CHAPTER XVII

But in these cases,
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: thus even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.

MACBETH

Some circumstances of an extraordinary nature now withdrew Emily from her own sorrows, and excited emotions, which partook of both surprise and horror.

A few days followed that, on which Signora Laurentini died, her will was opened at the monastery, in the presence of the superiors and Mons. Bonnac, when it was found, that one third of her personal property was bequeathed to the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi, and that Emily was the person.

With the secret of Emily's family the abbess had long been acquainted, and it was in observance of the earnest request of St. Aubert, who was known to the friar, that attended him on his deathbed, that his daughter had remained in ignorance of her relationship to the Marchioness. But some hints, which had fallen from Signora Laurentini, during her last interview with Emily, and a confession of a very extraordinary nature, given in her dying hours, had made the abbess think it necessary to converse with her young friend, on the topic she had not before ventured to introduce; and it was for this purpose, that she had requested to see her on the morning that followed her interview with the nun. Emily's indisposition had then prevented the intended conversation; but now, after the will had been examined, she received a summons, which she immediately obeyed, and became informed of circumstances, that powerfully affected her. As the narrative of the abbess was, however, deficient in many particulars, of which the reader may wish to be informed, and the history of the nun is materially connected with the fate of the Marchioness de Villeroi, we shall omit the conversation, that passed in the parlour of the convent, and mingle with our relation a brief history of

LAURENTINI DI UDOLPHO,

who was the only child of her parents, and heiress of the ancient house of Udolpho, in the territory of Venice. It was the first misfortune of her life, and that which led to all her succeeding misery, that the friends, who ought to have restrained her strong passions, and mildly instructed her in the art of governing them, nurtured them by early indulgence. But they cherished their own failings in her; for their conduct was not the result of rational kindness, and, when they either indulged, or opposed the passions of their child, they gratified their own. Thus they indulged her with weakness, and reprehended her with violence; her

spirit was exasperated by their vehemence, instead of being corrected by their wisdom; and their oppositions became contest for victory, in which the due tenderness of the parents, and the affectionate duties of the child, were equally forgotten; but, as returning fondness disarmed the parents' resentment soonest, Laurentini was suffered to believe that she had conquered, and her passions became stronger by every effort, that had been employed to subdue them.

The death of her father and mother in the same year left her to her own discretion, under the dangerous circumstances attendant on youth and beauty. She was fond of company, delighted with admiration, yet disdainful of the opinion of the world, when it happened to contradict her inclinations; had a gay and brilliant wit, and was mistress of all the arts of fascination. Her conduct was such as might have been expected, from the weakness of her principles and the strength of her passions.

Among her numerous admirers was the late Marquis de Villeroi, who, on his tour through Italy, saw Laurentini at Venice, where she usually resided, and became her passionate adorer. Equally captivated by the figure and accomplishments of the Marquis, who was at that period one of the most distinguished noblemen of the French court, she had the art so effectually to conceal from him the dangerous traits of her character and the blemishes of her late conduct, that he solicited her hand in marriage.

Before the nuptials were concluded, she retired to the castle of Udolpho, whither the Marquis followed, and, where her conduct, relaxing from the propriety, which she had lately assumed, discovered to him the precipice, on which he stood. A minuter enquiry than he had before thought it necessary to make, convinced him, that he had been deceived in her character, and she, whom he had designed for his wife, afterwards became his mistress.

Having passed some weeks at Udolpho, he was called abruptly to France, whither he returned with extreme reluctance, for his heart was still fascinated by the arts of Laurentini, with whom, however, he had on various pretences delayed his marriage; but, to reconcile her to this separation, he now gave repeated promises of returning to conclude the nuptials, as soon as the affair, which thus suddenly called him to France, should permit.

Soothed, in some degree, by these assurances, she suffered him to depart; and, soon after, her relative, Montoni, arriving at Udolpho, renewed the addresses, which she had before refused, and which she now again rejected. Meanwhile, her thoughts were constantly with the Marquis de Villeroi, for whom she suffered all the delirium of Italian love, cherished by the solitude, to which she confined herself; for she had now lost all taste for the pleasures of society and the gaiety of amusement. Her only indulgences were to sigh and weep over a miniature of the Marquis; to visit the scenes, that had witnessed their happiness, to pour forth her heart to him in writing, and to count the weeks, the days, which must intervene before the period that he had mentioned as probable for his return. But this period passed without bringing him; and week

after week followed in heavy and almost intolerable expectation. During this interval, Laurentini's fancy, occupied incessantly by one idea, became disordered; and, her whole heart being devoted to one object, life became hateful to her, when she believed that object lost.

