

CHAPTER II

O You! whom Vanity's light bark conveys
On Fame's mad voyage by the wind of praise,
With what a shifting gale your course you ply,
For ever sunk too low, or borne too high!
Who pants for glory finds but short repose,
A breath revives him, and a breath o'er-throws.

Pope.

Here the Marquis concluded his adventures. Lorenzo, before He could determine on his reply, past some moments in reflection. At length He broke silence.

'Raymond,' said He taking his hand, 'strict honour would oblige me to wash off in your blood the stain thrown upon my family; But the circumstances of your case forbid me to consider you as an Enemy. The temptation was too great to be resisted. 'Tis the superstition of my Relations which has occasioned these misfortunes, and they are more the Offenders than yourself and Agnes. What has past between you cannot be recalled, but may yet be repaired by uniting you to my Sister. You have ever been, you still continue to be, my dearest and indeed my only Friend. I

feel for Agnes the truest affection, and there is no one on whom I would bestow her more willingly than on yourself. Pursue then your design. I will accompany you tomorrow night, and conduct her myself to the House of the Cardinal. My presence will be a sanction for her conduct, and prevent her incurring blame by her flight from the Convent.'

The Marquis thanked him in terms by no means deficient in gratitude. Lorenzo then informed him that He had nothing more to apprehend from Donna Rodolpha's enmity. Five Months had already elapsed since, in an excess of passion, She broke a blood-vessel and expired in the course of a few hours. He then proceeded to mention the interests of Antonia. The Marquis was much surprized at hearing of this new Relation: His Father had carried his hatred of Elvira to the Grave, and had never given the least hint that He knew what was become of his eldest Son's Widow. Don Raymond assured his friend that He was not mistaken in supposing him ready to acknowledge his Sister-in-law and her amiable Daughter. The preparations for the elopement would not permit his visiting them the next day; But in the meanwhile He desired Lorenzo to assure them of his friendship, and to supply Elvira upon his account with any sums which She might want. This the Youth promised to do, as soon as her abode should be known to

him: He then took leave of his future Brother, and returned to the Palace de Medina.

The day was already on the point of breaking when the Marquis retired to his chamber. Conscious that his narrative would take up some hours, and wishing to secure himself from interruption on returning to the Hotel, He ordered his Attendants not to sit up for him. Consequently, He was somewhat surprised on entering his Anteroom, to find Theodore established there. The Page sat near a Table with a pen in his hand, and was so totally occupied by his employment that He perceived not his Lord's approach. The Marquis stopped to observe him. Theodore wrote a few lines, then paused, and scratched out a part of the writing: Then wrote again, smiled, and seemed highly pleased with what He had been about. At last He threw down his pen, sprang from his chair, and clapped his hands together joyfully.

'There it is!' cried He aloud: 'Now they are charming!'

His transports were interrupted by a laugh from the Marquis, who suspected the nature of his employment.

'What is so charming, Theodore?'

The Youth started, and looked round. He blushed, ran to the Table, seized the paper on which He had been writing, and concealed it in confusion.

'Oh! my Lord, I knew not that you were so near me. Can I be of use to you? Lucas is already gone to bed.'

'I shall follow his example when I have given my opinion of your verses.'

'My verses, my Lord?'

'Nay, I am sure that you have been writing some, for nothing else could have kept you awake till this time of the morning. Where are they, Theodore? I shall like to see your composition.'

Theodore's cheeks glowed with still deeper crimson: He longed to show his poetry, but first chose to be pressed for it.

'Indeed, my Lord, they are not worthy your attention.'

'Not these verses, which you just now declared to be so charming?'

Come, come, let me see whether our opinions are the same. I promise that you shall find in me an indulgent Critic.'

The Boy produced his paper with seeming reluctance; but the satisfaction which sparkled in his dark expressive eyes betrayed the vanity of his little bosom. The Marquis smiled while He observed the emotions of an heart as yet but little skilled in veiling its sentiments. He seated himself upon a Sopha: Theodore, while Hope and fear contended on his anxious countenance, waited with inquietude for his Master's decision, while the Marquis read the following lines.

LOVE AND AGE

The night was dark; The wind blew cold;
Anacreon, grown morose and old,
Sat by his fire, and fed the chearful flame:
Sudden the Cottage-door expands,
And lo! before him Cupid stands,
Casts round a friendly glance, and greets him by his name.

'What is it Thou?' the startled Sire

In sullen tone exclaimed, while ire
With crimson flushed his pale and wrinkled cheek:
'Wouldst Thou again with amorous rage
Inflame my bosom? Steeled by age,
Vain Boy, to pierce my breast thine arrows are too weak.

'What seek You in this desert drear?
No smiles or sports inhabit here;
Ne'er did these vallies witness dalliance sweet:
Eternal winter binds the plains;
Age in my house despotic reigns,
My Garden boasts no flower, my bosom boasts no heat.

'Begone, and seek the blooming bower,
Where some ripe Virgin courts thy power,
Or bid provoking dreams flit round her bed;
On Damon's amorous breast repose;
Wanton-on Chloe's lip of rose,
Or make her blushing cheek a pillow for thy head.

'Be such thy haunts; These regions cold
Avoid! Nor think grown wise and old
This hoary head again thy yoke shall bear:

Remembering that my fairest years
By Thee were marked with sighs and tears,
I think thy friendship false, and shun the guileful snare.

'I have not yet forgot the pains
I felt, while bound in Julia's chains;
The ardent flames with which my bosom burned;
The nights I passed deprived of rest;
The jealous pangs which racked my breast;
My disappointed hopes, and passion unreturned.

'Then fly, and curse mine eyes no more!
Fly from my peaceful Cottage-door!
No day, no hour, no moment shalt Thou stay.
I know thy falsehood, scorn thy arts,
Distrust thy smiles, and fear thy darts;
Traitor, begone, and seek some other to betray!'

