

THE  
MYSTERIOUS COUNT;

OR,  
*MONTVILLE CASTLE.*

A ROMANCE,  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY ANNE KER.

VOL. I.

On what strange grounds we build our hopes and fears!  
Man's life is all a mist, and in the dark  
Our fortune meets us.

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# THE MYSTERIOUS COUNT,

*&c. &c.*

## CHAP. I.

SITUATED near the delightful village of Artenai, in the province of Orleans, was the Castle of Alembert. It had for its owner, in the year 1758, the Duke de Limousin, a nobleman of the first distinction in France, admired for his abilities, revered for his virtues, and beloved for his generosity and humanity. He had maintained through the course of his life an excellent character; the poor found in his benevolence a benefactor and a friend; as his heart was ever solicitous to discover objects worthy his attention, wherein he could reward industry, or chase the severe hand of distress from poverty and affliction. Such was the Duke de Limousin.—He had been a widower several years—had only one son, named Albert, who bore the title of Count de Villiers, on whom every attention was bestowed.

Albert was a most promising young man, tall, elegant, and accomplished; and was greatly esteemed by all who knew him.—At the age of seventeen he had evinced such a desire for a military life, and such an extreme regard for General Dumetz, who was going with reinforcements for the ensuing campaign to America, that he prevailed on his father to permit him to accompany the General.

The Duke, ever anxious for the honor and prosperity of his beloved Albert, immediately acceded to his wish, and he prepared to depart with General Dumetz.

The Duke de Limousin, in the absence of his son, became more attached to his friend the Count Beranger, who was first Minister of State to Louis the Fifteenth: he had always admired the wisdom and policy of the Count, and the absence of Albert made him more charmed with the agreeable and lively manners of his esteemed friend, whose visits to Alembert Castle were more frequent than ever, as the Duke preferred that beautiful habitation to any other of his country residences.

When peace was restored, in the year 1760, General Dumetz and his young friend Alembert returned to their native home: the General, with the animating expectation of being well received by his King and country, in whose service he had spent his best days; and Albert, anxious to receive the ardent embrace of his indulgent father.

But though Albert met with the warm reception he expected, yet the General's hopes were erroneous, for that welcome did not fit on the King's brow he imagined to find. To account for his Majesty's behaviour, which portrayed such a visible alteration in his manner to any former time when the General had returned, I must say that Count

Beranger's heart was never favourably inclined towards General Dumetz. The General, all open, and unsuspecting deceit, charmed with the enthusiastic expressions of those who professed themselves his friends, could not penetrate into the secret designs of Count Beranger; who, though apparently a friend warm with every approbation, secretly undermined his character, and lessened the King's esteem, who was taught to believe every ill success during the war was owing to the General's fault.

General Dumetz had formerly been high in his Majesty's favour; but Count Beranger, in the General's absence to America, had most powerfully ingratiated himself, and was jealous of his return, that in all probability would place a rival in the King's estimation. In an ill-fated hour Count Beranger's plans succeeded but too well, and General Dumetz received a dismissal from the service of his country, which he had ever been the most zealous to defend, without being conscious of having done one action to deserve it.

While these events were carrying on in Paris, the Duke de Limousin and Albert were at Alembert Castle, nor did they receive any information of it till a letter from the General to Albert announced the unwelcome intelligence, which created the greatest surprise and anxiety in their bosoms. After the General had explained as well as he was able the subject of his uneasiness, he thus continued in his letter:

"For your sake, my amiable young friend, I am more unhappy than for my own, as I am older, and a short time will enable me to treat this disgrace with indifference, but you are just immersing into life, and I flattered myself I should see you soon exalted to a rank suitable to your merit. But after the treatment I have received, I have not one wish left of remaining in my native land, which I solemnly declare is now hateful to me; for my King and countrymen have listened to the most villainous secret accusations, and have dismissed me without allowing me to know my accuser, or suffering me to justify myself.—Is this just dealing, Albert? Yet it convinces me it is high time to withdraw myself from such an ungrateful country, where I have spent thirty years in its service; and after every exertion of mine for its safety, am now abandoned to dishonour. With such a people, vain, and blown up with a little prosperity, but depressed and eager to accuse on the earliest ill success, I cannot wish to live in future. I go to Poland. The simple honesty and rusticity of its inhabitants, which, if unacquainted with the virtues or civilization of more polished Courts, have none of their vices. With them I may find content. In the city of Warsaw, my young friend, a letter will find me. Ungrateful France shall never more behold the face of

"DUMETZ."

As Albert concluded the General's letter, he exclaimed, "My life shall answer for thy conduct!—Secret enemies all people may have, that would endeavour to poison the good name they cannot overcome in the fair face of truth, jealous of that superior merit they cannot emulate. Such, most worthy, most wronged man, is thine. Young as I am, I repeat I dare vouch for thy conduct and honour; and the enemy that accuses thee cannot be more favourable to me; knowing that under thy immediate eye, in thy tent, my youthful head was first reared in arms. To me, my second father, thy name and memory shall be ever dear."—

The Duke interrupted him. The age of sixty, and the affection he had for his only surviving hope, Albert, induced him to entreat he would act with caution, and remain silent in whatever dispute might arise between the King, the Ministers, and the General; for though he much esteemed General Dumetz himself, he well knew his single voice in opposition would be of very little consequence. But Albert could not agree with the Duke in this particular, as he ardently hoped to find and punish the traitor who had maliciously dared to taint the character of General Dumetz.

As every incident is but a short-lived wonder, so in a few days the conversation on the General's dismissal and departure imperceptibly wore away; and he who had been the hero in every one's estimation, the topic, while popularity exerted her reign, of every conversation, seemed almost forgotten.—Those who were his enemies were glad to shrink into silence, and his friends could only feel for his misfortunes without daring to utter a vindication.

During the time this affair was so much the object of attention in Paris, Count Beranger came to Alembert Castle, with an invitation to the Duke de Limousin and Albert to pass a few weeks at a distant province, in his Castle of Montville.

Albert had heard much spoken in praise of the beauty and engaging manners of the Count's daughter Correlia, and the amiableness of the Countess. He was impatient till he had the pleasure of seeing her, for fame was proud in Correlia's commendations.

A few hours journey introduced the Duke and Albert to the ladies, and at first sight a reciprocal affection took place in the hearts of Albert and Correlia, who far exceeded every idea fame had impressed him with. She was fair, and extremely beautiful; her eyes were blue, her hair a light brown, tall, elegant, and graceful; her form even prejudice itself could not imagine a fault in. She had not yet arrived at the age of seventeen, and the virtues of her spotless mind added an irresistible charm to the graces she was blest with, which entirely captivated the heart of Albert, who thought he could be happy to live for her alone. He observed the Countess appeared to smile with approbation on their growing affection, and the Count did not betray a wish to oppose it.

Six weeks soon moved away, and appeared to Albert but as so many days. They now thought of going to Paris, and previous to his departure he sought his much-esteemed Correlia, and promised, with the approbation of their parents, inviolable love.

Count Beranger did not wish them to go to Paris yet; therefore proposed a new excursion to the Duke and Albert, to visit the Baron de Solignac, who was a particular friend of Count Beranger's, and at present was much indisposed at his villa at St. Leon, a few leagues distant from Montville Castle.

The Baron de Solignac had a daughter named Matilda, who, on account of her father's ill health, welcomed his noble guests with every degree of respect and attention. Her engaging manners were lost upon Albert, who had for six weeks been accustomed to

admire Correlia, and was dejected on account of leaving her. Matilda was a handsome brunette, witty and sprightly, an attractive charm seemed to play round her every action, which pleased the Duke de Limousin and Count Beranger; but to Albert every thing was insipid in Correlia's absence, and he could not refrain observing the difference that appeared to him in the manners of Matilda de Solignac and Correlia.

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## CHAP. II.

DURING the stay of the Duke, Albert, and Count Beranger at St. Leon, the Baron de Solignac paid the great debt of nature, leaving Matilda one of the richest heiresses in France. Her father, who had no other child than her, loved her to a degree of dotage; he never contradicted her, and allowed her to act as she pleased: this indulgence made her headstrong and haughty; she was only seventeen years of age, but in self-conceit she made it a point to yield to no one, for if she once fixed her opinion on any subject, however erroneous that opinion might be, she always persisted in maintaining it, even if convinced she was in the wrong; thus by a too fond indulgence, though a promising young lady in person, her mind became perverted, and yielded to the rude gust of every headstrong passion that actuated the principles of a giddy, conceited girl.

On her the Duke looked with admiration.—To some, flirtation and vanity may have charms. Matilda's heart was prejudiced in favour of Albert; she had not a doubt that he could remain cold in her presence, who had been the toast of Paris, and had heard so many pay her the most flattering compliments. Albert imagined he saw her aim, and therefore minutely avoided every attention she could bestow. Albert's indifference was a cause of great vexation to Matilda; she thought she loved him better than her proud heart could have wished, and as he declined every attention that could lead her to fancy he felt any partiality for her, she took an opportunity of hinting her affection for him.

Albert was rather surprised to hear her make such a declaration; but to crush passion in its infancy at once; he declared the truth of his love for Correlia de Beranger, which was the object that made him decline the honour of her hand, an object which no earthly power could remove.

Matilda really felt a partiality for Albert. Accustomed to have no opposition made to her wishes, her disposition being of the most irritable nature, received additional force from disappointed love; she therefore determined to study a revenge that should imbitter all his future days.

Count Beranger, though married to a most excellent lady, could not resist the charms of her person; and the Duke de Limousin became enamoured from the first time he saw her, and anxiously wished to call Matilda de Solignac his bride.

Count Beranger had long been a particular friend of the Baron de Solignac and Matilda; he therefore was soon made acquainted with the sentiments of the Duke and that lady. His regard for her induced him to undertake to solicit the affection of Albert in her behalf, and to serve her, overlooked the knowledge he had of the mutual love of Albert and Correlia.

Matilda, who in reality studied nothing but the gratification of whatever passion was predominant, very little regarded what Albert might think of her delicacy of sentiment in making the first advances, so that she could obtain him for a husband. She imagined she could launch into every fashion and dissipation as a married woman, which as an

unmarried girl, (without a protector now her father was dead,) she could not do, without giving occasion to the censorious to blame her conduct. She knew not that the heart of Albert despised these gaudy butterflies, and was one of the first to find fault if he thought a woman overstepped the bounds of prudence. It was a matter of indifference to her what were his thoughts; if she could prevail on him to marry her, she determined to pursue every dictate of her soul.

Albert was very much amazed when Count Beranger proposed an alliance between him and Matilda de Solignac, and in ingenuous terms renewed the declaration of his love for the amiable Correlia, who from the first hour of their acquaintance had exchanged hearts, and lived but for each other, which the Count well knew before they quitted the Castle of Montville.

Count Beranger feigned to appear contented. He had reasons why he wished Matilda married—he knew her temper—he rather secretly disliked Albert on account of General Dumetz, for which reason he designed to honour him with a lady for a bride that should be the torment of his future peace; as dispositions of such opposite extremes, as were Albert and Matilda's, would certainly produce.

Matilda's temper was ill calculated to receive a refusal when she deigned to ask a favour; of course Count Beranger's reply was distressing; but a short time enabled her to conquer those uncomfortable sensations that arise from disappointment, and a few days convinced Albert he was as much shunned by her as his company had been previously courted.

Great was Albert's astonishment, when within the short space of a week he heard that preparations were making for the marriage of the Duke de Limousin and Matilda de Solignac. The behaviour of the Duke wore an air of reserve which Albert was unable to penetrate. Count Beranger was the only one who appeared perfectly satisfied; an air of pleasure seemed to chase away every other thought, and an exulting demeanour over Albert, which did not altogether accord with his feelings, created uneasiness and suspicions in his bosom of the most alarming nature.

In three days after Albert received the above information, Matilda de Solignac became the wife of the Duke de Limousin, who was infatuated with her charms, and gave to Albert a mother-in-law two years younger than himself, from which time he perceived his father behaved with uncommon reserve and indifference towards him. A few days after the company set out for Paris, the Duke and Matilda strenuously insisting Count Beranger should pass some time at their house there.

The Duchess de Limousin's manner of behaviour exhibited a marked dislike towards her son-in-law Albert, and the Duke shewed a like estrangement from the son who had always been the pride of his life till he quitted the Castle of Montville for the villa of the Baron de Solignac.

Albert felt no uneasy sensation at the indifference and apparent displeasure of Matilda, as the pleasure of obtaining Correlia's hand was all his wish, and a military life all his ambition. A month passed away very uncomfortably. Albert observed his presence was unwelcome, he therefore intreated permission to visit the Countess Beranger and Correlia, at Montville Castle.

Agreeable to all was the departure of Albert. He had been absent about a fortnight when the Duchess, anxious for revenge on the man who had dared to refuse her offered love, thought it a proper opportunity to put the scheme she and Count Beranger had framed in execution, which would immediately destroy Albert's hopes.

They had discovered that the Duke's only foible was jealousy where he loved. Count Beranger conceived the thought of alarming the Duke on account of Albert, declaring that he entertained an affection for the Duchess, which, as Albert could not conquer, nor bend the amiable Matilda to his wishes, he had thought prudent to retire, to Montville Castle.

Count Beranger also insinuated that this love was nothing new, for Albert had wished for her hand soon after her father died, but that she had silenced his hopes, acknowledging she preferred the Duke his father; that she certainly expected her marriage would prevent her from hearing a repetition of his passion, but was miserable at the certainty of its continuation, and begged the Duke would take such steps as would insure the Duchess's peace of mind, and put a stop to any offence he might offer in future.

The Duke heard all Count Beranger had to say on the subject with extreme patience; yet astonishment sealed his lips for some minutes, and he mentally thought it impossible that Albert could be capable of behaving ill to the wife of his father, much less that he could offend her ears with a declaration of love. He imagined the Count must have been misinformed, or that the too exact niceness and delicacy of Matilda had erred in conjecturing such an amiable young man could entertain ideas to her disadvantage: again he thought if Albert appeared over attentive, it was occasioned by the filial respect and tenderness he bore his father, as he was certain Albert was never wanting in affection to him. A few moments he hesitated, then recollecting Count Beranger waited a reply, he said, "I am astonished at the declaration you have made—I am equally unwilling to doubt my son's honor and affection for me and the veracity of my friend. I am extremely alarmed; but let the Duchess speak her suspicions herself—why should she trouble another person?"

"Shall I seek her?" said Count Beranger. "Hear what she says herself, and then judge of the truth of my assertions."

Without awaiting his command he suddenly quitted him, and flew to seek Matilda. He found her rather agitated, for her better genius had represented to her the rashness she had been guilty of in studying such deep revenge, as also the folly she had committed in accepting the father purposely to make the son miserable. Count Beranger had actuated most of her motives; he had led her into innumerable errors, from which she now perceived no way of extricating herself but by boldly yielding to his directions. He

informed her of the conversation that had passed between him and the Duke, and entreated she would confirm the accusation by her voice, as the only means of revenge she could pursue for Albert's slighting the offer of her hand; reminding her, that if she had a family of her own, which she had reason to expect, it would be happy for her to keep the Duke and Albert at variance.

Matilda obeyed the wish of Count Beranger, and allowed him to lead her to the Duke de Limousin. She put on a melancholy air, which apparently confirmed what the Count had related to him. The Duke dreaded to ask an explanation of the dejection that shaded her countenance. In the Duke's presence Matilda's conscience reprobated her present conduct; she was not yet sufficiently hardened to every feeling of truth and sincerity, but mentally wished she had not embarked in such a dangerous undertaking.

Count Beranger's motives were not sufficiently explained to Matilda; he saw her hesitate, and then he renewed the hateful subject which the Duke had endeavoured to suppress the idea of, believing his Albert incapable of acting with dishonor; but Count Beranger again declared his offences, and called on Matilda to witness the truth of his assertions.

"And is it true, Matilda?" said the Duke seeing her apparently unwilling to join the Count's declaration.

"I am sorry to say it is," she replied; "and that Albert's conduct has given me a world of anxiety and uneasiness."

"And why, my Matilda, did you keep this uneasiness a secret from me?"

"I dreaded your resentment towards him, though at the same time convinced that he merited it; but I knew your fondness for him, and thought what an unhappy being I should be if I should cause animosities to reign between you and this darling son."

"You amaze me!" said the Duke; "sure I could not mistake—I thought he solicited the hand of the fair Correlia. Beranger, was it not so?"

"My Lord, such were my thoughts; but his conduct towards this lady withdraws the favourable opinion I once entertained for him. It is true he is now on a visit at Montville Castle, but Correlia would despise the man who could act so unjustly by you and this lady."

Matilda gained courage, and Count Beranger strenuously continued to accuse Albert. The Duke's rage against him increased; argument succeeded argument, till a confirmation of unpardonable guilt was declared by Count Beranger against Albert, and induced the Duke to declare he would never see him more. He then vowed to disinherit him, and place the inheritance on the child he hoped Matilda would bless him with.—"Yet let him not think I totally neglect him," said the Duke, "carry him this order for six thousand Louis, bid him be careful, and not give way to extravagance; but say—say—that we must

never meet again.—When I remember the pleasure I took in his early youth, it makes me wonder, and ask myself, could Albert be guilty of doing this? A furnace rages in my bosom—I must retire to vent my griefs, and intreat you, my friend, to bear the intelligence to my ungrateful son.—I leave you to act as you think proper."

He then left the room.

Count Beranger and Matilda were elated at the success of their scheme; but he lost no time in departing from Paris, while the Duke's anger was warm, believing all he wished was accomplished.

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### CHAP. III.

I WILL leave Paris and the Duke to the bitter reflections that seized upon his heart, when he learnt that his only son had acted so unworthily, and pursue Count Beranger, who eagerly hastened towards Montville Castle, anxious to relate the Duke's displeasure to Albert, though he deemed it proper to conceal the real cause; for he knew, if Albert attempted to see his father, and prove his innocence, all his deep-wrought schemes would vanish into air.

He in his way recollected the friendship that subsisted between General Dumetz and Albert, and thought it an occasion to ground his father's displeasure on.

Arriving at Montville Castle, he found Albert and Correlia happy in the hope of their speedy union; and the Countess, though visibly indisposed, endeavouring to combat the painful certainty of a rapid decline in the hopes of seeing her adored Correlia happily married to the man who possessed her affections.

Count Beranger soon acquainted the company with the reason of his sudden arrival without having sent previous notice.

Correlia shrieked, and sunk on her mother's bosom, while Albert stood motionless with astonishment, for the dreadful intelligence had robbed him of the power of utterance.

As soon as Albert recovered from the severe shock his spirits had received by this alarming command of his father, whom he had always honoured and revered; he asked the Count if he could assign any reason why he should be so severe a sufferer by the Duke's displeasure. To which the Count replied,

"The friendship long subsisting between your father and myself enables me to say what I know, and what I think. General Dumetz's conduct is not approved; and your father is now convinced the General has not been treated wrong. He has retired from France. You persist in being his friend, and have received letters from him; continuing to carry on a correspondence with a person obnoxious in the eyes of the nation. It is only since you quitted Paris that the Duke de Limousin perceived how much he was mistaken in the an, and has been informed of every particular concerning him.—He acknowledges you said you would vindicate General Dumetz's character at the expence of your life."

"So I repeat—at the expence of life or fortune," Albert warmly replied. "I know his honour and his valour; and to speak the real sentiments of my mind, I firmly believe some villain, some daring and atrocious villain, jealous of the General's superior merit, has secretly been endeavouring to poison his good name, in order to prejudice his King and country against him, when in the fair face of day the calumniator would shrink in the presence of the injured General, and tremble like the leaves of an asp shaken by the power of the wind; and here I swear to search the villain out that has dared to traduce his

fame—that has cruelly armed the Duke de Limousin against his son. Give me, Almighty God! to know the traitor who had done this, that I may hunt him through the world, till he sink beneath my conquering sword, and thereby atones for his villainy; a sword that was never drawn but in the cause of honour, and shall never be unsheathed in one of guilt."

"You are too warm, young man," replied Count Beranger; "it is the error of inexperienced, headstrong youth; I assure you, silence would better become you; yet it proves the person who told is well informed."

"Say who it was that spoke ill of me; allow me the power of vindicating myself; a soldier's honour is his glory; deprive me not of that," said Albert.

"From me," replied Count Beranger, "you shall never know. Suffice it to say, that I am entirely displeased with your conduct. When you quit this place return no more—Your threats avail nothing; your future inquiries will be equally fruitless, eternal silence shall ever seal my lips on the subject; for I deem it beneath me to answer any interrogatories you may make."

"Correlia! dear Correlia!" said Albert, turning and taking her hand, "then our ideas of future bliss are vanished like a dream. Once the heir of a noble family, I thought it a supreme happiness if you would be allied to it; you see me now dishonoured—an alien—an outcast of my family—deprived by villainy of that fortune I fondly hoped to share with you. In such a situation, though I am convinced of your love, I dare not aspire to the honour of enjoying your hand."

"No," replied Count Beranger, "I am determined you never shall wed a daughter of mine. Were I not displeased with your conduct, your father's anger, your loss of inheritance and want of fortune, would induce me to refuse Correlia; but in your present situation, your own sense must inform you I have a just right to prevent all future interviews between you."

"My father," said Correlia, "increase not the bitter afflictions of Albert;—reproach him not, I beseech you, nor add to those distresses his bursting heart is unable to sustain. If I am deprived of him, happiness is renounced by me for ever. In his unfortunate situation I dare not hope you will consent to the alliance I once esteemed the pride and joy of my life.—But the shaft of fate is flown, and I consigned to wretchedness."

"To see my own child consigned to wretchedness," replied the Count, "is indeed a trial; but sure, Correlia, you have more sense than to imagine I could see you united to one in Albert's situation."

"Nor I," said Albert; "great as is my love for the matchless Correlia, I would punish my heart with living without her, rather than involve her in the miseries that surround me; yet, be assured, Correlia, that resigning you in the severest affliction I ever experienced.—Farewell, much-loved Correlia! to me thy name and memory shall be ever dear."

Albert could articulate no more—his bursting heart heaved for utterance, and tears of anguish rushed to his eyes.—He pressed Correlia to his bosom in an agony of grief and despair.—Correlia's tears flowed abundantly.

The Countess, sinking with illness and distress of heart, was unable to own what she felt on the trying occasion. She took Correlia's hand, and looked with that expression on her face which declared more than words could utter.

Count Beranger hesitated a few minutes, and then said, "This must be your last interview: I had a thousand things to say, but the confusion of the present moment has made me neglect it. You, Count de Villiers, must return no more to the habitation of your father. It was the Duke de Limousin's command and wish that you should meet no more.—The Duchess"—

"I sincerely believe I have no friend in her," Albert interrupted; "I have observed an alteration in my father's behaviour towards me ever since their marriage. No doubt she finds her interest in it. I shall immediately proceed to Paris."

"Hold," exclaimed the Count, "I can inform you it will be useless to go to Paris; before now the Duke and Duchess de Limousin are returned to Alembert Castle."

"Then I will go to Alembert Castle," replied Albert, "and see my father if possible. It must be a singular contrivance against me that the Duke could listen and give way to, and condemn his son unheard—that could induce him to prohibit that son's entering his presence. Suspicions are busy in my heart, and I do not wish to judge wrong; yet let me once discover the author or authors of my misfortunes, and I swear my sword shall never be sheathed till it has revenged its master's wrongs."

"Go then," said Correlia, "and may the blessings of Heaven accompany every action of your future life! Correlia will for ever remember you in her prayers; while life animates her bosom, she will never cease to implore its protection, and that you may discover the authors of your wrongs. May happiness unspeakable be your lot, though Correlia is lost for ever!"

As Correlia concluded these words she rushed from the apartment in an agony of grief and despair that rent Albert's heart to observe, and not have power to redress. He could scarce articulate, "Farewell, Correlia!"

Albert called his servant Eugene, ordering him immediately to saddle their horses and prepare to depart from Montville Castle. The afflicting situation of the Countess, from whom he had received much kindness and many favours, alarmed him. The servants were called to convey her to her apartment. Albert saw her countenance change to a deadly paleness. Her expressive eyes were fixed in wild and stedfast gaze on him, without speaking—her looks were sufficient to describe the agony that passed in her mind.

The servants lifted her in their arms, but her inquiring eye still dwelt on Albert, whose distress it is impossible to describe. As the servants reached the door, she exclaimed, "Farewell, Albert, endeavour to suffer with fortitude; but my Correlia—"

What she would have said could not be known, for she expired as she uttered the name of her daughter.

Albert for a few moments surveyed the pale corpse of the amiable Countess, and then suddenly quitted the Castle of Montville, as her death so unexpected threw a confusion all around.

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## CHAP. IV.

ALBERT left the Castle of Montville with regret, for Correlia was there, who, he was conscious, would severely lament his departure and their unhappy situation. Who now was to comfort the lovely mourner for the loss of an indulgent parent? and what must she suffer at that dear parent's sudden dissolution? For although the Countess had long been in a declining state of health, yet the approach of death was not feared while that awful moment was surveyed at a distance. Albert dreaded the effect of this melancholy catastrophe on the delicate, afflicted spirits of Correlia, who when he quitted Montville Castle had not been informed of it. The stern look of the Count, and the recollection that he had desired his absence and forbid every future conversation with Correlia, hurt Albert's pride, and he suddenly quitted the place, conscious that he could not observe Correlia's grief on this trying occasion, without offering her consolation.—Count Beranger had expressed his disapprobation of their attachment; the innate feelings of honor and innocence rose in opposition to his imperious will.—Albert never liked the Count, but esteemed him because he was his father's friend, and the father of her who claimed all his thoughts, and possessed his heart.

Albert had often secretly remarked, that in observing Count Beranger's conversation he seldom spoke well of any one, and had often an artful insinuation in his manner, that privately undermined the best of characters; if he found any opposition, he always had the dexterity of extricating himself; yet Albert could scarce imagine, he could derive any interest in setting the father and son at variance.

However, he thought it very probable that some word of the Count's might be misconstrued by the Duke de Limousin, which had produced the cause of the dreadful message Albert received from him.—As for the prohibition of Count Beranger respecting his return to Paris, or Alembert Castle, that he determined to oppose; and with a mind filled with every torturing, every afflicting sensation, he, attended by Eugene, pursued his course towards Alembert Castle, where the Duke had but that morning arrived.

When he reached that place, the face of affairs seemed strangely altered. A servant of the Duchess answered him rather impertinently, which roused the indignant spirit of Albert, and he rushed past him, and entered the first parlour, where the Duchess chanced to be sitting alone.

She inquired the reason of his intrusion, when orders had been sent by Count Beranger, that he never more was to enter the presence of his father.

"Such," replied Albert, "were indeed the harsh commands of a father, I am conscious of never having offended.—Some artifice must have been used to arm the Duke with resentment against the son he always loved, and who ever revered him; but within these few weeks I am sorry to say, his kindness to me has been visibly changed.—I wish an explanation to this seemingly ambiguous business: for that I have returned to Alembert

Castle, and have not a doubt of vindicating my conduct, in a manner that shall give every possible satisfaction to the Duke and you, and restore myself to his paternal affection."

"The Duke is ill," replied the Duchess, "and has retired to his own room; he ordered no one should be admitted, and you, Albert, are particularly denied."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed he, "my father ill, and I denied the pleasure of seeing him, a circumstance that in all my life was never debarred me.—Am I awake—and dare any one say I shall be prevented?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Matilda, "I have orders to deny you even entering the gates of this Castle, which you have rudely passed by in opposition to the servant who had received his orders—Cruel Albert—you wish, by your impertinent presence, to increase your father's illness, but it is my duty to prevent it—If I suffered this intrusion, I might justly be thought as bad as you."

"O! let me take all the blame in myself! Suffer me to see him and convince him of my entire obedience, and submission to his will: I have not a doubt, but I can give him every satisfaction his heart would wish to learn;" replied Albert.

"Depend on me," said Matilda; "I have received the Duke's orders, and shall abide by them; and if you dare to press upon his retirement, the servants are commanded to obey me, and compel you to quit this Castle by force, if you do not choose to leave it otherwise."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Albert, "almost twenty years I have been brought up in this place, under the eye of an indulgent parent.—To my knowledge I have not done any thing to excite his anger.—No, madam, your servants shall not enjoy the satisfaction of forcibly driving the heir of the Duke de Limousin from hence.—I quit Alembert Castle only in the hope that Providence will allow an opportunity of avenging my wrongs—which I swear I will exert every endeavour to discover the author of.—Fain would I suppress the pangs of resentment which now arise, but I have always been sincere.—My bursting heart must speak; if I conjecture wrong, I humbly beg pardon; but—I really do not think I have a friend either in you or Count Beranger.—I may be mistaken, and sincerely hope I may.—My inheritance I learn by him, I am deprived of—the empty title of Count de Villiers is of no use, with only six thousand livres to support it—the title I do not claim; Albert de Villiers can enjoy more peace of mind, than the author of his disgrace can feel, surrounded by every pageantry rank or fortune can bestow. The avenging hand of Heaven will not always suffer calumny to succeed; when lulled in the greatest security, the guilty are often discovered. Conscience is an awful monitor; my bosom contains an honest heart, no more is necessary.—I request my clothes may be sent by my servant to the Cigne Blanc at Artenai, where I shall wait till he comes. I leave my respectful duty to my father, with hopes for the re-establishment of his health and peace.—But peace will be a stranger to me, though unconscious of ever having acted wrong."

Albert's feelings were arrived at a height bordering on distraction; for in addition to the loss of a father's love, Correlia, the idol of his heart, was torn from him for ever. Every thing else was indifferent to him, and he abruptly quitted the Duchess, without bidding her adieu, and left the Castle of Alembert with indignation, forgetting at that moment it was his birth place, and where in happier times he had enjoyed every earthly felicity.

As Albert mounted his horse, he cast his eyes towards the Castle, apparently taking a melancholy farewell of that once delightful habitation.

Eugene saw his master's agitation, and said, "My Lord."—Albert turned and saw his faithful servant was observing his steadfast gaze upon the Castle, which recovered him from the fit of anxiety and dejection he seemed plunged in.

"Doubtless, Eugene," said Albert, "from my behaviour within these twelve hours you think me mad.—My senses are indeed deranged, but not by insanity. Return to the Castle, and immediately collect every thing that is mine, all my clothes, books, and valuables—and follow me to the Cigne Blanc at Artenai—there I will explain what it is necessary you should know.—I will go there unattended, and wait your coming.

Albert rode away instantly, and the astonished Eugene returned to the Castle, to obey his master's orders.—He soon collected every thing belonging to his master that was at Alembert Castle, and was eager to follow him.—The trunks were put into a carriage, and, attended by Eugene, were safely conveyed to the Cigne Blanc.