Several months passed, during which she heard nothing from the Marquis de Villeroi, and her days were marked, at intervals, with the frenzy of passion and the sullenness of despair. She secluded herself from all visitors, and, sometimes, remained in her apartment, for weeks together, refusing to speak to every person, except her favourite female attendant, writing scraps of letters, reading, again and again, those she had received from the Marquis, weeping over his picture, and speaking to it, for many hours, upbraiding, reproaching and caressing it alternately.

At length, a report reached her, that the Marquis had married in France, and, after suffering all the extremes of love, jealousy and indignation, she formed the desperate resolution of going secretly to that country, and, if the report proved true, of attempting a deep revenge. To her favourite woman only she confided the plan of her journey, and she engaged her to partake of it. Having collected her jewels, which, descending to her from many branches of her family, were of immense value, and all her cash, to a very large amount, they were packed in a trunk, which was privately conveyed to a neighbouring town, whither Laurentini, with this only servant, followed, and thence proceeded secretly to Livorno, where they embarked for France.

When, on her arrival in Languedoc, she found, that the Marquis de Villeroi had been married, for some months, her despair almost deprived her of reason, and she alternately projected and abandoned the horrible design of murdering the Marquis, his wife and herself. At length she contrived to throw herself in his way, with an intention of reproaching him, for his conduct, and of stabbing herself in his presence; but, when she again saw him, who so long had been the constant object of her thoughts and affections, resentment yielded to love; her resolution failed; she trembled with the conflict of emotions, that assailed her heart, and fainted away.

The Marquis was not proof against her beauty and sensibility; all the energy, with which he had first loved, returned, for his passion had been resisted by prudence, rather than overcome by indifference; and, since the honour of his family would not permit him to marry her, he had endeavoured to subdue his love, and had so far succeeded, as to select the then Marchioness for his wife, whom he loved at first with a tempered and rational affection. But the mild virtues of that amiable lady did not recompense him for her indifference, which appeared, notwithstanding her efforts to conceal it; and he had, for some time, suspected that her affections were engaged by another person, when Laurentini arrived in Languedoc. This artful Italian soon perceived, that she had regained her influence over him, and, soothed by the discovery, she determined to live, and to employ all her enchantments to win his consent to the diabolical deed, which she believed was necessary to the security of her happiness. She conducted her scheme with deep dissimulation and patient perseverance, and,

having completely estranged the affections of the Marquis from his wife, whose gentle goodness and unimpassioned manners had ceased to please, when contrasted with the captivations of the Italian, she proceeded to awaken in his mind the jealousy of pride, for it was no longer that of love, and even pointed out to him the person, to whom she affirmed the Marchioness had sacrificed her honour; but Laurentini had first extorted from him a solemn promise to forbear avenging himself upon his rival. This was an important part of her plan, for she knew, that, if his desire of vengeance was restrained towards one party, it would burn more fiercely towards the other, and he might then, perhaps, be prevailed on to assist in the horrible act, which would release him from the only barrier, that withheld him from making her his wife.

The innocent Marchioness, meanwhile, observed, with extreme grief, the alteration in her husband's manners. He became reserved and thoughtful in her presence; his conduct was austere, and sometimes even rude; and he left her, for many hours together, to weep for his unkindness, and to form plans for the recovery of his affection. His conduct afflicted her the more, because, in obedience to the command of her father, she had accepted his hand, though her affections were engaged to another, whose amiable disposition, she had reason to believe, would have ensured her happiness. This circumstance Laurentini had discovered, soon after her arrival in France, and had made ample use of it in assisting her designs upon the Marquis, to whom she adduced such seeming proof of his wife's infidelity, that, in the frantic rage of wounded honour, he consented to destroy his wife. A slow poison was administered, and she fell a victim to the jealousy and subtlety of Laurentini and to the guilty weakness of her husband.

But the moment of Laurentini's triumph, the moment, to which she had looked forward for the completion of all her wishes, proved only the commencement of a suffering, that never left her to her dying hour.

