

## CHAPTER II

Forse se tu gustassi una sol volta  
La millesima parte delle gioje,  
Che gusta un cor amato riamando,  
Diresti ripentita sospirando,  
Perduto e tutto il tempo  
Che in amar non si sponde.

Tasso.

Hadst Thou but tasted once the thousandth part  
Of joys, which bless the loved and loving heart,  
Your words repentant and your sighs would prove,  
Lost is the time which is not past in love.

The monks having attended their Abbot to the door of his Cell, He dismissed them with an air of conscious superiority in which Humility's semblance combated with the reality of pride.

He was no sooner alone, than He gave free loose to the indulgence of his vanity. When He remembered the Enthusiasm which his discourse had excited, his heart swelled with rapture, and his imagination presented him with splendid visions of

aggrandizement. He looked round him with exultation, and Pride told him loudly that He was superior to the rest of his fellow-Creatures.

'Who,' thought He; 'Who but myself has passed the ordeal of Youth, yet sees no single stain upon his conscience? Who else has subdued the violence of strong passions and an impetuous temperament, and submitted even from the dawn of life to voluntary retirement? I seek for such a Man in vain. I see no one but myself possessed of such resolution. Religion cannot boast Ambrosio's equal! How powerful an effect did my discourse produce upon its Auditors! How they crowded round me! How they loaded me with benedictions, and pronounced me the sole uncorrupted Pillar of the Church! What then now is left for me to do? Nothing, but to watch as carefully over the conduct of my Brothers as I have hitherto watched over my own. Yet hold! May I not be tempted from those paths which till now I have pursued without one moment's wandering? Am I not a Man, whose nature is frail, and prone to error? I must now abandon the solitude of my retreat; The fairest and noblest Dames of Madrid continually present themselves at the Abbey, and will use no other Confessor.

I must accustom my eyes to Objects of temptation, and expose

myself to the seduction of luxury and desire. Should I meet in that world which I am constrained to enter some lovely Female, lovely . . . as you, Madona. . . .!

As He said this, He fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin, which was suspended opposite to him: This for two years had been the Object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight.

'What Beauty in that countenance!' He continued after a silence of some minutes; 'How graceful is the turn of that head! What sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! How softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the Rose vie with the blush of that cheek? Can the Lily rival the whiteness of that hand? Oh! if such a Creature existed, and existed but for me! Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! Gracious God, should I then resist the temptation? Should I not barter for a single embrace the reward of my sufferings for thirty years? Should I not abandon. . . . Fool that I am! Whither do I suffer my admiration of this picture to hurry me? Away, impure ideas! Let me remember that Woman is for ever lost to me. Never was Mortal formed so perfect as this picture. But even did

such exist, the trial might be too mighty for a common virtue, but Ambrosio's is proof against temptation. Temptation, did I say? To me it would be none. What charms me, when ideal and considered as a superior Being, would disgust me, become Woman and tainted with all the failings of Mortality. It is not the Woman's beauty that fills me with such enthusiasm; It is the Painter's skill that I admire, it is the Divinity that I adore!

Are not the passions dead in my bosom? Have I not freed myself from the frailty of Mankind? Fear not, Ambrosio! Take confidence in the strength of your virtue. Enter boldly into a world to whose failings you are superior; Reflect that you are now exempted from Humanity's defects, and defy all the arts of the Spirits of Darkness. They shall know you for what you are!

Here his Reverie was interrupted by three soft knocks at the door of his Cell. With difficulty did the Abbot awake from his delirium. The knocking was repeated.

'Who is there?' said Ambrosio at length.

'It is only Rosario,' replied a gentle voice.

'Enter! Enter, my Son!'

The Door was immediately opened, and Rosario appeared with a small basket in his hand.

Rosario was a young Novice belonging to the Monastery, who in three Months intended to make his profession. A sort of mystery enveloped this Youth which rendered him at once an object of interest and curiosity. His hatred of society, his profound melancholy, his rigid observation of the duties of his order, and his voluntary seclusion from the world at his age so unusual, attracted the notice of the whole fraternity. He seemed fearful of being recognised, and no one had ever seen his face. His head was continually muffled up in his Cowl; Yet such of his features as accident discovered, appeared the most beautiful and noble.

Rosario was the only name by which He was known in the Monastery.

No one knew from whence He came, and when questioned in the subject He preserved a profound silence. A Stranger, whose rich habit and magnificent equipage declared him to be of distinguished rank, had engaged the Monks to receive a Novice, and had deposited the necessary sums. The next day He returned with Rosario, and from that time no more had been heard of him.

The Youth had carefully avoided the company of the Monks: He answered their civilities with sweetness, but reserve, and evidently showed that his inclination led him to solitude. To this general rule the Superior was the only exception. To him He looked up with a respect approaching idolatry: He sought his company with the most attentive assiduity, and eagerly seized every means to ingratiate himself in his favour. In the Abbot's society his Heart seemed to be at ease, and an air of gaiety pervaded his whole manners and discourse. Ambrosio on his side did not feel less attracted towards the Youth; With him alone did He lay aside his habitual severity. When He spoke to him, He insensibly assumed a tone milder than was usual to him; and no voice sounded so sweet to him as did Rosario's. He repayed the Youth's attentions by instructing him in various sciences; The Novice received his lessons with docility; Ambrosio was every day more charmed with the vivacity of his Genius, the simplicity of his manners, and the rectitude of his heart: In short He loved him with all the affection of a Father. He could not help sometimes indulging a desire secretly to see the face of his Pupil; But his rule of self-denial extended even to curiosity, and prevented him from communicating his wishes to the Youth.

'Pardon my intrusion, Father,' said Rosario, while He placed his

basket upon the Table; 'I come to you a Suppliant. Hearing that a dear Friend is dangerously ill, I entreat your prayers for his recovery. If supplications can prevail upon heaven to spare him, surely yours must be efficacious.'

'Whatever depends upon me, my Son, you know that you may command.

What is your Friend's name?'

'Vincenzio della Ronda.'

' 'Tis sufficient. I will not forget him in my prayers, and may our thrice-blessed St. Francis deign to listen to my intercession!--What have you in your basket, Rosario?'

'A few of those flowers, reverend Father, which I have observed to be most acceptable to you. Will you permit my arranging them in your chamber?'

'Your attentions charm me, my Son.'

While Rosario dispersed the contents of his Basket in small Vases placed for that purpose in various parts of the room, the

Abbot thus continued the conversation.

'I saw you not in the Church this evening, Rosario.'

'Yet I was present, Father. I am too grateful for your protection to lose an opportunity of witnessing your Triumph.'

'Alas! Rosario, I have but little cause to triumph: The Saint spoke by my mouth; To him belongs all the merit. It seems then you were contented with my discourse?'

'Contented, say you? Oh! you surpassed yourself! Never did I hear such eloquence . . . save once!'

Here the Novice heaved an involuntary sigh.

'When was that once?' demanded the Abbot.

'When you preached upon the sudden indisposition of our late Superior.'

'I remember it: That is more than two years ago. And were you present? I knew you not at that time, Rosario.'

' 'Tis true, Father; and would to God! I had expired, ere I beheld that day! What sufferings, what sorrows should I have escaped!'

'Sufferings at your age, Rosario?'

'Aye, Father; Sufferings, which if known to you, would equally raise your anger and compassion! Sufferings, which form at once the torment and pleasure of my existence! Yet in this retreat my bosom would feel tranquil, were it not for the tortures of apprehension. Oh God! Oh God! how cruel is a life of fear!--Father! I have given up all; I have abandoned the world and its delights for ever: Nothing now remains, Nothing now has charms for me, but your friendship, but your affection. If I lose that, Father! Oh! if I lose that, tremble at the effects of my despair!'

'You apprehend the loss of my friendship? How has my conduct justified this fear? Know me better, Rosario, and think me worthy of your confidence. What are your sufferings? Reveal them to me, and believe that if 'tis in my power to relieve them. . . .!'

'Ah! 'tis in no one's power but yours. Yet I must not let you know them. You would hate me for my avowal! You would drive me from your presence with scorn and ignominy!'

'My Son, I conjure you! I entreat you!'

'For pity's sake, enquire no further! I must not . . . I dare not . . . Hark! The Bell rings for Vespers! Father, your benediction, and I leave you!'

As He said this, He threw himself upon his knees and received the blessing which He demanded. Then pressing the Abbot's hand to his lips, He started from the ground and hastily quitted the apartment. Soon after Ambrosio descended to Vespers (which were celebrated in a small chapel belonging to the Abbey), filled with surprise at the singularity of the Youth's behaviour.

Vespers being over, the Monks retired to their respective Cells. The Abbot alone remained in the Chapel to receive the Nuns of St. Clare. He had not been long seated in the confessional chair before the Prioress made her appearance. Each of the Nuns was heard in her turn, while the Others waited with the Domina in the

adjoining Vestry. Ambrosio listened to the confessions with attention, made many exhortations, enjoined penance proportioned to each offence, and for some time every thing went on as usual: till at last one of the Nuns, conspicuous from the nobleness of her air and elegance of her figure, carelessly permitted a letter to fall from her bosom. She was retiring, unconscious of her loss. Ambrosio supposed it to have been written by some one of her Relations, and picked it up intending to restore it to her.

'Stay, Daughter,' said He; 'You have let fall. . . .'

At this moment, the paper being already open, his eye involuntarily read the first words. He started back with surprise! The Nun had turned round on hearing his voice: She perceived her letter in his hand, and uttering a shriek of terror, flew hastily to regain it.

'Hold!' said the Friar in a tone of severity; 'Daughter, I must read this letter.'

'Then I am lost!' She exclaimed clasping her hands together wildly.

