeared to have lost sight of that intention.

Walking one evening upon the terrace in my garden, "Biondetta," said I, "when your distinguished preference for me determined you to unite your fate with mine you promised to render me worthy of it by initiating me into those mysteries unattainable by common mortals without such an assistant. Do I now appear undeserving of that confidence; or does love make you forget that to excuse your partiality you should exalt the object of it much above his own sphere and equal to yours?"

"Oh! Alvare," replied she, "it is six months since

The Devil in Love

I assumed my present state and it scarcely appears as if I had lov'd a day;—pardon a heart that is absorbed in the softest, sweetest sensations and as yet has had no experience. I would teach you to love as I do and you will be, by that single sentiment, much above your fellows; but I find human nature soars beyond those enjoyments, and the restless spirit of man will not permit him to enjoy the present happiness unless he has a prospect of a future one still greater. Yes, I will instruct you, Alvare—I would with pleasure forget my own interest; but it is now so blended with yours that I must be a sharer in your splendour; but it does not suffice that I devote myself to you, you must also be mine without reserve—and for ever.”

We were seated upon a green bank overhung with honeysuckles and jessamines; when, throwing myself at her feet, “Dear Biondetta,” said I, “I here vow to the eternal fidelity.”

“No,” cried she, “you do not know me—indeed you do not know me—you must unreservedly resign yourself to me—that alone can gain my confidence and satisfy me.”

I kissed her hand with transport and repeated my oaths of attachment to her; to which she again opposed her doubts and fears, and, in the eagerness

The Devil in Love

of conversation, she leaned her head against mine, and our lips met. At this instant I felt myself seized by the flap of my coat and shaken with great violence. Turning about I saw it was my dog, a young Dane which had been given me, and that I had accustomed to play with my handkerchief. As it had been lost the night before I had ordered him to be secured; but he had broken from his confinement, traced me to this place, and pulled me by the coat to solicit my notice. In vain were my attempts to repulse him; it was impossible to drive him away, so great was his joy upon finding me. He ran round me—he barked—in short he so overcame me by his perseverance and gambols that I caught hold of his collar and led him into the house.

I was going back to Biondetta when a servant followed me, saying, "Supper was served." We went in and seated ourselves at the table, where I expected she would have appeared a little embarrassed after what had passed, but fortunately we found a young nobleman who was come to visit us.

The next day I went to her apartment to communicate some serious reflections which had occurred to me during the night. She was still in bed. I sat down by her. "We were yesterday," said I, "my dear Biondetta, near committing a folly which I

The Devil in Love

should for ever have repented of. My mother is urgent with me to marry, and although I can be only yours, I cannot enter into so solemn an engagement without her consent, and looking upon you already as my wife, it is my duty to respect you."

"Yes, I suppose I am to respect you too, Alvare; but will not that sentiment be the poison of love?"

"You mistake," said I, "it will be the sweetener of it."

"A fine sweetener indeed which brings you here with an air so frozen that it petrifies me. Oh! Alvare, Alvare, I happily know no bounds to my affections and have neither father nor mother; I will love you with my whole heart and without that sweetener you talk of. It is natural you should pay a deference to your mother, you owe it her; but why should she be acquainted with our attachment before our union. But you are born with prejudices which blind you, and whether you reason or do not reason, they render your conduct as uncertain as whimsical; subject to real duties, you impose upon yourself imaginary ones, and even, in pursuit of the object you seem most to desire, you are eternally raising objections to prevent the completion of your wishes and become dependent upon the will of another. And who knows if Donna Mercia will think my descent entitles me to

The Devil in Love

enter into the distinguished family of Maravillas? I may see myself despised and rejected, and, at the best, I shall receive you from your mother, rather than from your own free will.

“Is it a man destined to exalted sciences that speaks to me, or a child just come from the mountains of Estremadura? Am I to be void of delicacy when I see others insist so much upon theirs? Alvare, Alvare! the Spaniards boast of their love, but they have ever more pride and stubbornness than passion.”

I had experienced many extraordinary scenes, but I was not prepared for this. I endeavoured, however, to calm her inquietude and to justify my deference to my mother by representing the duty such a relationship demands, besides the many obligations I owed to her affection; but I was not heard.

