

The Castle of Otranto

by Horace Walpole

Chapter 5

The reflection which Manfred made on the Friar's behaviour, conspired to persuade him that Jerome was privy to an amour between Isabella and Theodore. But Jerome's new presumption, so dissonant from his former meekness, suggested still deeper apprehensions. The Prince even suspected that the Friar depended on some secret support from Frederic, whose arrival, coinciding with the novel appearance of Theodore, seemed to bespeak a correspondence. Still more was he troubled with the resemblance of Theodore to Alfonso's portrait. The latter he knew had unquestionably died without issue. Frederic had consented to bestow Isabella on him. These contradictions agitated his mind with numberless pangs.

He saw but two methods of extricating himself from his difficulties. The one was to resign his dominions to the Marquis— pride, ambition, and his reliance on ancient prophecies, which had pointed out a possibility of his preserving them to his posterity, combated that thought. The other was to press his marriage with Isabella. After long ruminating on these anxious thoughts, as he marched silently with Hippolita to the castle, he at last discoursed with that Princess on the subject of his disquiet, and used every insinuating and plausible argument to extract her consent to, even her promise of promoting the divorce. Hippolita needed little persuasions to bend her to his pleasure. She endeavoured to win him over to the measure of resigning his dominions; but finding her exhortations fruitless, she assured him, that as far as her conscience would allow, she would raise no opposition to a separation, though without better founded scruples than what he yet alleged, she would not engage to be active in demanding it.

This compliance, though inadequate, was sufficient to raise Manfred's hopes. He trusted that his power and wealth would easily advance his suit at the court of Rome, whither he resolved to engage Frederic to take a journey on purpose. That Prince had discovered so much passion for Matilda, that Manfred hoped to obtain all he wished by holding out or withdrawing his daughter's charms, according as the Marquis should appear more or less disposed to co-operate in his views. Even the absence of Frederic would be a material point gained, until he could take further measures for his security.

Dismissing Hippolita to her apartment, he repaired to that of the Marquis; but crossing the great hall through which he was to pass he met Bianca. The damsel he knew was in the confidence of both the young ladies. It immediately occurred to him to sift her on the subject of Isabella and Theodore. Calling her aside into the recess of the oriel window of the hall, and soothing her with many fair words and promises, he demanded of her whether she knew aught of the state of Isabella's affections.



“I! my Lord! no my Lord—yes my Lord—poor Lady! she is wonderfully alarmed about her father’s wounds; but I tell her he will do well; don’t your Highness think so?”

“I do not ask you,” replied Manfred, “what she thinks about her father; but you are in her secrets. Come, be a good girl and tell me; is there any young man—ha!—you understand me.”

“Lord bless me! understand your Highness? no, not I. I told her a few vulnerable herbs and repose—”

“I am not talking,” replied the Prince, impatiently, “about her father; I know he will do well.”

“Bless me, I rejoice to hear your Highness say so; for though I thought it not right to let my young Lady despond, methought his greatness had a wan look, and a something—I remember when young Ferdinand was wounded by the Venetian—”

“Thou answerest from the point,” interrupted Manfred; “but here, take this jewel, perhaps that may fix thy attention—nay, no reverences; my favour shall not stop here—come, tell me truly; how stands Isabella’s heart?”

“Well! your Highness has such a way!” said Bianca, “to be sure—but can your Highness keep a secret? if it should ever come out of your lips—”

“It shall not, it shall not,” cried Manfred.

“Nay, but swear, your Highness.”

“By my halidame, if it should ever be known that I said it—”

“Why, truth is truth, I do not think my Lady Isabella ever much affectioned my young Lord your son; yet he was a sweet youth as one should see; I am sure, if I had been a Princess—but bless me! I must attend my Lady Matilda; she will marvel what is become of me.”

“Stay,” cried Manfred; “thou hast not satisfied my question. Hast thou ever carried any message, any letter?”

“I! good gracious!” cried Bianca; “I carry a letter? I would not to be a Queen. I hope your Highness thinks, though I am poor, I am honest. Did your Highness never hear what Count Marsigli offered me, when he came a wooing to my Lady Matilda?”