All colour instantly faded from her face; she trembled with agitation, and was obliged to fold her arms round a Pillar of the Chapel to save herself from sinking upon the floor. In the meanwhile the Abbot read the following lines.

'All is ready for your escape, my dearest Agnes. At twelve tomorrow night I shall expect to find you at the Garden door: I have obtained the Key, and a few hours will suffice to place you in a secure asylum. Let no mistaken scruples induce you to reject the certain means of preserving yourself and the innocent Creature whom you nourish in your bosom. Remember that you had promised to be mine, long ere you engaged yourself to the church; that your situation will soon be evident to the prying eyes of your Companions; and that flight is the only means of avoiding the effects of their malevolent resentment. Farewell, my Agnes! my dear and destined Wife! Fail not to be at the Garden door at twelve!'

As soon as He had finished, Ambrosio bent an eye stern and angry upon the imprudent Nun.

'This letter must to the Prioress!' said He, and passed her.

His words sounded like thunder to her ears: She awoke from her torpidity only to be sensible of the dangers of her situation.

She followed him hastily, and detained him by his garment.

'Stay! Oh! stay!' She cried in the accents of despair, while She threw herself at the Friar's feet, and bathed them with her tears. 'Father, compassionate my youth! Look with indulgence on a Woman's weakness, and deign to conceal my frailty! The remainder of my life shall be employed in expiating this single fault, and your lenity will bring back a soul to heaven!'

'Amazing confidence! What! Shall St. Clare's Convent become the retreat of Prostitutes? Shall I suffer the Church of Christ to cherish in its bosom debauchery and shame? Unworthy Wretch! such lenity would make me your accomplice. Mercy would here be criminal. You have abandoned yourself to a Seducer's lust; You have defiled the sacred habit by your impurity; and still dare you think yourself deserving my compassion? Hence, nor detain me longer! Where is the Lady Prioress?' He added, raising his voice.

'Hold! Father, Hold! Hear me but for one moment! Tax me not with impurity, nor think that I have erred from the warmth of

temperament. Long before I took the veil, Raymond was Master of my heart: He inspired me with the purest, the most irreproachable passion, and was on the point of becoming my lawful husband. An horrible adventure, and the treachery of a Relation, separated us from each other: I believed him for ever lost to me, and threw myself into a Convent from motives of despair. Accident again united us; I could not refuse myself the melancholy pleasure of mingling my tears with his: We met nightly in the Gardens of St. Clare, and in an unguarded moment I violated my vows of Chastity. I shall soon become a Mother: Reverend Ambrosio, take compassion on me; take compassion on the innocent Being whose existence is attached to mine. If you discover my imprudence to the Domina, both of us are lost: The punishment which the laws of St. Clare assign to Unfortunates like myself is most severe and cruel. Worthy, worthy Father! Let not your own untainted conscience render you unfeeling towards those less able to withstand temptation! Let not mercy be the only virtue of which your heart is unsusceptible! Pity me, most reverend! Restore my letter, nor doom me to inevitable destruction!

'Your boldness confounds me! Shall I conceal your crime, I whom you have deceived by your feigned confession? No, Daughter, no!

I will render you a more essential service. I will rescue you from perdition in spite of yourself; Penance and mortification shall expiate your offence, and Severity force you back to the paths of holiness. What; Ho! Mother St. Agatha!

'Father! By all that is sacred, by all that is most dear to you, I supplicate, I entreat. . . .'

'Release me! I will not hear you. Where is the Domina? Mother St. Agatha, where are you?'

The door of the Vestry opened, and the Prioress entered the Chapel, followed by her Nuns.

'Cruel! Cruel!' exclaimed Agnes, relinquishing her hold.

Wild and desperate, She threw herself upon the ground, beating her bosom and rending her veil in all the delirium of despair.

The Nuns gazed with astonishment upon the scene before them. The Friar now presented the fatal paper to the Prioress, informed her of the manner in which he had found it, and added, that it was her business to decide, what penance the delinquent merited.

While She perused the letter, the Domina's countenance grew inflamed with passion. What! Such a crime committed in her Convent, and made known to Ambrosio, to the Idol of Madrid, to the Man whom She was most anxious to impress with the opinion of the strictness and regularity of her House! Words were inadequate to express her fury. She was silent, and darted upon the prostrate Nun looks of menace and malignity.

'Away with her to the Convent!' said She at length to some of her Attendants.

Two of the oldest Nuns now approaching Agnes, raised her forcibly from the ground, and prepared to conduct her from the Chapel.

'What!' She exclaimed suddenly shaking off their hold with distracted gestures; 'Is all hope then lost? Already do you drag me to punishment? Where are you, Raymond? Oh! save me! save me!'

Then casting upon the Abbot a frantic look, 'Hear me!' She continued; 'Man of an hard heart! Hear me, Proud, Stern, and Cruel! You could have saved me; you could have restored me to happiness and virtue, but would not! You are the destroyer of my

Soul; You are my Murderer, and on you fall the curse of my death and my unborn Infant's! Insolent in your yet-unshaken virtue, you disdained the prayers of a Penitent; But God will show mercy, though you show none. And where is the merit of your boasted virtue? What temptations have you vanquished? Coward! you have fled from it, not opposed seduction. But the day of Trial will arrive! Oh! then when you yield to impetuous passions! when you feel that Man is weak, and born to err; When shuddering you look back upon your crimes, and solicit with terror the mercy of your God, Oh! in that fearful moment think upon me! Think upon your Cruelty! Think upon Agnes, and despair of pardon!

As She uttered these last words, her strength was exhausted, and She sank inanimate upon the bosom of a Nun who stood near her. She was immediately conveyed from the Chapel, and her Companions followed her.

Ambrosio had not listened to her reproaches without emotion. A secret pang at his heart made him feel, that He had treated this Unfortunate with too great severity. He therefore detained the Prioress and ventured to pronounce some words in favour of the Delinquent.

'The violence of her despair,' said He, 'proves, that at least Vice is not become familiar to her. Perhaps by treating her with somewhat less rigour than is generally practised, and mitigating in some degree the accustomed penance. . . .'

'Mitigate it, Father?' interrupted the Lady Prioress; 'Not I, believe me. The laws of our order are strict and severe; they have fallen into disuse of late, But the crime of Agnes shows me the necessity of their revival. I go to signify my intention to the Convent, and Agnes shall be the first to feel the rigour of those laws, which shall be obeyed to the very letter. Father, Farewell.'

Thus saying, She hastened out of the Chapel.

'I have done my duty,' said Ambrosio to himself.

Still did He not feel perfectly satisfied by this reflection. To dissipate the unpleasant ideas which this scene had excited in him, upon quitting the Chapel He descended into the Abbey Garden.

In all Madrid there was no spot more beautiful or better regulated. It was laid out with the most exquisite taste; The

choicest flowers adorned it in the height of luxuriance, and though artfully arranged, seemed only planted by the hand of Nature: Fountains, springing from basons of white Marble, cooled the air with perpetual showers; and the Walls were entirely covered by Jessamine, vines, and Honeysuckles. The hour now added to the beauty of the scene. The full Moon, ranging through a blue and cloudless sky, shed upon the trees a trembling lustre, and the waters of the fountains sparkled in the silver beam: A gentle breeze breathed the fragrance of Orange-blossoms along the Alleys; and the Nightingale poured forth her melodious murmur from the shelter of an artificial wilderness. Thither the Abbot bent his steps.

In the bosom of this little Grove stood a rustic Grotto, formed in imitation of an Hermitage. The walls were constructed of roots of trees, and the interstices filled up with Moss and Ivy. Seats of Turf were placed on either side, and a natural Cascade fell from the Rock above. Buried in himself the Monk approached the spot. The universal calm had communicated itself to his bosom, and a voluptuous tranquillity spread languor through his soul.

He reached the Hermitage, and was entering to repose himself,

when He stopped on perceiving it to be already occupied.

Extended upon one of the Banks lay a man in a melancholy posture.

His head was supported upon his arm, and He seemed lost in meditation. The Monk drew nearer, and recognised Rosario: He watched him in silence, and entered not the Hermitage. After some minutes the Youth raised his eyes, and fixed them mournfully upon the opposite Wall.

'Yes!' said He with a deep and plaintive sigh; 'I feel all the happiness of thy situation, all the misery of my own! Happy were I, could I think like Thee! Could I look like Thee with disgust upon Mankind, could bury myself for ever in some impenetrable solitude, and forget that the world holds Beings deserving to be loved! Oh God! What a blessing would Misanthropy be to me!'

'That is a singular thought, Rosario,' said the Abbot, entering the Grotto.

'You here, reverend Father?' cried the Novice.

At the same time starting from his place in confusion, He drew his Cowl hastily over his face. Ambrosio seated himself upon the

Bank, and obliged the Youth to place himself by him.

'You must not indulge this disposition to melancholy,' said He;  
'What can possibly have made you view in so desirable a light,  
Misanthropy, of all sentiments the most hateful?'

'The perusal of these Verses, Father, which till now had escaped  
my observation. The Brightness of the Moonbeams permitted my  
reading them; and Oh! how I envy the feelings of the Writer!'

As He said this, He pointed to a marble Tablet fixed against the  
opposite Wall: On it were engraved the following lines.

#### INSCRIPTION IN AN HERMITAGE

Who-e'er Thou art these lines now reading,  
Think not, though from the world receding  
I joy my lonely days to lead in  
    This Desart drear,  
That with remorse a conscience bleeding  
    Hath led me here.

No thought of guilt my bosom sows:

Free-willed I fled from courtly bowers;  
For well I saw in Halls and Towers  
That Lust and Pride,  
The Arch-Fiend's dearest darkest Powers,  
In state preside.

