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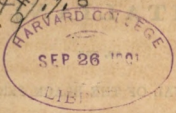




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CHAPTER I.

In earliest Greece to thee, with partial choice,  
The grief-full muse address'd her infant tongue ;  
The maids and matrons on her awful voice,  
Silent and pale, in wild amazement hung.

COLLIN'S ODE TO FEAR.

THE wounds of Vivaldi and of his servant were pronounced by the Benedictine, who had examined and dressed them, to be not dangerous, but those of one of the ruffians were declared doubtful. Some few of the brothers displayed much compassion and kindness towards the prisoners; but the greater part seemed fearful of expressing any degree of sympathy for persons who had fallen within the cognizance of the *Holy Office*,

and even kept aloof from the chamber in which they were confined. To this self restriction, however, they were not long subjected; for Vivaldi and Paulo were compelled to begin their journey as soon as some short rest had sufficiently revived them. They were placed in the same carriage, but the presence of two officers prevented all interchange of conjecture, as to the destination of Ellena and the immediate occasion of their misfortune. Paulo, indeed, now and then hazarded a surmise, and did not scruple to affirm, that the abbess of San Stefano was their chief enemy; that the Carmelite friars who had overtaken them on the road, were her agents; and that, having traced their route, they had given intelligence where Vivaldi and Ellena might be found.

I guessed we never should escape the abbess, said Paulo, though I would not disturb you, signor mio, nor the poor lady Ellena, by saying so. But your abbesses are as cunning as inquisitors, and are so fond of governing, that they



had rather, like them, send a man to the devil, than send him no where.

Vivaldi gave Paulo a significant look, which was meant to repress his imprudent loquacity, and then sunk again into silence and the abstraction of deep grief. The officers, meanwhile, never spoke, but were observant of all that Paulo said, who perceived their watchfulness, but because he despised them as spies, he thoughtlessly despised them also as enemies, and was so far from concealing opinions, which they might repeat to his prejudice, that he had a pride in exaggerating them, and in daring the worst, which the exasperated tempers of these men, shut up in the same carriage with him, and compelled to hear whatever he chose to say against the institution to which they belonged, could effect. Whenever Vivaldi, recalled from his abstractions by some bold assertion, endeavoured to check his imprudence, Paulo was contented to solace his conscience, instead of protecting himself, by saying, It is their own fault ;

they would thrust themselves into my company; let them have enough of it; and, if ever they take me before their reverences, the Inquisitors, *they* shall have enough for it too. I will play up such a tune in the Inquisition as is not heard there every day. I will jingle all the bells on their fool's caps, and tell them a little honest truth, if they make me smart for it ever so.

Vivaldi, aroused once more, and seriously alarmed for the consequences which honest Paulo might be drawing upon himself, now insisted on his silence, and was obeyed.

They travelled during the whole night, stopping only to change horses. At every post-house, Vivaldi looked for a carriage that might enclose Ellena, but none appeared, nor any sound of wheels told him that she followed.

With the morning light he perceived the dome of St. Peter, appearing faintly over the plains, that surrounded Rome, and he understood, for the first time, that he was going to the prisons of the

Inquisition in that city. The travellers descended upon the Campania, and then rested for a few hours at a small town on its borders.

When they again set forward, Vivaldi perceived that the guard was changed, the officer who had remained with him in the apartment of the inn only appearing among the new faces which surrounded him. The dress and manners of these men differed considerably from those of the other. Their conduct was more temperate, but their countenances expressed a darker cruelty, mingled with a demureness and a solemn self-importance, that announced them at once as belonging to the Inquisition. They were almost invariably silent; and when they did speak, it was only in a few sententious words. To the abounding questions of Paulo, and the few earnest entreaties of his master, to be informed of the place of Ellena's destination, they made not the least reply; and listened to all the flourishing speeches of the servant against Inqui-

sitors and the *holy office* with the most profound gravity.

Vivaldi was struck with the circumstance of the guard being changed, and still more with the appearance of the party who now composed it. When he compared the manners of the late with those of the present guard, he thought he discovered in the first the mere ferocity of ruffians; but in the latter, the principles of cunning and cruelty, which seemed particularly to characterize Inquisitors; he was inclined to believe, that a stratagem had enthralled him, and that now, for the first time, he was in the custody of the *holy office*.

It was near midnight when the prisoners entered the Porto del Popolo, and found themselves in the midst of the carnival at Rome. The Corso, through which they were obliged to pass, was crowded with gay carriages and masks, with processions of musicians, monks, and mountebanks, was lighted up with innumerable flambeaux, and resounded with the heterogeneous

rattling of wheels, the music of serenaders, and the jokes and laughter of the revellers, as they sportively threw about their sugar plumbs. The heat of the weather made it necessary to have the windows of the coach open; and the prisoners, therefore, saw all that passed without. It was a scene, which contrasted cruelty with the feelings and circumstances of Vivaldi; torn as he was from her he most loved, in dreadful uncertainty as to her fate, and himself about to be brought before a tribunal, whose mysterious and terrible proceedings appalled even the bravest spirits. Altogether, this was one of the most striking examples, which the chequer work of human life could shew, or human feelings endure. Vivaldi sickened as he looked upon the splendid crowd, while the carriage made its way slowly with it; but Paulo, as he gazed, was reminded of the Corso of Naples, such as it appeared at the time of carnival, and, comparing the present scene with his native one, he found fault with

every thing he beheld. The dresses were tasteless, the equipages without splendour, the people without spirit; yet, such was the propensity of his heart to sympathize with whatever was gay, that, for some moments, he forgot that he was a prisoner on his way to the Inquisition; almost forgot that he was a Neapolitan; and, while he exclaimed against the dullness of a Roman carnival, would have sprung through the carriage window to partake of its spirit, if his fetters and his wounds had not withheld him. A deep sigh from Vivaldi recalled his wandering imagination; and, when he noticed again the sorrow in his masters's look, all his lightly joyous spirits fled.

My maestro, my dear maestro!—he said, and knew not how to finish what he wished to express.

At that moment they passed the theatre of San Carlo, the doors of which were thronged with equipages, where Roman ladies, in their gala habits, courtiers in their fantastic dresses, and masks

of all descriptions, were hastening to the opera. In the midst of this gay bustle, where the carriage was unable to proceed, the officials of the Inquisition looked on in solemn silence, not a muscle of their features relaxing in sympathy, or yielding a single wrinkle of the self-importance, that lifted their brows; and, while they regarded with secret contempt those, who could be thus lightly pleased, the people, in return, more wisely, perhaps, regarded with contempt the proud moroseness, that refused to partake of innocent pleasures, because they were trifling, and shrunk from countenances furrowed with the sternness of cruelty. But, when their office was distinguished, part of the crowd pressed back from the carriage in affright, while another part advanced with curiosity; though, as the majority retreated, space was left for the carriage to move on. After quitting the Corso, it proceeded for some miles through dark and deserted streets, where only here and there a lamp, hung on,

high before the image of a saint, shed its glimmering light, and where a melancholy and universal silence prevailed. At intervals, indeed, the moon, as the clouds passed away, shewed for a moment, some of those mighty monuments of Rome's eternal name, those sacred ruins, those gigantic skeletons, which once enclosed a soul, whose energies governed a world! Even Vivaldi could not behold with indifference the grandeur of these reliques, as the rays fell upon the hoary walls and columns, or pass among these scenes of ancient story, without feeling a melancholy awe, a sacred enthusiasm, that withdrew him from himself. But the illusion was transient; his own misfortunes pressed too heavily upon him to be long unfelt, and his enthusiasm vanished like the moonlight.

A returning gleam lighted up, soon after, the rude and extensive area, which the carriage was crossing. It appeared, from its desolation and from the ruins scattered distantly along its skirts, to



be a part of the city entirely abandoned by the modern inhabitants to the reliques of its former grandeur. Not even the shadow of a human being crossed the waste, nor any building appeared, which might be supposed to shelter one. The deep tone of a bell, however, rolling on the silence of the night, announced the haunts of man to be not far off; and Vivaldi perceived in the distance, to which he was approaching, an extent of lofty walls and towers, that, as far as the gloom would permit his eye to penetrate, bounded the horizon. He judged these to be the prisons of the Inquisition. Paulo pointed them out at the same moment. Ah, signor! said he despondingly, that is the place! what strength! If my old lord, the Marchese, were but to see where we are going! Ah!—

He concluded with a deep sigh, and sunk again into the state of apprehension and mute expectation, which he had suffered from the moment that he quitted the Corso.

The carriage, having reached the walls, followed their bendings to a considerable extent. These walls, of immense height, and strengthened by innumerable massy bulwarks, exhibited neither window, nor grate, but a vast and dreary blank; a small round tower only, perched here and there upon the summit breaking their monotony.