The passion of revenge, which had in part stimulated her to the commission of this atrocious deed, died, even at the moment when it was gratified, and left her to the horrors of unavailing pity and remorse, which would probably have empoisoned all the years she had promised herself with the Marquis de Villeroi, had her expectations of an alliance with him been realised. But he, too, had found the moment of his revenge to be that of remorse, as to himself, and detestation, as to the partner of his crime; the feeling, which he had mistaken for conviction, was no more; and he stood astonished, and aghast, that no proof remained of his wife's infidelity, now that she had suffered the punishment of guilt. Even when he was informed, that she was dying, he had felt suddenly and unaccountably reassured of her innocence, nor was the solemn assurance she made him in her last hour, capable of affording him a stronger conviction of her blameless conduct.

In the first horrors of remorse and despair, he felt inclined to deliver up himself and the woman, who had plunged him into this abyss of guilt, into the hands of justice; but, when the paroxysm of his suffering was over, his intention changed. Laurentini, however, he saw only once afterwards, and that was, to

curse her as the instigator of his crime, and to say, that he spared her life only on condition, that she passed the rest of her days in prayer and penance. Overwhelmed with disappointment, on receiving contempt and abhorrence from the man, for whose sake she had not scrupled to stain her conscience with human blood, and, touched with horror of the unavailing crime she had committed, she renounced the world, and retired to the monastery of St. Claire, a dreadful victim to unresisted passion.

The Marquis, immediately after the death of his wife, quitted Château-le-Blanc, to which he never returned, and endeavoured to lose the sense of his crime amidst the tumult of war, or the dissipations of a capital; but his efforts were vain; a deep dejection hung over him ever after, for which his most intimate friend could not account, and he, at length, died, with a degree of horror nearly equal to that, which Laurentini had suffered. The physician, who had observed the singular appearance of the unfortunate Marchioness, after death, had been bribed to silence; and, as the surmises of a few of the servants had proceeded no further than a whisper, the affair had never been investigated. Whether this whisper ever reached the father of the Marchioness, and, if it did, whether the difficulty of obtaining proof deterred him from prosecuting the Marquis de Villeroi, is uncertain; but her death was deeply lamented by some part of her family, and particularly by her brother, M. St. Aubert; for that was the degree of relationship, which had existed between Emily's father and the Marchioness; and there is no doubt, that he suspected the manner of her death. Many letters passed between the Marquis and him, soon after the decease of his beloved sister, the subject of which was not known, but there is reason to believe, that they related to the cause of her death; and these were the papers, together with some letters of the Marchioness, who had confided to her brother the occasion of her unhappiness, which St. Aubert had so solemnly enjoined his daughter to destroy: and anxiety for her peace had probably made him forbid her to enquire into the melancholy story, to which they alluded. Such, indeed, had been his affliction, on the premature death of this his favourite sister, whose unhappy marriage had from the first excited his tenderest pity, that he never could hear her named, or mention her himself after her death, except to Madame St. Aubert. From Emily, whose sensibility he feared to awaken, he had so carefully concealed her history and name, that she was ignorant, till now, that she ever had such a relative as the Marchioness de Villeroi; and from this motive he had enjoined silence to his only surviving sister, Madame Cheron, who had scrupulously observed his request.

It was over some of the last pathetic letters of the Marchioness, that St. Aubert was weeping, when he was observed by Emily, on the eve of her departure from La Vallée, and it was her picture, which he had so tenderly caressed. Her disastrous death may account for the emotion he had betrayed, on hearing her named by La Voisin, and for his request to be interred near the monument of the Villerois, where her remains were deposited, but not those of her husband, who was buried, where he died, in the north of France.

The confessor, who attended St. Aubert in his last moments, recollected him to be the brother of the late Marchioness, when St. Aubert, from tenderness to

Emily, had conjured him to conceal the circumstance, and to request that the abbess, to whose care he particularly recommended her, would do the same; a request, which had been exactly observed.

Laurentini, on her arrival in France, had carefully concealed her name and family, and, the better to disguise her real history, had, on entering the convent, caused the story to be circulated, which had imposed on sister Frances, and it is probable, that the abbess, who did not preside in the convent, at the time of her noviciation, was also entirely ignorant of the truth. The deep remorse, that seized on the mind of Laurentini, together with the sufferings of disappointed passion, for she still loved the Marquis, again unsettled her intellects, and, after the first paroxysms of despair were passed, a heavy and silent melancholy had settled upon her spirits, which suffered few interruptions from fits of frenzy, till the time of her death. During many years, it had been her only amusement to walk in the woods near the monastery, in the solitary hours of night, and to play upon a favourite instrument, to which she sometimes joined the delightful melody of her voice, in the most solemn and melancholy airs of her native country, modulated by all the energetic feeling, that dwelt in her heart. The physician, who had attended her, recommended it to the superior to indulge her in this whim, as the only means of soothing her distempered fancy; and she was suffered to walk in the lonely hours of night, attended by the servant, who had accompanied her from Italy; but, as the indulgence transgressed against the rules of the convent, it was kept as secret as possible; and thus the mysterious music of Laurentini had combined with other circumstances, to produce a report, that not only the château, but its neighbourhood, was haunted.

