

1805

Almagro & Claude, or the Monastic Murder [Transcript]

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Recommended Citation

Almagro & Claude, or the Monastic Murder. London: T. Plummer, c. 1805.

ALMAGRO & CLAUDE,
OR THE
MONASTIC MURDER.

THE Marquis d'Axala, after leaving the University of Salamanca, set out immediately on his travels. He was liberally supplied with money and letters of introduction by his father, who insisted on his concealing his rank, and travelling as a private gentleman. Before he entered upon his tour, the prudent parent addressed his son in a long speech upon the principles which ought to direct his conduct, and the reasons why he had enjoined him for a time to drop his title; which were, that he might appreciate the estimation in which he himself would be held by the world when their judgment was not biassed by his rank, and that he might examine the customs and manners of the multitude, without derogating from his exalted birth. The Marquis saw the propriety of this advice, and quitted Spain, calling himself by the plain title of Don Almagro di Cordova. Paris was the first station he made, attended by a faithful servant. Here he found the manners of the people trifling, unstable, and insincere; and, dissatisfied, bent his way towards the German Courts, intending to make some stay at Strasbourg. The Marquis arrived safely at Luneville, and on stepping out of his chaise to alight at the inn, observed a rich equipage at the door, and soon after saw an elegant female, followed by two attendants, enter the carriage, which drove off immediately. He directly enquired of the host who the lady was, and learned that she was a German Baroness of great rank and fortune, who had been on a visit to the Duchess of Bellecour, and was returning to Strasbourg, to her husband previously to their return home. Almagro set off, and intended to reach Strasbourg that night. In this, however, he was prevented by the breaking down of the chaise in the middle of a dark forest. There seemed no alternative but for Almagro to take the servant's horse, and ride on; but the old postilion, after stating the intricacy of the way in such a gloomy night, said it was only five minutes walk from the cottage of Dubois, a very honest friend of his, and a wood cutter. The proffered help was immediately accepted, and the shattered vehicle was, with much labour, drawn to the cottage, through the window of which they beheld the blaze of a comfortable fire. They soon made the cottager awake, who apologized for not opening the door till he heard the voice of his friend Jacques, as there were a sad number of rogues about. He then introduced Almagro into an inner room, where sat a female whom he supposed to be the wife of his host, who received him with a slight reverence, but did not rise to assist in providing for his accommodation till reproved by her husband and Jacques. A churlish gloom overspread her countenance, and, though she might be called handsome, her very look and action expressed discontent. The woodman seemed to be about sixty years of age, and appeared to have absorbed all the fatness and fresh colour of his wife, who was haggard, though not yet thirty.

The postilion would have proceeded to Strasbourg that night for workmen to return and mend the chaise, but Almagro over-ruled this, as the night was bitterly cold, and his arrival there at a particular hour was of no consequence. Not long after Dubois put his head out of the cottage door, and said, "I wonder what detains my boys so long. O Monsieur, they are such fine young men, that you will say, when you see them, their equals are not to be found any where."

"Such sons, indeed!" exclaimed Antoinette, in a growling accent. "Come, come, Antoinette," said the host, "cheer up a little; if your two sons are not quite as old, I hope you will yet live

to see them just such lads as Martin and Philip. "Heaven forbid!" cried Antoinette, clasping her hands together: "I would rather see them perish first!" She then quitted the room, and the Marquis could not help remarking to his host how ill-fated he was in being united to such a woman. The man briefly informed him, that her affection for two sons she had had by a former husband made her play the step-mother with his two sons; but, cross as she was, she managed his family excellently. This discourse was interrupted by aloud halloo, followed by a carriage, attended by several cavaliers, who were proceeding to Strasbourg, but through the ignorance of the drivers had lost their way. A lady inside appeared to be principally distressed, and whom Almagro recognised to be the lady he had seen at Luneville, the Baroness Wildenheim. The woodman shewed evident chagrin at the arrival of these strangers, but his countenance afterwards cleared up, upon learning the quality of his guest, and he soon arranged matters for the Baroness to have one chamber, and Almagro the other. The servants were to be well accommodated in a large barn, a few yards distant from the house. This arrangement being gratefully accepted, Dubois was just going to conduct the male domestics to their outhouse, when Martin and Philip appeared, who started at coming in, but, being assured by Dubois that the good company would find a corner for them, they staid, and were presented to the Baroness and Almagro, after which the two waiting women were conducted by Antoinette to their lady's apartment.

The two young men were tall and stout, and acknowledged Jacques as an old acquaintance. They then drew a cutlass and a brace of pistols from under their clothes, and laid them on the shelf, remarking at the same time they had just come from Strasbourg, and it was necessary to be well armed, as the forest was much infested with robbers. The Baroness earnestly wished to convey a letter to her husband, but the account of the forest rendered it too hazardous to send any servant. When Jacques understood this, he informed her he was under the necessity of reaching Strasbourg that night, and would convey a letter safely, as he was too insignificant an object to be interrupted by banditti. The Baroness accepted his offer, and, at the same time she gave her letter, the Marquis sent a few lines to his banker. The lady, finding herself much fatigued, was conducted to her chamber; and on Antoinette's return, the Marquis, perceiving he was in her way, said he would go to his room till supper was ready. Philip asked what chamber it was, and Antoinette replied, the one with the green hangings; and having put clean sheets on the bed, if the gentleman chooses to lounge on it, she should not make it over again. Philip, having remarked that it was no novelty to see his mother out of humour, opened the door, and began to ascend the staircase. "You fool, to go without a light!" exclaimed Antoinette, and passed the Marquis to put the candle into Philip's hand; in returning she met the Marquis just going to ascend: no one was near at the moment, and she instantly took the Marquis's hand, pressed it, and whispered, "Look at the sheets!" Don Almagro was startled, but Philip's voice calling him, he ascended to his room, where an excellent fire was lighted. No sooner was his conductor departed, than he turned down the coverture of the bed, and stood petrified at seeing the sheets crimsoned with blood. The circumstances which had taken place convinced the Marquis of the horror of his situation; which was further confirmed by hearing some one pacing hastily backwards and forwards under his window, whom he discovered to be Dubois, looking round with anxiety as if he expected some one. Having extinguished his candle, and repaired to the window, he saw Dubois joined by the postilion, Jacques, whom he had supposed on his way to Strasbourg.

They entered into a deep conversation, the result of which was, that, as the Marquis had above 2000 pistoles in his chaise, and the Baroness had also a casket of jewels of immense value, Jacques should immediately set out for the cavern, where some confederate banditti would be waiting till eleven o'clock; he was then to conduct them by twelve to the cottage of Dubois, and if any resistance was made by the cavaliers, the latter were all to be poniarded. The feelings of the Marquis at the prospect before him may be easily imagined; unarmed as he was, courage could do but little against so many; however, to avoid suspicion, he re-lighted his candle, and, on descending, found the table spread for six persons. The Baroness sat opposite the Marquis, who by a single glance informed Antoinette that he had taken her hint. He could not escape his confusion being seen by the young men, who enquired the cause, which he attributed to fatigue. The Marquis then talked upon his visit to Germany, and received an invitation from the Baroness to pass some time at her castle; at which the brothers cast a malignant smile, that seem to say they might never reach there. During all the supper time the Marquis talked incoherently, his attention being fixed on escaping from the cottage, and getting to the barn, to alarm the domestics; but the circumspection of Philip and Martin prevented this, and his only hope lay in Jacques not finding the banditti, in which case the guests might escape unhurt.

The host lamented the poorness of his fare, and he insultingly remarked, that, if his guests should be detained longer than they at present intended, he hoped to provide them with better entertainment. Dubois, then observing, that it very rarely happened he had such noble company, said he would celebrate the accidents of the night, by uncorking a bottle of most excellent wine made by his father, who was now in a better world! He gave his wife the key of the closet, which she received with a look of fear and distress. When she returned, the Marquis's eye caught her's, and she looked frowningly at the wine, and then expressively at him. In the mean while the host had drawn the cork, and filled two goblets, one of which the lady, at the instance of Dubois, drank. The Marquis, by its look and smell, took it for champaign, but seeing some grains of white powder floating on the top, he raised it to his lips, and seemed to have swallowed two or three mouthfuls of it, when, suddenly starting up, and declaring that this sort of wine always made him ill, he feigned to spit it out, and unperceived emptied the liquor into a vase of water behind him. Martin and Dubois looked distrustful; and Philip, in a side whisper, said, he had drunk *sufficient*. The Marquis anxiously watched the effect of the wine upon the Baroness, who sunk into a profound sleep, which he did not dare to notice, but continued the conversation. The banditti now no longer seemed to preserve appearances, but whispered among themselves, and his danger seemed proceeding fast to extremity. In this situation he was relieved by Antoinette, who, placing herself behind the seats of her step sons, closed her eyes, and reclined her head upon her shoulder, pointing to the Marquis. He understood the hint, and in a few minutes seemed overcome with slumber. Dubois now congratulated his sons, that the Spaniard was gone to sleep, as he began to suspect him, and regretted they had not come a few minutes before the arrival of the Baroness, in which case the Don and his servant might have been dispatched out of the way, and their property secured. It was agreed, if the gang did not arrive that night, the travellers should be way-laid in the forest on the morrow. Dubois had just asked his wife, if she had given the sleeping draught to the female attendants, and been answered in the affirmative, when the trampling of horses

announced the arrival of the troop, and Antoinette horrified the Marquis by an exclamation of, "Gracious heaven, then they must die!" "Let us in," was vociferated outside the cottage. "Yes, yes!" cried Dubois, joyfully, "they are our friends; you lead them to the barn, and do the business there; I will manage my gentleman here, and the women!" Martin would have shot the Marquis upon the spot, but Dubois bid him follow his brother, and assist the newcomers, who had dismounted, and were silently moving towards the barn. Dubois then went to a small cupboard, and unlocked it. At this moment Antoinette whispered in the Marquis's ear, "Now!" and on opening his eyes, he saw Dubois standing with his back towards him, feeling the point of a dagger. Not a moment was to be lost. The Marquis, unarmed, sprang from his seat, and being possessed of a powerful arm, he grasped the villain by the throat with such violence, that he threw him on the floor breathless, while Antoinette, taking advantage of his unrecovered state, wrested the dagger from his hand, and plunged it repeatedly into his heart.