The prisoners passed what seemed to be the principal entrance, from the grandeur of its portal, and the gigantic loftiness of the towers that rose over it; and soon after the carriage stopped at an archway in the walls, strongly barricadoed. One of the escort alighted, and, having struck upon the bars, a folding door within was immediately opened, and a man bearing a torch appeared behind the barricado, whose countenance, as he looked through it, might have been copied for the

Grim-visaged comfortless Despair

of the poet.

No words were exchanged between

him and the guard ; but on perceiving who were without, he opened the iron gate, and the prisoners, having alighted, passed with the two officials beneath the arch, the guard following with a torch. They descended a flight of broad steps, at the foot of which another iron gate admitted them to a kind of hall ; such, however, it at first appeared to Vivaldi, as his eyes glanced through its gloomy extent, imperfectly ascertaining it by the lamp, which hung from the centre of the roof. No person appeared, and a death-like silence prevailed ; for neither the officials nor the guard yet spoke ; nor did any distant sound contradict the notion, that they were traversing the chambers of the dead. To Vivaldi it occurred, that this was one of the burial vaults of the victims, who suffered in the Inquisition, and his whole frame thrilled with horror. Several avenues, opening from the apartment, seemed to lead to distant quarters of this immense fabric, but still no footstep whispering along the pavement, or voice murmuring

through the arched roofs, indicated it to be the residence of the living.

Having entered one of the passages, Vivaldi perceived a person clothed in black, and who bore a lighted taper, crossing silently in the remote perspective; and he understood too well from his habit, that he was a member of this dreadful tribunal.

The sound of footsteps seemed to reach the stranger, for he turned, and then paused, while the officers advanced. They then made signs to each other, and exchanged a few words, which neither Vivaldi, nor his servant, could understand, when the stranger, pointing with his taper along another avenue, passed away. Vivaldi followed him with his eyes, till a door at the extremity of the passage opened, and he saw the inquisitor enter an apartment, whence a great light proceeded, and where several other figures, habited like himself, appeared waiting to receive him. The door immediately closed; and, whether the imagination of Vivaldi was affected,

or that the sounds were real, he thought, as it closed, he distinguished half stifled groans, as of a person in agony.

The avenue, through which the prisoners passed, opened, at length, into an apartment gloomy like the first they had entered, but more extensive. The roof was supported by arches, and long arcades branched off from every side of the chamber, as from a central point, and were lost in the gloom, which the rays of the small lamps, suspended in each, but feebly penetrated.

They rested here, and a person soon after advanced, who appeared to be the jailor, into whose hands Vivaldi and Paulo were delivered. A few mysterious words having been exchanged, one of the officials crossed the hall, and ascended a wide staircase, while the other, with the jailor and the guard, remained below, as if awaiting his return.

A long interval elapsed, during which the stillness of the place was sometimes interrupted by a closing door, and, at others, by indistinct sounds, which yet

appeared to Vivaldi like lamentations and extorted groans. Inquisitors, in their long black robes, issued, from time to time from the passages, and crossed the hall to other avenues. They eyed the prisoners with curiosity, but without pity. Their visages, with few exceptions, seemed stamped with the characters of demons. Vivaldi could not look upon the grave cruelty, or the ferocious impatience, their countenances severally expressed, without reading in them the fate of some fellow creature, the fate, which these men seemed going, even at this moment, to confirm; and, as they passed with soundless steps, he shrunk from observation, as if their very looks possessed some supernatural power, and could have struck death. But he followed their fleeting figures as they proceeded on their work of horror, to where the last glimmering ray faded into darkness, expecting to see other doors of other chambers open to receive them. While meditating upon these horrors, Vivaldi lost every selfish consideration

in astonishment and indignation of the sufferings, which the phrenzied wickedness of man prepares for man, who, even at the moment of infliction, insults his victim with assertions of the justice and necessity of such measures. Is this possible! said Vivaldi internally, Can this be in human nature!—Can such horrible perversion of right be permitted! Can man, who calls himself endowed with reason, and immeasurably superior to every other created being, argue himself into the commission of such horrible folly, such inveterate cruelty, as exceeds all the acts of the most irrational and ferocious brute. Brutes do not deliberately slaughter their species; it remains for man only, man, proud of his prerogative of reason, and boasting of his sense of justice, to unite the most terrible extremes of folly and wickedness!

Vivaldi had been no stranger to the existence of this tribunal; he had long understood the nature of the establishment, and had often received particular accounts of its customs and laws; but,

though he had believed before, it was now only that conviction appeared to impress his understanding. A new view of human nature seemed to burst, at once, upon his mind, and he could not have experienced greater astonishment, if this had been the first moment, in which he had heard of the institution. But, when he thought of Ellena, considered that she was in the power of this tribunal, and that it was probable she was at this moment within the same dreadful walls, grief, indignation, and despair, irritated him almost to phrenzy: He seemed suddenly animated with supernatural strength, and ready to attempt impossibilities for her deliverance. It was by a strong effort for self-command, that he forbore bursting the bonds, which held him, and making a desperate attempt to seek her through the vast extent of these prisons. Reflection, however, had not so entirely forsaken him, but that he saw the impossibility of succeeding in such an effort, the moment he had conceived it, and he forbore



to rush upon the certain destruction, to which it must have led. His passions, thus restrained, seemed to become virtues, and to display themselves in the energy of his courage and his fortitude. His soul became stern and vigorous in despair, and his manner and countenance assumed a calm dignity, which seemed to awe, in some degree, even his guards. The pain of his wounds was no longer felt ; it appeared as if the strength of his intellectual self had subdued the infirmities of the body, and, perhaps, in these moments of elevation, he could have endured the torture without shrinking.

Paulo, meanwhile, mute and grave, was watchful of all that passed ; he observed the revolutions in his master's mind, with grief first, and then with surprize, but he could not imitate the noble fortitude, which now gave weight and steadiness to Vivaldi's thoughts. And when he looked on the power and gloom around him, and on the visages of the passing Inquisitors, he began to

repent, that he had so freely delivered his opinion of this tribunal, in the presence of its agents, and to perceive, that if he played up the kind of tune he had threatened, it would probably be the last he should ever be permitted to perform in this world.

At length, the chief officer descended the staircase, and immediately bade Vivaldi follow him. Paulo was accompanying his master, but was withheld by the guard, and told he was to be disposed of in a different way. This was the moment of his severest trial; he declared he would not be separated from his master.

What did I demand to be brought here for, he cried, if it was not that I might go shares with the signor in all his troubles? This is not a place to come to for pleasure, I warrant; and I can promise ye, gentlemen, I would not have come within an hundred miles of you, if it had not been for my master's sake.

The guards roughly interrupted him,

and were carrying him away, when Vivaldi's commanding voice arrested them. He returned to speak a few words of consolation to his faithful servant, and, since they were to be separated, to take leave of him.

Paulo embraced his knees, and, while he wept, and his words were almost stifled by sobs, declared no force should drag him from his master, while he had life; and repeatedly appealed to the guards, with—What did I demand to be brought here for? Did ever any body come here to seek pleasure? What right have you to prevent my going shares with my master in his troubles?

We do not intend to deny you that pleasure, friend, replied one of the guards!

Don't you? Then heaven bless you! cried Paulo, springing from his knees, and shaking the man by the hand with a violence, that would nearly have dislocated the shoulder of a person less robust.

So come with us, added the guard, drawing him away from Vivaldi. Paulo now became outrageous, and, struggling with the guards, burst from them, and again fell at the feet of his master, who raised and embraced him, endeavouring to prevail with him to submit quietly to what was inevitable, and to encourage him with hope.

I trust that our separation will be short, said Vivaldi, and that we shall meet in happier circumstances. My innocence must soon appear.

We shall never, never meet again, signor mio, in this world, said Paulo, sobbing violently, so don't make me hope so. That old abbess knows what she is about too well to let us escape; or she would not have caught us up so cunningly as she did; so what signifies innocence! O! if my old lord, the Marchese, did but know where we are!

Vivaldi interrupted him, and turning to the guards said, I recommend my faithful servant to your compassion; he is innocent. It will some time, perhaps,

be in my power to recompence you for any indulgence you may allow him, and I shall value it a thousand times more highly, than any you could shew to myself! Farewell, Paulo,—farewell! Officer, I am ready.

O stay, signor, for one moment—stay! said Paulo.

We can wait no longer, said the guard, and again drew Paulo away, who looking piteously after Vivaldi, alternately repeated, Farewell, dear maestro! farewell, dear, dear maestro! and, What did I demand to be brought here for? What did I demand to be brought here for?—what was it for, if not to go shares with my maestro? till Vivaldi was beyond the reach of sight and of hearing.

Vivaldi, having followed the officer up the staircase, passed through a gallery to an anti-chamber, where, being delivered into the custody of some persons in waiting, his conductor disappeared beyond a folding door, that led to an inner apartment. Over this door was

an inscription in Hebrew characters, traced in blood colour. Dante's inscription on the entrance of the infernal regions, would have been suitable to a place, where every circumstance and feature seemed to say, "Hope, that comes to all, comes not here!"

