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FRANKENSTEIN:

OR,

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

BY MARY W. SHELLEY.

AUTHOR OF THE LAST MAN, PERKIN WARBECK, &c. &c.

[Transcriber's Note: This text was produced from a photo-reprint of

the 1831 edition.]

REVISED, CORRECTED,

AND ILLUSTRATED WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION,

BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET:

BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;

AND CUMMING, DUBLIN.

1831.

INTRODUCTION.

The Publishers of the Standard Novels, in selecting "Frankenstein" for

one of their series, expressed a wish that I should furnish them with

some account of the origin of the story. I am the more willing to

comply, because I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so

very frequently asked me--"How I, when a young girl, came to think of,

and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?" It is true that I am very

averse to bringing myself forward in print; but as my account will only

appear as an appendage to a former production, and as it will be

confined to such topics as have connection with my authorship alone, I

can scarcely accuse myself of a personal intrusion.

It is not singular that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished

literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing.

As a child I scribbled; and my favourite pastime, during the hours given

me for recreation, was to "write stories." Still I had a dearer pleasure

than this, which was the formation of castles in the air--the indulging

in waking dreams--the following up trains of thought, which had for

their subject the formation of a succession of imaginary incidents. My

dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings. In

the latter I was a close imitator--rather doing as others had done,

than putting down the suggestions of my own mind. What I wrote was

intended at least for one other eye--my childhood's companion and

friend; but my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody;

they were my refuge when annoyed--my dearest pleasure when free.

I lived principally in the country as a girl, and passed a considerable

time in Scotland. I made occasional visits to the more picturesque

parts; but my habitual residence was on the blank and dreary northern

shores of the Tay, near Dundee. Blank and dreary on retrospection I call

them; they were not so to me then. They were the eyry of freedom, and

the pleasant region where unheeded I could commune with the creatures of

my fancy. I wrote then--but in a most common-place style. It was beneath

the trees of the grounds belonging to our house, or on the bleak sides

of the woodless mountains near, that my true compositions, the airy

flights of my imagination, were born and fostered. I did not make myself

the heroine of my tales. Life appeared to me too common-place an affair

as regarded myself. I could not figure to myself that romantic woes or

wonderful events would ever be my lot; but I was not confined to my own

identity, and I could people the hours with creations far more

interesting to me at that age, than my own sensations.

After this my life became busier, and reality stood in place of fiction.

My husband, however, was from the first, very anxious that I should

prove myself worthy of my parentage, and enrol myself on the page of

fame. He was for ever inciting me to obtain literary reputation, which

even on my own part I cared for then, though since I have become

infinitely indifferent to it. At this time he desired that I should

write, not so much with the idea that I could produce any thing worthy

of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the

promise of better things hereafter. Still I did nothing. Travelling, and

the cares of a family, occupied my time; and study, in the way of

reading, or improving my ideas in communication with his far more

cultivated mind, was all of literary employment that engaged my

attention.

In the summer of 1816, we visited Switzerland, and became the neighbours

of Lord Byron. At first we spent our pleasant hours on the lake, or

wandering on its shores; and Lord Byron, who was writing the third canto

of Childe Harold, was the only one among us who put his thoughts upon

paper. These, as he brought them successively to us, clothed in all the

light and harmony of poetry, seemed to stamp as divine the glories of

heaven and earth, whose influences we partook with him.

But it proved a wet, ungenial summer, and incessant rain often confined

us for days to the house. Some volumes of ghost stories, translated from

the German into French, fell into our hands. There was the History of

the Inconstant Lover, who, when he thought to clasp the bride to whom he

had pledged his vows, found himself in the arms of the pale ghost of her

whom he had deserted. There was the tale of the sinful founder of his

race, whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the

younger sons of his fated house, just when they reached the age of

promise. His gigantic, shadowy form, clothed like the ghost in Hamlet,

in complete armour, but with the beaver up, was seen at midnight, by

the moon's fitful beams, to advance slowly along the gloomy avenue. The

shape was lost beneath the shadow of the castle walls; but soon a gate

swung back, a step was heard, the door of the chamber opened, and he

advanced to the couch of the blooming youths, cradled in healthy sleep.

Eternal sorrow sat upon his face as he bent down and kissed the forehead

of the boys, who from that hour withered like flowers snapt upon the

stalk. I have not seen these stories since then; but their incidents are

as fresh in my mind as if I had read them yesterday.

"We will each write a ghost story," said Lord Byron; and his proposition

was acceded to. There were four of us. The noble author began a tale, a

fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem of Mazeppa. Shelley,

more apt to embody ideas and sentiments in the radiance of brilliant

imagery, and in the music of the most melodious verse that adorns our

language, than to invent the machinery of a story, commenced one founded

on the experiences of his early life. Poor Polidori had some terrible

idea about a skull-headed lady, who was so punished for peeping through

a key-hole--what to see I forget--something very shocking and wrong of

course; but when she was reduced to a worse condition than the renowned

Tom of Coventry, he did not know what to do with her, and was obliged to

despatch her to the tomb of the Capulets, the only place for which she

was fitted. The illustrious poets also, annoyed by the platitude of

prose, speedily relinquished their uncongenial task.

I busied myself \_to think of a story\_,--a story to rival those which had

excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears

of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror--one to make the reader dread

to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the

heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be

unworthy of its name. I thought and pondered--vainly. I felt that blank

incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship,

when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. \_Have you thought

of a story?\_ I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to

reply with a mortifying negative.

Every thing must have a beginning, to speak in Sanchean phrase; and that

beginning must be linked to something that went before. The Hindoos give

the world an elephant to support it, but they make the elephant stand

upon a tortoise. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist

in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the

first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless

substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all

matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the

imagination, we are continually reminded of the story of Columbus and

his egg. Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the

capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning

ideas suggested to it.

Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to

which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these,

various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the

nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability

of its ever being discovered and communicated. They talked of the

experiments of Dr. Darwin, (I speak not of what the Doctor really did,

or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken

of as having been done by him,) who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a

glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with

voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a

corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things:

perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought

together, and endued with vital warmth.

Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by,

before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not

sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed

and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with

a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw--with shut

eyes, but acute mental vision,--I saw the pale student of unhallowed

arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous

phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some

powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital

motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the

effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the

Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would

rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope

that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated

would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect

animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the

belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient

existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle

of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the

horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on

him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

I opened mine in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of

fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my

fancy for the realities around. I see them still; the very room, the

dark \_parquet\_, the closed shutters, with the moonlight struggling

through, and the sense I had that the glassy lake and white high Alps

were beyond. I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still

it haunted me. I must try to think of something else. I recurred to my

ghost story,--my tiresome unlucky ghost story! O! if I could only

contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been

frightened that night!

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. "I

have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only

describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow." On the

morrow I announced that I had \_thought of a story\_. I began that day

with the words, \_It was on a dreary night of November\_, making only a

transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream.

At first I thought but of a few pages--of a short tale; but Shelley

urged me to develope the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe

the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to

my husband, and yet but for his incitement, it would never have taken

the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I

must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely

written by him.

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I

have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when

death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart.

Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a

conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in

this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers

have nothing to do with these associations.

I will add but one word as to the alterations I have made. They are

principally those of style. I have changed no portion of the story, nor

introduced any new ideas or circumstances. I have mended the language

where it was so bald as to interfere with the interest of the narrative;

and these changes occur almost exclusively in the beginning of the first

volume. Throughout they are entirely confined to such parts as are mere

adjuncts to the story, leaving the core and substance of it untouched.

M. W. S.

\_London, October 15, 1831.\_

PREFACE.

The event on which this fiction is founded, has been supposed, by Dr.

Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of

impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest

degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as

the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely

weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the

interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere

tale of spectres or enchantment. It was recommended by the novelty of

the situations which it developes; and, however impossible as a physical

fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of

human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the

ordinary relations of existing events can yield.

I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary

principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon

their combinations. The Iliad, the tragic poetry of Greece,--Shakspeare,

in the Tempest, and Midsummer Night's Dream,--and most especially

Milton, in Paradise Lost, conform to this rule; and the most humble

novelist, who seeks to confer or receive amusement from his labours,

may, without presumption, apply to prose fiction a licence, or rather a

rule, from the adoption of which so many exquisite combinations of human

feeling have resulted in the highest specimens of poetry.

The circumstance on which my story rests was suggested in casual

conversation. It was commenced partly as a source of amusement, and

partly as an expedient for exercising any untried resources of mind.

Other motives were mingled with these, as the work proceeded. I am by

no means indifferent to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies

exist in the sentiments or characters it contains shall affect the

reader; yet my chief concern in this respect has been limited to the

avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day, and to

the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the

excellence of universal virtue. The opinions which naturally spring from

the character and situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived

as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to

be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical

doctrine of whatever kind.

It is a subject also of additional interest to the author, that this

story was begun in the majestic region where the scene is principally

laid, and in society which cannot cease to be regretted. I passed the

summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva. The season was cold and rainy,

and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire, and

occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories of ghosts, which

happened to fall into our hands. These tales excited in us a playful

desire of imitation. Two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of

whom would be far more acceptable to the public than any thing I can

ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded

on some supernatural occurrence.

The weather, however, suddenly became serene; and my two friends left me

on a journey among the Alps, and lost, in the magnificent scenes which

they present, all memory of their ghostly visions. The following tale is

the only one which has been completed.

Marlow, September, 1817.

FRANKENSTEIN;

OR,

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

LETTER I.

\_To Mrs. Saville, England.\_

St. Petersburgh, Dec. 11th, 17--.

You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the

commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil

forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my

dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of

my undertaking.

I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of

Petersburgh, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which

braces my nerves, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this

feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which

I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by

this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try

in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and

desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of

beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible; its

broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual

splendour. There--for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust

in preceding navigators--there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing

over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in

beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its

productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of

the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes.

What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there

discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate

a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to

render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate

my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before

visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man.

These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of

danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with

the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday

mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But, supposing

all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable

benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by

discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which

at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret

of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an

undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my

letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to

heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a

steady purpose,--a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye.

This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have

read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been

made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the

seas which surround the pole. You may remember, that a history of all

the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our

good uncle Thomas's library. My education was neglected, yet I was

passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night,

and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as

a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my

uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets

whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also

became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation;

I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the

names of Homer and Shakspeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted

with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at

that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were

turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can,

even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great

enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied

the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily

endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder

than the common sailors during the day, and devoted my nights to the

study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of

physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest

practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a

Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt

a little proud, when my captain offered me the second dignity in the

vessel, and entreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness; so

valuable did he consider my services.

And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great

purpose? My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I

preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh,

that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage

and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are

often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage,

the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not

only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own,

when theirs are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly

quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in

my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stage-coach. The

cold is not excessive, if you are wrapped in furs,--a dress which I

have already adopted; for there is a great difference between walking

the deck and remaining seated motionless for hours, when no exercise

prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no

ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburgh and

Archangel.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my

intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying

the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think

necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not

intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah,

dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many

months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail,

you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear, excellent Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on

you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for

all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,

R. WALTON.

LETTER II.

\_To Mrs. Saville, England.\_

Archangel, 28th March, 17--.

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow!

yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel,

and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already

engaged, appear to be men on whom I can depend, and are certainly

possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the

absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have

no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success,

there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by

disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I

shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium

for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who

could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem

me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I

have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as

well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or

amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor

brother! I am too ardent in execution, and too impatient of

difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am

self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a

common, and read nothing but our uncle Thomas's books of voyages. At

that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own

country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive

its most important benefits from such a conviction, that I perceived the

necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my

native country. Now I am twenty-eight, and am in reality more illiterate

than many schoolboys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more,

and that my day dreams are more extended and magnificent; but they want

(as the painters call it) \_keeping\_; and I greatly need a friend who

would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection

enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind.

Well, these are useless complaints; I shall certainly find no friend on

the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen.

Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in

these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful

courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory: or rather, to

word my phrase more characteristically, of advancement in his

profession. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and

professional prejudices, unsoftened by cultivation, retains some of the

noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on

board a whale vessel: finding that he was unemployed in this city, I

easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The master is a person of an excellent disposition, and is remarkable in

the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. This

circumstance, added to his well known integrity and dauntless courage,

made me very desirous to engage him. A youth passed in solitude, my best

years spent under your gentle and feminine fosterage, has so refined the

groundwork of my character, that I cannot overcome an intense distaste

to the usual brutality exercised on board ship: I have never believed it

to be necessary; and when I heard of a mariner equally noted for his

kindliness of heart, and the respect and obedience paid to him by his

crew, I felt myself peculiarly fortunate in being able to secure his

services. I heard of him first in rather a romantic manner, from a lady

who owes to him the happiness of her life. This, briefly, is his story.

Some years ago, he loved a young Russian lady, of moderate fortune; and

having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl

consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined

ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and, throwing herself at his

feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she

loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never

consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on

being informed of the name of her lover, instantly abandoned his

pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, on which he had

designed to pass the remainder of his life; but he bestowed the whole on

his rival, together with the remains of his prize-money to purchase

stock, and then himself solicited the young woman's father to consent to

her marriage with her lover. But the old man decidedly refused, thinking

himself bound in honour to my friend; who, when he found the father

inexorable, quitted his country, nor returned until he heard that his

former mistress was married according to her inclinations. "What a noble

fellow!" you will exclaim. He is so; but then he is wholly uneducated:

he is as silent as a Turk, and a kind of ignorant carelessness attends

him, which, while it renders his conduct the more astonishing, detracts

from the interest and sympathy which otherwise he would command.

Yet do not suppose, because I complain a little, or because I can

conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am

wavering in my resolutions. Those are as fixed as fate; and my voyage is

only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The

winter has been dreadfully severe; but the spring promises well, and it

is considered as a remarkably early season; so that perhaps I may sail

sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly: you know me

sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness, whenever the

safety of others is committed to my care.

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my

undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the

trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am

preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to "the land of

mist and snow"; but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be

alarmed for my safety, or if I should come back to you as worn and woful

as the "Ancient Mariner"? You will smile at my allusion; but I will

disclose a secret. I have often attributed my attachment to, my

passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of ocean, to that

production of the most imaginative of modern poets. There is something

at work in my soul, which I do not understand. I am practically

industrious--pains-taking;--a workman to execute with perseverance and

labour:--but besides this, there is a love for the marvellous, a belief

in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out

of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited

regions I am about to explore.

But to return to dearer considerations. Shall I meet you again, after

having traversed immense seas, and returned by the most southern cape of

Africa or America? I dare not expect such success, yet I cannot bear to

look on the reverse of the picture. Continue for the present to write to

me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters on some occasions

when I need them most to support my spirits. I love you very tenderly.

Remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother,

ROBERT WALTON.

LETTER III.

\_To Mrs. Saville, England.\_

MY DEAR SISTER, July 7th, 17--.

I write a few lines in haste, to say that I am safe, and well advanced

on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchantman now on its

homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see

my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits:

my men are bold, and apparently firm of purpose; nor do the floating

sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the

region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them. We have

already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer,

and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow

us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain,

breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us that would make a figure in a

letter. One or two stiff gales, and the springing of a leak, are

accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record; and

I shall be well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured, that for my own sake, as well as

yours, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering,

and prudent.

But success \_shall\_ crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have

gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas: the very stars

themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still

proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the

determined heart and resolved will of man?

My swelling heart involuntarily pours itself out thus. But I must

finish. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R. W.

LETTER IV.

\_To Mrs. Saville, England.\_

August 5th, 17--.

So strange an accident has happened to us, that I cannot forbear

recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before

these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st), we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed

in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea-room in which she

floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were

compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that

some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in

every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have

no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow

watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted

our attention, and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We

perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on

towards the north, at the distance of half a mile: a being which had the

shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge,

and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with

our telescopes, until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the

ice.

This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed,

many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote

that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in,

however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had

observed with the greatest attention.

About two hours after this occurrence, we heard the ground sea; and

before night the ice broke, and freed our ship. We, however, lay to

until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose

masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited

of this time to rest for a few hours.

In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck, and

found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking

to some one in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen

before, which had drifted towards us in the night, on a large fragment

of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within

it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not, as

the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some

undiscovered island, but an European. When I appeared on deck, the

master said, "Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish

on the open sea."

On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a

foreign accent. "Before I come on board your vessel," said he, "will

you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?"

You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to

me from a man on the brink of destruction, and to whom I should have

supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not

have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I

replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the

northern pole.

Upon hearing this he appeared satisfied, and consented to come on board.

Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his

safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly

frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I

never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him

into the cabin; but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted.

We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to

animation by rubbing him with brandy, and forcing him to swallow a small

quantity. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in

blankets, and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. By slow

degrees he recovered, and ate a little soup, which restored him

wonderfully.

Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak; and I often

feared that his sufferings had deprived him of understanding. When he

had in some measure recovered, I removed him to my own cabin, and

attended on him as much as my duty would permit. I never saw a more

interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness,

and even madness; but there are moments when, if any one performs an act

of kindness towards him, or does him any the most trifling service, his

whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence

and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy

and despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of

the weight of woes that oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered, I had great trouble to keep off

the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not

allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body

and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose. Once,

however, the lieutenant asked, Why he had come so far upon the ice in so

strange a vehicle?

His countenance instantly assumed an aspect of the deepest gloom; and he

replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

"And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?"

"Yes."

"Then I fancy we have seen him; for the day before we picked you up, we

saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice."

This aroused the stranger's attention; and he asked a multitude of

questions concerning the route which the dæmon, as he called him, had

pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said,--"I have,

doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people;

but you are too considerate to make enquiries."

"Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to

trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine."

"And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have

benevolently restored me to life."

Soon after this he enquired if I thought that the breaking up of the ice

had destroyed the other sledge? I replied, that I could not answer with

any degree of certainty; for the ice had not broken until near midnight,

and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that

time; but of this I could not judge.

From this time a new spirit of life animated the decaying frame of the

stranger. He manifested the greatest eagerness to be upon deck, to watch

for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to

remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of

the atmosphere. I have promised that some one should watch for him, and

give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the

present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health, but is very

silent, and appears uneasy when any one except myself enters his cabin.

Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle, that the sailors are all

interested in him, although they have had very little communication with

him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant

and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been

a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so

attractive and amiable.

I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no

friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit

had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as

the brother of my heart.

I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should

I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17--.

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my

admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble

a creature destroyed by misery, without feeling the most poignant grief?

He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he

speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they

flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.

He is now much recovered from his illness, and is continually on the

deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet,

although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery, but

that he interests himself deeply in the projects of others. He has

frequently conversed with me on mine, which I have communicated to him

without disguise. He entered attentively into all my arguments in favour

of my eventual success, and into every minute detail of the measures I

had taken to secure it. I was easily led by the sympathy which he

evinced, to use the language of my heart; to give utterance to the

burning ardour of my soul; and to say, with all the fervour that warmed

me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every

hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death were

but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I

sought; for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the

elemental foes of our race. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my

listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress

his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes; and my voice quivered

and failed me, as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his

fingers,--a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused;--at length he

spoke, in broken accents:--"Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have

you drank also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me,--let me reveal my

tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!"

Such words, you may imagine, strongly excited my curiosity; but the

paroxysm of grief that had seized the stranger overcame his weakened

powers, and many hours of repose and tranquil conversation were

necessary to restore his composure.

Having conquered the violence of his feelings, he appeared to despise

himself for being the slave of passion; and quelling the dark tyranny of

despair, he led me again to converse concerning myself personally. He

asked me the history of my earlier years. The tale was quickly told:

but it awakened various trains of reflection. I spoke of my desire of

finding a friend--of my thirst for a more intimate sympathy with a

fellow mind than had ever fallen to my lot; and expressed my conviction

that a man could boast of little happiness, who did not enjoy this

blessing.

"I agree with you," replied the stranger; "we are unfashioned creatures,

but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves--such a

friend ought to be--do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and

faulty natures. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures,

and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have

hope, and the world before you, and have no cause for despair. But I--I

have lost every thing, and cannot begin life anew."

As he said this, his countenance became expressive of a calm settled

grief, that touched me to the heart. But he was silent, and presently

retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does

the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight

afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of

elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may

suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet, when he has

retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a

halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you smile at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine

wanderer? You would not, if you saw him. You have been tutored and

refined by books and retirement from the world, and you are, therefore,

somewhat fastidious; but this only renders you the more fit to

appreciate the extraordinary merits of this wonderful man. Sometimes I

have endeavoured to discover what quality it is which he possesses, that

elevates him so immeasurably above any other person I ever knew. I

believe it to be an intuitive discernment; a quick but never-failing

power of judgment; a penetration into the causes of things, unequalled

for clearness and precision; add to this a facility of expression, and a

voice whose varied intonations are soul-subduing music.

August 19. 17--.

Yesterday the stranger said to me, "You may easily perceive, Captain

Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had

determined, at one time, that the memory of these evils should die with

me; but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for

knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the

gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine

has been. I do not know that the relation of my disasters will be useful

to you; yet, when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course,

exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am,

I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale; one that may

direct you if you succeed in your undertaking, and console you in case

of failure. Prepare to hear of occurrences which are usually deemed

marvellous. Were we among the tamer scenes of nature, I might fear to

encounter your unbelief, perhaps your ridicule; but many things will

appear possible in these wild and mysterious regions, which would

provoke the laughter of those unacquainted with the ever-varied powers

of nature:--nor can I doubt but that my tale conveys in its series

internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed."

You may easily imagine that I was much gratified by the offered

communication; yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by

a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the

promised narrative, partly from curiosity, and partly from a strong

desire to ameliorate his fate, if it were in my power. I expressed these

feelings in my answer.

"I thank you," he replied, "for your sympathy, but it is useless; my

fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall

repose in peace. I understand your feeling," continued he, perceiving

that I wished to interrupt him; "but you are mistaken, my friend, if

thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny: listen

to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined."

He then told me, that he would commence his narrative the next day when

I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I

have resolved every night, when I am not imperatively occupied by my

duties, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has

related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make

notes. This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure:

but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips, with what

interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day! Even now, as I

commence my task, his full-toned voice swells in my ears; his lustrous

eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness; I see his thin

hand raised in animation, while the lineaments of his face are

irradiated by the soul within. Strange and harrowing must be his story;

frightful the storm which embraced the gallant vessel on its course, and

wrecked it--thus!

{CHAPTER I.

I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished

of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and

syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour

and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him, for his integrity

and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger

days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; a variety of

circumstances had prevented his marrying early, nor was it until the

decline of life that he became a husband and the father of a family.

As the circumstances of his marriage illustrate his character, I cannot

refrain from relating them. One of his most intimate friends was a

merchant, who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous

mischances, into poverty. This man, whose name was Beaufort, was of a

proud and unbending disposition, and could not bear to live in poverty

and oblivion in the same country where he had formerly been

distinguished for his rank and magnificence. Having paid his debts,

therefore, in the most honourable manner, he retreated with his daughter

to the town of Lucerne, where he lived unknown and in wretchedness. My

father loved Beaufort with the truest friendship, and was deeply grieved

by his retreat in these unfortunate circumstances. He bitterly deplored

the false pride which led his friend to a conduct so little worthy of

the affection that united them. He lost no time in endeavouring to seek

him out, with the hope of persuading him to begin the world again

through his credit and assistance.

Beaufort had taken effectual measures to conceal himself; and it was ten

months before my father discovered his abode. Overjoyed at this

discovery, he hastened to the house, which was situated in a mean

street, near the Reuss. But when he entered, misery and despair alone

welcomed him. Beaufort had saved but a very small sum of money from the

wreck of his fortunes; but it was sufficient to provide him with

sustenance for some months, and in the mean time he hoped to procure

some respectable employment in a merchant's house. The interval was,

consequently, spent in inaction; his grief only became more deep and

rankling, when he had leisure for reflection; and at length it took so

fast hold of his mind, that at the end of three months he lay on a bed

of sickness, incapable of any exertion.

His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness; but she saw with

despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing, and that there

was no other prospect of support. But Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind

of an uncommon mould; and her courage rose to support her in her

adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw; and by various

means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life.

Several months passed in this manner. Her father grew worse; her time

was more entirely occupied in attending him; her means of subsistence

decreased; and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving

her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her; and she knelt

by Beaufort's coffin, weeping bitterly, when my father entered the

chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who

committed herself to his care; and after the interment of his friend, he

conducted her to Geneva, and placed her under the protection of a

relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife.

There was a considerable difference between the ages of my parents, but

this circumstance seemed to unite them only closer in bonds of devoted

affection. There was a sense of justice in my father's upright mind,

which rendered it necessary that he should approve highly to love

strongly. Perhaps during former years he had suffered from the

late-discovered unworthiness of one beloved, and so was disposed to set

a greater value on tried worth. There was a show of gratitude and

worship in his attachment to my mother, differing wholly from the

doating fondness of age, for it was inspired by reverence for her

virtues, and a desire to be the means of, in some degree, recompensing

her for the sorrows she had endured, but which gave inexpressible grace

to his behaviour to her. Every thing was made to yield to her wishes and

her convenience. He strove to shelter her, as a fair exotic is sheltered

by the gardener, from every rougher wind, and to surround her with all

that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent

mind. Her health, and even the tranquillity of her hitherto constant

spirit, had been shaken by what she had gone through. During the two

years that had elapsed previous to their marriage my father had

gradually relinquished all his public functions; and immediately after

their union they sought the pleasant climate of Italy, and the change of

scene and interest attendant on a tour through that land of wonders, as

a restorative for her weakened frame.

From Italy they visited Germany and France. I, their eldest child, was

born at Naples, and as an infant accompanied them in their rambles. I

remained for several years their only child. Much as they were attached

to each other, they seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection

from a very mine of love to bestow them upon me. My mother's tender

caresses, and my father's smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding

me, are my first recollections. I was their plaything and their idol,

and something better--their child, the innocent and helpless creature

bestowed on them by Heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future

lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as

they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of

what they owed towards the being to which they had given life, added to

the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined

that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of

patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken

cord, that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me.

For a long time I was their only care. My mother had much desired to

have a daughter, but I continued their single offspring. When I was

about five years old, while making an excursion beyond the frontiers of

Italy, they passed a week on the shores of the Lake of Como. Their

benevolent disposition often made them enter the cottages of the poor.

This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a

passion,--remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been

relieved,--for her to act in her turn the guardian angel to the

afflicted. During one of their walks a poor cot in the foldings of a

vale attracted their notice, as being singularly disconsolate, while the

number of half-clothed children gathered about it, spoke of penury in

its worst shape. One day, when my father had gone by himself to Milan,

my mother, accompanied by me, visited this abode. She found a peasant

and his wife, hard working, bent down by care and labour, distributing a

scanty meal to five hungry babes. Among these there was one which

attracted my mother far above all the rest. She appeared of a different

stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child

was thin, and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and,

despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of

distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes

cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of

sensibility and sweetness, that none could behold her without looking on

her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a

celestial stamp in all her features.

The peasant woman, perceiving that my mother fixed eyes of wonder and

admiration on this lovely girl, eagerly communicated her history. She

was not her child, but the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother

was a German, and had died on giving her birth. The infant had been

placed with these good people to nurse: they were better off then. They

had not been long married, and their eldest child was but just born. The

father of their charge was one of those Italians nursed in the memory of

the antique glory of Italy,--one among the \_schiavi ognor frementi\_, who

exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country. He became the

victim of its weakness. Whether he had died, or still lingered in the

dungeons of Austria, was not known. His property was confiscated, his

child became an orphan and a beggar. She continued with her foster

parents, and bloomed in their rude abode, fairer than a garden rose

among dark-leaved brambles.

When my father returned from Milan, he found playing with me in the hall

of our villa, a child fairer than pictured cherub--a creature who seemed

to shed radiance from her looks, and whose form and motions were lighter

than the chamois of the hills. The apparition was soon explained. With

his permission my mother prevailed on her rustic guardians to yield

their charge to her. They were fond of the sweet orphan. Her presence

had seemed a blessing to them; but it would be unfair to her to keep her

in poverty and want, when Providence afforded her such powerful

protection. They consulted their village priest, and the result was,

that Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents' house--my more

than sister--the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations

and my pleasures.

Every one loved Elizabeth. The passionate and almost reverential

attachment with which all regarded her became, while I shared it, my

pride and my delight. On the evening previous to her being brought to my

home, my mother had said playfully,--"I have a pretty present for my

Victor--to-morrow he shall have it." And when, on the morrow, she

presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish

seriousness, interpreted her words literally, and looked upon Elizabeth

as mine--mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on

her, I received as made to a possession of my own. We called each other

familiarly by the name of cousin. No word, no expression could body

forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me--my more than

sister, since till death she was to be mine only.

CHAPTER II.

We were brought up together; there was not quite a year difference in

our ages. I need not say that we were strangers to any species of

disunion or dispute. Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the

diversity and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer

together. Elizabeth was of a calmer and more concentrated disposition;

but, with all my ardour, I was capable of a more intense application,

and was more deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge. She busied

herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the

majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home--the

sublime shapes of the mountains; the changes of the seasons; tempest and

calm; the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine

summers,--she found ample scope for admiration and delight. While my

companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the

magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their

causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine.

Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness

akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest

sensations I can remember.

On the birth of a second son, my junior by seven years, my parents gave

up entirely their wandering life, and fixed themselves in their native

country. We possessed a house in Geneva, and a \_campagne\_ on Belrive,

the eastern shore of the lake, at the distance of rather more than a

league from the city. We resided principally in the latter, and the

lives of my parents were passed in considerable seclusion. It was my

temper to avoid a crowd, and to attach myself fervently to a few. I was

indifferent, therefore, to my schoolfellows in general; but I united

myself in the bonds of the closest friendship to one among them. Henry

Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva. He was a boy of singular

talent and fancy. He loved enterprise, hardship, and even danger, for

its own sake. He was deeply read in books of chivalry and romance. He

composed heroic songs, and began to write many a tale of enchantment and

knightly adventure. He tried to make us act plays, and to enter into

masquerades, in which the characters were drawn from the heroes of

Roncesvalles, of the Round Table of King Arthur, and the chivalrous

train who shed their blood to redeem the holy sepulchre from the hands

of the infidels.

No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My

parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence. We

felt that they were not the tyrants to rule our lot according to their

caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we

enjoyed. When I mingled with other families, I distinctly discerned how

peculiarly fortunate my lot was, and gratitude assisted the developement

of filial love.

My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some

law in my temperature they were turned, not towards childish pursuits,

but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things

indiscriminately. I confess that neither the structure of languages, nor

the code of governments, nor the politics of various states, possessed

attractions for me. It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I

desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things, or

the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied

me, still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or, in its

highest sense, the physical secrets of the world.

Meanwhile Clerval occupied himself, so to speak, with the moral

relations of things. The busy stage of life, the virtues of heroes, and

the actions of men, were his theme; and his hope and his dream was to

become one among those whose names are recorded in story, as the

gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species. The saintly soul of

Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her

sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her

celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the

living spirit of love to soften and attract: I might have become sullen

in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was

there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness. And

Clerval--could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval?--yet

he might not have been so perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his

generosity--so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for

adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of

beneficence, and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring

ambition.

I feel exquisite pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood,

before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its bright visions of

extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self.

Besides, in drawing the picture of my early days, I also record those

events which led, by insensible steps, to my after tale of misery: for

when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion, which

afterwards ruled my destiny, I find it arise, like a mountain river,

from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it

proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away

all my hopes and joys.

Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire,

therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my

predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age, we all

went on a party of pleasure to the baths near Thonon: the inclemency of

the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this

house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I

opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate, and

the wonderful facts which he relates, soon changed this feeling into

enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind; and, bounding with

joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. My father looked

carelessly at the titlepage of my book, and said, "Ah! Cornelius

Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad

trash."

If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to

me, that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that

a modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much

greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were

chimerical, while those of the former were real and practical; under

such circumstances, I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and

have contented my imagination, warmed as it was, by returning with

greater ardour to my former studies. It is even possible, that the train

of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my

ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no

means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents; and I

continued to read with the greatest avidity.

When I returned home, my first care was to procure the whole works of

this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I read

and studied the wild fancies of these writers with delight; they

appeared to me treasures known to few beside myself. I have described

myself as always having been embued with a fervent longing to penetrate

the secrets of nature. In spite of the intense labour and wonderful

discoveries of modern philosophers, I always came from my studies

discontented and unsatisfied. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have avowed

that he felt like a child picking up shells beside the great and

unexplored ocean of truth. Those of his successors in each branch of

natural philosophy with whom I was acquainted, appeared even to my boy's

apprehensions, as tyros engaged in the same pursuit.