"Our only safety now lies in flight!" exclaimed Antoinette; "follow me! quick as lightning!" The Marquis seized the Baroness in his arms, and hastened, after Antoinette, who mounted one of the banditti's horses, while the Marquis did the same with his charge. As they galloped by the barn, they could distinguish the shrieks of the dying, and the Marquis, unable to relieve them, felt a pang too great for utterance. Their flight was perceived by Martin, who with a torch recognized the fugitives in passing, and ordered a pursuit. The Marquis and his guide were in view of the steeple of Strasbourg, when the banditti were found to be gaining fast on them. The horses were spurred to the utmost, and at the moment when Antoinette had exclaimed, "We are lost!" a numerous band of cavaliers approached, of the foremost of whom she most piteously implored protection from robbers. "It is she herself!" exclaimed the man, jumping on the ground; "It is my mother! Stop, my Lord, they are safe."

Antoinette now descended, and clasped the cavalier in her arms. "Where is the Baroness Wildenheim?" inquired another stranger, (her husband) and on beholding her in the arms of the Marquis, he ejaculated, "God be thanked, she has escaped uninjured!" The Marquis, having pointed out to the company the approach of the brigands, they hastened to meet them; but the latter perceiving their danger, fled towards the wood. Immediately, upon their arrival at Strasbourg, the Baroness, on whom the effects of the opiate had not ceased to operate, was put to bed, and a physician administered medicine to counteract its effects. The Marquis was pleased that his banker had provided apartments for him before his arrival, whither he had the lady conveyed.

While the Marquis was relating the adventure to the Baron, the pursuing party returned, with the complete subjugation of the banditti, who had submitted, to the number of sixty, without resistance. Their first visit was to the barn, where they found two of the Baron's servants alive, though, much wounded; but the Marquis's faithful servant, Lopo, had perished. The waiting women, being overlooked by the brigands, in their hurry, were found still sleeping, and, with all infant about four years old, which proved to be the child of Antoinette, were removed to the Marquis's residence. When the first burst of Antoinette's maternal affection was over, the Marquis requested to know the cause of her being united to such a man as Dubois. She blushed, and proceeded thus:

“I was born of respectable parents in Strasbourg, where my father still lives. Betrayed by a villain, I quitted my father's house: I dearly loved my seducer; and this baby and the youth who warned you of your lady's danger, were the offspring of our love. Having squandered away his paternal inheritance, his noble relations discarded him; he sunk into distress, and at length joined the banditti who infest the forest, many of them were respectable young men, reduced like himself. I followed, and shared in his losses and gains, and at eight years end found his love for me remained undiminished. He cautiously concealed from me that he ever imbrued his hands in innocent blood, and it was not till after he had been killed in attacking an English traveller, that I earned this horrid feature. When my grief had subsided, I resolved to return to Strasbourg, with my two babes, and implore my father's forgiveness; but, think of the bitter disappointment I felt when the banditti informed me, that they suffered none of their body ever to depart, who were acquainted with their retreat, and that I must make choice of a husband. They decided this by lot, in spite of my remonstrances, and I became the property of the infamous Dubois. A robber, who had been a priest formerly, said a burlesque ceremony, and I and my children were delivered into the custody of my new husband, who proved the reverse of my first lover, and strove to bend my nature to an approbation of scenes of blood and slaughter. I should certainly have put an end to my existence, but I trembled for the virtue of my children. The youngest was not capable of receiving my instructions, but the eldest shewed how little he was calculated for the society of villains, by his detestation of their proceedings. This was my situation, when the perfidy of Don Almagro's postilion conducted him to the cottage, and I resolved to risk every thing to save one so young and innocent. Dubois watched me so closely, that my only hope lay in procuring succour from Strasbourg. My son, Louis, was then ill in bed, but I seized an opportunity to steal to his room; he directly entered into my plan, let himself down from the window, took Jacques's horse, and rode to Strasbourg, where he applied to a magistrate, and the news reaching the Baron, who knew his wife was travelling that road, they set off with an armed party, conducted by Louis; the fortunate issue of which you are all acquainted with.”

They afterwards learned from Antoinette, that she had put the sheets on the bed, in which a traveller had been murdered a few nights before, that Don Almagro might be aware of his situation, and feel the force of her hint. The sleeping potion, she also said, was administered, that, if the victim were armed, they might the more easily search him, and prevent a desperate resistance. The Baron, having asked Antoinette what were her future plans of life, she replied, that it was her wish to enter a consent, hoping that her father, through the intercessions of the gentlemen before her, would accept her repentance, and provide for his two grandsons. The Baron and Almagro assured Antoinette, that, if her father proved inflexible, they would provide for the children; and the poor woman's heart was read in her eyes.

On the recovery of the Baroness, Almagro was persuaded to accompany the Baron to his castle in Bavaria, prior to which the interests of Antoinette were not forgotten at Strasbourg. The good old man received his repentant and only daughter, after an absence of fourteen years, with open arms, and persuaded her to remain with him; but no inducement could influence Louis to leave the Marquis, who requested to be taken into his service, and with all the innocent eloquence of a youth of thirteen, set forth the little services he might render him. The Marquis then dubbed him his page, and, before leaving Strasbourg, faithfully promised to restore him to his mother within the year.

The journey to Wildenheim Castle proved very pleasant, and Almagro found in the Baron an uninformed man, remarkably fond of hunting; and the Marquis being a tolerable good sportsman, his dexterity soon fixed him in the Baron's friendship. At the castle of Wildenheim it was that Almagro first saw the lovely Claude, then scarcely sixteen, and blooming in every beauty and accomplishment. From the Baroness Almagro learned that Claude was her niece, and sister of his friend Olphos; that she herself was his country-woman, and sister to the Duke of Calvados; that Claude was the daughter of Don Farojez, her second brother, and that she had been devoted to the convent from her cradle, and would soon make her profession at Madrid, in consequence of a vow made by her mother in child-birth, who, being then taken dangerously ill, vowed to dedicate the child, if a girl, and she survived, to St. Clare. She did survive, and Don Farojez readily chimed in with his wife's wishes; but, knowing the aversion the Duke, his brother, had to a monastic life, Claude accompanied her newly married aunt, Donna Lemnosa, to the castle of Wildenheim. The Baroness then placed her in a neighbouring convent, where her education was liberally attended to, and the acquirements she made estranged her heart from a life of seclusion. She did not conceal her repugnance, and Don Farojez, fearful it might come to his brother's ears, fixed the time for her taking the veil when he was on his travels. Olphos was never made acquainted with his mother's fatal vow, and all his letters to Claude were always opened and inspected, which was the case with her answers.

Almagro, master of these cruel particulars, determined to attempt the rescue of this lovely girl from such a fate. He spoke to her of his friendship with her brother, of his willingness to serve her, and soon received a confession of esteem and love. The Marquis proposed her quitting the castle of Wildenheim, but this she indignantly rejected, and advised, in its place, that Almagro should endeavour to gain the consent of her austere aunt to the union; and next those of the Baron and her guardian, and then her hand should be his.

The Marquis set about this plan directly, and applied the chief battery of his attentions to the Baroness, who was now about forty years of age, and yet retained several traits of former beauty. Her passions were amorous and violent, and her hatred was as inveterate. Don Almagro laboured incessantly to please her, and succeeded but too well. He read to her every day, for several hours, from old Spanish romances, till he was tired to death. Every day the Baroness seemed more pleased with him, and her partiality at length became so marked, that Claude advised the Marquis to seize the first opportunity of declaring their mutual passion to her aunt. This occurred one evening, after he had finished a romance. "Do you think it possible," said the Baroness, "for any man to feel a love so sincere as the hero of this tale?"—Almagro replied, that his bosom could answer in the affirmative, were he permitted to name the object of his affection. "She has long been known to me," said Donna Lemnosa, "and laments most sincerely the cruel bonds which separate her from you." "Then you have discovered my secret," exclaimed Almagro, taking her hand; "and now what may I hope?" "For my consent!" replied the Baroness. "Ah! Don Almagro, *I* no longer can stifle the violence of my passion; *I* own I adore you! Respect for myself, and regard for the Baron's honour, are all vanquished; they all bend to my love for you!" Almagro was silent—he stood astonished, contemplating the dreadful mistake to which his assiduities had led. Notwithstanding the knowledge of her revengeful disposition, he resolved to clear up the mistake at the moment, concealing only the name of his mistress. This he did in the handsomest terms

his eloquence could supply; but it abated nothing of the exclamatory fury which followed. She demanded who the happy rival was. "Let me," exclaimed she, "but find her who dares to rob me of your heart, and I will inflict upon her all the tortures of jealousy and disappointment. Spies shall watch your steps and your eyes, till she is discovered, and then tremble, Almagro, for her and your own safety."