Vivaldi conjectured, that in this chamber they were preparing for him the instruments, which were to extort a confession; and though he knew little of the regular proceedings of this tribunal, he had always understood, that the torture was inflicted upon the accused person, till he made confession of the crime, of which he was suspected. By such a mode of proceeding, the innocent were certain of suffering longer than the guilty; for, as they had nothing to confess, the Inquisitor, mistaking innocence for obstinacy, persevered in his inflictions, and it frequently happened that he compelled the innocent to become criminal, and assert a falsehood, that they might be released from anguish, which they could no

longer sustain. Vivaldi considered this circumstance undauntedly; every faculty of his soul was bent up to firmness and endurance. He believed that he understood the extent of the charge, which would be brought against him, a charge as false, as a specious confirmation of it, would be terrible in its consequence both to Ellena and himself. Yet every art would be practised to bring him to an acknowledgment of having carried off a nun, and he knew also, that, since the prosecutor and the witnesses are never confronted with the prisoner in cases of severe accusation, and since their very names are concealed from him, it would be scarcely possible for him to prove his innocence. But he did not hesitate an instant whether to sacrifice himself for Ellena, determining rather to expire beneath the merciless inflictions of the Inquisitors, than to assert a falsehood, which must involve her in destruction.

The officer, at length, appeared, and, having beckoned Vivaldi to advance,

uncovered his head, and bared his arms. He then led him forward through the folding door into the chamber; having done which, he immediately withdrew, and the door which shut out Hope, closed after him.

Vivaldi found himself in a spacious apartment where only two persons were visible, who were seated at a large table, that occupied the centre of the room. They were both habited in black; the one, who seemed by his piercing eye, and extraordinary physiognomy, to be an Inquisitor, wore on his head a kind of black turban, which heightened the natural ferocity of his visage; the other was uncovered, and his arms bared to the elbows. A book, with some instruments of singular appearance, lay before him. Round the table were several unoccupied chairs, on the backs of which appeared figurative signs, at the upper end of the apartment, a gigantic crucifix stretched nearly to the vaulted roof; and, at the lower end, suspended from an arch in the wall, was a dark



curtain, but whether it veiled a window, or shrouded some object or person, necessary to the designs of the Inquisitor, there were little means of judging. It was, however, suspended from an arch, such as sometimes conceals a casement, or leads to a deep recess.

The Inquisitor called on Vivaldi to advance, and, when he had reached the table, put a book into his hands, and bade him swear to reveal the truth, and keep for ever secret whatever he might see or hear in the apartment.

Vivaldi hesitated to obey so unqualified a command. The inquisitor reminded him, by a look, not to be mistaken, that he was absolute here; but Vivaldi still hesitated. Shall I consent to my own condemnation? said he to himself. The malice of demons like these may convert the most innocent circumstances into matter of accusation, for my destruction, and I must answer whatever questions they choose to ask. And shall I swear, also, to

conceal whatever I may witness in this chamber, when I know that the most diabolical cruelties are hourly practised here?

The Inquisitor, in a voice which would have made a heart less fortified than Vivaldi's tremble, again commanded him to swear; at the same time, he made a signal to the person, who sat at the opposite end of the table, and who appeared to be an inferior officer.

Vivaldi was still silent, but he began to consider that, unconscious as he was of crime, it was scarcely possible for his words to be tortured into a self-accusation; and that, whatever he might witness, no retribution would be prevented, no evil withheld by the oath, which bound him to secrecy, since his most severe denunciation could avail nothing against the supreme power of this tribunal. As he did not perceive any good, which could arise from refusing the oath; and saw much immediate evil from resistance, he consented to receive it. Notwithstanding this,

when he put the book to his lips, and uttered the tremendous vow prescribed to him, hesitation and reluctance returned upon his mind, and an icy coldness struck to his heart. He was so much affected, that circumstances, apparently the most trivial, had at this moment influence upon his imagination. As he accidentally threw his eyes upon the curtain, which he had observed before without emotion, and now thought it moved, he almost started in expectation of seeing some person, an Inquisitor perhaps, as terrific as the one before him, or an accuser as malicious as Schedoni, steal from behind it.

The Inquisitor having administered the oath, and the attendant having noted it in his book, the examination began. After demanding, as is usual, the names and titles of Vivaldi and his family, and his place of residence, to which he fully replied, the Inquisitor asked, whether he understood the nature of the accusation on which he had been arrested.

The order for my arrestation informed me, replied Vivaldi.

Look to your words! said the Inquisitor, and remember your oath. What was the ground of accusation?

I understood, said Vivaldi, that I was accused of having stolen a nun from her sanctuary.

A faint degree of surprise appeared on the brow of the inquisitor. You confess it, then? he said, after the pause of a moment, and making a signal to the secretary, who immediately noted Vivaldi's words.

I solemnly deny it, replied Vivaldi, the accusation is false and malicious.

Remember the oath you have taken! repeated the inquisitor, learn also, that mercy is shewn to such as make full confession; but that the torture is applied to those, who have the folly and the obstinacy to withhold the truth.

If you torture me till I acknowledge the justness of this accusation, said Vivaldi, I must expire under your inflictions, for suffering never shall compel

me to assert a falsehood. It is not the truth which you seek ; it is not the guilty, whom you punish ; the innocent, having no crimes to confess, are the victims of your cruelty, or, to escape from it, become criminal, and proclaim a lie.

Recollect yourself, said the inquisitor, sternly. You are not brought hither to accuse, but to answer accusation. You say you are innocent ; yet acknowledge yourself to be acquainted with the subject of the charge, which is to be urged against you ! How could you know this, but from the voice of conscience ?

From the words of your own summons, replied Vivaldi, and from those of your officials who arrested me.

How ! exclaimed the inquisitor, note that, pointing to the secretary ; he says by the words of our summons ; now we know, that you never read that summons. He says also by the words of our officials ;—it appears, then, he is ignorant, that death would follow such a breach of confidence.

It is true, I never did read the summons, replied Vivaldi, and as true, that I never asserted I did; the friar, who read it, told of what it accused me, and your officials confirmed the testimony.

No more of this equivocation! said the inquisitor, Speak only to the question.

I will not suffer my assertions to be misrepresented, replied Vivaldi, or my words to be perverted against myself.

I have sworn to speak the truth only; since you believe I violate my oath, and doubt my direct and simple words, I will speak no more.

The inquisitor half rose from his chair, and his countenance grew paler. Audacious heretic! he said, will you dispute, insult, and disobey, the commands of our most holy tribunal! You will be taught the consequence of your desperate impiety.—To the torture with him!

A stern smile was on the features of Vivaldi; his eyes were calmly fixed on the inquisitor, and his attitude was un-

daunted and firm. His courage, and the cool contempt which his looks expressed, seemed to touch his examiner, who perceived that he had not a common mind to operate upon. He abandoned, therefore, for the present, terrific measures, and, resuming his usual manner, proceeded in the examination.

Where were you arrested?

At the chapel of San Sebastian, on the lake of Celano.

You are certain as to this? asked the inquisitor, you are sure it was not at the village of Legano, on the high road between Celano and Rome.

Vivaldi, while he confirmed his assertion, recollected with some surprise, that Legano was the place where the guard had been changed, and he mentioned the circumstance. The inquisitor, however, proceeded in his questions, without appearing to notice it. Was any person arrested with you?

You cannot be ignorant, replied Vivaldi, that Signora di Rosalba was

seized at the same time, upon the false charge of being a nun, who had broken her vows, and eloped from her convent; nor that Paulo Mendrico, my faithful servant! was also made a prisoner, though upon what pretence he was arrested I am utterly ignorant.

The inquisitor remained for some moments in thoughtful silence, and then inquired slightly concerning the family of Ellena, and her usual place of residence. Vivaldi, fearful of making some assertion that might be prejudicial to her, referred him to herself; but the inquiry was repeated.

She is now within these walls, replied Vivaldi, hoping to learn from the manner of his examiner, whether his fears were just, and can answer these questions better than myself.

The inquisitor merely bade the notary write down her name, and then remained for a few moments meditating. At length, he said, Do you know where you now are?



Vivaldi, smiling at the question, replied, I understand that I am in the prisons of the inquisition, at Rome.

Do you know what are the crimes that subject persons to the cognizance of the *holy office*?

Vivaldi was silent.

Your conscience informs *you*, and your silence confirms *me*. Let me admonish you, once more, to make a full confession of your guilt; remember, that this is a merciful tribunal, and shews favour to such as acknowledge their crimes?

Vivaldi smiled; but the inquisitor proceeded.