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him, and was acquainted

with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little

more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal

lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. He might dissect,

anatomise, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in

their secondary and tertiary grades were utterly unknown to him. I had

gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human

beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I

had repined.

But here were books, and here were men who had penetrated deeper and

knew more. I took their word for all that they averred, and I became

their disciple. It may appear strange that such should arise in the

eighteenth century; but while I followed the routine of education in the

schools of Geneva, I was, to a great degree, self taught with regard to

my favourite studies. My father was not scientific, and I was left to

struggle with a child's blindness, added to a student's thirst for

knowledge. Under the guidance of my new preceptors, I entered with the

greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the

elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention.

Wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the

discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render

man invulnerable to any but a violent death!

Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a

promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of

which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always

unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and

mistake, than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors. And thus

for a time I was occupied by exploded systems, mingling, like an

unadept, a thousand contradictory theories, and floundering desperately

in a very slough of multifarious knowledge, guided by an ardent

imagination and childish reasoning, till an accident again changed the

current of my ideas.

When I was about fifteen years old we had retired to our house near

Belrive, when we witnessed a most violent and terrible thunder-storm. It

advanced from behind the mountains of Jura; and the thunder burst at

once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I

remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity

and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of

fire issue from an old and beautiful oak, which stood about twenty yards

from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had

disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited

it the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner.

It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribands

of wood. I never beheld any thing so utterly destroyed.

Before this I was not unacquainted with the more obvious laws of

electricity. On this occasion a man of great research in natural

philosophy was with us, and, excited by this catastrophe, he entered on

the explanation of a theory which he had formed on the subject of

electricity and galvanism, which was at once new and astonishing to me.

All that he said threw greatly into the shade Cornelius Agrippa,

Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, the lords of my imagination; but by

some fatality the overthrow of these men disinclined me to pursue my

accustomed studies. It seemed to me as if nothing would or could ever be

known. All that had so long engaged my attention suddenly grew

despicable. By one of those caprices of the mind, which we are perhaps

most subject to in early youth, I at once gave up my former occupations;

set down natural history and all its progeny as a deformed and abortive

creation; and entertained the greatest disdain for a would-be science,

which could never even step within the threshold of real knowledge. In

this mood of mind I betook myself to the mathematics, and the branches

of study appertaining to that science, as being built upon secure

foundations, and so worthy of my consideration.

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments

are we bound to prosperity or ruin. When I look back, it seems to me as

if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the

immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life--the last effort

made by the spirit of preservation to avert the storm that was even then

hanging in the stars, and ready to envelope me. Her victory was

announced by an unusual tranquillity and gladness of soul, which

followed the relinquishing of my ancient and latterly tormenting

studies. It was thus that I was to be taught to associate evil with

their prosecution, happiness with their disregard.

It was a strong effort of the spirit of good; but it was ineffectual.

Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and

terrible destruction.

CHAPTER III.

When I had attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I

should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto

attended the schools of Geneva; but my father thought it necessary, for

the completion of my education, that I should be made acquainted with

other customs than those of my native country. My departure was

therefore fixed at an early date; but, before the day resolved upon

could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred--an omen, as it

were, of my future misery.

Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; her illness was severe, and she

was in the greatest danger. During her illness, many arguments had been

urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her. She had,

at first, yielded to our entreaties; but when she heard that the life of

her favourite was menaced, she could no longer control her anxiety. She

attended her sick bed,--her watchful attentions triumphed over the

malignity of the distemper,--Elizabeth was saved, but the consequences

of this imprudence were fatal to her preserver. On the third day my

mother sickened; her fever was accompanied by the most alarming

symptoms, and the looks of her medical attendants prognosticated the

worst event. On her death-bed the fortitude and benignity of this best

of women did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and

myself:--"My children," she said, "my firmest hopes of future happiness

were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be

the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my

place to my younger children. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you;

and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all?

But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign

myself cheerfully to death, and will indulge a hope of meeting you in

another world."

She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death.

I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by

that most irreparable evil; the void that presents itself to the soul;

and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long

before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and

whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for

ever--that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished,

and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the ear, can be

hushed, never more to be heard. These are the reflections of the first

days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then

the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that

rude hand rent away some dear connection? and why should I describe a

sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives,

when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that

plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not

banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to

perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think

ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My departure for Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events,

was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of

some weeks. It appeared to me sacrilege so soon to leave the repose,

akin to death, of the house of mourning, and to rush into the thick of

life. I was new to sorrow, but it did not the less alarm me. I was

unwilling to quit the sight of those that remained to me; and, above

all, I desired to see my sweet Elizabeth in some degree consoled.

She indeed veiled her grief, and strove to act the comforter to us all.

She looked steadily on life, and assumed its duties with courage and

zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught to call her

uncle and cousins. Never was she so enchanting as at this time, when

she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She

forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget.

The day of my departure at length arrived. Clerval spent the last

evening with us. He had endeavoured to persuade his father to permit him

to accompany me, and to become my fellow student; but in vain. His

father was a narrow-minded trader, and saw idleness and ruin in the

aspirations and ambition of his son. Henry deeply felt the misfortune of

being debarred from a liberal education. He said little; but when he

spoke, I read in his kindling eye and in his animated glance a

restrained but firm resolve, not to be chained to the miserable details

of commerce.

[Illustration: \_The day of my departure at length arrived.\_]

We sat late. We could not tear ourselves away from each other, nor

persuade ourselves to say the word "Farewell!" It was said; and we

retired under the pretence of seeking repose, each fancying that the

other was deceived: but when at morning's dawn I descended to the

carriage which was to convey me away, they were all there--my father

again to bless me, Clerval to press my hand once more, my Elizabeth to

renew her entreaties that I would write often, and to bestow the last

feminine attentions on her playmate and friend.

I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away, and indulged

in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by

amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavouring to bestow mutual

pleasure, I was now alone. In the university, whither I was going, I

must form my own friends, and be my own protector. My life had hitherto

been remarkably secluded and domestic; and this had given me invincible

repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and

Clerval; these were "old familiar faces;" but I believed myself totally

unfitted for the company of strangers. Such were my reflections as I

commenced my journey; but as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I

ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. I had often, when at

home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place,

and had longed to enter the world, and take my station among other

human beings. Now my desires were complied with, and it would, indeed,

have been folly to repent.

I had sufficient leisure for these and many other reflections during my

journey to Ingolstadt, which was long and fatiguing. At length the high

white steeple of the town met my eyes. I alighted, and was conducted to

my solitary apartment, to spend the evening as I pleased.

The next morning I delivered my letters of introduction, and paid a

visit to some of the principal professors. Chance--or rather the evil

influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over

me from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father's

door--led me first to Mr. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He

was an uncouth man, but deeply embued in the secrets of his science. He

asked me several questions concerning my progress in the different

branches of science appertaining to natural philosophy. I replied

carelessly; and, partly in contempt, mentioned the names of my

alchymists as the principal authors I had studied. The professor stared:

"Have you," he said, "really spent your time in studying such nonsense?"

I replied in the affirmative. "Every minute," continued M. Krempe with

warmth, "every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly

and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems

and useless names. Good God! in what desert land have you lived, where

no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have

so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are

ancient? I little expected, in this enlightened and scientific age, to

find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear sir, you must

begin your studies entirely anew."

So saying, he stept aside, and wrote down a list of several books

treating of natural philosophy, which he desired me to procure; and

dismissed me, after mentioning that in the beginning of the following

week he intended to commence a course of lectures upon natural

philosophy in its general relations, and that M. Waldman, a

fellow-professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that

he omitted.

I returned home, not disappointed, for I have said that I had long

considered those authors useless whom the professor reprobated; but I

returned, not at all the more inclined to recur to these studies in any

shape. M. Krempe was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and a

repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in

favour of his pursuits. In rather a too philosophical and connected a

strain, perhaps, I have given an account of the conclusions I had come

to concerning them in my early years. As a child, I had not been content

with the results promised by the modern professors of natural science.

With a confusion of ideas only to be accounted for by my extreme youth,

and my want of a guide on such matters, I had retrod the steps of

knowledge along the paths of time, and exchanged the discoveries of

recent enquirers for the dreams of forgotten alchymists. Besides, I had

a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very

different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power;

such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed.

The ambition of the enquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation

of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I

was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of

little worth.

Such were my reflections during the first two or three days of my

residence at Ingolstadt, which were chiefly spent in becoming acquainted

with the localities, and the principal residents in my new abode. But as

the ensuing week commenced, I thought of the information which M. Krempe

had given me concerning the lectures. And although I could not consent

to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a

pulpit, I recollected what he had said of M. Waldman, whom I had never

seen, as he had hitherto been out of town.

Partly from curiosity, and partly from idleness, I went into the

lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor

was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but

with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few grey hairs

covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly

black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the

sweetest I had ever heard. He began his lecture by a recapitulation of

the history of chemistry, and the various improvements made by different

men of learning, pronouncing with fervour the names of the most

distinguished discoverers. He then took a cursory view of the present

state of the science, and explained many of its elementary terms. After

having made a few preparatory experiments, he concluded with a panegyric

upon modern chemistry, the terms of which I shall never forget:--

"The ancient teachers of this science," said he, "promised

impossibilities, and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very

little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir

of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made

to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or

crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the

recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding places. They

ascend into the heavens: they have discovered how the blood circulates,

and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost

unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the

earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows."

Such were the professor's words--rather let me say such the words of

fate, enounced to destroy me. As he went on, I felt as if my soul were

grappling with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were

touched which formed the mechanism of my being: chord after chord was

sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception,

one purpose. So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of

Frankenstein,--more, far more, will I achieve: treading in the steps

already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and

unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of

insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I

had no power to produce it. By degrees, after the morning's dawn, sleep

came. I awoke, and my yesternight's thoughts were as a dream. There

only remained a resolution to return to my ancient studies, and to

devote myself to a science for which I believed myself to possess a

natural talent. On the same day, I paid M. Waldman a visit. His manners

in private were even more mild and attractive than in public; for there

was a certain dignity in his mien during his lecture, which in his own

house was replaced by the greatest affability and kindness. I gave him

pretty nearly the same account of my former pursuits as I had given to

his fellow-professor. He heard with attention the little narration

concerning my studies, and smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa and

Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited. He

said, that "these were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern

philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their

knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names,

and arrange in connected classifications, the facts which they in a

great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours

of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in

ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." I listened to his

statement, which was delivered without any presumption or affectation;

and then added, that his lecture had removed my prejudices against

modern chemists; I expressed myself in measured terms, with the modesty

and deference due from a youth to his instructor, without letting escape

(inexperience in life would have made me ashamed) any of the enthusiasm

which stimulated my intended labours. I requested his advice concerning

the books I ought to procure.

"I am happy," said M. Waldman, "to have gained a disciple; and if your

application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success.

Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest

improvements have been and may be made: it is on that account that I

have made it my peculiar study; but at the same time I have not

neglected the other branches of science. A man would make but a very

sorry chemist if he attended to that department of human knowledge

alone. If your wish is to become really a man of science, and not merely

a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch

of natural philosophy, including mathematics."

He then took me into his laboratory, and explained to me the uses of his

various machines; instructing me as to what I ought to procure, and

promising me the use of his own when I should have advanced far enough

in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list

of books which I had requested; and I took my leave.

Thus ended a day memorable to me: it decided my future destiny.

CHAPTER IV.

From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the

most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation.

I read with ardour those works, so full of genius and discrimination,

which modern enquirers have written on these subjects. I attended the

lectures, and cultivated the acquaintance, of the men of science of the

university; and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense

and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy

and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I

found a true friend. His gentleness was never tinged by dogmatism; and

his instructions were given with an air of frankness and good nature,

that banished every idea of pedantry. In a thousand ways he smoothed for

me the path of knowledge, and made the most abstruse enquiries clear and

facile to my apprehension. My application was at first fluctuating and

uncertain; it gained strength as I proceeded, and soon became so ardent

and eager, that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning

whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.

As I applied so closely, it may be easily conceived that my progress was

rapid. My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students, and my

proficiency that of the masters. Professor Krempe often asked me, with

a sly smile, how Cornelius Agrippa went on? whilst M. Waldman expressed

the most heart-felt exultation in my progress. Two years passed in this

manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart

and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries, which I hoped to make.

None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements

of science. In other studies you go as far as others have gone before

you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit

there is continual food for discovery and wonder. A mind of moderate

capacity, which closely pursues one study, must infallibly arrive at

great proficiency in that study; and I, who continually sought the

attainment of one object of pursuit, and was solely wrapt up in this,

improved so rapidly, that, at the end of two years, I made some

discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which

procured me great esteem and admiration at the university. When I had

arrived at this point, and had become as well acquainted with the theory

and practice of natural philosophy as depended on the lessons of any of

the professors at Ingolstadt, my residence there being no longer

conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and

my native town, when an incident happened that protracted my stay.

One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the

structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life.

Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was

a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery;

yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted,

if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our enquiries. I revolved

these circumstances in my mind, and determined thenceforth to apply

myself more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which

relate to physiology. Unless I had been animated by an almost

supernatural enthusiasm, my application to this study would have been

irksome, and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must

first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of

anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural

decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had

taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no

supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale

of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness

had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the

receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of

beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to

examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days

and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. My attention was fixed upon

every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human

feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I

beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I

saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused,

examining and analysing all the minutiæ of causation, as exemplified in

the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst

of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me--a light so brilliant

and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the

immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised, that

among so many men of genius who had directed their enquiries towards the

same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing

a secret.

Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman. The sun does not

more certainly shine in the heavens, than that which I now affirm is

true. Some miracle might have produced it, yet the stages of the

discovery were distinct and probable. After days and nights of

incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of

generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing

animation upon lifeless matter.

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon

gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful

labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires, was the most

gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great

and overwhelming, that all the steps by which I had been progressively

led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. What had been

the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world

was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened

upon me at once: the information I had obtained was of a nature rather

to direct my endeavours so soon as I should point them towards the

object of my search, than to exhibit that object already accomplished. I

was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found a

passage to life, aided only by one glimmering, and seemingly

ineffectual, light.

I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes

express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with

which I am acquainted; that cannot be: listen patiently until the end of

my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that

subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to

your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my

precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of

knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town

to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature

will allow.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated

a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although

I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame

for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles,

and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour.

I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like

myself, or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much

exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give

life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at

present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an

undertaking; but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I

prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be

incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect: yet, when I

considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and

mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least

lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the

magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its

impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation

of a human being. As the minuteness of the parts formed a great

hinderance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to

make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet

in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this

determination, and having spent some months in successfully collecting

and arranging my materials, I began.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like

a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared

to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a

torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as

its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their

being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so

completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I

thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might

in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where

death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with

unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person

had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of

certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or

the next hour might realise. One secret which I alone possessed was the

hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight

labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued

nature to her hiding-places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret

toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured

the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble,

and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and

almost frantic, impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all

soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing

trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the

unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits.

I collected bones from charnel-houses; and disturbed, with profane

fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary

chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all

the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of

filthy creation: my eye-balls were starting from their sockets in

attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the

slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human

nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by

an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a

conclusion.

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in

one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow

a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage:

but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same

feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to

forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not

seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them; and I well

remembered the words of my father: "I know that while you are pleased

with yourself, you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear

regularly from you. You must pardon me if I regard any interruption in

your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally

neglected."

I knew well therefore what would be my father's feelings; but I could

not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which

had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I wished, as it were,

to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the

great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be

completed.

I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect

to vice, or faultiness on my part; but I am now convinced that he was

justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from

blame. A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and

peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to

disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge

is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself

has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for

those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that

study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human

mind. If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit

whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic

affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Cæsar would have spared his

country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the

empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.

But I forget that I am moralising in the most interesting part of my

tale; and your looks remind me to proceed.

My father made no reproach in his letters, and only took notice of my

silence by enquiring into my occupations more particularly than before.

Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not

watch the blossom or the expanding leaves--sights which before always

yielded me supreme delight--so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation.

The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a

close; and now every day showed me more plainly how well I had

succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared

rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other

unwholesome trade, than an artist occupied by his favourite employment.

Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a

most painful degree; the fall of a leaf startled me, and I shunned my

fellow-creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime. Sometimes I grew

alarmed at the wreck I perceived that I had become; the energy of my

purpose alone sustained me: my labours would soon end, and I believed

that exercise and amusement would then drive away incipient disease; and

I promised myself both of these when my creation should be complete.

CHAPTER V.

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment

of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected

the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being

into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the

morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was

nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I

saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a

convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

[Illustration: "\_By the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw

the dull, yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a

convulsive motion agitated its limbs, ... I rushed out of the

room.\_"]

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the

wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as

beautiful. Beautiful!--Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the

work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black,

and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only

formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost

of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his

shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of

human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole

purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived

myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far

exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the

dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.

Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of

the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to

compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I

had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes,

endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain:

I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I

saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of

Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted

the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her

features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my

dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the

grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my

sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered,

and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of

the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the

wretch--the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain

of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me.

His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin

wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand

was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed

down stairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which

I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up

and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and

fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the

demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy

again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I

had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those

muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing

such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and

hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly

sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with

this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had

been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a

hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned, and discovered to my

sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple

and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates

of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the

streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the

wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my

view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt

impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a

black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring, by

bodily exercise, to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed

the streets, without any clear conception of where I was, or what I was

doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on

with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:--

"Like one who, on a lonely road,

Doth walk in fear and dread,

And, having once turned round, walks on,

And turns no more his head;

Because he knows a frightful fiend

Doth close behind him tread."[1]

[Footnote 1: Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner."]

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the

various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew

not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that

was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew

nearer, I observed that it was the Swiss diligence: it stopped just

where I was standing; and, on the door being opened, I perceived Henry

Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. "My dear

Frankenstein," exclaimed he, "how glad I am to see you! how fortunate

that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!"

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought

back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home

so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot

my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during

many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in

the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval

continued talking for some time about our mutual friends, and his own

good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. "You may easily

believe," said he, "how great was the difficulty to persuade my father

that all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of

book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last,

for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that

of the Dutch schoolmaster in the Vicar of Wakefield:--'I have ten

thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.'

But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and

he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of

knowledge."

"It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left

my father, brothers, and Elizabeth."

"Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you

so seldom. By the by, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account

myself.--But, my dear Frankenstein," continued he, stopping short, and

gazing full in my face, "I did not before remark how very ill you

appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for

several nights."

"You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one

occupation, that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see:

but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an

end, and that I am at length free."

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to

allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick

pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the

thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my

apartment might still be there, alive, and walking about. I dreaded to

behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him.

Entreating him, therefore, to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the

stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock

of the door before I recollected myself. I then paused; and a cold

shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are

accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them

on the other side; but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the

apartment was empty; and my bed-room was also freed from its hideous

guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have

befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I

clapped my hands for joy, and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast;

but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed

me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse

beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same

place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud.

Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival;

but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes

for which he could not account; and my loud, unrestrained, heartless

laughter, frightened and astonished him.

"My dear Victor," cried he, "what, for God's sake, is the matter? Do not

laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?"

"Do not ask me," cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought

I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; "\_he\_ can tell.--Oh, save

me! save me!" I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled

furiously, and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! what must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he

anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was

not the witness of his grief; for I was lifeless, and did not recover my

senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever, which confined me for

several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I

afterwards learned that, knowing my father's advanced age, and unfitness

for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make

Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my

disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse

than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not

doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that

he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill; and surely nothing but the unbounded and

unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The

form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before

my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words

surprised Henry: he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my

disturbed imagination; but the pertinacity with which I continually

recurred to the same subject, persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed

its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses, that alarmed and

grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became

capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I

perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared, and that the young

buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a

divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I

felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom

disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was

attacked by the fatal passion.

"Dearest Clerval," exclaimed I, "how kind, how very good you are to me.

This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised

yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you?

I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been

the occasion; but you will forgive me."

"You will repay me entirely, if you do not discompose yourself, but get

well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I

may speak to you on one subject, may I not?"

I trembled. One subject! what could it be? Could he allude to an object

on whom I dared not even think?

"Compose yourself," said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, "I

will not mention it, if it agitates you; but your father and cousin

would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own

handwriting. They hardly know how ill you have been, and are uneasy at

your long silence."

"Is that all, my dear Henry? How could you suppose that my first

thought would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love, and

who are so deserving of my love."

"If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to

see a letter that has been lying here some days for you: it is from your

cousin, I believe."

CHAPTER VI.

Clerval then put the following letter into my hands. It was from my own

Elizabeth:--

"My dearest Cousin,

"You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant letters of dear kind

Henry are not sufficient to reassure me on your account. You are

forbidden to write--to hold a pen; yet one word from you, dear Victor,

is necessary to calm our apprehensions. For a long time I have thought

that each post would bring this line, and my persuasions have restrained

my uncle from undertaking a journey to Ingolstadt. I have prevented his

encountering the inconveniences and perhaps dangers of so long a

journey; yet how often have I regretted not being able to perform it

myself! I figure to myself that the task of attending on your sick bed

has devolved on some mercenary old nurse, who could never guess your

wishes, nor minister to them with the care and affection of your poor

cousin. Yet that is over now: Clerval writes that indeed you are getting

better. I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in

your own handwriting.

"Get well--and return to us. You will find a happy, cheerful home, and

friends who love you dearly. Your father's health is vigorous, and he

asks but to see you,--but to be assured that you are well; and not a

care will ever cloud his benevolent countenance. How pleased you would

be to remark the improvement of our Ernest! He is now sixteen, and full

of activity and spirit. He is desirous to be a true Swiss, and to enter

into foreign service; but we cannot part with him, at least until his

elder brother return to us. My uncle is not pleased with the idea of a

military career in a distant country; but Ernest never had your powers

of application. He looks upon study as an odious fetter;--his time is

spent in the open air, climbing the hills or rowing on the lake. I fear

that he will become an idler, unless we yield the point, and permit him

to enter on the profession which he has selected.

"Little alteration, except the growth of our dear children, has taken

place since you left us. The blue lake, and snow-clad mountains, they

never change;--and I think our placid home, and our contented hearts are

regulated by the same immutable laws. My trifling occupations take up my

time and amuse me, and I am rewarded for any exertions by seeing none

but happy, kind faces around me. Since you left us, but one change has

taken place in our little household. Do you remember on what occasion

Justine Moritz entered our family? Probably you do not; I will relate

her history, therefore, in a few words. Madame Moritz, her mother, was a

widow with four children, of whom Justine was the third. This girl had

always been the favourite of her father; but, through a strange

perversity, her mother could not endure her, and, after the death of M.

Moritz, treated her very ill. My aunt observed this; and, when Justine

was twelve years of age, prevailed on her mother to allow her to live at

our house. The republican institutions of our country have produced

simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great

monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the

several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders, being neither

so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A

servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France

and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of

a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include

the idea of ignorance, and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.

"Justine, you may remember, was a great favourite of yours; and I

recollect you once remarked, that if you were in an ill-humour, one

glance from Justine could dissipate it, for the same reason that

Ariosto gives concerning the beauty of Angelica--she looked so

frank-hearted and happy. My aunt conceived a great attachment for her,

by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which

she had at first intended. This benefit was fully repaid; Justine was

the most grateful little creature in the world: I do not mean that she

made any professions; I never heard one pass her lips; but you could see

by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. Although her

disposition was gay, and in many respects inconsiderate, yet she paid

the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the

model of all excellence, and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and

manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her.

"When my dearest aunt died, every one was too much occupied in their own

grief to notice poor Justine, who had attended her during her illness

with the most anxious affection. Poor Justine was very ill; but other

trials were reserved for her.

"One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the

exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience

of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her

favourites was a judgment from heaven to chastise her partiality. She

was a Roman catholic; and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea

which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure

for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor

girl! she wept when she quitted our house; she was much altered since

the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to

her manners, which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her

residence at her mother's house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The

poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged

Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of

having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting

at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased

her irritability, but she is now at peace for ever. She died on the

first approach of cold weather, at the beginning of this last winter.

Justine has returned to us; and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is

very clever and gentle, and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her

mien and her expressions continually remind me of my dear aunt.

"I must say also a few words to you, my dear cousin, of little darling

William. I wish you could see him; he is very tall of his age, with

sweet laughing blue eyes, dark eyelashes, and curling hair. When he

smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek, which are rosy with

health. He has already had one or two little \_wives\_, but Louisa Biron

is his favourite, a pretty little girl of five years of age.

"Now, dear Victor, I dare say you wish to be indulged in a little gossip

concerning the good people of Geneva. The pretty Miss Mansfield has

already received the congratulatory visits on her approaching marriage

with a young Englishman, John Melbourne, Esq. Her ugly sister, Manon,

married M. Duvillard, the rich banker, last autumn. Your favourite

schoolfellow, Louis Manoir, has suffered several misfortunes since the

departure of Clerval from Geneva. But he has already recovered his

spirits, and is reported to be on the point of marrying a very lively

pretty Frenchwoman, Madame Tavernier. She is a widow, and much older

than Manoir; but she is very much admired, and a favourite with

everybody.

"I have written myself into better spirits, dear cousin; but my anxiety

returns upon me as I conclude. Write, dearest Victor,--one line--one

word will be a blessing to us. Ten thousand thanks to Henry for his

kindness, his affection, and his many letters: we are sincerely

grateful. Adieu! my cousin; take care of yourself; and, I entreat you,

write!

"ELIZABETH LAVENZA.

"Geneva, March 18th, 17--."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Dear, dear Elizabeth!" I exclaimed, when I had read her letter, "I will

write instantly, and relieve them from the anxiety they must feel." I

wrote, and this exertion greatly fatigued me; but my convalescence had

commenced, and proceeded regularly. In another fortnight I was able to

leave my chamber.

One of my first duties on my recovery was to introduce Clerval to the

several professors of the university. In doing this, I underwent a kind

of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained.

Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of

my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of

natural philosophy. When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the

sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous

symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view.

He had also changed my apartment; for he perceived that I had acquired a

dislike for the room which had previously been my laboratory. But these

cares of Clerval were made of no avail when I visited the professors. M.

Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the

astonishing progress I had made in the sciences. He soon perceived that

I disliked the subject; but not guessing the real cause, he attributed

my feelings to modesty, and changed the subject from my improvement, to

the science itself, with a desire, as I evidently saw, of drawing me

out. What could I do? He meant to please, and he tormented me. I felt as

if he had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments

which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel

death. I writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain I felt.

Clerval, whose eyes and feelings were always quick in discerning the

sensations of others, declined the subject, alleging, in excuse, his

total ignorance; and the conversation took a more general turn. I

thanked my friend from my heart, but I did not speak. I saw plainly that

he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and

although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew

no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide to him that

event which was so often present to my recollection, but which I feared

the detail to another would only impress more deeply.

M. Krempe was not equally docile; and in my condition at that time, of

almost insupportable sensitiveness, his harsh blunt encomiums gave me

even more pain than the benevolent approbation of M. Waldman. "D--n the

fellow!" cried he; "why, M. Clerval, I assure you he has outstript us

all. Ay, stare if you please; but it is nevertheless true. A youngster

who, but a few years ago, believed in Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as in

the gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he

is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.--Ay, ay,"

continued he, observing my face expressive of suffering, "M.

Frankenstein is modest; an excellent quality in a young man. Young men

should be diffident of themselves, you know, M. Clerval: I was myself

when young; but that wears out in a very short time."

M. Krempe had now commenced an eulogy on himself, which happily turned

the conversation from a subject that was so annoying to me.

Clerval had never sympathised in my tastes for natural science; and his

literary pursuits differed wholly from those which had occupied me. He

came to the university with the design of making himself complete master

of the oriental languages, as thus he should open a field for the plan

of life he had marked out for himself. Resolved to pursue no inglorious

career, he turned his eyes toward the East, as affording scope for his

spirit of enterprise. The Persian, Arabic, and Sanscrit languages

engaged his attention, and I was easily induced to enter on the same

studies. Idleness had ever been irksome to me, and now that I wished to

fly from reflection, and hated my former studies, I felt great relief in

being the fellow-pupil with my friend, and found not only instruction

but consolation in the works of the orientalists. I did not, like him,

attempt a critical knowledge of their dialects, for I did not

contemplate making any other use of them than temporary amusement. I

read merely to understand their meaning, and they well repaid my

labours. Their melancholy is soothing, and their joy elevating, to a

degree I never experienced in studying the authors of any other country.

When you read their writings, life appears to consist in a warm sun and

a garden of roses,--in the smiles and frowns of a fair enemy, and the

fire that consumes your own heart. How different from the manly and

heroical poetry of Greece and Rome!

Summer passed away in these occupations, and my return to Geneva was

fixed for the latter end of autumn; but being delayed by several

accidents, winter and snow arrived, the roads were deemed impassable,

and my journey was retarded until the ensuing spring. I felt this delay

very bitterly; for I longed to see my native town and my beloved

friends. My return had only been delayed so long, from an unwillingness

to leave Clerval in a strange place, before he had become acquainted

with any of its inhabitants. The winter, however, was spent cheerfully;

and although the spring was uncommonly late, when it came its beauty

compensated for its dilatoriness.

The month of May had already commenced, and I expected the letter daily

which was to fix the date of my departure, when Henry proposed a

pedestrian tour in the environs of Ingolstadt, that I might bid a

personal farewell to the country I had so long inhabited. I acceded with

pleasure to this proposition: I was fond of exercise, and Clerval had

always been my favourite companion in the rambles of this nature that I

had taken among the scenes of my native country.

We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my health and spirits had

long been restored, and they gained additional strength from the

salubrious air I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and

the conversation of my friend. Study had before secluded me from the

intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but

Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me

to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children.

Excellent friend! how sincerely did you love me, and endeavour to

elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own! A selfish pursuit

had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed

and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years

ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy,

inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful

sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The

present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the

hedges, while those of summer were already in bud. I was undisturbed by

thoughts which during the preceding year had pressed upon me,

notwithstanding my endeavours to throw them off, with an invincible

burden.

Henry rejoiced in my gaiety, and sincerely sympathised in my feelings:

he exerted himself to amuse me, while he expressed the sensations that

filled his soul. The resources of his mind on this occasion were truly

astonishing: his conversation was full of imagination; and very often,

in imitation of the Persian and Arabic writers, he invented tales of

wonderful fancy and passion. At other times he repeated my favourite

poems, or drew me out into arguments, which he supported with great

ingenuity.

We returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon: the peasants were

dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy. My own spirits

were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and

hilarity.

CHAPTER VII.

On my return, I found the following letter from my father:--

"My dear Victor,

"You have probably waited impatiently for a letter to fix the date of

your return to us; and I was at first tempted to write only a few lines,

merely mentioning the day on which I should expect you. But that would

be a cruel kindness, and I dare not do it. What would be your surprise,

my son, when you expected a happy and glad welcome, to behold, on the

contrary, tears and wretchedness? And how, Victor, can I relate our

misfortune? Absence cannot have rendered you callous to our joys and

griefs; and how shall I inflict pain on my long absent son? I wish to

prepare you for the woful news, but I know it is impossible; even now

your eye skims over the page, to seek the words which are to convey to

you the horrible tidings.

"William is dead!--that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed

my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! Victor, he is murdered!

"I will not attempt to console you; but will simply relate the

circumstances of the transaction.

"Last Thursday (May 7th), I, my niece, and your two brothers, went to

walk in Plainpalais. The evening was warm and serene, and we prolonged

our walk farther than usual. It was already dusk before we thought of

returning; and then we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone

on before, were not to be found. We accordingly rested on a seat until

they should return. Presently Ernest came, and enquired if we had seen

his brother: he said, that he had been playing with him, that William

had run away to hide himself, and that he vainly sought for him, and

afterwards waited for him a long time, but that he did not return.

"This account rather alarmed us, and we continued to search for him

until night fell, when Elizabeth conjectured that he might have returned

to the house. He was not there. We returned again, with torches; for I

could not rest, when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself, and

was exposed to all the damps and dews of night; Elizabeth also suffered

extreme anguish. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy,

whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health,

stretched on the grass livid and motionless: the print of the murderer's

finger was on his neck.

"He was conveyed home, and the anguish that was visible in my

countenance betrayed the secret to Elizabeth. She was very earnest to

see the corpse. At first I attempted to prevent her; but she persisted,

and entering the room where it lay, hastily examined the neck of the

victim, and clasping her hands exclaimed, 'O God! I have murdered my

darling child!'

"She fainted, and was restored with extreme difficulty. When she again

lived, it was only to weep and sigh. She told me, that that same evening

William had teased her to let him wear a very valuable miniature that

she possessed of your mother. This picture is gone, and was doubtless

the temptation which urged the murderer to the deed. We have no trace

of him at present, although our exertions to discover him are

unremitted; but they will not restore my beloved William!

"Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps

continually, and accuses herself unjustly as the cause of his death; her

words pierce my heart. We are all unhappy; but will not that be an

additional motive for you, my son, to return and be our comforter? Your

dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, Thank God she did not live to

witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

"Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin,

but with feelings of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead of

festering, the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my

friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not

with hatred for your enemies.

"Your affectionate and afflicted father,

"ALPHONSE FRANKENSTEIN.

"Geneva, May 12th, 17--."

\* \* \* \* \*

Clerval, who had watched my countenance as I read this letter, was

surprised to observe the despair that succeeded to the joy I at first

expressed on receiving news from my friends. I threw the letter on the

table, and covered my face with my hands.

"My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed Henry, when he perceived me weep with

bitterness, "are you always to be unhappy? My dear friend, what has

happened?"

I motioned to him to take up the letter, while I walked up and down the

room in the extremest agitation. Tears also gushed from the eyes of

Clerval, as he read the account of my misfortune.

"I can offer you no consolation, my friend," said he; "your disaster is

irreparable. What do you intend to do?"

"To go instantly to Geneva: come with me, Henry, to order the horses."

During our walk, Clerval endeavoured to say a few words of consolation;

he could only express his heart-felt sympathy. "Poor William!" said he,

"dear lovely child, he now sleeps with his angel mother! Who that had

seen him bright and joyous in his young beauty, but must weep over his

untimely loss! To die so miserably; to feel the murderer's grasp! How

much more a murderer, that could destroy such radiant innocence! Poor

little fellow! one only consolation have we; his friends mourn and weep,

but he is at rest. The pang is over, his sufferings are at an end for

ever. A sod covers his gentle form, and he knows no pain. He can no

longer be a subject for pity; we must reserve that for his miserable

survivors."

Clerval spoke thus as we hurried through the streets; the words

impressed themselves on my mind, and I remembered them afterwards in

solitude. But now, as soon as the horses arrived, I hurried into a

cabriolet, and bade farewell to my friend.

My journey was very melancholy. At first I wished to hurry on, for I

longed to console and sympathise with my loved and sorrowing friends;

but when I drew near my native town, I slackened my progress. I could

hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind. I

passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for

nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time! One

sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little

circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which,

although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive.

Fear overcame me; I dared not advance, dreading a thousand nameless

evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them.

I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I

contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm; and

the snowy mountains, "the palaces of nature," were not changed. By

degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my

journey towards Geneva.

The road ran by the side of the lake, which became narrower as I

approached my native town. I discovered more distinctly the black sides

of Jura, and the bright summit of Mont Blanc. I wept like a child.

"Dear mountains! my own beautiful lake! how do you welcome your

wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid.

Is this to prognosticate peace, or to mock at my unhappiness?"

I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself tedious by dwelling on

these preliminary circumstances; but they were days of comparative

happiness, and I think of them with pleasure. My country, my beloved

country! who but a native can tell the delight I took in again beholding

thy streams, thy mountains, and, more than all, thy lovely lake!

Yet, as I drew nearer home, grief and fear again overcame me. Night also

closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt

still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil,

and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched

of human beings. Alas! I prophesied truly, and failed only in one single

circumstance, that in all the misery I imagined and dreaded, I did not

conceive the hundredth part of the anguish I was destined to endure.

It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the

gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night

at Secheron, a village at the distance of half a league from the city.

The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit

the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass

through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at

Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightnings playing on

the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful figures. The storm

appeared to approach rapidly; and, on landing, I ascended a low hill,

that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were

clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its

violence quickly increased.

I quitted my seat, and walked on, although the darkness and storm

increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over

my head. It was echoed from Salêve, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy;

vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake,

making it appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every

thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from

the preceding flash. The storm, as is often the case in Switzerland,

appeared at once in various parts of the heavens. The most violent storm

hung exactly north of the town, over that part of the lake which lies

between the promontory of Belrive and the village of Copêt. Another

storm enlightened Jura with faint flashes; and another darkened and

sometimes disclosed the Môle, a peaked mountain to the east of the lake.

While I watched the tempest, so beautiful yet terrific, I wandered on

with a hasty step. This noble war in the sky elevated my spirits; I

clasped my hands, and exclaimed aloud, "William, dear angel! this is thy

funeral, this thy dirge!" As I said these words, I perceived in the

gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood

fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning

illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its

gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than

belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the

filthy dæmon, to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be

(I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner

did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its

truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for

support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom.

Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child. \_He\_ was

the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an

irresistible proof of the fact. I thought of pursuing the devil; but it

would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging

among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salêve, a

hill that bounds Plainpalais on the south. He soon reached the summit,

and disappeared.

I remained motionless. The thunder ceased; but the rain still continued,

and the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness. I revolved in

my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole

train of my progress towards the creation; the appearance of the work of

my own hands alive at my bedside; its departure. Two years had now

nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life; and was

this his first crime? Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved

wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery; had he not murdered my

brother?

No one can conceive the anguish I suffered during the remainder of the

night, which I spent, cold and wet, in the open air. But I did not feel

the inconvenience of the weather; my imagination was busy in scenes of

evil and despair. I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind,

and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such

as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own

vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy

all that was dear to me.

Day dawned; and I directed my steps towards the town. The gates were

open, and I hastened to my father's house. My first thought was to

discover what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be

made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. A

being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life, had met me at

midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain. I remembered

also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time

that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a

tale otherwise so utterly improbable. I well knew that if any other had

communicated such a relation to me, I should have looked upon it as the

ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would

elude all pursuit, even if I were so far credited as to persuade my

relatives to commence it. And then of what use would be pursuit? Who

could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont

Salêve? These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain

silent.

It was about five in the morning when I entered my father's house. I

told the servants not to disturb the family, and went into the library

to attend their usual hour of rising.

Six years had elapsed, passed as a dream but for one indelible trace,

and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before

my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and venerable parent! He still

remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over

the mantel-piece. It was an historical subject, painted at my father's

desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair,

kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic, and her

cheek pale; but there was an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly

permitted the sentiment of pity. Below this picture was a miniature of

William; and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. While I was thus

engaged, Ernest entered: he had heard me arrive, and hastened to welcome

me. He expressed a sorrowful delight to see me: "Welcome, my dearest

Victor," said he. "Ah! I wish you had come three months ago, and then

you would have found us all joyous and delighted. You come to us now to

share a misery which nothing can alleviate; yet your presence will, I

hope, revive our father, who seems sinking under his misfortune; and

your persuasions will induce poor Elizabeth to cease her vain and

tormenting self-accusations.--Poor William! he was our darling and our

pride!"

Tears, unrestrained, fell from my brother's eyes; a sense of mortal

agony crept over my frame. Before, I had only imagined the wretchedness

of my desolated home; the reality came on me as a new, and a not less

terrible, disaster. I tried to calm Ernest; I enquired more minutely

concerning my father, and her I named my cousin.

"She most of all," said Ernest, "requires consolation; she accused

herself of having caused the death of my brother, and that made her very

wretched. But since the murderer has been discovered--"

"The murderer discovered! Good God! how can that be? who could attempt

to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the

winds, or confine a mountain-stream with a straw. I saw him too; he was

free last night!"

"I do not know what you mean," replied my brother, in accents of wonder,

"but to us the discovery we have made completes our misery. No one would

believe it at first; and even now Elizabeth will not be convinced,

notwithstanding all the evidence. Indeed, who would credit that Justine

Moritz, who was so amiable, and fond of all the family, could suddenly

become capable of so frightful, so appalling a crime?"

"Justine Moritz! Poor, poor girl, is she the accused? But it is

wrongfully; every one knows that; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?"

"No one did at first; but several circumstances came out, that have

almost forced conviction upon us; and her own behaviour has been so

confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight that, I fear,

leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried to-day, and you will

then hear all."

He related that, the morning on which the murder of poor William had

been discovered, Justine had been taken ill, and confined to her bed for

several days. During this interval, one of the servants, happening to

examine the apparel she had worn on the night of the murder, had

discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged

to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly showed it to

one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went

to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On

being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a

great measure by her extreme confusion of manner.

This was a strange tale, but it did not shake my faith; and I replied

earnestly, "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor,

good Justine, is innocent."

At that instant my father entered. I saw unhappiness deeply impressed on

his countenance, but he endeavoured to welcome me cheerfully; and, after

we had exchanged our mournful greeting, would have introduced some other

topic than that of our disaster, had not Ernest exclaimed, "Good God,

papa! Victor says that he knows who was the murderer of poor William."

"We do also, unfortunately," replied my father; "for indeed I had rather

have been for ever ignorant than have discovered so much depravity and

ingratitude in one I valued so highly."

"My dear father, you are mistaken; Justine is innocent."

"If she is, God forbid that she should suffer as guilty. She is to be

tried to-day, and I hope, I sincerely hope, that she will be acquitted."

This speech calmed me. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that

Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I

had no fear, therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be

brought forward strong enough to convict her. My tale was not one to

announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness

by the vulgar. Did any one indeed exist, except I, the creator, who

would believe, unless his senses convinced him, in the existence of the

living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose

upon the world?

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had altered her since I last

beheld her; it had endowed her with loveliness surpassing the beauty of

her childish years. There was the same candour, the same vivacity, but

it was allied to an expression more full of sensibility and intellect.

She welcomed me with the greatest affection. "Your arrival, my dear

cousin," said she, "fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means

to justify my poor guiltless Justine. Alas! who is safe, if she be

convicted of crime? I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my

own. Our misfortune is doubly hard to us; we have not only lost that

lovely darling boy, but this poor girl, whom I sincerely love, is to be

torn away by even a worse fate. If she is condemned, I never shall know

joy more. But she will not, I am sure she will not; and then I shall be

happy again, even after the sad death of my little William."

"She is innocent, my Elizabeth," said I, "and that shall be proved; fear

nothing, but let your spirits be cheered by the assurance of her

acquittal."

"How kind and generous you are! every one else believes in her guilt,

and that made me wretched, for I knew that it was impossible: and to see

every one else prejudiced in so deadly a manner rendered me hopeless and

despairing." She wept.

"Dearest niece," said my father, "dry your tears. If she is, as you

believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our laws, and the activity

with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality."

CHAPTER VIII.

We passed a few sad hours, until eleven o'clock, when the trial was to

commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend

as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this

wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture. It was to be

decided, whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would

cause the death of two of my fellow-beings: one a smiling babe, full of

innocence and joy; the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every

aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror.

Justine also was a girl of merit, and possessed qualities which promised

to render her life happy: now all was to be obliterated in an

ignominious grave; and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have

confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine; but I was

absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been

considered as the ravings of a madman, and would not have exculpated her

who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in mourning; and her

countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her

feelings, exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in

innocence, and did not tremble, although gazed on and execrated by

thousands; for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have

excited, was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the

imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed. She was

tranquil, yet her tranquillity was evidently constrained; and as her

confusion had before been adduced as a proof of her guilt, she worked up

her mind to an appearance of courage. When she entered the court, she

threw her eyes round it, and quickly discovered where we were seated. A

tear seemed to dim her eye when she saw us; but she quickly recovered

herself, and a look of sorrowful affection seemed to attest her utter

guiltlessness.

The trial began; and, after the advocate against her had stated the

charge, several witnesses were called. Several strange facts combined

against her, which might have staggered any one who had not such proof

of her innocence as I had. She had been out the whole of the night on

which the murder had been committed, and towards morning had been

perceived by a market-woman not far from the spot where the body of the

murdered child had been afterwards found. The woman asked her what she

did there; but she looked very strangely, and only returned a confused

and unintelligible answer. She returned to the house about eight

o'clock; and, when one enquired where she had passed the night, she

replied that she had been looking for the child, and demanded earnestly

if any thing had been heard concerning him. When shown the body, she

fell into violent hysterics, and kept her bed for several days. The

picture was then produced, which the servant had found in her pocket;

and when Elizabeth, in a faltering voice, proved that it was the same

which, an hour before the child had been missed, she had placed round

his neck, a murmur of horror and indignation filled the court.

Justine was called on for her defence. As the trial had proceeded, her

countenance had altered. Surprise, horror, and misery were strongly

expressed. Sometimes she struggled with her tears; but, when she was

desired to plead, she collected her powers, and spoke, in an audible,

although variable voice.

"God knows," she said, "how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend

that my protestations should acquit me: I rest my innocence on a plain

and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me;

and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a

favourable interpretation, where any circumstance appears doubtful or

suspicious."

She then related that, by the permission of Elizabeth, she had passed

the evening of the night on which the murder had been committed at the

house of an aunt at Chêne, a village situated at about a league from

Geneva. On her return, at about nine o'clock, she met a man, who asked

her if she had seen any thing of the child who was lost. She was alarmed

by this account, and passed several hours in looking for him, when the

gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of

the night in a barn belonging to a cottage, being unwilling to call up

the inhabitants, to whom she was well known. Most of the night she spent

here watching; towards morning she believed that she slept for a few

minutes; some steps disturbed her, and she awoke. It was dawn, and she

quitted her asylum, that she might again endeavour to find my brother.

If she had gone near the spot where his body lay, it was without her

knowledge. That she had been bewildered when questioned by the

market-woman was not surprising, since she had passed a sleepless night,

and the fate of poor William was yet uncertain. Concerning the picture

she could give no account.

"I know," continued the unhappy victim, "how heavily and fatally this

one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining

it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to

conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been

placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked. I believe that I have

no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been so wicked as to

destroy me wantonly. Did the murderer place it there? I know of no

opportunity afforded him for so doing; or, if I had, why should he have

stolen the jewel, to part with it again so soon?

"I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for

hope. I beg permission to have a few witnesses examined concerning my

character; and if their testimony shall not overweigh my supposed guilt,

I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my

innocence."

Several witnesses were called, who had known her for many years, and

they spoke well of her; but fear, and hatred of the crime of which they

supposed her guilty, rendered them timorous, and unwilling to come

forward. Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent

dispositions and irreproachable conduct, about to fail the accused,

when, although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the

court.

"I am," said she, "the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered, or

rather his sister, for I was educated by, and have lived with his

parents ever since and even long before, his birth. It may therefore be

judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion; but when I see a

fellow-creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended

friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of

her character. I am well acquainted with the accused. I have lived in

the same house with her, at one time for five, and at another for nearly

two years. During all that period she appeared to me the most amiable

and benevolent of human creatures. She nursed Madame Frankenstein, my

aunt, in her last illness, with the greatest affection and care; and

afterwards attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner

that excited the admiration of all who knew her; after which she again

lived in my uncle's house, where she was beloved by all the family. She

was warmly attached to the child who is now dead, and acted towards him

like a most affectionate mother. For my own part, I do not hesitate to

say, that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I

believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She had no temptation for

such an action: as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she

had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her; so

much do I esteem and value her."

A murmur of approbation followed Elizabeth's simple and powerful appeal;

but it was excited by her generous interference, and not in favour of

poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed

violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude. She herself wept

as Elizabeth spoke, but she did not answer. My own agitation and anguish

was extreme during the whole trial. I believed in her innocence; I knew

it. Could the dæmon, who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my

brother, also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death

and ignominy? I could not sustain the horror of my situation; and when I

perceived that the popular voice, and the countenances of the judges,

had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in

agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained

by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not

forego their hold.

I passed a night of unmingled wretchedness. In the morning I went to the

court; my lips and throat were parched. I dared not ask the fatal

question; but I was known, and the officer guessed the cause of my

visit. The ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was

condemned.

I cannot pretend to describe what I then felt. I had before experienced

sensations of horror; and I have endeavoured to bestow upon them

adequate expressions, but words cannot convey an idea of the

heart-sickening despair that I then endured. The person to whom I

addressed myself added, that Justine had already confessed her guilt.

"That evidence," he observed, "was hardly required in so glaring a case,

but I am glad of it; and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a

criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive."

This was strange and unexpected intelligence; what could it mean? Had my

eyes deceived me? and was I really as mad as the whole world would

believe me to be, if I disclosed the object of my suspicions? I hastened

to return home, and Elizabeth eagerly demanded the result.

"My cousin," replied I, "it is decided as you may have expected; all

judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer, than that one guilty

should escape. But she has confessed."

This was a dire blow to poor Elizabeth, who had relied with firmness

upon Justine's innocence. "Alas!" said she, "how shall I ever again

believe in human goodness? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my

sister, how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray?

her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile, and yet she has

committed a murder."

Soon after we heard that the poor victim had expressed a desire to see

my cousin. My father wished her not to go; but said, that he left it to

her own judgment and feelings to decide. "Yes," said Elizabeth, "I will

go, although she is guilty; and you, Victor, shall accompany me: I

cannot go alone." The idea of this visit was torture to me, yet I could

not refuse.

We entered the gloomy prison-chamber, and beheld Justine sitting on some

straw at the farther end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested

on her knees. She rose on seeing us enter; and when we were left alone

with her, she threw herself at the feet of Elizabeth, weeping bitterly.

My cousin wept also.

"Oh, Justine!" said she, "why did you rob me of my last consolation? I

relied on your innocence; and although I was then very wretched, I was

not so miserable as I am now."

"And do you also believe that I am so very, very wicked? Do you also

join with my enemies to crush me, to condemn me as a murderer?" Her

voice was suffocated with sobs.

"Rise, my poor girl," said Elizabeth, "why do you kneel, if you are

innocent? I am not one of your enemies; I believed you guiltless,

notwithstanding every evidence, until I heard that you had yourself

declared your guilt. That report, you say, is false; and be assured,

dear Justine, that nothing can shake my confidence in you for a moment,

but your own confession."

"I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain

absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my

other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my

confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost

began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened

excommunication and hell fire in my last moments, if I continued

obdurate. Dear lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a

wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil

hour I subscribed to a lie; and now only am I truly miserable."

She paused, weeping, and then continued--"I thought with horror, my

sweet lady, that you should believe your Justine, whom your blessed aunt

had so highly honoured, and whom you loved, was a creature capable of a

crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated. Dear

William! dearest blessed child! I soon shall see you again in heaven,

where we shall all be happy; and that consoles me, going as I am to

suffer ignominy and death."

"Oh, Justine! forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you. Why

did you confess? But do not mourn, dear girl. Do not fear. I will

proclaim, I will prove your innocence. I will melt the stony hearts of

your enemies by my tears and prayers. You shall not die!--You, my

play-fellow, my companion, my sister, perish on the scaffold! No! no! I

never could survive so horrible a misfortune."

Justine shook her head mournfully. "I do now not fear to die," she said;

"that pang is past. God raises my weakness, and gives me courage to

endure the worst. I leave a sad and bitter world; and if you remember

me, and think of me as of one unjustly condemned, I am resigned to the

fate awaiting me. Learn from me, dear lady, to submit in patience to the

will of Heaven!"

During this conversation I had retired to a corner of the prison-room,

where I could conceal the horrid anguish that possessed me. Despair! Who

dared talk of that? The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the

awful boundary between life and death, felt not as I did, such deep and

bitter agony. I gnashed my teeth, and ground them together, uttering a

groan that came from my inmost soul. Justine started. When she saw who

it was, she approached me, and said, "Dear sir, you are very kind to

visit me; you, I hope, do not believe that I am guilty?"

I could not answer. "No, Justine," said Elizabeth; "he is more convinced

of your innocence than I was; for even when he heard that you had

confessed, he did not credit it."

"I truly thank him. In these last moments I feel the sincerest gratitude

towards those who think of me with kindness. How sweet is the affection

of others to such a wretch as I am! It removes more than half my

misfortune; and I feel as if I could die in peace, now that my innocence

is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin."

Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself. She indeed

gained the resignation she desired. But I, the true murderer, felt the

never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or

consolation. Elizabeth also wept, and was unhappy; but her's also was

the misery of innocence, which, like a cloud that passes over the fair

moon, for a while hides but cannot tarnish its brightness. Anguish and

despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within

me, which nothing could extinguish. We stayed several hours with

Justine; and it was with great difficulty that Elizabeth could tear

herself away. "I wish," cried she, "that I were to die with you; I

cannot live in this world of misery."

Justine assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty

repressed her bitter tears. She embraced Elizabeth, and said, in a voice

of half-suppressed emotion, "Farewell, sweet lady, dearest Elizabeth, my

beloved and only friend; may Heaven, in its bounty, bless and preserve

you; may this be the last misfortune that you will ever suffer! Live,

and be happy, and make others so."

And on the morrow Justine died. Elizabeth's heart-rending eloquence

failed to move the judges from their settled conviction in the

criminality of the saintly sufferer. My passionate and indignant appeals

were lost upon them. And when I received their cold answers, and heard

the harsh unfeeling reasoning of these men, my purposed avowal died away

on my lips. Thus I might proclaim myself a madman, but not revoke the

sentence passed upon my wretched victim. She perished on the scaffold as

a murderess!

From the tortures of my own heart, I turned to contemplate the deep and

voiceless grief of my Elizabeth. This also was my doing! And my father's

woe, and the desolation of that late so smiling home--all was the work

of my thrice-accursed hands! Ye weep, unhappy ones; but these are not

your last tears! Again shall you raise the funeral wail, and the sound

of your lamentations shall again and again be heard! Frankenstein, your

son, your kinsman, your early, much-loved friend; he who would spend

each vital drop of blood for your sakes--who has no thought nor sense of

joy, except as it is mirrored also in your dear countenances--who would

fill the air with blessings, and spend his life in serving you--he bids

you weep--to shed countless tears; happy beyond his hopes, if thus

inexorable fate be satisfied, and if the destruction pause before the

peace of the grave have succeeded to your sad torments!

Thus spoke my prophetic soul, as, torn by remorse, horror, and despair,

I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and

Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing is more painful to the human mind, than, after the feelings have

been worked up by a quick succession of events, the dead calmness of

inaction and certainty which follows, and deprives the soul both of hope

and fear. Justine died; she rested; and I was alive. The blood flowed

freely in my veins, but a weight of despair and remorse pressed on my

heart, which nothing could remove. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered

like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond

description horrible, and more, much more (I persuaded myself), was yet

behind. Yet my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue. I

had begun life with benevolent intentions, and thirsted for the moment

when I should put them in practice, and make myself useful to my

fellow-beings. Now all was blasted: instead of that serenity of

conscience, which allowed me to look back upon the past with

self-satisfaction, and from thence to gather promise of new hopes, I was

seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a

hell of intense tortures, such as no language can describe.

This state of mind preyed upon my health, which had perhaps never

entirely recovered from the first shock it had sustained. I shunned the

face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude

was my only consolation--deep, dark, deathlike solitude.

My father observed with pain the alteration perceptible in my

disposition and habits, and endeavoured by arguments deduced from the

feelings of his serene conscience and guiltless life, to inspire me with

fortitude, and awaken in me the courage to dispel the dark cloud which

brooded over me. "Do you think, Victor," said he, "that I do not suffer

also? No one could love a child more than I loved your brother;" (tears

came into his eyes as he spoke;) "but is it not a duty to the survivors,

that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an

appearance of immoderate grief? It is also a duty owed to yourself; for

excessive sorrow prevents improvement or enjoyment, or even the

discharge of daily usefulness, without which no man is fit for society."

This advice, although good, was totally inapplicable to my case; I

should have been the first to hide my grief, and console my friends, if

remorse had not mingled its bitterness, and terror its alarm with my

other sensations. Now I could only answer my father with a look of

despair, and endeavour to hide myself from his view.

About this time we retired to our house at Belrive. This change was

particularly agreeable to me. The shutting of the gates regularly at ten

o'clock, and the impossibility of remaining on the lake after that hour,

had rendered our residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome to

me. I was now free. Often, after the rest of the family had retired for

the night, I took the boat, and passed many hours upon the water.

Sometimes, with my sails set, I was carried by the wind; and sometimes,

after rowing into the middle of the lake, I left the boat to pursue its

own course, and gave way to my own miserable reflections. I was often

tempted, when all was at peace around me, and I the only unquiet thing

that wandered restless in a scene so beautiful and heavenly--if I except

some bat, or the frogs, whose harsh and interrupted croaking was heard

only when I approached the shore--often, I say, I was tempted to plunge

into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my

calamities for ever. But I was restrained, when I thought of the heroic

and suffering Elizabeth, whom I tenderly loved, and whose existence was

bound up in mine. I thought also of my father, and surviving brother:

should I by my base desertion leave them exposed and unprotected to the

malice of the fiend whom I had let loose among them?

At these moments I wept bitterly, and wished that peace would revisit my

mind only that I might afford them consolation and happiness. But that

could not be. Remorse extinguished every hope. I had been the author of

unalterable evils; and I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I

had created should perpetrate some new wickedness. I had an obscure

feeling that all was not over, and that he would still commit some

signal crime, which by its enormity should almost efface the

recollection of the past. There was always scope for fear, so long as

any thing I loved remained behind. My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be

conceived. When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became

inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so

thoughtlessly bestowed. When I reflected on his crimes and malice, my

hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation. I would have made a

pilgrimage to the highest peak of the Andes, could I, when there, have

precipitated him to their base. I wished to see him again, that I might

wreak the utmost extent of abhorrence on his head, and avenge the deaths

of William and Justine.

Our house was the house of mourning. My father's health was deeply

shaken by the horror of the recent events. Elizabeth was sad and

desponding; she no longer took delight in her ordinary occupations; all

pleasure seemed to her sacrilege toward the dead; eternal woe and tears

she then thought was the just tribute she should pay to innocence so

blasted and destroyed. She was no longer that happy creature, who in

earlier youth wandered with me on the banks of the lake, and talked with

ecstasy of our future prospects. The first of those sorrows which are

sent to wean us from the earth, had visited her, and its dimming

influence quenched her dearest smiles.

"When I reflect, my dear cousin," said she, "on the miserable death of

Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they before

appeared to me. Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and

injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of

ancient days, or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more

familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come

home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood.

Yet I am certainly unjust. Every body believed that poor girl to be

guilty; and if she could have committed the crime for which she

suffered, assuredly she would have been the most depraved of human

creatures. For the sake of a few jewels, to have murdered the son of her

benefactor and friend, a child whom she had nursed from its birth, and

appeared to love as if it had been her own! I could not consent to the

death of any human being; but certainly I should have thought such a

creature unfit to remain in the society of men. But she was innocent. I

know, I feel she was innocent; you are of the same opinion, and that

confirms me. Alas! Victor, when falsehood can look so like the truth,

who can assure themselves of certain happiness? I feel as if I were

walking on the edge of a precipice, towards which thousands are

crowding, and endeavouring to plunge me into the abyss. William and

Justine were assassinated, and the murderer escapes; he walks about the

world free, and perhaps respected. But even if I were condemned to

suffer on the scaffold for the same crimes, I would not change places

with such a wretch."

I listened to this discourse with the extremest agony. I, not in deed,

but in effect, was the true murderer. Elizabeth read my anguish in my

countenance, and kindly taking my hand, said, "My dearest friend, you

must calm yourself. These events have affected me, God knows how deeply;

but I am not so wretched as you are. There is an expression of despair,

and sometimes of revenge, in your countenance, that makes me tremble.

Dear Victor, banish these dark passions. Remember the friends around

you, who centre all their hopes in you. Have we lost the power of

rendering you happy? Ah! while we love--while we are true to each other,

here in this land of peace and beauty, your native country, we may reap

every tranquil blessing,--what can disturb our peace?"

And could not such words from her whom I fondly prized before every

other gift of fortune, suffice to chase away the fiend that lurked in my

heart? Even as she spoke I drew near to her, as if in terror; lest at

that very moment the destroyer had been near to rob me of her.

Thus not the tenderness of friendship, nor the beauty of earth, nor of

heaven, could redeem my soul from woe: the very accents of love were

ineffectual. I was encompassed by a cloud which no beneficial influence

could penetrate. The wounded deer dragging its fainting limbs to some

untrodden brake, there to gaze upon the arrow which had pierced it, and

to die--was but a type of me.

Sometimes I could cope with the sullen despair that overwhelmed me: but

sometimes the whirlwind passions of my soul drove me to seek, by bodily

exercise and by change of place, some relief from my intolerable

sensations. It was during an access of this kind that I suddenly left my

home, and bending my steps towards the near Alpine valleys, sought in

the magnificence, the eternity of such scenes, to forget myself and my

ephemeral, because human, sorrows. My wanderings were directed towards

the valley of Chamounix. I had visited it frequently during my boyhood.

Six years had passed since then: \_I\_ was a wreck--but nought had changed

in those savage and enduring scenes.

I performed the first part of my journey on horseback. I afterwards

hired a mule, as the more sure-footed, and least liable to receive

injury on these rugged roads. The weather was fine: it was about the

middle of the month of August, nearly two months after the death of

Justine; that miserable epoch from which I dated all my woe. The weight

upon my spirit was sensibly lightened as I plunged yet deeper in the

ravine of Arve. The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on

every side--the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the

dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as

Omnipotence--and I ceased to fear, or to bend before any being less

almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here

displayed in their most terrific guise. Still, as I ascended higher, the

valley assumed a more magnificent and astonishing character. Ruined

castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains; the impetuous

Arve, and cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the

trees, formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and

rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids

and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the

habitations of another race of beings.

I passed the bridge of Pélissier, where the ravine, which the river

forms, opened before me, and I began to ascend the mountain that

overhangs it. Soon after I entered the valley of Chamounix. This valley

is more wonderful and sublime, but not so beautiful and picturesque, as

that of Servox, through which I had just passed. The high and snowy

mountains were its immediate boundaries; but I saw no more ruined

castles and fertile fields. Immense glaciers approached the road; I

heard the rumbling thunder of the falling avalanche, and marked the

smoke of its passage. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont

Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding \_aiguilles\_, and its

tremendous \_dôme\_ overlooked the valley.

A tingling long-lost sense of pleasure often came across me during this

journey. Some turn in the road, some new object suddenly perceived and

recognised, reminded me of days gone by, and were associated with the

light-hearted gaiety of boyhood. The very winds whispered in soothing

accents, and maternal nature bade me weep no more. Then again the kindly

influence ceased to act--I found myself fettered again to grief, and

indulging in all the misery of reflection. Then I spurred on my animal,

striving so to forget the world, my fears, and, more than all,

myself--or, in a more desperate fashion, I alighted, and threw myself on

the grass, weighed down by horror and despair.

At length I arrived at the village of Chamounix. Exhaustion succeeded to

the extreme fatigue both of body and of mind which I had endured. For a

short space of time I remained at the window, watching the pallid

lightnings that played above Mont Blanc, and listening to the rushing of

the Arve, which pursued its noisy way beneath. The same lulling sounds

acted as a lullaby to my too keen sensations: when I placed my head upon

my pillow, sleep crept over me; I felt it as it came, and blest the

giver of oblivion.

CHAPTER X.

I spent the following day roaming through the valley. I stood beside the

sources of the Arveiron, which take their rise in a glacier, that with

slow pace is advancing down from the summit of the hills, to barricade

the valley. The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy

wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered

around; and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of

imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves, or the fall of

some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche, or the cracking,

reverberated along the mountains of the accumulated ice, which, through

the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn,

as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. These sublime and

magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was

capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling;

and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and

tranquillised it. In some degree, also, they diverted my mind from the

thoughts over which it had brooded for the last month. I retired to rest

at night; my slumbers, as it were, waited on and ministered to by the

assemblance of grand shapes which I had contemplated during the day.

They congregated round me; the unstained snowy mountain-top, the

glittering pinnacle, the pine woods, and ragged bare ravine; the eagle,

soaring amidst the clouds--they all gathered round me, and bade me be at

peace.

Where had they fled when the next morning I awoke? All of

soul-inspiriting fled with sleep, and dark melancholy clouded every

thought. The rain was pouring in torrents, and thick mists hid the

summits of the mountains, so that I even saw not the faces of those

mighty friends. Still I would penetrate their misty veil, and seek them

in their cloudy retreats. What were rain and storm to me? My mule was

brought to the door, and I resolved to ascend to the summit of

Montanvert. I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and

ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It

had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy, that gave wings to the soul,

and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. The

sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect

of solemnising my mind, and causing me to forget the passing cares of

life. I determined to go without a guide, for I was well acquainted with

the path, and the presence of another would destroy the solitary

grandeur of the scene.

The ascent is precipitous, but the path is cut into continual and short

windings, which enable you to surmount the perpendicularity of the

mountain. It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the

traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken

and strewed on the ground; some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning

upon the jutting rocks of the mountain, or transversely upon other

trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of

snow, down which stones continually roll from above; one of them is

particularly dangerous, as the slightest sound, such as even speaking in

a loud voice, produces a concussion of air sufficient to draw

destruction upon the head of the speaker. The pines are not tall or

luxuriant, but they are sombre, and add an air of severity to the scene.

I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers

which ran through it, and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite

mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain

poured from the dark sky, and added to the melancholy impression I

received from the objects around me. Alas! why does man boast of

sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders

them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger,

thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by

every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may

convey to us.

We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.

We rise; one wand'ring thought pollutes the day.