Her rage here ending in a fainting fit, Almagro called her attendants to assist, and took the opportunity to escape. Not knowing where he strayed to, he entered the garden, and saw Claude sitting at the window of a room that looked into it; some drawing instruments, & several large sketches lay before her. He entered the room, and before he had determined whether she dare be trusted with her aunt's vengeful determination, he was struck with the subject of one of the pictures. It represented the great hall of the Castle Widenheim. A door stood half open, which conducted to a narrow stair-case. In the front were several characters in caricature positions, arising from terror at seeing a gigantic female figure, clothed in the habit of some religious order. Her face was veiled, and her dress was in several places stained with blood, which trickled from a gash in her neck. One hand held a lamp, and the other a large dagger, and she was advancing towards the iron portal of the hall. Almagro asked Claude, if the picture was an invention of her own; but she replied, by asking him if he had lived three months in the castle of Widenheim without having heard of the bleeding Nun? Almagro rejoined, that he had never heard about the lady, and asked who she was. Claude replied, that she had been handed down in a traditional story from father to son; and that her aunt, as well as the Baron, firmly believed she haunted the castle. "But sit down," said Claude, "and I will tell you the whole of this alarming story."

"The Nun did not begin to be known till after she was dead; but not choosing to remain for ever quiet, she fixed on the castle of Widenheim for her theatre of action, and, being a person of taste, took the best room to perform her ghostly pranks in. Sometimes she visited the other chambers and galleries, to the universal terror of the inhabitants, who described her as here traced on the paper. The Nun, full at times of execrations and blasphemies, and at others, of the most religious exercises, soon made the castle scarcely habitable, and its lord was so frightened by these midnight revels, that one morning he was found dead in his bed.

The next lord exorcised her by a pious and tough priest, and for some time after no news was heard of her; but this lord died in five years, and then she appeared again, somewhat inure tractable than before. She then walked about in silence, and never made her appearance but once in five years—a custom which the Baron firmly believes is continued. He is fully persuaded that, on the fourteenth of February of every fifth year, at midnight, the door of the haunted chamber opens, which has been continued for to century. On this night she marches with a lamp and dagger, as in the picture, when the porter out of respect leaves the castle gate open for her ghostship, who, after an hour's absence, retires to, her chamber, and is quiet for another five years. The sketch I have here taken is from the description of Dame Barjona, my governess, who tells that fifteen years ago she saw the spectre *with her own eyes*."—The caricature which the playful imagination of Claude had correctly drawn for the Dame Barjona was to correct; that it excited both the laughter and admiration of the Marquis." "If that please you," said Claude, "I will present you with a likeness much more ridiculous than Dame Barjona. Do with it as you think proper." She then unlocked a small cabinet, and drew forth a

miniature portrait of herself. Transported with gratitude, the Marquis threw himself at her feet, and was declaring to her well-pleased ears the ardour of his passion, when she suddenly uttered a loud shriek, disengaged her hand, and escaped from the room by a door that opened into the garden. On turning round, the Marquis beheld the Baroness standing near him, choking with rage. She had seen the portrait given, and heard their mutual declarations of everlasting attachment; the embarrassment of the Marquis and Donna Lemnosa was equal; but the lady first recovered the use of speech, and told him he should know what it was to love without hope, since Claude should be sent to Spain on the arrival of an order from her parents, and there take the veil. She then added that her niece should be confined till he took his departure, which she expected would be the earliest possible.

The Baroness then darted from the room with a look of contempt on the Marquis, who, after seeking the timid Baron, and vainly endeavouring to interest him in his cause, quitted the castle without a sight of Claude. The Marquis was attended only by a French servant, and Louis, whose ability and disposition had endeared him to his master. He had learned Spanish sufficient to be understood, by going to school for that purpose, from the time the Marquis adopted him. "Courage, Signor," said he in Spanish; "I have watched the moment when Dame Barjona was absent, to mount to the chamber over that of Donna Claude, and sung so loud that she heard me, and opened her window. I then let down a string, and drew it up in a few minutes, with this scrap, of paper fastened to it. "When my aunt believes you have quitted Wildenheim, I shall be restored to liberty. Conceal yourself in some neighbouring village, till the night of the thirtieth, when I will be in the West Pavilion at twelve, and we will concert our future plans. Adieu. Claude." The Marquis obeyed the instructions of Claude, and proceeded to Munich, leaving the care of the chaise to Fouet, his French servant; who was ordered to remain there till his master and Louis returned. The latter, having disguised themselves, repaired to an inn at a village about four miles from Wildenheim, where a fortnight passed away, and Almagro had the pleasure of seeing Claude with her Duenna pass through the village, in good health and spirits, whither she came every Friday to the convent there. Almagro attended the following Friday, and had the pleasure to see himself recognized by Claude in his disguise. At length the long expected thirtieth night arrived, and the Marquis, with Louis, who had provided a ladder of ropes, scaled the garden wall, and posted themselves in the west pavilion. As the castle bell tolled twelve, the light footstep of Claude announced her approach. The Marquis flew to receive her, and conducted her to a seat. "We have no time to lose," said Claude impatiently, "for Dame Barjona watches me every moment. In a week I am to depart for Madrid, to be sacrificed. I have no hope left but in your honour; and this is the plan of escape I have formed. On the fifth day from this time, the visionary nun is expected to appear, and by means of a friend I have provided a dress proper for the character. You must be ready with a carriage, at a little distance from the great gates of the castle; then, as soon as the clock strikes one, I shall quit my chamber habited as the ghost, and easily reach the door; thus far success is certain; but, if you reward my confidence with perfidy, the world will not hold a more wretched being than your Claude." Had the Marquis's carriage been ready, he would have carried her away at the moment, but Munich was the nearest place to obtain one, and that lay at a distance of two day's journey; the plan of Claude was therefore acceded to, and the lovers sat making mutual vows of love and honour. Suddenly the door of the pavilion was opened, and Barjona entered; she had watched her mistress out, and overheard the

whole conversation.—“But I shall mar all your projects,” said the Duenna; “and as for you Don Almagro, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, to seduce an innocent young creature away from her family. Good by, Signor.—Come, Claude, your ghostship will please to return with me.” The Marquis interceded with the cruel Barjona; but, finding all remonstrance vain, after having premised her obstinacy would be her punishment, he took the veil of Claude, and enveloped Barjona's head in it, threatening her with instant death upon making the least noise; he then bound her hand and foot with handkerchiefs, and bid Claude regain her apartment, and carry her plan into effect on the day appointed. Claude then departed, and the antiquated intruder was hoisted over the wall, and carried to the inn at the village, where Louis managed by knocking out the light to get her conveyed by Almagro, without being perceived, into his room. The Marquis, when all the bustle was over, strove to reconcile Barjona to her temporary confinement, but such was the fury of the virago, that he was compelled to gag and lock her up, except at meal times, when he stood over her with a drawn sword. The greatest alarm was excited at the castle on account of the lost Duenna; thus in various conjectures the five days passed away, and in making preparations on the part of the Marquis, who had written to Fouet to be ready with a coach and four, at ten o'clock in the morning of the 14th of Feb. at the village of Hauser. He was punctual, and before twelve o'clock on that day, he and Louis repaired to the important scene of action. The coach was hidden in a large cavern, called Weldenheim vault, close to the castle. The night was still; the moon faintly shone, and the castle clock struck twelve, the usual signal for the family to retire to bed. Not long after the porter opened wide the portal gates, the lights disappeared, and the whole fabric was eclipsed in darkness. The Marquis then ventured to draw near to the castle, and observed a few rays of light glimmering in the chamber of Claude. While he was going, a figure drew near the window and the curtain was carefully closed to conceal the lamp burning there. Almagro, convinced that Claude was there, returned to wait for the appointed hour. At length, the solemn hour of one tolled, and in five minutes after a light again appeared. The light soon faded away, and all was dark and gloomy. Not many minutes however elapsed, when he saw Claude pass through the folding gates, habited exactly like the spectre, with a lamp and dagger. She advanced to where Almagro stood; he flew to meet her, and clasped her in his arms. The terrified maid, overcome by joy, sunk upon his bosom, and in this state he conveyed her to the carriage. Louis remained behind to release Barjona, and take a letter to the Baroness, explaining Almagro's tank and intentions to her niece. Being seated in the carriage, the postilions drove away with great fury; the horses became restive, and a dreadful storm of thunder and lightning coming on, they were no longer manageable, but dragged the carriage at their pleasure, till all farther progress was stopped, by its striking against a tree, and being shattered to pieces. The shock threw the Marquis out, and wounded him so desperately on the temple, that his senses forsook him, and he lay without animation till broad daylight, when he saw himself surrounded by several peasants, of whom he immediately demanded if they had seen Claude. They replied no person answering her description had been seen by them, and they had been attracted to the spot by hearing the groans of the only surviving horse. Almagro immediately dispatched some of the peasants in search of her, while four that remained made a litter of boughs, and conveyed him on it to Ratisbon; a surgeon being sent for, it was found that Almagro had dislocated his arm, broken a rib, and his left leg was dreadfully bruised. The arm however was set with success, and the surgeon announced no other consequence from his hurts than a tedious and painful cure. It was conceived both by the surgeon, the hostess, and the peasants, that he was delirious, when he talked about the

