

CHAPTER V

----He was a fell despightful Fiend:

Hell holds none worse in baleful bower below:

By pride, and wit, and rage, and rancor keened;

Of Man alike, if good or bad the Foe.

Thomson.

On the day following Antonia's death, all Madrid was a scene of consternation and amazement. An Archer who had witnessed the adventure in the Sepulchre had indiscreetly related the circumstances of the murder: He had also named the Perpetrator. The confusion was without example which this intelligence raised among the Devotees. Most of them disbelieved it, and went themselves to the Abbey to ascertain the fact. Anxious to avoid the shame to which their Superior's ill-conduct exposed the whole Brotherhood, the Monks assured the Visitors that Ambrosio was prevented from receiving them as usual by nothing but illness. This attempt was unsuccessful: The same excuse being repeated day after day, the Archer's story gradually obtained confidence. His Partizans abandoned him: No one entertained a doubt of his guilt; and they who before had been the warmest in his praise were now the most vociferous in his condemnation.

While his innocence or guilt was debated in Madrid with the utmost acrimony, Ambrosio was a prey to the pangs of conscious villainy, and the terrors of punishment impending over him. When He looked back to the eminence on which He had lately stood, universally honoured and respected, at peace with the world and with himself, scarcely could He believe that He was indeed the culprit whose crimes and whose fate He trembled to envisage. But a few weeks had elapsed, since He was pure and virtuous, courted by the wisest and noblest in Madrid, and regarded by the People with a reverence that approached idolatry: He now saw himself stained with the most loathed and monstrous sins, the object of universal execration, a Prisoner of the Holy Office, and probably doomed to perish in tortures the most severe. He could not hope to deceive his Judges: The proofs of his guilt were too strong. His being in the Sepulchre at so late an hour, his confusion at the discovery, the dagger which in his first alarm He owned had been concealed by him, and the blood which had spirted upon his habit from Antonia's wound, sufficiently marked him out for the Assassin. He waited with agony for the day of examination: He had no resource to comfort him in his distress. Religion could not inspire him with fortitude: If He read the Books of morality which were put into his hands, He saw in them

nothing but the enormity of his offences; If he attempted to pray, He recollected that He deserved not heaven's protection, and believed his crimes so monstrous as to baffle even God's infinite goodness. For every other Sinner He thought there might be hope, but for him there could be none. Shuddering at the past, anguished by the present, and dreading the future, thus passed He the few days preceding that which was marked for his Trial.

That day arrived. At nine in the morning his prison door was unlocked, and his Gaoler entering, commanded him to follow him. He obeyed with trembling. He was conducted into a spacious Hall, hung with black cloth. At the Table sat three grave, stern-looking Men, also habited in black: One was the Grand Inquisitor, whom the importance of this cause had induced to examine into it himself. At a smaller table at a little distance sat the Secretary, provided with all necessary implements for writing. Ambrosio was beckoned to advance, and take his station at the lower end of the Table. As his eye glanced downwards, He perceived various iron instruments lying scattered upon the floor. Their forms were unknown to him, but apprehension immediately guessed them to be engines of torture. He turned pale, and with difficulty prevented himself from sinking upon the

ground.

Profound silence prevailed, except when the Inquisitors whispered a few words among themselves mysteriously. Near an hour past away, and with every second of it Ambrosio's fears grew more poignant. At length a small Door, opposite to that by which He had entered the Hall, grated heavily upon its hinges. An Officer appeared, and was immediately followed by the beautiful Matilda. Her hair hung about her face wildly; Her cheeks were pale, and her eyes sunk and hollow. She threw a melancholy look upon Ambrosio: He replied by one of aversion and reproach. She was placed opposite to him. A Bell then sounded thrice. It was the signal for opening the Court, and the Inquisitors entered upon their office.

In these trials neither the accusation is mentioned, or the name of the Accuser. The Prisoners are only asked, whether they will confess: If they reply that having no crime they can make no confession, they are put to the torture without delay. This is repeated at intervals, either till the suspected avow themselves culpable, or the perseverance of the examinants is worn out and exhausted: But without a direct acknowledgment of their guilt, the Inquisition never pronounces the final doom of its Prisoners.

In general much time is suffered to elapse without their being questioned: But Ambrosio's trial had been hastened, on account of a solemn Auto da Fe which would take place in a few days, and in which the Inquisitors meant this distinguished Culprit to perform a part, and give a striking testimony of their vigilance.