We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh or weep,

Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;

It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,

The path of its departure still is free.

Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;

Nought may endure but mutability!

It was nearly noon when I arrived at the top of the ascent. For some

time I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice. A mist covered

both that and the surrounding mountains. Presently a breeze dissipated

the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier. The surface is very uneven,

rising like the waves of a troubled sea, descending low, and

interspersed by rifts that sink deep. The field of ice is almost a

league in width, but I spent nearly two hours in crossing it. The

opposite mountain is a bare perpendicular rock. From the side where I

now stood Montanvert was exactly opposite, at the distance of a league;

and above it rose Mont Blanc, in awful majesty. I remained in a recess

of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. The sea, or

rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose

aerial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks

shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before

sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy; I exclaimed--"Wandering

spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow

me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the

joys of life."

As I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance,

advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices

in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as

he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled: a mist came

over my eyes, and I felt a faintness seize me; but I was quickly

restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape

came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch

whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait

his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached;

his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and

malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible

for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; rage and hatred had at

first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him

with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt.

"Devil," I exclaimed, "do you dare approach me? and do not you fear the

fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile

insect! or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! and, oh! that I

could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those

victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!"

"I expected this reception," said the dæmon. "All men hate the wretched;

how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things!

Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art

bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You

purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty

towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If

you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace;

but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated

with the blood of your remaining friends."

"Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! the tortures of hell are too

mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! you reproach me with

your creation; come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so

negligently bestowed."

My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the

feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another.

He easily eluded me, and said--

"Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred

on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to

increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of

anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made

me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints

more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to

thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my

natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which

thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and

trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and

affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be

thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy

for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am

irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend.

Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

"Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and

me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in

which one must fall."

"How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable

eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe

me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and

humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor

me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me

nothing? They spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary

glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of

ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one

which man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder

to me than your fellow-beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my

existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my

destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no

terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my

wretchedness. Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them

from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not

only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up

in the whirlwinds of its rage. Let your compassion be moved, and do not

disdain me. Listen to my tale: when you have heard that, abandon or

commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The

guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their

own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You

accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience,

destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man! Yet I

ask you not to spare me: listen to me; and then, if you can, and if you

will, destroy the work of your hands."

"Why do you call to my remembrance," I rejoined, "circumstances, of

which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and

author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light!

Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you! You have

made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to

consider whether I am just to you, or not. Begone! relieve me from the

sight of your detested form."

"Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said, and placed his hated hands

before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; "thus I take from

thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant

me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possessed, I demand this

from you. Hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of

this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon

the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to

hide itself behind yon snowy precipices, and illuminate another world,

you will have heard my story, and can decide. On you it rests, whether I

quit for ever the neighbourhood of man, and lead a harmless life, or

become the scourge of your fellow-creatures, and the author of your own

speedy ruin."

As he said this, he led the way across the ice: I followed. My heart was

full, and I did not answer him; but, as I proceeded, I weighed the

various arguments that he had used, and determined at least to listen to

his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my

resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my

brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion.

For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards

his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I

complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his

demand. We crossed the ice, therefore, and ascended the opposite rock.

The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend: we entered the

hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart, and

depressed spirits. But I consented to listen; and, seating myself by the

fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.

CHAPTER XI.

"It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of

my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct.

A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard,

and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I

learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By

degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I

was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me, and troubled

me; but hardly had I felt this, when, by opening my eyes, as I now

suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked, and, I believe,

descended; but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations.

Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch

or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no

obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid. The light became

more and more oppressive to me; and, the heat wearying me as I walked, I

sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near

Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my

fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This roused me

from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found

hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the

brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

"It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened, as it

were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted

your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some

clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of

night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could

distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat

down and wept.

"Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens, and gave me a sensation of

pleasure. I started up, and beheld a radiant form rise from among the

trees.[2] I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it

enlightened my path; and I again went out in search of berries. I was

still cold, when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which

I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas

occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and

thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rung in my ears, and on all

sides various scents saluted me: the only object that I could

distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with

pleasure.

[Footnote 2: The moon.]

"Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had

greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each

other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with

drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted

when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my

ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had

often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with

greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the

boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I

tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable.

Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the

uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into

silence again.

"The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened

form, showed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations

had, by this time, become distinct, and my mind received every day

additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light, and to

perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from

the herb, and, by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the

sparrow uttered none but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and

thrush were sweet and enticing.

"One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been

left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the

warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live

embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I

thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I

examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be

composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches; but they were wet,

and would not burn. I was pained at this, and sat still watching the

operation of the fire. The wet wood which I had placed near the heat

dried, and itself became inflamed. I reflected on this; and, by touching

the various branches, I discovered the cause, and busied myself in

collecting a great quantity of wood, that I might dry it, and have a

plentiful supply of fire. When night came on, and brought sleep with it,

I was in the greatest fear lest my fire should be extinguished. I

covered it carefully with dry wood and leaves, and placed wet branches

upon it; and then, spreading my cloak, I lay on the ground, and sunk

into sleep.

"It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I

uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I

observed this also, and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the

embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again, I

found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat; and that

the discovery of this element was useful to me in my food; for I found

some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and

tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I

tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the

live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation,

and the nuts and roots much improved.

"Food, however, became scarce; and I often spent the whole day searching

in vain for a few acorns to assuage the pangs of hunger. When I found

this, I resolved to quit the place that I had hitherto inhabited, to

seek for one where the few wants I experienced would be more easily

satisfied. In this emigration, I exceedingly lamented the loss of the

fire which I had obtained through accident, and knew not how to

reproduce it. I gave several hours to the serious consideration of this

difficulty; but I was obliged to relinquish all attempt to supply it;

and, wrapping myself up in my cloak, I struck across the wood towards

the setting sun. I passed three days in these rambles, and at length

discovered the open country. A great fall of snow had taken place the

night before, and the fields were of one uniform white; the appearance

was disconsolate, and I found my feet chilled by the cold damp substance

that covered the ground.

"It was about seven in the morning, and I longed to obtain food and

shelter; at length I perceived a small hut, on a rising ground, which

had doubtless been built for the convenience of some shepherd. This was

a new sight to me; and I examined the structure with great curiosity.

Finding the door open, I entered. An old man sat in it, near a fire,

over which he was preparing his breakfast. He turned on hearing a noise;

and, perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and, quitting the hut, ran across

the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared

capable. His appearance, different from any I had ever before seen, and

his flight, somewhat surprised me. But I was enchanted by the appearance

of the hut: here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was

dry; and it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as

Pandæmonium appeared to the dæmons of hell after their sufferings in the

lake of fire. I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd's

breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk, and wine; the latter,

however, I did not like. Then, overcome by fatigue, I lay down among

some straw, and fell asleep.

"It was noon when I awoke; and, allured by the warmth of the sun, which

shone brightly on the white ground, I determined to recommence my

travels; and, depositing the remains of the peasant's breakfast in a

wallet I found, I proceeded across the fields for several hours, until

at sunset I arrived at a village. How miraculous did this appear! the

huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses, engaged my admiration by

turns. The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw

placed at the windows of some of the cottages, allured my appetite. One

of the best of these I entered; but I had hardly placed my foot within

the door, before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted.

The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until,

grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I

escaped to the open country, and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel,

quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had

beheld in the village. This hovel, however, joined a cottage of a neat

and pleasant appearance; but, after my late dearly bought experience, I

dared not enter it. My place of refuge was constructed of wood, but so

low, that I could with difficulty sit upright in it. No wood, however,

was placed on the earth, which formed the floor, but it was dry; and

although the wind entered it by innumerable chinks, I found it an

agreeable asylum from the snow and rain.

"Here then I retreated, and lay down happy to have found a shelter,

however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more

from the barbarity of man.

"As soon as morning dawned, I crept from my kennel, that I might view

the adjacent cottage, and discover if I could remain in the habitation I

had found. It was situated against the back of the cottage, and

surrounded on the sides which were exposed by a pig-sty and a clear pool

of water. One part was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I

covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and

wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass

out: all the light I enjoyed came through the sty, and that was

sufficient for me.

"Having thus arranged my dwelling, and carpeted it with clean straw, I

retired; for I saw the figure of a man at a distance, and I remembered

too well my treatment the night before, to trust myself in his power. I

had first, however, provided for my sustenance for that day, by a loaf

of coarse bread, which I purloined, and a cup with which I could drink,

more conveniently than from my hand, of the pure water which flowed by

my retreat. The floor was a little raised, so that it was kept perfectly

dry, and by its vicinity to the chimney of the cottage it was tolerably

warm.

"Being thus provided, I resolved to reside in this hovel, until

something should occur which might alter my determination. It was indeed

a paradise, compared to the bleak forest, my former residence, the

rain-dropping branches, and dank earth. I ate my breakfast with

pleasure, and was about to remove a plank to procure myself a little

water, when I heard a step, and looking through a small chink, I beheld

a young creature, with a pail on her head, passing before my hovel. The

girl was young, and of gentle demeanour, unlike what I have since found

cottagers and farm-house servants to be. Yet she was meanly dressed, a

coarse blue petticoat and a linen jacket being her only garb; her fair

hair was plaited, but not adorned: she looked patient, yet sad. I lost

sight of her; and in about a quarter of an hour she returned, bearing

the pail, which was now partly filled with milk. As she walked along,

seemingly incommoded by the burden, a young man met her, whose

countenance expressed a deeper despondence. Uttering a few sounds with

an air of melancholy, he took the pail from her head, and bore it to the

cottage himself. She followed, and they disappeared. Presently I saw the

young man again, with some tools in his hand, cross the field behind the

cottage; and the girl was also busied, sometimes in the house, and

sometimes in the yard.

"On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the

cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been

filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost

imperceptible chink, through which the eye could just penetrate. Through

this crevice a small room was visible, whitewashed and clean, but very

bare of furniture. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man,

leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude. The young

girl was occupied in arranging the cottage; but presently she took

something out of a drawer, which employed her hands, and she sat down

beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play, and to

produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale.

It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch! who had never beheld

aught beautiful before. The silver hair and benevolent countenance of

the aged cottager won my reverence, while the gentle manners of the girl

enticed my love. He played a sweet mournful air, which I perceived drew

tears from the eyes of his amiable companion, of which the old man took

no notice, until she sobbed audibly; he then pronounced a few sounds,

and the fair creature, leaving her work, knelt at his feet. He raised

her, and smiled with such kindness and affection, that I felt sensations

of a peculiar and overpowering nature: they were a mixture of pain and

pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or

cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear

these emotions.

"Soon after this the young man returned, bearing on his shoulders a load

of wood. The girl met him at the door, helped to relieve him of his

burden, and, taking some of the fuel into the cottage, placed it on the

fire; then she and the youth went apart into a nook of the cottage, and

he showed her a large loaf and a piece of cheese. She seemed pleased,

and went into the garden for some roots and plants, which she placed in

water, and then upon the fire. She afterwards continued her work, whilst

the young man went into the garden, and appeared busily employed in

digging and pulling up roots. After he had been employed thus about an

hour, the young woman joined him, and they entered the cottage together.

"The old man had, in the mean time, been pensive; but, on the appearance

of his companions, he assumed a more cheerful air, and they sat down to

eat. The meal was quickly despatched. The young woman was again occupied

in arranging the cottage; the old man walked before the cottage in the

sun for a few minutes, leaning on the arm of the youth. Nothing could

exceed in beauty the contrast between these two excellent creatures.

One was old, with silver hairs and a countenance beaming with

benevolence and love: the younger was slight and graceful in his figure,

and his features were moulded with the finest symmetry; yet his eyes and

attitude expressed the utmost sadness and despondency. The old man

returned to the cottage; and the youth, with tools different from those

he had used in the morning, directed his steps across the fields.

"Night quickly shut in; but, to my extreme wonder, I found that the

cottagers had a means of prolonging light by the use of tapers, and was

delighted to find that the setting of the sun did not put an end to the

pleasure I experienced in watching my human neighbours. In the evening,

the young girl and her companion were employed in various occupations

which I did not understand; and the old man again took up the instrument

which produced the divine sounds that had enchanted me in the morning.

So soon as he had finished, the youth began, not to play, but to utter

sounds that were monotonous, and neither resembling the harmony of the

old man's instrument nor the songs of the birds: I since found that he

read aloud, but at that time I knew nothing of the science of words or

letters.

"The family, after having been thus occupied for a short time,

extinguished their lights, and retired, as I conjectured, to rest."

CHAPTER XII.

"I lay on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences

of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these

people; and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well

the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous

villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter

think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in

my hovel, watching, and endeavouring to discover the motives which

influenced their actions.

"The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman

arranged the cottage, and prepared the food; and the youth departed

after the first meal.

"This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The

young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various

laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be

blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument or in contemplation.

Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers

exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him

every little office of affection and duty with gentleness; and he

rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

"They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often

went apart, and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness;

but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were

miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being,

should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They

possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every

luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill, and delicious viands

when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more,

they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day

looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they

really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions; but

perpetual attention and time explained to me many appearances which were

at first enigmatic.

"A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of

the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty; and they suffered

that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted

entirely of the vegetables of their garden, and the milk of one cow,

which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could

scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the

pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers;

for several times they placed food before the old man, when they

reserved none for themselves.

"This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during

the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but

when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I

abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots, which I

gathered from a neighbouring wood.

"I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist

their labours. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in

collecting wood for the family fire; and, during the night, I often took

his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home

firing sufficient for the consumption of several days.

"I remember, the first time that I did this, the young woman, when she

opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished on seeing a

great pile of wood on the outside. She uttered some words in a loud

voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprise. I

observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but

spent it in repairing the cottage, and cultivating the garden.

"By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that

these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and

feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words

they spoke sometimes, produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in

the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike

science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was

baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation

was quick; and the words they uttered, not having any apparent

connection with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by

which I could unravel the mystery of their reference. By great

application, however, and after having remained during the space of

several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that

were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse; I learned

and applied the words, \_fire\_, \_milk\_, \_bread\_, and \_wood\_. I learned

also the names of the cottagers themselves. The youth and his companion

had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was

\_father\_. The girl was called \_sister\_, or \_Agatha\_; and the youth

\_Felix\_, \_brother\_, or \_son\_. I cannot describe the delight I felt when

I learned the ideas appropriated to each of these sounds, and was able

to pronounce them. I distinguished several other words, without being

able as yet to understand or apply them; such as \_good\_, \_dearest\_,

\_unhappy\_.

"I spent the winter in this manner. The gentle manners and beauty of the

cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt

depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathised in their joys. I saw few

human beings beside them; and if any other happened to enter the

cottage, their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the

superior accomplishments of my friends. The old man, I could perceive,

often endeavoured to encourage his children, as sometimes I found that

he called them, to cast off their melancholy. He would talk in a

cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure

even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometimes filled

with tears, which she endeavoured to wipe away unperceived; but I

generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after

having listened to the exhortations of her father. It was not thus with

Felix. He was always the saddest of the group; and, even to my

unpractised senses, he appeared to have suffered more deeply than his

friends. But if his countenance was more sorrowful, his voice was more

cheerful than that of his sister, especially when he addressed the old

man.

"I could mention innumerable instances, which, although slight, marked

the dispositions of these amiable cottagers. In the midst of poverty and

want, Felix carried with pleasure to his sister the first little white

flower that peeped out from beneath the snowy ground. Early in the

morning, before she had risen, he cleared away the snow that obstructed

her path to the milk-house, drew water from the well, and brought the

wood from the out-house, where, to his perpetual astonishment, he found

his store always replenished by an invisible hand. In the day, I

believe, he worked sometimes for a neighbouring farmer, because he often

went forth, and did not return until dinner, yet brought no wood with

him. At other times he worked in the garden; but, as there was little to

do in the frosty season, he read to the old man and Agatha.

"This reading had puzzled me extremely at first; but, by degrees, I

discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read, as when

he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs

for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend

these also; but how was that possible, when I did not even understand

the sounds for which they stood as signs? I improved, however, sensibly

in this science, but not sufficiently to follow up any kind of

conversation, although I applied my whole mind to the endeavour: for I

easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to

the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become

master of their language; which knowledge might enable me to make them

overlook the deformity of my figure; for with this also the contrast

perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.

"I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers--their grace, beauty,

and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself

in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that

it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully

convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with

the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did

not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.

"As the sun became warmer, and the light of day longer, the snow

vanished, and I beheld the bare trees and the black earth. From this

time Felix was more employed; and the heart-moving indications of

impending famine disappeared. Their food, as I afterwards found, was

coarse, but it was wholesome; and they procured a sufficiency of it.

Several new kinds of plants sprung up in the garden, which they dressed;

and these signs of comfort increased daily as the season advanced.

"The old man, leaning on his son, walked each day at noon, when it did

not rain, as I found it was called when the heavens poured forth its

waters. This frequently took place; but a high wind quickly dried the

earth, and the season became far more pleasant than it had been.

"My mode of life in my hovel was uniform. During the morning, I

attended the motions of the cottagers; and when they were dispersed in

various occupations, I slept: the remainder of the day was spent in

observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any

moon, or the night was star-light, I went into the woods, and collected

my own food and fuel for the cottage. When I returned, as often as it

was necessary, I cleared their path from the snow, and performed those

offices that I had seen done by Felix. I afterwards found that these

labours, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and

once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words \_good\_

\_spirit\_, \_wonderful\_; but I did not then understand the signification

of these terms.

"My thoughts now became more active, and I longed to discover the

motives and feelings of these lovely creatures; I was inquisitive to

know why Felix appeared so miserable, and Agatha so sad. I thought

(foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to

these deserving people. When I slept, or was absent, the forms of the

venerable blind father, the gentle Agatha, and the excellent Felix,

flitted before me. I looked upon them as superior beings, who would be

the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand

pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I

imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and

conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards

their love.

"These thoughts exhilarated me, and led me to apply with fresh ardour to

the acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but

supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their

tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease.

It was as the ass and the lap-dog; yet surely the gentle ass whose

intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserved

better treatment than blows and execration.

"The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the

aspect of the earth. Men, who before this change seemed to have been hid

in caves, dispersed themselves, and were employed in various arts of

cultivation. The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began

to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! fit habitation for gods,

which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My

spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past

was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future

gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy."

CHAPTER XIII.

"I now hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate

events, that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been,

have made me what I am.

"Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine, and the skies

cloudless. It surprised me, that what before was desert and gloomy

should now bloom with the most beautiful flowers and verdure. My senses

were gratified and refreshed by a thousand scents of delight, and a

thousand sights of beauty.

"It was on one of these days, when my cottagers periodically rested from

labour--the old man played on his guitar, and the children listened to

him--that I observed the countenance of Felix was melancholy beyond

expression; he sighed frequently; and once his father paused in his

music, and I conjectured by his manner that he enquired the cause of his

son's sorrow. Felix replied in a cheerful accent, and the old man was

recommencing his music, when some one tapped at the door.

"It was a lady on horseback, accompanied by a countryman as a guide. The

lady was dressed in a dark suit, and covered with a thick black veil.

Agatha asked a question; to which the stranger only replied by

pronouncing, in a sweet accent, the name of Felix. Her voice was

musical, but unlike that of either of my friends. On hearing this word,

Felix came up hastily to the lady; who, when she saw him, threw up her

veil, and I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her

hair of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were

dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular

proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a

lovely pink.

"Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of

sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of

ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes

sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I

thought him as beautiful as the stranger. She appeared affected by

different feelings; wiping a few tears from her lovely eyes, she held

out her hand to Felix, who kissed it rapturously, and called her, as

well as I could distinguish, his sweet Arabian. She did not appear to

understand him, but smiled. He assisted her to dismount, and dismissing

her guide, conducted her into the cottage. Some conversation took place

between him and his father; and the young stranger knelt at the old

man's feet, and would have kissed his hand, but he raised her, and

embraced her affectionately.

"I soon perceived, that although the stranger uttered articulate sounds,

and appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood

by, nor herself understood, the cottagers. They made many signs which I

did not comprehend; but I saw that her presence diffused gladness

through the cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the

morning mists. Felix seemed peculiarly happy, and with smiles of delight

welcomed his Arabian. Agatha, the ever-gentle Agatha, kissed the hands

of the lovely stranger; and, pointing to her brother, made signs which

appeared to me to mean that he had been sorrowful until she came. Some

hours passed thus, while they, by their countenances, expressed joy, the

cause of which I did not comprehend. Presently I found, by the frequent

recurrence of some sound which the stranger repeated after them, that

she was endeavouring to learn their language; and the idea instantly

occurred to me, that I should make use of the same instructions to the

same end. The stranger learned about twenty words at the first lesson,

most of them, indeed, were those which I had before understood, but I

profited by the others.

"As night came on, Agatha and the Arabian retired early. When they

separated, Felix kissed the hand of the stranger, and said, 'Good night,

sweet Safie.' He sat up much longer, conversing with his father; and, by

the frequent repetition of her name, I conjectured that their lovely

guest was the subject of their conversation. I ardently desired to

understand them, and bent every faculty towards that purpose, but found

it utterly impossible.

"The next morning Felix went out to his work; and, after the usual

occupations of Agatha were finished, the Arabian sat at the feet of the

old man, and, taking his guitar, played some airs so entrancingly

beautiful, that they at once drew tears of sorrow and delight from my

eyes. She sang, and her voice flowed in a rich cadence, swelling or

dying away, like a nightingale of the woods.

"When she had finished, she gave the guitar to Agatha, who at first

declined it. She played a simple air, and her voice accompanied it in

sweet accents, but unlike the wondrous strain of the stranger. The old

man appeared enraptured, and said some words, which Agatha endeavoured

to explain to Safie, and by which he appeared to wish to express that

she bestowed on him the greatest delight by her music.

"The days now passed as peaceably as before, with the sole alteration,

that joy had taken place of sadness in the countenances of my friends.

Safie was always gay and happy; she and I improved rapidly in the

knowledge of language, so that in two months I began to comprehend most

of the words uttered by my protectors.

"In the meanwhile also the black ground was covered with herbage, and

the green banks interspersed with innumerable flowers, sweet to the

scent and the eyes, stars of pale radiance among the moonlight woods;

the sun became warmer, the nights clear and balmy; and my nocturnal

rambles were an extreme pleasure to me, although they were considerably

shortened by the late setting and early rising of the sun; for I never

ventured abroad during daylight, fearful of meeting with the same

treatment I had formerly endured in the first village which I entered.

"My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily

master the language; and I may boast that I improved more rapidly than

the Arabian, who understood very little, and conversed in broken

accents, whilst I comprehended and could imitate almost every word that

was spoken.

"While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters, as

it was taught to the stranger; and this opened before me a wide field

for wonder and delight.

"The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney's 'Ruins of

Empires.' I should not have understood the purport of this book, had not

Felix, in reading it, given very minute explanations. He had chosen this

work, he said, because the declamatory style was framed in imitation of

the eastern authors. Through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of

history, and a view of the several empires at present existing in the

world; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and

religions of the different nations of the earth. I heard of the slothful

Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians;

of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans--of their

subsequent degenerating--of the decline of that mighty empire; of

chivalry, Christianity, and kings. I heard of the discovery of the

American hemisphere, and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its

original inhabitants.

"These wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. Was man,

indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so

vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil

principle, and at another, as all that can be conceived of noble and

godlike. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that

can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record

have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than

that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not

conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why

there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and

bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and

loathing.

"Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me.

While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the

Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I

heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid

poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood.

"The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the

possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and

unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only

one of these advantages; but, without either, he was considered, except

in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his

powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation

and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no

money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a

figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same

nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon

coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to

my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw

and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth,

from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned?

"I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted

upon me: I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with

knowledge. Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known

nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

"Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind, when it

has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to

shake off all thought and feeling; but I learned that there was but one

means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death--a state

which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good

feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my

cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through

means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and

which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one

among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha, and the animated smiles

of the charming Arabian, were not for me. The mild exhortations of the

old man, and the lively conversation of the loved Felix, were not for

me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!

"Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the

difference of sexes; and the birth and growth of children; how the

father doated on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the

older child; how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in

the precious charge; how the mind of youth expanded and gained

knowledge; of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which

bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

"But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my

infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if

they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I

distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then

was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling

me, or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question

again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

"I will soon explain to what these feelings tended; but allow me now to

return to the cottagers, whose story excited in me such various feelings

of indignation, delight, and wonder, but which all terminated in

additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an

innocent, half painful self-deceit, to call them)."

CHAPTER XIV.

"Some time elapsed before I learned the history of my friends. It was

one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding

as it did a number of circumstances, each interesting and wonderful to

one so utterly inexperienced as I was.

"The name of the old man was De Lacey. He was descended from a good

family in France, where he had lived for many years in affluence,

respected by his superiors, and beloved by his equals. His son was bred

in the service of his country; and Agatha had ranked with ladies of the

highest distinction. A few months before my arrival, they had lived in a

large and luxurious city, called Paris, surrounded by friends, and

possessed of every enjoyment which virtue, refinement of intellect, or

taste, accompanied by a moderate fortune, could afford.

"The father of Safie had been the cause of their ruin. He was a Turkish

merchant, and had inhabited Paris for many years, when, for some reason

which I could not learn, he became obnoxious to the government. He was

seized and cast into prison the very day that Safie arrived from

Constantinople to join him. He was tried, and condemned to death. The

injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant;

and it was judged that his religion and wealth, rather than the crime

alleged against him, had been the cause of his condemnation.

"Felix had accidentally been present at the trial; his horror and

indignation were uncontrollable, when he heard the decision of the

court. He made, at that moment, a solemn vow to deliver him, and then

looked around for the means. After many fruitless attempts to gain

admittance to the prison, he found a strongly grated window in an

unguarded part of the building, which lighted the dungeon of the

unfortunate Mahometan; who, loaded with chains, waited in despair the

execution of the barbarous sentence. Felix visited the grate at night,

and made known to the prisoner his intentions in his favour. The Turk,

amazed and delighted, endeavoured to kindle the zeal of his deliverer by

promises of reward and wealth. Felix rejected his offers with contempt;

yet when he saw the lovely Safie, who was allowed to visit her father,

and who, by her gestures, expressed her lively gratitude, the youth

could not help owning to his own mind, that the captive possessed a

treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard.

"The Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on

the heart of Felix, and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his

interests by the promise of her hand in marriage, so soon as he should

be conveyed to a place of safety. Felix was too delicate to accept this

offer; yet he looked forward to the probability of the event as to the

consummation of his happiness.

"During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for

the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several

letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to

express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old

man, a servant of her father, who understood French. She thanked him in

the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her parent; and

at the same time she gently deplored her own fate.

"I have copies of these letters; for I found means, during my residence

in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were

often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart, I will give them

to you, they will prove the truth of my tale; but at present, as the sun

is already far declined, I shall only have time to repeat the substance

of them to you.

"Safie related, that her mother was a Christian Arab, seized and made a

slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of

the father of Safie, who married her. The young girl spoke in high and

enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom, spurned the

bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the

tenets of her religion, and taught her to aspire to higher powers of

intellect, and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female

followers of Mahomet. This lady died; but her lessons were indelibly

impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again

returning to Asia, and being immured within the walls of a haram,

allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill suited to

the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble

emulation for virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian, and

remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in

society, was enchanting to her.

"The day for the execution of the Turk was fixed; but, on the night

previous to it, he quitted his prison, and before morning was distant

many leagues from Paris. Felix had procured passports in the name of his

father, sister, and himself. He had previously communicated his plan to

the former, who aided the deceit by quitting his house, under the

pretence of a journey, and concealed himself, with his daughter, in an

obscure part of Paris.

"Felix conducted the fugitives through France to Lyons, and across Mont

Cenis to Leghorn, where the merchant had decided to wait a favourable

opportunity of passing into some part of the Turkish dominions.

"Safie resolved to remain with her father until the moment of his

departure, before which time the Turk renewed his promise that she

should be united to his deliverer; and Felix remained with them in

expectation of that event; and in the mean time he enjoyed the society

of the Arabian, who exhibited towards him the simplest and tenderest

affection. They conversed with one another through the means of an

interpreter, and sometimes with the interpretation of looks; and Safie

sang to him the divine airs of her native country.

"The Turk allowed this intimacy to take place, and encouraged the hopes

of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he had formed far other

plans. He loathed the idea that his daughter should be united to a

Christian; but he feared the resentment of Felix, if he should appear

lukewarm; for he knew that he was still in the power of his deliverer,

if he should choose to betray him to the Italian state which they

inhabited. He revolved a thousand plans by which he should be enabled to

prolong the deceit until it might be no longer necessary, and secretly

to take his daughter with him when he departed. His plans were

facilitated by the news which arrived from Paris.

"The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their

victim, and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer. The plot

of Felix was quickly discovered, and De Lacey and Agatha were thrown

into prison. The news reached Felix, and roused him from his dream of

pleasure. His blind and aged father, and his gentle sister, lay in a

noisome dungeon, while he enjoyed the free air, and the society of her

whom he loved. This idea was torture to him. He quickly arranged with

the Turks, that if the latter should find a favourable opportunity for

escape before Felix could return to Italy, Safie should remain as a

boarder at a convent at Leghorn; and then, quitting the lovely Arabian,

he hastened to Paris, and delivered himself up to the vengeance of the

law, hoping to free De Lacey and Agatha by this proceeding.

"He did not succeed. They remained confined for five months before the

trial took place; the result of which deprived them of their fortune,

and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country.

"They found a miserable asylum in the cottage in Germany, where I

discovered them. Felix soon learned that the treacherous Turk, for whom

he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering

that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and ruin, became a

traitor to good feeling and honour, and had quitted Italy with his

daughter, insultingly sending Felix a pittance of money, to aid him, as

he said, in some plan of future maintenance.

"Such were the events that preyed on the heart of Felix, and rendered

him, when I first saw him, the most miserable of his family. He could

have endured poverty; and while this distress had been the meed of his

virtue, he gloried in it: but the ingratitude of the Turk, and the loss

of his beloved Safie, were misfortunes more bitter and irreparable. The

arrival of the Arabian now infused new life into his soul.

"When the news reached Leghorn, that Felix was deprived of his wealth

and rank, the merchant commanded his daughter to think no more of her

lover, but to prepare to return to her native country. The generous

nature of Safie was outraged by this command; she attempted to

expostulate with her father, but he left her angrily, reiterating his

tyrannical mandate.

"A few days after, the Turk entered his daughter's apartment, and told

her hastily, that he had reason to believe that his residence at Leghorn

had been divulged, and that he should speedily be delivered up to the

French government; he had, consequently hired a vessel to convey him to

Constantinople, for which city he should sail in a few hours. He

intended to leave his daughter under the care of a confidential servant,

to follow at her leisure with the greater part of his property, which

had not yet arrived at Leghorn.

"When alone, Safie resolved in her own mind the plan of conduct that it

would become her to pursue in this emergency. A residence in Turkey was

abhorrent to her; her religion and her feelings were alike adverse to

it. By some papers of her father, which fell into her hands, she heard

of the exile of her lover, and learnt the name of the spot where he then

resided. She hesitated some time, but at length she formed her

determination. Taking with her some jewels that belonged to her, and a

sum of money, she quitted Italy with an attendant, a native of Leghorn,

but who understood the common language of Turkey, and departed for

Germany.

"She arrived in safety at a town about twenty leagues from the cottage

of De Lacey, when her attendant fell dangerously ill. Safie nursed her

with the most devoted affection; but the poor girl died, and the Arabian

was left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country, and

utterly ignorant of the customs of the world. She fell, however, into

good hands. The Italian had mentioned the name of the spot for which

they were bound; and, after her death, the woman of the house in which

they had lived took care that Safie should arrive in safety at the

cottage of her lover."

CHAPTER XV.

"Such was the history of my beloved cottagers. It impressed me deeply. I

learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire

their virtues, and to deprecate the vices of mankind.

"As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and

generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to

become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were

called forth and displayed. But, in giving an account of the progress of

my intellect, I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the

beginning of the month of August of the same year.

"One night, during my accustomed visit to the neighbouring wood, where I

collected my own food, and brought home firing for my protectors, I

found on the ground a leathern portmanteau, containing several articles

of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize, and returned with

it to my hovel. Fortunately the books were written in the language, the

elements of which I had acquired at the cottage; they consisted of

'Paradise Lost,' a volume of 'Plutarch's Lives,' and the 'Sorrows of

Werter.' The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I

now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories,

whilst my friends were employed in their ordinary occupations.

"I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced

in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me

to ecstacy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In

the 'Sorrows of Werter,' besides the interest of its simple and

affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed, and so many lights

thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects, that I found

in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle

and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and

feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded

well with my experience among my protectors, and with the wants which

were for ever alive in my own bosom. But I thought Werter himself a more

divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained

no pretension, but it sunk deep. The disquisitions upon death and

suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder. I did not pretend to

enter into the merits of the case, yet I inclined towards the opinions

of the hero, whose extinction I wept, without precisely understanding

it.

