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THE NUN, OR MEMOIRS OF ANGELIQUE;
A TALE [Transcript]

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The Nun, or Memoirs of Angelique; A Tale. c. 1805.

THE NUN,
OR
MEMOIRS OF ANGELIQUE;
A TALE.

INCLOSED for life in the deep cold bosom of a convent, why should I take my pen to state the fatal cause which condemned me hither, since with me this paper will most probably sink into oblivion? But it may survive me; it may meet the eye of some parent less determined than my own, in whose heart nature is not entirely petrified. Some trembling female may in future be saved by it, and that possibility shall be my inducement.

My ancestors several ages back were noble; but some of them marrying into Bretagne, lost much of their consequence in their own province by blending with a species of nobility who do not think commerce disgraceful. My father was the younger son of an *ecuyer*, who by the courtesy of Bretagne was styled Seigneur; and though my grandfather's late ancestor had neither held public employments nor possessed a patent of creation, yet we looked upon ourselves as one of the best families in that province, or even in Normandy, being descended from the ancient lords of Vitre, and having quartered time out of mind the arms of several houses who had mingled with the blood-royal. My father did not, however, retain that unbending pride which had characterized his remote ancestors. He seriously applied himself to the acquisition of that, to which nobility itself as frequently obliged to give way, and being successful in his commercial undertakings, he was soon without any of the hopes or fears of younger brothers. Emboldened by a long run of good fortune, he one year risked an immense venture to the West Indies, and at the time when he hoped to hear of its safe arrival, he was informed by his correspondent there, that a dreadful storm had arisen, and the little fleet was supposed to have been destroyed, as no account had since been heard of it. This intelligence put my father on the rack, and the apprehension of its proving true, combating the hope that it would be found false, his mind became dreadfully disturbed.

Sometimes, when despondency prevailed, he would accuse the cruelty of that Being who could suffer a wretch to toil away half his existence, and bury the production of his industry in a moment. Again, when Hope gained the ascendancy, he would promise, if his ships arrived safe, to offer up his favourite child, myself, then seventeen, to the sole service of that Omnipotent Deity who had preserved the fruits of his labour.

Let the soul of sensibility conceive, if possible, the situation of a filial mind under this suspense; conceive its misery when told, that love lurked in the heart, and united with native abhorrence to stir up rebellion to such an unnatural sacrifice. A young Ensign of the Artillery was the friend to whom my heart was opened: he was my cousin and my lover, and from infancy we had been partial to each other. He waited with anxiety, which only my own could equal, the confirmation of my father's hopes or fears. This, young man, but a few years older than myself, was lovely in his person, and a most pleasing address. His intellectual merit was universally admitted, and his heart was sincere, benevolent, and liberal. We had been destined by our parents for each other, and had often lived in the same house with that degree of familiarity which is apt to exalt simple

approbation into a warmer sentiment, even in minds where time or disappointment have quenched the romantic ardour of a first love. For hearts like ours, still new to the passion, and still fascinated by its influence, yielding to it in the beginning with the sanction of our friends, and confirmed, irrevocably confirmed, by their continued approbation, what must we feel at seeing the axe thus laid to the root of our happiness by those very hands who pointed out where we should plant it.

Ah! Whence does a parent deduce his claim to this cruel prerogative? Who shall say to the mind, "Hate, approve, renounce, accept, as I shall dictate?" None. The soul makes its choice, and will ever feel its independence. But when I question the justice of such imperious commands, I would not wish to be understood as holding parental authority in contempt. Far, very far from it. When the approbation or opposition of such near relatives is grounded upon rational principles, let youth be cautious how it treats that opposition with haughtiness, and beware how it willfully shuts its eyes to that propriety of conduct which insures approbation, at once dispassionate and discriminating.

Letters at length came with an account of the fleet's safe arrival; and my fate was then decided. I was snatched from the arms of my lover, and forced upon my noviciate in a neighbouring convent. A year was spent in vain endeavour to reconcile me to my fate. My father pleaded his vow, as binding him to a perseverance in his determination, and painting the serene happiness of the life he had chosen for me, in the most energetic language enthusiastic devotion could inspire.