I saw Mankind with vice incrustured;  
I saw that Honour's sword was rustured;  
That few for aught but folly lusted;  
That He was still deceiv'd, who trusted  
In Love or Friend;  
And hither came with Men disgustured  
My life to end.

In this lone Cave, in garments lowly,  
Alike a Foe to noisy folly,  
And brow-bent gloomy melancholy  
I wear away  
My life, and in my office holy  
Consume the day.

Content and comfort bless me more in  
This Grot, than e'er I felt before in

A Palace, and with thoughts still soaring  
To God on high,  
Each night and morn with voice imploring  
This wish I sigh.

'Let me, Oh! Lord! from life retire,  
Unknown each guilty worldly fire,  
Remorseful throb, or loose desire;  
And when I die,  
Let me in this belief expire,  
"To God I fly"!

Stranger, if full of youth and riot  
As yet no grief has marred thy quiet,  
Thou haply throw'st a scornful eye at  
The Hermit's prayer:  
But if Thou hast a cause to sigh at  
Thy fault, or care;

If Thou hast known false Love's vexation,  
Or hast been exil'd from thy Nation,  
Or guilt affrights thy contemplation,  
And makes thee pine,

Oh! how must Thou lament thy station,

And envy mine!

'Were it possible' said the Friar, 'for Man to be so totally wrapped up in himself as to live in absolute seclusion from human nature, and could yet feel the contented tranquillity which these lines express, I allow that the situation would be more desirable, than to live in a world so pregnant with every vice and every folly. But this never can be the case. This inscription was merely placed here for the ornament of the Grotto, and the sentiments and the Hermit are equally imaginary. Man was born for society. However little He may be attached to the World, He never can wholly forget it, or bear to be wholly forgotten by it. Disgusted at the guilt or absurdity of Mankind, the Misanthrope flies from it: He resolves to become an Hermit, and buries himself in the Cavern of some gloomy Rock. While Hate inflames his bosom, possibly He may feel contented with his situation: But when his passions begin to cool; when Time has mellowed his sorrows, and healed those wounds which He bore with him to his solitude, think you that Content becomes his Companion? Ah! no, Rosario. No longer sustained by the violence of his passions, He feels all the monotony of his way of living, and his heart becomes the prey of Ennui and weariness. He looks

round, and finds himself alone in the Universe: The love of society revives in his bosom, and He pants to return to that world which He has abandoned. Nature loses all her charms in his eyes: No one is near him to point out her beauties, or share in his admiration of her excellence and variety. Propped upon the fragment of some Rock, He gazes upon the tumbling waterfall with a vacant eye, He views without emotion the glory of the setting Sun. Slowly He returns to his Cell at Evening, for no one there is anxious for his arrival; He has no comfort in his solitary unsavoury meal: He throws himself upon his couch of Moss despondent and dissatisfied, and wakes only to pass a day as joyless, as monotonous as the former.'

'You amaze me, Father! Suppose that circumstances condemned you to solitude; Would not the duties of Religion and the consciousness of a life well spent communicate to your heart that calm which. . . .'

'I should deceive myself, did I fancy that they could. I am convinced of the contrary, and that all my fortitude would not prevent me from yielding to melancholy and disgust. After consuming the day in study, if you knew my pleasure at meeting my Brethren in the Evening! After passing many a long hour in

solitude, if I could express to you the joy which I feel at once more beholding a fellow-Creature! 'Tis in this particular that I place the principal merit of a Monastic Institution. It secludes Man from the temptations of Vice; It procures that leisure necessary for the proper service of the Supreme; It spares him the mortification of witnessing the crimes of the worldly, and yet permits him to enjoy the blessings of society. And do you, Rosario, do YOU envy an Hermit's life? Can you be thus blind to the happiness of your situation? Reflect upon it for a moment. This Abbey is become your Asylum: Your regularity, your gentleness, your talents have rendered you the object of universal esteem: You are secluded from the world which you profess to hate; yet you remain in possession of the benefits of society, and that a society composed of the most estimable of Mankind.'

'Father! Father! 'tis that which causes my Torment! Happy had it been for me, had my life been passed among the vicious and abandoned! Had I never heard pronounced the name of Virtue! 'Tis my unbounded adoration of religion; 'Tis my soul's exquisite sensibility of the beauty of fair and good, that loads me with shame! that hurries me to perdition! Oh! that I had never seen these Abbey walls!'

'How, Rosario? When we last conversed, you spoke in a different tone. Is my friendship then become of such little consequence? Had you never seen these Abbey walls, you never had seen me: Can that really be your wish?'

'Had never seen you?' repeated the Novice, starting from the Bank, and grasping the Friar's hand with a frantic air; 'You? You? Would to God, that lightning had blasted them, before you ever met my eyes! Would to God! that I were never to see you more, and could forget that I had ever seen you!'

With these words He flew hastily from the Grotto. Ambrosio remained in his former attitude, reflecting on the Youth's unaccountable behaviour. He was inclined to suspect the derangement of his senses: yet the general tenor of his conduct, the connexion of his ideas, and calmness of his demeanour till the moment of his quitting the Grotto, seemed to discountenance this conjecture. After a few minutes Rosario returned. He again seated himself upon the Bank: He reclined his cheek upon one hand, and with the other wiped away the tears which trickled from his eyes at intervals.

The Monk looked upon him with compassion, and forbore to interrupt his meditations. Both observed for some time a profound silence. The Nightingale had now taken her station upon an Orange Tree fronting the Hermitage, and poured forth a strain the most melancholy and melodious. Rosario raised his head, and listened to her with attention.

'It was thus,' said He, with a deep-drawn sigh; 'It was thus, that during the last month of her unhappy life, my Sister used to sit listening to the Nightingale. Poor Matilda! She sleeps in the Grave, and her broken heart throbs no more with passion.'

'You had a Sister?'

'You say right, that I HAD; Alas! I have one no longer. She sunk beneath the weight of her sorrows in the very spring of life.'

'What were those sorrows?'

'They will not excite YOUR pity: YOU know not the power of those irresistible, those fatal sentiments, to which her Heart was a prey. Father, She loved unfortunately. A passion for One

endowed with every virtue, for a Man, Oh! rather let me say, for a divinity, proved the bane of her existence. His noble form, his spotless character, his various talents, his wisdom solid, wonderful, and glorious, might have warmed the bosom of the most insensible. My Sister saw him, and dared to love though She never dared to hope.'

'If her love was so well bestowed, what forbad her to hope the obtaining of its object?'

'Father, before He knew her, Julian had already plighted his vows to a Bride most fair, most heavenly! Yet still my Sister loved, and for the Husband's sake She doted upon the Wife. One morning She found means to escape from our Father's House: Arrayed in humble weeds She offered herself as a Domestic to the Consort of her Beloved, and was accepted. She was now continually in his presence: She strove to ingratiate herself into his favour: She succeeded. Her attentions attracted Julian's notice; The virtuous are ever grateful, and He distinguished Matilda above the rest of her Companions.'

'And did not your Parents seek for her? Did they submit tamely to their loss, nor attempt to recover their wandering Daughter?'

'Ere they could find her, She discovered herself. Her love grew too violent for concealment; Yet She wished not for Julian's person, She ambitioned but a share of his heart. In an unguarded moment She confessed her affection. What was the return? Doating upon his Wife, and believing that a look of pity bestowed upon another was a theft from what He owed to her, He drove Matilda from his presence. He forbid her ever again appearing before him. His severity broke her heart: She returned to her Father's, and in a few Months after was carried to her Grave.'

'Unhappy Girl! Surely her fate was too severe, and Julian was too cruel.'

'Do you think so, Father?' cried the Novice with vivacity; 'Do you think that He was cruel?'

'Doubtless I do, and pity her most sincerely.'

'You pity her? You pity her? Oh! Father! Father! Then pity me!'

The Friar started; when after a moment's pause Rosario added with

a faltering voice,--'for my sufferings are still greater. My Sister had a Friend, a real Friend, who pitied the acuteness of her feelings, nor reproached her with her inability to repress them. I . . .! I have no Friend! The whole wide world cannot furnish an heart that is willing to participate in the sorrows of mine!'

As He uttered these words, He sobbed audibly. The Friar was affected. He took Rosario's hand, and pressed it with tenderness.

'You have no Friend, say you? What then am I? Why will you not confide in me, and what can you fear? My severity? Have I ever used it with you? The dignity of my habit? Rosario, I lay aside the Monk, and bid you consider me as no other than your Friend, your Father. Well may I assume that title, for never did Parent watch over a Child more fondly than I have watched over you.

From the moment in which I first beheld you, I perceived sensations in my bosom till then unknown to me; I found a delight in your society which no one's else could afford; and when I witnessed the extent of your genius and information, I rejoiced as does a Father in the perfections of his Son. Then lay aside your fears; Speak to me with openness: Speak to me,

Rosario, and say that you will confide in me. If my aid or my pity can alleviate your distress. . . .'

'Yours can! Yours only can! Ah! Father, how willingly would I unveil to you my heart! How willingly would I declare the secret which bows me down with its weight! But Oh! I fear! I fear!'

'What, my Son?'

'That you should abhor me for my weakness; That the reward of my confidence should be the loss of your esteem.'

'How shall I reassure you? Reflect upon the whole of my past conduct, upon the paternal tenderness which I have ever shown you. Abhor you, Rosario? It is no longer in my power. To give up your society would be to deprive myself of the greatest pleasure of my life. Then reveal to me what afflicts you, and believe me while I solemnly swear. . . .'

'Hold!' interrupted the Novice; 'Swear, that whatever be my secret, you will not oblige me to quit the Monastery till my Noviciate shall expire.'

'I promise it faithfully, and as I keep my vows to you, may Christ keep his to Mankind. Now then explain this mystery, and rely upon my indulgence.'