When Eugene arrived, Albert having gained a little composure, related all the recent occurrences to his astonished servant. "I have an order for six thousand louis, sent by my father," said Albert, "and if I mistake not, in the black portmanteau are three thousand more in ready money, with the jewels which cost me ten thousand, as a present for Correlia de Beranger. "Ah! Correlia!—I little thought that any interruption would intervene to separate us—but the will of fate must be obeyed."

"Eugene, I cannot stay long in France.—I feel an honest pride in my breast, that prevents my remaining any longer; now the world will know of my misfortunes. I will depart for Italy immediately; for this country is now hateful to me, deprived of my honored father and my love—but before I depart, you must carry a letter to Correlia's servant, and beg she will give it her lady from me, and be cautious Count Beranger does not see you."

"Ah! my Lord!" replied Eugene, "when we left Alembert Castle, who would have thought this would happen?"

"Thus are we disappointed in our fairest hopes," said Albert; "but disquietude is the lot of man;" and he began writing the letter he designed for Correlia, that it might be ready for Eugene to take early in the morning.

A moment he paused—then wrote:

"Dear Correlia,

"I feel the impossibility of leaving France without letting you know, I hope you will sometimes remember me. When I am far from you, perhaps your tender heart will heave a sigh when you think of me, and the manner of our separation, which may incline you to bestow your best wishes; deprived of every felicity in my native country, I have need of them, and though cruel fate deprives me of your love, consider me your friend, which name I shall always be proud to bear; and let me intreat you will allow me your friendship in return.

The unfortunate

Albert.

Soon after Albert had written this note and gave it to Eugene, to set out with early in the morning, he retired to rest. But anxious to quit a place, where every flattering hope had received such a depression, he arose at the same time Eugene did, and departed for Nice, where he designed to remain a short time, and ordered Eugene to follow him on that road, after he had presented the letter to Correlia.

Before Albert reached Nice in Savoy; Eugene overtook him—He had been fortunate enough to see Correlia by accident.—"The note," he said, "she would often peruse, and forever esteem Albert her friend." —She had not time to say more, for Count Beranger had called her to attend the remains of the deceased Countess, and Eugene precipitately departed to follow his master.

## CHAP. V.

ALBERT, on whose brow gloomy care sat brooding, while severe anxiety preyed upon his heart; strove to appear cheerful in the presence of Eugene, and to suffer what he felt to sink in his own bosom, thereby to deprive Eugene of participating that grief and vexation he endured, which he well knew his faithful servant's affectionate heart would experience, if he considered his master's peace of mind was any way destroyed.

Eugene overtook his Master at B—, and delivered the reply of Correlia.

Albert endeavoured to suppress his feelings on the occasion, and their journey from thence to Nice was a silent one; for Albert's heart was too much oppressed to suffer him to speak, and Eugene observed his master's sorrow, and wished not to intrude.

When they arrived at Nice, a number of people of Albert's acquaintance were there; he entered into all their parties of pleasure and amusement, with a hope to dissipate the heavy gloom with which he was surrounded, and in some measure his endeavours were crowned with success.

He mixed into every gaiety the place afforded, and allowed six weeks to glide away in a vortex of dissipation, which partly chased away the sorrow he endured; for his father's displeasure, and the loss of Correlia, were afflictions too weighty to be sustained, and too powerfully oppressed his mind when alone, which was the reason why he launched into every gaiety, to banish the intrusions of corroding care.

After staying there six weeks, he suddenly left that place, and those acquaintances who had partly amused him, for he found himself inadequate to support the extravagance and expence such a connection required, forgetting in the moment when he associated himself with these gentlemen, that he was no longer the rich young Count de Villiers.

When Albert had travelled through the most esteemed parts of Italy, and admired every thing worthy of notice there, he thought of going to Poland, for at Warsaw his second father, General Dumetz, chose to fix his residence. He had heard but twice from the General since he left France, for Warsaw. Albert having wasted away eight months in Italy, designed to proceed to Warsaw; and, assured of the esteem of General Dumetz, Albert strove to *feel no more*.

"I will endeavour," said he to Eugene, "to forget myself, and all those misfortunes that have rendered me unhappy. The King of Poland is now obliged to guard his territories from the incursions of the Tartars; the Ruffians are no less obnoxious when an opportunity occurs, why remain I inactive?—I have been brought up to a military life—a soldier ought to be bereft of feeling when deprived of all he holds dear; for who could be so cruel to sly the embraces of a fond parent—an affectionate wife—a family of innocent children, or the maid he adores, in whom every wish of his heart, and all his future happiness is centered—who can forsake those he loves and court the arms of destructive

war—Such a one must be devoid of every sentiment of humanity. I have lost all those blessings: and only such as me are fit for that employment; therefore—

"I'll to the wars; and as the Corybantes,  
With clashing shields, and braying trumpets, drown'd  
The cries of infant Jove; I'll stifle feelings,  
And nature's murmurs, in the din of arms."

As Albert paused, Eugene replied—"Upon my word, my Lord, you speak this well, no player of the Parisian theatre could have given the subject more energy.—It is true, my Lord, you have been brought up to a military life—but some, I verily believe, are only soldiers, because they admire the outside shew, the fine parade and dress—a dress that often covers an empty skull, and disguises a cowardly heart. But you certainly speak the truth.—No man that had anybody he cared for, or who cared for him, if he had any sense, would hazard the chance of being shot.—However, I am willing to attend you all over the world, let your destiny be what it will. I respect you too much to let you suffer any danger I do not partake of."

Albert admired the affection of his honest servant, and thanked him for it—then desired he would prepare for the journey, which would take place in a few days.

Albert was now uneasy till he quitted Italy, and impatiently waited the moment that should convey him to the man, who, next his father, he most esteemed on earth.

All things were in readiness in two days; they left the village, and soon bade adieu to Italy. They passed through a most delightful country, and being in no particular haste, examined and admired the beauties of nature that fell in their way, and their journey to Warsaw took up much longer of their time, than they at first designed.

When Albert arrived at Warsaw, he made inquiries for General Dumetz according to his directions, but so simply ignorant were those of whom he asked information, that no one could tell where he was gone.

Vexed at his disappointment and convinced of the ignorance of the Poles, he determined on waiting on the first minister, to be introduced to their king, and solicited a commission in the army, against the enemies of their country.

In a few days his request was complied with.

He saw the king, who honoured him with a commission, and ordered him to join a reinforcement to General Zadifki's army, which were to depart from the capital in three days.

Albert obeyed the command with pleasure, and hoped to drown every uneasy sensation in the din of arms, and the fortune of ruthless war. Fortunately he arrived with the wished for succours, at the time when the Polish army were giving way to their

enemies. The troops were rallied; elated with the happy reinforcement, under the command of a veteran officer and Albert, who was second in command, the combat was renewed with great bravery and skill, and the victory on the side of Poland was complete—but alas! it was a dear bought victory; for numbers of their best countrymen were no more.

Albert had received a slight wound in his arm, which however was no confinement, for when it was drest, he was able to attend to his station, but the rage of battle had subsided.—Albert retired to his tent for a temporary relaxation.

Though he had suffered extreme fatigue during the day, yet the anxiety he felt on the melancholy occasion, induced him to desert his couch, and wander through the scene of death and carnage, so recently experienced, previous to the interment of those brave but unfortunate men who fell in the defence of their country.

Albert's heart was endued with every sentiment of soft humanity:—to wander through this waste of misery—to sigh for their fate—to lament the necessity that armed man against man, and deprived the world of some of its most valuable ornaments, was to him a melancholy retrospection.—He wished, but he checked the thought lest it might appear to arraign the will of Heaven, that he had been one of the number that now lay extended on the field, for *he* had no one to lament his loss—while the poor wretch, over whose breathless corpse he should walk, perhaps might have left a family and connexions every way dear to him.

Unable to tranquilize the agony of his mind, he suddenly quitted his tent, as he imagined unobserved.—The moon shone beautifully, as if unconscious of the horrors of the preceeding day. On either side were strewed the bodies of the slain.—Often he stopped and gazed on the mangled relics, and exclaimed, "These are thy works, Ambition!—and to what end?—ambition and humanity are the opposite extremes—let the men who urged us on to slaughter each other, advance into this scene of misery and destruction, and see if they would have liked to have been in the foremost ranks—or if only to look on this desolate prospect, what could they say?—what think?—Have I done this—am I the cruel cause?—are so many made wretched for me?—have I sent so many to the vale of death, in the midst of sins and drunkenness on my account?—What then is to become of me hereafter, for so doing?"

As Albert stood wrapped in this soliloquy, he thought he heard his name pronounced, and casting his eyes around perceived Eugene rapidly advancing towards him.

"Pardon me, my dear Lord," said he, "if I trespass on your thoughts—but you know I love you—I feared you would fall into some danger, and when you left the tent, I knew you was unhappy."

"Do you see these?" said Albert, pointing to the bodies, and almost inattentive to the kind voice of Eugene.—"Ye powers! what havoc does ambition make amongst your works!"

But a soldier is not to consider that," replied Eugene.—"If you remember, my Lord, you remarked that just before we left Italy."

"Yet though I am a soldier, Eugene, I must feel for the distresses, the sufferings of others."

As he spoke, a loud scream assailed his ears.—He looked round with astonishment.—Eugene from the same motive, followed his master's example—but the moon suddenly passed behind a cloud, and veiled the surrounding melancholy scene in darkness.

Another scream was uttered. It sounded nearer, and the voice seemed feminine.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Albert, "some unfortunate wretch, perhaps, still lingers out a wretched existence among this number of hapless mortals, now no more. Let us proceed and give assistance; friends or enemies, let us grant the help required, and endeavor to rescue one from the grave."

Eugene stepped forward a few paces, but found it difficult to proceed for the heaps of dead that obstructed their way; and they continued to conjecture the scream issued from some one supposed to be dead, who had not yet been discovered.

Albert stood gazing wildly round, and the shriek was repeated. at that moment the moon emerging from a heavy cloud, shone with a beautiful brilliancy, on the melancholy objects round, discovering a female elegantly habited, in the arms of four men, apparently Ruffians, within a few steps of him.

A thousand thoughts crowded into Albert's mind, and Correlia was the first.—He imagined the form extremely resembled her, and in the energy of the moment, he forgot the vast distance he was from her; but he sprang forward to give the assistance she apparently required.

"Sure my senses err not," said he; "it certainly is Correlia de Beranger."

Without a moment's hesitation, he drew his sword, and rushed on the astonished Ruffians, demanding the lady.—They were obstinate in their refusal, and persisted in carrying her away.—Eugene seeing the danger his master was exposed to, ran to his assistance;—an affray ensued, in which Albert was so far victorious as to gain the lady, (who had fainted) from their grasp; having wounded one of them, and he vowed to defend her with his life.

A violent contest ensued, in which Eugene could give his master no assistance, as he dreaded to leave the lady, who was to every appearance bereft of life; fearing she would again fall into the hands of the Ruffians; but he had the satisfaction of seeing another fall beneath his master's conquering sword, and had wounded a third.—The last then called to

Albert to desist, and intreated he might convey his wounded companions away, that they might have every necessary assistance given them.

Albert complied, as he had rescued the lady, and only wished to remove her to his tent, that proper remedies might be applied for her recovery.

The Ruffians drew off their wounded associates, and Albert returned to the Lady and Eugene, who was busy in endeavouring to restore her. But, apprehensive of the return of more Ruffians, they lifted her from the ground, and supporting her in their arms, conveyed her to Albert's tent.

So great was the resemblance of the lady the rescued to Correlia, that Albert gazed on her in wild astonishment. She recovered, and politely thanked Albert to his kind assistance.—Surprise nearly overcame him—She looked, she spoke, every accent of her voice reminded him of Correlia de Beranger.—At first sight the similitude was extreme, but on a more minute survey, the lovely stranger had rather the advantage of Correlia in height; but in elegance of form, it was doubtful which had the preference.

His amazement a little abated—He seated himself, and entered into conversation with the lady, as he much wished to know to whom she belonged, that he might restore her to her friends.

"My name is Alzeyda," she replied; "my father is one of the generals in Zadiski's army: during this day of horror and death, I have been employed in administering consolation, and endeavouring to alleviate the fears of an indulgent mother. My father, thank God, returned to us after the battle, without having received any harm, and eased our hearts of a weight of care.

"Melancholy reflections induced me to quit the tent of the General this evening, and I walked out to take a slight survey of the weighty loss we had sustained; it brought to my mind sensations I am unable to delineate.—I shuddered at the dreadful sight of the numbers of our fellow creatures who lie in heaps on the field of battle—and was uttering a short, but fervent prayer for the souls of those hapless mortals that were so suddenly cut off, when the band of Ruffians seized me, and were carrying me away—doubtless they would have succeeded but for your timely and generous rescue; for which, words are inadequate to the sense I have of the obligation."

Alzeyda ceased.—But every accent sunk deep in Albert's heart—the resemblance she bore Correlia created various emotions, and he evidently wished the lovely stranger had been the amiable fair he sighed for—yet he was happy to find there existed one person on earth who so much resembled her.

After partaking some refreshments Alzeyda wished to return to her father's tent, fearing lest he should suffer any anxiety by her absence, and Albert ordered a guard of soldiers to attend them, apprehensive that the Ruffians might have had the audacity to assemble a greater force to intercept her return.

Alzeyda leaning on Albert's arm, stepped forward to lead the way to the General's tent, which she pointed out at a distance; and attended by about a dozen soldiers, happily reached the destined spot.

When they arrived at the tent, Alzeyda introduced Albert to her father as the person to whose generosity and courage she was indebted for her deliverance from the power of the Ruffians:—but what words can convey Albert's surprise, to behold in the father of the charming stranger, his valued friend General Dumetz.

Mutual astonishment ensued—then the General rushed forward to press his young friend to his breast, and give him that welcome his conduct so justly merited.

Alzeyda's amazement equalled theirs. At present she had not an opportunity of relating the particulars of the signal service he had rendered her—but now an explanation took place, and the General returned him a profusion of thanks for the kind attention he had shewn his daughter.

They were then introduced to Madame Dumetz, who was informed of Alzeyda's late escape from the hands of the Ruffians—but suppressed as much as possible the danger to which she had been exposed, as Madame Dumetz was apparently ill, and they feared to alarm her.

The party sat down to a repast, and each seemed as happy as their situation, after a day surrounded by danger and death, could make.

Albert soon bade them farewell for the night, promising to visit them in the morning—and was extremely rejoiced to find so unexpectedly the friend he had some time been in search of.

Alzeyda again thanked him, and begged he would not omit calling on them the following day. A request almost unnecessary, for Albert had much to inform the General of, as also that he felt truly happy in the agreeable company at his tent.

Albert and his little troop returned to his own tent, where he dismissed them; he then retired to rest,—but the various occurrences of the day kept him awake, and chafed sleep from his eyes.

The meeting with Alzeyda had given him great uneasiness, as at first sight he absolutely thought it was Correlia de Beranger, and the apparent danger she was in, inspired him with a greater share of courage to relieve her. How singularly strange it appeared to him, that the beautiful lady he had been so fortunate as to save from the power of the Ruffians, was the daughter of the friend he sought—yet, on the contrary, he was surprised to hear the General acknowledge her for his daughter, because he knew General Dumetz was unmarried when he left France. He therefore conjectured Alzeyda was only his daughter-in-law.

Lost in perplexing thoughts, towards morning he fell into a slumber that for a short time excluded sensations that mingled pleasure with anxiety. When he awoke, he immediately repaired to the tent of his friend.

The day was a very busy one, as they were clearing the field of its dreadful burden, and burying the bodies of those who fell in battle.

Alzeyda with a placid smile was the first to bid him welcome. She had perfectly overcome her fright of the preceding night, and looked extremely beautiful. Her presence created Albert's uneasiness, for she most forcibly brought to his mind his dear, his lost Correlia. "Correlia!" sighed he to himself—"Correlia, I am forbid to think of, and must think of you no more. But sure without a fault, I may for thy sake revere her who so nearly resembles thee; and although I have been in many circumstances unfortunate, yet fate for once has been kind, for I have found my friend,"

Madame Dumetz appeared at breakfast, somewhat relieved from the anxiety she endured the day before. Her person was elegant and beautiful, her manners affable and engaging. She seemed to be about thirty-eight years of age, her conversation was extremely agreeable, and she paid the greatest attention to the General; never mentioning him but with respect. She said he had been her greatest friend, and the most indulgent of fathers to her Alzeyda, since it had pleased Heaven to bestow him on them. By this Albert learnt, that his first ideas were right: Alzeyda was the General's daughter-in-law.

Albert then left the ladies, and went to assist the General and others; and when their melancholy employment was completed, he returned with the General.

After dinner, Albert minutely related every circumstance that had occurred since the General left France, which he could not trust by letter, and of the strange conduct of Count Beranger.

"Count Beranger!" exclaimed the General—"Ah! that is a lurking serpent.—To him I am indebted for that loss of reputation I sustained in France. It was by his artful insinuations and contrivances that deprived me of the esteem of my sovereign. I have been informed of the whole proceeding, but let it rest—Beranger and I must never meet again—I cannot see him without letting him know—I am certain he is a villian, and how greatly he has wronged me; and certainly my heart would then seek to be revenged on the traitor."

"Ah!" replied Albert, "I also fear the Count has been acting wrong by me. But the cruel manner he treated me and poor Correlia, sinks to my heart, and never, never, can be forgotten."

Alzeyda interrupted him, saying, "Correlia! then I presume, sir, you loved Correlia, as you speak of her with such concern?"

Albert bowing replied—"I once had the happiness also of her affection."

"Was she handsome?"

"She so much resembles yourself," said Albert, "that when I saw you in the power of the Ruffians, I sincerely believed it was Correlia de Beranger, though I knew I had left her far, far distant; but the energy of the moment made me forget where I was—and even when you was conducted to my tent you still appeared the same."

Alzeyda looked rather confused, and sunk into silence—topics of more immediate concern occupied the discourse of Albert and General Dumetz.—The ladies rose to retire, Alzeyda's heart was not entirely at ease, and she cast a penetrating look at Albert as she quitted their presence.

Soon after the General and Albert left the tent, to attend their duty in the field.

Chawton House Library

## CHAP. VI.

ALZEYDA had felt a strong partiality in favour of Albert from the first moment she saw him in his tent. Gratitude for his venturing his life to save her from the Ruffians, endeared him to her the more, and she was charmed that the General was his friend and esteemed him; flattering herself by that means she should the oftener have the pleasure of his company.—But when she found he had entertained a love for the fair Correlia, of whom he could not forbear speaking with the ardour of a lover, her flattering hopes received a check, which convinced her, she held the agreeable and gallant officer in too high estimation.

A month moved away in this manner—Albert every day visited his friend the General, and Alzeyda grew more uneasy, as she grew more acquainted with him.—To her he appeared every thing amiable, and she could not prevent her heart's feeling a powerful attachment.—"Happy Correlia," would she often say, "to be possessed of the affections of that generous and brave young man—how I envy you!—Yet, what must you feel, at this dreadful separation?"

Albert, affected to treat Alzeyda with indifference, though always with respect; for Correlia's likeness in her he adored, and dreaded the progress Alzeyda was making in his heart.—"Correlia," said he, "I am certain can never be mine, a rigid father opposes our happiness; I ought to forget her, knowing the dreadful state of our circumstances.—I had endeavoured to overcome the sad remembrance of what was impossible to be remedied.—My mind had assumed a calm, for absence, dissipation, and a military life, made me at times indifferent; when Alzeyda in Correlia's form appears, and totally overturns every effort of mine to forget her.—Wherefore should I feel thus anxious?—I know no pleasure but in Alzeyda's company—and I certainly revere her the more for Correlia's sake."

About this time they received a surprize from the enemy, and the army of Zadiski was obliged to hazard a battle, though conscious of the Polish troops being greatly inferior in numbers to their opponents.

The battle was desperate, and the valor of the Poles was never more conspicuous than on that memorable day; for though a part of their army had given way, the troops under the command of general Dumetz were successful.

Zadiski felt elated at the unexpected turn of fortune; he apparently received new life with the success, and rallying the troops, a very warm contest ensued, which proved decisive in favor of Poland, for the enemy was completely routed.

During this action, Albert de Villiers fought with great bravery.—His horse was killed under him, and he received a wound that disarmed him. The soldier was going to repeat the blow, when a young peasant, with a drawn sabre in his hand, rushed between Albert and the uplifted arm that was going to destroy him.—"Oh! spare him!—or let your sword

pass through me,"—exclaimed a voice, which struck Albert's heart with anxiety and admiration.—He was conscious the voice was Alzeyda, and was under the greatest alarm for her safety.

Alzeyda at the first blow, had the good fortune to disarm his antagonist; but to exert herself in battle was not her ambition, any more than to save the life of Albert de Villiers.—She therefore embraced the opportunity of hurrying Albert away to the general's tent, that every assistance might be given him.

When he arrived there, the wound was examined, which was declared not to present any symptom of a dangerous nature.—But Alzeyda's fears created every danger.—It was bound up, and he did not appear much exhausted; but casting a look on Alzeyda who stood trembling with dread, he said—"Why, charming Alzeyda, did you venture your life for me—think what I should have suffered, if any accident had happened to you in that dangerous attempt. I never should have experienced happiness again."

"Did you not preserve me?" replied Alzeyda; "did you not rescue me from falling into the hands of the Ruffians?—Did you not restore me to the arms of my dear mother, who I am conscious would never have survived my loss?—Only think too, generous Albert, of the obligations I certainly am under to you, and can you imagine the insensible?—Where would have been my gratitude?—words are empty tributes—but I gloried in the thought of following you through every danger the day produced—in the hopes of being instrumental to the safety of him who so bravely defended me."

"I feel myself highly obliged," replied Albert, "and am sorry I have been so long insensible of your goodness—but you, sweet maid, had all to risk, and all to lose—had any accident befallen you—the General and Madame Dumetz would have been inconsolable.—I, on the contrary, Alzeyda, leave no one to mourn for me.—Distant from my country—deprived of a father's love—robbed of every felicity I once flattered myself in indulging—I should have sunk amidst the numbers that perished, forgotten, unknown, and unlamented."

"Oh! say not," said Alzeyda, "that you should leave none to mourn for you—I am indebted to you in an eminent degree—and can you suppose the General, who regards you as if you were his own son, can you not imagine he would feel a severity of affliction for you?"

"The General, Alzeyda, has been always kind, always a father to me.—I have received a singular proof of your attention—But the outcast of fortune, though blessed with the cheering smiles of a few deserving friends, cannot be happy—because conscious of his own inferiority."

While they were speaking, the General entered with a number of officers and soldiers, and announced the tidings of victory.

Joyful was the sound to every one,—but they ceased not in the moment of triumph to feel as men, and to lament these brave but unfortunate beings, enemies as well as friends, who had risen to a cheerful dawn—but their evening was set in death.

Alzeyda took the earliest opportunity of retiring, wishing not to be observed in the dress she wore;—and Albert was put into the General's bed—for General Dumetz imagined he was considerably worse than he really was, and could not suffer him to be removed to his own.

After the company had withdrawn, the General, Madame Dumetz, and Alzeyda, sat to watch him during the night; but finding the fatigue he had undergone inclined him to sleep, the General prevailed on the Ladies to seek the comforts of repose, and he would watch by him alone.—"For," added the General, "the unfortunate creature, far from his native country—deprived of the cheering consolation of friends and relations, and discarded by those who ought to regard him, shall not be deserted by the only friend fate has not wrested from him.—I shall not trust him to the care of any one but myself."

"Sir, you speak nobly, you speak kindly," said Alzeyda, taking his hand, and pressing it to her lips:—I know your goodness—I know that the unfortunate are certain of receiving every attention from you; and if your reward is not to this world, hereafter, my dear sir, you will find it."

So saying, she quitted the General, and taking Madame Dumetz's hand, retired to her bed.

General Dumetz watched by Albert's side during the night, and was happy to find the danger existed only in their fears for his safety.—In the morning, Albert appeared greatly refreshed, and seemed to suffer very little from pain.

Alzeyda was present at breakfast.—She experienced a pleasure in seeing Albert better than her flattering hopes could have had an idea of—but her mother, who had not enjoyed a good state of health for some time, was too unwell to let them partake of her company.

The General was greatly affected, on hearing of her indisposition, and informed Albert that she had been unwell for several months, but had hoped she would recover, and dreaded her returning to the alarming state she was in a short time before.

Madame Dumetz however, was present at dinner, and the General imagined she was considerably better.—Alzeyda was rejoiced at the thought for to her Madame Dumetz was more than a mother—a friend.

Albert returned suitable thanks to the General and all his family for the kind attention he had received.—But to Alzeyda he could not express the grateful sentiments of his heart adequate to his feelings, for her kindness in singling him out in the heat of battle, preserving his existence at the hazard of her own.

He then departed, and returned to his own tent.

"Alzeyda," said he, "loves me, or she would never have exposed her angelic form in a situation so dangerous. I knew not of her intention, or the amiable peasant should have been my first care.—What motive but affection could she have for so doing?—She tells me gratitude.—Sweet Alzeyda!—thy heart is grateful; but for a female to precipitate herself into danger, is beyond every idea we can form.—Oh! had Alzeyda been taken prisoner—had fate designed so woeful a separation between her and her amiable parents, I should have hated the destiny that led me to Poland, and said it was the blackest hour of my life.—Correlia! charming Correlia! I know you can never be mine—all hopes leading that way have been long since vanished into air—her friendly disposition would not wish me to be always unhappy.—She would respect Alzeyda for the service she has done me—to Alzeyda I owe the preservation of my life.—Generous, incomparable Alzeyda! Gratitude shall teach me to revere and adore you—but alas! fortune is wanting to raise you to the station you were doomed to adorn."

In thoughts like these, Albert often passed several hours of the day when the duty of a soldier was over.—His mind was rather inclined to melancholy, for Alzeyda's goodness, and his prior attachment to Correlia, rendered him unhappy.

"Correlia," said Albert one day, "Correlia knew my affection for her, was sincere; she knows the impossibility of our union—she knows the boundless ambition of the Count Beranger, that he will not suffer her to wed one in my unfortunate situation.—It is for my want of fortune and title, that has made him banish me from her heart, and all those charming prospects enraptured fancy formed.—Thus made uncomfortable, I know the generosity of her disposition; for no selfish idea inhabits the bosom of the amiable Correlia.—She would feel happy that I admired Alzeyda, because I loved Correlia and there is no one on earth I could love but Alzeyda, and her only, knowing I never can marry Correlia.—Alzeyda has ventured her life for me and ought I not to preserve it for her sake? If there is any thing in my power, that can make her happy—I should endeavour to do it."

## CHAP. V.

ALBERT saw Alzeyda every day, and the party at General Dumetz's after the fatigues of war, received a pleasure in his company; but Madame Dumetz's health was visibly on the decline. Thus passed away the time till it was expected the campaign was near a conclusion.

One day while Albert was there, Madame Dumetz proposed to relate her history, as a trifle to amuse the time. "Though alas!" said she, "what I shall say is of a melancholy nature, and no one but the General and Alzeyda know any thing concerning me, but you will judge how uncertain happiness is in this world.

My father's name was Westburne, a native of England, and when I was only two years old, he was appointed the English Consul at Algiers; my mother died soon after we arrived at that place, the climate affected her health, and a sudden termination of all sublunary events deprived us of her for ever.

My father's whole delight was now centred in me, and for the sake of the dear saint we had lost, his attention and tenderness was redoubled on his Emily, that was my name.

I grew up to the age of sixteen, under the care of the best and most indulgent fathers, who spared no expence to render me accomplished and happy. I knew no other place than Algiers, and there I felt contented.

Among the number of my acquaintances was a Moorish lady of high rank, who was called Zara.—I loved her with the affection of a sister, and received very little pleasure but what I enjoyed in her company; and I frequently visited at her house, as she valued me beyond every person of her own country.

As Zara and I were one day walking in one of the beautiful gardens belonging to her habitation, a slave abruptly passed us, as if he wished to avoid us. I remarked to Zara that I thought his behaviour was somewhat singular; "let us not wonder," said the lovely moor, "he has been purchased but about a week.—Consider, Emily, what would our hearts endure, if we were torn from our dear friends and native home, and forced to a strange country, to be doomed to slavery, and obliged to serve the caprices of another; let us think of that, and cease to wonder why he appears thus."

My heart felt strangely agitated as she spoke, and I mentally said, some of the Moors have tender and generous hearts.—I then asked what countrymen he was?

"He is a Frenchman," replied Zara, "and by his figure and manner, I imagine him to be a superior rank in life."

"A Frenchman," said I, "is to be remarked, I have been taught, for his politeness and indifference—for it is said, let a Frenchman be in whatever situation fortune is pleased to place him, he is always cheerful."

"Yet," replied Zara, "the human heart of whatever country must be sensible of misfortune—and in a few words I can relate what Valcour knows—He is a slave."

Valcour now passed us; and either the elegance of his person, or the unfortunate situation to which fate had consigned him rushed powerfully on my fancy.—I felt unhappy, and wished I could relieve his misfortunes.

We now observed him busily employed.—Zara and I walked about the garden a considerable time talking on indifferent subjects, and as we returned to the house Valcour stepped respectfully aside to let us pass, and with a graceful bow presented each of us a nosegay, culled from the choicest productions of nature.

"Surely," said Zara, "Valcour must have heard your remark, for I never saw him thus attentive before."

"I am very sorry," said I, "to see a person so apparently amiable and genteel as he seems to be, reduced to the dreadful fate of slavery. I should like to speak with him; perhaps none of his friends knows what is become of him, and their hearts may be breaking on account of his mysterious loss.

"You who are not a Moor," replied Zara, "may speak, but I cannot.—If you have a wish to know to whom he belongs, or can do him any service, go. In the orange room you will find Abdallah attending, bid him order Valcour into your presence."

Zara quitted me; and I, anxious to know if my father could render the unfortunate stranger any assistance, walked to the orange room as directed, and ordered Valcour to attend.

When he entered the apartment, I was extremely surprised, for he appeared a very elegant young man, who at first sight made a very powerful impression on my heart.—I asked him many questions concerning his country, his friends, and the nature of his misfortunes.—He told me his father was a man of high rank; that he, an only son, had been to one of the French Islands in the West Indies on business of consequence; and on his return the vessel had been chased by an Algerine rover, captured, and he himself sold for a slave.

"My father," said I, "is the British Consul and has great interest in Algiers.—shall he write and inform your friends of your unfortunate situation? doubtless they are very unhappy on your account."

"No Madame," returned Valcour, "though I feel myself highly obliged by your kind and generous offer—yet let them remain in ignorance.—To be ignorant of my

melancholy fate will render them far happier than to be convinced of the fatal truth.—No! I must not add to their afflictions by declaring the secret of my cruel destiny."