Soon after her entrance into this holy community, and before she had shown any symptoms of insanity there, she made a will, in which, after bequeathing a considerable legacy to the convent, she divided the remainder of her personal property, which her jewels made very valuable, between the wife of Mons. Bonnac, who was an Italian lady and her relation, and the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi. As Emily St. Aubert was not only the nearest, but the sole relative, this legacy descended to her, and thus explained to her the whole mystery of her father's conduct.

The resemblance between Emily and her unfortunate aunt had frequently been observed by Laurentini, and had occasioned the singular behaviour, which had formerly alarmed her; but it was in the nun's dying hour, when her conscience gave her perpetually the idea of the Marchioness, that she became more sensible, than ever, of this likeness, and, in her frenzy, deemed it no resemblance of the person she had injured, but the original herself. The bold assertion, that had followed, on the recovery of her senses, that Emily was the daughter of the Marchioness de Villeroi, arose from a suspicion that she was so; for, knowing that her rival, when she married the Marquis, was attached to another lover, she had scarcely scrupled to believe, that her honour had been sacrificed, like her own, to an unresisted passion.

Of a crime, however, to which Emily had suspected, from her frenzied confession of murder, that she had been instrumental in the castle of Udolpho, Laurentini was innocent; and she had herself been deceived, concerning the spectacle, that formerly occasioned her so much terror, and had since compelled her, for a while, to attribute the horrors of the nun to a consciousness of a murder, committed in that castle.

It may be remembered, that, in a chamber of Udolpho, hung a black veil, whose singular situation had excited Emily's curiosity, and which afterwards disclosed an object, that had overwhelmed her with horror; for, on lifting it, there appeared, instead of the picture she had expected, within a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle, was, that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands. On such an object, it will be readily believed, that no person could endure to look twice. Emily, it may be recollected, had, after the first glance, let the veil drop, and her terror had prevented her from ever after provoking a renewal of such suffering, as she had then experienced. Had she dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax. The history of it is somewhat extraordinary, though not without example in the records of that fierce severity, which monkish superstition has sometimes inflicted on mankind. A member of the house of Udolpho, having committed some offence against the prerogative of the church, had been condemned to the penance of contemplating, during certain hours of the day, a waxen image, made to resemble a human body in the state, to which it is reduced after death. This penance, serving as a memento of the condition at which he must himself arrive, had been designed to reprove the pride of the Marquis of Udolpho, which had formerly so much exasperated that of the Romish church; and he had not only superstitiously observed this penance himself, which, he had believed, was to obtain a pardon for all his sins, but had made it a condition in his will, that his descendants should preserve the image, on pain of forfeiting to the church a certain part of his domain, that they also might profit by the humiliating moral it conveyed. The figure, therefore, had been suffered to retain its station in the wall of the chamber, but his descendants excused themselves from observing the penance, to which he had been enjoined.

This image was so horribly natural, that it is not surprising Emily should have mistaken it for the object it resembled, nor, since she had heard such an extraordinary account, concerning the disappearing of the late lady of the castle, and had such experience of the character of Montoni, that she should have believed this to be the murdered body of the lady Laurentini, and that he had been the contriver of her death.

The situation, in which she had discovered it, occasioned her, at first, much surprise and perplexity; but the vigilance, with which the doors of the chamber, where it was deposited, were afterwards secured, had compelled her to believe, that Montoni, not daring to confide the secret of her death to any person, had

suffered her remains to decay in this obscure chamber. The ceremony of the veil, however, and the circumstance of the doors having been left open, even for a moment, had occasioned her much wonder and some doubts; but these were not sufficient to overcome her suspicion of Montoni; and it was the dread of his terrible vengeance, that had sealed her lips in silence, concerning what she had seen in the west chamber.