The Abbot was not merely accused of rape and murder: The crime of Sorcery was laid to his charge, as well as to Matilda's. She had been seized as an Accomplice in Antonia's assassination. On searching her Cell, various suspicious books and instruments were found which justified the accusation brought against her. To criminate the Monk, the constellated Mirror was produced, which Matilda had accidentally left in his chamber. The strange figures engraved upon it caught the attention of Don Ramirez, while searching the Abbot's Cell: In consequence, He carried it away with him. It was shown to the Grand Inquisitor, who having considered it for some time, took off a small golden Cross which hung at his girdle, and laid it upon the Mirror. Instantly a loud noise was heard, resembling a clap of thunder, and the steel shivered into a thousand pieces. This circumstance confirmed the suspicion of the Monk's having dealt in Magic: It was even supposed that his former influence over the minds of the People

was entirely to be ascribed to witchcraft.

Determined to make him confess not only the crimes which He had committed, but those also of which He was innocent, the Inquisitors began their examination. Though dreading the tortures, as He dreaded death still more which would consign him to eternal torments, the Abbot asserted his purity in a voice bold and resolute. Matilda followed his example, but spoke with fear and trembling. Having in vain exhorted him to confess, the Inquisitors ordered the Monk to be put to the question. The Decree was immediately executed. Ambrosio suffered the most excruciating pangs that ever were invented by human cruelty: Yet so dreadful is Death when guilt accompanies it, that He had sufficient fortitude to persist in his disavowal. His agonies were redoubled in consequence: Nor was He released till fainting from excess of pain, insensibility rescued him from the hands of his Tormentors.

Matilda was next ordered to the torture: But terrified by the sight of the Friar's sufferings, her courage totally deserted her. She sank upon her knees, acknowledged her corresponding with infernal Spirits, and that She had witnessed the Monk's assassination of Antonia: But as to the crime of Sorcery, She

declared herself the sole criminal, and Ambrosio perfectly innocent. The latter assertion met with no credit. The Abbot had recovered his senses in time to hear the confession of his Accomplice: But He was too much enfeebled by what He had already undergone to be capable at that time of sustaining new torments.

He was commanded back to his Cell, but first informed that as soon as He had gained strength sufficient, He must prepare himself for a second examination. The Inquisitors hoped that He would then be less hardened and obstinate. To Matilda it was announced that She must expiate her crime in fire on the approaching Auto da Fe. All her tears and entreaties could procure no mitigation of her doom, and She was dragged by force from the Hall of Trial.

Returned to his dungeon, the sufferings of Ambrosio's body were far more supportable than those of his mind. His dislocated limbs, the nails torn from his hands and feet, and his fingers mashed and broken by the pressure of screws, were far surpassed in anguish by the agitation of his soul and vehemence of his terrors. He saw that, guilty or innocent, his Judges were bent upon condemning him: The remembrance of what his denial had already cost him terrified him at the idea of being again

applied to the question, and almost engaged him to confess his crimes. Then again the consequences of his confession flashed before him, and rendered him once more irresolute. His death would be inevitable, and that a death the most dreadful: He had listened to Matilda's doom, and doubted not that a similar was reserved for him. He shuddered at the approaching Auto da Fe, at the idea of perishing in flames, and only escaping from indurable torments to pass into others more subtle and ever-lasting! With affright did He bend his mind's eye on the space beyond the grave; nor could hide from himself how justly he ought to dread Heaven's vengeance. In this Labyrinth of terrors, fain would He have taken his refuge in the gloom of Atheism: Fain would He have denied the soul's immortality; have persuaded himself that when his eyes once closed, they would never more open, and that the same moment would annihilate his soul and body. Even this resource was refused to him. To permit his being blind to the fallacy of this belief, his knowledge was too extensive, his understanding too solid and just. He could not help feeling the existence of a God. Those truths, once his comfort, now presented themselves before him in the clearest light; But they only served to drive him to distraction. They destroyed his ill-grounded hopes of escaping punishment; and dispelled by the irresistible brightness of Truth and conviction, Philosophy's

deceitful vapours faded away like a dream.