“I have not leisure,” said Manfred, “to listen to thy tale. I do not question thy honesty. But it is thy duty to conceal nothing from me. How long has Isabella been acquainted with Theodore?”

“Nay, there is nothing can escape your Highness!” said Bianca; “not that I know any thing of the matter. Theodore, to be sure, is a proper young man, and, as my Lady Matilda says, the very image of good Alfonso. Has not your Highness remarked it?”

“Yes, yes,—No—thou torturest me,” said Manfred. “Where did they meet? when?”

“Who! my Lady Matilda?” said Bianca.

“No, no, not Matilda: Isabella; when did Isabella first become acquainted with this Theodore!”

“Virgin Mary!” said Bianca, “how should I know?”

“Thou dost know,” said Manfred; “and I must know; I will—”

“Lord! your Highness is not jealous of young Theodore!” said Bianca.

“Jealous! no, no. Why should I be jealous? perhaps I mean to unite them—If I were sure Isabella would have no repugnance.”

“Repugnance! no, I’ll warrant her,” said Bianca; “he is as comely a youth as ever trod on Christian ground. We are all in love with him; there is not a soul in the castle but would be rejoiced to have him for our Prince—I mean, when it shall please heaven to call your Highness to itself.”



“Indeed!” said Manfred, “has it gone so far! oh! this cursed Friar!—but I must not lose time—go, Bianca, attend Isabella; but I charge thee, not a word of what has passed. Find out how she is affected towards Theodore; bring me good news, and that ring has a companion. Wait at the foot of the winding staircase: I am going to visit the Marquis, and will talk further with thee at my return.”

Manfred, after some general conversation, desired Frederic to dismiss the two Knights, his companions, having to talk with him on urgent affairs.

As soon as they were alone, he began in artful guise to sound the Marquis on the subject of Matilda; and finding him disposed to his wish, he let drop hints on the difficulties that would attend the celebration of their marriage, unless—At that instant Bianca burst into the room with a wildness in her look and gestures that spoke the utmost terror.

“Oh! my Lord, my Lord!” cried she; “we are all undone! it is come again! it is come again!”

“What is come again?” cried Manfred amazed.

“Oh! the hand! the Giant! the hand!—support me! I am terrified out of my senses,” cried Bianca. “I will not sleep in the castle to-night. Where shall I go? my things may come after me tomorrow—would I had been content to wed Francesco! this comes of ambition!”

“What has terrified thee thus, young woman?” said the Marquis. “Thou art safe here; be not alarmed.”

“Oh! your Greatness is wonderfully good,” said Bianca, “but I dare not—no, pray let me go—I had rather leave everything behind me, than stay another hour under this roof.”

“Go to, thou hast lost thy senses,” said Manfred. “Interrupt us not; we were communing on important matters—My Lord, this wench is subject to fits—Come with me, Bianca.”

“Oh! the Saints! No,” said Bianca, “for certain it comes to warn your Highness; why should it appear to me else? I say my prayers morning and evening—oh! if your Highness had believed Diego! ’Tis the same hand that he saw the foot to in the gallery-chamber—Father Jerome has often told us the prophecy would be out one of these days—‘Bianca,’ said he, ‘mark my words—’”

“Thou ravest,” said Manfred, in a rage; “be gone, and keep these fooleries to frighten thy companions.”

“What! my Lord,” cried Bianca, “do you think I have seen nothing? go to the foot of the great stairs yourself—as I live I saw it.”

“Saw what? tell us, fair maid, what thou hast seen,” said Frederic.

“Can your Highness listen,” said Manfred, “to the delirium of a silly wench, who has heard stories of apparitions until she believes them?”

“This is more than fancy,” said the Marquis; “her terror is too natural and too strongly impressed to be the work of imagination. Tell us, fair maiden, what it is has moved thee thus?”

“Yes, my Lord, thank your Greatness,” said Bianca; “I believe I look very pale; I shall be better when I have recovered myself—I was going to my Lady Isabella’s chamber, by his Highness’s order—”

“We do not want the circumstances,” interrupted Manfred. “Since his Highness will have it so, proceed; but be brief.”