“I did not become a mortal for nothing, Alvare; I voluntarily gave myself to you and only so will I receive you; and Donna Mercia will not then be so mad as to disapprove. Talk not to me—since I am to be respected, and people respect themselves, and all the world are to be respected. I am become more miserable than when I was hated.”

She then fell into a passionate flood of tears.



*I took refuge in a church, the door of
which was open....*



The Devil in Love

Fortunately for myself I had a haughty pride in my nature which saved me from the weakness of throwing myself at her feet, to have appeased that unreasonable anger and to have dried those tears which were so painful to me.

I hastily retired—I went to my closet—I could have wished myself chained there, as I dreaded the issue of those trials I seemed destined to encounter. I flew to my gondola, called for my gondoliers and desired one of Biondetta's women to inform her I was gone to Venice as I had just received intelligence that my presence was necessary there in the process I had entered into against Olympia.

I departed a prey to the keenest vexation and most alarming apprehensions. Discontented with Biondetta, but still more so with myself, I saw I must pursue a desperate conduct or an abandoned one.

I landed as soon as I arrived at Venice, and running wildly about the streets I did not observe a storm which was approaching, but from which it was necessary I should seek some shelter as it threatened to be one of those sudden and violent showers which so frequently happen in the month of July and which in a moment burst upon me, the rain being accompanied by large hailstones. I took refuge in a church, the door of which was open; it

The Devil in Love

proved to be that belonging to the grand convent of the Franciscans.

My first reflection was that it required some such event as the present one to carry me into a church, as, since I had become an inhabitant of the states of Venice, I had not entered into any place of worship. My second was to condemn myself for my total neglect of those duties I ought to have observed. Fired with these painful reflections and impatient to tear myself from them, I examined the monuments and pictures with which the choir abounded. It was a sort of inquisitive tour round the nave and choir. At last I came to a little retired chapel, which was lighted only by a lamp, as every ray of daylight was excluded. Something bright at the end caught my attention. It was a monument. Two angels depositing a female figure in a black marble tomb, two others melted in tears leaning on it. All the figures were of the finest white marble, and the beautiful polish, relieved by the strong contrast, so reflected the light of the lamp as to cause that soft lustre which first attracted my notice.

On approaching it to take a nearer view I found the figures of the finest proportion, full of expression, and the execution exquisite.

I fixed my eyes upon the face of the principal

The Devil in Love

figure; but how was I struck? I thought it was the resemblance of my mother. I was seized with a tender and lively sorrow, accompanied by the most pious respect. "Oh! my mother," cried I, "is it to inform me that my want of affection, and the disorder of my life, have brought you to the grave, that this cold marble has borrowed your beloved likeness? Oh! most respectable of women, estranged as he is, your Alvare has yet preserved your influence on his heart. He swears by this solemn representation that he had rather die a thousand deaths than forget the obedience which is your due. I am still under the dominion of a tyrannic passion. I am unequal to it; you have just appeared to my eyes; speak, O speak to my heart, and if I ought to vanquish it teach me how to do so without sacrificing my life!"

In pronouncing this earnest invocation I had prostrated myself with my face upon the pavement, and in that posture waited for those instructions I was persuaded I should receive—so strong was my enthusiasm. But I now began to reflect (which at first I was incapable of doing) that in all cases where we stand in need of extraordinary succours to regulate our conduct, if our supplicating with earnestness does not entitle us to have them granted, it at

The Devil in Love

least, by our retiring, puts us in a situation to reap all the benefit of our own prudence. I had therefore a strong claim to the interposition of mine; and this is what it suggested to me: give yourself this duty to fulfil—separate yourself from the object of your passion and wait till events instruct you.

I arose with precipitation. “Let me then tear myself away—let me hasten to open my heart to my mother and again put myself under her protection.”

I returned to my accustomed inn, ordered a carriage and without embarrassing myself with attendance, I took the road to Turin, meaning to pass through France to Spain, having first enclosed a draft upon my banker for three hundred sequins, in the following letter.