In anguish almost too great for mortal frame to bear, He expected the time when He was again to be examined. He busied himself in planning ineffectual schemes for escaping both present and future punishment. Of the first there was no possibility; Of the second Despair made him neglect the only means. While Reason forced him to acknowledge a God's existence, Conscience made him doubt the infinity of his goodness. He disbelieved that a Sinner like him could find mercy. He had not been deceived into error:

Ignorance could furnish him with no excuse. He had seen vice in her true colours; Before He committed his crimes, He had computed every scruple of their weight; and yet he had committed them.

'Pardon?' He would cry in an access of phrenzy 'Oh! there can be none for me!'

Persuaded of this, instead of humbling himself in penitence, of deploring his guilt, and employing his few remaining hours in deprecating Heaven's wrath, He abandoned himself to the transports of desperate rage; He sorrowed for the punishment of his crimes, not their commission; and exhaled his bosom's anguish in idle sighs, in vain lamentations, in blasphemy and despair.

As the few beams of day which pierced through the bars of his prison window gradually disappeared, and their place was supplied by the pale and glimmering Lamp, He felt his terrors redouble, and his ideas become more gloomy, more solemn, more despondent. He dreaded the approach of sleep: No sooner did his eyes close, wearied with tears and watching, than the dreadful visions seemed to be realised on which his mind had dwelt during the day. He found himself in sulphurous realms and burning Caverns, surrounded by Fiends appointed his Tormentors, and who drove him through a variety of tortures, each of which was more dreadful than the former. Amidst these dismal scenes wandered the Ghosts of Elvira and her Daughter. They reproached him with their deaths, recounted his crimes to the Daemons, and urged them to inflict torments of cruelty yet more refined. Such were the pictures which floated before his eyes in sleep: They vanished not till his repose was disturbed by excess of agony. Then would He start from the ground on which He had stretched himself, his brows running down with cold sweat, his eyes wild and phrenzied; and He only exchanged the terrible certainty for surmizes scarcely more supportable. He paced his dungeon with disordered steps; He gazed with terror upon the surrounding darkness, and often did He cry,

'Oh! fearful is night to the Guilty!'

The day of his second examination was at hand. He had been compelled to swallow cordials, whose virtues were calculated to restore his bodily strength, and enable him to support the question longer. On the night preceding this dreaded day, his fears for the morrow permitted him not to sleep. His terrors were so violent, as nearly to annihilate his mental powers. He sat like one stupefied near the Table on which his Lamp was burning dimly. Despair chained up his faculties in Idiotism, and He remained for some hours, unable to speak or move, or indeed to think.

'Look up, Ambrosio!' said a Voice in accents well-known to him--

The Monk started, and raised his melancholy eyes. Matilda stood before him. She had quitted her religious habit. She now wore a female dress, at once elegant and splendid: A profusion of diamonds blazed upon her robes, and her hair was confined by a coronet of Roses. In her right hand She held a small Book: A lively expression of pleasure beamed upon her countenance; But still it was mingled with a wild imperious majesty which inspired the Monk with awe, and repress in some measure his

transports at seeing her.

'You here, Matilda?' He at length exclaimed; 'How have you gained entrance? Where are your Chains? What means this magnificence, and the joy which sparkles in your eyes? Have our Judges relented? Is there a chance of my escaping? Answer me for pity, and tell me, what I have to hope, or fear.'

'Ambrosio!' She replied with an air of commanding dignity; 'I have baffled the Inquisition's fury. I am free: A few moments will place kingdoms between these dungeons and me. Yet I purchase my liberty at a dear, at a dreadful price! Dare you pay the same, Ambrosio? Dare you spring without fear over the bounds which separate Men from Angels?--You are silent.--You look upon me with eyes of suspicion and alarm--I read your thoughts and confess their justice. Yes, Ambrosio ; I have sacrificed all for life and liberty. I am no longer a candidate for heaven! I have renounced God's service, and am enlisted beneath the banners of his Foes. The deed is past recall: Yet were it in my power to go back, I would not. Oh! my Friend, to expire in such torments! To die amidst curses and execrations! To bear the insults of an exasperated Mob! To be exposed to all the mortifications of shame and infamy! Who can reflect without