“Lord! your Highness thwarts one so!” replied Bianca; “I fear my hair—I am sure I never in my life—well! as I was telling your Greatness, I was going by his Highness’s order to my Lady Isabella’s



chamber; she lies in the watchet-coloured chamber, on the right hand, one pair of stairs: so when I came to the great stairs—I was looking on his Highness's present here—”

“Grant me patience!” said Manfred, “will this wench never come to the point? what imports it to the Marquis, that I gave thee a bauble for thy faithful attendance on my daughter? we want to know what thou sawest.”

“I was going to tell your Highness,” said Bianca, “if you would permit me. So as I was rubbing the ring—I am sure I had not gone up three steps, but I heard the rattling of armour; for all the world such a clatter as Diego says he heard when the Giant turned him about in the gallery-chamber.”

“What Giant is this, my Lord?” said the Marquis; “is your castle haunted by giants and goblins?”

“Lord! what, has not your Greatness heard the story of the Giant in the gallery-chamber?” cried Bianca. “I marvel his Highness has not told you; mayhap you do not know there is a prophecy—”

“This trifling is intolerable,” interrupted Manfred. “Let us dismiss this silly wench, my Lord! we have more important affairs to discuss.”

“By your favour,” said Frederic, “these are no trifles. The enormous sabre I was directed to in the wood, yon casque, its fellow—are these visions of this poor maiden's brain?”

“So Jaquez thinks, may it please your Greatness,” said Bianca. “He says this moon will not be out without our seeing some strange revolution. For my part, I should not be surprised if it was to happen tomorrow; for, as I was saying, when I heard the clattering of armour, I was all in a cold sweat. I looked up, and, if your Greatness will believe me, I saw upon the uppermost banister of the great stairs a hand in armour as big as big. I thought I should have swooned. I never stopped until I came hither—would I were well out of this castle. My Lady Matilda told me but yester-morning that her Highness Hippolita knows something.”

“Thou art an insolent!” cried Manfred. “Lord Marquis, it much misgives me that this scene is concerted to affront me. Are my own domestics suborned to spread tales injurious to my honour? Pursue your claim by manly daring; or let us bury our feuds, as was proposed, by the intermarriage of our children. But trust me, it ill becomes a Prince of your bearing to practise on mercenary wenches.”

“I scorn your imputation,” said Frederic. “Until this hour I never set eyes on this damsel: I have given her no jewel. My Lord, my Lord, your conscience, your guilt accuses you, and would throw the suspicion on me; but keep your daughter, and think no more of Isabella. The judgments already fallen on your house forbid me matching into it.”

Manfred, alarmed at the resolute tone in which Frederic delivered these words, endeavoured to pacify him. Dismissing Bianca, he made such submissions to the Marquis, and threw in such artful encomiums on Matilda, that Frederic was once more staggered. However, as his passion was of so recent a date, it could not at once surmount the scruples he had conceived. He had gathered enough from Bianca's discourse to persuade him that heaven declared itself against Manfred. The proposed marriages too removed his claim to a distance; and the principality of Otranto was a stronger temptation than the contingent reversion of it with Matilda. Still he would not absolutely recede from his engagements; but purposing to gain time, he demanded of Manfred if it was true in fact that Hippolita consented to the divorce. The Prince, transported to find no other obstacle, and depending on his influence over his wife, assured the Marquis it was so, and that he might satisfy himself of the truth from her own mouth.



As they were thus discoursing, word was brought that the banquet was prepared. Manfred conducted Frederic to the great hall, where they were received by Hippolita and the young Princesses. Manfred placed the Marquis next to Matilda, and seated himself between his wife and Isabella. Hippolita comported herself with an easy gravity; but the young ladies were silent and melancholy. Manfred, who was determined to pursue his point with the Marquis in the remainder of the evening, pushed on the feast until it waxed late; affecting unrestrained gaiety, and plying Frederic with repeated goblets of wine. The latter, more upon his guard than Manfred wished, declined his frequent challenges, on pretence of his late loss of blood; while the Prince, to raise his own disordered spirits, and to counterfeit unconcern, indulged himself in plentiful draughts, though not to the intoxication of his senses.