'Does Age, old Man, your wits confound?'
Replied the offended God, and frowned;
(His frown was sweet as is the Virgin's smile!)
'Do You to Me these words address?
To Me, who do not love you less,

Though You my friendship scorn, and pleasures past revile!

'If one proud Fair you chanced to find,
An hundred other Nymphs were kind,
Whose smiles might well for Julia's frowns atone:
But such is Man! His partial hand
Unnumbered favours writes on sand,
But stamps one little fault on solid lasting stone.

'Ingrate! Who led Thee to the wave,
At noon where Lesbia loved to lave?
Who named the bower alone where Daphne lay?
And who, when Caelia shrieked for aid,
Bad you with kisses hush the Maid?
What other was't than Love, Oh! false Anacreon, say!

'Then You could call me--"Gentle Boy!
"My only bliss! my source of joy !"--
Then You could prize me dearer than your soul!
Could kiss, and dance me on your knees;
And swear, not wine itself would please,
Had not the lip of Love first touched the flowing bowl!

'Must those sweet days return no more?
Must I for aye your loss deplore,
Banished your heart, and from your favour driven?
Ah! no; My fears that smile denies;
That heaving breast, those sparkling eyes
Declare me ever dear and all my faults forgiven.

'Again beloved, esteemed, carest,
Cupid shall in thine arms be prest,
Sport on thy knees, or on thy bosom sleep:
My Torch thine age-struck heart shall warm;
My Hand pale Winter's rage disarm,
And Youth and Spring shall here once more their revels keep.'--

A feather now of golden hue
He smiling from his pinion drew;
This to the Poet's hand the Boy commits;
And straight before Anacreon's eyes
The fairest dreams of fancy rise,
And round his favoured head wild inspiration flits.

His bosom glows with amorous fire
Eager He grasps the magic lyre;

Swift o'er the tuneful chords his fingers move:
The Feather plucked from Cupid's wing
Sweeps the too-long-neglected string,
While soft Anacreon sings the power
and praise of Love.

Soon as that name was heard, the Woods
Shook off their snows; The melting floods
Broke their cold chains, and Winter fled away.
Once more the earth was deckt with flowers;
Mild Zephyrs breathed through blooming bowers;
High towered the glorious Sun, and poured the blaze of day.

Attracted by the harmonious sound,
Sylvans and Fauns the Cot surround,
And curious crowd the Minstrel to behold:
The Wood-nymphs haste the spell to prove;
Eager They run; They list, they love,
And while They hear the strain, forget the Man is old.

Cupid, to nothing constant long,
Perched on the Harp attends the song,
Or stifles with a kiss the dulcet notes:

Now on the Poet's breast reposes,
Now twines his hoary locks with roses,
Or borne on wings of gold in wanton circle floats.

Then thus Anacreon--'I no more
At other shrine my vows will pour,
Since Cupid deigns my numbers to inspire:
From Phoebus or the blue-eyed Maid
Now shall my verse request no aid,
For Love alone shall be the Patron of my Lyre.

'In lofty strain, of earlier days,
I spread the King's or Hero's praise,
And struck the martial Chords with epic fire:
But farewell, Hero! farewell, King!
Your deeds my lips no more shall sing,
For Love alone shall be the subject of my Lyre.

The Marquis returned the paper with a smile of encouragement.

'Your little poem pleases me much,' said He; 'However, you must not count my opinion for anything. I am no judge of verses, and for my own part, never composed more than six lines in my life:

Those six produced so unlucky an effect that I am fully resolved never to compose another. But I wander from my subject. I was going to say that you cannot employ your time worse than in making verses. An Author, whether good or bad, or between both, is an Animal whom everybody is privileged to attack; For though All are not able to write books, all conceive themselves able to judge them. A bad composition carries with it its own punishment, contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its Author a thousand mortifications. He finds himself assailed by partial and ill-humoured Criticism: One Man finds fault with the plan, Another with the style, a Third with the precept, which it strives to inculcate; and they who cannot succeed in finding fault with the Book, employ themselves in stigmatizing its Author. They maliciously rake out from obscurity every little circumstance which may throw ridicule upon his private character or conduct, and aim at wounding the Man, since They cannot hurt the Writer. In short, to enter the lists of literature is wilfully to expose yourself to the arrows of neglect, ridicule, envy, and disappointment. Whether you write well or ill, be assured that you will not escape from blame; Indeed this circumstance contains a young Author's chief consolation: He remembers that Lope de Vega and Calderona had unjust and envious Critics, and He modestly conceives himself to

be exactly in their predicament. But I am conscious that all these sage observations are thrown away upon you. Authorship is a mania to conquer which no reasons are sufficiently strong; and you might as easily persuade me not to love, as I persuade you not to write. However, if you cannot help being occasionally seized with a poetical paroxysm, take at least the precaution of communicating your verses to none but those whose partiality for you secures their approbation.'

'Then, my Lord, you do not think these lines tolerable?' said Theodore with an humble and dejected air.

'You mistake my meaning. As I said before, they have pleased me much; But my regard for you makes me partial, and Others might judge them less favourably. I must still remark that even my prejudice in your favour does not blind me so much as to prevent my observing several faults. For instance, you make a terrible confusion of metaphors; You are too apt to make the strength of your lines consist more in the words than sense; Some of the verses only seem introduced in order to rhyme with others; and most of the best ideas are borrowed from other Poets, though possibly you are unconscious of the theft yourself. These faults may occasionally be excused in a work of length; But a short Poem

must be correct and perfect.'

'All this is true, Segnor; But you should consider that I only write for pleasure.'