horror on such a doom? Let me then exult in my exchange. I have sold distant and uncertain happiness for present and secure: I have preserved a life which otherwise I had lost in torture; and I have obtained the power of procuring every bliss which can make that life delicious! The Infernal Spirits obey me as their Sovereign: By their aid shall my days be past in every refinement of luxury and voluptuousness. I will enjoy unrestrained the gratification of my senses: Every passion shall be indulged, even to satiety; Then will I bid my Servants invent new pleasures, to revive and stimulate my gluttonous appetites! I go impatient to exercise my newly-gained dominion. I pant to be at liberty. Nothing should hold me one moment longer in this abhorred abode, but the hope of persuading you to follow my example. Ambrosio, I still love you: Our mutual guilt and danger have rendered you dearer to me than ever, and I would fain save you from impending destruction. Summon then your resolution to your aid; and renounce for immediate and certain benefits the hopes of a salvation, difficult to obtain, and perhaps altogether erroneous. Shake off the prejudice of vulgar souls; Abandon a God who has abandoned you, and raise yourself to the level of superior Beings!

She paused for the Monk's reply: He shuddered, while He gave it.

'Matilda!' He said after a long silence in a low and unsteady voice; 'What price gave you for liberty?'

She answered him firm and dauntless.

'Ambrosio, it was my Soul!'

'Wretched Woman, what have you done? Pass but a few years, and how dreadful will be your sufferings!'

'Weak Man, pass but this night, and how dreadful will be your own! Do you remember what you have already endured? Tomorrow you must bear torments doubly exquisite. Do you remember the horrors of a fiery punishment? In two days you must be led a Victim to the Stake! What then will become of you? Still dare you hope for pardon? Still are you beguiled with visions of salvation? Think upon your crimes! Think upon your lust, your perjury, inhumanity, and hypocrisy! Think upon the innocent blood which cries to the Throne of God for vengeance, and then hope for mercy! Then dream of heaven, and sigh for worlds of light, and realms of peace and pleasure! Absurd! Open your eyes, Ambrosio, and be prudent. Hell is your lot; You are doomed

to eternal perdition; Nought lies beyond your grave but a gulph
of devouring flames. And will you then speed towards that Hell?
Will you clasp that perdition in your arms, ere 'tis needful?
Will you plunge into those flames while you still have the power
to shun them? 'Tis a Madman's action. No, no, Ambrosio: Let us
for awhile fly from divine vengeance. Be advised by me; Purchase
by one moment's courage the bliss of years; Enjoy the present,
and forget that a future lags behind.'

'Matilda, your counsels are dangerous: I dare not, I will not
follow them. I must not give up my claim to salvation.
Monstrous are my crimes; But God is merciful, and I will not
despair of pardon.'

'Is such your resolution? I have no more to say. I speed to joy
and liberty, and abandon you to death and eternal torments.'

'Yet stay one moment, Matilda! You command the infernal Daemons:

You can force open these prison doors; You can release me from
these chains which weigh me down. Save me, I conjure you, and
bear me from these fearful abodes!'

'You ask the only boon beyond my power to bestow. I am forbidden to assist a Churchman and a Partizan of God: Renounce those titles, and command me.'

'I will not sell my soul to perdition.'

'Persist in your obstinacy, till you find yourself at the Stake: Then will you repent your error, and sigh for escape when the moment is gone by. I quit you. Yet ere the hour of death arrives should wisdom enlighten you, listen to the means of repairing your present fault. I leave with you this Book. Read the four first lines of the seventh page backwards: The Spirit whom you have already once beheld will immediately appear to you. If you are wise, we shall meet again: If not, farewell for ever!'

She let the Book fall upon the ground. A cloud of blue fire wrapped itself round her: She waved her hand to Ambrosio, and disappeared. The momentary glare which the flames poured through the dungeon, on dissipating suddenly, seemed to have increased its natural gloom. The solitary Lamp scarcely gave light sufficient to guide the Monk to a Chair. He threw himself into his seat, folded his arms, and leaning his head upon the table,

sank into reflections perplexing and unconnected.

He was still in this attitude when the opening of the prison door roused him from his stupor. He was summoned to appear before the Grand Inquisitor. He rose, and followed his Gaoler with painful steps. He was led into the same Hall, placed before the same Examiners, and was again interrogated whether He would confess. He replied as before, that having no crimes, He could acknowledge none: But when the Executioners prepared to put him to the question, when He saw the engines of torture, and remembered the pangs which they had already inflicted, his resolution failed him entirely. Forgetting the consequences, and only anxious to escape the terrors of the present moment, He made an ample confession. He disclosed every circumstance of his guilt, and owned not merely the crimes with which He was charged, but those of which He had never been suspected. Being interrogated as to Matilda's flight which had created much confusion, He confessed that She had sold herself to Satan, and that She was indebted to Sorcery for her escape. He still assured his Judges that for his own part He had never entered into any compact with the infernal Spirits; But the threat of being tortured made him declare himself to be a Sorcerer, and Heretic, and whatever other title the Inquisitors chose to fix upon him. In consequence of

this avowal, his sentence was immediately pronounced. He was ordered to prepare himself to perish in the Auto da Fe, which was to be solemnized at twelve o'clock that night. This hour was chosen from the idea that the horror of the flames being heightened by the gloom of midnight, the execution would have a greater effect upon the mind of the People.