"As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and

condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike

to the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a

listener. I sympathised with, and partly understood them, but I was

unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none. 'The

path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my

annihilation. My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic? What did

this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my

destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to

solve them.

"The volume of 'Plutarch's Lives,' which I possessed, contained the

histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had

a far different effect upon me from the 'Sorrows of Werter.' I learned

from Werter's imaginations despondency and gloom: but Plutarch taught me

high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own

reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages. Many things I

read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused

knowledge of kingdoms, wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and

boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns, and large

assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only

school in which I had studied human nature; but this book developed new

and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public

affairs, governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest

ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I

understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I

applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I

was of course led to admire peaceable lawgivers, Numa, Solon, and

Lycurgus, in preference to Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of

my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind;

perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young

soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with

different sensations.

"But 'Paradise Lost' excited different and far deeper emotions. I read

it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as

a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe, that the

picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of

exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity

struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to

any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine

in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a

perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of

his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge

from, beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and

alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my

condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my

protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

"Another circumstance strengthened and confirmed these feelings. Soon

after my arrival in the hovel, I discovered some papers in the pocket of

the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had

neglected them; but now that I was able to decipher the characters in

which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was

your journal of the four months that preceded my creation. You minutely

described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your

work; this history was mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences.

You, doubtless, recollect these papers. Here they are. Every thing is

related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole

detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it, is

set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person

is given, in language which painted your own horrors, and rendered mine

indelible. I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day when I received life!' I

exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so

hideous that even \_you\_ turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made

man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy

type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his

companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am

solitary and abhorred.'

"These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but

when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and

benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become

acquainted with my admiration of their virtues, they would compassionate

me, and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door

one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship? I

resolved, at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for

an interview with them which would decide my fate. I postponed this

attempt for some months longer; for the importance attached to its

success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail. Besides, I found

that my understanding improved so much with every day's experience, that

I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months

should have added to my sagacity.

"Several changes, in the mean time, took place in the cottage. The

presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants; and I also

found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha

spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in

their labours by servants. They did not appear rich, but they were

contented and happy; their feelings were serene and peaceful, while mine

became every day more tumultuous. Increase of knowledge only discovered

to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it

is true; but it vanished, when I beheld my person reflected in water, or

my shadow in the moonshine, even as that frail image and that inconstant

shade.

"I endeavoured to crush these fears, and to fortify myself for the trial

which in a few months I resolved to undergo; and sometimes I allowed my

thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and

dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathising with my

feelings, and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed

smiles of consolation. But it was all a dream; no Eve soothed my

sorrows, nor shared my thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam's

supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me

and, in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed him.

"Autumn passed thus. I saw, with surprise and grief, the leaves decay

and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had

worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not

heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my

conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights

were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of

summer; when those deserted me, I turned with more attention towards the

cottagers. Their happiness was not decreased by the absence of summer.

They loved, and sympathised with one another; and their joys, depending

on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place

around them. The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to

claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and

loved by these amiable creatures: to see their sweet looks directed

towards me with affection, was the utmost limit of my ambition. I dared

not think that they would turn them from me with disdain and horror. The

poor that stopped at their door were never driven away. I asked, it is

true, for greater treasures than a little food or rest: I required

kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of

it.

"The winter advanced, and an entire revolution of the seasons had taken

place since I awoke into life. My attention, at this time, was solely

directed towards my plan of introducing myself into the cottage of my

protectors. I revolved many projects; but that on which I finally fixed

was, to enter the dwelling when the blind old man should be alone. I had

sagacity enough to discover, that the unnatural hideousness of my person

was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me. My

voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it; I thought, therefore,

that if, in the absence of his children, I could gain the good-will and

mediation of the old De Lacey, I might, by his means, be tolerated by my

younger protectors.

"One day, when the sun shone on the red leaves that strewed the ground,

and diffused cheerfulness, although it denied warmth, Safie, Agatha, and

Felix departed on a long country walk, and the old man, at his own

desire, was left alone in the cottage. When his children had departed,

he took up his guitar, and played several mournful but sweet airs, more

sweet and mournful than I had ever heard him play before. At first his

countenance was illuminated with pleasure, but, as he continued,

thoughtfulness and sadness succeeded; at length, laying aside the

instrument, he sat absorbed in reflection.

"My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would

decide my hopes, or realise my fears. The servants were gone to a

neighbouring fair. All was silent in and around the cottage: it was an

excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my

limbs failed me, and I sank to the ground. Again I rose; and, exerting

all the firmness of which I was master, removed the planks which I had

placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived me,

and, with renewed determination, I approached the door of their cottage.

"I knocked. 'Who is there?' said the old man--'Come in.'

"I entered; 'Pardon this intrusion,' said I: 'I am a traveller in want

of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me, if you would allow me to

remain a few minutes before the fire.'

"'Enter,' said De Lacey; 'and I will try in what manner I can relieve

your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and, as I am

blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'

"'Do not trouble yourself, my kind host, I have food; it is warmth and

rest only that I need.'

"I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious

to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the

interview; when the old man addressed me--

"'By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman;--are you

French?'

"'No; but I was educated by a French family, and understand that

language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends,

whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes.'

"'Are they Germans?'

"'No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an

unfortunate and deserted creature; I look around, and I have no relation

or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen

me, and know little of me. I am full of fears; for if I fail there, I am

an outcast in the world for ever.'

"'Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the

hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full

of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if

these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.'

"'They are kind--they are the most excellent creatures in the world;

but, unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good

dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless, and in some degree

beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they

ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable

monster.'

"'That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot

you undeceive them?'

"'I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I

feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I

have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily

kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and

it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.'

"'Where do these friends reside?'

"'Near this spot.'

"The old man paused, and then continued, 'If you will unreservedly

confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in

undeceiving them. I am blind, and cannot judge of your countenance, but

there is something in your words, which persuades me that you are

sincere. I am poor, and an exile; but it will afford me true pleasure to

be in any way serviceable to a human creature.'

"'Excellent man! I thank you, and accept your generous offer. You raise

me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I

shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your

fellow-creatures.'

"'Heaven forbid! even if you were really criminal; for that can only

drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am

unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent:

judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.'

"'How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first

have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be for

ever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with

those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.'

"'May I know the names and residence of those friends?'

"I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob

me of, or bestow happiness on me for ever. I struggled vainly for

firmness sufficient to answer him, but the effort destroyed all my

remaining strength; I sank on the chair, and sobbed aloud. At that

moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to

lose; but, seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the

time!--save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I

seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'

"'Great God!' exclaimed the old man, 'who are you?'

"At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and

Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on

beholding me? Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend,

rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural

force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of

fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick.

I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope.

But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I

saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and

anguish, I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped

unperceived to my hovel."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not

extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I

know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were

those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the

cottage and its inhabitants, and have glutted myself with their shrieks

and misery.

"When night came, I quitted my retreat, and wandered in the wood; and

now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my

anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the

toils; destroying the objects that obstructed me, and ranging through

the wood with a stag-like swiftness. O! what a miserable night I passed!

the cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches

above me: now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the

universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment: I, like

the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me; and, finding myself unsympathised

with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around

me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.

"But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became

fatigued with excess of bodily exertion, and sank on the damp grass in

the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men

that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness

towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared everlasting war

against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me,

and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

"The sun rose; I heard the voices of men, and knew that it was

impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid

myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours

to reflection on my situation.

"The pleasant sunshine, and the pure air of day, restored me to some

degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the

cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my

conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. It was apparent that my

conversation had interested the father in my behalf, and I was a fool in

having exposed my person to the horror of his children. I ought to have

familiarised the old De Lacey to me, and by degrees to have discovered

myself to the rest of his family, when they should have been prepared

for my approach. But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable;

and, after much consideration, I resolved to return to the cottage, seek

the old man, and by my representations win him to my party.

"These thoughts calmed me, and in the afternoon I sank into a profound

sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by

peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was for ever

acting before my eyes; the females were flying, and the enraged Felix

tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted; and, finding that

it was already night, I crept forth from my hiding-place, and went in

search of food.

"When my hunger was appeased, I directed my steps towards the well-known

path that conducted to the cottage. All there was at peace. I crept into

my hovel, and remained in silent expectation of the accustomed hour when

the family arose. That hour passed, the sun mounted high in the heavens,

but the cottagers did not appear. I trembled violently, apprehending

some dreadful misfortune. The inside of the cottage was dark, and I

heard no motion; I cannot describe the agony of this suspense.

"Presently two countrymen passed by; but, pausing near the cottage, they

entered into conversation, using violent gesticulations; but I did not

understand what they said, as they spoke the language of the country,

which differed from that of my protectors. Soon after, however, Felix

approached with another man: I was surprised, as I knew that he had not

quitted the cottage that morning, and waited anxiously to discover, from

his discourse, the meaning of these unusual appearances.

"'Do you consider,' said his companion to him, 'that you will be

obliged to pay three months' rent, and to lose the produce of your

garden? I do not wish to take any unfair advantage, and I beg therefore

that you will take some days to consider of your determination.'

"'It is utterly useless,' replied Felix; 'we can never again inhabit

your cottage. The life of my father is in the greatest danger, owing to

the dreadful circumstance that I have related. My wife and my sister

will never recover their horror. I entreat you not to reason with me any

more. Take possession of your tenement, and let me fly from this place.'

"Felix trembled violently as he said this. He and his companion entered

the cottage, in which they remained for a few minutes, and then

departed. I never saw any of the family of De Lacey more.

"I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of

utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed, and had broken the

only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of

revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control

them; but, allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my

mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild

voice of De Lacey, the gentle eyes of Agatha, and the exquisite beauty

of the Arabian, these thoughts vanished, and a gush of tears somewhat

soothed me. But again, when I reflected that they had spurned and

deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger; and, unable to injure any

thing human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night

advanced, I placed a variety of combustibles around the cottage; and,

after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I

waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my

operations.

"As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods, and quickly

dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens: the blast tore

along like a mighty avalanche, and produced a kind of insanity in my

spirits, that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the

dry branch of a tree, and danced with fury around the devoted cottage,

my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon

nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my

brand; it sunk, and, with a loud scream, I fired the straw, and heath,

and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the

cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it, and

licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.

"As soon as I was convinced that no assistance could save any part of

the habitation, I quitted the scene, and sought for refuge in the woods.

"And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps? I

resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes; but to me, hated

and despised, every country must be equally horrible. At length the

thought of you crossed my mind. I learned from your papers that you were

my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than

to him who had given me life? Among the lessons that Felix had bestowed

upon Safie, geography had not been omitted: I had learned from these the

relative situations of the different countries of the earth. You had

mentioned Geneva as the name of your native town; and towards this place

I resolved to proceed.

"But how was I to direct myself? I knew that I must travel in a

south-westerly direction to reach my destination; but the sun was my

only guide. I did not know the names of the towns that I was to pass

through, nor could I ask information from a single human being; but I

did not despair. From you only could I hope for succour, although

towards you I felt no sentiment but that of hatred. Unfeeling, heartless

creator! you had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast

me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only

had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek

that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that

wore the human form.

"My travels were long, and the sufferings I endured intense. It was late

in autumn when I quitted the district where I had so long resided. I

travelled only at night, fearful of encountering the visage of a human

being. Nature decayed around me, and the sun became heatless; rain and

snow poured around me; mighty rivers were frozen; the surface of the

earth was hard and chill, and bare, and I found no shelter. Oh, earth!

how often did I imprecate curses on the cause of my being! The mildness

of my nature had fled, and all within me was turned to gall and

bitterness. The nearer I approached to your habitation, the more deeply

did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart. Snow fell, and

the waters were hardened; but I rested not. A few incidents now and then

directed me, and I possessed a map of the country; but I often wandered

wide from my path. The agony of my feelings allowed me no respite: no

incident occurred from which my rage and misery could not extract its

food; but a circumstance that happened when I arrived on the confines of

Switzerland, when the sun had recovered its warmth, and the earth again

began to look green, confirmed in an especial manner the bitterness and

horror of my feelings.

"I generally rested during the day, and travelled only when I was

secured by night from the view of man. One morning, however, finding

that my path lay through a deep wood, I ventured to continue my journey

after the sun had risen; the day, which was one of the first of spring,

cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of

the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long

appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these

sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting

my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy. Soft tears again bedewed

my cheeks, and I even raised my humid eyes with thankfulness towards the

blessed sun which bestowed such joy upon me.

"I continued to wind among the paths of the wood, until I came to its

boundary, which was skirted by a deep and rapid river, into which many

of the trees bent their branches, now budding with the fresh spring.

Here I paused, not exactly knowing what path to pursue, when I heard the

sound of voices, that induced me to conceal myself under the shade of a

cypress. I was scarcely hid, when a young girl came running towards the

spot where I was concealed, laughing, as if she ran from some one in

sport. She continued her course along the precipitous sides of the

river, when suddenly her foot slipt, and she fell into the rapid

stream. I rushed from my hiding-place; and, with extreme labour from the

force of the current, saved her, and dragged her to shore. She was

senseless; and I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to restore

animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic,

who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing

me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened

towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew

why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he

carried, at my body, and fired. I sunk to the ground, and my injurer,

with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.

"This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being

from destruction, and, as a recompense, I now writhed under the

miserable pain of a wound, which shattered the flesh and bone. The

feelings of kindness and gentleness, which I had entertained but a few

moments before, gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth.

Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind.

But the agony of my wound overcame me; my pulses paused, and I fainted.

"For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to

cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder,

and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any

rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also

by the oppressive sense of the injustice and ingratitude of their

infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge--a deep and deadly revenge,

such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had

endured.

"After some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey. The

labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or

gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery, which insulted my

desolate state, and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for

the enjoyment of pleasure.

"But my toils now drew near a close; and, in two months from this time,

I reached the environs of Geneva.

"It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a hiding-place among

the fields that surround it, to meditate in what manner I should apply

to you. I was oppressed by fatigue and hunger, and far too unhappy to

enjoy the gentle breezes of evening, or the prospect of the sun setting

behind the stupendous mountains of Jura.

"At this time a slight sleep relieved me from the pain of reflection,

which was disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came

running into the recess I had chosen, with all the sportiveness of

infancy. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this

little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have

imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and

educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in

this peopled earth.

"Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed, and drew him

towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his

eyes, and uttered a shrill scream: I drew his hand forcibly from his

face, and said, 'Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to

hurt you; listen to me.'

"He struggled violently. 'Let me go,' he cried; 'monster! ugly wretch!

you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces--You are an ogre--Let me go,

or I will tell my papa.'

"'Boy, you will never see your father again; you must come with me.'

"'Hideous monster! let me go. My papa is a Syndic--he is M.

Frankenstein--he will punish you. You dare not keep me.'

"'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy--to him towards whom I have

sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.'

"The child still struggled, and loaded me with epithets which carried

despair to my heart; I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a

moment he lay dead at my feet.

"I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish

triumph: clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I, too, can create desolation;

my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and

a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.'

"As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his

breast. I took it; it was a portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite

of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed

with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely

lips; but presently my rage returned: I remembered that I was for ever

deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow; and

that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have

changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and

affright.

"Can you wonder that such thoughts transported me with rage? I only

wonder that at that moment, instead of venting my sensations in

exclamations and agony, I did not rush among mankind, and perish in the

attempt to destroy them.

"While I was overcome by these feelings, I left the spot where I had

committed the murder, and seeking a more secluded hiding-place, I

entered a barn which had appeared to me to be empty. A woman was

sleeping on some straw; she was young: not indeed so beautiful as her

whose portrait I held; but of an agreeable aspect, and blooming in the

loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose

joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over

her, and whispered 'Awake, fairest, thy lover is near--he who would give

his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes: my

beloved, awake!'

"The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she

indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus

would she assuredly act, if her darkened eyes opened, and she beheld me.

The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me--not I, but she

shall suffer: the murder I have committed because I am for ever robbed

of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source

in her: be hers the punishment! Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the

sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief. I bent over

her, and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress.

She moved again, and I fled.

"For some days I haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place;

sometimes wishing to see you, sometimes resolved to quit the world and

its miseries for ever. At length I wandered towards these mountains,

and have ranged through their immense recesses, consumed by a burning

passion which you alone can gratify. We may not part until you have

promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone, and miserable; man

will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself

would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species,

and have the same defects. This being you must create."

CHAPTER XVII.

The being finished speaking, and fixed his looks upon me in expectation

of a reply. But I was bewildered, perplexed, and unable to arrange my

ideas sufficiently to understand the full extent of his proposition. He

continued--

"You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the

interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone

can do; and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to

concede."

The latter part of his tale had kindled anew in me the anger that had

died away while he narrated his peaceful life among the cottagers, and,

as he said this, I could no longer suppress the rage that burned within

me.

"I do refuse it," I replied; "and no torture shall ever extort a consent

from me. You may render me the most miserable of men, but you shall

never make me base in my own eyes. Shall I create another like yourself,

whose joint wickedness might desolate the world. Begone! I have answered

you; you may torture me, but I will never consent."

"You are in the wrong," replied the fiend; "and, instead of threatening,

I am content to reason with you. I am malicious because I am miserable.

Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? You, my creator, would tear

me to pieces, and triumph; remember that, and tell me why I should pity

man more than he pities me? You would not call it murder, if you could

precipitate me into one of those ice-rifts, and destroy my frame, the

work of your own hands. Shall I respect man, when he contemns me? Let

him live with me in the interchange of kindness; and, instead of injury,

I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his

acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable

barriers to our union. Yet mine shall not be the submission of abject

slavery. I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will

cause fear; and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator,

do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care: I will work at your

destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall

curse the hour of your birth."

A fiendish rage animated him as he said this; his face was wrinkled into

contortions too horrible for human eyes to behold; but presently he

calmed himself and proceeded--

"I intended to reason. This passion is detrimental to me; for you do not

reflect that \_you\_ are the cause of its excess. If any being felt

emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and

an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, I would make peace with

the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be

realised. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a

creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is

small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is

true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that

account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be

happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel.

Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one

benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing;

do not deny me my request!"

I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of

my consent; but I felt that there was some justice in his argument. His

tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of

fine sensations; and did I not as his maker, owe him all the portion of

happiness that it was in my power to bestow? He saw my change of

feeling, and continued--

"If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us

again: I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that

of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite;

acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will

be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare.

We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on

man, and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful

and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the

wantonness of power and cruelty. Pitiless as you have been towards me, I

now see compassion in your eyes; let me seize the favourable moment, and

persuade you to promise what I so ardently desire."

"You propose," replied I, "to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell

in those wilds where the beasts of the field will be your only

companions. How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man,

persevere in this exile? You will return, and again seek their kindness,

and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be

renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of

destruction. This may not be: cease to argue the point, for I cannot

consent."

"How inconstant are your feelings! but a moment ago you were moved by my

representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints?

I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me,

that, with the companion you bestow, I will quit the neighbourhood of

man, and dwell as it may chance, in the most savage of places. My evil

passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy! my life will

flow quietly away, and, in my dying moments, I shall not curse my

maker."

His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and

sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I

saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my

feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle

these sensations; I thought, that as I could not sympathise with him, I

had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which

was yet in my power to bestow.

"You swear," I said, "to be harmless; but have you not already shown a

degree of malice that should reasonably make me distrust you? May not

even this be a feint that will increase your triumph by affording a

wider scope for your revenge."

"How is this? I must not be trifled with: and I demand an answer. If I

have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the

love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become

a thing, of whose existence every one will be ignorant. My vices are the

children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will

necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel

the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of

existence and events, from which I am now excluded."

I paused some time to reflect on all he had related, and the various

arguments which he had employed. I thought of the promise of virtues

which he had displayed on the opening of his existence, and the

subsequent blight of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn which

his protectors had manifested towards him. His power and threats were

not omitted in my calculations: a creature who could exist in the

ice-caves of the glaciers, and hide himself from pursuit among the

ridges of inaccessible precipices, was a being possessing faculties it

would be vain to cope with. After a long pause of reflection, I

concluded that the justice due both to him and my fellow-creatures

demanded of me that I should comply with his request. Turning to him,

therefore, I said--

"I consent to your demand, on your solemn oath to quit Europe for ever,

and every other place in the neighbourhood of man, as soon as I shall

deliver into your hands a female who will accompany you in your exile."

"I swear," he cried, "by the sun, and by the blue sky of Heaven, and by

the fire of love that burns my heart, that if you grant my prayer, while

they exist you shall never behold me again. Depart to your home, and

commence your labours: I shall watch their progress with unutterable

anxiety; and fear not but that when you are ready I shall appear."

Saying this, he suddenly quitted me, fearful, perhaps, of any change in

my sentiments. I saw him descend the mountain with greater speed than

the flight of an eagle, and quickly lost among the undulations of the

sea of ice.

His tale had occupied the whole day; and the sun was upon the verge of

the horizon when he departed. I knew that I ought to hasten my descent

towards the valley, as I should soon be encompassed in darkness; but my

heart was heavy, and my steps slow. The labour of winding among the

little paths of the mountains, and fixing my feet firmly as I advanced,

perplexed me, occupied as I was by the emotions which the occurrences of

the day had produced. Night was far advanced, when I came to the

half-way resting-place, and seated myself beside the fountain. The stars

shone at intervals, as the clouds passed from over them; the dark pines

rose before me, and every here and there a broken tree lay on the

ground: it was a scene of wonderful solemnity, and stirred strange

thoughts within me. I wept bitterly; and clasping my hands in agony, I

exclaimed, "Oh! stars and clouds, and winds, ye are all about to mock

me: if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as

nought; but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness."

These were wild and miserable thoughts; but I cannot describe to you how

the eternal twinkling of the stars weighed upon me, and how I listened

to every blast of wind, as if it were a dull ugly siroc on its way to

consume me.

Morning dawned before I arrived at the village of Chamounix; I took no

rest, but returned immediately to Geneva. Even in my own heart I could

give no expression to my sensations--they weighed on me with a

mountain's weight, and their excess destroyed my agony beneath them.

Thus I returned home, and entering the house, presented myself to the

family. My haggard and wild appearance awoke intense alarm; but I

answered no question, scarcely did I speak. I felt as if I were placed

under a ban--as if I had no right to claim their sympathies--as if never

more might I enjoy companionship with them. Yet even thus I loved them

to adoration; and to save them, I resolved to dedicate myself to my most

abhorred task. The prospect of such an occupation made every other

circumstance of existence pass before me like a dream; and that thought

only had to me the reality of life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Day after day, week after week, passed away on my return to Geneva; and

I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the

vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my

repugnance to the task which was enjoined me. I found that I could not

compose a female without again devoting several months to profound study

and laborious disquisition. I had heard of some discoveries having been

made by an English philosopher, the knowledge of which was material to

my success, and I sometimes thought of obtaining my father's consent to

visit England for this purpose; but I clung to every pretence of delay,

and shrunk from taking the first step in an undertaking whose immediate

necessity began to appear less absolute to me. A change indeed had taken

place in me: my health, which had hitherto declined, was now much

restored; and my spirits, when unchecked by the memory of my unhappy

promise, rose proportionably. My father saw this change with pleasure,

and he turned his thoughts towards the best method of eradicating the

remains of my melancholy, which every now and then would return by fits,

and with a devouring blackness overcast the approaching sunshine. At

these moments I took refuge in the most perfect solitude. I passed whole

days on the lake alone in a little boat, watching the clouds, and

listening to the rippling of the waves, silent and listless. But the

fresh air and bright sun seldom failed to restore me to some degree of

composure; and, on my return, I met the salutations of my friends with a

readier smile and a more cheerful heart.

It was after my return from one of these rambles, that my father,

calling me aside, thus addressed me:--

"I am happy to remark, my dear son, that you have resumed your former

pleasures, and seem to be returning to yourself. And yet you are still

unhappy, and still avoid our society. For some time I was lost in

conjecture as to the cause of this; but yesterday an idea struck me, and

if it is well founded, I conjure you to avow it. Reserve on such a point

would be not only useless, but draw down treble misery on us all."

I trembled violently at his exordium, and my father continued--

"I confess, my son, that I have always looked forward to your marriage

with our dear Elizabeth as the tie of our domestic comfort, and the stay

of my declining years. You were attached to each other from your

earliest infancy; you studied together, and appeared, in dispositions

and tastes, entirely suited to one another. But so blind is the

experience of man, that what I conceived to be the best assistants to my

plan, may have entirely destroyed it. You, perhaps, regard her as your

sister, without any wish that she might become your wife. Nay, you may

have met with another whom you may love; and, considering yourself as

bound in honour to Elizabeth, this struggle may occasion the poignant

misery which you appear to feel."

"My dear father, reassure yourself. I love my cousin tenderly and

sincerely. I never saw any woman who excited, as Elizabeth does, my

warmest admiration and affection. My future hopes and prospects are

entirely bound up in the expectation of our union."

"The expression of your sentiments of this subject, my dear Victor,

gives me more pleasure than I have for some time experienced. If you

feel thus, we shall assuredly be happy, however present events may cast

a gloom over us. But it is this gloom which appears to have taken so

strong a hold of your mind, that I wish to dissipate. Tell me,

therefore, whether you object to an immediate solemnisation of the

marriage. We have been unfortunate, and recent events have drawn us

from that every-day tranquillity befitting my years and infirmities. You

are younger; yet I do not suppose, possessed as you are of a competent

fortune, that an early marriage would at all interfere with any future

plans of honour and utility that you may have formed. Do not suppose,

however, that I wish to dictate happiness to you, or that a delay on

your part would cause me any serious uneasiness. Interpret my words with

candour, and answer me, I conjure you, with confidence and sincerity."

I listened to my father in silence, and remained for some time incapable

of offering any reply. I revolved rapidly in my mind a multitude of

thoughts, and endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion. Alas! to me the

idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and

dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled,

and dared not break; or, if I did, what manifold miseries might not

impend over me and my devoted family! Could I enter into a festival with

this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck, and bowing me to the

ground. I must perform my engagement, and let the monster depart with

his mate, before I allowed myself to enjoy the delight of an union from

which I expected peace.

I remembered also the necessity imposed upon me of either journeying to

England, or entering into a long correspondence with those philosophers

of that country, whose knowledge and discoveries were of indispensable

use to me in my present undertaking. The latter method of obtaining the

desired intelligence was dilatory and unsatisfactory: besides, I had an

insurmountable aversion to the idea of engaging myself in my loathsome

task in my father's house, while in habits of familiar intercourse with

those I loved. I knew that a thousand fearful accidents might occur, the

slightest of which would disclose a tale to thrill all connected with me

with horror. I was aware also that I should often lose all self-command,

all capacity of hiding the harrowing sensations that would possess me

during the progress of my unearthly occupation. I must absent myself

from all I loved while thus employed. Once commenced, it would quickly

be achieved, and I might be restored to my family in peace and

happiness. My promise fulfilled, the monster would depart for ever. Or

(so my fond fancy imaged) some accident might meanwhile occur to destroy

him, and put an end to my slavery for ever.

These feelings dictated my answer to my father. I expressed a wish to

visit England; but, concealing the true reasons of this request, I

clothed my desires under a guise which excited no suspicion, while I

urged my desire with an earnestness that easily induced my father to

comply. After so long a period of an absorbing melancholy, that

resembled madness in its intensity and effects, he was glad to find that

I was capable of taking pleasure in the idea of such a journey, and he

hoped that change of scene and varied amusement would, before my return,

have restored me entirely to myself.

The duration of my absence was left to my own choice; a few months, or

at most a year, was the period contemplated. One paternal kind

precaution he had taken to ensure my having a companion. Without

previously communicating with me, he had, in concert with Elizabeth,

arranged that Clerval should join me at Strasburgh. This interfered with

the solitude I coveted for the prosecution of my task; yet at the

commencement of my journey the presence of my friend could in no way be

an impediment, and truly I rejoiced that thus I should be saved many

hours of lonely, maddening reflection. Nay, Henry might stand between me

and the intrusion of my foe. If I were alone, would he not at times

force his abhorred presence on me, to remind me of my task, or to

contemplate its progress?

To England, therefore, I was bound, and it was understood that my union

with Elizabeth should take place immediately on my return. My father's

age rendered him extremely averse to delay. For myself, there was one

reward I promised myself from my detested toils--one consolation for my

unparalleled sufferings; it was the prospect of that day when,

enfranchised from my miserable slavery, I might claim Elizabeth, and

forget the past in my union with her.

I now made arrangements for my journey; but one feeling haunted me,

which filled me with fear and agitation. During my absence I should

leave my friends unconscious of the existence of their enemy, and

unprotected from his attacks, exasperated as he might be by my

departure. But he had promised to follow me wherever I might go; and

would he not accompany me to England? This imagination was dreadful in

itself, but soothing, inasmuch as it supposed the safety of my friends.

I was agonised with the idea of the possibility that the reverse of this

might happen. But through the whole period during which I was the slave

of my creature, I allowed myself to be governed by the impulses of the

moment; and my present sensations strongly intimated that the fiend

would follow me, and exempt my family from the danger of his

machinations.

It was in the latter end of September that I again quitted my native

country. My journey had been my own suggestion, and Elizabeth,

therefore, acquiesced: but she was filled with disquiet at the idea of

my suffering, away from her, the inroads of misery and grief. It had

been her care which provided me a companion in Clerval--and yet a man is

blind to a thousand minute circumstances, which call forth a woman's

sedulous attention. She longed to bid me hasten my return,--a thousand

conflicting emotions rendered her mute, as she bade me a tearful silent

farewell.

I threw myself into the carriage that was to convey me away, hardly

knowing whither I was going, and careless of what was passing around. I

remembered only, and it was with a bitter anguish that I reflected on

it, to order that my chemical instruments should be packed to go with

me. Filled with dreary imaginations, I passed through many beautiful and

majestic scenes; but my eyes were fixed and unobserving. I could only

think of the bourne of my travels, and the work which was to occupy me

whilst they endured.

After some days spent in listless indolence, during which I traversed

many leagues, I arrived at Strasburgh, where I waited two days for

Clerval. He came. Alas, how great was the contrast between us! He was

alive to every new scene; joyful when he saw the beauties of the setting

sun, and more happy when he beheld it rise, and recommence a new day.

He pointed out to me the shifting colours of the landscape, and the

appearances of the sky. "This is what it is to live," he cried, "now I

enjoy existence! But you, my dear Frankenstein, wherefore are you

desponding and sorrowful!" In truth, I was occupied by gloomy thoughts,

and neither saw the descent of the evening star, nor the golden sunrise

reflected in the Rhine.--And you, my friend, would be far more amused

with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of

feeling and delight, than in listening to my reflections. I, a miserable

wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.

We had agreed to descend the Rhine in a boat from Strasburgh to

Rotterdam, whence we might take shipping for London. During this voyage,

we passed many willowy islands, and saw several beautiful towns. We

stayed a day at Manheim, and, on the fifth from our departure from

Strasburgh, arrived at Mayence. The course of the Rhine below Mayence

becomes much more picturesque. The river descends rapidly, and winds

between hills, not high, but steep, and of beautiful forms. We saw many

ruined castles standing on the edges of precipices, surrounded by black

woods, high and inaccessible. This part of the Rhine, indeed, presents a

singularly variegated landscape. In one spot you view rugged hills,

ruined castles overlooking tremendous precipices, with the dark Rhine

rushing beneath; and, on the sudden turn of a promontory, flourishing

vineyards, with green sloping banks, and a meandering river, and

populous towns occupy the scene.

We travelled at the time of the vintage, and heard the song of the

labourers, as we glided down the stream. Even I, depressed in mind, and

my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased.

I lay at the bottom of the boat, and, as I gazed on the cloudless blue

sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquillity to which I had long been a

stranger. And if these were my sensations, who can describe those of

Henry? He felt as if he had been transported to Fairy-land, and enjoyed

a happiness seldom tasted by man. "I have seen," he said, "the most

beautiful scenes of my own country; I have visited the lakes of Lucerne

and Uri, where the snowy mountains descend almost perpendicularly to the

water, casting black and impenetrable shades, which would cause a gloomy

and mournful appearance, were it not for the most verdant islands that

relieve the eye by their gay appearance; I have seen this lake agitated

by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water, and gave you an

idea of what the water-spout must be on the great ocean; and the waves

dash with fury the base of the mountain, where the priest and his

mistress were overwhelmed by an avalanche, and where their dying voices

are still said to be heard amid the pauses of the nightly wind; I have

seen the mountains of La Valais, and the Pays de Vaud: but this country,

Victor, pleases me more than all those wonders. The mountains of

Switzerland are more majestic and strange; but there is a charm in the

banks of this divine river, that I never before saw equalled. Look at

that castle which overhangs yon precipice; and that also on the island,

almost concealed amongst the foliage of those lovely trees; and now that

group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half

hid in the recess of the mountain. Oh, surely, the spirit that inhabits

and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man, than those

who pile the glacier, or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the

mountains of our own country."