It does not resemble some severe, yet just courts, where immediate execution follows the confession of a criminal. No! it is merciful, and though it punishes guilt, it never applies the torture but in cases of necessity, when the obstinate silence of the prisoner requires such a measure. You see, therefore, what you may avoid, and what expect.

But if the prisoner has nothing to

confess ! said Vivaldi,—Can your tortures make him guilty ? They may force a weak mind to be guilty of falsehood ; to escape present anguish a man may unwarily condemn himself to death ! You will find that I am not such a one.

Young man, replied the inquisitor, you will understand too soon, that we never act but upon sure authority ; and will wish, too late, that you had made an honest confession. Your silence cannot keep from us a knowledge of your offences ; we are in possession of facts ; and your obstinacy can neither wrest from us the truth, or pervert it. Your most secret offences are already written on the tablets of the *holy office* ; your conscience cannot reflect them more justly.—Tremble, therefore, and revere. But understand, that, though we have sufficient proof of your guilt, we require you to confess ; and that the punishment of obstinacy is as certain, as that of any other offence.

Vivaldi made no reply, and the inqui-

ditor, after a momentary silence, added, Was you ever in the church of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?

Before I answer the question, said Vivaldi, I require the name of my accuser.

You are to recollect that you have no right to demand any thing in this place, observed the inquisitor, nor can you be ignorant that the name of the informer is always kept sacred from the knowledge of the accused. Who would venture to do his duty, if his name were to be exposed to the vengeance of the criminal, against whom he informs? It is only in a particular process that the accuser is brought forward.

The names of the witnesses? demanded Vivaldi. The same justice conceals them also from the knowledge of the accused, replied the inquisitor.

And is no justice left for the accused? said Vivaldi. Is he to be tried and condemned without being confronted with either his prosecutor, or the witnesses!

Your questions are too many, said

the inquisitor, and your answers too few. The informer is not also the prosecutor; the *holy office*, before which the information is laid, is the prosecutor, and the dispenser of justice; its public accuser lays the circumstances, and the testimonies of the witnesses, before the court. But too much of this.

How! exclaimed Vivaldi, is the tribunal at once the prosecutor, witness, and judge? What can private malice wish for more, than such a court of justice, at which to arraign its enemy? The stiletto of the assassin is not so sure, or so fatal to innocence. I now perceive, that it avails me nothing to be guiltless; a single enemy is sufficient to accomplish my destruction.

You have an enemy then? observed the inquisitor.

Vivaldi was too well convinced that he had one, but there was not sufficient proof, as to the person of this enemy, to justify him in asserting that it was Schedoni. The circumstance of Ellena having been arrested, would have com-

pelled him to suspect another person as being at least accessory to the designs of the confessor, had not credulity started in horror from the supposition, that a mother's resentment could possibly betray her son into the prisons of the inquisition, though this mother had exhibited a temper of remorseless cruelty towards a stranger, who had interrupted her views for that son.

You have an enemy then? repeated the inquisitor.

That I am here sufficiently proves it, replied Vivaldi. But I am so little any man's enemy, that I know not whom to call mine.

It is evident, then, that you have no enemy, observed the subtle inquisitor, and that this accusation is brought against you by a respecer of truth, and a faithful servant of the Roman interest.

Vivaldi was shocked to perceive the insidious art, by which he had been betrayed into a declaration apparently so harmless, and the cruel dexterity, with which it had been turned against

him. A lofty and contemptuous silence was all that he opposed to the treachery of his examiner, on whose countenance appeared a smile of triumph and self-congratulation, the life of a fellow-creature being, in his estimation, of no comparative importance with the self-applauses of successful art; the art too, upon which he most valued himself—that of his profession.

The inquisitor proceeded, You persist, then, in withholding the truth? He paused, but Vivaldi making no reply, he resumed.

Since it is evident, from your own declaration, that you have no enemy, whom private resentment might have instigated to accuse you; and, from other circumstances, which have occurred in your conduct, that you are conscious of more than you have confessed,—it appears, that the accusation, which has been urged against you, is not a malicious slander. I exhort you, therefore, and once more conjure you, by our holy faith, to make an ingenuous

confession of your offences, and to save yourself from the means, which must of necessity be enforced to obtain a confession before your trial commences. I adjure you, also, to consider, that by such open conduct only, can mercy be won to soften the justice of this most upright tribunal.

Vivaldi, perceiving that it was now necessary for him to reply, once more solemnly asserted his innocence of the crime alleged against him in the summons, and of the consciousness of any act, which might lawfully subject him to the notice of the *holy office*.

The inquisitor again demanded what was the crime alleged, and Vivaldi having repeated the accusation, he again bade the secretary note it, as he did which, Vivaldi thought he perceived upon his features something of a malignant satisfaction, for which he knew not how to account. When the secretary had finished, Vivaldi was ordered to subscribe his name and quality to the depositions, and he obeyed.

The inquisitor then bade him consider of the admonition he had received, and prepare either to confess on the morrow, or to undergo the question. As he concluded, he gave a signal, and the officer, who had conducted Vivaldi into the chamber, immediately appeared.

You know your orders, said the inquisitor, receive your prisoner, and see that they are obeyed.

The official bowed, and Vivaldi followed him from the apartment in melancholy silence.

The inquisitor again demanded what was the crime alleged, and Vivaldi having repeated the accusation, he again bade the secretary note it, as he did which Vivaldi thought he perceived upon his features something of a malignant satisfaction, for which he knew not how to account. When the secretary had finished Vivaldi was ordered to subscribe his name and quality to the depositions, and he obeyed.



THE ITALIAN 44

CHAPTER II.

Call up the Spirit of the ocean, bid  
Him raise the storm! The waves begin to heave,  
To curl, to foam: the white surges run far  
Upon the dark'ning waters, and mighty  
Sounds of strife are heard. Wrapt in the midnight  
Of the clouds, sits Terror, meditating  
Woe. Her doubtful form appears and fades,  
Like the shadow of Death, when he mingles  
With the gloom of the sepulchre, and broods  
In lonely silence. Her spirits are abroad!  
They do her bidding! Hark, to that shriek!  
The echoes of the shore have heard!

ELLENA, meanwhile, when she had been carried from the chapel of San Sebastian, was placed upon a horse in waiting, and, guarded by the two men who had seized her, commenced a journey, which continued with little interruption during two nights and days. She had no means of judging whither she was going, and listened in vain expectation, for the feet of horses, and the voice of Vivaldi, who, she had been told, was following on the same road.

The steps of travellers seldom broke

upon the silence of these regions, and, during the journey, she was met only by some market-people passing to a neighbouring town, or now and then by the vine-dressers or labourers in the olive grounds; and she descended upon the vast plains of Apulia, still ignorant of her situation. An encampment, not of warriors, but of shepherds, who were leading their flocks to the mountains of Abruzzo, enlivened a small tract of these levels, which were shadowed on the north and east by the mountainous ridge of the Garganus stretching from the Apennine far into the Adriatic.

The appearance of the shepherds was nearly as wild and savage as that of the men, who conducted Ellena; but their pastoral instruments of flageolets and tabors spoke of more civilized feelings, as they sounded sweetly over the desert. Her guards rested, and refreshed themselves with goat's milk, barley cakes, and almonds, and the manners of these shepherds, like those she had formerly met with on the mountains, proved

to be more hospitable than their air had indicated.

After Ellena had quitted this pastoral camp, no vestige of a human residence appeared for several leagues, except here and there the towers of a decayed fortress, perched upon the lofty acclivities she was approaching, and half concealed in the woods. The evening of the second day was drawing on, when her guards drew near the forest, which she had long observed in the distance, spreading over the many rising steps of the Garganus. They entered by a track, a road it could not be called, which led among oaks and gigantic chesnuts, apparently the growth of centuries, and so thickly interwoven, that their branches formed a canopy, which seldom admitted the sky. The gloom, which they threw around, and the thickets of cystus, juniper, and lenticus, which flourished beneath the shade, gave a character of fearful wildness to the scene.

Having reached an eminence, where the trees were more thinly scattered,

Ellena perceived the forests spreading on all sides among hills and vallies, and descending towards the Adriatic, which bounded the distance in front. The coast, bending into a bay, was rocky and bold. Lofty pinnacles, wooded to their summits, rose over the shores, and cliffs of naked marble of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance, obtruded themselves far into the waves, breasting their eternal fury. Beyond the margin of the coast, as far as the eye could reach, appeared pointed mountains, darkened with forests, rising ridge over ridge in many successions. Ellena, as she surveyed this wild scenery, felt as if she was going into eternal banishment from society. She was tranquil, but it was with the quietness of exhausted grief, not of resignation; and she looked back upon the past, and awaited the future, with a kind of out-breathed despair.

She had travelled for some miles through the forest, her guards only now and then uttering to each other a ques-

tion, or an observation concerning the changes which had taken place in the bordering scenery, since they last passed it, when night began to close in upon them.

