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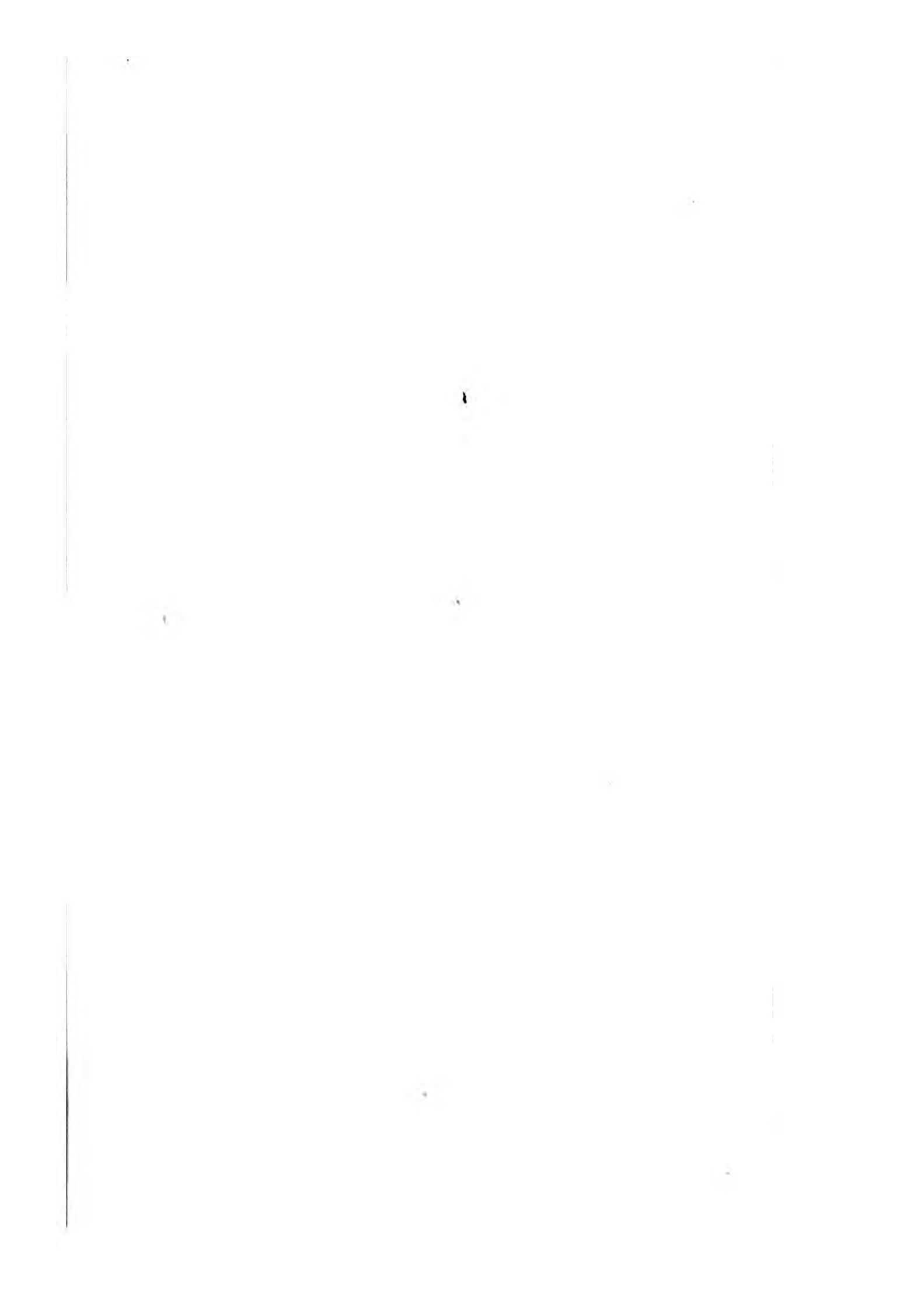




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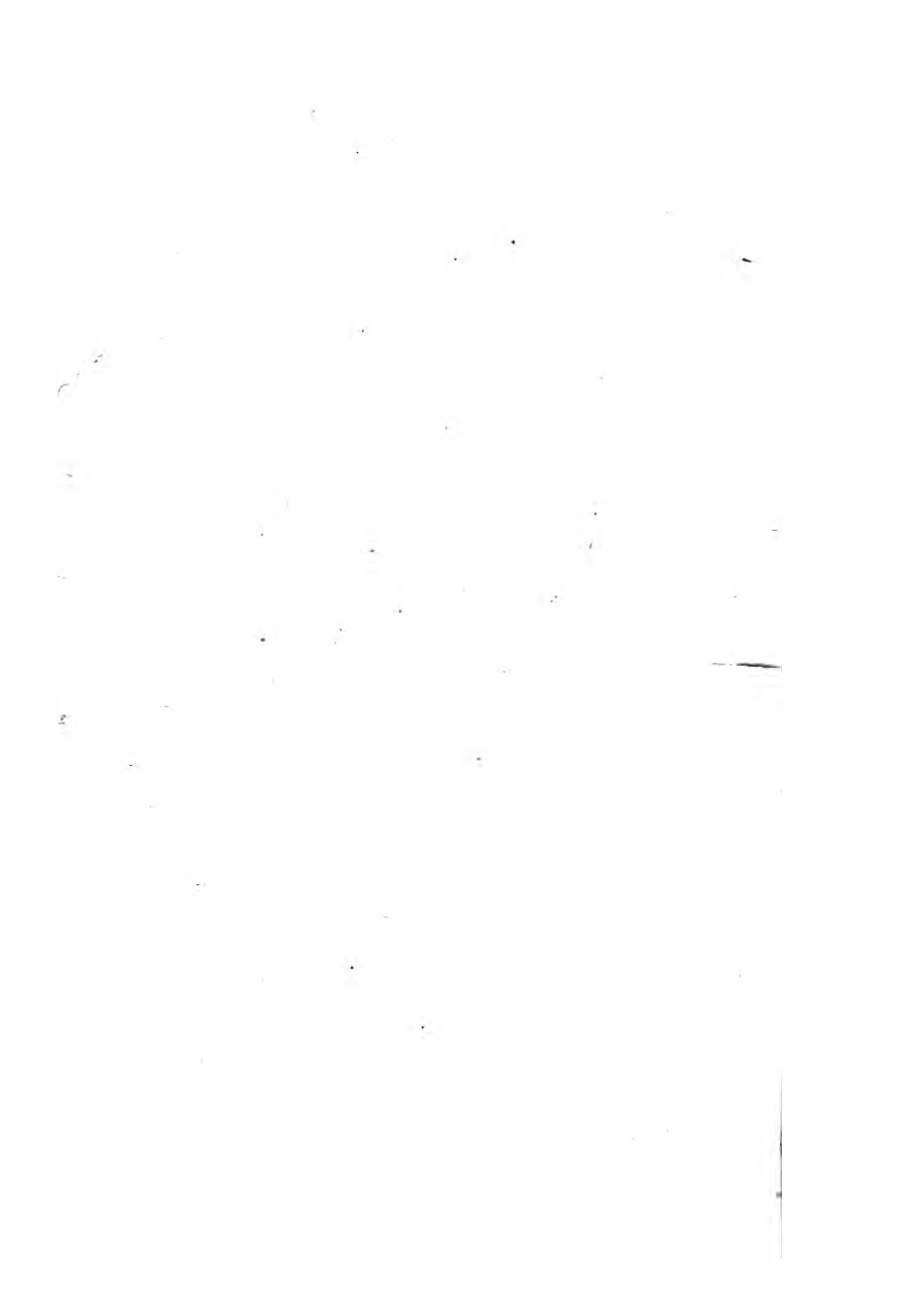




LUNA AND PEROLLO.

AN HISTORIC TALE.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.



THE
FEUDS
OF
LUNA AND PEROLLO;
OR, THE
FORTUNES
OF THE
HOUSE OF PANDOLFINA.

AN HISTORIC TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?
SHAKESPEARE.

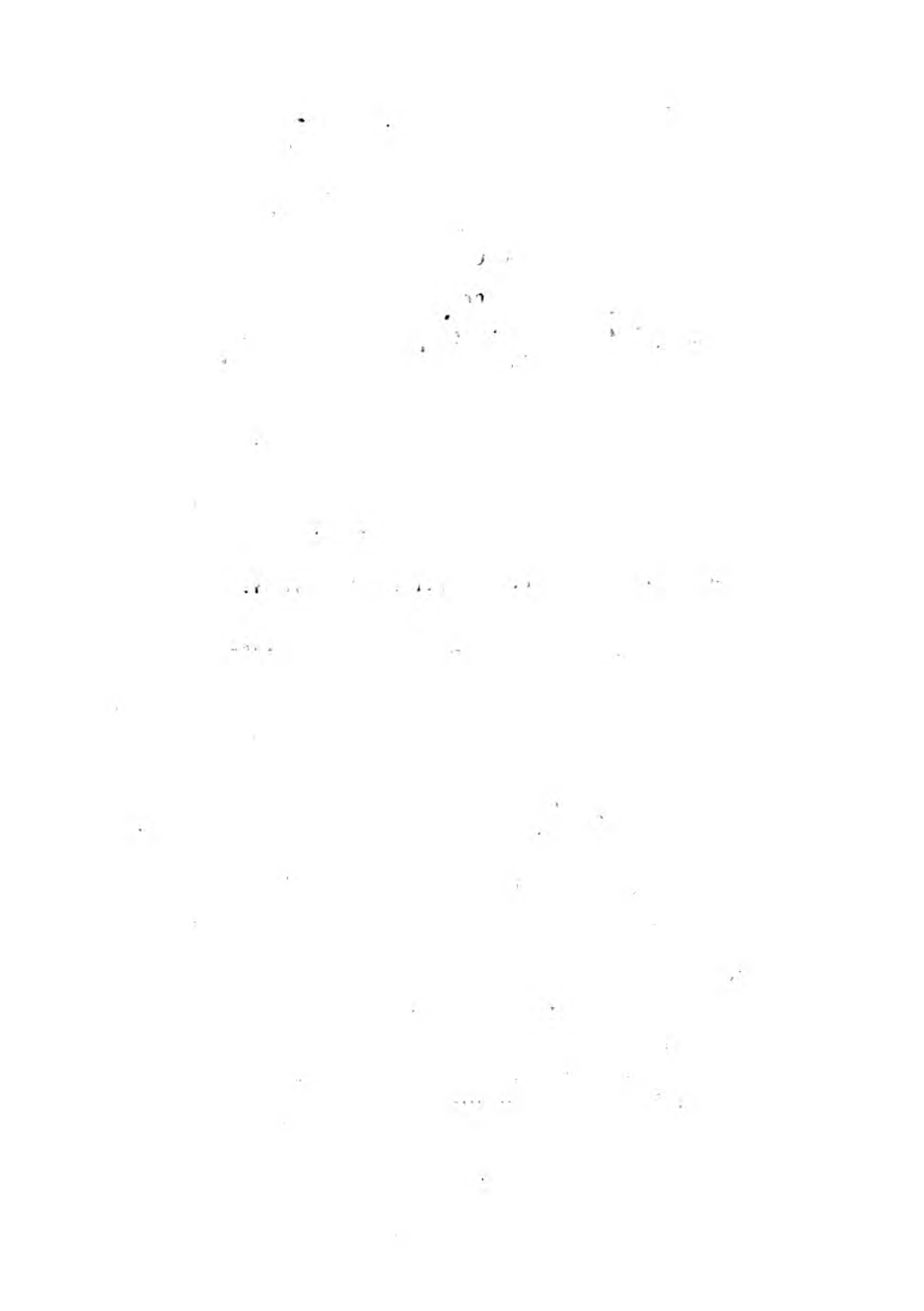
VOL. I.

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1821.



PREFACE.



THE scenes described in the following pages are accurately detailed from a manuscript which was written by a native of Sciacca, soon after the events took place, and which was purchased, in 1812, by an English gentleman during his stay in that city.

Similar instances of party hatred and animosity are to be met with in the annals of almost every Italian city during the middle ages. Milan, Padua, Florence, and Turin, were all of them disgraced by outrages equal in

atrocities ; but few have been recorded with the same minute particulars as are detailed in the manuscript of the “ Casa di Sciacca ;” nor could any of them boast a more popular chieftain, or circumstances of more ferocious barbarity : these, dreadful as they may appear, have many of them been softened down in the following work ; and throughout the whole, the characters of all the party have been traced with as much fidelity as possible.

The account of Serican is historically true, as are also all the leading events and the circumstances of the catastrophe ; nor has the author deviated from the manuscript in any essential point whatever.

The character Accursi d’Amato

may perhaps be supposed too terrific for reality, but he is described as “un’ uomo d’un diabolico ardire ;” and seems, in two or three cases, to have exceeded the measure of iniquity here ascribed to him.

The obstinate perseverance of don Geronimo Statella, in resisting the invitation of Perollo, and their conduct respecting the Imperial troops, are ascribed by the writer of the original manuscript to a fatality which they could not resist ; and nothing perhaps but their being strictly true, could have made them credible.

The author is aware that the great interest lies towards the conclusion of the work ; but so much previous detail was necessary to make the reader fully

acquainted with all the particulars and characters connected with the story, that it was unavoidable: many persons also, who are slightly mentioned in the original, are altogether left out in the following pages, as likely to produce confusion, from the introduction of so many similar names, as unavoidably occur in the detail of a family feud.

THE
FEUDS
OF
LUNA AND PEROLLO.

CHAPTER I.

Love, Hope, and Joy, fair Pleasure's smiling train ;
Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of Pain ;
These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,
Make and maintain the balance of the mind ;
The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife
Give all the strength and colour of our life. **Pope.**

IT was on the eve of the feast of Santa Rosalia, in the year 1528, that a large Spanish vessel entered the port of Palermo; and sending on shore a boat from the commander, one of the inferior officers was commissioned to give immediate intelli-

gence at the viceregal palace, of the arrival of the baroness Solanto, who had for some time been expected by his highness the duca di Monteleone, with her husband and family. Business of importance having made the presence of the baron Solanto necessary in Sicily, he had been requested by his friend the viceroy to make Palermo his head-quarters, from whence he could visit any part of the island whither his affairs might call him. The commands of his Imperial master, Charles the Fifth, had however detained the baron on the eve of his departure, and when his family had already embarked; but as the cause of his detention was not likely to be of long duration, he resolved to permit the baroness and his daughter to take advantage of the fair wind, and to follow them as soon as possible. A safe and easy voyage had now brought the baroness to the place of her destination, and she requested the captain to apprise the viceroy immediately of her arrival.

The intelligence being communicated

to his excellency, one of his favourite officers, the young Federico Perollo was directed to wait upon the lady without delay, and to escort her to the palace.

With alacrity he proceeded to execute his commission, and was received by the baroness with all the courtly elegance of the high-born Castilian, free from the unbending formality too generally conspicuous in the Spanish character.

The baroness Solanto, in her manners, was peculiarly gentle and conciliating; and though some time past her prime, still preserved vestiges of a beauty particularly soft and feminine. But her daughter, the lady Costanza di Solanto, to whom the young Perollo was introduced by her mother, attracted his attention most forcibly; brilliant in youth and beauty, he had never seen, amidst all the ladies of the Sicilian court, one whom he thought could be compared with her.

As the boat was conveying the party on shore, the baroness remarked with delight the enchanting scenery which the

shores of the bay presented: the bold promontories of Cefalu and Pelegrino formed the extremities of the amphitheatre, in which the city reared its gay and glittering pinnacles—and the hills of San Martino closed it in with a magnificent background; whilst far away to the east, the towering head of Etna rose proudly pre-eminent. Perollo joined with enthusiasm in the praises of his native island, and expressed the highest gratification at the pleasure with which the ladies contemplated the scene before them. They saw descending from Pelegrino the procession which accompanied the holy relics of Santa Rosalia from her mountain abode to the temporary resting-place prepared for them in the city.

In the serenity of a Sicilian evening, the distant strains of the choristers, swelled by the voices of the multitude who followed, mingled sweetly with the faint murmurs of the waves, as they washed the rocky shore of the Marino. The monks from all the convents in the city, in their va-

rious robes of white, black, and blue, added to the picturesque beauties of the scene; and the banners which were displayed by the attendants, gave to the whole pageant a striking air of splendour and solemnity. The boatmen paused on their oars, and crossed themselves with devotion, as they saw the sacred assembly winding through the craggy pathways of the mountain, now hid from their view by the projecting masses of rock with which their laborious way was encumbered, and now appearing fully displayed in some more open space.

A short and impressive silence was indulged in by all the party, which was at length broken by the baroness inquiring of Perollo if the festival had begun?

"The relics of the saint," he replied, "will be deposited for the night in the cathedral, and to-morrow our festivities begin."

The swelling notes of the sacred music again were wafted by the evening breeze

from the mountain-side, and again the party in the boat was silent. The rays of the setting sun had tinted every mountain-head with varying shades of purple, and even the lingering snows of Etna were tinged with a ruddy blush; whilst each rippling wave, as it passed by, was crested with the deep amethystine hue peculiar to the waters of the Mediterranean in the unclouded sunset of a summer eve.

“The Bay of Palermo does indeed exceed all the expectations I had formed of its loveliness,” said the baroness to Perollo, “and fully justifies the encomiums bestowed upon it.”

“Oh, it is—it must be the loveliest sight in nature!” answered Perollo; “the inscription in the Torre Zizza is neither false nor exaggerated.”

“To what do you allude?” asked the lady.

“Westward of the city walls,” he said, “stands an ancient Moorish tower, which some Castilian noble has of late re-edified and embellished; inscribing on its walls,

the proud, but incontrovertible boast—
“*That as Europe is the noblest of the divisions of the earth, so is Italy the garden of Europe; Sicily the loveliest of its parterres; and Palermo the fairest of the flowers which adorn it.*”

The baroness smiled at his vehemence, and Perollo, in enthusiastic language, continued to descant on the beauties of the island, and particularly of the present scene, pointing out to their notice the most striking objects it afforded—the dark forms of Mongierbino and Pelegrino rising from the bosom of the waves; the fantastic shape of the hills of La Bagaria; the majestic head of Etna, capped with smoke; and still nearer to their view, the city of Monreale on the mountains behind Palermo; and in the distance, an antique castle, perched on the summit of San Martino.

The baroness listened with gratifying attention, and by the countenance of the lady Costanza, she seemed to partake in some degree of the enthusiastic delight which inspired their young companion,

who, when they reached the shore, regretted the extraordinary rapidity with which they had performed their short voyage.

On the Marino they found a party of the viceregal attendants waiting to conduct the ladies to the palace. Perollo requested that his services might not be dispensed with; and they being courteously accepted by the baroness, he continued by the side of her palfrey until they reached their destination.

The streets of Palermo were filled with busy preparations for the approaching festival, and all seemed in anxious expectation of the gala on the morrow.

The baroness Solanto was received with distinguished kindness and attention by her illustrious host and the duchessa, to whom she had been long and intimately known; whilst the admiration excited by the lady Costanza was universal throughout the court.

The festival began on the succeeding evening, when the colossal image of the saint was conveyed, splendidly attired, in a

triumphal car, brilliantly illuminated, through the city. The size of the machine on which it is carried, elevates the figure to a level with the tops of the houses, and in different parts of the car are stationed upwards of an hundred musicians, to the sounds of whose instruments the festive hymns and shouts of the multitude arise in deep and solemn chorus. The court of the viceroy assembled in the archiepiscopal palace to grace the ceremony, and never had it displayed a more magnificent appearance.

The popular character of the duca di Monteleone, and fascinating manners of the duchessa, had endeared them to all ranks in the nation; and the homage due to their high station was paid with affection as well as respect. In the gay circles of Palermo, they appeared continually promoting the cheerfulness and unanimity of the higher classes, whilst shewing every attention and care to the wants and necessities of the lowest of the citizens.

The present occasion had assembled all

the nobles of the metropolis, who seemed to vie with each other in the magnificence of their appearance. The baroness Solanto, and her lovely daughter, were objects of attention to all; and the admiration excited by the latter was not a little heightened by the retiring modesty with which it was received.

During the early part of the evening, the young Perollo, who had been more particularly introduced to the stranger guests, as a favourite and *protégé* of the viceroy and his duchessa, was unceasing in his attentions to them, pointing out the most remarkable of the characters who filled the gay scene. They were however continually called away to the numerous persons to whom they were introduced by their highnesses; and after the first part of the ceremonies was concluded, the presence of Perollo was required in a masque, which was presented by the young nobles of the court, and which consisted of an allegorical representation of the deliverance of Italy from the French by the arms of the

Emperor, and the captivity of Francis at Pavia: the interposition of the saints in favour of the Imperial cause was maintained in heroic verse, which, with music and dancing, formed the spectacle now presented, and in which one of the most conspicuous parts was sustained by Perollo, with a propriety and grace which called forth general approbation; nor did his new friends, the Solantos, forget their thanks for the pleasure they had received, and certainly their commendations did not seem the *least* pleasing to him: their notice was however soon attracted by the vehemence with which two ladies near them were carrying on a conversation.

“It is the duchessa Camastra and signora Spinelli, the two most rigid devotees in Palermo,” said Perollo; “and they appear discussing the merits of their patron saints. The signora is a Neapolitan by birth and education, consequently opposed in all things to the prejudices of her neighbour, one of our first Sicilian dames.”

The baroness was not a little amused by

the lavish abuse with which each of the ladies was endeavouring to load the favourite of the other.

St. Gennario, the patron of Naples, was accused by the Sicilian lady of being infected with a most disloyal spirit, inclining entirely to the Guelphic faction; whilst no one, she proudly boasted, could assert that Santa Rosalia had ever worked a miracle in behalf of any but the staunchest Ghibeline; the patron of Naples had been publicly invoked by Francis himself, and strongly suspected of secretly favouring his cause, had he not been overpowered by the superior sanctity of Santa Rosalia.

“A very good little saint, indeed,” said the signora, “could her legend be authentically made out, and the value of her services really ascertained; but the miraculous blood of St. Gennario, every one must confess, is an eternal monument of its divine origin, and far transcends any thing which has ever been heard or believed of the poor little recluse of Pelegrino; besides, let me ask you, duchessa, by whose

aid was the miraculous victory of Pavia obtained?"

"Oh, Maria, defend me! signora, every one knows that it was through the blessed saints Ildefonso and Rosalia!"

The debate proceeded with increasing violence; each of the disputants apparently well inclined to bestow on her opponent the virulence which she heaped on the object of her adoration, till the superior claims of a *primero table* called them to a different employment: for this amusement however neither the Solanto family, nor the party of the viceroy, had any anxiety.

"The marquis Leonforté requests the honour of being introduced to the wife and daughter of his old friend and fellow-soldier, the baron Solanto," said his highness, presenting to the ladies a cavalier, whom they had not before seen.

"It is some time," said the marquis, "since I saw the baron Solanto; my services have been confined to the Italian war, whilst he has been engaged in the Imperial affairs in almost every nation in Europe."

“I have frequently heard the baron mention the marquis Leonforté with sentiments of the highest regard and esteem,” replied the baroness, “and particularly remember the regret which was expressed by him on the subject of your excellenza’s wound last year at the capture of Rome; from your present appearance, however, I trust that all is well again, and the only subject of regret, the loss that your confinement proved to the cause of humanity; it having been the general opinion, that the presence and exertion of such an officer might have restrained the violence of the troops during the anarchy of that unfortunate period.”

“No one could have regretted more than myself,” replied the marquis, “the scenes which then disgraced our victorious army; something still must be conceded to those feelings which the loss of our heroic general occasioned, and to the injudicious conduct of the pontiff, who, by publicly branding the German troops with the name of Lutherans, and the Spaniards

with that of Moors, had excited a personal feeling of hatred and vengeance against his sacred person in every individual throughout the army : his obstinate resistance afterwards within the walls of St. Angelo continued to increase the fury of the conquerors, and no power but that of Bourbon himself could, I fear, have curbed these lawless depredations."

"Your excellenza, I think, was with the duke at the time of his fall?"

"We were wounded nearly at the same instant, and removed to the same spot, where my lamented friend expired by my side."

"He survived his wound but a short time, I think?" said the lady.

"From the moment he received the ball, he felt the irretrievable consequence, and his chief concern appeared to be, to conceal it from the men ; the few words he uttered were expressive of his desire for victory, and pardon for the offences of his mortal enemy, the implacable Louise, who had been the first cause of all his errors and misfortunes."

The marquis remained for some time in conversation with the ladies, who did not return to the palace till a late hour in the morning.

For five successive days, the festivities were kept up with unabated ardour. On the day after the procession, a magnificent masquerade was given at the viceregal palace, to which the principal citizens, as well as the court and nobility, were invited. The lady Costanza di Solanto, habited in the most splendid costume of Spain, outshone all the beauties of Palermo. The grotesque figures of many of the guests, and the magnificence of others, rendered the motley scene particularly amusing to those to whom it could offer the charm of novelty.

The youth of Perollo had permitted him but lately to join in the gaieties of the metropolis; and the lady Costanza had been accustomed, during the absence of her father in his military duties, to the strictest retirement, from which she had never, till the present time, emerged.

She wore a robe of white satin, fitted to her beautiful form, and confined at the waist with a clasp of magnificent brilliants; her fine dark hair, braided with pearls, was partially covered with a fine lace Spanish veil, which was fastened on the top of her head, and fell in light and elegant folds over her whole person. When she entered the duchessa's private drawing-room previous to her party entering the state apartments, her highness could not help extolling the surpassing loveliness of her appearance; nor the duca refrain from some good-humoured raillery, on the malice of determining to destroy the peace of all the court, both male and female.

The blushing Costanza was confused by so much praise; but her mother looked grateful for their approbation of her child.

"Do you know," said the duchessa to her lord, "what is Perollo's character for the night?"

"Oh, no," he answered; "the disguise of the gallants for this evening is a mystery of more than state importance; so

the ladies must exercise their ingenuity in discovering them."

Almost immediately they repaired to the grand saloon, where all that Italy could produce of splendid decoration was lavishly displayed; and Costanza thought for an instant it must be enchantment—some poetic dreams realized.

The masques now began to arrive in numbers; but every body's attention was arrested by a band of Moors, who making their way to the canopy, gracefully saluted the viceregal party. They were all handsomely attired, yet seemed but as foils to their chief; he appeared from his figure to be young, but being masqued, and not having spoken, they could not guess who he was; he wore a vest and trowsers of rich green silk, embroidered in silver, his belt and dagger-hilt were studded with most costly jewels, and his robe of velvet and beautiful turban completed the costume. Having paid his devoirs to the duchessa, he approached Costanza, and bowing very low, kissed the hem of her

veil ; then in a feigned voice, asked her to dance.

Costanza, who had but a few minutes before almost determined with herself that she dare not dance in such an assembly, felt abashed and unable to answer, but encouraged by the duchessa, at last consented. The dance chosen was a bolero, in compliment to the lady's Spanish dress. She could not but be graceful in all she did; but at first timidity made her movements appear constrained—soon however the animation of her partner, the music, the many other couples who began to move about her, and, above all, the natural elasticity of youthful spirits, gave to her manner all the playful graces that dancing is so capable of admitting. No description can do justice to the elegant movements of her arms and whole person, or the lightness with which, in the quicker varieties of the bolero, she seemed to float almost in air; beating time with beautiful exactness with her feet and castanets, she was only equalled by her partner, who how-

ever seemed too intent on admiring her to think much of himself, and only danced mechanically; still his strikingly-fine figure, and firm yet graceful action, could not pass unnoticed.

The duchessa was engaged in receiving her guests, and the baroness Solanto remained for some short time silently watching the dancers, when her attention was attracted by the conversation of two ladies near her, which at first she listened to, almost unconsciously, till at length the interest it excited rivetted her to the spot.

"I have no doubt," said one of them, in answer to a question from the other, "that it must be the young Perollo; there is not a gallant in the court, whose figure, or whose dancing, could be mistaken for don Federico: did you see anything of his family in your late visit to Sciacca?"

"My connexion with the house of Luna rendered it impossible to be acquainted with any of the family of baron Pandolfina; but in public I had frequent opportunities

of seeing them, and I think that don Federico bids fair to resemble his father, who, in spite of the abhorrence of my relative, the countess Caltabellotta, is certainly most captivating in his manners and address."

"Is the countess still as amiable and agreeable as ever?"

"Do not mention her, my dear friend; the bare idea makes me shudder; were it not for my regard for don Sigismund, nothing should tempt me to venture again within the walls of Luna Castle; but Sigismund, with all his faults, will ever be an object of affection to his friends."

"The death of the countess Lucretia must have been a great shock to his feelings."

"Perhaps, my dear Antonia, not so severe as may be supposed; her temper too much resembled his mother's, and he himself is not the gentlest of men; besides, there are reports of his having entered into another engagement—but with whom I know not; however, be the lady who she

may, she has my sincerest pity and compassion."

The baroness Solanto gave an involuntary start; the ladies, however, proceeded in their conversation without noticing any one near them.

"Don Sigismund is young, handsome, and rich; report speaks well of him, and I see no reason why he should not be one of the most desirable matches in Sicily."

"To count Luna himself," said the other, "perhaps few ladies would object; but there is something in the countess, his mother, beyond even her temper and manners, which inspires me with a horror indescribable: besides, it is whispered in Sciacca——" Here the speaker lowered her voice, and the baroness looking towards her, saw her companion express the utmost horror at what she heard—at length she said—"Impossible! what motive could excite her to such atrocity?"

"Hatred, Antonia—deadly, implacable hatred, which governs with imperious sway the actions of the countess."

“ And who is to succeed the ill-fated Lucretia, you have not heard ?”

“ No ; a mysterious silence is preserved in that family on all subjects ; and I believe this is known only to the countess and the baron Adriano.”

“ Geronimo Peralta ?” said the other, in a tone of interrogation.

“ The same ; one of the dearest friends of Sigismund, and one of the most dangerous.”

Some cavalier now approached the ladies and interrupted them.

Deeply interested in all that related to count Luna, the baroness Solanto had in this short conversation heard enough to furnish subject for reflections of no pleasing nature : the father of don Sigismund had been a particular friend of her husband, and she had motives of no small weight to make her wish to discover his real character ; of the temper and manners of the countess his mother, she had before heard very unpromising accounts ; but it

was the disposition and character of the count in which she was most interested. Fame spoke loudly in praise of his personal appearance, of his warm affection to his friends, and devotion to his mother, whose temper frequently put his filial duty to a hard trial. That he was impetuous and headstrong was acknowledged; but as the baroness did not expect to find him without imperfections, she flattered herself these might be softened down by affection and tenderness. In vain she attempted to persuade herself that what she had just heard was merely the gossip of the day; but there was no motive to hide or to magnify the faults of those who had been the subjects of conversation.

The dancing having ceased for a time, Costanza was reconducted to her mother by the cavalier with whom she had been engaged, and the reflections of the baroness were by their approach diverted for a time into another channel. With a profound obeisance the gallant Moor expressed his delight at the honour conferred upon him

by the lady Costanza, and disguising his voice as much as possible, he was entering into conversation with the ladies when the old count Jaci joined them.

“ You are too recently come amongst us, baroness Solanto,” he said, “ to be acquainted with the masquers of the court; let me unriddle to you the hidden characters of the night.”

“ The count will use us all most unmercifully,” said the Moor; “ ladies, beware of his satire, and make all the allowance you can for the unfortunate victims he may single out.”

“ Surely you, don Giovanni,” said the count, “ need be under no alarm; we have not, madam, a more discreet cavalier within the walls of the city, than this gentleman, don Giovanni Pescara.”

“ I had mistaken the noble Moor,” said the baroness, “ for a younger character, don Federico Perollo.”

“ Really,” replied the count, with a smile, “ Federico would be indebted to you, but he has so many objects of adoration

amongst the ladies here, that he would scarcely be able to offer his homage to any new attraction, though he has the character of being the most inconstant of our gallants."

"I never knew," replied the Moor, "that Perollo had any attachment, or was accused by any one of inconstancy."

"Oh! you are not in his confidence, don Giovanni, and mistake the character of Perollo; I can give you a better idea of him."

The Moor impatiently endeavoured to change the conversation, and separate the ladies from their new companion.

The count however most perseveringly kept his ground.—"Yonder," he said, "is the object of our discussion," pointing to one of the band of Moors who had entered with their companion, and who was evidently making vehement love to a lady by whom he was seated.

"Surely you are mistaken," said the Moor; "it is the marquis Roccaforte, who is taller and thinner than Perollo."

"I grant you that Roccaforte is the taller of the two, but let the ladies judge if that cavalier is not don Federico."

The baroness smiled, and acquiesced with the count, evidently to the great discomposure of the Moor.

"He seems particularly attentive to the lady," said the count; "the manners of Perollo are, I doubt not, peculiarly fascinating to his female friends, and more so, perhaps, from his generally selecting some one, whose years or whose personal charms have not so many attractions for others."

"A singular taste for a youth like Perollo," observed the baroness.

"His vanity is doubtless gratified by the pleasure with which his attentions are received."

"This is really insufferable, signor!" exclaimed the Moor.

Jaci looked at him with affected surprise.—"I did not know, signor Pescaro, you were so tender of the tastes and dispositions of your friends; I am the last person in the world who would wish to

be censorious, or to hurt the feelings of any of the admirers of Perollo, who is, upon the whole, a very good youth; but you must allow that he has two or three faults."

"Doubtless, signor; but surely he is not guilty of the absurdities you mention."

"Mere trifles," continued the count; "I can tell you several other instances of his taste, which I am sure will amuse you vastly; and you may hint them to don Federico hereafter, with a due regard to his feelings, of which I would have you as tender as I should be; and be particularly careful not to allude to them at any improper time."

"Permit me to attend you to the duchessa," said the Moor; "she is looking round as if in search of you."

"I believe it would be charity to accept your offer," said the baroness, with a smile, "and the count Jaci may accompany us; it would be unfortunate should your friend Perollo lose his instructive hints."

"I told your excellenza how satirical

the count could be ; you must not attend to his reflections on Perollo, or any other unfortunate wight who may fall beneath his lash."

" Having disarmed the violence of my blows, signor Giovanni," said the count, " I may now proceed to narrate two or three anecdotes of your friend, without hurting your sensibility." The old gentleman then detailed an instance of the heroism and gallantry of don Federico, who had during the preceding winter exposed his life to the utmost peril in rescuing some shipwrecked mariners, whose vessel was driven on the rocks under Pelegrino. The violence of the storm was such, that no one dared venture to their aid, till the spirit and humanity of Perollo excited some of the boatmen of the city to venture with him, and they succeeded in saving the unfortunate men from the imminent danger to which they were exposed. For this generous act Perollo had received the public thanks and commendations of

the viceroy, and all Palermo had resounded with his praises.

The ladies frequently interrupted the detail, with exclamations of satisfaction and admiration; but the Moor preserved the strictest silence, and seemed equally distressed as when listening to the raillery which had been previously levelled at Perollo.

“Why, signor Giovanni,” said the count, when he had concluded, “you seem to take but little interest in the exploits of your friend; I expected you would have been loud in his praises; what a dreadful thing is jealousy and envy! it is the bane of every virtue; beware, signor, of indulging in so horrible a vice.” With a low bow to the ladies, Jaci departed; but the vivacity of the Moor for some time was repressed, till the dancing again summoned him and his fair partner to join in its amusements, when he was once again all joy and animation. At the close of the dance, when he led the lady Costanza to her mother, the duchessa, who was stand-

ing by, inquired if she had yet discovered her African friend?

“At first,” she replied, “I thought I could not be mistaken, but the count Jaci has now disclosed the secret.”

“Jaci,” said the duchessa, “was more likely to mislead than to direct you; shall I introduce you?”

“Spare me, for pity’s sake!” said the mask, in his natural voice, thrown off his guard by the proposal of her highness.

“Oh! signor Perollo! it is—it must be signor Perollo!” cried Costanza.

The baroness smiled.—“For myself,” she said, “I was not deceived by the count’s feigned mistake.”

Perollo, at first, was rather confused at the discovery, but it soon wore away; and during the remainder of the evening he continued the life and spirit of the circle.

On the fifth day the feast concluded, with a splendid illumination in the cathedral, the effect of which was peculiarly striking. Every ornament of the external architecture was traced out in lines of

light, from its base to its highest pinnacle, and thousands of lamps suspended from the roof, gave the most brilliant effect to the interior of the venerable pile, whilst the dark pillars of the porphyry tombs, under which are deposited the remains of the ancient monarchs of Sicily, still frowned in gloomy majesty, forming a striking contrast to the gay scene exhibited by the assembled multitude, in whom were displayed all that was splendid and *gallant* in the court and city of Palermo. Loudly the sacred music resounded through every aisle, and the enthusiastic devotion of the people keeping pace with the gorgeous pomp of Catholic ceremonies, was raised to a pitch, in which the coldest sceptic, or the gloomiest disciple of Calvin, could scarcely have failed to participate, however they might have argued or resisted its temptations, when the effect had ceased to act upon their senses.

The baroness Solanto and her daughter had no counteracting feeling, no sentiments which did not fully coincide with the re-

ligion of those around them ; they partook in sincerity and truth of the devotion of the time, and declared that the feast of Santa Rosalia was one of the most splendid and imposing ceremonies they had ever witnessed.

For some time the guests of the viceroy awaited patiently the arrival of the baron ; but weeks, and even months, wore away, and he was still delayed at Madrid, though almost in daily expectation of being enabled to join his family at Palermo.

During this time, the kindness of the viceroy and the duchessa were unwearied ; their friendship and regard seemed to have gained strength from their increased knowledge of their guests, whilst the admiration of Perollo had grown up unperceived into a passion, of which he himself scarcely knew the force. The viceroy, who thought he perceived some danger of it in the early part of their acquaintance, had cautioned Federico against indulging any hopes upon the subject, by observing, that there were reasons, which would make such a con-

nexion impossible, and that the profession of a soldier, for which he was intended, ought to prevent, for a considerable time at least, any idea of the sort from entering his imagination. The baroness Solanto also evidently discouraged any particular attention shewn to her daughter; and the delicacy of the lady Costanza checked every thing which had the slightest appearance of more than politeness and respect. A circumstance, which conduced very much to the intimacy with the Solanto family, to which Federico was admitted, was the discovery of an early friendship, which had subsisted between his mother and the baroness, both being daughters of Castilian nobles, and educated in the same convent at Madrid.

Donna Victoria Moncada had however quitted Spain immediately after her marriage with don Giacomo Perollo, and from that time resided entirely in Sicily. Her husband, the baron Pandolfina, was the head of the illustrious house of Perollo, who, from their high descent, their vast

possessions, and, above all, from the highly-popular character of don Giacomo, were inferior to none of the nobles of Sicily in influence and power. An early attachment, which began in the court of Charles the Fifth, caused the viceroy to regard the baron Pandolfina almost with the affection of a brother; and immediately after his arrival in Palermo, to take possession of his government, he had entreated that the heir of Pandolfina might be committed to his charge, which being complied with, the young Federico was placed among the number of his pages, until an opportunity offered of introducing him into the military profession—and such had now occurred.

The ensuing spring, it was expected, would be distinguished by the most strenuous efforts of the emperor, to drive the French from their few remaining possessions in the Milanese, which most probably would be followed by an irruption into France. During the autumn, the viceroy of Sicily had been making the most ac-

tive exertions to collect all the strength of the island in aid of the Imperial cause; levies of men had been made with great promptness and expedition, the Imperial taxes called in, and their feudal services required from the tenants of the crown.

In the approaching spring, the forces were to march to Messina, to be in readiness for embarkation; and many others of the young nobility had, like Perollo, eagerly enrolled themselves in a cause which had been marked by such brilliant success. Amongst them was also Gaetano Pignatelli, the most intimate friend of Perollo, and a nephew of the viceroy, who had for some time been stationed with the new levies at Trapani, but received permission from his uncle to spend the winter with Perollo and his family at Sciacca, the place of their residence for many centuries.

The baroness Solanto and her daughter still remained with the viceroy, at the time of Federico's departure, the baron having been employed by his sovereign on an embassy to France, and the hospitality of the

viceroi not permitting the baroness to remove, as she proposed, to a separate residence; but the business on which Solanto had been occupied being now completed, he was daily expected in Palermo; what place would then be the residence of his family, was however unknown to all but the viceroy and the duchessa, their private affairs having never been mentioned even in the presence of Perollo; but when they separated, and the baroness charged him with her remembrances to his mother, she intimated that the arrangements of the baron might probably bring her to Sciacca.

With a feeling of indefinable regret, Perollo bade adieu to the two ladies, scarcely daring to inquire into the cause. He had received every discouragement to any hopes he might have been inclined to form; nor had he yet even allowed himself to think that he regarded the lady Costanza with any other idea than that of admiration and profound respect.

When taking leave of his noble patron on the eve of his departure, Federico re-

ceived from him private dispatches for his father. His highness repeated his assurances of esteem and affection, charging him to use every means in his power to induce the baron to accompany him to Messina in the spring; and exhorting Perollo to avoid involving himself in any of the feuds with which Sciacca was disturbed, dismissed him with kind wishes for his journey, and flattering desires for his return, which he promised not to require, till the departure of the troops should render it unavoidable.

CHAPTER II.
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And now, fair dames, methinks I see  
You listen to my minstrelsy ;  
Your waving locks ye backward throw,  
And sidelong bend your necks of snow :  
Ye ween to hear a melting tale  
Of two true lovers in a dale ;  
Alas ! fair dames, your hopes are vain !

WALTER SCOTT.

THE morning dawned through mist and clouds, as Federico rode from the Porta Reale ; but the wind rose gently, and soon dispersed the gloom which threatened to hang over the first part of his journey. With no small regret the young traveller had quitted the inmates of the palace ; but on the other hand, joyfully he anticipated the meeting with his family, and the society of his friend Gaetano. Slowly he wound up the craggy road to Monreale, and when arrived at the summit of the

hill, turned to take a parting view of the Conca d'Oro.

The sun just rising from the bay of Palermo, lighted the towers and spires of the city with a blaze of splendour, finely contrasted with the brilliant verdure of the orange-groves and plains behind it. Refreshed by the showers which had recently fallen, nature appeared to be recovering from the effects of the summer heats, and the approach of a Sicilian winter was, as usual, marked with the characteristics of a northern spring. The amphitheatre of mountains, which bounded the scene from Termini to Pelegrino, were tinted with the richest hues of morning, save where some of the loftiest peaks began to display their wintry covering of hail and snow: the white sails of the fishing-boats were gradually spreading over the bay, whose waves sparkled with a dazzling lustre; on the opposite side the valley, the little town of Parco, romantically seated on the brow of a hill, added to the variety of the scenery; and immediately beside the

delighted spectator arose the venerable and majestic cathedral of Monreale, one of the finest works of Norman magnificence which any country can boast.

The enthusiastic feelings of Perollo were forcibly excited by the surpassing beauty of the view before him, and he felt assured, as he gazed upon its charms, that no country on earth could vie with his native land; the objects around him, combined with the refreshing breezes of the morning, gave to his spirits an elasticity, of which youth alone is susceptible: to his fervid imagination all things seemed possible. As his eye sought the distant towers of the palace, over which the Imperial banner was gaily waving, his thoughts rested on the lady Costanza di Solanto; the cautions of the viceroy were almost forgotten; it is true, he had never yet seriously reflected upon the subject, or considered the nature of those sentiments which she had excited in his breast; but it was with unfeigned delight that his mind dwelt on the hope which the baron-



ess had held out, of their meeting in Sciacca, and of the renewal of that intercourse which he began to think of consequence to his happiness. The ensuing campaign, he trusted, would afford him an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and of acquiring those honours for which he impatiently panted, and which, when added to his hereditary claims, might render him worthy of his name and of his country. He would perhaps have indulged himself for some time longer in these reflections, and in contemplating the view before him, had not his servant Baptista and the muleteer who attended, grown impatient to proceed.

“We have a long journey to Alcamo, signor,” said the servant, “and if we loiter on the road, must expect to be late in the woods, which our guide tells me are terribly infested by banditti, who commit numberless murders.”

“Indeed, Baptista!” replied his master; “methinks it is strange that no complaint of these outrages has reached the viceroy; however, quiet your alarms, and by a lit-

the expedition we may soon recover the few moments I have wasted here."

Again the party set forward, and a short time brought them to the uncultivated plains beyond Monreale, when leaving the road to Corleone on the left, they entered the narrow valley which leads to the flat expanse of country called the Sal di Partinico; the pass is for some way contracted into a deep ravine, between two vast and rugged rocks, enormous masses of which hang beetling over the pathway, and threaten by their fall to crush the passing traveller.

"Santissima Vergine!" exclaimed the guide, as they entered the gorge of this tremendous spot, and crossed himself with extreme devotion.

"Did you see any one?" cried Baptista, in a tone of terror.

"Any one!" said the man; "there were at least four or five of the most ferocious-looking ruffians I ever beheld; but one of them I shall never forget."

The countenance of the domestic exhi-

bited signs of extreme alarm, and he implored the man to explain himself.

“It is now some months ago——”

“Some months ago!” interrupted Baptista; “I thought you had a glimpse of them this instant.”

“No, signor Baptista, it is now some months since, in this very place, I was witness to an affair, which I have no doubt ended in a most bloody murder.”

Baptista urged his steed as near as possible to that of his companion, and, breathless from impatience and anxiety, entreated him to narrate the circumstances.

“Why, as to that,” said the man, “some of the same party may, for aught I know, be still lurking about in the clefts of these rocks, where doubtless,” (he added in an under tone) “we might find the remains of the miserable victim they had seized, whose cries for mercy are still ringing in my ears, and I almost expect to see the gigantic leader of the band start on us from some angle of the road.”

Baptista glanced a fearful and hasty view

around; but the sun was shining brightly on the scene; his companions were well armed, and no object appeared to justify his terrors—"Perhaps we had better wait," he said, "till we are through the pass; yet no one could overhear, if you spoke in a low voice, and, of course, we cannot be in danger."

"That is as it may be," said the muleteer. "The poor fellow they seized was just such another in appearance as yourself, with nothing about him which could excite an idea of valuable plunder; and the persons who took him certainly did not resemble common banditti."

The prudence of Baptista held a conflict with his curiosity, and he was silent for a few moments.

"What were the circumstances to which you allude?" asked Federico.

"Why, if your *eccellenza* wishes to be informed, I must tell you, that a few months back——"

"We had better wait, if your *eccellenza*

pleases, till we are through the ravine," interrupted Baptista.

Federico smiled at the caution of the valet, and bade the man proceed in his narration.

Travelling the same road, he said, some time since, he was approaching Partinico towards the close of the day, and had just reached the entrance to the defile, when a shrill whistle echoed amidst the rocks, and three or four men rushed upon him; in an instant he was dismounted, and they were proceeding to secure him, when two other persons joined the party, and from the tone of authority they assumed, were evidently the leaders of the band. The gigantic figure and dark habiliments of the principal of the two, seemed to have made a deep impression on the mind of the narrator. In a voice of impatient anger, he commanded the men to quit their captive, and pointed to another traveller, who had at the moment entered the pass; before the terrified and astonished muleteer could effect his escape, he saw the



unfortunate victim, for whom he supposed himself to be mistaken, seized by the ruffians, torn from his horse, bound, and, in spite of his vehement cries and supplications, borne from his sight, by the road through which he had entered the defile.

Taking advantage of the confusion, the muleteer succeeded in gaining the plains, where he concealed himself in the thickets, and soon saw the tall cavalier returning at a furious rate, apparently in search of him, upon which his alarm was so great, that he remained in the covert, until the shades of night enabled him to reach Partinico unperceived.

Federico inquired if any one had been missing from the neighbourhood, or any traces seen of the body of the murdered victim?

The man answered in the negative, but confessed that his terror and alarm, lest he should incur the danger of discovery by the chieftain, or any of his band, had prevented him from making any particu-



lar inquiries. The slight view he had caught of the features of the former, had impressed him with boundless fear, and he described him with all the exaggeration of his horror-stricken fancy. The dark plumes waving over his cap, gave additional fierceness to the lurid glances of his eye, and the cloak in which he was enveloped threw an imposing air of mystery around his lofty figure; the portrait was sketched in such vivid colours as to cause the height of alarm in Baptista, and excite considerable mirth in Perollo, who added not a little to the fears of his domestic, by loudly expressing a desire to obtain an interview with this supernatural-looking being.

Without any incident, the party reached Partinico, (the supposed site of the ancient Palamita, which was built by Æneas and his Trojan followers). After resting here a few hours, they again began their journey, and crossed the fertile plain, through long avenues of olive trees, till they arrived at Valguenara, a small town

upon a hill, surrounded by marshy grounds, which during the summer months cause such an infectious atmosphere, that the few inhabitants appear afflicted with all the varieties of disease and deformity incident to Malaria. In a small chapel adjoining an old palace belonging to the Gravi-na family, a solitary priest was saying mass to a congregation consisting of two old women, and the attendants of Federico seemed inclined to halt, and offer up their vows for a safe deliverance from the woods of Alcamo, which however they passed without any incident, and arrived at the place of their destination just as the vesper bell was sounding from the Capuchin convent without the city.

Alcamo having no attraction to detain him, and being anxious to reach Trapani, Perollo started early the next morning, with an intention of visiting the ruins of Segesta on his way. Although it might have been an extraordinary circumstance for a native of the island to be interested in its beauties and its wonders, yet the

care of the viceroy had given to his *protégée*, in the Jesuit father Pasquale, an instructor, whose classical learning and elegant erudition had excited in him that taste which was just beginning to awaken in the most refined courts of Europe; and Federico Perollo, with the natural quickness and enthusiasm of his countrymen, had availed himself of the advantages he had thus received; he contemplated with delight the beauties of his native land, and, with eagerness and pride, had listened to the classic tales of her historic fame and splendour: it was then impossible that he should pass by one of her finest relics unremembered and unseen; and impatient as he was to join Gaetano, the temple at Segesta had irresistible attractions for Perollo.

From Alcamo he proceeded through a wild and dreary waste, unmarked by any appearance of life or civilization; not even a wild olive-tree to cheer the scene of solitary desolation, and nothing more amusing than his own reflections, and the lamentations of Baptista, at the loss of time this

excursion from the main road must occasion, with a sad recapitulation of the miseries of travelling, and a doleful remembrance of the ease and pleasure to be found in Palermo. After a journey of two hours and a half, having crossed, with some difficulty, a stream of water much swollen by the autumnal rains, on winding round an angle in the road, the object of their visit appeared before them.

Placed on the summit of a hill in silent lonely grandeur, stands the temple of Segesta, perfect in all its parts; the plain and unadorned magnificence of its structure forcibly arrested the traveller's attention, whilst its symmetry, its simple beauty, and the imposing site on which it stood, filled him with admiration and delight; with impatience he hurried up the steep side of the hill, to contemplate the interior of the building; here, however, he was somewhat disappointed, the coarseness of the stone, and total absence of ornament, though grand and impressive in the whole, rather diminished the satisfaction which Federico had

expected from a more minute inspection of this fine remnant of other ages.