"Believe me, I think you are cruelly sporting with their feelings," said I; "but you are certainly the best judge—If a life of bondage is your choice, perhaps, I am wrong to interfere?"

"To be in bondage," replied Valcour, "where I have the pleasure of seeing such an amiable lady, and to have the honor of her good wishes for my welfare, to know that she generously compassionates my misfortunes, to me is a material consolation, it cheers my drooping heart, and relieves the burden of my woes. Believe me, madam, I am happy—Your concern for me, in a foreign land surrounded by strangers, is a cordial to my spirits, and a pleasure I never shall forget."

Valcour as he concluded speaking made a graceful bow, and I rose to leave the apartment, in some measure vexed at having succeeded no better: for I flattered myself he would have been overjoyed to have found a person willing to convey the news of his distresses to his friends.

But how strangely we are infatuated! after this short interview, Valcour was ever present in my thoughts, and the only pleasure I experienced, was the hope of seeing him again: how insensibly our affections steal away—a few weeks convinced me, Valcour was the only being on earth that could make me happy.

I visited Zara every day, and by that means had an opportunity of seeing and conversing with Valcour, who could not refrain expressing his affection for me, and now for my sake began to lament his being a slave.

Convinced that my father had loved me above all earthly beings—that his mind disdained a thought of avarice, and that if I asked a favour I seldom met a refusal—I blamed myself for suffering a passion to lurk in my bosom, and conceal it from this best of parents; I therefore resolved to declare the truth, and acknowledge that I entertained an affection for a young man of distinction, that cruel fortune had made a slave—and that he had expressed the same tender sentiments for me; all I wished was for him to purchase his liberty, and to allow him to pay his addresses to me, as by the elegance of his person and manners, I had not a doubt of his being a person of fortune.

Mr. Westburne heard me, and uttered not a word in opposition; money was no object when he had the welfare of a fellow creature in view. Much he esteemed his Emily—her happiness was the first wish of his heart, and the first he wished to promote.

We soon after paid a visit to Zara—I to see her—my father to her father, in order to see if he would sell his slave, and pay the sum he demanded for him.—The purchase was high, but it was immediately paid, and Valcour returned home with my father in his carriage; while I staid the remainder of the day with Zara, whom I informed of every particular, and the intention of my father's visit to liberate Valcour.

When my father had passed some time in conversation with Valcour, he admired him as much as I had done—his manners seemed perfectly amiable and engaging, he was very intelligent and free—and apparently quite the accomplished gentleman.

He soon confessed to my father, that he had admired and loved me, ever since he first saw me with his mistress Zara.

When I returned home, Valcour met me as I entered the apartment, and acknowledged the sense he had of the obligation, with every grateful expression a heart sensible of benefits received could dictate.

My father supplied him with money, and every accommodation till he could write to his friends and receive remittances: satisfied with the behaviour and conduct of Valcour every preparation was made for our marriage, which took place about a month after.

Chawton House Library

## CHAP. VIII.

I PASSED away near twelve months in happiness.—Valcour was the most affectionate and tenderest of husbands, but at times he appeared very dejected. To account for that dejection, he expressed himself extremely unhappy that he had received no reply to any of the letters he had written to France—and I perceived he suffered anxiety for what he imagined a neglect.

One year I had been married, and Heaven blessed me with a daughter.—I was supremely happy! Valcour's affection for her equalled mine.—I did not expect that in the midst of such felicity as I promised myself with my lovely child, fate had such severe afflictions in store as I was shortly doomed to experience, and which has embittered almost every hour of my life since that time.

My daughter was but a fortnight old, when Valcour, who had taken an affectionate leave of us in the morning, to go out on business of importance for my father—by some dreadful accident, some fatal mystery, returned no more! I need not express what were my sufferings on this melancholy occasion, your own heart must judge what it is to lose all we value in life, and that in a manner distressing beyond every power of mine to describe.

My father was severely afflicted, my misfortunes he made his own; and he also had a great regard for Valcour. He made inquiries every where without effect—he flew to Zara, and to every acquaintance and person, we thought likely to discover where he could be found.—alas! in vain.

My father then dispatched letters to the Baron de Valcour at Paris, who Valcour said was his father, and that he resided in that city; as also to every person we had heard him mention being acquainted with in France, vainly hoping to trace him somewhere.

But how shall I explain our surprize on receiving a letter from the Baron de Valcour, expressing his astonishment on the receipt of my father's letter; he assured Mr. Westburne he never had a son, and that it was an entire mistake; nor could he call to mind any person he had ever seen, that answered the description we sent of him.

My grief was extreme. I wished for death to put a final period to the miseries my heart sustained; but then I thought of my daughter, and knew if I was also snatched away from her, she would be left a poor unprotected orphan. My father's goodness was to be sure every thing I could wish or hope, but he was growing in years, and when he died, I knew my child would be quite alone, in a country far distant from any relation to take care of her helpless infancy; these reflections roused me from the stupor which distress of mind had sunk me into. I exerted every ability and strove to suppress every acute feeling, for the sake of my daughter; and firmly believed Valcour must have been murdered and concealed, or I think the affectionate regard he always shewed, would never have permitted him to desert his infant daughter and me.

Zara every opportunity visited me.—She tenderly endeavoured to assuage my sorrows—her affection for my child; the rich jewels she presented her with, and her unexampled attention to me, with her friendly exertion to alleviate my distress of heart, and chase the stern look of care from my brow, increased my love for her, and induced me to call my daughter, by the name Zara wished to give her.—It was Alzeyda, the name of Zara's mother, whom she most affectionately loved.

I never experienced such tender, such disinterested friendship from any person I ever met with, in any country, as from this amiable, this accomplished Moorish lady. Sweet Zara, the innumerable kindnesses I have received from thee, shall be remembered with gratitude and affection by me, while life animates my bosom.

By degrees my grief abated, but the cause remained in my heart.—I found the necessity of appearing cheerful, and often assured my friends, my sorrows had lost some of their poignancy on account of my father, who really laboured under great distress of mind for my sake. And my little Alzeyda, who now began to run about and chatter, often looked sad when she saw me in tears, though the innocent creature knew not for why.

Three years elapsed, during which time no intelligence could be obtained of Valcour. At that sad period, my dear friend Zara fell dangerously sick, and, convinced that her death was approaching, sent for me and Alzeyda, to whom she gave every valuable jewel she was possessed of—all those brilliant ornaments, that once adorned the lovely owner, were bestowed on her little favorite Alzeyda.—But alas! could they compensate for the loss of that excellent, and amiable friend, who soon after expired, and left me wretched to mourn our separation!

Algiers had now no charms for me.—Valcour had been mysteriously torn away, and all attempts to discover what was become of him were ineffectual.—Zara, the charming Zara was no more, death had deprived me of a blessing I always esteemed, but never sufficiently knew how to value—till death robbed me of it.

My father's health was visibly on the decline, and he intreated to be recalled to his native home; which event did not happen for two years.—We then departed from Algiers, where I had passed the days of my childhood in delight—where I had received much pleasure and friendship, but where also I sustained the severest afflictions.

England, the place of my nativity, did not afford me the joy I hoped to experience: accustomed as I had been to foreign manners from my infancy; and I flattered myself, that if we travelled through France, we could make more particular inquiries concerning Valcour, than any that had hitherto been made, and ardently hoped to hear some intelligence of him dead or alive.

But my father's affairs during his long absence abroad were greatly deranged, and it took some time to settle them according to his desire. We remained four years in England, and then set out for France.

We travelled leisurely through that country, and at every place we came to, inquired for the name of Valcour.—Many of that name we were introduced to, but none that in the least resembled my husband.—And what made me more unhappy, was, the friends he had mentioned to me, when I visited them, to make more particular inquiries, assured me they knew of no such person; nor had they ever any acquaintance answering the description I gave.

All my dread now was, that Valcour had deceived me with respect to who his real family and connexions were, for not one of the people he said, he had wrote to, and those he often talked to my father about, had any knowledge of him. After a period of ten years, it gave me additional uneasiness to imagine him capable of being guilty of disguising his real name and situation; and to find myself imposed on.

After continuing two years in France, we returned to England, where nothing material occurred for four years; at that time my father fell sick, and though his health apparently mended, his physician advised him to go to Italy, as the air of that country was the best to restore him to health.

We accordingly once more quitted England, designing to fix our residence at Nice, where we arrived in safety.—There we met with General Dumetz.—My father and he were inseparable friends; he honoured me with his esteem and affection, and soon after requested my hand in marriage.

I own I felt a great partiality for the General; his merit, his goodness of heart was sufficient to gain my attention and admiration.—I related to him the account of my sufferings; the mysterious loss of Valcour, and our fruitless endeavours to discover if yet he lived: but being now near seventeen years absent, we all firmly believed he was dead.

We were married.—General Dumetz adopted Alzeyda for his daughter—his affection for her was truly parental; my father was happy to see me once more protected, but alas! he lived but a short time to witness our happiness, death deprived me of the most indulgent of fathers.—

Madame Dumetz ceased a few minutes, to bestow a tear she was unable to suppress, as a tribute to his memory. She then continued:

Soon after my father was buried; General Dumetz informed me he was going to Poland; for he was honored with a commission in the army, at that time acting at Borkzowka, in the palitinate of Padolia.

We left Italy and proceeded with all imaginable speed to Warsaw—The journey was extremely pleasant, but my mind was rather inclined to melancholy musing; my father's recent death allowed no other sensations.

The General fixed me and my daughter in an elegant establishment at Warsaw; and then was obliged to depart to join the army of Zadiski.

In the absence of General Dumetz, I had the consolation of Alzeyda's company, for the country was new to me, the language I could not understand, and I found it difficult to learn—I had the pleasure of receiving frequent letters from the General, which proved his attention and how much he valued us.

At the close of the campaign he returned to Warsaw, and soon after his arrival I was blessed with a daughter, a most engaging lovely infant; and I felt an additional happiness as the General was doatingly fond of her;—she was called Anne.

This beautiful creature, whose angelic sweetness was rarely to be met with, Heaven in its will ordained was not long to be with us—a fatal illness seized her, which continued one week, during which time, the pain she seemed to endure is beyond description, no one could imagine a child of her age could suffer so much.—Yet I vainly flattered myself that while there was life there remained a hope, and had it pleased the Almighty to have spared her, I could have endured every hardship without repining, for the sake of being blessed with her.—After one week of painful, dreadful agony, it pleased the Father of Mercies to ease the sufferings of my angel Anne, and to call her from a world of misery to one of everlasting joy; her blessed spirit quitted its tenement of clay, and winged its flight to realms of bliss eternal.

Madame Dumetz at the recollection of her loss, could not conceal the grief that laboured in her breast, which rendered her unable to proceed for a few minutes. The General as if unwilling to be observed, rose from his seat and with hurried steps went to the door of his tent,—he gave a heavy sigh as he passed Albert, but remained silent, his looks were expressive of his feelings.

Madame Dumetz after a pause, raised her eyes to Heaven and said—"My angel love, I hope we shall meet again!—there is another world, in which I sincerely trust, we *shall*—thy pure gentle spirit is certainly arrived at that happy eternity, and may it as a guardian angel hover to protect those of thy kindred who were dear to thee, from every ill.—I have heard of such,—and sure my Anne, if spirits departed have a power of remembering those they left behind to mourn their loss—I—we must all be dear to thee.—Forget thee, I never, never can; alone, or in the midst of the greatest company, still art thou present to my thoughts, still in my mind reigns the idea of thy charming image, and I must cease to breathe when I cease to think of thee.

"And neither the toils of war, the dangers of the field, or the misfortunes with which this country is surrounded, can banish thy loved remembrance from thy father's mind."

Madame Dumetz rose and went to the General, whose melancholy he had endeavoured to hide, as he could not suppress. A few minutes enabled him to return composedly with her to the company.

Being seated she continued.

I shall not omit now we are speaking of my blessed girl to repeat the lines written extempore by a young lady, only twelve years of age, when she heard of her death, it shews the amiable ideas of so young a mind, and though a tribute to an infant she loved, of only five months old, I feel myself extremely obliged for her kindness.

#### ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

Sweet babe! thy life was short, and to thy memory  
Cool hearted malice sure would ne'er refuse,  
To drop with grief that sympathizing tear,  
As o'er my cheek this moment doth diffuse.

Oh lovely child! by this time thou'rt arrived  
At that blest place, where many, many would  
Give all their foolish tinsel'd fopperies,  
To hasten there, so pure, so chaste, so good.

No glaring virtues shall my pen retrace,  
No splendid honors deck thy simple bier;  
Thy dove like innocence, and gentle truth,  
Was far too good to dwell with mortals here.

And now on high amidst the Heavenly choir,  
Thou lifts thy little angel voice to sing;  
And in soft notes thy gratitude express,  
By chanting praises to th' Almighty King.

May I thro' life preserve thy dove-like mind,  
And then more blest, more happy than a queen,  
May truth and virtue be my constant guides,  
And my last hour, may it be like thine, serene.

No more fond parents weep, no more repine,  
That he who gave, should claim his own again,  
But let this cheering thought assuage thy mind,  
She's left a world of vice, of care, and pain;  
And to her native heaven is restor'd,  
Where peace serenely smiles, the only blest abode.

"Though conscious that my loved child was far happier than ever I could make her, yet I feel it impossible to abate the affliction I endured, and still endure for her loss.—Amusements I tried—how vain is every earthly pageantry, to endeavour to beguile that melancholy which secretly preyed on my heart; in the midst of dissipation my lovely Anne could not be forgotten; for sad remembrance brought to my mind that on such a

night, I rose to watch the few remaining hours of my dying infant only a few weeks ago—these recollections made me more sad than I should otherwise have been, and I determined to visit public amusements no more.

"General Dumetz, I am resuming a melancholy subject—but you will pardon me—you know my heart is doomed like yours to feel our loss—but I will say no more on the occasion.

"The time drew near that called General Dumetz to join the army of General Zadiski. Though blessed with Alzeyda, who felt equally for the loss of her sister, I dreaded his leaving me, convinced that in his absence I should ponder more on the melancholy subject that engrossed my thoughts. I believe the General perceived the anxiety of my mind: alas! I have been full of anxiety ever since I became his wife.—My father died whose memory I ever shall revere. The general, after we had hurried from Nice, was obliged to leave me in a strange country, and the loss of my sweet little Anne, indeed Albert I am inadequate in expressing what I feel on that occasion.

"General Dumetz imagined an alteration of time and place might contribute to restore my spirits from the depression he had long perceived me suffer, he therefore proposed, I and Alzeyda should accompany him in the next campaign.—I should have been sorry had he been exposed to danger, and I not present; but now I perceived the cause of his request; I knew he feared my spirits in his absence would be too powerfully depressed.

"I shewed little reluctance at going; every place was alike to me now, the innocent creature that claimed my care and attention was no more. The general hoped the diversity of scene might amuse me.—We accompanied him—We have endured the hardships of war—have been witness to calamities only felt by those whose lives are devoted for the preservation of their country, unknown to them who in their own habitations enjoy by the blessings of fortune and riches that affluence, the hard fate of a soldier is denied.—It is an easy task to order thousands of armed men to oppose each other,—they feel not, they care not who out of that number will return to bless his family, to cheer this mourning hearts with the sunshine of his presence.—Or if they did, would they doom their fellow creatures to sufferings, that a humane heart would not wish one of the brute creation to endure; immediate death to such a one must be a blessing!—Anne, Angel, for whom my silly heart as a mother still feels regret, thou art beyond the reach of, thou canst never know miseries like these.—Heaven in its mercy has called thee to share joys eternal, free from the distresses, the abuses, the dangers, of this world of misery and wickedness.

"Since we accompanied General Dumetz to the camp, there has been several battles, and we have suffered the distresses of a military life. You who kindly rescued Alzeyda from the hands of the Ruffians know every thing that has occurred since that time."

Thus Madame Dumetz concluded her narrative.

## CHAP. IX.

ALBERT thanked Madame Dumetz for the recital of the distresses that afflicted her mind, assuring her he was honored by the exertion she had made to favor him.—A sympathetic sigh burst from his heart, and forced a tear to his eyes, which he strove to conceal as she mentioned some parts of her relation and observations—For when Albert first embraced a military life, his youthful ardour and ambition fancied it all joy and glory—yet while at Paris during the vacant time he had passed there he had seen the reverse, for a soldier is but a soldier, and an officer no more.—Many he had heard named that fell in battle, and had observed the concern was scarce of a day's duration, and even their unfortunate death has been treated with indifference.

Madame Dumetz expressed a desire of returning to Warsaw, and anxiously awaited the conclusion of the campaign, as her health had been some time on the decline, and in her present situation she could not have the necessary advice, but as the winter was advancing, the General assured her he believed the order would come very soon for them to return to winter quarters. Albert also felt relieved, for who for a constancy can endure the toils and hardships of war.

Albert soon after bade farewell for the night, and repaired to his own tent: the night was cold and cloudy, and Albert caught a very severe cold before he reached his home, which prevented his attending the General and the ladies next day and the following. But General Dumetz that day paid him a visit, as he was unacquainted with the reason of Albert's absence.

Scarce had Albert recovered from his indisposition, before Madame Dumetz was taken extremely ill, and a few days only suspended the doctor's belief—that it was impossible for her to recover.

Alzeyda whose anxiety for her mother's health had made her request the doctor would be explicit, and not delude her with vain hopes, now endured a severe shock, as he declared it to be his opinion, she could not survive.—The kindness Albert had always received from Madame Dumetz made him anxious for her recovery, and he wished not to return to his own tent, till she was pronounced out of danger, especially as Alzeyda appeared bowed down with affliction, her kind endeavours for *him*, made his heart feel every agonizing solicitude for *her* sake; she never quitted her mother's bedside but for so short a time that nature could scarce receive any refreshment.

General Dumetz was almost inconsolable, though in Alzeyda's presence he affected to believe there was hope.—On a sudden the nurse, (who was a soldier's wife) required their attention, as her lady was just awakened, and appeared much worse, as also she begged the Count de Villiers would attend.

General Dumetz and Albert instantly obeyed the summons—they found Alzeyda weeping, on her knees by the side of her mother; Madame Dumetz, apparently in the

agonies of death.—She extended her hand to the General and Albert, and implored the continuations of their protection for her Alzeyda—The General solemnly assured her, Alzeyda should be ever nearest, and dearest to his heart—she looked thanks, she was unable to utter, and the General absorbed in sorrow, felt on the trying occasion, as a man on the verge of parting with all he holds dear.

Madame Dumetz then addressing herself to Albert, said, "I may perhaps be acting wrong; if so, forgive me; but what my heart feels at leaving all I value behind me, may possibly carry my wishes beyond the bounds of reason. Think it not strange if I solicit your kind attention, I would say protection, if possible, to my daughter. She esteems you. I fondly hoped, on our first acquaintance, to have called you a nearer relation; but every thing must be according to the decrees of Heaven."

Albert was extremely affected as she spoke. The distress of Alzeyda increased his emotion. "She esteems me!" sighed Albert; "a dying parent informs me I am not disregarded, and claims my protection for that beautiful deserving, mourning maid."—He took Alzeyda's hand, and addressing himself to Madame Dumetz, said, "If there is any thing I can do that can make your last moments experience a ray of ease, I beg you will command it. My heart, most excellent lady, is at your disposal—dare I hope Alzeyda would accept it I should be happy; but the present moment is too awful for me to make the offering; yet rest assured Alzeyda shall be my constant care, and whatever your fondest hopes could imagine I solemnly declare to fulfil."

Madame Dumetz took his hand and pressed it to her lips, then her daughter's, and joining them, said, "Albert, Albert, you have made me happy—Heaven bless and protect you for ever."

Alzeyda suffused in tears, sunk on the General's shoulder, who was endeavouring to stifle the agonizing grief he endured, to enable Alzeyda to meet the dreadful separation with fortitude; till roused from the abyss of sorrow by Madame Dumetz—"Alzeyda," said she, "I have something more to say—reach me the dagger I have always worn."

Alzeyda obeyed, and presented it.

"The dagger," said Madame Dumetz, "on which is the word *honour*, with another equally valuable, with the word *love*, both in diamonds set in gold, were given to me and your father, a few days after our marriage, by my kind friend Zara, as the custom of Algiers was to wear them. I, from long use, and a respect for the dear giver, have always worn mine. I now resign it to you—wear it also; and whenever you meet its resemblance with the word *love* which is the only difference, instantly make inquiry of the person in whose possession it is found, from whom they received it. It may lead to a discovery of the mysterious fate of Valcour, and be a means of knowing to what family you belong. Do not forget my charge."

Alzeyda took the present, and promised to obey the dictates of her mother. She stooped to embrace her. Life seemed on the wing. She repeated a short prayer with great

fervency—pressed the hand of Alzeyda, and casting a look of eager expression on the General, who unable to conceal his sorrow, had sunk on the pillow, bending over her dying countenance. "Do not mourn," said she; "I am going to my little angel—I shall see her again—we also shall meet again, in a happier world, where no disquiets will any more disturb our peace. I am going but a short time before you—farewell!"

The General took a last embrace—she heaved two or three heavy sighs, and expired.

The mournful company, overcome by the afflicting emotions each endured, sat a short time indulging the grief that laboured for utterance. Alzeyda was inconsolable—clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to Heaven, she said, "she is gone—gone for ever! The sound of my voice is heard no more!—yes, O God! thy will be done!—we must submit."

Albert took her hand—then turning to the General, and taking his arm, he endeavoured to rouse him from that lethargy of grief he seemed plunged in. "Sir," said he, "permit me to prevail on you to quit this scene of woe, which only distresses you, without benefit to the angel we lament. She is now happy—may we all enjoy as blessed an hereafter! The Lord gave—he can recal. Allow me to lead you, and this afflicted pair, to the other part of the tent, for your sorrows but increase by continuing here. I must enjoin you, Sir, to exert your fortitude on this trying occasion, to encourage Alzeyda to bear this irreparable loss with becoming firmness."

The General and Alzeyda silently submitted, and Albert conducted them from the scene of mourning.

Albert now constantly attended them, in hopes to dispel some of that affliction so generally felt.—The time drew near for the funeral ceremony. The General was hurt that they were not at Warsaw, that her remains might have been interred in a church-yard; but when the soul is fled to a blissful eternity, of what consequence is it where the claytenement it once inhabited is deposited? General Dumetz, after a moment's pause, was convinced of the truth of this idea.

A deep grave was dug in the field, just without the camp, to receive her much-lamented remains. The General wished her funeral could have been private as possible, but he could not suppress the ardent gratitude of the soldiers, to whom she had been a sincere friend; as also to those who had wives, as each had partaken of her bounty and every friendly assistance, in those distressing times when the fate of war had made them experience the severe hand of adversity and necessity.

Alzeyda insisted she should be permitted to attend the last sad ceremony of her beloved parent, though the General wished her to continue in the tent, apprehensive her spirits might be too much shocked if she accompanied them.—She replied, "far otherwise; I shall derive a consolation, believing it will be the last duty I can perform."—She went, supported by Albert; and every officer thought it his duty to attend as a mourner the wife of the General they esteemed.

As the body was conveyed outside the tent, a great number of soldiers were ready attending to receive her, with arms reversed, and that concern depleted on their countenances which they suffered in their hearts.

The martial music, which on this occasion was uncommonly grand, and entirely unexpected by General Dumetz, consisting of the principal performers of the band of every regiment, immediately commenced the most solemn music, and preceded the body to the grave where it was deposited. The funeral ceremony was then read, and a dirge performed by the musicians, so sweet, so pathetic, so solemnly grand and beautiful, as lifted the enraptured soul to heaven, and made it imagine for a moment it no longer lived below. A few seconds convinced them of mortality. During the funeral, a discharge of cannon convinced them how much she was honoured, and that they thought it their duty to pay the same respect to her as if it had been the General himself they had lost.

When the grave was filled up, Alzeyda, who had with difficulty supported herself during the awful ceremony, sunk on her knees, and lifting her hands to heaven, said, "dearest, best of parents! in the plains of Borkzowka I leave thy much-lamented clay; but thy immortal soul received no hurt from thy body's being in unconsecrated ground: thou art buried with many who have died in their country's cause, and who, I fervently hope, partakes of the same blissful hereafter, goodness like thine certainly enjoys. I have lost a most inestimable friend, but she is taken to happiness eternal; wherefore then do I thus lament? Heaven in its mercy has reserved me another. Thy will, O power supreme! be done.

"And the will of Madame Dumetz shall be obeyed," said Albert, taking her hand—"she wished me to be a friend to you. Over her grave I solemnly promise to live only for the pleasure of being yours. I call Heaven to witness to what I now declare, and expect its vengeance if I break it."

He then raised her from the earth, and the mournful procession returned to the General's tent in the same order they came.

## CHAP. X.

THE conclusion of the campaign drew near. Madame Dumetz had been buried but one week, when they received orders to prepare for winter quarters.

After a season of difficulties it was highly pleasing to all, but to none more so than to General Dumetz and Alzeyda. The loss of Madame Dumetz had such an effect on the General, who fondly loved her, that he resolved to resign his commission, and live in future at ease, especially as the air of Poland did not entirely agree with his health. And on another account, it was exposing Alzeyda to dangers every way alarming, now death had deprived her of her amiable mother. The difficulties and hardships of a camp were not calculated to give her any degree of quiet; and for her to remain at Warsaw in his absence alone, a young unprotected stranger, was exposing her to more uneasiness. He had promised her dying mother to protect her—he could not fulfil her request if he continued in the army.

These thoughts kept him one night very unhappy, and he was unable to close his eyes. He communicated them next day to Albert, who agreed his ideas were just.

In a few days the army left the ground, and marched to their places of destination. Alzeyda went with all possible dispatch for Warsaw, to await her father's arrival, for in that name the General took great delight.

As soon as General Dumetz had attended his troops till they were at the town appointed to receive them, he bade them farewell, and took the road for Warsaw, anxious to see Alzeyda, for whom he felt an affection, equal to her being his own daughter.

A few days also, from a similar motive, brought Albert to that place; for he had suffered great uneasiness during this short absence of Alzeyda, which convinced him of the power she maintained over his heart and affections.

Italy was the place the General designed to retire to, after he had resigned. Albert had no inclination to stay behind him; to be with General Dumetz was all his wish—to be esteemed by Alzeyda was all his delight. A few moments determined him how to act.

"My worthy friend," said he, "if you and Alzeyda quit Poland, I certainly cannot think of staying behind you—in your society centres all my happiness, as also in obedience to Madame Dumetz's wish. She expressed a desire that I should protect Alzeyda. If I should remain in Poland, and any misfortune should deprive her of you, far, far, from my amiable Alzeyda, she might be in need of a protector, in want of my assistance, and I in a distant country, unable to bestow it."

The General looked concerned—Alzeyda gave a smile of approbation.

"Could you feel happy, Alzeyda?" said Albert, "if I accompany you and your worthy father into Italy?"

"Certainly," she replied—"you know I am poor in friends; my father and you are the only treasures Alzeyda knows."

"A friend, a lover you shall ever find me; absent from you, Alzeyda, I fear I could not long support existence."

"God bless you!" said the General, rousing himself from a fit of dejection—"God bless you both! we will go together—yes, in every respect I wish Madame Dumetz's wishes could be obeyed."

"They shall be obeyed," said Albert, "with Alzeyda's permission. Madame Dumetz mentioned she valued me. I was happy to hear it, for I could not look on Alzeyda without loving her. I beg you will allow me to continue that affection, and to assure you, I should feel it the highest pride of my life if I might hope for the honor of her hand."

"You have my consent," replied the General—"Alzeyda, my love! can you bestow an unreluctant hand?"

"Is it your desire, Sir?" said Alzeyda.

"Yes."

"Honored by your approbation, Sir, I can have no objection."

"Say, charming Alzeyda," said Albert, receiving her hand from the General—"does your heart accompany the gift?"

"I never will bestow the one without the other, Albert."

"A soldier," said General Dumetz, "is perhaps not used to fine compliments. I have been a soldier all my life—an explicit answer is all I desire of any one. I expect my daughter will reply sincerely to what I ask. Can you, Alzeyda, freely give your heart to this amiable young man, and at the same time feel yourself happy in so doing?"

Alzeyda blushed—she hesitated, but considering the command of her father, replied.

"Dear Sir, your kindness prevents me from speaking—yet you know, and I trust will not doubt my sincerity. I am entirely at your disposal, and if the Count de Villiers is the gentleman of your choice, be assured he is of mine; for no one on earth I value equal to him, yourself excepted.—Albert, the pleasure of being esteemed by you far exceeds every happiness this world can afford. Were it possible for a monarch to admire Alzeyda, my willing heart, desirous to obey my mother's wishes, would prefer you; as I confess my own inclinations long since corresponded with her desire. I have but one wish,

Albert—that is, endeavour to be reconciled to your father—then indeed I shall be truly happy."

"Alzeyda," said Albert pressing her hand to his lips, "you have made me happy—for you I will strive to conciliate my father's affliction to me, but when unavoidable we are forced to submit. It is a determination of mine to wait on him in a very short time—I have reason to hope he will receive me kindly, for till a little while previous to our unfortunate misunderstanding his affection for me was extreme."

Alzeyda bowed.—"I shall depart for Verona in a few days, if you design to resign your commission, follow us there," said the General.

"And let us not long feel your absence," Alzeyda added.

They continued some time in conversation. Albert was happy—But when he bid farewell for the night a tremulous anxiety seized him—he knew not for why.

Solicitude when he courted the friendly aid of sleep, chased the drowsy god from his pillow. Alzeyda, whom he found more interesting, more engaging than ever, had enjoined him to seek a reconciliation with his father.—Alas! reflection reminded him, that period was far, far distant. He remembered Count Beranger informed him, his father's principal displeasure was because Albert esteemed General Dumetz—"Certainly," said he, "my father must have heard that I have been in the Polish army in company with that man, to me as I always esteemed him deserving—Can I venture to declare the passion my heart feels for the incomparable Alzeyda? will he be conciliated if I avow my affection for the daughter of a man he scorns?—I fear, I doubt the success—yet it is my duty to try! for Alzeyda's sake I will exert every effort; and may the enlivening rays of hope cheer my desponding heart!"

He had resigned his commission before he saw General Dumetz and his daughter next day; and declared he was ready to accompany them wherever choice directed.

The General's affairs were soon settled.—Albert's required very little trouble—they, attended by Eugene, in a few days quitted Warsaw, and journeyed leisurely till they arrived at Verona, the place where General Dumetz wished to reside at, without any material occurrence happening in their way.

Albert hired apartments in the same street where they lived.—How delightful now passed the moments! What happiness he enjoyed every time he conversed with Alzeyda! now sanctioned by the friendly voice of General Dumetz—their mutual affection could scarcely admit of an increase.