lady he had brought with him since one o'clock that morning from the village of Hausen, which lay at a considerable distance from Ratisbon. All efforts to trace the lost Claude proved fruitless, and the furious agitation the Marquis had at first displayed sunk into a mild despondency. On the third night, as he lay tossing from side to side, and vainly endeavouring to invite sleep, he heard slow and heavy steps ascending the staircase. A rush light glimmered on the hearth, and by an involuntary sensation, the Marquis raised himself up in his bed, and drew back the curtain. At that moment the clock of a neighbouring church tolled one, the door was thrown open with violence, and the figure of the bleeding Nun entered, but without the lamp and dagger. His astonishment was changed into horror, when she lifted up her veil in a solemn manner, and instead of presenting the face of the beautiful Claude, he saw before him nothing but an animated corpse. The glaring eyeballs of the visionary female now fixed upon the Marquis, and in a sepulchral voice she repeated the first effusions of affection which he had uttered on her escape from the castle. The apparition then seated itself opposite to him, with her eyes fixed on his, till the clock struck two, when it rose and approached the bed: then taking hold of his hand with her burn fingers, and pressing her icy lips to his, she repeated her former words, and quitted the chamber. The Marquis fainted with a loud groan immediately that she had disappeared; the sound was heard by the host and his wife, who entered his chamber, and found some difficulty in restoring him to his senses. The following night the Marquis led a servant to sit up with him, and by the assistance of opiates had slept several hours till the neighbouring clock struck one, when he awoke, and felt all the terror of the preceding night renewed. His servant was fast asleep, beyond his strength to wake him, and the bleeding Nun entered the room with the same appearance as the preceding evening, saying, "Signor, Signor, thou art mine! Signor, Signor, I am thine!" in a hollow voice, and after again pressing his lips, and staying till the clock struck two, disappeared. This was repeated every night, and so little did his terror abate by familiarity to his nocturnal visitor, that several months elapsed before he was able to cross the room without assistance. The ghost was invisible to every eye but his, and whenever any attendants sat up with him, they were seized with an irresistible slumber from the entrance of the spectre till its departure.

Louis, who had, during this interval, been confined at Wildenheim, had some difficulty to find his master at Ratisbon, and from him and the subsequent relation of Claude, he learned the following particulars. On the fatal night when her elopement was to have taken place, accident had prevented her from quitting her chamber at the exact time; nevertheless, she found no obstruction in getting through the castle gate, in her ghostly attire. Finding that Almagro was not there, she staid till past two o'clock, in traversing the avenues of the castle. When she returned, the door was shut; but, on knocking, the porter admitted the supposed spirit, and Claude passed quietly to her chamber. In the mean time, Louis, seeing the carriage drive off with the false Claude, returned to the village, released Barjona, and accompanied her to the castle. He found the Baron and Baroness disputing upon the porter's relation; but the mystery was soon developed, on his being interrogated, and the ghost that appeared at past two o'clock was resolved into the person of Claude. The Baroness now artfully suppressed the letter, and the real rank of the Marquis, who from a vanity of being beloved only for his own sake, had not even revealed to his mistress that he was any other than plain Don Almagro di Cordova. This artful lady

instructed Barjona to tell Claude, that the scheme had failed entirely through the perfidy of her fortune-hunting lover; and Louis, lest he should contradict it, was kept confined in the castle. Incensed at Almagro's perfidy, Claude passed another month before she consented to receive the veil, and then set off for Spain with Don Farojez. Louis was set at liberty, and, after finding his master had not been at Munich, succeeded in joining him at Ratisbon. One day, while Louis was looking through the window, and Almagro was lying on the sofa, he exclaimed, "There goes the great Bashaw, who is the most singular man in the world! Some suppose him an astrologer, from Arabia, others, Doctor Faustus and others, the devil. He told me, when I was seeing you out, that he had a message for you, Signor, and that he alone could dissipate the bloody phantom!" Almagro bid him fly after the Bashaw, and request his attendance. In a few minutes he returned with this stranger, who was tall and majestic in his appearance. A band of black velvet encircled his forehead, and his wild black locks gave force to the secret awe his countenance inspired. Having motioned to Louis to retire, he said, "Marquis, I have the power to release you from the nocturnal visitor. After Saturday, you shall see her no more! She is perpetually by your side, though visible to you only one hour in the day, nor will she ever leave you till her request is granted, which she will explain on Saturday night next! Ask no more till then!"

The Marquis then entered into conversation with him, and found that he had visited all countries; which he accounted for by saying, that an irresistible fate compelled him to stay no longer than a fortnight in one place; and that, although he had courted death in a thousand shapes, heaven had ordered that neither animals nor elements should injure him. The stranger, then bidding Almagro expect him at twelve on Saturday, retired. This was the last day of his fortnight at Ratisbon; and, true to his appointed time, he entered the Marquis's room at midnight, with a small chest in his hand. After saluting him, he opened the chest, and took out a wooden crucifix, which he kneeled to, and kissed three times. He then produced a goblet, and sprinkled the floor with a liquor which appeared to be blood. The end of the crucifix was next dipped in the fluid, and he described a circle in the middle of the floor, round about which were laid relics, skulls, and other human bones, in the form of crosses. Having taken out a large bible, he beckoned the Marquis to move into the circle, and be silent. He had scarcely commenced reading, when the spectre entered at the hour of one, and advanced to the circle. After some unintelligible words on his part, he extended the crucifix towards the ghost, and in a solemn voice pronounced thrice the name Malvoglia!" "Speak!" faltered out the spectre. "Say why," rejoined the Sorcerer, "you haunt this youth? How can this spirit be laid at rest?"—"It is forbidden me to tell," replied the Nun; "fain would I repose in the grave, but my punishment is prolonged!"—"Look at this blood!" rejoined the stranger. Knowest thou not in whose veins it flowed! By his manes I charge thee to answer me!"—The spectre shook her head in dissent."—"Now shalt thou obey me!" exclaimed the Bashaw, and he drew from his forehead the velvet band, and a burning cross was visible on his brow. The horror the Marquis felt was equally imparted to the spectre, whose limbs trembled, while her quivering lips spoke thus. "At that mark I obey: learn then, that in Wildenheim vault my bones rot in obscurity, and this youth only can consign them to the grave; his own lips have made over his soul and body to me, and never shall he rest till my mouldering remains are at rest in his Andalusian castle. There let 30 masses be said for my repose, and then I

disquiet the earth no more. Oh! that burning crucifix scorches me!”——The Bashaw now let drop the crucifix, which till that moment he had pointed towards her, and the apparition bowed her head as she vanished into air.

The exorciser then led Almagro from the circle, replaced his bible, &c. in the chest, and addressed him thus: “Don Almagro, fail not to fulfil those conditions punctually. Malvoglia is your relation, and, when living, bore the name of D'Axala. She was great aunt to your grandfather: She took the veil at an early age, but when her ungovernable passions began to expand, she contrived to elope from the convent, and fled to Germany with the Baron Wildenheim. Here she lived several months as his avowed concubine, professed herself an atheist, and disgusted the whole country by her grossness. Soon after her arrival, the Baron's younger brother attracted her affection, and she found in him her equal in turpitude. He made the return of his love the price of his brother's murder, and the night was fixed on for the deed. Rolan said that he would wait for her in Wildenheim vault, on the night of the murder; then with some friends proceed to make himself master of the castle, and conclude by marrying her, which the Baron had ever refused to do.

“On the fatal eight, Malvoglia plunged her dagger into the heart of her lord, as the castle clock tolled one, and then quitting her bed hastily, took the lamp in one hand, with the bloody dagger in the other, and repaired towards the cavern. She reached Wildenheim vault unopposed, where she saw Rolan waiting for her. He listened to the narrative of the atrocious deed with transport, and before she could half enquire why he had brought no attendants with him, or defend herself, he wrested the dagger from her, and plunged it, still reeking with his brother's blood, into her bosom, and terminated her life by repeated blows. Rolan now succeeded to the barony, and the murder was solely attributed to the fugitive nun. But his crime did not remain unpunished: her bones lying still unburied in the cave, the spirit of Malvoglia continued to inhabit the castle, dressed in her nun's Habit, and holding the lamp and dagger. Every night she stood thus before the bed of Rolan, uttering alternate prayers and blasphemies. At length Rolan's life became insupportable, and he was one morning found dead in his bed.