From the temple itself he at length turned to the surrounding objects. On one side it commanded a view down the valley by which he had approached ; on the other, the scene expanded over a vast extent of country ; on the north it looked down a steep and rocky defile, the stones of which were tinted with all the varied hues of the mosses and lichens which covered them ; and on the south lay the ruined walls and fragments, which once formed the strength and splendour of the city of Segesta. Federico had no cicerone with him to give a name to every loose heap of stones, which accident or design had thrown together—he had no one to point out the situation of palaces and temples, which perhaps had never existed ; but his imagination, in wandering amidst the low walls and fallen fragments of this once-populous and now-abandoned city, could, with a sensation of melancholy satisfaction, call back the former ages of Sicilian great-



ness; and connecting the past, the present, and the future, he had wandered on, absorbed in thought, ignorant of and unheeding the lapse of time, till he was suddenly roused from his reverie by the sound of some one rapidly approaching; at the same time Baptista and the muleteer riding up, he concluded it was from them the sounds proceeded; but on turning round a projection of the ruins, he saw two persons not belonging to his suite. Though surprised at such an unexpected rencounter, Perollo might have supposed them travellers like himself, brought there from curiosity, but for the exclamations of Baptista, and evident alarm of the muleteer.

“Who are these strangers,” demanded Perollo, “whose appearance has excited such wonder and dismay?”

“Oh, signor, the guide declares that it is the same dreadful cavalier he saw in the pass of Partinico; had I known this last night, I should not have felt so secure under the same roof with him.”



“Did you not make out in Alcamo the name of the gentleman? Surely, Baptista, you might have satisfied your curiosity, if he took up his quarters at the convent.”

“For two hours, signor, I last night endeavoured, in vain, to make it out, which I am sure I should have been more cautious in doing, had I entertained an idea that it was the same person of whom we yesterday heard so fearful a history.”

Federico inquired of the muleteer, if the person they had just seen was the same who had committed the outrage he had described in the defile near Partinico?

“From the imperfect view I had of the cavalier,” he replied, “and terror I was in, I may have been mistaken; but two such men, and both so alike in dress as well as in size, surely cannot be found in Sicily; I recognised him at the first glance, and urged Baptista to make all possible speed to inform you of our danger.”

“Taking it for granted that it is the same,” replied Perollo, “I see no reason to suppose that any attack was meditated

upon us, or that we could have cause to fear the prowess of an inferior number of assailants, though this gigantic knight had found a companion of similar dimensions to himself, and one attendant was the whole of his train. You have seen no one besides lurking amongst the ruins?"

"Santissima Maria forbid!" ejaculated the man, looking fearfully around.

"We shall all be inevitably murdered!" cried Baptista; "he is gone for the rest of his troop, and will return before we can possibly effect our escape. Oh that we had received absolution before we left Palermo, or that I had never quitted it!"

"Let us hope your confessions will not come too late, Baptista," said his master, "if you delay them till we arrive in Trapani; and in the meantime let me hear what you saw of this gentleman at Alcamo. At present you need be under no alarm, for had he meditated an open attack, he would not have come thus singly, and been obliged to retire for further aid."

A little assured, though still under the

influence of considerable terror, the servant proceeded to state, that soon after they had reached the convent on the preceding evening, the cavalier had arrived attended by a single domestic. Of the former, however, Baptista had seen but little, for one glimpse at his dark and ill-favoured countenance, he said, was all he could obtain, and that it looked as little like a sick man as the expedition to Segesta—"Tired as I was," continued the valet, "I found up his attendant; but all I could make out from him was, that his master was in ill health, had left Palermo some hours later than he intended, and was much fatigued by the exertions he had made to reach Alcamo that evening. This, I assure you, signor, is all I could discover; though I communicated to the uncivil fellow all our intended movements, and confided to him all our plans, telling him that your excellenza——"

"Truly, Baptista, your communications to a stranger were highly discreet and laudable; it matters not indeed who knows

our route ; but in future it may be as well not to proclaim to all the world who and what we are."

" Your excellenza thinks then," replied Baptista, with some emotion, " that they have some evil designs on foot—perhaps are part of don Sigismund di Luna's banditti."

" Count Luna can feel no personal enmity towards me, I should think," said Perollo, " nor can I perceive any possible connexion to exist between him and the perpetrators of the deed to which the muleteer was witness ; for myself, I have been fortunately removed from Sciacca too early to be involved in the feuds of the families there, and sincerely hope that time will, ere long, altogether extinguish them."

" Impossible, signor, that the families of Luna and Perollo should forget their old grievances, and be friends ; and unless the count and all his family should have shut themselves up in Bivonia, we shall not be long in Sciacca without feeling the effect of their hatred and malice : and who

does your excellenza suppose these persons to be, unless they belong to don Sigismund?"

"Granting the cavalier to be the same gentleman of whom you yesterday heard the alarming history, I should suppose him to be some resident in this neighbourhood, entirely unconnected with the inhabitants of Sciacca, where the chieftains of Luna, I believe, have always resided; nor is even their castle at Bivonia often used by them as a place of abode."

"No, signor; formerly I have heard it was a stronghold belonging to the Peralta family, and the Castel di Luna being incapable of resisting any military assault, the counts of Luna have kept their mountain fortress as a place of resort, in case at any time their outrages should provoke their neighbours to punish them as they deserve, and they have continually been adding to its fortifications."

"By the recent death of the countess Lucretia, his wife, which was, I understand, sudden and unexpected," observed Perollo,



"the count must be occupied in other cares than those of enmity to our house, or hostility against his neighbours."

"Your excellenza will excuse me, but the case is quite the reverse. Don Sigismund is, I understand, again on the eve of matrimony."

"Matrimony!" exclaimed Perollo; "why his wife has not been dead above eighteen months."

"No matter, signor; that she is dead, so much the better for don Sigismund, and so much the worse for the lady with whom he is now in treaty."

"How so, Baptista?"

"Why, signor, it is a well-known fact, that the last marriage of the count was an engagement entered into by the old contessa his mother, for the probable advantage of the family, without consulting the inclinations of the parties concerned; and the spirit of the late lady Lucretia resembling that of don Sigismund, all his quarrelsome dispositions found employment at home, without disturbing the old family



feuds: the present treaty may be some time before it is brought to a conclusion, and the lady may be of a more gentle spirit than her predecessor; in either case count Luna will find his time hang heavy on his hands, unless he can renew his contests with your excellenza's family and friends."

"So then, in consequence of his wife's death, we are to arm ourselves for warlike measures, it being essential to the happiness of don Sigismund to have discord either at home or abroad."

"Certainly, signor; but by this new treaty of marriage, he appears to be inclined to renew the internal commotions of his castle."

"He must then have sufficient employment upon his hands, and being interested in shewing a few symptoms of love and gentleness, we shall not find him so turbulent and hostile as you seem to expect."

"Well, signor, nothing, I perceive, can put you on your guard against the stratagems of your enemies."

“ Not being aware of having any, your cautions, Baptista, are thrown away.”

“ Does your *eccellenza* then think nothing of the extraordinary conduct of these strangers?”

“ Upon my word,” said Perollo, laughing, “ I can see nothing mysterious or alarming in our meeting at Segesta, nor in the valet’s declining to answer your impertinent questions; much less can I predict any danger of attack from a sick cavalier, attended by a single domestic. You must have given your last night’s acquaintance a terrible idea of your valour.”

“ But can your *eccellenza* suppose that these heaps of rubbish and ruined walls can have attractions sufficient to bring a gentleman, who was really indisposed, so far out of his way? He had much better have quickened his pace to the *madonna di Trapani*, and prayed for his recovery, than have exposed himself to the fatigue of a ride over these hills for nothing, as he did not even ascend to the old building with which your *eccellenza* seemed so en-

raptured ; we saw him ride up the valley but a few minutes before we joined you with the horses."

During this conversation they had remounted, and proceeded on their way to Trapani, crossing the flat and marshy lands which extend round the base of Mount St. Giuliano, where, in days of yore, stood the temple of the Erycinian Venus. Ceasing to attend to the harangues of his servant, the thoughts of Federico had wandered far away from the scenes around him. The event which had excited such wonder and dismay in his attendants, was soon forgotten in the variety of other reflections with which his mind was occupied. From the anticipation of his meeting with Gaetano, his imagination had travelled on to the delight of seeing again his family in Sciacca ; in Sciacca too he hoped once more to enjoy the society of the baroness Solanto and the lady Costanza.

In the spring, he should have the pain of bidding adieu to those who were dearest to him on earth, to enter on the perils

of a military life ; but if, as he fondly hoped, his exertions should be crowned with the praise and approbation of his commander, how proudly should he once again revisit his native land, and receive the gratulations of his friends ! perhaps the smiles and welcome of the lady Costanza di Solanto might brighten his return. Without any distinct idea why or wherefore, every subject of his meditations seemed to terminate in the same object, to revolve round the same centre, the lovely heiress of Solanto.

In the bustle and gaiety of Palermo, when in the daily habit of meeting, Federico had perhaps thought of his Spanish friends less than he did now, when left to himself alone for subjects of reflection ; yet had any one accused him of being in love with the lady Costanza, he might, and probably with truth, have denied the accusation ; or had their future destinies brought them no more within the sphere of each other's knowledge, the impressions he had received would perhaps have passed away

with other phantasies incidental to the fervour and romance of youth.

Arrived in Trapani, Perollo found his friend Gaetano in anxious expectation of him, and not less delighted than himself at meeting once again; mutual details fully occupied them for the remainder of the day; but the first joyous effusions of their happiness had scarcely passed away, when Federico thought he observed a slight cloud hanging over the usually-buoyant spirits of his companion, and anxiously inquired the cause.

"A misfortune," he replied, "which has befallen a friend of mine, has of late occupied much of my time and thoughts; to-morrow I will introduce you to don Vincentio, and inform you of the particulars of his melancholy loss, in which I know you will feel, as I do, the deepest concern: but let us not recur to these distresses to-night."

A stay of two or three days in Trapani was all Federico intended to make, after which, Gaetano was to accompany him to



Sciacca, to remain there on leave of absence with his friend, till the viceroy should summon them both to Messina in the spring, for the purpose of joining the expedition which was then to leave Sicily for the seat of war.

On the ensuing morning Pignatelli kept his promise with his friend, and narrated to him the circumstances to which he had alluded.—Don Vincentio Landolini, he said, a cavalier with whom he had formed an acquaintance at Trapani, was a younger brother of a noble family, who having displeased his connexions early in life, had been neglected by them, and left entirely to his own slender means, a trifling appointment in the garrison being the only military promotion he had ever obtained. In a small cassino near the sea-shore, at some distance from the town, he had resided (when duty allowed him to be absent) with an only daughter, in whom all his hopes and happiness were concentrated; their residence was peculiarly lonely and retired, both the circumstances and



the inclinations of don Vincentio leading him to fix at a distance from the society, and consequent expences, of a large and populous town like Trapani. One day he left his home, as he thought, for a few hours only, but was detained until the next morning, when, on his return, he found his cassino a blackened and still-smoking ruin, his Marguerita gone, and not one human being remaining to tell the tale. When Pignatelli first reached Trapani, this melancholy event was the theme of universal regret; many of those, however, who were deepest in their expressions of commiseration for the unfortunate fate of don Vincentio, thought they had done sufficient in proclaiming their excessive sympathy for his misery; but it was not thus that Gaetano felt or acted; the cavalier was a stranger to him, but his misfortunes were a call of all-powerful force, and he had exerted himself with the warmth and energy of the oldest friendship, in making every inquiry, and seeking every means of information on the subject. Some

of the fishermen belonging to the town had seen the flames, but their distance from the shore at the time, made them ignorant of the cause from whence they proceeded; these individuals, however, had not yet been found by Gaetano, and their report came only through the medium of others, the men themselves being absent on some distant voyage for the present.

Don Vincentio, though deprived of every hope in this life, still bore himself meekly, and with the resignation of a Christian, acknowledging, with the deepest gratitude, the disinterested exertions of Pignatelli in his cause.

When Gaetano called to inform don Vincentio of his approaching departure, he begged to introduce to him his friend Perollo, who had seldom seen any one exciting, even in their first appearance, so powerful an interest; his armour indeed bespoke no wealth in its wearer, but his tall and graceful figure, though wasted by grief, still preserved a dignity which commanded respect; whilst the mild and me-

lancholy expression of his finely-featured countenance conciliated affection and regard.

“ I ought not to be sorry that you are going with the companion of your youth, my friend,” he said to Gaetano; “ but I shall miss you sadly—yours is the only society which has ever beguiled me for a moment of my misery, and I shall almost wish I had never known the indulgence; but I will not damp your pleasures by my egotism—God bless you wherever you go! and if you ever are a parent, the relief your affectionate attentions have been to me, will be remembered by you with greater satisfaction than more brilliant exploits.”

Gaetano expressed his anxious hope, that something might still arise to give some relief to his afflictions, and claimed a promise which don Vincentio had long given, that in case any intelligence should be obtained to excite any cheering hopes, he would apprise him of it, and employ his personal services and his interest with the

viceroi, in any way that might contribute to his comfort and assistance.

With modest and feeling delicacy, Perollo begged that he might be permitted to join his exertions to those of Gaetano, and to offer the services of his family and friends, if it should be found that they could in any way tend to clear up the mysterious circumstances of the cavalier's misfortune.

Landolini again expressed his thanks; and, almost overpowered by his feelings, repeated his adieus to them both.

Readily complying with the impatience of Perollo, Gaetano consented to set out rather late on the third day, instead of waiting till the next morning.—“We may,” he said, “if we reach Castel Vetrano to-night, be in Sciacca to-morrow evening, and at my uncle's castle we shall be better accommodated than among the Capuchins; there is not perhaps much chance of our being sumptuously feasted, but we shall there be at liberty to do as we please, and

it is the only place where we can halt, so as to divide our journey into two stages."

To this proposition Federico assented; and, deeply engaged in conversation, they proceeded on their way, crossed the open country to the south of Trapani; and leaving the towns of Mazzara and Marsala on the right, and Salermi on the left, as they passed by Santa Ninfa, their attention was roused by a loud peal of thunder, which rolled deeply among the mountains before them. The day was fast declining, and the gathering clouds upon the hills threatened a tremendous storm before they could possibly reach Castel Vetrano, then six or eight miles distant; whilst the marshy grounds which surrounded them prevented their reaching Santa Ninfa by a shorter route; but they were not easily dismayed, nor likely to make much of evils no greater than a thunder-storm, or a journey for an hour or two in the dark; even had they been so inclined, the ludicrous distress of Baptista would in some



degree have counterbalanced the discomfort.

He began in a lamentable tone—"Your *eccellenza* will now, I hope, see the use my advice would have been of, had you taken it, and not left Trapani at an hour when there was no chance of reaching our destination before it was dark; night is rapidly coming on, and a storm rising among the mountains: Our Lady grant we may reach Castel Vetrano in safety!"

"Amen!" answered Gaetano, "and that we may not be spirited away by the demon of Segesta, nor washed out to sea by the mountain torrents!"—adding, in a whining tone, as much like that of Baptista as possible—"oh, Federico! had you but listened to this miracle of wisdom, we had never come hither to be drowned in the highway, nor left in the dark to the mad knight of Alcamo and his uncivil attendant."

"Well, gentlemen," replied Baptista, somewhat piqued out of his dismal condi-



tion, "you must say what you please; but if my eyes deceived me not, I saw the same two figures behind us, as we crossed the flats, not more than an hour ago."

"Why, Baptista, the storm which is coming will be the death of your sick friend, and relieve us from all our apprehensions; it is the most fortunate thing that could have befallen us; your wisdom and foresight have been proved beyond a question, and your evil genius must necessarily perish from the inclemency of the night."

"I knew your excellenza's merriment would not spare me," said the man, "or I could at the moment have convinced you of the fact, by shewing you the identical tall figure which we saw the other day, wrapped in his black horseman's cloak, with the black plumes in his hat, which my master must have observed at Segesta."

"Better and better," retorted Gaetano; "you have at least derived some benefit from your friends."

"How so, signor?"

“Why, Baptista, you have learned to hold your tongue upon an occasion.”

As the man was about to reply, another peal rattled among the hills; the wind blew whistling over the marshes, and large drops of rain announced the approaching storm. The party stopped a few minutes to defend themselves from its violence, by girding on their cloaks, then quickened their pace whilst a little light remained; the rain increased momentarily, the thunder rolled nearer and nearer, and the mountain echoes scarcely allowed an interval between the claps: at length a flash of the most vivid lightning burst from the cloud before them; it vanished not in an instant, but seemed to roll along the earth in a body of liquid flame; at the same time a deafening peal of thunder shook the ground beneath the horse's feet.

“Jesu e Maria!” screamed Baptista; the other servants echoed his ejaculation, and an interval of silence succeeded; during which the party heard, or thought they heard, the sound of voices before them:

another flash, nearly as vivid as the last, drew forth a groan and a pious ejaculation from Baptista.

“ Never mind, my fine fellow,” said Gaetano, “ this will finish the black gentleman behind us.”

Again a long and loud clap of thunder seemed tearing the hills from their foundations, and in the pause which ensued, voices were distinctly heard in accents of terror and distress. Impelling their horses to the utmost speed, Federico and Gaetano rode forward, and the next flash gave them an imperfect view of the persons from whom the cries proceeded. A litter overturned upon the ground, several men and two or three females supporting the body of a lady to all appearance lifeless, and the fore-horse of the litter stretched dead in its harness, were the dismal objects which struck their sight. The succeeding thunder-clap was less violent than that which preceded it, and when it ceased, a female voice exclaimed—“ Indeed, indeed, your excellenza may perceive that my lady

lives—she breathes, she revives—the Virgin be praised, my lady lives !”

Gaetano was about to demand the nature of the accident, and to offer their services, when the lightning’s flash again illumined the scene.

“The lady Costanza di Solanto!” exclaimed Federico, in a voice of terror and amazement, throwing himself from his horse, and seizing her hand; “what dreadful chance has exposed you to the perils of a night like this?”

“Signor Perollo!” cried another voice, “Heaven be praised for this unhoped-for aid!” An hysteric sob from the younger lady gave proofs of returning animation.—“My child!” said the baroness; “gracious Heaven has restored my child!”

The thunder again interrupted every other sound; when it had ceased, Pignatelli learnt from the attendants (for Perollo and the baroness were capable of no thought but for Costanza), that the party had left Palermo on the day before, to join the baron Solanto, who was expected on the

western coast, and were proceeding to Castel Vetrano when overtaken by the tempest; during which the lightning had struck down the fore-horse of the litter, and terrified the ladies nearly to death.

Whilst Perollo was aiding the baroness and her daughter, who was recovering from her swoon, Gaetano, with the assistance of the men, raised the litter, and dismounting one of his own servants, placed his horse in the harness of the animal which had been killed, and urged the ladies, if possible, to proceed immediately.

In a faint voice Costanza expressed her ability to go on, and being placed by Perollo in the litter, he inquired of the baroness where to direct their way?

"To Castel Vetrano," she replied; "a courier has been forwarded by the kindness of the viceroy, to prepare for our reception at the castle."

"We cannot be above an hour's journey from the town," replied Federico; "let the lady Costanza and your excellenza keep up your spirits, and we shall soon be there



in safety; trust to my friend Pignatelli and myself to take every precaution requisite."

The violence of the tempest was now somewhat abated, but the rain still descended in torrents, and the darkness was almost impenetrable: placing the guides however in the van, and themselves riding on each side the litter, they advanced as quickly as the state of the road and other circumstances would admit.

Gladly the party hailed the lights in the towers of Castel Vetrano, where they had no sooner arrived, than Gaetano hastened forward to announce their approach, and found that every preparation had been made which time would permit, the courier having only arrived on the preceding night.

The lady Costanza, though considerably recovered, still felt the effects of her accident, and retired to the chamber prepared for her almost immediately; but the baroness remained for a short time with the young men, to express her thanks



for their services, and informed them that the baron Solanto having been so long delayed from his voyage to Sicily, had at length abandoned his plan of visiting Palermo, and embarking in a small vessel for Sciacca, had forwarded dispatches to herself and the viceroy, excusing the change in his arrangements, and requesting her to join him instantly at the place of his destination, where he hoped to be arrived when she received the information; upon which she had quitted Palermo without loss of time, and was anxiously hastening to Sciacca.

The young men earnestly entreated permission to be her escort for the remainder of the journey, and the lady having acceded to their request, the party separated for the night.

CHAPTER III.  
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“ *Beatrice*.—For which of my good parts did you suffer love for me?

Benedict.—Suffer love! a good epithet—I do indeed suffer love, for I love you against my will.”

HAVING exerted themselves to procure all the comforts for the ladies which circumstances would allow of, Gaetano and his friend proceeded to disencumber themselves of their drenched garments, and to make arrangements with the castellan for their own accommodation, and that of their servants, during the night.—“ For ourselves,” said Pignatelli, “ we will remain where we now are—in a small apartment near that of the ladies—my own man and Baptista may make up their bed in the anteroom, and the other servants you will dispose of as may least inconvenience your own family.”

“ And the other cavalier, signor ? ”

“ Don Federico remains with me.”

“ I mean the other gentleman, who came into the castle after your excellenza, in the train of the baroness.”

“ There was no one with the party but attendants.”

“ Excuse me, signor, there was a tall gentleman in a large dark mantle, with a plume of dark feathers in his cap ; I should not have observed him, but from the glittering of the chain round his neck, as the torches were held up for the ladies when they were taken from their litter.”

The friends gazed at each other.

“ We saw no such person,” said Gaetano ; “ the baroness has inquired for no one, and where is this gentleman now ? ”

“ I have not seen him, signor, since we were in the court below, but I will inquire amongst the people, who can doubtless inform me.” The castellan withdrew.

“ Did you observe this strange cavalier, Federico ? or can it be your Segestan ac-

quaintance, desirous of a further introduction?"

"It may either be some superior attendant on the ladies, or some gentleman belonging to the town who joined the party after we left it," observed Federico.

The man returned in a short time, and stated that several of the men had seen the strange cavalier when he entered the castle, but none knew who he was, or whither he had gone.

"It must have been as I supposed then," said Federico; "some gentleman of Castel Vetrano joined the party after our departure, and from motives of curiosity having followed it to the castle, is now gone to his home."

"Have you seen your friend, the black magician of Alcamo, signor Baptista," asked Gaetano, as the valet entered the room, "since we arrived here?"

"Many of the other attendants did," answered the man, "and I have no doubt it was the same; I hope your excellenza

will have no cause to think more seriously of him than you do at present."

"Really," said Gaetano, "I shall get anxious for an introduction to this wonderful personage."

"I fear then you will be disappointed; for you may be satisfied it is no other than I have said," interrupted Federico; "some cavalier belonging to the place, who having seen the party to their abode, is now gone to his own."

"I know most of the neighbouring gentlemen personally," added the castellan, "but the extraordinary height of the person I saw below, and the slight view I had of his dark countenance, convince me he is a stranger here."

"Well," said Gaetano, "he does not seem to be in the castle now, or as if he intended to honour us with an interview; do therefore, my good friend, see what you can procure us for supper, and let us get to rest as soon as we can, for last night we had but little repose—I hope to-night we shall make it up."

"I hope so too," said Baptista, in a tone somewhat resembling a groan of anticipated alarm.

Having finished their repast, the young men prepared for their repose, and dismissed their servants for the night. The castellan had provided for Baptista and his companion the means of making up a bed on the floor of the anteroom.—"We won't place it too near this frightful old arras," observed the former; "there may be rats behind it, animals which I abhor; or there may be some concealed door not well secured; nor will we have it by the window, for the rain and thunder still continue; nor by either of the doors, because——"

"Really, signor Baptista, you appear as if no part of the room would suit you; do let us place it in the centre, and make haste to bed. I believe you would gladly prefer some other apartment: do you know any thing of this room, and has there been any horrid murder committed here?"

"The Virgin forbid! how can you talk

of such things? I certainly think the fine long room where the soldiers sleep, or the one on the opposite side, where the baronessa's people are put, might have held us also."

"And who then would have attended on their excellenzas?"

The bed being arranged, the two servants were soon unconscious of all around them; Baptista having first most devoutly committed himself to the protection of the Virgin, Santa Rosalia, and St. Francis, and placed against the door, which opened into the gallery, two or three articles of furniture.

The night was stormy and tempestuous, the wind howled round the towers of the castle, the rain beat with violence against the windows, and at intervals the fury of the tempest seemed to revive; during one of the most tremendous blasts, the door of the room was so much shaken, as to throw down part of the barricado which Baptista's care had placed there; it awoke him, he started up in his bed and listened;

but the gust which appeared to have caused the disturbance died away, and all was still again, save the heavy drops of rain which were heard without. Uttering a short commendation of himself to his patron saint, he tried to compose himself to sleep, envying his snoring companion. A slight movement again rustled at the doorway; he started and listened, in hopes it would pass away like the former sounds: it ceased for an instant, and Baptista breathed again; but his respiration was almost immediately suspended, by seeing, most distinctly, that the door was moved, and a light shone in at the aperture; in speechless terror he gave his companion a violent push, but the fellow snored on unheeding.

The door was gradually forced back; the light became more visible, and a tall dark figure entered the apartment; his head was bare, a cadaverous paleness was spread over his strongly-marked features; in one hand he held a lamp, and though wrapping his long cloak around him, he seemed to carry some weapon beneath it

in the other. He advanced rapidly, and with a firm, but quiet tread, nearly half-way towards the opposite door of the apartment; having hastily glanced his fierce dark eyes over the chamber, Baptista recognised the figure he had seen in the corridor of the convent of Alcamo, in the ruins of Segesta, and on the road from Trapani; his terror was so great, he could utter no sound; his mouth was distended to the utmost limits, and his eyes involuntarily fixed upon the object before him; he grasped his sleeping companion with convulsive horror, who, roaring at the violence of the gripe, woke and sprung from the bed, dragging Baptista along with him, still clinging to his arm, who seemed, by the howl of his fellow-servant, to have recovered his articulation, and joined in his sonorous lamentations. The figure stopped, stared for an instant at the terrified domestics, and extinguishing the light, rapidly escaped into the gallery.

Gaetano and Federico, awakened by the

outcries of their servants, rushed from their apartment, armed only with their swords; but finding the anteroom in darkness, Perollo returned for the lamp, when they discovered Baptista upon the floor, and his companion, who had disengaged himself from his grasp, standing beside him in a state of wonder and amazement.

“What is the cause of this disturbance, Giuseppe?” asked Gaetano, hastily.

“Why, signor, I believe Baptista has had some frightful dream, for he awoke me by pinching my arm most horribly; and the noise I made seems to have alarmed the gentleman who was coming to your chamber.”

“Who could be coming to us at this hour? surely the ladies are not ill?”

Baptista tried to speak, but could only groan inarticulately, and shake his head. Federico was hastening out to make inquiries into the cause of the confusion, when Baptista, by a violent effort, threw himself in his way, and arrested his progress.

“Stop ! stop ! for Heaven’s sake, signor !” Federico paused for an instant—“he may be lurking still in the gallery.”

“Oh, oh !” said Gaetano, “your old friend, Baptista, has been disappointed in his visit to us by your uncivil alarms.”

Baptista assented in silence, unable to speak intelligibly of the mysterious object of his fears.

“Come then, Federico, let us lose no time in seeking him ; this fellow is as little communicative as signor Diavolo himself.”

The two young men then, in spite of the supplications of the servant, left the room, ordering Giuseppe to remain with his associate, who insisted on crawling to the door, that he might have the consolation of seeing the light from the lamp as long as possible.

“This way,” said Federico ; “let us not alarm the ladies, neither is it probable the stranger would enter their apartment, as his errand seems to have been to me.”

The doors of the gallery were all closed, except one which opened into the armoury

of the castle, and all was silent but the storm without.

“There are so many places of concealment here,” said Gaetano, “and we are so unacquainted with the castle, that it is a hopeless task to search for this said cavalier, who, after all, may be only one of the other servants, or perhaps a creature of Baptista’s fancy—no one appears to be in motion, which must be the case if the ladies required assistance; and by alarming the household, we can do no good, and may create a general panic.”

“Circumstances,” replied Federico, “are rather in favour of Baptista’s vision; but otherwise I can see no end the stranger can propose in following me from place to place; if such is the case, we shall doubtless hear further from him; but I do not see any probability of our discovering him now, if he chooses to remain concealed; let us then return to our room, make out what particulars we can from the servants, and to-morrow may perhaps afford us some clue to an elucidation.”

They then left the armoury, and returned to their chamber, where they endeavoured to gain from the men some particulars of the reason for their outcries.

Giuseppe had but little to say; he knew that he was awakened by the violent grasping of his bedfellow, to which his arm bore witness; and that when he leaped from the bed, he certainly perceived a light in the room, but who the person was that bore it, how it was extinguished, which way the bearer had departed, or how he entered, he knew not.

Baptista, in spite of the raillery of Gaetano, remained steady in his assertions, that it was the sick cavalier he had seen at Alcamo, and having now had a more distinct view of his features, he had some imperfect remembrance of having seen them at a remoter period, but where or when he could not say; from this statement he never varied; but the exaggerated account he gave of his height, and the ferocity of his countenance, failed not to produce from Gaetano repeated bursts of laughter.—

“ Did this same *truculent*-looking gentleman,” he inquired, “ leave no sulphureous odours behind him? Had he not a certain air about him, as if his usual abode was in the heart of Etna?”

“ No, signor, it is not that I think the gentleman I saw was a spirit from the dead, for then I should have known what to do; but I am convinced it is one of the bravoos of Luna!”

“ As I am by no means assured it was not a spectre or goblin,” answered Gaetano, “ may I inquire what it will be necessary for me to observe, in case I should be honoured by a vision?”

“ In the first place, signor——”

“ Really,” interrupted Federico, “ if you have no more important inquiries to make, it will be, I think, as well to dismiss the men and return to bed again.”

Baptista’s visage fell to a ludicrous pitch of horror.—“ For the love of St. Vito, signor, do not send me from you!”

“ Do pray let them remain in the room,” said Gaetano, “ for the presence of signor

Baptista seems to have something peculiarly attractive to this mysterious traveller, and I shall flatter myself with the hopes of an interview if he remains here."

They then retired for the rest of the night to their couches; and the servants having brought in their cloaks, rolled themselves in them, and slept on the floor till morning.

The castellan waited on the gentlemen as soon as he understood they were visible, and begged to know, from Gaetano, how he intended to proceed.

"The day," observed Pignatelli, "is too bad to allow us to think of leaving the castle, and the ladies must want rest and refreshment after their alarm last night; we shall therefore probably remain till they are able to proceed: and now tell me if you have seen or heard again of the stranger who appeared last night in the castle?"

"No, signor; but the servants were surprised this morning at finding two horses less in the stables than there were

last night; however, as these buildings are without the walls of the castle, the strangers might have put their horses there, and gone themselves to the convent for the night."

Federico and his friend looked at each other, and the castellan having retired, the former observed—"This is a singular coincidence with the statement of Baptista, and it appears undoubted that some one has traced my route from Palermo hither, but with what intention I know not. I am not aware of having private enemies, and Baptista's suggestion that the stranger is an emissary of don Sigismund di Luna appears absurd, as I left Sciacca too young to have provoked his anger, and my destruction could forward no views either of himself or his partisans."

"To me," replied Gaetano, "it seems equally ridiculous that any one should take the trouble to follow you during the whole journey, terrify your servant into fits, and depart without attempting any thing more."

After breakfast, the day seeming a little improved, the young men agreed to stroll into the town, as well to see it as to hear if any strangers had been observed in the neighbourhood, before or since the preceding evening.

The town of Castel Vetrano is situated upon a hill, in the centre of one of the loveliest scenes of fertility which even Sicily can boast; immediately around it is an extensive plain covered with vineyards and corn-fields, interspersed with a prodigious number of almond and olive trees, and groves of oranges and lemons; whilst the country-seats of the nobility, embowered in luxuriant groups of mulberry-trees, some of which grow to an enormous height and dimensions, give to the scene an appearance of life and cheerfulness. On the mountains which encircle the plain to the north, are the towns of Salermi, Santa Ninfa, Margarita, Partanna, and Monfrici, being all built of the white stone of the country; their towers and steeples formed a lively contrast with the vivid green of

the hills, now restored to their proper hue by the rains of the season. On the south, the expanse of ocean rolled before them, still turbulent from the recent storms. On the west, the eye wandered over the flat and fertile plain towards Trapani; and on the east, their view was bounded by the majestic mountains which rose in a bold outline behind the town of Sciacca.

Federico, naturally enthusiastic in his admiration of the beauties of his country, looked on the enchanting landscape without any apparent pleasure or interest. Gaetano watched his countenance, but forbore, for a while, any observation, allowing him to lose himself in the subject of his thoughts, whatever it might be; at length he said—"Well, Perollo, having sufficiently studied the view before you, now for your eulogium on its beauties."

"It is indeed very beautiful."

"Very beautiful! Why, man, it is an earthly paradise. I'll give up the Milanese, and cultivate my uncle's territorial do-

mains; I'll turn my thoughts to corn, wine, and cowkeeping; I'll throw myself at the feet of the first beauty I meet, and in twelve months be solely occupied by my charming wife, and delightful little family; occasionally we will make you a visit at Sciacca, but for some time it will be impossible for me to tear myself from all these domestic comforts."

During this tirade Federico was looking towards the castle.

"What!" said Gaetano, "you are examining my future abode; it certainly wants considerable repairs and decorations."

"Did you not see some figure at that window?" asked Federico.

Gaetano looked as if he thought him rather wild.—"What, Baptista's friend—signor Infernale?"

"No," replied Perollo; "a female figure; is not that the apartment of the baroness?"

"Really it may be, for ought I know; and you may have been honoured by a vision of their fat old attendant, for no

other of the party can be large enough to be distinguished at this distance."

"Surely it was donna Costanza."

"Impossible; but do you intend to be haunted by her image, as your idiot Baptistista is by the old boy in his long black robe and plumes? to be sure, our adventure last night was sufficiently romantic; we have nothing to do now but to fall in love and complete it. I do not wish to cut your throat, my dear friend; so, as you have probably settled your choice some time since, I will take up with madame la baronessa, and leave the fair Costanza to your sighs and sonnets."

"Ridiculous, Gaetano! she is certainly an exquisite creature, but——"

"But what? this exquisite creature has captivated you, and a pretty life I shall have of it; but I abhor love tales, and if you make me your confidant, depend on it I will proclaim it to every creature I meet with."

During this conversation they had reach-

ed the small Dominican convent near the east end of the town, and were interrupted by the approach of one of the monks, who coming up, said—"That having been informed of the arrival of the viceroy's nephew and a party at the castle, without preparation for so many being made, he was commissioned by the prior to offer any aid and accommodation their poor house could give."

Gaetano thanked the monk for these offered services, but said—"As their stay was likely to be so short, they should have no occasion to trouble them;" adding, "I suppose by to-morrow the Fiumara will be passable."

"Provided no more rain falls, signor, it certainly will; and indeed one of our brothers heard, from a man who lives on the hill by the Fiumara side, that the barone della Bardia had crossed it at an early hour this morning, attended by a single servant; they must have left this place in the dead of the night, and what can have occasioned such a journey we can none of us imagine."

"Is this barone an inhabitant of Castel Vetrano?" asked Federico.

"No, signor; he resides near Sciacca."

"I thought I had some recollection of his name——"

"Don Accursi d'Amato, signor."

"Yes, I now remember it well."

The monk was beginning a conversation which seemed likely to be rather long; therefore Pignatelli commended himself to the prior with grateful thanks, and the friends took their leave.

In their way back Federico said—

"Does it not strike you, Pignatelli, that this barone has some connexion with our strange visitor? it may, or it may not be so, but I have a strong suspicion, from what the monk said, that it is no other than Accursi d'Amato who has thus followed me from Palermo, though why or wherefore, I know not."

"Who and what is he?"

"One of the nobles of Sciacca, most firmly attached to the house of Luna. I have myself no recollection of him in any

way, but of his connexion with that family I have frequently heard, from persons who know more of the politics of Sciacca than I do; what more than curiosity could have induced him to follow me thus, I cannot possibly conceive."

"Something more must have excited his visit last night," said Gaetano; "and something, I fear, not quite so innocent: however, it would be ridiculous to connect every strange event, or unexpected occurrence, with this dreadful feud, as Baptista does; and having been so long removed from the scene of contention, you surely cannot have incurred the enmity of the faction, nor contracted any taint of the spirit which, it is to be feared, animates too many of the parties."

"No, Heaven forbid!" replied Perollo: "I feel towards every individual of the house of Luna nothing stronger than indifference, and have long resolved to use every means in my power to allay the unhappy discords which have so long torn asunder the bonds of society and neigh-

bourhood in Sciacca; but so violent is the rage of party there at present, that no hopes of any friendly intercourse can be indulged in."

On reaching the castle, the cavaliers repaired to the apartments of the baroness, and found both her and the lady Costanza quite recovered from all effects of their fright. The ladies had both felt some curiosity to see more of Pignatelli, of whom they had heard so much at Palermo, from his noble relatives, and still more from Perollo, who had never spoken of him without his vehement regard and affection being manifested.

As frequently happens, he was the very opposite to his friend both in manners and person—Perollo being very tall, singularly handsome, and more than commonly commanding in his appearance, for one so young, and his manners sure to attach those who knew him, but apt to be unattractive to strangers, from their mistaking a natural reserve for hauteur; he did not

shew every new impression, but when received, it was nearly ineffaceable; and his character had in it a deep and ardent sensibility, which felt much, but had the power of concealing it, except from those who knew him very intimately.

Gaetano resembled him in nothing but high honour, steady principles, and the then unusual taste for literature, which they had both received from the same tutor. In person he just escaped being little, but was exquisitely formed; rode and danced better than any body; was acknowledged to have the finest eyes, and most animated countenance, in all Sicily; was the idol of every society, and the favourite of every lady. The little party now assembled at Castel Vetrano could with difficulty be equalled for graces of mind and person.

After the baroness had thanked the friends for their timely aid in her distress, the foregoing evening, she said—"We have smiled, this morning, to think how astonished you must have been, signor Perollo, at our rencontre last night; but

you had not left Palermo more than two days, when I received the baron's directions to proceed to Sciacca, and as soon as the arrangements for our journey could be made, we started; your having gone round by Trapani was the fortunate cause of our so providentially meeting with you in our distress."

Costanza was surveying, from one of the windows, the beautiful scenery around; and when the baroness had finished speaking, Perollo walked towards her, and Gaetano observing the subject of her contemplation, said—"My friend Perollo, signora, is a devoted admirer of the beauties of Sicily, but this scene seems to have benumbed his faculties; one poor compliment to Castel Vetrano is all I have been able to extort; do pray try and rouse him to something like a sense of its beauties; for myself, I am so enchanted with them, that I have almost resolved to spend my days here, in a state of patriarchal simplicity."

"Perhaps, signor, you can discover

some grotto or hermitage amongst the adjacent hills, where your venerable purpose may be easily fulfilled, and the contemplative disposition of your friend indulged to its fullest extent," answered Costanza.

"The raptures of Pignatelli," observed Federico, "so far surpassed all bounds of moderation, that nothing remained for me but tacit approbation; he talked of a paradise on earth; had already, in imagination, beaten his sword into a pruning-hook, turned vine-dresser and agriculturist, and surrounded himself with a band of descendants, even to the third and fourth generations; a flight beyond this, I could not soar to; and as my humble applause would have fallen so far beneath his eulogium, I contented myself with merely assenting to his opinions."

"The vehement feelings of don Gaetano are, I fear, somewhat transient," said Costanza, "and the attractions of the metropolis would perhaps draw him from his rural paradise to the purgatory of Palermo,

where he would soon forget his sheep and his lambkins."

"And inconstancy, no doubt, would be a crime sufficient in your eyes, fair lady, to doom me to remain in my abode of punishment?"

"No," replied Costanza, "I would send you back to your vineyard and sheepfold, lest the gaieties of the court should charm away all your regrets, and you should be contented with your lot."

"Lady, you are a merciless judge, and I would appeal from your sentence to the angel who, by the original contract, was to have been my partner in the rural life, which you and Perollo hold in such disdain; however, there are few among the dames of Sicily who would not encourage my apostacy, I fear; and that reflection alone seems sufficient to make me delay my intended purpose of turning husbandman in Castel Vetrano."

"For shame, Pignatelli!" exclaimed Federico; "how can you thus doubt the

retired and domestic virtues of our country-women? My mother has, for these twenty years, abandoned all the splendour of the Imperial court, and, with occasional visits to Palermo, has resided in the intermediate time at Sciacca; and except during the long absences of my father, I believe she has never regretted the exchange."

"The baroness Pandolfina is universally held up," said Gaetano, "as a model of female dignity, virtue, and excellence; there cannot, therefore, be many such in the world, nor do I expect my future destiny to give me such a treasure. I intend, therefore, to be contented with perfect beauty, gaiety, good-humour, wealth, rank, and such like external and internal ornaments."

"Moderate and reasonable in all things, signor!" said Costanza, with a smile; "and you will give in return——"

"Myself," replied Gaetano, "such as I am—my good qualities, which Perollo must be well aware of, and can give me a

character for ; these we must make the most of, and the others we will not mention, but decently conceal from view."

" You must be a good hand at masquerading, don Gaetano," said the baroness, " if you can contrive to keep this vanity out of sight. I do not wonder, signor Perollo, that you speak with exultation of your mother's domestic virtues ; such qualities are not matters of surprise in females who, from want of birth, talents, beauty, or any thing which we are apt to think essential, are not fitted for courts ; but it must require no small degree of philosophy and cheerfulness of temper, in a being so singularly adapted to grace them as Victoria Moncada, to be happy in so confined a sphere as Sciacca."

Federico's heightened complexion and sparkling eyes spoke his delight at this unsought and unexpected tribute to the excellencies of a mother, on whom he doated, and whose approbation was the most delightful reward he had ever received for any exertion.

The baroness Pandolfina had not delegated to servants the care of her son's education even in his earliest years; she justly felt that he would, almost unconsciously, imbibe opinions and ideas from those around him, which would colour his future character, and which no arguments could entirely efface: a delicate sense of honour, high-minded generosity, impartiality in judging ourselves, liberality of sentiment, and a nice sense of what is due to others, it is absurd to expect should be inculcated by persons who are continually seeking excuses for wanting those very qualities themselves; and there can be no doubt but such sentiments, received from the lips of an elegant female and an affectionate mother, are imprinted more deeply, and with more pleasing associations, even on the heart of a boy, than they would be if they proceeded from an austere tutor or a vulgar nurse.

But to return to our party. The baroness Solanto expressed so much pleasure to Perollo, at the thought of meeting again

her old friend, that he ventured to say—
“How I wish your excellenza’s destination then was to Perollo Castle! have you a residence prepared in Sciacca?”

“Why, I do not quite know; if the baron has been long enough there, he may have got a separate abode for us, but I rather expect we shall be guests for a time at Luna Castle.”

“Luna Castle!” ejaculated Perollo, as every expression of pleasure vanished from his countenance: “I beg pardon for repeating your excellenza’s words, but I was so utterly disappointed by your intelligence: I had hoped for my mother and myself so much satisfaction; but with the unfortunate prejudice of count Luna against our race, it will be much if you are not induced to dislike the very name of Perollo.”

Costanza advanced to her mother as Perollo spoke; the whole party were silent for a few moments, and all seemed rather distressed; at length Costanza said, timid,

ly—"Is don Sigismund so very prone to hate?"

"Only those, lady, who are allied or attached to any of our family."

"It is a feeling I cannot understand," she said, and then added—"I mean, I cannot imagine hating for a name."

Federico looked so grateful, that she returned again to the window, but did not seem to attend either to the landscape or Gaetano, as she had done before; however, the baroness, almost immediately, said—"Do not let us anticipate any thing so painful, my young friend; to dislike every Perollo, we must become very ungrateful, which, I flatter myself, is impossible; and with whoever I may be a guest, I must be the friend of the baroness Pandolfina. I had heard of this unhappy feud from our friends at Palermo; and I cannot but hope, that in a short time two such admirable persons as baron Pandolfina and count Luna must know and acknowledge each other's merits, when there is any friend

near, who is disinterestedly anxious to terminate these terrible discords—and such a friend the baron Solanto will be proud to be. The count's father was our very particular friend, and I am deeply interested in finding in his son all I admired in him.”

The baroness seemed to observe an absent and uneasy manner in her daughter, and soon changed the conversation.

The cavaliers spent almost all the remainder of the day with them, and retired in the evening to regulate the morrow's journey.

CHAPTER IV.
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'Twas autumn—and sunshine arose on the way,  
To the home of my fathers, that welcom'd me back.

CAMPBELL.

THE fineness of the evening tempted the cavaliers to stroll round the ramparts of the castle by the light of the moon, which had risen in full splendour from behind the hills; chequered by light and shade, the plain beneath the walls seemed to have acquired additional beauties from the stillness of the hour, and the mild radiance of the orb of night, whose beams were alternately reflected from the white walls of the various cassinos, or absorbed by the dark foliage of the surrounding groves.

The mountains of Sciacca bounded the prospect to the east, and formed a dark bold outline against the deep blue sky; whilst to the westward the ocean waves



glittered brightly in the moonbeams, and, still turbulent from the effects of the late storm, murmured hoarsely in the distance, but not sufficiently loud to break the repose of the scene, which was only disturbed by the sound of some shepherds pipes, whose notes came mellowed up the hill.

The friends were silently contemplating the landscape, when, from a window above, a voice, whose dulcet sweetness thrilled through every power of attention, fixed them to the spot, where they remained long after the melody had ceased, wishing and expecting to hear the enchanting strains renewed.—“It must be the lady Costanza,” said Federico, in a tone of rapturous delight.

“You appear recovering your powers of admiration, my friend,” replied Gaetano; “it will be impossible for you long to resist all the powerful attractions of the lady, and I wonder you had not cast yourself at her feet long before you left the walls of Palermo.”

“It appears then impossible, in your

opinion, Gaetano, to admire a beautiful girl, and to do justice to her talents, without being romantically in love with her."

"By no means: I doubt not but your admiration is entirely the effect of an abstract taste for female beauty, and a passion for music; that it is nothing more than Platonic friendship, and totally unconnected with any thing more tender than esteem, respect, and veneration, such as one feels for the good old father Pasquale, for instance, or the venerable head of his convent."

"I certainly," replied Federico, "do feel the greatest regard and esteem for the lady Costanza, and"—after a short pause, he added—"for the baroness Solanto."

"Of course; and this regard and esteem will hereafter be a very fortunate event in other respects: the ladies appear inclined to conciliate between your family and that of count Luna; your infinite regard and esteem will doubtless make you yield with all due deference to their wishes, and the count will be equally tractable, as he

will, of necessity, be desperately in love with his fair guest, the signora Costanza."

Perollo started, and looked with terror and amazement at Gaetano, who, bursting into a fit of laughter, inquired if he had not expressed a wish himself to appease the discord between the two families?—"Certainly," he answered, "but don Sigismund is engaged; he has already a treaty of marriage on foot, to supply the place of the late countess."

"Indeed!" said Gaetano, gravely, and after a moment's reflection; "and what engagements has the lady? it would be as well to avoid falling in love with a person who may be already betrothed to another."

"Impossible! the lady Costanza herself assured me, she had never been introduced into society till her arrival in Palermo."

"This appears to me no proof that her heart and hand are not predisposed of, and at all events, my dear Federico, I wish you were not quite so far gone as I fear you already are: but the night is cold and chilly—we had better retire."

“Retire!” said Perollo. “I could pass the night in waiting for those sounds again!”

“Depend on it, you will hear no more of them to-night; and it may be supposed that we are waiting under the ladies window, to listen to their commendations of ourselves.”

Slowly and unwillingly Federico withdrew; when meeting Baptista on the way to their apartment, Gaetano inquired if he had received any further intelligence of his nocturnal visitor?

“No, signor,” he said; “but you must be convinced that some one did really leave the castle last night, by two horses less being found in the stable this morning.”

“This some one then, I presume, devoured the other steed for his supper, as he could scarcely want to ride off upon both, although he must have been terribly alarmed by your magnanimous display of valour, Baptista.”

“As to that, signor,” answered the man,

without alluding to the latter insinuation, "the cavalier had certainly an attendant with him."

"How much better a figure then he would have made," said Gaetano, "with his train-bearer behind him, instead of lurking about, with an untrimmed lamp in his hand, and rolled up in the long cloak, which has made so tremendous an impression on your fancy! but as the castle artillery is too ponderous to be conveniently placed by your bedside, you may make up your couch for the night in yonder corner, and Giuseppe may retire with the other servants; but if you have any visions to break my rest, I shall take the liberty of hoisting your haunted person from the window to the battlements below, as the best way of laying the spectre and yourself also."

It being but eight leagues to Sciacca, and a season of the year when the midday sun was not likely to be inconvenient, the travellers left Castel Vetrano at no very



early hour, couriers having been sent forward to Memfici, where they intended to halt at noon, and also to Sciacca, to prepare for their arrival. The cavaliers riding on each side the litter in which the ladies travelled, much to the annoyance of Perollo, were prevented from any conversation with them, by the unceasing noise of the bells attached to the harness of the horses; and although the curtains of the vehicle nearly obscured all view of those within it, yet were the beauties of the country lost upon him, and he rode on unheeding every thing but his companion, though the forest scenery at a few miles distance from Castel Vetrano could not have failed to delight any one at leisure to contemplate its magnificence.

From these woodlands the party descended a hill, and riding some short distance along the side of a fiumara, forded it ~~in~~ safety, without any incident to call forth ~~the~~ gallantry of the gentlemen, or excite the fears of the ladies, though the mountain-torrent brawled along its rugged

channel with no small impetuosity and violence. Beyond the *fiumara*, the road became more hilly, and a short time brought them to Memfici (the site of the ancient Inaco), where preparation had been made for their accommodation, during the short time they halted to take their siesta, and refresh their horses. From hence they set out for Sciacca, through a country less abounding in picturesque beauties than that which they had passed in the early part of the day.

On the mountains to the left, they saw the town of Sambuca, and before them rose the lofty hill which shelters Sciacca on the north. As they approached his native home, the thoughts of Federico wandered even from Costanza, and rested with fond affection on his family and friends: his father he had occasionally seen in Palermo, since his absence from his paternal castle; but his mother he had not seen for some few years, and on meeting with her, his fancy now dwelt with rapture and de-

light; the junior branches of his family were all so much inferior to him in age, that he remembered them merely as infants, too young to engross much attention from a boy.

But amongst the friends of his early days, his kinsman, don Paolo Perollo, stood high in his remembrance and affection; anxiously did he hope to hear that Solanto was arrived, and that no bar was placed to an immediate introduction taking place between the two families; the old friendship would be renewed between the ladies; his father and the baron, he thought, had probably met in early life, Solanto having long held high military commands under his Imperial master, and don Giacomo being well acquainted with most of the leading men in Charles's court: with the baron Pandolfina he knew it was impossible not to be captivated; his highly-polished manners, the joyous cheerfulness, and the boundless liberality of his nature, were irresistible attractions, which drew the hearts of all men towards him; and Fede-

rico hesitated not to believe that the two families would be united in the strictest intimacy. Indulging in reveries of happiness, the journey wore away, and they arrived on the summit of a small hill, from whence the town of Sciacca appeared in all its magnificence before them; at that time the residence of numerous barons, and other illustrious and wealthy families, it yielded to few cities of the island either in beauty or splendour.

