

Countess

HODGSON'S EDITION.

THE
Inhuman Husband

OR THE
SAD NARRATIVE
OF THE
DUTCHESS OF C—,

WHO WAS
EXCLUDED FOR NINE YEARS

From the sight of the Sun,

BEING CONFINED ALL THAT TIME IN

A Dreadful Dungeon

UNDER GROUND,

Without a Bed, a scanty allowance of Bread and Water, suffering
through Hunger, Thirst, and Cold, annoyed by Vermin,
and nearly deprived of Sight,

WITH HER

Fortunate Deliverance

AND

RESTORATION TO SOCIETY,

BY THE

COUNT OF BELLMIRE,

TOGETHER WITH THE

Happy Marriage of her Daughter.

London:

ORLANDO HODGSON.



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THE DUCHESS OF C***

London O. Holtson

See Page

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
DUCHESS OF C * * *

I WAS born at Rome, and am descended from one of the most illustrious houses in Italy. Being the sole heiress of an immense fortune, no pains were spared to give me a suitable education. Brought up by the best of mothers, beloved by a tender father, and by a family of whom I was the only hope, fortune and nature seemed to have favoured me with their choicest gifts. I attained my fifteenth year, without having once experienced a single sorrow, without having known the slightest indisposition, or shed any other tears than those of tenderness and joy. I was fond of recollecting the past—I enjoyed the present with transport; nor did I behold aught in the future, but a situation equally prosperous and happy. A young lady, the daughter of an intimate friend of my mother, was the companion of my infancy; her character was irreproachable, and her heart not devoid of sensibility; but she wanted experience, and consequently could neither counsel nor direct me. Nevertheless, I contracted a violent friendship for this young creature, and my confidence in her was unbounded. My friend married the Marquis of Venuzi, of whom she had been enamoured above a year. She had communicated her secret to me, and this confidence had but too much raised my imagination, and misled my heart. My friend, two days after the wedding, accompanied the marquis to his delightful villa, thirty miles from Rome. My mother was of the party, and took me with her. The Marchioness of Venuzi was three years older than me. Her conduct seemed to bespeak a great share of prudence and good sense; and therefore, although she was only in her nineteenth year, my mother left us at full liberty to enjoy each other's company alone, at whatever hour. One evening, after supper, the marchioness proposed to me a walk in the park. At some distance from the house we entered a little wilderness, and, turning down one of the walks, we saw very distinctly a young gentleman upon a garden seat. On perceiving us he arose; and the great surprise which he expressed, excited the same sensation in us. The moon shone on his face: we were near him, and were equally struck by his graceful figure and noble air. After a moment's silence, as he did not retire, the marchioness asked him who he was. He answered her with equal respect and politeness, but refused to mention his name, and immediately went away. We returned directly to the house, much surprised at this adventure, which we did not fail to communicate to the marquis. He smiled; he suffered us to perceive that this young man was not unknown to him; and, as I expressed a great desire for some further information concerning him, "All that I can tell you," he proceeded, "is, that this young man is independent, and of an illustrious family. He has for a long time ardently desired to see you; and if you consent to it, I will to-morrow acquaint you with his name." The next day I renewed my inquiries, but without receiving any satisfactory answer. At night, when my mother had retired to her chamber, I repaired to my friend. We shut ourselves up in her closet, and talked over the adventures of the preceding evening, when, on a sudden, the door was opened, and I saw the Marquis of Venuzi enter, holding in one hand a dark lantern, and with the other introducing the very same young man whom I had such an inclination to know. I was quite motionless with surprise. "I present to you," said the

marquis, approaching me, "my prisoner, whose liberty, I believe," continued he, laughing, "it is no longer in my power to restore, since he has been so imprudent as to wish to see you a second time." At these words I blushed, and felt inexpressible embarrassment. Notwithstanding I was so young, I had some confused idea of the consequence of such an adventure. I was that moment resolved to leave the room, to hasten to my mother, and to confess all to her; but curiosity detained me, and I forgot my duty. The marquis, assuming a more serious air, informed us that he was going to intrust us with a most important secret: "I know your discretion," said he, "and I am persuaded that you will justify the confidence you have inspired." After this preamble, the marquis made me promise inviolable secrecy, and the young man informed us that he was called the [Count of Belmire; that his father, the Marquis of Belmire, was brother to the Duke of C—, one of the richest noblemen in Naples; that the duke, who was the head of the family, having quarrelled with his brother, had contrived to ruin him at court, and had continued to persecute him with such rancour, that he was obliged to leave his country and settle in France, where he had an affair of honour four years afterwards, that obliged him to seek another retreat; that the Marquis of Venuzi, his intimate friend, being then in France, and about to return to Italy, had prevailed on him to accept of an asylum in this very house, where he had been concealed three months; that he himself (the young count) having heard me frequently mentioned, could not resist the curiosity he had to see me; that after the transient glimpse of me by moonlight, he had been more urgent than ever with the marquis to procure him an interview, on which he set so high a value; and, finally, that he was the next day to accompany his father to Venice. After having heard this information, I rose, and, notwithstanding all the entreaties of the marquis to the contrary, immediately retired to my chamber, overwhelmed with sorrow. I durst not reflect on what had just passed; I was afraid to interrogate my heart, or to examine my conduct; I could not conceive how I had been capable of attending, unknown to my mother, and at midnight, to a young man, a stranger, who had presumed to talk to me of love. I perceived clearly that I ought to distrust the advice of the Marquis of Venuzi, and that even his wife was not in a situation to direct me. I shuddered at the danger before me; a prophetic horror seemed to whisper that I was going irrecoverably to lose my reputation, my tranquility, and, in a word, all the happiness which I had hitherto enjoyed. But the Marchioness of Venuzi soon resumed her wonted influence over me: she incessantly talked to me of the Count of Belmire. These dangerous conversations contributed to pervert my understanding, but could not dissipate my melancholy thoughts. At the expiration of three months we returned to Rome. Towards the end of the winter there were a variety of entertainments. The Marquis of Venuzi, in particular, gave a masked ball at which I was present with my mother. About two in the morning, the marchioness proposed to me that I should go into her room to change my dress. We left the ball-room, and, on crossing a small gallery, but indifferently lighted, I observed that a mask followed us. What was my surprise when the mask, approaching me, and throwing himself at my feet, was discovered to be the Count of Belmire. Notwithstanding my emotion, and the secret joy I felt at seeing him again, my first idea was to endeavour to escape; but he detained me by my robe, entreating me to grant him a moment's conversation. He conjured the marchioness to prevail on me to hear him. She united her entreaties to his, and, at last, I had the weakness to consent. The count then told me that his father's affair was happily accommodated; that he had been for six weeks past at Naples, having had the satisfaction of terminating his difference with the duke, his brother, by a very cordial reconciliation. "My father," continued he, "sets out in a month for France, in order to arrange his private affairs in that kingdom before he finally settles in his native country; and I, before I accompany him in this journey, am solicitous to know my fate. I am come privately from Naples, solely to learn whether the tender homage

which I have presumed to offer he absolutely rejected. Speak, madam, if you hate me, I shall bid you an everlasting adieu. Despised by you, I am undone, I renounce I ally for ever. Speak! your answer will recall me to my country, or sentence me to irrevocable exile." As the count pronounced these last words, I could not refrain from tears. This answer was but too well understood; he required no other. A thousand times he assured me of his unceasing love, certain of my affection, and returning to Rome in six months. Two months after this interview, which for ever destroyed all the tranquility of my life, the Duke of C— came to Rome, and I saw him at a *Conversazione** at the French Ambassadors. When he was introduced to me I felt a kind of shock, an unaccountable sensation, which, after all, might proceed from the extreme bad terms in which the Marquis of Venuzi had spoken of him, who, in mentioning the duke's persecution of the Marquis of Belmire, had described him as a character equally vindictive and hypocritical. The Duke of C—, who was then about thirty-six, was perfectly handsome; but one could not help remarking in his eyes and eyebrows, a something gloomy and inauspicious, which struck one more forcibly at first sight than the nobleness and the regularity of his figures. His look was piercing and austere; and when he would endeavour to soften it, he rendered it ambiguous and deceitful. Such was the Duke of C—. I felt an invincible antipathy to him the first moment I beheld him. Unfortunately for me, I inspired him with very different sentiments. He procured an introduction to my mother; and a fortnight after, my father declared to me that the duke had demanded me in marriage, and that I must prepare for the ceremony in a month. My father added, "I have given my word without waiting for your consent, for I took it for granted that you would accept with pleasure the greatest match in Italy, a man that adores you, and whose person is so agreeable." I received this declaration (which appeared to me like a sentence of death) without being able to utter a single word. My father loved me, but he was absolute; besides, what could I say? Had I even the consolation of applying to my mother, with what face could I avow my error, and confess that I had disposed of my heart without her approbation! It was then I perceived, in its full extent, the fatal imprudence of my conduct; and that the greatest misfortune that can befall a young woman, is the not having regarded her mother as a true friend and confidant. Deprived thus of the sweet resource of uttering my complaints to some soothing friend, I concealed my suffering and grief within my own breast, and carefully avoided the Marchioness of Venuzi, whose dangerous advice I dreaded. Obedience alone I thought could expiate my error: I submitted to my fate, and sacrificed my happiness to the deference which I paid to the commands of my parents. I married the Duke of C—, and set out almost immediately with him for Naples. When we arrived in that city, and entered the palace where I was to spend my life, I experienced sensations of grief too poignant to be expressed. The duke, who attributed my melancholy to my affection for my parents, endeavoured to divert my attention by the protestation of a passion which it was not in my power to return. I appeared at court, and soon perceived that the duke was extremely jealous. This circumstance, however, gave me little concern; I would gladly have retired from every scene of a fashionable dissipation; but the vanity of the duke, notwithstanding my apparent aversion to gaiety, and his own disposition to jealousy, was too predominant to permit it. When I had been married about seven months, I learnt that the Marquis of Belmire had died in France, that by his will he had appointed the duke guardian of his son; and that the latter, on his return to Italy, had been taken ill at Turin. A fortnight after, the duke entered my apartment, and informed me that he had just received a letter from his nephew, whose health was happily re-established. "He will not come to Naples," added the duke, "but he has written to you to entreat you to prevail on me to