“The castle next fell to a distant relation, who, terrified by the accounts of the bleeding nun, called in a holy man, who forced the spectre to silence during his life-time. At his death, which happened five years after, she again appeared, but only once within every fifth year, at the same hour she murdered her sleeping lover; she then visited the cavern holding her mouldering skeleton, and returned at two o'clock, when she disappeared for five years.——She was doomed to suffer during the space of a century, which being past, nothing now remains but to obey the injunctions of the spectre.——I now feel some consolation in having released you from her visits, and with you farewell.” The Marquis entreated the Bashaw to stay, and reveal some of the mystery attending himself, which the latter promised to do, if he would let him defer his explanation to the next day; but the following morning the Marquis learned that he had quited Ratisbon, and who this singular person was, unless he were the celebrated character known by the name of the *Wandering Jew*, he was never able to discover. Relieved of his terrors, Almagro rapidly grew well, and soon set out for Wildenheim, where he was welcomed by the Baron and his lady, whose passion the Marquis was sorry to see was not diminished by his absence. Wishing to avoid

the latter's revenge, and perform the obsequies of the murdered nun, he collected her remains, and bent his course, with Fouet and Louis, towards Spain. He arrived at his father's castle in Andalusia without any accident, deposited the bones of Malvaglia in the family vault, and performed the masses. He now set about tracing Claude, but found that her mother was dead, that her brother Olphos was from home, and her father on a visit to the Duke of Calvados. Neither the ingenuity of himself, nor Louis, could develop the mystery, till the following adventure effected it. Returning home one night from the playhouse, he was attacked by three men in an unfrequented street. One he laid at his feet, but he would have vainly opposed the others, had not a cavalier with his servants heard the clashing of swords, and rushed to his assistance. The bravoes then fled, and the Marquis, finding he was severely wounded, requested to be carried to the Hotel D'Axala.

On mentioning the name, the Cavalier said he knew the father of the Marquis very well, and insisted on his being taken to his brother's, (the Duke of Calvados,) hard by. When they had entered, the family surgeon was sent for, and declared, that the wounds were of no consequence, and only required rest. "I esteem myself happy," said Don Farojez di Calvados, "to render you any service; and am infinitely obliged to my daughter for detaining me so late at the convent of St. Clare. I am certain my brother will lament his absence, but in the mean time every thing in the hotel di Calvados is at your disposal." This was a double discovery for the Marquis, nor did he feel uneasy when he afterwards learned that Claude had taken the vows in St. Claire, as he flattered himself that his uncle's credit at the court of Rome could easily procure a bull to remove that obstacle. There was little doubt that the Marquis's intended assassination had been attempted by the means of Donna Lemnosa, yet he carefully guarded this knowledge from her brother Don Farojez, who had no suspicion that the Marquis was the person who had been attached to his daughter under the name of Don Almagro di Cordova at Wildenheim.—The Marquis now closely attacked the gardener of St. Clare with bribes and promises, and succeeded in persuading the old man to introduce him as his assistant. The Prioress suspected no deception, and for three days he worked in the garden, without meeting with the object of his disguise. On the fourth morning the Prioress and Claude advanced, and seated themselves on a bench; she was lecturing the fair recluse on her obstinacy in giving way to an ill-requited love, when a young pensioner came, and called the old lady out. Claude then shewed the charming girl several letters, which the latter read with pleasure, and begging leave to copy them, retired to her cell.—The Marquis now came forward, and the eye of Claude recognised him in his disguise. She accused him of falsehood, and would have retired; but he detained her with an assurance that she had been deceived by the artifices of her relations. She listened, and the next night at eleven o'clock they agreed to meet again on the same spot. The weather was cold, but it secured them from interruption, and the Marquis had a full opportunity of declaring the cause of his absence on the fatal night of the spectre, deceiving her, and assured her, that, even the dreadful barrier to their happiness in having taken the veil, might be overcome by the Cardinal Duke of Parma's influence at Rome. Claude listened, but combated his arguments, stating, her father's superstition would never pardon her leaving the convent in any manner, and she concluded with saying, that she felt her voluntary vows to heaven were binding, and that her father's curse would follow her if she broke them. The Marquis continued to refute her scruples till the convent bell rang, when he persuaded her to meet him at the same hour next evening.

These meetings continued for several weeks uninterrupted, and in one unguarded moment the honour of Claude was sacrificed to their mutual passions.—When the burst of delirium was over, Claude started from the bank on which she was seated, and after venting the reproaches of conscience on the Marquis, she hurried to the convent, in spite of his efforts to detain her. The next morning and night the Marquis attended at the garden, but Claude came not.

Several nights passed away without seeing her, and at length the old gardener informed him, that the lady whom he used to meet had threatened, if he continued any longer in the convent, to unfold the whole business to the lady prioress, and that regard for his own safety required he should withdraw himself. Finding all efforts to see Claude were ineffectual, he submitted not to visit the convent. In a fortnight after, he was summoned to attend his father, who was taken dangerously ill. He lay several months before he died, and a week more passed after his decease, before the Marquis could arrange his affairs so as to return to Madrid. On his arrival, he found a letter from Claude, announcing that she was with child, and both the innocent babe and herself would be lost if he could not extricate her from the tyranny of the vengeful prioress; that the gardener having been dismissed, and one of inflexible integrity in his place, the only chance of her receiving an answer from him was by concealing it under the statue of St. Francis, in the Capuchin cathedral, whither she went to confess every Thursday morning. Her father's death, she added, had removed one obstacle to their union, and she now intreated him to procure with all speed the dispensation from her vows, as the only means of saving her life!—The Marquis felt pleasure at this epistle, because he thought he had power to execute the prayer of it. From the first he had interested the Cardinal-Duke of Parma to procure the necessary bull, which he had just received a letter from him he expected to arrive in a few days; but he also said it was necessary to get Claude out of the convent privately, lest the fury of the prioress should counteract his Holiness's mandate.

The Marquis saw the necessity of this, and immediately had the new gardener seized, and conveyed to his hotel. Master of the key, he entered, and deposited at the shrine of St. Francis a letter for Claude, to prepare her for elopement at twelve the next night. The Marquis, in doing this, became accidentally known to the vigilant Olphos, his friend, the brother of Claude, who promised to assist, and informed him that he had now nothing to fear from Donna Lemnosa, who, in a fit of passion, had died by bursting a blood vessel. At twelve the following night the friends attended at the garden wall of the convent, with a coach and four. Don Almagro drew out his key, and they entered the garden, where they waited a long time, but Claude came not. The fact was, the prioress had learned the situation of Claude, and the plan; she knew that to arrest the lover would only have provoked inquiry about the government of her convent, and therefore she left them to wait as long as they thought proper, and then retire unmolested. The next morning Olphos repaired to the convent, and requested to see his sister. He was informed by the Prioress that she had been taken ill, and confined to her bed the last three days, owing to something which secretly preyed on her mind, and which she would not reveal.

Olphos requested to be admitted to her cell, but the Prioress was shocked at such a horrid proposition, as admitting a man into the convent. Finding his sister was not to be seen that day, he repaired early the next morning to the convent, and received an account that the

physician had ordered no one to see her. Regularly did he attend the convent every day, and received always a more unfavorable account. Convinced that her indisposition was feigned, these accounts did not alarm him; but how to extricate her from the fangs of the Prioress was a very serious consideration, as she was cruel, superstitious, and never suffered a nun of rank to depart.

Fortunately at this time arrived the Pope's expected bull for the release of Claude. This essential paper decided at once the proceedings of the Marquis and his friends. On the following day Olphos was commissioned to present the instrument, and repaired to the convent early in the morning. When the matin service was over, he, to see the Prioress, who replied, as usual, that the only chance of her dear child's recovery, was in keeping her from being agitated. To end the business, Olphos placed the Pope's bull in her hand; she received it with humility, but, on perusing the contents, her hypocrisy forsook her, and, in a rage, she exclaimed,—“The Pope's mandate cannot be obeyed; it has arrived too late! I cannot deliver up Claude either with or without delay, for she expired on Friday last!”—Olphos started with horror, but recollecting that the Prioress had said the moment before that she was alive, he taxed her falsehood, and insisted on her being produced.—“If I concealed her death,” replied the Prioress, “it was only to soften the sad event to you. What interest have I in detaining one who long has wished to quit our holy society? But her crimes are great, and it is not to be regretted such a wretch no longer exists. On Thursday last, in returning from the Capuchin chapel, she was taken ill, and, thanks to the Virgin, we were *too ignorant* to suspect her malady. Judge then of our horror, when she was delivered the next day of a dead child, and followed it herself immediately! Claude is therefore no more, and, if you have, any doubt, I swear by this sacred crucifix she has been buried three days!”—She then, with scornful smile, left the room, first observing, that he might now obtain a second bull from the Pope for her resurrection. Olphos also retired, and communicated the result to the Marquis, who was firmly convinced that the walls of St. Clare still confined her, and tried every means, without success, to procure intelligence of her. Olphos thought she was taken off by unfair means, and two months elapsed without any thing arising to create a contrary supposition. All the researches of the Marquis d'Axala proved in vain, and the despair he felt brought on a long and severe illness. Olphos attended him constantly with the most fraternal affection; but no one was more sensibly afflicted than the amiable lad Louis, who left no means unemployed to gain an entrance into the convent.