Emily, in discovering the Marchioness de Villeroi to have been the sister of Mons. St. Aubert, was variously affected; but, amidst the sorrow, which she suffered for her untimely death, she was released from an anxious and painful conjecture, occasioned by the rash assertion of Signora Laurentini, concerning her birth and the honour of her parents. Her faith in St. Aubert's principles would scarcely allow her to suspect that he had acted dishonourably; and she felt such reluctance to believe herself the daughter of any other, than her, whom she had always considered and loved as a mother, that she would hardly admit such a circumstance to be possible; yet the likeness, which it had frequently been affirmed she bore to the late Marchioness, the former behaviour of Dorothée the old housekeeper, the assertion of Laurentini, and the mysterious attachment, which St. Aubert had discovered, awakened doubts, as to his connection with the Marchioness, which her reason could neither vanquish, nor confirm. From these, however, she was now relieved, and all the circumstances of her father's conduct were fully explained: but her heart was oppressed by the melancholy catastrophe of her amiable relative, and by the awful lesson, which the history of the nun exhibited, the indulgence of whose passions had been the means of leading her gradually to the commission of a crime, from the prophecy of which in her early years she would have recoiled in horror, and exclaimed — that it could not be! — a crime, which whole years of repentance and of the severest penance had not been able to obliterate from her conscience.

CHAPTER XVIII

Then, fresh tears
Stood on her cheek, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gather'd lily almost wither'd
SHAKESPEARE

After the late discoveries, Emily was distinguished at the château by the Count and his family, as a relative of the house of Villeroi, and received, if possible, more friendly attention, than had yet been shown her.

Count De Villefort's surprise at the delay of an answer to his letter, which had been directed to Valancourt, at Estuvière, was mingled with satisfaction for the prudence, which had saved Emily from a share of the anxiety he now suffered, though, when he saw her still drooping under the effect of his former error, all his resolution was necessary to restrain him from relating the truth, that would afford her a momentary relief. The approaching nuptials of the Lady Blanche now divided his attention with this subject of his anxiety, for the inhabitants of the château were already busied in preparations for that event, and the arrival of Mons. St. Foix was daily expected. In the gaiety, which surrounded her, Emily vainly tried to participate, her spirits being depressed by the late discoveries, and by the anxiety concerning the fate of Valancourt, that had been occasioned by the description of his manner, when he had delivered the ring. She seemed to perceive in it the gloomy wildness of despair; and, when she considered to what that despair might have urged him, her heart sunk with terror and grief. The state of suspense, as to his safety, to which she believed herself condemned, till she should return to La Vallée, appeared insupportable, and, in such moments, she could not even struggle to assume the composure, that had left her mind, but would often abruptly quit the company she was with, and endeavour to sooth her spirits in the deep solitudes of the woods, that overbrowed the shore. Here, the faint roar of foaming waves, that beat below, and the sullen murmur of the wind among the branches around, were circumstances in unison with the temper of her mind; and she would sit on a cliff, or on the broken steps of her favourite watchtower, observing the changing colours of the evening clouds, and the gloom of twilight draw over the sea, till the white tops of billows, riding towards the shore, could scarcely be discerned amidst the darkened waters. The lines, engraved by Valancourt on this tower, she frequently repeated with melancholy enthusiasm, and then would endeavour to check the recollections and the grief they occasioned, and to turn her thoughts to indifferent subjects.

One evening, having wandered with her lute to this her favourite spot, she entered the ruined tower, and ascended a winding staircase, that led to a small chamber, which was less decayed than the rest of the building, and whence she had often gazed, with admiration, on the wide prospect of sea and land, that extended below. The sun was now setting on that tract of the Pyrenees, which divided Languedoc from Rousillon, and, placing herself opposite to a small grated window, which, like the wood tops beneath, and the waves lower still,

gleamed with the red glow of the west, she touched the chords of her lute in solemn symphony, and then accompanied it with her voice, in one of the simple and affecting airs, to which, in happier days, Valancourt had often listened in rapture, and which she now adapted to the following lines.

TO MELANCHOLY

Spirit of love and sorrow — hail!
Thy solemn voice from far I hear,
Mingling with ev'ning's dying gale:
Hail, with this sadly-pleasing tear!

O! at this still, this lonely hour,
Thine own sweet hour of closing day,
Awake thy lute, whose charmful pow'r
Shall call up Fancy to obey:

To paint the wild romantic dream,
That meets the poet's musing eye,
As, on the bank of shadowy stream,
He breathes to her the fervid sigh.

O lonely spirit! let thy song
Lead me through all thy sacred haunt;
The minister's moonlight aisles along,
Where spectres raise the midnight chaunt.