'I obey you. Know then. . . . Oh! how I tremble to name the word! Listen to me with pity, revered Ambrosio! Call up every latent spark of human weakness that may teach you compassion for mine! Father!' continued He throwing himself at the Friar's feet, and pressing his hand to his lips with eagerness, while agitation for a moment choaked his voice; 'Father!' continued He in faltering accents, 'I am a Woman!'

The Abbot started at this unexpected avowal. Prostrate on the ground lay the feigned Rosario, as if waiting in silence the decision of his Judge. Astonishment on the one part, apprehension on the other, for some minutes chained them in the same attitudes, as had they been touched by the Rod of some Magician. At length recovering from his confusion, the Monk quitted the Grotto, and sped with precipitation towards the Abbey. His action did not escape the Suppliant. She sprang from the ground; She hastened to follow him, overtook him, threw herself in his passage, and embraced his knees. Ambrosio strove

in vain to disengage himself from her grasp.

'Do not fly me!' She cried; 'Leave me not abandoned to the impulse of despair! Listen, while I excuse my imprudence; while I acknowledge my Sister's story to be my own! I am Matilda; You are her Beloved.'

If Ambrosio's surprise was great at her first avowal, upon hearing her second it exceeded all bounds. Amazed, embarrassed, and irresolute He found himself incapable of pronouncing a syllable, and remained in silence gazing upon Matilda: This gave her opportunity to continue her explanation as follows.

'Think not, Ambrosio, that I come to rob your Bride of your affections. No, believe me: Religion alone deserves you; and far is it from Matilda's wish to draw you from the paths of virtue. What I feel for you is love, not licentiousness; I sigh to be possessor of your heart, not lust for the enjoyment of your person. Deign to listen to my vindication: A few moments will convince you that this holy retreat is not polluted by my presence, and that you may grant me your compassion without trespassing against your vows.'--She seated herself: Ambrosio, scarcely conscious of what He did, followed her example, and She

proceeded in her discourse.

I spring from a distinguished family: My Father was Chief of the noble House of Villanegas. He died while I was still an Infant, and left me sole Heiress of his immense possessions. Young and wealthy, I was sought in marriage by the noblest Youths of Madrid; But no one succeeded in gaining my affections. I had been brought up under the care of an Uncle possessed of the most solid judgment and extensive erudition. He took pleasure in communicating to me some portion of his knowledge. Under his instructions my understanding acquired more strength and justness than generally falls to the lot of my sex: The ability of my Preceptor being aided by natural curiosity, I not only made a considerable progress in sciences universally studied, but in others, revealed but to few, and lying under censure from the blindness of superstition. But while my Guardian laboured to enlarge the sphere of my knowledge, He carefully inculcated every moral precept: He relieved me from the shackles of vulgar prejudice; He pointed out the beauty of Religion; He taught me to look with adoration upon the pure and virtuous, and, woe is me! I have obeyed him but too well!

'With such dispositions, Judge whether I could observe with any

other sentiment than disgust the vice, dissipation, and ignorance, which disgrace our Spanish Youth. I rejected every offer with disdain. My heart remained without a Master till chance conducted me to the Cathedral of the Capuchins. Oh! surely on that day my Guardian Angel slumbered neglectful of his charge! Then was it that I first beheld you: You supplied the Superior's place, absent from illness. You cannot but remember the lively enthusiasm which your discourse created. Oh! how I drank your words! How your eloquence seemed to steal me from myself! I scarcely dared to breathe, fearing to lose a syllable; and while you spoke, Methought a radiant glory beamed round your head, and your countenance shone with the majesty of a God. I retired from the Church, glowing with admiration. From that moment you became the idol of my heart, the never-changing object of my Meditations. I enquired respecting you. The reports which were made me of your mode of life, of your knowledge, piety, and self-denial riveted the chains imposed on me by your eloquence. I was conscious that there was no longer a void in my heart; That I had found the Man whom I had sought till then in vain. In expectation of hearing you again, every day I visited your Cathedral: You remained secluded within the Abbey walls, and I always withdrew, wretched and disappointed. The Night was more propitious to me, for then you stood before me in my dreams; You

vowed to me eternal friendship; You led me through the paths of virtue, and assisted me to support the vexations of life. The Morning dispelled these pleasing visions; I woke, and found myself separated from you by Barriers which appeared insurmountable. Time seemed only to increase the strength of my passion: I grew melancholy and despondent; I fled from society, and my health declined daily. At length no longer able to exist in this state of torture, I resolved to assume the disguise in which you see me. My artifice was fortunate: I was received into the Monastery, and succeeded in gaining your esteem.

'Now then I should have felt completely happy, had not my quiet been disturbed by the fear of detection. The pleasure which I received from your society, was embittered by the idea that perhaps I should soon be deprived of it: and my heart throbbed so rapturously at obtaining the marks of your friendship, as to convince me that I never should survive its loss. I resolved, therefore, not to leave the discovery of my sex to chance, to confess the whole to you, and throw myself entirely on your mercy and indulgence. Ah! Ambrosio, can I have been deceived? Can you be less generous than I thought you? I will not suspect it. You will not drive a Wretch to despair; I shall still be permitted to see you, to converse with you, to adore you! Your virtues shall

be my example through life; and when we expire, our bodies shall rest in the same Grave.'

She ceased. While She spoke, a thousand opposing sentiments combated in Ambrosio's bosom. Surprise at the singularity of this adventure, Confusion at her abrupt declaration, Resentment at her boldness in entering the Monastery, and Consciousness of the austerity with which it behoved him to reply, such were the sentiments of which He was aware; But there were others also which did not obtain his notice. He perceived not, that his vanity was flattered by the praises bestowed upon his eloquence and virtue; that He felt a secret pleasure in reflecting that a young and seemingly lovely Woman had for his sake abandoned the world, and sacrificed every other passion to that which He had inspired: Still less did He perceive that his heart throbbed with desire, while his hand was pressed gently by Matilda's ivory fingers.

By degrees He recovered from his confusion. His ideas became less bewildered: He was immediately sensible of the extreme impropriety, should Matilda be permitted to remain in the Abbey after this avowal of her sex. He assumed an air of severity, and drew away his hand.

'How, Lady!' said He; 'Can you really hope for my permission to remain amongst us? Even were I to grant your request, what good could you derive from it? Think you that I ever can reply to an affection, which . . . !'

'No, Father, No! I expect not to inspire you with a love like mine. I only wish for the liberty to be near you, to pass some hours of the day in your society; to obtain your compassion, your friendship and esteem. Surely my request is not unreasonable.'

'But reflect, Lady! Reflect only for a moment on the impropriety of my harbouring a Woman in the Abbey; and that too a Woman, who confesses that She loves me. It must not be. The risque of your being discovered is too great, and I will not expose myself to so dangerous a temptation.'

'Temptation, say you? Forget that I am a Woman, and it no longer exists: Consider me only as a Friend, as an Unfortunate, whose happiness, whose life depends upon your protection. Fear not lest I should ever call to your remembrance that love the most impetuous, the most unbounded, has induced me to disguise my sex; or that instigated by desires, offensive to YOUR vows and my

own honour, I should endeavour to seduce you from the path of rectitude. No, Ambrosio, learn to know me better. I love you for your virtues: Lose them, and with them you lose my affections. I look upon you as a Saint; Prove to me that you are no more than Man, and I quit you with disgust. Is it then from me that you fear temptation? From me, in whom the world's dazzling pleasures created no other sentiment than contempt? From me, whose attachment is grounded on your exemption from human frailty? Oh! dismiss such injurious apprehensions! Think nobler of me, think nobler of yourself. I am incapable of seducing you to error; and surely your Virtue is established on a basis too firm to be shaken by unwarranted desires. Ambrosio, dearest Ambrosio! drive me not from your presence; Remember your promise, and authorize my stay!

'Impossible, Matilda; YOUR interest commands me to refuse your prayer, since I tremble for you, not for myself. After vanquishing the impetuous ebullitions of Youth; After passing thirty years in mortification and penance, I might safely permit your stay, nor fear your inspiring me with warmer sentiments than pity. But to yourself, remaining in the Abbey can produce none but fatal consequences. You will misconstrue my every word and action; You will seize every circumstance with avidity, which

encourages you to hope the return of your affection; Insensibly your passions will gain a superiority over your reason; and far from these being repressed by my presence, every moment which we pass together, will only serve to irritate and excite them.

Believe me, unhappy Woman! you possess my sincere compassion. I am convinced that you have hitherto acted upon the purest motives; But though you are blind to the imprudence of your conduct, in me it would be culpable not to open your eyes. I feel that Duty obliges my treating you with harshness: I must reject your prayer, and remove every shadow of hope which may aid to nourish sentiments so pernicious to your repose. Matilda, you must from hence tomorrow.'

'Tomorrow, Ambrosio? Tomorrow? Oh! surely you cannot mean it!

You cannot resolve on driving me to despair! You cannot have the cruelty. . . .'

'You have heard my decision, and it must be obeyed. The Laws of our Order forbid your stay: It would be perjury to conceal that a Woman is within these Walls, and my vows will oblige me to declare your story to the Community. You must from hence!--I pity you, but can do no more!'

He pronounced these words in a faint and trembling voice: Then rising from his seat, He would have hastened towards the Monastery. Uttering a loud shriek, Matilda followed, and detained him.

'Stay yet one moment, Ambrosio! Hear me yet speak one word!'

'I dare not listen! Release me! You know my resolution!'

'But one word! But one last word, and I have done!'

'Leave me! Your entreaties are in vain! You must from hence tomorrow!'

'Go then, Barbarian! But this resource is still left me.'