"Can you, **←missing quote mark (p. 5)** he would often say, "can you, my child, form to yourself a more happy situation in this world than that which excludes every temptation to evil? A situation from which you may regard sublunary concerns as if you were an inhabitant of a superior planet; a retreat where you will have leisure to commune with your own heart, and by daily labouring for its purification, make it at last a valuable present to the Giver of Life. From the ample and quiet shade of your convent, you may look down as from a serene eminence on the cloudy atmosphere that envelopes society. You may from thence contemplate, without interruption, the grand order of Nature, trace effects from their causes, drink at the hidden springs of truth, and inform yourself how the silent hand of Omnipotence creates and preserves the harmony of the universe. In researches like these, you will feel your soul detached from, and elevated above, all earthly views and connections; your imagination will carry you to the throne of God; you will renounce with transport every worldly pleasure, and I shall have the happiness of offering to my Maker that sacrifice which I have vowed, and which the delights to behold, an innocent and devoted heart. Can you, my love, figure to yourself a happier state of being? Impossible?"

Alas! I had already depicted one more agreeable to my feelings, more consonant to my nature. The gentle, and the charming Ferdinand was foremost in the scene. At the time of my going into the Convent, he was called to join his corps at some leagues distance, and we had had no opportunity to fix upon a method of correspondence previous to his departure. The dreadful day was named which was to condemn me for ever to solitude and to despair. To inform him was impossible, and could I have done so, it would have been in vain, as escape was impracticable. With a heart devoted to love, and tortured with the certainty of

everlasting separation from its object, I was led to the altar, and made to vow eternal obedience to dictates the most repugnant to my soul.

When the fatal lawn was thrown over me, and this cruel ceremony at an end, my father came up and thanked me with emphasis; imprinted a kiss on my cold cheek; presented my weeping mother, with my brothers and sisters, to take a last embrace; and then, recommending me to the Abbess bid me a long farewell.

I will not attempt to delineate my sensations on becoming an inmate for life of this very unsocial retreat. Language has not terms sufficiently expressive of the anguish I suffered, when sometimes awaking from an uneasy slumber, the solemn tinkling of the midnight bell has called me to pronounce prayers, the purport of which I scarcely knew, my imagination wandering the while into that world where I fancied my distracted Ferdinand pined away his life a victim to despair.

When I had been here about a month, the Superieure came one day into my dormitory, and told me, that a novice, who was to enter the next afternoon, should (if I had no objection) occupy one of the beds in my room. This proposal gave me a degree of satisfaction which I thought no future circumstance could have awakened in me, and I expressed myself pleased with the arrangement. I felt a degree of hope that my new associate (perhaps yet unfixed in conventual principles) might, by sympathizing with my sorrows, remove a part of that extreme wretchedness which seemed even to threaten my intellects. The afternoon of the next day brought with it our new sister elect; but how different from the portrait my fancy had wrought! Far from the elegant languor of reluctant beauty shivering on ~~←deleted one~~ **“on” (6-7)** the icy threshold of eternal celibacy, I beheld a figure finely formed indeed, but masculine, advancing undauntedly along, yet with down-cast eyes, and cheeks on which the pencil of health had laid colours that might have been mistaken for the momentary effects of extreme modesty. This equivocal and inconsistent appearance destroyed my confidential plan in a moment, and I retired to my room, little pleased at the idea of so uninteresting an intruder on the privacy I had so dearly purchased.

After vespers I was introduced by the abbess to our new devotee; when supper was over, I was requested to wait on her to her room. I had been so displeased at her apparent want of sensibility to the horrors that awaited her, that I had scarcely looked in her face since our introduction to each other in the chapel, and believe I performed with a very ill grace those little attentions which as a stranger she had a right to expect. The same disgust accompanied me up stairs; and having pointed out her bed, and ordered a lay-sister to wait her commands, I coldly wished her a good night, and retired to my own side of the room. Expecting she would go to bed when she had counted her beads and undressed, I had recourse to my rosary, and waited afterwards till she should have taken off her cloaths, before I attempted to prepare for sleep, amusing myself the while with twining round the window some branches of woodbine which had crept through the interstices of my casement, and in contemplating the lucid brightness of the evening star as it sparkled through a vault of azure. The rich breath of the evening breeze, the warbling of a neighbouring stream, the soft radiance of the crested moon, and the stillness of the night, absorbed me entirely into that state of mind in which the soul feels a supreme degree of pleasure without being ably distinctly to ascertain its nature, or from

what train of thought it is derived. The trance was momentary. The idea of Ferdinand rushed across my fancy, and I exclaimed involuntarily, "My friend, my love, we must meet no more."