Clerval! beloved friend! even now it delights me to record your words,

and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving. He

was a being formed in the "very poetry of nature." His wild and

enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart.

His soul overflowed with ardent affections, and his friendship was of

that devoted and wondrous nature that the worldly-minded teach us to

look for only in the imagination. But even human sympathies were not

sufficient to satisfy his eager mind. The scenery of external nature,

which others regard only with admiration, he loved with ardour:--

----"The sounding cataract

Haunted him like a passion: the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to him

An appetite; a feeling, and a love,

That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, or any interest

Unborrow'd from the eye"[3]

[Footnote 3: Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey.]

And where does he now exist? Is this gentle and lovely being lost for

ever? Has this mind, so replete with ideas, imaginations fanciful and

magnificent, which formed a world, whose existence depended on the life

of its creator;--has this mind perished? Does it now only exist in my

memory? No, it is not thus; your form so divinely wrought, and beaming

with beauty, has decayed, but your spirit still visits and consoles your

unhappy friend.

Pardon this gush of sorrow; these ineffectual words are but a slight

tribute to the unexampled worth of Henry, but they soothe my heart,

overflowing with the anguish which his remembrance creates. I will

proceed with my tale.

Beyond Cologne we descended to the plains of Holland; and we resolved to

post the remainder of our way; for the wind was contrary, and the stream

of the river was too gentle to aid us.

Our journey here lost the interest arising from beautiful scenery; but

we arrived in a few days at Rotterdam, whence we proceeded by sea to

England. It was on a clear morning, in the latter days of December, that

I first saw the white cliffs of Britain. The banks of the Thames

presented a new scene; they were flat, but fertile, and almost every

town was marked by the remembrance of some story. We saw Tilbury Fort,

and remembered the Spanish armada; Gravesend, Woolwich, and Greenwich,

places which I had heard of even in my country.

At length we saw the numerous steeples of London, St. Paul's towering

above all, and the Tower famed in English history.

CHAPTER XIX.

London was our present point of rest; we determined to remain several

months in this wonderful and celebrated city. Clerval desired the

intercourse of the men of genius and talent who flourished at this time;

but this was with me a secondary object; I was principally occupied with

the means of obtaining the information necessary for the completion of

my promise, and quickly availed myself of the letters of introduction

that I had brought with me, addressed to the most distinguished natural

philosophers.

If this journey had taken place during my days of study and happiness,

it would have afforded me inexpressible pleasure. But a blight had come

over my existence, and I only visited these people for the sake of the

information they might give me on the subject in which my interest was

so terribly profound. Company was irksome to me; when alone, I could

fill my mind with the sights of heaven and earth; the voice of Henry

soothed me, and I could thus cheat myself into a transitory peace. But

busy uninteresting joyous faces brought back despair to my heart. I saw

an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow-men; this

barrier was sealed with the blood of William and Justine; and to reflect

on the events connected with those names filled my soul with anguish.

But in Clerval I saw the image of my former self; he was inquisitive,

and anxious to gain experience and instruction. The difference of

manners which he observed was to him an inexhaustible source of

instruction and amusement. He was also pursuing an object he had long

had in view. His design was to visit India, in the belief that he had in

his knowledge of its various languages, and in the views he had taken of

its society, the means of materially assisting the progress of European

colonisation and trade. In Britain only could he further the execution

of his plan. He was for ever busy; and the only check to his enjoyments

was my sorrowful and dejected mind. I tried to conceal this as much as

possible, that I might not debar him from the pleasures natural to one,

who was entering on a new scene of life, undisturbed by any care or

bitter recollection. I often refused to accompany him, alleging another

engagement, that I might remain alone. I now also began to collect the

materials necessary for my new creation, and this was to me like the

torture of single drops of water continually falling on the head. Every

thought that was devoted to it was an extreme anguish, and every word

that I spoke in allusion to it caused my lips to quiver, and my heart to

palpitate.

After passing some months in London, we received a letter from a person

in Scotland, who had formerly been our visiter at Geneva. He mentioned

the beauties of his native country, and asked us if those were not

sufficient allurements to induce us to prolong our journey as far north

as Perth, where he resided. Clerval eagerly desired to accept this

invitation; and I, although I abhorred society, wished to view again

mountains and streams, and all the wondrous works with which Nature

adorns her chosen dwelling-places.

We had arrived in England at the beginning of October, and it was now

February. We accordingly determined to commence our journey towards the

north at the expiration of another month. In this expedition we did not

intend to follow the great road to Edinburgh, but to visit Windsor,

Oxford, Matlock, and the Cumberland lakes, resolving to arrive at the

completion of this tour about the end of July. I packed up my chemical

instruments, and the materials I had collected, resolving to finish my

labours in some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland.

We quitted London on the 27th of March, and remained a few days at

Windsor, rambling in its beautiful forest. This was a new scene to us

mountaineers; the majestic oaks, the quantity of game, and the herds of

stately deer, were all novelties to us.

From thence we proceeded to Oxford. As we entered this city, our minds

were filled with the remembrance of the events that had been transacted

there more than a century and a half before. It was here that Charles I.

had collected his forces. This city had remained faithful to him, after

the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of

parliament and liberty. The memory of that unfortunate king, and his

companions, the amiable Falkland, the insolent Goring, his queen, and

son, gave a peculiar interest to every part of the city, which they

might be supposed to have inhabited. The spirit of elder days found a

dwelling here, and we delighted to trace its footsteps. If these

feelings had not found an imaginary gratification, the appearance of the

city had yet in itself sufficient beauty to obtain our admiration. The

colleges are ancient and picturesque; the streets are almost

magnificent; and the lovely Isis, which flows beside it through meadows

of exquisite verdure, is spread forth into a placid expanse of waters,

which reflects its majestic assemblage of towers, and spires, and domes,

embosomed among aged trees.

I enjoyed this scene; and yet my enjoyment was embittered both by the

memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future. I was formed for

peaceful happiness. During my youthful days discontent never visited my

mind; and if I was ever overcome by \_ennui\_, the sight of what is

beautiful in nature, or the study of what is excellent and sublime in

the productions of man, could always interest my heart, and communicate

elasticity to my spirits. But I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered

my soul; and I felt then that I should survive to exhibit, what I shall

soon cease to be--a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to

others, and intolerable to myself.

We passed a considerable period at Oxford, rambling among its environs,

and endeavouring to identify every spot which might relate to the most

animating epoch of English history. Our little voyages of discovery were

often prolonged by the successive objects that presented themselves. We

visited the tomb of the illustrious Hampden, and the field on which that

patriot fell. For a moment my soul was elevated from its debasing and

miserable fears, to contemplate the divine ideas of liberty and

self-sacrifice, of which these sights were the monuments and the

remembrancers. For an instant I dared to shake off my chains, and look

around me with a free and lofty spirit; but the iron had eaten into my

flesh, and I sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self.

We left Oxford with regret, and proceeded to Matlock, which was our next

place of rest. The country in the neighbourhood of this village

resembled, to a greater degree, the scenery of Switzerland; but every

thing is on a lower scale, and the green hills want the crown of distant

white Alps, which always attend on the piny mountains of my native

country. We visited the wondrous cave, and the little cabinets of

natural history, where the curiosities are disposed in the same manner

as in the collections at Servox and Chamounix. The latter name made me

tremble, when pronounced by Henry; and I hastened to quit Matlock, with

which that terrible scene was thus associated.

From Derby, still journeying northward, we passed two months in

Cumberland and Westmorland. I could now almost fancy myself among the

Swiss mountains. The little patches of snow which yet lingered on the

northern sides of the mountains, the lakes, and the dashing of the rocky

streams, were all familiar and dear sights to me. Here also we made some

acquaintances, who almost contrived to cheat me into happiness. The

delight of Clerval was proportionably greater than mine; his mind

expanded in the company of men of talent, and he found in his own nature

greater capacities and resources than he could have imagined himself to

have possessed while he associated with his inferiors. "I could pass my

life here," said he to me; "and among these mountains I should scarcely

regret Switzerland and the Rhine."

But he found that a traveller's life is one that includes much pain

amidst its enjoyments. His feelings are for ever on the stretch; and

when he begins to sink into repose, he finds himself obliged to quit

that on which he rests in pleasure for something new, which again

engages his attention, and which also he forsakes for other novelties.

We had scarcely visited the various lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland,

and conceived an affection for some of the inhabitants, when the period

of our appointment with our Scotch friend approached, and we left them

to travel on. For my own part I was not sorry. I had now neglected my

promise for some time, and I feared the effects of the dæmon's

disappointment. He might remain in Switzerland, and wreak his vengeance

on my relatives. This idea pursued me, and tormented me at every moment

from which I might otherwise have snatched repose and peace. I waited

for my letters with feverish impatience: if they were delayed, I was

miserable, and overcome by a thousand fears; and when they arrived, and

I saw the superscription of Elizabeth or my father, I hardly dared to

read and ascertain my fate. Sometimes I thought that the fiend followed

me, and might expedite my remissness by murdering my companion. When

these thoughts possessed me, I would not quit Henry for a moment, but

followed him as his shadow, to protect him from the fancied rage of his

destroyer. I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the

consciousness of which haunted me. I was guiltless, but I had indeed

drawn down a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime.

I visited Edinburgh with languid eyes and mind; and yet that city might

have interested the most unfortunate being. Clerval did not like it so

well as Oxford: for the antiquity of the latter city was more pleasing

to him. But the beauty and regularity of the new town of Edinburgh, its

romantic castle, and its environs, the most delightful in the world,

Arthur's Seat, St. Bernard's Well, and the Pentland Hills, compensated

him for the change, and filled him with cheerfulness and admiration. But

I was impatient to arrive at the termination of my journey.

We left Edinburgh in a week, passing through Coupar, St. Andrew's, and

along the banks of the Tay, to Perth, where our friend expected us. But

I was in no mood to laugh and talk with strangers, or enter into their

feelings or plans with the good humour expected from a guest; and

accordingly I told Clerval that I wished to make the tour of Scotland

alone. "Do you," said I, "enjoy yourself, and let this be our

rendezvous. I may be absent a month or two; but do not interfere with my

motions, I entreat you: leave me to peace and solitude for a short time;

and when I return, I hope it will be with a lighter heart, more

congenial to your own temper."

Henry wished to dissuade me; but, seeing me bent on this plan, ceased to

remonstrate. He entreated me to write often. "I had rather be with you,"

he said, "in your solitary rambles, than with these Scotch people, whom

I do not know: hasten then, my dear friend, to return, that I may again

feel myself somewhat at home, which I cannot do in your absence."

Having parted from my friend, I determined to visit some remote spot of

Scotland, and finish my work in solitude. I did not doubt but that the

monster followed me, and would discover himself to me when I should have

finished, that he might receive his companion.

With this resolution I traversed the northern highlands, and fixed on

one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of my labours. It was a

place fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock, whose high

sides were continually beaten upon by the waves. The soil was barren,

scarcely affording pasture for a few miserable cows, and oatmeal for its

inhabitants, which consisted of five persons, whose gaunt and scraggy

limbs gave tokens of their miserable fare. Vegetables and bread, when

they indulged in such luxuries, and even fresh water, was to be procured

from the main land, which was about five miles distant.

On the whole island there were but three miserable huts, and one of

these was vacant when I arrived. This I hired. It contained but two

rooms, and these exhibited all the squalidness of the most miserable

penury. The thatch had fallen in, the walls were unplastered, and the

door was off its hinges. I ordered it to be repaired, bought some

furniture, and took possession; an incident which would, doubtless, have

occasioned some surprise, had not all the senses of the cottagers been

benumbed by want and squalid poverty. As it was, I lived ungazed at and

unmolested, hardly thanked for the pittance of food and clothes which I

gave; so much does suffering blunt even the coarsest sensations of men.

In this retreat I devoted the morning to labour; but in the evening,

when the weather permitted, I walked on the stony beach of the sea, to

listen to the waves as they roared and dashed at my feet. It was a

monotonous yet ever-changing scene. I thought of Switzerland; it was

far different from this desolate and appalling landscape. Its hills are

covered with vines, and its cottages are scattered thickly in the

plains. Its fair lakes reflect a blue and gentle sky; and, when troubled

by the winds, their tumult is but as the play of a lively infant, when

compared to the roarings of the giant ocean.

In this manner I distributed my occupations when I first arrived; but,

as I proceeded in my labour, it became every day more horrible and

irksome to me. Sometimes I could not prevail on myself to enter my

laboratory for several days; and at other times I toiled day and night

in order to complete my work. It was, indeed, a filthy process in which

I was engaged. During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy

had blinded me to the horror of my employment; my mind was intently

fixed on the consummation of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the

horror of my proceedings. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my

heart often sickened at the work of my hands.

Thus situated, employed in the most detestable occupation, immersed in a

solitude where nothing could for an instant call my attention from the

actual scene in which I was engaged, my spirits became unequal; I grew

restless and nervous. Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor.

Sometimes I sat with my eyes fixed on the ground, fearing to raise them,

lest they should encounter the object which I so much dreaded to behold.

I feared to wander from the sight of my fellow-creatures, lest when

alone he should come to claim his companion.

In the mean time I worked on, and my labour was already considerably

advanced. I looked towards its completion with a tremulous and eager

hope, which I dared not trust myself to question, but which was

intermixed with obscure forebodings of evil, that made my heart sicken

in my bosom.

CHAPTER XX.

I sat one evening in my laboratory; the sun had set, and the moon was

just rising from the sea; I had not sufficient light for my employment,

and I remained idle, in a pause of consideration of whether I should

leave my labour for the night, or hasten its conclusion by an

unremitting attention to it. As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to

me, which led me to consider the effects of what I was now doing. Three

years before I was engaged in the same manner, and had created a fiend

whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart, and filled it for

ever with the bitterest remorse. I was now about to form another being,

of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten

thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for its own

sake, in murder and wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighbourhood

of man, and hide himself in deserts; but she had not; and she, who in

all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might

refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might

even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own

deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it

came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn with

disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and

he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being

deserted by one of his own species.

Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new

world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the

dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be

propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the

species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. Had I right,

for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?

I had before been moved by the sophisms of the being I had created; I

had been struck senseless by his fiendish threats: but now, for the

first time, the wickedness of my promise burst upon me; I shuddered to

think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness

had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps, of the

existence of the whole human race.

I trembled, and my heart failed within me; when, on looking up, I saw,

by the light of the moon, the dæmon at the casement. A ghastly grin

wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task

which he had allotted to me. Yes, he had followed me in my travels; he

had loitered in forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide

and desert heaths; and he now came to mark my progress, and claim the

fulfilment of my promise.

As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of

malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my

promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion,

tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me

destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for

happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.

I left the room, and, locking the door, made a solemn vow in my own

heart never to resume my labours; and then, with trembling steps, I

sought my own apartment. I was alone; none were near me to dissipate the

gloom, and relieve me from the sickening oppression of the most terrible

reveries.

Several hours passed, and I remained near my window gazing on the sea;

it was almost motionless, for the winds were hushed, and all nature

reposed under the eye of the quiet moon. A few fishing vessels alone

specked the water, and now and then the gentle breeze wafted the sound

of voices, as the fishermen called to one another. I felt the silence,

although I was hardly conscious of its extreme profundity, until my ear

was suddenly arrested by the paddling of oars near the shore, and a

person landed close to my house.

In a few minutes after, I heard the creaking of my door, as if some one

endeavoured to open it softly. I trembled from head to foot; I felt a

presentiment of who it was, and wished to rouse one of the peasants who

dwelt in a cottage not far from mine; but I was overcome by the

sensation of helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you

in vain endeavour to fly from an impending danger, and was rooted to the

spot.

Presently I heard the sound of footsteps along the passage; the door

opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared. Shutting the door, he

approached me, and said, in a smothered voice--

"You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you

intend? Do you dare to break your promise? I have endured toil and

misery: I left Switzerland with you; I crept along the shores of the

Rhine, among its willow islands, and over the summits of its hills. I

have dwelt many months in the heaths of England, and among the deserts

of Scotland. I have endured incalculable fatigue, and cold, and hunger;

do you dare destroy my hopes?"

"Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like

yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness."

"Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself

unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe

yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day

will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your

master;--obey!"

"The hour of my irresolution is past, and the period of your power is

arrived. Your threats cannot move me to do an act of wickedness; but

they confirm me in a determination of not creating you a companion in

vice. Shall I, in cool blood, set loose upon the earth a dæmon, whose

delight is in death and wretchedness? Begone! I am firm, and your words

will only exasperate my rage."

The monster saw my determination in my face, and gnashed his teeth in

the impotence of anger. "Shall each man," cried he, "find a wife for his

bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? I had feelings of

affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn. Man! you may

hate; but beware! your hours will pass in dread and misery, and soon the

bolt will fall which must ravish from you your happiness for ever. Are

you to be happy, while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness?

You can blast my other passions; but revenge remains--revenge,

henceforth dearer than light or food! I may die; but first you, my

tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery.

Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful. I will watch with the

wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall

repent of the injuries you inflict."

"Devil, cease; and do not poison the air with these sounds of malice. I

have declared my resolution to you, and I am no coward to bend beneath

words. Leave me; I am inexorable."

"It is well. I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your

wedding-night."

I started forward, and exclaimed, "Villain! before you sign my

death-warrant, be sure that you are yourself safe."

I would have seized him; but he eluded me, and quitted the house with

precipitation. In a few moments I saw him in his boat, which shot across

the waters with an arrowy swiftness, and was soon lost amidst the waves.

All was again silent; but his words rung in my ears. I burned with rage

to pursue the murderer of my peace, and precipitate him into the ocean.

I walked up and down my room hastily and perturbed, while my imagination

conjured up a thousand images to torment and sting me. Why had I not

followed him, and closed with him in mortal strife? But I had suffered

him to depart, and he had directed his course towards the main land. I

shuddered to think who might be the next victim sacrificed to his

insatiate revenge. And then I thought again of his words--"\_I will be

with you on your wedding-night.\_" That then was the period fixed for the

fulfilment of my destiny. In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy

and extinguish his malice. The prospect did not move me to fear; yet

when I thought of my beloved Elizabeth,--of her tears and endless

sorrow, when she should find her lover so barbarously snatched from

her,--tears, the first I had shed for many months, streamed from my

eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter

struggle.

The night passed away, and the sun rose from the ocean; my feelings

became calmer, if it may be called calmness when the violence of rage

sinks into the depths of despair. I left the house, the horrid scene of

the last night's contention, and walked on the beach of the sea, which I

almost regarded as an insuperable barrier between me and my

fellow-creatures; nay, a wish that such should prove the fact stole

across me. I desired that I might pass my life on that barren rock,

wearily, it is true, but uninterrupted by any sudden shock of misery. If

I returned, it was to be sacrificed, or to see those whom I most loved

die under the grasp of a dæmon whom I had myself created.

I walked about the isle like a restless spectre, separated from all it

loved, and miserable in the separation. When it became noon, and the sun

rose higher, I lay down on the grass, and was overpowered by a deep

sleep. I had been awake the whole of the preceding night, my nerves were

agitated, and my eyes inflamed by watching and misery. The sleep into

which I now sunk refreshed me; and when I awoke, I again felt as if I

belonged to a race of human beings like myself, and I began to reflect

upon what had passed with greater composure; yet still the words of the

fiend rung in my ears like a death-knell, they appeared like a dream,

yet distinct and oppressive as a reality.

The sun had far descended, and I still sat on the shore, satisfying my

appetite, which had become ravenous, with an oaten cake, when I saw a

fishing-boat land close to me, and one of the men brought me a packet;

it contained letters from Geneva, and one from Clerval, entreating me to

join him. He said that he was wearing away his time fruitlessly where he

was; that letters from the friends he had formed in London desired his

return to complete the negotiation they had entered into for his Indian

enterprise. He could not any longer delay his departure; but as his

journey to London might be followed, even sooner than he now

conjectured, by his longer voyage, he entreated me to bestow as much of

my society on him as I could spare. He besought me, therefore, to leave

my solitary isle, and to meet him at Perth, that we might proceed

southwards together. This letter in a degree recalled me to life, and I

determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days.

Yet, before I departed, there was a task to perform, on which I

shuddered to reflect: I must pack up my chemical instruments; and for

that purpose I must enter the room which had been the scene of my odious

work, and I must handle those utensils, the sight of which was sickening

to me. The next morning, at daybreak, I summoned sufficient courage, and

unlocked the door of my laboratory. The remains of the half-finished

creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost

felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being. I paused to

collect myself, and then entered the chamber. With trembling hand I

conveyed the instruments out of the room; but I reflected that I ought

not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of

the peasants; and I accordingly put them into a basket, with a great

quantity of stones, and, laying them up, determined to throw them into

the sea that very night; and in the mean time I sat upon the beach,

employed in cleaning and arranging my chemical apparatus.

Nothing could be more complete than the alteration that had taken place

in my feelings since the night of the appearance of the dæmon. I had

before regarded my promise with a gloomy despair, as a thing that, with

whatever consequences, must be fulfilled; but I now felt as if a film

had been taken from before my eyes, and that I, for the first time, saw

clearly. The idea of renewing my labours did not for one instant occur

to me; the threat I had heard weighed on my thoughts, but I did not

reflect that a voluntary act of mine could avert it. I had resolved in

my own mind, that to create another like the fiend I had first made

would be an act of the basest and most atrocious selfishness; and I

banished from my mind every thought that could lead to a different

conclusion.

Between two and three in the morning the moon rose; and I then, putting

my basket aboard a little skiff, sailed out about four miles from the

shore. The scene was perfectly solitary: a few boats were returning

towards land, but I sailed away from them. I felt as if I was about the

commission of a dreadful crime, and avoided with shuddering anxiety any

encounter with my fellow-creatures. At one time the moon, which had

before been clear, was suddenly overspread by a thick cloud, and I took

advantage of the moment of darkness, and cast my basket into the sea: I

listened to the gurgling sound as it sunk, and then sailed away from the

spot. The sky became clouded; but the air was pure, although chilled by

the north-east breeze that was then rising. But it refreshed me, and

filled me with such agreeable sensations, that I resolved to prolong my

stay on the water; and, fixing the rudder in a direct position,

stretched myself at the bottom of the boat. Clouds hid the moon, every

thing was obscure, and I heard only the sound of the boat, as its keel

cut through the waves; the murmur lulled me, and in a short time I slept

soundly.

I do not know how long I remained in this situation, but when I awoke I

found that the sun had already mounted considerably. The wind was high,

and the waves continually threatened the safety of my little skiff. I

found that the wind was north-east, and must have driven me far from the

coast from which I had embarked. I endeavoured to change my course, but

quickly found that, if I again made the attempt, the boat would be

instantly filled with water. Thus situated, my only resource was to

drive before the wind. I confess that I felt a few sensations of terror.

I had no compass with me, and was so slenderly acquainted with the

geography of this part of the world, that the sun was of little benefit

to me. I might be driven into the wide Atlantic, and feel all the

tortures of starvation, or be swallowed up in the immeasurable waters

that roared and buffeted around me. I had already been out many hours,

and felt the torment of a burning thirst, a prelude to my other

sufferings. I looked on the heavens, which were covered by clouds that

flew before the wind, only to be replaced by others: I looked upon the

sea, it was to be my grave. "Fiend," I exclaimed, "your task is already

fulfilled!" I thought of Elizabeth, of my father, and of Clerval; all

left behind, on whom the monster might satisfy his sanguinary and

merciless passions. This idea plunged me into a reverie, so despairing

and frightful, that even now, when the scene is on the point of closing

before me for ever, I shudder to reflect on it.

Some hours passed thus; but by degrees, as the sun declined towards the

horizon, the wind died away into a gentle breeze, and the sea became

free from breakers. But these gave place to a heavy swell: I felt sick,

and hardly able to hold the rudder, when suddenly I saw a line of high

land towards the south.

Almost spent, as I was, by fatigue, and the dreadful suspense I endured

for several hours, this sudden certainty of life rushed like a flood of

warm joy to my heart, and tears gushed from my eyes.

How mutable are our feelings, and how strange is that clinging love we

have of life even in the excess of misery! I constructed another sail

with a part of my dress, and eagerly steered my course towards the land.

It had a wild and rocky appearance; but, as I approached nearer, I

easily perceived the traces of cultivation. I saw vessels near the

shore, and found myself suddenly transported back to the neighbourhood

of civilised man. I carefully traced the windings of the land, and

hailed a steeple which I at length saw issuing from behind a small

promontory. As I was in a state of extreme debility, I resolved to sail

directly towards the town, as a place where I could most easily procure

nourishment. Fortunately I had money with me. As I turned the

promontory, I perceived a small neat town and a good harbour, which I

entered, my heart bounding with joy at my unexpected escape.

As I was occupied in fixing the boat and arranging the sails, several

people crowded towards the spot. They seemed much surprised at my

appearance; but, instead of offering me any assistance, whispered

together with gestures that at any other time might have produced in me

a slight sensation of alarm. As it was, I merely remarked that they

spoke English; and I therefore addressed them in that language: "My good

friends," said I, "will you be so kind as to tell me the name of this

town, and inform me where I am?"

"You will know that soon enough," replied a man with a hoarse voice.

"May be you are come to a place that will not prove much to your taste;

but you will not be consulted as to your quarters, I promise you."

I was exceedingly surprised on receiving so rude an answer from a

stranger; and I was also disconcerted on perceiving the frowning and

angry countenances of his companions. "Why do you answer me so roughly?"

I replied; "surely it is not the custom of Englishmen to receive

strangers so inhospitably."

"I do not know," said the man, "what the custom of the English may be;

but is the custom of the Irish to hate villains."

While this strange dialogue continued, I perceived the crowd rapidly

increase. Their faces expressed a mixture of curiosity and anger, which

annoyed, and in some degree alarmed me. I enquired the way to the inn;

but no one replied. I then moved forward, and a murmuring sound arose

from the crowd as they followed and surrounded me; when an ill-looking

man approaching, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Come, Sir, you

must follow me to Mr. Kirwin's, to give an account of yourself."

"Who is Mr. Kirwin? Why am I to give an account of myself? Is not this a

free country?"

"Ay, sir, free enough for honest folks. Mr. Kirwin is a magistrate; and

you are to give an account of the death of a gentleman who was found

murdered here last night."

This answer startled me; but I presently recovered myself. I was

innocent; that could easily be proved: accordingly I followed my

conductor in silence, and was led to one of the best houses in the town.

I was ready to sink from fatigue and hunger; but, being surrounded by a

crowd, I thought it politic to rouse all my strength, that no physical

debility might be construed into apprehension or conscious guilt. Little

did I then expect the calamity that was in a few moments to overwhelm

me, and extinguish in horror and despair all fear of ignominy or death.

I must pause here; for it requires all my fortitude to recall the memory

of the frightful events which I am about to relate, in proper detail, to

my recollection.

CHAPTER XXI.

I was soon introduced into the presence of the magistrate, an old

benevolent man, with calm and mild manners. He looked upon me, however,

with some degree of severity: and then, turning towards my conductors,

he asked who appeared as witnesses on this occasion.

About half a dozen men came forward; and, one being selected by the

magistrate, he deposed, that he had been out fishing the night before

with his son and brother-in-law, Daniel Nugent, when, about ten o'clock,

they observed a strong northerly blast rising, and they accordingly put

in for port. It was a very dark night, as the moon had not yet risen;

they did not land at the harbour, but, as they had been accustomed, at a

creek about two miles below. He walked on first, carrying a part of the

fishing tackle, and his companions followed him at some distance. As he

was proceeding along the sands, he struck his foot against something,

and fell at his length on the ground. His companions came up to assist

him; and, by the light of their lantern, they found that he had fallen

on the body of a man, who was to all appearance dead. Their first

supposition was, that it was the corpse of some person who had been

drowned, and was thrown on shore by the waves; but, on examination, they

found that the clothes were not wet, and even that the body was not then

cold. They instantly carried it to the cottage of an old woman near the

spot, and endeavoured, but in vain, to restore it to life. It appeared

to be a handsome young man, about five and twenty years of age. He had

apparently been strangled; for there was no sign of any violence, except

the black mark of fingers on his neck.

The first part of this deposition did not in the least interest me; but

when the mark of the fingers was mentioned, I remembered the murder of

my brother, and felt myself extremely agitated; my limbs trembled, and a

mist came over my eyes, which obliged me to lean on a chair for

support. The magistrate observed me with a keen eye, and of course drew

an unfavourable augury from my manner.

The son confirmed his father's account: but when Daniel Nugent was

called, he swore positively that, just before the fall of his companion,

he saw a boat, with a single man in it, at a short distance from the

shore; and, as far as he could judge by the light of a few stars, it was

the same boat in which I had just landed.

A woman deposed, that she lived near the beach, and was standing at the

door of her cottage, waiting for the return of the fishermen, about an

hour before she heard of the discovery of the body, when she saw a boat,

with only one man in it, push off from that part of the shore where the

corpse was afterwards found.

Another woman confirmed the account of the fishermen having brought the

body into her house; it was not cold. They put it into a bed, and rubbed

it; and Daniel went to the town for an apothecary, but life was quite

gone.

Several other men were examined concerning my landing; and they agreed,

that, with the strong north wind that had arisen during the night, it

was very probable that I had beaten about for many hours, and had been

obliged to return nearly to the same spot from which I had departed.

Besides, they observed that it appeared that I had brought the body from

another place, and it was likely, that as I did not appear to know the

shore, I might have put into the harbour ignorant of the distance of the

town of \* \* \* from the place where I had deposited the corpse.

Mr. Kirwin, on hearing this evidence, desired that I should be taken

into the room where the body lay for interment, that it might be

observed what effect the sight of it would produce upon me. This idea

was probably suggested by the extreme agitation I had exhibited when the

mode of the murder had been described. I was accordingly conducted, by

the magistrate and several other persons, to the inn. I could not help

being struck by the strange coincidences that had taken place during

this eventful night; but, knowing that I had been conversing with

several persons in the island I had inhabited about the time that the

body had been found, I was perfectly tranquil as to the consequences of

the affair.

I entered the room where the corpse lay, and was led up to the coffin.

How can I describe my sensations on beholding it? I feel yet parched

with horror, nor can I reflect on that terrible moment without

shuddering and agony. The examination, the presence of the magistrate

and witnesses, passed like a dream from my memory, when I saw the

lifeless form of Henry Clerval stretched before me. I gasped for breath;

and, throwing myself on the body, I exclaimed, "Have my murderous

machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have

already destroyed; other victims await their destiny: but you, Clerval,

my friend, my benefactor----"

The human frame could no longer support the agonies that I endured, and

I was carried out of the room in strong convulsions.

A fever succeeded to this. I lay for two months on the point of death:

my ravings, as I afterwards heard, were frightful; I called myself the

murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval. Sometimes I entreated

my attendants to assist me in the destruction of the fiend by whom I was

tormented; and at others, I felt the fingers of the monster already

grasping my neck, and screamed aloud with agony and terror. Fortunately,

as I spoke my native language, Mr. Kirwin alone understood me; but my

gestures and bitter cries were sufficient to affright the other

witnesses.

Why did I not die? More miserable than man ever was before, why did I

not sink into forgetfulness and rest? Death snatches away many blooming

children, the only hopes of their doating parents: how many brides and

youthful lovers have been one day in the bloom of health and hope, and

the next a prey for worms and the decay of the tomb! Of what materials

was I made, that I could thus resist so many shocks, which, like the

turning of the wheel, continually renewed the torture?

But I was doomed to live; and, in two months, found myself as awaking

from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by

gaolers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon.

It was morning, I remember, when I thus awoke to understanding: I had

forgotten the particulars of what had happened, and only felt as if some

great misfortune had suddenly overwhelmed me; but when I looked around,

and saw the barred windows, and the squalidness of the room in which I

was, all flashed across my memory, and I groaned bitterly.

This sound disturbed an old woman who was sleeping in a chair beside me.

She was a hired nurse, the wife of one of the turnkeys, and her

countenance expressed all those bad qualities which often characterise

that class. The lines of her face were hard and rude, like that of

persons accustomed to see without sympathising in sights of misery. Her

tone expressed her entire indifference; she addressed me in English, and

the voice struck me as one that I had heard during my sufferings:--

"Are you better now, sir?" said she.

I replied in the same language, with a feeble voice, "I believe I am;

but if it be all true, if indeed I did not dream, I am sorry that I am

still alive to feel this misery and horror."

"For that matter," replied the old woman, "if you mean about the

gentleman you murdered, I believe that it were better for you if you

were dead, for I fancy it will go hard with you! However, that's none of

my business; I am sent to nurse you, and get you well; I do my duty with

a safe conscience; it were well if every body did the same."

I turned with loathing from the woman who could utter so unfeeling a

speech to a person just saved, on the very edge of death; but I felt

languid, and unable to reflect on all that had passed. The whole series

of my life appeared to me as a dream; I sometimes doubted if indeed it

were all true, for it never presented itself to my mind with the force

of reality.

