Melmoth the Wanderer, Vol. 2

Maturin, Charles Robert, 1780-1824

Transcriber's Notes:

Every effort has been made to replicate this text as faithfully as possible, including inconsistencies in spelling, hyphenation, and punctuation.

Some corrections of spelling and punctuation have been made. They are marked like this in the text. The original text appears when hovering the cursor over the marked text. A list of amendments is at the end of the text.

The motto for Chapter VI is misquoted from *Iliad* XXIII 72; it has been left as printed.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BERTRAM," &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER VI.

Τηλε μἐιργουσι ψυχαι ειδωλα καμοντων.

Homer.

When, after some days interval, the Spaniard attempted to describe his feelings on the receipt of his brother's letter, the sudden resuscitation of heart, and hope, and existence, that followed its perusal, he trembled,—uttered some inarticulate sounds;—wept;—and his agitation appeared to Melmoth, with *his uncontinental feelings*, so violent, that he entreated him to spare the description of his feelings, and proceed with his narrative.

"You are right," said the Spaniard, drying his tears, "joy is a convulsion, but grief is a habit, and to describe what we never can communicate, is as absurd as to talk of colours to the blind. I will hasten on, not to tell of my feelings, but of the results which they produced. A new world of hope was opened to me. I thought I saw liberty on the face of heaven when I walked in the garden. I laughed at the jar of the doors as they opened, and said to myself, "You shall soon expand to me for ever." I behaved with uncommon complacency to the community. But I did not, amid all this, neglect the most scrupulous precautions suggested by my brother. Am I confessing the strength or the weakness of my heart? In the midst of all the systematic dissimulation that I was prepared and eager to carry on, the only circumstance that gave me real compunction, was my being obliged to destroy the letters of that dear and generous youth who had risked every thing for my emancipation. In the mean time, I pursued my preparations with industry inconceivable to you, who have never been in a convent.

"Lent was now begun,—all the community were preparing themselves for the great confession. They shut themselves up,—they prostrated themselves before the shrines of the saints,—they occupied themselves whole hours in taking minutes of their consciences, and magnifying the trivial defects of conventual discipline into offences in the eye of God,

in order to give consequence to their penitence in the hearing of the confessor,—in fact, they would have been glad to accuse themselves of a crime, to escape from the monotony of a monastic conscience. There was a kind of silent bustle in the house, that very much favoured my purposes. Hour after hour I demanded paper for my confession. I obtained it, but my frequent demands excited suspicion,—they little knew what I was writing. Some said, for every thing excites inquiry in a convent, “He is writing the history of his family; he will discharge it into the ears of the confessor, along with the secrets of his own soul.” Others said, “He has been in a state of *alienation* for some time, he is giving an account to God for it,—we shall never hear a word about it.” Others, who were more judicious, said, “He is weary of the monastic life, he is writing an account of his monotony and ennui, doubtless that must be very long;” and the speakers yawned as they uttered these words, which gave a very strong attestation to what they said. The Superior watched me in silence. He was alarmed, and with reason. He consulted with some of the *discreet* brethren, whom I mentioned before, and the result was a restless vigilance on their part, to which I supplied an incessant fuel, by my absurd and perpetual demand for paper. Here, I acknowledge, I committed a great oversight. It was impossible for the most exaggerated conscience to charge itself, even in a convent, with crimes enough to fill all the paper I required. I was filling them all the time with *their* crimes, not my own. Another great mistake I made, was being wholly unprepared for the great confession when it came on. I received intimations of this as we walked in the garden,—I have before mentioned that I had assumed an amicability of habit toward them. They would say to me, “You have made ample preparations for the great confession.” “I have prepared myself.” “But we expect great edification from its results.” “I trust you will receive it.”—I said no more, but I was very much disturbed at these hints. Others would say, “My brother, amid the multitudinous offences that burden your conscience, and which you have found necessary to employ quires of paper to record, would it not be a relief to you to open your mind to the Superior, and ask for a few previous moments of consolation and direction from *him*.” To this I answered, “I thank you, and will consider of it.”—I was thinking all the time of something else.

“It was a few nights before the time of the great confession, that I had to entrust the last packet of my memorial to the porter. Our meetings had been hitherto unsuspected. I had received and answered my brother’s communications, and our correspondence had been conducted with a secrecy unexampled in convents. But this last night, as I put my packet into the porter’s hand, I saw a change in his appearance that terrified me. He had been a comely, robust man, but now, even by the moon-light, I could perceive he was wasted to a shadow,—his hands trembled as he took the papers from me,—his voice faultered as he promised his usual secrecy. The change, which had been observed by the whole convent, had escaped me till that night; my mind had been too much occupied by my own situation. I noticed it then, however, and I said, “But what is the matter?” “Can you then ask? I am withered to a spectre by the terrors of the office I have been bribed to. Do you know what I risk?—incarceration for life, or rather for death,—perhaps a denunciation to the Inquisition. Every line I deliver from you, or to you, seems a charge against my own soul,—I tremble when I meet you. I know that you have the sources of life and death, temporal and eternal, in your hands. The secret in which I am an agent should never be intrusted but to *one*, and *you are another*. As I sit in my place, I think every step in the cloister is advancing to summon me to the presence of the Superior. When I attend in the choir, amid the sounds of devotion your voice swells to accuse me. When I lie down at night, the evil spirit is beside my bed, reproaching me with perjury, and reclaiming his prey;—his emissaries surround me wherever I move,—I am beset by the tortures of hell. The saints from their shrines frown on me,—I see the painting of the traitor Judas on every side I turn to. When I sleep for a moment, I am awakened by my own cries. I exclaim, “Do not betray me, he has not yet violated his vows, I was but an agent,—I was bribed,—do not kindle those fires for me.” I shudder,—I start up in a cold sweat. My rest, my appetite, are gone. Would to God you were out of this convent;—and O! would that I had never been instrumental to your release, then both of us might have escaped damnation to all eternity.” I tried to pacify him, to assure him of his safety, but nothing could satisfy him but my solemn and sincere assurance that this was the last packet I would ever ask him to deliver. He departed tranquillized by this assurance; and I felt the dangers of my attempt multiplying around me every hour.

“This man was faithful, but he was timid; and what confidence can we have in a being whose right hand is held out to you, while his left trembles to be employed in transferring your secret to your enemy. This man died a few weeks after. I believe I owed his dying fidelity to the delirium that seized on his last moments. But what I suffered during those moments!—his death under such circumstances, and the unchristian joy I felt at it, were only in my mind stronger evidences against the unnatural state of life that could render such an event, and such feelings, almost necessary. It was on the evening after this, that I was surprised to see the Superior, with four of the monks, enter my cell. I felt this visit boded me no good. I trembled all over, while I received them with deference. The Superior seated himself opposite to me, arranging his seat so as that I was opposite the light. I did not understand what this precaution meant, but I conceive now, that he wished to watch every change in my countenance, while his was concealed from me. The four monks stood at the back of his chair; their arms were folded, their lips closed, their eyes half shut, their heads declined—they looked like men assembled reluctantly to witness the execution of a criminal. The Superior began, in a mild voice, “My son, you have been intently employed on your confession for some time—that was laudable. But have you, then, accused yourself of every crime your conscience charges you with?” “I have, my father.” “Of all, you are sure?” “My father, I

have accused myself of all I was conscious of. Who but God can penetrate the abysses of the heart? I have searched mine as far as I could." "And you have recorded all the accusations you found there?" "I have." "And you did not discover among them the crime of obtaining the means of writing out your confession, to abuse them to a very different purpose?"—This was coming to the point. I felt it necessary to summon my resolution—and I said, with a venial equivocation, "That is a crime of which my conscience *does not accuse me*." "My son, do not dissemble with your conscience, or with me. I should be even above it in your estimation; for if it errs and deceives you, it is to me you should apply to enlighten and direct it. But I see it is in vain to attempt to touch your heart. I make my last appeal to it in these plain words. A few moments only of indulgence await you—use them or abuse them, as you will. I have to ask you a few plain questions, which, if you refuse to answer, or do not answer truly, your blood be on your own head." I trembled, but I said, "My father, have I then refused to answer your questions?" "Your answers are all either interrogations or evasions. They must be direct and simple to the questions I am about to propose in the presence of these brethren. More depends on your answer than you are aware of. The warning voice breaks forth in spite of me."—Terrified at these words, and humbled to the wish to propitiate them, I rose from my chair—then gasping, I leant on it for support. I said, "My God! what is all this terrible preparation for? Of what am I guilty? Why am I summoned by this warning voice so often, whose warnings are only so many mysterious threatenings? Why am I not told of my offence?"

"The four monks, who had never spoken or lifted up their heads till that moment, now directed their livid eyes at me, and repeated, all together, in a voice that seemed to issue from the bottom of a sepulchre, "Your crime is—" The Superior gave them a signal to be silent, and this interruption increased my consternation. It is certain, that when we are conscious of guilt, we always suspect that a greater degree of it will be ascribed to us by others. Their consciences avenge the palliations of our own, by the most horrible exaggerations. I did not know of what crime they might be disposed to accuse me; and already I felt the accusation of my clandestine correspondence as dust in the balance of their resentment. I had heard the crimes of convents were sometimes unutterably atrocious; and I felt as anxious now for a distinct charge to be preferred against me, as I had a few moments before to evade it. These indefinite fears were soon exchanged for real ones, as the Superior proposed his questions. "You have procured a large quantity of paper—how did you employ it?" I recovered myself, and said, "As I ought to do." "How, in unburdening your conscience?" "Yes, in unburdening my conscience." "That is false; the greatest sinner on earth could not have blotted so many pages with the record of his crimes." "I have often been told in the convent, I *was* the greatest sinner on earth." "You equivocate again, and convert your ambiguities into reproaches—this will not do—you must answer plainly: For what purpose did you procure so much paper, and how have you employed it?" "I have told you already." "It was, then, employed in your confession?"—I was silent, but bowed assentingly.—"You can, then, shew us the proofs of your application to your duties. Where is the manuscript that contains your confession?" I blushed and hesitated, as I showed about half-a-dozen blotted and scrawled pages as my confession. It was ridiculous. It did not occupy more than a tenth part of the paper which I had received. "And this is your confession?" "It is." "And you dare to say that you have employed all the paper entrusted to you for that purpose."—I was silent. "Wretch!" said the Superior, losing all patience, "disclose instantly for what purpose you have employed the paper granted you. Acknowledge instantly that it was for some purpose contrary to the interests of this house."—At these words I was roused. I saw again the cloven foot of interest peeping from beneath the monastic garb. I answered, "Why am I suspected if *you* are not guilty? What could I accuse you of? What could I complain of if there were no cause? Your own consciences must answer this question for me." At these words, the monks were again about to interpose, when the Superior, silencing them by a signal, went on with his matter-of-fact questions, that paralyzed all the energy of passion. "You will not tell me what you have done with the paper committed to you?"—I was silent.—"I enjoin you, by your holy obedience, to disclose it this moment."—His voice rose in passion as he spoke, and this operated as a signal on mine. I said, "You have no right, my father, to demand such a declaration." "Right is not the question now. I command you to tell me. I require your oath on the altar of Jesus Christ, and by the image of his blessed Mother." "You have no right to demand such an oath. I know the rules of the house—I am responsible to the confessor." "Do you, then, make a question between right and power? You shall soon feel, within these walls, they are the same." "I make no question—perhaps they are the same." "And you will not tell what you have done with those papers, blotted, doubtless, with the most infernal calumnies?" "I will not." "And you will take the consequences of your obstinacy on your own head?" "I will." And the four monks chorussed again, all in the same unnatural tone, "The consequences be on his own head." But while they spoke thus, two of them whispered in my ears, "Deliver up your papers, and all is well. The whole convent knows you have been writing." I answered, "I have nothing to give up—nothing on the faith of a monk. I have not a single page in my possession, but what you have seized on." The monks, who had whispered in a conciliatory tone to me before, quitted me. They conversed in whispers with the Superior, who, darting on me a terrible look, exclaimed, "And you will not give up your papers?" "I have nothing to give up: Search my person—search my cell—every thing is open to you." "Every thing shall be soon," said the Superior in fury. In a moment the examination commenced. There was not an article of furniture in my cell that was not the object of their investigation. My chair and table were overturned, shaken, and finally broken, in the attempt to discover whether any papers had been secreted in them. The prints were snatched from the walls,—held up between them and the light.—Then the very frames were broken, to try if any thing was concealed in them. Then they examined my bed;

—they threw all the furniture about the floor, they unripped the mattress, and tore out the straw; one of them, during this operation, actually applied his teeth to facilitate it,—and this malice of activity formed a singular contrast to the motionless and rigid torpor with which they had clothed themselves but a few moments before. All this time, I stood in the centre of the floor, as I was ordered, without turning to right or left. Nothing was found to justify their suspicions. They then surrounded me; and the examination of my person was equally rapid, minute, and indecorous. Every thing I wore was on the floor in a moment: The very seams of my habit were ript open; and, during the examination, I covered myself with one of the blankets they had taken from my bed. When it was over, I said, “Have you discovered any thing?” The Superior answered, in a voice of rage, struggling proudly, but vainly, with disappointment, “I have other means of discovery—prepare for them, and tremble when they are resorted to.” At these words he rushed from my cell, giving a sign to the four monks to follow him. I was left alone. I had no longer any doubt of my danger. I saw myself exposed to the fury of men who would risk nothing to appease it. I watched, waited, trembled, at every step I heard in the gallery—at the sound of every door that opened or shut near me. Hours went on in this agony of suspense, and terminated at last without an event. No one came near me that night—the next was to be that of the great confession. In the course of the day, I took my place in the choir, trembling, and watching every eye. I felt as if every countenance was turned on me, and every tongue said in silence, “Thou art the man.” Often I wished that the storm I felt was gathering around me, would burst at once. It is better to hear the thunder than to watch the cloud. It did not burst, however, then. And when the duties of the day were over, I retired to my cell, and remained there, pensive, anxious, and irresolute.

“The confession had begun; and as I heard the penitents, one by one, return from the church, and close the doors of their cells, I began to dread that I was to be excluded from approaching the holy chair, and that this exclusion from a sacred and indispensible right, was to be the commencement of some mysterious course of rigour. I waited, however, and was at last summoned. This restored my courage, and I went through my duties more tranquilly. After I had made my confession, only a few simple questions were proposed to me, as, Whether I could accuse myself of any *inward* breach of conventual duty? of any thing I had *reserved*? any thing in my conscience? &c.—and on my answering them in the negative, was suffered to depart. It was on that very night the porter died. My last packet had gone some days before,—all was safe and well. Neither voice or line could bear witness against me now, and hope began to revisit me, as I reflected that my brother’s zealous industry would discover some other means for our future communication.

“All was profound calm for a few days, but the storm was to come soon enough. On the fourth evening after the confession, I was sitting alone in my cell, when I heard an unusual bustle in the convent. The bell was rung,—the new porter seemed in great agitation,—the Superior hurried to the parlour first, then to his cell,—then some of the elder monks were summoned. The younger whispered in the galleries,—shut their doors violently,—all seemed in agitation. In a domestic building, occupied by the smallest family, such circumstances would hardly be noticed, but, in a convent, the miserable monotony of what may be called their internal existence, gives an importance,—an interest, to the most trivial external circumstance in common life. I felt all this. I said to myself, “Something is going on.”—I added, “Something is going on against me.” I was right in both my conjectures. Late in the evening I was ordered to attend the Superior in his own apartment,—I said I was ready to go. Two minutes after the order was reversed, and I was desired to remain in my cell, and await the approach of the Superior,—I answered I was willing to obey. But this sudden change of orders filled me with an *indefinite* fear; and in all the changes of my life, and vicissitude of my feelings, I have never felt any fear so horrible. I walked up and down, I repeated incessantly, “My God protect me! my God strengthen me!” Then I dreaded to ask the protection of God, doubting whether the cause in which I was engaged merited his protection. My ideas, however, were all scattered by the sudden entrance of the Superior and the four monks who had attended him on the visit previous to the confession. At their entrance I rose,—no one desired me to sit down. The Superior advanced with a look of fury, and, dashing some papers on my table, said, “Is that your writing?” I threw a hurried and terrified eye over the papers,—*they were a copy of my memorial*. I had presence of mind enough to say, “That is not my writing.” “Wretch! you equivocate, it is a copy of your writing.”—I was silent.—“Here is a proof of it,” he added, throwing down another paper. It was a copy of the memoir of the advocate, addressed to me, and which, by the influence of a superior court, they had not the power of withholding from me. I was expiring with anxiety to examine it, but I did not dare to glance at it. The Superior unfolded page after page. He said, “Read, wretch! read,—look into it, examine it line by line.” I approached trembling,—I glanced at it,—in the very first lines I read *hope*. My courage revived.—I said, “My father, I acknowledge this to be the copy of my memorial. I demand your permission to read the answer of the advocate, you cannot refuse me this right.” “Read it,” said the Superior, and he flung it towards me.

“You may readily believe, Sir, that, under such circumstances, I could not read with very steady eyes; and my penetration was not at all quickened by the four monks disappearing from the cell, at a signal I did not see. The Superior and I were now alone. He walked up and down my cell, while I appeared to hang over the advocate’s memoir. Suddenly he stopped;—he struck his hand with violence on the table,—the pages I was trembling over quivered from the violence of the blow,—I started from my chair. “Wretch,” said the Superior, “when have such papers as those profaned the convent before? When, till your unhallowed entrance, were we insulted with the memoirs of legal advocates? How

comes it that you have dared to——” “Do what, my father?” “Reclaim your vows, and expose *us* to all the scandal of a civil court and its proceedings.” “I weighed it all against my own misery.” “Misery! is it thus you speak of a conventual life, the only life that can promise tranquillity here, or ensure salvation hereafter.” These words, uttered by a man convulsed by the most frantic passion, were their own refutation. My courage rose in proportion to his fury; and besides, I was driven to a point, and forced to act on my defence. The sight of the papers added to my confidence. I said, “My father, it is in vain to endeavour to diminish my repugnance to the monastic life; the proof that that repugnance is invincible lies before you. If I have been guilty of a step that violates the decorum of a convent, I am sorry,—but I am not reprehensible. Those who forced me into a convent, are guilty of the violence which is falsely ascribed to me. I am determined, if it be possible, to change my situation. You see the efforts I have already made, be assured they will never cease. Disappointment will only redouble their energy; and if it be in the power of heaven or earth to procure the annulment of my vows, there is no power in either I will not have recourse to.” I expected he would not have heard me out, but he did. He even listened with calmness, and I prepared myself to encounter and repel that alternation of reproach and remonstrance, of solicitation and menace, which they so well know how to employ in a convent. “Your repugnance to a conventual life is then invincible?” “It is.” “But to what do you object?—not to your duties, for you perform them with the most edifying punctuality,—not to the treatment you receive, for it has been the most indulgent that our discipline admits of,—not to the community itself, who are all disposed to cherish and love you;—of what do you complain?” “Of the life itself,—that comprehends every thing. I am not fit to be a monk.” “Remember, I implore you, that though the forms of earthly courts must be obeyed, from the necessity that makes us dependent on human institutions, in all matters between man and man, they never can be available in matters between God and man. Be assured, my deluded child, that if all the courts on earth pronounced you absolved from your vows this moment, your own conscience never can absolve you. All your ignominious life, it will continue to reproach you with the violation of a vow, whose breach man has connived at, but God has not. And, at your last hour, how horrible will those reproaches be!” “Not so horrible as at the hour I took that vow, or rather at the hour when it was extorted.” “Extorted!” “Yes, my father, yes,—I take Heaven to witness against you. On that disastrous morning, your anger, your remonstrances, your pleadings, were as ineffectual as they are now, till you flung the body of my mother before my feet.” “And do you reproach me with my zeal in the cause of your salvation?” “I do not wish to reproach you. You know the step I have taken, you must be aware I will pursue it with all the powers of nature,—that I will never rest till my vows are annulled, while a hope of it remains,—and that a soul, determined as mine, can convert despair itself into hope. Surrounded, suspected, watched as I have been, I yet found the means of conveying my papers to the hands of the advocate. Calculate the strength of that resolution which could effectuate such a measure in the very heart of a convent. Judge of the futility of all future opposition, when you failed in defeating, or even detecting, the first steps of my design.” At these words the Superior was silent. I believed I had made an impression on him. I added, “If you wish to spare the community the disgrace of my prosecuting my appeal within its walls, the alternative is easy. Let the door be left unguarded some day, connive at my escape, and my presence shall never molest or dishonour you another hour.” “How! would you make me not only a witness, but an accomplice in your crime? Apostate from God, and plunged in perdition as you are, do you repay the hand stretched out to save you, by seizing it, that you may drag me into the infernal gulph along with you?” and he walked up and down the cell in the most violent agitation. This unlucky proposal operated on his master-passion, (for he was exemplarily rigid in discipline), and produced only convulsions of hostility. I stood waiting till this fresh burst had subsided, while he continued to exclaim incessantly, “My God, for what offence am I thus humiliated?—for what inconceivable crime is this disgrace precipitated on the whole convent? What will become of our character? What will all Madrid say?” “My father, whether an obscure monk lives, dies, or recalls his vows, is an object of little importance beyond the walls of his convent. They will forget me soon, and you will be consoled by the restored harmony of the discipline, in which I should always be a jarring note. Besides, all Madrid, with all the interest you ascribe to it, could never be made responsible for my salvation.” He continued to walk up and down, repeating, “What will the world say? What will become of us?” till he had worked himself into a state of fury; and, suddenly turning on me, he exclaimed, “Wretch! renounce your horrible resolution,—renounce it this moment! I give you but five minutes for consideration.” “Five thousand would make no change.” “Tremble, then, lest you should not have life spared to see the fulfilment of your impious purposes.”

“As he uttered these words he rushed from my cell. The moments I passed during his absence were, I think, the most horrible of my life. Their terror was aggravated by darkness, for it was now night, and he had carried away the light along with him. My agitation did not at first permit me to observe this. I felt I was in the dark, but knew not how or why. A thousand images of indescribable horror rushed in a host on me. I had heard much of the terrors of convents,—of their punishments, often carried to the infliction of death, or of reducing their victim to a state in which death would have been a blessing. Dungeons, chains, and scourges, swam before my eyes in a fiery mist. The threatening words of the Superior appeared emblazoned on the darkened walls of my cell in characters of flame. I shuddered,—I cried aloud, though conscious that my voice would be echoed by no friendly answering tones in a community of sixty persons,—such is the sterility of humanity in a convent. At last my very fears recovered me by their excess. I said to myself, “They dare not murder me,—they dare not incarcerate me;—they are answerable to the court to which I have appealed

for my forthcoming,—they dare not be guilty of any violence." Just as I had come to this comfortable conclusion, which indeed was the triumph of the sophistry of hope, the door of my cell was thrown open, and the Superior, attended by his four satellites, re-entered. My eyes were dim from the darkness in which I had been left, but I could distinguish that they carried with them a rope and a piece of sackcloth. I drew the most frightful presages from this apparatus. I altered my reasoning in a moment, and instead of saying they dare not do so and so, I instantly argued, "What dare they not do? I am in their power,—they know it. I have provoked them to the utmost,—what is it monks will not do in the impotence of their malignity?—what is to become of me?" They advanced, and I imagined the rope was to strangle me, and the sackcloth to inclose my murdered body. A thousand images of blood swam before me,—a gush of fire choaked up my respiration. The groans of a thousand victims seemed to rise from the vaults of the convent, to which they had been hurried by a fate like mine. I know not what is death, but I am convinced I suffered the agonies of many deaths in that moment. My first impulse was to throw myself on my knees. I said, "I am in your power,—I am guilty in your eyes,—accomplish your purpose, but do not keep me long in pain." The Superior, without heeding, or perhaps hearing me, said, "Now you are in the posture that becomes you." At hearing these words, which sounded less dreadful than I had feared, I prostrated myself to the ground. A few moments before I would have thought this a degradation, but fear is very debasing. I had a dread of violent means,—I was very young, and life was not the less attractive from its being arrayed only in the brilliant drapery of imagination. The monks observed my posture,—they feared its effect on the Superior. They said, in that choral monotony,—that *discordant unison* that had frozen my blood when I knelt in the same posture but a few nights before, "Reverend father, do not suffer yourself to be imposed on by this prostituted humiliation,—the time for mercy is past. You gave him his moments of deliberation,—he refused to avail himself of them. You come now not to listen to pleadings, but to inflict justice." At these words, that announced every thing horrible, I went on my knees from one to the other, as they all stood in a grim and executioner-like row. I said to each with tears, "Brother Clement,—Brother Justin,—why do you try to irritate the Superior against me? Why do you precipitate a sentence which, whether just or not, must be severe, since you are to be the executioners? What have I done to offend you? I interceded for you when you were guilty of any slight deviation—Is this my return?" "This is wasting time," said the monks. "Hold," said the Superior; "give him leave to speak. Will you avail yourself of the last moment of indulgence I can ever afford you, to renounce your horrible resolution of recalling your vows?" Those words renewed all my energies. I stood upright before them all. I said, in a loud distinct voice, "Never—I stand at the bar of God." "Wretch! you have renounced God." "Well, then, my father, I have only to hope that God will not renounce me. I have appealed to a bar also, over which you have no power." "But we have power here, and that you shall feel." He made a signal, and the four monks approached. I uttered one short cry of fear, but submitted the next moment. I felt convinced it was to be my last. I was astonished, when, instead of fastening the cords round my neck, they bound my arms with them. They then took off my habit, and covered me with the sackcloth. I made no resistance; but shall I confess to you, Sir, I felt some disappointment. I was prepared for death, but something worse than death appeared threatened in these preparations. When we are driven to the precipice of mortality, we spring forward with resolution, and often defeat the triumph of our murderers, by merging it in our own. But when we are led to it step by step, held often over it, and then withdrawn, we lose our resolution along with our patience; and feel, that the last blow would be mercy, compared with its long-suspended, slowly descending, wavering, mutilating, hesitating stroke. I was prepared for every thing but what followed. Bound with this rope as fast as a felon, or a galley-slave, and covered only with the sackcloth, they dragged me along the gallery. I uttered no cry, made no resistance. They descended the stairs that led to the church. I followed, or rather was dragged after them. They crossed the aisle; there was a dark passage near it which I had never observed before. We entered it. A low door at the end presented a frightful perspective. At sight of it I cried aloud, "You will not immure me? You will not plunge me in that horrible dungeon, to be withered by damps, and devoured by reptiles? No, you will not,—remember you are answerable for my life." At these words, they surrounded me; then, for the first time, I struggled,—I called for help;—this was the moment they waited for; they wanted some repugnance on my part. The signal was instantly given to a lay-brother, who waited in the passage,—the bell was rung,—that terrible bell, that requires every member of a convent to plunge into his cell, as something extraordinary is going on in the house. At the first toll I lost all hope. I felt as if not a living being was in existence but those who surrounded me, and who appeared, in the livid light of one taper burning faintly in that dismal passage, like spectres hurrying a condemned soul to his doom. They hurried me down the steps to this door, which was considerably below the level of the passage. It was a long time before they could open it; many keys were tried; perhaps they might have felt some agitation at the thoughts of the violence they were going to commit. But this delay increased my terrors beyond expression; I imagined this terrible vault had never been inclosed before; that I was to be the first victim inhumed within it; and that their determination was, I should never quit it alive. As these thoughts occurred, in unutterable agony I cried aloud, though I felt I was beyond all human hearing; but my cries were drowned in the jarring of the heavy door, as it yielded to the efforts of the monks, who, uniting their strength, pushed it with extended arms, grating all the way against the floor of stone. The monks hurried me in, while the Superior stood at the entrance with the light, appearing to shudder at the view it disclosed. I had time to view all the furniture of what I thought my last abode. It was of stone; the roof formed an arch; a block of stone supported a crucifix, and a death's head, with a loaf and a pitcher of water. There was a mat on the floor, to lie on; another rolled up at the end of it formed a pillow. They flung me on it, and prepared to depart. I no

longer struggled, for I knew escape was in vain, but I supplicated them at least to leave me a light; and I petitioned for this with as much earnestness as I could have done for my liberty. Thus it is that misery always breaks down the mind into petty details. We have not strength to comprehend the whole of our calamity. We feel not the mountain which is heaped on us, but the nearest grains press on and grind us. I said, “In Christian mercy leave me a light, if it be but to defend myself against the reptiles that must swarm here.” And already I saw this was true, for some of extraordinary size, disturbed by the phænomenon of the light, came crawling down the walls. All this time the monks were straining their strength to close the heavy door; they did not utter a word. “I adjure you to leave me light, *if it is but to gaze on that skull*; fear not the exercise of sight can be any indulgence in this place; but still let me have a light; think that when I wish to pray, I must *feel my way* to that crucifix.” As I spoke, the door was with difficulty closed and locked, and I heard their departing steps. You will hardly believe, Sir, that I slept profoundly; yet I did; but I would rather never sleep again, than awake so horribly. I awoke in *the darkness of day*. I was to behold the light no more; nor to watch those divisions of time, which, by measuring our portions of suffering, appear to diminish them. When the clock strikes, we know an hour of wretchedness is past, never to return. My only time-keeper was the approach of the monk, who every day renewed my allowance of bread and water; and had he been the object I loved most on earth, the sound of his steps could not have made more delicious music. These æras by which we compute the hours of darkness and inanity are inconceivable to any but those who are situated as I was. You have heard, Sir, no doubt, that the eye which, on its being first immersed into darkness, appears deprived of the power of vision for ever, acquires, imperceptibly, a power of accommodating itself to its darkened sphere, and even of distinguishing objects by a kind of conventional light. The mind certainly possesses the same power, otherwise, how could I have had the power to reflect, to summon some resolution, and even to indulge some hope, in this frightful abode? Thus it is, when all the world seems sworn to hostility against us, we turn friends to ourselves with all the obstinacy of despair;—and *while all the world is flattering and deifying us, we are the perpetual victims of lassitude and self-reproach*.