Time insensibly stole away.—The year of mourning was near expired.—The General had appointed that time for Albert's marriage with his daughter—he reminded Albert he had not yet seen his father.

Albert was visibly much confused; he had forborne to wound that worthy man, with the reason (as he imagined) of his father's displeasure, and as he had kept it a secret so long, dreaded to mention it now. A few moments enabled him to feel composed, he declared he would lose no more time, but go to Alembert Castle, and if possible seek a reconciliation.

"Yet will you not accompany me," said Albert, "your presence with that of Alzeyda may be of consequence,—perhaps, though, I am wrong to ask,"—added he with a sigh, for when he hinted a wish for their company, the momentary idea of that pleasure had banished the remembrance of Count Beranger's message.

"Do you not know,"—replied the General, "that I have sworn France shall never more receive me? Alone you may be prosperous,—but if the inhabitants of France believe me capable of acting wrong, they are unworthy of my presence."

"Yet I could with so fair a mediatrix of peace as the beautiful Alzeyda; if my father will not listen to me, her voice in my behalf will surely prevail," said Albert.

Satisfied of your honor and Alzeyda's virtue, I shall feel no uneasiness at your going to France. I deem it necessary for you to ask the Duke de Limousin's consent to your marriage;—present Alzeyda as the object of your choice—if he is still determined, still hardened, (which I can never believe, or he must be singularly altered since I had the pleasure of his friendship) against you—remember then you have my free consent to make Alzeyda de Valcour your wife."—The General then presented her hand which Albert received with transport.

The General appeared affected. He dashed with indignation an intruding tear away, that in spite of his endeavours rushed to his eyes—at that moment he exclaimed, as he clasped his hands together,—*"O my country!"*

Albert affected not to observe him, unwilling to add to what he apparently suffered, for he knew General Dumetz was a sincere well wisher to his country, and had often lamented the ungrateful treatment he had received.—He then intreated to know when they should proceed to France.

"This day week," replied the General, "I will be ready to attend you to the summit of Mount Cenis,—from that height I will take a peep at my beloved country, the place of my nativity—and mourn the misquided ideas that have rendered me unhappy."

The time arrived.—Attended by Eugene and a female servant, they travelled at leisure till they reached the summit of the mountain General Dumetz proposed accompanying them to.

"Are we to leave you now, Sir," said Alzeyda, in plaintive accents; "is it really your wish?"

"Assured of the rectitude of your conduct, as well as of my friend's," replied the General, "I am conscious that neither of you will entertain a thought that should render me unhappy.—To you and Albert I say,—remember the loved mortal, whose dear remains lay buried in the plains of Borkzowka; imagine her as a guardian angel hovering to protect you, consider her wish, and judge, can you do wrong?"

"To the utmost verge of life I shall remember her," said Alzeyda—"This dagger, which when she presented it I secretly vowed forever to wear, will certainly remind me, if my own heart should traiterously neglect her charge, and is not a sufficient monitor—and although I wear it concealed, I never forget that I carry it about me."

"Even so, my child.—With impatience I shall wait at Suza, and journey up and down this mountain till I hear from you; may every thing turn out to your wishes!—Heaven bless, protect, and guard you from all dangers!"

Alzeyda dropped a few tears, for the General seemed unusually depressed, and he could not hide the strong emotions that laboured in his bosom for vent, from her acute observation.—He saw the conflict that swelled Alzeyda's breast at parting—to relieve her anxiety he said—"A few steps further I will venture.—Ha—there is my native land,—sure I may look down on the imperfect appearance, if I deny myself the pleasure of visiting it."

The day was serene and without a cloud, the prospect enchanting, the season delightful—the vessels were sailing to and fro upon the bosom of the ocean—it was a scene he had often admired,—he sighed at the recollection—its contagion was caught by Albert and Alzeyda, they endeavoured to conceal emotions impossible to describe.

"A little below," said the General, "is Modane, a short distance to the right is Chambre, and Cevennes a little farther on; I have been accustomed to you from an early period in life, for Provence was my birth place, and many, many hours I have sported up and down these mountains when a boy. It is a great while ago, but quite fresh in my memory."

Albert venerated his admiration too much to interrupt him.

General Dumetz then said, "I am hindering your journey, and I fear am making you melancholy it is now time to separate. Remember, Alzeyda has now no protector but yourself—I resign her solely to your care."

They then took an affectionate farewell. Albert and Alzeyda with a heavy heart, followed by their servants, descended towards France—General Dumetz followed them with his eye till he saw their forms lost in distance, and then turned to the town of Suza, where he proposed residing for a time.

Alzeyda was very melancholy during her journey, Albert was not much better, and his endeavours to raise his spirits were ineffectual.

When they arrived in the environs of Alembert Castle, they inquired if the Duke of Limousin was there at that time—There they learnt he had been some months in Paris, they therefore were under the necessity of continuing on to that place.

It is now necessary to return to the Count Beranger and Correlia, whom Albert left the day the Countess died.—The loss did not much affect the Count, as he never had paid her any great attention; his ambition generally led him to court; and whenever he returned to Montville Castle, he was always peevish and displeased till he quitted it. But to Correlia it was far, far different; she adored the Countess, and the affliction she suffered for her loss could not admit of increase.

After the Countess's funeral, Count Beranger observing the grief that dwelt in Correlia's mind, thought proper to remove her from the Castle, in order to divert her thoughts from objects he deemed it unlikely she should forget, though he affected not to notice it.—He prevailed on her, to follow him to Paris, that she might share in the pleasures and dissipation that great city afforded, whither she soon after attended him.

Correlia quitted Montville Castle with reluctance—she was passionately fond of that place, and the removal added to her sorrows, as the fortitude of her mind did not anticipate that amusement the Count proposed. Far more happy would she have been to have remained at the Castle, but she knew a refusal would highly offend the Count.

When she arrived at her father's house at Paris, her oppressed heart did not experience any consolation, the alteration, from pleasing solitude to boundless noise and revelry, was a contrast that did not agree with her disposition.

She had very little of her father's company, business of importance always carried him abroad—and the parties who visited when the Count was at home were very numerous, and claimed an exertion of spirits Correlia was little able to support, as her heart could not so easily overcome the recent death of her mother, and the loss of Albert,—time enabled her to be resigned, but happiness was a blessing she never expected to enjoy.

A year moved away, during which Correlia vainly attempted to feel happy, and strove to attain some degree of her accustomed cheerfulness, but without effect. She sighed to return to Montville Castle, and was grieved that her father specified no time for so doing—she had secret reasons which gave her extreme anxiety, to wish for a removal from Paris; her beauty had gained her many admirers among the number of people of fashion and distinction, who visited at the Count's, some had ventured to declare their passion for her. Having no inclination to marry, their attentions were disagreeable, and she dreaded lest any one should make known their affection to her father, apprehensive he might esteem some one and request her compliance, which would considerably add to the distress of mind she endured.—Her heart was devoted to Albert, she had loved him with unbounded affection, from the first of their meeting, the separation and her father's prohibition, could not erase the strong hold he had of her heart. Convinced how absolutely he was master of her affections, she determined never to listen to love from

any other—that if it was the will of fate to divide them—she would live a single life, as her love could not be transferred to any other object.

After staying at Paris near two years, she requested permission to return to the Castle, as the gaieties of Paris were not adapted to her solitary mind, and her health had suffered materially by the alteration.

Count Beranger at first treated her request with indifference, but as she persevered in that request, he consented she should return to the Castle, for himself he said, he could not accompany her, as his presence was materially wanted at Paris.

Correlia kindly thanked him for allowing her to go alone, and with prayers for his health and happiness she departed.

Correlia attended by her maid Lauretta, soon arrived at her wished for abode. The servants received her with joy—Father Francis the priest, who resided in the Castle, came forth to welcome her safe return;—grateful to her heart was the smile of the benignant man who from her earliest infancy she had been taught to revere—To a fine understanding, Father Francis added the most elevated sentiments of religion; his mind was truly good and benevolent, the dictates of wisdom, truth, and piety that fell from his lips, Correlia had often listened to with rapture and admiration. The Countess and Correlia during the long absences of Count Beranger, enjoyed a consolation and comfort in his admonitions.

Father Francis conducted her into the parlour.—She looked round her with anxiety, and heaved a deep sigh, for recollections of a tender and affecting nature crowded in her mind; for in this parlour she parted with Albert, leaving her mother then sinking with distress of heart as she imagined for her sake, sitting in the window.—A few moments only intervened after she quitted the room, before that dear, that affectionate parent was numbered with the dead.—She had now no one to alleviate the sorrows that preyed upon her heart, but the good father; she considered him as a blessing reserved to her by Heaven; she had often entertained thoughts of retiring to a convent to pass the remainder of her days, since she knew Albert could not be hers, though she found it impossible to forget him, yet her thoughts had gained a settled composure, a delightful calm, which often elevated her ideas to Heaven.—Father Francis endeavoured to support her in those ideas, that he perceived apparently gave pleasure to existence.—There only wanted the opportunity to retire to her satisfaction, and the peaceful situation of Montville Castle, encouraged her to prepare for the alteration she designed should take place, as soon as she could be able to settle and arrange all her worldly concerns.

Thus Correlia passed another year, not being often interrupted by Count Beranger; for when the business of his important station at court did not demand him, the remainder of his time was chiefly passed at the Duke de Limousin's, who apparently was never happy but when he enjoyed the company of his valuable friend, as he believed the Count to be.—Of course when he visited his charming daughter at Montville Castle, his continuance there was but of short duration.

Let us return to the affairs of the Duke de Limousin. His happiness did not continue long, for he was extremely displeased with himself at having acted with such severity towards his son.—He therefore as soon as his first passion of resentment had a little subsided, wrote to him and ordered his immediate attendance.—Matilda intercepted the letter; she well knew the Duke ardently wished to be reconciled to Albert—she knew the meeting would not accord with her interest or wishes, therefore exerted every artifice she could invent to prevent it.

Matilda had been married but six months, when she was brought to bed of a son; The Duke de Limousin suffered too severe a shock at this circumstance, to experience any degree of ease. Dearly as he once loved Matilda, the birth of this child turned it all to aversion—And the continued obstinacy (as he imagined) of Albert, grieved him extremely, and considerably added to his uneasiness—for he had been informed that Albert had called at the Castle and defied his displeasure.

Anger asserted its sway. The Duke had sworn the inheritance should be in the child of Matilda, and that he would strive to blot Albert from remembrance. He was miserable to think he had so vowed, for Matilda's infamous conduct had afflicted him to the soul, and the torturing feelings he endured on finding himself so grossly imposed on and deceived, by one who to all outward appearance seemed so worthy, is impossible to describe.

After this unfortunate period, the Duke appeared very unhappy, his health suffered by the agitation his mind constantly experienced; change of place was necessary to relieve the grief that oppressed him: Matilda was now his aversion, yet the generosity of his nature, could not publicly expose her, and not being able so suddenly to determine how he would act, he took her with him to Paris.

Matilda flattered herself, that as the Duke had spared venting the reproaches she expected to receive, that he also had forgot all animosity, and would think no more of the affair.—The expected journey to Paris gave her infinite pleasure, where the variety of amusements, and company the Duke kept would in a short time she hoped, banish the remembrance of recent events from her husband's mind. When at Paris, Matilda was sufficiently mortified by the Duke's insisting she should not appear in public without his permission, which to a person so young and gay as she was, was a considerable shock to her vanity.—She took an opportunity of telling the Duke how much she was displeased with his conduct—he replied, "I always believed you to be a person of sense—therefore, Madame, if you have not lost every sense of shame or honor, you surely can judge how much I ought to be displeased with your conduct.

"I am astonished to think, after what has happened, that you could have the assurance of appearing in public—be easy on that head, I shall depart for the country to-morrow."

Matilda appeared dissatisfied, but did not venture to say more, the Duke's resolute answer, which she so little expected, was a blow she was not prepared to receive.

Paris had no pleasures for the unhappy Duke de Limousin—He returned to Alembert Castle; Matilda made some opposition, wishing to remain at Paris, but she found the Duke would be obeyed, therefore returned with him.

Some uncomfortable months passed away at the Castle in a very solitary manner, to the great grief of Matilda; all her pleasing hopes were vanished into air, for she expected when she became Duchess de Limousin, to launch into a vortex of dissipation—but her ideas were erroneous.

The Duke only waited for a proper opportunity to separate from Matilda, and believing he had sufficiently mortified her vain and haughty spirit by taking her to Paris, without suffering her to enjoy the pleasures of that place, and as he now never condescended to take any farther notice of her, than to give any order when he fancied she acted wrong.—He now thought it best to live entirely separate from the person who had caused him such uneasiness.—He therefore made her the offer of retiring with her son, whose name was Ferdinand, to the villa of St Leon, formerly the property of her father, the late Count de Solignac, which, with a considerable jointure he had settled on her on their marriage: "if she studied her own interest," he said, "she would not think of offering any opposition, but retire contented, and bless Heaven he had never mentioned to any person the real cause of their dispute; though every one was free to judge what they thought proper; if on the contrary she made any objection, he should think himself justified in making their cause public."

Matilda had conceived a great dislike to the Duke, as his disposition grew every day more fretful, and she had ardently wished for a separation, though she never had been able to propose it: she readily agreed to the Duke's desire, and in a few days, she with her son and a favourite woman servant, departed from Alembert Castle.

The Duke was very unhappy in his mind: he often wondered why Albert could remain so stubborn, and never apply for money or any thing else: "Five thousand *Louis*, is but a trifle for one who has been brought up in the affluent manner Albert has,"—was a remark he often made to those of his friends who were acquainted with the reason of this observation, as also when he was alone, the fear of Albert's being in want of proper accommodations caused him frequently to feel uncomfortable sensations.

After the Duke had passed near three years away at Alembert Castle and his other country residences, without hearing any thing of Albert, during which time he endured that severe distress of mind which can only be felt by those in a similar situation; he received several letters from Matilda, who was anxious to instate herself in the Duke's affections, and had hopes from his advanced age, that her endeavours would be crowned with success.—Count Beranger was very assiduous from the extreme friendship he bore the Duke, as well as the daughter of his deceased friend, to bring about a reconciliation;—but he found the Duke too positive to yield to his intercessions, or her artful intreaties; he solemnly assured the Count, that he never would live with her again—moreover, it was his wish never to see her more.

Count Beranger had no more arguments to offer in opposition to the Duke's fixed determination, and fearful of offending was obliged to desist at that time, but as he seldom proposed any thing, wherein in the course of time he did not gain his wished for ends, so he had some hopes of prevailing with the Duke to forgive the faults of Matilda; for which reason he thought if he could get the Duke to go to Paris, and rouse him from the solitary and recluse manner of life he had some time accustomed himself to live in, in retirement, he had not a doubt but he should succeed in behalf of Matilda.

One point he soon obtained; the Duke was not very well, and consented to go to Paris, his motive was, on account of having the best physicians to attend him—But the Count was happy to think he had prevailed on him to come to that place, it was in his opinion one difficulty removed towards a reconciliation with Matilda.—It was at this period, that Albert and Alzeyda arrived at Alembert Castle, and learnt where the Duke then resided.

They proceeded forward till they reached Paris—Albert's first object was to seek apartments proper for the residence of Alzeyda, while he designed to remain at an hotel.

Alzeyda being placed to his satisfaction, his next ardent wish was to see his father, and endeavour to awaken that affection, which for three years and a half he believed had lain dormant.

The next morning he paid the Duke a visit.—Count Beranger, who very frequently was with the Duke, happened to be there at that time.—Albert was rather surprised to see him come into the parlour to receive him: but admittance to the unfortunate Albert was denied.

Albert forebore to complain, his pride made him stifle the resentment he bore towards the Count, yet he was extremely grieved to find the Duke continued to repose such confidence in him, and sighed to think how difficult a task it appeared to gain admission to his father.—Finding he could not succeed this time—he turned with an air of indifference from the Count, determining to take some other opportunity.

"Messages," said he mentally, "are often misrepresented, but to speak face to face, a character is often retrieved, and all made happy. I must seek the Duke, from his own mouth alone will I receive the decrees of fate, not by the artful tongue of Beranger." Learning the Duke would visit a nobleman of distinction that evening, he proposed to Alzeyda that she should go to the theatre alone, to amuse herself with the entertainments, saying, if he could follow her he certainly should feel happy, but if prevented by a meeting with his father, that now was the principal object of his wishes; and she must forgive him, if by paying attention to the Duke he for once neglected her.

Alzeyda experienced more satisfaction than she had done since she left her father—for a reconciliation with the Duke was her most ardent wish. She flattered herself her beloved Albert would be so fortunate as to meet his father, and rejoiced that there appeared an opportunity for him to express the sentiments that filled his breast, and to vindicate his honor.

In compliance to the will of Albert she went to the Theatre; but absent from him, the amusements to her were entirely insipid.

The play had been honored by a very crowded audience; it was half over, when for want of room, a gentleman entered the box Alzeyda sat in—he appeared about forty. She made a bow at his entrance, but her attention being drawn to the performance, she paid very little to him; though he frequently made observations concerning it.

I must remark that this gentleman was the Count Beranger—The appearance of Alzeyda gave him infinite surprise; he paid very little regard to the performance, the beauty of Alzeyda made a powerful impression on his thoughts, he appeared quite charmed with the grace and elegance of her manner, as well as the charms of her face, and he thought he never before had seen so beautiful a female.

Curiosity prompted him to know her residence, he intreated permission to see her safe home. Alzeyda politely thanked him, but refused—She left the Theatre, and was conveyed home in a hackney coach.

A tumult of contending emotions filled the breast of the Count—Alzeyda appeared to him the most engaging and interesting creature he had ever beheld; he surveyed her with transport, and could not call to recollection any one he had ever seen that made such an impression on his heart.—While his thoughts were thus taken up, the object of his admiration departed.—He was anxious to follow her, to know where she lived, and was satisfied when he saw her enter a very respectable house, in one of the best streets in Paris.

The remembrance of the fair creature he had beheld, chased sleep from his eyes; he was desirous to see her again, and pay her that adulation familiarity had made habitual to him. Count Berenger's principles were of a libertine nature, he had no wish to pay his attentions to Alzeyda with honourable views, but imagined she could be caught by the glittering snare of riches, accompanied by flattery.

Novelty, particularly in amours, was every thing to the Count; he impatiently awaited for the dawn of day, that he might pay his respects to the object who engrossed all his present attention.

Unknowing who she was, or to whom she belonged, he thought it necessary to make some inquiries concerning her, previous to seeing her. He learnt she was a young Polish lady, and came to that place with Albert Count de Villiers, who visited her every day.

"Albert! Albert" said the Count, ruminating—"then be it my place to supplant him in her affections."

Unwilling to encounter Albert, he declined paying her the intended visit, but set spies to observe when she went out alone, and to give him information—He had many

opportunities of conversing with her, as she frequently went out to church and elsewhere by herself. He professed the most ardent affection for her that could possibly be the inmate of a human breast—but they met with no return. The offers which he ventured to make her, she treated with a becoming disdain, and despised the wretch that could so grossly affront her. She did not know the name of the person who had given her such offence, or she would have exposed him to the resentment of her beloved Albert, who would have called him to a severe account.

Unable to bear solicitations so mortifying and degrading, she at length told him she was affianced to a noble youth, Albert Count de Villiers, that she esteemed him above every person on earth except her father, and that his attentions and professions were vain; for it was not her ambition, or wish to please more than the Count de Villiers.

She left Count Beranger confounded with astonishment.—Custom induces many to err—fortune and grandeur he fancied had charms sufficient to captivate the heart of a female with no other protector than Albert—and being used to the weak and vain part of her sex, he imagined Alzeyda was possessed of her share of vanity, and was a being that could easily fall beneath his grasp.

During this interval of unpleasing occurrences, wherein Alzeyda feared to wound the feelings of Albert by relating how uncomfortably she was situated whenever she went abroad—he was endeavouring to gain an interview with the Duke de Limousin, and had attended several times without being able to accomplish his wishes.

One day while Alzeyda was walking in the Thuilleries, Count Beranger had followed her there, and behaved unusually affronting, which excited her indignation and she returned home extremely vexed.—Albert had that day suffered great uneasiness in his mind, and was waiting to receive her—she dreaded to inform him of the cause of her anxiety, as she perceived he apparently laboured under great distress of heart.

Before Albert bid her adieu for the night, he informed her that he had made frequent applications to see the Duke, but every effort had been fruitless—that he had come to the determination of taking her in the carriage with him, and if the Duke still remained inexorable, he would continue no longer in a state of doubt and anxiety—and begged Alzeyda to consider that the day after to morrow, he designed should unite them for ever. Alzeyda acquiesced—She remembered the command of General Dumetz, nor had she a wish to oppose it.

Albert then bid her prepare for his calling on her the ensuing day, as he designed to accompany her to his father's—"Your presence," added he, "will perhaps plead in my behalf, he may listen to you, when he will not allow me to enter the place where he is;—if on the contrary, we my love, know what we have to trust to."

Alzeyda assured him she would be in readiness, which relieved his bosom of some of the distresses that harboured there,—and they then bade adieu for the night.

## CHAP. XI.

AGREEABLE to the desire of Albert, Alzeyda made every necessary preparation, and waited with impatience the arrival of him she so much esteemed. She remained not long in suspense, a carriage stopped at the door, and she hastened to attend him.

Albert met her on the stairs.—He took her hand and led her back to the dining room—"My love," said he, "I beg you will listen and attend to me. I have been every day endeavouring to obtain an interview with my father, in that I fear I am prevented.—You have heard me name Count Beranger—I have reason to apprehend he still remains no friend of mine.—I find he is continually with my father, I can see no one but him—from him I receive answers that only serve to increase my disquiet; I may do him wrong, but I think his countenance seems to express the pleasure he feels in giving me pain.—My fear is, that the Duke may augment his severity unless he sees you, and alledge a continuation of it, to my marrying without his approbation.—That is the reason why I wish you to accompany me this day—He may hear you—when he is deaf to me."

Alzeyda's heart was too much overcome to make any reply.—Sensations unfelt before swelled in her bosom, and caused tears to ascend to her eyes, which she strove to conceal by drawing on her gloves, and faintly said.—"I am ready to attend you."

A few minutes conveyed them to the Duke de Limousin's. Albert had written a letter, which he gave to the servant, to present it to the Duke.

Some time elapsed, when, to increase his uneasiness, Count Beranger walked down the steps and advanced to the window of the carriage to receive them.

But how shall I attempt to explain the feelings of Alzeyda's mind, when she saw the man, who for the last fortnight had persecuted her with the most insulting addresses,—which, though she scorned him and them alike, her heart could not experience ease, while apprehensive of receiving the like again.

"Your father,"—said the Count, "has no desire of seeing the lady of your choice—you are to act as you please; here sir, is your letter, the Duke thought proper to return it."

Albert was struck with amazement at the return of the letter, and suffered on the occasion every uneasy sensation.—Alzeyda recovered her surprise—and turning her face full on the Count, replied in a haughty accent.—"Is that indeed, the Duke de Limousin's answer?—is it possible for him to forget the son he once esteemed? or has calumny dared to point her envenomed shaft against him—If the Duke would not suffer himself to be swayed by prejudice, but would allow the conduct of Albert to be discussed in the fair face of truth, I trust he would find little to blame. I assure you Sir, I do not consider this to be the reply of the Duke de Limousin—I may conjecture wrong, but many circumstances seem to declare my ideas are just.—I was in hopes the Duke was able to answer for himself."

Count Beranger appeared confounded, he was unable to answer—his countenance changed—his eyes were rivetted on Alzeyda. Albert saw the emotion he endured, unknowing to what cause to assign it, and said,—“I am very sorry my Lord to give you, *particularly*, any trouble—be assured this is the last time my father or you shall be troubled by me.”

The carriage then drove from the door.

Albert was too much hurt to enter into conversation till he reached the residence of Alzeyda.

“Alzeyda” said he, “the conflict is now over: vain have been every endeavour to see the Duke de Limousin, or to present you—I am resolved to feel no further—be ready my love to accompany me to the church of Notre Dame to-morrow morning.”

“As it is your request,” replied Alzeyda, “I will.”

“To-morrow,” said Albert, “is a grand festival in honor of St. Angès—His Majesty will be present at the ceremony, all the nobility are expected to go in procession,—my father as one of the *Noblesse*, will certainly be there—I request you will dress yourself with that degree of elegance and splendor you are capable of—The procession will pass under the window.—After we are united, we will return home and observe the grand spectacle, if I cannot prevail on being admitted, he will not fail to see me here.”

“Be it so,”—said Alzeyda—“I will be ready to attend you, and obey the will of General Dumetz. I am extremely sorry to find the Duke confides his friendship in such an unworthy person as the Count Beranger,—I fear he does not bear you any good will.”

“Let us my Alzeyda—consider him an object beneath our notice.—I am apprehensive he has used some arts against me, but as yet cannot penetrate the mystery that screens them. Let us be happy—and despise the frowns of fickle fortune.”

They partook of supper, the evening passed away agreeably, and when he took his leave, he reminded her to be ready in the morning.

Alzeyda assured him she would be in waiting—he then bade her adieu.

Albert's request, though Alzeyda had not a wish to delay it, yet being so sudden, a little troubled her, as she was rather unprepared.—She was convinced her union was necessary, as she could find a lawful protector in her husband: Count Beranger's conduct had given her the most alarming inquietude; she did not know the name of the person who had so audaciously and so repeatedly offended her, till she saw him at the Duke de Limousin's;—then, for the first time she heard it was Beranger! a name she had often heard Albert mention while they were in Poland.

She knew Albert suffered much mental distress, from being unable to accomplish the ardently desired reconciliation with his father, she therefore would not afflict him more, by mentioning any thing of Count Beranger's behaviour to her.

It wanted two hours of midnight when Albert left her—She looked out a very elegant suit of white satin and silver to be ready for the morning; as also the jewels which had been bequeathed to her by Zara, as Albert had hinted a desire for her to appear as splendid as possible on the occasion; she wished to indulge the pride, (as she imagined) of her intended husband, as also her own inclinations led her to dress in a manner that should show the respect she thought due, to a person of his high rank, especially as they designed to be spectators of the procession as it passed, and there would be numbers who would know Albert.

When she had made the necessary preparations and given orders to her servant, she retired to rest.

In the morning she arose with a cheerful heart.—The sun shone beautifully through the curtains, and reminded her to prepare for the arrival of Albert.—She was soon dressed. Alzeyda never wasted much time at the toilette, yet she was always charming—her elegant figure perfectly graceful, needed no glittering aid of ornament.—Albert was conscious of it, but he felt an innate pride in her being adorned to every advantage, as he hoped thereby to draw the attention, more particularly of the Duke de Limousin if he went in the procession—and if not, he had not a doubt but some one would mention having seen a very beautiful lady with his son, and he might be anxious to see her.

Albert and a gentleman of his acquaintance waited on her to breakfast. Alzeyda's habit was a very rich long Polish robe, trimmed with silver and ornamented with pearls—her head was adorned with a turban, partly in the Moorish style, with a beautiful crescent of pearls and diamonds richly set, and strings of the same intermixed with her hair.—She had no female acquaintance in Paris—accustomed to the friendly endeavours and kind attentions of Julia, the faithful attendant that came with her from Verona, she chose her to accompany them to church. Julia was presented with an elegant habit suitable for the occasion.—They took a cup of coffee, and Albert led Alzeyda to the carriage that waited to convey them to the church of Notre Dame, followed by Julia and Albert's friend.

When the ceremony was over, they returned as speedy as possible to Alzeyda's apartments, for the streets began to be crowded to see the procession pass along—Every window was full of ladies, but Alzeyda when she entered the balcony drew every one's attention.—Albert placed himself by her side, he received many bows from several who had formerly been his acquaintances, and each by their manner, seemed to be solicitous to congratulate his return.—Yet the beautiful Alzeyda, was to all an entire stranger.

END OF VOL. I.

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THE  
MYSTERIOUS COUNT;

OR,  
*MONTVILLE CASTLE.*

A ROMANCE,  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

*BY ANNE KER.*

VOL. II.

On what strange grounds we build our hopes and fears!  
Man's life is all a mist, and in the dark  
Our fortune meets us.

*LONDON:*

Printed by D. N. SHURY, Berwick-street, Soho,  
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1803.

# THE MYSTERIOUS COUNT,

*&c. &c.*

## CHAP. XII.

THE procession commenced. The King passed: and all eyes were anxious to behold their Sovereign. A few carriages followed; when that of the Duke de Limousin advanced: Albert remarked to Alzeyda who it was. The brilliancy of her appearance, as well as her beauty, drew the Duke's attention; the carriage stopped before the window, which enabled him to look at her with a stedfast gaze; he appeared to feel extreme astonishment at seeing Albert by her side; she made a low curtesy, and Albert a respectful bow. The Duke clasped his hands together, looked with increased emotion, then covered his face with his handkerchief, and sunk back in his carriage. It moved on: Albert was overjoyed to see his appearance made some impression on his father, and flattered himself it was a favourable omen.

In the third following carriage was Count Beranger. His eyes were directed to the window of Alzeyda's apartment long before he came near it—he looked on her with a momentary surprise, and thought she looked more lovely than ever he had seen her, for the richness of her dress surpassed every thing of the kind he had ever seen. He smiled, and bowed *low*. Common politeness obliged them to return the salute; yet Albert could have spared the compliment, as he well knew Count Beranger was no real friend. Alzeyda had reasons why she would have avoided noticing.—Count Beranger's carriage passed on; but it had been observed the Minister had bowed to Alzeyda and smiled;—so gracious a piece of complaisance was followed by every other person in all the following carriages, who imagined that where he condescended to pay respects it was their duty to copy the example.

Alzeyda enjoyed a considerable relief when the procession was finished, for she apparently, by Count Beranger's taking notice of her, was become the object of public admiration. She was happy to retire from the window, being absolutely fatigued with returning her respects to the numerous Nobility as they passed.

Alzeyda and Albert, with his friend and Julia, sat down to dinner. They had scarce concluded, when a Gentleman entered, and begged to speak with Albert. He rose to receive him.

The stranger made known his message. It was that the Duke de Limousin requested Albert would accompany him to a house at a short distance, as he (the Duke) much wished to see him.

Albert experienced a joy that had long been a stranger to his breast—he blessed it as the most fortunate moment of his life, and all his troubles he flattered himself would soon be at an end. "My dear Alzeyda," said he, "you will, I am sure, pardon my leaving you on this occasion—be assured I shall not stay long."

"Go then," said Alzeyda, "and may Heaven grant your wishes may be complete."

He took an affectionate leave of her, and accompanied the stranger. A gentleman's carriage waited to receive them—a short time conveyed them to a house in the suburbs of Paris.