To my dear Biondetta

I tear myself from you, my dear Biondetta, and the cruel separation, I feel, would be fatal to me were it not that the hopes of our meeting again soon supports me. I go to my mother animated with the impression you have left upon my mind. I shall so powerfully plead my cause as to return with her consent to that union with you which will constitute the happiness of my future life, satisfied with having complied with my duty before I resigned myself wholly to love and you; at your feet I shall then devote the rest of my life. You will then, my Biondetta, know a Spaniard, and when you see the good effect of his prejudices you will no longer consider as pride that principle which regulates his conduct. The same motive which induces him to pay proper regard to the ties of honour and of blood will ensure his fidelity to the object of his tenderness. Of your love I cannot doubt after

The Devil in Love

the repeated vows of obedience you have voluntarily made me; but I shall be still more convinced of it by this small acquiescence to my views, which points to our mutual felicity. The enclosed draft is meant to defray the expenses of our house; and from Spain I shall send you what I think least worthy of your acceptance till the most ardent love brings back for ever,

Your devoted

Alvare.

I was upon my road to Estremadura; it was in the most beautiful season of the year and everything so far appeared propitious to the impatience I felt to arrive at the end of my journey. Already I saw the clocks of Turin when a miserable post chaise, much out of repair, having passed my carriage at a little distance, broke down, and I perceived a woman in great distress trying to disengage herself from it. My postillion immediately stopped; and flying to offer my assistance I received Biondetta in my arms. She could only say, "Alvare, you have abandoned me"—and fell into a state of insensibility.

I carried her to my own chaise, which was the only place I could conveniently set her down in, and it was fortunately made for two people.

I did what I could to recover her; and unloosing some parts of her dress, which seemed to impede her breathing freely, supported her in my arms and we pursued our journey in a situation which may be easily imagined.

The Devil in Love

We stopped at the first inn that promised, by its appearance, some accommodation, where I had Biondetta conveyed to the best apartment it afforded, and laid upon a bed; and sitting down by her I procured all the reviving medicines I could recollect to recover her from her faintings, and at last she shewed some signs of returning life.

“Once again you have endangered my life, Alvare. You shall be satisfied.”

“What injustice,” said I, “it is caprice which induces you to oppose measures which I feel so necessary on my part, and I am aware I shall ill perform my duty and also entail upon me a remorse which will interrupt the tranquillity of our future days unless I have resolution to resist your artful wiles, from whence I had no sooner escaped and was proceeding to gain my mother’s consent—”

“And why did you not tell me so, Barbarian as you are, and that it was your will? Am I not made to obey you? I would then have followed you. But to leave me alone and unprotected to the vengeance of those enemies which, for your sake, I had drawn upon myself. To see myself exposed by your neglect to the most humiliating affronts—”

“Explain yourself, Biondetta—and has anybody dared—”

The Devil in Love

“And what should deter them from insulting one of my sex, equally unacknowledged and undefended? The worthless Bernadillo followed us, as you know, to Venice, and scarcely had you disappeared, when ceasing to fear you and impotent towards me, since I gave myself to you, but able to trouble the imaginations of those who surrounded me, caused your house to be beset with phantoms of his creation. My women frightened at me, left me, and a report, authorized by letters, prevailed that an imp had spirited away a captain of the guards of the King of Naples and had conducted him to Venice. It was affirmed that I was that Imp and circumstances contributed to corroborate the belief. Everyone fled from me in terrors and I implored assistance and compassion without finding any. But at last gold obtained what was refused to humanity, and I paid dearly for a wretched chaise, found guides and postillions and was following you.”

My steadiness was almost shaken by this detail of Biondetta's misfortunes. “How,” said I, “could I have imagined events of this nature, who had seen you the object of admiration and respected by all the inhabitants upon the banks of the Brenta? Could I have supposed that these tributes, which you seem so well to deserve, would have ceased with my

The Devil in Love

presence? Oh! Biondetta, enlightened as you are, why did you not foresee that, opposing my laudable designs, you would drive me to desperate measures; why—”

“Can you expect a woman to be so constantly mistress of herself as never to be guilty of an inconsistency? I am a woman by choice, Alvare, but still I am a woman, and subject to all the weaknesses of one. I am not made of marble. I have chosen among the twelve zones, the elementary matter of which I am composed; it is of a very susceptible nature, if it were not, you would not have so much power over me, and I should become insipid to you; pardon me for having run the hazard of taking upon me all the imperfections of my sex, in aiming at the possession of its graces. But the folly is past recall, and formed as I at present am, my sensations are of such unbounded vivacity, that my imagination is a perfect volcano. In one word, my passions are of so violent a nature as ought to frighten you, if you were not the object which excited them, and if we did not understand these natural emotions better than they do at Salamanca; there they give them odious names, and talk of overcoming them. What! overcome a celestial flame, the only means by which the soul and body operate reciprocally, one upon