“The prisoner whose hours are visited by a dream of emancipation, is less a prey to ennui than the sovereign on a throne, begirt with adulation, voluptuousness, and satiety. I reflected that all my papers were safe,—that my cause was prosecuting with vigour,—that, owing to my brother’s zeal, I had the ablest advocate in Madrid,—that they dared not murder me, and were answerable with the whole credit of the house for my re-appearance whenever the courts demanded it,—that the very rank of my family was a powerful protection, though none of them but my generous fiery Juan was probably favourable to me;—that if I was permitted to receive and read the advocate’s first memoir, even through the hands of the Superior, it was absurd to imagine that I could be denied intercourse with him in a more advanced and important stage of the business. These were the suggestions of my hope, and they were plausible enough. What were the suggestions of my despair, I shudder even at this moment to reflect on. The most terrible of all was, that I might be murdered *conventually* before it was possible that my liberation could be accomplished.

“Such, Sir, were my reflections; you may ask, what were my occupations? My situation supplied me with those, and, revolting as they were, they were still occupations. I had my devotions to perform; religion was my only resource in solitude and darkness, and while I prayed only for liberty and peace, I felt I was not at least insulting God by the prayers of hypocrisy, which I would have been compelled to utter in the choir. There I was obliged to join in a sacrifice that was odious to me, and offensive to him;—in my dungeon I offered up the sacrifice of my heart, and felt it was not unacceptable. During the glimpse of light afforded me by the approach of the monk who brought me bread and water, I arranged the crucifix so as that I could feel it when I awoke. This was very often, and not knowing whether it was day or night, I uttered my prayers at random. I knew not whether it was matins or vespers; there was neither morning or evening for me, but it was like a talisman to me to touch the crucifix, and I said as I felt for it, “My God is with me in the darkness of my dungeon; he is a God who has suffered, and can pity me. My extremest point of wretchedness can be nothing to what this symbol of divine humiliation for the sins of man, has undergone for mine!”—and I kissed the sacred image (with lips wandering from the darkness) with more emotion than I had ever felt when I saw it illuminated by the blaze of tapers, amid the elevation of the Host, the tossing of the perfumed censers, the gorgeous habits of the priests, and the breathless prostration of the faithful. I had other occupations less dignified, but quite as necessary. The reptiles, who filled the hole into which I had been thrust, gave me opportunity for a kind of constant, miserable, ridiculous hostility. My mat had been placed in the very seat of warfare;—I shifted it,—still they pursued me;—I placed it against the wall,—the cold crawling of their bloated limbs often awoke me from my sleep, and still oftener made me shudder when awake. I struck at them;—I tried to terrify them by my voice, to arm myself against them by the help of my mat; but above all, my anxiety was ceaseless to defend my bread from their loathsome incursions, and my pitcher of water from their dropping into it. I adopted a thousand precautions, trivial as they were inefficacious, but still there was occupation. I do assure you, Sir, I *had more to do in my dungeon than in my cell*. To be fighting with reptiles in the dark appears the most horrible struggle that can be assigned to man; but what is it compared to his combat with those reptiles which his own heart hourly engenders in a cell, and of which, if his heart be the mother, solitude is the father. I had another employment,—I cannot call it occupation. I had calculated with myself, that sixty minutes made an hour, and sixty seconds a minute. I began to think I could keep time as accurately as any clock in a convent, and measure the

hours of my confinement or—my release. So I sat and counted sixty; a doubt always occurred to me, that I *was counting them faster than the clock*. Then I wished to be the clock, that I might have no feeling, no *motive for hurrying on the approach of time*. Then I reckoned slower. Sleep sometimes overtook me in this exercise, (perhaps I adopted it from that hope); but when I awoke, I applied to it again instantly. Thus I oscillated, reckoned, and measured time on my mat, while time withheld its delicious diary of rising and setting suns,—of the dews of dawn and of twilight,—of the glow of morning and the shades of the evening. When my reckoning was broken by my sleep, (and I knew not whether I slept by day or by night), I tried to eke it out by my incessant repetition of minutes and seconds, and I succeeded; for I always consoled myself, that whatever hour it was, sixty minutes must go to an hour. Had I led this life much longer, I might have been converted into the idiot, who, as I have read, from the habit of watching a clock, imitated its mechanism so well, that when it was down, he sounded the hour as faithfully as ear could desire. Such was my life. On the fourth day, (as I reckoned by the visits of the monk), he placed my bread and water on the block of stone as usual, but hesitated for some time before he departed. In fact, he felt a repugnance at delivering an intimation of hope; it was not consonant either to his profession, or the office which, in the wantonness of monastic malignity, he had accepted as penance. You shudder at this, Sir, but it is nevertheless true; this man thought he was doing service to God, by witnessing the misery of a being incarcerated amid famine, darkness, and reptiles. He recoiled when his penance terminated. Alas! how false is that religion which makes our aggravating the sufferings of others our mediator with that God who willeth all men to be saved. But this is a question to be solved in convents. This man hesitated long, struggled with the ferocity of his nature, and at last departed and bolted the door, that he might indulge it a few moments longer. Perhaps in those moments he prayed to God, and ejaculated a petition, that this protraction of *my* sufferings might be accepted as a melioration of his own. I dare say he was very sincere; but if men were taught to look to the *one great Sacrifice*, would they be so ready to believe that their own, or those of others, could ever be accepted as a commutation for it? You are surprised, Sir, at these sentiments from a Catholic; but another part of my story will disclose the cause of my uttering them. At length this man could delay his commission no longer. He was obliged to tell me that the Superior was moved by my sufferings, that God had touched his heart in my behalf, and that he permitted me to quit my dungeon. The words were scarce out of his mouth, before I rose, and rushed out with a shout that electrified him. Emotion is very unusual in convents, and the expression of joy a phenomenon. I had gained the passage before he recovered his surprise; and the convent walls, which I had considered as those of a prison, now appeared the area of emancipation. Had its doors been thrown open to me that moment, I don't think I could have felt a more exquisite sensibility of liberty. I fell on my knees in the passage to thank God. I thanked him for the light, for the air, for the restored power of respiration. As I was uttering these effusions, (certainly not the least sincere that were ever poured forth within those walls), suddenly I became sick,—my head swam round,—I had feasted on the light to excess. I fell to the ground, and remember nothing for many hours afterwards. When I recovered my senses, I was in my cell, which appeared just as I had left it; it was day-light, however; and I am persuaded that circumstance contributed more to my restoration, than the food and cordials with which I was now liberally supplied. All that day I heard nothing, and had time to meditate on the motives of the indulgence with which I had been treated. I conceived that an order might have been issued to the Superior to produce me, or, at all events, that he could not prevent those interviews between the advocate and me, which the former might insist on as necessary while my cause was carrying on. Towards evening some monks entered my cell; they talked of indifferent matters,—affected to consider my absence as the result of indisposition, and I did not undeceive them. They mentioned, as if incidentally, that my father and mother, overwhelmed with grief at the scandal I had brought on religion by appealing against my vows, had quitted Madrid. At this intelligence I felt much more emotion than I showed. I asked them how long I had been *ill*? They answered, Four days. This confirmed my suspicions with regard to the cause of my liberation, for the advocate's letter had mentioned, that on the fifth day he would require an interview with me on the subject of my appeal. They then departed; but I was soon to receive another visitor. After vespers, (from which I was excused), the Superior entered my cell alone. He approached my bed. I attempted to rise, but he desired me to compose myself, and sat down near me with a calm but penetrating look. He said, "You have now found we have it in our power to punish."—"I never doubted it."—"Before you tempt that power to an extremity, which, I warn you, you will not be able to endure, I come to demand of you to resign this desperate appeal against your vows, which can terminate only in dishonouring God, and disappointing yourself."—"My father, without entering into details, which the steps taken on both sides have rendered wholly unnecessary, I can only reply, that I will support my appeal with every power Providence puts within my reach, and that my punishment has only confirmed my resolution."—"And this is your final determination?"—"It is, and I implore you to spare me all further importunity,—it will be useless." He was silent for a long time; at length he said, "And you will insist on your right to an interview with the advocate to-morrow?"—"I shall claim it."—"It will not be necessary, however, to mention to him your late punishment." These words struck me. I comprehended the meaning which he wished to conceal in them, and I answered, "It may not be necessary, but it will probably be expedient."—"How?—would you violate the secrets of the house, while you are yet within its walls?"—"Pardon me, my father, for saying, that you must be conscious of having exceeded your duty, to be so anxious for its concealment. It is not, then, the secrets of your discipline, but the violation of it, I shall have to disclose."—He was silent, and I added, "If you have abused your power, though I have been the sufferer, it is you who are guilty."—The Superior rose, and quitted my cell in silence.

The next morning I attended matins. Service went on as usual, but at its conclusion, when the community were about to rise from their knees, the Superior, striking the desk violently with his hand, commanded them all to remain in the same posture. He added, in a thundering voice, “The intercession of this whole community with God is supplicated for a monk who, abandoned by the Spirit of God, is about to commit an act dishonourable to Him, disgraceful to the church, and infallibly destructive of his own salvation.” At these terrible sounds the monks, all shuddering, sunk on their knees again. I was kneeling among them, when the Superior, calling me by my name, said aloud, “Rise, wretch! rise, and pollute not our incense with your unhallowed breath!” I rose, trembling and confounded, and shrunk to my cell, where I remained till I was summoned by a monk to the parlour, to meet the advocate, who waited for me there. This interview was rendered quite ineffective by the presence of the monk, who was desired by the Superior to witness our conference, and whom the advocate could not order away. When we entered into details, he interrupted us with declarations, that his duty would not permit such a violation of the rules of the parlour. When I asserted a fact, he contradicted it, gave me the lie repeatedly, and finally disturbed the purpose of our conference so completely, that in mere self-defence, I spoke of the subject of my punishment, which he could not deny, and to which my livid looks bore a testimony invincible. The moment I spoke on this subject the monk became silent, (he was treasuring every word for the Superior), and the advocate redoubled his attention. He took minutes of every thing I said, and appeared to lay more stress on the matter than I had imagined, or indeed wished for. When the conference was over, I retired again to my cell. The advocate’s visits were repeated for some days, till he had obtained the information requisite for carrying on my suit; and during this time, my treatment in the convent was such as to give me no cause of complaint; and this doubtless was the motive of their forbearance. But the moment those visits ceased, the warfare of persecution commenced. They considered me as one with whom no measures were to be kept, and they treated me accordingly. I am convinced it was their intention that I should not survive the event of my appeal; at least it is certain they left nothing unaccomplished that could verify that intention. This began, as I mentioned, on the day of the advocate’s last visit. The bell rung for refection;—I was going to take my place as usual, when the Superior said, “Hold,—place a mat for him in the midst of the hall.” This was done, and I was required to sit down on it, and supplied with bread and water. I eat a little, which I moistened with my tears. I foresaw what I had to undergo, and did not attempt to expostulate. When grace was about to be said, I was desired to stand without the door, lest my presence should frustrate the benediction they implored.

“I retired, and when the bell rung for vespers, I presented myself among the rest at the door of the church. I was surprised to find it shut, and they all assembled. When the bell ceased, the Superior appeared, the door was opened, and the monks hurried in. I was following, when the Superior repelled me, exclaiming, “*You, wretch, you!* Remain where you are.” I obeyed; and the whole community entered the church, while I remained at the door. This species of excommunication produced its full effect of terror on me. As the monks slowly came out, and cast on me looks of silent horror, I thought myself the most abject being on earth; I could have hid myself under the pavement till the event of my appeal was over.

“The next morning, when I went to matins, the same scene was renewed, with the horrible addition of audible reproaches, and almost imprecations, denounced against me, as they entered and returned. I knelt at the door. I did not answer a word. I returned not “railing for railing,” and lifted up my heart with a trembling hope, that this offering might be as acceptable to God as the sonorous chaunt of the choir, which I still felt it was miserable to be excluded from joining.

“In the course of the day, every sluice of monastic malignity and vengeance was thrown open. I appeared at the door of the refectory. I did not dare to enter. Alas! Sir, how are monks employed in the hour of refection? It is an hour, when, while they swallow their meal, they banquet on the little scandal of the convent. They ask, “Who was late at prayers? Who is to undergo penance?” This serves them for conversation; and the details of their miserable life supply no other subject for that mixture of exhaustless malignity and curiosity, which are the inseparable twins of monastic birth. As I stood at the door of the refectory, a lay-brother, to whom the Superior nodded, bid me retire. I went to my cell, waited for several hours, and just when the bell for vespers had rung, was supplied with food, which famine itself would have shrunk from. I tried to swallow it, but could not, and hurried away, as the bell tolled, to attend vespers; for I wished to have no cause of complaint against my neglect of duties. I hastened down. The door was again shut; service began; and again I was compelled to retire without partaking of it. The next day I was excluded from matins; the same degrading scene was acted over when I appeared at the door of the refectory. Food was sent to my cell, that a dog would have rejected; and the door was shut when I attempted to enter the church. A thousand circumstances of persecution, too contemptible, too minute, either for recollection or repetition, but infinitely harassing to the sufferer, were heaped on me every day. Imagine, Sir, a community of upwards of sixty persons, all sworn to each other to make the life of one individual insupportable; joined in a common resolution to insult, harass, torment, and persecute him; and then imagine how that individual can support such a life. I began to dread the preservation of my reason—of my existence, which, miserable as it was, still fed on the hope of my appeal. I will sketch one day of my life for you. *Ex uno disce omnes.* I went down to matins, and knelt at the door; I did not dare to enter. When I retired to my cell, I found the crucifix taken

away. I was about to go to the Superior's apartment to complain of this outrage; in the passage I happened to meet a monk and two boarders. They all shrunk close to the walls; they drew in their garments, as if trembling to encounter the pollution of my touch. I said mildly, "There is no danger; the passage is wide enough." The monk replied, "Apage Satana. My children," addressing the boarders, "repeat with me, apage Satana; avoid the approach of that demon, who insults the habit he desecrates." They did so; and to render the exorcism complete, they spit in my face as they passed. I wiped it off, and thought how little of the spirit of Jesus was to be found in the house of his nominal brethren. I proceeded to the apartment of the Superior, and knocked timidly at the door. I heard the words, "Enter in peace;" and I prayed that it might be in peace. As I opened the door, I saw several monks assembled with the Superior. The latter uttered an exclamation of horror when he saw me, and threw his robe over his eyes; the monks understood the signal; the door was closed, and I was excluded. That day I waited several hours in my cell before any food was brought me. There is no state of feeling that exempts us from the wants of nature. I had no food for many days requisite for the claims of adolescence, which were then rapidly manifesting themselves in my tall, but attenuated frame. I descended to the kitchen to ask for my share of food. The cook crossed himself as I appeared at the door; for even at the door of the kitchen I faultered at the threshold. He had been taught to consider me as a demon incarnate, and shuddered, while he asked, "What do you want?"—"Food," I replied; "food;—that is all."—"Well, you shall have it—but come no further—there is food." And he flung me the offal of the kitchen on the earth; and I was so hungry, that I devoured it eagerly. The next day I was not so lucky; the cook had learned the secret of the convent, (that of tormenting those whom they no longer have hopes of commanding), and mixed the fragments he threw to me, with ashes, hair, and dust. I could hardly pick out a morsel that, famished as I was, was eatable. They allowed me no water in my cell; I was not permitted to partake of it at refection; and, in the agonies of thirst, aggravated by my constant solicitude of mind, I was compelled to kneel at the brink of the well, (as I had no vessel to drink out of), and take up the water in my hand, or lap it like a dog. If I descended to the garden for a moment, they took the advantage of my absence to enter my cell, and remove or destroy every article of furniture. I have told you that they took away my crucifix. I had still continued to kneel and repeat my prayers before the table on which it stood. That was taken away,—table, chair, missal, rosary, every thing, disappeared gradually; and my cell presented nothing but four bare walls, with a bed, on which they had rendered it impossible for me to taste repose. Perhaps they dreaded I might, however, and they hit on an expedient, which, if it had succeeded, might have deprived me of reason as well as repose.

"I awoke one night, and saw my cell in flames; I started up in horror, but shrunk back on perceiving myself surrounded by demons, who, clothed in fire, were breathing forth clouds of it around me. Desperate with horror, I rushed against the wall, and found what I touched was cold. My recollection returned, and I comprehended, that these were hideous figures scrawled in phosphorus, to terrify me. I then returned to my bed, and as the day-light approached, observed these figures gradually decline. In the morning, I took a desperate resolution of forcing my way to the Superior, and speaking to him. I felt my reason might be destroyed amid the horrors they were surrounding me with.

"It was noon before I could work myself up to execute this resolution. I knocked at his cell, and when the door was opened, he exhibited the same horror as at my former intrusion, but I was not to be repelled. "My father, I require you to hear me, nor will I quit this spot till you do so."—"Speak."—"They famish me,—I am not allowed food to support nature."—"Do you deserve it?"—"Whether I do or not, neither the laws of God or man have yet condemned me to die of hunger; and if *you* do, you commit murder."—"Have you any thing else to complain of?"—"Every thing; I am not allowed to enter the church,—I am forbid to pray,—they have stripped my cell of crucifix, rosary, and the vessel for holy water. It is impossible for me to perform my devotions even alone."—"*Your* devotions!"—"My father, though I am not a monk, may I not still be a Christian?"—"In renouncing your vows, you have abjured your claim to either character."—"But I am still a human being, and as such—But I appeal not to your humanity, I call on your authority for protection. Last night, my cell was covered with representations of fiends. I awoke in the midst of flames and spectres."—"So you will at the last day!"—"My punishment will then be enough, it need not commence already."—"These are the phantoms of your conscience."—"My father, if you will deign to examine my cell, you will find the traces of phosphorus on the walls."—"*I* examine your cell? *I* enter it?"—"Am I then to expect no redress? Interpose your authority for the sake of the house over which you preside. Remember that, when my appeal becomes public, all these circumstances will become so too, and you are to judge what degree of credit they will attach to the community." "Retire!" I did so, and found my application attended to, at least with regard to food, but my cell remained in the same dismantled state, and I continued under the same desolating interdiction from all communion, religious or social. I assure you, with truth, that so horrible was this amputation from life to me, that I have walked hours in the cloister and the passages, to place myself in the way of the monks, who, I knew, as they passed, would bestow on me some malediction or reproachful epithet. Even this was better than the withering silence which surrounded me. I began almost to receive it as a customary salutation, and always returned it with a benediction. In a fortnight my appeal was to be decided on; this was a circumstance I was kept in ignorance of, but the Superior had received a notification of it, and this precipitated his resolution to deprive me of the benefit of its eventual success, by one of the most horrible schemes that ever entered the human (I retract the expression) the monastic heart. I received an indistinct intimation of it the very

night after my application to the Superior; but had I been apprised, from the first, of the whole extent and bearings of their purpose, what resources could I have employed against it?

“That evening I had gone into the garden; my heart felt unusually oppressed. Its thick troubled beatings, seemed like the vibrations of a time-piece, as it measures our approach to some hour of sorrow.

“It was twilight; the garden was empty; and kneeling on the ground, in the open air, (the only oratory they had left me), I attempted to pray. The attempt was in vain;—I ceased to articulate sounds that had no meaning—and, overcome by a heaviness of mind and body inexpressible, I fell on the ground, and remained extended on my face, torpid, but not senseless. Two figures passed, without perceiving me; they were in earnest conversation. One of them said, “More vigorous measures must be adopted. You are to blame to delay them so long. You will be answerable for the disgrace of the whole community, if you persist in this foolish lenity.”—“But his resolution remains unbroken,” said the Superior, (for it was he).—“It will not be proof against the measure I have proposed.”—“He is in your hands then; but remember I will not be accountable for——” They were by this time out of hearing. I was less terrified than you will believe, by what I had heard. Those who have suffered much, are always ready to exclaim, with the unfortunate Agag, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” They know not, that that is the very moment when the sword is unsheathed to hew them in pieces. That night, I had not been long asleep, when I was awoke by a singular noise in my cell: I started up, and listened. I thought I heard some one hurry away barefooted. I knew I had no lock to my door, and could not prevent the intrusion of any one into my cell who pleased to visit it; but still I believed the discipline of the convent too strict to allow of this. I composed myself again, but was hardly asleep, when I was again awoke by something that touched me. I started up again; a soft voice near me said in whispers, “Compose yourself; I am your friend.”—“My friend? Have I one?—but why visit me at this hour?”—“It is the only hour at which I am permitted to visit you.”—“But who are you, then?”—“One whom these walls can never exclude. One to whom, if you devote yourself, you may expect services beyond the power of man.”—There was something frightful in these words. I cried out, “Is it the enemy of souls that is tempting me?” As I uttered these words, a monk rushed in from the passage, (where he had been evidently waiting, for his dress was on). He exclaimed, “What is the matter? You have alarmed me by your cries,—you pronounced the name of the infernal spirit,—what have you seen? what is it you fear?” I recovered myself, and said, “I have seen or heard nothing extraordinary. I have had frightful dreams, that is all. Ah! Brother St Joseph, no wonder, after passing such days, my nights should be disturbed.”

“The monk retired, and the next day passed as usual; but at night the same whispering sounds awoke me again. The preceding night these sounds had only startled me; they now alarmed me. In the darkness of night, and the solitude of my cell, this repeated visitation overcame my spirits. I began almost to admit the idea that I was exposed to the assaults of the enemy of man. I repeated a prayer, but the whisper, which seemed close to my ear, still continued. It said, “Listen,—listen to me, and be happy. Renounce your vows, place yourself under my protection, and you shall have no cause to complain of the exchange. Rise from your bed, trample on the crucifix which you will find at the foot of it, spit on the picture of the Virgin that lies beside it, and——” At these words I could not suppress a cry of horror. The voice ceased in a moment, and the same monk, who occupied the cell next to mine, rushed in with the same exclamations as on the preceding night; and, as he entered my cell, the light in his hand shewed a crucifix, and a picture of the blessed Virgin, *placed* at the foot of my bed. I had sprung up when the monk entered my cell; I saw them, and recognized them to be the very crucifix and picture of the Virgin which had been taken from my cell. All the hypocritical outcries of the monk, at the disturbance I had again caused him, could not efface the impression which this slight circumstance made on me. I believed, and not without reason, they had been left there by the hands of some human tempter. I started, awake to this horrible imposition, and required the monk to leave my cell. He demanded, with a frightful paleness in his looks, why I had again disturbed him? said it was impossible to obtain repose while such noises were occurring in my cell; and, finally, stumbling over the crucifix and picture, demanded how they came there. I answered, “You know best.”—“How, then, do you accuse me of a compact with the infernal demon? By what means could these have been brought to your cell?”—“By the very hands that removed them,” I answered; and these words appeared to produce an effect on him for a moment; but he retired, declaring, that if the nightly disturbance in my cell continued, he must represent it to the Superior. I answered, the disturbance did not proceed from me,—but I trembled for the following night.

“I had reason to tremble. That night, before I lay down, I repeated prayer after prayer, the terrors of my excommunication pressing heavy on my soul. I also repeated the prayers against possession or temptation by the evil spirit. These I was compelled to utter from memory, for I have told you that they had not left a book in my cell. In repeating these prayers, which were very long, and somewhat verbose, I at last fell asleep. That sleep was not to continue long. I was again addressed by the voice that whispered close to my bed. The moment I heard it, I rose without fear. I crept around my cell with my hands extended, and my feet bare. I could feel nothing but the empty walls,—not a single object, tangible or visible, could I encounter. I lay down again, and had hardly begun the prayer with which I tried to fortify myself, when the same sounds were repeated close to my ear, without the possibility either of my

discovering from whence they proceeded, or preventing their reaching me. Thus I was completely deprived of sleep; and if I dozed for a moment, the same terrible sounds were re-echoed in my dreams. I became feverish from want of rest. The night was passed in watching for these sounds, or listening to them, and the day in wild conjectures or fearful anticipations. I felt a mixture of terror and impatience inconceivable at the approach of night. I had a consciousness of imposture the whole time, but this gave me no consolation, for there is a point to which human malice and mischief may be carried, that would baffle those of a demon. Every night the persecution was renewed, and every night it became more terrible. At times the voice would suggest to me the most unutterable impurities,—at another, blasphemies that would make a demon shudder. Then it would applaud me in a tone of derision, and assure me of the final success of my appeal, then change to the most appalling menaces. The wretched sleep I obtained, during the intervals of this visitation, was any thing but refreshing. I would awake in a cold perspiration, catching at the bed-furniture, and repeating in an inarticulate voice, the last sounds that had rung in my closing ears. I would start up and see the bed surrounded by monks, who assured me they had been disturbed by my cries,—that they had hurried in terror to my cell. Then they would cast looks of fear and consternation on each other and on me; say, “Something extraordinary is the matter,—something presses on your mind that you will not disburden it of.” They implored me, in the most awful names, and for the interests of my salvation, to disclose the cause of these extraordinary visitations. At these words, however agitated before, I always became calm. I said, “Nothing is the matter,—why do you intrude into my cell?” They shook their heads, and affected to retire slowly and reluctantly, as if from pity of my dreadful situation, while I repeated, “Ah, Brother Justin, ah Brother Clement, I see you, I understand you,—remember there is a God in heaven.”

“One night I lay for a considerable time without hearing any sound. I fell asleep, but was soon awoke by an extraordinary light. I sat up in my bed, and beheld displayed before me the mother of God, in all the glorious and irradiated incarnation of beatitude. She hovered, rather than stood, in an atmosphere of light at the foot of my bed, and held a crucifix in her hand, while she appeared to invite me, with a benign action, to kiss the five mysterious wounds(1). For a moment I almost believed in the actual presence of this glorious visitor, but just then *the voice* was heard louder than ever, “Spurn them,—spit on them,—you are mine, and I claim this homage from my vassal.” At these words the figure disappeared instantly, and the voice was renewing its whispers, but they were repeated to an insensible ear, for I fell into a swoon. I could easily distinguish between this state and sleep, by the deadly sickness, the cold sweats, and the horrid sense of *evanition*, that preceded it, and by the gasping, sobbing, choaking efforts that attended my recovery. In the mean time the whole community carried on and even aggravated the terrible delusion, which, while it was my torment to detect, it was my greater to be the victim of. When art assumes the omnipotence of reality, when we feel we suffer as much from an illusion as from truth, our sufferings lose all dignity and all consolation. We turn demons against ourselves, and laugh at what we are writhing under. All day long I was exposed to the stare of horror, the shudder of suspicion, and, worst of all, the hastily-averted glance of hypocritical commiseration, that dropt its pitying ray on me for a moment, and was then instantly raised to heaven, as if to implore forgiveness for the involuntary crime of compassionating one whom God had renounced. When I encountered any of them in the garden, they would strike into another walk, and cross themselves in my sight. If I met them in the passages of the convent, they drew their garments close, turned their faces to the wall, and told their beads as I went by. If I ventured to dip my hands in the holy water that stood at the door of the church, it was thrown out before my face. Certain extraordinary precautions were adopted by the whole community against the power of the evil one. Forms of exorcism were distributed, and additional prayers were used in the service of matins and vespers. A report was industriously diffused, that Satan was permitted to visit a favoured and devoted servant of his in the convent, and that all the brethren might expect the redoubled malice of his assaults. The effect of this on the young boarders was indescribable. They flew with the speed of lightning from me, whenever they saw me. If accident forced us to be near each other for a moment, they were armed with holy water, which they flung at me in pailfuls; and when that failed, what cries,—what convulsions of terror! They knelt,—they screamed,—they shut their eyes,—they cried, “Satan have mercy on me,—do not fix your infernal talons on me,—take your victim,” and they mentioned my name. The terror that I inspired I at last began to feel. I began to believe myself—I know not what, whatever they thought me. This is a dreadful state of mind, but one impossible to avoid. In some circumstances, where the whole world is against us, we begin to take its part against ourselves, to avoid the withering sensation of being alone on our own side. Such was my appearance, too, my flushed and haggard look, my torn dress, my unequal gait, my constant internal muttering, and my complete isolation from the habits of the house, that it was no wonder I should justify, by my exterior, all of horrible and awful that might be supposed passing in my mind. Such an impression I must have made on the minds of the younger members. They had been taught to hate me, but their hatred was now combined with fear, and such a union is the most terrible amid all the complications of human passion. Desolate as my cell was, I retired to it early, as I was excluded from the exercises of the community. The bell for vespers would ring, I would hear the steps of those who were hastening to join in the service of God, and tedious as that service had once appeared to me, I would now have given worlds to be permitted to join in it, as a defence against that *horrible midnight mass of Satan*(2), that I was awaiting to be summoned to. I knelt however in my cell, and repeated what prayers I could recollect, while every toll of the bell struck on my heart, and the chaunt of the choir from below sounded like a repulsive echo to an answer which my fears already anticipated from heaven.