Ambrosio rather dead than alive was left alone in his dungeon. The moment in which this terrible decree was pronounced had nearly proved that of his dissolution. He looked forward to the morrow with despair, and his terrors increased with the approach of midnight. Sometimes He was buried in gloomy silence: At others He raved with delirious passion, wrung his hands, and cursed the hour when He first beheld the light. In one of these moments his eye rested upon Matilda's mysterious gift. His transports of rage were instantly suspended. He looked earnestly at the Book; He took it up, but immediately threw it from him with horror. He walked rapidly up and down his dungeon: Then stopped, and again fixed his eyes on the spot where the Book had fallen. He reflected that here at least was a resource from the fate which He dreaded. He stooped, and took it up a second time.

He remained for some time trembling and irresolute: He longed to

try the charm, yet feared its consequences. The recollection of his sentence at length fixed his indecision. He opened the Volume; but his agitation was so great that He at first sought in vain for the page mentioned by Matilda. Ashamed of himself, He called all his courage to his aid. He turned to the seventh leaf. He began to read it aloud; But his eyes frequently wandered from the Book, while He anxiously cast them round in search of the Spirit, whom He wished, yet dreaded to behold. Still He persisted in his design; and with a voice unassured and frequent interruptions, He contrived to finish the four first lines of the page.

They were in a language, whose import was totally unknown to him.

Scarce had He pronounced the last word when the effects of the charm were evident. A loud burst of Thunder was heard; The prison shook to its very foundations; A blaze of lightning flashed through the Cell; and in the next moment, borne upon sulphurous whirl-winds, Lucifer stood before him a second time. But He came not as when at Matilda's summons He borrowed the Seraph's form to deceive Ambrosio. He appeared in all that ugliness which since his fall from heaven had been his portion: His blasted limbs still bore marks of the Almighty's thunder: A

swarthy darkness spread itself over his gigantic form: His hands and feet were armed with long Talons: Fury glared in his eyes, which might have struck the bravest heart with terror: Over his huge shoulders waved two enormous sable wings; and his hair was supplied by living snakes, which twined themselves round his brows with frightful hissings. In one hand He held a roll of parchment, and in the other an iron pen. Still the lightning flashed around him, and the Thunder with repeated bursts, seemed to announce the dissolution of Nature.

Terrified at an Apparition so different from what He had expected, Ambrosio remained gazing upon the Fiend, deprived of the power of utterance. The Thunder had ceased to roll: Universal silence reigned through the dungeon.

'For what am I summoned hither?' said the Daemon, in a voice which sulphurous fogs had damped to hoarseness--

At the sound Nature seemed to tremble: A violent earthquake rocked the ground, accompanied by a fresh burst of Thunder, louder and more appalling than the first.

Ambrosio was long unable to answer the Daemon's demand.

'I am condemned to die;' He said with a faint voice, his blood running cold, while He gazed upon his dreadful Visitor. 'Save me! Bear me from hence!'

'Shall the reward of my services be paid me? Dare you embrace my cause? Will you be mine, body and soul? Are you prepared to renounce him who made you, and him who died for you? Answer but "Yes" and Lucifer is your Slave.'

'Will no less price content you? Can nothing satisfy you but my eternal ruin? Spirit, you ask too much. Yet convey me from this dungeon: Be my Servant for one hour, and I will be yours for a thousand years. Will not this offer suffice?'

'It will not. I must have your soul; must have it mine, and mine for ever.'

'Insatiate Daemon, I will not doom myself to endless torments. I will not give up my hopes of being one day pardoned.'

'You will not? On what Chimaera rest then your hopes?'

Short-sighted Mortal! Miserable Wretch! Are you not guilty?'