* An Assembly in Italy is thus called.

grant him permission to make a tour for two years. He then gave the letter, with the seal broken. I took it trembling, and in a faltering voice read aloud what follows:—

“MADAM,
“Although I have not the happiness of being known to you, I persuade myself that I am too unfortunate not to hope to inspire you with some sentiments of compassion: I have lost the tenderest and best of fathers. Grief and despair had almost brought me to the grave; the cruel tenderness of my friends had recalled me to life. But to what an existence am I restored! I have lost all that could endear it to me! Forgive me, madam, for troubling you with sorrows in which you are not interested, but with which my heart is overwhelmed. Oh, condescend at least to pity and excuse me! My father, by his last will has placed me under an entire subjection to my uncle; but I cannot obey the order to return to Naples. That city is now become hateful to me. It was there he lived so many years. Every thing there will recall the most distracting ideas. No, I can never go thither! I am sure, madam, that you can imagine how very strong, how natural this reluctance must be, and that you will have the goodness to engage my uncle to revoke an order which is not in my power to obey. Obtain for me, madam, the permission to travel—to fly—to banish myself from Naples: in a word, to carry far from Italy that anguish and those sorrows which I shall retain to the latest moment of my life.

“I am, with respect, &c.

“THE COUNT OF BELMIRE.”

I can give no idea of the grief and terror which I experienced on reading this letter. I was apprehensive that it would be impossible for the duke not to understand the double meaning it conveyed: of all men, he was the most mistrustful and suspicious. Nevertheless, as he did not know that his nephew had been at Rome, and was persuaded that I never could have seen him, he had not the most distant idea of the truth; for my part, being unable to keep within my breast the distracting sentiments by which I was agitated, I was so imprudent as to write a letter the next day to the Marchioness of Venuzi, complaining of my cruel fate, and deploring the fatal passion which I could not conquer. The marchioness, in her answer, questioned me concerning the duke's behaviour. I was explicit in my reply, I did not scruple to declare, that every day I discovered such faults and vices in the duke, together with such a ferocity of character, as but too well justified the antipathy I had conceived for him. Thus, by the reiterated impudence of my conduct, I actually completed, as it were, the digging of that abyss which was already half open under my feet. About this time I again enjoyed the happiness of seeing my father and mother; I was near my time; they came to Naples to be with me; I was delivered of a daughter: I asked and obtained permission to suckle her. This delightful employment, while it lasted, suspended all my sorrows, and made me insensible to the ill-treatment of the duke, who, for a long time, had ceased to put any restraint on his conduct, and had permitted me to behold all the violence and impetuosity of his character. The day after I had weaned my child, he came to me, and said, we must immediately set out for a seat he had thirty-six miles from Naples. My daughter was with me, I took her in my arms, and followed the duke without uttering a word. We got into the carriage: I held my daughter upon my lap, I caressed her: the duke was silent, and seemed, during the whole journey, to be absorbed in thought. When we arrived at the castle, we passed over a drawbridge; I shuddered at the rattling of the chains, and at this instant, by a kind of involuntary impulse, I looked at the duke. “What ails you?” said he, “the antique appearance of the castle seems to surprise you. What, then, do you think you are entering a prison?” He uttered these words with a forced and malicious smile, and I could perceive in his eyes such a cruel pleasure, as made me ready to sink with horror. Wishing, however, to conceal it,

reclined my head upon my daughter's; I could not refrain from tears: feeling them trickle upon her face, she began to cry. Her cries pierced my very soul, I pressed her to my heart with sensations of indescribable tenderness, and I wept and sobbed. In this situation I alighted from the carriage. The duke, tearing, as it were, my child from my arms, gave it to one of the servants, and seizing one of my hands, he led, or rather dragged me towards the castle. He then made me ascend a staircase, which terminated in a long gallery. The evening came on, the gallery which we were crossing was very spacious and gloomy. The duke, at first, walked extremely fast; then stopping suddenly, “You tremble,” said he, “whence can proceed this terror? Are you not with a husband whom you love, and whose duty it is to protect you?”—“Oh, heavens!” I exclaimed, “what means that gloomy and distracted look, that terrible tone of voice?”—“Come, come,” he resumed, “we are going to have an explanation.” At these words, almost carrying me in his arms, (for I could neither follow him nor walk,) he dragged me out of the gallery to a large bed-chamber, I flung myself into a chair, and gave a free passage to my tears. He left the room, but soon returned with a candle, which he set upon a table opposite to me, seating himself by it. I durst not look at him; scarcely breathing, sinking with terror, my eyes cast down, I waited, trembling, for his breaking silence. At last the duke spoke: “You have sufficiently enjoyed the secret reproaches of your conscience; and it is now time to overwhelm you with confusion. Read these letters, I have copied them myself.” He then gave me a packet of papers, and seeing that I hesitated to take them, he took a sheet, and read it aloud. From the first words I knew it was one of the letters which I had written to the Marchioness of Venuzi, in which I had mentioned, without reserve, not only the fatal sentiments of my heart, but my unquerable aversion to the duke. “Ah!” I exclaimed, “I am undone!” “Perfidious woman!” replied the duke, “I have not then had the happiness to please you: I selected you, I preferred you to all other women; I adored you, and you hated me. You fancied yourself unhappy; I inspire you with an unaccountable aversion! Well, then, I will justify your hatred! I will give you sufficient reason to detest me. Betrayed, dishonoured by you, do you think I can suffer such outrages with impunity?” “Hold!” interrupted I, “you may accuse and punish, without aspersing me. I am guilty, indeed, in some degree; but if I have not been able to subdue an unhappy passion, at least your honour and mine are yet unsullied; and I save only to reproach myself with the imprudent confession which friendship extorted from me.” “Perjured woman!” returned the duke, in a rage, “hear your condemnation.” Then taking up another of the letters, he read the following passage: “That object, alas! which nothing can eradicate from my heart, is as much to be pitied as myself. Does he not know to what excess he is beloved? Does he not know how severely I reproach myself for a confession, which now renders me so guilty and so wretched?” I recollected but too well this passage in one of my letters; I also perfectly remembered that I had not only forebore to name the Count of Belmire in any of them, but that I had even spoken of him in such an indifferent manner, that it was impossible to know from these letters at what period the attachment I confessed first took its rise; and the duke, who had been violently jealous, at the time of our marriage, of two persons at the court of Naples, who had given proofs of particular attention to me, had not the least doubt that one of these was the object of my passion.

This supposition left him no room to hesitate about my guilt: for after the passage he had just read, it appeared unquestionable that I had avowed my sentiments since my marriage; the only method, therefore, which I could take to justify myself, was to declare that when I gave him my hand I had no longer a heart to dispose of; that I well knew what a despicable opinion he conceived of my sex, and how very much disposed he was to entertain the most odious suspicions: sensible of this, the welfare of my daughter would not let me be more explicit. I did not leave Rome till six weeks