“One evening that I still continued to pray, and audibly, as the monks passed my cell they said, “Do *you* presume to pray? Die, desperate wretch,—die and be damned. Precipitate yourself into the infernal gulph at once, no longer desecrate these walls by your presence.” At these words I only redoubled my prayers; but this gave greater offence, for churchmen cannot bear to hear prayers uttered in a form different from their own. The cry of a solitary individual to God, sounds like profanation in their ears. They ask, Why do they not employ our form? How dare they hope to be heard? Alas! is it forms then that God regards? or is it not rather the prayer of the heart which alone reaches him, and prospers in its petition? As they called out, passing my cell, “Perish, impious wretch, perish,—God will not hear you,” I answered them on my knees with blessings,—which of us had the spirit of prayer? That night was one of trial I could no longer support. My frame was exhausted, my mind excited, and, owing to our frail nature, this battle of the senses and soul is never long carried on without the worst side remaining conqueror. I was no sooner laid down than the voice began to whisper. I began to pray, but my head swam round, my eyes flashed fire,—fire almost tangible, my cell appeared in flames. Recollect my frame worn out with famine, my mind worn out with persecution. I struggled with what I was conscious was delirium,—but this consciousness aggravated its horror. It is better to be mad at once, than to believe that all the world is sworn to think and *make* you be so, in spite of your own consciousness of your sanity. The whispers this night were so horrible, so full of ineffable abominations, of—I cannot think of them,—that they *maddened my very ear*. My senses seemed deranged along with my intellect. I will give you an instance, it is but a slight one, of the horrors which——” Here the Spaniard whispered Melmoth(3). The hearer shuddered, and the Spaniard went on in an agitated tone.

“I could bear it no longer. I sprung from my bed, I ran through the gallery like a maniac, knocking at the doors of the cells, and exclaiming, “Brother such a one, pray for me,—pray for me, I beseech you.” I roused the whole convent. Then I flew down to the church; it was open, and I rushed in. I ran up the aisle, I precipitated myself before the altar, I embraced the images, I clung to the crucifix with loud and reiterated supplications. The monks, awakened by my outcries, or perhaps on the watch for them, descended in a body to the church, but, perceiving I was there, they would not enter,—they remained at the doors, with lights in their hands, gazing on me. It was a singular contrast between me, hurrying round the church almost in the dark, (for there were but a few lamps burning dimly), and the groupe at the door, whose expression of horror was strongly marked by the light, which appeared to have deserted me to concentrate itself among them. The most impartial person on earth might have supposed me deranged, or possessed, or both, from the state in which they saw me. Heaven knows, too, what construction might have been put on my wild actions, which the surrounding darkness exaggerated and distorted, or on the prayers which I uttered, as I included in them the horrors of the temptation against which I implored protection. Exhausted at length, I fell to the ground, and remained there, without the power of moving, but able to hear and observe every thing that passed. I heard them debate whether they should leave me there or not, till the Superior commanded them to remove that abomination from the sanctuary; and such was the terror of me into which they had *acted* themselves, that he had to repeat his orders before he could procure obedience to them. They approached me at last, with the same caution that they would an infected corse, and dragged me out by the habit, leaving me on the paved floor before the door of the church. They then retired, and in this state I actually fell asleep, and continued so till I was awoke by the bell for matins. I recollected myself, and attempted to rise; but my having slept on a damp floor, when in a fever from terror and excitement, had so cramped my limbs, that I could not accomplish this without the most exquisite pain. As the community passed in to matins, I could not suppress a few cries of pain. They must have seen what was the matter, but not one of them offered me assistance, nor did I dare to implore it. By slow and painful efforts, I at last reached my cell; but, shuddering at the sight of the bed, I threw myself on the floor for repose.

“I was aware that some notice must be taken of a circumstance so extraordinary—that such a subversion of the order and tranquillity of a convent, would force an inquiry, even if the object was less remarkable. But I had a sad foreboding, (for suffering makes us full of presages), that this inquiry, however conducted, would terminate unfavourably to me. I was the Jonah of the vessel—let the storm blow from what point it would, I felt the lot was to fall on me. About noon, I was summoned to the apartment of the Superior. I went, but not as at former times, with a mixture of supplication and remonstrance on my lips,—with hope and fear in my heart,—in a fever of excitement or of terror,—I went sullen, squalid, listless, reckless; my physical strength, borne down by fatigue and want of sleep; my mental, by persecution, incessant and insupportable. I went no longer shrinking from, and deprecating *their worst*, but defying, almost desiring it, in the terrible and indefinite curiosity of despair. The apartment was full of monks; the Superior stood among them, while they formed a semicircle at a respectful distance from him. I must have presented a miserable contrast to these men arrayed against me in their pride of power,—their long and not ungraceful habits, giving their figures an air of solemnity, perhaps more imposing than splendour—while I stood opposed to them, ragged, meagre, livid, and obdurate, the very personification of an evil spirit summoned before the angels of judgment. The Superior addressed me in a long discourse, in which he but slightly touched on the scandal given by the attempt to repeal my vows. He also suppressed any allusion to the circumstance which was known to every one in the convent but myself, that my appeal would be decided on in a few days. But he adverted in terms that (in spite of my consciousness that they were hollow) made me

shudder, to the horror and consternation diffused through the convent by my late tremendous visitation, as he called it. "Satan hath desired to have you," he said, "because you have put yourself within his power, by your impious reclamation of your vows. You are the Judas among the brethren; a branded Cain amid a primitive family; a scape-goat that struggles to burst from the hands of the congregation into the wilderness. The horrors that your presence is hourly heaping on us here, are not only intolerable to the discipline of a religious house, but to the peace of civilized society. There is not a monk who can sleep within three cells of you. You disturb them by the most horrible cries—you exclaim that the infernal spirit is perpetually beside your bed—that he is whispering in your ears. You fly from cell to cell, supplicating the prayers of the brethren. Your shrieks disturb the holy sleep of the community—that sleep which they snatch only in the intervals of devotion. All order is broken, all discipline subverted, while you remain among us. The imaginations of the younger members are at once polluted and inflamed, by the idea of the infernal and impure orgies which the demon celebrates in your cell; and of which we know not whether your cries, (which all can hear), announce triumph in, or remorse for. You rush at midnight into the church, deface the images, revile the crucifix, spurn at the altar; and when the whole community is forced, by this unparalleled atrocity of blasphemy, to drag you from the spot you are desecrating, you disturb, by your cries, those who are passing to the service of God. In a word, your howls, your distortions, your demoniac language, habits, and gestures, have but too well justified the suspicion entertained when you first entered the convent. You were abominable from your very birth,—you were the offspring of sin—you are conscious of it. Amid the livid paleness, that horrible unnatural white that discolours your very lips, I see a tinge like crimson burning on your cheek at the mention of it. The demon who was presiding at your natal hour—the demon of impurity and anti-monasticism—pursues you in the very walls of a convent. The Almighty, in my voice, bids you begone;—depart, and trouble us no more.—Stop," he added, as he saw I was obeying his directions literally, "hold, the interests of religion, and of the community, have required that I should take particular notice of the extraordinary circumstances that have haunted your unhallowed presence within these walls. In a short time you may expect a visit from the Bishop—prepare yourself for it as you may." I considered these as the final words addressed to me, and was about to retire, when I was recalled. I was desired to utter some words, which every one was eager to put into my mouth, of expostulation, of remonstrance, of supplication. I resisted them all as steadily as if I had known (which I did not) that the Bishop had himself instituted the examination into the deranged state of the convent; and that instead of the Superior inviting the Bishop to examine into the cause of the disturbance in his convent, (the very last step he would have taken), the Bishop, (a man whose character will shortly be developed), had been apprized of the *scandal* of the convent, and had determined to take the matter into his own hands. Sunk in solitude and persecution, I knew not that all Madrid was on fire,—that the Bishop had determined to be no longer a passive hearer of the extraordinary scenes reported to pass in the convent,—that, in a word, my *exorcism* and my appeal were quivering in alternate scales, and that the Superior himself doubted which way the scale might incline. All this I was ignorant of, for no one dared to tell it to me. I therefore was about to retire without uttering a word in answer to the many whispered speeches to humble myself to the Superior, to implore his intercession with the Bishop to suspend this disgraceful examination that threatened *us* all. I broke from them as they surrounded me; and standing calm and sullen at the door, I threw a retorting look at them, and said, "God forgive you all, and grant you such an acquittal at his judgment-seat, as I hesitate not to claim at that of the Bishop-visitant." These words, though uttered by a ragged demoniac, (as they thought me), made them tremble. Truth is rarely heard in convents, and therefore its language is equally emphatical and portentous.

"The monks crossed themselves, and, as I left the apartment, repeated, "But how then,—what if we *prevented* this mischief?"—"By what means?"—"By any that the interests of religion may suggest,—the character of the convent is at stake. The Bishop is a man of a strict and scrutinizing character,—he will keep his eyes open to the truth,—he will inquire into facts,—what will become of us? Were it not better that——" "What?"—"You comprehend us."—"And if I dared to comprehend you, *the time is too short*."—"We have heard of the death of maniacs being very sudden, of——" "What do you dare to hint at?"—"Nothing, we only spoke of what every one knows, that a profound sleep is often a restorative to lunatics. *He* is a lunatic, as all the convent are ready to swear,—a wretch possessed by the infernal spirit, whom he invocates every night in his cell,—he disturbs the whole convent by his outcries."

"The Superior all this time walked impatiently up and down his apartment. He entangled his fingers in his rosary,—he threw on the monks angry looks from time to time; at last he said, "I am myself disturbed by his cries,—his wanderings,—his undoubted commerce with the enemy of souls. I need rest,—I require a profound sleep to repair my exhausted spirits,—*what would you prescribe?*" Several pressed forward, not understanding the hint, and eagerly recommended the common opiates—Mithridate, &c. &c. An old monk whispered in his ear, "Laudanum,—it will procure a deep and sound sleep. Try it, my father, if you want rest; but to make the experiment sure, were it not best to try it first on another?" The Superior nodded, and the party were about to disperse, when the Superior caught the old monk by his habit, and whispered, "But no murder!"—"Oh no! only profound sleep.—What matter when he wakes? It must be to suffering in this life or the next. *We* are not guilty in the business. What signifies a few moments sooner or later?" The Superior was of a timid and passionate character. He still kept hold of the monk's habit;—he whispered, "But it must not be known."—"But who can know it?" At this moment the clock struck, and an old ascetic monk, who occupied a

cell adjacent to the Superior's, and who had accustomed himself to the exclamation, "God knoweth all things," whenever the clock struck, repeated it aloud. The Superior quitted his hold of the monk's habit,—the monk crawled to his cell *God-struck*, if I may use the expression,—the laudanum was not administered that night,—the voice did not return,—I slept the entire night, and the whole convent was delivered from the harassings of the infernal spirit. Alas! none haunted it, but that spirit which the natural *malignity of solitude* raises within the circle of every heart, and forces us, from the terrible economy of misery, to feed on the vitals of others, that we may spare our own.

"This conversation was repeated to me afterwards by a monk who was on his dying bed. He had witnessed it, and I have no reason to doubt his sincerity. In fact, I always considered it as rather a palliation than an aggravation of their cruelty to me. They had made me suffer worse than many deaths,—the single suffering would have been instantaneous,—the single act would have been mercy. The next day the visit of the Bishop was expected. There was an indescribable kind of terrified preparation among the community. This house was the first in Madrid, and the singular circumstance of the son of one of the highest families in Spain having entered it in early youth,—having protested against his vows in a few months,—having been accused of being in a compact with the infernal spirit a few weeks after,—the hope of a scene of exorcism,—the doubt of the success of my appeal,—the probable interference of the Inquisition,—the *possible* festival of an auto da fe,—had set the imagination of all Madrid on fire; and never did an audience long more for the drawing up of the curtain at a popular opera, than the religious and irreligious of Madrid did for the developement of the scene which was acting at the convent of the Ex-Jesuits.

"In Catholic countries, Sir, religion is the national drama; the priests are the principal performers, the populace the audience; and whether the piece concludes with a "Don Giovanni" plunging in flames, or the beatification of a saint, the applause and the enjoyment is the same.

"I feared my destiny was to be the former. I knew nothing of the Bishop, and hoped nothing from his visit; but my hopes began to rise in proportion to the visible fears of the society. I argued, with the natural malignity of wretchedness, "If they tremble, I may exult." When suffering is thus weighed against suffering, the hand is never steady; we are always disposed to make the balance incline a little on our own side. The Bishop came early, and passed some hours with the Superior in his own apartment. During this interval, there was a stillness in the house that was strongly contrasted with its previous agitation. I stood alone in my cell,—*stood*, for I had no seat left me. I said to myself, "This event bodes neither good or evil to me. I am not guilty of what they accuse me of. They never can prove it,—an accomplice with Satan!—the victim of diabolical delusion!—Alas! my only crime is my involuntary subjection to the delusions they have practised on me. This man, this Bishop, cannot give me freedom, but he may at least do me justice." All this time the community were in a fever—the character of the house was at stake—my situation was notorious. They had laboured to represent me as a possessed being beyond their walls, and to *make* me appear as one within them. The hour of trial approached. For the honour of human nature,—from the dread of violating decency,—from the dread of apparently violating truth, I will not attempt to relate the means they had recourse to the morning of the Bishop's visitation, to qualify me to perform the part of a possessed, insane, and blasphemous wretch. The four monks I have before mentioned, were the principal executioners, (I must call them so).—Under pretence that there was no part of my person which was not under the influence of the demon, * * * * * * *

"This was not enough. I was deluged almost to suffocation with aspersions of holy water. Then followed, &c. * * * * *

"The result was, that I remained half-naked, half-drowned, gasping, choaking, and delirious with rage, shame, and fear, when I was summoned to attend the Bishop, who, surrounded by the Superior and the community, awaited me in the church. This was the moment they had fixed on—I yielded myself to them. I said, stretching out my arms, "Yes, drag me naked, mad—religion and nature alike violated in my abused figure—before your Bishop. If he speaks truth,—if he feels conscience,—woe be to you, hypocritical, tyrannical wretches. You have half-driven me mad!—half-murdered me, by the unnatural cruelties you have exercised on me!—and in this state you drag me before the Bishop! Be it so, I must follow you." As I uttered these words, they bound my arms and legs with ropes, carried me down, and placed me at the door of the church, standing close to me. The Bishop was at the altar, the Superior near him; the community filled the choir. They flung me down like a heap of carrion, and retreated as if they fled from the pollution of my touch. This sight struck the Bishop: He said, in a loud voice, "Rise, *unhappy*, and come forward." I answered, in a voice whose tones appeared to thrill him, "Bid them unbind me, and I will obey you." The Bishop turned a cold and yet indignant look on the Superior, who immediately approached and whispered him. This whispering consultation was carried on for some time; but, though lying on the ground, I could perceive the Bishop shook his head at every whisper of the Superior; and the end of the business was an order to unbind me. I did not fare much the better for this order, for the four monks were still close to me. They held my arms as they led me up the steps to the altar. I was then, for the first time, placed opposite to the Bishop. He was a man, the effect of whose physiognomy was as indelible as that of his character.—The one left its impress on the senses, as strongly as the other did on the soul. He was tall, majestic, and hoary; not a feeling agitated his frame—not a passion had left its trace on his features. He was a marble statue of Episcopacy, chiselled out

by the hand of Catholicism,—a figure magnificent and motionless. His cold black eyes did not seem to see you, when they were turned on you. His voice, when it reached you, did not address *you*, but your *soul*. Such was his exterior:—for the rest, his character was unimpeachable, his discipline exemplary, his life that of an Anchorite hewed out in stone. But he was partially suspected of what is called *liberality* in opinions, (that is, of an inclination to Protestantism), and the sanctity of his character went bail in vain for this imputed heterodoxy, which the Bishop could hardly redeem by his rigid cognizance of every conventual abuse in his district, among which my convent happened to be. Such was the man before whom I stood. At the command to unloose me, the Superior shewed much agitation; but the command was positive, and I was released. I was then between the four monks, who held me, and I felt that my appearance must have justified the impression he had received. I was ragged, famished, livid, and on fire, with the horrible treatment I had just received. I hoped, however, that my submission to whatever was to be performed, might, in some degree, redeem the opinion of the Bishop. He went with evident reluctance through the forms of exorcism, which were delivered in Latin, while all the time, the monks crossed themselves, and the *Acolytes* were not sparing of holy water and of incense. Whenever the terms “diabole te adjuro” occurred, the monks who held me twisted my arms, so that I appeared to make contortions, and uttered cries of pain. This, at first, seemed to disturb the Bishop; but when the form of exorcism was over, he commanded me to approach the altar alone. I attempted to do so; but the four monks surrounding me, made it appear an act of great difficulty. He said, “Stand apart—let him alone.” They were compelled to obey. I advanced alone, trembling. I knelt. The Bishop, placing his stole on my head, demanded, “Did I believe in God, and the holy Catholic church?” Instead of answering, I shrieked, flung off the stole, and trampled in agony on the steps of the altar. The Bishop retreated, while the Superior and the rest advanced. I collected courage as I saw them approach; and, without uttering a word, pointed to the pieces of broken glass which had been thrown on the steps where I stood, and which had pierced me through my torn sandals. The Bishop instantly ordered a monk to sweep them away with the sleeve of his tunic. The order was obeyed in a moment, and the next I stood before him without fear or pain. He continued to ask, “Why do you not pray in the church?”—“Because its doors are shut against me.”—“How? what is this? A memorial is in my hands urging many complaints against you, and this among the first, that you do not pray in the church.”—“I have told you the doors of the church are shut against me.—Alas! I could no more open them, than I could open the hearts of the community—every thing is shut against me here.” He turned to the Superior, who answered, “The doors of the church are always shut to the enemies of God.” The Bishop said, with his usual stern calmness, “I am asking a plain question—evasive and circuitous answers will not do. Have the doors of the church been shut against this wretched being?—have you denied him the privilege of addressing God?”—“I did so, because I thought and believed—” “I ask not what you thought or believed; I ask a plain answer to a matter-of-fact question. Did you, or did you not, deny him access to the house of God?”—“I had reason to believe that—” “I warn you, these answers may compel me to make you exchange situations in one moment with the object you accuse. Did you, or did you not, shut the doors of the church against him?—answer yes or no.” The Superior, trembling with fear and rage, said, “I did; and I was justified in doing so.”—“That is for another tribunal to judge. But it seems you plead guilty to the fact of which you accuse him.” The Superior was dumb. The Bishop then examining his paper, addressed me again, “How is it that the monks cannot sleep in their cells from the disturbance you cause?”—“I know not—you must ask them.”—“Does not the evil spirit visit you nightly? Are not your blasphemies, your execrable impurities, disgorged even in the ears of those who have the misfortune to be placed near you? Are you not the terror and the torment of the whole community?” I answered, “I am what they have made me. I do not deny there are extraordinary noises in my cell, but they can best account for them. I am assailed by whispers close to my bed-side: It seems these whispers reach the ears of the brethren, for they burst into my cell, and take advantage of the terror with which I am overwhelmed, to put the most incredible constructions on it.”—“Are there no cries, then, heard in your cell at night?”—“Yes, cries of terror—cries uttered not by one who is celebrating infernal orgies, but dreading them.”—“But the blasphemies, the imprecations, the impurities, which proceed from your lips?”—“Sometimes, in irrepressible terror, I have repeated the sounds that were suggested to my ears; but it was always with an exclamation of horror and aversion, that proved these sounds were not *uttered* but *echoed* by me,—as a man may take up a reptile in his hand, and gaze on its hideousness a moment, before he flings it from him. I take the whole community to witness the truth of this. The cries I uttered, the expressions I used, were evidently those of hostility to the infernal suggestions which had been breathed into my ears. Ask the whole community—they must testify, that when they broke into my cell, they found me alone, trembling, convulsed. That I was the victim of those disturbances, they affected to complain of; and though I never was able to guess the means by which this persecution was effected, I am not rash in ascribing it to the hands that covered the walls of my cell with representations of demons, the traces of which still remain.”—“You are also accused of having burst into the church at midnight, defaced the images, trampled on the crucifix, and performed all the acts of a demon violating the sanctuary.” At this accusation, so unjust and cruel, I was agitated beyond controul. I exclaimed, “I flew to the church for protection in a paroxysm of terror, which their machinations had filled me with! I flew there at night, because it was shut against me during the day, as you have discovered! I prostrated myself before the cross, instead of trampling on it! I embraced the images of the blessed saints, instead of violating them! And I doubt whether prayers more sincere were ever offered within these walls, than those I uttered that night amid helplessness, terror, and persecutions!”—“Did you not obstruct and deter the community next morning by your cries, as they attempted to enter the church?”—“I was paralyzed from the effects of

lying all night on the stone pavement, where they had flung me. I attempted to rise and crawl away at their approach, and a few cries of pain were extorted from me by my efforts to do so—efforts rendered more painful by their refusing to offer me the slightest assistance. In a word, the whole is a fabrication. I flew to the church to implore for mercy, and they represent it as the outrages of an apostate spirit. Might not the same arbitrary and absurd construction be put on the daily visits of multitudes of afflicted souls, who weep and groan audibly as I did? If I attempted to overturn the crucifix, to deface the images, would not the marks of this violence remain? Would they not have been preserved with care, to substantiate the accusation against me? Is there a trace of them?—there is not, there cannot be, because they never existed." The Bishop paused. An appeal to his feelings would have been vain, but this appeal to facts had its full effect. After some time, he said, "You can have no objection, then, to render before the whole community the same homage to the representations of the Redeemer and the holy saints, that you say it was your purpose to render them that night?"—"None." A crucifix was brought me, which I kissed with reverence and unction, and prayed, while the tears streamed from my eyes, an interest in the infinite merits of the sacrifice it represented. The Bishop then said, "Make a deed of faith, of love, of hope." I did so; and though they were extempore, my expressions, I could perceive, made the dignified ecclesiastics who attended on the Bishop, cast on each other looks in which were mingled compassion, interest, and admiration. The Bishop said, "Where did you learn those prayers?"—"My heart is my only teacher—I have no other—I am allowed no book."—"How!—recollect what you say."—"I repeat I have none. They have taken away my breviary, my crucifix;—they have stript my cell of all its furniture. I kneel on the floor—I pray from the heart. If you deign to visit my cell, you will find I have told you the truth." At these words, the Bishop cast a terrible look on the Superior. He recovered himself, however, immediately, for he was a man unaccustomed to any emotion, and felt it at once a suspension of his habits, and an infringement of his rank. In a cold voice he bid me retire; then, as I was obeying him, he recalled me,—my appearance for the first time seemed to strike him. He was a man so absorbed in the contemplation of that waveless and frozen tide of duty in which his mind was anchored, without fluctuation, progress, or improvement, that physical objects must be presented before him a long time before they made the least impression on him,—his senses were almost ossified. Thus he had come to examine a supposed demoniac; but he had made up his mind that there must be injustice and imposture in the case, and he acted in the matter with a spirit, decision, and integrity, that did him honour.

"But, all the time, the horror and misery of my appearance, which would have made the first impression on a man whose feelings were at all *external*, made the last. They struck him as I slowly and painfully crawled from the steps of the altar, and the impression was forcible in proportion to its slowness. He called me back and inquired, as if he saw me for the first time, "How is it your habit is so scandalously ragged?" At these words I thought I could disclose a scene that would have added to the Superior's humiliation, but I only said, "It is the consequence of the ill treatment I have experienced." Several other questions of the same kind, relating to my appearance, which was deplorable enough, followed, and at last I was forced to make a full discovery. The Bishop was incensed at the detail more than was credible. Rigid minds, when they yield themselves to emotion, do it with a vehemence inconceivable, for to them every thing is a duty, and passion (when it occurs) among the rest. Perhaps the novelty of emotion, too, may be a delightful surprise to them.

"More than all this was the case now with the good Bishop, who was as pure as he was rigid, and shrunk with horror, disgust, and indignation, at the detail I was compelled to give, which the Superior trembled at my uttering, and which the community dared not to contradict. He resumed his cold manner; for to him feeling was an effort, and rigour a habit, and he ordered me again to retire. I obeyed, and went to my cell. The walls were as bare as I had described them, but, even contrasted with all the splendour and array of the scene in the church, they seemed emblazoned with my triumph. A dazzling vision passed before me for a moment, then all subsided; and, in the solitude of my cell, I knelt and implored the Almighty to touch the Bishop's heart, and impress on him the moderation and simplicity with which I had spoken. As I was thus employed, I heard steps in the passage. They ceased for a moment, and I was silent. It appeared the persons overheard me, and paused; and these few words, uttered in solitude, made, I found, a deep impression on them. A few moments after the Bishop, with some dignified attendants, followed by the Superior, entered my cell. The former all stopped, horror-struck at its appearance.

"I have told you, Sir, that my cell now consisted of four bare walls and a bed;—it was a scandalous, degrading sight. I was kneeling in the middle of the floor, God knows, without the least idea of producing an effect. The Bishop gazed around him for some time, while the ecclesiastics who attended him testified their horror by looks and attitudes that needed no interpretation. The Bishop, after a pause, turned to the Superior, "Well, what do you say to this?" The Superior hesitated, and at last said, "I was ignorant of this."—"That is false," said the Bishop; "and even if it was true, it would be your crimination, not your apology. Your duty binds you to visit the cells every day; how could you be ignorant of the shameful state of this cell, without neglecting your own duties?" He took several turns about the cell, followed by the ecclesiastics, shrugging their shoulders, and throwing on each other looks of disgust. The Superior stood dismayed. They went out, and I could hear the Bishop say, in the passage, "All this disorder must be rectified

before I quit the house." And to the Superior, "You are unworthy of the situation you hold,—you ought to be deposed." And he added in severer tones, "Catholics, monks, Christians, this is shocking,—horrible! tremble for the consequences of my next visit, if the same disorders exist,—I promise you it shall be repeated soon." He then returned, and standing at the door of my cell, said to the Superior, "Take care that all the abuses committed in this cell are rectified before to-morrow morning." The Superior signified his submission to this order in silence.

"That evening I went to sleep on a bare mattress, between four dry walls. I slept profoundly, from exhaustion and fatigue. I awoke in the morning far beyond the time for matins, and found myself surrounded by all the comforts that can be bestowed on a cell. As if magic had been employed during my sleep, crucifix, breviary, desk, table, every thing was replaced. I sprung from bed, and actually gazed in extasy around my cell. As the day advanced, and the hour for refection approached, my extasy abated, and my terrors increased;—it is not easy to pass from extreme humiliation and utter abhorrence, to your former state in the society of which you are a member. When the bell rung I went down. I stood at the door for a moment,—then, with an impulse, like despair, I entered, and took my usual place. No opposition was made,—not a word was said. The community separated after dinner. I watched for the toll of the bell for vespers,—I imagined that would be decisive. The bell tolled at last,—the monks assembled. I joined them without opposition,—I took my place in the choir,—my triumph was complete, and I trembled at it. Alas! in what moment of success do we not feel a sensation of terror? Our destiny always acts the part of the ancient slave to us, who was required every morning to remind the monarch that he was a man; and it seldom neglects to fulfil its own predictions before the evening. Two days passed away,—the storm that had so long agitated us, seemed to have sunk into a sudden calm. I resumed my former place,—I performed the customary duties,—no one congratulated or reviled me. They all seemed to consider me as one beginning monastic life *de novo*. I passed two days of perfect tranquillity, and I take God to witness, I enjoyed this triumph with moderation. I never reverted to my former situation,—I never reproached those who had been agents in it,—I never uttered a syllable on the subject of the visitation, which had made me and the whole convent change places in the space of a few hours, and the oppressed take the part (if he pleased) of the oppressor. I bore my success with temperance, for I was supported by the hope of liberation. The Superior's triumph was soon to come.

"On the third morning I was summoned to the parlour, where a messenger put into my hands a packet, containing (as I well understood) the result of my appeal. This, according to the rules of the convent, I was compelled to put first into the hands of the Superior to read, before I was permitted to read it myself. I took the packet, and slowly walked to the Superior's apartment. As I held it in my hand, I considered it, felt every corner, weighed it over and over again in my hand, tried to catch an omen from its very shape. Then a withering thought crossed me, that, if its intelligence was auspicious, the messenger would have put it into my hands with an air of triumph, that, in spite of convent etiquette, I might break open the seals which inclosed the sentence of my liberation. We are very apt to take our presages from our destination, and mine being that of a monk, no wonder its auguries were black,—and were verified.

"I approached the Superior's cell with the packet. I knocked, was desired to enter, and, my eyes cast down, could only distinguish the hems of many habits, whose wearers were all assembled in the Superior's apartment. I offered the packet with reverence. The Superior cast a careless eye over it, and then flung it on the floor. One of the monks approached to take it up. The Superior exclaimed, "Hold, let *him* take it up." I did so, and retired to my cell, making first a profound reverence to the Superior. I then went to my cell, where I sat down with the fatal packet in my hands. I was about to open it, when a voice from within me seemed to say,—It is useless, you must know the contents already. It was some hours before I perused it,—it contained the account of the failure of my appeal. It seemed, from the detail, that the advocate had exerted his abilities, zeal, and eloquence to the utmost; and that, at one time, the court had been near deciding in favour of my claims, but the precedent was reckoned too dangerous. The advocate on the other side had remarked, "If this succeeds, we shall have all the monks in Spain appealing against their vows." Could a stronger argument have been used in favour of my cause? An impulse so universal must surely originate in nature, justice, and truth."