The evening being far advanced, the banquet concluded. Manfred would have withdrawn with Frederic; but the latter pleading weakness and want of repose, retired to his chamber, gallantly telling the Prince that his daughter should amuse his Highness until himself could attend him. Manfred accepted the party, and to the no small grief of Isabella, accompanied her to her apartment. Matilda waited on her mother to enjoy the freshness of the evening on the ramparts of the castle.

Soon as the company were dispersed their several ways, Frederic, quitting his chamber, inquired if Hippolita was alone, and was told by one of her attendants, who had not noticed her going forth, that at that hour she generally withdrew to her oratory, where he probably would find her. The Marquis, during the repast, had beheld Matilda with increase of passion. He now wished to find Hippolita in the disposition her Lord had promised. The portents that had alarmed him were forgotten in his desires. Stealing softly and unobserved to the apartment of Hippolita, he entered it with a resolution to encourage her acquiescence to the divorce, having perceived that Manfred was resolved to make the possession of Isabella an unalterable condition, before he would grant Matilda to his wishes.

The Marquis was not surprised at the silence that reigned in the Princess's apartment. Concluding her, as he had been advertised, in her oratory, he passed on. The door was ajar; the evening gloomy and overcast. Pushing open the door gently, he saw a person kneeling before the altar. As he approached nearer, it seemed not a woman, but one in a long woollen weed, whose back was towards him. The person seemed absorbed in prayer. The Marquis was about to return, when the figure, rising, stood some moments fixed in meditation, without regarding him. The Marquis, expecting the holy person to come forth, and meaning to excuse his uncivil interruption, said,

“Reverend Father, I sought the Lady Hippolita.”

“Hippolita!” replied a hollow voice; “camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?” and then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl.

“Angels of grace protect me!” cried Frederic, recoiling.

“Deserve their protection!” said the Spectre. Frederic, falling on his knees, adjured the phantom to take pity on him.

“Dost thou not remember me?” said the apparition. “Remember the wood of Joppa!”

“Art thou that holy hermit?” cried Frederic, trembling. “Can I do aught for thy eternal peace?”

“Wast thou delivered from bondage,” said the spectre, “to pursue carnal delights? Hast thou forgotten the buried sabre, and the behest of Heaven engraven on it?”



“I have not, I have not,” said Frederic; “but say, blest spirit, what is thy errand to me? What remains to be done?”

“To forget Matilda!” said the apparition; and vanished.

Frederic’s blood froze in his veins. For some minutes he remained motionless. Then falling prostrate on his face before the altar, he besought the intercession of every saint for pardon. A flood of tears succeeded to this transport; and the image of the beautiful Matilda rushing in spite of him on his thoughts, he lay on the ground in a conflict of penitence and passion. Ere he could recover from this agony of his spirits, the Princess Hippolita with a taper in her hand entered the oratory alone. Seeing a man without motion on the floor, she gave a shriek, concluding him dead. Her fright brought Frederic to himself. Rising suddenly, his face bedewed with tears, he would have rushed from her presence; but Hippolita stopping him, conjured him in the most plaintive accents to explain the cause of his disorder, and by what strange chance she had found him there in that posture.

“Ah, virtuous Princess!” said the Marquis, penetrated with grief, and stopped.

“For the love of Heaven, my Lord,” said Hippolita, “disclose the cause of this transport! What mean these doleful sounds, this alarming exclamation on my name? What woes has heaven still in store for the wretched Hippolita? Yet silent! By every pitying angel, I adjure thee, noble Prince,” continued she, falling at his feet, “to disclose the purport of what lies at thy heart. I see thou feelest for me; thou feelest the sharp pangs that thou inflictest—speak, for pity! Does aught thou knowest concern my child?”

“I cannot speak,” cried Frederic, bursting from her. “Oh, Matilda!”