He was shewn into an elegant parlour, and the gentleman left him, where he waited near an hour before any one came to interrupt him.

At length the door opened; but Albert's astonishment was too powerful to be expressed, when, instead of the Duke de Limousin, who he had taught himself to expect, he beheld Count Beranger.

"My Lord," said Count Beranger respectfully, "you doubtless feel surprised at seeing me; but I must inform you the Duke much wishes to see you. He is gone to Montville Castle—for there are many reasons why he did not wish you to attend him at Paris."

"You have made me extremely happy," replied Albert, "in saying my father wishes to see me; but I think it rather singular he should choose to go so far, when he could have honoured me with an interview at Paris."

"The Duke, my Lord," said Count Beranger, "is advanced in years, and a little positive at times, as elderly people often are.—I hope you do not doubt my will to serve you.—I have exerted every endeavour, to the utmost of my abilities, to reconcile you, and flatter myself I shall succeed at last. But when he expressed a desire to meet you at Montville Castle, I did not deem it proper to offer any thing in contradiction."

"You are very obliging," returned Albert, "I assure you I entertain the highest sense of your goodness."

"And I assure you," replied the Count, "that I am extremely happy to see you. We will just drink a few glasses of wine to the renewal of our friendship, and then proceed, if you please."

Albert was anxious to return to Alzeyda, but the hope of seeing his father, and reinstating himself in his esteem, was equally his wish; his mind, from the oddity of the circumstance of being so suddenly called to attend the Duke, was rather in a perturbed state; however he sat down with the Count, to partake of the offered refreshment, being unwilling to give him any cause for being offended by a refusal.

"It will be necessary for me, as I have interfered in the difference between you, to know the whole of what has happened to you since you quitted Alembert Castle," said Beranger.

Albert replied—"My Lord, I am so anxious to see my father, and so eager to return to Paris, that you must excuse my apparent impatience; with your permission I will give you every necessary information while we pursue our journey."

"With all my heart," said Beranger, rising. "I am ready—we will proceed immediately."

They then seated themselves in the carriage, and ordered the postillion to drive as fast as possible.

Albert then related all that had happened to him while he was in Poland, till he returned to Italy.

"And that beautiful lady is the daughter of General Dumetz?"

"Yes, my Lord."

Count Beranger bit his lips, and appeared displeased. Albert observed it, but imagined the Count's change of countenance proceeded from the mention of General Dumetz; he therefore took no notice of it.

After some minutes silence, the Count said—"But you have not acquainted me with the motive of your journey."

Albert replied—"I left General Dumetz on the Alps, entrusted with the care of his lovely daughter; the General consented to our marriage; but I thought it necessary to see my father, to endeavour to be reconciled, and to present Alzeyda, conscious he must approve the choice I have made. I have in consequence made repeated applications, but without success, as you, my Lord, are well acquainted with. Yesterday I resolved should be the last time. Accompanied by Alzeyda, I went to his house—admittance was, as usual, denied. You know the reception we experienced. I then came to an immediate determination to obey the command of General Dumetz; if unsuccessful, we were no longer to delay our marriage. I reminded Alzeyda of the will of her father; she made no refusal, and this morning, at the church of *Notre Dame* we were married."

Count Beranger started.—"Were you indeed married?" he eagerly asked.

"Yes, my Lord."

"I fear," said the Count, "it is all at an end. You certainly should have obtained the Duke's consent."

"My Lord," replied Albert, "you know how anxious I was to see him—I have written several letters, some of which were returned unopened. How else could I proceed?"

Count Beranger folded his arms, and leaned back in a corner of the carriage.

Albert perceived he did not seem pleased.

The Count mentioned no more on that subject; and they journeyed post till they reached Montville Castle. It was ten o'clock at night when they arrived there. They alighted and went into a back parlour.

Here also Albert felt the severe disappointment of not seeing his father—he looked round with anxiety, and was astonished to conjecture the meaning—he thought he beheld a visible embarrassment in Count Beranger's manner of behaviour, who in a few minutes took his leave, telling Albert to expect his father, as he was going to introduce him.

Albert suffered great agitation of mind, especially when his thoughts reverted to Alzeyda. He grew impatient at the delay of the Count and his father; near an hour elapsed, and he wondered at the meaning of so strange a behaviour. At length a rustling sound was heard near the door; his heart bounded at the expectation of beholding the Duke de Limousin—the door opened—and Albert, instead of seeing his father, found himself surrounded by four armed men, one of whom produced a paper, declaring it was an order for taking him into custody.

Albert felt bereft of motion, and every agonizing thought rushed on his tortured imagination. The arrest implied immediate submission.—Seized by the hand of power, and conscious of his own innocence, he had not a wish to oppose it.

"And where am I to go?" said he sternly.

"My orders are to secure your person till I receive further instructions," replied one of the men.

"And who gave you orders to seize me?" said Albert.

"It was the Count Beranger that delivered the arrest to me," was the reply.

"Enough," replied Albert. "The Count has taken extraordinary pains to prove himself a base, designing villain; at Paris I could have fallen into his snares as easily as here. Lead on.—Adversity is the lot of man; and we ought always to be on our guard against treachery and a false friend."

They hurried round Albert, and without giving him any answer, forced him from the parlour.

One of them proceeded before Albert with a torch—but as they passed the foot of the stairs he heard a faint shriek, as if uttered by some female—but his own unfortunate situation occupied his mind too fully to be relieved by any trivial incident.

Albert was conducted down a private flight of stairs, that were never used by any of the family—and only on any occasion of consequence of the Count's; the door leading thereto opened at the termination of a winding gallery at the extremity of a dark hall, which was quite detached from the family. When they came to the bottom of the steps they entered an arched passage that turned to the left, wet with unwholesome damp. They continued along till they came to a miserable dungeon. Albert thought this would be his place of destination, but he was mistaken. The conductor waved his solitary torch, and discovered four passages on the opposite side.

They crossed this miserable place, and entered the passage on the right hand. At the extremity was an iron door strongly secured. They opened it, and led him in, then just shewing him some straw for a bed, left him to think of the mysterious seizure, and to vent the woes of his heart alone.

They secured the door after them, leaving him in utter darkness.

Albert sunk motionless on his straw, overcome with every racking thought, and pressed by the most agonizing recollections. Alzeyda! who was now to protect her?—what was she to imagine at his mysterious absence?—His father—He was proceeding, but a moment chased every unkind sensation from his mind, and he perceived Count Beranger was his most determined enemy. To the machinations of his secret arts, Albert firmly believed he had to look as the origin and contriver of his misfortunes.—"The Duke—the Duke," said he, "is not to blame—he has been deceived, egregiously deceived by this man he thought a friend—I see it plain—now it is too late I can pierce the thin disguise that has veiled in mystery and displeasure above three years of my life; he it is that has occasioned my father's resentment, who will not see me, and now can never know my miseries. What dark deep scheme has Beranger now lurking in his perfidious heart?—It is evident he alone is my oppressor—or why am I imprisoned in his castle? If there existed a word of truth in the arrest, had I given offence to my country, or been guilty of any crime, I ought to have been conveyed to a public prison. Far other thoughts, I fear, inspire the breast of Count Beranger, or he who should support the laws could never commit such a daring outrage against justice."

These reflections increased his afflictions.—There needed no addition when he called to mind Alzeyda. The impenetrable darkness through which no object could be distinguished drove him nearly to phrenzy. Unable to discover any part of his dreary habitation, he sunk down on his wretched bed, and endeavoured to call to mind every circumstance of his past life, to account for the cruel tyranny exercised over him.

Some hours elapsed before day had evinced it had risen, and shone through a very small aperture, apparently in the roof, which did not serve to illumine the dreary place, or

shew the extent of his prison; yet the cheering ray was a solitary consolation, and he watched it with delight and impatience.

At length his prison door opened, and one of the men who conducted him there entered with provisions, which consisted only of a small portion of bread and water; he brought with him a lamp. Albert hoped it would be left; but alas! that consolation was denied.—His stern gaoler retreated, and secured the door.

A day of misery ensued—Albert's grief may be easier conceived than described, and in that dreadful dungeon he was compelled to submit to fate.

Chawton House Library

### CHAP. XIII.

I WILL return to the Count Beranger, who quitted Albert only to order the ruffians to enter and seize him.—A very short time enabled him to conquer sensations that in spite of his natural duplicity would press on his mind; he then was pleased to think Albert was safe, and now only meditated how to proceed.

While he sat absorbed in thought, awaiting the return of his agents, who were conveying Albert to his prison, Correlia entered. She was unable to suppress tumults that agitated her gentle bosom.

At the door she wiped her eyes that were suffused in tears, for she and her maid had heard all that had passed between her father and the ruffians, and were on the stairs when Albert was forced from the parlour; seeing which, she dreaded some ill was meditated against him, and shrieked in an agony of despair.

Her natural courage did not forsake her. Lauretta would have forced her lady to her chamber. "O heed me not!" exclaimed Correlia, "strive to follow that unfortunate young man, and see where they deposit him. Sly, dear Lauretta! suffer no fear to assail thee in the exertion of a good act—let the grief thy mistress now endures induce thee to serve her!"

Lauretta flew to obey.—Correlia, trembling with apprehension, waited a short time to quiet the agonizing emotions that racked her bosom, then descended to the parlour.

The Count started with a mixture of terror and astonishment at her unexpected appearance, and angrily demanded the reason of her intrusion.

"Pardon me, dear Sir, if I have done wrong, but I came to congratulate your safe return to this place, and to pay my dutiful respects after not having seen you so long a time."

"Thank you, Correlia—thank you," replied he, "but I could have spared your respects at this time, for business of the greatest importance now engrosses my thoughts."

"Sir, you shall be obeyed," said Correlia, retiring, and endeavouring to stifle the agonizing feelings of her heart.

"Hark ye, Correlia!" said he, rising, and catching her arm in a wild and terrifying manner, "instantly retire to your chamber, and on no pretence whatever depart from it. Ask me no questions—attempt not to pry into the secrets of my thoughts—my future peace, my every thing is wrapped in the business I am now engaged in.—If you obey me, it is well. If, on the contrary, you dare to appear, in opposition to my will, I shall confine you till the period I think proper to release you."

"I will obey you, Sir," said she in faltering accents, while every limb trembled with fear bordering on agony—"Farewell."

She hurried from his presence, and with a palpitating heart ascended the stairs leading to her apartment; but the agony of mind she endured was too severe to contend with. Unable to sustain the shock, she sunk down on the stairs, and after some minutes found relief in tears.

In a few minutes her attention was called by somebody's running swiftly up stairs. She started from her seat, fearing it was the Count. It proved to be Lauretta. She took her lady by the hand, and led her into the first room that was open.

Having shut the door, Lauretta proceeded to relate where she had been. She had followed softly and at a distance the light of the torch; she passed the stairs, the passage, and entered the first dungeon—then pursuing their steps, she crossed it, and saw them enter the dungeon with the iron door, then she was proceeding, but seeing them return, she retreated as fast as possible, and would certainly have been discovered there, if the light in the hall at the head of the stairs had not shewn its friendly ray.—Breathless with fright, she ascended them—and hurried through the hall, and up the great stairs, where she found her mistress.

Correlia's heart sunk with horror at Lauretta's recital of Albert's melancholy situation. The ruffians were by this time returned to her father.

As it was impossible for her to know what this mysterious conduct alluded to, her present anxiety would not permit her to retire. Unmindful of the Count's prohibition, she descended alone, and went into a small anti-room that commanded a hearing of what was said in the parlour, and to her surprise witnessed the following conversation:

"Is he secured?" the Count inquired with eagerness.

"So strongly that it is impossible he can ever quit his prison," was the reply.

To which the Count answered,—*"Enough.—Now listen to my commands. You, Fonteville, immediately set out for Paris—you know the house where you brought Albert from—there you will find a lady named Alzeyda—tell her you are sent by Albert Count de Villiers to conduct her to him—say his father and he are perfectly reconciled, and that the Duke waits with impatience to behold her, and embrace her as his daughter.—Hire a post carriage, and bring her here with all imaginable dispatch.—Your reward shall be considerable."*

Fonteville having received his orders, hastened to obey them. He wished the Count and his comrades good night, and left the Castle.

"To your care, Vimar, I commit the prisoner," said the Count. "For Alzeyda's sake he must die. I am determined she never shall be his.—The scornful fair shall mourn the hour

she rejected me—if she consents to be the mistress of my affections, he shall be spared—if she refuses, his doom is fixed."

The agonizing distress that tortured Correlia's bosom is beyond my power to describe.—Unable to listen to a longer detail of cruelty and treachery, she left the room, and hurried up to her chamber, where Lauretta waited to receive her.

All she could utter was, "Great God! can it be possible?" and sunk down in a strong swoon.

When she recovered, she related in a low voice to Lauretta all she heard said in the parlour, and intreated she would lend her every assistance to give relief to the unfortunate sufferer, for she firmly believed Alzeyda could not avoid the snare laid for her. She knew not who Alzeyda was, but imagined she was somebody in whose fate Albert was deeply interested.

Lauretta's sympathising heart was greatly affected. She assured her lady that she would act with extreme caution, and endeavour secretly to learn what passed in the Castle, as she dreaded meeting the Count.

Correlia acknowledged she was greatly obliged to her, and soon after retired to bed, overcome with sorrow and anxiety, where she obtained a short but disturbed repose—but before break of day she arose, and placed herself in the window of her chamber that commanded a view of the road leading to the Castle, eager to catch a glance of the unfortunate, unsuspecting sufferer. Alzeyda; as also to be convinced she really had fallen into the Count's power.

As she had been prohibited visiting her father, she feared descending to the anti-room, apprehensive of meeting him, and creating that anger she was confident her appearance would excite. "And then," said Correlia to her attendant, "if the Count suspects I watch him, and imagines I secretly know what is now transacting, all my anxious hopes would be vanished into air."

"What do you hope, dear Madam?" said Lauretta in an energetic tone of voice—"tell me, is there any hope?"

"Unless the flatterer deceives me there is," said Correlia. "But I must maturely consider the event, and if I (which Heaven avert my fears), see the necessity."

"Oh, Madam! indeed, indeed there exists the greatest necessity, if your kind heart has the will."

"Hear me," said Correlia. "I once attended my mother, when I was quite a child, to the prison you say Albert de Villiers is confined in; it was on a very important occasion. By accident she had discovered a prisoner in a deplorable situation there; what was the cause of his confinement I never knew; I at the time was too young to ask, but remember his

figure commanded respect, and I clung round the knees of the Countess Beranger without knowing why I did so.—She formed the resolution of liberating him.—Unable to procure the keys for any length of time, she sought the opportunity of taking the impressions in wax. A trusty servant, long since dead, had the keys made. My mother accomplished her wish—I attended her at the time she gave liberty to the sufferer, who said he had been confined there ten years by my grandfather, and oh! I never shall forget the thanks he bestowed upon us, and how he blessed us! My mother gave him a purse to relieve his necessities. We saw him depart.—The Countess made me promise to take no notice of it to any one, and I have never mentioned it till now. To me she gave the keys not long before she died, unknowing what might happen—I am in possession of those valuable things."

Lauretta's eyes sparkled on hearing Correlia mention having the keys; but they had to wait a proper opportunity, fearing to meet any of the men in the way.

Correlia then requested Lauretta to be diligent in listening for information, while she continued watching for the arrival of the unfortunate Alzeyda.

The Count rose very early. He seemed impatient, for Correlia from her window observed him several times go out a few paces, and return.

About noon Correlia saw a post carriage coming very swift towards the Castle—she feared it was Alzeyda—her heart sickened at the thought, and lamented there was no way of letting the unhappy creature know the fate that awaited her.

In a few minutes the carriage stopped at the gate. It was Alzeyda. The ruffian, who appeared like a gentleman, handed her from the carriage—she was dressed most elegantly, (in the habit she wore the preceding day, but had dismissed some of her jewels.)

Correlia wept as she saw her alight, but could not forbear admiring, for she thought she never before had seen so charming a woman.

With every dread and horror that could fill a mind raised to such a pitch of agony as were the feelings of Correlia at this moment—forgetting her father's command, and fearing only for Alzeyda, she rushed from her chamber, and before she could gain a recollection of the prohibition, had proceeded half way down stairs.

A violent shriek echoed from the parlour, and made the hall resound.

It was repeated.

"Oh! my God!" exclaimed Correlia, clasping her hands, "protect the innocent, and inspire my father to act with justice—with humanity."

Fearful of being discovered, for she now dreaded to meet the strange men that were at Montville Castle as much as her father, she retired to her chamber, and put up fervent prayers for the safety of those in whose distresses she felt interested.

Alzeyda easily fell into the snare. She felt no alarm for the absence of Albert, because she imagined his father was happy to see him, and might have much to say after so long a time. And when the message came for her, she experienced a cheerfulness in the idea of going to Albert. Her conductor behaved very respectfully on the road, but avoided entering into any discourse; nor did she feel any dread of the truth or fallacy of the message, till she entered the parlour where Count Beranger was sitting with three other men.

"Now, fair Alzeyda, will you refuse my love?" said the Count, rising and taking her hand.

Alzeyda shrieked.

"Allow me thus to ask, and be heard with kindness," said he, dropping on his knees.

Alzeyda shrieked again, and endeavoured to withdraw her hand. The Count smiled.

"My lord, I must declare you offer me the most unmanly insolence," disengaging herself, and speaking with an air of dignity and disdain that for a moment awed the Count into admiration.

"Where is Albert? Where the Duke de Limousin? My business is with them, not you," said she, snatching her robe that he had grasped to prevent her going away.

"Did you ask for the Duke de Limousin?"

"And Albert," she replied.

"Why, madam, the Duke is in Paris.—Albert—Albert, madam, can be of no consequence to you."

Alzeyda looked with contempt.—Count Beranger observed it—his pride was mortified, and he spoke with anger.

"I have some time admired you—I found I loved you, which induced me to make you many proposals, all which your pride thought proper to reject—for what?—I find for Albert—a wretch, the scorn of fortune, and the outcast of his family. The state of affluence you would enjoy with me is far superior than living with so poor a being as he is."

Rage darted from the angry eyes of Alzeyda as she replied, "Is poverty his crime? yet, my glory is, he bears an honest heart; and do you thus treat his wife because you imagine him too poor to sue for justice?"

"Take care you urge not too far; Alzeyda, for, to humble your proud heart, I will inform you—Albert is my prisoner."

Alzeyda looked petrified with astonishment. Terror agitated her whole frame—her colour changed—she could not speak.

The Count continued. "And a hostage he shall remain;—if you consent to my offer, I grant his liberty; if you refuse, he dies. Should you wish to save his life, you know the price."

"Then let him die!" said Alzeyda, "but let him die honest. Death, to a mind so truly noble, would be a sweeter joy than a life purchased with infamy; it is where we must all arrive at last. Lead me to my Albert—let me share his miseries; misfortune shall not rob us of our fortitude or honour."

"Both will be tried," replied the Count; then addressing himself to the men, said, "lead to the apartment designed for her. In a few hours, madam, I shall wait on you; I am at present overcome with fatigue. You have heard my intentions. I charge you weigh well what I have said, for Albert's life depends on the reply you will then give, for, from that period, only a few minutes remain between him and fate."

Alzeyda made no reply. Resistance was useless. She was carried from the parlour up stairs to an elegant apartment. The men then left her, and locked the door.

Her distress was now increased to phrenzy. She called in vain on Albert—on her father—on her departed mother. Alas! it was a useless lamentation. She tried the door and every part of the room, hoping to find some part neglected where she might escape; and was compelled to abandon the feeble ray of hope, and sit down a prey to despair, that silent companion of the wretched, to mourn a destiny that could not be avoided.

## CHAP. XIV.

LAURETTA lost very little of the dreadful discourse—she flew to inform her mistress—Correlia's grief was extreme—she could utter no reply—sighs precluded words—her mind seemed fixed on some great event, which the distracted state she was in could not declare to her faithful maid. She passed the day in this manner, which much alarmed Lauretta, nevertheless, she did not neglect the charge Correlia had once given her, nor the sufferers that had excited their pity, and she frequently stepped to the room to listen what was going forward in the parlour.

About eleven o'clock at night, she was shocked to hear the following order from the Count. He said, he meant to visit Alzeyda, and if she still continued to oppose his wishes, Albert was to suffer immediately, to put it beyond a possibility of her being his.

Lauretta staid to hear no more. The dreadful command prompted her to stay, and, if there was a possibility, to save the life of Albert. She found Correlia in the same melancholy state she had left her some time before.

"Oh! madam," said Lauretta, in plaintive accents, "I grieve to see you thus distressed. You mentioned the flatterer hope, this morning—Is it fled? Has all the fortitude you possessed forsaken you?—If it has not, now, now, dear lady, is the time to exert yourself! Oh! hasten and prevent the fatal order which I have heard—Albert is to die tonight! Oh! save him, madam! The generosity of your heart will not suffer the man you once loved to perish, though he is now the husband of another."

Correlia rose hastily from her seat, saying, "Once loved—did you say?—You, I thought, knew your mistress better, than to imagine my affections could ever change. Alas! for my own ease, I wish he were forgotten. And can such a cruel order be given!—then will I defy all danger. Yes, Albert, if you live not for me, you shall for Alzeyda. She will not be angry to think the love I once bore him, induced me to venture my life to give him liberty. Heaven knows, I should forfeit mine were I discovered."

She hastily sought for the keys, and in an instant left Lauretta astonished.

Correlia, inspired by the will to serve the afflicted pair, yet apprehensive she might be seen, thought of applying to Father Francis. The distraction her mind had laboured under, prevented her seeing him that day. She flew to his apartment, and found the holy man at prayers;—at sight of her, at such an unusual hour, with grief and terror depicted on her countenance, he started.

"What brings my daughter at this late hour? Why have you forsaken your pillow? You tremble, lady—why are you alarmed?"

"Oh! father! I cannot explain my distress; but if ever a good action was dear to you, assist me now."

"What is it you require?" replied the good father.

"Lend me your habit for only one half hour. A precious life depends on your compliance," said Correlia.

Father Francis made no reply. He took a habit of his order from a shelf, and presented it, helping her to put it on.

"Now, father," said Correlia, "let me intreat your prayers till I return."

"You shall have them. Blessings attend you in whatever you attempt, for you are goodness itself."

Correlia departed. Swift as lightning she darted down a back flight of stairs that led to a room filled with armour. Her chance was soon directed—she took a sword unmindful which, as long as she obtained one. She took with her a wax taper, and easily procured a lamp.

She then opened the private door, and descended the steps; she entered the first dungeon, and instantly passed the dreary vault and passages; then applying her key to the lock of the iron door—it flew open.

She hesitated a moment, finding the place without a light, and feared Lauretta had mistaken the place, as she could not at first distinguish the object of her search.

A voice then spoke that agitated every sense.

"Art thou the midnight assassin I am told to expect, as your sword proclaims; if so, I beseech you end my sufferings at once."

"No, I am not," sighed Correlia, altering the tone of her voice, "but am one who pities your misfortunes; and, though allied to Beranger, abhor his conduct."

"You are generous. Know you any thing of a lady, named Alzeyda? What must she think?"

"What must she feel," replied Correlia, "deprived of liberty, with two such dreadful alternatives—your death or dishonor."

Albert struck his forehead in agony.

"I," said Correlia, "am come to give you liberty."

"What! and not know the real situation of Alzeyda? Never!"

"Yes, you must. The Count is surrounded by enough, who are ready to execute his orders. You are unarmed. Take this key—It will open a door that will give you entrance to a passage that will lead you in safety; and that key opens the door at the extremity. You will easily gain the road;—hasten to a magistrate, that, by the force of power, Alzeyda may be demanded. Next seek your father; let no refusal bar your entrance. Accept this sword as a present from one who esteems you; you may need it; and all I beg is, that you spare Beranger's life if fate should bring you together."

"Generous, noble friend!" said Albert, taking the sword, "tell me, to whom am I indebted for this miraculous preservation?"

"That must be secret," she replied. "Imagine one whose friendship cannot be equalled—who rejoices it once is in my power to serve *you* and Alzeyda."

She then opened the door of his prison, and taking the wax taper she had brought, lighted it, and presented it to him to enable him to find his way along the dreary passage.

As she gave him the light, part of her disguise moved aside. The astonished Albert beheld Correlia.

"Correlia!—do I dream? Generous—generous maid—thus let me thank you."

Albert sunk on his knees, and kissed the hand that presented the light with fervor.

"I am discovered," said Correlia. "I flattered myself this disguise would conceal me. I assure you I feel a superlative happiness in being able to assist you. Obey me, I beseech you, Albert, for I know more of your destiny than you do. Lose not the precious moments that now offer—they cannot be regained. Fly! —pursue this path—that key leads you to liberty. Slight not my ardent desire to save you. As I passed, I heard the wretched Alzeyda—"

"Alzeyda!" said Albert, in amazement.

"Pardon me," replied Correlia, "if I wound you—I know I must—but Alzeyda is a prisoner in Montville Castle like yourself. No means of extricating her remains, but by your obeying my command—Fly! —I repeat the word. Safety may be found beyond the walls of Montville Castle. There you may assist Alzeyda. Death awaits you here."

Albert was unable to reply. He looked distracted at what Correlia said. Alzeyda's dreadful situation seemed more formidable than ever. He had many things to say, but Correlia had so urgently intreated him to fly, that he hesitated a moment, unknowing how to proceed.

"What!" said he, "do you command me to leave Alzeyda?—leave her here surrounded with enemies, if I may judge by the treatments I have received. Will my leaving the Castle of Montville save her from the shaft of fate? Gracious God! to you I resign

her!—Soften, I beseech thee, the rigour of her destiny. And to you, Correlia, my best, my inestimable friend, what thanks are due; even to the last hour of my life, while sense is permitted to remain in this body, will I remember you with gratitude."

He took her hand and pressed it to his lips with fervor, then hastily pursued the path she directed. Correlia watched him along the passage, and with rapture saw the light diminish. She fancied she heard the door close after him. The light was now extinguished. A sensation, unfelt before, fluttered in her bosom. In that cavern of distress and despair, she lifted her hands to heaven, and fervently prayed Albert might be happy, and Alzeyda restored to him in safety.

For a few moments, the recollection of where she was fled; her thoughts were only on Albert and Alzeyda, but the remembrance soon returned. She closed the door of the passage through which Albert had escaped; then quitting the dungeon, she secured the iron door, and hurried to regain the habitable part of the castle.

As she reached the last step of the stairs her heart failed her, for she dreaded the men would soon proceed to put the Count's order in execution; and she endured great alarm for her own safety, as also for father Francis, if it should be discovered that he had assisted her in aiding Albert's escape, by means of lending her his habit. Fear for the good father Francis, more than for herself, made her step forward and resume her natural courage. She passed the door that led to the gallery at the end of the hall, and hastily secured it; then extinguishing her lamp, she pursued the back flight of stairs, for a confused sound of voices issued from the great stairs, and she dreaded ascending them, lest she should meet the Count or any of his men.

As she reached the first landing, the door was open that led into the apartment of Alzeyda, and she saw the glimpse of the four men waiting. Correlia drew back, for it was impossible to pass to the chamber she designed without being seen. Fortunately the colour of her habit accorded with the dull appearance of the place she was in, and enabled her to remain unperceived.

The Count's voice was now very loud. She heard him venting threats and reproaches on Alzeyda, whose replies apparently increased his anger, for he called to the men to enter the room and seize her. They obeyed; which circumstance allowed the trembling and afflicted Correlia an opportunity of going to her own apartment. Lauretta was absent. Correlia imagined she was paying attention to the suffering Alzeyda, and therefore thought it necessary to go to father Francis, and resign the habit that had been of such singular service.

The good man was at prayers;—he heeded not the entrance of Correlia.—She wished not to interrupt his pious thoughts, but the agitation of her mind made it difficult to remain unobserved. She heard him bless her, and call on the Supreme Power to guide and protect her. His eye then caught the object that caused those orisons. He rose to receive her.

"Has the habit been of that essential service your wishes seemed to presage?" said Father Francis, as he assisted in taking it off.

"It has," she replied, "and thousands of thanks are due to you for the use of it.—Hear me, good father;—affairs of dreadful consequence now occupy the time of Count Beranger.—I should be shocked were he a stranger to me; but I want words to express what I feel at this moment; to imagine my father could be guilty of deeds I dread to scrutinize. Spare me the detail of my apprehensions, for at present my thoughts are too much confused;—and now another object engrosses them.

Father Francis looked amazed, but Correlia was in too much haste to explain her meaning at that time. She immediately quitted his apartment, being anxious to learn the fate of Alzeyda; she therefore repaired to her chamber, and gently opened the casements after having extinguished her light, for a solicitude fluttered in her heart to watch the steps of Albert, as he left the outer door of the castle where he had been confined; and a supreme delight glowed in her breast, in the idea of having been instrumental to the liberty and happiness of the person who engaged her earliest affections, though his love was now dedicated to another.

## CHAP. XV.

THE moon had risen superbly grand, and its serene and brilliant ray illumined the azure firmament, which was bespangled with innumerable stars. It was Correlia's favourite hour; for she had often risen to contemplate the beauties of a similar fine night. The towering trees that shaded the left wing of the Castle, in her idea wore a more lovely garb than usual. She watched with impatient gaze the spot, for amidst the trees the door of the Castle was situated from which Albert had made his escape.

While she was looking in eager expectation, she fancied she saw a man come from among the trees—imagination painted Albert. She had not a doubt but it was him; and as her watchful eye pursued the swift footsteps of the object of her care, she blessed the Almighty, who had enabled her to grant the necessary assistance, and prayed for his preservation, continuing her ardent gaze till the person was lost in distance.

While she was thus watching the steps of Albert, she heard voices below in the courtyard, and cautiously opened the casement to observe the reason more particularly. To her astonishment she beheld several men lifting a lady, to all appearance lifeless, or bereft of the power of extricating herself from those who were forcing her from the Castle.

Upon a more minute survey, she perceived the lady was Alzeyda. Alarmed to the greatest extreme at a sight which filled her with terror and astonishment, it was no way diminished on observing a carriage waiting at a short distance, which, from the attention she paid to the departure of Alzeyda, she had not before seen.

At that moment her attention was solely taken up by the carriage to which the men were carrying the lady. They soon reached it, and placed her therein, then got in themselves, and the carriage drove away.

When she had watched it as far as the eye could reach, she closed the casement, and gave vent to the sorrows that oppressed her heart by tears.

Lauretta soon after arrived. Her expressive countenance indicated what passed in her mind. She looked greatly shocked, and told her mistress that the Count had ordered the men to carry the unfortunate lady to some place—she could not clearly hear where—that his orders were immediately obeyed, and the lady taken away.