after my marriage, and had the duke understood that I had conceived an affection for another before I became acquainted with him, it is very probable that he would have harboured the most invidious doubts respecting the birth of my daughter. Besides, this confession might have led to a discovery of the whole truth; he might soon have recollected a thousand circumstances to ascertain it; the letter which I had received from his nephew, my emotions on reading it, my blushes every time he mentioned his name to me: he might at last have discovered the connexion between the Marquis of Venuzi, and the Count of Belmiere's father; in a word, if I had destroyed that prepossession in which centered all his suspicions at Naples, I should have risked the secret which it would be impossible to betray, without exposing the object of my affection to all the fury of his resentment; this was the more to be dreaded, as the Count of Belmiere, who was only nineteen, was absolutely dependant on the duke, who was his uncle and guardian. All these reflections rose at once to my imagination, and involved me in unspeakable embarrassment; thus, not daring to justify myself, what answer could I give? The duke interpreted my silence as a tacit confession, which demonstrated his own dishonour and my disgrace. His passion knew no bounds; he rose, and with his face inflamed, and his eyes sparkling with fury, "You have nothing then," said he, "to allege in your defence?" "Alas!" answered I, "are you in a situation to hear me?—I am innocent! I invoke heaven to witness it." "You innocent!" interrupted he; "dare you persist in it? Have you not written yourself that your lover knows to what excess he is beloved?" "And yet," replied I, bursting into tears, "I am innocent, heaven knows that I am!" "Oh, thou monster of deceit!" exclaimed the duke, "tremble at the vengeance that is ready to overwhelm thee." At these words, uttered in a menacing and dreadful tone, I thought I heard the inevitable sentence of destruction; I threw myself upon my knees, and lifting up my hands to heaven, "O, God!" I cried, "God, my only refuge, protect me!" "Rise," said the duke in a milder tone, "sit down and attend to me." I obeyed, looked at him with a timid and suppliant air; he was for some moments silent, and then fetching a deep sigh, "You ought to be sensible," said he, "to what a degree I am offended; you, who accuse me of being passionate and vindictive; you, ungrateful woman, to whom I have hitherto only given proofs of love; you, who have such just reason now to dread the effects of my vengeance! Nevertheless, it is yet possible for me to forgive you, but your sincerity only can disarm my anger; remember, that henceforth the slightest concealment will irrevocably ruin you. I can be content with one victim, but one I am determined to have: name instantly the vile seducer, who has thus made you violate the most sacred vows, the most sacred duties." "No," interrupted I, "no, I have broken no vows, I have violated no duties." "I will know," replied the duke, raising his voice, "I will know the name of your lover; I command you to tell me." At this moment I anticipated all the horror of my fate; but with the sense of my danger I received an accession of courage; and, preferring death itself to the base action he proposed, "If," replied I, "you must have a victim, sacrifice her whom you have in your power; let the whole weight of vengeance fall on me, for the name you demand you shall never know."

Astonished and confounded at this unexpected intrepidity, the duke sat for some time motionless; he could find no words expressive of his rage; at last it burst out. "Wretch!" said he, "I shall never know it; ah! I perceive that you have no idea to what excesses I can proceed; you do not know me." "I expect every thing, and, miserable as I am, I can bid defiance to death." "Death! cease then to flatter yourself; no, I have not destined such consolation for you: for a year past, I have been fostering my hatred and revenge in the bottom of my soul; I have been meditating the punishment of thy infidelity; and do you think that the vengeance of a moment can satisfy me? No, you shall not die; your tomb is indeed prepared, but you must descend into it alive; nor shall you find there that

death which you desire." These dreadful words chilled my blood; my eyes closed, and I sunk senseless upon the floor. When I recovered, I found myself in the arms of some women, and passed the night under a sensible constraint in their presence, yet dreading to be alone; neither daring to complain before them, nor to send them away; and internally suffering all the pangs which recollection and regret, which terror, and the expectation of some dreadful catastrophe, could excite. About six in the morning, I desired them to lead me to my daughter's chamber; she was still asleep; I dismissed my woman, and sat down by her cradle. The sight of her, far from mitigating, did but augment my sorrows: "Alas! my dear child," said I, "thou sleepest in peace! What sweet repose dost thou enjoy! Thou canst neither imagine, nor partake with thy wretched mother, the sorrows that distract her: I see thee, perhaps, for the last time! Receive, oh, receive, my tenderest blessings—Gracious God!" continued I, falling upon my knees, "I submit to my dreadful fate; but let my dear daughter be happy! May she live in innocence and peace! If they have the inhumanity to tear her from me, be thou, O God, her father and protector!" My tears and sobs now increased, and deprived me of utterance. At this instant the door flew open, and the duke appeared; I shuddered at his aspect; my tears ceased to flow; I rose, but being unable to support myself, I sunk upon a sofa. "Well," said the duke, "has reflection taught you to be more reasonable? Are you sensible of all the consequences you hazard by resistance to my will? A deep sigh was my only answer. "That name which I have demanded," continued the duke, "are you still determined that I shall never know it?" I lifted up my eyes to heaven, and persisted in my silence. "I insist on a positive answer," said he; "will you name him or not?" "I cannot," answered I. "Ah!" cried the duke, "you have pronounced your own sentence! look at that child, and take leave of her for ever!" "No," interrupted I, "you cannot be so barbarous as to tear her from me. Oh, leave me my child! let me see her at least sometimes, and I will endure, without murmuring, whatever your hatred can inflict. Alas! my lord, is your heart then quite inaccessible to pity? Oh! if it is, whatever be the sufferings you have prepared for me, you will be much more an object of compassion than myself, but I cannot believe it! No, you will not rob me of my child for ever!" That moment my daughter awoke; she opened her eyes, and smiling upon her father, lifted up her little hands, almost clasped towards him. "Alas!" said I, "she seems to plead for me; oh, my child! my dear child! why canst thou not speak? thou wouldst soften thy father!" I was then going to take her in my arms, but the duke seized her. "Leave her," said he, "she is no longer yours." "Oh," cried I, "take, take my life, or restore me to my child!" I threw myself at his feet, I bathed them with my tears, I embraced his knees. The barbarian, unmoved, seemed to enjoy my humiliation; he contemplated me for a moment in this situation, then spurning me from him in a rage, he went some few steps towards the door; I followed him, still upon my knees, crying out, "My daughter! my daughter!" The child, terrified, uttered a plaintive cry, stretching her little arms towards me; she seemed to bid me a last mournful adieu. Alas! at that instant I lost sight of her, the duke rushed furiously out of the room, and left me in agonies of despair. He returned a moment after, and bade me go into my own apartment; then composing his countenance, "You think," said he, "that I have an obdurate heart, and yet——" He stopped, his eyes bent upon the ground; those eyes, whose wild and ill-boding looks might have discovered his vile deceit; I thought that at last he had begun to reproach himself with his excess of cruelty; and that at least, he would mitigate the punishment on which he had meditated before. A ray of hope somewhat revived my heart, I began talking to him of my daughter; the duke heard me with a gloomy air, but not expressive of pleasure; he gave me to understand that his affection for me had alone impelled him to such violent measures; and that if I would take care of my health, I might see my daughter again. So dear a hope

made me forget all my sufferings; seeing the duke less cruel, I began to consider myself more guilty; after the letters which he had read, I thought it natural that he should suspect me of absolute infidelity, and his hatred was an obvious consequence; I excused the violence of his conduct; I was deeply impressed by that compassion which he had affected for my sufferings; and, while the most sincere repentance suffused my eyes with tears, the cruel author of my woes was secretly exulting in the success of his black artifice, and was preparing every thing for my destruction.

A fever, occasioned by the violent agitations I had undergone, obliged me to go to bed. The duke then appeared to feel the utmost anxiety; he dispatched an express to Naples, for two physicians, who assured him that my illness was not dangerous; and their practice at Naples being urgent, they set out in two days. The very morning of their departure, the anxiety which the duke expressed for me seemed to be greater than ever; and, although I had no longer any fever, he obliged me to keep my bed. As he had made all my women sit up with me the three preceding nights, they were overcome with fatigue, and he now dismissed them to take repose for the whole day, declaring that he would nurse me himself, with one of his valets, and an old woman, the keeper of the castle. The choice of these two witnesses was not the result of accident: he selected them in preference to any of his other servants, because he knew them each to be equally credulous and ignorant. The curtains of my bed were drawn, and I thought that my women were still attending me, when, at noon, I perceived that no one was in my chamber but the two persons I have just mentioned. I expressed my surprise at this. The duke came to my bed side, assuring me that I should not be worse attended on that account, and he would not leave me. "Oh, for why?" I exclaimed, with great emotion: "I am no longer ill!" To this question he gave me no other answer than begging me not to talk, and endeavour to compose myself. He then sat down by my bed side. I felt a secret uneasiness, without knowing why, and my eyes were suffused with tears. He now appeared very much disturbed and agitated, and I observed a very extraordinary alteration in his countenance. About three in the afternoon he desired to see my arm; I presented it, trembling; he felt my pulse; on a sudden, he started up; he ran to my new attendants; he told the valet aloud to go that instant to the stables, and send an express to Naples for a physician: and the old woman he dispatched in all haste for the chaplain. When he had given these orders, he exclaimed, with a voice of grief and consternation, "She is dying! she is dying!" Imagine, if possible, the excess of my astonishment and terror! My first idea was to get up and endeavour to escape; but I sunk down again upon my bed without strength, with a palpitation of heart, which deprived me of respiration, and a terror which chilled me, and left me quite motionless. My two attendants, after having each received orders that must take them at least three-quarters of an hour to execute, instantly left me and the duke together. He then came to me, and presented me a cup: "Here," said he, "take this draught." At these words my hair stood erect; a cold sweat ran down my face; it was the last moment, I thought, of my life; for I had not a doubt but that he was giving me poison. "Drink it!" resumed he. "Alas!" answered I, "what is it you are giving me?" "What you must drink." "Leave me then time to implore infinite mercy?" "Dare you suspect me? Do you accuse me of a crime?" "Alas! I accuse my own imprudence, and my hard fate. Oh, my God!" I continued, clasping my hands, "forgive me, forgive my persecutor; comfort my father and mother: protect my child!" After this short prayer I felt all my courage revive; I hoped even that my resignation would render me worthy to appear before God. I looked at the duke with a steady eye. He was pale, trembling, and disconcerted. He spoke some words scarcely articulate, and then raising my head with one hand, with the other he applied the cup to my lips. I no longer hesitated; without the least resistance, I drank all the liquor he gave me, and believing that I had now received my death, I sunk