'Your defects are the less excusable. Their incorrectness may be forgiven in those who work for money, who are obliged to complete a given task in a given time, and are paid according to the bulk, not value of their productions. But in those whom no necessity forces to turn Author, who merely write for fame, and have full leisure to polish their compositions, faults are impardonable, and merit the sharpest arrows of criticism.'

The Marquis rose from the Sopha; the Page looked discouraged and melancholy, and this did not escape his Master's observation.

'However' added He smiling, 'I think that these lines do you no discredit. Your versification is tolerably easy, and your ear seems to be just. The perusal of your little poem upon the whole gave me much pleasure; and if it is not asking too great a favour, I shall be highly obliged to you for a Copy.'

The Youth's countenance immediately cleared up. He perceived not

the smile, half approving, half ironical, which accompanied the request, and He promised the Copy with great readiness. The Marquis withdrew to his chamber, much amused by the instantaneous effect produced upon Theodore's vanity by the conclusion of his Criticism. He threw himself upon his Couch; Sleep soon stole over him, and his dreams presented him with the most flattering pictures of happiness with Agnes.

On reaching the Hotel de Medina, Lorenzo's first care was to enquire for Letters. He found several waiting for him; but that which He sought was not amongst them. Leonella had found it impossible to write that evening. However, her impatience to secure Don Christoval's heart, on which She flattered herself with having made no slight impression, permitted her not to pass another day without informing him where She was to be found. On her return from the Capuchin Church, She had related to her Sister with exultation how attentive an handsome Cavalier had been to her; as also how his Companion had undertaken to plead Antonia's cause with the Marquis de las Cisternas. Elvira received this intelligence with sensations very different from those with which it was communicated. She blamed her Sister's imprudence in confiding her history to an absolute Stranger, and expressed her fears lest this inconsiderate step should

prejudice the Marquis against her. The greatest of her apprehensions She concealed in her own breast. She had observed with inquietude that at the mention of Lorenzo, a deep blush spread itself over her Daughter's cheek. The timid Antonia dared not to pronounce his name: Without knowing wherefore, She felt embarrassed when He was made the subject of discourse, and endeavoured to change the conversation to Ambrosio. Elvira perceived the emotions of this young bosom: In consequence, She insisted upon Leonella's breaking her promise to the Cavaliers. A sigh, which on hearing this order escaped from Antonia, confirmed the wary Mother in her resolution.

Through this resolution Leonella was determined to break: She conceived it to be inspired by envy, and that her Sister dreaded her being elevated above her. Without imparting her design to anyone, She took an opportunity of dispatching the following note to Lorenzo; It was delivered to him as soon as He woke.

'Doubtless, Segnor Don Lorenzo, you have frequently accused me of ingratitude and forgetfulness: But on the word of a Virgin, it was out of my power to perform my promise yesterday. I know not in what words to inform you how strange a reception my Sister gave your kind wish to visit her. She is an odd Woman, with many

good points about her; But her jealousy of me frequently makes her conceive notions quite unaccountable. On hearing that your Friend had paid some little attention to me, She immediately took the alarm: She blamed my conduct, and has absolutely forbidden me to let you know our abode. My strong sense of gratitude for your kind offers of service, and . . . Shall I confess it? my desire to behold once more the too amiable Don Christoval, will not permit my obeying her injunctions. I have therefore stolen a moment to inform you, that we lodge in the Strada di San Iago, four doors from the Palace d'Albornos, and nearly opposite to the Barber's Miguel Coello. Enquire for Donna Elvira Dalfa, since in compliance with her Father-in-law's order, my Sister continues to be called by her maiden name. At eight this evening you will be sure of finding us: But let not a word drop which may raise a suspicion of my having written this letter. Should you see the Conde d'Ossorio, tell him . . . I blush while I declare it . . .

Tell him that his presence will be but too acceptable to the
sympathetic
Leonella.

The latter sentences were written in red ink, to express the blushes of her cheek, while She committed an outrage upon her virgin modesty.

Lorenzo had no sooner perused this note than He set out in search of Don Christoval. Not being able to find him in the course of the day, He proceeded to Donna Elvira's alone, to Leonella's infinite disappointment. The Domestic by whom He sent up his name, having already declared his Lady to be at home, She had no excuse for refusing his visit: Yet She consented to receive it with much reluctance. That reluctance was increased by the changes which his approach produced in Antonia's countenance; nor was it by any means abated when the Youth himself appeared. The symmetry of his person, animation of his features, and natural elegance of his manners and address, convinced Elvira that such a Guest must be dangerous for her Daughter. She resolved to treat him with distant politeness, to decline his services with gratitude for the tender of them, and to make him feel, without offence, that his future visits would be far from acceptable.

On his entrance He found Elvira, who was indisposed, reclining upon a Sopha: Antonia sat by her embroidery frame, and Leonella, in a pastoral dress, held 'Montemayor's Diana.' In spite of her being the Mother of Antonia, Lorenzo could not help expecting to find in Elvira Leonella's true Sister, and the Daughter of 'as

honest a painstaking Shoe-maker, as any in Cordova.' A single glance was sufficient to undeceive him. He beheld a Woman whose features, though impaired by time and sorrow, still bore the marks of distinguished beauty: A serious dignity reigned upon her countenance, but was tempered by a grace and sweetness which rendered her truly enchanting. Lorenzo fancied that She must have resembled her Daughter in her youth, and readily excused the imprudence of the late Conde de las Cisternas. She desired him to be seated, and immediately resumed her place upon the Sopha.