Are you not infamous in the eyes of Men and Angels. Can such enormous sins be forgiven? Hope you to escape my power? Your fate is already pronounced. The Eternal has abandoned you; Mine you are marked in the book of destiny, and mine you must and shall be!

'Fiend, 'tis false! Infinite is the Almighty's mercy, and the Penitent shall meet his forgiveness. My crimes are monstrous, but I will not despair of pardon: Haply, when they have received due chastisement'

'Chastisement? Was Purgatory meant for guilt like yours? Hope you that your offences shall be bought off by prayers of superstitious dotards and droning Monks? Ambrosio, be wise!

Mine

you must be: You are doomed to flames, but may shun them for the present. Sign this parchment: I will bear you from hence, and you may pass your remaining years in bliss and liberty. Enjoy your existence: Indulge in every pleasure to which appetite may lead you: But from the moment that it quits your body, remember that your soul belongs to me, and that I will not be defrauded of my right.'

The Monk was silent; But his looks declared that the Tempter's words were not thrown away. He reflected on the conditions proposed with horror: On the other hand, He believed himself doomed to perdition and that, by refusing the Daemon's succour, He only hastened tortures which He never could escape. The Fiend saw that his resolution was shaken: He renewed his instances, and endeavoured to fix the Abbot's indecision. He described the agonies of death in the most terrific colours; and He worked so powerfully upon Ambrosio's despair and fears that He prevailed upon him to receive the Parchment. He then struck the iron Pen which He held into a vein of the Monk's left hand. It pierced deep, and was instantly filled with blood; Yet Ambrosio felt no pain from the wound. The Pen was put into his hand: It trembled. The Wretch placed the Parchment on the Table before him, and prepared to sign it. Suddenly He held his hand: He started away hastily, and threw the Pen upon the table.

'What am I doing?' He cried--Then turning to the Fiend with a desperate air, 'Leave me! Begone! I will not sign the Parchment.'

'Fool!' exclaimed the disappointed Daemon, darting looks so furious as penetrated the Friar's soul with horror; 'Thus am I

trifled with? Go then! Rave in agony, expire in tortures, and then learn the extent of the Eternal's mercy! But beware how you make me again your mock! Call me no more till resolved to accept my offers! Summon me a second time to dismiss me thus idly, and these Talons shall rend you into a thousand pieces! Speak yet again; Will you sign the Parchment?'

'I will not! Leave me! Away!'

Instantly the Thunder was heard to roll horribly: Once more the earth trembled with violence: The Dungeon resounded with loud shrieks, and the Daemon fled with blasphemy and curses.

At first, the Monk rejoiced at having resisted the Seducer's arts, and obtained a triumph over Mankind's Enemy: But as the hour of punishment drew near, his former terrors revived in his heart. Their momentary repose seemed to have given them fresh vigour. The nearer that the time approached, the more did He dread appearing before the Throne of God. He shuddered to think how soon He must be plunged into eternity; How soon meet the eyes of his Creator, whom He had so grievously offended. The Bell announced midnight: It was the signal for being led to the Stake! As He listened to the first stroke, the blood ceased to

circulate in the Abbot's veins: He heard death and torture murmured in each succeeding sound. He expected to see the Archers entering his prison; and as the Bell forbore to toll, he seized the magic volume in a fit of despair. He opened it, turned hastily to the seventh page, and as if fearing to allow himself a moment's thought ran over the fatal lines with rapidity. Accompanied by his former terrors, Lucifer again stood before the Trembler.

'You have summoned me,' said the Fiend; 'Are you determined to be wise? Will you accept my conditions? You know them already. Renounce your claim to salvation, make over to me your soul, and I bear you from this dungeon instantly. Yet is it time. Resolve, or it will be too late. Will you sign the Parchment?'

'I must!--Fate urges me! I accept your conditions.'

'Sign the Parchment!' replied the Daemon in an exulting tone.

The Contract and the bloody Pen still lay upon the Table.

Ambrosio drew near it. He prepared to sign his name. A moment's reflection made him hesitate.

'Hark!' cried the Tempter; 'They come! Be quick! Sign the Parchment, and I bear you from hence this moment.'

In effect, the Archers were heard approaching, appointed to lead Ambrosio to the Stake. The sound encouraged the Monk in his resolution.

'What is the import of this writing?' said He.

'It makes your soul over to me for ever, and without reserve.'

'What am I to receive in exchange?'