Seated on a lofty eminence, whose base is washed by the waves of the Mediterranean, seaward the place commands a boundless view over the ocean; a stupendous mountain forms a barrier to the north, proudly overhanging the walls and towers of the city, but at such a distance as to afford no advantage to a besieging enemy. Within the walls, the towers and turrets of the principal castles of Luna and Perollo seemed to frown defiance to an invading foe; whilst the spires and steeples of the numerous convents and churches, with the more modern palaces of the other

nobles, blended with the intervening foliage of groves and gardens, gave to the whole an air of gay and cheerful greatness, elegance, and wealth. Federico, with silent exultation, looked at Gaetano, and pointed to the scene; Costanza, who had at the instant put back the curtains of the litter, smiled to see his transports, and he thought he had till then been blind to half her beauties.

At the bottom of the hill, the party crossed a small fiumara, or mountain stream, and ascended the opposite steep, Perollo thought, with most provoking tardiness; and when at length they entered the gateway of the city, his heart beat quickly with joyful anticipation; and in passing through the streets to the Castel di Luna, every well-remembered object returned with vivid force upon his mind, and with redoubled claims on his admiration; in the exuberance of his feelings, he could have greeted as an old friend don Sigismund himself; and never did his bosom so overflow with love and kindness to every hu-



man being, as when now riding down the principal streets of Sciacca, after an absence, which, though of no great duration, was in his life a most eventful period.

In a short time the travellers arrived before the ancient abode of the illustrious house of Luna and Peralta, the old and inveterate foes of Federico and his race, the friends and allies of Costanza di Solanto and her family. Over the principal entrance, which was cheerless and gloomy, heavily waved the banner of the counts of Luna, and a few centinels upon the battlements above were the only signs of life about the building. The porter was some time before he obeyed the summons, and gave the future inmates of the castle sufficient opportunity to contemplate the dark and unprepossessing exterior of the mansion.

To the inquiry, if the baron Solanto was arrived, a negative was given, which banished the hue from Costanza's cheeks, and seemed to overpower the baroness with distress and alarm.—“Is count Luna

in the castle?" she asked, in a tremulous voice.

Some person of more importance now came out, and requested to know if the baroness Solanto was the inquirer; stating, when he had received the reply, that count Luna had received the courier from her excellenza, and anxiously expected their arrival, but that important business had called him for some hours from Sciacca; on his return he hoped to find both the baron and his family inmates of the castle, and that during his absence the countess, his mother, would be honoured by shewing them every hospitality it could afford.

The baroness remained silent an instant—"But for the late tremendous storm, I should not feel so alarmed," she said, "at the absence of my lord."

Gaetano was near, and feeling for her distress, answered cheerfully—"The wind is so fair, that a few hours will probably bring the baron's vessel into port; though the late gales, from which no danger I think need be apprehended, may have made

it prudent to keep at a distance from the coast during their continuance."

"My mother, I am sure——" began Federico.

"No," interrupted the baroness, "I will not trespass on her kindness; I do not see that I could, even if I were so inclined. We will have the honour," she said, addressing the messenger of the countess, "to avail ourselves of the hospitality of count Luna, and pay our respects to his lady mother."

Federico shewed in his countenance the disappointment which he felt.

"For a time, my kind young friends," said the baroness, "accept my grateful adieus; the earliest opportunity I shall most anxiously seek to see your mother, signor Perollo, and beg that, in the meanwhile, you will present to her my kind remembrances: the baron Solanto, whose arrival I hope will not be long delayed, will, I am sure, be uneasy till he has expressed his thanks for those attentions, of which I shall long feel the value."

The cavaliers then kissed her hand, and Federico, as if to defer their separation for an instant, requested, that if any arrangement could be made to facilitate the landing of the baron, she would oblige him with her wishes and commands; his father being admiral of the adjacent seas, and commander of the port galleys, might, he said, be able to render him some attention, and would feel most happy in being called on to do so.

Again the baroness repeated her thanks, but said, that she did not apprehend there could be any occasion to call upon the baron Pandolfina for an exertion of his influence; if such however was the case, she promised they would cheerfully accept his offer. The lady Costanza looked grateful for this additional attention; and once more bidding them adieu, the litter was borne within the castle gates. The friends having seen it within the walls, Federico gave his horse the spur, and they set off with velocity for the neighbouring towers of his paternal residence.

As the litter passed under the lofty portal of the Castel di Luna, the heart of Costanza felt sad and oppressed; her mother's pallid countenance shewed that her recent disappointment weighed heavily upon her spirits, and made her languid and unwell; the surrounding objects were but little calculated to give either cheerfulness or comfort to the travellers; and when she looked round the courts of the castle, an involuntary sigh escaped from her, who considered herself as doomed to be its future mistress, for such was the present destiny of Costanza di Solanto.

By the first impression she had received from the appearance of the city of Sciacca, she had formed other ideas and a higher opinion of the abode of count Luna; it was true, it had all the grandeur of Gothic magnificence, but it was peculiarly dark and dreary; the palaces in the town, which she had observed in passing through to the castle, had most of them been erected by wealthy nobles, whose patents of nobility could vie in antiquity neither with the



honours of Luna nor Perollo; these buildings were all in the modern and lighter style of architecture, which began to arise with the re-establishment of its sister arts after the slumber of ages. Don Sigismund however had neither the taste nor the inclination to enliven the abode of his forefathers by modern innovations; even the dress of the domestics, though handsome, was obsolete; and their appearance, either from the tone of mind which circumstances had given to the newly-arrived guests, or from their having imbibed the disposition and habits of their superiors, was sombre and repulsive.

The dark hall into which they first entered was hung with the arms and banners of the illustrious ancestors of the counts di Luna, which appeared objects of peculiar care to the present lord; for the spears and swords gleamed brightly from the walls, the casques and cuirasses were untarnished by rust, and shewed that no neglect had put them by as useless appendages of state, or as relics of former days.

The ladies were conducted from the hall up the grand staircase to an apartment, where in solemn state sat the mother of count Luna, who was to do the honours of the castle to the guests. Maria di Luna, countess of Caltabellotta, was about sixty years of age, at the time of her present introduction to the baroness Solanto and her daughter, by birth a member of a younger branch of the house of Luchese, and nearly connected with the family of the reigning pontiff, Clement the Seventh. Sciacca, the place of her birth, was for many years the only part of the world of which she had any idea, and the pre-eminent rank of the house of Luna, in her native city, made her marriage with the count Giovanni the consummation of her most ambitious hopes. Arrived at this height, she considered it as one of the duties of her elevated station to look down with infinite contempt on all the nobility of the neighbourhood, who were not connected with Luna and Peralta, and as her first obligation to her husband and his fa-

mily, to enter with vehemence into their hereditary detestation of the Perollo race; at the same time making the aggrandizement of her son, don Sigismund, a paramount object, to which every feeling was to give way, every minor interest to be sacrificed; and on this principle she had promoted his second marriage with the wealthy heiress of Solanto, whose Spanish blood would have been an insurmountable objection, but for the power and the riches which such a connexion would give to the house of Luna.

The countess was a bigot in her religion, intolerant towards every opinion which did not originate with herself, or was not first submitted to the approbation of her own narrow understanding. The character of Maria di Luna might have been held up as a model of every harsh and unamiable quality, had not devotion to her son, and the interests of his family, nearly resembled the excess of maternal love; but pride was the basis—pride the stimulant of all her actions. Don Sigismund, never-

theless, felt the value of that self-devotion in his mother, which would have sacrificed even her existence to his glory and advantage.

Once, and once only, she had appeared in Palermo at the viceregal court, where her repulsive and unamiable habits had disgusted every individual who witnessed them, whilst her unpolished manners, bigoted opinions, and insufferable pride, had been subjects of mirth and ridicule throughout the court; and some of her good-natured friends having ventured, as far as they dared, to inform her of several pieces of absurdity of which she was the object, she insisted upon immediately returning to Sciacca, breathing vengeance against the court, the viceroy, and even against the government, for the insults she had received; nor had she ever after endured the thoughts of Palermo, or any succeeding representative of the royal authority, detesting as sincerely the duca de Monteleone as his predecessor, who had filled the viceregal chair thirty years be-

fore; added to this, her hatred of every thing Spanish had been raised to its highest fury, by the capture and imprisonment of Pope Clement, with the tacit approbation, if not by the desire of the emperor: the indignities the pontiff had received, she felt with all the keenness of family connexion, and all the bigotry of a devoted Catholic; and so inflamed had her spirit become upon this subject, so violent was her irritation, that could her influence or her exhortations have roused her countrymen to a repetition of the Sicilian vespers, probably, with the sole exception of count Luna's destined bride, not a living soul, who drew even from a distant source their origin from Spain, would have breathed another day upon the island.

Hence too arose her hatred to the baroness Pandolfina, and the ardour with which she followed up the engagement of her son with the countess Lucretia, niece to her relation Clement the Seventh. Such was the character of the countess, a compound of pride, hatred, and unfeeling in-



solence, unsoftened by any virtues, or any tender feelings, save those towards her son. Her person was equally repulsive, tall and inelegant, stiff and unbending; the dignity she attempted to assume appeared like ill humour, and when she affected to be affable, her manners descended to coarse familiarity.

It was in vain that she attempted to dress her harsh stern features in smiles of welcome to the baroness and Costanza; the former, fatigued by the journey, and disappointed at the absence of the baron, was too weak and low to take an attentive survey of her hostess; but the latter, though anxiously distressed at her mother's sufferings, gazed with mixed feelings of ridicule and disgust at the awkward figure and antiquated dress of her future mother-in-law. A closely-fitted robe of black, with a broad stripe of gold, embroidered from the bosom to the feet, shewed off her gaunt and meagre length of body, whilst most enormous hanging sleeves added to her graceless motions and appearance; the hard

features of her face were unsoftened by a single hair, all was tightly combed back beneath a high-pointed cap; and a cyprus veil of enormous length, depending from the back of it, hung from her shoulders in folds, which were any thing but becoming on such a form.

Advancing a few steps to meet her guests, she slightly inclined her head, and stood as if awaiting some humble acknowledgment for this prodigious honour. The baroness and Costanza returning the slight salute, listened for the welcome of their hostess—"Don Sigismund di Luna," she began, "will much regret that his absence from Sciacca for a few hours, has prevented him from paying to the baroness Solanto those honours and attentions which are due to all those with whom he feels himself connected. In his absence, I beg to offer my assurances of respect and affection to his affianced bride, and to command every hospitality this castle affords to be placed at her service and disposal."

Costanza crimsoned at the neglect thus

offered to her mother, and felt inclined to reply to the pompous absurdity with something like petulance; but the baroness, meekly addressing herself to the lady, said, that her weak health, and the absence of the baron, had rendered her so unfit for society, that it was perhaps better for her to be spared an introduction to don Sigismund, until more fitted for conversation; and that she would so far trespass on the courtesy of the countess, as to beg permission to withdraw with Costanza, and by a slight repose to recover her strength and spirits.

The lady of the mansion turning to her attendants, directed the chamberlain to be summoned, and without noticing the illness of her mother, proceeded to inform Costanza of the cause of don Sigismund's absence.—“The son and heir of Giacomo Perollo, finished, no doubt, by his education in all the profligacy of Palermo, is expected to-day in Sciacca; and to avoid the disgusting excesses which will doubtless be granted to all their licentious ban-

ditti, my son is gone over to Bivonia till to-morrow."

"The absence of count Luna," replied Costanza, "can be of no material import, and requires no apologies; had he been in Sciacca to receive my mother on her arrival, his gallantry might have been some alleviation to her disappointment; and the arrival of don Federico Perollo would have been a subject, I trust, of pleasure to him, as from our providential meeting with that gentleman and his friend, the signor Pignatelli, my mother and myself may attribute our existence now; and their subsequent attentions and kindness to her will not, I trust, be easily forgotten by any who are interested in our welfare."

The countess gazed at Costanza, as if she could not exactly comprehend what was intended, or had not heard aright—"Destruction light on all Perollo's house!" she exclaimed, with the most malignant passions marked on her countenance; and after a short pause, in which she seemed contending with the most violent emo-

tions, added —“ The dragons and enchanters, young lady, from which you have been rescued, I doubt not, were raised by the same power which overthrew them. This is a fresh insult to the house of Luna !”

The baroness raised her head in amazement; but perceiving Costanza about to reply, she said—“ It was from the dangers of an accident during the late tempest, that don Federico and his friend delivered us; great indeed is the obligation we received. We will now, by your permission, signora, withdraw to our apartment,” she added, wishing to stop all further discussion on the subject. Their hostess appeared unable to articulate, and bowing her head, the ladies returned her salutation, and, preceded by the attendant, withdrew.

They were conducted through a long gallery to a large and uncomfortable suite of chambers, furnished with splendid but antique magnificence. As they passed from the room in which they had been received,



the voice of don Sigismund's mother, raised to the highest pitch of discordant fury, sounded in their ears, but rendered perfectly unintelligible by passion. When they had reached their apartment, the baroness, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, became so much indisposed, that she desired to be placed immediately on a couch; and ordering one of her attendants to repair to the Marino, and procure the earliest information of any vessel which might appear in sight, she sunk into a state of lethargic silence.

Costanza, seated by her side, and no longer called into active exertion, gave way to the mingled feelings of disgust and indignation at the conduct of her future mother-in-law; disappointment at not finding her father arrived, and the weakness and indisposition of her mother, anticipating, with some little dislike, the return of don Sigismund, and remembering, perhaps with regret, the cheerfulness and attention of their late fellow-travellers, she

sat silently weeping, till an attendant entered to announce the time of the countess's evening repast.

CHAPTER V.  
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Blest be the gracious Pow'r, who gave my age
To boast a son like thee ! HANNAH MORE.

WITH difficulty Gaetano kept pace with his friend's impatient speed through the narrow windings of the streets by which they passed to the Casa di Perollo: the drawbridge was down, the castle-gates thrown open, and in the space before them, a multitude of vassals and dependants were collected, apparently waiting the expected arrival of the heir of Pandolfina.

Federico halted for an instant, and looking kindly and affectionately round him, returned their salutation ; and then, amidst the noisy gratulations of the crowd, and the thunder of the castle artillery, rode into the inner court: he might have recognized

many a familiar face, but his impatience was so unbounded, that he knew not of whom he inquired where to find his mother and the baron. He scarcely heard or waited for an answer, but seizing the arm of Gaetano, hurried him impetuously into the great hall, where they were met by don Giacomo, who, affectionately embracing them both, said—"Welcome, even as Federico himself, is every Pignatelli here."

"Where is my mother?" asked his son.

The baron smiled at his vehemence; and Federico, turning round, saw descending the grand staircase to the hall, the object of his inquiry, and in an instant was in the arms of the baroness herself.—"A most ceremonious introduction this, don Gaetano," said the baron, with a smile; "your friend seems inclined to leave you to introduce yourself, whilst he is indulging the exuberance of his joy."

"His impatience," answered Pignatelli, "has hurried me along at such a rate since we approached the castle, that he has, I

suppose, left me, in charity, to recover myself in the hands of your excellenza."

"Well then I must be your herald," said Pandolfina, leading him towards the stairs, which the baroness was descending.

Gaetano thought he had seldom seen so attractive a figure, or one in which dignity and grace were so equally blended: her height was not above the middle standard; the symmetry of her form, rounded by maturity, seemed to him a model of matronly beauty; and the conscious rank of the high-born Castilian gave an air of majesty and courtly elegance to her carriage, which might have graced the Imperial throne of Charles himself. Her features were not perhaps strictly beautiful, but characteristic of all the milder virtues which the meeting with her son had called forth. No violent passion had shed a wrinkle on her brow; no air of insolent vulgarity disturbed the serene dignity of her countenance; and the fascinating smile with which she extended her hand to the

friend of Federico, welcomed him with all the warmth of long acquaintance.

"I know not whether Pignatelli or myself," said don Giacomo, turning to his son, "have most right to complain of the treatment we receive."

"Forgive me, my father, for her sake who made me thus forgetful."

"You need not plead in any other name than your own at such a time as this, I trust," said the baroness, after having welcomed Gaetano to the castle.

"To say the truth," said the baron, looking with manifest delight at Federico's figure, so altered and improved since he had seen him last, "the boy must be forgiven for every thing but making me so evidently belong to the descending generation—his appearance must have added twenty years to my age already."

"Certainly not in your looks," replied the baroness; "nor does the accession of years seem to damp the joy which his arrival brings."

The hall now began to fill with the retainers and vassals of Perollo, assembled to congratulate the return of their future lord.—“Andrèa!” exclaimed Federico, taking the hand of a grey-headed old man, whom he had distinguished among the crowd.

“The Holy Virgin bless your excellenza for your kind remembrance!” said the old man, stooping to kiss his knees.

As Federico stopped him, he said—“Believe me, Andrea, time has not worn out the memory of any of my old friends, much less of one like you, whose recollection must return with every thought of my boyish sports.”

“Four generations of your house have I known,” Andrea answered, “and each successive one has called up new and stronger ties of duty in my heart.” He gazed on Federico till blinded by his tears—“I had not hoped,” he said, “to live to see the son of don Giacomo all that my fondest wishes could conceive.”

Federico then led his mother to the

apartment she had quitted, when the signal of his approach had been sounded from the battlements; the baron, engaged in inquiries of Gaetano relating to his uncle's welfare, followed them: the younger children, two daughters and a son, the eldest of whom was ten years junior to Federico, were now greeted with fond affection by their hitherto unknown, but anxiously expected brother. The baron continued for a few minutes in conversation with Pignatelli, whilst his family were indulging their first feelings of delight at meeting. The castle echoed with tumultuous sounds of joy, and the remainder of the evening was passed by the whole party in a state of happiness which knew no bounds and no alloy. All discussion of the events in Sciacca was forgotten, in the desire of the baron to be informed of the public affairs in Palermo, and the anxiety of the baroness to learn every particular of the future prospects of her son.

The circumstances of their journey were

lightly passed over, and although Federico ardently wished to talk with his mother on the subject of Costanza and her family, yet he could not begin the conversation, which Gaetano carefully avoided; and the expected campaign in the Milanese was of too much public interest to Pandolfina, and too much private concern to the baroness, as connected with her Federico, not to be an inexhaustible topic.—“To-morrow,” said his father, “we shall introduce you to the friends and adherents of our house, and welcome Pignatelli, as worthily as circumstances will admit: Sciacca cannot afford many means of amusement, but we shall endeavour to avail ourselves of all that can be found, both within and without the castle walls: one of our great festivals is at hand, which will at least enliven the city for a time.”

“I have no fears,” replied Gaetano, “that in such society my hours will pass heavily, or that our summons to Messina will not come too soon to call us from your excellenza’s hospitality.”

At a late hour the baroness retired, and the party separated for the night.

Early on the ensuing morning, Federico sent Baptista to the Marino, to hear if any vessel had entered the port, by which the baron Solanto could have arrived during the night; but his inquiries were answered in the negative; and his master was compelled to wait, without a hope of seeing the ladies, till Luna Castle was no longer their abode.

The early part of the day was spent by the young men in the inspection of the castle; part of this venerable pile had been constructed in the earliest days of the Norman dominion in Sicily. Rogiero de Hauteville had erected the original fortress, and the pointed arches of the keep shewed the architecture of those days; by him it was granted to his daughter Gilletta, and confirmed to her and her descendants, by her brother, king Rogiero, the first sovereign of his illustrious line. From Gilletta the castle had passed to her son,

Gilberto Perollo, with all her possessions in Sciacca and its vicinity; and the royal chapel in the Carmelite convent, where the ashes of the Perollo race were deposited, and their armorial ensigns displayed, shewed their high descent from the house of Hauteville, and the victorious counts of Apuglia. The succeeding lords of the castle had added to its size and strength; but the taste and munificence of don Giacomo, the present chieftain, had done more for its elegance, grandeur, and solidity, than many preceding ages.

The state apartments had been rebuilt, in all the florid beauty of the Gothic style, which, though declining before the Roman and Greek, was preferred by the baron's taste, as more accordant with the ancient buildings. He had also added to the strength of the outer bulwarks, and seven pieces of artillery had been placed on the most commanding parts of the battlements.

The grand entrance towards the city was surmounted by a ponderous and lofty

tower, from which the banners of the family, brilliant with the various quartering of their arms, were proudly displayed. The north side of the castle was defended by its high and massy walls; and on the east it joined the city, and an ancient gateway gave the inhabitants egress and ingress to the town at all times; nor since the viceroyalty of prince Gilberto had the captain of the city-guard, or any officer of government, ever interfered with this privilege. On the south side of the fortress, which faced the sea, several of the junior branches of the family had erected their mansions, under the protection of their chieftain's walls: some of them communicated with the interior of the castle.

Federico pointed them all out to his friend—"And there," he said, as turning round the south-west corner, another building appeared below; "there dwells my respected cousin, Paolo Perollo; of all the members of our house, the first in valour, gentleness, and honour."

Don Giacomo now called their atten-

tion to a new and splendid gateway he had built, enclosing from the city all the residences of his kinsmen, which, with the church and gate of St. Pietro, formed a barrier towards the town on the west. The site of the building itself was chosen with skill and judgment, both for taste and beauty; and the florid ornaments of the new, with the judicious improvement of the old, gave to the whole an appearance of comfort, as well as grandeur, far different from the gloom of castellated mansions of the earlier ages; and the numerous domestic servants and retainers which filled the courts, added not a little to the air of cheerfulness which pervaded the whole scene.

As Federico passed along, he was on all sides greeted with the most affectionate homage and attention; and the vassals seemed more attached to their lord by personal regard than by interest or custom.

In the armoury of the castle were hung the trophies of "many a well-fought field," the relics of Saracenic and oriental victories.

"Each of these," said Pignatelli to his friend, "I doubt not but old Andrea could illustrate, by a gallant tale of the valour of some brave Perollo, even from count Rogiero to the present day; but, I confess, the history I am most anxious to be acquainted with, is that of the hatred towards the house of Luna, which seems to pervade almost all your race."

"Some other time," replied Federico, "you shall hear the rise and progress of the feud, which does not reflect much credit upon either party; but now I hope all these jars will quietly pass away, and only be remembered amongst the traditions of the times gone by; my endeavours, at least, shall not be wanting to bring all to peace and amity."

"Your father," said Pignatelli, "seems to have added much to this already-splendid collection."

"I believe, signor," said an officer who attended them (don Giacomo having been called away), "that many of these warlike machines have been invented by the mili-

tary skill of don Paolo; and others are presents, which my lord's courtesy has well entitled him to, from the great liberality he shewstoall who come under his knowledge, as captain of the port; and I fear, notwithstanding don Federico's pacific disposition, we have by no means seen the end of our hostilities to the house of Luna."

"Are all reports of vessels entering here made to my father?"

"All, signor."

Perollo thought of Costanza and her father, and his impatience to converse with his mother on the subject of the baroness greatly increased.

Gaetano avoided it, and when started by Federico, changed it as soon as possible; at length, when he retired to prepare a letter for his uncle, by the courier dispatched by the baron, with answers to those he had received, Federico repaired immediately to the baroness.

"I did not," he said, "last night deliver to your excellenza the friendly remembrances with which I was charged by

your early intimate, donna Clara de Castro."

"Where did you meet with her, Federico?"

"She has been staying for some time with her friends at the viceregal palace; she left Palermo unexpectedly two days after me, and I met them again, as Gaetano and I were approaching Castel Vetrano, and had the happiness to be of some little service, and we made the rest of the journey together."

"Is she then in Sciacca?"

"Yes, and, I am sorry to say, at Luna Castle."

"How very unfortunate! I do not know any one I should be so pleased to see again; these broils are for ever thwarting one's wishes: what a most uncongenial companion she will find in the countess Caltabellotta, if she is as engagingly meek and gentle as she was formerly!"

"If those were her characteristics, my dear mother, I do not think you will find her changed." Federico paused; he had

tunity of enlarging on the merits of her daughter.

The preparations in the castle for the fete had been most sumptuous; the battlements were lined with soldiers, the domestics in their state liveries, and the principal apartments hung with the richest tapestry. The magnificent spirit of don Giacomo pervaded every part of his establishment, whilst his good taste prevented it from looking like an ostentatious display of wealth.

The marquis Geraci, an old friend of the baron, who was staying in the vicinity of Sciacca, was among the first who graced the feast; a salvo shot from the battlements announced his arrival, and he was shortly followed by the counts Sambuca and Partanna. A numerous and brilliant party was soon assembled in the grand saloon, to whom Pandolfina introduced his son and Gaetano.

The delighted pride with which the father seemed to contemplate his Federico's manners and appearance, soon communi-

cated itself to his friends, and the heir of Pandolfina was welcomed by them, with a warmth and cordiality which shewed the interest they took in all that concerned the head of their illustrious race. To the marquis Geraci, the young Perollo and his friend were well known in the viceroy's train; but by most of the assembly the one was scarcely remembered, and the other (an object of less importance to them) had never been known.

"The pride and satisfaction which your father must experience at your return, don Federico," said an elderly gentleman, of whom he had no recollection, "is scarcely inferior to my joy at being thus enabled to assure you of my devotion and esteem."

Perollo bowed, and was about to reply, when a voice behind him answered the person who had spoken.—"Your esteem, signor del Nadore, is soon and easily acquired, if at this first introduction it becomes so fervent and devoted. To my affection Federico may indeed assert a claim,

while old attachments are remembered, and to my esteem, if the promises appearance gives shall be fulfilled."

"It is don Paolo!" exclaimed his youthful kinsman, seizing his hand, and meeting with a most affectionate embrace.

The curiosity of Gaetano had been excited by the frequent mention his friend had made of the gallant cavalier before him, and he stood earnestly surveying his features, person, and appearance. He bore a slight resemblance to don Giacomo, but looked younger, as Gaetano could scarcely suppose him forty; his open and manly countenance commanded affection and respect; whilst there was a piercing intelligence in his large dark eyes, which seemed to read the inmost thoughts; his stature was tall and erect, and an air of simple dignity marked his carriage and gestures. His dress, unlike that of the rest of the party, though composed of costly materials, was entirely plain and unornamented; and as he advanced to meet him, Pignatelli thought he must have distinguished him

from the crowd, even had his attention not been thus forcibly called towards him.

“ You have been welcomed here, don Gaetano, with all the heart of Pandolfina, and in Sciacca none can offer more ; but if the services of an individual should be wanting, the friend of Federico may always claim mine.”

“ Perollo and I have been too long acquainted,” answered Pignatelli, “ for me to be a stranger to the value of any offered kindness from don Paolo Perollo.”

“ The countess Sambuca, and her brother, the baron Celano, if I remember right,” said Federico, as the baroness approached with a lady and gentleman ; the lady greeted the young men with many expressions of regard, and fixing her eyes on Gaetano, addressed to his friend a multitude of questions, which fortunately she did not wait to have resolved. Don Paolo immediately retired, as if to give the inundation way.

The baroness seeing some other persons enter the saloon, excused herself, and ad-

vanced to meet them. Federico in vain endeavoured to escape the volubility of the countess by attending to others. She paused for a moment, and he took the opportunity of introducing don Gaetano Pignatelli to her notice.

She smiled with infinite approbation, and lamented that her endeavours to prevail on the count to take her to Palermo had been fruitless; she was overwhelmed with sorrow and vexation at never having been presented to the viceroy and his family, and was convinced that Gaetano's friendship must be the most exalted and devoted passion, to bring him from the metropolis to Sciacca.

Pignatelli assured her he had not been called on for such a sacrifice, having only been joined by Federico at Trapani.

"Trapani!" echoed the countess; "I have more than twenty dear and beloved friends there; how delightful will be the news you can communicate of them!"

Gaetano looked in supplicating horror to Federico, who was engaged with other

of his connexions; don Giacomo and the baroness were at a distance; don Paolo kept aloof, and he saw no means of escape.

“How is my Antonia?” continued his tormentor; “you doubtless know the lovely baroness of St. Hippolita and her sister Santa Margarita; ages have passed since I was so blessed as to behold them.”

To no purpose her unwilling auditor began to assure her he was enable to satisfy her inquiries; she wanted no reply, and was beginning to call over other tender friendships, when turning her head, she saw the barone del Nadore bowing beside her; he repeated his salutations profoundly, and without ceasing. The lady slightly acknowledged them, and continued her persecutions; but the barone was not to be so easily dismissed.—“Whilst our admired visitants,” he said, “are thus receiving their welcome from the lips of beauty and grace, I may be considered an intruder; but my anxiety to be introduced to don Gaetano Pignatelli must plead for pardon.”

The lady smiled, and introduced him.

“Do tell me, signor,” she said, “of all the marriages and engagements now on foot in Trapani. I am so interested in the dear society there, that I shall consider myself eternally obliged to you; for, five years ago, the count and myself resided there three weeks, in the palazzo di St. Giuliano—who now inhabits it? where are the old proprietors? and has it been improved since we were there?”

“The palazzo has been inhabited by—”

“Indeed! What have been the amusements, what music, masques, and festivals?”

“Occupied as I have been,” said Pignatelli, during a moment’s cessation, “in the tedious enrolment of our new levies, I had but little opportunity of joining in the gaieties of the town.”

“Your services, signor,” said Del Nodre, with a low bow, “will doubtless be seen and acknowledged by his Imperial majesty, whose obligations to your family are infinite; and I can already anticipate

from yourself, that the Milanese will be a fertile field of glory."

Gaetano stared with astonishment at his new acquaintance.

"The Milanese!" said the countess; "and are you really going to the wars?—to leave Sicily? I am grieved beyond measure."

"The signor will doubtless return covered with honours, which I am assured he well deserves," rejoined the barone, with a complimentary grin.

"Oh, but to quit Palermo!" said the lady. "Milan, I have heard, is not very gay; I know nobody in Milan. Really, signor, if you did but know the trouble I have to persuade the count, my husband, to come sometimes to Sciacca."

"Would he had been inexorable now!" thought Gaetano.

"Can any one resist the wishes of the countess Sambuca?" said Del Nadore.

The lady was just going to begin again, when don Giacomo approached, and in-

roduced the count Sambuca to his guest. This operated instantaneously as a charm, and she became perfectly silent. Gaetano, after making his compliments to the count, took advantage of his vicinity to escape to the other side of the room, where he joined don Paolo.

“ You have had, no doubt, an interesting conversation,” said the latter.

“ To the lady I hope it was so; she seems to have a most ardent desire for information on every subject, but unwilling to wait my tardy power of giving it. Who is the fair inquirer?”

“ A sister of Ferdinando Perollo, baron Celano: her marriage with Sambuca was effected by the intercession of Pandolfina, who, strange as it may appear, has gained a most sincere and active friend, by what I think by most men would be considered no very enviable gift. The count Sambuca, however, has acquired a power over the lady, which can restrain even her loquacity, whilst the powerful connexions

and splendid dower which she brought, have raised his family high amongst the nobles of the country."

"And who," asked Pignatelli, "is that most discerning personage, the barone del Nadore, who has so high an affection and esteem for Federico, and foretold my deeds of prowess in the approaching expedition?"

"One of the illustrious members of our city government, who, though a natural adherent to count Luna's party, has found the interest of Pandolfina so useful, that he has availed himself of the easy frankness of his disposition, and contrived to be considered among the number of his friends and partisans: but here," he added, "is a gentleman, to whom I beg to introduce you, one of the worthiest and best of our citizens."

The cavalier Geronimo Ferrara now advanced, whose whole appearance was characteristic of mildness, gentleness, and ease.—"I have just been observing with pleasure," he said, "the improvement in your

youthful kinsman, don Paolo; and even you, I trust, are satisfied that time and absence have not returned your favourite other than you can wish."

"I fear it will confirm don Gaetano in an opinion of the strictness which you seem to ascribe to me, signor. If I say that a few days must pass before I can decide on Federico's unaltered worth, I hope and trust his heart is still the same it ever was; but five minutes conversation can scarcely authorize me to give an opinion so decisive."

"His appearance and manners," replied Ferrara, "cannot so far belie his disposition, but that I will confidently look forward to the day, when all our feuds in Sciacca will be closed, and Luna and Perollo no longer be the rallying words for party vengeance and hereditary discord."

"If you will receive my testimony," said Gaetano, "I will vouch for Federico's amicable temper, and challenge don Paolo's scrutiny into the excellence of his disposition; and I am assured that he will

find cause to strengthen, rather than to abate, the affection my friend has always claimed from him."

Don Geronimo embraced Pignatelli kindly, and thanked him for confirming his opinion.

The party were now summoned to the castle hall, where the banquet presented all that Pandolfina's wealth could procure, or his liberal hospitality display. The sounds of martial music echoed from the court below; the retainers of the family were splendidly attired, and all the baron's taste and magnificence seemed called forth in honour of the day. The spirits of don Giacomo were raised to their highest pitch, and shed round him a circle of mirth and conviviality, of which none could resist the influence; whilst the quiet cheerfulness of the baroness seemed scarcely less amiable and attractive.

"The barone della Bardia," said Cosmo Luchese, in the course of the entertainment, "is, I see, beginning to recover from

his confinement; he passed me this morning, in his way, I presume, to Luna Castle."

"What ill-disposed physician has sent him abroad again, to plague his friends and foes by his malignant spirit?" replied another of the guests. "The city ought to make a public day of sorrow and humiliation for his unwished-for recovery."

"Perhaps," replied Ferrara, "his long illness may have softened down his unhappy temper, and he may come forth restored in mind as well as body."

"Pray let the man who cured him prescribe for all his family without loss of time," observed Luchese.

"I understood," said Gaetano, "that don Accursi d'Amato had preceded us but a few hours in our road from Castel Vetrano hither."

"It must have been a phantom, signor," said Luchese; "the baron has been confined to St. Bartolomeo for several weeks, and, as I understood, most dangerously indisposed; he saw none of his friends, I believe, for several days."

"What signor Pignatelli says may nevertheless be true," replied the count Sambuca; "for if the evil spirit ever walks abroad, I know no form he can so properly assume as that of don Accursi d'Amato."

"And did you really see the fiend?" said the countess, in an under-tone. Having seated herself near Gaetano—"How did he look?—Whence did he come?—And whither did he go?"

"Alas!" thought Gaetano, "here comes another of the lady's tender friendships. I am sorry, madame," he replied, "it was only from report I heard that the baron crossed a fiumara in our way."

"He went to Luna Castle to-day, I presume," said Luchese, "to pay his respects to the affianced bride of don Sigismund on her arrival. And by-the-bye, signor Federico, I wonder how the count will like your intimacy with, and civilities to, his future countess, and the baroness Solanto, her mother."

The colour fled from the cheeks of Fe-

derico; for one moment he looked the ashy hue of death; in the next, the deepest crimson overspread his every feature, and he sat in silent agony.

Gaetano observed him, and instantly replied—"If don Sigismund has any regard for the ladies, he must feel glad that any one came to their assistance under such circumstances."

"I doubt not," said Ferrara, "that the count will feel and appreciate the services you were so fortunate as to render them."

No one but Gaetano and the baroness seemed to have observed Federico's agitation and distress, though his spirits had entirely vanished, and he hardly seemed to know what he was about during the remainder of the repast.

"So you really saw the lady who is to be the countess Luna?" said the signora di Sambuca to Pignatelli. "I am dying to know what she is like; I must make it all out from Federico and you."

"Oh! Perollo is not a good hand at such

descriptions," he replied ; " but I believe I can give you all the information you can wish on the subject."

" Enchanting !" observed the lady.

The conversation was however interrupted by the rising of the party.

Gaetano took the opportunity to exhort his friend to rouse himself to exertion, which his habitual self-possession soon enabled him to do ; and though the principal object of attention, no one suspected him of feeling any thing not corresponding with the festivities, which were kept up till a very late hour.

The baroness was so forcibly struck by Federico's change of countenance, on hearing of lady Costanza's engagement to don Sigismund, that she was scarcely able to banish the idea from her mind during the ensuing night. It was not that she had any great belief that people died for love, or that young men of his age are usually made very long miserable by such affairs ; but she knew that persons who do not, on every occasion, receive violent impressions,

are more apt to be deeply affected by them when they do; and most of all she dreaded, that any jealousy on the part of don Sigismund should renew the ancient feud, and those scenes of war and slaughter between the two houses, which she could never think of without horror.

She considered for some time on what was the best method to pursue: first she thought of avoiding the Solanto family altogether; then, but for a moment, of consulting the baron, and sending away Federico; but feeling sure, on the whole, that with such principles, and such a share of sense, as she had every reason to believe her son possessed, that reasoning must always be better than manceuvring, she summoned an attendant, and ordered him to request don Federico to come to her. When he entered she said—"I sent for you, my child, intending to use a mother's privilege of preaching and advising; do not look grave, for I feel that I should hardly have courage to give you pain."

"My mother, have I been so long away,

that you have forgotten how I enjoy your lessons, and how happy I am to obey your wishes, for you never command but by mildness?"

"Oh, you have learned flattery at Palermo; but sit down, and answer me one question.—Was I deceived yesterday in thinking the name of don Sigismund's bride gave you pain?"

Federico started up, and crossed the apartment to an open window, as if to breathe more freely; then returning to his seat, and endeavouring to compose himself, he said—"You were not deceived; but you will think me a maniac to feel thus—I hate myself for my folly; but the idea of such a creature being sacrificed to count Luna is madness!—it must not!—shall not——"

"Hush! hush! for pity's sake, for my sake, Federico! Would you involve your whole family in a war, for your personal advantage? But I see you are not cool enough for reasoning. For Heaven's sake,

my beloved child, pause before you rush on such a precipice as endeavouring to supplant count Luna. Can any thing be so dishonourable, so ungenerous? His affianced bride is accidentally exposed to your society, and you endeavour to break a contract, made by a kind father and mother (such a mother, I am sure, donna Clara is), and doubtless sanctioned by herself; for she was coming willingly to all appearance. In so doing, you uncloset all those still-painful wounds of former discords; hazard the lives of hundreds of your fellow-creatures, all the most attached friends of your family; perhaps involve in the ruin not only the object of your mad affection, but your father! Federico, how could you see me, after you had sacrificed all that is noble and excellent to such a cause? when you had——”

“ Oh! do not torture me to madness,” exclaimed Federico; “ you know full well I would not expose my father to a moment’s pain, much less—good Heaven!

I dare not think of it! oh, no! I would be the only victim!"

"Unhappy boy! did you mark your father's countenance, radiant with happiness at the sight of you?—did you mark his glistening eyes, when your praises reached him?—did you mark his speaking looks, as, with honest pride and fond anxiety, he watched your every movement yesterday, when he knew you were the object of universal scrutiny? No, you did not, or you could not have talked of separating your interest from his. Do you forget Paolo Perollo, who has loved you almost as a father from your infancy? Federico, I am not used to talk of myself or my own feelings; but if you think I could survive such misery—great Heaven! dare you talk of being the only victim?"

The baroness's even temper and calm dignity were so seldom urged to the expression of any thing like vehemence, that Federico had been unable to interrupt her, or even to move, till she was silent.

The conflict of feeling the conversation

had created, had carried her beyond herself; she had unconsciously risen from her seat; her height seemed increased; her exertion in speaking had given a brighter lustre to her eyes, and a deeper hue to her complexion; and as Federico raised his eyes to her interesting and majestic figure, he felt that he dared not disobey her injunctions, be they what they might. He approached her, and in a subdued and softened tone, said—"My dearest mother," and clasping his arms round her, felt that as yet nothing in the world was of equal consequence to him with her approbation, and no price too great to dry the tears which now flowed from her eyes, "can you forgive me, my angel mother, for distressing you thus? You shall dispose of me as you choose; I will be the creature of your will; only let me see you happy, and I think I cannot be miserable."

"Freely indeed do I forgive you, my child. You have ever been an object of such perfect satisfaction, such intense affection to your father and myself, that I

could not know how to bear such a prospect from you ; but you will be all we wish and expect you to be."

" I will endeavour to constitute your happiness at least," said Federico, sighing deeply.

" My dear Federico, we have been hurried beyond our wonted habits ; let us sit down and be rational. In doing what you know to be right, you must secure your own peace of mind most effectually ; you are well aware how wretched would be the consequences of persevering in this unfortunate attachment ; you cannot be so romantic as to suppose that twenty years hence you will feel as you do now, or that there is but this one woman in the whole world capable of making you happy, nor so weak, as to doubt that a real and earnest endeavour to subdue a sentiment, the encouragement of which would be dishonourable and ungenerous, could be unattended with success. We are accountable beings, and have the means amply bestowed on us to govern our passions, and

direct our actions ; therefore, to deny the power of doing either, is to be mad or wicked. I do not mean to assert that the effort will not be painful ; but it is a duty, a possible one, and depends entirely on yourself, and therefore I expect it from you. I will do all in my power to avoid exposing you to donna Costanza's too attractive society ; and after one campaign in the Milanese, you will see this affair altogether in a new light : and now, my dear boy, you must leave me, and compose yourself, and I will do the same : it would be cruel to damp your father's happiness at such a time."

CHAPTER VI.
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I do not think a braver gentleman,  
More daring or more bold, is now alive,  
To grace this latter age with noble deed.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the summons to the baroness Solanto was announced, Costanza in vain endeavoured to persuade her to excuse herself from attending the countess's evening repast, on account of her fatigue and disappointment; but the state of mind in which they had left their hostess, induced the baroness to exert herself, and she prepared to follow the attendant, commanding her daughter, on no account, to irritate the feelings of the lady by any opposition, or recurrence to the conversation which had passed.

When they entered the apartment, Costanza, who had expected to be received



with increased frigidity, was not a little astonished at the ghastly smile of affected complacency with which the countess advanced to meet them, and still more at the embrace with which she was greeted; and to receive which, without evincing the disgust she felt, required all her self-command.

"I am rejoiced," she said, "to see the baroness so far recovered from her fatigue, and trust that a night's rest, the speedy arrival of his excellenza the baron, and your tender and affectionate care, my child, will perfectly restore her."

Costanza expressed her thanks and wishes on the subject, and raised her eyes to the countenance of the speaker, whose looks were instantly averted, and she remarked the livid hue which was spread over her harsh features, and the convulsive motions which they exhibited, with something like terror, but without fully comprehending their intent.

"In a day or two," continued the countess, "one of our most solemn feasts will

be held, that of the Holy Thorn, and you will then see Sciacca in all its glory."

"The beauty of the city," said the baroness, "from what I have already seen, must strike every traveller with an idea of its riches and magnificence."

"They may boast of the splendours of Palermo," answered her hostess; "but accustomed as I have always been to Sciacca, I cannot say that I could perceive them; and the insolent vulgarity too of the upstart nobles there, could not but force me to a comparison between the different treatment, which persons of our illustrious rank meet with in the profligate metropolis, and in the uncorrupted manners of their native place: here," she continued, "we are surrounded by the hereditary connexions of the house of Luna and Peralta, who will, as soon as the baron Solanto arrives, manifest their respect and devotion to the destined bride of don Sigismund. The approaching festival brings all the neighbouring nobles to, the city;

and from Bivonia and Caltabellotta, the chief of our vassals will arrive."

"May I ask the origin of this religious feast in Sciacca?" said the baroness.

"When count William di Peralta," answered the lady, "founded the monastery of Santa Maria d'Istria, some two hundred years since, he endowed and enriched it, in a manner worthy of his pious and munificent disposition; and first amongst its treasures were placed three thorns, which were part of our blessed Saviour's crown, and which the count had purchased at an immense expence in his expedition to the Holy Land. Numberless are the cures these sacred relics have performed, and yearly they are borne through the city, to procure for it prosperity and the blessings of Heaven, and a long continuation to the honours and the name of its pious and noble benefactor."

The grandeur of the house of Luna was a subject on which the countess could always descant with complacency and satis-

faction: neither the baroness nor Costanza felt at all inclined to disturb her serenity, and she continued—"Don Sigismund, always anxious to support the high station his ancestors have filled in their native home, and to shew the high veneration he feels for every thing connected with our most holy faith (which in these days meets with such insults and degradations from those who ought to be its chief defenders), never fails devoutly to attend this sacred festival, and all who love and honour his name have ever accompanied him: nay, even the inveterate enemies of the race of Luna and Peralta, who might, from the remembrance of their sacrilegious insult offered to these holy relics, in shame absent themselves, yet never neglect to join in the procession."

In thus alluding to the house of Perollo, the voice of the speaker became tremulous from agitation, and she sat for some moments in silence.

"When is don Sigismund expected to return to Sciacca?" asked the baroness, not

willing to provoke a history of the feud to which the countess had alluded.

“ Early to-morrow he returns; some business which rendered his presence at Bivonia necessary, and which he hoped to have completed, before your arrival was an additional motive; but he will be sorry that any thing should have taken him from the castle at this time.”

After some further conversation of little interest, the baroness pleaded fatigue, and the ladies separated for the night.

Having reached her mother's apartment, Costanza threw herself on a seat, and covering her face with her hands, seemed entirely regardless of every thing around her, and unable to pay even her usual attentions to her mother.

An old servant, who had nursed her, watched this very unusual conduct for some time with silent respect, while busied about the baroness, but at last could not refrain from approaching her darling; and seeing that, notwithstanding her silence, tears were coursing each other down her



cheeks, she exclaimed—"Santa Maria! this frightful castello will be the death of us all; here is my sweet young lady in tears, who is always so joyous and happy; and I am sure all the attendants look as if they had not seen a smile since their infancy."

"Hush! hush!" said the baroness.—"Are you ill, my child? Come hither, Costanza.—Leave us, Beatrice; remain in the anti-room till I call for you."

The servant withdrew, and Costanza, left alone with her mother, gave free indulgence to her grief.

The baroness seeing she was thoroughly depressed, and thinking her tears would relieve her, did not for a few minutes interrupt her; but when she saw her beginning to recover, she said—"My love, I shall begin to think you are like Beatrice, and are frightened because the rooms are not very light, or very modern in their decorations: you have lived so peaceably and evenly till now, that you have yet to learn the effect that hurry and fatigue have even

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on the buoyant spirits of youth ; but compose yourself, and after a good night's rest, you will be quite restored."

" Oh never, never ! if I meet that terrible countess," said Costanza, with a fresh burst of grief ; " indeed I cannot stay with her. If don Sigismund is like her, (and how should he be otherwise ?) surely my father will not force me to fulfil this hateful engagement."

" My dearest Costanza, pray be more moderate ; your father, you are very certain, will never force you to any thing, even though he should think it for your advantage—he is too indulgent ; but I shall be displeased if you accustom yourself to such vehemence of expression. What right have you to call an engagement made for your happiness, and with your concurrence, hateful ? Nor can I imagine why a young man must of necessity be like an old woman ; besides which, to tell you the truth, I suspect the countess cannot entertain any very exalted idea of your gentleness ; for it was more

allowable in a person of her age, and very confined education, and whose society has been composed almost entirely of persons she considers beneath her, to lose her temper for a minute, than for you to reply in any thing like the same spirit."

"Perhaps I was wrong, my dear mother; but her insolent neglect of you——"

"Was probably caused by her anxiety to shew every possible attention to yourself, and her manners not being quite perfect enough to shew her immediately how to do both gracefully."

"Oh, but that burst of fury——"

"Was very disagreeable—certainly violence is always so; but a passionate temper is by no means the worst, and is very frequently, indeed generally, accompanied by an affectionate heart; and the evident desire evinced by the countess to represent her son to advantage, proves her a kind and partial mother, and therefore, my child, I hope not in your eyes quite without merit."

Costanza was going to speak, but the

baroness continued—"I know what you would say; but I was going to remind you, that you have quite left out all mention of the countess receiving us the second time, without the least remaining anger or ill humour; this at least shews as much readiness to forgive offences received, as to commit them, which, you will allow, is a very valuable quality."

"Certainly, my dear mother, if the countess really did feel no remaining anger; but I own, without being able to explain wherefore, that her expression of countenance frightened me more the second time of seeing her than the first; however, do not let me keep you up, and fatigue you more to-night. I will promise to see count Luna with as little prejudice as I can help, and I will endeavour to be all you wish me; but indeed, to exchange your mild dominion for that of the countess Caltabellotta does seem dreadful."

"Do not alarm yourself with chimeras, my Costanza, nor encourage prejudice against the countess more than her son."

Your father, I hope and pray, may be here to-morrow, and then you will feel sure, in following his judgment, that you are safe and right. Heaven bless you! call in the servants, and we will go to rest."

Having seen her mother to her couch, Costanza withdrew to her own apartment, which was adjoining, and supposing Beatrice to be following her, she neglected to close the door into the gallery; the servant, however, remained a few minutes longer with the baroness, when becoming rather impatient, Costanza was beginning to prepare for bed, and advanced towards the door to close it. Her attention was attracted by heavy footsteps in the passage; she hesitated, not wishing to be seen, and stood undetermined what to do, when she saw a tall majestic figure pass through the open space; a long black horseman's cloak enveloped his person, and a plume of dark feathers in his cap overshadowed his features. Attracted by the light through the doorway, the stranger turned his face to-



wards it for an instant, and as quickly averted it. The imperfect view she had of him caused Costanza to shudder with an indistinct feeling of alarm. It must be don Sigismund himself, was the first idea that struck her, and she felt as if her death sentence had been passed; again she thought, from even the imperfect view she had, that it was an older person than Luna had been described to her. In this state of terror and distress, she was still standing in the centre of the room, when her nurse entered, who, almost with a scream, ejaculated—"Maria degli Trombi! what have you seen, my child?"

Costanza attempted to smile.—"Is don Sigismund returned to the castle?"

"No, ma donna, but there are plenty of guards and attendants in the hall below; but, Holy Virgin defend us! they will never hear our screams."

"There is no cause to alarm them; I have seen no spirits or spectres, Beatrice," said her mistress, endeavouring to recover herself.

" You looked so pale and terrified, signora, when I entered the room, and asked so hastily for count Luna, that I fancied you had been frightened by something."

" It is fatigue and disappointment about my father, added to my mother's illness, which makes me so pale and low-spirited, I believe."

" I am sure I hope my lord will arrive to-morrow, and that we shall soon be settled in a cassino of our own," said the attendant, " for I am sure nobody can recover either health or spirits here."

" Yet here," said Costanza, with a sigh, " my future life will probably be spent."

" Oh yes, signora; but when you are mistress of the castle, things will soon wear another aspect; and to say the truth, I dare say we might make these great apartments cheerful, when we have our own way in every thing, as I hope your *eccellenza* means to have."

" Before we make such a resolution," said the lady, " I think we had better ascertain the disposition of don Sigismund."

“ Oh, my lady, as to that, every individual I have heard speak of him here, agrees that the count is liberal, generous, and brave—somewhat hasty to be sure; but violent people, you know, are easy to be managed—indeed I made every inquiry I could.”

“ Pray, Beatrice, who sleeps in the rooms beyond my mother?”

“ The old countess, signora, occupies, I believe, the whole extent of the gallery beyond.”

“ Has any friend of don Sigismund arrived to-night in the castle?”

“ None, my lady, I believe.”

Costanza then retired to rest; she found her mother better next day, but her anxiety about the baron unabated, no tidings having yet arrived of his approach. The countess received them in the morning, with evident wishes to conciliate, and efface from their memory the conversation which took place at her first interview.