I hear their dirges faintly swell!
Then, sink at once in silence drear,
While, from the pillar'd cloister's cell,
Dimly their gliding forms appear!

Lead where the pine-woods wave on high,
Whose pathless sod is darkly seen,
As the cold moon, with trembling eye,
Darts her long beams the leaves between.

Lead to the mountain's dusky head,
Where, far below, in shade profound,
Wide forests, plains and hamlets spread,
And sad the chimes of vesper sound,

Or guide me, where the dashing oar
Just breaks the stillness of the vale,
As slow it tracks the winding shore,
To meet the ocean's distant sail:

To pebbly banks, that Neptune laves,
With measur'd surges, loud and deep,

Where the dark cliff bends o'er the waves,
And wild the winds of autumn sweep.

There pause at midnight's spectred hour,
And list the long-resounding gale;
And catch the fleeting moonlight's pow'r,
O'er foaming seas and distant sail.

The soft tranquillity of the scene below, where the evening breeze scarcely curled the water, or swelled the passing sail, that caught the last gleam of the sun, and where, now and then, a dipping oar was all that disturbed the trembling radiance, conspired with the tender melody of her lute to lull her mind into a state of gentle sadness, and she sung the mournful songs of past times, till the remembrances they awakened were too powerful for her heart, her tears fell upon the lute, over which she drooped, and her voice trembled, and was unable to proceed.

Though the sun had now sunk behind the mountains, and even his reflected light was fading from their highest points, Emily did not leave the watch-tower, but continued to indulge her melancholy reverie, till a footstep, at a little distance, startled her, and, on looking through the grate, she observed a person walking below, whom, however, soon perceiving to be Mons. Bonnac, she returned to the quiet thoughtfulness his step had interrupted. After some time, she again struck her lute, and sung her favourite air; but again a step disturbed her, and, as she paused to listen, she heard it ascending the staircase of the tower. The gloom of the hour, perhaps, made her sensible to some degree of fear, which she might not otherwise have felt; for, only a few minutes before, she had seen Mons. Bonnac pass. The steps were quick and bounding, and, in the next moment, the door of the chamber opened, and a person entered, whose features were veiled in the obscurity of twilight; but his voice could not be concealed, for it was the voice of Valancourt! At the sound, never heard by Emily, without emotion, she started, in terror, astonishment and doubtful pleasure, and had scarcely beheld him at her feet, when she sunk into a seat, overcome by the various emotions, that contended at her heart, and almost insensible to that voice, whose earnest and trembling calls seemed as if endeavouring to save her. Valancourt, as he hung over Emily, deplored his own rash impatience, in having thus surprised her: for when he had arrived at the château, too anxious to await the return of the Count, who, he understood, was in the grounds, he went himself to seek him, when, as he passed the tower, he was struck by the sound of Emily's voice, and immediately ascended.

It was a considerable time before she revived, but, when her recollection returned, she repulsed his attentions, with an air of reserve, and enquired, with as much displeasure as it was possible she could feel in these first moments of his appearance, the occasion of his visit.

"Ah Emily!" said Valancourt "That air, those words — alas! I have, then, little to hope — when you ceased to esteem me, you ceased also to love me!"

"Most true, sir" replied Emily, endeavouring to command her trembling voice; "and if you had valued my esteem, you would not have given me this new occasion for uneasiness."

Valancourt's countenance changed suddenly from the anxieties of doubt to an expression of surprise and dismay: he was silent a moment, and then said, "I had been taught to hope for a very different reception! Is it, then, true, Emily, that I have lost your regard for ever? Am I to believe, that, though your esteem for me may return — your affection never can? Can the Count have meditated the cruelty, which now tortures me with a second death?"

The voice, in which he spoke this, alarmed Emily as much as his words surprised her, and, with trembling impatience, she begged that he would explain them.

"Can any explanation be necessary?" said Valancourt "do you not know how cruelly my conduct has been misrepresented? That the actions of which you once believed me guilty (and, O Emily! How could you so degrade me in your opinion, even for a moment!) those actions — I hold in as much contempt and abhorrence as yourself? Are you, indeed, ignorant, that Count de Villefort has detected the slanders, that have robbed me of all I hold dear on earth, and has invited me hither to justify to you my former conduct? It is surely impossible you can be uninformed of these circumstances, and I am again torturing myself with a false hope!"