As She said this, She suddenly drew a poignard: She rent open her garment, and placed the weapon's point against her bosom.

'Father, I will never quit these Walls alive!'

'Hold! Hold, Matilda! What would you do?'

'You are determined, so am I: The Moment that you leave me, I plunge this Steel in my heart.'

'Holy St. Francis! Matilda, have you your senses? Do you know the consequences of your action? That Suicide is the greatest of crimes? That you destroy your Soul? That you lose your claim to salvation? That you prepare for yourself everlasting torments?'

'I care not! I care not!' She replied passionately; 'Either your hand guides me to Paradise, or my own dooms me to perdition! Speak to me, Ambrosio! Tell me that you will conceal my story, that I shall remain your Friend and your Companion, or this poignard drinks my blood!'

As She uttered these last words, She lifted her arm, and made a motion as if to stab herself. The Friar's eyes followed with dread the course of the dagger. She had torn open her habit, and her bosom was half exposed. The weapon's point rested upon her left breast: And Oh! that was such a breast! The Moonbeams darting full upon it enabled the Monk to observe its dazzling whiteness. His eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beautiful Orb. A sensation till then unknown filled his heart

with a mixture of anxiety and delight: A raging fire shot through every limb; The blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination.

'Hold!' He cried in an hurried faltering voice; 'I can resist no longer! Stay, then, Enchantress; Stay for my destruction!'

He said, and rushing from the place, hastened towards the Monastery: He regained his Cell and threw himself upon his Couch, distracted irresolute and confused.

He found it impossible for some time to arrange his ideas. The scene in which He had been engaged had excited such a variety of sentiments in his bosom, that He was incapable of deciding which was predominant. He was irresolute what conduct He ought to hold with the disturber of his repose. He was conscious that prudence, religion, and propriety necessitated his obliging her to quit the Abbey: But on the other hand such powerful reasons authorized her stay that He was but too much inclined to consent to her remaining. He could not avoid being flattered by Matilda's declaration, and at reflecting that He had unconsciously vanquished an heart which had resisted the attacks of Spain's

noblest Cavaliers: The manner in which He had gained her affections was also the most satisfactory to his vanity: He remembered the many happy hours which He had passed in Rosario's society, and dreaded that void in his heart which parting with him would occasion. Besides all this, He considered, that as Matilda was wealthy, her favour might be of essential benefit to the Abbey.

'And what do I risque,' said He to himself, 'by authorizing her stay? May I not safely credit her assertions? Will it not be easy for me to forget her sex, and still consider her as my Friend and my disciple? Surely her love is as pure as She describes. Had it been the offspring of mere licentiousness, would She so long have concealed it in her own bosom? Would She not have employed some means to procure its gratification? She has done quite the contrary: She strove to keep me in ignorance of her sex; and nothing but the fear of detection, and my instances, would have compelled her to reveal the secret. She has observed the duties of religion not less strictly than myself. She has made no attempts to rouse my slumbering passions, nor has She ever conversed with me till this night on the subject of Love. Had She been desirous to gain my affections, not my esteem, She would not have concealed from me

her charms so carefully: At this very moment I have never seen her face: Yet certainly that face must be lovely, and her person beautiful, to judge by her . . . by what I have seen.'

As this last idea passed through his imagination, a blush spread itself over his cheek. Alarmed at the sentiments which He was indulging, He betook himself to prayer; He started from his Couch, knelt before the beautiful Madona, and entreated her assistance in stifling such culpable emotions. He then returned to his Bed, and resigned himself to slumber.

He awoke, heated and unrefreshed. During his sleep his inflamed imagination had presented him with none but the most voluptuous objects. Matilda stood before him in his dreams, and his eyes again dwelt upon her naked breast. She repeated her protestations of eternal love, threw her arms round his neck, and loaded him with kisses: He returned them; He clasped her passionately to his bosom, and . . . the vision was dissolved. Sometimes his dreams presented the image of his favourite Madona, and He fancied that He was kneeling before her: As He offered up his vows to her, the eyes of the Figure seemed to beam on him with inexpressible sweetness. He pressed his lips to hers, and found them warm: The animated form started from the Canvas,

embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite. Such were the scenes, on which his thoughts were employed while sleeping: His unsatisfied Desires placed before him the most lustful and provoking Images, and he rioted in joys till then unknown to him.

He started from his Couch, filled with confusion at the remembrance of his dreams. Scarcely was He less ashamed, when He reflected on his reasons of the former night which induced him to authorize Matilda's stay. The cloud was now dissipated which had obscured his judgment: He shuddered when He beheld his arguments blazoned in their proper colours, and found that He had been a slave to flattery, to avarice, and self-love. If in one hour's conversation Matilda had produced a change so remarkable in his sentiments, what had He not to dread from her remaining in the Abbey? Become sensible of his danger, awakened from his dream of confidence, He resolved to insist on her departing without delay. He began to feel that He was not proof against temptation; and that however Matilda might restrain herself within the bounds of modesty, He was unable to contend with those passions, from which He falsely thought himself exempted.

'Agnes! Agnes!' He exclaimed, while reflecting on his

embarrassments, 'I already feel thy curse!'

He quitted his Cell, determined upon dismissing the feigned Rosario. He appeared at Matins; But his thoughts were absent, and He paid them but little attention. His heart and brain were both of them filled with worldly objects, and He prayed without devotion. The service over, He descended into the Garden. He bent his steps towards the same spot where, on the preceding night, He had made this embarrassing discovery. He doubted not but that Matilda would seek him there: He was not deceived. She soon entered the Hermitage, and approached the Monk with a timid air. After a few minutes during which both were silent, She appeared as if on the point of speaking; But the Abbot, who during this time had been summoning up all his resolution, hastily interrupted her. Though still unconscious how extensive was its influence, He dreaded the melodious seduction of her voice.

'Seat yourself by my side, Matilda,' said He, assuming a look of firmness, though carefully avoiding the least mixture of severity; 'Listen to me patiently, and believe, that in what I shall say, I am not more influenced by my own interest than by yours: Believe, that I feel for you the warmest friendship, the

truest compassion, and that you cannot feel more grieved than I do, when I declare to you that we must never meet again.'

'Ambrosio!' She cried, in a voice at once expressive of surprise and sorrow.

'Be calm, my Friend! My Rosario! Still let me call you by that name so dear to me! Our separation is unavoidable; I blush to own, how sensibly it affects me.-- But yet it must be so. I feel myself incapable of treating you with indifference, and that very conviction obliges me to insist upon your departure. Matilda, you must stay here no longer.'

'Oh! where shall I now seek for probity? Disgusted with a perfidious world, in what happy region does Truth conceal herself? Father, I hoped that She resided here; I thought that your bosom had been her favourite shrine. And you too prove false? Oh God! And you too can betray me?'

'Matilda!'

'Yes, Father, Yes! 'Tis with justice that I reproach you. Oh! where are your promises? My Noviciate is not expired, and yet

will you compel me to quit the Monastery? Can you have the heart to drive me from you? And have I not received your solemn oath to the contrary?'

'I will not compel you to quit the Monastery: You have received my solemn oath to the contrary. But yet when I throw myself upon your generosity, when I declare to you the embarrassments in which your presence involves me, will you not release me from that oath? Reflect upon the danger of a discovery, upon the opprobrium in which such an event would plunge me: Reflect that my honour and reputation are at stake, and that my peace of mind depends on your compliance. As yet my heart is free; I shall separate from you with regret, but not with despair. Stay here, and a few weeks will sacrifice my happiness on the altar of your charms. You are but too interesting, too amiable! I should love you, I should doat on you! My bosom would become the prey of desires which Honour and my profession forbid me to gratify. If I resisted them, the impetuosity of my wishes unsatisfied would drive me to madness: If I yielded to the temptation, I should sacrifice to one moment of guilty pleasure my reputation in this world, my salvation in the next. To you then I fly for defence against myself. Preserve me from losing the reward of thirty years of sufferings! Preserve me from becoming the Victim of

Remorse! YOUR heart has already felt the anguish of hopeless love; Oh! then if you really value me, spare mine that anguish! Give me back my promise; Fly from these walls. Go, and you bear with you my warmest prayers for your happiness, my friendship, my esteem and admiration: Stay, and you become to me the source of danger, of sufferings, of despair! Answer me, Matilda; What is your resolve?--She was silent--'Will you not speak, Matilda? Will you not name your choice?'

'Cruel! Cruel!' She exclaimed, wringing her hands in agony; 'You know too well that you offer me no choice! You know too well that I can have no will but yours!'

'I was not then deceived! Matilda's generosity equals my expectations.'

'Yes; I will prove the truth of my affection by submitting to a decree which cuts me to the very heart. Take back your promise. I will quit the Monastery this very day. I have a Relation, Abbess of a Covent in Estramadura: To her will I bend my steps, and shut myself from the world for ever. Yet tell me, Father; Shall I bear your good wishes with me to my solitude? Will you sometimes abstract your attention from heavenly objects to bestow

a thought upon me?'

'Ah! Matilda, I fear that I shall think on you but too often for my repose!'

'Then I have nothing more to wish for, save that we may meet in heaven. Farewell, my Friend! my Ambrosio!-- And yet methinks, I would fain bear with me some token of your regard!'

'What shall I give you?'

'Something.--Any thing.--One of those flowers will be sufficient.' (Here She pointed to a bush of Roses, planted at the door of the Grotto.) 'I will hide it in my bosom, and when I am dead, the Nuns shall find it withered upon my heart.'

The Friar was unable to reply: With slow steps, and a soul heavy with affliction, He quitted the Hermitage. He approached the Bush, and stooped to pluck one of the Roses. Suddenly He uttered a piercing cry, started back hastily, and let the flower, which He already held, fall from his hand. Matilda heard the shriek, and flew anxiously towards him.