Towards the middle of the day, a great noise of horses was heard in the court be-

low.—“It is my son returned,” said the countess. Costanza’s heart beat almost audibly; the figure she had seen last night rushed forcibly upon her imagination; who could it be but the count who had entered his mother’s apartment at such an hour? and if such was her destined husband, she felt that it would be impossible to fulfil her engagement. She heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and her agony and impatience were almost insupportable: they stopped for a few moments in the anti-room; to her it seemed an age of delay, and yet she dreaded the moment when the door should open. At length the lord of Costanza’s destiny stood manifest before her, and she contemplated, with mixed sensations of astonishment and pleasure, the person and appearance of don Sigismund di Luna, as he entered the room. His height was lofty and commanding, his motions easy and dignified, and his countenance, though expressive of pride, strikingly handsome. He advanced with kindness and respect towards the ba-

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roness, and expressed the satisfaction he felt at her safe arrival in Sciacca; lamenting the delay of the baron, and that his own absence from the castle had prevented his receiving her in person: but when he turned towards her daughter, admiration and delight seemed to have deprived him of the power of speech.

Costanza blushed deeply, and when her mother presented her, could scarcely stand, much less answer his incoherent compliments.

The baroness endeavoured to relieve her daughter's distress, and to engage the count's attention; whilst his mother stood near, apparently not entirely approving his evident admiration, and the total inattention to herself.—“Your excellenza is, I hope, returned but a short time before Solanto; the wind has been fair for the last two days, and my anxiety for his arrival hourly increases.”

“Beyond all expectation!” said don Sigismund, still gazing at Costanza.

The pause of wonder with which all



the party heard this reply, so foreign to the subject, roused Luna to remembrance; conscious of some mistake, yet perfectly in ignorance of the speech which had been addressed to him, he looked towards his mother for an explanation.

“You seem not to have remembered, don Sigismund,” she said, “that there were other claims to your attention here.” A frown was gathering on her brow, which Sigismund endeavoured instantly to disperse.

“Forgive the admiration, dearest mother, which for a moment rendered me forgetful of your presence.” The affection and respect with which he kissed the countess’s hand, gave Costanza a sensation of exquisite pleasure.—“You expected to have found the baron here, madame, I understand,” he said, again turning to the baroness; “but the late storms may have induced him to stand out to sea; he may have put into Mazzara, and found a difficulty in doubling the Punta di Taurello,

or I have even known vessels some days in getting round Cape St. Mark."

"Your opinion is consolatory, signor," she answered, "as it gives me hope that no untoward accident occasions the delay."

"Even should the arrival of the bark be still some few days distant," he continued, "which however I do not think will be the case, I trust you will not unnecessarily indulge in anticipating evils, and we will not doubt that every thing will turn out which will be most to your comfort."

These kind endeavours to cheer her mother's drooping spirits were most gratefully felt and appreciated by Costanza.

"We met with a most dangerous and unpleasant accident on our journey during the heavy storm, but the kindness and attention of signor Pignatelli and his friend the cavalier Perollo, relieved us from all the ill consequences which might have followed it."

Luna started at the mention of Perollo; a shade passed over his countenance, and

he said—"Though I would willingly have been indebted to any other instrument for such a weight of obligation, yet I shall acknowledge this service with gratitude even to Federico Perollo."

The countess evidently wished to interrupt the conversation, and asked, in no very gentle tone, what friends he expected at the castle previous to the feast?

"Geronimo Peralta," he replied, "will be the only one who takes up his abode with us. The baron della Bardia is not, I fear, sufficiently recovered to attend; and Infontanetta has persuaded others of our friends to make his house their home. The baron Solanto," he added, cheerfully, "will be here in time to join in our solemnity, and witness the pride and satisfaction with which our family will welcome this auspicious visit."

"I should be very unwilling," the baroness answered, "that such an opportunity should be lost, of becoming personally known to your illustrious relatives; but

should the baron be unfortunately detained from hence, I fear my spirits will hardly be equal to a public introduction; and under such circumstances, my daughter and myself must claim your indulgence, to excuse us from appearing at the approaching festival."

"Your will and pleasure, lady," said don Sigismund, "shall in all things be obeyed; but I expect hourly to hear that the baron is in safety in our port."

"On an occasion like the present," said the countess, "when the duties of religion are in question, all private feelings must be sacrificed; and when the honour of the house of Luna and Peralta is concerned, every one who feels its interest at heart will make it a first consideration. The baroness Solanto and her daughter must attend the approaching solemnity."

Even the meek spirit of the elder lady rose indignant at this insolent harangue; a tinge of colour flushed in her cheeks, but she repressed her feelings, and looked in silence to don Sigismund.

"Our honoured guests are here," he said, "not only to command their own engagements, but their wishes, and their will shall be supreme to every one over whom my influence extends."

"'Tis well, count Luna," said his mother; "another power is, I see, again to be placed over me; insults and indignities will drive me from your house, but if once I depart, I never enter Luna Castle more." With every feature distorted by rage, the lady quitted the apartment.

Don Sigismund attempted to soften down his mother's ill behaviour, and the baroness, anxious to allay the storm, assured him, that to give the countess all the satisfaction in her power, she was perfectly willing to attend the devotions in the church, but begged to decline the ceremony of a formal introduction till the baron was present.

His gratitude for this conciliating kindness was gracefully and cordially expressed, and his manner had in it so much ardent admiration of Costanza, and respect towards her mother, that when he retired

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to appease the furious countess, the former felt so well disposed to him, that all her reluctance to fulfil her engagement had vanished; and the recollection of the figure she had fancied was that of her destined husband, was no longer an object of terror to depress her spirits, but nearly forgotten in the satisfaction with which she thought of don Sigismund's manners and address.

Both ladies were silent for a few minutes after his departure; at length the baroness said—"Well, Costanza, is not don Sigismund terribly like the countess?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Oh! then you do not intend to throw yourself at your father's feet, and supplicate to be freed from your engagement."

"My dear mother!"

"Well, well, my child, I will not torment you; but, pray, let this agreeable disappointment be also a useful lesson to you—to argue more moderately, and not mistake your own fears for realities."

"I will do my best endeavours, but without the least hope of ever arriving at

the degree of Christian charity and meekness you possess; for instance, now, I felt a vast inclination to tell that violent old woman how disagreeable, violent, and absurd she was, and to persist in going to the feast or staying away at my own pleasure: and really, my dear mother, if she does not know how to behave with common civility, she should be taught, and a few such lessons would so much improve her."

"If she were as young as yourself, Costanza, there is no doubt but rational severity and opposition would be of infinite use to the countess; but at her age, to attempt new moulding her temper would be ridiculous; and the only chance of living comfortably with her, must be by avoiding subjects of dispute, and determining never to notice any ill-natured thing she either says or does; and, in short, treating her like a much more amiable person than she is."

"But surely, my dear mother, such conduct would be indulging ill-tempered people very undeservedly; and besides, it

seems to me so exceedingly mean-spirited to be overpowered by violence, when one knows one is right."

"You quite mistake the business; for, in reality, to be humoured like a froward child who must not be punished, is no very enviable state; but persons who need such treatment, usually aspiring to mere dominion, have neither delicacy or discrimination enough to care or understand why it is granted them. Young people are very apt to miscall wilfulness by the name of spirit, which term, by-the-bye, is so often applied to those who prefer their own will to that of every other person, and is altogether so indefinite, that for myself, I must confess, I feel, when I hear of a great spirit, as I should if people said at once, very obstinate or very unruly. With respect to your relative situation with the countess Caltabellotta, opposition will make her an irreconcilable enemy; and cheerfully humouring her, a very ardent friend; and every sacrifice which you make to the general happiness of his

family, the comfort of his mother, and thereby to his own ease of mind, don Sigismund will not fail to appreciate, and the more highly, as he was not, I hear, always accustomed to it; and if you are as happy with him as I hope you will be, his approbation will be more than a reward for all your self-control. But let us go to my room, and hear if Beatrice has sent again to the Marina, as I ordered."

## CHAPTER VII.



Can piety the discord heal,  
Or staunch the death-feud's enmity?  
Can Christian love, can patriot zeal,  
Can love of blessed charity?  
No! vainly to each holy shrine  
In mutual pilgrimage they drew,  
Implor'd in vain the grace divine,  
For chiefs their own red falchions slew.

WALTER SCOTT.

FEDERICO, after the interview with his mother, retired to his own apartment, too much agitated to join in society; and the baron Pandolfina being occupied in public business, don Paolo offered his services to Gaetano to attend him wheresoever he might wish to go.

Pignatelli, anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, willingly accepted the offer, and they left the castle together, having declined, with all possible civility, the pre-



sence of the obsequious barone del Nadore, who seemed particularly anxious to ingratiate himself with the nephew of the viceroy, but met with little encouragement in his obsequious adulation.

“ I am, I fear, particularly ungrateful,” said Gaetano to his companion, “ but the professions of this new friend of mine, the barone del Nadore, are irksome in the extreme ; I must be indebted for them to his affection for don Giacomo, but I sincerely wish he would transfer his numberless attentions and compliments to Federico, who can accommodate himself much more readily and patiently to the follies of his neighbours ; besides, it would be showing more regard to the patron of the barone.”

“ Del Nadore,” replied don Paolo, “ never loses an opportunity of ingratiating himself with any one connected with the higher powers, and however lavish he may be in his speeches to yourself, he will still find an inexhaustible fund to try the temper of my young kinsman. I know that don Giacomo receives with the contempt it

deserves his fulsome flattery; but at the same time he believes Del Nadore to be attached to his interest, and that he is only weak and foolish; whereas I know him to be wicked and designing, and that the first advantage gained by the enemies of Pandolfina, would range this sycophant beneath their banners: he is too trifling a character to make him dangerous, but I wish we had not so many doubtful friends, or rather secret enemies, as spies upon our actions."

"The character of the baron Pandolfina appears to be such as to disarm the power of envy and detraction."

"Quite the contrary, my young friend; with every feeling of regard, affection, and respect for my kinsman's worth, I cannot be blind to those imperfections, rather in manner than in disposition, which may one day be the origin of wide-spreading and extensive evil."

"May I ask an explanation?"

"Certainly," said don Paolo; "the character of don Giacomo is such as his

friends must contemplate with pride, such as they cannot but love, respect, and almost idolize: warm, ardent, and sincere in his attachments—disinterested, liberal, and devoted to all that is honourable, good, and great, his very faults appear to spring from an excess of these amiable qualities: somewhat impetuous in his abhorrence of every thing which militates against those high and chivalrous principles which absorb his every thought and feeling, he too often expresses, in open unambiguous terms, his opinion of those he knows to have been once guilty of the vices he detests. Some of the highest of our city nobles, whose injustice, peculation, and oppressive tyranny, had reached the ears of the baron, he has publicly disgraced and eternally offended. His impetuous feelings, and strict honour, make no distinction between friends and foes; but where he finds cause for censure, unreflectingly and openly he gives it way: conscious of the rectitude and utility of his public measures, he proceeds directly forward, and neither attempts to sooth the pre-

judices of the weak, nor inform the understanding of the ignorant. Narrow-minded and illiberal persons are to be found in every society. At a distance from the scenes of public action, the minds of many individuals, habituated to the same routine, start with horror from every innovation, and receive with cautious suspicion every improvement on their usual habits. The education of don Giacomo has been in the courts of emperors and kings, and the enlightened ideas he there acquired, are unfortunately of too high a standard for the meridian of Sciacca; hence many even of our well-disposed neighbours regard the alterations, which perhaps they do not fully comprehend, as outrages to their habitual feelings and customs. But I am entering," he added, "too deeply into this subject; I had undertaken to introduce you to the city, not to the citizens of Sciacca; we are now on the Marina—that building before you is the house of the Jesuits."

"When I accepted your kind offices,

signor," answered Gaetano, "it was more from a desire to improve my acquaintance with one who has long been the theme of Federico's panegyric, than of parading through the streets of Sciacca; the view from this Marina however is strikingly magnificent—why should we extend our perambulation?"

"As you please," answered Perollo; "our city affords but few attractions to any one accustomed to the splendours of Palermo. The castles of Luna and Perollo are the principal private buildings here; the residences of the other nobles are far inferior in every respect."

"They appear to be numerous, elegant, and modern buildings," said Gaetano.

"Forty barons now reside within the walls, connected, I am sorry to add, by party animosity or party affection with our rival houses; would I could think, with the worthy Geronimo Ferrara, that our feuds are nearly at an end! but neither the character of don Sigismund di Luna, nor that of Giacomo Perollo, are



formed to close the wounds of civil discord, which have now had the strength of ages to fester and inflame."

"Have these hereditary contests existed so long then?" asked Gaetano.

"Nearly a century and a half ago, I believe we may date the unhappy seeds of contest."

"Long and anxiously," returned Pignatelli, "I have wished to hear the origin of these jars and animosities; Federico however has always avoided indulging my curiosity."

"He has, I hope," answered don Paolo, "been so far removed from the scene of party rage, that it has at present stamped its characters but feebly on his mind, and the less frequently the recollections are recalled, the better; I will therefore undertake the office of historian, if you will accept such imperfect accounts as my memory can furnish."

"Most gratefully, signor," answered his companion, eager to accept the offer.

Don Paolo then proposed that they

should retire to his residence, and on their way thither Gaetano asked his opinion of count Luna.

Perollo smiled at the request.—“To ask,” he said, “the character of the chief of Luna and Peralta from any member of our family, is taxing our impartiality and candour somewhat heavily, but I will try how far I can forget the prejudices of birth and education, to reply to you.—Sigismund di Luna is, I believe, brave, generous, and noble, warm-hearted to his friends, enthusiastic in his attachments, but impetuous, violent, and haughty; proud of his illustrious birth and family, he looks with jealousy on the superior power and popularity of don Giacomo. The count is young, his education has been confined, and his mother has acquired a power over him, which she exerts to irritate, rather than to sooth his impetuous temper; and others are not wanting to assist her. The rank and influence of don Sigismund in Sciacca having made him the rallying point of all whom his rival has

offended, and these men uniting to compass their revenge, continually urge him on by every argument their hatred and vengeance can dictate: in almost any other case, the generous good-nature of Pandolfina would make allowance for the sallies of a hot-headed young man driven to hostilities by those around him; but the hereditary dislike which early education has planted in him against the very names of Luna and Peralta, no power of reason can eradicate, and he too commonly indulges in ridiculing the ineffectual threats and denunciations of his enemies, with the pompous grandeur, and perhaps arrogant pretensions, of don Sigismund himself."

Having reached the house of don Paolo, his new friend lost no time in gratifying Pignatelli with the promised detail.

"Our family, in this unhappy history," said Perollo, "may perhaps be justly condemned as the first transgressors; and as I cannot but feel a bias to their side, you must in justice, signor, make all due allow-

ance for my prejudices ; but I will, with all the impartiality I can command, recount the rise and progress of these evils. It is necessary to go back as far as the death of don Nicholo Peralta, count of Caltabellotta, one of our first Sicilian nobles, of royal lineage, and of enormous wealth. His death took place about the year 1391, leaving behind him three daughters, his coheiresses, Giovanna, Margarita, and Costanza, between whom the accumulated honours, riches, and possessions of the house, were to be divided ; whilst the inheritance they derived from their mother, Elizabetha Chiaramonte, added to their paternal domains, made them the wealthiest heiresses of their time. By their father's will, however, they were restricted from marrying, without the consent of don Martin, king of Aragon and Sicily, the infanta Leonora of Aragon, their grandmother, the cardinal of Santa Chiesa, the count of Modica, and one or two other noble relatives, amongst whom was don Giacomo

Perollo, lord of Castelamare. Such a variety of guardians to propitiate, might have made any suitor hopeless, and in endeavouring to secure his daughters from improper matches, don Nicholo had almost condemned them to perpetual celibacy.

“ Giovanna, the eldest, died soon after her father, and Artalo di Luna, relying on his relationship to his sovereign, don Martin, demanded the lady Margarita, heiress of the county of Caltabellotta, in marriage; but his demand, though supported by the consent and authority of the monarch, was instantly rejected by the infanta, by Giacomo Perollo, and all the other guardians. Luna however persevered, and after many months dispute, the sovereign authority was exerted, and the king commanded the marriage to be solemnized, whilst the other parties could only protest in vain against the act.

“ From this union of the houses of Luna and Peralta, their descendants have since borne the united names of both their progenitors. Antonio di Luna and Pe-



ralta, count of Caltabellotta, and grand constable of the kingdom, was the first fruit of the marriage of don Artalo and Margarita. The opposition of don Giacomo Perollo had throughout the discussion been active and determined, an offence which Artalo di Luna never could forgive: the hatred which rankled in his bosom descended to his son, and count Antonio remembered but too well the lessons of irreconcilable enmity he had imbibed against our house, of which Pietro Perollo, baron of San Bartolomeo, was the first to feel the effects: against him the count instituted a suit, and finally succeeded in depriving him of his barony.

“The fierce temper of Perollo could ill brook this injury; he considered that he had been unjustly deprived of his hereditary rights, and vowed never to put the armour from his back, till he had fully and deeply revenged his wrongs on the head of Antonio di Luna. Knowing the martial spirit of don Pietro, his resolute and

determined perseverance, and dreading the vengeance of his powerful connexions, the count Antonio withdrew to Caltabellotta, and fortified himself against the attacks with which he was threatened by don Pietro's vow of vengeance. From the fortress of count Luna, emissaries were continually sent out, by private assassination to cut off the object of his hatred and fear; but the valour and activity of Pietro, and his devoted friends, preserved him from their snares; whilst these instances of discovered treachery served only to strengthen the determination of the party of Perollo, and incite them more violently to pursue and to exterminate their insidious foe.

“ The faithful and ancient ally of our house, count Geraci and Ventimiglia, joined his powerful aid, and warmly espoused the cause of don Pietro, having himself been deeply injured by Antonio di Luna. Many were their deliberations on the means of compassing their plans of vengeance; but whilst within the walls of Caltabellotta,

their enemy might mock at their power, and defy their most violent assaults. This he appeared so well aware of, that for some months he never ventured beyond his walls, and frustrated all their intended schemes and resolutions; but the hour of their revenge arrived at length. To-morrow, as you have heard, signor, is the anniversary of the festival of the Santa Spina. These relics were conferred on the convent of Santa Maria d'Istria by one of the ancestors of the Peralta family, and his descendants have at all times most scrupulously attended this feast.

“ The count Antonio, trusting to the sanctity of the occasion, and to the time which had elapsed, determined to leave his retirement, and not abandon the attendance which all his family had shewn to the relics, since first count William had bestowed them on the convent. Of his determination, the friends of Perollo were well aware, and blinded by their fury, regarded not the holiness of the meeting; before the torrent of their vindictive fren-

zy, all the barriers of piety, religion, and humanity, were swept away, and even in the sacred procession they resolved to shed the blood of Antonio di Luna.

“ The anniversary of to-morrow, in the year 1455, gave birth to an event, which no time can ever eradicate from the memory of Luna or Perollo, as long as their names endure in Sciaeca. As has always been the case, the streets were thronged by daybreak with the crowds of villagers and citizens; the nobles of the surrounding country, with all their vassals and retainers, were assembled to grace the solemnity; the balconies and windows, filled with the females of rank, and the bells from the churches, announced the hour for the procession to begin. Antonio had arrived the evening before, with a numerous train of valiant cavaliers, at the Castello di Luna; and Perollo, with his band, were placed in ambush in one of the streets through which the pageant was to pass. In breathless anxiety don Pietro and his friends awaited the hour which should gra-

tify their sanguinary vengeance; the sacred banners of the various convents were displayed, the holy relics borne through the streets by the prior of Santa Maria, and followed by the nobles of the city, at whose head was count Luna: the procession had reached the open space before the church of St. Nicholas and Santa Caterina, when, with shouts of triumph and revenge, Perollo and his associates burst from their concealment. No moment was left for escape or for defence; the sword of Pietro had felled Antonio to the ground, before himself, or those about him, were aware from whence the danger came; confusion and dismay spread rapidly around; the officers of religion, and unarmed citizens, fled in all directions to their churches and houses, and the city resounded with cries of terror and alarm; no one knew the extent of the evil which they feared; screams of murder and affright were echoed from one to another, and the multitude on all sides dispersed from the scene of blood and sacrilege, the victorious assailants indulged



unopposed their thirst for revenge; the wounded and mangled body of Luna was trodden in the dust by their adherents, who, having satiated their fury, left their enemy, as they supposed, the slaughtered victim of their successful enterprise, and, mounting their horses, fled through the gate of St. Nicholas, to shelter themselves in the Castle of Geraci, under the protection of Ventimiglia, an aider and abettor in the outrage.

“ The first moments of surprise having passed over, the friends of Luna rallied round his body, which had been abandoned during the confusion; and the opposite party having fled, they conveyed it without any obstruction to the Castel di Luna. Life was not extinct, and by the care and skill of his attendants, the count was restored to animation, and after a long and tedious confinement, finally recovered from the barbarous attack.

“ With returning life and strength, the bosom of don Antonio throbbed for vengeance and redress: it required no more

than a plain statement of facts to call, round the standard of Luna and Peralta, every friend whom the ties of blood or friendship had connected with their race. Nobles and dependants crowded in numbers to his aid, and when capable of leading his faithful followers, he found a numerous and willing multitude, ready and anxious to avenge their chieftain's cause, and wreak his vengeance on all the name of Perollo.

“ In vain they searched every house and castle belonging to his family. Pietro, in safety under Geraci's roof, escaped their vindictive purpose; but fire and sword were unsparingly let loose against all his vassals and adherents; marks of the desolation which they spread abroad may still be seen around the neighbouring country, and for some months these scenes of havoc and destruction were continued, involving the innocent and the guilty in one common ruin; every law was outraged and insulted; till at length the royal power was

called forth, and both parties banished from the island; but after some lapse of time, king Alphonso summoned to his court the contending chiefs, a public reconciliation was effected, and both returned to Sciacca; yet still the embers of their hatred have continued burning fiercely under this outward show, and since that day, though somewhat damped and weakened, have never been extinguished, and, with the dispositions of the present chiefs of the two factions, are, I fear, more likely to flame out anew, than to expire in oblivion and peace. Such, my young friend," added don Paolo, "are the foundations on which this unfortunate feud hath arisen; numberless bickerings and irritating circumstances have at various times occurred to manifest the dispositions of both parties to renew those deeds of open violence, of which you have just heard the long detail; your patience has been tried, and your curiosity probably been disappointed in the narration, which only records the mutual acts of ungoverned passion and re-

venge, so long disgraceful to the houses of Luna and Perollo."

Gaetano expressed his gratitude to don Paolo for the trouble he had given him, and thanked him for the interesting history of events, so nearly connected with his earliest friend—"In Federico," he added, "all hatred to the house of Luna is extinct, and from the principles he has imbibed, I feel convinced that no private wrong will induce him to involve his family and friends in civil broils; nor will he ever assume to himself the right of redressing his individual quarrels, by any outrage to the laws and justice of his country."

"Would that don Sigismund," replied Perollo, "had received in early life the advantages which Federico has enjoyed, that he had been removed from these scenes, and from the arts of those who now surround him: he is not, I believe, naturally ill-disposed, but the lessons of his mother, and the constant excitations of the party about him, have rendered him irrit-

able, and jealous of every act don Giacomo performs. His narrow education prevents his entering into the liberal and enlightened plans of Pandolfina; and even some marks of civility, which my kinsman's benevolent disposition shews to all, have been rejected by Luna with insult and disdain: his late wife, the countess Lucretia, as niece to Clement, violently espoused the cause of the pontiff, and for the sake of his Imperial master, most cordially detested the loyalty of Pandolfina; but she is now no more; strange and mysterious rumours are abroad respecting her sudden death; but such are always prevalent, when any one of rank is snatched away without a previous illness; internal and domestic discord interrupted count Sigismund's matrimonial comfort; his mother and his wife, both fond of power, tormented him by ceaseless contests, yet the marriage was the ardent wish of the elder lady, and the character of count Luna stands too high for suspicion to attach to



him; the various rumours are most likely the vague discourses of the ignorant and idle."

"The affianced bride of don Sigismünd," said Gaetano, "appears to be all that is captivating in manners and disposition, and a lovelier person never was beheld."

"The baron Solanto," observed don Paolo, "is powerful and wealthy; he will, I hope, take up his abode in Sciacca, and not leave this young creature exposed to the violence of count Luna, the ill humour of his mother, the machinations of the baron Adriano, and the terrors of Accursi d'Amato's friendship and acquaintance. Such are the friends of her destined husband, and the inmates of Luna Castle, that, unprotected and at a distance from her family, she would be exposed to certain misery, without a friend to advise or to assist her."

"The baron Solanto," replied Pignatelli, "is a brave and noble soldier; the baroness gentleness itself; they surely will not sacrifice their only child to such an ill-

boding connexion, when further intimacy has made them more acquainted with the family of count Luna."

"The wealth and power possessed by the relatives of lady Costanza, I apprehend," said Perollo, "will tempt the countess to use every artifice which may disguise her natural disposition; and if the count himself is captivated by her beauty and virtues, it will be some restraint upon his violence. Geronimo Peralta can at all times gloss over his malignant purposes; whilst for Accursi d'Amato, shrouded as he generally is in mystery and darkness, it may be long before they have an opportunity of forming an opinion of his real character."

"This signor d'Amato appears a strangely-suspicious person," said Gaetano; "if I mistake not, he intended us an interview upon our journey."

"Indeed!" exclaimed don Paolo, looking earnestly at his companion.

"He appears to have followed Federico from Palermo; Baptista saw him first at

Alcamo; next he appeared amidst the ruins of Segesta; afterwards, by entering the castle in the train of the baroness Solanto, he nearly succeeded in reaching our chamber at Castel Vetrano, but was alarmed by the outcries of the terrified domestics, who slept in the anteroom."

"And from whom did you learn that it was Accursi?" asked Perollo.

"We have only suspicion to guide us," said Gaetano; "having heard that he left Castel Vetrano that night, and crossed the fiumara on the road to Sciacca."

"It has been reported," said don Paolo, "that he has for some time been confined by illness; but he may have been absent on some dark scheme of assassination and revenge."

"The description of him by Baptista, though in a style of the broadest caricature, must identify his person—a gigantic figure, with a most cadaverous countenance and air; towering plumes of black feathers, and a cloak of the same funereal dye, were the characteristics of the unknown stranger,

who appeared to the valet as more than a mortal visitant."

"Though a little exaggerated, the portrait must have been taken from the barone della Bardia, and answers perfectly to his usual habit and appearance."

"But how can Federico have given him offence?"

"In being the son of don Giacomo Perollo, a crime in the eyes of Della Bardia to justify even midnight murder; his vindictive fury against Pandolfina has in it perhaps more deadly malice than all the house of Luna are possessed with."

"And whence did this arise?" asked Pignatelli.

"Placed in one of the principal offices in Sciacca," replied Perollo, "his violence, extortion, and oppression, called forth the severest censures of my kinsman, who, by the power the viceroy has conferred upon him, dismissed d'Amato from his office with ignominy and reproach, obliging him to restore, in some degree, the fruits of his rapacity, and exposing him before the as-

sembled council of the city. The deep and deadly vow of vengeance which the infuriated baron uttered, was heard by Pandolfina with contempt, and only answered by derision and defiance; for myself, I cannot but wish that a less hostile method had been taken in his dismissal, though Della Bardia certainly deserved the correction he received. The time however, signor Pignatelli, has worn apace, and requires our return to the castle. I had intended to ask from you some account of the habits and manners of Federico; but I have, I find, been leading on a conversation, which has carried us to subjects of a far different nature."

"I think, signor," said Gaetano, "that you will find that Federico has as few, if not fewer, vices than any of his contemporaries in age and rank; but you will perhaps find cause to wish that he was not possessed of feelings quite so vehement, and susceptible of impressions quite so lasting."

On his return to the castle, Gaetano was



encountered by a messenger, who had been sent to inform him that a courier from Trapani had brought dispatches for him, which were of some importance, and which he found to contain intelligence respecting the affair of the unfortunate cavalier Landolini, who was at the time confined by illness, occasioned principally by agitation at some tidings he had received from the fishermen, who had seen his cassino in flames on the night of its destruction. They were returned to Trapani, and reported that they had observed, towards the close of evening, a light shallop hovering off the coast, and from its suspicious appearance, it was perhaps one of the piratic vessels with which the seas were infested. This information was too vague for hope, yet sufficiently well authenticated to excite the most agonizing feelings of suspense in the bosom of the father; and weakened as he had been by previous grief and anxiety, it had brought on so severe an indisposition as to have confined him to his bed. Under these circum-

stances, he had fulfilled his promise to Gaetano in communicating the intelligence he had received, but without suggesting any plan of proceeding, and only concluded by lamenting the absence of his young friend at the present juncture.

Pignatelli instantly sought Federico—“You must assist me,” he said, “Perollo, with all your interest in the baron Pandolina to send me hence without delay.”

Federico was silent, for a few moments, with astonishment, and Gaetano put into his hand the letter from Landolini. Having read it, he observed, that against so imperative a call, nothing could be urged, but that he saw no immediate benefit which was to be hoped from a journey to Trapani.

“To Tunis,” said Pignatelli.

“Let us consult my father, and permit me to be your companion in the expedition.”

“To the former part of the proposal, I readily answer yes; but to the latter, my dear Federico, there are insurmountable

objections ; besides, any companion might impede my motions ; but your father shall decide."

On the first mention of the project, the baron Pandolfina hesitated as to the expediency of Gaetano's proposed voyage, and the propriety of his undertaking it without the approbation of his uncle ; but when every circumstance was fully explained to him, he gave his decided approbation to the plan, and even added further arguments in its favour, by confirming the supposition that the destruction of the *cassino* had been effected by pirates, as he had received intelligence, in his official capacity, that such vessels had lately been seen off the coasts, and in some instances the crews from them had landed by stealth, destroyed detached houses, and carried the inhabitants into slavery ; the western coast was also at the time peculiarly liable to such aggressions, a powerful Turkish fleet cruising between Sicily and Malta, and no European power sufficiently free from contests nearer home, to engage against the

enemies of Christendom ; plunder and captives seemed to be the great object of the marauders, and, except in cases of violent resistance, they had sacrificed but few lives. The daughter of Landolini might then probably be spared—might possibly be restored to her disconsolate father.

The full use of his power and influence in any way was freely offered by the baron, who engaged to provide means for the voyage, and to furnish Gaetano with an introduction to the secret agent of the Sicilian government at Tunis. With regard to Federico attending his friend, don Giacomo opposed it, upon the plea of its inutility, and the chance that it might prove an impediment to Pignatelli. To put the remonstrances of his son to silence at once, he urged the distress it would be to his mother to part with him immediately on his arrival, and promised that if Gaetano, on reaching Tunis, considered the presence of his friend as likely to forward his designs, that he should be permitted to follow without delay. It was impossible for

the necessary arrangements to be made that night; but on the following evening, the baron thought every thing would be in readiness, and that they should, in the intermediate time, have leisure to consider on the proper steps to be taken; and it was resolved that the subject should only be mentioned to the confidential members of the family, and that Gaetano, by attending the celebration of the festival on the morrow, should endeavour to prevent any suspicion from being excited that an expedition of the kind was in agitation.



CHAPTER VIII.  
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E segna il mobil volto or di colore

Di rabbioso disdegno, ed or d'amore. TASSO.

As the sun rose the next day, the artillery of the city of Sciacca proclaimed the approaching festival; they were answered from the battlements of Perollo Castle; and to honour the devotion of the citizens, the vessels in the bay hoisted their gayest colours, and saluted the rising light by a discharge of all their arms, whilst the bells from the various churches and convents sounded a deafening peal within the walls. The gates had been thronged for hours by the peasants, and hundreds had patiently taken their stations in the streets through which the procession was to pass; their pockets filled with boiled maize for their subsistence through the day, and their minds fully occupied with their own splen-

did appearance in their holiday clothes, and the anticipated grandeur and solemnity of their annual pageant, they felt neither anxiety nor impatience, but quietly waited for hours the procession of the holy relics.

The devotion of a Sicilian peasant has no gloomy Calvinistic character, is neither torpid nor indifferent, but is the delight, the business, the amusement of his life. If, through attachment to some particular saint or image, he misdirects his prayers and adoration, still his faith is ardent and sincere, and his services are paid with warm and enthusiastic pleasure. The days which are consecrated to the feasts and festivals of their church, are neither spent in Bacchanalian revels, nor misanthropic and gloomy seclusion, but in participating with all around them in the joy and hilarity which such seasons bring. The gay and splendid dresses of the saints, and their religious attendants, the lights and music in their churches, aided by the charms of statuary and painting, are felt by the lowest and

most uneducated amongst them ; their habits are temperate, their indulgences few, and the relaxation of their religious ceremonies, the first and greatest pleasure which they know.

Amidst the crowd assembled in the streets of Sciacca to witness the procession of the day, there was no riot or confusion. To a stranger, perhaps, the vehement tones and gesticulations of some of the parties, might have been mistaken for debate and strife, but was in fact only the natural effusion of their buoyant spirits and habitual animation ; all was order, peace, and happiness amongst the multitude assembled on the occasion : but individuals there were within the walls, in whose bosoms the festive sounds found no responsive echoes of delight.

The baroness Solanto, with a sigh of sad and sickening disappointment, had heard again that the night had passed without the arrival of her long-expected lord. Costanza witnessed with regret the

languor and uneasiness of her mother's spirits; nor had the attentions of don Sigismund di Luna been able to divert her thoughts from the anxious uneasiness which her father's delay occasioned. She felt indeed relieved from a considerable weight of care, by the favourable impression her future husband's manners and appearance had made upon her, and contemplated with complacency, rather than regret, the destiny which seemed to have united their years to come.

The countess was the only object of uncomfortable recollection, and to her she felt an abhorrence greater perhaps than her unpleasant manners and disposition might appear to justify; she saw, or fancied that she saw, a fiendlike and malignant temper, only kept in awe by some temporary and violent exertion, which seemed to sit uneasily, and with such difficulty as could not long be overcome; but still her mother's weak state, and almost hourly-increasing illness, and her father's long and unexpected delay, were predominant.

The baroness, faithful to her promise to don Sigismund, prepared to attend the countess Caltabellotta to the principal church, where the procession went from the convent of Santa Maria, the count and his family connexions attending it through the streets.

On joining the lady of the castle, Costanza perceived the gaze of dissatisfied ill-humour with which she regarded her mother and herself. The baroness apologized for the plainness of their attire, as they left their heavy baggage to come by sea from Palermo, and it had not yet arrived. She herself was handsomely, though simply dressed, and Costanza covered with a light and elegant veil, which shewed in every fold the graceful form beneath it. Their Spanish costume was a crime in the eyes of the countess, even of more weight than the want of gorgeous ornament and splendid decoration.—“Count Sigismund di Luna will, I think, be little flattered to see his family connexions thus masquerad-

ing in a foreign dress," she said; "why Pandolfina's wife could not have shewn a greater scorn for every thing Sicilian."

"Count Sigismund perhaps," answered Costanza, "may have sufficient cause to blush for his family connexions; to us he would scarcely think of owning it; yet their conduct may be too offensive to suffer the baron di Solanto to ally his house with theirs."

The baroness trembled with agitation, and attempted in vain to arrest her daughter's indignation.

"I honour," she continued, "my father's native land; but even the house of Luna and Peralta may with pride anticipate an union with the De Castro's Spanish blood, should such union take place hereafter."

Don Sigismund entered the apartment while Costanza was still speaking; he looked at her with astonishment and admiration: her veil was half thrown back, and the glow of indignation which mantled in her cheeks, and sparkled in her eyes, gave a dignity both to her form and

features, which, for an instant, appeared to awe even the countess herself. The count looked to his mother for an explanation; pale, and with a tone of hoarse but restrained passion, she said—"I did indeed presume to intimate to these ladies an opinion, that the costume of this country might have been a more appropriate compliment to the solemnity of the day, than the new-fangled dresses of another."

"And who could wish to see the lady Costanza other than she is?" exclaimed Luna.

"I am glad your lordship likes such a spirit," said the countess, in an under-tone; "but grieved to see how little you regard the deference your mother's name and rank demand."

"Allow me," said Sigismund, regardless of her reply, "allow me to see you on your way; my friends are gone to Santa Maria's: when I have had the honour to see you to the Church of the Incarnation, I must join the party preparing for the procession;" and taking the hand of the

baroness Solanto, he led her from the apartment, her daughter attending at her side.

The countess and her suite followed; and by the time they had arrived at the church, appeared to have regained her self-possession.

Don Sigismund apologized by the way for the vehemence of his mother, and appeared anxious to sooth the irritated feelings of Costanza by every means in his power.

Without relaxing in her opinion of his mother's ill conduct, the attentions of the count gratified her, and excited in her bosom a favourable inclination to himself. Arrived at the church, Sigismund left the ladies, to hasten to the convent of Santa Maria, and the countess preceded her guests to their station near the high altar. The walls of the church were hung with the richest tapestry; the altars gaily dressed with flowers, and the statues of the saints in their best attire. The interior was not yet crowded to excess, most of

the multitude having taken their places in the streets to accompany the relics in their progress. The countess advanced with all the state and dignity she could assume, and approaching the altar, knelt for several minutes before it, apparently unconscious of all around her. The baroness and her daughter knelt beside her, and when they rose from the position, in looking round her on the opposite side of the altar, the latter recognized, amidst a numerous group of persons magnificently attired, the companions of her journey, Federico Perollo and Gaetano Pignatelli; the eyes of the former had been rivetted on the lovely companion of the countess Luna ever since her entrance, and when, throwing back her veil, she returned their salutation, he stood fixed in admiration, the colour mounted to his cheeks, and he seemed inattentive to every thing beside.

Costanza saw Gaetano bend forward to one of the ladies of the party, who seeing the baroness rise from her knees, after an instant, advanced from the surrounding

band of ladies and cavaliers, towards the place where they were stationed, and the two young men attended her.

The countess raised her head at their approach, rose from her seat, and with a look of horror and indignation, retreated, as far as her situation would admit, from the intruders; and silent to the salutation paid to herself, she returned only a look of assumed contempt and haughty defiance.

“My anxiety to meet so old and dear a friend,” said the lady, “could only have been restrained by circumstances as forcible as those which hitherto have prevented Victoria Moncada from greeting the baroness Solanto on her arrival in Sciacca; my son and signor Pignatelli had informed me of the happiness I might expect, when circumstances would permit this interview.”

The baroness wept upon her bosom, too overpowered to speak.

Gaetano hoped to Costanza that her mother's health had not suffered from her journey.

“Anxiety for my dear father, and her own weak health, have prevented her recovering the fatigue of her journey, or rallying her spirits since the first disappointment.”

Federico was too busily employed in looking at, and listening to Costanza, to remember any necessity for speaking himself.

“The signora di Solanto,” said Gaetano, introducing her to the baroness Pandolfina.

“We shall, I hope, not long remain strangers,” said the baroness, extending her hand, which Costanza was about to take, when the countess Luna rushed rudely between them.—“We must withdraw,” she said, “from this intrusion, till some of the friends of the count shall arrive to protect us from these insults.”

The baroness raised her head from the bosom of her friend, gave her an affectionate blessing and embrace, and was about to yield to the insolent fury of the countess, when Costanza, taking her arm, replied—“We shall, I think, be more se-

cure from rudeness, insult, and aggression, in any society than that of the countess Caltabellotta, and we will not retire."

The spirits of the baroness could hold out no longer, and she would have sunk upon the pavement, had she not been supported by Perollo and his mother; a fainting fit came on, Costanza's anger subsided in alarm, and the countess again withdrew to the furthest possible spot from the objects of her bitter detestation.

Two or three of the ladies who had attended the baroness Pandolfina now advanced, and rendered every assistance in their power; the exertions of Costanza were called forth, and her mother was recovered.—"My intemperate vehemence," she exclaimed, "can never be forgiven; but even the provocation of the countess Luna shall tempt me no more."

"Hush! hush, my love!" said her mother, embracing her; "thanks to my kind friends, I feel again restored; but I fear I am too weak at present to withdraw."

"The entrance to the church," observed

Gaetano, "is so crowded, that it would be difficult, if not impossible."

"You had better remain and recover here," said the baroness Pandolfina; "I regret that my impatient friendship should have caused this altercation and distress, but could not resist the impulse of my feelings to welcome you to Sciacca; as soon as your excellenza is at liberty to receive my visits, we shall, I hope, renew our former friendship and intercourse."

"It will be to me a pleasure beyond my power to express," answered the baroness.

The party collected round the ladies, whilst aiding Costanza in supporting her mother, entered into conversation with her, to spare the returning strength of the invalid, who was still feeble and languid.

The procession from the convent of Santa Maria at length began to gratify the expecting multitude; the sacred banner of crimson satin, with an embroidered figure of the Virgin and Child, was borne forth, attended by all the convent servants; next followed that of the city, and close

behind, the blazoned dragon of the house of Luna and Peralta. The barone del Nadore, Pietro Laurifici, and the two other giurati or principal magistrates of Sciacca, succeeded, in their splendid robes of office; after whom were borne the massive crosses and candlesticks belonging to the various churches and convents, each preceded by the censer-bearers, who filled the air with clouds of perfume. The lay-brothers of the religious orders followed; after whom came the monks themselves, in all their varying costume; the black and flowing robes of the Benedictines, the white vestments of the Carmelites, and brown and sordid garments of the brothers of St. Francis, formed a contrast with each other, and with the white and gold embroidered dresses of the parish priests who followed them. A band of music, with the best singers of every choir in the city, preceded the prior who bore the sacred relics; his principal officers attended him; and immediately behind came don Sigismund di Luna; the splendour of his armour threw

a lustre round his tall and graceful figure. A chain of the richest workmanship hung from his shoulders, and his uncovered head, which towered above the surrounding multitude, might have been considered a model of manly beauty, had not a high and haughty character, somewhat like insolent disdain, and a look of impatient violence, thrown a shade over his features, which generally rendered them more strikingly-handsome than agreeable. Behind him walked all the noble cavaliers of Sciacca and the neighbouring country, who were attached to the house of Luna, or not immediately connected with that of Perollo, the baron Adriano, the brothers of Infontanetta Calogero, and Geronimo Calandrino, all the members of the illustrious houses of Imbiagnia, Vasco, and Luchese, with a countless multitude of attendants, who filled every avenue from the convent to the Church of the Incarnation.

The procession moved slowly through the streets, and as the splendid casket which contained the sacred treasure was

borne along, the crowd, in silent adoration, knelt before it.

The chant of the choristers alone was heard, neither disorder nor confusion prevailed, and had the heavy tread of the attending train been hushed, the distant waves might have been distinguished, as in the deepest midnight stillness. The gay and brilliant pageant glittered in the bright beams of an unclouded Sicilian sky; from every window were displayed the richest tapestry, damask, and brocade. A scene more calculated to captivate the fancy, or dazzle the imagination, of a people who generally act from impulse rather than reflection, could not well have been conceived. The heat within the church, from the increasing multitude, rendered the baroness Solanto still faint, and almost unable to support herself; and as the countess Luna kept aloof, the baroness Pandolfina and her friends remained with her, rendering all the aid and comfort they were able.

The procession was some time in reaching

the church, and the pressure caused by the crowd who entered with it, rendered it still more oppressive. As count Sigismund passed up the body of the church, his eye wandered in search of Costanza and his mother. The countess soon caught his attention, but the Solantos were not by her; the disorder apparent in her looks, and the frown upon her brow, alarmed him; and when he soon after recognized the object of his search, surrounded by a party, some of whom he knew to be the family and adherents of don Giacomo Perollo, forgetful of every thing besides, he attempted to rush from the line of the procession; the crowd, however, prevented his advancing, and he was compelled to wait till the party before him had found their way to their respective stations. The countess also seemed impatient to rejoin her son, and advanced, as far as she was able, to meet him. Don Sigismund's attention however was rivetted upon the party round the baroness Solanto, whose illness was apparent in her countenance;

she seemed reposing almost in a state of insensibility in the arms of the baroness Pandolfina, whilst Costanza was endeavouring to revive her. Two young men, with whom he was totally unacquainted, appeared to be deeply interested in the scene, and several ladies of the Perollo party were gathered round them—the countess met him when he had nearly reached the group.—“ ’Tis well, count Luna, you are arrived to protect me, at least, from the insults to which your absence has exposed us.”

“ My mother,” exclaimed Costanza, “ must be instantly removed; we are indebted to the kindness of the baroness Pandolfina and these cavaliers, for that assistance which the violence of the countess Caltabellotta, and the oppressive heat, have rendered necessary.”

“ Accept my grateful thanks, signor,” said don Sigismund to Federico, “ and aid me in reaching my friends; we may then be able to convey the baroness from the church.”

" 'Tis the son of Giacomo Perollo !" exclaimed the countess, in a tone of horror and amazement.

Sigismund started ; the deepest crimson overspread his countenance—" I have already received too great an obligation from your hands, signor Perollo," he replied, " and beg you will rejoin your party, and leave these ladies under my protection ; my friends will soon arrive."

" My mother must not be exposed to strangers," said Costanza ; " these gentlemen will continue their kindness, and with your assistance we can reach one of the side-doors."

" Impossible," replied Luna ; " we cannot accept the services of a Perollo, and must await the arrival of my friends."

" I entreat you, count Luna," said Costanza, " not to sacrifice my mother to these party feelings. She faints again ! Assist me, gentlemen ; we can, we must, make our way with the aid of those around us."

Don Sigismund stood irresolute, whilst

Gaetano and Federico prepared to obey Costanza, and raising the baroness, attempted to make their way.

"Here come the baron Adriano and don Geronimo Calandrino," said Luna; "we will not trouble these cavaliers."

"Let us proceed, signor Pignatelli," continued Costanza, without hearing the count.

"We may, I think," said Federico, "escape by yonder door."

"Stay, young lady, I command you!" vociferated the countess.

"Command, madam, those unfortunate menials whom fortune has placed within the reach of your violence," said Costanza. "For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, convey my mother out instantly, and without hesitation."

"I am obliged, though unwillingly, to interfere," interrupted Luna. "These cavaliers must retire."

"Count Luna, my mother cannot be detained an instant."

"My friends can assist the baroness, signora."

"Our friends, count Luna, are able to perform all the service we require."

The disturbance which the debate occasioned near the altar, excited the attention of every one. Calandrino pushed rudely by Gaetano, and attempted to take the baroness, who had relapsed into insensibility—"Excuse me, signor," he said; "I cannot resign my charge unless that lady wishes it."

"My friends and myself, signora," continued Luna, "must beg you to request that your mother may be entrusted to our care."

"This cruel interference, signor, only delays us in escaping from the crowd."

The young men had now nearly reached the door, followed by Sigismund and several of his friends. The countess was separated from her son by the interposing multitude, but exerted herself violently to reach him.

"Can you put up with public insults

like these? The house of Luna and Peralta never knew disgrace till now. Thus to lacquey the heels of young Perollo! even let them take their prize to Pandolfina's castle."

Sigismund seized the arm of Federico—"Signor, you must resign your burthen."

"Impossible," said Perollo, shaking him off, and by a considerable exertion reaching the doorway; "our office is now nearly done, and we shall resign our charge into your lordship's care."

They conveyed the baroness into a porch exposed to the outer air, where she soon shewed symptoms of returning animation.

"If our services can be of further use, lady Costanza," said Gaetano, "I entreat you will command us."

"The unasked attentions you have shewn, signor," said Sigismund, "must here cease, and the ladies now remain with me."

"I did not address myself," replied Pignatelli, "to count Luna, nor shall I consult either his will or inclination on the subject."

“The ladies, signor, are under my care and protection; for the assistance you have rendered them, I am your debtor. There can be no further need for your attendance.”

The baroness recovered sufficiently to express a wish to be taken to the castle.

“Signor Perollo,” said Costanza, “I trust that I feel, as I ought to do, the obligations we have received from yourself and your friends; some other opportunity will, I hope, soon occur, when those who feel interested in us will express a sense of your kindness, in a manner less offensive to both of us than at present seems probable: by your assistance we have escaped from our difficulties, but you may now leave us with count Luna.”

Sigismund shook with emotion—“Your trifling services,” he said, “signor Perollo, are, I hope, amply repaid by the lady’s flattering compliments; for myself, it is impossible to deny the unwillingness with which I receive them at your hands. Circumstances have given you this advantage

over me ; but I cannot express a satisfaction which I feel not, at the rejection of my offered service to the ladies, and their acceptance of yours."

" It is with great reluctance, count Luna," answered Federico, " that I am tempted into any discussion on the subject ; neither myself, nor my friend, claim any thanks for the performance of a common act of humanity. You are entirely free from any obligation to either of us, and a perfect silence on the subject would have been less offensive than the thanks we have received from you. It is far from my intention to irritate or excite any one to those unhappy dissensions which have been too long the disgrace and misfortune of our native home."

Costanza regarded the speaker with a look which amply repaid his forbearance, and, with respectful salutations to all the party, the young men retired.

The countess Caltabellotta had reached the door of the church ; but Sigismund, fearful of an angry debate, requested some

of his friends to see her safely back to her station by the altar, whilst he escorted the ladies to the castle. Costanza was fully occupied by her mother, and scarcely regarded the distress under which the count laboured; but on their arrival, instantly withdrew to their apartment.

The baroness was too much overpowered by illness to speak, and her daughter returned only a silent acknowledgment to the regrets and confused excuses of don Sigismund, who, having seen them home, was obliged to return to his station in the church.

The remainder of the ceremonies passed without his regards being attracted by any of them; his thoughts were occupied by Costanza alone. Her beauty had made a deep and instantaneous impression upon him; her manners had fascinated and enchanted him: even in the unfortunate occurrences of the morning, he saw nothing but the excess of her filial affection; yet he thought she was unjustly offended.

Unwilling to fix the blame upon him-

self, he tried to throw it wholly on the interference of Perollo; still Costanza was evidently displeased at his conduct, and the sense of her disapprobation was become a feeling he could with difficulty support. Too well aware of his mother's irascible temper, he feared to provoke her, by inquiring into the origin of the encounter with the family of Perollo, and sought, by every excuse, to palliate his own conduct, that he might hereafter be prepared to make his peace with his offended mistress. It was from those around him that he learned the conclusion of the ceremony, and his mother's voice recalled his recollection to the necessary attention which his friends required.

From the church they all repaired, according to immemorial custom, to the Castel di Luna, where a banquet awaited them. The inquiries sent by don Sigismund to the apartment of the baroness, were answered by the information that she was somewhat better, though still languid and ill.

“A pleasant encounter, don Sigismund,” said Adriano, “with the hopeful heir of Giacomo Perollo; he seems inclined to pay his earliest *devoirs* to your future bride.”

“An accident upon their journey hither,” replied Luna, “gave him an opportunity of rendering some service to the baroness Solanto, which, I presume, required her acknowledgments at meeting.”

“The ladies seemed well pleased, methought, with their attentions; a handsome cavalier, with all the airs and insolence of Monteleone’s court about him, may be a dangerous rival, signor.”

Don Sigismund restrained the rising feelings which swelled his bosom, and replied—“The baron di Solanto’s honour, and the lady Costanza’s high principles and worth, would be sufficient assurances against such supposition.”