The Devil in Love

the other, and force them to agree in maintaining the necessity of their union? That would be very weak, my dear Alvare, we should regulate these movements and sometimes by yielding to them. If we oppose or evade them they revolt, they escape at once and reason no longer knows where to take her seat of government.

“Have some consideration for me in these moments, Alvare; think that I have been what I now am but six months and am in the enthusiasm of this new scene; that a refusal that you make me, a word which you say inconsiderately, is an indignity to love, offends pride, awakens anger, distrust and fear. What am I saying? I see already that my poor head will be turned and that my Alvare will be as unhappy as myself.”

“Oh! Biondetta, you are an everlasting fund of wonder and amazement. But I think I discover the workings of nature in the confession of tenderness you have made me; we shall find resources in our mutual attachment, and what may we not also expect from the advice and counsel of my worthy mother, whose blessing we shall soon receive? She will cherish us and teach us to be happy.”

“Your will must be mine, Alvare, though I am better acquainted with my own sex than you, and

The Devil in Love

therefore am not so sanguine of the success of your plan. But I will obey to please you and consent to go.”

Gratified with this compliance and happy to find myself upon the road to Spain with the dear object who had so fascinated my reason and my senses, I lost no time in making preparations to pass the Alps and pursue my journey through France. But it seemed as if heaven was unpropitious from the time I ceased to be alone—frightful storms impeded our course, rendered the ways bad and some parts impracticable. My horses failed me, my carriage, which was apparently new and well put together, was perpetually wanting to be repaired at every post, and a wheel, a spring, a trace, or a something was for ever deranged; yet at last, after infinite impediments, we arrived at the narrow pass, the Col de Tende.

During this fatiguing and unfavourable journey, and the subjects of inquietude which tormented me, I could not help admiring the person and address of Biondetta, who was no longer that tender, sorrowful or impassioned character, which I had before seen her, but rather sought by the most animated vivacity to soften these vexations, and persuaded me she found no inconveniences from these accumulated disasters.

The Devil in Love

This agreeable gaiety was accompanied by caresses too seducing for me to refuse, to which, though I yielded, it was not without some reserve; and my pride defending me served as a guard to the violence of my desires, the tumult of which she plainly read in my eyes and used her endeavours to augment. I confess I was in no small danger; once, in particular, had not a wheel suddenly broke I know not what would have become of the point of honour. It, however, made me more cautious in the future, and after inconceivable distresses we reached Lyons, when, in complaisance to Biondetta, I determined to rest some days.

In the time we were there she pointed out to my notice the easy access and agreeable manners of the French nation. "But it is at Paris, at court, my dear Alvare, I would see you established. I can supply you with every requisite to make what figure you please there and appear in the most exalted line. And as gallantry is the leading feature of the French, if I am not too vain, I may presume the most distinguished of them will pay me homage; with what pleasure shall I sacrifice them all to my Alvare. What a fine subject of triumph will that be for the vanity of a Spaniard."

I treated this proposition as pleasantry. But she

The Devil in Love

assured me she was serious and it was really her wish.

“Let us proceed then with all expedition to Estremadura and when we come back you shall be presented to the court of France as the wife of Don Alvare Maravillas; it would not be proper you should be seen there as an adventurer—I am now upon the road to Estremadura and to everything that will give me pleasure; and what shall prevent me?”

I expected and I saw her repugnance, yet, adhering to my purpose, I soon reached the territories of Spain. But untoward obstacles again combined to retard our progress. Our mules were restive—our drivers drunk. Storms rolling over our heads and almost impassable bogs left us even less relaxation than when travelling through Piedmont and Savoy. Many complaints are made of the bad inns of Spain and with much truth; nevertheless I esteemed myself very happy when the misfortunes which occurred in the day did not oblige me to pass part of the night in the open fields or in some miserable barn.