'What is the matter?' She cried; 'Answer me, for God's sake!

What has happened?'

'I have received my death!' He replied in a faint voice;

'Concealed among the Roses . . . A Serpent. . . .'

Here the pain of his wound became so exquisite, that Nature was unable to bear it: His senses abandoned him, and He sank inanimate into Matilda's arms.

Her distress was beyond the power of description. She rent her hair, beat her bosom, and not daring to quit Ambrosio, endeavoured by loud cries to summon the Monks to her assistance. She at length succeeded. Alarmed by her shrieks, Several of the Brothers hastened to the spot, and the Superior was conveyed back to the Abbey. He was immediately put to bed, and the Monk who officiated as Surgeon to the Fraternity prepared to examine the wound. By this time Ambrosio's hand had swelled to an extraordinary size; The remedies which had been administered to him, 'tis true, restored him to life, but not to his senses; He raved in all the horrors of delirium, foamed at the mouth, and four of the strongest Monks were scarcely able to hold him in his bed.

Father Pablos, such was the Surgeon's name, hastened to examine the wounded hand. The Monks surrounded the Bed, anxiously waiting for the decision: Among these the feigned Rosario appeared not the most insensible to the Friar's calamity. He gazed upon the Sufferer with inexpressible anguish; and the groans which every moment escaped from his bosom sufficiently betrayed the violence of his affliction.

Father Pablos probed the wound. As He drew out his Lancet, its point was tinged with a greenish hue. He shook his head mournfully, and quitted the bedside.

' 'Tis as I feared!' said He; 'There is no hope.'

'No hope?' exclaimed the Monks with one voice; 'Say you, no hope?'

'From the sudden effects, I suspected that the Abbot was stung by a Cientipodoro: The venom which you see upon my Lancet confirms my idea: He cannot live three days.'

'And can no possible remedy be found?' enquired Rosario.

'Without extracting the poison, He cannot recover; and how to extract it is to me still a secret. All that I can do is to apply such herbs to the wound as will relieve the anguish: The Patient will be restored to his senses; But the venom will corrupt the whole mass of his blood, and in three days He will exist no longer.'

Excessive was the universal grief at hearing this decision. Pablos, as He had promised, dressed the wound, and then retired, followed by his Companions: Rosario alone remained in the Cell, the Abbot at his urgent entreaty having been committed to his care. Ambrosio's strength worn out by the violence of his exertions, He had by this time fallen into a profound sleep. So totally was He overcome by weariness, that He scarcely gave any signs of life; He was still in this situation, when the Monks returned to enquire whether any change had taken place. Pablos loosened the bandage which concealed the wound, more from a principle of curiosity than from indulging the hope of discovering any favourable symptoms. What was his astonishment at finding, that the inflammation had totally subsided! He probed the hand; His Lancet came out pure and unsullied; No traces of the venom were perceptible; and had not the orifice

still been visible, Pablos might have doubted that there had ever been a wound.

He communicated this intelligence to his Brethren; their delight was only equalled by their surprize. From the latter sentiment, however, they were soon released by explaining the circumstance according to their own ideas: They were perfectly convinced that their Superior was a Saint, and thought, that nothing could be more natural than for St. Francis to have operated a miracle in his favour. This opinion was adopted unanimously: They declared it so loudly, and vociferated,--'A miracle! a miracle!'--with such fervour, that they soon interrupted Ambrosio's slumbers.

The Monks immediately crowded round his Bed, and expressed their satisfaction at his wonderful recovery. He was perfectly in his senses, and free from every complaint except feeling weak and languid. Pablos gave him a strengthening medicine, and advised his keeping his bed for the two succeeding days: He then retired, having desired his Patient not to exhaust himself by conversation, but rather to endeavour at taking some repose. The other Monks followed his example, and the Abbot and Rosario were left without Observers.

For some minutes Ambrosio regarded his Attendant with a look of mingled pleasure and apprehension. She was seated upon the side of the Bed, her head bending down, and as usual enveloped in the Cowl of her Habit.

'And you are still here, Matilda?' said the Friar at length.

'Are you not satisfied with having so nearly effected my destruction, that nothing but a miracle could have saved me from the Grave? Ah! surely Heaven sent that Serpent to punish. . . .'

Matilda interrupted him by putting her hand before his lips with an air of gaiety.

'Hush! Father, Hush! You must not talk!'

'He who imposed that order, knew not how interesting are the subjects on which I wish to speak.'

'But I know it, and yet issue the same positive command. I am appointed your Nurse, and you must not disobey my orders.'

'You are in spirits, Matilda!'

'Well may I be so: I have just received a pleasure unexampled through my whole life.'

'What was that pleasure?'

'What I must conceal from all, but most from you.'

'But most from me? Nay then, I entreat you, Matilda. . . .'

'Hush, Father! Hush! You must not talk. But as you do not seem inclined to sleep, shall I endeavour to amuse you with my Harp?'

'How? I knew not that you understood Music.'

'Oh! I am a sorry Performer! Yet as silence is prescribed you for eight and forty hours, I may possibly entertain you, when wearied of your own reflections. I go to fetch my Harp.'

She soon returned with it.

'Now, Father; What shall I sing? Will you hear the Ballad which treats of the gallant Durandarte, who died in the famous battle of Roncevalles?'

'What you please, Matilda.'

'Oh! call me not Matilda! Call me Rosario, call me your Friend!

Those are the names, which I love to hear from your lips. Now  
listen!'

She then tuned her harp, and afterwards preluded for some moments  
with such exquisite taste as to prove her a perfect Mistress of  
the Instrument. The air which She played was soft and plaintive:

Ambrosio, while He listened, felt his uneasiness subside, and a  
pleasing melancholy spread itself into his bosom. Suddenly  
Matilda changed the strain: With an hand bold and rapid She  
struck a few loud martial chords, and then chaunted the following  
Ballad to an air at once simple and melodious.

#### DURANDARTE AND BELERMA

Sad and fearful is the story  
Of the Roncevalles fight;  
On those fatal plains of glory  
Perished many a gallant Knight.

There fell Durandarte; Never  
Verse a nobler Chieftain named:  
He, before his lips for ever  
Closed in silence thus exclaimed.

'Oh! Belerma! Oh! my dear-one!  
For my pain and pleasure born!  
Seven long years I served thee, fair-one,  
Seven long years my fee was scorn:

'And when now thy heart replying  
To my wishes, burns like mine,  
Cruel Fate my bliss denying  
Bids me every hope resign.

'Ah! Though young I fall, believe me,  
Death would never claim a sigh;  
'Tis to lose thee, 'tis to leave thee,  
Makes me think it hard to die!

'Oh! my Cousin Montesinos,  
By that friendship firm and dear

Which from Youth has lived between us,  
Now my last petition hear!

'When my Soul these limbs forsaking  
Eager seeks a purer air,  
From my breast the cold heart taking,  
Give it to Belerma's care.

Say, I of my lands Possessor  
Named her with my dying breath:  
Say, my lips I op'd to bless her,  
Ere they closed for aye in death:

'Twice a week too how sincerely  
I adored her, Cousin, say;  
Twice a week for one who dearly  
Loved her, Cousin, bid her pray.

'Montesinos, now the hour  
Marked by fate is near at hand:  
Lo! my arm has lost its power!  
Lo! I drop my trusty brand!

'Eyes, which forth beheld me going,  
Homewards ne'er shall see me hie!  
Cousin, stop those tears o'er-flowing,  
Let me on thy bosom die!

'Thy kind hand my eyelids closing,  
Yet one favour I implore:  
Pray Thou for my Soul's reposing,  
When my heart shall throb no more;

'So shall Jesus, still attending  
Gracious to a Christian's vow,  
Pleased accept my Ghost ascending,  
And a seat in heaven allow.'

Thus spoke gallant Durandarte;  
Soon his brave heart broke in twain.  
Greatly joyed the Moorish party,  
That the gallant Knight was slain.

Bitter weeping Montesinos  
Took from him his helm and glaive;  
Bitter weeping Montesinos

Dug his gallant Cousin's grave.

To perform his promise made, He  
Cut the heart from out the breast,  
That Belerma, wretched Lady!  
Might receive the last bequest.

Sad was Montesinos' heart, He  
Felt distress his bosom rend.  
'Oh! my Cousin Durandarte,  
Woe is me to view thy end!

'Sweet in manners, fair in favour,  
Mild in temper, fierce in fight,  
Warrior, nobler, gentler, braver,  
Never shall behold the light!

'Cousin, Lo! my tears bedew thee!  
How shall I thy loss survive!  
Durandarte, He who slew thee,  
Wherefore left He me alive!

While She sung, Ambrosio listened with delight: Never had He

heard a voice more harmonious; and He wondered how such heavenly sounds could be produced by any but Angels. But though He indulged the sense of hearing, a single look convinced him that He must not trust to that of sight. The Songstress sat at a little distance from his Bed. The attitude in which She bent over her harp, was easy and graceful: Her Cowl had fallen backward than usual: Two coral lips were visible, ripe, fresh, and melting, and a Chin in whose dimples seemed to lurk a thousand Cupids. Her Habit's long sleeve would have swept along the Chords of the Instrument: To prevent this inconvenience She had drawn it above her elbow, and by this means an arm was discovered formed in the most perfect symmetry, the delicacy of whose skin might have contended with snow in whiteness. Ambrosio dared to look on her but once: That glance sufficed to convince him, how dangerous was the presence of this seducing Object. He closed his eyes, but strove in vain to banish her from his thoughts. There She still moved before him, adorned with all those charms which his heated imagination could supply: Every beauty which He had seen, appeared embellished, and those still concealed Fancy represented to him in glowing colours. Still, however, his vows and the necessity of keeping to them were present to his memory. He struggled with desire, and shuddered when He beheld how deep was the precipice before him.