down upon my pillow. Some moments after, my eyes grew heavy, and closed; a total stupefaction deprived me of my speech and of my senses, and I fell into a deep lethargy. In about half an hour the valet and old woman returned. The duke, with his hair in disorder, and his face bathed in tears, ran to meet them, and told them I had just expired. He brought them again into my chamber, in order, he added, to have a confirmation of his misfortune, or to assist me, if I had yet any remains of life. He approached my bed; and having had the precaution to draw my curtains close, and make the room extremely dark, he pretended to give me all imaginable assistance. At last he appeared to abandon himself to the most violent grief. The chaplain arrived; he ordered him to read the prayers for the dead. In the mean time my woman, who had just awoke, and all the servants, came crowding into my room. The duke was upon his knees by my bed side: my two attendants related to their fellow-servants the endeavours that had been used to recover me. After this the duke half-opened my curtains for a moment; they saw me pale and lifeless, and not one had any doubt of my death. The duke made every body retire into the next room, except the chaplain, a venerable man of eighty, who remained with him, and continued the prayers of the dead till midnight. He then ordered all his servants to retire to rest. He declared that I should not be interred till the next evening; and that, not being able to tear himself from me, he should stay there the remainder of the night. He shut all the doors of my apartment. He ordered the chaplain and my two attendants to await his orders in an anti-chamber, that was separated from my apartment by three large rooms. He told them that he should not leave me till seven in the morning, and that he chose to remain with me, that he might not be disturbed in his grief and his prayers. The whole family, exhausted by fatigue, eagerly accepted the permission to retire, and by four o'clock in the morning every one was asleep; then, by degrees, recovering from my lethargy, I awoke. On opening my eyes, and looking around me, I perceived the duke standing by my bed-side. I started at the sight of him, although I had not any remembrance of what had passed; but afterwards, looking steadfastly at him, I had a confused recollection that he was exasperated against me. I felt an emotion of terror, I turned my head away; and being desirous of composing myself, that I might recollect some idea of what had happened, a thousand vague and fantastic forms rose in my imagination; and I sunk into a stupid reverie, which was followed by a kind of drowsiness. The duke then gave me a smelling-bottle, and made me take some drops of a liquor, which entirely revived me. I rose up: I looked round me with astonishment. My ideas growing clearer by degrees, I recollected that I had thought I was taking poison, and almost questioned my existence. "Oh!" I exclaimed at last, "by what miracle am I restored to life?" "You have experienced only an imaginary terror," said the duke: "compose yourself, and banish these injurious apprehensions." I durst not answer—I half undrew my curtains—I looked round the room, and seeing that I was alone with the duke, my terrors were more sensibly increased, as I had now entirely recovered my senses. "Why then," said I, "do you watch me alone?" "You shall know it presently," said he; "now get up." At these words he brought me a gown; he assisted me to put it on; and, supporting me in his arms, he led, or rather carried me to a great chair. As he saw me still weak and trembling, he made me take some more of the drops which he had just given me; and, after a moment's silence, "I will now," said he, "conceal nothing from you. The draught you took yesterday was a sleeping potion." "For what?" "Hear me without interruption. You have betrayed and dishonoured me—I have offered you your pardon, and you have refused it. Convicted of infidelity, you still cherish in your heart a guilty passion; neither my anger nor my threats have been able to persuade you to declare to me the name of your lover. You thought, perhaps, that my regard for your family would prevent me from taking your child from you, and depriving you of liberty; you thought, no doubt (for there is

not a crime of which your hatred will not think me capable) you thought that the only method I could adopt to avenge myself was secretly to attempt your life; and your *invincible aversion* for me could easily determine you to die; but know, at last, that you shall live, and that you shall be torn from your parents, your friends, your servants, and the whole world." "Oh, heaven!" I exclaimed; "and do you think, barbarous man, that an affectionate father, and the best of mothers, will not demand me at your hands?" "They will receive to-morrow," replied the duke, "the false intelligence of your death!" "Great God! and how will you be able—?" "I have already announced your death in the castle; during your profound sleep, all my people beheld you as they imagined dead." "Alas!" interrupted I, "I exist no longer then but for you! I see all the horrors of my fate!" "You do not yet know all," said the duke: "learn that I have under this castle some vast caverns, unknown to all the world, and to which the light never comes." "Oh, God! I am undone then! I am lost for ever!" "No," resumed the duke, "your fate is still in your own power: I can instantly go and awake your people, and declare that you were only in a lethargy; I have not yet sent my letter to your father; I can yet restore you to the world and forgive you. I only enact a word—a single word from you; I must have a victim—I have always declared it. Name your lover, and you shall resume your rights—I will restore you to the world, to life!" "What is it you propose to me? to deliver up to your resentment an object, who I repeat it, has never injured you; oh! I should be unworthy to live, if I could have the baseness to consent to it!" "Think well of it," said the duke, darting at me a furious look; "yet another refusal, and I will drag you to that dark abode, from which nothing can release you. To-morrow, your father and your mother will be either deploring your death, or rejoicing at your recovery; to-morrow, you will once more behold your daughter and the day; or you will be deprived of light, and groaning at the bottom of a horrid dungeon. In a word, to-morrow, we shall see you in this castle, enjoying perfect health, or shall be attending the solemnities of your funeral. Reflect seriously on it: this moment past, not a hope of pardon is left. In vain would you implore it by repentance, I have no longer power to grant it." At this urgent and dreadful speech I rose in consternation: I turned with terror towards the door, and giving a lamentable shriek, "Ah me!" said I, "I am then abandoned by all the world! My father, my mother! to-morrow you will deplore my death! My child! oh, let me once more see my child!" "Speak but one word," answered the duke, "and in a quarter of an hour your child shall be in your arms." At these words I felt my heart rending, I remained silent for a moment. The Comt of Belmire, it occurred to me, was absent—he was not to return for a year; in that time it might be easy for me to inform him of his danger; and, besides, an ingenious confession would demonstrate my innocence; but on a sudden, recollecting the cruelty of my persecutor, I as hastily rejected this groundless temptation. "Who," thought I, "will assure me that this confession will restore me my child and my liberty? Ought not I rather to fear that the duke, certain of my aversion, will never abandon the vengeance he has meditated; or, at least, that he will be content only to mitigate its inhuman rigour? And, in this doubt, can I be tempted to abandon to his rage the object I have loved?" All these reflections occurred to me with extreme rapidity. The duke imagined I was hesitating; he repeated his urgency. "The day," he added, "will soon appear: it is time to determine. I am now going to wake the family, and inform them you are living; or, to take you instantly to your tomb. Speak! will you name the author of your misfortunes and of mine?" At this question I lifted up my eyes to heaven, and summoning to my aid all my resolution, I answered, "I cannot." "Wretch!" said the duke, "what is it you say?" "No," I resumed, "abandon that hope." "Perfidious woman!" exclaimed the duke, "thou preferest thy lover to thy child, to liberty, to life, to the whole world!—tremble, tremble at thy fate! The moment of vengeance is at last arrived!" As he

finished these words, he was going to seize my arm. Penetrated with fear and horror, I escaped from him; I ran to the other end of the chamber, and flinging my arms round one of the bedposts, I kept fast hold of it. In making this effort, my nightcap came off, and my hair fell down my shoulders. The duke, who was coming to me, stopped; he appeared surprised, and evidently struck; he gazed on me silently a moment, and forcing me from the bedpost, he brought me opposite a looking-glass. "Unhappy woman," said he, "contemplate, for the last time, that beauty which the most horrid darkness will soon conceal for ever! Lift up your eyes—look at yourself—be not more inhuman than I am! Think on your youthful charms—think with pity on the fate that awaits you!—it is yet in your power to change it." I could not then refrain from casting an apprehensive and languid look at the glass: I presently closed my eyes, and felt some tears trickle down my cheeks. "Well," resumed the duke, "is your resolution yet unshaken?" "Oh!" answered I, "have you indeed sincerely offered me a sight of my child?" Scarcely had I uttered these words, when the duke, in a transport of rage, caught me in his arms, and carried me out of the room. I made no resistance; in the excess of terror I was motionless and silent. After having crossed two or three rooms, he made me descend by a private staircase, and I found myself in a spacious court, at the end of which was a door, which the duke opened. We went out, and I observed that we were in a garden. At this instant the duke perceiving the day appear, "This morning," said he, "is the last which your eyes will ever behold!" I threw myself upon my knees, and raising my eyes to heaven, "O, God!" I cried, "O, God! who knowest my innocence, wilt thou suffer me to be interred alive, and deprived for ever of the light of heaven?" At these words the duke dragged me about twenty paces, to a rock, and putting a key behind a large stone, a trap-door sprung open. I trembled—the duke stopped: "This moment," said he, "is still left, this is your tomb; it is yet but half open; repent at last—convince me of your remorse by an ingenious confession, and I am ready to pardon you." You may imagine, perhaps, that in the moment of completely gratifying my just resentment, I may dread the consequences to myself; but I have long meditated my plan: I have been attentive to every circumstance, and nothing can deter me." He then gave me a dreadful account of all the precautions he had taken; he told me that he had caused a pale and livid figure of wax to be made, which he should place in my bed; and that, under pretence of discharging an act of piety, he should bury it himself, with the assistance of the old woman, who would be witness of the interment, without his being obliged to place any confidence in her. "Once more," said he, "will you accept the pardon which I still deign to offer you for the last time? Speak! sacrifice your lover to my resentment!—tell me his name, or for ever renounce your liberty, the world, and the light of day!" At these words I extended my arms towards the rising sun, as if to bid an everlasting adieu; the bright and majestic clouds with which the sky was skirted, formed a most glorious sight, the momentary contemplation of which exalted my soul, and endued me with unexpected courage. I looked with contempt upon the earth; and turning to the duke, "Take," said I, with an undaunted voice, "take your victim!" At this instant he dragged me; my heart panted with violence; I turned my head to behold yet once more the day I was going to abandon for ever. We descended into a gloomy cavern, my trembling legs unable to support me; I was now dreadfully convulsed: I struggled in the arms of my cruel persecutor, and fell at his feet without sense or motion. I know not how long I remained in this condition: I was to revive, alas! only to abhor such a shocking existence. How shall I describe the extreme horror of my soul, when on opening my eyes, I found myself alone in those vast dungeons, encircled by impenetrable darkness, and lying upon straw mats? I screamed out, and the echo repeating the dreadful sound from the inmost recesses of the cavern, made me startle, and redouble the terror that oppressed me. "O God!" I cried, "is this