"Oh, heavens! exclaimed the stranger, in tones of the deepest distress.

I flew to the bed-side. She was still dressed, except that the bandeau had fallen from her head, and discovered tresses glowing and luxuriant as those which used to wave round the cheeks of my Ferdinand. The resemblance struck me. The loose white robe she wore was now untied at the neck and bosom, and I perceived, I thought, an uniform. "Gracious, heaven!" I screamed, faintly.

"Be composed, my adorable, my faithful Angelique!" cried the charming novice in a **whisper (see note four paragraphs below)**. "'Tis indeed your Ferdinand, but harbour not a thought to my prejudice; my intentions are as pure as yourself. I have been on the rack ever since my admission **abut (about?)** the means I should take to introduce myself without alarming you; but believe me, I have no wishes inconsistent with the purity I have ever professed."

"Impossible," cried I. "Know you not that I have sworn to dedicate myself to heaven?"

"And can you think this compulsory oath binding? Do you suppose it is registered by angels, or acceptable to God? Will he punish its forfeiture, or regard its observance with that complacency with which he looks upon the voluntary dedication of his servant, or with that anger which follows the non-observance of a willing vow? Certainly he will not. You have been forced to make a mockery of the sacred rite which unites the soul abstracted from the world to its Almighty author. You have been obliged to profess that seclusion to which the natural bent of your mind did not incline you, and which the ideas you have received and cherished, make not merely tormenting, but even criminal."

"Yet since it is so, ought I not to pray for that grace which shall enable me to banish whatever may impede my progress in the path I have so solemnly vowed to tread?"

"Why would you intreat your maker to eradicate those very feelings he has himself implanted? Why pray for their annihilation only for the purpose of adopting such a line of conduct as he never meant you to pursue? since, if he had, some impulse would have arisen in your own to aid you in the prosecution of it. Conscience, my sweet Angelique, conscience would have **wispered ← spelled with an "h" four paragraphs up (8)** to your soul your father's cruel adoption, if it had been essential to your salvation, or if the Almighty had looked with pleasure on the sacrifice. But believe me, when I tell you in the words of St. Evremont, though much more seriously than he, when dissuading the Duchess of Mazarine that your perseverance is not virtue, but, in fact, a temptation of the Demon, who envious of the glory of God, will not suffer our admiration to be given to his most beautiful work.

"But why talk to me thus? Was it my choice? Can I possibly escape from it? No. Then leave me. A wide gulph yawns betwixt us, which neither may pass without incurring anathemas the most dreadful."

“My charming Angelique, this is an imaginary abyss into which you dread plunging: it does not exist in the terra firma of common sense. When the freedom of choice is taken from you, when you have no will of your own, you become degraded into a machine, the mere organ of another’s sentiments, and cannot, in the nature of justice, be guilty for submitting to terms you had no power to refuse, or for resuming, on the very first opportunity, that natural right which had been wrested from you, and revoking your acknowledgment, of whatever militated against that reason which heaven has given for your guide. Resume yourself, my life; dare to be conducted by the light of your own understanding, suffer no power on earth to dictate terms to you, the injustice of which is so strikingly evident. Let us fly, my love, let us fly to that altar where your lips so lately pronounced an unmeaning vow, and breathe one which rises from your heart, and is stamped with the approbation of your intellect. When I first conceived the design of imposing upon the abbess, I proposed to disclose myself gradually to you; but your appearance after a year’s absence, the flattering pensoroso I perceived in you, and moreover, the very circumstance of my being put into your room, urged me to discover myself immediately. Let us hasten then to sanctify, by rites the most holy, that proximity which chance has favoured me with, and which I cannot enjoy till your voice has authorised me to retain it. After midnight prayers are over, we will go the altar, and interchange our vows: till then, my love, you shall tell me how you have passed this dreary noviciate, and I will inform you, what untoward circumstances have prevented me from seeing or hearing from you till now.”