Quitting the Princess thus abruptly, he hastened to his own apartment. At the door of it he was accosted by Manfred, who flushed by wine and love had come to seek him, and to propose to waste some hours of the night in music and revelling. Frederic, offended at an invitation so dissonant from the mood of his soul, pushed him rudely aside, and entering his chamber, flung the door intemperately against Manfred, and bolted it inwards. The haughty Prince, enraged at this unaccountable behaviour, withdrew in a frame of mind capable of the most fatal excesses. As he crossed the court, he was met by the domestic whom he had planted at the convent as a spy on Jerome and Theodore. This man, almost breathless with the haste he had made, informed his Lord that Theodore, and some lady from the castle were, at that instant, in private conference at the tomb of Alfonso in St. Nicholas’s church. He had dogged Theodore thither, but the gloominess of the night had prevented his discovering who the woman was.

Manfred, whose spirits were inflamed, and whom Isabella had driven from her on his urging his passion with too little reserve, did not doubt but the inquietude she had expressed had been occasioned by her impatience to meet Theodore. Provoked by this conjecture, and enraged at her father, he hastened secretly to the great church. Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were —

“Does it, alas! depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union.”

“No, this shall prevent it!” cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke.

“Ah, me, I am slain!” cried Matilda, sinking. “Good heaven, receive my soul!”



“Savage, inhuman monster, what hast thou done!” cried Theodore, rushing on him, and wrenching his dagger from him.

“Stop, stop thy impious hand!” cried Matilda; “it is my father!”

Manfred, waking as from a trance, beat his breast, twisted his hands in his locks, and endeavoured to recover his dagger from Theodore to despatch himself. Theodore, scarce less distracted, and only mastering the transports of his grief to assist Matilda, had now by his cries drawn some of the monks to his aid. While part of them endeavoured, in concert with the afflicted Theodore, to stop the blood of the dying Princess, the rest prevented Manfred from laying violent hands on himself.

Matilda, resigning herself patiently to her fate, acknowledged with looks of grateful love the zeal of Theodore. Yet oft as her faintness would permit her speech its way, she begged the assistants to comfort her father. Jerome, by this time, had learnt the fatal news, and reached the church. His looks seemed to reproach Theodore, but turning to Manfred, he said,

“Now, tyrant! behold the completion of woe fulfilled on thy impious and devoted head! The blood of Alfonso cried to heaven for vengeance; and heaven has permitted its altar to be polluted by assassination, that thou mightest shed thy own blood at the foot of that Prince’s sepulchre!”

“Cruel man!” cried Matilda, “to aggravate the woes of a parent; may heaven bless my father, and forgive him as I do! My Lord, my gracious Sire, dost thou forgive thy child? Indeed, I came not hither to meet Theodore. I found him praying at this tomb, whither my mother sent me to intercede for thee, for her—dearest father, bless your child, and say you forgive her.”

“Forgive thee! Murderous monster!” cried Manfred, “can assassins forgive? I took thee for Isabella; but heaven directed my bloody hand to the heart of my child. Oh, Matilda!—I cannot utter it— canst thou forgive the blindness of my rage?”

“I can, I do; and may heaven confirm it!” said Matilda; “but while I have life to ask it—oh! my mother! what will she feel? Will you comfort her, my Lord? Will you not put her away? Indeed she loves you! Oh, I am faint! bear me to the castle. Can I live to have her close my eyes?”

Theodore and the monks besought her earnestly to suffer herself to be borne into the convent; but her instances were so pressing to be carried to the castle, that placing her on a litter, they conveyed her thither as she requested. Theodore, supporting her head with his arm, and hanging over her in an agony of despairing love, still endeavoured to inspire her with hopes of life. Jerome, on the other side, comforted her with discourses of heaven, and holding a crucifix before her, which she bathed with innocent tears, prepared her for her passage to immortality. Manfred, plunged in the deepest affliction, followed the litter in despair.

Ere they reached the castle, Hippolita, informed of the dreadful catastrophe, had flown to meet her murdered child; but when she saw the afflicted procession, the mightiness of her grief deprived her of her senses, and she fell lifeless to the earth in a swoon. Isabella and Frederic, who attended her, were overwhelmed in almost equal sorrow. Matilda alone seemed insensible to her own situation: every thought was lost in tenderness for her mother.