then the only voice that will answer me, the only sound that I am henceforth to hear?" At this idea I wept profusely. While I was thus indulging the violence of my grief, I heard the door of my dungeon open, and the duke presently appeared with a lantern in his hand. He placed by my side a pitcher of water, and some bread: "Here," said he, "is your bread; for the future you will find it every day in the turning-box* opposite to you; I shall come and put it there myself, and shall never more enter this frightful dungeon." At these words, I looked around me—I saw a spacious cavern, the extent of which my eyes could not reach. The part I occupied was hung with coarse straw mats, to keep it from the cold and damp; for the barbarian, who had plunged me in this horrid abode, had taken all the precautions in his power to prolong my life in it. After having observed, trembling, the dismal scene around me, I turned again to my inhuman gaoler: I reproached him with the excess of his barbarity, and expressed, without reserve, all the detestation with which he had inspired me. He heard me for some time with concentrated rage; then, no longer able to contain himself, he flew into a most violent passion, and precipitately left me. From this day, whenever he came to bring me food, he constantly knocked at the turning-box till I answered him, and then went away without uttering a word. I soon repented of having thus, by my reproaches, increased still more, if possible, his hatred and resentment: I recollected that he was the father of my child, and that that dear child was in his power; besides, notwithstanding the horror of my situation, hope was not yet entirely extinguished in my bosom. The more I revolved in my mind, the less probable it appeared, that he really intended to detain me for ever in that dreadful captivity; I even flattered myself that he had announced my pretended death, either in the castle, or to my family; that he had found out some method of eluding their enquiries; and that he had still reserved the possibility of making me appear whenever he might choose it. How could I imagine that he had imposed on himself the painful necessity of bringing me, every day, the necessaries of life, and be reduced, in consequence, to the wretched slavery of his never being absent from the castle more than two or three days, since he was my only gaoler, nor daring to entrust the secret to a single person! These reflections persuaded me that he would one day put a period to his vengeance; and, full of this idea, every time he knocked at the turning-box I spoke to him; and although he did not answer me, I implored his compassion, and assured him of my innocence. As I was absolutely deprived of light, I cannot tell how many months I preserved this hope, but at last I entirely lost it; my reason then forsook me; I accused Providence—I murmured at its decrees. My dejected soul, harrowed with grief, lost its fortitude and principles, and I sunk into the most gloomy and desponding melancholy. I had the presumption to imagine that the excess of my misfortunes gave me aright to dispose of my life, as if it were permitted to violate a sacred obligation, whenever it ceased to be agreeable. Determined to die, I was now two days without taking any nourishment, or fetching it from the turning-box; in vain the duke knocked and called to me—I obstinately forbore to answer him. At last he entered my prison. When he appeared with the lantern in his hand, notwithstanding all the horror which his presence excited, I felt a secret joy in beholding the light, but I did not speak to him. He offered to soften the rigour of my captivity, and to give me a light, some books, and better food, if I would at last tell him the name he had so often demanded. At this proposal I looked disdainfully on him: "Now," said I, "that you have broken all the fatal ties that united us, my heart is free—it now indulges,

* Le Tour, the turning-box, is a kind of machine used in nurseries, being a round press, or cupboard, made to turn upon a pivot, and fixed in the wall. When the open part is fixed on the exterior part, it receives for the nurse whatever necessaries they have occasion for; and when turned to the interior part, it likewise receives from them whatever they wish to have conveyed without; and, in either case, without being seen.

without remorse, the sentiments which once it vainly endeavoured to subdue. That object, whose name you demand, with no other view than to sacrifice him to your vengeance, is now dearer to me than ever; my last sigh shall be for him; and do you think now that I will declare him?" "Then," resumed the duke, "every sentiment of religion is extinguished in your soul; you cherish in your heart an adulterous passion, and you would be guilty of suicide!" "Barbarian!" interrupted I, "am I still your wife? dare you assert it—you, who have plunged me into this abyss—you are even in mourning for me? It is true, I have no longer the fortitude to endure existence; but that God who hears and observes us both, will punish you alone for the despair to which you have reduced me: in such a situation as this, if I commit a crime, you alone will be responsible for it. No living creature can see my tears and lamentations. Do you think that the deepest caverns, the thickest walls, can keep from the Omniscent Being the cries of persecuted and helpless innocence? Tremble! that dread Being observes us both! He compassionates, he will pardon me; but his avenging arm is lifted over you!" The duke shuddered as I spoke; he gazed at me with an air of wildness; I enjoyed for a moment the satisfaction of striking terror and remorse into a soul equally weak and cruel. Pale, thunderstruck, and agitated, with downcast eyes, for some time he stood in malignant musing and sullen silence. At last he spoke: "Impute not to me," said he, "but to yourself alone the calamity you lament. You were guilty—I have unquestionable proofs of it; you have not been able to contradict them, and yet I did not punish you till after I had repeatedly offered you your pardon. I again propose to mitigate your punishment, and you refuse it. Yes, were it your pleasure, notwithstanding your infidelity, notwithstanding your aversion for me, you might still be in my palace—you might there see your child." "Oh, my child!" interrupted I, "alas, is she still alive? What, what has become of her?" "She is with your mother." "She is no longer then in your hands—is it really true?" The duke then perceiving that this idea revived me, took a letter from my mother out of his pocket, and permitted me to read it. This letter, which I bedewed with my tears, was as follows: "My grand-daughter arrived here yesterday evening. Oh, how shall I describe all the emotions I felt while I folded her to my heart. You gave her to me—she is mine; I feel that I already love her to excess. She may be enabled to attach me to life; but, oh! I must still be inconsolable. Alas! how can I enjoy the happiness of being yet a mother, without feeling the most disquieting uneasiness! After the loss I have sustained, is there a felicity on earth on which I can depend! I will come and see you next summer, and bring your daughter with me. We will spend two months with you. Since you cannot tear yourself from the melancholy spot which your grief so much endears to you, I will find resolution enough to come to you. I shall see the magnificent monument which your love has erected to the memory of an object so worthy of your tears; perhaps I shall there find the period of all my sufferings! Alas! is it possible that a mother, without dying, can embrace the tomb of her daughter? And yet I will live: religion commands it, and nature herself enjoins the sacred law—I will live for the dear child you have the goodness to confide to me. Oh! how shall I ever acknowledge such an obligation, such a sacrifice! How tenderly should you love this child? She has all her mother's features, she has all her charms! My own daughter is restored to me in her infancy! Oh! too flattering an illusion!—unhappy mother, thou hast no longer a daughter. The violence of grief cannot deliver thee from life."

I had scarcely finished this letter, when falling upon my knees, "Oh God!" I cried, "my child is in the arms of my mother! That tender mother consents to live for my child! Oh, God, I praise thee!—thou hast wounded only me. I now bow submissive to thy will. Pardon my distracted murmurs, pour down thy blessings on all I love, and prolong my painful existence at thy pleasure." I now sunk again upon my straw, for I was so weak, I could not support myself. The duke seized that instant to offer me some refreshment,