Antonia received him with a simple reverence, and continued her work: Her cheeks were suffused with crimson, and She strove to conceal her emotion by leaning over her embroidery frame. Her Aunt also chose to play off her airs of modesty; She affected to blush and tremble, and waited with her eyes cast down to receive, as She expected, the compliments of Don Christoval. Finding after some time that no sign of his approach was given, She ventured to look round the room, and perceived with vexation that Medina was unaccompanied. Impatience would not permit her waiting for an explanation: Interrupting Lorenzo, who was delivering Raymond's message, She desired to know what was become of his Friend.

He, who thought it necessary to maintain himself in her good graces, strove to console her under her disappointment by committing a little violence upon truth.

'Ah! Signora,' He replied in a melancholy voice 'How grieved will He be at losing this opportunity of paying you his respects! A Relation's illness has obliged him to quit Madrid in haste: But on his return, He will doubtless seize the first moment with transport to throw himself at your feet!'

As He said this, his eyes met those of Elvira: She punished his falsehood sufficiently by darting at him a look expressive of displeasure and reproach. Neither did the deceit answer his intention. Vexed and disappointed Leonella rose from her seat, and retired in dudgeon to her own apartment.

Lorenzo hastened to repair the fault, which had injured him in Elvira's opinion. He related his conversation with the Marquis respecting her: He assured her that Raymond was prepared to acknowledge her for his Brother's Widow; and that till it was in his power to pay his compliments to her in person, Lorenzo was commissioned to supply his place. This intelligence relieved Elvira from an heavy weight of uneasiness: She had now found a

Protector for the fatherless Antonia, for whose future fortunes She had suffered the greatest apprehensions. She was not sparing of her thanks to him who had interfered so generously in her behalf; But still She gave him no invitation to repeat his visit.

However, when upon rising to depart He requested permission to enquire after her health occasionally, the polite earnestness of his manner, gratitude for his services, and respect for his Friend the Marquis, would not admit of a refusal. She consented reluctantly to receive him: He promised not to abuse her goodness, and quitted the House.

Antonia was now left alone with her Mother: A temporary silence ensued. Both wished to speak upon the same subject, but Neither knew how to introduce it. The one felt a bashfulness which sealed up her lips, and for which She could not account: The other feared to find her apprehensions true, or to inspire her Daughter with notions to which She might be still a Stranger. At length Elvira began the conversation.

'That is a charming young Man, Antonia; I am much pleased with him. Was He long near you yesterday in the Cathedral?'

'He quitted me not for a moment while I staid in the Church: He gave me his seat, and was very obliging and attentive.'

'Indeed? Why then have you never mentioned his name to me? Your Aunt lanced out in praise of his Friend, and you vaunted Ambrosio's eloquence: But Neither said a word of Don Lorenzo's person and accomplishments. Had not Leonella spoken of his readiness to undertake our cause, I should not have known him to be in existence.'

She paused. Antonia coloured, but was silent.

'Perhaps you judge him less favourably than I do. In my opinion his figure is pleasing, his conversation sensible, and manners engaging. Still He may have struck you differently: You may think him disagreeable, and . . . !'

'Disagreeable? Oh! dear Mother, how should I possibly think him so? I should be very ungrateful were I not sensible of his kindness yesterday, and very blind if his merits had escaped me. His figure is so graceful, so noble! His manners so gentle, yet so manly! I never yet saw so many accomplishments united in one person, and I doubt whether Madrid can produce his equal.'

'Why then were you so silent in praise of this Phoenix of Madrid?

Why was it concealed from me that his society had afforded you pleasure?'

'In truth, I know not: You ask me a question which I cannot resolve myself. I was on the point of mentioning him a thousand times: His name was constantly upon my lips, but when I would have pronounced it, I wanted courage to execute my design. However, if I did not speak of him, it was not that I thought of him the less.'

'That I believe; But shall I tell you why you wanted courage? It was because, accustomed to confide to me your most secret thoughts, you knew not how to conceal, yet feared to acknowledge, that your heart nourished a sentiment which you were conscious I should disapprove. Come hither to me, my Child.'

Antonia quitted her embroidery frame, threw herself upon her knees by the Sopha, and hid her face in her Mother's lap.

'Fear not, my sweet Girl! Consider me equally as your Friend and

Parent, and apprehend no reproof from me. I have read the emotions of your bosom; you are yet ill-skilled in concealing them, and they could not escape my attentive eye. This Lorenzo is dangerous to your repose; He has already made an impression upon your heart. 'Tis true that I perceive easily that your affection is returned; But what can be the consequences of this attachment? You are poor and friendless, my Antonia; Lorenzo is the Heir of the Duke of Medina Celi. Even should Himself mean honourably, his Uncle never will consent to your union; Nor without that Uncle's consent, will I. By sad experience I know what sorrows She must endure, who marries into a family unwilling to receive her. Then struggle with your affection: Whatever pains it may cost you, strive to conquer it. Your heart is tender and susceptible: It has already received a strong impression; But when once convinced that you should not encourage such sentiments, I trust, that you have sufficient fortitude to drive them from your bosom.'

Antonia kissed her hand, and promised implicit obedience. Elvira then continued.

'To prevent your passion from growing stronger, it will be needful to prohibit Lorenzo's visits. The service which He has

rendered me permits not my forbidding them positively; But unless I judge too favourably of his character, He will discontinue them without taking offence, if I confess to him my reasons, and throw myself entirely on his generosity. The next time that I see him, I will honestly avow to him the embarrassment which his presence occasions. How say you, my Child? Is not this measure necessary?'

Antonia subscribed to every thing without hesitation, though not without regret. Her Mother kissed her affectionately, and retired to bed. Antonia followed her example, and vowed so frequently never more to think of Lorenzo, that till Sleep closed her eyes She thought of nothing else.