Ordering the litter to stop, as soon as Hippolita was brought to herself, she asked for her father. He approached, unable to speak. Matilda, seizing his hand and her mother’s, locked them in her own, and then clasped them to her heart. Manfred could not support this act of pathetic piety. He dashed himself on the ground, and cursed the day he was born. Isabella, apprehensive that these struggles of



passion were more than Matilda could support, took upon herself to order Manfred to be borne to his apartment, while she caused Matilda to be conveyed to the nearest chamber. Hippolita, scarce more alive than her daughter, was regardless of everything but her; but when the tender Isabella's care would have likewise removed her, while the surgeons examined Matilda's wound, she cried,

“Remove me! never, never! I lived but in her, and will expire with her.”

Matilda raised her eyes at her mother's voice, but closed them again without speaking. Her sinking pulse and the damp coldness of her hand soon dispelled all hopes of recovery. Theodore followed the surgeons into the outer chamber, and heard them pronounce the fatal sentence with a transport equal to frenzy.

“Since she cannot live mine,” cried he, “at least she shall be mine in death! Father! Jerome! will you not join our hands?” cried he to the Friar, who, with the Marquis, had accompanied the surgeons.

“What means thy distracted rashness?” said Jerome. “Is this an hour for marriage?”

“It is, it is,” cried Theodore. “Alas! there is no other!”

“Young man, thou art too unadvised,” said Frederic. “Dost thou think we are to listen to thy fond transports in this hour of fate? What pretensions hast thou to the Princess?”

“Those of a Prince,” said Theodore; “of the sovereign of Otranto. This reverend man, my father, has informed me who I am.”

“Thou ravest,” said the Marquis. “There is no Prince of Otranto but myself, now Manfred, by murder, by sacrilegious murder, has forfeited all pretensions.”

“My Lord,” said Jerome, assuming an air of command, “he tells you true. It was not my purpose the secret should have been divulged so soon, but fate presses onward to its work. What his hot-headed passion has revealed, my tongue confirms. Know, Prince, that when Alfonso set sail for the Holy Land—”

“Is this a season for explanations?” cried Theodore. “Father, come and unite me to the Princess; she shall be mine! In every other thing I will dutifully obey you. My life! my adored Matilda!” continued Theodore, rushing back into the inner chamber, “will you not be mine? Will you not bless your—”

Isabella made signs to him to be silent, apprehending the Princess was near her end.

“What, is she dead?” cried Theodore; “is it possible!”

The violence of his exclamations brought Matilda to herself. Lifting up her eyes, she looked round for her mother.

“Life of my soul, I am here!” cried Hippolita; “think not I will quit thee!”

“Oh! you are too good,” said Matilda. “But weep not for me, my mother! I am going where sorrow never dwells—Isabella, thou hast loved me; wouldst thou not supply my fondness to this dear, dear woman? Indeed I am faint!”

“Oh! my child! my child!” said Hippolita in a flood of tears, “can I not withhold thee a moment?”

“It will not be,” said Matilda; “commend me to heaven—Where is my father? forgive him, dearest mother—forgive him my death; it was an error. Oh! I had forgotten—dearest mother, I vowed never to see Theodore more—perhaps that has drawn down this calamity—but it was not intentional—can you pardon me?”

“Oh! wound not my agonising soul!” said Hippolita; “thou never couldst offend me—Alas! she faints! help! help!”



“I would say something more,” said Matilda, struggling, “but it cannot be—Isabella—Theodore—for my sake—Oh!—” she expired.

Isabella and her women tore Hippolita from the corse; but Theodore threatened destruction to all who attempted to remove him from it. He printed a thousand kisses on her clay-cold hands, and uttered every expression that despairing love could dictate.

Isabella, in the meantime, was accompanying the afflicted Hippolita to her apartment; but, in the middle of the court, they were met by Manfred, who, distracted with his own thoughts, and anxious once more to behold his daughter, was advancing to the chamber where she lay. As the moon was now at its height, he read in the countenances of this unhappy company the event he dreaded.

“What! is she dead?” cried he in wild confusion. A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. The latter, forcing Theodore along with them, rushed into the court. The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins.

“Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso!” said the vision: And having pronounced those words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, where the clouds parting asunder, the form of St. Nicholas was seen, and receiving Alfonso’s shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory.

The beholders fell prostrate on their faces, acknowledging the divine will. The first that broke silence was Hippolita.

“My Lord,” said she to the desponding Manfred, “behold the vanity of human greatness! Conrad is gone! Matilda is no more! In Theodore we view the true Prince of Otranto. By what miracle he is so I know not—suffice it to us, our doom is pronounced! shall we not, can we but dedicate the few deplorable hours we have to live, in deprecating the further wrath of heaven? heaven ejects us—whither can we fly, but to yon holy cells that yet offer us a retreat.”

“Thou guiltless but unhappy woman! unhappy by my crimes!” replied Manfred, “my heart at last is open to thy devout admonitions. Oh! could—but it cannot be—ye are lost in wonder—let me at last do justice on myself! To heap shame on my own head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer to offended heaven. My story has drawn down these judgments: Let my confession atone—but, ah! what can atone for usurpation and a murdered child? a child murdered in a consecrated place? List, sirs, and may this bloody record be a warning to future tyrants!”

“Alfonso, ye all know, died in the Holy Land—ye would interrupt me; ye would say he came not fairly to his end—it is most true— why else this bitter cup which Manfred must drink to the dregs. Ricardo, my grandfather, was his chamberlain—I would draw a veil over my ancestor’s crimes—but it is in vain! Alfonso died by poison. A fictitious will declared Ricardo his heir. His crimes pursued him—yet he lost no Conrad, no Matilda! I pay the price of usurpation for all! A storm overtook him. Haunted by his guilt he vowed to St. Nicholas to found a church and two convents, if he lived to reach Otranto. The sacrifice was accepted: the saint appeared to him in a dream, and promised that Ricardo’s posterity should reign in Otranto until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as



long as issue male from Ricardo's loins should remain to enjoy it—alas! alas! nor male nor female, except myself, remains of all his wretched race! I have done—the woes of these three days speak the rest. How this young man can be Alfonso's heir I know not—yet I do not doubt it. His are these dominions; I resign them—yet I knew not Alfonso had an heir—I question not the will of heaven—poverty and prayer must fill up the woeful space, until Manfred shall be summoned to Ricardo.”

“What remains is my part to declare,” said Jerome. “When Alfonso set sail for the Holy Land he was driven by a storm to the coast of Sicily. The other vessel, which bore Ricardo and his train, as your Lordship must have heard, was separated from him.”

“It is most true,” said Manfred; “and the title you give me is more than an outcast can claim—well! be it so—proceed.”

Jerome blushed, and continued. “For three months Lord Alfonso was wind-bound in Sicily. There he became enamoured of a fair virgin named Victoria. He was too pious to tempt her to forbidden pleasures. They were married. Yet deeming this amour incongruous with the holy vow of arms by which he was bound, he determined to conceal their nuptials until his return from the Crusade, when he purposed to seek and acknowledge her for his lawful wife. He left her pregnant. During his absence she was delivered of a daughter. But scarce had she felt a mother's pangs ere she heard the fatal rumour of her Lord's death, and the succession of Ricardo. What could a friendless, helpless woman do? Would her testimony avail?—yet, my lord, I have an authentic writing—”

“It needs not,” said Manfred; “the horrors of these days, the vision we have but now seen, all corroborate thy evidence beyond a thousand parchments. Matilda's death and my expulsion—”

“Be composed, my Lord,” said Hippolita; “this holy man did not mean to recall your griefs.” Jerome proceeded.

“I shall not dwell on what is needless. The daughter of which Victoria was delivered, was at her maturity bestowed in marriage on me. Victoria died; and the secret remained locked in my breast. Theodore's narrative has told the rest.”

The Friar ceased. The disconsolate company retired to the remaining part of the castle. In the morning Manfred signed his abdication of the principality, with the approbation of Hippolita, and each took on them the habit of religion in the neighbouring convents. Frederic offered his daughter to the new Prince, which Hippolita's tenderness for Isabella concurred to promote. But Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul.