which I very readily took. He then left me, and from that moment I never saw him more; yet, faithful to the vow which I made, I now took care of my life. The idea that my prayers and resignation would draw down upon my mother and daughter all the blessings of heaven—this dear, this consolatory idea, revived and supported me. The recollection of my errors became now my greatest affliction. "Alas!" said I, "all my misfortunes are of my own creation: I wanted confidence in my mother's mother—I deviated from my duty when I ceased to consult her. Ungrateful and guilty daughter! heaven, to punish me, blinded my parents in their choice—the husband they gave me was not formed for my felicity; and yet, for but repeated imprudence in my conduct, the sentiments of nature would at length have made me happy. But far from endeavouring to subdue a guilty passion, I fostered it in secret. I did not hesitate even to describe all its violence, in the imprudent letters that have been my ruin, and to complain, at the same time, of the husband I insulted!" These reflections made me shed torrents of tears; nevertheless, I felt something inexpressibly sweet and soothing in weeping for my family. I was fond, moreover, to represent them to my imagination in the strongest colours. In true contrition and sorrow there is something expiatory and healing. Religion taught me to know and to relish all the inexhaustible consolations which it is in her power to offer: she insensibly banished from my soul that unhappy passion which had been the greatest misfortune in my life; in a word, she inspired what human wisdom and mere philosophy could never give, the fortitude to endure, without despairing, and without murmuring, nine years of long captivity, in a dungeon in which light never entered. I will acknowledge, however, that for the first two or three years my sufferings were so extreme, that even now the bare recollection of them makes me shudder. That time which I supposed (from the best calculation it was in my power to make) that my mother and daughter must be arrived in the same castle under which I was prisoner—that time passed away with them in the most agonizing manner, and forms the most cruel period of my captivity. My heart was rending in the idea that my mother and daughter were near me, while I was incapable of cherishing the hope of ever seeing them again. "Oh!" I cried, "you are lamenting my death, and I exist; and, ah! what a hand have you chosen to wipe away your tears! It is in the bosom of my persecutor, of my assassin, that you shed them! Alas! the tomb to which he leads you is not mine! You will trample it under your feet without knowing it? You will behold, without a tear, the rocks that conceal it? Perhaps, in the silence of night, unable to taste the sweets of sleep, you will come to wander about my cavern; perhaps, at this very moment, you are sitting upon that horrid trap-door, which, for me, alas! will never more be opened. Ah! if it be so, you are thinking, no doubt, of the wretched daughter you are still weeping for; but you cannot hear her plaintive cries, nor her voice which calls to you!" These ideas were distracting beyond expression: they often affected my understanding. To these cruel paroxysms of grief succeeded a kind of stupid insensibility, the image, as it were of annihilation, which was more dreadful perhaps than despair itself. But, in proportion as piety gained the ascendancy in my heart, these violent agitations grew weaker: I found in prayer unspeakable consolation. Those awful themes, which most commonly sadden the human mind, were to me the most agreeable subjects of meditation, and enabled me to rise superior to my fate, and to acquiesce in it with resignation. Restored to reason and to myself, I not only experienced an alleviation of my sufferings, but I became accustomed to darkness and captivity: I even contrived some employments. My prison was spacious; I walked about great part of the day, or rather at night; I made verses, which I repeated aloud; I had a fine voice; I was a perfect mistress of music; I composed some hymns; and one of my greatest pleasures was to sing them, and to listen to the responsive echo. My sleep became peaceful: agreeable dreams presented me to my father, my mother, and daughter. Those dear objects seemed ever satisfied and happy; sometimes I was transport-

ed into magnificent palaces, or beautiful gardens. I again beheld the skies, the trees, the flowers; in short, these sweet illusions restored me to all the blessings I had lost. I awoke, it is true, with a sigh, but I slept with pleasure. Even, when awake, joy was no longer a stranger to my bosom—my imagination was raised into a kind of sweet enthusiasm. In the presence of the Supreme Being, I flattered myself with humble boldness, that my patience and resignation would not render me an unworthy object in his sight. Witness of all my actions; he deigned to hear me, to whisper to my heart, to revive it, to elevate it to himself; and I now scarcely felt a solitude in my cavern. After the privation of all the objects of my love, the only thing which I still regretted, in spite of myself, was the light and view of the sky. I could not conceive how any one could give way in the most dismal captivity, if they enjoyed a window that had a prospect of the country. At last, I was so habituated to my situation, that, so far from desiring death, I more than once found that I was still apprehensive of it. I often wanted food: the duke sometimes brought me sufficient for three or four days. I imagined that he was then compelled to go a short journey, and when my provisions were nearly exhausted, I felt some anxiety; the death of my tyrant would be mine, and that cruel idea made me utter prayers for his safety. It is true, I no longer felt an aversion for him: religion had easily led me to renounce every sentiment of hatred, and what could this weak effort cost me? Had I not already triumphed over my passion? I pitied my persecutor; I pictured to myself the situation of his soul; his distraction, his terrors, his remorse; and found that I was indeed severely avenged. In the beginning of my captivity, I had never heard him approach without being ready, at the same time, to faint with terror; by degrees these violent emotions grew weaker. Some sensations, indeed, he always excited, that were not unmingled with horror. Nevertheless, I was desirous that he would come, not only for the preservation of my life, but that he thus broke the deep and frightful silence and solitude. He made me sensible of motion and sound; in a word, he occasioned a kind of agitation, which, though it was never agreeable, yet was become necessary to me. I cannot express how very ardent and singular was my desire to hear some sound. When it thundered I heard it; I cannot describe what were my sensations then; I imagined that I was less alone. I listened to the awful sound with eagerness and ecstasy; and, when it entirely ceased, I sunk into the deepest melancholy and dejection. Such was early my situation for six or seven years; during that period nothing ever really much affected me, except the chagrin I felt at being totally ignorant of whatever concerned my mother and daughter. In vain I questioned the duke, through the turning-box, whenever he approached it; I could not obtain one word in answer; for, since his last appearance in my dungeon, he had never spoken more. All my fortitude was necessary to support this cruel uncertainty, on a subject so interesting to my heart. Often when I invoked heaven for my mother and daughter, my heart felt a sudden oppression, and my tears flowed apace. "Alas!" cried I, "do they still exist? I pray for their happiness, and perhaps I have the dreadful misfortune to survive them." At other times I felt so forcibly the animating consolations of hope, that I did not even feel the slightest anxiety on their account. In those happy moments I would flatter myself, that some unexpected event might yet extricate me from my prison. This idea made such an impression on my mind, particularly during the last year of my captivity, that I made a vow to God, that if I recovered my liberty, I would consecrate my life to him, in a solitude remote from Rome, and would there spend the remainder of my days, as soon as my daughter should no longer have occasion for my care. In the mean time I was approaching the most interesting period of my life—I was approaching the happy moment of deliverance; and the Divine Goodness was about to recompense me amply for nine years of suffering and grief. For some time I imagined that the duke constantly remained in the castle, because he regularly brought my food: but one day he failed to come at the appointed time;

I grew impatient at the delay; I had entirely finished my allowance: I slept, however, with sufficient tranquility. The next day I expected in the succour which every instant became more necessary: there was no remedy but patience; anxiety, as much as hunger and thirst, deprived me of sleep, and I remained in this situation nearly another day: then absolute exhaustion, I had no other prospect than a speedy dissolution: I contemplated death with tranquillity: yet the remembrance of all that was dear to me would intrude, to imbitter my dying thoughts. "Unhappy daughter! unhappy mother!" I cried, "in what a forlorn condition am I doomed to expire! My dear parents, must I then die without receiving your last blessing? Oh my Child! I cannot give thee mine! I cannot enjoy the sweet satisfaction of expiring in thy arms! Thou canst not even regret me? In the dying moments of thy wretched mother thou art enjoying, no doubt, the amusements and pleasures suitable to thy age! Dreadful idea! I am dying, and all that are dear to me have been reconciled to their loss! But what am I saying, inconsiderate that I am! I complain, I murmur, when all my miseries are just going to terminate! Great God! forgive this guilty weakness which my heart rejects and disavows. Oh, my Judge, my Father! deign at least to call me to thyself! Full of hopes and confidence, certain of immortal bliss, I expect death with serenity: I would even invoke it, did not resignation teach me to wait thy pleasure." As I concluded these words, I sunk down almost lifeless upon the straw that served me for a bed: I felt a serenity of soul, the sweets of which, till that moment I had never tasted. Like a salutary balm, it seemed suddenly to heal every wound of my heart; excessive weakness soon disordered my ideas: I imperceptibly fell into a delicious kind of sleep, during which the most ravishing scenes successively appeared to my imagination. Around my bed, I thought were encircling angels, and bright celestial forms: I heard afar harmonious voices, and more than mortal sounds: I saw heaven half opened, and God, upon a splendid throne, extend his arms, and graciously bid me approach. In reality he was then watching over me: his paternal hand was going to break my chains: on a sudden I awoke quite startled, I fancy I hear a knocking at the turning-box; I listen, I hear it again, my panting heart—but what a surprise! what unutterable extacy; I hear a voice, and that voice is no longer my tyrant's; it is new to me, it appears to me like the voice of an angel descended from heaven to deliver me. Astonished, distracted, I clasp my hands with an emotion of gratitude inexpressibly fervent: "Oh God!" I cried, "is it a deliverer whom thou sendest? Ah! I accepted death with joy, and thou restorest me to life!" With these words I endeavoured to rise, and hasten to the turning-box. I cannot, my strength forsakes me, I sink again upon my bed; at this moment my door is opened, and I perceive some light: somebody enters—I rise—I would fain look—I can distinguish nothing; my eyes so long deprived of light, cannot bear the glimmer of a lamp, and close in spite of me. The object still approaches; "Who, who are you?" I exclaimed with a faltering voice. At these words I again open my eyes, still dazzled by the light: I perceive a person on his knees before me, who, putting his arm under my head, tenderly supports it and presents me some food. Then, almost famished with hunger, I have no longer any idea than that of satisfying the imperious appetite; every other thought is suspended; and I seize, with eagerness, the offered sustenance: at last, finding my strength revive, I turned all at once to my deliverer: his face was in the shade, I could not distinguish his features; "Oh! speak," said I, "are you the accomplice of my persecutor, or are you come to deliver me?" "Oh heavens!" interrupted the stranger, "what voice is this! where am I?" Then hastily rising, he fetches the light nearer, and looks at me with an earnestness mingled with compassion and horror: I fix my eyes for a moment on his face, now enlightened by the lamp. His hair seemed to stand erect, he was pale and trembling, but it was impossible to mistake him. I wish to speak; my tears almost deprive me of utterance; I can only pronounce the name of the Count of Belmire! It is he indeed! he falls at