As the images that floated before me became more distinct, I grew

feverish; a darkness pressed around me: no one was near me who soothed

me with the gentle voice of love; no dear hand supported me. The

physician came and prescribed medicines, and the old woman prepared them

for me; but utter carelessness was visible in the first, and the

expression of brutality was strongly marked in the visage of the second.

Who could be interested in the fate of a murderer, but the hangman who

would gain his fee?

These were my first reflections; but I soon learned that Mr. Kirwin had

shown me extreme kindness. He had caused the best room in the prison to

be prepared for me (wretched indeed was the best); and it was he who had

provided a physician and a nurse. It is true, he seldom came to see me;

for, although he ardently desired to relieve the sufferings of every

human creature, he did not wish to be present at the agonies and

miserable ravings of a murderer. He came, therefore, sometimes, to see

that I was not neglected; but his visits were short, and with long

intervals.

One day, while I was gradually recovering, I was seated in a chair, my

eyes half open, and my cheeks livid like those in death. I was overcome

by gloom and misery, and often reflected I had better seek death than

desire to remain in a world which to me was replete with wretchedness.

At one time I considered whether I should not declare myself guilty, and

suffer the penalty of the law, less innocent than poor Justine had been.

Such were my thoughts, when the door of my apartment was opened, and Mr.

Kirwin entered. His countenance expressed sympathy and compassion; he

drew a chair close to mine, and addressed me in French--

"I fear that this place is very shocking to you; can I do any thing to

make you more comfortable?"

"I thank you; but all that you mention is nothing to me: on the whole

earth there is no comfort which I am capable of receiving."

"I know that the sympathy of a stranger can be but of little relief to

one borne down as you are by so strange a misfortune. But you will, I

hope, soon quit this melancholy abode; for, doubtless, evidence can

easily be brought to free you from the criminal charge."

"That is my least concern: I am, by a course of strange events, become

the most miserable of mortals. Persecuted and tortured as I am and have

been, can death be any evil to me?"

"Nothing indeed could be more unfortunate and agonising than the strange

chances that have lately occurred. You were thrown, by some surprising

accident, on this shore, renowned for its hospitality; seized

immediately, and charged with murder. The first sight that was presented

to your eyes was the body of your friend, murdered in so unaccountable a

manner, and placed, as it were, by some fiend across your path."

As Mr. Kirwin said this, notwithstanding the agitation I endured on this

retrospect of my sufferings, I also felt considerable surprise at the

knowledge he seemed to possess concerning me. I suppose some

astonishment was exhibited in my countenance; for Mr. Kirwin hastened to

say--

"Immediately upon your being taken ill, all the papers that were on your

person were brought me, and I examined them that I might discover some

trace by which I could send to your relations an account of your

misfortune and illness. I found several letters, and, among others, one

which I discovered from its commencement to be from your father. I

instantly wrote to Geneva: nearly two months have elapsed since the

departure of my letter.--But you are ill; even now you tremble: you are

unfit for agitation of any kind."

"This suspense is a thousand times worse than the most horrible event:

tell me what new scene of death has been acted, and whose murder I am

now to lament?"

"Your family is perfectly well," said Mr. Kirwin, with gentleness; "and

some one, a friend, is come to visit you."

I know not by what chain of thought, the idea presented itself, but it

instantly darted into my mind that the murderer had come to mock at my

misery, and taunt me with the death of Clerval, as a new incitement for

me to comply with his hellish desires. I put my hand before my eyes, and

cried out in agony--

"Oh! take him away! I cannot see him; for God's sake, do not let him

enter!"

Mr. Kirwin regarded me with a troubled countenance. He could not help

regarding my exclamation as a presumption of my guilt, and said, in

rather a severe tone--

"I should have thought, young man, that the presence of your father

would have been welcome, instead of inspiring such violent repugnance."

"My father!" cried I, while every feature and every muscle was relaxed

from anguish to pleasure: "is my father indeed come? How kind, how very

kind! But where is he, why does he not hasten to me?"

My change of manner surprised and pleased the magistrate; perhaps he

thought that my former exclamation was a momentary return of delirium,

and now he instantly resumed his former benevolence. He rose, and

quitted the room with my nurse, and in a moment my father entered it.

Nothing, at this moment, could have given me greater pleasure than the

arrival of my father. I stretched out my hand to him, and cried--

"Are you then safe--and Elizabeth--and Ernest?"

My father calmed me with assurances of their welfare, and endeavoured,

by dwelling on these subjects so interesting to my heart, to raise my

desponding spirits; but he soon felt that a prison cannot be the abode

of cheerfulness. "What a place is this that you inhabit, my son!" said

he, looking mournfully at the barred windows, and wretched appearance of

the room. "You travelled to seek happiness, but a fatality seems to

pursue you. And poor Clerval--"

The name of my unfortunate and murdered friend was an agitation too

great to be endured in my weak state; I shed tears.

"Alas! yes, my father," replied I; "some destiny of the most horrible

kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfil it, or surely I should

have died on the coffin of Henry."

We were not allowed to converse for any length of time, for the

precarious state of my health rendered every precaution necessary that

could ensure tranquillity. Mr. Kirwin came in, and insisted that my

strength should not be exhausted by too much exertion. But the

appearance of my father was to me like that of my good angel, and I

gradually recovered my health.

As my sickness quitted me, I was absorbed by a gloomy and black

melancholy, that nothing could dissipate. The image of Clerval was for

ever before me, ghastly and murdered. More than once the agitation into

which these reflections threw me made my friends dread a dangerous

relapse. Alas! why did they preserve so miserable and detested a life?

It was surely that I might fulfil my destiny, which is now drawing to a

close. Soon, oh! very soon, will death extinguish these throbbings, and

relieve me from the mighty weight of anguish that bears me to the dust;

and, in executing the award of justice, I shall also sink to rest. Then

the appearance of death was distant, although the wish was ever present

to my thoughts; and I often sat for hours motionless and speechless,

wishing for some mighty revolution that might bury me and my destroyer

in its ruins.

The season of the assizes approached. I had already been three months in

prison; and although I was still weak, and in continual danger of a

relapse, I was obliged to travel nearly a hundred miles to the

county-town, where the court was held. Mr. Kirwin charged himself with

every care of collecting witnesses, and arranging my defence. I was

spared the disgrace of appearing publicly as a criminal, as the case was

not brought before the court that decides on life and death. The grand

jury rejected the bill, on its being proved that I was on the Orkney

Islands at the hour the body of my friend was found; and a fortnight

after my removal I was liberated from prison.

My father was enraptured on finding me freed from the vexations of a

criminal charge, that I was again allowed to breathe the fresh

atmosphere, and permitted to return to my native country. I did not

participate in these feelings; for to me the walls of a dungeon or a

palace were alike hateful. The cup of life was poisoned for ever; and

although the sun shone upon me, as upon the happy and gay of heart, I

saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by

no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they

were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs

nearly covered by the lids, and the long black lashes that fringed them;

sometimes it was the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw

them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

My father tried to awaken in me the feelings of affection. He talked of

Geneva, which I should soon visit--of Elizabeth and Ernest; but these

words only drew deep groans from me. Sometimes, indeed, I felt a wish

for happiness; and thought, with melancholy delight, of my beloved

cousin; or longed, with a devouring \_maladie du pays\_, to see once more

the blue lake and rapid Rhone, that had been so dear to me in early

childhood: but my general state of feeling was a torpor, in which a

prison was as welcome a residence as the divinest scene in nature; and

these fits were seldom interrupted but by paroxysms of anguish and

despair. At these moments I often endeavoured to put an end to the

existence I loathed; and it required unceasing attendance and vigilance

to restrain me from committing some dreadful act of violence.

Yet one duty remained to me, the recollection of which finally triumphed

over my selfish despair. It was necessary that I should return without

delay to Geneva, there to watch over the lives of those I so fondly

loved; and to lie in wait for the murderer, that if any chance led me to

the place of his concealment, or if he dared again to blast me by his

presence, I might, with unfailing aim, put an end to the existence of

the monstrous Image which I had endued with the mockery of a soul still

more monstrous. My father still desired to delay our departure, fearful

that I could not sustain the fatigues of a journey: for I was a

shattered wreck,--the shadow of a human being. My strength was gone. I

was a mere skeleton; and fever night and day preyed upon my wasted

frame.

Still, as I urged our leaving Ireland with such inquietude and

impatience, my father thought it best to yield. We took our passage on

board a vessel bound for Havre-de-Grace, and sailed with a fair wind

from the Irish shores. It was midnight. I lay on the deck, looking at

the stars, and listening to the dashing of the waves. I hailed the

darkness that shut Ireland from my sight; and my pulse beat with a

feverish joy when I reflected that I should soon see Geneva. The past

appeared to me in the light of a frightful dream; yet the vessel in

which I was, the wind that blew me from the detested shore of Ireland,

and the sea which surrounded me, told me too forcibly that I was

deceived by no vision, and that Clerval, my friend and dearest

companion, had fallen a victim to me and the monster of my creation. I

repassed, in my memory, my whole life; my quiet happiness while residing

with my family in Geneva, the death of my mother, and my departure for

Ingolstadt. I remembered, shuddering, the mad enthusiasm that hurried me

on to the creation of my hideous enemy, and I called to mind the night

in which he first lived. I was unable to pursue the train of thought; a

thousand feelings pressed upon me, and I wept bitterly.

Ever since my recovery from the fever, I had been in the custom of

taking every night a small quantity of laudanum; for it was by means of

this drug only that I was enabled to gain the rest necessary for the

preservation of life. Oppressed by the recollection of my various

misfortunes, I now swallowed double my usual quantity, and soon slept

profoundly. But sleep did not afford me respite from thought and misery;

my dreams presented a thousand objects that scared me. Towards morning I

was possessed by a kind of night-mare; I felt the fiend's grasp in my

neck, and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rung in my

ears. My father, who was watching over me, perceiving my restlessness,

awoke me; the dashing waves were around: the cloudy sky above; the fiend

was not here: a sense of security, a feeling that a truce was

established between the present hour and the irresistible, disastrous

future, imparted to me a kind of calm forgetfulness, of which the human

mind is by its structure peculiarly susceptible.

CHAPTER XXII.

The voyage came to an end. We landed, and proceeded to Paris. I soon

found that I had overtaxed my strength, and that I must repose before I

could continue my journey. My father's care and attentions were

indefatigable; but he did not know the origin of my sufferings, and

sought erroneous methods to remedy the incurable ill. He wished me to

seek amusement in society. I abhorred the face of man. Oh, not abhorred!

they were my brethren, my fellow beings, and I felt attracted even to

the most repulsive among them, as to creatures of an angelic nature and

celestial mechanism. But I felt that I had no right to share their

intercourse. I had unchained an enemy among them, whose joy it was to

shed their blood, and to revel in their groans. How they would, each and

all, abhor me, and hunt me from the world, did they know my unhallowed

acts, and the crimes which had their source in me!

My father yielded at length to my desire to avoid society, and strove by

various arguments to banish my despair. Sometimes he thought that I felt

deeply the degradation of being obliged to answer a charge of murder,

and he endeavoured to prove to me the futility of pride.

"Alas! my father," said I, "how little do you know me. Human beings,

their feelings and passions, would indeed be degraded if such a wretch

as I felt pride. Justine, poor unhappy Justine, was as innocent as I,

and she suffered the same charge; she died for it; and I am the cause of

this--I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry--they all died by my

hands."

My father had often, during my imprisonment, heard me make the same

assertion; when I thus accused myself, he sometimes seemed to desire an

explanation, and at others he appeared to consider it as the offspring

of delirium, and that, during my illness, some idea of this kind had

presented itself to my imagination, the remembrance of which I preserved

in my convalescence. I avoided explanation, and maintained a continual

silence concerning the wretch I had created. I had a persuasion that I

should be supposed mad; and this in itself would for ever have chained

my tongue. But, besides, I could not bring myself to disclose a secret

which would fill my hearer with consternation, and make fear and

unnatural horror the inmates of his breast. I checked, therefore, my

impatient thirst for sympathy, and was silent when I would have given

the world to have confided the fatal secret. Yet still words like those

I have recorded, would burst uncontrollably from me. I could offer no

explanation of them; but their truth in part relieved the burden of my

mysterious woe.

Upon this occasion my father said, with an expression of unbounded

wonder, "My dearest Victor, what infatuation is this? My dear son, I

entreat you never to make such an assertion again."

"I am not mad," I cried energetically; "the sun and the heavens, who

have viewed my operations, can bear witness of my truth. I am the

assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations. A

thousand times would I have shed my own blood, drop by drop, to have

saved their lives; but I could not, my father, indeed I could not

sacrifice the whole human race."

The conclusion of this speech convinced my father that my ideas were

deranged, and he instantly changed the subject of our conversation, and

endeavoured to alter the course of my thoughts. He wished as much as

possible to obliterate the memory of the scenes that had taken place in

Ireland, and never alluded to them, or suffered me to speak of my

misfortunes.

As time passed away I became more calm: misery had her dwelling in my

heart, but I no longer talked in the same incoherent manner of my own

crimes; sufficient for me was the consciousness of them. By the utmost

self-violence, I curbed the imperious voice of wretchedness, which

sometimes desired to declare itself to the whole world; and my manners

were calmer and more composed than they had ever been since my journey

to the sea of ice.

A few days before we left Paris on our way to Switzerland, I received

the following letter from Elizabeth:--

"My dear Friend,

"It gave me the greatest pleasure to receive a letter from my uncle

dated at Paris; you are no longer at a formidable distance, and I may

hope to see you in less than a fortnight. My poor cousin, how much you

must have suffered! I expect to see you looking even more ill than when

you quitted Geneva. This winter has been passed most miserably, tortured

as I have been by anxious suspense; yet I hope to see peace in your

countenance, and to find that your heart is not totally void of comfort

and tranquillity.

"Yet I fear that the same feelings now exist that made you so miserable

a year ago, even perhaps augmented by time. I would not disturb you at

this period, when so many misfortunes weigh upon you; but a conversation

that I had with my uncle previous to his departure renders some

explanation necessary before we meet.

"Explanation! you may possibly say; what can Elizabeth have to explain?

If you really say this, my questions are answered, and all my doubts

satisfied. But you are distant from me, and it is possible that you may

dread, and yet be pleased with this explanation; and, in a probability

of this being the case, I dare not any longer postpone writing what,

during your absence, I have often wished to express to you, but have

never had the courage to begin.

"You well know, Victor, that our union had been the favourite plan of

your parents ever since our infancy. We were told this when young, and

taught to look forward to it as an event that would certainly take

place. We were affectionate playfellows during childhood, and, I

believe, dear and valued friends to one another as we grew older. But as

brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each

other, without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our

case? Tell me, dearest Victor. Answer me, I conjure you, by our mutual

happiness, with simple truth--Do you not love another?

"You have travelled; you have spent several years of your life at

Ingolstadt; and I confess to you, my friend, that when I saw you last

autumn so unhappy, flying to solitude, from the society of every

creature, I could not help supposing that you might regret our

connection, and believe yourself bound in honour to fulfil the wishes of

your parents, although they opposed themselves to your inclinations. But

this is false reasoning. I confess to you, my friend, that I love you,

and that in my airy dreams of futurity you have been my constant friend

and companion. But it is your happiness I desire as well as my own, when

I declare to you, that our marriage would render me eternally miserable,

unless it were the dictate of your own free choice. Even now I weep to

think, that, borne down as you are by the cruellest misfortunes, you may

stifle, by the word \_honour\_, all hope of that love and happiness which

would alone restore you to yourself. I, who have so disinterested an

affection for you, may increase your miseries tenfold, by being an

obstacle to your wishes. Ah! Victor, be assured that your cousin and

playmate has too sincere a love for you not to be made miserable by this

supposition. Be happy, my friend; and if you obey me in this one

request, remain satisfied that nothing on earth will have the power to

interrupt my tranquillity.

"Do not let this letter disturb you; do not answer to-morrow, or the

next day, or even until you come, if it will give you pain. My uncle

will send me news of your health; and if I see but one smile on your

lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I

shall need no other happiness.

"ELIZABETH LAVENZA.

"Geneva, May 18th, 17--."

\* \* \* \* \*

This letter revived in my memory what I had before forgotten, the threat

of the fiend--"\_I will be with you on your wedding night!\_" Such was my

sentence, and on that night would the dæmon employ every art to destroy

me, and tear me from the glimpse of happiness which promised partly to

console my sufferings. On that night he had determined to consummate his

crimes by my death. Well, be it so; a deadly struggle would then

assuredly take place, in which if he were victorious I should be at

peace, and his power over me be at an end. If he were vanquished, I

should be a free man. Alas! what freedom? such as the peasant enjoys

when his family have been massacred before his eyes, his cottage burnt,

his lands laid waste, and he is turned adrift, homeless, penniless, and

alone, but free. Such would be my liberty, except that in my Elizabeth I

possessed a treasure; alas! balanced by those horrors of remorse and

guilt, which would pursue me until death.

Sweet and beloved Elizabeth! I read and re-read her letter, and some

softened feelings stole into my heart, and dared to whisper paradisiacal

dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten, and the angel's

arm bared to drive me from all hope. Yet I would die to make her happy.

If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable; yet, again, I

considered whether my marriage would hasten my fate. My destruction

might indeed arrive a few months sooner; but if my torturer should

suspect that I postponed it, influenced by his menaces, he would surely

find other, and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge. He had vowed \_to

be with me on my wedding-night\_, yet he did not consider that threat as

binding him to peace in the mean time; for, as if to show me that he was

not yet satiated with blood, he had murdered Clerval immediately after

the enunciation of his threats. I resolved, therefore, that if my

immediate union with my cousin would conduce either to hers or my

father's happiness, my adversary's designs against my life should not

retard it a single hour.

In this state of mind I wrote to Elizabeth. My letter was calm and

affectionate. "I fear, my beloved girl," I said, "little happiness

remains for us on earth; yet all that I may one day enjoy is centred in

you. Chase away your idle fears; to you alone do I consecrate my life,

and my endeavours for contentment. I have one secret, Elizabeth, a

dreadful one; when revealed to you, it will chill your frame with

horror, and then, far from being surprised at my misery, you will only

wonder that I survive what I have endured. I will confide this tale of

misery and terror to you the day after our marriage shall take place;

for, my sweet cousin, there must be perfect confidence between us. But

until then, I conjure you, do not mention or allude to it. This I most

earnestly entreat, and I know you will comply."

In about a week after the arrival of Elizabeth's letter, we returned to

Geneva. The sweet girl welcomed me with warm affection; yet tears were

in her eyes, as she beheld my emaciated frame and feverish cheeks. I saw

a change in her also. She was thinner, and had lost much of that

heavenly vivacity that had before charmed me; but her gentleness, and

soft looks of compassion, made her a more fit companion for one blasted

and miserable as I was.

The tranquillity which I now enjoyed did not endure. Memory brought

madness with it; and when I thought of what had passed, a real insanity

possessed me; sometimes I was furious, and burnt with rage; sometimes

low and despondent. I neither spoke, nor looked at any one, but sat

motionless, bewildered by the multitude of miseries that overcame me.

Elizabeth alone had the power to draw me from these fits; her gentle

voice would soothe me when transported by passion, and inspire me with

human feelings when sunk in torpor. She wept with me, and for me. When

reason returned, she would remonstrate, and endeavour to inspire me with

resignation. Ah! it is well for the unfortunate to be resigned, but for

the guilty there is no peace. The agonies of remorse poison the luxury

there is otherwise sometimes found in indulging the excess of grief.

Soon after my arrival, my father spoke of my immediate marriage with

Elizabeth. I remained silent.

"Have you, then, some other attachment?"

"None on earth. I love Elizabeth, and look forward to our union with

delight. Let the day therefore be fixed; and on it I will consecrate

myself, in life or death, to the happiness of my cousin."

"My dear Victor, do not speak thus. Heavy misfortunes have befallen us;

but let us only cling closer to what remains, and transfer our love for

those whom we have lost, to those who yet live. Our circle will be

small, but bound close by the ties of affection and mutual misfortune.

And when time shall have softened your despair, new and dear objects of

care will be born to replace those of whom we have been so cruelly

deprived."

Such were the lessons of my father. But to me the remembrance of the

threat returned: nor can you wonder, that, omnipotent as the fiend had

yet been in his deeds of blood, I should almost regard him as

invincible; and that when he had pronounced the words, "I shall be with

you on your wedding-night," I should regard the threatened fate as

unavoidable. But death was no evil to me, if the loss of Elizabeth were

balanced with it; and I therefore, with a contented and even cheerful

countenance, agreed with my father, that if my cousin would consent, the

ceremony should take place in ten days, and thus put, as I imagined, the

seal to my fate.

Great God! if for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish

intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself

for ever from my native country, and wandered a friendless outcast over

the earth, than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if

possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real

intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I

hastened that of a far dearer victim.

As the period fixed for our marriage drew nearer, whether from cowardice

or a prophetic feeling, I felt my heart sink within me. But I concealed

my feelings by an appearance of hilarity, that brought smiles and joy to

the countenance of my father, but hardly deceived the ever-watchful and

nicer eye of Elizabeth. She looked forward to our union with placid

contentment, not unmingled with a little fear, which past misfortunes

had impressed, that what now appeared certain and tangible happiness,

might soon dissipate into an airy dream, and leave no trace but deep and

everlasting regret.

Preparations were made for the event; congratulatory visits were

received; and all wore a smiling appearance. I shut up, as well as I

could, in my own heart the anxiety that preyed there, and entered with

seeming earnestness into the plans of my father, although they might

only serve as the decorations of my tragedy. Through my father's

exertions, a part of the inheritance of Elizabeth had been restored to

her by the Austrian government. A small possession on the shores of Como

belonged to her. It was agreed that, immediately after our union, we

should proceed to Villa Lavenza, and spend our first days of happiness

beside the beautiful lake near which it stood.

In the mean time I took every precaution to defend my person, in case

the fiend should openly attack me. I carried pistols and a dagger

constantly about me, and was ever on the watch to prevent artifice; and

by these means gained a greater degree of tranquillity. Indeed, as the

period approached, the threat appeared more as a delusion, not to be

regarded as worthy to disturb my peace, while the happiness I hoped for

in my marriage wore a greater appearance of certainty, as the day fixed

for its solemnisation drew nearer, and I heard it continually spoken of

as an occurrence which no accident could possibly prevent.

Elizabeth seemed happy; my tranquil demeanour contributed greatly to

calm her mind. But on the day that was to fulfil my wishes and my

destiny, she was melancholy, and a presentiment of evil pervaded her;

and perhaps also she thought of the dreadful secret which I had promised

to reveal to her on the following day. My father was in the mean time

overjoyed, and, in the bustle of preparation, only recognised in the

melancholy of his niece the diffidence of a bride.

After the ceremony was performed, a large party assembled at my

father's; but it was agreed that Elizabeth and I should commence our

journey by water, sleeping that night at Evian, and continuing our

voyage on the following day. The day was fair, the wind favourable, all

smiled on our nuptial embarkation.

Those were the last moments of my life during which I enjoyed the

feeling of happiness. We passed rapidly along: the sun was hot, but we

were sheltered from its rays by a kind of canopy, while we enjoyed the

beauty of the scene, sometimes on one side of the lake, where we saw

Mont Salêve, the pleasant banks of Montalègre, and at a distance,

surmounting all, the beautiful Mont Blanc, and the assemblage of snowy

mountains that in vain endeavour to emulate her; sometimes coasting the

opposite banks, we saw the mighty Jura opposing its dark side to the

ambition that would quit its native country, and an almost

insurmountable barrier to the invader who should wish to enslave it.

I took the hand of Elizabeth: "You are sorrowful, my love. Ah! if you

knew what I have suffered, and what I may yet endure, you would

endeavour to let me taste the quiet and freedom from despair, that this

one day at least permits me to enjoy."

"Be happy, my dear Victor," replied Elizabeth; "there is, I hope,

nothing to distress you; and be assured that if a lively joy is not

painted in my face, my heart is contented. Something whispers to me not

to depend too much on the prospect that is opened before us; but I will

not listen to such a sinister voice. Observe how fast we move along, and

how the clouds, which sometimes obscure and sometimes rise above the

dome of Mont Blanc, render this scene of beauty still more interesting.

Look also at the innumerable fish that are swimming in the clear waters,

where we can distinguish every pebble that lies at the bottom. What a

divine day! how happy and serene all nature appears!"

Thus Elizabeth endeavoured to divert her thoughts and mine from all

reflection upon melancholy subjects. But her temper was fluctuating; joy

for a few instants shone in her eyes, but it continually gave place to

distraction and reverie.

The sun sunk lower in the heavens; we passed the river Drance, and

observed its path through the chasms of the higher, and the glens of the

lower hills. The Alps here come closer to the lake, and we approached

the amphitheatre of mountains which forms its eastern boundary. The

spire of Evian shone under the woods that surrounded it, and the range

of mountain above mountain by which it was overhung.

The wind, which had hitherto carried us along with amazing rapidity,

sunk at sunset to a light breeze; the soft air just ruffled the water,

and caused a pleasant motion among the trees as we approached the shore,

from which it wafted the most delightful scent of flowers and hay. The

sun sunk beneath the horizon as we landed; and as I touched the shore, I

felt those cares and fears revive, which soon were to clasp me, and

cling to me for ever.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was eight o'clock when we landed; we walked for a short time on the

shore, enjoying the transitory light, and then retired to the inn, and

contemplated the lovely scene of waters, woods, and mountains, obscured

in darkness, yet still displaying their black outlines.

The wind, which had fallen in the south, now rose with great violence in

the west. The moon had reached her summit in the heavens, and was

beginning to descend; the clouds swept across it swifter than the flight

of the vulture, and dimmed her rays, while the lake reflected the scene

of the busy heavens, rendered still busier by the restless waves that

were beginning to rise. Suddenly a heavy storm of rain descended.

I had been calm during the day; but so soon as night obscured the shapes

of objects, a thousand fears arose in my mind. I was anxious and

watchful, while my right hand grasped a pistol which was hidden in my

bosom; every sound terrified me; but I resolved that I would sell my

life dearly, and not shrink from the conflict until my own life, or that

of my adversary, was extinguished.

Elizabeth observed my agitation for some time in timid and fearful

silence; but there was something in my glance which communicated terror

to her, and trembling she asked, "What is it that agitates you, my dear

Victor? What is it you fear?"

"Oh! peace, peace, my love," replied I; "this night, and all will be

safe: but this night is dreadful, very dreadful."

I passed an hour in this state of mind, when suddenly I reflected how

fearful the combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and

I earnestly entreated her to retire, resolving not to join her until I

had obtained some knowledge as to the situation of my enemy.

She left me, and I continued some time walking up and down the passages

of the house, and inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat

to my adversary. But I discovered no trace of him, and was beginning to

conjecture that some fortunate chance had intervened to prevent the

execution of his menaces; when suddenly I heard a shrill and dreadful

scream. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired. As I

heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind, my arms dropped, the

motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood

trickling in my veins, and tingling in the extremities of my limbs. This

state lasted but for an instant; the scream was repeated, and I rushed

into the room.

Great God! why did I not then expire! Why am I here to relate the

destruction of the best hope, and the purest creature of earth? She was

there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging

down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair.

Every where I turn I see the same figure--her bloodless arms and relaxed

form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this, and

live? Alas! life is obstinate, and clings closest where it is most

hated. For a moment only did I lose recollection; I fell senseless on

the ground.

When I recovered, I found myself surrounded by the people of the inn;

their countenances expressed a breathless terror: but the horror of

others appeared only as a mockery, a shadow of the feelings that

oppressed me. I escaped from them to the room where lay the body of

Elizabeth, my love, my wife, so lately living, so dear, so worthy. She

had been moved from the posture in which I had first beheld her; and

now, as she lay, her head upon her arm, and a handkerchief thrown across

her face and neck, I might have supposed her asleep. I rushed towards

her, and embraced her with ardour; but the deadly languor and coldness

of the limbs told me, that what I now held in my arms had ceased to be

the Elizabeth whom I had loved and cherished. The murderous mark of the

fiend's grasp was on her neck, and the breath had ceased to issue from

her lips.

While I still hung over her in the agony of despair, I happened to look

up. The windows of the room had before been darkened, and I felt a kind

of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the

chamber. The shutters had been thrown back; and, with a sensation of

horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most

hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed

to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my

wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom,

fired; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and, running with the

swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake.

The report of the pistol brought a crowd into the room. I pointed to the

spot where he had disappeared, and we followed the track with boats;

nets were cast, but in vain. After passing several hours, we returned

hopeless, most of my companions believing it to have been a form

conjured up by my fancy. After having landed, they proceeded to search

the country, parties going in different directions among the woods and

vines.

I attempted to accompany them, and proceeded a short distance from the

house; but my head whirled round, my steps were like those of a drunken

man, I fell at last in a state of utter exhaustion; a film covered my

eyes, and my skin was parched with the heat of fever. In this state I

was carried back, and placed on a bed, hardly conscious of what had

happened; my eyes wandered round the room, as if to seek something that

I had lost.

After an interval, I arose, and, as if by instinct, crawled into the

room where the corpse of my beloved lay. There were women weeping

around--I hung over it, and joined my sad tears to theirs--all this time

no distinct idea presented itself to my mind; but my thoughts rambled to

various subjects, reflecting confusedly on my misfortunes, and their

cause. I was bewildered in a cloud of wonder and horror. The death of

William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly of

my wife; even at that moment I knew not that my only remaining friends

were safe from the malignity of the fiend; my father even now might be

writhing under his grasp, and Ernest might be dead at his feet. This

idea made me shudder, and recalled me to action. I started up, and

resolved to return to Geneva with all possible speed.

There were no horses to be procured, and I must return by the lake; but

the wind was unfavourable, and the rain fell in torrents. However, it

was hardly morning, and I might reasonably hope to arrive by night. I

hired men to row, and took an oar myself; for I had always experienced

relief from mental torment in bodily exercise. But the overflowing

misery I now felt, and the excess of agitation that I endured, rendered

me incapable of any exertion. I threw down the oar; and leaning my head

upon my hands, gave way to every gloomy idea that arose. If I looked up,

I saw the scenes which were familiar to me in my happier time, and which

I had contemplated but the day before in the company of her who was now

but a shadow and a recollection. Tears streamed from my eyes. The rain

had ceased for a moment, and I saw the fish play in the waters as they

had done a few hours before; they had then been observed by Elizabeth.

Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.

The sun might shine, or the clouds might lower: but nothing could appear

to me as it had done the day before. A fiend had snatched from me every

hope of future happiness: no creature had ever been so miserable as I

was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man.

But why should I dwell upon the incidents that followed this last

overwhelming event? Mine has been a tale of horrors; I have reached

their \_acme\_, and what I must now relate can but be tedious to you. Know

that, one by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. My

own strength is exhausted; and I must tell, in a few words, what remains

of my hideous narration.

I arrived at Geneva. My father and Ernest yet lived; but the former sunk

under the tidings that I bore. I see him now, excellent and venerable

old man! his eyes wandered in vacancy, for they had lost their charm and

their delight--his Elizabeth, his more than daughter, whom he doated on

with all that affection which a man feels, who in the decline of life,

having few affections, clings more earnestly to those that remain.

Cursed, cursed be the fiend that brought misery on his grey hairs, and

doomed him to waste in wretchedness! He could not live under the horrors

that were accumulated around him; the springs of existence suddenly gave

way: he was unable to rise from his bed, and in a few days he died in my

arms.

What then became of me? I know not; I lost sensation, and chains and

darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me. Sometimes, indeed,

I dreamt that I wandered in flowery meadows and pleasant vales with the

friends of my youth; but I awoke, and found myself in a dungeon.

Melancholy followed, but by degrees I gained a clear conception of my

miseries and situation, and was then released from my prison. For they

had called me mad; and during many months, as I understood, a solitary

cell had been my habitation.

Liberty, however, had been an useless gift to me, had I not, as I

awakened to reason, at the same time awakened to revenge. As the memory

of past misfortunes pressed upon me, I began to reflect on their

cause--the monster whom I had created, the miserable dæmon whom I had

sent abroad into the world for my destruction. I was possessed by a

maddening rage when I thought of him, and desired and ardently prayed

that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal

revenge on his cursed head.

Nor did my hate long confine itself to useless wishes; I began to

reflect on the best means of securing him; and for this purpose, about a

month after my release, I repaired to a criminal judge in the town, and

told him that I had an accusation to make; that I knew the destroyer of

my family; and that I required him to exert his whole authority for the

apprehension of the murderer.

The magistrate listened to me with attention and kindness:--"Be assured,

sir," said he, "no pains or exertions on my part shall be spared to

discover the villain."