Ellena perceived her approach to the sea, only by the murmurs of its surge upon the rocky coast, till, having reached an eminence, which was, however, no more than the base of two woody mountains that towered closely over it, she saw dimly its gray surface spreading in the bay below. She now ventured to ask how much further she was to go, and whether she was to be taken on board one of the little vessels, apparently fishing smacks, that she could just discern at anchor.

You have not far to go now, replied one of the guards, surlily; you will soon be at the end of your journey, and at rest.

They descended to the shore, and presently came to a lonely dwelling, which stood so near the margin of the sea, as almost to be washed by the

waves. No light appeared at any of the lattices; and, from the silence that reigned within, it seemed to be uninhabited. The guard had probably reason to know otherwise, for they halted at the door, and shouted with all their strength. No voice, however, answered to their call, and, while they persevered in efforts to rouse the inhabitants, Elena anxiously examined the building, as exactly as the twilight would permit. It was of an ancient and peculiar structure, and, though scarcely important enough for a mansion, had evidently never been designed for the residence of peasants.

The walls, of unhewn marble, were high, and strengthened by bastions; and the edifice had turreted corners, which, with the porch in front, and the sloping roof, were falling fast into numerous symptoms of decay. The whole building, with its dark windows and soundless avenues, had an air strikingly forlorn and solitary. A high wall surrounded the small court in which it

stood, and probably had once served as a defence to the dwelling; but the gates, which should have closed against intruders, could no longer perform their office; one of the folds had dropped from its fastenings, and lay on the ground almost concealed in a deep bed of weeds, and the other creaked on its hinges to every blast, at each swing seeming ready to follow the fate of its companion.

The repeated calls of the guard, were, at length, answered by a rough voice from within; when the door of the porch was lazily unbarred, and opened by a man, whose visage was so misery-struck, that Ellena could not look upon it with indifference, though wrapt in misery of her own. The lamp he held threw a gleam athwart it, and shewed the gaunt ferocity of famine, to which the shadow of his hollow eyes added a terrific wildness. Ellena shrunk while she gazed. She had never before seen villainy and suffering so strongly pictured on the same face, and she observed him with a degree of thrilling curiosity, which for

a moment excluded from her mind all consciousness of the evils to be apprehended from him.

It was evident, that this house had not been built for his reception; and she conjectured, that he was the servant of some cruel agent of the Marchesa de Vivaldi.

From the porch, she followed into an old hall, ruinous, and destitute of any kind of furniture. It was not extensive but lofty, for it seemed to ascend to the roof of the edifice, and the chambers above opened around it into a corridor.

Some half sullen salutations were exchanged between the guard and the stranger, whom they called Spalatro, as they passed into a chamber, where, it appeared that he had been sleeping on a mattress laid in a corner. All the other furniture of the place, were two or three broken chairs and a table. He eyed Ellena with a shrewd contracted brow, and then looked significantly at the guard, but was silent, till he desired them all to sit down, adding, that he



would dress some fish for supper. Elena discovered that this man was the master of the place; it appeared also that he was the only inhabitant; and, when the guard soon after informed her their journey concluded here, her worst apprehensions were confirmed. The efforts she made to sustain her spirits, were no longer successful. It seemed that she was brought hither by ruffians to a lonely house on the sea shore, inhabited by a man who had "villain" engraved in every line of his face, to be the victim of inexorable pride and an insatiable desire of revenge. After considering these circumstances, and the words, which had just told her, she was to go no further, conviction struck like lightning upon her heart; and, believing she was brought hither to be assassinated, horror chilled all her frame, and her senses forsook her.

On recovering, she found herself surrounded by the guard and the stranger, and she would have supplicated for

their pity, but that she feared to exasperate them by betraying her suspicions. She complained of fatigue, and requested to be shewn to her room. The men looked upon one another, hesitated, and then asked her to partake of the fish, that was preparing. But, Ellena having declined the invitation with as good a grace as she could assume, they consented that she should withdraw. Spalatro, taking the lamp, lighted her across the hall, to the corridor above, where he opened the door of a chamber, in which he said she was to sleep.

—Where is my bed? said the afflicted Ellena, fearfully, as she looked round. It is there—on the floor, replied Spalatro, pointing to a miserable mattress, over which hung the tattered curtains of what had once been a canopy. If you want the lamp, he added, I will leave it, and come for it in a minute or two.

—Will you not let me have a lamp for the night, she said in a supplicating and timid voice.

For the night ! said the man gruffly ;  
What ! to set fire to the house.

Ellena still entreated that he would  
allow her the comfort of a light.

Ay, ay, replied Spalatro, with a look  
she could not comprehend, it would be  
a great comfort to you, truly ! You do  
not know what you ask.

What is it that you mean ? said Ellena,  
eagerly ; I conjure you, in the name of  
our holy church, to tell me !

Spalatro stepped suddenly back, and  
looked upon her with surprise, but  
without speaking.

Have mercy on me ! said Ellena,  
greatly alarmed by his manner ; I am  
friendless, and without help !

What do you fear, said the man, reco-  
vering himself ; and then, without wait-  
ing her reply, added—Is it such an un-  
merciful deed to take away a lamp ?

Ellena, who again feared to betray  
the extent of her suspicions, only replied,  
that it would be merciful to leave it,  
for that her spirits were low, and she

required light to cheer them in a new abode.

We do not stand upon such conceits here, replied Spalatro, we have other matters to mind. Besides, its the only lamp in the house, and the company below are in darkness while I am losing time here. I will leave it for two minutes, and no more. Ellena made a sign for him to put down the lamp; and, when he left the room, she heard the door barred upon her.

She employed these two minutes in examining the chamber, and the possibility it might afford of an escape. It was a large apartment, unfurnished and unswept of the cobwebs of many years. The only door she discovered was the one, by which she had entered, and the only window a lattice, which was grated. Such preparation for preventing escape, seemed to hint how much there might be to escape from.

Having examined the chamber, without finding a single circumstance to en-

courage hope, tried the strength of the bars, which she could not shake, and sought in vain for an inside fastening to her door, she placed the lamp beside it, and awaited the return of Spalatro. In a few moments he came, and offered her a cup of sour wine with a slice of bread ; which, being somewhat soothed by this attention, she did not think proper to reject.

Spalatro then quitted the room, and the door was again barred. Left once more alone, she tried to overcome apprehension by prayer ; and after offering up her vespers with a fervent heart, she became more confiding and composed.

But it was impossible that she could so far forget the dangers of her situation, as to seek sleep, however wearied she might be, while the door of her room remained unsecured against the intrusion of the ruffians below ; and, as she had no means of fastening it, she determined to watch during the whole night. Thus left to solitude and darkness, she seated herself upon the mattress to await the

return of morning, and was soon lost in sad reflection ; every minute occurrence of the past day and of the conduct of her guards moved in review before her judgment ; and, combining these with the circumstances of her present situation, scarcely a doubt as to the fate designed for her remained. It seemed highly improbable that the Marchesa di Vivaldi had sent her hither merely for imprisonment, since she might have confined her in a convent, with much less trouble ; and still more so, when Ellena considered the character of the Marchesa, such as she had already experienced it. The appearance of this house, and of the man, who inhabited it, with the circumstance of no woman being found residing here, each and all of these signified, that she was brought hither, not for long imprisonment, but for death. Her utmost efforts for fortitude, or resignation, could not overcome the cold tremblings, the sickness of heart, the faintness and universal horror, that assailed her. How often, with tears of mingled terror and

grief, did she call upon Vivaldi—Vivaldi, alas! far distant—to save her; how often exclaim in agony, that she should never, never see him more!

She was spared, however, the horror of believing that he was an inhabitant of the Inquisition. Having detected the imposition, which had been practised towards herself, and that she was neither on the way to the *holy office*, nor conducted by persons belonging to it, she concluded, that the whole affair of Vivaldi's arrest had been planned by the Marchesa, merely as a pretence for confining him, till she should be placed beyond the reach of his assistance. She hoped, therefore, that he had only been sent to some private residence belonging to his family, and that, when her fate was decided, he would be released, and she be the only victim. This was the sole consideration, that afforded any degree of assuagement to her sufferings.

The people below sat till a late hour. She listened often to their distant voices, as they were distinguishable in the

pauses of the surge, that broke loud and hollow on the shore; and every time the creaking hinges of their room door moved, apprehended they were coming to her. At length, it appeared they had left the apartment, or had fallen asleep there, for a profound stillness reigned whenever the murmur of the waves sunk. Doubt did not long deceive her, for, while she yet listened, she distinguished footsteps ascending to the corridor. She heard them approach her chamber, and stop at the door; she heard also, the low whisperings of their voices, as they seemed consulting on what was to be done, and she scarcely ventured to draw breath, while she intensely attended to them. Not a word, however, distinctly reached her, till, as one of them was departing, another called out in a half whisper, It is below on the table in my girdle; make haste. The man came back, and said something in a lower voice, to which the other replied, She sleeps, or Ellena was deceived by the hissing consonants of some other



words. He then descended the stairs ; and in a few minutes she perceived his comrade also pass away from the door ; she listened to his retreating steps, till the roaring of the sea was alone heard in their stead.