It was in one of these forlorn asylums that Biondetta made her most dangerous attack upon me, which was the last trial of my honour and inflexibility of character.

The Devil in Love

“What a country we are going into, if I may judge by what I have already seen; have we much further to proceed, Alvare?”

“You are in Estremadura at present and within ten leagues of the castle of Maravillas.”

“We shall certainly never arrive there; the heavens seem to forbid our approach; see what clouds are gathering around us.”

I looked up and never before saw so menacing a sky; then remarked to Biondetta that fortunately the barn we were in would save us from the storm.

“Will it protect us from the lightning also?”

“What matters the lightning to you, who have been an inhabitant of the air and have seen the formation of so many storms and are versed in the physical causes of them?”

“I should not fear if I knew them less. For the love of you I have submitted to physical causes and I apprehend them because I know their power, and that they will kill, and am alarmed for those reasons.”

We were at the different ends of the barn, upon two bundles of straw, waiting the coming up of the storm which threatened us from every quarter, and at last burst upon us in a most terrifying manner. The whole atmosphere appeared like liquid fire, agitated by the wind, which blew tremendously. The

The Devil in Love

thunder, which rolled incessantly, was echoed by the neighbouring mountains. The rain and hail poured down in torrents, and these jarring elements seemed to contend with each other which should add most to the horror of the scene.

At last there came a flash of lightning which appeared to set our retreat in a blaze, and a clap of thunder still more formidable than we had heard before.

Biondetta, in apparent terror, came running with her eyes shut and her fingers in her ears, and threw herself into my arms exclaiming, "Ah! Alvare, I am lost."

I tried to comfort and compose her.—"Feel my heart, how it beats," said she, taking my hand and placing it upon her bosom; and though she mistook the place where the beating would be most sensibly felt, yet I could plainly feel it was violently agitated. She clung about me and at every flash of lightning pressed me more closely, when one more dreadful still made her hide herself in such a manner that the danger could not reach her unless it first proved fatal to me.

This effect of fear appeared to me singular and I began to be alarmed for myself, not at the consequences of the storm but of a plot formed by her

The Devil in Love

to vanquish my resistance and counteract my views. Although I was more transported than I can express I arose hastily.—“Biondetta, you do not know what you are about; calm yourself, this hurricane may not injure either you or me.”

She might well be surprised at my *sang-froid*; yet under the mask of fear, concealed her thoughts. Happily the storm abated, the clouds dispersed and the resplendency of the moon banished our apprehensions.

Biondetta remained where she had placed herself and seemed sleeping, while I sat silently by her, and gave greater and freer scope than I had ever done since the commencement of my adventure to my melancholy reflections and the critical circumstances my passion had led me into. I painted my folly in live colours; for although my mistress was enchanting, my aim was to unite myself to her by the most solemn ties.

The day surprised me in the midst of these distressing and various thoughts. I roused myself from them and went and looked if the weather would admit of our pursuing our journey, but found it utterly impossible at present from another cause, as the muletteer who drove my calash informed me he had already come the distance for which I hired him.

The Devil in Love

During this embarrassment Biondetta had arrived and joined me. I was provoked at this delay and began to be very impatient and suspicious of a roguish contrivance when a man passed the barn-door driving two mules of a promising appearance. I proposed to him to convey us to the castle of Maravillas; he was acquainted with the road and I immediately agreed to his demands.

I was just stepping into the carriage when a countrywoman accompanied by a little boy crossed the road, whom I thought I recollected. As she approached, looking steadily at her, I discovered it was Bertha, an honest farmer's wife in my village and sister to my nurse. I called her—she stopped and looking at me with visible consternation in her countenance.

“What! is it you, Signior Don Alvare? why do you come here to a place where they have sworn your ruin and which you have already made desolate?”

“I, my dear Bertha! what have I done?”

“Ah! Signior, does not your conscience reproach you for having occasioned the death of your worthy mother, our good and valued mistress? She is dead! alas! she is dead of the grief you have caused her; she sunk under the horrid intelligence which she received from Naples and Venice. Our good lord,

The Devil in Love

your brother, is outrageous and says he will solicit everywhere to have you apprehended and will himself deliver you up to justice.”

“Go, Bertha, and should you reach Maravillas before I do, inform my brother he will see me there very soon.”