While this was passing at Elvira's, Lorenzo hastened to rejoin the Marquis. Every thing was ready for the second elopement of Agnes; and at twelve the two Friends with a Coach and four were at the Garden wall of the Convent. Don Raymond drew out his Key, and unlocked the door. They entered, and waited for some time in expectation of being joined by Agnes. At length the Marquis grew impatient: Beginning to fear that his second attempt would succeed no better than the first, He proposed to reconnoitre the Convent. The Friends advanced towards it. Every thing was still

and dark. The Prioress was anxious to keep the story a secret, fearing lest the crime of one of its members should bring disgrace upon the whole community, or that the interposition of powerful Relations should deprive her vengeance of its intended victim. She took care therefore to give the Lover of Agnes no cause to suppose that his design was discovered, and his Mistress on the point of suffering the punishment of her fault. The same reason made her reject the idea of arresting the unknown Seducer in the Garden; Such a proceeding would have created much disturbance, and the disgrace of her Convent would have been noised about Madrid. She contented herself with confining Agnes closely; As to the Lover, She left him at liberty to pursue his designs. What She had expected was the result. The Marquis and Lorenzo waited in vain till the break of day: They then retired without noise, alarmed at the failure of their plan, and ignorant of the cause of its ill-success.

The next morning Lorenzo went to the Convent, and requested to see his Sister. The Prioress appeared at the Grate with a melancholy countenance: She informed him that for several days Agnes had appeared much agitated; That She had been prest by the Nuns in vain to reveal the cause, and apply to their tenderness for advice and consolation; That She had obstinately persisted in

concealing the cause of her distress; But that on Thursday Evening it had produced so violent an effect upon her constitution, that She had fallen ill, and was actually confined to her bed. Lorenzo did not credit a syllable of this account: He insisted upon seeing his Sister; If She was unable to come to the Grate, He desired to be admitted to her Cell. The Prioress crossed herself! She was shocked at the very idea of a Man's profane eye pervading the interior of her holy Mansion, and professed herself astonished that Lorenzo could think of such a thing. She told him that his request could not be granted; But that if He returned the next day, She hoped that her beloved Daughter would then be sufficiently recovered to join him at the Parlour grate.

With this answer Lorenzo was obliged to retire, unsatisfied and trembling for his Sister's safety.

He returned the next morning at an early hour. 'Agnes was worse; The Physician had pronounced her to be in imminent danger; She was ordered to remain quiet, and it was utterly impossible for her to receive her Brother's visit.' Lorenzo stormed at this answer, but there was no resource. He raved, He entreated, He threatened: No means were left untried to obtain a sight of

Agnes. His endeavours were as fruitless as those of the day before, and He returned in despair to the Marquis. On his side, the Latter had spared no pains to discover what had occasioned his plot to fail: Don Christoval, to whom the affair was now entrusted, endeavoured to worm out the secret from the Old Porteress of St. Clare, with whom He had formed an acquaintance; But She was too much upon her guard, and He gained from her no intelligence. The Marquis was almost distracted, and Lorenzo felt scarcely less inquietude. Both were convinced that the purposed elopement must have been discovered: They doubted not but the malady of Agnes was a pretence, But they knew not by what means to rescue her from the hands of the Prioress.

Regularly every day did Lorenzo visit the Convent: As regularly was He informed that his Sister rather grew worse than better. Certain that her indisposition was feigned, these accounts did not alarm him: But his ignorance of her fate, and of the motives which induced the Prioress to keep her from him, excited the most serious uneasiness. He was still uncertain what steps He ought to take, when the Marquis received a letter from the Cardinal-Duke of Lerma. It inclosed the Pope's expected Bull, ordering that Agnes should be released from her vows, and restored to her Relations. This essential paper decided at once

the proceedings of her Friends: They resolved that Lorenzo should carry it to the Domina without delay, and demand that his Sister should be instantly given up to him. Against this mandate illness could not be pleaded: It gave her Brother the power of removing her instantly to the Palace de Medina, and He determined to use that power on the following day.

His mind relieved from inquietude respecting his Sister, and his Spirits raised by the hope of soon restoring her to freedom, He now had time to give a few moments to love and to Antonia. At the same hour as on his former visit He repaired to Donna Elvira's: She had given orders for his admission. As soon as He was announced, her Daughter retired with Leonella, and when He entered the chamber, He found the Lady of the House alone. She received him with less distance than before, and desired him to place himself near her upon the Sopha. She then without losing time opened her business, as had been agreed between herself and Antonia.

'You must not think me ungrateful, Don Lorenzo, or forgetful how essential are the services which you have rendered me with the Marquis. I feel the weight of my obligations; Nothing under the Sun should induce my taking the step to which I am now compelled

but the interest of my Child, of my beloved Antonia. My health is declining; God only knows how soon I may be summoned before his Throne. My Daughter will be left without Parents, and should She lose the protection of the Cisternas family, without Friends.

She is young and artless, uninstructed in the world's perfidy,

and with charms sufficient to render her an object of seduction.

Judge then, how I must tremble at the prospect before her!

Judge how anxious I must be to keep her from their society who may excite the yet dormant passions of her bosom. You are

amiable, Don Lorenzo: Antonia has a susceptible, a loving heart,

and is grateful for the favours conferred upon us by your

interference with the Marquis. Your presence makes me tremble:

I fear lest it should inspire her with sentiments which may

embitter the remainder of her life, or encourage her to cherish

hopes in her situation unjustifiable and futile. Pardon me when

I avow my terrors, and let my frankness plead in my excuse. I

cannot forbid you my House, for gratitude restrains me; I can

only throw myself upon your generosity, and entreat you to spare

the feelings of an anxious, of a doting Mother. Believe me when

I assure you that I lament the necessity of rejecting your

acquaintance; But there is no remedy, and Antonia's interest

obliges me to beg you to forbear your visits. By complying with

my request, you will increase the esteem which I already feel for you, and of which everything convinces me that you are truly deserving.'