'My protection, and release from this dungeon. Sign it, and this instant I bear you away.'

Ambrosio took up the Pen; He set it to the Parchment. Again his courage failed him: He felt a pang of terror at his heart, and once more threw the Pen upon the Table.

'Weak and Puerile!' cried the exasperated Fiend: 'Away with this folly! Sign the writing this instant, or I sacrifice you to my rage!'

At this moment the bolt of the outward Door was drawn back. The Prisoner heard the rattling of Chains; The heavy Bar fell; The Archers were on the point of entering. Worked up to phrenzy by the urgent danger, shrinking from the approach of death, terrified by the Daemon's threats, and seeing no other means to escape destruction, the wretched Monk complied. He signed the fatal contract, and gave it hastily into the evil Spirit's hands, whose eyes, as He received the gift, glared with malicious rapture.

'Take it!' said the God-abandoned; 'Now then save me! Snatch me from hence!'

'Hold! Do you freely and absolutely renounce your Creator and his Son?'

'I do! I do!'

'Do you make over your soul to me for ever?'

'For ever!'

'Without reserve or subterfuge? Without future appeal to the divine mercy?'

The last Chain fell from the door of the prison: The key was heard turning in the Lock: Already the iron door grated heavily upon its rusty hinges.

'I am yours for ever and irrevocably!' cried the Monk wild with terror: 'I abandon all claim to salvation! I own no power but yours! Hark! Hark! They come! Oh! save me! Bear me away!'

'I have triumphed! You are mine past reprieve, and I fulfil my promise.'

While He spoke, the Door unclosed. Instantly the Daemon grasped one of Ambrosio's arms, spread his broad pinions, and sprang with him into the air. The roof opened as they soared upwards, and closed again when they had quitted the Dungeon.

In the meanwhile, the Gaoler was thrown into the utmost surprize by the disappearance of his Prisoner. Though neither He nor the Archers were in time to witness the Monk's escape, a sulphurous smell prevailing through the prison sufficiently informed them by

whose aid He had been liberated. They hastened to make their report to the Grand Inquisitor. The story, how a Sorcerer had been carried away by the Devil, was soon noised about Madrid; and for some days the whole City was employed in discussing the subject. Gradually it ceased to be the topic of conversation: Other adventures arose whose novelty engaged universal attention; and Ambrosio was soon forgotten as totally, as if He never had existed. While this was passing, the Monk supported by his infernal guide, traversed the air with the rapidity of an arrow, and a few moments placed him upon a Precipice's brink, the steepest in Sierra Morena.

Though rescued from the Inquisition, Ambrosio as yet was insensible of the blessings of liberty. The damning contract weighed heavy upon his mind; and the scenes in which He had been a principal actor had left behind them such impressions as rendered his heart the seat of anarchy and confusion. The Objects now before his eyes, and which the full Moon sailing through clouds permitted him to examine, were ill-calculated to inspire that calm, of which He stood so much in need. The disorder of his imagination was increased by the wildness of the surrounding scenery; By the gloomy Caverns and steep rocks, rising above each other, and dividing the passing clouds;

solitary clusters of Trees scattered here and there, among whose thick-twined branches the wind of night sighed hoarsely and mournfully; the shrill cry of mountain Eagles, who had built their nests among these lonely Desarts; the stunning roar of torrents, as swelled by late rains they rushed violently down tremendous precipices; and the dark waters of a silent sluggish stream which faintly reflected the moonbeams, and bathed the Rock's base on which Ambrosio stood. The Abbot cast round him a look of terror. His infernal Conductor was still by his side, and eyed him with a look of mingled malice, exultation, and contempt.

'Whither have you brought me?' said the Monk at length in an hollow trembling voice: 'Why am I placed in this melancholy scene? Bear me from it quickly! Carry me to Matilda!'

The Fiend replied not, but continued to gaze upon him in silence.

Ambrosio could not sustain his glance; He turned away his eyes, while thus spoke the Daemon:

I have him then in my power! This model of piety! This being without reproach! This Mortal who placed his puny virtues on a

level with those of Angels. He is mine! Irrevocably, eternally mine! Companions of my sufferings! Denizens of hell! How grateful will be my present!

He paused; then addressed himself to the Monk----

'Carry you to Matilda?' He continued, repeating Ambrosio's words:

'Wretch! you shall soon be with her! You well deserve a place near her, for hell boasts no miscreant more guilty than yourself.