Ellena's terrors were relieved only for a moment. Considering the import of the words, it appeared that the man, who had descended, was gone for the stiletto of the other, such an instrument being usually worn in the girdle, and from the assurance, She sleeps, he seemed to fear that his words had been overheard ; and she listened again for their steps, but they came no more.

Happily for Ellena's peace, she knew not that her chamber had a door, so contrived as to open without sound, by which assassins might enter unsuspectedly at any hour of the night. Believing that the inhabitants of this house had now retired to rest, her hopes and her spirits began to revive ; but she was yet sleepless and watchful. She measured the chamber with unequal steps,

often starting as the old boards shook and groaned where she passed; and often pausing to listen whether all was yet still in the corridor. The gleam, which a rising moon threw between the bars of her window, now began to shew many shadowy objects in the chamber, which she did not recollect to have observed while the lamp was there. More than once, she fancied she saw something glide along towards the place where the mattress was laid, and, almost congealed with terror, she stood still to watch it; but the illusion, if such it was, disappeared where the moonlight faded, and even her fears could not give shape to it beyond. Had she not known that her chamber door remained strongly barred, she would have believed this was an assassin stealing to the bed, where it might be supposed she slept. Even now the thought occurred to her, and vague as it was, had power to strike an anguish, almost deadly, through her heart, while she considered that her immediate situation was nearly as perilous as the one

she had imaged. Again she listened, and scarcely dared to breathe; but not the lightest sound occurred in the pauses of the waves, and she believed herself convinced, that no person except herself, was in the room. That she was deceived in this belief, appeared from her unwillingness to approach the mattress, while it was yet involved in shade. Unable to overcome her reluctance, she took her station at the window, till the strengthening rays should allow a clearer view of the chamber, and in some degree restore her confidence; and she watched the scene without as it gradually became visible. The moon, rising over the ocean, shewed its restless surface spreading to the wide horizon; and the waves which broke in foam upon the rocky beach below, retiring in long white lines far upon the waters. She listened to their measured and solemn sound, and, somewhat soothed by the solitary grandeur of the view, remained at the lattice till the moon had risen high into the heavens; and even till

morning began to dawn upon the sea, and purple the eastern clouds.

Re-assured, by the light that now pervaded the room, she returned to the mattress; where anxiety at length yielded to her weariness, and she obtained a short repose.

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CHAPTER III.

And yet I fear you ; for you are fatal then,  
When your eyes roll so.

Alas ! why gnaw you so your nether lip ?

Some bloody passion shakes your very frame :

These are portents ; but yet I hope, I hope,  
They do not point on me.

SHAKESPEARE.

ELLENA was awakened from profound sleep, by a loud noise at the door of her chamber ; when, starting from her mattress, she looked around her with surprise and dismay, as imperfect recollections of the past began to gather on her mind. She distinguished the undrawing of iron bars, and then the countenance of Spalatro at her door, before she had a clear remembrance of her situation—that she was a prisoner in a house on a lonely shore, and that this man was her jailor. Such sickness of the heart returned with these convictions, such faintness and terror, that unable to support her trembling frame, she sunk

again upon the mattress, without demanding the reason of this abrupt intrusion.

I have brought you some breakfast, said Spalatro, if you are awake to take it; but you seem to be asleep yet. Surely you have had sleep sufficient for one night; you went to rest soon enough.

Ellena made no reply, but, deeply affected with a sense of her situation, looked with beseeching eyes at the man, who advanced, holding forth an oaten cake and a bason of milk. Where shall I set them? said he, you must needs be glad of them, since you had no supper.

Ellena thanked him, and desired he would place them on the floor, for there was neither table nor chair in the room. As he did this, she was struck with the expression of his countenance, which exhibited a strange mixture of archness and malignity. He seemed congratulating himself upon his ingenuity, and anticipating some occasion of triumph; and she was so much interested, that

her observation never quitted him while he remained in the room. As his eyes accidentally met her's, he turned them away, with the abruptness of a person who is conscious of evil intentions, and fears lest they should be detected; nor once looked up till he hastily left the chamber, when she heard the door secured as formerly.

The impression, which his look had left on her mind, so wholly engaged her in conjecture, that a considerable time elapsed, before she remembered that he had brought the refreshment she so much required; but, as she now lifted it to her lips, a horrible suspicion arrested her hand; it was not, however, before she had swallowed a small quantity of the milk. The look of Spalatro, which occasioned her surprise, had accompanied the setting down of the breakfast, and it occurred to her, that poison was infused in this liquid. She was thus compelled to refuse the sustenance, which was become necessary to her, for she feared to taste even of

the oaten cake, since Spalatro had offered it, but the little milk she had unwarily taken, was so very small, that she had no apprehension concerning it.

The day, however, was passed in terror, and almost in despondency; she could neither doubt the purpose, for which she had been brought hither, nor discover any possibility of escaping from her persecutors; yet that propensity to hope which buoys up the human heart, even in the severest hours of trial, sustained, in some degree, her fainting spirits.

During these miserable hours of solitude and suspense, the only alleviation to her suffering arose from a belief, that Vivaldi was safe, at least from danger, though not from grief; but she now understood too much of the dexterous contrivances of the Marchesa, his mother, to think it was practicable for him to escape from her designs, and again restore her to liberty.

All day Ellena either leaned against the bars of her window, lost in revery,



while her unconscious eyes were fixed upon the ocean, whose murmurs she no longer heard ; or she listened for some sound from within the house, that might assist her conjectures, as to the number of persons below, or what might be passing there. The house, however, was profoundly still, except when now and then a footstep sauntered along a distant passage, or a door was heard to close ; but not the hum of a single voice arose from the lower rooms, nor any symptom of there being more than one person, besides herself, in the dwelling. Though she had not heard her former guards depart, it appeared certain that they were gone, and that she was left alone in this place with Spalatro. What could be the purport of such a proceeding, Ellena could not imagine ; if her death was designed, it seemed strange that one person only should be left to the hazard of the deed, when three must have rendered the completion of it certain. But this surprise vanished, when her suspicion of poison returned ; for it

was probable, that these men had believed their scheme to be already nearly accomplished, and had abandoned her to die alone, in a chamber, from whence escape was impracticable, leaving Spalatro to dispose of her remains. All the incongruities she had separately observed in their conduct, seemed now to harmonize and unite in one plan; and her death, designed by poison, and that poison to be conveyed in the disguise of nourishment, appeared to have been the object of it. Whether it were that the strength of this conviction affected her fancy, or that the cause was real, Ellena remembering at this moment that she had tasted the milk, was seized with an universal shuddering, and thought she felt that the poison had been sufficiently potent to affect her, even in the inconsiderable quantity she might have taken.

While she was thus agitated, she distinguished footsteps loitering near her door, and, attentively listening, became convinced, that some person was in the

corridor. The steps moved softly, sometimes stopping for an instant, as if to allow time for listening, and soon after passed away.

It is Spalatro! said Ellena; he believes that I have taken the poison, and he comes to listen for my dying groans! Alas! he is only come somewhat too soon, perhaps!

As this horrible supposition occurred, the shuddering returned with increased violence, and she sunk, almost fainting, on the mattress; but the fit was not of long continuance. When it gradually left her, and recollection revived, she perceived, however, the prudence of suffering Spalatro to suppose she had taken the beverage he brought her, since such belief would at least procure some delay of further schemes, and every delay afforded some possibility for hope to rest upon. Ellena, therefore, poured through the bars of her window, the milk, which she believed Spalatro had designed should be fatal in its consequence.

It was evening, when she again fancied footsteps were lingering near her door, and the suspicion was confirmed, when, on turning her eyes, she perceived a shade on the floor, underneath it, as of some person stationed without. Presently the shadow glided away, and at the same time she distinguished departing steps treading cautiously.

It is he, said Ellena; he still listens for my moans!

This further confirmation of his designs affected her nearly as much as the first; when anxiously turning her looks towards the corridor, the shadow again appeared beneath the door, but she heard no step. Ellena now watched it with intense solicitude and expectation; fearing every instant that Spalatro would conclude her doubts by entering the room. And, O! when he discovers that I live, thought she, what may I not expect during the first moments of his disappointment! What less than immediate death!

The shadow, after remaining a few minutes stationary, moved a little, and

then glided away as before. But it quickly returned, and a low sound followed, as of some person endeavouring to unfasten bolts without noise. Ellena heard one bar gently undrawn, and then another; she observed the door begin to move, and then to give way, till it gradually unclosed, and the face of Spalatro presented itself from behind it. Without immediately entering, he threw a glance round the chamber, as if he wished to ascertain some circumstance before he ventured further. His look was more than usually haggard as it rested upon Ellena, who apparently reposed on her mattress.