'Your frankness charms me,' replied Lorenzo; 'You shall find that in your favourable opinion of me you were not deceived. Yet I hope that the reasons, now in my power to allege, will persuade you to withdraw a request which I cannot obey without infinite reluctance. I love your Daughter, love her most sincerely: I wish for no greater happiness than to inspire her with the same sentiments, and receive her hand at the Altar as her Husband. 'Tis true, I am not rich myself; My Father's death has left me but little in my own possession; But my expectations justify my pretending to the Conde de las Cisternas' Daughter.'

He was proceeding, but Elvira interrupted him.

'Ah! Don Lorenzo, you forget in that pompous title the meanness of my origin. You forget that I have now past fourteen years in Spain, disavowed by my Husband's family, and existing upon a stipend barely sufficient for the support and education of my Daughter. Nay, I have even been neglected by most of my own Relations, who out of envy affect to doubt the reality of my

marriage. My allowance being discontinued at my Father-in-law's death, I was reduced to the very brink of want. In this situation I was found by my Sister, who amongst all her foibles possesses a warm, generous, and affectionate heart. She aided me with the little fortune which my Father left her, persuaded me to visit Madrid, and has supported my Child and myself since our quitting Murcia. Then consider not Antonia as descended from the Conde de la Cisternas: Consider her as a poor and unprotected Orphan, as the Grand-child of the Tradesman Torribio Dalfa, as the needy Pensioner of that Tradesman's Daughter. Reflect upon the difference between such a situation, and that of the Nephew and Heir of the potent Duke of Medina. I believe your intentions to be honourable; But as there are no hopes that your Uncle will approve of the union, I foresee that the consequences of your attachment must be fatal to my Child's repose.'

'Pardon me, Señora; You are misinformed if you suppose the Duke of Medina to resemble the generality of Men. His sentiments are liberal and disinterested: He loves me well; and I have no reason to dread his forbidding the marriage when He perceives that my happiness depends upon Antonia. But supposing him to refuse his sanction, what have I still to fear? My Parents are no more; My little fortune is in my own possession: It will be

sufficient to support Antonia, and I shall exchange for her hand Medina's Dukedom without one sigh of regret.'

'You are young and eager; It is natural for you to entertain such ideas. But Experience has taught me to my cost that curses accompany an unequal alliance. I married the Conde de las Cisternas in opposition to the will of his Relations; Many an heart-pang has punished me for the imprudent step. Wherever we bent our course, a Father's execration pursued Gonzalvo. Poverty overtook us, and no Friend was near to relieve our wants. Still our mutual affection existed, but alas! not without interruption.

Accustomed to wealth and ease, ill could my Husband support the transition to distress and indigence. He looked back with repining to the comforts which He once enjoyed. He regretted the situation which for my sake He had quitted; and in moments when Despair possessed his mind, has reproached me with having made him the Companion of want and wretchedness! He has called me his bane! The source of his sorrows, the cause of his destruction! Ah God! He little knew how much keener were my own heart's reproaches! He was ignorant that I suffered trebly, for myself, for my Children, and for him! 'Tis true that his anger seldom lasted long: His sincere affection for me soon revived in his

heart; and then his repentance for the tears which He had made me shed tortured me even more than his reproaches. He would throw himself on the ground, implore my forgiveness in the most frantic terms, and load himself with curses for being the Murderer of my repose. Taught by experience that an union contracted against the inclinations of families on either side must be unfortunate, I will save my Daughter from those miseries which I have suffered. Without your Uncle's consent, while I live, She never shall be yours. Undoubtedly He will disapprove of the union; His power is immense, and Antonia shall not be exposed to his anger and persecution.'

'His persecution? How easily may that be avoided! Let the worst happen, it is but quitting Spain. My wealth may easily be realised; The Indian Islands will offer us a secure retreat; I have an estate, though not of value, in Hispaniola: Thither will we fly, and I shall consider it to be my native Country, if it gives me Antonia's undisturbed possession.'

'Ah! Youth, this is a fond romantic vision. Gonzalvo thought the same. He fancied that He could leave Spain without regret; But the moment of parting undeceived him. You know not yet what it is to quit your native land; to quit it, never to behold it more!

You know not, what it is to exchange the scenes where you have passed your infancy, for unknown realms and barbarous climates! To be forgotten, utterly eternally forgotten, by the Companions of your Youth! To see your dearest Friends, the fondest objects of your affection, perishing with diseases incidental to Indian atmospheres, and find yourself unable to procure for them necessary assistance! I have felt all this! My Husband and two sweet Babes found their Graves in Cuba: Nothing would have saved my young Antonia but my sudden return to Spain. Ah! Don Lorenzo, could you conceive what I suffered during my absence! Could you know how sorely I regretted all that I left behind, and how dear to me was the very name of Spain! I envied the winds which blew towards it: And when the Spanish Sailor chaunted some well-known air as He past my window, tears filled my eyes while I thought upon my native land. Gonzalvo too . . . My Husband . . .!

Elvira paused. Her voice faltered, and She concealed her face with her handkerchief. After a short silence She rose from the Sopha, and proceeded.

'Excuse my quitting you for a few moments: The remembrance of what I have suffered has much agitated me, and I need to be

alone. Till I return peruse these lines. After my Husband's death I found them among his papers; Had I known sooner that He entertained such sentiments, Grief would have killed me. He wrote these verses on his voyage to Cuba, when his mind was clouded by sorrow, and He forgot that He had a Wife and Children.

What we are losing, ever seems to us the most precious: Gonzalvo was quitting Spain for ever, and therefore was Spain dearer to his eyes than all else which the World contained. Read them, Don Lorenzo; They will give you some idea of the feelings of a banished Man!