The silence of Emily confirmed this supposition; for the deep twilight would not allow Valancourt to distinguish the astonishment and doubting joy, that fixed her features. For a moment, she continued unable to speak; then a profound sigh seemed to give some relief to her spirits, and she said "Valancourt! I was, till this moment, ignorant of all the circumstances you have mentioned; the emotion I now suffer may assure you of the truth of this, and, that, though I had ceased to esteem, I had not taught myself entirely to forget you."

"This moment" said Valancourt, in a low voice, and leaning for support against the window — "this moment brings with it a conviction that overpowers me! — I am dear to you then — still dear to you, my Emily!"

"Is it necessary that I should tell you so?" she replied "Is it necessary, that I should say — these are the first moments of joy I have known, since your departure, and that they repay me for all those of pain I have suffered in the interval?"

Valancourt sighed deeply, and was unable to reply; but, as he pressed her hand to his lips, the tears, that fell over it, spoke a language, which could not be mistaken, and to which words were inadequate.

Emily, somewhat tranquillized, proposed returning to the château, and then, for the first time, recollected that the Count had invited Valancourt thither to

explain his conduct, and that no explanation had yet been given. But, while she acknowledged this, her heart would not allow her to dwell, for a moment, on the possibility of his unworthiness; his look, his voice, his manner, all spoke the noble sincerity, which had formerly distinguished him; and she again permitted herself to indulge the emotions of a joy, more surprising and powerful, than she had ever before experienced.

Neither Emily, nor Valancourt, were conscious how they reached the château, whither they might have been transferred by the spell of a fairy, for anything they could remember; and it was not, till they had reached the great hall, that either of them recollected there were other persons in the world besides themselves. The Count then came forth with surprise, and with the joyfulness of pure benevolence, to welcome Valancourt, and to entreat his forgiveness of the injustice he had done him; soon after which, Mons. Bonnac joined this happy group, in which he and Valancourt were mutually rejoiced to meet.

When the first congratulations were over, and the general joy became somewhat more tranquil, the Count withdrew with Valancourt to the library, where a long conversation passed between them, in which the latter so clearly justified himself of the criminal parts of the conduct, imputed to him, and so candidly confessed and so feelingly lamented the follies, which he had committed, that the Count was confirmed in his belief of all he had hoped; and, while he perceived so many noble virtues in Valancourt, and that experience had taught him to detest the follies, which before he had only not admired, he did not scruple to believe, that he would pass through life with the dignity of a wise and good man, or to entrust to his care the future happiness of Emily St. Aubert, for whom he felt the solicitude of a parent. Of this he soon informed her, in a short conversation, when Valancourt had left him. While Emily listened to a relation of the services, that Valancourt had rendered Mons. Bonnac, her eyes overflowed with tears of pleasure, and the further conversation of Count De Villefort perfectly dissipated every doubt, as to the past and future conduct of him, to whom she now restored, without fear, the esteem and affection, with which she had formerly received him.

When they returned to the supper-room, the Countess and Lady Blanche met Valancourt with sincere congratulations; and Blanche, indeed, was so much rejoiced to see Emily returned to happiness, as to forget, for a while, that Mons. St. Foix was not yet arrived at the château, though he had been expected for some hours; but her generous sympathy was, soon after, rewarded by his appearance. He was now perfectly recovered from the wounds, received, during his perilous adventure among the Pyrenees, the mention of which served to heighten to the parties, who had been involved in it, the sense of their present happiness. New congratulations passed between them, and round the supper table appeared a group of faces, smiling with felicity, but with a felicity, which had in each a different character. The smile of Blanche was frank and gay, that of Emily tender and pensive; Valancourt's was rapturous, tender and gay alternately; Mons. St. Foix's was joyous, and that of the Count, as he looked on the surrounding party, expressed the tempered complacency of benevolence;

while the features of the Countess, Henri, and Mons. Bonnac, discovered fainter traces of animation. Poor Mons. Du Pont did not, by his presence, throw a shade of regret over the company; for, when he had discovered, that Valancourt was not unworthy of the esteem of Emily, he determined seriously to endeavour at the conquest of his own hopeless affection, and had immediately withdrawn from Château-le-Blanc — a conduct, which Emily now understood, and rewarded with her admiration and pity.

The Count and his guests continued together till a late hour, yielding to the delights of social gaiety, and to the sweets of friendship. When Annette heard of the arrival of Valancourt, Ludovico had some difficulty to prevent her going into the supper room, to express her joy, for she declared, that she had never been so rejoiced at any *accident* as this, since she had found Ludovico himself.