Having gazed at her for an instant, he ventured towards the bed with quick and unequal steps; his countenance expressed at once impatience, alarm, and the consciousness of guilt. When he was within a few paces, Ellena raised herself, and he started back as if a sudden spectre had crossed him. The more than usual wildness and wanness of his looks, with the whole of his conduct,

seemed to confirm all her former terrors; and, when he roughly asked her how she did, Ellena had not sufficient presence of mind to answer that she was ill. For some moments he regarded her with an earnest and sullen attention, and then a sly glance of scrutiny, which he threw round the chamber, told her that he was inquiring whether she had taken the poison. On perceiving that the bason was empty, he lifted it from the floor, and Ellena fancied a gleam of satisfaction passed over his visage.

You have had no dinner, said he, I forgot you; but supper will soon be ready; and you may walk up the beach till then, if you will.

Ellena, extremely surprised and perplexed by this offer of a seeming indulgence, knew not whether to accept or reject it. She suspected that some treachery lurked within it. The invitation appeared to be only a stratagem to lure her to destruction, and she determined to decline accepting it; when again she considered, that to accomplish

this, it was not necessary to withdraw her from the chamber, where she was already sufficiently in the power of her persecutors. Her situation could not be more desperate than it was at present, and almost any change might make it less so.

As she descended from the corridor, and passed through the lower part of the house, no person appeared but her conductor; and she ventured to inquire, whether the men who had brought her hither were departed. Spalatro did not return an answer, but led the way in silence to the court, and, having passed the gates, he pointed toward the west, and said she might walk that way.

Ellena bent her course towards the "many sounding waves," followed at a short distance by Spalatro, and, wrapt in thought, pursued the windings of the shore, scarcely noticing the objects around her; till, on passing the foot of a rock, she lifted her eyes to the scene that unfolded beyond and observed some huts scattered at a considerable distance,

apparently the residence of fishermen. She could just distinguish the dark sails of some skiffs turning the cliffs, and entering the little bay, where the hamlet margined the beach; but, though she saw the sails lowered, as the boats approached the shore, they were too far off to allow the figures of the men to appear. To Ellena, who had believed that no human habitation, except her prison, interrupted the vast solitudes of these forests and shores, the view of the huts, remote as they were, imparted a feeble hope, and even somewhat of joy. She looked back to observe whether Spalatro was near; he was already within a few paces; and, casting a wistful glance forward to the remote cottages, her heart sunk again.

It was a lowering evening, and the sea was dark and swelling; the screams of the sea birds too, as they wheeled among the clouds and sought their high nests in the rocks, seemed to indicate an approaching storm. Ellena was not so wholly engaged by selfish sufferings,



but that she could sympathize with those of others, and she rejoiced that the fishermen, whose boats she had observed, had escaped the threatening tempest and were safely sheltered in their little homes, where, as they heard the loud waves break along the coast, they could look with keener pleasure upon the social circle, and the warm comforts around them. From such considerations, however, she returned again to a sense of her own forlorn and friendless situation.

Alas! said she, I have no longer a home, a circle to smile welcomes upon me! I have no longer even one friend to support, to rescue me! I—a miserable wanderer on a distant shore! tracked, perhaps, by the footsteps of the assassin, who at this instant eyes his victim with silent watchfulness, and awaits the moment of opportunity to sacrifice her!

Ellena shuddered as she said this, and turned again to observe whether Spalatro was near. He was not within view; and, while she wondered, and

congratulated herself on a possibility of escaping, she perceived a monk walking silently beneath the dark rocks that overbrowed the beach. His black garments were folded round him; his face was inclined towards the ground, and he had the air of a man in deep meditation.

His, no doubt, are worthy musings! said Ellena, as she observed him, with mingled hope and surprise. I may address myself, without fear, to one of his order. It is probably as much his wish, as it is his duty, to succour the unfortunate. Who could have hoped to find on this sequestered shore so sacred a protector! his convent cannot be far off.

He approached, his face still bent towards the ground, and Ellena advanced slowly, and with trembling steps, to meet him. As he drew near, he viewed her askance, without lifting his head; but she perceived his large eyes looking from under the shade of his cowl, and the upper part of his peculiar countenance. Her confidence in

his protection began to fail, and she faltered, unable to speak, and scarcely daring to meet his eyes. The monk stalked past her in silence, the lower part of his visage still muffled in his drapery, and, as he passed her, looked neither with curiosity, nor surprise.

Ellena paused, and determined, when he should be at some distance, to endeavour to make her way to the hamlet, and throw herself upon the humanity of its inhabitants, rather than solicit the pity of this forbidding stranger. But in the next moment she heard a step behind her, and, on turning, saw the monk again approaching. He stalked by as before, surveying her, however, with a sly and scrutinizing glance from the corners of his eyes. His air and countenance were equally repulsive, and still Ellena could not summon courage enough to attempt engaging his compassion; but shrunk as from an enemy. There was something also terrific in the silent stalk of so gigantic a form; it announced both power and treachery. He

passed slowly on to some distance, and disappeared among the rocks.

Ellena turned once more with an intention of hastening towards the distant hamlet, before Spalatro should observe her, whose strange absence she had scarcely time to wonder at; but she had not proceeded far, when suddenly she perceived the monk again at her shoulder. She started, and almost shrieked; while he regarded her with more attention than before. He paused a moment, and seemed to hesitate; after which he again passed on in silence. The distress of Ellena increased; he was gone the way she had designed to run, and she feared almost equally to follow him, and to return to her prison. Presently he turned, and passed her again, and Ellena hastened forward. But, when fearful of being pursued, she again looked back, she observed him conversing with Spalatro. They appeared to be in consultation, while they slowly advanced, till, probably observing her rapid progress, Spalatro, called on her

to stop, in a voice that echoed among all the rocks. It was a voice, which would not be disobeyed. She looked hopelessly at the still distant cottages, and slackened her steps. Presently the monk again passed before her, and Spalatro had again disappeared. The frown, with which the former now regarded Ellena, was so terrific, that she shrunk trembling back, though she knew him not for her persecutor, since she had never consciously seen Schedoni. He was agitated, and his look became darker.

Whither go you? said he in a voice that was stifled by emotion.

Who is it, father, that asks the question? said Ellena, endeavouring to appear composed.

Whither go you, and who are you? repeated the monk more sternly.

I am an unhappy orphan replied Ellena, sighing deeply, If you are, as your habit denotes, a friend to the charities, you will regard me with compassion.

Schedoni was silent, and then said—  
Who, and what is it that you fear?

I fear—even for my life, replied Ellena, with hesitation. She observed a darker shade pass over his countenance. For your life! said he, with apparent surprise, Who is there that would think it worth the taking.

Ellena was struck with these words.

Poor insect! added Schedoni, who  
would crush thee!

Ellena made no reply; she remained with her eyes fixed in amazement upon his face. There was something in his manner of pronouncing this, yet more extraordinary than in the words themselves. Alarmed by his manner and awed by the increasing gloom, and swelling surge, that broke in thunder on the beach, she at length turned away, and again walked towards the hamlet, which was yet very remote.

He soon overtook her; when rudely seizing her arm, and gazing earnestly on her face, Who is it that you fear, said he; say who?

That is more than I dare say, replied Ellena, scarcely able to sustain herself.

Hah! is it even so! said the monk, with increasing emotion. His visage now became so terrible, that Ellena struggled to liberate her arm, and supplicated that he would not detain her. He was silent, and still gazed upon her, but his eyes, when she had ceased to struggle, assumed the fixt and vacant stare of a man, whose thoughts have retired within themselves, and who is no longer conscious to surrounding objects.

I beseech you to release me! repeated Ellena, It is late, and I am far from home.

That is true, muttered Schedoni, still grasping her arm, and seeming to reply to his own thought, rather than to her words,—that is very true.

The evening is closing fast, continued Ellena, and I shall be overtaken by the storm.

Schedoni still mused, and then muttered—The storm, say you? Why ay, let it come.

As he spoke, he suffered her arm to drop, but still held it, and walked slowly towards the house. Ellena thus compelled to accompany him, and yet more alarmed both by his looks, his incoherent answers, and his approach to her prison, renewed her supplications and her efforts for liberty, in a voice of piercing distress, adding, I am far from home, father; night is coming on. See how the rocks darken! I am far from home, and shall be waited for.

That is false, said Schedoni, with emphasis; and you know it to be so.

Alas! I do, replied Ellena, with mingled shame and grief, I have no friends to wait for me!

What do those deserve, who deliberately utter falsehoods, continued the monk; who deceive and flatter young men to their destruction?

Father! exclaimed the astonished Ellena.