Elvira put a paper into Lorenzo's hand, and retired from the chamber. The Youth examined the contents, and found them to be as follows.

THE EXILE

Farewell, Oh! native Spain! Farewell for ever!

These banished eyes shall view thy coasts no more;

A mournful presage tells my heart, that never

Gonzalvo's steps again shall press thy shore.

Hushed are the winds; While soft the Vessel sailing
With gentle motion plows the unruffled Main,
I feel my bosom's boasted courage failing,
And curse the waves which bear me far from Spain.

I see it yet! Beneath yon blue clear Heaven
Still do the Spires, so well beloved, appear;
From yonder craggy point the gale of Even
Still wafts my native accents to mine ear:

Propped on some moss-crowned Rock, and gaily singing,
There in the Sun his nets the Fisher dries;
Oft have I heard the plaintive Ballad, bringing
Scenes of past joys before my sorrowing eyes.

Ah! Happy Swain! He waits the accustomed hour,
When twilight-gloom obscures the closing sky;
Then gladly seeks his loved paternal bower,
And shares the feast his native fields supply:

Friendship and Love, his Cottage Guests, receive him
With honest welcome and with smile sincere;
No threatening woes of present joys bereave him,

No sigh his bosom owns, his cheek no tear.

Ah! Happy Swain! Such bliss to me denying,
Fortune thy lot with envy bids me view;
Me, who from home and Spain an Exile flying,
Bid all I value, all I love, adieu.

No more mine ear shall list the well-known ditty
Sung by some Mountain-Girl, who tends her Goats,
Some Village-Swain imploring amorous pity,
Or Shepherd chaunting wild his rustic notes:

No more my arms a Parent's fond embraces,
No more my heart domestic calm, must know;
Far from these joys, with sighs which Memory traces,
To sultry skies, and distant climes I go.

Where Indian Suns engender new diseases,
Where snakes and tigers breed, I bend my way
To brave the feverish thirst no art appeases,
The yellow plague, and madding blaze of day:

But not to feel slow pangs consume my liver,

To die by piece-meal in the bloom of age,
My boiling blood drank by insatiate fever,
And brain delirious with the day-star's rage,

Can make me know such grief, as thus to sever
With many a bitter sigh, Dear Land, from Thee;
To feel this heart must doat on thee for ever,
And feel, that all thy joys are torn from me!

Ah me! How oft will Fancy's spells in slumber
Recall my native Country to my mind!
How oft regret will bid me sadly number
Each lost delight and dear Friend left behind!

Wild Murcia's Vales, and loved romantic bowers,
The River on whose banks a Child I played,
My Castle's antient Halls, its frowning Towers,
Each much-regretted wood, and well-known Glade,

Dreams of the land where all my wishes centre,
Thy scenes, which I am doomed no more to know,
Full oft shall Memory trace, my soul's Tormentor,
And turn each pleasure past to present woe.

But Lo! The Sun beneath the waves retires;
Night speeds apace her empire to restore:
Clouds from my sight obscure the village-spires,
Now seen but faintly, and now seen no more.

Oh! breathe not, Winds! Still be the Water's motion!
Sleep, sleep, my Bark, in silence on the Main!
So when to-morrow's light shall gild the Ocean,
Once more mine eyes shall see the coast of Spain.

Vain is the wish! My last petition scorning,
Fresh blows the Gale, and high the Billows swell:
Far shall we be before the break of Morning;
Oh! then for ever, native Spain, farewell!

Lorenzo had scarcely time to read these lines, when Elvira
returned to him: The giving a free course to her tears had
relieved her, and her spirits had regained their usual composure.

'I have nothing more to say, my Lord,' said She; 'You have heard
my apprehensions, and my reasons for begging you not to repeat

your visits. I have thrown myself in full confidence upon your honour: I am certain that you will not prove my opinion of you to have been too favourable.'

'But one question more, Segnora, and I leave you. Should the Duke of Medina approve my love, would my addresses be unacceptable to yourself and the fair Antonia?'

'I will be open with you, Don Lorenzo: There being little probability of such an union taking place, I fear that it is desired but too ardently by my Daughter. You have made an impression upon her young heart, which gives me the most serious alarm: To prevent that impression from growing stronger, I am obliged to decline your acquaintance. For me, you may be sure that I should rejoice at establishing my Child so advantageously. Conscious that my constitution, impaired by grief and illness, forbids me to expect a long continuance in this world, I tremble at the thought of leaving her under the protection of a perfect Stranger. The Marquis de las Cisternas is totally unknown to me:

He will marry; His Lady may look upon Antonia with an eye of displeasure, and deprive her of her only Friend. Should the Duke, your Uncle, give his consent, you need not doubt obtaining

mine, and my Daughter's: But without his, hope not for ours. At all events, what ever steps you may take, what ever may be the Duke's decision, till you know it let me beg your forbearing to strengthen by your presence Antonia's prepossession. If the sanction of your Relations authorises your addressing her as your Wife, my Doors fly open to you: If that sanction is refused, be satisfied to possess my esteem and gratitude, but remember, that we must meet no more.'

Lorenzo promised reluctantly to conform to this decree: But He added that He hoped soon to obtain that consent which would give him a claim to the renewal of their acquaintance. He then explained to her why the Marquis had not called in person, and made no scruple of confiding to her his Sister's History. He concluded by saying that He hoped to set Agnes at liberty the next day; and that as soon as Don Raymond's fears were quieted upon this subject, He would lose no time in assuring Donna Elvira of his friendship and protection.

The Lady shook her head.