Matilda ceased to sing. Dreading the influence of her charms, Ambrosio remained with his eyes closed, and offered up his prayers to St. Francis to assist him in this dangerous trial!

Matilda believed that He was sleeping. She rose from her seat, approached the Bed softly, and for some minutes gazed upon him attentively.

'He sleeps!' said She at length in a low voice, but whose accents the Abbot distinguished perfectly; 'Now then I may gaze upon him without offence! I may mix my breath with his; I may doat upon his features, and He cannot suspect me of impurity and deceit!--He fears my seducing him to the violation of his vows! Oh! the Unjust! Were it my wish to excite desire, should I conceal my features from him so carefully? Those features, of which I daily hear him. . . .'

She stopped, and was lost in her reflections.

'It was but yesterday!' She continued; 'But a few short hours have past, since I was dear to him! He esteemed me, and my heart was satisfied! Now!. . . Oh! now how cruelly is my situation changed! He looks on me with suspicion! He bids me leave him,

leave him for ever! Oh! You, my Saint! my Idol! You, holding the next place to God in my breast! Yet two days, and my heart will be unveiled to you.--Could you know my feelings, when I beheld your agony! Could you know, how much your sufferings have endeared you to me! But the time will come, when you will be convinced that my passion is pure and disinterested. Then you will pity me, and feel the whole weight of these sorrows!

As She said this, her voice was choaked by weeping. While She bent over Ambrosio, a tear fell upon his cheek.

'Ah! I have disturbed him!' cried Matilda, and retreated hastily.

Her alarm was ungrounded. None sleep so profoundly, as those who are determined not to wake. The Friar was in this predicament: He still seemed buried in a repose, which every succeeding minute rendered him less capable of enjoying. The burning tear had communicated its warmth to his heart.

'What affection! What purity!' said He internally; 'Ah! since my bosom is thus sensible of pity, what would it be if agitated by love?'

Matilda again quitted her seat, and retired to some distance from the Bed. Ambrosio ventured to open his eyes, and to cast them upon her fearfully. Her face was turned from him. She rested her head in a melancholy posture upon her Harp, and gazed on the picture which hung opposite to the Bed.

'Happy, happy Image!' Thus did She address the beautiful Madona;  
' 'Tis to you that He offers his prayers! 'Tis on you that He gazes with admiration! I thought you would have lightened my sorrows; You have only served to increase their weight: You have made me feel that had I known him ere his vows were pronounced, Ambrosio and happiness might have been mine. With what pleasure He views this picture! With what fervour He addresses his prayers to the insensible Image! Ah! may not his sentiments be inspired by some kind and secret Genius, Friend to my affection? May it not be Man's natural instinct which informs him. . . Be silent, idle hopes! Let me not encourage an idea which takes from the brilliance of Ambrosio's virtue. 'Tis Religion, not Beauty which attracts his admiration; 'Tis not to the Woman, but the Divinity that He kneels. Would He but address to me the least tender expression which He pours forth to this Madona! Would He but say that were He not already affianced to the

Church, He would not have despised Matilda! Oh! let me nourish that fond idea! Perhaps He may yet acknowledge that He feels for me more than pity, and that affection like mine might well have deserved a return; Perhaps, He may own thus much when I lie on my deathbed! He then need not fear to infringe his vows, and the confession of his regard will soften the pangs of dying. Would I were sure of this! Oh! how earnestly should I sigh for the moment of dissolution!

Of this discourse the Abbot lost not a syllable; and the tone in which She pronounced these last words pierced to his heart. Involuntarily He raised himself from his pillow.

'Matilda!' He said in a troubled voice; 'Oh! my Matilda!'

She started at the sound, and turned towards him hastily. The suddenness of her movement made her Cowl fall back from her head; Her features became visible to the Monk's enquiring eye. What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his admired Madona? The same exquisite proportion of features, the same profusion of golden hair, the same rosy lips, heavenly eyes, and majesty of countenance adorned Matilda! Uttering an exclamation of surprize, Ambrosio sank back upon his pillow, and

doubted whether the Object before him was mortal or divine.

Matilda seemed penetrated with confusion. She remained motionless in her place, and supported herself upon her Instrument. Her eyes were bent upon the earth, and her fair cheeks overspread with blushes. On recovering herself, her first action was to conceal her features. She then in an unsteady and troubled voice ventured to address these words to the Friar.

'Accident has made you Master of a secret, which I never would have revealed but on the Bed of death. Yes, Ambrosio; In Matilda de Villanegas you see the original of your beloved Madona. Soon after I conceived my unfortunate passion, I formed the project of conveying to you my Picture: Crowds of Admirers had persuaded me that I possessed some beauty, and I was anxious to know what effect it would produce upon you. I caused my Portrait to be drawn by Martin Galuppi, a celebrated Venetian at that time resident in Madrid. The resemblance was striking: I sent it to the Capuchin Abbey as if for sale, and the Jew from whom you bought it was one of my Emissaries. You purchased it. Judge of my rapture, when informed that you had gazed upon it with delight, or rather with adoration; that you had suspended it in

your Cell, and that you addressed your supplications to no other Saint. Will this discovery make me still more regarded as an object of suspicion? Rather should it convince you how pure is my affection, and engage you to suffer me in your society and esteem. I heard you daily extol the praises of my Portrait: I was an eyewitness of the transports, which its beauty excited in you: Yet I forbore to use against your virtue those arms, with which yourself had furnished me. I concealed those features from your sight, which you loved unconsciously. I strove not to excite desire by displaying my charms, or to make myself Mistress of your heart through the medium of your senses. To attract your notice by studiously attending to religious duties, to endear myself to you by convincing you that my mind was virtuous and my attachment sincere, such was my only aim. I succeeded; I became your companion and your Friend. I concealed my sex from your knowledge; and had you not pressed me to reveal my secret, had I not been tormented by the fear of a discovery, never had you known me for any other than Rosario. And still are you resolved to drive me from you? The few hours of life which yet remain for me, may I not pass them in your presence? Oh! speak, Ambrosio, and tell me that I may stay!

This speech gave the Abbot an opportunity of recollecting

himself. He was conscious that in the present disposition of his mind, avoiding her society was his only refuge from the power of this enchanting Woman.

'Your declaration has so much astonished me,' said He, 'that I am at present incapable of answering you. Do not insist upon a reply, Matilda; Leave me to myself; I have need to be alone.'

'I obey you--But before I go, promise not to insist upon my quitting the Abbey immediately.'

'Matilda, reflect upon your situation; Reflect upon the consequences of your stay. Our separation is indispensable, and we must part.'

'But not to-day, Father! Oh! in pity not today!'

'You press me too hard, but I cannot resist that tone of supplication. Since you insist upon it, I yield to your prayer: I consent to your remaining here a sufficient time to prepare in some measure the Brethren for your departure. Stay yet two days; But on the third,' . . . (He sighed involuntarily)--'Remember, that on the third we must part for ever!'

She caught his hand eagerly, and pressed it to her lips.

'On the third?' She exclaimed with an air of wild solemnity; 'You are right, Father! You are right! On the third we must part for ever!'

There was a dreadful expression in her eye as She uttered these words, which penetrated the Friar's soul with horror: Again She kissed his hand, and then fled with rapidity from the chamber.

Anxious to authorise the presence of his dangerous Guest, yet conscious that her stay was infringing the laws of his order, Ambrosio's bosom became the Theatre of a thousand contending passions. At length his attachment to the feigned Rosario, aided by the natural warmth of his temperament, seemed likely to obtain the victory: The success was assured, when that presumption which formed the groundwork of his character came to Matilda's assistance. The Monk reflected that to vanquish temptation was an infinitely greater merit than to avoid it: He thought that He ought rather to rejoice in the opportunity given him of proving the firmness of his virtue. St. Anthony had withstood all seductions to lust; Then why should not He? Besides, St.

Anthony was tempted by the Devil, who put every art into practice to excite his passions: Whereas, Ambrosio's danger proceeded from a mere mortal Woman, fearful and modest, whose apprehensions of his yielding were not less violent than his own.

'Yes,' said He; 'The Unfortunate shall stay; I have nothing to fear from her presence. Even should my own prove too weak to resist the temptation, I am secured from danger by the innocence of Matilda.'

Ambrosio was yet to learn, that to an heart unacquainted with her, Vice is ever most dangerous when lurking behind the Mask of Virtue.

He found himself so perfectly recovered, that when Father Pablos visited him again at night, He entreated permission to quit his chamber on the day following. His request was granted. Matilda appeared no more that evening, except in company with the Monks when they came in a body to enquire after the Abbot's health. She seemed fearful of conversing with him in private, and stayed but a few minutes in his room. The Friar slept well; But the dreams of the former night were repeated, and his sensations of voluptuousness were yet more keen and exquisite. The same

lust-exciting visions floated before his eyes: Matilda, in all the pomp of beauty, warm, tender, and luxurious, clasped him to her bosom, and lavished upon him the most ardent caresses. He returned them as eagerly, and already was on the point of satisfying his desires, when the faithless form disappeared, and left him to all the horrors of shame and disappointment.

The Morning dawned. Fatigued, harassed, and exhausted by his provoking dreams, He was not disposed to quit his Bed. He excused himself from appearing at Matins: It was the first morning in his life that He had ever missed them. He rose late. During the whole of the day He had no opportunity of speaking to Matilda without witnesses. His Cell was thronged by the Monks, anxious to express their concern at his illness; And He was still occupied in receiving their compliments on his recovery, when the Bell summoned them to the Refectory.