my feet, he bedews them with tears, he looks at me again; he approaches and he praises heaven. The excess of his compassion gives an air of wildness and grief to ecstasy and joy. We each speak at once, without hearing, without answering each other; the cavern echoes with our cries. At length the count, rising impetuously, "Oh, most inhuman of men!" cried he, "most execrable monster! is there a punishment at all adequate to thy crime! And you," continued he, assisting me to rise, "the unfortunate victim of a relentless tyrant's rage; come, you are free." At these words, my first impulse was to spring towards the door, but instantly checking myself, "Ah!" said I to the count, "You are my deliverer, to you I owe my life, my liberty; but the blessings you restore, can I still regard them as such? Alas! I dare not ask—my father—my mother?" "They are alive!" "Oh, heavens! and my daughter?" "She is at Rome; she will soon be in your arms." "Oh, God!" I cried, exultating myself, "what gratitude can ever quit the debt I owe to this moment only rewards me for all sufferings. Oh, my generous benefactor!" I continued, addressing myself to the count, "now for your recompence, know that I am innocent. But, before I relate the particulars of my melancholy history, allow me to ask you one question? Doubtless the duke is ill?" "He is attacked by a mortal distemper; he cannot survive the day: come, leave this horrid dungeon; let the habitation, before he expires, know that you are at liberty." "No," interrupted I, "my parents only must deliver me from this prison."

I then entreated the count to send an express that instant to my father; he promised me that he would, and, giving me a piece of paper and pencil, I wrote the following note:—

"Oh my father! my mother! I am still alive: I am innocent! come, and by your presence restore me really to life; deliver me from a dreadful dungeon, and make me forget all the miseries I have endured."

This note was barely legible, I was nearly a quarter of an hour in writing it; for I scarcely knew how to form a letter, and spelling I had nearly forgotten. The count, perceiving that I was absolutely determined to remain in the prison till the arrival of my mother, gave me the keys of the doors, and left me with inexpressible regret, after having promised to dissemble with the duke, if he was yet living, and to see me again the next evening. When I found myself once more alone, I felt a terror almost as strong as that which I had formerly experienced at the beginning of my captivity; and yet I was no longer in the dark, for the count had left me a lamp and a dark lantern. I had also asked him for a watch, that I might count the hours, for I did not imagine it would be possible for me to sleep one moment, immovably upon the spot where the count had left me. I could scarcely draw breath; I thrust not hit my eyes, and yet I could not forbear by stealth to cast a look round me: the light, so far from cheering me, added to my terror, by giving me a full view of my gloomy and mournful habitation; at last, unable any longer to support this situation, I rose, I took my light; I opened my first door, and entered a kind of long gallery, where the turning-box was placed; I already felt great relief in finding myself in a new place, and which brought me to the last door of my prison. I hurried on to the end of this gallery, and opened the door by which it was terminated; I then found myself at the foot of the staircase of my dungeon, and being no longer enclosed by the double door that opened into the garden, I shut that of the gallery, as it to separate myself from my frightful cavern: then ascending the staircase precipitately, I sat down upon the last step, and at length began to breathe. One would imagine, that after an event so happy, so unexpected, I should have felt a joy most exquisitely pure; but I had suffered so long, I had been so wretched, that my heart could not at once be susceptible of those fascinating pleasures which the sweetest hopes would naturally afford; I thought, indeed, with transport, that the dear objects of my affection were still in being, but when I reflected on the inexpressi-

ble happiness I should enjoy in finding myself once more in the arms of my mother, and embracing my father and child, I could not flatter myself that such felicity was ever to be my lot. A thousand dismal apprehensions sprung up to distress and darken my imagination, and in that state of melancholy and dejection, the most chimerical fears appeared to me so many presages of real woe: this interesting period of my life, the day when the Count of Belmire entered my prison, was on the 2nd of June, 17** He left me at midnight, and till six in the morning I remained in the situation I have just described, when all at once I thought I heard some gentle sounds; I listened with the greatest attention at the door of my prison, and notwithstanding its thickness, and that of the rock which covered it, I could very distinctly hear the warbling of the birds, that were awakened by the appearance of day. The emotion of joy which I experienced at this instant is neither to be described nor conceived; all my melancholy vanished, and my heart was again open to hope and felicity. The sweetest tears flowed from my eyes, although my ideas were extremely confused, and I was incapable of reflecting on the unexpected change in my situation, for my attention was engrossed by the desire of hearing what was passing in the garden. With my ear close to the door, and holding my breath, I listened with an attention from which no other thought could divert me; I heard dogs barking, men walking about, and even talking indistinctly; and all these different sounds were productive of inexpressible pleasure. However, towards the close of the day, I earnestly longed for night, that I might again see the Count of Belmire, and that I might question him on a thousand circumstances of which I was impatient to be informed, and which successively occurred to my imagination, in proportion as my ideas assumed a more regular form. For instance, I wished to know how long I had been confined in my prison; before the count appeared there, I imagined that I was nearly fifty years old. His youthful aspect convinced me that grief and wearisome days are bad calculators of time; but still I could not divine my age within four or five years. The count returned exactly at midnight; I could easily perceive by his pale countenance how deeply he was affected by sorrow and compassion, for the event which had produced such a happy revolution for me. Respecting my situation, which obliged me to receive him alone at such an hour, respecting the fatal tie now ready to be broken, but which still connected me, he neither mentioned the sentiments which he still retained for me. After having informed me that he had enclosed my note in a letter to my father, and that the duke was at the last extremity, I begged him to acquaint me with the motives that had determined the latter to entrust him with such an important secret. He accordingly proceeded to gratify my curiosity in the following words:

"I had been a year on my travels when I received the news of your death; I learned at the same time, that the duke was inconsolable for your loss. This circumstance greatly diminished my natural antipathy to him: I travelled two years more, and then being recalled by some affairs, I returned scarcely finished, to Italy. Obligated to see the duke, it was necessary to repair to this castle, for he very seldom absented himself from it, and that only to spend two or three days at Naples. Here I saw the monument erected to your memory; I beheld your picture placed in almost every apartment; I attached myself to this mansion, and even to the inhuman monster who had made you the victim of his fury. About a year ago, the duke was seized with an incurable distemper; but yet, not in the least apprehending it to be so, he still continued to make some excursions to Naples. Last winter he entirely left off going to court, and wrote to me at Rome, to desire that I would come and see him. I arrived here about the end of January, and found him rapidly declining, although he was not confined to his bed, and still continued to walk about. At length declining every day, he was seized at once with convulsions that obliged him to keep his bed: he remained in this condition three days, at the end of which, one of his valets came to acquaint me at nine o'clock in the evening, that he

wanted to speak to me. The man added, that the duke that night and the preceding, had sent his servants out of the way, in order to endeavour to rise without assistance; but that being too weak to stand, he had rung for them, and they had found him out of his bed half-dressed. I went that instant into his chamber; he dismissed his attendants, and informing me that he was going to intrust me with an important secret, made me swear to keep it inviolably. Then looking at me with an air of wildness, "Family crimes," said he, "oblige me to confine in this castle a woman whose crimes have merited death. She must want sustenance; go and carry her some; knock at the turning-box, which serves for that purpose; if she does not answer you, enter her prison, and give her what is necessary; but I must previously inform you that this woman is not in her senses. Pay no regard to what she says, but when you have given her some sustenance, return immediately; I promise to acquaint you one day with her name and history. The duke then disclosed to me the secrets of his caverns, and taking from under his pillow a parcel of keys, he put them into my hands, desiring me to execute this commission without delay. The barbarian supposing that I had never seen you, thought that he could not confide in a more proper person, and thus committed into my hands both your destiny and mine."