'I tremble for your Sister,' said She; 'I have heard many traits of the Domina of St. Clare's character, from a Friend who was

educated in the same Convent with her. She reported her to be haughty, inflexible, superstitious, and revengeful. I have since heard that She is infatuated with the idea of rendering her Convent the most regular in Madrid, and never forgave those whose imprudence threw upon it the slightest stain. Though naturally violent and severe, when her interests require it, She well knows how to assume an appearance of benignity. She leaves no means untried to persuade young Women of rank to become Members of her Community: She is implacable when once incensed, and has too much intrepidity to shrink at taking the most rigorous measures for punishing the Offender. Doubtless, She will consider your Sister's quitting the Convent as a disgrace thrown upon it: She will use every artifice to avoid obeying the mandate of his Holiness, and I shudder to think that Donna Agnes is in the hands of this dangerous Woman.'

Lorenzo now rose to take leave. Elvira gave him her hand at parting, which He kissed respectfully; and telling her that He soon hoped for the permission to salute that of Antonia, He returned to his Hotel. The Lady was perfectly satisfied with the conversation which had past between them. She looked forward with satisfaction to the prospect of his becoming her Son-in-law; But Prudence bad her conceal from her Daughter's knowledge

the flattering hopes which Herself now ventured to entertain.

Scarcely was it day, and already Lorenzo was at the Convent of St. Clare, furnished with the necessary mandate. The Nuns were at Matins. He waited impatiently for the conclusion of the service, and at length the Prioress appeared at the Parlour Grate. Agnes was demanded. The old Lady replied, with a melancholy air, that the dear Child's situation grew hourly more dangerous; That the Physicians despaired of her life; But that they had declared the only chance for her recovery to consist in keeping her quiet, and not to permit those to approach her whose presence was likely to agitate her. Not a word of all this was believed by Lorenzo, any more than He credited the expressions of grief and affection for Agnes, with which this account was interlarded. To end the business, He put the Pope's Bull into the hands of the Domina, and insisted that, ill or in health, his Sister should be delivered to him without delay.

The Prioress received the paper with an air of humility: But no sooner had her eye glanced over the contents, than her resentment baffled all the efforts of Hypocrisy. A deep crimson spread itself over her face, and She darted upon Lorenzo looks of rage and menace.

'This order is positive,' said She in a voice of anger, which She in vain strove to disguise; 'Willingly would I obey it; But unfortunately it is out of my power.'

Lorenzo interrupted her by an exclamation of surprize.

'I repeat it, Segnor; to obey this order is totally out of my power. From tenderness to a Brother's feelings, I would have communicated the sad event to you by degrees, and have prepared you to hear it with fortitude. My measures are broken through: This order commands me to deliver up to you the Sister Agnes without delay; I am therefore obliged to inform you without circumlocution, that on Friday last, She expired.'

Lorenzo started back with horror, and turned pale. A moment's recollection convinced him that this assertion must be false, and it restored him to himself.

'You deceive me!' said He passionately; 'But five minutes past since you assured me that though ill She was still alive. Produce her this instant! See her I must and will, and every attempt to keep her from me will be unavailing.'

'You forget yourself, Segnor; You owe respect to my age as well as my profession. Your Sister is no more. If I at first concealed her death, it was from dreading lest an event so unexpected should produce on you too violent an effect. In truth, I am but ill repaid for my attention. And what interest, I pray you, should I have in detaining her? To know her wish of quitting our society is a sufficient reason for me to wish her absence, and think her a disgrace to the Sisterhood of St.

Clare: But She has forfeited my affection in a manner yet more culpable. Her crimes were great, and when you know the cause of her death, you will doubtless rejoice, Don Lorenzo, that such a Wretch is no longer in existence. She was taken ill on Thursday last on returning from confession in the Capuchin Chapel. Her malady seemed attended with strange circumstances; But She persisted in concealing its cause: Thanks to the Virgin, we were too ignorant to suspect it! Judge then what must have been our consternation, our horror, when She was delivered the next day of a stillborn Child, whom She immediately followed to the Grave. How, Segnor? Is it possible that your countenance expresses no surprize, no indignation? Is it possible that your Sister's infamy was known to you, and that still She possessed your affection? In that case, you have no need of my compassion. I

can say nothing more, except repeat my inability of obeying the orders of his Holiness. Agnes is no more, and to convince you that what I say is true, I swear by our blessed Saviour, that three days have past since She was buried.'

Here She kissed a small crucifix which hung at her girdle. She then rose from her chair, and quitted the Parlour. As She withdrew, She cast upon Lorenzo a scornful smile.

'Farewell, Segnor,' said She; 'I know no remedy for this accident: I fear that even a second Bull from the Pope will not procure your Sister's resurrection.'

Lorenzo also retired, penetrated with affliction: But Don Raymond's at the news of this event amounted to Madness. He would not be convinced that Agnes was really dead, and continued to insist that the Walls of St. Clare still confined her. No arguments could make him abandon his hopes of regaining her: Every day some fresh scheme was invented for procuring intelligence of her, and all of them were attended with the same success.

On his part, Medina gave up the idea of ever seeing his Sister

more: Yet He believed that She had been taken off by unfair means. Under this persuasion, He encouraged Don Raymond's researches, determined, should He discover the least warrant for his suspicions, to take a severe vengeance upon the unfeeling Prioress. The loss of his Sister affected him sincerely; Nor was it the least cause of his distress that propriety obliged him for some time to defer mentioning Antonia to the Duke. In the meanwhile his emissaries constantly surrounded Elvira's Door. He had intelligence of all the movements of his Mistress: As She never failed every Thursday to attend the Sermon in the Capuchin Cathedral, He was secure of seeing her once a week, though in compliance with his promise, He carefully shunned her observation. Thus two long Months passed away. Still no information was procured of Agnes: All but the Marquis credited her death; and now Lorenzo determined to disclose his sentiments to his Uncle. He had already dropt some hints of his intention to marry; They had been as favourably received as He could expect, and He harboured no doubt of the success of his application.