Who disturb the peace of families—who trepan with wanton arts, the heirs of



noble houses—who—hah! what do such deserve?

Overcome with astonishment and terror, Ellena remained silent. She now understood that Schedoni, so far from being likely to prove a protector, was an agent of her worst and, as she had believed, her only enemy; and an apprehension of the immediate and terrible vengeance, which such an agent seemed willing to accomplish, subdued her senses; she tottered, and sunk upon the beach. The weight, which strained the arm Schedoni held, called his attention to her situation.

As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps, came back again, and bent over it—his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity. At one moment he stepped towards the sea, and taking water in the hollows of his hands, threw it upon her face; at another, seeming to regret that he had done so, he would stamp with sudden

fury upon the shore, and walk abruptly to a distance. The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions. He, who had hitherto been insensible to every tender feeling, who, governed by ambition and resentment, had contributed by his artful instigations, to fix the baleful resolution of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and who was come to execute her purpose,—even he could not now look upon the innocent, the wretched Ellena, without yielding to the momentary weakness, as he termed it, of compassion.

While he was yet unable to baffle the new emotion by evil passions, he despised that, which conquered him. And shall the weakness of a girl, said he, subdue the resolution of a man! Shall the view of her transient sufferings unnerve my firm heart, and compel me to renounce the lofty plans I have so ardently, so laboriously imagined, at the very instant when they are changing into realities! Am I awake! Is one

spark of the fire, which has so long smouldered within my bosom, and consumed my peace, alive! Or am I tame and abject as my fortunes? hah! as my fortunes! Shall the spirit of my family yield for ever to circumstances? The question rouses it, and I feel its energy revive within me.

He stalked with hasty steps towards Ellena, as if he feared to trust his resolution with a second pause. He had a dagger concealed beneath his monk's habit; as he had also an assassin's heart shrouded by his garments. He had a dagger—but he hesitated to use it, the blood which it might spill would be observed by the peasants of the neighbouring hamlet, and might lead to a discovery. It would be safer, he considered, and easier, to lay Ellena, senseless as she was, in the waves; their coldness would recal her to life, only at the moment before they would suffocate her.

As he stooped to lift her, his resolution faltered again, on beholding her innocent face, and in that moment she

moved. He started back, as if she could have known his purpose; and knowing it, could have avenged herself. The water, which he had thrown upon her face, had gradually revived her; she unclosed her eyes, and, on perceiving him, shrieked, and attempted to rise. His resolution was subdued, so tremblingly fearful is guilt in the moment when it would execute its atrocities. Overcome with apprehensions, yet agitated with shame and indignation against himself for being so, he gazed at her for an instant in silence, and then abruptly turned away his eyes and left her. Ellena listened to his departing steps, and, raising herself, observed him retiring among the rocks that led towards the house. Astonished at his conduct, and surprised to find that she was alone, Ellena renewed all her efforts to sustain herself, till she should reach the hamlet so long the object of her hopes; but she had proceeded only a few paces, when Spalatro again appeared swiftly approaching. Her utmost exertion availed her nothing; her feeble steps were soon

overtaken, and Ellena perceived herself again his prisoner. The look, with which she resigned herself, awakened no pity in Spalatro, who uttered some taunting jest upon the swiftness of her flight, as he led her back to her prison, and proceeded in sullen watchfulness. Once again, then, she entered the gloomy walls of that fatal mansion, never more, she now believed, to quit them with life; a belief which was strengthened when she remembered that the monk, on leaving her, had taken the way hither; for, though she knew not how to account for his late forbearance, she could not suppose that he would long be merciful. He appeared no more, however, as she passed to her chamber, where Spalatro left her again to solitude and terror, and she heard that fateful door again barred upon her. When his retreating steps had ceased to sound, a stillness, as of the grave, prevailed in the house; like the dead calm, which sometimes precedes the horrors of a tempest.

## CHAPTER IV.

I am settled and bend up

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

SHAKESPEARE.

SCHEDONI had returned from the beach to the house, in a state of perturbation, that defied the controul of even his own stern will. On the way thither he met Spalatro, whom, as he dispatched him to Ellena, he strictly commanded not to approach his chamber till he should be summoned.

Having reached his apartment, he secured the door, though not any person, except himself, was in the house, nor any one expected, but those who he knew would not dare to intrude upon him. Had it been possible to have shut out all consciousness of himself, also, how willingly would he have done so! He threw himself into a chair, and remained for a considerable time motion-

less and lost in thought, yet the emotions of his mind were violent and contradictory. At the very instant, when his heart reproached him with the crime he had meditated, he regretted the ambitious views he must relinquish if he failed to perpetrate it, and regarded himself with some degree of contempt for having hitherto hesitated on the subject. He considered the character of his own mind with astonishment, for circumstances had drawn forth traits, of which, till now, he had no suspicion. He knew not by what doctrine to explain the inconsistencies, the contradictions, he experienced, and, perhaps, it was not one of the least that in these moments of direful and conflicting passions, his reason could still look down upon their operations, and lead him to a cool, though brief examination of his own nature. But the subtlety of self love still eluded his inquiries, and he did not detect, that pride was even at this instant of self examination, and of critical import, the master spring of his mind,

In the earliest dawn of his character, this passion had displayed its predominancy, whenever occasion permitted, and its influence had led to some of the chief events of his life.

The Count di Marinella, for such had formerly been the title of the confessor, was the younger son of an ancient family, who resided in the duchy of Milan, and near the feet of the Tyrolean Alps, on such estates of their ancestors, as the Italian wars of a former century had left them. The portion, which he had received at the death of his father, was not large, and Schedoni was not of a disposition to improve his patrimony by slow diligence, or to submit to the restraint and humiliation, which his narrow finances would have imposed. He disdained to acknowledge an inferiority of fortune to those, with whom he considered himself equal in rank; and, as he was destitute of generous feeling and of sound judgment, he had not that loftiness of soul, which is ambitious of true grandeur. On the contrary, he was



satisfied with an ostentatious display of pleasures and of power, and, thoughtless of the consequence of dissipation, was contented with the pleasures of the moment, till his exhausted resources compelled him to pause and to reflect. He perceived, too late for his advantage, that it was necessary for him to dispose of part of his estate, and to confine himself to the income of the remainder. Incapable of submitting with grace to the reduction, which his folly had rendered expedient, he endeavoured to obtain by cunning, the luxuries, that his prudence had failed to keep, and which neither his genius, nor his integrity could command. He withdrew, however, from the eyes of his neighbours, unwilling to submit his altered circumstances to their observation.

Concerning several years of his life, from this period, nothing was generally known; and, when he was next discovered, it was in the convent of the Spirito Santo, at Naples, in the habit of a monk, and under the assumed name of

Schedoni. His air and countenance were as much altered as his way of life; his looks had become gloomy and severe, and the pride, which had mingled with the gaiety of their former expression, occasionally discovered itself under the disguise of humility, but more frequently in the austerity of silence, and in the barbarity of penance.

The person, who discovered Schedoni, would not have recollected him, had not his remarkable eyes first fixed his attention, and then revived remembrance. As he examined his features he traced the faint resemblance of what Marinella had been, to whom he made himself known.

The confessor affected to have forgotten his former acquaintance, and assured him, that he was mistaken respecting himself, till the stranger so closely urged some circumstances, that the former was no longer permitted to dissemble. He retired, in some emotion, with the stranger, and, whatever might be the subject of their conference,

he drew from him, before he quitted the convent, a tremendous vow, to keep secret from the brotherhood his knowledge of Schedoni's family, and never to reveal without those walls, that he had seen him. These requests he had urged in a manner, that at once surprised and awed the stranger, and which at the same time, that it manifested the weight of Schedoni's fears, bade the former tremble for the consequence of disobedience; and he shuddered even while he promised to obey. Of the first part of the promise he was probably strictly observant; whether he was equally so of the second, does not appear; it is certain, that after this period, he was never more seen, or heard of, at Naples.

Schedoni, ever ambitious of distinction, adapted his manners to the views and prejudices of the society, with whom he resided, and became one of the most exact observers of their outward forms, and almost a prodigy for self-denial and severe discipline. He was pointed out by the fathers of the convent to the

juniors as a great example, who was, however, rather to be looked up to with reverential admiration, than with a hope of emulating his sublime virtues. But with such panegyrics their friendship for Schedoni concluded. They found it convenient to applaud the austerities, which they declined to practise; it procured them a character for sanctity, and saved them the necessity of earning it by mortifications of their own; but they both feared and hated Schedoni for his pride and his gloomy austerities, too much, to gratify his ambition by any thing further than empty praise. He had been several years in the society, without obtaining any considerable advancement, and with the mortification of seeing persons, who had never emulated his severity, raised to high offices in the church. Somewhat too late he discovered, that he was not to expect any substantial favour from the brotherhood, and then it was that his restless and disappointed spirit first sought preferment by other avenues.