On reverting to the disastrous issue of his appeal, the unfortunate Spaniard was so much overcome, that it was some days before he could resume his narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

Pandere res alta terrâ et caligine mersas.

I'll shew your Grace the strangest sight,—

Body o'me, what is it, Butts?—

Henry the Eighth.

“Of the desolation of mind into which the rejection of my appeal plunged me, I can give no account, for I retain no distinguishing image. All colours disappear in the night, and despair has no diary,—monotony is her essence and her curse. Hours have I walked in the garden, without retaining a single impression but that of the sounds of my footsteps;—thought, feeling, passion, and all that employs them,—life and futurity, extinct and swallowed up. I was already like an inhabitant of the land where “all things are forgotten.” I hovered on the regions of mental twilight, where the “light is as darkness.” The clouds were gathering that portended the approach of utter night,—they were scattered by a sudden and extraordinary light.

“The garden was my constant resort,—a kind of instinct supplying the place of that choice I had no longer energy enough to make, directed me there to avoid the presence of the monks. One evening I saw a change in its appearance. The fountain was out of repair. The spring that supplied it was beyond the walls of the convent, and the workmen, in prosecuting the repairs, had found it necessary to excavate a passage under the garden-wall, that communicated with an open space in the city. This passage, however, was closely watched during the day while the workmen were employed, and well secured at night by a door erected for the purpose, which was chained, barred, and bolted, the moment the workmen quitted the passage. It was, however, left open during the day; and this tantalizing image of escape and freedom, amid the withering certainty of eternal imprisonment, gave a kind of awakened sting to the pains that were becoming obtuse. I entered the passage, and drew as close as possible to the door that shut me out from life. My seat was one of the stones that were scattered about, my head rested on my hand, and my eyes were sadly fixed on the *tree and the well*, the scene of that false miracle. I knew not how long I sat thus. I was aroused by a slight noise near me, and perceived a paper, which some one was thrusting under the door, where a slight inequality in the ground rendered the attempt just practicable. I stooped and attempted to seize it. It was withdrawn; but a moment after a voice, whose tones my agitation did not permit me to distinguish, whispered, “Alonzo.”—“Yes,—yes,” I answered eagerly. The paper was instantly thrust into my hands, and I heard a sound of steps retreating rapidly. I lost not a moment in reading the few words it contained. “Be here to-morrow evening at the same hour. I have suffered much on your account,—destroy this.” It was the hand of my brother Juan, that hand so well remembered from our late eventful correspondence,—that hand whose traces I never beheld without feeling corresponding characters of hope and confidence retraced in my soul, as lines before invisible appear on exposure to the heat that seems to vivify them. I am surprised that between this and the following evening my agitation did not betray me to the community. But perhaps it is only agitation arising from frivolous causes, that vents itself in external indications,—I was absorbed in mine. It is certain, at least, that my mind was all that day vacillating like a clock that struck every minute the alternate sounds, “*There is hope,—there is no hope.*” The day,—the eternal day, was at last over. Evening came on; how I watched the advancing shades! At vespers, with what delight did I trace the gradual mellowing of the gold and purple tinges that gleamed through the great eastern window, and calculated that their western decline, though slower, must come at last!—It came. Never was a more propitious evening. It was calm and dark—the garden deserted, not a form to be seen, not a step to be heard in the walks.—I hurried on. Suddenly I thought I heard the sound of something pursuing me. I paused,—it was but the beating of my own heart, audible in the deep stillness of that eventful moment. I pressed my hand on my breast, as a mother would on an infant whom she tried to pacify;—it did not cease to throb, however. I entered the passage. I approached the door, of which hope and despair seemed to stand the alternate portresses. The words still rung in my ears, “Be here to-morrow evening at the same hour.” I stooped, and saw, with eyes that devoured the sight, a piece of paper appear under the door. I seized and buried it in my habit. I trembled with such ecstacy, that I thought I never should be able to carry it undiscovered to my cell. I succeeded, however; and the contents, when I read them, justified my emotion. To my unspeakable uneasiness, great part of it was illegible, from being crushed amid the stones and damp clay contiguous to the door, and from the first page I could hardly extract that he had been kept in the country almost a prisoner, through the influence of the Director; that one day, while shooting with only one attendant, the hope of liberation suddenly filled him with the idea of terrifying this man into submission. Presenting his loaded fowling piece at the terrified wretch, he threatened him with instant death, if he made the least opposition. The man suffered himself to be bound to a tree; and the next page, though much defaced, gave me to understand he had reached Madrid in safety, and heard for the first time the event of my ill-fated appeal. The effect of this intelligence on the impetuous, sanguine, and affectionate Juan, could be easily traced in the broken and irregular lines in which he vainly attempted to describe it. The letter then proceeded. “I am now in Madrid, pledged body and soul never to quit it till you are liberated. If you possess resolution, this is not impossible,—the doors even of convents are not inaccessible to a silver key. My first object, that of obtaining a communication with you, appeared as impracticable as your escape, yet it has been accomplished. I understood that repairs were going on in the garden, and stationed myself at the door evening after evening, whispering your name, but it was not till the sixth that you were there.”

“In another part he detailed his plans more fully. “Money and secrecy are the primary objects,—the latter I can insure by the disguises I wear, but the former I scarce know how to obtain. My escape was so sudden, that I was wholly

unprovided, and have been obliged to dispose of my watch and rings since I reached Madrid, to purchase disguises and procure subsistence. I could command what sums I pleased by disclosing my name, but this would be fatal. The report of my being in Madrid would immediately reach my father's ears. My resource must be a Jew; and when I have obtained money, I have little doubt of effecting your liberation. I have already heard of a person in the convent under very extraordinary circumstances, who would probably not be disinclined to * * * * * * *

"Here a long interval occurred in the letter, which appeared to be written at different times. The next lines that I could trace, expressed all the light-heartedness of this most fiery, volatile, and generous of created beings. * * * * * *

"Be not under the least uneasiness about me, it is impossible that I should be discovered. At school I was remarkable for a dramatic talent, a power of personation almost incredible, and which I now find of infinite service. Sometimes I strut as a *Majo*(4), with enormous whiskers. Sometimes I assume the accent of a Biscayan, and, like the husband of Donna Rodriguez, "am as good a gentleman as the king, because I came from the mountains." But my favourite disguise is that of a mendicant or a fortune-teller,—the former procures me access to the convent, the other money and intelligence. Thus I am paid, while I appear to be the buyer. When the wanderings and stratagems of the day are over, you would smile to see the loft and pallet to which the heir of Monçada retires. This masquerade amuses *me* more than the spectators. A consciousness of our superiority is often more delightful when confined to our own breasts, than when expressed by others. Besides, I feel as if the squalid bed, the tottering seat, the cobwebbed rafters, the rancid oil, and all the other *agremens* of my new abode, were a kind of atonement for the wrongs I have done you, Alonzo. My spirits sometimes sink under privations so new to me, but still a kind of playful and wild energy, peculiar to my character, supports me. I shudder at my situation when I retire at night, and place, for the first time *with my own hands*, the lamp on the miserable hearth; but I laugh when, in the morning, I attire myself in fantastic rags, discolour my face, and modulate my accent, so that the people in the house, (where I tenant a garret), when they meet me on the stairs, do not know the being they saw the preceding evening. I change my abode and costume every day. Feel no fears for me, but come every evening to the door in the passage, for every evening I shall have fresh intelligence for you. My industry is indefatigable, my zeal unquenchable, my heart and soul are on fire in the cause. Again I pledge myself, soul and body, never to quit this spot till you are free,—*depend on me, Alonzo*."

"I will spare you, Sir, the detail of the feelings,—feelings! Oh my God, pardon me the prostration of heart with which I kissed those lines, with which I could have consecrated the hand that traced them, and which are worthy only to be devoted to the image of the great Sacrifice. Yet a being so young, so generous, so devoted, with a heart at once so wild and warm, sacrificing all that rank, and youth, and pleasure could offer,—submitting to the vilest disguises, undergoing the most deplorable privations, struggling with what must have been most intolerable to a proud voluptuous boy, (and I knew he was all this), hiding his revoltings under a gaiety that was assumed, and a magnanimity that was real—and all this for me!——Oh what I felt! * * * * * *

"The next evening I was at the door; no paper appeared, though I sat watching for it till the declining light made it impossible for me to discover it, had it been there. The next I was more fortunate; it appeared. The same disguised voice whispered "Alonzo," in tones that were the sweetest music that ever reached my ears. This billet contained but a very few lines, (so I found no difficulty in *swallowing it* immediately after perusal). It said, "I have found a Jew, at last, who will advance me a large sum. He pretends not to know me, though I am satisfied he does.—But his usurious interest and illegal practices are my full security. I shall be master of the means of liberating you in a few days; and I have been fortunate enough to discover how those means may be applied. There is a wretch——"

"Here the billet ended; and for four following evenings the state of the repairs excited so much curiosity in the convent, (where it is so easy to excite curiosity), that I dared not to remain in the passage, without the fear of exciting suspicion. All this time I suffered not only the agony of suspended hope, but the dread of this accidental communication being finally closed; for I knew the workmen could not have more than a few days to employ on their task. This I conveyed the intelligence of to my brother in the same way in which I received his billets. Then I reproached myself for hurrying him. I reflected on the difficulties of his concealment—of his dealing with Jews—of his bribing the servants of the convent. I thought of all he had undertaken, and all he had undergone. Then I dreaded that all might be in vain. I would not live over those four days again to be sovereign of the earth. I will give you one slight proof of what I must have felt, when I heard the workmen say, "It will be finished soon." I used to rise at an hour before matins, displace the stones, trample on the mortar, which I mingled with the clay, so as to render it totally useless; and finally, *re-act Penelope's web* with such success, that the workmen believed the devil himself was obstructing their operations, and latterly never came to their task unless armed with a vessel of holy water, which they dashed about with infinite sanctimony and profusion. On the fifth evening I caught the following lines beneath the door. "All is settled—I have fixed the Jew on *Jewish terms*. He affects to be ignorant of my real rank, and certain (*future*) wealth, but he knows it all, and dare not, for his own sake, betray me. The Inquisition, to which I could expose him in a moment, is my best security—I must add, my *only*. There is a wretch in your convent, who took sanctuary from *parricide*, and consented to become a monk, to escape

the vengeance of heaven in this life at least. I have heard, that this monster cut his own father's throat, as he sat at supper, to obtain a small sum which he had lost at gambling. His partner, who was a loser also, had, it seems, made a vow to an image of the Virgin, that was in the neighbourhood of the wretched house where they gamed, to present two wax tapers before it in the event of his success. He lost; and, in the fury of a gamester, as he repassed the image, he struck and spit at it. This was very shocking—but what was it to the crime of him who is now an inmate of your convent? The one defaced an image, the other murdered his father: Yet the former expired under tortures the most horrible, and the other, after some vain efforts to elude justice, *took sanctuary*, and is now a lay-brother in your convent. On the crimes of this wretch I build all my hopes. His soul must be saturated with avarice, sensuality, and desperation. There is nothing he will hesitate at if he be bribed;—for money he will undertake your liberation—for money he will undertake to strangle you in your cell. He envies Judas the thirty pieces of silver for which the Redeemer of mankind was sold. *His* soul might be purchased at half-price. Such is the instrument with which I must work.—It is horrible, but necessary. I have read, that from the most venomous reptiles and plants, have been extracted the most sanative medicines. I will squeeze the juice, and trample on the weed.

"Alonzo, tremble not at these words. Let not your habits prevail over your character. Entrust your liberation to me, and the instruments I am compelled to work with; and doubt not, that the hand which traces these lines, will soon be clasping that of a brother in freedom."

"I read these lines over and over again in the solitude of my cell, when the excitement of watching for, secreting, and perusing it *for the first time*, were over, and many doubts and fears began to gather round me like twilight clouds. In proportion as Juan's confidence increased, mine appeared to diminish. There was a terrifying contrast between the fearlessness, independence, and enterprise of *his* situation, and the loneliness, timidity, and danger of mine. While the hope of escape, through his courage and address, still burnt like an inextinguishable light in the depth of my heart, I still dreaded entrusting my destiny to a youth so impetuous, though so affectionate; one who had fled from his parents' mansion, was living by subterfuge and imposture in Madrid, and had engaged, as his coadjutor, a wretch whom nature must revolt from. Upon whom and what did my hopes of liberation rest? On the affectionate energies of a wild, enterprising, and unaided being, and the co-operation of a demon, who might snatch at a bribe, and then shake it in triumph in his ears, as the seal of our mutual and eternal despair, while he flung the key of liberation into an abyss where no light could penetrate, and from which no arm could redeem it.

"Under these impressions, I deliberated, I prayed, I wept in the agony of doubt. At last I wrote a few lines to Juan, in which I honestly stated my doubts and apprehensions. I stated first my doubts of the possibility of my escape. I said, "Can it be imagined that a being whom all Madrid, whom all Spain, is on the watch for, can elude their detection? Reflect, dear Juan, that I am staked against a community, a priesthood, a nation. The escape of a monk is almost impossible,—but his concealment afterwards is downright impossible. Every bell in every convent in Spain would ring out *untouched* in pursuit of the fugitive. The military, civil, and ecclesiastical powers, would all be on the "qui vive." Hunted, panting, and despairing, I might fly from place to place—no place affording me shelter. The incensed powers of the church—the fierce and vigorous gripe of the law—the execration and hatred of society—the suspicions of the lowest order among whom I must lurk, to shun and curse their penetration; think of encountering all this, while the fiery cross of the Inquisition blazes in the van, followed by the whole pack, shouting, cheering, hallooing on to the prey. Oh Juan! if you knew the terrors under which I live—under which I would rather die than encounter them again, even on the condition of liberation! Liberation! Great God! what chance of liberation for a monk in Spain? There is not a cottage where I could rest one night in security—there is not a cavern whose echoes would not resound to the cry of my apostacy. If I was hid in the bowels of the earth, they would discover me, and tear me from its entrails. My beloved Juan, when I consider the omnipotence of the ecclesiastical power in Spain, may I not address it in the language applied to Omnipotence itself: "If I climb up to heaven, thou art *there*;—if I go down to hell, thou art *there* also;—if I take the wings of the morning, and flee unto the *uttermost parts of the sea, even there*—" And suppose my liberation was accomplished—suppose the convent plunged in a profound torpor, and the unsleeping eye of the Inquisition winked at my apostacy—where am I to reside? how am I to procure subsistence? The luxurious indolence of my early years unfit me for active employment. The horrible conflict of apathy the deepest, with hostility the most deadly, in monastic life, disqualifies me for society. Throw the doors of every convent in Spain open, and for what will their inmates be fit? For nothing that will either embellish or improve it. What could I do to serve myself?—what could I do that would not betray me? I should be a persecuted, breathless fugitive,—a branded *Cain*. Alas!—perhaps expiring in flames, I might see *Abel* not *my* victim, but that of the Inquisition."

"When I had written these lines, with an impulse for which all can account but the writer, I tore them to atoms, burnt them deliberately by the assistance of the lamp in my cell, and went to watch again at the door in the passage—the door of hope. In passing through the gallery, I encountered, for a moment, a person of a most forbidding aspect. I drew on one side—for I had made it a point not to mix, in the slightest degree, with the community, beyond what the discipline of the house compelled me to. As he passed, however, he touched my habit, and gave a most significant look. I

immediately comprehended this was the person Juan alluded to in his letter. And in a few moments after, on descending to the garden, I found a note that confirmed my conjectures. It contained these words: “I have procured the money—I have secured our agent. He is an incarnate devil, but his resolution and intrepidity are unquestionable. Walk in the cloister to-morrow evening—some one will touch your habit—grasp his left wrist, that will be the signal. If he hesitates, whisper to him—“Juan,” he will answer—“Alonzo.” That is your man, consult with him. Every step that I have taken will be communicated to you by him.”

“After reading these lines, I appeared to myself like a piece of mechanism wound up to perform certain functions, in which its co-operation was irresistible. The precipitate vigour of Juan’s movements seemed to impel mine without my own concurrence; and as the shortness of the time left me no opportunity for deliberation, it left me also none for choice. I was like a clock whose hands are pushed forward, and I struck the hours I was impelled to strike. When a powerful agency is thus exercised on us,—when another undertakes to think, feel, and act for us, we are delighted to transfer to him, not only our physical, but our moral responsibility. We say, with selfish cowardice, and self-flattering passiveness, “Be it so—you have decided for me,”—without reflecting that at the bar of God there is no bail. So I walked the next evening in the cloister. I composed my habit,—my looks; any one would have imagined me plunged in profound meditation,—and so I was, but not on the subjects with which they conceived I was occupied. As I walked, some one touched my habit. I started, and, to my consternation, one of the monks asked my pardon for the sleeve of his tunic having touched mine. Two minutes after another touched my habit. I felt the difference,—there was an intelligential and communicative force in his grasp. He seized it as one who did not fear to be known, and who had no need to apologise. How is it that crime thus seizes us in life with a fearless grasp, while the touch of conscience trembles on the verge of our garment. One would almost parody the words of the well known Italian proverb, and say that guilt is masculine, and innocence feminine. *I grasped his wrist* with a trembling hand, and whispered—“Juan,” in the same breath. He answered—“Alonzo,” and passed me onward in a moment. I had then a few moments leisure to reflect on a destiny thus singularly entrusted to a being whose affections honoured humanity, and a being whose crimes disgraced it. I was suspended like Mahomet’s tomb between heaven and earth. I felt an antipathy indescribable to hold any communication with a monster who had tried to hide the stains of parricide, by casting over their bloody and ineffaceable traces the shroud of monasticism. I felt also an inexpressible terror of Juan’s passions and precipitancy; and I felt ultimately that I was in the power of all I dreaded most, and must submit to the operation of that power for my liberation.

“I was in the cloisters the following evening. I cannot say I walked with a step so equal, but I am sure I did with a step much more artificially regular. For the second time the same person touched my habit, and whispered the name of Juan. After this I could no longer hesitate. I said, in passing, “I am in your power.” A hoarse repulsive voice answered, “No, I am in yours.” I murmured, “Well, then, I understand you, we belong to each other.”—“Yes. We must not speak here, but a fortunate opportunity presents itself for our communication. To-morrow will be the eve of the feast of Pentecost; the vigil is kept by the whole community, who go two and two every hour to the altar, pass their hour in prayer, and then are succeeded by two more, and this continues all night. Such is the aversion with which you have inspired the community, that they have one and all refused to accompany you during your hour, which is to be from two till three. You will therefore be alone, and during your hour I will come and visit you,—we shall be undisturbed and unsuspected.” At these words he quitted me. The next night was the eve of Pentecost, the monks went two and two all night to the altar, —at two o’clock my turn arrived. They rapped at my cell, and I descended to the church alone.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Ye monks and nuns throughout the land,

Who go to church at night in pairs,

Never take bell-ropes in your hands,

To raise you up again from prayers.

Colman.

“I am not superstitious, but, as I entered the church, I felt a chill of body and soul inexpressible. I approached the altar, and attempted to kneel,—an invisible hand repelled me. A voice seemed to address me from the recesses of the altar, and demand what brought me there? I reflected that those who had just quitted that spot had been absorbed in prayer, that those who were to succeed me would be engaged in the same profound homage, while I sought the church with a purpose of imposture and deception, and abused the hour allotted to the divine worship in contriving the means to

escape from it. I felt I was a deceiver, shrouding my fraud in the very veils of the temple. I trembled at my purpose and at myself. I knelt, however, though I did not dare to pray. The steps of the altar felt unusually cold,—I shuddered at the silence I was compelled to observe. Alas! how can we expect that object to succeed, which we dare not entrust to God. Prayer, Sir, when we are deeply engaged in it, not only makes us eloquent, but communicates a kind of answering eloquence to the objects around us. At former times, while I poured out my heart before God, I felt as if the lamps burnt brighter, and the images smiled,—the silent midnight air was filled with forms and voices, and every breeze that sighed by the casement bore to my ear the harpings of a thousand angels. Now all was stilled,—the lamps, the images, the altar, the roof, seemed to behold me in silence. They surrounded me like witnesses, whose presence alone is enough to condemn you, without their uttering a word. I dared not look up,—I dared not speak,—I dared not pray, lest it would unfold a thought I could not supplicate a blessing on; and this kind of keeping a secret, which God must know, is at once so vain and impious.

"I had not remained long in this state of agitation, when I heard a step approach,—it was that of him I expected. "Rise," said he, for I was on my knees; "rise,—we have no time to lose. You have but an hour to remain in the church, and I have much to tell you in that hour." I rose. "To-morrow night is fixed for your escape."—"To-morrow night,—merciful God!"—"Yes; in desperate steps there is always more danger from delay than from precipitation. A thousand eyes and ears are on the watch already,—a single sinister or ambiguous movement would render it impossible to escape their vigilance. There may be some danger in hastening matters thus, but it is unavoidable. To-morrow night, after midnight, descend to the church, it is probable no one will then be here. If any one should, (engaged in recollection or in penance), retire to avoid suspicion. Return as soon as the church is empty,—I will be here. Do you observe that door?" and he pointed to a low door which I had often observed before, but never remembered to have seen opened; "I have obtained the key of that door,—no matter by what means. It formerly led to the vaults of the convent, but, for some extraordinary reasons, which I have not time to relate, another passage has been opened, and the former has not been employed or frequented for many years. From thence branches another passage, which, I have heard, opens by a trap-door into the garden."—"Heard," I repeated; "Good God! is it on report, then, you depend in a matter so momentous? If you are not certain that such a passage exists, and that you will be able to trace its windings, may we not be wandering amid them all night? Or perhaps——" "Interrupt me no more with those faint objections; I have no time to listen to fears which I can neither sympathise with or obviate. When we get through the trap-door into the garden, (if ever we do), another danger awaits us." He paused, I thought, like a man who is watching the effect of the terrors he excites, not from malignity but vanity, merely to magnify his own courage in encountering them. I was silent; and, as he heard neither flattery nor fear, he went on. "Two fierce dogs are let loose in the garden every night,—but they must be taken care of. The wall is sixteen feet high,—but your brother has provided a ladder of ropes, which he will fling over, and by which you may descend on the other side in safety."—"Safety! but then Juan will be in danger."—"Interrupt me no more,—the danger within the walls is the least you have to dread, beyond them, where can you seek for refuge or secrecy? Your brother's money will enable you possibly to escape from Madrid. He will bribe high, and every inch of your way must be paved with his gold. But, after that, so many dangers present themselves, that the enterprise and the danger seem but just begun. How will you cross the Pyrennees? How——" and he passed his hand over his forehead, with the air of a man engaged in an effort beyond his powers, and sorely perplexed about the means to effect it. This expression, so full of sincerity, struck me forcibly. It operated as a balance against all my former prepossessions. But still the more confidence I felt in him, the more I was impressed by his fears. I repeated after him, "How is it possible for me to escape ultimately? I may, by your assistance, traverse those intricate passages, whose cold dews I feel already distilling on me. I may emerge into light, ascend and descend the wall, but, after that, how am I to escape?—how am I even to live? All Spain is but one great monastery,—I must be a prisoner every step that I take."—"Your brother must look to that," said he abruptly; "I have done what I have undertaken." I then pressed him with several questions relating to the details of my escape. His answer was monotonous, unsatisfactory, and evasive, to a degree that again filled me first with suspicion, and then with terror. I asked, "But how have you obtained possession of the keys?"—"It is not your business to inquire." It was singular that he returned the same answer to every question I put to him, relative to his becoming possessed of the means to facilitate my escape, so that I was compelled to desist unsatisfied, and revert to what he had told me.—"But, then, that terrible passage near the vaults,—the chance, the fear that we may never emerge to light! Think of wandering amid sepulchral ruins, of stumbling over the bones of the dead, of encountering what I cannot describe,—the horror of being among those who are neither the living or the dead;—those dark and shadowless things that sport themselves with the reliques of the dead, and feast and love amid corruption,—ghastly, mocking, and terrific. *Must* we pass near the vaults?"—"What matter? perhaps I have more reason to dread them than you. Do *you* expect the spirit of your father to start from the earth to blast you?" At these words, which he uttered in a tone intended to inspire me with confidence, I shuddered with horror. They were uttered by a parricide, boasting of his crime in a church at midnight, amid saints, whose images were silent, but seemed to tremble. For relief I reverted to the unscaleable wall, and the difficulty of managing the ladder of ropes without detection. The same answer was on his lips,—"Leave that to me,—all that is settled." While he answered thus, he always turned his face away, and broke his words into monosyllables. At last I felt that the case was desperate,—that I must trust every thing to him. *To him!* Oh, my God!

what I felt when I said this to myself! The conviction thrilled on my soul,—I am in his power. And yet, even under the impression, I could not help recurring to the impracticable difficulties that appeared to obstruct my escape. He then lost patience,—reproached me with timidity and ingratitude; and, while resuming his naturally ferocious and menacing tone, I actually felt more confidence in him than when he had attempted to disguise it. Half-remonstrance, half-invective as it was, what he said displayed so much ability, intrepidity, and art, that I began to feel a kind of doubtful security. I conceived, at least, that if any being on earth could effect my liberation, this was the man. He had no conception of fear, —no idea of conscience. When he hinted at his having murdered his father, it was done to impress me with an idea of his hardihood. I saw this from his expression, for I had involuntarily looked up at him. His eye had neither the hollowness of remorse, or the wandering of fear,—it glared on me bold, challenging, and prominent. He had but one idea annexed to the word danger,—that of strong excitement. He undertook a perilous attempt as a gamester would sit down to encounter an antagonist worthy of him; and, if life and death were the stake, he only felt as if he were playing at a higher rate, and the increased demands on his courage and talent actually supplied him with the means of meeting them. Our conference was now nearly at an end, when it occurred to me that this man was exposing himself to a degree of danger which it was almost incredible he should brave on my account; and this mystery, at least, I was resolved to penetrate. I said, “But how will you provide for your own safety? What will become of you when my escape is discovered? Would not the most dreadful punishments attend even the suspicion of your having been an agent in it, and what must be the result when that suspicion is exchanged for the most undeniable certainty?” It is impossible for me to describe the change his expression underwent while I uttered these words. He looked at me for some time without speaking, with an indefinable mixture of sarcasm, contempt, doubt, and curiosity in his countenance, and then attempted to laugh, but the muscles of his face were too stubborn and harsh to admit of this modulation. To features like his, frowns were a habit, and smiles a convulsion. He could produce nothing but a *rictus Sardonicus*, the terrors of which there is no describing. It is very frightful to behold crime in its merriment,—its smile must be purchased by many groans. My blood ran cold as I looked at him. I waited for the sound of his voice as a kind of relief. At length he said, “Do you imagine me such an ideot as to promote your escape at the risk of imprisonment for life,—perhaps of immurement,—perhaps of the Inquisition?” and again he laughed. “No, we must escape together. Could you suppose I would have so much anxiety about an event, in which I had no part but that of an assistant? It was of my own danger I was thinking,—it was of my own safety I was doubtful. Our situation has happened to unite very opposite characters in the same adventure, but it is an union inevitable and *inseparable*. Your destiny is now bound to mine by a tie which no human force can break,—we part no more for ever. The secret that each is in possession of, must be watched by the other. Our lives are in each other’s hands, and a moment of absence might be that of treachery. We must pass life in each watching every breath the other draws, every glance the other gives,—in dreading sleep as an involuntary betrayer, and watching the broken murmurs of each other’s restless dreams. We may hate each other, torment each other,—worst of all, we may be weary of each other, (for hatred itself would be a relief, compared to the tedium of our inseparability), but separate we must never.” At this picture of the liberty for which I had risked so much, my very soul recoiled. I gazed on the formidable being with whom my existence was thus incorporated. He was now retiring, when he paused at some distance to repeat his last words, or perhaps to observe their effect. I was sitting on the altar,—it was late,—the lamps in the church burned very dimly, and, as he stood in the aisle, he was placed in such a position, with regard to that which hung from the roof, that the light fell only on his face and one hand, which he extended towards me. The rest of his figure, enveloped in darkness, gave to this bodyless and spectre head an effect truly appalling. The ferocity of his features, too, was softened into a heavy and death-like gloom, as he repeated, “We part never,—I must be near you for ever,” and the deep tones of his voice rolled like subterranean thunder round the church. A long pause followed. He continued to stand in the same posture, nor had I power to change mine. The clock struck three, its sound reminded me that my hour had expired. We separated, each taking different directions; and the two monks who succeeded me luckily came a few minutes late, (both of them yawning most fearfully), so our departure was unobserved.