Hark, Ambrosio, while I unveil your crimes! You have shed the blood of two innocents; Antonia and Elvira perished by your hand.

That Antonia whom you violated, was your Sister! That Elvira whom you murdered, gave you birth! Tremble, abandoned Hypocrite!

Inhuman Parricide! Incestuous Ravisher! Tremble at the extent of your offences! And you it was who thought yourself proof against temptation, absolved from human frailties, and free from error and vice! Is pride then a virtue? Is inhumanity no fault?

Know, vain Man! That I long have marked you for my prey: I watched the movements of your heart; I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I seized the fit moment of seduction. I observed your blind idolatry of the Madona's

picture. I had a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form, and you eagerly yielded to the blandishments of Matilda. Your pride was gratified by her flattery; Your lust only needed an opportunity to break forth; You ran into the snare blindly, and scrupled not to commit a crime which you blamed in another with unfeeling severity. It was I who threw Matilda in your way; It was I who gave you entrance to Antonia's chamber; It was I who caused the dagger to be given you which pierced your Sister's bosom; and it was I who warned Elvira in dreams of your designs upon her Daughter, and thus, by preventing your profiting by her sleep, compelled you to add rape as well as incest to the catalogue of your crimes. Hear, hear, Ambrosio! Had you resisted me one minute longer, you had saved your body and soul. The guards whom you heard at your prison door came to signify your pardon. But I had already triumphed: My plots had already succeeded. Scarcely could I propose crimes so quick as you performed them. You are mine, and Heaven itself cannot rescue you from my power. Hope not that your penitence will make void our contract. Here is your bond signed with your blood; You have given up your claim to mercy, and nothing can restore to you the rights which you have foolishly resigned. Believe you that your secret thoughts escaped me? No, no, I read them all! You trusted that you should still have time for repentance. I saw

your artifice, knew its falsity, and rejoiced in deceiving the deceiver! You are mine beyond reprieve: I burn to possess my right, and alive you quit not these mountains.'

During the Daemon's speech, Ambrosio had been stupefied by terror and surprize. This last declaration roused him.

'Not quit these mountains alive?' He exclaimed: 'Perfidious, what mean you? Have you forgotten our contract?'

The Fiend answered by a malicious laugh:

'Our contract? Have I not performed my part? What more did I promise than to save you from your prison? Have I not done so? Are you not safe from the Inquisition--safe from all but from me? Fool that you were to confide yourself to a Devil! Why did you not stipulate for life, and power, and pleasure? Then all would have been granted: Now, your reflections come too late. Miscreant, prepare for death; You have not many hours to live!'

On hearing this sentence, dreadful were the feelings of the devoted Wretch! He sank upon his knees, and raised his hands towards heaven. The Fiend read his intention and prevented it--

'What?' He cried, darting at him a look of fury: 'Dare you still implore the Eternal's mercy? Would you feign penitence, and again act an Hypocrite's part? Villain, resign your hopes of pardon. Thus I secure my prey!'

As He said this, darting his talons into the Monk's shaven crown, He sprang with him from the rock. The Caves and mountains rang with Ambrosio's shrieks. The Daemon continued to soar aloft, till reaching a dreadful height, He released the sufferer. Headlong fell the Monk through the airy waste; The sharp point of a rock received him; and He rolled from precipice to precipice, till bruised and mangled He rested on the river's banks. Life still existed in his miserable frame: He attempted in vain to raise himself; His broken and dislocated limbs refused to perform their office, nor was He able to quit the spot where He had first fallen. The Sun now rose above the horizon; Its scorching beams darted full upon the head of the expiring Sinner. Myriads of insects were called forth by the warmth; They drank the blood which trickled from Ambrosio's wounds; He had no power to drive them from him, and they fastened upon his sores, darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and insupportable.

The Eagles of the rock tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eyeballs with their crooked beaks. A burning thirst tormented him; He heard the river's murmur as it rolled beside him, but strove in vain to drag himself towards the sound. Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his existence, yet dreading the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments, six miserable days did the Villain languish. On the Seventh a violent storm arose: The winds in fury rent up rocks and forests: The sky was now black with clouds, now sheeted with fire: The rain fell in torrents; It swelled the stream; The waves overflowed their banks; They reached the spot where Ambrosio lay, and when they abated carried with them into the river the Corse of the despairing Monk.