When the count had finished this recital, he entreated me to make him acquainted with my history; but as I could not relate it without speaking of the sentiments which I had once entertained for him, I declared that I could not comply with his request but in the presence of my father and mother. From the calculation of the count, I expected my father to arrive in less than two days at furthest. Less agitated now, and more capable of reflection, I enjoyed for twenty-four hours, all the happiness which so dear an expectation could inspire; my impatience then increasing, as the hour of my deliverance approached, it presently knew no bounds, and became an insupportable torment. I never felt any thing which I can compare to the violent emotions which I experienced on the night preceding the happiest day of my life; my eyes intently fixed on the watch, I mournfully considered at my leisure, the slow progress of its index; every moment I thought I heard a noise, I started, I felt my blood boil in my veins, and my poor heart palpitate with violence; these agitations grew stronger, when the singing of the birds announced the dawn of day, that happy day in which I was going to be born again, and resume the name, with all the dear and sacred claims, of daughter and of mother. That moment, formed to compensate for an age of suffering—that moment so impatiently longed for—it approaches, it comes at last! Reiterated cries and tumultuous voices are heard: I soon distinguished a confused noise of carriages, horses, and armed men; the clamour increase! It approaches! I tremble!—Oh, heavens! what voice strikes my ears, and penetrates my very soul! Oh, my mother! who calls her daughter!—At these words my door is opened, I rush out of my cavern, notwithstanding the bright glare of day, that strikes and hurts my dazzled eyes; I see, I recollect my mother and father.—I give a violent scream—I fling myself into their arms—I faint away! Oh! who can describe the ecstasy of my soul when I recovered my senses? I found myself upon the bosom of the dearest of mothers, my face bedewed with her tears; my father upon his knees before me, pressing both my hands in his; I beheld again the day, the sun; I was soon to behold again my daughter. That instant realized all my dearest hopes, and satisfied the utmost wishes of my heart. I can give no account of my ideas in the first moments of this affecting scene; I felt too much to be able to think, or to express the violence of my joy, otherwise than by sobs and tears: at last, my father raising me in his arms, "Come, my dear child," said he, "quit this dreadful shade, where guilt has been so long the oppressor of innocence, come." At these words I rose up, I looked around me, and saw with surprise that we were surrounded by a troop of armed men, among whom I recollected many relations, and some old friends of my father; who informed me, that

having assembled them before he left Rome, he had conducted them to Naples, and having thrown himself at the king's feet, and shown him my note, he had not only obtained leave to go and take me away by force, if force were necessary, but also some troops to assist him. "When I arrived here," continued my father, "I was informed your vile persecutor had just expired: this happy day then restores you to all your love, delivers you from an execrable tyrant, and secures you perfect liberty. All the answer I could give my father, was by embracing him with tears.

At the summit of felicity, and having nothing now to dread, I could not forbear pitying, from my very soul, the wretched Duke of C—: "Alas!" thought I, "if I had loved him, he might not have polluted his life by such guilty excesses; he might have lived and been happy." This reflection, while it excited my compassion, made it painful and melancholy, and for some moments embittered all my joy. At last we set out, and the next day the delight of the daughter was increased by that of the mother; I found again that child so passionately beloved; I folded her in my arms, I saw her shed tears, and heard her call me mother. I was in a kind of intoxication the two first days of my arrival at Rome, stunned with noise, astonished at every thing, and enjoyed nothing truly but the happiness of seeing my daughter again, and of finding myself between my father and mother. Then my heart being fully satisfied, I began to feel the value of all the blessings that were restored to me; I found enjoyments equally agreeable, in the most common things of life; in every object I beheld a spectacle of wonder. The first time I walked out by moonlight, I experienced an ineffable sensation of admiration and extacy, in beholding again that serene and beautiful splendour, with the skies all bespangled and innumerable orbs; I could not walk into the garden, without stopping at every step to examine minutely every object. I was never tired with contemplating the flowers, the fruits, the trees, the verdure of the fields, the closing evening, and the rising sun; that sublime, that enchanting spectacle! "O God!" thought I, "what wonders hath thy goodness created! what treasures has it lavished on us!

Yet wand'ring oft, with brute unconscious gaze,
Man marks not thee!

Surrounded by such a variety of blessings, he can even think himself unhappy." In such meditations did my heart indulge with transport in all that felicity of which it has so long been deprived. I also feel inexpressible pleasure in finding myself again in the palace in which I was born, and in which I had spent the happy years of infancy and youth; but I confess that I could not again behold, without pain, the Marchioness of Venuzi, that early friend, who was the first cause of all my misfortunes. The Count of Belmire soon followed me to Rome, and in the presence of my father and mother, the Marchioness of Venuzi, and some of my relations, I gave him my history. I had scarcely finished, when throwing himself at my feet, he expressed, in the most passionate terms, the excess of his gratitude. "What!" cried he, "you might, by naming me, have extricated yourself from that horrid destiny! It was I who plunged you into that abyss; and while you were weeping there, I beheld the day of which you was deprived for me. May I be permitted to flatter myself that love may still recompense you for all the miseries it has caused you to endure? Could that heart so noble and susceptible, be otherwise than faithful? Have your misfortunes led you to discard those sentiments, without which it is impossible for me to live?" At these words, my father affectionately embraced the Count of Belmire, and gave me to understand by this action, how much he approved his sentiments; but, for my part, having lost even the idea of a passion, which had once such an ascendancy over my heart, I could not conceive how any one could be devoted to it, and still less how it were possible that I could be the object of it. After some pauses, I addressed the Count, and

described to him so naturally the situation of my heart, that he instantly gave up every hope; he retired from Rome for some time, but the sentiment which made him fly, soon recalled him; and, consoled by the friendship which I expressed for him, he fixed his residence there entirely. In the mean time, far from losing any relish for the happiness I enjoyed, every day seemed to make me more sensible of its inestimable worth; how delighted were my first thoughts every time I awoke! I felt the most exquisite delight in looking round, in beholding my daughter's bed by the side of mine, and in finding myself again in my paternal dwelling. I could no longer comprehend how I had been able to support the privation of that felicity which I now enjoyed, or even of the pleasures and conveniences which habit began to make me think absolutely necessary to life. These ideas inspired me with the most tender compassion for all who were unfortunate. I had lain for nine years upon a bed of straw; I had endured hunger, thirst, and cold; I owed at least to my misfortunes that sentiment which brings us nearest to the Deity; I could never hear with inattention the complaints of those poor objects who were imploring my compassion; in their fate I recollected mine, I considered them as my fellow-creatures, and I enjoyed the most heartfelt satisfaction in something and relieving them. To resolve, to welcome them, was not sufficient; I thought it my duty to go in search of them. "Alas! who can have a better claim to be thus assisted, than the suffering wretch who often dares not to ask for the slender assistance that would save his life. This desire of finding out the unfortunate, in order to convert their tears into rejoicing, was not a virtue in me; it was the most urgent appetite of my soul, and the sweetest of all my pleasures; but the more I became accustomed to the ease which was restored to me, the stronger was the impression which the remembrance of my captivity excited; and it soon became impossible for me either to mention my misfortunes, or to listen with tranquillity to such histories or conversations, as had any tendency to recal them to my recollection. This weakness was the source of many others; I could not bear darkness, nor absolute solitude, were it only for a moment. One night, I remember, my light went out; I awoke, and perceiving myself in utter darkness, I felt a terror which my reason could neither conquer nor diminish; I screamed out, my servants hastened to me, and found me pale, terrified, and almost senseless; these groundless terrors, this involuntary weakness, the melancholy consequences of my sufferings and captivity, were not my greatest distress: I found myself absolutely incapable of superintending the education of my daughter. I was obliged to learn again to read, write, and cast accounts; but by a singularity remarkable enough, I had hardly forgotton the least thing of what I had read in my youth; for not having had, for nine years, any kind of occupation, I had sought for one in the past, by often recalling circumstances whatever I had learned from books and conversation; thus, all those things were imprinted in my memory, better perhaps than if I had never quitted the world. I was twenty-seven years of age when I left my prison, and my daughter was then ten; solely engaged with her, living quite in retirement, constantly shut up in my apartment, and seeing no one but my father, my mother, and sometimes the Count of Belmire, I passed thus five years of my life. My daughter at last attained her sixteenth year; and, being the greatest fortune in Italy, all the families of distinction at Rome made proposals to me. For a long time I had secretly made my choice; I consulted my daughter, she confessed that her sentiments coincided with mine; my father and mother entered into my views, and I no longer delayed their accomplishment. The Count of Belmire, still young, of a captivating figure, equally virtuous and amiable, and master of a noble fortune, and constantly refused the most advantageous and splendid alliances; it was to that too faithful lover, to that dear friend—in a word, to my deliverer, that I offered my daughter; "I give her to you," said I, "she is yours; she loves you; she is fifteen, which was my age when first I beheld you; her person and sentiments will recall to you whatever

was then. Providence restores to you now what it deprived you of formerly; and as I was never born for your felicity, I can derive no other consolation on that account, than in seeing you happy with my daughter." At these words the Count of Belmire seized one of my hands, bedewed it with his tears, and as I urged him to answer me, "Ah!" said he, at last, "have you not a right to dispose of my destiny." The very evening that this conversation passed, the marriage articles were signed, and eight days after, the count was married to my daughter. I remained at Rome another year, and then seeing my daughter settled, and perfectly happy, I turned my thoughts to that retirement and solitude, to which, when I was in my prison, I had vowed to devote myself. Besides, the air of Rome being very detrimental to my health, the physicians had ordered me to repair to Nice for a time. I undertook this journey by La Carniche, and was so delighted with the situation of Alberga, that I determined to fix my residence in this charming place. I built here a nice and convenient house, in which I took up my abode on my return from Nice: here, for four years past, I have perfectly recovered my health, and my life glides away in the sweetest repose; here I have written this history, which I intend for my granddaughters, when they shall be of proper ages to derive benefit from it. In quitting the world, I have not renounced the objects that are dear to me. Since my residence here, I have had two journeys to Rome, to see my father and mother, and every year my daughter and son-in-law come to spend three months in my retreat. In a word, it is impossible to be more completely happy than I am. I praise God every day for the blessings I enjoy, even for the miseries I have endured, since they have expiated my faults, purified my heart, and taught me the inestimable worth of the felicity that is restored to me.

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HER HEROIC COURAGE IN DISCOVERING A

Barbarous and cruel Murder

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