"I thank you," replied I; "listen, therefore, to the deposition that I

have to make. It is indeed a tale so strange, that I should fear you

would not credit it, were there not something in truth which, however

wonderful, forces conviction. The story is too connected to be mistaken

for a dream, and I have no motive for falsehood." My manner, as I thus

addressed him, was impressive, but calm; I had formed in my own heart a

resolution to pursue my destroyer to death; and this purpose quieted my

agony, and for an interval reconciled me to life. I now related my

history, briefly, but with firmness and precision, marking the dates

with accuracy, and never deviating into invective or exclamation.

The magistrate appeared at first perfectly incredulous, but as I

continued he became more attentive and interested; I saw him sometimes

shudder with horror, at others a lively surprise, unmingled with

disbelief, was painted on his countenance.

When I had concluded my narration, I said, "This is the being whom I

accuse, and for whose seizure and punishment I call upon you to exert

your whole power. It is your duty as a magistrate, and I believe and

hope that your feelings as a man will not revolt from the execution of

those functions on this occasion."

This address caused a considerable change in the physiognomy of my own

auditor. He had heard my story with that half kind of belief that is

given to a tale of spirits and supernatural events; but when he was

called upon to act officially in consequence, the whole tide of his

incredulity returned. He, however, answered mildly, "I would willingly

afford you every aid in your pursuit; but the creature of whom you speak

appears to have powers which would put all my exertions to defiance. Who

can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice, and inhabit

caves and dens where no man would venture to intrude? Besides, some

months have elapsed since the commission of his crimes, and no one can

conjecture to what place he has wandered, or what region he may now

inhabit."

"I do not doubt that he hovers near the spot which I inhabit; and if he

has indeed taken refuge in the Alps, he may be hunted like the chamois,

and destroyed as a beast of prey. But I perceive your thoughts: you do

not credit my narrative, and do not intend to pursue my enemy with the

punishment which is his desert."

As I spoke, rage sparkled in my eyes; the magistrate was

intimidated:--"You are mistaken," said he, "I will exert myself; and if

it is in my power to seize the monster, be assured that he shall suffer

punishment proportionate to his crimes. But I fear, from what you have

yourself described to be his properties, that this will prove

impracticable; and thus, while every proper measure is pursued, you

should make up your mind to disappointment."

"That cannot be; but all that I can say will be of little avail. My

revenge is of no moment to you; yet, while I allow it to be a vice, I

confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul. My rage is

unspeakable, when I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose

upon society, still exists. You refuse my just demand: I have but one

resource; and I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his

destruction."

I trembled with excess of agitation as I said this; there was a frenzy

in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness

which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed. But to a Genevan

magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of

devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of

madness. He endeavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child, and

reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium.

"Man," I cried, "how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease;

you know not what it is you say."

I broke from the house angry and disturbed, and retired to meditate on

some other mode of action.

CHAPTER XXIV.

My present situation was one in which all voluntary thought was

swallowed up and lost. I was hurried away by fury; revenge alone endowed

me with strength and composure; it moulded my feelings, and allowed me

to be calculating and calm, at periods when otherwise delirium or death

would have been my portion.

My first resolution was to quit Geneva for ever; my country, which, when

I was happy and beloved, was dear to me, now, in my adversity, became

hateful. I provided myself with a sum of money, together with a few

jewels which had belonged to my mother, and departed.

And now my wanderings began, which are to cease but with life. I have

traversed a vast portion of the earth, and have endured all the

hardships which travellers, in deserts and barbarous countries, are wont

to meet. How I have lived I hardly know; many times have I stretched my

failing limbs upon the sandy plain, and prayed for death. But revenge

kept me alive; I dared not die, and leave my adversary in being.

When I quitted Geneva, my first labour was to gain some clue by which I

might trace the steps of my fiendish enemy. But my plan was unsettled;

and I wandered many hours round the confines of the town, uncertain what

path I should pursue. As night approached, I found myself at the

entrance of the cemetery where William, Elizabeth, and my father

reposed. I entered it, and approached the tomb which marked their

graves. Every thing was silent, except the leaves of the trees, which

were gently agitated by the wind; the night was nearly dark; and the

scene would have been solemn and affecting even to an uninterested

observer. The spirits of the departed seemed to flit around, and to cast

a shadow, which was felt but not seen, around the head of the mourner.

The deep grief which this scene had at first excited quickly gave way to

rage and despair. They were dead, and I lived; their murderer also

lived, and to destroy him I must drag out my weary existence. I knelt on

the grass, and kissed the earth, and with quivering lips exclaimed, "By

the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by

the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear; and by thee, O Night,

and the spirits that preside over thee, to pursue the dæmon, who caused

this misery, until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict. For this

purpose I will preserve my life: to execute this dear revenge, will I

again behold the sun, and tread the green herbage of earth, which

otherwise should vanish from my eyes for ever. And I call on you,

spirits of the dead; and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to

aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink

deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me."

I had begun my adjuration with solemnity, and an awe which almost

assured me that the shades of my murdered friends heard and approved my

devotion; but the furies possessed me as I concluded, and rage choked my

utterance.

I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish

laugh. It rung on my ears long and heavily; the mountains re-echoed it,

and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter.

Surely in that moment I should have been possessed by frenzy, and have

destroyed my miserable existence, but that my vow was heard, and that I

was reserved for vengeance. The laughter died away; when a well-known

and abhorred voice, apparently close to my ear, addressed me in an

audible whisper--"I am satisfied: miserable wretch! you have determined

to live, and I am satisfied."

I darted towards the spot from which the sound proceeded; but the devil

eluded my grasp. Suddenly the broad disk of the moon arose, and shone

full upon his ghastly and distorted shape, as he fled with more than

mortal speed.

I pursued him; and for many months this has been my task. Guided by a

slight clue, I followed the windings of the Rhone, but vainly. The blue

Mediterranean appeared; and, by a strange chance, I saw the fiend enter

by night, and hide himself in a vessel bound for the Black Sea. I took

my passage in the same ship; but he escaped, I know not how.

Amidst the wilds of Tartary and Russia, although he still evaded me, I

have ever followed in his track. Sometimes the peasants, scared by this

horrid apparition, informed me of his path; sometimes he himself, who

feared that if I lost all trace of him, I should despair and die, left

some mark to guide me. The snows descended on my head, and I saw the

print of his huge step on the white plain. To you first entering on

life, to whom care is new, and agony unknown, how can you understand

what I have felt, and still feel? Cold, want, and fatigue, were the

least pains which I was destined to endure; I was cursed by some devil,

and carried about with me my eternal hell; yet still a spirit of good

followed and directed my steps; and, when I most murmured, would

suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

Sometimes, when nature, overcome by hunger, sunk under the exhaustion, a

repast was prepared for me in the desert, that restored and inspirited

me. The fare was, indeed, coarse, such as the peasants of the country

ate; but I will not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I

had invoked to aid me. Often, when all was dry, the heavens cloudless,

and I was parched by thirst, a slight cloud would bedim the sky, shed

the few drops that revived me, and vanish.

I followed, when I could, the courses of the rivers; but the dæmon

generally avoided these, as it was here that the population of the

country chiefly collected. In other places human beings were seldom

seen; and I generally subsisted on the wild animals that crossed my

path. I had money with me, and gained the friendship of the villagers by

distributing it; or I brought with me some food that I had killed,

which, after taking a small part, I always presented to those who had

provided me with fire and utensils for cooking.

My life, as it passed thus, was indeed hateful to me, and it was during

sleep alone that I could taste joy. O blessed sleep! often, when most

miserable, I sank to repose, and my dreams lulled me even to rapture.

The spirits that guarded me had provided these moments, or rather hours,

of happiness, that I might retain strength to fulfil my pilgrimage.

Deprived of this respite, I should have sunk under my hardships. During

the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night: for in

sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country; again I saw the

benevolent countenance of my father, heard the silver tones of my

Elizabeth's voice, and beheld Clerval enjoying health and youth. Often,

when wearied by a toilsome march, I persuaded myself that I was dreaming

until night should come, and that I should then enjoy reality in the

arms of my dearest friends. What agonising fondness did I feel for them!

how did I cling to their dear forms, as sometimes they haunted even my

waking hours, and persuade myself that they still lived! At such moments

vengeance, that burned within me, died in my heart, and I pursued my

path towards the destruction of the dæmon, more as a task enjoined by

heaven, as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was

unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my soul.

What his feelings were whom I pursued I cannot know. Sometimes, indeed,

he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone,

that guided me, and instigated my fury. "My reign is not yet over,"

(these words were legible in one of these inscriptions;) "you live, and

my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the

north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am

impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily,

a dead hare; eat, and be refreshed. Come on, my enemy; we have yet to

wrestle for our lives; but many hard and miserable hours must you endure

until that period shall arrive."

Scoffing devil! Again do I vow vengeance; again do I devote thee,

miserable fiend, to torture and death. Never will I give up my search,

until he or I perish; and then with what ecstasy shall I join my

Elizabeth, and my departed friends, who even now prepare for me the

reward of my tedious toil and horrible pilgrimage!

As I still pursued my journey to the northward, the snows thickened, and

the cold increased in a degree almost too severe to support. The

peasants were shut up in their hovels, and only a few of the most hardy

ventured forth to seize the animals whom starvation had forced from

their hiding-places to seek for prey. The rivers were covered with ice,

and no fish could be procured; and thus I was cut off from my chief

article of maintenance.

The triumph of my enemy increased with the difficulty of my labours. One

inscription that he left was in these words:--"Prepare! your toils only

begin: wrap yourself in furs, and provide food; for we shall soon enter

upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting

hatred."

My courage and perseverance were invigorated by these scoffing words; I

resolved not to fail in my purpose; and, calling on Heaven to support

me, I continued with unabated fervour to traverse immense deserts, until

the ocean appeared at a distance, and formed the utmost boundary of the

horizon. Oh! how unlike it was to the blue seas of the south! Covered

with ice, it was only to be distinguished from land by its superior

wildness and ruggedness. The Greeks wept for joy when they beheld the

Mediterranean from the hills of Asia, and hailed with rapture the

boundary of their toils. I did not weep; but I knelt down, and, with a

full heart, thanked my guiding spirit for conducting me in safety to the

place where I hoped, notwithstanding my adversary's gibe, to meet and

grapple with him.

Some weeks before this period I had procured a sledge and dogs, and thus

traversed the snows with inconceivable speed. I know not whether the

fiend possessed the same advantages; but I found that, as before I had

daily lost ground in the pursuit, I now gained on him: so much so, that

when I first saw the ocean, he was but one day's journey in advance, and

I hoped to intercept him before he should reach the beach. With new

courage, therefore, I pressed on, and in two days arrived at a wretched

hamlet on the sea-shore. I enquired of the inhabitants concerning the

fiend, and gained accurate information. A gigantic monster, they said,

had arrived the night before, armed with a gun and many pistols; putting

to flight the inhabitants of a solitary cottage, through fear of his

terrific appearance. He had carried off their store of winter food, and,

placing it in a sledge, to draw which he had seized on a numerous drove

of trained dogs, he had harnessed them, and the same night, to the joy

of the horror-struck villagers, had pursued his journey across the sea

in a direction that led to no land; and they conjectured that he must

speedily be destroyed by the breaking of the ice, or frozen by the

eternal frosts.

On hearing this information, I suffered a temporary access of despair.

He had escaped me; and I must commence a destructive and almost endless

journey across the mountainous ices of the ocean,--amidst cold that few

of the inhabitants could long endure, and which I, the native of a

genial and sunny climate, could not hope to survive. Yet at the idea

that the fiend should live and be triumphant, my rage and vengeance

returned, and, like a mighty tide, overwhelmed every other feeling.

After a slight repose, during which the spirits of the dead hovered

round, and instigated me to toil and revenge, I prepared for my journey.

I exchanged my land-sledge for one fashioned for the inequalities of the

Frozen Ocean; and purchasing a plentiful stock of provisions, I departed

from land.

I cannot guess how many days have passed since then; but I have endured

misery, which nothing but the eternal sentiment of a just retribution

burning within my heart could have enabled me to support. Immense and

rugged mountains of ice often barred up my passage, and I often heard

the thunder of the ground sea, which threatened my destruction. But

again the frost came, and made the paths of the sea secure.

By the quantity of provision which I had consumed, I should guess that I

had passed three weeks in this journey; and the continual protraction of

hope, returning back upon the heart, often wrung bitter drops of

despondency and grief from my eyes. Despair had indeed almost secured

her prey, and I should soon have sunk beneath this misery. Once, after

the poor animals that conveyed me had with incredible toil gained the

summit of a sloping ice-mountain, and one, sinking under his fatigue,

died, I viewed the expanse before me with anguish, when suddenly my eye

caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain. I strained my sight to

discover what it could be, and uttered a wild cry of ecstasy when I

distinguished a sledge, and the distorted proportions of a well-known

form within. Oh! with what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart!

warm tears filled my eyes, which I hastily wiped away, that they might

not intercept the view I had of the dæmon; but still my sight was dimmed

by the burning drops, until, giving way to the emotions that oppressed

me, I wept aloud.

But this was not the time for delay: I disencumbered the dogs of their

dead companion, gave them a plentiful portion of food; and, after an

hour's rest, which was absolutely necessary, and yet which was bitterly

irksome to me, I continued my route. The sledge was still visible; nor

did I again lose sight of it, except at the moments when for a short

time some ice-rock concealed it with its intervening crags. I indeed

perceptibly gained on it; and when, after nearly two days' journey, I

beheld my enemy at no more than a mile distant, my heart bounded within

me.

But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my foe, my hopes were

suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I

had ever done before. A ground sea was heard; the thunder of its

progress, as the waters rolled and swelled beneath me, became every

moment more ominous and terrific. I pressed on, but in vain. The wind

arose; the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake,

it split, and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work

was soon finished: in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me

and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice, that

was continually lessening, and thus preparing for me a hideous death.

In this manner many appalling hours passed; several of my dogs died; and

I myself was about to sink under the accumulation of distress, when I

saw your vessel riding at anchor, and holding forth to me hopes of

succour and life. I had no conception that vessels ever came so far

north, and was astounded at the sight. I quickly destroyed part of my

sledge to construct oars; and by these means was enabled, with infinite

fatigue, to move my ice-raft in the direction of your ship. I had

determined, if you were going southward, still to trust myself to the

mercy of the seas rather than abandon my purpose. I hoped to induce you

to grant me a boat with which I could pursue my enemy. But your

direction was northward. You took me on board when my vigour was

exhausted, and I should soon have sunk under my multiplied hardships

into a death which I still dread--for my task is unfulfilled.

Oh! when will my guiding spirit, in conducting me to the dæmon, allow me

the rest I so much desire; or must I die, and he yet live? If I do,

swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you will seek him,

and satisfy my vengeance in his death. And do I dare to ask of you to

undertake my pilgrimage, to endure the hardships that I have undergone?

No; I am not so selfish. Yet, when I am dead, if he should appear; if

the ministers of vengeance should conduct him to you, swear that he

shall not live--swear that he shall not triumph over my accumulated

woes, and survive to add to the list of his dark crimes. He is eloquent

and persuasive; and once his words had even power over my heart: but

trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and

fiendlike malice. Hear him not; call on the manes of William, Justine,

Clerval, Elizabeth, my father, and of the wretched Victor, and thrust

your sword into his heart. I will hover near, and direct the steel

aright.

\* \* \* \* \*

WALTON, \_in continuation\_.

August 26th, 17--.

You have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret; and do you not

feel your blood congeal with horror, like that which even now curdles

mine? Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his

tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty

the words so replete with anguish. His fine and lovely eyes were now

lighted up with indignation, now subdued to downcast sorrow, and

quenched in infinite wretchedness. Sometimes he commanded his

countenance and tones, and related the most horrible incidents with a

tranquil voice, suppressing every mark of agitation; then, like a

volcano bursting forth, his face would suddenly change to an expression

of the wildest rage, as he shrieked out imprecations on his persecutor.

His tale is connected, and told with an appearance of the simplest

truth; yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he

showed me, and the apparition of the monster seen from our ship, brought

to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his

asseverations, however earnest and connected. Such a monster has then

really existence! I cannot doubt it; yet I am lost in surprise and

admiration. Sometimes I endeavoured to gain from Frankenstein the

particulars of his creature's formation: but on this point he was

impenetrable.

"Are you mad, my friend?" said he; "or whither does your senseless

curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a

demoniacal enemy? Peace, peace! learn my miseries, and do not seek to

increase your own."

Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he

asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many

places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the

conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my

narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to

posterity."

Thus has a week passed away, while I have listened to the strangest tale

that ever imagination formed. My thoughts, and every feeling of my soul,

have been drunk up by the interest for my guest, which this tale, and

his own elevated and gentle manners, have created. I wish to soothe him;

yet can I counsel one so infinitely miserable, so destitute of every

hope of consolation, to live? Oh, no! the only joy that he can now know

will be when he composes his shattered spirit to peace and death. Yet he

enjoys one comfort, the offspring of solitude and delirium: he believes,

that, when in dreams he holds converse with his friends, and derives

from that communion consolation for his miseries, or excitements to his

vengeance, that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the beings

themselves who visit him from the regions of a remote world. This faith

gives a solemnity to his reveries that render them to me almost as

imposing and interesting as truth.

Our conversations are not always confined to his own history and

misfortunes. On every point of general literature he displays unbounded

knowledge, and a quick and piercing apprehension. His eloquence is

forcible and touching; nor can I hear him, when he relates a pathetic

incident, or endeavours to move the passions of pity or love, without

tears. What a glorious creature must he have been in the days of his

prosperity, when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin! He seems to feel

his own worth, and the greatness of his fall.

"When younger," said he, "I believed myself destined for some great

enterprise. My feelings are profound; but I possessed a coolness of

judgment that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of

the worth of my nature supported me, when others would have been

oppressed; for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those

talents that might be useful to my fellow-creatures. When I reflected on

the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive

and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common

projectors. But this thought, which supported me in the commencement of

my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my

speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who

aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell. My imagination

was vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application were intense; by

the union of these qualities I conceived the idea, and executed the

creation of a man. Even now I cannot recollect, without passion, my

reveries while the work was incomplete. I trod heaven in my thoughts,

now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects.

From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but

how am I sunk! Oh! my friend, if you had known me as I once was, you

would not recognise me in this state of degradation. Despondency rarely

visited my heart; a high destiny seemed to bear me on, until I fell,

never, never again to rise."

Must I then lose this admirable being? I have longed for a friend; I

have sought one who would sympathise with and love me. Behold, on these

desert seas I have found such a one; but, I fear, I have gained him only

to know his value, and lose him. I would reconcile him to life, but he

repulses the idea.

"I thank you, Walton," he said, "for your kind intentions towards so

miserable a wretch; but when you speak of new ties, and fresh

affections, think you that any can replace those who are gone? Can any

man be to me as Clerval was; or any woman another Elizabeth? Even where

the affections are not strongly moved by any superior excellence, the

companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our

minds, which hardly any later friend can obtain. They know our infantine

dispositions, which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never

eradicated; and they can judge of our actions with more certain

conclusions as to the integrity of our motives. A sister or a brother

can never, unless indeed such symptoms have been shown early, suspect

the other of fraud or false dealing, when another friend, however

strongly he may be attached, may, in spite of himself, be contemplated

with suspicion. But I enjoyed friends, dear not only through habit and

association, but from their own merits; and wherever I am, the soothing

voice of my Elizabeth, and the conversation of Clerval, will be ever

whispered in my ear. They are dead; and but one feeling in such a

solitude can persuade me to preserve my life. If I were engaged in any

high undertaking or design, fraught with extensive utility to my

fellow-creatures, then could I live to fulfil it. But such is not my

destiny; I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence;

then my lot on earth will be fulfilled, and I may die."

\* \* \* \* \*

September 2d.

My beloved Sister,

I write to you, encompassed by peril, and ignorant whether I am ever

doomed to see again dear England, and the dearer friends that inhabit

it. I am surrounded by mountains of ice, which admit of no escape, and

threaten every moment to crush my vessel. The brave fellows, whom I have

persuaded to be my companions, look towards me for aid; but I have none

to bestow. There is something terribly appalling in our situation, yet

my courage and hopes do not desert me. Yet it is terrible to reflect

that the lives of all these men are endangered through me. If we are

lost, my mad schemes are the cause.

And what, Margaret, will be the state of your mind? You will not hear of

my destruction, and you will anxiously await my return. Years will pass,

and you will have visitings of despair, and yet be tortured by hope. Oh!

my beloved sister, the sickening failing of your heart-felt expectations

is, in prospect, more terrible to me than my own death. But you have a

husband, and lovely children; you may be happy: Heaven bless you, and

make you so!

My unfortunate guest regards me with the tenderest compassion. He

endeavours to fill me with hope; and talks as if life were a possession

which he valued. He reminds me how often the same accidents have

happened to other navigators, who have attempted this sea, and, in spite

of myself, he fills me with cheerful auguries. Even the sailors feel the

power of his eloquence: when he speaks, they no longer despair; he

rouses their energies, and, while they hear his voice, they believe

these vast mountains of ice are mole-hills, which will vanish before the

resolutions of man. These feelings are transitory; each day of

expectation delayed fills them with fear, and I almost dread a mutiny

caused by this despair.

September 5th.

A scene has just passed of such uncommon interest, that although it is

highly probable that these papers may never reach you, yet I cannot

forbear recording it.

We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of

being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my

unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of

desolation. Frankenstein has daily declined in health: a feverish fire

still glimmers in his eyes; but he is exhausted, and, when suddenly

roused to any exertion, he speedily sinks again into apparent

lifelessness.

I mentioned in my last letter the fears I entertained of a mutiny. This

morning, as I sat watching the wan countenance of my friend--his eyes

half closed, and his limbs hanging listlessly,--I was roused by half a

dozen of the sailors, who demanded admission into the cabin. They

entered, and their leader addressed me. He told me that he and his

companions had been chosen by the other sailors to come in deputation to

me, to make me a requisition, which, in justice, I could not refuse. We

were immured in ice, and should probably never escape; but they feared

that if, as was possible, the ice should dissipate, and a free passage

be opened, I should be rash enough to continue my voyage, and lead them

into fresh dangers, after they might happily have surmounted this. They

insisted, therefore, that I should engage with a solemn promise, that if

the vessel should be freed I would instantly direct my course southward.

This speech troubled me. I had not despaired; nor had I yet conceived

the idea of returning, if set free. Yet could I, in justice, or even in

possibility, refuse this demand? I hesitated before I answered; when

Frankenstein, who had at first been silent, and, indeed, appeared hardly

to have force enough to attend, now roused himself; his eyes sparkled,

and his cheeks flushed with momentary vigour. Turning towards the men,

he said--

"What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you then so

easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious

expedition? And wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was

smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers

and terror; because, at every new incident, your fortitude was to be

called forth, and your courage exhibited; because danger and death

surrounded it, and these you were to brave and overcome. For this was it

a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were

hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your names

adored, as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour, and

the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of

danger, or, if you will, the first mighty and terrific trial of your

courage, you shrink away, and are content to be handed down as men who

had not strength enough to endure cold and peril; and so, poor souls,

they were chilly, and returned to their warm fire-sides. Why, that

requires not this preparation; ye need not have come thus far, and

dragged your captain to the shame of a defeat, merely to prove

yourselves cowards. Oh! be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your

purposes, and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your

hearts may be; it is mutable, and cannot withstand you, if you say that

it shall not. Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace

marked on your brows. Return, as heroes who have fought and conquered,

and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe."

He spoke this with a voice so modulated to the different feelings

expressed in his speech, with an eye so full of lofty design and

heroism, that can you wonder that these men were moved? They looked at

one another, and were unable to reply. I spoke; I told them to retire,

and consider of what had been said: that I would not lead them farther

north, if they strenuously desired the contrary; but that I hoped that,

with reflection, their courage would return.

They retired, and I turned towards my friend; but he was sunk in

languor, and almost deprived of life.

How all this will terminate, I know not; but I had rather die than

return shamefully,--my purpose unfulfilled. Yet I fear such will be my

fate; the men, unsupported by ideas of glory and honour, can never

willingly continue to endure their present hardships.

September 7th.

The die is cast; I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed.

Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back

ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess,

to bear this injustice with patience.

September 12th.

It is past; I am returning to England. I have lost my hopes of utility

and glory;--I have lost my friend. But I will endeavour to detail these

bitter circumstances to you, my dear sister; and, while I am wafted

towards England, and towards you, I will not despond.

September 9th, the ice began to move, and roarings like thunder were

heard at a distance, as the islands split and cracked in every

direction. We were in the most imminent peril; but, as we could only

remain passive, my chief attention was occupied by my unfortunate

guest, whose illness increased in such a degree, that he was entirely

confined to his bed. The ice cracked behind us, and was driven with

force towards the north; a breeze sprung from the west, and on the 11th

the passage towards the south became perfectly free. When the sailors

saw this, and that their return to their native country was apparently

assured, a shout of tumultuous joy broke from them, loud and

long-continued. Frankenstein, who was dozing, awoke, and asked the cause

of the tumult. "They shout," I said, "because they will soon return to

England."

"Do you then really return?"

"Alas! yes; I cannot withstand their demands. I cannot lead them

unwillingly to danger, and I must return."

"Do so, if you will; but I will not. You may give up your purpose, but

mine is assigned to me by Heaven, and I dare not. I am weak; but surely

the spirits who assist my vengeance will endow me with sufficient

strength." Saying this, he endeavoured to spring from the bed, but the

exertion was too great for him; he fell back, and fainted.

It was long before he was restored; and I often thought that life was

entirely extinct. At length he opened his eyes; he breathed with

difficulty, and was unable to speak. The surgeon gave him a composing

draught, and ordered us to leave him undisturbed. In the mean time he

told me, that my friend had certainly not many hours to live.

His sentence was pronounced; and I could only grieve, and be patient. I

sat by his bed, watching him; his eyes were closed, and I thought he

slept; but presently he called to me in a feeble voice, and, bidding me

come near, said--"Alas! the strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I

shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being.

Think not, Walton, that in the last moments of my existence I feel that

burning hatred, and ardent desire of revenge, I once expressed; but I

feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary. During

these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor

do I find it blamable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a

rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was

in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there

was another still paramount to that. My duties towards the beings of my

own species had greater claims to my attention, because they included a

greater proportion of happiness or misery. Urged by this view, I

refused, and I did right in refusing, to create a companion for the

first creature. He showed unparalleled malignity and selfishness, in

evil: he destroyed my friends; he devoted to destruction beings who

possessed exquisite sensations, happiness, and wisdom; nor do I know

where this thirst for vengeance may end. Miserable himself, that he may

render no other wretched, he ought to die. The task of his destruction

was mine, but I have failed. When actuated by selfish and vicious

motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this

request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue.

"Yet I cannot ask you to renounce your country and friends, to fulfil

this task; and now, that you are returning to England, you will have

little chance of meeting with him. But the consideration of these

points, and the well balancing of what you may esteem your duties, I

leave to you; my judgment and ideas are already disturbed by the near

approach of death. I dare not ask you to do what I think right, for I

may still be misled by passion.

"That he should live to be an instrument of mischief disturbs me; in

other respects, this hour, when I momentarily expect my release, is the

only happy one which I have enjoyed for several years. The forms of the

beloved dead flit before me, and I hasten to their arms. Farewell,

Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it

be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in

science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been

blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed."

His voice became fainter as he spoke; and at length, exhausted by his

effort, he sunk into silence. About half an hour afterwards he attempted

again to speak, but was unable; he pressed my hand feebly, and his eyes

closed for ever, while the irradiation of a gentle smile passed away

from his lips.

Margaret, what comment can I make on the untimely extinction of this

glorious spirit? What can I say, that will enable you to understand the

depth of my sorrow? All that I should express would be inadequate and

feeble. My tears flow; my mind is overshadowed by a cloud of

disappointment. But I journey towards England, and I may there find

consolation.

I am interrupted. What do these sounds portend? It is midnight; the

breeze blows fairly, and the watch on deck scarcely stir. Again; there

is a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser; it comes from the cabin

where the remains of Frankenstein still lie. I must arise, and examine.

Good night, my sister.

Great God! what a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the

remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to

detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete

without this final and wonderful catastrophe.

I entered the cabin, where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable

friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe;

gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he

hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged

hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture

like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased

to utter exclamations of grief and horror, and sprung towards the

window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such

loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily, and

endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this

destroyer. I called on him to stay.

He paused, looking on me with wonder; and, again turning towards the

lifeless form of his creator, he seemed to forget my presence, and every

feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some

uncontrollable passion.

"That is also my victim!" he exclaimed: "in his murder my crimes are

consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh,

Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that

I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by

destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! he is cold, he cannot answer me."

His voice seemed suffocated; and my first impulses, which had suggested

to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying

his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion.

I approached this tremendous being; I dared not again raise my eyes to

his face, there was something so scaring and unearthly in his ugliness.

I attempted to speak, but the words died away on my lips. The monster

continued to utter wild and incoherent self-reproaches. At length I

gathered resolution to address him in a pause of the tempest of his

passion: "Your repentance," I said, "is now superfluous. If you had

listened to the voice of conscience, and heeded the stings of remorse,

before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity,

Frankenstein would yet have lived.

"And do you dream?" said the dæmon; "do you think that I was then dead

to agony and remorse?--He," he continued, pointing to the corpse, "he

suffered not in the consummation of the deed--oh! not the ten-thousandth

portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its

execution. A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was

poisoned with remorse. Think you that the groans of Clerval were music

to my ears? My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and

sympathy; and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not

endure the violence of the change, without torture such as you cannot

even imagine.

"After the murder of Clerval, I returned to Switzerland, heart-broken

and overcome. I pitied Frankenstein; my pity amounted to horror: I

abhorred myself. But when I discovered that he, the author at once of my

existence and of its unspeakable torments, dared to hope for happiness;

that while he accumulated wretchedness and despair upon me, he sought

his own enjoyment in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which

I was for ever barred, then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled

me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance. I recollected my threat,

and resolved that it should be accomplished. I knew that I was preparing

for myself a deadly torture; but I was the slave, not the master, of an

impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey. Yet when she

died!--nay, then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling,

subdued all anguish, to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil

thenceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt

my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of

my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended;

there is my last victim!"

I was at first touched by the expressions of his misery; yet, when I

called to mind what Frankenstein had said of his powers of eloquence and

persuasion, and when I again cast my eyes on the lifeless form of my

friend, indignation was rekindled within me. "Wretch!" I said, "it is

well that you come here to whine over the desolation that you have made.

You throw a torch into a pile of buildings; and, when they are consumed,

you sit among the ruins, and lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend! if he

whom you mourn still lived, still would he be the object, again would he

become the prey, of your accursed vengeance. It is not pity that you

feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn

from your power."

"Oh, it is not thus--not thus," interrupted the being; "yet such must be

the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my

actions. Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I

ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the

feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being

overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now, that virtue has

become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into

bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am

content to suffer alone, while my sufferings shall endure: when I die, I

am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory.

Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of

enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my

outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was

capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and

devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No

guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to

mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot

believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with

sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of

goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil.

Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his

desolation; I am alone.

"You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my

crimes and his misfortunes. But, in the detail which he gave you of

them, he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I

endured, wasting in impotent passions. For while I destroyed his hopes,

I did not satisfy my own desires. They were for ever ardent and craving;

still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there

no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all

human kind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his

friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic

who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous

and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an

abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my

blood boils at the recollection of this injustice.

"But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the

helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept, and grasped to

death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing. I have

devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love

and admiration among men, to misery; I have pursued him even to that

irremediable ruin. There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me;

but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look

on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the

imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when these

hands will meet my eyes, when that imagination will haunt my thoughts no

more.

"Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief. My work is

nearly complete. Neither yours nor any man's death is needed to

consummate the series of my being, and accomplish that which must be

done; but it requires my own. Do not think that I shall be slow to

perform this sacrifice. I shall quit your vessel on the ice-raft which

brought me thither, and shall seek the most northern extremity of the

globe; I shall collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this

miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and

unhallowed wretch, who would create such another as I have been. I shall

die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me, or be the

prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched. He is dead who called me

into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both

will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel

the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass away;

and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the

images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the

cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the

warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to

die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes, and torn by the

bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?

"Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of human kind whom these

eyes will ever behold. Farewell, Frankenstein! If thou wert yet alive,

and yet cherished a desire of revenge against me, it would be better

satiated in my life than in my destruction. But it was not so; thou

didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness;

and if yet, in some mode unknown to me, thou hadst not ceased to think

and feel, thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than

that which I feel. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to

thine; for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in my

wounds until death shall close them for ever.

"But soon," he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, "I shall die, and

what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be

extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the

agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade

away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will

sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus.

Farewell."

He sprung from the cabin-window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft

which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and

lost in darkness and distance.

THE END.

LONDON:

Printed by A. & R Spottiswoode,

New-Street-Square.

[Transcriber's Note: Possible printer errors corrected:

Line 2863: "I do no not fear to die" to "I do now not fear to die"

Line 6375: "fulfil the wishes of you parents" to "your parents"]

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