“And do you call that a marriage,” cried I, angrily, “which has nothing but the burning taper and the holy image to witness its existence?”

“It is the most solemn contract into which we can enter, till chance gives us some means of escaping hence.”

Alas! how soon the mind is reconciled to that which it endeavours to approve. My lover had combated with success such frail reasoning as I could bring forward for persisting in any vow, and he now as easily convinced me of the propriety of a measure I ought, perhaps, to have rejected altogether. I consented, at length, to attend him to the altar after midnight, and in the interim gave him all the information to which, for the preceding year, he had been a stranger; he, in return; recounting all that he thought might interest me, from the time of his departure from my father’s house.

The hour of prayer at length arrived and past, we returned to our room, and the convent was again silent as the grave. When we thought sleep had resumed its power over the eye-lids of the unsuspecting sisterhood, we stole back to the chapel, and approaching the altar, knelt down, while Ferdinand began to read from the book the matrimonial rite. But he had scarcely begun when a shriek from a confessional just by told us we were seen, and a nun whom we had not before observed, supposing herself discovered, rushed forward, fell at our feet, and implored, with all the appearance of guilty agitation, that we should not expose her, or the holy man who was with her, to the Abbess; protested that she would never forget us in her prayers; and would forward any scheme which could promote our happiness, for the disguise of Ferdinand no longer concealed the officer, and she had overheard for what purpose we had come thither. Thus is guilt the means of its own exposure. If the lady had not come up, it is

most likely our eyes would not have wandered towards her; or if she had had presence of mind enough to say nothing of her confessor, the circumstance of his being there might have remained a profound secret to us.

“Then,” said Ferdinand, “bring the holy man, as you call him, hither, and let him perform to us that rite which is in itself sacred; and cannot be less so, though pronounced by the organs of hypocrisy itself.” The monk, who had remained snug in the confessional, now came forward.

“I am well aware,” said he, assuming a meek and placid air, “to what suspicions I am exposed from the discovery of my being here at such an hour, but the uprightness of my designs will——”

“I will not undertake the task of convincing you that this was my errand,” said the wily confessor, “because I know that your imagination, and that of your fair companion, is too deeply wrapped up in the midst of worldly gratifications to perceive that delicate line which the sanctified spirit keeps perpetually in its eye in the midst of temptation: you are **to ←too?** **(11)** far absorbed by the personal attractions of each other to conceive, with any degree of conviction, the possibility of acting in similar cases to mine as if no such attractions existed. I therefore am contented to receive without murmuring all the sarcasms you may think fit to utter. It has been the fate of the church in all ages to have its best supporters defamed, insulted, and loaded with reproach. I am willing to take my share of the indignity, in hopes of participating the reward; but do not let this young penitent be a theme for scandal; do not let that ardent piety which brought her hither, be turned to her disadvantage; consider how delicate that mind must be which could not sleep under the idea of one venial sin till she had obtained the consolation of a formal absolution; think what such a mind must feel at being even suspected, and let that consideration induce you to perpetual silence. For my own part, since you are thus far agreed, I will ask no questions, I will betray no curiosity, but will with pleasure perform that ceremony you require, to convince you that no rancour lurks in my heart, and to shew you at how high a price I would purchase your confidence and fidelity.”

Ferdinand seemed to believe his assertions, and we promised secrecy. We were then married with all the solemnity the ceremony is capable of receiving; and the monk, after having taken leave of his weeping penitent, in order to ratify our engagement with him, after her departure, took us through a passage under ground which had a communication with his **monastery**, about half a mile from the nunnery. Here, on presenting each with an indulgence (it being fast week) he set out before us all the delicacies of the season; when his assumed character was lost in a bottle of the best Burgundy, he frankly commended the good sense which had led me to set aside the vow wherein my heart had no share, and as highly applauded the Quixotism of my lover, who had ventured on this scheme for my enlargement.