Among other schemes, he one day took it in his head to disguise himself as a beggar; he put a patch over his left eye, took his guitar in his hand, and posted himself at the gate of the convent, imagining that if Claude were at liberty, and heard his voice, she would recollect him, and find means to let him know it. His sweet songs soon attracted the notice of the nuns, and when the rest of the beggars were dispersed from the gate, he was desired to come in, and partake of their charitable donation of soup. The nuns all admired his youth and beauty, and agreed that he would be a worthy pillar of the Catholic church. This was represented by the portress to the Domina, who ordered him to be introduced. After having asked him several questions, to which he replied artlessly, the Prioress was so pleased with him, that she ordered him to attend the next day, to speak further upon his entrance into the church. The Domina then retired, and the nuns crowded round him, to whom he related his strange

adventures, and amused them so highly, that each of them gave him some little relic, waxen image, or consecrated cross. He had just remarked, that he should want a basket to put his presents into, when the Mother St. Urbana presented him with one, lined with satin, saying, significantly, that, though it seemed of little value, it had many hidden virtues. Louis, in receiving the present, came as close to the grate as possible, and she whispered in a low voice, "Claude!" He immediately after withdrew, and hastened to the Marquis, who started from his pillow on hearing what Louis had to say. With eager haste he ripped up the satin lining, and found the following note on a scrap of paper:—"I have recognised your page, and venture to send these few lines. Procure an order from the Cardinal Duke to seize my person and the Domina, and let it be executed at midnight on Friday, during the festival of St. Clair. Be secret, or I may perish before I can unfold the dreadful tale. St. Urbana."

This note, instead of giving comfort to the Marquis, deprived him of sense and motion. From the tenor of these lines he was convinced that Claude was no more; but when he recovered, both he and Olphos broke out into execrations against the assassin of Claude, and vowed to take a signal vengeance. The Marquis raved till he relapsed into insensibility, and his friend flew to the palace of the Cardinal

Duke, who was out of town. Olphos however set off immediately, as it wanted five days to the festival of St. Clare, and succeeded in obtaining the order for arrest, with which he arrived on the evening of the festival. Having shewn it to the Marquis, who remained very ill, he took it to Don Gomez, an uncle of Claude's, and an officer of the Inquisition, who was petrified with horror at the recital of his niece's unhappy fate, and promised to accompany him at night, with a band of trusty archers, to prevent every opposition on the part of the populace. They repaired full an hour before the time to the convent gates, where a great crowd was assembled to witness the precession. The archers mixed among the populace, and Olphos being recognized as a person of rank, was permitted with his party, to place himself opposite the great portal, through which the pilgrims were to pass. The convent service lasted till midnight, the finish of which was announced by a bell.

The procession then began by the Capuchin monks chaunting hymns in honour of St. Clare, and marching two and two; next came the novices, without tapers, and the professed with. To these succeeded a beautiful young girl, representing St. Lucia, her eyes covered with a velvet band, and led by another nun. St. Catharine followed, and then St. Genevieve, surrounded by grotesque imps, who endeavoured to abstract her attention from a devout book, on which her eyes were fixed; at this the spectators laughed heartily. After a band of choristers, came the reliques of St. Clare; the nun who bore the heart was the mother St. Urbana, and Olphos recognised her by Louis's description. Next appeared the damsel representing St. Clare, selected from the most lovely of all the nuns. Her dress was inestimably rich, and she was seated on a moving throne. Her beauty attracted every eye, and was contrasted with the sour visage of the prioress, who followed at the head of the remaining nuns, with her eyes raised to heaven. The populace blessed her as she passed, but what alarm and confusion followed, when Don Gomez arrested her in the name of his Holiness! When she had recovered her first surprise, she called upon the people to protect her from sacrilege and impiety; they were eagerly preparing to obey her, when Don Gomez rushed forward with his band of archers, and threatened the populace with the vengeance of the Inquisition. All was again quiet, and Don Gomez declared he must next arrest the

Mother St. Urbana. At this moment Olphos stepped forward, and the prioress exclaimed, "Holy Virgin, I am betrayed!"—"Yes," retorted St. Urbana, "betrayed by your villainies! I am your accuser.—I charge you with murder, and slake my life for the issue of the accusation."—A murmur ran through the multitude, and an explanation was vociferously demanded. The procession in the mean time dispersed, and the mob ordered St. Urbana to harangue them from the vacant throne, which she ascended, and addressed them as follows. "I am now at liberty to relate a tale, which had I been in the power of the prioress would have cost me my life, and numbered me with the once lovely and gentle Claude di Calvados. I was entrusted with her secrets, and she shared the love of every one—even of the proud and forbidding prioress. Alas! Claude had her faults, and who is free from error?

She violated the rules of our order, and the sentence adjudged by the unforgiving Domina was cruel and inhuman, though conformable to the rigour of a law, altogether obsolete till she revived it. This law decreed that the offender should be plunged into a private dungeon, be there condemned to perpetual solitude, and her friends be induced to believe she was dead. Here for the remnant of her life her food was to be bread and water, and the straw-covered earth her bed."

A council of twelve elders was called to try the unfortunate Claude, and I was of the number. Except the Mothers Anna and Ladrona, and myself, the rest were for her sacrifice: but this we overruled by our remonstrance, and the Prioress demanded time to reflect on a system, of punishment that might be agreeable to the sisterhood. On the evening of the third day it was announced that Claude should be examined, and her punishment be regulated by her behaviour. In the night preceding this examination, I flew to the cell of Claude, while the other nuns were asleep; I cautioned her not to be ensnared, into a confession prejudicial to her interests; I exhorted her to fortitude, and, after mingling my tears with her's, was about to retire, when the sound of steps approaching the cell, compelled me to place myself behind a curtain which veiled a large crucifix. The Prioress in a moment after entered, followed by four other nuns. The Superior reproached her in the bitterest terms, and commanded her to drink the contents of a goblet which she held in her hand, as an expiation of her crimes! The unhappy girl, aware that the liquor was poison, sued for life in the most piteous accents and affecting prayers,—for a month, a week, a day longer! The Prioress bid her recommend herself to heaven's mercy, which had been insulted, and whose avenging instrument she was. Perceiving it was vain to implore this religious monster, Claude sprang from her bed, and was about to call for assistance, when the Prioress seized her by the arm, pushed her back on the bed, and, drawing a dagger, vowed by heaven if she uttered a cry, or hesitated to the poison, she would stab her that instant! The fatal goblet was presented by a nun. Claude drank it off, and the deed was soon accomplished. They embittered her pangs in dying by their reproaches, and such were her agonies, that they must amply have gratified the inhumanity of her enemies. When the victim ceased to breathe, and the Domina, with the assistant nuns, retired, I ventured out; and scarcely had strength sufficient to regain my own cell. As I took the last farewell of the lovely lifeless body, I vowed to bring her assassins to shame and death. No marks of violence appearing on the corpse, it was given out she had expired suddenly.

"At her funeral, I unguardedly dropped some hints, and have ever since been so closely watched, that it was at the utmost hazard of my life I conveyed my secret to the unhappy lady's relations.

I again repeat, and will answer it with my life, that the Prioress is a murderer, a barbarian, and a hypocrite, and I also accuse the nuns Melina, Porcella, Dolla, and Teresa, as accomplices!"

Such was the address of St. Urbana, which raised the indignation of the mob to so high a pitch, that they demanded the immediate surrender of the Prioress to their fury. To this Don Gomez positively objected, and surrounded her with the archers, but the ungovernable assailants soon forced a passage through the guards, and dragged their destined victim from their shelter. The wretched woman shrieked out for mercy, but she spoke to those who were now as deaf to that quality as she had been. They stifled her cries with howlings and curses, dragged her through the streets, trampled on her, and spurned her with savage fury. At length, a well-directed stone struck her on the temple; she staggered, and fell to rise no more! Their next object, after the Prioress, was her convent; thither they repaired, set fire to it, and swore not a nun of the

order of Clare should be left alive. Olphos entered with the rabble, and vainly endeavoured to repress their indiscriminating fury, till the progress of the flames compelled him to seek for his own safety. The mob now hastened out with more eagerness than they had entered; the doorways were suddenly closed up, and the flames rapidly advancing, many perished from this cause as well as pressure. Olphos, more fortunate, made his escape at a small door in a further aisle of the chapel, which led him to the foot of St. Clare's sepulchre. Here he stopped to breathe, and found he was followed by Gomez and some of his people. A wicket door in the wall opened into the garden of the Capuchins, and they all passed though except Olphos, who, being the last, observed the door of the sepulchre to be softly opened. Some one looked out, but, on seeing a stranger, uttered a shriek, flew back, and descended the marble steps. Olphos immediately pursued, and followed through dark and subterranean vaults, till he could only trace the object he was in quest of by the sound of the feet. He at length became quite bewildered, and with his sword drawn, groped his way till he caught the glimmer of a lamp, which, as he drew near, he perceived was placed before the statue of Saint Clare.