“The day that followed I have no more power of describing, than of analysing a dream to its component parts of sanity, delirium, defeated memory, and triumphant imagination. The sultan in the eastern tale, who plunged his head in a bason of water, and, before he raised it again, passed through adventures the most vicissitudinous and incredible—was a monarch, a slave, a husband, a widower, a father, childless,—in five minutes, never underwent the changes of *mind* that I did during that memorable day. I was a prisoner,—free,—a happy being, surrounded by smiling infants,—a victim of the Inquisition, writhing amid flames and execrations. I was a maniac, oscillating between hope and despair. I seemed to myself all that day to be pulling the rope of a bell, whose alternate knell was *heaven—hell*, and this rung in my ears with all the dreary and ceaseless monotony of the bell of the convent. Night came at last. I might almost say *day came*, for that day had been my night. Every thing was propitious to me,—the convent was all hushed. I put my head several times out of my cell, to be assured of this,—*all was hushed*. There was not a step in the corridor,—not a voice, not a whisper to be heard under a roof containing so many souls. I stole from my cell, I descended to the church. This was not unusual for those whose consciences or nerves were disturbed, during the sleepless gloom of a conventual night. As I advanced to the door of the church, where the lamps were always kept burning, I heard a human voice. I retreated in terror;—then I ventured to give a glance. An old monk was at prayers before one of the images of the saints, and the

object of his prayers was to be relieved, not from the anguish of conscience, or the annihilation of monasticism, but from the pains of a toothache, for which he had been desired to apply his gums to the image of a saint quite notorious for her efficacy in such cases(5). The poor, old, tortured wretch, prayed with all the fervency of agony, and then rubbed his gums over and over again on the cold marble, which increased his complaint, his suffering, and his devotion. I watched, listened,—there was something at once ludicrous and frightful in my situation. I felt inclined to laugh at my own distress, while it was rising almost to agony every moment. I dreaded, too, the approach of another intruder, and feeling my fear about to be realized by the approach of some one, I turned round, and, to my inexpressible relief, saw my companion. I made him comprehend, by a sign, how I was prevented from entering the church; he answered me in the same way, and retreated a few steps, but not without shewing me a bunch of huge keys under his habit. This revived my spirits, and I waited for another half-hour in a state of mental excruciation, which, were it inflicted on the bitterest enemy I have on earth, I think I would have cried, “Hold,—hold, spare him.” The clock struck two,—I writhed and stamped with my feet, as loud as I dared, on the floor of the passage. I was not at all tranquillized by the visible impatience of my companion, who started, from time to time, from his hiding-place behind a pillar of the cloister, flung on me a glance——no, a glare—of wild and restless inquiry, (which I answered with one of despondency), and retired, grinding curses between his teeth, whose horrible grating I could hear distinctly in the intervals of my long-withheld breath. At last I took a desperate step. I walked into the church, and, going straight up to the altar, prostrated myself on the steps. The old monk observed me. He believed that I had come there with the same purpose, if not with the same feelings, as himself; and he approached me, to announce his intention of joining in my aspirations, and intreating an interest in them, *as the pain had now reached from the lower jaw to the upper*. There is something that one can hardly describe in this union of the lowest with the highest interests of life. I was a prisoner, panting for emancipation, and staking my existence on the step I was compelled to take,—my whole interest for time, and perhaps for eternity, hung on a moment; and beside me knelt a being whose destiny was decided already, who could be nothing but a monk for the few years of his worthless existence, and who was supplicating a short remission from a temporary pain, that I would have endured my whole life for an hour’s liberty. As he drew near me, and supplicated an interest in my prayers, I shrunk away. I felt a difference in the object of our addresses to God, that I dared not search my heart for the motive of. I knew not, at the moment, which of us was right,—he, whose prayer did no dishonour to the place,—or I, who was to struggle against a disorganized and unnatural state of life, whose vows I was about to violate. I knelt with him, however, and prayed for the removal of his pain with a sincerity that cannot be questioned, as the success of my petitions might be the means of procuring his absence. As I knelt, I trembled at my own hypocrisy. I was profaning the altar of God,—I was mocking the sufferings of the being I supplicated for,—I was the worst of all hypocrites, a hypocrite on my knees, and at the altar. Yet, was I not compelled to be so? If I *was* a hypocrite, who had made me one? If I profaned the altar, who had dragged me there, to insult it by vows my soul belied and reversed faster than my lips could utter them? But this was no time for self-examination. I knelt, prayed, and trembled, till the poor sufferer, weary of his ineffectual and unanswered supplications, rose, and began to crawl away. For a few minutes I shivered in horrible anxiety, lest some other intruder might approach, but the quick decisive step that trod the aisle restored my confidence in a moment,—it was my companion. He stood beside me. He uttered a few curses, which sounded very shocking in my ears, more from the force of habit, and influence of the place, than from the meaning attached to them, and then hurried on *to the door*. A large bunch of keys was in his hand, and I followed instinctively this pledge of my liberation.

“The door was very low—we descended to it by four steps. He applied his key, muffling it in the sleeve of his habit to suppress the sound. At every application he recoiled, gnashed his teeth, stamped—then applied both hands. The lock did not give way—I clasped my hands in agony—I tossed them over my head. “Fetch a light,” he said in a whisper; “take a lamp from before one of those figures.” The levity with which he spoke of the holy images appalled me, and the act appeared to me nothing short of sacrilege; yet I went and took a lamp, which, with a shuddering hand, I held to him as he again tried the key. During this second attempt, we communicated in whispers those fears that left us scarce breath even for whispers. “Was not that a noise?”—“No, it was the echo of this jarring, stubborn lock. Is there no one coming?”—“Not one.”—“Look out into the passage.”—“Then I cannot hold the light to you.”—“No matter—any thing but detection.”—“Any thing for escape,” I retorted with a courage that made him start, as I set down the lamp, and joined my strength to his to turn the key. It grated, resisted; the lock seemed invincible. Again we tried, with cranched teeth, indrawn breath, and fingers stripped almost to the bone,—in vain.—Again—in vain.—Whether the natural ferocity of his temper bore disappointment worse than mine, or that, like many men of undoubted courage, he was impatient of a *slight* degree of physical pain, in a struggle where he would have risked and lost life without a murmur,—or how it was, I know not,—but he sunk down on the steps leading to the door, wiped away the big drops of toil and terror from his forehead with the sleeve of his habit, and cast on me a look that was at once the pledge of sincerity and of despair. The clock struck three. The sound rung in my ears like the trumpet of the day of doom—the trumpet that *will sound*. He clasped his hands with a fierce and convulsive agony, that might have pictured the last struggles of the impenitent malefactor,—that agony without remorse, that suffering without requital or consolation, that, if I may say so, arrays crime in the dazzling robe of magnanimity, and makes us admire the fallen spirit, with whom we dare not sympathize. “We are undone,” he cried; “*you* are undone. At the hour of three another monk is to enter on his hour of

recollection." And he added, in a lower tone of horror inexpressible, "I hear his steps in the passage." At the moment he uttered these words, the key, that I had never ceased to struggle with, turned in the lock. The door opened, the passage lay free to us. My companion recovered himself at the sight, and in the next moment we were both in the passage. Our first care was to remove the key, and lock the door on the inside; and during this, we had the satisfaction to discover, that there was no one in the church, no one approaching it. Our fears had deceived us; we retired from the door, looked at each other with a kind of breathless, half-revived confidence, and began our progress through the vault in silence and in safety. In safety! my God! I yet tremble at the thought of that subterranean journey, amid the vaults of a convent, with a parricide for my companion. But what is there that danger will not familiarize us with? Had I been told such a story of another, I would have denounced him as the most reckless and desperate being on earth—yet *I was the man*. I had secured the lamp, (whose light appeared to reproach me with sacrilege at every gleam it shed on our progress), and followed my companion in silence. Romances have made your country, Sir, familiar with tales of subterranean passages, and supernatural horrors. All these, painted by the most eloquent pen, must fall short of the breathless horror felt by a being engaged in an enterprise beyond his powers, experience, or calculation, driven to trust his life and liberation to hands that reeked with a father's blood. It was in vain that I tried *to make up my mind*,—that I said to myself, "This is to last but for a short time,"—that I struggled to force on myself the conviction that it was necessary to have such associates in desperate enterprises;—it was all in vain. I trembled at my situation,—at myself, and that is a terror we can never overcome. I stumbled over the stones,—I was chilled with horror at every step. A blue mist gathered before my eyes,—it furred the edges of the lamp with a dim and hazy light. My imagination began to operate, and when I heard the curses with which my companion reproached my involuntary delay, I began almost to fear that I was following the steps of a demon, who had lured me there for purposes beyond the reach of imagination to picture. Tales of superstition crowded on me like images of terror on those who are in the dark. I had heard of infernal beings who deluded monks with the hopes of liberation, seduced them into the vaults of the convent, and then proposed conditions which it is almost as horrible to relate as to undergo the performance of. I thought of being forced to witness the unnatural revels of a diabolical feast,—of seeing the rotting flesh distributed,—of drinking the dead corrupted blood,—of hearing the anthems of fiends howled in insult, on that awful verge where life and eternity mingle,—of hearing the hallelujahs of the choir, echoed even through the vaults, where demons were yelling the *black mass* of their infernal Sabbath.—I thought of all that the interminable passages, the livid light, and the diabolical companion, might suggest.

"Our wanderings in the passage seemed to be endless. My companion turned to right, to left,—advanced, retreated, paused,—(the pause was dreadful)!—Then advanced again, tried another direction, where the passage was so low that I was obliged to crawl on my hands and knees to follow him, and even in this posture my head struck against the ragged roof. When we had proceeded for a considerable time, (at least so it appeared to me, for minutes are hours in the *noctuary* of terror,—terror has no *diary*), this passage became so narrow and so low, that I could proceed no farther, and wondered how my companion could have advanced beyond me. I called to him, but received no answer; and, in the darkness of the passage, or rather hole, it was impossible to see ten inches before me. I had the lamp, too, to watch, which I had held with a careful trembling hand, but which began to burn dim in the condensed and narrow atmosphere. A gush of terror rose in my throat. Surrounded as I was by damps and dews, my whole body felt in a fever. I called again, but no voice answered. In situations of peril, the imagination is unhappily fertile, and I could not help recollecting and *applying* a story I had once read of some travellers who attempted to explore the vaults of the Egyptian pyramids. One of them, who was advancing, as I was, on his hands and knees, stuck in the passage, and, whether from terror, or from the natural consequences of his situation, swelled so that it was impossible for him to retreat, advance, or allow a passage for his companions. The party were on their return, and finding their passage stopped by this irremoveable obstruction, their lights trembling on the verge of extinction, and their guide terrified beyond the power of direction or advice, proposed, in the selfishness to which the feeling of vital danger reduces all, to cut off the limbs of the wretched being who obstructed their passage. He heard this proposal, and, contracting himself with agony at the sound, was reduced, by that strong muscular spasm, to his usual dimensions, dragged out, and afforded room for the party to advance. He was suffocated, however, in the effort, and left behind a corse. All this detail, that takes many words to tell, rushed on my soul in a moment;—on my soul?—no, on my body. I was all physical feeling,—all intense corporeal agony, and God only knows, and man only can feel, how that agony can absorb and annihilate all other feeling within us,—how we could, in such a moment, feed on a parent, to gnaw out our passage into life and liberty, as sufferers in a wreck have been known to gnaw their own flesh, for the support of that existence which the unnatural morsel was diminishing at every agonizing bite.

"I tried to crawl backwards,—I succeeded. I believe the story I recollected had an effect on me, I felt a contraction of muscles corresponding to what I had read of. I felt myself almost liberated by the sensation, and the next moment I was actually so;—I had got out of the passage I knew not how. I must have made one of those extraordinary exertions, whose energy is perhaps not only increased by, but dependent on, our unconsciousness of them. However it was, I was extricated, and stood breathless and exhausted, with the dying lamp in my hand, staring around me, and seeing nothing

but the black and dripping walls, and the low arches of the vault, that seemed to lower over me like the frown of an eternal hostility,—a frown that forbids hope or escape. The lamp was rapidly extinguishing in my hand,—I gazed on it with a fixed eye. I knew that my life, and, what was dearer than my life, my liberation, depended on my watching its last glimpse, yet I gazed on it with the eye of an ideot,—a stupified stare. The lamp glimmered more faintly,—its dying gleams awoke me to recollection. I roused myself,—I looked around. A strong flash discovered an object near me. I shuddered,—I uttered cries, though I was unconscious of doing so, for a voice said to me,—"Hush, be silent; I left you only to reconnoitre the passages. I have made out the way to the trap-door,—be silent, and all is well." I advanced trembling, my companion appeared trembling too. He whispered, "Is the lamp so nearly extinguished?"—"You see."—"Try to keep it in for a few moments."—"I will; but, if I cannot, what then?"—"Then we must perish," he added, with an execration that I thought would have brought down the vaults over our heads. It is certain, Sir, however, that desperate sentiments are best suited to desperate emergencies, and this wretch's blasphemies gave me a kind of horrible confidence in his courage. On he went, muttering curses before me; and I followed, watching the last light of the lamp with agony increased by my fear of further provoking my horrible guide. I have before mentioned how our feelings, even in the most fearful exigencies, dwindle into petty and wretched details. With all my care, however, the lamp declined,—quivered,—flashed a pale light, like the smile of despair on me, and was extinguished. I shall never forget the look my guide threw on me by its sinking light. I had watched it like the last beatings of an expiring heart, like the shiverings of a spirit about to part for eternity. I saw it extinguished, and believed myself already among those for "whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever."

"It was at this moment that a faint sound reached our frozen ears;—it was the chaunt of matins, performed by candle-light at this season of the year, which was begun in the chapel now far above us. This voice of heaven thrilled us,—we seemed the pioneers of darkness, on the very frontiers of hell. This superb insult of celestial triumph, that amid the strains of hope spoke despair to us, announced a God to those who were stopping their ears against the sound of his name, had an effect indescribably awful. I fell to the ground, whether from stumbling from the darkness, or shrinking from emotion, I know not. I was roused by the rough arm, and rougher voice of my companion. Amid execrations that froze my blood, he told me this was no time for failing or for fear. I asked him, trembling, what I was to do? He answered, "Follow me, and feel your way in darkness." Dreadful sounds!—Those who tell us *the whole* of our calamity always appear malignant, for our hearts, or our imaginations, always flatter us that it is not so great as reality proves it to be. Truth is told us by any mouth sooner than our own.

"In darkness, total darkness, and on my hands and knees, for I could no longer stand, I followed him. This motion soon affected my head; I grew giddy first, then stupified. I paused. He growled a curse, and I instinctively quickened my movements, like a dog who hears the voice of a chiding master. My habit was now in rags from my struggles, my knees and hands stript of skin. I had received several severe bruises on my head, from striking against the jagged and unhewn stones which formed the irregular sides and roof of this eternal passage. And, above all, the unnatural atmosphere, combined with the intensity of my emotion, had produced a thirst, the agony of which I can compare to nothing but that of a burning coal dropt into my throat, which I seemed to suck for moisture, but which left only drops of fire on my tongue. Such was my state, when I called out to my companion that I could proceed no farther. "Stay there and rot, then," was the answer; and perhaps the most soothing words of encouragement could not have produced so strong an effect on me. This confidence of despair, this bravado against danger, that menaced the power in his very citadel, gave me a temporary courage,—but what is courage amid darkness and doubt? From the faultering steps, the suffocated breath, the muttered curses, I guessed what was going on. I was right. The final—hopeless stop followed instantly, announced by the last wild sob, the cranching of despairing teeth, the clasping, or rather clap, of the locked hands, in the terrible extacy of utter agony. I was kneeling behind him at that moment, and I echoed every cry and gesture with a violence that started my guide. He silenced me with curses. Then he attempted to pray; but his prayers sounded so like curses, and his curses were so like prayers to the evil one, that, choaking with horror, I implored him to cease. He did cease, and for nearly half an hour neither of us uttered a word. We lay beside each other like two panting dogs that I have read of, who lay down to die close to the animal they pursued, whose fur they fanned with their dying breath, while unable to mouthe her.

"Such appeared emancipation to us,—so near, and yet so hopeless. We lay thus, not daring to speak to each other, for who could speak but of despair, and which of us dared to aggravate the despair of the other. This kind of fear which we know already felt by others, and which we dread to aggravate by uttering, *even to those who know it*, is perhaps the most horrible sensation ever experienced. The very thirst of my body seemed to vanish in this fiery thirst of the soul for communication, where all communication was unutterable, impossible, hopeless. Perhaps the condemned spirits will feel thus at their final sentence, when they know all that is to be suffered, and dare not disclose to each other that horrible truth which is no longer a secret, but which the profound silence of their despair would seem to make one. The secret of silence is the only secret. Words are a blasphemy against that taciturn and invisible God, whose presence enshrouds us in our last extremity. These moments that appeared to me endless, were soon to cease. My companion

sprung up,—he uttered a cry of joy. I imagined him deranged,—he was not. He exclaimed, “Light, light,—the light of heaven; we are near the trap-door, I see the light through it.” Amid all the horrors of our situation, he had kept his eye constantly turned upwards, for he knew that, if we were near it, the smallest glimmering of light would be visible in the intense darkness that enveloped us. He was right. I started up,—I saw it too. With locked hands, with dropt and wordless lips, with dilated and thirsting eyes, we gazed upwards. A thin line of grey light appeared above our heads. It broadened, it grew brighter,—it *was* the light of heaven, and its breezes too came fluttering to us through the chinks of the trap-door that opened into the garden.”

CHAPTER IX.

“Though life and liberty seemed so near, our situation was still very critical. The morning light that aided our escape, might open many an eye to mark it. There was not a moment to be lost. My companion proposed to ascend first, and I did not venture to oppose him. I was too much in his power to resist; and in early youth superiority of depravity always seems like a superiority of power. We reverence, with a prostituted idolatry, those who have passed through the degrees of vice before us. This man was criminal, and crime gave him a kind of heroic immunity in my eyes. Premature knowledge in life is always to be purchased by guilt. He knew more than I did,—he was my all in this desperate attempt. I dreaded him as a demon, yet I invoked him as a god.

“In the end I submitted to his proposal. I was very tall, but he was much stronger than I. He rose on my shoulders, I trembled under his weight, but he succeeded in raising the trap-door,—the full light of day broke on us both. In a moment he dropt his hold of the door,—he fell to the ground with a force that struck me down. He exclaimed, “The workmen are there, they have come about the repairs, we are lost if we are discovered. They are there, the garden is full of them already, they will be there the whole day. That cursed lamp, it has undone us! Had it but kept in for a few moments, we might have been in the garden, might have crossed the wall, might have been at liberty, and now——” He fell to the ground convulsed with rage and disappointment, as he spoke. To me there was nothing so terrible in this intelligence. That we were disappointed for a time was evident, but we had been relieved from the most horrible of all fears, that of wandering in famine and darkness till we perished,—we had found the way to the trap-door. I had unfailing confidence in Juan’s patience and zeal. I was sure that if he was watching for us on that night, he would watch for many a successive night. Finally, I felt we had but twenty-four hours or less to wait, and what was that to the eternity of hours that must otherwise be wasted in a convent. I suggested all this to my companion as I closed the trap-door; but I found in his complaints, imprecations, and tossing restlessness of impatience and despair, the difference between man and man in the hour of trial. He possessed active, and I passive fortitude. Give him something to do, and he would do it at the risk of limb, and life, and soul,—he never murmured. Give me something to suffer, to undergo, to submit, and I became at once the *hero of submission*. While this man, with all his physical strength, and all his mental hardihood, was tossing on the earth with the imbecillity of an infant, in a paroxysm of unappeasable passion, I was his consoler, adviser, and supporter. At last he suffered himself to hear reason; he agreed that we must remain twenty-four hours more in the passage, on which he bestowed a whole litany of curses. So we determined to stand in stillness and darkness till night; but such is the restlessness of the human heart, that this arrangement, which a few hours before we would have embraced as the offer of a benignant angel for our emancipation, began to display, as we were compelled to examine its aspect more closely, certain features that were repulsive almost to hideousness. We were exhausted nearly to death. Our physical exertions had been, for the last few hours, almost incredible; in fact, I am convinced that nothing but the consciousness that we were engaged in a struggle for life or death, could have enabled us to support it, and now that the struggle was over, we began to feel our weakness. Our mental sufferings had not been less,—we had been excruciated body and soul alike. Could our mental struggles have operated like our bodily ones, we would have been seen to weep drops of blood, as we felt we were doing at every step of our progress. Recollect too, Sir, the unnatural atmosphere we had breathed so long, amid darkness and danger, and which now began to show its anti-vital and pestilent effect, in producing alternately on our bodies deluges of perspiration, succeeded by a chill that seemed to freeze the very marrow. In this state of mental fever, and bodily exhaustion, we had now to wait many hours, in darkness, without food, till Heaven pleased to send us night. But how were those hours to be passed? The preceding day had been one of strict abstinence,—we began already to feel the gnawings of hunger, a hunger not to be appeased. We must fast till the moment of liberation, and we must fast amid stone walls, and damp seats on floors of stone, which diminished every moment the strength necessary to contend with their impenetrable hardness,—their withering chillness.

“The last thought that occurred to me was,—with what a companion those hours must be passed. With a being whom I abhorred from my very soul, while I felt that his presence was at once an irrepealable curse, and an invincible necessity. So we stood, shivering under the trap-door, not daring to whisper our thoughts to each other, but feeling *that despair of incommunication* which is perhaps the severest curse that can be inflicted on those who are compelled to be together, and compelled, by the same necessity that imposes their ungenial union, not even to communicate their fears to each

other. We *hear* the throb of each others hearts, and yet dare not say, “My heart beats in unison with yours.”

“As we stood thus, the light became suddenly eclipsed. I knew not from what this arose, till I felt a shower, the most violent perhaps that ever was precipitated on the earth, make its way even through the trap-door, and drench me in five minutes to the skin. I retreated from the spot, but not before I had received it in every pore of my body. You, Sir, who live in happy Ireland, blessed by God with an exemption from those vicissitudes of the atmosphere, can have no idea of their violence in continental countries. This rain was followed by peals of thunder, that made me fear God was pursuing me into the abysses where I had shrunk to escape from his vengeance, and drew from my companion blasphemies more loud than thunder, as he felt himself drenched by the shower, that now, flooding the vault, rose almost to our ancles. At last he proposed our retiring to a place which he said he was acquainted with, and which would shelter us. He added, that it was but a few steps from where we stood, and that we could easily find our way back. I did not dare to oppose him, and followed to a dark recess, only distinguished from the rest of the vault by the remains of what had once been a door. It was now light, and I could distinguish objects plainly. By the deep hollows framed for the shooting of the bolt, and the size of the iron hinges that still remained, though covered with rust, I saw it must have been of no common strength, and probably intended to secure the entrance to a dungeon,—there was no longer a door, yet I shuddered to enter it. As we did so, both of us, exhausted in body and mind, sunk on the hard floor. We did not say a word to each other, an inclination to sleep irresistibly overcame us; and whether that sleep was to be my last or not, I felt a profound indifference. Yet I was now on the verge of liberty, and though drenched, famishing, and comfortless, was, in any rational estimate, an object much more enviable than in the heart-withering safety of my cell. Alas! it is too true that our souls always contract themselves on the approach of a blessing, and seem as if their powers, exhausted in the effort to obtain it, had no longer energy to embrace the object. Thus we are always compelled to substitute the pleasure of the pursuit for that of the attainment,—to reverse the means for the end, or confound them, in order to extract any enjoyment from either, and at last fruition becomes only another name for lassitude. These reflections certainly did not occur to me, when, worn out with toil, terror, and famine, I fell on the stone floor in a sleep that was not sleep,—it seemed the suspension both of my mortal and immortal nature. I ceased from animal and intellectual life at once. There are cases, Sir, where the thinking power appears to accompany us to the very verge of slumber, where we sleep full of delightful thoughts, and sleep only to review them in our dreams: But there are also cases when we feel that our sleep is a “sleep for ever,”—when we resign the hope of immortality for the hope of a profound repose,—when we demand from the harassings of fate, “Rest, rest,” and no more,—when the soul and body faint together, and all we ask of God or man is to let us sleep.

“In such a state I fell to the ground; and, at that moment, would have bartered all my hopes of liberation for twelve hours profound repose, as Esau sold his birth-right for a small but indispensible refreshment. I was not to enjoy even this repose long. My companion was sleeping too. Sleeping! great God! what was his sleep?—that in whose neighbourhood no one could close an eye, or, worse, an ear. He talked as loudly and incessantly as if he had been employed in all the active offices of life. I heard involuntarily the secret of his dreams. I knew he had murdered his father, but I did not know that the vision of parricide haunted him in his broken visions. My sleep was first broken by sounds as horrible as any I ever had heard at my bed-side in the convent. I heard sounds that disturbed me, but I was not yet fully awake. They increased, they redoubled,—the terrors of my habitual associations awoke me. I imagined the Superior and the whole community pursuing us with lighted torches. I felt the blaze of the lights in contact with my very eye-balls. I shrieked. I said, “Spare my sight, do not blind me, do not drive me mad, and I will confess all.” A deep voice near me muttered, “Confess.” I started up fully awake,—it was only the voice of my sleeping companion. I stood on my feet, I viewed him as he lay. He heaved and wallowed on his bed of stone, as if it had been down. He seemed to have a frame of adamant. The jagged points of stone, the hardness of the floor, the ruts and rudenesses of his inhospitable bed, produced no effect on him. He could have slept, but his dreams were from within. I have heard, I have read, of the horrors attending the dying beds of the guilty. They often told us of such in the convent. One monk in particular, who was a priest, was fond of dwelling on a death-bed scene he had witnessed, and of describing its horrors. He related that he had urged a person, who was sitting calmly in his chair, though evidently dying, to intrust him with his confession. The dying person answered, “I will, when those leave the room.” The monk, conceiving that this referred to the relatives and friends, motioned them to retire. They did so, and again the monk renewed his demands on the conscience of the penitent. The room was now empty. The monk renewed his adjuration to the dying man to disclose the secrets of his conscience. The answer was the same,—“I will, when those are gone.”—“*Those!*”—“Yes, those whom you cannot see, and cannot banish,—send them away, and I will tell you the truth.”—“Tell it now, then; there are none here but you and me.”—“There are,” answered the dying man. “There are none that I can see,” said the monk, gazing round the room. “But there are those that I do see,” replied the dying wretch, “and that see me; that are watching, waiting for me, the moment the breath is out of my body. I see them, I feel them,—stand on my right side.” The monk changed his position. “Now they are on the left.” The monk shifted again. “Now they are on my right.” The monk commanded the children and relatives of the dying wretch to enter the room, and surround the bed. They obeyed the command. “Now they are every where,” exclaimed the sufferer, and expired(6).

“This terrible story came freshly to my recollection, accompanied by many others. I had heard much of the terrors that surrounded the dying bed of the guilty, but, from what I was compelled to hear, I almost believe them to be less than the terrors of a guilty sleep. I have said my companion began at first with low mutterings, but among them I could distinguish sounds that reminded me too soon of all I wished to forget, at least while we were together. He murmured, “An old man?—yes,—well, the less blood in him. Grey hairs?—no matter, my crimes have helped to turn them grey,—he ought to have rent them from the roots long ago. They are white, you say?—well, to-night they shall be dyed in blood, then they will be white no longer. Aye,—he will hold them up at the day of judgment, like a banner of condemnation against me. He will stand at the head of an army stronger than the army of martyrs,—the host of those whose murderers have been their own children. What matter whether they cut their parents’ hearts or their throats. I have cut *one* through and through, to the very core,—now for the other, it will give him less pain, I feel that,”—and he laughed, shuddered, and writhed on his stony bed. Trembling with horror ineffable, I tried to awake him. I shook his muscular arms, I rolled him on his back, on his face,—nothing could awake him. It seemed as if I was only rocking him on his cradle of stone. He went on, “Secure the purse, I know the drawer of the cabinet where it lies, but secure him first. Well, then, you cannot,—you shudder at his white hairs, at his calm sleep!—ha! ha! that villains should be fools. Well, then, I must be the man, it is but a short struggle with him or me,—he may be damned, and I must. Hush,—how the stairs creak, they will not tell him it is his son’s foot that is ascending?—They dare not, the stones of the wall would give them the lie. Why did you not oil the hinges of the door?—now for it. He sleeps intensely,—aye, how calm he looks!—the calmer the fitter for heaven. Now,—now, my knee is on his breast,—where is the knife?—where is the knife?—if he looks at me I am lost. The knife,—I am a coward; the knife,—if he opens his eyes I am gone; the knife, ye cursed cravens,—who dare shrink when I have griped my father’s throat? There,—there,—there,—blood to the hilt,—the old man’s blood; look for the money, while I wipe the blade. I cannot wipe it, the grey hairs are mingled with the blood,—those hairs brushed my lips the last time he kissed me. I was a child then. I would not have taken a world to murder him then, now,—now, what am I? Ha! ha! ha! Let Judas shake his bag of silver against mine,—he betrayed his Saviour, and I have murdered my father. Silver against silver, and soul against soul. I have got more for mine,—he was a fool to sell his for thirty. But for which of us will the last fire burn hotter?—no matter, I am going to try.” At these horrible expressions, repeated over and over, I called, I shrieked to my companion to awake. He did so, with a laugh almost as wild as the chattering of his dreams. “Well, what have you heard? I murdered him,—you knew that long before. You trusted me in this cursed adventure, which will risk the life of both, and can you not bear to hear me speak to myself, though I am only telling what you knew before?”—“No, I cannot bear it,” I answered, in an agony of horror; “not even to effect my escape, could I undertake to sustain another hour like the past,—the prospect of seclusion here for a whole day amid famine, damps, and darkness, listening to the ravings of a ——. Look not at me with that glare of mockery, I know it all, I shudder at your sight. Nothing but the iron link of necessity could have bound me to you even for a moment. I *am* bound to you,—I must bear it while it continues, but do not make those moments insupportable. My life and liberty are in your hands,—I must add my reason, too, in the circumstances in which we are plunged,—I cannot sustain your horrible eloquence of sleep. If I am forced to listen to it again, you may bear me alive from these walls, but you will bear me away an ideot, stupified by terrors which my brain is unable to support. Do not sleep, I adjure you. Let me watch beside you during this wretched day,—this day which is to be measured by darkness and suffering, instead of light and enjoyment. I am willing to famish with hunger, to shudder with cold, to couch on these hard stones, but I cannot bear your dreams,—if you sleep, I must rouse you in defence of my reason. All physical strength is failing me fast, and I am become more jealous of the preservation of my intellect. Do not cast at me those looks of defiance, I am your inferior in strength, but despair makes us equal.” As I spoke, my voice sounded like thunder in my own ears, my eyes flashed visibly to myself. I felt the power that passion gives us, and I saw that my companion felt it too. I went on, in a tone that made myself start, “If you dare to sleep, I will wake you,—if you dose even, you shall not have a moment undisturbed,—you shall wake with me. For this long day we must starve and shiver together, I have wound myself up to it. I can bear every thing,—every thing but the dreams of him whose sleep reveals to him the vision of a murdered parent. Wake,—rave,—blaspheme,—but sleep you shall not!”