“Were we to live according to the rules we lay down for others,” said the Monk, by way of apology for again replenishing his glass, “we should indeed be above humanity, and Linnæus, in his arrangement of the animal world, ought to place a monk above a man, as a being approaching still nearer to divinity, and more worthy of connecting the material world with that of spirits. But alack!” continued he, “to preach and to practice too, is beyond the **limited (12)** sphere of mortal

ability. To form plans for the well-being of others is certainly a work of merit: if they can reduce our theories into practice, so much the better. Human nature is the same in a **monastery** ←spelled differently two paragraphs above (12) as in the court, therefore you ought not to be surprised at the similarity of her proceedings in these places: and now that I have gone thus far, tell me if I shall assist you in your escape from hence: you cannot remain long undiscovered, therefore the sooner you go the better.”

We thanked him for his consideration, and eagerly embraced the offer of his assistance, by which we were desirous of profiting immediately, lest, when the fumes of the Burgundy were dissipated, caution should resume its place in his heart, and put him upon some plan less favourable to our happiness. Ferdinand proposed an immediate sortie, to which the jovial monk instantly agreed. He then conducted us through a dismal labyrinth of cloisters to a secret entrance which opened into the fields, and was, he told us, known only to a few botanical ladies in the neighbourhood, who sometimes come in that way to consult the Bibliotheque of the pious fathers; a favour to which their learning and purity gave them an indubitable claim.

The dawn was rising when we took leave of our ingenuous confessor, after he had directed us to a neighbouring village, where a conveyance might be had to the next town, at which we meant to remain a few days incog. and go from thence to my husband's quarters, as by that time his leave of absense would be expired.

Ah, my God! what were my sensations on escaping this worst of prisons; on finding myself irrecoverably linked to the man I loved, and whom I had once despaired of ever again beholding: on finding myself at liberty to wander with him over the world, to participate his sorrows, to increase his delights. Words cannot do justice to the variety and strength of my emotions; lovers will feel them, and by others the description would not be understood were I to attempt it. Ferdinand's regiment lay at Forges in Normandy, whither we went with all convenient expedition. The waters of Forges were in high estimation, and they were at the time of our arrival quite in season. The company was fashionable, and the amusements were numerous.

I will not pretend to have been so lost in romantic passion for one object, as to be incapable of sometimes receiving pleasure from a change of scene and of society. The presence of Ferdinand formed the grand happiness of my life, but I felt that short absences rather increased than lessened that happiness. I was very young, and to me the world was full of novelty. My husband, confiding in my love, trusted me with the arrangement of my own time, and was glad to see me enter into those pleasures which furnished me with opportunities of making contrasts to his advantage, and supplied materials for conversation, which must otherwise have languished! for however incredulous the belle may be, experience daily shews us, that the exercise of intellect is necessary to rivet the chains forged by beauty: that the silver-toned voice itself will become ennuyant when the mere organ of insipidity; and that intelligence is perhaps more essential to the preservation of love, than personal charms to the creation of attachment.

Previous to our departure from Forges, where we had been three months, the colonel of the regiment gave a masked balle to which the officers and gentry of the place were invited. Ferdinand and myself went of course, and I expected considerable amusement from an entertainment which was entirely new to me. I dressed myself as a Paysanne, being a character less difficult to support, and went with a large party amongst whom was my husband, early in the evening. When my friends mingled with the crowd, I found my attention so strongly seized by the appearance of the motley group, that I sincerely repented the self-conceit which had led me to imagine I could support any fictitious character in a scene so new and so distracting. I wished now that I had not desired Ferdinand to quit me, and longed to call him back; but I **←deleted one ‘T’ (13)** could not distinguish him in the crowd, and consoling myself with the idea that he would keep an eye upon me, and come up if he saw embarrassed. I threw off as far as I could my diffidence, gave into the gaiety of the evening, and wandered up and down the room without apprehension, and on tip-toe for wit and incident. But here, as in life, consistency of character was little attended to. A Diogenes in a moving curve presently attacked, and made violent love to me, and at last distressed me so much, that I was glad to put myself under the protection of a grave Cardinal; but I was still worse off with him than the former, for taking advantage of the liberty this entertainment authorizes, he presently offered me a carte blanche! After I had with difficulty shaken off the amorous Cardinal, a Poet coming up thought it incumbent on him to mistake me for a Sylvan Deity, and begged I would honour him with my opinion of his pastoral; but seeing a Melpomene enter, he quitted me to present an elegy to the Goddess, who it appeared was a woman of rank, and kept a companion to read to her, being too volatile to acquire that accomplishment for herself: so that when the unfortunate author displayed his work, the fair inhabitant of Helicon having but a slight acquaintance with the five and twenty letters, was utterly at a loss to know whether they ought to be regarded as standing on their heads or on their feet, and began to reverse the vulgar manner of reading by turning the page bottom upwards. An Abbe seeing her embarrassment, would have undertaken to examine the work, but the tragic muse hearing fiddles strike up in the next room insisted on the Abbe's being her partner in a cotillion, for which purpose they danced off. The Poet now returned quickly towards me, but a Monk coming up engaged my attention. Alas! my hand shakes at the recollection: that transient vivacity which the idea of this evening inspired me with is vanished, now I begin to think of its conclusion; yet I will go through with it if possible.