“The insolent intrusion of Giacomo’s wife,” said the countess, “could have no connexion with the boy’s helping the

ladies through a thunder-storm, and requires both explanation and apology."

"As fellow-countrywomen, probably, the baroness Solanto might recognize an old acquaintance in the mother of young Perollo."

The subject was discussed with some asperity by various members of the party; the count however appeared to relapse into abstraction, and the whole passed off heavily.

In the evening Sigismund made his personal inquiries after the state of the baroness; he was however admitted no further than her anti-room, and was informed that she still continued too much indisposed to see any one but her daughter, and that the repeated inquiries after the arrival of vessels indicated an anxiety which, it was to be feared, would very much retard her recovery.

The count hesitated for a few moments, but unable to bear the state of suspense which the idea of Costanza's displeasure had thrown him into, he requested a short

interview with her. His wish was immediately complied with; but as she entered from her mother's chamber, he almost felt a desire that it had been denied, her appearance having entirely obliterated from his memory the apologies he had resolved to make.

Costanza advanced, and seemed awaiting some communication of importance—"It is with the greatest regret, signora," he began, "that I learn the continuance of the baroness's indisposition, and her increasing anxiety respecting your father's safety."

"My mother, I am happy to say, is as well as I could rationally expect, after the fatigue she was this morning so unnecessarily exposed to, and her weakness naturally makes her less able to endure my father's protracted absence."

"I do indeed lament," replied Sigismund, "that our solicitations should have subjected her *eccellenza* to the distressing circumstances which have occurred, and

which, could they have been foreseen, no inducement should have urged me to expose her to; conscious of having been accessory to the increase of her unfortunate indisposition, it is almost impossible for me to hope for your pardon and forgiveness."

"It is not to yourself, count Luna, that I so much attribute my mother's present sufferings, as to the violence and outrage of the countess Caltabellotta; from her the first apology should come. My good opinion is, I fear, of little consequence, or it might have restrained those intemperate sallies with which the essential services we have received from signor Perollo were returned; to him I consider your repentance should be addressed, as well as to my mother."

"Do me not injustice, signora," answered Luna; "there is no sacrifice my honour will permit that I would not willingly and joyfully perform, to prove the influence which even during our short acquaintance you have established over me.

I was intemperate, violent, and rude ; I willingly confess Perollo's superiority ; I gratefully acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to him ; but if you knew or felt the numberless insults and irritating opposition with which his family have for ages followed all the house of Luna, you would perhaps look with a more lenient eye on my offences of to-day. For my mother, her every thought and affection are centered in me ; the honour of our race is the first and leading principle within her, and if she does regard our bitter and inveterate foes with indignation and abhorrence, much surely may be allowed to her impetuous warmth—to habits which are now too deeply grafted in her breast ever to be subdued or mollified ; yet the same ardent and unrestrained feelings which swell within her bosom to those she regards as inimical to Luna and Peralta, rush, with no abated tide of love and self-devotion, to all within the pale of her affections."

“ I can indeed,” replied Costanza, “ with gratitude to Heaven acknowledge that no such deadly and inveterate hatred is intelligible to my feelings, as would induce me to receive with insult and disdain the providential services of one who could have offended only through his ancestors ; nor can I understand why the insults which your excellenza’s forefathers received should restrain my mother’s feelings of affection at the sight of an old and early friend, although that friend be united with Perollo’s house. I have, my lord, been hitherto the child of fond and doting parents ; their mild commands have been delivered with gentleness and love, and, I hope, obeyed with affection and duty. The imperious tone assumed by the countess I am not prepared either to receive or submit to.”

“ Let not Sigismund di Luna, lady, be the first then to excite those feelings of dislike and hatred in your bosom,” answered the count ; “ and for my mother’s unguarded and ill-timed vehemence, ac-

cept the sorrow which I know she will experience when reflection has convinced her of her error."

"Your contrition and apology, signor, ought to be addressed to others as well as to me. How far the countess Caltabelotta may intend to make the only amends which now remain to those whom her rudeness and impatience have insulted, I fear you cannot decide; for me perhaps it is unreasonable to expect concessions, situated as I may be hereafter with relation to your mother, and somewhat guilty on the same subject, by hastily replying to what I considered an outrage to my mother, as well as to myself; but with respect to the baroness, though her gentle spirit and courteous manners may not insist on the performance, yet nothing but the humblest apology, both to her and her friend the baroness Pandolfina, should be offered. Yet one thing further, signor: permit me to assure you that any repetition of such conduct as I have witnessed

from the countess more than once since our arrival here, will terminate all intercourse between us, as far as I am personally concerned. The baron Solanto has ever been too kind a father to force his daughter's inclinations, and she inherits from him a spirit which insolence will never tame, nor violence conciliate."

"If the lady Costanza ever honours our house by her alliance, no other influence will, I hope, be necessary to induce her than that of Sigismund di Luna, whose days thenceforth shall proudly be dedicated to anticipate her every wish, and shield her from every annoyance. Anxious as my mother is to insure the happiness of her son, she may, I hope, be forgiven, if in some few instances she oversteps the laws of moderation."

"In you, signor, the countess has every right to expect an advocate, and you do not deceive her expectations; but for myself, I own I contemplate the idea of a residence with her, away from the indul-

gence of my parents, with a degree of terror it would be difficult to describe to you."

"And do you imagine, lovely Costanza, that, left under my protection entirely. I should not insist on every thing giving place to your happiness? Nay, do not leave me the moment I presume to mention myself. The short time you have been here, the baron's unfortunate absence, and the baroness's illness (not to mention my poor mother's vehemence, which, I fear, drives you from us), have given me so little of the indulgence of your society, that though the interest your every word and action have excited in me, are, I believe, already ineffaceable, still to you I seem a stranger; and forgive my complaining a little, that you so entirely treat me as such, and consider my feelings on every occasion connected with yourself less than those of any other person."

While speaking, don Sigismund had gently and respectfully taken the hand of his fair mistress, and seemed waiting for

a reply, which she every moment felt less certain how to make, for she had prepared herself for ill humour in the count, instead of candour and submission, and knew not whether she should seem too much interested in *him*, if she accepted his apology immediately, or too much governed by resentment, if she refused, and felt besides, notwithstanding her anger, that his opinion of her was not quite a matter of indifference.

In this state of indecision she stood for more than a minute, her hand still in Luna's, who gazed on her with delight, and almost feared lest her return to self-possession should break a spell, and render her again indignant. At last he said—"May I then hope you will forgive me for envying to others the smiles of friendliness you are so careful of bestowing on me?"

"Count Luna, I am perfectly willing to accept your apologies for yourself, but the countess must make hers to my mother and the baroness Pando——"

“Nay, lady, do not name her. Sorry am I for it, but death would be preferable to my mother. Dearest Costanza! be generous as you are lovely, and accept an apology to your own amiable mother, which, I am sure, the countess Luna will, of her own accord, make to-morrow morning as soon as she can see her.”

“Well, my lord, then do persuade the countess to be more gentle, and it shall be as you wish. Good-night!”

“Must you leave me so instantly?”

“Yes, my lord, immediately.”

“Good-night, then, lady Costanza! I trust to-morrow will bring to the baroness revived health, and your father.”

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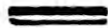
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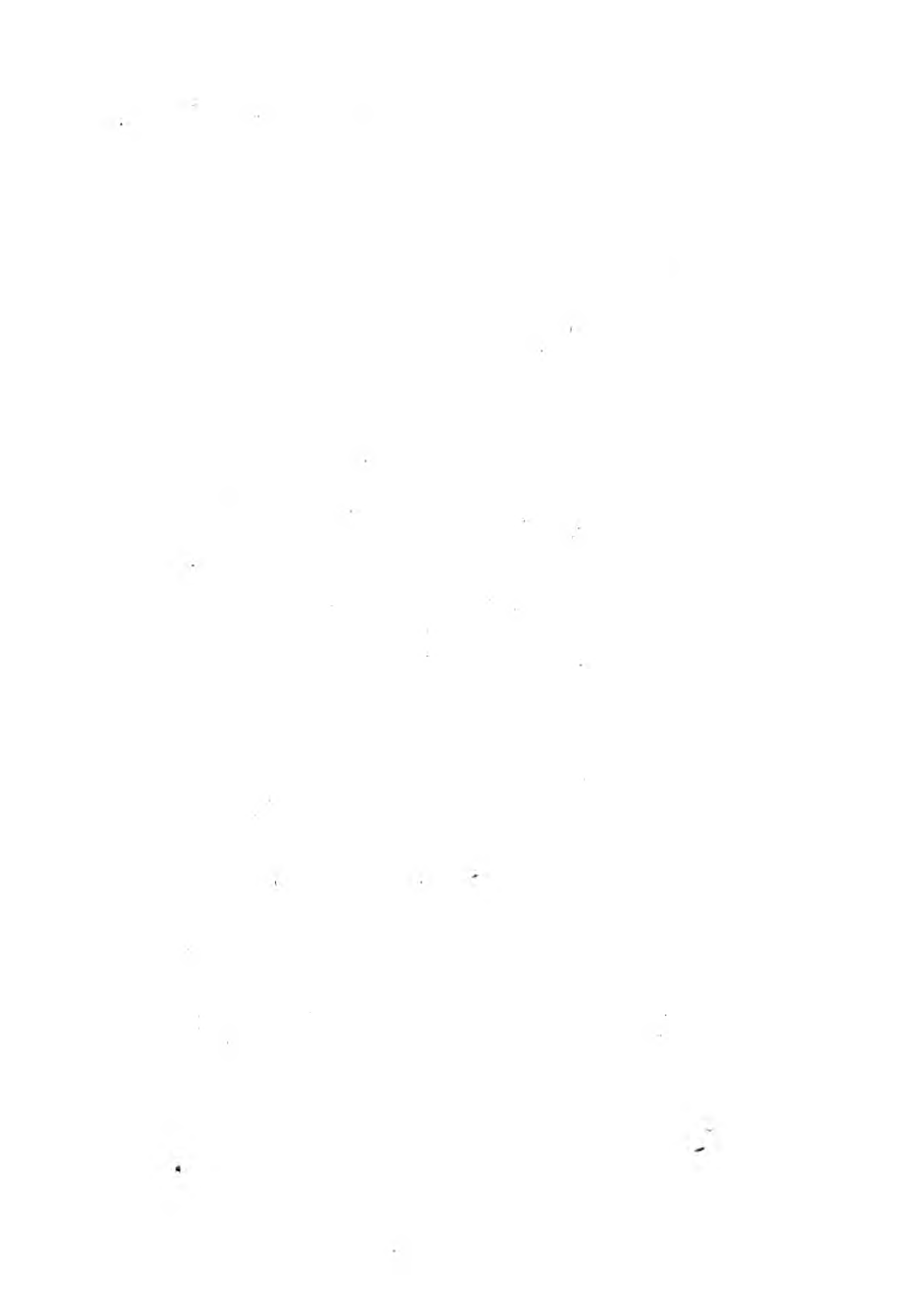
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AN HISTORIC TALE.

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LUNA AND PEROLLO;
OR, THE
FORTUNES
OF THE
HOUSE OF PANDOLFINA.

AN HISTORIC TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?
SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. II.

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1821.

THE
FEUDS
OF
LUNA AND PEROLLO.

CHAPTER I.

————— The high emprise,
That bade him forth to knighthood's fearless eyes,
Seem'd desperate in the days of Charlemagne;
But, in our times, nor glory, love, nor gain,
Would youthful knight allure to seek such perilous prize.

OBERON.

THE impatience of Gaetano to begin his voyage was such, that he resolved to depart the instant the bark was in readiness; and amidst the regrets and good wishes of his friends, left Sciacca during the night which succeeded the festival.

Don Giacomo had provided him with a swift-sailing vessel, and every thing which could, in any probability, contribute to the success of his expedition. Federico and don Paulo accompanied him to the beach, and the former deeply regretted that he was not permitted to partake in the enterprise.

On the second day after the departure of Pignatelli, another dispatch arrived from Trapani, and by his desire it was opened by Federico. It brought the information that the cavalier Landolini was recovering from his illness, and hoped immediately to obtain leave to seek his young friend in Sciacca, and deliberate with him on some further steps for the recovery of his lost daughter, or at least to endeavour to ascertain her fate.

In the mean time, with a favourable wind, and buoyant hopes of success, Gaetano pursued his course to Tunis, which he reached in safety, after a remarkably short and easy voyage. The usual *douceur* to the officers of the port in-

duced them to connive at the arrival of a small vessel, the master of which gave out that he came on some commercial business with a Jewish merchant, who traded largely with many European ports.

Under this pretext, Gaetano was hospitably received by Ben Musa the Jew, who was a confidential agent of several European governments, and particularly indebted to Perollo. Pignatelli made known to his host, without delay, the object of his voyage—to search for, and redeem at any expence, a young female who had been carried off from the coast of Sicily. The Jew undertook to make every inquiry, and to use his most strenuous endeavours to accomplish the object he desired; which his extensive connexions, general interest, and acquaintance, would enable him to do. If the lady was in Tunis, he assured Pignatelli he should be informed of it; but at the same time said, that if she had been already disposed of to any of the principal

Tunisians, all hopes of redeeming her would be vain. It would, he added, take a day or two to make the necessary inquiries, and in the interim he begged his guest would excite no curiosity or suspicion, by his personal interference or questions, but conduct himself on all occasions in a manner suitable with his assumed character of a mercantile agent. The character was rather a novel one to him, but Pignatelli promised to do his best to support it.

During his voyage, and until he had taken these first steps to forward the point in view, Gaetano had been too much occupied in considering every probable event which might occur, and preparing himself for it; but he had now put the affair into the best train he could, and began to turn his attention to the novelties of the situation in which he was placed. His host was hospitable and kind, and seemed to enter warmly into his wishes; there was however an air of caution about him, acquired from the precarious state in which

he was kept by the circumstances of the country: his family consisted of his wife, two daughters, and a son. Even from them, he desired that Gaetano's real rank, and the occasion of his voyage, might be concealed; and they regarded him at first with little interest, considering him merely as a mercantile person, similar to many others who were daily in habits of intercourse with Musa: but all the care of Pignatelli could not repress his natural manners; his admiration of the fair Rachel and her sister shewed itself in numberless attentions, which soon excited their wonder, and the alarm of their father: they were dismissed to their rooms, and the Jew cautioned Pignatelli to be more careful in concealing his politeness: he promised obedience, and his host went out on the business with which he was commissioned, when a new dilemma occurred. Three or four merchants came in, who had heard of the arrival of some stranger at the house of Musa: his son,

who had been desired to remain with the guest, received them, but their object was to hear the news from abroad, and Pignatelli was inundated with questions as to the rate of exchange in Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. He was aghast at being questioned on a subject so remote from his knowledge, stammered, hesitated, and was unable to utter a word.

“A prudent discreet young man,” observed one of the visitors; “he has been ordered by his employers to give no information; something worth knowing must be in agitation.”

They then varied their mode of attack, and demanded the prices which various articles of merchandize produced in different ports. Gaetano thought here he might venture on a guess to answer them; but unfortunately his statements were such as called forth the utmost astonishment; and again he found he was wrong.

“Barilla risen so, within these six weeks!” exclaimed one of them; “it will

enrich my cousin Benjamin prodigiously : follow me, young man, to his house, and you shall be well rewarded."

" I should be most happy," replied Gaetano, " to be the messenger of such good tidings; but my statement was only from report, and may be incorrect; at all events, I cannot leave the house until my friend returns."

" And saltpetre?" asked another; " how is saltpetre in the European markets?"

Fortunately Musa unexpectedly returned, before Pignatelli had again involved himself, and his host finding he was under some confusion, requested him to retire into another room, to inspect some accounts he had prepared for him. Gladly he accepted this excuse to escape, and left the Jew to discuss with his brethren the extraordinary intelligence brought by the young agent, whom Musa again cautioned, when he had dismissed these unwelcome visitants, to avoid, as much

as possible, entering into any conversation which might betray him.

"It was entirely involuntary on my part, I assure you," said Gaetano; "I was equally unable either to escape from the questions, or to answer them."

The Jew was however so disturbed at the idea of the conversation which might be excited by the wonderful account which had been given, and which no endeavours on his part could induce his brethren either to conceal or to disbelieve, that he determined not to expose Gaetano to such difficulties in future, but to remain with him as much as possible, and to prevent any one from seeing him, during the time that the affair required his own absence from home.

When the family again assembled, Pignatelli endeavoured to remember his lesson, and acquitted himself, as he thought, with the most becoming rudeness and indifference, but could scarcely restrain the wonder and amusement he derived from

the manners and customs of his new acquaintance. The dresses of the females consisted of the richest velvets, covered with heavy gold embroidery; they were at once magnificent and elegant: in their ears they wore (as is common with the African Jewesses) earrings of enormous size, eight and ten inches in circumference, and so weighty, from the jewels attached to them, that they are obliged to be supported by fastening them to the head-dresses, as well as to the ears, in which large holes are made for them, and kept open by wearing in them date-stones. The ladies still seemed to remember the first civilities they had received, and were only restrained by the presence of their father from demonstrating the satisfaction they had afforded.

To prevent as much as possible any conversation which might betray his guest, Ben Musa endeavoured to keep as far as possible from such topics as had already exposed his ignorance, and inquired into the public affairs of Europe.

Pignatelli was at first as guarded as could be wished; but after a while becoming more forgetful, he launched into ardent and enthusiastic approbation of the masterly manœuvres of the Imperial generals; and with all the ardour of a young soldier, descanted on the military transactions which had lately occurred. For some time his host endeavoured to restrain him by signs and gestures, but these were all unheeded; and after suffering the torrent to continue for some time, and finding that the observation of all the party was excited, he bluntly said, the subject tired him.

Gaetano, now aware of what he had done, instantly desisted; but the wonder of the family was increased, and all were convinced that the stranger was not what he wished to be thought: this produced farther remonstrances from the Jew, and additional promises from Gaetano of being more guarded in future.

On the day following, Musa yielded to the wishes of his guest, and conducted

him through the principal parts of the city, in which there are few objects worthy notice. It is situated on the western side of a large landlocked bay, or rather lake, in which rises a lofty eminence, forming the boldest feature in the scene; on this stood the principal buildings of ancient Carthage, every vestige of which time has now swept away, and the far-famed daughter of Tyre is, like her great progenitor, no longer to be traced, but by a few solitary masses of undistinguishable ruin. The principal mosque and the palace of the bey are the only buildings of consequence in the modern town; and except these, the novelty of the scene was its only attraction; the curiosity of Gaetano was soon satisfied, and they were returning to the residence of Ben Musa, when a Tunisian, apparently of some rank, accosted them.

“Your young friend, Musa,” he said, “has, I hear, brought intelligence of Benjamin’s good fortune.”

“Some of our merchants have chosen to raise such a report,” said Musa.

“And is it not true?” asked the Tunisian, looking at Gaetano, in whose air he observed something so much above the usual rank of Musa’s associates, that he fixed his eyes upon him with uncommon earnestness.

The Jew observed it, and anxiously wished to escape; but fearful of betraying his uneasiness, only quickened his pace, and talked loudly, and with great rapidity, of the common affairs of the city.

At length they succeeded in getting quit of their companion; and Musa, no longer able to endure this constant alarm, implored Pignatelli to withdraw from the city to a country-house he possessed at Manuba, about four miles from Tunis: thither he promised to convey to him any intelligence he could collect respecting the object of his mission, and assured him, that from the inquiries he had already set on foot, he should be enabled to inform

him of all the captives who had been brought to Tunis since the time of Marguerita's disappearance.

Pignatelli, willing to gratify his host, consented to the plan, and in company with young Musa, departed in a few hours for Manuba. The house was situated in a small plain, embosomed in groves and gardens, nearly adjoining the ancient aqueduct which supplied Carthage with water, and in the immediate vicinity of several country-houses of the principal Tunisians.

They arrived in the evening, and at an early hour separated for the night. The room in which Gaetano was placed communicated with a terrace in the garden by a flight of steps from his window. The evening was fine and clear; he had left his companion for the sake of being relieved from the restraint of his presence, rather than from fatigue, and felt little disposition to go to rest; he therefore opened his window, and descended to the terrace below. The dew, which was be-

ginning to fall, refreshed the plants around him, and they sent forth on every side the most delicious perfume. The moonlight glimmered through the walks of orange and citron trees, and tempted him to wander through their shadowy arcades; he was meditating on his friends in Sicily, on Landolini, on Federico, and on Costanza di Solanto, when a distant sound of music aroused him, and the notes of a well-known Sicilian air floated on the gentle breeze of evening. Pleasure and astonishment fixed him for a few moments to the spot. Who could the musician be who had awakened these notes, so singularly adapted to catch his attention? Young Musa was ignorant of every thing connected with him, and had betrayed no taste which could induce him to suppose that the sounds proceeded from him. At all events he was resolved, if possible, to ascertain from whence they came, and advanced with rapidity down a path which led in the direction from which he seemed to hear them; his progress was arrested

by arriving at the foot of the aqueduct, the wall of which was the boundary of the garden in that direction; the music had ceased, and he waited to hear it resumed; but he waited in vain, and, considerably disappointed, he returned towards his apartment; he had hardly reached the terrace, when another air, familiar to his ears, was breathed from a Sicilian pipe. Once more he tried to follow the direction from whence it proceeded, till he was stopped by a lofty hedge of myrtle and mastic bushes; the sounds now seemed at no great distance; the musician paused for an instant, and was beginning again, when Gaetano commenced singing the words to the air he had just heard; the sounds then ceased altogether, and when he had concluded, he listened in eager hope of a reply. A slight rustling was heard amongst the bushes, and a voice on the other side demanded, what unfortunate fellow-captive was so near?"

"No captive," replied Gaetano, "but

one who possesses the inclination, and perhaps the means of rescuing the unfortunate."

"Where are you?" inquired the stranger.

"In the gardens of Ben Musa the Jew."

"It is too late for me to be absent much longer," said the voice again; "can you meet me an hour earlier to-morrow evening by the wall of the aqueduct?"

"Certainly," replied Pignatelli; "who and what are you?"

"A Sicilian by birth, and a slave by fortune; but be silent, some one is approaching, and do not disappoint me to-morrow."

The speaker then began loudly to sound his pipe, and was soon interrupted by another person, with whom he entered into conversation; and Pignatelli waiting till he heard their voices fade away in the distance, returned to his chamber, resolving to see the unknown person the next evening, and to render him any aid in his

power. His feelings were at the time more than commonly susceptible; the music, and the circumstances under which he heard it, had excited in him a lively interest, and he ardently desired to rescue his countryman from captivity.

On the following day, Ben Musa came down to Manuba, and informed Pignatelli, that he had received intelligence from several persons who were concerned in the disposal of captives, of all that had been brought to Tunis within the time to which his inquiries reached; one however seemed most particularly to correspond with the circumstances of the signora Landolini. A young girl had been brought nearly about the time from some part of the Italian coast, and almost instantly disposed of, notwithstanding the ill health into which she was thrown by her capture. She was now, it was stated, in the possession of one of the agas of the court, who had given a considerable sum for her. The name of this lady Musa could

not learn, but he expected further intelligence upon the subject.

“The person who has purchased her,” he said, “resides in a neighbouring palace; but if this is the lady you seek, signor, I fear all hopes of redeeming her will be in vain.”

“Can no means be devised of conveying her away?”

“Impossible,” said the Jew; “the attempt would involve all concerned in it in certain ruin, and could not succeed.”

Pignatelli had seen too much of the cautious character of his host, to entertain an idea of persuading him to run any hazard in forwarding his wishes; and he resolved to conceal his designs, and trust to his own exertions, and any aid he could procure from other quarters. Pandolfina had given him an unlimited credit on the Jew, and desired him to spare no expence in bribes to any person to whom it was necessary; he hoped therefore that if he could ascertain that Marguerita was in the

hands of the aga, he might, by the means placed in his reach, gain over some of his domestics to assist in conveying her privately on board his bark, and escaping with her to Sicily. He inquired the name of the aga, and having learned it, made no further comment, but begged his agent to follow up his inquiries with unabated zeal, and to lose no means of obtaining information; which Musa promised, and leaving Gaetano still with his son, returned in the evening to Tunis.

After his departure, Pignatelli asked his companion to accompany him round the gardens, and inquired occasionally the names of the adjoining proprietors, amongst whom he learned was the aga Solyman, whose domains joined upon that part of Ben Musa's ground, in which he had on the previous evening held the conversation with the Sicilian stranger.

Gaetano concealed his satisfaction, and, as early as he could without suspicion, withdrew to his chamber, where he awaited the hour of his appointed interview,

and heard, with no little joy, the commencement of the same strains which had before attracted his attention; and hastening instantly to the spot, he found the stranger no less anxiously expecting his coming. After exchanging a few words, he told Gaetano that if every thing was secure on his side from interruption, he would find the means of joining him for a short time; and being assured that there was no danger of discovery, he soon made his way through the ruins of the aqueduct into the garden, and descended to the place where Pignatelli awaited him, who found his new acquaintance a young man of prepossessing appearance, clothed in the habit of a slave.

Gaetano informed him that he was a Christian and fellow-countryman, who was a visitor for a short time with Ben Musa the Jew, and proffered his service in any way that might be of use.

The young man expressed his gratitude at so fortunate an encounter, and told him that he was a Sicilian of respectable

parentage, who had been captured by the Tunisians in a voyage from Sicily to Malta, and sold as a slave to the aga Solyman, by whom he was employed in his gardens; and having acquired the favour of his superior, he was permitted to enjoy rather more liberty than his fellow-captives, and lived with the principal manager of his master's lands, who frequently permitted him to ramble in the gardens till a late hour in the evening, when he solaced himself with the music of his native land; for no great sum he thought he might obtain his liberty, and upon his arrival in Sicily, his friends would thankfully repay the kindness which had set him free.

Gaetano inquired if the aga had other Sicilian slaves.

Ludovico, which was the name of the young man, said he believed not, but he knew little of the interior of the palace and its inhabitants; he had however heard from the wife of the man with whom he dwelt, and who was frequently employed in the harem, of some young Italian girl

who had been brought to Manuba within a few months; that her appearance was peculiarly interesting, but she seemed sinking into an untimely grave from sorrow. The aga, he added, was deeply enamoured of her beauty, and lamented her illness, which was, he understood, daily and rapidly increasing.

“Would it be possible,” asked Gaetano, “by bribing this woman, to communicate to the lady, that a friend, deeply interested in her welfare, was at hand, to redeem her either openly by purchase, or to venture his life to procure her escape? Effect this,” he continued, “and I will answer without hesitation for your own deliverance.”

Ludovico considered for a few moments, and then replied, that his own exertions should be employed to the utmost, and that he believed old Cadige, the woman he had mentioned, was avaricious enough to be tempted to any thing by a liberal bribe; and the keys of the garden being in her husband's power, she might enable them to effect their purpose.

On the following night, he promised to meet Gaetano again, and inform him of any intelligence he had been able to gain. They soon after separated, and Pignatelli returned to his chamber. The next day passed without any incident, Musa not coming down to Manuba; but as our adventurer had, he hoped, placed the affair in a proper train, he felt less anxious about the measures to be taken by the Jew. He was not indeed positively certain that the lady in the harem of Solyman was Marguerita Landolini, but he had strong evidence of its being so; the time at which she was brought to Tunis corresponded with that at which the daughter of his friend was carried off, and no other person had yet been heard of by Musa, who at all answered the description. The more he reflected on the subject, the more fully he was convinced he was right; and that if disappointed here, he had no hopes of success in any other quarter. The intelligence brought him by Ludovico at their

next meeting still further convinced him. The honesty of Cadige had yielded to the hopes of gain, and she readily engaged, for a stipulated price, to introduce Ludovico and his friend into the private garden, put the lady into their hands, and procure disguises in which she and Ludovico might reach Tunis, where Gaetano could convey them privately on board, and set sail for Sicily without delay. The lady, she said, was an Italian, exceedingly young and beautiful, but sinking rapidly beneath her mental sufferings; and unceasingly lamenting for her father and her friends, there could be no doubt of her readiness to escape, for which the old woman undertook to prepare her, the first opportunity she could find during the day. Gaetano parted from his new acquaintance in great glee, engaging to have the bark in readiness to sail the moment they could reach Tunis, and to prepare on the ensuing night for the rescue of the lady.

When Musa came again to visit his guest, he brought no further news of any importance; the only female he could hear of, at all likely to be the one of whom Gaetano was in search, was the lady who was in the harem of aga Solyman, and all hopes to redeem her were useless, even if death had not already set her free, of which there appeared great prospect.

Gaetano affected to acquiesce in the opinion of the Jew, but requested him to furnish him with a sum of money immediately, and to attend him on the morrow, as he should like at least to make the attempt to deliver the lady, by offering her ransom; but that if it failed, he should set sail for Sicily; and as he observed the sailors might be dilatory, he would order them to prepare instantly for their departure; desiring Musa, on his return to the city, to send one of the mariners to him with the money he required. His wishes were punctually obeyed; the caution of his host was lulled to sleep, and Pignatelli

prepared for the execution of his plan; ordering the sailor who brought the sum he desired, to take care that all on board would be in readiness to depart at a moment's notice.

Ludovico was punctual to his appointment, and told his companion that Cadige was to be in readiness in a short time to admit them to the garden, that she had been some hours in the palace, and assured him she should find no difficulty in communicating to the lady the good fortune which awaited her; but before she put her into their hands, should require the payment of the sum she had specified, and for which she thus adventured her life. When they had escaped from the gardens, the lady was to set out with Ludovico, disguised as peasants, with such fruits as are usually carried to the markets in Tunis. They were to arrive as soon as the city-gates should be opened, and repair without loss of time to the port, where Pignatelli's bark was in waiting.

Gaetano found no difficulty in ascend-

ing the aqueduct by the route his companion had discovered, and they reached the gardens of Solyman. The part separated for the use of the females was at some distance, and inclosed with high walls, but communicated by a small door, which was kept constantly locked, and served to admit the necessary workmen, under the direction of the head-gardener and eunuchs. They concealed themselves near the spot, in expectation of the signal, and had waited more than an hour, when the door slowly unclosed, and a female figure stood in the opening. Pignatelli advanced, followed by Ludovico, and they entered the garden.—“Cadige,” cried the latter, “is all safe?”

“Give me my reward,” she replied.

Pignatelli placed the purse in her hands, which she quietly concealed about her person, and then said—“I am obliged to you, signor, and to my friend Ludovico, but lament that I can be of no further use; the lady expired an hour ago.”

The surprise and mortification of Gaetano for an instant overpowered him.

“ This is a forged tale,” he said, “ and invented to deceive us; but nothing shall induce me to return till I have fuller conviction.”

The woman quietly placed the key in her bosom, having previously locked the gate.—“ My life,” she said, “ shall not be hazarded; and unless you swear instantly to retire, I will alarm the palace guards, and give you up to certain destruction.”

Ludovico, who was standing behind Gaetano, loosened his cloak, and suddenly throwing it over the head of Cadige, prevented her uttering any sound, and snatching the key from her bosom, inquired how they should proceed?

“ Let us first,” said Pignatelli, “ secure this most faithful ally, and then endeavour to ascertain the truth of her statement.”

They conducted her to a remote part of the outer garden, and interrogated her about her story, in which she firmly per-

sisted ; but at length agreed, that if they dared to follow her to the walls of the harem, she would place them in a situation to convince themselves of her veracity. Resolved that nothing should prevent him from ascertaining the fact, Gaetano consented ; and drawing his dagger, swore to plunge it in her breast if she betrayed them. Under considerable trepidation, she now retraced with them the way to the palace, Ludovico still retaining the key of the private gate ; they followed in profound silence a winding path, which led through the fragrant shades of the zenana gardens, and soon arrived within sight of the buildings.

“ By mounting a tree near yonder lattice,” said Cadige, “ you may command a view of the chamber where the remains of the lady are deposited ; joy at the hopes of freedom overcame her, and she expired in the arms of her women ; I left the attendants mourning round her body.”

Pignatelli desired his companion to guard their conductress, and according to

her directions, mounted the tree, from whence he was too fully convinced of the melancholy truth. In the apartment before him, he perceived the inanimate form of a young female stretched lifeless upon a couch, and two mutes stationed beside her. As he leaned forward to gain, if possible, a clearer view, the branch on which he rested gave way, and he fell with some violence to the ground, but arose unhurt. Ludovico, who saw the accident, rushed forward to aid him, forgetful of his charge; and Cadige, taking advantage of his negligence, fled to a neighbouring door of the harem, rending the air with screams and cries.

“This treacherous fool will be our ruin,” said Ludovico.

“We have no longer any cause for exposing ourselves,” said Gaetano; “follow me.”

They then retreated with all possible speed towards the gate, but missing the direct pathway, entangled themselves in the mazes of the garden. Lights moving

in all directions in the distant windows, convinced them that the palace was alarmed, and their danger increasing. When they at last reached the gate, Pignatelli asked his companion for the key.

“Surely, signor, I gave it to you when last we entered.”

“I had it not,” said Gaetano, “and perfectly recollect your retaining it.” Suspicion of the faith of his new acquaintance for a moment entered his breast; but the evident alarm under which he suffered, convinced him of his truth. “It is undoubtedly concealed about your person,” he said.

Ludovico, now nearly beside himself with fright, trembled so violently, that he could scarcely make the necessary search, which however proved successful. He had in his agitation forgotten where he had put it; and but for the greater composure of his companion, which never deserted him for an instant, they must have fallen into the hands of their pursuers. As it was, they fled through the opening,

just as some one appeared in the distance, and discharged a carbine at them in their retreat. The windings of the exterior gardens were well known to Ludovico; they outstripped their pursuers, reached the ruined aqueduct, and gained the grounds of Ben Musa in safety.

Gaetano took Ludovico with him to his chamber, and they consulted together how to proceed. It was probable that Cadige would invent some story of her terrors, which would by no means involve herself, and perhaps not Gaetano; the safety of Ludovico was more doubtful, and Pignatelli determined to rescue him at all events; but the difficulty at first seemed very great. In the habit he then wore, he was exposed to certain detection; his master missing him in the morning, would make inquiries which must lead to an instant search; to trust Ben Musa, would be to betray to him the whole proceeding, and would waste time, as the sooner they were on board the better.

After some consideration, Pignatelli re-

solved to enter the chamber of young Musa, and convey away his clothes, in which he might attire Ludovico, and set out with him for Tunis, to reach the city before the gates unclosed in the morning. This he happily effected; and thus disguised, they made their way to the port without detection, found every thing prepared for their sailing, and with a strong wind in their favour, were in a few hours beyond the reach of danger.

Gaetano had left a note for Ben Musa, excusing his sudden flight, and inclosing a full and handsome remuneration for his services, with a present for his son, but without specifying any of the circumstances which induced him to depart thus privately.

When the hurry of events was over, and he reflected on what had passed, his spirits sunk at the thoughts of Landolini; and as the distant land of Sicily rose above the waves, he greeted it with a sigh of sad disappointment, and almost wished that

the breezes which wafted him so rapidly along, had delayed the fatal intelligence, of which he was the unwilling herald. But soon they doubled Cape St. Marco, and bore down towards Sciacca, with a course which, under any other circumstances, Pignatelli would have considered as the height of good fortune.

CHAPTER II.
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————— It doth present harsh rage,  
Defect of manners, want of government,  
Pride, haughtiness, opinion, and disdain;  
The least of which haunting a nobleman,  
Loseth mens hearts, and leaves behind a stain.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE news of a vessel bearing up towards the city, was, four or five days after Gaetano's departure, conveyed to don Sigismund, who instantly ordered that the baroness Solanto should not be disturbed by the intelligence, until some more certain information was obtained: a second messenger came, confirming the news, but at present ignorant of the nation to which she belonged. The count immediately repaired to the gallery in which was situated the apartments of the baroness and her daughter; and having summoned an attendant, desired that the lady

Costanza might be requested to see him instantly. Anticipating the purport of his visit, a few minutes brought her to his presence.

“ I wish not,” said Sigismund, “ to cause hopes, signora, which may hereafter be disappointed ; but a vessel, I am told, is now bearing into the bay ; probably it may bring the baron Solanto, and such, most devoutly do I hope, we may find to be the case ; but until we are assured of the fact, it will, I think, be better not to agitate the feelings of the baroness. I will myself repair to the Marino, and bring you the earliest intelligence.”

Costanza expressed her joy and gratitude, and agreed with the count in the precaution he advised, entreating him not to delay an instant in relieving her from the agony of suspense. Impatient to bring her the glad tidings, Sigismund lingered not a moment, but hurried to the Marino, to watch the progress of the approaching sail, which yet was at some little distance.

From one of the towers of Perollo Castle, Federico was also watching the coming bark.

"She appears a vessel of some force," said one of his father's officers who was with him; "and Turkish, I should think by her make."

Federico began to fear that disappointment was still in store for those in whom he felt so interested; since their meeting in the church, his thoughts had been occupied by one idea alone. The image of Costanzo di Solanto filled his mind, and her destiny had been the only subject of his reflections. In the imperious and haughty manner of Sigismund di Luna, he read the tyranny to which her spirit would be bowed; and in the malignant scowl of the countess, he had traced those dark passions to which he feared Costanza's peace would for ever be sacrificed. Had any accident happened to her father, he felt there were no hopes of her escape, as her mother's weak state rendered it impossible she could bear up against any

shock of grief; and left an orphan in the hands of Luna and his mother, the fulfilment of her engagements must be inevitable; but should these fears for the safety of Solanto be groundless, his arrival, it might be hoped, would change the situation of affairs. How far he might be pledged to Luna, Federico knew not; but he trusted that some fortunate event might shew in their true colours the dangerous risks to which the happiness of any female must be exposed, who was left to the violence of Sigismund and the fury of the countess.

Without violating the promise he had given to his mother, Perollo could not but indulge in these delusive visions. Costanza's appearance at the festival, and the spirit with which she had resisted the assumed authority, and the rudeness and ill-humour to which she was exposed, had served to increase his growing passion for her. All the resolutions he had formed, after the conversation with his mother, had faded before the impressions which



the interview in the church had brought back ; and though no event had occurred to raise his hopes, though the air and manner of don Sigismund convinced him that Costanza was considered as his plighted bride, yet, against all reason, he did feel less overwhelmed with despondency than he had done since first he learned the fatal truth of Sigismund's engagement with the object of his new and ardent love. His anxiety for the arrival of the baron had also another motive ; by enabling the baroness to remove from the Castel di Luna, he trusted the intercourse with his mother would be more frequent, and that he himself should thus be enabled to visit, and avail himself of any advantage which fortunate circumstances might offer.

In the temper and manner of don Sigismund, and the character which the countess universally bore, he flattered himself he had sufficient excuse for desiring to rescue Costanza from their alliance. Soothing and encouraging him-

self with every favourable point, and carefully excluding from his thoughts every argument which reason could not but adduce to crush his hopes and expectations, he had requested to be informed of the arrival of any vessel in the port, and now stood watching the approach of the only one which had entered for several days. The wind being directly fair, she stood into the bay with a steady and rapid course.

“She must be Turkish,” said Antonio Margieri, who stood by; “and I think now I can distinguish their flag of truce: a short time, signor, will inform us who and what she is.”

On the Marino count Luna had also anxiously awaited the bark.—“It is some Turkish vessel by her rigging,” said a mariner who stood near. Sigismund felt that he knew not how to carry back such tidings to his mistress; he remained in fearful suspense, wishing, yet scarcely expecting, to hear the supposition contra-

dicted. "I know her well," exclaimed the man who had spoken before; "it is Il Gindeo, the Turkish admiral."

"The corsair who has infested our seas of late?" asked Sigismund.

"Call him what you please, signor; I know it is the ship which Serican commands, and from which we had a narrow escape not many weeks ago; she bears a flag of truce too; what can have brought them here?"

Luna saw the signal, and could not but be convinced that his hopes were disappointed; without waiting for further information, he bent his steps with a heavy and reluctant heart towards the castle, as he knew the unwelcome tidings he must communicate to his expecting guests.

"The will of Heaven be done!" said Costanza with a sigh, when he had told his tale; "what dire misfortune has befallen my poor father, I fear to think!"

"Hope still," said Sigismund; "this vessel may at least bring tidings of the baron, and be the harbinger of his ap-

proach; I will return and collect for you all the information I can; but cheer your spirits, dear lady Costanza, and support the baroness under the ignorance in which we must yet keep her, till something more is known."

Costanza gratefully expressed her thanks, and Luna returned again to the Marino. The vessel now rode within a short and easy distance of the shore, from whence a boat was dispatched by the officers of Pandolfina, as captain of the port. The circumstance of such a vessel entering the bay, had drawn a considerable number of citizens to the Marino, and all were expecting the return of those whom don Giacomo had ordered out on the inquiry.— "They say," said one of the crowd, "that it is Il Gindeo himself, who has kept the seas these many weeks with two-and-twenty galleys, and from the few arrivals we have had of late, I fear he has found his present expedition a most profitable one."

The barone del Nadore had joined the

gazing multitude, and was addressing Sigismund on this most unusual event.—“Were our seas properly protected,” he said, “such insults could not happen to our flag; but whilst our Spanish masters, and their vicegerent here in Sciacca, the illustrious don Giacomo, are revelling in the spoils of the people, and trampling on every noble who opposes their degrading tyranny, they have no time or inclination to oppose the enemies of Christianity. This bragging pirate, if I mistake not, has some secret intrigue with the Perollo and his ruffians. Were such men as count Sigismund di Luna in the high offices they ought to fill, we should not see the corsairs scouring our seas, closing all our ports, and outraging our feelings, by such bold and daring visitations; we shall soon see the captain of our port parading through the streets to hold a parley with this infidel.”

“Surely,” said Luna, “even he will not so far debase himself as to wait on the pirate in his den; whatever business may



have brought the corsair here, can be transacted in some manner less offensive to the feelings of a Sicilian noble, than by attending on his will where he shall choose to dictate."

The boat was now returning towards the shore, and the crowd impatiently awaiting them; that it was Serican himself was soon ascertained, but who or what he wanted, still remained a secret. The barone del Nadore demanded of part of the boat's crew who had ascended to the Marino, and seemed to be hastening to Perollo Castle, what had brought the corsair to Sciacca?

"To treat, I understand, with count Luna for the redemption of some prisoner he has on board."

Luna started at the reply, and demanded a further explanation. Either from the tone in which the question was put, or from an acquired enmity towards the count, the fellow rather uncivilly referred him to the baron Pandolfina for information, to whom, he said, they were hasten-

ing to report the message they had received.

The blood of Luna rose indignant at the insult, and he rushed unattended to the beach below, and commanded some boatmen to convey him immediately to the ship; to be indebted to Perollo for information or assistance, was more than the spirit of Luna could endure, and if, as he already feared, the baron Solanto was the captive, he wished, at all events, to stop the interference of any one beside himself in effecting his deliverance.

The count was some minutes before he found any one to convey him from the shore, and as he was stepping into the boat, part of the port-captain's men, who had remained with their vessel, advanced, and peremptorily ordered that not a soul should stir, until permission had been obtained from the baron Pandolfina.

Sigismund angrily commanded the boatmen to proceed; they still hesitated; and his opponents leaping in, quietly seated

themselves, and reiterated their orders that not a soul should move. The rage of Luna was now unbounded ; he stormed and threatened ; but the men, assuring him all the time of their entire devotion to his excellenza's will, remained steady in their opposition. The count appeared as if determined to revenge himself by force, when Del Nadore, who had followed him, came forward, and exerting his authority as principal magistrate of the city, and as a friend of don Giacomo, commanded the opponents of the count to retire, and allow him to proceed ; unwillingly, and after much debate, they did so. The fury of Luna remained however entirely unabated ; he did not remember to thank the baron for his friendly interference ; but almost unconscious of what he was about, ordered to be conveyed instantly alongside the newly-arrived vessel. The boatmen proceeded, and Sigismund brooded over the public insult he considered himself to have received. Arrived alongside, the

rowers paused upon their oars. An officer looked over the ship's side, and demanded their names and business.

"Tell the pirate chief," said Sigismund, still tremulous with passion, "that count Luna is arrived to ransom and redeem his captive."

The questioner retired, and soon again appeared.

"The Turkish bassa Serican, commander of the Ottoman fleet within these seas, orders count Luna to make what speed he may to land; were not the flag of truce still flying on our tops, his insolence had met with its deserts, before the eyes of all the citizens of Sciacca. The bassa hopes to find at Tunis some more courteous friend of the baron Solanto to rescue him from slavery."

Luna sat for some moments motionless from fury and vexation. Thus to be insulted by one whom he considered as a corsair and a plunderer, was more than he could at any time have borne, much less in his present state of irritation; but to

return bootless from his voyage, to publish the contempt with which he had been treated to all the multitude on shore, and, above all, how to meet the just reproaches of Costanza, and hereafter to excuse his intemperate conduct to the baron himself, overwhelmed him with a variety of distress, from which he knew no means of being extricated.

At length recovering in a slight degree, he replied to the officer, who was apparently watching his departure—"Ignorant, signor, of the rank and station of your commander, I only learned the circumstance of his requiring a communication with me from the citizens on shore; he will therefore excuse, I trust, my inadvertency, and inform me on what terms we are to treat."

The Turk again withdrew, and shortly after reappeared with the bassa's answer.—"Our admiral, signor, has sent on shore to the baron Pandolfina (who is, we understand, the port-captain) the terms on which he meant to treat, and through him



you ought to have applied; but no apology can now efface the insult you have offered."

"I have already made my excuses, signor," said Luna; "there can be no necessity for any intermediate intercourse between us. Commend me, therefore, to your commander, and say I wait to hear his resolution and demands."

To this conciliatory speech, however, Serican still remained unyielding.—"I have the bassa's strict injunction, signor, to order you instantly to leave the vessel's side. In addition to the first unprovoked insult offered to our admiral's high rank, he now considers, as a second aggression, the objection to treat through the person to whom you were referred. I am forbidden farther parley."

Sigismund sat for some moments in silence.

"What would your excellenza wish?" asked the boatmen.

"Return to land," was the reply;

"mention to none the circumstances of our voyage, and follow me to Luna Castle."

When they reached the shore, one of the men observed, "they have hauled down their flag of truce, and put their helm about; but with a wind like this, they must remain where they are, for out to sea they cannot get."

Luna felt some slight return of hope, and on landing, ordered the people to follow him.

Del Nadore had waited his return, and pressed forward eagerly to inquire the particulars of his interview with Serican.

"I have not seen him, nor has any thing yet taken place," said Sigismund, endeavouring to escape.

The barone followed with many offers of service, which Luna unceremoniously declined; his persecutor was however not so easily dismissed, but continued to accompany him towards the castle.

"The business, signor barone," he at length said, "in which I am engaged, is

of no pleasant nature; if I stand in need of your services, I shall command them." Del Nadore stared in astonishment.—"I cannot now be trifled with," said Luna, "and must request to be left."

With a bow of respect and wonder, the gentleman withdrew.

As the count entered his castle, he ordered one of his servants to request the baron Adriano would come to him, and sent others to summon to his presence the signors Calandrino and Infontanetta: he then proceeded to the gallery adjoining the baroness Solanto's apartments, and desired an attendant to inform the lady Costanza, without her mother's knowledge, that he wished for a few minutes conversation.

Whilst he expected her approach, the count endeavoured to collect himself, not to alarm, more than was unavoidable, the filial tenderness of Costanza, and to exculpate himself for his imprudence. She soon attended him, and eagerly demanded what information he had collected?

"The baron," he answered, "is in safety."

"And arrived?" asked Costanza, her countenance brightening with joy; but regarding the depression of his manner, she relapsed again into anxiety and terror.

"He is indeed on board this vessel; but his landing will, I fear, be some time delayed."

"My father well, and safely arrived in Sciacca!" she ejaculated; "let me instantly revive my mother with the tidings!"

"Not yet, not yet!" said Luna, seizing her hand; "there is a distressing circumstance still to mention, which must be kept from the knowledge of the baroness, and which you, I trust, will hear with firmness and self-possession."

Costanza could scarcely support her tottering frame, and gazed in silent agony upon the count.

"The baron is detained on board a Turkish ship of war."

"Is that the worst?" asked the daugh-

ter, breathing again from her overpowering fears.

"I trust it is," replied Luna.

"Then let his ransom instantly be paid; let his captors tax us to the utmost; willingly shall all we have redeem my father's liberty. If they ask a captive in return, our sovereign, I know, will gladly let them take their choice, to serve his gallant veteran Solanto. Repair, count Luna, instantly on board; comply with any terms they ask. Restore my father to liberty, myself and all besides shall gratefully be yours; nay, stay not to reply; let him be instantly released, and let me bless my mother by the news."

"I have already," answered Sigismund, with hesitation, "been off to the vessel."

"And what was your reception? what are the terms of ransom?"

"I was received with insult, all terms rejected, and referred to the Perollo."

"What says don Giacomo?" ejaculated Costanza.



“ Could I inquire of a Perollo ? ” replied Luna, extremely agitated.

She looked at him for an instant.—  
“ My mother and myself are here, signor, under your protection till my father is restored ; and I require you to attend me instantly to the castle of the baron Pandolfina.”

“ Impossible ! ” said the count.

“ Then unattended I must go. The courtesy of the Perollo will, I doubt not, render me all the service I require, and to him count Luna will hereafter be indebted for the ransom of his father’s friend.”

“ Torture me not, for pity’s sake,” said Sigismund ; “ I have summoned hither my family and friends, and every exertion, dearest Costanza, shall be made to set your father free ; do but confide in us ; no reference shall then be wanting to our insulting foe, nor shall any sacrifice on our part be withheld.”

“ If from the baron Pandolfina we are

to learn the terms, he must of course be sooner or later referred to, and I see no advantage which advice can possibly be of in the affair; it will but cause delays equally distressing and needless, and if on every occasion my wishes, and the comfort of my family, must yield to this unnatural hatred, I cannot but measure your professions of regard by circumstances which will weigh heavily against their sincerity."

Sigismund looked displeased; but Costanza was unwilling to postpone for an instant the application to Perollo.—"At least," she said, "let me endeavour to obtain an interview with my father during the treaty; surely this will not be denied."

"Your mother, signora, will wonder at your absence; why should we alarm her? till your anxiety is terminated by the baron's restoration to liberty, why agitate her mind? My friends will soon be here; trust me, we will decide without loss of time

what course we should pursue, and follow up our resolutions with celerity and dispatch."

A servant announced that the baron Adriano was waiting count Sigismund's commands; he again entreated Costanza to trust the negociation with himself and his friends, without any immediate reference to Perollo. Unwillingly she consented to a short delay, but feeling that her wishes were so needlessly sacrificed to Sigismund's unyielding enmity, she viewed him with a sensation of more dislike than she had ever felt since their introduction. To his endeavours to support her hopes of soon beholding Solanto, her answers were cold, and somewhat indignant; and she returned to her mother, exerting all her powers to hide the perturbation of her mind. The baroness had missed her from her room, and eagerly inquired if any favourable tidings had called her out?

"We may soon hope to hear some vessels are arriving," she said, "though

not the one we look for; yet my father's safety has been ascertained."