Several females stood round it, and, from their conversation, Olphos learned they had flown there for security from the mob. They were thrown into the most dreadful alarm when he presented himself, but he soon dissipated their fears. While he was assuring them of protection, a loud groan seemed to issue from the middle of the vault in which he and the nuns were. A second groan followed, and the noise plainly came from the statue. The nuns accounted for the noise as a miraculous intimation from the saint that she was offended at the proceedings of the people, and shewed Olphos a human hand, grasping her arm, which had once belonged to a man who had sacrilegiously mounted the statue of St. Clare to steal a valuable ring from her finger. The robber could be released only by amputation, since which he had turned hermit, and no one had dared to touch the statue under the fear of certain destruction. This extraordinary legend led Olphos to examine the arm of St. Clare with particular attention; and jumping over the iron railing which inclosed her, he ascended the pedestal, and discovered a small iron knob between the shoulder and the supposed man's hand; on pressing it, it seemed to loosen a chain that attached the wooden image to the base. Lifting this off, he perceived a heavy iron grate in the hollow of the pedestal, which, with some difficulty, he raised, inviting the nuns to follow; this they declined, and he descended a flight of rude mishapen steps to a cavern, and thought he perceived a spark of light:—as he wandered on, he lost sight of it, but a plaintive moan stole upon his ear, and he directed his steps towards it. It became more audible as he advanced, and

at length conducted him to a narrow gloomy dungeon in one side of the cavern. Through the vapour and pestilential fog that clouded this cell, by the glimmering beams of a lamp, he saw a pale emaciated human being lying on a bed of straw. She was partly naked, her disordered hair concealed her face, and a tattered rag enveloped her limbs. With one hand she pressed a small bundle to her bosom; the other hung inactively down. Her sunken eyes were directed to a crucifix, and beside her straw was a basket and an earthen pitcher. Olphos stopped a moment to contemplate this horrid object: she cast her eyes towards the staircase, and then in a feeble voice uttered, "No one comes to me!—Two long days have passed, and no food!—Oh, cruel, to lengthen out my miseries by a death of hunger!" She then shivered, drew the rug closer over her shoulders, and addressed the bundle which lay on her breast. "Dear babe, once so lovely, so like him, how have a few days changed thee! Yet still art thou dear to me, and I will weep over thy putrid form!" She then shed some tears, which she wiped away with her tresses, and stretched out her hand to the pitcher, but put it back again, exclaiming, "Not a drop! Oh! I would give worlds for a drop of water to allay my burning thirst! Saviour, Saviour, have pity on me, and turn the hearts of my persecutors!"

Olphos, no longer able to contain his feelings, entered the dungeon, and in a soft voice said, he was come to relieve her woes. The captive started, and eagerly demanded if the Prioress had sent him to destroy her. Olphos briefly related that he was come to give her liberty and comfort, and that she had nothing to fear from the Prioress, who had been sacrificed to the popular indignation. As Olphos stooped to raise her, the beams of the lamp struck full upon his face, and the captive exclaimed, "Gracious heaven! is it possible!—Those features!—Ah! it is——" She said no more, but sunk upon the straw in a fainting fit. Olphos lost no time in removing an iron chain, which encircled the body of the unknown victim, and taking her in his arms, by the iron lamp, he gained the iron grate, where he met the nuns, who were waiting his return with the greatest anxiety. They busily employed themselves in restoring the inanimate female, till they were alarmed by the sound of Don Gomez's cries, calling on Olphos to know if he were safe.

When Gomez joined them, he brought the pleasing intelligence, that the riot had all subsided, and that the nuns, with their helpless charge, were consigned to his care, while Olphos penetrated into other parts of this subterranean abode, and succeeded in rescuing two more victims of the Domina's fury. Don Gomez conducted all the nuns to their respective friends. The beautiful Almira, who had personated St. Clare, requested not to be separated from the rescued prisoner, and Don Gomez conducted them both to her house. Here the unfortunate was immediately put to bed, and medical assistance procured. As her illness had principally arisen from weakness and want of wholesome food, she very soon assumed an altered appearance; and when her history was related, she proved to be the supposed deceased and sacrificed Claude!—The account which Claude gave of her sufferings and imprisonment ran thus:

"My imagined death was attended with the greatest agonies, and when I awoke from my trance, an hour elapsed before I was sufficiently collected to examine the surrounding objects. I found myself extended upon a sort of wicker couch, with four handles, which doubtless served the nuns to convey me to my grave. A lamp was over my head, and four narrow walls encompassed me. Perceiving my grated door was unfastened, I rose to endeavour to explore my way out; but the first thing I put my hand on was the corrupted head of a nun, who had died

some months before. This dreadful discovery prompted me the more eagerly to remove, and I ascended through the grated door, and got into a vault, which was strewn with sepulchral fragments and mouldering bones. I advanced eagerly to the door which formed the outlet, and to my horror found it fastened on the other side.

I now abandoned myself to the prospect of perishing with hunger, and projected destroying myself, but the sake of the infant I bore prevented me. Suddenly a neighbouring tomb caught my eye, on which was a basket containing some coarse bread, and a small bottle of water. I blessed the friendly hand which had placed these viands there, and devoured them with eagerness. I then sat down, debating on the cause of finding this relief, and was inexpressibly delighted with hearing the sound of footsteps approach, and seeing a light advance; but all my hopes were dashed to pieces when I heard the door unbolted, and saw the Prioress enter, with the four nuns, who had been witnesses of my supposed death. She gazed upon me with angry eyes, and exclaimed, “Do I see a repentant or a criminal?—I fear those tears are shed less for your fault, than to excite my compassion.—But I do not wish for your death, but your repentance. I administered an opiate, not a poison, that you might feel the agonies of a guilty conscience, without dying. I shall now purify you with wholesome correction, and revive the long neglected laws of our convent, for such incontinent crimes as your’s. All Madrid thinks you dead; I have taken sufficient caution to continue the mystery, therefore abandon all thoughts of this world, and prepare for that which is soon to come. Now listen to the sentence of St. Clare. Beneath these vaults are dungeons allotted to such criminals as yourself. Thither are you to be conveyed. Food and raiment, just sufficient to support nature in the coarsest manner, will be supplied you. There, chained down, and illuminated only by a feeble lamp, you will have leisure to repent. Follow me!”—Thunder struck at this sentence, I fainted, and was conveyed by two of the nuns to the principal shrine of St. Clare. The nuns then, raised an iron gate, hitherto concealed by the image, which was taken from the pedestal, and we descended. I was conducted down a frightful abyss, and forced into one of the cells that lined the walls of the cavern. I now interceded for mercy, for the sake of my unborn babe, but the Prioress cursed my innocent offspring, and vowed that I should bring it into the world, feed, and bury it, unbefriended! Her gross inhumanity threw me into a second fit, and when I recovered, my tyrant had departed. I then awoke to the horrors of my situation, but scantily supplied with clothing, food, and oil for my lamp. To add to my misery, the pains of child birth came on, and I was delivered of my forlorn burthen. It came alive into the world, but soon perished from my ignorance, and a want of proper attendance. The bitter wind that whistled through the vaults, the misty damps that arose from the ground, in a few hours finished its existence, and I witnessed its death with agonies that even wound me severely now.

“Sister Theresa visited me every twenty-four hours, and would fain have buried the infant, but the contemplation of its features was my only comfort, and I would not have it separated from me; nor, when I quitted my prison, could I scarcely be persuaded to entomb the precious remains. The reason of Theresa's not visiting me as usual with my stipulated allowance, I have been since informed by the Mother Urbana; she was suddenly taken ill, and a dangerous infectious fever confined her to her bed, from which cause no one would attend her, but the lay sister who was appointed to nurse her. The Prioress, and the nuns in the mystery had given me over entirely to her care. One day passed away without food; another, and a third arrived, but no Theresa, no sustenance! The lapse of time was discernible by the wasting of my lamp, to feed

which, fortunately, oil enough for four days had been left me. In this dreadful dilemma, I thought the Domina had ordered the nuns to let me perish. I was become an absolute skeleton; I had the pangs of hunger gnawing at my vitals, and groans were all I had strength to utter. I was looking for the moment of my dissolution, when my beloved brother arrived in time to save me. My dim light at first could not recognise him, but when I did, the burn of rapture overpowered me, and my emotions found refuge in insensibility. O Olphos, Axala, how shall I repay the debt of gratitude I owe to your exertions, how compensate ye for the affluence and ease I now feel, surrounded by those I esteem, and about to become the wife of him who has long before been wedded to my heart! Axala, think not, because you once found me frail, that you will witness such another error in my future conduct. No!—I am fully sensible of the great and grievous error I have committed, but I trust heaven has accepted the sufferings I have endured, as an expiation of that crime. Had it not been for the consequences of that unguarded moment, I had never seen you again: but, Fate has ordained it otherwise, and I rejoice in the wise dispensation of Providence! Here then shall the subject rest, and my future life convince Axala that the error of his mistress shall operate to render her more exemplary as a wife.” Here Claude ceased, and her friends replied to her address, in terms equally affectionate and encouraging. It may easily be expected that Claude had before commencing her narrative made enquiries concerning Don Almagro. The wretched situation in which he lay, gave her a great shock, but as there did not appear any danger of not surviving his malady, she secretly exulted in the cause of his illness, since it proved the strength of his affection. Olphos undertook the pleasing duty of communicating to his friend the happiness that awaited him, in the liberation of Claude, and her rapid convalescence. Notwithstanding the caution Olphos used in relating the intelligence, Almagro's transports were so violent, as to threaten his life from an excess of joy. These once past, assured of the completion of *his wishes*, and above all blest with the presence of Claude, who, immediately that she had recovered under the care of Almira, hastened to attend her lover, and soon enabled him to overcome the effects of his late malady. The ease of his mind communicated itself to his body, and he recovered his health with astonishing rapidity. The next time the happy party met, Olphos expressed his satisfaction at the prospect of being so intimately connected with a man, for whom he had so much esteem. No obstruction could now present itself, (the Pope's bull having liberated Claude from all monastic engagements) except the illness of Don Olphos—which now threatened to place him in the same situation his friend had just escaped from.

His uncle, the Duke di Calvados, had before solicited his affections in favour of Almira, the young nun who, with several others, had taken refuge, during the riots, in the sepulchre of St. Clare. He could have no objection to this beautiful girl, who, from person, accomplishments, and rank, was a fit match for the first nobleman in Spain. He begged only delay till he had overgotten the shock he had experienced in the sepulchre, which, added to the affection he had long felt for a beloved and sacrificed object, whom he had discovered in the vaults, had terminated in a fit of despondency. The story involves some interest, and may not be unacceptable to the reader.