“And what makes thee here my sweet simpleton?” said the Monk to me. “Has curiosity brought thee? Be assured danger treads on the heels of gratification. Has love misguided thee from thy country solitude? Go back, renounce its fascination while it is possible, and believe me there is nothing worth living for but the anticipated pleasure of existence beyond the grave.”

“You are,” said I, “the only one whom I have heard speak in character; but you are too serious, my good father. If curiosity be idle, if love and pleasure be ridiculous, what makes you here?”

“Heaven and earth!” exclaimed he, “What do I hear? What voice is that?”

I would have asked the same question, but my tongue, denied its utterance: in the Monk I recognized my father! and fell lifeless on the floor.

I cannot go on—the remembrance of this wrings my heart afresh. Alas! mortal pangs are laying hold on me—I quit the pen for ever. The shadows of death float before my eyes—I go to meet my husband.

Here the Monk took up the story:—“The health of my wife,” said he, “had been for some time very precarious, and the waters of Forges were recommended for its re-establishment. We had been there but a few days before the fatal masquerade, whither I went rather to protect my wife than any gratification of my own. We had been from home ever since my daughter’s renunciation, and owing to the carelessness of a servant, had never received the intimation sent by the Abbess of her escape; we were in consequence ignorant of its having been effected. The unhappy situation of my sweet child instantly drew crouds about her, and Ferdinand amongst the foremost.”

“My life! my Angelique! my wife!” cried he, wildly straining her to his bosom, **missing quote mark (15)→** What have they done to you, tell me what mystery is this?”

“Remove her,” cried I in rage, “remove her from that sacrilegious robber, against whose licentious intrusion not even the sanctuary itself is proof.”

“Oh!” cried the distracted Ferdinand, recollecting my voice, “do not part us; she is my wife, by every law human and divine. Kill me! kill me!” continued he, “but do not take her from me.”

“Can you,” continued the Monk, “can you look on me without horror, when I tell you that, wrought to a pitch of temporary insanity, my fury went even to murder! that, forgetting myself, my family, my child, and my God, I drew a sword from beneath my habit, and madly plunged it into the amiable heart where my daughter’s very life was garnered.

“Why should I detain you by repeating the poignancy of my immediate remorse, the phrenzy of my daughter, or the last affectionate addresses of her dying husband? Cowardice, you have perhaps frequently observed, enters at the same door with cruelty. My first moments of recollection came attended with sensations I had never known before. As I looked upon the crimsoned floor, the fear of an ignominious death started into my mind like an hideous apparition, and froze the blood boiling about my heart. Impelled by that ever active principle, self-preservation, I seized the advantage which the consternation of the company afforded me, and sliding through the crowd, darted downstairs, where stripping off my habit, I hurried into the street, and from thence took the most private road leading out of the town.

“When I had walked a few miles, the morning coming on, I perceived myself on the verge of a wood, and piercing into the thickest part of it, ventured to take a few moments rest. Here, when I considered the magnitude of my crime, a crime so inconsistent with the natural feelings of my heart, so detestible to my principles, and so awful in its consequence, I was tempted to rid myself of an existence which was oppressive almost to madness, and liable, every day, to a shameful termination. But that Being, whose goodness is inexhaustible, saved me from this final step to everlasting and inevitable destruction.