"His ship then," said the baroness, "has been seen? knowing he has been in safety since the storm, will tranquillize my mind, though he is not yet arrived."

"That he is safe, we have heard from undoubted authority," said Costanza, eager to give her mother comfort.

"Can I not see the persons who brought the information?" asked the baroness.

"Not yet, I fear," answered her daughter; "but, dearest mother, you will, I hope, be composed, now we know that my father is safe and well. We may expect him speedily, therefore reserve your strength to meet him joyfully, or to bear a few hours longer delay."

Sigismund having joined Adriano and his other friends, briefly stated the captivity of the baron Solanto, and his own ineffectual attempt to redeem him; indulging in those feelings of rage and indignation which the presence of Costanza

had repressed. Upon the mention of the reference which had been made to Perollo, the baron Adriano observed, that the connivance of don Giacomo was evident throughout the whole affair.—“Why should the pirate,” he added, “send for you, my friend, to drive you back with insolence, without even an offer of terms? to what end and purpose does this Serican pretend to enter our port, but to treat with count Luna for the ransom of his friend? and for a slight breach of etiquette, breaks off all communication, affects to leave the port, and to bear away his captive to foreign slavery—a feint intended only to raise the price he will soon demand; and it appears, that to add to these insults, they wish to drive you, don Sigismund, as a suppliant to the power and influence of Giacomo.”

“We have already borne so many acts of oppression tamely,” said Calogero, “that they expect to find our spirits depressed, even to the point they wish; and that among his suitors and dependants,



Giacomo shall number the chieftain of Luna and Peralta."

"Their hopes and wishes then are vain," said Sigismund, "and we shall ere long teach this tyrant, that neither his insults are forgotten, or his power respected; that Luna scorns his friendship, and despises his attempts to bend the spirit of his party. But in the present instance, how shall we prevent the interference of Perollo, and induce this insolent Mahometan to restore Solanto? I would not again expose myself to be rejected and dismissed by the audacious savage; and what other means of treaty can be devised, which shall not involve an application to our insidious enemy?"

"Entrust the embassy to me," said Adriano; "it will be no difficult matter, spite of his sycophantic attendance on Perollo, to induce Del Nadore to accompany me on board. As one of the giurati of the city, his visit cannot be rejected, and once to gain the ear of Serican, will be, I doubt not, to deliver the

baron Solanto from bondage. These infidel pirates cannot resist the charms of gold, and with the present wind their vessel cannot leave the bay; which circumstance will afford us time for action."

"Perollo will no doubt avail himself of this; and unless you wish to encounter him on board, the earlier you are in your application the better," said Calandrino.

When Adriano observed that the ransom demanded would probably be enormous, Infontanetta said—"I have been informed that this Serican has at times conducted himself with liberality and honour."

"Even had he done so till now," replied Adriano, "the influence under which he acts would stop the current of these rare virtues."

Sigismund cautioned him to remember that he had failed in his application from his style of address.—"The infidel," he said, "prides himself on his situation as admiral of the galleys now at sea, and requires to be approached with more sub-

mission than I thought proper to bestow."

"Fear me not," answered his friend; "I shall be all the mighty Ottoman can wish."

"The ransom," said Luna, "I shall not regard; all sacrifices to restore the baron to his freedom, without the interference of Perollo, I shall esteem light and easy. But be as rapid as possible in all your movements, to save us from the anticipated evil, and to relieve the anxiety which the family of Solanto must suffer till the important negociation is completed."

Adriano and Calandrino then departed in search of Del Nadore, and Sigismund returned to inform Costanza that his friends were gone, accompanied by one of the giurati of the city, with full powers from himself to treat for the restoration of her father, and to yield to any request, provided the baron was set at liberty instantly.

With this report she was rather tran-

quillized, but still felt that an application through Perollo would have been the most effectual means, and that her wishes on the subject had been sacrificed to the groundless enmity which don Sigismund entertained against the house of Pandolfina. Inspired by these sentiments, she received the information he brought with coldness, and immediately returned to her mother, who again inquired the cause of her absence.

“Only a further confirmation of the former intelligence,” replied Costanza, “that my father is safe and well; though we may still have some short time to wait before we embrace him.”

With this the baroness was satisfied. She was by this time considerably recovered from her late indisposition; they had met the countess as usual, but she had not hitherto made any apology. Costanza however did not forget her conduct in the church, and considered some acknowledgment to her mother essentially necessary, yet did not wish to provoke

any discussion on the subject till the arrival of her father, who would, she knew, deeply resent any disrespect offered to the baroness. To prevent her mother from suffering the painful suspense she herself felt, Costanza endeavoured to keep her in conversation, and talked of the baroness Pandolfina.

“ My joy at seeing Victoria Moncada once again,” said the baroness, “ gave me a shock, which rendered me almost unconscious of ought beside; the oppressive heat too prevented me from recovering sufficiently to know what passed within the church, or how I was conveyed out; all I can now remember is the tender kindness with which my old friend greeted me: with what pleasure do I anticipate the freedom of intercourse which your father’s return will give us! no longer under the roof of count Luna, there will be no restriction upon us; and our intervention may perhaps hereafter close the unhappy discord between these rival families.”



“It would be delightful indeed,” said Costanza, “to be the instruments of such a blessed event; but I fear your benevolent wishes will never be realized, whilst the baneful influence of his mother retains its power over the mind of don Sigismund.”

“The count,” continued the baroness, “is young, and has seen but little of the world; his unfortunate connexion with so violent and irritable a spirit, as I understand the lady Lucretia possessed, may have given a temporary shade to his character, which other scenes and gentler manners will in time eradicate.”

“I almost tremble at the experiment,” said Costanza, with a sigh.

Her mother apprehending that her spirits were subdued by anxiety respecting her father, attempted to change the conversation; but her thoughts would recur to those traits in the character of her future husband, which the last few hours had made visible. To know that such dark and deadly passions could find so

lasting an abode within his breast ; to see so clearly that his impetuous violence of temper was to be restrained, neither by gratitude nor love, gave to Costanza ample scope for melancholy meditation and uncomfortable foreboding. In her father however she fully confided, knowing well that no power would induce him to sacrifice her peace to an union for which she did not feel sufficient inclination.

“ Donna Victoria,” said the baroness, “ appears but little altered for the time. The same affectionate and tender kindness shines through the majestic dignity of manner which always marked her character.”

“ It was strongly enough contrasted by the rudeness of the countess,” said Costanza, “ whose natural deformity of temper never could have shone forth more conspicuously than on that occasion.”

“ I lament,” replied the baroness, “ to hear you, my child, so frequently recur to the unpleasant manners of the mother of don Sigismund : forbearance from you

may greatly sooth her impetuosity, and will at all events preserve your own peace and happiness, when united with her son."

Costanza, unwilling to distress her mother by an argument, listened in silence; and the latter again resumed her commendations of the baroness Pandolfina.

The baron Adriano and Calandrino were for some time unsuccessful in their search for Del Nadore; but having at length met with him, before they could communicate the object of their mission, he had begun a long account of the preparations which don Giacomo was making, to visit the newly-arrived vessel.—"His ostentation," he said, "has already ordered out half the provisions in the city to feast these infidel marauders; the boats are loading with refreshments on the beach, and may even now be on their way to greet this worthy friend of Pandolfina."

"We must anticipate them, if possible," exclaimed Adriano; "and you, signor barone, must, at the request of count Luna, accompany us."

“ Don Sigismund did not deign to inform me on the subject when we parted,” said the baron; “ I have in vain endeavoured to make out from don Giacomo the whole of this mysterious proceeding, and am now required to become an agent in the business.”

“ The count has been disappointed in the negociation,” said Adriano, “ and knows no one whose influence and judgment he can so confidently trust to as yours, signor. I am to have the honour of attending you, and will explain upon the way the commission with which you are charged.”

With this speech Del Nadore was so well pleased, that he expressed his readiness immediately to go upon the expedition; and they proceeded for that purpose to the Marino: but upon their arrival there, a new dilemma disconcerted their measures. The boats loaded with refreshments were seen nearly up with Serican's ship; and Pandolfina, attended by a numerous band of officers and gen-

tlement, was just entering his barge of state to follow them, although the flag of truce was down, and Serican endeavouring to stand out to sea again.

“It is out of all question for us to proceed now,” said Adriano; “the best method I can devise, is for you, signor del Nadore, to attempt to reach the party of Perollo, and obtain permission to go with him, that we may learn the circumstances of their interview. I will, in the meantime, return to don Sigismund, and consult with him upon the present state of his affairs.”

The baron hastened to the beach, and his friends waited until they saw him received by don Giacomo into his suite, and the party on their way to greet the Turkish admiral. They then returned to the Castel di Luna, to communicate their unsuccessful embassy to don Sigismund, who, disconcerted at the coldness with which his last communication to Costanza had been received, was in no good humour to listen to their information. He burst



into violent denunciations of revenge against don Giacomo, should he presume to treat for the ransom of his friend ; and forgetful of his own negociation being rejected, would willingly, at the moment, have consigned Solanto to perpetual slavery, rather than be indebted to Perollo for his release. His friends, the subtle Adriano and Calogero Calandrino, endeavoured by every artifice to add fuel to the flames of his rage.

“ It is certainly to be regretted,” said the former, “ that you, signor, did not wait to see how the illustrious port-captain would proceed, and by what means he would communicate with you upon the subject : he will now doubtless plead the information Del Nadore gave him of the failure of your voyage, to excuse himself for not having sent you the message which Serican delivered to his officers ; and the uncourteous rebuff the insulting infidel audaciously cast on you, will furnish ample subject for mirth and congratulation with these confederate plunderers.”

“To me there appears a deeper plot than this,” said Calandrino; “Pandolfina will now release your friend, the baron Solanto: his son has already, I am informed, rendered some services to the ladies of the family; the gratitude both parties will doubtless claim, will be a fair excuse to justify the violation of all treaties with count Luna, and Solanto’s wealth and influence will be no despicable portion for the young Perollo’s bride.”

“Sooner with my own hand would I immolate Costanza to my just revenge! The lives of Perollo and all his hated race, could not make amends for an insult such as this,” exclaimed Luna.

“I watched their conduct in the church,” said Calandrino, “and saw the evident marks of admiration with which the young gentleman regarded your blooming bride, count Sigismund. I saw the smile with which she honoured him at parting, and the proud compassion with which he regarded your rejected services.”

Sigismund paced the room with frantic impatience.

“It is not now a time,” said Adriano, “to manifest our feelings on the occasion. Let the events proceed unnoticed, and when the infamy and perfidy of the Perollo have reached their acme, then let us burst with all our power upon them, wash out in their blood the accumulated weight of injury and insult, which years have seen the house of Luna and Peralta suffering under, and give to all posterity a monument of revenge.”

“My life and soul,” said Sigismund, “are placed upon this marriage; sooner than see her given to Perollo, I would stab her at the altar.”

“Some means,” said Calandrino, “may be found to cut off this dangerous rival.”

Luna stopped suddenly, and looking at the speaker, vehemently exclaimed—“Silence, signor Calandrino! am I to be again insulted by an offer of private assassination?—no; once more, I tell you all my vengeance shall be open as the insults

I have met with ; does Della Bardia's spirit possess the bosoms of you all?"

A silence of some minutes followed, and Luna began again to pace the apartment with vehemence.—“ Can no one find a remedy but this ?” he said.

“ For myself,” said Adriano, “ I have always held it vain and useless to strike at one amongst this hated race ; until a universal fate has swept them all from off the earth, till not a graft is left belonging to the cursed stock, we never shall be safe from private danger and public insult. For this alliance, signor, the wishes of every member of our house must follow yours : from every circumstance it offers domestic happiness, increase of wealth, of influence and power. The weight the baron Solanto is known to have in the Imperial court, will be a just and equal counterpoise to that of Pandolfina. His riches and family connexions will give, though not perhaps a local strength to our party here, yet an influence on those abroad, most advantageous to your inte-

rest; but once within the vortex of Perollo's artifice, we cannot be too careful of his words and actions. Solanto may be faithful to his honour and his word, but we must watch him well."

A slight noise was heard in the anti-room, the door thrown open, and the baron di Solanto was announced.



## CHAPTER III.

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————— I gradi primi
Piu meritar, che conseguir desio. TASSO.

UPON don Sigismund leaving the shore, at the intercession of the barone del Nadore, one of Pandolfina's men, who had at first opposed his embarkation, repaired to the Casa di Perollo, to inform his commander of the circumstance; a messenger had been just sent to deliver the communication received from Serican to count Luna, but upon learning the steps which that chieftain had already taken, don Giacomo countermanded the message, and desired his officers to report to him any events which might take place.

The circumstance which had brought the bassa to Sciacca was soon known throughout the castle, and excited in Federico the liveliest emotion, in which the

baroness in some degree partook ; the former, in company with don Paolo, repaired immediately to the Marino, and were soon informed of the return of don Sigismund alone ; they saw also that the flag of truce was taken down, and the galley endeavouring to stand out to sea.

“ What can this mean ? ” asked Federico ; “ surely count Luna cannot have refused to ransom the prisoner.”

“ From the disposition of the count, it is not impossible that he may have had some dispute with the bassa ; at all events let us hasten back, and learn what steps your father intends to follow.”

On their return to the castle, all was bustle and preparation ; the baron had been informed of the ill success of don Sigismund’s expedition, and given orders that provisions of all sorts should be immediately collected and conveyed to Serican in his name, whilst he prepared to follow them himself ; being joined by don Paolo and Federico, the party proceeded

to the Marino, where the state-barge of the port-captain was in waiting to receive them.

Don Giacomo was attired in splendid armour, but without any weapon of offence; the insignia of his office were suspended from his neck, and above his open-visored helmet waved a magnificent plume. The attendants were in the dresses belonging to their stations, and all unarmed. As they were entering the boat, the barone del Nadore arrived upon the beach, and requested to be taken with them.

"We are already a numerous party," said don Paolo, "and cannot, I fear, signor, as we could wish."

"It matters not," answered Del Nadore, "if don Giacomo will permit me to attend him."

"The Turkish commander has taken down his flag of truce, and it is uncertain what reception we may meet with; you had better wait another opportunity, signor."

Pandolfina hearing the discussion, requested his kinsman would permit the baron to enter their vessel, which he did, and they pushed off from land. The wind had continued so adverse, that Serican had made but little way, and the barge soon reached the side of his galley.

“Don Giacomo Perollo,” said Pandolfina to an officer who appeared on deck, “requests the honour of an interview with the Ottoman commander.” The party were courteously invited on board, and when arrived, saluted the admiral, who was waiting to receive them, surrounded by his officers.

“Excuse me, signor commandante,” said don Giacomo, “for the unworthy offering which has been tendered to your acceptance; I had scarcely expected that your treaty with count Luna would have terminated so abruptly; but learning with surprise that you were about to leave our port, I have endeavoured by expedition to make up for the respect I should have

been proud to pay to so gallant an enemy ; and I now am come in person to beg your indulgence for the slight attention time has allowed me to shew, and that you would command my services in any way consistent with the duties of my station."

" I feel and am gratified, baron Pandolina," replied Serican, " by the confidence with which you honour me, for the liberal supplies we have received ; and still further for this flattering visit, I must ever remain your debtor."

" The wind, signor, is adverse to your sailing ; if you can anchor for the night within the bay, I trust that to-morrow I should be enabled to offer something more worthy your acknowledgments."

" I entered Sciacca, don Giacomo," said Serican, " with no hostile feelings ; I was quitting it under a sense of unmerited insult. Count Luna, I was informed, came to the side of our vessel, and desired to see the corsair who commanded. Such contempt to the Ottoman arms and to

myself as an individual, I could not pass over; it was not from inadvertency, and I think not ignorance; under these circumstances, I was about to depart, with the feelings of anger such a reception must naturally cause. I shall now leave your port with regret that duty obliges me to decline your hospitable offer, and with a lasting recollection of the kindness and the honour you have done me; from this time forth the sea is open from Cape St. Marco to Cape Bianco, and no vessel under my command shall commit any act of hostility within the limits of the baron Pandolfina's jurisdiction*."

Don Giacomo expressed his gratitude for the bassa's kindness, and regretted that he should have been disappointed in the object of his expedition to Sciacca.

"I cannot consider my expedition fruitless," replied the admiral, "since it has given me the pleasure of this introduction; but the wind," he added, "is so

* This promise was punctually kept for some years, even after the decease of don Giacomo Perollo.—M.S.S.

strongly against us, that we make but little way at present; allow me to hope you will go down into my cabin, and accept such a welcome as the circumstances afford."

The invitation having been accepted, after they had been a short time below, the bassa addressed himself to don Giacomo.—"My intention in entering your port, signor," he said, "was to negotiate with count Luna for the ransom of a Sicilian nobleman, whom fortune has made my captive. I understand he has connexions in Sciacca, and my wish in coming hither was to relieve the anxiety of his friends, and to spare him a useless voyage to Algiers or Tripoli. Summon the baron Solanto," he added, turning to an officer; "he has been our captive for a few days only, having been driven out to sea by the late gales."

The baron here entered the cabin.

"The baron Pandolfina," said Serican, "and these his friends, are perhaps known to you, signor, though they are not the

persons whose services you had expected would redeem you; I have already informed you of the unprovoked aggression which induced me to take down my flag of truce, and forbid all further intercourse with count Luna; it is against my will and former intentions that I detain you still a captive, but on your friend, the count, the blame must rest, and not on me."

"Amongst these my countrymen," said Solanto, "I shall not lack the means of raising whatever ransom you may demand, signor; the character of the baron Pandolfina is not unknown to me, nor mine I think to him, and I may, I trust, rely on his security, if such will be accepted by yourself."

"Willingly, signor," exclaimed Perollo; "tax me as you please."

"I cannot indeed," replied Serican, "accept your liberal offer, baron Pandolfina; I feel deeply indebted to your kindness, and could not in return receive the

sacrifice you thus nobly tender ; the baron di Solanto is yours, free and ransomless."

A pause of some length ensued. Solanto appeared overwhelmed by his feelings.

"Your excellenza overrates my trifling services," said don Giacomo. "I shall consider them as amply repaid should I be permitted to discharge the ransom so justly due to the baron's gallant captors."

"Which I would most gratefully receive," said Solanto, "till circumstances allow me to repay your kindness, signor Perollo."

"No," said Serican, "to the baron Pandolfina you are indebted for your liberty, signor; from henceforth you are free; but I have yet a service to require at his hands," he continued, turning to don Giacomo.

Pandolfina bowed.—"Nay, it is, I hope, no ungrateful task; have I your permission to propose it?"

"The bassa Serican is too good and

gallant a subject to offer any thing derogatory to the duties of my station ; therefore, though ignorant of your wishes, signor, I think I may pledge myself to the performance of them."

Serican rose from the carpet on which he was seated, and left the cabin, which he soon re-entered, leading a female, whose face and figure were shrouded beneath a thick veil.

"For this fair prize," he said, "I am indebted to a train of accidents which she herself will hereafter explain. The signora Landolini is a Sicilian by birth, and has been forced from her home by Tunisian rovers; I have pledged myself to restore her to her friends, and now commit her to your charge, assured that her treatment will be such as her unprotected youth and beauty imperiously demand."

"And those," said the lady, in a tremulous voice, "whose fate connected them with me?"

"They all are free," said Serican; "from the moment of our meeting, lady, I gave

you my assurance that you should find in me a protector and a friend."

"Nobly and generously has your promise been performed," replied the lady; and as she stooped to kiss his hand, tears forced themselves from her eyes, falling from beneath her veil, which she had slightly raised. Serican also seemed deeply affected, and both remained silent for some time to recover their composure.

The baron Solanto anxiously inquired if any of the party could give him information on the subject of his family?

"My son," said don Giacomo, "has the honour of being acquainted with the baroness, and will give you all the information in his power."

"I had the pleasure," said Federico, "of seeing the baroness and donna Costanza di Solanto a few days back; the latter was well, but for her excellenza, I am sorry to say she seemed indisposed, which, however, I learn proceeded from the anxiety of mind your absence, signor, occasioned; the cause being thus happily re-

moved, her illness will now undoubtedly subside; the ladies are at present inmates of the Castel di Luna."

"May I be allowed," asked Solanto, "to dismiss a messenger with the glad tidings of the generous treatment I have met with?"

"The baron Pandolfina," said Serican, "will, I doubt not, signor, readily increase your obligations to him by granting your request."

"It will, perhaps," said Perollo, "be more gratifying to the baron Solanto to allow him personally to sooth the anxious impatience of his family; I will direct my officers to convey him to Luna Castle, and, with the permission of your excellenza, await their return, if my delay is no intrusion here."

"I would that we parted not so soon, as perforce we must," said Serican; "and every delay will be the continuance of a gratification to myself."

When Pandolfina re-entered the cabin, after giving the necessary orders to his

men, he informed the baron that every thing was prepared for his conveyance on shore, and added, "that he hoped the inveterate enmity of count Luna would not prevent him from seeing himself and family at the Casa di Perollo."

"My friendship with the late count Luna," answered Solanto, "is my only connexion with the family, and has induced me to make this visit to his son; but whatever may hereafter be the relationship between us, a powerful sense of gratitude must ever make me anxious to deserve the friendship of the baron Pandolfina;" and turning to the admiral, he added, "with your permission, signor, I shall now hasten to embrace my family; and should the future fortunes of my life enable me to shew my deep remembrance of this eventful day, the name of Serican shall be to all his countrymen a safeguard and protection: one request I yet must make—to add to all your other bounties, may I be permitted to ransom my unfortunate attendants?"

“Mention them not, signor ; I will arrange with the baron Pandolfina every thing respecting them entirely to your satisfaction : and now, farewell, and may the future fortunes of your life be free from such distresses as you now are rescued from !”

Solanto then departed, after renewing his thanks for this additional kindness, and hastened into the barge which awaited him ; its progress, though scudding before the wind, seemed slow to his anxious wishes, and the distance from the Marino to the castle of count Luna an immeasurable way. When arrived at the gateway of the mansion, he paused an instant, and reflected on the danger of too sudden a surprise to the baroness ; and demanding of the servant who ushered him in to see the count only, he learnt that he was engaged with the baron Adriano and another friend.

“Conduct me immediately to the apartment of the count, and announce the

baron Solanto," he said; and to the great astonishment of don Sigismund and his party, interrupted their discussion by his unexpected appearance.

Antonio Margieri, a confidential officer attached to Perollo, had seen the baron Solanto in safety to the abode of count Luna, and from thence had proceeded without delay to the Casa di Perollo, to execute with all possible expedition a private order he had received from his commander, and returned to await his departure from the Turkish galley.

When Solanto had left the vessel, the conversation became general, and Pandolina had an opportunity to discover the great fund of general information and the good sense of the Turkish chief; his air and manners were characteristic of quiet grace and dignity, and his countenance, though marked with traces of his Jewish origin, strikingly handsome and prepossessing; and though evidently aware of his high rank and station, he appeared

eager to shew his sense of the obligation he had received by the visit of Perollo, his frank conduct, and flattering confidence. Europeans in general form their ideas of the Turks from the barbarous customs of the Moors and Algerines; they give them credit for few of the virtues, and none of the elegances of polished life; they consider them as savages but half-redeemed from their wild and wandering habits, bigoted to a sensual faith, and trained up in the grossest ignorance: far different is the case with those Turks whose birth has placed them above the lowest class in society; the treasures of Arabian knowledge, the beauties of its poetry, and the more solid worth of its morals and philosophy, though generally hidden from the Christians of the west, have been to the orientals a mine of literary wealth; their retired habits, and extreme aversion to associate with Europeans and unbelievers, have concealed from us many of their most amiable traits; and for the sensuality of their lives, there are few amongst them

who indulge in all the liberty their law allows them.

Serican, though perhaps not a Turk by descent, yet had been brought up at Constantinople and in the faith of Mahomet, and had imbibed in all things the manners of his native land. His reception of the Perollo party was graceful and easy, and his high-breeding shewed itself more particularly in the facility with which he addressed to each individual the compliments most calculated to please.

Federico had on the first opportunity communicated to the signora Landolini the intelligence of Gaetano's expedition in search of her, and of her father's expected arrival in Sciacca, and removed her desire to set out instantly for Trapani, by assuring her that he would not be long delayed, and that to relieve him from suspense, the baron would without loss of time send a courier to meet him.

Upon the return of Margieri, Pandolina left the cabin to speak with him; he had been ordered to bring on board a large

sum of money, to be divided amongst the crew, the news of which largess soon reached the bassa.

“ I did not expect this treachery, signor,” he said, with a smile, “ or I would have prevented it ; you will not allow me any disinterested means of returning your kindness, but are resolved to purchase the admiration of us all ; the attendants of the lady and of the baron Solanto are few in number, and their freedom a most unworthy offering ; wear then this diamond in memory of Serican’s respect and admiration of these courteous acts, which form the brightest ornament of Christian chivalry.”

“ Your excellenza overpays my poor endeavours,” replied Perollo ; “ vouchsafe to receive this chain, and I will gratefully accept your jewel.”

He then took the chain from his neck, and presenting it to the bassa, received the diamond ring which the commander wore, who also begged to offer presents of arms to the companions of Pandolfina, the ac-

ceptance of which appeared to confer the greatest pleasure on the generous donor.

“It is with regret,” said don Giacomo, “I mention the necessity of parting; we have already trespassed largely on your time as on your liberality, signor; allow me to conduct the signora Landolini on deck.”

Don Giacomo immediately descended, and returning with the lady, requested that his barge might be ordered. The signora approached Serican, as if to repeat her acknowledgments for his protection and kindness. She stood before him for an instant, as if collecting her thoughts; then throwing herself on the deck, embraced his knees, and wept with emotion.

The Turk was agitated in no common degree.—“The duties which humanity demands,” he said, “require not, my child, this vehemence of gratitude. Alla be praised, that during my eventful life, ’midst all the scenes of war and blood which Serican’s uncertain destiny has made him witness, the natural feelings of his

heart have not been warped to apathy against the pleadings of distress! I found thee a wanderer upon the ocean, unprotected and in danger; it required surely no great exertion of virtue or compassion to cherish and relieve thee. Believe that in the self-gratulation which the action brings, I am most amply repaid. You are returning to comfort an unhappy father. The early sufferings which your youth has known, as they have been the means to call your resignation and prudence into action, will, I doubt not, be lessons to all your future days. With pride and joy your father will receive again his child, who has passed through the trials of sorrow and temptation, unbroken by the one, and unsubdued by the other. His days shall close in calm enjoyment, rendered brighter by the hopeless desolation under which he now is groaning; for thee, I trust, are many happy moons in store, and if amongst your joys our short acquaintance is remembered, it will be a comfort to me to reflect, that

with the thoughts of Serican your heart will mingle the recollection of those services he so rejoiced to render. But come, recover from this agitation; I shall deliver you into the hands of one whose kindness will, I know, restore you without delay to your afflicted parent: summon the other prisoners," he continued, as she still silently wept upon his arm.

The men being arrived from below, the bassa addressed them in a few words, telling them that to don Giacomo Perollo they were all indebted for their liberty. They expressed their gratitude, and were ordered by Perollo into one of the boats which had conveyed the refreshments on board, and which had remained by Margieri's order.

"Those who belong to the baron Solanto," said Perollo, "shall be conducted to Luna Castle; the rest shall remain with me; and this fair lady will, I hope, find the Casa di Perollo a happy home, until I have the pleasure of consigning her to her father's arms, who in three days time

will, I hope, be in Sciacca; in the mean time the baroness Pandolfina will be proud to shew her every kindness and attention."

"In giving this treasure to your charge, don Giacomo," said Serican, "I do it in the fullest confidence that she will meet no more the obstacles which those who ought to have been her protectors have thrown in her way, and which compelled her to expose her person to the dangers of the ocean, unprotected and defenceless."

"Of all the favours your excellenza has, with so bounteous a hand, heaped on us," replied Perollo, "this act of trust conveys the most flattering sensations to my heart; the lady shall command the services of all my house, and will, I dare affirm, meet amongst us no lukewarm friends. And now, signor permit me to repeat the assurances of my high esteem and gratitude for the honour of this generous reception; and should at any time the services of a Perollo be useful to you or yours, to beg you will command them to the utmost; I regret to say

farewell, but I have prolonged my visit to the last moment."

"Farewell, don Giacomo Perollo! hereafter you will find that Serican forgets not such attentions as he has received from you; and should it be written in the book of fate that we shall meet again, there is a pleasure in store for me, which I would willingly encounter many difficulties to enjoy. Receive this pledge of my regard," he added, giving the signora to his arms.

"May Heaven repay the debt of Marguerita's gratitude, in many years of happiness to come!" articulated the lady in a faint tone.

"Alla bless thee, my child!" said Serican, as don Giacomo bore her down the vessel's side, and covered his face for a moment with his hand. The rest of the party repeated their respectful adieus, the rowers dipped their oars, and lightly the barge flew over the waves to the white walls of Sciacca.

The signora Landolini sat by don Gia-

como, enveloped in her veil, and apparently still weeping from agitation; the rest of the party were extolling the merits of the Turkish chief; and immediately behind the barge followed the boat which conveyed the rescued prisoners.

The friends and adherents of don Giacomo had heard from Antonio Margieri the success of his expedition, and were assembled on the Marino in crowds to greet his return. The populace, attracted by the same cause, had flocked to witness the spectacle, and the greater part of the city appeared collected to receive them.

When the barge touched the beach, a cry of "Viva il Perollo," was raised by the multitude on the shore, and echoed by those on the Marino above.

As don Giacomo conveyed on shore the prize entrusted to him, she nearly fainted, from the overwhelming joy of returning after such peril to her native land—the land which held the first and only object of her love and veneration, the father from

whom she had been so cruelly, so unexpectedly separated.

Pandolfina almost carried her from the beach to the Marino, and as he ascended the rugged cliff, again the cry of "Viva il Perollo," arose from the delighted multitude; they had scarcely reached the summit, and were waiting to recover the exhausted strength of the lady, when the party who had followed arrived also; their story was soon spread abroad, and again their shouts of joy arose; with difficulty don Giacomo made way through the exulting throng, and bore his interesting charge.

As they passed the statue of the Virgin, near the convent of the Jesuits, Marguerita raised herself from the supporting arm of Perollo, and knelt upon the steps before it; in silent respect the multitude stood or knelt around her; the influence of her devotion appeared to be communicated to all, and "Viva Maria" was mingled with their former shouts.

As the lady rose from the posture of

almost involuntary adoration, she seemed relieved from part of her emotion, and proceeded on the rest of their way to the Casa di Perollo, with more composure, though apparently confused by the joyous numbers who surrounded her. They passed the Castel di Luna, and halting for an instant, don Giacomo ordered the attendants of Solanto immediately to join their master. "Viva don Giacomo!, Viva il Perollo!" was repeated again till the walls of the castle re-echoed with the shout.

On arriving at his own home, Pandolfina gave orders that the castle-gates should be thrown open to all who followed, and such entertainment be provided for them as could be procured at the time. He then conducted the lady to the interior, to present her to the baroness, and as he withdrew, uncovered his head, and respectfully saluted the applauding crowd, with thanks for their kind and welcome approbation. Their transports of joy were redoubled, and every blessing was invoked upon the house of Perollo.

The baroness had been apprized by Pandolfina's message of the arrival of her new guest, and advancing towards the signora Landolini as the baron led her into the apartment, welcomed her by an affectionate embrace. — "The pleasure, lady, which I must feel in congratulating your return from slavery to freedom, will be heightened by the satisfaction of being permitted to shew you every attention in my power."

The young lady gratefully acknowledged the kindness of her hostess.

"Order a messenger," said the baron to an attendant, "to be instantly in readiness for Trapani."

"Thank you, signor; thank you for your kind consideration of my impatience."

Don Giacomo smiled, and said—"Perhaps you had better let me write these tidings to your father."

"I am unable to say much," answered Marguerita; "but with your excellenza's permission, a few lines from my hand

will, I know, be a cordial to his grief, and in some degree excuse me to myself for not being the bearer of the news of my redemption and return."

"I then will narrate the circumstance of your safe arrival here," said the baron, "and enclose whatever you may write. The messenger will soon be ready, and I enter fully into all your anxiety for dispatch, that every unnecessary moment's misery may be spared to the cavalier your father."

The gentleman retired immediately, leaving the lady with the baroness to prepare her note, and recover in some degree the composure, of which the events of the morning had completely deprived her. As soon as the courier was in readiness, she concluded her epistle, which was dispatched with a command to the bearer to use all possible expedition in reaching Trapani. This duty done, she felt her anxiety much relieved, and having endeavoured, at the request of the baroness, to take a

short siesta, she was enabled to join the small party assembled in the evening.

The whole family emulated each other in kind attentions to their guest, assuring her that her father would soon arrive; "but for Pignatelli," said the baron, "I must lament the disappointment he will feel until his return to us, that his gallant expedition should end in a voyage to Tunis and back."

"The winds have so favoured him," said don Paolo, "that he may shortly be expected again in Sciacca."

Marguerita expressed her hopes that his kind exertions in her behalf would not expose him to any personal danger.

To this Federico replied, that every precaution had been taken for his safety, and that judging from himself and from his knowledge of Gaetano, he was sure his friend would consider the satisfaction of seeing her restored to her father, as sufficient recompence for any difficulties he might have to encounter.

The conversation afterwards turned upon the conduct of Serican, who was the object of universal admiration.

"The short interview," observed the signora Landolini to don Giacomo, "which your excellenza had with the bassa, displayed the more shewy features of his character; it required a helpless situation like my own to appreciate his gentler virtues: from the first hour of our meeting till delivered to your charge, his care and tenderness could not have been surpassed even by my dear father, nor his respectful delicacy censured by the severest scrutiny."

"You met the bassa in your way from Malta, I think, signora?"

"I was escaping from a persecution," she replied, "equally unmerited and unexpected."

"Pardon me," said the baron; "I did not wish to lead to any detail of your misfortunes, signora. Let us not recall such uncomfortable events." He then, during the remainder of the evening, directed the

conversation to general subjects, for the which she felt infinitely obliged to him; and the following morning, when in private with the baroness, communicated the particulars of the late events which had thus thrown her on the kindness and hospitality of strangers.

CHAPTER IV.



Helas ! qui peut m'assurer qu'elle me restera toujours ?

GENLIS.

THE cavalier Vincentio Landolini was the youngest son of a Sicilian nobleman, who, with high rank and a large family to support, could do little more for the junior branches, than instil into them good and honourable principles, and put them either into naval and military services, or into convents.

Vincentio was handsome, amiable, and brave ; and in after-life shewed qualities of higher worth than the first years of his being left to his own guidance promised. On a visit to one of his sisters at a convent, he was unfortunate enough to fall desperately in love with a very beautiful girl, who was a boarder there ; and after a

few interviews, his vehement affection and imprudence, and her extreme youth and inexperience, made her consent to elope with him; and Vincentio found he had a wife to take care of, before he knew how to provide for himself. He carried his bride immediately to a cassino he had hired in a very small retired town on Etna, where they remained, contrary to their fears and expectations, unmolested by either family. The baron Landolini, knowing he could do nothing further for his son's advantage, felt that, he had little right to add to his embarrassments; and the lady's father, as she had not formed a connexion which could disgrace his name, made a great merit of his exceeding moderation, in allowing them to quit the world by such quiet means as starvation, for nothing would ever induce him to assist them with a single dollar.

Vincentio, during the first few months of his married life, thought himself the happiest of the happy. In his wife he had beauty and gentleness; the cheer-

fulness of extreme youth, and entire devotion to and dependence on himself: and even afterwards, though she had been taught nothing which could make her a very useful counsellor, or give her much courage to bear difficulties, still she never embittered them to her husband by futile complaints; and often by her affectionate endeavours to cheer him, made him forget all but his happiness in possessing her. Not long however did she live to enjoy or suffer with him; for in the second year of their marriage, in giving birth to a female infant, she expired.

Had they possessed fortune suitable to their rank, and lived in the society they were born in, it is possible that Vincentio might have felt less acutely than he did the misery of losing her. There seemed to him a vacuum in life which nothing could ever fill. She had suffered with and for him, and he was no longer certain there was one who ever lamented his absence, and rejoiced in his return, and who thought belonging to him was alone a

sufficient remuneration for every sacrifice. Suffering tries affection, and if it outlives harassing disappointments, and the fretting detail of perpetual privations and anxieties, it is safely to be trusted.

For some months after the death of his wife, Vincentio could scarcely endure to see his child, or even to remain in his house. But what parent can resist the innocent smile with which opening perception illumines the countenance of an infant? and when time had a little softened the character of his grief, and his person became known to his little Marguerita, her infantine endeavours to attract his notice, and the soft clasping of his fingers by her little hands, taught him he had still something to love.

During the years of mere childhood he was often absent from her for months, on service, or otherwise engaged; but found that each time he felt more interest in returning. And by the time it was necessary to think of her education, he had determined not to part from her, except

when his professional duties rendered it impossible to keep her with him. The "dull realities of life" had had their usual effect on a good disposition; and Vincenzio Landolini was at thirty as rational, as moderate, and as resigned, to whatever the will of Heaven chose to inflict on him, as at twenty he had been violent and impatient of control.

Marguerita, brought up by such a father, was at ten years old more fit to act for herself, than was her mother when she left her convent to become a wife. At that age, Vincenzio felt a father's desire to bestow on his sole remaining treasure some advantages which he could not give her by himself, so far removed from all society as Tre Castagne. He therefore removed with her to the neighbourhood of Trapani, where he took a small house, in a very retired situation near the sea. Himself, his daughter, and two or three old servants, formed the whole establishment, and were as much as his means could provide for.

Marguerita had always promised to be as lovely in person as had been her unhappy mother; and at fifteen, it certainly did not require a father's partiality to think her surpassingly captivating. What little society she had seen since she came into the neighbourhood of Trapani (and before she had seen none) was of the first order; for besides don Vincentio's naturally-good taste, he felt an allowable pride in taking all possible care that his own imprudence should not tempt out of their rank any of his name and race; and therefore it was, that Marguerita had perhaps more strict ideas on the subject of birth and family, than many who, from living where these advantages are never questioned, might be supposed to prize them more highly.

Women of that day were not in general addicted to reading, but Landolini in his retirement had been forced to books for society, consolation, and amusement; and his daughter, naturally imitating the only person who interested her, and having

no other means of getting rid of her time, read also; whilst her father's library not being very extensive, she read its contents again and again, till she could not help understanding them; and the books which in retirement could engage the attention of a sensible and well-principled man, could hardly fail to benefit a woman. Marguerita therefore was like few young ladies of her age. She had seen nothing of the world and its manners, yet still, by the help of a clear, cool understanding, and her father's religious and reasonable precepts, was more fit to encounter its varieties of storms and calms, than many who have been brought up in the midst of them. Such a creature was necessarily an object almost of adoration to her father; he had educated her himself, and every day gloried more in his success. Sometimes indeed he could not help asking himself what would be her lot should he be taken from her? but he looked at her, and was sure she would marry well. He felt

certain that beauty would never be a misfortune to her, as it had been to her mother; and besides, in Catholic countries, convents offer at all times safe and honourable asylums to unprotected females. He took her sometimes to Trapani, where he had a few friends, whose praises and admiration of his child delighted him; but he always felt happy to bring her home again; she was of too great value to be quite rational about.

Time rolled on quietly enough; don Vincentio had few cares, and no calamities; and all his vivid feelings were centered in his daughter, now just seventeen.

One morning he received a message, which made it necessary for him to go to Trapani; and when he ordered his horses, Marguerita said—"Take me with you, dear father; I have not been out for an age."

"No, my love, you have not; but I cannot take you to-day, for it is possible I may not return this evening, and I shall

be engaged all day ; and you know, when you are from home, I do not like to leave you to the care of others."

"Then I must e'en stay, and make old Maria as agreeable and enlivening as I can."

"I will return to-night, if possible ; but certainly to-morrow. Farewell for a few hours, my dear child."

After her father's departure, Marguerita walked to a convent some little way from home, and returning along the beach, remarked a light sailing vessel hovering about the coast.

"I wonder what that vessel is, Maria ?" she said ; "for if those on board wish to land, I should think the wind is fair enough."

"Yes, signora ; but I don't suppose they do at present ; very likely they are corsairs, and waiting till evening to catch up any little vessels coming into port."

During the rest of the day, Marguerita employed herself with her books, her embroidery, and her birds ; and was say-

ing to her attendant at night, that it would be useless to sit up longer for her father, as it was much beyond his usual hour of returning, when they heard a violent noise at the entrance of the house, like scuffling and altercation, and almost immediately a frightful shriek and the fall of some heavy weight. Maria stood speechless and motionless; Marguerita flew to the door to attempt securing it; but the whole alarm was so rapid, that she had scarcely reached it, when it was pushed open with such force as almost to throw her down; she caught by the nearest piece of furniture; and pale, breathless, and almost lifeless with terror, saw three ferocious-looking ruffians enter the room. They stared around them, apparently very much disappointed at the appearance of the apartment, which presented nothing of value; and began to utter, in their lingua Franca jargon, furious imprecations against the owner and his poverty, when some one, of seemingly-higher rank, entered and asked what they had done?

"Why nothing, captain; the place contains nothing worth the trouble of quieting yon fool outside there."

The captain surveyed the room; and his eyes resting on Marguerita, he said—
"Why here seems something worth taking, if it is alive."

As he approached to lay hold on her, she screamed and fled, as if for protection, to the nearly-lifeless Maria. The ruffian knew she could not escape, and after surveying her a moment with cool barbarous determination, ordered her on board the shallop, as if she had been a bale of merchandize.

Horror now gave her words, and in agony not to be described or imagined, she implored to be left. "My father will ransom me with all he has! but if you know what pity is, do not inflict on him the torment of missing me!"

They heard her with the coldest indifference, and muffling a large cloak around her, spite of struggles, prayers, and shrieks, bore her to the shore.

“It is a dark night,” said one of the wretches; “make a funeral pile for old Cerberus there; it will light us on board.”

The order was obeyed; but Marguerita, on being taken from the house, lost all consciousness of her situation, and remained so for some time. When she recovered her recollection, she found herself lying in the cloak; the noise over her head, the darkness and the pains in her limbs, from her previous fright and struggles, were altogether so overwhelming, that she was near relapsing again into insensibility, when a man entered the cabin with a lamp and a cup. He approached her, lifted her up, and poured some wine down her throat, waited a moment or two to see that it revived her, and looking satisfied that death would not rob them of their prey at present, left the unhappy girl to darkness and her own reflections. She was now sufficiently recovered to remember what had befallen her. With memory and thought came terror, far, far beyond any thing she had known or fan-

cied; but when she thought of her father and his despair, she forgot herself, and gave way to an agony of tears.

Daybreak brought even to her some relief; she could look from the little cabin window, and hoping to see some friendly sail, forgot for a moment the impossibility of making any attempt to profit by it. She tried to think of what must be her probable fate; of what she ought to do and might say to induce the pirates to allow her father to ransom her. But still all her thoughts were but excursions from one settled idea of intense misery, and always ended in the same point—her father, and his cheerless desolation. She had never seen him otherwise than placid and dignified, of course she could not recollect his grief at her mother's death; and don Vincentio had been too deeply schooled in adversity, to be discomposed by trivial annoyances. Those who have known real afflictions, are alone able to give their due insignificance to trifles; and

that Marguerita had never seen her father under the influence of any violent feeling, added to her alarm by the uncertainty of how he might be affected by it. He was still a young man, but anxiety had undermined his health, and he seemed more than ten years older than he really was. Should he sink under this blow, and leave her in the world alone! for so she thought must those feel who are connected by no tie of affection with any fellow-creature.

The idea was too terrible, and it was almost a relief to see the dark-countenanced being who attended with her food. She knew that to injure her health would not be to increase her powers of acting and thinking for herself, should occasion offer; and therefore, though she felt not much appetite, and the viands were not very tempting, she forced herself to eat as was requisite, to support her strength and spirits.

When next any one entered the cabin,

she ventured to inquire whither they were bound? and was answered in one word, Tunis.

“Then slavery,” she involuntarily exclaimed, “is to be my bitter portion.”

“Yes,” said the man, and departed.

Without employment of any kind, pent up in her miserable prison, the day seemed an age of suffering; and when night again came, she wrapped herself up in her cloak, and laid down on her hard couch, determined to seek for a few hours forgetfulness, and thankful to Providence that the day had worn away in only passive suffering; she thought of her distant and loved father, and wept herself to repose. Weariness of mind and body made her sleep soundly till morning, and she awoke refreshed; but was almost immediately sensible of having been roused by a great increase of noise over her head; and a moment after, the discharge of cannon shook the vessel till it seemed separating, and nearly deprived poor Marguerita of her

senses. The firing became tremendous to her, and with little intermission.

“Good Heaven,” she thought, “for what am I reserved !” and in that hour of dismay and loneliness, felt the support of the pure faith her father had inculcated, and relied on Providence with the confidence of youthful belief and innocence. Seated on the floor, in a corner of the cabin, with her hands now lifted to heaven, and now pressed to her head, to deaden the distracting noise, she tried to prepare for the destruction of the shallop, or her own liberation, with resignation to Him who cannot err.

At last the heavy firing ceased altogether, and from the violent noise of persons treading heavily and falling, with the clashing of arms on deck, she imagined the vessel was boarded. The struggle seemed still obstinate, and the torment of suspense to the lonely listener, whilst it lasted, was agonizing beyond all description.

At length it subsided almost entirely ; she heard steps approaching, and held her breath in anxiety at the result. There was scarcely time to think, however, before the door opened, and one appeared, very unlike the rude and uncouth figures which the day before had presented to her view. It was a young man of gay and prepossessing appearance, who seemed in high glee at the victory.

Marguerita's spirits had been so overstrained, that she could only throw herself on her knees, and clasp her hands in supplication. The youth's astonishment seemed for a moment to overpower all his faculties ; but it was only for a moment. He raised the trembling girl, and supporting her, begged to know by what accident she came there ? In as few words as possible she explained this ; and asked in return, into whose power she was now thrown ?

“ You are now, lady, in the power of those who are most bound to protect all others from oppression ; I mean the

knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Don Giuglio, our commander, is slightly wounded, and cannot, I fear, come to you. Will you allow me to conduct you to him?"

Marguerita was so happy to leave her prison, that she did not hesitate a moment about following her young conductor; and when she came on deck, she was too confused to notice distinctly the various objects around her of dead and dying, which would at another time have appalled her senses. She was soon presented to don Giuglio, a strikingly-handsome man, but looking very faint from pain and loss of blood, and supported by those around him.

"See, here is a prize we have rescued from the corsair, sir. What a lucky fellow I was to find her! I am determined henceforth to search all ships, the very first moment of boarding them."

"Hush, Sforza! be quiet for once; do you not see the commander is faint, and the lady frightened?—Sir," said the same

LUNA AND PEROLLO.

officer to the captain, "the boat is now ready; perhaps the lady had better go on board the galley with you; there is no place here fit for her."

The captain signified his acquiescence, and was lowered into the boat, followed by Marguerita. They were soon at the galley's side; but with the additional fatigue of being raised into it and taken to his cabin, don Giuglio fainted. Marguerita was placed in a little cabin by herself, and some refreshment given her, which she very much needed. She now began confidently to hope to be restored to her father; and with all the ardour of extreme youth, had calculated how long she might be detained in Malta, and how soon reach Trapani, where meet her father, and how happy she should be.

In such pleasing reveries she had passed several hours, when she received a message from don Giuglio d'Aguilar, requesting to see her, with which she immediately complied. She found don Giuglio on a

couch, looking tolerably free from pain.

He smiled as she approached, and said—

“ I must trust to my condition to make my apologies, signora, both for sending for you now, and for the little attention I paid you on our first introduction.”

“ No apologies can be requisite to me, signor; to you, perhaps,” she said, “ I ought to pay some compliments on your victory, and thanks for my rescue; but,” she added, blushing, “ I have been little in the world, and my father always told me, that all knights of St. John were humane, and that combat and victory are with them synonymous.”

“ Pray sit near me, and tell me who is the happy father, whose lessons of exquisite flattery you have so well remembered.”

“ My father is the chevalier Vincentio Landolini; in his absence the corsairs brought me from the neighbourhood of Trapani.”

“ Thither then, I suppose, signora, you wish to return. I was desirous, as we are

so near Malta, to know before our landing, what would most contribute to your comfort?"

"To be sent instantly to suspend the anxiety my poor father must feel."

"I am sorry not to be able to take you immediately home; but to go into a Sicilian port would be against my present instructions; therefore we must go to Malta with the prize. But I am sure the grand master's kindness of heart would induce him, if there was no vessel bound for Sicily, to equip one on purpose, rather than detain you under such circumstances."

Marguerita looked the thanks which she could not utter for these encouraging assurances; and D'Aguilar thought he had never seen any creature so lovely.

A few hours sail brought them into the harbour, under the walls of fort St. Angelo. The illustrious La Valetta had not yet immortalized the scene. The white rocks were unconscious of the majestic and impregnable fortifications, which were soon

to defy the united forces of the Ottoman empire.

Driven from Rhodes, the grand master, L'isle d'Adam, with several of his valiant friends, were anxiously expecting the decision of the emperor, who, ashamed of having deserted the champions of Christianity in their utmost need, had promised them some spot on his extensive dominions, where they might again rear their bannered cross, and redress their wrongs, and from whence they might pour their vengeance on the empire of the infidels, and revenge their martyred brethren, who fell amidst the ruins of their Rhodian possessions. It was not yet definitively settled ; but the intention of Charles to bestow the sovereignty of Malta on the brotherhood was publicly declared ; and under this assurance, many of them had retired thither with the remnant of their galleys, and what had been preserved from the wreck of their ancient home. The keys of the castle they had so long and so

gloriously defended, had been borne away by the grand master, and were destined as memorials of their eventful retreat. To this day they decorate the splendid walls of St. Giovanni's church in La Valletta.

Even the white rocks which embosom the bay, and reflected back the dazzling radiance of the sun, now had charms for Marguerita. Her escape from the anticipated horrors of Tunisian slavery, and the reunion with her father, to which she now looked forward with confidence and intense delight, had given an elasticity to her spirits, the stronger from her recent state of hopeless misery.

Whatever plan her deliverer proposed, seemed to her the only one she ought to follow ; and when he offered to place her with his sister, during the short time which must necessarily elapse before her return to Sicily, he appeared to be adding to an already-boundless debt of gratitude. Her thanks were animated and enthusiastic, bursting forth from the timidity with

which she had at first been overpowered, in language refined and elegant; her birth and education were stamped on every word and action; whilst don Giuglio gazed in admiration and delight, and lamented his present helplessness the more, as it prevented his taking personal charge of his beautiful protégée in landing.

As the knights had no establishment of their own, he had sent ashore immediately for permission from the grand master to remain during his illness at the house of a widowed sister. The request had been granted, and he was conveyed thither in a litter, Marguerita following, escorted by Enrico Sforza, whose spirits were about on a par with her own; but she nevertheless felt no small share of embarrassment and alarm, at being thus left to the humanity of strangers, and for the first time to her own guidance.