While Lauretta was relating the account of Alzeyda's departure to Correlia, they heard the Count leave the room from whence the men had taken Alzeyda, and repaired to his own chamber; and as he passed along, he gave orders to his servants for his horses to be ready by day-break, as he was going to a distant part of the country.

Correlia felt herself relieved of a weight of anxiety and terror when she heard his door closed for the night.

She then endeavoured to obtain a short oblivion from care in the arms of sleep, happy that she had liberated Albert; but the uncertainty and uneasiness she endured for the unfortunate Alzeyda, deprived her of the repose she sought, which, from the agitation of her mind, she stood in great need of.

Agreeable to the Count's commands, the servants attended with horses at a very early hour. They did not wait long before he was ready. He mounted his horse, and Correlia, with a trembling heart, saw him depart, followed by two servants.

She observed he looked unwell.—His brow was contracted, his fine countenance wore a ferocity that alarmed her gentle nature, for she had never been accustomed to see such a stern and gloomy aspect exhibited by her father. She fervently prayed he might be restored to his usual tone of mind, and the object of his resentment be relieved from the severity of his anger.

Her perturbed mind became now calm. The most uneasy sensation she experienced was on account of Alzeyda, for she sincerely hoped Albert was beyond a probability of danger, and to heaven she commended the fair unfortunate object of her thoughts; then, retiring again to rest, was favoured with a few hours salutary repose.

Count Beranger had ordered his assistants to convey Alzeyda from the Castle, on account of his family and servants, to a hunting seat of his at Luneville, in the province of Lorraine, about thirty miles distant from Montville Castle, where he thought she could be more secure, and blamed his want of thought in having brought her to the Castle at all. Anxious to follow her, he had ordered his horses in the morning early, and Alzeyda had not arrived at the place of destination above two hours when the Count reached that place also.

She had been conducted to her apartment by Fonteville, who offered her refreshments, which she refused, and when he quitted the room she secured the door, resolving at that moment never to open it, and rather perish, (for death had charms,) in preference to the odious addresses of Count Beranger.

Fonteville frequently returned, and intreated her to open the door, and take some kind of nourishment, but she persisted in declining all, and positively denied opening the door.

A dreadful thought now entered the unhappy Alzeyda's mind—it was fixed on death.—She had heard the stern threat of Beranger when he named the death of Albert; her eyes had witnessed the departure of the assassin to obey the cruel order. She firmly believed that threat had been executed, and Albert was now numbered with the dead.—"Life," said she, "is a burden easily laid down, and when we cannot enjoy it with honor, it is not worth preserving. The Almighty will I hope pardon me if such a dreadful step is necessary—misery and distraction impel me on to the rash act of self-murder—it is a thought I shudder at—my blood chills in my veins, yet what other remedy? If Albert is no more—if for my sake he suffers—then what happiness can there be in life for me? Hold—let me think—the means are in my power—the dagger, the present of my dying

mother, by good fortune I have with me, it was concealed under my robe when I was taken from Paris. I will treasure it as the most valuable gift, sent from heaven to save me from Beranger! And now, O merciful Father! accept my prayer."

Alzeyda now resigned herself to fate, and dreading the necessity of putting a period to her own sorrows and existence, as also fearful that Count Beranger meant to deprive her of life, if she continued to refuse his solicitations, she bent her thoughts to the unavoidable destiny that awaited her, and determined to pass the short time she believed she had to live in prayer and preparation for the awful change.

Thus the day passed over, and the hour of midnight advanced. Alzeyda's eyes had not been closed for two nights—she felt inclined to sleep, but fear would scarce allow it, as her afflicted mind swelled with every torturing apprehension; however, taking the dagger from concealment, lest she might suffer any intrusion unprepared, she laid down on the bed, with the dagger in her hand, and soon fell into a profound sleep.

Count Beranger had frequently sent, in hopes she would be induced to open the door, and was greatly enraged he succeeded no better. "Her scorn," exclaimed he, bursting with passion, "shall be repaid. Albert by this time is no more. General Dumetz I always hated—I could triumph over him by his daughter's dishonor; but if not so, he shall no more see Alzeyda—death must put the final separation, and make him wretched. This night, alone, I will enter that apartment, and though she imagines herself safe by securing the door, there is another that it is impossible she can discover. My soul could never endure a rival in any thing—I gained my point with her father—he once affronted me—Albert displeased me—I could not make him act agreeable to my wishes—Alzeyda I love—she scorns me—revenge is now the only passion of my soul."

Count Beranger sat late: the three men who assisted in conveying Alzeyda there supped with him, and drank freely—they were to continue there to obey any further order.

The Count looked at his watch; he found it was one o'clock—a few moments he hesitated, then went to a cabinet, and took from thence a dagger, saying cheerfully, it would be of more service to him than his sword; then taking a lamp, he ascended to that part of the house where he could enter unperceived the apartment of the unfortunate Alzeyda.

The door easily yielded to his hand—he stepped softly forward, and saw Alzeyda in a profound sleep—he was fearful of breathing lest he should awaken her. A moment he paused to look on her beautiful countenance, before he raised his arm to give the blow, but pity nearly overcame his resolves.

Unwilling his determination should be set aside by a momentary sensation, he advanced towards the bed, at the same instant raising his arm to plunge his dagger in her breast while she slept; but seeing Alzeyda grasping a dagger, he stopped. Terror shook

his whole frame, his countenance changed while he dropped the curtain he had held aside, and in agony called, "Alzeyda!"

Alzeyda started from her sleep—she saw Count Beranger, the author of all her misery, armed, ready to plunge the dagger in her bosom. The sight was distraction, yet she soon remembered the thoughts that occupied her during the day. She leaped from the bed, and exclaimed, "Albert shall not die unrevenged, Beranger, though death awaits me."

As she uttered these words, she aimed her dagger at the Count's breast.

"Hold! hold!—for heaven's sake! hold!" the Count frantically exclaimed; but as he drew aside to avoid the impending blow, received its point in his arm. He staggered, and fell into a chair.

Alzeyda saw the blood flow from the wound—her resentment was at an end—for a moment she forgot Albert, and every thing—then falling on her knees, and lifting her hands to Heaven, said—"Merciful God! restore him—and save me. O! be kind, and save me from the dreadful crime of murder."

Count Beranger fixed his eyes steadfastly on her—he shook with convulsive agony—articulation was apparently denied him. At length, making a violent effort to speak, he said, "Alzeyda, tell me—tell me truly, how came you by that dagger?"

Alzeyda replied, "it was my mother's."

"O! tell me not it was your mother's, for if I could form the thought that the owner of that dagger was your mother, I should be a wretch indeed."

Alzeyda pressed the dagger to her lips, saying, "Yes, indeed, Sir, it was my mother's; the dear saint, now in heaven, bequeathed it me with her last breath, as the most valuable present she had to resign to her unfortunate girl."

Count Beranger was greatly affected. He took his handkerchief, and wiped the drops of perspiration that drove one another down his face, then eagerly said, "What was your mother's name?"

"Emily," replied Alzeyda, "Emily Westburne. I mourn the loss of that inestimable and amiable parent."

Count Beranger fell back in his seat, apparently senseless.

Alzeyda rose from her kneeling attitude to give him assistance, for she dreaded it was caused by the wound; then taking her handkerchief, bound it round his arm.

The Count soon revived, but gazed upon her with such fixed astonishment, such indelible agony, that greatly alarmed her, then said with a heavy sigh, "Emily

Westburne, you tell me was your mother's name. Then General Dumetz is not your father."

"No," said Alzeyda, "I am truly sorry to say he is not. I am only the child of his adoption; but he has been the kindest, best of fathers; he has studied to make me happy, and always studied the happiness of those I loved."

"Who was your own father?" he eagerly asked.

"Alas! there is my misfortune—I never saw my father. I was born in Algiers; was but a fortnight old when my dear father mysteriously disappeared, and every endeavour has been exerted to discover what is become of him without effect—for he never since has been heard of.

Count Beranger again sighed heavily, and after a few moments pause, during which time he appeared to suffer extreme emotion, he said, "Did you observe the dagger I raised to take your life?"

"Oh! no—it was sufficient I saw you armed."

"Look, then," said he, producing it, "there is a great resemblance between yours and mine, the only difference is the word—mine is *Love*."

Alzeyda gazed eagerly on the dagger, unable to speak and overcome by a crowd of thoughts that rushed impetuously on her tortured imagination.—She groaned with anguish, and appeared to be subdued imperceptibly till she sunk senseless on the floor as if every faculty was lost.

The Count reached his hand to ring for assistance, but it was some time before it could be obtained, for the men who brought Alzeyda to that place knew nothing of the secret door. They came to the one at the top of the stairs, and found it secured; they were then under the necessity of waking some of the servants, and explaining as well as they were able the room the Count was in; so that it was some time before any one came to assist Alzeyda.

Alzeyda was then lifted to the bed, and every care taken to restore her; others were also busy in examining the Count's arm, but he refused to say what had caused it, or give any account concerning the state Alzeyda and he were found in.

Alzeyda by proper care recovered just as the Count was being led from the chamber. Seeing him about to depart, she disengaged herself from those who were supporting her, and rushed before the Count. Throwing herself at his feet she frantically exclaimed, "O! leave me not till you say where is—what is become of Valcour! here will I hang, and bar your passage till you tell me if he lives! or did he with his last breath bequeath that dagger to you?"

"He lives," replied the Count, "it is all I can say at this time.—Be careful of your health, and endeavour to seek repose; in a few hours I shall send for you and inform you more. My spirits, my strength is quite exhausted, and I must retire. The attendants then led him away, leaving only one female servant with Alzeyda.

Alzeyda's eager eye was strained after the Count. "He lives! he lives!" said she, "Valcour lives! if the Count may be believed. Gracious Providence! how mysterious are thy ways!—I may yet behold my father."

The servant intreated she would compose herself, and retire to rest, assuring her she would carefully watch by her bed side, and bid her fear no intrusion. "I will endeavour," said Alzeyda, "but shall not undress, for you know not the anxiety I endure till I see the Count.—If I should chance to sleep, be so kind to let me know the instant he sends for me."

"Be assured I will, Madam," was the reply.

Alzeyda looked round, as if in search of something, for the agitation of her spirits had been so great, she had forgot in the confusion to put by her dagger—it lay on the floor, and she soon replaced it by her side, then endeavoured to compose her mind, and strove to obtain rest.

## CHAPT. XVI.

IT was long before she closed her eyes. The events of the two preceding days had made her weary, but misfortune is wakeful, and her unhappy situation had filled her mind with every dreadful alarm.—Now a temporary slumber had shed its balmy influence, but she often started, and called on the Count.

About eleven o'clock in the forenoon she was informed the Count desired to see her in his own apartment, for he was unable to leave it. She immediately obeyed, and was conducted to Count Beranger.

He was sitting up, but looked extremely pale, and appeared very weak. His countenance no longer wore that air of sternness and severity so visible on the preceding day; his haughty spirit seemed broken; he looked on her with a placid smile, and extended one hand towards her with a degree of kindness, saying,—“Alzeyda, my dear! come, sit down by me.”

A chair had been placed beside him. Alzeyda obeyed. She then inquired concerning his wound, and hoped there would be no dangerous effects from it, expressing her concern for the fatal accident, which only the misery of her dreadful situation could have prompted her to, and intreated he would forgive her.

“That I do sincerely,” replied the Count. Then ordering the attendants to leave the room, he said:

“I have a secret to disclose that overwhelms me with confusion. What I would reveal, is to you alone; my servants must not yet be made acquainted with what I am going to relate. You mentioned the name Valcour. You saw the present Zara gave him at the time she gave the corresponding one to your mother. Was it not the gift of a lady of that name?”

“It was!” replied the astonished Alzeyda. “Mysterious providence! How could you know that, Sir?”

“Hear with attention, and believe;—for heaven's my witness, what I am going to declare is truth.—I am that Valcour!”

Alzeyda rose from her seat—her bosom beat with painful emotion—her countenance varied alternately from crimson to a deadly paleness—her lips quivered—the accents died away unfinished on her tongue, unable to articulate a word, to explain the conflict that was passing in her bosom. Her trembling limbs could scarce support her, and she was obliged to resume her seat. At length a few tears gave her full heart relief. She took the Count's hand, and pressed it with fervor to her lips, then said,—“Are you—are you indeed Valcour? My father? Have I, in an enemy, found that long lamented parent? Is not what I hear an illusion? Can it be possible that blessing is reserved for me? Am I at last

honored with so great a happiness? Yet my heart, habituated to misfortune, can scarcely credit the mysterious discovery."

"I am Valcour," replied the Count. "To convince you more, I will further explain what, perhaps, you may have heard your mother mention. I am the husband of Emily Westburne. She was daughter of the British Consul of Algiers. Ill fortune took me to that place; the vessel I was returning in from one of the West India islands, to a port in the Mediterranean, was taken by an Algerine. The engagement was fatal, for our loss was extreme; the few that remained were immediately sold for slaves. I determined to conceal my name, that my father might not feel too much uneasiness on my account, hoping he might be ignorant of the unfortunate situation that had befallen me, till chance should allow me an opportunity of freeing myself; for which reason, I called myself Valcour. My lot fell to serve an excellent lady, her heart pleaded in my favor; to her generosity I was indebted for my liberty. Mr. Westburne, by the persuasions of his lovely daughter, purchased me of Zara's father, and instantly made me free. Soon after I married Emily Westburne; and you, Alzeyda, are our child,"

As he spoke, he pressed her to his bosom; and Alzeyda, from what she had heard, was fully convinced Count Beranger and Valcour were the same, and that he was her father.

"Dear Sir," said Alzeyda, "tell me—tell me all.—Why did you leave my mother? Why did we never hear from you?—Twenty-one years have mournfully rolled away since that period. She tenderly loved you, Sir. Why was you concealed from those who, with such distress of heart, bewailed your loss?"

Count Beranger covered his face with his handkerchief, but remained silent.

"Dear Sir," said she, "add not to my sorrows, but give me some account why you absented yourself from us."

"Will you not despise me, Alzeyda?"

"Heavens! my father, what a thought!"

The Count then replied.

"My soul is harrowed up at the thoughts of those circumstances which has taught me to forget you;—but every racking idea rushed on my agonized senses when I saw you asleep, with the dagger in your hand, which I knew to be my Emily's, as the custom of Algiers obliged us to wear. Shall I say, I was determined on your destruction. I had weighed in my mind your refusal; and believing you the daughter of General Dumetz, who, (now Alzeyda, is the time to declare the truth) I hated; and am sorry to say, I exerted every endeavor to diminish the esteem our sovereign had for him; and when Albert told me you was his daughter,—I—spare me, and imagine what I would say—I had determined to wound the General in the nicest point—his honor, which was his boast. Alas! I little thought it was my own child I designed to ruin. If that failed, I knew your

death would afflict him to the soul. I forgot all thoughts of love. Inspired by revenge, I came alone to a private door of your chamber. I looked on you, as I thought for the last time; then raised my hand against your life. At that moment I perceived the word *honor* on a dagger you held in your hand.—Surprise overcame me—my arm was suspended—I was unable to perform the dreadful task I came upon, for the exact resemblance to that which my Emily wore, struck me motionless. That of my much-wronged Emily was more sure, and I met a just reward for my ingratitude to her; and it saved me from perpetrating the blackest crime in human nature.

"But to return to times long since past. My Emily had been brought to bed about a fortnight. I was supremely happy, and was walking in the evening to enjoy the refreshing breezes from the sea. Accidentally, I met an old friend, whose ship lay in the harbour, and being overjoyed to see me, insisted I should go on board to spend the evening.

"I readily complied, being extremely anxious to learn some account of my father and friends. He informed me that my father was very unhappy—that he had been told I was in Algiers, and had engaged for the safety of a vessel, if any one would undertake to go to Algiers in search of me.

"I need not express my uneasiness, to find the Count Beranger's grief for my loss was so excessive. While I sat paying minute attention to all he said, I found, by the motion of the vessel, we were sailing. I ran from the cabin to the deck, and found Algiers diminishing to view—there was no remedy—and I want words to explain the distress I suffered.

"My friend laughed at my solicitude. He told me I was in love; that the news had reached my father that I lived with a Moorish lady, with whom it was reported I was going to be married, for which reason he thought proper to prevent it: as I was the heir of a plentiful fortune, he had an entire aversion to my marrying any person of a different religion, therefore thought it necessary to remove me from the place, and the object that he feared engrossed my love.

"I was so distracted in mind at what I heard, that I felt it difficult to reply.—I knew not how to act.—It was impossible for me to escape back to Algiers, and therefore silently, though my heart reluctantly, submitted to the severe destiny allotted me. I secretly flattered myself that I should soon return to my Emily, and, by my presence, chase away all those uncomfortable apprehensions that I knew her tender, generous heart would endure on account of my mysterious absence.

We arrived in France. My father received me with rapture, and I was surrounded with friends who rejoiced at my return. The day after my arrival, I attended the Count Beranger to Paris, and received an office of high rank near the person of our august sovereign.—Day after day I determined to write to my Emily, but I found a great difficulty in getting a letter conveyed to her. I wrote, but never received any answer. Whether she ever had it, I never could learn, and I endured great uneasiness on her account.

"But in the continual round of dissipation I was engaged in, and the diligent attendance my station required, my mind was materially engaged; and as no one knew of my marriage, the secret was my own. I never mentioned it, fearful of offending my father, whose temper was very hasty.

"While at Paris, I was introduced to Correlia, the beautiful Countess de Clausanne. She greatly resembled my Emily. I regarded her for Emily's sake alone, as *she* was an object too near the heart to forget. She loved me. My father learnt her affection. He proposed her to me in marriage—I gave no immediate answer, but suffered our acquaintance to continue till I was ashamed to object to it. We were married; and Emily was at some times forgotten; yet the recollection of her would often intrude. I did not flatter myself with happiness, but was satisfied with having obeyed the Count's command. Correlia resided principally at Montville Castle. My attention was called to Paris by my king; as she preferred Montville Castle to the hurry and dissipation of Paris, it was an excuse for the long absences which frequently occurred.

"Correlia, in the first year of our marriage, had a daughter, whom she named after herself, Correlia.

"My little girl was very handsome, but I paid a very trivial regard to her, for my situation at that time required particular attention and, as I have before remarked, drew me much from home. The sweet child was all her mother's comfort, who really adored her; and my apparent want of affection in her early infancy increased her mother's fondness. Imagining herself neglected, and being always attached to the delightful situation of Montville Castle, fond of the river Aube, which flowed through Champagne, the province where she was born, on whose banks Montville Castle vies with every other for pre-eminence, she chose it for her particular residence. The convent of St. Louis was within a very short space of the castle. Her mind (perhaps occasioned by disappointments, and my neglect) was strongly inclined to religion; at that place she enjoyed the satisfaction of superintending her daughter's education, and exercising those domestic as well as religious duties, which the innate goodness of her heart taught her to revere.

"My father died when my little Correlia was two years old, and I enjoyed his estates and title. About three years after, the king honored me with the first office of state, once filled by my father. I obtained his Majesty's favor, and became respected by all who knew me.

"My mind, entirely occupied by the duty of my station, and the long time I in general staid at Paris, in a continual round of dissipation, chased the remembrance of Emily from my breast; and as I had so long neglected her, every day I became more indifferent. Months have passed over, and she has never once entered my thoughts. When recollection brought her sometimes to my mind, it was but of a short duration, though at the time I suffered great uneasiness; but when the idea had vanished, she then was forgotten again. Time insensibly moved away; perhaps it was originally the remembrance

of Emily, that made me neglectful of the Countess and Correlia. I am sorry to say I did neglect them. I am certain my behaviour has given her distress of heart unutterable, as my conduct, while I lived at Paris, could not fail of reaching her ears; for there a very handsome lady drew my attention, and her vanity enjoyed the satisfaction that her charms had occasioned the Countess Beranger to be disregarded.

"It shocks me, my child, to wound your feelings with your father's ill conduct; but when we grew indifferent, regardless of these objects, who ought to be dear to us; when we resign our reason to the guidance of our impetuous passions, we know not where to stop, for one error leads on to another. The world judges of our faults, and condemns or approves, as giddy chance directs. I was considered a man of gallantry and fashion—esteemed by every one—and my acquaintance courted by all. Nevertheless, I cannot excuse my ill conduct towards my suffering, charming Emily: I must pass it over as silently as possible. The Countess Beranger was also another lovely sufferer; calm, patient, and resigned, her meek spirit scorned to up braid, though she could not refrain feeling every afflicting disappointment.—But I will proceed, and confess the whole of my faults.

"When General Dumetz and the Count de Villiers returned from America, high in their country's favor, blessed with the esteem of the king, and the applause of the people, I saw, with regret, the rival in his Majesty's affections. I could not bear one to possess equal estimation with myself. I formed the project of accusing him secretly; and by undermining his unblemished character, deprived him of the favor he enjoyed. He was received at court with much indifference; the apparent displeasure of the sovereign was soon whispered; General Dumetz, who had many friends, soon learned something was amiss. Conscious of having always acted with honor, which was his boast, he fought to vindicate his conduct. The king, by my persuasions, avoided him. Dumetz saw the power he once held in his Majesty's esteem was now on the decline; and the next morning he received a dismissal from the service of his country, without having any cause assigned for so doing. I judged what must have been his feelings. He did not stay long in France, but where he went, I neither knew nor cared, so that I had prevailed in his being removed from rivaling me.

The Duke de Limousin was my friend, he also had a high regard for the General; I was obliged to act with extreme caution to him, for Albert de Villiers, the Duke's only son, had been with General Dumetz to America, and was zealous in his praise as it affected his honor. I dreaded lest the Duke, who was greatly esteemed by the King, might be induced to vindicate the General's conduct, and perhaps have him reinstated in favor, especially as it so materially concerned his son, for which reason I prevailed on them to pay a visit to Montville Castle, purposely to take them out of the way, and to keep their minds engaged in another manner.

"Albert was an elegant, accomplished young man, his mind was aspiring, his disposition truly noble and generous; he greatly revered the General, which was the first cause of that aversion, I have ever since entertained for him, also his amiable qualities

were so generally admired, that I was jealous lest fortune should place a rival in my ambition in the person of this young man.

"In this visit to Montville Castle Albert and my Correlia grew enamoured of each other. I at that time had no wish to oppose it—a circumstance, however, happened that made it necessary.

"Matilda de Solignac I had been intimately acquainted with at Paris. She was young, vain, and extremely gay—she had retired with her father, the Count de Solignac, to his summer residence of St. Leon, between Torrigny and Sens. I had received an invitation to pass a few weeks there, and Matilda knowing that the Duke de Limousin and Albert (who she secretly much regarded) were at Montville Castle she prevailed on her father to request the Duke and Albert to accompany me; but before I left Paris, Matilda's virtue had yielded to her vanity, and her desire of being admired. I was happy in her favor, which was one of the reasons why she had so warmly joined her father's solicitations for me and my friends to visit them.

"Matilda's coquettish character had hitherto not considered the consequences, unmindful of what the world might say if her conduct was known. Vanity whispered her that the heiress of De Solignac could be guilty of no wrong, and that being a young lady of rank and fortune, her errors might be passed by without censure, and her levities ascribed to fashion and dissipation, which in reality were the offspring of a depraved mind.

"Matilda was at this time little more than seventeen—her heart had never been particularly engaged, though she had many admirers—I arrived at St. Leon with the Duke de Limousin and Albert. His elegant figure caught the eye of the giddy Matilda—she never before had viewed him so partially—the impression sunk in her mind, accustomed to comply with the dictates of her passions, and unmindful of that secret monitor *conscience*, she did not endeavour to discourage the ardent affection that prevailed in her bosom for the Count de Villiers. I was soon made her confidant; she begged I would acquaint my young friend.—I was interested in her request, and complied—but Albert loved my Correlia too well, to change his affection for her at that time.

"When I related my ill success to Matilda, it occasioned a violent agitation in her mind—but her father soon after fell dangerously ill, and during our stay at St. Leon, expired.

"The death of the Count de Solignac did not affect Matilda so much as the thought that Albert preferred another before her, a circumstance that mortified her vanity extremely, though her gallantry suffered no diminution for I continued to enjoy that place in her esteem though she often declared Albert was the master of her heart. Time and prudence made it necessary for Matilda to marry, lest the consequences of our illicit connexion should be discovered. I had certainly a great regard for her, and could have wished the man of her choice to have been her husband, which was Albert; though I confess I secretly disliked him on General Dumetz's account, and I had habituated myself so much

in the indulgence of my passions to their fullest extent, that I always desired to be revenged if I imagined myself affronted, or had any reason for displeasure.

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## CHAP. XVII.

"THE Duke de Limousin saw the beautiful Matilda with the eyes of love. He forgot his age, and flattered himself with every happiness if he could obtain her for his wife. I soon informed her of it, but her heart, her wishes were all centred in Albert, nor did her conscience once upbraid her with the injustice she was doing in desiring an alliance with him, when she knew that a few months in all probability would produce a confirmation of her prior attachment to me. She took an opportunity of expressing her affection to Albert himself, as she was angry and dissatisfied with my endeavours to procure that return of love she ardently wished for. From him she learnt the unpleasing issue of her vain hopes—he politely declined the honour of her offered hand, assuring her his heart was engaged. Matilda had scarcely patience to listen to the conclusion of his declaration—her heart was bursting to be revenged—she secretly vowed he should suffer for his indifference, the insensibility he felt for her charms, and the honour she thought she conferred in offering him her hand.

"She flew to me for redress and for revenge. All hopes of Albert were now at an end. My wish to serve Matilda, and the expectation of continuing to receive the favours she had conferred on me, made me readily form a scheme. I proposed she should marry the Duke de Limousin, who had declared he should be supremely happy if she would honour him with her hand.

"A short time she hesitated; but her ardent desire of revenging herself on Albert, made her easily consent: she also had fears for her character, and allowed me to say to the Duke, she had no objection to the alliance he proposed.

"The Duke was happy—the marriage was hurried over in a very short time—Albert was astonished at the change of her avowed sentiments, but pleased to think she shunned him now, as much as formerly she had courted his company.

"In a few weeks Matilda returned with us to Paris, Duchess de Limousin.

"I took the earliest opportunity (even before their marriage) of acquainting the Duke with his son's affection for Matilda; at least I persuaded him that Albert loved her, with a design to create a jealousy in his bosom, as Matilda and myself had concerted our plans for her to be revenged on him for the slight he paid to her beauty and offered love. For this reason the Duke estranged his affection from a son he formerly adored, believing him guilty of having wished to obtain Matilda's heart in preference to himself.

"Four months rolled away very uncomfortably, but Matilda had her designs in making it so, for she thought her revenge on Albert would be complete if she could prevail on the Duke to disinherit him, and place the inheritance on her child, which in reality was mine.

"Albert begged permission to visit the Countess Beranger and Correlia; the request was readily complied with, as we much wished for his absence, and agreeable to every one was his departure.

"I then undertook to declare to the Duke that the sole cause of Albert's leaving Alembert Castle was on account of the love he still bore the Duchess, who had several times lately been affronted by him; and as he could not conquer that passion, he had chosen to retire. I told him the Duchess was extremely unhappy on the account, not knowing how to act, and had requested me to acquaint the Duke with the cause of her uneasiness.

"To be explicit, and not tire you with a detail of circumstances that would undoubtedly wound your feelings, I must inform you, that Albert was too successfully accused, and the Duke too easily believed. Matilda's revenge was complete, for the Duke disinherited Albert, and swore to fix it on her child. He commissioned me to bear the unwelcome (but to me pleasing) news to his son, with a sum of money for his present necessities, and to forbid him ever more to enter the Castle of Alembert.

"I had engaged too deeply to serve Matilda, to recede—I knew the mutual affection of Albert and Correlia—ambition prompted me to break that once desired connexion—Correlia, my only daughter, heiress to a large fortune, ought to marry a person possessed of wealth and titles—Albert was now an outcast, destitute of either, with few friends; for when the sunshine of prosperity has declined, there are few who pride themselves in being friends to the unfortunate. Besides, the title and estates of the Duke de Limousin would be enjoyed by Matilda's child, which I certainly believed to be mine, by which means one of my children would claim all the possessions of that Nobleman. That was the principal cause why I wished Correlia to marry Albert; and when I left Matilda to convey the distressing news to Albert, she declared he should never have the opportunity of vindicating his conduct to his father, as she would take particular care they never more should meet.

"My arrival at Montville Castle threw the whole into confusion. I briefly related my orders, and as peremptorily forbid a continuation of his and Correlia's affection. They endeavoured to soften my resolves, but the effort was useless—can a rock be softened?—such was my heart; their intreaties made it feel new strength—I was enraged that Albert should dare to reply, or appear to doubt the veracity of my message—I ordered my daughter to her chamber, and forbid her ever more, if possible, to think of him.

"In this confusion the Countess, (who had long been in a declining state of health,) either from the shock her spirits received at that time, or the griefs she suffered for her daughter's disappointment, expired. Yet the stern purpose of my heart remained unshaken, the melancholy scene before me had no effect on my feelings. Albert left the house, and I saw him no more.

"Not to tire you with relating every minute circumstance that attended, I will only say that the Countess was buried, and at that time I received a letter from the Duchess of Limousin, expressing the satisfaction she enjoyed in having so well succeeded, for Albert had been at Alembert Castle, but she had prevented his seeing the Duke, and invited me to return as soon as possible, as her husband esteemed me his most valued friend.

"I hastened to obey her. Correlia's grief and melancholy I cannot describe. I endeavoured to prevail on her to go to Paris, but she refused, wishing to indulge the solitude of her mind; and as affairs of importance as well as pleasure courted my presence, I had little time, and less inclination to bestow it on Correlia's griefs. I hastened to Paris, and Correlia, fearful of disobliging me by persisting in remaining at Montville Castle, agreed to follow me there in a short time.

"Matilda had been married but just turned of six months, when she was brought to bed of a son. Dearly as the Duke once loved her, she now became his aversion—he saw too late the injustice he had done Albert, and regretted the fatal oath he had taken of placing the inheritance on Matilda's child. He grew more peevish—enjoyed no comfort but in my company—and never wished to see or converse with his wife. For the sake of not publicly exposing her, he consented to taking her with him to Paris, as he had business there; but when there would not suffer her to enter into that vortex of dissipation the place afforded. They soon returned to Alembert Castle, and their mutual discontent increased. At length he determined on a separation, and Matilda and her son retired to the Villa of St. Leon.

"She did not long happily enjoy the fruits of her malignity; she lives a life of continual vexation, torment, and wretchedness, which a mind sensibly alive to every passion can feel, yet want the power to redress.