“The wood was silent, wild, and gloomy, suitable to the horror of my thoughts. I wandered up and down for some time in such a state of suspense as no language can define, and looked about to find a solitary cave where I might lay down that life I thought too tormenting to be supported. Again I pondered how I might find the means of existence; if my courage should be unequal to the decision of my own fate by suicide. Monastic seclusion presented me a gleam of comfort. Oh! that I was buried in the sombrious labyrinths of the **Chartseuse** ←spelled differently the paragraph after next, said I to myself, amidst its rocky solitudes, its eternal shades, its awful silence, I would devote to repentance the sad remainder of my existence.

By an accident I may reasonably call providential, I was enabled to put this scheme in execution; and perhaps by that was prevented from the commission of that worst of crimes, self-destruction.

“As I walked along the verge of a brook, scarcely conscious of my own movement, I perceived a small valise lying among the rushes, and concluding that robbers, under the fear of pursuit had left it behind them, I opened it without ceremony, ← should be a period (16) It contained about fifteen hundred livres, which I made no scruple of appropriating, and taking the most beaten path, determined to make the best of my way to some town, from whence the diligence might speedily rid me of the fear of being apprehended. To shorten my story, I got safe out of Normandy, wandering on foot through Orleanois, from thence keeping the course of the Loire as far as Roaune; there I crossed over to Lyons, and went gown the Rhone into Dauphine, supporting myself on herbs and water, exposing my body to the night air, and voluntarily treading the hot and flinty paths without any covering to my feet; hoping that the severity of my mortifications might be some atonement for my crime.

“Tis true, I was not certain that my crime had had that final consequence which would have effected my life, but shame with extended arms stood in the way of my return, and the situation of my affairs was such as rendered absence of no moment to the fortunes of my family. In fine, I determined to see them no more, and after a weary pilgrimage of two months, I got with great difficulty into the **Chartreuse**, where, without daring to make any enquiries after my family, I remained till the revolution, when I quitted it, after having been a resident near fifteen years. The altered situation of the kingdom, and the many changes which must have taken place in our province, made me now desirous of knowing how my wife and children were situated; and I thought this curiosity might be indulged without danger, since my appearance was so much changed that it was almost impossible to know me for the man who had abandoned them so many years before. I came back into Normandy. I found that my nephew had died a few days after our unhappy rencontre; that my beauteous Angelique had returned voluntary into the convent after that dreadful event, and unable to struggle with extreme mental wretchedness, united to the severest bodily anguish, she died some months after in child-birth, her unborn infant perishing with her.

“The abbess of her convent, where I learnt these heartrending particulars, presented me with this paper, which had been found amongst the books of my daughter. It may, as a devoted child once said, it may meet the eye of some parent less obdurate than myself: it

may, perhaps, sooner or later induce some father to decline the adoption of violent measures, when mild ones have been tried without effect; for when a parent attempts to curb the natural right of choice in his child, authority swells into tyranny, and the inherent spirit of free-will bursting its bonds, flies into extremes that but for such oppression it would have shuddered to think of. Filial affection is absorbed by this grand injustice, and the parent loses his child, and the daughter her father, by his unbounded exertion of that power, a moderate use of which might have insured long life and happiness to both. To tear my Angelique from connections the most delicate and natural, in order to the accomplishment of an absurd vow, is an action I now wonder how I could be guilty of, since my reason has learnt to appreciate with more accuracy the goodness of the Deity and the rights of human nature.

“Time and accidents have, during my retreat, laid all my family in the grave. Angelique had requested to be buried amongst her ancestors in the church of Vitre, and she was accordingly brought hither. In this desolated chateau, once the splendid residence of my glorious forefathers, I have lived from the time of my arrival in Normandy, unknown and unsuspected. The little slab you saw in the ruin, I intend, when finished, to have placed over her grave in the church; and believe me, that to breathe prayer for the repose of her soul, to trace the features of her beautiful countenance on the marble, and to mourn my own guilt in the dust, is all for which I now exist.”

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