The calash being quite ready I presented my hand to Biondetta and assisted her into it, concealing, as much as I could, the anguish of my heart under the appearance of steadiness, while she seemed frightened and full of alarm.

“What! will you deliver yourself up to the fury of your brother? will you, by our presence, sharpen the resentment of a family so much incensed against us and which you have already plunged in misery?”

“I cannot fear my brother, Madam, if he imputes faults to me of which I am not guilty, it is of importance to me to undeceive him, and if I have committed them I must endeavour all I can to excuse myself, and as they have not originated in my heart I have a right to hope for his compassion and indulgence. If I have brought my mother to her grave by the irregularity of my life I am bound to make all the atonement I can for a conduct which is disgraceful to my character, and so openly to bewail her loss that all Spain may witness the truth

The Devil in Love

and sincerity of my regret, and in some degree efface from her unnatural son the stain that he has cast upon himself.”

“Ah! Alvare, you are following a path which will lead you to your ruin and mine will surely follow. These letters which have been written from all parts, these reports, which have been so industriously propagated, are but a continuance of those persecutions we experienced in Venice. That traitor Bernadillo, whose malice and inveteracy you are not sufficiently aware of, possesses your brother and will make him—”

“What have I to apprehend from Bernadillo, or from all the incendiaries upon earth? I am, Madam, the only formidable enemy to myself; my brother will never be prevailed upon to be unjust by giving way to a blind vengeance or commit an action unworthy of a man of ability and honour; in short, of a gentleman.”

She still persisted on the danger I was running into, but I was become inflexible. Sensible that I was the author of my own misfortunes, I was determined to expose myself to any punishment, since the severest which could be inflicted would be less painful than being a prey to the remorse and agony which went to my soul.

The Devil in Love

'Twas in this disposition of mind that I advanced towards the place of my birth, which, by my misconduct, was become a house of mourning. The mules, though strong, proceeded too slowly for my impatience. "Drive on, drive on, muleteer, faster still!"—he whipped them and mended their pace.

Already I saw, though at some distance, the towers of the castle; and to animate the dull animals still more I pricked them with the point of my sword; upon which they began to plunge and grew unmanageable; and presently taking the bit in their teeth they set off with great rapidity: it was soon no longer running, but flying. The driver was thrown off into a slough, the reins fell down, and I in vain attempted to reach them; I called out repeatedly for assistance; but no one had courage to stop the furious animals, but was afraid and got out of the way. We passed quick as lightning through the village of Maravillas and I found myself six leagues on the other side of it without meeting with any obstacle of force enough to impede the astonishing velocity with which the carriage moved. I was a thousand times tempted to throw myself out; but the swiftness of the motion made it impracticable.

At length being tired and provoked at the ineffectual efforts I had made, or could think of, I sat

The Devil in Love

down, and looking at Biondetta, observed she appeared with greater tranquillity than I could have imagined in such circumstances, especially as I had seen her much more susceptible of fear on less alarming occasions. A ray of light broke in on me. "Events are to instruct me," cried I—"I am possess'd." Then, seizing upon a button of her habit, I pronounced with great sternness.—"Thou live spirit, if thou art here to estrange me from my duty and entice me to the precipice from whence I have rashly and daringly brought thee—return and remain there everlastingly!"

I had scarcely pronounced these words when she vanished and the mules, which were of the same nature as herself, disappeared also.

There was a most extraordinary motion in the calash which threw me from the seat, and it was with difficulty I could save myself from falling out; when raising my eyes to heaven I perceived a black cloud ascending in the air, the summit of which had the appearance of an enormous camel's head; but the violence of the wind, which blew almost a hurricane at this instant, soon bore this vision from my sight; then looking around I observed that the loss of the mules had occasioned the shock which I had felt in the carriage, as the shafts rested upon the



I perceived a black cloud ascending in the air....



The Devil in Love

ground and I was left in the midst of a solitary plain where no traces of human footsteps were seen.

My first impulse was to prostrate myself in grateful thanks to the Almighty for my deliverance from the imminent danger to which I was sensible I had exposed myself and from which I had so providentially escaped. At length I discovered, at some distance, a small cottage, the inhabitants of which furnished me with a mule to convey me to Maravillas, though I did not dare to risk any enquiries of what had passed there or to make myself known.