"In this situation near three years and a half have passed away. The Duke never once suspected I had any interest in any of those events that had caused him so much uneasiness; on the contrary, he never was happy but when I was present, and often blessed Heaven that had left him a friend of such value. Alas! he little thought how grossly I had wronged him! yet so callous was my heart to the distress of mind I had caused him, that it never once rose to reproach me for my duplicity.

"To me he would often speak with deep concern about his son Albert; it was to my interest to continue to speak against him: though I seldom mentioned what I, to serve Matilda had originally declared, her name was nearly become hateful to him, as he believed her to be made up of arts and falshood, and knew Albert and himself had never seen her till within five weeks of his marriage, so his anger and jealousy was entirely silenced on that head; but as I had given a different account of the Duke's anger to Albert, I knew I should totally lose his esteem if I suffered an explanation to take place.

"I attended him to Paris, as he was very ill, and there he soon was confined to his chamber; I had my views in so doing, for I had hopes to reconcile him and Matilda, if his illness terminated in death. But his complaint proved only melancholy reflections.

"One day, while I was on a visit, I heard that Albert was in Paris, and that he was determined to see his father, and intreat forgiveness if he had offended him; it was also mentioned that he brought with him a young and beautiful Polish lady. I soon informed myself of where he lived, and lost no time in hastening to the Duke's in order to prevent his seeing Albert.

"Finding the Duke de Limousin appear very ill, I offered to pass a week or two constantly with him in the house, and that he might rely on my friendship to see all his concerns properly taken care of. The Duke received my offer as an additional proof of my friendship—I was very lucky, for in less than two hours Albert called, and requested to see his father. The servant, whom I had cautioned and bribed for the purpose, instantly informed me I was wanted, and I hastened to give the answer I thought necessary.

"Many were the visits of Albert, but with no better success than the former—many letters were also brought me from him, and I carried them back unopened, with whatever message I thought proper, as if it was the Duke's command.

"I had seen you frequently during the time Albert was applying himself to endeavour to see his father—my heart beat in your favour—I had determined never to marry again, but wished to obtain you for my mistress. But when I found you was the destined bride of Albert, then every jealous and afflicting thought rushed on my mind, and all I wished was to deprive him of the happiness he hoped to enjoy.

"The Duke, though indisposed, and contrary to my wish, determined to go in the procession in honour of the festival of St. Agnes. I knew there would be many spectators, and I feared, as we were to pass through the street where you lived, that Albert might be there, and be seen by the Duke. Lest he should suspect any thing, I informed him, just before we were setting out, that I had been told, Albert had been in Paris near a month, and expressed my astonishment as his obstinacy, as he seemed so little to wish to conciliate his father's esteem, as he had never called even to inquire after his health.

"The Duke cast his eyes mournfully to the ground, and continued some time silent—at length with a heavy sigh he said, "I have used him very ill."

"Oh no! Why do you think so?"

"By giving ear to the artful insinuations of that infamous Matilda. You have been egregiously deceived, Beranger—I am inclined to think you would not so readily have taken her part against the Count de Villiers had you but slightly fancied what she was guilty of."

"I am inclined to think there was some truth in the affair, my Lord."

"Not an atom! I who knew the gem that inhabited his noble breast ought to have known its value—he is honour and goodness itself. I should have fairly and candidly

allowed him to justify himself before that wicked accuser Matilda, and not have driven him from home in the manner I did, without permitting one word to be spoken in his behalf. O jealousy! jealousy! how weak, how poor, how contemptible a being hast thou made of me!"

"Our carriages were in waiting. Fearful of saying any more, I departed, and we soon joined in the procession: my mind entirely taken up with the thoughts how I should act.

"As the procession passed through the street I saw Albert and you in the balcony; you appeared to me unusually lovely, and I resolved on your separation, for to be Albert's was impossible, after I had formed a wish you should be mine.

"The Duke at church informed me he had seen his son, and should send on the next day to desire he would wait on him. I knew all would be at an end if Albert ever met the Duke, and an explanation took place. I took the earliest opportunity of leaving the church, and by an artifice Albert fell easily into my power.

"When I arrived with him at Montville Castle I had him secured in a dungeon without light, wretchedly lodged, and with only a small quantity of bread and water to support life; for I feared if the Duke met with Albert, and found him innocent of the charge I and Matilda had concerted, the Duke might be induced to break his oath with regard to my son by Matilda, as he had sworn the inheritance should go to him, believing Albert guilty of horrid crimes. Then again, if I was discovered to have had any hand in the business, the Duke might ruin me by declaring it. At present I was high in every one's esteem—in favour at Court—enjoyed a dignified situation in rank and state. A favourite, thought I, if once disgraced, if once a person can accuse him of acting unjustly, adieu to all the enchanting prospects his enraptured fancy formed—his conduct is then severely scrutinized, all his ambitious views are exposed, he is execrated, and soon falls from the summit where his pride and power placed him—his elevated situation in life is a poor defence, for when disgraced he is the object for the finger of public scorn to point at. Oh! I will never live to be so degraded. Let me study to avoid so miserable a change. If Albert is reinstated in the Duke's affection, if he knows how often his son has called to see him and I have refused him admittance, I had better end my days. One of the two must not survive—be it Albert—by which means I can secure the incomparable Alzeyda.

"Albert was no sooner secured in the dungeon, and a strict order given to the man who had the charge of him, than I dispatched one to fetch you to the Castle of Montville. You are acquainted with every subsequent transaction—but—"

Here Count Beranger hesitated, while Alzeyda, anxious to know the fate of her beloved Albert, said,

"But—what, Sir?"

"Albert—I fear to distress you—but Albert is no more!"

"Oh Heaven!" exclaimed Alzeyda, clasping her hands in frantic agony, "can it be possible—could you not pity, not feel for his unmerited misfortunes?"

The Count replied, "I had resolved on his death when I took him from Paris. When you arrived at Montville Castle I made the offer of his life to you conditionally, though, had you acceded to my wishes at that time, I knew not how to grant it. Vimar had orders to let him suffer death at midnight—the very hour you was taken from the Castle—and ere now—"

"He is no more!" exclaimed Alzeyda distractedly. "Oh! cruel, cruel men! if ever you had pity, release me from this world of woe—let me not survive the generous the amiable Albert—O kill me! and in the silent grave unite me with my love, my husband."

"Peace, peace! commend yourself to Heaven, and be resigned," said the Count, "this is a life of errors and disappointment—I am miserable" would it were in my power to make you happy, Alas! it cannot be; but I will do you justice."

"This is a time, Sir, in which I have much to say," replied the afflicted Alzeyda, "you, I perceive, have much on your mind. I wish not to name what my tortured heart endures, nor add to the wretchedness your heart apparently feels, lest it should appear like reproaches: suffer me, therefore to retire, and indulge the grief that rends my breaking heart."

Alzeyda abruptly quitted the apartment—the Count was too much overcome to prevent her—busy memory brought a thousand tormenting reflections to his agonized mind, every way distressing and humiliating; and that his daughter should have received such kindness from General Dumetz, the man he had so wronged, was an additional torture to his proud heart.

He soon came to a determination of ending all his present afflictions—he resolved immediately to settle all his worldly affairs, and send in his resignation as Minister, then to retire to a monastery to expiate his faults, and make his peace with Heaven.

In a short time he ordered Alzeyda to attend him—she appeared drowned in tears—her grief drew a glow of conscious shame into his countenance, which spoke the sense he had of his injustice—"I am going to return to Montville Castle," said he, "I will present you to a sister so truly amiable that I am certain you will esteem—let me introduce you to the only near relation you will soon have in the world—I shall not long be in it—my mind is fixed—at the altar I will amend my life, and implore forgiveness for my past guilt. Will you go with me?"

"Any where you please," said Alzeyda distractedly, "the world to me now is a dreary waste—no one thing desirable in it to court my stay. How bitterly I feel the severity of every disappointment; accustomed from infancy to misfortunes, I fear they will end but with life."

"Let the carriage be immediately made ready," said the Count to a servant; the order was obeyed, and they were soon informed it waited. Count Beranger and Alzeyda took their seats therein, and commenced a solitary journey; the Count overcome by the thoughts that crowded on his tortured imagination—Alzeyda oppressed with grief for the loss of her adored Albert, and the mysterious relation of a father, duty ought to make her revere, but a recollection of many circumstances in his late dreadful confession almost taught her to despise—and the contract between Count Beranger and General Dumetz, whom she always tenderly regarded, was in her ideas extreme.

While they continued on their journey, it will be proper to return to the Castle of Montville, and say what passed there.

Albert obeyed the command of the amiable Correlia—his heart glowed with thanks for her generosity, and he sighed to think that excellent young lady was daughter to a father so totally unworthy of her innate goodness of heart. He remembered their former affection, and returned fervent thanks to Heaven that had reserved such an inestimable friend for him in the hour of necessity and adversity. Love, when it first entered his bosom in favour of Alzeyda, was for Correlia's sake, whom she greatly resembled. He sighed to think of Count Beranger's cruel prohibition—that they should meet no more; then his thoughts returned to Alzeyda, whom he tenderly loved; but receiving such a kindness from Correlia's hands, made his thoughts wander to times long past, and which had been partly forgotten.

He hastened to the nearest magistrate, and procured a warrant to search Montville Castle for Alzeyda early in the morning, but it was eight o'clock before he (attended by proper officers) entered that place; their search was vain—Alzeyda was no where to be found.

Correlia had anxiously expected their arrival, as she charged Albert the preceding night to demand Alzeyda with proper assistants—she stepped from her chamber, and begged to speak a few words with Albert.

She led him into the parlour, where Albert profusely thanked her, for her kind interposition the night before, acknowledging her the preserver of his life, then earnestly asked if she knew what was become of Alzeyda.

"While I watched from my window," said Correlia, "last night, anxious to see if you departed safe, you had scarce gone beyond the reach of the eye, when Alzeyda was taken from this place by three men, and put into a carriage that waited under those trees you can perceive at a small distance. My father left the Castle at four this morning, and at seven the man who remained to guard you quitted this place also. Where they are gone I know not—I should feel superlatively happy if I could inform you, and alleviate the distress your heart must feel.—I am inclined to think you believe me."

"Generous Correlia! is it possible for you to imagine that I should be guilty of so much injustice as to doubt you one moment?"

"Then mark me," she replied.—"Let me beg you will waste no time in following my directions. I am blest with the opportunity of informing you, that the Duchess has lost intirely the favour of your father; his friend Count Beranger is absent; Matilda has no longer any influence over the Duke's wishes, nor the power to forbid your entrance; at least I hope not. Seek to conciliate the Duke's affection, it will make the liveliest transports of happiness once more play round my heart, to know you are no longer the sport of capricious fortune; and may you enjoy that supreme felicity you so justly merit, is the fervent wish of Correlia."

She then made a respectful curtesy, and retired, scarcely allowing Albert time to thank her.

He then dismissed the officers, and hastened to the nearest inn, that he could procure a conveyance to go post to Paris, impatient to see the Duke his father.

## CHAP. XVIII.

VIMAR, to whose care Albert was consigned, had informed him, when he carried his provisions in the morning, that the hour of midnight was fixed for his execution, and therefore could not withhold a sensation of pity, that, spite of his natural hardness of heart, overcame him, and urged him to request Albert would make his peace with God! Albert heard with thanks and patience, and was resigned, awaiting in expectation of the executioner. When the hour of midnight arrived, what was his surprise and joy! Correlia, the first object of his love, prevented the fatal doom by visiting his dungeon and pointing out the means of escape, and how to act with regard to Alzeyda whom he was ignorant of being in the Castle of Montville till *she* gave the intelligence.

When the carriage departed with Alzeyda, Count Beranger gave the signal to Vimar to put his command in force, and to take the life of Albert Count de Villiers. He then retired to his own room, while he believed the dreadful business was performing in the dungeon, and so tormented were his thoughts, that he gave orders no one should dare to interrupt him.

Vimar hastened to obey the cruel order. He descended the steps with his drawn dagger in one hand, and a lamp in the other. He passed the first dungeon, where all was silent as death.—The deep gloom—the hollow echo of his footsteps, accorded with the designs of a midnight assassin. He entered the arched passage, unlocked the iron door, then passed into the dungeon, where he expected to find the devoted Albert.

As this dungeon was large, and he had only one lamp, it was with difficulty he could see to the extremity. The silence that reigned, inclined him to think Albert was asleep;—he walked round to see where he had lain himself; but not finding the unfortunate object of his search, he called, saying, "Albert, awake!"—"Awake," echoed through the vault, but no Albert appeared.

Vimar knew not what to conjecture by this mysterious silence. "If he is dead," said he, "I certainly must find his body; and for him to escape, is totally impossible for the keys of his dungeon have never been out of my pocket, on any account whatever. He never could go from this place without assistance!"

Again he searched all around, but with as little success as before. Every corner was looked into, but in vain. Terror overcame him—he sat down to call those things over in his mind, which floated in his troubled imagination.

At length, having vainly tried every effort, he then determined to conceal the mysterious loss of Albert from Count Beranger, assured, that if he declared Albert was no were to be found, the Count would accuse him of letting him escape. He knew the Count's fiery temper, and was certain his own life would forfeit for the disappointment.

When he was really convinced that Albert was gone, he retreated from the dungeon, carefully locking the door, and determining to avoid the Count.—Happy was he when he heard the Count depart. He waited a few hours, during which time he visited the dungeon again, to endeavor to ascertain which way Albert went, but without deriving the wished-for satisfaction; and soon after he left the castle, without mentioning a word of this mysterious occurrence to any one.

Albert arrived safely in Paris, and went immediately to the Duke de Limousin's. The servant who had formerly refused him admittance, endeavoured to prevent him *now* from seeing his master; he was a creature of Count Beranger's, and had been well bribed for the purpose; but Albert would not suffer any obstruction; he passed him with disdain, and ascended the stairs leading to the Duke's chamber, where he heard *he* then was.

The Duke was sitting pensively reading, and apparently in profound thought. He did not observe the door open, or perceive the approach of any one, till he beheld Albert on his knees before him—his animated countenance filled with eager expression. The Duke de Limousin started, as from a dream, and exclaimed—"Albert!"

"Pardon the liberty your son has taken, who has suffered almost four years misery on account of your displeasure. Oh! how often I have wished and strove to see you, that I might vindicate my conduct, and explain the mysterious events that drove me from your presence. Forgive me, dear Sir, for daring to rush past your servant, who has so repeatedly refused my admittance; and, believe me, I took advantage of your friend Beranger's absence, because, as he always answered me, and assured me of your continued displeasure, I was apprehensive the Count might make some misrepresentations, whereby I remained so severe a sufferer."

"Am I awake?" exclaimed the Duke. "Rise Albert!" and he took his hand, and cordially pressed it to his bosom;—have you really endeavoured to see me?"

"Often!" The last time I called, was the day before the festival of St. Agnes. I brought with me the lovely daughter of General Dumetz. I delivered a letter to one of your servants, which Count Beranger brought back to me unopened, with your answer, that you neither wished to see me or the lady."

"Is it possible?—The villain!—Then I have been deceived—grossly deceived! Be assured, Albert, your unexpected presence makes me happy. I have been taught to believe you disregarded my displeasure. I will give you every satisfaction, and (now the opportunity is arrived) relate the whole that has distressed me, which occasioned my banishing you."

The Duke first assured Albert, that he intirely forgave him, and was rejoiced to see him return. Then he proceeded to give a minute detail of all the events that had happened since his marriage with Matilda, and of her joint accusation with Count Beranger against him, which was the reason why he forbid him his sight.

Albert stood petrified with amazement, to think that Matilda or the Count could be guilty of so cruel a charge. He soon convinced the Duke that such a wish had never once entered his head; for, at the time of the Duke's marriage, his heart was devoted to the fair Correlia de Beranger. "Beranger," exclaimed Albert, "is a mysterious villain. He never once hinted the true cause of your sending me away, well knowing I could immediately confront him and Matilda. He told me your anger originated in my continuing a correspondence with my esteemed friend, General Dumetz; that you was convinced the General was a traitor; and for my so warmly taking his part, you insisted I never more should enter your presence. What did I not suffer by this harsh treatment? What more did he make me suffer, by cruelly dismissing me from Montville Castle, forbidding me ever to speak to Correlia again!

"I did not receive the command without wishing to disobey it, as there appeared some mystery in the affair I could not penetrate. I immediately returned to Alembert Castle, to learn the true particulars of your displeasure.

"I was received by the Duchess, who peremptorily refused my seeing you. I urged many arguments, without effect, for admittance, but was sternly denied; and I was obliged to leave Alembert Castle, without accomplishing the fervent wish of my heart—that of seeing and being reconciled to you."

Albert then minutely related all the events that followed his departure for Poland; his entering the Polish army, and accidentally meeting with General Dumetz; and every subsequent incident till he quitted the dungeon, (where Count Beranger had treacherously secured him) by the friendly aid of Correlia.

"Then I have been egregiously deceived, and I alone to blame," exclaimed the Duke. "First, poisoned by the insinuating arts of that deceitful girl, Matilda, whom I believed an angel, till convinced I was the dupe of her artifice; then to find myself betrayed into an error, and led into every kind of wretchedness by the man I thought a friend. It seems a dream!—What could induce Count Beranger to act in this manner? What end could he have to serve? What could he mean by confining you, with a design to take your life? It is a mystery I cannot solve."

"Himself alone can confess it," said Albert. "Let him be sought for, and made to declare the truth, if it is possible to rely on one who has behaved so treacherously. But my Alzeyda—how can she be regained?"

Measures were immediately concerted how to act, but it was deferred till the ensuing day, as Albert stood in great need of rest after the fatigue of his late journey; and they knew not which road Count Beranger had gone. In the transporting idea, that his long lost son was returned, the Duke apparently forgot those misfortunes that had for a considerable time preyed upon his heart; he saw how cruelly they had both been imposed on, and execrated the conduct of his false friend, Count Beranger.

Next evening, while they were sitting at supper, a gentleman was announced, who brought the intelligence that Count Beranger had resigned the high office he held—a circumstance that caused the greatest astonishment throughout Paris, for no one could conjecture the real cause of his so doing, as he enjoyed greater honors than any one in a similar situation ever had. The consternation he declared was extreme; but the King apparently felt the effect more powers fully, as it was reported he had received a private letter, assigning the cause.

"Where is it possible to seek him," said Albert, eagerly. "When I left Montville Castle, he was not there, nor could any one tell to what place he was gone. What is to be done? How can we recover Alzeyda?"

It required time for deliberation.—The gentleman congratulated Albert on his happy return. An account of Count Beranger's behaviour to him, in some measure, explained the reason of his resignation, as they imagined he had discovered Albert's escape, and was fearful and ashamed of appearing in the presence of those he had so grossly injured.

While they were considering the circumstances which had rendered them so very unhappy, a messenger arrived express, with a letter for the Duke. The contents, to their infinite surprise, was the following.

"My Lord,

"I have greatly injured you; but as I am about to leave the world, it is necessary I should make what reparation I am able. I wrongly and inhumanly sacrificed Albert to your resentment, by my wish to serve Matilda de Solignac. She became your wife. But I consider myself indebted by justice to declare, that her son is mine. Matilda and I had lived together several months previous to her marriage; therefore you will readily judge, I had an interest in all I did. Alzeyda, the beautiful creature, your unfortunate son married, supposing her to be the daughter of General Dumetz, I have discovered to be my own child—a daughter I deserted in infancy. I have made my will, and she is now co-heiress with Correlia. Her affection for your son is extreme—her grief, in her present situation, I am inadequate to describe. Let not the father's faults be remembered in the child—allow her to visit you, and she will relate particulars I have not time to commit to paper.—She shall set out post for Paris to-morrow. Ah! could I hope your generous and friendly heart would pity, and endeavor to relieve the deep sorrow of this unfortunate girl, for she needs every consolation. But your son, alas! I fear to wound you too severely, but I have taken his life, in order to conceal my villainous conduct towards you both;—forgiveness I ask not—I do not merit it—nor can I expect it if *I did ask*, that you would grant it.

"Beranger."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Albert, "my Alzeyda the daughter of Count Beranger! how my astonishment increases! then she is safe, and will be here to-morrow!—Where shall I seek her?—To-morrow!—Oh! it is an age—I cannot support it!—The exstacy the hope of seeing her once more creates—to know what she has suffered since our separation, is too much for my full heart to sustain."

"As we know not where she is," replied the Duke, "it will be a useless attempt to go in search of her, for we may take the wrong road. Suffer your impatience to subside; a few hours will enable you to learn the whole. If the villain (I will no longer call him friend, or fancy he ever was one) is to be relied on, she will be here to-morrow. Oh! how I have been imposed on—how deceived! I am astonished to think how I could possibly be the dupe of such an artifice. When I call to mind every circumstance, it increases my wonder, to imagine how I could so easily fall into their snares."

While they sat commenting on the subject that had caused the fatal misunderstanding between the Duke de Limousin and his son, the next morning at breakfast; and they fervently thanked heaven for suffering Albert to escape the dreadful fate, to which Count Beranger consigned him, who imagined he had fallen by the hand of Vimar. "We cannot," said the Duke, "sufficiently admire the will of Providence, that inspired the gentle heart of Correlia to save you from impending destruction; she, though the daughter of Beranger, shall always have my prayers and thanks, for she has no share in her father's crimes."

They were suddenly surprised at the entrance of a woman, whom the Duke immediately remembered to have been the servant of the Duchess; she said her Lady was dead, and with her last breath, commanded her to give that letter into the Duke's own hands. The Duke received it with a degree of indignation, but did not consider her any way concerned in the Duchess's conduct towards him.—Thinking she obeyed the last wish of her mistress, he took the letter and read.

"My Lord,

"I have been informed by a letter from Count Beranger, that he has written an account of our connexion, and conduct towards you; if so, there is no cause for a repetition. I acquit you of your oath towards my son, with regard to the inheriting your title and estates; and I bestow him on the kindness of his two sisters, Alzeyda and Correlia de Beranger; I have heard of the latter's goodness of heart, and trust to her protection; Alzeyda I know little of, any more than that the Count declares to me, she is his eldest daughter. I think the Count might have consulted me, before he made any confession of our conduct towards you. It is an offence I cannot pardon. His regard for me ought to have allowed me an opportunity of retreating, without putting me to the painful necessity of ending all the ills I endure so suddenly, as he might have supposed my spirit would never submit to suffer public censure—public contempt.

"If you will allow my unfortunate son, Ferdinand, to enjoy the villa of St. Leon, and estate of De Solignac, which you settled on me on our marriage, I should feel myself highly obliged to you. Consider, it will be the last favor I shall ever ask of you, and the severity of my fate would be considerably relieved, if I thought you would grant it. I am, with every wish for your future peace and welfare, your unfortunate

"Matilda de Limousin."

The Duke was astonished at this letter, and the mention the woman made that the duchess was dead: he eagerly asked what was the cause?

"She swallowed poison, my Lord!"

"Good heaven!—poison! Did the consciousness of her infamous conduct in this world deprive her of all hope of an hereafter? She ought to have lived and repented. There is no repentance in the grave."

"Certainly, my Lord, there is not;—but the letter she received from Count Beranger (I must speak what I think and know) alarmed her to a degree of phrenzy. Imagining the distress she apparently suffered was occasioned by that letter, I took the liberty when she left the room, to read it."

"The Count urged her to repent, and devote her future days to heaven. He mentioned having written to you, the particulars of which only the Count and the Duchess were acquainted with; and that he had acknowledged Lord Ferdinand for his own son; in it, he said he had discovered his eldest daughter; also, that the circumstances which had lately happened, and with which she was perfectly familiar, would not permit him to return to Paris. He had resigned his office, and meant to retire to a monastery at Naples, there to end his days.

"This, my Lord, was nearly the purport of Count Beranger's letter to the Duchess de Limousin. He also mentioned the death of the Count de Villiers, which seemed to have a great effect on my lady.

"She frequently expressed the hatred she felt against Count Beranger, and cursed the tameness of his spirit, in exposing her and Lord Ferdinand to your resentment, which would deprive her of all hope of being reconciled to you. I feared her intellects were deranged. For two hours she yielded to the dictates of the most turbulent passions, then suddenly quitted the room, but soon returned with a glass full of wine, as I believed, and drank it off. After she had swallowed it, she told me it was poison; then ordered her desk, and wrote the letter to you, commanding me to deliver it into your own hand, and soon after expired. I hastened to obey the order."

## CHAP. XIX.

LEAVING the Duke and Albert to make further inquiries of the servant, and indulge the confused ideas those strange events had occasioned, I will return to pursue Count Beranger and Alzeyda.

Their journey was solitary. Alzeyda's heart was too powerfully oppressed with grief, which almost bordered on distraction, for the loss of her adored Albert. She could not resist giving way to the agonizing sensations, that harrowed her hitherto gentle bosom, and silently submitted to the will of heaven; at intervals, fervently imploring the Almighty to release her from the sufferings she endured, and call her spirit to the realms of bliss, where she believed Albert had arrived. The shock her spirits sustained, the dread that seized her on the preceding day, the mysterious declaration of Count Beranger, were too much for her delicate frame to support, and she sunk beneath the pressure of those accumulated ills that had attended her from her earliest infancy, and which all her endeavors were unable to surmount. Count Beranger did not attempt to break the solemn silence that prevailed; absorbed in melancholy and apparent despair, some dreadful event seemed to labour in his mind.

When they arrived at the first place where they stopped to change horses, he called for materials for writing, and sat down to write some letters, which he said were of importance—one to the Duke de Limousin, another to the Duchess, and one to the King. In that to his Majesty, he declared the innocence of General Dumetz, and that he had been prompted by ambition to vilify his conduct, fearing the high estimation the General was held in, might create a rival in his Majesty's, or the public favor.—He acknowledged he had seized on every opportunity to do him every injury he was capable of. He concluded with thanking the King for the many favors he had bestowed on him, and wished to do justice to the character of the General, who, he again solemnly assured his Majesty was truly worthy and amiable, and begged he would publicly cancel the unjust opinion many had formed of him through his (Count Beranger's) artful insinuations.

These letters he immediately dispatched, as also the resignation of the high office he had so long enjoyed; he then proceeded to write his will, and had it witnessed by some persons in the house; and these writings took up near four hours to execute. The carriage being in readiness, he and his disconsolate daughter again pursued their journey, and arrived at Montville Castle rather late at night.

He handed Alzeyda from the carriage; grief and unconquerable dejection clouded her fine blue eyes; she cast a melancholy look on the exterior of the building, and recollected the sensations her bosom experienced two days before, when she expected to meet her beloved Albert there. That Albert was now no more, and in this castle he suffered death! it was a chilling remembrance that ran through every vein, and struck her soul with horror. Tremblingly she entered the Castle, unable to suppress emotions that nearly deprived her of sense.

He entered the parlour, where Correlia was waiting to receive them, as she saw the carriage stop.

The Count introduced Alzeyda to Correlia, who gave her the most friendly welcome, as she had severely felt for her sufferings; but Alzeyda was unable to articulate her thanks, her lips quivered when she attempted to speak, she trembled, and sunk into a chair as if every faculty was lost.

Correlia paid her minute attention; she endeavoured all in her power to mitigate her sorrows;—her tender assiduities in some measure relieved the suffering Alzeyda, who, looking affectionately on Correlia said, "You are goodness itself; but alas! Albert is no more." and she burst into tears.

Correlia tenderly pressed her to her bosom, and in a low voice said, "Speak not of Albert, he is far happier than you are. Heaven's will be done! you have suffered a severe loss, but let it not deprive you of fortitude or resignation."

"Correlia could have eased Alzeyda's fears, but the Count was a stranger to Albert's escape; and as she knew not what might have happened since the Count left the Castle of Montville, therefore thought proper to let the secret remain at present in her own bosom.

The count had retired to the window to quiet the agitation of his mind, which almost overcame him, when he observed the conflict that swelled the bursting heart of Alzeyda; but now returned, and ordered the servants to bring in refreshments, then claimed Correlia's attention to the detail of facts which he was going to relate.

"My time," said he, "is but short that I have to remain here. Be not surprised, Correlia, when I inform you that Alzeyda is your sister—she is my daughter, whom in her infancy I deserted; her mother was truly amiable, but I have been guilty of the most unpardonable silence and neglect."

Correlia interrupted him, and eagerly asked, "Dear Sir, is Alzeyda really my sister?"

"She is," was the reply.

"I am happy," said Correlia, turning to Alzeyda, and tenderly pressing her hand, "I felt an interest in your welfare ever since strange whispers mentioned you to me. Allow me to endeavour to soften your sorrows. But Sir, I interrupt you."

The table was spread, and supper being brought in, the continuation of the conversation was deferred till after the cloth was removed, when the Count fully explained the whole of his mysterious conduct, as before related to Alzeyda, in confirmation of which he produced the dagger given him by Zara, which he resigned to Alzeyda."

Correlia was extremely shocked and amazed, to think her father had been guilty of so cruelly imposing on Albert and the Duke, while the repetition of those circumstances brought fresh tears to the eyes of Alzeyda, in which Correlia sympathetically joined, and pitied her misfortunes, as she perceived that unhappy young lady had been the sport of fortune from her earliest infancy. The beautiful sisters wept, and mingled their tears with each other.

Count Beranger suffered them to indulge this luxury of grief undisturbed, while his full heart was labouring to declare his future intentions; some time elapsed before he broke the silence that prevailed, then said,

"How strangely singular it is that we seldom check the career of our passions till some great event strikes us with a consciousness of our own unworthiness. Sickness—distresses—or the dread of discovery of some of our concealed faults, rouses our slumbering conscience, and reason calls us to a sense of what we ought to do. I have been the favourite of fortune—now I am fortune's fool—I have enjoyed every wish of my heart to its fullest extent, it is time that I examine into the secret recesses there, and repent of my past ill deeds.

"I bequeath my estate jointly between Alzeyda and you Correlia—I have already set it down in writing, that there may be no mistakes; of cash I shall take what is necessary for my future wishes, and five thousand louis I give to the son of the Duchess of Limousin.—For my sake, Correlia, look on him with kindness whenever he comes to see you. To General Dumetz I leave the valuable present of the sword I had the honor of receiving from the hand of our gracious Sovereign; I intreat him to wear it; not as the gift of a friend, but as the legacy of one conscious of his superior merit, and far more worthy the present than ever I was. To you, Alzeyda, I must apply to beg for your father's sake that *he* will forgive the errors of my ambition; it was not the man I hated, but his merit—I was jealous of the ascendancy he enjoyed in the minds of all people—the respect his presence claimed—the growing power he possessed, induced me to traduce his character, and all France were guilty of unpardonable credulity in suffering themselves to be so grossly imposed on. Solicit his pardon, and assure him I feel the force of every obligation I lay under to him, for his kind affection and generosity to you and your mother.