Father Clement was the Abbot of the Capuchins, and bore the surname of the Man of Holiness, from his austerity and sanctity. His stature was tall, and his features uncommonly handsome;—the glance of his eye was penetrating and his manner inspired universal awe. This reverend father

was about thirty years of age, and had been brought up by the late superior of the Capuchins, who had found him an infant left at the Abbey door. He was educated in the monastery, and had remained there ever since, even, without quitting it, till a short period back, when he had been induced, on Thursdays, to deliver a lecture in the cathedral, which all Madrid constantly attended to hear. The common people esteemed him as a saint, and he was looked upon as a miracle of chastity and purity. Such was the man whom Donna Gardana, and her beautiful niece, Nerina, had come to hear. The press of the crowd was so great, that seats were invaluable, and the old lady and her charge would have retired, if Don Olphos and his friend Lopez had not politely offered to accommodate them with the seats they had procured. The beauty and elegance of Nerina, when she had, by her aunt's persuasion, unveiled, sunk deep into the heart of Olphos. They learned, in conversation with Donna Gardana, that Donna Camilla, Nerina's mother, had come from Mercia to Madrid, to solicit the continuance of a small income from the son of her father-in-law, which by the death of the latter was discontinued. Olphos, having learned the name of the gentleman, informed Nerina that he was well acquainted with him, and made an offer of his services in her mother's favour, as he was well acquainted with the generosity of his friend. Nerina raised her blue eyes, and thanked him by a look of inexpressible sweetness. This conversation preceded the sermon, which had the effect to interest every one of the auditors most profoundly, but none more than Nerina, who listened with admiration to the clear, nervous, and sublime language in which he inveighed against the vices of humanity, and described the punishments reserved for them in a future state. When he descended from the pulpit, he was loaded with blessings, and Nerina's eyes followed him with anxiety as he quitted the church. The absence of this pious father seemed to deprive her of something essential to her happiness. Olphos observed the interest she seemed to take in him, and spoke with delight of his powers and eloquence. Nerina felt an assurance that he was superior to temptation, and here the conversation ended. The ladies soon after retired, and Olphos told his friend how much he was pleased with Nerina, and that he thought her sufficiently interesting and charming to make her his wife. When they parted, Olphos repaired to the Convent, to call on his sister Claude. When he entered the church, the cool and refreshing air invited him to sit down, and as he sat contemplating the perfections of Nerina, he went fast asleep, and did not awake till the sound of the monks performing Vespers disturbed him. He was about to retire, when he observed a man, who seemed suspicious of being observed, advance towards the colossal statue of St. Francis, and, placing a letter beneath it, he retired. Not long after the sisterhood entered, with the Prioress at their head, who made a profound reverence as she passed the statue of St. Francis, the patron of the cathedral. She was followed by the rest, unveiled; but guess the astonishment of Olphos, when he saw his sister Claude, in bending to the shrine, *accidentally* drop her rosary, and extract the letter from the Saint's foot. Upon this the unknown quitted his concealment, & was hastily retiring from the church, when Olphos insisted on knowing the contents of the letter, and who he was. This produced an *éclaircissement*, to the great joy of Olphos, who found in the stranger his much valued friend, the Marquis d'Axala, who had just then come from Wildenheim, and whose history has been previously detailed. The Monk, after the above service had been performed, retired to his cell, where he looked round in conscious exultation, considering himself as a being in many respects superior to his fellow creature.

Suspended opposite to him was the picture of a Madona, on the fine face and bosom of which he constantly gazed with delight.—He was one day indulging in a train of free ideas on the beauty of the Madona before him, when Giovanni, a young novice, opened the door, with a small basket

of flowers in his hand.—He intended to make his profession in three months, and had a considerable degree of mystery about him. A stranger, whose rich habit and magnificent equipage had declared him to be of high rank, had engaged the monks to receive the novice, and with him had left the necessary sums. The youth had carefully avoided all society, except that of Father Clement. His face was so muffled up in his cowl, that no one ever had seen it, not even the Monk, who was charmed with the sweetness of his manners, and his particular attention to him.—Giovanni had come to applaud his decided conduct in not listening a few nights before to the prayers and intreaties of Claude. The latter, in stooping to make her confession before the Abbot in his official chair, let fall the letter which she had a little before obtained from the statue of St. Francis, containing the plan of her escape from the convent, and signed by the Marquis d’Axala. The Monk shewed her what he had picked up, and deaf to her intreaties, sent it to the Prioress, who thereby became acquainted with the whole plot, and prevented, as before-mentioned, the escape of Claude.

When Giovanni had done speaking, the father said he felt pity for her. “If you pity her father,” said Giovanni, “Oh! then pity me! for I have no friend, and my secret bows me down with its weight!”—The Monk took Giovanni’s hand, and vowed that his happiness was as dear to him as his own. “Swear then!” said Giovanni, “that I shall not quit the monastery before my noviciate expires!” The Monk swore, and then intreated an explanation of the mystery. “I obey you, father!—Reverend Clement, pity my weakness, my love; pity the passions of one who is a woman!” The father started, and would have flown, but Malina prevented him, and the Monk seated himself beside her. She then informed him that her father died when she was an infant, and left her rich; that she was brought up under an uncle, who instructed her in erudition and magic; having refused many offers, her heart had remained uninfluenced by love, till she saw him in the pulpit of the cathedral. The father disapproved of her conduct, at the same time he felt the pleasure with which he had contemplated the Madona transferred to this living representative of her. It will be sufficient to say, that, after various interviews between them, in which the seductive charms of Malina had been displayed partially to his view, he repaired one night to her cell, having received a message that she was unwell. The syren, raising herself half out of bed, threw her arms round him; the impression was irresistible; the rays of the lamp darted upon her half-undressed figure, and the vows of the Monk yielded to passion! The barrier of holiness was broken down, and the gulf of desire was ready to cancel in a short time every other remaining virtue.—Intoxicated with pleasure, the Monk rose from the fair one’s couch; habit made her necessary to his pleasures for a time; but, as in the course of his confessional duty, new faces and other charms succeeded; he grew cloyed with the easy conquest he had obtained over the person of Malina, and panted only for new enjoyments, regardless of his sacred character, and satisfied with avoiding the danger of detection from the unimpeachable purity of his character.

One morning the confluence of penitents was greater than usual; he was detained till it was late, and was about to retire, when the beautiful Nerina and another female solicited him to pray for her mother, and send some pious Monk to comfort her in her dying moments. He was charmed with the supplicant, and took the card with the address of the sick Donna Camilla on it. When the Monk retired to his cell, he felt a thousand new emotions spring up in his bosom: he felt a mingled sentiment of tenderness, admiration, and respect: he felt now the purer influence of love, and in a fit of indignation dashed the picture of the Madona from the wall. He resolved to be the confessor himself, and the gratitude of Nerina shone through her eyes when the holy

father entered her mother's chamber. Camilla was highly gratified by this visit; the pious Monk laid all her fears at rest, and in case of her death, promised to provide for the future comforts of her daughter.

In the anti-room he met Nerina, gave her hopes of her mother, and received with delight the artless expressions of her gratitude. When Clement returned to the abbey, his mind was filled with the most pleasing images, and he failed not to profit of Camilla's indisposition, to visit her daughter every day, whose innocent familiarity encouraged his desires; and as her mother was getting better, he thought the attempt to try his influence over the innocent Nerina must not be delayed. One day he entered her room, which adjoined that of her mother, and found her sleeping on the sofa in consequence of an opiate he had given her.

He gazed for some minutes in rapture on the sleeping beauty, and he was bending his head to salute her, when Camilla entered from a private closet that opened into her room, and detected the guilty monk. The Abbot made an effort to get to the door, conscious, if he could but once reach his convent, his reputed sanctity would protect him from imputation. The enraged mother, however, opposed his progress, and called loudly to the servant to witness his guilt. Not a moment was to be lost. Suddenly with one hand he grasped Camilla by the throat, threw her on the floor, and placing a pillow over her face and bosom, knelt upon it till she was suffocated. The horrible act once perpetrated, he beheld the enormity of his crime. The shock of Camilla's unexpected death produced its natural effect on the daughter; it brought on a despondency, and in this dilemma the Abbot again visited her; as she mended, his flame revived, and Malina recommended to him the administration of a second draught. This plan the Monk executed, successfully, and Nerina was conveyed to St. Clare's, supposed really dead. During Nerina's lethargy, the Monk effected his lustful purpose, and she awoke to the horrors of her situation. Scarcely had the terrors of conscience visited the Monk; when Malina informed him the convent was beset. She then drew a dagger, and recommended that Nerina should be poniarded. He hesitated to do the deed, resolving to lock her up in the secret dungeon; but the noise of archers, and Olphos, impelled Nerina to call for help, when the Abbot twice plunged the dagger into her bosom, and fled. Nerina died in the arms of Olphos, and the Monk and Melina were afterwards convicted of witchcraft and murder, and executed.

These circumstances for a time clouded the mind of Olphos, but at length they gave way to the remonstrances of his friend, and the beauty of Almira, and he eventually entered the regions of Hymen, with his friend Almagro and Claude.

FINIS.

T. Plummer, Printer, Seething-Lane.

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