Absorbed in grief and overcome with remorse more keen and poignant than I had ever experienced I arrived at the castle, hardly daring to raise my eyes or fix them on any object. I heard a voice—"It is Alvare! it is my son!" I lifted up my eyes and beheld my mother!

It is not in the power of language to express the triumph of joy, tenderness, surprise and agitation which animated my feelings. I ran—I flew into those arms which were extended to receive me. I embraced her with rapture—I knelt to her—I shed a deluge of tears. "Ah! my mother, my mother, I am not then your murderer; and can you, will you, acknowledge as your son the wretch who has caused you so much sorrow, him whose temerity—Ah! my

The Devil in Love

mother, you do embrace your son? alas! a little more and he had become a monster, odious to heaven and to earth.”

The agony, the violence of my manner, and the change it occasioned in my voice and features, alarmed her. She raised me—she pressed me affectionately to her bosom and tried to encourage me. I made an effort to speak without articulating a word—I seized her hands and kissed and wept upon them without ceasing.

Donna Mercia contemplated me with amazement, and concluded from my extreme agitation something very extraordinary must have befallen me, and was not without apprehensions of a derangement of my intellects. Anxiety, tenderness and curiosity were all strongly marked upon her countenance; yet she was not unmindful of the refreshments necessary for a fatigued and weary traveller, come, she thought, a long and difficult journey. The attendants vied with each other in serving me. I tasted what they set before me out of compliance; but I could do no more, for my eyes eagerly sought for my brother, as I was alarmed at his not appearing. “Where, Madam, is the amiable, the worthy Don Juan?” “He will be rejoiced to find you as he has written to request you to come here;

The Devil in Love

but as his letter, dated from Madrid, was dispatched but two or three days since, we did not think it possible that you could have arrived so soon. The purport of his letter was to inform you that you are promoted to the command of the regiment of which he was Colonel, as the king has appointed him to a viceroyalty in the Indies."

"Thanks be to heaven," exclaimed I, "there is no reality in the horrible dream which I have had." My mother urged me to explain myself. "What dream is that you speak of, Alvare?" "Of the most long and most dangerous one that can be imagined." And then, overcoming all pride and shame, I related to her every circumstance that had happened to me from the time I entered the vault of Portici till the happy moment in which I was restored to her maternal arms.

This most respectable woman listened to me with unexampled patience and goodness, and seeing there was no need of exaggerating the perils to which I had exposed myself, or recalling to my mind those duties and engagements I had so wilfully neglected, and that I was sensible of the whole extent of my fault, said to me, "I perceive, Alvare, that you are possessed with the opinion that all the circumstances which have befallen you are natural events;

The Devil in Love

but I see clearly that you have been encompassed by lies and illusions from the instant you sought to be so, as you may judge by the report of my death, your brother's anger and the fancied appearance of Bertha, whom you thought you held discourse with, tho' she has been confined by illness this long time. I never thought of sending you two hundred sequins more than your allowance, as by such a gift I should have dreaded being accessory in supporting your irregularities, or even in leading you into them. The honest Piedmontese groom has been dead these eight months. But they availed themselves of my name, the better to conceal the snares they laid in your way; and not only encouraged your propensities, but sought to give you vices you had not. Every road to lead you astray was made smooth and enticing, whilst every obstacle was opposed, and every way made intricate to prevent your returning into that right path from whence you had deviated. In a word, everything was supernatural, except some little incidents that were favourable to you, and the resources you found in your own fortitude. But I must remark to you that you yourself was the author of your adventure and the principal accomplice in the deceptions to which you had so nearly fallen a victim. You dared the evil spirit, he presented him-

The Devil in Love

self in the shape of an hideous beast—you thought proper to give him a pleasing form, with all the allurements of wit and graces. He took advantage of it to gain an ascendancy over you and seduce you. He was often deficient in address, but you were obstinately blind to his mistakes and thereby furnished him with opportunities of repairing them. In short, my son, the excess of folly can only be equalled by the happiness of being delivered from the dreadful effects of your misconduct. But let past events be a lesson for you in future, and should your enemy again endeavour to tempt you (and, believe me, it is not his last stratagem) repulse him resolutely, and, above all things, never seek him in vaults.”

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