"Now, my children, this is the last time you will behold your unfortunate father, except in the morning, when I shall bid you an eternal farewell; my mind is resolved—I cannot return to Paris, shame will not permit it, and vengeance is undoubtedly and deservedly to be expected from the Duke de Limousin, for to him I have written an account of all that has transpired, as also that you, Alzeyda, will be with him in Paris to-morrow, and more fully explain to the Duke what you have heard me relate. Correlia, for the sake of obeying my request, will perhaps attend you, though her heart may experience the pain of hearing her father called a wretch. But Alzeyda's breaking heart needs all your care, Correlia. I mean to retire to the monastery of San Bertrand, at Naples, there to endeavour to expiate my faults, and end my days.—Life is a load I am now weary of—but we cannot resign it when we please—I wish for death to put a final period to what my heart endures, but cannot press sooner into the presence of my offended God

than he permits; at the altar I will pray for blessings to attend you, my children, and if you should every wish to know if I am living or dead, any inquiry respecting father Anthony will be answered."

"But why? why leave us?" said Correlia, "as you have so newly discovered my sister, leave her not, I beseech you, in the distress of heart she now is, when she requires the most careful attention you can bestow."

"My absence will be her greatest consolation. It is I who have caused her that distress of heart you speak of—I have made her miserable—my presence adds to her griefs, and the sight of her fills my soul with horror, as she perpetually reminds me of those criminal intentions I once had towards her. Heaven in its mercy saved her from my vile intentions and me from accomplishing the worst of crimes. My heart is harrowed with the most distressing thoughts—I must see her no more—the idea that I loved her with improper thoughts will for ever torment my soul! God assist me to expiate my guilt—accursed infatuation! never, never to be forgotten.—Besides, I must prevent the justice of my country—I must fly, and seek an asylum in another. Ask me no more—my mind is resolved—there is no earthly power that can remove this settled purpose of my soul."

Finding him inflexible, Correlia gave up the point. He affectionately embraced them, and commanded them to retire and seek repose, adding, that Alzeyda's troubled spirits required the friendly balm of sleep, and hoped her slumbers would relieve the agony of mind she had experienced within the last two days. He then quitted the room.

Correlia, turning to Alzeyda, said, "Will you, my sister, retire with me to my apartment? Unknowing how happy I was in such a relation, and not being informed of your returning to Montville Castle, I have not had time to prepare one suitable the reception of such an amiable guest; nor could I, in the present state of your griefs, suffer you to be alone; allow me, I beseech you, to offer what consolation is in my power, and every friendly attention I can bestow."

Alzeyda thanked her profusely, saying, "Such friendship I might have expected from Correlia de Beranger if ever I had the happiness of seeing her. I am not unacquainted with your amiable character, though at the time I heard those commendations repeated I was unconscious *that Correlia* was my sister. But I am so confused, so astonished, when I reflect on the mysterious events that have occurred within the space of a few hours, it appears to me all a dreadful dream.—I am ready to attend you."

She gave her hand to Correlia, and they retired to their chamber.

The agitation of Alzeyda's spirits yielded to the fatigues of the day and the preceding night—she sunk into a kind of slumber, at least became insensible to grief for a few hours—Correlia watched by her attentively some time, and finding she was asleep, retired to rest.

Early in the morning Laretta entered to inform her lady that the Count waited their company in the breakfast parlour. They soon attended him. Alzeyda had slept, but the perturbation of mind she had endured made her extremely ill, however she did not keep her father long in expectation, but soon joined him and Correlia at breakfast.

A servant soon after entered to tell the Count the carriage was at the Castle gate.

Correlia started from her seat, unknowing for why, and ran to the window; she there perceived a post carriage in waiting.

The Count rose and followed her, saying, "Be not alarmed—I am going now to Naples—remember what I have said. Recollect, Alzeyda, that I have apprised the Duke de Limousin you will be with him to-day; I charge you lose no time in repairing to Paris. If I find that I have forgot any thing, I will write, and trust you will obey my order."

Correlia took his hand and looking earnestly in his face as she reclined her head on his shoulder, while he extended his other hand to Alzeyda, then said, "Dear Father, do I behold you now for the last time?"

"Yes, Correlia!" was all he could utter. She burst into tears—Alzeyda endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, but it was a vain attempt.

"The little regard I have paid to you from infancy, Alzeyda, must naturally make you consider me almost a stranger, by my late behaviour you may have imagined me a tyrant and a villain—I grant you have had cause; however I have experienced a ray of happiness in beholding you once before I leave the world; yet Correlia will require every consolation—she will feel my loss severely. Farewell!"

He alternately embraced them, the tears rolled down his cheeks as he pressed each to his bosom, his looks were sufficient to explain what passed there. He fervently prayed for their happiness, again bade them farewell, and hurried out of the parlour.

Correlia uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless on the couch. Laretta, alarmed at hearing her lady's voice, ran into the room to give her assistance, while Alzeyda flew to the window, to take a last look as he stepped into the carriage—he observed her, and bowed his head—the carriage then drove away.

Alzeyda then returned to her afflicted sister, and fell on her knees by the side of the couch; forgetting her own misfortunes, she raised her clasped hands to Heaven, and ardently implored its blessings and protection to her father.

By Laretta's assiduity Correlia revived. "Is he gone?" she exclaimed, "gone for ever! then, gracious heaven, grant him happiness. It is the life I have chosen, and soon mean to retire from a world where nothing but disappointment and trouble appear to my view." Then falling on her knees by Alzeyda's side, she desired Laretta to inform Father Francis that she requested his presence.

Father Francis soon appeared, and inquired what was her pleasure. He saw Alzeyda for the first time, which extremely surprised him.

Correlia had not time to explain the reason of her being there, and apparently suffering the same grief she herself experienced, but desired Father Francis would join them in prayer.

They continued in fervent devotion about an hour, when their minds became more composed; Correlia then briefly related the cause of their grief, occasioned by the Count's leaving them to embrace a religious life; she then informed him Alzeyda was her sister, at which the good father was greatly amazed; he then replied, "May your father, Madam, feel that happiness at the altar which he could not attain in this world. The jealous ambition of my Lord the Count could never be satisfied; he has enjoyed the highest honors—arrived at the summit of power. You, Madam, know full well how he exercised that power—no human means could be opposed to check it. I well remember every circumstance that occurred on that horrid night when you borrowed my robe—I saw the distress you suffered, and the abhorrence you felt at those cruel actions, by the agitation you appeared in before me. O that night! I shall never forget it—I knew the cause at the time, though you did not mention the reason till morning. Heaven will reward generosity and humanity like yours."

"Oh Alzeyda! I have much to say," said Correlia, "but the hurry and confusion we have been in arising from my father's return so late last night and acknowledging you for his daughter, chased away every other thought; then the little interval of time that I enjoyed his company this morning, for the *last time*, prevented my mentioning things of importance. I do not wish to revive your sorrows; but as I know the cause of your afflictions, I should be happier to relieve them. Allow me to ask you a few questions, but withal I caution you not to be too much surprised at what I am going to say."

"My heart is familiar with misfortune," replied Alzeyda, "I have suffered so many alarms that no surprise will be new to me."

"You believe Albert is dead?"

"My father declared he was; nay, I heard the order given for him to suffer; I saw the murderer depart to execute his fatal purpose the night my father sent me from this place."

"He did not die," replied Correlia. "Under the disguise of Father Francis, I sought his dungeon; Heaven had blessed me with the power of liberating him, and directing him how to escape. We shall no doubt meet him at the Duke de Limousin's, for there I ordered him to hasten."

Alzeyda pressed Correlia's hand to her lips, and kissed it with fervor, "Generous! generous Correlia," she exclaimed; "I want words to thank you as you deserve; my heart overflows with gratitude, with love for your kindness; but it appears to me almost

impossible that Albert should survive; are you sure he departed safe from the Castle? My fluttering heart feels the most agonizing perturbation, to imagine he lives when I have lamented him as dead so many painful hours. Dare I ask you again, without offending in seeming to doubt your affection.—Does Albert live?"

"So far I am sure of it," replied Correlia, "that in the morning as I directed him, he came with proper officers to search the Castle for you, but you was gone. I spoke to him, and informed him of it, as also that my father left the Castle about four o'clock in the morning. At seven, Vimar, to whose care Albert was left, departed also; and now the recollection strikes me, my father never asked for Vimar—he knows not what is become of him, or if his orders were obeyed, and only imagines Albert is dead.—I simply forgot to tell him—so he has not that guilt on his conscience he believed."

"Oh Albert! Albert! shall we then meet again?" exclaimed Alzeyda, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Dear Correlia, as to your generosity and kindness he owes his life, shorten the torments he must endure by the uncertainty of what is become of me. Let us repair to the Duke de Limousin's immediately; for myself I care not; I feel as if I never could recover from the dreadful shock I sustained by the belief that he was dead; but he is my husband, and I wish to relieve him from a world of anxiety on my account."

"Be it so," replied Correlia; and gave orders for the carriage to be in readiness.

They then retired to make some little arrangement in their dress, and soon commenced their journey.

A few hours conveyed them to Paris.

## CHAP. XX.

WHEN the carriage stopped at the Duke de Limousin's, Albert, whose soul was all impatience bounding at the sound of every vehicle that passed, flew to the window, and seeing the Count Beranger's equipage with two ladies in it, had not a doubt but one of them was Alzeyda. He descended the great stairs, in order to meet them and conduct them into the drawing room, where the Duke was sitting. The joy he experienced at the sight of Alzeyda received a check from the languor of her appearance. She trembled, and could scarcely step as she leaned on his arm to ascend the stairs.

Correlia received a hearty welcome from Albert; he called her his preserver and the restorer of his dearest treasure. Correlia endeavoured to force a cheerfulness to make Alzeyda happy; for the presence of Albert, though Alzeyda tenderly loved him, had not power to dispel the melancholy that possessed her mind.

The Duke welcomed them with every demonstration of joy and satisfaction, as did Albert, for he was too happy in the return of Alzeyda, to minutely observe the sadness of her spirits. The day was passed happily, every explanation was made concerning recent events that had given all present so great a share of uneasiness. Julia, who accompanied Alzeyda from Verona, was sent for, and the trunks which contained her jewels and clothes were soon conveyed to the Duke de Limousin's.

Julia was elated to behold her mistress and Albert in safety, and enjoying the favour of the Duke, with whom she knew they much wished to be reconciled.

The next day a large company were invited, and Alzeyda, elegantly habited, was acknowledged the wife of Albert Count de Villiers. Correlia, who had not provided herself with any dress suitable for the occasion, put on one of Alzeyda's, similar to that she wore, and when in company every one present admired the extreme resemblance between Correlia and Alzeyda.

Great was the surprise of all the company when the Duke declared to all his friends that his lovely daughter-in-law was the acknowledged daughter of Count Beranger; but as he had been apprised of the life the Count had chosen to atone for his faults, he should forbear mentioning any thing further concerning him, lest it might afflict the ladies.

It was then mentioned by one of the company, that the letter the King received from the Count so intirely cleared the character of General Dumetz to his Majesty's satisfaction, that he had thought it proper to make it known in order to reinstate him in the favour of his countrymen, as well as his King, as also that his Majesty meant to offer him, on his return to France, the most exalted situation in the state.

The Count and Countess de Villiers experienced a joy on the happy occasion unknown before; elated at the idea that the man who had been to them a father as well as a friend was likely to enjoy the reward his merit deserved.

Correlia continued at her house at Paris near a fortnight, every day visiting Alzeyda. She then determined to return to Montville Castle, for she was no way partial to the noise and bustle of a large city. Alzeyda was extremely sorry when she found Correlia persisted in returning to her favourite country residence, and expressed a wish to accompany her there. She related to Albert the bequest of her father to General Dumetz, and the message he commanded her to deliver, also hinting that the General would expect their return to inform him of their success.

Albert immediately consented, and the Duke insisted on being one of the party, as he much wished to see his old friend.

They obeyed the dictates of their wishes, and set out for Montville Castle, designing to sleep there that night.

In the morning Correlia presented Alzeyda with the sword her father left to General Dumetz, and they then prepared to set out on their journey.

Correlia had not a wish to be of the party, she therefore excused herself, much against their desire, so they went without her.

They passed over a sweet tract of country before they reached the place where General Dumetz proposed to stay till their return; and when they arrived on the summit of the towering Alps, how rejoiced were they to see the General observing their ascent.

General Dumetz had seen the Duke de Limousin advancing—he was certain Albert had regained his father's affection or he would never have accompanied them in their journey. When he first perceived them, by the assistance of a glass which he frequently used for that purpose, he hastily returned to the person at whose little dwelling he sometimes passed a few days in expectation of their arrival, and bid him order his wife to prepare every refreshment they were capable of providing to set before the company he saw they were soon to expect.

When they arrived near the top of the mountain the General descended a few paces to meet them. The pleasure he saw visible on every countenance convinced him of their happiness—he gave them a penetrating look, and imagined all they would say. The meeting between him and the Duke wants words to describe. He then embraced his esteemed Alzeyda and his young friend Albert, then ushered them into the small habitation with every degree of joy.

The table was soon covered with refreshments. The Duke and Albert undertook to give the General a minute explanation of all they had heard, for Alzeyda appeared to suffer extreme fatigue, therefore they only applied to her for an affirmation or negative, as she best knew. However she acquitted herself of the charge her father had given her to the General, and produced the sword which the King gave to Count Beranger, assuring him that the Count thought no one so worthy of wearing it as General Dumetz.

The General was extremely astonished when he learnt the singular particulars related by Alzeyda—that she was the daughter of Count Beranger, and Count Beranger that Valcour, for whom Madame Dumetz had suffered so many years of anxiety and regret.

The Duke observing him appear greatly affected, roused him from the thoughts that seemed to prey upon his mind, by informing him that the King, in consequence of a letter received from Count Beranger, (which he had thought proper to publish that the General might no longer suffer in the opinion of his countrymen,) intended to make him an offer of the most advantageous post in the kingdom, if he chose to accept it.

"I cannot accept it," replied the General.

"Why?"

"There may be many who envy me as much as Count Beranger did. Who is there on earth able to guard against secret enemies? You know 'when impious men bear sway, the post of honour is a private station.' Such, then, is my choice, I never more mean to enter into the public scenes of life; my mind is now a stranger to ambition; during my stay on these mountains it has become resolved. I humbly thank his Majesty for the honour and the justice he has done me, but beg to decline the former."

In conversations of a similar nature they passed their time, but totally unable to prevail on General Dumetz to return with them to France. "It is an ungrateful country," said he, "which I have determined never more to enter. I have purchased a pleasant but retired dwelling near Nice, where I mean in future to reside, and shall feel a happiness whenever my son and daughter (for such I esteem them) deign to pay me a visit."

They continued several days with the General, and experienced a temporary happiness. When they parted, it was with regret. The Count and Countess de Villiers promised the General it should not be long before they visited him at Nice. They then departed.

The Duke seemed greatly depressed when he took leave of General Dumetz, for he thought it would be for the last time; he then turned, and pursued the footsteps of Albert and Alzeyda.

The General followed those loved objects with his eye, as far as he could distinguish them, then turned, and walked pensively to his cottage.

Albert and Alzeyda proceeded to the Castle of Montville. The Duke remained there one night, then returned to Paris.

Correlia was delighted to see them arrive. Her partiality for Alzeyda had increased during the period of their short separation; but to Correlia, Alzeyda appeared much altered for the worse—it might be fancy—it might be occasioned by the fatigue of her

long journey—but her health was visibly on the decline—the roses had quitted their station on her cheeks—her eyes looked languid—her cheerfulness was fled.—Correlia's welcome did not alleviate the drooping spirits of her lovely sister. She inquired the cause.

"I know not," replied Alzeyda. "I have at present no cause for sorrows; blest, through your kind means, with the restoration of my Albert, the affection of the Duke de Limousin, the love of you, my sister, and, though last, the place I hold in the heart of my second father, the General—to you, Correlia, I must confess the truth—I have never recovered from the distress of heart I experienced when I met the disappointment of all my hopes, and a confirmation of those mysterious events my father acquainted me with; they have made too deep an impression on my mind for all the tenderness of the generous Albert ever to efface; I strive, in his presence, to rise superior to the effects of misfortune, and wish to drive sadness and melancholy to a distance, in order to make him happy, who so affectionately studies me; but every attempt is vain, Correlia; my heart has been too severely pierced by affliction to admit of cure; I bow beneath its oppression."

Correlia was extremely concerned to hear this declaration of Alzeyda. She endeavoured all in her power to persuade her troubles were at an end, and time only would erase the melancholy recollection of the past.

Alzeyda shook her head, but was unable to reply.

In a few days Albert proposed they should return to Paris.

Previous to their quitting Montville Castle, Correlia informed Alzeyda of a determination she had long made, of retiring to a convent, saying, "this probably will be the last time of our seeing each other; if so, every part of the estate of Count Beranger, I resign to you, except the present I mean to make to the convent, where I intend to reside."

Alzeyda was greatly alarmed. "Do not, dear Correlia, if you value me, do not retire from the world—you are my only female friend—I seek for no other—I may not long be a trouble to you—My prophetic heart presages that the end of my existence is near at hand—desert me not, my sister, while I remain on this earth, and may every blessing attend you hereafter."

Alzeyda could not refrain tears.—Correlia observed it, and was unable to suppress the contagion. —They wept.—Correlia assured her, if it would give her any satisfaction, she would not retire till she saw Alzeyda's health established.

"I will believe you, if you will accompany me and the Count de Villiers to Paris."

"I have no objection to Paris."

"To the Castle of Alembert then?"

"Excuse me," said Correlia.

"I cannot excuse you. If you have a dislike to Alembert Castle, any where else."

"I will study to oblige you, if I could any way add to your happiness. At present, I have many domestic concerns to settle; but believe me, I will follow you, if I thought it would give you or the Count any satisfaction. Write to me when you have fixed where you intend to be, and I will not hesitate one moment to attend you."

Alzeyda was perfectly satisfied with Correlia's promise; and obedient to the wish of Albert, they next morning quitted the Castle of Montville, and repaired to Paris.

Correlia much feared Alzeyda was in a rapid decline, as she perceived her health and spirits every day grew worse; sensible of the heart-piercing anxiety she had endured, she did not much wonder at it, but fancied that when Alzeyda was restored to her esteemed Albert, those sorrows would abate. Alas! how little are we competent to judge of the feelings of others, her sorrows had taken too deep an impression to admit of any mitigation, though blessed with the man of her heart.

Correlia had studied to regard Albert with indifference; she yielded to the superior charms of Alzeyda, to whom he was married, and day by day, fervently prayed for their happiness; yet she found she had not so far forgot him, but that his presence created an uneasiness in her bosom, for which reason she declined accompanying Alzeyda to Paris. Perceiving the ascendancy Albert still maintained in her heart, she had resolved to follow the example of the Count her father, and dedicate her future days to religion; but Alzeyda's apparent indisposition made her think it necessary to inform her, fearful that the unexpected news might alarm her beyond her strength to support.

Alzeyda had requested Correlia to delay entering a monastic life till *she* was better; and had entreated she would so far oblige her, as to pass a short time with her, previous to that period, that she would be lost to her for ever. In consequence, Correlia had acceded to Alzeyda's wish.

Correlia received many letters from her sister, mentioning that her health had experienced no amendment, but on the contrary, was worse.

Correlia suffered six weeks to elapse, when the arrival of another letter determined her how to proceed. At the conclusion of a very affectionate letter from Alzeyda, Albert subjoined those words.

"Dear Friend,

"I beseech you will no longer refuse to comply with our request. Alzeyda's health hourly declines; the physicians assure me all hopes are vanity, and bid me prepare for the weighty loss; the power of medicine is yielded to the wish, that she may enjoy change of air. I have asked what place she would wish to go to—" any where," she replies, "but pray will not our dear Correlia grant her company? Surely she would not refuse if she knew my situation."

"I, in the poor Alzeyda's name, beg you will favor us. My father joins in the request—he will attend us for company and amusement. I think to take her to Plombiers, to try the effect the waters have there. If she finds no amendment, I purpose going to Nice, where the presence of our worthy friend the General, may help to crown our endeavours with the wished-for success.

"We will not imagine you will deny us your company, administering angel as you are, for we have both tasted your generosity and tenderness, which can never be forgotten while life animates our bosoms.

"Albert de Villiers."

A request so strongly urged, Correlia had no power to refuse. She hastily collected every thing she imagined she might want in her journey, and lost no time in pursuing the road to Paris.

When she entered the chamber where Alzeyda was, she experienced a severe shock on seeing her so greatly altered; still the same beautiful face remained, but her lovely form was washed to a mere shadow.

Alzeyda smiled with satisfaction as Correlia appeared, and welcomed her most cordially. Albert soon returned, and profusely thanked her for her compliance; informing her that as she had honored them with her much wished-for presence, he should depart from Paris on the morrow, as he ardently wished Alzeyda's health might be restored, therefore no time ought to be lost.

Albert then proceeded to make the necessary arrangements; and Correlia, after a short conversation with Alzeyda, desired Julia to assist her in preparing for their departure. When she had ordered every thing to her wish, she passed the remainder of the day with Alzeyda.

In the morning, the Duke and Correlia seated themselves in his carriage; Albert, Alzeyda, and a nurse, followed in the next. Lauretta, Julia, and Eugene, to attend on the Duke and Albert, in Correlia's carriage, with the different portmanteaus.

They pursued the route to Plombiers, by short and easy stages. At Plombiers they remained a fortnight, without any alteration for the better in the drooping Alzeyda.

Albert's anxiety would not permit a longer stay, and they continued journeying from place to place, hoping her health would experience an amendment, for a month longer. At that time they arrived safely at Nice, and surprised General Dumetz, not having given him any previous notice of their intention.

He was shocked to see his dear Alzeyda appear so ill, but happy to find they had honored him once more with a visit, and was rejoiced to find the Duke of the party.

The General rallied Alzeyda, with the hope to make her more cheerful—alas! she could not bear a jest; he then told her she must not yield to sadness, for the cause no longer existed, and time would chase every uncomfortable sensation from her breast.

Alzeyda looked expressively at the General—it seemed to say, "soon I shall follow my dear mother and infant sister." The General felt the force of her penetrating gaze; there wanted no words to explain her meaning and he sunk into silence.

While Albert and the Duke flattered themselves with hope, the General and Correlia could not reconcile themselves to the illusion; a few days put them out of doubt—Alzeyda's disorder increased, and soon put a termination to her existence.

Correlia paid her the most minute regard, and would not quit her bedside during the severity of her illness. A few hours before her death, Alzeyda awaked from a kind of perturbed slumber, and thus spoke to Correlia.

"Dear and inestimable friend! short indeed has been the time I have had the supreme happiness of calling you sister; but greatly am I and Albert indebted to you for the many obligations we have received. I again pronounce what I sincerely believe was the cause of my illness; it originated in the severe shock I suffered when my father took me from Montville Castle, and declared the death of Albert. Even the certainty of the existence of my adored husband had not the power to disperse the dread and terror I then experienced, which I am certain I never shall recover; yet, heaven knows how ardent my endeavors have been to conquer the too deeply routed distress of mind.

"Your goodness taught me to forget many uneasy sensations, but it could not restore peace to my heart. You have saved the life of Albert—you have proved yourself my friend, most worthy and amiable Correlia; you deserve every praise Albert has so repeatedly bestowed on you. He first loved me for your sake, and you alone are worthy of him. It is my earnest and dying wish, that if Albert marries again, it may be to where his heart was first devoted—to you, my generous friend and sister. Make me happy by saying you will esteem him for my sake, if not for his own."

Correlia burst into tears. "Oh!" exclaimed she, "talk not thus, Alzeyda;—distract me not with the thought of losing you—hope but to recover, and I am inclined to think, heaven will spare you to us many happy years to come."

"Not many hours," replied Alzeyda, with a serene, yet positive accent.—"You are mistaken, my love, and too deeply affected; retire and compose your agitated spirits; I was to blame to distress your gentle heart. Will you be so kind to say to Albert, that I wish to speak with him."

"Certainly, your request shall be complied with," said Correlia, and retired.

She flew to Albert, who was sitting with his father and the General, not imagining Alzeyda was in such imminent danger; but Correlia's tears seemed to presage the little hope that remained. She told Albert his presence was required, and he hastened to obey.

"How is my child?" said the General, in a despairing tone of voice, which much affected Correlia.

"Do not be alarmed, Sir," replied Correlia, "there is no hope; my dear sister is in the agonies of death, I fear."

The General's anxiety was too great to allow him to stay where he was, and his dear Alzeyda expiring. He took Correlia's hand, and in a few minutes followed Albert to the apartment of his suffering favorite.

Albert was sitting by her bedside in tears. As Correlia entered the room, Alzeyda said, "to that dear friend we are indebted for life, for liberty, and the short-lived happiness we have enjoyed, every blessing I have received through her means, and the will she had to serve me, at a time when she did not know who I was. You must express the grateful sentiments which strive in my feeble bosom for utterance, for my strength is inadequate to what I wish to say."

Her countenance was considerably altered since Correlia left her. General Dumetz advanced and embraced her, as he believed, for the last time, then turned away his head to conceal the tears that rushed to his eyes. Alzeyda sunk into a temporary state of insensibility, and Correlia seated herself by her bedside, till she should speak.

A few moments elapsed, when she opened her eyes, and cast them alternately on Albert and Correlia, then conveyed a hand of each to her lips, and faintly uttered: "farewell."

She expired, leaving Albert absorbed in grief, and the fair Correlia disconsolate.

General Dumetz's grief nearly equalled Albert's, for in Alzeyda he had lost a most affectionate and amiable young woman; he had always regarded her as his own child, and he judged of Albert's distress by the sorrow he himself sustained for her loss.

Albert took a melancholy embrace of the lovely inanimate form of his Alzeyda, and suffered General Dumetz to lead him from the mournful chamber.

Correlia soon after quitted the lifeless form of her charming sister, and retired to her apartment to indulge, unobserved, the grief she experienced.

In the course of the week Alzeyda was interred in the tomb of her grand-father, Mr. Westburne. Albert's grief was extreme—he wished to return to France, as Nice perpetually reminded him of his loss; but he perceived the General was very unhappy,

and feared that he would think it unkind if he quitted him so soon after death had deprived him of his lovely adopted child.

The Duke and Albert continued there near three months after that melancholy event, but Correlia, Lauretta, and Julia did not remain there above a fortnight, and then returned to Montville Castle. The respect and regard Julia had always shewn for Alzeyda, determined Correlia to keep her in her service till she had fixed on the place she meant to retire to.

The death of Alzeyda severely afflicted Correlia, yet served to convince her how vain are all human hopes and expectations. She comforted herself with the thought that she had always acted with justice to the utmost of her abilities. The good father Francis assisted all in his power to alleviate her depression of spirits when she returned to the Castle, and by arguments of religion and reason made her submissive, and resigned to all the decrees of Heaven.

Three months passed away, and Correlia's heart experienced a calm composure, when the Duke and Albert arrived at the Castle, intending to call and inquire after her health, as also to present her with some of Alzeyda's valuable jewels to wear in remembrance of that lady.

Correlia expressed suitable thanks, and the sense she had of the obligation, but assured him she should not stand in need of useless ornaments, any more than to remember the lovely owner with reverence, as she soon meant to retire from the world to a place where those things were absolutely unnecessary.

Albert was rather surprised, but soon recollected that Alzeyda had once mentioned something of the kind.

The Duke intreated her maturely to confide before she fixed her choice, and hoped he should have the pleasure of seeing her again.

Much conversation ensued on this subject, but Correlia seemed resolved. They staid to dinner, and then bade her adieu, being anxious to return to Paris.

In the course of six months, as Correlia positively related their repeated solicitations to come to Paris, they paid her several visits, out of respect to the departed Alzeyda. Time had removed some of Albert's grief, though it could not efface it: He was happy in Correlia's company, because she so greatly resembled Alzeyda, and remembered the last wish of his charming wife, which she privately declared to him a few minutes before she died, "to endeavour to conciliate Correlia's affections, and if he could prevail, to give his hand to his first love, from whom they had both received such disinterested friendship, as *she* alone merited his future regard."

He hinted the desire to Correlia, and urged to know if she had any objections to a union once so ardently wished, but many circumstances had occurred to prevent it,

assuring her that he first loved Alzeyda for Correlia's sake, as he always thought she resembled her. Now he must reverse it, and not only love her for herself, but for the dear angel they had lost.

Correlia replied, "I have suffered extreme uneasiness, as you may readily imagine, from the hour we parted—you know the situation of affairs at Montville Castle when you left it. The loss of my amiable mother—the unkindness of my father—and the afflicting thought of seeing you no more, were to me severely distressing. Time reconciled me to what I thought ill—three years and a half slowly lingered away—I had taught my heart to forget you. At that time you was traitorously brought to the Castle—Ah! was it possible to forget you then? I saw the injustice of my father—I wished to redress it—I overheard the cruel charge given for your execution—saw them depart for Alzeyda, without my knowing where she lived, or how to warn her of her ill-fated destiny. I learnt the hour you was to suffer death, and heard the noble minded Alzeyda prefer it to a life of infamy.—It awakened every dormant sensation—my only ambition was, to save the man I had loved, and prove myself his friend, though I found his heart was devoted to another. At that time I did not intend you should know to whom you was indebted for your liberty—accidentally you discovered me—the rest you know; and when I found you really was forever lost to me, I determined to retire to a convent, there to pass the remainder of my days, for which I am now preparing."

"Let me prevent it," replied Albert. "Alzeyda declared she should be happy if I could prevail on you to be mine; wound me not with the thought that I shall lose you, when my heart, sensible of your goodness, is ready to offer itself to you; deign, charming Correlia, to accept it, and allow the person who once held your affections to enjoy the supreme felicity of placing his on her who was first mistress of all his hopes and wishes."

"My objections are silenced," said Correlia, "after what I have said, no more is necessary."

"And you will live for me?"

"Happily if I can add to your felicity, I have nothing further to oppose."

After this mutual declaration, Albert frequently visited Correlia. He had lamented the loss of Alzeyda, and now endeavoured to estrange his ideas from her who could not be recalled. Correlia now engaged all his thoughts and affections, and in the space of another six months she became Countess de Villiers, to the inexpressible joy of all their friends, but none among them was more happy than the Duke de Limousin, who lived to see her the mother of several children as amiable and beloved by all as their parents. Nor in the general joy was Ferdinand forgotten; Correlia treated him with the tenderness of a mother, and the faults of Count Beranger died away in silence. The Duke made him a valuable present, but the avowed circumstances of his illegitimate birth absolved the Duke from his oath, and he declared the inheritance in favour of Albert Count de Villiers, who lived many years to enjoy it, and was the comfort and delight of the country round.

THE END.

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