Arrived at the house of the marchesa Villagiusta, she was made as easy as the most perfect hospitality and polished elegance of manners on the part of her hos-

tess could make her. The marchesa was a few years older than D'Aguilar, and hardly handsome enough to be taken for his sister, but still resembling him in countenance and manners; she seemed anxious beyond measure about his wound, and apologized to Marguerita for paying all her attention at first to him; "but indeed," she said, "I have been so long away from my family, that his coming is a delight I hardly know how to enjoy peaceably."

A few hours rest was absolutely necessary to don Giuglio, after the fatigue of landing; and to the marchesa Marguerita explained at length the occasion of her trespassing on her hospitality, and inquired how soon she was likely to get a conveyance to Sicily, as every hour made her absence more painful to her, both on her own account and that of her father.

"The wind is so directly against anything going to Sicily," said the marchesa, "that till it changes, I can give you no

idea ; but I imagine the moment it is fair, some means of sending you safely may be arranged ; in the mean time, as no effort of yours can change the direction in which it blows, pray be as happy as you can ; you must help me to amuse and keep up my brother's spirits, who, unless he is very much altered of late, will not be very patient under confinement."

Numerous visitors called in the course of the afternoon to pay their compliments to the marchesa, to inquire after signor d'Aguilar ; and perhaps a few might be curious to see the beautiful captive he had rescued from the Tunisian.

The marchesa's house was evidently the resort of all the gayest society in Malta, but a very small proportion were ladies ; and that certainly not the one best liked by the mistress of the house, who openly professed a preference for the conversation of gentlemen, and affected to treat as silly prejudices the opinions of those who ventured to intimate that a young and rich

widow had better live more among her own sex, and the grave rather than the gay of the other.

“ I had quite enough of formality, age, and decorum, in the marchesa Villagiusta,” she always said ; “ and as I married him to please my father by being rich, it would be very hard indeed if I might not spend the fortune thus acquired, in the way I like best. There is no danger now of my committing any great folly, since I was so reasonable at sixteen.”

It would have been very useless to tell the lively marchesa, that habits of obedience may be the cause of acting more prudently under a father’s eye at sixteen, than by our own guidance at thirty. According to her determination to do as she liked, so she lived. No one, as she herself asserted, could say any harm of her. She might have gone further perhaps; few thought any. She was publicly well received everywhere, and the idol of all those who preferred the splendour of her style of living, the fascination of her man-

ners, and the easy independence of her opinions, to the more safe but less attractive society of those graver matrons, who were but little seen in her circles. On the whole, she was by no means the person to whom the prudent affection of Vincentio Landolini would have entrusted his beautiful child.

In the evening, the marchesa very unceremoniously dismissed her guests, saying, she must pass an hour or two with her brother. On entering his apartment, they found him feverish, and out of spirits.

"The signora Landolini has been too captivating to allow you to think of me," he said; "however, thank you for bringing her at all."

"I dare say we should have found each other very captivating indeed by this time, if we had been indulging in a *tête-à-tête* ever since we left you; but we have been much better employed, in receiving the adoration of twenty cavaliers; so pray be very agreeable and grateful, my dear

brother, to recompense us for leaving them."

"And does the signora Landolini think the adoration of the crowd so alluring?" asked Giuglio, looking with an earnestness of delight he took little care to conceal on the surprised Marguerita, who, a good deal discomposed by a species of admiration so entirely new to her, replied—"That she had too little knowledge of the pleasure derived from a numerous society, to form any distinct idea of its value."

"I do not wonder that the cavalier Landolini should guard you carefully. I think, were I possessed of such a gem, I should be jealous of every one who beheld it, lest they should estimate its value as highly as myself."

"It is fortunate then, my dear Giuglio," said the marchesa, "for some fair dame, that your vows put it out of your power to play the tyrant."

"Why, Violante, is not the devotion and love of one unchanging heart, better

than the empty admiration of the multitude?"

"Yes, I suppose it might be; but somehow or other, hearts are terribly apt to change; and if the price I was to pay for such a lover-husband was to be having him for my gaoler, I should heartily wish him in a comfortable state of indifference."

"Are such your opinions, signora?" said Giuglio, looking at Marguerita.

"I have scarcely an opinion on the subject, signor; but I should suppose the approbation of her husband very essential to the happiness of a female; and that treating a wife like a suspected prisoner, was a bad way of gaining her affection."

"Oh, but you are taking my expressions in a light I did not quite intend; affection naturally indulges its object to its utmost power."

"Yes, signor, rational affection; but that is inconsistent with jealousy; because it could not exist without confidence and respect."

"Common sense, my dear Giuglio,"

said his sister, laughing, " makes sad havock with your romance."

" I hope the wind will change by to-morrow," said Marguerita, looking from the window ; " if my father did but know of my safety, I should not be so anxious."

" In a few hours," said D'Aguilar, " are you so impatient to leave us?"

" If I were not, signor, I should be quite unworthy the kindness of the marchesa and yourself."

To change the subject, and amuse her guest and the invalid, donna Violante sent for her lute, and sang to it, till it was time to separate for the night, which each was glad to do. The marchesa, notwithstanding her affection for her brother, and her good humour towards her young protégée, might have passed an evening more to her taste.

Marguerita was thoroughly tired of the various exertions her spirits had supported during the day ; and Giuglio was most blamably indulging his admiration for her,

to a degree that already made every thing else irksome to him.

Little accustomed at any time to set bounds to his feelings, he had become a knight of St. John in a fit of despair, because some one he had fancied himself everlastingly in love with, had married another, and his father, count d'Aguilar, felt greatly relieved by his so doing, and considered him tolerably safe from any additional folly of the sort, and admirably provided for, as he had three brothers older than himself.

Giuglio however soon forgot his love, in the variety of scenes in which his new profession threw him; and poor Marguerita seemed likely to be the innocent cause of making him heartily repent his vows.

The next morning she found the wind still strong against all departures; and day after day for a fortnight brought the same disappointment. Poor Marguerita tried to bear it patiently, and to be cheerful

under her anxiety ; but her efforts were often vain, and she retired to give relief to her distress by tears. She was, as we have said, rational in an uncommon degree for her age ; but she was only seventeen ; and a more perplexing situation to a young girl can hardly be imagined than she was placed in ; away even from the only country she had ever known, without any guide, and obliged to entreat strangers for protection, and even the very means of subsistence, and that too under circumstances which made receiving them still more distressing.

The unthinking and impetuous Giuglio was in a few days so madly in love, that even her extreme modesty and dignified manners could not prevent his openly expressing it on every occasion, and persecuting her with the most passionate lamentations on his own thralldom. Whilst he was confined to a couch, she could sometimes avoid him ; but to add to her distress, he was soon able to move about the

house, and then she could scarcely ever escape from his pursuit, and glowing expressions of delight at her presence.

Accustomed to consider him as her preserver from slavery, she yielded to an innocent desire to testify her gratitude, by every exertion in her power to amuse and relieve the invalid, whose suffering she almost felt was for herself, without ever dreaming that she was encouraging a frantic degree of affection in D'Aguilar for her, and a tenderness in herself likely at least not to add to her happiness.

One evening she had been singing by his couch, and when she laid down her lute, and looked towards him, his eyes were fixed on her with an expression of such ardent love, that she sat confused and silent. Giuglio had carried her hand to his lips before she could think, and, covered with blushes, she rose to depart; when an old knight who stood by, but quite unthought of by either party, said in a grave voice—"My young friend, you

are making your vows into heavier chains than you rescued that too beautiful creature from ; beware in time !”

Marguerita felt faint and sick for a moment ; but she had not erred wilfully, and the warning was sufficient ; she was ashamed of the few tears that would fall on her cheeks ; but from that moment the illusion was past, and she gave no farther encouragement to the more culpable D’Aguilar.

In a few days he was well enough to bear an increase of society ; and the marchesa received her evening guests in his apartment ; by this means he could judge of Marguerita in another light, than either a captive whom his bravery had set free, or a female employed where woman’s gentle and unassuming talents are apt to be most appreciated, in soothing the irritation of suffering, or enlivening the weariness of confinement.

In polished and cheerful society she attracted, without the slightest effort on her part, the attention of all. Her naturally-

good understanding, cleared of prejudice, and cultivated by her father, seemed more than commonly great; while her strikingly noble and elegant manners were sure to charm those who could not judge of her mind. The sense of pleasing gave new animation to her beauty, and Giuglio gazed and listened, till he forgot all the world besides.

It was in vain she argued on the folly of his love, and was indignant at his daring to express it. He agreed to all she advanced, and loved her the more for her reason and her anger. Every day made her feel her situation more irksome and more improper. She felt herself insulted by his professions, and distressed by the air of hopeless wretchedness he assumed when compelled to silence. Even in company she could not shake off his persecuting attention; for it is easy to make a young woman seem so entirely the property of one person, that no one else ventures to pay her the least attention.

She complained at last to the marchesa,

who only laughed, and told her it was a matter of course for Giuglio to be in love with a beautiful girl he had rescued from slavery; and that to be in love was, with such violent and romantic people as him, to be completely disagreeable; that he knew very well, if he chose to be reasonable for a moment, that his father would use all the influence he possessed to prevent his procuring a dispensation from his vows, as he considered them the only safeguard his family had over his furious and ungovernable passions.—“ My dear young friend,” she continued, “ pray listen to his vagaries quietly; it is the only way to keep him in any sort of bounds whilst you are here. And when you are gone, he will in course be violently miserable for a time, then interestingly melancholy, and then recover. So pray do not let him make you uneasy, and this adverse wind cannot last much longer.”

Notwithstanding the light way in which donna Violante treated the matter, Marguerita felt that it was not right, and that

she ought to be protected from such a continued outrage to her delicacy. Her respect for her gay hostess declined in consequence, and she determined, as soon as the wind was fair, to allow nothing to detain her a day longer in Malta.

CHAPTER V.
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*La douleur qui consume n'éclate pas.*      GENLIS.

AFTER more than a fortnight of continued disappointment, from the wind remaining in the same quarter, Marguerita had the happiness to perceive, on rising in the morning, that it had changed; in an instant she forgot all the delay, and was in imagination, already on her way to Sicily.

She was met by the marchesa with a cheerful smile of congratulation, and gay complaints that the very wind conspired against her pleasure, by setting free her lovely captive; "and I fear," she added, "when you reach your father, your remembrance of me can be only connected with the anxiety you have constantly suffered, from the beginning of our acquaintance, till, I was going to say, the end;



but I will hope, as you are young, and I am not very old, we shall meet again. But hush ! here comes Giuglio ; put off, I conjure you, a little of that brilliant animation at the prospect of leaving him, or we shall be favoured with a scene in his deepest style of tragedy.—Now, my dear brother,” she said, as he entered, “ we must exert ourselves to perform an act of most romantic self-denial, for we must hasten from us our charming friend ; by the regret we shall feel at parting from her, we may imagine how dreadful her father’s anxiety must be in his uncertainty at her fate.”

Marguerita’s feelings were, by the hope of seeing her father, by Giuglio’s air of wretchedness, and the marchesa’s kindness of manner, roused to such a state of agitation, as made it impossible for her to articulate ; and she hid her face on the shoulder of the marchesa, who stood with one arm round the waist of her protégée, while she used the other in animated gestures to illustrate her discourse.

Giuglio had thrown himself on a couch without speaking; the most violent feeling seemed to shake his whole frame; and at last, clasping his hands to his head, as if his senses were forsaking him, he said—  
“If she will condemn me to madness by going, she must, but I cannot send her.”

Marguerita lifted up her head, and replied—“Surely, signor, you will not forfeit the word of honour you pledged to send me in safety to my father; surely you will not emulate the inhumanity of the pirate, who tore me from him! you would not, you dare not, disgrace your order by detaining me an instant! I have trusted, notwithstanding your ungenerous persecution on a subject upon which you especially ought to have been silent, that when the time did come for acting, you would act honourably.”

“And did you trust me? did you place confidence in me? I will not disappoint you. I will not give you cause to hate me. I will go instantly and see what is

to be done, lest I again lose the power of acting as I ought."

For some hours Giuglio did not return, and when he did, the information he brought was any thing but satisfactory; no vessel of any sort would sail for Sicily for two or three days; the grand master was prevented, by reasons quite incomprehensible to poor Marguerita, from sending a galley on purpose; and, in short, there appeared no remedy, and she must wait a few days, or perhaps even a week. Longer it could not be, Giuglio said, and he had secured her a passage in the very first conveyance.

In proportion as she had been happy a few hours before, she was now miserable, and for some time neither attempted to restrain or conceal her tears. The marchesa and her brother said every thing they could think most likely to console her; and while, on the one hand, the marchesa entreated her not to let her spirits sink at the delay of a few days only, Giuglio implored that she would not destroy

the only remaining hours of tolerable existence he expected ever to know, by letting him see her unhappy.

A week passed, and another, and another ; each two or three days brought some delay, and Marguerita found herself nearly as much a prisoner as on board the Tunisian shallop ; it was true, she saw many visitors at the house of the marchesa ; but if any person seemed likely to converse with her beyond the compliments of the day, the persecuting and intolerable attentions of Giuglio immediately sent them away ; and she never went out but with him at her side.

The marchesa had no idea of any body's feelings and delicacy being wounded by the ardent love of a very handsome man of family, and was only restrained by politeness from laughing at her distress ; her own opinions of female propriety were far from being so strict as to see the necessity of interfering in the cause of the persecuted damsel, and though she must have

more than suspected, still she never chose to know positively, that in her brother's will alone existed the causes of delay ; and if she ever troubled herself to think about the matter, it did not appear to her that a week or two, more or less, could be of consequence to torment a person whose name was all she knew of him, and therefore she was gay and charming as ever, though accessory to the direct misery of others.

One morning, to her constant question of—"Can I not go to-day?" the marchesa answered—"If the report I hear is true, all the galleys in the grand master's possession could not set you safely on the Sicilian shores at present."

"What is that, signora?"

"Why that Serican, the famous Turkish admiral, of whom you have heard such terrific tales, under the name of Il Giudeo, now keeps these seas with nearly thirty sail, and nothing can stir in or out the port whilst this blockade lasts."

Marguerita crossed her arms tightly on



her bosom to repress the agony she felt, and left the apartment. On reaching her own chamber, she walked up and down for some time, unable even to think. At length becoming more composed, she sat down to endeavour to determine what she ought to do; to remain longer in her present situation she knew was at all events wrong, and therefore determined not to do so; and yet she thought, "if this report is really true, I have waited too long to venture now; surely the marchesa cannot have lent herself to assist her brother's disgraceful frenzy in detaining me." She knew that to speak to any of the guests would be difficult, and she was uncertain that any of them would interest themselves for her, if she could find an opportunity; to attempt corrupting the servants was dangerous, and besides, her early habits of honour and dignity rendered the idea disagreeable to her: the only person whom she ever saw, and to whom she felt able to apply, was the venerable Vauvilliers, the old knight who had so oppor-

• tunely cautioned her against the allurements of Giuglio, and had at all times shewed an interest in her welfare; could she but find an occasion to communicate her distressing situation to him, she felt convinced that he would at least advise her how to proceed.

To effect this purpose, she wrote on a slip of paper, " Find an opportunity for me to speak to you unheard by any but yourself;" and concealing it about her person, anxiously waited for a day or two before the cavalier made his appearance. Giuglio, as usual, kept by her so immoveably, that she began to despair of escaping his notice for a moment, when fortunately a messenger arrived from the grand master, requiring his immediate attendance.

D'Aguilar did not appear very much pleased at the summons, which however he was obliged to obey, and endeavoured in vain to persuade Vauvilliers to accompany him.

After his departure more visitors arrived, and the knight approached to talk

with Marguerita, who, when she saw the marchesa fully engaged, said in a low voice, that she had something she wished to ask him, if he could find an opportunity unobserved by the party. This he soon did, and she inquired if it was true that the Turkish admiral blockaded the harbour?

“Perfectly so, signora,” he replied.

“Then Heaven must be my protection,” she exclaimed, “for here I cannot stay. I am placed in a most embarrassing situation, and slight as is my acquaintance with you, signor, you are the only person on whom I can rely, or of whom I can venture to ask a favour. Will you?—but first tell me, has any vessel sailed for Sicily since I came here?”

“Numbers; and strange have I thought it that you availed yourself of none of them to return.”

“You might wonder, indeed,” she said; “I have been most unhandsomely detained, and deceived by the manœuvres of don Giuglio d’Aguilar, and the careless indifference of the marchesa Villagiusta.

Longer, I again repeat, I ought not, I must not remain here; will you aid me to escape?"

"I will certainly do every thing in my power; but you will tell me how you wish I shall act; shall I state the case to the grand master, or remonstrate privately with D'Aguilar upon the inhumanity and impropriety of his conduct?"

"Remonstrances," replied Marguerita, "would, I fear, only produce new stratagems to detain me; and I would not for the world injure either don Giuglio or his sister, or involve him in any thing unpleasant with the grand master; though I ~~must escape from them now, I can never~~ forget the kindness I have really received from them; under these circumstances, the more quietly we act the better."

Vauvilliers still urged the plan he had at first proposed, as the most rational and practicable.—If D'Aguilar, he said, after his remonstrances, still detained her under any pretext whatever, it would be proper to apply to the grand master, which might

be done in such a manner as not to produce any unpleasant effect to her friends.

Marguerita was however not to be convinced, and persisted in wishing to escape in secret from her present captivity.

“But surely, my child, you will wait patiently till Serican leaves the neighbourhood,” said the knight.

“That may be weeks.”

“It may certainly, but the hazard will be great; and if you are taken?”

“Signor Vauvilliers, I must risk anything; I have waited so long in hopes of going safely, that I may not contemplate weeks more.” Her agitation was uncontrollable, and she added—“It is dreadful to mention such a possibility; but to those who daily see the persecution I suffer from don Giuglio, my character must seem doubtful; and were my father’s name through me to meet reproach, I could never see him more; the chance of slavery, or of death, is preferable; for pity’s sake then aid me in escaping.”

Vauvilliers considered for a moment;



the repugnance of Marguerita to allow him to apply to the superior power was not to be overcome, and he feared she might be driven to ask aid from others who would not be so faithful to her confidence.—“ If I can find any body,” he said at length, “ venturous enough to put to sea in the night, and endeavour to pass in the dark through the Turkish fleet, dare you accompany them? and can you escape from this house unperceived?”

“ For my own resolution I can answer: the window of my apartment is not too high to escape from, and any one who would undertake the enterprise, my father would reward to the utmost of his ability. And now we had better separate, for fear of observation; as soon as you have any information, write it to me, and I will take care to find you the means of giving me the paper.”

In a few days Vauvilliers called again at the marchesa's. Giuglio was in the room, and, as usual, kept so close to Marguerita, as to render it impossible for her

to exchange a whisper with any one unheard by himself, when Enrico Sforza, one of the young officers belonging to the galley under the command of D'Aguilar, arrived.

"The grand master," he said, "will require your attendance this evening, and we shall, I hope, be soon again in search of adventures, signor. Serican cannot long keep the seas, and every one knows your impatience to be in action."

"Then every one knows more than I do," said D'Aguilar; "I abhor the idea of motion, and would willingly resign any command, however tempting, which could be offered me."

"How unfortunate!" said Sforza; "for it was only this morning, I understand, that great interest was made to induce the grand master to send you to Barcelona, and from thence to Madrid, to bring back the emperor's concession of this island to the order; you will perhaps be delayed some months in Madrid; but your newly-

acquired taste for repose and inaction will there be indulged to its utmost."

"The grand master might surely find some messenger better fitted to the office," observed D'Aguilar.

"So thought several ill-disposed persons," said Sforza; "but your friends, signor, have triumphed, and I understand you will be summoned to-night to receive your first instructions."

D'Aguilar seemed much out of humour, and being entirely off his guard, Vauvilliers took an opportunity, during the conversation, to desire Marguerita to be in her balcony alone, at the time the rosario sounded on that evening. To this she could only give a silent assent, and although she anxiously wished another moment's conversation, the vigilance of Giuglio rendered it impossible.

The day seemed longer even than any Marguerita had yet known in Malta; she watched the course of the sun with indescribable impatience. Don Giuglio had

been summoned to attend the council, and the marchesa had an appointment at Civita Vecchia, a few miles distant, from which it was with the utmost difficulty that she excused her guest from accompanying her; but at length her hostess was persuaded to set forth without her, and Marguerita withdrew to her apartment, to wait for the communication of Vauvilliers.

Heavily did the time roll on, as she sat with her eyes intently fixed on the distant ocean, which, like a chain around her, had kept her from relieving her father's anxious and despairing misery. What would be the event of her interview this evening, she knew not, but hoped that some plan had been devised by which she might escape from her present persecution and distress.

As she thought on the circumstances in which she was placed, she felt inspired with a resolution which would enable her to brave every danger, with a prospect of deliverance from thralldom. But when

she first heard the voice of the cavalier beneath her window, and the bells from the neighbouring churches announced the long-expected moment, she became incapable of either speech or action, and unable to move from her chair. Again she heard herself named in a gentle tone, and by a violent exertion hastened into the balcony.

“ I have but a desperate remedy to offer, lady,” said Vauvilliers ; “ and can scarcely think that you will hazard it.”

“ Any thing,” replied Marguerita, “ that my strength can enable me to bear, I shall gladly undertake ; tell me what it is ?”

“ The only vessels which leave the island are small scampavias, which occasionally endeavour to communicate with Cape Passaro ; one sails, I understand, to-night, and I am perfectly prepared to attend you ; but surely it will be better to wait some more favourable opportunity, and claim the protection of the grand master.”

“ Your kind and generous offer, signor,



I must decline; but it must claim my eternal gratitude; it would be a useless trouble, and no safeguard to me from the dangers of the ocean. Heaven will be my guide and my protection, and safely confiding in such support, I would not lose the present time, which offers unusual facilities; the marchesa is at Civita Vecchia, and don Giuglio from home—let me instantly escape.”

“Alone and unattended, my child, I cannot let you go; it would be a breach of every law of humanity, a violation of every injunction of our order; my life shall gladly be resigned in your service, but I cannot abandon you, on the wide seas, to no other protection than the boatmen who navigate the frail bark in which we shall be obliged to venture.”

Marguerita still persisted in declining his offered attendance, urging its inutility, and her repugnance to make any one the companion of her flight; but it was in vain, Vauvilliers refused to aid in the fulfilment of her wishes, unless she accepted his escort, and

was preparing to depart, when her earnest supplication and tears induced him to remain; and finally, by her protestations that she would unassisted endeavour to persuade some boatmen to convey her over, he was induced to give his most reluctant consent that she should depart without him; and left her for an hour, to make such few arrangements for her comfort as the bark would admit, promising to return at the expiration of that time, and if she still maintained her resolution, to conduct her on board; at the same time exhorting her to consider the dangers to which she would be exposed, without a friend to aid and protect her.

As soon as the knight had departed, Marguerita sat down to write her farewell to the marchesa and her brother; in which she thanked them for the kind protection they had afforded her, and lamented the step she had been compelled to adopt; a feeling of regret passed over her mind as she folded up this short adieu. She was under infinite obligations both to the

brother and sister. The gallant conduct of Giuglio, when he rescued her from the pirates, with his personal appearance and manners, might have made an impression upon her, but for the caution she had received from Vauvilliers, and the irrevocable engagements under which Giuglio was bound; and she felt a sensation of deeper regret, at the idea of seeing him no more, than she had before thought possible; but the remembrance of her father forcibly returned, and with it the claims of duty and decorum re-occupied her heart.

Except the dress she wore, all the presents of the marchesa, she deposited upon the couch, and wrapping a thick veil around her, knelt in supplication to the Virgin, for the strength and protection she so needed in her present hour of trial. The evening had closed in when Vauvilliers returned, and informed her that he had provided for her such accommodation as the miserable vessel afforded; that the padrone was a man of respectable charac-

ter, and willing to receive her on board ; but at the same time, he said, he could not advise the dangerous experiment, nor feel happy at the idea of her departure without his protection.

Marguerita however was resolved upon encountering every difficulty, and firm in her refusal of his attendance, aware that should her fears allow her to involve another in any misfortune which might befall her, it would add to her sorrows, and could be no means of safety. The window of her chamber was only a short distance from the ground, which she easily reached with the assistance of her companion.

On her way to the boat, she could not but reflect that she was leaving a kind and hospitable roof, to commit herself to the hands of strangers, and men by nature and habit rude and uncultivated ; that she was voluntarily about to venture in a frail bark, upon a midnight sea, and to explore her way through a fleet of hostile infidels ; she shuddered at her own temerity, and might have listened to her fears,

might perhaps have allowed them to overcome her impatience to relieve the anxiety of her father ; but when she thought upon the positive impropriety of remaining in the house with don Giuglio, and the obloquy which might attach itself to her conduct, she resumed her undaunted resolution, and proceeded with Vauvilliers to the strand, where the bark awaited them. The padrone had engaged, on arriving in Sicily, to see her in safety to the nearest convent, from whence she could communicate to her father the news of her return.

With a heavy heart, after another fruitless attempt to overcome her repugnance to his accompanying her, Vauvilliers handed the fair fugitive on board, and giving her a large cloak to wrap her from the night air, deeply lamented the danger and inconvenience to which she was exposed, imploring with fervent devotion the protection and the blessing of Heaven upon her.

Marguerita, with tears, repeated her



thanks for his kindness, and wrapping the cloak around her, seated herself with patient resignation beneath the slight covering provided for her.

“By daybreak to-morrow, lady,” said the padrone, “we shall see the shores of Sicily. The wind is fair, and the Virgin will defend us from Il Giudeo and his galleys.”

He released the chain which held the vessel to the rock. Vauvilliers repeated his prayers for her security, and the shore began to recede from her sight through the gloom of night.

The moon rose late from the bosom of ocean, and its face was continually covered by the clouds which flitted over; the song of the boatmen ceased soon after they had left the land, and silently they proceeded through the dashing waves, lest any of the blockading squadron should be attracted by the sound of their voices. The sail was also taken down, to avoid the danger to which they might have been exposed, by the gleams of the moon being

reflected from it; Marguerita felt more secure from the unobstructed course they held for a considerable time, and began to anticipate the sight of her native shore.

“A sail!” exclaimed one of the boatmen. The sound electrified Marguerita, and dissipated in an instant all her dreams of happiness.

“Stand to the east,” said the padrone; “I question if they see us.”

The vessel held on its course, and they escaped observation; but a short time only elapsed before the same appalling sound was heard.

“Another sail a-head of us,” said the boatman.

“San Francisco save us!” exclaimed the padrone; “we are in the clutches of Il Giudeo; yonder is another galley bearing down this way.”—A cloud now passed over the moon, and all was dark. Marguerita sat in silent trepidation.—“If the moon was but obscured, we might still make our way through.”

The prayers of the boatmen were audible, and the fair companion of their journey joined fervently in their petitions. The cloud soon flitted again from the descending orb, but its light still shewed them enough of their impending danger.

“Had we been one hour later,” said the sailor, “we had escaped from slavery.”

“They have not desried us yet,” said the padrone; “put the boat about, and stand off a while; the moon will soon go down, and we may escape.”

Another friendly cloud shrouded them again in darkness; but when it had passed over, they saw themselves cut off from retreat by an intervening galley. The moon shone brightly from its temporary screen. Marguerita saw with breathless terror the white sails spotting the ocean around them.

“A miracle alone can save us,” cried the padrone.

“My father! oh my father!” was the last thought of which the afflicted girl was

conscious. A bright flash from the nearest galley, and the thunder which followed, announced that they were seen and hailed. The boatmen abandoning their oars, gave themselves up to prayers and lamentations, and the bark floated at the mercy of the waves. The rushing of the approaching vessel through the waters, as she dashed the foaming spray around her, was sounding in the ears of the terrified Maltese, and with an involuntary obedience they caught a rope thrown to them, and were received on board their captors. The whole party were ordered on the deck of the galley, and with a scream of terror, excited by the grasp of a dark and turbaned sailor, Marguerita fainted, and was for some time unconscious of her hapless destiny.

When she awoke, it was without any remembrance of the scene in which she had been involved, but with a heavy sensation of misery upon her spirits. The first object which attracted her attention was a tall majestic figure, who appeared to

be regarding her with the deepest interest and anxiety.

"Be under no alarm, my child," he said; "you are with friends, who will render you every kindness and assistance."

Marguerita raised herself from the reclining posture in which she was supported, and looking at the person in whose arms she rested, she saw again a dark African countenance, overshadowed by a turban, and clasping her hands before her eyes, with a thrilling shriek, relapsed into insensibility.

Awakening from this second fainting, she saw the padrone of the boat in which she left Malta, whose countenance was now distorted by so ludicrous a mixture of terror and compassion, as would at any other time have excited mirth.

"Viva, madama!" said he, seeing her eyes unclosed; "for the love of San Francisco di Padua, recover, and save our lives."

"Be silent," said the person she had



before noticed, "and allow the lady to recover. You are with friends, signora," he added; "why thus distress yourself with groundless terrors?"

"I thought," said Marguerita, "we had been captured by Serican."

The person to whom she spoke smiled, and replied—"You have only exchanged your method of conveyance, signora, and shall be landed in Sicily as soon as an opportunity occurs; at present compose your spirits; the night is far advanced, endeavour to get some rest; we will retire, and if you wish for any thing in our power, it shall instantly be supplied."

"Tell me where I am, and with whom," said Marguerita.

"You are on board a vessel which offers better accommodation than the one you left, and shall be restored to your friends as soon as possible," said the gentleman; "endeavour, my child, to take the repose you need, and trust to my assurances of safety and protection."

She looked at the person who addressed her; there was something in his manner and appearance which inspired confidence; but the terrified aspect of the Maltese, as he left the cabin, and an indistinct remembrance of the horrors which had at first alarmed her, weighed still on the mind of the fair wanderer, and she tried in vain to compose her agitated feelings. She was placed on splendid cushions on the floor of what appeared to be the cabin of a large vessel. The magnificent carpet which covered the apartment, and the elegant lamp suspended from the ceiling, gave her an idea of something above barbaric grandeur, and she tried to think she was recaptured by some Spanish ship of war. Still the turbaned attendant haunted her imagination. At length she sunk into a state of torpid composure for a few hours; after which the same person who had before endeavoured to comfort her, entered the cabin, which was now illuminated by the beams of the sun.

“ I hope you have had some rest, sig-

nora," he said; "the fatigue and anxiety of last night quite overcame your spirits; you will, with returning strength, be more satisfied with the destiny which has made me your escort to your friends."

"To whom am I thus indebted?" asked Marguerita.

"What matters it by whom you are restored to your family?" replied the stranger; "I have engaged, as soon as it can be done, to land you on the Sicilian shore."

"Generous cavalier! I am indeed indebted to your kindness; but my terror at the idea of falling into the hands of that monster Serican had bereft me of my senses."

The stranger smiled again, and assured her that she was safe, for the present, from any monster, whether infidel or Christian.

Marguerita now recovered in some degree her spirits and her strength, and conversed with her new friend with cheerfulness and pleasure; she informed him of

her short and eventful history, of the seizure of her person by the Tunisian corsairs, the rescue which don Giuglio so fortunately effected, his subsequent persecution, and her escape from Malta to avoid him, and to relieve the anxious distress under which she knew her father laboured.

When she mentioned that dear and only friend, the tears forced their way down her cheeks, and she wept in agony at the thoughts of his sufferings.—“The terror which I experienced last night,” she said, “when conveyed on board your vessel, signor, cannot be described; for the mysterious horrors I have heard of this Turkish chief, had filled me with such apprehension, that I think it would be impossible to survive really encountering him; for the kind Providence which has placed me under your protection, I never can be sufficiently grateful.”

“That you were on your way to join your father, signora, I had learned from the boatmen who were conveying you;

but who he is, or where he may be found, I am still ignorant."

"Vincentio Landolini is his name," said Marguerita; "a name connected with some of the noblest families in Sicily, and probably he is still near Trapani, from whence I was carried off."

"It is fortunate," replied her friend, "that we are now on the western side the island, for I presume you would not find it difficult to make your way from Girgenti, or Marsala, to Trapani, which are probably the nearest ports we shall make."

"On any spot in Sicily," she replied, "I should feel no fears of meeting with some means of communication with my father."

"I will then take the earliest opportunity of landing you upon your native shore; but you have taken no refreshment—forgive my inattention." Saying which he hastily withdrew from the cabin, and left the lady to her solitary meditations.

Who this stranger could be, Marguerita knew not; his dress was not that of a



European, nor did it resemble the ruffian who had at first seized her. He wore no turban on his brow, but a high cap of splendid materials, equally unlike the costume of the corsairs and that of the warriors she had been accustomed to behold. His courteous manners, and his promise to land her on the Sicilian shore, persuaded her he was not a barbarian chief. His accent, though neither Spanish nor Italian, was that of one well versed in the purer language of Italy; but, above all, the benignity of his treatment to herself convinced her she was in the hands of a Christian in alliance with the sovereign of Sicily.

The Maltese padrone entered the room with coffee and refreshments.

Marguerita looked anxiously at his countenance, and asked—"Who is our generous friend?"

"Signora!" said the man, in a tone of terror and surprise.

"Who is the commander of this vessel?"

“Jesu Maria save your sweet senses, lady!” ejaculated the Maltese.

Marguerita was astonished at his conduct, in which she had not before seen anything extraordinary; and taking some of the offered viands, the man asked if he might leave them and retire?

“Certainly, if you wish it,” she replied; “but I am anxious to know what vessel we are on board, and who commands.”

The Maltese stood for an instant undecided what to do, when the door opened, and her former friend told the man he might retire; he hesitated, and asked with some trepidation—“Has your excellenza a doctor on board?”

“A doctor! for whom and what?”

“For the poor signora, whose senses are gone with the fright.”

The cavalier looked at Marguerita and at the padrone with an inquisitive air of surprise.

“My wish to be informed to whom I was indebted for this kind treatment,”

said the lady, "has, it appears, excited this alarm in my former conductor."

The parties gazed on each other, as if none knew how to proceed.

"Who could have supposed," at length said the padrone, "that madonna did not recognise in your excellenza the bassa Serican?"

Marguerita sat pale and immoveable as a statue.

"I had ventured to hope," said the bassa, "that when my dreaded name was announced, the promises I had already made would have quieted your fears, signora. It is true that I am Serican, the Turkish chief, of whom report has conveyed so terrible a description to your ears. I can only assure you, that such as you have found me while unknown, you shall find me still; you have not fallen again into the hands of barbarian rovers, but are under the protection of an Ottoman bassa, who pledges his word, as a Moslem and a warrior, to restore you in safety to your father and your country.

Serican, lady, wars not to enrich himself with the blood of captives, or the plunder of his foes. The will and providence of Heaven have placed you in his hands, not as a prisoner, but as a charge, which he will defend with all his power from evil and from danger, and as soon as circumstances will permit, relieve you from all your fears, by landing you in Sicily."

The open manly brow of the chief demanded confidence and faith ; his smile of affectionate compassion dissipated all feelings of alarm ; and she almost wondered at herself for the agitation she still experienced, at the thought of being in the power of this far-famed and feared commander.

After a few moments, however, she collected her thoughts, and said—" You will forgive, signor, the conduct into which ignorance and inexperience have betrayed me. I must repose my hopes upon your generous promises, and feel that I should do it cheerfully ; the treatment I have al-

ready met with at your hands demands my gratitude, and ensures my reliance on you for the future."

"I shall endeavour," answered Serican, "to meet your wishes, and to repay your confidence in all things. I am now cruising with my fleet off the western coast of Sicily, and will take an early opportunity to land you under a flag of truce at some convenient port."

A noise on deck attracted the admiral's attention, and an officer appeared at the cabin-door to announce a sail in sight; Serican prevented him from entering, and requesting Marguerita to command whatever she wished for, withdrew to attend the proceedings above.

A considerable noise was heard, and a sound of artillery at a little distance. The anxious damsel trembled at the idea of another combat, but a shout from the deck, and a cessation of the firing, soon relieved her; and Serican immediately appeared to quiet her alarms, and informed her that one of the advanced galleys had just cap-



tured a small vessel making towards the Sicilian coast.

"We shall now stand up to her," he said, "in order to ascertain who and what she is; I may be some time detained on deck; in the meantime, your Maltese attendants wait your commands. I have prohibited all others from approaching this cabin, which henceforth you will consider as your own apartment."

On board the captured bark was the baron Solanto; himself and his principal attendants were immediately removed to the admiral's ship, where he met with the generous reception which Serican's noble spirit was always forward to pay to a brave man whom fortune had placed in his power.

He learned the state of distress and anxiety into which the baron's family would be thrown by his non-arrival in Sciacca, and kindly acceded to the proposal of putting into the port of that city, and treating with count Luna for the ransom of his captive, that he might be spared

a voyage to some Turkish port, and his wife and daughter relieved from their fears at his delay.

In Sciacca, too, Serican had hoped to fulfil his charitable intention of forwarding Marguerita to her friends; but in all his expectations he was nearly disappointed by the insulting conduct of count Luna. With don Giacomo Perollo, the noble Ottoman felt a confidence inspired by his liberal and open conduct, and to him he resigned both his fortunate captives. The charm of Marguerita's manners had, though she had been on board so few days, endeared her to the bassa with almost a parental regard, and he parted from her with more regret than their short intimacy might have been expected to excite.

CHAPTER VI.  
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Par sa mère élevé, nourri dans ses maximes,
Il n'était point, comme elle, endurcit dans les crimes.

HENRIADE.

As the return of the baron Solanto removed all anxiety from the mind of the baroness, it immediately restored her to her accustomed health and spirits ; but as the family felt that a separate residence would be most comfortable, and leave them most at liberty, it was agreed to make the late indisposition of the baroness a reason for placing her directly in a house of her own, where she could be more quiet and independent than at Luna Castle ; and as the celebrated baths of Sciacca were situated in a beautiful valley, at a short distance from the city, the baron determined to take a cassino in their vicinity.

If Costanza ultimately married count Luna, her father and mother wished to remain near her when the baron was not on service ; and if any thing occurred to prevent the union taking place, they would be more easy any where than at his house.

In the society of his wife and child, the baron had forgotten the extraordinary reception he had met with from don Sigismund ; his immediate inquiries for his family, and the interposition of Adriano, had made it pass at the time ; but still there was something, on recollecting the circumstances, which Solanto could not but think inexplicable.

After the first effusions of joy at their reunion, the baroness gave an account of their visit to Palermo, and the kindness of their viceregal friends ; mentioned Federico Perollo, and the pleasant discovery she had made of his mother being her old friend Victoria Moncada. She related their accident near Castel Vetrano, and the providential meeting with and gallantry of

Perollo and Pignatelli; passing lightly over the rencontre in the church, and the ill-humour of the countess Caltabellotta.

Costanza was unwilling to interrupt her mother; besides which, her present happiness made her feel more leniently both towards the countess and don Sigismund, by whose exertions she had no doubt but her father had been released from his unpleasant situation.

The baron listened with attention and interest, and when the detail was concluded, he said—"I find my debts to the house of Perollo are more numerous than I suspected; and I think I feel even more obliged by the kindness shewn to you than for my own liberation."

An exclamation of surprise from Costanza was excited by the discovery that to Perollo, and not to count Luna, she was indebted for the restoration of her father. The baroness had not yet been informed of her husband's captivity, and eagerly requested to hear the particulars of his unexpected delay.

When informed of all the circumstances, she could only raise her hands to Heaven in silent gratitude for his deliverance. But Costanza did not refrain from wishing openly, that the baron Pandolfina's courtesy and liberality of sentiment, were not so powerfully contrasted by the violent tempers and narrow prejudices of don Sigismund and his mother.

The baron looked at his daughter as if for an explanation; but the baroness prevented it, by saying—"Hush, my child! the unpleasant manners of the countess are not worth remembering; and for the count, he is young, and will improve."

"I hope he may, my dear mother; but it is so proper that my father should be perfectly acquainted with the manner and temper of both of them, that ere long I must beg his permission to relate all the events which have occurred since our arrival."

"I will willingly hear all my Costanza wishes to tell me," he replied; then to the baroness he added, "but I must now go

and see count Luna, to whom I have hardly spoken; to-morrow I shall visit Perollo, to shew at once that I will be involved in no party feuds."

"I am truly glad to hear you so determine," said the baroness, "and Costanza and I will accompany you."

"That shall be just as you may wish," said Solanto, and left the apartment.

Solanto found count Luna, his mother, and Adriano, apparently engaged in an interesting debate.—"My anxiety," he said, "to see my family, made me forgetful of the attentions due to my noble host; permit me now, with unfeigned affection, to embrace the son of my much-esteemed friend, count Luna."

"From me, signor, the apology ought to come; I was deficient in those regards which, had I been myself, I should have paid to so honoured a guest. My despair at the rude repulse I had met with from the pirate chief, and the conviction I had just received of his connivance with our

direct enemy Perollo, had for the moment bereft me of the power of action."

"Some false intelligence has misled you, count Luna," replied Solanto. "From my noble captor, the bassa Serican, I learned the cause of your rejected application to have been a failure on your part of the ceremony due to the admiral of the Ottoman fleet; and for the baron Pandolfina, malignant must be the man who could have intimated that his conduct was other than bounteous and honourable; and that it involved no disrespect to your lordship, I will vouch my life and reputation. But come, count Sigismund, these party feuds, I hope, will be allayed ere long. Allow me the honour of an introduction to your friends."

"My mother," said Sigismund, presenting him to the countess, "and don Geronimo Peralta, baron Adriano."

"To the widow of my friend," said Solanto, "I hope no other introduction is necessary than my regard for him."

"Which is shewn," said the countess, "by insulting us with the history of the virtues of his deadly foe, the accursed Giacomo Perollo."

Solanto stood confounded at this return to his civility.—"If to acknowledge with eternal gratitude the favours I have received from baron Pandolfina be a crime, I fear I shall be found an obstinate offender."

"Perhaps, when your excellenza has learned all the secret springs from whence this action of the Perollo was derived, you may find motives to change the high opinion you have formed of him," replied Adriano, interposing to arrest the current of the lady's anger, just ready to pour forth.

"The wisdom of those who would find motives discreditable to my deliverer's character," answered Solanto, "must be such as I should find it difficult to comprehend, and be most unwilling to attend to. I trust count Luna more justly appreciates the generosity even of his foes."

The shouts of the populace attending Pandolfina and the rescued prisoners, and the cries of "Viva il Perollo!" now reached their ears; Luna started, and turned pale; the countess stamped with rage, and imprecating a frightful malediction on don Giacomo and all his friends, rushed from the apartment.

"Are they coming hither to repeat their insults?" said Sigismund, tremulous with passion.

An attendant announced the arrival of the baron Solanto's retinue, who had been brought on shore by Pandolfina.

"With your permission, signor," said Solanto, "let them enter." Before the count could reply, the men had made their way into the room.

"This is another proof of the noble treatment we have met with," said the baron.

"Viva il Perollo!" exclaimed one of the men; "long life to the generous don Giacomo, and confusion to his enemies!"

Luna rushed forward, and seizing the

speaker by the collar, dashed him to the ground, and had drawn his poniard, when the baron and Adriano wrung it from his grasp.

"This intemperate violence, signor," said Solanto, "is the frenzy of a madman, not the anger of a gentleman."

"You too," said the furious Sigismund, "must be one of Perollo's agents, thus to dare insult the spirit of Luna and Peralta; but even I may rouse at last, and when I do, my deep revenge will not be satiated by a trifling sacrifice."

"At present, count Luna," answered Solanto, calmly, "you are too much agitated to attend to reason or remonstrance. You may withdraw," he said to the attendants, and when they had retired, he added—"This effervescence of anger and violence, signor, is such as augurs ill for the happiness of any one connected with you by the ties of marriage; my engagements are at present only conditional, and I must rejoice to think they are so."

"The agitation under which count

Luna's spirits have suffered during the day," said Adriano, " must plead for him with your excellenza ; so deep was the interest he took in your deliverance, that the repulse he met with nearly deprived him of reason. The fortunate event being afterwards produced by means so adverse to his wishes, has prevented him from recovering his equanimity of temper ; believe me he will, when reflection has restored him to himself, as deeply deprecate your just anger as you yourself could wish."

Don Sigismund stood during this conversation leaning against the side of the room, his face shrouded in his mantle, and his body convulsed by agitation.

" For the present," continued Adriano, " allow me to withdraw with him till he is more composed, when I am well convinced he will obtain your pardon for this unfortunate ebullition of passion."

" I am too deeply interested in count Luna's disposition," replied Solanto, " to forget the scene which has just passed, but will at present form no rash or sudden

resolution. He immediately retired, leaving Adriano to endeavour to restore count Luna to a sense of the impropriety and danger of such conduct.

They both remained some time without speaking. Sigismund paced the room hastily, and Peralta seated himself to wait an interval of returning composure.

At length the count paused, and exclaimed—"Must I submit to be insulted even here by the slaves whom Giacomo Perollo has purchased for the purpose? am I to be threatened with the loss of my betrothed bride, because I crouch not to insult and oppression? let the baron di Solanto league himself with my enemies, I have power and strength to crush them all, and force them to fulfil their contract."

"There is, I doubt, one opposing power; your lordship cannot bend, and without which all your exertions will be made in vain."

"And who is it," said Luna, fiercely,

“that dares the united powers of our house, when called forth to action?”

“The spirit of Costanza di Solanto,” replied Peralta. “I marked the cool contempt with which she repelled your mother’s anger in the church, and the decided resistance she offered to your wishes in conducting forth the baroness. Your excellenza must pursue another course to gain the lady and her dower. Your late violence has, I fear, disgusted the baron, and it will require all our exertions to obliterate it from his memory.”

“And would you, Adriano, have listened tamely to the contumelious insult of the slave?”

“A future time should have revenged his crime,” said the baron; “his unthinking tongue might have been silenced in a fitter place, and by a surer hand; why drive Solanto forcibly to seek Perollo’s friendship? unless you now appease him, we shall find him ranged under the banners of our enemies, and a transfer of his

daughter's hand made to the son of Giacomo."

"To what act of desperation is it you would hurry me, Peralta?"

"To none," replied his counsellor; "I would have you temporise with all, till you have gained your point; I would have you sooth Solanto's indignation, and ensure his heiress as your bride; if necessary, I would have you even court Perollo; and when all is done, and this increase of wealth and power secured to your family, then throw off the mask, call forth the strength of all your friends, and by one glorious extermination, wipe from the earth every soul whose veins contain one drop of the Perollo blood. Thus shall we redress our long-continued train of injuries and insults, and complete our great revenge."

"Revenge!" exclaimed the countess, entering the apartment; "if Sigismund di Luna felt as the head of his illustrious race should feel, his every thought would

centre in revenge. Is this a time for love and revelry, when even in our castle we are insulted by the friends of the Perollo? must I stand by and hear my husband's name polluted by the friendship of Giacomo's redeemed adherent? This baron Solanto, who boasts his gratitude and high respect to that detested wretch, is in our power. Were I the chief of Luna, to-night should seal his fate, and to-morrow's sun see his daughter mine by force."

"I only argue for delay," said Adriano, "that our deeds of vengeance may be full; we are not yet prepared for open war; all that I urge is time to complete such preparations as may ensure us full success, and leave no scion of Perollo to hand their hated name to other ages."

"Why not begin with this Solanto, this slave redeemed by Giacomo; crush by his death their growing intimacy, secure his daughter and her portion, and no longer temporise with this execrable race?"

"The wealth and power of baron So-

lanto," observed Adriano, "are not yet sufficiently in count Luna's grasp; when they are, I will no longer endeavour to suspend his fate, or restrain the noble ardour of my chief for vengeance and redress."

"How would you have me act?" asked Luna.

"Try, by every method of conciliation, to assure the baron of your repentance, for the hasty sally he witnessed, win the affection of his daughter, and her consent to an immediate union, and as soon as circumstances will permit, remove the only obstacle to full possession by Solanto's death."

"Again, Peralta, the same dark course of treachery and murder. I will not stain my hands by any such nefarious crimes; I would gladly immolate the last of the Perollo race to the remembrance of our injuries, but it must be in fair and open war. For the baron Solanto, he was my father's friend; he is, I hope, the parent of my future spouse; would you have the

chief of Luna and Peralta a mercenary parricide? no; by every tie his life is sacred; and if by his fall alone our purposes of vengeance could be procured, I would resign them all."

"Then turn Franciscan; unite the hands of Federico Perollo and Costanza di Solanto, and leave the world a lasting monument of the degenerate weakness of count Luna," said his mother. "This poor effeminate dislike to follow a bold, decisive course, will shew every one how justly the Perollo claims the merit of superior spirit. I have loved thee, Sigismund, with such fond devotion, that my existence hangs but on your life and honour; but did I think you capable of foregoing for an instant the glorious path of vengeance I have pointed out, or hesitating to sacrifice ten thousand such as this Solanto, nay, even your dearest friends, to fulfil the noble destiny that awaits you, I could myself, with indignation and abhorrence, equal only to the love I have borne you, plunge a stiletto in your heart,

and blast your name with everlasting infamy."

"There is no occasion," replied Adriano, "for this vehemence, signora; the question of Solanto's life or death is immaterial to our great design; he must at present be appeased, and the count must condescend to sooth him by every promise and profession he may think proper to demand. But here comes the peace-making Geronimo Ferrara; a better emissary we cannot have; his hypocritical harangues must now be rendered useful to our purpose; have I your permission to engage his services?"

"Do even as you will," replied Sigismund.

"I like not such half-measures, and detest this canting fool," said the countess, and withdrew as Geronimo entered.

"I came, signor," he said, "to rejoice with you on the arrival of your friend, and to beg to be allowed to offer my sincere congratulations."

Don Sigismund bowed in silence.

"In good time are you come, signor Geronimo," said Adriano, "to use your powers of conciliation. Untoward events have ruffled the spirits of the count to-day, and he has unintentionally offended the baron Solanto; will you be the bearer of his most humble apology?"

"You are going too far, baron Adriano," interrupted Sigismund; "signor Ferrara will oblige me by stating my regret at the violence into which I was betrayed, but by which I intended no disrespect towards the baron, and therefore hope to be forgiven."

"Leave it to don Geronimo," replied Adriano; "he will, I know, say only what is proper, and be the willing messenger of your repentance."

"I expected not to be employed in such an office here," answered don Geronimo; "but count Luna may in weightier things command my services. At present, however, I am ignorant even of the nature of the fault for which I am to plead forgiveness."

"It was a misunderstanding with the baron," said Peralta, "respecting the interference of Perollo in his deliverance from the Turk; and the count resented, too hastily perhaps, the ignorant zeal of one of Solanto's attendants."

"Oh that this party strife were at an end!" replied Ferrara; "that two such noble dispositions as those of count Luna and Pandolfina should be so ignorant of each other's estimable qualities!"

"This is a subject we need not now discuss," said Peralta; "some future time, I trust, will see these evils remedied, and the houses of Luna and Perollo no longer rivals; believe me, my endeavours shall not be wanting towards effecting this most desirable event, signor Ferrara; but at present let us use our efforts to heal this breach, which makes the count so unhappy."

"I will most willingly do my utmost," said Geronimo.

"The count and myself," added Adriano, "will retire, and when your persuasions have succeeded, as I doubt not but they will, we may bring the parties together to

complete their reconciliation. I will cause the baron to be informed of your attendance."

Count Sigismund and Adriano then withdrew, and the latter desired the baron Solanto might be told, that a friend of the count requested the honour of an interview.