After dinner the Monks separated, and dispersed themselves in various parts of the Garden, where the shade of trees or retirement of some Grotto presented the most agreeable means of enjoying the Siesta. The Abbot bent his steps towards the Hermitage: A glance of his eye invited Matilda to accompany him.

She obeyed, and followed him thither in silence. They entered the Grotto, and seated themselves. Both seemed unwilling to begin the conversation, and to labour under the influence of mutual embarrassment. At length the Abbot spoke: He conversed only on indifferent topics, and Matilda answered him in the same tone. She seemed anxious to make him forget that the Person who sat by him was any other than Rosario. Neither of them dared, or indeed wished to make an allusion, to the subject which was most at the hearts of both.

Matilda's efforts to appear gay were evidently forced: Her spirits were oppressed by the weight of anxiety, and when She spoke her voice was low and feeble. She seemed desirous of finishing a conversation which embarrassed her; and complaining that She was unwell, She requested Ambrosio's permission to return to the Abbey. He accompanied her to the door of her cell; and when arrived there, He stopped her to declare his consent to her continuing the Partner of his solitude so long as should be agreeable to herself.

She discovered no marks of pleasure at receiving this intelligence, though on the preceding day She had been so anxious to obtain the permission.

'Alas! Father,' She said, waving her head mournfully; 'Your kindness comes too late! My doom is fixed. We must separate for ever. Yet believe, that I am grateful for your generosity, for your compassion of an Unfortunate who is but too little deserving of it!'

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. Her Cowl was only half drawn over her face. Ambrosio observed that She was pale, and her eyes sunk and heavy.

'Good God!' He cried; 'You are very ill, Matilda! I shall send Father Pablos to you instantly.'

'No; Do not. I am ill, 'tis true; But He cannot cure my malady. Farewell, Father! Remember me in your prayers tomorrow, while I shall remember you in heaven!'

She entered her cell, and closed the door.

The Abbot dispatched to her the Physician without losing a moment, and waited his report impatiently. But Father Pablos soon returned, and declared that his errand had been fruitless.

Rosario refused to admit him, and had positively rejected his offers of assistance. The uneasiness which this account gave Ambrosio was not trifling: Yet He determined that Matilda should have her own way for that night: But that if her situation did not mend by the morning, he would insist upon her taking the advice of Father Pablos.

He did not find himself inclined to sleep. He opened his casement, and gazed upon the moonbeams as they played upon the small stream whose waters bathed the walls of the Monastery. The coolness of the night breeze and tranquillity of the hour inspired the Friar's mind with sadness. He thought upon Matilda's beauty and affection; Upon the pleasures which He might have shared with her, had He not been restrained by monastic fetters. He reflected, that unsustained by hope her love for him could not long exist; That doubtless She would succeed in extinguishing her passion, and seek for happiness in the arms of One more fortunate. He shuddered at the void which her absence would leave in his bosom. He looked with disgust on the monotony of a Convent, and breathed a sigh towards that world from which He was for ever separated. Such were the reflections which a loud knocking at his door interrupted. The Bell of the Church had already struck Two. The Abbot hastened to enquire the cause

of this disturbance. He opened the door of his Cell, and a Lay-Brother entered, whose looks declared his hurry and confusion.

'Hasten, reverend Father!' said He; 'Hasten to the young Rosario.

He earnestly requests to see you; He lies at the point of death.'

'Gracious God! Where is Father Pablos? Why is He not with him?

Oh! I fear! I fear!'

'Father Pablos has seen him, but his art can do nothing. He says that He suspects the Youth to be poisoned.'

'Poisoned? Oh! The Unfortunate! It is then as I suspected!

But let me not lose a moment; Perhaps it may yet be time to save her!'

He said, and flew towards the Cell of the Novice. Several Monks were already in the chamber. Father Pablos was one of them, and held a medicine in his hand which He was endeavouring to persuade Rosario to swallow. The Others were employed in admiring the Patient's divine countenance, which They now saw for

the first time. She looked lovelier than ever. She was no longer pale or languid; A bright glow had spread itself over her cheeks; her eyes sparkled with a serene delight, and her countenance was expressive of confidence and resignation.

'Oh! torment me no more!' was She saying to Pablos, when the terrified Abbot rushed hastily into the Cell; 'My disease is far beyond the reach of your skill, and I wish not to be cured of it'--Then perceiving Ambrosio,-- 'Ah! 'tis He!' She cried; 'I see him once again, before we part for ever! Leave me, my Brethren; Much have I to tell this holy Man in private.'

The Monks retired immediately, and Matilda and the Abbot remained together.

'What have you done, imprudent Woman!' exclaimed the Latter, as soon as they were left alone; 'Tell me; Are my suspicions just? Am I indeed to lose you? Has your own hand been the instrument of your destruction?'

She smiled, and grasped his hand.

'In what have I been imprudent, Father? I have sacrificed a

pebble, and saved a diamond: My death preserves a life valuable to the world, and more dear to me than my own. Yes, Father; I am poisoned; But know that the poison once circulated in your veins.'

'Matilda!'

'What I tell you I resolved never to discover to you but on the bed of death: That moment is now arrived. You cannot have forgotten the day already, when your life was endangered by the bite of a Cientipodoro. The Physician gave you over, declaring himself ignorant how to extract the venom: I knew but of one means, and hesitated not a moment to employ it. I was left alone with you: You slept; I loosened the bandage from your hand; I kissed the wound, and drew out the poison with my lips. The effect has been more sudden than I expected. I feel death at my heart; Yet an hour, and I shall be in a better world.'

'Almighty God!' exclaimed the Abbot, and sank almost lifeless upon the Bed.

After a few minutes He again raised himself up suddenly, and gazed upon Matilda with all the wildness of despair.

'And you have sacrificed yourself for me! You die, and die to preserve Ambrosio! And is there indeed no remedy, Matilda? And is there indeed no hope? Speak to me, Oh! speak to me! Tell me, that you have still the means of life!'

'Be comforted, my only Friend! Yes, I have still the means of life in my power: But 'tis a means which I dare not employ. It is dangerous! It is dreadful! Life would be purchased at too dear a rate, . . . unless it were permitted me to live for you.'

'Then live for me, Matilda, for me and gratitude!-- (He caught her hand, and pressed it rapturously to his lips.)--'Remember our late conversations; I now consent to every thing: Remember in what lively colours you described the union of souls; Be it ours to realize those ideas. Let us forget the distinctions of sex, despise the world's prejudices, and only consider each other as Brother and Friend. Live then, Matilda! Oh! live for me!'

'Ambrosio, it must not be. When I thought thus, I deceived both you and myself. Either I must die at present, or expire by the lingering torments of unsatisfied desire. Oh! since we last conversed together, a dreadful veil has been rent from before my

eyes. I love you no longer with the devotion which is paid to a Saint: I prize you no more for the virtues of your soul; I lust for the enjoyment of your person. The Woman reigns in my bosom, and I am become a prey to the wildest of passions. Away with friendship! 'tis a cold unfeeling word. My bosom burns with love, with unutterable love, and love must be its return.

Tremble then, Ambrosio, tremble to succeed in your prayers. If I live, your truth, your reputation, your reward of a life past in sufferings, all that you value is irretrievably lost. I shall no longer be able to combat my passions, shall seize every opportunity to excite your desires, and labour to effect your dishonour and my own. No, no, Ambrosio; I must not live! I am convinced with every moment, that I have but one alternative; I feel with every heart-throb, that I must enjoy you, or die.'

'Amazement!--Matilda! Can it be you who speak to me?'

He made a movement as if to quit his seat. She uttered a loud shriek, and raising herself half out of the Bed, threw her arms round the Friar to detain him.

'Oh! do not leave me! Listen to my errors with compassion! In a few hours I shall be no more; Yet a little, and I am free from

this disgraceful passion.'

'Wretched Woman, what can I say to you! I cannot . . . I must not . . . But live, Matilda! Oh! live!'

'You do not reflect on what you ask. What? Live to plunge myself in infamy? To become the Agent of Hell? To work the destruction both of you and of Myself? Feel this heart, Father!'

She took his hand: Confused, embarrassed, and fascinated, He withdrew it not, and felt her heart throb under it.

'Feel this heart, Father! It is yet the seat of honour, truth, and chastity: If it beats tomorrow, it must fall a prey to the blackest crimes. Oh! let me then die today! Let me die, while I yet deserve the tears of the virtuous! Thus will expire!''--(She reclined her head upon his shoulder; Her golden Hair poured itself over his Chest.)-- 'Folded in your arms, I shall sink to sleep; Your hand shall close my eyes for ever, and your lips receive my dying breath. And will you not sometimes think of me? Will you not sometimes shed a tear upon my Tomb? Oh! Yes! Yes! Yes! That kiss is my assurance!'

The hour was night. All was silence around. The faint beams of a solitary Lamp darted upon Matilda's figure, and shed through the chamber a dim mysterious light. No prying eye, or curious ear was near the Lovers: Nothing was heard but Matilda's melodious accents. Ambrosio was in the full vigour of Manhood. He saw before him a young and beautiful Woman, the preserver of his life, the Adorer of his person, and whom affection for him had reduced to the brink of the Grave. He sat upon her Bed; His hand rested upon her bosom; Her head reclined voluptuously upon his breast. Who then can wonder, if He yielded to the temptation? Drunk with desire, He pressed his lips to those which sought them: His kisses vied with Matilda's in warmth and passion. He clasped her rapturously in his arms; He forgot his vows, his sanctity, and his fame: He remembered nothing but the pleasure and opportunity.

'Ambrosio! Oh! my Ambrosio!' sighed Matilda.

'Thine, ever thine!' murmured the Friar, and sank upon her bosom.