“The man stared at me for some time, almost incredulous of my being capable of such energy of passion and command. But when he had, by the help of his dilated eyes, and gaping mouth, appeared to satisfy himself fully of the fact, his expression suddenly changed. He appeared to feel a community of nature with me for the first time. Any thing of ferocity appeared congenial and balsamic to him; and, with oaths, that froze my blood, swore he liked me the better for my resolution. “I *will* keep awake,” he added, with a yawn that distended like the jaws of an Ogre preparing for his cannibal feast. Then suddenly relaxing, “But how shall we keep awake? We have nothing to eat, nothing to drink, what shall we do to keep awake?” And incontinently he uttered a volley of curses. Then he began to sing. But what songs?—full of such ribaldry and looseness, that, bred as I was first in domestic privacy, and then in the strictness of a convent, made me believe it was an incarnate demon that was howling beside me. I implored him to cease, but this man could pass so instantaneously from the extremes of atrocity to those of levity,—from the ravings of guilt and horror ineffable, to songs that would insult a brothel, that I knew not what to make of him. This *union of antipodes*, this unnatural alliance of the extremes of guilt and light-mindedness, I had never met or imagined before. He started from the visions

of a parricide, and sung songs that would have made a harlot blush. How ignorant of life I must have been, not to know that guilt and insensibility often join to tenant and deface the same mansion, and that there is not a more strong and indissoluble alliance on earth, than that between the hand that dare do any thing, and the heart that can feel nothing.

"It was in the midst of one of his most licentious songs, that my companion suddenly paused. He gazed about him for some time; and faint and dismal as the light was by which we beheld each other, I thought I could observe an extraordinary expression overshadow his countenance. I did not venture to notice it. "Do you know where we are?" he whispered. "Too well;—in the vault of a convent, beyond the help or reach of man,—without food, without light, and almost without hope."—"Aye, so its last inhabitants might well say."—"Its last inhabitants!—who were they?"—"I can tell you, if you can bear it."—"*I cannot bear it,*" I cried, stopping my ears, "I will not listen to it. I feel by the narrator it must be something horrid."—"It was indeed a horrid night," said he, unconsciously adverting to some circumstance in the narrative; and his voice sunk into mutterings, and he forbore to mention the subject further. I retired as far from him as the limits of the vault admitted; and, burying my head between my knees, tried to *forbear to think*. What a state of mind must that be, in which we are driven to wish we no longer had one!—when we would willingly become "as the beasts that perish," to forget that privilege of humanity, which only seems an undisputed title to superlative misery! To sleep was impossible. Though sleep seems to be only a necessity of nature, it always requires an act of the mind to concur in it. And if I had been willing to rest, the gnawings of hunger, which now began to be exchanged for the most deadly sickness, would have rendered it impossible. Amid this complication of physical and mental suffering, it is hardly credible, Sir, but it is not the less true, that my principal one arose from the inanity, the want of occupation, inevitably attached to my dreary situation. To inflict a suspension of the action on a being conscious of possessing the powers of action, and burning for their employment,—to forbid all interchange of mutual ideas, or acquirement of new ones to an intellectual being,—to do this, is to invent a torture that might make Phalaris blush for his impotence of cruelty.

"I had felt other sufferings almost intolerable, but I felt this impossible to sustain; and, will you believe it, Sir, after wrestling with it during an hour (as I counted hours) of unimaginable misery, I rose, and supplicated my companion to relate the circumstance he had alluded to, as connected with our dreadful abode. His ferocious good nature took part with this request in a moment; and though I could see that his strong frame had suffered more than my comparatively feeble one, from the struggles of the night and the privations of the day, he prepared himself with a kind of grim alacrity for the effort. He was now in his element. He was enabled to daunt a feeble mind by the narration of horrors, and to amaze an ignorant one with a display of crimes;—and he needed no more to make him commence. "I remember," said he, "an extraordinary circumstance connected with this vault. I wondered how I felt so familiar with this door, this arch, at first.—I did not recollect immediately, so many strange thoughts have crossed my mind every day, that events which would make a life-lasting impression on others, pass like shadows before me, while thoughts appear like substances. *Emotions are my events*—you know what brought me to this cursed convent—well, don't shiver or look *paler*—you were pale before. However it was, I found myself in the convent, and I was obliged to subscribe to its discipline. A part of it was, that extraordinary criminals should undergo what they called <u>extraordinary</u> penance; that is, not only submit to every ignominy and rigour of conventual life, (which, fortunately for its penitents, is never wanting in such amusing resources), but act the part of executioner whenever any distinguished punishment was to be inflicted or witnessed. They did me the honour to believe me particularly qualified for this species of recreation, and perhaps they did not flatter me. I had all the humility of a saint on trial; but still I had a kind of confidence in my talents of this description, provided they were put to a proper test; and the monks had the goodness to assure me, that I never could long be without one in a convent. This was a very tempting picture of my situation, but I found these worthy people had not in the least exaggerated. An instance occurred a few days after I had the happiness to become a member of this amiable community, of whose merits you are doubtless sensible. I was desired to attach myself to a young monk of distinguished family, who had lately taken the vows, and who performed his duties with that heartless punctuality that intimated to the community that his heart was elsewhere. I was soon put in possession of the business; from their ordering me to *attach* myself to him, I instantly conceived I was bound to the most deadly hostility against him. The friendship of convents is always a treacherous league—we watch, suspect, and torment each other, for the love of God. This young monk's only crime was, that he was suspected of cherishing an earthly passion. He was, in fact, as I have stated, the son of a distinguished family, who (from the fear of his contracting what is called a degrading marriage, *i. e.* of marrying a woman of inferior rank whom he loved, and who would have made him happy, as fools, that is, half mankind, estimate happiness) forced him to take the vows. He appeared at times broken-hearted, but at times there was a light of hope in his eye, that looked somewhat ominous in the eyes of the community. It is certain, that hope not being an indigenous plant in the parterre of a convent, must excite suspicion with regard both to its origin and its growth.

"Some time after, a young novice entered the convent. From the moment he did so, a change the most striking took place in the young monk. He and the novice became inseparable companions—there was something suspicious in that. My eyes were on the watch in a moment. Eyes are particularly sharpened in discovering misery when they can hope to

aggravate it. The attachment between the young monk and the novice went on. They were for ever in the garden together—they inhaled the odours of the flowers—they cultivated the same cluster of carnations—they entwined themselves as they walked together—when they were in the choir, their voices were like mixed incense. Friendship is often carried to excess in conventual life, but this friendship was too like love. For instance, the psalms sung in the choir sometimes breathe a certain language; at these words, the young monk and the novice would direct their voices to each other in sounds that could not be misunderstood. If the least correction was inflicted, one would intreat to undergo it for the other. If a day of relaxation was allowed, whatever presents were sent to the cell of one, were sure to be found in the cell of the other. This was enough for me. I saw that secret of mysterious happiness, which is the greatest misery to those who never can share it. My vigilance was redoubled, and it was rewarded by the discovery of a secret—a secret that I had to communicate and raise my consequence by. You cannot guess the importance attached to the discovery of a secret in a convent, (particularly when the remission of our own offences depends on the discovery of those of others.)

"One evening as the young monk and his darling novice were in the garden, the former plucked a peach, which he immediately offered to his favourite; the latter accepted it with a movement I thought rather awkward—it seemed like what I imagined would be the reverence of a female. The young monk divided the peach with a knife; in doing so, the knife grazed the finger of the novice, and the monk, in agitation inexpressible, tore his habit to bind up the wound. I saw it all—my mind was made up on the business—I went to the Superior that very night. The result may be conceived. They were watched, but cautiously at first. They were probably on their guard; for, for some time it defied even my vigilance to make the slightest discovery. It is a situation incomparably tantalizing, when suspicion is satisfied of her own suggestions, as of the truth of the gospel, but still wants the *little fact* to make them credible to others. One night that I had, by direction of the Superior, taken my station in the gallery, (where I was contented to remain hour after hour, and night after night, amid solitude, darkness, and cold, for the chance of the power of retaliating on others the misery inflicted on myself)—One night, I thought I heard a step in the gallery—I have told you that I was in the dark—a light step passed me. I could hear the broken and palpitating respiration of the person. A few moments after, I heard a door open, and knew it to be the door of the young monk. I knew it; for by long watching in the dark, and accustoming myself to number the cells, by the groan from one, the prayer from another, the faint shriek of restless dreams from a third, my ear had become so finely graduated, that I could instantly distinguish the opening of *that door*, from which (to my sorrow) no sound had ever before issued. I was provided with a small chain, by which I fastened the handle of the door to a contiguous one, in such a manner, that it was impossible to open either of them from the inside. I then hastened to the Superior, with a pride of which none but the successful tracer of a guilty secret in convents, can have any conception. I believe the Superior was himself agitated by the luxury of the same feelings, for he was awake and up in his apartment, attended by *four monks*, whom you may remember." I shuddered at the remembrance. "I communicated my intelligence with a voluble eagerness, not only unsuited to the respect I owed these persons, but which must have rendered me almost unintelligible, yet they were good enough not only to overlook this violation of decorum, which would in any other case have been severely punished, but even to supply certain pauses in my narrative, with a condescension and facility truly miraculous. I felt what it was to acquire importance in the eyes of a Superior, and gloried in all the dignified depravity of an informer. We set out without losing a moment,—we arrived at the door of the cell, and I pointed out with triumph the chain unremoved, though a slight vibration, perceptible at our approach, showed the wretches within were already apprised of their danger. I unfastened the door,—how they must have shuddered! The Superior and his satellites burst into the cell, and *I* held the light. You tremble,—why? I was guilty, and I wished to witness guilt that palliated mine, at least in the opinion of the convent. I had only violated the laws of nature, but they had outraged the decorum of a convent, and, of course, in the creed of a convent, there was no proportion between our offences. Besides, I was anxious to witness misery that might perhaps equal or exceed my own, and this is a curiosity not easily satisfied. It is actually possible to become *amateurs in suffering*. I have heard of men who have travelled into countries where horrible executions were to be daily witnessed, for the sake of that excitement which the sight of suffering never fails to give, from the spectacle of a tragedy, or an *auto da fe*, down to the writhings of the meanest reptile on whom you can inflict torture, and feel that torture is the result of your own power. It is a species of feeling of which we never can divest ourselves,—a triumph over those whose sufferings have placed them below us, and no wonder,—suffering is always an indication of weakness,—we glory in our impenetrability. *I* did, as we burst into the cell. The wretched husband and wife were locked in each others arms. You may imagine the scene that followed. Here I must do the Superior reluctant justice. He was a man (of course from his conventual feelings) who had no more idea of the intercourse between the sexes, than between two beings of a different species. The scene that he beheld could not have revolted him more, than if he had seen the horrible loves of the baboons and the Hottentot women, at the Cape of Good Hope; or those still more loathsome unions between the serpents of South America and their human victims(7), when they can catch them, and twine round them in folds of unnatural and ineffable union. He really stood as much astonished and appalled, to see two human beings of different sexes, who dared to love each other in spite of monastic ties, as if he had witnessed the horrible conjunctions I have alluded to. Had he seen vipers engendering in that frightful knot which seems the pledge of mortal hostility, instead of love, he could not have testified more horror,—and I do him the justice to believe he felt all he testified. Whatever affectation he might employ on points

of conventual austerity, there was none here. Love was a thing he always believed connected with sin, even though consecrated by the name of a sacrament, and called marriage, as it is in our church. But, love in a convent!—Oh, there is no conceiving his rage; still less is it possible to conceive the majestic and overwhelming extent of that rage, when strengthened by principle, and sanctified by religion. I enjoyed the scene beyond all power of description. I saw those wretches, who had triumphed over me, reduced to my level in a moment,—their passions all displayed, and the display placing me a hero triumphant above all. I had crawled to the shelter of their walls, a wretched degraded outcast, and what was my crime? Well,—you shudder, I have done with that. I can only say want drove me to it. And here were beings whom, a few months before, I would have knelt to as to the images round the shrine,—to whom, in the moments of my desperate penitence, I would have clung as to the "horns of the altar," all brought as low, and lower than myself. "Sons of the morning," as I deemed them in the agonies of my humiliation, "how were they fallen!" I feasted on the degradation of the apostate monk and novice,—I enjoyed, to the core of my ulcerated heart, the passion of the Superior, —I felt that they were all men like myself. Angels, as I had thought them, they had all proved themselves mortal; and, by watching their motions, and flattering their passions, and promoting their interest, or setting up my own in opposition to them all, while I made them believe it was only theirs I was intent on, I might make shift to contrive as much misery to others, and to carve out as much occupation to myself, as if I were actually living in the world. Cutting my father's throat was a noble feat certainly, (I ask your pardon, I did not mean to extort that groan from you), but here were hearts to be cut,—and to the core, every day, and all day long, so I never could want employment."

"Here he wiped his hard brow, drew his breath for a moment, and then said, "I do not quite like to go through the details by which this wretched pair were deluded into the hope of effecting their escape from the convent. It is enough that I was the principal agent,—that the Superior connived at it,—that I led them through the very passages you have traversed to-night, they trembling and blessing me at every step,—that——" "Stop," I cried; "wretch! you are tracing my course this night step by step."—"What?" he retorted, with a ferocious laugh, "you think I am betraying you, then; and if it were true, what good would your suspicions do you,—you are in my power? My voice might summon half the convent to seize you this moment,—my arm might fasten you to that wall, till those dogs of death, that wait but my whistle, plunged their fangs into your very vitals. I fancy you would not find their bite less keen, from their tusks being so long sharpened by an immersion in holy water." Another laugh, that seemed to issue from the lungs of a demon, concluded this sentence. "I know I am in your power," I answered; "and were I to trust to that, or to your heart, I had better dash out my brains at once against these walls of rock, which I believe are not harder than the latter. But I know your interests to be some way or other connected with my escape, and therefore I trust you,—because I must. Though my blood, chilled as it is by famine and fatigue, seems frozen in every drop while I listen to you, yet listen I must, and trust my life and liberation to you. I speak to you with the horrid confidence our situation has taught me,—I hate,—I dread you. If we were to meet in life, I would shrink from you with loathings of unspeakable abhorrence, but here mutual misery has mixed the most repugnant substances in unnatural coalition. The force of that alchemy must cease at the moment of my escape from the convent and from you; yet, for these miserable hours, my life is as much dependent on your exertions and presence, as my power of supporting them is on the continuance of your horrible tale,—go on, then. Let us struggle through this dreadful day. *Day!* a name unknown *here*, where noon and night shake hands that never unlock. Let us struggle through it, "hateful and hating one another;" and when it has passed, let us curse and part."

"As I uttered these words, Sir, I felt that terrible *confidence of hostility* which the worst beings are driven to in the worst of circumstances, and I question whether there is a more horrible situation than that in which we cling to each other's hate, instead of each other's love,—in which, at every step of our progress, we hold a dagger to our companion's breast, and say, "If you faulter for a moment, this is in your heart. I hate,—I fear, but I must bear with you." It was singular to me, though it would not be so to those who investigate human nature, that, in proportion as my situation inspired me with a ferocity quite unsuited to our comparative situations, and which must have been the result of the madness of despair and famine, my companion's respect for me appeared to increase. After a long pause, he asked, might he continue his story? I could not speak, for, after the slightest exertion, the sickness of deadly hunger returned on me, and I could only signify, by a feeble motion of my hand, that he might go on.

"They were conducted here," he continued; "I had suggested the plan, and the Superior consented to it. He would not be present, but his dumb nod was enough. I was the conductor of their (intended) escape; they believed they were departing with the connivance of the Superior. I led them through those very passages that you and I have trod. I had a map of this subterranean region, but my blood ran cold as I traversed it; and it was not at all inclined to resume its usual temperament, as I felt what was to be the destination of my attendants. Once I turned the lamp, on pretence of trimming it, to catch a glimpse of the devoted wretches. They were embracing each other,—the light of joy trembled in their eyes. They were whispering to each other hopes of liberation and happiness, and blending my name in the interval they could spare from their prayers for each other. That sight extinguished the last remains of compunction with which my horrible task had inspired me. They dared to be happy in the sight of one who must be for ever miserable,—could there be a

greater insult? I resolved to punish it on the spot. This very apartment was near,—I knew it, and the map of their wanderings no longer trembled in my hand. I urged them to enter this recess, (the door was then entire), while I went to examine the passage. They entered it, thanking me for my precaution,—they knew not they were never to quit it alive. But what were their lives for the agony their happiness cost me? The moment they were inclosed, and clasping each other, (a sight that made me grind my teeth), I closed and locked the door. This movement gave them no immediate uneasiness,—they thought it a friendly precaution. The moment they were secured, I hastened to the Superior, who was on fire at the insult offered to the sanctity of his convent, and still more to the purity of his penetration, on which the worthy Superior piqued himself as much as if it had ever been possible for him to acquire the smallest share of it. He descended with me to the passage,—the monks followed with eyes on fire. In the agitation of their rage, it was with difficulty they could discover the door after I had repeatedly pointed it out to them. The Superior, with his own hands, drove several nails, which the monks eagerly supplied, into the door, that effectually joined it to the staple, *never to be disjoined*; and every blow he gave, doubtless he felt as if it was a reminiscence to the accusing angel, to strike out a sin from the catalogue of his accusations. The work was soon done,—the work never to be undone. At the first sound of steps in the passage, and blows on the door, the victims uttered a shriek of terror. They imagined they were detected, and that an incensed party of monks were breaking open the door. These terrors were soon exchanged for others,—and worse,—as they heard the door nailed up, and listened to our departing steps. They uttered another shriek, but O how different was the accent of its despair!—they knew their doom. * * * * * It was my penance (no,—my delight) to watch at the door, under the pretence of precluding the possibility of their escape, (of which they knew there was no possibility); but, in reality, not only to inflict on me the indignity of being the convent gaoler, but of teaching me that callosity of heart, and induration of nerve, and stubbornness of eye, and apathy of ear, that were best suited to my office. But they might have saved themselves the trouble,—I had them all before ever I entered the convent. Had I been the Superior of the community, I should have undertaken the office of watching the door. You will call this cruelty, I call it curiosity,—that curiosity that brings thousands to witness a tragedy, and makes the most delicate female feast on groans and agonies. I had an advantage over them,—the groan, the agony I feasted on, were real. I took my station at *the door* —that door which, like that of Dante's hell, might have borne the inscription, "Here is no hope,"—with a face of mock penitence, and genuine—cordial delectation. I could hear every word that transpired. For the first hours they tried to comfort each other,—they suggested to each other hopes of liberation,—and as my shadow, crossing the threshold, darkened or restored the light, they said, "That is he;"—then, when this occurred repeatedly, without any effect, they said, "No,—no, it is not he," and swallowed down the sick sob of despair, to hide it from each other. Towards night a monk came to take my place, and to offer me food. I would not have quitted my place for worlds; but I talked to the monk in his own language, and told him I would make a merit with God of my sacrifices, and was resolved to remain there all night, with the permission of the Superior. The monk was glad of having a substitute on such easy terms, and I was glad of the food he left me, for I was hungry now, but I reserved the appetite of my soul for richer luxuries. I heard them talking within. While I was eating, I actually lived on the famine that was devouring them, but of which they did not dare to say a word to each other. They debated, deliberated, and, as misery grows ingenious in its own defence, they at last assured each other that it was impossible the Superior had locked them in there to perish by hunger. At these words I could not help laughing. This laugh reached their ears, and they became silent in a moment. All that night, however, I heard their groans,—those groans of physical suffering, that laugh to scorn all the sentimental sighs that are exhaled from the hearts of the most intoxicated lovers that ever breathed. I heard them all that night. I had read French romances, and all their unimaginable nonsense. Madame Sevignè herself says she would have been tired of her daughter in a long tete-a-tete journey, but clap me two lovers into a dungeon, without food, light, or hope, and I will be damned (that I am already, by the bye) if they do not grow sick of each other within the first twelve hours. The second day hunger and darkness had their usual influence. They shrieked for liberation, and knocked loud and long at their dungeon door. They exclaimed they were ready to submit to any punishment; and the approach of the monks, which they would have dreaded so much the preceding night, they now solicited on their knees. What a jest, after all, are the most awful vicissitudes of human life!—they supplicated now for what they would have sacrificed their souls to avert four-and-twenty hours before. Then the agony of hunger increased, they shrunk from the door, and grovelled apart from each other. *Apart!*—how I watched that. They were rapidly becoming objects of hostility to each other,—oh what a feast to me! They could not disguise from each other the revolting circumstances of their mutual sufferings. It is one thing for lovers to sit down to a feast magnificently spread, and another for lovers to couch in darkness and famine,—to exchange that appetite which cannot be supported without dainties and flattery, for that which would barter a descended Venus for a morsel of food. The second night they raved and groaned, (as occurred); and, amid their agonies, (I must do justice to women, whom I hate as well as men), the man often accused the female as the cause of all his sufferings, but the woman never,—never reproached him. Her groans might indeed have reproached him bitterly, but she never uttered a word that could have caused him pain. There was a change which I well could mark, however, in their physical feelings. The first day they clung together, and every movement I felt was like that of one person. The next the man alone struggled, and the woman moaned in helplessness. The third night,—how shall I tell it?—but you have bid me go on. All the horrible and loathsome excruciations of famine had been undergone; the disunion of every tie of the heart, of passion, of nature, had commenced. In the agonies of their famished sickness they loathed each other,—they could have

cursed each other, if they had had breath to curse. It was on the fourth night that I heard the shriek of the wretched female,—her lover, in the agony of hunger, had fastened his teeth in her shoulder;—that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated, became a meal to him now." * * * * * "Monster! and you laugh?"—"Yes, I laugh at all mankind, and the imposition they dare to practise when they talk of hearts. I laugh at human passions and human cares,—vice and virtue, religion and impiety; they are all the result of petty localities, and artificial situation. One physical want, one severe and abrupt lesson from the tintless and shrivelled lip of necessity, is worth all the logic of the empty wretches who have presumed to prate it, from Zeno down to Burgersdicius. Oh! it silences in a second all the feeble sophistry of *conventional* life, and ascetitious passion. Here were a pair who would not have believed all the world on their knees, even though angels had descended to join in the attestation, that it was possible for them to exist without each other. They had risked every thing, trampled on every thing human and divine, to be in each others sight and arms. One hour of hunger undeceived them. A trivial and ordinary want, whose claims at another time they would have regarded as a vulgar interruption of their spiritualised intercourse, not only, by its natural operation, sundered it for ever, but, before it ceased, converted that intercourse into a source of torment and hostility inconceivable, except among cannibals. The bitterest enemies on earth could not have regarded each other with more abhorrence than *these lovers*. Deluded wretches! you boasted of having hearts, I boast I have none, and which of us gained most by the vaunt, let life decide. My story is nearly finished, and so I hope is the day. When I was last here I had something to excite me;—talking of those things is poor employment to one who has been a witness to them. On the *sixth* day all was still. The door was unnailed, we entered,—they were no more. They lay far from each other, farther than on that voluptuous couch into which their passion had converted the mat of a convent bed. She lay contracted in a heap, a lock of her long hair in her mouth. There was a slight scar on her shoulder,—the rabid despair of famine had produced no farther outrage. He lay extended at his length,—his hand was between his lips; it seemed as if he had not strength to execute the purpose for which he had brought it there. The bodies were brought out for interment. As we removed them into the light, the long hair of the female, falling over a face no longer disguised by the novice's dress, recalled a likeness I thought I could remember. I looked closer, she was my own sister,—my only one,——and I had heard her voice grow fainter and fainter. I had heard——" and his own voice grew fainter—it ceased.

"Trembling for a life with which my own was linked, I staggered towards him. I raised him half up in my arms, and recollecting there must be a current of air through the trap-door, I attempted to trail him along thither. I succeeded, and, as the breeze played over him, I saw with delight unutterable the diminution of the light that streamed through it. It was *evening*,—there was no longer any necessity, no longer any time for delay. He recovered, for his swoon arose not from exhausted sensibility, but from mere inanition. However it was, I found my interest in watching his recovery; and, had I been adequate to the task of observing extraordinary vicissitudes of the human mind, I would have been indeed amazed at the change that he manifested on his recovery. Without the least reference to his late story, or late feelings, he started from my arms at the discovery that the light had diminished, and prepared for our escape through the trap-door, with a restored energy of strength, and sanity of intellect, that might have been deemed miraculous if it had occurred in a convent:—Happening to occur full thirty feet below the proper surface for a miracle, it must be put to the account of strong excitement merely. I could not indeed dare to believe a miracle was wrought in favour of my profane attempt, and so I was glad to put up with second causes. With incredible dexterity he climbed up the wall, with the help of the rugged stones and my shoulders,—threw open the trap-door, pronounced that all was safe, assisted me to ascend after him,—and, with gasping delight, I once more breathed the breath of heaven. The night was perfectly dark. I could not distinguish the buildings from the trees, except when a faint breeze gave motion to the latter. To this darkness, I am convinced, I owe the preservation of my reason under such vicissitudes,—the glory of a resplendent night would have driven me mad, emerging from darkness, famine, and cold. I would have wept, and laughed, and knelt, and turned idolater. I would have "worshipped the host of heaven, and the moon walking in her brightness." Darkness was my best security, in every sense of the word. We traversed the garden, without feeling the ground under our feet. As we approached the wall, I became again deadly sick,—my senses grew giddy, I reeled. I whispered to my companion, "Are there not lights gleaming from the convent windows?"—"No, the lights are flashing from your own eyes,—it is only the effect of darkness, famine, and fear,—come on."—"But I hear a sound of bells."—"The bells are ringing only in your ears,—an empty stomach is your sexton, and you fancy you hear bells. Is this a time to faulter?—come on, come on. Don't hang such a dead weight on my arm,—don't fall, if you can help it. Oh God, he has swooned!"

"These were the last words I heard. I had fallen, I believe, into his arms. With that instinct that acts most auspiciously in the absence of both thought and feeling, he dragged me in his brawny arms to the wall, *and twisted my cold fingers* in the ropes of the ladder. The touch restored me in a moment; and, almost before my hand had touched the ropes, my feet began to ascend them. My companion followed extempore. We reached the summit,—I tottered from weakness and terror. I felt a sickly dread, that, though the ladder was there, Juan was not. A moment after a lanthorn flashed in my eyes,—I saw a figure below. I sprung down, careless, in that wild moment, whether I met the dagger of an assassin, or the embrace of a brother. "Alonzo, dear Alonzo," murmured a voice. "Juan, dear Juan," was all I could utter, as I felt my shivering breast held close to that of the most generous and affectionate of brothers. "How much you must have

suffered,—how much I have suffered," he whispered; "during the last horrible twenty-four hours, I almost gave you up. Make haste, the carriage is not twenty paces off." And, as he spoke, the shifting of a lanthorn shewed me those imperious and beautiful features, which I had once dreaded as the pledge of eternal emulation, but which I now regarded as the smile of the proud but benignant god of my liberation. I pointed to my companion, I could not speak,—hunger was consuming my vitals. Juan supported me, consoled me, encouraged me; did all, and more, than man ever did for man,—than man ever did, perhaps, for the most shrinking and delicate of the other sex under his protection. Oh, with what agony of heart I retrace his manly tenderness! We waited for my companion,—he descended the wall. "Make haste, make haste," Juan whispered; "I am famishing too. I have not tasted food for four-and-twenty hours, watching for you." We hurried on. It was a waste place,—I could only distinguish a carriage by the light of a dim lanthorn, but that was enough for me. I sprung lightly into it. "*He is safe*," cried Juan, following me. "*But are you?*" answered a voice of thunder. Juan staggered back from the step of the carriage,—he fell. I sprung out, I fell too—on his body. I was bathed in his blood,——he was no more."