CHAPTER XIX

Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin low doth bend,
And, from thence, can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.

MILTON

The marriages of the Lady Blanche and Emily St. Aubert were celebrated, on the same day, and with the ancient baronial magnificence, at Château-le-Blanc. The feasts were held in the great hall of the castle, which, on this occasion, was hung with superb new tapestry, representing the exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve peers; here, were seen the Saracens, with their horrible visors, advancing to battle; and there, were displayed the wild solemnities of incantation, and the necromantic feats, exhibited by the magician *Jarl* before the Emperor. The sumptuous banners of the family of Villeroi, which had long slept in dust, were once more unfurled, to wave over the gothic points of painted casements; and music echoed, in many a lingering close, through every winding gallery and colonnade of that vast edifice.

As Annette looked down from the corridor upon the hall, whose arches and windows were illuminated with brilliant festoons of lamps, and gazed on the splendid dresses of the dancers, the costly liveries of the attendants, the canopies of purple velvet and gold, and listened to the gay strains that floated along the vaulted roof, she almost fancied herself in an enchanted palace, and declared, that she had not met with any place, which charmed her so much, since she read the fairy tales; nay, that the fairies themselves, at their nightly revels in this old hall, could display nothing finer; while old Dorothée, as she surveyed the scene, sighed, and said, the castle looked as it was wont to do in the time of her youth.

After gracing the festivities of Château-le-Blanc, for some days, Valancourt and Emily took leave of their kind friends, and returned to La Vallée, where the faithful Theresa received them with unfeigned joy, and the pleasant shades welcomed them with a thousand tender and affecting remembrances; and, while they wandered together over the scenes, so long inhabited by the late Mons. and Madame St. Aubert, and Emily pointed out, with pensive affection, their favourite haunts, her present happiness was heightened, by considering, that it would have been worthy of their approbation, could they have witnessed it.

Valancourt led her to the plane-tree on the terrace, where he had first ventured to declare his love, and where now the remembrance of the anxiety he had then suffered, and the retrospect of all the dangers and misfortunes they had each encountered, since last they sat together beneath its broad branches, exalted the sense of their present felicity, which, on this spot, sacred to the memory of St. Aubert, they solemnly vowed to deserve, as far as possible, by

endeavouring to imitate his benevolence — by remembering, that superior attainments of every sort bring with them duties of superior exertion — and by affording to their fellow beings, together with that portion of ordinary comforts, which prosperity always owes to misfortune, the example of lives passed in happy thankfulness to God, and, therefore, in careful tenderness to his creatures.

Soon after their return to La Vallée, the brother of Valancourt came to congratulate him on his marriage, and to pay his respects to Emily, with whom he was so much pleased, as well as with the prospect of rational happiness, which these nuptials offered to Valancourt, that he immediately resigned to him a part of the rich domain, the whole of which, as he had no family, would of course descend to his brother, on his decease.

The estates, at Toulouse, were disposed of, and Emily purchased of Mons. Quesnel the ancient domain of her late father, where, having given Annette a marriage portion, she settled her as the housekeeper, and Ludovico as the steward; but, since both Valancourt and herself preferred the pleasant and long loved shades of La Vallée to the magnificence of Epourville, they continued to reside there, passing, however, a few months in the year at the birthplace of St. Aubert, in tender respect to his memory.

The legacy, which had been bequeathed to Emily by Signora Laurentini, she begged Valancourt would allow her to resign to Mons. Bonnac; and Valancourt, when she made the request, felt all the value of the compliment it conveyed. The castle of Udolpho, also, descended to the wife of Mons. Bonnac, who was the nearest surviving relation of the house of that name, and thus affluence restored his long oppressed spirits to peace, and his family to comfort.

O! how joyful it is to tell of happiness, such as that of Valancourt and Emily; to relate, that, after suffering under the oppression of the vicious and the disdain of the weak, they were, at length, restored to each other — to the beloved landscapes of their native country — to the securest felicity of this life, that of aspiring to moral and labouring for intellectual improvement — to the pleasures of enlightened society, and to the exercise of the benevolence, which had always animated their hearts; while the bowers of La Vallée became, once more, the retreat of goodness, wisdom and domestic blessedness!

O! Useful may it be to have shown, that, though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!

And, if the weak hand, that has recorded this tale, has, by its scenes, beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, taught him to sustain it — the effort, however humble, has not been vain, nor is the writer unrewarded.