Solanto immediately followed the messenger, and was conducted to the presence of Ferrara, whose prepossessing figure inspired him with involuntary respect, and the cordial warmth with which he greeted him, demanded his gratitude, and conciliated his regard.

"My first intention," said Ferrara, "in visiting the castle to-day, was to congratulate count Luna on the safe arrival of his friend the baron Solanto; and I have now received from him instructions to assure your excellenza of his deep regret at the unpleasant circumstances which have occurred, and to beg that you will in charity forgive his impetuosity, and forget that the irritation of the moment betrayed him into so unwarrantable an act of violence."

"I regret," replied Solanto, "that to such an intercessor I cannot concede in all things; but too much is now at stake in my daughter's future happiness, to allow me to forget the display count Sigismund has made of his intemperate anger."

"Count Sigismund, signor," answered Ferrara, "is young and impetuous; his feelings easily excited, and with difficulty restrained; but he is generous, kind, affectionate, and sincere; he does most penitently acknowledge his error, and with the respect he feels for your opinion, and desire for your friendship, I think I may venture to say, that the lesson he has now received will preserve him from many repetitions of such excesses."

"It is to the future conduct of the count, signor, that I must look for the sincerity of his sorrow; I am ready and willing to allow for his irritated feelings, and the impetuosity of his temper; but I cannot, till further proof of his good disposition, entrust the happiness of my child to him."

"But you will for the past," replied don Geronimo, "accept the count's excuses, and look to his future conduct only for the opinion you may form of his character."

"So far, signor, I will concede to your friendly interposition."

"Accept my thanks," said Ferrara: "how gladly would I bring the feuds between the rival houses of Luna and Perollo to the same conclusion! both the count and baron Pandolfina possess qualities and virtues which, under any other names, they would cheerfully acknowledge and sincerely respect. The slightest conciliation on the part of count Luna would even now, I think, make don Giacomo his friend; but such principles have been assiduously imprinted on the mind of the former from his earliest youth, as have made him, without any fault of his own, incapable of admitting any feelings of amity towards the house of Perollo. Under the mild influence of an amiable wife, much might be hoped from his na-

turally-good disposition; as yet he has had none about him who have really wished to promote this desirable reconciliation: but I am delaying to inform him of your acceptance of his apologies, and compose his mind upon the subject."

Don Geronimo withdrew, and soon returned with Sigismund and Adriano.

"I am indebted," said the former, "both to signor Ferrara's kind intercession, and your generous forgiveness, baron Solanto, of the unintentional violence of which I was guilty."

"Let it be no more remembered, but as a warning for the future," replied Solanto; "and now let me beg your information on the subject of a residence for myself and family."

"I had hoped," said Sigismund, "that my father's friend, I fear I must not yet say mine, would have honoured me by making my house his home during his stay in Sciacca."

"Believe me," replied the baron, "I am fully sensible of your kindness and hos-

pitality ; but I find the baroness has not been quite well, and would like to be near the baths ; and in case we should ultimately be more nearly connected, I think it better for Costanza to be in her father's house than her lover's. And though we shall not be exactly your guests, we shall hope you will consider us most closely united to you by every tie of friendship and regard ; and that you will be as much with us as your inclination and engagements will permit."

Luna tried still to persuade the baron to remain with him, but could not, and at last yielded to his having a separate home. On considering about residences, he said—"There are several cassinos in the neighbourhood, which are often used by persons visiting the baths ; and if your excellenza will leave the affair to me, I will endeavour to learn to-morrow what houses are disengaged, and how you can be accommodated, though by so doing I shall deprive myself of a long-anticipated pleasure."

"I will leave it then entirely to you, and will myself go to-morrow, with the baroness and Costanza, to pay our respects to the baron Pandolfina."

The count started and turned pale, but suppressed his rising anger, and said, in a hurried tone—"If her *eccellenza* is not quite well, she had better not be exposed to any fatigue, and donna Costanza will not surely go without her."

"Though the baroness is not quite as strong as I would have her, still I hope she is not ill; and they are both eager to express their gratitude for the attentions we have received."

The count appeared contending with his feelings, when Adriano made some remark about the baths, and diverted the conversation to another course. Don Geronimo joined in it; and, after some time, the party separated, apparently forgetful of the disagreeable events which had occurred at their former interview. Solanto was much better satisfied with count Luna, and pleased with the mildness and con-

ciliating manners of Ferrara; but with regard to Adriano, there was an appearance of art which he could not conceal, and upon which the baron could not reflect, without sensations of dislike and distrust.

When Luna and Adriano were again in private, the latter observed—"Your excellenza exceeded my hopes, and must, I think, have removed from the mind of the baron every unpleasant remembrance of what had passed; a little self-command will win him to our wishes; his daughter and his wealth will be yours, and the fate of Perollo will hang upon your word."

"I would that this visit could be prevented," said Luna, "or at least that Costanza could be withheld from going."

"Any such attempt would be useless, and therefore I think impolitic," replied Adriano; "no opposition being made by you, will convince Solanto of your moderation and temper: we must hereafter try to embroil the parties, and undermine their good understanding. It will be no

common thing if their short intimacy can resist the machinations of your confederate friends, aided by the prepossession the baron and baroness evidently have in your favour, and the interest you cannot fail soon to create for yourself in the heart of their only child."

"I would do much," said Luna, still recurring to the same subject, "to prevent Costanza from visiting the Perollo."

"It is vain and fruitless to attempt it," answered Adriano; "it will excite suspicions in the baron, and betray the feelings I would most wish your excellenza to conceal."

Luna remained some time in silence.

"Was not that an adherent of Della Bardia's," asked Peralta, "who passed us in the gallery?"

"I believe it was; Accursi has of late had many communications with my mother; some arrangements, perhaps, respecting the property of their kinsman, old Luchese, his uncle; at least such I suppose it to be."

"We shall see D'Amato soon in Sciacca, I presume," said Adriano.

"Probably we may; but he is little seen, and mixes, as you know, but rarely in the society of the citizens here."

"There are few more devotedly attached to our house," said Adriano, "or who are more inveterate foes to the Perollo."

"He is, I believe, a sincere and zealous friend," answered Luna; "but I sometimes wish his plans were less mysterious and sanguinary."

"In all things," replied Peralta, "he will be found a firm supporter of our cause; his sword is never backward to revenge the insults of the house of Luna."

The conversation was here interrupted, and the remainder of the evening was passed very pleasantly to all the party.

The Solanto family were received the next day at the Casa di Perollo, with a cordiality and kindness which made them feel at once among friends; and the exchange from the gloomy state of Luna

Castle made the cheerful air of Pandolfina's magnificent establishment even more than commonly attractive to strangers.

The baron Solanto found in don Giacomo the enlightened understanding and suavity of manners, for which he had so often heard him remarked; and the baroness saw in madame Pandolfina all that she remembered so dignified, so endearing, and delightful, in Victoria Moncada.

The facility with which young people get acquainted, soon led Marguerita and Costanza into close conversation. Federico stood by them, unwilling to treat Costanza as a mere casual visitor, and unable, from consciousness of feeling more deeply than he ought, to claim the privileges of his longer acquaintance; yet he was so happy to see her in Perollo Castle, that to every one but herself he talked with even more than his usual life and animation.

In the course of conversation, the baroness Pandolfina asked Solanto if he

intended making Luna Castle his home while in Sciacca?

"If," he answered, "I could have prevailed on myself to do any thing previous to paying my respects here, I should have been now in search of a residence for ourselves, where we can independently see all our friends. I think I shall prefer the vicinity of the baths; the situation I understand is good for hunting, of which I am perhaps a little too fond, and by not being quite in the city, I shall be more able to choose my society, which, as I may probably in future be much here, will be a great point in comfort."

"Will you allow me," said Pandolfina, "to offer you a cassino which I have; it is particularly well situated in the valley where the springs rise?"

"I doubt," replied Solanto, "I must, in this instance, decline your kindness; for my friend don Sigismund is so jealous of my being obliged to any one but himself, that in this I must indulge him, and

leave the arrangement of every thing to him."

Don Giacomo smiled, and said—"I can well imagine that count Luna would not particularly wish any of his friends to be obliged to me; perhaps I should feel something of the same sort myself; but I shall more than ever execrate his advisers, if they make this unhappy feud into an annoyance to you."

"Do you not think, don Giacomo," said the baroness Solanto, "that the liberated captives, and those to whom happiness has been restored with them, ought to give some public demonstration of their gratitude to Heaven for its interposition in their behalf?"

"Most certainly, madam; but as the cavalier Landolini must not be omitted, we had better, perhaps, not determine what we shall do till after his arrival; when he comes, I will let you know, and we will then arrange every thing according to your wishes."

Marguerita expressed her gratitude to

the baron for his unwearied attention to the feelings of all within his sphere of action.

In the course of their visit, the Solantos were introduced to don Paolo, and several others of the Perollo family, with whose manners and appearance the baron was much pleased, and most particularly with the gentlemanlike moderation with which Pandolfina, his son, and all the family, spoke of Luna and his mother.

The ladies did not forget particular inquiries after signor Pignatelli, and their interest in him was greatly increased, by hearing of the expedition in which his active humanity had engaged him. After partaking of refreshments, and staying long enough to depart with regret, the baron reminded the ladies that they had far outstaid the usual length of visits, and they returned to Luna Castle.

On the way to their chamber, the ladies encountered in the gallery a tall cavalier, whom Costanza immediately recognised as the person she had seen on the

night of her arrival in Sciacca. He passed them with a silent salutation, and entered the apartments of the countess. The baroness took but little notice of him, their attendants knew nothing of him, and Costanza finding it impossible to persuade her mother that there was any thing wonderful or mysterious in his appearance, or in his visit to the castle, she seated herself quietly to her embroidery, revolving in her mind the circumstances of their interview with the family of Perollo; and could not avoid contrasting its various members with those of the race of Luna, to the no small disadvantage of the latter. There was much in don Sigismund himself that she liked, and she could not help feeling grateful for his admiration and respect for her; and she thought that if his mother was like the baroness Pandolfina, and his friends like don Giacomo Perollo, don Paolo, and Gaetano, she should feel less alarm at fixing herself within the sphere of their influence; but that he, with all the great imperfections which she

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, and that instead of repairing in any degree, the absence of her own indulgent parents, she would be to her a perpetual object of disgust and terror—she felt that she had not courage to become the wife of Sigismund.

She looked on the countenance of her mother, and thought that however much she had loved her before, it was *only* now that she appreciated the meekness of spirit which was her peculiar characteristic; she had sometimes thought she wanted *energy* to repel the injuries to which mildness and slowness to take offence sometimes expose their possessors; but now that she saw pride, violence, and unyielding self-love, without the veil of politeness and grace, which frequently blinds us to their natural deformity, she wondered how she had ever tolerated such qualities, and felt

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are usually not slow in perceiving the im.

pressions they make, and the interest they

excite; their great advantage is quickness

of perception; their reverse, want of stead-

iness, and liability to be diverted from one

object to another.

Thus it was that Costanza, though she

said to herself that Federico Perollo could

never be any thing to her, still did not

feel displeased at his evident admiration.

She thought don Sigismund the hand-

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a temper, and influencing such a stubborn will ; but still she could not help comparing him with Perollo, and in the comparison count Luna always lost.

As Costanza was not without common sense, and had been educated by a mother, whose cool imagination and nice sense of propriety and delicacy peculiarly fitted her for the task, there was no danger of her fancying herself in love, upon such slight grounds, or that because Perollo evidently admired her, he would be wretched to see her given to another, or tormented by lasting regrets. Still she did not recollect, that while there remained the least chance of her becoming the wife of count Luna, she was doing wrong to encourage any comparison to his disadvantage.

CHAPTER VII.
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Think'st thou there are no serpents in the world  
But those who slide along the grassy sod,  
And sting the luckless foot which presses them?  
There are who in the paths of social life  
Do bask their spotted skins in fortune's sun,  
And sting the soul. JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE countess Caltabellotta received her visitor with an air of sullen displeasure, and commanded her attendant to retire into the gallery, and see that no one entered even the antichamber of her apartment till she had given farther orders. "The barone della Bardia and myself," she said, "have private business to transact; let me have no interruption from any one whatever."

The barone seated himself without any regard to the lady, and as she secured the

door, observed—"You do well, madam, to guard against the curiosity of those about you; had you always acted with so much caution, I had never thought of seizing your confidant, nor made myself the arbiter of your destiny."

"How long will the unhappy Pietro linger in his hopeless confinement?" asked the countess.

"Spite of your prayers, madam, he may live many years; so necessary a witness is sure to be well attended, in case I should find it politic to expose your dark acts of murder and——"

"Hush! hush! you know the fatal secret, and I need no repetition of your information."

"Well, madam, my eternal silence is to be purchased by your compliance with my demand; sign an order to the abbess of Santa Caterina to deliver into my hands the lady Francisca, publicly acknowledge her rank, resign the portion which belongs to her, and the head of Pietro shall be a



nuptial present from your kinsman, Della Bardia."

"I have already, at your request," said the countess, "prohibited the completion of her vows; why not take this earnest of my future intentions, and give up the pledges you hold? All I wish is to secure the marriage of count Sigismund with the heiress of Solanto; and were the existence of Francisca known, her claims might break off the treaty, and destroy the future prospects of my son. I have promised that Francisca shall be your wife, but why insist on my proclaiming her birth and origin? her dower shall be paid; the money this Costanza brings will make the sacrifice of less importance; but do not, signor, drive me to this open declaration; do not impede this union, so beneficial to our family."

"Della Bardia, signora, does not intend to take a nameless bride, nor does he feel inclined to trust your excellenza's word; were I disposed to resign the power I pos-

sess over your high spirit, I might expect the fate I should so justly merit, and some confidant, like Pietro, would be found to help me on the way by which——”

“I will not be insulted by this insolence, signor barone,” said the lady, impatiently interrupting him; “were I to brave you to a disclosure, I have friends, whose influence and high authority would bear me through, despite of your accusations.”

Della Bardia replied only by an insulting laugh.

“And,” she added, “your witnesses, I might assert, are only slaves suborned to aid your malice and revenge.”

“By an order under your own hand, lady, I procured from the abbess of Santa Caterina certain records, which, if produced, would cover with eternal shame all those who are concerned in the dark proceeding to which they relate. I have myself experienced the severity of Giacomo Perollo; think you not that he would assist in laying before the viceroy the documents which are

in my power? and for the high connexions of your *eccellenza*, it may possibly happen that the influence of pope Clement would be exerted rather to punish, than conceal the evil deeds I might disclose. But I wish not to urge you to this desperate trial; I propose to you no disgraceful alliance; your kinsman, Della Bardia, is no improper match even for Francisca."

"Francisca," answered the countess, "is bent on taking the veil, and an exertion of all our power will be required to restrain her; why compel me to the cruelty of forcing her inclinations?"

"The tenderness of the countess Calta-bellotta may well be an obstacle to my wishes," said the barone, with a sneer; "she who for sixteen years has immured her victim in such a convent as that of Santa Caterina. I tell you, signora, I will be obeyed, and instantly."

"You must then issue your commands to some tamer spirit than that which Maria di Luna possesses: malignant vil-

lain ! what demon prompted your detested policy to penetrate my secret actions?" exclaimed the countess, in a paroxysm of rage.

"Interest and ambition, signora, have been my principal inducements; circumstances have made me the master of your actions; I come not here to listen to your abuse, and scorn the accusations of a murderess. You are in my power, and I shall use the influence I possess, as best befits my inclination and designs."

The coolness with which her vehemence was met rendered the countess nearly frantic; she stamped furiously upon the floor, and ordered Della Bardia to quit her presence.

"I shall do no such thing," he answered, with the utmost indifference; "I have too much regard for the honour of your son, the chieftain of our house, to bring on him such a degradation as the exposure of his mother's infamy, and will therefore wait till a short time for reflection has re-

stored your *eccellenza* to reason and composure. You must acknowledge my generous forbearance."

"Insulting ruffian!" ejaculated the countess.

"Let me have no more such language, madam, or I depart, and by to-morrow's sun shall drag you forth to public shame and punishment; you best know how you can confront the testimony of Pietro di Forni."

"Only give me a few days delay," said the countess, "and when Sigismund has insured his prize, I will grant all your demands."

"Really, signora, your spirit seems inclined to yield to circumstances."

"I do not refuse to give Francisca to you," continued the lady; "I want not to withhold her portion; but why should I proclaim her birth, and who will believe the tale?"

"Who shall dare to doubt it?" said Della Bardia; "the evidence to back your assertion is simple and conclusive. You



may make your story as favourable to yourself as circumstances will permit. Don Sigismund has long been accustomed in all things to think and act as you direct. Francisca herself is ignorant of her story, and my end once answered, I require no more. Your excellenza may arrange the details of the discovery even as you will."

"Why, signor, then refuse me the proof of confidence I ask, and still retain Pietro in your power? why should we not act as friends and allies from this time forth?"

"We know each other, lady, somewhat too well; our intercourse, founded on fear on your side and interest on mine, is likely to have but little confidence on either hand. Gladly I know your excellenza would greet the sight of Della Bardia's lifeless body; I know myself the object of your deadly hatred and incessant dread; and but that my death would spread your secret wide abroad, I had not now the power of making your spirit bend to

my wishes; neither your violence nor your hypocrisy will have weight with me; I equally despise them both. You are an instrument whom I shall use on all occasions as events may make most needful, and at your peril you may disobey me."

The countess sat silent and thoughtful.

"I am come, lady," he continued, "for your final answer, and shall not depart without it; give up Francisca and her dower, and acknowledge her as a daughter of the house from which she is descended."

"For a few days, Accursi, let me delay, and I will act in all things as you wish."

"I am not to be trifled with," he answered; "I grant the respite you require; but at the expiration of a fortnight your engagements must punctually be fulfilled, or my secrecy is no longer secured. I am already weary of delay. Yourself and Adriano have promised that my wrongs should meet redress from count Luna and his friends. It is now many months since the execrated tyrant drove

me disgraced and plundered from my office. The only tie which has held me from revenge, has been the hope that the insults daily heaped upon our house would give me such a band of auxiliaries, that we might exterminate Perollo's name.

"In this," replied the countess, "you can accuse neither myself nor Geronimo Peralta; we wait but the completion of these nuptials, and with the added strength and wealth of the Solantos, when we shall give way to Sigismund's impatient spirit, you may sate your thirst for vengeance to the full."

"I would have reached the heart of Giacomo through the idol of his love and vanity, the heir of their detested race; but events have untowardly prevented me," said Accursi.

"Why not await the hour when our united foes shall overwhelm them?"

"Death," he answered, "however lingering, is a mercy I should not feel disposed to grant to Pandolfina, till I had robbed him of all that made life valuable;

my deep hatred is not to be appeased by one act of slaughter. I would tear his heart's affections piecemeal; would butcher daily all he loved; and when I found he had nothing more in the world to love or lose, dismiss him in torments to the grave."

The countess gazed at Della Bardia, but spoke not. Inhuman and malicious as her nature was, she trembled to think to what a wild demoniac spirit her crimes had made her subject.

With a fiend-like laugh he continued—"Your excellenza may, perchance, feel flattered at this confidence, this disclosure of my thoughts and wishes; you dare not, if you would betray them; and the knowledge of my determined nature may be a useful lesson to secure your obedience."

"You have reproached me," replied the countess, "for one act of passion and revenge, have threatened to expose it to the world, and yet, without hesitation, dare avouch such sentiments as these."

"I care not for your crimes," said the

baron, "had they been of ten times deeper dye; but I well know your dread of infamy; I know the terror which you feel at bringing shame upon the house of Luna, and how gladly you would make any sacrifice to save count Sigismund the dire disgrace of having his mother proved a murderess."

The countess trembled, and in a tone subdued by fear, implored him not to raise his voice so high.

"I have found the master-key to all your excellenza's actions," he continued, "and shall use my power with no more pity than poor Francisca yet has found, or the more hapless——"

"Hush! why torture me by these unceasing and useless repetitions? I have for the present engaged to do all that you demand, to forward your views in every way, and only claim a slight return in asking silence."

"I shall now leave you," said Della Bardia, "and shall probably soon visit Santa Caterina, where should I find that



any secret influence has been exerted to instigate an opposition to my wishes in Francisca, your *eccellenza* knows on whom the punishment will fall; she shall be mine, though force should be required to drag her to the altar; and as such a measure would create in her an indelible aversion, all must be done by your command, signora, her kind maternal friend. I shall now give you time to reflect upon the manner in which you choose to make these great discoveries public."

D'Amato rose and wrapped his cloak around him, the lady watched his motions, and anxious to be relieved from the presence of an object so feared and so detested, forbore detaining him by any new remarks; and when he strode from her chamber, she felt her spirit revive within her.

For some time after his departure, she sat silently meditating on the situation to which she was reduced; the tyranny to which her crimes had made her subject, became daily more insupportable. She

had found Accursi rise from one demand to another, and felt that when all that he now required should be granted, it was probable he might still choose to keep her in dependence on his will, and that she should for ever be subject to his insults and extortion; any thing she felt was preferable to this; and she almost resolved to cut him off by some unexpected blow; the threats which he held forth of her secret being published after his death, was the only tie which had hitherto restrained her from following this course; but her spirit during their last conversation had been worked up to a pitch, which overpowered the dictates of prudence, or the remonstrances of fear. Unsupported by his personal weight, the evidence he might leave behind him, she hoped, would be crushed by the influence and power she possessed; and were Della Bardia in his grave, she thought she should not fear the power of any human being.

The object of her alarm being no longer before her, and her fury excited to a de-

gree, which even she had scarcely known, the countess forgot every thing but the insults she had received, and the degradation which she dreaded ; at all hazards, she determined on an attempt to free herself from her present slavery ; tools were not wanting, nor was she ignorant where to seek them ; and in defiance of the posthumous vengeance he denounced, the death of Della Bardia was resolved upon.

The meeting between the cavalier Landolini and his daughter was a scene in which all the powers of description must fail, and was witnessed only by the baroness Pandolfina, who, as soon as they had recovered from the first effects of their joy, left them to indulge, without interruption, in the feelings so powerfully excited.

When he had in some degree recovered his equanimity, the cavalier expressed his obligations to don Giacomo, in a tone of warm and manly gratitude ; and Pandolfina obtained from him a promise to remain at the castle for as great a length of

time as the commander-in-chief would permit.

“We may soon,” said the chieftain, “expect the return of Gaetano from his chivalrous expedition to the African shores, and intend to join with the family of the baron Solanto in a public festival of thanksgiving for the happiness with which Providence has marked the last few days, in giving freedom to our captive countrymen.”

Landolini acquiesced in the opinion of all parties on the subject, and the return of Pignatelli was only wanting to fix the day when the procession should take place. Nor was this long delayed; the short time he had been detained in Tunis, and the favourable passage he had made, both on his voyage thither and on his return, soon restored him to the wishes of his friends.

Two or three days after the arrival of don Vincentio, as the party in Perollo Castle were assembled at their usual amusements, they heard an exclamation

of joy from the children, who were playing in the gallery.

“ I should almost hope that was caused by the return of Gaetano,” said Federico, advancing to the door, which Pignatelli entered at the moment ; his eye caught a view of Landolini, and instantly throwing himself into the arms of Federico, he exclaimed—“ Santa Virgine ! how can I see the unhappy father with such news as I bring !”

“ My dear Gaetano, recover yourself ; donna Marguerita is safe.”

“ No, no ! do not deceive him, Federico ! I saw her lifeless body stretched on the bed of death.”

By this time all the party were assembled round them, and Landolini said—

“ My dear young friend, I never can acknowledge, as I ought, this unprecedented kindness ; here is my child ; she too must ever feel your generous exertions in our cause.”

Pignatelli looked up, as if he could scarcely credit what he heard, and saw lean-



ing upon Landolini a beautiful girl, whose countenance shewed, by its deep interest in the scene, that it must be Marguerita. By degrees he recovered his composure, and the remainder of the evening passed with the greatest cheerfulness, the adventures of the young traveller affording infinite amusement to his friends.

Solanto having received information from don Giacomo that all the parties interested were now arrived, mentioned their intention to count Luna, who excused himself from participating in the ceremonies which were to take place upon the day of thanksgiving, on the grounds of his being unable to join in any arrangements which were to take place under the control of Perollo; but assured the baron, that he most sincerely partook in the general joy of the occasion, leaving it to his friend and adviser, Adriano, to endeavour to break off the growing cordiality between his guest and don Giacomo, taking an opportunity to leave them together, after he had thus made his apologies for

not joining in the procession, which he thought the family might probably expect.

When Sigismund had quitted the room, Peralta observed, that it was rather singular for don Giacomo to make so public a parade of the services he considered himself to have rendered to the baron Solanto, which seemed, in fact, to have been entirely the effect of the capricious generosity of the infidel chief.

“ You have till lately, signor,” he said, “ been a stranger to the private character of Perollo, or your great penetration must have discovered the arrogant assumption which, in every instance, he advances to exalt the merit of his trifling civilities; the ostentatious display of his naval command was certainly a fortunate circumstance for your excellenza; but it by no means entitles him to the sort of deference he presumes to declare that he shall expect from you.”

“ And does the baron Pandolfina take

this ungenerous advantage of the debt of gratitude I owe him?" asked Solanto.

"I was not present at the time," answered Adriano; "but in a public assembly of the nobles of the city, he arrogantly boasted that the obligations he had conferred upon you must ensure your attachment to any measure he might choose to propose."

"This would be a heavy price to pay even for my liberty," said Solanto, "if such bondage could be designated by the name."

"By artful conduct like this, he has reduced a great part of the nobles of Sciacca to a state of most intolerable servitude, and lords it over all with imperious tyranny." Adriano paused for an instant, and looked stedfastly at Solanto, who continued silent, and concealed what was passing within him. His companion went on—"Your excellenza might purchase the eternal gratitude of all around us, show your own independence, and eventually serve don Giacomo himself, whose pride

and insolence, unless they meet with a speedy check, must lead him on to ruin and destruction; the oppression he is guilty of will one day cause a reaction, and I tremble for the consequences; but by adding your exertions to those of don Sigismund, this pride might be humbled, and the effects of his tyranny counteracted."

"My power in Sciacca," answered Solanto, "can be of no avail to strengthen any party."

"But the influence of your name, signor, your interest with the reigning powers, might be employed in our behalf. At all events, I hope you will not allow him the triumph of exhibiting to his partizans your illustrious person in his train, nor expose the baroness and donna Costanza to the band of ruffians by which this Giacomo is always surrounded."

"Allow me," said Solanto, "to request the presence of count Luna."

Peralta paused; and the baron withdrawing, sent a servant to beg that don

Sigismund would join him; when he returned, Adriano continued—"I felt assured that when your excellenza knew the insufferable pretensions of don Giacomo, you would instantly renounce all intercourse with him; high as the name of the baron Solanto stands in the eyes of Europe, it would be no small triumph to their party, to see him, even as a neutral, amongst them; but they could not hope that such discrimination would long be deceived by their shallow pretences."

Count Luna entered the apartment.

"I was wrong, signor," said Solanto, advancing towards him, "in the harsh treatment I bestowed somewhat too rashly, I hope, on your vehemence against my friend the baron Pandolfina; (Adriano looked delighted at the revolution his eloquence had wrought in the opinions of Solanto) I attributed your conduct too much perhaps to injustice and party hatred. You are young, count Luna, and it is one of the misfortunes of youth to be deceived by those they think their



friends; the lessons of experience, though salutary, are seldom pleasant, particularly when they expose the fallacy of our hopes, or the frailty of those affections to which we have trusted. Connected as I already feel with you, my lord, I almost hourly take a deeper interest in every thing which concerns your welfare; and therefore, without hesitation, am about to perform a necessary, though most painful duty, to expose the calumny, the falsehood, the unprincipled character of your kinsman, the baron Adriano."

Sigismund stood in silent astonishment, and his friend appeared overwhelmed with confusion and disappointment.

"With such an adviser," continued Solanto, "I wonder not at the enmity you feel towards the noble Pandolfina, having myself just witnessed his undisguised malignity. I have received, count Luna, from the hands of don Giacomo Perollo, an obligation which it will never be in my power to repay; this obligation has since been increased by the most generous

kindness, manifested in every way which his unbounded liberality could devise, and this insinuating treacherous relative of yours has been using all his powers to point out the merits of ingratitude, and heaping the most unqualified abuse upon my friend, regardless alike of honour and of truth. The exalted character he has thus basely attacked, is far above the malice of such enemies; but yours, my lord, is hourly in danger, while he continues to be acknowledged and received as the friend and intimate of count Luna. I feel myself so deeply insulted, that it is impossible for me to remain longer as an inmate of the same abode; and unless the baron Adriano immediately quits your castle, I must remove myself and family."

"Some misunderstanding I fear," said Luna.

"No misunderstanding, signor," interrupted Solanto; "the declarations of the baron Adriano were too clear, his principles too glaringly displayed, to allow of any misconstruction; and I must again

repeat that it is impossible for us both to continue your guests." Thus saying, the baron withdrew, leaving Luna and his partisan confounded at his calm, yet decided resolution.

Sigismund regretted the unfortunate discussion, and more especially that his friend's zeal for his service had brought upon him the unpleasant reproaches of the baron.

To his regrets Adriano answered—  
"For myself, I shall find a time to repay the compliments of this most magnanimous cavalier; my only anxiety is to forward your excellenza's interest. The policy of don Giacomo begins, I find, to work; he trusts, through the influence of this new connexion, to alienate all your former friends, and thus draw you unresistingly into his power. Our best line of conduct appears to me to be, to humour them in all things, till you have secured the lady Costanza. I can withdraw to the house of Calandrino, and, for

the present, let our intercourse be private. Offer no resistance to their party to-morrow; affect a deference to the opinion of the baron, which will, I doubt not, soon produce the effect we wish, and restore us to liberty of action, and the enjoyment of a prompt revenge, in the contemplation of which I shall console myself for the present, under the insult I have just received."

"Your advice, my friend," said Luna, "is always temperate, but it will be difficult for me to follow it; any thing but Costanza would be dearly purchased at such a sacrifice of my feelings; but I will in all things endeavour to follow your directions."

When Solanto and Luna next met, the latter offered some slight excuse for the conduct of Peralta, and informed the baron he had withdrawn from the castle.

Solanto congratulated his young friend on having escaped the snares of a secret foe, thanked him for the moderation he had shewn, and kindly hoped that Cos-

tanza would acknowledge the temper and self-command he had evinced in all which related to the affair. During the rest of the day, Sigismund exerted himself to conceal his real sentiments, and Solanto forbore to recall the subject of his approaching visit to Perollo.

On the evening preceding the festival, Federico had been visiting the abbot of the Dominican convent in the valley Delli Guimari, to whom he had been known from infancy, and was returning alone through the rocky valley towards the private gate of the Casa di Perollo, when his attention was arrested by the clashing of arms, which sounded from the adjoining road, which led in the direction of the baths; and hastening to the spot from whence the noise came, he saw a tall cavalier, with his back against a rock, defending himself from the attack of four men. At the first glance he recognized the same figure he had seen amidst the ruins of Segesta, and who had excited the



alarms of Baptista during great part of their journey from Palermo: though Perollo had heard the atrocious character of the baron Della Bardia, and suspicions were strongly against him that he had intended some mischief to himself by the midnight visit at Castel Vetrano, yet every idea instantly disappeared from the mind of Federico, but that of the disproportionate force by which he was attacked, and the danger to which he was exposed; he flew immediately to his aid, and two of the assailants turning to meet him, gave the barone some respite from his enemies. The men fought bravely, but the coolness of Perollo, and his superior skill in the use of his weapon, in a few moments stretched one of them at his feet, and disarmed the second, who fled from the spot; he then joined in the contest with those who still pressed the barone, by whose hand another of the ruffians fell; and with the aid of Perollo, he succeeded in securing the person of the one who remained, who being disarmed, and in the powerful grasp of

Della Bardia, earnestly implored forgiveness.

"Who set you on to seek my life?" exclaimed the baron, furiously.

"It was not from the reward," said the man, "but from a wish to serve my chief, count Luna."

"Liar!" cried Della Bardia; "count Luna hired you not to murder his firmest friends."

"Not the count himself," replied the prisoner, "but his vassal Marco, who engaged me to prevent your excellenza from breaking off the marriage of count Luna, by producing the other lady who is in your custody."

"Did no one else engage your services?"

"No; signor Marco, who lies dead before you, was the person who promised me the reward, and told me why your excellenza must be cut off, to ensure the happiness of his master."

"As you hope for mercy," said Della

Bardia, "tell me if the count or his mother knew of the proceeding?"

The assassin swore most solemnly that he had declared all he knew.

"Have you no more to reveal?" said the baron.

"No, signor, as I hope for pardon here and hereafter."

"Then take the punishment you merit," cried Accursi, shortening his sword, and plunging it in the bosom of his victim; "the revenge of Della Bardia knows not mercy or forgiveness."

Federico interposed, but too late.— "Shame!" he exclaimed, indignantly; "shame, signor, on this disgraceful act, to murder your prisoner, thus disarmed and in your power."

"He would have shewn the same compassion to myself," said the baron, and looking earnestly at his preserver, exclaimed—"Perollo's son!"

"Yes, signor, it is the son of don Giacomo Perollo, who has been so fortunate

as to render you assistance, and who laments that it was not in his power to save you from this last act of cruelty and rage."

"Signor Perollo," said Della Bardia, "I have long sought your life; I have vowed the destruction of your family; it is perhaps a fatal act into which you have been betrayed."

"My family and myself," replied Federico, "are under the protection of a Providence, which will defend us, as it has hitherto done, from the snares of those who seek our destruction; and confiding in that support, no Perollo would forfeit its favour by abandoning the direst of his foes to treachery and assassination."

"Then let them seek the shelter of a cloister," replied Accursi, with a sneer, "and they will escape my pursuit. For you, signor, I shall remember your services to-night, and henceforward forego my purposed vengeance; and though I cannot feel towards you any sentiments of

friendship even as the preserver of my life, though the injuries and insults heaped on me by your father are imprinted on my memory in characters which never can be effaced, and shall one day be deeply avenged, yet the fortunate succour I have to-night received from you will be equally indelible."

"I wish not," replied Perollo, with a smile, "to be separated from the danger with which you, signor, seem to threaten my family, and beg that the trifling service I have rendered, may not burthen you with any feelings of gratitude which sit so uncomfortably on your spirit. To the same Providence that watches over my father and my friends, and to the sword I carry, I am willing to trust for protection from the vengeance of the barone della Bardia."

"Your confidence, signor Perollo, might perhaps be convicted of rashness; but from this time forth, I shall never raise my arm against your life: it is in your power to



purchase my farther good opinion, by not immediately promulgating what has passed to all the citizens of Sciacca."

"I have never been wont to boast of common acts of humanity," replied Federico; "and though I shall not pledge myself to secrecy, it is not my intention to make these circumstances public; and as I can be of no farther service, nor wish to prolong this conversation, shall now bid you farewell."

Della Bardia returned his salutation, and they parted.

When Federico reached the Casa di Perollo, he did not for some time mention the affair to any one, and would probably have concealed it altogether, but for the confession of the assassin, that the motive for the attempt was to prevent the production of some lady, who might break off the contract between count Luna and the signora di Solanto. This information had conveyed to his heart the most overflowing happiness, and he had soon con-

vinced himself that the lady Lucretia was still alive, and in the custody of Accursi; or that some lady existed, with whom count Luna had formed a precontract of marriage. It was at all events his duty to communicate these tidings to the baron Solanto; but the difficulty consisted in the method of doing it; his own personal interference was rendered impossible by the consciousness of the interest he took in the lady. He was determined not to involve his father in any new contest with the house of Luna, and therefore don Paolo was the only person whom he could commission to give the intelligence to the parties interested.

Federico confided to Gaetano the plan he intended to pursue, and his friend fully approving his intention, he sought his kinsman early in the morning, and laid the whole affair before him. Don Paolo acknowledged the propriety of mentioning the intelligence to Solanto, and undertook to do so, without involving Federico in any way, unless his evidence should be abso-

lutely necessary, which did not appear likely to be the case.

The barone della Bardia, when left by his preserver, instantly took measures to remove the bodies of the three men who had fallen, wishing to prevent any public inquiry into the transaction ; and when he had accomplished his purpose, bent his steps to the Castel di Luna, where he sought the apartment of the countess. The frequency of his private interviews had rendered them no longer a matter of observation to the family, and he made his way unnoticed and unannounced to her presence.

The lady was pacing the room, with marks of evident perturbation and anxiety, when Accursi threw open the door, and stood before her in the archway. She uttered an involuntary scream, and trembled violently.

“ I am, I fear, an unwelcome and unexpected visitor,” he said, in a tone of smothered fury ; “ your excellenza is not

went to be so disturbed, even at the presence of Della Bardia."

"I was thinking upon other subjects," she answered, in a tone of hesitation and confusion.

"Vastly interesting, no doubt, madame. May I be indulged in learning the subject of your meditations? you can have no secrets from so dear and intimate a friend as myself—one whom you so highly value, and so affectionately regard."

The countess looked at him, but unable to stand the searching glance of his dark eye, turned away in terror and confusion.

"Events of strange and unexpected occurrence are daily happening to us all," he continued; "I have just had a friendly interview with young Perollo; to-morrow, perhaps, I may visit at his father's castle."

"Have you again attempted his life?" asked the lady.

"No, signora; nor ever mean it more; I am too deeply indebted to the youth,

ever to raise my hand against him. When in such an enemy one finds a deliverer, one may almost expect to find treachery amongst one's friends, were not the attempt too wild and frantic."

"I have reflected on the subject of Francisca," said the countess, "and will put her into your hands whenever you shall choose to fix the day."

"Indebted, no doubt, entirely to your friendly disposition towards me for this unlooked-for concession, perhaps, signora, I may avail myself of it speedily. Has your excellenza seen the count's faithful vassal, Marco, of late?"

"Marco!" faintly articulated the countess, sinking into her chair.

"Yes, signora, Marco; does the mention of his name excite such strange emotions?"

Della Bardia was now silent, and the pause to the countess was dreadful. She saw that her intentions had failed, and were discovered. Well did she know the vindictive spirit she had provoked, and the



power he had of inflicting upon her whatever punishment he might think proper. She trembled before his inquiring gaze, and knew not how to appease him. Accursi seemed rejoicing in the torment he inflicted, and inclined to prolong it to the utmost.

At length the lady, no longer able to endure the silence, asked when he purposed visiting Santa Caterina?

"As soon as every thing can be prepared at Santo Bartolomeo for the reception of the baroness della Bardia."

"I will arrange the payment of her dower, as may be most convenient to you," said the countess, hoping to sooth him.

"It may not be in your power, signora. Your fate is not yet decided."

Again she trembled and sat silent, not daring to venture on any inquiries, and Accursi, after another pause, said—"Your intentions against me, signora, have failed, and fortunate it is for you that they have done so; you may still be of use in forwarding my plans, and there-

fore for a time I shall leave your crimes unpunished; but, in return, shall require the most unresisting obedience in all things. I too much despise any attempts against my life to fear them, but again assure you, that you will bring down speedy destruction and disgrace upon the house of Luna, should you succeed, and another trial would carry you a prisoner to Palermo, to answer for the enormities you have committed. It suits my purpose to spare you for the present, but my life shall not be exposed to your treachery, nor the fulfilment of my wishes delayed."

The countess attempted some incoherent defence of herself; but Accursi imperiously commanded her to be silent, and on the morrow to dispatch an order to the abbess of Santa Caterina, that the person of the novice Francisca should be delivered to his care whenever he chose to require it.—"It is not my wish," he added, "to punish the innocent with the guilty, nor to trespass on the obligations which I owe to the chieftain of my family. I shall not

therefore insist on the public recognition of Francisea's rights, till after the union of don Sigismund with the daughter of Solanto, unless compelled by unforeseen circumstances to such a measure."

The countess expressed her thanks for this last assurance, and promised a ready obedience to his wishes. All her endeavours to conciliate were however vain, and Della Bardia quitted her presence with a look of silent contempt, leaving her to the agony of her own reflections, which was considerably increased by the uncertainty she was in, as to the measures the barone might take to visit her offence against himself.

All the friends and adherents of Pandolfina assembled on the day appointed for the thanksgiving of the captives, to attend the procession from the Casa di Perollo to the principal church. The streets were lined by the retainers of don Giacomo and his friends, and thronged by crowds of citizens, who extolled, in terms of loud admiration, the conduct of Pe-

rollo, his liberality, and the inflexible justice with which he protected them from the oppression of the nobles.

Don Giacomo, with the baroness Solanto, led the procession, and were immediately followed by the baron, who was accompanied by the prior of San Vito; and the baroness Pandolfina, Landolini, his daughter, and the senior monk of the same convent, succeeded; after whom came Ludovico and the inferior captives, each conducted by some noble connexion of don Giacomo, and a brother of San Vito, and bearing an olive-branch in their hands. It was with regret that Federico resigned the attendance upon Costanza to don Paolo, and, to the consternation of Pignatelli, he found himself obliged to escort the countess Sambuca.

The procession passed in solemn silence through the city. The calm and pious gratitude of the baroness Solanto, the joyous happiness of don Giacomo, the dignity of the baroness Pandolfina, the

military stature and commanding figure of Solanto, with the entranced devotion of Marguerita, formed a contrast the most lively and impressive. Every one seemed to enter into the solemn and grateful nature of the duty in which they were engaged, and the deepest silence sealed the lips of all save one.

"Did you observe, signor Pignatelli," asked the countess Sambuca, "what a veil the lady Costanza has got? It is the most beautiful thing I ever beheld; I would give the universe for such another. The signora Luchese has one she makes a great parade about, but it really is nothing like this; I hope she will die with vexation at the sight of it."

"We shall be observed, if we enter into this important discussion at present, signora," said Gaetano.

"You really are as bad as Sambuca himself; but you need not expect that I shall remain silent during the whole of this tedious ceremony; I want to hear



again the whole account of your Jewish friends, signor; of their beautiful dresses, and divine earrings."

"For the present, signora, I hope you will be contented to attract admiration by the charms of your person, and reserve the display of your animated conversation till our return."

"As you are more civil in your manner of requesting it than my husband, I will try what I can do; but you must remember that I am only a spectator of this ceremony, and have no thanksgiving to offer; and to tell you the truth, signor——"

"Silence, lady, for pity sake!" said Pignatelli. The lady went on unheeding him.

"To tell you the truth, this Serican seems to have been a most elegant-minded man; and I think the signora Landolini might well have been contented to remain with him. For my own part, I was glad enough when I got away from my convent, and from the authority of my father.

I had expected," she added, with a whine of lamentation, "to find myself my own mistress when I married; and had I met with so superior a creature as this bassa, I am sure I should not have wished to be delivered from him."

Her companion saw that his endeavours to keep her silent were useless, and therefore gave way to her garrulity, and the countess chattered on incessantly till they arrived at the church, where being placed near the count, she was restrained from disturbing the solemn proceedings.

Te Deum was celebrated with all the pomp and magnificence usual on such occasions, and liberal offerings made by Solanto and Perollo; the latter insisting on his right, as temporary guardian of Marguerita, to present the acknowledgment of her gratitude to the treasury of the church; don Vincentio made some resistance, but the generous perseverance of Pandolfina was irresistible.

During the interval between the return of the party from the church, and their

reassembling at the banquet, don Giacomo accompanied Solanto over the castle, to see the armoury, and various improvements which had been made to the strength and ornament of the building.

“ I know not,” said Solanto, “ a more delightful residence than Sciacca, were it not for the unfortunate feud between your house, don Giacomo, and the family of Luna; but we shall, I hope, one day see this discord at an end.”

“ It must be by the extinction of one of our families,” said Pandolfina. “ Don Sigismund has resisted every attempt towards a union with such pertinacity, and resents so keenly even offences which on our parts are not intended, that it is impossible for me to feel any thing but pity for his infatuation, and dislike for the ill conduct it produces.”

“ I have good cause,” answered Solanto, “ to believe that the fault rests not in don Sigismund himself; he is a hot-headed and impetuous young man, and has been ill-advised by those whom he considered as

his friends. Your conduct has been misrepresented, and he has been prompted to resent injuries and insults which existed only in the malignant imagination of those who find it expedient to irritate the ill-will between you. As I may rely on the generosity you have manifested, I shall not despair of restoring him to reason and temper."

Don Giacomo smiled.—"Your excellenza will achieve a marvel in reconciling the feuds of Luna and Perollo. For myself, I am willing to join in amity with count Luna, whenever he feels inclined to accept my friendship; but there are members of his family, who never will forgive my offences towards them. Della Bardia has too good a memory to forget my lecture on speculation; the baron Adriano will not lose sight of the imprisonment which his violation of the laws brought upon him; and the houses of Imbiagnia, Calandrino, and Infontanetta, have lost too much by the restriction of their oppressions on the lower class of citizens, to make

them sincere advocates for peace and concord."

"Much perhaps might be done," observed Solanto, "by detaching don Sigismund from his party, and the new influence we may perhaps acquire over him will not be useless."

"I may be imprudent, perhaps impertinent," said don Paolo, who was the only person now in company with the two gentlemen; "but I hope that my intentions will plead for me, when I say, that if your excellenza values the peace and happiness of donna Costanza, as highly as it is natural you should, you will avoid the fulfilment of any engagement for the present."

Solanto looked with surprise at this address. Don Paolo had taken no part in the previous conversation, and his present interference excited the astonishment both of the baron and don Giacomo.

"I may find no other opportunity so favourable," continued don Paolo, "to speak without observation, and I have



motives which urge me strongly to this warning. Baron Solanto," he added, in an impressive tone, "I speak not as an enemy to the house of Luna; the count possesses many amiable qualities, and I am most willing to allow them; I accuse no one, but there are mysterious circumstances attached to the party, which require explanation, and without it, may for ever destroy the happiness of your family; I ask, only for your own sake, that you will not be precipitate, that you will avoid all promises for a time, and carefully observe the inmates of Luna Castle. Be assured this is not the insidious jealousy of hereditary hatred; doubt me if you will, but attend to my request; I have motives the most powerful for this conduct, but wish not at present to declare them, and am unable to afford you any positive proofs of the events to which I allude."

"From any other than my kinsman, Paolo," said don Giacomo, "I should have laughed at such a warning, or treated it as one amongst the numerous inventions

of our citizens to raise suspicions of the house of Luna; but ignorant as I am of his intentions, I strongly advise your excellenza to listen to his request."

"I shall without hesitation follow your directions, signor," said the baron; "the character of don Paolo makes his advice at all times valuable, and I fully rely on his honour and discretion."

"Flattered as I feel by this confidence, signor," said don Paolo, "I can only at present say, I shall endeavour to deserve it, and that nothing but imperious circumstances should induce me to act in so mysterious and secret a manner."

The conversation was interrupted by the approach of other persons, and no more passed upon the subject.

In the amusements of Perollo Castle, Costanza soon forgot the unpleasant reflections which the gloom of count Luna's abode never failed to inspire. Pignatelli, to keep the stricter watch over Federico, and to prevent the particularity of his at-

tentions being observed, had attached himself to her, and listened with infinite amusement to the vivacity of her conversation, till the approach of the countess Sambuca stopped her.

“ Well, signor Pignatelli,” she began, “ I expect, in return for your uncivil treatment this morning, you will now introduce me to the honour of an acquaintance with the signora di Solanto.”

Gaetano obeyed, and the countess poured forth an almost interminable string of compliments, questions, and information, on various subjects, to which Costanza was unable to reply, from astonishment at her address.

“ How rejoiced I should be,” said the countess, “ was there any prospect of our forming a mutual friendship ! but I understand, signora, you are destined to that dreadful count Luna. It really makes me tremble to think how soon you may be spirited away by the old countess ; I am amazed you don’t run off, throw yourself into a convent, or——”

"Indeed," interrupted Costanza, "your compassion, signora, is wasted on a bad subject ; if I am hereafter to be the wife of don Sigismund, your character of him is calculated to excite fearful anticipations ; but I am under no alarm, nor would my father force me to any dreadful alternative."

"Well, he must be a great delight, my dear ; as for myself, I have been the most unfortunate creature on earth in my relatives, and cannot but wish that you were destined to some more humanized partner."

Costanza turned to speak to some one near her, and the countess directed her conversation to Pignatelli, but in a voice loud enough to be heard by both the parties, of whom she was speaking—"There is my cousin Federico ; he is, I believe, an excellent young man, though he avoids me so carefully, that I have seldom an opportunity of talking with him ; he would make a much better husband for the sig-

nora di Solanto, and it is evident by his looks that he very much admires her; I wish he would try and rescue her from her inauspicious fate."

"The count Sambuca appears desirous to engage your attention, signora," said Gaetano, anxious to stop the conversation.

"Why need you heed him?" replied the countess, peevishly; "I never do, unless it is impossible to help it."

Costanza, covered with blushes and confusion, sought her mother, and was some time before she could recover from the agitation into which the unexpected attack had thrown her. The confusion of Federico, which she had a glimpse of, and his previous manner, had awakened strong suspicions in her mind of his secret attachment; and so fully was she employed in reflecting on the subject, that for a time she scarcely heard the conversation which don Paolo addressed to her; but at length he succeeded in gaining her attention, and



she was infinitely charmed by his manners and observations.

During the evening, the cavalier Landolini complained of being languid and ill, and withdrew some time before the rest of the party.

Varied were the feelings and reflections, excited by the occurrences of the day, which, when the hour of separation came, possessed the minds of those who had been engaged in the busy scene. The baron Solanto pondered with some anxiety upon the warning he had received from don Paolo. Costanza rejoiced at escaping from observation, and at being enabled to consider, without interruption, the circumstances in which she was involved. Every hour brought with it additional repugnance to fulfilling her engagement with count Luna, and with dismay she reflected on the observations of the countess Sambuca, who could scarcely be suspected of having an opinion of her own, and spoke of don Sigismund as one whose bad qualities were notorious. The

interest she held in the heart of Federico became daily more apparent, and she thought at times that she could not, and that she ought not, to marry Luna; but knew no sufficient reason to give to her father or to the world, for breaking an engagement she at first had sanctioned; nor did she feel satisfied with herself for wishing it.

Whilst Costanza was thus uneasy at her future prospects, Federico was little less so; he had forfeited the resolutions he had made, and found that in the presence of the signora di Solanto his self-command constantly deserted him; he could not hope that his conduct and attentions had escaped the eye of his mother; for even the countess Sambuca appeared to have remarked them, and he dreaded the remonstrances he felt he had deserved.

But none of the party who had met at the Casa di Perollo were suffering like Landolini and his child. The former had retired to bed feverish and languid, with increasing symptoms of severe illness; the

affectionate alarm of Marguerita was excited, and she sat by his couch, promising that every half-hour should be the last of her vigil; her father had declined the attendance of any of the domestics, hoping he should sleep and be refreshed; and after they had retired to rest, Marguerita was unwilling to summon any one, nor could she quit her father, who before morning felt so ill, that he did not even desire her absence; and when Gaetano, at an early hour, came to inquire how his old friend had rested, he found Marguerita pale and ill from watching, but still more so from anxiety and alarm, and Landolini very seriously indisposed.

END OF VOL. II.

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