CHAPTER X.

Men who with mankind were foes.

* * * *

Or who, in desperate doubt of grace.—

* * * *

Scott's Marmion.

"One wild moment of yelling agony,—one flash of a fierce and fiery light, that seemed to envelope and wither me soul and body,—one sound, that swept through my ears and brain like the last trumpet, as it will thrill on the senses of those who slept in guilt, and awake in despair,—one such moment, that condenses and crowds all imaginable sufferings in one brief and intense pang, and appears exhausted itself by the blow it has struck,—one such moment I remember, and no more. Many a month of gloomy unconsciousness rolled over me, without date or notice. One thousand waves may welter over a sunk wreck, and be felt as *one*. I have a dim recollection of refusing food, of resisting change of place, &c. but they were like the faint and successless attempts we make under the burden of the night-mare; and those with whom I had to do, probably regarded any opposition I could make no more than the tossings of a restless sleeper.

"From dates that I have since been enabled to collect, I must have been four months at least in this state; and ordinary persecutors would have given me up as a hopeless subject for any further sufferings; but religious malignity is too industrious, and too ingenious, to resign the hope of a victim but with life. If the fire is extinguished, it sits and watches the embers. If the strings of the heart crack in its hearing, it listens if it be the *last* that has broken. It is a spirit that delights to ride on the *tenth wave*, and view it whelm and bury the sufferer for ever. * * * * * * *

"Many changes had taken place, without any consciousness on my part of them. Perhaps the profound tranquillity of my *last* abode contributed more than any thing else to the recovery of my reason. I distinctly remember awaking at once to the full exercise of my senses and reason, and finding myself in a place which I examined with the most amazed and jealous curiosity. My memory did not molest me in the least. Why I was there? or what I had suffered before I was brought there? it never occurred to me to inquire. The return of the intellectual powers came slowly in, like the waves of an advancing tide, and happily for me memory was the last,—the occupation of my senses was at first quite enough for me. You must expect no romance-horrors, Sir, from my narrative. Perhaps a life like mine may revolt the taste that has feasted to fastidiousness; but truth sometimes gives full and dreadful compensation, in presenting us facts instead of images.

"I found myself lying on a bed, not very different from that in my cell, but the apartment was wholly unlike the latter. It was somewhat larger, and covered with matting. There was neither crucifix, painting, or vessel for holy water;—the bed, a coarse table which supported a lighted lamp, and a vessel containing water for the purpose, were all the furniture. There was no window; and some iron knobs in the door, to which the light of the lamp gave a kind of dismal distinctness and prominence, proved that it was strongly secured. I raised myself on my arm, and gazed round me with the apprehensiveness of one who fears that the slightest motion may dissolve the spell, and plunge him again in darkness. At that moment the recollection of all the past struck me like a thunder-bolt. I uttered a cry, that seemed to drain me of breath and being at once, and fell back on the bed, not senseless but exhausted. I remembered every event in a moment, with an intenseness that could only be equalled by actual and present agency in them,—my escape,—my safety,—my despair. I felt Juan's embrace,—then I felt his blood stream over me. I saw his eyes turn in despair, before

they closed for ever, and I uttered another cry, such as had never before been heard within those walls. At the repetition of this sound the door opened, and a person, in a habit I had never seen before, approached, and signified to me by signs, that I must observe the most profound silence. Nothing, indeed, could be more expressive of this meaning, than his denying himself the use of his voice to convey it. I gazed on this apparition in silence,—my amazement had all the effect of an apparent submission to his injunctions. He retired, and I began to wonder where I was. Was it among the dead? or some subterranean world of the mute and voiceless, where there was no air to convey sounds, and no echo to repeat them, and the famished ear waited in vain for its sweetest banquet,—the voice of man? These wanderings were dispelled by the re-entrance of the person. He placed bread, water, and a small portion of meat on the table, motioned me to approach, (which I did mechanically), and, when I was seated, *whispered* me, That my unhappy situation having hitherto rendered me incapable of understanding the regulations of the place where I was, he had been compelled to postpone acquainting me with them; but *now* he was obliged to warn me, that my voice must never be raised beyond the key in which he addressed me, and which was sufficient for all proper purposes of communication; finally, he assured me that cries, exclamations of any kind, or even *coughing too loud*(8), (which might be interpreted as a signal), would be considered as an attempt on the inviolable habits of the place, and punished with the utmost severity. To my repeated questions of “Where am I? what is this place, with its mysterious regulations?” he replied in a whisper, that his business was to issue orders, not to answer questions; and so saying he departed. However extraordinary these injunctions appeared, the manner in which they were issued was so imposing, peremptory, and *habitual*,—it seemed so little a thing of local contrivance and temporary display,—so much like the established language of an absolute and long-fixed system, that obedience to it seemed inevitable. I threw myself on the bed, and murmured to myself, “Where am I?” till sleep overcame me.

“I have heard that the first sleep of a recovered maniac is intensely profound. Mine was not so, it was broken by many troubled dreams. One, in particular, brought me back to the convent. I thought I was a boarder in it, and studying Virgil. I was reading that passage in the second book, where the vision of Hector appears to Æneas in his dream, and his ghastly and dishonoured form suggests the mournful exclamation,

“——Heu quantum mutatus ab illo,—

——Quibus ab oris, Hector expectate venis?”

Then I thought Juan was Hector,—that the same pale and bloody phantom stood calling me to fly—“Heu fuge,” while I vainly tried to obey him. Oh that dreary mixture of truth and delirium, of the real and visionary, of the conscious and unconscious parts of existence, that visits the dreams of the unhappy! He was Pantheus, and murmured,

“Venit summa dies, et ineluctabile tempus.”

I appeared to weep and struggle in my dream. I addressed the figure that stood before me sometimes as Juan, and sometimes as the image of the Trojan vision. At last the figure uttered, with a kind of querulous shriek,—that *vox stridula* which we hear only in dreams,

“Proximus ardet Ucalegon,”

and I started up fully awake, in all the horrors of an expected conflagration.

“It is incredible, Sir, how the senses and the mind can operate thus, during the apparent suspension of both; how sound can affect organs that seem to be shut, and objects affect the sight, while its sense appears to be closed,—can impress on its dreaming consciousness, images more horribly vivid than even reality ever presented. I awoke with the idea that flames were raging in contact with my eye-balls, and I saw only a pale light, held by a paler hand—close to my eyes indeed, but withdrawn the moment I awoke. The person who held it shrouded it for a moment, and then advanced and flashed its full light on me, and along with it—the person of my companion. The associations of our last meeting rushed on me. I started up, and said, “Are we free, then?”—“Hush,—one of us is free; but you must not speak so loud.”—“Well, I have heard that before, but I cannot comprehend the necessity of this whispering secrecy. If I am free, tell me so, and tell me whether Juan has survived that last horrible moment,—my intellect is but just respiring. Tell me how Juan fares.”—“Oh, sumptuously. No prince in all the land reposes under a more gorgeous canopy,—marble pillars, waving banners, and nodding plumes. He had music too, but he did not seem to heed it. He lay stretched on velvet and gold, but he appeared insensible of all these luxuries. There was a curl on his cold white lip, too, that seemed to breathe ineffable scorn on all that was going on,—but he was proud enough even in his life-time.”—“His life-time!” I shrieked; “then he *is* dead?”—“Can you doubt that, when you know who struck the blow? None of my victims ever gave me the trouble of a second.”—“You,—you?” I swam for some moments in a sea of flames and blood. My frenzy returned, and I remember only uttering curses that would have exhausted divine vengeance in all its plenitude to fulfil. I might have

continued to rave till my reason was totally lost, but I was silenced and stunned by his laugh bursting out amid my curses, and overwhelming them.

"That laugh made me cease, and lift up my eyes to him, as if I expected to see another being,—it was still the same. "And you dreamt," he cried, "in your temerity, you dreamt of setting the vigilance of a convent at defiance? Two boys, one the fool of fear, and the other of temerity, were fit antagonists for that stupendous system, whose roots are in the bowels of the earth, and whose head is among the stars,—*you* escape from a convent! *you* defy a power that has defied sovereigns! A power whose influence is unlimited, indefinable, and unknown, even to those who exercise it, as there are mansions so vast, that their inmates, to their last hour, have never visited all the apartments;—a power whose operation is like its motto,—one and indivisible. The soul of the Vatican breathes in the humblest convent in Spain,—and you, an insect perched on a wheel of this vast machine, imagined you were able to arrest its progress, while its rotation was hurrying on to crush you to atoms." While he was uttering these words, with a rapidity and energy inconceivable, (a rapidity that literally made one word seem to devour another), I tried, with that effort of intellect which seems like the gasping respiration of one whose breath has long been forcibly suppressed or suspended, to comprehend and follow him. The first thought that struck me was one not very improbable in my situation, that he was not the person he appeared to be,—that it was not the companion of my escape who now addressed me; and I summoned all the remains of my intellect to ascertain this. A few questions must determine this point, if I had breath to utter them. "Were you not the agent in my escape? Were you not the man who—— What tempted you to this step, in the defeat of which you appear to rejoice?"—"A bribe."—"And you have betrayed me, you say, and boast of your treachery,—what tempted you to this?"—"A higher bribe. Your brother gave gold, but the convent promised me salvation,—a business I was very willing to commit to their hands, as I was totally incompetent to manage it myself."—"Salvation, for treachery and murder?"—"Treachery and murder,—hard words. Now, to talk sense, was not yours the vilest treachery? You reclaimed your vows,—you declared before God and man, that the words you uttered before both were the babble of an infant; then you seduced your brother from his duty to his and your parents,—you connived at his intriguing against the peace and sanctity of a monastic institution, and dare *you* talk of treachery? And did you not, with a callosity of conscience unexampled in one so young, accept, nay, cling to an associate in your escape whom you knew you were seducing from his vows,—from all that man reveres as holy, and all that God (if there be a God) must regard as binding on man? You knew my crime, you knew my atrocity, yet you brandished me as your banner of defiance against the Almighty, though its inscription was, in glaring characters,—impiety—parricide—irreligion. Torn as the banner was, it still hung near the altar, till you dragged it away, to wrap yourself from detection in its folds,—and *you* talk of treachery?—there is not a more traitorous wretch on earth than yourself. Suppose that I was all that is vile and culpable, was it for you to double-dye the hue of my crime in the crimson of your sacrilege and apostacy? And for murder, I know I am a parricide. I cut my father's throat, but he never felt the blow,—nor did I,—I was intoxicated with wine, with passion, with blood,—no matter which; but you, with cold deliberate blows, struck at the hearts of father and mother. You killed by inches,—I murdered at a blow,—which of us is the murderer?—And *you* prate of treachery and murder? I am as innocent as the child that is born this hour, compared to you. Your father and mother have separated,—she is gone into a convent, to hide her despair and shame at your unnatural conduct,—your father is plunging successively into the abysses of voluptuousness and penitence, wretched in both; your brother, in his desperate attempt to liberate you, has perished,—you have scattered desolation over a whole family,—you have stabbed the peace and heart of each of them, with a hand that deliberated and paused on its blow, and then struck it calmly,—and you dare to talk of treachery and murder? You are a thousand times more culpable than I am, guilty as you think me. I stand a blasted tree,—I am struck to the heart, to the root,—I wither alone,—but you are the Upas, under whose poisonous droppings all things living have perished,—father—mother—brother, and last yourself;—the erosions of the poison, having nothing left to consume, strike inward, and prey on your own heart. Wretch, condemned beyond the sympathy of man, beyond the redemption of the Saviour, what can you say to this?"—I answered only, "Is Juan dead, and were you his murderer,—were you indeed? I believe all you say, I must be very guilty, but is Juan dead?" As I spoke, I lifted up to him eyes that no longer seemed to see,—a countenance that bore no expression but that of the stupefaction of intense grief. I could neither utter nor feel reproaches,—I had suffered beyond the power of complaint. I awaited his answer; he was silent, but his diabolical silence spoke. "And my mother retired to a convent?" he nodded. "And my father?" he smiled, and I closed my eyes. I could bear any thing but his smile. I raised my head a few moments after, and saw him, with an habitual motion, (it could not have been more), make the sign of the cross, as a clock in some distant passage struck. This sight reminded me of the play so often acted in Madrid, and which I had seen in my few days of liberation,—El diablo Predicador. You smile, Sir, at such a recollection operating at such a moment, but it is a fact; and had you witnessed that play under the singular circumstances I did, you would not wonder at my being struck with the coincidence. In this performance the infernal spirit is the hero, and in the disguise of a monk he appears in a convent, where he torments and persecutes the community with a mixture of malignity and mirth truly Satanic. One night that I saw it performed, a groupe of monks were carrying the Host to a dying person; the walls of the theatre were so slight, that we could distinctly hear the sound of the bell which they ring on that occasion. In an instant, actors, audience, and all, were on their knees, and the devil, who happened to be on the stage, knelt among the rest, and crossed himself with visible marks of a devotion equally

singular and edifying. You will allow the coincidence to be irresistibly striking.

“When he had finished his monstrous profanation of the holy sign, I fixed my eyes on him with an expression not to be mistaken. He saw it. There is not so bitter a reproach on earth as silence, for it always seems to refer the guilty to their own hearts, whose eloquence seldom fails to fill up the pause very little to the satisfaction of the accused. My look threw him into a rage, that I am now convinced not the most bitter upbraidings could have caused. The utmost fury of imprecation would have fallen on his ear like the most lulling harmony;—it would have convinced him that his victim was suffering all he could possibly inflict. He betrayed this in the violence of his exclamations. “What, wretch!” he cried;—“Do you think it was for your masses and your mummeries, your vigils, and fasts, and mumbling over senseless unconsoling beads, and losing my rest all night watching for the matins, and then quitting my frozen mat to nail my knees to stone till they grew there,—till I thought the whole pavement would rise with me when I rose,—do you think it was for the sake of listening to sermons that the preachers did not believe,—and prayers that the lips that uttered them yawned at in the listlessness of their infidelity,—and penances that might be hired out to a lay-brother to undergo for a pound of coffee or of snuff,—and the vilest subserviencies to the caprice and passion of a Superior,—and the listening to men with God for ever in their mouths, and the world for ever in their hearts,—men who think of nothing but the aggrandizement of their temporal distinction, and screen, under the most revolting affectation of a concern in spiritualities, their ravening cupidity after earthly eminence:—Wretch! do you dream that it was for this?—that this *atheism of bigotry*,—this creed of all the priests that ever have existed in connexion with the state, and in hope of extending their interest by that connexion,—could have any influence over *me*? I had sounded every depth in the mine of depravity before them. I knew them,—I despised them. I crouched before them in body, I spurned them in my soul. With all their sanctimony, they had hearts so worldly, that it was scarce worth while to watch their hypocrisy, the secret developed itself so soon. There was no discovery to be made, no place for detection. I have seen them on their high festivals, prelates, and abbots, and priests, in all their pomp of office, appearing to the laity like descended gods, blazing in gems and gold, amid the lustre of tapers and the floating splendour of an irradiated atmosphere alive with light, and all soft and delicate harmonies and delicious odours, till, as they disappeared amid the clouds of incense so gracefully tossed from the gilded censers, the intoxicated eye dreamed it saw them ascending to Paradise. Such was the *scene*, but what was *behind the scene*?—*I saw it all.* Two or three of them would rush from service into the vestry together, under the pretence of changing their vestments. One would imagine that these men would have at least the decency to refrain, while in the intervals of the holy mass. No, I overheard them. While shifting their robes, they talked incessantly of promotions and appointments,—of this or that prelate, dying or dead,—of a wealthy benefice being vacant,—of one dignitary having bargained hard with the state for the promotion of a relative,—of another who had well-founded hopes of obtaining a bishoprick, for what? neither for learning or piety, or one feature of the pastoral character, but because he had valuable benefices to resign in exchange, that might be divided among numerous candidates. Such was their conversation,—such and such only were their thoughts, till the last thunders of the allelujah from the church made them start, and hurry to resume their places at the altar. Oh what a compound of meanness and pride, of imbecillity and pretension, of sanctimony so transparently and awkwardly worn, that the naked frame of the natural mind was visible to every eye beneath it,—that mind which is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” Was it to live among such wretches, who, all-villain as I was, made me hug myself with the thought that at least I was not like them, a passionless prone reptile,—a thing made of forms and dressings, half satin and shreds, half ave’s and credo’s,—bloated and abject,—creeping and aspiring,—winding up and up the pedestal of power at the rate of an inch a day, and tracking its advance to eminence by the flexibility of its writhings, the obliquity of its course, and the filth of its slime,—was it for this?”—he paused, half-choaked with his emotions.

“This man might have been a better being under better circumstances; he had at least a disdain of all that was mean in vice, with a wild avidity for all that was atrocious. “Was it for this,” he continued, “that I have sold myself to work their works of darkness,—that I have become in this life as it were an apprentice to Satan, to take anticipated lessons of torture,—that I have sealed those indentures here, which must be fulfilled below? No, I despise—I loathe it all, the agents and the system,—the men and their matters. But it is the creed of that system, (and true or false it avails not,—some kind of creed is necessary, and the falser perhaps the better, for falsehood at least flatters), that the greatest criminal may expiate his offences, by vigilantly watching, and severely punishing, those of the enemies of heaven. Every offender may purchase his immunity, by consenting to become the executioner of the offender whom he betrays and denounces. In the language of the laws of another country, they may turn “king’s evidence,” and buy their own lives at the price of another’s,—a bargain which every man is very ready to make. But, in religious life, this kind of transfer, this substitutional suffering, is adopted with an avidity indescribable. How we love to punish those whom the church calls the enemies of God, while conscious that, though our enmity against him is infinitely greater, we become acceptable in his sight by tormenting those who may be less guilty, but who are in our power! I hate you, not because I have any natural or social cause to do so, but because the exhaustion of my resentment on you, may diminish that of the Deity towards me. If I persecute and torment the enemies of God, must I not be the friend of God? Must not every pang I inflict on another, be recorded in the book of the All-remembering, as an expurgation of at least one of the pangs that

await me hereafter? I have no religion, I believe in no God, I repeat no creed, but I have that superstition of fear and of futurity, that seeks its wild and hopeless mitigation in the sufferings of others when our own are exhausted, or when (a much more common case) we are unwilling to undergo them. I am convinced that my own crimes will be obliterated, by whatever crimes of others I can promote or punish. Had I not, then, every motive to urge you to crime? Had I not every motive to watch and aggravate your punishment? Every coal of fire that I heaped on your head, was removing one from that fire that burns for ever and ever for mine. Every drop of water that I withheld from your burning tongue, I expect will be repaid to me in slaking the fire and brimstone into which I must one day be hurled. Every tear that I draw, every groan that I extort, will, I am convinced, be repaid me in the remission of my own!—guess what a price I set on yours, or those of any other victim. The man in ancient story trembled and paused over the scattered limbs of his child, and failed in the pursuit,—the true penitent rushes over the mangled members of nature and passion, collects them with a hand in which there is no pulse, and a heart in which there is no feeling, and holds them up them in the face of the Divinity as a peace-offering. Mine is the best theology,—the theology of utter hostility to all beings whose sufferings may mitigate mine. In this flattering theory, your crimes become my virtues,—I need not any of my own. Guilty as I am of the crime that outrages nature, your crimes (the crimes of those who offend against the church) are of a much more heinous order. But your guilt is my exculpation, your sufferings are my triumph. I need not repent, I need not believe; if you suffer, I am saved,—that is enough for me. How glorious and easy it is to erect at once the trophy of our salvation, on the trampled and buried hopes of another's! How subtle and sublime that alchemy, that can convert the iron of another's contumacy and impenitence into the precious gold of your own redemption! I have literally worked out *my* salvation by *your* fear and trembling. With this hope I appeared to concur in the plan laid by your brother, every feature of which was in its progress disclosed to the Superior. With this hope I passed that wretched night and day in the dungeon with you, for, to have effected our escape by day-light, would have startled credulity as gross as even yours. But all the time I was feeling the dagger I bore in my breast, and which I had received for a purpose amply accomplished. As for you,—the Superior consented to your attempt to escape, merely that he might have you more in his power. He and the community were tired of you, they saw you would never make a monk,—your appeal had brought disgrace on them, your presence was a reproach and a burden to them. The sight of you was as thorns in their eyes,—they judged you would make a better victim than a proselyte, and they judged well. You are a much fitter inmate for your present abode than your last, and from hence there is no danger of your escaping."—"And where, then, am I?"—"*You are in the prison of the Inquisition.*"

CHAPTER XI.

Oh! torture me no more, I will confess.

Henry the Sixth.

You have betrayed her to her own reproof.

Comedy of Errors.

"And it was true,—I was a prisoner in the Inquisition. Great emergencies certainly inspire us with the feelings they demand; and many a man has braved a storm on the wide wild ocean, who would have shrunk from its voice as it pealed down his chimney. I believe so it fared with me,—the storm had risen, and I braced myself to meet it. I was in the Inquisition, but I knew that my crime, heinous as it was, was not one that came properly under the cognizance of the Inquisition. It was a conventual fault of the highest class, but liable only to be punished by the ecclesiastical power. The punishment of a monk who had dared to escape from his convent, might be dreadful enough,—immurement, or death perhaps, but still I was not legitimately a prisoner of the Inquisition. I had never, under all my trials, spoken a disrespectful word of the holy Catholic church, or a doubtful one of our most holy faith,—I had not dropped one heretical, obnoxious, or equivocal expression, relative to a single point of duty, or article of faith. The preposterous charges of sorcery and possession, brought against me in the convent, had been completely disproved at the visitation of the Bishop. My aversion to the monastic state was indeed sufficiently known and fatally proved, but that was no subject for the investigation or penalties of the Inquisition. I had nothing to fear from the Inquisition,—at least so I said to myself in my prison, and I believed myself. The seventh day after the recovery of my reason was fixed on for my examination, and of this I received due notice, though I believe it is contrary to the usual forms of the Inquisition to give this notice; and the examination took place on the day and hour appointed.

"You are aware, Sir, that the tales related in general of the interior discipline of the Inquisition, must be in nine out of ten mere fables, as the prisoners are bound by an oath never to disclose what happens within its walls; and they who could violate this oath, would certainly not scruple to violate truth in the details with which their emancipation from it indulges them. I am forbidden, by an oath which I shall never break, to disclose the circumstances of my imprisonment

or examination. I am at liberty to mention some general features of both, as they are connected with my extraordinary narrative. My first examination terminated rather favourably; my contumacy and aversion to monasticism were indeed deplored and reprobated, but there was no ulterior hint,—nothing to alarm the peculiar fears of an inmate of the Inquisition. So I was as happy as solitude, darkness, straw, bread, and water, could make me, or any one, till, on the fourth night after my first examination, I was awoke by a light gleaming so strongly on my eyes, that I started up. The person then retired with his light, and I discovered a figure sitting in the farthest corner of my cell. Delighted at the sight of a human form, I yet had acquired so much of the habit of the Inquisition, that I demanded, in a cold and peremptory voice, who had ventured to intrude on the cell of a prisoner? The person answered in the blandest tones that ever soothed the human ear, that he was, like myself, a prisoner in the Inquisition;—that, by its indulgence, he had been permitted to visit me, and hoped——"And is *hope* to be named here?" I could not help exclaiming. He answered in the same soft and deprecatory tone; and, without adverting to our peculiar circumstances, suggested the consolation that might be derived from the society of two sufferers who were indulged with the power of meeting and communicating with each other.

"This man visited me for several successive nights; and I could not help noticing three extraordinary circumstances in his visits and his appearance. The first was, that he always (when he could) concealed his eyes from me; he sat sideways and backways, shifted his position, changed his seat, held up his hand before his eyes; but when at times he was compelled or *surprised* to turn their light on me, I felt that I had never beheld such eyes blazing in a mortal face,—in the darkness of my prison, I held up my hand to shield myself from their preternatural glare. The second was, that he came and retired apparently without help or hindrance,—that he came, like one who had a key to the door of my dungeon, at all hours, without leave or forbiddance,—that he traversed the prisons of the Inquisition, like one who had a master-key to its deepest recesses. Lastly, he spoke not only in a tone of voice clear and audible, totally unlike the whispered communications of the Inquisition, but spoke his abhorrence of the whole system,—his indignation against the Inquisition, Inquisitors, and all their aiders and abettors, from St Dominic down to the lowest official,—with such unqualified rage of vituperation, such caustic inveteracy of satire, such unbounded license of ludicrous and yet withering severity, that I trembled.

"You know, Sir, or perhaps have yet to know, that there are persons *accredited* in the Inquisition, who are permitted to solace the solitude of the prisoners, on the condition of obtaining, under the pretence of friendly communication, those secrets which even torture has failed to extort. I discovered in a moment that my visitor was not one of these,—his abuse of the system was too gross, his indignation too unfeigned. Yet, in his continued visits, there was one circumstance more, which struck me with a feeling of terror that actually paralyzed and annihilated all the terrors of the Inquisition.

"He constantly alluded to events and personages beyond his *possible memory*,—then he checked himself,—then he appeared to go on, with a kind of wild and derisive sneer at his own *absence*. But this perpetual reference to events long past, and men long buried, made an impression on me I cannot describe. His conversation was rich, various, and intelligent, but it was interspersed with such reiterated mention of the dead, that I might be pardoned for feeling as if the speaker was one of them. He dealt much in anecdotical history, and I, who was very ignorant of it, was delighted to listen to him, for he told every thing with the fidelity of an eye-witness. He spoke of the *Restoration* in England, and repeated the well-remembered observation of the queen-mother, Henriette of France,—that, had she known as much of the English on her first arrival, as she did on her second, she never would have been driven from the throne; then he added, to my astonishment, I was beside her carriage(9), *it was the only one then in London*. He afterwards spoke of the superb fetes given by Louis Quatorze, and described, with an accuracy that made me start, the magnificent chariot in which that monarch personated the god of day, while all the titled pimps and harlots of the court followed as the rabble of Olympus. Then he reverted to the death of the Duchesse d'Orleans, sister to Charles II.—to Pere Bourdalone's awful sermon, preached at the death-bed of the royal beauty, dying of poison, (as suspected); and added, I saw the roses heaped on her toilette, to array her for a fete that very night, and near them stood the pix, and tapers, and oil, shrouded with the lace of that very toilette. Then he passed to England; he spoke of the wretched and well-rebuked pride of the wife of James II. who "thought it scorn" to sit at the same table with an Irish officer who informed her husband (then Duke of York) that *he* had sat at table, as an officer in the Austrian service, where the Duchess's father (Duke of Modena) had stood behind a chair, as a vassal to the Emperor of Germany.

"These circumstances were trifling, and might be told by any one, but there was a minuteness and circumstantiality in his details, that perpetually forced on the mind the idea that he had himself seen what he described, and been conversant with the personages he spoke of. I listened to him with an indefinable mixture of curiosity and terror. At last, while relating a trifling but characteristic circumstance that occurred in the reign of Louis the Thirteenth, he used the following expressions(10): "One night that the king was at an entertainment, where Cardinal Richelieu also was present, the Cardinal had the insolence to rush out of the apartment before his Majesty, just as the coach of the latter was announced. The King, without any indignant notice of the arrogance of the minister, said, with much *bon hommie*, "His

Eminence the Cardinal will always be first."—"The first to attend your Majesty," answered the Cardinal, with admirable polite presence of mind; and, snatching a flambeau from a page who *stood near me*, he lighted the King to his carriage." I could not help catching at the extraordinary words that had escaped him; and I asked him, "Were you there?" He gave some indirect answer; and, avoiding the subject, went on to amuse me with some other curious circumstances of the private history of that age, of which he spoke with a minute fidelity somewhat *alarming*. I confess my pleasure in listening to them was greatly diminished by the singular sensation with which this man's presence and conversation inspired me. He departed, and I regretted his absence, though I could not account for the extraordinary feeling which I experienced during his visits.

"A few days after I was to encounter my second examination. The night before it one of the *officials* visited me. These are men who are not the common officers of a prison, but accredited in some degree by the higher powers of the Inquisition, and I paid due respect to his communications, particularly as they were delivered more in detail, and with more emphasis and energy than I could have expected from an inmate of that speechless mansion. This circumstance made me expect something extraordinary, and his discourse verified all, and more than I expected. He told me in plain terms, that there had been lately a cause of disturbance and inquietude, which had never before occurred in the Inquisition. That it was reported a human figure had appeared in the cells of some of the prisoners, uttering words not only hostile to the Catholic religion, and the discipline of the most holy Inquisition, but to religion in general, to the belief of a God and a future state. He added, that the utmost vigilance of the officials, on the rack for discovery, had never been able to trace this being in his visits to the cells of the prisoners; that the guards had been doubled, and every precaution that the circumspection of the Inquisition could employ, was had recourse to, hitherto without success; and that the only intimation they had of this singular visitor, was from some of the prisoners whose cells he had entered, and whom he had addressed in language that seemed lent him by the enemy of mankind, to accomplish the perdition of these unhappy beings. He himself had hitherto eluded all discovery; but he trusted, that, with the means lately adopted, it was impossible for this agent of the evil one to insult and baffle the holy tribunal much longer. He advised me to be prepared on this point, as it would undoubtedly be touched on at my next examination, and perhaps more urgently than I might otherwise imagine; and so, commending me to the holy keeping of God, he departed.

"Not wholly unconscious of the subject alluded to in this extraordinary communication, but perfectly innocent of any ulterior signification, as far as related to myself, I awaited my next examination rather with hope than fear. After the usual questions of—Why I was there? who had accused me? for what offence? whether I could recollect any expression that had ever intimated a disregard for the tenets of the holy church? &c. &c. &c.—after all this had been gone through, in a detail that may be spared the hearer, certain extraordinary questions were proposed to me, that appeared to relate indirectly to the appearance of my late visitor. I answered them with a sincerity that seemed to make a frightful impression on my judges. I stated plainly, in answer to their questions, that a person had appeared in my dungeon. "You must call it cell," said the Supreme. "In my cell, then. He spoke with the utmost severity of the holy office,—he uttered words that it would not be respectful for me to repeat. I could scarcely believe that such a person would be permitted to visit the dungeons (cells, I should say) of the holy Inquisition." As I uttered these words, one of the judges, trembling on his seat, (while his shadow, magnified by the imperfect light, pictured the figure of a paralytic giant on the wall opposite to me), attempted to address some question to me. As he spoke, there came a hollow sound from his throat, his eyes were rolled upwards in their sockets,—he was in an apoplectic paroxysm, and died before he could be removed to another apartment. The examination terminated suddenly, and in some confusion; but, as I was remanded back to my cell, I could perceive, to my consternation, that I had left an impression the most unfavourable on the minds of the judges. They interpreted this accidental circumstance in a manner the most extraordinary and unjust, and I felt the consequences of it at my next examination.

"That night I received a visit in my cell from one of the judges of the Inquisition, who conversed with me a considerable time, and in an earnest and dispassionate manner. He stated the atrocious and revolting character under which I appeared from the first before the Inquisition,—that of a monk who had apostatized, had been accused of the crime of sorcery in his convent, and, in his impious attempt at escape, had caused the death of his brother, whom he had seduced to join in it, and had overwhelmed one of the first families with despair and disgrace. Here I was going to reply, but he stopped me, and observed, that he came not to listen, but to speak; and went on to inform me, that though I had been acquitted of the charge of communication with the evil spirit at the visitation of the Bishop, certain suspicions attached to me had been fearfully strengthened, by the fact that the visits of the extraordinary being, of whom I had heard enough to assure me of his actuality, had never been known in the prison of the Inquisition till my entrance into it. That the fair and probable conclusion was, that I was really the victim of the enemy of mankind, whose power (through the reluctant permission of God and St Dominic, and he crossed himself as he spoke) had been suffered to range even through the walls of the holy office. He cautioned me, in severe but plain terms, against the danger of the situation in which I was placed, by the suspicions universally and (he feared) too justly attached to me; and, finally, adjured me, as I valued my salvation, to place my entire confidence in the mercy of the holy office, and, if *the figure* should visit me

again, to watch what its impure lips might suggest, and faithfully report it to the holy office.

“When the Inquisitor had departed, I reflected on what he had said. I conceived it was something like the conspiracies so often occurring in the convent. I conceived that this might be an attempt to involve me in some plot against myself, something in which I might be led to be active in my own condemnation,—I felt the necessity of vigilant and breathless caution. I knew myself innocent, and this is a consciousness that defies even the Inquisition itself; but, within the walls of the Inquisition, the consciousness, and the defiance it inspires, are alike vain. I finally resolved, however, to watch every circumstance that might occur within the walls of my cell very closely, threatened as I was at once by the powers of the Inquisition, and those of the infernal demon, and I had not long to watch. It was on the second night after my examination, that I saw this person enter my cell. My first impulse was to call aloud for the officials of the Inquisition. I felt a kind of vacillation I cannot describe, between throwing myself into the power of the Inquisition, or the power of this extraordinary being, more formidable perhaps than all the Inquisitors on earth, from Madrid to Goa. I dreaded imposition on both sides. I believed that they were playing off terror against terror; I knew not what to believe or think. I felt myself surrounded by enemies on every side, and would have given my heart to those who would first throw off the mask, and announce themselves as my decided and avowed enemy. After some reflection, I judged it best *to distrust the Inquisition*, and to hear all that this extraordinary visitor had to say. In my secret soul I believed him their secret agent,—I did them great injustice. His conversation on this second visit was more than usually amusing, but it was certainly such as might justify all the suspicions of the Inquisitors. At every sentence he uttered, I was disposed to start up and call for the officials. Then I represented to myself his turning accuser, and pointing *me* out as the victim of their condemnation. I trembled at the idea of committing myself by a word, while in the power of that dreadful body that might condemn me to expire under the torture,—or, worse, to die the long and lingering death of inanity,—the mind famished, the body scarcely fed,—the annihilation of hopeless and interminable solitude,—the terrible inversion of natural feeling, that makes life the object of deprecation, and death of indulgence.

“The result was, that I sat and listened to the conversation (if it may be called so) of this extraordinary visitor, who appeared to regard the walls of the Inquisition no more than those of a domestic apartment, and who seated himself beside me as quietly as if he had been reposing on the most luxurious sofa that ever was arrayed by the fingers of voluptuousness. My senses were so bewildered, my mind so disarranged, that I can hardly remember his conversation. Part of it ran thus: “You are a prisoner of the Inquisition. The holy office, no doubt, is instituted for wise purposes, beyond the cognizance of sinful beings like us; but, as far as we can judge, its prisoners are not only insensible of, but shamefully ungrateful for, the benefits they might derive from its provident vigilance. For instance, you, who are accused of sorcery, fratricide, and plunging an illustrious and affectionate family in despair, by your atrocious misconduct, and who are now fortunately restrained from farther outrages against nature, religion, and society, by your salutary confinement here;—you, I venture to say, are so unconscious of these blessings, that it is your earnest desire to escape from the further enjoyment of them. In a word, I am convinced that the secret wish of your heart (unconverted by all the profusion of charity which has been heaped on you by the holy office) is not on any account to increase the burden of your obligation to them, but, on the contrary, to diminish as much as possible the grief these worthy persons must feel, as long as your residence pollutes their holy walls, by abridging its period, even long before they intend you should do so. Your wish is to escape from the prison of the holy office, if possible,—you know it is.” I did not answer a word. I felt a terror at this wild and fierce irony,—I felt a terror at the mention of escape, (I had fatal reasons for this feeling),—a terror of every thing, and every one near me, indescribable. I believed myself tottering on a narrow ridge,—an Al-araf, between the alternate gulphs which the infernal spirit and the Inquisition (not less dreaded) disclosed on each side of my trembling march. I compressed my lips,—I hardly suffered my breath to escape.

“The speaker went on. “With regard to your escape, though I can promise that to you, (and that is what no *human power* can promise you), you must be aware of the difficulty which will attend it,—and, should that difficulty terrify you, will you hesitate?” Still I was silent;—my visitor perhaps took this for the silence of doubt. He went on. “Perhaps you think that your lingering here, amid the dungeons of the Inquisition, will infallibly secure your salvation. There is no error more absurd, and yet more rooted in the heart of man, than the belief that his sufferings will promote his spiritual safety.” Here I thought myself safe in rejoining, that I felt,—I trusted, my sufferings here would indeed be accepted as a partial mitigation of my well-merited punishment hereafter. I acknowledged my many errors,—I professed myself as penitent for my misfortunes as if they had been crimes; and the energy of my grief combining with the innocence of my heart, I commended myself to the Almighty with an unction I really felt,—I called on the names of God, the Saviour, and the Virgin, with the earnest supplication of sincere devoutness. When I had risen from my knees, my visitor had retired. * * * * * * *

“Examination followed examination before the judges, with a rapidity unexampled in the annals of the Inquisition. Alas! that they should be *annals*,—that they should be more than records of *one day* of abuse, oppression, falsehood, and torture. At my next examination before the judges, I was interrogated according to the usual forms, and afterwards was led, by questions as artfully constructed, as if there was any necessity for art to lead me, to speak to the question on

which I longed to disburden myself. The moment the subject was mentioned, I entered on my narrative with an eagerness of sincerity that would have undeceived any but Inquisitors. I announced that I had received another visit from this unknown being. I repeated, with breathless and trembling eagerness, every word of our late conference. I did not suppress a syllable of the insults on the holy office, the wild and fiend-like acrimony of his satire, the avowed atheism, the diabolism of his conversation,—I dwelt on every particular. I hoped to *make merit* with the Inquisition, by accusing their enemy, and that of mankind. Oh! there is no telling the agony of zeal with which we work between two mortal adversaries, hoping to make a friend of one of them! I had suffered enough already from the Inquisition, but at this moment I would have crouched at the knees of the Inquisitors,—I would have pleaded for the place of the meanest official in their prison,—I would have supplicated for the loathsome office of their executioner,—I would have encountered any thing that the Inquisition could inflict, to be spared the horror of being imagined the ally of the enemy of souls. To my distraction, I perceived that every word I uttered, in all the agony of truth,—in all the hopeless eloquence of a soul struggling with the fiends who are bearing it beyond the reach of mercy, was disregarded. The judges appeared struck, indeed, by the earnestness with which I spoke. They gave, for a moment, a kind of instinctive credit to my words, extorted by terror; but, a moment after, I could perceive that *I*, and not my communication, was the object of that terror. They seemed to view me through a distorting atmosphere of mystery and suspicion. They urged me, over and over again, for further particulars,—for ulterior circumstances,—for something that was in *their* minds, but not in mine. The more pains they took to construct their questions skilfully, the more unintelligible they became to me. I had told all I knew, I was anxious to tell all, but I could not tell more than I knew, and the agony of my solicitude to meet the object of the judges, was aggravated in proportion to my ignorance of it. On being remanded to my cell, I was warned, in the most solemn manner, that if I neglected to watch, remember, and report every word uttered by the extraordinary being, whose visits they tacitly acknowledged they could neither prevent or detect, I might expect the utmost severity of the holy office. I promised all this,—all that could be demanded, and, finally, as the last proof I could give of my sincerity, I implored that some one might be allowed to pass the night in my cell,—or, if that was contrary to the rules of the Inquisition, that one of the guard might be stationed in the passage communicating with my cell, to whom I could, by a signal agreed on, intimate when this nameless being burst on me, and his impious intrusion might be at once detected and punished. In speaking thus, I was indulged with a privilege very unusual in the Inquisition, where the prisoner is only to answer questions, but never to speak unless when called on. My proposal, however, caused some consultation; and it was with horror I found, on its termination, that not one of the officials, even under the discipline of the Inquisition, would undertake the task of watching at the door of *my* cell.

“I went back to it in an agony inexpressible. The more I had laboured to clear myself, the more I had become involved. My only resource and consolation was in a determination to obey, to the strictest letter, the injunctions of the Inquisition. I kept myself studiously awake,—*he* came not all that night. Towards the morning I slept,—Oh what a sleep was mine!—the genii, or the demons of the place, seemed busy in the dream that haunted me. I am convinced that a real victim of an *auto da fe* (so called) never suffered more during his horrible procession to flames temporal and eternal, than I did during that dream. I dreamed that the judgement had passed,—the bell had tolled,—and we marched out from the prison of the Inquisition;—my crime was proved, and my sentence determined, as an apostate monk and a *diabolical* heretic. The procession commenced,—the Dominicans went first, then followed the penitents, arms and feet bare, each hand holding a wax taper, some with *san benitos*, some without, all pale, haggard, and breathless, the hue of their faces frightfully resembling that of their clay-coloured arms and feet. Then followed those who had on their black dresses the *fuego revolto*(11). Then followed—I saw *myself*; and this horrid tracing of yourself in a dream,—this haunting of yourself by your own spectre, while you still live, is perhaps a curse almost equal to your crimes visiting you in the punishments of eternity. I saw myself in the garment of condemnation, *the flames pointing upwards*, while the demons painted on my dress were mocked by the demons who beset my feet, and hovered round my temples. The Jesuits on each side of me, urged me to consider the difference between these painted fires, and those which were about to enwrap my writhing soul for an eternity of ages. All the bells of Madrid seemed to be ringing in my ears. There was no light but a dull twilight, such as one always sees in his sleep, (no man ever dreamed of sun-light);—there was a dim and smoky blaze of torches in my eyes, whose flames were soon to *be in my eyes*. I saw the stage before me,—I was chained to the chair, amid the ringing of bells, the preaching of the Jesuits, and the shouts of the multitude. A splendid amphitheatre stood opposite,—the king and queen of Spain, and all the nobility and hierarchy of the land, were there to see us burn. Our thoughts in dreams wander; I had heard a story of an *auto da fe*, where a young Jewess, not sixteen, doomed to be burnt alive, had prostrated herself before the queen, and exclaimed, “Save me,—save me, do not let me burn, my only crime is believing in the God of my fathers;”—the queen (I believe Elizabeth of France, wife of Philip) wept, but the procession went on. Something like this crossed my dream. I saw the supplicant rejected; the next moment the figure was that of my brother Juan, who clung to me, shrieking, “Save me, save me.” The next moment I was chained to my chair again,—the fires were lit, the bells rang out, the litanies were sung;—my feet were scorched to a cinder,—my muscles cracked, my blood and marrow hissed, my flesh consumed like shrinking leather,—the bones of my legs hung two black withering and moveless sticks in the ascending blaze;—it ascended, caught my hair,—I was crowned with fire,—my head was a ball of molten metal, my eyes flashed and melted in their sockets;—I opened my

mouth, it drank fire,—I closed it, the fire was within,—and still the bells rung on, and the crowd shouted, and the king and queen, and all the nobility and priesthood, looked on, and we burned, and burned!—I was a cinder body and soul in my dream.

"I awoke from it with the horrible exclamation—ever shrieked, never heard—of those wretches, when the fires are climbing fast and fell,—*Misericordia por amor di Dios!* My own screams awoke me,—I was in my prison, and beside me stood the tempter. With an impulse I could not resist,—an impulse borrowed from the horrors of my dream, I flung myself at his feet, and called on him to "save me."

"I know not, Sir, nor is it a problem to be solved by human intellect, whether this inscrutable being had not the power to influence my dreams, and dictate to a tempting demon the images which had driven me to fling myself at his feet for hope and safety. However it was, he certainly took advantage of my agony, half-visionary, half-real as it was, and, while proving to me that he had the power of effecting my escape from the Inquisition, proposed to me that incommunicable condition which I am forbid to reveal, except in the act of confession."

Here Melmoth could not forbear remembering the *incommunicable condition* proposed to Stanton in the mad-house,—he shuddered, and was silent. The Spaniard went on.

"At my next examination, the questions were more eager and earnest than ever, and I was more anxious to be heard than questioned; so, in spite of the eternal circumspection and formality of an inquisitorial examination, we soon came to understand each other. I had an object to gain, and they had nothing to lose by my gaining that object. I confessed, without hesitation, that I had received another visit from that most mysterious being, who could penetrate the recesses of the Inquisition, without either its leave or prevention, (the judges trembled on their seats, as I uttered these words);—that I was most willing to disclose all that had transpired at our last conference, but that I required to first confess to a priest, and receive absolution. This, though quite contrary to the rules of the Inquisition, was, on this extraordinary occasion, complied with. A black curtain was dropt before one of the recesses; I knelt down before a priest, and confided to him that tremendous secret, which, according to the rules of the Catholic church, can never be disclosed by the confessor but to the Pope. I do not understand how the business was managed, but I was called on to repeat the same confession before the Inquisitors. I repeated it word for word, saving only the words that my oath, and my consciousness of the holy secret of confession, forbade me to disclose. The sincerity of this confession, I thought, would have worked a miracle for me,—and so it did, but not the miracle that I expected. They required from me that incommunicable secret; I announced it was in the bosom of the priest to whom I had confessed. They whispered, and seemed to debate about the torture.

"At this time, as may be supposed, I cast an anxious and miserable look round the apartment, where the large crucifix, thirteen feet high, stood bending above the seat of the Supreme. At this moment I saw a person seated at the table covered with black cloth, intensely busy as a secretary, or person employed in taking down the depositions of the accused. As I was led near the table, this person flashed a look of recognition on me,—he was my dreaded companion,—he was an official now of the Inquisition. I gave all up the moment I saw his ferocious and lurking scowl, like that of the tiger before he springs from his jungle, or the wolf from his den. This person threw on me looks, from time to time, which I could not mistake, and I dared not interpret;—and I had reason to believe that the tremendous sentence pronounced against me, issued, if not from his lips, at least from his dictation.—"You, Alonzo di Monçada, monk, professed of the order of ——, accused of the crimes of heresy, apostacy, fratricide, ("Oh no,—no!" I shrieked, but no one heeded me), and conspiracy with the enemy of mankind against the peace of the community in which you professed yourself a votary of God, and against the authority of the holy office; accused, moreover, of intercourse in your cell, the prison of the holy office, with an infernal messenger of the foe of God, man, and your own apostatized soul; condemned on your own confession of the infernal spirit having had access to your cell,—are hereby delivered to——"

"I heard no more. I exclaimed, but my voice was drowned in the murmur of the officials. The crucifix suspended behind the chair of the judge, rocked and reeled before my eyes; the lamp that hung from the ceiling, seemed to send forth twenty lights. I held up my hands in abjuration—they were held down by stronger hands. I tried to speak—my mouth was stopped. I sunk on my knees—on my knees I was about to be dragged away, when an aged Inquisitor giving a sign to the officials, I was released for a few moments, and he addressed me in these words—words rendered terrible by the sincerity of the speaker. From his age, from his sudden interposition, I had expected mercy. He was a very old man—he had been blind for twenty years; and as he rose to speak my malediction, my thoughts wandered from Appius Claudius of Rome,—blessing the loss of sight, that saved him from beholding the disgrace of his country,—to that blind chief Inquisitor of Spain, who assured Philip, that in sacrificing his son, he imitated the Almighty, who had sacrificed his Son also for the salvation of mankind.—Horrid profanation! yet striking application to the bosom of a Catholic. The words of the Inquisitor were these: "Wretch, apostate, and excommunicate, I bless God that these withered balls can no longer behold you. The demon has haunted you from your birth—you were born in sin—fiends rocked your cradle, and dipt

their talons in the holy font, while they mocked the sponsors of your unsanctified baptism. Illegitimate and accursed, you were always the burden of the holy church; and now, the infernal spirit comes to claim his own, and you acknowledge him as your lord and master. He has sought and sealed you as his own, even amid the prison of the Inquisition. Begone, accursed, we deliver you over to the secular arm, praying that it may deal with you not too severely." At these terrible words, whose meaning I understood but too well, I uttered one shriek of agony—the only *human* sound ever heard within the walls of the Inquisition. But I was borne away; and that cry into which I had thrown the whole strength of nature, was heeded no more than a cry from the torture room. On my return to my cell, I felt convinced the whole was a scheme of inquisitorial art, to involve me in self-accusation, (their constant object when they can effect it), and punish me for a crime, while I was guilty only of an extorted confession.

"With compunction and anguish unutterable, I execrated my own beast-like and credulous stupidity. Could any but an idiot, a driveller, have been the victim of such a plot? Was it in nature to believe that the prisons of the Inquisition could be traversed at will by a stranger whom no one could discover or apprehend? That such a being could enter cells impervious to human power, and hold conversation with the prisoners at his pleasure—appear and disappear—insult, ridicule, and blaspheme—propose escape, and point out the means with a precision and facility, that must be the result of calm and profound calculation—and this within the walls of the Inquisition, almost in the hearing of the judges—actually in the hearing of the guards, who night and day paced the passages with sleepless and inquisitorial vigilance?—ridiculous, monstrous, impossible! it was all a plot to betray me to self-condemnation. My visitor was an agent and accomplice of the Inquisition, and I was my own betrayer and executioner. Such was my conclusion; and, hopeless as it was, it certainly seemed probable.

"I had now nothing to await but the most dreadful of all destinations, amid the darkness and silence of my cell, where the total suspension of the stranger's visits confirmed me every hour in my conviction of their nature and purport, when an event occurred, whose consequences alike defeated fear, hope, and calculation. This was the great fire that broke out within the walls of the Inquisition, about the close of the last century.

"It was on the night of the 29th November 17—, that this extraordinary circumstance took place—extraordinary from the well-known precautions adopted by the vigilance of the holy office against such an accident, and also from the very small quantity of fuel consumed within its walls. On the first intimation that the fire was spreading rapidly, and threatened danger, the prisoners were ordered to be brought from their cells, and guarded in a court of the prison. I must acknowledge we were treated with great humanity and consideration. We were conducted deliberately from our cells, placed each of us between two guards, who did us no violence, nor used harsh language, but assured us, from time to time, that if the danger became imminent, we would be permitted every fair opportunity to effect our escape. It was a subject worthy of the pencil of Salvator Rosa, or of Murillo, to sketch us as we stood. Our dismal garbs and squalid looks, contrasted with the equally dark, but imposing and authoritative looks of the guards and officials, all displayed by the light of torches, which burned, or appeared to burn, fainter and fainter, as the flames rose and roared in triumph above the towers of the Inquisition. The heavens were all on fire—and the torches, held no longer in firm hands, gave a tremulous and pallid light. It seemed to me like a wildly painted picture of the last day. God appeared descending in the light that enveloped the skies—and we stood pale and shuddering in the light below.

"Among the groupe of prisoners, there were fathers and sons, who perhaps had been inmates of adjacent cells for years, without being conscious of each others vicinity or existence—but they did not dare to recognize each other. Was not this like the day of judgement, where similar mortal relations may meet under different classes of the sheep and goats, without presuming to acknowledge the strayed one amid the flock of a different shepherd? There were also parents and children who *did* recognize and stretch out their wasted arms to each other, though feeling they must never meet,—some of them condemned to the flames, some to imprisonment, and some to the official duties of the Inquisition, as a mitigation of their sentence,—and was not this like the day of judgement, where parent and child may be allotted different destinations, and the arms that would attest the last proof of mortal affection, are expanded in vain over the gulph of eternity. Behind and around us stood the officials and guards of the Inquisition, all watching and intent on the progress of the flames, but fearless of the result with regard to themselves. Such may be the feeling of those spirits who watch the doom of the Almighty, and know the destination of those they are appointed to watch. And is not this like the day of judgement? Far, far, above us, the flames burst out in volumes, in solid masses of fire, spiring up to the burning heavens. The towers of the Inquisition shrunk into cinders—that tremendous monument of the power, and crime, and gloom of the human mind, was wasting like a scroll in the fire. Will it not be thus also at the day of judgement? Assistance was slowly brought—Spaniards are very indolent—the engines played imperfectly—the danger increased—the fire blazed higher and higher—the persons employed to work the engines, paralyzed by terror, fell to the ground, and called on every saint they could think of, to arrest the progress of the flames. Their exclamations were so loud and earnest, that really the saints must have been deaf, or must have felt a particular predilection for a conflagration, not to attend to them. However it was, the fire went on. Every bell in Madrid rang out.—Orders were issued to every Alcalde to be had.—The king of Spain himself, ((12)after a hard day's shooting), attended in person. The churches were all lit

up, and thousands of the devout supplicated on their knees by torchlight, or whatever light they could get, that the reprobate souls confined in the Inquisition might feel the fires that were consuming its walls, as merely a slight foretaste of the fires that glowed for them for ever and ever. The fire went on, doing its dreadful work, and heeding kings and priests no more than if they were firemen. I am convinced twenty able men, accustomed to such business, could have quenched the fire; but when our workmen should have played their engines, they were all on their knees.

“The flames at last began to descend into the court. Then commenced a scene of horror indescribable. The wretches who had been doomed to the flames, imagined their hour was come. Idiots from long confinement, and submissive as the holy office could require, they became delirious as they saw the flames approaching, and shrieked audibly, “Spare me—spare me—put me to as little torture as you can.” Others, kneeling to the approaching flames, invoked them as saints. They dreamt they saw the visions they had worshipped,—the holy angels, and even the blessed virgin, descending in flames to receive their souls as parting from the stake; and they howled out their allelujahs half in horror, half in hope. Amid this scene of distraction, the Inquisitors stood their ground. It was admirable to see their firm and solemn array. As the flames prevailed, they never faultered with foot, or gave a sign with hand, or winked with eye;—their duty, their stern and heartless duty, seemed to be the only principle and motive of their existence. They seemed a phalanx clad in iron impenetrable. When the fires roared, they crossed themselves calmly;—when the prisoners shrieked, they gave a signal for silence;—when they dared to pray, they tore them from their knees, and hinted the inutility of prayer at such a juncture, when they might be sure that the flames they were deprecating would burn hotter in a region from which there was neither escape or hope of departure. At this moment, while standing amid the groupe of prisoners, my eyes were struck by an extraordinary spectacle. Perhaps it is amid the moments of despair, that imagination has most power, and they who have suffered, can best describe and feel. In the burning light, the steeple of the Dominican church was as visible as at noon-day. It was close to the prison of the Inquisition. The night was intensely dark, but so strong was the light of the conflagration, that I could see the spire blazing, from the reflected lustre, like a meteor. The hands of the clock were as visible as if a torch was held before them; and this calm and silent progress of time, amid the tumultuous confusion of midnight horrors,—this scene of the physical and mental world in an agony of fruitless and incessant motion, might have suggested a profound and singular image, had not my whole attention been rivetted to a human figure placed on a pinnacle of the spire, and surveying the scene in perfect tranquillity. It was a figure not to be mistaken—it was the figure of him who had visited me in the cells of the Inquisition. The hopes of my justification made me forget every thing. I called aloud on the guard, and pointed out the figure, visible as it was in that strong light to every eye. No one had time, however, to give a glance towards it. At that very moment, the archway of the court opposite to us gave way, and sunk in ruins at our feet, dashing, as it fell, an ocean of flame against us. One wild shriek burst from every lip at that moment. Prisoners, guards, and Inquisitors, all shrunk together, mingled in one groupe of terror.

“The next instant, the flames being suppressed by the fall of such a mass of stone, there arose such a blinding cloud of smoke and dust, that it was impossible to distinguish the face or figure of those who were next you. The confusion was increased by the contrast of this sudden darkness, to the intolerable light that had been drying up our sight for the last hour, and by the cries of those who, being near the arch, lay maimed and writhing under its fragments. Amid shrieks, and darkness, and flames, a space lay open before me. The thought, the motion, were simultaneous—no one saw—no one pursued;—and hours before my absence could be discovered, or an inquiry be made after me, I had struggled safe and secret through the ruins, and was in the streets of Madrid.

“To those who have escaped present and extreme peril, all other peril seems trifling. The wretch who has swum from a wreck cares not on what shore he is cast; and though Madrid was in fact only a wider prison of the Inquisition to me, in knowing that I was no longer in the hands of the officials, I felt a delirious and indefinite consciousness of safety. Had I reflected for a moment, I must have known, that my peculiar dress and *bare feet* must betray me wherever I went. The conjuncture, however, was very favourable to me—the streets were totally deserted;—every inhabitant who was not in bed, or bed-rid, was in the churches, deprecating the wrath of heaven, and praying for the extinction of the flames.

“I ran on, I know not where, till I could run no longer. The pure air, which I had been so long unaccustomed to breathe, acted like the most torturing spicula on my throat and lungs as I flew along, and utterly deprived me of the power of respiration, which at first it appeared to restore. I saw a building near me, whose large doors were open. I rushed in—it was a church. I fell on the pavement panting. It was the aisle into which I had burst—it was separated from the chancel by large grated railings. Within I could see the priests at the altar, by the lamps recently and rarely lighted, and a few trembling devotees on their knees, in the body of the chancel. There was a strong contrast between the glare of the lamps within the chancel, and the faint light that trembled through the windows of the aisle, scarcely showing me the monuments, on one of which I leaned to rest my throbbing temples for a moment. I could not rest—I dared not—and rising, I cast an involuntary glance on the inscription which the monument bore. The light appeared to increase maliciously, to aid my powers of vision. I read, “Orate pro anima.” I at last came to the name—“Juan di Monçada.” I flew from the spot as if pursued by demons—my brother’s early grave had been my resting place.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

Transcriber’s Note:

The following is a list of corrections made to the original. The first passage is the original passage, the second the corrected one.

- Page 8:
  to all eternity. I tried to pacify
  to all eternity.” I tried to pacify
- Page 22:
  horrible. “I walked up and down, I repeated
  horrible. I walked up and down, I repeated
- Page 63:
  It was noon before I could work myself
  “It was noon before I could work myself
- Page 87:
  visitation, as he called it. Satan hath
  visitation, as he called it. “Satan hath
- Page 87:
  desired to have you, he said, because you
  desired to have you,” he said, “because you
- Page 93:
  The Superior all this time walked impatiently
  “The Superior all this time walked impatiently
- Page 97:
  “If they tremble, I may exult.
  “If they tremble, I may exult.”
- Page 109:
  paused. An appeal to his fealings would
  paused. An appeal to his feelings would
- Page 141:
  lamp in my ce , and went to watch again
  lamp in my cell, and went to watch again
- Page 199:
  cut their parents hearts or their throats.
  cut their parents’ hearts or their throats.
- Page 210:
  should undergo what they called extraorordinary
  should undergo what they called extraordinary
- Page 314:
  to every Alcaide to be had.—The
  to every Alcalde to be had.—The
- Footnote 3:
  the mother of God
  the mother of God.